Schools and religious communities’ contributions to the religious formation of Christian youth

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Abstract
This article questions the implications of tribal forms of religious socialisation for (religious) schools’ and communities’ contributions to the religious formation of Christian youth. It clarifies that the religious education of a new generation of young Christians requires authorities and communities to connect in a worldwide pedagogical space that includes contemporary participating youth. This argument is made against the background of the Dutch case, where young Christians grow up in a de-institutionalised world increasingly influenced by multi-religious and secular voices.

Keywords
Socialisation; Youth; Religious Education; Christianity; Community; Authority
1. Introduction

In the article ‘Beyond individualism: Neo-evangelical lessons for religious socialisation,’ Johan Roeland, Pieter Vos, and I argued that young Christians may be less individualised than has been suggested by current literature, and that the religious socialisation of youth often takes place in tribal forms of sociality, i.e. new forms of communal religious life, such as religious events, festivals, concerts, media, and online communities (De Kock et al., 2011). This brings us to the question of this article: how do religious schools and communities contribute to the religious formation of Christian youth? The argument I will develop is placed against the background of current political and societal debates on the position of religious schools in the Netherlands. Also, my argument considers the broader issue of institutions contributing to the religious formation of a new generation of Christian youth who are growing up in a de-institutionalised world that is increasingly influenced by multi-religious and secular voices.

A central theme in my analysis is the concept of socialisation. The argument of this article is developed starting from the assumption that socialisation and religious socialisation in particular of a next generation is a good thing. In section two of this article, I explore three ideal types of socialisation: traditional socialisation, modern socialisation, and tribal socialisation. I posit that in the current Dutch context, forms of tribal socialisation are particularly important for Christian faith communities. In section three, I discuss the religious formation of Christian youth and the expected contribution from (religious) schools. In section four, I consider the contribution of Christian faith communities. In section five, I integrate insights drawn from sections three and four into a discussion of a double movement of the religious formation of Christian youth. The article ends with a conclusion in section six.

I will briefly highlight the dual educational system established in the Netherlands, thereby providing a proper understanding of the political and social background of religious formation in the Netherlands. Almost a century ago, a system of government funding and monitoring was established for public as well as private (religious) education. Renkema (forthcoming) explains that the dual system is strongly related to the so-called pillarized society of the Netherlands (segmented into “pillars” based on differing faiths or ideologies), resulting in the present educational system harbouring a large variety of schools, each with their own distinct values and principles. “The pillarization of the Dutch society got a strong impetus after 1917 when the controversy about school funding was settled by the Pacification Act: the equal financial treatment within the Dutch dual educational system of state schools and denominational (private) schools” (Miedema, 2013: 236). The pillarized educational system reached its height in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century (Ter Avest et al., 2007).

‘Within each ‘pillar’ every school has its own culture, related to its ‘well-considered convictions’ such as implicit or explicit opinions about ‘the good life’, the ideal person, the ideal child, the good society, and what the transcendental or God is like” (Ter Avest et al.: 209). Both public and a variety of private (largely ideologically-based) schools exist in the Dutch context. Thus, the formation of youth has been dependent on the existence of ideologically differentiated types of schools, each representing a different worldview.

2. Individualised young people, a de-institutionalised world, and tribal forms of sociality

In the past decade in Dutch society, there has been an increase in multiculturalism, multi-religiosity, and secularity in public and political debates concerning the role of religion in public life. In particular, this is the case in educational settings, where it is necessary to address how an issue relates to the role of religion in people’s private lives and religious communities. One prominent concept that we can use to analyse this phenomenon is individualisation.

I assume a relationship between individualisation and Bauman’s account of the ‘liquidation’ of modern society, whereby social de-institutionalisation is accompanied by individualisation, which is both a consequence and cause of the further erosion of established institutionalised patterns (Bauman, 2005). Structurally speaking, individualisation refers to the weakening or loss of ties and bonds between individuals, or in other words—a loss of community. Culturally speaking, individualisation denotes the loss of authority of shared frameworks of meaning. This is a consequence of the erosion of these frameworks and the rise of modern individualism, which prioritises individuality and authenticity above collectivity and conformity (Taylor, 1989, 2007; De Kock et al., 2011).

In particular, processes of individualisation and de-institutionalisation in the religious domain have come to challenge the legitimacy of religious pedagogy and religious education as a discipline. These challenges flow from a loss of community and meaningful frameworks. Our reflections on religious learning processes and religious upbringing should concentrate more on the properties of change in a context that has become decoupled from institutions or exists outside of them. Learning is
now also becoming individualised. Religious learning has become less organised or controlled by institutions like the Christian school or church; instead, religious learning is a fluid process in which the individual is at the steering wheel of his or her formation vehicle, selecting input from sources other than their own family, church, or school. Today, social media has become an unmistakably important platform on which the heated exchange of religious views and affections takes place. Given these societal changes, we see a contextual evolution from static to dynamic religious formations of Christian youth.

In the present Dutch context, forms of tribal religious socialisation have increased in importance for Christian faith communities and religious schools. De Kock et al. (2011) have already observed tribal socialisation among youth in neo-evangelical movements in Dutch Christianity. Tribal religious socialisation can be distinguished from traditional and modern religious socialisation, as elaborated by De Kock et al. (2011), as well as De Kock and Sonnenberg (2012). Traditional socialisation conceptualises religious socialisation as a transmission of Christian faith to the next generation (see also Vermeer, 2009). The authority in these socialisation processes is externally situated in the religious tradition and with representatives of that tradition. Modern forms of socialisation (De Kock et al., 2011) focus centrally on raising children by supporting the development of their personal identity. Now, the emphasis is on supporting the individual’s development of their religious identity. The authority here is to be found internally—within the young people themselves. The ideological focus in modern socialisation is on clarification (cf. Raths et al., 1986). The emphasis on self-actualisation and the approach of clarifying values can be labelled as a kind of expressivism (Van der Ven, 1998).

Next to traditional and modern approaches, tribal socialisation is a third relevant approach. The term ‘tribal’ here, and throughout the remainder of the article, is used in a neutral sense; ‘tribal’ is not used with negative connotations like primitiveness or uncritical loyalty, but rather to indicate the important role of group experience. Theories on tribal socialisation point to the relevance of the experiential practice of faith; it is concerned with what is felt and sensed rather than merely a cognitive acceptance of faith. The authority in this type of socialisation is intersubjective. The authoritative figure can be an individual who, by expressing his close relationship with God, becomes authoritative. Following Maffesoli (1996), this phenomenon can be typified as tribalism, emphasising the worth of the social group that is loosely organised around shared lifestyles, tastes, interests, and affinities or the desire to be together. The ideal of authenticity is at the heart of tribal socialisation and the ideological focus is on communication. Individuals bring their values and beliefs into a communicative process. In this third model, the affective dimension of the communication process is also stressed. Teachers or youth leaders in church can participate in the communication process with their authority not primarily based on their positions as leaders, but on their authenticity and charisma.

3. The position of religious schools
What are the implications for religious schools, given these forms of tribal religious socialisation? The context surrounding this question is often formed by a forceful caricature of the roles of faith and religion in schools, for example, that religious education is a form of indoctrination linked with a particular faith community. There is another claim which states that religious education is merely passing on factual information about religions and ideologies to youth (Wardekker and Miedema, 2001b: 25). In contrast with this rather unsound depiction, Wardekker and Miedema (2001b) make an argument for taking the development of the whole person into account by viewing the pupils as active and participating subjects.

Significantly, Wardekker and Miedema have pointed not merely to the active roles of pupils but also to their participating roles. As a reaction to more traditional views of pupils and their (religious) socialisation (sometimes labelled ‘indoctrination’), they propose a modern view of pupils’ socialisation (see section 2), in which a pupil becomes an active, autonomous constructor of their own (religious) identity. Adding the pupils’ participating role to the debate means shifting the focus toward (shared) practices in the (religious) development of youth, in which pupils are living, learning, and reciprocally influencing one another. The participating role of pupils echoes a more tribal view of pupils’ religious socialisation.

The first implication of tribal religious socialisation for (religious) schools is quite clear: forms of tribal religious socialisation challenge schools that are following traditional forms of socialisation and strictly modern conceptions of religious socialisation. The reaction from traditional schools is obvious. One of the observed strategies (see De Kock, 2012b) of orthodox, faith-based schools is to (re)strengthen the relationships between the school, the pupils’ families, and their churches (as
represented in the school board). Their aim is to work together to form religious identities in a coherent way and to pass traditions on to the next generation. This strategy leans on a traditional socialisation concept, giving tradition a position of authority and using the process of transmission as a focal point. In doing so, the school serves as a counterweight to developments such as multi-religiosity and secularity while moving toward de-institutionalisation. Viewed a certain way, this strategy is fighting tribal forms of religious socialisation. This is done, for example, by taking tradition as a starting point for religious education instead of the life of young people (individually or as a group). Or, more didactically, by focusing on cognitive-oriented processes of religious learning instead of participatory processes, which centre on learning by doing and experiencing.

Furthermore, forms of tribal religious socialisation challenge schools that are leaning on a strictly modern conception of religious socialisation. The modern strategy involves leaving the development of religious identity outside of the school and in private life. This strategy of abstaining can be observed in both denominational (private) and state schools. Whereas orthodox faith-based schools are willing to be confessional in all aspects of school life, modern schools pursue some secular ideals in school life. Following the ideological notion that religious education can too easily lead to indoctrination, the role of the modern school becomes informing pupils, on a factual level, about various religions and ideologies. In this strategy, the starting point is the autonomy of pupils' religious development. The school’s role of clarification is in line with more modern conceptions of religious socialisation.

The modern strategy, in a way, excludes tribal forms of religious socialisation. It does so by viewing the pupil as a religious or a-religious individual rather than as participating in a (religious) community that may overlap with in-school communities. Also, it is characteristic to view the teacher as merely a coach for pupils’ religious learning, instead of serving as an authentic source of inspiration for that pupil’s religious development. At most, the school’s role is to help pupils to comprehend the core of ideological and religious traditions and to develop a sensibility for the religious dimensions of reality (Van der Zee, 2010; Alii, 2009); there is no room for tribal socialisation.

Thus far, I have portrayed an antithesis between more traditional or modern oriented (faith-based) schools and tribal forms of religious socialisation. Yet, we can also inquire about the consequences of Christian schools incorporating principles of tribal religious socialisation. This question leads to three kinds of answers concerning what transpires on the level of teachers, the school, and the “trans-school”.

Tribal religious socialisation can be applied in schools by using the teacher as a starting point. Tribal religious socialisation requires that the teacher invests in relationships with pupils, is present in pupils’ networks, and demonstrates his or her religious outlooks, affects, and actions in daily school life. The teacher serves as an authentic, charismatic source of inspiration with whom pupils can identify. In this scenario, tribal socialisation occurs in the relationship between the individual teacher and one or more willing pupils in the classroom who desire that connection. The responsibility for religious socialisation is now attributed to the individual teacher; it is not necessarily equally shared among the teaching staff or applied in the same manner by other teachers. In this model, the individual teacher is much more important for religious socialisation than the school as an institution. Defining tribal religious socialisation on the level of the individual teacher means that Christian formation is possible beyond Christian schools. Also, multi-religious, inter-religious, inter-worldview, or cooperation schools can be adequate environments for the process of Christian formation, where pupils from different backgrounds can learn to live, work, play, and learn together (Miedema, 2013: 238). In this respect, Castelli (2012: 213) introduces a pedagogy of faith dialogues which entails seriousness, humility, hesitation, articulation, and imagination.

A second focus is what transpires on the level of the school. When tribal religious socialisation is applied at the school level, taking the perspective of the school as an organisation, other kinds of consequences can be observed. We not only see individual teachers as authentic sources of inspiration, but we can also observe that among teachers and students in (Christian) schools, there exists a sense of solidarity and commonly lived religious practices in school life. Furthermore, there are religious practices in which teachers and students participate as part of a school task focused on religious socialisation. These religious practices are not bound to a specific Christian subgenre or church tradition, but are more fluid, flexible, and even anti-institutional. The school as a whole then serves as a kind of tribe. The individual teacher and the school (as a Christian institution) become stakeholders.

This raises the question of whether a traditional pillarized school should be regarded as a tribe, or whether the school and tribe would be equivalent. There are two important differences in comparison with the concept of tribal socialisation as proposed in this article. First, the tribal life of a traditional pillarized school is tightly connected to a particular ecclesial tradition, and often has a
confessional basis with consequences for relationships between teachers and students. This phenomenon contrasts with the notion of tribal socialisation at schools proposed here: our model is much more loosely coupled with church traditions and is more open to faith diversity at the levels of teacher and student. Second, traditional pillarized schools are also characterised by (sub)cultural homogeneity when it comes to the family and church life of both students and teachers, whereas the schools following tribal socialisation are characterised by much more (sub)cultural plurality. These schools are actively striving to meet the (religious and cultural) ‘other’ in the school, classroom, and beyond.

The third focus is on the trans-school level. This entails widening the concept of a tribe to include a maximally fluid and trans-local community, sometimes even a virtual community of individual believers in which Christian schools can potentially still play a socialising role. When taking a trans-school view, various actors may be involved including traditional/orthodox faith-based schools, schools applying tribal socialisation principles on the school level, and individual Christian teachers working in state and private schools. They are all actors performing together as religious pedagogues and possibly doing so simultaneously “in the cloud”—that is, the de-institutionalised Christian community in which young Christians are growing up and in which other pedagogues (e.g. church leaders, parents, and peers) are involved. The implication of these forms of tribal socialisation is being aware of a Christian community or tribe beyond institutional, organisational, or visible borders. Clearly, whether it is on the teacher, school, or trans-school level, forms of tribal socialisation challenge both traditional and modern religious education. Castelli (2012: 209) circumscribes the challenge this way: “Whatever the position taken on the contested notion of a post-secular society, the religious education classroom cannot ignore tensions within and between religions and between religion and a secularist view of the world if one of the tasks of education is helping young people understand themselves and the world they inhabit.” With this pedagogical aim, tribal socialisation is not directed towards indoctrination but towards authenticity, communication (both verbal and multisensory), active personal involvement, and participation. Castelli (2012: 210) suggests that “An encounter through dialogue will entail change if only a growth in an understanding of the other. Self and the other may not be seeking assimilation or domination but neither are they totally detached or unchanged by the encounter.”

4. The position of Christian faith communities

What implications might these forms of tribal religious socialisation have for Christian faith communities? The context surrounding this question is the ongoing debate on the function of the church as a learning community. The learning that occurs in the Christian church community can be understood as one of its basic functions (De Kock and Verboom, 2011: 272). This learning may be more or less organised, for example, in catechesis practices or Bible study groups. Also, informal learning occurs in the daily practices of the church community. Therefore, the Christian church community is often seen in its ideal form as a learning community. The concept of the church as a learning community refers to intergenerational learning, learning through encounters, learning in everyday life, and emancipatory learning. This requires individuals to take responsibility for learning from each other and their community (De Kock et al., forthcoming).

The central principle of learning in the church community is learning as an intergenerational process (see De Kock et al., forthcoming). Shared religious practices in church and family life function as the cornerstone for this type of learning (see also Alii, 2009: 18-19). In the Netherlands, the challenge for the majority of church communities is the loss of community in church life. This has occurred as a result of general societal tendencies towards individualisation and de-institutionalisation. This social pattern challenges more than just practical church life; it also challenges religious pedagogy and religious education as a discipline within the church.

Evidence of religious learning by church members can be found outside of the church, or loosely coupled with local church institutions and communal life. Examples include spontaneous activities by young people, service trips, festivals, and different kind of networks—both physical and digital. An examination of these examples reveals that forms of tribal religious learning ground the religious learning processes. Analogous to what transpires at school, forms of tribal religious socialisation challenge Christian faith communities. In particular, these forms challenge church institutions in faith communities with strictly traditional or modern views of religious learning practices.

Elsewhere (De Kock, 2012b, 2014) I distinguish between three models of religious socialisation in church communities that serve my argument: behavioural, developmental, and apprenticeship models. In a behavioural model, pastors, youth leaders, catechists, or parents instruct young people as to what things should be learned and how and then these instructions are followed.
Catechists, in this model, will direct the content of lessons—generally drawn from a catechism—thereby aiming, in the words of Westerhoff (1987: 584), “to acquire knowledge and skills considered necessary and useful to Christian life.” In a strategic reaction to de-institutionalisation and secularisation tendencies, churches might structure a youth’s learning activities along the lines of this behavioural model. The behavioural model stands in opposition to tribal forms of religious socialisation by situating religious authorities at the level of the institution and not allowing them at the level of the living community and its members. A related feature is building a community with clear boundaries, which constitute institutional boundaries, instead of building more flexible and (external) networks linked to certain communities of believers.

In a developmental model, youth leaders, catechists, or parents are engaged in questioning, contradicting, or even challenging a youth’s personal (religious) theories. The young members of the church are coached by the elders, in the words of Westerhoff (1987: 583), “to reflect on experience in the light of Christian faith and life.” Though not necessarily about the church/faith tradition, the questions generated by young people are directing learning processes in the church. The faith community is not directed toward a transmission of communal learning, but toward the primacy of individual learning based on the personal interests of individual church members.

The developmental model excludes tribal forms of religious socialisation. This is evident when the church defines itself as a provider of spiritual goods serving a religious market of individuals who are searching for significance and meaning. This would preclude defining itself as an accessible, flexible, community that binds together individuals in a communal life with shared interests, ideals, and responsibilities. A related feature involves taking the individual truth claims of youth as a starting point for learning processes, instead of drawing from claims of communally shared (religious) truth.

Thus far, I have established that tribal forms of religious socialisation are challenging Christian faith communities that heavily lean on either behavioural or developmental models of religious learning. The urgency is apparent when determining the consequences for churches that are incorporating principles of tribal religious socialisation. To further outline these consequences, I will introduce the third model of religious socialisation mentioned above (De Kock, 2012b, 2014).

The apprenticeship model views church life as one shared world, i.e. the faith community. The community consists of both experts and novices. For example, an expert may be the catechist who has considerable faith proficiencies and attempts to model his expertise in a living faith world. The novice, a catechumen, then learns by participating in this faith world and imitating the activities of the catechist. The apprenticeship model is, as Westerhoff (1987) notes, about experiencing the Christian faith and life. The roles of expert and novice are not stable, but can change over time and in different situations. In this model, even little children can be perceived as experts, for example, when it comes to having a basic trust in God. The apprenticeship model of religious socialisation in faith communities strongly supports the ideal of a church as a faith community and a learning community (De Kock, 2012a). The apprenticeship model thereby reflects many of the principles of tribal religious socialisation. So what could this indicate for churches that incorporate principles of tribal and apprenticeship religious socialisation?

The first consequence can be clearly observed in neighbourhoods in the Netherlands over the past decade. Partly rooted in a dissatisfaction with traditional and institutionally organised church communities, people have started local initiatives to build up small faith communities as an alternative to churches, for instance, in a house or on a particular street. These communities are like little tribes through which people from the same living area and with the same (religious) interests come and live together. These communities were partly realised as a result of missionary initiatives, where one of the goals is to share the Christian life and gospel with non- or other-believing people. These communities can be understood as an ecclesial alternative or a church form existing alongside traditional institutions. Another example of alternative communities can be found on the Internet. Internet churches or digital/virtual faith communities are an alternative way to have a church experience with one another.

A second consequence is that traditional or institutionally organised churches are being revitalised according to tribal principles. The most important indicator of this development is the increased focus on church small groups. Church communities are investing more and more in forming small groups of young people involved in service initiatives. Another example is that churches are organising pastoral care as small group care, in which certain church members are responsible for the pastoral care of several families. Explicit attention is also paid to role models in the church community; they are given an opportunity to take on an educating role in church life.

A third consequence is found at the “trans-church” level. Analogous to the trans-school level (see section 3 above), on a trans-church level the tribal concept is widened. It entails being maximally fluid and trans-local, sometimes involving a virtual community of individual believers formed by a
network of representatives from traditional churches, revitalised churches, and members of new local or virtual communities. Young Christians may be connected with this trans-church community, for example via social network sites, other network connections, or through peers or youth leaders in their local church communities. While connected with this trans-church community, Christian youth may become inspired by debates, positions, or the examples of their peers, and may learn from model (charismatic) figures from around the world. In this way, a new de-institutionalised, worldwide pedagogical space is formed in which a new generation of Christian youth is being cultivated. The implication of these forms of tribal socialisation is the awareness among local pastors and youth workers that there is a Christian (and church) community or tribe which moves beyond institutional, organisational, or visible borders.

5. Religious formation of Christian youth: a double movement

What can be observed when the insights developed in the previous sections are integrated, that is, the position of (religious) schools and the position of Christian faith communities? In this section, I take my analysis one step further, elaborating the consequences of tribal forms of religious socialization one has to take into account as alternatives next to traditional and modern forms.

We observe a double movement in the religious formation of Christian youth: on the one hand, a movement from the institution (be it a church or a Christian school) to the individual believer in a particular local context; on the other hand, a movement from the institution to the trans-institutional, fluid, potentially global or virtual context.

The first movement is the result of the individualisation process (see section 2), where religious life is increasingly considered to be a personal or individual matter instead of a communal and institutional one. At the same time, a need for togetherness and connectedness is expressed, which is sought at a particular or private, local level. This is loosely coupled with, or detached from, institutional life, or it is sought out on a trans-institutional level in the form of global (communities of) Christianity, as supported by new (social) media techniques.

In understanding the second movement, we must realise that at a trans-institutional level the concept of a tribe is widened, becoming maximally fluid and trans-local and sometimes including virtual communities of individual believers. Participants in this community include Christian schools and institutional churches, as well as individuals, such as Christian teachers, pastors, youth workers, and parents; all can play a role in the “cloud of pedagogues”. Applying forms of tribal socialisation means being aware that a Christian community can be conceived as a tribe, going beyond institutional, organisational, or visible borders which (loosely) connect individual believers and particular local, de-institutionalised communities.

The double movement in religious formation also confronts the role of Christian schools and churches as organisations/institutions. What role might they (continue to) play in the religious upbringing of a new generation of Christian youth? Following my analysis thus far, I posit two scenarios. One, the role of institutions (be it Christian schools or churches) is decreasing and will eventually fade away. Or two, which is a much more interesting and realistic option, institutions will have a powerfully renewed role in religious formation at local and trans-institutional levels. The latter function entails a two-fold supporting role: (1) providing for authorities in the worldwide pedagogical space, and (2) providing for or supporting (new) religious communities.

The need for authorities among youth can be expected to grow from modern tendencies of socialisation in general and religious socialisation in particular. What is true, what is worthwhile, and what is right is continually subject to debate. Not only are youth constructing their own (religious) positions in life, so are their elders and the people surrounding them; they are all continuously developing and changing their positions. As a result, there is a growing need for stable authorities who can serve as anchor points for the identity development of young Christians. Tribal tendencies, with regard to socialisation in general and religious socialisation in particular, will often lead to communities of peers instead of multi/intergenerational communities. This leads to a particular need for an older generation of authorities.

Vermeer (2009) explains that denominational schools “have two important contributions to make. Their religious affiliation not only enables them to introduce their students to a specific body of religio-cultural elements, but as living representatives of a particular religious tradition they also present these elements as meaningful” (Vermeer, 2009: 207). In these schools, teachers are more than facilitators for a youth’s individual religious quests. They are religious authorities—living representatives of a particular religious tradition participating in the lives of young people. The same is true for parents, pastors, and youth workers, as argued by Roebben (1997: 334, using the word ‘authority’ here in the sense of authoritative): “… in order to strengthen the agency pole of the young person, a confrontation is needed with other convincing agencies such as educators and parents.
Their strength does not lie in their authority but in their wisdom, their authenticity, their affirmation of the contingency of every life project (included their own), their capacity to criticize and relativize the impact of media, and their openness to the stories of young people who are looking for a good life."

Hence, young people benefit from associating with older generations that invest in their relationships with pupils by being present in their networks and by showing their religious outlooks, affects, and actions in their daily lives. They serve as an authentic, charismatic source of inspiration with which pupils can identify. In a de-institutionalised world, a new generation of Christian youth would still benefit from authorities from previous generations. The Christian school and the (institutional) church can be places where these authorities can grow, be fed, and feel inspired about meeting young people inside or outside of the institutions, in local street life, or on the Internet.

Aside from having a powerfully renewed role in providing for authorities, institutions may also support (new) religious communities. Although the institution’s role decreases when it comes to the impact of its structures, organising principles, and homogeneity, it still produces a lot of social capital, of which pedagogical authorities are an important part. To a certain extent, schools and churches possess the social forces needed for self-renewal. This puts them in the vicinity of tribal communities, which meet the challenges and needs of a new generation of Christian youth. At the same time, these social forces or social capital can serve the existence/continuation of new religious communities outside of institutions. In this scenario, the institutions would still be there but they would create their own sources of inspiration and tradition and their members would form fruitful communities outside of their borders, whether it is an alternative religious gathering at a school site, a missionary and living community next door, or a faith community on the Internet.

6. Conclusion
Religious education for a new generation of Christians requires authorities and communities, which are connected in a worldwide pedagogical space with participating youth. The Internet or social media context is not only a technical and communicative context but also a pedagogical context where young people learn from other participants and communities. The same is true at the street level; the place where one lives can be an important religious pedagogical context where a small religious community can serve young people.

Authorities and communities can be found in an institutional setting, but they should also be connected to the local street level as well as to the worldwide pedagogical space. We increasingly see how authorities and communities will be sought and found outside of existing institutions. This means that churches, schools, teachers, pastors, parents, and other pedagogues should connect or reconnect with these new communities and authorities to better serve their youth.

This article demonstrates the increasing importance of individual believers (authorities) as well as flexible and fluid religious communities in the religious upbringing of a new generation of Christian youth. The perspective on forms of tribal religious socialisation adds to more organisational or institutional reflections on religious school education. For example, this includes the differences and preferences of segregated schools, program schools, (Christian) encounter schools, and interreligious schools (Wardekker and Miedema, 2001a,b). The perspective on tribal religious socialisation also adds to more organisational or institutional reflections of the church as an institution. This article’s argument puts into perspective the role of structures on the meso level and highlights the role of individuals, local context, and (on the trans-institutional level) the worldwide pedagogical space.

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