

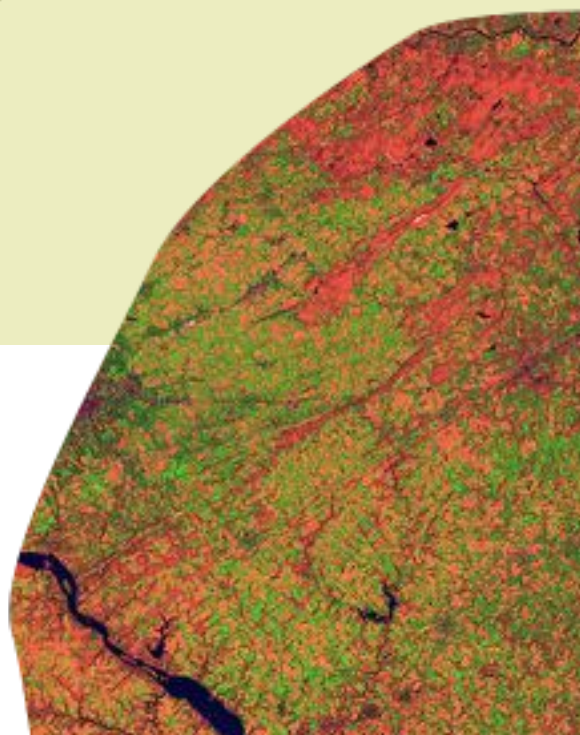
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**Occupy Climate
Change (OCC!)**
*Grassroots initiatives
entry*



FORMAS



“Ta Tillbaka Framtiden” – a Swedish youth climate movement and community

By Clara Saglietti



Picture 1: Ta Tillbaka Framtiden youth climate movement. (Image with permission to use from Ta Tillbaka Framtiden, 2023)

[Ta Tillbaka Framtiden](#) – “Reclaim the Future” in English – is a new Swedish climate movement and radical community for young people, who “aim to be the change and claim back the future taken away by the environmental and social emergency” (Informant 1, personal communication, May 15, 2023). With such a proactive stance, this approach shows that the future of societies and nature is radically open and up for grabs (Swyngedouw, 2013). Since April 2023, the movement has taken peaceful direct action against the fossil fuel industry. It started with a 2-week blockade of the oil terminal in Gothenburg’s harbour to obstruct fossil fuel transport (De Rosa, 2022; Hansson, 2023; Kardell, 2023; Mattsson, 2023; Persson, 2023). This has been followed by other actions, like a similar blockade of the oil harbour in Malmö in June, which was joined by many young activists including Greta Thunberg (Henley, 2023; Rannard, 2023).

In addition to these acts of civil disobedience, the group is creating an inclusive and growing community that organises meetings and fun activities to envision a different future, redistribute power, and build the desired future world without waiting for others to take responsibility. As some of the founders said, the movement fights against the two main problems affecting the lives of youth today, climate change and individualism, but also “organises to create alternatives based on the most beautiful parts of existing and being together in a hopeful and joyful way” (Informant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2023).



Picture 2: The second action of Ta Tillbaka Framtiden, blocking the oil terminal of Malmö in June 2023. (Image with permission to use from Ta Tillbaka Framtiden, 2023)

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

So far, there are three main local groups in Gothenburg, Malmö, Stockholm and Umeå, with other members spread out across the country. The founders describe it as “a movement for young people, by young people” (Informant 3, personal communication, May 16, 2023). The community members are between 12 and 30 years old with different levels of experience in climate activism, and they came together in Autumn 2022. The focus is on empowering the current young generations and the movement is rooted in a Swedish cultural context, but the organisers have a broader holistic take on activism. They aim also to bring about change and

transition to a sustainable and just society for future generations and for all those who are affected by the socio-ecological crises.

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

Ta Tillbaka Framtiden engages with the climate by opposing the fossil fuel industry, “the largest contributor to climate change and perpetrator of today’s injustices” (Informant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2023), and by addressing the social consequences of climate change through the creation of a space for young people to deal with the crises and the feelings it brings with it. The movement tackles mainly mitigation, by trying to dismantle the fossil fuel industry. The members are very clear on the fact that “fossil fuels cannot co-exist with the idea of a future – it is either us or them” (Informant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2023). They want to take measures so that the climate crisis doesn’t get worse.

Furthermore, the movement has recognized that “no is not enough” (Dawson et al., 2022, p.11). Since the effects of climate change are already happening and affecting many people, they are working with society and building resilient communities to promote adaptation, while addressing other societal inequalities and injustices. As they say, “even if in a thought experiment we would not have climate change, we would still like to work on the many social problems of today” (Informant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2023), by creating a more resilient and supportive community.

What are the main objectives? What are the main values?

Beyond the focus on the two pillars of (1) taking action against the fossil industry and (2) creating a community for young people in an individualised society, the movement has clear values and objectives articulated in *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden*’s vision. The following nine points from the movement’s vision document reflect what the members are working towards and how they behave in the community.

1. “Hopeful future: We want to live in a society that acts powerfully to deal with the climate crisis and fight injustice. In our movement, we take matters into our own hands to create the future we're hoping for.

2. Connection between humans and nature: We want to live in a society that respects the planetary boundaries and is organized in a way that creates prosperous ecosystems. In our movement, we understand that humans belong to and depend on nature.
3. Real justice: We want to live in a society that does away with the structural injustices that characterize our culture. In our movement, we highlight unheard perspectives and oppose oppression within and outside the movement.
4. Well-being over profit: We want to live in a society that prioritizes human well-being over economic profit. In our movement, we take people's different needs into account and strive for an equal community.
5. Community first: We want to live in a society where people help and care for each other. In our movement, we break free from individualism and loneliness.
6. Long-term perspective: We want to live in a society that is planned based on a long-term perspective to protect future generations. In our movement, we make decisions taking into account the consequences of these in both the short and long term.
7. Meaningful existence: We want to live in a society where work is meaningful and does not wear out our bodies and minds. In our movement, we value activities other than work and make our work situations joyful and satisfying.
8. Caring coexistence: We want to live in a society where we are allowed to express our feelings and our vulnerability. In our movement, we create a culture where we respect and meet each other's emotional needs.
9. Learning through exchanges: We want to live in a society where knowledge and opinions is created in an exchange between people from different backgrounds. In our movement, we listen to perspectives other than our own and are open to the responses we receive.”
(*Ta Tillbaka Framtiden*, 2023).



Pictures 3 and 4: The two pillars of the movement: (1) direct action against the fossil fuel industry in April 2023, Gothenburg, and (2) the creation of an inclusive community for the youth. (Image with permission to use from Ta Tillbaka Framtiden, 2023)

What is the timeline? Are there already visible effects?

The timeframe is not decided a priori as *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden* is still exploring, expanding, and evolving, but it has a long-term perspective and orientation. The movement was created from the realisation that it was time to shape something innovative, needed, and interesting for young people to start broader and deeper shifts in the long run regarding how communities are built and organised. The group is still in its starting phase of bringing in more people, getting organised, and strategizing about campaigns that will have strong

impacts. According to the organisers, the fact that an increasing number of people is joining *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden* shows that movement speaks to the youth's needs, that it offers an attractive and hopeful alternative, and that the community-building strategy is successful. Furthermore, the members report a shared sense of satisfaction and happiness for being part of a community that is so supportive, dares to dream, and tries to bring those dreams to life. According to them, "there are already visible effects on the lives of the people involved in the movement, but visible and measurable aren't the same thing" (Informant 1, personal communication, May 15, 2023). They think that there are a lot of impacts which will be hard to clearly point at, for example in the reactions to the actions, or in how people change mindsets. The members expect more visible effects in relation to the disturbance caused to the fossil fuel industry as results of the non-violent direct actions against it and the upcoming campaigns.

Which limits and shortcomings does it encounter?

Although the founders think that they are doing well in building the organizing structure and getting people involved in the movement and in actions, they mostly struggle with the same problems they are trying to address. Namely, in the society they aim to transform, people are often too busy with work to meet their economic needs or isolated and struggle to get involved in activism. They claim that "this is especially difficult when trying to recruit young people in Sweden, since we've been raised in a hyper-individualistic society in a hyper-individualistic country, but in the long-term we believe that we're addressing these issues in a way that will attract other young people" (Informant 3, personal communication, May 16, 2023). Moreover, as typical of movements in an early stage, they have experienced that finding funding for civil disobedience is challenging and they are working on it. A generally positive attitude prevails as these limits are not perceived as insurmountable and there is ongoing work on adjustments and improvements to address the movement's shortcomings. They say that they are working every day on small things that can be done better, for example improving communication within each local group, between groups, as well as outside of the movement.

How would it be potentially replicable in other settings?

Ta Tillbaka Framtiden wants to scale the movement in Sweden and mass mobilise, but they want to keep pace with building a solid structure and social fabric, growing the community in a potentially slow but stable way. If this initial phase is successful and can inspire others,

some ideas can be taken to another context and help other movements, but that is not a goal for *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden*. Exchanges can be enriching as they are aware that there are other groups with similar ideas and that there are many common themes in the global climate youth movement, such as connecting the climate crisis to social issues, and focusing on well-being and inclusion within social movements. They don't see problematic aspects with scaling internationally some of their unique approaches, and they think that it may be possible to replicate some aspects of the movement. However, they hypothesise that "it needs to be done in a way that it is not just copy-paste, since the movement was formed in a Swedish context to address specific problems (...) and the answers to the biggest questions addressed may vary a lot also within Sweden too" (Informant 3, personal communication, May 16, 2023). Knowing that young people from other backgrounds have different viewpoints and priorities about the socio-ecological crises, they want to work on involving different types of people, especially less privileged groups, and creating more dialogues at the local level. It is from particular historical-geographical configurations and not universal approaches that a radical politics of transformation can be thought and put into practice (Swyngedouw, 2013).

Is this initiative conducive to broader changes (law, institutional arrangements, long-term sustainability or community preparedness, etc.)? If yes, which?

Although it is at an initial stage, *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden* holds a lot of potential to lead to deep changes in society. The founders say that "you never know what will be the spark that turns into a big fire" (Informant 1, personal communication, May 15, 2023) but they think to be "onto something quite huge, especially with the community aspect of the movement, which has opened doors to think differently for those involved and set them up to be about big changes as well" (Informant 1, personal communication, May 15, 2023). Moreover, the flexible structure of the movement has potential to allow activists to try different things, adapt and change, using the creativity of the community.

They are also experiencing something extremely positive and rewarding with the commitment and satisfaction of the community. Differently from many other 1-week actions where people are mentally and physically tired at the end, "the action in Gothenburg was even longer but people seemed to have more energy afterwards and were really happy" (Informant 3, personal communication, May 16, 2023). They think that there is something revolutionary in a movement that employs quite radical strategies through "big and long-lasting actions way out of the norm and people comfort zone but still providing a really nice community to fall on to support each other" (Informant 1, personal communication, May

15, 2023). In this way, *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden* is organising to bring about change in a sustainable and resilient way.

When exploring how the transition to a sustainable society will look like, the organisers reply that they want first to dismantle the fossil fuel industry and shut it down. However, they have not talked a lot about alternatives and desirable futures yet, since it is something to decide with the emerging community. They are “focused not on specific technological solutions, but on visions and ideology to work towards a cultural shift” (Informant 2, personal communication, May 16, 2023). The movement encourages young people to engage with hopeful visions in a time of disillusionment and includes the participants in the production of new ideas rather than presenting them with ready-made alternatives. Therefore, the case of *Ta Tillbaka Framtiden*, among other examples of urban climate insurgency, show that climate policy is no longer the exclusive province of national governments, international bodies, or experts (Dawson et al., 2022), but that also citizens can take the future in their hands and collectively shape it.



Pictures 5: Seeds of municipalism in spaces for dialogue and fun activities during the community meetings. (Image with permission to use from Ta Tillbaka Framtiden, 2023)

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