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# **The Afrikaner Quest for Community**

## **A study on Communitarianism in Orania**

**“Ons veg nie vir geld of goed nie, ons veg vir die lewe van ’n volk.”**

- Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1958

**Henry van der Burgt**

**S0714526**

**Master Thesis**

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**Radboud University Nijmegen**

**Supervisor: Dr. Hans Marks**

**Second reader: Dr. ir. Joost Beuving**

**December 2016**

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To travel half-way across the world in order to take a peek into the lives of people you have never met before, lives with their own aspirations, their own challenges and ultimately their own worldview is always a challenge. For this reason alone I owe the existence of this thesis entirely to the people of Orania, who gave me a warm welcome, who introduced me to their community and the many aspects of their rich lives, and who were extremely forthcoming in our conversations. To name everyone would be impossible but not a day of went by without meeting a kind person who contributed, in small or big way, to the end result.

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## **Part I – Introduction**

## Introduction

One of the first challenges I came across as a student in the field of anthropology was not related to my course material, my interview techniques or even finding my way around the university campus. For me it was how to explain the purpose of this exciting discipline to people coming from a non-academic, and sometimes even academic background. In time I realized that one of the possible starting points of an explanation is to illustrate how anthropologists tend to look at people as members of a *community*, rather than at the level of the individual or the level of grand constructs such as states. Although the vagueness of the term community likely raised as many questions as it gave answers for people, for me personally it highlighted the immense flexibility of the anthropological discipline, and how it can approach a wide range of subjects in service of both academic, public and private interests. In light of this it seemed only fitting to conclude my master degree with an investigation of what it truly means to be part of a community. Growing up in a world that on the one hand venerates the individual as a fundamental unit of society, while that same world on the other hand is rapidly changing due to a plethora of globalizing developments, I never gave much thought to the idea of what belonging to a community really meant to me personally. In most cases because, usually, there was no need to, and even then it was always a personal choice to identify myself with one group or another. To a degree it was precisely this personal choice which I hold responsible for sending me to the town of Orania, located in the barren environment of South Africa's Northern Cape region.

Established in the middle of the 1990s on the ruins of a derelict town, Orania was intended as a new beginning for a much older idea, that of a *Volkstaat* (People's State), a separate state, with full self-determination rights, exclusively for the Afrikaner people. Although the town was met with criticism and controversy in the newly created Rainbow Nation of Nelson Mandela, it nonetheless persisted, upholding its core values such as *selfwerksaamheid* (doing one's own work) and self-reliance while simultaneously growing both in the number of inhabitants, businesses and communal services. Today Orania represents a sizeable town of more or less a 1000 inhabitants, with its own churches, schools and museums. Although the original *Volkstaat* idea seems an unlikely outcome, the dream of a sprawling Afrikaner city in the middle of South Africa is more real than ever. While the claims of racism and neo-apartheid are still common occurrences in the debate surrounding the town, Orania prefers to highlight



the increasingly difficult position of the Afrikaner in South Africa, and the need for an Afrikaner *kultuurgemeenskap* (culture community) where Afrikaners can find a home that is free of cultural oppression, increasing crime rates and the discriminatory effects of affirmative action programs. What it means to be a member of a *kultuurgemeenskap*, according to one of the founders of Orania, professor C.W.H. Boshoff (1998, 39), is to share a similar outlook and shared norms and values.

“Family, church, school, and as such the entire community of Afrikaners is characterized as a culture community with similar traits, and common norms and values, which must be protected and carried on by just about everyone.”

- C.W.H. Boshoff (1998, 39) explaining what it means to be a culture community.

Although it is this unique objective which has given Orania its fame, or even notoriety, at the same time this is also a town where people live their lives. It is where they work, do their shopping and go to church. Being operated as a private shareholder company leaves them with no government funding, requiring them to manage themselves as their own municipality, along with all the strains this places on safety measures, infrastructure and town organisation. It is a lively community that embraces their cultural heritage and actively sends out its message both in South Africa and to the rest of the world. It is a community where people depend on each other, not only in order to celebrate the good times, but also to support each other when times get tough. In my eyes this makes Orania a blueprint communitarian community, where people value the importance of the group and partially resist the individualist, materialist and impersonal forces often related to the rise of modernity and the triumph of liberalism. It is a group identity strongly reinforced with their own cultural symbols, traditions and history, but also one which has its own limits and puts a lot of stress on those who hold the identity in disregard or who fail to meet expectations. It is the inner working of this communitarian perspective which serves as the backbone of this thesis, while the Orania community serves as the surrounding illustrative framework.

## Aim and objectives

What I gained from this fieldwork, and what serves as the account of experiences written up in this master thesis, did not so much convince me of the righteousness of Orania's plight to the Afrikaner cause, as it did introduce me to what it truly means to belong to a community, one that for better or worse has no choice but to rely for the most part on both its own strength and that of its members. In time I came to realize that the complexities that make up Orania were mirroring many of the characteristics that were central to the debate surrounding communitarianism from the 1980s onwards. This debate, often waged at a philosophical and theoretical level, was thus far lacking strong examples of communitarianism in practice, especially in the context of relatively large, multi-generational communities. It is my belief that Orania can serve as one of these examples, one that depicts the immense strength provided by a shared communitarian identity, as well as the many small, but simultaneously huge, fissures that can grow between a common goal and individual aspirations. In the opposite direction I also think that communitarianism provides the means to look at the controversial nature of Orania with a degree of reflexive distance. It allows for a historical perspective that compares the intentions behind Orania with the lived practices and opinions of its inhabitants today, and as such can perhaps begin to explain different points of view with regard to the necessity and added value of an Afrikaner *kultuurgemeenskap*.

To make this possible this thesis seeks answers on four questions, each addressing a different aspect of the relation between Orania as a beacon of Afrikaner culture and self-determination and their place in the wider debate surrounding communitarianism. In Part II this thesis tries to underpin my initial argument, that Orania was once founded on communitarian principles, and continues to build on these principles to this very day. What makes Orania a communitarian town? This allows for an in-depth examination of the town, both as a geographical and cultural presence, as well as an introduction to the important institutions, values and people central to the town. Part III illustrates how one cannot ignore the continuous religious and historical intertwining between the Afrikaner people in Orania and their engagement with history and religion. History, and more importantly, the Afrikaner view on history, serve along with the Christian faith as one of the most important markers of the Afrikaner identity. As a consequence one cannot begin to understand Orania without understanding the historical and religious origins of its communitarian ideals. Lastly, in Part IV

and V my fieldwork tried to look at the fringes of Orania's communitarian ideal, by isolating particular groups of inhabitants with widely different backgrounds, who stay in Orania for various reasons, and as a consequence who experience Orania from a point of view that diverges from the core values. The insights we gain from their point of view emphasize some of the struggles that present themselves as a result of living in this particular communitarian setting. As such they give a detailed panorama of the sometimes radically different meanings people adhere to while living in a community. By addressing some of the weak spots of communitarianism in the context of Orania it becomes possible to see how this community either solves, struggles or temporarily circumvents issues related to a growing community with increasingly diverting interests. All in all this thesis presents a remarkable example of a growing communitarianist community, and with it the opportunity to renew the debate surrounding communitarianism in practice, in particular with regards to the question whether or not this political philosophy remains viable in the context of a rapidly growing community.

## **Welcome to the Karoo**

Moving to another continent is in some ways similar to moving to a strange planet in a science fiction movie. On the one hand you recognize many things, but on the other hand everything seems different, ranging from 'a little bit off' to 'completely unfamiliar'. The same was absolutely true for my journey to the Northern Cape region of South Africa. After I had landed and the neighbours of my host parents had picked me up at the airport, as we drove back to Orania, one of our first stops was a Spar supermarket in Kimberley. I could not help but notice the irony of travelling half way across the world, only to find myself in a supermarket which in more ways than not was identical to supermarkets back home. It was only after we had set out on our 160 kilometres journey back to Orania, after spending some time staring of into the mesmerizing empty and seemingly endless horizons of the Karoo that it became more and more noticeable how this strange place was in itself a completely alien world. It is a landscape which seemingly stretches out on an infinite plane, only rarely interrupted by a road, fence or power line. The horizons display countless *koppies* (small hills), rarely more than a hundred metres high, which dot the landscape and which, perhaps by their unreachable distance, always made me wonder what could be found on the other side of them. Other than these

hills the landscape is flat, forming an ocean of dry red soil and *ysterklip* (iron rocks) that make up the vast majority of the Karoo landscape. Being located upwards of a 1000 metres above sea level produces an arid air which took me, as someone coming from below sea level, a full week to get used to. Furthermore, the region is located in a steppe climate, which rarely receives more than 250 millimetres of rain in a year (Spatium 2009, 54). Even then the rain can be unpredictable, as the extremely dry summer of 2015 would prove. The temperatures too, are made up of extremes. Summers tend to be blistering hot, whereas winters vary between frozen nights below zero and relatively comfortable temperatures during the day.

Yet, despite this immense harshness, the region still contains traces of early human occupation, with several rock carvings made by the San people decorating the landscape with animals such as elephants, rhinoceros and eland antilopes, some of them well over 10.000 years old. Lacking caves or large outcroppings in this barren landscape, these carvings serve as the equivalent of rock paintings elsewhere in South Africa (Opperman 2014, 8). Other carvings would express religious concepts related to making rain or being in trance. Some of these animals might have been food that was hunted, while the eland antelope might have had an important social role, with its hunt being a rite of passage in the transformation from boy to man. Other archeological finds in the region have been arrowheads.

If it wasn't for the important lifeline provided by the *Oranjerivier* (Orange River) that runs along one border of the town one would start to wonder how anyone could survive the harsh climate of the area. Discovered in 1779, it is the river that allows the extensive farmfields surrounding Orania to grow multiple harvests in a single year, while it also provides the iconic *Aan-die-Oewer* ("on-the-banks") recreation area on the edge of town with a well-kept lawn and lush greenery. Huge pumps and seven kilometres of thick pipes, one of the first projects undertaken after Orania was bought, run above ground along the outskirts of the town and provide each household with both clean drinking water and so called "grey" water, most commonly used to water people's gardens (Adviesrapport Dorpsvisie 2014, 59). Further upstream, near the towns of Vanderkloof and Norvalspont two major hydro-electric dams, the Gariep and Vanderkloof Dam, act as important sources of electricity for South Africa.

In this landscape one of the most dominant manmade features is made up by several hundred hectares of impressive, almost perfectly round farmfields, daily watered through so-

called *spilpunten* (center pivot water systems). With the end of winter wheat is planted on the fields which is then harvested in early December, after which many farmers set their fields ablaze to prepare the land for another harvest of maize before the return of winter. Another crucial pillar of Orania's agricultural landscape is formed by row after row of pecan nut trees, planted early on in the town's history. What started out as fifty hectares and 5000 pecan nut trees was further expanded until it reached a size of 200 hectares or 20,000 trees around 2002 (Boshoff 2002). Today these orchards yield yearly harvests of hundreds of tons of edible pecan nuts, which are in high demand across South Africa (du Plessis n.d., 53). Animal husbandry occurs only on a very limited scale due to the harsh climate and sparse quantity of grazing grounds. There once was a large scale milk producing farm, capable of producing 200,000 litres of milk every month, but it had gone out of business in 2002 for a variety of reasons, with Orania being too remote, allegations of fraud within the business, milk prices being low, corn prices too high, and other South African milk producers conspiring to keep the newcomers out (du Plessis 2001, 6; Smith 2002; Seldon 2014, 184).

## **A town like any other**

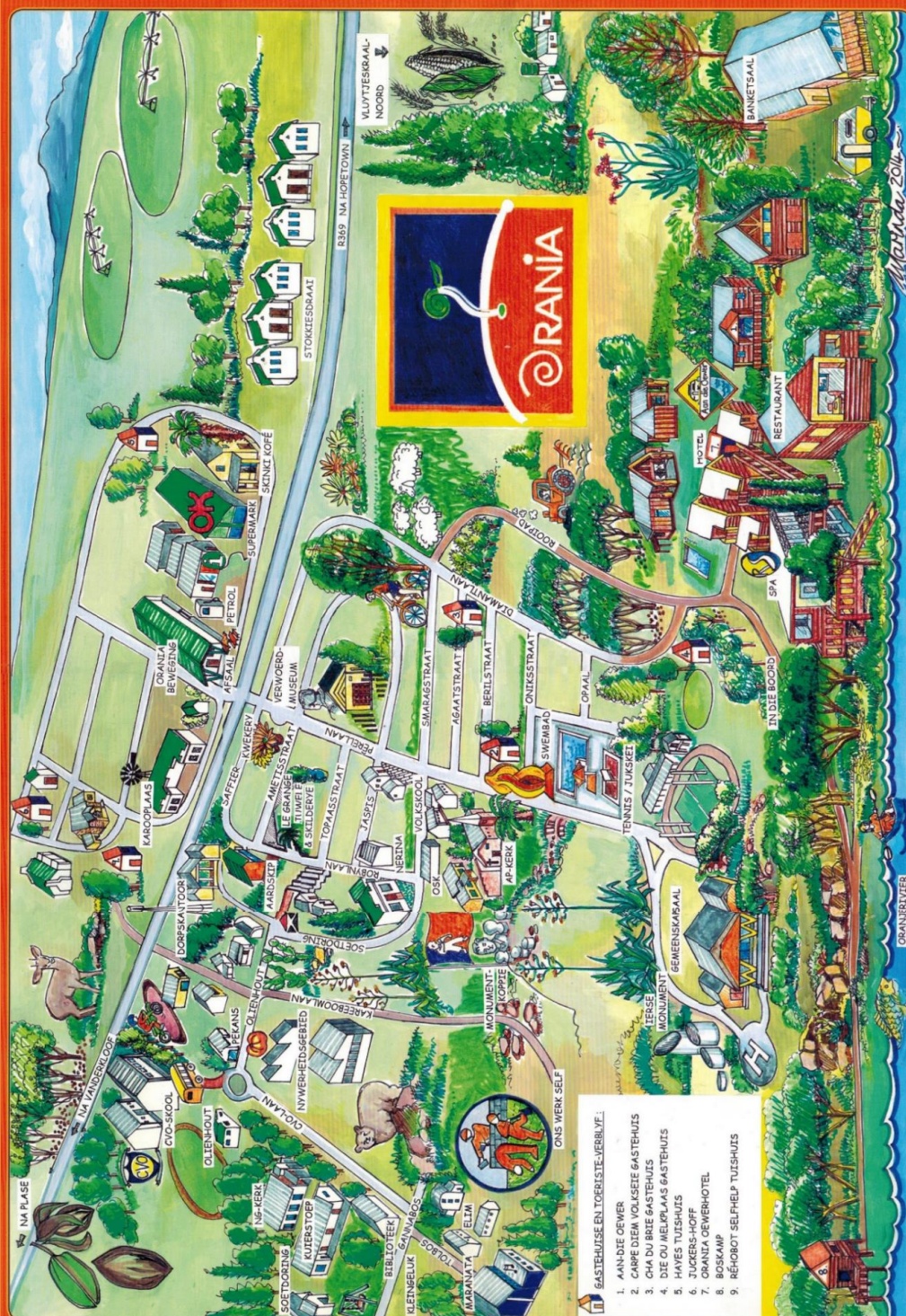
One of the first thing I was told as the couple who had picked me up at Kimberley Airport drove back into Orania was "*die dorpie is 'n bietjie snaaks*" (this town is a little bit weird). It is unmistakably the truth, although, if a visitor limits their view to the surface, it wouldn't appear so. In many ways Orania is a town like it can be found anywhere around the world, with people working their jobs, children going to school and families and friends coming together in church on Sunday. There are multiple supermarkets, various restaurants, a cinema with daily showings and a public swimmingpool. Tourists on their way across South Africa are welcomed with several guesthouses, a comfortable hotel and a luxurious spa, giving them a great opportunity to visit the many unique sights and places Orania has to offer. Yet on closer inspection it appears that Orania is in many ways also a unique product of its environment. People are eager to provide suggestions how one should go about living in the harsh Karoo environment. During a social gathering after church one man was adamant that the first thing you should do when you move to the Karoo, is plant fruit trees.



*Agriculture in Orania.*

*Top picture: a pecan nut orchard being watered automatically.  
Bottom picture: two large centre pivot fields with early corn plants.*





Artistic map displaying the layout of Orania, showing the R389 road, street names, important buildings and the Orange River.

For him it was the best investment one could make, because, although it would take several years before you would see the results, the trees would prove to be invaluable as a source of shade, a barrier against dust clouds and an ample source of fresh fruit for years to come. Houses are also built with the climate in mind, as another man told me to always buy your house in a north-bound direction, since that provides the most comfortable temperature in the house, with east being too hot in the summer and west too cold in the winter. My host parents, Oom Gerd and Tannie Jeanette Erasmus (*Oom*, meaning Uncle, and *Tannie*, meaning Aunt, are used as a term of respect for older people), explained how houses are built with extremely isolated roofs, in order to keep the heat out, and with smaller windows on the sunny side. These are just a few examples of how people live their lives in tandem with their environment, not going out of their way but adapting to the extreme circumstances.

Although it might not be apparent at first sight, the town is divided in several neighbourhoods, which only serve as geographical indicators, and do not appear to have socio-economic or cultural differences between them. This is an intentional choice, since Orania is actively trying to promote egalitarianism through the mixing of lower and middle class housing, and as a result some of the town's foremost members would stay in some of the more peripheral areas. The town is divided in half by the R369 road that connects Orania to the neighbouring towns of Hopetown and Vanderkloof. Looking to the right from the direction of Hopetown shows people what Tannie Jeanette liked to call the "international" zone of Orania, because this is an area that is frequently shared with people from neighbouring towns who make use the OK supermarket, the restaurants and the petrol station. Going instead to the left brings people into the largest section of Orania, sometimes referred to as *Grootdorp*. It is predominantly a living area, with streets named after a wide array of gemstones, although here are also important community buildings such as the largest church in Orania, the Afrikaans Protestant Church (AP Church), several monuments, the *Volkskool* (People's School), a communal swimming pool and the *gemeenskapsaal* (community centre). Proceeding through Orania, along a dirt road towards the river embankment brings a person to the Aan-die-Oewer area, which serves predominantly as a tourist area with a hotel, restaurant, and luxurious spa. In the summer time it is also an important communal area because of the lush greenery, *braai* (barbeque) areas, canoboats and swimming opportunities that the river provides.



Slightly more hidden away, following a curvy road called Soetdoring, brings a person to what is commonly called the *nywerheidsgebied* (industrial zone), where some of the bigger industries of Orania are located. This too can be regarded as an “international zone”, since these business, as well as an additional two supermarkets tend to serve a wider public than just inhabitants. It is also this area where the *Dorpskantoor* (Town hall) and the EPOG archive is located. Following the road through the industrial zone leads to another part of Orania, predominantly made up by the CVO School and the Dutch Reformed Church (NG Church). Eventually, this way a person ends up in Kleingeluk, another large living area in Orania. It is a neighbourhood with a distinctly different feel to it than the Grootdorp, with smaller houses and smaller plots, which makes these houses more affordable for people with a lower income, an intentional decision by the *Orania Dorpsraad* (Village council) to encourage house ownership. Central to this neighbourhood is the Kuierstoep, a small shopping area surrounding a small park, which contains among other things a library, a convenience store managed by Tanie Sarie, and the *Orania Maatskappelyke Raad* (Orania Social Services, OMR). Another relevant area is Elim, a housing unit with a large number of single room appartments, strictly occupied by single men. It is also the location of the Maranata Church, a choice the pastor thought might have been deliberate, to keep the Church out of the Grootdorp. One woman who had lived in Orania all her life remarked how Kleingeluk used to have a rather negative reputation in the past, mainly due the presence of the Elim men, who used to cause trouble and suffer from alcohol abuse. This went as far as her father refusing her to set foot in this part of town, telling her “*Jy bly weg van die gogga’s af*” (You stay away from those insects). In recent years this situation had greatly improved however, and today she was happily living in Kleingeluk herself.

## Theory

### Origin of communitarian thinking

Although the debate surrounding communitarianism reached a peak in the 1980s and 90s, some authors have positioned it in a much older historical wave pattern going back as far as ancient Greek or early Christian communities, where people at different times throughout history rallied against the social pressures of their time, such as pointless commodity worship and unmoveable social hierarchies, while simultaneously longing for a more group-oriented

living condition with a focus on sharing with and caring for other members of the group (Bennett 1975, 66-68; Tam 1998, 18-19). Other writers have noted how an inherent opposition against liberal reform was already present from the earliest onset of the French Revolution, which was deemed to promote decadence and moral decline (Newman 1997, 626; Tam 1998, 20). This resembles an equation similar to what Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 'Democracy in America', where he contrasted the New World as one remarkably void of class hierarchy and instead raised on the basis of equality, especially in comparison to the European continent (Navarro 2002, 423-424). Likewise Ferdinand Tönnies (1963, original 1887) was the first author to coin the fundamental differences between a *gemeinschaft*, which is in search of group conformity, morality and social control, versus a *gesellschaft*, which is fuelled by individual strive, law and public control. It was however the early 20th century that saw for the first time a clearly worded criticism against the corrupting force of materialism, individualism and the excessive demands of the liberalist dogma, mainly by critical thinkers such as Leo Strauss and Christopher Lasch (Newman 1997, 627). They considered modernity to be in a stage of crises, with people blindly conforming to universal expectations, worshipping hubris and commodities alike while living their lives marked by the absence of morality.

## **20th century developments**

Although these were early indicators of an inherent friction between liberal ideals and a more community-oriented opposition, it was only in the 1980s that people, predominantly in the United States, started to develop 'communitarianism' as a cohesive philosophical critique against what communitarians experienced as an all-encompassing liberal domination. Perhaps the earliest inspirations for this were drawn from now classic works related to the research into social capital, such as 'The Strength of Weak Ties', written by Mark Granovetter (1973). In assessing the crucial role of so-called weak ties in the appropriation of information, Granovetter found these secondary relationships between people to be just as important as the more predictable strong ties, where it concerned acquiring new information or ideas (Julien 2015, 357-358). James Samuel Coleman (1988) is another possible influence, based on his research into social capital, which he considered a public good that could be translated to the creation of human capital, as long as participating individuals have a motivation to contribute to the collective resource pool. This would indicate that the collective good is best served if people act in the interest of the group, rather than that of their individual self.

Since then other authors have also made contributions to our understanding of community, although many would in later years go on to reject identification with communitarianism. John Rawls (1971), seeking to reconcile the inherent disparity between liberty and equality in the famous publication *A Theory of Justice*, founded two principles of justice that gave people the most fair distribution of societal 'primary goods', such as liberty, opportunity, wealth and self-respect. In this context inequality can exist, but only if it benefits the very least advantaged in society (Waghid 2003, 47-48). Consequently Rawls constructs an extreme view of liberalism, one that rejects the notion of community for the reason that this requires state control over the individual (Kukathas 1996, 93). In his view individual justice should be held in higher regard than the welfare of society, by balancing individual values, goods and liberties as a free choice (Etzioni 2014, 620). This denies the existence of a political community, but deems there to be one, singular, enclosed political society where social order is being established. Participation in the political society as autonomous citizens overrules the plurality of society, with the principal goal being solely the reproduction of the political society.

It was this work, *A Theory of Justice*, which garnered a critical response from thinkers who would lay the foundation for what later became known as communitarianism. Michael Sandel (1982) was one of the more profound critics, stating that Rawls autonomous individual was in fact an 'encumbered self', burdened by loyalties and moral ties that were in many ways inseparable from the individual (Etzioni 1996, 25). Some ambitions, values and aims are so intimate to the individual that he can neither take a reflexive distance from them, nor can change them, unlike personal convictions that do change over time. According to Sandel it is instead through experiencing the social context that we become aware of these values (Kymlicka 1988, 189-190). Likewise Alisdair MacIntyre (1981) launched his own treatise against the idea of the abstract autonomous individual, stating that morality and virtues can only be comprehended in the context of their own community. Inspired by the philosophical reasoning of Aristotle, his work describes how the individual does not calculate the benefits and downsides of an action, but rather acts in a certain way out of consideration of doing the most virtuous thing (Knight 2005, 261). To achieve the realization of one's greatest good is to achieve the greatest common good, which naturally can only come into being in cooperation with others (Waghid 2003, 55).

Later thinkers would take these ideas and further reinforce them, such as for example Charles Taylor (1994), whose 'politics of recognition' gave expression to an identity that continuously engaged with the community surrounding the individual, and which describes damning effects when the individual fails to recognize itself in its immediate social environment. Likewise his concept of 'politics of difference' suggests that a differential treatment for cultural identities might under certain circumstances be the better option compared to a totally uniform treatment. It is perhaps the first attempt to overcome the clash between liberalism and communitarianism, which according to Taylor (2003), served 'cross-purposes', meaning that both were right but each served different agendas. Instead, he opted for a discussion about genuine citizens' dignity, which he felt was the objective both sides of the argument were aspiring to. In his view this 'citizens capacity' to influence one's own condition had to either include the ability to secure individual preferences, meaning the retrieval of individual rights and equality through for example the law, or include participation in self-rule, meaning one as an individual can at least partly identify with the local political consensus. Lastly, one major influence in the communitarian debate has come from Robert D. Putnam (2000), in his work *Bowling Alone*. Describing the erosion of organized community life in terms of the membership of civic organizations, he saw a trend that has the potential to undermine not just the social interaction that fuels a healthy democracy, but also quality of life, health and sense of safety. His call to recover this lost link to the community, and with that the social cohesion in modern life, has after the fact been interpreted as a call towards communitarianist values, making this perhaps the most influential publication relatable to communitarianism (Navarro 2002, 425-426).

### **Communitarianism as philosophy**

What this wide scope of historical precedents already shows is the immense complexity, or perhaps dangerous simplicity, associated with any thinking regarding communitarianism (Newman 1997, 624). It is easy to slip into a dichotomy that takes communitarianism at face value as the polar opposite of liberalism, or to simplify it to a strict adherence to group values and group rights. It becomes apparent that, in order to come to a understanding of what communitarianism is one needs to untangle the different strands related to the concept.

Perhaps one of the more outspoken proponents of communitarianism came forward with *The Spirit of Community*, written by Amitai Etzioni (1993). To him the communitarian movement was first and foremost “dedicated to working with our fellow citizens to bring about the changes in values, habits, and public policies that will allow us to do for society what the environmental movement seeks to do for nature: to safeguard and enhance our future” (Etzioni 1993, 3). To him the communitarian goal was to find a social order that was perceived as a good society, meaning that there exists “a social order that is aligned with the moral commitments of the members” (Etzioni 1996, 11). For this purpose he presented a ‘new golden rule’, stating that “the tension between one’s preference and one’s social commitments be reduced by increasing the realm of duties one affirms as moral responsibilities – not the realm of duties that are forcibly imposed but the realm of responsibilities one believes one should discharge and that one believes one is fairly called upon to assume” (Id., 12). In this line of thought Etzioni deemed a moral revival in the United States feasible, predominantly by placing renewed emphasis on social responsibilities, rather than rights. Excessive permissive rights had left people with a sense of entitlement, rather than obligation, and this balance had to be restored (Bowring 1997, 97). In his vision it was possible to avoid both the extremes of authoritarianism and uncontrolled moral decline by balancing self-interest with commitment to collective values by promoting ‘character formation’ within the family and ‘moral education’ within the schools (Etzioni 1993, 2-3). Critiquing the neo-liberal idea that an economy could run solely on self-interest Etzioni could only conclude that “a society cannot function well given such self-centred, me-istic orientations. It requires a set of dos and don’ts, a set of moral values, that guides people toward what is and encourages them to avoid that which is not” (Id, 24). It was now up to the individual to reassert itself, to see it as a moral duty to retake control at a local level, in order to defuse the power of the state (Newman 1997, 628-629).

Etzioni’s work proved to be a compelling, yet in many ways superficial polemic that mirrored much of the earlier communitarian criticism levelled at the liberal society. It is an opposition that is worth looking at with more detail, in order to arrive at a better understanding of what the main objections against liberalism are. One interpretation is that communitarianism is essentially rooted in the desire for a more religiously inspired society, where religion serves as a binding agent and religious worship is an important factor in the

upholding of the moral standards of society. Running parallel with these ideas is the secular interpretation that seeks a greater meaning in the community, but one specifically inspired by a composed, structured forms of society, led by traditions and strong values. In such a society the small, daily interactions between people are in some way in service to the greater legacy; everyone is to do his or her part in keeping the engine turning. As a consequence communitarians are expected to maintain sufficient intellectual distance to the immediate fulfilment of self-interest, in turn sacrificing some of their individualism for the betterment of the group (Kateb 1989, 927-928).

It is precisely this individualism that is placed under scrutiny by communitarians. They reckon that the human individual cannot be separated from its cultural background and its place in the community. Treating people solely on the basis of individual rights would almost inevitably alienate them because this ignores the differences that can exist between groups (Lea 2005, 37). On the contrary, liberal thought considers people free to make and break allegiances depending on their convenience, unlike communitarians, who see membership of a particular society in many situations as a given, firmly rooted in a person (Kukathas 1996, 90). Many of the 20<sup>th</sup> century civil rights movements, particularly those seen in the US, such as the Black Civil Rights Movement or the LGBT movement can be considered forerunners of this communitarian criticism. In these cases individual rights were either denied or oppressed, and did not align themselves with the vulnerable position of what, in retrospect, were valid claims to the necessity of specific, group-oriented rights (Moore 2009, 326). Instead of emphasizing individual agency, the practices and institutions should therefore be devised with the intent to strengthen individual interdependency, such as reciprocity and fraternity (Lu 2002, 191). In line with this, politics should strive to uphold the well-being of a community as a whole, making sure that the common good is maintained in relation to others, as much as to the individual (Kukathas 1996, 91).

### **Recognizing communitarianism**

As far as deriving a concise goal from this longstanding philosophical tradition is possible, I can find agreement with anthropologist John W. Bennett, who defined the mission of the communitarian movement as dual: “the search for the integrity of the *gemeinschaft* on the one hand, and the flowering of the identity of the individual in the group, on the other.”

(Bennett 1975, 64; Etzioni 1996, 27) According to him it was a way of life where group participation was the primary source of well-being, rather than the personal gain of the individual (Bennett 1975, 71). For Bennett (Id., 64) communitarianism can best be described as a four point agenda:

1. Share thy possessions.
2. Share thy tasks and decisions with others.
3. Minimize thy wants.
4. Love thy brother, who is all men.

It is an oversimplification, but as Bennett expands on his thinking a clearer image appears, one that includes communal child raising, a collective process of decision making, egalitarianism within relationships, emphasis on the sharing of property and labour, encouraging personal interdependency and an established system of rules and values by which to live ones lives (Id., 64). As we will see, many of these aspects are strongly visible in Orania. Nonetheless, this summary is surely not all-encompassing, as other authors have added their own additions, such as Manussos Marangudakis (2002, 59), who in his study of radical environmental advocacy groups summarized the communitarian principles as follows:

1. An egalitarian community where common values and principles have been internalized.
2. A communal identity, constructed through group meetings, discussions, literature, and comradeship.
3. They have achieved a certain purity of identity by snubbing issues unrelated to the overall goal.
4. An imagined community since they lack a shared residential site.
5. A common goal, which is considered more valuable than any single member of the group.

With this, ostensibly more concrete, checklist a different picture arises, one in which a community derives its shape from common goals, values and a self-generated identity. Rather than identifying themselves as individuals in a loose collective members can identify themselves as members of a group. It is a principle very dear to the Orania community, where the Afrikaner identity is remembered and reproduced in a plethora of ways, perhaps stronger

than anywhere else in the world. It is also a community driven by a common set of goals and aspirations, which, although not valued the same by every individual member, nonetheless take precedence over the position of the individual in the community.

A distinction that further helps to understand Orania as a communitarian community comes from the distinction Vincent (1997, 14-15) makes between so-called weak and strong communitarianism. Whereas the latter assumes total merging between the individual and social entity, the former seeks a basis that relates the two on more distinct terms:

1. Political and moral goods cannot be determined by abstract reasoning, they arise out of historical communities.
2. The community forms the basis of practical reason.
3. The human self is seen to be constituted through the community, although it is not absorbed by the community. Basic individual rights and freedoms are still upheld.
4. There are no external rational foundations to draw upon outside the community.

Critical in light of Orania is the emphasis on the historical community, a historical justification for a shared group sensation. Like Etzioni, this author also balances the individual rights of a person with the sense of community, which in Orania, as part of the Republic of South Africa, is a fundamental given. What this thesis ultimately shows is that Orania meets many of these characteristics considered token to communitarianism. Inversely, the lessons we can learn from Orania as a community provide important insights in the feasibility and struggles that communitarianism might meet 'in the wild'.

Etzioni (1996, 27) himself also set a defining number of markers for what he regarded the state of equilibrium between the social good and individual choices, which amounted to a societal pattern that included:

1. A reliance mainly on education, leadership, persuasion, faith and moral dialogues, rather than law, for sustaining virtues.
2. Defining a core of values that need to be promoted – a substantive core that is richer than those that make procedures meritorious.
3. Not a pervasive ideology or the kinds of religion that leave little room for autonomy.



These are important characteristics, because they remind us that it is easy to forget that the communal good is not the be-all and end-all of the communitarian view, as this could easily relinquish the freedom and autonomy of the individual for a blind following of the rules. It teaches us that there needs to be space for disagreement and dialogue in order for the equilibrium between the individual and communal good to exist.

Lastly, a more detailed and in many ways pragmatic description came from Henry Tam (1998), who established 'The Three Communitarian Principles', which are meant to combine all the previous understandings into a more coherent framework. These Principles are:

1. Co-operative Enquiry
2. Common values & mutual responsibility
3. Communitarian power relations

The first, co-operative enquiry, gives a community the means to determine how claims about certain beliefs should be judged (Id., 12-13), based on the notion that this can only happen in a valid way if it involves informed participants who deliberate together. There needs to be open communication to assure that judgements are made based on objective information, assuming that people are willing to adjust their personal views towards a workable consensus. Secondly, there need to be common values, carried by a mutual sense of responsibility, meaning that everyone takes responsibility to make it possible for others to pursue them (Id., 14). These are very general values that have proven themselves, of which Tam lists four types: the experience of loving and being loved, the experience of understanding with clear thought, the experience of a fair treatment by others and the experience of developing one's full potential. These values are not just important within communities, but are in many ways universally applicable, allowing for a much larger, globalized community to exist. Thirdly citizens need to be able to participate as equals, giving each individual a say in the way power is handled. Tam beliefs this avoids the pitfalls of democracy in which individuals are solely trying to get the best outcome for themselves through the authority of a small minority, without looking at what could be the best possible outcome for everyone (Id., 17). Instead of delegating political awareness to politicians all citizens should be concerned with and thus share the political risks and opportunities in a community. This would however require that

there are no barriers between equal citizens, either in the shape of power relations or undermining cultural differences. The important lesson we learn from Tam here is that any communitarian community, regardless of their exact make-up, cannot exist without a supporting political system in which citizens are concerned with how they are governed, implying that common values can only come to flourish when there is a political framework supporting them.

## Doing fieldwork in the Volkstaat

### Fieldwork

How does one go about investigating a small town with a 1000 inhabitants, a town which in many ways seems timeless, in which most people live their lives inconspicuously (Orania Dorpsraad 2014, 9)? It is easy enough to start out with the obvious, explore the rather empty streets, visit important markers such as the museums, the tourist information service of the *Orania Beweging* (Orania Movement, OB) and the town hall, but where can one take it from there? In many ways the answer came from Orania itself. As I was exploring the town, people would stop to talk to me, curious what a strange face was doing walking, rather than driving through town (I will never forget how a little girl playing in the yard remarked “where is your car?” as I walked by), often in the heat of the day when most people attempt to stay out of the sun as best as possible. One of the brokers I met this way was James Kemp, who works for the *Orania Beweging* as the person in charge of Communication and Marketing. This made him an indispensable person at many of the events and meetings organized in the community, and also meant he had contact with virtually anyone in town. Over time he proved to be an inexhaustible source for people who I could meet, from every possible corner of the community. Although initially I was afraid this might funnel my view to a story universally positive towards Orania, over time I realized that no such story exists. Different people hold different opinions with regards to Orania, both positive and negative, and James simply wanted to make sure that I would hear as many voices as possible.

Of course, when an anthropologist looks into a topic as broad as “community”, it is simply not possible to experience it solely through talking and interviewing people. Ideally one wants to be part of the experience, to participate to a degree that allows for a deeper understanding

than that of a situational visitor. There were of course formal events that I could attend, such as meetings, the various *volksfeeste* (public feasts) organized throughout the year and the tourist events organized during the summer holidays, but those only tell one side of the story. Participating in the *verblyfreg* (right of stay) procedure, which includes a mandatory interview process and two-day Orientation Course meant that I got to experience Orania more or less from the perspective of a new immigrant, who enters with little knowledge and has to find his way in a community made up of Afrikaners coming from all-over South Africa. Working with the men from Elim gave me a comprehensive insight in the ways that they structure their lives, and the struggles that they meet on a day-to-day basis. Living together with Tannie Jeanette and Oom Gerd meant that over time I developed a personal bond with their experience of life in Orania, and more importantly also gained access to the way in which people go to church, participate in weekly Bible studies, and meet up with friends and family. I stayed my entire fieldwork period with an elderly couple that lived on the southern end of the town. During this time I got to know my host parents on a personal level, as people working hard to make a living, and not shy to tell others about their religious and cultural believes. They were active members of the community, engaged with the town life, assisting with safety patrols, contributing to the local radio station and working at the local school. There is no denying that their viewpoint gave me an understanding of the importance of community, because of the many people that I met and informal events that I got to attend. It gave me a much better understanding of why people come together and the importance of religion for many people living in Orania.

Lastly there was a lot of information that could be found in the Orania community archive, located next to the Community Hall. It was established in 2007 (du Plessis 2007, 7) and provides a rich overview of the history of Orania and the numerous feasibility studies done in the 90s with regard to a Volkstaat in the Northern Cape region. The archive is managed by *Elemente van Politiek, Omgewing en Gemeenschap* (Elements of Politics, Environment and Community), commonly abbreviated to EPOG. As an organization EPOG is the successor of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-aangeleenthede* (South African Bureau of Race Issues, SABRA) (Boshoff 2015, 159). The research they perform is mostly concerned with cultural and political politics, mainly for the *Orania Beweging* (De Klerk, 2014, 41). EPOG also organizes the *H.F. Verwoerd Gedenklesing*, (H.F. Verwoerd Memorial Lecture), a yearly lecture concerned with

recognition and to some degree redemption for the leadership and ideological thinking of H.F. Verwoerd, the 7th Prime Minister of South Africa (De Beer 2007), who often is held responsible for some of the worst excesses of institutionalized apartheid.

All in all, this unique combination of data covered open interviews, either as notes, recordings or transcriptions, notes on small talk and (participant) observation and recordings from selected events and meetings, as well as copies from archival material and literature. Analysing this data through a computer-assisted open coding process yielded 127 domains which were suitable across these various data collections (see Appendix A). Each of these domains was analyzed in further detail which led to a total of 1246 subdomains, each specifying a particular aspect of a certain domain. Making “Orania” the hub for these domains led to various expansive spokes, and these spokes would to varying degrees become the foundation for this thesis. The selection process by which these spokes were constructed was largely based on the theoretical framework of communitarianism, attempting to chart the two most dominant fields in which the communitarian aspects of the community were prevalent, and the two most evident examples in which communitarianism was challenged. The former was clearly found in the institutional and ideological construct of Orania, as well as in the shared identity derived from the Orania perspective on history, culture and religion, while the latter was found incidentally in the swimming pool incident, and more structurally in the socio-economic positioning of the inhabitants of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring.

### **Reflection on my own position**

Over the course of my fieldwork I have wondered multiple times to what extent my fieldwork experience might have been influenced by my own predispositions and background. Being white must have been a big, if not the biggest marker for the way in which people approached me. Coupled with the fact that I came from the Netherlands, a country which many Afrikaners could relate to, at least on a conceptual level, and by extension that I understood, and to a very basic degree spoke Afrikaans meant that most people in Orania would readily open up to me. That is not to say that I at any point was accepted as Afrikaner, but even as “Hollander” (Dutch guy) it rarely felt as if there existed insurmountable cultural differences that either I or the people of Orania could not accommodate to. That is not to say they were entirely positive about the Netherlands, because as much as people appreciated Jan van Riebeeck for his role

in bringing the Afrikaner to South Africa, in many cases they were also strongly opposed to the multicultural, secular and liberal aspects of Dutch society. This opposition presented me with the significant challenge of dropping my own “Dutch” predispositions in order to understand the “*volkseie*” (people’s own) thinking in Orania.

Furthermore, being raised in a Catholic community meant that I had a rudimentary understanding of Christianity, the Bible and the underlying religious motives. While it was clear from the start that my own religious framework differed greatly from the protestant views of many of the inhabitants, sharing the Christian faith even on the most fundamental level made it easier to associate with the religious aspects, which proved to be crucial to my understanding Orania. On top of this, since Orania lacks a Catholic Church there was never any pressure to go to “my” church, which gave me full freedom to participate in the numerous different religious communities in the town. It meant that I could stay above religious quarrels and differences and that I was accepted with equal appreciation, or perhaps equal neutrality, in all denominations of Orania. One person, referring to the numerous church denominations in Orania, jokingly suggested that I might as well start my own church in Orania together with Sepp Eckmaier, a German beer brewer who lives in Orania and who also happened to be Catholic. Lastly, coming from a rural setting in the Netherlands meant that I could relate to the day-to-day experiences of farmers and workers, which are an important backbone of Orange River region. With conversations about the weather and the growing crops or fruit trees being default small talk topics for many of the people in Orania having some understanding of these concepts meant I could easier engage in these conversations. In the same vein it proved useful to have a basic understanding of the growth cycles of

“Yes it is true, the drought by which the Lord has visited this land is terrible. ... One farmer has said, if he does not at least receive 200 millimetres of rain it becomes impossible to plant, as there would be no harvest. In the news we heard about yet another municipality that has decided to enforce water restrictions. Farmers have begun to sell their animals, because they can no longer afford to keep them. If there do not come summer rains, there will not be food to eat for man and animal for years to come, as thus far only two percent of dry land farmers have yet planted their crops.”

*- Opening of the sermon vicar Koos Kersten held during the Ootmoedigingsdiens*

produce in order to understand the importance of water supply and crop yield. For example, with El Nino making the summer of 2015 one of the driest ones in decades I got to experience first-hand how the people in Orania, even with the comfort of the Orange River in their backyard, would still display genuine worry about the impact this drought would have on their crop yields, and by extension the food security of South Africa. The Gereformeerde Kerk Orania would for example hold an *Ootmoedigingsdiens* (Service of Humility) to ask for relief from the relentless drought.

## **Part II – Orania and its core values**

## Introduction

In trying to understand a community like Orania, how can one approach the rich variety of people and ideas? What is a suitable framework for the immense complexity that hides behind a seemingly simple message? In retrospect the first clue already came to me long before I had even set foot on the African continent, as in preparation of my fieldwork I read the *Voorgrond*, a marketing magazine published by the *Orania Beweging*. In an article Jaco Kleynhans (2012, 4-6), asks the reader the question, “What makes Orania so different from other villages and communities with Afrikaners?” To him the answer to this question is its sense of community, referring to Robert Nisbet’s *Quest for Community* (1953), which describes how the American individual has increasingly become alienated, losing touch with the social order of church, schools, politics and organisations, and with it also lost the urge to be a member of these. It is this development which Jaco Kleynhans sees more than ever occurring with the Afrikaner people, seeing a strong individualism that consequently has given rise to a strong state power, which then in turn has to enforce a ruthless value system that opposes organized community life. Opposing this development is the sense of community that sets Orania apart, and the underlying community values are what Orania attempts to both preserve and encourage among its inhabitants.

“Orania can and must be an example of how we create solutions through a strong community life. Values must not be enforced and policed, but must be transferred and regulated through individual connections within family relations and between neighbours, colleagues and friends. Education, civil services and the religious care of your fellow man must be your job and not just of the preachers, teachers and social workers.”

- Jaco Kleynhans (2012, 5-6) explaining the role of community life in Orania.

I got another hint, much later in my fieldwork, in conversation with C. Boshoff, the son of the late professor C.W.H. Boshoff, one of the founders of Orania. In one of our conversations he mentioned how Orania was a community with a relatively high degree of egalitarianism, yet also a community that did not have an outspoken form of socialism. It was indeed a remarkable observation, because even though the community adheres to all the markers of political liberalism and its inhabitants are protected by the South African constitution, there were also many unique aspects to the town that one could qualify as socialism, such as for



example their emphasis of collective ownership and social responsibility towards the community. To explain this further I would like to address several key points related to the community of Orania. First of all, there is the purpose by which the community was founded, why here, why right around the dramatic turn of the 1994 South African elections, and with what explicit goals? To understand this requires a comprehensive historical overview of the town, which highlights the different ideals embodied by the town from its earliest incarnation to the present day. In the following chapter this thesis will then look at the different ways in which the ideals are found throughout the town today, represented in symbolism, cultural heritage, historical representations and day-to-day living. This will show that the communitarian ideals of Orania are not just idealist rhetoric but are to a significant degree also important socio-cultural markers within the community.

## **The cosmology of Orania**

To understand the goals of Orania is by no means an easy affair. Not only has the town vastly different meanings for different people, as we will see in later chapters, but in the 25 years of its existence the objectives have taken on a variety of shapes. This makes it a useful exercise to distinguish the different objectives of Orania in order to determine how they slot together into one coherent communitarian worldview. It are these objects that every person in the community is expected to support and to understand in order to become a full-fledged member, making them essential to being a member of the community.

### **Freedom**

At the most abstract level Orania searches for *vryheid* (freedom). It is a seemingly innocent word which appears in many contexts, such as in the name of the forerunner of the *Orania Beweging*, the *Afrikaner Vryheidstigting* (Afrikaner Freedom Foundation, AVSTIG) and the *Vryheidsfront Plus*, (Freedom Front Plus, VF+), a political party which defends the interests of Afrikaners throughout South Africa. It is also one of the key concepts defined in the Constitution of the *Orania Beweging* (Orania Beweging 2012, 5). This is perhaps the most fundamental definition by which to understand and interpret Orania, one which emphasizes the protection of identity and of values, mainly through institutions and, optionally, a state with some degree of self-determination.

“The right and capacity of people and communities to express their values, convictions and identity both separately and together, to not be denied or oppressed in this by other people and communities, and to not deny or oppress other people or communities based on this. For communities this means the creation of and access to institutions which cooperate, and who contribute to identity transfer and material and mental wellbeing. Under certain circumstances and for certain communities this takes the shape of state formation.”

*- Freedom as it is defined in the Constitution of the Orania Beweging*

This conceptualization of freedom is very different from the common notion of ‘individual freedom’, which is associated with human rights and enlightenment thinking (Vestergaard 2000, 116-121). Although Orania, as part of the Republic of South Africa fully ascribes to these constitutional freedoms, the freedom Orania seeks is of a group-oriented or communitarian nature. It is more akin to what Bowring (1997, 94) described as the ‘moral authenticity of the subjects that compromise a community’; something that all members can aspire to through their actions, and something that can only be gained out of free will. This measure of autonomy calls for people to take responsibilities, rather than for people to rely on rights that have been granted to them a priori. This mirrors the thinking of Sartre on freedom, in which authenticity, to be true to what one really is, instead of what one is expected to be, can only come from a free and conscious choice to become an authentic being (Id., 111). In case of Orania, it is the freedom to express oneself as member of a group and to share the internalized values of the community free from being oppressed or from having to oppress others. It is neither an individual freedom nor an objective set by the Orania leadership, but rather a freedom that gives people explicit room and encouragement to express themselves, both through accessible institutions, and active identity transfer. In the way C.W.H. Boshoff (1989c, 8; n.d. a, 4) envisioned freedom it had to be all-encompassing, not based on civil rights that might safeguard the Afrikaner minority on paper or as dependent federal states within a nation, but as a physical presence, a secure region that would guarantee that the Afrikaner as group would have a home. Likewise his son, C. Boshoff qualified freedom as the means to achieve dignity for the community, something which he deems only possible by breaking the unreasonable construct central to the present era, in which a global and liberal hegemony is forced upon the Afrikaner (Boshoff 2015, 302-304).

“For the purpose of his survival the Afrikaner cannot agree to anything but total freedom. Freedom in their own neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces is not freedom; freedom as the right for voluntary association and disassociation is not freedom; freedom as a risky existence without legal protection is not freedom; freedom to maintain one’s own identity through inner strength is not freedom; freedom with secured minority rights and in a democratic system where numbers are not a determining factor, is not freedom. These are all forms of deception or self-deception that have worked nowhere in the world, and least of all in Africa.”

- C.W.H. Boshoff (1989c, 8) explaining what freedom is, or what it is not.

For the people living in Orania freedom boils down to the notion of an unbreakable link between on the one hand losing one’s political *selfbeskikking* (self-determination), and on the other hand losing one’s identity. To lose one’s self-determination, and consequently to be assimilated by the multicultural South Africa is seen as a silent death of the Afrikaner as a distinct cultural group with its own identity. It was this deeply ingrained fear of losing one’s freedom that motivated people to start thinking about, and to eventually undertake a project which today has become the town of Orania. Initially it was the *Suid-Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse-aangeleenthede* (South African Bureau of Race Issues, SABRA), created in 1948 as the academic pillar of the *Nasionale Party* (National Party, NP), who came to the realization that the apartheid idea of separating different racial groups into their respective individual “homelands” was becoming increasingly unrealistic, mainly due to a lack of support from the government following the death of Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd in 1966. With cracks appearing in the once ironclad apartheid regime SABRA initiated the search for an alternative future in which the Afrikaner would lose its dominant position as minority government over the whole of South Africa, but where it would retain its status as a defined group with political self-determination, rather than a minority subjugated to the non-Afrikaner majority in South Africa (Boshoff 1985a, 26; Boshoff 2012, 337). From that point onwards SABRA, under the leadership of the late C.W.H. Boshoff, committed itself to a radical restructuring of South Africa, on the one condition that this would leave space for the Afrikaner people, their history and traditions.

## Selfbeskikking

Like *vryheid*, it is also worth investigating the concept of *selfbeskikking* in greater detail. A single definition is hard to make out, since it has received many meanings over the years. Perhaps the best understanding can be gained from the efforts of the *Volkstaatraad* (Volkstaat Council), a research group created by President F.W. de Klerk in 1994 to investigate the feasibility of various Volkstaat proposals as part of the political transition that was happening in South Africa. Made up

“... political supreme authority. This enables a people to determine their own destination and to express their desire for freedom from oppression and discrimination, to strive for the development of human and natural resources and to decide about the shape and nature of their government.”

- *Selfbeskikking as it was defined in the publications of the Volkstaatraad*

by twenty of the foremost Afrikaner nationalists from various organisations, it was a relatively late but nonetheless inspired attempt to define how Afrikaner *selfbeskikking* would look like in an ANC-led South Africa. Although in the end both the minds behind the *Volkstaatraad* and the Afrikaners as a group proved to be too dispersed to define a structural plan, their investigation reveals much of the *selfbeskikking* ideal that to this day continues to fuel people and policy in the Orania community (Kirsten n.d., 7-8). According to the Volkstaatraad (1995, 7-8) *selfbeskikking* refers to a culmination of both political and economic authority over a state at a level where the state has no accountability to any higher powers. Later Volkstaat publications would build upon this definition, adding for example that in case of minorities such as the Afrikaner, self-determination also meant decentralization, which allows defining characteristics and cultural traits such as language and religion to flourish (Volkstaatraad 1996, 36). It was not considered a human right, but a common right that was applicable to all people who are aware of their existence and identity, and who wish to preserve this (Jooste 1996, v). Its goal is to create a plausible legal order in which the common necessities of all are taken into account, rather than to treat every individual as equals (Id., 1).

The extent to which Orania has been successful in gaining a measure of *selfbeskikking* is mostly a matter of perspective. While it is true that Orania is still an integrated part of South Africa and the idea of a Volkstaat has lost a lot of its appeal as a feasible future outside of Orania, on a small scale Orania is de facto operating as an independent municipality. Article

235 of the South African Constitution provides a legal context that can theoretically grant self-determination rights to communities sharing a common culture and language. Along with re-affirmations from Deputy Minister for Provincial and Constitutional Affairs Mohammed Valli Moosa in 1998 and President Thabo Mbeki in 2002 this has provided Orania with a legal context in which self-determination is at least a possibility. At the same time Article 235 is not a legal right, meaning that Orania cannot make a demand for self-determination to the government (Pienaar 2007, 74-75). As a result of these limitations Orania has since then searched for more limited versions of self-determination, aiming instead to become an autonomous municipality.

This leaves the question to what extent this notion of *selfbeskikking*, combined with the previous notion of freedom can be seen as a form of nationalism. Historically Afrikaner nationalism, often described as Christian-nationalism due to its religious underpinnings formed an unmistakable characteristic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century political agenda of the NP. Both public and private entities cooperated in a cultivated paradigm which aimed to align the skewed racial relations of the apartheid era with coherent Afrikaner identity politics (Davies 2009, 18-19). What in the 1950s started out as a definitive aim for 'survival in justice' for the Afrikaner people eroded over the years to become an extreme security regime that was met with increasing pressure from both inside and outside South Africa to reform and open up to non-Afrikaners (Gilliomee 1994, 530). Boshoff (1992, 52-61) himself described his views on Afrikaner nationalism by a range of characteristics, firstly as something determined by humans, meaning that it involves the individual within the state. Secondly, it serves as something that is religiously determined, which serves as timeless durability against a changing world. Thirdly, it is historically determined, with history being crafted to serve an emotional bond between the past and the future. Fourthly, Afrikaner nationalism can be ethnically determined, in that it generates a feeling of "our own people". Here Boshoff draws an important distinction, stating that although nationalism in itself can act out a sense of exclusivity or superiority, Afrikaner nationalism is based on ethnical nationalism, meaning that it looks internally, rather seeking redemption in its own culture, language and sense of belonging. Fifthly, Afrikaner nationalism is determined by space, as a community existing in a physical environment or fatherland. Because of the Afrikaner's minority position this translates to a sense of autonomy. Lastly, Boshoff described Afrikaner nationalism as

‘integral’, meaning that its traditions, history and political, economic and social structures were more diffused than united. What tied them together was an awareness of their position in history, from which they approach their present day hardships with a nationalist fervour (Id., 62).

In the debate surrounding communitarianism the usefulness of nationalism and self-determination are a topic that its critical thinkers cannot agree on. It has been asserted that relevant comparisons can be drawn between nationalism, and what surmounts to so-called ‘weak communitarianism’ (Vincent 1997). Vincent points to five traits shared by both ideologies, of which the first states that both consider humans to be social beings, framed within a community context (Id., 16-18). Secondly, both also oppose liberalism, although not necessarily for the same reasons. Thirdly, both see community as a construct made of unquestioned morals and customs, shared among members. Fourthly, both are driven by a sense of egalitarianism, seeing the world as a mosaic of distinguishable, unique identities that need to be recognized. Lastly, ethically both share a focus on particularistic, rather than universalistic ethics. What is considered the ultimate ideal, or the “good” life comes from the particular history of the group, rather than an external notion of universalist principles. Following the critical thinking of Sandel (1982, 175) that there exists no such thing as “unencumbered selves”, it becomes possible to understand why people in Orania consider themselves first and foremost as Afrikaners, as members of a group that they address as a *volk* (people), rather than as citizens in the country of South Africa. They reject the liberal notion of a chosen membership to a civic state, and replace it with the idea of an ascribed membership to a future Afrikaner state, the *Volkstaat* (People’s State). In this Volkstaat homogeneous values are projected and reproduced to make the Afrikaner people stand out as a culturally distinguishable group, with its own historic and religious precedent.

Etzioni (1992) has however expressed great concern with regard to self-determination efforts, believing that they would be destructive to legitimate democratic efforts to find a resolution for particularism within a state. While he absolutely wants communities to be as self-reliant as possible (Etzioni 1993, 146), in situations where larger states did break up to form new, smaller states, he notices the absence of a responsive democratic process for the new citizens. According to him these states will also continue to be dependent on their larger neighbours, whose economic and military power tends to be essential for the survival of

smaller states. Using the apartheid system as an example Etzioni (1992, 28-29) concluded that if there is no tolerance between ethnic groups within a state, chances are high that self-determination will continue to foster conflict and ethnic strife, and Etzioni would therefore encourage ethnic groups to seek an intra-state solution for their disputes. One condition for this is however that states provide a real democratic structure and do not homogenize their population to an artificial reflection of its demographic, as an intra-state solution requires at the very least room for plurality and open debate. Only then can ethnic groups survive within a multicultural state where they are free to practice ethnic expressions such as language, religion, cuisine and cultural forms (Id., 34-35).

## **Selfstandigheid wat erken word**

When around 1990 it became apparent that South Africa stood at the edge of a major transition, one which, if left to its own devices, would cost the Afrikaner his freedom, AVSTIG started to actively lobby for a separate state solution, and would eventually buy Orania as the self-proclaimed beginning of the Volkstaat. As C.W.H. Boshoff (n.d. b, 1) described it, the Afrikaner stood at a crossroads, with two paths in front of him. Either Afrikaners would walk in line with the South African civil state, as a white minority ruled by a black majority, or they would opt for the Volkstaat alternative, to live with self-determination, independent from the rest of South Africa (Schönteich 2003, 36). Unlike the multicultural South Africa this Volkstaat would be culturally homogenous, ensuring that the Afrikaner heritage would be preserved. This dichotomy exemplifies the idea of Tönnies, with the South African civil state been a *gesellschaft*, in which people maintain a formal contract with the state in exchange for individual civil rights, whereas the Volkstaat strongly resembles a *gemeinschaft*, aimed at “*eiesoortig voortbestaan*” (distinctive survival) and based on interdependent allegiances between the Afrikaner people as a culturally distinct group (Boshoff 1989a, 7). In this context Frans de Klerk, the executive officer of Orania, has described *selfbeskikking* as “*selfstandigheid wat erken word*” (recognized autonomy), something that can only be gained if there exists a “*kultuur van selfstandigheid*” (culture of autonomy), a shared culture that permeates public institutions, business operations and the community as a whole (de Klerk 2015, 28).

This does however raise the question, how to create this “culture of autonomy”? The most obvious example that anyone can see while walking through the town of Orania is the way it is engaged with its ecological sustainability. As many as 45% of the housing in the community contains a solar heater that provides sufficient hot water for most household needs (Orania Dorpsraad 2014, 25). Solar power is also becoming increasingly popular, providing as much as 15% of the energy needs of the community. Colourful trash bins around town remind everyone to separate their garbage into glass, metal, plastics, chemicals and rest material, allowing these materials to be recycled. Other initiatives happen on a project basis, for example, several houses in the community have been built largely out of hay bales, an excellent insulator against the extreme temperatures, or shipping containers, in the spirit of recycling old materials for new purposes. One unique example of self-reliance and sustainability in Orania is the *Aardskip* (Earth Ship), a house that among other features captures its own water, generates its own electricity and is also effectively carbon-neutral, while it has been constructed out of recycled materials such as sandbags, mud and car tires. It maximizes the use of what little rain tends to fall within a year, recycling it first as drinking water, then using it to water a garden that produces a selection of fresh vegetables and herbs, after which it is used for the toilet and lastly for the watering of trees and plants outside of the house. The owner of the *Aardskip*, Ludwig Everson, provides regular tours to show all the features, and considered it his mission to educate people about the different ways in which even the harsh climate of the Karoo can provide for a sustainable living. Although he did not expect people would copy the *Aardskip* any time soon, he hoped the various elements could inspire people to include them in future buildings. Yet such ecological sustainability is only a small building block of the envisioned Volkstaat. More pertinent is the question, how can South Africa ever accommodate a Volkstaat solely occupied by Afrikaners?

From a practical point of view, this seems a difficult position to defend in any country, even more so in a country with a troubled history of apartheid and undemocratic white governance. But to understand the other building blocks that make up Orania one only has to know one key phrase: “*eie land, eie instellings, eie arbeid*” (own land, own institutions, own labour). This can be considered the Orania paradigm, the model on which Orania is built, made up of three sanctified rules that cannot be broken if Orania wishes to stay true to its cause. These principles were the culmination of extensive research done by SABRA, in particular sociologist





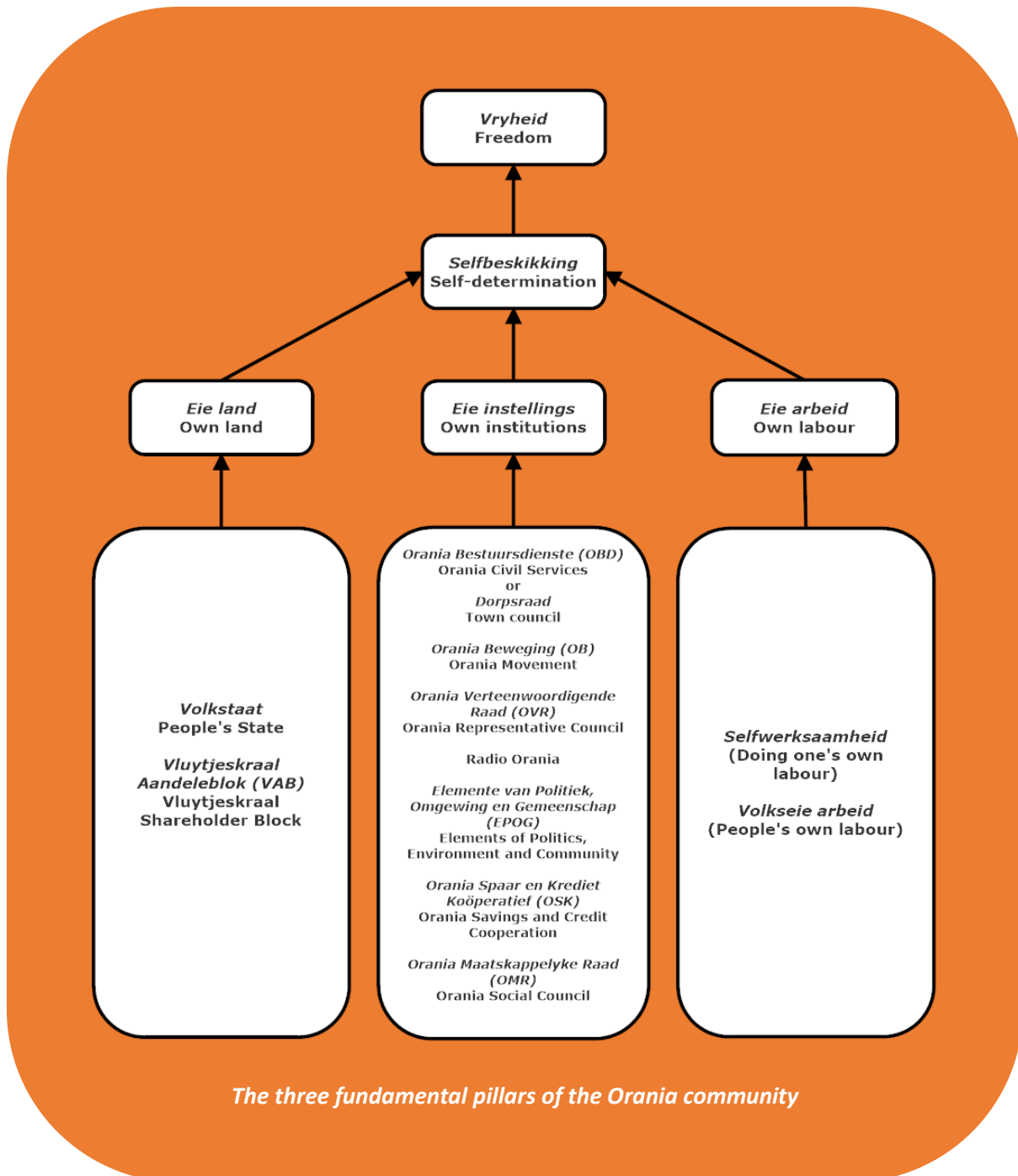
*Sustainable living in Orania.*

*Top picture: the Aardskip, using recycled materials, smart architecture, solar power and water preservation to live with a minimal ecological footprint.*

*Bottom left picture: trash bins reminding everyone to separate their thrash.*

*Bottom right picture: cooking with solar power.*

Dr. Chris Jooste, whose name today is honoured by the Chris Jooste Auditorium in Orania, the lecture and meeting room of the *Orania Beweging*. It are principles carved in stone, which serve as a backbone to Orania's ideology and can be considered the overarching communitarian goal of the Orania community.



## Eie land

It is easy to skip past the obviousness of “land”, when it concerns the creation of a state. It is an essential aspect of any modern-day country to have some kind of land mass, accompanied with distinct boundaries that one can trace on a map. Likewise, for aspiring minority states it is commonly assumed that a distinct territory is one of the first requirements for a nation to be recognized

(Jooste 2007, 4; Pienaar 2007). Yet for Afrikaners the matter is far from simple. As Lida Strydom, one of the members of Orania’s City management explained during the Orientation Course, the Afrikaner does not strive to be solely an imagined community, existing exclusively as an identity that people can assume.

“We cannot exist in the air, we cannot exist in a virtual space. We need a place where we can plant our orchards, where our children can go to school, where we can work, that is why we need our own land.”

- Lida Strydom explaining new inhabitants why Orania needs to have a physical place

Yet land, or more specific “*grond*” (ground) is also an element with strong emotional connotations. I became first aware of this during a book presentation by Dirk Hermann (2015), who had come to Orania to present his book *Begron*d. This fictional book tells about the aftermath of a so-called *plaasmoord* (farm murder), and how the Afrikaner should take a stance against these dramatic events. It is a difficult topic in any regard, since many people in Orania felt that the vulnerability of farmers shows the damaging effects of South African police inefficiency, and led to the ongoing debate asking if these farm attacks should be considered a targeted “white genocide”, or just an “ordinary” crime wave against particularly vulnerable targets (Cilliers 2015, 1). To honour these deaths Orania organizes a yearly *Plaasmoordeherdenking* (Farm Murder Memorial Service), held around a large white cross, called *Moordkruis* (Murder Cross), which is located on a rocky hill near the *Dorpskantoor*. The service was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, a date chosen on purpose because of the commemoration services of World War One held in numerous other countries around the world. The book *Begron*d served as a spiritual sequel to *Treurgrond*, another book by Dirk Hermann (2012), which served as inspiration for a critically acclaimed movie with the same title. Both books convey the message that the Afrikaner, in particularly remote farmers, are vulnerable, and with these brutal attacks the Afrikaner people not only lose a life, but they

also lose a little bit of land, and with that some of their identity, history and uniqueness. Hermann explains that whereas the book, and the movie *Treurgrond* depicts the dramatic reality of today, *Begron*d is intended as a story of hope. He explained that being “*begron*d” (grounded) was about having hope, both because you have your own land to stand on, and because you are grounded religiously in the Christian faith. According to Hermann the Afrikaner does not treat land as ownership, as a symbol of power, or a symbol of prosperity, but as stewardship over something the Afrikaner should “*bewerk en bewaak*” (take care of and guard, after Genesis 2:15). It makes the land something the Afrikaner is bound to, as farmers on and inhabitants of the land, but also as a cultural collective with historical and religious roots in the land.

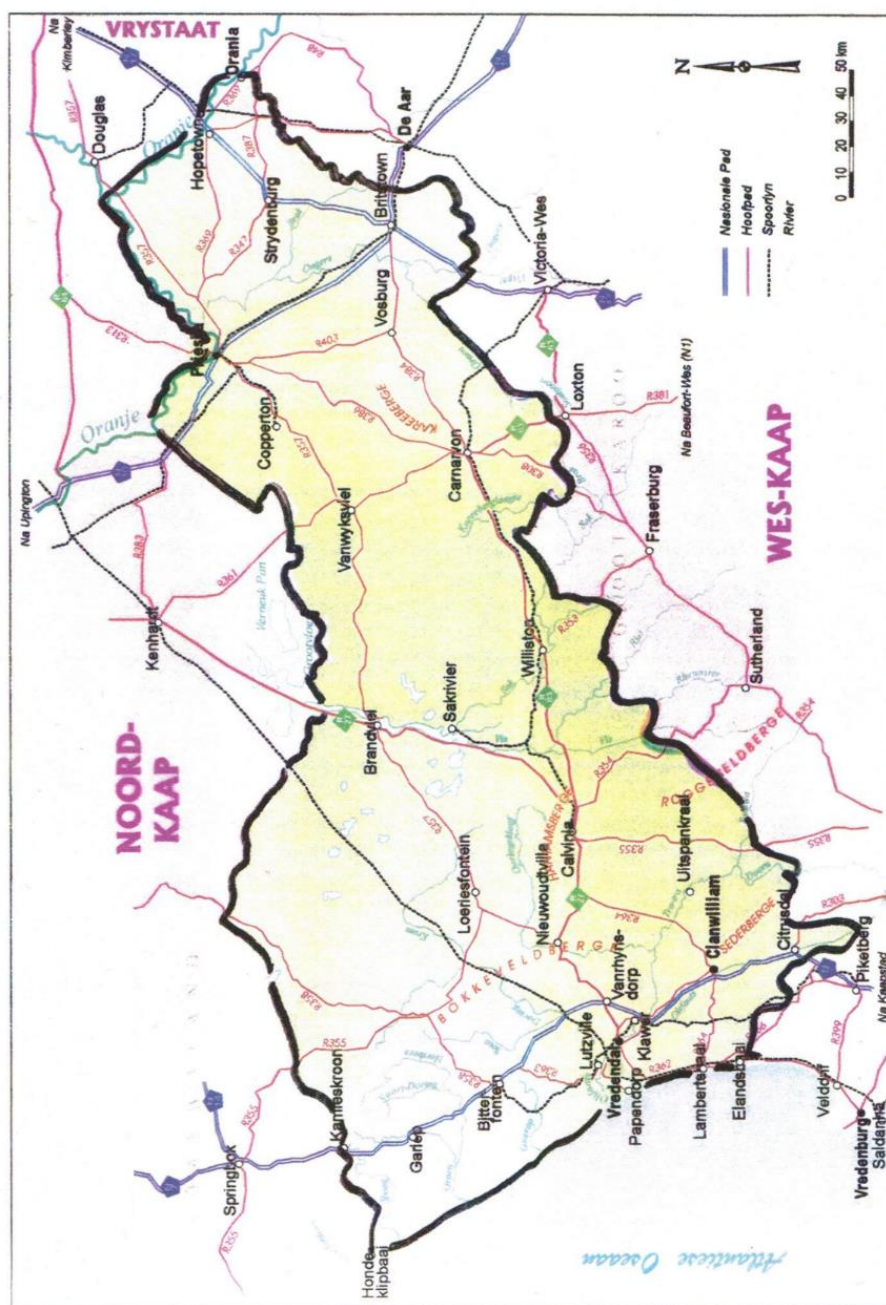
It was against this background that AVSTIG commenced with the realization of an Afrikaner homeland in the early 1980s. Based on the work of SABRA, South Africa was searched for a region that could match the requirements set out the research of Dr. Chris Jooste for a future Volkstaat. Many regions were initially considered, of which most were rejected for one or more reasons (Pienaar 2007, 50-56). While explaining to new Orania inhabitants why the earliest settlers of Orania had chosen such a remote and arid region as the Karoo, rather than one of the more comfortable regions of South Africa, Carel Boshoff answered with an iconic “*hier is een ding nie, hier is een ding wel*” (around here there is one thing we do not have, and one thing we do have). The former turned out to be densely populated urban areas, whereas the latter concerned a reliable source of water. In his book, “*Verder as Vryheid*” Boshoff (2015, 112-113) described how one of the divisive issues among early *Volkstaters* (Volkstaat supporters) was the choice between building a Volkstaat where the most Afrikaners lived, preferably with the historical precedent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Boer Republics, or in the most sparsely inhabited regions, where Afrikaners might have a chance at gaining a majority presence. His explanation for the location of Orania thus mirrors the arguments made in earliest planning phase of the Volkstaat, how it had to be small enough to be settled by less than half a million Afrikaners, with water and sea access, mineable minerals, arable land and as far removed from non-Afrikaner population centres as possible (Jooste 1997, 100-102; Boshoff 2001, 2-3). It had to be defensible and have controllable borders, but more importantly, ideally it would have a relative small number of non-Afrikaners, assuring the Volkstaat would have a relatively homogeneous Afrikaner identity (Jooste 1997, III). For this

reason large, multicultural cities had to be avoided, even though non-Afrikaners within the borders of the Volkstaat should be treated with all the rights of the South African constitution, on a basis of friendship and cooperation (Jooste 1999, 3). Although Afrikaners could not settle for anything less than full sovereignty and a majority position, simultaneously the resettlement of other population groups was deemed unrealistic (Boshoff 1989b, 75).

Eventually this meant that AVSTIG set its crosshairs on the North-Western Cape region of South Africa, which was relatively sparsely inhabited (with a population density of 3.1/km<sup>2</sup>), with Afrikaans as a dominant language, and an underdeveloped economy with huge potential due to the prime access to the Orange River with its hydroelectric dams to support large-scale farming (Boshoff 1989a, 8; Boshoff 2007a, 2). Furthermore it was a relatively safe region, with both crime rates, strikes and labour conflicts being less of an issue than the urban areas (de Klerk 1995, 2). With Orania as eastern most town the Volkstaat was to stretch all the way to South Africa's west coast, where it would have direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, roughly from the Hondeklipbaai in the north to the Elandsbaai in the south. Since 2001 this has also been the Volkstaat conceptualization that was endorsed by the Vryheidsfront Plus (du Plessis 2001). It would encompass roughly 160,000 square kilometres, equivalent of 13.3% of the South African land mass, with its largest city being Vrededal, at 10,000 inhabitants (Jooste 1999, 3). It was a seemingly well-thought up plan in which Orania was to be the first of many Afrikaner settlements, rapidly growing as Afrikaners all over South Africa would resettle for a life in the newly created Afrikaner homelands.

Skipping ahead 25 years for a moment, the plans for such a large, country-scale Afrikaner nation have been scaled back to more realistic proportions. Recently the work of Frans de Klerk (2015) has shifted the debate surrounding the *Volkstaat* more towards the localized growth of Orania, turning it in a *Volkstad* (People's City) similar to for example Singapore. According to de Klerk this Asian city proves that a local city-state can be economically successful, a role that Orania hopes to fulfil for the Afrikaner people if it can become an economically thriving, ecologically sustainable city with a university, business opportunities and medical facilities (Id., 22-23).





**Map of the proposed Volkstaat in the Northern Cape, occupying land from Orania in the east to the South African west coast.**

Yet, simultaneously this does not mean that Volkstaat idea is dead in Orania, as the prominent position of the *Hartland Stigting* (Heartland Foundation), in the middle of the Orania highlights. This young organization takes the Volkstaat idea back to its roots, with the objective being to reproduce another “Orania” in the western coastal area of South Africa. With a climate more suitable to the farming with livestock and wild animals, as well as corn and grain agriculture, they believe this could become another hotspot of Afrikaner development. According to them this will serve as the real “heart” of the Volkstaat, running in parallel with Orania, rather than in competition with it.

“Now the Orania Movement has strayed away from the old goal of the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation, because the Afrikaner Freedom Foundation said, ‘occupation of a country’. You know, a country cannot just be a village, it needs to be a little bit bigger.”

- A member of the Heartland Foundation explaining what their objective is.

## Eie instellings

According to the autobiography of C.W.H. Boshoff it was a small advertisement in the *Landbouweekblad* of August 1990 that started it all (Boshoff 2012, 384). A small town, 470 hectares in size, had come up for sale, approximately 160 kilometres from Kimberley. The Department of Water Affairs had built this town, complete with church, school, sports facilities and a swimming pool, predominantly to house the workers of the *Oranjerivierwaterskema* (Orange River Project), whose first employees moved in around 1963. This project led to the construction of the Gariep and Vanderkloof Dam and, through irrigation, had turned large tracts of arid plains into fertile farmland. It was here that the name Orania was first born, replacing the name *Vluytjeskraal*, which up until then had been the name of the farm on which the town was to be built (du Plessis 1998, 7-12). Now, 27 years later, the Orange River Project was finished, and upon his first visit Boshoff found out that what remained was little more than a skeleton of a town, with wooden houses severely deteriorated due to the blistering sun, weeds growing everywhere and practically all furniture either removed or looted. Yet, some of the brick buildings in town, such as a school and church, had survived in better conditions, and although many of the old houses could only be demolished, they did have a solid foundation on which new houses could be build.

After careful deliberation it was decided that Orania's interests would be best protected by a private shareholder company, which would go by the name of *Orania Bestuurdienste* (Orania Management Services, OBD, commonly called *Dorpsbestuur*). Originally OBD owned all the land purchased from the Department of Water Affairs, but as more people bought property the land owned by OBD has slowly diminished, and will technically all be sold to residents at some point in the future. In this pioneering phase the roughly 150 houses that could be repurposed sold at prices ranging from 31.000 to 41.000 rand (du Plessis 1998, 18). Houses in Kleingeluk sold for less, perhaps 10.000 rand, whereas empty tracts of land were sold for as little as 600 rand (Pienaar 2007, 58-59). For the total sum of 1,5 million rand AVSTIG found itself the new owners of what would become Orania, including its roads, infrastructure, houses and other buildings. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1991 Orania was officially re-opened, an event that is today still celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, due to it coinciding with *Stigtingsdag* (Founder's Day), which up until 1994 used to be a national holiday honouring the landing of Jan van Riebeeck in the Cape. On this day Orania usually organizes a theatrical display remembering the landing. It was by no means a quiet transition, as 500 or so occupants, some who had lived there since the days of the Orange River Project, and others squatting in what they felt was their native land, found themselves now declared "illegal". These coloured and black inhabitants, most of which lived in *Grootgewaagd* (today's *Kleingeluk*) were faced with increasing pressure and even aggression in an attempt to convince them to leave the property, which they eventually did (Cavanagh 2013, 400-402). Later that year Orania was expanded in a southwest direction by the purchase of *Vluytjeskraal 272 Eiedom Bpk*, greatly expanding Orania's territory with 2300 hectares of fertile farmland. Today these lands are partly occupied by large pecan nut orchards, while others have been divided in small farmlands of ten to fifteen hectares.

These circumstances meant that the first inhabitants were pioneers in more ways than not, leaving behind the vested interests and the comforts offered by their former lives in an attempt to resuscitate the decrepit ghost town (Boshoff 2001, 2). Yet it was also the time where some of the major institutions of Orania first saw the light of day. Legally the town was seen as a private farm, with allotted blocks of shares replacing title deeds for land ownership (Boshoff 2014, 2). This does however mean that shareholders do not have *kart en transport* (access rights) to their property, giving Orania sole authority over the access to its territory.



The shareholder company, created by OBD, maintains the vast majority of shares in a shareholder company called *Vluytjeskraal Aandeleblok Bpk* (VAB). Effectively all developed land is handed over to the VAB, in which each house owner has one or more shares, and with those shares also voting power at the annual shareholder meeting. This gives the eight people on the

shareholder company's Board of Directors the de facto role of *Dorpsraad* (Village council). They elect a chairperson, which serves as de facto mayor (during my fieldwork this was Christo Mulder), and an executive officer which serves as the day-to-day leadership of the town (during my fieldwork this was Frans de Klerk) (de Beer 2006, 111). Other members of the Board of Directors are active in various community portfolios, specifically Safety (Kobus van der Merwe), Planning & Development (Christo Conradie), Community Services (Lida Strydom), Engineering Services (Herman Grotius) and Corporative Services (Frans de Klerk). The VAB is effectively the institution where Orania inhabitants get their services and infrastructure from, such as power, roadworks and water, and it is also the institution to which inhabitants pay their taxes and utility bills.

"The restoration of the Freedom of the Afrikaner and its prolongation in a democratic Republic grounded on Christian virtues and convictions and which strives for applicable forms of self-reliance, in relation to other related states."

- *The objective of the Orania Beweging as described in its constitution (Orania 2012, 6)*

Another institution that operates on the political or at least organizational level of Orania, as the successor of the Afrikaner organisations AVSTIG and the *Afrikanervolkswag* (Afrikaner People's Guard), is the *Orania Beweging* (Orania Movement) (du Plessis 2001, 1). Although not formally related, one fairly common assumption made by various people during my fieldwork was also that the *Orania Beweging* was de facto a subsidiary of the *Solidariteit* (Solidarity), a nation-wide trade-union which focuses largely, although not exclusively on Afrikaners. Compared to the OBD or VAB its role is less easy to define, but going by its own constitution the goal of the *Orania Beweging* can be described as a less institutional, and a more abstract, political mission to achieve Afrikaner freedom in a state that is governed by self-reliance and Christian virtues.

In practise the *Orania Beweging* serves more or less as the “Department of Foreign Affairs” for Orania, providing information, bus tours and souvenirs for the steady stream of tourists who visit Orania, while also performing and publishing research related to the town (mainly through EPOG) and promoting the core values of Orania such as Afrikaner identity, *selfwerksaamheid* and *opbouende naasbestaan* (constructive co-existence) both inside and outside South Africa (Boshoff 2015, 170-172). On a limited scale the *Orania Beweging* is also a contributor to the development of Orania, predominantly by re-investing some of the funding they receive from donors all over the world in community projects. The *Orania Beweging* also publishes the *Voorgrond* magazine, an Afrikaans-language magazine that is published four times a year and covers stories about what has happened in the community, such as cultural events and new construction developments, but also advertising for Orania businesses and political and philosophical topics related to topics like freedom or *selfbeskikking*.

Although this legal structure functions quite effective for the internal organisation of Orania, it does put the community at odds with the supra-local government structures ruling over South Africa. This became all too apparent in 2000, when a new country-wide administrative division threatened to include Orania in the Tembelihle municipality (grouping Hopetown, Strydenburg and Orania together), effectively taking away the relatively unrestricted local governance that Orania had enjoyed up until that point. Due to a clerical error the notification to abolish Orania’s representative council was however delayed until the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, a mere six days before the nationwide local elections were planned. With no response arriving in due time the *Orania Verteenwoordigende Raad* (Orania Representative Council, OVR) proceeded to take the issue to the Northern Cape High Court (van der Merwe 2000). Having the legal argument on their side, this action threatened to obstruct the nationwide election process, which eventually led the South African government to settle for an indefinite prolonging of the *Orania Verteenwoordigende Raad* as the sole political authority over Orania, at least until a new agreement could be made (Pienaar 2007, 72-73; Spatium 2009, 6-7). Today this has led to a relatively peaceful relation between Orania and the Tembelihle municipality, with each respecting the other’s authority. While the Tembelihle municipality does set up a voting booth in Orania, this is ignored in favour of the local election of the OVR, where the majority of people tend to vote for the Freedom Front Plus.

What these different political institutions also show however, is that being independent, as far as the day-to-day management is concerned, is by no means a simple matter, something which is clearly highlighted by the efforts made to explain their different functions in the Orientation Course. Yet, just like land seems an obvious element of acquiring *selfbeskikking*, so does the idea behind “*eie instellings*” also tell its own story. Frans de Klerk (2015, 39) has described them as “vehicles that mobilize resources and that provide community services and necessary infrastructure”. He explains their role as a necessity, since the region around Orania has historically had a low priority for development. As a result there are currently too many challenges for private parties to flourish, for example with regard to infrastructure. For this reason it is up to the institutions to identify and enable the necessities for development, which will proceed to benefit the ideal of *selfbeskikking* in the long run. Carel Boshoff also explained that the multitude of institutions is an important factor that gives Orania its resilience, jokingly asserting how anyone who wants to execute a coup d'etat on Orania would not know what institution they should take. In his opinion the different institutions, with their own nuances and priorities share nonetheless the same general consensus, that Orania should be an open community, striving to stave off isolation at all times. C.W.H. Boshoff (1998, 38-40) once explained how institutions exist on the surface but are at the same time also deeply rooted in a community. To him institutions were not just civic organizations and economic engines, but also contained in community elements such as the family, schools or churches, each extremely important for the values that they instill over the course of generations, a process that shapes unity and expresses a shared identity. Language, tradition, history, worldview and values are constituted here, each of them intertwined with a Christian religious identity. The function of the state was to be the overarching institution that protects the people, their religion, schools and values as a people. While *eie instellings* might refer to the physical buildings above the soil, it are the underlying values that they represent which makes the idea of *eie instellings* so important to Orania. After all, implicitly managing your own institutions also means that they are staffed with your own people, and thus are under your own control, rather than under the control of a more distanced regional or national government.

This notion of *eie instellings* serves as a sentiment that is shared by some communitarian thinkers, who considered institutions the foundation on which communities are built. Etzioni (1993, 137-139) describes how institutions not only fulfill crucial roles for a community, but

how they also serve as important sources of identity, as something people can identify with. In modern societies the communal role of institutions has often been absorbed by the welfare state weakening the strength of communities. For this reason Etzioni (1996, 149-150) regards it instrumental that some government roles are returned to the community, cooperating with rather than completely replacing the state or the private sector. According to him this will enable them to be better adapted to individual circumstances, with a more humane approach and more transparency. More importantly, it will strengthen the interpersonal bonds in the community which he considers essential to happy lives. Due to the importance of *eie instellings* these interpersonal bonds are rather explicitly visible in Orania, where people see each other frequently in a wide range of social settings, whether it is in church, on the job, in meetings or during community celebrations. An interesting example that communitarian authors use to illustrate this perspective on institutions is the idea of community policing, in which the police engages with the people on foot and personally know the community in which they operate (Id., 155; Tam 1998, 120-121). According to Etzioni, by doing so the police became more human, gained more trust with local people and had to use less force to maintain the peace. Meanwhile Tam mentions the importance of community-based protection that is not based on formal law enforcement, but increased awareness and communication within local communities. More importantly, according to him responsible citizens are more likely to consider the well-being of others when they make the decision to break the law.

### **Community policing**

Both these ideas closely mirror the role of the *Veiligheidskantoor* in Orania, which serves the role of a police force in absence of any nearby law enforcement. While there are relatively few serious incidents that they need to respond to, they nonetheless are constantly watching over the community. Entry roads to Orania are monitored by cameras and strange vehicles are reported by inhabitants and checked out by one of the officers on duty. Working crews coming from outside Orania are for example required to sign in at the *Veiligheidskantoor* so that it is known where they will be working. Although the officers are trained in self-defense and firearm usage, speaking with Hester van Zyl gave me the impression that the vast majority of issues, like disputes between neighbours, are resolved through talking and a watchful eye between neighbours. For example, every evening a few inhabitants form a security patrol that

drives through town to make sure nothing out of the ordinary is going on. In case of serious crimes or incidents that go beyond what Orania can manage the community closely cooperates with the police force of Hopetown, who are also present on scheduled security meetings in which possible regional threats such as political unrest or car thefts are discussed. During my fieldwork the *Veiligheidskantoor* also organized an emergency practice, during which the made-up 'Allumni Pampuni' pressure group attempted to gain equal rights for *pampoenkoekies* (pumpkin cookies) compared to the more famous *koeksister* (a kind of doughnut infused with sweet syrup). During this week several incidents such as controlled fires or a made-up kidnapping of the mayor were orchestrated to test the awareness and speed at which inhabitants would report the incident to the *Veiligheidskantoor*. Although it seemed all very light-hearted, with for example funny radio segments, it was also a chilling reminder that Orania is a safe but small island in a very tumultuous sea in which violence and riots are frequent occurrences.

### Helping each other

Another crucial aspect of Orania is the role it hopes to fulfil in the rescue and recovery of impoverished Afrikaners, who are frequently seeking refuge in Orania as a consequence of *regstellende aksies* (affirmative action) or to raise their children in a safe environment. Being an independent community means that Orania has to rely on the contributions of their own inhabitants, businesses and outside supports for their public funding, rather than subsidies from the state of South Africa. The *Helpsaamfonds* (Help Together Fund) in Orania the institution that collects donations and uses these for long-term investments in Orania, such as low-income housing and contributions to the welfare of the community. Since 2007 this project, initiated by Frans de Klerk, has been responsible for major housing projects in the community, going by the names of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring. Elim, named after the bible verse Exodus 15:27, serves as low income housing for single men and is located on the edge of the *Kleingeluk* neighbourhood. It started as a small-scale project around 1996, after which it was gradually expanded and improved with money from private donations and later the *Helpsaamfonds*. These men live in fourty single rooms, located in several barracks, sharing amenities such

"And they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters."

- Exodus 15:27

as showers, a communal television room and canteen where they can order food. Nerina is located in the centre of *Grootdorp*, with the aim to provide housing for single women and mothers, although during my fieldwork there were also several families staying there. Lastly, Soetdoring is a recently completed project that aimed at middle class housing for young families, with more spacious houses near a large playground and the Kuierstoep park area. The goal of these projects is to build affordable housing, which, through means of a small rent for the inhabitants generates a small profit that can be re-invested in future projects.

Besides the major contributions to the housing in Orania the *Helpsaamfonds* also makes various other contributions, such as to the *Orania Maatskappelyke Raad* (Orania Social Services, OMR), which addresses the most immediate emergencies of people in need. In conversation with Tanie Cora Jacobs, treasurer for the OMR, she told me how money used to be an issue in the past, but since a few years the OMR organizes a yearly dinner event where many of the institutions and businesses in Orania, as well as the national welfare branch of the Solidariteits trade union, *Helpende Hand* (Helping Hand), pledge significant donations. This year the total amount added up to 350.000 rand, enough to assure that the OMR could help on various areas in the Orania community, such as providing a healthy school lunch for children, a pre-school childcare facility named *Huppelkind*, homework assistance for highschool students, counselling for former alcoholics and professional caretakers for the elderly in Orania. Tanie Lenie Kotze, the leading social worker of the OMR explained to me that their philosophy is to help wherever possible, but to refrain from structural financial subsidies that make a person dependent on welfare, or as Lida Strydom once explained to me, “*We can push the wheelbarrow a short way, but then you need to jump out and help us push*”. This is because the OMR lacks the funds to do so, and also because it considers it everyone’s responsibility to take care of themselves to the extent that this is possible. The OMR is also the primary institution for immediate emergencies, for which Orania inhabitants are keen to provide food, clothing and household items which the OMR then redistributes where necessary, often to newcomers who arrived in Orania with next to nothing, but also for example when a house burns down and a family needs to start over. For this purpose they manage a second-hand clothing store called the *Kleretrommel* that provides people with clothing. They cooperate closely with the various churches in Orania, who traditionally had an important role as caretakers for the public welfare, a tradition that continues in Orania.

### Cooperative banking

A third, essential building block of the Orania community is the *Orania Spaar- en Krediet Kooperatiewe Bank* (Orania Cooperative Savings and Creditbank, OSK). They serve as the primary banking institute in Orania, born out of necessity when the early settlers of Orania had to rely on the national banks in cities like Hopetown. Lukas Taljaard is widely lauded as the great mind behind this operation, who, despite lacking any knowledge about banking, started operating from a corner in the petrol station, where the various checks and wage slips were deposited and exchanged for cash money. When this operation grew to a turnover of 100.000 rand in 1999 he decided to legally register as a credit union. In 2011 OSK then proceeded to become the only independent credit bank in the country, backed by the South African Reserve Bank of South Africa. Today OSK operates as a fully qualified and accounted community bank with their own employees. During the annual meeting of OSK this growth pattern was further confirmed, with 2015 seeing new loans with a total value of 12 million rand and about 65.000 banking transactions involving as much as 393 million rand in total. Their purpose is primarily to handle the day-to-day banking needs of inhabitants, but they are also crucial to the growth of the town, because the shareholder system makes it impossible to acquire a regular mortgage for a house or piece of land in Orania, since one does not legally own the land, but only a number of shares. This makes the OSK the primary financier for house purchases in Orania (Seldon 2014, 93).

“Who is prepared to start such a bank? You need to invest much more money than you receive. If it was not for Orania I would not have done it either. I want to do it for my *volk*, I want to bequeath this place for my children. So that they have a safe place where they can stay, so that they will go forward. I did it, but I have invested a lot.

But I could do it, I had enough.”

- *Lukas Taljaard explaining his reasons for starting the OSK bank*

Another important function of the OSK is to stimulate local spending and investment of money, as well as the pooling of community money for large investments such as the purchase of land. One of the initiatives the OSK came up with in cooperation with the *Orania Sakekamer* (Orania Chamber of Commerce) for this purpose is the *ora*, an Orania-specific form of currency that is exchanged freely within Orania stores at the price of one *ora* for every one South African rand. The coin has its own bank notes, with values of 10, 20, 50, 100 and recently 200

*ora*, each displaying a range of iconic historical figures, Orania symbols, Karoo animals and local plant life. They are released on a limited scale and for a limited duration, resulting in various series that are legal tender for just about two years (recently three) after which new *ora* with new designs are released to the public. The first of such series included 240.000 *ora*, while the second series already had grown to 412.000 *ora* (Orania Sakekamer, no date). Currently Orania is using the 5<sup>th</sup> series, released in April 2014, meaning that at the time of my fieldwork as much as 830.000 *ora* was in circulation. The functions of this local currency are many. It is for example unlikely to get stolen by people outside of the community, and since it only functions in the community it encourages people to buy locally, instead of stores in Hopetown or Kimberley, something that is also promoted by various discounts that shops and businesses in Orania give to people who pay with *ora* (Wirz 2008, 6). With its unique iconography and various editions the *ora* has also become somewhat of a collector's item among tourists, while the people in Orania see it as a token of their identity and sense of *selfbeskikking*. Lastly, perhaps the most important reason is the legal requirement that every *ora* is backed by one rand in the OSK bank, from which the bank can gather interest over time. The acceptance of the *ora* among inhabitants varies, although most people use them freely in the day-to-day exchange, where some estimates say that half the money in stores, and half the money given out as wages uses the *ora* as its currency (Mears 2009).

### **Educating a new generation**

Orania has long before considered education to be an important aspect of what it means to be a *kultuurgemeenskap*. C.W.H. Boshoff (1998, 39) considered education on par with both the family unit and the church, and as such what is taught in school should supplement what is taught in the home and in the church. It reflects a neo-Calvinistic outlook that follows the ideas of Abraham Kuyper, in that every aspect of a life should be seen in the light of a religious purpose. Furthermore, Frans de Klerk (2014, 45) considered an educated workforce the greatest challenge to assure prolonged economic growth of the community. Orania has two private schools that each provide children with both a primary and secondary education. Both schools also have kindergarten facilities. Their study programs have national acknowledgements and allow students to continue their education on universities elsewhere in South Africa. The first is commonly called the CVO School, referring to *Christenlike Volkeie*



“That is why the school is not just a place for gaining knowledge and education, but also of upbringing and life formation. What is taught and formed there, should not be in conflict with what is pursued in the family. That is why Afrikaner schools have a certain uniformity and distinctiveness, an expression of identity, characterised by a certain ethos that does not exist just out of language and class materials.”

- C.W.H. Boshoff (1998, 39) on the way education should be organized.

*Onderwys* (Christian People’s Own Education), and serves as a franchise of a nation-wide movement of fourthy CVO schools called BCVO. With around 210 students it is the largest school in Orania, and it follows a more traditional schooling system with teachers in front of the classroom and students wearing school uniforms. It differs from public schools in South Africa in the emphasis that is placed on the Afrikaner language, the Christian-Reformed worldview, and the Afrikaner culture and history. The latter means that history is highlighted from an Afrikaner perspective, more so than the multicultural perspective taught elsewhere in the country, but it also means students engage more with their culture through for example poetry or oratory competitions. The religious perspective is mainly emphasized in school subjects like *Bijbel Onderrig* (Bible Education), which discusses the Bible from a Christian Reformed perspective, and *Christelike Lewensoriëntering* (Christian Life Orientation), which discuss subjects related to life, such as humanity and ethics. A teacher also explained that the Christian worldview was incorporated into other school subjects to provide context or examples for certain topics, while she, begrudgingly, also taught about evolution or the Big Bang. They also aim to provide a range of useful skills to their students that may serve them within the community as well as elsewhere, such as hospitality and mechanical technology studies. They provide a wide range of sports for students to participate in athletics, rugby and netball, each for which they have competing teams. The school is mainly attended by students from Orania itself, although a school bus also brings in students from nearby Vanderkloof, and there are a few dorm rooms on the school terrain where students are staying by themselves. In the future the CVO School hopes to become a regional, rather than local school, which can also serve students from Hopetown and Kimberley. Speaking to the head of the school, Johan de Klerk, he explained that parents are not yet willing to pay extra for the private education because they do not see the advantages compared to public education. He thinks this will

change in the future, when the good public schools will become more expensive, and the quality of public schooling will drop further, as good teachers are generally in short supply. The *Helpsaamfonds* is an important contributor to the CVO school that helps parents to pay the school fees, while it also provides the school with money for unexpected expenses, for example to pay for school activities.

The other school in Orania is referred to as Volkschool, although it also goes by the name of Orania Akademie. It was founded in 1991 and is located along the central road running through *Grootdorp*. It calls its educational model *Christelike selfwerksame Volkstaat-onderwijs* (Christian *selfwerksame* Volkstaat Education) and provides a more alternative approach to education, which relies less on a teacher lecturing in front of the class, requires no school uniforms and allows for more independence and initiative from the students themselves. The idea is that this will prepare them better for tertiary education at one of South Africa's universities. Similar to the CVO School the Volkschool emphasises Christian values and Afrikaner culture and history, but unlike the CVO School it does this with the ideal of a future Volkstaat in mind, unlike the more general BCVO program (Seldon 2014, 154). In the Volkschool system students are not told what to do, but encouraged to engage with the study materials themselves, for example by answering questions on the computer and to seek assistance from the teachers when needed. This allows students to work at their own pace, and to make their own schedule for each week. Students who excel in a subject can work ahead and are also rewarded for this, for example by giving them time to read books or to play chess, while students who struggle with a particular subject get more attention from the teachers and have to come to school for an additional hour for a week to catch up. It is a system that is well suited for long-distance learning, as it allows the teacher to work with each student individually and does not require that a struggling student must constantly keep up with the entire class, and as such Volkschool allows students from remote areas all over South Africa to engage with an Afrikaner focused education. On the downside the limited number of students who are actually present at the school means that sports are played at a less competitive level, while teams have to play together with schools in Hopetown.

Another large-scale education project which was being built in late 2015 was the Bo-Karoo training centrum, which aims to provide technical trainings starting in early 2016. On the one hand it will serve as a practical education for students who want to stay in Orania after their

secondary education, while on the other hand it will address the immediate need of the community for skilled tradesmen and construction workers. For this reason it will house the technical classes of the CVO School, but it also intends to offer evening classes for school dropouts or manual workers who wish to gain full qualifications in their trade. Even more long-term Orania also intends to become a hub for tertiary education, for example by hosting an Afrikaans-language university. Sarel Roets, owner of the Stokkiesdraai shopping centre, explained that every student would eventually go on to provide employment for ten people, so attracting hundreds of students would be an attractive way to push Orania beyond the 1000 inhabitants it has today.

## **Eie arbeid**

In the mantra of “*eie land, eie instellings, eie arbeid*” the latter is perhaps the most evocative of the three. Whereas the former are more or less checkboxes, being mere aspects of *selfbeskikking* that had to be in place for Orania to function as an independent entity, the idea of *selfwerksaamheid* (doing one’s own work) expresses a commitment that people need to adhere to personally. It is one of the principal agreements new inhabitants make when they sign their *Orania Erekode* (Orania Honorary Code) at the end of their Orientation Course, yet it is also the element that is the most difficult to explain to anyone outside of South Africa, because what is so special about doing one’s own work? Don’t we all, to a large degree, do our own work, or, alternatively, exchange money for other people’s work? Yet Tannie Jeanette repeatedly mentioned how the Afrikaner tourists that visited her vacation homes were shocked at the mere idea that she cleaned their rooms by herself, or that Oom Gerd took care of his own garden and was building an additional guest house by himself. Again and again, whenever I spoke to people about the core of their beliefs about *selfbeskikking*, it was clearly *selfwerksaamheid* that was very important to them. It was the defining characteristic that legitimizes Orania’s self-determination claim as, to them, it provides a clear break with the apartheid past, and a foundation on which they can built an independent future. For others it was a lifestyle, one that they either chose on purpose, or had to come to terms with as a part of living in Orania. Returning once more to the definitions offered in the constitution of the




Ons dorpsvlag

## Orania- erekode

1. Ek erken my diepe afhanklikheid van God 'Drie-enig en aanvaar Hom as die hoogste gesag in my lewe.
2. Ek beloof om lojaal aan Orania, sy gemeenskap en sy instellings te wees.
3. Dit is my ideaal om, saam met andere, Orania te help ontwikkel as die kern van 'n gebied waar Afrikaners selfstandig in vryheid kan woon.
4. Ek onderneem om te alle tye die beginsel van volkseie arbeid in Orania te handhaaf.
5. Ek sal eerbaar en welvoeglik optree teenoor mede-Oraniërs sowel as buitestaanders.

Handtekening: \_\_\_\_\_

Handtekening: \_\_\_\_\_

Datum: 31/10/15

 (Voorsitter VAB se direksie)

### 'n Lied vir Orania

Uit die jeugkrag van ons strew  
 is opnuut 'n volk geplant.  
 Uit die wil om hoog te lewe  
 skep ons hier 'n vaderland.  
 Ons sal plant en bou en vasbyt  
 met die krag wat wil bewaar  
 en 'n toekoms hier verseker  
 om ons vryheid te verklaar.  
 Ons bou op ons volksverlede  
 met ons oog op God gerig.  
 Ons sal handhaaf  
 ons sal sterk wees  
 ons hier in Orania

Met die spierkrag van ons liggaam  
 met die wilskrag van ons gees  
 met ons oog wat nimmer wyk nie  
 en 'n hart wat nooit sal vrees  
 bou ons hier ons volksaltare  
 vir die offer wat dit vra  
 vir die ideaal van ware  
 Vryheid in Orania.  
 Laat ons kragte hier dan saamsmelt  
 as die roepstem vir ons vra:  
 Om te lewe  
 om te sterwe  
 ons hier in Orania.

*The Orania Erekode (honorary code) new immigrants sign at the end of their Orientation Course (signature removed for privacy reasons).*

*Orania Beweging* provides some explanation for the ideal. It considers a division of labour based on skills as a signature of a modern society, but simultaneously sees the distinction between “higher” and “lower” kinds of labour as the underpinnings of a colonial relationship. It is in this context that *selfwerksaamheid* is described as “a lifestyle that regards all labour as high, and a community that is self-sufficient in every way” (Orania 2012, 4). This idea of self-sufficiency is often addressed as *volkseie arbeid*. During my fieldwork people gave me different explanations for the distinction between *selfwerksaamheid* and *volkseie arbeid*. Whereas some considered the latter interchangeable with *selfwerksaamheid*, others positioned it differently, explaining that *volkseie arbeid* relates to the recruitment of fellow Afrikaners to do the work for you, while *selfwerksaamheid* entails the notion to literally do the work by yourself. This tells us that *selfwerksaamheid* in general is something that concerns

the individual, as well as the community as a whole, since on the one hand this implies that even “lower” kinds of labour must be done by members of the community, while on the other hand it elevates the people performing these kinds of labour to the status of full-fledged members of the community, on equal social standing with those for who they work. To understand the full meaning of the concept one only has to look at one of the monuments in the community, the *Kleine Reus* (Little Giant) statue positioned in the middle of the *Monumentkoppie* (Monument Hill) in Orania. This statue of a little boy rolling up his sleeves is perhaps the strongest symbol of Orania, visible everywhere across town, on the official Orania flag, on the Ora money, on souvenirs and on the welcoming signs at the entry roads of the town. It has a remarkable history, being first designed in 1964 by the artist Elly Holm, as a rock carving gifted to Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (Kemp 2015a, 20-21). It would find its way to Orania in the shape of a leadlight window in the former home of Betsie Verwoerd, which today contains the *Verwoerd Gedenkversameling*. After a competition was organized to find a flag for Orania the current design with the *Kleine Reus* came out as the winner, after which the artist Cornelia Holm, current resident of Orania was asked to make it into the bronze statue currently on display at the *Monumentkoppie*. Here the statue accompanies a plate that expresses the essential meaning of *selfwerksaamheid*, being the one value upholding all other aspects of the aspirations to freedom, going as far as to state that without *selfwerksaamheid* there can be no freedom.

“Labore ad Libertatem

Through Labour to Freedom

People's own labour is the pre-requisite for sustainable freedom in our own land. Fellow countrymen must take responsibility for all kinds of work, such as is the case everywhere around the world. This principle is so fundamental that this creates the guarantee for all other conditions of freedom. No territory for the Afrikaners can grow towards freedom while this is depending on non-Afrikaner labour.”

- The text underneath the *Kleine Reus* statue expressing the importance of *selfwerksaamheid*

The reason why the tourists staying with Tannie Jeanette were so amazed at the notion of *selfwerksaamheid* was born from the reality elsewhere in South Africa, where it is not uncommon for middle and upper class Afrikaners to rely heavily on non-Afrikaner labourers for low-skilled, manual labour jobs, such as gardening, cleaning and construction. It was, and today still is, a system riddled with inequality, where paying minimum wage buys you a day labourer from the streets. In Orania the general consensus is that this kind of division of labour has done great damage to the Afrikaner as people. Christo Conradie explained to me how it had made the Afrikaner lazy, since workers are so readily available that there simply is no need to work for yourself. But within Orania's borders *selfwerksaamheid* serves a far more important role than just shoring up the Afrikaner labour ethos. It is seen as one of the most important assurances for the ideal of *selfbeskikking*, and seen as a clean break with the past.

"Us Afrikaners became very, very lazy, very easy. Because you had the labour. It was not that black labour was exploited, it was simply there. In those years, you see, labour costs had a certain limit, if your workers cost less than that limit, you used them. If it became more expensive, you might say, I will do it myself. There was an oversupply of black labour in South Africa, and that lowered the labour costs, and you used this, because it was there. This has made us very evil."

- Christo Conradie explaining the impact non-Afrikaner workers have on Afrikaner work ethic

The reason for this is that the one fundamental mistake that the Afrikaners have made from the very earliest arrival in the African continent was to rely heavily on the labour of non-Afrikaners, and in this way eventually sold out their own freedom. It gave non-Afrikaners the opportunity to increase in numbers, and to leverage their economic power by converting it into political power. As early as the 1960s critical voices predicted how continued economic integration, combined with extreme social segregation, would eventually result in the empowerment of non-Afrikaners and the downfall of the Afrikaner (Gilliomee 2011, 515). Ultimately this gave non-Afrikaners the means to empower themselves and to demand equality in land ownership, political suffrage and human rights (Jooste 1992, 56). It made the loss of Afrikaner *selfbeskikking* come 1994 inevitable, and although most people in Orania will agree that this was the right outcome for South Africa as a country, they do not wish to repeat this "mistake" within the Volkstaat. As Jan Joubert, secretary for the Vryheidsfront Plus in the Northern Cape, explained to me that it all came down to the voting booth, where the Afrikaner

will never achieve *selfbeskikking* as long as they each rely on multiple non-Afrikaners to do their labour, since this will mean that those labourers will ultimately be in the majority.

This makes *selfwerksaamheid* perhaps the most controversial aspect of Orania, as critics care to point out how it can be seen as a fabricated logic by which to keep non-Afrikaners out, whereas Orania itself considers it the principal underpinning of its community's existence. For them it is

"Many people still live in a dream world, because we still possess the land. But you can see, the ANC wants to have it. Our people think, as always, 'that is my land'. But he does not think, 'here is my farm, here stands my house. I, my wife, and three children. We are five people'. And then there are a bunch of worker houses, and there live twenty people. Now, if all these people vote, who would win? They [workers] would win. But they [farmers] think, 'I am the boss'. But he no longer is the boss."

*- Jan Joubert explaining why selfwerksaamheid is a necessity for selfbeskikking*

much more about acquiring parity with a concept so normal elsewhere in the world, doing one's own labour, while for critics it serves as blindness for the thoroughly multicultural society of South Africa. Seen in a communitarian light *selfwerksaamheid* seems first and foremost a call for the sharing of possessions and tasks, although in this case, the sharing the immaterial possession of labour (Bennett 1975, 64). By encouraging people to do their own jobs, whether it be simple, daily household chores or full-time professions, both are placed in service of the Afrikaner ideal as a human capital that needs to be retained within the community. Rather than bringing in relatively cheap labour from outside the community, Orania intends to build its independence on its own people, ensuring that they will never come to rely on non-Afrikaners, while it also encourages people to take on an egalitarian attitude towards labour.

## International resonance

The notion of the Afrikaner *volk* in search of a self-determination has drawn remarkable support from various sponsors. For one, there are a significant number of *uitwoners*, people who are connected and supportive of Orania, but who do not live there themselves (Hagen 2013, 77). Many of them are Afrikaners living elsewhere in Africa, and some own property in

the community, either as an investment or as a summer retreat, while others are simply supportive of the idea that Orania represents and express this through a membership to the *Orania Beweging*. Again others might contemplate moving there one day when the community has grown towards a city with more services and economic opportunities. In support of Orania they are encouraged to donate to the *Helpsaamfonds*, to find more members for the *Orania Beweging*, to stay in Orania on holiday or to invest in the *Orania Groei- and grondfonds* (Growth and Land fund), which pays out a small yearly dividend (Orania Beweging 2006, 10). In another way, a particular alliance with Orania came into being on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, when the community initiated a memorandum with the South African Xhosa community of Mnyameni. Since then both communities exchange ideas about development in combination with self-reliance, in particular on subjects of education, agriculture and tourism (de Klerk 2014, 65-67). Mnyameni hopes that development in these areas will encourage youngsters to stay in the community, rather than to move away. Meanwhile for Orania it shifts the conversation away from an exclusive, centralized Volkstaat idea, towards an inclusive approach for minorities in a more federalist South Africa, which recognizes minority cultures and local forms of government (Boshoff 2012). In conversation with James Kemp I learned that this makes Orania's desire for cultural recognition and preservation not unique to the Afrikaner, but just one of many South African minority cultures which are currently put under pressure in South Africa.

To a small extent this support also stretches all the way to Europe, where Orania maintains warm relationships with various groups and associations. Foreign supporters can become a member of the *Buitelandse Vriende van Orania* (Foreign Friends of Orania) organisation, which was founded in 2006 and acts as the international branch of the *Orania Beweging*, through which foreigners too can support the development of Orania with financial donations. Consequently the Orania leadership has also reached out to allies all over Europe, meeting up with like-minded right-wing political parties, such as the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest) and Dutch *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom), as well as cultural platforms such as the *Vrienden van Zuid-Afrika* (Friends of South Africa) and the *Nederlands-Zuid-Afrikaanse Vereniging* (Dutch-South African Association) (Duplessis 2006, 1). The major projects of the *Helpsaamfonds*, Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring have also been supported by various European sponsors who are supportive to the notion of self-determination, such as



the *Südtiroler Freundeskreis der Afrikaner* (South Tyrolean Friends of the Afrikaner) or supportive of the preservation of the Afrikaner culture and the Afrikaans language, such the Marnixring. Especially with South Tyrol there exists a strong relationship, as many Tiroleans fought in the Boer War, while the partial independent status of the Tyrol region serves as an example of regional autonomous development, an example that Orania would very much like to follow or at least use as a source of knowledge for their own quest towards *selfbeskikking* (Kleynhans 2015, 6-9).

## The core values of Orania

From what we have seen thus far it seems that Orania shares more than one trait commonly ascribed to the philosophical ideas behind communitarianism. Going back to the characteristics described by Marangudakis (2002), Orania adheres to a clear, common goal that constitutes the very core of the community's existence. The abstract longing for freedom, and more concrete the quest for *selfbeskikking* serves as an objective that for many inhabitants was the primary reason for moving to the community, while it is simultaneously also a strict requirement of the formal procedure to acquire *verblyfreg* (right of stay) in Orania. It is a non-negotiable ideology for the people of Orania, and one that people swear their loyalty to at the end of the Orientation Course. In many ways Orania word for word follows the mantra of Etzioni (1993, 3), that a communitarian movement is first and foremost concerned with a mode of co-habitation driven by values and public policies that safeguard and enhance the societal future. What we have seen in this chapter is that Orania seeks a revolutionary break with the Afrikaner past, building upon a foundation of self-reliance rather than as a subsidiary of the South African state. In its promotion of *eie land, eie instellings* and *eie arbeid* Orania tries to shed what they see as an age-old curse that has kept the Afrikaner from being truly independent from oppression. Both politically and economically Orania has sought, and at least for now, found a construction that allows it to run the community on its own terms, and with their aim set a future independent Afrikaner entity, either in the shape of a *Volkstaat* or *Volkstad*.

Is this the 'moral voice' of Orania? Etzioni (1996, 120) describes the moral voice as a motivation coming from within. It is not telling a person to satisfy an urge but instead is telling a person to do what is right. He proceeds to describe it as the marriage between an inner voice, which are personal beliefs with regard to what the shared values ought to be, and external voices, which are encouragements outside of the individual telling them to live up to a certain set of shared values. The former is based on the idea that people will follow a behaviour rule if it pertains to a value that they believe in as serving the common good. The latter is however made up by a nexus of social obligations, whose values are shared and reaffirmed among members (Id., 121-123). While the external voice tends to reinforce the inner one, there is no guarantee that the two align. It is a process in which a person is more likely to act a certain way because that way of acting befits the external moral voice of the people that one cares about. Consequently, if a community lacks a moral voice, with no communal regard for the core values of its members, chances are high that these will deteriorate over time. Within the Orania community there seems to be a strong moral voice that informs people about the values important to them, emphasising the importance of *selfwerksaamheid*, of knowing one's history, of keeping one's culture alive and of actively participating in the community. It counts on the Orania people to know the purpose of Orania, to uphold Christian values through church attendance and daily practice and to embrace the hardships of living in a remote area for the immaterial luxuries of safety, a sense of community and independence.

In its longing for freedom Orania searches a higher moral authenticity derived not from individual rights, but collective responsibilities. People have constitutional rights and can make their own decisions, but the expectation is to act in service of the greater good of an independent community, with the reward being the freedom to once again belong to the Afrikaner *volk* and to express oneself accordingly, something that has become more and more difficult ever since the sweeping changes that occurred in South Africa since 1994. Orania, with its claim to its own land and institutions, is trying to be the vessel by which a message can be broadcasted, calling Afrikaners everywhere to return to the homeland, or alternatively, to exchange their membership as minority group in the South African civic state for a majority share in the Volkstaat. The town aims to defend the Afrikaner, its heritage, its minority rights and its socio-economic position, but wishes to do so not in opposition to, but in cooperation

with South Africa. As far as this can be seen as a form of nationalism it displays many of the communitarian ideas about the origin, of the sources from which the community values are derived, such as customs, morals, a sense of egalitarianism and a historical framework of particularistic ethics, while it simultaneously distances itself from the apartheid era.

## Conclusion

What this chapter has shown, besides a detailed history of the development of Orania from a neglected ruin to the thriving town it is today, is that Orania is founded on a set of ideas that are deeply ingrained in the very being of the community. It strives for freedom for the Afrikaner people, free from oppression and free from a minority status. A measure of *selfbeskikking* is deemed the only feasible path towards this, inspiring the town to grow, ultimately to become an independent city or one day even a country. It is a narrative build on three pillars that are considered the backbone of Orania, which, when combined for the time being make local self-determination possible within the framework of South Africa's municipal system. In this view Orania needs to have ownership over its own land, it needs to be run by its own institutions and it needs to do its own labour. While the first two provide Orania with a basis from which to rule, the latter ensures that Orania will continue to rule, as Orania believes that reliance on non-Afrikaner labour, such as is common place elsewhere in South Africa, would undermine the democratic basis for Afrikaner self-rule. While this prevents non-Afrikaner from living in the community, it also ensures that there will remain a political Afrikaner majority that can stand up for its own rights.

This seemingly simple ideology represents the communitarian underpinning for Orania, providing a narrative for inhabitants through which they can feel connected to the Afrikaner *volk*, and express themselves with a particular Afrikaner identity that does not have to adhere to ideas of South African multiculturalism. In the following chapter we will take a closer look at the historical and religious roots of this identity, and how these serve as a fundamental narrative for the communitarianist principles of Orania.

## **Part III – A living legacy**

## Introduction

The previous chapter tried to explain in great detail the ideological story behind Orania. It discusses the three pillars on which the community is built, three cardinal rules that are non-negotiable to the Orania leadership and the inhabitants. But it would be foolish to think that these ideas exist in a vacuum. In the eyes of many Orania citizens they have a long lineage as proud Afrikaner people, who, battered and bruised throughout time have nonetheless survived, and are trying to recapture some of the greatness they once lost. They carry on a history, a legacy rich with writers, poets, politicians and generals. They share a religion which, although diffused in a wide range of denominations, continues to empower many of their ideas about the world and their role in it. Together they make up a heritage imbued with meaning, tradition and memories. This chapter tries to analyse this narrative, by simultaneously addressing the various ways in which history, religion and culture is used throughout the Orania community, as well as the meaning it gives to the present day ideas we have seen in the previous chapter. However, it is first necessary to look at a broader concept. Why do Afrikaners, especially those in Orania, identify themselves as *volk*, and why is it featured so prominent in the aspirations for an Afrikaner land with self-determination?

## What is a *volk*?

Trying to establish the meaning of '*volk*' in the context of the Afrikaner people is no simple task. It is a loaded question, to which different people can give different answers, all boiling down to the question what truly ties together the group of people, led by Jan van Riebeeck, who landed on the southern African coast in the year 1654. In general terms the concept seems to mimic several aspects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *völkisch movement* that emphasised German folklore, history and patriotism as the basis from which Germany derived its identity as a united community. In its essence this movement encouraged a return to the land, where the people could live self-sufficiently and carry on the legacy of their ancestors. It build upon older ideas of the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who considered *volk* a combination of patriotism and egalitarianism, because patriots shared the same understanding regardless of their class. For Herder the landscape naturally divided people in nationalist tribes, whose own concerns were more important than those of humanity as a whole. Following Taylor

(1994, 30-32) the underlying idea of Herder's *volk* was that every human lives their life based on their own unique judgement, an inner nature that is threatened by outside conformity. It implies that the individual has to resist these pressures in its search for self-fulfilment, and likewise each *volk* should also search for its inherent authenticity. It is this authenticity that has come under threat in case of the Afrikaner in the present day, and it is this authenticity as a *volk* that Orania is trying to restore. To stay with the thinking of Taylor for a moment, in this light Afrikaner history, from that very landing of Jan van Riebeeck up to the present day, can be framed as a continuous tale involving around politics of recognition. This implies that the Afrikaner identity can only exist as long as it is recognized, and this recognition has always been under outside pressure, more than ever following the end of apartheid in 1994. In South Africa the Afrikaner might be recognized as a 'culture of equal value', that may survive, but it is not recognized as a 'culture of worth', as a group that has earned the respect of others through its actions (Id., 63-64).

In case of Orania the meaning of *volk* is intimately tied to this necessity to create a protected *kultuurgemeenskap*, an environment where the *volk* can express its unity in terms of the heritage that is built up through language, traditions and culture. Dr. Chris Jooste saw a *volk* as a group of people sharing this heritage, but who also feel united in a common fate and the desire to survive as a *volk*.

"People are a people when its members are highly related; when all of them attach great value to the language, habits, traditions and culture that they have built over the course of generations, as well as those that others have produced elsewhere; when they consider themselves bound in their faith, feel themselves spiritually united with each other and can be characterised by an urge to survive as people."

- Dr. Chris Jooste (1986, 3) explaining what it means to be part of a *volk*.

As can be seen in this definition, *volk* is considered a timeless entity for which the lessons of history serve a projection for survival in the future (Seldon 2014, 145). The Afrikaner *volk* is meant to survive, meant to stand against those who wish to oppose it.

## A legacy for the ages

Going back to the definition of *volk* given by Dr. Jooste for a moment, it seems to be an abstract notion that can only come into being over many generations, an element that needs to be intimately interwoven with the past in order to have a legitimate claim. To walk through Orania, is in many ways also like walking through a timeline of Afrikaner history. This is perhaps most apparent on the surface, where you can see monuments, such as the *Monumentkoppie*, dedicated to some of the leaders of the Afrikaner history, and the Irish Monument, remembering the 500 Irish soldiers who came to support the Boer side in the Second Boer War. There are museums, such as the *Kultuur-historiese Museum* (Cultural-historical Museum) offering an elaborate overview of Afrikaner history from long before the arrival of the Afrikaner up until far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the *Verwoerd Gedenkversameling* (Verwoerd Memory Collection) serves as a memorial to Dr. H.F. Verwoerd. But history is also alive in far less noticeable ways as well. The recently opened public park and shopping area is named *Stokkiesdraai*, after the vacation home that H.F. Verwoerd once maintained along the Vaalrivier, while some of the vacation homes in the Aan-Die-Oewer area are named after the famous Boer generals who fought during the Second Boer War. And this is not even mentioning the range of holidays and events inspired by history that are actively celebrated in Orania in memory of the Afrikaner past. One event that stood out particularly to me was the so-called *cantus*, a typical student activity that the *Orania Beweging* organized during the visit of a group of AfriForum student members. It was a highly ritualized event that involved a *praeses* and *sedemeester* who oversaw the singing of various songs, over the course of an entire evening. During this event the *praeses* orchestrated the entire event by telling people what to sing, when to drink beer or when they were allowed to speak, while the *sedemeester* took note of various funny rule “violations” and made-up appropriately funny punishments. Most interesting to this event was perhaps the choice of songs, which encompassed various national anthems, such as South African *Die Stem*, as well as the Dutch *Wilhelmus* and Flemish *De Vlaamse Leeuw*, but also the anthems of the historical Boer republics such as the Transvaal and Orange Free State and various other patriotic or historically inspired songs, varied with other songs such as university anthems or traditional drinking songs. To me it was just one of many indicators that Orania, as a *kultuurgemeenskap*, not just intends to remember a past, but also wishes to keep it alive.



*History in Orania.*

*Top left: the Irish Monument*

*Top right: agricultural equipment on display outside of the Kultur-Histories Museum Bottom: Monumentkoppie with the Kleine Reus and the busts of various Afrikaner leaders*



It is a past that traces the history of the Afrikaner *volk* back to its landing on the African continent, all the way through its awakening as a distinct group. This process creates a lineage that allows people to legitimize a claim to independence, separate from the national history of South Africa. In this light it is a useful exercise to elaborate on this history with its many facets. This gives us by no means a complete, or comprehensive historical overview, which other authors have already pursued in far greater detail (Scholtz 1967-1984; Gilliomee 2011). Instead, it focuses on those eras that are important to the people of Orania, in an attempt to figure out why these have become central elements in the Afrikaner understanding, and as such have become pillars of the communitarian values of the community. This is not dissimilar to the manner in which Don Kalb and Herman Tak (2005) advocated for an analysis of 'critical junctions' as a way to avoid reductionism, by instead opting for a close reading of differentiated histories. They considered "local outcomes to be largely contingent as local communities choose from an abundant menu of global offerings in finance, economics, ideologies and cultural images" (Id., 3), meaning that localities situated themselves along various junctions, specifically related to social relations of time, space, power and dependency, and lastly also social relations of nominal domains such as economics, politics, law or family. How this process can occur has been addressed by Christian Giordano (2005, 57), who felt that the major contribution of anthropology to the understanding of history was to chart 'actualized histories', the ways in which history is used, (re)interpreted and (re)invented, and how these choices have an impact on the present. He described the essence of a community as the belief in shared common traits, most of which gained their strength through historical legacies, which at the very least partially reconstruct and reinvent the past. Taking founding myths as an example Giordano considers them crucial expressions of collectivism with the goal to bring historically divided people together under a shared umbrella (Id., 58). At the most basic level these actualized histories are constructed by two processes, through 'destruction of the past', by which selective or unappealing eras, facts and symbols are removed, forgotten or at the very least suppressed, and the 'reversing of events', in which unfavourable recent eras are overshadowed by a more glorious past in order to restore these older values in the present (Id., 64). Giordano warns however that any form of actualized history needs to be considered in its wider context, the underlying reasons why one form of history dominates all others within a certain community.

## The landing

It is rare for a group of people to be able to point to a single day as the specific beginning of their existence, but for the Afrikaner this date is set in stone: the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1652. On this day Jan van Riebeeck, a commander for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) landed on the coast of what today is Cape Town, with three ships, the *Dromedaris*, *Reijger* and *Goede Hoop*. The location, right in between Europe and the Dutch colonial domains in the East Indies made this an exceptional place for a half-way station where ships could load up fresh provisions. Under the leadership of van Riebeeck the immediate area was fortified, while small scale agriculture and livestock herding would produce a steady food supply. This, by no means exceptional, effort made him nonetheless a profound founding father of the Afrikaner *volk*. It made the landing important, not just for sowing the seed of what would decades later bloom to become the Afrikaner *volk*, but also because it highlights the relationship to Europe, where the Netherlands had only recently won their freedom from the Spanish Crown with the Peace of Münster treaty four years earlier. According to Jooste (1999, 8) it was this freedom that drove the Dutch people to take in refugees, spawning a thriving economy and rich culture, with the capability and drive to explore a future South Africa. In this light it was understandable why some of the people I spoke to during my fieldwork felt offended by a statement of Jacob Zuma earlier that year, in which he declared that “*Jan van Riebeeck’s arrival in Cape Town was the beginning of all South Africa’s problems.*” (Zuma 2015). Later on Zuma would proceed to explain that all of the suffering and exploitation in South Africa had started on that day in 1652, referring to the land that was stolen and the massacres committed against the local tribal populations. It led to a storm of discussions throughout South Africa, where critics saw it as yet another way in which the ANC tried to frame history in a confrontational perspective that positioned black against white. In response the *Orania Beweging* launched their “*Ek is Jan*” (“I am Jan”) campaign, mimicking the “Je suis Charlie” slogan that appeared after the terrorist shooting on the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo, encouraging people to sign up for a certificate that stated that they took ownership of their past, took pride in their ancestors and were willing to build on the foundations made by the positive contributions of their history.

This is not to say that people were completely free from criticism with regard to this earliest point in the Afrikaner timeline. Wynand Boshoff considered the landing of Jan van Riebeeck essentially a failure, because the Dutch East India Company decided to leave it as a supply station, mainly because it was limited in resources, and never allowed it to grow into a full-fledged colony like they did in the East Indies. He could only mesmerize how such a colony could have radically changed the minority position of the Afrikaners in present day South Africa, with a larger Afrikaner population, which would have been economically stronger and which occupied a smaller, concentrated region on the Cape. This sentiment was also shared by the historian G.D. Scholtz (1954, 70-72; 1967, 84-85), who saw it as a missed opportunity. Carel Boshoff also explained to me how the landing was the first instance where *selfwerksaamheid* was ignored in favour of local, non-European labour, setting a trend for centuries of racial inequality with regard to labour, a trend Orania today intends to break with its implementation of *selfwerksaamheid*. Scholtz (1964, 22-27) also considered the decision by van Riebeeck to copy the systems he was most acquainted with in the East Indies as a fatal flaw, precisely because it integrated black and white societies to a point where the former was exploited, and the latter lost their sense of pride for manual labour.

“The colony [Cape Colony] shall, in our opinion, from now on be continued and founded with Europeans and not with slaves, since our nation has the nature that once it has the comfort of slaves, it becomes lazy and no longer wishes to use their hands for labour.”

- A recommendation the Council of the Indies (the Dutch colonial government in Asia) made in 1856 with regards to the use of non-European labour in South Africa (Scholtz 1964, 24).

In many ways this era can be considered the origin of the Afrikaner identity, as some VOC employees were allowed to become farmers in the Cape region and thus quickly lost their connection to Europe in favour of becoming *vryburghers* (free citizens). In 1688 around 180 French Huguenots and later German missionaries found their way to the continent, of which the former group has had a lasting influence on for example Afrikaner family names. As early as the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century people started to identify themselves as “*Africaanders*”, meaning that they “came from Africa” (Gilliomee 2011, 22-23). Staying loyal to Calvinist doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Dutch language and shared identity as *burghers* meant the European influences could triumph despite a relatively high rate of racial mixing



## EK IS JAN

HIERMEE WORD GESERTIFISEER DAT

Jan van Riebeeck

EIENAARSKAP NEEM VAN SY GESKIEDENIS.

TROTS IS OP DIE BYDRAE  
WAT SY VOORVADERS GELEWER HET.

BEREID IS OM DIT WAT GOED IS UIT DIE VERLEDE  
TE NEEM EN DAAROP VOORT TE BOU.

NAMENS DIE ORANIA BEWEGING  
VERKLAAR ONS DAT DIE PERSOON 'N JAN IS.

Jan van Riebeeck

ONDERTOKEN



ORANIA BEWEGING

19 Januarie 2015

DATUM

*"Ek is Jan" certificate given out by the Orania Beweging to those who take pride in  
their ancestors and who want ownership over their history*

between Europeans and the slave population at the Cape. With time the *vryburghers* came to resist the VOC government, whose officials frequently competed for land, monopolies and supply contracts for the VOC, ultimately granting *vryburghers* the sole right to produce food as well as the right to move further inland in search of new farmlands. In Orania the landing of van Riebeeck is celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, in combination with the celebration of the founding of Orania, which occurred on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1991.

## The Groot Trek

It would take well over a century before the Afrikaner saga continued, this time not stirred up by rebellion against the Dutch VOC, but towards the British, who had conquered Cape Town first in 1795, and later again in 1806 following a string of conflicts fought in Europe during the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Wars. Tensions between the British forces and Afrikaner *burghers* rose almost immediately, as the harsh treatment of the *burghers'* slaves conflicted with newly introduced Enlightenment ideas, whereas enduring conflicts with Xhosa forces left the border regions in a state of insecurity (Gilliomee 2011, 79-80). The former issue would eventually result in *gelykstelling*, the liberation and emancipation of the slave population in the Cape Colony in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, further cementing disapproval of the *burghers* (Id., 94-96). Along with various other issues, such as a shortage of land, labour and investment capital, as well as a strong sentiment of political marginalization and cultural oppression, this led to a large-scale migration best known as the *Groot Trek* (Great Trek) (Id. 144-153). In the decade following 1835 as many as 15.000 *burghers* moved in a north-eastern direction in six groups, later receiving the name *Voortrekker* ("those in front who pull"; pioneers). Along the way they met fierce resistance from local tribes, internal schisms, and the untamed landscape of the African interior (Id., 161-163). Initially these groups found themselves supported by the British colonies, who saw the Boer presence in the interior as both a border guard against African tribes and a reliable trading partner. Through the Sand River convention of 1852 and Bloemfontein convention of 1854 the British allowed the Voortrekker communities to acquire their own government, which they quickly did in the shape of the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek* (South African Republic, ZAR) and *Oranje Vrystaat* (Orange Free State, OVS). As we will see, these would be short-lived republics, limited in

political authority and lacking a true national identity or strong economic foundation (Id., 175-179). Keen to restore the situation as it was before the *gelykstelling* of black and whites in the Cape Colony the large population of black Africans in the republics were excluded from the political process and heavily relied upon for agricultural production. Internally the Republics were also sharply divided, and, despite committing themselves on paper to a strong sense of democracy and egalitarianism among citizens, who were represented in a *Volksraad* (People's Council), in reality military commanders and large farmers held great influence over the new republics (Id., 181-189).

"Ringing out from our blue heavens,  
From our deep seas breaking round,  
Over everlasting mountains,  
Where the echoing crags resound,  
From our plains where creaking wagons,  
Cut their trails into the earth,  
Calls the spirit of our country,  
Of the land that gave us birth.  
At thy call we shall not falter,  
Firm and steadfast we shall stand,  
at thy will to live or perish,  
O South Africa, dear land."

- *First verse of The Call of South Africa, the national anthem between 1957 and 1994.*

It does not take much imagination to understand why the collective Afrikaner memory held, and many people in Orania continue to hold, such high regard for this time-period. It was a decisive discontinuation of the subjugation under English rule, while the image of the tough Voortrekkers, surviving the perils of the untamed South African interior with nothing more than their ox wagons and Bible in hand was the kind of image that spoke to later Afrikaner generation. Consequently the search of an independent homeland undoubtedly serves as an inspiration for the later Volkstaat idea. C.W.H. Boshoff (2011, 545-546) went as far as suggesting that if the Great Trek had not happened, the Afrikaner population would over time likely have been assimilated by the Cape Colony, becoming a mixed English society like the United States, Australia or New Zealand. In 1937 the Great Trek led to the construction of the impressive *Voortrekkermonument* in Pretoria, followed by a year of celebrations that re-enacted much of the journey and sparked great enthusiasm among Afrikaners for Afrikaner nationalism and setting the stage for the NP political victory in 1948 (Robbertze 1996, 22; Gilliomee 2011, 432; Boshoff 2015, 109-112). Later on the Great Trek would also be

referenced in the national anthem of South Africa, better known as the *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (The Call of South Africa) between 1957 and 1994, highlighting the struggle and glory of the perilous event. Furthermore in 1988 C.W.H. Boshoff, as chairman of the *Afrikanervolkswag* would be a leading force behind the commemorations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Trek in Donkerhoek. This event, lasting from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December attracted 60.000 to 80.000 Afrikaners commemorating the Groot Trek with re-enactment and a series of publications lauding it as the birth of the Afrikaner volk (Duvenage 1986-1988; Hart 1988, 13-17).

For Orania specifically the legacy of the Groot Trek is limited, although rock engravings have been found of several early explorers, as well as from Stephanus Ockert Vermeulen, the first owner of the *Vluytjeskraal* farm on which Orania today is located (Opperman 2014, 42-50). More important is perhaps the symbolic meaning the people of Orania gave to the event. Speaking to Corrie Jacobs, the wife of mayor

“S. Vermeulen bought this farm in the year 1882 for the sum of 3952-4-8 (pounds) all costs included and was still here in 1892 and still in 1902 and still in 1912 and still in 1922 and still in 1923 and still in 1924. Grandfather died 12 April 1925.”

- Rock engraving denoting the purchase of the *Vluytjeskraal* farm by S.O. Vermeulen.

Chris Jacobs, she explained that the Afrikaner was at its very core a *trekvolk* (people who trek), meaning that they always look for alternatives, for solutions, when faced with oppression. Chris however added to this that to him the Afrikaner was more of a *bouvolk* (people who build), as the Voortrekkers moved inland to create something for themselves. To him the later generations, who would play important roles in construction projects all over Africa serve as a testament to this calling to build something that lasts. The Afrikaner needs to retrieve both these sentiment again today, in order to become a united *volk* again. Wynand Boshoff equated the Groot Trek more with the first awakening of the Afrikaner sense of *selfbeskikking*, and a sense of responsibility towards the isolationist life of the earliest pioneers, in which they themselves were responsible for maintaining their Afrikaner identity and rejecting intermixing with other population groups. It positioned them uniquely at the dawn of decolonization, where the Afrikaner had neither a European nation to go back to, nor a place in Africa to call home.

## The Geloofte van Bloedrivier

This story, and with that the importance Afrikaners attach to the memory of the Great Trek, would not be complete however, if it were to leave out one specific event, known as *die Geloofte van Bloedrivier*, (The Blood River Vow, commonly known as the Vow). It is an important occasion that Orania celebrates every year on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. It recalls one specific battle, the Battle of Blood River, fought on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838 between 468 Voortrekkers, led by Andries Pretorius, and a large army of Zulu warriors, led by the Zulu chief Dingane kaSenzangakhona. Although the size of the Zulu army has not been recorded it is assumed to have greatly outnumbered the Voortrekkers, with numbers varying between

10.000 and 21.000 warriors. It was the aftermath of previous territory negotiations that had gone wrong, after the Voortrekker Piet Retief, his army and later his party of 500 men, women and children were betrayed and consequently massacred (Gilliomee 2011, 163-165). In an attempt to penalize chief Dingane and overturn the powerful threat he posed to the Voortrekkers Andries Pretorius set out to defeat him in early December 1838 (Swart 1989, 26-27). Ten days before the actual battle would take place Pretorius encouraged his men to swear a vow, in which he promised to God that if he were to grant the Voortrekkers a victory against Dingane, they would construct a Church in honour to God. For the Battle itself he choose a tactically advantageous position, located next to the Ncome River, protecting his rear, while a defensive line of 64 ox wagons and moveable barriers created a *laer*, a wagon fort behind which the Voortrekkers found protection from the Zulu spears. Much debate has gone into why the Voortrekkers were as successful as they were, with arguments varying from the use of buckshot to maximize casualties, the two cannons and the excellent training of the Voortrekkers, to the Zulu medicine doctors bestowing a false sense of immortality upon their

"We stand here before the Holy God of heaven and earth, to make a vow to Him that, if He will protect us and give our enemy into our hand, we shall keep this day and date every year as a day of thanksgiving like a Sabbath, and that we shall erect a house to His honour wherever it should please Him, and that we will also tell our children that they should share in that with us in memory for future generations. For the honour of His name will be glorified by giving Him the fame and honour for the victory."

- *The commonly accepted wording of the Blood River Vow*



warriors or the strategical choice of the Zulu forces to switch to shorter spears that lacked the reach to strike through the *laer* defences. In the end the battle took no longer than three hours and resulted in 3000 Zulu casualties, with the rest of them making a hasty retreat across a river that from that day on would be called the Blood River (Id., 165). Meanwhile the Voortrekker party had only three minor injuries, and as promised in the Vow, credited their victory to God.

Like the Great Trek in general, this specific event is one which received great attention throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it continues to be an important marker on the Afrikaner calendar. As early as 1841 a Church of the Vow was constructed in Pietermaritzburg, which was later repeatedly rebuilt and expanded with a Voortrekker museum (Swart 1989, 249). Furthermore, in 1947 a large granite ox wagon was erected on the site of the battle, followed by a re-imagined *laer* of bronze ox-wagons that were added in 1972. On the other side of the Blood River the Ncome monument attempts to highlight the other side of the conflict, by positioning the conflict in Zulu history and nationalism. More telling than these monuments are perhaps the celebrations held yearly on *Geloftedag* (Day of the Vow, also known as *Dingaans Day*). Despite efforts on the side of the ANC to rename this day to the Day of Reconciliation, which over time has eroded its importance among Afrikaner, it continues to be a lively tradition that is celebrated throughout Afrikaner communities in South Africa, Orania included. From my observation in Orania it seems to be a day of celebration, both in a historical, religious and thanksgiving sense of the word (Grobbelaar 1975, 46). The morning is reserved for a formal *Geloftediens* (Service of the Vow), a church service, while the afternoon is spent informally as friends and family come together in celebration. During my stay there were three separate church services, one organized by the Reformed Church Orania, one by the Afrikaans Protestant Church, and one general service organized near *the* Aan-die-Oewer hotel, where the grassy fields and shady trees directly next to the river offer a cool and expansive open area that could accommodate the large group of attendants. This general service was one of the largest cultural gatherings I've seen during my fieldwork period, attracting both local inhabitants, tourists and Afrikaners from surrounding areas, adding up to several hundred attendants.

This service started with the singing of psalters and hymns, guided by a piano placed on the stage. The service itself was led by vicar Fanie Hofmann of the AP Church in Orania, who read

II Kings 6:24-7:20 from the Bible. These verses tell about a city under siege which in the moment of greatest despair was suddenly relieved. Those who believed the prophet Elisha found their relief, but one city official who mocked the prophecy was trampled to death. Vicar Fanie Hofmann prayed that this relief would also be granted to the Afrikaner, who also found himself in a dire position with the ongoing drought, but more importantly that God would provide the Afrikaner with spiritual relief, even for Afrikaners who forsake their duty towards God. He followed it up with preaching, questioning if the Afrikaner still continued to be a *geloftevolk*, if the Afrikaner *volk* still understood the importance of following the Vow. He recalled how the *volk* has fought a struggle throughout history, in a similar fashion as is told about in the bible verse. He reminded the listeners to remember those moments in which God intervened in the Afrikaner history, and to share it amongst themselves, and with their children. He recalled the miraculous events of the Battle of Blood River, how lucky the Voortrekkers must have been, since the Zulu warriors brought shorter spears, and the nightly fog lifting just in time to assure their gunpowder stayed dry. Yet he questioned if it had been purely human skill that won this battle, and instead emphasized the meaning of the Vow, how the victory that day was nothing short of mercy granted by God himself. It taught the Afrikaner that as long as they stand together and hold faith in God, he will take care of them. Meanwhile those who walk alone, ignorant of him or in the false belief that humans can take care of themselves will, just like the mocking city official, meet their demise. He then called his audience to action, how today the Afrikaner was threatened more than ever, with poverty and drug abuse striking down on the integrity of the *volk*. It is in this decisive moment the people should rely on God. Ultimately, Fanie Hofmann concluded that the Blood River Vow as a miracle directed by God, that proves that the Afrikaner *volk* has a right to exist as light bearer in a darker world. It is a mission which the Afrikaner *volk* cannot escape. The Vow was then confirmed during which all attendants stood up.

"This event at Blood River is and remains for us as *volk* a miraculous intervention, an intervention of God, in which he has shown us that this Boer *volk*, this Afrikaner *volk*, should continue to exist, to work, to live in this country, to be a light bearer in this dark world. We have a task as people of the Vow, a calling to fulfil, and we cannot shy away from it."

- Vicar Fanie Hofmann during the Day of the Vow church service.



*Singing psalters and hymns in anticipation of the 2015 Geloftediens, held in the lush Aan-Die-Oewer area recreational area, next to the Orange River.*

## The Boer War

“The Boer War was different from most wars. It was a vast tragedy in the life of a people, whose human interest far surpassed its military value. A book was wanted which would give us some insight into the human side of this epic struggle between the smallest and the greatest of peoples.”

*- Quote from the preface to the book “Commando”, coined by J.C. Smuts*

At some point during my fieldwork I was told that I would never truly understand the Afrikaner unless I would read two books, one of them being “My Life”, written by Golda Meir (1975), the 4<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of the State of Israel, and the other being “Commando”, written by Deneyz Reitz (1929), a soldier in the Second Boer War. Without going into too much detail about both, the one overarching topic that I derived from these books was the sense of struggle that seems to be token to the Afrikaner history. Both books display the hardships that

came with fighting for a piece of land to call home, with the difference that the State of Israel came out with a reasonable measure of success, whereas the Orange Free State and South African Republic met their demise in the First and Second Anglo-Boer (or, as people in Orania were keen to correct me, the First and Second Freedom War). After the Boer victory in the relatively short First Freedom War it was the 1886 discovery of gold, diamond and coal deposits in the Witwatersrand area that really turned the heat between the South African Republic and Great Britain into a roaring boil. In what can truly be called a gold rush, the previously rural periphery rapidly developed, with Great Britain investing into dozens of mines and miners flocking in from all over the world. It was during this time that the newly founded city of Johannesburg outgrew Cape Town in less than a decade (Gilliomee 2011, 236-239). It was both a blessing and a curse for the South African Republic, led by President Paul Kruger, who encouraged the economic development, but also found himself under increasing pressure from the Cape colony to modernize and to open up to immigrants, mainly well-educated British, who were known as *uitlanders* (foreigners). Meanwhile the increasing British influence on the Cape had led to aspirations for a united South Africa, placing prominent figures such as Cecil John Rhodes in opposition to the South African Republic, which in return developed a growing dislike for the British influence on the Cape (Id, 239-243; Allen 2010, 39-41).

Ultimately something had to happen, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 1899 the first shots were fired. While there were some initial successes for the Boer forces, the scale of the British presence, along with a lack of discipline on the Boer side meant that a total victory was never on the table. Rather, midway 1900, after the conventional forces were on the brink of defeat, a group known as the *Bittereinders* (after the idea to fight bitter end) switched to guerrilla warfare that involved highly mobile troops that aimed to sabotage and harass British forces. In response the British took extreme measures, burning all farms and crops in order to destroy the supplies to the guerrilla force, while relocating the Boer families to concentration camps in an attempt to eliminate the guerrilla support network. Due to a lack of sanitation, supplies and food the woman and children in these camps often suffered horrendously, with many dying to illness and malnutrition (Id., 252-260). Despite continued resistance against all odds this eventually spurred leaders such as Jan Smuts and Louis Botha in 1902 to seek a surrender on favourable terms, in order join a united South Africa, to which the British agreed, sensing

that the Afrikaner presence would be instrumental in their continued rule over South Africa. It brought an end to the immense destruction of the Second Freedom War, which wiped out 5000 Boer soldiers, and another 27.000 woman and children, combined accounting for 10% of the Boer population. Farms and livestock were completely destroyed, leaving many Boer families in an impoverished state with their dream of independence thoroughly shattered (Id., 260-264).

An event with such an impact is bound to leave its mark upon history, even more so in the collective memory of future generations who once again seek their own freedom. The aftermath of the Second Freedom War made Great Britain a much hated enemy (Vestergaard 2000, 32-34), a grudge that some people in Orania continued to hold to this day, whereas it is almost too easy to draw parallels between the British oppression of the past and the complicated position of Afrikaners in South Africa today. Once a year, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May the signing of *Vrede van Vereeniging* is remembered on *Bittereinderdag*, a ceremony which Orania commonly holds at the Doornbult concentration camp, located approximately thirty kilometres outside of Orania (Seldon 2014, 176; Kemp 2015b, 20-21), which is both an archaeological museum site and one of the better preserved cemeteries from the Second Freedom War. It is a day of remembrance in which attendants lay flowers and a memorial wreath at the graves. Likewise on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October Orania celebrates *Heldedag* (Hero's Day), which coincides with the birthday of President Paul Kruger. This celebration differs from year to year, but has in 2016 been held at the site of the historical Magersfontein battlefield. In this light some authors have gone as far as to label continued remembrance of the Second Boer War as cultural trauma, which mirrors some of the emotions I encountered while speaking to people in Orania (Maris 2010). My host mother, Tannie Jeanette could tell countless stories about majestic battles such as the Battle of Majuba Hill, where South African Republic achieved an impressive victory, yet she was also bitter about how the British had never even apologized for the crimes of the concentration camps. Hannes du Preez explained that the war was especially damaging because it urbanized the Afrikaner, while many of their leaders, the most outspoken Boers, were the first to die, either as soldiers or in the concentration camps. It was a cultural vacuum in which people had nothing to rally behind, something that can also be seen in the dramatic growth of religious denominations of the era directly after the Second Freedom War.

Simultaneously however, people like Carel Boshoff have considered the outcome of the Second Freedom War, despite its horrors, also a small blessing in disguise, because it forced the Afrikaner to wake up to the demands of a new era, to modernize and to develop itself as an united *volk*, both economically and culturally. It meant the death of the “first” Afrikaner, but the birth of the “second”, just like Orania today is an indication that there is now a “third” Afrikaner, supporting a third republican movement, who again are prepared to shed off their past in favour of adjusting to the demands of their own time (Boshoff 2007a, 74; Boshoff 2012, 594-595). The Second Freedom War completed a chapter of an Afrikaner-centered history that served as the foundation of the *volk*, the essence that there existed something that was *volkseie* (belonging to the people). It has been argued that this “project Afrikaner” served as a way to explain the history of abuse and dislocation, in a way that the Afrikaner, even if he was now stateless, still derived a great strength from his own unity, history and common identity (Jensen 2008, 39-42). It became a staple element of the nationalist rhetoric of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which both the victimhood and rebirth of the Afrikaner as *volk* gained prominence (Allen 2010; Raath 2010). To a degree this is also the sentiment that influenced Orania, such as can be read in a statement of intent, signed on *Bittereinderdag* in 1995, in which the people of Orania saw themselves as a new generation of *bittereinders* who were prepared to go to great lengths to become the only free Afrikaners in South Africa.

“We, *Volkstaters* whose names are written down in this book, accept and declare that Orania is the birth of our own state. We recognize with great gratitude the acts of our predecessor ‘*bittereinders*’ which had the consequence that Orania and the surrounding land is currently the only place in the country that retained its freedom. Even if our new country is small, we intend to stay loyal to it by guarding, cultivating and governing it by ourselves, to the honour of God.”

- *Beginning of a statement of intent, signed on Bittereinderdag 1995.*

## Armblankes

If the Second Freedom War was a tale of defeat, then the post-war period became a story of reconstruction. Around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Afrikaner found itself in a general state of poverty and economic decline. Especially farmers, who never had it easy to begin with, but nonetheless managed to make a decent subsistence living, found themselves vulnerable.

Even before the Second Freedom War they had already been struggling, with the employment provided by large-scale railroad projects coming to an end in 1895, and deadly rinderpest striking two-thirds of the bovine farms in the following year. Furthermore, inheritance laws encouraged farmers to divide their land among their children, which left many with patches of land that, due to the barren climate were too unproductive to maintain cattle (Gilliomee 2011, 321). A combination of unstable prices and the inability to modernize to a cash driven market economy due to a lack of capital, fertile land and education meant many farmers were unable to scale up their farming operations following the Witwatersrand gold rush, causing many to abandon their land and to migrate to the cities (Fourie 2007, 10-12). There they found strong competition from black unskilled labour and British tradesmen, making it difficult, if not downright impossible to stave off unemployment. (Forgey 1994, 50-58). Those farmers who did not turn to the cities became so-called *bywoners*, landless farmers who lived on the larger farms in exchange for their labour. On top of this domestic crises the 1929 stock market crash also greatly diminished the international export of gold and diamonds, while continued immigration flows from Europe meant that while the population was growing, economic opportunities were often already occupied (Gilliomee 2011, 318). This *armblankes* (poor white) problem, as it came to be known, received great attention, first and foremost in a study by the American Carnegie Commission, titled “The Poor White Problem in South Africa” (1932). Besides the obvious external economic factors mentioned previously they also located a range of sociological, psychological and educational issues that further undermined the position of the Afrikaner. It was a comprehensive study that pinpointed the weaknesses of the protestant-religious educational system of the time, which many farmers considered a luxury rather than a valuable contribution to their human capital (Fourie 2007, 9-10; Gilliomee 2011, 319). Furthermore, the passive and conservative attitude farmers maintained towards innovation, born from their overreliance on the available cheap black labour (de Widt 2014, 161-162), as well as the dangerous consequences of poverty, such as moral decline, increased crime and a general disregard for honesty, discipline and self-respect (Seekings 2008, 519).

Based of the 1932 Carnegie Report, a great deal of thought went into the discussion what could be done to improve the situation for the *armblankes*. The recommendations made in the Carnegie Report itself were minimal, but nonetheless suggested major changes to reduce the social isolation of the poor whites, such as an improved education system, as well as to

create a minimum wage, reducing welfare dependency, and to promote further industrial development in the cities (Forgey 1994, 129-131; Gilliom 2011, 348). The bulk of the improvement can be related back to three more general, parallel, developments that marked the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for the Afrikaner, these being ethnic mobilization, economic growth and political mobilization. Ethnic mobilization in this context meant the individual willingness to make sacrifices for the greater good, the idea that the hardships of the individual can be overcome by an extreme loyalty to the ethnic group, in this context the Afrikaner nationalist agenda, led by the *Nasionale Party* (National Party), *Nasionale Pers* (National Press) and *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Afrikaner Brotherhood), in which the *armblanks* were presented as a direct threat to the white political hegemony (Forgey 1994, 131-132). Relying on core elements such as the Afrikaans language, the shared history and the protestant religion allowed these organisations to bolster a feeling of shared responsibility. It led for example to social upheaval movements such as the *Helpmekaarbeweging* (Help Each Other Movement), which relied on donations to mobilize private institutions that would go on to become profitable business operations such as the insurance companies *Sanlam* and *Santam* in 1918 (Id., 132-137). These proved to be instrumental to expand the social capital from a limited elite to the general Afrikaner population of South Africa (Verhoef 2008). In 1939 this would culminate in the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* (Economic People's Congress) discussing how the *volk* could be saved from its impoverished state. The answer became *volkskapitalisme* (people's capitalism), which was capitalism applied exclusively within the Afrikaner realm, which encouraged people to save their money in Afrikaner banks, to only buy from other Afrikaners and to invest in Afrikaner companies through newly created institutions such as the *Federale Volksbeleggings* (Federal People's Investments, FVB), created in 1940 and the *Afrikaner Handels Instituut* (Afrikaner Trade Institute, AHI), created a year later. Furthermore it led to the creation of the *Reddingsdaadbond* (Rescue Act Alliance, RDB), going by the illustrious motto of “*‘n Volk red homself*” (a people saves themselves), which aimed to collect money for the *Reddingsdaadsfonds* (Rescue Act Fund) and encourage economic independence, worker rights and education for skilled trades (Grobelaar 1975, 144-145; Gilliom 2011, 353-354). Although the direct poverty relief for the *armblanks* was limited, the broad support for these structures did serve a broad economic mobilization that benefited the Afrikaner group as a whole (Forgey 1994, 139-142).



## Apartheid

No chapter in the Afrikaner history has left such a mark on South African history, and had a more lasting consequence for the Afrikaner, as the apartheid years between 1948 and 1994. It is a history that South Africa as a country must never forget, but also a history that many Afrikaners consciously are trying to forget. In this thesis there is simply no way to do justice to the full scope of racial segregation, extreme classification and discrimination of non-white South Africans, or even to the vastly complex, multi-sided and conflicted role of the Afrikaner in this history. Also, unlike the other chapters of the Afrikaner timeline the apartheid era is by far the most contested among Afrikaners themselves. While most people in Orania generally agree that apartheid was a troubled system, interwoven with excessive acts of violence and ingrained with racism, they also emphasize that it is something that belongs in the past, and is not an aspiration that they continue to hold. Many are tired of the questionable message that journalists sometimes take home from their visit to Orania, which depicts the community as a microcosm in which apartheid has never seemed to exist. More than once inhabitants clarified to me that anyone can come live in Orania, as long as they identify with the Afrikaner cause. For them the boundaries did not run across a racial division, but included everyone who themselves felt part of the Afrikaner community. If a person of colour would ask them if they could move to Orania, the canned response was to ask them if they would *want* to stay in the community, implying that, while there is nothing stopping people of colour from moving to Orania, since they do not identify with the Afrikaner, there is no reason for them to move there.

"We do not want to be, like the English say, a gated community, or a closed community. We are an open community, but to a degree also closed in the sense that people with the same convictions, religious convictions, cultural convictions, and ultimately also white people, as us Afrikaners are white, we share the same convictions. We have now more than a 1000 white people together, say a black person asks if he could come tomorrow, then there is no incentive for him to stay. Why would he want to stay? He is not part of the culture. He has no connotation, he won't participate in Helderdag or Gelofte dag. That has no meaning to him. On those grounds he disqualifies himself to be part of the community, not because he is yellow, or red or black."

*- Christo Meyer explaining why Orania is not trying to re-establish apartheid.*

Yet some people also expressed that apartheid has been drawn out of context, misrepresented as a totalitarian system whose sole purpose was to oppress non-whites for the sake of white superiority. During my fieldwork I encountered a lot of people in Orania who preferred to distinguish the notion of *apartheid* from the notion of “*aparte ontwikkeling*” (“separate development”), referring to the creation of eight *bantustans* (homelands) with the intention to provide each ethnic group with their own territory and own autonomy. This well-meant intention, even if never realized in practice, formed perhaps the one aspect of apartheid that the people in Orania showed open appreciation for. In this light, this thesis does not look at the institute of apartheid as a whole, nor how it affected the Afrikaner group and its post-apartheid identity formation, nor how the emotional guilt post-1994 left a traumatic scar in the lives of many Afrikaners, both topics which other authors have given detailed attention before (Korf & Malan 2002; Jensen 2008; Davies 2009; Boersema 2013). Instead, this thesis is better served by a more concise look that focuses on two key aspects of apartheid that mean the most to the people of Orania. Firstly, the role of Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, which highlights the view that some of the people in Orania hold with regard to apartheid, the person Verwoerd and his plans for separate development, and secondly the critical moment of 1994, when apartheid came to an end, and Orania was born more or less as a direct consequence of the sudden transformation that came over South Africa.

“I have lived overseas, and when I asked people there, what do you know about South Africa, then they tell you the story of how the black people were oppressed, how Nelson Mandela is a great freedom fighter, a great emancipator of the country. But if you tell the other side of the story, of apartheid, the true side, then apartheid means, you stay here, I stay there. Just like here [the room next to him in the apartment block], this man lives next to me. This wall is apartheid. I do not come there and use his toothbrush, he does not come here and uses my motor bike. I respect his property, he respects my property. That is all that it means.”

*- A man explaining how apartheid more akin to separate development.*

## Dr. H.F. Verwoerd

To understand the relationship between Orania and the legacy of Dr. H.F. Verwoerd it first becomes necessary to understand the person Verwoerd, in particular his political achievements. Born in the Netherlands, Verwoerd grew up in South Africa, acquiring a stellar academic career in Social Psychology and Philosophy, studying in Germany, Great Britain and the United States. After he returned to South Africa in 1928 he would continue to lecture until 1936, where he became lead editor for *Die Transvaler*, an Afrikaner nationalist newspaper aiming to rebuild popularity for the National Party in the Transvaal province. Building upon republicanism, nationalism, agriculture and labour rights he managed to solidify the Afrikaner ranks, who consequently rallied behind the NP in the general election of 1948, where the *Herenigde Nasionale Party* (Reunited National Party) and Afrikaner Party gained a small majority in government. In light of the growing black political aspirations Prime Minister D.F. Malan promised the Afrikaner voter a clear-cut system of segregation, giving birth to what is now known as apartheid. Meanwhile Dr. Verwoerd continued to gain support among the Afrikaners, first becoming Minister of Native Affairs in 1950, and finally Prime Minister in 1958. From that day onward until the day of his death in 1966 his leadership aimed to secure Afrikaner safety and prolonged survival through a series of legislative acts, of which the *Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act* intended to create eight distinct *bantustans*, or homelands, in South Africa, to which large groups of the black population of South Africa were encouraged, and in many cases forced, to relocate (Gilliomee 1994, 535).

These political policies were driven by the idea of “separate development”, the belief that different ethnic groups could develop within their own nation-states, on their own merits and on the basis of self-determination. Critical reviews of the implementation of the homelands, such as Tomlinson Report published in 1954, concluded however that the system would require enormous sacrifices in terms of land reforms and subsidies for the socio-economic development of these poor and undeveloped regions (Gilliomee 2011, 515-516). Lacking international recognition and surviving largely on subsidies of the South African government made these homelands for the most part unsuccessful, since terrible housing and working conditions alongside major corruption meant that the majority of inhabitants had to make a living as guest workers in the South African cities (Id., 531-532). As a consequence of this failure, the bantustans were essentially doomed from the very start, never living up to the



*Dr. H.F. Verwoerd in Orania*

*Top left: the Verwoerd memorial in Orania's cemetery*

*Top right: the bloodied shirt worn by H.F. Verwoerd on the day of his assassination*

*Bottom: the former residence of Betsie Verwoerd, now used as a museum for the Verwoerd Gedenkversameling.*

objectives behind their creation, while simultaneously representing some of the worst excesses of apartheid's segregation practices (Gilliomee 1994, 533; Gilliomee 2011, 506-507). Furthermore Verwoerd was also the leading figure in the efforts to make South Africa a Republic, presiding over a 1960 referendum that won with a tight 52% victory. A year later, on the 31<sup>th</sup> of May, the Republic of South Africa was born, the same date the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed at the end of the Second Freedom War. Already having survived a failed assassination attempt in 1960, Verwoerd was killed in Parliament in 1966, when a mentally ill parliamentary messenger managed to stab Verwoerd repeatedly in the chest and neck, after which Verwoerd died on the way to the hospital (Id., 536). Today his grave can be found in the Hero's Acre in Pretoria, alongside famous political figures such as President Paul Kruger, Prime Minister Louis Botha and Andries Pretorius, first chairman of the *Volksraad* of the South African Republic.

One thing that might be confusing to anyone visiting Orania, and that likewise confused me for a long time, is how a community that emphasises a clean break with the days of apartheid can nonetheless associated itself with a political figure like Dr. Verwoerd. After all, for many he is seen as the orchestrator of some of the most damaging systematic forms of oppression seen in the apartheid era. Both domestic and international his leadership was met with increasing resistance, with violent protests from black South Africans rallying behind the ANC banner, and a damaging economic boycott directed by the United Nations. Although this did result in the development of a successful domestic military industrial complex that boosted the economy and produced advanced military armaments, it also meant that South Africa was severely isolated on the diplomatic front. Yet Verwoerd still has found a prominent place in the Orania cemetery, and the *Verwoerd Gedenkversameling* reminds everyone that Verwoerd continues to be a figure that deserves remembering to this day. One reason for this is the proximity of Orania to the *Oranjerivierwaterskema* (Orange River Project) initiated by Verwoerd in 1965, which tamed the Orange River with the Hendrik Verwoerd Dam and PK le Roux Dam (later renamed to Gariep Dam and Vanderkloof Dam). This massive project gave Orania its foundations and turned the marginal desert region into a fertile hotspot with hydro-electric power and a fresh water supply (Biehl 2016, 24-25). Moreover the presence of Verwoerd can be explained genealogically, since C.W.H. Boshoff was married to Anna Boshoff, born Anna Verwoerd, the daughter of Dr. Verwoerd. Consequently Betsie Verwoerd, Dr.

Verwoerd's wife chose Orania as her place of retirement in 1992, living in what today has become the museum for the *Verwoerd Gedenkversameling* (du Plessis 1998, 33). This collection serves more as an archive than a shrine of remembrance, displaying various collections related to the life of Verwoerd, while leaving part of Betsie Verwoerd's residence untouched. The collections are highly varied, ranging from pins and badges to books and clothing, there is a collection of native gifts received during his rule as Prime Minister, certificates displaying honorary titles granted to Verwoerd before and after his untimely death, but also the clothing he wore on the day of his assassination, highlighting the various areas where he was stabbed. Sebastian Biehl, one of the employees of the *Orania Beweging* explained to me that the *Verwoerd Gedenkversameling* attempts to keep the memory of Verwoerd in South Africa alive, not because Orania collectively identifies with the vision and leadership of Verwoerd, but because Verwoerd was born in the Netherlands and assassinated in Parliament, and thus had no formal resting place where his historical legacy could be preserved.

Nonetheless, speaking to the people of Orania it became more and more apparent that, in their opinion, separate development was not so much a failure in its intention, as it was in its execution. The premature demise of Verwoerd meant that his vision of separated homelands could not come a satisfying outcome, and subsequent leaders of the National Party failed to show the same leadership and commitment to this enormous undertaking. Without the grand vision of Verwoerd the National Party retreated from his hard-line stance, and decades later the demise of apartheid as a whole meant that today Verwoerd, his policies and goals are burdened by misconceptions. Yet to Orania he is the spiritual father of Afrikaner *selfbeskikking*, foreseeing an alternative future that would have allowed Afrikaners to rule over themselves and to avoid the difficult position they find themselves in today. In his autobiography C.W.H. Boshoff (2012, 425-426), referring to a speech Verwoerd made in 1959 to promote his views with regard to the self-government of the *Bantustan* communities, recalls how Verwoerd's vision for Afrikaner survival was ultimately not aimed at continued minority dominance over the entirety of South Africa, but had the intention to scale down to a smaller, autonomous white state with full *selfbeskikking*. Other People would also quite frequently refer to the *Bantu Education Act* of 1953, and the *Extension of University Education Act* enacted by H.F. Verwoerd in 1959. These controversial acts banned non-white students

from white universities, but simultaneously also created various racially divided universities. Although these universities did offer a degree of tertiary education, there has been extensive debate to what extent their purpose was aimed at servicing the *bantustan* divisions by directing non-whites towards the unskilled labour market. Quality, living conditions and teaching standards were generally poor, certainly in comparisons to white universities, while the curricula were differentiated on purpose, based on the idea that universities should serve the immediate needs of the different homelands, rather than

“... then my answer to such reasoning is that in the end I prefer to settle for a smaller state in South Africa that is white, which will control its own army, its own fleet, its own police and its own military, and which will stand as a stronghold for white civilization in the world; which will have foreign support in case of emergency or struggle with ideologies in neighbouring countries in order to maintain itself.”

- *Fragment of the Senate speech given by H.F. Verwoerd on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1959.*

live up to the standards of Western tertiary education. This debate was also the theme of the 2015 *H.F. Verwoerd Gedenklesing*, titled *Dr. H.F. Verwoerd en swart onderwys: 'n Slagveld vir ideologieë* (Dr. H.F. Verwoerd and black education: a battlefield for ideologies), held in the Orania *Gemeenskapsaal* by Dr. Manie Opperman (2015), who himself taught at the Xhosa university in Fort Hare, located in the Ciskei *bantustan*. He wished to oppose the sharp criticism levelled at the *Bantu Education Act*, stating how their intention to educate students based on the necessities of their own *Bantustan* communities was misunderstood, misrepresented, and how ultimately it were the very students taught at these universities who spearheaded the rise of black political awareness and the downfall of apartheid.

## End of apartheid, or end of the Afrikaner?

Another aspect related to apartheid which came up time and time again was precisely those years in the early 90s, where South Africa went through a highly tumultuous phase of transition and transformation. It brought an end to centuries of white minority rule, a change many of them deemed unbelievable and often traumatic (Boersema 2013, X-XI). Afrikaners had to make a sudden adjustment; gone was the racism and white privilege of the past, in

came the guilt and shame of being part of such a much-hated system. It required them to surrender their control over their future, to surrender to the new democracy of South Africa and to rebuild themselves without the buffer zone that white privilege had provided them with in the past (Seldon 2014, 13). For some it became a burden that their generation would have to bear, for others it became a time of nostalgia, the “good ol’ days” when the country was functioning better and tensions between ethnic groups were lower (Id., 122-123). Later generations found themselves confounded with the question if it was their role to carry on the torch of blame, to ask themselves if they were responsible for the actions of their parents, or grandparents even, especially if these personally had no role in the apartheid-regime (Id., 199-202). The fact that the Afrikaner had acted as one tight-knit block, sharing and allegiance to the cause of protecting the Afrikaner *volk* by means of institutions such as the National Party made it difficult to separate the role of the individual Afrikaner from the general post-apartheid sentiments.

### **The path of no return**

Perhaps the most important reason why the notion of being a *volk* continues to be so important to Orania is because the threat that post-apartheid South Africa poses is not just theoretical, but a reality seen thoroughly interwoven with everyday life. Besides the previously discussed problem of *plaasmoorde*, and an overall rise in crime rates there are various forces in play that from the point of view from many people in Orania undermine the Afrikaner, and if allowed to continue will eventually doom the Afrikaner volk. As C.W.H. Boshoff once asked himself rhetorically, how does the Afrikaner volk survive as a unique *kultuurgemeenskap*, in the circumstances that we experience in South Africa, and will survival be granted to him? (Boshoff 2007c, 1). Jan Joubert explained to me how the Vryheids Front Plus serves to stand up against the three forces that can subjugate a *volk* that exists in a minority position, those of *uitwissing*, *uitdrywing* and *assimilasie* (extinction, expulsion and assimilation). According to him, and many more people of Orania all three of these threats are very real, both throughout their history and perhaps even more so today. There is the obvious loss of political self-rule, following the transition of 1994, which meant Afrikaners lost both the status and political influence they had enjoyed for the past decades (Korf & Malan 2002, 152-154; Boersema 2013, 7). It simultaneously meant a loss of pride, with many Afrikaners feeling like the achievements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as a relatively thriving economy,



domestic industry, infrastructure and military were completely ignored due to the disproportional attention raised to the apartheid system. It left Afrikaners stuck with a majority-based government that largely ignored their interests, and reduced the Afrikaner *volk* to just one of the many minority groups that would have to settle for one central government (Boshoff 1985b, 9-10). For many Orania citizens this seemed like the beginning of the end, resulting in what Dr. Chris Jooste regarded as the ultimate choice between self-determination or assimilation. He felt that with time the assimilation option would position the interests of a non-Afrikaner majority in opposition to the Afrikaner minority, resulting in a revolution that would be the end of the Afrikaner (Boshoff 1986, 102).

“When he cannot maintain himself as absolute majority and as the owner and controller of the land, there remain only one of two outcomes, namely to divide the land and to survive in his part, or to share it with other *volkere* [peoples] and to be assimilated by them.

- Dr. Chris Jooste (1986, 4) explaining why majority rule is essential to the Afrikaner survival.

### **The loss of identity**

Besides the evident loss of political power following 1994, a more abstract reason why the concept of one united Afrikaner *volk* feels threatened is the experience that the Afrikaner identity in itself has come under sharp scrutiny. In the wake of the 1994 transition much of South Africa's history was rewritten, replacing the ones carefully crafted apartheid discourse, based on strict racial divisions, with a more nuanced story about liberation and democratic transition. What once was a sense of pride became a cultural stigma of guilt and shame, which led to a widespread sense of alienation among Afrikaners (Korf & Malan 2002; Boersema 2013, 247). The underpinnings of the Afrikaner cultural identity were rewritten in this process, and with that the identity politics that once united the Afrikaner ranks, leaving the Afrikaners as a group divided on what direction to follow (Davies 2009, Verwey & Quayle 2012, 560-562). In conversation with Schalk Albertyn, the vicar of the Dutch Reformed Church in Orania, he explained to me how this was however not just a result of the 1994 transition, but a much longer development that already started after the Second World War, after South Africa had become a Republic under NP leadership and much of the unrest caused by the ANC had temporarily been silenced. It led to a time of economic boom in the 1960s, that allowed many Afrikaners to change their lifestyle and consumption pattern, after which particularly

youngsters lost the interest in ideas about nationalism and dedication to the *volk* (Grundlingh 2008). Schalk Albertyn went on to explain how this made Orania in the present day a very strong anomaly, that does not reflect the vast majority of Afrikaners elsewhere in South Africa. It represents an identity crises that is further compounded by the effort on the side of the ANC government to remove every memory of the Afrikaner legacy from public view, in the shape of statues, monuments, the public names of roads and infrastructure and the role of Afrikaans in public offices and education. The *Monumentkoppie* (Monument Hill), located on the edge of Grootdorp serves as a testament to this, with a selection of bust statues displaying a selection of famous Afrikaner Presidents, from left to right, J.G. Strijdom, D.F. Malan, H.F. Verwoerd, J.B.M. Hertzog and Paul Kruger. Many of these statues were donated to Orania after they had fallen out of grace elsewhere in the country, a continuing trend visible that was prominently featured during the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall protests, which sparked various acts of vandalism against Afrikaner statues following the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes from the University of Cape Town campus.

### **Regstellende aksies**

Besides this experience of political marginalization and cultural prosecution another force threatening the future of the Afrikaner *volk* are the *regstellende aksies* (affirmative action) programs meant to adjust the ethnic distribution of the South African workforce. Contrary to other countries where such policies are aimed at the economic empowerment of minority groups, the ANC government has shifted the priority of these programs to the majority group of black citizens. For the ANC the objective is to find compensation for what they consider an unjust legacy of an apartheid regime that did not provide the black population with adequate education or job opportunities to prepare them to participate in the workforce after 1994,

“Only the black people get promotions. They are lower... they have a lower rank, and they are promoted before you. You have to do all the work, they get the promotion. There is no future for you in government places. One in every ten thousand gets an opportunity to become someone, the rest just stays put. Afrikaans has a nice word, *verdrukking* [oppression]. You have to do all the work, all the mistakes are yours, you have to do other people’s work. They are not educated to do the work, but they get the position.”

- A former police officer who moved to Orania as a consequence of *regstellende aksies*.

particularly in white-dominated fields such as civil service. In practice this has led to various 'racial redress' policies, the most important one being the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act, in which companies are encouraged to mirror their workforce on the ethnic distribution of the South African population (Boersema 2013, 56-57). A natural consequence of this development left many Afrikaners either without a job, or in a position where they would no longer be promoted, even when they were the better candidate. Simultaneously, because *regstellende aksies* tend to provide people with jobs who do not have sufficient skills, education or experience, many of the people in Orania considered *regstellende aksies* the root cause for the failing infrastructure, corruption and poor governance in South Africa. Meanwhile the intended results of *regstellende aksies* are difficult to quantify, and have been criticized for mainly helping a select group of black elites, rather than serving any function in long-term poverty relief (Davies 2007, 365-366; Fourie 2007, 1291). While macro-economic statistics such as unemployment have shown an improvement, it is uncertain if this is the result of the *regstellende aksies*, and looking towards international examples predicts relatively few long-term results despite the high costs and unpredictable side-effects such as racial stereotyping and racial polarisation (Waghid 2003, 104-106).

## Emigration

Mostly as a consequence of these issues, but also because of increasing crime rates and uncertainty, a relatively large proportion of Afrikaners has decided to move away from South Africa. Although statistics are hard to come by, as many as 1 to 1,6 million skilled workers are said to have left the country between 1995 and 2005 alone, of which a large proportion (in excess of 90%) is assumed to be Afrikaner (Bailey 2006, 211; Bhorat 2002, 16; Ndulu 2004, 61). This has led to a substantial outflow of human capital and consequently a

"There is a percentage [of people] who completely says, 'I am done with South Africa, I am done with the Afrikaner'. I have in my family a young man that I know. I know him, he grew up in front of me. He lives in Australia for quite a few years now. Two children. The language in their home is English, he does not even speak Afrikaans in that house. He does not really come to South Africa anymore. These people, unless there comes a big, very big reversal, these Afrikaners are lost for the Afrikanerdom."

- Adam Boshoff explaining the potential risk the Afrikaner folk faces due to emigration

demographic shift, especially when it concerns highly skilled Afrikaners, students and families with children (Id. 212-213; Ndulu 2004). Meanwhile some of the more common destination countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia these migrants welcome these skilled immigrants with open arms, with cities such as Perth in Australia spawning lively Afrikaner communities as a consequence (Bhorat 2002, 3-4). Besides the evident socio-economic consequences Orania is equally concerned about the negative impact this has on the *volk*. When Afrikaners move abroad it is generally written off as a loss, since Afrikaners are keen to absorb local culture at the cost of their Afrikaner identity (Lombard 2012, 7). As a result most people in Orania were outspokenly opposed the idea to move abroad, or as one woman explained to me: *“the grass is only greener on the other side because there is a lot more shit to fertilize it”*. It gives the Orania community a dual, in some ways conflicting role. Many regarded it as an alternative when they lacked the money or qualifications to migrate abroad. It allowed them to move “away” from South Africa, without having to go through the process of emigration, something which some inhabitants were still considering nonetheless. Yet simultaneously Orania does not want to attract “refugees”, people who are solely hoping to get away from South Africa, searching for safety or work, but unaware of the ideological values and objectives of the community.

## **The role of religion**

After reading this historical narrative it might come as no surprise that it is strongly interwoven with a religious counter-part. The Dutch settlers of the VOC were Christian Protestants, and with their arrival in the Cape they brought their beliefs with them. One of the first acts Jan van Riebeeck undertook upon his arrival was to pray for his arrival, which consequently is said to be the origin of the ritual to commence every meeting with Christian prayer, a tradition still strictly observed in Orania. Since then the Christian faith remained a noticeable beacon for most of the Afrikaner timeline, guiding them through difficult times such as the isolated journeys of the Great Trek, the Vow that would precede the Battle of Blood River and the relief efforts to resolve the poor whites problem. Historian Herman Gilliomee (2011, 41) suggests that the importance of the Christian faith might have been more than just purely religious, but that it served as an important marker that distinguished European civilization from the “barbarians”. It was the one shared trait between the *vryburghers*, who, coming from various nationalities lacked any other common background, even though they, as Gilliomee states,

“O Gracious and Most Merciful God and Heavenly Father, in Your Divine Majesty You have Saved us and called us to guide the affairs of the Dutch East India Company in this place, and to this end we are gathered here together in Your Name. May the decisions we take further maintain justice and, among these wild and uncivilised people, may Your true and perfect Christian teachings be established and spread, to the honour and praise of Your Holy Name and the prosperity of our God Almighty, without whose merciful help we are powerless. Therefore we pray to You, Most Merciful Father, and ask that You will stand by and support us with your Fatherly wisdom and understanding and preside over our gatherings...”

- Part of Jan van Riebeeck's prayer as it was spoken upon arrival at the Cape.

initially were not remarkably religious. Only after the 1790s did religiosity show an expansion among the white settlers. Along with the Dutch language the Dutch Reformed church became something that the Dutch East India Company actively wished to preserve at the Cape, mainly through its military commanders and numerous church schools. It led to an extensive belief that God held a covenant with the Christian *burghers* like he previous held with the Jews in the Old Testament (Id., 42).

After the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619 bestowed the task of baptizing or confirming slaves upon their masters, these largely ignored this out of fear for *gelykstelling* (equalization) in the Reformed Church between whites and non-whites (Id., 175-176). It became such a heated issue that it resulted in various schisms in the Reformed Church, resulting in the foundation of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in 1853 and the Gereformeerde Kerk of South Africa in 1859. The latter, under guidance of future President Paul Kruger, would be instrumental in encouraging the belief that God held a covenant with the chosen Afrikaner people, a belief which would proceed to garner traction following the hardships of the Great Trek and the Second Freedom War. Ultimately this idea never became a mainstream doctrine, but nonetheless religion would continue to fuel racial separation during the early years of apartheid, when the Dutch Reformed Church encouraged a *volkseie* (people's own) faith that would bolster the character and nationality of its worshipers, meaning services should take linguistic, cultural and social differences in consideration (Id., 454). Whites and non-whites had separate churches, while missionary work and Christian education among the non-white population was limited, certainly compared to other overseas colonies. In the 1930s this would eventually become the blueprint for the entire societal segregation of apartheid, which

attempted to combine the survival of the Europeans with justice for the non-white population (Id., 460). It would take until 1986 for the Dutch Reformed Church to break its alliance with the apartheid system, calling it an oppressive and sinful error, affirming that the church was open to anyone and denouncing any Bible-based legitimizations for racial segregation (Id., 620-621). As a result the following years would see an exodus of conservative church members, who formed the Afrikaans Protestant Church in 1987. Since then church affiliations with the traditional Reformed churches have generally been in a state of decline, both in terms of church membership and attendance.

### **Religion in Orania**

When a community with 1000 inhabitants is made up of 14 different denominations, spread out across four formal churches and various other places of communal worship you know that religion is an important matter for a community. This happens to be the case in Orania, where a recent survey indicated that 85% of the inhabitants consider themselves members of a church, of which the largest denominations are made up by the Afrikaans Protestant Church, AP-Church) (21,9%), the Dutch Reformed Church (14,8%) and the charismatic Maranata Church (14,8%) (Orania Dorpsraad 2014, 15). Nonetheless there is also a minority of 15,6% that denies any religious affiliations, and in speaking to the vicar of the Maranata Church I learned that many people will claim a religious affiliation upon entering the community, but nonetheless never attend any of the church services. In his judgement this could be as low as 50% of the community. The differences between the various denominations are difficult to grasp as an outsider, and are largely depending on one's personal point of view. While C.W.H. Boshoff had originally the intention to unite the various denominations this proved impossible as the community grew and the rifts between various groups appeared too difficult to overcome (Retief & Hammond 2014, 81). In their essence all churches in Orania can be considered protestant, except for the Maranata Church, which is charismatic, and they all belief in the Holy Trinity. Beyond this common ground the distinctions can be as substantial as deeply ingrained religious rifts, or as minor as whether or not church services should sing psalters or hymns, or what Bible translation should be used. The Dutch Reformed Church, Afrikaans Protestant Church and Reformed Church are all considered sister churches, each

strongly interwoven with the history of the Afrikaner people. The latter two can be considered offshoots from the former one, but in their church services and religious beliefs they share many similarities. They all share the same confessional documents for example, better known as the Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism. The Maranata Church is considered as a bit of an outsider, since they position the person central in the church service, rather than the Bible, while also allowing more expression and more modern religious songs. Despite these differences many people pride themselves on the fact that the religious denominations as such do not act as social boundaries within the community, with people generally respecting each other despite disagreeing on the religious front (Pienaar 2007, 79; Hagen 2013, 64). Institutionally the churches will also cooperate when necessary, such as with choirs, and they serve indiscriminately in the prayer during community meetings or other appropriate occasions. Various people also praised how close the community can come together in times of sorrow, such as for example with funerals for people who meant a lot to the community.

Besides these churches the Christian values are in themselves deeply ingrained in the community, as can be seen in the first three articles of the Constitution of Orania, and they are treated as an active part of living in Orania. Pre-marital sex is not allowed, an issue that some people take more seriously than others (Pienaar 2007, 85). Church attendance on Sunday is high, with some people going twice, while commercial ventures are for the most part halted, except for critical services such as the petrol station and certain stores, although

1. We recognize the Trinity of God, as is disclosed in the Bible as the sole and true God who determines and governs the faith of all people, *volkere* [peoples] and nations and we believe that we can better comply with our calling to maintain and inhabit the Earth by creating a free Volkstaat for the Boer-Afrikanervolk in the North-western Cape.
2. We intend to glorify the Trinity of God with our acts and to work and to strive for the expansion of the Christian beliefs in our daily interaction and labour.
3. We intend at all times, in faithful recognition of God, to underwrite, to protect, to express and to promote the Afrikaner language, culture, traditions, upbringing of our children and outlook and worldview of the Boer-Afrikanervolk.

**- The first three Articles of the Orania Constitution**

the cinema would also show a movie every Sunday afternoon. Speaking to the owner, he felt that this was justified, since he did not advertise it and only showed the movie in the afternoon, when there was no church service. Prayer is an intimate practice that occurs before (and sometimes after) every meal and public meeting. Likewise new inhabitants are required to indicate their religious adherence, as participation in one of the church communities is considered essential for a better integration into the community. It allows new people to find a welcoming group which, despite members coming from all over South Africa, share a common background. This gives the church also a very strong social function within the community, since the Sunday church service is followed by the opportunity to drink tea and coffee together. Various churches also organise communal Bible reading, where a group of members would gather at one of their homes, practise psalters and discuss a particular chapter of the Bible under the guidance of the vicar. Afterwards there again is a social function as members spend time together over coffee or tea. The Afrikaans Protestant Church also organizes a yearly *Dankfeest* (Gratitude Festivity) which combined both elements of a religious service and a county fair, including a communal breakfast and later on the day a public auction where amongst other things live animals and cuts of meat were sold. This event was extremely well attended by people of all denominations. In the summer the Maranata Church would also organize weekly Youth Service, where children and teenagers alike could participate in all sorts of activities, often with a mild Christian undertone. Examples of this would be a volleyball tournament or coming together to sing-a-long with Christian pop songs. On a day-to-day basis churches also provide an important function as social safety net, by providing their members with food, supplies or money when times get tough. This *Dienst van Barmhartigheid* (Ministry of Mercy) is performed by deacons, who look after vulnerable church members by means of regular visits, where they try to provide aid, prayer and guidance. Often these churches will work alongside the OMR in Orania, where the churches address the most immediate and direct needs, such as food or clothing, while the OMR attempts to look for structural solutions. Likewise the OMR will often assist new arrivals in the community across the barriers of entering a church community as a stranger, so people might overcome initial fears and become active church members, finding a wider support network in the process.





*Religion in Orania.*

*Top: Gereformeerde Kerk Orania, located in the CVO School.*

*Bottom: The Maranata Church located in Kleingeluk.*

Some people would adhere to a more radical, more abstract relationship between the notion of *volk* and religion, referring to the Bible verse of Acts 17, verse 26, which dictates that all nations were appointed by God, and are entitled to maintain their own boundaries. Vicar Fanie Hoffman explained that the Bible never states that this is at any point meant to change, or that it

“From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.”

- Acts 17:26

could be considered a sin. He considered religion the rock on which the Afrikaner was built, and felt that every culture should be allowed to express themselves as they saw fit, while no outside force can tell a person how to live their lives. To him the Afrikaans Protestants Church was a *volkskerk* (People’s Church), striving to let everybody be themselves, to give them the space to live their lives. One man in the Reformed Church explained to me how this meant that God had bestowed clear boundaries upon people and nations. He wondered, that if we were to remove that foundation, as multicultural society deems right, what foundation would there be to replace it? People would lose their own country, and with that lose their own identity, their private property and their history. He felt that this was what was going on in the world, a removal of God-given boundaries between people that left the world in a state of turmoil and confusion. Others would maintain a much more liberal point of view, such as Quintin Diederichs, who owns various businesses in Orania. He considered himself Christian, but rarely went to church, to him God was watching out for the Afrikaner *volk*, but this does not make them chosen people, who have more right to exist than other people.

There is a strong momentum, and I as Christian belief that the hand of God is here. Because it could be destroyed so easily, what can we do ourselves, and how easy is it for others? I do not know if you’re religious, that is your business. I believe there is more, even if I do not preach, and only visit church once every six months. It could have gone wrong so many times. I belief that hand protected us from Jan van Riebeeck onwards. How else did we survive the British Empire, the Groot Trek? Not that we are chosen people, I do not say that we are chosen as people. Everyone who believes will be saved, regardless if you are Zulu or Afrikaner.

- Quintin Diederichs explaining his view on the relation between the Afrikaner and Christianity.

He compared this to the Israel Vision movement, a religious fringe group (2,1% of inhabitants) which supposedly is present in Orania (Dorpsraad Orania 2014, 15). Their ideas are far from coherent and for the most part based on international movements such as British Israelism and Christian Identity. A highly critical pamphlet distributed by the Reformed Church in Orania summarized their point of view as following: Israel is the sole white race, a chosen nation of which only the racially pure Israelites can maintain a relation with God. From the twelve tribes of Israel came forth the European nations, whereas the other races were created as “animals in the field” (after Genesis 1, verse 24-25) born from the offspring of the devil and Eve (or possibly Gam) (Gereformeerde Kerk 2015). Personally I never encountered anyone publicly declaring their allegiance to Israel Vision, but I did receive numerous warnings to watch out for them, and to separate their ideas from the overall view representative for Orania. People would sometimes also talk amongst each other declaring someone to be part of the movement, based on their opinions and ideas. The general consensus seemed to be that adherents of the Israel Vision movement were acting against the intended meaning of the Christian faith and by their presence in the community were trying to make Orania stand for something that the vast majority of people does not want to associate themselves with.

## **Communitarianism in a kultuurgemeenskap**

What this chapter has attempted to show is that the Afrikaner as a group used to carry, and in Orania continues to carry a rich history, build on stories of suffering and oppression and with sharp undertones of protestant religious values. It stands at the core of the community, where it explains its purpose as a *kultuurgemeenskap* and the idea that they are indeed one of the last Afrikaners of a prosecuted *volk*, stuck between a rock and a hard place, actively trying to stave off the forces of extinction, expulsion and assimilation. As an outsider it is difficult to judge how valid their concerns are, as they are real to these people, even though the Afrikaner elite, in general terms, is doing quite well, and at least economically, seems to have thrived following the political transition of 1994 (Davies 2007, 353-354; Seldon 2014, 33). There are undeniably serious country-wide problems on the political and economic front, crime rates are high, and extreme income inequality is splitting the nation apart, but these issues affect everyone, and are a reflection of a country struggling to find its way in between

third world dependency and first world development. Yet seen from within Orania, the fact that the community is so centred on its own needs for survival, its own aspiration as a minority resembles a certain purity of identity, a characteristic of communitarianism coined by Marangudakis (2002, 59). It tells about a history that is coming from a very sharp, Afrikaner-focused angle that leaves little room for other voices, nor questions the role of non-Afrikaners or the extent to which this notion of a *volk* is sustainable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some eras are met with a deeply ingrained cultural amnesia while others are emphasised for the important lessons that they hold with regards to the present day Afrikaner identity. This is especially true for the era of apartheid, which on the one hand provides the background for the longing towards *selfbeskikking* in Orania, but which on the other hand also results in the common misunderstanding that Orania is nothing more than continuation of the apartheid ideology.

More importantly, this chapter traces the very foundation and the various pillars of communitarianism in Orania. Take for example one of the key characteristics Vincent (1997, 15) related to weak communitarianism, *“Political and moral goods cannot be determined by abstract reasoning, they arise out of historical communities.”* This precisely happened in Orania. The narrative of being a *volk*, of sharing a common ancestry, a common battle against the harsh elements of South African plains, opposing colonial factions and hostile British soldiers became the building blocks for today’s quest for *selfbeskikking*. Whether the narrative is objectively true or not, to the people in Orania it is a testament that the only future the Afrikaner might have resides in an independent *Volkstaat* or equivalent thereof. People look at the landing of Jan van Riebeeck and see their roots as a Western nation, they look at the Groot Trek and Boer War and they see a struggle to resist oppression, and they look at the history of the *armblankes* and they see the drive to build, to work hard and to rebuild everything that they have lost. Likewise the people in Orania do not forget apartheid in its abusive forms, but instead look up to the Verwoerdian project of separate development as a blueprint, a divergent timeline that could have resolved the many issues Afrikaners today find themselves in. Remarkable in this history is the key role for central figures, whose actions, political views and religious ideas have made them essential ‘bearers of history’ (Bowring 1997, 109). They have become more than just historical figures, but in their actions we can find examples that guide how to live one’s life in an authentic fashion, in case of Orania authentic to the Afrikaner *volk*. This has made these figures timeless, important enough to be

located centrally in the community with for example the *Verwoerd Gedenkhuis* and *Monumentkoppie*, and to serve as valuable role models in education.

Also interesting, rather than choosing for isolation it appears that Orania is also seeking what Etzioni (1996, 237) labelled a 'cross-societal moral voice'. By approaching right-wing political parties in Europe, as well as other groups concerned with self-determination or cultural preservation Orania is bolstering its ideas, and in the process they elevate their seemingly unique position to a global scale where interest groups all over the world are struggling with similar questions. Etzioni, while abstaining from making his own moral claims, encourages communities to seek common core values, while also giving each other the room to develop independent normative grounds with regard to more particular topics such as economy, culture and even military decisions. With their role as a *kultuurgemeenskap* Orania has for example found common ground with Dutch-speaking groups in the Netherlands and Flanders, who, despite the geographic distance feel a common interest in the preservation of the Afrikaans language. Likewise Etzioni (1996, 210-211) agreed that such a core language should be entitled to serve the role of an official language, even if that meant enforcing it on immigrants with other native languages, as a shared language would benefit the cohesion of the community. In his view learning the dominant language does not have to impact the personal life choices, while other languages could be maintained for other purposes. In case of Orania this is however different from the context of the United States of which Etzioni was writing, as Afrikaans is just a minority language within the larger South Africa which is dominated by English.

This touches upon the vision of Etzioni (1996, 27) that communitarianism should not be a pervasive ideology with little room for autonomy of the individual. Within a certain spectrum people in Orania are free to engage with their history and religion in a way that they see fit. They can refrain from going to church or choose not to attend cultural events free of consequence, nor are they extensively tested on these qualities before they are welcomed in the community. The primary source for the communal identity, the idea that one belongs to an Afrikaner state in search of *selfbeskikking*, is constructed, reiterated and kept alive through cultural meetings, discussion and recognition of a shared history and religion (Marangudakis 2002, 59). There are no rules governing these virtues, instead people rely on education, the persuasion of the Orania leadership, the faith and the moral dialogue that people have among

themselves (Etzioni 1996, 27). For C.W.H. Boshoff (2012, 532) the *volk* should be seen in light of the theological understanding of J.A. Heyns (1989), as something organic and dynamic, that provides a person not with a replacement of its individuality, but rather with a cooperative environment of other individuals striving for the same goal. It is an understanding that shows remarkable similarity to Etzioni's communitarian paradigm, who considered communitarianism neither a triumph of the social good nor a suppression of the individual, but rather a precious equilibrium between the two that serves both virtues (Etzioni 1996, 27).

"The individual does not lose its autonomy and freedom in order to be included in a *volk* relationship. Instead different individuals are united together intimately with each other in such a living environment, that the entirety becomes more than the sum of the involved individuals."

- *What it means to be a member of a volk, according to J.A. Heyns (1989).*

## Conclusion

In summary this chapter walked through a very specific cross-section of South African history, highlighting those eras that are necessary to understand the people of Orania, their belief system and outlook on history. It is a narrative of oppression, resistance and overcoming the odds that continues to this very day, with survival of the Afrikaner people, and with that the Afrikaner identity, being paramount. This identity, carefully constructed out of a long and rich historical heritage, shows how the Afrikaner is framed as a pariah, ousted first by the Dutch East India Company, then the British colonial forces, and in the present day the ANC government. It is that torch of survival that Orania tries to carry on, by emphasising the need to keep the historical ancestors alive, Afrikaans as a living language and Christianity as a fundamental value both in church and in the daily lives of people. While individuals might engage with this belief system on different levels, with some people going as far as believing that the survival of the Afrikaner *volk* is a quest bestowed by a higher power, for everyone in Orania it provides a framework that contextualizes their daily existence. There are cultural holidays that keep it alive, of which the *Geloftedag* is by far the best attended, while the Afrikaner culture, language and religion are visible in museums, in church services and in the living memory of people.

Following Giordano's concept of 'actualized histories' this chapter shows how the Afrikaner legacy has been re-appropriated to provide support to the idea of *selfbeskikking*, giving the Afrikaner the roots by which to define its identity and cultural values. Rather than emphasizing the present-day transformation process that the ANC considers necessary to overcome the dramatic era of apartheid Orania rather reverses events, looking further back to past legacies. It provides inhabitants with the belief that they have a common origin, found in the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, and a fight ahead of them that is not dissimilar from the struggle of their ancestors. Likewise the victories of their ancestors, be it the Boer Republics, the recovery from the white poverty problem or the birth of the Republic of South Africa act as positive memories that give reason to believe that Orania also has a chance. Yet simultaneously it also makes people aware that the threat to the Afrikaner legacy is real, with the loss of political influence in 1994 moving the Afrikaner people towards an uncertain future that undermines their identity and positions them in a vulnerable socio-economic position. It is a call to action, one of the last defensive lines that truly acts with the Afrikaner interests in mind, in order to keep the Afrikaner as a cultural group together and ultimately, alive.

Approaching this cultural Afrikaner history with a communitarian angle tells us about the origin of many of the values ingrained to Orania's existence, how the idea of freedom entered into the hearts and minds of inhabitants and consequently are used today to keep the flame of an independent existence alive. It has given the community a mission, a shared identity that manages to overcome individual differences through a sense of belonging. What the next chapter will show is, however, that there are also limitations to this sense of unity, most evident when it concerns people whose allegiance to the Orania cause can be called into question. It will show that the strong bond that Orania inhabitants have in relation to their community becomes fluid the moment it draws outsiders into the community.

## **Part IV – Communitarianism in crisis**



## Introduction

Thus far the ethnographic description of Orania may have given the impression that this town in the Karoo desert serves as the pinnacle of communitarianism, a Walhalla in which collective values are not just central to the communities' mission, but also freely expressed, as a central, interwoven aspect of the community. Looking at it from a top-down perspective, from the angle by which the community as institution presents itself, one would indeed get such an impression. It tells the story that can be found in the numerous publications on Orania, and the information provided by core members of the community. However the beauty of fieldwork for me has always been to be able to look also from a bottom-to-top perspective, to see how everyday people engage with the conditions of their existence, how they live with them, take advantage of them or even suffer because of them. Following the contemplation of previous studies (Boersema 2013, 15-17) that the Afrikaner is too often approached as a united and homogeneous group, I agree that there is merit to a more diversified perspective, in which the Afrikaner is approached from a range of different views. This other perspective is perhaps even more interesting in a community like Orania, where the collective views are so outspoken and community membership is in many ways dependent on allegiance to them.

In the previous chapters I have tried to provide an expansive and detailed depiction of the way in which a visitor, in moving through town, perhaps staying for a couple of days, would experience Orania. To the extent that this Orania narrative has appeared to be closely aligned with the essence of communitarianism, I would now like to look in another direction, one that questions its limitations. Taking an example to Erving Goffman (1956) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* the following chapter takes a peek "behind the scenes", analysing Orania from two different, more compartmentalized contexts. Comparing daily life to theatrical performances, Goffman saw a performance on stage occurring in which people intend to avoid embarrassment as much as possible, while maintaining an identity that befits the day to day social interactions within a community. Yet just like in theatre actors also move behind the stage, dropping their performance for a period of time while they engage in a more private setting. Furthermore, Goffman noticed that every social setting had to have a 'definition of the situation', which is an agreement about the value system and roles of participants in a particular setting. It seeks agreement among participants with the intent to encourage social cohesion, while a failure to establish such a definition tends to be a source of conflict.

In a sizeable town of approximately a thousand people this will inevitably lead to cracks, sometimes even rifts, where the communitarian ideals are met with the reality of everyday life and the practicality of managing a community. While these are in themselves already interesting, approaching them with a communitarian perspective also shows us the rough edges of this philosophy when applied in the context of a rapidly growing, and increasingly heterogeneous community. In this light our ethnographic understanding of Orania would not be complete without coming to terms with these disparities between the realm of ideals and the reality of everyday life. Then, if we accept that Orania on its institutional level reflects a strong prototypical communitarian town, as previous chapters have tried to illustrate, then their translation to the level of the lived experience of the actual inhabitants is where we find the limitations of the communitarian doctrine. It are real issues that confront the people of Orania in the present, issues that are likely to become more prevalent and demanding towards the future, if, or more likely when, the aspirations of growth become a reality. These issues will have to be translated to a theoretical field if we want to advance the application of the communitarian agenda, or at least our theoretical understanding of how communities operate.

## **A state of conflict**

Like any other community, once a person stays long enough, and looks closely enough, Orania does not appear to be in complete homogeneous unity, but shows clear signs of diffusion. While this is perhaps no different from most modern day cities, in light of the communitarian underpinnings of the community it does offer an explanation for the way in which inhabitants live their lives and express their membership to the community. The previous chapters have summarized several external threats that might endanger the Afrikaner people as a *volk*, such as *regstellende aksies*, emigration or *plaasmoorde*, threats to which Orania attempts to offer an alternative in the shape of an independent community, build on communitarian principles. Yet according to Frans de Klerk (2014, 25) another immediate threat to the community exists, not external, but internal. To oppose this he formulated 10 points in which he summarizes what could be considered the spine of the community: adherence to the Orania model as it was laid out by the founders, its politics of identity and self-reliance, its reliance on

“To establish a community such as Orania, has its own unique challenges – internal as well as external. Internal, because when such a new community is established, social cooperation and unity cannot be accepted readily and a new community can very easily experience large strains due to mutual differences. Externally, because political opponents can see such as a community as a threat, and can attempt to undermine its activities and development.”

*- Frans de Klerk (2014, 25) explaining the challenges of establishing a community*

*selfwerksaamheid* and how it strives to work in harmony with both the ecology, other minority communities and Afrikaners throughout South Africa (Id., 26-37). Likewise Carel Boshoff (2015, 309-310) has also emphasized how the philosophy of his father, C.W.H. Boshoff should be leading in the development towards the future. By adhering to his guidance Orania could prevent a downwards spiral of political dialectics that ultimate would deteriorate in conflict and anger. Notwithstanding these aspirations, like any community Orania has its divisions and differences of opinion, but they seem to be magnified because of the concentration of people who migrated from every corner of South Africa, each bringing their own socio-economic, religious, cultural and political background, and each having their own ideas about what it means to be a Volkstaat, to have a measure of *selfbeskikking* or to live a life in freedom. This explains for example why Orania adheres so much importance to the Orientation classes for new immigrants in the community, as these explain not just practical information but also attempt to generate a degree of unity in which people understand what Orania is about, and what it clearly is not about. Ideally it would like for Orania inhabitants to speak with one mouth with regard to controversial issues, not just to minimize internal conflict but also to avoid misrepresentations towards the media and other visitors.

“Culture is very important for Orania. We must understand how Orania understands and experiences culture, because our leaders in Orania need you to send out the same cultural message, so that we will not talk from two mouths, so we will not contradict each other. That is why the cultural experience of Orania is very important. Orania as a whole is built on culture. We have built this Afrikaner settlement, with everything that comes along with that, but now we need to ask ourselves, what is Afrikaner culture?”

*- François de Vos explaining the importance of uniform understanding of Afrikaner culture.*

In many ways this diffused nature among Afrikaners is as old as the Afrikaner itself, something which stands in stark contrast to the earlier notion of a united *volk* carrying the belief and the burden of a shared legacy. Carel Boshoff regarded it as a process that had started after 1994, and which led up to a definitive breakup around 1999, with the second national elections following the end of apartheid. Here it was definitively shown that the Afrikaner had completely lost its political foundation. In his own words, the Afrikaner had lost every sense of collectivism, and thus was reduced to individuals who were torn apart between the opportunism of the new post-apartheid era, and nostalgia for the apartheid past (Boshoff 2007a, 19). Those who agreed to such a dissolution of the Afrikaner as *volk* did not manage to present an alternative for the new era, while those who might have agreed with such an alternative did not feel sympathy for a total dissolution (Id., 49). It left the Afrikaner in a state of heterogeneity, a reconfiguration of the Afrikaner identity that put neo-liberal economic interests at odds with the ethic unity inherent to the notion of being a *volk* (Davies 2007, 353; Davies 2009, 15-17). Others have argued that this was the culmination of an earlier, rapid economic enrichment that started as early as the 1960s, where increased wealth broke up the nationalist interests (Grundlingh 2008). For Orania this was on the one hand a blessing, since it allowed Orania to be a welcoming alternative more slanted towards this old sense of unity, but on the other hand it also means that the Afrikaners who choose to migrate to Orania come from all sides of the spectrum. Previous studies on Orania have drawn these differences across various lines, between isolationists and those wishing to open up to the outside world (Seldon 2014, 218-220), liberalism and conservatism (Vestergaard 2000, 107-110) and heterodoxy and orthodoxy (Id., 111-115). This raises the question, how can a community with such a strong ideological framework stay true to its core values, when most of its growth comes from the immigration of “outsiders”, people who lived diffused across South Africa? It is a situation that the community finds itself struggling with in recent years, now that the number of immigrants is growing rapidly, many of which, upon arrival have only limited awareness of what the community aspires to achieve. It generates a complex playing field where on the one hand there exists a latent pressure to remodel the original blueprints of the community towards a less inclusive, and more shielded community, while on the other hand it means that some people in the community might feel abandoned, lost in the ideological turmoil that plays out above their heads.

## A swimming pool under siege

### Context

As happens all too often, the events that in retrospect leave the biggest impression appear when you least expect them. In this case it was a short notification, distributed to all households, informing people about a meeting on the topic of the future energy management of Orania. It was held in the relatively small Chris Jooste Auditorium, which led me to believe that the number of people present would be limited, a trend I had noticed with previous community meetings. Although it did not occur to me at the time, the fact that the Auditorium was nonetheless almost full that evening would have been a signal of what was to come. Most noticeable was the first row on the right, which was exclusively occupied by a select group of men from the farms surrounding Orania. With their khaki shorts and shirts they stood out to me as the prototypical Afrikaner Boer, a remarkable, but to me as outsider nonetheless minor detail. Perhaps it was not a minor detail to Frans de Klerk, who as facilitator that evening, did mention, perhaps ironically, how he was pleased by the large turnout of attendants. Although the meeting started as planned, proceeded by religious prayer and a summary of the agenda, it was soon disrupted by one of men on the front row. He called for a motion that would address “things that happen in Orania without our [inhabitants] permission, things that went against the objective of Orania”. It was as vague as it was emotional, and initially left me in the dark about which matter he was referring to. Even more emotional was the response that he received from the other people in the room. For a short moment the Afrikaner world, that I, up until that point had known as a fortress of order, reason and calmness fell apart. People started shouting, a glass fell to the floor, some people were on the verge of getting physical and I noticed Manie Opperman, as the security officer present, tense up in case he had to intervene. But then, as quickly as the disorder had started, it disappeared again, to be replaced by an equally critical, but more coherent speaker from the front row attendants. He explained that they all were building on the same structure, but that the incident that had occurred today went against that common goal. He agreed with the other attendees that this was not the time, nor the place to discuss this, but he insisted that there should be a later opportunity to discuss this matter on a public forum. Another one of them pinned the interruption to a lack of communication, the feeling that they were kept out of the loop of what was going on

in the Orania community. Ultimately Frans de Klerk managed to defuse the situation, reminding everyone that today's meeting was about energy management, that intimidation would not be tolerated and that orderliness would be maintained to let the meeting go on as planned. It calmed the situation, as Frans de Klerk promised to discuss this, still unspecified matter afterwards, which gave the men the assurance by which they walked out.

"The order of this meeting will not be overthrown by a different agenda. We will finish this matter first. If anyone wants to bring anything else up afterwards they are more than welcome. That is the order of an Afrikaner community like Orania."

*- Frans de Klerk trying to calm down the unrest during the energy management*

It was at that meeting later that evening that I only became fully aware of the situation. It concerned an educational tour made by a school from Hopetown, who had visited Orania that day to learn about Afrikaner history. Frans de Klerk explained that it had been a group of 75 students, most of them white, with the exception of 11 children. They had visited the *Monumentkoppie* and the *Kultuurhistoriese Museum*, a visit during which, according to the curator François de Vos, the students had been at their best behaviour and had shown great interest for the items on display. As a reward for their attention these students had spent the afternoon in the Orania *Gemeenskapsswembad*, the beautifully restored Olympic size swimming pool located in the heart of Grootdorp. It is a public swimming pool that at the time of this incident was open to tourists and inhabitants alike. Surrounded by a brick wall, this pool offered a stark contrast to the dry desert landscape of the Karoo, with a well-maintained pool filled with crystal clear water, lush green grass and picnic tables with small roofs providing cover from the burning sun. Ice-cream and drinks were for sale during the hours of operation, while there was also a children's pool and ample room to play frisbee or to braai. This combination makes the pool a favourable place of relaxation in the community, especially during the weekends or community holidays. For many of the people I spoke, it was the crown jewel of the community, a site that made them forget about the many hardships of life in the Karoo, a place where they came together and could have a good time. In mid-December, in the final week of my stay in Orania the swimming pool also became a site of tradition, since the homecoming students would not let me go home unless I participated in a night-time raid

of the closed swimming pool, which involved a treacherous climb across the surrounding brick wall and a dive to the bottom of the deep end in the rather cold pool water. It made me realize that this pool resembles more than just a place of relaxation, but almost serves as a revered site to the community. It was present when the first settlers came to Orania, dating back to the years that Orania was still owned by the Department of Water Affairs, and despite the expense of keeping it clean it is an affordable luxury in the otherwise modest town life. Low entry fees, as well as monthly subscriptions means that anyone, even those with minimal wages can afford entry, making it more akin to the public square of the Grootdorp area.



*The Orania Gemeenskapswembad*

## A warm welcome

With this background in mind it became clear that some, certainly not all, people in Orania had taken grave offence to the notion of outsiders in the swimming pool, while for an even smaller group the concern came from the fact that it had been non-white outsiders. For the proponents, mainly members of the *Dorpsraad* and *Orania Beweging*, the idea behind the visit was simple enough. In the meeting directly following the energy management meeting Frans de Klerk explained that Orania wants to be an independent state, which means it needs to maintain mature relationships with other states, which implies an open stance towards outsiders asking to come visit. He added to this that Orania has known 25 years in which visitors from all over the world and all ethnic groups have received a warm welcome in Orania, with them staying at the Aan-die-Oewer hotel and visiting the stores and museums. To him it was this public nature that made Orania distinguishable from the security complexes with high fences and extreme security measures in the cities. Furthermore, he added that if the pool were to become a private swimming pool for inhabitants only, this would also exclude the farmers living outside of the community as well. He reminded everyone that it would be impossible in today's South Africa to make it a private swimming pool for "white people", so boundaries would have to be drawn in another way. Mayor Chris Jacobs added to this saying that Orania is still, begrudgingly, part of South Africa, and thus has to consider its relationship with neighbouring communities more careful than a fully independent nation could. In this light guests need to be welcomed, regardless if they are tourists, journalists or people using the stores in town. He requested the trust of the people, asking them to rally behind the *Dorpsraad* and *Orania Beweging* in their vision for the future. Wynand Boshoff mentioned at this meeting how people treated this incident as the "thin end of a wedge", as the beginning of a trend to allow outsiders to enter the very core of the community, which was only symbolically represented by the swimming pool. In this light he took the controversial stance to remind everyone that the Afrikaner people did not lose their freedom as a consequence of social integration, but rather due to neglecting their *selfwerksaamheid*. He could not help but notice the irony of the farmers complaining about this relatively minor issue, which they intended to solve with social segregation, while they themselves relied heavily on non-Afrikaner labourers at their farms and thus were sacrificing the cardinal rule of Orania to strive for economic independence.



“We must remember one thing. Orania is not an independent state inside South Africa. We are in South Africa, we are from Africa, and we will be so for a long time to come. I have said tonight, we have our vision, which is the vision that we wish to pursue. We will work towards that. But we ask every man, trust us that what we do not do this for ourselves. ... Every day we have issues that we need to deal with, and I would like to ask the community to give us their support and strength.”

*- Mayor Chris Jacobs explaining the position of the Dorpsraad*

In the end it was a peaceful meeting, whose only real outcome was the promise to arrange for a larger community meeting several days after this incident, where the entire Orania community would have a chance to discuss this issue. Here an extremely insightful debate played out, one that highlights in many ways the different views in Orania with regard to both its role as Afrikaner community, and future as a city. This second meeting was held in the *Gemeenskapssaal* and was remarkably well attended by more than 200 inhabitants of all walks of life, with the general consensus of the attendants being slanted in opposition to the decision to let these students in the swimming pool. Here it became apparent that the issues surrounding the swimming pool were not isolated concerns of some of the more conservative voices in the community, but that it was a controversial issue that had resonated with a large group of inhabitants. It also showed that this swimming pool incident was not the primary concern for a lot of people at this meeting, but simply the spark that ignited lingering tensions with regard to communication, transparency and representation. Lastly it was also a meeting that stood out for its orderliness, which stood in stark contrast to the chaotic tensions of the day of the incident itself. This was noticeable in the prayer upfront, which, through Jacobus chapter 1, verse 19-27 emphasized that people should listen to each other, and find common ground rather than speak negatively about each other. Time was taken to fully explain the situation, from the very moment the first request had arrived from Hopetown, after which the the code of conduct during the meeting was discussed. Frans de Klerk gave his interpretation of how to look at the situation from multiple angles, most of which resonated the arguments proponents had brought forth in the earlier meeting. A small group of other residents also stepped forward to give their support, such as Johann Dannhauser, editor of the local *Ditsem Nuus* newspaper, who emphasizing that Orania as Christian community had to practise good

neighbourliness, especially when people come to learn about the Afrikaner and its history, and when visits are supervised and not providing any disruptions to the community. François de Vos looked back upon the legacy of SABRA and AVSTIG, who emphasized that Orania should never become isolated, but instead should pursue good relationships with neighbouring communities in preparation of a time when the town will achieve *selfbeskikking*. Carel Boshoff added to this that it was an amazing token of recognition, that Hopetown, as oldest city in the immediate vicinity, considered Orania, at the young age of 25 years, a location worthy to learn about South Africa's history. Ludwig Everson, owner of the Aardskip, considered the case simple enough. If Orania wants to be a Volkstaat, this meant it wants to be an independent nation. And in that light there was no country on earth which refused tourists to come visit based on their cultural or ethnical background. Although it was justified to have a tourism policy, this has to be inclusive of all tourists, regardless of ethnicity.

### **Security is paramount**

For the opposing side of the issue, which proved to be the vast majority of the people present at the community meeting, these arguments were far less convincing, which led them to rally against the idea of letting non-whites in the swimming pool. One man described the swimming pool was his place of safety, his *heimat*, his comfort zone. It was once more confirmed that the swimming pool was different from the stores, or from the tourist areas such as museums and monuments. He understood that people had to be welcome in Orania, but felt they should be restricted to the Aan-die-Oewer recreational area. It was a view supported by another attendant of the meeting, who found it counter-intuitive that a community that has the explicit goal to build on its own merits and its own labour would then have to share it with non-whites. Some people would get emotional, explaining how they had experienced first-hand how the rest of South Africa was "taken" from them, how there was not a single swimming pool in South Africa that still "belonged" to them. The implication seemed to be that this event meant that not even the Orania swimming pool was safe from the outside invasion. One man told how he had given up his farm elsewhere in South Africa to escape the very intrusion of South Africa in his life, and he was shocked to realize that now it had caught up with him.

“The Bible also says, ‘you must be righteous as a dove, but as careful as a snake’. And I think as a consequence of this event, we have not been careful at all. ... This decision has been made within an entire Board of Directors, and I doubt this would have been passed off so lightly if they had been sensitive to the community, to this case. ... My main concern is, we are taking some things for granted too easily. We have become too easy. The political field in which you as Board of Directors operate, with frequent requests from groups of outsiders, that is not just now and then anymore. There is an increasing attention from the outside. ... You must understand that we do not consider this seemingly innocent request, innocent in the slightest. ”

*- One of the opponents of the incident speaking his mind during the community meeting.*

Other people would take a Christian or historical perspective, such as a man who referred to 1 Timoteus 5, verse 8, which states that those who do not care for their own people are worse than heathens. In his eyes the *Dorpsraad* had forgotten where their priorities were located, which according to him should be with the inhabitants, rather than guests. Another man would support this by referring to Matheus 10, verse 16, which warns that while one has to be just, and one also has to be cautious. According to him the *Dorpsraad* had been far from cautious by not informing the inhabitants, which he considered a sign of insensitivity. He felt that the people in Orania were steadily adjusting to outsiders, inviting them more often to the community without thinking about the consequences. He deemed it possible that long-term inhabitants might have forgotten about the hardships of life on the outside, which he assured to everyone was getting increasingly worse. In his view the people who opposed the views of the *Dorpsraad* were falsely portrayed as right-wing extremists, akin to the historical *Konserwatiewe Party* (Conservative Party, KP) or *Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging* (Afrikaner Resistance Movement, AWB), whereas he considered himself a conservative who only wished to proceed with caution. Another man agreed, saying he did not understand why Afrikaners continued to be seen as right-wing extremists, whenever they were speaking about their own interests and building their own future. The time had come for the Afrikaner to stop asking for an apology and focus on their own interests. Another attendant to the meeting mentioned the failed negotiations between Voortrekker Piet Retief and chief Dingane, which should have taught the Afrikaner the lesson of betrayal. He explained how he had been robbed at gunpoint not too long ago, an event which had assured him that the rest of South Africa hates the colour

of his skin. Orania was the last place where the Afrikaner still had peace and self-determination, and this incident was an example of how these unique values were being sold out. A woman drew the situation in a more international perspective, to the National Independence Day celebrated in Poland only a few days before the incident, which commemorated the 1830 November Uprising, when the people rose up against their weak-willed governments that allowed Russia to dominate the country for well over a century. She saw clear parallels to Europe today, which too was faced with a “non-white” invasion during the 2015 refugee crisis. Her point was that Orania should take these developments as warning, or as an incentive to be careful about who it invites in the community.

Eventually people shifted the debate away from the actual swimming pool issue, and directed it more towards the communication coming from and going to the *Dorpsraad*. Although people praised the *Dorpsraad* for many of their policies and plans, this was seen as a case where they had failed in their task. Multiple people expressed how this meeting was a symptom of an ancient problem, in which the *Dorpsraad* ignores the wishes of the inhabitants, and does not inform inhabitants about what is going on. People called for a better representation, and rallied against aspects inherent to the shareholder system of Orania, such as proxy voting. This refers to the practise in which people will pledge their individual shareholder votes to the support of prominent community figures, assuring that they will have a much stronger vote when it comes to community decisions and the formation of the Board of Directors. Some people felt the proxy system was abused, allowing newcomers to become a Director while barring other, more settled inhabitants. One of the opponents in the debate expressed for example how there had to be more transparency, how new Directors had to be

“I think we need more access management in our town. We do not live in an impregnable Orania. We still live in South Africa. We see in the newspapers and on the internet what people want to do to us. We cannot afford that they come to hurt the old people in the town. The only thing we can do to be watchful is to take access management serious now. Not games like, you guard for two hours and then you guard for two hours. Let’s institute, and I think every inhabitant will give money for this, fences that we can close, so that people must enter Orania with a license or a partner.”

**- One of the opponents of the incident suggesting extreme security measures**

introduced to the people, and people had to be informed about the percentage of proxy votes, the majority share of OBD and influence of *uitwoners*, people who owned shares but currently did not reside in Orania. Other people would come up with solutions, such as one man who went as far as to suggest a complete overhaul of the way Orania manages its access roads, with security checkpoints and mandatory identification cards. He referred to a personal experience in which non-white people would visit the town almost daily in order to acquire alcohol, something Orania could do nothing against. Ultimately he considered the presence of other non-white groups insulting to tourists who came to visit the community for its right-wing nature and Afrikaner identity. Another man deemed checkpoints too impractical, but opted for privatization of the swimming pool, although he was aware that this could never be done formally without creating a huge backlash from the South African media. He suggested instead that it should be done informally, which he compared to making the swimming pool a “holy cow” in the community. For another man the danger was not so much in the security system of Orania, but the failing awareness of its inhabitants. People simply accept the presence of strangers in their community, even though protocol says they should report them.

Ultimately it seemed like the opponents had the stronger voice at the meeting, and consequently steps were taken to address the issue. A few days after this meeting a notification was posted for each house in the community, explaining how there would be a formal procedure in which people would have several weeks to provide written suggestions or commentary about a workable solution for the access to community services by non-inhabitants of Orania. From this new guidelines would be established, which would be further discussed in the months to come. Until a special shareholder meeting could be arranged all further requests from groups to visit the swimming pool would be denied.

## **A critical reflection**

In the days leading up to and following the meeting I discussed the situation with many people in Orania, wondering if they considered incidents such as this a threat to their existence in Orania, and how they felt about the views of the other side of the debate. This gave people the ability to distance themselves from the internal politics and reflect on their own views, as well as those of others. Many described the events surrounding the swimming pool as a non-

“That issue with the Hopetown school children is something that annoys me, but it is not something that I feel concerned about. We must maintain good relationships with our neighbours, we are not here for apartheid or racism. I will not attend the meeting tonight, I do not want to see how people fight over something this stupid. We want to lose the image of racism, the image of apartheid. It are innocent children, they did not come to Orania to invade us. It is sad that village inhabitants act so negatively, you want these people to understand you? Can a person be so small-minded? We lost nothing.”

*- A women expressing her disgust about the swimming pool incident*

issue to them. They considered it good that people’s discontent had come to the surface, so it could be discussed, but simultaneously they were saddened that it was an incident involving children, especially children who had come with the best of intentions. The proponents of an open Orania would take a more reflective perspective, such as Carel Boshoff, who was shocked how the opponents were apparently longing for apartheid in its smallest, most oppressing form, with separated services for different racial groups. Simultaneously he felt that the two hundred or so people present were a very skewed representation of the community as a whole, as they resembled a critical minority that had rallied its ranks to come protest that evening. The fact that this was a narrative mainly pushed by conservative people, especially by farmers living around Orania, confirmed to him that they, due to the extreme isolation of their remote existence, were still able to hold the belief that apartheid could still be possible in 2015. Many of them do not live in the community itself, and as a consequence are not exposed to the vision Orania holds for a future in which there is zero tolerance for a continuation of apartheid. This group of people also does not have to attend the Orientation Course and thus essentially never gains the awareness that Orania is in fact striving to be something different than an Afrikaner gated community. In his observation much of the disagreement came also from new migrants, people who had only entered the community in recent years. The only explanation he could give for it was the intense feeling of engulfment that many of these recently migrated Afrikaners have experienced outside of Orania, the shocking realization that they were vastly outnumbered by other ethnicities. This made the swimming pool important to them, more so than the museums or shopping areas, as all other swimming pools were “lost” to the multicultural reality of the Rainbow Nation. This would also

explain why some of these inhabitants at the meetings had publicly accused the older inhabitants on the Orania *Dorpsraad* of losing sight of how bad things had gotten elsewhere in South Africa.

Carel Boshoff was of the opinion that this incident serves as a challenge to the Orania leadership, which now on the one hand has to live up to the vision of an accessible Orania that is willing to welcome visitors, but on the other hand also had to stay representative of what the community as a whole wants. For this there needs to be a constant majority who understands why Orania does what it does, and is willing to defend this view during the difficult decisions. The alternative, a one-sided, de facto autocratic, governance in which the people would have no representation was no option to him. It means the future will bring new challenges, both in terms of city planning and political structure. Even the immediate result of the incident, the appointment of an extra employee whose job was to improve communication between the leadership and the inhabitants was already a sizeable financial commitment that could otherwise have been spent elsewhere. It could set the stage for less political unity in a future stage, now that survival is no longer an immediate objective and different political ideas about for example safety or the benefits of outsider relationships could divide people's opinions. Christo Meyer, the member of the Board of Directors representing people without a share in the VAB, also explained to me that while people were free to have an opinion about this issue, both proponents and opponents should understand that the access to the swimming pool can only be enforced if the rules for it are written down in the statutes of the VAB. This would require the vote of the entire community and up until that decision is made Orania is part of South Africa, and the swimming pool should be treated

"Our view is that you use these events, use these contact moments, to reinforce your identity, firstly. Secondly, that you use them to reinforce friendly relationships, rather than hostile relationships, because you need that for good neighbourliness. It is already in service of reinforcing *die eie* (ourselves), rather than weakening *die eie* in a kind of surrender. But the people in revolt do not accept this. They only see it as they saw it twenty or thirty years ago, as attempts to weaken the connection to ourselves. So that is a problem, our people do not have a balance between the preservation of *die eie* and affirmation of the other. "

- Carel Boshoff explaining the thought behind Orania's positive relationships with outsiders

as a public area that essentially is open to everyone. For this reason there was never any ground to refuse the Hopetown school access to the swimming pool, and likewise there could be no rash decision-making based on the emotional arguments of a minority of people. The only thing that could be done about it is better communication, to explain the situation to everyone in order to avoid misunderstandings.

For the people on the opposing side of the spectrum it was more of an emotional ordeal. One very outspoken man would emphasize how the Afrikaner had lost everything in South Africa since the end of apartheid, especially well-maintained public services such as swimming pools and public parks. In his eyes these services have fallen in quality and in many ways felt inaccessible to him. While he can still go there, it is not a friendly environment, but rather an environment of mutual, passive hostility between the Afrikaner and the non-Afrikaners. The music non-Afrikaners play is different, the people do not clean up after themselves, and you just “cannot do your thing”. He felt letting these people enter the community was a very slippery slope where you can surrender your space bit by bit, without knowing where it would end. More importantly, once they control something they fail to maintain it properly, so with time the swimming pool would get filthy and lose its appeal. This latter was also the observation of another man that I spoke to, who saw it as an act of jealousy from Hopetown, which was jealous of Orania because it was the only successful community in the region. Compared to the countless potholes and dirty streets in Hopetown Orania was a paradise, and although he had nothing personal, racist hate against the children, it would still be better if they stayed over there, and we stayed over here. The people in Orania are the ones paying for the swimming pool, and they should also be the caretakers of it. He felt it was the best

“We moved to Orania, we paid a price, and they told us, we can make demands. The white people in Hopetown, in surrounding villages, they do not like us, because Orania is the only successful community. I mean, drive to Hopetown, there are potholes, the Hotnots [derogative name for coloured people] lay in the streets, they produce filth in the streets and leave their trash behind. Look how clean and beautiful it is over here. They are jealous of us, because why do they want to use our swimming pool? That is my argument. I am not a racist, but I believe, I stay here, you stay there, done. But where do you draw that line?”

*- One of the inhabitants opposing the school visit explaining her opinion on the matter*



response because the people of Hopetown were also very discriminatory to the people of Orania. Another man did not have a personal issue with the children visiting the swimming pool, but he could not understand how the *Dorpsraad* had let come it get this far, since they should know why many of the inhabitants had moved to Orania in the first place, this being safety and isolation. To him it was a problem of misplaced loyalties, of the *Dorpsraad* giving of the wrong signal to the people living in Orania by siding with the interests of outsiders. Instead the *Dorpsraad* should have chosen the side of their own people, even if this meant refusing the children to come to Orania.

### **A multi-layered incident**

For such a seemingly innocent incident it is surprising how many angles there are that make it noteworthy. To an outsider the ideas shared by the proponents of this issue might appear like common sense, as a strong argument that positions the ideology of Orania above the petty divide between white and non-white seen during the apartheid years. It serves as a testament to Orania's value as a *kultuurgemeenskap*, and a sign of good faith that they are willing to include non-whites in their conception of a future Volkstaat, as long as it occurs in a respectful manner. The opponents look at it from a different angle however, in which they see Orania as the last fortress in a world that they begrudgingly surrendered to non-white influences. They are unwilling to risk losing the last swimming pool in South Africa that they can truly call theirs, out of fear that it might act as a slippery slope that destroys the ideals of Orania and will convert it to a multicultural community where the Afrikaner is yet again a minority subjugated to the will of others. For others it was a simple matter of good governance, communication and safety, making this incident only a symptom of greater concerns about day-to-day policy making in Orania. Remarkably these are also the areas where inhabitants showed the least trust in during the latest community census (Orania Dorpsraad 2014, 50-52). Lisa Hagen (2013, 74-79), in her own study of the Orania community described this tension in terms of a bounded collective identity, which qualifies a certain group as insiders or outsiders, although more often it is a position somewhere in between. She too described *omwoners*, the people living around the community as a separate group from the *inwoners*, the inhabitants actually living in the community, as the former tends to distance themselves from some of Orania's

core principles, such as *selfwerksaamheid*. Furthermore, her thesis qualifies visitors and tourists to a large degree as outsiders, who are welcomed in the community but nonetheless strongly associated with the “outside world”.

On the community meeting Frans de Klerk took the time to explain his analysis of the issue. He deemed it unrealistic and unnecessary to publicly announce every single visitor who comes into the community, but he did realize that there was an inherent sensitivity to this particular situation. He could also understand why a person would come to Orania after they had grown tired with the constant insecurity and tensions elsewhere in South Africa, but people should realize that these threats are realities in South Africa, and not something that he personally, nor the *Dorpsraad* can take away. What the *Dorpsraad* could do, was to work towards a safe space for the Afrikaner, but this would require responsible actions and a pro-active relations with the outside, with regional governments and other communities that are striving for self-determination. In his opinion the objective of Orania was to send out the message that Orania is not a threat to South Africa. He recalled for example a similar debate that had taken place around the national elections of 2009, when Julius Malema, then leader of the ANC Youth League, had visited Orania. Back then opinions had also been divided on whether or not Orania should welcome Malema, whose controversial anti-Afrikaner statements made it seem as if he was hoping for a rejection to further his political campaign. Instead, Orania gave him a warm welcome and a full tour of the community, with the result that Malema’s attempt to misrepresent Orania fell completely flat. Frans de Klerk considered this just one example of how an open and welcoming attitude was often the most effective and at the same time the most secure way to approach outsiders in the community.

In summary this incident reflects a struggle in which Orania as a community displays uncertainty about how to approach outsiders who enter the community. On the one hand they are essential, either as paying tourists, frequent shoppers or potential immigrants. On the other hand they remind people about the outside world, about South Africa, and all the turmoil that they retreated from. To some the emphasis should be placed on an open attitude, on seeking friends and alliances both in South Africa and abroad. To others it should be on isolation, in order to protect the unique homogeneity of Orania and assure that what is theirs will stay theirs. It are two sides that both lay claim to the interests of Orania’s future, yet that look at it from extremely different angles. It mirrors an opposition similar to what Hagen

“There will always be a group of people that arrive extremely ideological, and those you can split up between racists and Volkstaters. That’s how I see it. And then there are many people who come for safety, elder people in particular, or for work. It is often said, some people move to Orania, some people wash ashore here. For those people living has just become too much and then they end up being stuck here.”

- Wynand Boshoff explaining the various motivations of immigrants in Orania

(2013, 190-191) identified as the mutual identification between *brekers* and *bouwers* (demolishers and builders), a constant interplay between the creation, transformation and preservation of values inherent to life in Orania which puts different people at odds with each other. In conversation with Wynand Boshoff he explained that the distinction varied from person to person. Some people come for ideological reasons, either with a racist or Volkstaat undertone, some people come for safety. If people wished to put their racist ideas in practise they could buy their own land and start their own community, but Orania, being built on the idea of freedom for both the Afrikaner and non-Afrikaners was not the place for it. As Orania constructs itself as a place open to outsiders and banishes the social segregation of apartheid this results in a pushback that would rather preserve the values of independence and isolation at the cost of beneficial relationships and outside acceptance. In turn the latter group desires to transform Orania in something else, either through a formal neighbourhood policy, privatized swimming pool or more extreme measures such as entry checkpoints.

Approaching the swimming pool event in etic terms qualifies it in my opinion as a classic social drama, as it has been discussed extensively by Victor Turner (1957, 1968, 1975). He described this as a four-stage process, in which certain rifts within a community are made apparent, grow in size and consequently need to be addressed in order to restore the unity again, as otherwise a permanent schism might appear in the community. They tend to involve groups who on the one hand share similar values, interests and often a common history (Turner 1980, 149). The first stage involves a breach, possibly created on purpose, to challenge the dominant authority in a community. In case of the swimming pool incident this was seen during the meeting about energy management. This was not the time nor the place to discuss the topic, but people consciously chose it regardless, precisely because it positioned the existing leadership of Orania in a vulnerable position where they were not prepared to

respond. The second stage of Turner's model then involved a widening of the breach, culminating in what truly can be called a crisis, that being a situation that cannot be left unattended. In the next few days, and especially during the community meeting that followed the true extent of the conflict, and entrenchments of both opposing sides became apparent. It had given the inhabitants time to choose their factions, to side with either the idea of a public or a private swimming pool, and by extension, an open or an isolated Orania. In a third phase the crisis needs to be contained, and to an extent also redressed. This was exactly what happened half-way during the community meeting. Whereas people previously had been emphasizing their differences, their completely opposing views with regards to the relation Orania should maintain with those living outside of their community, at a certain point both the tone and content of the discussion shifted away from conflict, and more towards restoring unity. People reminded each other to the common goal for which everyone was present in Orania, and took time to praise the *Dorpsraad* for the many things they did do right. Ultimately the fourth and final phase then saw the restoration of unity, a solution that both sides could claim as a victory, with Orania as community staying a publicly accessible community for the time being, yet the swimming pool remaining closed for outsiders until a community vote could be held. Rather than the breach becoming an irreparable rupture the situation was kept under control and set the stage for a resolution that fitted within the existing framework of the community, with final decisions only being made after a time of deliberation.

## **The cracks of communitarianism**

The swimming pool incident serves as an interesting event for a multitude of reasons. On the most basic level it shows how even a community as small and seemingly homogenous as Orania can still be broken up in factions, in varying allegiances that have vastly different ideas about what Orania should be today or should become in the future. Some people wish to see it as a well-developed city, a hub for the Northern Cape region, and a model for other communities. Other people are willing to accept it as the desert enclave it used to be in the early years, isolated but totally independent. At a more elevated level the incident shows a constant struggle between an institution that strives to look towards the future and a divided community that continues to be haunted by a difficult apartheid past, as well as a post-

apartheid identity crisis. Seen from the theoretical perspective of this thesis, which approaches Orania as a communitarian community, it seems that the swimming pool incident also serves as an example by which we can take a more critical look at the inner workings, and possible shortcomings of communitarianism. The swimming pool incident, being a conflict within the community, or perhaps even between the community and the individual makes it essentially a deficit of the shared norms and values (Yar 2003, 112). With this communitarian point of view in mind it appears on the one hand as if the generally accepted ideas of the *Dorpsraad* do not find fertile soil among all members of the Orania community, while on the other hand both sides of the argument also use these generalized concepts to express their interpretations of what it means to be a safe and independent community. Both groups aspire the same common moral framework, but each side seeks to extend and consolidate this in a different direction.

Also remarkable is the tool employed to defuse the initial social drama, this being a community meeting in which all members of the community had a chance to speak their minds with regard to this issue. At first sight it approximates what John Rawls (1997, 93-94) labelled as 'public reason', "the reason of equal citizens who, as a collective body, exercise final political and coercive power over one another in enacting laws and in amending their constitution". It asks of people to justify the motivation for their actions in terms that, ideally, a reasonable person could not object to, on the condition that others are expected to show acceptance to listen and to alter their views as necessary (Waghid 2003, 129). Rawls (1997, 114) himself noted however the inherent weakness of this principle in situations where there are various reasonable answers to the same questions, like was the case in the situation surrounding the swimming pool. This made public reason only truly applicable to constitutional matters, where there exist limits to what participants regard as justice for the common interests of all. One of the reasons why the communitarian ideals of Orania clashed in this situation was because these limitations were lacking, with no clear consensus on the degree to which Orania should, or perhaps could ban non-inhabitants from its public space. While the consensus seemed to favour an open approach, legitimized by the South African constitution, for others the framework of a private community meant that Orania could de facto become a gated community with a far more careful embrace of the outside world.

Perhaps the reason why the otherwise so homogenous community broke apart in this particular situation was related to the fact that people have different expectations about who belongs to the Afrikaner community. To the proponents the Orania community did obviously include its inhabitants, but around that they saw a secondary layer of non-Afrikaners who are just as valuable when they are supportive of Orania's purpose as a *kultuurgemeenskap* or its goal to acquire *selfbeskikking*. As we have seen previously, these supporters, whether they are other South African communities in favour of local development and federalist politics, or European organisations that value the preservation of Afrikaner culture, are in this light just as important as the inhabitants themselves. Likewise these Hopetown high school students, who came with the intention to learn about Orania and Afrikaner heritage, were effectively no longer outsiders, but as far as the Orania leadership was concerned they were now partial insiders, who in their own way granted legitimacy to the very things that Orania intends to achieve. The fact that they came from the outside made them all the more valuable in order to bridge the ideological gap between Hopetown and Orania. For the opponents of the incident on the other hand, the community had a more contained size, limited to those who live within the immediate surroundings of the town. To them Orania stands on its own, and everybody else are effectively outsiders whose allegiance is to be scrutinized at all times. To return to the theoretical level of Etzioni (1996, 120), we see here a divergence between the external moral voice of the community, which generally ascribes to the view that non-inhabitants should be welcomed in the community, and the internal moral voice of the opponents. For the opponents, even though their internal moral voice fully subscribed to the values of a safe and independent Orania, it was nonetheless impossible to match this idea with a welcoming attitude towards outsiders, especially outsiders with a different skin colour. To them the idea of losing their exclusivity over the swimming pool served as a warning for a much bigger threat, one that had already taken over the rest of South Africa, and was now knocking on the doors of Orania. All in all this incident provides numerous angles to the communitarian nature of Orania that are worth exploring in greater detail.

### **Unavoidable divergences**

As we have previously established, one of the important factors influencing the swimming pool incident seems to be the diversity of people living in Orania. There are long-term inhabitants who find themselves in position of power, but simultaneously there is a constant

influx of Afrikaners who migrated from elsewhere in South Africa. Both these groups are widely distributed across scales of age, socio-economic background and religious background (Orania Dorpsraad 2014). Meanwhile Orania as a community has slowly, but steadily outgrown its earliest years as a commune and become a community well on its way to become a large town or even a small city. The community is growing, raising a new generation of inhabitants, both in the form of children and immigrants coming from elsewhere. Increasingly the traditional loyalties and solidarity are replaced by institutional solutions to problems. Some communitarian thinkers have linked these developments, inherent to a multi-generational and growing community with increasing tensions and strife (Bennett 1975, 81). These tensions are caused by the realization that the individualized and institutionalized world of the outside is now for the first time brought inside a community. Simultaneously the desire for a close-knit communitarian life, in which the group values are recognized throughout society meets an opposing pressure in which individuals would like to see their individuality represented, especially when it concerns important issues such as one's personal beliefs or identity (Id., 82). This was precisely the core of the argument many of the opponents of the incident presented on the communal meeting, they felt that their plight to keep Orania exclusively for its inhabitants was not heard by, nor represented in the *Dorpsraad*. Even though they shared the belief that Orania should strive for *selfbeskikking*, for them this meant something else than for the proponents of an open and accessible community. In essence the swimming pool incident mirrors a conflict that communitarian authors have described as the clash between 'the activist', who tries to achieve something on the platform provided by the community, and 'the privatist', who seeks his own satisfaction in the larger comfort of the group (Id., 84). Whereas the activist is easily criticized for betraying its own community, the privatist might seem to abandon the fight for the ideals prematurely. Ultimately neither have it right, as neither emphasize the importance of sharing. If either side wishes to advance the communitarian agenda in a meaningful way it involves working together with people holding a different perspective, by creating an environment in which both can foster. Another author, Henry Tam (1998, 15-16) has also warned for the danger of individuals or groups that consider their individual values more important than the common values, as this cuts members in the community off behind a 'wall of exclusion'. At that point the internal values, similar to Etzioni's internal moral voice, no longer aligns with the external values, or external moral voice, of the

community. This will then either completely isolate them, or might even be destructive to the community as a whole.

Taylor (1998, 49-50) called this process of communal strife 'political fragmentation', in which people respond to a feeling of exclusion with politics of mutual disinterest. Taylor warned that if such a conflict has an impact on the actual political process, like for example the decision to temporarily close the swimming pool for groups coming from outside Orania, then this might set a development into motion that undermines the formation of broad coalitions who despite their differences at least agree on the common good in a community. In these situations it entrenches groups behind a narrow set of arguments and prevents the community as a whole from engaging with the major issues in a community. In extreme cases it could even develop in what Taylor called 'soft despotism', which describes the fragmentation that occurs when community sympathy weakens (Id., 50). Critics of communitarianism have explained this tension by addressing how people are never part of a single community, but are partially invested in various communities at the same time (Kukathas 1996, 91). The lives of people are not just shaped by the communitarian philosophy of Orania as community, but also by various groups who might see things differently, such as in this case a tight-knit farming community in search of isolation and safety, or a diffused community of immigrants who are mentally still part of an outside world that they tried to escape. Essentially these groups are Turner's 'star groups', the formal or informal group to which an individual has the greatest loyalty (Turner 1980, 149). Since there exists no objective ranking between groups the subjective differences between them can become a prevalent source of social drama, in which people identify with different needs or have varied personal concerns. Etzioni (1996, 128) rebuttals that this group partiality can also be a source of strength, since too much moral pressure from one community attachment can be offset by shifting time and effort towards other groups, such as volunteer work, friends or family. In Orania inhabitants are both part of the town as a community, but also of neighbourhood groups, church communities, the country of South Africa and networks of family and friends living in South Africa and as well as abroad. Furthermore Etzioni (Id., 205-206) considers this partial membership a strong weapon against singular identity politics, which frame a person in boxed categories of for example ethnicity, class or gender and consider everyone who does not fit this model an enemy. Differences between groups are then regarded as absolute



instead of mere differences within the same community. Etzioni opposes such identity politics, considering such self-definitions dangerous to the community. While a community thrives on the loyalty of its members, this should not be based on exclusion of other groups. This makes for a fine line between both sides of the swimming pool incident, where the proponents considered these students part of a wider community than just Orania inhabitants, whereas the opponents regarded them as an outside threat, which did not fit their narrative of what Orania should be. While the proponents regarded these visitors as genuinely interested people who were willing to engage with Orania on a diplomatic level, the opponents saw a group completely disconnected from the community that had no business in the swimming pool. To illustrate this I would like to address three potential breaking points of the communitarian community, while explaining how the roots for these tensions can be seen in the swimming pool incident in Orania. These are the threat of majoritarianism and authoritarianism, and the danger of failing to evolve with time.

### **The majoritarianism balancing act**

The swimming pool incident highlights an attempt of Orania to bolster its official creed by emphasizing one official communal (or quasi-national) identity that is supported by one unified political community. The opponents of the incident attempt to rebuttal this, effectively stating that Orania is advocating too much homogeneity on an issue that is important to their individual identification with the community. While Orania might desire a high degree of homogeneity, it consequently also has to suppress diversity (Kukathas 1996, 92). Etzioni (1993, 49), alongside other authors (Ellis 1991, 58) in responding to what he called “radical liberalism” called this a fear for ‘majoritarianism’, to distinguish it from the fear for authoritarianism. While the latter involves a small minority subjugating the entire community to their will, the former would be a communitarian society in which the majority consensus imposes its will on a dissenting minority or individual. In extreme cases such societies would jeopardize constitutional rights in an attempt to resolve social issues (Etzioni 1998, xiv). Etzioni’s measure for this precarious balance was the need for ‘differentiation’, by constitutionally defining which aspects of a community can be ruled by a majority, and which are left individual choice (Id., 50). The most prominent example of this is a national constitution, whose values are held in such high regard that they are declared untouchable, even if a majority wishes to invoke a change (Etzioni 1998, xv). This can also be seen in Orania,

where the *Dorpsraad* wishes to exercise its authority on matters of key values such as *eie land*, *eie instellings* and *eie arbeid*, but also for example on the matter of good relations with non-inhabitants, even if a large group of people might wish to move in a different direction. In the same vein Orania is also bound by the higher power of the South African constitution, meaning that it exists in a position where it has only limited control over what rules it legally can enforce. Other authors such as Henry Tam (1998, 223-224) have also touched upon this tension between social cohesion and cultural pluralism, arguing against comparisons that have been made with South Africa's apartheid era, in which membership of institutions such as the NP or AB bestowed people with crippling obligations that would override their individual autonomy. For this he distinguishes Durkheim's mechanical solidarity (1893) as the force that keeps a community like Orania together on a homogeneous level, but also contemplates that organic solidarity allows individuals to develop themselves in the direction of what Durkheim called moral individualism. In this line of thought communitarianism should strive to empower both of these forms of solidarity, a distinction critics tend to dismiss. In many ways this is precisely what could be seen at the communal meeting, where both sides of the conflict were in agreement about the mechanical solidarity on which Orania is built, on the objective of the community, the longing for freedom which can only be satisfied through acquiring *selfbeskikking*. These were considered to be beyond discussion and instrumental to what brought the community together. What was being negotiated in response to this incident however was the organic solidarity between people, discussing the soft, non-tangible values of Orania: to what extent should the community sacrifice short-term self-interest for an open borders approach, which might yield better alliances towards the future?

### **The threat of authority**

One other factor to consider in relation to the swimming pool issue is the extent to which Orania is willing to change its very core to accommodate the changing attitudes of the community. Etzioni (1993, 40-43) recalled how communitarians were often jokingly compared to neo-puritans, imposing their standards of living and behaviour on others. Such a society would resist any change, and maintain zero tolerance for dissent. This is perhaps less true for Orania, where, even though there exists an ideal of a prototypical Afrikaner to live up to, who is religious, a strong contributor to the community, well-versed in Afrikaans, Afrikaner culture and history, there nonetheless also exists the individual freedom to engage with this

prototype on a level of one's personal choice. Going to church, participating in cultural events and volunteering for Orania organisations is strongly encouraged, but nonetheless not mandatory or at risk of punishment. While people might disagree with the life choices of others, they do so only in private and do not attempt to force their views upon other members of the community. Etzioni (1993, 47-49; 1996, 127-130) sees how radical individualists can consider the threat of authoritarianism as an inherent risk of communitarianism, even though personally he considers this argument void. He states that a communitarian community is no less dependent on the structure of order derived laws, along with a necessity for punishment for people who break them, but as long as these laws are derived from a democratic process and reflect the moral values of the community they can never be considered authoritarian. That being said, Etzioni (1996, 138-141) encourages communities to rely less on formalized law, and instead to look towards the moral voice of the community for regulation. The law should then only apply as far as the reach of the moral voice in the community, and more importantly, should adapt to changing value systems within a community. His reasoning for this is that when there is a substantial match between personal convictions and the communal value system people are more likely to behave themselves in line with regulations.

Religious authority might be another source for unbridled puritanism, often relying less on faith and more on laws to enforce a value system (Id., 144-145). He regards the actual threat of this development limited however, contemplating that these value judgements tend to live only as long as the community shares them as internalized values, and with a trend towards decreasing religiosity in politics these regulations will often soften over time (Etzioni 1998, 41). Ultimately this was precisely one of the issues put to the test as a result of the swimming pool incident. It would have been possible for the *Dorpsraad* to ignore the public opinion on this matter by voicing their own point of view, but instead a public and transparent meeting was called that allowed the community as a whole to discuss this issue on neutral grounds. Simultaneously the *Dorpsraad* did however stand their ground in that they did not let the initial energy meeting derail into an unruly breach of the conventions, showing that they were also intending to maintain control over the situation. It is a balancing act that mirrors Etzioni's distinction between authoritarian and responsive communitarianism (2011, 17). Whereas the former tends to be dismissive of autonomy, the latter is seeking a balance between the common good and individual initiative by relying on societal controls rather than the state

such as education and informal societal controls. The swimming pool incident allowed the *Dorpsraad* to reaffirm itself without confronting or overruling the opponents of the issue. By explaining their side of the ordeal and giving the community a chance to speak they found a solution that if not completely satisfactory to the opponents, at least gave them an incentive to participate in the process towards a functional outcome. Likewise communitarianism can only flourish on the basis of a community that has an inherent and truthful commitment to their core values. They need to accommodate the agenda of individuals, while they also need to be accepted by all the members. If they fail to do so and exclude certain members from the moral dialogue this will result in an anti-social response as moral order is reduced (Etzioni 1996, 129-130). This was also the case with the swimming pool incident, where the opponents of the issue felt excluded and rejected in their views, and rather than waiting for an appropriate forum decided to hijack the situation unexpectedly on the very same day that it occurred. This incident then became a platform on which a wide range of critique was mounted, serving as the straw that broke the camel's back. Etzioni concludes however that under these circumstances authoritarianism is further dampened by the relative mobility within a communitarian environment like Orania, which allows people to move out of the community with relative ease if they find themselves confronted with an unliveable moral order.

### **A failure to evolve**

What both the responses of majoritarianism and authoritarianism tend to obfuscate is the risk that a community founded on certain collective principles fails to evolve itself, refusing to recognize itself as something fluid and prone to change. A community rarely finds itself at a stable point in time, and often finds itself constantly negotiating its boundaries as it is recreating itself (Kukuthas 1996, 92). To a certain extent this can also be seen in the Orania case, where large-scale plans for a *Volkstaat* have with time turned into a more realistic *Volkstad* idea, and hopes for a relatively swift constitutional resolution with the blessing of the national government have with time receded to a more manageable local resolution as a de facto autonomous municipality. But with change there comes resistance, and resistance shows how the fluidity of the community can stand at odds with the desire for institutions to

commit itself to certain values, policies and objectives, in turn giving members a sense of alienation. In this context there exists a real risk that intolerance or oppression, whether it is by a minority over a majority or vice versa, is condoned in service of a higher purpose (Tam 1998, 223). This becomes especially precarious if a communitarian community does not recognize itself as communitarian, and instead holds on to traditional political mechanism and social arrangements. To some extent this could be seen in Orania, where participants on the communal meeting for the swimming pool asserted that the traditional shareholder model of Orania was failing to represent their voice in the management of the community. This model, while offering great protection to Orania as autonomous municipality does also have its weaknesses in that it fails to provide a democratic, one man, one vote representation for the entire community. In response to this Carel Boshoff mentioned that ultimately Orania might abandon the shareholder model as its source for political deliberation, and could in the future instead focus on the currently neglected role of the *Orania Verteenwoordigende Raad* (Orania Representative Council, OVR). This elected municipality would be better at representing different points of views through the democratic process and allow various groups to state their case as political parties, rather than as supporters who get to rally behind a proxy vote for a select group of shareholder board members.

In a similar vein, Henry Tam (1998, 227) called for the necessity of a *principle of co-operative enquiry*, in which political decisions are not made based on the claims of authorities, but on knowledge external to a particular claimant or all claimants. This would make all participants involved in the decision-making process, both by making suggestions, doing the research and drawing conclusions; a process Tam called the *principle of mutual understanding*. By pursuing core human values, such as love, wisdom and justice opportunities could be maximized, while barriers would be minimized. With time this would allow people to deviate from the enshrined values of past generations, adapting these – if necessary – to changing circumstances (Id., 234). Ultimately nobody would be able to deny their responsibility to the outcome. It is questionable if such principles would have made a difference in case of the swimming pool incident, but it does mirror the solutions suggested by Carel Boshoff, in which he encouraged the representatives of the opponents to become politically active. He felt assured that once these critical voices would be faced with the actual task of governing, with choices that involved a careful weighing of the different factors and interests, they would readily become

aware that their views might simply not be attainable in real practise. Other communitarians, such as Etzioni, have also been praiseworthy of what he labelled 'deliberations', in which a community may "establish its normative guidance of conduct and its policies by assembling an aggregate of individuals to discuss dispassionately the facts of the situation, their logical implication, and the available policy alternatives, and then to choose the most empirically valid and logical course" (Etzioni 1996, 97). He is however also wary of the process, stating that it is bound by three defined limitations. Firstly there is the practical limitation, in which community members are bound by the spare time available to them besides working jobs, raising children and thus often are limited in the information that they can absorb. Secondly individuals tend to form subgroups, representatives of their point of view who show the most significant overlap, but whose internal processes can also alter the message slightly. Thirdly these processes are rarely purely fact-based, but more often than not have a normative rather than empirical aspect to them. While this normative aspect certainly does not purely have to be self-interest, it does weaken the value of deliberations with regard to issues that touch upon the core values of a community (Id., 97-101). To a large extent these three factors were also visible in case of the swimming pool issue, with many of the inhabitants expressing disregard for the issue, which they considered a waste of their time, while for example the opponents defended their argument with emotional, historical or religious motivations rather than the more procedural and diplomatic approach chosen by the proponents.

## Conclusion

This incident surrounding the Orania swimming pool highlights how a carefully sculpted image of Orania, and the very considerate relationship it intends to maintain with the outside world was be upset in the course of a single day. On the surface this incident was targeted against the very idea that Orania should open up to outsiders, especially in places which hold a personal, or emotional value to the people living in the community. Hidden behind this front was the explanation of the extreme response, which showed a minority with the desire to express their discontent, to voice its concerns and to seek representation in the political leadership of the community. It shows how the considerations of the *Dorpsraad* do not suit the worldview of everyone in Orania, especially the people who prefer a more isolated community that closes its ranks to protect what is theirs. For some it is as simple as preventing the outside from "taking over" the swimming pool, like they have experienced throughout

South Africa in the past. Others simply consider it a good security measure to make sure Orania controls who enters and leaves the town. Others are less clear about their intentions, but their response suggests that they would rather return to the days from before 1994, when a swimming pool for white people was still a common occurrence. On an even higher plain, on the theoretical level this issue shows not just the cracks of Orania, but also the inherent cracks that threaten communitarianism itself. It shows that a growing community, and new generation of migrants might not share the unity and homogeneity that the early settlers in Orania once had. It means the Dorpsraad will have to hold on to their foundational principles, yet also will need to be sensitive to the interests of minorities who might disagree. Ultimately we have seen how the swimming pool incident walked a tightrope between on the one hand authoritarianism, in which a majority would subjugate the minority, and majoritarianism, in which the majority overrules the voices of a minority. Due to an immediate response Orania managed to handle the situation and relief the build-up stresses following the incident, restoring unity and preventing further breach forming in a process that in many ways resembled the social drama of Victor Turner. Looking towards the future, in which Orania aspires to become a bustling city, there exists the challenge to what extent Orania should evolve, how much of the old it should maintain, and how much influence from new migrants it should accept. It touches the heart of the decision-making process of the community, in which the shareholder model currently tends to favour a select group of board members, whereas a communitarian society is better suited for a collective decision-making process, more akin to the communal meeting we have seen to resolve this incident.

Yet at the same time, this incident was only a superficial conflict, a disagreement over a unique situation that is bound to be handled differently from now on. It shows disagreement, but only as far as people expressed this during one communal meeting. Once the situation had been defused, life went on as normal, with people on both sides of the argument agreeing to disagree in the interest of Orania. What it does however indicate is that it can be worthwhile to look for more cracks in the communitarian philosophy, especially the ones that exist on a more structural basis and thus have a larger impact on the community. This is what the following chapter aims to address, by looking at three unique communities that due to their socio-economic position, as well as their status as relatively new migrants tend to have a hugely diverse outlook on Orania.

## **Part V – The short end of the stick?**



## Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter addressed an ideological, or perhaps even political schism, this chapter approaches Orania with a socio-economic perspective. It looks at a highly specific group of inhabitants who are in many ways an essential part of the economy of the town, but who at the same time often find themselves a very long distance away from Orania as a community. These are the people who live in the rental housing at Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring. As buildings these housing areas stand out compared to the many freestanding houses in Orania, as they are more uniform and made up of smaller apartments. In many ways the building style and location of Nerina and Soetdoring is distinctively city-like, with compact housing, strategically placed near shopping areas, children's play areas and schools. Soetdoring is also the first structure in the community that has apartments built on top of each other, which fits in a denser, more urban city plan. As previously explained these houses have all been built with financing from the *Helpsaamfonds*, after which they are rented out to inhabitants in search of housing. Over time the rent of these houses, along with donations of supporters from in- and outside Orania allow the *Helpsaamfonds* to undertake increasingly larger projects. By keeping the rent relatively low these are very attractive living arrangements for new immigrants or people in search of affordable housing, especially since the house prices in Orania are relatively high. As a consequence this generally means that the inhabitants of these houses are relatively new to the community, and thus also have relatively loose roots in the community compared to longer established inhabitants. Their incentives for coming to Orania are extremely diverse, although many inhabitants are outspoken about their reasons. In case of the single men in Elim, it is almost always a search for labour, driven by the poverty and difficulty of finding a suitable job elsewhere in South Africa. In case of Nerina and Soetdoring, with many families or single parents with children, the most important reasons for migrating tend to be safety or education for their children. This makes this an interesting group to look at in light of the communitarian nature of Orania, since these people are on the one hand at the forefront of Orania's desire to grow, but simultaneously also experience living in the community from a very different socio-economic point of view than your average inhabitant.

# Elim

## History

Since 1996 Elim has been intimately intertwined with the history of Orania. Born out of the ideal of *selfwerksaamheid*, Elim was an answer to the persistent shortage of Afrikaner labourers in the early years of Orania, and in many ways continues to be a thriving workforce behind many of the manual jobs in Orania to this day. Inspired by the Israeli Friends of Zion movement, which was instrumental in the early establishment of the State of Israel, Orania created its own *Vriende van Orania* (Friends of Orania) with the intent to collect donations for what would later become the Elim project. Another inspiration was the high unemployment rate among white young men, especially those without education or work experience (Bestuur Elim Trust 2001a). They were seen as the future of the Afrikaner people, and as such their state of unemployment was a threat to the survival of the Afrikaner (Bestuur Elim Trust 2001b). In this light Elim was created as a home for single Afrikaner men who were willing to work for a living. Since most of the men arrive with nothing more than the clothes they wear, and often come from impoverished backgrounds, Elim is considered a place where these men can regain some humanity. Ultimately the objective for these men is to make a living for themselves through extensive support of the Orania community, so that they can save up to build their own homes in the community. In this early phase Elim operated as an independent employment agency where employers paid enough money for the men to afford their rent and utility costs. Wages were as low as 35 rand per day, and the men lived in a single apartment that housed five to seven men (Vriende van Orania 1996). In 1997 construction started on the housing complex that is still used today, at the time allowing for twenty men to live in Elim (Bestuur Elim Trust 1999).

"These people are the salt of the earth. People can say what they want, but if it had not been for this place, this town would not have existed. These people work for little money. That's why I am self-employed. If you have to work for an employer, for two hundred rand a day, then you cannot save anything. But they work for that money. It is hard labour, in harsh weather, and they do not complain. But at nine in the evening, during the week, no matter what, this place is dead quiet. Then these young men are done for, tired."

*- One of the older Elim inhabitants expressing his respect for the younger men.*



*One of the barracks in the Elim housing complex, located in Kleingeluk.*

During these early years Elim struggled to be successful, with a lot of people coming and going without much commitment. Many struggled to adjust to the hot climate, refused to do “kaffer” (derogatory term for a black person) jobs or saw no future in the Orania community for themselves. This led to major changes around 2005, when Willem du Plessis and his wife Debbie were brought in to oversee the project. Under his guidance firmer rules were established, as well as a stricter recruitment policy. Alcohol and drugs use was banned, as a violation of this rule will always result in removal from the Elim, and by extension the Orania community (du Plessis 2007). Elim justifies this because it lacks the means to fully rehabilitate people if they do not wish to live by the rules or do not have the intention to work for their living. While the age range was initially restricted, aiming at young men between 19 and 28, over the years long-term inhabitants, as well as exceptions have resulted in a mixed community of boys as young as 17 and men older than 60. Daily ages range between 180 to 200 rand per day, a very low income compared to the cost of living in Orania. Since 2010 the

support of the *Helpsaamfonds* has allowed Elim to make further improvements to its facilities, such as showers and a recreation area, and also allowed for the further expansion of the number of living apartments, so that Elim today houses a maximum of 42 men (Voorgrond 2010, 19). These changes, as well as the stricter discipline enabled men to stay in Elim for longer periods of time (Voorgrond 2010, 11). Over the years increasing emphasis has been placed on education, both by employers themselves and in the future through technical college that was being built in Orania (Coetzee 1999). On rare occasions men in Elim have also been allowed to follow courses which gave them formal qualifications as construction workers, which enabled them to become independent contractors in Orania.

## Reputation

The history of Elim has been stained by a very mixed reputation that persists to this day, even though many people agreed that things had been improving significantly in recent years. For the most part people were positive about the contribution made by Elim to the town's development. In the early days of Orania Elim was instrumental in the creation of the town, when capable workers were in short supply. In many ways these men serve as the living embodiment of *selfwerksaamheid*, being employed in a wide range of manual jobs in for example construction, gardening, garbage disposal and agriculture. While most inhabitants interpret *selfwerksaamheid* as doing your own chores around the house, ultimately it is Elim that makes *volkseie arbeid* possible for the community as a whole, since they provide many of the workers for jobs in construction and maintenance, while also doing many other manual labour jobs in the community. Many inhabitants of Orania recognize the difficult circumstances of Elim workers, and feel that they should be given a chance to prove

"There are men who do not stay very long, they will talk negatively. They do not talk as Orania people. Such a man comes here from Jo'burg [Johannesburg], as criminals... I do not want to call them criminals, because I do not have evidence. But some people, they do not want to work on the outside, so they come here, and think Orania owes them something. That is the problem at Elim. Such a man comes here alone. He has no family, he works himself half to death during the day, and tonight he sits in his room. He may not do this, he may not do that. Such people become negative, you understand?"

- An Orania inhabitant commenting on the negative reputation of Elim

themselves. The general sentiment is that these men are just as much part of the Afrikaner *volk*, but they just did not receive the upbringing and opportunities that they should have had. In discussing the living and labour conditions of the men a lot of inhabitants in Orania felt that the treatment and compensation the men received for their labour was bare bones, sometimes bordering on exploitation, while others felt that they received fair wages, but that the men had to be smart with their money. One extreme assertion sometimes made in passing was that the men at Elim were “working like *kaffers*” for the richer people in the community, implying that Elim men had simply replaced the role of non-white workers elsewhere in South Africa, along with their exploitative relationship between employer and employee (Seldon 2014, 101-102). This was however not a sentiment expressed by the men themselves.

At the same time the past of Elim is one littered with problems of alcohol and public disturbance, and to a lesser degree drug abuse and sometimes even crime (Hagen 2013, 73; Seldon 2014, 102). In the past fights were not uncommon and the Hopetown police force had to stay on standby to assist in case situations got out of control. This gave Elim a bad reputation, in particular in the Kleingeluk area, and this reputation, although improved, still persists to this day (Orania Dorpsraad 2014, 51-52). Besides the problems this caused for the neighbourhood it also meant that men themselves did not have money left to sustain themselves properly, causing many had to leave within weeks after their arrival. After Willem du Plessis came to oversee Elim the most profound change he made was to ban alcohol completely, something which he also did himself that day as a token of his sincerity. Not only are the men who stay at the Elim apartments not allowed to visit any of the alcohol serving establishments around town, but they are also not allowed to buy any alcohol at the stores. This is no empty threat either, as alcohol has been one of the most common reasons for removal from Elim, which, due to the extremely limited availability of affordable housing in town also means they have to leave Orania. During my fieldwork a police raid was called upon the Elim apartments, during which six police cars blocked the various exits, after which the police proceeded to search through various rooms and frisked the men in and near the area. Later I heard from one of the men that the police had primarily been looking for illegal cigarettes, but that none were found. As Willem du Plessis would explain later during an Elim meeting, the reason for this raid was that he felt that the threat of punishment for breaking the rules should be real, otherwise it would just be empty words. At the same time he felt that

this raid, and the fact that nothing was found, could serve as an example that would show the Orania community, and especially the *Dorpsraad*, that Elim was not as bad as they supposedly thought.

## Reality

Throughout my fieldwork I felt that Elim was perhaps the one place that one can only truly experience from the inside, not as researcher visiting for a quick interview, but as a labourer participating at least some time with these men actually doing work and living to some extent as they do. Even though my time for participant observation was limited and while I did not actually live at the Elim apartments myself, I set myself the goal to work alongside a *bouspan* (construction team) of men for a week. After I had visited the Elim communal room for a couple of nights when the men had come back from work I became acquainted with a small group of them. This group stood out because they were the only ones who tended to watch television in the large communal space, and who also seemed to be the most open and willing to talk. Television seemed to be their primary form of entertainment, along with action movies, Twizza carbonated drinks and cigarettes. Nonetheless, it proved to be something we could bond over, especially during the 2015 Rugby World Cup, of which the men, along with most of Orania, were great fans. Since we could get along well they invited me to come visit them at their job site, which at the time happened to be laying garden pavement around the Aan-die-Oewer houses. While I initially was keen to help them out with small chores for free, it did not take long before their employer invited me to take on a freelance position, where I would earn a wage for my labour without any contractual obligations.

This experience, of working a whole week with them, while also spending a lot of evenings watching television with them, gave me a good impression of the lifestyle of this particular group of workers. It is by no means exemplary for all of the Elim men, but nonetheless touched upon many of the struggles of this lifestyle. The *bouspan* was a mixed group made up of a father and son and three men slightly older than me, although on occasion other men would also join depending on the task at hand. This crew was led by the employer that had hired me, although he would also leave for extensive periods of time during which one of his sons, younger than all of us, took over the role as crew leader. The work we did during my participation was varied, although we usually spend about two days on one job, involving

paving, building foundational walls or cleaning up the farmland of the employer. These jobs were performed “manually” in the most literal sense of the word, considering that everything was done by hand, either mixing cement from sand, gravel and water, moving stacks of bricks or pavement stones to where they needed to go, or measuring and laying these bricks or stones in place. It was generally frowned upon to work too slowly or to spend too much time off the job, even although this did not stop the crew from taking frequent breaks when their employer was absent. In my experience his leadership style was rather authoritarian, not giving the men much lee-way while they were on the job, but at the same time he was also trying to educate them in various skills and explaining to them why he made the decisions that he made. One highlight of these days was always the two hour break that we got during the hottest hours of the day, although on other occasions we were allowed to start one hour later in exchange for a one hour break. These breaks were usually spent at the *Volkskombuis* (People’s Kitchen), a small corner store that the men preferred, because it sold calorie-rich meals for little money.

These two hours during the day were a welcome relief that made the final stretch of the day seem like an easy sprint to the finish line, compared to the extended mornings that seemed to take forever. Nonetheless these breaks also filled me with a sense of irony, as I would usually spent as much as three hours of wage on my lunch alone. It really gave me a perspective on the struggle of living on a subsistence wage level, at which these men are effectively working to survive. As the week progressed my passion for waking up and going to the jobsite rapidly declined, becoming a necessity, rather than an exciting fieldwork opportunity. The men also quickly realized that once the novelty of having a Dutch guy on their crew wore off, I was just another worker, in many ways incompetent and certainly not the fastest worker of the crew. Considering the climate this time of year and the constant intensity to hurry up and keep the work going I personally found it a greatly exhausting effort, since the constant assault of sunburn, muscle pains, tiredness and minor cuts and bruises really took its toll at the end of the week. Obviously I was not adjusted to the wear and tear of physical labour, but it also made me understand why the men usually kept a steady supply of Grand-Pa’s, the local brand of paracetamol. Likewise, it made me understand why, whenever I visited the men in the evenings after work their response to “how are you” would steadfast be “*moeg*” (tired). Nonetheless, at the end of the week I felt satisfied as my hard

labour was translated in a light brown envelop, containing 180 Ora for each day of work. It was a marginal sum of money compared to my expenses, but nonetheless it was money that I had earned with physical labour in its purest form. Even more valuable was perhaps the appreciation I received from one of my fellow crew-members, who despite seeing me as just another wandering worker did recognize that I had given it my best effort and that alone made me a better worker than some of the new men showing up at Elim who gave up after a single day. At other times my contribution was quickly dismissed, since other men felt that I had not truly worked at Elim until I had experience the gruesome task of *vloere gooien* (pouring concrete floors), or until I had actually lived at the Elim complex, with the annoyances of hot and aging rooms and constant noise from men coming and going. It made me realize that to truly understand Elim would take a far more localized study, in which one would dedicate all their time to this unique community within a community.

## Nerina

Compared to Elim, Nerina seemed like the complete opposite in many ways. Compared to the bare-bones existence at Elim these small houses in a quiet neighbourhood, with plenty of shady trees and a playground make this small community look like a place of comfort. Since construction started in 2010 the project, funded mostly by the *Helpsaamfonds*, has been expanded to 11 small houses that provide living space, a single bedroom and a small garden terrace. The name Nerina comes from the Nerine flower, which is native to various regions in South Africa and known to survive both extreme heat and cold, while still producing

“We did research on the human resources of Orania, and then it turned out that we had too many single men, and too few single women. Prof Carel [Boshoff] has always said, we come from the animals, that is how it works. Too many men is not good, too many women is not good, then you lose balance. That is when we looked at Nerina, we thought, we have all these single men, now we should look for single women. That is miraculous, how a man from Elim and a women from Nerina married and now live in Soetdoring. So we do a good job, single men, single women, we make families and even give them a house.”

- Willem du Plessis explaining the origin of the Nerina houses.





*Two of the Nerina houses, located in Grootdorp*

deep-red flowers. Like Elim these houses were designed for people with a low income that would have no affordable housing elsewhere in Orania. Unlike Elim, which was built on the extreme edge of town Nerina is located in the heart of Orania, in the middle of Grootdorp. It is located in a quiet, almost deserted street, making it a very safe place for parents with children, while also being relatively close to the Volkschool. Although it was originally built with the idea of vulnerable women and single mothers in mind, this purpose seems to have diluted somewhat, as there were also couples living there, as well as an elderly lady. Unlike the men in Elim these people are rather difficult to summarize, as their pasts, as well as their choice for Orania and their reasons for staying in Nerina differ greatly. Some were recent immigrants, others had already lived in the community for years. Most people were either self-employed in blue-collar professions, working for example as welders, as cleaners or as restaurant employees. Although they theoretically had to follow the same strict rules that exist for Elim, such as zero tolerance for alcohol use, the people who I asked explained that these were not enforced at Nerina as long as they did not cause any trouble.

## Soetdoring

“We discovered that single men are great for pushing a project forward, but that is a problem for the sustainability of a business. You cannot put ten men in the OK [supermarket], that is a continuous project, not a project with an end, it needs to be sustained. Our research showed that families are better suited for that. They are responsible, there is more steadiness, they do not move away as easily. With that problem in mind we started to look at Soetdoring, with twelve bedrooms. A small family can live there comfortably.”

*- Willem du Plessis explaining what the reasoning behind building Soetdoring was*

Following the success of Nerina the next step was to employ the *Helpsaamfonds* money for a much bigger project, which would eventually become Soetdoring. This multi-story housing block, built over the course of 2014 and officially opened during my fieldwork in 2015 gave homes to 12 Afrikaner families, many of which already had children at various ages. Soetdoring is located in Kleingeluk, right next to the Kuierstoep, with its stores and recreational park, and also right next to a large playground. Especially parents with young children remarked how practical the location was, with stores, various churches and the CVO School all in close proximity. In most of these apartments both parents had a job, giving them some discretionary income to save money and buy luxury items, something which was rare in Nerina, and virtually unheard of in Elim. It also gave them “room to breathe”, since the struggle for survival was out of the way they were appreciative to live in a community that was safe, showing signs of development and taking care of the Afrikaner identity. Like some of the Nerina inhabitants, some of the inhabitants of Soetdoring were also in the process of building or searching for other housing.

## The importance of family

One aspect which stands out to me upon reviewing these various communities is the extent to which they represent the idea of a malleable community. Instead of building general all-purpose housing these housing blocks have been built with specific aims, reflecting the various needs of Orania as a community throughout time, while also reflecting on the needs of its



*The recently build two story Soetdoring apartment blocks, located in Kleingeluk*

tenants. Whereas Elim served as the initiator that build much of Orania from the ground up, Nerina and especially Soetdoring represent more durable values with more emphasis on family and a future generation of Orania inhabitants. Whereas Elim men would come and go as they saw fit, often staying for a few months before moving away again, Nerina and Soetdoring attempt to provide single parents with children and families with a place to settle down, to raise their children and to start saving up for more permanent housing in the community. The gender difference underlying Elim and Nerina as well as their respective locations also emphasis this idea, with the men of Elim living literally on the edge of the community where they can cause relatively little nuisance, while Nerina is found in Grootdorp, in a secure and central location in the community. I wondered if the physical distance between the men and women was born out of the Christian idea that men and women should not live or at least sleep together before marriage, as some people in Orania expressed how this was a very important value to them.

“Numerous studies all over the world have proved that the chances for a child who comes from a home with a father and mother, are so much better in order to receive good education, to be healthier and ultimately to hold a successful position in his or her community. This is why we can make a strong case, from our Christian perspective, but also from a very practical perspective, for the traditional family.”

*- Jaco Kleynhans (2012, 5) explaining the importance of traditional family values*

Meanwhile Soetdoring seemed to emphasize the importance of the family unit, in some sense highlighting the importance that Orania attaches to family values. After all, while immigration is the driving force behind Orania’s growth, ultimately the idea behind a Volkstaat is that it can grow from within, to renew itself with every generation in order to provide today’s children with a future home where they can be safe, successful and live out their Afrikaner heritage. It gave me the impression that Soetdoring was in many ways different from Elim or Nerina as many of these families had achieved the family status that can be seen as a token of rootedness or permanence in the community. With children going to the Orania schools and parents working in the community to raise their children, families are more likely to think long-term, and to invest in their culture and community in Orania, compared to for example the single men in Elim whose focus was on their individual interests and immediate necessities. In their publications the *Orania Beweging* often equates children with the future, as a vulnerable group that needs to be shielded from the crime and corruption on the outside and raised in a safe and moral Afrikaner environment (Strydom 2010, 3). For this reason Orania hopes that children who go on to study at South Africa’s universities will afterwards come home to Orania to apply their professional skills to the benefit of the community, effectively raising a new generation of Afrikaners who can contribute to the town’s development (Orania Beweging 2013, 28-29).

“Children are the living message that we send to a time that we will not see”

*- Lida Strydom (2010, 3) explaining the importance of children*

## Struggles of life

Thus far I have tried to describe life at Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring in objective terms. After all, for the vast majority of people in these housing areas it was just a place to stay. They appreciated living in Orania for its safety, its small town culture and the beauty of the untouched Karoo landscapes. They have found reliable work here, which might not always pay as much as they were used to before, but nonetheless enough to keep them alive and in some cases allows them to save up money. Again others felt that Orania gave their lives religious relevance, or allowed them to develop a new-found appreciation for their Afrikaner identity. In many ways these housing communities were exceptionally heterogeneous, housing vastly different people with different pasts, their own reasons for coming to Orania and their own outlooks on the future. With about ten percent of the community living in these housing communities taking a closer look at them shows us a rich cross-section of the people in Orania, a panorama of people with their own concerns, struggles and aspirations. Similarly to what we have seen in the previous chapter, these concerns enrich our understanding of the communitarian perspective of Orania. It allows us to explore the edges of the community by looking at people who stand simultaneously at the core of the community, but who in some cases also exist very far removed. This is because some, but certainly not all, of these people are atypical for Orania. This can be for a plethora of reasons, either because they do not own their own housing property, because they have different ideas about religion, or because they feel little to no inherent association with Orania as Afrikaner *kultuurgemeenskap*. On top of this, as relatively new immigrants these inhabitants find themselves in a transition, where they are removed from their old way of life outside of Orania, and are in the process of “proving their worth”. While this is of course true for any migrant who makes the decision to move to Orania, for people with the perspective that comes with living Elim and Nerina, and to a lesser extent Soetdoring, the difference is that you cannot afford permanence in the community (yet). For some this combination of not owning property, often combined with the inability to save up money and a social distance to the community can make it very difficult, if not impossible to climb up from the margins of Orania. The overarching objective, in which these homes are meant to be temporary housing, which over time should give people the opportunity to work towards a more permanent place in the community is by no means feasible for everyone. In this context the meaning of permanence can take a variety of shapes,

for example owning property, which grants a person voting power in the shareholder meetings, building a family, or becoming an active and valued member of the Orania community. As a result of this struggle with marginalization, the people I spoke to were more often than not struggling with the question whether or not they should proceed in the hope of finding this permanence, or if they should move away after failing to find acceptance in the community. This makes marginalization perhaps the only characteristic shared between the people in the various housing areas, as each of these inhabitants are in their own way engaged with the process of becoming part of the town. Some have already reached such a status, while others have failed to do so and are contemplating what to do next.

## **Verblyfreg**

One of the first interactions between new immigrants in Orania and the *Dorpsraad* is often the so-called *verblyfreg* (right of stay) procedure. It involves a short but nonetheless essential procedure that serves multiple purposes, ultimately with the goal to determine if someone qualifies as a suitable inhabitant for Orania. Whenever someone wishes to stay in the community for longer than three months they are asked to visit the *Dorpskantoor* (village office), in order to fill out a form that asks for basic contact information, but also finer details with regards to children, employment history, church affiliation, criminal record, military training and health conditions (Seldon 2014, 70). Based on this information the *Veiligheidskantoor* makes an assessment about a person, based on a person's police record and the associations that aspiring inhabitants maintain on for example social media. In case of a criminal past the nature of the crime is assessed, for example by asking previous employers for an impression. This background knowledge, along with the observation of how people live in the community, serves as a recommendation for a formal interview, sometimes referred to as *keuring* (vetting) which is overseen by selected members of the community, mostly people who are also active for the *Dorpsraad* or the *Orania Beweging*. This interview enables the leadership of Orania to familiarize themselves with new immigrants, their reasons for moving to Orania and their background, while it also gives them an opportunity to emphasize to potential inhabitants what they regard as the essence of the Orania community, which can be aspects such as culture, *selfwerksaamheid* or Afrikaner history. While in my case

I was granted a “temporary visa” for my fieldwork period after just one interview, for permanent residence several interviews can be required in which the potential immigrant has to come back after acquiring additional documentation for their application in order to complete this vetting process. Sometimes people are only granted *verblyfreg* under specific conditions, such as speaking Afrikaans when a person comes from an English-speaking background.

One condition, that is mandatory for all applicants, is to participate in the so-called *Orientasie* (Orientation) classes which in my case were held on two consecutive Saturdays. On the first day these classes begin with an informative questionnaire about Afrikaner culture and history, meant to encourage people to learn about their past and culture as *volk*. What follows over the course of these two days are then various short presentations, meant to educate future inhabitants on various relevant topics. These vary from a general introduction about Orania as independent political entity, with its history and specific objective as community, to relatively specific topics such as safety protocols and economic opportunities in Orania. Other topics that are addressed include the development plans currently in place, the various social services of the *Helpsaamfonds*, the importance of Afrikaner culture in Orania, how to handle questions from the media, and how to care for nature in the Karoo region. It is an opportunity in which the small rituals of the community, such as waving to each other in passing, are promoted, but where people are also recommended to buy locally, to refrain from racist remarks and to be very careful with regards to journalists. For each of these topics leading members of the *Orania Beweging* or *Dorpsraad* give a short presentation, followed with the opportunity to ask questions. In the end the knowledge retention of these various topics is tested by means of another questionnaire, which is also collectively reviewed as a final repetition of the most essential information. At the time of my fieldwork the outcome of neither exam was binding, meaning that anyone could pass the tests regardless of their score. This meant that at the end of the day everybody who had passed the vetting process and completed both mornings of Orientation could write their signature under the *Orania Erekode*, formally signalling the moment they became true Orania citizens.

This *verblyfreg* is more than just a welcoming gesture however, since there is also the rare scenario in which someone fails to meet the requirements for the vetting procedure or fails to participate in the Orientation classes. If inhabitants remain without *verblyfreg* for an

extensive period of time they can effectively be forced to leave the community. The same can happen after someone has been admitted as a formal resident, but turns out to be a substantial source of disturbance or is caught committing a crime. While the *Dorpsraad* tries to be accommodating and intends to resolve minor incidents between residents internally by handing out warnings or seeking the support of the *Orania Maatskappelyke Raad*, if an issue continues for a long period of time and people show no sign of improvement it can happen that people lose their *verblyfreg*, and effectively become persona non grata in the community. At that point notices will be posted around town, indicating with name and photo that a person is no longer welcome on Orania land, which is after all private property. These notifications tell inhabitants that from a certain date onwards these people should be denied housing and employment, and should be reported to the *Veiligheidskantoor* if they nonetheless are found within the boundaries of Orania, since they can then be prosecuted through the South African justice system for illegal entry on private property. It is a sentence that is only evoked when all other options have been exhausted, and in case of a conflict between two residents, only after an extensive mediation procedure, followed by a further arbitration procedure. It also does not strictly ban people for life, as the *Dorpsraad* can let people back in if they have shown noticeable signs of improvement. They can also be allowed in for short visits to for example family or friends if these are announced beforehand, after which the *Veiligheidskantoor* will set a time and place for the visitation, if necessary at one of the public areas or restaurants in town.

When asking people's opinion about this *verblyfreg* procedure most of them were rather positive, since they felt it could serve as a safeguard that ensures people would come to Orania for the right reasons. It could also encourage people to become active in the community, to introduce themselves to their neighbours or to ask for support in times of trouble. Adam Boshoff remarked how the ability to suspend a person's *verblyfreg* kept Orania in control of its own safety, since it kept the problems of bigger cities, such as crime and drugs, away from the community. Corrie Jacobs, herself a member of the *verblyfreg* committee also considered it a fair system, considering the number of opportunities the committee would give people to sort out their paperwork and get everything in order. Others were less content with the existing system, such as for example C.W.H. Boshoff, who himself once called for a halt to the suspension process, because he felt that the process would be unsustainable once Orania



would start to grow. Instead he encouraged the *Dorpsraad* to emphasize the Orientation phase to a greater extent, so that inhabitants could be educated and have more opportunities to remain part of the community (Boshoff 2012, 404-405). Wynand Boshoff was also critical of the process, feeling that, while Orania could not harbour criminals who tried to escape prosecution in South Africa, it also gave new immigrants a very unwelcome experience, where a committee assesses if a person is “good enough” to join the community, while it at the same time only provides a very limited test of people’s real commitment to Orania. Other opinions expressed the opposite, stating that the current system was lacking and should be further expanded or applied more rigorously. The average scores of the Orientation exams can for example be quite disappointing, while others would recall how there was an increasing number of people in Orania who seemed ignorant of the requirements set by the *verblyfreg* procedure. In response Lida Strydom, herself a member of the *verblyfreg* committee, told me how she was hoping that people in critical positions, such as teachers, would in the future receive more education as to what Orania is about, enabling them to relay their knowledge to students and parents. She was also hopeful that new immigrants would in the future be able to start their *verblyfreg* procedure before coming to Orania, so that they would be better prepared and knew what they could expect on arrival. Another objective was to extend the Orientation classes, so that, rather than numerous short presentations on the same day, it could become longer presentations spread out over several weeks. Ultimately this would enable Orania to make the exam scores more binding, in order to assure that people would have to get a certain score before they could complete their *verblyfreg* procedure.

For the inhabitants in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring the *verblyfreg* was one of the first hurdles they had encountered since their arrival in Orania. They were at various stages of the process, some already having *verblyfreg*, some were working towards it during my fieldwork, and again others had yet to be called in for an interview. Opinions were greatly divided on the merits of the *verblyfreg* system, with many people regarding it as a good way to assure that Orania would attract the right kind of people, even in the future when it might grow to become a city. However, at the same time many people I spoke to struggled with the concept. In case of Elim most of the men did not feel any obligation to live up to the values encouraged throughout *verblyfreg* process. They would speak English, or a mix of Afrikaans and English, and more often than not identified strongly with South Africa, rather than Orania. For them

Orania was just one of the places in South Africa where they had found a temporary home, that provided them with safety and employment. One man would complain how he had already been in Orania for four months, and yet he had never been contacted by the *Dorpsraad*, and until they would contact him, he did not care about it either. For others, especially those in Nerina or Soetdoring, not having your *verblyfreg* yet mainly proved to be a stress factor, since it meant that new immigrants were unable to

"Yes, I went there and told them, you cannot throw me out on grounds of religion and language, that's discriminating. Yes, I will leave when you throw me out and you will see me in the courts. I can speak your language fluently, I speak my own, but you can't take mine away. That's the adaption that I made. I speak your language too."

*- An Elim man, defending his right to be a Catholic and to speak English in Orania*

take certain jobs and could not buy a home or land in the community without it. One woman in Nerina also felt that the *verblyfreg* procedure should not judge the past of a person, since all people should be forgiven for their past mistakes, and get a new opportunity to prove themselves when they move to Orania. She saw how people continued to be judged in the community, especially as a result of gossip.

"The only bad thing that I can say about Orania, that I feel in my heart is very bad, is that, we believe, as Christians, that... your past is your past and your future is your future, and God forgives you for what you have done in your past. ... They want people to come and work here, but they are not able to forgive them for things that happened in their past. It is like someone who did drugs in their life, they have overcome that problem, like alcohol, they are sober for seven or eight years, but they will still hold that over your head."

*- A Nerina woman expressing her criticism for the verblyfreg procedure*

### **Labore ad libertatem?**

While the *verblyfreg* might seem a strictly technical aspect of moving to Orania, it sets the tone for the expectations that Orania has of inhabitants who are new in the community. In many ways it emphasises people's own responsibilities, the responsibility to work and make a living, the responsibility for *inskakelen* (participating in and contributing to the community) and the responsibility to stand up for the Orania project as a small part in a larger machine.

The image of a hard-working Afrikaner, owning his own property, devoutly going to church, knowing his heritage and taking care for his community becomes a measure that people are encouraged to strive for. While many of the people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring shared these aspirations, they were also conveying a persistent struggle to actually live up to them. Especially the men in Elim seemed to exist lightyears away from these ideals, fighting a constant battle to balance their budgets, to pay their debts and to stave off complete isolation and boredom. They seemed to have running bills with a large number of people and stores, and were always looking for extra jobs that they could do on Saturday, since the money they earned throughout the week was mostly spent on food and housing. They felt isolated from the community, since they were not allowed to visit any place that served alcohol, nor did they have money for places like the cinema. This meant they rarely ventured into town, except occasionally to visit the swimming pool on Sunday. The little money they saved they almost inevitably spent on soft drinks, cigarettes and credit for their phones, which together with the television in the Elim communal room seemed to be their only real form of recreation. Some found friends within Elim, especially those working in construction crews, but even this was difficult for others. One elderly man felt particularly lonely, being much older than the young men, while another man found it hard to relate to the worldly interests of the other men, himself being higher educated and very much religious.

Even though 180 rand per day meant the men earned well above the South African minimum wage, they felt it was effectively the bare minimum necessary to survive in Elim. They could not save any of it and more often than not were extremely vulnerable to income shocks, for example when they had to work unpaid overtime, or when an employer delayed their wage payment. As a result many of the men I spoke with would usually also work on Saturdays, either with their regular employer or on independent jobs that they tried to find during the week. Another frustration came from the fact that the men were usually paid in cash, and in Ora, meaning they lost time and money to convert their wages back to the South African rand if they wished to send it to family or spend it outside of Orania. Likewise working conditions on the job seemed harsh, with little protection from the elements, no safety equipment on site and a constant pressure to work quickly and efficiently. When we were working at a factory outside of Orania one day the factory safety inspector remarked how the men were in violation of a whole list of safety requirements, however, when the men later on

"I work a lot with these men, I work where they build. I hear how they talk, I see how they act, how they eat. I'm with them every day. There outside on the farm, there are four guys that I see every day. They come in the morning around 4, they go home around 5. They do not go home for lunch time, they do not bring lunch with them. He drinks water from the river, there is no fresh water at that farm. And when he gets sick from that water, who pays the doctors? He cannot stay away, no work, no pay."

*- An independent construction worker describing his experience with the lifestyle of Elim men.*

mentioned this to their employer, he reminded them that if everything went by the book he would hardly be able to recruit any of us, since half the crew had older injuries that legally kept them from physically straining jobs, while I was working without a work permit, and in general the cost of a safety inspector on site would raise his costs considerably. Food was another constant issue, since the men felt that the food for sale at Elim was insufficient for the price, which meant that they tended to skip meals, bought (junk) food from the stores or tried to cook themselves with the limited means available to them. One man for example introduced me to the "chip sandwich" which consisted of two slices of bread with mayonnaise and potato chips in between them.

Even though my crew took pride in their job, the men remarked numerous times how their current employer had betrayed their trust, and by the end of my fieldwork one of the men of my crew had already moved to another one, while another man one was aspiring to do the same in the upcoming year. This seemed to be the mantra for almost everyone in both Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring, a good employer can make all the difference. For example, speaking to a different construction crew gave me an entirely different perspective. One of these men had moved to Orania from Great Britain out of a personal commitment to the Afrikaner cause, and despite bringing a lot of money with him he was still committed to work on the construction of the Volkstaat. By living together with another Elim man he had managed to get a home in the community, rather than at Elim, and this also made it possible for him to have a drink with his employer after work. Seeing this crew showed a much more egalitarian employer-employee relationship, in which the employer expressed a desire to provide his employees with a sustainable living, not only for the moment but also for the months to come, when there might not be a job available to them. The employer felt that a man could not just

move bricks or wheelbarrows all their life, and intended to train these men in a wide range of skills and pay them more money as they would qualify for more tasks. Ultimately this would allow the workers to become employers for themselves, and so they could in turn contribute their part to the growth and development of Orania.

Employers also seemed the key determinant for the degree to which people managed to succeed in the process of *inskakelen* (participating and contributing to the community). Numerous people in Soetdoring were for example employed at Senbel, a callcenter

in Orania that looks for new Afrikaner members for the *Orania Beweging*, AfriForum and the Solidariteit union. The employer, Magdaleen Kleynhans, was widely lauded as an amazing employer. The commission-based work allowed about thirty employees to earn relatively high salaries, which in turn enabled them to save up money and to receive a pension fund. Magdaleen also seemed to care a great deal about her employees, organizing numerous teambuilding events and providing them with small incentives to perform well on the job. She would also educate her employees on how to handle their money wisely, while also encouraging them to actively engage with their religion by opening every day with collective Bible reading and prayer. She also expected her employees to participate in *Geloftedag*, so that they would learn to understand the importance of history and why it needs to be preserved. Furthermore, Senbel also served an important social role in the community as many of its employees were also active for the Orania branch of *Helpende Hand* (Helping Hand). This social organisation tries to make a meaningful contribution all across South Africa, for example in Orania by sponsoring students that need to move away for their tertiary education, for which *Helpende Hand* assists students to pay for travel expenses, dorm rooms,

"Now I help men like him, who work for us. Me and the other guy. We help them, because we want them to learn to work for themselves, like we do. Otherwise it does not help. This man cannot be a labourer all day. This man cannot hand over stones or mix cement all day. He cannot. You must help him, so that he becomes a boss, he must get someone else, so that the town can grow. Why is the town here otherwise? So that it can grow, because of us. You must help others, which is why Orania is here, to help others. To raise them up their feet and get all the nonsense from the outside away from them."

*- An employer explaining his motivations for caring about his employees.*

"We all carry Magdaleen on our hands. I cannot express how happy I am with her as my boss. We have a social day almost every month, because she believes you must relax, you need to be flexible. That is important to her. Sometimes she will say, today you can leave a little bit earlier. She spends so much money on us. Last week she took us to the Sterreland (Star Land) cinema. She said, take the rest of the day off, go to the cinema. Who does that? What company outside of Orania would take its people to a farm, in the middle of the field, to let two teams play against each other? You build a team, that is nice."

*- A Senbel employee praising Magdaleen for the way she operates the business*

books and other learning materials. Another employer, *Wilco Vervoer* (Wilco Transportation), which produces and transports grain as well as dog food throughout the entire region was lauded in a similar fashion. Being one of the most successful business operations in Orania, its owner Willie Nel was held in high regard by the employees that I spoke, caring for them throughout times of financial or health-related hardships. He explained to me that his objective was to expand his business to a family operation, where his children could be successful, while expanding his operation to double the size of today's twenty employees.

With these different positions in the Orania community also came vastly different outlooks with regard to the cost of living in Orania. While the employees of Senbel were making a decent income that allowed them to save money, the men at Elim were constantly aware of ongoing debts and the upcoming payment for their rooms. As certain products are twenty to thirty percent more expensive in Orania than in the surrounding cities people with a car would occasionally travel to Hopetown or Kimberley to buy groceries and other necessities, often cooperating with neighbours to save on the time and fuel to travel back and forth. One Elim man explained to me that of his 900 rand income about 280 went to the rent of his room, while another 300 to 400 rand went to food. This left only about 200 for small luxuries such as cigarettes and soft drink, which meant he was often buying these items on a running bill which, at the time for him stood at about 270 rand. It is only a rough indication of the meaning of money in the Elim lifestyle, but does display how limited the means of some men are to save money or to take a day off from work. Meanwhile a family with a single child staying in Nerina together earned roughly 10.000 rand, but also paid roughly 2000 in rent and utilities, while easily spending 3000 on the raising of their child, 3000 on food and another 1500 on

fuel. They too were struggling, but not to the same extent as the men in Elim. The only people who seemed to live relatively comfortable were the Senbel employees staying in Soetdoring, of which one person managed to bring in 8000 to 9000 rand a month on her own, while her husband was also still working. This seemed the exception rather than the rule, as she managed to save money and afford new luxury goods.

## **Inskakelen**

While this made Senbel a unique exception in Orania, it appeared to make all the difference in the lives of its employees. Many of the other people I spoke in either Elim, Nerina or Soetdoring lacked this kind of support and in fact struggled greatly with their attempts to participate in the Orania community. They seemed to live lives that were to a lesser or greater extent completely detached from the “mainstream” society, either because they lacked the disposable income, and thus the time to participate, or because they were generally disinterested. A large number of these people felt cornered in their social lives, with one couple remarking how I was one of the first visitors who had come to their door since they had arrived six months ago. It shows a tension between the ideal where Orania inhabitants are supposed to participate and contribute in the community, and the reality in which many fail to do so. One of the most important aspects of *inskakelen* is for example joining one of the churches in the community, who can then play a vital role in introducing new immigrants and assisting them if times get tough. It is something that is strongly implied during both the vetting process and the Orientation, and Willem du Plessis would for example constantly encourage the Elim men to go there, although he did not want to force them either. Reality

"People feel excluded, because they work the entire week, they work Saturday. There are meetings, I would like to talk to more people, I am interested in these things, and I have dealt with these things for many years, before I came here. There are meetings and things that I find important. But I do not participate, I never end up going there, because I have to work the entire time. I work the entire time. To be honest I have withdrawn myself... not withdrawn, but say, when they have a talk about philosophical ideas. Before, if my life had been different here, then I would have participated, because I am interested in that. It is as if... Orania starts to pass you by."

*- An Elim man expressing his lack of participation in the Orania community*

was however that some people were simply non-religious or non-practicing, while others were deeply religious, but felt that it was a personal journey that they wished to experience outside of the organized church. Again others felt they were not ready to join a church yet, while others could not find a church in Orania that they felt comfortable with, meaning they held their own private services at home, or participating in the church services of neighbouring towns. The few Elim men who did actively go to church however, seemed to really have a social environment outside of their workplace where they would make friends and often found a safety net for their personal struggles in life. Some Elim men would for example go to the weekly Maranata Youth Services during the summer, while another man was aspiring to become a deacon in the Gereformeerde Kerk Orania. It grants credit to Orania's initiative to encourage church attendance, but at the same time makes life all the more difficult for those who for one reason or another do not attend any of the church services in the community.

Failure with the process of *inskakelen* often caused a sense of emotional alienation towards the rest of the Orania community. There seemed to be few social gatherings outside of church communities or occasional cultural events organized by the *Dorpsraad* or *Orania Beweging*, meaning people often were unsure how to become active members of the community. Many people would remark how their most immediate social circle were either their colleagues, direct neighbours or their church community, if they had one. Most seemed to live a rather isolated existence however, focussing on their own aspirations, struggles and plans for the future rather than showing a strong allegiance to either Orania or any institutions within Orania. Likewise, because the people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring were renting their house, and thus have no house ownership, they effectively have no voting power in the shareholder meetings. Orania attempts to compensate this with an additional board member who represents people without voting power, but people were critical about this disfranchisement nonetheless. When asking this board member why these inhabitants were only granted indirect influence on the politics in Orania, he explained that this was a technical consequence of the way the shareholder system was set up, with property representing a vote. He felt this was not such a big issue, since these people were still allowed to speak their minds, and most issues were effectively misunderstanding that could be resolved with good communication, for example information meetings where he could explain to people what was going on in the community and where he could answer people's questions.



"I have received the right to vote, and I have no property and no share. You must prove that you are serious about staying here. But someone who has only been here for three months, who does not understand what is going on, must first do his homework to see and know what it is about. It is good that you do not receive the rights automatically, it is something you need to earn. Then you will make a positive contribution, you will show that you are serious. If you have shown the effort to stay here for five years, then you have a vote to give."

*- A woman from Soetdoring who received her voting rights after staying in the community for five years explains her view on who should be allowed to vote*

Another woman explained that she had received a vote after staying in Orania for five years, even though she did not own property. She considered this a good way to assure that only the people who had shown commitment to Orania got to decide over its future. In her opinion Orania should reward you if you are serious about staying and contributing to the community, unlike people who only show because they have fallen on hard times, and who then move on after Orania had helped them recover. While this ruling is considerate of long term inhabitants, even without property, it demands a significant commitment to stay for five years, which is not easily met by for example the men in Elim. There are plans to make it easier for low income inhabitants to acquire their own homes though, for example by selling small patches of land for price of just 50.000 rand, on which the *Dorpsraad* does not have to make a profit. These can be backed by an interest-free loan of the *Helpsaamfonds*, which ensures that people can pay the deposit. The *Voorgrond* magazine also tells about a woman who managed to secure a loan of 160.000 rand with the OSK, which enabled her to build her own home in her spare time, for a price far below the going rate of houses in the community (Biehl, 2016, 8-9). It is a sign that there are possibilities for people who have shown commitment and financial stability for a certain period of time, to eventually acquire land and a home which would give them the property to acquire voting rights in the shareholder system. It is however difficult to predict how feasible this is for people who do not have the skills to build their own homes, or people who do not manage to secure a loan with the OSK.

## To stay or to go?

What this chapter has tried to highlight thus far is some of the challenges the people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring must conquer before they can truly call themselves Orania citizens. It is a long road that requires a constant effort to live up to the ideal of a contributing and hard-working citizen. While this might be a challenge to anyone coming from outside Orania, for the people in Elim, Nerina and to a lesser extent Soetdoring these aspirations often stood in stark contrast to the lived reality of everyday life. Some were working hard to overcome these struggles, looking forward to constructing their own homes in Orania, to raise their families and build their futures. Many others were unsure if Orania was the right place for them, sometimes contemplating to move back to the big cities of South Africa, where they might find a better paying job, or to move abroad, leaving South Africa behind all together. Lacking the permanence of house ownership, the ability to save money, a family to take care of or a personal allegiance to the ideals of Orania left people in a state of marginalization. On the one hand they had left their lives outside Orania behind them, on the other hand they did not qualify, nor were they seen as full-fledged inhabitants.

In my experience sooner or later this state of marginalization has to evolve into a difficult choice to either stay in the community, rejoicing in the fact that Orania has provided them with the safety and stability they need to raise a family, or to give up those aspirations, in search of something else. In some cases, for example, in case of Elim, it seems to be a self-reinforcing process, in which new immigrants have a particular hard landing, and like a

"If I look at my financial future, then I will be here for another ten to twenty years. And there are people who have been here for twenty years. If I stay another twenty years, how will I... how will that go? I would not like to... there are people here who are already sixty years old, who walk, because they have no car... I do not like that. I would not like to live like that, that is hard, very hard. I would like to stay here, and look into all these things that I like. I wished there were more people with who I could talk. I know there are people who care for this. I am a little bit fearful for my future, financially. How will I be staying in twenty years? Will I still be sitting here? Or... should I try something else?"

*- An Elim man contemplating what the future might bring for him*

revolving door tend to leave relatively soon, sometimes even within a week after arrival. The reasons for this can vary, but most of the men that left during my fieldwork did so out of dislike for the physical labour and harsh working conditions. This then creates an image of the unreliable and unrooted Elim men which then further restraints the ability of new migrants to bond with the existing Orania community, who are wary to invest too much in people who might leave again without notice. In other cases inhabitants do initially find a welcoming and positive experience, but nonetheless take a long time to decide if Orania is the place for them. One couple staying in Nerina had for example been living in Orania for eight years before they finally had made the decision to move away, mainly because the husband, as a trained and qualified construction worker could no longer compete with the influx of unqualified labourers who undercut him for bare bones prices. It left him with a lot of botched construction projects to repair, but without a reasonable payment for the value of his experience and qualifications that he would receive elsewhere in South Africa. Low wages, combined with the relatively high cost of living seemed to be the most common reason to move away, especially when people felt that employers were taking advantage of them. For other people it was the social control of a small community, with social pressure and gossiping.

Looking back on these various issues in the lives of people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring raises a lot of questions. On the one hand one can argue that Orania exploits people in need, promising them a future that for many immigrants is out of reach, with a tension between low wages a high cost of living, with a risk for isolation and a daunting task to prove one's worth and to live up to an imagined prototype Afrikaner. On the other hand these people are in many ways happy to be in Orania, where they have found safety, jobs and peace of mind, away from the chaos of their previous lives. Even if they do not find a future in Orania in the end, their stay does give them time and stability to re-assert themselves and to think about what they want for their future. It is a filtration process that ultimately gives Orania a core of committed citizens, who live up to the communitarian ideals of the community, while it filters people without these intentions quietly out through the backdoor. It keeps the problems of the outside world away, but simultaneously assures that, while growth in numbers might be going strong, the growth as a community will suffer from these various growing pains.

## Communitarian perspectives

Ultimately this chapter tries to display two co-existing viewpoints. On the one hand the inhabitants of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring are as much part of Orania as any other inhabitant, both as invaluable employees and in most cases as committed followers of the broader communitarian ideals of the town. Yet on the other hand this group of people always seems to exist at an arm's length away from the rest of the community, struggling to make a connection, and often questioning how to live up to the ideals that Orania aspires to. Not unlike the previous chapter this observation calls on Orania to address difference within its ranks, this time not politically or ideologically inspired, but relating to its very core as a community. As it stands people are expected to live up to the communitarian values, and, if failing to do so, are left with a struggling existence within the community or the difficult choice to migrate away. Insofar this is not yet a pressing issue, it will almost certainly be one for a growing community with city-like features. Falling back on the previous chapter, it is interesting to note how, just like the high school students coming from Hopetown, some of the inhabitants of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring also experience their lives in Orania as de facto outsiders, be it outsiders within, rather than external to the community. They might be inhabitants in name, but to become an inhabitant in status can be a long road with many pitfalls. While there are obviously many inhabitants who are glad with the safety and community that they have found, others felt it was a struggle. For those inhabitants the external moral voice was out of reach to the inner moral voice that ran through their lives in which survival and making a living where more important than committing to the ideals of Orania. The pertinent question then becomes to what extent this group of people can be regarded as a clustered minority within the larger Afrikaner minority population, and to what extent the communitarian values of Orania would be affected to accommodate these.

## Equality

Looking at Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring tells us a lot about the communitarian nature of Orania. It shows a remarkable dichotomy, thus far left unexplored, in which the notion of being part of the Afrikaner *volk* simultaneously implies that one belongs to the Afrikaner volk, but also that one has something to prove. To live in Orania one does not just have to be an Afrikaner, one has to actively identify with what it means to be an Afrikaner, according to the

"My husband said last night on a meeting. 'If you are a labourer, if you are a man with money, we are exactly the same. You need me, I have the money to build a building. But I need you to build the building.' So we really need each other. That is a thing from Orania. There are very few... there are a few, but very few people here are snobistic, you know? 'I am better than you'. But you get that everywhere. But here in Orania, in general, we respect each other, if you are rich, poor, beautiful or ugly. We respect each other, we recognize each other as equals. And that is starting to catch on, that people say, 'okay, we build together'. That is why Elim is very important, and why Nerina is very important."

*- Corrie Jacobs explaining the egalitarian nature of Orania*

Orania standards. This implies that an intimate understanding of and living up to the communitarian aspects we have seen in previous chapters becomes a pre-requisite to become part of Orania. It reminded me of the Dutch asylum procedure, which, not unlike Orania, also expects new immigrants to learn about the language and culture, and expects them to participate in society. The strange difference is however that in case of the Netherlands, migrants come from vastly different cultural backgrounds, whereas Orania attracts strictly people who at least partly identify with being an Afrikaner, and who often share the same language. In my eyes this turns the communitarian nature of Orania into an egalitarian creed that rises above the differences that might exist among people in terms of for example class, income or religious background, enabling them to live together by re-defining personal objectives in terms that fit the Orania narrative. The hardships of for example physical labour for a minimum wage, or buying locally despite the extra expenses can become acceptable if one believes this aids the Afrikaner cause and ultimately, stone by stone, builds the future Volkstaat. Consequently, if one fails to make this adjustment, either by choice or due to circumstance, there effectively is no place for a person in Orania. At that point a person exists outside of the communitarian realm and thus outside of the core Orania community.

In the liberalism versus communitarianism debate the concept of equality has always been a pertinent issue. In general liberalism tends to defend 'equalisation of opportunities' over complete societal equality. Rawls (2005, 368-369) called for example for 'justice as fairness', meaning that there needs to be sufficient 'deliberation' in a society to achieve sufficient social cooperation between as free and equally capable citizens. The goal of these deliberations is

then to achieve an agreement through a fair process, and this agreement needs to be enacted as it was agreed upon (Waghid 2003, 100-102). Such a deliberative democracy would in theory guarantee equality of opportunity to participate, but this does not have to mean that people are equal in their ability to vote or to speak out their opinion. This is an inherent weakness of deliberative democracy, which counts on people to exercise political judgement by themselves, or alternatively through a political proxy. However, proxies contradict the idea of complete equality, as a proxy effectively only represents the voice of people who either cannot do nor want to engage with the political process (Id., 102). For this reason critical thinkers in line with communitarianism have suggested a differentiated understanding of equality that guarantees a minimum level of security for marginalized groups within the community. Walzer (1983, 14-19) sets 'weak equality', meaning equality in for example resources, property and education apart from 'complex equality', meaning that a standing with regard to one social good cannot interfere with the standing with regards to another social good. What this means is that a group can be marginalized in one area, but still retains equal opportunity in other ones, such as education or employment. Only when marginalization in one particular area is also holding a group back in other aspects is legislation required to put additional assurances in place (Waghid 2003, 168).

## **The meaning of labour**

What the idea behind Elim, but really all the housing under the *Helpsaamfonds* seems to indicate is the belief in 'workfare', rather than 'welfare'. Unemployment is treated as a loss, not just economically, but also in the sense that presents a social problem. It mirrors what some writers have stated, that labour is considered instrumental in providing stability and discipline, and as a consequence it provides people with an essential social identity (Bowring 1997, 102). Lacking this stake in a community, young men, and to a lesser extent women, are at risk of turning to alcohol or crime and thereby becoming a threat to the community cohesion. Having and holding job are thus essential in the process to raise people who come to Orania with next to nothing, also inspired by the fact that Orania is in no financial position to provide people with sustained subsidies. Communitarians have long been supportive of this idea, Etzioni (1993, 113) suggested for example a year of national service following high

school, spend either in the armed forces or with relevant NGO's. It would provide youngsters with what Etzioni regarded as meaningful work, avoiding the demoralization of unemployment and giving them the opportunity to develop both their skillset and their character. It would also thoroughly mix people across lines of class-based, ethnical and regional boundaries, overcoming differences in the process. Together with the notion of *inskakelen* this makes Orania approach the ideal of the 'new golden rule' that Etzioni (1996, 12) advocated, which demands that "the tension between one's preference and one's social commitments be reduced by increasing the realm of duties one affirms as moral responsibilities – not the realm of duties that are forcibly imposed but the realm of responsibilities one believes one should discharge and that one believes one is fairly called upon to assume". Orania does not force its inhabitants to do a certain job, or to contribute to the community as a volunteer, but it counts on its inhabitants to intrinsically want to do this. This is the flame that Orania is trying to kindle, the awareness of people that they want to build towards a city, or a *Volkstaat*, even in minor ways such as helping out at the schools or participating in a safety patrol.

Looking at it from an abstract level there seems to exist a certain opposition between owning property on the one hand, and performing labour on the other. In case of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring, those who lack the ability to acquire their own property, such as permanent housing in the community, are effectively making up for this with their position as labourer. Due to the shareholder system this however undermines the ability of people to become an integrated community member, meaning they have to prove their loyalty in different ways. Remarkably this opposition between labour and property approaches what Karl Marx (1988) called the 'theory of alienation'. In his view capitalism drives people away from their role as autonomous workers, forcing them to become reliant on their labour for their survival. Whereas humans could previously survive through their access to natural resources, this relationship has now been severed twice, first by the job that one has to do to gain money, and then again by the means for one's subsistence which are acquired with this money. This implies that, because the worker needs money to survive, he can only survive as a worker. Instead of fulfilling his human nature the worker is reduced to a tool for the accumulation of more wealth. Workers are no longer in control of their own destiny, and instead are directed by those in charge of the means of production, while the labour power is commodified into a

reduced exchange value (wages) that alienates the worker from the actual value of their own labour. It is however difficult to pinpoint to what extent the people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring felt alienated from their “human nature”, which in the context of Orania could feasibly be the moral voice that they as members of the community are supposed to listen to. Not having access to the property of their labour did undoubtedly put them in a marginalized position, in which they had nothing to their name but their value as workers in service of the community, especially to those who did own their own property. This was then further compounded by lacking truly equal access to the process of democratic deliberation compared to property owners. This is not to say that Orania is not willing to engage with this opposition between property and labour, as various projects in the community aim to assist people with acquiring property for themselves, such as small loans for those workers that have proven to be loyal and committed to Orania.

In his own assessment of the relevance of labour to the community, Henry Tam (1998, 85) arrives at a similar conclusion, establishing that labour is a necessity for inclusive communities for three reasons. Not only does it convert resources into necessary goods and services, but it also generates income that allows greater autonomy in the process of political deliberation, and lastly also secures a measure of fulfilment in the lives of people. Especially the latter, which he calls the ‘moral dimension’ of labour, highlights the importance of deriving a sense of responsibility and pride from the labour one does, ensuring that all labour in an inclusive community is regarded as worthy and in its own way, inherently valuable. Work that fails to meet this requirement, and thus is demoralizing or alienating, should not be encouraged, especially when it is still generating an increase in wealth (Id., 88). If there is no meaningful relation between the task of a worker and the product that is being produced the workforce will effectively become alienated from the core values of the community, creating a moral disinterest and a disinterest in participation. This means that an inclusive community should not just strive to provide work for everyone, but should ensure that there is sufficient integrated, or rewarding work. This is especially relevant considering the nature of Orania’s *selfwerksaamheid*, which made the conscious choice to move away from the reliance on non-Afrikaner labour for reasons of inequality, but to some extent replaced this with Afrikaner labourers. The sentiment that Elim men work like “*kaffers*” raises the question to what extent they are experiencing structural social inequality, which would ultimately negate the idea of



social egalitarianism in the Orania community. While this extreme sentiment might sometimes be misplaced, the fact that discussion about *selfwerksaamheid* does not engage on an ideological level with the inherent inequality of attracting low-income workers with very limited social mobility is raising questions and undermining the ideal of equality. This might then be one explanation for the lack of pride people seem to get from manual labour when they speak of it as “*kaffer*” labour. This could then furthermore partially explain their lack of engagement with the community at large, which seems to complicate the task of *inskakelen*.

### **Engagement with societal differences**

The rich Afrikaner history we have seen in previous chapters is perhaps most remarkable because it never properly addresses societal differences within the Afrikaner ranks. Both during crises times and glory days, the Afrikaner is presented as an united *volk*, fighting for freedom and self-determination. Political leaders might clash at times, but these are only distractions for the path that the Afrikaner has been walking and should continue to walk. Even when socio-economic differences came into play, such as extreme Afrikaner poverty, these could still be addressed from a position of political power that made it possible to limit their lasting impact, to the point where their treatment would in fact lay the foundation for the unity displayed for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shifting ahead to the present day Afrikaners once again find themselves with substantial societal differences, but as a relatively small minority they have far less means to engage with them. It is a challenge not unique to Orania, as critics of communitarianism have previously addressed how historical nostalgia can cover up the uneven distribution of power within a community (Newman & De Zoysa 1997, 630-631). In these cases communitarianism tends to avoid non-conformity or even oppress diversity, instead of enabling debate between interest groups with different points of view. Etzioni (1996, 130) treats this conservatism as an important distinction between authoritarian and responsive communitarianism, whereby the former attempts to recreate traditional communities with an emphasis on values pertaining to family, religion, authority and stratification, while the latter seek open participation and dialogue among its members to construct new, contemporary shared values. Other critics have added to this that the common good cannot just be born from a pre-supposed cultural hegemony, since such general conceptions can potentially undermine the disadvantaged people in a community and leaves them no means to change the consensus (Yar 2003, 112). As we have seen previously, such

monolithic communities lead to conformism, where shared values take precedence over individualism, and power elites within the community take on an authoritarian role (Etzioni 2015, 623-624).

In case of the United States Etzioni (1996, 193-195) sees how increasing heterogeneity has resulted in a rise of strife and conflict, undermining the ability of the community in accordance with his golden rule. Meanwhile the forces that could resist this development, such as a national curriculum, national media and opportunities to mix with other citizens have been weakened as a result of an ever increasing emphasis on autonomy. Much like Orania, Etzioni is also critical of cultural assimilation attempts, as these all too often result in a way too forceful application in name of multiculturalism (Id., 195-196). Upon the question if a nation truly needs a core identity, unitary and unique, or can also exist in a pluralist fashion, Etzioni chooses the former, emphasising that such 'shared substantive values' do not have to be rigid or unchangeable, as long as they are built on seven core elements (Id., 199-210). Firstly democracy needs to be applied as an ingrained value, rather than a procedure, as this is despite its weaknesses still the best tool to overcome differences. Secondly there needs to be a constitution in place that embodies and defends a set of core values. Thirdly Etzioni speaks of layered loyalties, in which someone is both committed to the immediate community (which is influenced by self-interest), as well as the encompassing community that describes a vaguer sense of belonging. Fourthly there needs to be a measure of respect and tolerance for other cultures besides the appreciation for one's own culture, at least as long as these do not violate the defined set of core values. Fifthly there exists the need to limit the extent of identity politics, preventing people from defining themselves by a singular social status, as this blinds them from the reality that status allegiances are almost always multiple and overlapping. Sixthly there is the necessity to facilitate moral dialogues in such a way that they are both accessible to the community, yet are not allowed to escalate to the point of unbridgeable differences. Lastly Etzioni speaks about reconciliation, which can take away existing emotions of resentment and hate in order to serve as a new beginning for a clean slate.

Orania in its current form seems to hover somewhere in the middle of these factors, and the shortcomings among them might be one possible explanation that gives insight in the struggle experienced by the people in Elim, Nerina and to a lesser extent Soetdoring. On the one hand Orania is driven to instil its inhabitants with appreciation for archetypical Afrikaner

values, asking them to tell the story of their past, to educate themselves and to live up to the legacies of their ancestors, while on the other hand there is room for dialogue that, albeit limited, tries to provide everyone with a voice in the community. While this provides more established, or settled inhabitants with great flexibility in the extent to which they associate themselves with Orania, for the people at Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring it is however less obvious to what extent their voices are being included into the actual policies that would also allow them to recognize themselves in the broader communitarian views of the community. This raises the question, how should a communitarian community approach individual vulnerabilities such as poverty, and what potential charitable actions would be the best for the common good? Communitarians have generally rallied against the liberalist idea that individuals have the ability to lift themselves up, regardless of the severity of their hardships, since this leaves those who fail to do so as victims who are left to fend for themselves (Tam 1998, 129-130). Communitarianism differs from this approach in that it intends to empower all citizens, by providing a community-wide safety net where individual misfortune can be overcome with the aid of others. This does however require an independent assessment of realistic vulnerabilities, in order to assure that public funding goes to the actual risks, and not politically motivated interests (Id. 130-132). Ultimately a communitarian community should strive to elevate individuals above a level of meaningful existence, rather than basic survival, as the latter would only ensure that a person will have no upwards social mobility. Consequently they would be unable to do their bit to help others in the community and have to pay for this with increasing mistrust and criticism for being a drain on the community (Id., 136). Unless such a meaningful, fundamental level can be achieved among all members there is bound to be strife and fragmentation as some people will be forced take responsibility for others, who in turn will be unable to return the favour.

### **Skewed power distributions**

One issue that seemed to affect people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring to various degrees is their relatively vulnerable position as new members in an otherwise firmly established community, even though the reasons for this feeling differed between people. For the men in Elim it was largely the financial impasse in which they were working manual jobs with limited

prospects for an improved future, while people in Nerina and Soetdoring felt more isolated, unsure how they could fit in with the established structures of power in the community. It gave me the impression that these people were not so much living in complete isolation, since everyone had their own social circle, but with a strong sense of atomization, in that they, as individuals, struggled to find an attachment to the values important to Orania as a community. Being squeezed into the direction that is aspired by Orania meant that people lacked the freedom to deviate to other, perhaps also meaningful paths, whereas not having a formal vote left people without real means to engage with the status quo. This skewed power distribution is a feminist criticism not unknown to communitarianism, whose ideas can relatively easily be construed as a structure of domination and subordination (Tam 1998, 224-225). In response to this Tam suggests that any communitarian community should embrace the fact that there are various forms of community life by acknowledging that the goal of maximum individual growth can only be achieved in a state of equal power distributions that accommodate open communication and evaluated reform.

Etzioni regards such dominance of what he calls power elites a reflection of the shortcomings of a communitarian community, as it shows that not all community members are fully committed to a set of core values. If members are excluded or feel ignored they will almost certainly push back against the flow in an anti-social manner (Etzioni 2015, 624). In case of Orania this can be seen by the extent to which the community goes to educate its inhabitants, not just through its internalized social control and formal rules, but as we can for example see with Senbel, also through employee-employer relationships. For Etzioni (1998, 43-44) this represents a sliding scale, where it can be reasonable for an organisation or company to make certain demands of their employees (for example with regards to alcohol use), possibly even in their private time, but these requirements must at all times be relatable to the performance of the job. Beyond that “corporate morality” as he calls it, tends to become puritanism that invades on the private lives of the individual. According to Etzioni the only resolution comes when a community decides to live up to the idea behind responsive communitarianism, or alternatively, abandons the core values all together. It is a potential risk that resonates with what Charles Taylor labelled fragmentation, in which people increasingly lose sight of the common purpose bonding them together (Taylor 1998, 50-51). According to him such a development can grow spontaneously, from collisions such as we have seen in the

previous chapter, but also from gradual, self-propelling rifts in which failing democracies entice people to increasingly partial and diffused groupings. This does not have to erode the sense of egalitarianism or political activity in a community, but it does tend to make the leadership seem like a distant and huge construct that one cannot mobilize against, resulting in a loss of sympathy and increase in apathy. Henry Tam (1998, 239-243) therefore considers it critical that the *principle of co-operative enquiry*, which was addressed in the previous chapter needs to be based on a *principle of citizen participation*. This means that “everyone affected by a given power structure must be able to participate as equal citizens in determining how the power in question is to be exercised”. He goes as far as stating that the moral culture within a community, which encourages people to care for each other, cannot evolve if individuals are locked out of the opportunity to work towards a common good.

Ultimately the choice to stay, or to leave, is one that is inherent to every communitarian community, which Bennett (1975, 83) described as a “chronic opportunity cost problem”, where the struggle of a communal existence can easily make the grass seem greener on the other side. Working towards collective goals does tend to place a greater burden on a person than the immediate gratification of individual desires, and in the opposition between South Africa and Orania the two are very diametrically opposed. A life outside of Orania tends to provide higher wages, more opportunities and luxuries and much easier access to certain services and goods, which are more difficult to find in or around Orania. More than once people described how the move to Orania had come with a changing sense of materialism, in which they had to make a huge investment to move to Orania, but in exchange for that financial cost they had now found intrinsic belonging to their Afrikaner roots. Others would reason in the opposite direction, evaluating the safety and relaxed lifestyle of Orania against the possible opportunity of higher wages or a life closer to family elsewhere in South Africa. As a result Bennett wondered if a communitarian community was inherently temporary by its very nature, bound to wither away back into the individualist and largely disconnected societies it originally tried to oppose.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was directed at the structural diversity of Orania’s inhabitants of Orania can actually be. There is the obvious story, made up by what can be regarded as the power elites

of Orania, the people with a long history in the community, political influence, a good understanding of the core values and a prominent position in many of the town's institutions. Yet there are also the people with a much smaller footprint in the community, whose lives are mainly governed by working and the immediate needs of everyday life. The people in Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring are good examples of this. In many ways they lead very ordinary lives, with jobs that pay the bills, children to take care of and a future to look forward to. Most of them are content in the Orania community, praising it for its safety, its schools and the opportunities it provides them with. But they also find themselves with the challenge to live up to Orania's aspirations to be more than just a town, which asks of them to do their part to make the communitarian values come to life. It is a challenge many are willing to accept, but also a challenge that might not be for everyone. Ultimately it requires people to fit in a mould that suits some better than others, leaving everybody with an inevitable choice to either live up to their status as inhabitants of Orania or to eventually move away again in search for something else. It is a choice that rarely comes easily, and as a result many people find themselves contemplating their position within Orania.

Yet as much as this makes living in Orania a challenge for its people, it is perhaps even more so a challenge for the town itself. It serves as an indication that there exist societal differences within the Orania community, and that some of these might contradict or even undermine what can be regarded as the communitarian core values of the community. As it stands Orania expects its people to adjust to the program in order to ensure that the community does not stray too far off the beaten path. From a communitarian point of view this is counter-productive however, as this excludes people from the ongoing, open debate in the community to the point where it might hamper the growth in the community as it becomes difficult for people to feel acknowledged. It might skew power in the direction of existing community members and leave new immigrants questioning how they can find their footing in the relatively atomized Orania environment. Ultimately this issue becomes even more interesting considering the sincere and realistic prospect of demographic growth in the community, which for communitarianism often raises the stakes, with *gemeinschaft* structures making way for *gesellschaft*-based alternatives. It will challenge Orania to find a way to overcome the inherent pressures of an urban environment without further skewing the distance, and consequently power balance between existing and new members in the community.

## Conclusion

At the first chapter of this thesis I mentioned how moving to another continent is in more ways than not like moving to another planet. It is a world that is similar in many ways, but endlessly different as well. Throughout this thesis I have tried to highlight this nuance in fine detail. It tells the story of a small town that in many ways is just that, a normal town where people go to work, where churchgoers meet up after the Sunday service and where children play in the streets after school. Yet at the core of this town lays a very unique community made up of people who are driven to build towards something more than just a town made up of roads and bricks. It is these people that I have tried to give a voice, in which they talked about success and struggle, achievements and crises. I have tried to find the middle ground between the story one can find in the marketing material of Orania and the often biased views portrayed in the media. I avoided the question if the ideas of Orania are right, opting instead to address how the community looks at itself, with an emphasis on how this perspective adds relevance to our theoretical understanding. Building upon previous research that positions Orania in a field of post-apartheid Afrikaner identity I felt the need to take the debate in a different, less descriptive and more analytical direction. I set myself the objective to look at the town with a communitarian angle, following the rich history that this philosophy has in its tug-of-war with political liberalism.

In the second chapter I explained why Orania makes for an excellent prototype in the communitarian debate, addressing how the mission of the town is ultimately for the extremely dispersed group of Afrikaners, a *volk* without a country to call its home, to return to their roots. It forgoes the comfort and priorities of the individual, instead providing a long road towards a yet undetermined future in which it is assumed that the Afrikaner collective as whole will be better off than it is today. This chapter explains the mantra of freedom through self-determination, in which Orania aspires to accumulate its own land, run by its own institutions and operated by Afrikaner workers who do their own labour. It is a controversial vision in post-apartheid South Africa, but at the same time also tells us that Orania is looking forwards, towards a future free from the burden of the past. These three elements, *eie land*, *eie instellings* and *eie arbeid*, make for a strong triangle that despite its hick-ups along the way has proven to be sufficiently robust to make the inhabitants of Orania believe that an independent Volkstaat, or at the very least an Afrikaner city, might one day be within reach.

In communitarian terms Orania provides its people with a foundation in which collective responsibilities can be the answer to individual aspirations for a better future. It provides the framework for an external moral voice which many residents have taken up as their personal inner moral voice, in which the alternative of Orania seems more appealing than the harsh and difficult life they could have elsewhere in South Africa.

The third chapter addresses the historical heritage that acts as the narrative for Orania's communitarian values. By taking select chapters of the rich Afrikaner history Orania manages to reinforce the idea of a *volk* that for centuries has been waging a tug-of-war to acquire its independence from outside oppression, whether this was the Dutch East India Company, the British Empire or the political dominance of the ANC since the end of apartheid. Along with the deeply ingrained Christian values of the community this heritage provides legitimacy to the idea of self-determination, while also depicting the "golden era" of the Afrikaner, in which its people stood united and were strongly invested in the values that Orania attempts to revive again in the present day. If gaining freedom and independence is the objective, then this history tells us why the people of Orania should strive for it. It provides us with a background that allows us to understand what makes Orania a communitarian community, in which history and religion are two fundamental pillars for the collective values that drive the community. It is taught in the schools, on display in the museums and kept alive through cultural events and holidays, reminding everyone that people are not in Orania as loosely connected individuals, but as one group with a centuries of common ancestry and the blessing of a higher power.

It is this notion of communitarian unity that is carefully dissected in the fourth chapter, by looking at one specific incident, which showed that internal rifts exist even in a community so united behind a single objective. While the inhabitants might agree with the idea of an independent Afrikaner community, how to design this beyond its infrastructure and bare necessities is an open question that is met with a plethora of different answers. This particular issue, of "foreign" students in Orania's own swimming pool, is one such example, where ideas about good neighbourliness and a strong urge to isolate oneself from South Africa go head to head in a developing public discourse. It shows the challenge of maintaining political unity and representation as the community grows and the demographic of Orania adapts from its early pioneers to a relatively new group of recent immigrants. This makes it an excellent example



of communitarianism in crisis, when, all noble aspirations and common values aside, people feel that their immediate sense of security is undermined and the leadership no longer has their best interest in mind. At the same time it shows an excellent example of the political deliberation process in Orania, where a communal meeting, with an open podium for all its inhabitants meant that the crises could be defused relatively quickly. On an abstract level it hints at the unavoidable nature of diverging views in a growing community, which challenges every communitarian community to make the difficult choices, without resorting to the extremes of majoritarianism or even authoritarianism. It is a reminder that no community is frozen in time, showing that they will have to evolve together with its inhabitants in order to maintain a sense of allegiance for the core values of the community.

The fifth chapter continues to look at the fringes of the communitarian ideals of the community, specifically by looking in great detail to a particular group of people who are in some ways atypical, but who are nonetheless of instrumental importance and sizeable as a group. The people living in the housing communities of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring, are on the one hand essential to Orania, forming an essential backbone as workers and new aspiring inhabitants. Yet they are also faced with the challenge of integrating into a community that expects them to live up to the core values of the community before fully accepting them as integrated members. This means that while many of them are very happy to enjoy the safety and work available to them in Orania, some are also struggling to find their place in a community that expects people to fit in a model in which one should not look down on work, regardless of the conditions, and in which one is expected to participate more so than the circumstances of daily survival might allow. For better or worse this acts as a filter for new immigrants, a litmus test to see who is suited to be a member of the Orania community, and who is not. It gives Orania the opportunity to screen its inhabitants, to keep the 'rotten apples' out and to ensure that people understand the values of the community, while it gives people a chance to prove that they are Afrikaners in more than name only. It gives us a remarkable insight in what it means to be an Afrikaner, since apparently this is not a matter of belonging, but something one has to live up to. Consequently this questions the communitarian nature of Orania from a socio-economic perspective, where the image of egalitarianism can hide the inherent heterogeneity that exists between people who are working to survive and who have

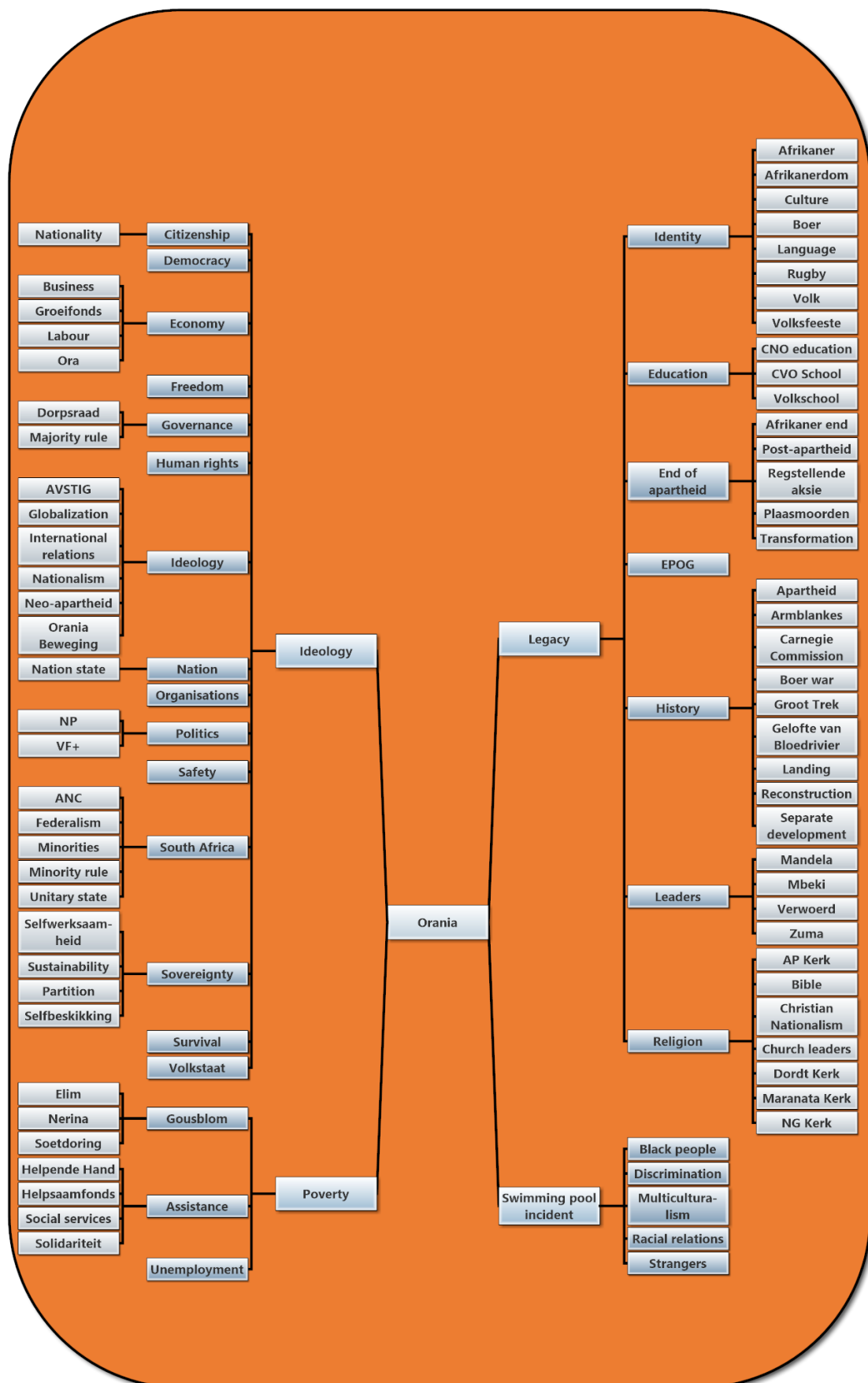
little property to their name, versus people who experience Orania from a relatively comfortable position.

If there is one lesson about communitarianism that we can take home from looking at the unique circumstances of the Orania community, it is that there is no such thing as the “perfect community”. Regardless of the rosy philosophies of communitarian authors, promising meaningful, fulfilling lives and a return to a collective, cooperative lifestyle, in the real world any implementation will always take the shape of a constant experiment, a trial and error to figure out collective core values, to give them a real world implementation and to adjust them based on the response of the community. Orania is by no means a perfect communitarian community, but it is a community that is showing that people can rally behind values that are bigger than themselves, and that these values enable them to find meaning in, and to overcome the hardships of everyday life. It shows the immense depth that can lay behind a set of values, both in the shape of a well-thought out philosophy, a history with a rich heritage and deeply ingrained religious values. This context gives people the ability to distance themselves from the here and now and to see themselves as part of a long lineage, as people striving to continue the legacy of their ancestors. In the second half of this thesis the emphasis has shifted to the apparent limitations of communitarianism, how the well-defined principles of Orania need to come to terms with a range of diverging opinions with regards to the meaning of belonging in a community. It shows us that the community is evolving over time, adapting to the pressures of a multicultural South Africa, an influx of immigrants and the ambition to be more than an isolated desert commune, but rather a city that can spearhead a country-wide development aimed at local autonomy and development. Likewise the path that new immigrants have to walk to become truly integrated members of the community, not just in name, but also in their value system shows us the challenge of consolidating a degree of unity, of encouraging participation and guaranteeing truly democratic deliberation, especially when it concerns people who are still trying to survive day to day.

This leaves the ultimate question, where to go from here? Over the course of the past 25 years Orania has become a permanent settlement in the South African landscape. It has the intention to grow to a sizeable city community, and the various building sites that were being carved out of the rocky ground by the time my fieldwork had come to an end gave me confidence that this claim will to some extent prove true in the coming years. One of the most

recent Voorgrond magazines reports about the intention to invest 180 million rand over the course of the next five years, providing more houses, infrastructure, business locations, schools and community services, while the *Helpsaamfonds* is announcing a sequel to the success of Elim, Nerina and Soetdoring that intends to provide 75 new housing units with space for an additional 225 inhabitants (Kemp 2016, 8-10). Seeing the level of organization, planning and the investments that have been made in Orania thus far no doubt this will expand economic opportunities to the benefit of the regional population, providing a broader range of goods and services and improving the quality of life for the community. But with demographic and economic growth also come changes to the social cohesion and cultural make-up of a community. Based on my fieldwork I sense that there might come a significant challenge to the preservation of what can be regarded as Orania's core values. Deeply ingrained as they are to what makes Orania, Orania, their communitarian nature nonetheless positions them at odds with a growing community that attracts a relatively mixed group of immigrants from all over South Africa. The sociological understanding of a city as strictly a *gesellschaft*, with a strong absence of community or underlying shared values seems difficult to marry with the idea of a purpose driven communitarian *gemeinschaft*. To what extent this will change the community over time only time can tell, but it is still early. Orania is in a good position to guide the process forward, to search a path that stays loyal to its values and yet is adaptive enough to accommodate new influences.

## Appendix A



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