

# WHO IS THE CITY FOR?

From the Paris Olympics, summer tourism, and mega-pop star concerts, this edition of the FEANTSA Homeless in Europe Magazine was born from a reflection on the impact of various mega events and tourism on housing and homelessness throughout 2024. In multiple cities throughout Europe, we saw the repeated penalisation and displacement of those experiencing homelessness, evictions, and the augmentation of house prices, in the name of mega-events and tourism.

We see cities as the intersection of our private and political lives. Centres of commerce, culture, and opportunity, as well as life, family, and home. It is logical, therefore, that tensions begin to rise. Tensions of interest and priority. Tensions that lead us to question how we can carve out liveable spaces in the city? How can local governments balance financial and commercial interests with the personal interests of those who exist each and every day within these spaces? Who decides who gets to exist in these spaces? Ultimately, *who is the city for?*

Furthermore, these questions are increasingly important within the context of homelessness. To ignore the significance of public space is to ignore the lived realities of over one million people in Europe. These tensions are most acutely felt by those without secure housing, for whom public spaces are not just shared areas but a necessity. And yet, from legislation to physical barriers, people experiencing homelessness are having their rights to exist in the public increasingly limited.

This issue centres on the questions and debates surrounding cities and public spaces, and the impact on homelessness and housing. From mega-events to hostile architecture, contributions cover a variety of topics around the issue of the public: who has the right to exist in public spaces? What is the value of the public and how can we protect it? How, and to whom, is the public limited?

Following the logic that carried us to this edition, we begin with *The Olympic fight for unhoused and precarious people against Paris 2024' social cleansing*. Paul Alauzy, from *Le Revers de la Médaille* collective, provides a detailed overview of the impact of Paris' 'social cleansing' campaign ahead of Summer 2024. The article lays the foundations for approaching the issue of mega-events, providing concrete evidence for the negative social impact, and proposing systematic changes needed to ensure future events respect social, environmental, and democratic standards.

# EDITORIAL



By **Bryony Martin**, communications officer, FEANTSA

Following this, Maria Persdotter offers insight into why events such as the Olympics are breeding grounds for displacement and mistreatment of those experiencing homelessness. The article, *Both spectacular and structural: Reflections on mega events and mass displacements*, looks at the historical precedent of displacement due to the Olympics, and how this relates to wider structural phenomena including neoliberal and financialised urbanism, and colonialism.

Paris is not the only city to have focused on 'social cleansing' this year. Mariana Cantero of Arrels Foundation writes about *Pla Endreça* in *The Pressure on People Living on the Streets in Barcelona Grows*. As the city tries to attract and cater for tourists, it turns against its homeless citizens, through increased policing and fines for 'lack of hygiene'. This article outlines the scheme, its impact, and the response of the Ombudsman of Barcelona to a complaint filed by the organisation.

Unfortunately, the discriminatory nature of cities often goes beyond mega-events. Fondation Abbe Pierre makes the invisible visible again through their satirical *Pics d'or* campaign. The article *The Pics d'Or: Awarding Hostility in Urban Design*, takes a page from their book and (or at least attempts to) provide a humorous overview of this campaign against hostile architecture. Highlighting the value of imagery, the article assesses how campaigns can help increase public engagement and, hopefully, action.

Similarly, *In The 'Exclusionary City'* goes unnoticed by most people, Kirsten Skovlund Asmussen and Pia Justesen outline a recent exhibition on 'design and law that exclude[s] homeless citizens from urban spaces' by Projekt Udenfor and Aalborg University. They highlight how hostile architecture and targeted legislation aim to make homelessness 'invisible' and to bring this problem into the light through the exhibition.

Regarding the criminalisation of homelessness, we turn towards the US *Johnson v. Grants Pass: A Major Setback, But Not the Last Word in Criminalization of Homelessness in the U.S.* (first published by Housing Rights Watch). Here, Eric Tars analyses the *Johnson v. Grants Pass* Supreme Court ruling which allows cities to penalise those experiencing homelessness for sleeping outdoors. The article provides an example of the role of legislation in making cities inhospitable for those experiencing homelessness, and the impact 'beyond the courtroom'.

We finish the edition with an interview conducted by FEANTSA with a member of Free54, a grassroots organisation from Brussels focused on protecting public space. At this point, the relationship between public space and homelessness is well established, and the conversation looks at the topic more broadly – centring on the question of what it means for a space to be truly public. It outlines their experience fighting the reclaim Place St. Catherine in Brussels city centre and all the challenges this involves. Through the honest discussion of a grassroots experience, this interview will hopefully provide inspiration and acknowledgement of the role they may play in the fight for public cities, as well as their limitations.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the FEANTSA Homeless in Europe Magazine. It marks a slight change from our usual work, centring on the thematic question rather than an individual topic. Ultimately, cities are designed – it's time to ask 'For whom?'

