

‘HOW DOES THE MOVEMENT WORK?

ABOVE ALL, INEFFICIENTLY’.

POLITICAL OUTCOMES OF THE POLISH LGBT* MOVEMENT

BEATA BIELSKA

Nicolaus Copernicus Universit in, Toruń

bielska.beata@umk.pl

The aim of this article is to analyse the political outcomes of the LGBT* movement in Poland, referring to civil unions, marriage equality, adoption, homophobic and transphobic hate crimes and Gender Recognition Act. I argue that the movement has become a recognizable political actor but has not achieved any legislative goal. It is based on an extensive qualitative research project conducted between 2013 and 2016, but includes also the newest information about the context and the movement. Methodologically it is situated in the critical orientation in sociology and theoretically in the field of social movement studies. Respondent’s comments on the conclusions are also presented.

Introduction

One of the main questions that confronts both activists and social scientists is: What did a social movement accomplish? Did it achieve anything? Although activists and academics may ask the same questions, their answers often differ. In this case, it is probable that scholars would be much more optimistic than activists, since they are not constantly confronted with negative outcomes and the failures of their social movement.

The aim of this article is to analyse the political outcomes of the LGBT* movement in Poland. I argue that the movement has become a recognisable political actor but has not achieved any legislative goal. Therefore it has been partly successful. Following a brief overview of collective action by LGBT* actors since the late 1980s, I present my methodology and a theoretical discussion of the social movement theories within which I interpret my primary data. This section is followed by an analysis of LGBT* activism in Poland with a view to understanding the factors constraining the achievement of their goals. My findings and conclusions were consulted with the leaders of the movements and this process is described at the end of the article.

The LGBT Movement in Poland*

I define the LGBT* social movement as different types of collective actions undertaken by lesbians, gay men, bisexual, transgender, queer, intergender, asexual people and their allies, whose goal is to initiate and maintain socio-cultural, political and economic changes. These changes include a move away from the heteronormative model (obligatory heterosexuality and binary genders) to a society that respects the diversity of psychosexual orientations and gender identities/expressions and sex characteristics; and consequently, the abolition of all forms of socio-cultural, political and economic discrimination against non-heterosexual people or people of non-normative gender identity/expression/sex characteristics (non-heteronormative people). The collective actions to achieve these goals are undertaken by formal organisations (associations and foundations), informal groups and dispersed communities (including 'virtual' ones on the internet) as well as individuals who publicly support the demands of the above-mentioned categories.¹ This definition builds on the work of Jacek Kochanowski² to include transgender, asexual and intergender people (and consequently gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics).

The first collective actions by gay men in Poland (but not at that time lesbians) began in the 1980s, before the transformation from the authoritarian political system and Soviet-style economy to democracy and the capitalist economy. Informal groups also cooperated with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association

1 Bielska, Beata. *Potencjał zmiany. Rezultaty działania ruchu społecznego na przykładzie ruchu LGBT* w Polsce*. [The Potential of Change. Outcomes of a Social Movement Activity on the example of the LGBT* Movement in Poland], Toruń: Publishing House of Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018, 16–17.

2 Kochanowski, Jacek. 'Poza horyzont heteronormatywności. Ruchy społeczne lesbijek i gejów.' [Beyond the Horizon of Heteronormativity. Lesbian and Gay Social Movements] in: *Societas/Communitas*, No. 4, 2007, 3–4.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

(ILGA) in Austria,³ and focused on self-help.⁴ The first formal organisation was registered in the early 1990s⁵ and the movement has since then been shaped by growth and divisions. For example, in 1996 Lambda split into Lambda Warsaw and a number of provincial branches, and again, between 2010 and 2012 the Campaign Against Homophobia (hereafter CAH) experienced the same division, with the newly independent provincial branches either disappearing or becoming fully independent organisations.

The movement is now differentiated not only geographically but also by its thematic focus. The three biggest organisations operate in the capital city, of which CAH is the richest and has all the characteristics of a professional social movement. Its leaders devote all their time to the movement; they are actually employed by the association. The membership base is very small – the organisation is run by workers employed by the association. Most of the resources do not come from the represented community, but from international donations (public grants). The CAH addresses its message primarily to its allies (constituents), the best-known example being the action 'Side by side to equality' ('Ramię w ramię po równość', since 2014), in which celebrities were photographed expressing their support for LGBT* people. And it tries to achieve political goals through these constituents.⁶

LGB people in Poland have been protected by the labour law since 2003. As a condition of accession to the European Union, Poland was required to introduce legislation that forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace and ensures equal access to goods and services,⁷ which covers gender but not gender identity or sex characteristics.⁸ Thus, women are protected but transgender and intergender people are not. Polish law recognizes neither civil unions nor adoption by social (non-biological) mothers and fathers, nor homophobic and transphobic hate crimes.

3 At that time it was known as the International Gay Association (IGA).

4 Fiedotow, Agata. 'Początki ruchu gejowskiego w Polsce (1981-1990).' [Beginnings of Gay Movement in Poland (1981-1990)] in: *Kłopoty z seksem w PRL. Rodzenie nie całkiem po ludzku, aborcja, choroby, odmienności*. [Troubles with Sex in Polish People's Republic. Childbirth not Quite with Dignity, Abortion, Diseases, Disparities] Edited by Marcin Kula, 241–358. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015, 242–43. Adamska, Katarzyna. *Ludzie obok. Lesbijki i geje w Polsce*. [The People Beside. Lesbians and Gays in Poland] Toruń: Graffiti BC Pracownia Duszycki, 1998, 98.

5 Fiedotow, Agata. 'Początki ruchu gejowskiego w Polsce (1981-1990).' [Beginnings of Gay Movement in Poland (1981-1990)] in: *Kłopoty z seksem w PRL. Rodzenie nie całkiem po ludzku, aborcja, choroby, odmienności*. [Troubles with Sex in Polish People's Republic. Childbirth not Quite with Dignity, Abortion, Diseases, Disparities] Edited by Marcin Kula, 241–358. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015, 258.

6 McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. *The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Corporation). Morristown, NJ: General Learning Corporation, 1973, 20.

7 Ustawa z dnia 26 czerwca 1974 r. Kodeks pracy. [The Act of 26 June 1974, The Polish Labour Code] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19740240141>.

8 Ustawa z dnia 3 grudnia 2010 r. o wdrożeniu niektórych przepisów Unii Europejskiej w zakresie równego traktowania. [The Act of 3 December 2010 on the implementation of certain provisions of the European Union in the field of equal treatment] <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20102541700>.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

Since then the situation has deteriorated for the LGBT* movement. Its critics in the right-wing and/or conservative parties, have dominated the parliament and formed the government since 2015. The opposition parties are weak and the ones who support the movements's goals, such as Razem, have minimal support. The ruling party, PiS, is openly homophobic with the current Polish President, Andrzej Duda, beginning his term of office by blocking the Gender Recognition Act. This bill will be analysed further in the article. His party also used LGBT* people as a scapegoat in its campaign for the European Parliament elections in May 2019⁹ and in the presidential elections in 2020.

Active neo-fascist movements that oppose the LGBT* movement, such as the National Rebirth of Poland [Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (NOP)], the All-Polish Youth [Młodzież Wszechpolska], the Third Way [Trzecia Droga], the National Radical Camp [Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (ONR)] and the National Movement [Ruch Narodowy] have experienced a recent resurgence as they are supported financially and ideologically by leading politicians. Openly homophobic associations and foundations are advisors to the government and state administration, such as the Institute for Legal Culture Ordo Iuris [Instytut na rzecz Kultury Prawnej Ordo Iuris] and the Life and Family Foundation [Fundacja Życie i Rodzina], and the openly homophobic Roman Catholic Church has a close relationship with the government as shown, for example, by government donations to the to the prominent priest and businessman Tadeusz Rydzyk.

Attacks on non-governmental organisations, including LGBT* organisations, have also been reported, alongside intrusive police inspections and abusive media reports. LGBT* organisations and equality marches have also been attacked (for example, in Białystok and Gniezno in 2019) or banned (for example, in Lublin in 2018), while some local authorities have created so-called 'LGBT-free zones'¹⁰.

The period before 2015 was not, however, particularly advantageous to the movement. Although the governing Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) was not openly homophobic and declared support for the movements' goals by promising to legalize civil unions, it failed to enact this and, as my interview data shows, was accused of feigning support for LGBT* equality.

Research on the LGBT movement*

Although the political situation for LGBT* rights is very problematic, a wealth of empirically rich and interesting research on the movement has been published by domestic and international scholars. Among the most important recent publications are the work of Justyna Struzik's¹¹ about solidarity in 'queer movements', Jon Binnie and Christian

9 Korzeniowski, Paweł. '70 proc. nastolatków LGBT+ myślało o samobójstwie. Kaczyński walczy z "wrogiem", którego trzeba chronić.' [70 percent LGBT+ teenagers have thought about suicide. Kaczyński fights with 'an enemy' who has to be protected] Accessed April 25, 2019. <https://noizz.pl/lgbt/kaczynski-vs-lgbt-pis-straszy-ze-karta-lgbt-seksualizuje-dzieci/lq2vsvw>.

¹⁰ Cf. Tilles, Daniel. 'Poland's anti-LGBT campaign explained: 10 questions and answers.' Accessed November 24, 2020. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/06/17/polands-anti-lgbt-campaign-explained-ten-questions-and-answers/>.

¹¹ Struzik, Justyna. *Solidarność queerowa. Mobilizacja, ramy i działania ruchów queerowych w Polsce*. [Queer Solidarity. Mobilization, Framework and Activities of Queer Movements in

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

Klesse's comparative analysis of the movement and its links to the feminist movement¹², Łukasz Szulc¹³ and Agata Fiedotow's¹⁴ studies of the movement's history, and Dorota Hall's¹⁵ work on the religious fraction of the movement. There is also a rich seam of research on the identities of LGBT* people in Poland¹⁶ as well as their cultural representation.¹⁷ Nevertheless, a clear and academically rigorous overview of the movement political outcomes has not yet been published and what follows seeks to fill this gap.

Methodology

-
- Poland] Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2019. Struzik, Justyna. 'My się kochamy, jesteśmy parą gejów z pieskiem, a seksu nigdy nie uprawiamy. Męskość i seksualność w perspektywie aktywistów ruchów queerowych w Polsce' [We are in love, we are a gay couple with a doggie, but we never have sex. Masculinity and Sexuality in the Perspective of Queer Movements Activists in Poland] in: *Interalia*, No. 10 (2015): 172–94.
- 12 Binnie, Jon, and Christian Klesse. 'Like a Bomb in the Gasoline Station: EastWest Migration and Transnational Activism around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Politics in Poland.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39, No. 7 (2013): 1107–24. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2013.778030. Binnie, Jon, and Christian Klesse. 'Solidarities and tensions: Feminism and transnational LGBTQ politics in Poland. in: *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, No. 4 (2012): 444–59.
- 13 Szulc, Lukasz. *Transnational homosexuals in communist Poland: Cross-border flows in gay and lesbian magazines*. Springer, 2017.
- 14 Fiedotow, Agata. 'Początki ruchu gejowskiego w Polsce (1981-1990).' [Beginnings of Gay Movement in Poland (1981-1990)] in: *Kłopoty z seksem w PRL. Rodzenie nie całkiem po ludzku, aborcja, choroby, odmienności*. [Troubles with Sex in Polish People's Republic. Childbirth not Quite with Dignity, Abortion, Diseases, Disparities] Edited by Marcin Kula, 241–358. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego and Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015.
- 15 Hall, Dorota. 'Biseksualność w aktywizmie chrześcijan i chrześcijanek LGBT w Polsce.' [Bisexuality in Activism of Male and Female LGBT Christians in Poland] in: *Studia Socjologiczne*, No. 3 (2016): 79–99.
- 16 Majka-Rostek, Dorota. *Związki homoseksualne. Studium socjologiczne*. [Homosexual Relationships. A Sociological Study] Warszawa: Difin, 2008. Mizielińska, Joanna, and Agata Stasińska. 'Od „wroga rodziny” do jednej z jej form: Rodziny z wyboru we współczesnym polskim dyskursie prasowym.' [Once the Enemy, Now One of its Forms: Families of Choice in Contemporary Polish Press Discourse] in: *Interalia*, No. 8 (2013). Kłonkowska, Anna. *Płeć dana czy zadana. Strategie negocjacji (nie)tożsamości płciowej w Polsce*. [Is Gender Given or Set. Strategies of Negotiating Gender (Non)Identity in Poland] Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2017.
- 17 Sypniewski, Zbigniew and Błażej Warkocki, eds. *Homofobia po polsku*. [Homophobia Polish-Style] Warszawa: Sic!, 2004. Tomasiak, Krzysztof. *Gejereł. Mniejszości seksualne w PRL-u*. [Geyerel. Sexual Minorities in the Polish People's Republic (PRL)] Warszawa: Krytyka Polityczna, 2012.

The methodological and theoretical frame of this study is based on the constructivist approach in the sociology of sexuality¹⁸, critical sociology¹⁹ and feminist philosophy of knowledge.²⁰ What is meant here is that, firstly, I based my research project on the way the movement defined itself. In 2015 one of the associations located outside of Warsaw – the Association for LGBTQ Persons "Diversity Workshop" – published a list of organisations and informal groups, both active and inactive. In 2015 there were 37 active organisations on the list. Nowadays, there are at least 30 – the list is no longer issued. I used the list of 2015 to choose the respondents and to describe the movement. Secondly, I was an activist in the movement during the research study, thus I was engaged in the field and conducted my study not only for scholars, but also for the movement.²¹ I had started being an activist a year before I decided to conduct this research project, with no initial intention to collect data. Thirdly, I use the term 'situated knowledges'²² to emphasize that no knowledge is objective in the positivist sense and all we have is our situated, embodied point of view and data collected from this point of view. My research project was also conducted in this manner, from the perspective of feminist objectivity.²³ Being in the movement gave me the contextual knowledge which allowed me to design and conduct interviews, as well as interpret the data accurately. Participant observation of the movement allowed for an embodied approach. I am a bisexual cis-woman; I am part of the LGBT* community.

The article is based on an extensive, qualitative long-term research project carried out by the author between 2013 and 2016. Between 2015 and 2016 thirteen in-depth interviews with leaders of the movement were conducted, three of which took the form of joint interviews (dyads) since in these cases the leaders of organisations were couples. At the same time, three individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) with members of an informal lesbian group, and in 2016 four IDIs with the movement opponents (mostly pro-life and nationalist activists), including one joint interview were conducted. After every interview an observational note was prepared. In 2014 a focus group interview with members of one organisation from the LGBT* movement was conducted.

18 Vance, Carole S. 'Anthropology Rediscovered Sexuality: A Theoretical Comment.' in: *Culture, Society and Sexuality. A Reader*. Edited by Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton, 41–58. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

19 Mucha, Janusz. *Socjologia jako krytyka społeczna. Orientacja radykalna i krytyczna we współczesnej socjologii zachodniej*. [Sociology as Social Criticism. The Radical and Critical Orientation in Contemporary Western Sociology] Warszawa: PWN, 1986.

20 Derra, Aleksandra. 'Od skromnego świadka do wiedzy usytuowanej. O pożytkach z feministycznych badań nad nauką i technologią.' [From a Modest Witness to Situated Knowledge. On Benefits of Feministic Research into Science and Technology] in "Etyka [Ethics], No. 45 (2012): 119–32.

21 Bevington, Douglas, and Chris Dixon. 'Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism.' *Social Movement Studies* 4, No. 3 (2005): 185–208. doi:10.1080/14742830500329838, 198–200.

22 Haraway, Donna. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.' in: *Feminist Studies* 14, No. 3 (1988): 575–99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>, 581.

23 Haraway, Donna. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.' in: *Feminist Studies* 14, No. 3 (1988): 575–99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>, 583.

Content analysis was also carried out by the author of the minutes of seven meetings of the movement held between 2014 and 2016 and of a transcript of a recording of a meeting held in 2013. As an activist I took part in most of them – the so-called All-Polish Meetings of LGBTQ Organisations (Ogólnopolskie Spotkania Organizacji LGBTQ). It was part of the auto-ethnographic experience in the movement which helped me to prepare and understand other sources of data. My analyses were supported by an analysis of the content of LGBT* groups' websites. I also interpreted the data from exit polls conducted by other researchers. The study was conducted in Polish. The data were analysed using MaxQda software.

Social Movement Outcomes

In the rich field of social movement studies there are many interesting perspectives and middle-range²⁴ theories. This study will draw on two.

According to new social movements theory a 'successful' social movement would be – as I interpret it – a central or total social movement. Alain Touraine defined a social movement as "an organised conflict or the conflict between organised actors".²⁵ These actors are social classes – one which dominates and the other which is dominated. A central or total social movement is one engaged in conflict about the historicity (the main cultural patterns, including knowledge, investments and ethics) of a specific type of society.²⁶ It is about control over the way the society "thinks" about itself. This movement would not be organised by a marginalized group, as the conflict would cross the boundaries between social and economic strata. This movement would be successful because it would engage with the most important conflict for this society. For Touraine the Polish Solidarity [Solidarność] was an example of a central or total social movement.²⁷

According to the resource mobilisation theory the social movement is "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or distribution of a society".²⁸ A 'successful' social

24 Merton, Robert K. 'Social Theory and Social Structure.' New York, London: The Free Press/Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1968, 39.

25 Touraine, Alain. 'The Importance of Social Movements.' *Social Movement Studies* 1, No. 1 (2002): 89–95. 10.1080/14742830120118918, 90.

26 Touraine, Alain. 'An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements.' in: *Social Research* 52, No. 4 (1985): 749-787. 10.2307/40970397, 773-775.

27 Touraine Alain et al. 'Solidarność. Analiza ruchu społecznego 1980–1981.', transl. Andrzej Krasieński. Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, 2010.

28 McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald 'Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.' in: *American Journal of Sociology* 82, No. 6 (1977): 1212–1241. 10.1086/226464, 1217-1218. It should be stated here that although I do not define the LGBT* movement exactly the same way as Touraine or McCarthy and Zald (as "the conflict" or "the set of opinions and beliefs") it does not mean that these definitions exclude each other. In my analyses all the aspects presented in the above definitions are present: the movement does fight for changes (the conflict with the state and counter-movements), actors are organised (e.g. in associations), they do have and spread opinions and beliefs (e.g. equality) and want to change the society (the heteronormative model).

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

movement would be – as I interpret it – one which achieved its goals by effectively mobilising resources – including cultural, human, material, moral and socio-organisational – within and outside the movement.²⁹

This article focuses solely on political goals and outcomes and includes the most current information about the movement. The main goal of the project was to describe the LGBT* movement in Poland while focusing on its outcomes. Speaking about outcomes, instead of failures or a success, is widely accepted among social movements scholars.³⁰ Social movement outcomes are defined here as any intentional or unintentional consequences of the actions of all or part of the social movement.³¹ Marco Giugni emphasized that scholars interested in social movements tend to concentrate on political outcomes. As he writes, 'This is partly a result of the dominant role played by resource mobilization and political process theories during the last few decades. [...] Policy changes are easier to measure than changes in social and cultural arenas. Therefore, much research has focused on the policy impact of movements by relating their action to changes in legislation or in some other indicator of policy change.'³² The goal of this research project was broader than studying the political outcomes exclusively (also socio-cultural and economic); however, this article will focus on the former.

The socio-cultural outcomes of LGBT* movement in Poland include: changes in individuals' biographies (for example, by coming out as an LGBT* person); the existence of the movement (although it experienced disintegration twice; it was not institutionalized by the state and it did not become a marginal violent group, cf. the concept of 'anti-social movement'³³); the creation of a collective identity (defining grief – homophobia and transphobia mostly – and a response to this grief); the introduction of the ideas of civil unions, marriage equality and transgender rights into the mainstream discourse; the change in the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men (there is no data about other categories of people from the LGBT* acronym); the development of knowledge on the community (the movement was the first actor, who did studies about the community).

29 Edwards, Bob, and John McCarthy. 'Resources and Social Movement Mobilization.' in: 'The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements.' Edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2004): 116–152.

30 Bosi, Lorenzo, and Katrin Uba. 'Introduction: The Outcomes of Social Movements.' *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 14, No. 4 (2009): 409–15. [10.17813/mai.14.4.m1408k812244744h](https://doi.org/10.17813/mai.14.4.m1408k812244744h). Giugni, Marco, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, eds. "How Social Movements Matter." Special issue, *Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*, No. 10 (1999): 10. Diani, Mario. 'Social movements and social capital: A network perspective on movement outcomes.' in: *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 2, No. 2 (1997): 129–47.

31 Bielska, Beata. *Potencjał zmiany. Rezultaty działania ruchu społecznego na przykładzie ruchu LGBT* w Polsce*. [The Potential of Change. Outcomes of a Social Movement Activity on the example of the LGBT* Movement in Poland], Toruń: Publishing House of Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018, 120.

32 Giugni, Marco. 'Introduction. How Social Movements Matter: Past Research, Present Problems, Future Developments.' in: 'How Social Movements Matter.' Edited by Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly. Special issue, *Social Movements, Protest, and Contention*, No. 10 (1999): xiii–xxxiii: xiii–xxxiii, xxi.

33 Wieviorka, Michel. 'After New Social Movements.' in: *Social Movement Studies* 4, No. 1 (2005): 1-19. [10.1080/14742830500051812](https://doi.org/10.1080/14742830500051812).

Among the economic outcomes there are: establishing LGBT* people as a consumer group (by founding "gay clubs" but also by cooperation with companies, especially during the equality parades and other equality marches) and promoting diversity management in enterprises.³⁴ There is also some research about LGBT* workers³⁵ but cooperation between the LGBT* movement and labour unions barely exists (e.g. Inicjatywa Pracownicza [Workers' Initiative] supports LGBT* rights openly and is present during some equality marches, but no formal stable cooperation exists).

The outcomes were analysed in the contexts of the movement's goals and the structure of opportunities. The structure of opportunities has been described in detail above, since it has changed dramatically compared to the time of my research. The enemies mentioned by my LGBT* respondents during the interviews are now in the mainstream politics.

Results

Hitherto, the objectives of the Polish LGBT* movement have been mostly legislative. The movement sought to persuade Parliament to adopt laws on civil unions, same-sex marriage, adoption, gender recognition, and homophobic and transphobic hate crimes. In March 2019 twenty-seven organisations from the movement also decided to demand the introduction of the 'conversion therapy' ban.³⁶

The oldest goal was to permit formal civil unions and thus grant the same rights and benefits to same-sex couples that married couples enjoy. Since 2003 bills were written by activists and presented by (post) socialist, labour and liberal parties in 2003, 2011, 2013 and 2015³⁷. One of these bills (the 'Dunin's project', 2013) assumed that same-sex couples could create an enterprise – private partnership – to secure their rights. Others were close to the French model of a civil law contract (PACS) registered by the state.³⁸ The bills did not include adoption³⁹ and would have granted the same rights to both same-sex and different-sex couples. None of them passed or were even voted on. Most of them

34 Bielska, Beata, and Katarzyna Tamborska (prev. Lis). 'Transnational Corporations as Entities of Informal Influence. Some Reflections Based on the Example of Their Engagement in Activities Directed to LGBT Groups in Poland.' in: *Annales. Ethics in Economic Life* 21, No. 7 (2018): 59–73. 10.18778/1899-2226.21.7.04.

35 Sielicki, Janusz. 'Raport badania rynku i środowiska pracy osób LGBT 2014: Suplement.' [Report on Research into Labour Market and Work Environment of LGBT People 2014: A Supplement] in: *Replika*, No. 50 (2014).

36 Queer.pl. '27 organizacji LGBT podpisało Deklarację.' [27 LGBT Organisations Signed the Declaration]. Accessed April 10, 2019. <https://queer.pl/news/202623/27-organizacji-lgbt-podpisalo-deklaracje-kongres-mnw>.

37 Democratic Left Alliance [Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej], Labour Union [Unia Pracy], Palikot's Movement [Ruch Palikota] and Civic Platform.

38 Pilch, Paulina. 'Modele regulacji prawnych dotyczących związków partnerskich obowiązujące w krajach europejskich – rys historyczny.' [Models of Legal Regulations on Civil Unions Applicable in European Countries – a Historical Overview] in: *Orientacja seksualna i tożsamość płciowa. Aspekty prawne i społeczne.* [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Legal and Social Aspects] Edited by Roman Wieruszewski and Mirosław Wyrzykowski, 119–40. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy EuroPrawo, 130–34.

39 In the final versions, although adoption was discussed.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

were submitted between 2007 and 2015 when the ruling party was the liberal Civic Platform, officially supporting equality, and when an out gay man (Robert Biedroń) and a transgender woman (Anna Grodzka) had been elected to Parliament. As an activist from one of the organisations explained:

Maybe it will cause an argument. Some people think that civil unions or the issue of regulation and institutionalisation of civil unions is the most important and [...] this issue is the most important to the branch ('branża'⁴⁰) and regulating it is a prestigious issue of fundamental significance. Not all of us have to agree with this opinion, but for sure this issue is more controversial than introducing a shield against hate crimes. (OSOL2013⁴¹)

A new bill was introduced by the liberal opposition in 2017 but this too was dismissed as a political tactic. As the organisation Love Does Not Exclude [Miłość Nie Wyklucza] stated, the community was not consulted about the bill, which they regarded as the result of political infighting among Polish liberals rather than a genuine commitment to LGBT* rights.⁴² Thus, there is no direct legal recognition of same-sex relationships although courts and public offices do, occasionally, treat the couple as a legal partnership.⁴³

A few years ago the movement decided to move towards another goal – marriage equality which would also grant the right to adopt children, a move that echoed a similar change in strategy by activists in the USA.⁴⁴ Some of my respondents mentioned this change in the LGBT* movement agenda:

D2⁴⁵: (I have observed the discussion about marriage – BB) for a few years. I don't speak about public discussion; I speak about the discussion in the LGBT movement itself. And here even the people who were adherents of civil union-type solutions, now they say that marriages by all means, that these two ideas (should be – BB) implemented simultaneously. But then it will be necessary to resign from marriages and keep civil unions, for a while.

40 Branch ('branża') is a traditional term used by LGBT* people in Poland to refer to their community.

41 OSOL 2013 - meeting of the organisations in 2013, citations from the transcript.

42 Miłość Nie Wyklucza. 'Odpowiedź Miłość Nie Wyklucza na zapowiedź złożenia ustawy o związkach partnerskich przez Nowoczesną' [Love Does Not Exclude's Answer to Modern Party's Announcement of Submitting Civil Unions Bill]. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://mnw.org.pl/press/odpowiedz-milosc-nie-wyklucza-na-zapowiedz-zlozenia-ustawy-o-zwiazkach-partnerskich-przez-nowoczesna/>.

43 Pilch, Paulina. 'Modele regulacji prawnych dotyczących związków partnerskich obowiązujące w krajach europejskich – rys historyczny.' [Models of Legal Regulations on Civil Unions Applicable in European Countries – a Historical Overview] in: *Orientacja seksualna i tożsamość płciowa. Aspekty prawne i społeczne*. [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Legal and Social Aspects] Edited by Roman Wieruszewski and Mirosław Wyrzykowski, 119–40. Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy EuroPrawo, 134.

44 Feinberg, Jessica R. 'Avoiding Marriage Tunnel Vision. in: *Tulane Law Review* 88, no. 2 (2013): 257–315.

45 D2 – the second person in the dyad (D) interview.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

But marriages are to be implemented. So, I observe that there has been a change over the last three, four years, in the perception of it. (D7)

Maybe we shall stop fighting for civil unions, and start to fight for marriage equality, full marriage equality, I mean with the right to adoption, internal and external. (R8⁴⁶)

The bill on marriage equality was prepared by the movement in cooperation with well-known experts, primarily lawyers. Nevertheless, initially none of the parties represented in parliament offered their support. In June 2020 the coalition of parties of the Left [Lewica] decided to submit two bill proposals – one of civil unions and one of marriage equality with the right to adoption⁴⁷, although this can be seen as a symbolic gesture – the parliament is dominated by right-wing parties and both bills have no prospect of success.

Alongside the campaign for civil unions, marriage equality and adoption rights, the movement has also concentrated on fighting homophobic and transphobic acts by having them labelled as 'hate crimes' motivated by prejudice against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Bills to this effect were primarily prepared by activists and were put forward by the (post) socialist and liberal parties in 2011 and 2012. The document prepared by Civic Platform was once again controversial, as it included language that referred to 'acquired personal traits' and 'beliefs'. Once again, these changes to the Penal Code did not even reach the point in parliament where they could be voted on. One reason for this failure, according to activists, is the lack of consensus in the movement:

We don't even have one vision of civil unions - to speak about the closest things. Not to mention, we don't have one vision of getting on towards these civil unions and methods of implementing them, and methods of action. We don't have one vision how hate crimes should be penalized, if hate speech should be penalized. There is no single common understanding what hate speech is and what hate crimes are. (R12)

The only bill which had a realistic chance of becoming law was the Gender Recognition Act. This was also prepared by the activists, in cooperation with the transgender MP Anna Grodzka. Transgender people are only able to change their gender in Poland if they take legal action against their own parents on the grounds that their sex was wrongly ascribed by birth. The intention of the new law was to simplify these procedures. It also included intergender people by banning surgeries on infants. It was accepted by the Parliament but vetoed by the newly appointed right-wing president in 2015. One of the respondents expressed her feelings about it:

The bill was passed on the 10th of September and on the 11th of September was forwarded to President Duda for his signature. And Mister President

46 R8 – respondent number 8, individual in-depth interviews.

47 Ambroziak, Anton. '„Żądać niemożliwego”'. Lewica składa w Sejmie pierwszy w historii projekt ustawy o równości małżeńskiej' [„Demand Impossible”. Left submits in parliament first in history marriage equality bill proposal]. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://oko.press/lewica-sklada-w-sejmie-pierwszy-w-historii-projekt-ustawy-o-rownosc-malzenskiej/>.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

Duda on the last day [...] vetoed the bill. With no... and no justification at all, it is just ridiculous, no substantive basis. (R1)

The movement has not achieved any of the abovementioned goals, but it has become a political actor (it took part in the legislative processes, was consulted on changes to laws, cooperated with various government ministries before 2015) and is recognized as part of the electorate with some politicians campaigning for LGBT* support. This has resulted in activists using the primarily normative narratives – either homonormative ('long-standing monogamous relationships of two people with determined and stable homosexual identity') or trans-normative ('poor sick people born in a wrong body'). Asexuality and bisexuality issues barely exist in the movement. Some of my respondents criticised homonormativity in the movement.

D1: What I am talking with you about – monogamy, open relationships, yes? – it's simply swept under the rug. What has emerged in the context of (XY⁴⁸ – BB) is that s/he is in an open relationship. I know it, you know it, but in the Gala magazine or another one... / D2: Everything is always denied. / D1: We're a happy, stable relationship. OK. You may be a happy one and a stable one, but... / D2: You're not a monogamous one and why hide it, right? / [...] D1: Politically. / D2: This is simply a political trick. (D4)

The perception of these political outcomes is negative. From the point of view of the activists these outcomes are failures, not successes.

D3: How does it work? Above all, inefficiently and it is... because having been an activist for twenty-something years, soon thirty years, after these changes civil unions should already be here. (D11)

The movement's countries of reference are those from the Euro-American cultural circle, particularly the European Union which is the biggest international political structure in which same-sex relations are widely recognized.⁴⁹ This narrative is an element of the movement's political strategy. They want Poland to be 'normal' by conforming to Western standards, but they also recognize that these models are themselves far from ideal. The critical opinion about the British situation was expressed by one of my respondents.

Last year, literally last 2015 year, (the British LGBT* rights organisation – BB) Stonewall had a huge gala on the occasion that they will finally be trans-inclusive. The biggest British organisation had last year a party on the occasion that they will just be trans-inclusive. So, they realize that it is, that this letter ('T' – BB) is not just a letter, but it has some consequences. [...] It doesn't mean of course that we have to follow the same path. Maybe their historical experience is they had to come to this, maybe it could be done differently here, but it was just being accepted here (in Poland – BB) as an

48 XY – a former leader of the organisation. The name is anonymized.

49 Mendos, Luca R. 'State-Sponsored Homophobia. 13th Edition.' Accessed May 30, 2019. <https://ilga.org/state-sponsored-homophobia-report>, 533–34.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

acronym. Like nobody thought what it really means that we're LGBTQ, God forbid other letters, no. (R10)

When I wrote this text for the first time I argued that neither in the perspective of new social movements theories, nor in resources mobilization theories has the LGBT* movement in Poland achieved a success. From the perspective of new social movements theories, there was no mass outrage in the society concerning the proposed LGBT* legislation. The movement did not cross the boundaries between different social and economic strata⁵⁰. The problems which the movement addresses were not central to the public discussion about the cultural orientations of Polish society. This was not a central social movement.⁵¹ In August 2020, in the context of radicalization of right-wing populist politics not only in Poland, but globally⁵², I would risk a hypothesis that this situation could be changing. However, the research project described here do not provide enough data to test this hypothesis.

From the perspective of resources mobilization theories, the movement has simply failed to achieve its goals. It mobilized many resources – moral (e.g. empathy for transgender people), cultural (e.g. changing the language in the media – from “sex change” to “sex reassignment”), socio-organizational (e.g. the cooperation between CAH and local groups), human (e.g. many well-educated specialists active in the movement), material (e.g. international grants). However, there have been no legislative changes and there is no stable inter-organizational alliance (the meetings of groups and organisations are irregular and there are long periods without any communication between them). On the other hand the prerequisites for future changes have been created. They have already been mentioned – as socio-cultural changes (movement identity, constituents' mobilization, cultural heritage, rich repertoire of contention). The structure of socio-cultural opportunities has also changed – it could be observed that, although the political situation is

50 The leaders I interviewed were (almost all of them) well-educated, with an income higher than average and lived in big cities. There is also an over-representation of well-educated people from bigger cities in existing research studies about the movement, see e.g. the newest report Abramowicz, Marta. 'Sytuacja społeczna osób LGBT* w Polsce. Raport za lata 2015–2016.' [Social situation of LGBT* people in Poland. Report for years 2015-2016]. Warszawa: Kampania Przeciw Homofobii, 2017. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y423ql4k>. Public opinion polls show regularly that people who are elder, not well-educated, religious and live in the countryside are more homo-negative, see e.g. Górska, Paulina. 'Efekt „tęczowej zarazy”? Postawy Polaków wobec osób LGBT w latach 2018-2019.' [„Rainbow plague” effect? Attitudes of Poles towards LGBT people in 2018-2019]. Warszawa: Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniem. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y4ojhfs5>.

51 Touraine, Alain. 'An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements.' *Social Research* 52, No. 4 (1985): 749–87. Accessed August 21, 2017, 773–75.

52 Korolczuk, Elżbieta. 'Poland's LGBT-free zones and global anti-gender campaigns', 2020. Accessed August 31, 2020. <https://en.zois-berlin.de/publications/zois-spotlight/polands-lgbt-free-zones-and-global-anti-gender-campaigns/>. Ayoub, Phillip M., and Agnès Chetaille. 'Movement/countermovement interaction and instrumental framing in a multi-level world: rooting Polish lesbian and gay activism'. *Social Movement Studies*. 10.1080/14742837.2017.1338941.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

difficult, more and more people who come to the 'equality marches' organized by LGBT* activists.⁵³

Moreover, activists are adapting to the changing situation in Poland. The goals of the movement are, for example, changing – the Polish LGBT* groups have moved from civil unions to marriage equality and activists have learned how to be active in the institutional politics, some (e.g. Robert Biedroń) have become professional politicians and some became active in the media or cooperated with international LGBT* organisations (e.g. ILGA). Moreover, activists are learning from earlier mistakes. As a result of my belief in public⁵⁴ sociology the results of my research were sent to my respondents – the movement's acknowledged leaders and their responses reveal the ways in which they are learning from the past and adapting their activism. They had an opportunity to comment on my findings between December 2017 and February 2018. Some asked for some extra anonymization or for more precision in citations. Most of the comments were about Campaign Against Homophobia and my observations concerning this organization:

I can see my statements to be out of date because we have a completely different situation in Poland now. There is no point in splintering into the process of disintegration of CAH or someone's mistakes in the face of such an enormous enemy as Law and Justice. (Rx⁵⁵)

Unfortunately, I have to agree. CAH in the frame of 'professionalization' of actions is becoming a mainly advocacy organisation and strongly based on specialists from a given field. They separated themselves from the community and don't benefit from it, its resources, don't consult actions with LGBTQ community. However, there's no denying their success resulting from this strategy. (Rx)

Many of them agreed with my conclusions and found the research study useful for their actions:

You present the goals of LGBT* movement in Poland clearly and understandably. I like it very much. (Rx)

I am impressed by the thoroughness of the characterisation of the social movement of non-heteronormative people. (Rx)

53 Bielska, Beata. "“People Join Us When It's Bad” Positive Mobilization Outcomes of Polish LGBT Movement in a Disadvantageous Political Situation", Paper presented at the Midterm Conference of the ESA Sexuality Research Network 'Sociological explorations of sexuality in Europe: bodies, practices, and resistance in troubled times' 14-15.02.2019, Cracow, Poland. Accessed May 30, 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332820336_People_join_us_when_it's_bad_Positive_Mobilization_Outcomes_of_Polish_LGBT_Movement_in_Disadvantageous_Political_Situation.

54 Burawoy, Michel. 'For Public Sociology. 2004 ASA Presidential Address.' *American Sociological Review* 70, No. 1 (2005): 4–28. Accessed May 30, 2019.

⁵⁵ All comments in this section were further anonymized.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

Your conclusions and observations are as accurate as possible, the description of the situation complete, and the anticipations for the future highly probable and overlapping my own. (Rx)

I'm impressed. Incredibly interesting for me. [...] I agree with many conclusions. [...] A really amazing reading. (Rx)

In summary, the Polish LGBT* movement has been growing since the 1980s and is still active on the political scene, both in Poland and within EU institutions. It has not achieved any legislative objectives, but it has become a political actor and an acknowledged part of the electorate. It has also achieved some socio-cultural and economic goals. These outcomes have been perceived as failures by the movement but there is much that has been achieved, as revealed by how much could still be lost if the Polish government advances its homophobic agenda, but the respondents have mostly agreed with my conclusions. The current political situation in Poland is a clear example of a closed structure of political opportunities and it is possible the movement will lose whatever it has achieved (or even more).

Discussion

Social movement outcomes may be analysed as a form of creating social change. Social movements are mostly defined this way – as a form of collective action, the goal of which is to create change. Social movement studies could be analysed as part of social change theories.⁵⁶ It could be the change within and outside the movement, affecting collective action in whole or in part. Modernization theories, convergence theories, and postcolonial studies are the most useful to study these changes on the global level. From this perspective, Poland is understood as a semi-peripheral country, partly dependent on the centre not only economically, but also culturally.⁵⁷

Social changes are extremely complicated; the cause and effect relationships are difficult to determine. Although the explanations concentrating on only one factor are popular (for example 'mass movements are the most effective', 'radical movements are the most effective'), they are rarely justified. Therefore, my claim here is rather that under these circumstances (structures of opportunities) it is highly probable that this movement has contributed to the change/s. It should also be mentioned that not all outcomes are ascribed to the movement; it may be thought that, for example, politicians from outside the movement wrote the bill, while in fact it is the activists who did it. Certain unintended consequences could also be observed, for example, when the movement is growing and more and more people come to equality marches, the countermovement is growing too. The goals of the movement are also changing – the Polish LGBT* groups have moved from civil unions to marriage equality. And the new social movement itself is never coherent – it does by definition question the structures of power and different fractions may

56 Sztompka, Piotr. *Socjologia zmian społecznych*. [Sociology of Social Change] Warszawa: Znak, 2010, 301.

57 Cavanagh, Clare. 'Postkolonialna Polska. Biała plama na mapie współczesnej teorii.' [Post-colonial Poland: An Empty Space on the Map of Current Theory]. *Second Texts*, 2-3 (2003): 60–71.

Bielska Beata (2021) 'How does the movement work? Above all inefficiently. Political outcomes of Polish LGBT* Movement, "Central Europe", <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790963.2021.1920134>

have various objectives. I tried to present how these people presented and present themselves as intimate citizens.⁵⁸

Therefore there were many factors which contributed to the political outcomes that the movement achieved. Its history is not long (more than thirty years; much shorter than in, e.g., the Netherlands); the movement is still quite small, not mass (but growing); the political context has been mostly disadvantageous (political and economic transformation in 1990s) and partly advantageous (EU-accession, confronted with EU-scepticism); the counter-movement is developing not only in Poland, but globally. At the same time activists have learned how to be active in the institutional politics, some have become professional politicians and some became active in the media or cooperated with international LGBT* organisations.

The research presented in this paper was qualitative and has its limitations. Some of them have been mentioned before. It is also a research project of only one movement in a specific context and it should be mentioned that LGBT* actions are undertaken globally, and the Polish movement is connected with international organisations. Some activists decide to leave the country to live in better political conditions, as well as continuing their activism abroad. This aspect is worth studying. Bisexual, asexual, intergender and non-binary people are still studied rarely and new projects showing their activism would be beneficial for our knowledge about the phenomenon of the LGBT* movement.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all my respondents from The Movement and co-workers from NCU who helped me working on my research. This work was supported by the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun within faculty research grants under Grant [No. 2035-H].

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

58 Plummer, Kenneth. 'The Square of Intimate Citizenship.' in: *Citizenship Studies* 5, No. 6 (2001): 237–55.