

Career Sheet: Projects and Network Director



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I am not your typical STEM profile, but I work in the field of ICT standardisation supporting the digital transformation of cities and communities. As Projects & Network Director of [Open & Agile Smart Cities \(OASC\)](#), an international city network, it is nevertheless key to have a helicopter view of the technological concepts we are working with.

Originally, I have studied Journalism at the University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (DE) and completed my academic path with a MSc in Communications, New Media & Society in Europe at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) in Belgium. I am not a specialist in tech, but I do have an education that allows to understand the context and dive deeper where need. At my currently role of OASC, I oversee ongoing projects as well as proposal development and I am coordinating the network activities.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

At Open & Agile Smart Cities, I am managing the network's communications and coordinate our projects, such as the [DUET Digital Twin Project](#). My role is two-fold: on the one hand, I am doing my best to explain the work and benefits of OASC to a diverse audience (e.g., policymakers, project, and IT managers as well as developers) and I work on a strategy to grow and nurture our community. For this, I need to understand the technical implications of our work and translate it into digestible pieces for both the tech-savvy stakeholders (as in really deep into the technical nitty-gritty of ICT standards, Urban Data Platforms, etc.) as well as the more policy-oriented stakeholders. On the other hand, I work in-depth with colleagues from all around Europe and beyond on the deployment of open city technology that adheres to the OASC principles for an open and fair digital urban transformation.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

As so often in life, serendipity played a key role. I was already interested in the topic of urbanisation and mobility. I decided to write my Master Thesis on Open Data in the Transport Sector – analysing business models of mobility apps – and got in touch with OASC along the way.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

As Projects & Network Director of an international city network, it happens that you start your day with a call from Australia, I work to deliver on projects afterwards and end my day catching up with colleagues in the Americas. I am trying to link up to complementary initiatives, meet with cities interested to join or organise webinars for our existing network. That usually is quite exciting as you receive a lot of input

from the community, which in turn can be used to develop new projects. All with the ambition to make digital transformation of cities and communities faster, cheaper, and more impactful (Yes, standards can help with that 😊).



STUDY & CAREER PATH

I started off studying Journalism in Germany, where I learned the ins and outs of the craft - from writing stories, to producing radio and TV shows. After interning for one of Germany's major car manufacturers, I followed up with a master's degree in 'New Media and Society' at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). At was at VUB, where I first got in touch with smart cities, open data and OASC as part of my master's thesis. If someone had told me at the age of 18 that I would end up working for an international smart city network, supporting, and coordinating cutting-edge ICT projects in Europe as part of my job, I would have laughed straight into this person's face. Me? In ICT? No way. But here I am, and it is quite a fun job including the sometimes-astonished faces when I put my tech knowledge on the table. That being said, I am of course lightyears away from being a CTO, but it usually surprises people that I know what a context broker is.

What is important is that you might start off with something completely unrelated (like journalism) and nevertheless end up working for an international smart city network. If you are interested in tech, but you do not really want to go down the engineering path, you can also choose a subject in the humanities and specialise by selecting certain courses or pursuing internships. Internships during your studies can be also extremely helpful to find out what you do not want to do.



KEY SKILLS

The basic skill for this job is curiosity and, because you are dealing with so many different stakeholders, you need quite a broad skill set ranging Social & Management Skills, to Analytical and Communication skills. It is hard to pin down a specific skill for the job as you can learn a lot while on the job and depending on the team that surrounds you.

Overall, I would rank communication skills as the highest, such as Active Listening, Collaboration, Non-Verbal Communications. In Project and Network Management, you should always have your feelers out to hear about current sentiments in the network as well as emerging trends, etc. And you should always be open to feedback and criticism. As a Network Manager, you might be trying out new tools, formats, etc to engage the community. Therefore, you should always ask: How can we improve things so that it is more valuable to you. It might be something completely different from what you and the team might have thought.



CAREER PROSPECT

In this specific role, I work mainly with representatives of the public sector (local, regional, national, supra-national level), but also with researchers and business representatives. This is what makes my job so much fun: You get insights from so many different profiles in the ICT sector and beyond. Profiles include developers, foresight managers, business developers, policymakers, IT experts, standardisation experts. The list could go on and on.



CHALLENGES

At the moment, my job implies quite a lot of work. Not only within DUET. Digital Twins are the hype of this decade in the smart cities' domain. And now we must get it right so that the concept delivers on the promise.

Overall, there is so much to do, so many parties to link up to. How to you keep it strategically relevant and to what extent can you improve workflows to make them more efficiently? These are main questions that I am asking myself regularly.



YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Every student is different, so a general advice is quite difficult. For starters, there are many ways to reach your dream job, but sometimes it turns out that, what you thought was your dream job, is not. If that happens, keep your cool. If you dream of becoming an engineer/developer and work with a city to improve how things are going. Do it. Cities & communities need you.



YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

While I am not the one in a position to give advice to teachers and parents, I hope that all of us can, at some point, leave our biases behind and our perception of how certain roles in society should be filled and especially by whom. Girls can be engineers and developers just as fine as boys and boys can be social workers just as much as girls.



LEARN MORE

Find out more about the project <https://www.digitalurbantwins.com/>

Or about women in ICT: <https://www.digitalurbantwins.com/womeninict>



ABOUT DUET

This Career sheet has been provided by DUET. DUET will help public sector decision-making become more democratic and effective. By creating digital replica's of a city, people, no matter their background, can use the Digital Twins 3D and 2D interfaces for easy policy impact exploration and experimentation across entire cities and regions.)

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