

# Review of: "Skilling Up for Tomorrow's Cities: The Workforce of Smart Cities"

Marco Bevolo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> World University of Design (WUD)

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

The topic is of great importance and high relevance, as demonstrated in a special edition of the EURES seminar series, designed and delivered in 2018. At that time, there was no apparent anticipatory insight into the changing nature of talent and competences implied by the advancement and implementation of digital solutions for smart living. The paper is comprehensive and complete as an introductory rationale on the topic.

These are points of strength of this paper:

The introduction provides a good overview of both content and structure. The methodology is well introduced; however, an expansion thereof might create additional interest from social scientists and academic audiences, especially given the original connection between large archives and Grounded Theory. It seems also pertinent to describe profiles as “emerging,” given the liminal nature of the urban transition towards pervasive smart technologies. The lack of “Technical” talent in the EU is accurately presented and described; here, it might be interesting to go deeper into the root causes and potential solutions regarding this mission-critical weakness in Europe. Some intuitions are very inspiring, e.g., the hypothesis of a “Smart City Biodiversity” professional, which might stand for a wider social demand for actions and policies in this domain. Also, “Heat Managers” as a new class of specialized professionals seem very interesting from the viewpoint of addressing specific concerns in the larger picture of climate change. The bibliography seems complete, with a number of projects being included as references.

These are opportunities to further improve the paper:

The reference to stakeholder engagement might be better articulated, especially taking into account the potential literature of interest from Action Research and Social Innovation to the wider topic of Commons, e.g., Ugo Mattei in Italy. Here, a number of critical voices might emerge, from urbanism to feminism, where the planned technological vision of the smart city might be met with a more problematic mindset. This appears important because future competencies will be partly shaped by current beliefs and social norms, e.g., the notion of cultural mediation as necessary for a diverse and inclusive society. Likewise, the “green transition” is presented as a self-evident reality, whereas recent dynamics in societies might indicate a more ambiguous perception by increasingly larger groups, from climate activist protests to the farmer movements with opposite ideologies in Europe. The Management Profiles appear slightly mixed and unfocused, with existing managerial roles (Chief Innovation Officer) interconnected to roles that do not appear managerial but operational (Technologist, Mediator). It also seems peculiar that any managerial role for designers or design leaders is included, e.g.,

Chief Design Officer, as such a title was granted since the early 2010s in innovative municipalities like Seoul, South Korea, or Helsinki, Finland. There are some possible overlaps between “Technical” and “Smart City” profiles, where a sharper definition / distinction between the two domains might help to efficiently classify. In the “Smart City” category, the co-existence of both urban and building managers might offer the opportunity to further diversify between public and private employers. The final remarks, presented as “Key Findings,” might benefit from additional discussion and critical revision.

All in all, a very good first step into the topic, which might be substantially improved by a) deeper specification of the methodological approach; b) inclusion of critical views of the important topics at hand, and c) expansion on less technical, more people-centric areas of activity, from design to Community Development or community management, where digital innovation and human interaction might contribute to creating the new fabric of tomorrow's cities. The authors might have the opportunity to elevate this essay to a higher status, both epistemologically and thematically, hence offering to both scholar and professional audiences a reference on this important topic.