

## BE USE-LESS

**The streets, squares and parks we share with the people we don't know, make up the beating heart of our cities. Those are the places where we are confronted with the things we are not familiar with, and where our settled ideas are challenged.** Unfortunately more and more these places lose their public character. The most important activities on public spaces have become making or spending money; they are the places where politicians can reach beyond their traditional followers and convince potential voters by direct campaigning or indirect entertaining; and they are the sites where public authorities can control the behaviour of a population.

On the other hand, there is a wealth of initiatives that does use urban public spaces as places of expression, experiment and interrogation. They are cultural, social, economic or political projects stretching from urban gardening over bicycle projects, neighbourhood initiatives to exchange systems and actions to support the rights of citizens of a different colour of skin, sexual orientation or social class. What they have in common is their spontaneous and informal character, their non-hierarchical structure, and the fact that they are urban **because of the city, not despite the city.**

Although these initiatives are often explicitly local, we can find urban micro-initiatives in almost every metropolis. They share a concern for public space, and most of them know that public space is under threat from a lot of angles - privatised, sanitised, over-regulated, now dress-coded [Belgium will be the first country with a burka-ban on public space, making it the second only after Iran to put dress-codes for public space in federal law!].

We would be wrong talking about very conceptual things at this point. This requires a clear and simple message clear and simple message: **we need public space!**

This is a rallying **call** for all those concerned about public space to go out on the **15th of May** and use our shared spaces. Ideas can range from getting a blanket out and inviting some friends to have a picnic in a public space, up to setting up the type of action City Mine(d) aims for in Brussels and London. Maybe you don't have to organise something extra, maybe your activities already bring you to a public garden or park on the 15th, and then it is just a matter of finding interesting ways of communicating the message: "cities need public spaces, we care about them and we are not alone."

The call has already been answered in Brussels, London, Paris, Lyon and Berlin, with others still preparing.

What can you do on 15 May :

1. pic nic, play games, meet people, talk about something... but do it in public space, and let us know about it. It does not have to be long, just visible.
2. Send us images about what you did, then this action can be something we can use in our struggle for public space,
3. Follow the results of this campaign here, and on 19 November in the Urban Platform in Flagey

for more info  
email [info@citymined.org](mailto:info@citymined.org)  
<http://tinyurl.com/BeUseless>