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'Wiki City Rome' to provide real-time crowd information, mapping for fest

[K.C. Jones](#)

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The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's SENSEable City Laboratory will present a vision of Rome through new interactive mapping technology that's designed to provide information and views never before available.

[Wiki City Rome](#) will present a futuristic urban map, drawn with dynamic data received anonymously from cell phones, GPS devices on buses and taxis, and other wireless mobile devices. Data are made anonymous and aggregated to provide more layers of information than most maps provide.

A visitor or resident in Rome could view the map to find the most crowded place to drink an aperitivo -- and then identify the least congested route by which to reach it, researcher Francesco Calabrese, of SENSEable City Lab, said in a statement.

The project debuts Sept. 8 during Rome's "Notte Bianca", or white night, an all-night festival with citywide events. Anyone with an Internet connection will be able to see a unique map of the Italian capital that shows the movements of crowds, event locations, the whereabouts of well-known Roman personalities, and the real-time position of city buses and trains, MIT researchers said.

A big-screen display in a Roman city center square will broadcast the map, giving Romans real-time feedback on the human dynamics in their immediate surroundings.

"Rome's Notte Bianca is all about the city, the people, and the events, and Wiki City Rome will give Romans a new awareness of how they move within their city in response to this exceptional pulse of activities," researcher Kristian Kloeckl, a SENSEable City Lab member involved in the project, said in a statement.

"How do people react towards this new perspective on their own city while they are determining the city's very own dynamic," she asked. "How does having access to real-time data in the context of possible action alter the process of decision-making in how to go about different activities? These are among the questions we may be able to answer."

Wiki City Rome is part of an initiative directed by Carlo Ratti to study the impact of new technologies on cities. It builds on the work of "Real Time Rome," presented during the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale, a biannual exhibition of contemporary art.

"By deploying developments of the 'Web 2.0' and the 'Semantic Web,' Wiki City can be a significant leap forward towards a pervasive 'Internet of things' to support human action and interaction," Ratti said in a statement.

The Wiki City project studies tools that enable people to become prime actors themselves in improving the efficiency of urban systems, MIT said. Researchers hope to develop the project into an open platform where anybody can download and upload data that are location and time sensitive.

In addition to Kloeckl, Calabrese and Ratti, Assaf Biderman, Bernd Resch, and Fabien Girardin are members of the Wiki City Rome team. Several companies and public entities are also involved. They include: SEAT Pagine Gialle, Telecom Italia, Telespazio, the Rome public transportation authority ATAC, La Repubblica, and Trenitalia.

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