



Generative insights from the Many-to-Many Network

June 2026

Offered via the Generative Journalism Alliance (GJA)

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Reflections

In March 2026, the [Generative Journalism Alliance](#) (GJA) was approached by the Beyond the Rules team to support them in surfacing what has been made possible within the Many-to-Many Network over three years of collaborative and experimental work – and to ask how its ending could help to seed future becomings.

We worked with a core group from the network to develop a [Topic of Inquiry](#) ahead of the final Many-to-Many Network meeting in Sheffield on 11th June. We named our top-level question as: *What if we were able to seed more spaces where people have a felt sense of a many-to-many deep-code shift?*

Through nine interviews with network members, we gained a felt sense of the passion, curiosity and spirit of experimentation that lives in this small group of systems change practitioners, and the deep and detailed resources it has generated across its lifespan. We have attempted to honour each of these perspectives through [nine long-form written stories](#) which we co-produced with our story sources.

Being part of this network has been a mind-expanding experience for many of those involved. We heard several times how it had become a space for the growth of people, organisations and the systems change field at large, and how the depth of the thinking felt well aligned with the big problem areas that members are called to address through their work.

It has been complicated and complex, highly technical yet paradoxically often hard to pin down. A sense of an imperfect process – perhaps by necessity, perhaps due to the confines of current systems – came across clearly. So too did the value placed on having the time and space to go 'under the hood' together. It felt both inconclusive and revelatory, confusing and meaningful, arcane and common sense – an experiment, an attempt, an inching closer to something genuinely transformative.

Several story sources expressed a worry that the work done and resources created may be lost to time, or that those outside the group would need hands-on support to engage with them – several named examples of where they are already taking root in the world, and how members of the network are thinking about what that support could look like.

And although the Many-to-Many Network as it currently stands is drawing to a close with the event on 11th June, we heard people identifying next steps and making personal and organisational commitments to continuing the deep governance inquiry that started in this group.

GJA, 10.06.2026

Quotes

We consider [the stories](#) we have co-produced with the practitioners working in the Many-to-Many Network to be the primary material in this generative inquiry and we encourage the below quotes not to be looked at only in isolation.

We have chosen them for their resonance with us. Any further analysis doesn't sit comfortably with the GJA, as folks who are not deeply in this work, so we offer them here as glimpses of those full stories – and of possible futures for this work.

The best thing that could happen

"The best thing that could happen would be if people who were nervous about working in this way – who are maybe sometimes the blocker to this kind of collaboration that's complex and emergent – could come into the work and understand that there is so much rigour that has to surround this." **Leah Black**

"...That there is more equity in contracting – that it's a two-way street that recognises everybody's assets and what they bring in, and is really clear about values and ways of working, as well as about all of the contractual stuff about what needs to be delivered." **Kathleen Kelly**

"...That we continue to sense where there's energy and potential. That perhaps the best thing that can happen is for us to just try these next things, learn, and then figure it out from there." **Daniel Ford**

"My hunch is that in the future many-to-many system you would see a greater crystallisation of that new type of organisational form. Cross-sector, cross-domain, relational work will enable really interesting innovations guided by a different set of organising principles and value contributions. I could imagine many-to-many transforming what we think an organisation is, and therefore transforming how we think about the relationship between state and market." **James Lock**

"A much more widespread reckoning with the operating systems that we're using [...] Institutions would re-posture their roles, seeing how they become enablers of much more civic, multi-sector, multi-party, multi-capital forms of value creation. Civil society is given more space to bring its capacity into these challenges in a way that is collaborative with institutions. And to have collaborations of people that can go from the somatic to the relational, to the interpersonal group dynamics, to the governing system, to the learning system, to the organising, through to the legal architecture, to

the strategy and portfolio - that whole stack of infrastructures that you need."

Annette Dhami

"My dream would be for the area and region I live and work in to start holding these central questions about strategic collaboration as things we cannot take for granted."

Matt Bell

"We cannot escape the legal framework. So we need something that is legally sound, but also able to hold the relationships. The best thing would be governance infrastructure that can hold the relationships, help us hold the complexity of what it means to do this work, and give us the knowledge to do that." **Habiba Nabatu**

"What I'm interested in is how do we build feedback loops, so that what we're learning comes back. So for me the best thing that could come out of that is that it becomes really good food for the next evolution of thinking. We stand on the shoulders of everything that came before us." **Michelle Zucker**

"The best thing that could happen would be that there are continual loops that mean this work is built on and refined, rather than left at this point. In a bigger, broader sense, the best thing that can happen is that our collective capabilities and capacities to work in collaboration on complex issues are improving, that we are levelling up, that we are growing." **Zahra Davidson**

Why it's important, what was made possible & what felt most alive

"Governance is not a side issue. It is not the thing we fall back to when things get hard, or the thing we only do at the beginning. It is fundamental infrastructure that gives us protection, safety, and hopefully allows us to do the work we need to do as peers." **Habiba Nabatu**

"It felt important because if we don't work these things through quite practically, persistently and relentlessly, then I don't know how we bridge between what's necessary and what's possible right now." **Annette Dhami**

"If you take seriously the idea of phasing the development of working together, then you have to track it right back to the starting conversations. How we conduct those starting conversations matters [..] If we want the route to end up in a more collaborative setting, we need conversations at the start that begin to lay the seeds for some of the heavier conversations later on." **Matt Bell**

"[I'm] noticing some of the learnings being taken out of the learning network experience and brought into some of the live projects and collaborations happening.

I'm really curious about those ripples. There is something about us normalising the inquiry around this." **Daniel Ford**

"I entered the network with a very place-based challenge in mind. That work is less about delivering a specific project and more about developing the civic capability required to act collectively on complex transitions. We are trying to create the governance, relationships, legitimacy and resource flows that allow multiple actors to coordinate around shared purposes and generate many different projects, interventions and investments over time." **James Lock**

"I'm really excited to see where Annette and I might get with a possible systems embodiment facilitation tool or asset we can work on to help people start uncovering deeper code shifts in this work. Because I think people feel like they need specialist knowledge in these things, but the specialists aren't always aware of the nuance and the detail of the specific context of the collaboration." **Kathleen Kelly**

"In my dream situation, what would have made it feel more alive is if we were doing collective sensemaking. But that is infinitely slower and perhaps it requires more bandwidth than people could have even given." **Michelle Zucker**

"I think you find out where the trade-offs are when you do this kind of experimental work. You might be able to shift that responsibility and distribute it more broadly, and then you realise you've given away enabling clarity [...] So then you have the question: which matters more? [...] I think that feels like the glass ceiling of my own practice at the moment." **Zahra Davidson**

"We all have power that we can share. And if we join that power up into ecosystems and think about things that most people find really boring - like governance structures, contracts, risk and how money flows - and if we make sure that people who are not normally part of these conversations are part of these conversations, we can make the transformational change that we're all looking for." **Leah Black**

What could come next

"It's often the people who come after the pioneers, isn't it? The innovators - asking them to build on it, innovate, see where it takes us. I'd really love commissioners to be thinking in this way. I think there's a desire to operate in a different way, but often there's institutional or structural fear." **Kathleen Kelly**

"I would point to some who resisted through the generations, those who rejected a world based on extraction, domination and the dehumanisation of some people, Mother Earth, planet and more-than-human kin. I would say that the next generations are capable of this too - they are absolutely capable of cooperation,

reciprocity with Mother Earth and living with other people who are different from us." **Habiba Nabatu**

"I hope that what we've put in the [many-to-many field guide](#) will help others to be able to scan their environment and at least nudge the governing and legal structures in a way that's more conducive to what's trying to be built. Or if it's completely not conducive, figure out whether to get involved or not." **Annette Dhami**

"I am really of the ilk – this goes deep to my core philosophy – that if something is valuable, people will use it." **Michelle Zucker**

"Just last week, I had a conversation with somebody who had referenced the M2M work in this initial document that she put together. So people are watching and learning." **Leah Black**

"I'm very keen to apply this in Sheffield in the work that we're doing. What I'd like to happen is that we show the value of thinking about many-to-many governance and for that to mature into the contracting of place-based missions." **James Lock**

"I see loads of potential in getting beyond organisational forms and their constraints, and I think this was one example of how you can do that [...] More exploration around how to work beyond the boundaries of organisations – I think that's the sort of question I'd love to see more exploration around." **Zahra Davidson**

"There's also something about a posture of humility to go alongside all of this. We can encourage people to come towards it, organise around it, and sense what might be useful in it, but not pretend that it's the whole truth or that it has all the answers." **Daniel Ford**

"My ask of future generations would be: recognise the things inside us that make it all work, and notice the things inside us that get in the way. If we can do that, we suddenly make the possible appear everywhere. Because we have all got it in us. Let's allow it to become free." **Matt Bell**



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