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OERopoly: A Game to Generate Collective Intelligence around OER

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Collective Intelligence (CI) [1, 2, 3, 4] is a phenomenon that emerges at the crossroads of three worlds: Open Educational Resources (OER), Web 2.0 technologies and Online Learning Communities. Building CI for the OER movement means capturing the richness of information, experiences, knowledge and resources, that the movement is constantly generating, in a way that they can be shared and reused for the benefit of the movement itself. The organisation of CI starts from collecting the knowledge and experiences of OER's practitioners and scholars in new creative forms, and then situating this knowledge in a collective 'pot' from where it can be leveraged with new 'intelligent' meanings and toward new 'intelligent' goals. This workshop is an attempt to do so by engaging participants in a CI experience, in which they will contribute to, and at the same time take something from, the existing CI around OER, Web 2.0 technologies and Online Learning Communities.

CI is one strand of the Open Learning Network (OLnet) project (funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation) that started in March 2009. OLnet's main objective is to help researchers and practitioners in the field of Open Education to contribute to the evidence of OER effectiveness and to investigate this evidence collaboratively. In order to do so, OLnet follows several strategies and techniques: such as developing and facilitating the use of new technologies to develop CI [5, 6], supporting a fellowship programme, performing desk research, driving expert interviews, conducting controlled experiments and facilitating face-to-face as well as virtual workshops. Undertaking a host of facilitative workshops is, in fact, a major technique adopted in OLnet to uncover what has been achieved with OER. This OERopoly workshop is a first step towards understanding what CI may mean for the OER movement and what the constitutive elements of the environment may be in which CI manifests itself. Thus this workshop explores the relationships (both synergies and tensions) between these three worlds.

The aim of this workshop is to discover some of these relationships through the use of mediating artefacts [7] in a collaborative environment. Participants will play a board game called OERopoly where 'gaming' provides participants with a concrete, enjoyable, experience of "Collective Intelligence" in action. Throughout the workshop different types of mediating artefacts are used to assist users in making informed decisions and choices around game-playing and, therefore, mediates their subsequent gaming activities.

Mediating artefacts are broadly defined "to include instruments, signs, languages, and machines" (Nardi, 1995). In our context mediating artefacts include technology and community playing cards, OER project cards, pawns, dice, instruction documents, the participants, the facilitators, and the workshop format. The collaborative activity will be guided by work undertaken with Patterns [5].

During the game (which has already been piloted and refined elsewhere), participants will be engaged in performing the following activities:

1. Creating ideas: Acting and Playing (60 minutes)

This task will involve playing the OERopoly game to explore the relationships between OER, Web 2.0 technologies and Online Learning Communities. Game rules will be explained then participants throw the dice and start playing. The game will follow similar mechanical rules to Monopoly (which has influenced the design of OERopoly); but with the following underlying metaphors:

- **Money** = Information and Knowledge of OER
- **“Streets”, Utilities and Stations** = OER Projects, OER research hot topics, and Web 2.0 Technologies

During the game participants will be asked to answer questions on OER projects, communities and technologies and to post the answers on a diagrammatic representation showing where the three worlds (OER, Web 2.0 technologies and online learning communities) converge and differ.

It is expected that the game part of the workshop will last for approximately one hour.

2. Feedback: Reflections (20 minutes)

In the final phase of the workshop participants are requested to complete a short survey giving feedback using the following questions:

1. *What did you like about playing OERopoly?*
2. *What didn't really work for you?*
3. *Did playing the game allow you to acquire any new knowledge and insights related to open educational content, OER communities or tools and technologies used in OER projects?*
4. *While playing OERopoly, which elements helped you progress within the game? (i.e. other people's answers, the debate within the group, the information cards? etc)*
5. *In your opinion, what is the emerging relationship between open educational content, OER communities or tools and technologies used in OER projects?*
6. *What do you think is meant by Collective Intelligence?*

As an outcome of these two activities data will have been gathered in the following formats; video; audio and surveys, that will then be used to reflect on existing and potential relationships between Web 2.0 technologies, OER and online learning communities.

During the workshop participants will also have an opportunity to gain an insight into how OER projects differ; be able to see a variety of OER best practices as well as learn further details and sample what it is like to be involved in different aspects of OER developments, such as:

- Projects
- Research communities
- International agencies
- Translation organisations
- Emerging institutions
- Community sites

By playing OERopoly and interacting in the collaborative environment, participants will also have the opportunity to share what they know about a variety of OER activities across the world.

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