

Is Democracy Dying in Venezuela?
**A radio documentary explaining the
current crisis the country is facing**

By
Andreína González

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Public Relations, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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ABSTRACT

Venezuela has been non-stop on the global news for more than two years now. Today it is in the top 15 most corrupt countries and in the top 20 most dangerous countries in the world. Even though it counts with the largest proven reserves of oil in the world, it has the world's worst inflation and it is today in crisis.

This dissertation conducted by practice produced a radio documentary which explores my country, Venezuela, through the eyes of different people, diverse in nationality and backgrounds. It is a mix of personal opinions and statistics.

The aim of this documentary is to explain the current crisis Venezuela is facing and answer the question: how the country that was one the richest in Latin America got to a state of near collapse. It investigates the roots of the crisis, by analysing different indexes, studies and by interviewing some experts.

The audience is taken on a trip in which contributors tell their stories and comment on the present situation. The voices on the documentary give an insight into the economic boom where oil was a game-changer for the country, then the promises to end poverty with the Socialism of the 21st century, and it ends with the reasons for the current crisis and hopes for the future.

The raw statistics with the socio-economic data of 2019 explain the reality for the vast majority of Venezuelans and give rise to the claims that the country cannot be considered a democracy any more.

This written document describes the research on the subject of the documentary, referring to the relevant literature and other projects carried out in this area.

This paper also explains the artistic and practical process that led to the ultimate edition of the radio documentary: *Venezuela, How Did We Get Here?*

In this 32-minute radio documentary I attempt to address why and how Venezuela arrived at the crisis that it is in today.

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Andreína González,

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Democracies are in danger. Many authors have agreed that there has been a shift on political matters on Western countries and “the rest” and that the global scene is worrisome. Different events are threatening democracy, like the vote on Brexit in the UK, the election of Donald Trump in the US and of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, the consolidation of populism in Peru, Poland and the Philippines, the self-styled illiberal democracy of Hungary, the re-election of Vladimir Putin in Russia, and the recent events in Venezuela where two men claim to be president.

The present dissertation aims to investigate the current situation regarding democracy. It uses the radio documentary as a way of giving voice to others and not to give personal opinions. In order to do so, I will focus my research on one particular country, Venezuela. I have chosen it because it is my own, and it is one of the examples that democratic societies in 2019 are deconsolidating.

My project will serve as an explainer for an Irish audience about why and how Venezuela came to the crisis that it is in today.

With this dissertation by practice I explore why the country that was once the richest in Latin America is today in a state of near collapse. The documentary also examines how things went downhill since the economic boom of the 1970s. These are the main questions addressed during this 32-minute radio documentary.

While this documentary is about the reasons for the crisis as to how the country got to its current breakdown, it also explores why the state government is not considered to be a democracy. In the Democracy Index by The Economist Intelligence Unit, Venezuela became an “authoritarian regime” in 2017. The nation lost its status of “flawed democracy” and has been declining every year since 2006, due to the weakening trust in institutions, decay in media freedoms and destruction of civil liberties (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019).

The goal of my documentary is to inform and educate. Through this written report, I will explain the process behind completing the audio part.

In Chapter Two, I will provide evidence of the research involved in the preparation and performance of this project. I analyse a range of texts, perspectives and indexes by journalists, academics and different organisations, both inside and outside Venezuela. This helped for the preparation of the interviews and the script of the documentary.

Chapter Three will deal with the designing, construction and editing of the documentary itself. It will cover the decisions that were made, the editing process and the reasons for choosing the contributors.

Chapter Four will discuss how the product was completed from the early phases (consultation with the dissertation supervisors) to delivering the final edition: including what worked well and what did not, what interviews were finally omitted, as well as why.

The final chapter will offer a conclusion: my perspective on the finished product and my views on the formulation and execution of the documentary, where it would be suitable for broadcast and other projects that could be created in the future using mine as a basis.

CHAPTER 2: EVIDENCE OF RESEARCH

The aim of this dissertation is to create a radio documentary and in order to do so I have researched, read books, skimmed newspapers, watched the news, listened to podcasts, talked to people, browsed on the internet, among other things to more or less get an understanding of the topic of study.

I have planned to create a piece called: *Venezuela, how did we get here?* that at the beginning intended to answer one question: Is democracy in Venezuela dying? But over the time it shifted to become an intention to try and explain to non-Venezuelans how the country that was once the richest in Latin America is today in collapse.

To create the project, I researched different works that would serve for the design and construction of the documentary. And in this chapter, I will outline that literature.

It is divided in three sections: Definitions and Background, Omen of Trouble and Numbers that Matter. The three will helped to shape the foundation for the interviews conducted and consequently for the editing of the radio documentary.

Definitions and Background

In order to reach a conclusion and answer the main research question of this dissertation, “Is democracy dying in Venezuela?”, concepts need to be demarcated. This section will study the history of democracy, its definition and the values associated with the same and then, the situation in Venezuela since the 1970s when the retreat started.

Democracy in History

Democracy comes from the Greek and means “the power of the people”. *Demos* equals people, and *Kratos* means power.

“Democracy can be seen as a set of practices and principles that institutionalise, and thereby, ultimately, protect freedom... [it] presupposes equality before the law, due process and political pluralism” (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Democracy got formed from three historical models: Athenian democracy, Roman republicanism, and the republicanism of the Italian Renaissance.

Doctor Jason Vick (2015) stated that Athenian democracy arose because in the 7th and 6th centuries BC the cities were dominated by several tyrants. However, it did not develop overnight and did not appear only in Athens.

Vick described the key characteristics of this Athenian democracy. An understanding of freedom was seen **as the opportunity to govern and be governed in turn**. The concept of “freedom and citizenship unsurprisingly stressed civic virtue, public activity as the source of one’s identity, the subordination of private life to public affairs, and direct participation by an active, involved citizenry in the legislative and judicial functions”. The *demos* was autonomous, and the assembly of citizens was the key organ for the creation of laws (Vick, 2015).

Next is the Roman Republic. Even though it was not a democracy itself, it served as a base to the concept we have nowadays. It “provided a large role for **elections** and empowered its common citizens through various tribunes” (Vick, 2015).

Thirdly was the Italian Renaissance. These Republicans proclaimed two key principles: “the right to be free from any outside control of their political life,” and “the right to govern themselves as they thought fit,” which **allows for popular participation** (Skinner, 1978 cited in Vick, 2015).

Democratic Principles

Many scholars have discussed the principles that need to be present in order for a democracy to exist. And these principles will help establish whether or not Venezuelan is a democracy in the narration of the documentary.

Habermas talked about the principles of a free society, these being: 1) general accessibility, especially to information, 2) the elimination of privilege and, 3) the search for general norms of behaviour and discourse. The Council of Europe (2018) recognises the following as elements of a democracy: 1) fair and free elections, 2) freedom of expression and 3) freedom of assembly. And, other principles widely recognised and accepted are: the rule of law equally applied to all citizens, the protection of the human rights, the active participation of citizens in politics and civil life and the equal access to sources of information.

What this means is that in a democracy people choose their leaders and hold them accountable for their policies and behaviour in office. The people are sovereign and have a key role in participating in public life.

Citizens also have an obligation to learn about public issues and voting in elections as part of a civic duty.

In a democracy, citizens have basic rights that are guaranteed by international law and must be protected by the state.

Likewise, since all peoples are equal before the law, there is the rule of law, which guards the rights of citizens, preserves order and limits the power of government.

“The fundamental features of a democracy include government based on majority rule and the consent of the governed; the existence of free and fair elections; the

protection of minority rights; and respect for basic human rights” (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

Eduardo Fernández Luiña (2018) explains, on the other hand, that the ideal democracy has three values: liberal, republican and democratic. In the liberal value, there are few characteristics: rights of an individual nature, freedom of expression, association, mobility, conscience and the right to private property.

The Republican philosophy has three features: a division of powers, an active civil society and the rule of law and not of people. And finally is the democratic level, which calls for suffrage (the right to vote) and the right to be voted.

With these three ingredients, one can discriminate. One can differentiate what constitutes a democracy from what does not.

There are different causes for the current decline in democracy: the economic crisis, the crisis of elite renewal, people do not feel represented and the perception of corruption. In this sense, Victor Lapuente Gine (2017) establishes that the perception of corruption is what contributes to delegitimize the democratic system.

Venezuela



Venezuela is the South American country with the largest proven reserves of oil in the world. Yet, as it will be clarified in the documentary, it is today in crisis.

While global democratic progress has been uneven in recent years, Venezuela is one of the countries that have lowered the most in the ranking. Venezuela is now in the top 15 most corrupt countries (Transparency International, 2019) (see appendix 1), in the top 20 most dangerous countries in the world according to the Global Peace Index 2019 (see appendix 2) and has the world's worst inflation according to Trading Economics (2019) (see appendix 3). All this data is further illustrated in the documentary where our contributors explain their real implications.

According to Margarita Seminario (2017), Senior Program Manager to the Americas at The International Foundation for Electoral Systems, there is slow economic growth in the continent, “a surge of migration, ineffective leadership, socio-economic inequality, social conflicts caused by wealth inequality, corruption scandals linked to organized crime, and authoritarian regimes” – such as in Nicaragua, where government institutions helped eliminate the opposition, and Venezuela, where the

Constitutional Assembly illegally attempts to rewrite the constitution, authorities cancelled free and fair elections, and persecute those who object.

Venezuela was a Spanish colony until 1811, when they declared their independence. From there until 1958 the country suffered from multiple dictatorships, transitional governments and the foundation of four Republics, but in January 1958 the military dictator Pérez Jiménez was forced out, awakening a young democracy.

The country enjoyed its freedom till Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999 with populist ideas, using socialist rhetoric and founding what he called the Fifth Republic. And today, the country suffers from “economic decay, food and drug shortages, mass emigration, violent political unrest, and corruption” (Allsop, 2019). This statement served as basis for some of the interviews, where I ask if Chavez is to blame and the reasons for the crisis.

Having briefly given a background to democracy, the chapter will continue with some of the causes of the problem.

Omen of Trouble

Contrary to what many believe, the economic, social and political crisis that Venezuela is experiencing did not begin with the access of Commander Hugo Chávez to the Presidency of the Republic in 1998. In fact, it began with President Pérez at the beginning of the 1970s. In conversations with Venezuelan Professor Alex Fergusson (2019), it was possible to identify some of the reasons for the current crisis. The nationalization of oil and the profligate and corrupt economic boom that derived from it, marked the beginning of an economic and social policy of large deals that 20 years later, would provoke the "black Friday" in 1983 (which was the first major devaluation of the bolivar and the first exchange control). Later, in 1989 the great popular revolt and looting known as "the Caracazo" took place.

During this period, the neglect of the needs of the people, corruption and the attempt to correct deviations through the application of neoliberal economic measures (such as privatizations, unrealistic budgets, increased cost of services and other measures), promoted discontent. The military uprising of February 4, 1992, with Chávez at the head and then the banking debacle in the mid-1990s during the Caldera government closed that period (Fergusson, 2019).

All this information is retold in the documentary as the beginning of the crisis.

Beginning of the economic boom of the 70s, going through the Black Friday, the Caracazo and the Coup d'État

In the early 1920s, Venezuela began to enjoy its **oil boom**. First along the shores of Lake Maracaibo in the west, and then in areas in the eastern part of the country, vast oil reserves were discovered and started to be exploited (Alexander, 1965).

The oil boom brought profound changes to the traditional structure of the country. The cities near the oil fields and the capital began to grow rapidly, stimulated to a large extent by the construction projects undertaken by the administration. A new middle class associated with the expansion of the urban economy began to develop. A modern urban working class appeared in the oil fields and in the main cities (Alexander, 1965).

The oil brought prosperity and change to the country. The Venezuelan currency, the *bolívar*, was in fact “one of Latin Americas’ strongest currencies from the 1950s to 1970s” (Niño, 2019); however, today, it is practically worthless.

These insights set the scenario for the first part of the documentary, which I called *The Oil Boom, a Game Changer*.

The current hyperinflationary debacle in Venezuela and its democratic deterioration are a process that has been developing for decades.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Venezuela had one of the most successful economies in the world: inflation remained relatively low and GDP showed sustained growth. According to Jeff Desjardins (2017) from The Money Project, “by 1950, as the rest of the world was struggling to recover from World War II, Venezuela had the fourth-richest GDP per capita on Earth. The country was 2 times richer than Chile, 4 times richer than Japan, and 12 times richer than China”.

But as Anibal F. Gauna (2017) comments, in the mid-1970s problems began to amass: the economy contracted for eight uninterrupted years (1978-1985), the real income per capita in 1985 was almost 15 percent lower than at the beginning of the decade, the external debt enlarged from USD 2 billion in 1973 to more than USD 35 billion in 1982 and almost 70 percent of exports revenues were used up to pay the external debt. In addition, between 1981 and 1997, unemployment increased from 6.6 percent to 15.4 percent, and the income of the poorest declined.

In the 1970s there was a growth of decentralized public administration, explains the same author. It was structured in a way that openly favoured the executive branch. Public spending was radically modified under Pérez's administration (1974–1979). On “29 April 1974, only a couple of months following his inauguration, Congress granted Pérez special powers allowing him to rule by decree”. His programme was characterized by evident intervention in the economy through direct investment and credits (Gauna, 2017).

In 1960 the central government accounted for 70 percent of spending, while the public administration just 30 percent. However, in 1980 these figures were 33 percent and 67 percent, respectively. This signposted that the structure of public expenditure

was moving towards where the president had vast control of the budget, beyond the reach of Congress (Gauna, 2017).

During Pérez's administration, there was an unprecedented increase in subsidies, determined almost entirely by the executive (Gauna, 2017). He announced a state reform in December 1974, with the objective of increasing the power of the executive and the private sector.

The government nationalized the iron ore industry on 1 January 1975 and the oil industry one year later. This meant that the executive had control over all the most important sources of income of the Venezuelan state. In addition to that, the Venezuelan government politicized its central bank, bought "a privately owned stake and placed the Pérez government's cabinet members on the central bank's board" (Niño, 2019).

The following governments of Herrera (1979-1984) and Lusinchi (1984-1989) had at least two things in common: both inherited the reconfiguration of Pérez's state and deepened the crisis.

In 1983, the Venezuelan government carried out an unprecedented devaluation of its currency to try to get out of its precarious self-inflicted siege. With the so-called "Black Friday" of 18 February 1983, Venezuela experienced a depreciation of its currency and the exchange rate was devalued by 20 percent (both for the first time) (Niño, 2019).

President Lusinchi took office in 1984. He announced an adjustment plan that was approved afterwards by the International Monetary Fund. It included a system of multiple exchange rates, low interest rates for the agricultural sector, increases in the prices of gasoline and other petroleum products. However, the plan was ruled out due to poor results. During the last years of the 1980s and the 1990s, an attempt was

made to reform the Venezuelan state. There was partial decentralization and several free market and electoral reforms were implemented. But the state, for the most part, remained intact, and the legitimization crisis only intensified (Gauna, 2017).

In 1989 Venezuela went through the infamous “Caracazo”, a government crackdown that left hundreds of people dead and inflation raised to 84 percent (Niño, 2019).

Political tension continued to mount, with two coups launched in 1992 (Niño, 2019). Even though they were unsuccessful, they made Hugo Chávez known and paved the way for his rise to power (Thomson and Zerpa, 2018).

In 1995, about 60 percent of Venezuelans were not "very satisfied" or "not at all satisfied" with democracy, while only 11 percent were "completely satisfied," according to figures from Latinobarómetro. “It is hard to deny that something was afoot in a society that went from having a single-digit voter abstention rate from the beginning of the democratic period up to 1973 to having a rate close to 40 percent in 1993” (National Electoral Council), (Gauna, 2017).

1998 elections - Hugo Chávez won the Presidency, his promises and hopes for the “Socialism of the 21st century”

From there, the doors were opened to what we now understand as populist proposals, disguised as leftist politics and socialism that Chávez embodied and many, excited about a radical change, supported. Thus, Venezuelans made him president in 1998.

This formed the second part of the radio documentary. Chávez is also a game changer to Venezuelan politics and is often the target of attacks. This information is the base to my interview with Alex Fergusson, where I would like to understand if the late president is to blame or not.

Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez, a political outsider that was “running as an anti-establishment political candidate” (Niño, 2019), was elected president of Venezuela.

García-Guadilla and Mallen (2018) explicate in their paper about the *Democratic Erosion in Venezuela's Twenty-First Century Socialism* how Chávez entered politics defending an anti-neoliberal discourse and adopting an agenda that blamed capitalism and the neoliberal economic austerity measures of poverty, social inequality and even polarization.

Like his predecessors, Chavez promised to use the benefits of oil to end poverty and include excluded sectors of society. But he also promised to reform the democratic process to reduce the influence of the corrupt elite, which he blamed for the evils of Venezuela. Once elected, in February 1999, he convened a constituent process to draft a new constitution (García-Guadilla and Mallen, 2018).

1999 to 2013, where populism arose, Chávez started his expropriations and still counted with most of the popular support

The Transition Plan 1999-2000 formulated by the government of President Chávez gave an account of the problems suffered in the past and promised not to ignore them.

The objective was to lead Venezuela to what is vaguely defined as "socialism of the 21st century".

The adoption of the new economic model after the election of Hugo Chávez was accompanied by a sustained increase in oil prices. According to Asdrúbal Oliveros (2019) since 1999, with the sole exception of 2001 and 2009, the average price of the Venezuelan oil basket (CPV) rose every year, going from an average of 10.6 dollars per barrel (\$ / bl) in 1998 to 88.6 \$/bl in 2008, and averaged about 101.7 \$/bl between 2011 and 2013.

The problem was that this placed the country in a situation dangerously dependent on international oil prices. And it is a statement that later, my contributor Fernando Nunez-Noda will give as one of the reasons for the collapse of the country, in the third part of the documentary.

The growing gap between private consumption and production capacity was covered with a sustained increase in imports, which tripled. This growth model in Venezuela, with a high incidence of public spending and low investment, is far from stable.

During the oil bonanza, *Chavismo* managed to build a model that, supported by the constant expansion of public spending, got support in many sectors of society. That was his trademark. Supported by the increase in oil prices, the government, in general terms, allocated an increasing public expenditure to finance the current consumption of the less favoured sectors (Oliveros, 2019).

This policy allowed Chavez to stimulate the growth of aggregate demand and GDP, thus generating (artificially and discretionally) a situation of "welfare" that served as a platform to maintain high levels of popularity.

But then with the fall in oil prices, together with the destruction of private economic activity and the depletion of international credit, *Chavismo* has left the State without the institutional and financial capacity to provide basic social services such as health, education, electricity, water and security and the regular supply of the country, which has produced a humanitarian crisis whose final consequences are still unknown.

As if that was not enough, the total consolidated debt of the country (national and foreign debts, loans and bonds issued by the Republic and PDVSA - the Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company), amounted to 181 billion dollars. This is almost 18 times more than the total of the country's international reserves (Fergusson, 2019).

But meanwhile, the popular support reached its maximum expression, largely due to the "sense of empowerment" in the towns, the hope of improving through "the missions" and the leader's charisma. But that illusion lasted little and was liquidated with the death of Chávez (Fergusson, 2019).

In reality, "Chávez continued the same anti-growth policies of the previous political order [and] amplified them at catastrophic rates. Massive spending, economic

controls, easy money, and constant expropriations had shattered Venezuela's productive capacities" (Niño, 2019).

Maduro gets to power - collapse of the country

When Nicolás Maduro became president, in April 2013, he did so with a level of legitimacy and electoral support that was much lower than that of Chávez until his death. He won the elections with a difference of only 1.5 percent over the opposition candidate and amid the background noise of electoral fraud.

A fundamental break in the Bolivarian process occurred when, with the overwhelming victory in the parliamentary elections of 2015, the opposition reached a qualified majority of two thirds in the National Assembly. This implied a radical change in the correlation of forces within the public powers. But, instead of recognizing this severe defeat and initiating a deep self-critical reflection on its causes, the government did not see the need for changes in its policies and attributed the crisis and the victory of the opposition exclusively to what they called the "economic war" by the local "political right" and the "American empire" (Fergusson, 2019).

The truth is that in the last four years, the Venezuelan economy recorded its worst ever fall. Oil production fell to close to 960,000 barrels per day (bpd) in March 2019, according to a report by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. This is one and a half million barrels less than what was produced in 2001.

On the other hand, as stated by Data Drum (2019) the international reserves decreased from 35 billion dollars to less than 8 billion (see appendix 4).

Current situation in 2019: the humanitarian, economic, social and political crisis and the rise of Juan Guaidó (President Interim of Venezuela)

The result was a tremendous socio-economic impact. And all this data served as a basis for the fourth part of the documentary

The general deterioration of productive activity and public finances has had serious repercussions on the living conditions of the population, especially in the areas of health, food and personal security, especially affecting the vulnerable sectors: children, the elderly, women and the chronically ill.

So far this year, the general situation turned into a catastrophe: hyperinflation in February 2019 was estimated at 1.7 million percent (The Economist, 2019), there has been alarming drop in purchasing power, a depreciation in the currency, growing deterioration of services (water, electricity, gas, fuel, health, internet, etc.), the productive industrial, manufacturing and livestock production system in bankruptcy, lack of food, medicines and almost everything, delinquency and obscene corruption.

The levels of poverty in terms of monetary income, which had been significantly reduced between 1999 and 2010, are this year (2019) worse than the levels that existed before the beginning of the Chávez government.

Thousands of production companies and businesses, including foreign companies that settled during the economic boom, have closed or have been expropriated.

As a visible result, Professor Fergusson (2019) estimated that 54 percent of children and many older adults have some degree of malnutrition. Likewise, morbidity and mortality in vulnerable sectors have grown to alarming figures due to the absence of medicines and hospital supplies. This is the case of malaria, tuberculosis, measles, diphtheria and others that had been eradicated or controlled. For example, between

2015 and 2018, the number of malaria cases registered in the country increased by 76 percent.

In the period 2016-2018, the country had a homicide rate of 91 per 100,000 inhabitants, that is, about 25,000 violent deaths per year. Finally, although there are no official figures, it is estimated that some two and a half million people have left the country in the last three years, especially young people, both professionals and unskilled workers, in search of a “better future” in other places (Fergusson, 2019).

The advent of a new opposition leadership represented by Juan Guaidó and the relaunching of the National Assembly (which is the Venezuelan parliament) created the basis for political action and the design of a work agenda and a roadmap that has generated confidence and has fuelled the hope of an exit from the crisis, with the support of the international community.

This hope for the future forms the fifth and last part of the documentary, where my contributors tell us their perceptions and optimisms and I ask questions about what the future may hold for the country.

Thus, the majority of Venezuelan society has understood that there is no turning back; as Professor Fergusson (2019) said “we have reached a point at which we play the present and the future”.

Numbers that Matter

The concept of democracy has been studied many times and many authors have explained the different reasons for its decline. This literature has given some of those viewpoints; in the rest of the chapter, three indexes will be debated: Freedom in the World, Democracy Index and Corruption Perceptions Index. They will allow for a discussion of what I have called the Breakdown of Democracy and are an essential

part of the narration of the documentary as the presenter will give statistics and figures of recognised institutions throughout the voiceover.

Freedom in the World

Freedom in the World is the annual report by Freedom House — an association that studies the political rights and civil liberties of the countries of the world. The 2019 edition covered developments in 195 countries and 14 territories from 1 January 2018 through 31 December 2018.

The 2019 report recorded the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. Over the period since retreat began, 116 countries have seen a net decline, and only 63 have experienced a net improvement; 86 countries stand as “free”, representing more than 2.9 billion people; 30 percent of all countries evaluated are judged to be “partly free”. A total of 50 countries, denoting 26 percent of the world’s polities, are considered “not free”.

In the 2018 report, Michael Abramowitz affirms that democracy is in crisis. “Political rights and civil liberties around the world deteriorated to their lowest point... For the 12th consecutive year, according to Freedom in the World, countries that suffered democratic setbacks outnumbered those that registered gains” (Freedom House, 2018).

Venezuela is in the list of the countries with the largest decline in freedom over the last 10 years (see appendix 5). In 2018, President Nicolás Maduro prolonged his authoritarian government with a deeply flawed presidential election — characterized by the banning of prominent opposition candidates and voter intimidation, which made it condemned as illegitimate by the international community. Maduro presided over an economic collapse and the additional humanitarian crisis has left loads of citizens struggling to meet their basic needs (Freedom House, 2019).

In the report, Venezuela is ranked at the lowest of the scale, with an *aggregate freedom score* of 19 out of 100, being considered a Non-Free country (see appendix 6). The same statement explains that the country's "democratic institutions have deteriorated since 1999, but conditions have grown sharply worse in recent years due to the continued concentration of power in the executive, and harsher crackdowns on the opposition" (Freedom House, 2019).

Democracy Index

The Democracy Index by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019) provides a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide for 167 independent states and two territories, where they are classified as one of four types of regime: "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime", and "authoritarian regime"; and it is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture.

The index reported that a total of 42 countries experienced a decline in their total score compared with 2017; 48 registered an increase in total score. But as a percentage of the world's population, fewer people lived in some form of democracy (47.7 percent compared with 49.3 percent in 2017) (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019).

The conclusions are that 4.5 percent of the world population lives in "full democracy" and 35.6 percent in "authoritarian regimes". In 2018, some countries fell into the "Hybrid regimes" category, which brought the number up to 39 countries out of 167.

Some of the main manifestations of this democracy recession include: declining popular participation in elections and politics, declining trust in institutions, declining media freedoms and erosion of civil liberties.

The case of Venezuela, for example, is interesting. It became an "authoritarian regime" (in the previous index, 2017), joined by Cuba in the Democracy Index but got a score of 4.44 on "Political participation" — on a 0 to 10 scale, which is the same or

higher to some of the “flawed democracies”; however, on “Electoral process and pluralism” it got just 1.67.

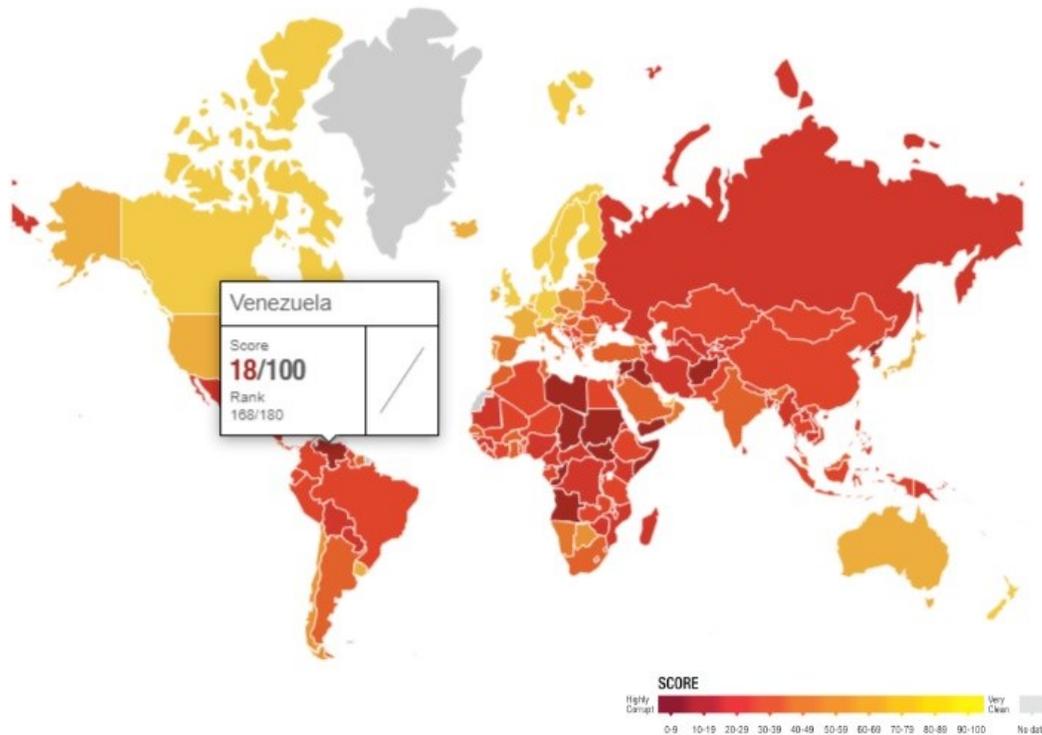
In February 2019, the Economist estimated the inflation in Venezuela at 1.7 million percent. (The Economist, 2019). Also, given political apathy among the Venezuelan opposition and sham elections held in 2018, the country registered once again notable deteriorations in punctuation, marks which have been declining every year since 2006.

As Venezuela suffered a significant decrease in its score and fell in the ranking in the last evaluation, sinking further into authoritarianism, the entire region fell down the ranking (see appendices 7, 8 and 9).

Corruption Perceptions Index

A report by Transparency International found that in 2017 more than two-thirds of countries score below 50 in the Corruption Perceptions Index – “which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, [and] uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean” (Transparency International, 2018).

The latest index, published in January 2019 shows that there is a disturbing relationship “between corruption and the health of democracies, where countries with higher rates of corruption also have weaker democratic institutions and political rights” (Transparency International, 2019b).



Source: Transparency International, 2019.

Venezuela ranks with a low score of 18 out of 100, worsening its place to the 168th position among 180 countries and territories (Transparency International, 2019a).

Democratic Breakdown

The principles democracy symbolises, mainly the right to select leaders in free and fair elections, freedom of the press, and the rule of law, are under attack and in retreat worldwide (Freedom House, 2018).

In the last few years, many countries experienced a regression in their scores due to a weak political culture, a chaotic transition, difficulties in creating institutions to safeguard the rule of law and persistent problems of corruption, which creates a

difficult habitat for democracy (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). (See appendix 10).

Yes, there is evidence of a global democratic recession. The average level of democracy in the world has regressed to where it was 10 years ago. However, the decay has not been extreme, and most vicissitudes have occurred in the categories of regimes: democracies develop less liberally, and autocracies are less competitive and more oppressive (Mechkova, Lührmann and Lindberg, 2017).

Both *Freedom House* and *The Economist Intelligence Unit's* Democracy Index warned that democracy is in retreat.

Venezuela is one of the countries where corruption has flourished and where undemocratic and populist politicians have used it to their advantage. (See appendix 11).

According to the Latest Venezuela Regional Fact Sheet from April 2019, by USAID, the US Agency for International Development, the worsening economic and political circumstances—characterized by hyperinflation—in Venezuela since 2014 “have decreased households’ access to food, medicine, and health care; contributed to increasing humanitarian needs; and triggered an influx of Venezuelans into neighbouring countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru”. The same source details that more than 400,000 Venezuelans have applied for asylum worldwide since 2014 (US Agency for International Development, 2019).

This democratic backslide, as Barrios and Bisbal (2019) put it, is a regression from democracy to dictatorship. Where democratic institutions have been undermined, the separation of powers has ended, the media has been totally controlled and the opposition is being repressed.

From this section we can conclude that Venezuela is not a democracy. As it was mentioned at the beginning, the Athenian democracy defined freedom **as the opportunity to govern and be governed in turn**. In the latest studies it has been demonstrated that the official government of Venezuela, presided over by the leader Nicolás Maduro, has attacked the opposition. Freedom House (2019) reported that in the last elections the government had banned “prominent opposition candidates” and intimidated the voters, which would also contradict the democratic principle of the Italian Renaissance that **allows for popular participation** and the **right to be free from any outside control of their political life**.

Also, the media in the country is under pressure. The World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (2019) stated that between 2014 and 2018 the country slid 27 places, and just in the last year slid another five places (see appendix 12).

“Harassment of independent media intensified in 2017 and 2018, and RSF registered a record number of arbitrary arrests and violence against reporters by the police” (Reporters Without Borders, 2019). And as Allsop (2019) claimed, the Venezuelan government has inhibited freedom of expression and the press in different ways; one of them includes a law of 2010 that imposes sanctions on critics of the regime and a law of 2017 that criminalizes the promotion of “fascism, intolerance or hatred” on social networks.

This would undermine what Habermas called “**general accessibility, especially to information**” and The Council of Europe, “**freedom of expression**”, elements of any democracy.

Data on the socioeconomic situation (From April 2019)

The following data has been taken from two Venezuelan organisations, ENCOVI and the *Conindustria, Consecomericio y la Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela*, published in

the book edited by Barrios and Bisbal (2019), and is used in the fourth part of radio documentary.

80 percent of households in Venezuela are considered to be food insecure, food consumption has fallen by 50 percent and production to less than 30 percent of installed capacity. 12 percent of children between 0 and 5 years old have acute malnutrition and 65 percent have a nutritional deficit.

The minimum wage is Bs. 19,800, equivalent to US \$ 5.50, while the food basket is estimated at Bs. 360,115.75, equivalent to US \$ 300, in a hyperinflation scenario estimated at 1,698,488 percent. 94 percent of Venezuelans do not reach their income to cover the cost of living, which is an increase compared to 87 percent in 2017.

There is 60 percent less capacity available in health care. Only 29 percent of households receive water daily and only 18 percent have electricity service permanently; 23 percent of the population does not have water sources.

The vast majority of Venezuelans, this is eight out of 10, perceive the situation of the country negatively. The migration is at least 3.4 million, estimated by the International Organization for Migration.

For illustration, see appendices 4, 13, 14 and 15.

CHAPTER 3: CONSTRUCTING / DESIGNING THE PRODUCT

Radio Documentary as a Tool of Communication

Radio documentaries are defined neither by length nor by the audience. According to Stephen Smith (2001), a documentary possesses a depth of research, however, its length does not define the quality. “At the heart of the documentary-style are moments recorded on tape in which the story unfolds... These scenes function like a photo essay or a film documentary, where events play out in real-time”.

Long-duration radio narratives are labelled as feature or documentaries. These two types are often distinguished by the level of truth, but the terms are most times used indistinctly (Lindgren and McHugh, 2013). “The documentary can be described as wholly factual, telling stories of real-life through interviews and written records” (Lindgren, 2011).

The present dissertation uses the radio documentary as a way of giving voice to others and with the purpose of not giving personal opinions.

Creating the Product: Radio Documentary

This is a dissertation by practice in the form of a radio documentary. In order to produce the final product, I researched on the topic and identified podcasts that would serve as a guide for the production of my own documentary.

Examples are: *How to Kill a Democracy* and *Can Democracy Work*, both by BBC Radio 4; *Is Democracy Dying?* by Radio Atlantic; *Could populism actually be good for democracy?* by The Guardian; and, *¿Está muriendo la democracia?* (Is Democracy Dying?) by the Institute Juan de Mariana.

Since I decided to focus on Venezuela, I heard the news via podcasts and video to understand how these two media portray the realities of the country.

The main purpose of this study is to acquire an insight into the present situation in democratic societies and to understand why countries that are not democratic in practice can claim to be democracies.

Since I personally do not consider Venezuela to be a democracy, I researched to know what the experts think. I took a look at different indexes, statistics, news and reports and I also conducted a series of interviews with specialists on the topic.

The mentioned interviews were semi-structured face to face in the studio for the Irish contributors and over the phone for the international interviewees.

I decided to do my dissertation by practice because I think the topic deserved to be heard. I chose radio because it is a medium I am interested in, and because I would like people to imagine the distress and struggles Venezuelans are living through nowadays while listening to the narration. I think sometimes video can be too descriptive and does not leave room for imagination.

Radio documentaries give listeners the “ability to control and extract their own meanings in their minds”.

Some of the disadvantages of radio documentaries are that they can “reflect individualistic biases and myths,” and “can reproduce stereotype”. However, it is “a robust and growing field, taking advantage of relatively inexpensive recorders and desktop computer software,” it offers “listeners [a] direct access to other voices” and, serves as “a model for journalism as a whole” (Ehrlich, 2003).

The limited time I had to explain a complex situation was a difficulty — around 50 years in 30 minutes. Another problem is that all my interviewees had interesting and educational things to say; but some of them did not have an appealing voice, which is a big plus to make listeners stay tuned.

Still, I chose radio over video because I believe the medium motivates the listeners to imagine and that is one of my goals.

Emma Roderó, a communications professor in Barcelona, Spain, who has studied how audio productions hold the attention of people, says that “audio is one of the

most intimate forms of media because you are constantly building your own images of the story in your mind and you're creating your own production... And that of course, is something that you can never get with visual media" (cited in Wen, 2015).

Also, since my idea was always to include Venezuelans as contributors, I thought it would be better to give them some privacy. And video could have stopped them from expressing their views fully.

*Mia Lindgren (2011) on her Unpublished PhD thesis called *Developing radio documentary theory from practice*, explains that a "radio documentary is about sharing human stories and experiences (p.40)" and that the format has an "important democratic function as it presents ordinary people as superstars; ordinary lives become important (p.39)".*

According to Lindgren, documentaries can inspire and are a powerful tool for sharing personal stories. "We cannot protect ourselves emotionally from the impact of a close voice-recording of someone sharing their story of love or suffering (P. 43)". This is one of the reasons I chose the medium, to educate the listeners but also to move them with the stories told.

My documentary will be telling real events through the experiences and knowledge of real people, but I do not intend to represent my country, nor the stories in an absolute manner, but as one way of looking at things.

My Contributors

1. Fernando Nunez-Noda, Journalist, American citizen, Venezuela.
2. James Gallen, Doctor in Political Science, Ireland.
3. Carl Gershman, President of the National Endowment for Democracy, USA.
4. María Trejo, Irish Citizen, Venezuela.
5. Kirk Hawkins, Professor of Political Science, USA
6. Alex Fergusson, Co-Editor of the Constitution of Venezuela, 1999, Venezuela.
7. Aron Spinola, served as an actor and voice over of Alex Fergusson, whose interview was in Spanish.

8. Cecilia Escalante, my mom, Venezuelan — she was not explicitly interviewed but her voice served as an introductory clip.

The contributors were chosen for the following reasons: **James Gallen**, Lecturer at School of Law and Government, Dublin City University due to his familiarity with international law and legal and transitional justice; **Alex Fergusson**, for his experience in working in online journalism and also for his personal experiences as a former supporter of the Chávez government; **Fernando Nunez-Noda** due to his experiences as a journalist, Venezuelan national and expert on the topic and also for his personal experiences as a self-exiled person; **Kirk Hawkins**, an associate professor at Brigham Young University and director of Team Populism, because he teaches comparative politics with an emphasis on Latin America and wrote a book called *Venezuela's Chavismo and Populism in Comparative Perspective*; **Carl Gershman**, for his experience with humans rights and on the National Endowment for Democracy; and **María Trejo**, because she lives in Dublin, but her entire family is in Venezuela and she is their main support system.

I added a clip at the beginning where I am talking to my mom. This helped to give flavour to the audio and to connect with the real condition in Venezuela since my parents struggle every day with the situation and are the reason I decided to do this documentary.

I succeeded in giving voice to different nationalities and ages.

It is to be noted that even though I interviewed six people I decided to not include **Carl Gershman** in the finished product, but it did help me and guide me around the questions I asked the other interviewees.

The same happened with **James Gallen**, he was included in the first draft of the documentary but as it was longer than I had expected I decided to cut his part about the next steps a future government should take to build peace after the transition. I do believe it was an interesting point but did not add to the focus of my documentary.

I had the initial idea of conducting a vox pop out on the streets of Dublin city centre, trying to get different voices, ages, cultures and nationalities, but since I achieved that already with my contributors, it was decided it was not necessary.

The main motivation I had to do this documentary is my unease over my own country and the wonder of why and how societies that are not democratic in practice can claim to be a democracy.

I chose a 32-minute documentary and it is presented in a mix of calm and fast-paced style, which I think resonates with the confusions and worries about the topic under discussion.

The interviews I conducted were all qualitative interviews. I asked open-ended questions. As I was the narrator of the programme, I found scripting the narration a big challenge. As I was producer, narrator, director, journalist and researcher, I found it hard sometimes to be objective, and that is why I concentrated a few times on the facts by recognised organisations.

I call the documentary *Venezuela, How Did We Get Here?* and it is an explainer to an Irish audience of how the country got to its current crisis.

The design of the documentary consists of five main parts: an initial introduction to the topic in Venezuela and the boom of oil, a game changer; A second section introducing Hugo Chávez, his promises and hopes for the “Socialism of the 21st century” and reflexions on whether he is to blame or not with **Alex Fergusson**; A third part introducing **Fernando Nunez-Noda** and his explanations for the crisis; Then, a fourth part with socioeconomic data for 2019 and **Maria Trejo** telling her views of the current situation, and the collapse of the country and **Kirk Hawkins** establishing that Venezuela is not a democracy. Finally, **Fernando Nunez-Noda** gives his hopes for the future mentioning the rise of Juan Guaidó (President Interim of Venezuela).

The documentary focuses on one country, one crisis and, different stories, different views and journeys. It contains a discussion between experts and ordinary people.

There is no conclusion. I ask what the future may hold for Venezuela but is up to the listener to imagine the ending.

I aimed to hold the listener's attention by using music, sound effects, and insightful interviews.

Featured Music and Sound Effects

Since this radio documentary has educational purposes, it was decided that any music could be sourced; if it is used for broadcast in the future, it would up to the broadcaster to pay the licences of the music featured or change it.

I used some songs because of their lyrics and others due to what they represent.

The music of the documentary is conformed of the following songs:

1. Techos de Cartón by Ali Primera - there is copyright on this track.
2. Venezuela by Luis Silva- there is copyright on this track.

And the following audios:

1. The oil boom, taken from The Vox.
2. Clips on the humanitarian crisis by different news outlets.

The sounds effects were provided by Griffith College Dublin, which means they are free to use and eligible for commercial activities — open licensed.

I only used a “playback” sound effect and the “WhatsApp call ring” which was picked up at the same time of the recording.

Challenges

The topics of democracy, human rights and economic crisis are themselves very broad issues. The history of Venezuela is also very extensive. Trying to condense these problems challenged me so I focused the documentary in a specific period and with a climax that will hopefully attract the listener.

One of the biggest tasks I faced was the fact that most of my interviewees were abroad. I struggled to get a good quality audio; however, with the help of some software I could edit and improve the clips.

Editing was also challenging. I wanted to create dynamism and a change of tones, voices, speeds and emotions, but at the same time, I wanted consistency. I had more of four hours of audio interviews plus two hours of narrations and reducing it to 32 minutes was a hard task.

I was lucky enough to secure my interviews at the early stage of the thesis, so I had all done by the end of May.

But, after I had done the first draft and received feedback from my supervisor, it was decided to include extra emotion.

So, I came up with the idea of placing the listener in a familiar environment. I changed the beginning of my documentary to an Irish setting: me doing groceries at Lidl.

This added more emotion and stories to the documentary but brought loads of work for the last phase of the dissertation.

In terms of style, it was hard to find background music that would fit. I knew I wanted something that represented Venezuela, both I believe most of our music is happy; I wanted to give a serious tone, but I did not want to mix some Classical Opera or American Jazz.

I chose “Venezuela” because it is a popular song and it is considered to be a second national anthem. Then I chose “Techos de Carton” because of its meaning. The author was a socialist. Poverty and social inequality are evidenced in his lyrics — all his songs were anti-government. He sings to the poor.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

My dissertation proposal was submitted on 13th March 2019. At this point, I had delineated the central premise of my future documentary; accompany by a detailed reading list and the contributors I had secured to the moment.

However, after the first meeting with supervisor Colette I decided to change my original idea. In the beginning, I was going to produce a piece of the democratic backslide in the world, but as my supervisor pointed out, that was such a broad and difficult topic to cover. I finally went for a more focus subject: an explainer of the current situation of my home country: Venezuela.

Initially I had felt that a big figure like Carl Gershman was good to have on the documentary. I believed it would be more credibility to my piece. However, he was my very first interviewee and possibly I did not ask the right questions. The truth is it did not work well, and I decided to omit his interview all together.

Another one that did not work well was James Gallen. I got really good opinions from him and I had chosen him because of his understanding on authoritarian regimes and his passion for peace building. I wanted to add a section answering: what should the new government do once Maduro leaves power? However, at the end it seemed to me that the question could be part of a different documentary. So, I also omitted this interview.

On another note, one of the contributors was really nervous at the moment of recording. Maria's native language is Spanish, and she felt overwhelmed at some points of the interview. She knew what she wanted to say because I had briefed her beforehand about the topic and possible questions, so she came prepare to the studio with some notes. That was helpful to get her calm, but it made her want to read during the interview. The way I found to kept her talking and focus was by asking her for examples. Every time she related the questions to her own experience, everything worked out better.

What worked very well was also parts I added at the beginning. Me at the supermarket and the WhatsApp call with my mom. They gave emotion and reality to the Venezuelan situation. The clips made it real and I feel they made it attractive as a production piece.

In the final edition the music was not really working. Most Venezuelan songs are quite happy, so I found it hard to create a tense and serious atmosphere around the music chosen.

Also, it was recommended by the supervisor to simplify the language of the radio documentary. As my script seemed to be a journalistic piece and not a documentary, I had to omit some hard facts and trying to make it simpler for the audience. I had to appeal to more real-life examples.

I created a script and record my narration from it.

The equipment at the studio did not work for me so I got microphones and recorders outside the College to complete the project.

Ethical Issues

This research applied ethical principles where contributors understood their role, participation was voluntary and withdraw was an option; anonymity and confidentiality were an option to those who chose it (it was not the case).

I provided both information sheets and consent forms.

Initially, I thought about including a Vox Pop with ordinary people, but it was not necessary.

Audience Interest

I believe there will be a great acceptance of my documentary. In the latest Irish Census, it was registered that there were 1,188 Venezuelans living in Ireland (Central

Statistics Office, 2019) but the Venezuelan Community in Ireland puts the number a bit higher to around 4,500 people (including those with dual nationality).

The case is, that the Venezuelan situation is known by my Irish citizens, either through friends, relatives or because it has been over the news for the last few years. I believe my documentary will be well received and the audience will appreciate the informative edge.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The Venezuelan panorama is uncertain and contradictory, because it is not possible to determine what will happen in the coming months. Even though Venezuela is constantly in the news due to its current crisis, not many people in Ireland know the reasons behind this situation.

Many in my circle of friends ask me on a daily basis about Venezuela and many times I don't find the words to explain it.

I made the documentary in hopes to explain to them, and an Irish audience what has happened to my country, with the aim of educating and also touching them.

The process of executing the radio documentary about a country I no longer live in proved to be difficult but satisfying in the end. I had to research a lot, talked to many people and cried over my new discoveries. But it was rewarding to produce a piece that will inform and give notice of the real situation in Venezuela through the voice of different people, experiences and backgrounds.

The main concern I have with the completed piece is that I did not tell enough about the stories of my Venezuelan interviewees. I felt like including diverse voices to offer a range of perspectives, but in 30 minutes it was hard to completely allow their experiences, views and feelings be heard.

In some sense, it was tough for me to reach a conclusion. During the interviews I got to understand other people's points of view and those sometimes went beyond what I have known.

For people like Maria and me, whose lives only had the chance to meet one way of government and one idea oppressing others, that is all that I had known. The two of us had been lucky enough to have got a good education. But aside from that, since we were children, we only got to see the Venezuela that Hugo Chávez created. For our generation and for those who did not have the luxury of going to private school, it has been difficult to see that queuing for eight hours to buy milk and not finding

chicken in the supermarket is not normal; for the youth of Venezuela it is alien to visit a country where they must pay to fill their cars with petrol, and the older population never got to enjoy their savings or retirement as they had to use them in one go due to the hyperinflation.

I hope that someone one day finds my documentary useful as a basis for their own radio documentary or journalistic piece. And I hope that people looking to know about my country find themselves to be educated after having listened to it.

This dissertation conducted by practice ended up being a mix of personal opinions and statistics and answered to the question, “How the country that was once the richest in Latin America got to a state of near collapse?” by explaining the current crisis Venezuela is facing.

Through the interviewees’ perspectives, it was possible to reach some conclusions.

To the question “Did all the problems start with Chávez?” Professor Alex Fergusson established that they did not, and he placed the beginning of the crisis with the economic boom in the 1970s.

However, Fernando Nunez-Noda, María Trejo and Kirk Hawkins blame Chávez for the complete collapse. When asked “How all this happened?” They mentioned some of the reasons but emphasised in the fact that during Chávez’s government all the democratic institutions lost legitimacy.

The statistics of the socio-economic data for April 2019 explained the reality for the vast majority of Venezuelans and gave rise to the claims that the country cannot be considered a democracy today. To the question “Is Venezuela a democracy?” All the contributors, even the ones not portrayed in the final edition of the documentary, said that the country can not be considered a democracy any more.

The main finding of this dissertation is that the research question has been negatively answered by the interviewees. “Is democracy dying in Venezuela?” for them, the problem is that it has already died.

I am convinced that my documentary can be broadcast in networks including *Newstalk* and *RTE Radio*, as it is relevant and could educate their listeners. It would also be possible to stream on SoundCloud as it provides for a wider range.

I also think that the idea behind it has great potential and could be further developed to create a series of podcasts. As I called it *How Did We Get Here?* we could have a next one called *How Do We Get Out of Here?*.

Finally, by conducting this investigation and far-reaching interviews, it is expected that the understanding of what happened in Venezuela can be better appreciated and that through it, more people can begin to sympathize, spread the word and participate in politics to safeguard democracy.

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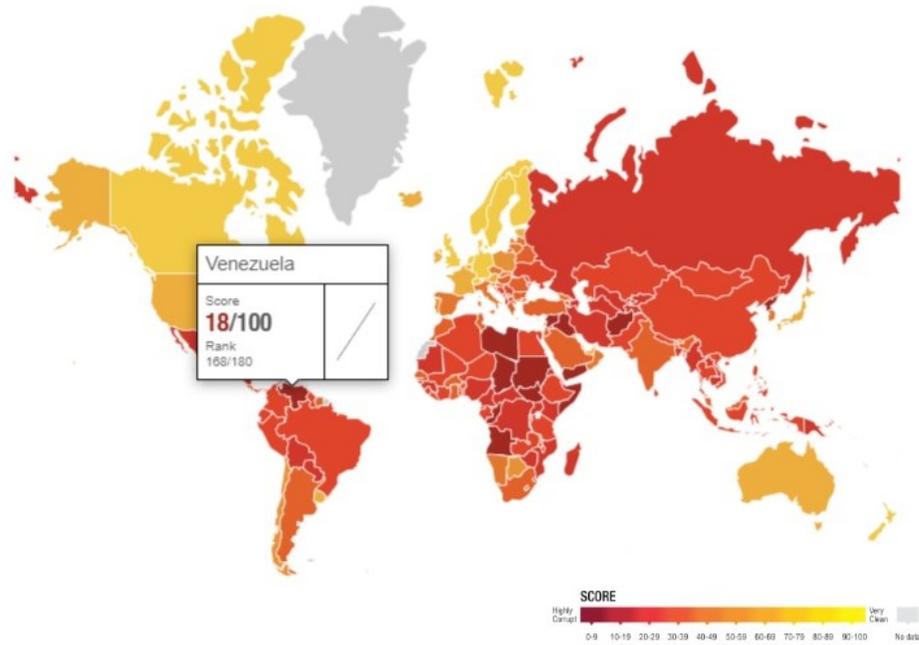
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APPENDICES

1. Top 15 Most Corrupt Countries by Transparency International - Venezuela

INDEX 2018



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Since its inception in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International's flagship research product, has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. The index offers an annual snapshot of the relative degree of corruption by ranking countries and territories from all over the globe. In 2012, Transparency International revised the methodology used to construct the index to allow for comparison of scores from one year to the next. The 2018 CPI draws on 13 surveys and expert assessments to measure public sector corruption in 180 countries and territories, giving each a score from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

Q Search for a country or region

| # | COUNTRY | REGION | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 |
|-----|-------------------|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| 180 | Somalia | Sub-Saharan Africa | 10 | 9 | 10 | 8 |
| 178 | South Sudan | Sub-Saharan Africa | 13 | 12 | 11 | 16 |
| 178 | Syria | Middle East & North Africa | 13 | 14 | 13 | 18 |
| 178 | Korea, North | Asia Pacific | 14 | 17 | 12 | 8 |
| 178 | Yemen | Middle East & North Africa | 14 | 16 | 14 | 18 |
| 172 | Afghanistan | Asia Pacific | 16 | 16 | 16 | 11 |
| 172 | Equatorial Guinea | Sub-Saharan Africa | 16 | 17 | N/A | N/A |
| 172 | Guinea Bissau | Sub-Saharan Africa | 16 | 17 | 16 | 17 |
| 172 | Sudan | Sub-Saharan Africa | 16 | 16 | 14 | 12 |
| 170 | Burundi | Sub-Saharan Africa | 17 | 22 | 20 | 21 |
| 170 | Libya | Middle East & North Africa | 17 | 17 | 14 | 16 |
| 168 | Iraq | Middle East & North Africa | 18 | 18 | 17 | 16 |
| 168 | Venezuela | Americas | 18 | 18 | 17 | 17 |
| 166 | Angola | Sub-Saharan Africa | 19 | 19 | 16 | 16 |

2. Most Dangerous Countries in the World - Global Peace Index 2019

MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD

Sort the table to view the ranking by either the most peaceful or the most dangerous countries in the world.

| RANK | COUNTRY | SCORE |
|------|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Afghanistan | 3.574 |
| 2 | Syria | 3.566 |
| 3 | South Sudan | 3.526 |
| 4 | Yemen | 3.412 |
| 5 | Iraq | 3.369 |
| 6 | Somalia | 3.300 |
| 7 | Central African Republic | 3.296 |
| 8 | Libya | 3.285 |
| 9 | Democratic Republic of the Congo | 3.218 |
| 10 | Russia | 3.093 |
| 11 | Pakistan | 3.072 |
| 12 | Turkey | 3.015 |
| 13 | Sudan | 2.995 |
| 14 | Ukraine | 2.950 |
| 15 | North Korea | 2.921 |
| 16 | Nigeria | 2.898 |
| 17 | Lebanon | 2.800 |
| 18 | Israel | 2.735 |
| 19 | Mali | 2.710 |
| 20 | Venezuela | 2.671 |
| 21 | Colombia | 2.661 |
| 22 | Palestine | 2.608 |

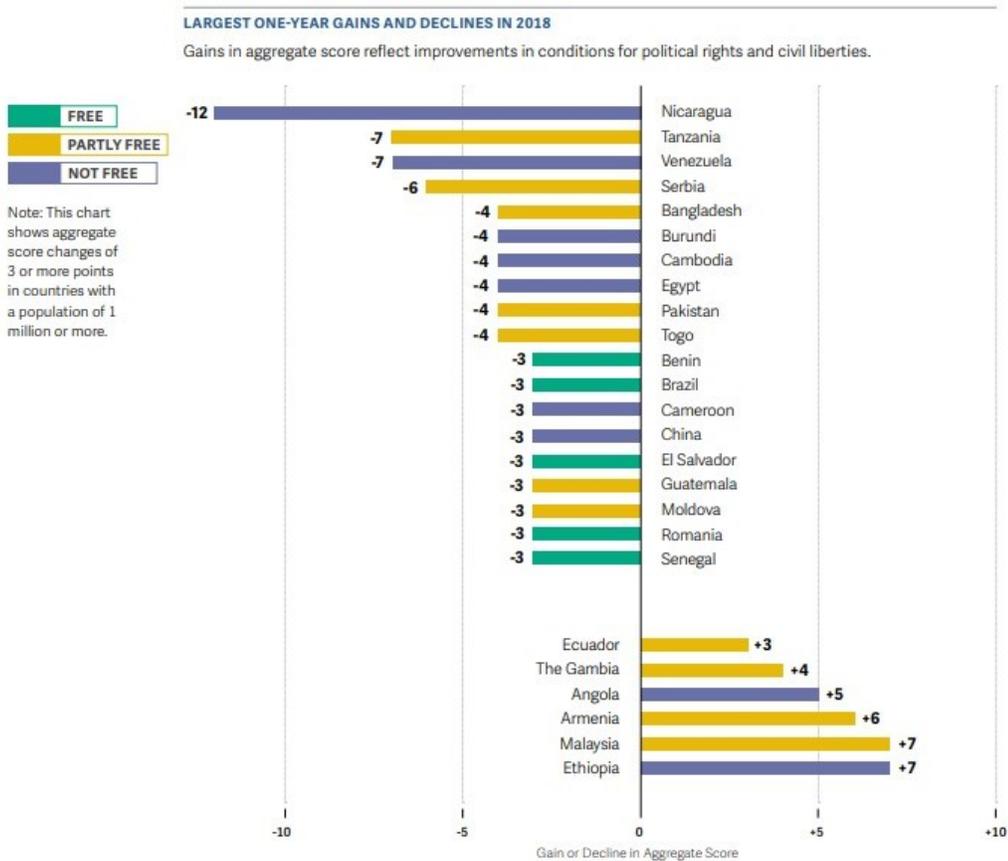
3. World's Worst Inflation according to Trading Economics (2019)

| TRADING ECONOMICS | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|---------------|-----------|-----|
| Calendar Indicators Markets Forecasts | | | | | | |
| Inflation Rate | | | | | | |
| World | Europe | America | Asia | Africa | Australia | G20 |
| Country | Last | | Previous | Range | | |
| Venezuela | 282972.80 | Apr/19 | 329568 | 344510 : 3.22 | | % |
| Zimbabwe | 97.85 | May/19 | 75.86 | 97.85 : -7.5 | | % |
| Argentina | 57.30 | May/19 | 55.8 | 20263 : -7 | | % |
| South Sudan | 56.10 | Mar/19 | 58.7 | 836 : -14 | | % |
| North Korea | 55.00 | Jul/13 | 70 | 4376 : 30 | | % |
| Iran | 52.10 | May/19 | 51.4 | 59.02 : -3.27 | | % |
| Sudan | 44.60 | Apr/19 | 45.4 | 182 : -1 | | % |
| Liberia | 23.30 | Apr/19 | 25.8 | 28.5 : -5.69 | | % |
| Turkey | 18.71 | May/19 | 19.5 | 139 : -4.01 | | % |
| Haiti | 17.70 | Apr/19 | 16.7 | 38.4 : -4.7 | | % |
| Sierra Leone | 17.46 | Mar/19 | 17.19 | 256 : -39.84 | | % |
| Angola | 17.14 | May/19 | 17.36 | 241 : 6.89 | | % |

4. International Reserves and Minimum Wage by Data Drum 2019



5. Venezuelan Decline by Freedom House



6. A Non-Free country by Freedom House



7. Authoritarian Regime by the Economist

Latin America and the Caribbean 2018

| | Overall score | Global Rank | Regional rank | I Electoral process and pluralism | II Functioning of government | III Political participation | IV Political culture | V Civil liberties | Regime type |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Uruguay | 8.38 | 15 | 1 | 10.00 | 8.57 | 6.11 | 7.50 | 9.71 | Full democracy |
| Costa Rica | 8.07 | 20 | 2 | 9.58 | 7.50 | 6.67 | 7.50 | 9.12 | Full democracy |
| Chile | 7.97 | 23= | 3 | 9.58 | 8.57 | 4.44 | 8.13 | 9.12 | Flawed democracy |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 7.16 | 43 | 4 | 9.58 | 7.14 | 6.11 | 5.63 | 7.35 | Flawed democracy |
| Panama | 7.05 | 45 | 5 | 9.58 | 6.07 | 6.67 | 5.00 | 7.94 | Flawed democracy |
| Argentina | 7.02 | 47= | 6 | 9.17 | 5.36 | 6.11 | 6.25 | 8.24 | Flawed democracy |
| Jamaica | 7.02 | 47= | 7 | 8.75 | 7.14 | 4.44 | 6.25 | 8.53 | Flawed democracy |
| Suriname | 6.98 | 49 | 8 | 9.17 | 6.43 | 6.67 | 5.00 | 7.65 | Flawed democracy |
| Brazil | 6.97 | 50 | 9 | 9.58 | 5.36 | 6.67 | 5.00 | 8.24 | Flawed democracy |
| Colombia | 6.96 | 51 | 10 | 9.17 | 6.79 | 5.00 | 5.63 | 8.24 | Flawed democracy |
| Guyana | 6.67 | 54= | 11 | 9.17 | 5.71 | 6.11 | 5.00 | 7.35 | Flawed democracy |
| Peru | 6.60 | 59 | 12 | 9.17 | 5.00 | 5.56 | 5.63 | 7.65 | Flawed democracy |
| Dominican Republic | 6.54 | 61 | 13 | 9.17 | 5.36 | 6.11 | 5.00 | 7.06 | Flawed democracy |
| Ecuador | 6.27 | 68 | 14 | 8.75 | 5.36 | 6.11 | 4.38 | 6.76 | Flawed democracy |
| Paraguay | 6.24 | 70 | 15 | 8.75 | 5.71 | 5.00 | 4.38 | 7.35 | Flawed democracy |
| Mexico | 6.19 | 71= | 16 | 8.33 | 6.07 | 7.22 | 3.13 | 6.18 | Flawed democracy |
| El Salvador | 5.96 | 77 | 17 | 9.17 | 4.29 | 5.56 | 3.75 | 7.06 | Hybrid regime |
| Bolivia | 5.70 | 83 | 18 | 7.50 | 4.64 | 5.56 | 3.75 | 7.06 | Hybrid regime |
| Honduras | 5.63 | 85 | 19 | 8.50 | 4.64 | 4.44 | 4.38 | 6.18 | Hybrid regime |
| Guatemala | 5.60 | 87 | 20 | 7.92 | 5.36 | 3.89 | 4.38 | 6.47 | Hybrid regime |
| Haiti | 4.91 | 102 | 21 | 5.58 | 2.93 | 3.89 | 6.25 | 5.88 | Hybrid regime |
| Nicaragua | 3.63 | 122 | 22 | 2.67 | 1.86 | 3.89 | 5.63 | 4.12 | Authoritarian |
| Venezuela | 3.16 | 134= | 23 | 1.67 | 1.79 | 4.44 | 4.38 | 3.53 | Authoritarian |
| Cuba | 3.00 | 142 | 24 | 1.08 | 3.57 | 3.33 | 4.38 | 2.65 | Authoritarian |

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit.

8. Venezuela over the years by the Economist



Democracy Index 2018: Me too?

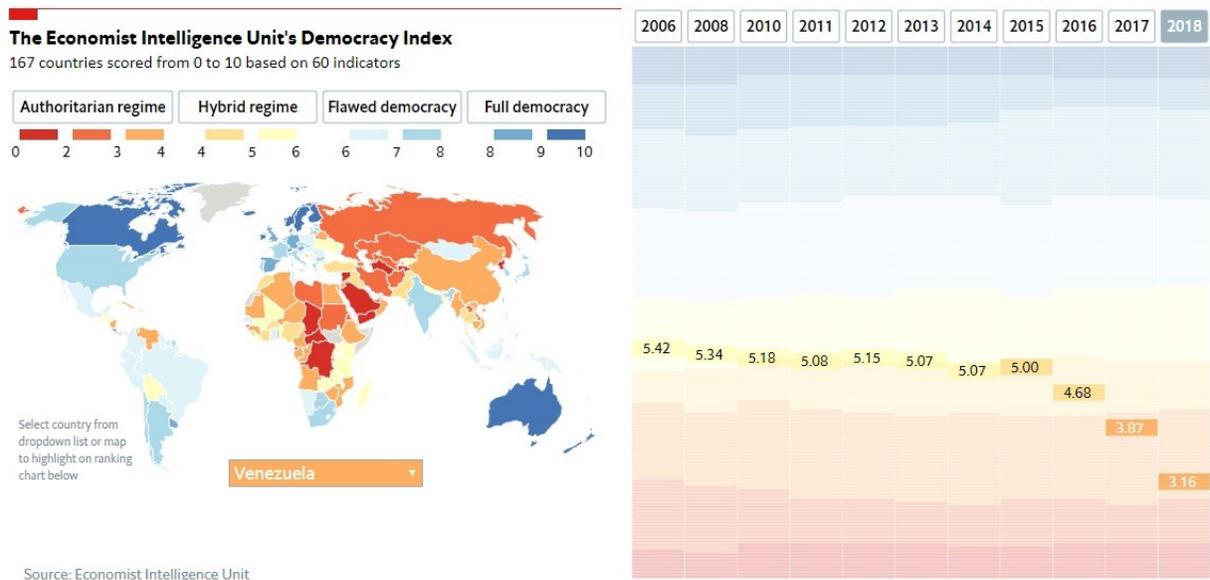
Political participation, protest and democracy

A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit

Democracy Index 2006-18

| | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2008 | 2006 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Venezuela | 3.16 | 3.87 | 4.68 | 5.00 | 5.07 | 5.07 | 5.15 | 5.08 | 5.18 | 5.34 | 5.42 |

9. Democracy Index over the years by the Economist



10. Global Erosion by Freedom House



11. Venezuela doing bad at tackling corruption by Transparency International

Many governments doing badly at tackling corruption

53%
say their government is doing badly

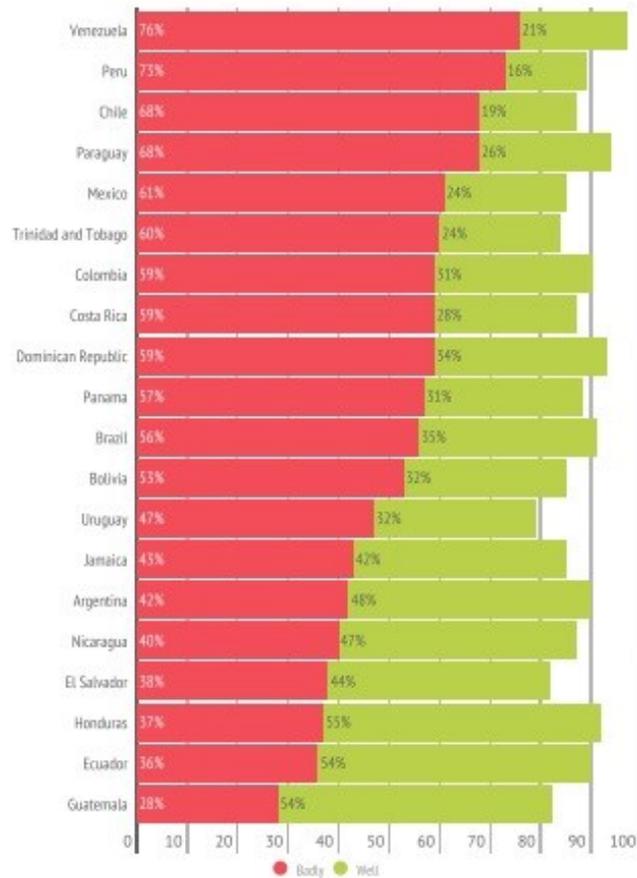
35%
say their government is doing well

We asked people to tell us how well or badly they thought their government was doing in fighting public sector corruption. We found that just over a half of citizens in the region said that their government was doing badly (53 per cent) while just over a third said that their government was doing well (35 per cent).

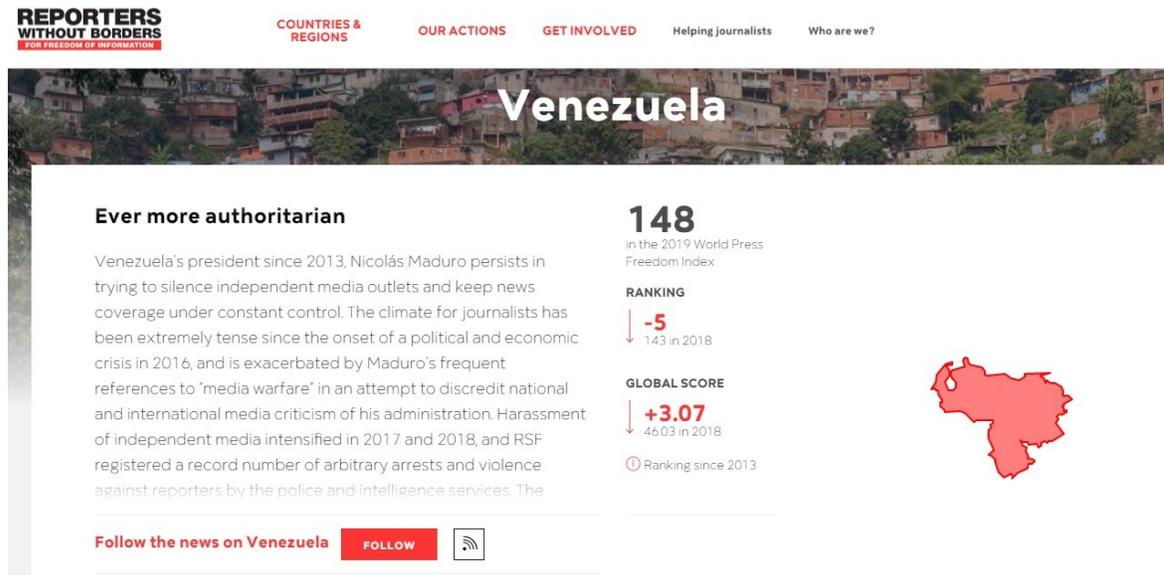
Citizens in Venezuela were the most critical of government efforts to fight corruption; over three quarters said that their government was doing a bad job (76 per cent). High levels of disapproval were found in Chile, Paraguay and Peru where over two thirds of citizens in these countries gave their government a poor rating (from 68 per cent to 73 per cent).

In Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras citizens were more positive about their governments' efforts to address corruption risks. In these countries over a half of respondents said that their government was doing well (54 per cent each).

HOW WELL OR BADLY IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING AT FIGHTING CORRUPTION? – RESULTS BY COUNTRY



12. World Press Freedom Index Ranking by Reporters Without Borders



13. Venezuelan Diet for 2017 by ENCOVI and WHO

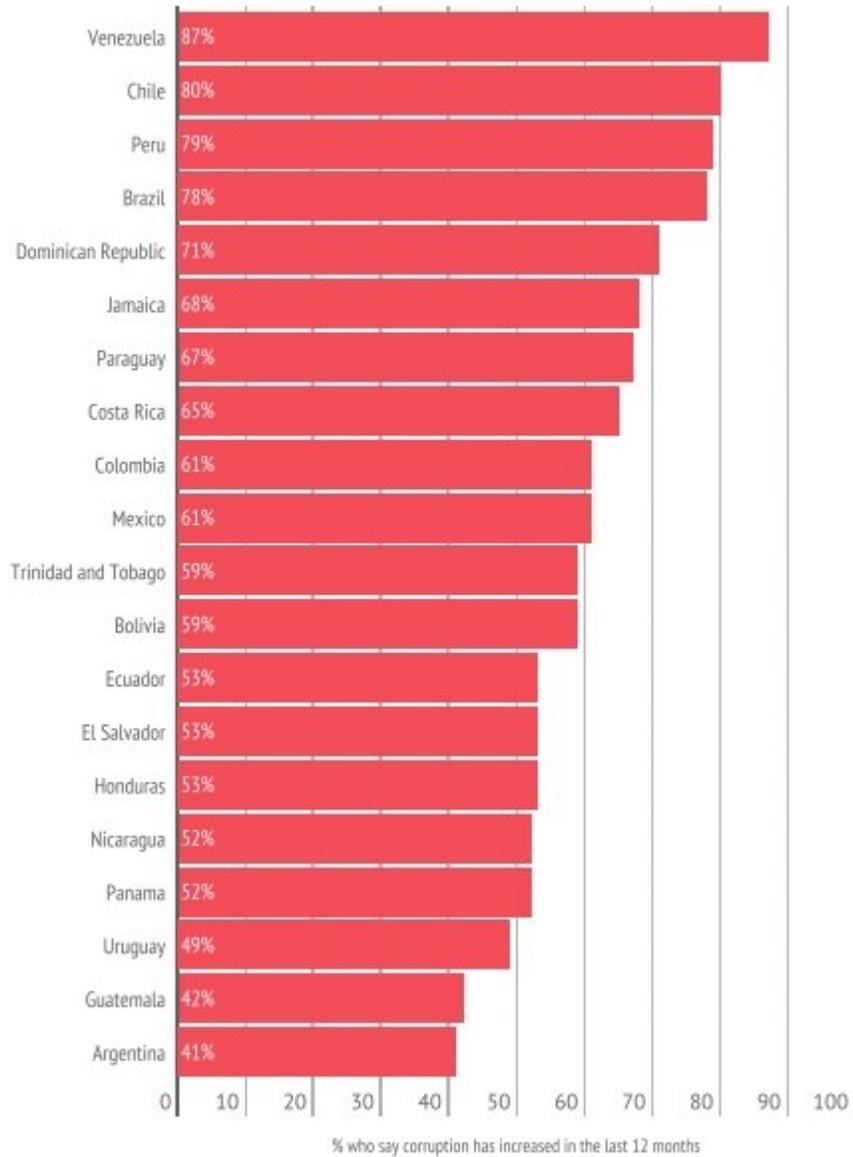


14. Number of Venezuelans fleeing the country since 2015 by the International Organization for Migration



15. Levels of Corruption by Transparency International

PERCENTAGE WHO THOUGHT THAT THE
LEVEL OF CORRUPTION HAD INCREASED
– RESULTS BY COUNTRY



16. Sample Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Dr James Gallen

1. How do you define a democratic government?
2. Is democracy the best form of government?
3. Could you list the features of democracies that make it valuable?
4. What are your thoughts on the 2019 Democracies?
5. Do you believe is it dying today?
6. Why democratic elected leaders are able to subvert the democratic process to stay in power? Why international organisations do not get involved and do something about it?
7. Do you consider Venezuela to be a democracy?
8. Is it possible for free and fair elections be carried out under an authoritarian regime?
9. What else the international community can do to help countries in democratic backsliding, like Venezuela, to restore their democracy?
10. Do you have faith on the wisdom of people to choose their leaders? Is really democracy the best form of government? The people chose Brexit, the people chose Trump, and chose Chávez.
11. The truth is Venezuela is an extremely divided society. If the Maduro regime ends today, what should the new government do to build peace and restore democracy?
12. Should the international community help with the transition?
13. Is the international community's help reliable?

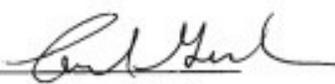
17. Sample Consent Form

Consent Form

"Is Democracy Dying in Venezuela?
A radio documentary explaining the current crisis the country is facing"

Researcher: [Andreína González]

- The aim of this study is to examine if democracy is dying in Venezuela. It will examine the crisis the country is facing at the moment and how this came to happen.
- You will be asked 18 questions about your experiences as an expert on the topic of democracy in political science. The interview should last around 15 minutes.
- This research will be of benefit as it draws on your experience with Humans Rights and on the National Endowment for Democracy.
- There has been a lot of discussion on the issues Venezuelans are living but this project pretends to serve as an explainer as to why they got there.
- This research provides an opportunity to hear a group of experts' perspectives. And also, to hear the voices of ordinary people.
- Information from Vox Pops will be anonymised, while the experts will be identifiable.
- The participants understand that the information provided will be used for an academic Radio Documentary that may be used in the future for broadcast.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary and there will be no consequences for withdrawing.
- If you have any questions about this research, please contact:
Andreina Gonzalez, 2972022, aagones12@gmail.com, + 353 899618594. (Researcher)
Colette Kinsella, Colette.Kinsella@griffith.ie (Research supervisor)
- This project has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Signature 
Date 5/20/19
Researcher Signature _____
Date _____