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The raising of the flag in 'Volkstaat' Orania: perspectives on a school ceremony

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Abstract

In this paper we present an analysis of a social practice that was observed during a two month ethnographic field study in a school in the Afrikaans community of Orania. It is a flag ceremony that is carried out at the end of each week. We use two different framework positions from which to discuss the ceremony - Turner's (2009) interpretive framework with which to analyse social action as ritual and Reckwitz's (2003) "theories of practice" approach to see how it could be understood as forming part of everyday life. From the view of the former, rituals are mostly associated with power relations and initiation, and have rigid time and content structures. From the view of the latter, a type of "praxeological" approach, the observed ceremony could be interpreted as an integral part of everyday school life that is embedded and is an embodied routine, without rational, reflective practice. The aim of this article is to juxtapose and discuss these two alternative approaches as they apply to the observed ceremony. For this we turn to the work of Erving Goffman, who combines ritual theory with an everyday routine focus. The conclusions point to the need to examine the underlying logic of practices instead of only describing their evolving dynamics.

Keywords

Orania, praxeology, ritual, Goffman, community, *communitas*

Introduction

In an ethnographic study of a school in the community of Orania in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, we identified a flag raising ceremony as an example of an event that could illustrate the theoretical discussion of this article. The discussion centres around different perspectives on such an event, which could be understood to be a ritual, or an everyday routine, or both. We assume that, usually, if flag ceremonies are conducted in South African schools, that the homage paid is to the national flag. However, in the *Volkskool Orania*, a different flag was raised.

To situate this ceremony we will first sketch the context of the community where the school is located. Then we examine specific theories of social action, followed by an excerpt from ethnographic field notes compiled during the study. This excerpt is then discussed, focusing on Turner's interpretive framework of social action as ritual,

Reckwitz' s conceptualisation of practices as everyday routine, and Goffman's work on rituals in everyday life. We conclude that the *logic of practice* needs to feature more strongly in school research and that in order to understand the ordinary it is sometimes necessary to examine the out-of-the-ordinary.

The school's community: *Volkstaat Orania*



Illustration 1: A photograph of Orania's flag on the school grounds

Orania was founded in 1990 by the son-in-law of the main architect of the apartheid state, Hendrik Verwoerd. It was planned as an 'Afrikaners only' settlement. Since Orania was established on private property, all residents have to buy shares of the managing company that runs Orania. Residents need to be able to make a living on their own so as not to become a burden to the community's treasury. Africans, "coloureds"¹ and even English-speaking whites are not accepted as citizens or even as employees but there is no objection to their spending their money earned on the neighbouring farms in the extensive range of shops, businesses, or the small petrol station. The latter is a rather unusual example of 'role reversal': white Afrikaans station attendants serve African families passing by on the R369 main road. In Orania all work is done by the white community, including domestic work. People are proud of it: dependency on black labour is seen as one of the major problems of the past.

Despite its unusual characteristics, little systematic investigation about Orania has been carried out, although there have been reports in the mass media – also about their individualised computer assisted learning programmes (e.g. Schadomsky 2004).

¹ A term that traditionally designates people of 'mixed race' in South Africa.

Few researchers² have made attempts to look at the dynamics of this community and its school. In the light of this lack of research, one of the authors undertook an ethnographic study of the school in Orania to find out about the kinds of institutional practices and dynamics taking place in an atmosphere of 'separateness' (Hues, 2008). Through participant observation the classroom situation in the school was studied and summarised in ethnographic reports. With a carefully chosen coding system some interaction patterns were identified, one of these patterns being institutionalised solidarity. The way in which social action was observed led us to identify different theoretical approaches for the analysis of the data, one example of which is the object of discussion in this article.

Even though Orania is in many ways characterised, or even defined, by its political and racial attitudes, we do *not* wish to comment here on matters of race, culture and heritage (see also Schwartz, 1994). Though this should not be neglected, the focus of this article is on theory and methodology only. In essence the question we try to address is how ritual theory (Turner, 2009), Reckwitz's (2004) praxeology theory, and Goffmann's routine theory could be integrated to better understand the *logic of practice* of the event of the flag raising.

Examining routines and rituals

There seems to be consensus that modern schools serve as societal institutions that reproduce their population in terms of values and tradition (see for example Giddens, 2006; Gecas, 2008). This assumption was the motivation for the selection of Volkskool Orania as object of inquiry. It provides a unique opportunity to address the question of how a community, which is based upon cultural and race exclusiveness, separatism, and seclusion, prepares and educates its children, and how it reproduces the fundamental values of its culture. In this context, it is assumed that there are special and out-of-the-ordinary school contexts, actions and dynamics to support this formation of a 'gemeenskap' (community, or *Gemeinschaft* as described by Tönnies, 1887).

One of the easiest ways to gain an (insider) understanding about school-in-action in Orania would have been to simply ask the actors. A few open-ended interviews with school officials, some content-analysis through '*Orania Bewegings*' comprehensive publications, or questionnaires would have provided useful responses. But, we argue, as anthropologists always do (Geertz, 1988) that it is not that simple to grasp the dynamics of group relationships and their 'way of life' (Wolcott, 1988), without witnessing everyday life.

Orania is a topic of controversial discussions in the media abroad; many journalists have visited the settlement, which holds a certain fascination for them; it is sometimes smiled at, and at other times openly criticised by international journalists and politicians. This is because it clearly represents itself as an opposing movement

² Besides a recent MA thesis from Stellenbosch University (Pienaar 2007) about master narratives of Orania, Lindie Todd's work on Afrikaner identity (2007) is an important exception. Parts of her monograph deal with Orania in particular, which is shown to be one possible way to achieve a new collective Afrikaner identity, which appeared highly desirable throughout the whole Afrikaner community after apartheid's end.

to the more liberal and democratic strivings of post-apartheid South Africa. Therefore it needs good (self-generated) public relations to present its ideals. Both its website and in-town information centre appear, on the surface, to represent rather liberal views and ask, sometimes in an obvious, sometimes in a very implicit manner, for support and understanding. Interviews with officials would most likely have underlined this self-presented image. Therefore, instead of asking residents, we chose to use the first author's own ethnographic field notes³ as primary research data (although in the overall study interviews were also used). We use one excerpt to examine the flag ceremony as an example of social action.

Social science is never objective and there is no doubt that this article presents a subjective perspective, and that others would write differently (also see Breidenstein 2006: 20; Geertz, 1988). It is in this context that we wish to emphasise the fact that we, as authors, are looking at Orania, and at South African schooling in general, from an outsider perspective. We both have had a background in German schooling, meaning that we are not personally familiar with patriotic or authoritarian rules, symbols and practices of any sort, such as the wearing of uniforms and other restrictions governing physical appearance, attending assemblies with patriotic messages, the singing of school songs, belonging to 'houses' during sports or cultural events, and so on. Our sense is that most of these are taken for granted in South Africa, although the ideologies may differ in various communities. Some of these are probably a result of the influence of British colonial rule and the import of school conventions from the time of the British Empire (see Randall, 1982). All such practices are in essence 'strange' to us. This 'strangeness' is in many ways an ethnographic advantage, as we try to see things other than those observed and noted by researchers who are familiar with the conventions (Amann and Hirschauer, 1997:23).

Thus, when we insert a description of the scene/event that serves as example for the discussion, we capture it as outsiders and we do so in the genre developed by the Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman (1973, 1971, 1986). He explored the field of *everyday interaction* and did not only focus on abstract theories, but identified the everyday, detailed and the sometimes hard-to-describe dynamics, interactions and structures of life, viewing them as valuable areas of investigation in their own right within the social sciences. He focussed especially on seemingly insignificant or unintended actions because they can tell us something about the structures and unconscious knowledge guiding human existence.

He was also among the first to overcome the polarity between the notions of *routine* and *ritual*, and partially combined the two in an innovative conceptual way. *Routine* would traditionally be described as everything of the 'normal'; everything which has no obvious declarative intention, and which is carried out usually without reflecting on it. But Goffman went further. He re-interpreted the concept of rituals, which, before his writings, were mostly seen as religious or para-religious phenomena. Rituals were regarded as something out-of-the-ordinary. Contrastingly, Goffman conceptualised rituals as part of everyday life.

Hence, the question we ask is whether the ceremony is routinised action, evoked by the school's everyday dynamics and following its traditions, or whether it is a ritual, an out-of-routine procedure with special significance. These questions point to two

³ This article is based on the overall study, which included a two-month ethnographic research visit in winter 2006.

perspectives; that of routine and that of ritual, following theorists Turner (2009) and Reckwitz (2003, 2004) respectively. Ultimately we try to overcome this apparent dichotomy and look at Goffman as a truly integrative routine-ritual theorist, whose writing may shed some light on school ceremonies and everyday practices.

The flag and the school

I ask Sebastiaan⁴ [Hofmeyr, the Volksskool principal] if it would be possible to arrange a key for me so I can use one of the Volksskool's rooms for a Saturday afternoon interview. Sure, no problem, he replies, friendly and helpful as usual. He also informs me that school is actually finished (for the day) right now, but a flag ceremony will follow. Flag ceremony? Sebastiaan smiles bashfully and tells me that he himself is actually not too fond of militarist events, and he even denied participating in military service himself. But this certain ceremony was important for the kids – they'd always look forward to it. As he speaks, the 35 children of the entire school walk out of the building and meet at the quad, right next to the flag pole. Girls to the left, boys to the right, including the few teachers. One teacher carries her baby daughter, who was with her in class today. Adolph has unknotted the flag rope; he and Benny stand on the pole's little plateau. It's windy, the Orania flag, showing a little boy who ambitiously rolls up his sleeves, waves in the winter-cold Karoo breeze. The last kids arrive, find their positions, one behind the other, blocks of about 4x4. Sebastiaan stands in front of the boys' block, his mother, Helen Hofmeyr, in front of the girls'. She starts talking, loudly, gives the week's overview. When she's finished, Sebastiaan gives a command, everyone stands at attention. The teachers as well. Glancing straight, hands on the pants seam, feet parallel and firm on the ground. Now the first row stretches their arms to their neighbours, some kind of wall appears. It's a bit of a haunting atmosphere when everyone stands like that for 20 seconds (that feel like eternity). The wind blows, the sun has appeared and gives this bizarre scenery a somewhat contradictory ambiance. Bennie glances to Adolph, only for a sec, both are preparing to recover the flag, I presume. Very concentrated. Then another command: stand as you are. Now a song is playing, everyone knows the lyrics, knows the plot. Except the youngest – but even they move their lips dutifully. I don't get the text, but it appears to be an Afrikaans marching song. While singing, Adolph carefully strikes the flag, Bennie takes it and folds it – just as careful as his older buddy. Last command from Sebastiaan: everyone turns right, marches a few steps, een, twee, drie. I focus on Nelie's face, try to worm a smile out of it. No chance. She literally looks through me. Pretty surprisingly the whole thing ends abruptly. The children start laughing, walking away, some even run joyfully. Weekend mood. "Sien vir jou, Oom Henning!", "Lekker naaweek!" Bennie and Adolph hand the flag to Sebastiaan – a totally unspectacular delivery. I hurry to get home. (11.08.2006)⁵

⁴ We use pseudonyms throughout this paper. However, to make the name "Orania" anonymous would be senseless, as the movement has reached a certain notoriety. We are very grateful to all citizens of Orania for their warmth and their personal insights and for their willingness to share their lives with the researcher.

⁵ These field notes were composed shortly after the actual event. Analysing and interpreting the researcher's own notes as part of an ethnographic strategy might appear anomalous. A good overview of the aspects and dilemmas of this type of research strategy is given by Clifford (2008). One advantage of this type of discussion is that it enables researchers to deal with impressions and perspectives – without any objective demand, but rather with the awareness that every single witness of the spectacle will find his or her own logic for analysis.



Illustration 2: A photograph of Orania's flag raised during the ceremony

This scenario unfolds every Friday after school when classes have ended. It has a strong military character: not only the muster-style of getting together, but also the marching and the strictness with which the whole procedure is carried out, are foreign to us coming from a cultural background that has banned every sort of militarist ceremony and national pride from schools. But it is not quite foreign in South African schools, where national pride, school pride and group pride still play a role (see Fritz, Henning and Swart, 2008). For example, the fact that school children wear uniforms, the singing of school songs during assembly (even conducting an assembly itself), the competing in different groups during sports/cultural events, which is often accompanied by singing, marching, colourful dressing and other ceremonial type of actions, are all strange type of practices to a researcher from a country like Germany. This is somewhat ironic, since it is not the Afrikaner roots in historical Dutch or French culture that are perpetuated here, but British colonialist education, including elite private education (Randall, 1982), that seems to have permeated South African schools of all cultural and language groups.

After having spent some time in the school community, the ceremony appeared, on the one hand, as a *routine* (among other routines) that is carried out regularly. It may be regarded as a *routinised action* of schools in patriotic settings, but there are other ways of interpreting it. One is to view it as a ritual with a very specific socio-cultural function and aim. Contrary to viewing it as a routine approach, the ceremony could thus also be interpreted as a socio-culturally standardised *ritual*. Looking at its plot and style, we argue that it is more than everyday school routine. It could be, according to a ritual theorist like Victor Turner (2009), be seen as an intentional action that has the power to change a community's social constitution. Sometimes such 'change' implies something as big and significant as the initiation of Xhosa adolescents in the Eastern Cape for example. Other times this change is about something much more ordinary, like the ritual of an extended handshake for example, which changes the participants' status from 'unknown and anonymous' to 'introduced and official'. It becomes clear that 'change' has many facets but includes moments of rearranging a person's status or the rearranging of symbolic meaning of artefacts involved with the interaction. In every ritual this rearranging is the performed

outcome. Commonly, and to sum up their main attributes, ritualised forms of interaction are characterised by a strict time schedule, an atmosphere of high concentration and some sort of personal/psychological involvement (see Turner, 2009 and Deflem, 1991).

Recently the term 'ritual' has been over-used in a sense that everything seems to afford the possibility of being analysed with the use of this category. It has, therefore, become so encompassing as to remain semantically elusive (see Bell, 1997). Nevertheless, its main characteristic, namely *the strong sense of the out-of-the-ordinary*, has remained intact. If everyday life with its ordinary procedures and interaction structures may be regarded as 'normal', then any ritual will stand out from this normality. Everyday life would never be seen as 'normal' if there were not something 'extra'-ordinary (or out-of-the ordinary) happening once in a while to accentuate what *is* everyday. Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2000) illustrate this with an example of how one finds out what is everyday practice by disturbing or 'disequilibrating' it out-of-the-ordinary occurrence.

As an example Fritz et al (2008) show how an urban Johannesburg school mirrors the community's sense-making during times of social uncertainty and rapid change by 'using' the children to act out parents' and teachers' frustrations and concerns through the annual school play. In this process ordinary school life was disrupted for extended periods of time and the school play also demanded much effort and concentration, as well as personal involvement of the actors and directors, who wilfully disrupted the every life of a school with this out-of-the-ordinary action. We would therefore define this as a ritualistic action, performed in the school, on stage. Regarding the Orania school, we will now consider whether these two perspectives, routine and ritual, are mutually exclusive or whether they could indeed be reconciled or even integrated.

Ritual, or just routine, or both as "tie-sign"?

An early and rather basic definition of ritual is that it is an exclusive (in other words not an everyday or a 'normal') act, but also "a perfunctory, conventionalised act through which an individual portrays his respect and regard for some object of ultimate value to that object of ultimate value or to its stand-in" (Goffman 1971: 62). Goffman's aim was to apply the concept of rituals, which were traditionally set in religious contexts, to everyday culture (1971:60). Looking at the flag ceremony one is tempted to regard it as "object(s) of ultimate value", through creating analogies that seem obvious: the wall built by the children would symbolise strength; and the singing, marching and the whole rallying style could stand for an Afrikaner tradition of defence, struggle and independence. But as we will show later, this is not its main function.

If we look at the ceremony from Goffman's perspective, then we would not look for the symbols within a type of communication (e.g. the 'wall' built by the children or the lyrics of the song), but would rather understand the ceremony 'only' as a symbol of interaction. Goffman would call this a "tie-sign" (something that ties people together) that acts as "evidence about relationships" (Goffman 1971: 194 (1971)). It produces official recognition and public pronouncement between the school children and their environment: "Acts and rituals [...] appear to have some general social functions" (Goffmann:1971: 199). Tie signs, as applied to the ceremony, could have two

functions: emphasising the ceremony attendees' connection *for themselves* and representing this connection *to non-attendees* (Goffman 1971: 196) who may hold a similar value regarding the sign. Thus, the above sequence has, from Goffman's perspective, little to do with Afrikanerhood but with group coherence in general. In essence, it is *not* performed to celebrate or remember facets of Afrikaner history, but constitutes itself as some kind of interaction that has an impact on the school community as a school community in the first instance. Goffmann has provided us with some analytical tools that might help us understand such practices. If we are able to grasp the meaning or function of an event, explications about the underlying norms or guiding value systems could be made.

Following from this, it can be argued that such a ceremonial event is a strong *tie-sign* and represents a form of communication that can be referred to as an *interpersonal ritual* (Goffman 1971: 199). As the term indicates, this sort of ritual is dependent on a type of social contact, which, according to Goffman, can be observed in only three types of situations, namely business, accident and ceremony (Goffman 1971: 72). The first two are to be thought of in terms of professional, regular ('business') and unplanned, spontaneous ('accidental') contact, respectively. If chances for the occurrence of these two types of social contact are too few, participants have to build a ceremonial environment to intentionally establish a contact situation. Both partners will have to invest: "costs will be involved in terms of time, money, and effort" (ibid.). Thus a social contact must be established and afterwards advanced as ritual. The flag ceremony can be regarded as such a case: here contact is constructed as all protagonists assemble to perform a certain action or to be part of a certain event. This means that there was (non-verbal) social accordance that contact should be intensified: "Given particular presumptions regarding contact, parties to a relationship may engineer a coming together because business, ceremony, or chance have not done so recently enough (it is felt) *to guarantee the well-being of the relationship*" (Goffman 1971: 173, emphasis added).

This *well-being of the relationship* is not just an abstract thought but of importance for all school settings. It implies, after all, the need for community building and cooperative schooling. As Vandeyar (2008) has shown, the wellbeing of school communities is not an abstract wish, but a realisable and concrete benefit for schools. If South African schools paid more attention to such 'events' or ceremonies school officials could have greater insight and thus greater influence on the social dynamics at play in school communities.

Maintenance Ritual

Coming back to the aim of establishing the well-being of relationships, as introduced by Goffman, a prominent example of a ritual that could serve as opportunity for missing professional or accidental social contacts is the *maintenance ritual*: "It is as if the strength of a bond slowly deteriorates if nothing is done to celebrate it, and so at least occasionally a little invigoration is called for" (Goffman 1971: 73). As there are no pedagogical reasons for the ceremony (assuming that it is not only performed for the children's enjoyment) this notion might be applicable. From this view the flag ceremony has the simple and exclusive function of keeping a community together. This implies that without such "invigoration" there would be a slow deterioration of unity and coherence. So one could ask why a place like Orania, presenting itself as culturally homogeneous group in terms of its 'Afrikaans purity' would need to stage a ritual that clearly constitutes or backs up a community like the one mentioned.

We argue, following Goffman further, that especially among such *apparently close* communities, there is a great need to steadily underline this sense of “togetherness” (Goffman 1971: 65). A community is never as tight and uncontested as it might appear (or strive to appear) but *has to invest* in its bonds (Goffman 1971: 202, also see Steyn 2001). This also applies to South African school system in general, as Fritz et al (2008) have shown. They underline the school play as a type of ceremony, which in some working class areas of Johannesburg schools “brings together aspects of school life” (2008: 383).

We would like to stress that the flag ceremony has – though it might incorporate aspects of a play – nothing to do with a staged drama for an audience. Its aim is not to impress, entertain, or speak to a public. The group performs this “in-group alignment” *for itself* (Goffman 1963: 137) and thus has the power to push and reinforce the team spirit. This self-reference implies a strong statement about the group; it is seen as the primary identity-related reference (Goffman 1963: 139). In other words: the children and staff are first and foremost *Orania residents*; this fact is maintained, celebrated, and even articulated during the whole ceremony. The label of ‘Northern Cape residents’ or ‘South Africans’ (or ‘South Africans belonging to a past era’) plays a secondary role, but these secondary references are, in the situation of the ceremony, of little or no importance.

This self-reference is necessary in particular if group members are somehow stigmatised and see their social status as diminished, and if they do not see themselves as accepted in the wider national community (ibid.: 9). The term “stigma” may seem unexpected when talking about Orania, because it is often associated with powerlessness and exclusion of the stigmatised (Goffman 1963: 14). **But Orania is not the victim of exclusion - it excludes *itself* from the national community. For Goffman this is not surprising since there is autonomy and power in being stigmatised (ibid.: 12). The fact that Orania’s residents *label themselves as different* creates some sort of power in that they do not feel the negative effect of this stigmatisation** – it is the power *in* the isolation that they feel. The power Orania holds has therefore little to do with its political fight for autonomy, but with the fact that it chose its isolation itself, is aware of it and can define if and to what extent it wishes to interact with the rest of the nation.

Signifying the ceremony: acting because of not knowing

Is the ceremony only about maintenance of cohesion, of tying in with one another in the self-established isolation and even stigmatisation? There is another way of conceptualising the ceremony: one could assume that attendees are driven predominantly by routines. Such routines are formed by biographical knowledge⁶ and specific experiences, and are therefore carried out more unintentionally. This approach is known as “Theory of Practices” or Praxeology and can be seen in relation to Goffman’s work. Although Goffman may serve as a good compromise between ritual (e.g. Turner 2009) and routine (e.g. Reckwitz 2003) approaches as he develops a connection to both. However, his conception is also limited in that his

⁶ Biographical knowledge is the set of personal experiences, skills and attitudes that a person has accumulated over time and which makes him or her competent to respond to specific situations in ways that he or she deems appropriate.

analyses do not deal with the details of performing. We thus turn to the work of Reckwitz (2003) to explore the performance of the ceremony.

Reckwitz's conception of praxeology is situated in what has become known as the "practice turn" in the analysis of action. Recently, this way of interpreting social phenomena has emerged in sociology, with Reckwitz (2003, 2004) as the key theorist in the German literature, while Schatzki (2005) is prominent internationally. The "practice turn" encourages exploration of everyday routine in social science research.

Proponents of praxeology argue that individuals often do not act because they want to or rationally decide to, but are rather driven by practices and routines that they have experienced through imitation. A 'practice' is understood as embodied mental routine which is kept up by constant repetition (Reckwitz 2004: 319). This "embodied" routine points to a collection of "acting structures" which are accumulated in the actor in an embodied way. It is generated through biographical experiences (Reckwitz 2003: 293 f.). The concept of biography does not simply mean "past", but refers to a set of experiences which provides the actor with competences for his or her modes of acting. People know how to act because their own experiences have constructed a way of acting which proved to be appropriate in different settings. From a praxeological perspective, an individual would hardly be able to reflect on his or her acting as routines. These personal, *implicit forms of knowledge* are both the driving force *and* the outcome for the acting person. Praxeology thus focuses on practical instead of intellectual knowledge, and reflection plays a minor, if any, role.

Viewed like this, there is a strict demarcation between practical and cognitive knowledge (Reckwitz 2004: 322⁷), the latter of which would allow the actor to reflect on his or her action. Though the term is seldom used, practices happen rather 'automatically'. However, this would imply functionalist ways of explaining human actions, and was not intended by Reckwitz (ibid.: 312). Looking at the flag ceremony, cognitive knowledge of what happens and reflection about it would not be considered from a praxeological point of view. **The essence about praxeology is that things do not happen because somebody knows something, but because that person does *not* know something.**

Such an interpretation may suggest that human beings are not able to reflect on their own actions or activities and are therefore dependent on guidance from another source. This is not what Reckwitz meant. By the automatic recognition of a situation's context – or "frame", as Goffman (1986) would call it – one will be able to apply one's routine not by thinking or reflecting, but by applying one's *embodied knowledge*. "He is likely to be unaware of such organised features as the frameworks have and unable to describe the framework with any completeness if asked, yet these handicaps are no bar to his easily and fully applying it" (Goffman 1986: 21). To recapitulate: from a praxeological perspective, recognising a frame (meaning the circumstances of a situation) is not an intellectual or cognitive act, but driven by a knowledge-set or knowledge system that might be called 'instinctive' and which is embodied.

⁷ Though Reckwitz makes clear that cognitive structures are not replaced totally, as then no routine and repetition of acts would be possible (2004: 316 f.).

Identifying a frame rationally, in other words *not* through experiential competence or instinctive knowledge, has to do with how reflectively someone acts. But reflectivity has little status in praxeology discourse. Here Reckwitz speaks against “intellectualisation of acting” (2004: 320, own translation) and so develops Goffmanian thoughts further:

“The theory of practices does not think of the collective orders of knowledge in a culture as a mental ‘knowing that’, or as a purely cognitive scheme of observation, and also not simply as codes within discourses or communications, but as a practical knowledge, a competence, a ‘knowing how’, a conglomerate of every-day techniques, a practical understanding in the sense of ‘knowing all about something’” (Reckwitz 2003: 289, own translation).

These collective orders of knowledge return and reproduce themselves continuously; they are seen as representations of the particular individual and his or her standing in his or her sphere of action (Reckwitz 2003: 294). Further, praxeology would assume that humans are often driven by the *logic of their routines* rather than by *rational decision*. The constant repetition of a specific acting mode develops an inner logic which is difficult – if at all possible – for the actor to reflect on. Additionally, these routine experiences (“biographical knowledge”) provide the actor with competences on how to handle a situation and how to behave in an appropriate manner. The individual, provided with experiences from routinised acting, is able to apply the logic derived from them to new situations.

There is, however, a certain problem when trying to apply praxeological thinking to the flag ceremony and it has to do with individualised versus collective action. It could, on the one hand, be understood as practice during which participants act out of routinised ‘instinct’ or embodied knowledge. The routinised repetition of the ceremony, i.e. the fact that it takes place every Friday afternoon, contributes to consistent biographical experience. It is an experience the children have gained over some time. As described earlier, the biographical, non-reflective knowledge, which could be termed, “How to carry out the flag ceremony,” is both driving force *and* impact. They do it as they always have and this is also the reason *why* they do it. But we speak about a group – while Goffman and especially Reckwitz have applied their ideas mostly to individuals. Their theories are based on assumptions – as valid they as they may be – that tends to concentrate on the individual, and Reckwitz’s attempts to apply them to groups, assuming that an embodied experience might be shared, remain vague and rather abstract:

“The social is neither to be found through inter-subjectivity, norm orientation, nor communication, but in the collective of behavioural styles, which are connected by a specific practical competence” (Reckwitz 2003: 289, own translation).

The practice itself would serve as motivation and connection between the attendees (instead of being driven by normative or value-laden motives for example). This would mean that the children do not meet because they were told to or against their will, but motivated through their knowledge and routine of Friday afternoons. Authority is noticeable but plays a minor role. There was no guiding norm that formed a feeling of community, but a practice working “through its material anchorage in

incorporated knowledge equipped bodies, which are [...] practices-competent” (Reckwitz 2003: 291).

Even though such an understanding of motivation, based on routine rather than normative systems, may sound convincing, the question of how these individuals are formed into a group that carries out the flag ceremony together, still remains open. This is where ritual theory may be useful, since it has developed ideas about grouping and socialisation. We will now continue the discussion by showing what ritual theory says about the question of group constitution.

About rituals and groups

When considering the routine and the embodied knowledge that signify action from a praxeological perspective, ritual theory can be used as a contrasting mechanism. It sketches the *non-routine* character of events and provides a more encompassing understanding of the significance of the ceremony. The work of ritual theorist Victor Turner (2009) explains that although ritual action is mostly associated with change of societal status and religious power (Turner 2009: 41 ff., see also Deflem, 1991), it can be applied to other contexts as well. From this perspective there are two possible arguments with regard to the flag ceremony: firstly, the *constitution of the group*, and secondly, the *plot* of the ceremony.

In terms of group constitution, Turner’s writings on the concept of *communitas* posits that the togetherness of a group in a specific social ceremony is different to the notion of everyday community (Turner 2009: 95), which according to Anderson (1983, cited in Mihelj, Bajt and Pankov, 2009:67) is a group of people tied by a “deep, horizontal comradeship”, and is not necessarily tied to one particular activity. The group that produces this feeling of *communitas* does not meet, based on the members’ own, independent wills, but is composed through a secular power or an initiator (Turner 2009: 26 ff.). In the case of the flag ceremony, this role is fulfilled by the principal. The children are not consulted about whether or not they would like to take part in this ceremony. They simply have to attend. Turner accentuates the unquestioning subordination of the participants, e.g. in religious contexts (2009: 126 f.). Although such an interpretation may not be fully applicable to this case, the Orania children’s duty is underlined by a strong militaristic style and the 20 seconds of standing completely still in the sun does appear like prayer or homage to a higher being. Turner’s assumption, that discipline is an important feature in rituals, is observable in this ceremony.

The will to fulfil the intended positions within the ceremony becomes evident when looking at Adolph’s and Bennie’s concentration. These two boys are grade 4 children who are tired, yet playful and energetic after a hard week’s work. Their concentration and focus are therefore somewhat surprising at this time of day at the end of the week. Another child, Nelie, a grade 8 pupil, puts on an overly serious face and gives an impression of due compliance. This normally happy-go-lucky girl, whose mouth is never shut, follows her older friends in fulfilling the requirements of the ceremony. The picture of participants in a ritual, who compliantly follow rules, is amplified.

This *communitas* spirit within a ritualised procedure that forms a seemingly passive and submissive group does not emerge individually, but only in groups (ibid.: 95). The youngest children are not yet fully familiar with the procedure and its details and

are maybe even a bit confused. Nevertheless, they submit to this authority, taking their cues from the older children. Their knowledge of what is going on is insufficient but the *communitas* spirit has communicated the essentials to them. Though this confusion and nebulosity as seen among the younger children is not uncommon among ritual groups (Turner 2009: 95), it is balanced through a 'quasi-magic' atmosphere that includes (and embraces) all.

The group's behaviour is, from Turner's perspective, characterised by homogeneity, obeisance, dependence and humility (Turner 2009: 106). To a lesser extent, this applies to Orania's ceremony as well: the members of the school community are equalised when they have to line up to pay homage to the flag. Even the teachers that do not belong to the Hofmeyr dyad of mother and son are put on the same 'level' as their pupils – therefore their own sense of authority is levelled. The *mevrou* become 'friends' with the children in these moments of homage. Additionally, children of different ages, sexes or grade levels are all mixed in no apparent order. Everyone is intermingled and hence becomes equal. This mix is not the product of this group but of the school directorates that lead the ceremony.

The logic of practice in school ceremonies

Thus far we have tried to develop two perspectives on the same social event. The first follows a praxeological point of view that would interpret Orania's flag ceremony as "embodied knowledge" (Reckwitz 2003: 290). According to this view the actors are qualified as autonomous beings who nevertheless follow a plot without consciously thinking about it. Although the issue of the social composition of the group remains somewhat abstract, individual action can be explained from this position.

Alternatively, the flag ceremony could also be grasped as a ritual. In particular, the plot that the ceremony follows and the composition of the group would be congruent with this view. From this view, furthermore, the group-in-action can be explained with the concept of *communitas*. However, ritual theory and praxeology should not be understood as mutually exclusive theoretical constructs. Both perspectives are dynamic and provide categories that can be carefully combined to understand the school ceremony and other such events.

What unites these two theoretical approaches is a lack of focus on cognition and reflection. Turner differentiates between various forms of *communitas* feelings, but cognition only becomes a central concept when the ritual is performed often enough and a structure for it has developed (2009: 127). Frequency and structural reinforcement are thus important precursors to cognition. In the Volkskool Orania the regularity and the early introduction of the ritual ensure that the pupils learn to embody the action without learning to consider its meaning. The implications for indoctrination are obvious, as with all unquestioned action. The children know the plot so well that they act 'automatically,' knowing when to act the plot in time-oriented fashion. Thus, on Fridays they stand in homage to the flag - regardless of what it may mean to them.

Reckwitz dissociates his praxeological approach to analysing action and events from any form of knowledge or cognition as well – but for different reasons. For him, it is less about discipline and higher powers (as in rituals) that replace reflective knowledge, but about the competence an individual has. He ascribes power to

humans even if they are not willing or able to reflect - they still *know* what they do although they may not always know why they do it. The difference of “knowing how” (practices) and “knowing that” (cognitive reflection) is important in this regard and Reckwitz would emphasise the former and not dwell on the latter. Much as this is counter-intuitive, it is a view that explains *much* of school activity, including ritualised forms of pedagogy.

However, acting can soon become boring and mechanic if people are not regularly motivated by a feeling of *communitas*. This is where Turner and Goffman would agree, though the latter never spoke of something like *communitas*: “if nothing is done to celebrate it [a community’s strength, [...] occasionally a little invigoration is called for” (Goffman 1971: 73). Here one can invoke praxeology: practices themselves *do not* serve as tools for community-building or uniting since that is not their main interest. A theory of practices approach simply asks for the logic of these routines. This theory is ethnomethodological. It does not pretend to explain more than the *logic of practice*.

Conclusion: Routines in practice in schools

This article wanted to introduce possible ways of looking at the connection between routines and rituals, specifically in the context of schools by way of an example of one event. The notion of routine may serve as the conceptual connection between rituals that do have routine features and *practices* that develop out of routines. While the concept of routine has rather negative connotations in ritual theory, since it describes how the ‘magic’ of spontaneous *communitas* (Turner 2009: 139) is used for structural power building, it is the most important category for praxeology, defining routine as fundamental for everyday life competence (Reckwitz 2003: 293). And it works – with it one can understand quite well the way in which the children meet and act during the militaristic flag ceremony discussed.

What the concept or routine lacks, however, is an ability to explain the constitution of the actors acting within a *group*. Here the notion of *communitas* provides a suitable category of description. Moreover, looking at the different stages of *communitas*-embedded feelings allows us to see the school’s implicit wish to reproduce this existential *communitas* feeling and develop it into an ideology.

A more open Goffman-styled approach of analysing the event of the flag raising at the Volksskool Orania has clarified, for us, the ritual/routine distinction. When looking at the ceremony using both a ritual and a praxeological approach, one will find some methodological strengths and weaknesses. Combining them will help to realise that they are far more connected than it seems and elements of both lie in the other. As a tool to inquire into other school-based events it may explain certain fixed ways of teaching, of having meetings, of running sports events and of organising cultural events such as drama productions and music festivals. The logic of the practice of education needs much inquiry and needs to complement, and we would argue, perhaps also precede the many descriptive and causal studies that assign meaning to practices without examining their dynamics and their underlying logic.

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