Call for papers  DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, MIGRATION AND GENDERED FORMS OF E-COMMERCE

Panel organizers  Griet Steel, assistant professor in International Development Studies at Utrecht University.
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Panel description
The introduction of digital technologies, and social media in particular, have shaped, transformed and restructured migration processes and experiences in various ways. As long as the multifaceted linkages between migration and digital technology are concerned, most scholars focus on the role of new ICTs in the social and political lifeworlds of migrants. Less attention is paid to the ways in which the intersections between migration and digital technologies have triggered the rise of mundane practices of electronic commerce (e-commerce) in which men and women from all over the world buy and sell goods, products, services and funds through digital mediation. An in-depth-focus on this economic dimension on migration and technology is however important to disentangle the unique ways in which the growing popularity of social media has opened novel entrepreneurial opportunities for migrants as well as people who do not migrate, but maintain a strong network with different migrant communities in the diaspora. Panelists are expected to throw an innovative light on the digital migration debates, by showing how global digital connections have made the world of trade and commerce accessible for those who do not physically move through space. Contributions will demonstrate how digital entrepreneurship, even as more conventional flows of remittances, has the potential to extend the development impact of migration beyond the livelihoods of the migrants themselves.
This panel aims to explore the complex and unexpected ways in which in the digital revolution has shaped, restructured and facilitated digital entrepreneurship. It will zoom in on empirical examples of small-scale entrepreneurs capitalizing on migration to open web shops and other online commercial activities through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. The panel specifically welcomes ethnographic papers focussing on the mundane practices of e-commerce in and from cities in the Global South, or digital entrepreneurial practices of people in a migrant setting in the global North, and scrutinizing the way these practices are gendered and are closely intermingled with the migration trajectories of relatives and friends.

Practicalities  This is a panel proposal for the online conference on ‘Migrant Belongings: Digital Practices and the Everyday’ from 21 to 23 April 2021. If you are interested in participating to this panel with a paper, please send a title, a 250-word abstract and a 150-word biographical note to Griet Steel (g.steel@uu.nl) by 16 January 2021.