A virtual group relations conference

EXPLORATION IN HUMAN RELATIONS IN SHIFTING ENVIRONMENTS

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for the study of groups, organizations, & social systems

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Conference

THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE®

GROUP RELATIONS INTERNATIONAL
Creating a better world - together

Directed by
Dr. Mónica Rocío Velarde Lazarte

26-28 September 2025
09:00-17:00 ET

Contents

Letter from the directorate

Dear Prospective Member,

The New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations, & Social Systems invites you to be part of a temporary learning environment known as a virtual Group Relations Conference (GRC).

In spite of its name, a GRC is unlike most conferences you're familiar with: there are no speakers, no panels, no presentations, and no keynotes. Rather, a virtual GRC is the co-creation of a living system. We consider it a sort of laboratory, where we study our direct experience in the system as we create and inhabit it.

This year, the laboratory is **themed around the dynamics of presence, accountability, authority, and leadership within evolving virtual environments.**

As digital environments reshape the way we connect, lead, and collaborate, this laboratory offers a rare opportunity to engage with these changing dynamics in real time.

During the conference, **we will migrate from the familiar and established technology of Zoom to an emergent, novel technology called The Territory.** We will study this migration in order to learn more about the socio-technical impact of virtual work environments. In this context, we might have the opportunity to explore things such as how spaces shape our capacity to learn, take up roles, and lead. ***What emotions are mobilized when we migrate the technologies that hold our work together? How do we configure our virtual space, and how does its design impact our human behavior?***

Through it all, we will stay focused on our primary task of studying the dynamics of presence, accountability, authority, and leadership.

We are living in a particularly challenging time. Our global politics are increasingly polarized, and our most urgent challenges transcend borders. We have grown so much as a civilization, and at the same time, we need to learn how to cooperate in a meaningful way across systems, cultures, technological, and virtual divides.

Whether you are new to GRCs or are a seasoned practitioner, your presence matters. This is more than a virtual GRC–it is a living laboratory, a space for transforming our group relations methodology and a shared commitment to learning in motion.

Everyone is invited to bring the fullness of their presence and identity, in cooperation with all the available technology, so that we can all be ready to be the change we need to see in the systems we inhabit.

We look forward to working with you and collaborating to write a new story, a story of becoming...

Warm regards,

Dr. Mónica Rocío Velarde Lazarte, Conference Director

Dr Debra A. Noumair, Associate Director

Jack Marmorstein, Sociotechnical Research Lead

Dr. Abigail Johnson, Lead Administrator

Claudia Velarde Vidarrauzaga, Administrator

What is an eGRC

A virtual GRC (eGRC) is an adaptation of the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations (TIHR) Group Relations Method (GRM) into virtual environments.

The GRM facilitates experiential events that are international, inter-professional, interdisciplinary, multicultural, and multi-faith in nature. These events focus on the formation and development of temporary organizations, offering participants profound learning on culture, leadership, authority, management, and responsible citizenship.

01 Since 2006, several online adaptations of the GRM have taken place globally.

02 The COVID-19 pandemic ignited a surge for the development of eGRC technology.

03 The process of adaptation of the GRM into virtual environments is an ongoing task that requires critical reflection. Working on such adaptation brings both opportunities and limitations that are subject to exploration.
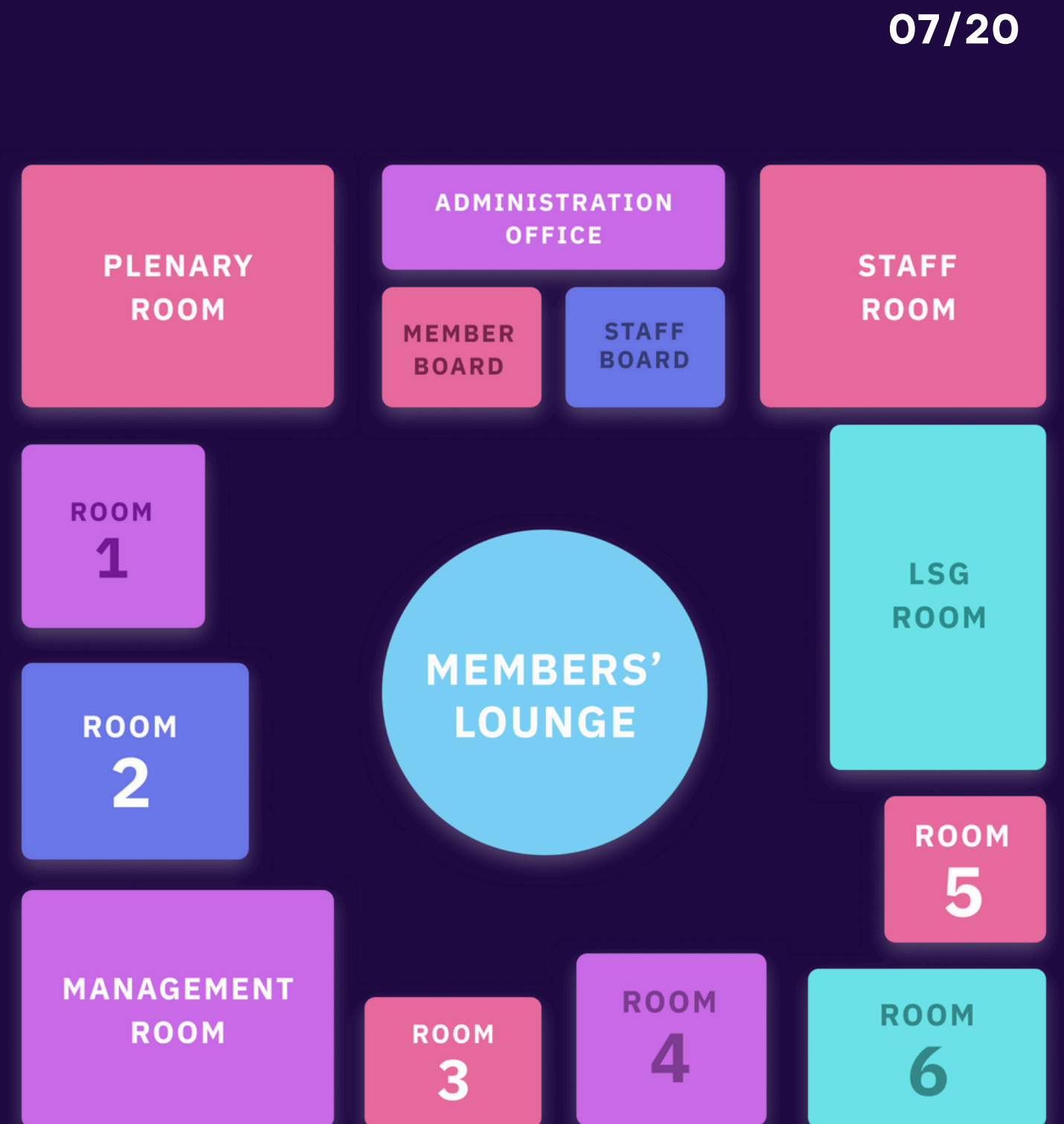
01 An eGRC provides opportunities for the study of roles within contextualized virtual environments and on this occasion, the conference is conceived as an experiment that starts in Zoom and migrates into The Territory.

02 Its design studies in real time the process of beta testing The Territory, a new virtual environment intended for the study of group processes. The technological migration, or the shift of virtual environments will offer multiple opportunities to study how our behavior is impacted by the structure of the technology in which we operate.

03 Additionally, a parallel socio-technical research track will be generating cooperative knowledge about the way in which our virtual environments are impacting our roles in the systems we operate.

04 Our aim is to generate useful data for further developing the use of the Tavistock GRM in virtual environments and to offer opportunities for improvement of The Territory, a platform that we hope will be of further use to those interested in studying group processes in virtual environments.

05 Our experiment also offers participants the opportunity to learn about their own behavior in virtual environments, inviting them to transfer this learning into their daily contexts and workplaces.

06 **The primary task of this conference** is to explore, through direct experience, the **dynamics of presence, accountability, authority, and leadership within evolving virtual contexts**, positioning the conference as a temporary learning cooperative.

The learning goals of this eGRC

Location

The conference will start in **Zoom** and participants will migrate into a new virtual environment, **The Territory**, a platform for freedom and learning.

The Territory is a combined space for teleconferencing and virtual engagement that allows individuals to explore self and roles out-of-the box while discovering different ways to place oneself within systems.

PLENARY ROOM

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

MEMBER BOARD

STAFF BOARD

STAFF ROOM

ROOM 1

ROOM 2

MEMBERS' LOUNGE

LSG ROOM

ROOM 5

MANAGEMENT ROOM

ROOM 3

ROOM 4

ROOM 6

Conference events

Plenary Sessions (P)

Include the whole membership and staff. These sessions aim to facilitate the conference journey by allowing a space for reflection of the experience, of beginnings and endings through the study of how the group enters, joins, transitions, and leaves the conference.

Institutional Event (IE)

The event explores the relationship and relatedness of the experiment as a temporary learning cooperative within its context. It studies the collective system-in-the-mind of the experiment-as-a-whole through the creation of space for testing fantasy against reality through a creative flow of heuristics and hermeneutics in the shape of working hypotheses.

Participants will migrate into The Territory, a platform for freedom and learning. A **Socio-Technical Research track** will be integrated into the event offering opportunities for members to exercise agency over this and future virtual adaptations of the group relations methodology. Participants will be offered the possibility to contract a **Post-Conference Evaluation Event**.

Conference events

Small Study Group (SSG)

Each group consists of up to 12 participants working with 1 consultant. The primary task of the SSG is to learn about the dynamics of small virtual groups.

It is an experiential 'here-and-now' event in which the behavior of the group is placed under a high resolution microscope and the group has the opportunity to study its own behavior as it happens, with the help of consultancy. The rationale for this is that knowledge, understanding and learning lead to change.

Large Study Group (LSG)

The LSG comprises the whole conference membership working together with 2-4 consultants. The primary task of this event is to provide opportunities for studying the dynamics of large groups and the processes of cohesion and fragmentation, myth-making and reality-testing as they occur.

This event also draws on the exploration of the dreams, myths, beliefs, assumptions and identities that emerge. This is an experiential 'here-and-now' event in which the behavior of the group is placed under a high resolution microscope and the group has the opportunity to study its own behavior as it happens.

Conference events

Review and Application Group (RAG)

In review mode, the aim is to offer participants the opportunity to review the different roles taken up during their conference experience. In application mode, the aim is to offer participants the opportunity to transfer learning of the conference to roles in their daily contexts and workplaces.

Post-Conference Evaluation Event

A follow-up evaluation meeting may be arranged six months after the conference, under the terms contracted in the Institutional Event.

Conference schedule

TIME (ET)	FRIDAY 26/9	SATURDAY 27/9	SUNDAY 28/9
09:00-10:00	Opening Plenary	Small Study Group	Small Study Group
10:15-11:15	Small Study Group	Large Study Group	Large Study Group
11:30-12:30	Large Study Group	Institutional Event	Institutional Event
12:30-13:30	Lunch & Wellness Break	Lunch & Wellness Break	Lunch & Wellness Break
13:30-14:30	Institutional Event	Institutional Event	Institutional Event
14:45-15:45	Institutional Event	Institutional Event	Closing Plenary
16:00-17:00	Review and Application Group	Review and Application Group	Review and Application Group

Directorate
Conference staff

Conference Director

Dr. Mónica Velarde Lazarte, Socioanalyst and psychologist director of Socioanalytic Practice. Co-Founder of the Territory, a platform for learning and freedom. Co-Founder of Wild Thoughts UK. Professional partner of TIHR.

Associate Director

Dr. Debra A. Noumair is Professor of Psychology & Education and Founder & Director of the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership (XMA) in the Department of Organization & Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. A group relations scholar and practitioner, she is a Fellow of AKRI.

Sociotechnical Research Lead

Jack Marmorstein is Chief Learning Officer at a global edtech company, with graduate degrees in literature and psychology. A published journalist and scholar with seven patents, he has staffed GRCs since 2008 and served as AKRI President from 2018–2020, leading early efforts to bring AKRI and the global group relations community online. He lives in Philadelphia, PA.
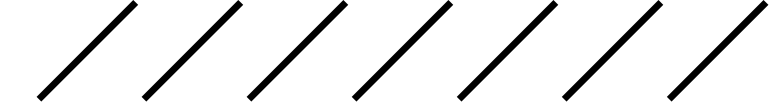
Directorate
Conference staff

Lead Administrator

Dr. Abigail Johnson is an OD consultant specializing in organizational change. She holds a doctorate in Social and Organizational Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a B.A. in Psychology from Oral Roberts University. She is a member of the New York Center for Group Relations, SIOP, AKRI, and ISPSO. In her free time, she enjoys dancing, cuddling her twin cats, and playing the harp, handpan, and piano.

Administrator

Lic. Claudia Velarde Vidarrauzaga, MA, is a clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, and educator with extensive experience in group relations, teaching, and psychoanalytic research. She has lectured in psychology faculties, facilitated group dynamics workshops, and researched countertransference and relational configurations in therapy. An international GRC consultant and presenter, she is passionate about integrating research, practice, and education to deepen understanding of group dynamics and their impact on growth.

Consultants

Conference staff

Leila Djemal, MA, is an OD consultant, executive coach, and founder of TouchOFEK Professional Development, where she also teaches. She has directed and staffed Group Relations Conferences in Europe, the UK, and the USA. An Associate of AKRI and past Treasurer of the NY Center for the Study of Groups, she is also a member and former board member of OFEK, a board member of PCCA, and a member of OPUS (UK).

Hanna Fisher is a senior psychoanalytic psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and organizational consultant based in Italy and the UK. She has consulted and translated at Group Relations Conferences and works closely with il Nodo group and ECW. Her work explores ecosystem homeostasis, unconscious organizational dynamics, and extreme religious orthodoxy. She co-founded Wild Thoughts, a consultancy integrating unconscious processes, environmental awareness, and embodiment for sustainable growth.

Consultants

Conference staff

Jack Lampl is an organizational consultant, credentialed mediator, and visual artist. A past president and Fellow of AKRI and past president of the Threshold Foundation, he serves on the board of the San Diego Psychoanalytic Center and is active in ApsA. His work blends group relations with creative and embodied practices. A former GREX board member, he founded Subjective Technologies, an early virtual reality startup, and continues to apply art and technology to experimental group relations work.

Dr. Yaro Fong-Olivares is Executive Director of the Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business at Bentley University, focused on leadership in multicultural organizations. She holds a doctorate from William James College, an M.S. from the Milano School, and a B.A. from Barnard College. A certified AKRI consultant, she is Past President of The New York Center, Co-Creator of Group Relations International, and a member of the Center for the Study of Groups and Social Systems. She enjoys HIIT, mindfulness, and yoga.

Consultants

Conference staff

Alan Ruiz is an artist and educator whose work explores how space is produced as both material and ideology. Through site-reflexive installations, writing, lectures, and workshops, he examines how institutions and architecture reflect social hierarchies and unconscious processes. He holds an M.F.A. from Yale and was a fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program. Alan has taught at RISD, Wesleyan, Parsons, Eugene Lang, and Hunter College. He is a GRI Co-Creator, a certified AKRI consultant, and past president of its New York Center affiliate.

Dr. Flora Taylor is a Licensed Counseling Psychologist and Organization Development Consultant. She runs an independent practice in West Orange, NJ, where she offers executive coaching and other Organization Development consultation, and psychotherapy. She teaches Group Dynamics at Teachers College, and University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Taylor is a Fellow of the A.K. Rice Institute, and she has published research in the A.K. Rice Group Relations Reader III, and elsewhere. Dr. Taylor received her A.B. in Psychology from Harvard, and her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a wife of one, a mother of 3, an avid fan of tennis and K-Dramas, and a 2nd Dan Black belt.

Registration
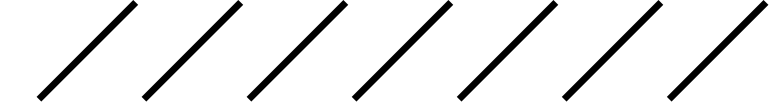
Click here to register or scan:

Please consider paying at the highest rate that you can afford. Your generosity supports our delivery of a sustainable event in service of equity and opportunity.

Scholarships
Funds for scholarship and/or subsidy are available (yet limited).
Learn more about scholarships here.

Email thenewyorkcenterGRC@gmail.com to inquire about group discounts.

	Register by **31 July 2025** for Early Bird fees	Final registration deadline is **10 September 2025**
General	$400	$475
Members of New York Center, AKRI, and GRI	$350	$425
Students (with current ID)	$175	$250

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for the study of groups, organizations, & social systems

THE **TAVISTOCK** **INSTITUTE**®

The New York Center for the Study of Groups, Organizations, and Social Systems advances leadership, education, collaboration, and innovation in Group Relations in the New York metropolitan area and beyond. The Center seeks to incorporate a diversity of perspectives related to Group Relations.

The Center has a commitment to social justice. The New York Center facilitates a variety of Group Relations activities throughout the year and across mediums, such as: experiential conferences, study groups, panel presentations, social dreaming events, and affinity group discussions on applied group relations in social and professional situations. The Center builds community and welcomes emerging practices in the field.

The Tavistock Institute for Human Relations (TIHR) is a not-for-profit organization which applies social science to contemporary issues and problems. It was formally founded as a registered charity in 1947. The Institute is engaged with organizational development and change consultancy, executive coaching and professional development, evaluation and action research, in support of sustainable change and ongoing learning.

TIHR staff work creatively with people involved in innovative activities, working across boundaries or in difficult situations. TIHR combines research and analytical skills with practical help in devising creative responses and in following through to implementation. TIHR is particularly known for its capacity to work with issues that are otherwise hidden, sometimes unconscious.
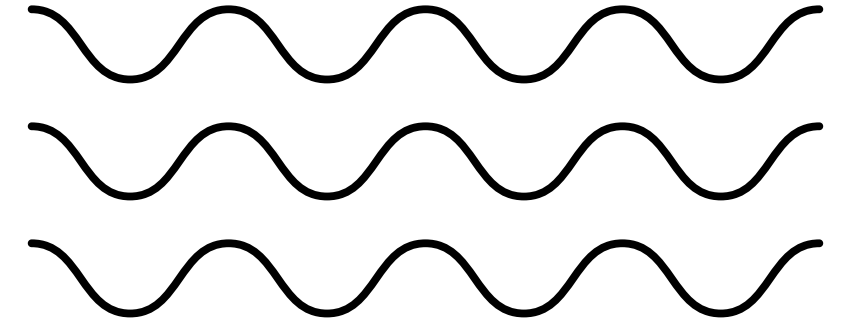
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The A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI), a not-for-profit organization, was established in 1970 to advance knowledge of the dynamics of groups, organizations and social systems, using the methodology developed at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in the United Kingdom. Today, the Institute's mission has broadened to include any efforts, across diverse audiences, that explore the different ways in which groups interact. AKRI continues to hold regular Group Relations Conferences, symposia, and training with the hope to promote further discussions and research on social interaction in the United States.

Group Relations International (GRI) is a home for people who have experienced the power of group relations work, particularly in combination with spirituality and social justice. GRI aims to nurture the GR network by offering a place to co-create as individuals and/or organizations. GRI is open to collaboration around group relations conferences and application events, writing, reflecting and meeting. GRI offers to stay connected with "the work" in various ways. *We pay attention to where the energy takes us.*

Contact us

E-mail

thenewyorkcenterGRC@gmail.com

Registration

https://forms.gle/46sSRi78sbrXR1Qi6

Conference webpage

https://www.nycgrouprelations.org/new-york-center-group-relations-conference