

Charter for Building a Data Commons for a Free, Fair and Sustainable Future

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Purpose

This Charter/Carta provides practical guidance and political orientation for mapping, modeling, managing and sharing data as a Commons. If you follow these guidelines, you will contribute to a Global Data Commons. That is, you will govern your mapping community and manage data differently than people who centralize data control for profit.

The Charter does not describe the vision, scope or values of a specific mapping project, but Data Commons principles. It will help you reimagine how you protect the animating spirit of your mapping project and prevents your data from being co-opted or enclosed.

The Charter as a whole is the maximum „commons denominator“ of mapping projects that aspire to share data for the common good.

Help commonize maps and data! For the people, by the people.

Principles

1. **Reflect on your intentions together**

Discuss the core of your project again and again. Everybody involved should always feel in resonance with the direction in which it's heading.

2. **Make your community thrive**

For the project to be successful, a reliable community is more important than anything else. Care for thos

3. **Separate commons and commerce**

Mapping for the commons is different from producing services or products to compete on the map-market. Make sure you don't feed power-imbalances or profit-driven agendas and learn how to systematically [separate commons from commerce](<https://discourse.transformap.co/t/separate-commons-and-commerce-to-make-it-work-for-the-commons/625>)

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4. **Design for interoperability**

Think of your map as a node in a network of many maps. Talk with other contributors to the Data Commons to find out if you can use the same data model, licence and approach to mapping.

5. **Care for a living vocabulary**

Vocabularies as entry points to complex social worlds are always incomplete. Learn from other mappers' vocabularies. Make sure your vocabulary can be adjusted. Make it explicit and publish it openly, so that others can learn from it too.

6. **Document transparently**

Sharing your working process, learnings and failures allow others to replicate, join and contribute. Don't leave documentation for after. Do it often and make it understandable. Use technologies designed for open cooperation.

7. **Crowdsource what you can**

Sustain your project whenever possible with money, time, knowledge, storing space, hardware or monitoring from your community or public support. Stay independent!

8. **Use FLOSS tools**

It gives you the freedom to further develop your own project and software according to your needs. And it enables you to contribute to the development of these tools.

9. **Build upon the open web platform**

Open web standards ensure your map, its data and associated applications cannot be enclosed and are prepared for later remixing and integration with other

sources.

10. **Own your data**

In the short run, it seems to be a nightmare to refrain from importing or copying what you are not legally entitled to. In the long run, it is the only way to prevent you from being sued or your data being enclosed. Ban Google.

11. **Protect your data**

To own your data is important, but not enough. Make sure nobody dumps your data back into the world of marketization and enclosures. Use appropriate licenses to protect your collective work!

12. **Archive your project**

When it doesn't work anymore for you, others still might want to build on it in the future.

How to? Recommendations

NOTE: Each paragraph/principle of the Charter is supposed to be fleshed out via some "how to" recommendations. The following lines are only remnants of former conversations, not yet to be considered a draft of the HOW TO. The idea is to add a HOW TO in such a way, that everybody can easily understand how to implement a principle in his/her project.

Link to WikiData and OpenStreetMap

Don't maintain your single data set. Contribute as much as possible to already existing data commons. Make them thrive.

Start from Semantic Modelling

Semantic modelling is very powerful, make use of it. Remember: everything derives from your data modelling protocol.

Make data claims traceable

Include/reference data sources. Especially when mapping controversies, include links to organizations and agencies addressing related issues.

Advance people's needs

There are plenty of fair and sustainable ways to meet people's needs. To focus on needs eases collaboration and ensures

Self-host your infrastructure

To enable both, collaboration and autonomy, choose technology which allows to be

replicated quickly and enables you to easily iterate and improve your map.