

Learning in a distance teaching community

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Athabasca University 
CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY

Athabasca University

CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY



(-40°F = -40°C)

canada's open university, formed 1970, (almost) entirely distance (big distances in Canada, 2nd biggest country in the world)

Distributed faculty



not just distance learners but distance teachers – many in Edmonton, some in Calgary, a few in Athabasca, others scattered. Lots of admin and tech in Athabasca. Islands of f2f clusters.

Transactional distance



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Why does this matter? a diversion....

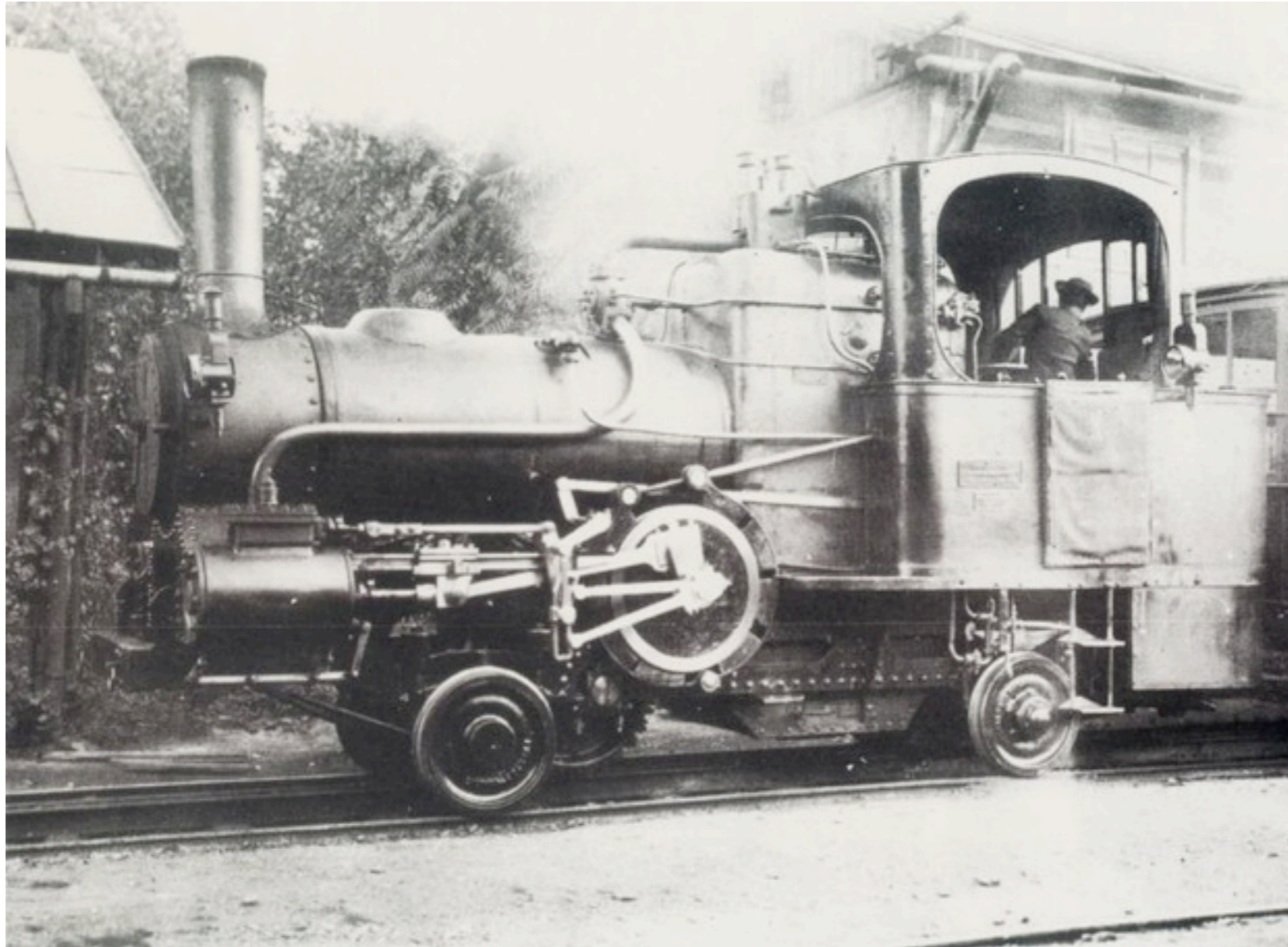
distance measured by structure and dialogue.

As Saba & Shearer showed (94) the two are inversely related

AU went for structure in its teaching. That became its culture. The result is that there are forms and processes for everything, and communication tends to be very focused and instrumental, purposive and intentional. Although there are local communities and presentations etc that pass on some of what we know, there is not a natural and easy flow of knowledge around the place.

there are mailing lists, which are chaotic and over-softened – no structure at all, and a place for people to stand and shout with megaphones (the loudest get heard)

Course production model



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A seven stage waterfall development model with teams of instructional designers, subject experts, graphic designers, editors, technicians, media specialists, programmers, etc. Takes a year or two on average, sometimes more. Courses led by coordinators and taught by tutors.

Very rigid and inflexible. Little dialogue. Very high structure. works well and results in high quality courses.

but there is a lot of stuff for free, high quality oers, good textbooks, etc. what do we add apart from process and accreditation?

Distributed teaching



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Teaching is a distributed role – all the team, the designers, editors, tutors, textbook authors, etc.

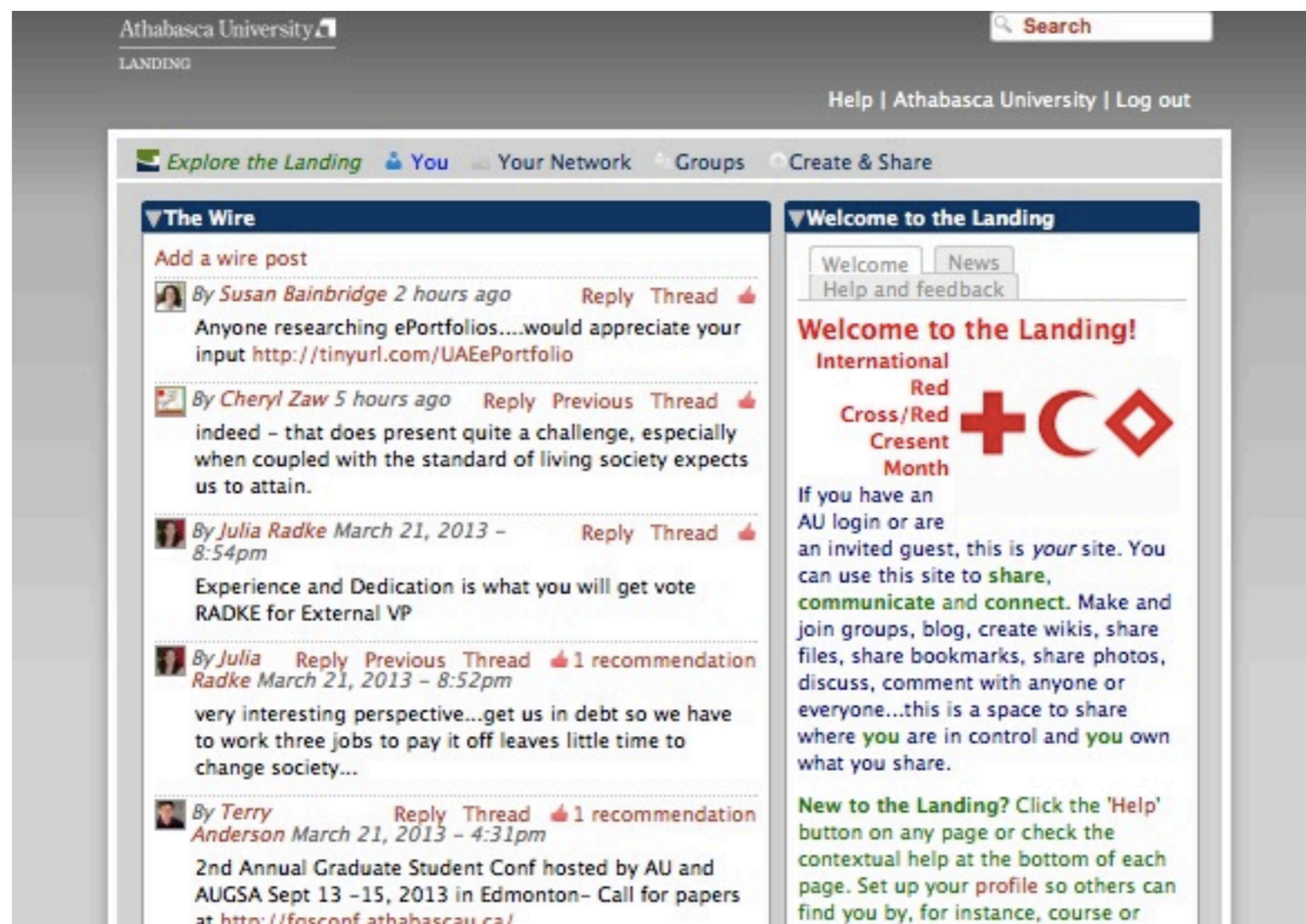
Since becoming electronic, some student–student learning. But difficult to make structured course social.

Main thing is that teachers do not know how to teach – parts of the role played by others.

Very difficult for organizational learning to spread. Very codified. Forms for everything, processes for everything.

Derailed considerably when we move to online learning models.

Athabasca Landing



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landing has many purposes. A social construction kit where everyone is equal from president to visiting student. create, share, communicate, connect. Filling gaps between hard systems. Enabling dialogue. Enabling ...control... (and some different pedagogies than those allowed in Moodle)

blogs, wikis, microblogs, file sharing, podcasting, bookmarking, groups, social network, presentation, aggregation, etc etc etc

comp650, social software, comp607, comp 607, plugin, social
comp 650, comp 470, education, copyright, landing, technolo
podcast, e-portfolio, mdde605, learning, lms, elearning, edubloggin
privacy, social computing, mdde663, help, 806, facebook, oer, queer, b
javascript, comp 266, portfolio, edde806, video, widget, software, twi
intellectual property, learning journal, news, teaching, pedagogy, podcasting
learning technology, introduction, learning diary, Virtual learning environm
design, tool, reflection, audio, unit 1, mcast, html, writing, academic blogg
sex work, re
conference.

Explore the Landing You Your Network Groups

People you may know

 **Amanda Nielsen**
7 followers: Terry Anderson, Kinshuk, Ian, Nathaniel Ostashevs, Pannekoek

Your Dashboard Research teaching My stuff 266 moodle Following MyAU

Group activity

Benjamin Smith added a new

Landing groups

The Landing Help Community

Tag cloud

video, widget, journals

Your Dashboard Research teaching My stuff 266 moodle Following MyAU

COMP 266

Groups > COMP 266

Default Useful information recent activity

7091 Views

```
<title>
COMP 266:
Introduction to
</title>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Welcome to (
<script type="te
<!--
//this is to wel

```

Description: This is closed group to support the SCIS course, COMP 266, Introduction to Web Programming. If you are a student of COMP 266 (revision 3) please request membership to join this group. Should you run into difficulties joining the group, please mail Jon Dron at jond@athabascau.ca

Brief description: COMP 266: Introduction to Web Programming

Tags: comp 266, comp266, web programming, html, css, jquery, javascript, ajax, programming, web

Website: <http://scis.lms.athabascau.ca/course/view.php?id=310>


Owner: Jon Dron
Group members: 103
Closed group

- Group activity
- Group blog
- Group bookmarks
- Group discussion
- Group featured content
- Group files
- Group polls
- Group wikis

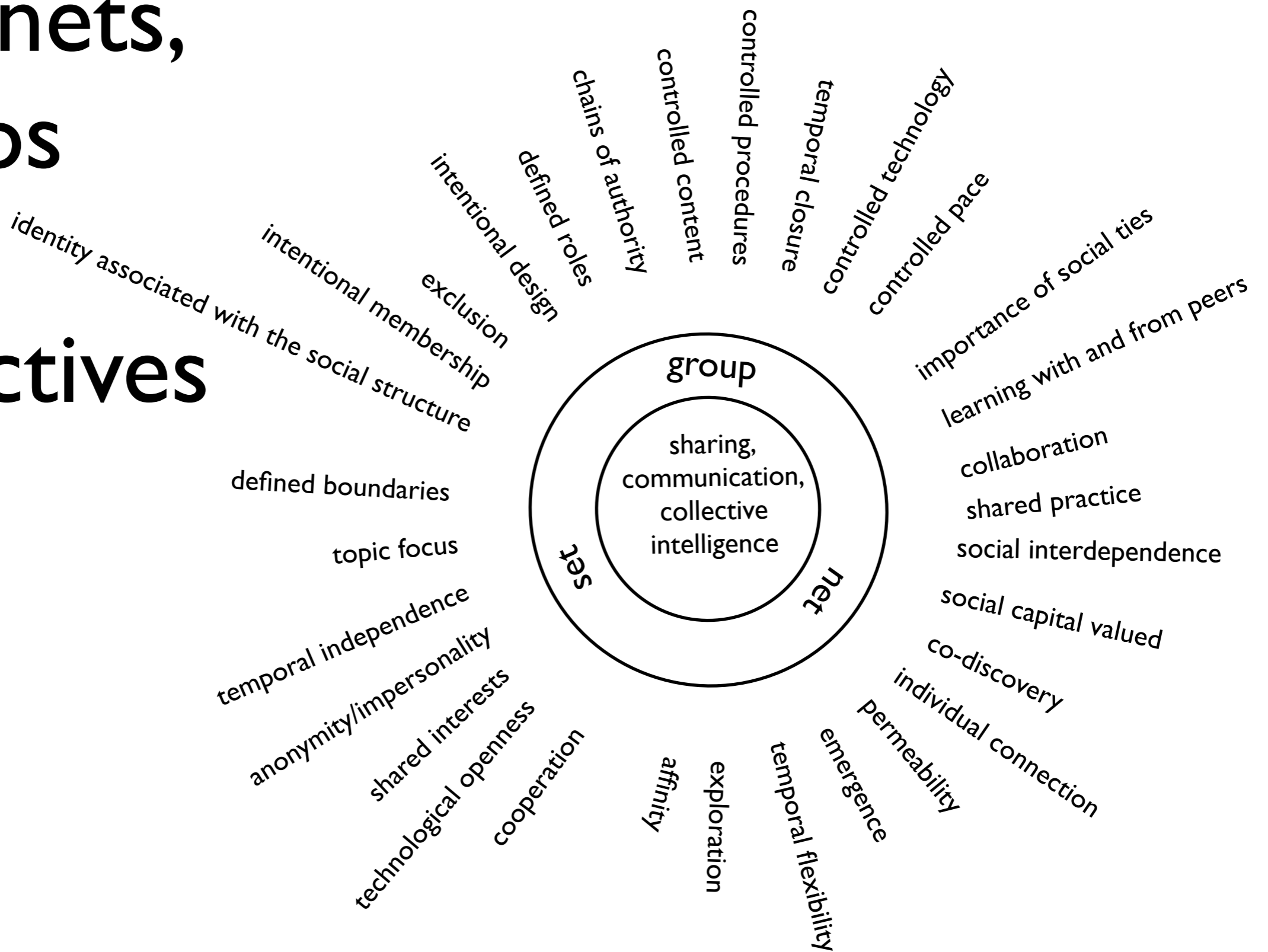
Manage join requests

Search in this group

Tag Tracker

 **Unit 0**
By Shannon February 23, 2013 (0 Comments (1))
comp 266, e-learning, ur
A Reflection

Sets, nets, groups and collectives



groups – hierarchies, roles, structures, processes, norms, rituals, exclusion, joining, leaving
 nets – defined by connections. individual-centric (networked individualism)
 sets– shared interests

Soft and hard technologies



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Orchestrated phenomena put to some use (Brian Arthur). Some phenomena provided by other technologies. All technologies are assemblies.

landing is a soft tech. Orchestration performed by humans, with processes and tools aggregated together into assemblies (not assemblages – process and interconnection matters here)

compare with Moodle – hard tech with orchestration embedded – developers, admins, policies provide much shaping. Mention effect of defaults (99.15% of courses using announcements at uni of brighton)
soft technologies are orchestrated by people – think paint brush, knitting needles, pens, screwdrivers.

Soft and hard technologies



Active orchestration of phenomena by people



Orchestration of phenomena embedded in the technology

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precision
replicability
accuracy
speed
ease of use

hard is easy
soft is hard

resilience
flexibility
diversity
creativity
control

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Context sensitivity

The screenshot displays a Moodle user interface. On the left, a vertical menu lists various user roles and groups, with 'au staff' highlighted in blue. The main content area features a large photograph of a classroom with children sitting at tables. Below the photo, a navigation bar contains tabs for 'Research', 'teaching', 'My stuff', '266 moodle', 'Following', and 'MyAU'. The interface also shows several content blocks, including a 'Landing groups' section with entries like 'The Landing Help Community' and 'Friends of the Landing', and a 'Tag cloud' section.

- Private
- Logged in users
- Public
- Social Learning
- TerryAndGeorge
- special interest
- friends
- e-learning
- tekri
- SCIS
- colleagues
- students
- distance education researcher
- just Terry
- COMP 470
- teodora
- au staff**
- comp602
- comp266
- landing
- daniel
- ev and rory
- Group: COMP 607
- Group: Academic web sites
- Group: eTextbooks
- Group: Anethum - Collaboration
- Group: COMP 444
- Group: It's a fugazi
- Group: First World Problems
- Group: Athabasca University e-lab
- Group: Library of the Future
- Group: Copyright?
- Group: Adobe Connect Users (or complainers) Group
- Group: Accessibility at AU
- Group: COMP 602: Enterprise Information Management

Navigation tabs: Research, teaching, My stuff, 266 moodle, Following, MyAU

Content blocks:

- Landing groups**
 - The Landing Help Community: Help with using this site
 - Friends of the Landing: The Landing Advisory Network
 - The Landing Operations Group
- Tag cloud**: video, widg, Journals, meeting, e, facebook, software etc, privacy, con, moodle, hel

shifting contexts – courses, research, social networks, admin, etc. Not one network but many

Transactional distance complexified



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where everyone is the teacher, not a measure of structure provided by teacher and dialogue. Lots of reified dialogue, complex overlapping networks, groups and sets. transactional distance distributed and aggregated and averaged – lumpy, discontinuous, not discrete. both high and low in one space.

thank you

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terrya@athabascau.ca

<https://landing.athabascau.ca/profile/jond>