

CONFLICT, COOPERATION AND GROUP DECISION-MAKING ON MARS

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The way groups function is closely tied to the way people in those groups categorise themselves and others. This is because all aspects of collective behaviour (e.g., conflict, cooperation, trust, communication, leadership, productivity) are affected by the degree to which individuals identify with a superordinate social category that includes others. When people do so, this means that they define themselves and others as members of a common ingroup. Such groups are an important part of how we see ourselves and are a crucial source of pride, self respect and a sense of purpose. Feeling part of a group also has consequences for how we behave towards others in the group. When we see people as part of our group we are more likely to communicate with them, take up their ideas, cooperate with them and work to achieve their goals. However, feeling part of a common group on one set of dimensions doesn't preclude us seeing ourselves as different on another set of dimensions. In fact, we see the most creativity and cooperation in groups when people feel similar to others but also see themselves as having a clear and distinct role to play. We call this an organic social identity. Such groups don't emerge spontaneously on Earth and simulation studies done to date show that Mars is likely to be no exception. In fact, evidence suggests that people on simulation missions tend to splinter apart fairly easily, despite their shared isolation. This raises the question: How can we make sure that isolated groups develop a positive social structure? A four-stage model designed to address this issue - the ASPIRe model - is discussed. The model is a negotiation-based planning tool that can be used to resolve conflicts and/or help a group plan and coordinate its activities. It does so partly by building a sense of attachment to both distinct (subgroup) and shared (superordinate) identities. The first stage of this model involves developing a psychological map of the group. This reveals the way in which people currently categorise themselves and others within the broader group as well as something of the nature of relations between these category subgroupings. Subgroupings inform the way people really behave within the broader group and, consequently, must be explicitly acknowledged in planning or conflict resolution. In subsequent phases relevant subgroups (and then the group as a whole) develop and coordinate goals that are relevant to the problems and tasks they face on the mission. In a final phase concrete plans for action are developed. Our intention is to test the model in future simulated missions.

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