It is not necessary that all the loaded software modules are the same. Indeed, usually at least some of them will hold different data sets because they represent different entities. Preferably, the software building environment provides, or provides access to, more than one collaboration or co-ordination strategy. In use of the environment, the developer can then load a different collaboration or co-ordination strategy to at least one module for use in the system.

More preferably, the software module is capable of having loaded therein more than one collaboration or co-ordination strategy such that its collaboration or co-ordination behaviour in the system is flexible. That is, it can operate according to one collaboration or co-ordination strategy at one time and another collaboration or co-ordination strategy at another time.

The software module may also or instead be capable of operating according to more than one collaboration or co-ordination strategy at once.

According to a second aspect of the present invention, there is provided a software system for use in control, monitoring and/or management of a process or apparatus, wherein said system comprises at least two software modules, each module comprising data and/or process information which comprises:

(i) organisation data concerning an inter-module relationship; and

(ii) executable software providing a collaboration or co-ordination strategy, expressed for instance as a rule or algorithm;

wherein, in use, a module selects said executable software for use in negotiating with another software module in relation to task allocation, said selection being determined at least in part by said organisation data.

According to a third aspect of the present invention, there is provided a software module for use in a software system for distributed control, monitoring and/or management of a process or apparatus, the module comprising:

(i) communication means for communicating with other software modules;

(ii) executable software for use in co-ordinating with other software modules in the selection of tasks to be allocated to respective software modules for controlling or carrying out; and