

Curriculum Vitae

Tony Roberts

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CURRENT EMPLOYMENT: Freelance Consultant

NATIONALITY: British

THEMATIC EXPERTISE: Digital Development, Digital Inequalities, Digital Rights, Digital Citizenship, Digital Disinformation, Digital Surveillance, Digital Authoritarianism, Participatory Video.

GEOGRAPHICAL EXPERTISE: Anglophone Africa, S.E. Asia, Central America

OVERVIEW

Dr. Tony Roberts He has been working at the intersection of digital technologies, international development, and social justice since 1988 as a volunteer, lecturer, practitioner, trustee, and researcher. After lecturing in Innovation Studies in the 1990s, Tony founded and directed two international development agencies. He led Coda International and then Computer Aid International for a decade each before consolidating 25 years of practitioner experience in doctoral research on digital development. His 2015 PhD involved research with women technologists in Zambia using participatory video to enhance critical agency. He has lived or worked in 20+ African countries as well as in Nicaragua and Macao, China.

Tony was a Fellow in the Digital and Technology cluster at the Institute of Development Studies between 2016 and 2026. Tony joined IDS in 2016 after a year as a Research Fellow at the United Nations University digital development research institute in Macau (UNU-CS). His research focuses on digital inequalities, digital citizenship, and digital rights. Tony is the series editor for Zed Books series "Digital Africa" and is co-editor of five books "[Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#)", "[Digital Disinformation in Africa: hashtag politics, power and propaganda](#)", "[Digital Surveillance in Africa: power, agency and rights](#)"; [Internet Shutdowns in Africa: technology, rights and power](#) and [Feminist Digital Citizenship in Africa: agency, rights and resistance](#). A full list of Tony's publications is available from his website [Appropriating Technology](#), from his [Google Scholar page](#) or [ORCID ID](#).

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

2011 – 2015	PhD: Critical-Agency in ICT4D: a case study of women's use of participatory video technology to challenge gender inequality. Royal Holloway, University of London. (December 2015)
2011 – 2012	PGCert in Teaching to Inspire Learning, University of London
1994 – 1995	PGDip in Organisational Development & Training University of Leicester.
1987 – 1990	BSc (Hons) New Technology & Education University of East London

RECORD OF EMPLOYMENT

Academic

2016 – 2026	Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, UK Research contracts including for SDC, DFID, DFAT, SIDA, USAID. Evaluation contracts including HIF, Oxfam, GODAN, DIAL. Consultancy/training for govts of Tanzania and Tajikistan.
2015 – 2016	Research Fellow, United Nations University, Macau, China

2013 – 2015	Visiting Lecturer, Royal Holloway University of London
1990 – 1994	Associate Lecturer, University of East London.
<u>Practitioner</u> 1997 – 2010	Founder & CEO, Computer Aid International From conception to £2m annual turnover and 50 staff Social business provided 250,000+ computers to non-profits in 100+ countries. Strategic management, established 15 country programmes.
1989 – 1997	co-Founder & Director, Coda International Institutional From conception to £500k turnover and 20 staff on 3 continents INGO providing institutional capacity building to community-based organisations Leadership, organisational development, project management.
Voluntary	Trustee and co-Founding Director of BOND (British Overseas NGOs for Development). Founding Trustee & Director of the Restart Project. ex-Chair of Trustees for Coda International. Current International Board member of three Zambian NGOs; BongoHive, Asikana Network and Constituency Watch.

AFFILIATIONS

International Panel on the Information Environment - Founding Member responsible for membership development.

Information Technology and Development journal – Editorial Board member.

Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries – Editorial Panel Reviewer

AI and Society Journal - Editorial Panel Reviewer

ICTD Conference Programme Committee 2020-2024 conference committee.

IFIP9.4 Conference Committee and Track Chair 2020 - 2023

Development Studies Association conference track chair Digital Rights and Activism 2021

Member of the Development Studies Association

RECENT RESEARCH FUNDING: I wrote the proposals for the awards marked Principal Investigator (P.I.)

Start/End dates	Funding Body	Value of Award	Type of Grant	Role
Oct 2025-Sept 2026	Ford Foundation	£300,000	Grant	Co-I
April 2025-May2026	British Academy	£30,000	Grant	P.I.
Jan 2025 – Dec 2029	SARChI	£220,000	Grant	Co-I
Jan 2023 – Dec 2025	Open Society Fund	\$400,000	Grant	P.I.
Jan 2023 – Dec 2024	Ford Foundation	\$600,000	Grant	P.I.
Aug 2022 – Jul 2023	Global Dialogue	\$100,000	Grant	P.I.
Mar 2021 – Sep 2021	Omidyar Foundation	\$40,000	Grant/Award	P.I.
Jun 2020 – May 2021	GCRF - DIDA	£150,000	Network Grant	P.I.
Oct 2019 – Mar 2020	Oxfam Novib	€48,983	Contract for services	Co. I.
Oct 2019 – Jan 2020	UKRI	£7,685	Contract for services	Co. I.
Aug 2018 – Mar 2019	Elrha (HIF)	£57,452	Contract for services	P.I.
May 2018 – Jan 2019	DIAL	\$133,641	Research Grant	Co-I

SELECTED EXPERIENCE

- 2023-2025 Series Editor of **"Digital Africa"**: five collected edition books Zed Books.
1. Editor Book: [Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#) – July 2023
2. Editor Book: [Digital Disinformation in Africa: hashtag politics, power and propaganda](#) – April 2024
3. Editor Book: [Digital Surveillance in Africa: power, agency and rights forthcoming](#) March 2025
4. Editor Book: [Internet Shutdowns in Africa: technology, rights and power](#). September 2025
5. Editor Book: [Feminist Digital Citizenship in Africa: agency, rights and resistance](#). December 2025
- 2021-2024 Editor of Handbook section and three reports
Commissioned authors, edited chapters, and wrote introductory syntheses for:
1. [Sage Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry](#) – six-chapter section 4.2: Digital Methods.
2. [Digital Rights in Closing Civic Spaces: lessons from ten countries](#).
3. [Surveillance Law in Africa: a review of six countries](#)
4. [Mapping the supply of surveillance technologies to Africa: case studies from five countries](#)
5. [The Digitalisation of Social Protection in Africa: The Perspective of Marginalised Workers](#)
- 2020-2025 Principal Investigator, African Digital Rights Network
Secured funding and built research network of 75+ researchers from 30+ Africa countries.
I led 100 online sessions over three years to build network, develop research agenda, and run editorial meetings during and since the pandemic. Attracted funding from Omidyar (\$40k), Global Dialogue (\$100k), Ford Foundation (\$600k) and Open Society Foundation (\$400k), SARChi (£220k)..
- 2022-2024 Principal Investigator and Lead Trainer, SDC
Conducted research for four [Digital Governance reports](#) then led training for SDC staff and government staff first in Serbia and later in Tajikistan.
- 2019 Principal Evaluator, Humanitarian Innovation Fund, global
Conducted retrospective analysis of 60 humanitarian innovation grants for Elrha.
- 2018 Lead Researcher, Science and Technology Agency, Tanzania
Led evidence-to-policy diagnostic and training for COSTECH government researchers.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND OUTPUTS

- Bosch, T. and Roberts, T. (Editors) (2025) *Feminist Digital Citizenship in Africa*, London, Zed Books / Bloomsbury. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/feminist-digital-citizenship-in-africa-9781350500488/>
- Antonio, F. and Roberts, T. (Editors) (2025) *Internet Shutdowns in Africa: Technology, Rights and Power*. London, Zed Books / Bloomsbury. <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/monograph?docid=b-9781350464322>
- Roberts, T. (2025) *Understanding Digital Rights: Definitions, Conceptions, and Myths*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: 10.19088/IDS.2025.014
<https://www.ids.ac.uk/publications/understanding-digital-rights-definitions-conceptions-and-myths/>
- Roberts, T. and Mare, A. (eds) (2025) [Digital Surveillance in Africa: power, agency and rights](#), London, Zed Books.
- Roberts, T. and Howard, J. (2025) [Using the Participation Cube to Conduct Participation Analysis of Development Projects in Zambia and Uganda](#), *The Journal of Development Studies*, 1–20.
- Roberts, T., & Oosterom, M. (2024). [Digital Authoritarianism: a systematic literature review](#). *Information Technology for Development*, 1–25.

Faith, B., Roberts, T. and Alfery, L. (2024) [The Digitalisation of Social Protection in Africa: The Perspective of Marginalised Workers](#). Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Roberts T. and Karekwaivanane (eds) (2024) [Digital Disinformation in Africa: hashtag politics, power and propaganda](#). London, Zed Books.

Roberts, T. et al. (2023) [Mapping the Supply of Surveillance Technologies to Africa](#): Case Studies from Nigeria, Ghana, Morocco, Malawi, and Zambia, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Roberts T. and Bosch T. (eds) (2023) [Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#). Collected Edition Book, London, Zed Books.

Roberts T. and Bosch T. (2023) Introduction: Spaces of Digital Citizenship in Africa, chapter in Roberts T. and Bosch T. (eds) (2023) [Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#). Collected edition book, London, Zed Books.

Antonio, F. and Roberts T. (2023) Internet Shutdowns and Digital Citizenship, chapter in Roberts T. and Bosch T. (eds) (2023) [Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#). Collected edition book, London, Zed Books.

Elias M. and Roberts T. (2023) Digital Citizenship and Political Accountability in Namibia's 2019 election, chapter in Roberts T. and Bosch T. (eds) (2023) [Digital Citizenship in Africa: technologies of agency and repression](#). Collected edition book, London, Zed Books.

Roberts, T. and Zheng, Y. (2022) [Datafication, Dehumanisation and Participatory Development](#): does digitalisation dehumanise development? Paper presented at the IFIP 9.4 conference in 2022.

Roberts, T., Hernandez, K., Faith, B., and Prieto Martín, P. (2022) [Key Issues in Digitalisation and Governance](#). Bern: SDC Governance Network, Swiss Development Cooperation.

Roberts T. and Bosch T. (2021) [Digital Citizenship or Digital Authoritarianism](#) in OECD Development Co-operation Report 2021: Shaping a Just Digital Transformation, Paris, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Roberts, T. (editor) (2021) [Surveillance Law in Africa: a review of six countries](#), Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. Commissioned and edited a collection of six country reports.

Roberts, T.; Mohamed Ali, A.; Farahat, M.; Oloyede, R. and Mutung'u, G. (2021) [Surveillance Law in Africa: introduction chapter synthesis of research](#), Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Roberts, T. (editor) (2021) [Digital Technologies in Participatory Research](#), in Burns, D. Howard J. and Ospina S., The Sage Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry, London, Sage. Commissioned and edited six chapter section.

Roberts, T. (2021) [Digital Affordances in Participatory Research Methods](#): Section Introduction, in Burns, D. Howard J. and Ospina S., The Sage Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry.

Roberts, T. (editor) (2021) [Digital Rights in Closing Civic Space: lessons from ten African countries](#). Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. Commissioned and edited ten country reports.

Roberts, T. and Mohamed Ali, A. (2021) '[Opening and Closing Online Civic Space in Africa: An Introduction to the Ten Digital Rights Landscape Reports](#)', in T. Roberts (ed.), Digital Rights in Closing Civic Space: Lessons from Ten African Countries, Brighton: IDS.

- Bosch, T. and Roberts, T. (2021) [South Africa Digital Rights Landscape Report](#), in T. Roberts (ed.), Digital Rights in Closing Civic Space: Lessons from Ten African Countries, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Roberts, T. and Jimenez, A (2021) [Decolonising Innovation](#), in Mazzucato, M. (2021) Public Purpose: industrial policy's comeback and government's role in shared prosperity, Boston Review, Forum 19 (46.3).
- Roberts, T. Hernandez. and Faith, B. (2021) [Digital Technologies and the Future of Poverty and Development](#), in Allen, T. and Thomas. A. (2021) Poverty & Development in the 21st Century, Oxford University Press. Textbook chapter.
- Roberts, T. and Faith, B. (2021) [Digital Aid: understanding the digital challenges facing humanitarian assistance](#), Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.
- Roberts, T. and Hernandez, K. (2021) [Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition: A Literature Review and Proposed Conceptual Framework](#). IDS Working Paper 545, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Hernandez, K. and Roberts, T. (2020) [Predictive Analytics in Humanitarian Action: a preliminary mapping and analysis](#). Emerging Issues 33. Institute of Development Studies.
- Roberts, T. and Hernandez, K. (2019) [Digital Access is not Binary: the 5 'A's of Technology Access in the Philippines](#). Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries.
- Roberts, T. (2019) [Closing Civic Space and Inclusive Development in Ethiopia](#). IDS Working Paper 527, Brighton: IDS.
- Roberts, T. and Muñiz, S. (2019) [Fifty Years of Practice and Innovation in Participatory Video in: Servaes J.](#) (ed). Handbook of Communication for Development. Springer, Singapore.
- Jimenez, A. and Roberts, T. (2019) [Decolonising Neo-Liberal Innovation: Using the Andean Philosophy of 'Buen Vivir' to Reimagine Innovation Hubs](#). In: Nielsen P. and Kimaro H. (eds) IFIP International Conference on the Social Implications of Information Technologies in Developing Countries, Vol 552, pp 180-191.
- Hernandez, K. and Roberts, T. (2018) [Leaving No One Behind in a Digital World](#). K4D Emerging Issues Report, Brighton, UK, Institute of Development Studies.
- Roberts, T. and Marchais, G. (2018) [Assessing the Role of Social Media and Digital Technology in Violence Reporting](#). Journal article in *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* Vol.10 (2), pp. 9–42. doi:10.22381/CRLSJ10220181
- Faith, B., Roberts, T. and Berdou, E. (2018) [Towards a More Gender-Inclusive Open Source Community](#), Washington, Digital Impact Alliance.
- Hossain, N., Khurana N., Mohmand, S., Nazneen, S., Oosterom, M., Roberts, T., Santos, R., Shankland, A. and Schröder P. (2018) [What Does Closing Civic Space Mean for Development?](#) A Literature Review and Proposed Conceptual Framework, IDS Working Paper 515, Brighton.
- Poveda, S. and Roberts, T. (2017) [Critical Agency and Development: applying Freire & Sen to ICT4D in Zambia and Brazil](#). Journal article in *Information Technology and Development*, Vol 30(1).
- Roberts, T. and Hernandez, K. (2017) [The Techno-centric Gaze: Incorporating Citizen Participation Technologies into Participatory Governance Processes in the Philippines](#), Making All Voices Count Research Report, Brighton: IDS.

Roberts, T. (2017) [Participatory Technologies: Affordances for Development](#). In: Choudrie J., Islam M., Wahid F., Bass J., Priyatma J. (eds) Information and Communication Technologies for Development. IFIP Advances in Information and Communication Technology, vol 504. Springer.

Roberts, T. (2016), [Women's Use of Participatory Video Technology to Tackle Gender Inequality in Zambia's ICT Sector](#), in: Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Information and Communication Technology and Development, 4-6 June 2016, Ann Arbor, USA.

Roberts, T. (2015), [Critical Agency in ICT4D](#), Unpublished doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway University of London.

Roberts, T. (2015), [Critical Intent & Interests: a typology of ICT4D initiatives](#), in: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on the Social Implications of Computers in Developing Countries, 20-22 May 2015, Negombo, Sri Lanka.

Roberts, T. and Lunch, C. (2015), [Participatory Video](#), Encyclopedia chapter, in: International Encyclopedia