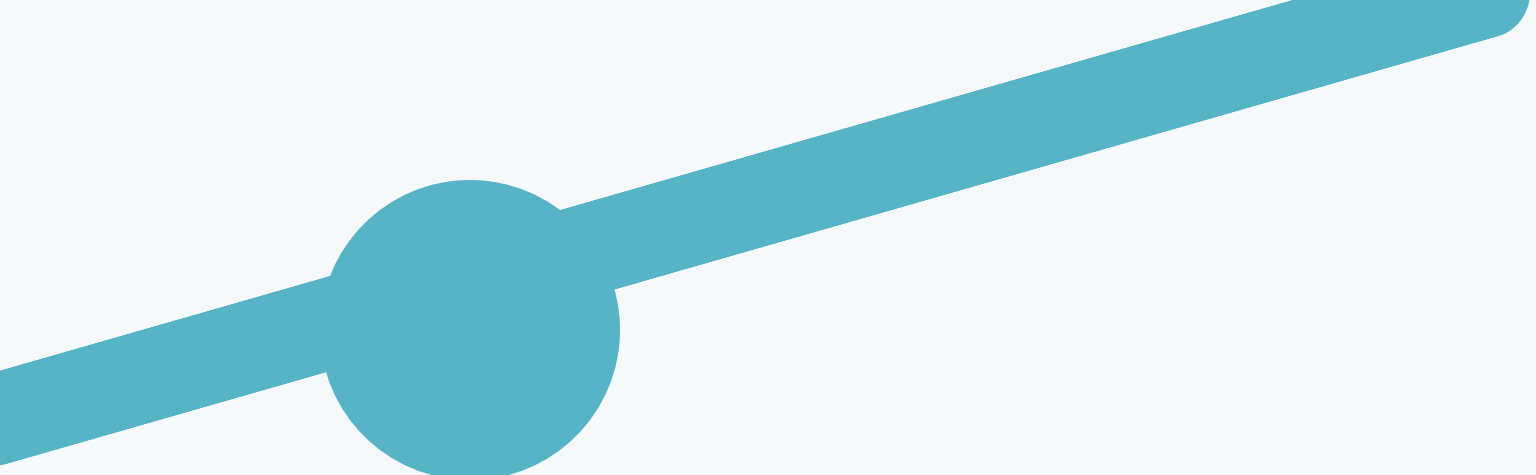


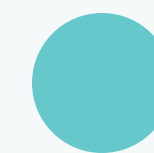


GROUP RELATIONS CONFERENCE

Living Together in Difference: Authority, Responsibility, and Ethical Imagination



13–15 February 2027 · Stony Brook University · Long Island, New York



Sponsorship

HOSTED BY

newyorkcenter

for the study of groups, organizations, & social systems

IN COLLABORATION WITH



An Invitation

We're living through a period of real organizational and social change. Many of the challenges we face — at work, in our communities, in our organizations — are bigger than any one of us, or any one group, can solve alone.

At the same time, many of us feel more disconnected than ever: from our organizations, from each other, from the systems we depend on.

Living Together in Difference: Authority, Responsibility, and Ethical Imagination is an invitation to explore that tension directly — not by talking about it, but by living inside it, together, for three days.

How do we live and work together in the presence of difference?

How do we exercise authority when responsibility is shared across many hands?

How do we stay engaged with what's hard to face — rather than turning away from it?

Explore authority. Embrace difference. Imagine responsibly.

What is a Group Relations Conference?

Historically: A Group Relations Conference (GRC) comes from the Tavistock tradition of **learning about authority, leadership and organizational life through direct experience**. In 1957, the first Leicester Conference established this as a radical educational innovation: rather than learning about organizations from a distance, participants became members of a temporary organization, investigating their own experience as it unfolded within the conference itself. **Learning comes from noticing what actually happens as people work together on a shared task.**

GRC with a twist: Traditionally, for three days, a GRC becomes a *temporary organization*. However, for this particular GRC we will use the term, **temporary learning cooperative**, rather than a temporary organization, because an organization implies something that can be handed down as a finished structure, **but a cooperative has to be built, together, by the people inside it.**

A **temporary learning cooperative draws on relational psychoanalysis**: interdependence is part of how the container itself is constructed, jointly, rather than simply provided — its field and its containment co-constructed by members and staff together. It's within that shared construction that ethical imagination becomes possible.

A GRC with a Twist: Becoming a Cooperative

This design stays disciplined about what a Group Relations Conference already does well — and adds a few things on top.

WHAT STAYS THE SAME

- An **emphasis on learning** with a clear primary task and firm boundaries of time, task and territory.
- **Authority and role learned through direct experience**, in the here-and-now — not through lectures.
- **Traditional GRC events:**
 - Opening and Closing Plenary - a space to reflect and transition inbetween daily life and the conference experience.
 - Review & Application Groups - a space to review the conference experience and integrate potential learnings into life's organizations and social systems.

WHAT'S NEW HERE

- Framed as a **temporary cooperative** (rather than temporary organization) in which interdependence and sponsorship are learned about in the public.
- The creation of an art installation: members will contribute to the creation of a living and evolving exhibition that will enhance the socioanalytic exploration of the larger field they inhabit.
- **Revised GRC events:**
 - Cooperative Matrix - members negotiate and attempt to build organizational structures of their own, while they study the dynamics of sponsorship, management, and organisation/s in real time.
 - These have the potential to live beyond the duration of the GRC, and address a dilemma of their organisational and social field.
 - This event replaces the traditional Institutional Event, an event where participants studied the relationships and relatedness between the management and staff of the temporary learning institution.
 - Small Learning Matrix & Field Learning Matrix: Will have the same primary task as a **Small Study Group (SSG)** and **Large Study Group (LSG)** **respectively**, to study the here and now life, but it will do so, from the perspective of a matrix.

THE PRIMARY TASK

To study (1) the conditions under which Ethical Imagination may be found or lost within a temporary learning cooperative, and (2) how authority, responsibility, sponsorship, difference, and interdependence influence the capacity of individuals, groups, and organizations to respond to contemporary dilemmas.

Every event in the conference exists to serve this task.

What is Ethical Imagination?

Ethical imagination (Armstrong, 2017) emerges in response to real dilemmas in practical life. It brings together a developmental possibility, a recognition of human resourcefulness and agency, and the capacity to re-imagine forms of human association. Such possibilities also evoke resistance — within individuals, groups, organizations and the wider social system.

For Armstrong, ethical imagination is therefore not simply about thinking differently or tolerating uncertainty. It concerns our capacity to face reality in new ways and imagine how we might organize and associate differently, in the service of human resilience and flourishing.

This GRC does not seek to produce ethical imagination; rather, creates the temporary learning cooperative that provides a setting in which participants can study these processes through experience: how dilemmas are encountered, agency is taken up or surrendered, new forms of association become possible, and resistance emerges around them.

The Art Installation

Celebrating the eightieth anniversary of this tradition, *Living Together in Difference: Authority, Responsibility, and Ethical Imagination*, invites participants to contribute a professional, organisational or societal dilemma through a collaborative artistic installation.

The installation will be co-curated by staff member/consultant, Alan Ruiz, together with conference members and draws some inspiration from the pioneering work of the Tavistock Institute, use of artistic installations within GRCs aiming to expand the possibilities for inquiry, reflection and collective meaning-making.

Where the first Leicester Conference sent members out to meet the field, this time we bring the field in: **the installation carries the outside world's dilemmas into the conference itself, through artistic representation.** It lives in the room where the Field Study Matrix meets — not as the object of that event's work, but as an evolving presence that informs it, the way a field informs what becomes possible within it.

Throughout the GRC, the installation will unfold as a living representation of the concerns, hopes and uncertainties brought by members.

A LABORATORY FOR NEW FORMS OF ASSOCIATION

The Cooperative Matrix

This event replaces the traditional Institutional Event.

Here, participants stop being members of a GRC someone else designed — and start becoming responsible for organizational designs of their own. Around dilemmas that matter to them, members propose a task, look for collaborators, and negotiate the authority, sponsorship, and resources it actually requires. Some cooperatives find their footing. Others struggle, or dissolve. Both are materially worth thinking about.

This is the space of exploration of ethical imagination: can a group stay connected to what actually matters — to each other, to the task, to the reality of what they're facing — while also negotiating authority, resources, and facing resistance. That tension, lived in real time, is what the Cooperative Matrix is designed to surface and work through.

Projects that take shape here can be presented to the Management of the Cooperative Event as seed projects for consultation, resource allocation, and authorization. Where support is granted, members negotiate how available resources — funds, networks, expertise, institutional backing — may be invested in service of their task during and after the conference.

The Conference Journey

Opening Plenary

Marks the crossing the boundary from everyday life into the temporary Cooperative — sets the available task, time, territory and resources.

Cooperative Matrix

Members create temporary organizational forms of their own, negotiating sponsorship, authority and resources - with potential of these projects living beyond the GRC.

Field Learning Matrix

Similar to a classical LSG, with the evolving art installation of dilemmas folded in as live associative material.

Small Learning Matrix

Similar to a classical SSG but turns attention to how hard — or possible — it is to think in the presence of difference.

Review & Application Groups

Reviewing conference experience and its relevance to roles and systems members belong to outside.

Closing Plenary

Reviews the GRC as a whole and marks the end of the GRC.

Each event offers a different vantage point on the same conference system.

The conference winds through these six events, and earlier dynamics often resurface later.

YOUR GUIDES FOR THIS INQUIRY

Conference Staff

Learn more about staff [here](#).

CONFERENCE DIRECTORATE



Dr. Monica Velarde Lazarte

Conference Director

Socioanalyst, Psychologist and Consultant,
Professional Associate and Trustee of the
Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (THR)



Dr. Flora Taylor

Conference Associate Director

Organisational and leadership consultant and
educator



Lamya Razzouk

Administrative Director

Conference administrator and
organizational collaborations



Jack Marmorstein

Sociotechnical Lead & Consultant

Specialist in sociotechnical systems and
digital platforms in organisational and
learning environments

STAFF



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Consultant

Professor and Director of Child and
Adolescent, Psychology at UCLA



Dr. Abigail Johnson

Consultant

Organizational Development
Consultant and Executive Coach.



Alan Ruiz

Art Co-curator & Consultant

Artist, Educator, Group Relations
Consultant and Co-Creator



Dr. Christopher Scanlon

Consultant

Group Analyst and Psychotherapist.
Independent Psychosocial Researcher and
Consultant, Professional Associate THR



Viera Sterning

Administrator & Consultant

Psychologist and psychoanalytic therapist.
Group Relations consultant working with
individuals, groups, and organizations to
explore human dynamics and relationships.



Who Should Attend

This conference is for anyone who thinks, leads and acts inside or with an organization.

LEADERSHIP & CONSULTANCY

- Leaders and Managers, including Board Members
- Organizational Consultants
- Executive Coaches
- Community Leaders and Organizers

CLINICAL & GROUP RELATIONS

- Mental Health Practitioners, including Psychoanalysts
- Group Relations Practitioners

EDUCATION & PUBLIC LIFE

- Educators
- Public Servants
- Members of International Organizations
- Volunteers of Not-for-profit or Community Organizations

RESEARCH, ARTS & ACTIVISM

- Researchers
- Students and Trainees
- Artists
- Activists



Why Someone Should Attend

What participants (members and staff) gain from this experience...

GRCs offer direct experience of how authority, leadership and organizational life actually operate. Participants develop a clearer read on their own role in organizational life, sharper thinking about leadership and responsibility, and new ways of seeing group and institutional dynamics.

This conference extends that by creating opportunities to investigate how authority, responsibility, sponsorship, resources, legitimacy and interdependence operate within contemporary social and organizational systems.

The conference also invites inquiry into whether new forms of association may emerge when individuals and groups remain sufficiently connected to reality, difference, responsibility and one another. Such forms may include collaborations, initiatives, partnerships, communities of practice, networks, organizational experiments, social innovations, and temporary or enduring collective projects. The conference does not assume that such forms will emerge — it seeks to study the conditions under which they become possible.



Art Submission

Application is understood as the first act of authority and participation within the conference.

Participants are invited to submit a creative representation of an unresolved dilemma drawn from their organizational, professional, community, societal, or personal field of experience.

Submissions may include drawings, photographs, poems, short texts, songs, audio recordings, collages, sculptures, videos, code, digital media, or other creative artifacts.

These submissions are not evaluated artistically. They are understood as representations of dilemmas entering the temporary learning cooperative. Upon submission, artifacts become part of the conference system and may be revisited throughout the conference as material for inquiry, reflection, and study.

Cost and Scholarships

General (register by 10 Jan 2027)	\$1,300
Member (TNYC, AKRI, GRI)	\$1,000
Early Bird (register by 30 Nov 2026)	\$750
Lower-Fee (Students, Retirees, Artists, and Individuals w. Lower Income or Underpaid Careers*)	\$750

*Please contact us to discuss eligibility.

Scholarships Available

Scholarships are available for students, early-career professionals, seniors, and practitioners from under-resourced organizations or regions. Applications are competitive, based on demonstrated need and alignment with the purpose of the conference.

Investing in this conference is investing in deeper organizational thinking and more ethical futures.

Practical Information

Dates & Venue

13–15 February 2027, Stony Brook University, Long Island, New York.

Arrival & Departure

A detailed schedule, including arrival and departure times, is shared once registration is confirmed.

Accommodation

Accommodation options off campus will be suggested by the administrative team and are not included in the conference fee.

Meals

Meals for the duration of the conference are not included in the conference fee.

What to Bring

Comfortable clothing for extended group work — no special equipment or prior experience is required.

Questions

Write to thenewyorkcentergrc@gmail.com for anything not covered here.



We learn about organizational life so that
better organizations and more ethical futures can become possible.

Explore authority. Embrace difference. Imagine responsibly.

Ready to Join Us?

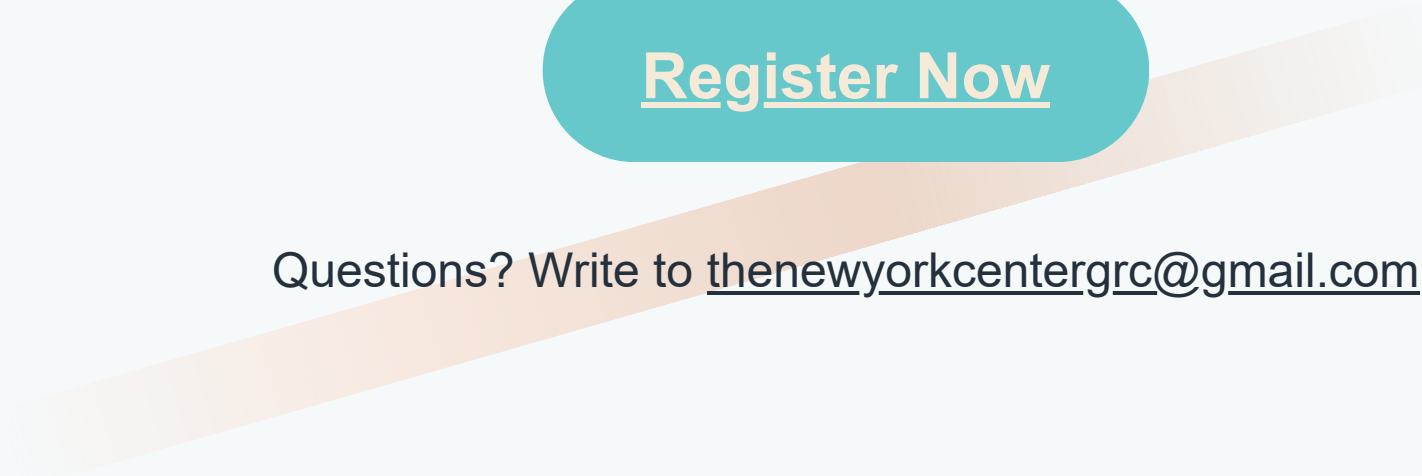
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Early bird deadline: 30 November 2026

Registration closes: 10 January 2027

[Register Now](#)

Questions? Write to thenewyorkcentergrc@gmail.com



Glossary

Temporary Learning Cooperative — the temporary institution the conference itself becomes, built jointly by members and staff for this work of learning.

Ethical Imagination — is an active, and simultaneously resisted, engagement with dilemmas arising in practical organisational and social life, in which human agency and resourcefulness may make possible the re-imagining of forms of association.

Container & Containment — the relational-psychoanalytic term for the shared, jointly built space (container) and the capacity it provides (containment) to hold and think about difficult experience, rather than act it out or avoid it.

Sponsorship — the authority, resources and legitimacy an initiative needs from others in order to exist and act.

Here-and-Now — the space for learning, attention to what is actually happening among members as it happens, rather than to reported events from elsewhere or another time.

Sociotechnical — the view that organisational life is shaped jointly by social relationships and technical or structural systems, neither of which can be understood in isolation from the other.

Opening & Closing Plenary — the events that mark the boundary between everyday life and the Cooperative, and back again.

Field Learning Matrix — the classical Large Study Group, with the living art installation folded in as material for the group's study of itself.

Review & Application Groups — where members review their experience and consider its relevance to the roles and systems they belong to outside the conference.

Primary Task — the core purpose the conference exists to serve; every event is judged by what it contributes to it.

New Forms of Association — organisational arrangements that may become possible when people work through real interdependence, rather than assumptions inherited in advance.

Interdependence — the condition of depending on others for a task no one holds alone — studied here, not assumed away.

Field — the wider web of relationships, institutions and conditions a person, group or organisation is embedded in and shaped by, beyond its own boundary.

Boundary — the edge of time, task, territory or membership that marks what is inside a system and what is outside it, and makes that system available for study.

Social Hackathon — a concentrated, time-bounded working session in which members build directly on a shared problem, here lending its pace and hands-on spirit to the conference's collaborative work.

Small Learning Matrix — small-group work on here-and-now experience, from the perspective of a matrix within the larger field rather than an isolated group.

Cooperative Matrix — where members negotiate and attempt to build organisational forms of their own around shared dilemmas.

Relatedness — the quality of connection between people, groups and systems that is neither assumed nor fixed - studied here as something that has to be actively constructed, negotiated and sustained.