# Cultural Mapping

## A platform to map tangible and intangible elements of thathera culure

**Project 3**

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# Acknowledgement

# Contents

# 1. Introduction

**What is cultural mapping ?**

Cultural mapping is a systematic tool to involve communities in the identification and recording of local cultural assets, with the implication that this knowledge will then be used to inform collective strategies, planning processes, or other initiatives.[1]

**Types of cultural mapping :**

**Resource Mapping** – identifying and recording tangible cultural resources usually making use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) tools and platforms.

**Community Identity Mapping** – exploring 'intangible cultural resources' – the unique stories and traditions that define a community's identity and sense of place.[2]

Community identity mapping is the type of mapping used in the project.

**Why is there a need to do cultural mapping ?**

The aim and need of the project is truly inspired from ministry of culture's project to map culture. The mission document of ministry of culture says"We always had an oral way of transferring the cultural arts but in the advanced world of Information and Technology, it is essential to design a web-portal to maintain a database of cultural assets and resources such as art forms, individual artists, artists' community cultural organisations, cultural spaces & facility, creative cultural industries, festivals & events, heritage properties, landmark etc. spread across all over the country and enhance it with a determination to deliver what we have inherited. Properly mapped, documented and designed database can be effectively used for not only preserving the rich cultural heritage but also providing means of livelihood and ameliorating the economic conditions of the performing artistes. In the above context, Ministry of Culture has planned a National Mission on Cultural Mapping and roadmap for the same"[3].

# 2. Topic & Need

**Broad Topic :**

To make intangible resources more visible to the society via means of cultural mapping.

**Community Chosen : Thatheras**

'Thatheras' are the metal craftsmen who make utensils out of brass(an alloy of copper and zinc) using traditional techniques. They make utensils by using different hand techniques and then polish them with traditional material like sand and tamarind juice manually. Later they carve designs on the polished utensil by skilfully hammering a series of tiny dents into the heated metal.

This particular utensil making technique was the first ever traditional indian craft form that got inscribed in the 2014 list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage..

**Why is there is need to map Thathera culture?**

The thathera craft colony was established during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1883) the great 19th Century Sikh Monarch. He encouraged the skilled metal craftsmen from Kashmir to settle in Punjab. During that time thatheras were spread in different regions of punjab but were mostly concentrated in a village near amritsar called jandiala guru. During the partition muslim thatheras went to pakistan and settled in kujranwala (now in pakistan) and the hindu thatheras came to jandiala guru. The thatheras in kujranwala are still practicing the same craft. So today this craft of thatheras is actually knitting the boundary of the two countries together. During the time of independence there were around 400 families practicing the craft in the village jandiala guru. And today there are hardly 20-25 thathera families who are still practicing the craft. There is a huge downfall in the number of Thatheras. New generations are not following the craft. If the same trend follows, this culture of thatheras to make utensils by hand will die soon and eventually the community will also vanish. So there is a high need to protect and preserve the thathera culture.

# 3. Primary Research

## 3.1 Research protocol

Based on the assumptions made a research protocol for the field study was developed.

**What do I want to know ?**
Why is the community of Thatheras dying ?
Why are they leaving this culture of making utensils?
What is their work culture? Who all are the stakeholders ?
What are their concerns, strengths, beliefs  ?
What makes them unique?

**Why do I want to know what i want to know?**
To reach the core problem why the culture is dying.

**How will I get to know what I want to know?**
By conducting contextual enquiries with thathera communities in Punjab.

**Questionnaire**
Since when are they doing this work ?
What are the motivations behind continuing the work ?
How has the type of work changed with time?
Background about place, generations.
Major challenges faced while working?
How has the challenges faced changed with time?
What do they think are the benefits of doing this work?
Any health issues because of work?

**Observations**

Expressions while talking, emotions, clothes, environment.

**Contextual Enquiry**

In the first set, 2 thatheras from Nabha were interviewed. Out of the 2 there was only one thathera who was still practicing the craft.The other one had left the craft and was a principal in a school.

In the second set, a contextual enquiry with 10 groups of thatheras from the village jandiala guru was conducted for a period of 1 week. Every group of thathera included of at least 2 people. Days were spent with these thatheras to better understand the process they go through

In the third set, 2 thatheras from the city Batala were interviewed.It was discovered that only nobody in the town is making utensils, only 2-3 people were doing only the repairing jobs.

In third round the target users were interviewed. These interviews were held at different centers of yuva parivartan. The Centers in Mumbai and camps  held in villages Palghar, Usgaon were visited. A total of 25-30 users were interviewed in these visits. It helped a lot in understanding the user. The major key questions involved  demographics, course they are undergoing? Why are they taking the course? What are the inspirations behind? What are the main challenges faced? Will they want to take any other course? Later on the users analysis was performed.

Fig.3.1(a) Pictures from contextual enquiry

# 3.2 Research analysis and synthesis

## Value flow model

After the interviews a value flow model of the work culture of thatheras was developed to understand process and the stakeholders involved.
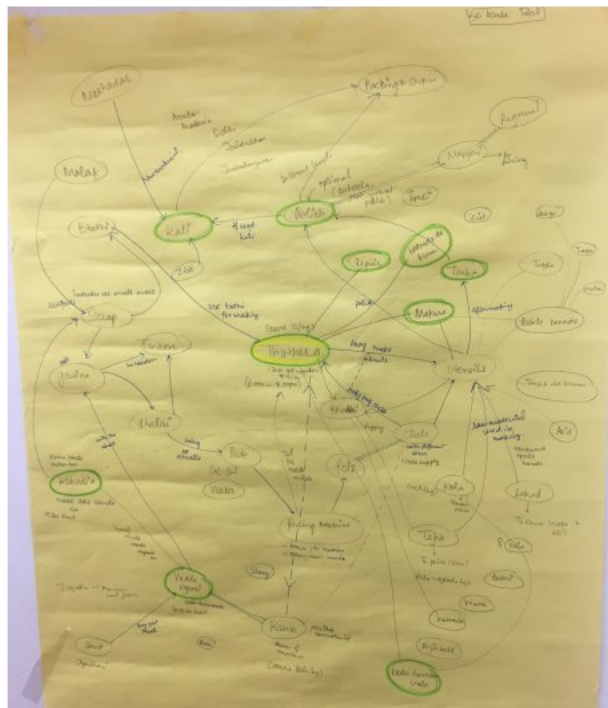


Fig.3.2(a)  Value flow model

The Value flow model helped identify the pains and the frustrations a thathera. The model shows that the Thathera doesn't get the work directly but there is a middleman called kasera who gets the order for thatheras. Thatheras are just paid the labour for making utensils. The raw materials used in the making has to be purchased by the thatheras themselves. With rise in price of brass utensils and the market 'kaseras' are making good profits but the thathera is still paid the same labour cost from years.

## Concept Map

The concept map of the work culture of thatheras helped making the flow model of an utensil making. It further helped in identifying all the stakeholders involved in the process.
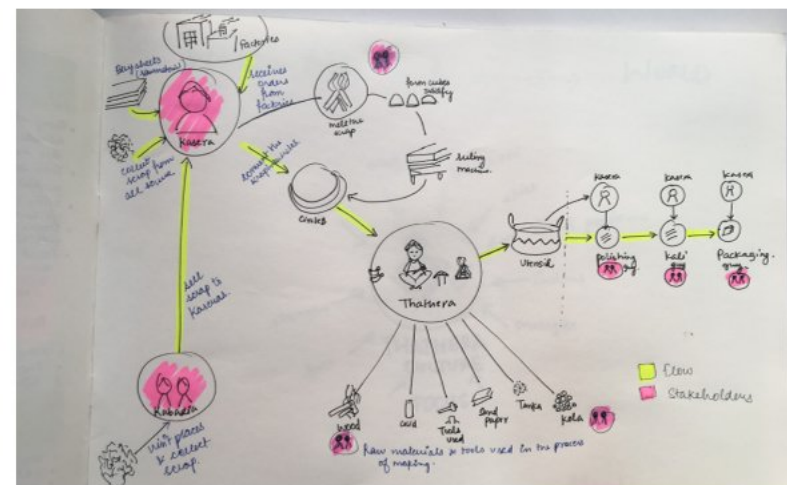


Fig.3.2(b) Concept map

## User statements mapping

Later on the research synthesis was done. Based on the research questions a categorization was made and all the users statements were written under the category they belong to. Mapping of these user statements was done by marking the similar type of statements under one category. The mapping further helped deriving the findings.
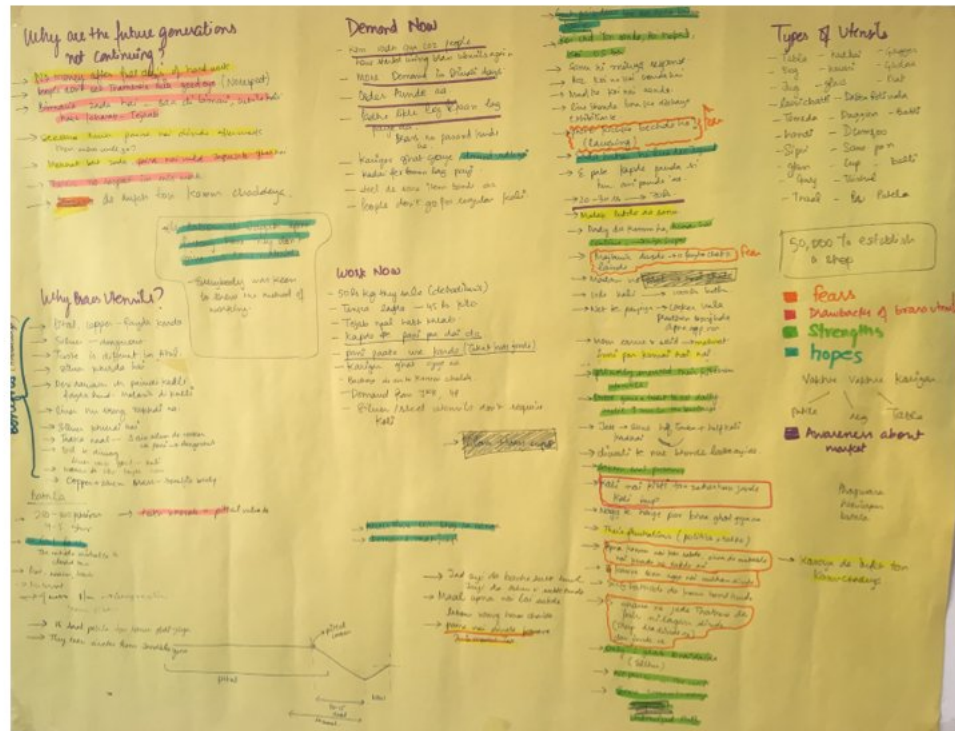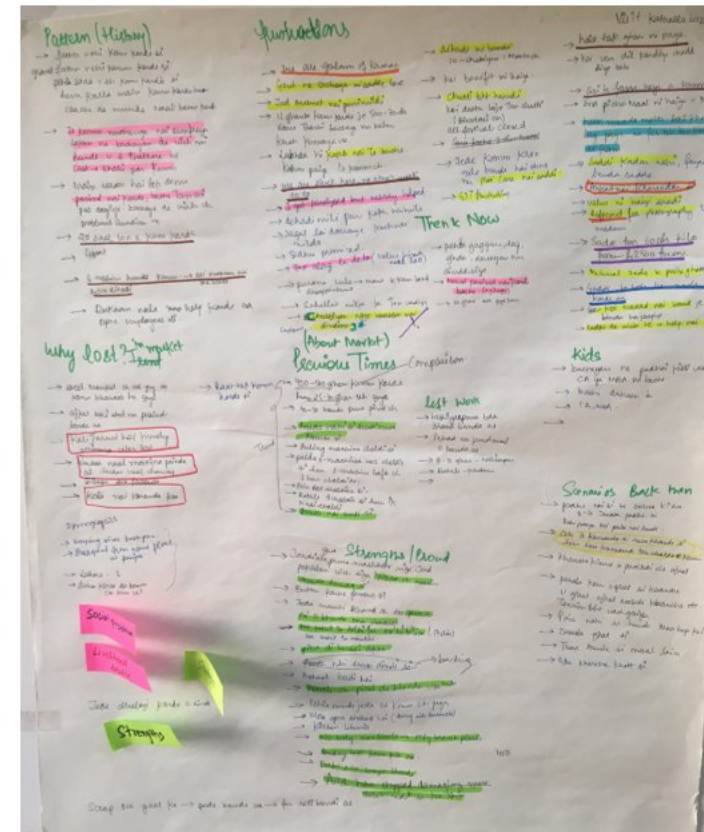


Fig.3.2(c)  Mapping user interviews



Fig.3.2(d)  Mapping user interviews

# 3.3 Findings

Major findings after the research included all the aspects of thathera culture ie.their strengths, customs, fears, frustrations etc. The figure shows the findings of the research.



Fig.4.3(a)  Findings

**More findings**

- The demand of brass utensils have decreased from past 15 years but now the demand has started gaining peak again.
- The main reason of Thatheras leaving their work is not only falling demand but frustrations from kaseras (the middlemen) and getting no social respect for their work.
- The Price of raw material for making has increased but the labour paid to the Thatheras is same.

The above findings were also validated with news articles and similar results were found. Below are some of the news articles validating the information.



**Copper, brass prices move up on global cues**

Select copper and brass prices moved up marginally at the non-ferrous metal market here today on stockist buying.

PTI | Updated: Jun 18, 2013, 05.25 PM IST

MUMBAI: Select copper and brass prices moved up marginally at the non-ferrous metal market here today on stockist buying amidst modest demand from industrial users on the back of higher London Metal Exchange cues.

Meanwhile, tin dropped on subdued offtake from alloy industries.

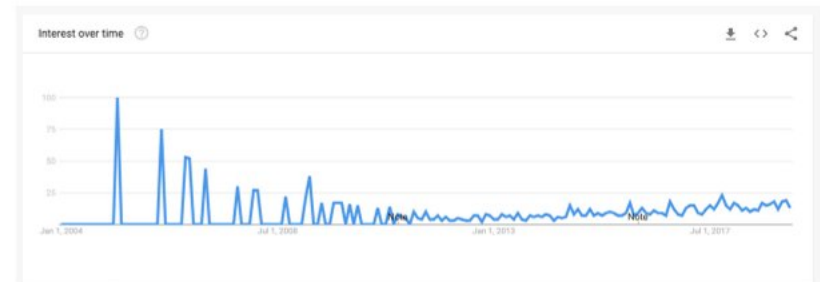Fig.3.3(b)  Newspaper article showing rise in prices of brass



Fig.3.3(c)  Newspaper article showing trend of demand of brass utensils

# 4. Need

The current scenario is that the demand of the brass utensils is rising but the no. of thatheras in the craft are decreasing. Future generations are not following the family legacy. In the whole village Jandiala guru there was only one boy from new generation who was continuing the family legacy by practicing the craft. There is a gap between the dwindling thatheras and rising demand and hence an opportunity to intervene.

**Possible areas of Intervention**

- Livelihood of Thatheras : An intervention to help thatheras earn their livelihood by teaching them techniques to modernise their work
- Market and Thatheras : Connecting the thatheras directly to the market
- Preserving Culture : Documenting the thathera culture
- Thathera culture - connecting to world

Mapping the thatheras will not only document, preserve their culture but will also help them get recognition for their work and further could connect them to fetch market as well which addresses all the above mentioned areas of intervention.

**Narrowed Topic**

The narrowed down topic of the project is to design a platform that maps thathera culture and makes them more visible to the society.

# 5. Goal & Objective

**Goal**

The long term goal of the project is to make Dying cultures and their crafts more visible to society through cultural mapping and the intended goal for the project is to concentrate on thathera community.

**Objective**

To create a platform that maps the intangible(invisible) and tangible(visible) aspects of thathera culture.

# 6. Secondary research

For secondary research various definitions of cultural mapping were discovered and different types of projects done under cultural mapping were explored. Below are some of the details of some of the cultural mapping projects :

*Kochi cultural mapping*[4] - It maps all the tangible heritage sites to their geo locations. Very helpful for locating nearby cultural artefacts. It maps the tangible cultural heritage.

*Creative city network of canada*[5] - This project has created a toolkit for mapping the canadian culture. The toolkit provides step by step instructions to map the culture.

*Cultural Mapping- Niagara Region*[6] - This document has defined cultural mapping, its types and further uses. The document was referred to understand more about cultural mapping

*Written in the sand*[7] - It a project on  cultural mapping of san culture via documentation. The platform has nicely documented a dying community in south africa.

*Ottawa valley culture*[8]- Ottawa valley culture has mapped all the cultural resources nearby and it also maps the events happening around. The user is connected to both the tangible and intangible resources of the city.

*Ministry of culture[9]*- Mission document of ministry of culture was taken as inspiration to start the project and the document has been referred for defining the objectives and need of the project.

*UNESCO*[10] - The video of thathera culture uploaded by unesco was taken as reference to understand the process of utensil making better.

# 7. Design Ideas

## Idea 1

A platform to connect the Thatheras to the government.



Fig.7.(a). Idea 1

It will be a government initiated platform for thatheras which will help them them grow better. Make them more aware about the government policies and schemes which can help them. They will be able to upload their inventory on the platform and hence increase their market. This idea was dropped later because it was drifting from the primary goal of the project which is to map the thathera culture and make them more visible to the world. And also it was realised that monetary help from the government is must to help the thatheras grow their market.
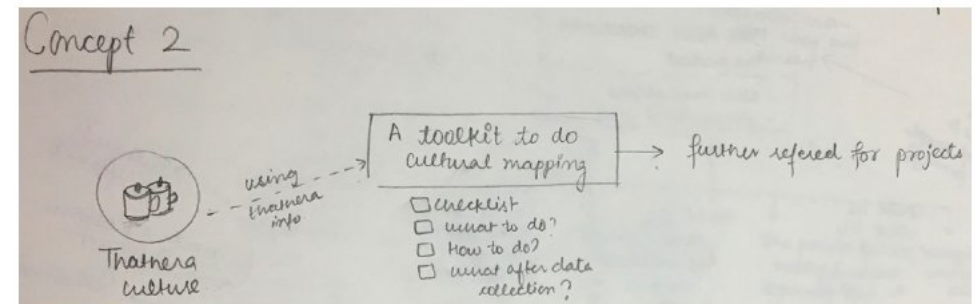
## Idea 2

A cultural mapping toolkit



Fig.7.(b). Idea 2

A toolkit which will provide a checklist and a method on how to do cultural mapping. The thathera culture will be used a reference to create the toolkit. The idea was rejected as the field study of just one community might not help to create a scalable toolkit. To create a toolkit there is a need to capture different communities and cultures and then come up with a common toolkit.
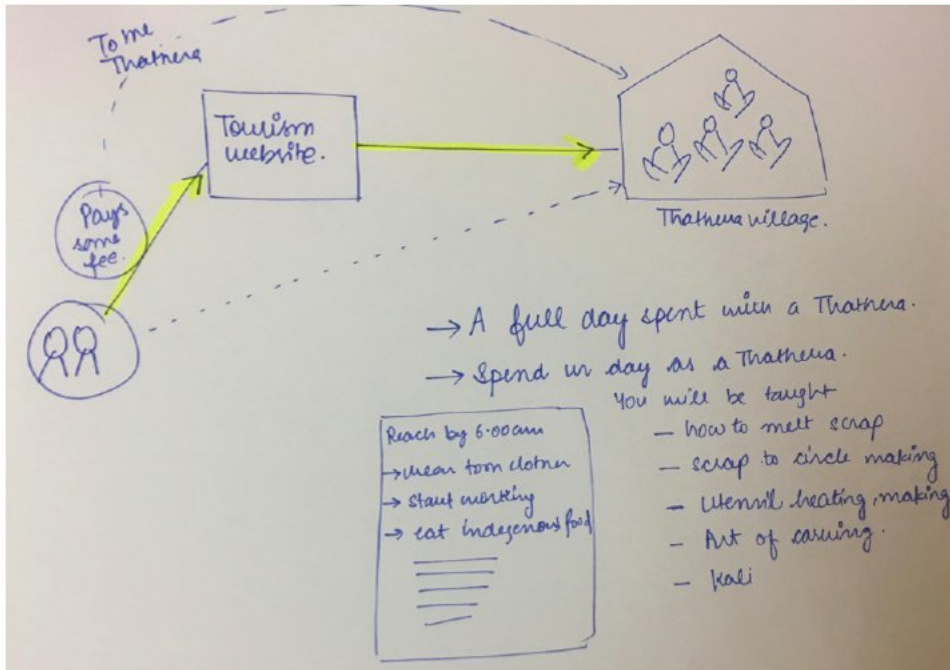
## Idea 3

A cultural trip to thathera community



Fig.7.(c). Idea 3

To design a trip to thathera community where in the user will get to experience a whole day in a thatheras role. From waking up early going to shop and to closing the shop in the night the user will experience everything. User will perform all the tasks from buying circles from the kaseras(middlemen) and making an utensil out of it. Eat their indigenous food and experience the thathera culture to the fullest. The idea is to design the field visit and incorporate it into punjab tourism.
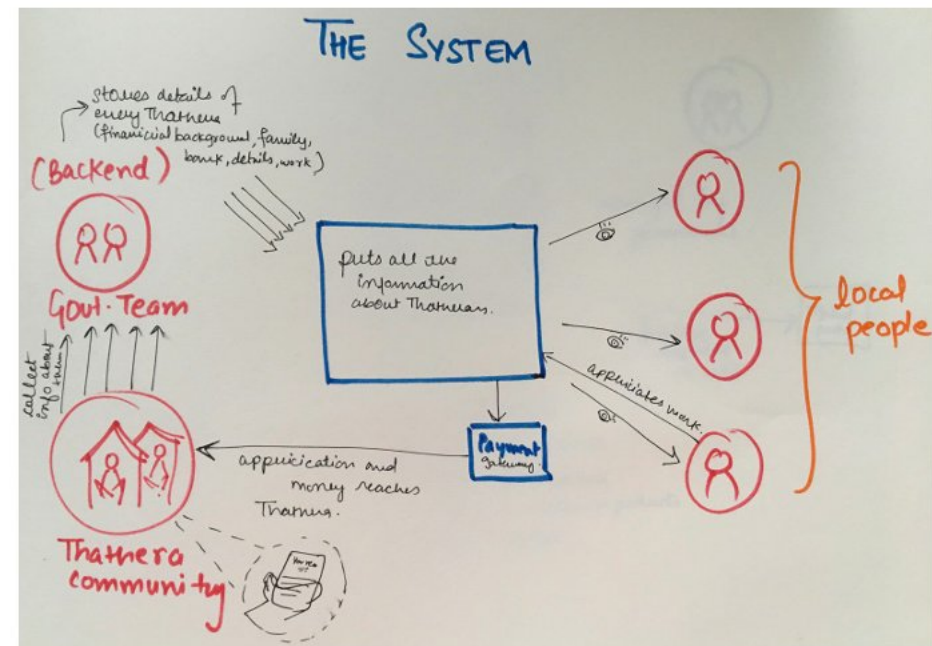
## Idea 4

A thathera culture centric ecosystem



Fig.7(d). Idea 4

The 'Thathera culture' centric platform which will tell the story of the thathera culture in an engaging way. It will cover all the elements related to thathera culture namely their strengths, customs, traditions, achievements, frustrations, utensil making journey and their products. The idea is to make user feel the sense of the thathera community.

# 8. Final concept

For the final concept some iterations were done on idea 4. The final concept consists of two parts :

**System structure** : that is how will the whole system work.
**Platform design** : Design of the platform mapping thatheras.
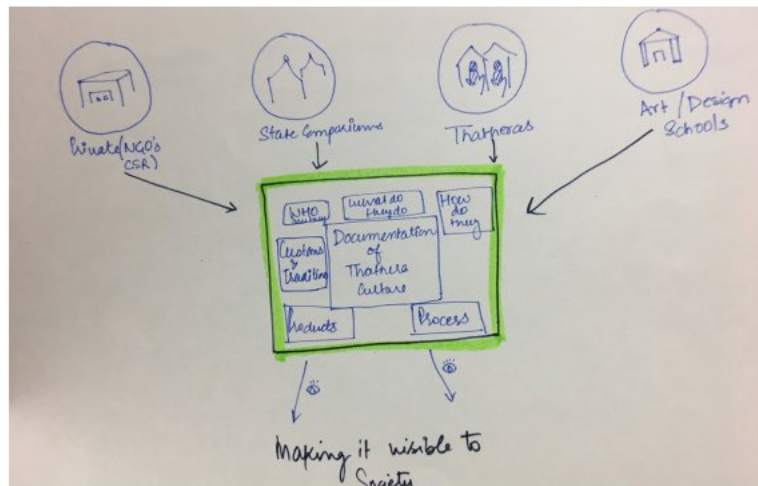
## 8.1 System structure



Fig.8.1.(a). Final system structure

The final iteration of the system structure is such that the there will be four stakeholders namely : state emporiums, industry (CSR's), thatheras and art/design schools. These four stakeholders will help us build the platform. The initiative of the project will be done by state emporium or the industry people. And later the project will be continued with contribution of all the stakeholders.

**Stakeholders**

| Who | How will they contribute ? | Why will they contribute? |
|---|---|---|
| State emporiums | With its direct contact with the craft and community, they can help generate a database of information that is authentic and empathetic | Get a platform where culture is mapped<br><br>An assurance that with the increased visibility on the community and its crafts, people get attracted to it<br><br>This creates direct access for public to these crafts<br><br>It reduces the role of middleman by creating the possibility of direct marketing |
| Industry | CSR funds for empowering a social cause.<br><br>Offer possible internships to students studying these communities | Gets tax benefits for funding<br><br>Gets respect for showing social concern |
| Thathera | Map themselves on to the platform and tag their products | Get recognition for their work<br><br>Connection to the world |

| Art/design schools | Create information bases about the communities by visiting and documenting the communities  Help mapping through student projects | Recognition for information creation  Possible internships with industry/NGO's |
| --- | --- | --- |

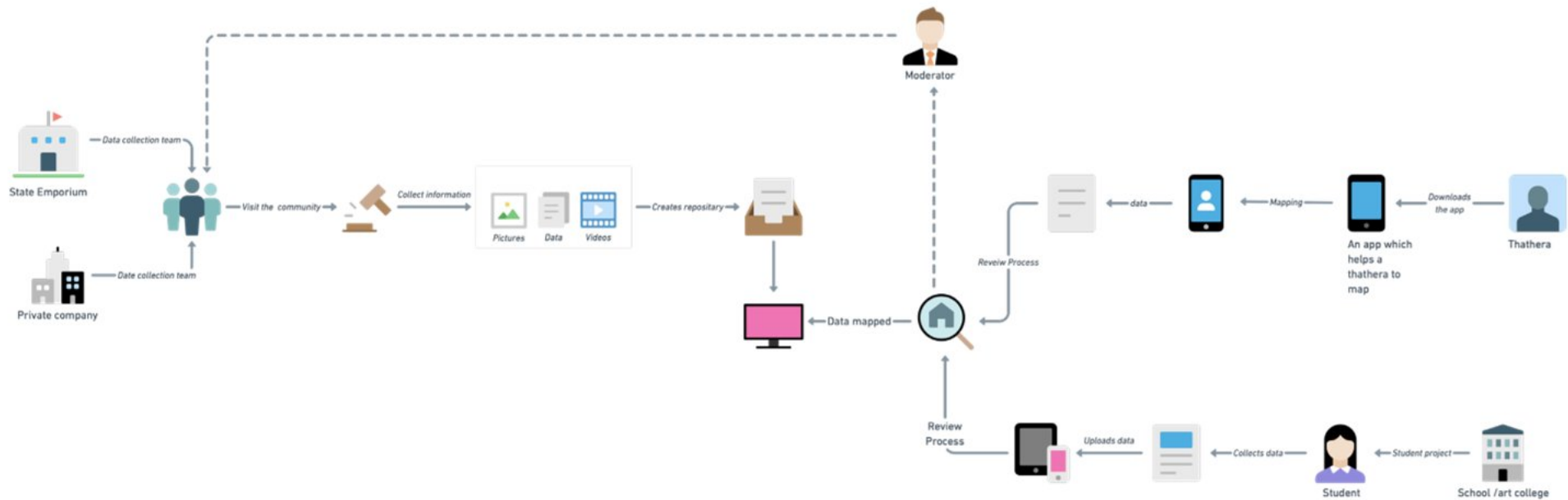## Detailed system design

The figure below explains the flow of the system working.



Fig.8.1.(b). Detailed system design

# 8.2 Platform design

Before starting the platform final design, the content of the system was finalised. Different categories/elements to be involved in the design were identified and the content for the same was finalised.
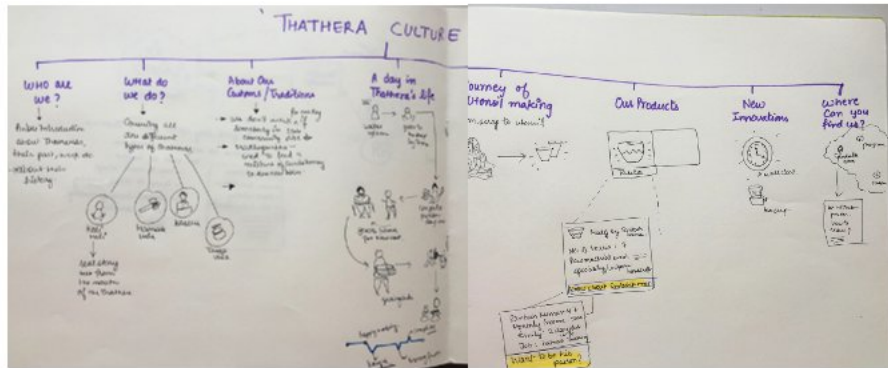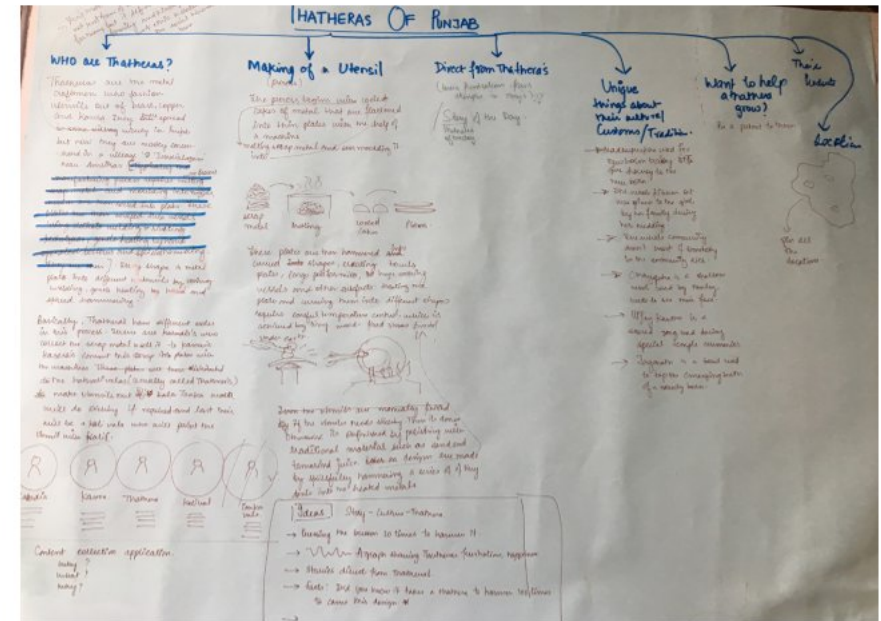


Fig.8.2.(a). Elements of final design



Fig.8.2.(b). Content of final design

## 8.2(a)Platform design iteration 1

The figure represents a rough information flow of the platform. The idea was that after coming to the platform it will take users through different roles to experience the thathera culture and the user will have the privilege to choose what role does he want to to try or the user could skip the role and directly jump to check the website.
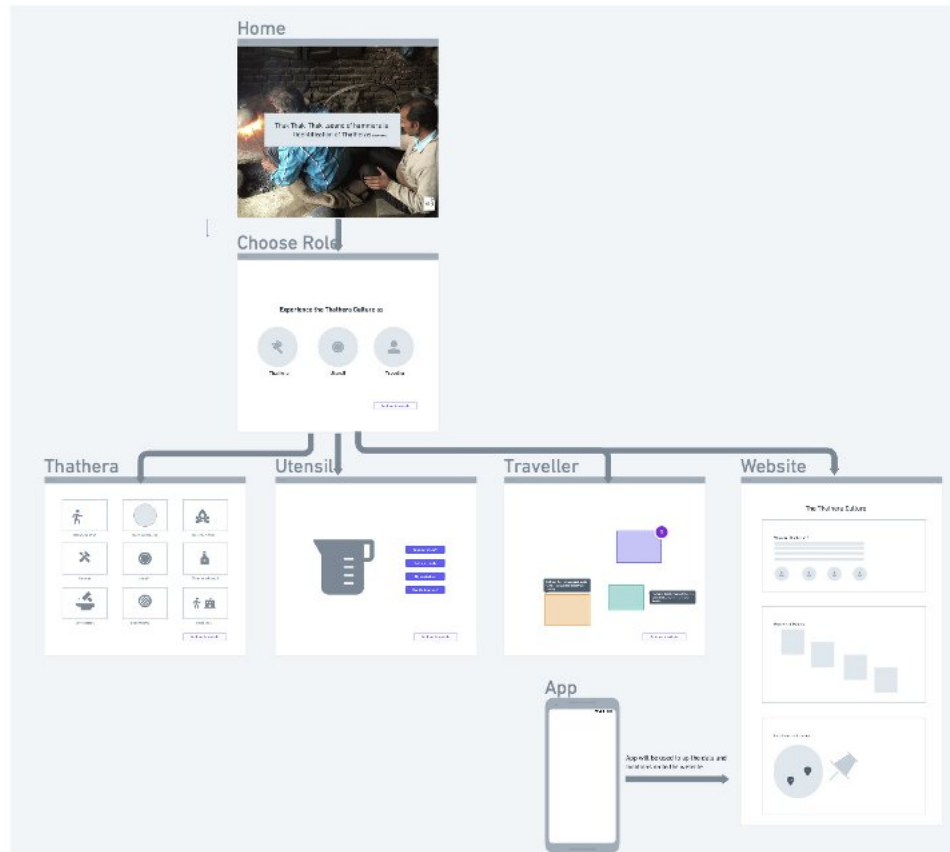
# Information flow



Fig.8.2.(c). Information flow of design

### Thathera trip as a 'Thathera'

The Thathera will be given a task to make an utensil and he will perform it by collecting all the raw materials required. It will give an essence about how is a day in a thathera's life.

### Thathera trip as an 'Utensil'

The utensil will talk about its history, its use and how its use is declining with passage of time or it is used no more. Also the utensil will try convincing user to help the utensil increase its productivity by being a patron to a thathera.

### Thathera trip as a 'traveller'

The traveller will visit thathera shops and will get to know about thathera customs, traditions, frustrations etc. Each shop(Thathera) visited by the traveller will tell him a new story. This will help create more empathy in the traveller towards thatheras.

### Website

The Website will present all the information about thathera culture mostly in visual form. After going through the role playing it will be easier for the user to get all the information about the culture.

### Mobile App

A mobile app will be used to collect content and to map more people on the platform. The app will have proper instructions on what to click and how to click. Anybody following the it step by step will be able to map Thatheras. The idea of using a mobile app is to make content collection easier. In this case thatheras were just limited to a one state but what if they were spread all over the country then it would have been hard to map. So this mobile app will make the content collection part of the project much more
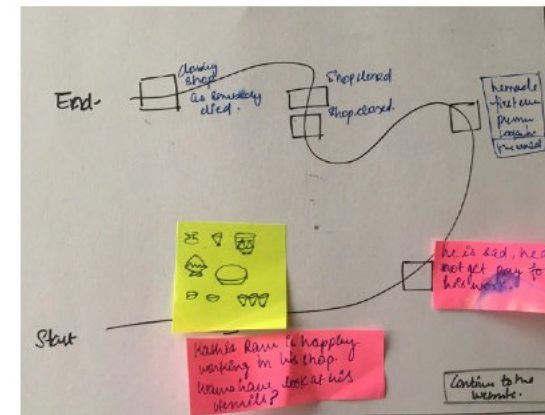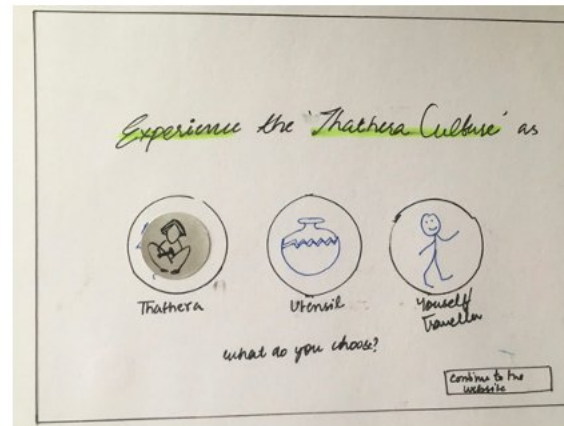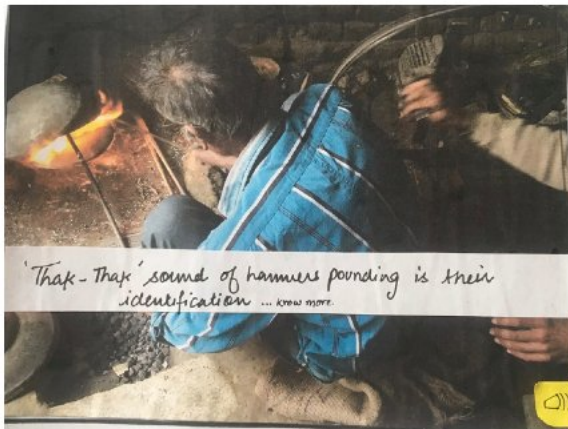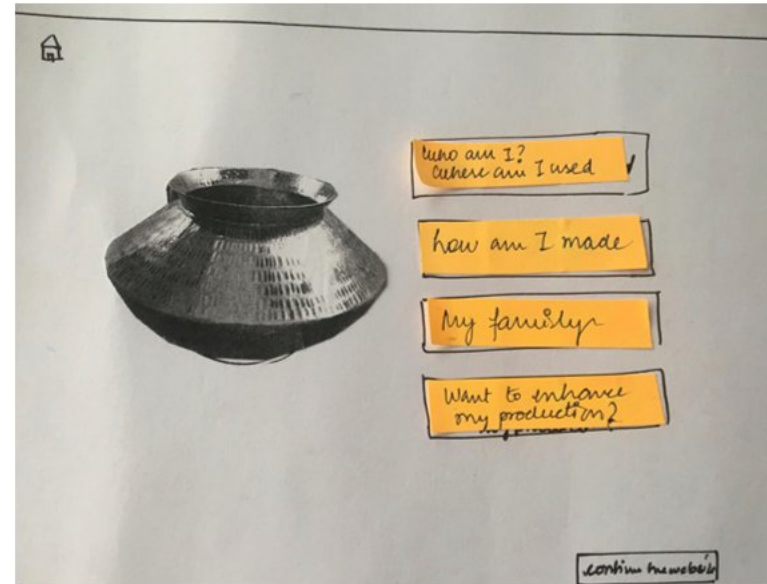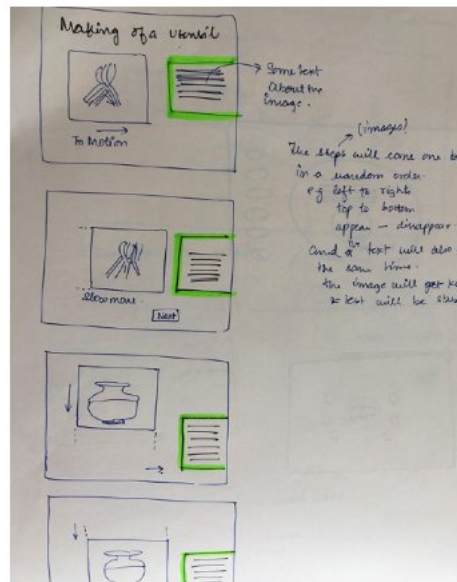
**Lo-fi wireframing**









Fig.8.2.(d). Lo-fi wireframes
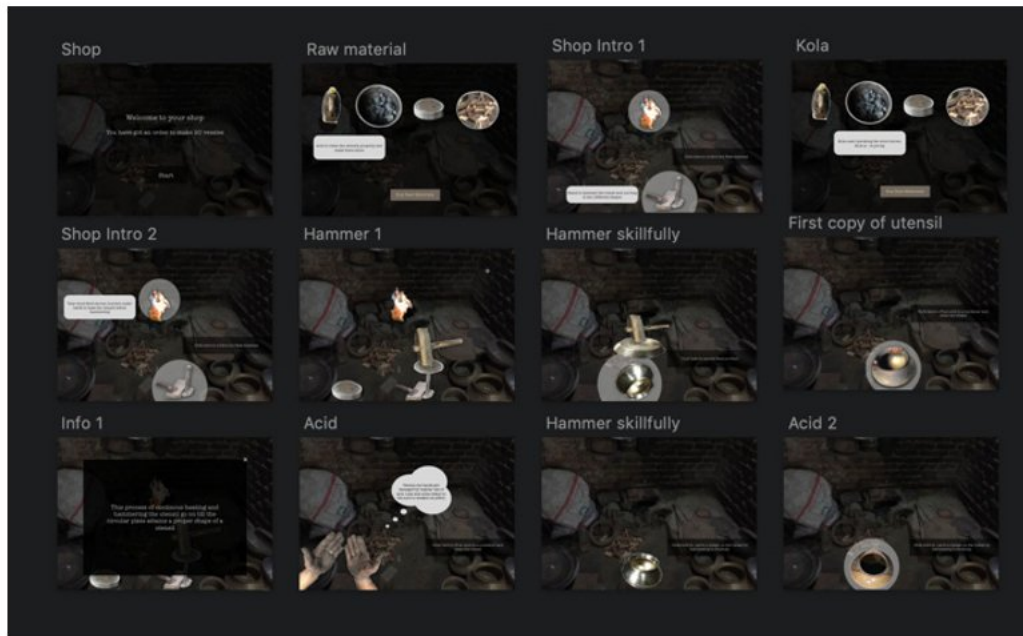
# Hi-fi wireframing



Fig.8.2.(e). Hi-fi screens for thathera role



Fig.8.2.(f). Hi-fi screens for thathera role
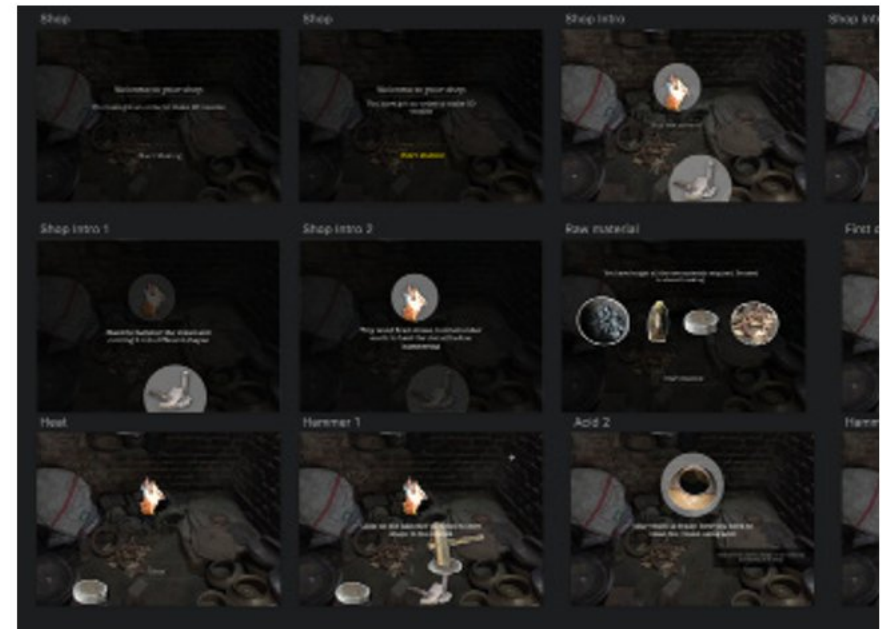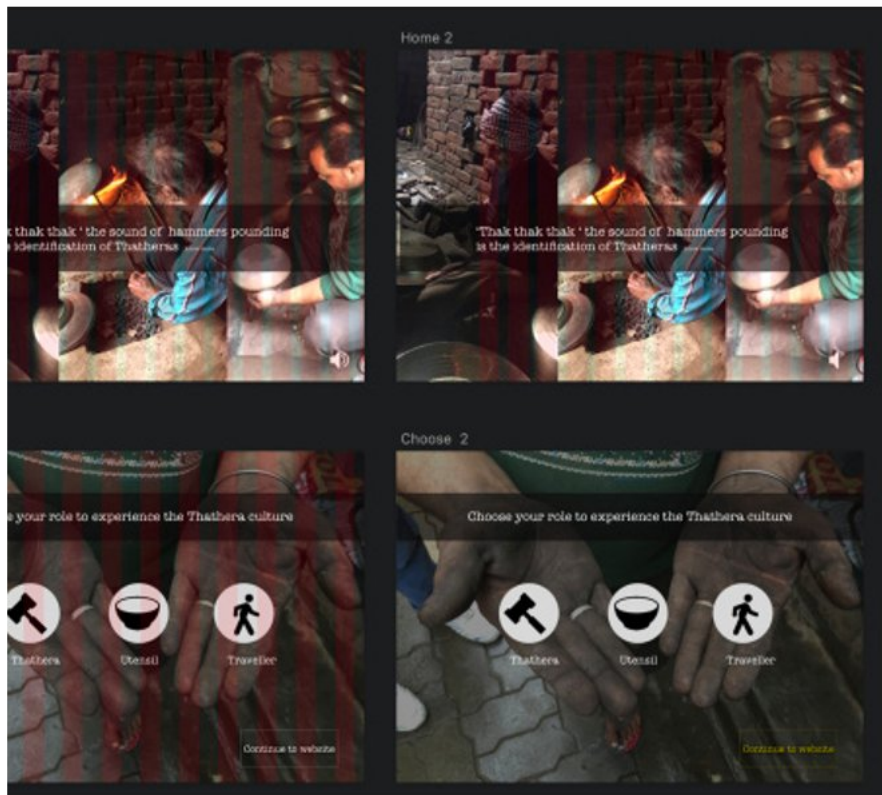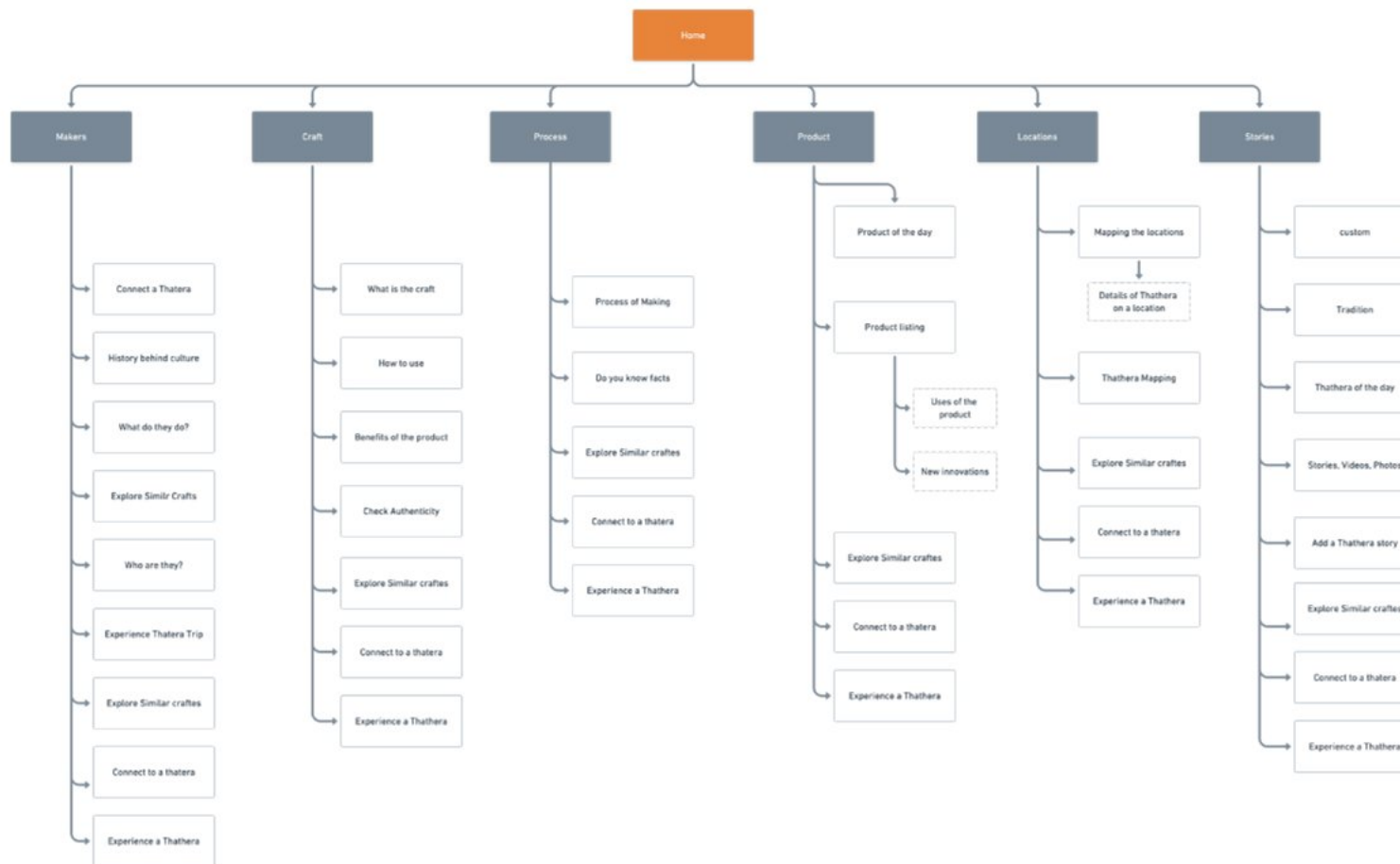
Fig.8.2.(g). Hi-fi screens for home pages

This idea of choosing a role after entering the website was discarded later on after testing it with some people. The feedback received was that they weren't clear what do they focus on and also the process of utensil of utensil making seemed very easy to them. Later the idea was reworked and the final iteration of the platform was made.

# 8.2(b) Platform design final iteration

**Information architecture**

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                                          ┌──────────┐
                                          │   Home   │
                                          └──────────┘
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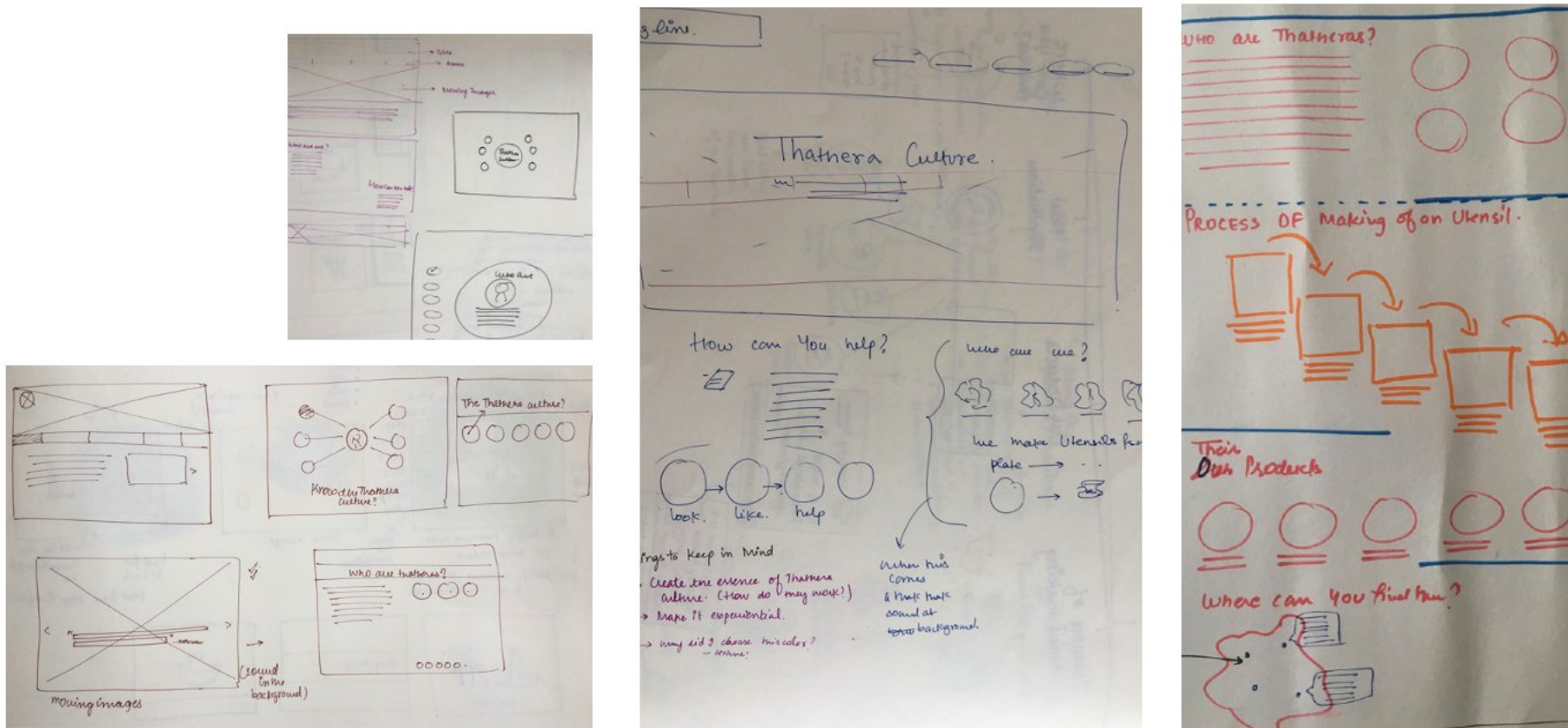| Makers | Craft | Process | Product | Locations | Stories |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Connect a Thatera | What is the craft | Process of Making | Product of the day | Mapping the locations | custom |
| History behind culture | How to use | Do you know facts | Product listing | Details of Thathera on a location | Tradition |
| What do they do? | Benefits of the product | Explore Similar craftes | Uses of the product | Thathera Mapping | Thathera of the day |
| Explore Similr Crafts | Check Authenticity | Connect to a thatera | New innovations | Explore Similar craftes | Stories, Videos, Photos |
| Who are they? | Explore Similar craftes | Experience a Thathera | Explore Similar craftes | Connect to a thatera | Add a Thathera story |
| Experience Thatera Trip | Connect to a thatera | | Connect to a thatera | Experience a Thathera | Explore Similar craftes |
| Explore Similar craftes | Experience a Thathera | | Experience a Thathera | | Connect to a thatera |
| Connect to a thatera | | | | | Experience a Thathera |
| Experience a Thathera | | | | | |

**Lo - fi wireframing**



Fig.8.2(h). Lo-fi wireframing for final design

Fig.8.2(i). Grey framing for final design
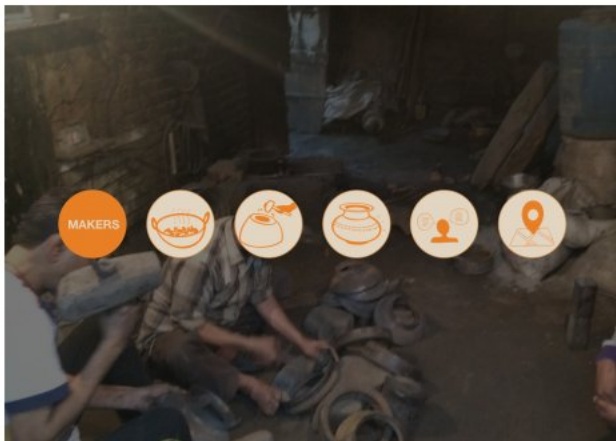
# Hi- fi wireframing



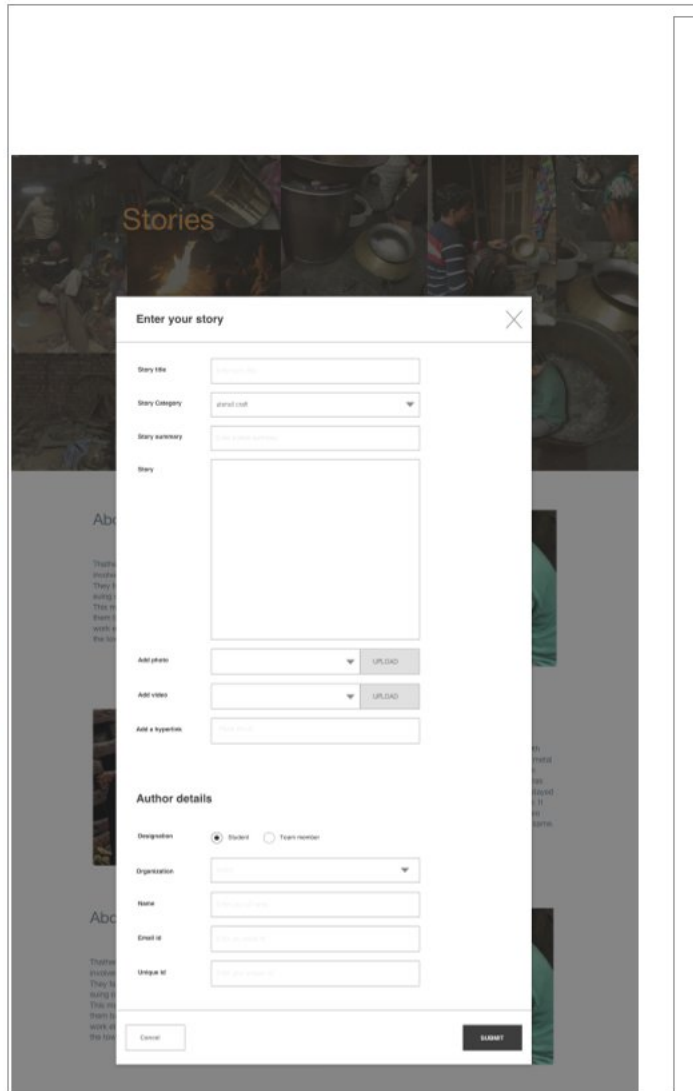Fig.8.2.(j) Thathera home screen
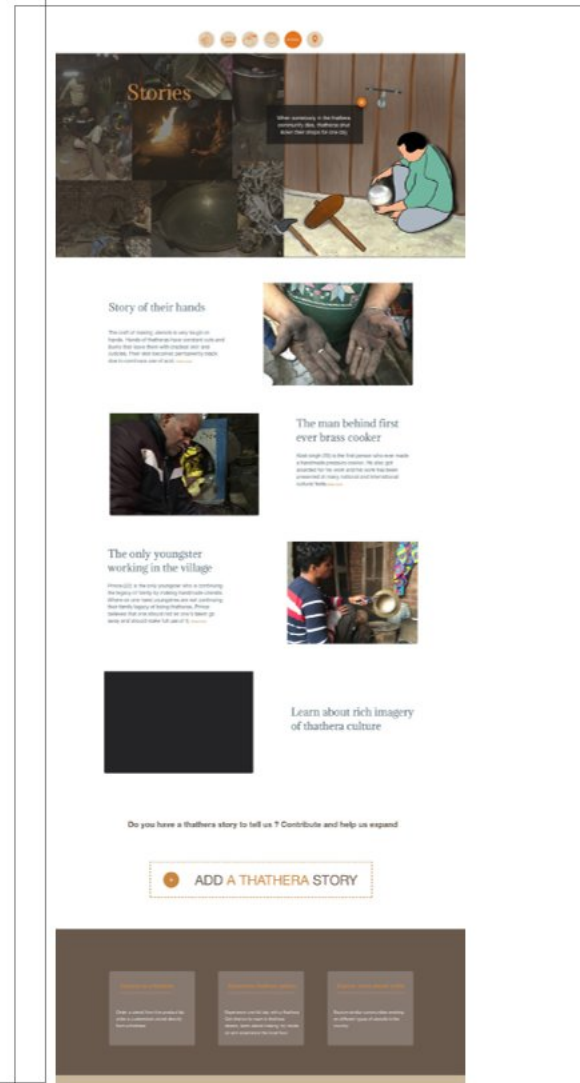


Fig.8.2.(k) form for story collection
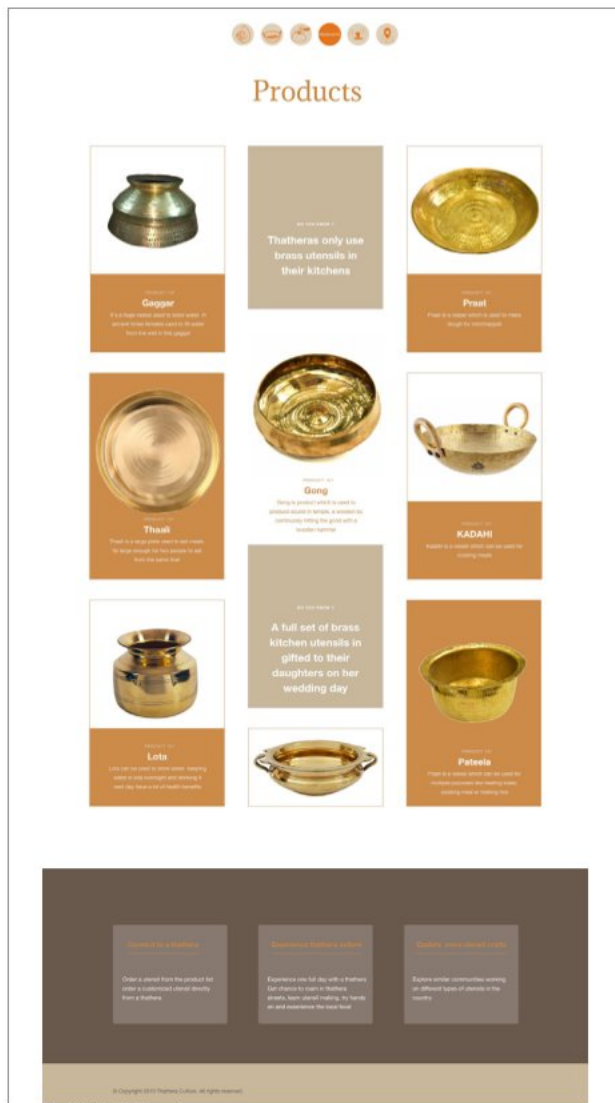


Fig.8.2.(l) Stories page
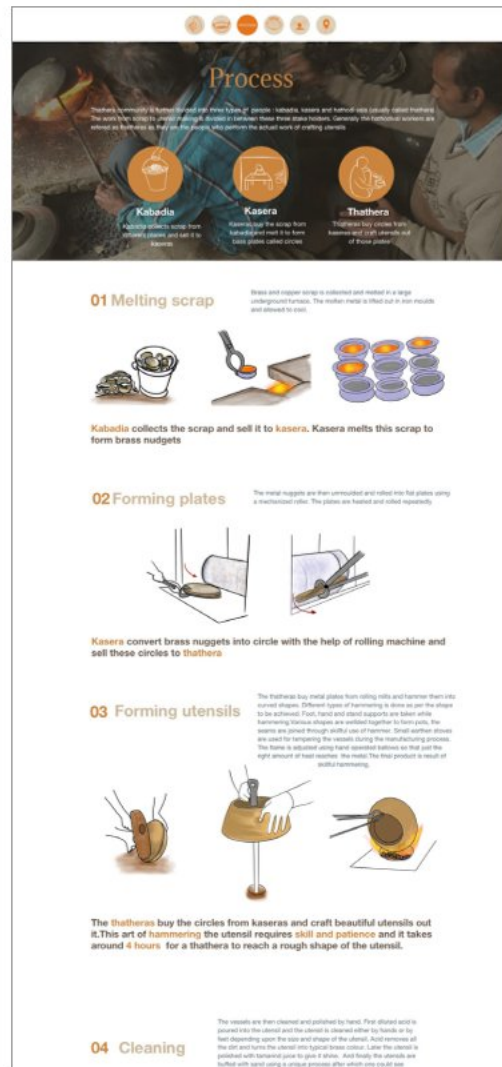
Fig.8.2.(m) Products page


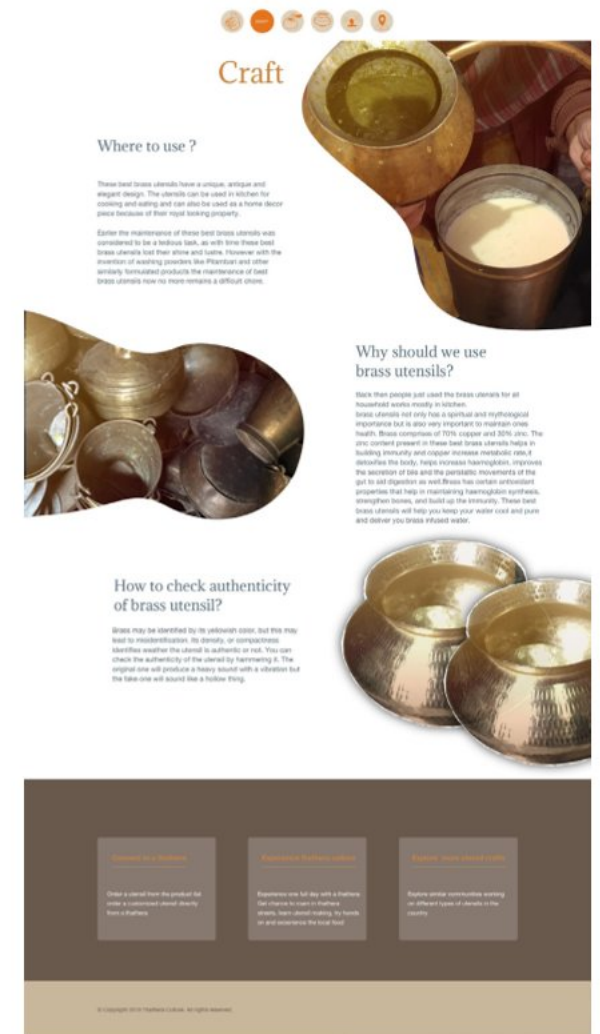Fig.8.2.(n) Process of making utensils


Fig.8.2(o) About the craft

# 9. Evaluation Plan

## What to evaluate ?

**Scalability of the platform** - Weather the design solution is scalable or not. Can the final design be used to perform mapping for different cultures or communities as well?

**System structure** - Weather the working of the system is feasible or not?

**Platform design** -
Weather the users are able to get the sense of the thathera culture?
Do they find it interesting ?
Do they have any new knowledge about thatheras after visiting the platform?

## How to evaluate ?

**System structure**
Expert evaluation will be done to test the system working. The system structure will be shown to authorities from any state emporium (preferably punjab state emporium), teacher from a design/art school and a thathera. They will be asked whether they think the design is feasible or not. If not then what are the areas that can be worked on.

**Scalability of the platform**
The framework of the designed solution will be used to map some other craft or culture eg. music, festival, community etc

**Platform design**
Will be tested with 5-6 users who are cultural enthusiasts.
users will be provided with the link of the platform.
After going through the platform users will be asked the following question :
What do they think the platform is for?
What were they looking for in the platform?

Do they gain any new knowledge after visiting the platform?
Do they find the platform interesting?
Which feature of the platform struck them the most?

# 10. References

[1] "Cultural Mapping - WordPress.com." https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/kc69-cultural-mapping.pdf. Accessed 12 Jan. 2019.

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