

## **“The everyday hero” – a story of ordinary people who live extra-ordinary lives-**

*This research project tells the stories of several individuals that live in European cities and who have found their own ways to lead sustainable and meaningful lives; people that most of us can identify with and who can open our eyes and inspire us.*

The output will be a website of good examples, an academic article on drivers and the spread of sustainable behaviour, and finally (at a later point) a 80-90 minute documentary on some of these individuals.

### Short background

Most of us in the richer parts of the earth know that our environment, the planet and its creatures are at risk. We lead our lives in an unsustainable manner and if we continue this way, disaster awaits. At the same time, our lifestyle does not make us happier. We are aware of these facts and most of us know that we could change our own behaviour and play a part in improving the environmental situation, our own well-being and our quality of life – but we don't do it.

What is going wrong? There is a clear need for behaviour change and revisiting values and norms. We have a reasonably good knowledge of the problems and the barriers to change. What is less developed is the discussion of possible solutions, answers and examples of ways to live and overcome real and perceived barriers at the individual level. We are still confused as to how we as an individual can make a real change in our lifestyles. What is a meaningful and sustainable life? And how do we get there? This project aims to address these questions and provide real solutions based on peoples experiences

### The project

There are people in European cities that have found their own way to lead sustainable lifestyles, despite being locked into the “Western” urban structural barriers. People who have overcome some of the barriers and who have gone beyond shopping organic products, and separating their waste for recycling. These people reject that this is the best we can do.

The idea of this project is to follow the lives of a number of individuals who all live in European cities and who all lead very different lives, but have some important things in common. They are all inspiring characters that are true to the idea of sustainability in most of their actions, their work, life, and travel. Furthermore, these people are not marginal, self-sacrificing saints or “ecological weirdoes” but “ordinary people.” They all have an interesting story to tell that will capture the viewer.

The website and documentary will highlight several aspects of the persons' lives. We will learn about their everyday life, their ideas, values, and their work. We will also look at their conflicts, challenges, and clashes. In short, the project will focus on **three** main questions:

- **What** is the individual doing that makes him/her extraordinary, and how is he/she leading a sustainable lifestyle?
- **Why** does the individual act in such a sustainable manner (e.g. ethical reasons, inspiration, fear, upbringing, education (formal or informal))?
- **How** (if at all) does the individual influence others (requiring to look at other people around or if through internet or remote, searching for these links and understanding how the individual's actions have spread and diffused through formal or informal routes)