



Connectivism and Personal Learning

Stephen Downes, October 17, 2011

Thesis of this Talk

Connectivism as a pedagogical theory is typically thought of in terms of networks – the making and traversing of connections.

But the major practical implication of connectivism occurs in the organization of learning events and resources.

Unlike traditional educational modalities, in which people work *collaboratively*, in a connectivist model, people work *cooperatively*.

Context: Current Work

- new instructional media, web software and design
<http://www.synergic3.com>
- open educational content, content repositories and content syndication <http://www.downes.ca/news/OLDaily.htm>
- design and development of massive open online courses <http://change.mooc.ca>
- semantic web and structured descriptions
- network theory as it applies to the design of learning environments

Introduction to this theme

- Introductory article
- <http://spomocnik.rvp.cz/clanek/14151/>
- *Collaboration*: everybody works together in a coordinated fashion on a single objective
- *Cooperation*: people work independently on individual objectives, but in a shared environment or with shared resources

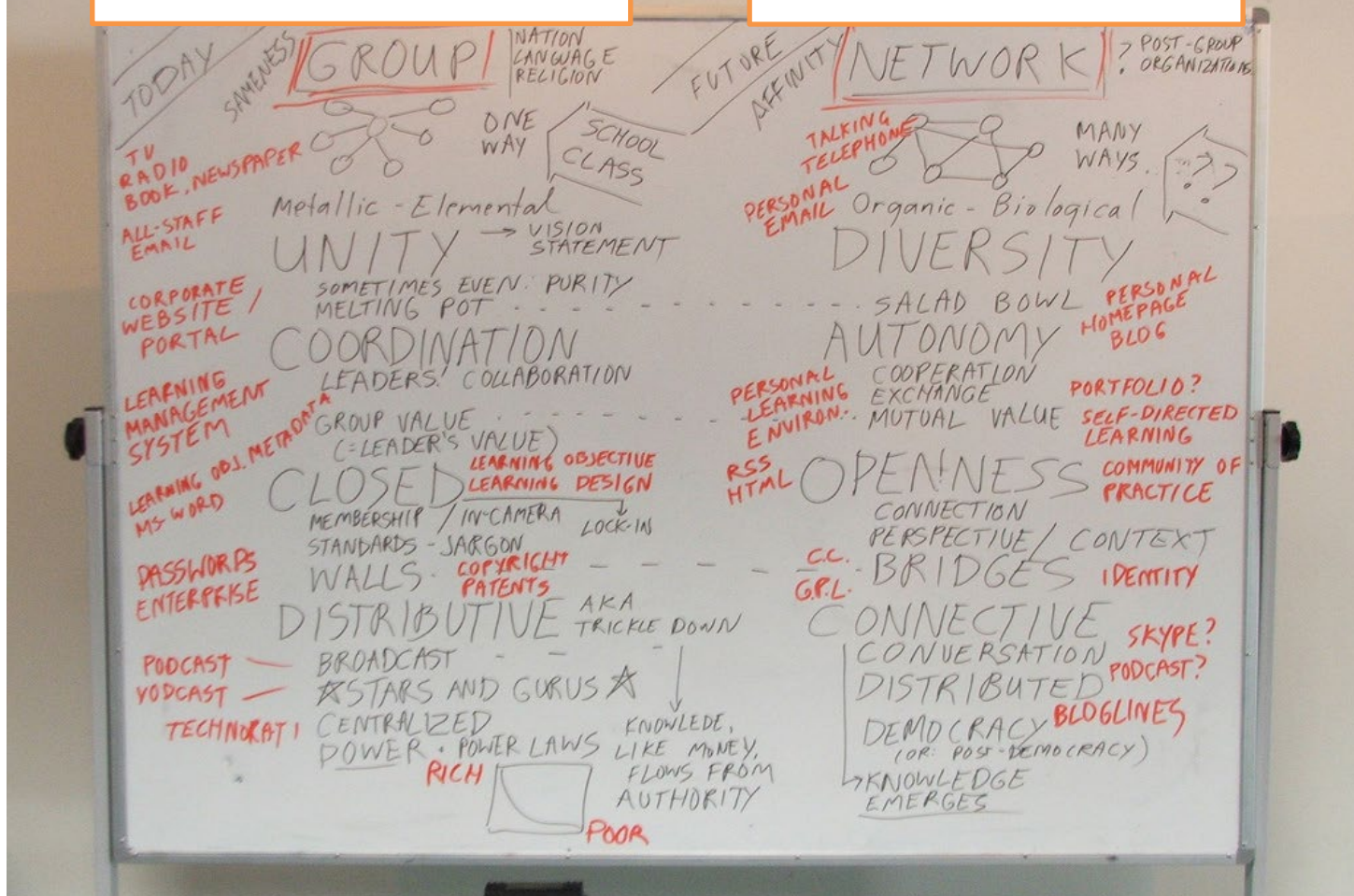
Dillenbourg et al. (1995) make a distinction between cooperation and collaboration. They define cooperative work as "... accomplished by the division of labor among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving..." They define collaboration as "...mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together"

<http://en.scientificcommons.org/57759749>

Elements of Cooperation

COLLABORATION

COOPERATION



The Effect of Connectivism

- School becomes *personal learning*
- There is not a single body of content to be learned
- Students learn not the same thing but *different* things
- The emphasis is on the communication and interaction
- The process is what Papert called 'constructionism'

The building of the PLE

- This is essentially the task of the instructor (among many other roles)
- Similar to the process of building a MOOC
- Support for the various stages of connectivist learning: aggregate, remix, repurpose, feed forward

Personal Professional Development

- Most important to manage your own professional development
- The phrase in English is “eat your own dog food” – use the practices to teach yourself
- Form, create, and work with networks of other professionals

Downes on Personal Professional Development

<http://www.downes.ca/presentation/217>

The Importance of Open Educational Resources

- Enables people to pursue their own personal interests in their own way
- But, more importantly, OERs become the *medium of communication*
- We need to view OERs, not as resources created by publishers at great cost, but as created by learners to interact with each other
- The role of professionals and publishers becomes the production of 'seed OERs'

Education and Democracy

- Education is not about remembering a body of predefined content
- It is about the citizens communicating what they know with each other
- It follows that OERs are necessary for this democratic vision of education
- The *owners* of education are the citizens of a society, not the governments and corporations

Papert and Freire on the Future of School

<http://www.papert.org/articles/freire/freirePart1.html>