



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# Reglerad sprängkraft

## Dynamiten, staten och den svenska civila sprängmedelsindustrin 1858-1950

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### Akademisk avhandling

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A regulated explosive force. Dynamite, the Government and the Swedish civilian explosives industry 1858-1950.

**Abstract**

The development of new innovations in explosives was an important part of the industrialization process from the mid-nineteenth century. The establishment of the world's first nitroglycerin factory – *Nitroglycerin Aktiebolaget* (NA) in Stockholm in 1864 started a process replacing gunpowder with nitroglycerin and from 1868 by the safer invention dynamite. This affected both the long-term relationships between the mining industry and the powder mills and the demand from new industries for efficient and safe explosives. Even though the explosives industry was a small industry, it was of great importance for many other industries and for economic transformation. With dynamite and its successors, society also faced new risks. As a result, an extensive legislation was developed at an early stage which was supplemented with further supervision from a government authority in various organizations from 1895.

The aim of the thesis is to investigate and analyze the major decision-making processes of the Swedish civilian explosives industry during the period 1858-1950. The purpose of the work is to contribute to gaining knowledge about how the society's regulation of different industries has evolved and how state and private actors have acted in the development of new regulations. The work is structured around three main questions. The first question is about how the Swedish explosives industry developed during the period. How did the technological development of the industry and the explosives look like and had this any impact on the questions the actors within the industry drove? The second question is about how the dynamite industry was regulated. What did the regulations contain and how was the control organized? How did rights and obligations look like and how was the industry affected by this? The third question concerns the regulatory process itself. How and why did the regulations change and which actors were involved in the various changes? How did the Government and the actors act and can we see shifts over time between their different roles and interests?

The study concludes that NA was the actor that, by using different methods, managed to gain the greatest influence over the regulatory process. Although the traditional established powder mill industry competed with NA at an early stage, it was nevertheless the initial, high-tech company that was involved in creating new national regulations in negotiation with the regulating authorities. This was a process of regulatory capture where NA, by combining both direct and indirect capture methods, managed to gain influence over regulations in the long run. A parallel but slightly different characteristic of this regulatory capture process is risk minimization for the public. Despite the occurrence of regulatory capture the regulations developed in a kind of a co-regulation system where the regulators became dependent on NA to provide the technical and practical expertise needed to build the necessary regulatory framework.

**Keywords**

economic history, dynamite, the Swedish civilian explosives industry, Alfred Nobel, regulations, regulatory capture, Government-market relations, *Nitroglycerin Aktiebolaget* (NA), the Inspectorate of Explosives and Flammables.

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