CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Dynamic Public Spaces Workshop led by MIT’s Senseable City Lab, named one of three highlights of the BMW Guggenheim Lab, in Berlin. In collaboration with the Austrian Institute of Technology, the Senseable City Lab will experiment with changing urban spaces with the help of image processing, environmental sensors, and social media analysis. The workshop takes place Friday 27th July 2012 at the Pfefferberg complex in Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin.

The workshop will provide an introduction to theories and models of how people move, talk and interact in public spaces, and how this information can lead to a better design of public spaces. The session is open to the general public, and participants will be given the opportunity to actively experiment with image processing and 3D cameras. The Senseable City Lab’s workshop will be kicked off with an introduction to Sense and the City at 2-2:15pm by Carlo Ratti.

Structured in two parts, the first half of the workshop will take place in a public space near the pavilion at the Pfefferberg Pavilion; participants will have the chance to transform the space using a variety of objects and marking tools. Cameras and mobile sensors will capture the activity as it happens, while servers collect social media traces in real-time.

“We want to see how sensing and social media can capture the excitement of a pop-up urban space. Fun, spontaneous spaces can be created anywhere, and technology helps us detect, understand, and improve how we build them,” said David Lee, research assistant with the Lab.

The second half will be based at the Pavilion, and will examine the information collected in the space. There will be a demonstration of how image processing can automatically detect pedestrian paths, behavior, and group dynamics. The noise, pollutant, and social media data will also be visualized, with participants invited to interpret the results.

"New digital technologies allow us to describe urban spaces in a way that simply was not possible just a few years ago,” said Carlo Ratti, director of the Senseable City Lab and one of the curators of the Berlin BMW Guggenheim Lab. “This is opening up unprecedented possibilities in urban planning- and in particular in the way we can engage citizens in the city making process, something that we might call participation 2.0.”

“I think our approach to the relationship of technology, the city and its citizens is fairly unique, but also complex,” said Anthony Vanky, research assistant at the Senseable City Lab. “By distilling it down to a set of activities that's fun and playful is a great way to engage people of all ages, and has the potential to make the research we do really accessible to a broader audience”.

The Senseable City Lab workshop team includes Carlo Ratti, Dietmar Offenhuber, David Lee, Kael Greco, Anthony Vanky, Prudence Robinson. This project is part of a collaboration with the Austrian Institute of Technology, whose team includes Stefan Seer and Katja Schechtner.