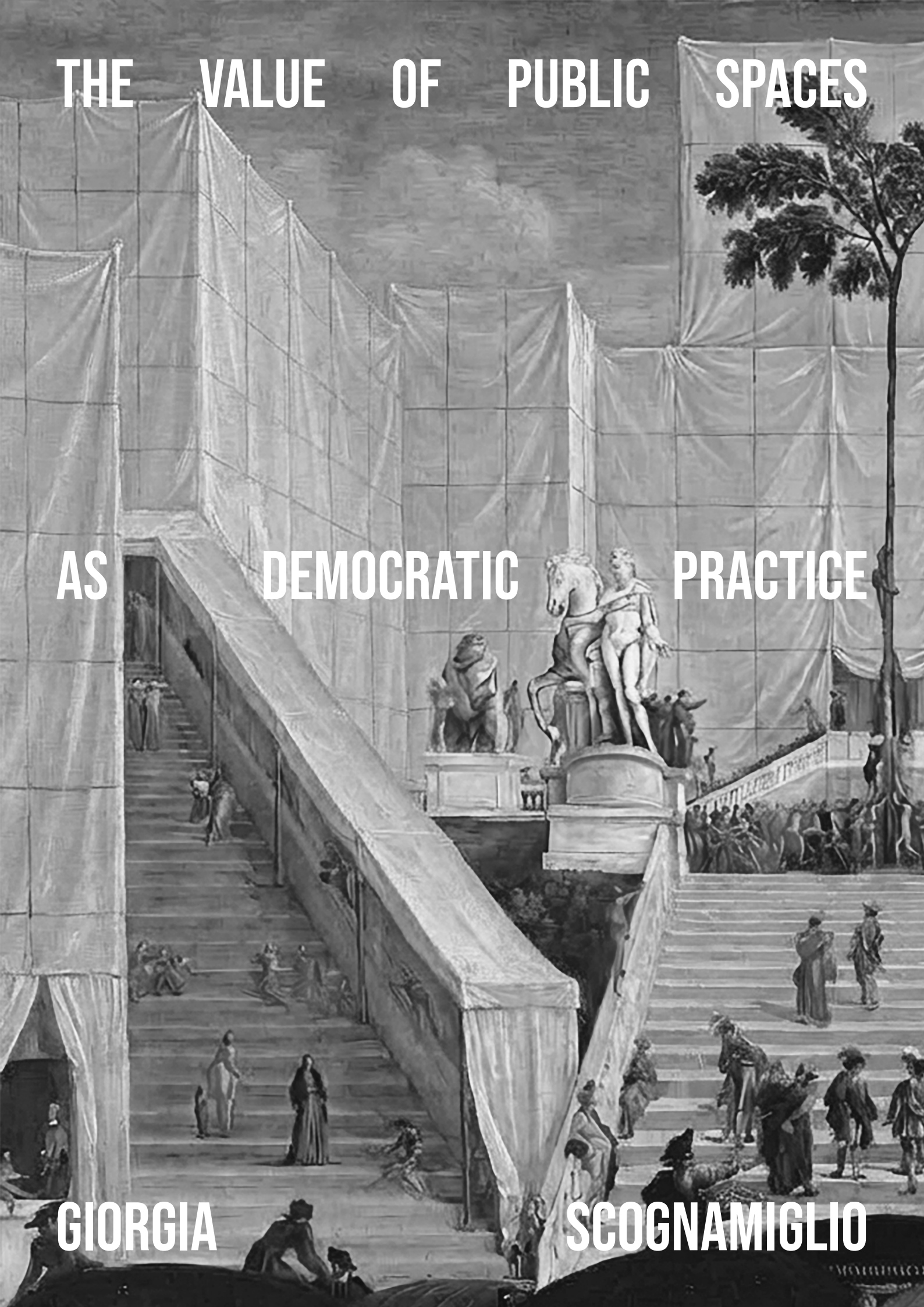


THE VALUE OF PUBLIC SPACES

AS DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

GIORGIA

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Biography:

Giorgia Scognamiglio is an ARB-registered architect, urban designer, and placemaking expert based in London, with extensive experience delivering inclusive, resilient, and community-led public realm and regeneration projects in complex urban contexts. She currently works within the Urban Regeneration team of a London local authority, where she leads the design and delivery of urban initiatives at multiple scales, from strategy to implementation.

Her work focuses on strengthening local identity, supporting economic vitality, and embedding long-term social and environmental value through thoughtful, people-centred design.

Giorgia is also a tutor on the EPQ course at the London School of Architecture and is a member of the New London Architecture Expert Panel on High Streets.

Title:

The Value of Public Spaces as Democratic Practice

This proposal explores contemporaneity in Rome through public spaces understood as a living democratic practice—shaped not only by design and urban morphology, but by everyday use and the continuous production of urban life.

Public spaces act as a shared ground where collective identity is expressed and negotiated. Beyond formal and symbolic qualities, it is through daily activities—gathering, resting, moving, interacting—and the expression of diversity that public space becomes truly contemporary. These ordinary practices reveal how the city is constantly reinterpreted by its inhabitants, framing democracy as something enacted in space (Gehl, 2010; Sennett, 2018). At the same time, public space is also a stage for the extraordinary: events, assemblies, and moments of collective intensity that temporarily redefine its meaning.

In Rome, however, public spaces have often remained underexplored as sites of active design and policy, and their current condition often reveals a persistent disconnection between symbolic representation and lived experience. Monumental spaces continue to embody institutional narratives, while everyday use and temporary activation remain marginal within both design and governance. This gap raises a critical question: who is represented in Rome's public spaces today, and through which forms of use?

To engage with this question, the contribution proposes an international panel focusing on London, where public space is actively developed as a platform for participation, programming, and civic engagement. The panel will bring together representatives from public authorities and established architectural practices such as muf architecture/art, Studio Weave, and Urban Radicals, all of whom are engaged in the design, governance, and activation of public spaces. Rather than offering a direct comparison, the panel will use London and the panelists' work as a critical lens through which to reflect on how everyday use, representation, and participation can inform the Roman context.

By framing public space as both a spatial and social infrastructure for democracy, the proposal highlights the role of design and urban form in enabling interaction, supporting diversity, and shaping the conditions through which democratic life unfolds in the contemporary city—understood as an open and evolving process, in which space remains adaptable, collectively produced, and capable of accommodating difference over time (Lefebvre, 1968; Sennett, 2018).

Keywords:

public space; democracy; everyday urbanism; representation; urban agency; participation; civic space; inclusivity; temporality; urban practices;

Bibliography:

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *The Right to the City*

Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities for People*

Sennett, R. (2018). *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City*

Image:



La Cuccagna © ROBOCOOP, 2026

Reinterpreting *Veduta del Campidoglio (o L'albero della cuccagna sulla piazza del Campidoglio per la festa del calendimaggio)* by Agostino Tassi, the artwork isolates and wraps the architectural setting of the Campidoglio, shifting the focus away from the built form itself toward the central tree as the dominant icon. The tree becomes a symbol of collective intensity and social activation within public space — foregrounding the event, the gathering, and the shared presence of the crowd over the permanence of architecture.

