

Project Group (Number and Name): 73; For whom the world changes - how activists construct meaningful turning points

## Comment

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### **A turning point with the potential of harming political movements?**

When talking about activism one can define two different types of turning points.

Firstly an event or act that motivates people to get engaged in activism. The second type of turning point can be described as a change a movement wants to implement.

In this comment we will focus on a major turning point concerning the women's rights movement in the "Bundesrepublik Deutschland" in the years following the Second World War and the impact this turning point has on the reality we live in today.

In 1949 the German Grundgesetz was adopted, while sixty one men were involved in drafting the constitution, only four women were able to participate directly. This was due to the predominant assumption that women should not be involved in politics. Nevertheless, the equality of men and women became part of the "Grundgesetz". This was not least the success of the women's rights movement.

Leading up to the drafting of the constitution were protests of women's rights activists. Moreover women were organising themselves in associations. Until the end of the 1940s the number of women actively engaging in the movements increased but shortly after securing equal rights in the constitution the number of members declined. By reaching the turning point, the establishment of equal rights, the movement lost considerable amounts of power.

What happened to the 1950 feminist movement is a common phenomenon. The fight is focused on a goal and when this goal seems to be achieved, the movement loses in strength. In the 50's probably a lot of women felt that they had gotten their rights now and no more work was to be done. But as groundbreaking as the paragraph in the "Grundgesetz" was, women still don't really have equal rights to this day.

In the following years laws that secured women's rights were passed but clearly until today we have not reached full equality just yet.

By just looking in the health sector, the gender pay gap, unpaid labour or the unequal distribution of power it becomes clear that there is a long way to go until the equality, that is granted to everyone, is still not reached.

At the turning point of success, it was not possible to direct the energy to other topics.

Although it is a reasonable approach to assume that the achievement of a major turning point led to less engagement in the women's rights movement, this is not the only possible explanation. Everything is interconnected and not only based on a single incident, for example in the case of the early discussed case. Shifts in the concepts of the women's rights movement are another possible reason why the approval went down.

To conclude, as important as turning points are for political movements, for activists, one should not only rely on one turning point. Even more, we tend to put weight on one single occurrence and assume it is the only logical explanation for an outcome we see. This example should be a reminder that everything is complex and interconnected.