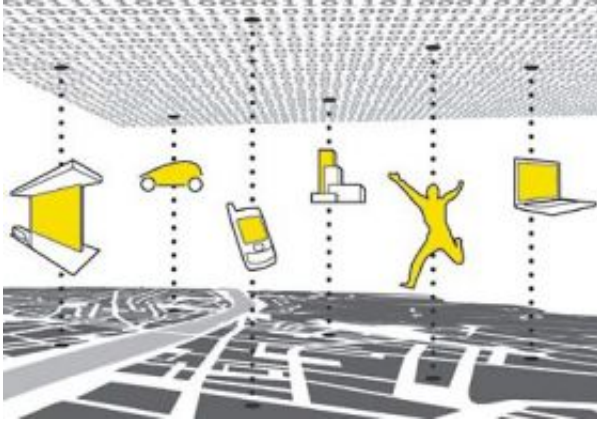# 'Wiki City Rome' to draw a map like no other

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In the 'Wiki City Rome' project an MIT team will obtain data anonymously from cell phones and other devices to map Rome in real time. Image / Kristian Kloeckl

Residents of Italy's capital will glimpse the future of urban mapmaking next month with the launch of "Wiki City Rome," a project developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that uses data from cellphones and other wireless technology to illustrate the city's pulse in real time.

The project will debut Sept. 8 during Rome's "Notte Bianca" or white night, an all-night festival of events across the capital city. During that night, 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.

The map will also be broadcast on a big-screen display in one of Rome's main squares in the city center, giving Romans real-time feedback on the human dynamics in their immediate surroundings.

Wiki City Rome stems from MIT's SENSEable City Laboratory, an initiative directed by Carlo Ratti that studies the impact of new technologies on cities. The project builds on the work of "Real Time Rome," presented during the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale, the prestigious biannual exhibition of contemporary art.

Organizers say Wiki City Rome raises the intriguing prospect of a map drawn on the basis of dynamic elements of which the map itself is an active part. According to researcher Francesco Calabrese of SENSEable City Lab, a person could consult the map to find the most crowded place in Rome to drink an aperitivo - and then identify the least congested route by which to reach it.

"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," said researcher Kristian Kloeckl, a SENSEable City Lab member who is also working on the project.

"How do people react towards this new perspective on their own city while they are determining the city's very own dynamic? 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?" Kloeckl asked. "These are among the questions we may be able to answer."

By looking at a city using a "real-time control system" as a working analogy, the Wiki City project studies tools that enable people to become prime actors themselves in improving the efficiency of urban

systems. In coming years, the Wiki City project will develop as an open platform where anybody can download and upload data that are location and time sensitive.

"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," said Carlo Ratti.

Ratti's team obtains its data anonymously from cell phones, GPS devices on buses and taxis, and other wireless mobile devices. Data are made anonymous and aggregated from the beginning, so there are no implications for individual privacy.

Partnering with the SENSEable City Lab on Wiki City Rome are SEAT Pagine Gialle, Telecom Italia, Telespazio, the Rome public transportation authority ATAC, La Repubblica, and Trenitalia.

In addition to Kloeckl, Calabrese and Ratti, members of the Wiki City Rome team include Assaf Biderman, Bernd Resch, and Fabien Girardin.

Link: "Wiki City Rome" -- senseable.mit.edu/wikicity/rome

Source: MIT

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