INCREASING THE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND POLITICAL LITERACY OF SRI LANKAN YOUTH
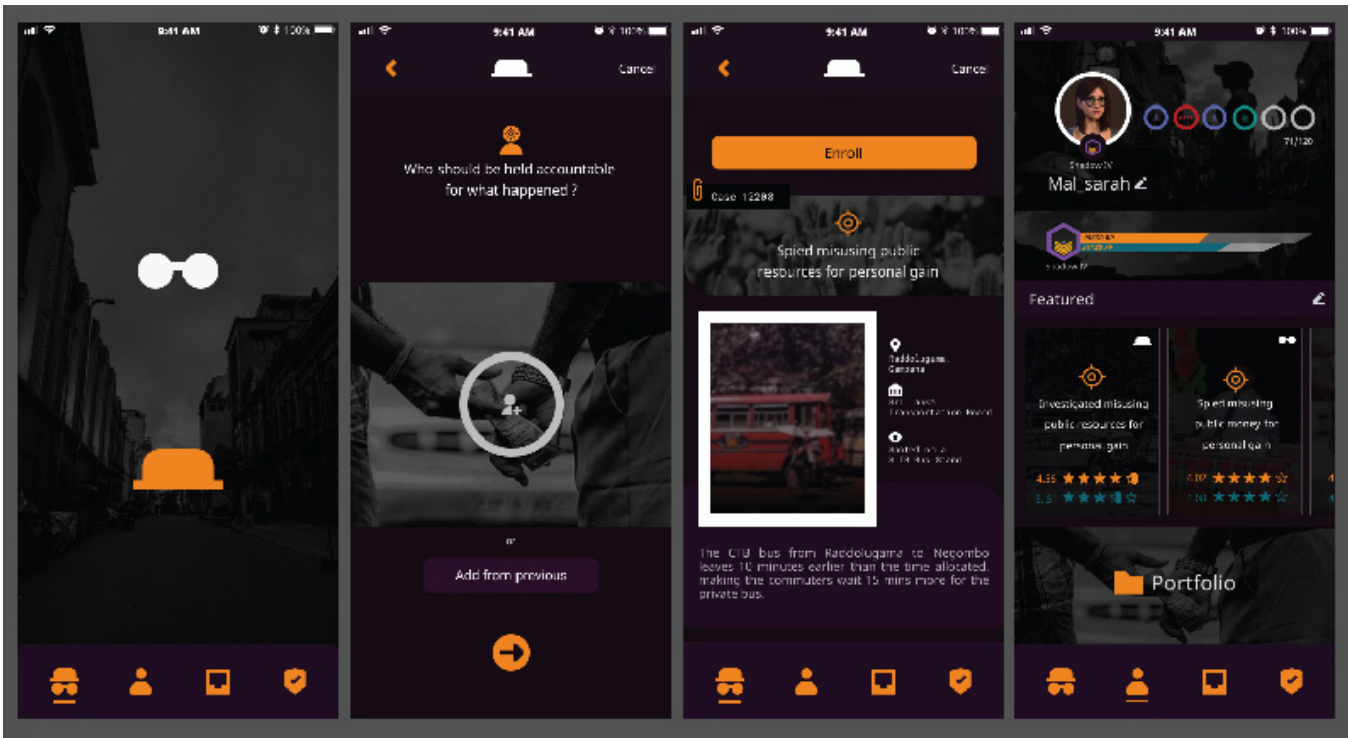
A Communication Design Aspect

The majority of the younger generation of Sri Lanka in particular have a very low regard for the whole subject of politics. The reason for this has been the political dysfunction that they witness in their day-to-day lives. The most common dialogue they hear concerning politics is one where the older generations acknowledge that the political landscape is an utter mess.

This has created an unsavory attitude among the younger generation towards politics. Hence, they feel little or no necessity in pursuing knowledge about the existing political climate and its intricacies and how it affects their own fate and the future of Sri Lanka. This is not a very promising situation for the country as the next generation is unavailable and unable to make sustainable and rational political decisions for the betterment of Sri Lanka.

To address this critical scenario, the essential political literacy component, or the skill that a youngster in Sri Lanka should possess was identified as the "Democratic Literacy". Democratic Literacy is the ability to analyze and evaluate political situations in a democratic setting or simply a democratic system. This includes analyzing and identifying undemocratic trends and democracy violations of the society and acting with integrity towards overcoming these issues.

Through narrative inquiries done with new voters it was identified that they do not have a clear understanding about the true meaning of democracy. To add to this, it was identified that they are influenced by the undemocratic patterns. The authoritarian trends and shifts that can be identified when looking at the Sri Lankan political climate and the perception about democracy among Sri Lankans being not very accurate in political terms could be identified as examples of these patterns. The youngsters who are influenced by these undemocratic patterns of the society enter the same loop of unjustifiable political decision making that has happened in Sri Lanka in the past few decades. Hence, to balance this out, the solution lies in equipping the younger generation with essential tools to increase democratic literacy.

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Interface of the Designed Application

As a communication designer, when analyzing the methods to equip these youngsters with the democratic literacy, it was identified that there should be a communication system that gives these youngsters the voice in the society to discuss democracy by making politics more accessible and interesting, which provides them with an interactive tool to support their first steps in the journey as responsible citizens who are involved and politically literate.

Based on the testing and research two user groups were identified. The first users were the ones who are likely to be involved in this political discussion and the second being users who are unlikely to be involved in the political discussion about democracy. The proposed solution of the project aimed to provide these users with a mobile based interaction that enables them to practice said required democratic literacy skills, specifically the skill of spotting and analyzing democracy violations in the country. By doing that, this communication mechanism was designed to increase political involvement and the democratic literacy. Through the same mechanism, the option of identifying the accountable authorities for

the democracy violations and exposing them to the society was enabled to raise their voice as a young responsible generation.

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