

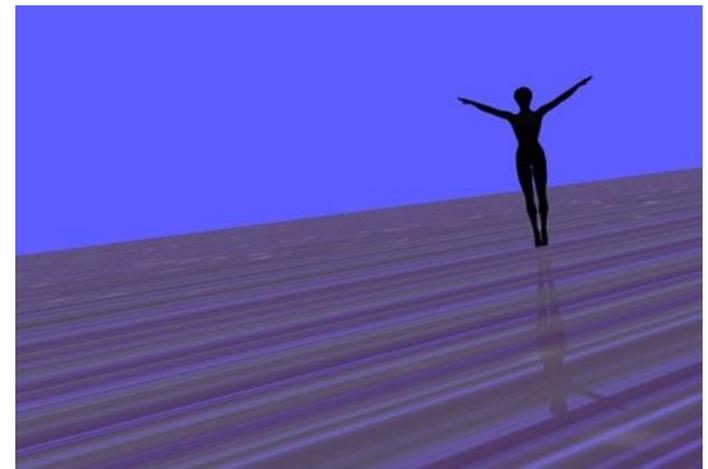


New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

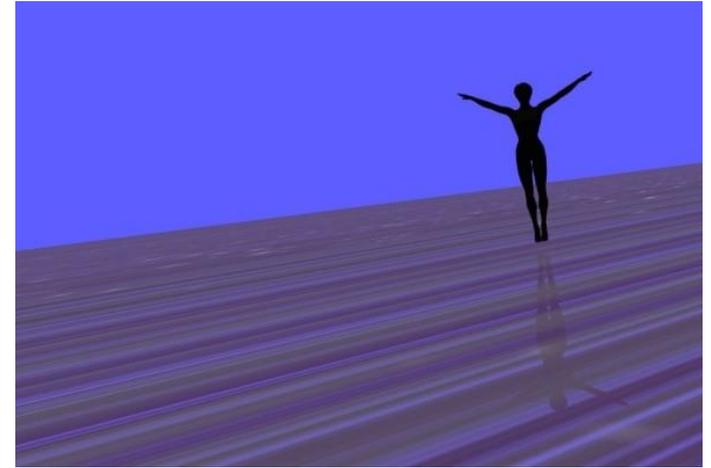
Democracy

Upper-Intermediate
New Internationalist
Easier English ready
lesson



This lesson:

Speaking 1: what is democracy?



Quiz: democracy and the world

Vocabulary: related to democracy

Reading: about democracy – the story of Iceland

Speaking 2: what is democracy?

Writing: a story for children

Questions:

**1/ What is “democracy”?
(and what is the opposite?)**

**2/ How can we get better democracy than
we have at the moment?**

**3/ How are the Internet, Facebook,
Twitter etc related to democracy?**



QUIZ

1. How many people in the world now use the Internet?

- *a) 30 million b) 300 million c) 3 billion*

2. What percentage of internet users are in:

- *a) Europe? b) Africa? c) Asia?*

3. What percentage of the population have Internet in:

- *a) North America? b) Africa? C) Europe?*

4. How many emails are sent every second?

- *a) About 2.5 thousand b) About 2.5 million c) About 2.5 billion*

5. Which country has the most journalists in prison?

- *a) USA b) China c) Turkey*

6. Name 5 of the countries with the most censorship of the Internet in the world.

7. How many people are there in China's Internet police?

- *a) 500,000 b) 1 million c) 2 million*

8. How many people now use Facebook?:

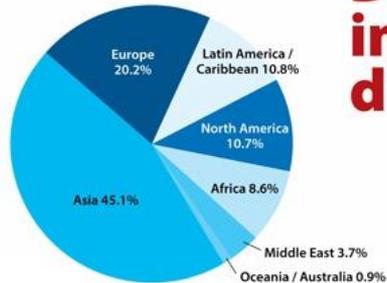
- *a) 1,350 b) 1,350 thousand c) 1,350 million*

To find the answers, look at this :

<http://www.newint.org/features/2015/01/01/digital-democracy-facts/>

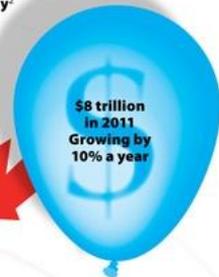
INTERNET

There are 3 billion internet users in the world – 8 times more than in 2000¹



Total internet economy²

Bigger than the economy of Spain or Canada – includes online purchases, advertising, investment in servers, software, communications systems.



LAWS and CONVENTIONS

Protection:

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says – *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom... to receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.* In 2012 an extension to include online media was adopted by 47 countries including China and Russia.

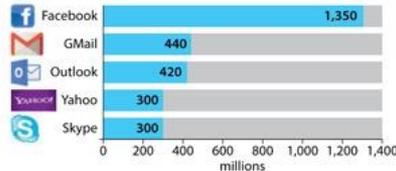
Threats:

Australia's proposed Data Retention Bill would compel telecommunication companies to retain for a minimum of 2 years the metadata of every subscriber in Australia.¹⁵
New counterterrorism laws going through the Australian parliament mean that journalists could face 10 years' jail for exposing security agency bungs.¹⁶

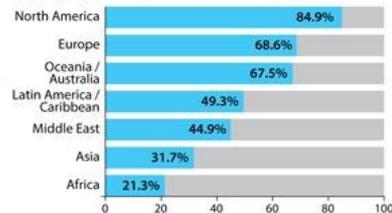
In Britain the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Bill, rushed through parliament without proper scrutiny in July 2014, will violate the privacy of citizens and compromise journalistic duty to protect confidential sources.¹⁷
Russia has passed a series of new laws which compel bloggers with 3,000 or more daily readers to register with the government, and make retweeting of 'extremist' views punishable by 5 years in jail.¹⁸

THE FACTS Democracy in the digital era

Users of large internet services and technologies³



Percentage of population that have internet coverage (internet penetration rates)



MASS SURVEILLANCE

\$120 billion – estimated total annual surveillance budget for the 'Five Eyes' (alliance of intelligence operations of Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand/ Aotearoa, US)⁴

\$54 billion – annual surveillance budget of the US Director of National Intelligence⁶

\$0.13 per person per day – surveillance cost per internet user⁶

20% ↑ – year-on-year increase in Australian state access to private data, without warrant⁷

36% of all raw information intercepted by Britain's GCHQ was passed on to the US's NSA⁸

24 – US mass surveillance programmes currently running (including Prism)⁹

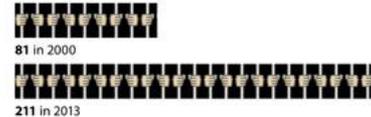
2 million – the reported size of China's internet police force in 2013¹⁰

\$110,000 – the bounty Russian authorities are offering for anyone able to crack the Tor anonymity network.¹¹

MEDIA FREEDOM

What happens to media practitioners is one way of measuring what's happening to press freedom.

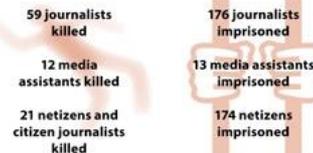
Journalists in prison:¹²



Countries with most imprisoned journalists in 2013:¹³



Under attack 2014¹⁴



CENSORSHIP

Top 10 internet censored countries (2014)¹⁵



Golden Shield

China has the most sophisticated content-filtering internet regime in the world. Golden Shield blocks destination IP addresses and domain names and also inspects the data being sent or received.⁵



¹ Internet World Stats.com nin.tl/1vRGGAU ² The Atlantic.com nin.tl/1HKZ2N0 ³ Statistica.com nin.tl/1z2F9na ⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists report nin.tl/12a76N7

Vocabulary

– match:

- 1) corruption
- 2) crowdsourcing
- 3) privatisation
- 4) constitution
- 5) colony
- 6) censorship

- a) A country under political control of another country.
- b) A set of rules that say how a country is governed.
- c) Using power to get something (eg. money) for yourself.
- d) Control of information and ideas.
- e) Getting money for a project from a lot of people online.
- f) When the government sells something (eg. a bank) to private people/companies

Iceland – what do you know already?

Birgitta Jónsdóttir, an activist and politician from Iceland, tells the story of her country and how it is becoming more democratic



Read the text to put these stages in order:

- a) Financial collapse.
- b) Lots of corruption by the mafia “The Octopus”.
- c) A comedian became Mayor of Reykjavik.
- d) Iceland became independent.
- e) New “crowdsourced” constitution written by the people.
- f) Iceland was a colony of Denmark and Norway.
- g) Banks grew too much, too quickly.
- h) 2 new parties: “Pirate Party” and “Bright Future”.
- i) Worst government ever.
- j) Discovery that the private buyers didn’t really buy the banks.
- k) Privatisation of banks

Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic, with a population of 320,001. It says it has the oldest parliamentary democracy in the world. But this is a myth; it was a colony of Denmark and Norway for centuries, and became an independent democratic republic in 1944.

We have a lot of corruption. Iceland is like a big Sicily. When they were becoming independent, the powerful mafia ('the Octopus') took everything from the country and gave it to their families and friends. It was like some African countries when they became independent about ten years later.

This is why the banks (when they became private in 2005) did not follow the professional laws. They gave the banks to people who pleased the 'mafia' families.

When the government studied the financial collapse, they found, in April 2010, that the buyers never really paid for the banks. The country didn't get the money for them.

Also, Iceland's bankers abused the European Economic Area banking laws to set up sister banks in Europe. So Iceland-based banks grew too much: to six times Iceland's GDP in only a few years. The bad bankers said we could be the financial leaders of the world. Iceland's President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and many others told people this, in Iceland and in other countries.. I did not believe this the fairytale, but most of the country did. Many people got good bank loans and the value of property rose.

There were many temptations. The bank owners put gold dust on their food and had private planes. Everyone loved them – and the bank owners also owned the media.

After the financial collapse in 2008, people had to see that everything they trusted had failed. There were many new thinktanks and grassroots groups. People discussed the future they wanted to develop together. They wanted to create Iceland 2.0 – a New Iceland - free from what brought them the world's fourth largest financial collapse.

People had to think like when they have a personal crisis. When you have a death in the family or a serious illness – you are more about to change. This is the same for societies.

In a deep crisis, you can make real changes. A good way to discover the true nature of a society is to start a discussion on what the society would like in its constitution or ‘social agreement’.

After the crisis, between 2009 and 2013, the people of Iceland tried to do something parliament had never been able to do in the 70 years since independence. By ‘crowdsourcing’, they wrote a new constitution by and for the people of Iceland, based on our values today. In a referendum, 67% of the people voted for the new constitution.

People began to trust the parliament. But parliament did not do what the people wanted. They did not bring in the new constitution, and, in April 2013, a new Centre-Right coalition that came to power. So now it will probably not happen.

We had more success in other areas. Eva Joly (lawyer and whistleblower) gave advice on how to bring to justice the people responsible for the crisis. In 2012, at the Landsdomur (a special court started in 1905 to make parliamentarians responsible), former Prime Minister Geir Haarde was found guilty of not calling emergency cabinet meetings before the financial crisis.

Also, there were very big changes in the local elections. In 2010, a very popular comedian Jón Gnarr (of the new Best Party) became mayor of Reykjavik. The party promised to use a direct democracy platform called Better Reykjavik. People suggest ideas here and the city council discusses the most popular suggestions every month.

In the April 2013 general election, two new parties entered the parliament: Bright Future and The Pirate Party. I helped co-create the Pirate Party and I became a Pirate Party MP.

But we now have the worst government for as long as I can remember. The people from the Octopus – the corrupt old Iceland – can now do whatever they feel is good for the 1%.

Key:

- f/Iceland was a colony of Denmark and Norway. Before 1944
- d/Iceland became independent. – 1944
- b/Lots of corruption by the mafia “The Octopus”. 1944-2015
- k/Privatisation of banks. - 2005
- g/Banks grew too much, too quickly. 2005-8
- a/Financial collapse. – 2008
- j/Discovery that the private buyers didn’t really buy the banks.2010
- c/A comedian became Mayor of Reykjavik. 2010
- e/New “crowdsourced” constitution written by the people. 2013
- h/2 new parties: “Pirate Party”and “Bright Future”.2013
- i/Worst government ever. 2015

Speaking

Discuss again:

1/ What is “democracy”?

(and what is the opposite?)

2/ How can we get better democracy than we have at the moment?

3/ How are the Internet, Facebook, Twitter etc related to democracy?

or **Writing?**

Write the story of democracy in Iceland as a children’s story:

You can begin

“Once upon a time, there was a small country

Homework:

Read the complete simplified text:

http://ewiki.newint.org/index.php/Democracy_in_the_digital_age

then click on the original at the bottom and read that. You'll be amazed how easy it is to understand after you've read the easier English text.

Interested in reading more about democracy?:

http://ewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue_479

Or look up the category “democracy”:

<http://ewiki.newint.org/index.php/Category:Democracy>

