CURRENT STATUS OF THE OPEN LEARNING COMMUNITY

Jan Hylén

Trends in Higher Education

- Growing competition
  - knowledge and learning resources are often considered as key intellectual property

- Still institutions and individuals are sharing their digital learning resources over the Internet openly and for free

- OECD/CERI study:
  - why is this happening?
  - who is involved?
  - what the implications of this?

A new culture of openness in HE?

- Open Source Software, Open Access, Open Educational Resources

- Free availability over the Internet

- As few restrictions as possible on the use of digital resources:
  - No technical barriers (disclosed source code)
  - No price barriers (no subscriptions, license fees)
  - As few legal barriers as possible (open licenses)

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OECD/CERI Study: main objectives

- Analyse and map scale and scope of OER initiatives in OECD countries

- Conceptual analyses

- 4 main issues:
  - IPR issues
  - How to develop sustainable cost/benefit models?
  - Incentives and barriers to produce, use and deliver materials?
  - How to improve access and usefulness?

- Policy implications

What is OER?

- "OER are digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and re-use for teaching, learning and research." (UNESCO 2002)

- OER includes:

1) open courseware and content;
2) open software tools (e.g. learning management systems);
3) open material for e-learning capacity building of faculty staff;
4) repositories of learning objects;

5) free educational courses

Drivers for OER

- Technological
  - Increased broadband availability
  - Increased hard drive capacity and processing speed
  - User-friendly software for creating, editing and remixing

- Social
  - Digital natives with substantial ICT skills
  - Desire for interactivity, willingness to share and contribute
  - Development of communities and collaborative projects

Drivers for OER

- Economical
  - Lower costs for broadband, tools and lower entry barriers
  - Sites and services hosting content for free
  - New economic models for monetising user created content

- Legal
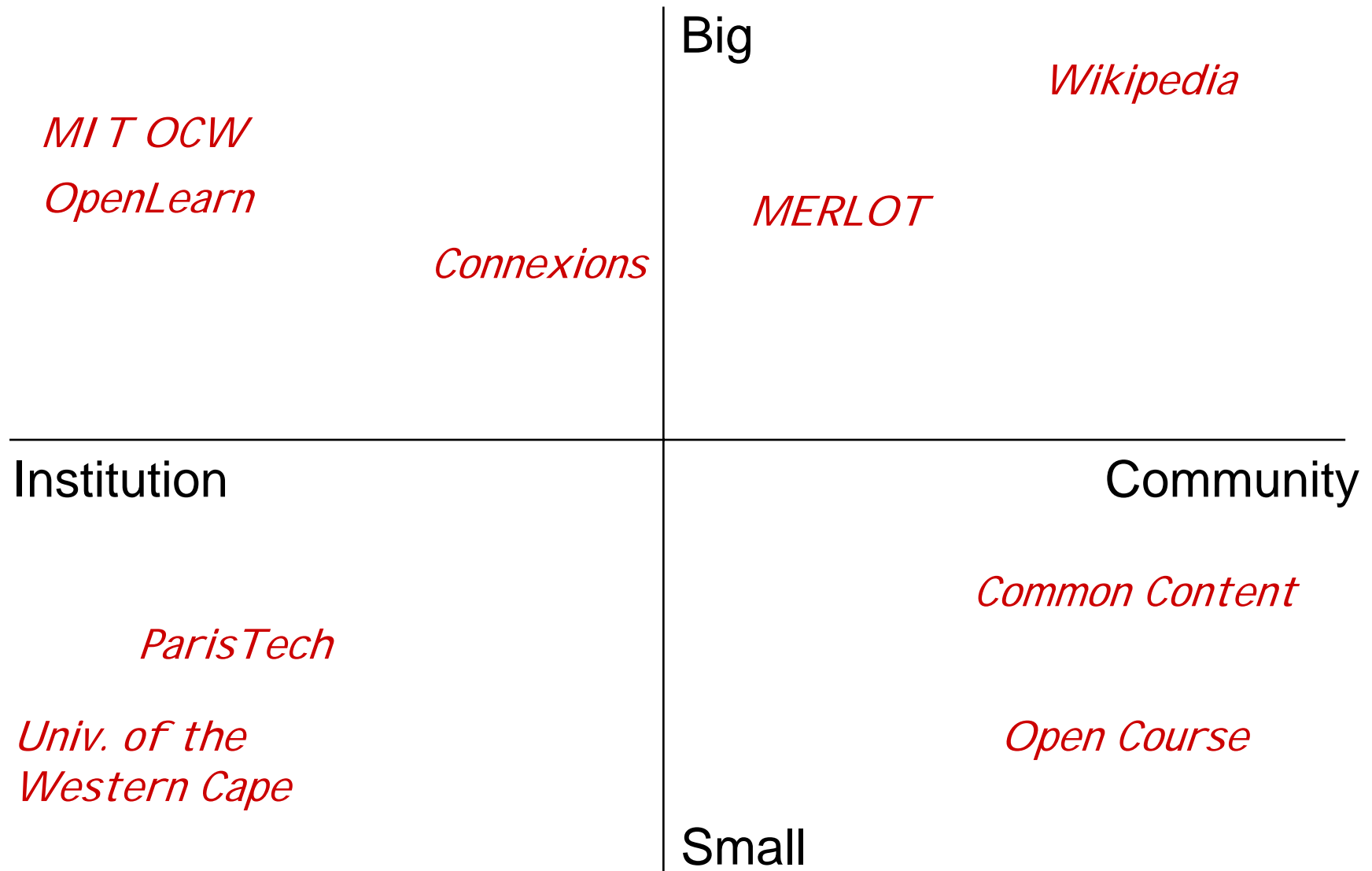 - licenses such as Creative Commons

Mapping the OER movement

- It is a global movement

- Growing number of initiatives and resources – but we cannot give accurate numbers

- The most frequent target group is post-secondary instructors, followed by students and general public

- A growing number of users

- In order to ensure easy access most providers have no registration – consequently: poor user data

OER initiative models

- Publicly or institutionally backed programmes
  - OCW programmes (MIT, Global Consortium with +200 members from 35 countries)
  - OU:s OpenLearn
  - OpenSpires

- Community approach
  - Open Course, Common Content, Free Curricula Center…

- In between models:
  - MERLOT, Connexions, ARIADNE

OER Providers

Big

Wikipedia

MIT OCW

OpenLearn

MERLOT

Connexions

Institution

Community

Common Content

ParisTech

Univ. of the
Western Cape

Open Course

Small

Source: OECD (2007)

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Mapping OER – Follow Up Study (2008)

- Growing number of resources: between 35-300%

- Growing number of visitors: between 50-150%

- Increased language diversity (due to translations)

- Increased global use

(According to six major OER initiatives)

Trends in OER

- From grass root movement to institution based initiatives

- Earlier few institution wide initiatives
  - Started by enthusiasts
  - Few at management level knew about initiatives

- Now mostly institution based initiatives

Trends in OER

- Less text, more video (iTunes U)

- Open Educational Practice – not only resources but also open teaching is offered for free (see OPAL project)

- OLnet – international resarch community on OER

International initiatives

- OCW Consortium (Global consortium with +200 member universities from 35 countries)

- UNESCO – Open Suite Strategy
  - OER platform
  - Open Access to scientific information
  - Free and open source software

Motivations for producing and sharing OER

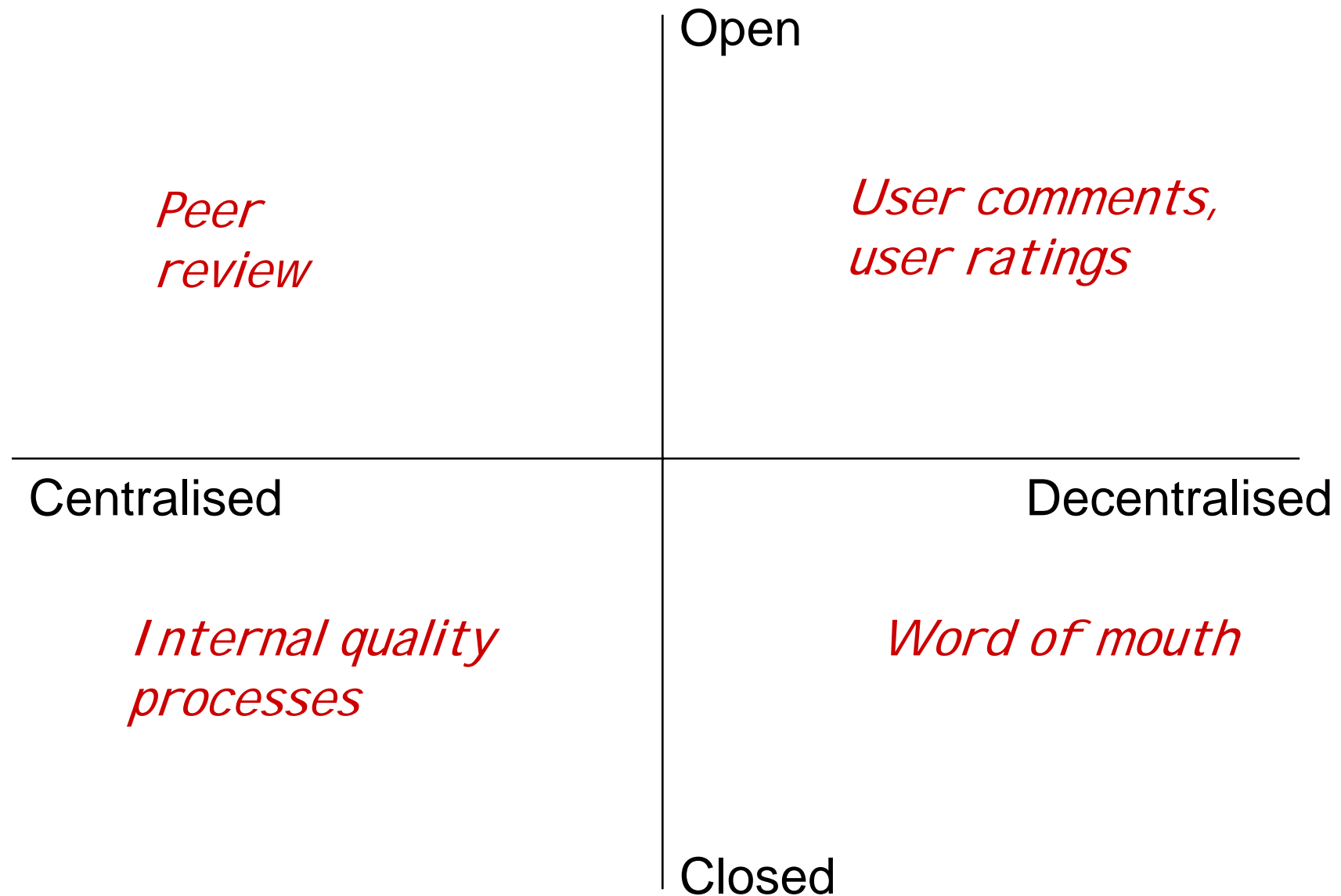| Governments	Institutions	Individuals
Expanded access to learning	Altruistic reasons	Altruistic or community supportive reasons
Bridge the gap between non-formal, informal and formal learning	Leverage on taxpayers' money by allowing free sharing and reuse between institutions	Personal non-monetary gain – "egoboo"
Promote lifelong learning	"What you give, you receive back improved"	Commercial reasons
	Good PR and show-window attracting new students	It is not worth the effort to keep the resource closed
	Growing competition – new cost recovery models are needed	
	Stimulate internal improvement, innovation and reuse	
Underlying Drivers and Inhibitors of technical, economic, social and legal nature		

Main Challenges for the OER movement

- Quality and relevance of resources

- Intellectual Property Rights

- Sustainability – more than economics, but important to find a good revenue model

- Technical issues

Quality management processes

Open

*Peer
review*

*User comments,
user ratings*

Centralised

Decentralised

*Internal quality
processes*

Word of mouth

Closed

Source: OECD (2007)

Sustainability: Revenue Models

- Replacement model – OER replaces other costs (has a natural limit)

- Foundation/Donation model – start up model but Government support could work in a European context

- Segmentation model – offer "value-added" services to user segments (sales of paper copies, training, user support…)

Sustainability: Revenue Models

- Conversion model – "you give something away for free and then convert the consumer to a paying customer"

- Voluntary support / Membership model – regular fees or support from individuals or institutions

- Contributor pay model – contributors pay the cost, the provider makes it available for free (cp. Open Access)

Policy implications

- **Institutional level**
  - The risk of doing nothing
  - IT strategy including OA and OER
  - Incentives for faculty members to use and produce OER
  - Training and support for development and use of OER and particular copyright issues

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

jan.hylen@metamatrix.se