

Response to Raul Hakli's and Pekka Mäkelä's critical paper "Planning in the We-Mode"

In this paper Hakli and Mäkelä propose an account of we-mode planning in view of the fact that my theory needs one. There is very little on planning in my 2013 social ontology book (SO), although in some earlier work I have touched on the topic.ⁱ These authors claim that planning is an important topic needed for a philosophical theory of collective and group action. I agree that a comprehensive account of we-mode planning would be a desirable addition to the theory.

These authors' paper starts with an introduction explaining what I say in SO about the I-mode and the we-mode, about intrinsic versus extrinsic intentionality as well as about group agents. Their account of my views seems to be basically right. In the second section the importance of planning for rational agency is discussed. Hakli and Mäkelä discuss some earlier accounts of planning, viz. those by Pollock, Weirich, and Bratman. As to my account, Hakli and Mäkelä wonder whether I think of intentions as plans or not. My answer is briefly that (except perhaps in some simple cases not involving the search for means-actions for realizing intentions) it holds that intentions are conceptually different from action plans although the realization of intentions does require planning. E.g. one can make plans for different contingencies, and they may be conditional wants or, in some cases, conditional intentions either in a narrow or broadly conditional or context-dependent sense. Plans are generally results of mental activities concerning the selection of means for satisfying wants or intentions or for

achieving goals. E.g. if one intends to travel from Helsinki to Timbuktu one obviously must in typical cases be concerned with means and times as well as costs of transportation, in general several means-end factors. A plan of this kind is a set of relevant beliefs but an intention need not be involved.

Hakli and Mäkelä present a deductive argument that has the conclusion that my account of group agency has not succeeded in accounting for large organized groups on the ground that I have not fully accounted for their long-term planning activities. That is an acceptable piece of criticism concerning the lack of planning account – my theory is not a finished theory. Another matter that also needs a fuller account is the cooperation within and between such large organized groups, and the same goes for some other interaction features such as their handling of conflicts in various kinds of groups.

The authors notice that Bratman's theory and my theory do not accept the game-theoretical and decision-theoretical "atomistic act evaluation principle" according to which the selection of an individual's momentary action should be based on the evaluation of the individual's momentary action and not on some other entity, e.g. some kind of sequence or combination of actions of which the individual's action is a part. The authors argue that the atomistic act evaluation principle need not be accepted and indeed should be rejected. I will not here go into the details of the matter.

Hakli and Mäkelä present an account of we-mode planning that basically does the same for the case of we-mode and group action that

Bratman's account gives for individualistic (in my terms, I-mode) action. Thus they end up with a combined account of planning applicable both to I-mode and we-mode cases. Their account of how we-mode planning proceeds is based on five phases. First, an agreement on the plan evaluation criteria must come about. Second, the best plan must be found and the group must commit itself to it. There are several subtasks involved in a plan for group action. Thus a (partial) action plan must be created, and it must also be suitably refined possibly by the use of team reasoning. Actions for the agents must be scheduled and allocated to them. Next individual action plans must be extracted and refined to preserve a mesh between them. Finally the individual subplans are to be executed whereby appropriate monitoring, adjusting, and helping activities are to find their place.

As such, I find this account of we-mode planning acceptable. I would nevertheless like to see an account of many details that are not mentioned above. First, there should be a clearer distinction of what happens at the group level and what happens at the member level – remembering that only group members' attitudes and actions can be in the we-mode, and strictly speaking not a group's attitudes and actions. Examples should be given to clarify e.g. how tasks are to be rationally assigned to individual participants

The last significant topic that the authors consider in their paper is comparing Bratman's individualistic theory of modest sociality with we-mode we-reasoning (also regarded as team reasoning) in the context of action planning. The we-mode theory recommends the selection of the best plan (typically utility maximizing plan) for we-intending participants and

gives the same utility maximizing strategy for all the participants (e.g. Hi in the Hi-Lo game).

In contrast, a purely individualistic theory is not capable in general (e.g. in the Hi-Lo case) to recommend a unique maximizing strategy for the individuals, but in the context of Bratman's theory we-intentions such as expressed by "We intend to maximize group utility" are not acceptable and used. Rather Bratman uses the kind of intentions expressible by "I intend that we maximize group utility" in the case of all participants. The authors argue that the resulting reasoning would lead to the recommendation of Hi.ⁱⁱ However, as the authors also argue, it is not clear if this kind of version of team reasoning would be accepted by Bratman.

Bacharachian team reasoning applies to situations where the participants make their decisions *independently* of each other on the basis of shared values or intentions, which for the we-mode account is not a typical case (this seems to be against what Hakli and Mäkelä think). When functioning in the we-mode the participants may yet on the basis of sharing the ethos of the group and the group's previous history in the present kind of situation arrive at Hi in Hi-Lo. In the full we-mode case not only the premises of the above schema but also the three we-mode criteria (concerning group reason, collective commitment, and collectivity) are satisfied. Compared with the Bacharachian case (where the participants team reason independently on the basis of shared group utility) there thus is much more ethos-based and other unity that are likely to lead to the "right" solution.

Hakli and Mäkelä argue that, in contrast to team reasoning, Bratman's theory will not be able to guarantee that shared intentions will be realized so as to lead to Hi. (I will not here comment on the details of their argument which seems to me acceptable.)

As a conclusion I would like to say that the Hakli-Mäkelä paper is clearly written and that it succeeds in making my theory of collective group action applicable to cases of planning covering temporally extended collective and group actions.

References

Bratman, M. (2014), *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*, New York: Oxford University Press

Sandu, G. and Tuomela, R. (1996), "Joint Action and Group Action Made Precise", *Synthese* 105, 319-345

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Notes

ⁱ See my action theory book of (1977) that only treats single-agent actions and especially see my 1984 book on social action where some examples of we-mode planning have been presented in terms of "social conduct plans" and practical reasoning schemas. In addition, Sandu and Tuomela (1995) present some logical tools for an account of planning applicable to temporally extended planning.

Note that my account of actions of course is intention-based, but it goes beyond the BDI (belief-desire-intention) scheme by adding *reason* as a fourth element to result in what I call a BDIR scheme (SO, p. 271).

ⁱⁱ The authors accordingly propose the following schema of practical inference:

1. You intend that we maximize group utility.
2. I intend that we maximize group utility.

3. Our choosing H_i uniquely maximizes group utility.

Therefore,

4. I will perform my component of $H_i H_i$, viz. H_i .

Mutual knowledge of the premises by the participants must be assumed for the schema to work as meant.