

Initial Post

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Hancock et al. (2024) show that digital technologies can strengthen transparency in human rights investigations but may also create new risks to fairness and accountability. These risks arise when data systems ignore local context or reinforce existing inequalities. For instance, digital monitoring tools often focus on regions with strong data coverage while overlooking areas where abuse also occurs. This selective visibility determines whose experiences are acknowledged and which are left out, undermining fairness in accountability processes.

New satellite systems, such as SpaceX's Starlink, are sometimes presented as solutions because they expand internet access to remote maritime areas. However, Abels (2024) notes that private control over communication infrastructure can lead to dependency and uneven power distribution. When a single company determines who can connect and under what conditions, it costs on the accountability front. Iwan Sojka (2025) further argues that centralised governance models tend to reinforce inequality. In contrast, inclusive, bottom-up approaches can support transparency and empower affected communities to influence how technologies and data are used.

To reduce these risks, it is essential to involve communities in the design and development of technology. Working closely with the people affected helps ensure that digital tools support justice and human rights rather than create new forms of inequality.

References

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