Dead mall phenomenon

A dead mall is a shopping mall with a high vacancy rate or a low consumer traffic level. In many instances, a mall begins dying when its surrounding neighborhood undergoes a socio-economic decline.

Since the mid-2000’s, the traditional shopping mall has been on a steep decline. The most obvious reason for this is the ever-growing popularity of online shopping. Sometimes redevelopment can involve a switch from retail usage to office or educational use for a building.

Em furniture Grisbacka

With this phenomenon in mind I chose to work with the building, EM furniture in Grisbacka which is an abandoned furniture mall that were built in 1960’s. The owner of the land is planning to demolish the building and build apartment houses there.

One way to see my work is that I want to create an alternative to the demolishing and present a new use for this type of building. My aim has always been to combine the idea of reuse of an abandoned business building with my interest of an improved ecosystem in an urban environment. An experience center that can integrate with businesses in preschools, schools and public. The possibility to integrate in an ecosystem in and outside of the building contributes to important knowledge about the nature and the multidisciplinary ecosystems.

Demolish and build new or reuse an existing building?

- New construction meaning lower current cost because heat- and energy losses often are at a lower level.
- Easier to satisfy new or rising demands on fire safety, ventilation, fire exits and disability improvement.
- Designing plans and the building’s design after needs and higher freedom in choice of material.
- Higher investing in short terms.
- Higher environmental impact with transports, influence on land and choice of the new building materials.
- Higher transport costs of the demolishing material.

+ Older industrial buildings technical buoyancy conditions are often good.
+ No costs for demolishing and decontamination.
+ Cheaper investing at short terms.
- Are not adapted to new or rising demands for any type of buildings.
- Limitations considering designs of the buildings conditions.

I am aware of the pros and cons there is with constructing new buildings or rebuild. I saw it as a teachable challenge to use an existing building to developing the Ecosystem learning center and I made my choices from that.
Interview and study visits.

Tegs central school:
Summary of interviews with two school children (12 years old) and one teacher.

Both school children want to have a more practical educational system and raises wishes for other study environments that offer less noise and more light.

Both want to mix theory with practice in their education and say that it is easier to learn that way. Both consider that nature and cultivation is important but their knowledge in the subjects differs. One lives on a farm and have great understanding of how the food on the plate comes from, but the other one are more uncertain and knows what that the school is teaching her.

The interview with the teacher was aimed at the subject of home economics and highlighted the need for custom rooms and practical education. Wishes of being able to teach in a more interactive way was pointed out, where students can have the possibility to work with food from “earth to table”.

Umeå School of nature.

School of nature is based on experiencing and learning through outdoor teaching methods in an active interaction with the place, the environment and each other for a lifelong sustainable learning.

There are more than 90 schools of nature in Sweden. Pre- and elementary school contact school of nature by themselves and invite them for support in teaching.

I got the chance of coming along Agneta Fries at school of nature to see how her work is. During that day, she taught science, math and English.

Technicus:
Technicus was developed 1998 and has being owned by Härnösand municipality since 2003. It is an science center with the aim of create an interest of science and technics for children, youth and adults. 2000 well-filled square makes complex science easy and fun. This is made through:

Show interesting phenomenons of pleasurable ways where the keywords are interactivity, genus perspective and esthetic.

Be a support for all types of school forms when it comes to science, technics and entrepreneurship.

Cooperate with Mittuniversity when it comes to teacher education and research about learning.

Be a meeting place for different types of groups of society actors like enterprise, researcher and school.

The main exhibition is interactive and aims to guide the way to one’s own discovery and insights. The guest exhibition is chosen to complement and deepen the pedagogical operation.

Own observation done at my study visit:
Except that the exhibition was fun, excited and challenging are there some things worth mention.

There were few sitting areas except where the coffee shop was. The walls that separate the exhibition rooms made it hard to have a good supervision over the children. It was hard to find the entrance from the parking. Unclear marking made it hard to orient in the building and some activates were not accessible for handicapped people.
The insects are disappearing.

Near 80 percent of all flying insects have disappeared from central Europe over the last 30 years. The decline is described by researchers as disastrous.

Honeybees produce not only honey but also pollinate lots of the crops we eat. According to estimates, honeybees pollinate 70 of the approximately 100 plant species that feed about 90 percent of the world’s population. Fruit trees and other plants can, in emergency, be pollinated by humans but that would lead to a strongly reduced production and heavy increasing in prices.

To make a turn in this negative progress, the humans need to endeavor to leave or recreate environments where insects thrive. Strategies, actions and monitoring methods are needed to support pollinating insects in urban environment. To increase the population of pollinators in the city, there must be nests, green "pause areas" and suitable nectar- and pollen plants available.

Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are the functions in ecosystem that somehow favors humans, which means that it maintains or improve wellbeing for humans. These are free favors from the nature like pollinating insects, water purification via wetlands, cleaner air, pest reducers, shadows from trees and reducing noise pollution via vegetation. It is important for sustainable development by cities and urban centers to correlate with and develop natures ecosystem services, which gives humans benefits that we take for granted or not even see.

Well functional cities are full of life, not only humans but a diversity of life. Grass, bumblebees, tree, squirrels, birds, bees, plants like flowers etc. The nature in the city are vital, it is a living infrastructure. It is important as power lines and public transportation. More than 50 % of the earth’s population is living in cities and increasing rapidly.

We are still totally dependent of nature in our cities and environs, which give us food, clean water, oxide and adequate temperature, in order for us to live and feel good in our cities, we need both nature around the city and functioning ecosystem within it.

As architects, we can affect green infrastructure with planning for nature land, parks, alleys, trees, bushes, hedges, cultivations, green roofs and walls, surfaces for children’s play, green corridors and other green surfaces in urban environments.

To manage cities to favor pollinators are more than important these days. By providing insects with food and shelter we can make the city more resilient and healthy for us people.