

**Name:** Alex McLean

**Why do you want to work with the Open Data Institute?**

The ODI has an excellent track record of working with artists in a considerate and respectful manner, remarkable for a growing institution.

I have a long investment in open technology and standards, which has run throughout my artistic and professional life. Although I do not press my ideals on my collaborators, all the software I make is free/open source.

The notion of Open Data connects with my interests in Pattern, played out through my Tidal software (for live coding pattern) and my Weaving Codes research project (investigating the structures of weaves including impacts in music technology). Pattern is central to the way we understand data (including machine learning, visualisation, sonification), and the sharing of data can be seen as the interweaving of pattern.

The notion of open data as interwoven pattern is something I am keen to explore, taking a long view of the digital to attempt to connect ancient datasources with contemporary online music making.

**Where are you currently with your creative practice, and how would this residency develop it?**

I have a well developed live coding and (informal) curatorial practice, with a diverse range of creative collaborations. This connects with my arts research, which I plan to continue outside academia (joining FoAM Kernow; <http://fo.am/kernow/>).

As well as generally allowing me the time to reflect and develop, this residency will allow me to connect with a broader range of people and institutions. Engaging people in workshops will allow me to gather open data from them, and bring them into the world of live coding. Engaging with institutions will allow me to open up archives, for my project and for others who would want to make use of it.

**How do you think working with The Open Data Institute will help your professional development?**

I think what I will value most is for a while, having the time to stop, think, absorb and reflect, while not having any particular plan. This kind of time is too often squeezed out of creative work, but I think is an essential part of developing a new strand of practice.

Although I have a history of industrial software development, and have worked in linked data while a research assistant in the University of Sheffield, the residency will

allow me to get to grips with current thinking in the open data field. While artists are often shy away from being led by technology, I take the view that technology is what makes us human, and allowing creative thoughts to follow the current flows of technology can be positive. However, it will also allow me to develop a critical view of open data practice, exploring such ideas as Small Data and Critical Engineering in this context.

**What work would you like to develop as part of the residency? Please outline what your starting points would be.**

I have three starting points that I'd like to explore:

Knitting patterns as source code. Working with contemporary and historical archives, develop ways of representing the structures of knitting towards transforming knitting patterns into audio/visual works. This would involve a mixture of knitting and programming.

Live coding with everyone. We are increasingly growing use to editing the same documents at the same time, through google drive and similar. Google spreadsheets point to the possibility of massive online live code scripts. What could happen if one hundred people edited the same generative music code at the same time, while it played? Perhaps an impossible idea, but I think there is something here, pointed to by my "shared buffer" network music collaboration (<http://yaxu.org/shared-buffer/>).

Live coding with live open data. Bringing live open data feeds into my Tidal software, so that fluctuating sources of data can be explored in musical performance. This is an idea that I am still unsure about, in particular whether open data sources can offer more than pseudo-random number generators.. But the emphasis on pattern should allow qualities of open data to be revealed to performance while they are changing.. I think this could end up being the most promising idea to explore.

**What are your other commitments for 2016/17**

I have a 50% part time contract as Fellow with the University of Leeds until July 2016. Aside from that, I am in the process of joining FoAM Kernow as researcher (<http://fo.am/kernow/>), in a transition period (<https://medium.com/@foam/thriving-in-uncertainty-d74b75020b05>).

**Works:**

Canute live  
<http://canute.lurk.org/>

Tidal  
<http://tidal.lurk.org/>