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# Citizens give up data in blockchain project to improve cities

By **Matt Reynolds**

ACTIVISM has never been so easy. Urban residents will soon be sharing their personal data – not with the usual social media giants, but with a scheme that aims to make their cities better places to live.

The three-year European Union-funded project, dubbed the Decentralised Citizen Owned Data Ecosystem (DECODE), will involve four pilot schemes that will begin in Barcelona and Amsterdam at the end of 2017. In each city, 1000 people will get an app through which they can share data about themselves to help firms or government groups create products or services to improve the city, such as better play areas in parks.

In general, people have little control over their data online, says Tom Symons, at innovation charity Nesta, who is leading the work on DECODE.

But with the project, each citizen will choose how much personal data is uploaded to its platform and how it should be used. For example, a person may decide that location-tracking data about parks they visit can be used by the city council but not by firms. Individuals' data-sharing choices will be kept on the blockchain: a digital ledger that securely stores data across a network of computers.

Symons says publicly available data such as social media posts could be combined with location data to better understand how people feel about

different parts of the city. This could help pinpoint places where people feel unsafe or provide insight into how they use public spaces and transport. Want more? Read the extended version of this article.

As part of the project, the DECODE team also plans to launch a website or app that will let people get involved in local politics and share possessions.

Residents will be able to use this platform to comment on city legislation, put forward their own ideas and vote on proposals. People might also use the platform to offer to lend items such as spare power tools or even their car, says

Symons.

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