

Sexuality is not simply about nature and biology. As much as sexuality has to do with hormones and the like, it is also a question of how it is defined by different people, different groups and different societies. Indeed, definitions of what is 'right' or 'wrong' in terms of sexuality are put forward by power structures in the economic, political, religious, cultural and scientific realms amongst others.

If one looks at homosexuality, one can note different meanings given to this term across time and space. For example, many social policy regimes in various societies assume and advocate heterosexuality and discriminate against other sexualities, both directly and indirectly.

In European societies in the late 19th century, homosexuality was considered to be morally wrong and a threat to the family. Homosexuality was punishable by law and discourses were propagated against it.

Later on, in the post-war years, homosexuality was considered by dominant structures to be a disease, a mental disorder or an abnormality. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, various societies including Britain and Malta started to decriminalise homosexual acts, though this was quite a bumpy ride. Such decriminalisation did not fall from the sky, but was influenced by the sexual revolution and courageous people who stood up to be counted.

As the Gay Liberation Movement of Britain put it in the 1970s - *“every person has the right to develop and extend their character and explore their sexuality through relationships with any other human being, without moral, social or political pressure ... we demand honour, identity and liberation.”*

The revival of conservative ideology in the late 1980s brought about a new backlash against gay and lesbian rights – and the AIDS issue led to opposition by right-wingers against some victories previously achieved.

Yet, as social theorist Michel Foucault teaches us – for power there is resistance. Various gay rights movements became even more active in their appeal for equality and respect – resulting in a political constituency that was also supported by people whose values became more open on sexuality.

Since then, various societies have introduced various social reforms – from anti-discrimination at work to recognition of gay marriages – and being gay, lesbian, transsexual or bisexual became recognised identities amongst others in post-traditional societies.

The LGBT community has made many victories – yet many challenges remain, especially in societies such as Malta when it comes to family policy. In some other societies such as Uganda and Iran, basic gay rights are still not existence, and being gay can actually lead to death.

As a Green activist, may I highlight the fact that Green parties have always been the most progressive parties when it comes to LGBT rights – the track record of the Greens in the European parliament is a case in point. Malta is no exception. Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party’s principles are not for sale. We have always been against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and we are the only party with a clear declared stand in favour of civil partnerships. Some may want us to go further, and others believe that we are too radical. I invite all those who wish to contribute to our policy-making to take part in our forthcoming debates concerning our electoral manifesto.

The struggle of LGBT activists and movements is ultimately part of the struggle for a more equal and inclusive society – which is ultimately what democracy should be all about.

It is thanks to books such as Joseph Chetcuti’s that the struggle for sexual equality is kept alive. May the struggle achieve further progress.

Let us accompany words with activism and with clever use of our vote... and let us change things for the better!