Using information design to aid communication in city renewal projects.

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In recent years, many cities are tackling the problems regarding the growing urbanization. City renewal projects are a complex undertaking—different stakeholders each come into the project with their own interests. The intricate relationship of stakeholder groups is ever changing depending on the scale and demands of the project. With each stakeholder group's terminology being so specific, negotiations can often be troublesome, resulting in possible solutions to the project that are left unexplored. Smaller involved parties are left aside easily, even though those smaller groups can be a very valuable source of local information.

There are stakeholder models for many commercial products, but a model for approaching a city renewal project is harder to set up. It may be useful to provide the different stakeholders in city renewal projects with universal tools, a language so to speak, to make negotiations and plans easier and involve all stakeholders as much as possible. This way, through visualizing the problems the city renewal project is addressing, and the demands, claims and possible solutions that are on the table during the negotiations, can be followed up, understood and used by all parties of interest.

After talking to the stakeholders that were involved in the renewal of a specific area, Park Belle-Vue, in the city of Leuven, Belgium, we received valuable information on their communication with other stakeholder groups. This gave us the opportunity to sketch out basic models and structures out of which a simple visual language arose. We constructed a ready-to-use toolkit based around a simple online platform, which we, in association with the stakeholders, implemented into the case project of Park Belle-Vue.

We presented our findings and resulting language to the different stakeholders and in particular to the municipality of Leuven. As this project was only made over a period several weeks, it is not easy to say if it has been successful or not. Wether the stakeholder groups will use our language and toolkit in the future remains to be seen.