



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## Globalization of Waldorf education: an ethnographic case study from the Philippines

Schie, T.J. van

### Citation

Schie, T. J. van. (2026, February 6). *Globalization of Waldorf education: an ethnographic case study from the Philippines*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4289509>

Version: Publisher's Version

[Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

License: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4289509>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

# Globalization of Waldorf Education

An Ethnographic Case Study from the Philippines

## ***Proefschrift***

ter verkrijging van

de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden

op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr. S. de Rijcke,

volgens besluit van het college van promoties

te verdedigen op vrijdag 6 februari 2026

klokke 11.30 uur

door

***Thijs Jan Romero van Schie***

geboren te Haarlem,

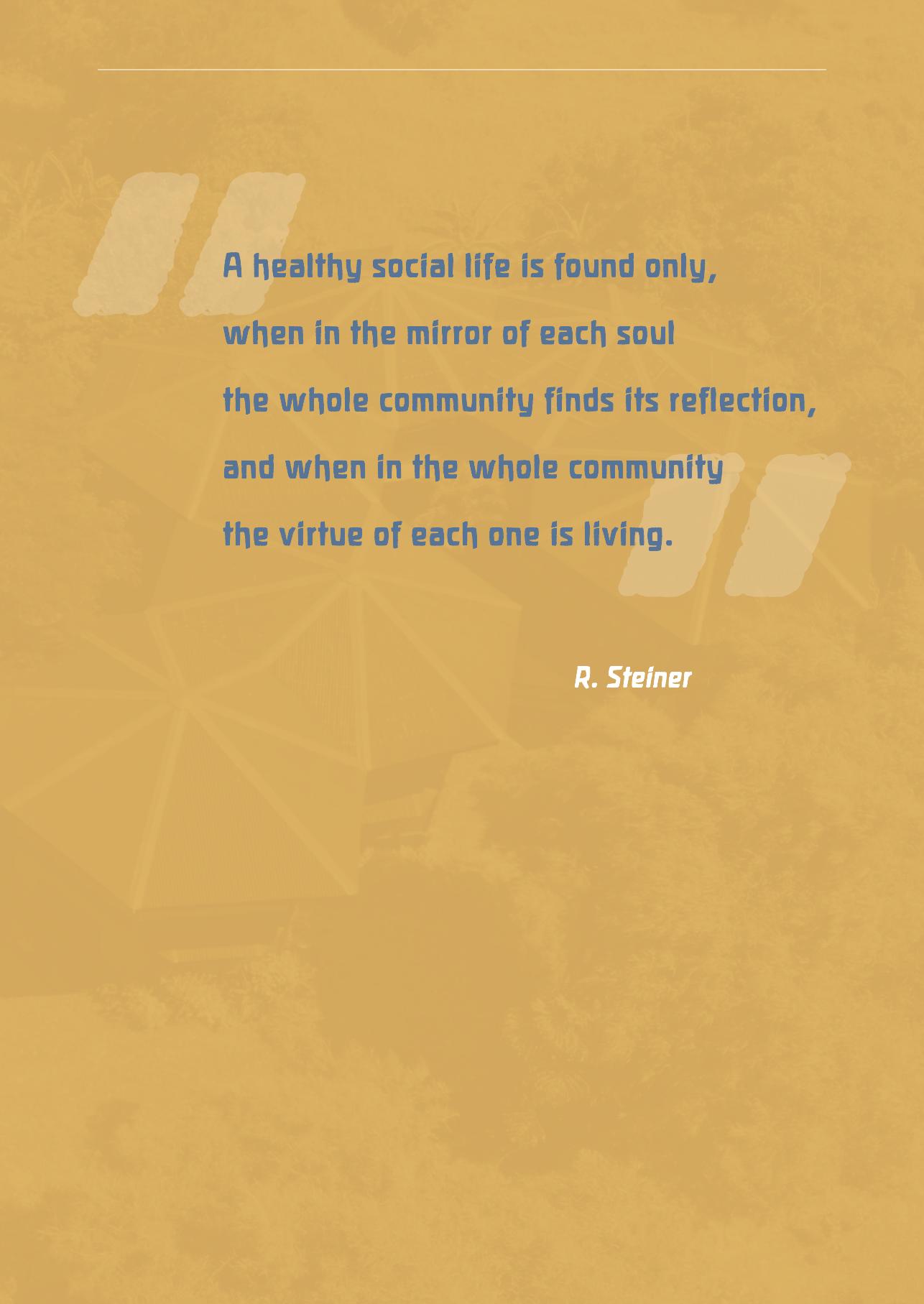
in 1980

---

<b>Promotores</b>	Prof.dr. G.A. Persoon Prof.dr. P.H. Vedder Dr. S.W.J. Luning (†)
<b>Promotiecommissie</b>	Prof.dr. M.J. Spierenburg - wetenschappelijk directeur Instituut Culturele Antropologie en Ontwikkelingssociologie, voorzitter Prof.dr. P.J. ter Keurs Prof. dr. E.J.P.G. Denessen - Radboud Universiteit Dr. A.Y. Mayo - wetenschappelijk directeur NIVOZ Dr. Jenny Tanilon

© T.J. van Schie, 2026  
ISBN/EAN: 978-94-6536-017-1

<b>Foto voorzijde</b>	S.F.N. Westhoff, Utrecht
<b>Foto achterzijde (onder)</b>	<a href="http://www.gamotcogon.org">www.gamotcogon.org</a>
<b>Fotografie</b>	door de auteur, tenzij anders vermeld
<b>Vormgeving</b>	E. Hoving, Amsterdam
<b>Druk</b>	Proefschriften.nl, Deventer
<b>Financiering</b>	Promotiebeurs voor leraren, NWO (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek), <a href="https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/023007026">https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/023007026</a>



A healthy social life is found only,  
when in the mirror of each soul  
the whole community finds its reflection,  
and when in the whole community  
the virtue of each one is living.

*R. Steiner*



---

# Table of Contents

Preface	6	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	8
	Intermezzo - The Village of Libongcogon	32
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Teachers as Ethnographers in Schools</b>	36
	Intermezzo - Gamot Cogon Waldorf School	48
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Bringing a Universal Impulse to Filipino Localities</b>	52
	Intermezzo - The Story of Sisidlan	74
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Being a Discoverer or Being Discovered?</b>	76
	Intermezzo - Classroom Stories About (Not) Forgetting The Local in a Global Curriculum	104
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Different Pedagogies, Equivalent Results</b>	106
	Intermezzo - Classroom Stories About When Imagination Is (Not) Engaged	132
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Two Different Worlds at the Same Road</b>	134
	Intermezzo - Filipino Anthroposophical Community	154
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Discussion and Conclusion</b>	156
	Acknowledgements	181
	Curriculum Vitae	183
	Summary	184
	Samenvatting	186
	Buod (Tagalog/Filipino)	188
	Buod (Hilligaynon/Illongo)	190

---

# Preface

At a close friend's wedding, I struck up a conversation with his father, who regularly visited a Waldorf school in the Philippines in an advisory role. He spoke vividly about his experiences, and I was fascinated. I had not realized that Waldorf schools existed outside Europe and began to wonder what Waldorf education might look like in a different cultural and social context. In the Netherlands, I could always recognize a Waldorf school the moment I walked in – the atmosphere, the wooden furniture, the scent of beeswax and wool, the sound of recorders and children reciting in chorus. Would I find that same feeling in a Philippine Waldorf school? What would have to be adapted to make it meaningful there? And how different would Philippine Waldorf education be from what I knew in the Netherlands?

As I listened and asked questions, a quiet thought formed: this might be a compelling theme for future doctoral research.

I had already been considering a PhD. At the time, I was teaching at Marecollege, a Waldorf secondary school in Leiden, and lecturing at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University – the very institute where I had trained as an anthropologist. That moment at the wedding brought both worlds together: my everyday life as a Waldorf teacher and my academic identity as an anthropologist. Until then, they had run parallel without really intersecting.

As an anthropologist, I had worked in Malawi and Vietnam, helping to establish and shape anthropology programmes. As a teacher, I deeply valued the creative, meaningful work with adolescents. Pursuing a PhD became a natural extension of both roles – perhaps best described as becoming an educational ethnographer. I hoped to bridge these two previously separate worlds, to bring them into dialogue and to see what new perspectives might emerge from their connection.

What a privilege – and a beautiful challenge – it was!

That said, the journey was not without difficulty. Balancing teaching with research is demanding; each role requires a different kind of energy. Teaching calls for flexibility and creativity; research demands reflection and time – something not always easy to find. All of this unfolded alongside major life events: I got married, we had children, we bought a house. A global pandemic struck. And my dedicated supervisor, Sabine Luning, passed away. Each of these moments marked and shaped this journey.

But – I did it! The dissertation you have before you is the result, and I am proud of it. What began as a personal learning trajectory is, I hope, clearly relevant to others as well. I hope it inspires teachers to engage in research themselves – something still made possible by the wonderful NWO Promotiebeurs voor Leraren (*Doctoral Grant for Teachers*). And I hope this work contributes to a deeper understanding of Waldorf education – emphasizing a living, contemporary approach in which all students, regardless of background, feel at home.

Above all, I hope this work strengthens our motivation, as educators, to keep working with energy and dedication – day by day and hour by hour – for and with the students entrusted to our care.