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Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

MODERNISING THE EXPERIENCE AND CULTURE OF THE PUBLIC SAUNA. CASE STUDY OF TALLINNA SAUN

**AVALIKU SAUNA KOGEMUSE JA KULTUURI MODERNISEERIMINE TALLINNA
SAUNA NÄITEL**

MASTER THESIS

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Hereby I declare, that I have written this thesis independently.

No academic degree has been applied for based on this material. All works, major viewpoints and data of the other authors used in this thesis have been referenced.

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THESIS TASK

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Abstract

The public saunas are either loved or hated but carry a valuable role in our society. The common perception is that these are dirty places meant for people without washing facilities, but the public saunas hide behind their doors a culture of traditions, equality and self-care. Being a community hub with many urban values but without the vision and knowledge for progress. This thesis explores the situation of public saunas and their role in Estonia to understand their potential and opportunities for improving the concept for urban society. The wider research section of this paper aims to offer a general understanding about the public sauna culture and examines the topic with the support of customer experience and interviews with different specialists and visitors. Until today, the public saunas have been mostly focused on the people who have been visiting these places for decades and the concept has mainly stayed unchanged. However, in order to keep the place open for loyal customers, economic sustainability needs to be created. For that, the concept needs to be modernised — creating new values, sustainability in the practices and becoming an attractive shared place for new users to join. The concept is based on the case study of Tallinna saun, a public sauna in the city centre of Tallinn active since 1882.

The proposed design process is based upon making the user an active driver in the development of the public sauna culture, rather than a passive customer. The aim was to enhance the values created in the public saunas and stimulate new initiatives by introducing new opportunities to the members. The aspect of combining the existing user group and new modern functions, allows to modernise the concept in a way that it is directed and accepted by the community.

The modernised concept of Tallinna saun is a community-driven public sauna, which is local, open and sustainable. The solution is based on designing an infrastructure of tools to create favourable conditions for co-creation, to bring out the potential of the people and to build community. By involving a digital platform to offer new communication channels for the members and service, but also create a bigger movement and community – Estonian Sauna Society, connecting all stakeholders like saunas, sauna enthusiasts, spas, technology companies, experts etc. Creating modern opportunities for all saunas that do not have the possibilities or knowledge to make the change on their own.

The real benefit is to promote a discussion and generate new ideas in the preservation of sauna culture and traditions in the urban society.

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1. Introduction

The motivation to study this particular topic of public saunas came from the personal interest while being involved in the processes of Tallinna saun. By seeing the valuable role of this place for certain social groups and knowing the challenges of public saunas in the urban society, I was interested to see what the future of these institutions could be in order to become sustainable.

Sauna is a thousand of years old tradition, which functions as a place of cleansing, therapy and togetherness. It has been continuous from generation to generation while modified to suit current needs. Sauna has typically been built as a separate building, but when people started moving from rural areas to the cities and only few apartments had hot water or shower, there was a need for cleaning facilities and therefore institutions like public saunas were built in the neighbourhoods. The creation of city saunas provided access to sauna for all people, as well as a place for gathering and socializing, which is an essential part of the bathing experience.

The concept of sauna has been continuously modified to the current needs through centuries and is highly influenced by the product innovations in the industry. As the sauna consumption has become technologically so easy and accessible, then people are turning to more private and small saunas which makes the ritual lonely and short. The innovation has been very focused on the physical consumption of the sauna, leaving the social aspect without attention. The urbanization of sauna lacks togetherness and quality; hence it is changing its meaning. But the disappearance of public saunas has contributed to the growing sense of loneliness and alienation in our modern world (Rang, 2019).

Public saunas are especially important for older generation who are used to go to sauna weekly. This is one of the few hobbies and meeting places they have and an important aspect of their personal hygiene. There are several public saunas in Estonia still active, but due to the high costs and low buying power of the user group, these places are highly dependent on the support of the local governments. Due to the urbanization and population growth, the future trends predict a more communal way of living in the cities where people live on smaller living spaces and share the amenities with their neighbours. A modern interest in saving energy, as well as encouraging bonding, has led to putting more effort into building more appealing, ecological and shared saunas for example within the Helsinki

area in Finland in the recent years. On the other side, there is a need for third places where people could spend pleasurable hours and actually meet the people they are living in the same neighbourhood with, in order to build communities (Oldenburg, 1997). Therefore, shared saunas can be beneficial for creating sustainability, building stronger ties in the society and preserve the sauna culture and local traditions.

Even though the future trends and urban environment should support the existence of public saunas very soon, the current businesses are not economically sustainable and might not survive the change, leaving the user group without an important meeting place. As the concept of sauna has changed in time, the public saunas have stayed the same in the constantly changing urban cities, failing to attract new user groups. In order to survive in the urban society, a public sauna, named Tallinna Saun, is taken as an example to create a concept for sustainable shared sauna in the modern world.

Therefore, a research question was formed:

How could the public sauna experience and culture be changed in order to modify it to the needs of 21th century?

For thinking of the possible future of public saunas, it needed to be understood what their role in time has been and what it is today in the modern world. What is the value created in these places and how could it be enhanced to touch even more people? As well, to identify what are the needs of 21th century that the public sauna should adjust to.

Throughout the research, it became clear that there is a question if the solution should be focused on the current users or involve attracting new user groups. Untangling this question, it revealed that in order to create sustainability with the design solution, other user groups should be considered with the aim to connect different social groups in a neutral meeting place. This argument provides the foundation for my concept which is a community-driven public sauna for an urban society. A meeting place that empowers the community members with support, infrastructure and knowledge to become the active drivers in the modernisation of the public sauna culture. Developing a modern and appealing public sauna experience and culture that attracts new user groups that are interested in sauna culture.

2. Methodology

For the topic of public saunas, I have chosen theoretical frameworks of third places, sustainability and social innovation. The research is based on looking at the problem through these approaches.

2.1 Third Places

The theory of Third Places is created by Ray Oldenburg and explained in a book “The Great Good Place”, published first in 1989. The third places are called places which come after home (first place) and work (second place). For example, bookstores, cafes, post offices etc, which offer a neutral ground, where people come and go when they please and are beholden to no one. Places like this serve virtually everyone and soon create an environment in which everybody knows just about everybody. This is one of the most important functions of the third places – to unite the neighbourhood; to know how they variously add to and subtract from the general welfare, and to learn to be at ease with everyone in the neighbourhood irrespective of how one feels about them.

Public life is populated with strangers and strangers frighten us more than ever before, therefore communities depend upon the successful integration of strangers. In third places, people find that they very much like certain people and dislike others. The membership depends on coming to terms with people who on the certain subject might not agree with them. Meeting different people with different thoughts and opinions helps to accept other characters in order to become more tolerant and a member of the community. Often third places are the ones bringing together people who will create other forms of associations later.

The convivial atmosphere in the third places helps to build a strong network of people, who care about each other. As the main activity in third places is a conversation, the people can share the problems of their lives and find mates who listen, offer valuable advice or solutions. This is very important for the mental health of society, as people can help themselves the most by cultivating the right kinds of social relationships and giving them due.

Therefore, if there is a question if public saunas that are close to extinction, should even be preserved, the author of third-place theory would say that if citizens of a community find places to spend pleasurable hours with one another for no specific or obvious purpose, there is a purpose for such association.

2.2 Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability

For creating a change in the existing service and build a community of people around it, I found that Ezio Manzini's social innovation theory is very suitable. The social innovation is the social practice that meets a social need and leads to new relationships or capabilities and better use of resources. Usually these ideas are created with the goal of strengthening the community and creating sustainability. Manzini explains that design for social innovation is all that the expert design can do to set off, keep and direct the processes of social changes towards the sustainability. If the last century could be described as the time of technological innovation, then during the 21th century, the main driver of change is social innovation. He explains the theory and design process in his book "Design, When Everybody Designs" published in 2015, that in a fast and profoundly changing world everybody is a designer influencing our world. "He describes social innovation as occurring in the every day as a response to social problems and often making use of new technologies that have not yet been absorbed into mainstream society. The role as a designer should be an enabler, who creates the right conditions for such creativity to emerge by designing systems and processes rather than products and objects" (Awan, Schneider & Till, 2011).

For a service, Manzini suggests designing platforms that foster mutual openness, conversations and meaningful encounters, at the same time, that activate the local resources, knowledge and skills of those involved in the production of a commonly recognised result. Some of the possible intersections include:

- Design for strengthening relations;
- Design for human/nature relationships;
- Design for empowerment and self-knowledge;
- Design for university-community engagement;
- Design for collaboration and conviviality (Design for Social Innovation and Services (DxSIS), 2020).

All these intersections are something, that the public sauna could actually involve.

2.3 Double Diamond

In order to design a meaningful solution, the creative process is based on the Double Diamond design model, invented by the British Design Council in 2004 („What is the framework for innovation? Design Council's evolved Double Diamond ", 2019). The model has four distinct phases: discover, define,

develop and deliver, which are describing specific work in the process. The following description of this method is based on Design Council's webpage.

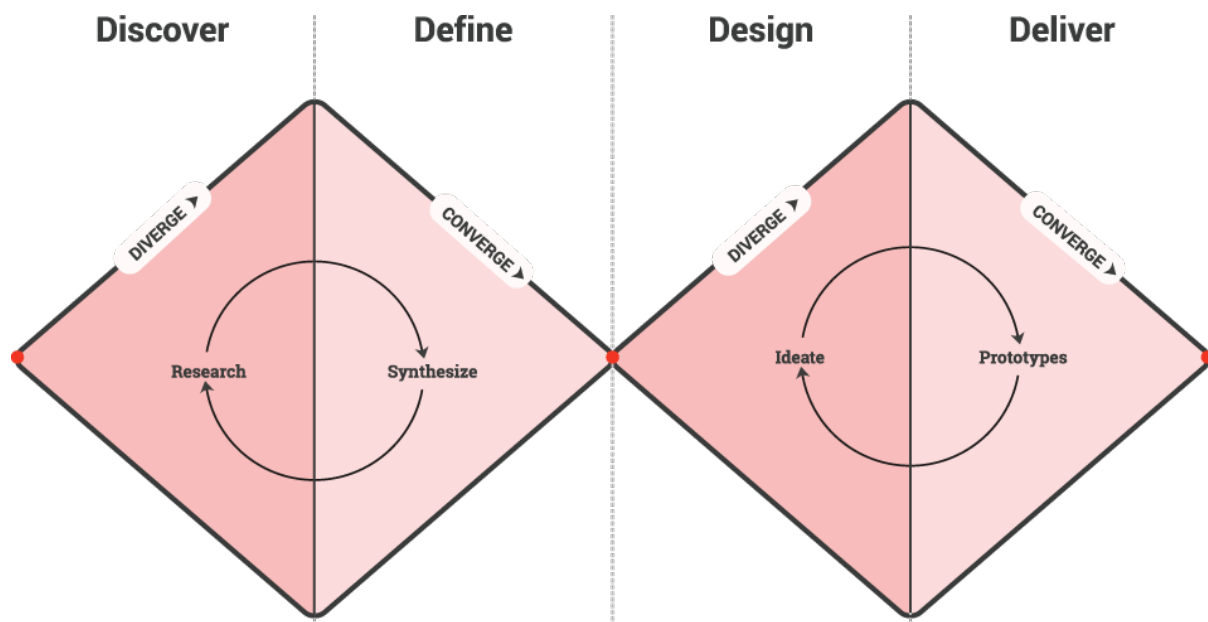


Figure 1. Double Diamond Model by British Design Council. Credit: Net Solutions

British Design Council outlines two diamonds that represent a process of exploring the problem more deeply (divergent thinking) and taking focused action (convergent thinking).

Discover

The first stage is the discovery of the problem in which as much information as possible about the field is gathered. It involves speaking and spending time with people who are connected to the issue. As not many authors have analysed the topic of public saunas, several research methods were used.

Desktop research is where the related publications, articles and studies were analysed to gain insights into the topic from the perspective of the sauna culture. It also included popular media search, as the topic is not very scientific and needed extra information.

Case study research was used for understanding the public saunas and their role and functions in time. This analysis was done by the customer experience, observations and semi-structured interviews with the visitors of the public saunas. The chosen case studies were in Estonia: Tallinna saun, Kalma saun, Lasnamäe Ökosaun and Kadrina saun. Additionally, a modern and successful public sauna example from

Helsinki, Löyly, was selected as one of the examples of what the public sauna could be about in the urban cities.

Expert interviews to understand the public sauna culture and situation from a wider angle. This was done with 2 board members of Tallinna saun and Kadrina saun who have been in the middle of management processes for years.

Probing with non-visitors were conducted in order to understand the expectations and perceptions. 11 people were selected who filled in a digital probe to give insight about what the sauna experience means for them and how do they perceive the public sauna culture.

Limitations. Researcher's gender needed to be taken in account when the case studies were analysed as it was not possible to experience the public sauna with men. To prevent missing valuable information, additional interviews with male users were conducted.

Define

The process is continued with the Define phase where the gathered information is synthesised, and insights are found. The opportunity areas are built and framed into objectives.

Develop

In the development phase the ideation is done, the solution is developed and presented to the client to evaluate them.

Opportunity mind map is used to map out the development opportunities for this topic.

Concept sketching was used to represent the proposed concept.

Storyboarding was used to play out the service and present it to the client.

Deliver

In the final stage, the solution is finalised and usually launched to the market. In this paper, the solution is not launched on the market and the design process ends with proposing the final outcome.

3. Discover

3.1 Sauna Culture

Sauna has been a part of the lifestyle of Estonian and Finnish nations already since ancient times. Regular visits to the sauna, throwing water on the stones to make steam and whisking belong to every real Estonian cleaning habit even today (Habicht, 2014). But what is a sauna? The Estonian dictionary (2009) describes the sauna as a heated room or building which is meant for sweating, whisking, cleaning and so on. The authors of a sauna book “Hüva leili!”, Lään and Tamming (2002) emphasize that very commonly the sauna is described as a heated place for washing, but this can refer to anything, the most important keywords when talking about sauna are sweating and whisking.

The activity of sweating in the sauna is done in countries around the world at different times for several reasons:

- For religious motives,
- To cure illnesses,
- To clean the body,
- To relax,
- For socializing (Lään & Tamming, 2002).

It has been a weekly habit for **physical hygiene**, strengthening the body and curing illnesses (Habicht, 2014). When getting ill, the sauna was the first place to visit – it was the centre of the local folk medicine (Habicht, 2014). As well, the sauna has functioned as a place of birth and even some household chores were conducted there (Sauna Studies 1976, Arstila 1983, Harjulin 2012). Therefore, the sauna has been a facility with many functions which needed water and a warm room.

As sauna is usually heated only once a week, it is shared with others for practical reasons. This has made the sauna consumption an important way for people to come together in a **shared place** where they can share the feeling of physical and psychological well-being with each other, in an environment of kinship and lack of rankings (Harjulin, 2012, Edelsward, 1993). During the old times, it was common that the family shared the sauna event with their servants (Habicht, 2014). The space has a special ability to create relationships of complete equality and comradeship (Harjulin, 2012, Edelsward, 1993).

One of the important aspects of it is that the sauna is consumed naked. Removing clothes, not only removes peoples of titles but also of social hierarchies (Edelsward, 1993, Harjulin, 2012). In respect of the sauna 'code', people do not usually talk about work, but rather about life in general, providing an environment of social relaxation (Taskinen, 2011, Harjulin, 2012). Sauna consumption has been very influenced by practicality, which brings people together to enjoy social relaxation in a neutral place. This description matches very well with Oldenburg's theory, by which the thirds places bring together people in the relaxed enjoyment in a neutral place.

Saunas are known for their intimate atmosphere that helps people to open themselves to others and through that **strengthen the existing relationships**. It seems to create a safe ambience for open-speech and to talk about even the most difficult, yet common, issues in life (Taskinen, 2011, Harjulin, 2012). „The sauna builds an atmosphere of empathy, confidence and trust among bathers, thus making it easy for relationships to evolve naturally into valuable, enduring friendships “(Arstila, 1983, Harjulin, 2012). Therefore, the public sauna can be a place for strengthening and creating new relationships and communities in urban cities.

The sauna is traditionally visited on Saturday because it marks the end of working (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Historically it has been a place of **physical and mental cleansing** after hard days of physical labour (Taskinen, 2011, Harjulin 2012). The average sauna visit takes around 1,5 hours (Lään & Tamming, 2002), therefore the visitor needs to take time off from other activities to do the ritual. After visiting the sauna, people go to rest and no work is allowed (Habicht, 2014). Sauna is suitable for everyone, it can be visited in all age and it is **consumed naked** (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Traditionally, the sauna is used separately by men and women, but can also be shared by the members of a family (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The public saunas have also usually been built up in a way that it has two separate parts – for men and women. The third places theory also describes that these places are usually consumed by different genders separately, as it gives a possibility to take a break from everyday companionship.

Habicht (2014) explains the traditional sauna ritual as followed: the ritual starts with preparing the sauna and putting the whisk into hot water to soak until the leaves become soft. The body is rinsed, which is followed by sitting in the steam room and sweating. When it feels enough, it is suggested to go and cool down in another room, then repeat the activity and start whisking. After that, the body is washed while sitting on the bench. Traditionally, people whisk and wash the backs of fellow guests in

the sauna. One of the activities is also to cool down the body with cold water. After washing the body, it is recommended to stay in the steam room once more and then go to rest.

3.2 History of Sauna

Sauna is often seen as a tradition of Northern countries as the most known type of sauna is the Finnish. But the baths that consist of hot air room and swimming pools were already known in Ancient Greece (Habicht, 2014), where bathhouses were built in the cities already around 6th century BC (Nenova, 2015).

After that, the Romans brought the experience into their culture to an increase degree (Ballena, 2019). The ancient Greeks and Romans had the wisdom to know that bodily cleanliness was an essential component of good hygiene and health (“Greek Medicine: The Greko-Roman Bath”, 2020). In the 3rd century, the individual and public baths were very common in Rome (Habicht, 2014). “They started to build huge terms that were as big as a campus. The terms of Caracella have been called the 8th Wonder of the World because these covered 124 000 square meters and fitted 2500 people.” (Lään & Tamming, 2002). These buildings were not only baths but also included a library, gym, places for eating and later even stadiums, as the physical exercising was always part of the bathing experience (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The baths gave citizens of all classes the chance to mingle, gossip and relax, men of all social classes mixed freely together (“Baths”, 2020). And the baths were viewed as a symbol of Rome’s superiority, they proved that the people were cleaner – and therefore better – than inhabitants of other countries (“Baths”, 2020). Therefore, the earliest known concept of sauna bathing is actually from Southern Europe and was always a **shared and social experience**, if not even a centre for the community.

Roman sauna is definitely different from the Nordic concept, but it shares the same foundation. The characteristic of Roman sauna is the very dry and hot air, with an important ritual like sweating, which is followed by a massage and a shower (Habicht, 2014). Before dressing up, the people rest on the soft beds (Habicht, 2014). The dry air of Roman sauna is especially favourable for the health of the skin – it activates intensive sweating, which removes the dead skin cells on the body easily and stimulates the nerves in the skin (Habicht, 2014).

The Roman sauna spread to Greece and from there already to the Orient, where it was called a Turkish bath or hammam (Habicht, 2014). After the collapse of the Roman state, the baths disappeared from Europe and only after the crusade, the crusaders brought the Turkish bath culture back to Europe

(Habicht, 2014). Probably that is also a reason why sauna culture is mainly associated with Northern Europe.

The sauna that is known in Nordic countries made its rise in Russia and Sweden actually before Finland (Harjulin, 2012). A historian from ancient Greece, Herodotos (484-425 BC), has described that he saw a weird ritual in Slavic countries during his travels – after funerals, people went to the sauna (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Therefore, there are evidence of the existence of the sauna in Slavic countries from already thousands of years ago. Procopius (500-565), the scholar of late antique Byzantine Greek, has written that the Slavic people were usually born in the sauna, they were washed there before weddings and after death (Lään & Tamming, 2002). From the 5th-6th century, there were even some public saunas, where whisking took place and afterwards the body was poured over with cold water – these commons have stayed for more than 1500 years (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Nestor, the historian from Kyiv, has described a sauna in Novgorod in 1113 as: “At first, they grease the body with fat, then naked people beat themselves with fresh branches and pour their bodies over with cold water. They torture themselves on their own will and I cannot understand if they do it more for: getting clean or they enjoy this whisking getting over. Some people go to sauna almost every day.” (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The foundation of these descriptions are present in the sauna culture even today, but the every-day-visiting has replaced with a more convenient shower.

The Finnish sauna is mentioned for the first time by an Arabian traveller-historian Ibn Dasta in 912 (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Therefore, it can be believed that the Finnish sauna can be as old as up to 2000 years, even if the written evidence are from 1000 years ago (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The characteristic of the Finnish sauna is that the visitor is **regulating the heat by himself** and elsewhere uncommon **tradition of whisking**, by which the essential oils from the branches have a healthy effect on the body (Lään & Tamming, 2002). In Estonia and Finland, it is possible to distinguish two main activities: 1) sweating-whisking; 2) washing (Habicht, 2002). The most important is to sweat in the sauna, this is the basis of the therapeutic effect (Habicht, 2014). Whisking helps to relax the muscles, makes you sweat and heals the wounds (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The smell of the birch whisks is an inseparable part of this sauna culture (Lään & Tamming, 2002). These commons have stayed until today.

The German traveller Adam Olearius (1599-1671) has written the first descriptions about Estonian sauna: “We saw it in Narva, that in Livonia they perceive the hot and cold differently than elsewhere... By the wall, there are benches stacked on top of each other and they let you take the kind of heat that

is suitable for you; those seats are covered with clean linen and hay pillows; you will lay on top of them to sweat. At your disposal is a maid girl in a shirt, who scrubs, washes and dries you. If you are an especially good friend to the house, they offer you during and after sauna some wine and beer, snacks like lemon slices, pieces of sugar and nutmeg.” (Lään & Tamming, 2002). These descriptions seem very luxurious compared to the simple and practical sauna culture that we know today. This kind of service is not very common that there is a person who takes care of the washing.

The speciality of Estonian-Finnish sauna is the rotation of dry and humid air (Habicht, 2014). To compare – in the Roman sauna it is not possible to regulate air humidity, in a Russian sauna, it is not possible to make it more humid (Habicht, 2014).

3.3 Development of the Nordic Saunas

Even though the sauna is a thousand of years old tradition, the concept has been **modified to the needs continuously** through centuries. The experts in Estonia and Finland have divided it into three stages of development (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The first stage began in ancient times and lasted until the end of the 12th century with the traditional smoke saunas. (Lään & Tamming, 2002).

In the next stage until the beginning of World War II, the wealth of the people in Finland grew, technological opportunities expanded (for example the electricity was installed to the households) and people started looking for new architectural solutions (Lään & Tamming, 2002). As before sauna had many other functions – for working, storing and even for sleeping during summers –, then now sauna focused on the main function (Lään & Tamming, 2002). In 1920-1930s, the wealthier people started to build summerhouses in the Finnish countryside and saunas together with them, which meant that saunas started spreading (Lään & Tamming, 2002).

After the II World War, the workforce was needed elsewhere than for preparing the sauna and therefore, the smoke sauna that needed a lot of heat and wood was not suitable anymore (Lään & Tamming, 2002). From that time, the small and famous Finnish sauna was born - it was driven by the love for the sauna and the economic crisis (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Therefore, the saunas of 2-4 square meters were born, with a little stove in the corner, heated by wood (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Heating this small room took less time and it was easy to build it into houses, apartments or in the previous sauna buildings (Lään & Tamming, 2002). In the 1960s, people had more free time and wealth, the popularity of small cabins in the countryside increased and in the 1970s electrically heated stove was introduced to the market (Lään & Tamming, 2002). This **product innovation** speeded up the heating and made sauna consumption much easier (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The popularity of sauna increased

accordingly – in 1938, they counted 0,5 million saunas in Finland, in 1980 it was already 1,3 million and in 2002 1,6 million (while the population is 5,2 million) (Lään & Tamming, 2002).

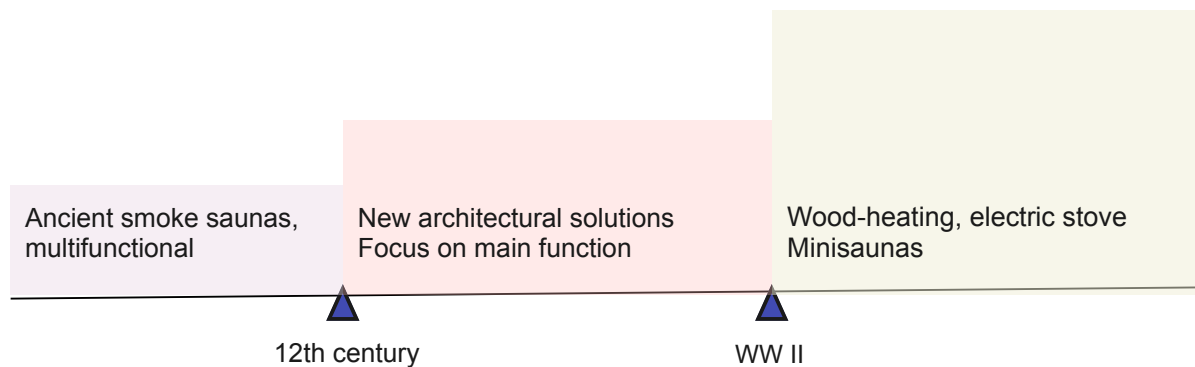


Figure 2: Development of Nordic saunas. Credit: Lea Kolde

Since that time, the sauna stoves have become even smaller and more powerful (“New electric sauna”, 2020). The new technology has brought to the market remote-control stoves that make the heating totally effortless. The sauna can be started and warmed up by a click on an app, which creates possibilities to schedule the experience and even control the humidity (“Technology”, 2020). An Estonian company has brought the innovation even further and created a climate system to guarantee equal heat distribution in the sauna room in order to improve the experience and get maximum health benefits (“World of Saunum”, 2020). Therefore, sauna culture has been very innovative in making the consumption of sauna easy and fast. If before, the ritual of sauna started long before the actual sauna visit, as the sauna needed to be heated up, then now the sauna ritual consists of only the visit.

3.4 Public Saunas in Estonia

With the people moving from rural areas to the cities, the shared sauna complexes were built in the **neighbourhoods in order to create washing facilities**, but it also provided a place for gathering and socialising, which is an essential part of the bathing experience (Salomaa in Edelsward, 1993, Harjulin, 2012). This kind of place usually consists of a lobby with a ticket office, a dressing room with 20-40 lockers, spacious washing room and a steam room (Lään & Tamming, 2002). This description matches a typical third place, as it was meant for a certain neighbourhood and helped people to meet and get to know each other.

The history of public saunas is longer than might be expected. The written evidence tells about the city saunas in the medieval Tallinn (Habicht, 2014), but as there are not many written materials from earlier times, it is difficult to research the topic (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The saunas in medieval Old Town were called in German *stupa*, later *stuben*, *bastoven* etc. (Lään & Tamming, 2002). There is even a medieval gate in Tallinn named after a sauna – *Stover portau*, and a street named Sauna in the old town (Lään & Tamming, 2002). As in other European cities, the saunas belonged to the city and were rented out to the sauna men (Habicht, 2014). In Tallinn, there was no guild for sauna men, therefore, the apprentice and the master had to acquire the documents from the guild of sauna men in Lübeck (Lään & Tamming, 2002). The sauna men of those times were also hairdressers, barbers and wound doctors that we name today surgeons (Lään & Tamming, 2002). It also reflects that the saunas from those times had **more functions** than we are used today.

The saunas were situated in the suburbs, which created a meeting place for the neighbourhood (Habicht, 2014). They were called after the street or the owner's name. As the city expanded, the saunas spread farer from Toompea – on the streets Uus, Rataskaevu etc (Lään & Tamming, 2002). In the end of 18th century, Tallinn had 8 saunas (Lään & Tamming, 2002). This means that the public sauna culture was once actually a very natural part of the city life and had an important role in taking care of the physical body.

Valdur Tamming (2002) has described his 50-year-long experience in public saunas as: “Every hour there is a certain crowd in the sauna. After 3-4 visits you already know most of the other customers. The crowds change in a few hours. This kind of situation happens every day in all the public saunas over Estonia. If you talk with the sauna men, they tell you that rarely a stranger comes to the sauna, sometimes you do not see a new face in 2 weeks. It is a **certain group of people** that go to the sauna and they rarely change the sauna they visit.” Therefore, the public saunas have a very loyal customer group who has scheduled their visits and already decades not many new people have been joining.

Until 1980 the number of public saunas was increasing, after that, it is only decreasing (Lään & Tamming, 2002). As the most influential innovation – the electrically heated sauna stove – was introduced to Finland in the 1970s, it definitely influenced the popularity of public saunas as well as the general **development of washing facilities at homes**. To compare, in 1992 there were 12 saunas in Tallinn and in 2002 only 6 public saunas were left: Kalamaja, Katusepapi, Tartu maantee, Raua, Kivimäe and Nõmme saun (Lään & Tamming, 2002). In 2020, from those have stayed in business Kalamaja, Tartu maantee and Raua. The city has built new saunas like Nõmme (Nõmme saun on populaarne,

2014), Lasnamäe Ökosaun (Lasnamäel avati linnasaun, 2015) and Tuulemaa (Kopliis avatud linnasaun on sama uhke kui mõni spa, 2007), therefore the number of public saunas is still 6.

The economic situation of public saunas today is not good. Most of the public saunas are financially supported by the local governments, who have understood that the existence of public saunas is **culturally important** and in order to keep it affordable for everyone, the ticket price needs to be low (Sikk, 2010). I agree that the service has to be affordable but bringing down the ticket price does not seem to be a very sustainable solution in the long term. "There are several reasons why the number of saunas is decreasing. Firstly, most of the apartments have a shower or bath, washing facilities are also in workplaces and sports clubs. Almost every private house has its own sauna. As well, even the hotels have saunas. ... The people who go to the public sauna are the ones who enjoy it. Only a few goes to a sauna just to wash, people go there for the steam and people." (Lään & Tamming, 2002). This means that the focus of the service should be actually offering high-quality steam and creating opportunities for socialisation.

Not only it is possible to wash everywhere, the possibilities to build a sauna in small spaces with electrically heated stoves has created a situation where almost all new apartments and houses have a built-in sauna (Vilk, 2019). At the same time, the Edelsward's research shows that sauna enthusiasts find an electrically heated stove's steam lifeless and it does not provide a genuine sauna feeling or satisfaction of a traditional or smoke sauna (Edelsward 1993, Harjulin 2012). However, the urbanization of the sauna is not a threat as much as it is part of the **preservation of the ritual and traditional sauna** (Edelsward 1993, Harjulin 2012). It can be said that even if the innovation has created the solutions to keep up with the needs of the people, who do not have time or desire to deal with the heating, the electrically heated sauna experience is still lacking from the authenticity.

Not only has the electrically heated stove changed the ritual, but it has changed the environment around the experience. "The new wave, fine saunas in individual apartments, is probably not a good idea. You go to the sauna alone, in the dry steam from the electrical stove you try to sweat as quickly as possible and then get out. The whole idea behind the traditional sauna, **the week's event**, is being turned upside down." (Salomaa 1984, Edelsward 1993, Harjulin 2012). The sauna lacks the preparedness and the companion.

Another reason why the number of sauna customers is decreasing is the ticket price, which has risen with the cost of water and heat (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Expensive price remains unaffordable for people with lower income (Lään & Tamming, 2002). And if the sauna does not offer a ticket for pensioners, then you cannot even see the older generation there (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Valdur Tamming has commented on the problem of public saunas dying out as: “The time of public saunas is not over, but due to the circumstances the number of them has decreased. In this kind of saunas, there are the real fans for whom washing is not the priority – the most important is the **steam and socializing**. ... Everything in our life is changing and the public saunas will also die out if we encourage it. ... The time of public saunas is not over; they need to be **modernized and financed** by the local government because the sauna is a part of our culture.” (Lään & Tamming, 2002). Therefore, sauna consumption as an event is an important way for people to come together in a social and shared place where they can share the feeling of well-being with each other. But the concept needs to be modernized.

3.5 Tallinna Saun

Tallinna Saun, also known as a sauna of the street Tartu maantee or the Brandmann’s sauna, is a public sauna complex founded in 1882, situated in the neighbourhood Torupilli. The street of Tartu maantee was built already at the beginning of 13th century but developed during the 18th and 19th century when Peter I assigned Tallinn as a base for the Russian navy and the officers started to buy land in this suburb. The area was covered with czarist and wooden houses, the sauna was built into **a modern service house** that provided services like sauna, washing facilities and laundry to the neighbourhood (Tallinna Saun, 2016).



Picture 1: The building of Tallinna Saun on Tartu maantee. Credit: PB Sille OÜ

Today, the complex is managed by a company Brandmann OÜ. The advisor of the company Rene Kuulmann described the history during an interview as: “The building was acquired in the 1920s by

Anna Brandmann who was from an entrepreneurial family. Her husband August was the founder of the first chocolate factory in Estonia, therefore the family was active on several businesses. The building had 5 public saunas – the first floor had 2 saunas for men, the second floor 2 saunas for women and one extra sauna for mothers with children. Anna rented out the building complex to a Jewish family, who took over managing the sauna and allegedly were so successful at it that they managed to educate their 2 daughters in the schools of England. In 1938, the complex had an official plan and building permit to build the Brandmann’s chocolate factory in the yard of the sauna building, but because of the hectic times and war, this plan was cancelled.

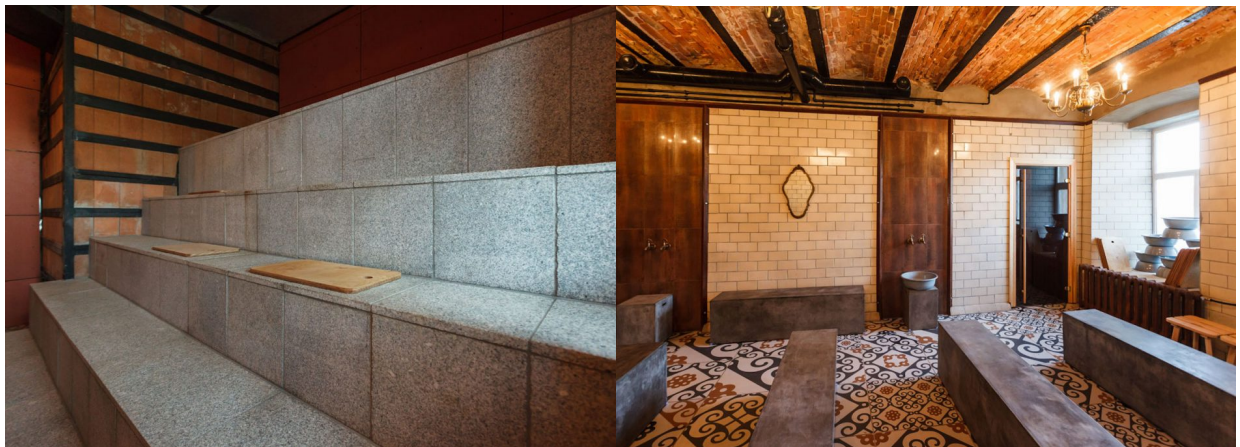


Picture 2: The entrance of Tallinna Saun in 1941. Credit: Tallinna Saun

Because of the Soviet occupation the building was nationalized, which lasted until 1994. During that period, the number of the customers in the sauna started decreasing and as there was a demand for office space, the second-floor saunas were demolished and replaced with commercial space. The building complex was returned to the family in 1994 and since then, the sauna has been managed by a private company. Tallinna Saun is the oldest active public sauna in Estonia. In 2012-2013, the sauna complex was fully renovated and continues to work with 2 saunas – one for men and the second for women. In 2016, the company started building the web presence to target new customer groups and for that the sauna changed its name to Tallinna Saun.”



Picture 3: Interior of Tallinna Saun. Credit: Tallinna Saun



Picture 4: Interior of Tallinna Saun. Credit: Tallinna Saun

The sauna today has two separate parts – for women and men who do not have any shared areas. As the public sauna culture is typically much popular among men, then men sauna is open 6 times a week, while women sauna only 3 times a week. This creates an opportunity to rent out the women sauna rooms for private events on the vacant days. Since the beginning, on Wednesdays, the sauna is closed for deep cleaning and maintenance. The third-place theory explains that typically third places are much more popular among men because they have more spare time and are open to new people. The women have historically been very busy with the children and chores, which makes them deprived of community life.

The sauna consists of 4 rooms for dressing, relaxing, washing and steam. The dressing room has around 20 lockers. The relaxation area has sofas and tables for socialisation and fridge to offer an opportunity for the guests to keep their food and drinks in cold. The washing room has 3 showers, but the washing

is mainly done in the bowls. The room is equipped with benches, bowls, wooden seat covers and taps for water. The steam room is made of stone and heated by gas. In the men sauna, a sauna attendant is available at all times. He takes care of the cleanliness in the rooms but is also an active mate for the visitors. In the lobby, there is a receptionist who sells tickets, drinks, whisks and miniature cleaning products as well as rents out towels.

The sauna is easily accessible as it is located next to the tram stop and offers free parking in the backyard for the members. The sauna has its own webpage and Facebook page through which information is forwarded to the customers. The sauna changed its name in 2016, while it is still known by previous names like Brandmann's sauna or the sauna on Tartu maantee.

3.5.1 Interview with Rene Kuulmann about the culture in Tallinna Saun

In order to understand the culture and everyday life in Tallinna saun, I chose to speak with the advisor of Tallinna saun, who has been part of the management processes for decades and also initiated the renovation project through which the sauna gained a new image.

He describes that some of the **loyal customers** visit this place weekly since the 1950s. "Their fathers have brought them here in childhood and they have continued this tradition. This is a place for socialising. Every day at least one group of friends comes here at fixed time. They bring their own food and drinks, which they keep in the fridge in the relaxation area. For example, on Sunday mornings a group of friends comes here, someone has made fish soup from the fish he caught yesterday, and the others will bring bread, potatoes, drinks etc. The tradition is so old and established that even though we changed the opening times to 10 am, we have to make an exception for them as they are just so used to coming at 9 am. This is a meeting place, a place to go together with friends, even if they do not socialise much outside the sauna. Some of them have met each other here and have started coming together. The tickets are sold for 2 hours, but as nobody actually checks the time, people tend to stay for 4-5 hours. If the place is full, people need to sit in the lobby and wait until they have a chance to enter."

He describes that there is not an average customer. The visitors are mostly retired, but also younger people who have a **childhood experience** with the place. Their parents or grandparents have introduced the concept to the child and these people continue this tradition by bringing their children to sauna today. The business is definitely focused on winter as during summer people are leaving town, the

weather is warm, and people have access to other saunas in the countryside. Typically, the sauna is closed in August to give vacation for the staff and refresh the facilities for the new season. The main reason to come here is to warm up the bones, strengthen the body and to take time off – people have their own healthy drinks and snacks, whisks to carry out their own ritual. “Russians are very active visitors of public saunas. But I would not tell that they socialise much with Estonians. Still, once I sent 2 young French boys to the sauna and said them to ask the Russian men to guide them through the experience. They did not speak the same language, but the local men offered them a very memorable experience. And the men were also excited to go through this strange event, it was something new and fun for them.” This means that the customers are actually open to new members if the connection is created.

He feels that Tallinna saun is more like a social club while the other saunas seem to be mainly focused on washing. The facilities are more luxurious and of higher quality. “Every sauna has its own milieu and customer group.” He states that the main challenge is to keep the fair price in order to keep the service quality high. “Inflation and **competition** are very high, but the city is lowering the prices in other saunas. There is a constant **market pressure to come down with the ticket price**, I know that this sauna has lost customers because of it. The men here tell me that there are other saunas in town that might close their doors soon because of the economic situation. If it happens, this sauna might get new visitors from there, but it would also change the culture here.” One of the problems he mentions is that people want to visit the sauna during the weekend which makes these days full, while in the mid-week the sauna is quiet. The sauna has fixed lower prices to encourage visiting in the mid-week. The renovation of the facilities has attracted new user groups, who book the sauna for birthdays, company events etc. His vision for the future is to move towards creating a sauna club, a group or community of people who come here to socialise, in order to enhance the current culture.

When discussing the topic of competition, he does not consider spas as the direct competitors for public saunas because the concept is completely different. The public sauna customer would not leave the sauna for a spa, but the younger generation might not come here if he is used to visiting spas. He states that he has not had any connections with other public saunas and knows about them only through what the customers are telling. This means that not much collaboration is happening between saunas.

3.5.2 Customer experience of Tallinna Saun

During the visit on Sunday evening, it can be understood that the sauna is relatively busy. Many men are hanging and relaxing after the sauna in the lobby area, chatting with the receptionist. But in the women sauna, the situation is very calm. Only 4 visitors – a young mother with a child, a woman in her twenties and a woman in her forties are taking the bath. The first two women are Russian and socialise freely with each other while both following their own ritual. Even though they arrived separately at different times, it seems like they know each other from this sauna and are used to see each other here on Sunday evenings. When being together in the steam room, one of the Russian ladies approaches me in English to ask if she could throw some water on the stones. The woman in her forties is Estonian and keeps distance from others, relaxing in a separate room. When approaching to talk to her, she opens up immediately and is happy to interact. All the women have their own snacks and drinks with them. They take turns in sitting in the sauna and have their own equipment with them – seat covers, hats, whisks, towels, flip-flops and cleaning products.

The ritual consists of dressing down, finding a place in the washing room to put down the equipment, the whisk is put to the hot water to soak, the body is rinsed with the water and followed by sitting in the sauna. After feeling enough, the person leaves the steam room to cool down. The sauna is repeated around 2 times, then the body is washed while sitting on the bench. The washing is done carefully, and it takes around 20-30 minutes. The bowl of water with the whisk is brought to the steam room and whisking is done – the women act differently, one does it before and after washing, the other one only after washing. After the ritual, the ladies cool down in the relaxation area while consuming the drinks and snacks they have brought with them. After that, the ritual ends with cleaning after yourself, packing things together, drying the hair and dressing.

As I have visited this sauna a few times before, I am already aware of the facilities and know the basics of the ritual. From the previous visits, I am already aware that cash needs to be prepared for buying the ticket and about the equipment available for the experience. Still, I am missing some of the core equipment, like flip-flops which become very important in the steam room where the stone floor is unbearably hot when being barefoot, but this can be solved by buying them from the reception. Still, I am observing fellow visitors understand the possible examples of different rituals. The sauna experience is nice and calming, but it is followed by some social anxiety for me as it was difficult to approach and talk to a stranger, especially if all are naked, at the same time it is strange to sit in quiet. Next week, I repeated the experience at the same time and the fellow guests were the same as on the

first time. This time, the Estonian woman already approach me herself and had all kind of information to the me that she had thought of during the week about the topics we had discussed previously.

Based on my first visits to this sauna, I have formulated a user journey (Fig. 3) of a new customer who does not typically visit public saunas. The main pain-points are that there is a lack of information and guidance about the service itself and how the customer should prepare for the visit. Going through the ritual alone can make the customer insecure which makes relaxation difficult. The problems with finding common discussion topics with strangers can also make the visit uncomfortable as it is difficult to socialise and at the same time not to socialise. Still, the sauna itself is nice and fills the need – when leaving, the feeling of relaxation arrives.

3.5.3 Interviews with customers of Tallinna Saun

Anneli, 45

Anneli is a 45-years-old woman from Tallinn. She has been visiting the public saunas **since her childhood** in Saaremaa because at home they did not have a sauna. They visited the public sauna in Kuressaare with the family during autumns, winters and springs. The summers were spent in the summerhouse where they had their own sauna. “It was a question of hygiene, my father always told that we need to go to the sauna to get actually clean.” Anneli has been visiting saunas all her life. She is married to her husband Martin (in the next interview) who also has the same childhood experience and therefore, they visit public saunas until today. As women and men consume public sauna separately, they agree on the end time, when they meet in the lobby.

“My husband is visiting saunas every week; I do not manage to join every time. When he goes alone, he visits Kalma saun as it is close to our home. But I do not like Kalma saun, so when we go together, we usually come here, to Tallinna saun.” She explains that she feels that the ladies in Kalma saun have a certain culture which is different from her sauna habits. The fellow visitors observe her and make comments if they feel that she is doing something incorrectly. “I really feel like an **outsider there**. Kalma is way too popular for me and the sauna is also too hot. Tallinna saun is much calmer, it is private and not many women visit this place. Sometimes I am completely alone here and can do my ritual in peace. You are actually one of the first people I have talked to, I usually keep private.” She informs me that if they go together, they need to take their 2 sons with them. When the sons were smaller, they enjoyed the sauna with the mother but now has moved to the men side with their father. “It is convenient to come here as it has free parking in the backyard. I also need to emphasize that the **aesthetics of the**

experience are also important for me – Tallinna saun is beautiful, old and dignified.” She believes that the place is not very crowded as the awareness of the sauna is low.

Martin, 46

Martin has been visiting public saunas since his childhood with his father. This was a father-son activity and they continued to do it even when Martin was an adult. Now the father is gone, but Martin still continues to visit public sauna every week. He does it because he is used to doing it and it is a fixed routine in his life. **“I have grown into it. If other men do sports, then I go to the sauna. It is a place to gather my thoughts for the new week.”**

He usually visits Kalma saun and his sons also like to come with him as that sauna has a pool. “The boys are sensitive to the hot steam, so the pool is the main attraction for them.” If his wife comes with them, they visit Tallinna saun. “I do not mind, this sauna experience is more for connecting with myself, not to socialise with a certain group of people. As I come at certain time, I already know the people and socialise with them, but it is **difficult to find common topics of discussion** with strangers.” This is why the family would also like to book the whole sauna for the family, so they could enjoy it together. He explains that they have used this opportunity in Raua saun, but this was a bit too small for them and had to be booked a week ahead which is difficult when you have children. “At home, we do not have a sauna and I would not want it either, because one part of the experience is **taking time off**, which is a bit difficult to achieve while being in the middle of your everyday environment.”

Sergei, 66

Sergei has been visiting Tallinna saun for decades already. He started visiting this place with his friend but has continued this weekly tradition now alone. He visits the place on Sunday at noon and this has been like this for since the beginning. “My wife knows that she cannot do any plans with me on Sundays because first I will go to the sauna and then I want to rest while doing nothing. She usually schedules a meal by the time I get home, so we really have gotten used to this routine.”

He explains that the sauna visit is to strengthen the immunity system and that he has developed a certain ritual to do it. They spend their summers at their summerhouse where he **prepares the whisks** and picks different herbs to create mixtures for tea. “As the summerhouse is actually not far from Tallinn, I still continue to visit this sauna on Sundays even during summers. In August, when the sauna is closed for the holidays, I try to find other saunas to visit, because **I need it.**” He dries the herbs and before sauna visit, he prepares strong tea to a thermos for consuming it in the sauna. “Sometimes I feel that preparing for the sauna is like packing for the adventure. There are so many items I need to take

and that is why I prefer going by car.” He states that he has gotten used to the crowd that visits the sauna at the same time with him. “There are bigger groups of friends in the sauna on Sundays and we all know each other. But I do not push to be part of their table. I enjoy being in a familiar crowd but also with myself. I can socialise with them if I want and I do, but I have my own space.” When discussing why his wife does not visit the sauna, he explains that she does not have this kind of habit and would probably want a friend to go with her. “But we all find our own ways to take time off. As I am not home on Sundays, she has these hours for herself also and usually goes for a walk with her friends.”

Aleksander, 74

Aleksander has been visiting this sauna for decades already since his childhood, his father took him with him. Since then, it is an **important routine of the week** he could not imagine his life without. Through life, he has brought his friends to this sauna and developed a weekly habit of meeting each other on Sundays. “We as humans need to get away from our everyday life and companions, this is a very convenient way to **stay in contact with my friends effortlessly**. I do not need to organize meetings with them, we see each other every week here and have our own traditions.” He explains that they have divided responsibilities of who brings what on the table and they enjoy that the room is supplied with fridge and some glasses they can use.

Based on the interviews of the users in Tallinna saun, I have formulated a user journey (Fig. 4) of an experienced user. This kind of customer has a lot of experience and has established a ritual for himself. This means that the user is not much influenced by the service and its information channels, therefore his service quality and feelings depend currently on his own actions. He is very passionate about his hobby, does it every week at the same time and cannot break this routine. He gathers the knowledge of herbal medicine in order to design his own ritual and prepares his own whisks during summer at his countryside. There are still some pain points for him like even though he knows everyone in the sauna, he finds it difficult to find common topics of discussion. He also comes to sauna by car, because he needs to bring all the equipment needed for the ritual with him and as he is tired after the sauna, it is much more convenient for him.

3.5.4 Conclusion of the analysis of the situation in Tallinna saun

Based on the research and customer experience, it seems that the situation of Tallinna saun is actually quite good – they have a loyal customer group and an attractive place that finds support from the old

and new users. Still, the new users are coming on only through group events or private bookings, which is not connected to the public sauna culture.

Visiting this place as a new user pointed out many pain points like:

- I do not have the knowledge of what exactly I need to bring with me to get a valuable experience;
- I do not have a certain ritual and following the behaviour of others, does not give me the insight into why these activities are done in this order;
- In the women side, there is no sauna attendant who would probably be the easiest person to approach to for socialising and asking for help;
- It is difficult to approach and socialise with others because there are Russians and Estonians mixed and there are not many common discussion topics.

For new members, there could be some kind of source of information or guided experience. The needed equipment should be available at the place as much as possible. The sauna could host also groups of friends or families who want to enjoy the sauna together but are currently separated because of their genders.

From the interviews of loyal customers, it can clearly be understood that these people have mastered their rituals and the experience starts already from home when preparing the equipment and drinks. I see the potential for building a community as loyal customers would be happy to socialise with each other. At the moment, they are having difficulties with finding common discussion topics or co-activities. The social innovation theory tells that these relationships should be strengthened if we want to create a change. A very positive aspect is that both of the saunas are supplied with fridge and relaxation room that supports the needs of the loyal customers, who want to design their own ritual by bringing their own food and drinks.

The sauna definitely should think of their use of resources, so they could decrease the waste and save money. This is important from the social innovation theory point of view, there should be some kind of connection to nature created. As well, think of digital opportunities that would help them target new people.

3.6 Other public saunas

In order to compare the experience and get a wider understanding of the culture, other public saunas were visited and analysed.

3.6.1 Lasnamäe Ökosaun

Lasnamäe Ökosaun is a relatively new sauna from 2015, built by the local government as a response to the request of the local neighbourhood (“Lasnamäel avati linnasaun”, 2015). Under the new complex, there are separate saunas for men and women, cafeteria and beauty salon. The wording Ökosaun refers to the ecological mindset, which is also explained on the sauna’s webpage. They have used more sustainable materials in the construction of the building, have energy-efficient led-lighting and mainly use natural products for cleaning the facilities. The website informs that the complex also has a sauna man who offers a service of whisking and consultation to educate the people about the traditions and rituals. Their goal is to offer a good sauna service, enlighten people about the traditions and culture and attract new user groups (Lasnamäe Ökosaun, 2015). Lasnamäe Ökosaun has a webpage and an active Facebook page to stay in contact with the customers.

The sauna consists of 4 areas: dressing room, washing room, Finnish sauna and steam sauna, outside terrace for relaxing. The washing room has benches, showers and taps to fill bowls with water. The outside terrace is closed and private. The facilities are suitable for people with reduced mobility (Lasnamäe Ökosaun, 2015).

Customer experience

During Saturday evening, the place seems to be relatively popular. In front of the building, men in towels are cooling down and inside the sauna, there are around 10 women who fill up the washing area. The women are sitting on the benches with their equipment and someone instantly makes a comment about my missing flip-flops. There is an active and friendly sauna attendant who is taking care of keeping the rooms clean and she offers to bring me flip-flops from the reception. The crowd seems to be Russian because this is the only language I hear, but they approach me in Estonian. All women spend most of the time sitting in the washing room and it is difficult to understand the pattern of their ritual. There is not much other space to socialise with others indoor.

In only a few minutes being in the sauna, another visitor starts talking to me and guide me through the experience. She starts telling me about her sauna stories without me even asking and involves me to

her ritual. As we meet in the Finnish sauna, she throws water on the rocks as much as we can handle and inform me about the plan of opening the window in the steam room after we leave. This is to ventilate the room and “let the bad spirits leave the sauna”. After leaving the sauna room, the body is rinsed with cool water and followed by a steam sauna. In the middle of the sauna sessions, we relax and talk in the outside terrace. She recommends me different products that make her sauna experience valuable and also some massage services that support her everyday life. The ritual is ended with a proper cleaning while sitting on the bench after which she invites me to the sauna once more to whisk the body with her handmade whisk. The experience is nice, but as I did not ask for it, it feels too intrusive and does not leave me any space for relaxation. The customer experience is formulated in a user journey (Fig. 5).

Interview with Anna (76)

Anna has been visiting public saunas for her whole life and visits this place as often as she can – usually at least twice a month. The motivation is to warm up the bones, strengthen the body and wash really clean. “People either go to bath or to the sauna to sweat off the dirt on the skin. I want to wash really clean and taking a bath just seems very dirty for me.” She lives nearby and walks to the sauna. She likes this place as it is so close to her home and is half the price from what she used to pay earlier. Before this sauna was built, she was a patriotic customer of Tallinna saun. She explains: “Tallinna saun was the best sauna in town! But at some point, they raised the ticket price and at the same time, the city built us this new and much cheaper sauna. All the sellers at Central Market used to go to Tallinna saun after work, but now they come here by bus because it is so much cheaper!” Anna prepares all the whisks for the whole year at her summerhouse during summer.

3.6.2 Kalma saun

Kalma saun is one of the most known public saunas in Tallinn and in Estonia, which is located in the popular district Kalamaja. The sauna was built in 1928 and has 4 different saunas: men, women and 2 private saunas that can be booked for private experience (Kalma saun, 2020). The saunas have pools which are elsewhere uncommon.

The sauna is divided into 3 areas: dressing room, washing area and a sauna. In the women side, the sauna room has an electrically heated stove. In men, a wood-burning stove and an extra steam sauna. The dressing room in the women side has 13 spacious lockers.

The sauna has a webpage as an information channel. The building has a backyard where the customers can park for free (Kalma saun, 2020).

Customer experience

During the visit on Monday evening, there are around 10 women in the sauna who fill up the washing area. All the visitors are elderly, sitting on the benches and very focused on their activity. During my visit, nobody used the pool. The facilities looked very tired comparing to the previous experiences, but there is a sauna attendant who is cleaning the rooms. Even though there are quite many people, not much socialising is happening. The behavioural pattern is different of what I have experienced before – the ladies wash thoroughly after each visit to the steam room, around 4-5 times, which makes me feel like I am doing something wrong. Even though the steam room has an electrically heated stove, the steam is quite pleasing and nice. As I am not able to follow the pattern of washing here, I am the first one to leave. As the whole experience is very quiet, it somehow feels strange and it is difficult to relax. I am the only one to leave the washing area between sauna sessions and therefore, hanging alone in the dressing room with my cooling drink. The whole focus of this culture seems to be washing based on this episode. As I feel lost and strange during the whole experience, I would not imagine visiting this place again alone.

In the dressing rooms, a possibility arose to chat with another visitor and the sauna attendant. The topics of discussions were about dentures and other complaints of the physical body. Unfortunately, I did not have any new values to bring to this conversation. Soon they started discussing the plan of the sauna to close the doors in the next years to use the property for something more profitable. This conversation clearly made them nervous, hoping that this event will be postponed at least for some years. One of the aspects that influenced that was that they were not aware of the saunas in Tallinn, they could eventually mention only Raua saun, but they were not sure if it is open. The customer experience is formulated into a user journey (Fig. 6).

3.6.3 Kadrina saun

Interview with Rein Sikk

In order to get information about the Kadrina village sauna, I chose to speak with Rein Sikk, who is one of the board members of this sauna. The following description is based on the information received.

Kadrina saun is a village sauna and 62 years old, which was built to **create washing facilities** for the local people. Around 20 years ago, when almost all homes already had washing facilities and many had their own saunas, the local government decided to close the doors because of the poor economic situation. The local community wanted to preserve this sauna; therefore, they founded a non-profit organisation and bought the sauna, followed by renovation with the support of local government and the funds of the European Union. As before the sauna had two separate parts – for men and women – then during the renovations they joined two parts into one to create a bigger dressing room and add a steam sauna. It also left enough space to create a sauna museum or party room with a kitchen which can be booked for events and meetings. Until today, the local government supports the sauna in some part financially, but it is managed by a local community. They have created a **sauna club** with a membership fee, from which the sauna is financed and maintained. All people working in the sauna are volunteers, the sauna has regular maintenance days where the community cleans the whole facility, prepares the wood for heating etc.

The sauna consists of 4 areas: dressing room, washing area, Finnish sauna and steam sauna, museum. The sauna is open only once a week, on Sundays. The women will go first in the afternoon and men will get the chance to visit in the evening. The steam room fits 15 people, the washing area has showers and taps with bowls. The dressing room has a TV and an information board that has information about the events happening in the village.

The sauna club is active to organize all kind of **events and entertainment for the local community**. One of the event series is to invite interesting people to the sauna, to introduce different topics. Rein Sikk explains: “For years we have invited politicians to the sauna. They come and of course, they are nervous about presenting their viewpoints to the group of men while being naked. But they open up quickly and enjoy being here. By now, the men here can all orientate in the topic of politics, can make good decisions and are very much aware. Once we invited an archbishop who talked about family and values – I have never seen our men so quiet.” He shares that they also organize themed excursions for the members to other saunas and even abroad to experience what else is available. Once, a sauna man visited to offer new experiences to the members. Traditionally, there is a big party with a concert organized on the birthday of the sauna. This means that the sauna is also offering other experiences next to the sauna.

The sauna was needed to preserve because it is a **social institution, a meeting place** where everybody is welcome, and community is built. Rein Sikk explains: “Around half of the people here have a sauna

at home. But there is no company. And you need to heat it up for 3 hours.” Men cook here together for everybody. “There is a wide range of people visiting us, from famous politicians to ordinary village people. And if a new face shows up, we let him introduce himself to find common topics of discussion. The discussion topics are about the local community life – politics, problems in the village, raising children etc. Everybody has their own ideas, and these are shared. Everybody leaves this place a bit richer and has new interesting thoughts. We are all equal in the sauna, it brings people together.” He explains that as they mostly are all from Kadrina, then they have a lot of common topics of discussion and it becomes a perfect place to discuss and solve the local problems – people are together and have time to think and discuss. From this, a lot of initiatives and solutions have grown out. He mentions that when he moved to Kadrina, he found his community from the sauna. It means that the local community has actually gained many new co-created ideas and solutions to develop the local village.

Rein Sikk believes that the public saunas can survive if there is a **community** to preserve it. But shares that the board is prepared that one day they will need to close their doors as every generation has their own commons. “The fear of being naked is real. All people here have a childhood experience with the public sauna. For new members to join, this place has to be **attractive and interesting enough**. But I have heard that people are afraid to come here because this seems to be for a certain community.” At the same time, he believes that the sauna culture is more diverse than ever and sees a potential to grow: “People are going to have more free time and money, they want to experience new pleasures.”

Customer experience

During the visit on Sunday afternoon, there are plenty of women in the sauna. This time, I have been assigned a community member Tamara to guide me through the experience. As I visit the place day before Independence Day, there is a table with sprat sandwiches and glasses of spirits for the customers in the entrance for free. As I am a new face and arrived with Tamara, then everybody is very open and interested in my reasons to visit this place. Several women as a group make sure that I have all equipment needed and find me missing items from the sauna. Tamara explains: “You have to come here with a mindset that it is a social place. People will want to socialise with you, and this is why we are here.” The discussion topics in the sauna are about the events happening in the village, someone’s vacation and sauna culture in general. While I am discussing the topic of public saunas with Tamara, the others are interested to be part of it and are expressing their opinions. When I mention that I am doing a case study for Tallinna saun, nobody actually can tell that they know this place. Some moments

later one woman informs me that she visited this sauna last December, but she was completely alone, and this made this experience strange.

As this is a community sauna, the members tell me that I do not need to lock my locker. The sauna ritual follows a pattern: rinsing the body with water, sauna, shower, relaxing in a dressing room, sauna, steam sauna and washing. Tamara washes my back and informs me that this is common in this public sauna. At the end of the ritual, the fellow member offers me her body scrub and another member gives me her whisk to finish the experience. After the sauna, Tamara brings me snacks and drinks from the entrance. The whole experience feels like a family event. I feel very welcomed and I would definitely go back. I believe that it is a perfect place to connect with the local neighbourhood. The customer experience is formulated into a user journey (Fig. 7).

Interview with Tamara

Tamara is originally from Tallinn and has been visiting public saunas all her life. After moving to Kadrina with her husband decades ago, they continued visiting the sauna here. “I personally visit sauna 3 times a week. I have training 2 times a week, so I go to the sauna in the sports centre, and on Sunday I am here. The real sauna experience is only here, this is a tradition. Our whole weekend is planned around this activity. My husband will come here after women, in the evening. He is also a member of the local sauna club.”

Tamara agrees that it is difficult to attract new user groups: “Even if I have brought my children here all their childhood, they now live in the city and do not visit public saunas. The new members in the village, the young families, also do not come here for some reason.”

3.6.4 Löyly, Helsinki

Löyly is a new and modern public sauna on the Helsinki waterfront. The following description is based on their webpage. The project started from the city of Helsinki initiative – a former industrial area on the seashore was developed into a residential area and needed new functions and attractions. The building consists of two parts: sauna and a restaurant. The saunas and public spaces open up to the sea, with views to the city centre and the open sea. There are three different saunas that are all heated with wood: a continuously heated sauna, a once heated sauna (heated in the morning) and a traditional smoke sauna. In the middle of the facility is a spa area and a fireplace room to relax in, between or after sauna bathing. The outside terrace offers the possibility to swim in the sea during the sauna visit. This public sauna is unique as **the women and men share the sauna experience**, only dressing room and

washing areas are separate. They explain it as: “We wanted to develop sauna culture so that there would be a possibility to bath together with your friends not depending on the gender. This makes the sauna experience available also for foreign visitors that might not be used to bathing naked.” The building is planned in **a sustainable mindset** – it is heated with district heating and electricity is produced with certified solar and wind power. The building is the first FSC-certified building in Finland and second in Scandinavia.

Customer experience

During the visit on Saturday evening, the sauna is fully booked and turns out that a reservation is needed. Somehow, I did not notice this information on the webpage. I decided to wait in the restaurant even though the receptionist expressed that there is not much chance for vacancies. After waiting for one hour, I am informed that some visitors did not show up and it is still possible to visit the sauna. The receptionist gives a towel and takes an id-card as a deposit. Men and women are directed to separate dressing rooms. The washing room is equipped with local shampoo and shower gel; therefore, the customer can arrive without taking anything else with her than a swimsuit. In Estonian public saunas, the focus is much on the washing – the rooms have benches to sit on and washing is done as a long and careful ritual in bowls. Here the washing room is tight and has only showers, which changes the experience completely. The shared areas are enjoyed in a swimsuit. As it is a November evening, outside is dark and no view is seen. People go outside to jump in the sea, but the open terrace door makes the spa area cold. The sauna itself is spacious and it can be understood that most of the people here are foreigners visiting the sauna as a tourist attraction. When someone is going to throw water on the rocks, he asks permission from the others.

There is a relaxation area with sofas and a fireplace, which is a very nice touch. A tap with glasses for drinking water and refreshing yourself. The reception area is located next to the fireplace room, which creates an opportunity to order drinks. As I remembered from the webpage, the place should have more than one sauna, but we did not find them. There was a private sauna booked for a group of people who made the areas crowded. After the sauna, when checking the building map on the webpage, it turned out that the entrance to the smoke sauna is from outside, but the facility did not have any signs about it and in these dark and cold conditions, the place stayed unnoticeable. The second advertised sauna was actually for private group bookings. The sauna is followed by a dinner in the restaurant that offers organic local food.

The overall feeling of the experience seems completely different than the Estonian public saunas. The ritual and the sauna traditions are not very present, and the place feels like a nice and appealing tourist attraction. This is definitely not a place for real sauna enthusiasts and has a different customer group than the usual public saunas, it is more similar to the spa. I cannot think of it as a regular place to visit and it seems directed to tourists. The idea itself is nice, offers something new that is suitable for attracting new people to the sauna culture in a comfortable environment and a shared place. The customer experience is formulated into a user journey (Fig. 8).

3.6.5 Conclusion of visits to the other saunas

To compare all the visits to different saunas I can understand that the culture is quite similar everywhere, but the interaction of people is dependent on the environment. If the socialisation is not supported by the facilities or by the actions of the community, the interactions between people are weak or not happening.

The people go there to take time off and relax. This is a weekly habit that ensures a balance in life. The opportunity of actually enjoying the sauna away from everyday life and companion gives a possibility to relax and unload. This can be also done in a group of people as it is often a meeting place where new friendships can be created or kept. The socialisation with new people gives new ideas and thoughts, but for that, there has to be some kind of topic to discuss.

Even as the rituals are a bit different in the saunas, they consist of the same elements and the practices have not been made sustainable. Some of the saunas have used sustainable materials in the constructions but the practices are still wasteful.

Through analysing the experiences, I understand that the nakedness in the public saunas is especially important for the body image. In childhood, we often learn in sauna what the human body looks like, but as the traditions are becoming more and more individualistic and private, or even involving swimsuit, the people lose connection with actually knowing what the human body looks like. This can create a basis for negative body image or unnatural body standards. Through the experience, I have seen all kind of bodies of different ages, including women who have gone through breast removal surgeries. This all has had a very important and healthy impact on me as a woman.

3.7 Probing

For understanding what the sauna experience is for people who do not visit public saunas, I decided to use the probing method. The digital probe was sent to 11 people who are visiting saunas but do it at home. The respondents were 5 men and 6 women from Tallinn and Tartu. 9 of them have a sauna at home.

The probe consisted of 3 parts – the first part initiated to share a memorable sauna experience from the past; the second part about what are the sauna traditions of the person today and the third part about public saunas and the perception of them.

Past experiences

Most of the memories from a past sauna experience were from childhood and had a similar storyline - visiting the sauna with the family and relatives in the countryside in the summer. It was a weekly family event, but the sauna was too hot for the child to handle. The child was sitting on the lowest bench and watching how the adults were becoming red from the heat and enjoying the experience. Still, the memories are loving and carrying the feeling of relaxation and peace. One of the respondents commented that this certain sauna is a safe place for her even today and she sometimes goes to sit in this unheated sauna room just to gather the thoughts.

Today's habit

About the traditions today, people were saying that they are mainly visiting the saunas in the cities, either at home or in the sports club or spa. And the people they share it with is not a family anymore, but friends or it is enjoyed alone. The visit does not follow any certain pattern or ritual, they do it how they feel like and just take their favourite drink with them. 7 people stated that the main function of a sauna is relaxation for them, 3 considered it to be a social activity and 1 felt that sauna is a place for getting yourself really clean.

Based on the responses, it seemed that the meaning of going to the sauna is a short vacation. As the experience means that you need to take a few hours of time off and after sauna people do not work anymore, the sauna is a perfect place for relaxing.

Experience with public saunas

Only 1 person of the respondents said that she has had any experience with a traditional public sauna, this was a weekly tradition in her family in the childhood, but as they own a home sauna now, this tradition has ended. The overall perception of public saunas of the respondents is that the place is probably dirty and meant for people who do not have a possibility to wash at home. The concept seems very out of date and intimidating as there is no privacy. The respondents mentioned that these places seem to belong to certain people who have certain rules to act, which would create social anxiety while visiting not relaxation. One of the respondents described the perception as “fat men with moustache socialising with each other on Sunday”. Still, two people said that this is probably a place for interesting discussions. Therefore, people do not perceive these places as inviting and see it as a closed culture.

The public saunas that the respondents could mention were Kalma saun (8 people), Raua saun (5 people), Tallinna saun (4 people), Anne saun in Tartu (2 people).

The most important aspects of sauna experience were mentioned to be:

- the people to share it with (7 people),
- the connection with nature (6 people),
- peace (4 people),
- privacy (4 people),
- the location close to home (4 people).

From the probing experience, the conclusions that can be made are that the sauna culture is influenced by family traditions. The childhood experiences are similar for the people, but while living in the cities now, the sauna habit has become much random. There is not a certain pattern or ritual, people consume sauna where they access it and the focus is on relaxation. The sauna experience should be shared with likeable people, have a connection to nature and offer relaxation. Currently, the perception of public saunas does not represent these values, because the culture seems closed and people do not feel that they would be welcomed there.

3.8 Sustainability of sauna

The topic of sustainability has not been much discussed about the sauna practices, but it can be clearly understood that the processes of heating the room and generous water use are making the activity wasteful. The report shows that in Finland, 5% of the domestic energy use is for heating the sauna

(Sitra, 2019). As well, as saunas increase the value and the price of the apartment, there is a trend of building tiny saunas to new apartments (“Kuidas kujuneb kinnisvara hindamisel korteri turuväärtus?”, 2017). But consuming the sauna separately in every home is unpractical because it needs to be heated which takes a lot of energy. People see the sauna as a valuable extra when buying the property, but often, in reality, these places are not actually used and become storage rooms (“Kas sauna olemasolu tõstab korteri väärtust?”, 2019). This means that they become wasteful use of valuable space and materials. Based on the research, there is not much sustainability created in the practices in public saunas. The steam rooms need a lot of heating and the customers use water generously for washing and cooling the body down. The visitors are usually using whisks, which are thrown away after and collectively the amount is quite large. As the steam room needs to be heated anyway, the more customers visit the sauna in a day, the more practical it becomes.

3.9 Trends

Life in urban cities is changing. By 2050, two-thirds of all humanity will be urban which means that significant transform of the way we build and manage our urban spaces is needed (“Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities”, 2020). “The cities all around the world are facing rapid urbanisation, ageing populations, climate change and lack of natural resources as well as unpredictable housing prices. It is clear that we need to rethink construction, management and life cycle of our buildings to become sustainable, affordable and socially equal for the people who wish to live here” (IKEA, 2019). The economic and social drivers have created a trend that the living spaces are becoming smaller, therefore the existing room space needs to be planned better and be more functional (Tiny Homes Trend: The Rise of Small Space Homes, 2016). This also means that if the use of apartment saunas is low, this space should be used for something more practical. The shared sauna complexes could be a city alternative for the apartment sauna.

The urban cities will have creative ways to weave nature into the city to offer relief to people who live there (Kolczak, 2017). Jonce Walker, who works in sustainable design in New York, says that there is a need to work on putting the nature back in the city and the best spots for it have the element of surprise – encountering nature where one might least expect it (Kolczak, 2017). There are already actions from an increasing number of green roofs, rooftop rainwater harvesting systems and solar energy panels (Kolczak, 2017). The conservation of resources will be a key issue for spas as well as they use a lot of water (Avison Young, 2019). Therefore, the saunas need to also consider their use of resources and the

opportunities to become more sustainable. I can see that those two trends of creating sustainability in practices and making a connection to nature for the people in cities, could be combined.

“Contemporary cities are called to come to terms with the local community’s renewed role as co-manager, co-designer, and co-producer of the living spaces” (D’Onofrio & Trusiani, 2018). The role of communities is increasing, and society needs places where to build those communities. The public places are “locations where the community comes alive, where bonds among neighbours are strengthened and where a sense of belonging is fostered” („Why Public Places are the Key to Transforming our Communities, 2020). „They are locations that spark economic development and drive environmental sustainability. The future of our communities and cities depend on great public places “ („Why Public Places are the Key to Transforming our Communities”, 2020). Therefore, the public sauna has the potential to build communities, stimulate new mindsets and by that co-design the urban cities around it.

4. Define

Based on the research and case studies analysed, it turned out that actually the public saunas visited in Estonia had many similar pain points that helped to understand the case of Tallinna saun better. It also reflected that when wanting to make a change in one sauna, the system of saunas needs to be involved as the phenomenon of public saunas is working as a system. Therefore, some conclusions and insights were formed.

1. The concept of the public sauna has stayed mainly the same as it was during their peak of popularity during the 1980s. As they are dependent on the loyal customer group who is used to the old concept, they are afraid of change and have **difficulties to see possibilities for modernisation**. The public saunas are suffering from high management costs and are having problems with attracting new people.
2. The local governments see that the public saunas are important places for certain groups in the society and have been actively supporting the culture by building new saunas and supporting financially some other saunas to bring down the ticket price. It is creating

possibilities for the customers but making the existence difficult for all public saunas. Instead of creating new values, the focus is on the cheapest price, which creates **competitiveness and fear in the culture**. Without fair incomes, the quality of service decreases.

3. The public saunas are not just businesses, but it is a culture which is very scattered. The saunas are promoting the same values and traditions but working very individually. They do not know much about other communities around them, there is a **lack of collaboration**, sharing of knowledge and helping each other. At the same time, they are drivers of the culture and all their actions influence the system as a whole.
4. The high costs of sauna business are directly connected to the **wasteful use of resources**. Some saunas have found ways how to make the business more sustainable by using more sustainable materials in the construction of new buildings, but the practices are still the same.
5. The user experience **depends on the knowledge of the customer**. Most of the customers have been guided to use this service in childhood by their parent or grandparent who has given them the knowledge of rituals and traditions. The whole experience today is highly do-it-yourself, which makes it difficult to join for new members if they have not been guided to use it.
6. The old members are open to guide the new members, but there is a **lack of structure that would actually support** this kind of connection and **socialisation**. This means that currently, the help received might be perceived as critique.
7. Public saunas were built in the centre of different neighbourhoods with whom people shared a lot of common everyday topics before. As people are more mobile today, the customer group in a public sauna is not entirely the people living in the same neighbourhood anymore. People are living in the social bubbles, **lacking common topics of discussion**, which makes socialising in the sauna difficult even if they share the same hobby.
8. The **culture is closed** and stuck in times which makes it unattractive for new people to join. These places seem to be for certain people who have certain rules to act. People are not aware of what the public sauna experience is about. Therefore, the saunas are invisible for people who do not have any experience with them, they do not even consider visiting these places.
9. People perceive that public saunas are for people who do not have washing facilities at home. Therefore, they are **afraid of these places being dirty** and do not see themselves visiting it.

These problems can be categories into 3: lack of community and collaboration, lack of knowledge and lack of development.

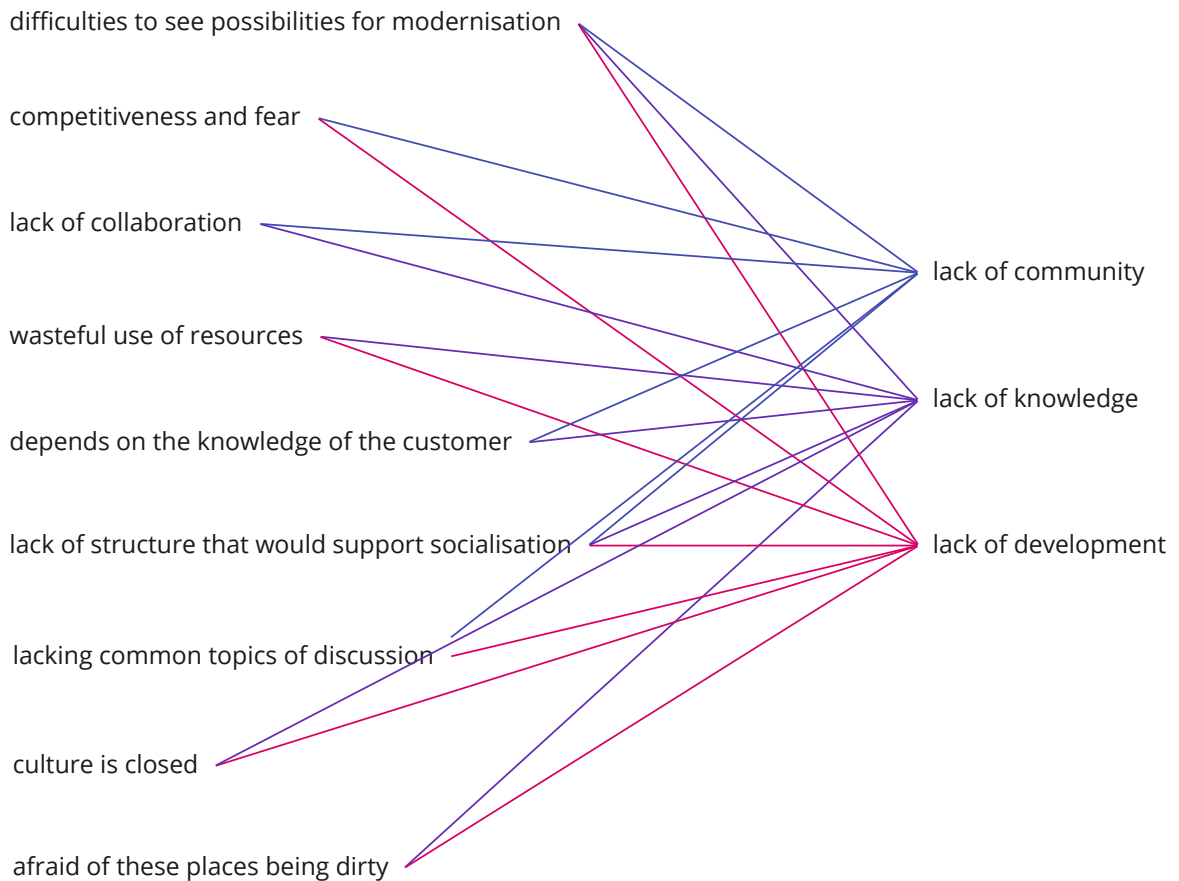


Figure 9: Problems. Credit: Lea Kolde

In order to understand what the positive insights or strengths are, which should be focused on, some key insights were framed:

1. Though it is a physical body-cleansing experience, people go there to take time off, gain new thoughts and energy. It is an important weekly ritual to keep the balance in life. Therefore, it is actually a “short escape” from the everyday city life.
2. The sauna is a great environment where to build new relationships and stimulate co-creation as people have time and are surrounded with a variety of people.
3. The visitors are very passionate about their hobby and are continuously trying to improve their rituals by gaining new knowledge and preparing goods for the experience.
4. The visitors are open to meet new people and have valuable knowledge of the traditions to give forward.

Based on the social innovation theory, the mindset needs to be changed, from thinking of the visitors as customers, to start thinking of them as community members, drivers of the sauna culture with

valuable knowledge supporting the public sauna culture weekly. For improving the service, the people need knowledge and empowerment to be a co-designer of the culture and the place. If planning a solution based on the social innovation theory, it should be an infrastructure of tools that trigger or support these meaningful connections that drive social change.

Based on these insights I framed the desirable design impact which was to empower the community members with support, infrastructure and knowledge to become the active drivers in the modernisation of the public sauna culture. By modernizing the experience and culture in a public sauna, the service should raise value for the existing community and become attractive for new user groups that are interested in sauna culture.

5. Develop

After framing the insights into 3 main categories, I made a quick brainstorm of random ideas to explore possible solutions and opportunities. From the main categories, I branched out and examined the relationships between different ideas. In the end, I noticed that the ideas connect with each other and can be combined with something bigger. This was combined into an Opportunity Mind Map (Fig. 10).

The main categories for making a change where the knowledge, community and development in the culture. The knowledge can be created by educating the people or through creating connections between people to share the existing knowledge. For that possible solutions seemed to be creating a sauna guild between different public saunas who would join their power for progressing the culture, or to educate the visitors with new knowledge by offering related literature and experiences.

For building a community, it seemed that the main goal is to ease the interaction between people and for that, discussion topics need to be created. The possible solutions seemed to be creating social areas in the environment and events where the people could experience something together and would give them something to talk about.

To develop the culture, it seemed that the main focus should be through sustainability and recycling the used resources like greywater, residual heat and compost. This can be used for greenhouse and

creating a community garden or creating a laundry service the Tallinna saun was initially also offering, but only using the greywater.

5.1 Concept creation

From the Opportunity Mind Map, it was already possible to formulate some key concepts.

5.1.1 Concept 1: Sauna Guild

One of the major pain points in the public sauna culture is that the saunas itself are working very individually and do not collaborate with other saunas who are struggling with the same problems. This makes them weak and stuck in times because they are not receiving any new knowledge and are afraid of making changes. Public saunas are a cultural phenomenon, but it lacks strength and development.

According to the history, the medieval public saunas in Estonia were part of a sauna guild in Lübeck. This was an umbrella organisation that gave out certificates and papers for the masters and apprentices of sauna men. There is not much information about those times, but it can probably be considered that this gave these institutions professionalism, which today's saunas are lacking.

A modern sauna guild, where public saunas can connect with each other, gather the thoughts and knowledge to start developing the culture together. Involve other stakeholders in the system like experts of culture and sustainability, different technology companies that are focused on creating innovation for sauna culture, event organizers, travel agencies, home sauna owners, sauna enthusiasts and even spas. To gather the individual stakeholders into a system, where they can start a collaboration and develop the system as a whole. The system can create a mapping of the saunas in Estonia, which raises awareness for the sauna fans, to experience something new.

The main idea behind the concept is to stimulate new initiatives that would benefit the individuals and the whole system. However, this solution as a whole might not be enough to actually initiate change and there should be a role-model of an existing sauna that can show the opportunities available.

Target users: stakeholders in the sauna culture

Unmet needs: lack of collaboration and knowledge of how to develop the sauna culture

Proposed new offerings: a platform with the possibility to interact with each other and share knowledge

Benefits to users: new insights, new partners, new initiatives

Why would they choose it: to belong to a community with shared values and get support on solving difficult problems.

5.1.2 Concept 2: Greenhouse community garden

As it was explained in the research section, the practices in saunas are very wasteful. The washing is done mainly in the bowls and the body is cooled down with large quantities of water several times, so the water-saving taps and showers would not create much change. Next to water, Tallinna saun needs a lot of gas for heating up the sauna and the water, which also creates residual heat after use. The used water is actually quite clean and might have mainly body washing products and dirt from the skin of the visitors. This means that the greywater can be reused for something that does not involve the need for drinking the water. The suggested use of greywater is for gardening or laundry.

Considering that we also have a lot of residual heat, an all-year-long greenhouse can be built where the greywater and heat are used to grow vegetables and fruits in the city. One of the leftovers of sauna practices are whisks, which can be composted and also used to support gardening.

A greenhouse that is based on reusing the resources from Tallinna saun in order to create a community garden on top of the sauna building. This creates a possibility to decrease the waste of resources, create a connection of nature in the city and attract new members who share the same values into a community in a shared place. The heating offers a possibility to garden all year long which is something that in Tallinn the community gardens have not yet offered. The green gardening in the city centre can change the mindset of the people and stimulate new initiatives.

The solution can create a community, but it is not directly connected to the sauna community and might not offer new value for the existing target group. As well, it does not make the people use less water, but might even increase the use as there is no guilt of wasting.

Target users: people who are interested in growing their own food close to their home while living in the city centre

Unmet or underserved needs: no community garden in this neighbourhood or a place to grow food all year long

Proposed new offering: green practices of how to smartly reuse resources and create a connection with nature in the city centre

Benefits to users: possibility to grow their own food sustainably

Why would they choose it: to gain a new hobby, a healthy ritual and a feeling of achievement

5.1.3 Concept 3: Guided ritual by a community member

As it came out from the case study analysis, there is an unmet connection between old and new members. The old members are willing to guide the new users to experience the value of the service. The new members do not have knowledge and experience to carry out a valuable experience alone. There is no structure to support the old members welcome the new ones because the public sauna works as a company today and people are afraid of bothering other customers.

The community members in public saunas are actually drivers of the public sauna culture with valuable knowledge and experience and they should be the ones who guide the new ones, not a hired sauna man who carries out tourist events. This connection would ease joining the community because both parties would be open to each other during the session. Next time the new member arrives at the public sauna alone, he already has a foundation of knowledge and experience, as well, familiar faces to interact with.

A service feature that offers a possibility for potential users to book a community member to share the experience together. The feature is enabled by a digital booking system on the web that offers the possibility for booking and from the other side let the community members to express their willingness to guide the ritual to new members.

At the moment, the webpage for Tallinna saun exists but does not enable bookings. There is a question if this kind of community interaction should be rewarded by money or it should be a natural course of action from conviviality.

Target users: potential users who are interested in experiencing public sauna culture or want to belong to a community

Unmet of underserved needs: lack of knowledge how to act in the public sauna, lack of openness with the rest of community

Benefits to users: experiencing the public sauna as it is supposed to already since the first time, openness to a new community, meeting new people

Why would they choose it: ease of joining a community, experiencing something new but local, connecting with the neighbourhood

5.2 Concept selection and evaluation

The three concepts were evaluated on the relevance to the modernisation of the public sauna culture and Tallinna saun. According to my research question, the solution should influence modernising the experience in Tallinna saun and the culture as a whole. Therefore, it was understood that none of those concepts alone can be a solution and the final concept needs to be something bigger with different layers. All these concepts are suitable parts of the final concept and can be involved. The environment and infrastructure for modernising the experience and culture can create a system that would enable the users to welcome new members, create green practices and collaborate with other stakeholders. Therefore, all these concepts were selected to further development.

5.3 Concept development

As I have two elements in my focus: modernising experience in Tallinna saun and modernising the culture in general, there are different needs that need to be satisfied.

For modernising the culture, the principles needed to be:

- instead of competition, encourage collaboration
- guide the way to sustainable and cost-effective practices
- building a community of sauna fans
- raise awareness of the existing sauna culture
- overcome the stigmatisation

The chosen concept was the sauna guild for creating stronger ties in the culture, share the knowledge and start developing the culture together. At the same time create an opportunity for building a community of sauna fans and raise awareness of the services that are available for them.

For modernising the experience in Tallinna saun, the things needed to achieve were formed:

- creating sustainability in practices;
- open the culture to new members;
- empower the current customer group;

- encourage community building;
- create possibilities for co-creation with the community.

This means that there is a need for several separate features that come together as a whole. The solution needs making changes in the physical place to support the experience at sauna, and a digital platform that would create modern opportunities to manage the service and open the culture to new users. The physical place should empower the users with new knowledge, offer them new experiences and encourage the co-creation. The digital platform was chosen as a place to book the sauna and interact with other community members.

Concept sketching

For playing out the infrastructure in sauna and proposing it to Tallinna saun, basic sketches were developed. The main idea was to show the new social activities (rituals, events, excursions) and the sustainability concept. This concept did not have the guided experience involved, and created an understanding that it is still needed, because new users might have difficulties to join with the sauna if they need to educate themselves during the visit and therefore, guiding is needed. The main question from Tallinna saun was if the sauna ritual would be a regular practice (daily or weekly) or an event. It seemed to be right to make the sauna ritual less often and as a special event, just to offer the local community new experiences.

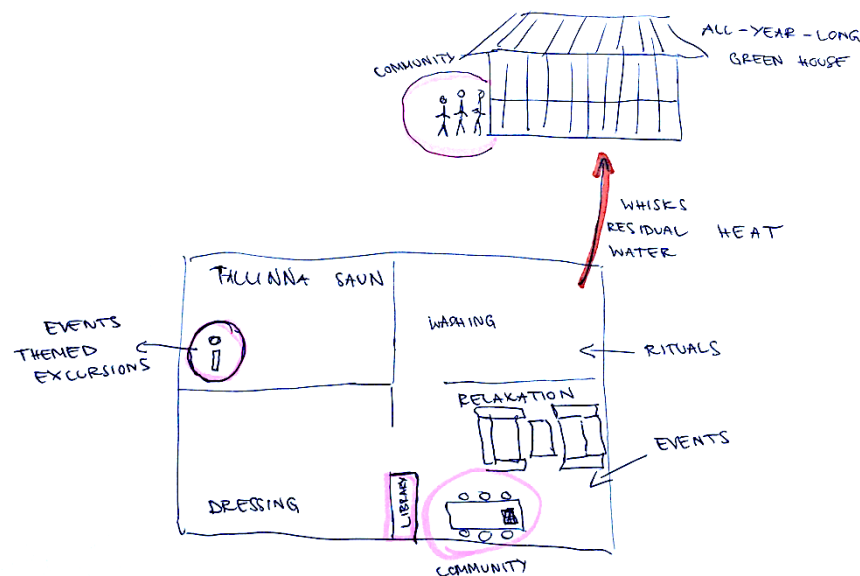


Figure 11: Concept sketching of Tallinna saun. Credit: Lea Kolde

Storyboarding

For understanding the concept of guided ritual, storyboarding was used, which reflected the process of guided experience with a community member. The new member books the experience through web and receiving guidelines for packing together with the confirmation. The community member shares the experience with him, introduces the ritual and to the other people. It aroused the question if the community member going through the ritual should get some benefits from this activity. It was chosen that he would get some bonus points that would be used in the sauna.

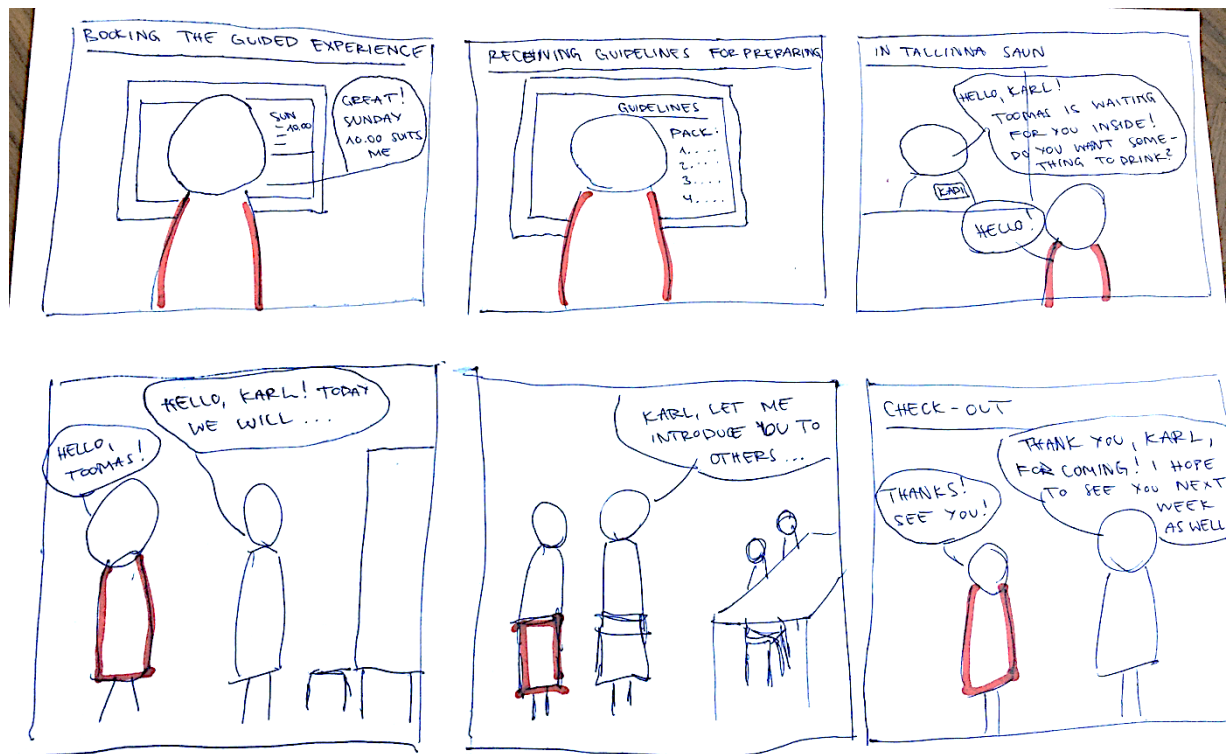


Figure 12: Storyboard of the guided experience process. Credit: Lea Kolde

5.4 Concept review

The concept idea was presented to the advisor of Tallinna saun, who agreed with the desirable design impact and reflected that both solutions, the sauna guild and the experience design, are needed. He stated that it is difficult to raise the awareness of the public sauna culture by an individual sauna because the culture is happening behind the doors and it is scattered. He agreed with the direction because it suited with their own vision of creating a community and enhancing the social side of the experience. He set a limit that the sauna is not prepared to make any renovations in the interior, therefore the solution should consider the current facilities.

6. Deliver

6.1 Estonian Sauna Society

Estonian Sauna Society (ESS) is a union of the drivers of the sauna culture. It is hosted on a digital platform where different stakeholders like public saunas, spas, sauna technology companies, home sauna owners, sauna fans, travel agencies, sauna event organisers, experts of the culture and sustainability and even local governments are gathered with the aim to encourage collaboration and raise the awareness of the culture. The system of ESS can be seen on Figure 13.

The platform is curating information of knowledge of the traditions to make stronger ties with the local culture. It provides guidelines and consulting for sauna services about the opportunities of making the practices more sustainable and cost-effective. To encourage the development of saunas, the local governments gather information about the funding opportunities.

Estonian Sauna Society (ESS) has an overview of the sauna services available in Estonia, raising awareness for the sauna enthusiasts about different opportunities available. The platform has a booking system that allows users to conveniently book the desired services, while it creates modern digital opportunities for the saunas.

ESS has a membership through which the community of local sauna fans can experience different saunas with a special price. This encourages enthusiasts to visit different saunas around Estonia and by that, enrich their own understanding of the sauna visit. ESS organizes events involving several saunas to make the culture active and exciting.

The active and developing saunas in the community are rewarded with branded certificates and awards. This will encourage the saunas to progress and the certificates make the services more attractive to the new users. The community members receive bonus points for their active participation in the community activities, which eventually gives them the status of an experienced sauna community member through which they can get special deals in the membership.

The platform functions as a community channel through which the members can actively socialise with each other. It can create opportunities to create other forms of connections, for example, the sauna technology companies to connect with new partners or user groups to develop new and better services and products for the community. As well, for event organizers and travel agencies to organize new kind of experiences for the local community and tourists.

The main aim is to gather the individual stakeholders into a system where they can create new kind of social ties, start a collaboration and develop the system as a whole.

6.2 Modernized experience in Tallinna saun

The modernised public sauna experience in Tallinna saun is a community-driven public sauna, supporting the community members with knowledge and experiences to improve the service quality and to ease the social interaction for the community building. The solution consists of infrastructure that educates the user, builds a community and develops the service.

The resources used in the sauna – water, heat and whisks – are reused in the all-year-long greenhouse on top of the building which is used for community gardening. The greenhouse can be up to 130 m² and accessed through the sauna entrance. Therefore, the garden is only accessible during sauna workdays (10 am-21 pm) but welcomes all kind of gardeners to the community. The interested individuals can access to the greenhouse by becoming a member of the gardening community and will receive an individual plot for growing their own zero-mile food. This does not make the sauna consumption zero-waste but creates opportunities to reuse most of the wasted resources in a way that it creates value for the customers and attracts new ones to be part of the urban community. By connecting the experience with nature, the green environment will stimulate new mindsets and creates an opportunity for urban people to grow their own vegetables and fruits near their home contributing to the sense of community and neighbourhood improvement.

The user group is empowered by creating a system of knowledge and experiences. The physical space of the sauna is supplied with a library of related literature (for example the sauna culture and herbal medicine) to educate the users about the traditions and opportunities to encourage them to develop their own practices and rituals further. The needed equipment is available at the place, to ease the preparation process and make the place easily accessible for new users.

The sauna is having event series like rituals with a sauna man or themed excursions to other saunas to expand the understanding of a sauna experience and offer new viewpoints. The developing customer can start testing or designing new rituals for his own experience. Or propose new ideas for developing the environment and culture in his usual sauna. Tallinna saun is creating co-design sessions with the community and putting up probes to stimulate new initiatives and design the place with the locals. This creates an opportunity to make the users the active drivers of the sauna and modernise the service in a way that it is accepted by the community.

These social activities and events bring together community members who might not be aware of each other as they are used to visit on a certain day and time. Tallinna saun will organize community events and new experiences to offer new discussion topics that ease the socialising and helps to create relationships between each other. The place is supplied with social areas with boardgames to encourage people to interact with each other. As sauna has a large role in Estonian culture, it is a great place for introducing the culture and its people to the new members of our society. Tallinna saun is collaborating with integration organisations and organizing events where the local community can introduce their traditions and culture to the people who have found their new home in Estonia. And in return, the new members offer an experience of their culture, by covering the table with snacks and food from their home. Through that open up the community and offer new kind of experiences to the local community, but at the same time create a touchpoint with the local culture and people for the new members.

The sauna manages its services through Estonian Sauna Society platform and for new visitors offers a possibility for guided experiences with the community members. The guest can request for a community member to guide him through the experience and share the sauna together. This creates the transition of knowledge and traditions, opens the community towards new people. The new member can experience the public sauna as it is from the first time, he can be introduced to the locals and during the next time, he already has familiar faces and the knowledge to experience the sauna fully by himself. The connection with the people helps to ease the integration to the community. This user journey can be seen in Figure 14.

The modernized experience in Tallinna saun empowers the local community with knowledge and the power to co-design the experience, builds a stronger community and creates sustainability in the process. The service attracts new users through the community gardening, Estonian Sauna Society and

the guided experience which eases the acceptance to the community. Tallinna saun will become an urban community hub in the centre of Tallinn promoting the communal way of living, creating stronger ties in society and stimulating new initiatives. The system's view of the modernised experience can be seen on Figure 15. The bigger aim is to raise the quality of a sauna visit as much that the urban apartment spaces would be used more functionally, and the sauna can become a shared facility and experience with the local community.

6.3 Expert review

The concept was presented to the board member in Tallinna saun to understand what kind of improvements are needed. The concept got positive feedback, as all the mentioned problems were indeed present and needed a solution. From the concept, the greenhouse building, and event series seemed very adaptable to the service already today. The need for a sauna guild seemed very reasonable and he confirmed the necessity of it. But the digital solution made him doubt that the older customers might not be using that. Therefore, the final outcome should make sure that the events and happenings are communicated also in the physical place of the sauna and the receptionist can have access to book services for people who do not have an account on the digital platform on their own.

7. Conclusion

The current public sauna concepts are dependent on the loyal customer and their knowledge, which has put the public sauna itself to a passive role. It is almost a comfort zone, where the loyal customers keep visiting the place from the life-long habit, but no new values are created. The public saunas are suffering from economic problems because they are having difficulties to attract new customers.

In order to modernise the culture and make it attractive, the whole system needs to be encouraged for development. Estonian Sauna Society creates the connections and communities of sauna culture and builds digital opportunities to modernize the services in every sauna. To offer a role-model for the culture, a concept of the modernized public sauna experience is proposed in Tallinna saun. This creates an infrastructure that encourages social interaction, community building and co-creation during the experience. So that the public sauna does not only seem to be a place for washing but becomes an

attractive meeting place or a centre of the community. To create meaningful connections with the people around us and decrease the need for a home sauna, so that people can start using their limited home space more efficiently and become more sustainable.

To create a sauna culture, where places and communities are not isolated units, but become nodes in the network. Collaborative places and communities, which create social and economic value locally, but together create a bigger movement for the whole culture.

8. Summary

Sauna culture is very influenced by the innovation, but in the public sauna culture, the development processes stopped already decades ago. The concept is stuck in times and therefore, manages to serve only the loyal customer group who is used to the old concept. In order to keep the place open for the loyal customers, the service needs to attract new users. The initial objective of this thesis was to explore the opportunities for modernising the public sauna experience in Tallinna saun.

The research involved analysing case studies and user interviews, which reflected that people that visit these places have done it already several decades, their parent or grandparent has guided to use them this service and given them the knowledge about the traditions and rituals. The people have grown into the habit of visiting public saunas weekly as it offers a possibility to take time off from everyday life and socialise with others in a neutral place. It is an important routine to keep a balance in life. The experience itself is highly do-it-yourself and depends on the knowledge of the customers. This makes it difficult and unattractive for new people to join because they have insecurities about how to act. The weak ties in the society are making the socialisation in the public sauna difficult because people are focused on their own ritual and are lacking common topic of discussion.

Through the theoretical approach of third places, sustainability and social innovation, the modernisation of the public sauna needed to empower the community members with support, infrastructure and knowledge to become the active drivers in the modernisation of the public sauna culture. Not only the culture in Tallinna saun, but the movement needed to involve the whole system

of the public saunas. By modernising the experience and culture, to raise value for the existing community and to become attractive for new user groups that are interested in sauna culture.

As a solution for creating this movement, a sauna guild, Estonian Sauna Society, is proposed to create a network of the stakeholders in the sauna community for encouraging collaboration and developing digital communication channels for the members in the community. To modernise the public sauna experience, the thesis proposes changes in the physical space, ways to create sustainable practices in the sauna and combination of social activities with the aim to build a community.

9. Kokkuvõte

Saunakultuur on väga mõjutatud innovatsioonist, aga avalikud saunad on püsinud juba mitu aastakümnet praktiliselt muutumatuna. Nende kontseptsioon on aega kinni jäänud ja seega teenindavad nad enamjaolt vaid püsikliente, kes on selle vana mudeliga harjunud. Selleks, et hoida avalikku sauna elujõulise ja avatuna püsiklientidele, on aga vaja muutuda atraktiivseks uutele kliendigruppidele. Selle magistritöö esialgne eesmärk oli uurida erinevaid võimalusi avaliku sauna kogemuse moderniseerimiseks Tallinna sauna näitel.

Uurimisprotsess kaasas erinevate avalike saunade analüüsimist ning kliendiintervjuusid, mis peegeldasid, et avalike saunade kliendid on neid paikasid külastanud juba mitu aastakümnet järjest, nende vanem või vanavanem on neid õpetanud seda teenust kasutama ning andnud edasi teadmised erinevatest traditsioonidest ja rituaalidest. Harjumus külastada avalikku sauna igapäevaselt on saanud nende klientide elu oluliseks osaks, mis pakub neile võimalust võtta igapäevaelust aeg maha ning sotsialiseeruda teiste inimestega neutraalses paigas. See on oluline rutiin hoidmaks elus tasakaalu. Avaliku sauna kogemus on oma olemuselt väga isetegevuslik ning toetubki kliendi enda teadmistele. See teeb aga teenuse kasutamise keeruliseks ja ebaatraktiivseks uutele klientidele, kelle eelhoiakut varjutab ebakindlus teadmatuses kuidas käituda. Nõrgad sidemed inimeste vahel ühiskonnas teevad aga suhtlemise avalikus saunas keeruliseks, sest küllastajad on keskendunud enda rituaali läbiviimisele ning neil on keeruline leida ühiseid jututeemasid võõraste inimestega.

Tuginedes kolmandate paikade, jätkusuutlikkuse ja sotsiaalse innovatsiooni teooriatele, peab avaliku sauna moderniseerimiseks jõustama kogukonnaliikmeid toe, infrastruktuuri ja teadmistega, et muuta neid aktiivseteks juhtideks selle saunakultuuri moderniseerimisel. Seega ei piisa ainult Tallinna sauna kogemuse muutmisest, vaid vaja on algatada progressiivne liikumine kogu avalike saunade süsteemis. Läbi teenuse ja kultuuri moderniseerimise on võimalik luua uut väärtust olemasolevale kogukonnale ja muutuda atraktiivseks uutele kliendigruppidele, kes on huvitatud saunakultuurist.

Selle liikumise algatamiseks pakub antud töö välja saunagildi loomise, et luua saunakogukonna võrgustik, ergutada nendevahelist koostööd ning arendada välja digitaalsed kommunikatsioonikanalid kõikidele saunakultuuri osalistele. Et moderniseerida avaliku sauna kogemust, pakub autor välja

muudatused füüsilises ruumis, et muuta saunakasutus jätkusuutlikumaks, ning kombinatsioon sotsiaalsetest tegevustest eesmärgiga tugevdada kogukonda.

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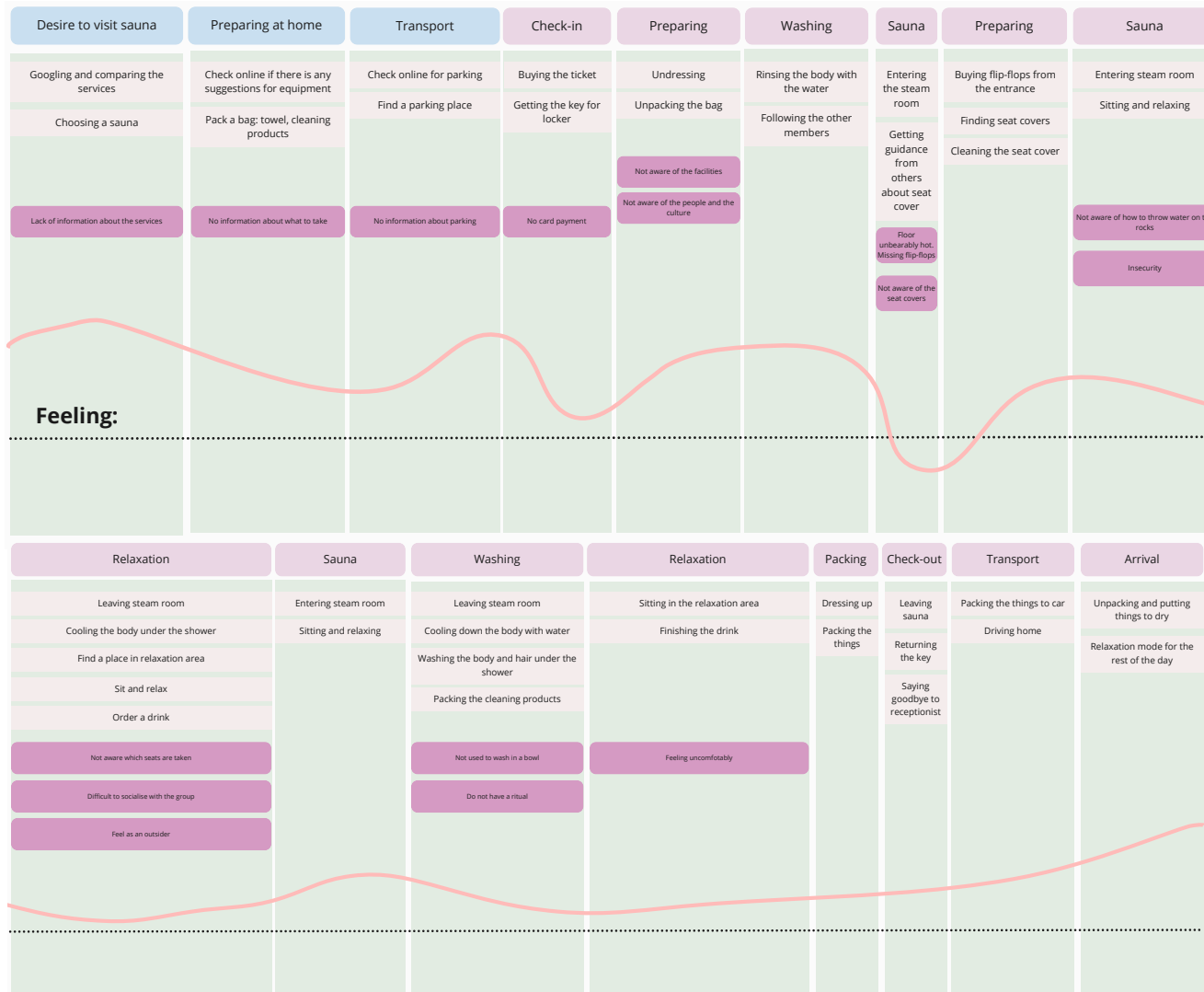


Figure 3: Current user journey of a new customer. Credit: Lea Kolde

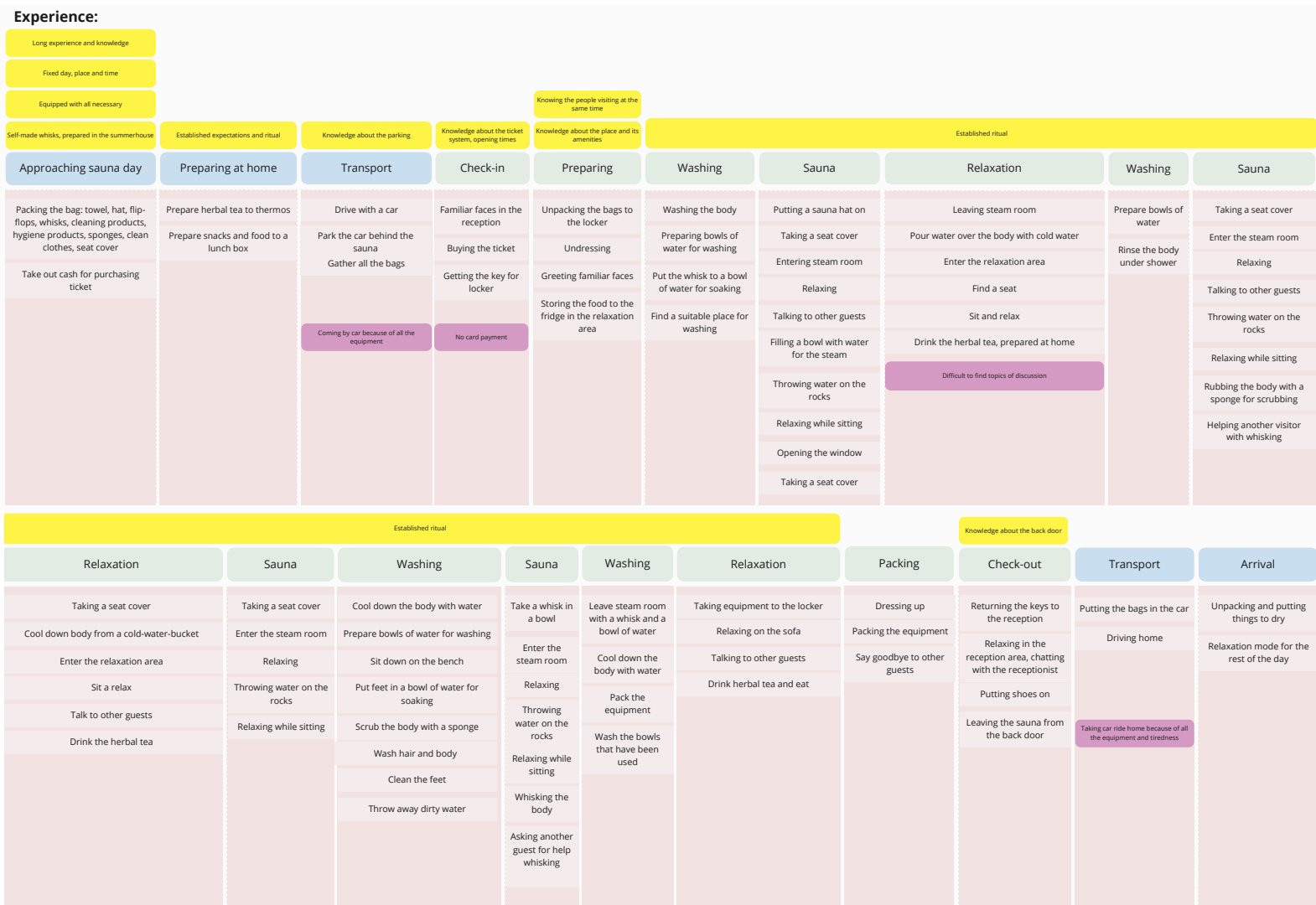


Figure 4: Current user journey of an experienced customer. Credit: Lea Kolde

LASNAMÄE ÖKOSAUN

Focus is on washing. Motivation to go: only in Sauna I can get clean!

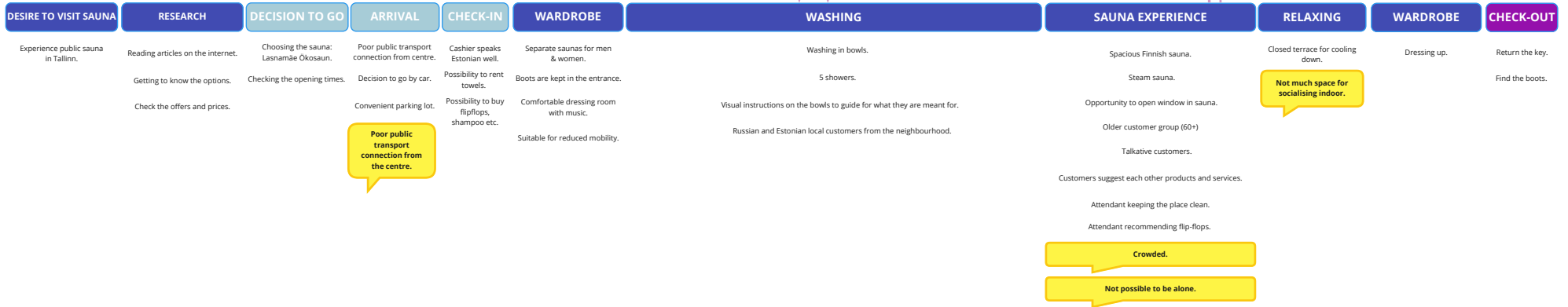


Figure 5: User experience in Lasnamäe Ökosau. Credit: Lea Kolde

KALMA SAUN

Focus is on washing.

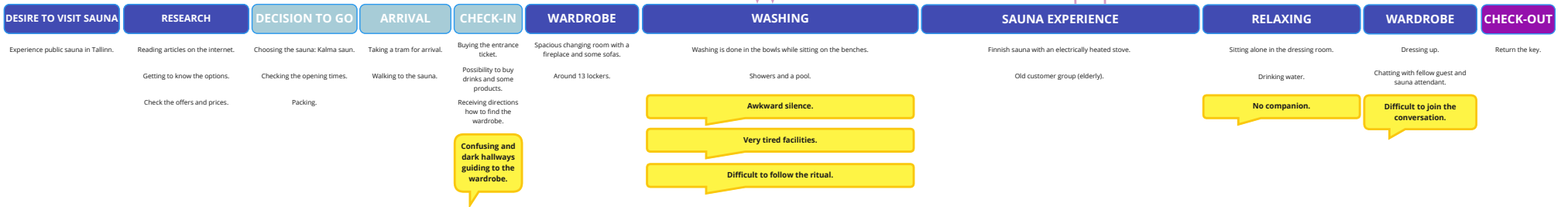


Figure 6: User experience in Kalma saun. Credit: Lea Kolde

KADRINA SAUN

Focus is on socialising and sauna.

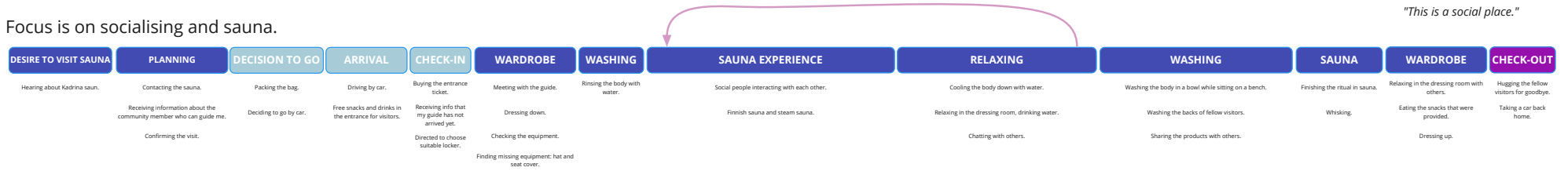
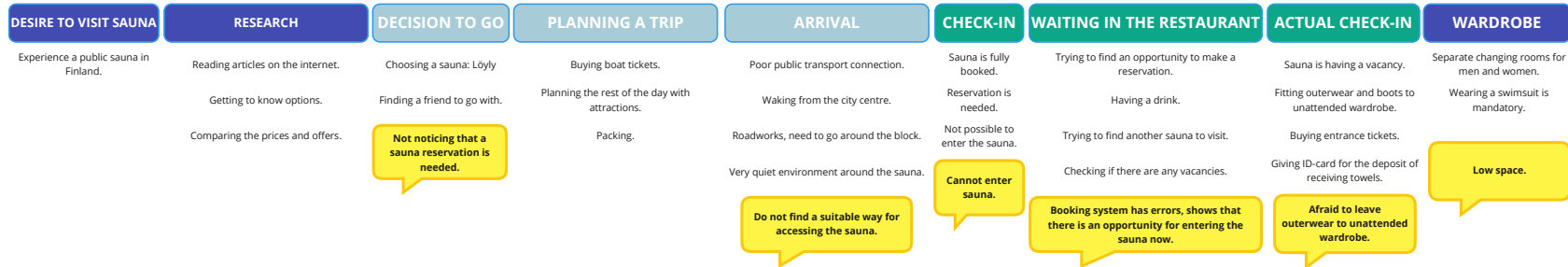


Figure 7: User experience in Kadrina saun. Credit: Lea Kolde

LÖYLY, HELSINKI

Focus is on relaxation and socialising.



"It is a typical tourist place, you will not see many local people at this sauna."

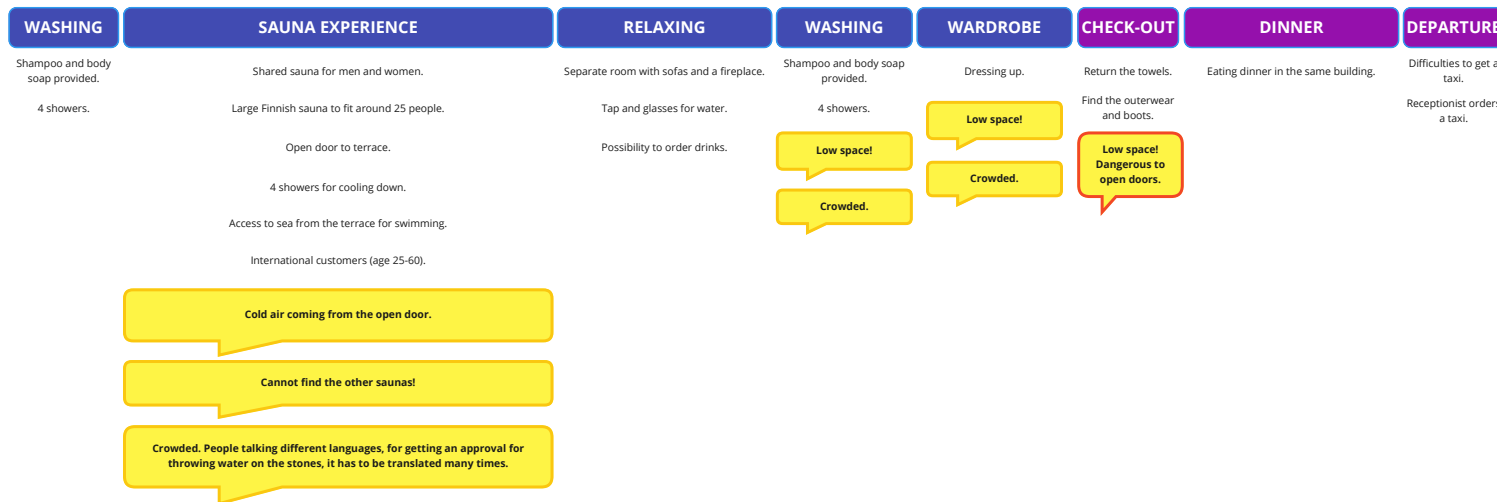


Figure 8: User experience in Löyly. Credit: Lea Kolde

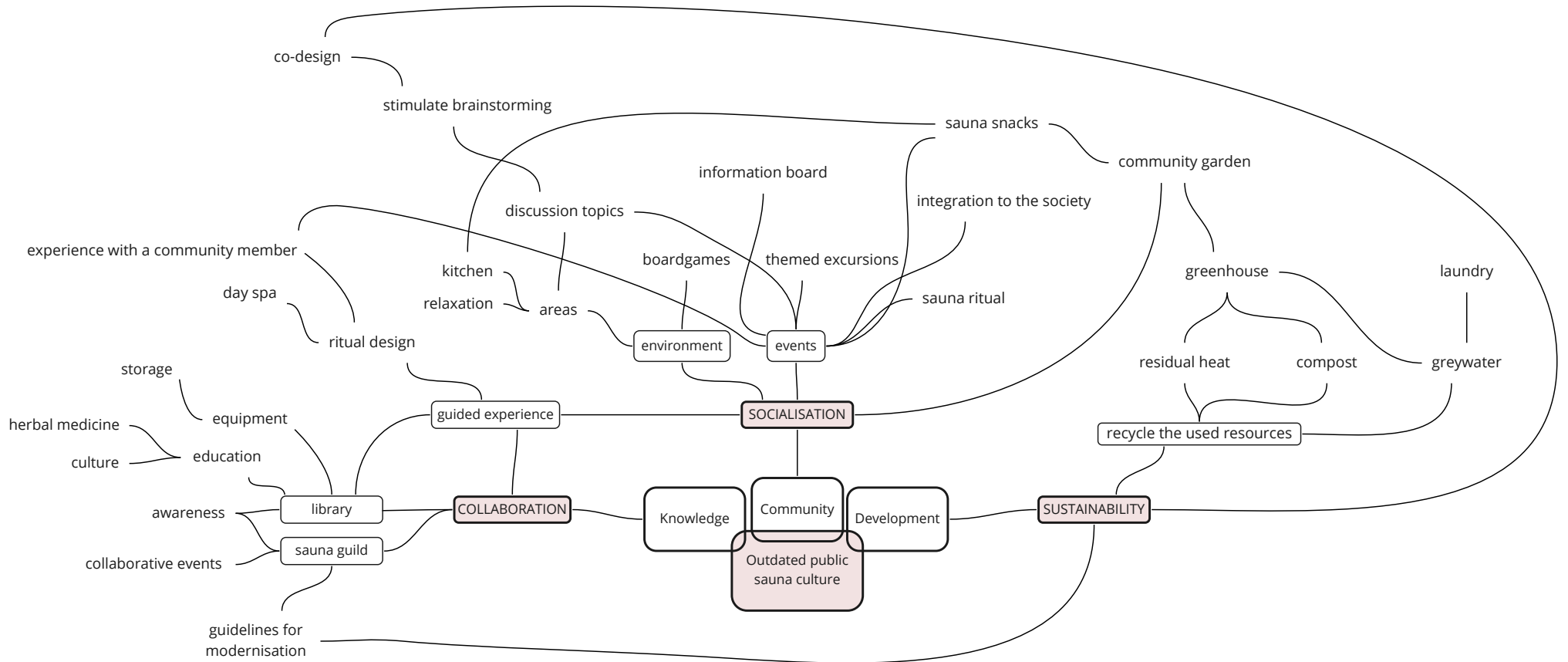


Figure 10: Opportunity Mind Map. Credit: Lea Kolde

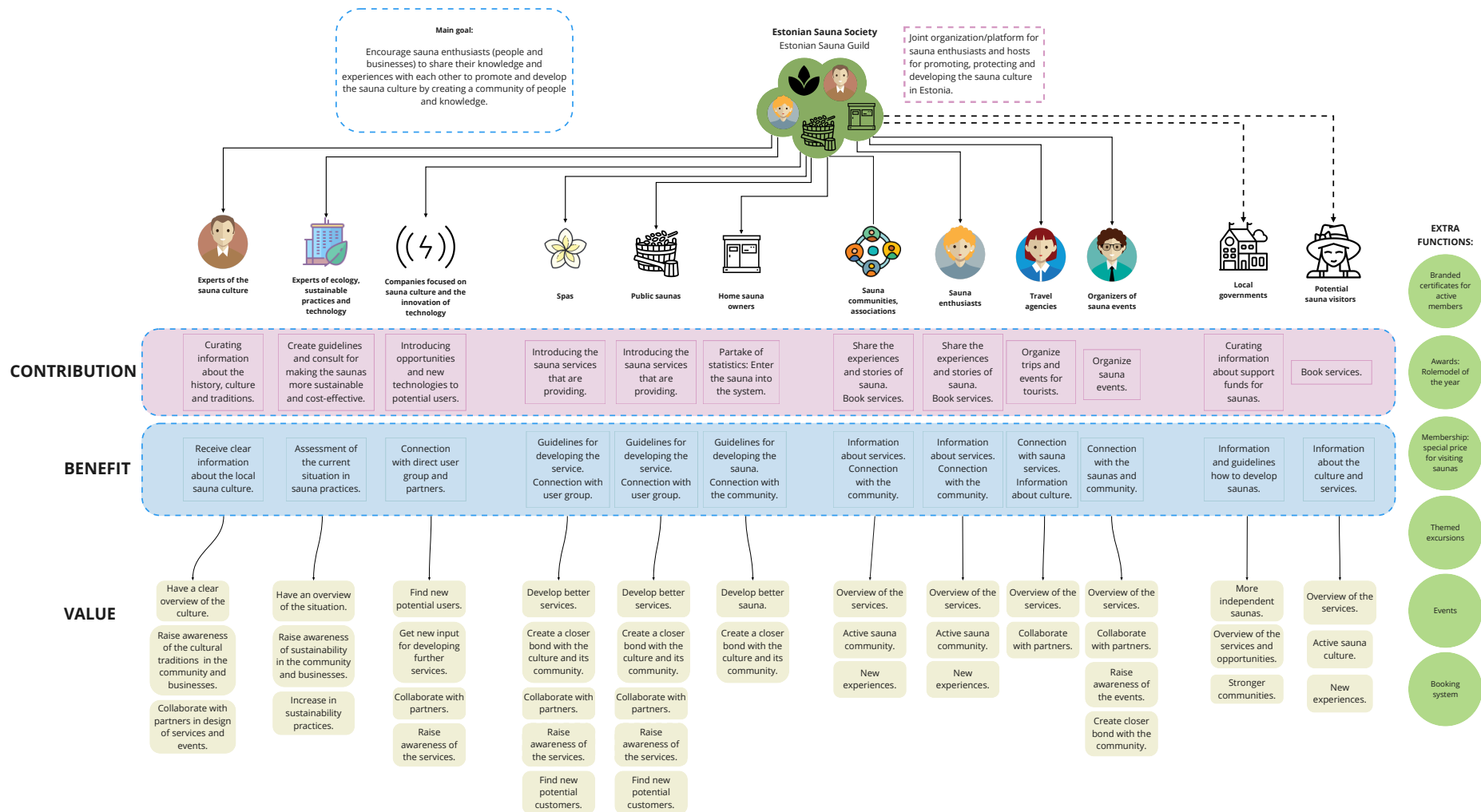


Figure 13: Estonian Sauna Society. Credit: Lea Kolde

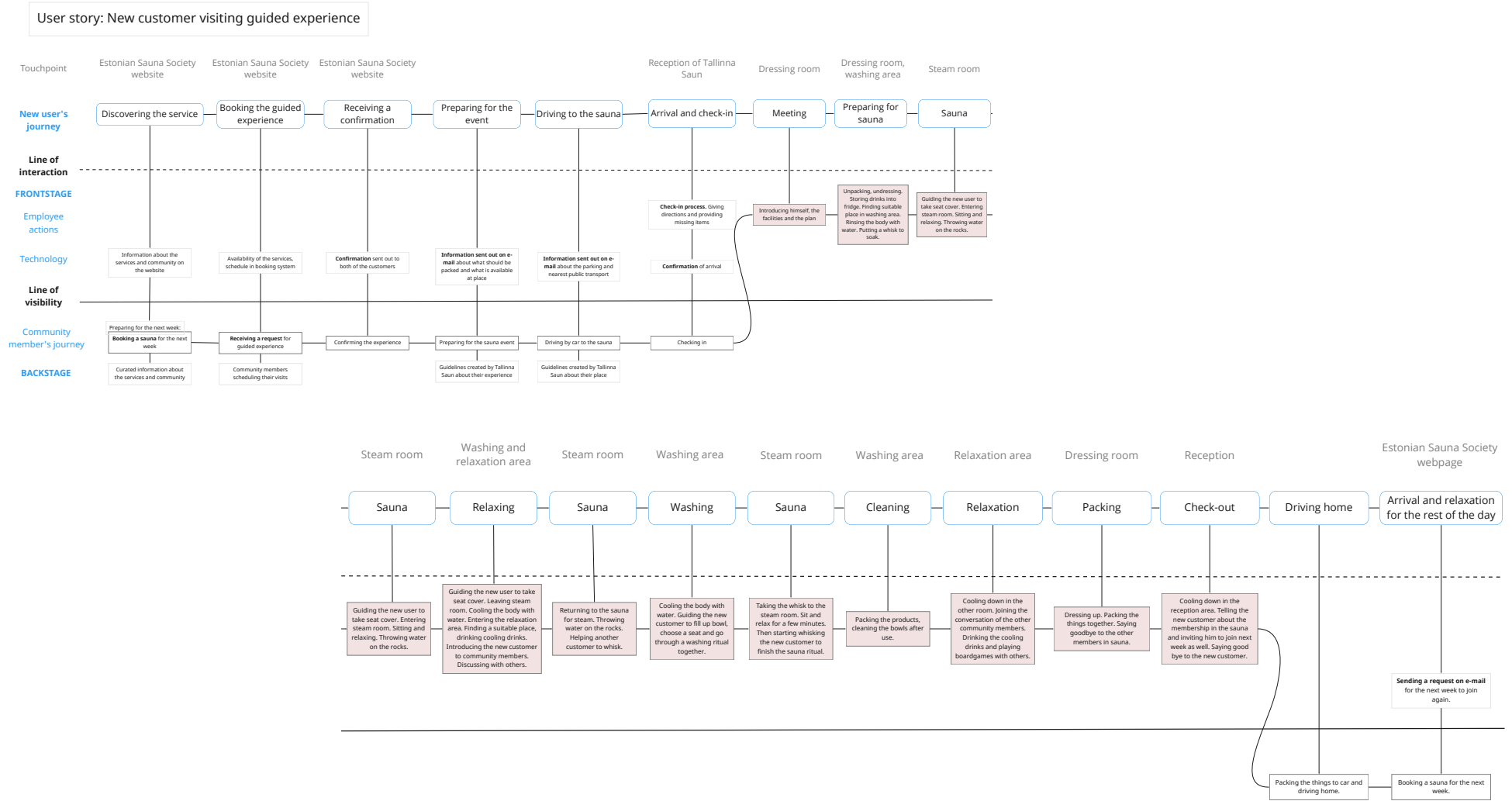


Figure 14: User story of a new customer visiting guided experience. Credit: Lea Kolde

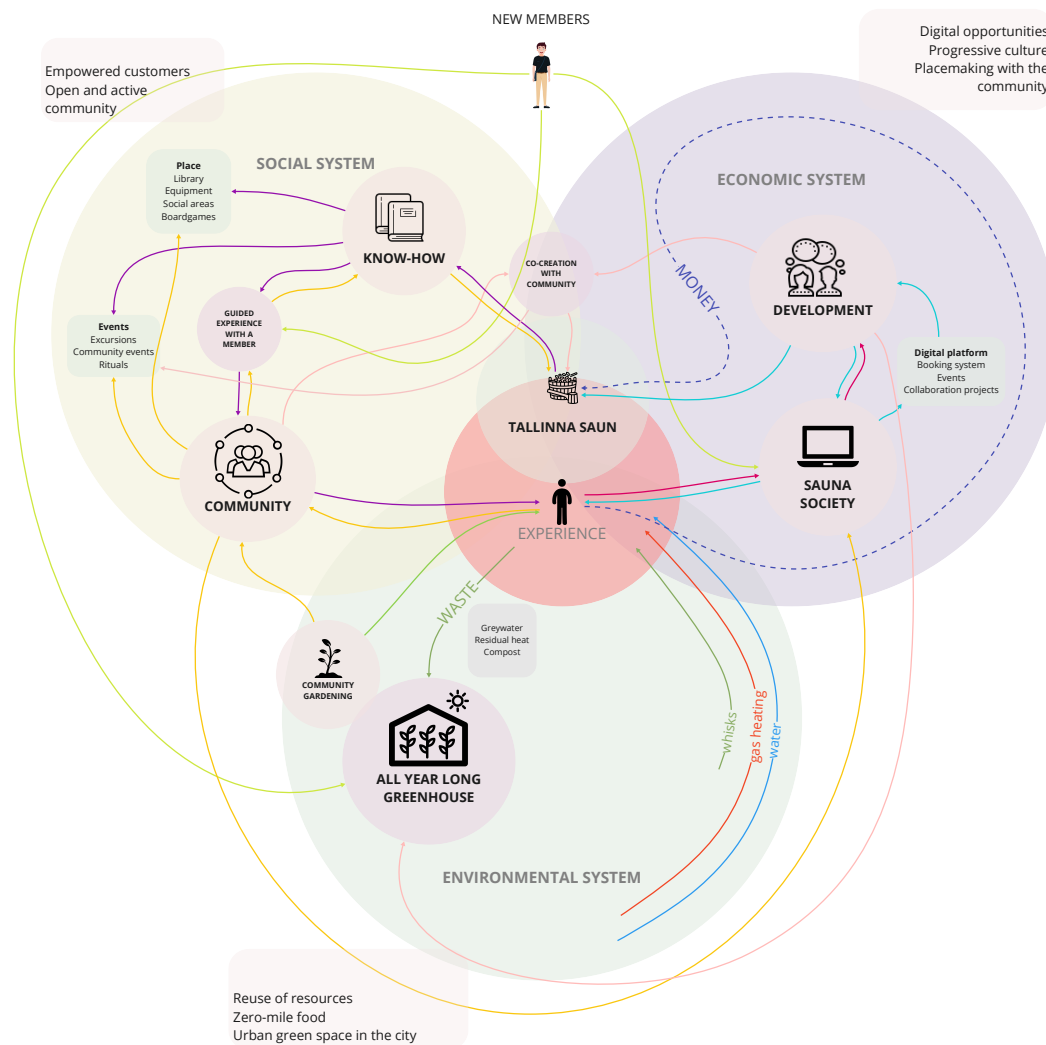


Figure 15: System's view of the modernised experience. Credit: Lea Kolde