

Title:

Author:

**Occupy Climate
Change (OCC!)**
*Grassroots initiatives
entry*



FORMAS



Expansion of oil refinery in Lysekil, Sweden

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- **Where this grassroots initiative is implemented? Who are the promoters? Who are the beneficiaries?**

The grassroots initiative is implemented in the city of Lysekil, Sweden. It was initiated by the network Stoppa Preemraff (“*Stop Preemraff*”), which is a politically independent network that was created in 2018 by a small group of citizens with the purpose of stopping the expansion of Preemraff. It has since then grown to a huge movement with many involved actors different from environmental organizations, youth parties and private individuals from different origins such as Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Fältbiologerna and Jordens Vänner. The promoters of the initiative all live in or nearby Lysekil, Mölndal or Gothenburg. They state that the beneficiaries of the initiative are Earth itself, their children and grandchildren, as well as the countries who will be the most affected by future climate change (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

Other NGOs, such as the local Naturskyddsföreningen of Lysekil-Munkedal, have also joined the cause later on (Boman and Maloney, 2020). Both Stoppa Preemraff and Naturskyddsföreningen Lysekil-Munkedal are politically independent (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^b; Hagström, 2020), and one could therefore argue that they have nothing to gain on the cancellation of the Preemraff other than to help above mentioned beneficiaries, while helping Sweden fulfill its environmental goals.

- **How does this initiative engage with climate? Does it tackle mitigation, adaptation, both or other dimensions of climate change?**

The grassroots initiative sought to stop the expansion of the refinery Preemraff, built 1975 by Preem, which is currently the biggest oil refinery in the Nordic region. In 2019, Preem decided to implement a project named “ROCC”, in an attempt to shorten the residue of oil conversion complex by converting heavy oil residues to diesel and petrol by processing them with hydrogen gas. To succeed, Preem needed to expand their operation base and therefore

applied for a permit for both existing and additional operations. If Preemraff expanded, the facility would have an annual throughput of 13 million tonnes of oil raw materials with 11.4 million tonnes of fossil oil. It would also have increased its yearly carbon emissions by 1 million tonnes, making it the single biggest carbon emitter in Sweden. The grassroots initiative therefore tried to hinder global warming, by lessening the impact on the environment by hindering more emissions from being released (Naturskyddsforeningen, n.d.).

- **What are the main objectives? What are the main values?**

Stoppa Preemraff has stated that they value the transition to a fossil free society and therefore cannot allow expansions of infrastructure which will allow more fossil fuels. They have three main objectives which are published on their website: stop the expansion of Preemraff, start the decommissioning of the fossil fuel industry and to support the development of sustainable work. The organization has also stated that they want Sweden to fulfill the agreement made in Paris and therefore seek to help in enabling a fair transition to a sustainable society (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^c).

- **What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?**

The expansion of Preemraff was publicly announced in 2018 and was later approved by the Swedish Land and Environment Court that same year. After this occurrence, in December 2018, a citizen living in Lysekil contacted the NGO Jordens Väner and asked for help to demonstrate against the decision. This was the starting point of the group Stoppa Preemraff, as the citizens shortly after started the local group. The approval by the Swedish Land and Environment Court was appealed by over a hundred private actors as well as organisations. In March 2019, Stoppa Preemraff had grown in size quite a bit and held a large gathering where they planned actions such as demonstrations, debates etc. In June 2019, the appeal finally had an effect and the Swedish Supreme Land and Environment Supreme Court decided to retry the decision of allowing Preem to expand the refinery in Lysekil. Shortly afterwards, in September 2019, the Swedish government got involved and stated that they would have the final say (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

In January 2020, Stoppa Preemraff started planning a huge manifestation which was to be held at the same time as the public court proceedings in Lysekil in March 2020. Organisations

such as Grön Ungdom, Fältbiologerna, the local Naturskyddsföreningen Lysekil-Munkedal, Jordens Vänner, Protect our Winters etc. were contacted beforehand and encouraged to join the protest, and a contact network including over 100 persons from different geographical origins with diverse backgrounds was created with representants from the different groups. Greenpeace was also contacted and their Swedish leader Isadora Rolski joined one of Stoppa Preemraff's bigger meetings, where she decided that hindering the expansion of Preemraff would be their highest priority for a short period of time within the near future. The court proceedings in Lysekil in March 2020 lasted for three days, and Naturskyddsföreningen Lysekil-Munkedal also attended court with several lawyers and experts who testified. After the court proceedings, Stoppa Preemraff continued to hold smaller actions continuously but the demonstrations became noticeably harder to plan and carry out due to Covid-19 (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

In June 2020, the Swedish Supreme Land and Environment Court published a statement declaring that the expansion of Lysekil did not break any laws and that the company was legally allowed to proceed, but that the final decision would be up to the government. Stoppa Preemraff then planned and held a two-week protest week in August, where they e.g. organized and sent over 2000 postcards to the government (Boman and Maloney, 2020). At the same time, in August 2020, activists from Greenpeace swam to the refinery by sea as a way of protesting against the expansion (Greenpeace Sverige, 2020^a). On the 10th of September 2020, their ship Rainbow Warrior and 40 other sailboats also arrived at the port located at Lysekil in an attempt to block the passing-by sea traffic. The Swedish Maritime Administration closed all sea traffic due to the blockade, which lasted 62 hours before Rainbow Warrior and the other boats decided to leave (Greenpeace Sverige, 2020^b). On the 13th of August, activists broke inside the refinery and chained themselves to the cranes to stop the workers from pursuing their day-to-day work at Preemraff (Tillman, 2020).

On the 28th of August 2020, Preem themselves decided to withdraw their application and no longer sought to expand their refinery at Lysekil (Naturskyddsföreningen, n.d.). The company itself stated that it was due to economic reasons (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^d).

- **Who are the actors involved? What is their background?**

The actors involved in the initiative created by Stoppa Preemraff are all citizens from different backgrounds. The founder lives in Lysekil, while others involved live nearby in Mölndal or

Gothenburg. One of the actors involved since the beginning has worked as a librarian her whole life. Other actors, who became involved later on as a result of Stoppa Preemraff's encouragement, include people with different ages and backgrounds, some who are also engaged in other NGOs such as Fältbiologerna, the local Naturskyddsföreningen Lysekil-Munkedal, Jordens Vänner, Protect our Winters, Greenpeace etc. (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

- **Which limits does it encounter?**

The biggest setback to the initiative was caused by Covid-19. The restrictions made it hard to meet in real life and plan actions together. The actors behind the initiative could not meet in person and build strong bonds, neither could they attract as many new people to their cause as many were uncomfortable with online platforms. Another limitation that the promoters of Stoppa Preemraff also experienced was that newspapers were reluctant to publish their articles, which they felt was a result of their agenda not matching that of the newspapers'. A counter-protest was also organized by Preem's followers, and the company published advertisements with designs that were similar to regular articles. This was deemed a limit by the actors behind Stoppa Preemraff, as it confused the readers (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

- **Are any shortcomings or critical points visible? What other problematic issues can arise from its implementation?**

The expansion of the oil refinery in Lysekil would have created 250 new jobs, increasing the local workforce in the city which Lysekil really needed. Without the expansion, these job opportunities would be lost (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^c). Stoppa Preemraff replied by questioning how one could lose job opportunities that never have existed (Boman and Maloney, 2020). There is also a risk that the refinery will be closed down permanently with the loss of its expansion, resulting in even fewer job opportunities in Lysekil, making it a more unattractive place to live. Whether it will close down is not decided as of yet, and will not happen any time soon (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^c). Another relevant observation in hindsight was that it was difficult for the initiative to grow so fast in size in the beginning. To go from zero to a hundred under a short period of time is bound to bring administrative consequences and it was hard to keep up (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

- **How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?**

The initiative could potentially be replicable anywhere in the world where people feel the need to protest against corporate decisions which might have a negative impact on the environment. For example, if a new oil refinery were to be built, people could take inspiration from Stoppa Preemraff's measures and replicate their actions to better demonstrate their position.

- **Is this initiative conducive to broader changes? If yes, which?**

Stoppa Preemraff have three main objectives: stop the expansion of Preemraff, start the decommissioning of the fossil fuel industry and to support the development of sustainable work (Stoppa Preemraff, 2020^e). The organisation has had continuous meetings during the autumn of 2020 where the objectives have been discussed. The actors also mention that they in the future would like to help develop the legislation in the Environmental Code, as they argue that it is obsolete and not adapted for the current situation in society today (Boman and Maloney, 2020).

- **Explain which materials you have used for your entry and eventually add links**

Boman, M., and Maloney, L., (2020). *Stoppa Preemraff - An Interview*. Interviewed by Tova Billstein for the KTH course "AK2210 Political Ecology", 14 October.

Greenpeace Sverige, 2020.

^a *Efter 62 timmars blockad av Preemraff – nu är det Stefan Löfvens tur*. [online]

Available at:

<https://www.greenpeace.org/sweden/pressmeddelanden/12501/efter-62-timmars-blockad-av-preemraff-nu-ar-det-stefan-lofvens-tur/> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

^b *Greenpeace-aktivister simmar till oljerigg för att protestera mot ny olja i Nordsjön*.

[online] Available at:

<https://www.greenpeace.org/sweden/pressmeddelanden/12274/greenpeace-aktivister-simmar-till-oljerigg-for-att-protestera-mot-ny-olja-i-nordsjon/> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

Hagström, T. (2020). *Om kretsen uppdaterad 2020-09-24 - Lysekil-Munkedals*

Naturskyddsförening: från kust till skog. [online] Available at:

<https://lysekil-munkedal.naturskyddsforeningen.se/om-kretsen-2/> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

Naturskyddsföreningen. (2020). *Striden om Preemraff – det här har hänt*. [online] Available at: <https://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/klimat/preemraff-overklagan> [Accessed 2020-10-08]

Stoppa Preemraff. (2020).

^a *Presskit*. [online] Available at: <https://stoppapreemraff.org/press-kit> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

^b *Om oss*. [online] Available at: <https://stoppapreemraff.org/om-oss> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

^c *Faktabank*. [online] Available at: <https://stoppapreemraff.org/faktabank> [Accessed 2020-10-15]

^d *Preem drar tillbaka sin ansökan!* [online] Available at: <https://stoppapreemraff.org/> [Accessed 2020-10-15]