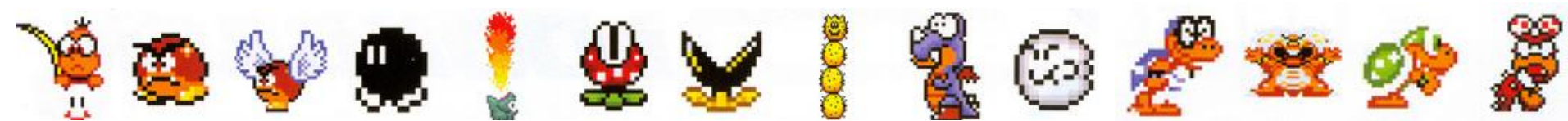




# Behaviours and outcomes in unauthorised fan-made video game production

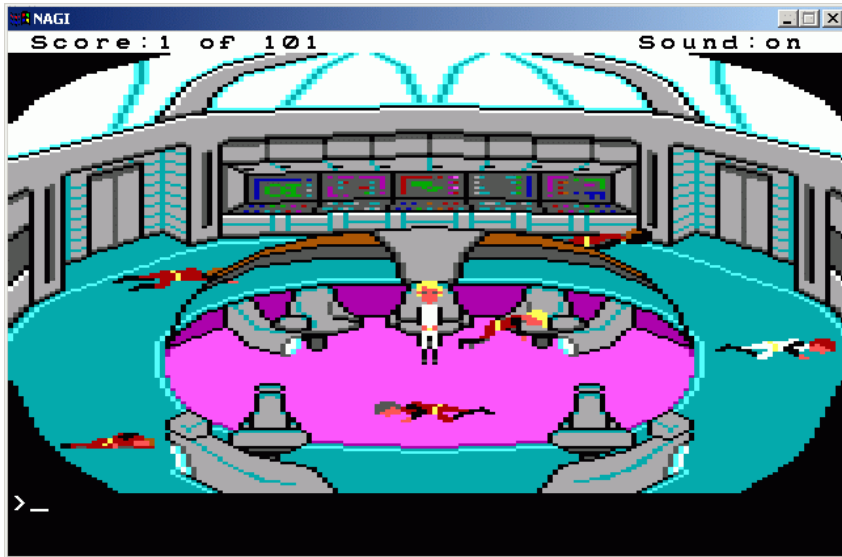


Kris Erickson\*, Martin Kretschmer\*,  
Olympia Mavridou\*\*, Gregor White\*\*

# What is a fan game?

*“A new game project, initiated by fans, which takes inspiration from a pre-existing video game... a fangame adds a significant new experience, differentiating it from minor tweaks, mods, or hacks that merely transform an existing game experience. A fangame project is judged to be motivated by love for the original game, rather than piggybacking on existing engine or source code to make a new product.”*

Original game may, or may not, be commercially available.



*Space Quest 0: Replicated*



*Kings Quest 2 Remake*

Narrative fidelity



*Ash Grey pastiche sequel*



*Rayman 3D adaptation*

Narrative innovation

# Digital Innovation & Copyright Intervention

**Legal status of Remakes:** Constitute copyright infringement if they copy a substantial part of the original (which fan games do, almost by definition)

- Unauthorised use may signal (unmet) demand
- Unauthorised use may conflict with exploitation of original, and/or damage reputation
- Fan games can involve considerable innovation: technological and narrative (i.e. may be wanted from a policy perspective in their own right)

**Interventions?**

**(1) tolerated use; (2) (pre-)litigation; (3) policy change (exception/non-use)**

**Methodological difficulties:**

- unknown population
- highly heterogeneous practice
- reporting bias / survivorship bias (illegitimate activity)
- decay of records (digital memory hole)

# Approach

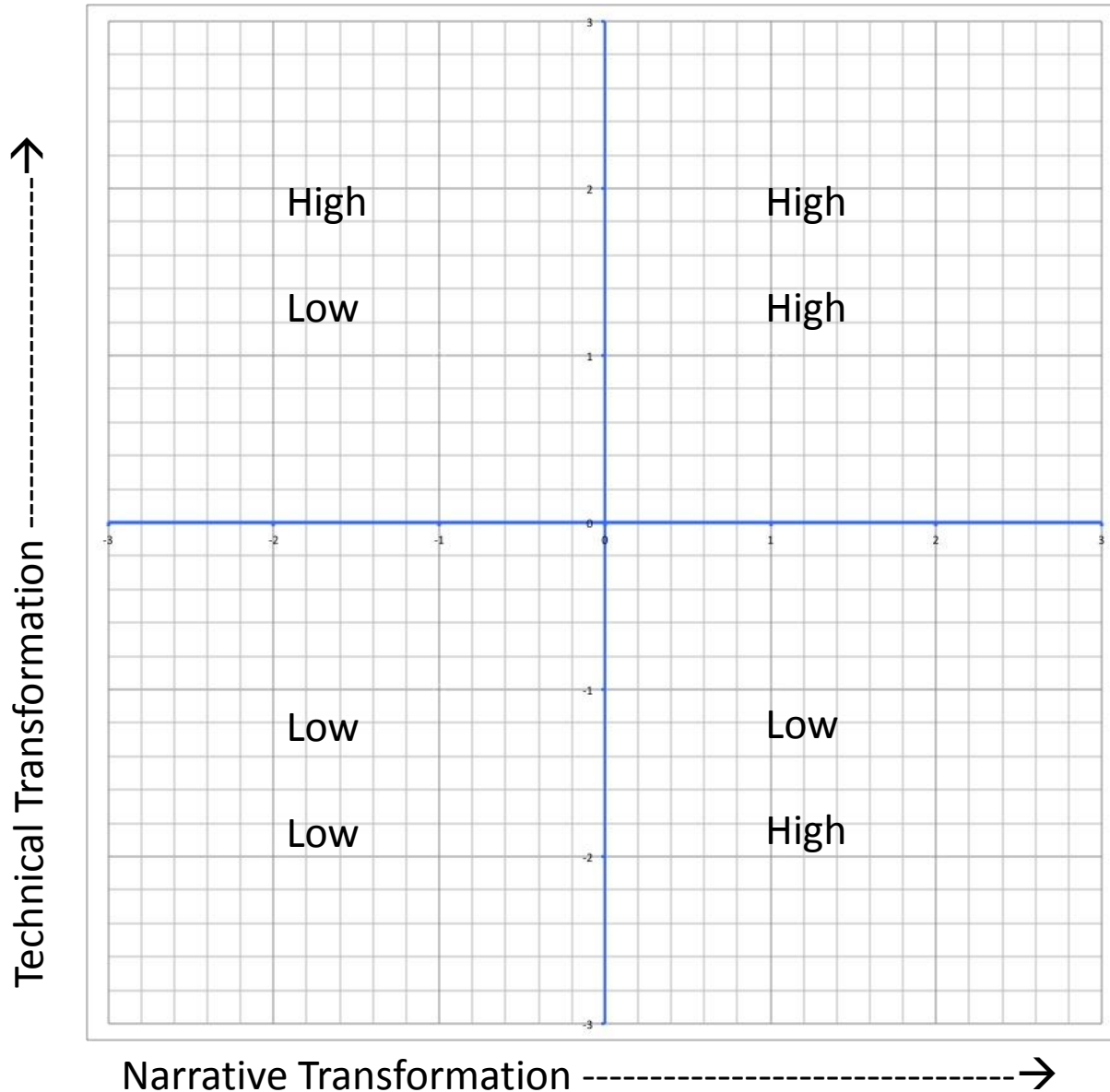
Promising site for improving our understanding of the **edges of law** (theories of infringement, innovation, reputational effects)

## **Inductive pilot exercise (fangame production and outcomes):**

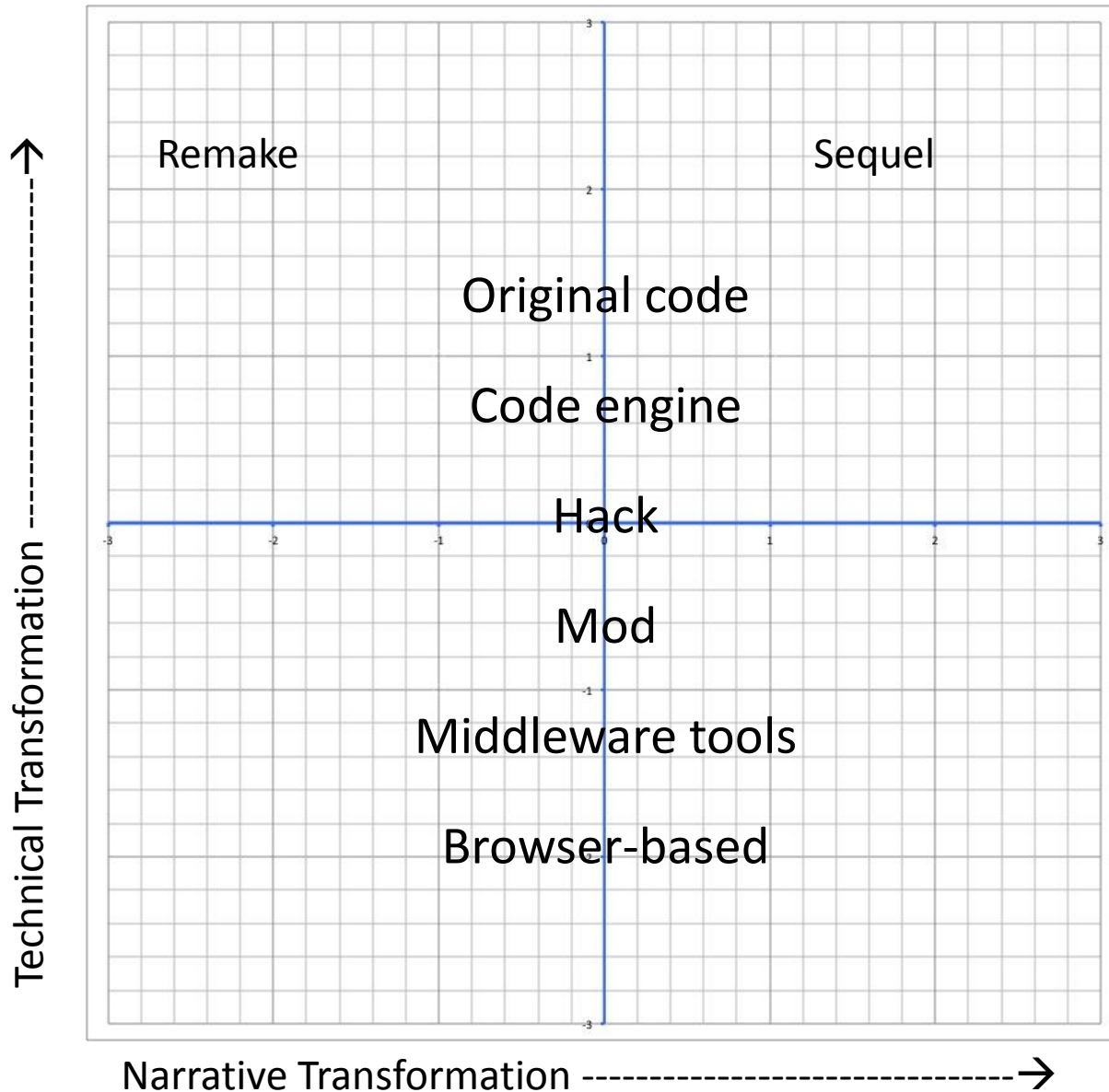
- Multiple case study – products as units of analysis (BM Hill, 2011)
- Content analysis of 350 candidate fan games
- Qualitative sources (forums, reviews, press reports, rumors, takedown notices, release notes, tweets)

Generate hypotheses for future large-scale quantitative study

# Transformation & outcomes

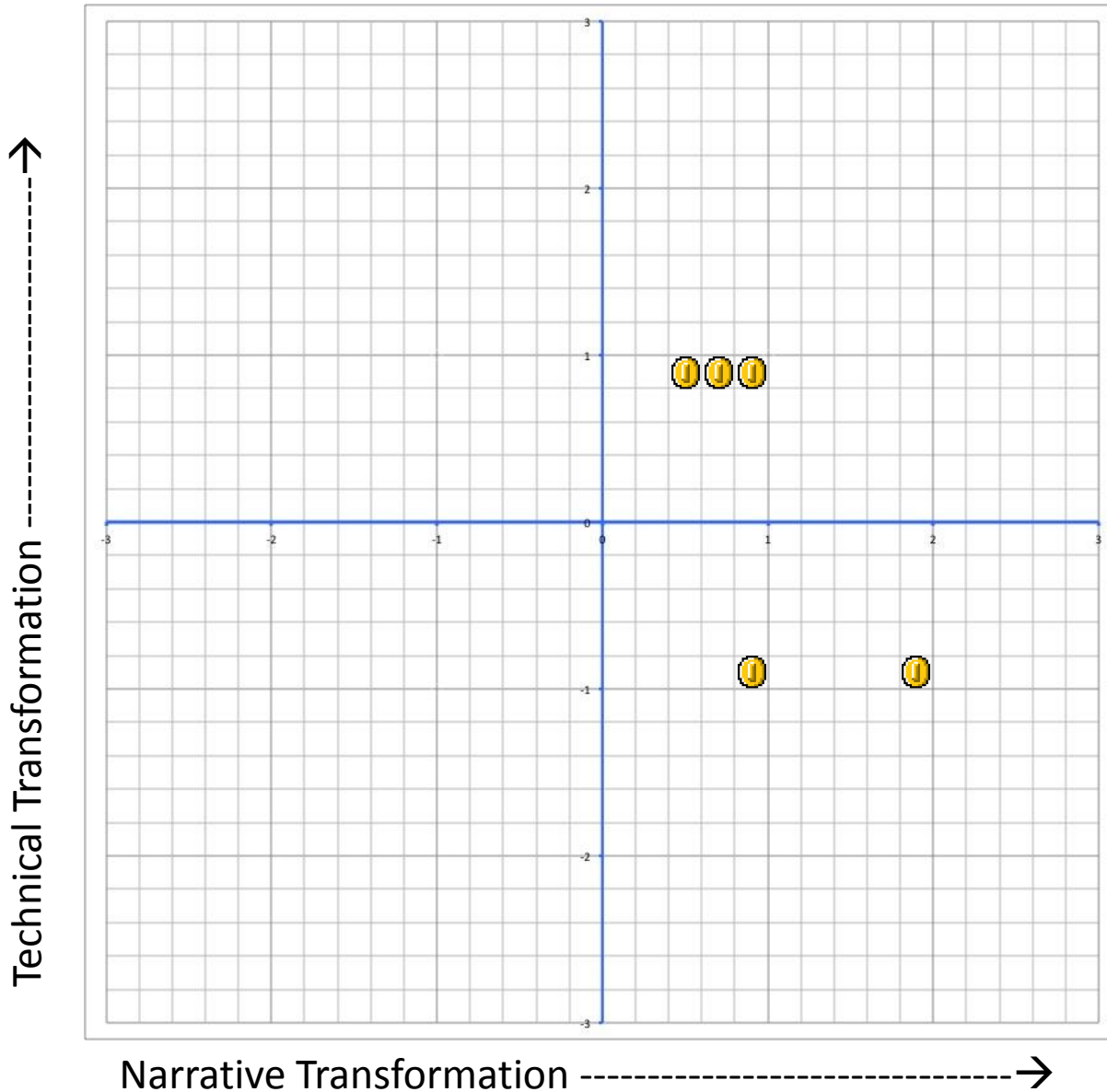


# Transformation & outcomes



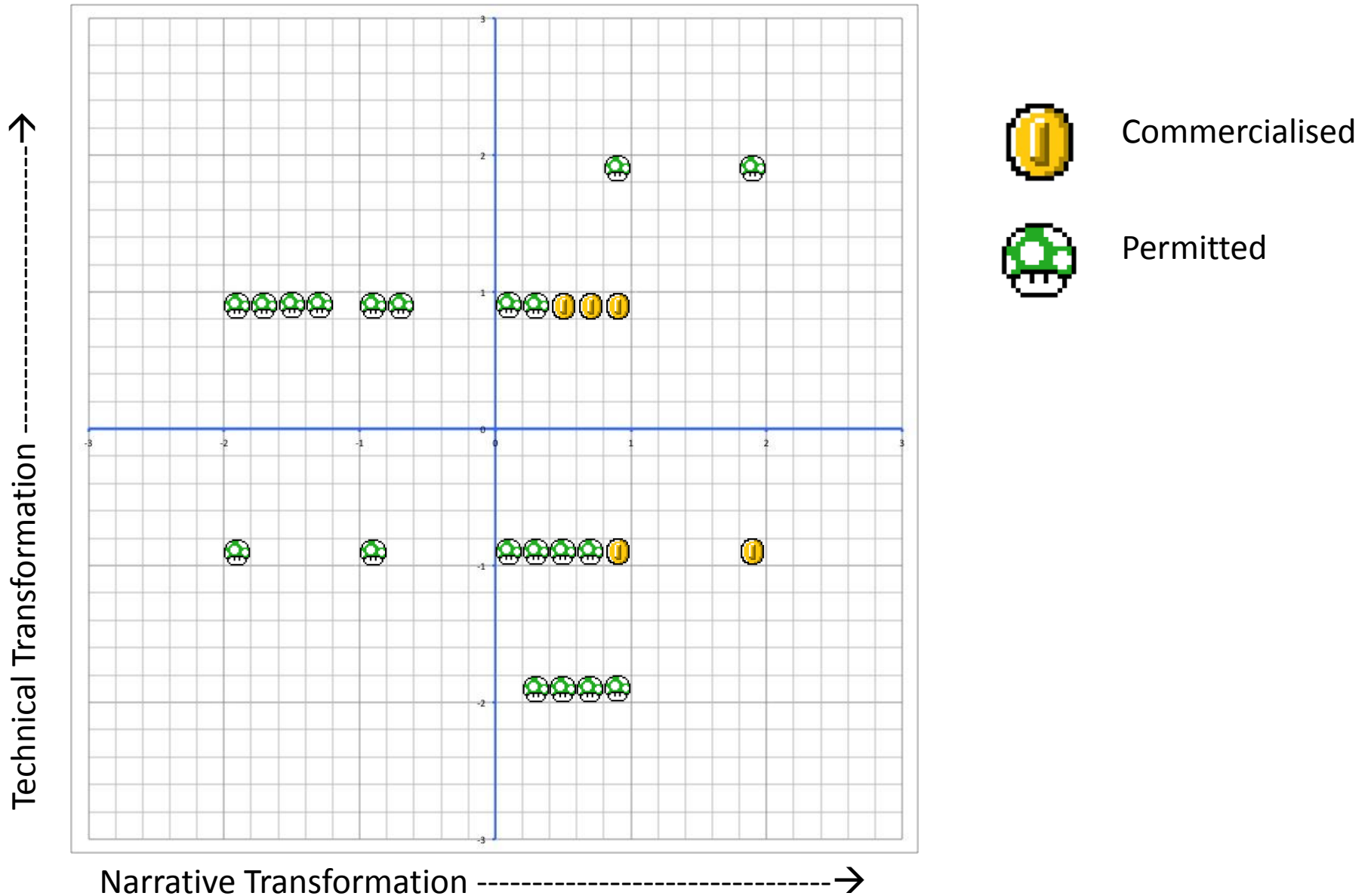


# Transformation & outcomes

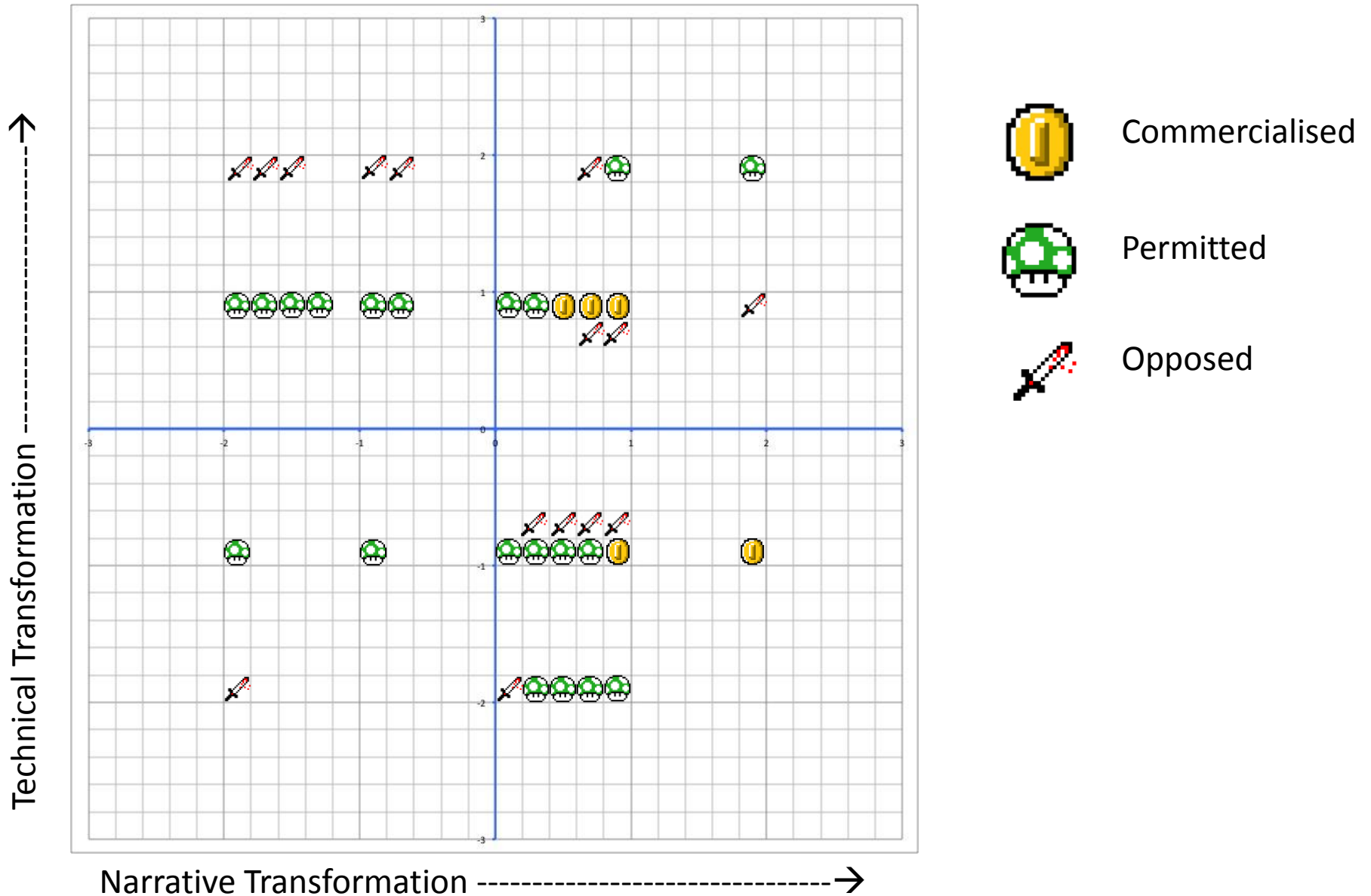


Commercialised

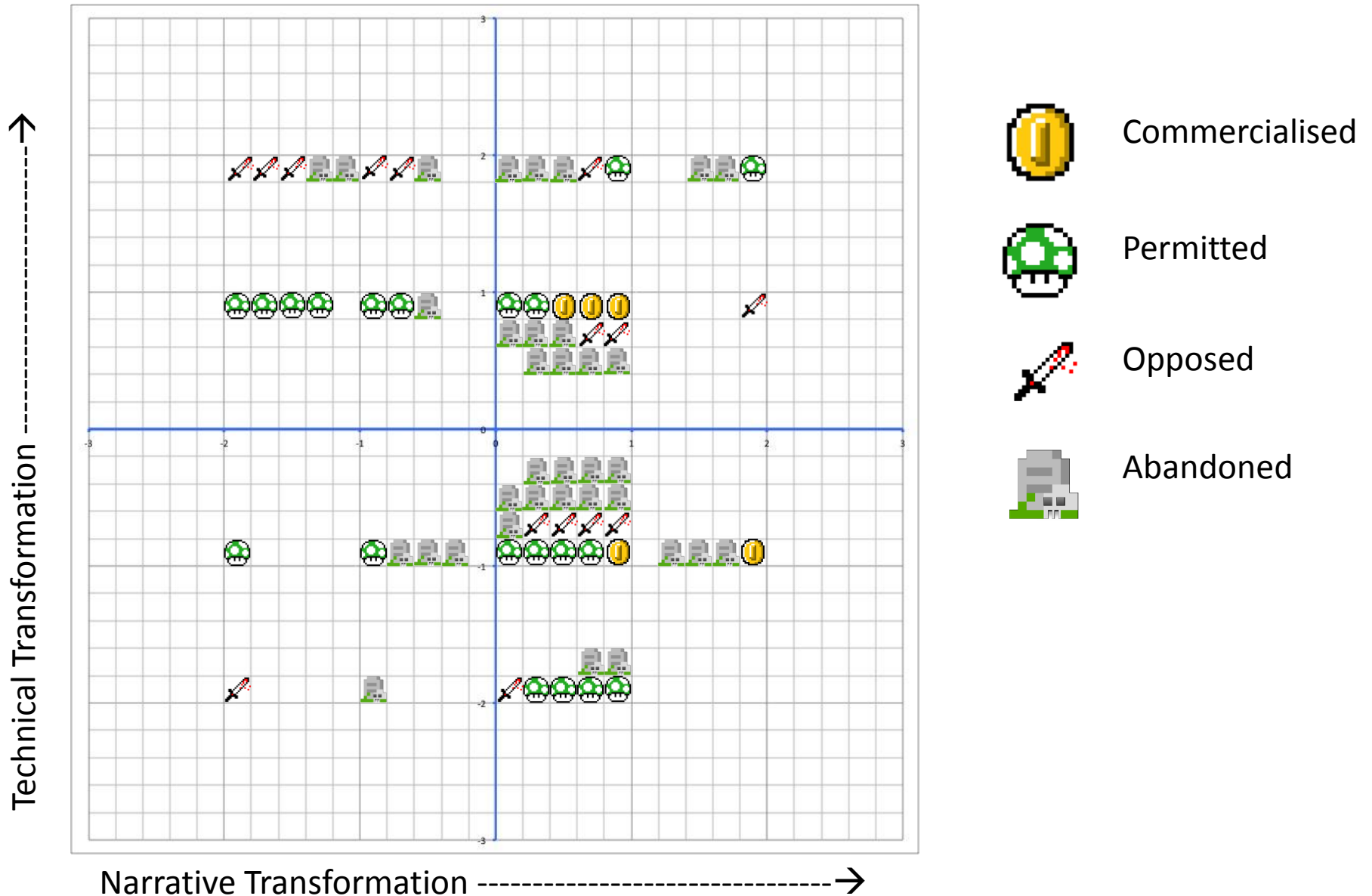
# Transformation & outcomes



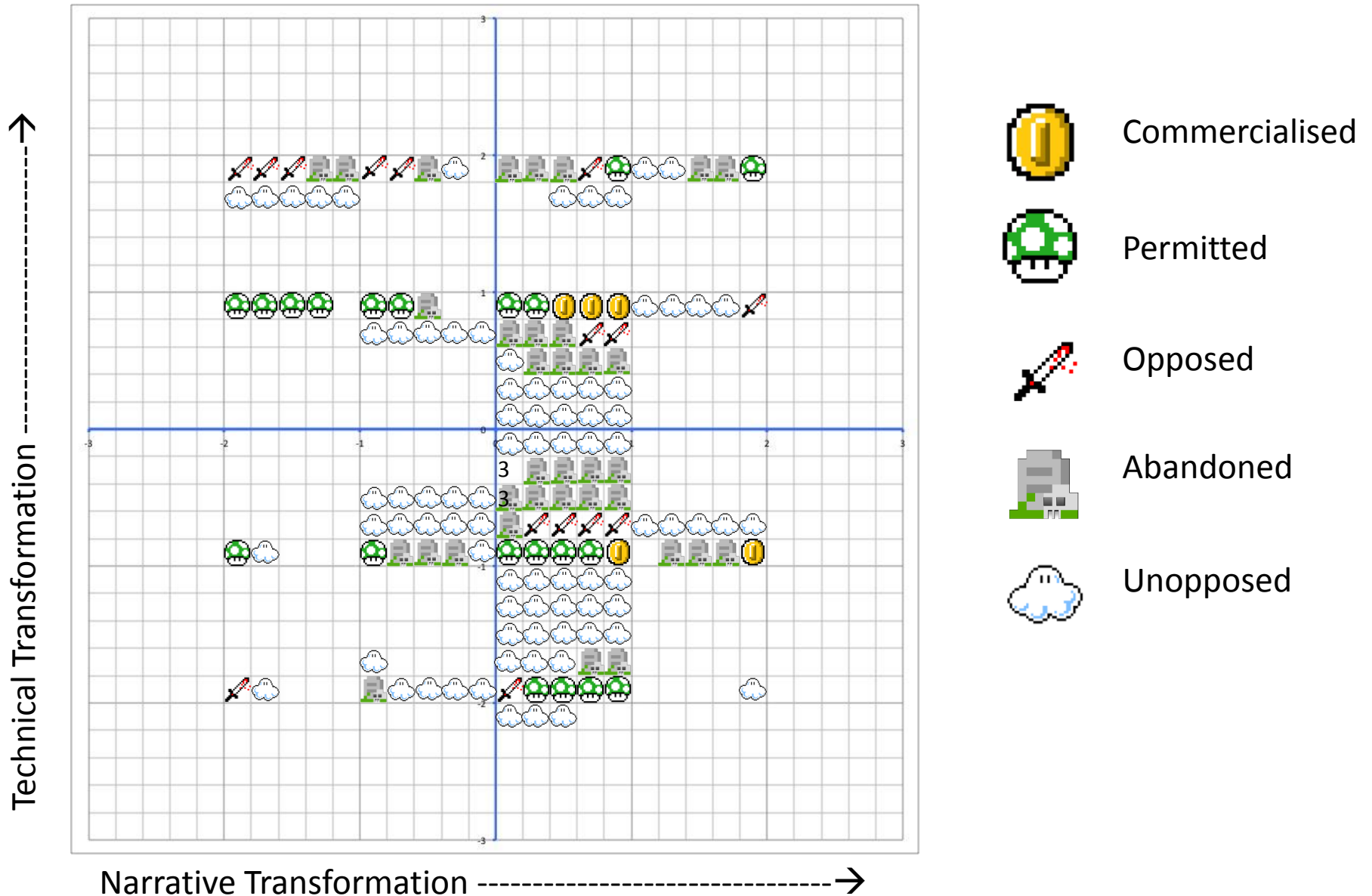
# Transformation & outcomes



# Transformation & outcomes



# Transformation & outcomes



# Tentative findings

- Largest proportion are low-tech but contain moderate narrative transformation.
- Low-tech remakes are the least frequent group.
- Monetisation by rightsholders favors narrative transformation.
- Success of fan projects appears related to complexity and team size
- Additional variables needed (availability of original and price; if not, date of market absence; fan game user base; measure of quality)

# Behaviour, Structure, Interventions: lessons?

1. Context and behaviour
2. Contagion in networks
  - Fan communities
3. Research design
  - Sampling issues, content analysis, quantification
4. Dynamics (social/economic process over time)
  - Technological obsolescence; user-led innovation
5. Language (inter-disciplinary and inter-community/user)
  - understanding of law; understanding of under-reported activity
  - potential for improving interventions of rightsholders and policy makers

# Type: Narrative fidelity

Motivation	Purpose / Rationale	Product types	Examples
Re-create or update existing work	Format shifting	Remake	<i>Streets of Rage 4 HD</i>
Capture 'spirit' or tradition of original	Respond to technical obsolescence	Enhanced remake	<i>Pokénet</i>
	Expand audience / community	Demake	<i>Mega Man 2.5D</i>
	Display technical proficiency / practice	Tribute / homage	
		Tech demo	



# Type: Narrative innovation

Motivation	Purpose / Rationale	Product types	Examples
Tell new stories about familiar characters / works	Respond to niche demand not met by commercial product	Sequel	<i>Space Quest: The Lost Chapter</i>
Fill in narrative gaps, missing products	Satisfy existing audience / community	Prequel	<i>Space Quest IV.5</i>
		Interquel	<i>Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth</i>
	Pastiche sequel		
	Scenario / campaign		
Adaptation			
Character swap			