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final paper

Open Cartography as Alternative Media

The Open Street Map project starts in 2004 as a global, networked, and collaborative project that intends to create a free and open map of the world. Following the open source model, OSM has not only generated an extensive amount of geographical data by the collaborative work of thousands of volunteer members, but also has created a global community and several local groups of practitioners. Because all the maps and data produced by OSM community are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license (CC-BY-SA), they are free and open to anyone who wants to use it. That fact has allowed the use of OSM's data sets and maps in rescue emergencies, storytelling, data mashups, and other creative, productive, and alternative applications. In this research paper I plan to study the OSM project as an exemplary form of alternative media that embraces the ideas and principles of the open source movement and culture.

The major research question is if the OSM project can be considered a form of alternative media. The secondary questions are related to the kind of open source community and practices developed in the OSM. What are those kind of practices? What are the characteristics of the community? How is it organized?

I imagine structuring the research paper around 4 sections:

1. Embracing "openness." Aligning with the philosophy of the open source movement and culture. Understanding the main ideas and ethos.

2. Community and collaborative practices. Local groups and global community.

3. Practical applications and projects. Promoting action.

3.1. Haiti earthquake crisis: volunteers generating data of an unmapped country. Used by rescue teams.

3.2. Mapping parties. The Atlanta Citywide Mapathon.

4. Conclusion. Open source/data/content as alternative media from the 21st century.