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W-rigidity for products of hyperbolic groups.*

We show that if $\Gamma = \Gamma_1 \times \cdots \times \Gamma_n$ is a product of $n \geq 2$ non-elementary ICC hyperbolic groups then any discrete group Λ which is W^* -equivalent to Γ decomposes as a k -fold direct sum exactly when $k = n$. This gives a group-level strengthening of Ozawa and Popa's unique prime decomposition theorem by removing all assumptions on the group Λ . This result in combination with Margulis' normal subgroup theorem allows us to give examples of lattices in the same Lie group which do not generate stably equivalent II_1 factors. (Received August 09, 2015)