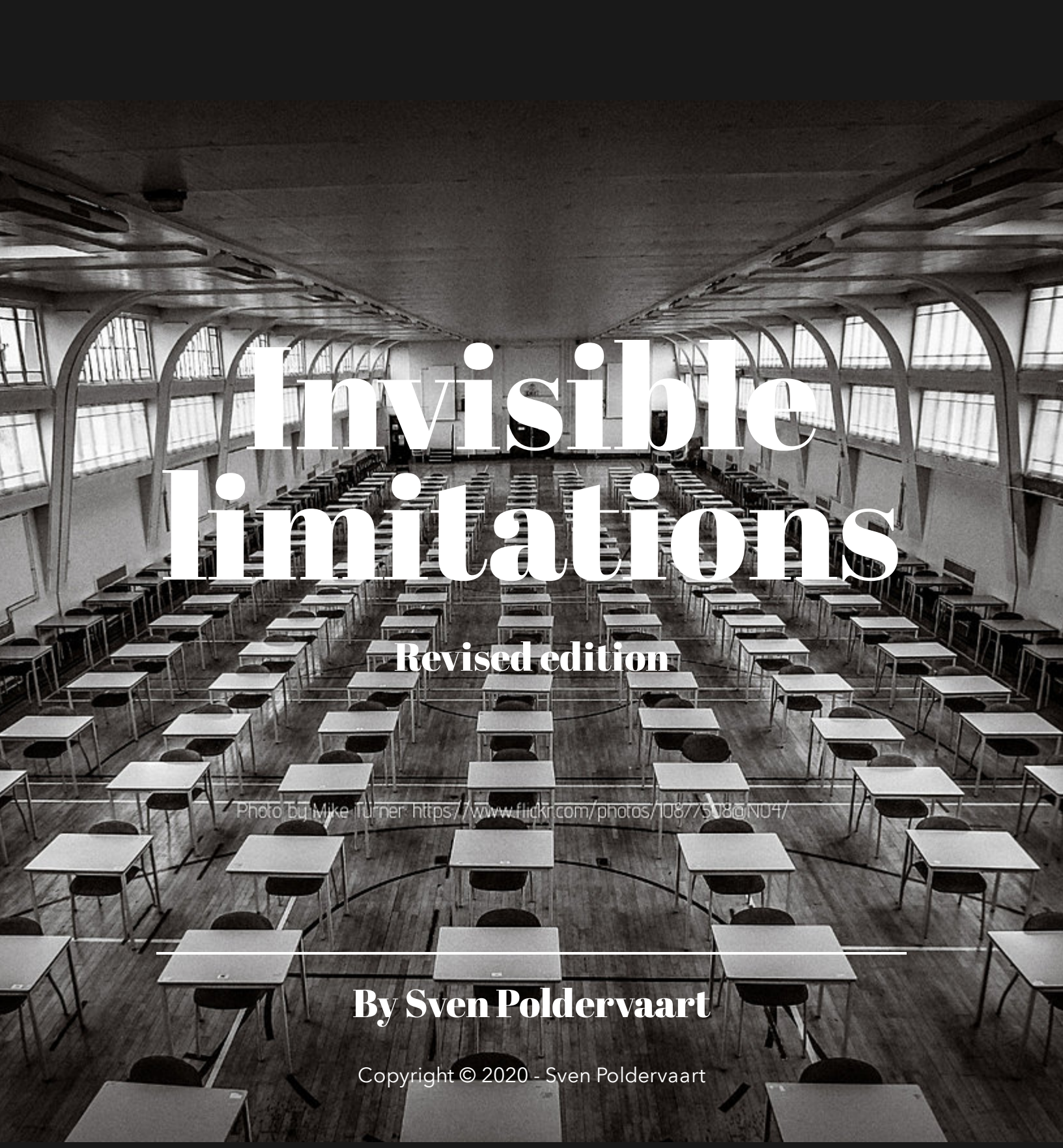

Invisible limitations

Revised edition

By Sven Poldervaart

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Preface

Change is inherent to human nature. During our lifetime we change our goals, thoughts, and whatever we think is important. Freedom is essential to anticipate these changes.

Our freedom is limited on all sides. We are obliged to go to school, earn a living, pay taxes, and we must act within laws and unwritten rules.

We are not always aware of these limitations, but we are obliged to act within these behavioral frameworks. We can therefore, label these frameworks as the 'Invisible limitations of the autonomous individual'.

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) stated that a human being is “condemned to be free” (Sartre, 1946). This roughly means that, although we do not choose to be born ourselves, we are obliged to take responsibility for our lives.

According to Sartre, our existence is inseparably connected with freedom of choice. This freedom coerces us to acts and acts are always accompanied by responsibility.

When you agree with Sartre, you will have to acknowledge that as a human being, you are responsible for your own happiness.

By aligning your life as much as possible with what makes you happy, you may eventually increase your chance on happiness. Freedom is essential for that and the invisible limitations determine its frameworks.

By getting to know the invisible limitations, we will discover what kinds of freedom we have, and how -when necessary- we can expand them. In this e-book we will focus on exactly that.

In the first chapter I will discuss what the invisible limitations look like. In the second chapter, I will explain in what way the invisible limitations are justified. The third chapter will be completely devoted to the educational system, because in my opinion, it plays an essential role within the invisible limitations. In the last chapter, chapter four, I will close with practical tips on how to expand your individual freedom.

I hope you will enjoy reading this e-book.

Sven Poldervaart

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CHAPTER 1

The invisible limitations of the autonomous individual

Introduction

As an individual within society, our freedom is limited. In my earlier remarks I called these frameworks the 'Invisible limitations of the autonomous individual'. These consist of formal laws, the economy, the educational system and informal laws.

The first limitation, the formal laws, establishes the official framework of norms and values which are registered in law books. When these limitations are exceeded, a punishment like a fine or a prison sentence follows.

The second limitation, the economy, imposes financial rules on the individual. Examples of that are the payment of rent or a mortgage, taxes and the cost for products or services.

The third limitation, the educational system, constitutes an obstacle of our freedom by the obligatory education. Through this, the implementation of our daily life until adulthood is determined by the authorities.

The last limitation, the informal laws, can be seen as the 'unwritten rules' of social desirability. They originate from for example, culture, religion, family, a group of friends or another club or association.

In this first chapter I will provide a short overview of the invisible limitations. The purpose of that, is to present a concrete picture of the frameworks in which we can act freely.

1.1 Formal laws

Perhaps the clearest behavioral framework of all, is made up by the formal laws. These are the official, institutionalized laws in the law book of a country. Formal laws, which are valid within a society, are difficult to change, especially for an individual.

Because we are born in whatever country, we will have to conform to the formal laws of that country whether we agree with them or not. Depending on your personal opinions, formal laws can therefore be suitable or unsuitable for you. Because of this, formal laws have an enormous impact on the freedom you experience in your daily life.

You can influence formal laws by using your right to vote or by becoming active in politics. However, amendments take a lot of concessions and it is therefore often difficult to exercise great influence on formal laws.

1.2 The economy

Besides formal laws, the economy also is of essential importance for the freedom of our acts. We must make money in order to survive and from this income we must pay taxes.

The obligation to pay taxes and bills limits our freedom. Because of these, we are obliged to work and cannot lazily stay in bed all day.

For many people work means a sense of purpose. However, for other people it does not. Not everybody is happy with his or her job but the economy coerces everybody to work. This obligation limits our free actions.

1.3 The educational system

The educational system fulfills a dual role in many societies, namely the transmission of norms and values and preparation for the labor market. It is also seen as an important social surrounding, in which a substantial part of social development takes place.

Although education plays an essential role in the development of our personality and knowledge, it imposes a strong restriction of personal freedom in the form of compulsory education at the same time.

Compulsory education is linked to a set number of educational hours per year. If we do not comply to these, a school attendance officer may penalize us with fines.

We are supposed to attend school five days weekly, do our homework and cram for tests. We can only minimally influence the implementation of this by choosing some subjects of our own choice.

The authorities determine the subjects that are compulsory and the subjects we can choose ourselves. For that reason, the educational system has a vast influence on our freedom as a minor.

1.4 Informal laws

Informal laws are behavioral rules originating from social desirability. Informal laws differ from formal laws because no legal action will follow if you do not comply with the rules. Instead of a lawbook, factors like social desirability, group pressure, culture and religious guidelines are the components which maintain the informal laws.

A classical example of informal laws is the drinking of alcohol which seems to be, in many western cultures and far beyond, more rule than exception. The drinking of alcohol is seen as generally accepted and deviating from this may be considered strange or even improper.

Age difference between love partners is also a good example of informal laws. Although a relationship of a 21 and 60 year old may be completely legal according to formal laws, many people will negatively judge this relationship.

Religion often has extensive moral behavioral rules as well, which should be honored by its believers. These rules are not always incorporated in the formal law of a country and therefore constitute a voluntary or imposed limitation of the individual freedom.

Within the working environment informal laws are valid as well. These are defined as the so called 'business culture'. Within a company, rules of conduct are in force which may vary considerably. Together with codes of conduct within the culture, family and other social contacts like friends, informal laws form a big addition to the formal laws and the other invisible limitations.

Postscript

When you realize that our daily life takes place within the frameworks of invisible limitations, you will conclude that our individual freedom is reduced considerably.

Until we reach adulthood, we are forced to conform to compulsory education and in addition to that we must live within the rules of the formal laws. We must also survive economically and respect the rules of the informal laws.

In the second chapter, I will focus on the question why the invisible limitations exist in the first place and what it is that justifies their existence.

CHAPTER 2

The justification of the invisible limitations

Introduction

The invisible limitations are frameworks in which people have been living for many years. The fact that they have, automatically poses the question why they have survived for so long and what justifies their existence.

To the justification of the invisible limitations, various answers can be given. Some people believe in conspiracy theories in which we as citizens are controlled for the purpose of paying taxes and not cause any problems.

I am more inclined to look for the justification of invisible limitations in human nature itself since oppression is often overthrown over a longer period of time. In order to investigate this, I will discuss theories of scientists such as Freud and Maslow, and philosophers like Hobbes and Rousseau.

2.1 The justification of formal laws

Formal laws are constantly subject to change. Politics influence the law and thus the governing of a country. But why do we have formal laws? And why is it not possible to do whatever we like in complete freedom?

Formal laws are there for a reason. People are capable of doing terrible things and the formal laws justify a conviction and the penalty that follows. Therefore, formal laws can protect us from malicious actions of people.

We will now begin with the examination of human nature to explain the need of this protection.

The selfishness of man

As a human being, you go through life as an individual. You want to survive but not only that. You want to achieve things and get the best out of life. During your life there are people who help and support you but there are people who oppose you as well. Your dreams and goals, after all, are not always the same as those of other people and might even be in conflict with theirs.

Although we strictly speaking go through life alone, we often do not in loneliness. We not only look for a partner but also engage in friendships and other relationships with people. In short: we need each other.

On the one hand we are alone, but on the other hand we depend upon each other. This means that the balance between our selfish interests and those of the people around us, form one of the greatest challenges of our lives.

Maslow

Human beings have a natural urge to survive, and to succeed in surviving, certain criteria must be met.

The American psychologist Abraham H. Maslow (1908-1970), described these in the 'Pyramid of Maslow' as so called “Physiological needs” (Maslow, 1943). These consist out of primary needs such as breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping and shelter.

The 'Pyramid of Maslow'

Because of our survival instinct and physiological needs, we have selfish interests. These are not really a problem as they will inspire us to develop activities which will make us happier and better. The selfish interest of an individual can only become a problem when it collides with that of another person. Then, competition and strife can be the result.

Selfish interests can also complement one another which makes cooperation possible. In that case there can be 'mutual selfishness', in which two individuals can serve their own selfish interest while helping each other at the same time.

The nature of selfish interests is therefore not malicious. This is only the case when a collision of interests takes place since mutual selfishness may as well lead to cooperation.

Freud

The Austrian neurologist Sigmund S. Freud (1856-1939), believed in the selfish character of man. He divided the human selfishness into three categories: the 'es', 'ich' and 'über ich' (Freud, 1923).

The 'es' is led by the so called 'lust principle' which implies that the individual is purely focused on the pursuit of pleasures. So, the individual acts purely selfishly and is exclusively focused on self-gratification. The needs of others do not mean anything to him.

The 'ich' controls the 'es' and takes environmental factors and social desirability into consideration. It comprises the strongly calculating ability of the individual to delay, if necessary, the gratification of needs or shape it differently. Thus, the needs can still be satisfied via a detour later.

The last category is the 'über ich'. This includes the conscience of an individual. Then, moral considerations play a major role. The central question is what is morally just and what is not.

So, according to Freud, the selfishness of man is composed of certain layers, in which the 'es' is nearest to the pleasure-seeking animal ego and the 'über ich' nearest to the rational individual.

Within Freuds theory it is clear that the 'Es' and 'Ich' are direct products of the selfishness of man. This also goes for the 'Über-ich', be it in a more indirect form.

The social contract and the Leviathan

When individuals act from selfish interest, it is necessary to devise a system in which people can cohabit peacefully. When interests collide, it is after all best to maintain the peace as well as possible.

Hobbes

The English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), described in his writings that for this a so called 'Leviathan' is necessary. A kind of dictator, who submits society to rules to keep it liveable (Hobbes, 1651).

Without a Leviathan, people would have to live in a 'state of nature', which is the original natural world in which everybody acts selfishly to provide for their own needs as soon as possible. According to Hobbes, this state of nature would look like a world in which exclusively self interest is of the essence, with extremes like murder and serious crime (Wolff, 2016). Because everyone will be in danger then, a Leviathan is necessary to maintain order.

However, the Leviathan can only maintain order when citizens give up some of their natural liberties. Instead of a state of nature without rules, they must conform to behavioral rules in the form of laws. Hobbes described these laws as the 'social contract' (Friend, n.d.), whereby individuals partly give up their individual liberty for the sake of the 'general law', the common interest of all individuals.

The social contract of Hobbes explains the necessity of formal laws. Because nobody likes to live in a state of nature, all individuals have an interest in a collective protection of a Leviathan.

Though, you may wonder whether a Leviathan will be the most appropriate ruler. An absolute monarch can rule easily, that is true, but this is not exactly democratic.

Whether a Leviathan is the best way to guarantee compliance with the social contract is therefore very questionable. Hobbes namely states that the individual is selfish and malicious, and therefore, the social contract is necessary to protect everyone against each other.

Within this statement, Hobbes contradicts himself. When the Leviathan obtains absolute power, sooner or later he will abuse his absolute power for the sake of his own profit. After all, the Leviathan is also only human and therefore selfish and malicious as well. At the moment a society led by a Leviathan is associated with suppression, the general will is not the central issue any longer, but the selfish interest of the Leviathan. Whether such a society is beneficial to the citizens is therefore highly questionable.

Montesquieu

According to the 'Trias Politica', an alternative system for a Leviathan is the democracy as described by the French philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755) ("De Trias Politica in de Nederlandse Grondwet", n.d.).

The Trias Politica assumes the separation of the legislative power, the executive power and judicial power. This prevents that a monarch can take absolute power and from selfish interest impose laws on his subjects.

In a democracy, the quality of a decree is higher than in absolute power. After different viewpoints have been compared and weighed, there is a democratic vote about the most favored option. This principle is more honest and prevents, much better than a dictatorship, the emergence of unrest in a society. But regardless of the type of governing, it is clear that formal laws serve a purpose to regulate the selfish interests of all individuals in society.

2.2 The justification of the economy

The economy is sometimes described as 'the system'. This is a name that can be used to express a certain slavery in which we as individuals are born. We are coerced to contribute to the system in the form of labor in order to have the right to exist. In other words: to live means that work is obligatory.

Rousseau

According to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), this system is imposed on us at our birth. With his well-known statement: “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains” (Moriarty, 2017), he refers to a limitation of freedom which is imposed on all individuals in society.

According to Rousseau, the basic nature of mankind is good and in principle everybody can cohabit peacefully. 'The state of nature' as Hobbes described, looks therefore far less dangerous to Rousseau. From Rousseau's perspective, problems arose when the idea of possession began.

To protect possession, a way had to be found to protect it. Therefore, people with possessions could invent laws which were binding for people without possessions (Rochat, 2014). When for example, a person had a few hectares of land, he could sublet a part to others and decide the conditions in the form of laws to which people without land had to conform.

In this way, people with possessions could force people without possessions into a state of slavery, an idea which strongly resembles the Marxist class-division of the Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

Whether the nature of man is good as Rousseau maintains, or is less good as portrayed by Hobbes, might be a difficult discussion. Not only is it difficult to generalize human beings in their underlying motivation to act in this world, the discussion what is right and wrong to begin with might be just as complicated.

To find an answer to this difficult question, it could be useful to return to the theory of Maslow regarding people's primary biological needs.

When nature has determined for us that the physiological needs are the conditions for our existence, we are born in unfreedom. We will always have to eat, drink and sleep in order to survive. Whether we choose working the land or hunting, we will always have to work to obtain the right to exist. In other words: we are not slaves of the system, we are the slaves of our primary biological needs. The system provides us with different possibilities to fulfill those needs instead of being condemned to our land or the land we loan from others. Economic regulation and currencies are essential to structure such a market of trades and capital.

The origin of the economy

Every individual is confronted with the challenge of providing for their primary biological needs. From this necessity, the economy has been able to shape itself on the basis of the principle of mutual selfishness. Every individual supplies a product or service to the market and is given money in return.

By cooperating and installing an economic system, mankind took a step forward in facilitating achieving the primary biological needs. Because every individual provides the market with a unique product or service, the final offer is big and diverse. After providing a single service or product to the market, there is an infinite choice of how to spend your money.

The specialization within the economy has only been possible because not all of us have to cultivate the land or hunt anymore. Perhaps, the transition from hunting and gathering to the establishment of a permanent place (the sedentary life), has laid the foundation for this. Instead of depending on hunting and picking fruits, through the sedentary life, a start could be made with a certain division of labour.

Instead of only hunting, issues like agriculture and fishery could be made possible. If hunting was unsuccessful, there still was the chance of a good harvest or good fishery. And, if all went well, there might be a surplus of food. So the tasks were divided, risks could be spread and expertise was increased to optimize profitability.

The division of labour could lead to specialization. Instead of everybody being hunters, gatherers and farmers, there was the freedom to choose for other needed professions. Perhaps these professions suited the individual much better and used the qualities of an individual much more. Through specialization, the quality of products could increase and the supply of products in the market be more varied.

Since we must provide for our physiological needs in order to survive, nature has determined for us that we are forever 'doomed' to labor. Not 'the system'.

The system offers us the opportunity to provide for our physiological needs in various ways. The economy offers us options on how we wish to provide for our right to exist. For that reason, the existence of the system or the economy is logical and its existence can be explained and justified.

2.3 The justification of informal laws and the educational system

Where the frameworks of the formal laws are equal to many people, the informal laws and the educational system have a much more individual character.

Every individual is part of other social groups and has a unique perspective on life. The extent and nature of the informal laws are therefore very diverse across individuals.

Just like informal laws, every individual interprets the educational system differently. We go to different schools and follow different levels and subjects within education. It is therefore clear that the informal laws and the educational system differ from the other invisible limitations because of their subjective, more individualized nature.

Informal laws are inseparable from being human. This is because we constantly search for other people, engage in friendships and look for a partner. We also have a family, colleagues and other social connections.

Informal laws play a role in how we treat each other as human beings and are an expression of our collective norms and values. By respecting the informal laws of a group, you will be, or remain, part of the group.

The scale of informal laws varies. On a smaller scale, informal laws are valid, for example within a group of friends or family. On a bigger scale, for example at national level, informal laws are often described as culture which can even be institutionalized into formal laws.

Because as people we are social beings, informal laws are useful and necessary to determine a certain group identity. Their existence is thereby. not only explained but justified as well.

As I already indicated in the first chapter, the educational system fulfills a diverse role in many societies. Personality development of the citizen as well as preparation for the job market are the primary tasks of education.

In our youth, we do not voluntarily attend school as there is compulsory education. This compulsory education can be justified because children are not capable to rationally take a decision whether they do or do not want to attend school.

When a child does not want to attend school, this has major consequences for his or her future. Compulsory education is therefore understandable although that comes with an enormous responsibility of the authorities.

Compulsory education has a huge impact on the life of a child until adulthood without being able to influence it himself. After all, children have no right to vote and cannot officially become politically active. Therefore, the implementation of the educational system must be well connected with the intrinsic motivation of the child and offer as much freedom of choice as possible to serve their interests. Educational policymaking is therefore an extremely important task of continuous relevance to justify and defend the existence of compulsory education.

Postscript

Invisible limitations are there for a reason. Further research reveals that all these behavioral frameworks can be logically explained and justified.

Formal laws exist to protect the general will and the economy exists because of our selfish interests coming from the primary biological needs. Informal laws exist to substantiate behavioral frameworks within groups and compulsory education exists to lead the development and future of a child into the right direction according to the state.

Of all invisible limitations, the educational system stands out. This is because children do not have any say in the design of the compulsory education. However, this design is completely and exclusively applicable to them. Because children cannot become politically active themselves and do not have the right to vote, others determine how their daily life until adulthood looks like. Therefore, as the educational system has such a dominant impact on the life of a child, it is necessary to examine the educational system critically at all times.

CHAPTER 3

The educational system: the heart of the invisible limitations

Introduction

Because of the dual function of education, the educational system can be seen as the heart of the invisible limitations. On the one hand, education has an educational function and on the other hand, it determines the career possibilities of the individual. Because of that, the educational system finds itself on the terrain of both the formal laws and informal laws on one side and the economy on the other.

Through its educational function, the educational system carries out the implementation of formal- and informal laws among minors in society extensively. School may therefore be considered one of the greatest social surroundings of society in which numerous informal laws are in force. Think for example about the informal laws among students, between teachers and students, staff, parents and staff, schools and businesses, schools and politics and so forth.

School has a great impact on the informal laws since when they lead to undesirable behavior, punishment can follow. Informal laws are the foundation of formal laws and therefore the school system shapes the individual and society to a great extent.

Besides the educational function, the educational system lays an important foundation for the economic success of the individual since useful knowledge and skills are worth money on the labor market .

By gaining more knowledge, an individual can specialize and distance himself from competition. Offering a good educational system, allows individuals the chance to specialize. They can then take advantage of the freedoms which are offered to provide for the right to exist in the way that suits them best.

Because of the great impact of education, the implementation of the educational system is of essential importance. For that reason, I have dedicated this entire chapter to this matter.

3.1 The importance of a good educational system

The educational system leaves an important mark on the norms and values within society. The effects of this system are profound and can eventually reflect in formal laws.

Students are the voters of the future, and the norms and values they learn at school determine for a great part their development and political convictions. A good educational system is aware of this effect and thinks carefully about the norms and values it wishes to convey.

Another school task is the preparation for the job market since both the individual and society benefit from skilled citizens. To the individual it is important to do work that suits him or her and to society it is important because of tax revenues.

As I mentioned before, specialization has a price and in all cases this is beneficial for tax revenues. The scarcity, which comes from specialization, eventually leads to higher wages of an employer or to innovative entrepreneurship.

High wages in paid employment, automatically mean a higher tax scale and so more tax revenues. The result of innovative entrepreneurship, is that new products or services are put on the market which create employment opportunities and may even be exported.

Tax revenues are essential for the general prosperity in a country and the educational system is directly connected with this. For that reason, the educational system and society cannot be seen apart from each other since they are of strong mutual influence. This fundamental belief is often portrayed as the core of the field of Sociology of Education.

3.2 The reform of the educational system

A time of quick technological development and flexible contracts demands a flexible and accessible educational system.

Retraining and the principle of a 'lifelong education and training' are necessary to respond to the fast changing market. The current educational system, at least as used in the Netherlands and many other countries, does not provide sufficient space to do so.

Accessibility to education depends on the price tag, and the more expensive the education, the higher the threshold to make a start.

In addition to this, flexibility plays a big role. When somebody works and has a family, education must be flexible and offer a lot freedom of choice to keep it accessible.

To increase the accessibility of education, it should be entirely financed by tax revenues. It is only logical that, because high tax revenues are the result of a good educational system, to re-invest this money. Since these reforms are expensive, they demand a concrete plan. In this paragraph I would like to describe what reforms might be useful.

The primary school period

It is often taken for granted that a child learns basic skills like reading, writing and arithmetic. The existence of compulsory education is also understandable.

A child will not always wish to go to school and perhaps does not yet realize that it is quite convenient to eventually be able to read and write.

To introduce children in the primary school period to a fixed curriculum, does therefore not seem to be wrong at all. Reading, writing and arithmetic and general knowledge can be acquired and work can be done on the development of informal laws to smoothen the social integration in society.

Though, from puberty onwards, the personality of the individual starts to shape itself and interests become increasingly visible. Intrinsic motivation to learn follows this process.

When there is a fixed study program, it is an enormous challenge to respond to the intrinsic motivation of every individual. Therefore, this calls for a more flexible curriculum.

To adjust the curriculum to the intrinsic motivation of the student, a solution could be found in the offer of separate courses during the secondary school period. By offering training courses in various areas of interest and levels, the student can compose his own study program which suits his or her interests and level.

Herewith, compulsory education consists exclusively of a required number of compulsory teaching hours, together with a number of essential training courses which every student must attend.

The number of compulsory courses within compulsory education should decrease every year to give more room to the personal interpretation of the student. Thus, the curriculum will grow along with the student, who, while growing older, will be able to better determine in what subject he or she would like to specialize.

Within the new educational system, local schools would cease to exist. Instead, central teaching centers will be established which might be combined with distance learning when the course is suitable for this.

As courses will be offered at different levels, people with a learning delay or disability will also be able to enroll. Besides that, the possibility of distance learning will partly relieve the pressure on traffic and public transport. Thus, education will be made more accessible for disabled people and for people in sparsely populated areas.

To be trained for a specific profession, companies, together with the teaching centers, draw up a summary of useful combinations of courses. The student then has the freedom to plan his program of courses at his own level, and, if necessary, add extra courses. In this way students can focus on looking for the job they trained for and combine this with the development of personal interests or expand their skillset.

Via this new educational model, students will have the ability to meet both other students with the same interests and of the same level, but also of different ages and cultural backgrounds. They can complement each other and so strengthen further development in their respective fields of expertise. Apart from that, diversity in age groups of the course population, can be useful to promote networking by which young talent can be linked to people that are already established in the professional field.

Maturity

When students reach maturity at the age of eighteen, compulsory education stops. At that moment there is no longer a fixed number of compulsory hours they must attend but they themselves can fully determine how many courses they want to attend courses besides their actual work. In this way they are able to continue to specialize, decide to continue learning or retrain themselves within an entirely new subject of education.

When students start looking for a job, companies will be able to select them on the basis of the training courses they have accomplished. If any knowledge is lacking, the company in consultation with the future employee can draw up a contract and state therein the courses that need to be completed next to their actual working activities. In this way, it will be easier to hire people even when they do not have a 100% matching profile. Because of this, it might be easier for job seekers to find a job and unemployment within society could be reduced.

The training courses see to it that companies do not have to invest in a new employee. Instead, the employee can be required to attend extra courses. This will benefit both parties; the company does not need to make additional costs and the jobseeker invests in his or her curriculum. In a time of flexible contracts and job hopping, it is very convenient when a company does not have to make a commitment like investing in additional training and at the same time it creates more job security for the employee.

Postscript

Every individual is responsible for his or her chances on the labor market. With the described modern education system, people will be able to give an increasingly freer interpretation to the design of the personal curriculum from high school onwards.

At a later age, everybody within the educational courses' program can determine how much time he or she would like to invest in self-development. When for instance you have no job, you can go to school full-time to retrain. When you just started a family, you can take a break or attend only one or two courses. If you want to go traveling or relax, then you can take a complete break.

Within such system, the chance of getting a burn-out will be much lower than in fixed studies and the load of study, work, and private life, can be balanced more easily.

From the age of eighteen, individuals will get the opportunity to work more instead of studying full-time. Thus, the knowledge gained from courses can be applied into practice immediately.

In addition to that, the possibility to work at an early age is beneficial for tax revenues. When individuals start working at a younger age, this will mean an increment of the labor force which will result in more tax revenues. Reinvesting these revenues in the educational system makes it possible to keep it free of charge, and thereby, accessible.

CHAPTER 4

Freedom and the invisible limitations

Introduction

Sometimes we ask ourselves questions like: "What would I do if I were a millionaire?" Answers to these kind of questions are useful, because they tell us how we would like to fill in our lives the most.

However, our image of this ideal life will change constantly and as we grow older, our life goals will develop along with us.

When we daydream about our ideal life, we will often encounter limitations at some point which are the frameworks of the invisible limitations. By expanding or avoiding these limitations, you will be minimally hindered in the realization of your goals.

What limitations you will encounter, are therefore very personal since they differ strongly across people and the phase of life they find themselves in.

In this last chapter, I will offer general guidelines about how to expand the space within the invisible limitations and increase your personal freedom.

4.1 Finding space within the invisible limitations

Because of our primary biological needs as Maslow described, we are inclined to aim at survival. Making money is directly connected to this, causing (financial) security to often be the starting point for our life decisions.

To get an image of whatever makes us happy, it will be wise not to think of the invisible limitations in the first place. We will then easier think in possibilities instead of limitations.

In order to do so successfully, the 'idea of opposite reasoning' can be very useful. This concept is very simple. Start with defining your goals, analyze what limitations you encounter and come up with a plan to tackle these limitations.

Because not all invisible limitations will apply to you to the same extent, I will shortly summarize them with general ideas about how to expand the freedom you experience within them.

Formal laws

Formal laws are different in every country. As a start, you can use your right to vote to influence the formal laws. You can also become politically active and share your ideas.

A more drastic measure, which often offers quicker results, is emigration. By choosing a country where formal laws suit you well, you swap the formal laws of your country of origin for new formal laws.

This method is very effective, although you must realize that the formal laws in the new country change constantly as well. In addition, it differs per country how easy it is to emigrate to and how big the cultural differences are. This will actually be very defining for the integration process.

Informal laws

Within each social group, informal laws differ a lot. Any unfreedom which you then experience, also differs hugely.

Expansion of the informal laws is only necessary when you cannot agree with the rules of the group.

When your identity is too far away from the group, you will experience whether or not your new identity will be accepted by the group. If this is not the case, it will be wise to leave the group and look for a new one which allows you to be yourself.

The economy

We experience financial limitations all around us. By keeping a number of guidelines in mind, you can limit this financial pressure to a great extent.

Be smart about debts

A first and important method, is by simply staying out of debt or to loan exclusively for wise purposes.

Debts make it possible for a person or institute to put financial pressure on you, making you less free to take your own choices.

The development of the economy and your own future financial situation are unpredictable. Because of this, you never surely know if you will be able to repay the debt and how much financial pressure the debt will give you in the future.

That does not mean that debts are per se unwise since it can be used for investments purposes as well. Hereby you can think of an educational training or the purchase of property for example. It is just important to ask yourself whether the loan serves for investment purposes or not. When it does not, try to stay out of debts.

Strive for minimalism

By living more minimalistic, you will lose more financial pressure. By being satisfied quicker, you will actually need less money to provide for your needs. Regardless of the amount of money you have, reducing your expenses will give you more space within economic limitations.

Apply Geo arbitrage

In a time in which working on distance becomes more normalized, it can be smart to try to get an income that does not depend on a location. By doing so, you could apply Geo arbitrage.

The application of Geo arbitrage means that you are going to live in a country where wages are lower than in the country where your employer is located. Your money is then worth more and you will automatically get a higher standard of living without having to work more hours.

The educational system

The limitation of freedom of the educational system is very difficult to expand. A child who experiences this unfreedom, actually has no possibility to escape from this system by, for instance, emigration or political activism.

The selection of the best educational system, is therefore completely the responsibility of parents. Parents choose to put children into the world and because of this, parents are also responsible to select the best educational system for their children.

By introducing a new educational system such as the one I described, students in compulsory education will get a stronger and quicker say in the education they attend. Thus, they will have more freedom of choice and will experience, less strongly, the limitations of compulsory learning.

The responsibility for optimizing the educational system will be relevant at all times, both for students and the prosperity of the state. As a sociologist of education, I see it as an extremely important and interesting duty to contribute to these challenges for the current- and future generations.

Postscript

During our entire lives we change and so will our goals and perspective on happiness. By expanding our freedom within the invisible limitations as much as possible, we will give ourselves the opportunity to keep anticipating those ever-changing life goals.

Since children do not have the authority over themselves when it comes to one of the strongest invisible limitations that is exclusively applicable to them; the educational system, we have an enormous responsibility to provide the best possible educational system to fit the needs of both the students and the state. A challenge I would like to dedicate my career to.

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