

Eco towns and transition towns: policy and practice in Britain

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What are eco towns?

- New towns of at least 5000 homes
- High environmental standards for design, construction and use of homes (e.g. low carbon buildings, good public transport)
- In a location that can enhance local sustainability

Social

Need for affordable housing

Environmental

Avoid land that is of high environmental value

Economic

Provide for retail and business space



What are transition towns?

Community led initiatives to rethink the ways in which people live their lives

Belief that communities will have to change because of

Climate change

Decline in access to fossil fuels

Plan for change at the community level

Involve businesses and residents

Promote local food, renewable energy, use of local businesses



Eco towns and transition towns

- Recognise significance of climate change and need to reduce energy use
- Current patterns of development – ways of living – inadequate
 - Over-reliance on fossil fuels
- Communities need to be resilient – able to adapt – to the future challenges of climate change and resource limits

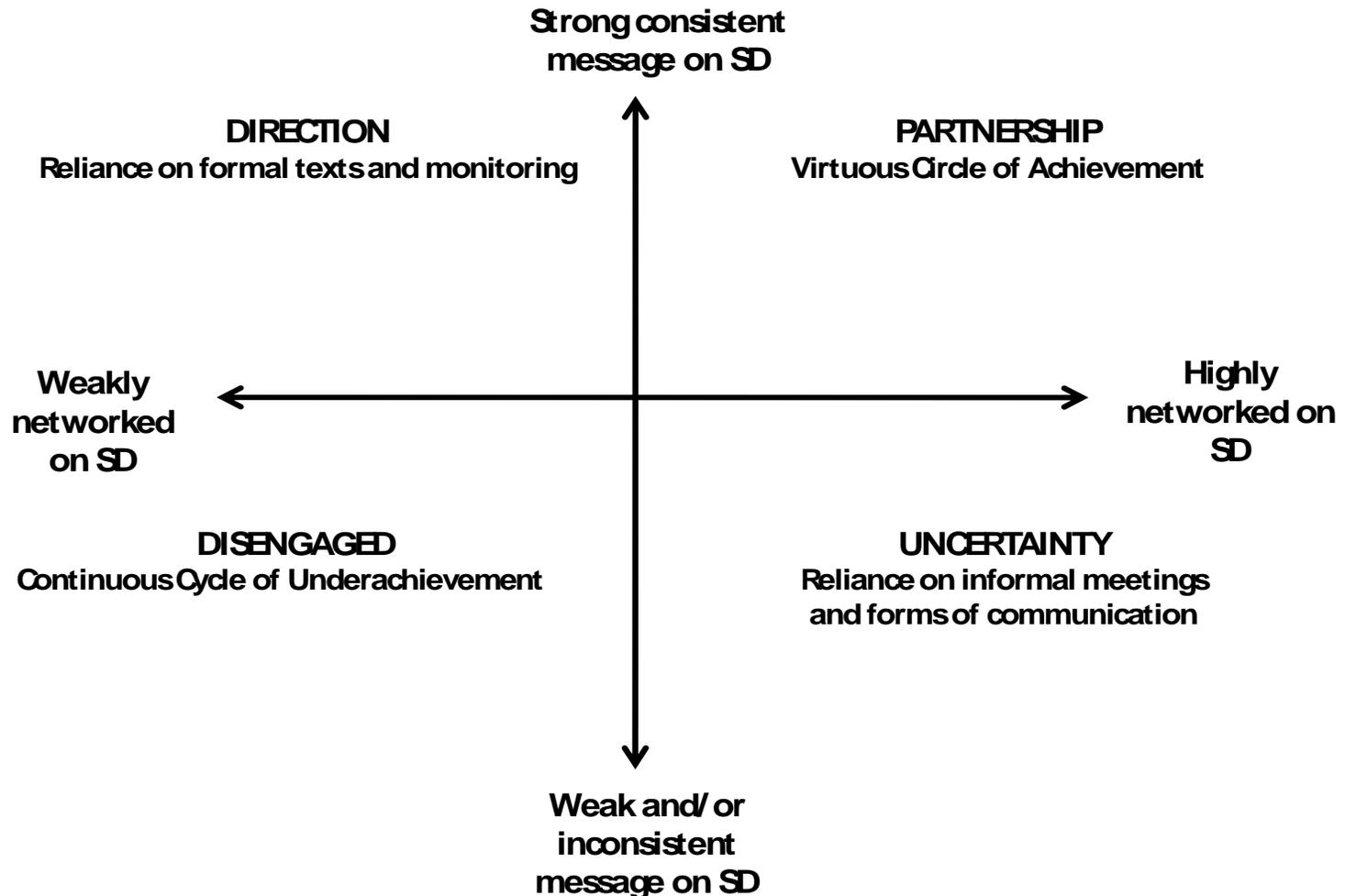
The development strategies compared

Development themes	Eco-town	Transition town
Initiator	Top-down, government initiative	Bottom-up, community centred
Role of government	Funding, planning system	Create space and support for community initiatives
Governance	National and local governments, private sector	Individuals and local organisations, networks
Driver for change	Technology	Behaviour
Relationship to wider area	Stand alone, independent	Linked to wider region
Awarding of status	Competitive entry	Meet and subscribe to pre-defined ideals
Standards	Eco-homes	N/A

Key assumptions

- Eco towns
 - Providing eco buildings and eco infrastructure will change peoples behaviour
- Transition towns
 - Change comes from people wanting to manage their lives and create communities
 - Communities have the skills, knowledge and commitment to make change happen

Delivering sustainable development



Eco town locations



Proposed Imerys eco town

- Located on former industrial land and disused mines

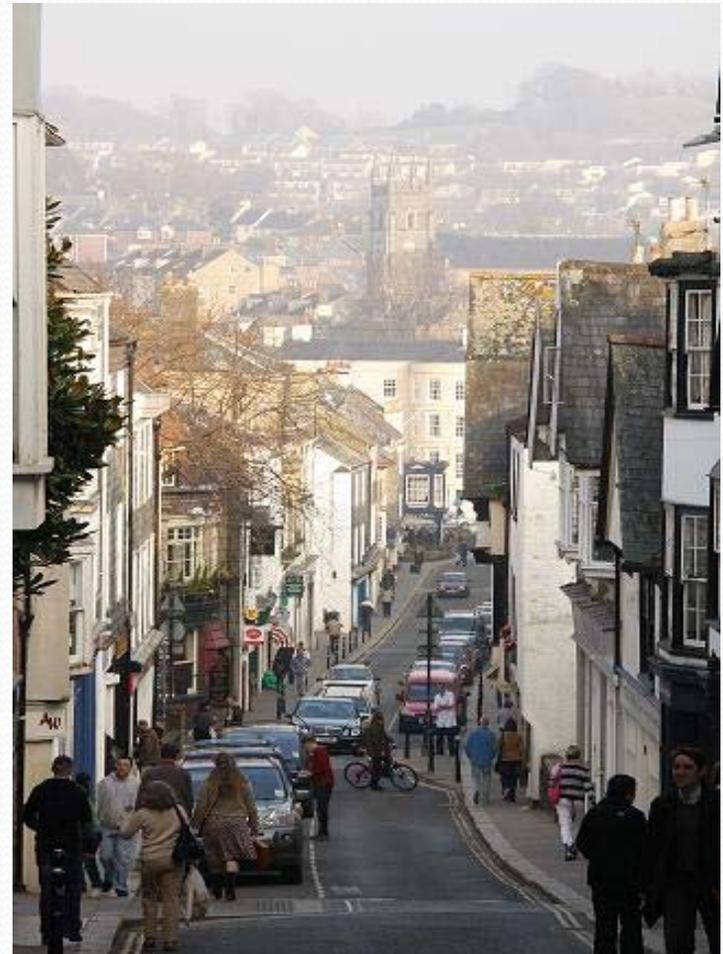
Build 5000 homes

- 1500 affordable homes
- Links to nearby Eden Project – an environmental centre – to promote environmental technologies
- Promote green transport
 - Bus station
 - Electric bike charging points
 - But concerns about accessibility



Transition town case study

- Totnes – first UK Transition Initiative
- Energy Descent Action Plan
 - a vision of the town in 2030
 - alternative pathways
- Transition streets
 - Neighbours generate electricity
 - Received £625,000 government funding



Implications for patterns of development

- Eco towns are suited to
 - Areas of significant development pressure
 - governments can 'steer' development
 - Different levels of government can work together
 - Working models of more sustainable living and working communities
- Transition towns are suited to
 - Well established communities
 - Where communities are willing to change their behaviour
 - Desire to make communities attractive places to live and work in for all ages
 - Do not face major development pressures