Public Support for Free Learning: A Policy Framework

Stephen Downes

October 25, 2011

Open Learning

- Long associated with distance learning
  - correspondence schools – 1880sff
  - 1915, creation of the National University Extension Association(NUEA)
  - U.S. radio broadcasting licenses to 202 colleges, universities, and school boards – 1920s, 30s
  - 1926, historian J C Stobart wrote a memo advocating a 'wireless university' while at BBC

Bizhan Nasseh, A brief History of Distance Education, http://www.downes.ca/files/nasseh_history.html
History of the OU, http://www8.open.ac.uk/about/main/the-ou-explained/history-the-ou

Open Institutions

- Open University opens in 1971
  - did not insist on prior educational qualifications
  - required students to take two foundation courses
- New York State's Empire State College
  - commenced operation in 1971
- Athabasca University (1970/72), Indira Gandhi National Open University (1985)

Empire State College, College History http://alumni.esc.edu/inauguration/collegehistory.php
IGNOU http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/profile/2

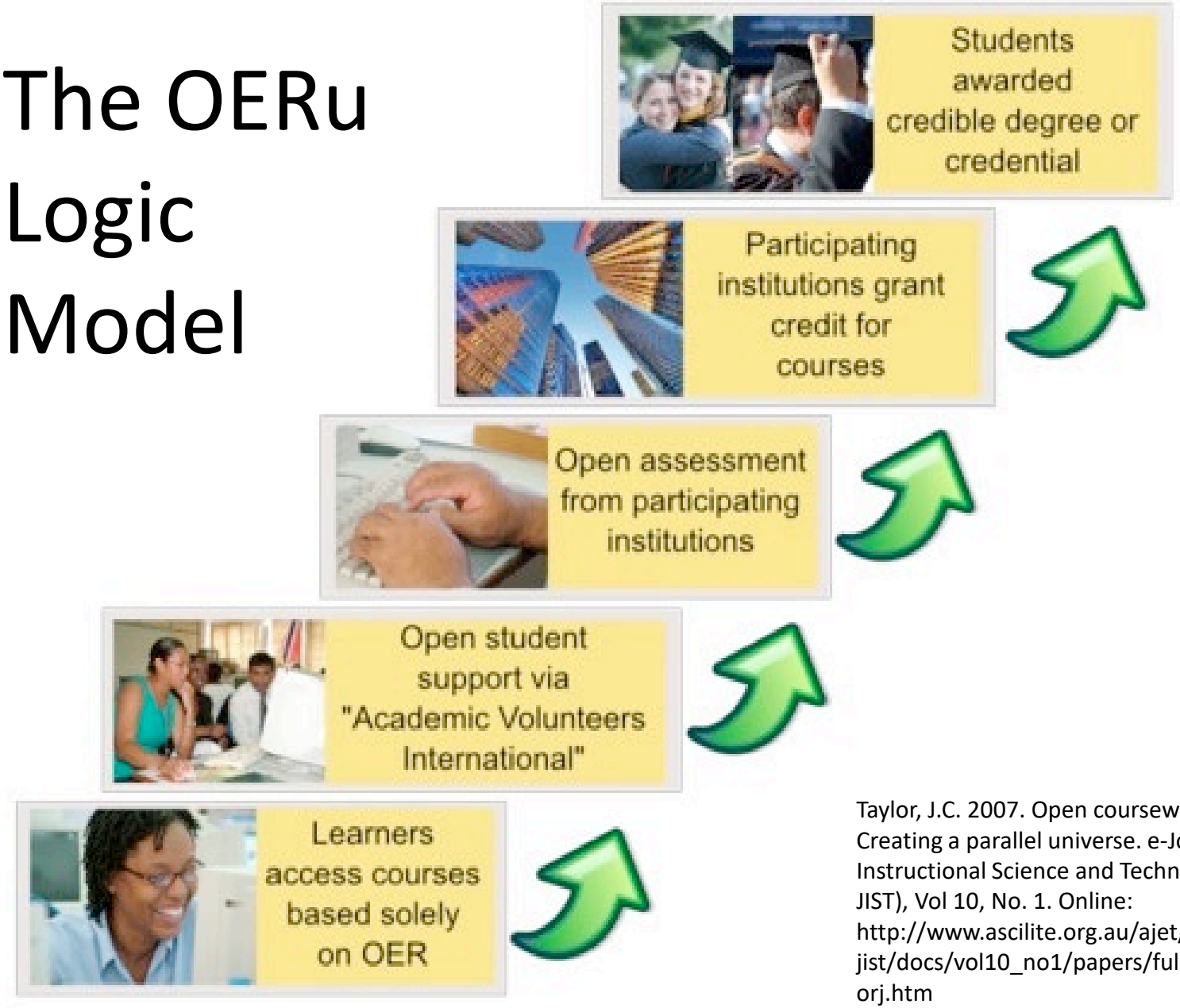
Open Learning (2)

- Over time – enhanced accessibility
  - distance learning
  - reduction of financial barriers
    - tuition reductions
    - subsidies
  - progressive pedagogies
    - Creation of distance learning pedagogies – Moore, Merrill, Gagne

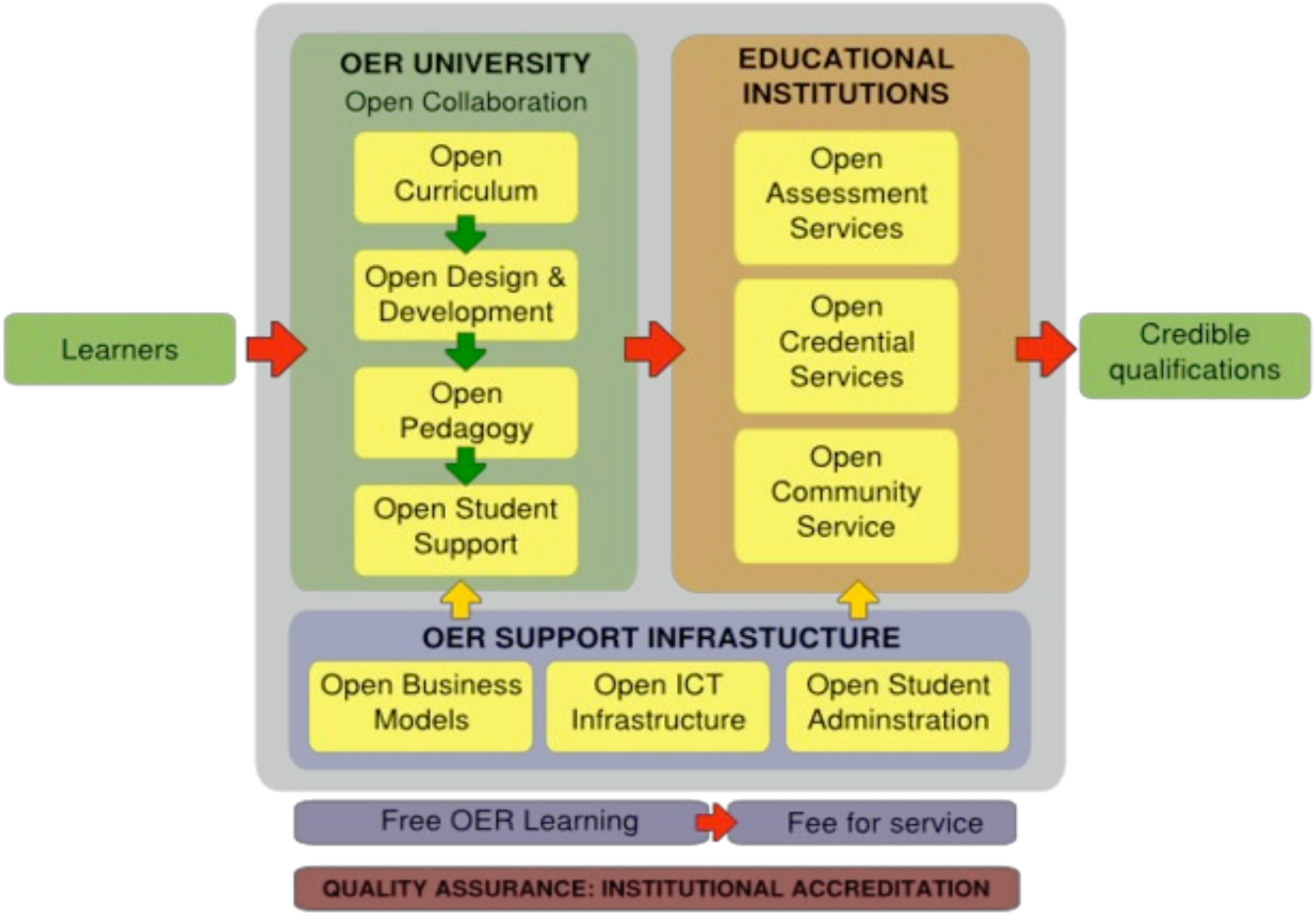
Open Resources

- Project Gutenberg
- Open Archives Initiative
  - BOAI
  - DSpace
- Wikipedia
  - Curricki
  - Wikiversity
  - WikiEducator – Commonwealth of Learning

The OERu Logic Model



Taylor, J.C. 2007. Open courseware futures: Creating a parallel universe. e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology (e-JIST), Vol 10, No. 1. Online: http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/e-jist/docs/vol10_no1/papers/full_papers/taylorj.htm


OER UNIVERSITY
Open Collaboration
Open Curriculum
Open Design & Development
Open Pedagogy
Open Student Support
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Open Assessment Services
Open Credential Services
Open Community Service
Learners
Credible qualifications
OER SUPPORT INFRASTUCTURE
Open Business Models
Open ICT Infrastructure
Open Student Adminstration
Free OER Learning
Fee for service
QUALITY ASSURANCE: INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION

Criticism of the Logic Model

- Traditional Curricular based approach
  - a focus on articulation & credit transfer
  - closed federation of traditional institutes
- Tight link to traditional credentials
- The Black Box problem – ‘open’ this or that (eg. ‘open business model’) unstudied and undeveloped

Contrasts in Design

- Learning objectives
  - concrete and stated Learning Objectives vs. unstated and multiple objectives
- Organization of subject matter
  - knowledge of vs knowledge about
  - linear organization vs knowledge community

Contrast in Assessment

- Subject and content-focused assessment, vs. performance-based and networked-based
- Assessment against external criteria vs. self-assessment
- Assessment by-instructor vs. 3rd-party assessment

Free Learning

- Based on the principles of connectivist, or network, learning
- Network design principles: distributed, disintermediated, dynamic
- Design based on the ‘semantic principle’:
  - autonomy
  - diversity
  - openness
  - interactivity

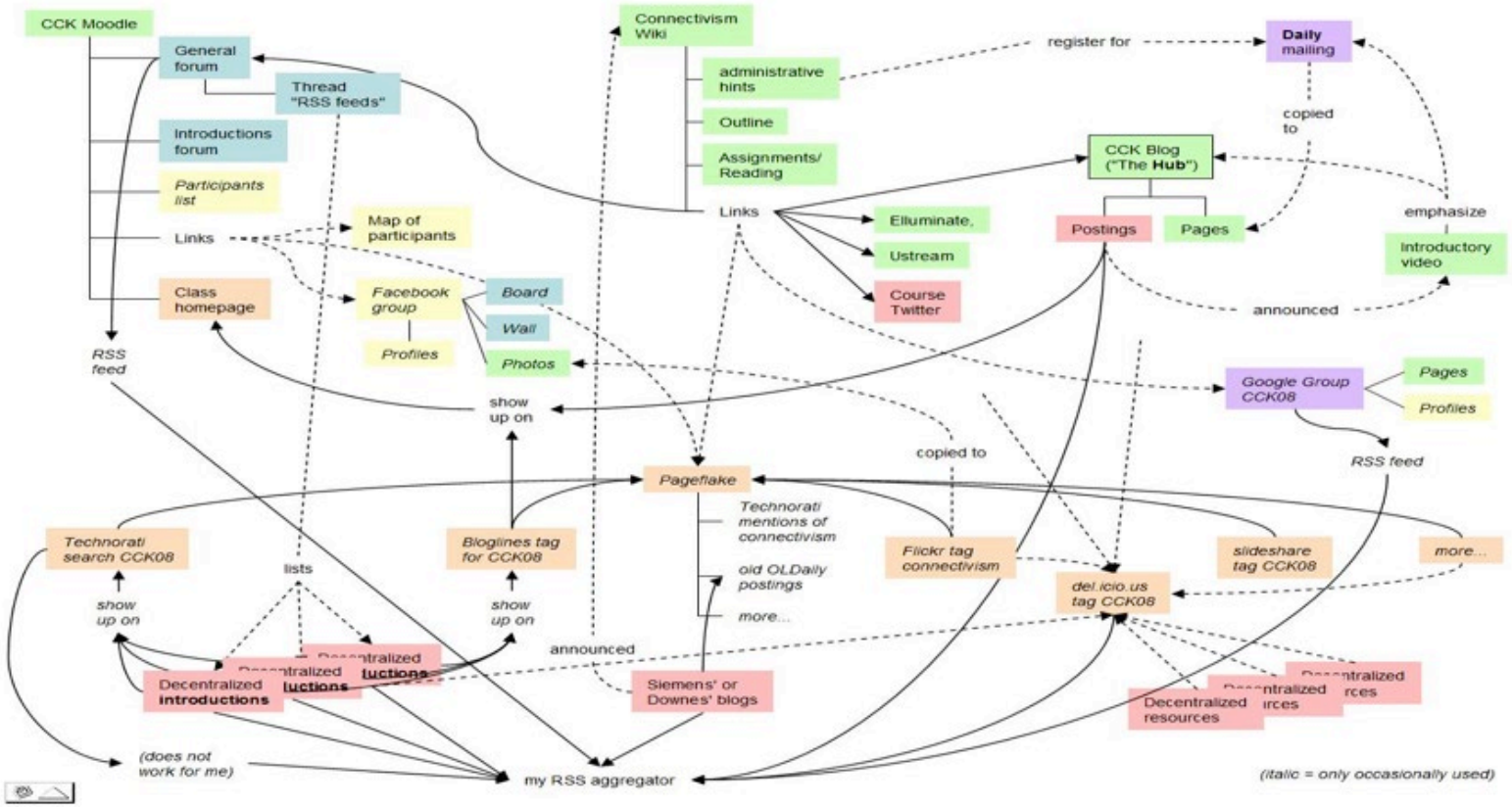
Connectivist Learning Design

- A non-curricular based approach
  - course content is the ‘McGuffin’ vs (Freire) the ‘banking system’
  - learning takes places through interaction and creativity
    - Seymour Papert – constructionism
    - Aggregate, remix, repurpose, feed forward
- Learning a matter of growth, not accumulation

But… why

- It’s a formal recognition that people have different destinations, different tastes
- Based on an understanding that knowledge varies according to these
- Expresses the principle that networks – communities – are stronger with multiple diverse perspectives
- Knowledge learned is *better* – indeed, *known*

A Map of the Community



Connectivism: A Theory of Personal Learning
Stephen Downes, December 3, 2008, Educational Development Centre, Ottawa
http://www.downes.ca/presentation/208

The MOOC Model

- MOOC: Massive Open Online Course
- There is no central core feature – no core content, group, etc
- Course design is a network, or a map, or a community
- Resources are distributed, and aggregated
- Participants are encouraged to create their own resources, communities, groups

2010: Stephen Downes, Rita Kop Critical Literacies & PLENK 2010

PLENK 2010 involved a significant research effort

http://connect.downes.ca/

PLENK Analytics

Rita Kop

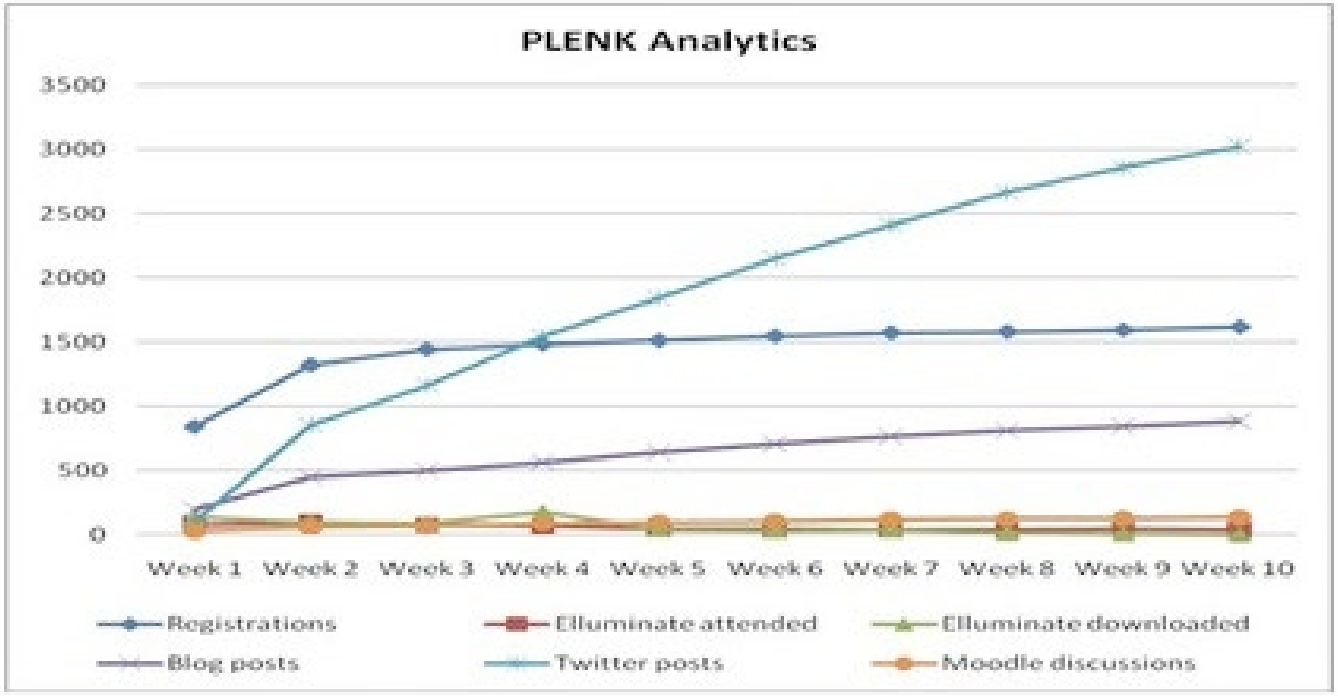
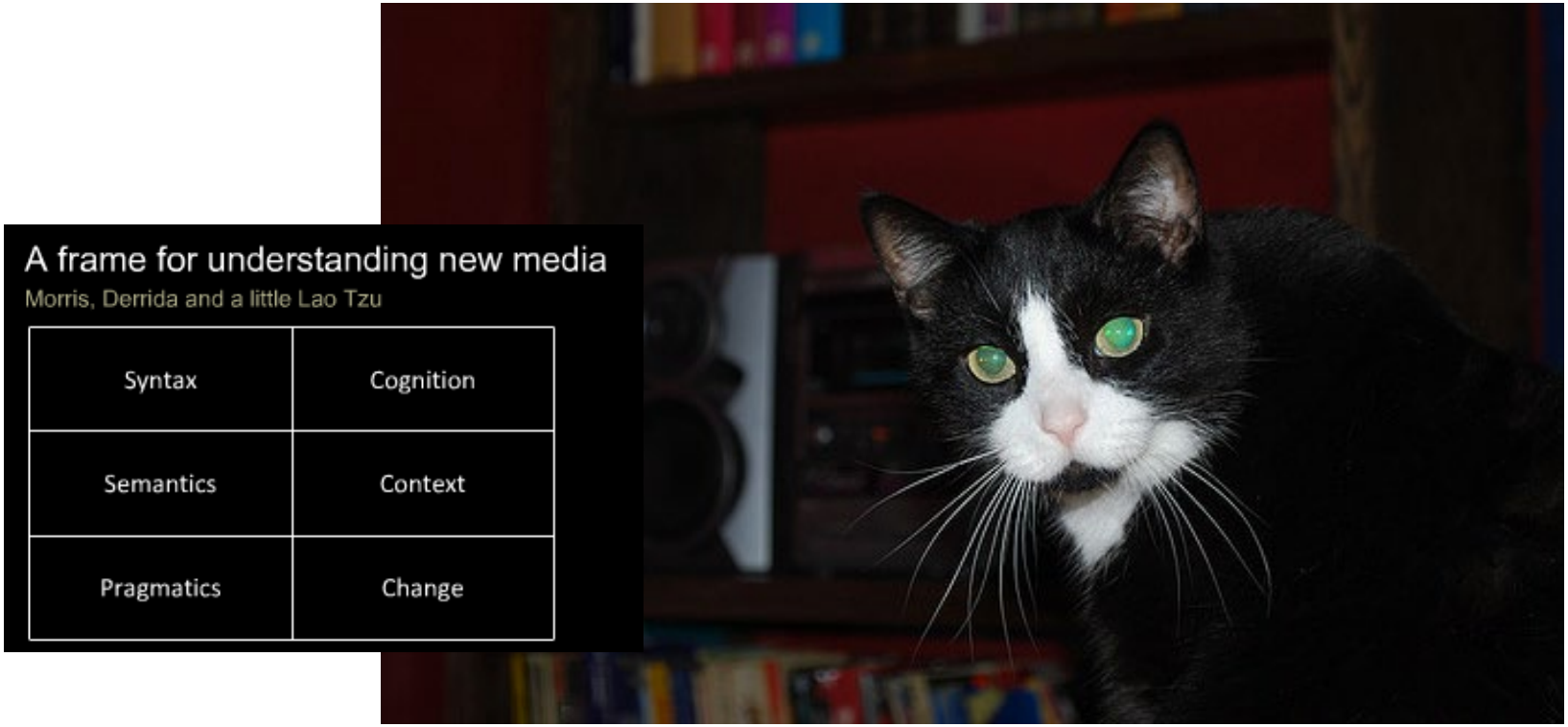


Chart 2. PLENK participation rates.

Supporting ongoing MOOC participation

http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/882

Critical Literacies

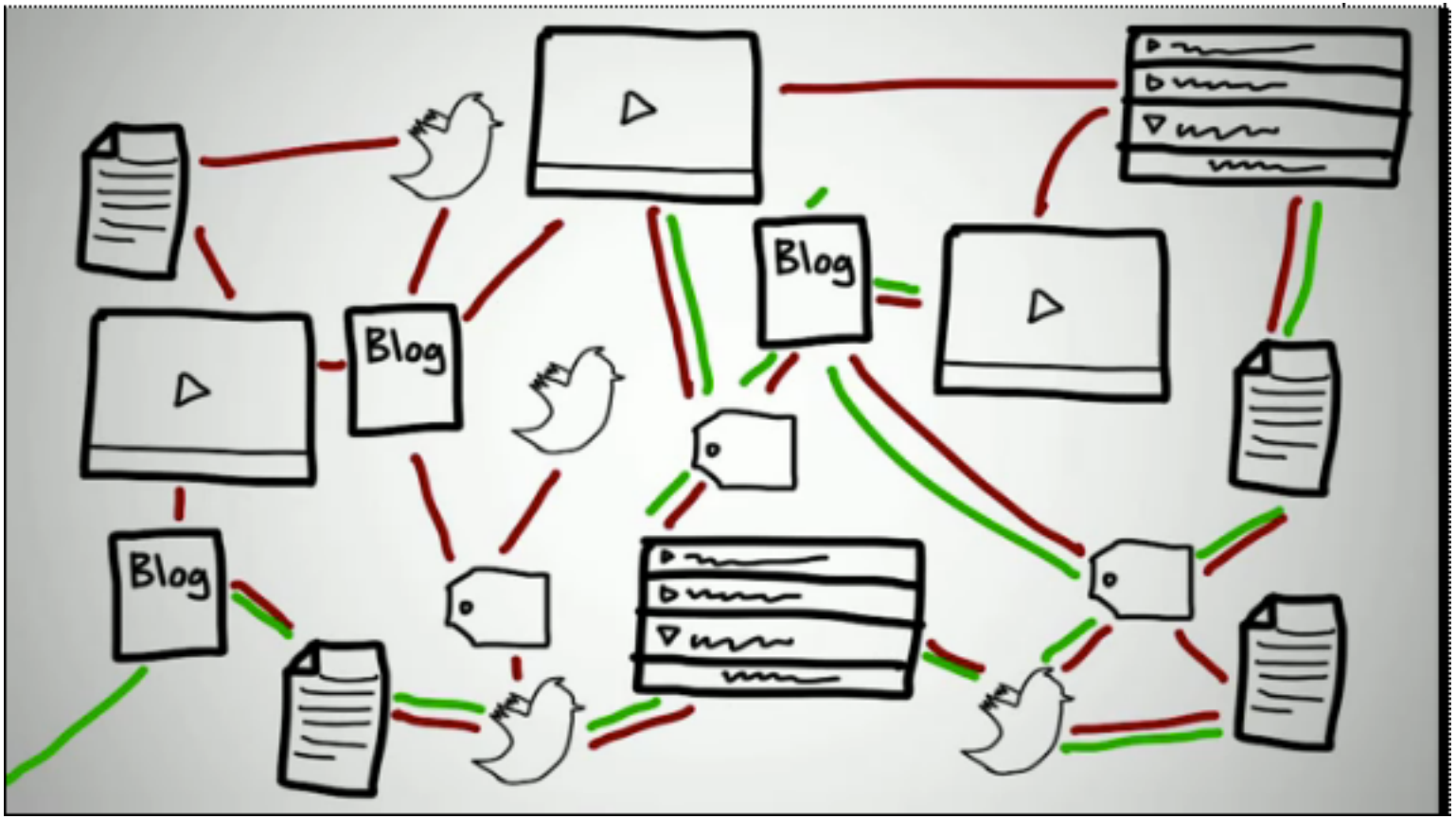


Understanding how we use artifacts to *communicate* in online and other learning networks

http://www.downes.ca/presentation/232

2011: Year of the MOOC

Connectivism & Connective Knowledge



CCK11: How to Learn in a MOOC

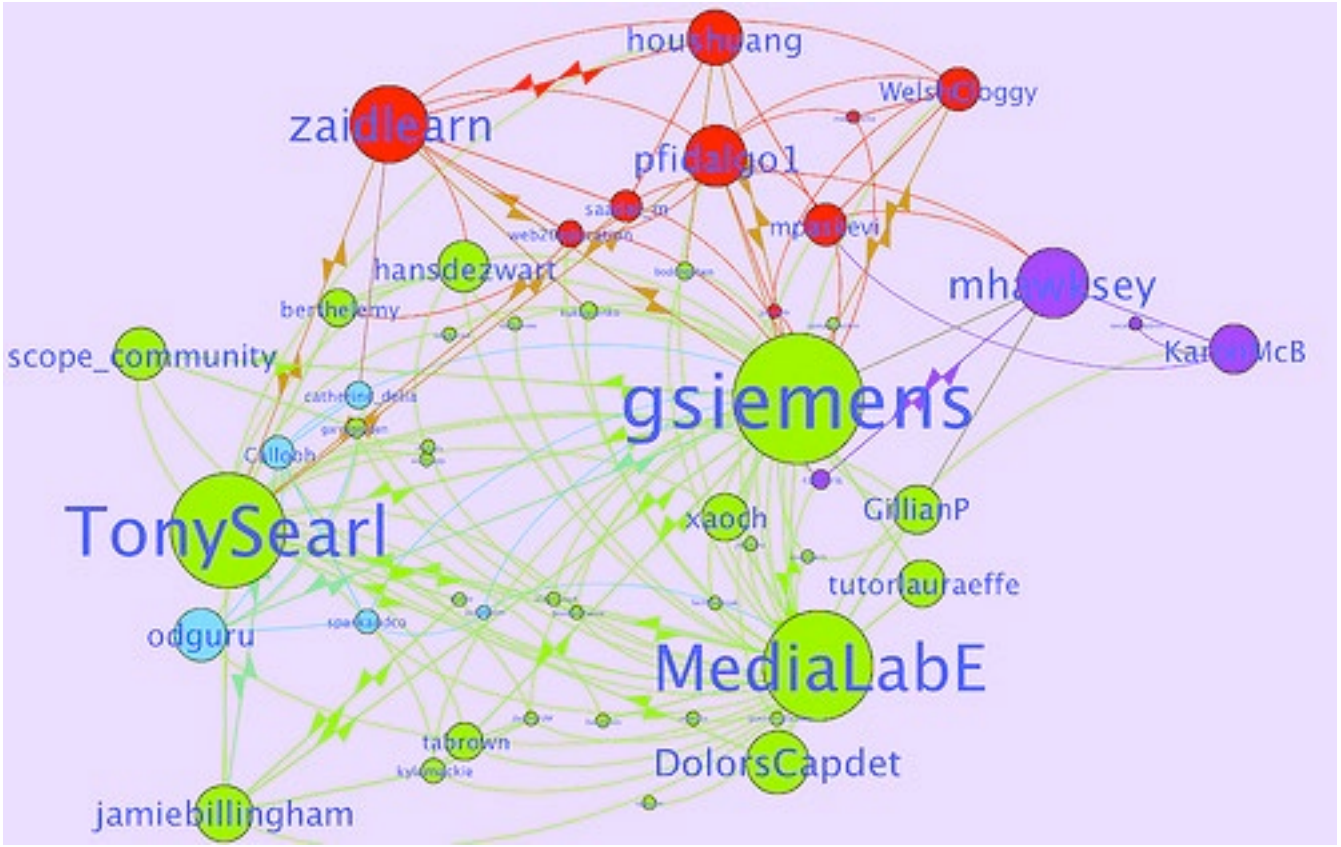
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eW3gMGqcZQc

How to be Successful in a MOOC

Dave Cormier

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8avYQ5ZqM0

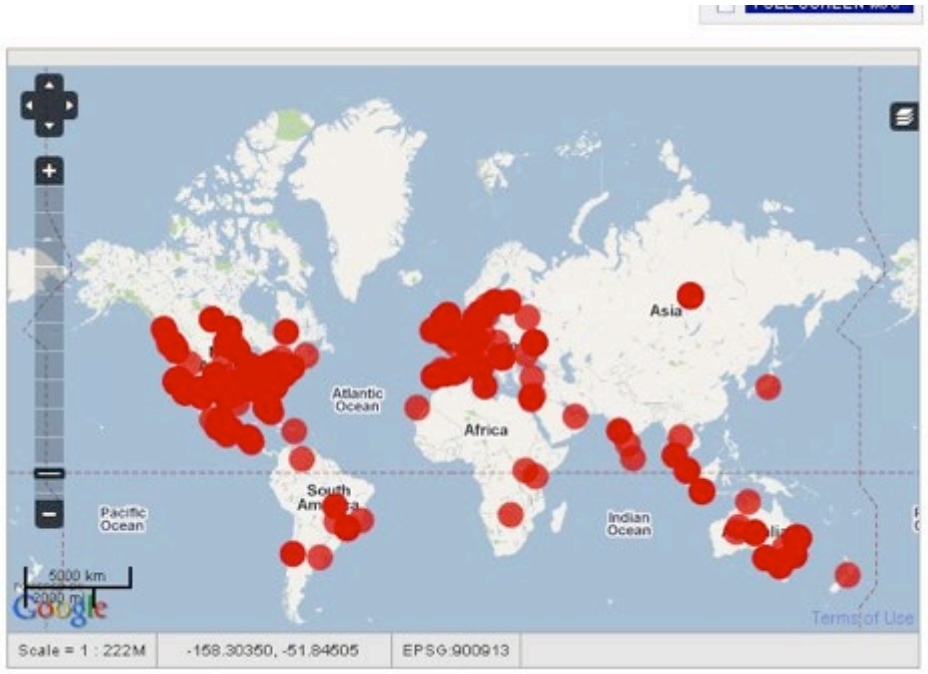
Learning Analytics



LAK11: How to measure success in a MOOC

http://scope.bccampus.ca/course/view.php?id=365

MobiMOOC

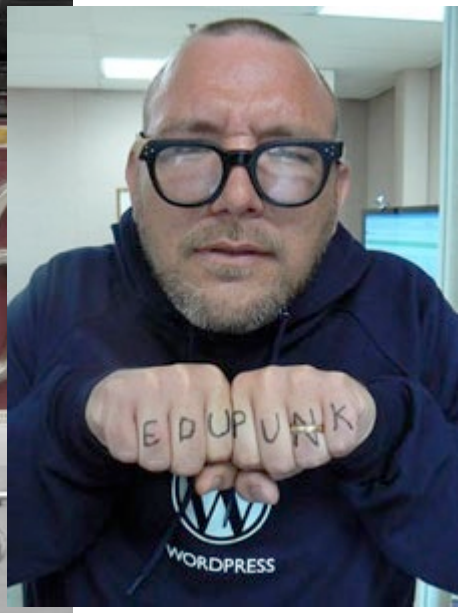


Inge de Waard

Supporting Mobile Learning Technology

http://mobimooc.wikispaces.com/

The madness and mayhem of DS106



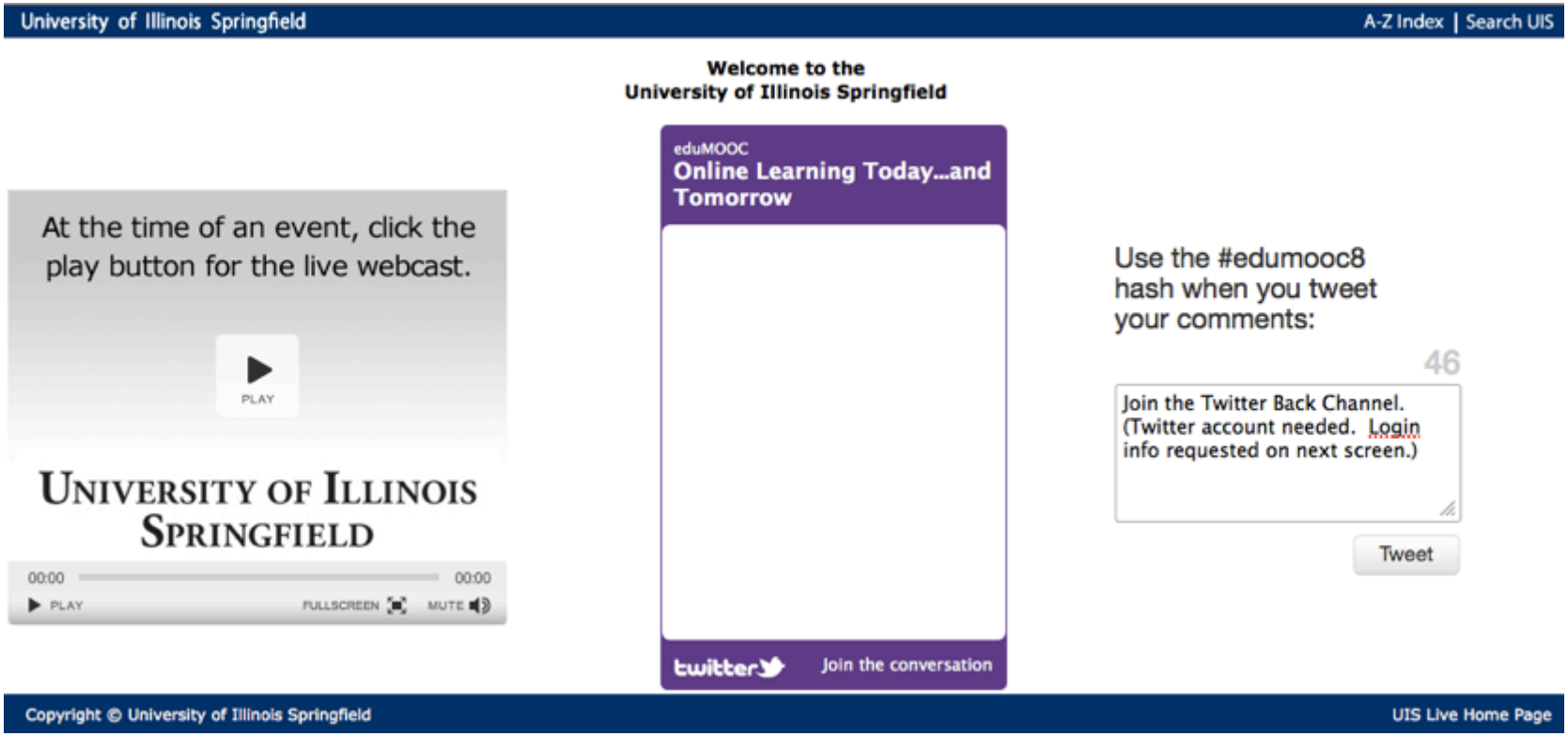
Jim Groom

DS = Digital Storytelling

DS106 redefined activities and participation

http://ds106.us/

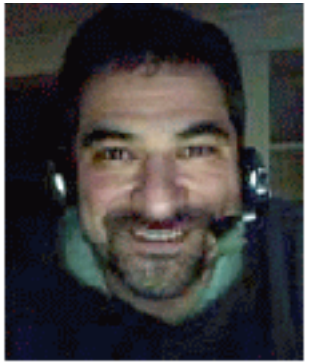
eduMOOC



Large, well publicized, but not very interactive

http://sites.google.com/site/edumooc/

eduMOOC underground



Jeff Lebow

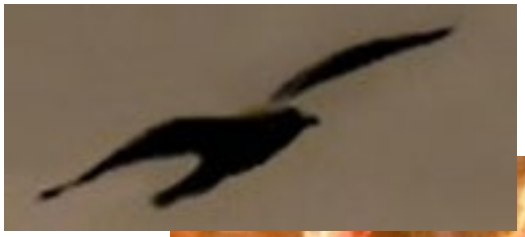
Jeff Lebow, Google+ hangout, and Livestream: Taking something ordinary, and making it something special – YOU make the MOOC

http://www.livestream.com/jefflebow/

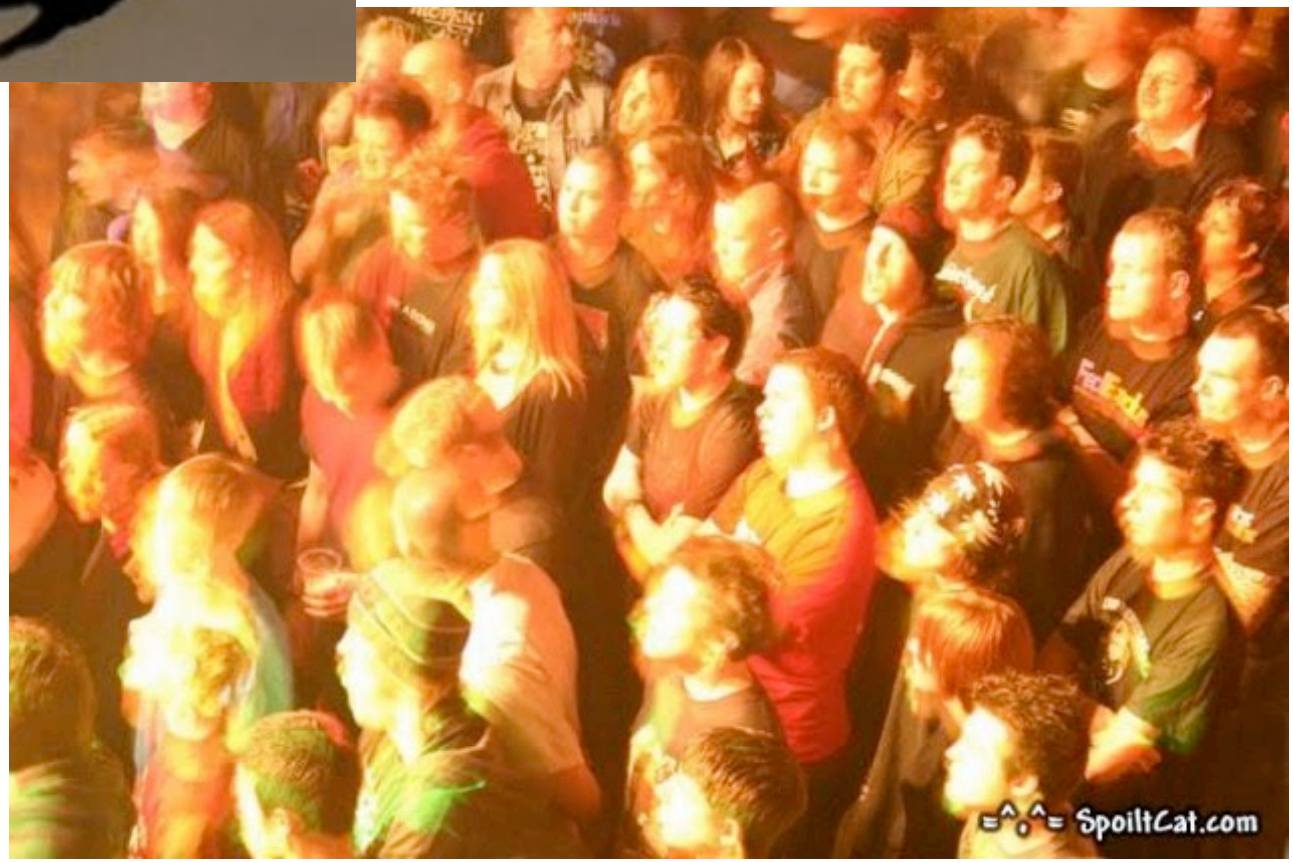
AI-Class: Redefining Massive

More than 100,000 people signed up for pre-registration

http://www.ai-class.com/



Change 2011



Downes, Cormier and Siemens try again

Image: http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.com/2011/04/running-mooc.html

http://change.mooc.ca

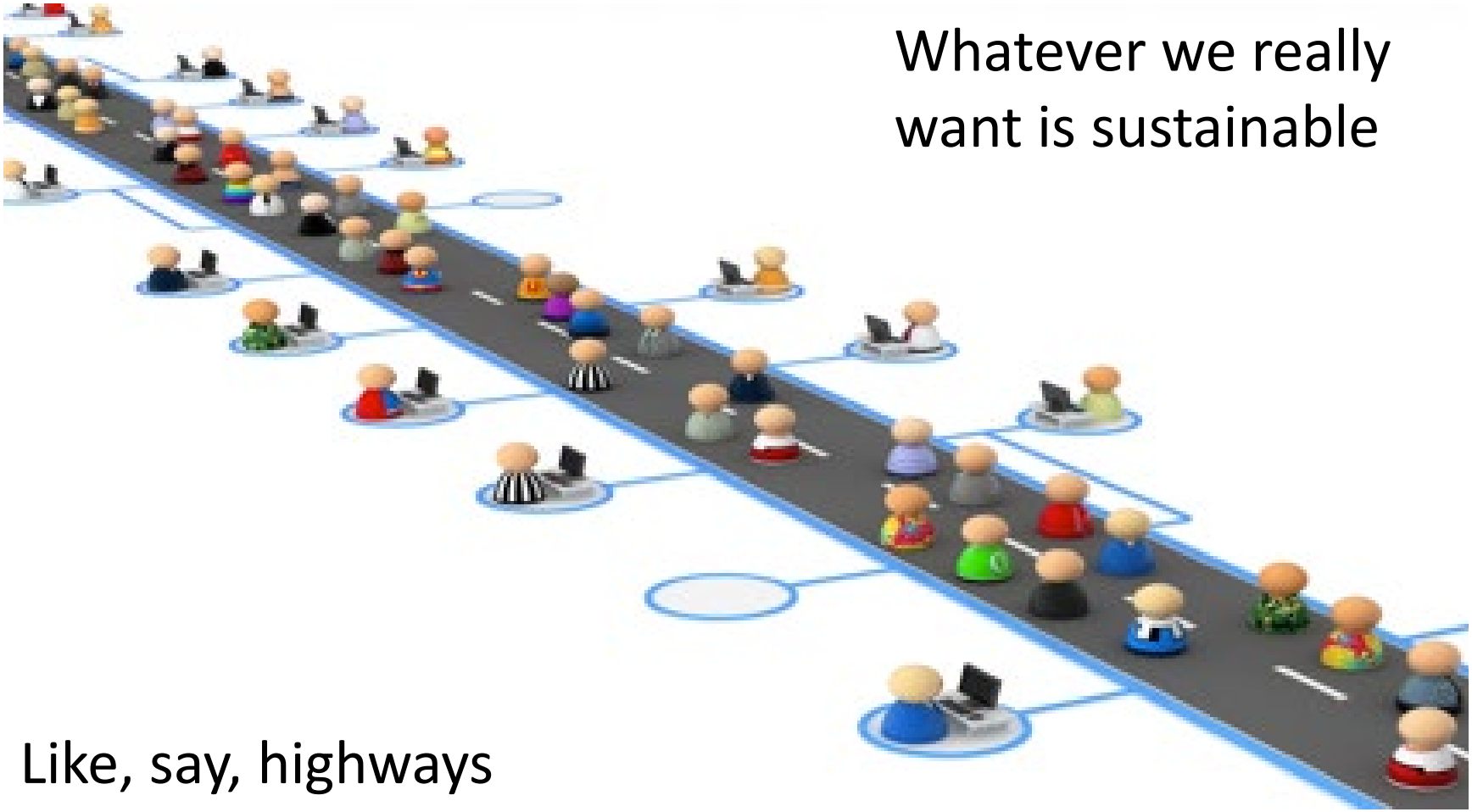
New Roles for Government

- Communications and Education Infrastructure
- Support for Open Educational Resources
- Support for Free Learning
- Management of assessments and credentialing

The Digital Infrastructure

- Public high-speed backbone networks
  - used not only for education but for other public services: police, fire and emergency, hospital, municipalities, etc.
- Local Access
  - eg. CAP Centres
- Legal Framework
  - policy on digital rights and copyright
  - net neutrality and similar regulations

A Note on Sustainability



Whatever we really want is sustainable

Like, say, highways

Sustaining Infrastructure

- Support for existing programs and services
  - cost reductions in communications overhead
  - improved efficiency of public service delivery
- Overhead on entertainment and commercial infrastructure
  - similar to broadcast ‘CanCon’ requirements

Open Educational Resources

- Traditional Resources
  - Already developed and paid for by government
  - Open access initiatives
- Public Policy Resources
  - design to serve a public end or objective
  - focus on basic literacies & community empowerment

Sustaining OERs

- Redirection of existing resource allocations
  - eg. OA mandates for grants and programs
  - community outreach for existing agencies
    - eg, NASA
- Support for community-based OER process
  - integration of OER development and use within publicly supported curricula
  - use of OERs in public services and programs

- Stephen Downes, Models for sustainable Open Educational Rsources, ijklo.org/Volume3/IJKLOv3p029-044**Downes**.pdf http://www.downes.ca/presentation/76
- OER Help with Keynote Slides, OER-Forum http://lists.esn.org.za/pipermail/oer-forum/2011-October/thread.html

Software and Service Support

- Software and environment support
  - eg. Public Knowledge Project,
  - Open Journal Systems, Moodle, et
- Service networks and support
  - JISC / CETIS, EdNA, etc.
  - Common Services - eFramework

Sustaining Support Systems

- Development and systems research support
- Public adoption of open licensing
  - FLOSS
    - GNU/GPL, BSD, etc
    - Creative Commons
  - directs resources toward multi-sector development
- Community service requirement for commercially sourced software

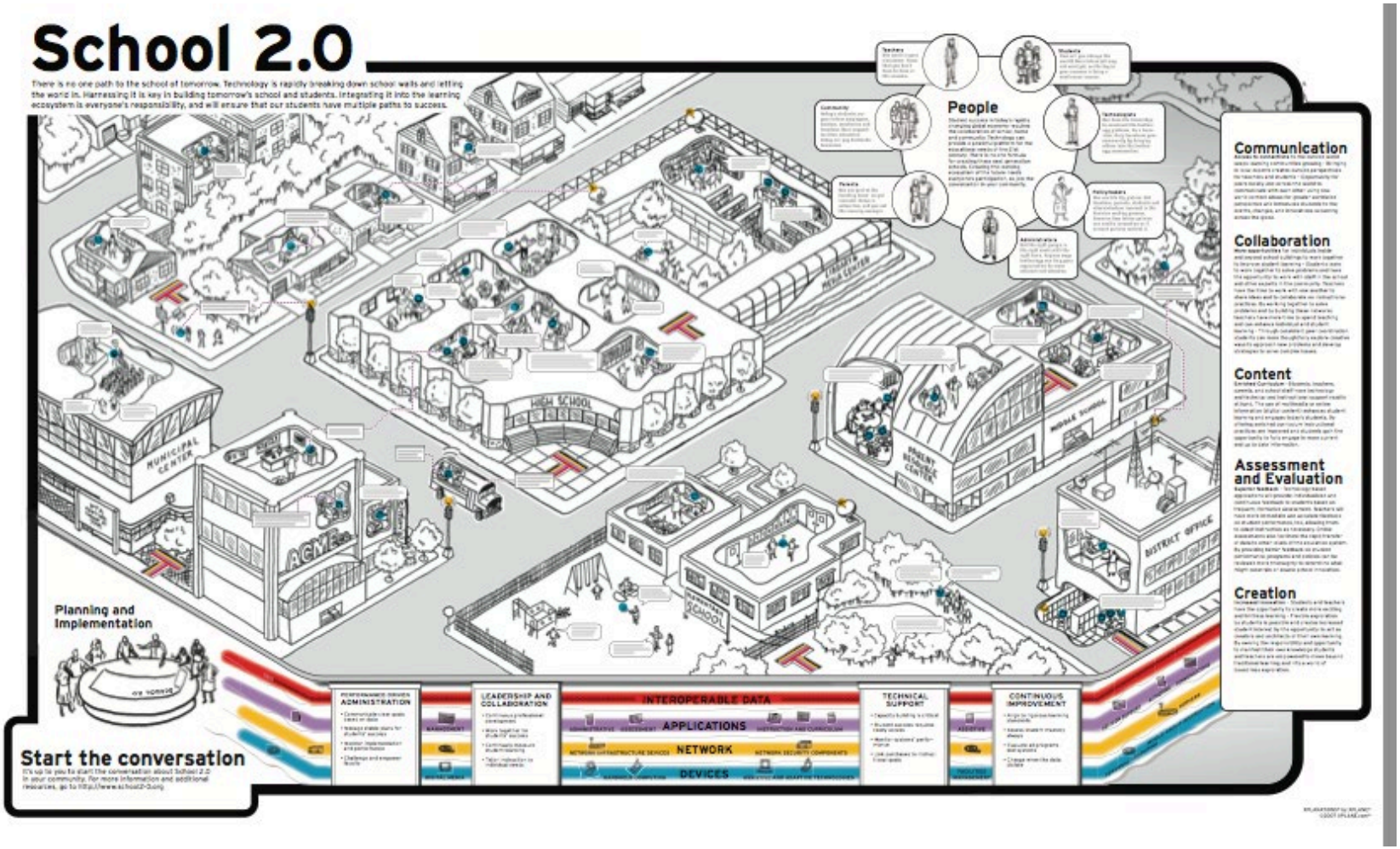
Assessment and Credentialing

- Major policy initiatives
  - separation of delivery and assessment
    - an end to Digital Diploma Mills
  - management of credentialing by professional associations under a regulatory framework
  - development of community-based assessment metrics and infrastructure
    - move away from simple testing, toward authentic community engagement and referrals

Assessment and Credentialing (2)

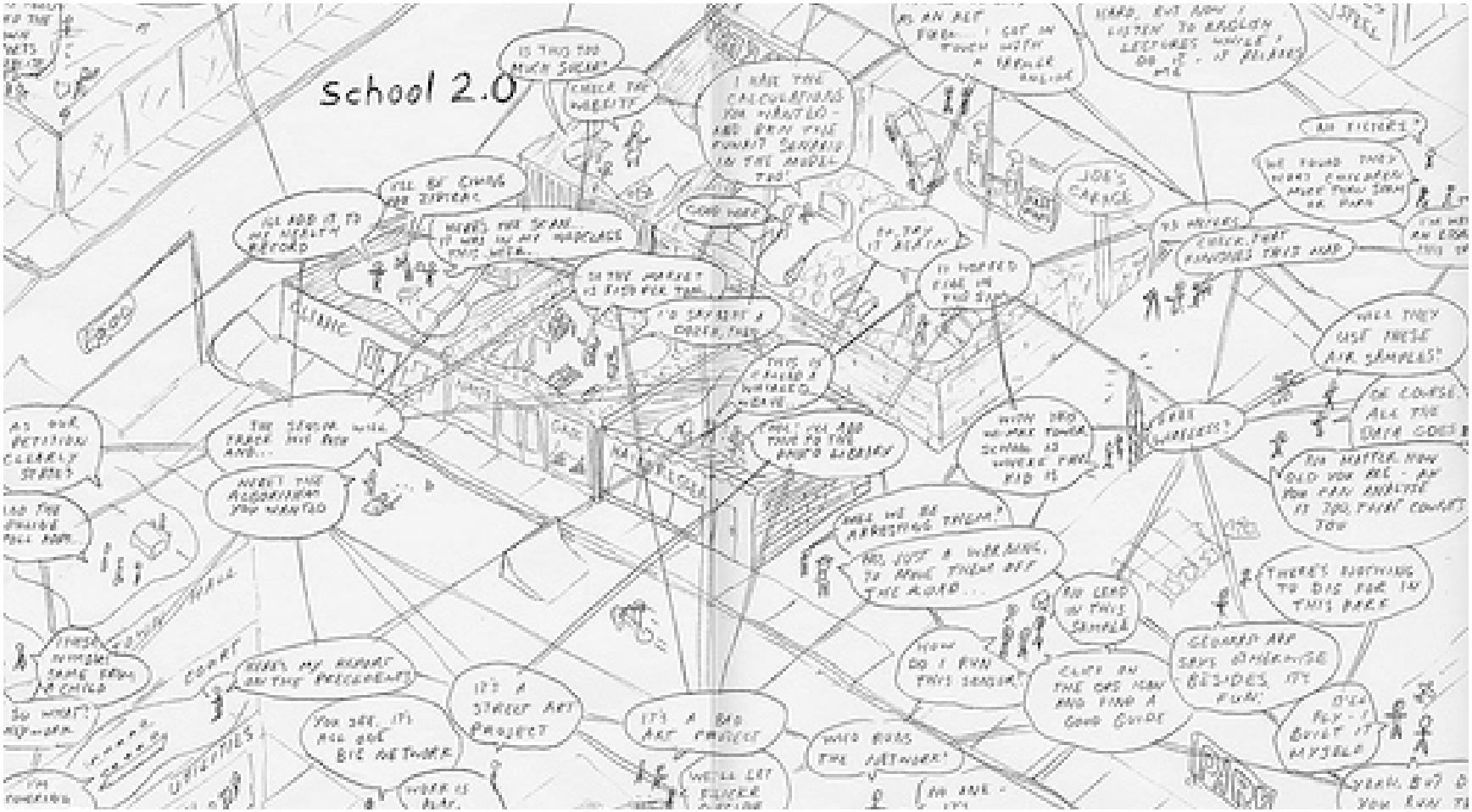
- Support for Personal Learning
  - provision of personal learning environments and frameworks
    - promote lifelong learning
    - link to skills database, corporate training registries
    - direct support for employment and funding
  - personal portfolios and credential banks
    - voluntary, self-managed
    - optional identity frameworks

The Old School 2.0

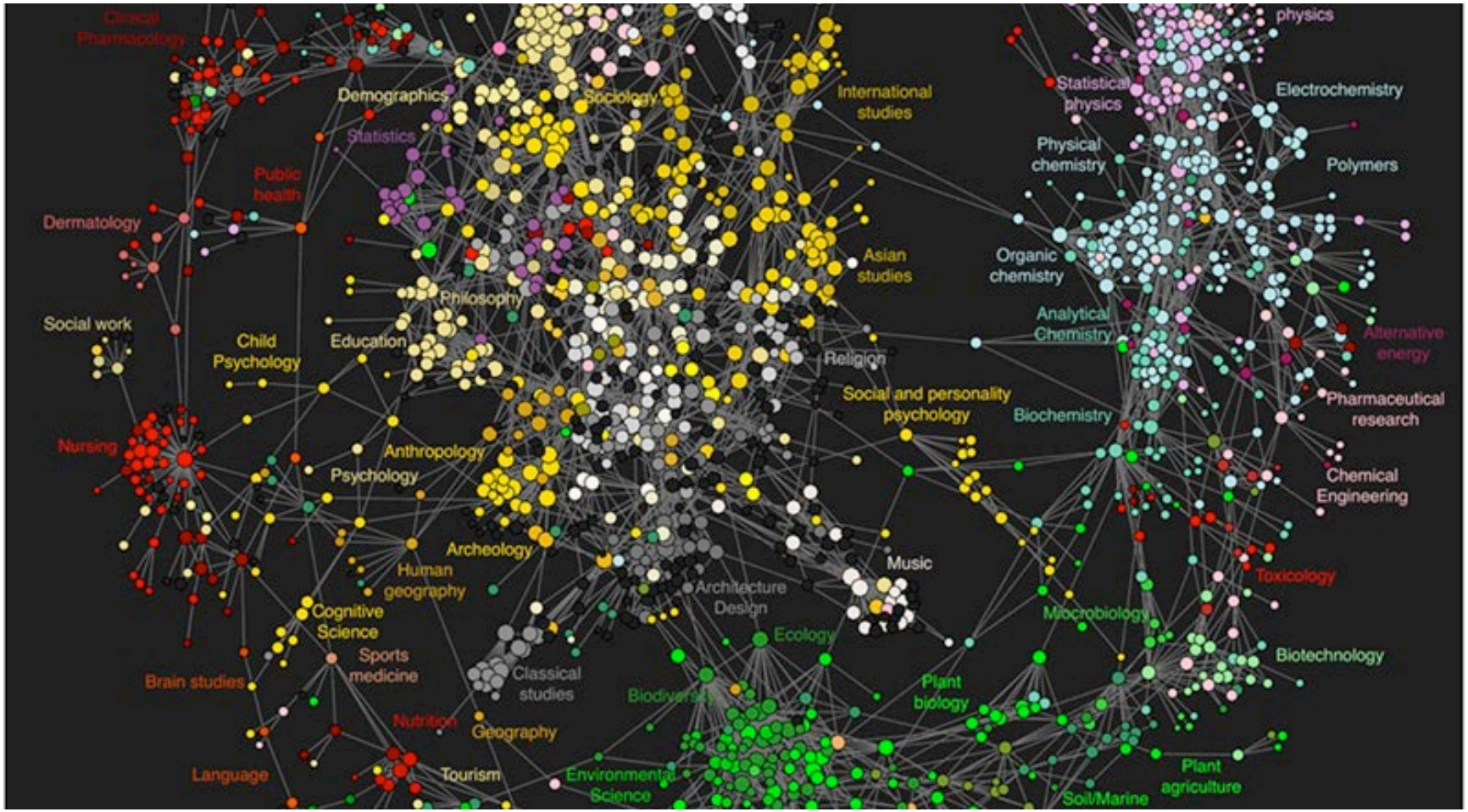


School 2.0 etoolkit http://etoolkit.org/etoolkit/

New Models for Schools



New Roles for Research



Community = Interactions

- Not ‘spreading the word’
- Not ‘amplification’
- But rather, the creation of our own society, together
  - emergent from the free actions of each of us
  - not based on the ideas of one (or a small number) of individuals

Open Communities are Free

Dave Pollard, the Metamovement http://howtosavetheworld.ca/2011/10/20/the-metamovement-moving-beyond-marches-and-people-in-the-street/

Stephen Downes

http://www.downes.ca