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The global left, pirates and socialists in post-crash Icelandic politics

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Abstract

The historically stable Icelandic political party system has been uprooted since the 2008 financial crisis. In this paper, we explore to what extent the global left movement of anarchists and socialists has manifested in Icelandic politics in this period. We provide a historical overview, starting with the 2008 financial crisis which brought to power the first entirely left-wing government in the country's history, but also gave birth to numerous new political parties that alternately united and divided socialists, anarchists and reformers. The Pirate Party spearheaded this movement from the 2013 elections, but internal disputes have plagued the party in recent years, and both they and the Left Greens now have a fresh challenge from the left: the Socialist Party. We conclude that the current prospects for a united uprising of these movements are dim, although history suggests that they can work together when focusing on common goals of political reform.

Keywords: Iceland; Left Green Movement; Pirate party; anarchism; socialism; global left

Introduction

Since before the dawn of the Republic of Iceland in 1944, and into the twenty-first century, the country's political party system was remarkably stable, consisting of four major parties that were entirely dominant: a bourgeois conservative party (the Independence Party); a farmers' party (the Progressive Party); a social democratic party; and a socialist party. Various fifth, smaller parties sometimes entered parliament, but of these, only the Women's List (from 1983–1999) and the Liberal Party (1999–2009) lasted longer than one term (Harðarson, 2006).

This all changed with the financial crash in 2008. While many new parties ran, only one new party – the Civic Movement (CM) –

entered parliament in 2009. At that time, an entirely left-wing government gained power for the first time in the country's history. The Left Green Movement also entered government for the first time, taking on unique challenges that brought the left to its knees. At the end of their term, the Left Greens were facing an identity crisis. Until 2009, the party had been relatively radical and marginal in the Icelandic political scene. Its predecessor, the People's Alliance (Alþýðubandalagið), had also been a small party, and had last been in government in 1991. After only four years in government, the Left Greens were now perceived as part of the establishment. The party lost a lot of support in the 2013 elections, entered opposition again and remained there despite a solid electoral performance in 2016. In 2017, however, the Left Greens formed a coalition government with the conservatives, further challenging the party's identity as a radical left-wing party.

A new tradition of protests also grew out of the crash. Various protest movements consolidated themselves through multiple new political parties, with 15 parties in total running in the 2013 elections. Some of these parties had clear anarchist and Marxist/socialist strands, and arguably started taking up the radical left of the political landscape. The Pirate Party, in particular, gained strong representation in parliament in 2016, and gradually shifted more towards the left. In 2017, however, both the Pirate Party and the Left Green Movement were challenged from the left in the form of the Socialist Party, which earned a seat in the Reykjavík City Council in 2018.

In this paper, we analyse these developments from our perspective as two academics who have been active in these developments; one for the Left Green Movement and the other for the Movement and the Pirate Party in the aftermath of the crash. The paper is partly structured as a sort of dialogue between these different perspectives, starting with sections focused on each party in turn and written primarily by the author active within that party – with critical scrutiny from the other – before converging on an analysis of

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the overall landscape in the final section and concluding remarks. The analysis is guided by an interest in the growing movement(s) of anarchism and Marxist socialism in the global left, exploring the extent to which these have manifested in these different protest and left-wing parties, and the question of whether the two ideologies are converging or diverging in Icelandic politics. This discussion is nested in the broader scope of this special issue, turning our attention both to the electoral left in Iceland and to the more anarchist and Marxist social movements that grew out of the financial crash, and to how and why these have converged and diverged in turn through post-crash Icelandic politics.

In the first section, we give an overview of the journey of the Left Green Movement from the margins to holding power. In the second section, we specifically discuss the effects of the financial crash, the protest movements and the political parties that grew out of it in later years. The third section focuses on the Pirate Party and its rise in Icelandic politics. In the fourth section, we introduce the Socialist Party and analyse further the tensions between socialists and other anarchists in post-crash Icelandic politics. We conclude that these different groups managed to cooperate in the years following the crash, first through the Movement and then the Pirate Party, but that, in recent years, ideological differences and personal conflicts have shattered this alliance into at least three distinct movements that currently see little common ground; although recent history suggests that a reconciliation may be possible.

The Left Green Movement

The Icelandic left has traditionally been fragmented and characterized by a larger Social Democratic Party, with a smaller communist/post-communist party existing on the far left of the political spectrum. Since the turn of the century, the Left Green Movement (i. Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð) has occupied this space. The

Left Greens trace their roots to the Communist Party through a failed attempt to unify the left wing in Iceland at the end of the twentieth century. The party bases its manifesto on five pillars: conservation of the environment; equality and social justice; a fair and prosperous economy; an independent foreign policy, and feminism (Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð, (n.d.). *Stefnuyfirlýsing*).

In its early years, the Left Green Movement was on the margins of Icelandic politics. It had minimal impact on policy and weak links to other opposition parties. The party's MPs were vigilant in their opposition to the expansion and overheating of the economy (Jónasson, 2006), alerting the government (Sigfússon, 2003) and the public alike to the dangers entailed in the operations of the financial system (Sigfússon et al., 2005). Their warnings went unheeded and media commentators and bankers even derided the members of the party for raising them (Egilsson, 2003). After almost a decade of this marginality, the Left Greens found themselves in a governing position after the financial collapse of 2008.

Along with the Social Democrats, the Left Greens explained the financial collapse with reference to corruption and lack of transparency. They called for political reforms to correct course, including the revision of the constitution and protection of the welfare state. This was followed with electoral success that catapulted them into government in the spring of 2009. Yet, the decision to enter government was not an easy one, according to former party chair Sigfússon. Aware that the coming years would be difficult, he and other party leaders felt obligated to take on the demanding task of governing in the years that followed, especially as the party was the only established party not implicated in the banking crisis (Sigbjörnsson, 2013).

The Left Green Movement served as the junior party in government from 2009–2013. A wave of popular anger at the so-called architects of the crash propelled the coalition to power, but it faced significant hurdles from the outset. The country's precarious economic situation necessitated an IMF bailout and significant auster-

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movements are therefore split into at least three passionately separated political parties, and internal disputes plague the one party that still attempts to reconcile anarchist and socialist ideologies. Therefore, the current outlook for a united uprising of the global left in Iceland is less than promising, although history suggests that they can work together when rallying behind clear, common demands for political reforms.

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ity measures, challenges that a left-wing coalition could barely address without compromising core elements of its agenda. Working with the IMF, enforcing austerity, and defending creditors' rights was a difficult position, but arguably one forced on the left by structural constraints. On top of all of this, Iceland entered one of the fiercest and most dramatic international conflicts in its history in the form of the Icesave dispute with the UK and Netherlands, while the government also attempted to overturn the fishing quota system, launched a controversial application for membership of the European Union, and initiated a process for revising or rewriting the country's constitution (Sigurðardóttir, 2014). While this process was, in many ways, laudable and unusually democratic, the decision to go forth with it was extremely costly to the left-wing parties in government (Ólafsson, 2014).

Both parties left that coalition battered and lacking in credibility after a difficult electoral term, with each losing close to half of its electoral support in the 2013 elections. Before these elections, the Left Greens elected a new chair, long-time vice-chair Katrín Jakobsdóttir. She took on the role of leading the opposition to the new center-right government, and spearheaded a move to renovate the party's platform. The revised policies increased focus on the equal distribution of wealth, and sent out clear signals on the importance of the welfare and education systems. In addition, the new platform set out an ambitious plan on environmental and climate issues (Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð, (n.d.). 'Stefnan').

The Left Green Movement thus tried to rehabilitate its reputation, focusing on its traditional issues in opposition to right-wing coalitions led by first the Progressive Party, and then the Independence Party (IP, i. Sjálfstæðisflokkurinn). Both coalitions collapsed before the end of their respective electoral terms, the first one due to protests surrounding the Panama Papers, and the second one after the junior coalition partner Bright Future decided it could not work with the IP after revelations relating to that party's chair covering up politically sensitive information. Untainted by political

scandal, the Left Greens earned back a considerable share of their votes in the 2016 and 2017 elections.

At the 2015 convention and in their 2016 and 2017 electoral platforms, the Left Greens attempted to reaffirm their position as a left wing and green party. In 2015, they passed resolutions against oil drilling off Iceland's shores, and for the state to convert its largest state-owned bank into a value-based bank, in order to fend off overzealous bankers (Vinstrihreyfingin – grænt framboð, (n.d.). 'Landsfundarályktanir 2015'). Their electoral platforms in 2016 and 2017 echoed the same refrain.

Through this tumultuous time in Icelandic politics, the Left Greens have gone from getting support equally from men and women, to enjoying far greater support from women. Support for the party has also localized in the urban areas of the country, with the exception of the Northeast district, where its founding chair, Sigfússon, enjoys significant personal popularity. Its support is also now the strongest among the oldest voters and those with the highest educational achievement. These shifts may indicate that the party has been losing touch with its roots as a socialist party, but that the feminist and environmentalist elements are growing stronger (Ómarsdóttir & Erlingsdóttir, in press) (Table 1).

The political landscape in Iceland changed rapidly following the financial crash of 2008. Intense demonstrations in front of parliament focused on a number of issues around a central theme of a politically reformed 'New Iceland'. New parties emerged, and in 2009, seven parties participated in the elections. The 5% threshold for parliamentary representation, however, meant that the Civic Movement was the only new party to enter parliament. The elections were held too soon after the crash for emerging parties to fully organize, but by 2013, fifteen parties contested the election (Statistics Iceland, 2015). Despite the number of parties standing in the elections, however, only six parties secured seats, with the Pirate Party and a new center-left party, Bright Future, entering parliament for the first time, while the Civic Movement did not

Conclusion

The once stable Icelandic political party system has been completely overturned following the financial crash of 2008. The once radical and marginal Left Green Movement has now entered government for the second time, this time in a highly controversial coalition with the conservative Independence Party. At the same time, an unprecedented protest movement grew out of the crash and entered parliament, first through the Civic Movement in 2009 and then through the Pirate Party from 2013. The latter has arguably taken up much of the space on the radical left in the Icelandic political landscape, especially in 2016 and again after the Left Greens entered government in late 2017. Both parties now face fresh competition from a new Socialist Party, elected to Reykjavík City Council in 2018.

While the Left Greens and their predecessors have historically been the radical socialist party in Iceland, this identity has been seriously challenged in recent years. Socialists and anarchists found common ground in the protest movement and together advocated various reforms after the crash, but the Civic Movement quickly dissolved from internal disputes, and the Pirate Party took their place as the standard-bearers of the protest movement. In the Pirates' early years, anarchists and socialists managed to work together relatively successfully. Public conflicts between the two groups in 2016 led to the party becoming more predominantly socialist, while some non-socialist anarchists and moderates remain in the party, and internal disputes between groups regularly boil over in public.

In recent times, with the advent of the Socialist Party, these two ideological groups have further diverged. When the Left Greens joined government in 2017 against the fierce opposition of the Pirates, and these two parties then formed a majority in Reykjavík against the fierce opposition of the Socialists, relationships between all three turned particularly cold. Today, these

Democrats and the center-right Reform party in the city council following those elections. The Socialists' single councillor opted to stay out of the coalition – along with the right-wing parties – and chose that opportunity to publish an article citing Martin Luther King Jr., proclaiming she would not 'become the house slave' to the establishment by taking part in the government (implying that the other parties had) (Mörtudóttir, 2018). This contributed to growing tensions in relations between party activists of the Pirates and Socialists, with socialist activists accusing the Pirates of being capitalists who were afraid to make necessary changes to the system (Sigurðsson, 2018).

As the above discussion indicates, there seems to be a tangible conflict going on in Icelandic anti-establishment politics between Marxists/socialists and non-socialist anarchists; the uneasy alliance between these groups in the aftermath of the crash has mostly fallen apart in recent years. These groups are now represented in at least three prominent parties – although one still remains outside of parliament. The current political landscape is fraught with tensions and conflicts between every pairing of the three, based on both personal animosities and political disagreements. This new situation sees a clearer demarcation between socialists and anarchists who don't necessarily identify as such, although there are still many socialists in the Pirate Party and many anarchists in the Socialist Party. The former still ostensibly invites and tries to accommodate both groups, while the latter is more explicitly geared towards socialists and Marxists. Where these groups will go from here is unclear, but the situation is precarious, and opportunities for cooperation seem distant at the moment. Any compromise would likely have to come from a resolution of these tensions within the Pirate Party, and/or a return to the unity around common goals seen after the crash, with activists of each party – as well as from the Left Greens and other parties – putting aside their ideological differences to work together towards the reforms that they substantively agree on.

	1999	2003	2007	2009	2013	2016	2017
Share of votes	9.1%	8.81%	14.3%	21.68%	10.9%	15.91%	16.9%
Men	50	44.6	37.3	45.1	36.5	32.8	34.5
Women	50	55.4	62.7	54.9	63.5	67.2	65.5
Age							
>30	22.9	27.7	28.4	21.1	16	16.4	28.9
31–40	28.8	21.8	18.9	21.9	19.9	19.6	13.7
41–50	21.2	21.8	19.9	19.8	18.6	18	14.9
51–60	9.3	15.8	16.9	20.7	25.6	18	17.3
61+	17.8	12.9	15.9	16.5	19.9	28	25.3
Occupation							
Public Sector	n/a	45.4	38.2	48.5	50.4	42.4	51.9
Private sector		52.3	56.6	41.4	40.5	50.0	39.6
Other		2.3	5.3	10.1	9.1	7.6	8.5
Education							
Elementary	49.6	54.7	32.5	29.1	17.9	23	21.1
Secondary	13.9	20.0	17.5	15.2	21.9	20.3	15.1
Vocational	18.3	7.4	12.4	19.6	9.3	10.2	12.8
University	18.3	17.9	37.6	36.1	51.0	46.5	51.0
Residence							
NW (rural)	n/a[a]	10.5	15.7	22.8	8.5	18.1	17.8
NE (rural)		13.9	19.3	29.7	15.8	20	19.9
S (rural)		4.6	9.7	17.1	5.9	10.2	11.8
SW (urban)		6.2	11.4	17.4	7.9	12	13.6

run that year (Harðarson & Kristinsson, 2014). Snap elections were held in 2016 and 2017. Numerous parties continued to stand in the elections, with seven parties earning seats in 2016. After drawn-out negotiations, the Reform Party and Bright Future joined a coalition led by the Independence Party (IP). After the collapse of that government, elections resulted in a record of eight parties taking seats in parliament, including two new parties: one founded by the former leader of the Progressive Party (The Centre Party) and another that focused on poverty and the rights of the elderly and the disabled (The People's Party). However, analysts have found populist and even xenophobic elements in the rhetoric of both (Bergmann, 2015, 2017).

At the onset of the 2016 elections, the Left Greens' chair Katrín Jakobsdóttir declared that she would not consider forming a coalition with the IP (Valgerðardóttir, 2016). It therefore came as a surprise to many that, a month after the next snap elections, in October 2017, the Left Greens formed a broad coalition with the centrist Progressive Party and the right-wing IP. To many, the new government felt like a betrayal, since they believed this meant compromising on many of the Left Greens' policies, although some commentators felt that their fingerprints were quite noticeable when it came to gender equality and environmental priorities (Magnúsdóttir, 2017). Numerous prominent members abandoned the party, including two of its former general managers, Auður Lilja Erlingsdóttir and Drífa Snædal.

In addition to many party members, two MPs, Rósa Björk Brynjólfsdóttir and Andrés Ingi Jónsson, also did not support Jakobsdóttir's decision to work with the IP, citing its repeated involvement in economic and social scandals. While they did not support the establishment of the coalition, they have nonetheless supported the government on most issues, with the notable exception of supporting a vote of no confidence against IP Minister of Justice Andersen (Jóhannsson, 2018). To some, this is reminiscent of the Left Greens' difficulties in maintaining party cohesion throughout the

too entrenched in the establishment, and the latter are weary of the unconventional approach of the Pirates to politics, as well as skeptical of some of their more radical ideas for democratic reform.

This tension has boiled over since the campaign leading up to the 2017 elections. Jakobsdóttir said in the campaign that all coalition options were on the table, and the party's MPs and prominent members publicly argued that voting for them was the best way to get the IP out of power (*Stundin*, 2017). They claimed they would never go into government with the IP, thus reaffirming the promise from the 2016 campaign (Hringbraut, 2016; Magneudóttir, 2017). Some Pirates started publicly warning that the Left Greens were likely to do just that and members of the latter (many quite genuinely) refused and reacted angrily to those accusations. This contributed to public rows between members of the two parties on social media, causing tensions that have hardly thawed since the forming of said government.

That said, the left-wing in Iceland is now facing a new challenge from the left by The Socialist Party of Iceland, which was officially founded on May 1st, 2017. Its platform focuses on representing working people against the capitalist system, advocating direct democracy and democracy in the workplace, cheap housing, a stronger welfare system, a more progressive tax system, and a shorter working week (Sósíalistaflokkur Íslands, 2017). The party ran in the 2018 local elections in Reykjavík, and received 6.4% of the vote. It currently has one representative on the city council (Reykjavíkurborg). As the name would suggest, this is a much more explicitly socialist party and has some decidedly Marxist features; it is unequivocal about its mission of battling capitalism on behalf of the working people. Not only have many former activists and supporters from both the Left Greens and Pirates declared support for the Socialist Party (Jónsdóttir publicly announced that she would vote for it in the 2018 local elections) (Miðjan.is, 2018), but the Socialist Party's placement on the left became very clear when the Pirates and Left Greens formed a majority coalition with the Social

ture. The CM quickly fell apart from these tensions, but perhaps the Pirates have been able to focus on their core policy agenda and use their internal voting system to temporarily compromise on other disputes. This precarious balance of compromising fundamentally different worldviews only goes so far, however. The Pirate Party has always appealed to many anarchists of both the libertarian and socialist kind, but these are not the most compatible groups of people in politics, and the public clash between them in early 2016 was real and ugly. It appeared to be an accumulation of their dislike for each other and their worldviews, rather than a substantive disagreement about Pirate Party policies. Since then, there have also been public conflicts over feminism within the party, between relatively radical feminists and more skeptical liberals and libertarians (Kristjánsson, 2018). In late 2018, serious conflicts have once more arisen, with several prominent party members abandoning ship and the future of the party again up in the air (Gunnarsson, 2018; Kjarninn, 2018).

Socialists and anarchists in Iceland: an uneasy alliance

The Left Greens have grown more distant from their traditional supporters after their ongoing participation in government with Iceland's conservative parties. Meanwhile, the turbulent rise of the Pirate Party has arguably seen the latter take up much of the space on the left of the political landscape, with 20.4% of the Left Greens' voters in 2013 switching to the Pirates in 2016 and 9.6% of 2017 Left Green voters saying they would vote for the Pirates in June 2018 (MMR, 2017; Social Science Research Institute of Iceland, n.d.). The Pirates and Left Greens were together in opposition from 2013–2017, and often worked together, but there were always tensions, especially between Jakobsdóttir and Jónsdóttir. There appears to be a strong sense within the Pirates that the Left Greens have become

2009–2013 electoral term (Ómarsdóttir & Jónsson, 2016; Ómarsdóttir & Erlingsdóttir, in press), but Brynjólfsdóttir and Jónsson argue that they are in all cases adhering to the party platform, whereas the coalition agreement strays from it in many ways.

Jakobsdóttir's broad coalition was initially well received by the public, with 74.1% supporting it after a month in government (Jónsdóttir, 2018). One can suppose that the public had gotten tired of the frequent elections and successive changes in government. Some voters, therefore, may have considered it a good omen that the coalition reached so far across the spectrum. Nonetheless, the Left Greens have sacrificed quite a lot to achieve their place in the government. They have only three cabinet seats out of eleven, and Jakobsdóttir has not shown any willingness to address political missteps by ministers in the other parties. She therefore faces significant opposition from former allies on the left, the Social Democrats, and, increasingly, from the Pirates, who are occupying more of the landscape on the left.

The Left Green Movement will have to make difficult decisions on how much they are willing to compromise on their platform in order to stay in power. While the party may have remained 'clean' in the eyes of the voters when scandals have brought down previous governments, voters will likely consider the party tainted by its cooperation with the right. What looked like the largest challenges facing the Left Greens only a year earlier are now overshadowed by the need to prioritize a left-wing welfare system in cooperation with a right-wing finance minister. The party must also face the reality that it has come to be a part of the political establishment. As the party celebrates its 20th anniversary, its parliamentary group has undergone limited rejuvenation, and new parties have stepped into the political fray with fresh faces, and, in many ways, fresher political platforms. The popular discourse in Iceland continues to favour political outsiders unbound by party tradition and discipline, leaving the Left Greens to face an uphill battle.

The crash and new political parties

The financial crash hit the Icelandic people in very dramatic fashion exactly ten years ago at the time of writing this; even if there had been warning signs in the months and years leading up to it (especially for the ruling elites) (The Special Investigation Commission (SIC), 2010), the crash was incredibly swift and society-wide. In a matter of a few days, all of the country's major banks went bankrupt, and the prime minister at the time, Geir H. Haarde, appeared live on national television to tell the people that (in our loose translation):

> The danger is real, good people of this nation, that the Icelandic economy could, in the worst-case scenario, get sucked along with the banks into the storm and the consequence would be national bankruptcy. (Vísir, 2013)

This was on Monday afternoon, 6 October 2008. At lunch the preceding Friday, a prominent economist had said on national radio that the country's economic system could neither meet its payments nor acquire currency to buy basic products (which many interpreted to include food, medicine and petrol) (Jóhannesson, 2009; The Special Investigation Commission (SIC), 2010). This was followed by a run on the banks, with customers intending to withdraw their life savings, even if the prime minister had tried to refute these claims in the same news broadcast (Jóhannesson, 2009; The Special Investigation Commission (SIC), 2010).

In short, the country was in panic. People experienced the crash not just as a financial collapse but as a societal breakdown; a catastrophic failure in most or all of its institutions, shattering public confidence and even the nation's common values and identity (RÚV, 2018). Not only did the major banks go bankrupt, but so did smaller savings banks. In addition, almost 5000 corporations faced insolvency in the years 2008–2012 (Mbl.is, 2012), with

2016). The core policy agenda adopted at the party's founding meeting stipulates direct democracy and individual autonomy, civil rights and privacy, freedom of information and expression, transparency, and accountability. The core policy also reflects a desire to approach politics in a particular way; to think critically and form policy on the basis of the best available information (with the goal of avoiding common prejudices such as partisanship, ideology or prior beliefs) (Píratar, n.d. 'Grunnstefna Pírata').

The Pirate Party's focus on direct democracy, modern technology, and individual autonomy is also reflected in the party's internal online electoral system, where every policy proposal, elected position within the party, and party primaries before local and general elections are decided by an online vote, in which every party member can participate (Píratar, n.d. 'Kosningakerfi Pírata'; Píratar, n.d. 'Lög Pírata'). This, and the fact that the party has no official leader or chairperson, is based on the party's roots in the values of egalitarian, non-hierarchical politics. It reflects a tendency towards a 'flat structure' of party organization and a commitment to direct democracy that likely derives from a certain skepticism of authority and government (Helgadóttir, 2016). This skepticism explains why many libertarian anarchists and right-wing activists were active in the party for a long time. Following a very public confrontation between some of them and Jónsdóttir in 2016, many have left the party (Mbl.is, 2016, January; 2016, February). Since then, the party platform arguably has become more decidedly left-wing and even socialist, with a strong emphasis on housing for all, free and better funded universal health-care, more generous welfare benefits and student loans, and a guaranteed minimum living standard, including an exploration of Universal Basic Income (UBI) (Píratar, n.d 'Áherslu- og stefnumál Pírata 2017'; Píratar, n.d. 'Framtíðarsýn Pírata').

It is, in a sense, surprising that the Pirate Party has survived this long, having such different internal ideologies, repeated interpersonal conflicts, and a shaky, non-hierarchical institutional struc-

Election Study (ICENES) in 2013, about 6% of those who said they had voted for the Left Greens in 2009 said they voted for the Pirates, but in 2016, the percentage of respondents who said they had switched from the former to the latter since 2013 had risen to 20.4%, despite the former's strong performance in the 2016 elections (Social Science Research Institute of Iceland, n.d.). This indicates that, in 2016, the Pirate Party took over much of the space on the left wing of Icelandic politics that the Left Greens had previously occupied, although it is not clear whether this was a long-term realignment. In the 2017 ICENES post-election survey, these currents seemed to have reversed: only 3.6% of 2016 Left Green voters said they voted for the Pirates. Instead, 15.6% said they voted for the Social Democratic Party in those elections, and, indeed, 20.4% of 2016 Pirate voters said they voted for the Left Greens (Social Science Research Institute of Iceland, n.d.). Polls conducted by Gallup Iceland1 in early 2018 indicate that these currents have partly reversed again after the forming of the current coalition government. In June 2018, only 43.4% of respondents who reported voting for the Left Greens in 2017 said they would vote for them 'today', 9.6% said they would vote for the Pirates, and 13.1% for the Social Democrats. Only 0.8% and 3.3% of 2017 voters of those two parties (respectively) said they would vote for the Left Greens (Gallup, 2018).

The Pirate Party therefore arguably remains a salient alternative for many voters on the political left in Iceland. The party was founded in 2012 by Movement MP Birgitta Jónsdóttir and other activists and 'hacktivists', including Smári McCarthy and others who had worked on the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) (Newhouse, 2017). The party intended to share the common international Pirate Party focus on digital human rights and privacy, freedom of information, transparency in government, and the use of modern technology in politics. Still, it tried to avoid becoming a 'single-issue' party by also fighting for direct democratic reforms, a new constitution, and various other social issues (Helgadóttir,

analysts estimating that about half of the country's companies were technically bankrupt (Stundin, 2018). The perception that media, academia, politicians and government had all failed the nation was widespread, and trust in public institutions plummeted (Gallup, 2017; The Special Investigation Commission (SIC), 2010).

This atmosphere led to some of the largest and most frequent protests in Icelandic history, including (relatively peaceful) riots, especially on and following 20 January 2009, when thousands of people started gathering on Austurvöllur square outside parliament every day, after having held organized protests there every Saturday for many weeks (Önnudóttir & Harðarson, 2011; Tryggvadóttir, 2014). The official demands of these protests were for the resignation of the government, the directors of the Central Bank, and the Financial Supervisory Authority, and for snap elections to the parliament. More fundamental demands for change brewed beneath the surface and quickly began to manifest; most notably those for a stronger democracy, political accountability, transparency in government, social rights, collective ownership of natural resources and a new constitution that would enshrine these demands (Sveinsson, 2013; Tryggvadóttir, 2014).

The official demands of the protests were met in early 2009, and general elections took place on 25 April, where the protest movement had largely rallied behind a new political party – the Civic Movement (i. Borgarahreyfingin) – which made most of the more fundamental demands for reforms. The people and groups associated with the Civic Movement (CM) were always quite diverse in their particular political objectives and worldviews. They managed to unite temporarily around their common objections to the status quo, support for a new constitution and other political reforms in the elections immediately after the crash. As time went on, however, the relative cohesion of the protest movement gradually dissolved (Tryggvadóttir, 2014). Some wanted revolution, others wanted reforms. Some were more focused on economic issues, others on democratic reforms; some were socialists, others were less

socialist or even libertarian anarchists, and still others more moderate liberals and social democrats. The CM split soon after they got three members elected to Althingi in 2009, officially based on disputes over how closely the MPs were obliged to follow the decisions of the broader party, but also, importantly, based on personal disputes and conflict within preliminary party institutions. This resulted in The Movement (i. Hreyfingin) being founded around the MPs and a few of their allies, while CM also stayed operational since it maintained control of the government funding allocated to parties after the elections (Tryggvadóttir, 2014).

In 2010, another new party had formed separately to these developments; an anti-establishment parody party called the Best Party (i. Besti flokkurinn), led by Jón Gnarr, a famous comedian who had never before been involved with politics, and numerous popular celebrities, artists and comedians who satirized the corruption, incompetence, campaign promises and rhetoric of the other parties (Árnadóttir, 2011; Rentoul, 2014). The party won a landslide victory in the local elections in Reykjavík, Gnarr became mayor and left office at the end of term in 2014, even more popular than in 2010 (Mbl.is, 2013). The Best Party was formally disbanded, but many of its members had founded Bright Future (i. Björt framtíð) in 2012, and ran in the 2013 general elections and the 2014 local elections on a liberal, internationalist platform of fighting corruption and incompetent politics (Framtíð; Vísir, 2012). The party entered into a coalition government with the IP after the 2016 elections (along with another new party, the center-right Reform (i. Viðreisn)) (RÚV, 2017, January; Vísir, 2016), but broke that government up less than a year later, and disappeared from parliament in the following elections in 2017 (Landskjörstjórn, n.d.f; RÚV, 2017, September).

One of the demands that grew out of the protest movement was the adoption of a new constitution for the country. In the 2009 campaigns, all the major political parties except the IP had pledged to start work on writing and adopting a new Icelandic constitution (Sigurðardóttir, 2014; Tryggvadóttir, 2014). As mentioned above, this was one of the big projects that the post-crash left-wing government failed to achieve, despite a supportive referendum result on the topic in 2012. This failure was construed by many as a serious betrayal, both of campaign promises and the results of the referendum, as well as a symbolic surrender to the status quo and the conservative elite. In 2012, the CM and the Movement reunited, along with the Liberal Party (i. Frjálslyndi flokkurinn) and some activists for a new constitution, to found Dawn (i. Dögun), a new political party that ran unsuccessfully for the parliamentary elections in 2013 and 2016, on a platform of adopting the constitution, but also of reforms to the economy and the fisheries system (Dögun, n.d; Tryggvadóttir, 2014). Other members from this movement founded yet another party that ran in the 2013 elections and was primarily focused on the new constitution: Democracy Watch (i. Lýðræðisvaktin), but neither they nor Dawn got elected to parliament. Two parties – the People's Front (i. Alþýðufylkingin) and the Humanist Party – also ran in these elections on radical Marxist-socialist platforms, but both received very few votes (Alþýðufylkingin, n.d.; Landskjörstjórn, n.d.g; The Reykjavik Grapevine, 2013).

The Pirate Party

As the above discussion illustrates, the protest movement diverged into various different parties in the years following the crash, even though the policy differences were not always clear. Perhaps the most notable of the parties to emerge was the Pirate Party Iceland (i. Píratar), that barely got into parliament in 2013 but became a major political force when it got 10 members (out of 63) elected in 2016, equalling the Left Greens in size as one of the two second-largest parties, before losing four of these members in the 2017 elections. According to the Icelandic National