

OECD LEED Local Development Centre, Trento, Italy.

Inauguration Speech, December 2003.

Greg Clark
Director, London Development Agency.

Chairman,
OECD LEED Forum of Cities and Regions.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to address these distinguished guests and hosts here in Trento today.

Many of you know that the OECD is an inter-governmental organisation, providing national and federal governments, in the world's top performing 30 nations, with an opportunity for peer to peer exchange on many matters of economic performance and co-operation. But, increasingly, the OECD is also, looking to city and regional authorities and their development agencies for insights about how sub-national economies are performing and how they, working with their national and federal governments as partners, can help to improve national economic performance from the bottom up.

Nearly 3 years ago the OECD LEED Programme created its Forum of Cities and Regions to help do just that, and I have been honoured to serve as its chairman, with great support from the LEED programme staff. Over these years we have examined, on a comparative basis, several important issues; concerning the role and best use of FDI at the local level, the most effective means to promote and foster entrepreneurship, the significance of social enterprise, the need and means to tackle urban distress and poverty, the future role of development agencies, the effectiveness of different tools for attracting private finance to local development efforts, and the opportunities for health, environment, and culture to contribute to local development strategies and programmes. It has been an exciting 3 years and each event has been hosted and sponsored by a different City or Regional Authority. Through the OECD national and sub-national partners have started a peer to peer exchange with local dimensions.

The OECD LEED Forum of Cities and Regions brings together city and regional actors of all kinds, not just big cities like London where I live, but rural regions, smaller cities and towns, coastal and port cities, and complex diverse regions. We welcome all who want to join the LEED Partners Club and become a member of our Forum and share their local development knowledge and insight.

We know that the world is changing and is again at a point of rapid internationalisation. Local leaders are concerned to ensure that their place is well connected to international flows of capital and trade and people, because this brings jobs, and incomes, investment and enterprise to a community. The internationalising economy can allow the locality to express its identity and its value in a new way. Equally, people living in local communities all over the world, whether within rural towns or big cities, now ask themselves; 'will the place where I live be a better place in the future than it is now, or should I leave to find somewhere that offers more opportunity for me and my family?'. Local development is about helping all places to be better in the future and to reduce the dilemmas that confront people in this globally mobile era.

Through the Trento Centre, we want to share this knowledge and widen this joint working between cities and regions of the OECD countries, and those of Central and Eastern Europe. We see this as a two-way exchange. We each have much to learn from others, and, if we widen this net, we can all learn more. The situation in each city and each region is unique, but no city or

region need be alone with its challenges and imperatives. There is a deep hunger for cities and regions, across the whole of Europe, to be in partnership.

We accept that the world is changing. The renewed internationalisation of the economy, including the enlargement and the integration of a unified Europe, has given city and regional players a new set of roles. Cities and regions in Europe have been able to re-define their roles within an integrating Europe, painting themselves in a new way onto a larger canvass, outside of some of the limitations of the nation-state economy and its traditional urban and regional hierarchies and functions. Some cities and regions are emerging with new roles and characteristics, serving new markets, and building up new agglomerations of assets and investments, or entrepreneurs and capital. With support and encouragement from their national governments, cities and regions can make useful investments in promoting their own development. Through this they can build an enhanced platform for success, foster new forms of growth, and promote social and economic inclusion.

Bringing together the cities and regions of the OECD countries offers an exceptional resource and range of experiences to share. Within the EU, the promotion of local and regional development has been an explicit strategy to accompany continental integration and expansion, and EU policies have become famous the world over. Local development is key to making continental integration work, and to adding value to European single markets and trans-continental infrastructures.

However, there are also distinctive and strong traditions of local development in other OECD countries including the USA, Mexico, and Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Poland and Turkey, as well non-EU European states. Distinctive approaches to entrepreneurship and workforce development co-exist alongside rather different tool-boxes for city and regional development. And the OECD LEED Programme is reaching out, not just to our friends in Central and Eastern Europe, but also to friends, new and old, in Latin America, in Asia, and in Africa.

Through the Trento Centre, we hope that the cities and regions of Central and Eastern Europe will build robust exchanges and collaborations with all of our partners in the LEED Programme. To put it simply, this is a practitioner network, implementation of sound practices is everything, and we can learn from what is working and what is not working all over the world:

- we are creating some clarity
- we are concerned with what works
- we consider which tools and approaches have merit
- we want to focus on how to invest,
- how to include more people, and
- how to evaluate and share the lessons of what we do

This creates knowledge and know-how that is collectively owned and shared. Through the OECD LEED Programme activities (reviews and case studies, peer assessments, books and reports, events and workshops, communications and exchanges, and many informal collaborations) this knowledge and know-how is built up and disseminated. In this way we are learning, and we all improve what we do at the city and regional level.

The Trento Centre is the most exciting new vehicle that we have to build-up and share our insights and foresights, and we pledge our support for making it a significant contributor to the family of cities and regional actors who are promoting effective local development in the context of European Integration and Global Trade. We wish the Trento Centre 'Good Luck!' and we look forwards to working with you.

Ends.