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Not a Plan for a Minority, but for Flanders

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Abstract. Endemic poverty is not only against any human right, any religious or moral set of standards; it is also much too expensive to pass on to the next generation. Our project is in connection with a deep rethinking of the economic and educational systems, that are not properly working. Considering that the whole society would benefit from the endemic poverty eradication, we started to think about the path dependency mechanism that prevents politics from finding a lasting solution to this issue. If not tackled in a new way, the problem will stay and grow, along with the stigma related to poverty that leads to marginalization. That keeps draining social and financial resources without solving anything.

This project relates to the intuition of an association, “ArmenTeKort,” about how to tackle the difficulty. We worked with them to look at the problem from a different perspective. Disadvantaged people often face the tradeoff between a bigger apartment and having enough food for the month. Renouncing a better accommodation implies that kids can neither properly study at home nor invite their peers over to socialize and do homework together. The school is not able to fill the gap generated by poor living conditions, dragging back these pupils that often will end up with no degree and poor working skills.

We gathered data and information to better understand how path dependency works and analyze other educational systems' success. We then set up a presentation that will be used to convey this insight to the politicians in charge to decide about a huge project of affordable housing in the next decade (1.5 billion euros per year, for the next 10 years). That could change the destiny of thousands of children in Flanders.

Keywords: Poverty; Education; Housing; Path dependency; Flanders; Transdisciplinary.

Not A PLAN for a MINORITY But FOR FLANDERS

Key insights about **path dependency** in the **Flemish Education System**.

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In cooperation with ArmenTeKort
Theo Vaes, Mathias Crab.



ERADICATING
ENDEMIC POVERTY
WITH
EDUCATION 2.0

The Flanders' PROBLEM:
the Educational System
losing **EFFECTIVENESS**

Teachers DROP OUT

Only 87% of newly qualified teachers are still in Education after 5 years. Among the highest qualified: **over one on five drops out**. This cost the taxpayers millions of euros, every year.

Students with NO DEGREE

Each year lots of **students leave schools without a degree**. Not only a **lost asset** but a **future cost**, due to missed participation in the job market as a qualified worker.

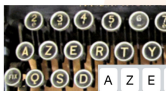
PATH DEPENDENCY in your LIFE

Why do we write on an **AZERTY** if it is inefficient?



We all know what is an **AZERTY** keyboard: we all have one of them on our **cellphones and laptops**.

- AZERTY was purposely made up to **SLOW DOWN** typewriter writing.
- **Slower and complicated** typing motion, but less mechanical typewriter arms stoppage.



- August Dvorak, an educational psychologist and Professor of Education, scientifically designs a "keyboard to decrease typing errors, speed up typing, and lessen typist fatigue" in 1932.
- Typewriters and their mechanical issues are no longer there...
...but **which typing layout has your keyboard?**

This is Path Dependency and its relentless influence.

PATH DEPENDENCY in Belgium Wallonia

Why is Wallonia less developed than us?



Wallonia: heavily industrialized in 19th century on coal mining and steel production.
Flanders: mainly rural until the first half of the 20th century. Small and diversified entrepreneurship was later sustained by strong multinational investments in petrochemicals, manufacturing, and shipping.



The **Wallon** path trajectory results from the cumulative decision path **naturally developed on each previous stage**.

This path **relying on past** political and economical trajectory, **without complete reinvention** made Wallonia head to a **regional long lasting crisis**, due to **path dependency**.



"As a teacher, I couldn't identify at first why I'm quitting. But in fact, it's the feeling of being limited in what I love."

~ THE AVERAGE DROP-OUT TEACHER

POOR WORKING PATHS IN EDUCATION

HIGHER INCOME
Despite the huge costs in higher wages for teachers.

MORE HOLIDAYS
Despite giving more free days to teachers.

STILL, TEACHERS DROP OUT.
THAT MEANS MORE COSTS, FOR ALL.

NEW CLASSROOM
Despite the renovations done within schools.

HIGHER OBJECTIVES AND MORE INSPECTIONS
Despite highering the standards.

STILL Belgium scores LOWER in PISA TESTS

1. Affordable solution? Social housing

1. HOUSING & EDUCATION CORRELATION: STUDENTS

- One bedroom flat cannot provide a safe space for studying and learning. Often low income families face the trade-off between a bigger apartment and enough food.
- Space unavailability equates to early social exclusion: kids cannot invite their peers at home, and they miss space for socialising, which means initial segregation.

2. HOUSING & EDUCATION CORRELATION: TEACHERS

- Lots of teachers feel like they're limited in what they want to do. Even new teachers feel that what they learn in school, that is teaching, isn't their main task.
- In Antwerp, a mathematics teacher has to deal with language problems for about 4 out of 5 students.
- Providing students with a decent study place at home can tackle the root cause of the educational gap.

3. MORE INVESTMENTS IN HOUSING

- The new social housing model requires small units spread over the city area. That would prevent **ghettoisation and marginalization**: phenomena linked to **huge social costs**.
- Social housing dispersion also means faster integration.
- 1,5ebn every year, for 10 years, for Flanders' growth.

4. LESS EXPENSIVE SOLUTION

- Following all the failed attempts in reforming Flanders' Education system, no action means further social crisis and costs.
- By tackling the root cause a stable solution is achievable, along with a more **resilient, healthy and productive social structure**.

Outcomes:

- Path dependency and path creation can help to understand the cycle of policies for solving poverty and developing suitable education for all.
- Path creation requires the increase of awareness at different levels, social, political, cultural, and economical.

Reflections:

- Poverty is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach. Education, housing, and access to basic services are all critical components that need to be addressed to tackle poverty effectively.
- Collaborating with organizations like ArmenTeKort can create a mutually beneficial relationship where both parties can provide and receive support, expertise, and resources.
- Through collaboration and cooperation, we can achieve a more holistic understanding of the root causes of poverty, leading to more targeted and effective interventions and through collaboration and cooperation, we can achieve more significant policy changes that have a lasting impact on poverty reduction.
- The well-being or progress of a society is not measured by its riches but by the absence of starvation/hunger among its people.
- The best way to make an impact is not by constantly adhering to traditional methods of solving problems but by charting/creating new and more promising paths.
- Developing friendships within a team can help to build trust and encourage open communication, leading to more effective decision-making and problem-solving.



"Historical choices shaping current/future outcomes. Past decision create self-reinforcing cycles. Difficult to deviate from established patterns."

~ PATH DEPENDENCY