DIGITAL INCLUSION IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD:
An Emancipatory Manifesto

by
TIM UNWIN

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

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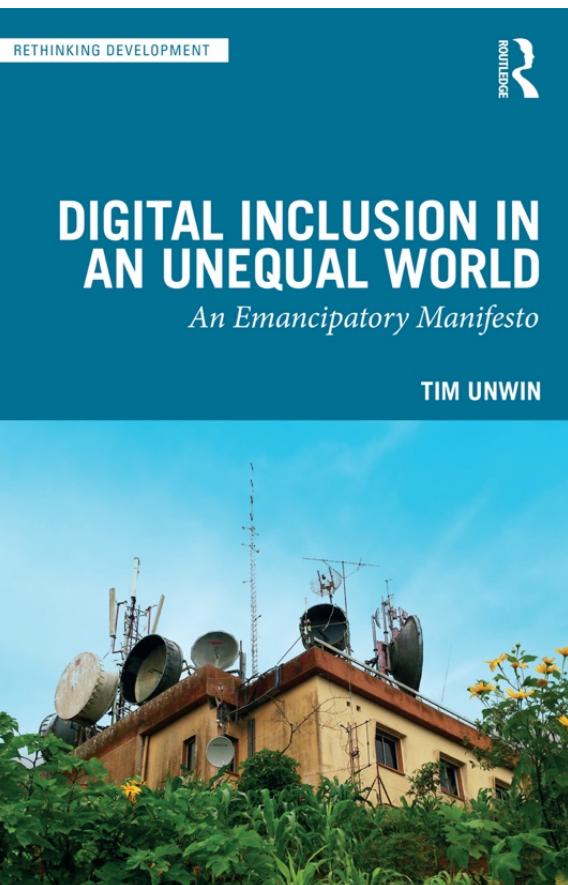
The book:

- Sheds *light* on why the poorest and most marginalised are still being left behind by the latest advancements in digital technologies, despite global rhetoric otherwise.
- Shares *understandings of* why many of those involved in using digital technologies for 'development' resolutely fail to learn from previous practice and research, and therefore continue to make similar mistakes to those made in the past.
- Advances an *emancipatory* agenda based around responsibilities rather than rights, that has the power to change existing priorities and practices

Seven Chapters
https://ict4d.org.uk/diuw/chapteroutline/

1. Notes from the Underground
2. Shifting the Balance: from Growth to Equity
3. A UN System Co-opted by the Interests of Global Capital
4. The 'Me' Syndrome
5. The Innovation Fetish
6. On Freedom and Digital Enslavement
7. Towards Emancipatory Responsibilities and Actions

What makes this book different?

A rigorous critique of why the poorest and most marginalised do not benefit from the use of digital tech due to: the "me syndrome", the UN system, the "innovation fetish", and digital enslavement

Concludes with a clear emancipatory framework built around practical steps that individuals, governments, the private sector and civil society should all take

Includes contributions from 31 leading authorities in the field, all of whom have contributed vignettes drawn from their own experiences, and told in powerful ways, often through short stories

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https://www.routledge.com/9781032983042

What are people saying about this book?

"I share with Tim a belief that we need to continue to do more to support the poorest and most marginalised individuals and communities in the world. What I do not share with him is his deep understanding of how digital tech can contribute to this effort, but equally how it can have profoundly harmful effects and deepen divisions and inequalities. As a result of reading this book I am at least a little closer to that understanding, and hope that policy makers and those advising them will take careful note of its wise words and recommendations."

Sir Myles Wickstead (Visiting Professor, International Relations, and former senior civil servant and Ambassador)

"Tim's diverse experiences have given him unique insights into what needs to be done so that the underprivileged and most marginalized population in Africa can really benefit from the use of digital tech. Used appropriately, digital tech can bring access to education, healthcare, financial services, and employment opportunities. It is an essential tool for social inclusion with the potential to reduce inequalities and foster sustainable development. This challenging book combines his practical experiences with rigorous scholarship to create a highly readable manifesto that cuts through the rhetoric and tells us all what we really need to do."

Helena Fernandes (Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Mozambique Communications Regulatory Authority (INCM))

"Digital transformation is having a major influence on the economy and the future of humanity, but many people in developing countries are still seeing only limited benefits. This important new book challenges us all to think again about how we can ensure that everyone benefits from the use of digital tech. Not only does it provide a sound critique, it also offers a clear manifesto for what we urgently need to do to rectify this."

Torbjörn Fredriksson (Head of E-commerce and Digital Economy, UNCTAD)

"Tim has articulated what many digital development advocates have long observed and privately lamented but seldom voiced publicly. In a world shaped by geopolitical tension, self-interest, and corporate exploitation, the gains of the technological revolution have reached only a privileged few. His book urges a return to compassion and reframes equity as an achievable goal. He critiques the corporate and political ecosystems, and makes an inspiring call for digital emancipation, laying out a clear roadmap for transformation, closing digital divides and unlocking opportunity for communities everywhere."

Bernadette Lewis (Secretary General, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation)

About the author

Tim Unwin first programmed in Fortran in the early-1970s, and has been fascinated by digital technologies ever since. His research-practice over the last 25 years has focused on ways through which the most marginalised, especially out of school youth, people with disabilities, women in patriarchal societies, and migrants, can benefit from the use of digital tech. He was founding UNESCO Chair in ICT4D at Royal Holloway, University of London (2007 – 2023), and served as Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (2011 – 2015). Trained as a Geographer, he has recently been described as "one of the leading minds in digital learning" (OEB, 2023) (For more, see https://timunwin.blog).

Thirty-one Vignettes
https://ict4d.org.uk/diuw/vignettes

- Thought provoking examples and case studies woven into the text
- By researchers and practitioners who have together spent over 500 years working in the field
- From diverse backgrounds in Africa, Asia, South America, Europe and North America
- Listen to the authors reading their own vignettes

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