

OpenCitizens

We propose to form a data collective called OpenCitizens that acts and advocates for its members in return for access to the data of that individual. OpenCitizens will sell the data in pseudonymous and/or aggregated form to entities which will use that data in beneficial and non-harmful ways, and provide members with useful insights into their own data.

Problem Statement: We live in both a mental and a physical world. Our minds are united: we share common truths, which are basis of communication and cooperation. Our bodies are separate, and form a basis for competition. In modern society, bodies often privatize the truth, and large bodies often use that information as a weapon against small bodies. Thus information and truth face a *tragedy of the commons* scenario.

Background: Our data is valuable. Historically, our data is collected electronically and often used against us instead of for our benefit. One attempt to remedy this situation were the GDPR laws adopted in the EU to prevent the collection of data without informed consent. However, the burden of managing what data we provide is difficult when we must make numerous such choices (e.g. for every website that we visit). To use such data for our benefit is possible if our data is accessible to us, but few of us lack the capability to retrieve this data via some obscure API and turn it into insights that are meaningful to us.

Benefits of Being an Open Citizen:

- Members gain insight into their data: for example, information about their spending habits, health, or location over time form valuable sources feedback that allow objective insight.
- The OpenCitizens organization is able to advocate for data privacy and security. It can lobby with the government, sue social media companies in cases of unfair use, and attempt to remedy the negative effects of a for-profit economy that has used our data against us via advertising or surveillance.

Other Benefits:

- The operating cost of the OpenCitizens organization can be paid from the judicious sale of data to various organizations that wish to have it.
- The governing body serves a public good in that it is able to offer pseudonymized or aggregate data to organizations such as the government, which can use that data to determine the appropriate taxation of goods and services (e.g. in proportion to the benefit and harm as determined by that data).

A Concrete Example:

- Joe drinks too often, and is hounded by advertising that encourages him to drink because he spends a slightly longer time looking at images containing alcohol before.
- Sue is a member of OpenCitizens. Because the privacy of Sues data is more highly safeguarded than Joes, she is less subject to profiteering. Sue is able to see when and how much she drinks because she has access to her data, which may help her to reduce consumption.
- OpenCitizens sells the data from its members to organizations that are not antithetical to the interests of those members. OpenCitizens provides information about its members to the government, which is then able to tax alcohol in proportion to the correlation between money spent on alcohol and money spent on health care. OpenCitizens may also provide data to insurance companies which is anticipated to secure a reduced rate for healthy individuals.

References: MIDATA cooperative (an online health data aggregator), Solid (a method for aggregating individual data in *pods*).