

Networks of People, Places and Symptoms

Saturday 31 October and Sunday 1 November 2026
9.30am to about 5pm each day

What this is, in three sentences.

A network is just dots and lines: people, places or ideas, and the connections between them. Over two days you will build several by hand, count things about them, and argue about what the lines actually mean.

By Sunday evening you will be able to look at any network diagram and say what it is claiming, and whether you believe it.

You do not need any of this

- **No laptop.** There is no software in this camp at all. Nothing to install, nothing to download.
- **No coding.** None. Not on either day.
- **No maths** beyond counting. If you can count ticks in a row, you can do every calculation in the two days.
- **No reading beforehand.** The reading list comes afterwards, and it is optional.
- **No prior anything.** We assume you have never heard the word “node”.

What you will actually do

Draw grids on paper. Count. Argue with three other people about whether two families in fifteenth-century Florence were really connected. Work out which port in the Indian Ocean, if you removed it, would break the whole trading system in half. Look at a diagram of your own social world that you built yourself, and find out you were wrong about who the important person in it is.

This brochure tells you exactly what happens and when.

Every session below says how long it is, what will happen in it, what you will be asked to do, and how loud the room will be. If anything here is still unclear, email before the camp and ask. Asking in advance is completely normal and we would rather you did.

Saturday 31 October

Theme: what counts as a connection?

Noise guide: ■ Quiet ■ Some talking ■ Busy and loud

9.00 – 9.30 Arrive

Sign in, pick up your glossary card, find your table. Tea available.

You will be asked to: Nothing. You can arrive at 9.20 and sit quietly if that is easier.

■ Quiet to ■ Some talking

9.30 – 11.00 Session 1: What is a network?

The words we will use for two days, introduced one at a time. Dots, lines, and a grid called an adjacency matrix, which is just a table where you tick a box if two things are connected. You will fill one in from a short story read out loud.

You will be asked to: Fill in a grid on paper, on your own first, then compare with your table.

■ Quiet, then ■ Some talking

11.00 – 11.15 Tea break

11.15 – 1.00 Session 2: Sixteen families in Florence

Fifteenth-century Florence. Sixteen powerful families, and a real historical puzzle about how one of them ended up running the city. Your group gets a list of who was connected to whom, draws the grid, and counts.

Then something happens that we are not going to spoil here.

You will be asked to: Work with your group on chart paper. Write one sentence on a card at the end.

■ Busy and loud — this is the loudest session of the weekend

1.00 – 2.00 Lunch

2.00 – 3.45 Session 3: Your own network

Your group picks a small world you share — a cohort, a hostel floor, a club — and maps who has studied or worked with whom in it. Everyone outside the room becomes A1, A2, A3 and so on. No real names leave your table.

Then you count, and you write a sealed prediction about who you think will turn out to be the most important person in your map.

You will be asked to: Help build your group's map, and agree a written prediction.

■ Some talking

4.00 – 4.30 Wrap up

Read the new words back. Hand in your group's sheet. Overnight, the convenor turns every group's paper map into a proper diagram for Sunday morning.

You will be asked to: Explain three words to someone at your table.

■ Some talking

Sunday 1 November

Theme: the same picture can mean completely different things.

9.30 – 11.00 Session 4: Your maps, drawn properly

Every group's network on screen. You open your sealed prediction first, out loud, and then see whether you were right.

Most groups get one part right and one part badly wrong, and the wrong part is the interesting one. It turns out people are good at spotting who is popular and bad at spotting who is holding the whole thing together.

You will be asked to: Read out your prediction. Say one person your group left out, and why.

■ **Some talking**

11.00 – 11.15 Tea break

11.15 – 1.00 Session 5: The Indian Ocean, and how ideas travel

Fourteen ports between East Africa and China, six hundred years ago, connected by monsoon winds, trade and travelling scholars. Same counting, different material.

The question your group answers: remove one port, and the whole system falls apart — which one? It is not the busiest one, and finding that out is the point.

Last half hour: the same idea applied to philosophers and their students, and whether your position in a network decides what you are able to think.

You will be asked to: Count, trace routes on paper, and defend an answer.

■ **Busy and loud**

1.00 – 2.00 Lunch

2.00 – 3.45 Session 6: Three kinds of line

Sitting and listening, with discussion. No counting.

We put three diagrams side by side. In one, a line means two families were married. In another, a line means historians think two ports traded. In the third, a line means a statistical association between two symptoms, calculated from a survey, with a wide margin of error.

The three pictures look identical and mean wildly different things. Telling them apart is the most important hour of the weekend.

A note about the third example. Part of this session uses published research on mental health, including personality disorders, as an example of the third kind of line. It is about published diagrams and their limits.

Nobody rates themselves or anyone else on anything. We will say clearly at the start of the session what is coming, and you are free to step out for that part.

You will be asked to: Nothing, unless you want to argue. Please do argue.

■ **Quiet**

4.00 – 5.00 Finish: your one page

You write a single page about a network in your own subject: who is in it, what a line would mean, where you would stop, and one thing you would expect to find. A few people read theirs out. Then we finish.

You will be asked to: Write one page. Volunteering to read it out is entirely optional.

■ **Quiet**, then ■ **Some talking**

About the group work

We put the groups together, you do not have to. Groups of three or four, the same group both days, so nothing is renegotiated on Sunday morning. No milling about looking for a team. Tell us on the form if you are coming with someone you know and we will seat you together.

You never have to be one of the dots. On Saturday afternoon your group maps a social world. If you would rather not be in it, say so, and you still do every other part. We announce this to the whole room, so saying no is not conspicuous.

The questions are boring on purpose. We only ask who has studied or worked with whom. Nothing about who likes whom, nothing personal, nothing about health. Real names never leave your table.

The room, and getting out of it

- **Leave any session at any time.** No need to say why, ask permission, or explain when you come back.
- **A quiet room next door** for the whole two days. Nobody will follow you into it or ask what is wrong.
- **Breaks are at fixed times** and we will not run over into them.
- **Two sessions are genuinely loud** — Saturday and Sunday 11.15, both marked. Bring ear defenders or loops if you use them. Several people will.
- **Standard overhead lighting.** Tell us in advance if that is a problem and we will dim the room or seat you away from it.
- **Nothing is timed, graded or recorded.** No test, no pressure to finish an exercise first.

What you take away

A printed glossary card, in your hand from the first ten minutes, with every word we use. Nothing is taught that is not on that card. Plus your own one-page memo, an optional reading list afterwards, and a diagram of a small piece of your own world that you built by hand out of ticks in a grid.

Signing up

Open to all Krea students. No department or year restriction, no prerequisites. Places are limited by tables, not by selection.

The form asks three things: your name, whether you are coming with someone you know, and whether there is anything we should arrange for you in advance. The third is optional and goes only to the convenor.

Questions before you decide? Email rakesh.sengupta@krea.edu.in. Asking what a session involves, or whether you will be made to speak, is completely reasonable and gets a straight answer.