

# Mistra Urban Futures Seminar

## "RATHER NETWORK" BY LISA BOMBLE

Welcome to a seminar about participatory networking for sustainability's sake. Lisa Bomble, PhD Candidate, has studied processes in Gråbo, Lerum municipality and followed a geographically defined network of people trying to work for a more sustainable future in that urban settlement. Lisa has come to conclusions about shared power, mutual storytelling and the development of a network through its successes and failures, rather than through its intentional build and organization.

**Where:** Mistra Urban Futures, Läraregatan 3, Göteborg - Room: FAIR

**Date:** September 10

**Time:** 9:00-11:00

**Registration** <http://bit.ly/VFZhWF> at the latest September 5

### **Lisa:**

- The title "Rather Network" is intentionally bad grammatically. The word *rather* having double meanings gives us a discussion about participation in networks from two perspectives:

First, I claim that any network for participation is better than no network at all - so rather network, than no network.

Secondly, the setup and build of a network happens over time and my results show that the network will change shape, representation and set up as it is given new issues and tasks. Thus, the network needs not be finished or finalized organizationally to help improve participatory decision-making. Thus, it's enough if it is "rather network", if you will.

### **Abstract of the text:**

*While our common future is a shared responsibility, the responsibility and/or power over planning decisions remain with municipal planning authority in Sweden. What is participation in planning when the decision lies with a certain actor in the process? This text explores how the build-up and support of a local network can in itself generate an arena for participatory decision-making. It shows how transparent planning processes with open communication is a prerequisite for well-based decision-making in a shared power world.*

*Based on observations in Lerum, a municipality in Sweden, and comparisons between that and descriptions of networking and decision-making in a shared power world, the text argues that power is shared the minute you invite to a participatory process, while responsibility may still lie with certain actors.*

*Transparency of the process and access to relevant information gives a co-production network understanding for the planning process and its considerations, but also an input in what problem to solve. The planning authority can not make decisions contradicting the logic known to the co-production network without losing both trust, momentum and possibilities for future participatory initiatives. At the same time, the network gets informed about interests and considerations outside their own realm, making the participatory process an opportunity for enhanced understanding of the planner's profession and task.*

*The network's build and prerequisites will depend on local contexts, but geographically defined networks of inhabitants and other stake-holders can be initiated top-down and still build on and trust local initiatives. Allowing and supporting the network taking shape through projects allows the network to grow and attract the right actors to each issue. With each issue the network learns both to rationalize its communication patterns, and the different potentials of different actors building the network further through social learning. Investigating the different actors in the network shows two ways of being a key actor - one's connectivity or the weight of one's formal responsibility.*

*Key words: Participation, communication, planning processes, shared power, co-production, sustainability*

The text will be sent to you if you register to participate in the seminar.  
If you want the text, but are unable to attend this seminar, please contact me and I'll send it out September 1st or 2nd.

Amicably

Lisa Bomble  
PhD candidate  
Communication and participation in planning  
Chalmers Architecture  
+46 (0)76 125 70 60  
[lisa.bomble@chalmers.se](mailto:lisa.bomble@chalmers.se)