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UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

Systemic Design Approach to the Finnish Funeral Ecosystem

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Arctic Art and Design Master's Degree Program

Service Design

2022

University of Lapland

The name of the Master's Thesis: Systemic Design Approach to the Finnish Funeral Ecosystem

Writer: Marja Kuronen

Degree Programme: Arctic Art and Design / Service design

The type of the work: Master's Thesis

Number of pages: 49, 2 appendices

Year: 2022

In our time, funerals have become more private within the community, and the processes related to dying have shifted from involving only relatives to having to include various professionals, hospitals, morgues and crematoriums. Relatives are now bystanders during their loved one's funeral process, and the lack of rituals that fit one's life view can result in unprocessed grief. In many ways, the post-mortem process has become effective, and efficient but often meaningless for relatives. The process is governed by laws and operated by different administrations, churches, agencies, and ministries. In addition, social relationships, paradigms, and norms affect bereavement's experience as they are arranging funerals.

The study explores how design thinking and systems thinking can be applied in understanding and developing Finnish funeral services and processes. By utilizing frameworks like systems-oriented design and service design it is possible to understand and make initiatives towards a more socially sustainable and inclusive funeral future. With the systems-oriented design, it is possible to observe the operating environment with wider lenses and the approach enables identifying the complexity of the systems that are included in the dynamics and decision-making of the entire ecosystem. While the service design approach provides processes and tools to understand the end-user and develop services that are meaningful for them.

The master's thesis at hand is a continuation of author's first master's thesis "Funeral service development for the needs in the near future" (Master's degree in Service design and Leadership / Novia UAS) in which she discovered the future demands for funeral services and processes from the relative's point of view. In the thesis at hand, she zooms out from the relative's angle to the ecosystem and culture that creates the relative's experience. The aim of the master's thesis is to explore the Finnish funeral ecosystem and its dynamics to make initiatives towards a change that serves next of kin in the future.

The thesis consists of a literature review and design-based research. In the literature review, the findings of desk research about the Finnish funeral culture and design as a methodology for shifting the systems are outlined. The findings of the study are drawn from the desk research as well as from the applied study. In the report research objective, research question and research design are outlined. Next, the thesis explores shortly the current state of the Finnish funerals and theory of service design and systemic design. This is followed by an overview of methods and their implications regarding the topic at hand. The findings are then presented, and their implications discussed. The findings explain, for example, how a Finnish funeral culture could be developed to meet the needs of relatives.

Keywords: Service design, Systemic design, Funerals, Burial

Vuosikymmenien aikana hautaaminen on muuttunut yhä yksityisemmäksi tapahtumaksi suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa, ja kuolemaan liittyvät prosessit ovat siirtyneet ammattilaisten hoitamiksi. Omaiset ovat kuin sivustakatsojia hautajaisissa ja menetys saattaakin jäädä käsittelemättä omaan arvomaailmaan sopivien prosessien ja rituaalien puuttuessa. Läheisen kuolemaan ja ruumiin käsittelyyn liittyvistä prosesseista on tullut monella tapaa tehokas, mutta samalla omaiset ovat etääntyneet kuolemasta. Prosessia säätelevät lait ja sitä ohjaa hallinto, kirkot, virastot ja ministeriöt. Myös sosiaaliset suhteet, paradigmat ja normit vaikuttavat suremiseen ja siihen, minkä koetaan olevan sosiaalisesti hyväksytty tapa haudata ja surra.

Tutkimus selvittää, miten muotoiluajattelua ja järjestelmäajattelua voidaan soveltaa suomalaisten hautauspalveluiden ja prosessien ymmärtämiseen ja kehittämiseen. Hyödyntämällä muotoilun lähestymistapoja kuten systeemistä muotoilua ja palvelumuotoilua, on mahdollista ymmärtää ja tehdä aloitteita kohti sosiaalisesti kestävämpää hautausalan tulevaisuutta. Systeemisellä muotoilulla on mahdollista havainnoida toimintaympäristöä kokonaisuutena ja lähestymistapa mahdollistaa koko ekosysteemin dynamiikkaan ja päätöksentekoon sisältyvien järjestelmien monimutkaisuuden tunnistamisen. Palvelumuotoilun prosessit ja työkalut mahdollistavat loppukäyttäjien tarpeiden ymmärtämisen ja heille merkityksellisten palvelujen kehittämisen.

Tämä pro gradu on jatkoa kirjoittajan ensimmäiselle ylemmän korkeakoulututkinnon opinnäytetyölle "Hautauspalveluiden kehittäminen lähitulevaisuuden tarpeisiin" (Palvelumuotoilun ja johtamisen ylempi AMK -tutkinto / Novia AMK), jossa kirjoittaja tutki hautaamisen tulevaisuuden tarpeita palvelumuotoilun keinoin. Tässä käsillä olevassa pro gradussa kirjoittaja tarkastelee tutkittavaa kohdetta systeemisellä tasolla. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia suomalaista hautausekosysteemiä ja sen vaikutuksia omaiseen, sekä selvittää kuinka muotoilun avulla on mahdollista vaikuttaa systeemisellä tasolla hautaamisen prosesseihin.

Pro gradu koostuu kirjallisuuskatsauksesta sekä soveltavasta osiosta. Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa esitellään työpöytätutkimuksen tuloksia suomalaisesta hautauskulttuurista sekä muotoilusta lähestymistapana systeemiseen muutokseen. Tutkimuskysymykseen vastataan sekä työpöytätutkimuksen että soveltavan tutkimuksen löydöksien perusteella.

Raportissa hahmotellaan aluksi tutkimuksen tavoite, tutkimuskysymys ja tutkimuksen suunnitelma. Sen jälkeen tarkastellaan lyhyesti suomalaisten hautajaisten nykytilaa sekä palvelumuotoilun ja systeemisen muotoilun teorioita. Tämän jälkeen esitetään yleiskatsaus menetelmistä ja niiden vaikutuksista käsiteltävään aiheeseen. Lopuksi tutkimuksen tulokset esitellään. Löydökset selittävät esimerkiksi, minkälaisilla toimilla suomalaista hautauskulttuuria voitaisiin muotoilun avulla kehittää.

Avainsanat: Palvelumuotoilu, Systeeminen muotoilu, Hautajaiset

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1. Introduction

In Finland, funeral customs have changed quite moderately during recent decades. The customs follow strictly the Lutheran customs, and it can be said that Finnis funeral traditions are somewhat the same as the Lutheran traditions (Butters 2017). During my first study on funeral topics, I discovered that relatives of the deceased are not completely satisfied with the current state of funeral services. On the other hand, they valued the help and guidance they got but at the same time, they felt that the current services and customs are not aligned with their values. The inspiration for the topic at hand arise from my previous study: I wanted to understand what are the structures and systems that create the relative's experiences and how they can be changed in order to help people process their grief according to their own life views. Based on my previous study it can be assumed that the need for the new kind of services and customs are needed even more in the future (Kuronen 2019). Service design has been used as an approach in the previous study and it has been completed with a systemic design approach in the study at hand. The aim is to provide an understanding and initial ideas for action toward a more diverse funeral future.

The aim of the research is to provide information for all the stakeholders that work in the funeral field. The target group consists not only the funeral workers but of anyone who encounters grieving persons in their work. In addition, the aim of the research is to provide information to decision-makers, designers, and peer researchers about the requirements for the development of funeral customs and services. I hope that my research contributes to the development of the funeral industry.

The topicality of the topic arises from the future needs of mourning relatives. Especially in the future sustainability in its full spectrum is necessary to take consider in every phase of the human life, also when it is time to farewell our loved ones. Now the funeral rituals and customs in our culture are leaning strongly on the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its customs. However, fewer, and fewer are members of the church and the expectations toward funeral services are changing.

The full research consists of two parts. The first part is study for my first master's thesis and the data I collected during the process. The study has been implemented with the following methods: observation, interviews, web survey, target group profiling, desk research, co-design, and future stories. The second part of the research was conducted two years later as a part of systems-oriented design studies at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. The second study is the thesis at hand. In the second phase, the used methods were observation, interviews, rich design research space, gigamapping, and zip-analysis. In addition, a brief implementation plan was delivered including intervention proposals and project portfolio.

The thesis consists of an introduction continuing with a literature review of the theory of systemic design, service design, and Finnish funeral customs. Then, I demonstrate a systemic design methodology in the context of the Finnish funeral ecosystem. The thesis closes up with a discussion and conclusions drawn from both the desk research and literature review and the design practiced research. An ethical perspective follows through the thesis.

In the literature review, I deal briefly the Finnish funeral culture, its history, and tensions that are appearing nowadays. The history of funerals has been discussed more comprehensive in my previous master's thesis "Funeral Service Development for Needs in the Near Future". In addition, with the overview of Finnish funerals, I discuss the possibilities of service design and systemic design approaches in the journey toward more socially sustainable and inclusive funerals.

In the Research process chapter, I describe the phases and outcomes of the research process. The chapter covers the methodology and its implications. First, I discuss the gathered data and methodology of the first study, followed by a more detailed description of the second study that builds on the first study. In the first study, I discovered the end-users' (people who arrange funerals for their loved ones) perspective on the current state of funeral services and processes in Finland. Based on the findings of the first study I continued to the second study as my purpose was to understand the ecosystem that creates the relative's customer journey and experiences. After defining the ecosystem, I propose an implementation plan for the systemic change that could improve the relatives' experience as they arrange funerals. Furthermore, the systemic change does not aim to change only the end-user experience but the system holistically including different stakeholders, their connections, culture,

decision-making and the paradigms. However, my humble aim in this thesis is not the be a change agent for the prevailing paradigm of the Finnish funerals but to suggest one possible way to approach the subject.

The Discussion chapter consists of the findings of the research. First, I discuss and combine the findings from the literature review and the praxis part of my master's study. Also, I answer the research questions. In the Conclusion chapter I reflect on my position and chosen methodology. My aim is to observe critically both aspects in order to provide transparency and develop my own professionalism. Last, I discuss future research propositions raised from the study at hand and from the field of funerals and service design in general.

2. The research objective and the research question

In my previous master's thesis about future needs for funerals (Kuronen 2019), I presented four pain points and change drivers that can be influencing in the development of funeral services and processes. To begin, arranging funerals and the property of the deceased is complicated: dozens of service providers and professionals are directly or indirectly involved in the processes. For example, next of kin must collect information for the estate inventory, get a death certificate, get a certificate of the family history of the deceased and it is relative's responsibility to collect and deliver information from one bureau to another. Part of the duties even has a timeframe. Not to mention funeral ceremony arrangements that include various things to know and take care of. Usually, the one who is arranging funerals is doing it the first time and has no clue about the procedures.

The complexity of the funeral arrangement leads to the second pain point and change driver which is the strong position of private sector actors and the Church in the funeral process. Relatives need help and consultancy to get all their duties done and they usually ask for help from a funeral home. People are usually very satisfied with the services and consultancy from the funeral home, yet some feel that funeral homes are overcharging people in a vulnerable situation (Lundell 2011; Saroniemi 2021). Funeral homes in Finland are private sector actors that are for-profit companies and a source of livelihood for many. Also, Evangelical Lutheran Church holds a strong position in the Finnish funeral field. The Church, together with funeral homes, provides guidance and aid in arranging funerals. Also, the Church takes care of the burial of almost all the citizens no matter their life views or religion. No secular, non-profit help in arranging funerals is available for the funeral arrangements.

Furthermore, the third pain point is that services and rituals are outdated and partly lack relevance for the next generations. My previous master's degree study revealed that the spectrum of demand is increasing as the diversity of religions, life views and individualistic desires are becoming a more common and forceful phenomenon in Finland. As mentioned before there are no easily accessible secular rituals and in addition digital services are still in their infancy and people desire more individual and personal choices. (Kuronen 2019).

Finally, death is taboo when it comes to its practices. Today, professionals, not relatives, attend to the deceased. Frequently, the hospital, the funeral agency and the parish attend to most of the arrangements and preparation of rituals for the family. Nonetheless, corpses, grieving and parts of the funeral process remain hidden and even somewhat secret in our society. Metaphorically, death, unlike birth, for the most part, takes place behind closed doors. This leads to the situation where people do not pay attention to the development needs for the funeral services and the need for development occurs only when people are facing the death as their loved one depart this life.

The findings described above led to the question of what kind of social structures create and affect the funeral ecosystem. Furthermore, how the structures can be changed with the aim of creating well-being for the people when they are confronted with the death of their loved one. These findings from the study were raised with the service design and futures design methodology. With this kind of approach, it was possible to understand the needs of the relatives and probe the future demands. Whereas for the second study at hand the aim was to understand the ecosystem and structures that create current funeral services and processes. The systemic design approach provides a wider lens to explore the deeper lying whys and wherefores for the current Finnish funeral culture. The motive for the study is to explore the possibilities of service design and systemic design as approaches for a system-level change in order to bring well-being in the middle of grief.

The research questions are as follows:
What kind of leverage points can be identified from the Finnish funeral ecosystem with a systemic design approach?
How systemic change can be started in the Finnish funeral ecosystem?

As mentioned before, the findings from my previous study were raised with the service design methodology that is outlined later further. With the service design approach, it is possible to explore the needs and facilitate change at the service ecosystem level but a systemic level change calls for methodologies from a systemic design toolbox.

By studying this sensitive subject, death is made visible, and exposing this mysterious phenomenon enables change. Kallinen, Pirskanen and Rautio (2015, p. 195) noted that

research represents a medium for the voice of the people experiencing these sensitive issues and allows them to be heard. By listening to these voices, it is possible to understand how to further develop and improve funeral services.

2.2 The research design

The full research consists of two parts (Figure 1). The first part is study for my first master's thesis and the data I collected during the process. The study has been implemented with the following methods: observation, interviews, web survey, target group profiling, desk research, co-design, and future stories. The collected data and used methodology are described more precisely in the part 4.1: Existing data. The second part of the research was conducted two years later as a part of systems-oriented design studies at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. The second study is the thesis at hand. In the second phase, the used methods were observation, interviews, rich design research space, gigamapping, and zip-analysis. The used methodology is described in more detail later in the thesis. In addition, a brief implementation plan was delivered including intervention proposals and project portfolio.
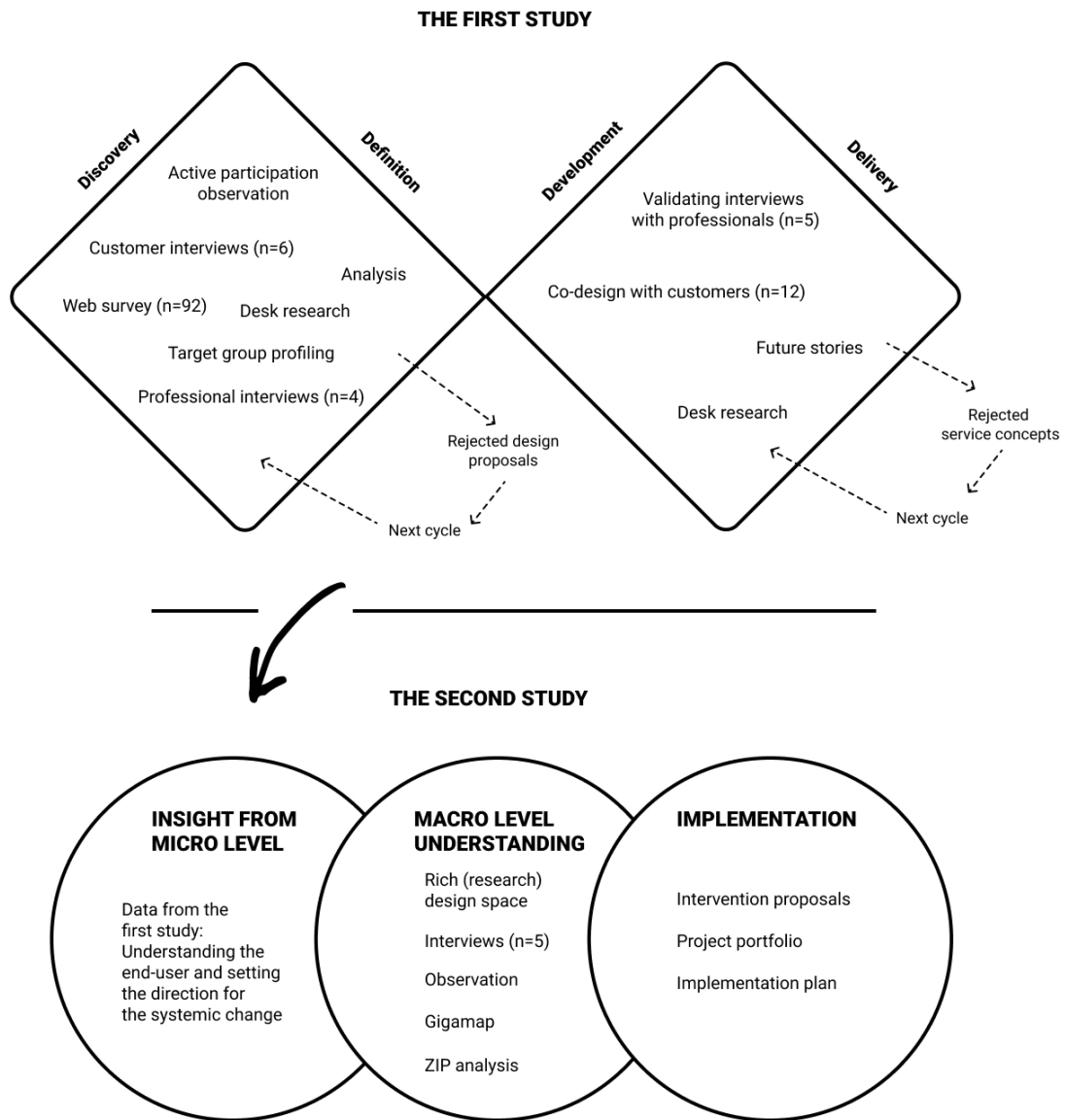
THE FIRST STUDY

Discovery

Active participation observation

Customer interviews (n=6)

Web survey (n=92)   Desk research

Target group profiling

Professional interviews (n=4)

Definition

Analysis

Rejected design proposals

Next cycle

Development

Validating interviews with professionals (n=5)

Co-design with customers (n=12)

Future stories

Desk research

Delivery

Rejected service concepts

Next cycle

THE SECOND STUDY

INSIGHT FROM MICRO LEVEL

Data from the first study: Understanding the end-user and setting the direction for the systemic change

MACRO LEVEL UNDERSTANDING

Rich (research) design space

Interviews (n=5)

Observation

Gigamap

ZIP analysis

IMPLEMENTATION

Intervention proposals

Project portfolio

Implementation plan

Figure 1: The research process

The aim of the study is not to provide ready implementation proposals for new kinds of services but rather to provide information and knowledge for the actors in the field of funerals and decision making. In the other words, the study aims in understanding the possibilities of the systemic change, not to suggest tactical solutions. Overall, this thesis focuses merely on the aspects of the funeral system's relationships, dynamics, and its effects

on the relatives' experiences as end-user. The results of this thesis can be taken as an inspiration for new implementation proposals, research, and exploration as well as a proposal for action toward a new kind of services and processes.

The sensitivity of both the research topic and the emotional well-being of target group members affected on how the research material was collected. Ethical research is even more important when the research investigates a sensitive subject such as death. When people are in a vulnerable state after the death of a loved one, they may inadvertently reveal something they do not wish to reveal. Therefore, the researcher must be prepared to completely protect the informants. Researchers' choices can greatly influence people's feelings as shown by the following example:

> 'Thank you, it was also good for me to remember the funeral. Our discussion inspired me as I visited my father's grave today' ("Tea", participant 2017).

Researchers can mislead and even exploit target groups if they do not adhere to ethical principles and practices. In the research, ethics is linked, on the one hand, with the researcher's responsibility to the research community and, on the other, with their responsibility to both the subject and the target groups as well as broader context as social fabric, environment and economy. The research at hand provides data for my ongoing doctoral studies and hereby it follows the guidelines of the ethical review of the doctoral research plan by Lapland University's research ethics committee.

Funerals can be understood, depending on the context, either as the entire process from the moment of death to the grave or more simply as a memorial service. In this study, the term funeral refers to the whole process from the moment of death to the remembrance of the deceased. The research and its results are partly applicable all over the world but as the case study considers Finnish customs the study takes mostly consider the Finnish funerals.

3. Literature review

3.1 The Finnish funeral culture on the verge of change

Human life can be divided into so-called life events like giving birth, marriage, divorce, death of a loved one, or loss of job. When facing this kind of big changes in our life we need support, guidance and sometimes rituals to get things processed in our minds and within our community. When it comes to funerals of our loved ones the rituals are vital as they can help relatives face their loss and process their feelings. At a funeral, the community also reorganizes itself after the loss. The rituals of death are often dictated by religion (Hakola, Kivistö & Mäkinen, 2014, pp. 16–17; Pentikäinen, 1990, p. 93). In this chapter, I outline the reasons for the stagnation of the Finnish funeral customs according to Finnish death and funeral researchers Varpu Alasuutari's and Maija Butters.

Finnish death and funeral culture has come a long way from the late Mesolithic era to the modern-day. The culture of burial in Finland has changed over time as new cultures are replaced by old customs states Maija Butters in her article "Between East and West: A diachronic overview of Finnish death culture" (2017). She continues that today Finland is a remarkably homogenous state regarding religion and ethnic diversity. The homogeneity can be seen also in the current Finnish death culture that is dominated by the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Butters states. Despite the remarkably homogeneous religions and ethnicity, the diversity among people and their needs for meaningful funeral rituals comes in many forms and colours. In her doctoral thesis "Death at the end of the rainbow" (2020) Varpu Alasuutari explores how the homogeneity in Finnish funeral culture affects the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) people. Moreover, it can be stated that the difficulties that people in Alasuutari's focus group have struggled with can be generalized to many other Finns today. Finnish death and funeral culture calls for reform in order to meet the needs of people's differing worldviews. In its current state Finnish funeral culture seems no to be inclusive or socially sustainable.

Evangelical-Lutheran religion and the church have had a strong and important role in Finland's history. Religion and services provided by the church have comforted and helped

people through difficult times. However, Alasuutari argues that today the role of the Lutheran funeral rituals both includes and excludes people. In the 16th century, that Finland began to become Lutheran, and at the same time, the practical relations between the church and the state were strengthening (Butters 2017). In Finland, religion has affected the funeral culture more extensively during history than in Sweden and differences can be seen even nowadays, for example, in cremation numbers that are remarkably higher in Sweden than in Finland (Butters 2017). Butters explains that the cremation rates reflect Finnish people's conservative views on Christian dogma and customs. She gives some examples of the possible reasons why the Finnish death culture is so intertwined with Lutheran tradition. Historical events play a significant role here as the church has been a vital supporter for the citizens during the wars. Hence the opportunity and questioning the church has started just recently as there is finally a possibility to do it, Butters discusses. As the homogeneous religion and traditions have been a resource for congruence for the whole nation in the past, it does not appear as inclusive nowadays. Alasuutari states that rituals that give a sense of inclusion for someone might exclude others. People's worldviews have diversified but the dogmas of the so-called state's church have remained the same. As a result, only a portion of people in Finland will receive the help and comfort they long for.

The position of the Christian funerals are strong and even if the bereaved are not religious or if they are so-called "believers out of habit", the dominance of the Christian funeral tradition might define their experience of inclusivity. Although fewer and fewer people are members of the church, Finland has a remarkably high rate of Lutheran funerals even nowadays. Butters claims that it is almost impossible to separate the Finnish funeral culture from the Lutheran funeral culture. She lists some practical reasons for the dominance of Christian funerals: the lack of non-religious rituals, the absence of non-Christian chapels and the fact that the funeral arrangements are not discussed with the loved one when they are still alive. However, there are some societally significant reasons why Christian funerals dominate the funeral field in Finland. The state buys burial services from the evangelical-Christian church, so-called state's church. It is obvious that this kind of power position also affects the fact that no other funeral options are easily available. In addition, the taboo of death is still very strong when it comes to the practicalities of death. Alasuutari argues that familiarity and appropriateness of the Christian funeral traditions might also make them attractive to the ones that do not share the same set of values with the church. The appropriateness and

affectiveness are admittedly tied with the community: whether the bereaved feel that they are excluded from or included in the community via Christian funeral traditions. Alasuutari continues by stating that as the funeral traditions are established and a norm, deviating from the rituals does not find emotionally appealing.

Many people try to personalise death rituals in order to process the loss according to their own worldview or to pay respects to the deceased and their wishes. Individualism is a megatrend that affects funerals too, but the attempt to personalize funerals can also be seen as an effort to make funerals more meaningful and hereby more healing events or processes. Alasuutari states that the adjusting of the death rituals gives the interviewed bereaved a sense of personal agency, control and inclusion. Butters gives examples of two Lutheran funerals that she has attended and describes that funerals were very different from each other, albeit the Lutheran tradition. Although the Lutheran funerals may vary and be very personalised, the Lutheran tradition itself is the aspect that the bereaved often wish to alter. As there might be different worldviews or different kinds of tensions between the bereaved, the adjustments of the rituals might cause problems too. Alasuutari illustrates how even minor adjustments might confuse or feel offensive to someone. As the purpose of funerals is to facilitate the grieving process of next of kin, it is not always clear if the funerals should be arranged according to deceased's wishes, or assumed wishes only or should each individual bereaved have a ritual according to their worldview. Furthermore, the Finnish funeral law states that funerals have to be organized according to the deceased's will. This, of course, does not exclude the wishes of the relatives but sets a certain expectation that funerals are for the dead body, not the mourning family. The consensus of the family might be easiest gained by following the Lutheran rituals, although the family or individuals might benefit more from the rituals that fit their own view of life.

It can be said that the reasons for the relatively slow changes in the Finnish funeral culture lay in the history and citizens' trust in the state's church but at the same time the social structures are holding back the growing needs for the change. The Lutheran funeral traditions are meaningful to many, but the growing demand for secular rituals should not be left ignored. In addition, the diversity of different religions is something that should be considered in the Finnish funeral field. The homogeneity of Finnish death rituals is already now excluding the bereaved and its hegemony prevents people from grieving in their own

way. The reasons behind the phenomenon are not only the lack of new kinds of rituals but the norms that the community creates probably unconsciously. This kind of paradigm that is intertwined with the social systemcan only be solved by bringing the phenomena to light and by abolishing the existing taboo of death.

3.2 Design as a change agent

The need for a change as described in previous chapter can be approached through design. In design practices like human-centered design, including service design, the goal is to understand the current and future needs of the end-user.

Design researchers Hakio, Mattelmäki and Vaselova (2019) state in their paper "Lenses of Care – revisiting interconnectedness in service design" that service design could be a vehicle for small or even wider scale societal transformation. Priya Prakash (2019) discusses the changing role of the designer when she says that it is time to redefine the design. She continues that design is not anymore only designing products but habits and creating new social movements to ship a better future. In recent years the designer's responsibility toward our planet and a more sustainable future in its every appearance has begun to be a hot topic among fellow designers. Of course, it is not designers only who are responsible for the change towards a more sustainable future. The development should be interdisciplinary and involve professionals from different fields. However, service designers as professionals in behavior nudging, designing processes, and facilitating the change of habits are the ones among other to deliver the cultural change. In an adaptation of a new kind of culture and customs user-centered design could be a part of the solution.

According to consultant and educator in regenerative development Daniel Wahl (2016, p.124) design in its broadest sense can be understood integrative activity that connects human intentions, materials, processes, and institutions. Different design fields and practices can be categorized, for example, according by the practices or objectives. Often, especially when considering large scale design projects, the borderlines between different practices and fields are not clear and the often the best results can be made by combining different approaches without prejudice. In figure 2, I introduce one example of the categorizing design practices

into levels based on what the design objective is about. The figure is adapted from design researchers Young, Blair and Cooper (2001).
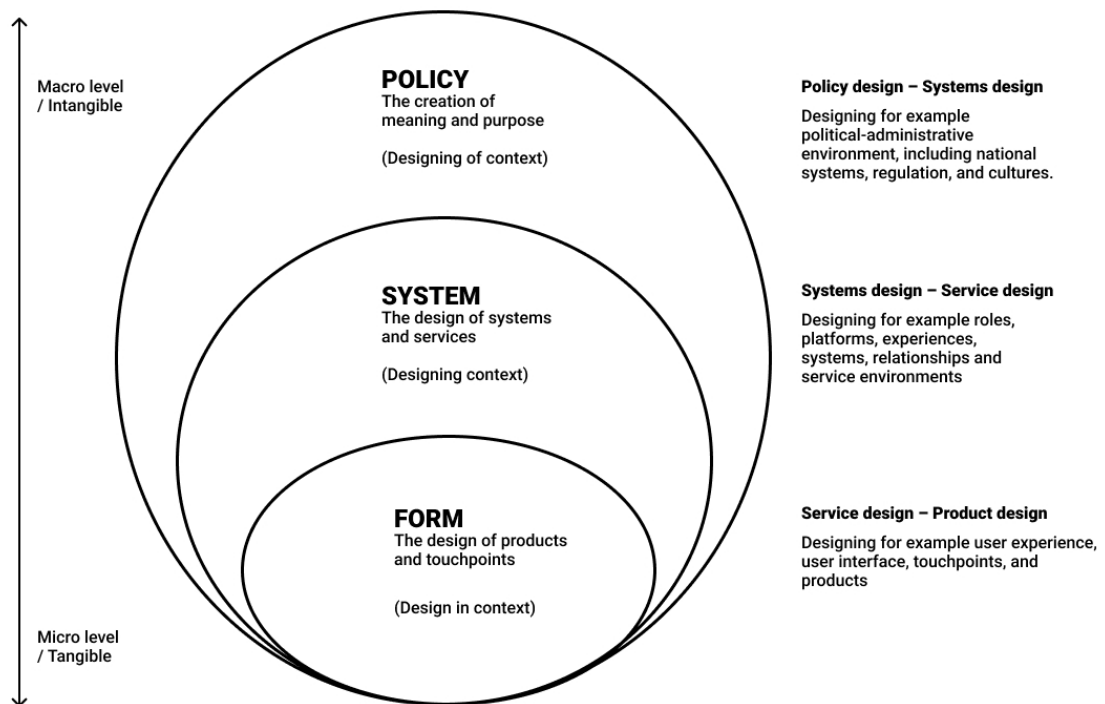

Figure 2: Design levels (Adapted from Young et al. 2001. Beyond the Bauhaus ICSID)

FORM: designing in the context – Designing products and touchpoints with a user-centric approach, both physical and digital products. For example, coffins, urns, web applications for the funeral agencies or designing how funeral director keeps in touch with relatives.

SYSTEM: designing the context – Designing services and systems, taking into account longer customer journeys, not only single touchpoints, and understanding the environment and future demands: for instance the relatives' journey as they are planning funerals or designing the co-operation of the stakeholders in the funeral field.

POLICY: designing of the context – Designing the context itself, influencing the policymaking and paradigms. For example, designing the Finnish funeral ecosystems, and its policies or paradigms.

The difference between systems design and systemic design according to design researcher Peter H. Jones (2020) is that systemic design is a design field (systemic as the modifier of design) and systems design is a practice to design systems. Furthermore, he states that the difference between systemic design and service or experience design is scale, social complexity and integration. He explains that systemic design concerns a more complex system that includes subsystems which can be called services. The definitions of "systems design" by Young et al. and "systemic design" by Jones are partly overlapping but it can be taken as a sign of a continually evolving field that still is refining its definitions or as a misinterpretation from myself as an author.

3.3 Systemic Design

In this chapter, I unfold the idea of systemic design. In the next chapters, I will apply the systemic design methodology to the development of the Finnish funeral culture. According to Jones (2020) "Systemic design has developed as an interdisciplinary field based on the integration of systems thinking and systems methods that effectively inform human-centered design for complex socio-technical and multi-stakeholder social systems". I interpreted this a bit complex description in a way that Jones suggests systemic design being an approach that applies design methodology with systemic thinking to solve complex challenges. In addition, he emphasizes the interdisciplinary of the field. In systemic design, the objective for design is the combined effect and interaction between the system's parts. For example, funerals in its broad sense are a system where different actors, stakeholders and parts works together to bury the deceased, help relative process the grief and get all the official duties done. According to researchers Battistoni and Barbero (2020), the cultural paradigm shift and other global interconnected problems require a holistic approach. They continue by claiming that systemic design can provide one solution to this kind of complex problem. The Finnish funeral ecosystem is not the most complex or even global system, but it includes multiple stakeholders, the need for a change of paradigm and it is closely interconnected with the

Finnish social system. The systemic design approach works well on this kind of smaller system too, as I later evidence.

One example of a cultural paradigm shift that might benefit from a systemic approach is Finnish funeral traditions and our planet's environmental boundaries. Besides the limits of resources, climate change and environmental issues are experiential and cultural challenges: people must re-evaluate their values and choices and adapt their identity, beliefs and life philosophy to a changing situation (BIOS 2019). One example of that kind of ritual to be re-evaluated is the cold storage of the bodies before the funeral ceremony. Bodies are cold storage relatively long time in Finland because the funeral ceremony is traditionally held a couple of weeks after death and it is a cultural norm that the body, not the ash, is blessed. Changes in the burial tradition to enable the funeral ceremony to be arranged after the body is cremated, would lower the energy consumption and CO_2 emissions as bodies would not need so long time in cold storage. However, these kinds of changes are not easy to deliver especially when there are cultural and religious aspects affecting them.

The direction of the systemic shift and the planned actions towards systemic change should always be defined and decided carefully and thoughtfully. In addition, it is a vital for a designer to understand both their own actions, themselves as a part of the systems and the target groups.

According to Berninger, Lovio, Temmes, Jalas, Kivimaa & Heiskanen (2017, 16) systemic changes are difficult to recognize and make because current operating models like behavioral routines, administrative decisions, and benefits for the stakeholders slow down the transformation process. They continue that the key to the change is to weaken old structures and learn new behavioral models. Path dependence is a phenomenon where old ways of thinking confirm how things happen in the future (Berninger et al. 2017, 204). Berninger et al. explain that the dominated operating model feeds itself. They continue that when all necessary infrastructure, awareness and operating models already exist it is difficult to reform operating models and usually re-designing is done within an existing infrastructure. This kind of path dependence is recognizable in the Finnish funeral ecosystem. The stagnation of the field benefits the stakeholders that are dominating the field now. Assuming that the field calls

for a change it needs to be done with a systemic approach, from many directions at the same time. More about this kind of approach in the chapter *4.4 Implementation*.

Systemic design field has its own sub-fields and practices and Professor Birger Sevaldson's Systems-oriented design (SOD) is one of the well-known ones. Systems-oriented design is a systemic design approach that lies intersection of systems thinking, systems practice, design thinking and design practice (Sevaldson 2009). According to Jones (2020) SOD shifts traditional design thinking by applying it to the services and processes that are more holistic societally. He adds that the implications of SOD can be seen usually in the field of social services, regional and municipal planning and for example healthcare issues. In the study I lean strongly on the methodology and approach of Systems-oriented design, still absorbing influences from the other systemic design approaches as well.

4. The Research process

4.1 The research methods in the first study

The full research consists of two parts. The first part is study for my first master's thesis and the data I collected during the process. The study has been implemented with the following methods: observation, interviews, web survey, target group profiling, desk research, co-design, and future stories. In the second study, introduced more detailed later, the used methods were observation, interviews, rich design research space, gigamapping, and zip-analysis. In addition, a brief implementation plan was delivered including intervention proposals and project portfolio.

The case study presented in the next chapters and its outcomes can be defined as a meta-design. In the framework of meta-design, the aim is not to create concrete products or process concepts but define and create infrastructures and environment that facilitates change (Fischer & Giaccargadi 2016). Both in the frameworks of the meta-design and systemic design the essential phase or factor is the setting of the desired direction. The aim is not to set the fixed goal but the direction and then design and execute adjustments along the way. The direction that I set in my study based on the findings from the first study and desk research was the socially sustainable and inclusive future of Finnish funerals.

As mentioned before the goal of the first study was to understand the perspective of the relatives who arrange funerals in modern-day Finland. The research followed the service design process. There are several different interpretations of the service design process, but fundamentally they share the same design of iteration and steps of exploration/discovery, creation/definition, recollection/development and implementation/delivery (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, p. 126). In addition to the gathering insight into the relative's perspective of the modern-day Finnish funerals, the aim of the study was to understand what kind of future needs the Finnish funerals might have and how a design thinking approach with future-oriented methods could help to develop services in an appropriate and effective way. From the collected information, the direction and the objective of systemic change were generated.

The research was conducted mostly with qualitative methods: interviews, online surveys, observations and co-design workshops. The web survey's goal was to increase understanding of the funeral industry generally, and the customer's experiences related to funeral service providers, specifically. The platform utilised for the questionnaire was Google Forms, and the web survey remained available for nine months. As the context of the study was Finnish funerals, the questionnaire was in Finnish so it would generate as many responses as possible. The answers were translated into English when necessary. Answering all of the questions was not mandatory. The questionnaire was distributed through three channels on social media: the author's own Facebook profile, the Finnish Death Studies Association's Facebook profile and the discussion forum Suomi24.fi. The questionnaire did not inquire about the respondent's background information in order to keep the form as short as possible. Respondents did not receive any compensation. There were 92 respondents to the web survey. In every phase, respondents were given the opportunity to respond with an open format reply in addition to a numeric option. This resulted in 304 open replies.

After and partially during the questionnaire response period, the interviews were conducted. The first phase of the interviews had a few different objectives: exploring the subject, understanding the needs and motivations of a person who arranges a funeral and finding out how satisfied customers currently are with the services. The second phase of the interviews was conducted after the workshops (described in more detailed in the next chapter) to validate the ideas that had arisen in the workshops. The questions that were asked of every interviewee were the following: How would you describe the funeral organising process in your case?, How would you improve the process?, How did the different service providers succeed?, and is discussing death a taboo in Finland? The customer interviewees were found through the author's Facebook account. Interviews were carried out with 13 people from all over Finland, aged 34 to 70 years who had organised a funeral sometime in the past. There were both anticipated deaths, for example, after a long-term illness, and unforeseen and unexpected deaths. Some interviewees were already familiar with the interviewer, and some were not. The interviews were semi-structured, and the interviewees talked freely about their experiences with the researcher in face-to-face conversations. The interviewees were given the opportunity to choose the interview location near their home or workplace. No compensation was given to the interviewees. The interviews were recorded and transcribed

with the permission of the interviewees. Pseudonyms were used in the quotations to protect participants' privacy.

Many interviewees were emotional during the interview, and they wanted to talk about their relationship with the deceased. Due to ethical considerations and respect for their personal feelings, these parts of the interviews were not transcribed. After transcription, the interviewees were able to review, comment on and refine their responses. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes. It was also vital to understand the service provider's point of view. To accomplish this, an entrepreneur, a florist, an end-of-life caregiver, a pastor, a senior advisor, an employee of a funeral agency and crematorium workers, who also were chapel workers, were interviewed. The objective was to determine what factors affect the experience of those who are arranging funerals from their professional perspective. During the interviews, we discussed the funeral industry and changes in it in general.

In co-design workshops with the customers, the aim was to collect ideas for the service proposals. The first workshop was held online using a platform called RealtimeBoard (Later called Miro). On Miro, participants used digital post-its on which they wrote their thoughts and ideas, but at the same time, they were able to see other people's notes and could comment on them. In the workshop, some of the informants were asked to develop ideas about how funeral services could be improved. These proposals from the online workshop were used as the basis for further development workshops. The next two workshops were held face-to-face with the participants. In the workshops and interviews, funeral-related services were discussed considering four different themes: memorial and rituals, funeral arrangements, the journey for the deceased, and property and laws. Property and laws were included because there was a lot of discussion about this theme even though it was not included in the original scope of the first study. These themes were created based on the previous online workshop on RealtimeBoard and the interviews in the discovery phase. In the development phase, every participant received a document that explained the aim of the study and how the information would be used. After each workshop, a short debriefing discussion was held. In an ideal situation, all the participants would be in the same workshop, and they would have a chance to discuss and develop ideas with each other. In this case, it was necessary to conduct the workshops with very small groups. This was a way to ensure an emotionally safe workshop environment for every participant. Using this approach, some

essential co-design benefits were lost as all the participants could not share ideas with each other.

Grief greatly affects the experience of the funeral customer. Hence, empathising with the customer's position is very difficult, sometimes impossible. However, observations were carried out to get more information about what kind of decisions the next of kin have to make. My goal was to recreate the experience of organising a funeral as authentically as possible within this framework. The observation was carried out by imagining a situation where my sister (who does not exist) had died, and I would have to arrange her funeral. The process included two phases: planning the funeral service in a funeral agency and visiting the chapel. These steps cover only a portion of what the post-mortem arrangements involve, but they increased our understanding of the bereaved customer's perspective. The first part of the observation was conducted at the funeral agency. The funeral officer agreed to act out a funeral planning situation similar to one involving actual customers. The funeral officer filled in a form with me and went through all the phases of organising a funeral – from the pastor and the schedule to the flowers and the repository for the ashes. The process took a total of 45 minutes. In a real-life situation, this would certainly take more time. At the end of the process, a coffin and an urn were chosen. The observation situation in the funeral agency was voice recorded, and a few photos were taken. The second part of the observation was visiting the chapel. There was no service at the time. The chapel worker showed us various areas of the chapel: the lobby, the lounge for survivors, the room where the deceased is viewed, the room for the urn and the three chapel halls. During the observations, emphasis was placed on seeing these spaces and noting their functionality. In addition, the crematorium worker told us about the processes that the chapel follows when ceremonies are held. The observation in the chapel was voice recorded, and photos were taken.

The validity of the study was ensured by involving participants from all over Finland and from several different funeral service providers. The stakeholder insights were combined with a literature review. The reliability of the customer insights was improved with triangulation and reviews from informants after the interviews were transcribed. Also, during the interviews, audio recording and transcription were used to ensure the accuracy of the notes taken.

The findings from the first study can be divided into four different aspects:

1. Arranging funerals (funeral ceremony, property, heritage) is complicated: Relatives don't know what they need to do, and they must take care of dozens of tasks and they sometimes confront unprofessionalism during the process.
2. There is no guidance or help in arranging funerals outside of (expensive) funeral homes or the church
3. Services are outdated for the next generation: No easily accessible secular rituals, lack of digital services, no individual choices etc.
4. Death is taboo when it comes to its practices

Initially, fewer people are dealing with death and traditions related to it; for example, fewer are now attending funerals in the previous decades. Obviously, inexperience increases stress and anxiety when the first funeral is to be arranged. There are dozens of things to take consider during the funeral arranging (Figure 3) and some of those even have a timeframe. In the customer interviews, many stressed the need for slower service experiences and clear instructions as well as a transparent and well-communicated process. From the web survey's replies, I found that the family's funeral organizers experienced inconsistent professionalism during the service process. Several respondents felt stressed about the fact that they encountered ignorance and unprofessionalism during the whole service journey. For example, in hospitals, scarce resources, in terms of space and time, had caused harm to relatives and those arranging funerals. On the other hand, in such situations, the professionalism of the person on duty may make a difference. An example of this was an employee who had tried to decorate a linen room for a deceased person as there was no other space for relatives to say goodbye to their loved ones.
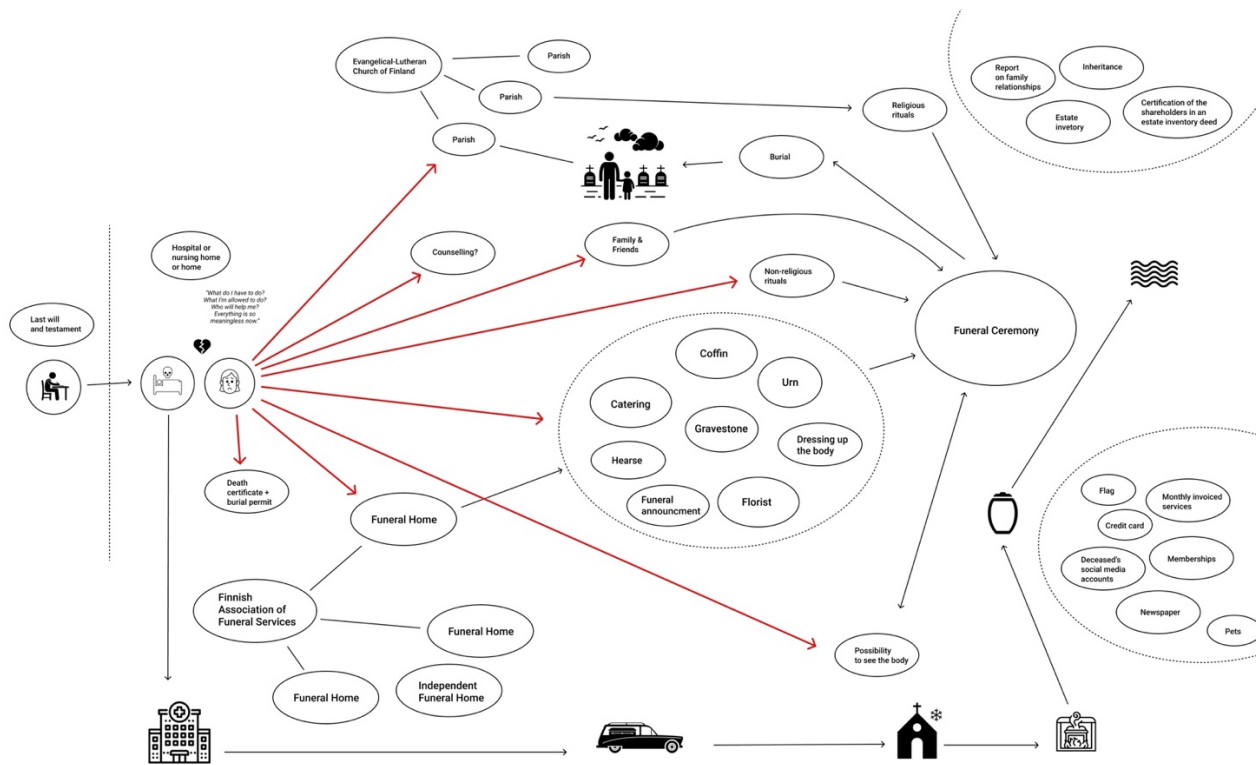
Figure 3: The complexity of the funeral arrangements

Secondly, the study raised the issue of the dominance of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the private sector's role in funeral arrangements. The role of the church is discussed widely in the chapter 4.2. However, the issue was raised also in the interviews. People rely on the traditional Finnish funeral customs, but the church's role feels distant to them. In addition, church customs and guidelines, or the views of an individual employee of the church, sometimes limit the options for the rituals of relatives. One of the web survey respondents wrote that she wanted to put a lumberjack's helmet on the coffin at the ceremony, but the pastor had forbidden it. For many, the cycle of nature and humans' relationship with the nature was emphasized over their relationship to religion. Also, the role of the private sector was critiqued. People feel that they are dependent on the funeral when they are in a vulnerable state. They are very aware that funeral homes seek for-profit and that influences the fact that people can not always fully trust the funeral home.

Thirdly, individualistic choices or one's own rituals are not commonly included. Today, customers desire individualistic choices for funeral artefacts, ceremonies and rituals. The

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participants of the study wanted concrete actions to be done to help them handle the loss: for example, shoveling sand on top of the coffin, escorting the ashes, and placing the urn. They also discussed self-making and co-creating, such as utilizing a natural stone as a memorial stone, which the relative could get from a meaningful place. Planting a tree and carving a coffin were also mentioned. One interviewee even said that he would like to bake buns and keep them in the freezer so that they could be served at his funeral. Cultural and religious customs, as well as laws, also limit self-determined rituals.

In the study, some practised their own rituals, some in a slightly undisciplined way. For example, one interviewee put keys in a coffin:

> "He layed there quite nicely, the coffin was open and I put the keys of the house in Carelia where he grew up. Even though you're not allowed to put metal in the coffin, I said 'the hell with it' and did anyway. So it was like he could get home now. He had kept them all his life " (Taija, participant, 2018)

Eventually, relatives often have no information about the deceased's wishes, and this increases the stress. They have a real need for clear, simple and scheduled directions. Practical arrangements such as paperwork should go smoothly for relatives, but dealing with the actual loss often also requires first-hand participation in the burial process. This situation was clearly described by a participant:

> "It would be great if the next of kin had more real-time information about things. As it is, death is hidden behind the funeral agency; the idea is that they take care of everything. I think not being able to participate is also stressful for the next of kin."
> (Participant in web survey, 2017)

4.1 Direction for the systemic change

Based on the first study the direction of the systemic change was formed. The central paradigms (Figure 4) that need to shift are as follows:

- Stagnation of the Finnish funeral culture
- The dominance of the church in funeral traditions and practicalities
- The taboo of the death

By shifting the Finnish funeral culture towards more versatile customs and rituals we enable people to grieve and process loss according to their needs and life views. In addition, the dominance of the Evangelical-Lutheran church should be tamed. It is undeniable that the church has done a lot of good work for Finnish burial and funeral culture, but in modern secular society, the strong position of the church regarding funeral processes cannot be justified. Finally, the taboo of death must be mitigated. As long as the death and practicalities of death are taboo the development and change are unattainable.

THE DIRECTION

This is how things have always been, we need traditions. ⟶ We need traditions but also we have to provide everyone possibility to process a loss according to their needs.

Finnish funeral customs are almost the same as the Lutheran funeral customs. ⟶ We need secular alternatives too.

Death is a distressing and unknown phenomenon and we don't want to talk about it. ⟶ Death and funerals are more familiar to people in order to make grieving more relieved.

The socially inclusive future of the Finnish funerals
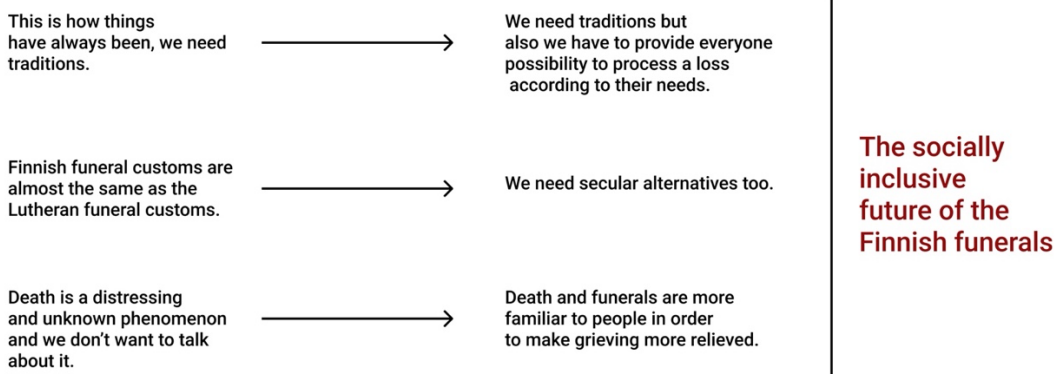
Figure 4: The direction of the paradigm change need was formed based on the first study

The ultimate direction of the systemic shift is socially inclusive future of the Finnish funerals.

4.2 The Research methods in the second study

After discovering the current situation of the relatives and professionals when they are arranging funerals it was time to zoom out to the macro level of the Finnish funeral ecosystem. Zooming out was done by getting information on both the large-scale processes, social structures and ecosystem as well as widening the scope of the research partly over Finland's borders. The objective was kept in the Finnish funerals but by benchmarking different cultures it was easier to see the possibilities for the future. The methodology used in the zooming out to macrolevel phase was a rich design research space, the gigamp and the interviews. The aim of discovering the macro level was to understand how the funeral system works. The second study was conducted in Oslo while I was studying Systems-oriented design at the Oslo school of architecture and design (AHO).

The study was started by building a rich design research space in the studio at AHO. A rich design research space is a physical or virtual space for different kinds of datasets and information that is collected to help sensemaking, analysis and discovering the interconnections between the stakeholders, actors and processes involved. According to Sevaldson (2008), A rich design research space is an attempt to respond to the growing complexity of the problems that researchers and designers face nowadays. It is a method or skill of design-led research whereas research is utilizing design practices. Sevaldson (2008) references skill, not the method as he empathizes that the aim is to engage and learn a holistic research practice that includes for example social, cultural, and aesthetic spaces.

My rich design research space consisted of five different datasets (Figure 5):

- Reference pictures both about the current situation and about possible futures
- The gigamap about the current Finnish funeral ecosystem and relative's journey. The concept of gigamap is described more precisely in the next chapter.
- Co-creating space for ideas about funeral rituals (Appendix I)
- Data sets about Finnish and Norwegian funeral practices and data digitalizing process
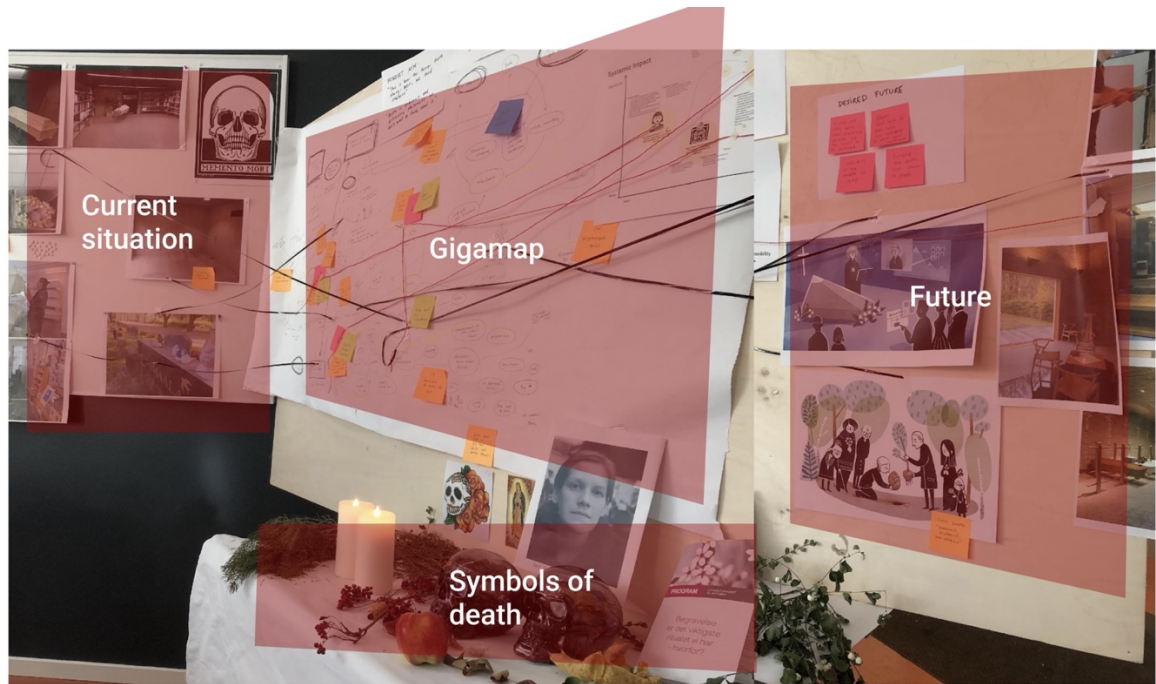- A composition of different symbols of death from different cultures

Figure 5: The rich design space build in the premises of Oslo school of architecture and design (AHO)

The rich design research space was used also to co-creating and communicate the topic. The complexity of the thesis was unraveled as the information was spread wide and it was possible to both zoom out and zoom in on certain matters. The rich design research space was organized as a timeline. On the left was a current situation, on the middle the proposals for the direction of the change and the action plan and on the right the desired futures. The space was also a conversation starter for our team which consisted of people from almost ten different nationalities.

In the hearth of the rich design space was the gigamap. Gigamap is a visual thinking tool and an information collection about a certain topic. Sevaldson (2011) claims that gigamapping unlike mapping in general does not aim for ordering or simplifying issues but to grasp and embrace the complexity. He continues that it can be used to define the boundaries and frame the system, but boundaries and simplification should not be done too early and quickly. Hence the problem must be unfolded beyond the assumed horizon of relevance

The entire rich design research space could be referred to as a gigamap but in this thesis, I refer gigamap as the visualizations of the current Finnish funeral ecosystem. During the process, I carried out several versions of the gigamapped Finnish funeral ecosystem, first by drawing and afterwards with digital design softwares Miro and Figma. The ecosystem was built around the relatives' customer journey or the visualization of all the tasks that next of kin must take care of. In figures 6 and 7, I give an overview of the connections between the stakeholders. Figure 6 shows the data flows and figure 7 shows the connections and tensions between the stakeholders. The information in figures is not complete or perfect but it gives an idea of the ecosystem's processes and logic. The data for the gigamaps was collected from informants, online resources and from the first study that I implemented.
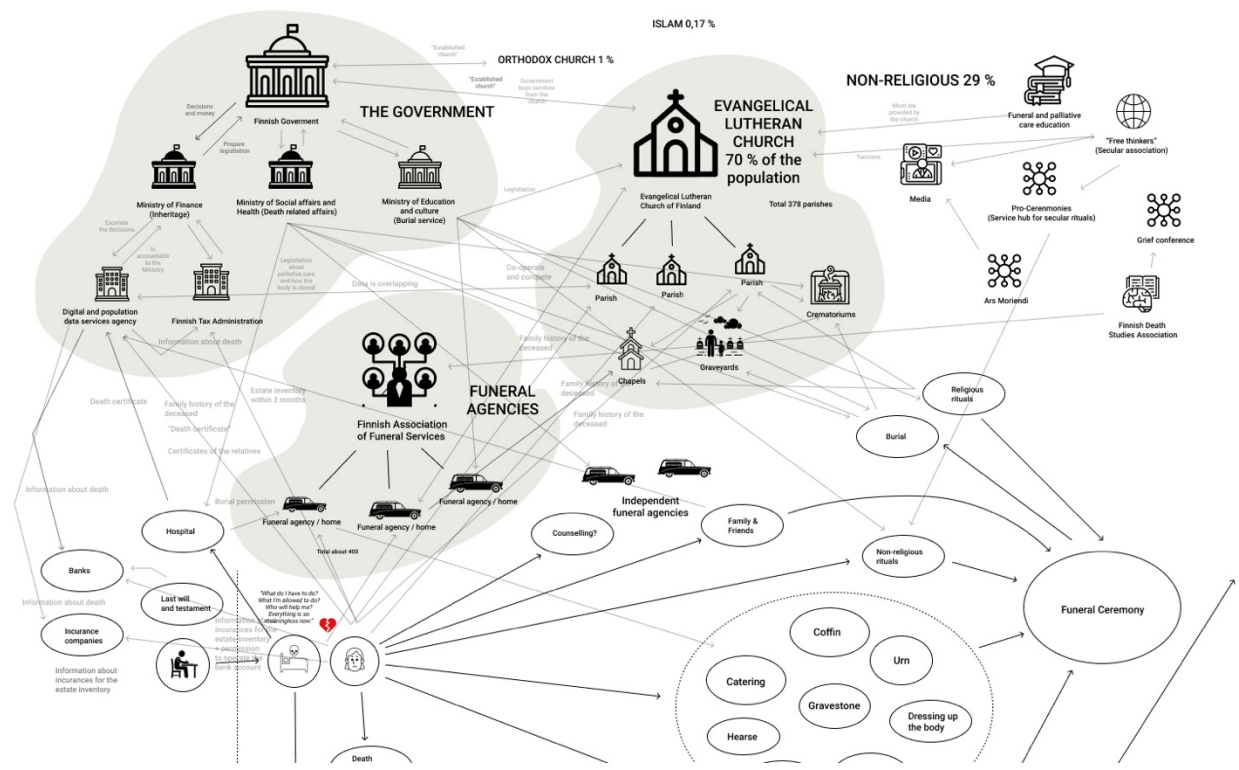

Figure 6: The Finnish funeral ecosystem: The main stakeholders and their connections and data flows between them
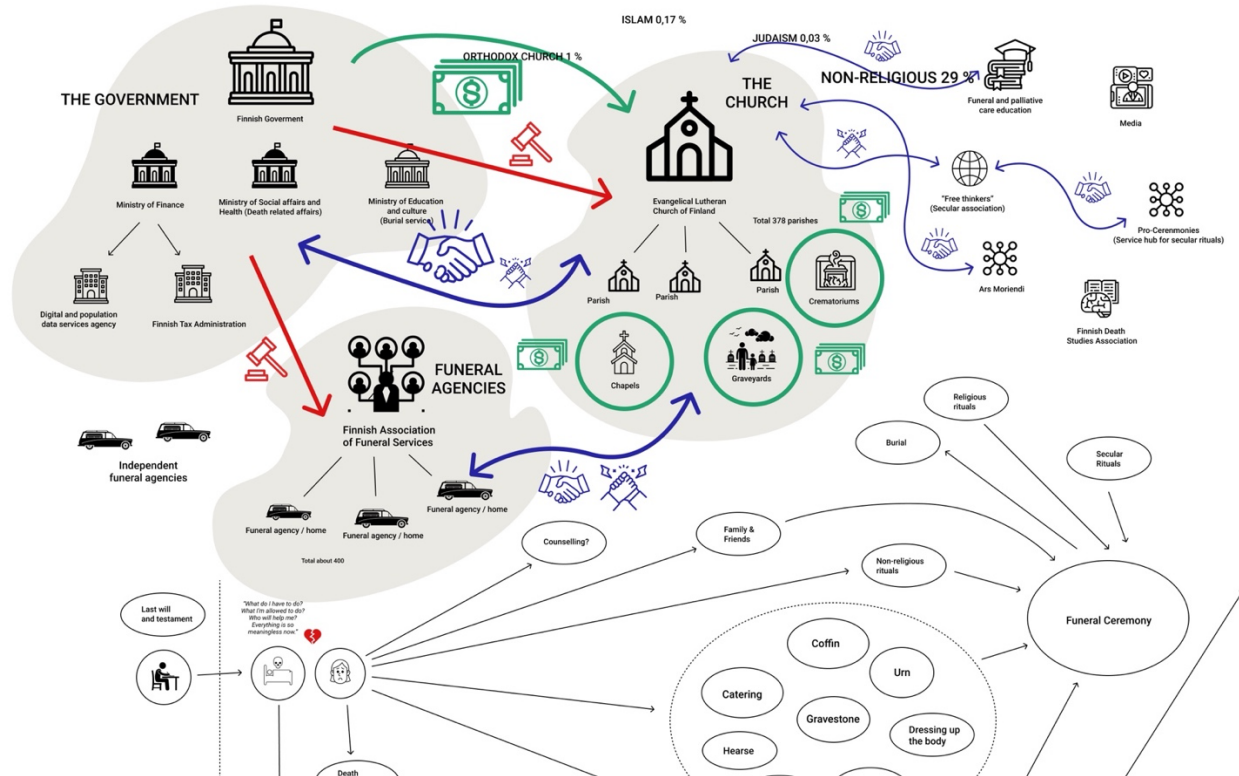
Figure 7: The Finnish funeral ecosystem: information about the hard and soft connections

The gigamaps visualize the three big stakeholders in the Finnish funeral industry. The government with the three ministries set the laws and prepares the legislation for the funeral field. The duties are divided between the three ministries as follows: the Ministry of Finance is responsible for the heritage; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for the death related affairs like palliative care and how the body is stored and the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the burial services. National administrations and agencies take care of the execution of the affairs. For example, Digital and Population Data Services agencies report on family relationships that are needed in the estate inventory. The legislation affects both the private sector's business and how the church's activities related to funerals and burials. The Evangelical-Lutheran church gets a state subsidy and is responsible for the burial of all the Finnish citizens no matter their convictions. In addition, almost all the

graveyards and crematoriums are under church maintenance. A total of 378 parishes take care of the practicalities of the burial and funeral arrangements. Funeral agencies and parishes both co-operate and "compete" with each other. They have partly the same duties to help the bereaved arrange funeral related responsibilities. In general, the relationship between the state and the church is good but there are some tensions too, for example concerning the duties of population accounting.

The Finnish Association of Funeral Services is a strong umbrella organization that develops, facilitates, and leads the way for its member organizations. However, not all funeral agencies are under the umbrella organization. The bereaved could theoretically arrange the funerals without the funeral home but the position of the funeral homes is so strong, and people take their services as mandatory, regardless of funeral agencies being private sector agencies.

Besides the three biggest stakeholders there are some independent actors that are influencing the funeral field for their part. The secular association called "Union of Freethinkers of Finland" advocates against the church's position as a so-called states church. They also provide secular alternatives to funeral ceremonies. However, their impact is not very strong as few people know that secular alternatives even exist. Funeral education in Finland is only provided by the Christian academies and the Finnish Association of Funeral Services. This can be promoting the strong position of these stakeholders.

From the gigamaps it can be concluded that three big stakeholders are dominating the Finnish funeral culture and processes: The Evangelical-Lutheran church, the private sector's funeral homes (and their umbrella organization) and of course the Finnish government. For the next of kin no public, secular and cheap help is available. On the other hand, the stagnation of the Finnish funeral culture seems to lead from the balance that these three stakeholders have created together and on the other hand from the taboo of the death: No problems in the current system are seen until someone dies and then people usually tend to lean on the easy solutions. The power relation between the government and the church can be described as reinforcing loop: The state has outsourced the burial of all Finns to the church. Thus, the position of the church is strong and will be further strengthened as the situation becomes more established in the minds of the citizens. The Lutheran burial customs thus becomes a

Finnish burial custom. This in turn contributes to the state continuing to outsource burial to the Lutheran Church.

4.3. ZIP analysis

As the direction of the aimed systemic change was the socially sustainable future of the Finnish funerals the next phase was to find the pain points and the possible point where the development could be started. Therefore after the discovery phase, it was time to analyze the system. For the analysis phase, ZIP analysis was conducted.

According to Sevaldson (2011), ZIP-analysis is method to develop a gigamap further by identifying points for new ideas, innovation and interventions. He explains that Z stands for zooming in, I for the idea, intervention, innovation and P for the problem, pain point or potential. Part of the identified intervention points can be so-called leverage points. Environmental scientist and system analyst Donella Meadows (1941–2001) defines twelve leverage points or underlining non-visible system structure or mindset (1999). With the leverage points, one can intervene in the system effective way. Leverage points differ from other intervention points with their maximum influence to change with minimum effort. The twelve leverage points according to Meadows are:

12. Constants, parameters, numbers

11. The size of buffers and other stabilizing stocks, relative to their flows

10. Structure of material stocks and flows (such as transport network, population age structures)

9. Length of delays, relative to the rate of system changes

8. Strength of negative feedback loops, relative to the effect they are trying to correct against

7. Gain around driving positive feedback loops

6. Structure of information flow (who does and does not have access to what kinds of information)

5. Rules of the system (such as incentives, punishment, constraints)

4. Power to add, change, evolve, or self-organize system structure

3. Goal of the system

2. Mindset or paradigm that the system — its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters — arises from

1. Power to transcend paradigms

By analyzing these aspects, it could be possible to go even deeper into the foundations of the Finnish funeral ecosystem. As the limits for the available resources for the thesis at hand are limited, I have been discovering and analyzing numbers (for instance number of parishes or members of the church), positive feedback loop (the state and the church), structure of information flow (who has the information) and mindset or paradigm of the system.

The analyzing process started by identifying the pain points according to the knowledge I had gathered so far. I identified a total of 11 pain points (Figure 9 and figure 10). After identifying the pain points, I started to zoom in on some of the pain points that found to be possible leverage points. I gathered more data on the following pain points:

Pain point 3 (P3): Survivors have no idea what they must do and how to take care of everything when their loved one dies.

Pain point 7 (P7): Bereaved have too many things to consider but not enough individual options

Pain point 8 (P8): No secular alternatives are available
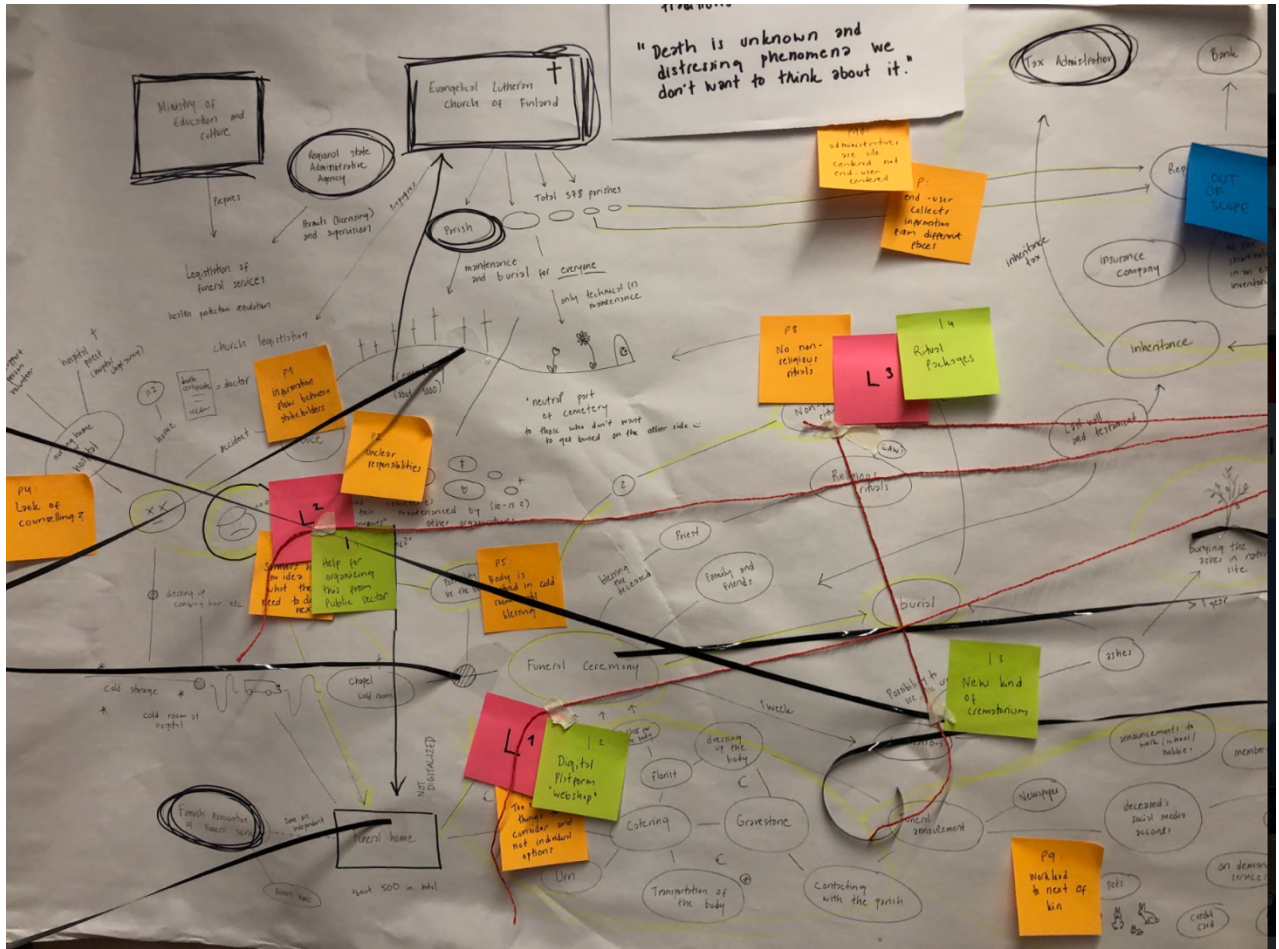
Figure 8: The second version of the gigamap with the information about customer journey (yellow line), the ownership of funeral field (bolded ones), pain points (orange), ideas (green) and leverage points (reds).

I zoomed into these three pain points by attending two funeral seminars, one in Finland and one in Norway. They both provide me with information about the pain points and the differences and similarities between these two countries' funeral administrations. Besides the seminars, I contacted the Norwegian digitization directorate (Digdir) and got invited to the meeting. The meeting was held in Vestfold crematorium and provided me with the possibility to observe the present-day crematorium design. In the meeting, I met Bredo Erik Swanberg from Digdir and Ola Asp who manages the crematorium and leads one of Digdir's Life event projects called "Death and Inheritance". Besides people from Digdir I also interviewed Petri Risto from the Finnish Digital and Population Data Services Agency. They have a similar project going on to Digdir.
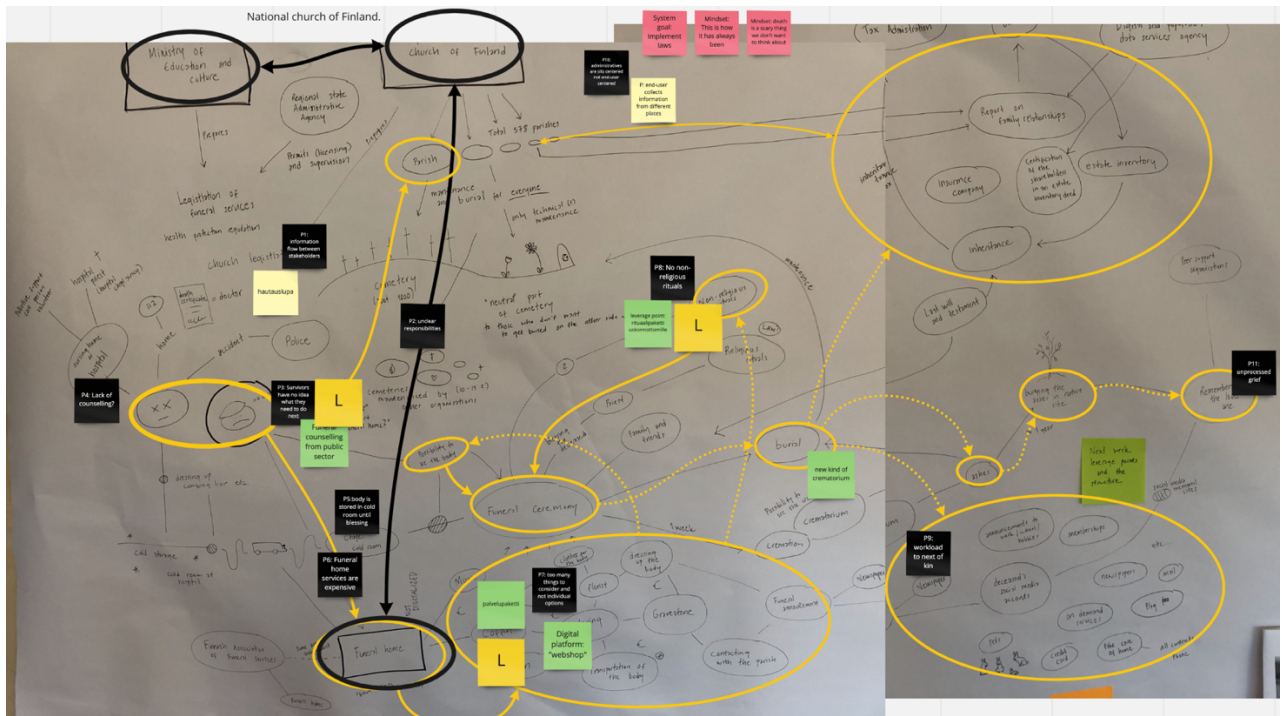
Figure 9: The third version of the gigamap where data was partly digitized. Pain points are on black post-its.

Based on the novel data I continued designing the potential interventions. According to the data, I evaluated that the three chosen pain points are possible leverage points to make an impact on the Finnish funeral ecosystem. Next, I introduced the possible interventions or ideas on how the change could be started. The ideas were:

1. Death doula that helps next of the kin in funeral organizing as well as the client in palliative care to speak up their will (P3)
2. Digital platform for planning (also one's own funeral) and organizing funerals. Hub for small business funeral service providers + clearly explained and facilitated process (P7)
3. Rites/rituals around cremation: Crematoriums could offer different kinds of rituals to the bereaved. (P8)

A death doula is an idea of a person who is educated in a school that is not connected with any religious or other conviction. The doulas are also professionals in the end-care giving and support both the dying one and their family. Death doula has a wide and varied understanding of different religions' customs as well as possibilities for secular rituals. A death doula facilitates the process where the dying person and their family can discuss the funerals, and everything related. After the passing, the doula helps the family with everything they need.

A digital platform for planning the funerals is meant to both plans one's own funerals as well to make all the arrangements for a loved one's funeral. The key idea is that the platform is a hub for all the information that is needed and it has integrations to all the necessary services and agencies. When the deceased has planned their own funerals the relatives can easily just make the orders via the app. The application provides also a platform for the local product and service providers to reach their relatives. For example, a local dressmaker can sell funeral clothes for the deceased.

The third intervention idea is a ritual around the crematorium. At the moment in Finland, the crematoriums are not available for the relatives to say goodbye to their loved ones except in some rare cases. For example, in Norway, there are crematoriums that are beautiful and lightful places where it is possible to follow as the coffin is being cremated. Although it might sound alienating the experiences are good. The crematorium is also freer from religious connections than chapels that are used for farewells for loved ones nowadays. Involving a relative in various stages of burial, such as preparing the body, slows down the process, and at the same time makes it more humane. If relatives actually take some control of the process of burying their relatives, they can also take the time and actions they need to deal with their loss.

The effectiveness and feasibility of the ideas were analyzed by mapping the ideas on the canvas with two dimensions: systemic impact and feasibility. Also, connections between the interventions were identified (Figure 11).
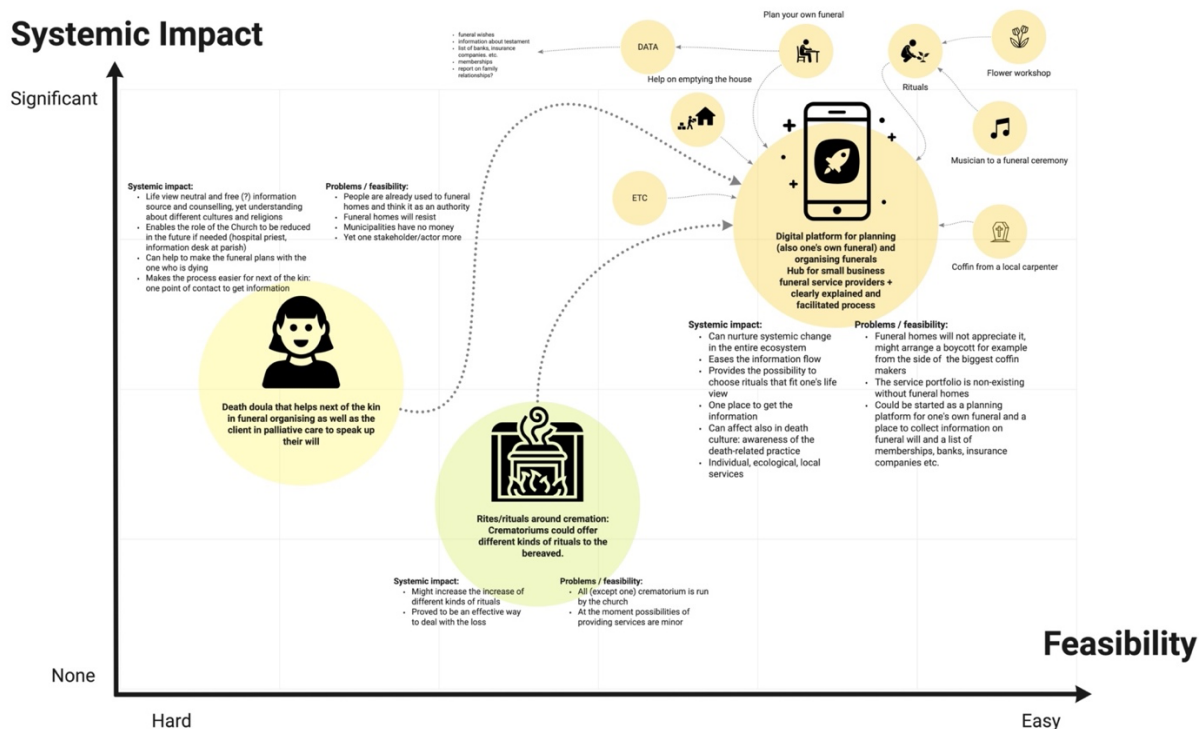
Systemic Impact

Significant

None

Hard

Easy

Feasibility

Plan your own funeral

DATA

- funeral wishes
- information about testament
- list of banks, insurance companies, etc.
- memberships
- report on family relationships?

Help on emptying the house

Rituals

Flower workshop

Musician to a funeral ceremony

Coffin from a local carpenter

ETC

Digital platform for planning (also one's own funeral) and organising funerals
Hub for small business funeral service providers + clearly explained and facilitated process

Systemic impact:
- Can nurture systemic change in the entire ecosystem
- Eases the information flow
- Provides the possibility to choose rituals that fit one's life view
- One place to get the information
- Can affect also in death culture: awareness of the death-related practice
- Individual, ecological, local services

Problems / feasibility:
- Funeral homes will not appreciate it, might arrange a boycott for example from the side of the biggest coffin makers
- The service portfolio is non-existing without funeral homes
- Could be started as a planning platform for one's own funeral and a place to collect information on funeral will and a list of memberships, banks, insurance companies etc.

Systemic impact:
- Life view neutral and free (?) information source and counselling, yet understanding about different cultures and religions
- Enables the role of the Church to be reduced in the future if needed (hospital priest, information desk at parish)
- Can help to make the funeral plans with the one who is dying
- Makes the process easier for next of the kin: one point of contact to get information

Problems / feasibility:
- People are already used to funeral homes and think it as an authority
- Funeral homes will resist
- Municipalities have no money
- Yet one stakeholder/actor more

Death doula that helps next of the kin in funeral organising as well as the client in palliative care to speak up their will

Rites/rituals around cremation: Crematoriums could offer different kinds of rituals to the bereaved.

Systemic impact:
- Might increase the increase of different kinds of rituals
- Proved to be an effective way to deal with the loss

Problems / feasibility:
- All (except one) crematorium is run by the church
- At the moment possibilities of providing services are minor

Figure 11: The effectiveness and feasibility of the ideas

After the systemic impact and feasibility were analyzed, it was time to make an implementation plan.

4.4 Implementation

The aim of the implementation plan of the suggested interventions is to give one example of the possible ways to start the shift towards a more inclusive Finnish funeral culture. The aim is to describe the process and not to give tactical plan but an example of it. In systemic change, the problem at hand needs to be approached from many different perspectives same time. The perspectives on approaching the system change could be for example: national and local; top-down and bottom-up; hard data and soft data; wicked problems and tame problems; technological and cultural or social (Figure 11).
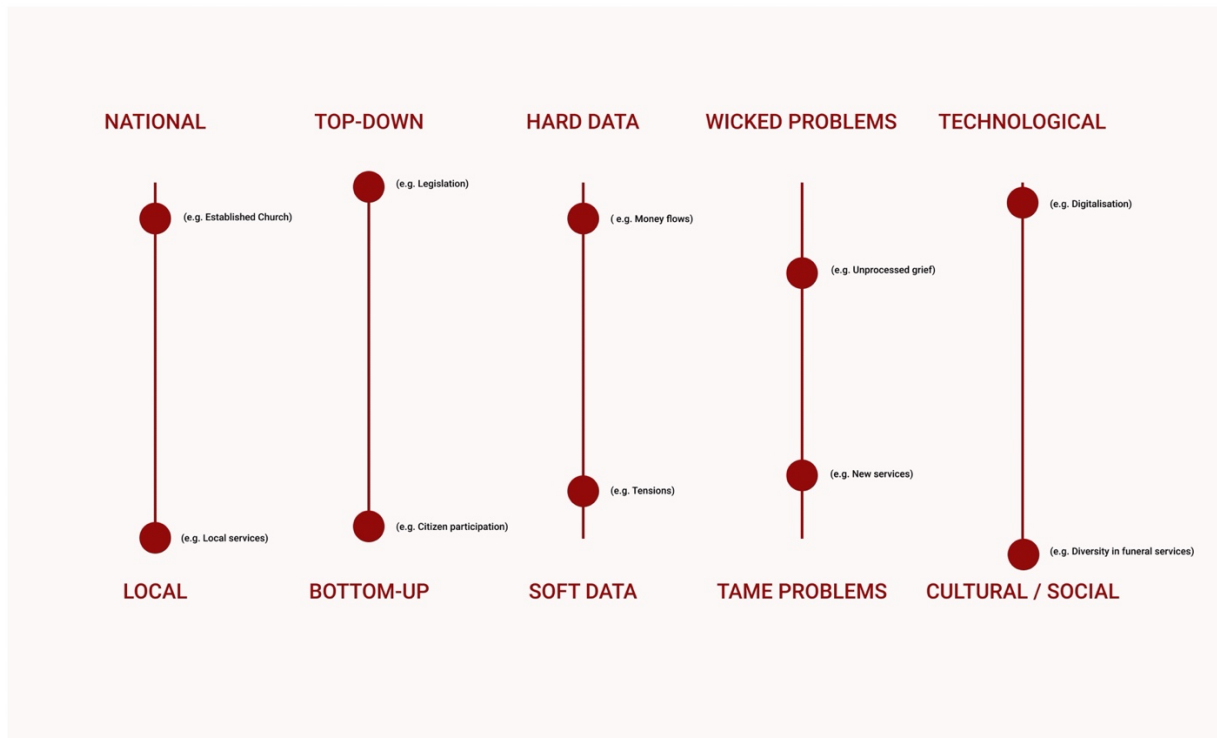
Figure 13: Approaches to the systemic movement

By approaching the domain from different perspectives same time, it is possible to beat the resistance that always exists in the big movements. The resistance can also be tamed by starting the change at the right time. If the system has confronted imbalance and it is reorganizing itself again, it is a good time to make interventions to shift the direction of the system. Resistance (Figure 12) is always existing, and it goes back to very human aspects such as discomfort and uncertainty. In addition, resistance derives to benefit and power that stakeholders are holding in the status quo.

Possible resistance

A possible confrontation
between secular and
religious organisations

Funeral agencies
are not willing to
cooperate

Death is a distressing
and unknown phenomenon
we do not want to talk about it

Resistance to the change
in some organisations

Ways to deal with the resistance

Appreciation

Transparency about
the aims and the process

Providing more data about
the future scenarios

Slow process, identifying that
people are in different phases and
adjusting the message

Making a plan for the change
management

Helping people reflect on their own role

Figure 12: Possible resistance and ways to deal with the resistance

Nevertheless, sometimes when addressing a certain problem in an attempt to resolve it the consequences make the situation worse. This kind of causality is called the Perverse incentive or cobra effect. Name Cobra effect refers to the attempt to solve the problem in the village with a reverse outcome. The anecdote tells about a village where there were too many cobra snakes. When people were getting paid for collecting cobras, they started to farm those to get more money. This kind of cobra effect might be caused by a too simplistic a solution to the complex systems. To avoid the cobra effect complex problems should be approached from many perspectives and with an agile mindset.

Next, I introduce the project portfolio of the interventions that could be starting and triggering the systemic change. The interventions do not aim for the tactical change for certain different pain points, but they aim for systemic change with possible ripple effects. The ripple effects are changes that occur from the direct or indirect influence of earlier change. In figure 12 where the timeline and the project portfolio are introduced the question marks represent the possible ripple effects.

As a starting point for the proposal two already existing projects are taken into account: the *Ars Moriendi* festival and the Government's death and heritage data combining project. Ars Moriendi festival is a science and art festival that is held once or twice a year by volunteers. It aims for sharing the knowledge and understanding of death. The government's death and heritage data combining project is a project that has started but does not receive funding from the ministry in the year 2022 as I am writing this thesis. The goal of the project is to ease relatives' work for example when they collect the information, they need for the estate inventory and deed inventory. The project is led by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (DVV).

The timeline has many streams, and it covers multiple approaches (Figure 13). The timeline is set for ten years. On the top is the top-down projects that are governed by the government and on the bottom are the bottom-up projects that are started by citizens. The three interventions: death doulas, the funeral application, and the new kind of secular crematorium rituals are shown in the timeline. The movement starts from the bottom: The Ars Moriendi festival starts to spread and has pop-up events for example "plan your own funeral" workshops. This increases the awareness of the death and media starts to discuss the topic more. An IT-company designs and builds an application where people can plan their own funeral and after a few years, the application has been integrated with banks, insurance companies and other life data. This does not mean that all the sensitive information is shared but the information that can be safely shown and that helps the relatives to arrange things.
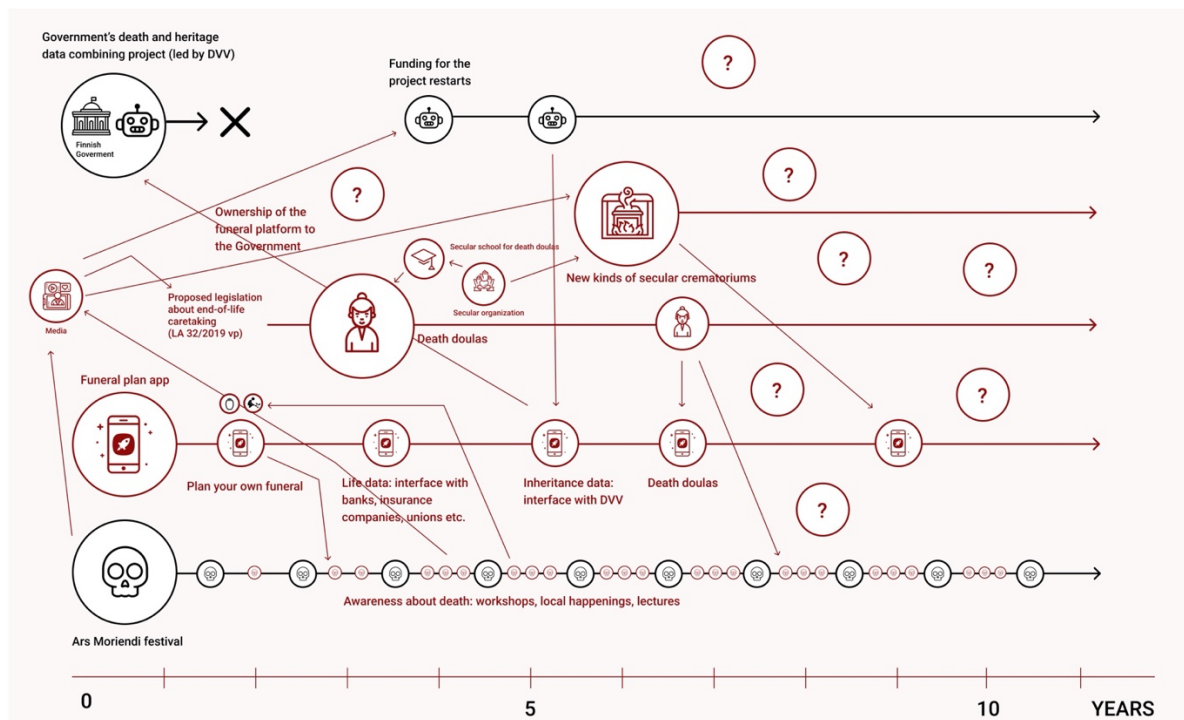
Figure 13: Project portfolio and the timeline for the systemic change

As the media has raised the theme of death on the frame, the legislation about end-of-life-caretaking that has been proposed earlier will been put into operation. The legislation ensures that everyone receives the care they need at the time of death. This leads to the increasing need for education of palliative care. If some secular organizations would begin schooling future palliative caretakers, there could be also a possibility to expand education to help the relatives in the funeral arrangements. This could be the way to have so-called death doulas. Maybe this kind of movement in society would affect the decision to restart the DVV's project about death and heritage data combining. That could lead to the situation that the funeral planning application could have integration with the DVV and Tax administration data and that way the application could be even more useful to the relatives. Of course, again here need to be aware of the possible vulnerabilities. The ownership of the application could be transferred to the government. After a couple of years, the first death doulas graduates, and they can provide their services through the funeral application. The movement also led to the awareness of the secular death rituals and a secular novel crematorium is built. The crematorium facilitates a new kind of death culture and provides a different kind of rituals for different kinds of needs.

After 10 years the Finnish society could be more open to the death discourse. The range of different services could help people to arrange funerals that fit their life view and help them to grieve. Hence people would think about their own and their loved one's mortality before it is too late.

5. Discussion

In this thesis, I aimed to give an overview of the possibilities of the design approach both in identifying and facilitating systemic change. The objective, Finnish funerals, was chosen as funerals have not been studied extensively with design and development approaches and as I found a great need for the development in my first master's study.

The aim of the study was to discover the possibilities to design the socially inclusive future of Finnish funerals. The used methods included both desk research, target group research and design experiments. The conclusion and findings are drawn from combing data from all the phases of the study. In its current state Finnish funeral culture is not inclusive and socially sustainable. However, the reform has to be made by recognising the value of Finnish funeral traditions for the society and those who find the traditional funeral customs meaningful. Therefore, the aim should not be to change one hegemony to another but embrace the diversity of different kinds of funeral customs and rituals in aiming to help different kinds of people process their losses.

It can be said that the reasons for the relatively slow changes in the Finnish funeral culture lay in the history and citizens' trust in the state's church but at the same time the social structures are holding back the growing need for the change. The Lutheran funeral traditions are meaningful to many, but the growing demand for secular rituals should not be left ignored. In addition, the diversity of different religions is something that should be considered in the Finnish funeral field. The homogeneity of Finnish death rituals is already now excluding the bereaved and its hegemony prevents people from grieving in their own way. The reasons behind the phenomenon are not only the lack of new kinds of rituals but the norms that the community creates probably unconsciously. This kind of social structure and paradigm can only be solved by bringing the phenomena to light and by abolishing the existing taboo of death.

The situation described above was the starting point based on the literature review. The problem was approached with design methodology, applying both service design and systemic design.

The first research question was:

What kind of leverage points can be identified from the Finnish funeral ecosystem with a systemic design approach?

The study addressed three leverage points that would make an impact on the funeral field and nourish the ripple effect around them. Leverage points one and two address the same needs. There are problems with the flow of information in many ways and it causes inconvenience to relatives as well as a lack of feeling of agency. The problems with the information flows can be solved with digital solutions as well as with the services provided in person. However, it is vital to understand that every funeral is unique, and the different kinds of service proposals serve a different kind of needs.

The proposals to solve the problems in the information flow were:

> *1.Death doula that helps next of the kin in funeral organizing as well as the client in palliative care to speak up their will.*

> *2.Digital platform for planning (also one's own funeral) and organizing funerals. Hub for small business*
> *funeral service providers + clearly explained and facilitated the process*

Thus, developing both kinds of solutions is the only way to ensure that people get support from a live person, knowledge of the possibilities in funeral rituals and an easy process when collecting data from different sources when arranging the so-called life data of the deceased. By intervening the problems in information flow especially two leverage points by Donella Meadow could be addressed: Structure of information flow (who does and does not have access to what kinds of information) and Power to add, change, evolve, or self-organize system structure. Knowledge and information would give people a feeling of agency to impact the traditional customs in order to arrange funerals that are meaningful to all mourners. It can be assumed that spreading knowledge would cause a ripple effect and reform the funeral sector. The digital application or platform is also scalable and its impact is

probably high. Also, it is feasible as it can be built in many phases starting from a minimum viable product.

The third leverage point addresses the core of the meaning of funerals. The purpose of the funeral is to enable the processing of kindred grief and the reorganization of the community. If the funeral did not have to fulfil these functions, we could bury the bodies much faster, more efficiently and even safer. For relatives, the realization of the will of the deceased at the funeral is often important, but it is also intertwined with the relatives' own process of mourning and dealing with the loss. For this reason, rituals should pay more attention to the needs of relatives, without forgetting the will of the deceased. By intervening in the problems of lack of meaningful rituals especially two leverage points by Donella Meadow could be addressed: *The goal of the system* and *the Mindset or paradigm that the system — its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters — arises from*. The goal of the system should be re-evaluated and shifted towards socially inclusive funerals with diverse funeral rituals. Also, the mindset and paradigm of homogeneity of Finnish death rituals are already now excluding the bereaved who do not share the same mindset.

The proposal to solve the part of the problem in the homogeneity of death rituals was:

3. *Rites/rituals around cremation: Crematoriums could offer different kinds of rituals to the bereaved.*

If there were secular crematoriums it would start a new kind of ritual without the burden from the past. It also would help people to rethink the whole paradigm of funerals. In their current state familiarity and appropriateness of the Christian funeral, traditions prevent people to explore different kinds of rituals, albeit the traditions are not serving their purpose. Rethinking the rituals could lead to the openness to the new, more ecological burial methods like composting the bodies.

The second research question was:
How systemic change can be started in the Finnish funeral ecosystem?

The intervention proposals above were examples of the actions that could be triggering the systemic change. As described in this report the design approach is an efficient way to both

identify the pain points in the system as well as facilitate the change. With design methodologies, it is possible to involve people in the change and avoid or solve resistance to change.

Before embarking on a systemic change, we need to identify the direction we are seeking. It is essential to understand that a goal cannot be a fixed goal but a flexible idea of what change is intended to achieve. To initiate systemic change, the objective must be approached from many directions simultaneously. By different directions, I mean, for example, that technological, administrative, social, small and large problems will be solved. At the same time, their solutions are constantly generating new information that can be used to re-evaluate the chosen direction. By approaching the domain from different perspectives same time, it is possible to beat the resistance that always exists in the big movements.

We easily understand our mortality as an abstraction that can be used as an inspiration for art and culture. However, when we have to actually face the death of a loved one, we turn the body over to professionals to take care of and remove it from our sight. In order for our society to be able to approach death more naturally in the future and to be able to deal with grief, it is essential to embark on such a systemic change.

6. Conclusion

My own perspective and a position as a researcher are major factors in doing research and should be taken into account for in every phase. Although the goal of the research is impartiality, the researcher must reflect on their own values, views, and opinions in front of the research. In order to make the research as transparent as possible, I will open my own background regarding the research. I have never arranged anyone's funeral, so I have no good or bad experiences with it. I consider this to be a good thing and it ensures a neutral approach to the subject. In addition, I do not have strong memories of attending a funeral. The funerals I have attended have been traditional Finnish funerals. The most memorable memory from the funerals is somewhat unconventional. After my grandmother's very traditional, out-of-the-box funerals we decided to buy a bottle of Finnish liquor, the one our grandmother liked. That memory about tasting the spirit and memorizing our loved Mamma in the taxi when driving from the funeral ceremony is the only funeral rite that has been meaningful to me. No matter how close the departed have been to me, the funerals have always been distancing despite this one moment.

I am not a member of the church but my attitude towards the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church is quite neutral. I have previously worked for the National Church Councill and in the cemetery maintained by the parish when I was eighteen. I am not religious and I hope that secular ways of grieving will become more common. However, to me, it is not personally important if the church continues to carry out the burial services in Finland. At least if all the service touchpoints are religiously neutral.

The chosen methodology in the research was service design in exploring the development objectives and systems-oriented design in the exploring of the systems level. The systems-oriented design was also applied when planning the intervention portfolio for the systemic change. As the service design approach is human-centered it raised insight from end-users experience which was the aim. One quantitative method was used in the form of a web survey. Hence no wide generalizations can be made as the gathered data is relatively small. However, with a qualitative approach, it is possible to arise a rich understanding of the reasons behind people's experiences. When applying the systemic design the limits of the

available resources like time framed the scope. Hence, the study covered this huge scale system only by surface. In accordance with the principles of systemic design, a broader perspective could have been sought from other fields and disciplines like anthropology, sociology, economics or urban planning. Also, design practices could have been used more extensively, for example, parishes, crematoriums, and cemeteries could be mapped on a map of Finland. With these kinds of visualization, more perspective could be provided to understand the current state of the funeral culture.

This study was the second one in the series of my funeral studies. The third one, my doctoral thesis is already on its way and it is going to fulfil the part of the gaps that the previous studies left. However, the importance of the topic becomes all the time clearer as I interview people who are in the process of overcoming their losses. Hence the real actions toward new kind of service proposals and raising awareness about the topic is at least as relevant as studying the topic further. The first article of my article-based doctoral dissertation discusses the care aspect of the funeral: how the bereaved feel that they are nurturing their lost loved one as they are arranging funerals and how the relative also receives care from different stakeholders. My perspective in the article is on how the care can be designed to improve bereavement care.

Besides the care aspect, there are plenty of research gaps in the field of funerals and service design or systemic design. The Finnish funeral ecosystem should be studied more broadly, and the possible secular rituals could also be studied more excessively. In addition, for example, the sustainability of the funerals could be studied in order to make sure that the changes take a sustainable direction. The leverage points of the systems presented by Donella Meadow could also be investigated more in order to provide valuable information about the Finnish funeral system.

The process of studying funerals and design methodology has been intriguing and opened me possibilities for fascinating discussions and stories of life. By studying this theme, I have also gotten a new valuable perspective on my own life. I hope I can raise the awareness of death and that way help people process their grief via my research.

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Appendix I: Co-creating space for ideas about funeral

Co-creating space was a part of the rich design space and collected ideas about funeral rituals.

Appendix II: Pictures from the Vestfold crematorium

The crematorium is bright and there are lots of large windows.

Relatives can follow the coffin's journey to the oven if they wish.

The crematorium is bright and peaceful.

The worker removes the ash from the oven.

Natural light also enters the cold room.

Selection of different urns.