

Ruby Day 3: OpenStreetMap's birthday party

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I couldn't persuade any taxis to come out here for an early-morning pickup, so up at 5:30am to catch the 6am bus to Manila. Well, buses: the first one breaks down, and I'm given enough money back from my ticket to find another bus to Manila. The other passengers wave one down, and I put myself back in the hands of the transport gods. Bus 3 is from Manila's main bus terminal, a rundown old mall on the waterside. Most transport comes through there, and it already looks packed to capacity. 4 hours after I start, I get to the event: the last bus drops me in the middle of traffic (literally: 3 lanes to cross to get to safety) but the first car I see is an empty taxi - the transport gods have been good to me today.

Celina rocks the crowd at the OSM event (nobody leaves, which in Manila is its own form of applause); she also does the first hakuna-matata-style waving a Brck in the air to happen in the Philippines (she is beyond excited at having one; I'm beyond patience at trying to get a local data sim card to work for it). I talk about Ushahidi - I've carefully pitched my slides away from disaster response (and more towards civic community), but again everyone here is obsessed with disaster (and, to be fair, traffic). I get some quality geek time with the SkyEye (local UAV company) team, and look over their fixed-wing foam UAV (1-1.5 hours flight time at 3 m/s, good range and flies in decent winds). They're great guys: we talk about drones, and camera types (they're working on a low-cost multispectral camera, which is a seriously big deal for checking environment etc) and public laboratory's work on sensors.

Ruby has become real: she's now a cat-5 typhoon (real bad) heading straight for the islands. Lots of people are fitting the camp in-between the many meetings that come with disaster preparation, mostly concentrating on pre-positioning resources. There's a 2-day event on whether agencies have learnt the right lessons from Typhoon Yolanda. Somehow that seems a little moot now: there's about to be a practical exam, and it's a pretty high bar on pass/fail. I put a note in the company chat that I might have a small issue with connectivity with a large typhoon coming and all but will try to stay safe; nobody responds. I drop notes in the disaster data chats that I'm in the area if needed - friends respond and add me to groups.

I check the HOT tasks list for the Philippines. There are still tasks on there (recent) mapping damage and infrastructure (roads etc) from the last storm. At least one of them has been updated in the last few hours, but if the last storm isn't finished yet, how are we going to prepare for the next one?

The local disaster website, [Pagosa](#), is down - overloaded with people looking for information. I wonder how many were local, and whether it would be good to have a "locals-only" site somewhere to keep down the traffic.

We travel back to the Ecamp in time for Celina to pitch her disaster community ideas to the judges. The competition is about education and disaster, and many of the pitches have woven both together.

We show the Ushahidi/ MAVC team <http://weather.com.ph/announcements/super-typhoon-hagupit-ruby-update-number-004> and make sure they're booked into safe accommodation away from the storm. It's killing their plan to go walking on the coast at the weekend, but that isn't the best idea right now (getting the hell out to a safe building is). We also reassure Matt, their colleague in Nairobi, that his team-mates are going to be safe.

As we leave for the night, there's a crowd of people around a television, looking at a picture of the storm track. We're booked on the 5:30pm transport out tomorrow, but by that time the roads will be full of people heading from here to safety in Manila. Nobody here seems to be panicking about this yet.

We go out to dinner and Celina scores: after hours of looking for a taxi to get us off the coast early, the hotel has a car service that will take us (and up to 6 friends) away.