

Launching into the open. Step 1: Get a rocket

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When I started my MSc in Management and IT at the University of St Andrews in fall 2012 I felt a growing interest in digital rights and transparent governments, but the feeling was still quite diffuse and uncontrolled. To turn this wafting thoughts into tangible areas of interest I got myself a copy of the O'Reilly book on Open Government, which, as a tribute to the tragic death of the contributor and digital activist Aaron Swartz in January 2013, is now [available as free PDF](#).

I can't pin down which of the book's essays was the proverbial "tipping point", but as soon as I started doing some in-depth research on the different actors and initiatives around Open Government Data I quickly figured out that I found what I was looking for: a community to engage and explore, to contribute and observe. Only weeks before this point the UK Government launched the [Open Data Institute](#) in London-Shoreditch with a promising vision ("to catalyse the evolution of Open Data culture to create economic, environmental, and social value") and a call-for-researchers. A couple of months later I moved to London to join the ODI team as a research intern for four weeks together with former St. Andrewsian [Fred Saunderson](#). Within this month in London and the kind support of my colleagues at the ODI, I was able to meet the people I was reading about at my desk in Scotland and to subsequently craft my final dissertation – a stepping stone for future work.

When I started diving into the global community around Open Data I started forming the plan not to end my research in this field with my MSc dissertation, but to extend it to a PhD project. With [Leonhard Dobusch](#) I found a supervisor at Free University of Berlin, who is investigating multiple areas of digital openness and was willing to guide my journey into the "Open".

This research blog should accompany my PhD research in the upcoming years as a memo, sandbox and meeting point for other interested researchers. I will provide some insights into my working routines, my inputs and outputs, interesting reads or inspiring events I attend. I would like to design my journey into the "Digital Open" as transparent as possible, this blog should thereby serve as my rocket – a vehicle to move around and a resort to contemplate about the things I have experienced out there.