Contact the researchers, Adrian Smith and Cian O’Donovan. Their Q-method analysis is under review at the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities. They can send you the draft.

It’s all part of a bigger body of work investigating new capacities for prototyping sustainable societies, grassroots innovation, and post-automation:

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OK. So policy support for makerspaces has to do more than just open workshops?

Definitely! Policy must connect workshops with local community development and inclusive circular economies.

Done appropriately, makerspaces can mobilize citizen innovation for sustainability… and their knowledge can inform new approaches to investment, training and infrastructures for greener societies.

Neat. Where do I learn more?

What did they learn?

Well, all types of experience showed enhanced creativity and skills, and people felt they had greater agency in material culture, as well as feeling part of a transformative community.

But they struggled to secure livelihoods from this activity, sustainable development possibilities were elusive. It was the absences common across types that was significant—the differences between experiences of each type.

Analysis found transformative potential—but it must connect to broader changes in economy and society to be experienced.

SPRU researched the human capabilities claimed for makerspaces. They used Q-method to analyze whether makers really experienced the transformational prototyping potential.

Q-method?

Yeah. They got a diversity of makers to sort statements about makerspaces and capabilities. Then they use statistical analysis to find correlations between the sorted statements. Basically, it’s a systematic way of identifying distinct types of prototyping experience common among makers.

They found three types of typicalexperience.

Some people claim it can open up new routes to sustainable transformations. And policy-makers are increasingly interested as hubs engaging people creatively in sustainable innovation?

Hold on! Is it really that good? I think we need some research!

Absolutely: makers are already prototyping greener product-service ideas; they’re looking at local remanufacturing and up-cycling possibilities; they’re holding repair parties; and meet-ups that debate and experiment with democratic material cultures.

It’s a game-changer! Radically redistributing the capacity for prototyping in societies it could transform the way we go about innovation?!

And these workshops are networked globally.

Wow! A globally-networked commons for know-how! But capable of adapting that knowledge to locally appropriate situations…

Wow, these makerspaces are fascinating!

Yeah. Community-based workshops where anyone can use versatile design and production technologies to hack, make, re-make anything they want. I love the emphasis on collaboration and open sharing!