This lecture explores the connections between the use of digital technologies and international development. It is usually argued that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a powerful and positive impact on development, and this has given rise to the widespread use of the term ICT4D (ICTs for Development) by academics and international organisations alike. However, whether this is true or not depends very much on the way in which “development is defined”. There is certainly some evidence that ICTs do contribute to economic growth, but this is not always inclusive. This can especially be seen in the use of technologies such as those associated with Smart Cities, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain, all of which have potential to enhance the lives of the poorest and most marginalised, but which in reality have been designed and implemented for very different reasons. The lecture emphasises that the private sector, governments and civil society all have interests in using the idea of “development” to boost the use and thus sale of such increasingly advanced technologies. Hence, instead of ICT4D, the links between digital technologies and development are much more akin to the notion of D4ICT (Development for ICTs). The lecture is illustrated throughout primarily by evidence from Africa and South Asia, focusing especially on the use of ICTs in education. It also draws on research and practice with out of school youth, people with disabilities, those living in rural areas, and women in patriarchal societies. It concludes with recommendations for ways through which the use of digital technologies can indeed be made more inclusive.

Biographical note:
Tim Unwin is Emeritus Professor of Geography (since 2011) and Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D (since 2007) at Royal Holloway, University of London. He was Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) from 2011-2015, and was Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission from 2009-2014. He serves on the ITU’s m-Powering Development Advisory Board, the UK Department for International Development’s Digital Advisory Panel, the UN University – Computing and Society International Advisory Board, and the Steering Committee of the World Economic Forum’s Internet for All initiative. Most of his research and writing currently focuses on the use of ICTs in international development and what needs to be done to ensure that the poorest and most marginalised can benefit from them. His edited book Information and
Communication Technologies for Development, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2009, and his latest book Reclaiming ICT4D was published by Oxford University Press in 2017. He has been a visiting professor at Peking University, and is an Honorary Professor at Lanzhou University in Gansu. He was appointed a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St George (CMG) in the Queen’s 90th Birthday Honours list in 2016 for his services to the Commonwealth