

Ukeme Offiong

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Counter Argument

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Counterargument for ATLAS

THE PITCH

The Hampton Roads Social and Environmental Justice (Atlas) is a project that doesn't yet exist but is working to create a free, open-access, web-based mapping platform focused on social and environmental justice for people in Hampton Roads. The main argument that the group brought forth was that data maps are hard to understand because consumers are not in the field. The platform will help users understand how to use data mapping.

WHO WOULD OPPOSE THIS

People who would mainly be in opposition to this platform would be real estate developers, privacy advocates, and fossil fuel companies. For example, with real estate developers using a free platform like this, you would be able to see different neighborhoods and be able to see where single-family homes, races, and bus stops are. This would raise awareness about urban inequities in neighborhoods and highlight the negative parts of a neighborhood when people are trying to buy, rent, or own properties.

Privacy advocates, they would mainly worry about the surveillance, as data mapping needs data from citizens, as it tracks your phone data, where you go, and what you do. It is very invasive, and with everything that is going on in the United States right now, people aren't okay with that happening. Fossil fuel companies and polluters don't want their information accessible

to the public, as they use toxic waste sites, and if they are polluting, it would make it easy for people to be aware of what they are doing.

Something else to consider is the data centers themselves. If this project were to attain a data center for this platform, it might cause an uproar in Virginia. Data mapping platforms would need a data center for a platform this big. A lot of citizens are upset with data centers right now, as they use a lot of electricity and water. Residents are worried about the cost of electricity in cities going up, as well as the extreme water usage that data centers use.

Both republican and democratic sides are upset with data centers, so much so that the [Harvard Gazette](#) believes the topic of AI can affect or sway some Virginia and Georgia elections that are happening in November. Virginia and Georgia have also given billions of dollars to the industry when that money could go towards more pressing industries like healthcare and education.

THE COMPETITION

By doing a quick Google search, you are able to see multiple platforms that offer data mapping, but for a price. Felt, ArcGIS Online, Open Street Map, Gather map, and Public Coordinate are data mapping platforms. While playing around with the demo for Felt, you are able to view different industries like agriculture, cities and governments, education, climate and natural resources, education, insurance, real estate, and a lot more.

For example, with real estate, you are able to view downtown mixed, single-family residential, and other properties with the Felt platform. With the graphs, you can understand and see what specifically you are looking at, as they use color coding to differentiate. With a bit of time, consumers will be able to understand how to read the data.

THE RELEASE DATE

Lastly, considering the platform is coming out in 2027, how do we know this project is actually going to be completed? According to Zoom, ATLAS has secured funding, built a team, and started on this project. How stable is this project considering the team of students? Are they going to be able to get this platform out by 2027, or will they have a lot of delays? That is also something to consider.

Sources

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