

Send in the Clowns Performing a Political Campaign in Post-Collapse Iceland

Sigríður Lára Sigurjónsdóttir

ABSTRACT

In the regional elections of 2010, a new political party, The Best Party (Besti flokkurinn), ran for office in Reykjavík under the leadership of mayor candidate, actor and comedian, Jón Gnarr. The Best Party's campaign was very successful, even if it made no attempt to argue policy or (apparently) use any of the methods used in a traditional campaign. This article deals with the question of whether and how a political campaign can be an effective political performance or be seen as political activism, using some of the Best Party's campaigning methods as a case study. The campaign is studied as a performance, drawing on the theories of Richard Schechner and Michel Foucault. While Jón Gnarr and the Best Party seemed to break with traditional politics, the article asks whether they really did that. What changes when a performer runs for office? Did the Best Party send in the clowns, or were they already there?

BIOGRAPHY

Sigríður Lára Sigurjónsdóttir holds an MA in Comparative literature and an MA in Practical Editorship and the Theory of Publishing from the University of Iceland. She has been a theatre practitioner since 1990 and made her debut as a playwright in 1999. Currently she is working on a PhD thesis at the School of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, the University of Iceland.

Send in the Clowns

Performing a Political Campaign in Post-Collapse Iceland

SIGRÍÐUR LÁRA SIGURJÓNSDÓTTIR

In 2010, Jón Gnarr, a well-known comedian, successfully ran for mayor in the capital of Iceland, Reykjavík. His campaign was unorthodox and generated a major debate about political campaigning and politics in general, raising questions of what defines a politician, whether politics should only be left to traditional politicians, and whether anyone can become a politician. Due to his success, the campaign also focused on performance as an important aspect of politics. The political debate in the weeks leading up to the regional elections in 2010 was therefore highly unusual. Whether this has led or will lead to a permanent change in the general political discourse in Iceland remains to be seen, and this article is not an attempt to chart the extent of the influence of this campaign, but only to analyze it in the context of theories of discourse and performance, thus trying to understand certain aspects of Gnarr's actions that relate to performance in politics.

It was January 2010. The Icelandic nation was beginning to move on after its financial difficulties. However, many were still reeling from the collapse of the banks in the autumn of 2008, and since then, the government had resigned as a result of what has been called the Kitchenware Revolution.¹ Congressional elections were held in 2009, and regional elections were to be held on 25 May.² The political atmosphere in Reykjavík was unusual for other reasons than the financial crisis, however. Due to the city council having had difficulties during its past four-year term, the council's majority had undergone several changes: a longstanding coalition

between all the left and centre parties had broken up before the previous elections, and from 2006 to 2010, the city had adapted to a new and fragmented city council, which had a hard time reaching agreements or collaborating on any policy, four mayors having been in office during the term. Then, the bank crisis added to the mayhem as the city suddenly had trouble paying its debts.

On 19 January 2010, Jón Gnarr announced that he was running for city council along with a new political party called The Best Party. Gnarr made his announcement via YouTube.³ This announcement of the candidacy by a comedian may have been intended as a joke: Gnarr was known for playing the simpleton in some of his stand-ups; he had used this role in many of his performances.⁴ It has, therefore, always been difficult to distinguish the serious from the satirical in his work. After it became clear that Gnarr's candidacy was no joke and that he and his 'Best Party' were running for city council, he received a following unusually large for a first-time candidate.

Even though Gnarr avoided the mainstream media in his original announcement, his celebrity status as an actor and a stand-up comedian ensured him considerable news coverage. Here, it was apparent that his campaign would be different from any other: on his announcement clip he was not eloquent or articulate, but rather seemed to hesitate, apparently attempting to use metaphors typical for politicians, especially in the aftermath of the collapse, in an exaggerated form that made them ridiculous, as if he was trying to be a politician but was

failing miserably. Instead of 'selling' himself as an honest and trustworthy politician, it looked as if he acknowledged the pretence of his campaign, which he launched by declaring: "I'm not good at this." In contrast to those who had lied successfully in the years before, he made the underlying statement: "I'm not one of 'them'. I'm not a good liar." This was particularly striking since he, as one of the nation's most successful actors, had indeed shown himself perfectly capable of assuming a 'false persona'.

PERFORMING

Right from the beginning, it was tempting to see the Best Party's campaign as a theatrical performance, partly because Jón Gnarr was the only one speaking on behalf of the party. Though other people on the list were introduced in the media and on the Best Party Website (in Iceland a party is required by law to enter a list of people for candidacy), among them many well-known artists from various fields, only Gnarr was in the limelight. He acted as the sole spokesman of the party. And his speeches, when he 'performed' the functions of a normal candidate – speaking in panel debates, showing up in television interviews, etc. – all had a somewhat surreal content. For the present purpose, however, it is important to look at the way the Best Party's campaign exposed the performance quality of political campaigns in general.

"Performance is an extremely difficult concept to define",⁵ as Richard Schechner says; yet he defines it as "an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group."⁶ Here we encounter our first problem: even though most of the things done by a politician in a campaign undeniably occur in front of an audience, in later years only a fraction of these activities occur in their actual physical presence. Much of the performance takes place in the media, on the internet (as was the case with the Best Party), not to mention the newspapers and magazines, or Twitter and Facebook. The ways in which politicians engage with their potential voters nowadays indeed involve a complex web of media. While a debate may be 'performed' in front of a live audience, it may then be broadcast on television, and

parts of it might then go viral on the internet where it may prompt extensive written comments. In this process, the candidate certainly engages in a kind of 'show', either as an individual or as the member of a political party.

Richard Schechner distinguishes between five categories that involve "certain acknowledged qualities" of live performance: play, games, sports, theatre and ritual.⁷ I have chosen to look at the elements in Richard Schechner's performance chart for a clearer view of how a political campaign compares to the five kinds of performance that Schechner counts in his chart. I must point out that in this experiment I do not differentiate between different forms of media and live performance, and am therefore using Schechner's chart as a point of reference rather than suggesting that I am adding a column, or two. Among these, political campaigning seems to have most in common with 'sports' and 'games', as candidates also tend to compete within a certain rule-bound time frame, after which they are clearly divided into winners and losers.⁸

While deadlines and the rules for campaign funding etc. are set down in all democratic states,⁹ there are also unwritten laws about how to act and what to say when running for office, many of which did not receive much attention in Iceland before the Best Party made a well-published point of breaking them. According to Schechner, 'playing' has inner rules, while games, sports and theatre have frame rules, and rituals have outer rules.¹⁰ The frame rules of the political campaign would be those required by the law, while the outer rules would be traditions and events that occur around every election but which are not required by law. These develop over time, differ from country to country and can even be seen as rituals of democracy. Many of the ritualistic parts of the political campaign take place in the media,¹¹ and while television has replaced radio and the printed media as the major platforms, the role of the internet is growing. The outer rules of the rituals are related to what Schechner calls "appeal to other",¹² i.e. whether the object is to engage others than the participants. This is relevant to sports and theatre, important to ticket sales for sports and theatre and believers if the ritual is religious, but essential to political campaigning¹³ where appealing

to the voters literally serves to grant power, through elections, which is its main goal.

This might be why it is usually expected that the unwritten laws of political campaigning are taken seriously. A few 'joke-parties' (usually with a satirical sting) had previously run for council in other Icelandic municipalities. Some of these parties had even had people elected, but it had never happened before in Reykjavík. Furthermore, previous 'joke' candidates had never received the attention and following that the Best Party received. Joke platforms in Iceland had never gone so far as to achieve the largest percentage of votes in their municipality.

Most of the forms in Schechner's chart are 'completed' at some point,¹⁴ and political campaigns, too, are concluded with an election. In the case of established political parties, however, each campaign refers back to the one that went before and builds on a long term reputation of campaigning and governing.

According to Schechner, play is self-assertive, in the sense that it creates and develops itself and its rules are made up by the player or the players as it progresses. Schechner claims that games, sports and theatre, on the other hand, are social; they follow an accepted framework that creates balance between outside reality (that of the audience) and the inner world of the game. Ritual he claims to be self-transcendent, implying that it only obeys rules that are set down by an authority or higher power.¹⁵ Schechner uses the traditional theatre performance as an example. The actor has space for personal interpretation (self-assertive) but also works out the artistic choice with the director (the social), and at the same time he is performing in the theatrical tradition of his time (self-transcendent).¹⁶ If we attempt to see political campaigning in these terms, the same may apply. The party does decide how it conducts its campaign, the players in this case being the candidates and the campaign manager. It is their 'play', and it can be seen as self-assertive. However, they are not speaking into a void. There are rules, dos and don'ts, when it comes to campaigning, and those consist of a mixture of the framework and the communications between parties and candidates. This would be the social element, and even has a lot in common with many group sports. The political

parties attempt to work together as teams and try to 'score points'. At the election itself the results are clear: the voters judge. The whole period of campaigning is, furthermore, based on the frame of the law and is organized in accordance with the democratic tradition of each nation state at the time, and in this sense it is self-transcendent.

In the case of the Best Party, the actually intended policy remained invisible, the campaign including election promises such as: a polar bear for the pet zoo; a drug-free congress in 2020; all kinds of things for unfortunates; free access to swimming pools, and something described as 'sustainable transparency'. Jón Gnarr also promised to break all his campaign promises, which made it impossible to discuss his policy. This made their self-assertive play very different, but at the same time more fun to watch than in any other campaign.

The Best Party thus tackled the question of self-assertiveness differently from any other party, Jón Gnarr declaring that he wanted a secure and well-paid job for a change¹⁷ and that he intended to employ his friends in order to make the corruption transparent and evident. In a way, this took self-assertiveness to another level, as it seemed to make any future charges of corruption or the breaking of campaign promises pre-redundant: the party not only followed the established rules for campaigns and elections, but even promised to continue doing that for which Icelandic politicians were often criticized. By doing this, he articulated that of which voters often accuse political candidates in Icelandic politics, but to which the politicians never admit. In the social context of Schechner's model they set the bar very high for other campaigns, having already declared a certain agreement with the voters that politics and politicians really were, to some extent, corrupt. Thus, the Best Party, one-sidedly, changed the rules. However, since the party, at the same time, agreed with the voters on a set of very important and delicate issues that had been a longstanding cause of debate between politically elected officials and the voters in Iceland, the opposing candidates were somewhat disarmed. Jón Gnarr pretended to play into the tradition of democracy in Iceland but by being honest about corruption, or acting as if he did not know that it was supposed to be a secret.

And since this was all done half-jokingly and since he was somewhat celebrated by the public, none of his political opponents found a convincing way to contradict him on these points.

TRUTH

Up to the elections, the Best Party was intensely debated, but the debate did not focus on the general policy of the party or on the credibility of its politicians, but rather on whether this was politics at all. Was it advisable to elect a party that had not been serious about anything in its campaign, nobody knowing what it actually stood for? Yet the polls promised the Best Party up to 42% of the votes at one point.¹⁸ It remained difficult to argue with Jón Gnarr, for how does one argue with a political candidate who is successfully diverting the political discussion into such questions as whether his political opponents had watched the TV series *The Wire*?¹⁹ This points to the role of discourse, which Michel Foucault defines as the “practices that systematically form the object of which they speak,”²⁰ and which are the mechanism behind all speech and the way we see the world.

“Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth: the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.”²¹ Of course, Foucault is here speaking about the much broader concept of discourse as the fabric of how we see and construct the world, but it may help to explain how the Best Party affected the political discourse in Iceland after the collapse of the three largest banks in 2008, which was a time when the credibility of Icelandic politicians had been called seriously into question. In fact, many CEOs and politicians had been exposed in the press for being repeatedly untruthful about the financial situation of the Icelandic banks and related companies in the years that led up to the collapse. One event in particular supported this underlying understanding of the Best Party’s criticism of Icelandic politics and power structure.

On 12 April 2010, six weeks before the elections, a nine-volume report by an investigative commission that had analyzed the process leading up to the collapse was published.²² The report was presented and discussed thoroughly at a media conference, which was broadcast on live television, and it was far from being the whitewash that many had, pessimistically, expected. A number of politicians and businessmen were shown to have been untruthful or even corrupt on many accounts, the report revealing how they had gone to extreme lengths to protect themselves while jeopardizing the nation’s economy. Hence, “the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth”, as well as “the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true”²³, seemed to undergo fundamental changes during the time the Best Party was campaigning. Until this report came out, there were only suspicions and allegations, even though many of them had been somewhat researched by journalists and scholars in various disciplines. This report was the long-awaited confirmation that showed how corruption in politics was partly to blame, and it did not help the campaign of the traditional politician in the weeks leading up to the regional elections in 2010.

The report also revealed the links of solidarity between members of the financial and political elite, further emphasizing the ‘us-against-them’ mood in society: it seemed clear now that a relatively small number of people had gambled away the livelihood of the whole nation. This mistrust of the elite was sometimes transferred onto elite symbols, such as the suit,²⁴ the investigative report apparently calling the credibility of everything about the traditional politician into question, from his discourse to his way of dressing.

Gnarr adopted an appearance and a ‘character’ that differed from those of the other political candidates, which according to his campaign manager, director and filmmaker Gaukur Úlfarsson, was part of their tactic. The purpose of this element, which he called ‘keeping them guessing’, was to keep people in the dark about what the Best Party was really about. The intention was both to keep Gnarr and the Best Party at the centre of media attention and to make people constantly change their minds

about their 'real' platform. Whenever the public thought it had 'figured Gnarr out' as a politician, he would change his performance and be another character the next time he appeared on television or on YouTube.²⁵ As Jón Gnarr stated in an interview just a few days before the elections, when asked whether he saw himself as belonging to the same category as American entertainer and performance artist Andy Kaufman: "Yes, categorisation. I am against that. We are such a clever species of animal, we love defining everything. I like depriving people of that sense of well-being [sic] they derive from that – any sense of well-being really – and make them feel uncomfortable. Not that I want to hurt anyone. I just hate being categorised, placed on a shelf. That's one of the things I am enjoying about *Besti flokkurinn*."²⁶ By evading categories in this way, Gnarr seemed to refuse to give any easy answers, which resonated somewhat with the Icelandic nation's search for truth after discovering that its politicians had offered categorical, easy and ultimately untrue answers about the nation's economy for years.

The content of Jón Gnarr's words on his announcement video on YouTube was not much different from what anyone running for office might say: the government had failed, and he was interested in taking responsibility for the rebuilding of society after the financial collapse. The reasons he gave for being the right man for the job were perhaps somewhat unorthodox (he claimed to be an almost licensed sea captain²⁷ and to have worked in a mental institution), but in most essentials he was not unlike most aspiring politicians. What mainly set him apart was that he bypassed mainstream media by using YouTube (internet usage in Iceland happens to be among the highest in the world), and that he seemed to have recorded the message at home: at the beginning of the video it looks as if he does not know what he is doing; he is not wearing a suit or a tie; he is not clean-shaven, and his hair is a bit ruffled. This first impression connects directly to a very deliberate use of certain attributes that were quite deliberately put into play by Jón Gnarr and his campaign manager.

The media found it difficult to interview Jón Gnarr because he was very inconsistent in his answers. According to Gaukur Úlfarsson, Gnarr

adopted three characteristics in the campaign. First, he played the simpleton.²⁸ This fitted very well with Gnarr's style of performance as a stand-up comedian and as a comic actor in short comedy sketches for television and radio. He was well-known in Iceland for his peculiar kind of satire, exposing the absurdity of various social habits and rules by staging unsuccessful attempts to uphold them. From the perspective of the simpleton, Gnarr asked many uncomfortable questions and made observations that people knew to be more or less accurate, but which were usually not discussed in a political context.

Secondly, as the elections drew to a close and polls showed that the Best Party might win several seats in the next city council and that Jón Gnarr was likely to become mayor, he began to speak in a more sincere and honest manner, according to Gaukur Úlfarsson, thereby presenting himself as a kind and open-hearted person.²⁹ Rather than making it look and sound as if he had all the answers, he tried to ensure that people knew that he seriously wanted to do a good job as mayor. This did not make him seem like other politicians at all, however. His level of sincerity was more child-like, but in this sincere mode he sometimes revealed some knowledge and opinions about the role of the mayor. For example, he admitted to having had certain difficulties managing his own finances in the past, but pointed out that he, as a mayor, would not be, single-handedly, managing the city's financial affairs. There were more capable people hired to do that job.

Thirdly, Gnarr used his personal charm to his full advantage, according to Úlfarsson: "And he is very charming". In this respect he did not differ much from other politicians, Icelandic candidates often assuming the character of 'one of you'. In the weeks before the Icelandic elections, campaigning candidates are often seen chatting with people in the street, which seems to be an effective strategy, although voters know, of course, that this 'performance' differs from the daily behaviour of the candidates. In 2010, however, the 'trickster suit' seemed to have got in the way of many candidates, while Gnarr, on the video diary he kept on YouTube throughout the campaign, showed himself in various states of shabbiness, sometimes appearing as if he had just fallen out of bed.³⁰ This seemed to ap-



Gnarr's shabby look in the Besti flokkurinn's campaign music video, adopting Tina Turner's version of "The Best" for promoting their election. Video frame from YouTube. Director and photographer: Gaukur Úlfarsson. Courtesy: Besti flokkurinn.

peal directly to the voters' search for a more honest, non-trickster politician.

Obviously, the financial collapse, the investigative report and the general distrust of the political class proved very harmful to the 'ordinary' political candidates, while the innovative campaign performed by the Best Party was effective in this political environment.

In this way, the whole performance was actually planned and constructed quite carefully. Gnarr and Úlfarsson simply created a better performance than a regular campaign management would have done, choosing media, costumes and rhetorical devices from a broader spectrum than that usually employed by Icelandic politicians. It was a political campaign, but mainly because it was advertised and performed in an unorthodox way, Úlfarsson and Gnarr achieved their goal: to keep the media focussed on the Best Party, thus taking all the attention from the other parties with the aim of winning the elections. At the same time they put the political performance in the foreground and since they knew how to get the media's attention, they made their opponents constantly have to deal with questions

and issues that they were not prepared for. If the other parties were to rise against the Best Party they had to do that as a part of the performance which the campaign had become. One of the things that enabled the Best Party to do this was Gnarr's celebrity status: while running for mayor he did not need to do much to get headlines. But the things he said were at the same time carefully designed to expose the political campaign itself as a performance.

(PER)FORMING TRUTH

Many of the rather simple statements made by Jón Gnarr in his campaign seemed to affect the political discourse and campaigning of the other candidates: it was as if he changed the very rules of political campaigning. In one interview, when asked about his earlier promise not to keep any of his campaigning promises, he added, almost as an afterthought, that nobody ever did that anyway.³¹

By stating that politicians never keep their promises, Gnarr made this an important issue in the political debate leading up to the elections. There was enough truth to his statement because cam-

paigned promises or policies seemed to lack credibility. Thus, the Best Party made traditional campaigning a dubious affair, and if the other parties were unable to discuss their policies or make promises, how could they appeal to the voters?

Gnarr was already more famous and more popular than any of the politicians, especially with the younger and less politically decisive generation, and he never identified himself as a politician. In an interview shortly before the elections, he stated: "I consider myself an artist, and I am my own subject. I am the only thing I have to work with."³² On Facebook, on 19 December 2012, after two and a half years serving as mayor, he still insists: "I don't see myself as a politician. I'm a political activist."³³ With these statements Gnarr attempts to distance himself from other political candidates and politicians, but since he ran for office, and since he officiated as a mayor at the time of these statements, he is nevertheless a politician in the conventional understanding of the word. These statements were not challenged, despite their evident untruthfulness, and although most politicians would probably have liked to be able to present themselves differently at the time. But then, what could they have used instead? Gnarr defines himself as a) an artist and b) a political activist. Adopting titles other than the less popular one of 'politician' did seem to strengthen his position, which would hardly have happened if a candidate had presented himself as a lawyer or as an economist.

DID THE CLOWNS TAKE OVER OR WHAT?

The Best Party reached the goal of any political campaign: they achieved about a third of the votes, formed a majority in the city council with the Social Democrats, and Jón Gnarr has been the mayor of Reykjavík since 15 June 2010.

This success is unprecedented for a new platform in Icelandic politics, let alone for one that argues no policy or serious intentions and ran a highly unorthodox campaign. The artistic background of the Best Party candidates was, in fact, widely distrusted as a valid preparation for governing the city by many of the critics of the party. Now that we have established the performance elements of cam-

paigned, however, it is noteworthy that a political party consisting mainly of trained performers had such success with the form. That seems logical, since a seasoned politician has extensive training in giving speeches, debating, campaigning – basically, in performing a certain kind of role. Jón Gnarr, Gaukur Úlfarsson and other members of the Best Party had a much broader range of performance experience and could therefore take the campaign in different directions. They created a persona of the candidate as a well-meaning citizen rather than a politician in the traditional sense. The Best Party used the campaign to expose certain weaknesses in the political system, such as the hollowness of campaigning promises and in this sense their campaign was political theatre and political activism while at the same time being an actual campaign for actual political power. Thus it transgressed the boundaries between participation in politics and an act of protest.

The campaign of the Best Party before the regional elections in Iceland 2010 was a performance and was open about being one. At the same time it revealed other – and perhaps all other – political campaigns to be the same. This made it evident before the elections that a political campaign is a performance. The Best Party decided they would compete by being funny and unpredictable while showing the best of intentions. Other politicians were thus made aware that they were, above all, being evaluated as performers. The candidates from the other political parties struggled with that playing field, which worked to the advantage of the Best Party. To describe political campaigning as a performance is not original, but the success of the Best Party may have created more awareness of the degree to which success depends on the performance of the candidates.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 On 20 January 2009 protests erupted in front of the House of Parliament that escalated over the next few days, ending in the resignation of the government on 26 January.
- 2 State senate's election website, <http://www.kosning.is/sveitarstjornarkosningar> (retrieved 28 April 2013).
- 3 Besti flokkurinn, *Kynning*, 19 January 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=EQeDkcSUVWg (retrieved 21 September 2013).
- 4 As seen in the stand-up *Ég var einu sinni nörd* (*Once I was a nerd*) from 2000, and Gnarr's character Georg in the TV series *Naturvaktin* (*The Night shift*, 2007), *Dagvaktin* (*The Day Shift*, 2008), *Fangavaktin* (*The Prison Shift*, 2009) and *Mr. Bjarnfreðarson* (2009).
- 5 Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, Routledge, London 1988, p. 22.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 17, figure 1.3.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.
- 17 Gaukur Úlfarsson, *Gnarr* (documentary), Allskonar, Enjoy and 10Films, Reykjavík 2011.
- 18 Viðskipti Eyjan: "Besti flokkurinn að ná hreinum meirihluta: Sjálfstæðisflokkur aðeins með þrjá", 21 May 2010, <http://eyjan.pressan.is/frettir/2010/05/21/ny-konun-besti-flokkurinn-ad-na-hreinum-meirihluta-sjalfstaedisflokkur-med-adeins-thrja/> (retrieved 21 September 2013).
- 19 Haukur S. Magnússon, "What are you voting for in Reykjavík," *Reykjavík Grapevine*, no. 6, 23 May-3 June 2010, p.15, <http://www.grapevine.is/Features/ReadArticle/Feature-What-Are-You-Voting-For-Reykjavik> (retrieved 21 September 2013).
- 20 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London 2002, p. 54.
- 21 Michel Foucault, *Truth, Power, Strategy*, Feral Publications, Sydney 1979, p. 46.
- 22 Alþingi, the Icelandic congress, *Report of the special investigative commission*, Reykjavík 2010, <http://www.rna.is/eldri-nefndir/addragandi-og-orsakir-falls-islensku-bankanna-2008/skyrsla-nefndarinnar/english/> (retrieved 21 September 2013).
- 23 Foucault 1979, op. cit., p. 46.
- 24 This dislike of the 'men in suits', who rule the financial and political systems, is also reflected on a global scale in Occupy Wall Street and similar protest movements that have emerged in recent years' criticism of the basis of society's power structures. From being a style of dress that symbolized success, as it had done in Iceland in the so-called boom-years starting around the turn of the century and ending in the collapse, the suit increasingly became to be seen as the uniform of the trickster.
- 25 Sigríður Lára Sigurjónsdóttir, unpublished interview with Gaukur Úlfarsson, 21 March 2011.
- 26 Magnússon, op. cit., p. 15.
- 27 Seafaring metaphors are very common in the Icelandic language and were especially prominent in the aftermath of the collapse in 2008. For example, it is common in Icelandic politics to refer to 'Þjóðarskútan' ('the nation-boat') as something that needs to be steered by the elected officials.
- 28 Sigurjónsdóttir, op. cit.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Examples can be found at the website of the Best Party: <http://bestiflokkurinn.is/> (retrieved 21 September 2013).
- 31 RUV (Icelandic State Broadcasting), *Kastljós* (news show), 15 April 2010.
- 32 Magnússon, op. cit., p. 15.
- 33 Jón Gnarr on Facebook, 19 December 2012.