

# The Rise and Fall of the Icelandic Constitutional Reform Movement: The Interaction Between Social Movements and Party Politics

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## Abstract

This article traces the rise and fall of the Icelandic constitutional reform movement, which emerged following the financial crisis of 2008. The movement grew out of the popular protest that arose in face of the crisis. We draw on the political process approach to examine how the movement declined despite some remarkable initial progress, such as the championing of a participatory drafting process. We find that the movement had serious challenges in terms of social control, collective attribution, movement network, and political opportunities. The movement faced tough setbacks partly derived from the traditional rural-capital dynamics in Icelandic politics. Moreover, the linkage with institutional actors was weak although ratification by parliament is necessary for the implementation of a new constitution. The populist movement frame motivated the participants in the beginning, however this was later impeded by the anti-foreign debt protests. The 2013 election was the final straw because the left-wing government, which supported the movement, was replaced by a right-wing government which was hostile to the new constitution. In conclusion, the paper finds that recognizing the dynamic interrelation between social movements and institutional politics is important if we are to understand today's social changes.

**Keywords : Iceland, Constitutional reform movement, Political process approach, Party politics, Financial crisis**

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## Introduction

The financial crisis which unfolded in 2008 and the following austerity politics triggered massive social mobilization in many European countries. The mobilizations emerged not only due to a deterioration of living conditions but also from a mistrust in the existing representative democratic systems. One of the characteristics of these protest movements is that they aimed to reform the existing political system pragmatically (Flesher Fominaya, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2017). Some of them took the form of participatory practices using the institution of direct democracy, for instance, referendum initiated by citizens (della Porta, O'Connor, Portos, & Ribas, 2017). This paper focuses on the Icelandic constitutional reform movement as representative of such practices at the time of the Great Recession. The reform movement showed remarkable progress, until it was put on hold in 2013. This paper explains the rise and fall of the movement through a description of the interactions both inside and outside of parliament. The Icelandic constitutional reform process has been studied mainly in constitutional studies with a few exceptions (for example, della Porta et al., 2017; Vogiatzoglou, 2017). This paper describes the process from the perspective of social movement studies as well as, to some extent studies on party politics.

Iceland was one of the first countries to be hit by the financial crisis of 2008. This crisis awakened the Icelandic civil society which had lain dormant since the protest movements that were generated around 1968 (Bernburg, 2016; Júlíusson & Helgasson, 2013; Vogiatzoglou, 2017). Although, the Icelandic popular protest, or so-called the 'pots and pans revolution,' attracted attention as an early starter of global protests during the Great Recession (Bernburg, 2016; Flesher Fominaya, 2014; della Porta & Matoni, 2014), the protest also needs to be characterized in terms of its development, into the constitutional reform movement (Vogiatzoglou, 2017).

The constitutional reform movement started in 2009, and it gained remarkable progress with legislative support from the left-wing government which was also established in that year. The movement and the government formed the National Assembly, which was a meeting composed of over 1,000 Icelandic citizens randomly selected to craft a blueprint for a new society. Subsequently, a Constitutional Assembly (later re-named the Constitutional Council) was formed in which twenty-five elected citizens drafted a proposal for a new constitution. The proposal was finally

approved with 64.2% support in an advisory referendum held on October 20, 2012 (Elster, 2016; Fillmore-Patrick, 2013; Gylfason, 2013, 2016; Landemore, 2017; Ólafson, 2016). However, the bill to implement the new constitution was not put to the vote in parliament even though ratification by the parliament is necessary to change the constitution in Iceland. In the general election of 2013, constitutional reform was no longer the main issue for voters (Thorarensen, 2016 p. 247). This election resulted in a win for the right-wing parties which were hostile to constitutional reform and the constitutional reform argument was shelved.

This paper mainly applies the political process approach which allows us to understand the social movement as political, and can therefore grasp the relationship between the social movement and structural features in a political context (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2014; McAdam, 1999). It is important to note that, in the case of the Icelandic constitutional reform movement, politicians or political parties as legislators are essential actors for the movement's success (Thorarensen, 2016, p. 239). Therefore, this paper looks at the political process of the movement from 2009 to 2013, focusing on political opportunity, movement frame, movement network and the political reactions from the opposition followed by conditions for emergence and development or decline of a social movement as proposed by Doug McAdam (1999).

The Icelandic constitutional reform movement is still ongoing, yet it is also true that the process was suspended once in 2013. Thus, this paper traces the political process of the movement from 2009 to its suspension in 2013. To describe the process, the author conducted interviews with seven people who were both movement actors and politicians as institutional political actors. Additionally, this paper utilizes statistical data as well as document data, such as articles written by the activists, parliamentary documents, party documents, and secondary resources.

### **Socio-economic and political impacts of the Icelandic financial crisis**

Iceland had a strictly regulated economy, but this changed rapidly after 1990 and on into the 2000s as the government implemented privatization and liberalization of the economy and expanded the financial sector. Joining the European Economic Areas (EEA) agreement, which came into effect in 1995, profoundly changed the country's economy because it allowed the Icelandic financial sector to participate in international

financial markets (Ólafsson, 2011a).

The financial industry became the driving force of the rapid expansion of the Icelandic economy from the late 1990s to the first half of the 2000s. The country's three main banks, Kaupþing, Glitnir, Landsbanki were privatized during this time, and they aggressively entered the international financial markets using their own currency, the Icelandic Krona. However, an awareness of risk facing the Icelandic economy had already become apparent around the mid-2000s<sup>1</sup>. In October 2008, when the Icelandic Krona crashed, the three major banks went into bankruptcy with a debt of about 700% of GDP and Iceland faced a financial crisis (Zoega, 2016, p.23). The fact that these three big banks held 97% of the banking assets of Iceland (Johnsen, 2016, p.41), meant that most of the country's economic activity was temporarily stopped.

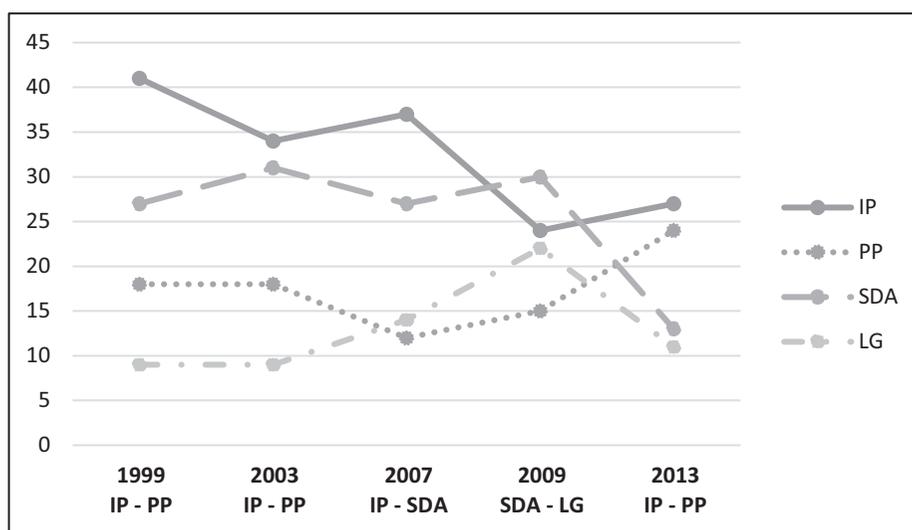
Thus, this financial crisis had an enormous impact on the lives of the people of Iceland. The unemployment rate almost tripled, from 2.3% in 2007 to 7.6% in 2010. GDP growth, which was positive up until the crisis, crashed to -6.8%. The Icelandic currency lost most of its value. Ólafsson (2011b, p. 9) points out that 'the most visible effect of the crisis for the general public is the cut in living standard affected by the fall of the Icelandic Krona'. Many households suffered even more since their housing loans were made in foreign currencies. While the value of their wages was reduced to half, their debts had doubled in the international markets. In addition, since Iceland largely relied on imports almost all consumer product prices, including gasoline, doubled overnight (Pálsson & Durrenberger, 2015, p.xvii).

The economic crisis led not only to deterioration of living conditions but also to an increasing mistrust in politics and politicians. A survey by Gallup<sup>2</sup> precisely shows a crisis of legitimacy of political institutions and politicians. According to the survey, the credibility of the parliament dramatically decreased from 44% in 2003 to 13% in 2009. One of the factors seems to be an increasing awareness of political corruption as a survey of the Iceland National Electoral Study (ICENES)<sup>3</sup> about political corruption shows. The survey asks 'how widespread do you think corruption is among politicians'. Although only less than one-third of the population (28.3%) responded 'very' or 'rather' widespread in 2003, it explosively increased to 72.2% in 2009 after the crisis. According to another survey, also by the ICENES, people who thought politicians were not 'trustworthy' increased from 16% in 2003 to 40.7% in 2009. This

mistrust led to an instability of party politics.

Icelandic party politics had been basically considered to be a stable four-party system consisting of the conservative Independence Party (IP), the center-right Progressive Party (PP) which was born as a peasant party, the Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), and the Left-Green Movement (LGM) made up of the previous socialist party and the communist party. Unlike other Nordic countries, Icelandic party politics was characterized by the fact that the conservative IP had been in power for a long time while the social democratic party had been relatively weak (Arter, 1999; Jahn & Oberst, 2012; Kristinsson, 1996). Especially during the neoliberal period, from 1990s to the 2008 financial crisis, the IP had always been in power and made coalitions with the PP most of that time to ensure their position (Ólafsson, 2011a p. 22). However, as Figure 1. shows, after the financial crisis of 2008, this stable party system began to fluctuate, and this led to the establishment of the first left-wing coalition government in Icelandic political history (Indriðason, Önnudóttir, Þórisdóttir & Harðarson, 2016; Jonsson, 2016). It was especially symbolic since the IP, which had been the ruler of the country, lost massive support, the LGM, which had been a marginal party before the crisis, rapidly increased. Hence, the financial crisis was a critical juncture.

Figure 1. Electoral results and government coalition 1999-2013



Source: Hagstofa Ísland (Statistics Iceland)<sup>4</sup>.

### **Cognitive liberation and creating a movement network in the popular protest**

The constitutional reform movement followed from the popular protest, and we can see its strong connection in the cognitive frame and organizational network of the movement. In October 2008, soon after the crisis, there was a massive social protest. Although constitutional reform was not an official goal of the protest movement, there were at least voices for it in the popular protest (Gylfasson, 2013, p. 380; Jónsdóttir, 2011).

The claim for a new constitution had existed, and also most of the ideas in the contents of the proposal for the new constitution had been argued prior to 2008. The Republic of Iceland was founded in 1944 when Iceland got complete independence from Denmark. Because the Icelandic constitution was originally given from the Danish Kingdom, it was almost the same as the old Danish constitution which was founded 19 centuries<sup>5</sup>. Some politicians were calling for a new constitution before 2008, but their voices were very small. However, after the crisis of 2008, the claim for a new constitution became explosively widespread in Icelandic society. IC3 who is a member of the Icelandic Pirate Party<sup>6</sup> said that

Since independence, many politicians have wanted to improve the constitution, or even rewrite it completely. But until the crash of 2008, I don't think it captured the popular imagination or was mainstream enough to be in a party platform ... But what happened since 2008 was that demand for the new constitution became mainstream (Interviewee IC3).

The ultimate aim of constitutional reform has been considered as a way to avoid what Iceland experienced in 2008 through a profound reform of the system through citizen participation (Thorarensen, 2016; Vogiatzoglou, 2017). It is however also important to note, that from the activist's perspective, the implantation of a new constitution was crucial for a redistribution of power. The activists recognized the domestic authorities, who were assumed to be the culprits of the crisis, as their adversaries. For instance, Jon Elster (2016, p. 191) and Jón Ólafson (2016, pp. 257-258) point out that one of the most significant motivations for a new constitution was the perception that it would break the corrupting relationship between political elites and

business elites which they conceived as a primary cause of the 2008 financial crisis. IC4 who is an activist mentioned about the participatory methods of the constitutional reform:

What we needed was more power to the people, what we needed was to have a more democratic society which we had not felt. It was very important because in the collapse, in the protest we have felt like it's my country, it's not their [the people in power] country (Interviewee IC4).

Also, Birgitta Jónsdóttir (2011), an information activist and later a co-founder of the Pirate Party, defines the people by saying that 'We' meaning the 99%, not the politicians who had failed'. Then, she mentioned that the new constitutional proposal 'has been rewritten by the people for the people ... Once it is passed, our new constitution will bring more power to the people and give us proper tools to restrain those in power'. This kind of populist discourse emerged in the popular protest. Jón Gunnar Bernburg (2016, pp. 72-74) mentions that one of the main discourses of the protest was that 'political corruption' in the country led the financial crisis and the 'problem was thus defined as an established pattern of flawed governance, a problem that, in the light of the crisis, called for democratic reform'. The popular protest was the beginning of a cognitive liberation, and the idea of the new constitution came to be considered crucial for what the protesters called 'New Iceland'. This sort of anti-establishment sentiment and aspiration for popular sovereignty were reflected in the desire for constitutional reform. IC7 who worked for the new constitution and later became a member of the Pirate Party said

There was so much distrust in the political establishment and political elites. People wanted to say direct power influence over this fundamental matter. There were huge demands and calls for increased democracy, direct democracy, participation, and people's power after the crash ... the National Assembly, the Constitutional Committee with experts, the public consultation meeting, the directly elected Constitutional Council, the referendum, all part of this trying to meet this demand and general desire for improvement or reforming our

democracy after the crash (Interviewee IC7).

The constitutional reform movement was not a ‘protest’ but it should still be seen as contentious politics. The constitutional reform movement indeed took over the populistic cognitive frame which emerged in the popular protest as well as its organizational network. As Markos Vogiatzoglou (2017, p. 49) notes, ‘all of the key actors of the protests were involved in the drafting process’. Some of them were elected to become members of the Constitutional Council, some worked in organizing the National Forum as volunteers, and some suggested many good ideas about the new constitution to the Council. Not only in such kind of open events but also they had a lot of the debates ‘in just coffeehouse’ (Interviewee IC3). The existent network which was established in the popular protest contributed to the emergence of the constitutional reform movement. Therefore, we can see the popular protest as an ‘eventful protest’ which produced social movement capital, collective identity, and knowledge for another movement (della Porta, 2008, p. 30).

### **The emergence of political opportunities**

The constitutional reform process was genuinely popular, and its process, such as the National Forum, the Constitutional Assembly/ Council, and the referendum, were all legally carried forward. In this regard, the left-wing government which supported the movement was first and foremost an important political opportunity. Sydeny Tarrow (1994, p. 85) defines political opportunity structure as ‘consistent — but not necessarily formal or permanent — dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure’. McAdam, McCarthy and Mayer (1988) show that changes in political context are crucially influenced by political opportunity structure shifts in the social movement field. From this perspective, we can assume that political opportunity structures for the Icelandic constitutional reform movement shifted in conjunction with the changes in party politics.

Between 2009 and 2013, the positions of the political parties with regards to constitutional reform, were divided. The conservative IP and the PP were strongly against constitutional reform, whereas the ruling coalition, the SDA and the LGM,



were in favor. Even though the PP professed a desire for constitutional revision in their 2009 electoral manifesto, they reversed their position after the election.

After the election in April 2009, the new constitution was widely seen as a crucial step toward breaking away from political corruption which was assumed to be the primary cause of the crisis. The government passed a bill for the National Forum, the Constitutional Assembly and a referendum. They promoted constitutional reform inside parliament up until 2012. In particular, it should be emphasized that the new prime minister of the left-wing government, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, the leader of the SDA, was a champion of constitutional reform. She had been a supporter throughout her long political career. As IC7 explained

The left-wing government got power with the very clear kind of mandate and promise to change a lot of things fundamentally ... and Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, the prime minister, had always been for new constitution ... she had a personal will for that (Interviewee IC7).

Therefore, in 2009, there was the promise of civil society which proclaimed for a new constitution on the one hand, as well as a government with a new pro-constitution prime minister established on the other produced political opportunities for the movement allowing them access to power.

In sum, the constitutional reform movement emerged in 2009 in part thanks to the previous popular protest, since the movement actors had broad networks in the social movement field, and they could also use the populist frame to mobilize the participants. Furthermore, the left-wing government, especially the prime minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, created a political opportunity as an influential ally. Therefore, the conditions for the emergence of the movement were all fulfilled in 2009. With the legislative support from the left-wing government, the movement showed that a constitutional reform process 'that relies almost exclusively on civil society during the drafting phase can, in fact, function' (Fillmore-Patrick, 2013, p. 16). However, the movement was rapidly contested in the first half of 2013.

### **Contestation of the constitutional reform movement**

McAdam (1999, p. 52) proposed four conditions of development or decline of protest movements: shifting political opportunities, organizational strength, collective attribution, and social control, the three formers are conditions of emergence, while the latter is set in motion by the emergence of the movement. Social control refers to responses from other actors, such as setbacks from opposition. We draw a contestation process of the Icelandic constitutional reform movement along these conditions.

### **Political conflict over constitutional reform**

There were tough setbacks to constitutional reform from the opposition. The conservative IP especially had always been against a new constitution. The most visible incident occurred after the national election of the Constitutional Assembly in November 2010, twenty-five citizens were elected as members from 523 candidates. However, after the election, three men filed a lawsuit seeking to disavow the effectiveness of the election, and on January 25, 2011, the Supreme Court decided that the election was null and void, granting their action. The three initiators of the lawsuit were connected with the IP (Fillmore-Patrick, 2013, p. 12; Gylfason, 2016, p. 207). The left-wing government reacted to this annulment with a bill which the Constitutional Assembly renamed the Constitutional Council and the parliament appointed the twenty-five citizens to be members. Despite the IP and the PP being against this bill, it was passed. It is evident that the government rescued the reform process with their legislative action.

However, this caused a rupture in the coalition of governing parties. A few MPs from the ruling parties, the SDA and the LGM, expressed their displeasure with the constitutional reform after the decision by the Supreme Court. For example, Ögmundur Jónasson, an LGM politician, stated that he was firmly against the governmental resolution for a Constitutional Assembly which he condemned as illegal (Jónasson 2011). Five other MPs in the ruling parties abstained when the bill was put to a vote in the Constitutional Council. ICI, a member of the LGM, said that in the parliamentary groups of the ruling parties constitutional reform 'wasn't one of their top priorities for many of them, but all of them agreed to go enter the process. But then things started going wrong with the Supreme Court especially ... It was a big

point in the process (Interviewee IC 1)'. The decision of the Supreme Court offered a reason to oppose constitutional reform, not only by the opposition parties but also by some members inside the ruling parties.

It may be that political conflict over the new constitution stems from a conflict between rural areas and urban areas, Reykjavik. A survey in 2017 conducted by Market Media Research (MMR)<sup>7</sup> shows that the inhabitants of the capital area (61%) are more likely to agree with constitutional reform than those living in rural areas (47%). A point of contention is an article which proposes 'one-person, one-vote' in the proposal for the new constitution. The Icelandic parliament has been pointed out to have overrepresentation of rural areas (Kristinsson 2000). Traditionally, the conservative parties, the IP and the PP, and to some extent the LGM have benefited from this. For the political elite, especially those from rural areas 'has always had a strong incentive to oppose constitutional change - the self-interest of safeguarding the overrepresentation of the regions' (Meuwese, 2013, p. 474). However, the rural constituencies also worried about 'one-person, one-vote'. In fact, they were clearly against 'one-person, one-vote' in the referendum (Gyflason, 2016; Meuwese, 2013)<sup>8</sup>. The reason why the constitutional reform process started easier was that the SDA had gotten strong support in Reykjavik and could form a coalition without the conservatives. However, during the process, the traditional rural-capital dynamics in Icelandic politics resulted in a conflict in the constitutional reform argument.

### **Weak linkage between those inside and outside of parliament**

As mentioned above, constitutional change cannot be made without ratification by the parliament. However, from the perspective of an organizational network, the linkage between the movement and the political parties was weak. 'The political parties, whose credibility suffered a major blow as a result of the crash, were excluded from the preparation and drafting stage of the new constitution' (Thorarensen, 2016, p. 239). For instance, members of the parliament could not run in the election for the Constitutional Assembly. Also, the Council's members did not have any communication with parliament members during their work. IC2 who was a member of the Council explained

I've never talked to any politicians during a time we wrote the constitution ... The way it [the Constitutional Assembly/Council] was designed, the way it was structured, and the way of the atmosphere in the society at the time, it [talking with politicians] made no sense ... at the time we were writing it [the proposal], they had no right to interfere (Interviewee IC2)

The movement actors considered that it was not necessary to communicate with the institutional actors and such an idea correlated with the mistrust of politicians triggered by the crisis. IC5 who was a member of the parliament from 2009 to 2013 referred to pressure from the public:

At that time there was no trust in politics ... it was, in the eyes of the people, so vital that this [the new constitution] was made by just ordinary people ... But at the same time, in the political party I was working in, the feeling of this anti-establishment went too far ... when we became professional politicians, we were suddenly part of the establishment, and they hated us for it. (Interviewee IC5).

It is evident, that to some extent, the weak linkage between those inside and outside of parliament stemmed from their motivation to drafting the new constitution 'by the people for the people.'

### **Interception of the populist frame and the loss of influential allies**

Another challenge for constitutional reform was that parliament had to deal with other political issues which stemmed from the crisis in parallel with constitutional reform. In addition, they had little time to examine and amend the proposal before dissolution in March 2013 (Thorarensen, 2016). These issues not only cut the time but also had an impact on the movement frame.

A foreign debt issue, the so-called Icesave dispute,<sup>9</sup> influenced the movement's cognitive frame. One of the biggest Icelandic private banks, the Landsbanki was nationalized after the crisis and the accounts were frozen. Iceland had 3.8 billion euros in foreign debt which was equivalent to 44% of the Icelandic GDP (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2016, p. 105). The Icelandic authorities decided to repay the Icesave debt

soon after the crisis, and even the new left-wing coalition government, established in April 2009, also agreed with this decision. However, the Icelandic public strongly opposed the repayment of the Icesave debt. According to a survey conducted by MMR in June 2009, 45.6% 'strongly disagreed' and 17.5% 'rather disagreed' to the question, 'Do the Icelandic people have to take responsibility for overseas Icesave depositors?'. Hence, we could say that actually 63.1% of the public opposed the repayment of the Icesave debt. On the other hand, only 23.8% answered 'agree' or 'rather agree'. This issue triggered massive protests, and it finally led to referenda in 2011 and 2012. In both referenda, the Icelandic public refused repayment, and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Court acknowledged and legitimized the refusal at the end. The repayment of Icesave debt was not precisely a bail-out which other European countries implemented during the financial crisis, but it was still along the same lines in terms of offsetting the failure of private banks with public funding (Hallgrímsdóttir & Brunet-Jailly, 2014, p. 88). Bernburg (2016, p. 36) points out that for the public, 'it seemed as if the authorities had allowed the banks to take enormous risks at the expense of the Icelandic public'. During the battle over the Icesave debt, the movement's populist frame was intercepted by the anti-Icesave protest. People were mobilized more for anti-Icesave and criticism of the left-wing government than constitutional reform. The IC2 said

I think it [the Icesave dispute] impacted in the way that people just went the constitutional reform downer in the agendas. That's the most obvious part of the whole puzzle because so much energy has gone from the public into all that matters (Interviewee IC2).

This interception of the cognitive frame was highly interrelated with the closure of political opportunities. Hallgrímsdóttir and Brunet-Jailly (2016, p. 112) note that 'Icesave was simultaneously the site of real and sincere politics around reforming democracy in Iceland as well as the vehicle for the cynical manipulation of the center-left coalition government that had been elected after the crash'. The Icesave dispute delegitimized the left-wing government despite the fact that the country experienced a rapid economic recovery from the financial crisis under this government (Ólafsson,

2016). The percentage of valid votes of left-wing parties in the 2013 general election decreased by half from the last election (Indriðason et al., 2016). Moreover, the Icesave dispute contributed to the popularization of right-wing parties which had strongly opposed the repayment of debt and it enabled them to get back into power (Thorarensen, 2016, p. 247). This change in the political opportunity structure was decisive in the contestation of the movement because they lost their strong political allies in power.

In addition, The SDA, which had been their strongest institutional ally, became detached to constitutional reform after a change in leadership in February 2013. Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir who had championed the new constitution, resigned, and Árni Páll Árnason became the new party leader. This change influenced party policies with regard to constitutional reform. At the conclusion of the party's general meeting in 2013, they did not even refer to the new constitution, although it had been emphasized as of 'great importance' at the conclusion of the 2011 meeting (Samfylkingin 2011, 2013). It is obvious that the movement lost a big part of their institutional allies. Many interviewees mentioned this change as crucial for the movement (Interviewees IC2, IC3, IC5, IC6, IC7).

## Conclusion

Although suspended in 2013, the Icelandic constitutional reform movement demonstrated the effectiveness of participatory practices using the institution of direct democracy. If we view the popular protest and the constitutional reform movement from the perspective of a protest cycle, the former produced movement networks and the cognitive frame for the later. In addition to this, the historical political change, the establishment of the first left-wing government in 2009, opened political opportunities for the movement. However, the movement was always faced with some challenges. The movement faced tough setbacks partly derived from the traditional rural-capital dynamics of Icelandic politics. Moreover, the linkage with institutional actors remained weak although ratification by the parliament was understood to be necessary in order to implement the new constitution. In the beginning, the populist movement frame motivated the participants, but this was intercepted by anti-foreign debt protests later on. In terms of political opportunities, the most influential ally, the SDA, became

detached due to changes of party leadership, and the 2013 election became the final straw as the left-wing government which supported the movement was replaced by a right-wing government hostile to the new constitution.

The emergence and decline of the Icelandic constitutional reform movement cannot be explained from the single perspective. National sociopolitical dynamics, such as rural-capital conflicts, or the country's history of independence, the configuration of political parties and international factors are always interconnected. The fact is that the movement was obviously influenced by the impact of the global Great Recession. We must remember the emergence of popular protest and the national importance of the Icesave dispute (della Porta et al., 2017). Our research shows that social movements should be considered from a perspective that has a view of the integration of national and transnational contexts. Besides, although the reciprocal relationship between social movements and party politics is often overlooked in social movement studies (Hutter, 2014), our research suggests that we need to pay more attention to the dynamic interrelation between social movements and institutional politics.

Finally, it must be noted that the Icelandic constitutional reform movement has not come to a close, but is still very active today. Therefore, it will be necessary to study how the movement has maintained its primacy, in future research.

### List of interviewees

- IC1, Parliamentarian/ member of the Left-Green Movement, 12 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC2, ex-member of the Constitutional Council/ executive member of the Constitutional Society, 15 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC3, member of the Pirate Party, 17 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC4, activist/ member of the Women for the New Constitution, 18 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC5, ex-parliamentarian/ member of the Social Democratic Alliance, 21 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC6, Parliamentarian/ member of the Pirate Party, 23 February 2019, Reykjavik  
 IC7, member of the Pirate Party, 4 March 2019, videotelephone

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## Note

- 1 For instance, the 2006 report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding the Icelandic economy warned that because of its huge external debt alongside the country's rapid economic growth in the early 2000s, the Icelandic economy was in an unstable situation (IMF Country Report No. 06/296).
- 2 Gallup á Íslandi. <https://www.gallup.is/>.
- 3 Iceland National Electoral Study. [http://fel.hi.is/Icelandic\\_national\\_election\\_study\\_icenes](http://fel.hi.is/Icelandic_national_election_study_icenes).
- 4 Hagstofa Ísland (Statistics Iceland). <https://hagstofa.is/>.
- 5 The Icelandic politicians have tried to change the constitution several times after 1944 yet these were only small amendments in terms of electoral constituencies.
- 6 The Icelandic Pirate Party is a new political party which was founded at the end of 2012. The party is strongly connected with the constitutional reform movement. For instance, many of their members came from the movement and one of their main political agendas is the constitutional reform. The party became the loudest voice for the issue in the parliament after

they had seats in the 2013 election.

7 Market Media Research. <https://mmr.is/>.

8 The six questions asked in the referendum. See the Icelandic government website: <https://www.government.is>.

9 Icesave was an online saving account with Iceland's high-interest rate that Landsbanki, one of the biggest banks in Iceland before the crisis, opened in the U.K. and Holland. It had approximately 400,000 customers in the two countries. Yet, because the Landsbanki was nationalized after the crisis and the accounts were frozen, both the British and the Dutch governments implemented their own deposit-guarantee scheme for the depositors in their own countries. After that, they claimed a refund including interest to Iceland.