

## **Digital tech, inequality, and migration: ethical and political considerations**

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### **Abstract**

This contribution highlights the fundamental question as to whether digital tech can be used by migrants to reduce the inequalities that they experience in their mobile lives. It draws mainly on research undertaken with migrants as part of the MIDEQ research programme (2019-24) mainly in Nepal and South Africa (but also in Ghana, Malaysia, Haiti and Brazil), as well as more recent research-practice in Brazil and Mozambique. Three main issues are addressed: the complexities of defining “inequalities” during migration; the interests underlying so-called Advanced Digital Technologies (focusing on EU definition: IoT, Blockchain, and Next Generation Internet); and whether the existing global geo-political system is capable of providing the leadership necessary beneficially to impact the use of digital tech by and for migrants. It concludes pessimistically that these latest technologies primarily serve the interests of a powerful minority within the global capitalist system, and that rather than reducing inequalities digital technologies will increasingly be used as tools of enslavement further to exploit and dehumanise migrants.

### **Biography**

**Tim Unwin** is a British academic and public figure, specialising in the uses of digital technology by the world’s poorest and most marginalised peoples. Trained as a geographer, he enjoys crossing boundaries between disciplines and sectors, and seeks to enhance international understanding between peoples and governments. He led the UK Prime Minister’s Imfundo initiative (creating partnerships for using IT in education in Africa) between 2001 and 2004, was Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation between 2011 and 2015, and Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D at Royal Holloway, University of London between 2007 and 2023. He has written or edited 17 books, and more than 250 other publications.