

## **Media and Twitter Agendas for Social Mobilizations: The Case of the Protests in Defense of the Public Healthcare System in Spain**

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This article analyzes the citizen movement in defense of the public health system and against the proposal of merging two hospitals in the city of Granada. The merger was scarcely covered by the mainstream media until a physician denounced the hospital system reform in a Facebook video that soon went viral. From that moment, a social online mobilization began facilitating greater involvement of citizens and civic organizations, reaching traditional political actors. Using a multimethod approach and based on content analysis, interviews, and social networks analysis, this case illustrates the mobilizing capacity of social media, highlighting the ability to overcome the traditional lack of agency that is associated with virtual mobilizations. It also demonstrates the ability of social media to set the social agenda and to influence the mainstream media, which are then “forced” to introduce the demand into their agenda. Finally, it also shows how new online social leaders become microcelebrities with high mobilizing capacities.

*Keywords: social mobilizations, social media, mass media, online activism, agenda-setting, Spain*

This article studies the local social movement in defense of the healthcare system of the city of Granada, how is it structured, and how it managed to shape agenda setting and transform its demands into policy reform. The local movement *Dos hospitales completos* [Two Complete Hospitals] emerged against

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Date submitted: 2018–0301

<sup>1</sup>This work was supported by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Spain) under grants CSO2015-64955-C4-1-R (MINECO/FEDER) and RTI2018-095775-B-C44.

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the proposal of merging two hospitals in Granada.<sup>2</sup> On November 21, 2014, the regional government decided to merge the city's two main hospitals. The decision was scarcely covered by news media despite protests of the workers in the two hospitals. The issue attracted traditional media attention at the end of 2016, after two massive demonstrations in October and November—demonstrations with the biggest turnout in Granada's recent history. After these popular mobilizations, by the end of February 2017, the regional government revoked the merger. Although *Dos hospitales completos* was not directly linked to the 15M social movement, it was born in some sense under its spirit.

Despite its lack of success in changing public policies, the 15M movement is normally considered the most organized and important social movement against austerity measures implemented in Europe (Hyman, 2015), as well as a predecessor of the Occupy movement and other similar European anticuts mobilizations (Errejón & Mouffe, 2016; Oikonomakis & Roos, 2013). Prior research has highlighted the relevance of social media and the Internet in mobilizing and organizing the protests of the Indignados (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014) as well as distributing information, frequently in opposition to the discourses of traditional media institutions (Kyriakidou & Olivas-Osuna, 2017).

International comparative research has shown the similarities of this social movement to other protests in Greece and the U.S. (Theocharis, Lowe, Van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2013). Generally, the horizontal nature of these social movements is highlighted, following what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) have described as "connective action." In opposition to traditional ways of political participation, connective action represents new organizational dynamics of political action in which communication has a preeminent role. Therefore, connective action networks used by new social movements are represented by networks that lack a central or leading actor, allowing new communication technologies for a more decentralized approach to communication and organization (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). Hence, Facebook groups and Twitter were used to mobilize supporters and organize protest activities in a decentralized way, in what Castells (2015) calls a networked social movement, thus bringing about the mobilization of sectors of society that tend to be less engaged in more traditional forms of political participation (Gerbaudo, 2012).

Apart from mobilization and organization, social media were also useful in the 15M movement as online environments where users could share personal stories and content of interest, engage in debate, and conduct a series of related practices aimed toward engendering an alternative public sphere out of traditional media outlets (Papa, 2017). The interconnections between this alternative public sphere and traditional news media is of high interest for this research. When traditional media do cover social or protest movements, previous international research has found that they do so by following the "protest paradigm" (Chan & Lee, 1984), tending to marginalize dissenting voices and adopting a negative point of view in their reporting. Chadwick's (2013) theory of the hybrid media system, however, describes how it is becoming easier for political actors to disseminate their agendas into the broad public sphere. It is therefore key for social movements to overcome this traditional media bias, using social media to "force" news media to report about their narratives and agendas. To better understand that, we need to see how former well-

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<sup>2</sup> Granada is a city in southern Spain's Andalusia region. In the 2016, the population was 234,758; the population of the entire urban area was estimated to be 472,638, ranking as Spain's 13th largest urban area.

established theories such as agenda setting have recently been transformed and what that means for social movements.

### **Media Construction of Citizen Mobilizations in Times of Social Media**

The disruptive changes in news dissemination on social media are transforming the traditional roles of gatekeepers and agenda setters performed by legacy media. In the last decades, we have seen flourishing new concepts and theoretical adjustments that address this phenomenon (Guo, 2014; Singer, 2014). This research also provides evidence of how mainstream media agendas and social media agendas influence each other and what implications they have in depicting public opinion processes.

Since its inception 50 years ago, agenda-setting theory has evolved into a broad theory with distinct facets, but many regard agenda setting as the transfer of issue salience from the news media to the public agenda (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). Public agenda in the 20th century was measured through surveys that interrogated respondents about the most important problems. However, in our contemporary media system and interconnected world, the public agenda is much too difficult to define. The advent of social media has opened new venues for political communication and participation of more publics, but its dynamics has led to serious concerns about risks of audience fragmentation and polarization (Sunstein, 2017).

Recent research has demonstrated that the Internet facilitates the reconfiguration of the news agenda through comments, retweets, and likes. For example, Zhou and Moy (2007) found that news media coverage was not strongly influencing audiences' attitudes on social media toward important events in China, pointing also to an important role of "online public opinion" in transforming a local event into a national issue. More recently, Susan Jacobson (2013) has confirmed the importance of discussions on Facebook and their impact on public opinion, and authors including Vargo, Guo, McCombs and Shaw (2014) have identified how audiences used to combine different news media agendas during the 2012 U.S. elections. Further research (Bennett & Manheim, 2006) has shown that we could be operating within a communication model based on a one-step flow, in which opinion leaders might have lost their formerly hegemonic position within the two-step flow communication model (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948). Some authors have defined the new situation as "personally curated flow" (Thorson & Wells, 2012), pointing out the new capacities for personalization and selective exposure of today's audiences.

A recent evolution of agenda-setting theory is what McCombs et al. (2014) define as *agendamelding*. This involves an active role of the audience in selecting from among a potential array of media agendas. Specifically, "agendamelding is the social process by which we meld agendas from various sources, including other people, to create pictures of the world that fit our experiences and preferences" (p. 794). Hence, by borrowing salience from a variety of agendas, audiences find or create the personal communities in which they choose to live. Measuring correlations of agenda setting shows the level of agreement between a medium and its audience.

Nevertheless, even accepting the relevant role of social networks and other Internet-related online environments in shaping public opinion, authors such as Guo and Vargo (2015) argue that traditional news institutions still maintain a prominent position within the public sphere:

Although the boundary between mass communication and interpersonal communication continues to blur in this digital age, the symbolic power of traditional news media still remains. Simply put, news media still set the public agenda, and do so in ways more complicated than previously thought. They construct message networks. (p. 574)

In any case, there is a need to better understand how audiences' participation on social media influences the news media agenda and to what extent debates on social media are reproducing discourses and addressing topics similar to traditional news media regarding social movements and protest actions. Although social media have received great academic attention in recent years, the relationships between traditional and social media used in social movements or for political action with the aim of defining public agendas and formulating public opinion have been the subject of scarce research. Regarding social movements, it is salient here to highlight how activists understand the relevance of appearing in traditional news media to spread their messages and how they perceive those social media as a key instrument to accomplish this objective (Della Porta & Diani, 2011; Lomicky & Hogg, 2010).

In a media system formerly dominated by traditional actors, it was difficult, if not impossible, for a social movement to capture mass public attention without passing through mass media (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). However, this seems to be changing, as Tufekci (2013) argues: "In today's participatory media ecology, social movement adherents can broadcast to larger publics, mobilize their supporters, offer preferred frames, and directly engage key mediators of attention, such as journalists, celebrities, or government officials" (p. 849).

A relevant point here is how social movements need to be structured to better fulfill this objective. Gerbaudo (2012) highlights that despite the traditional horizontal nature of social movements, they do have leadership. Because of the nature of traditional media, clear leadership within a social movement might attract more media attention, contributing to increasing the leadership of those networked microcelebrity activists, as defined by Tufekci (2013): actors who engage personally and directly with citizens through social media use, combining different channels and becoming, in the end, the face of a certain social movement. As an example, *Podemos*, the party that was born after the Spanish 15M movement, strove to be a horizontal political movement—only to end up being strongly controlled by the leadership of Pablo Iglesias, former activist and current politician and undisputed leader of the party.

In other contemporary protests, such as the Arab Spring, formal leaderships were mostly absent (Poell, Abdulla, Rieder, Woltering, & Zack, 2016). However, in most cases, some people did have an important degree of influence—in particular thanks to their role as administrators of social network sites (Gerbaudo, 2012), facilitating citizens' access to information (Della Ratta & Valeriani, 2012). Hence, connective leadership, as Della Ratta and Valeriani labeled it, became crucial in protests articulated through social media (Poell et al., 2016).

### Objectives

Our case study presents a social movement that, by starting with online mobilizations, successfully mobilized citizens and influenced media agendas. Hence, our research objectives will focus on discovering how agenda setting worked in this specific case study and the roles of social media in shaping public opinion. We argue that former studies were based on general surveys and the study of general interest in broad topics, without attention to specific case studies. Hence, theories that might work in the "macro" dimension (general issues of interest) might not be as useful at the "micro" level of analysis (specific public issues and local case studies). Because the quality of the healthcare system is one of the main concerns of citizens in Spain, the first research objective is:

*RO1: To analyze the role of news media in covering the merger of the two hospitals in Granada and the resulting social protests.*

Insofar as antiausterity movements across Europe used social media for both mobilizations and organization, as well as to engender an alternative public sphere out of the traditional media, the second research objective is:

*RO2: To study the role of social media sites within the movement in defense of the healthcare system in Granada and to assess its power to establish the agenda, in both social media and legacy media.*

Furthermore, the social movement in defense of the healthcare system in Granada carries great relevance because it is an example of a social movement that fulfills its objectives. In this case, protesters successfully make the situation well known among broader sectors of public opinion, channeling the energies of citizens into effective political actions. Finally, they manage to access the political arena and force political representatives to change their initial planned policies. Our third research objective addresses the way in which the social movement is structured and organized online, to evaluate the factors that made it so successful:

*RO3: To determine the specific characteristics and structure of the antimerging social movement on social media and to assess why it manages to be relevant both online and offline.*

### Method and Case

To answer the research questions previously described, a multimethod approach was selected, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. To analyze media coverage of the political decision of merging the two hospitals and the citizen movement in defense of the public health system, the two major local newspapers of Granada and two nationwide newspapers with regional editions were selected: *Ideal* and *Granada Hoy*, and *ABC-Andalucía* and *El País-Andalucía*, both print and online outlets.

The time period selected for this study was November 21, 2014, when the merger was passed by the regional parliament, to February 27, 2014, when the regional government revoked the merger.

Articles from each newspaper were collected from the My News Online database using the search query: [(fusion AND hospitales) OR ("fusión hospitalaria") AND (Granada)] and limiting the results to those published between the dates selected for the study. Because My News Online limits direct access to the printed articles of *Granada Hoy* to those published in the last three months, to complete the corpus of analysis, older articles were consulted using the print version available in the library. Similarly, ABC.es and Elpais.com contents were retrieved through the Factiva database using the search query and temporal limits. Ultimately, and once duplicates were removed, a total of 1,687 articles were retrieved for analysis.

An encoder manually analyzed the content of those articles published in *Granada Hoy* and *Ideal*, and articles were coded deductively and categorized according to the scheme: promoter, antimerger, and neutral. To ensure the reliability of the results of the content analysis, a sample of news was selected at random and analyzed by a second encoder. Cohen's kappa test was run with satisfactory results.

The analysis was completed with six in-depth interviews. We interviewed Carmen Serrano, president of the Physicians Union of Granada; Vicente Matas, member of the board of directors of the union (both in December 21, 2017); and Jesús Candel, who became the leader of the antimerger movement (December 29, 2016, and January 12, 2018). In addition, we also interviewed three journalists who were working for the media we analyzed during the period of study. To protect respondent confidentiality, the names of the journalists were anonymized.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. A qualitative textual analysis was carried out to identify key themes related to the research questions. In addition, because of the central role of Jesús Candel, aka Spiriman, these methodological approaches were completed through monitoring Spiriman's social network activity.

Finally, to analyze activist activity on the social networks, particularly on Twitter, 45,265 tweets were gathered after the two antimerger demonstrations that took place in Granada on November 27, 2016 (14,563), and January 15, 2017 (30,702 tweets). Tweets were collected with NodeXL using the hashtags #27nyovoy and #2hospitalesya and analyzed separately.

For the analysis of the sample, we took as our starting point the approach of Bruns and Stieglitz (2012), which is based on the assumption that replies indicate interactions among users, a form of public conversation, and that retweets indicate authority and point to the influence of the various actors. Based on that assumption, we took a combined quantitative and qualitative approach for the analysis of the tweets. The quantitative approach enabled us, from the number of tweets—and in particular, the retweets and replies made—to identify the central and peripheral users in the "Twittersphere" on the subject being analyzed. We also analyzed the contributions made by individual users or groups of users and the nature of those users.

### **The Case**

On November 21, 2014, the regional government of Andalusia ordered the merger of the two hospitals in the city of Granada. The health professionals involved expressed their opposition to the project, claiming that it only responded to economic criteria and budget cuts. The decision was, as will be seen,

scarcely covered by the media and had a very limited social impact even though healthcare is one of the main concerns of Granada's citizens (EGOPA, 2018). In particular, according to the respondents, healthcare is the second biggest concern in the region (34.6%), only behind unemployment (80.7%).

The situation radically changed on August 28, 2016, when Jesús Candel (aka Spiriman), a doctor at one of the hospitals, posted a video on Facebook denouncing the fusion and its consequences for the quality of the public healthcare system in Andalusia. His video became a viral phenomenon, with 261,719 views and 6,996 shares on Facebook in total. From that moment on, the activity in Spiriman's social media multiplied. He created a group on Facebook entitled "Granada 16-O for a dignified and supportive public healthcare system," which has more than 65,000 members and in which he regularly published messages critical of the merger. In parallel, its content spread through a YouTube channel (with more than 500 videos and 10,000 subscribers) and Twitter (21,242 followers).

In September, Spiriman's videos and posts published on Facebook and shared on Twitter flooded social networks and became popular among Granada's citizens. The president of the Physicians Union of Granada, Carmen Serrano, was clear in this regard: "If Jesus Candel, and the figure of Spiriman, had not appeared, we would not be talking about this issue, and the merger would have continued forward without opposition" (Interview, December 21, 2017).

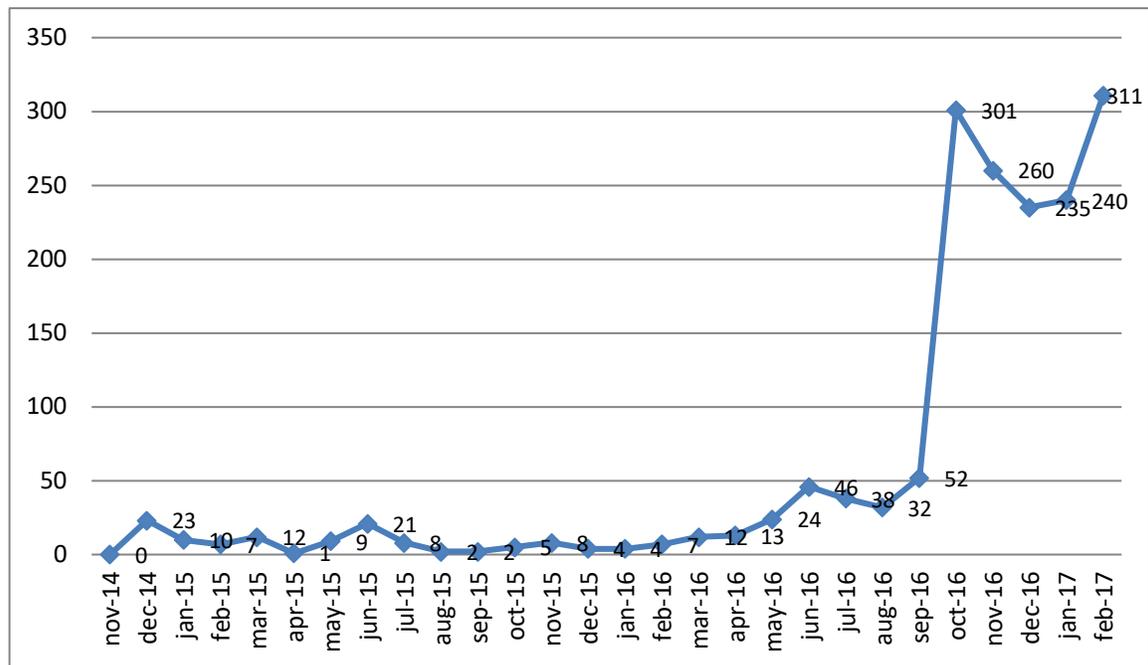
In October, the mobilization moved from the networks to the streets, when Spiriman called to join a demonstration on October 16 (Ideal.es, 2016). Owing to the mobilization power of social media, the support of unions, and professional and civic associations, the demonstration was a huge success, with up to 40,000 participants; it was the largest protest rally in Granada in the previous 10 years. Subsequent demonstrations—one on November 27, 2016, and another on January 15, 2017—had an equally impressive turnout. With the citizens in the streets clamoring for a change in the public healthcare policies, mobilizations culminated on February 27 with the repeal of the merger order of the two hospitals in Granada issued by the government of Andalusia. Hence, the social movement in defense of the quality of the public healthcare system in Granada has apparently won the first battle.

## Results

The foundational arguments of agenda-setting theory hold that news media determine the public issues that citizens consider more relevant, and they consequently hold great power in the public sphere (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). With the advent of a hybrid media system, various voices have arisen that question the validity of the theory and defend the ability of social media to shape their own public agenda and transfer it to the legacy media agenda. Our results point in this direction, in a case study in which social media showed a high capacity to shape public opinion and the news' media agenda.

Although the healthcare system is a major concern of citizens, the news media under study scarcely covered the merger of the two hospitals. As shown in Figure 1, news about the merger was minimal until May 2016, with some exceptions that were due to special events: the creation of Granada Platform for Health, driven by professionals, associations, unions, and parties; the announcement of the government refusing to stop the merger (June 2016); and the closure of the Hospital Clínico after 65 years as a result

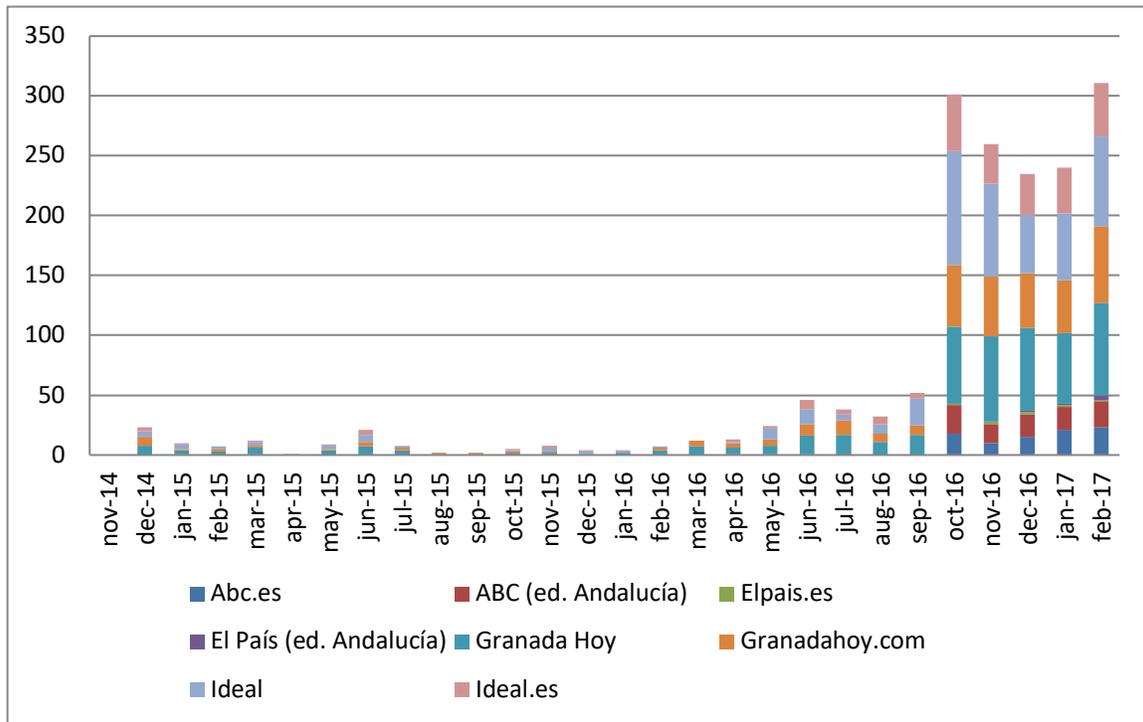
of the merger (July 2016). In 2016, the number of news stories published in August and September was stable, but it skyrocketed in October, with an increase of more than 385% compared with the average monthly news published until then.



**Figure 1. Articles published regarding merger.**

The behavior of the news media under study shows similar patterns, although the geographical proximity directly affects the media attention generated by the events. Thus, the local media, *Ideal* and *Granada Hoy*, both in print and digital editions, were the ones that published the highest number of articles about the merger. Both have nearly the same publication rate: showing little interest for more than a year, a slight rebound during the summer of 2016, and great attention from October onward (Figure 2).

The regional editions of the two media outlets with national scope (*El País* and *ABC*) only paid attention to the events from October 2016 onward, when citizens from Granada took to the streets in protest. Until then, these media outlets' interest in hospital reform had been nonexistent.



**Figure 2. Articles published by media outlet.**

Not only did the local media not cover the health reform, but they conducted a mostly neutral follow-up. A total of 60.1% adopted that position, although in those who took sides, it was fundamentally against the merger (36.3%), relegating those who defended the merger to a testimonial 3.6%. Thus, we conclude that the media avoided introducing the topic into the agenda despite its importance. Furthermore, they never positioned themselves in favor of the merger, although, as we will see, a neutral stance could be considered a promerger stance.

Among the journalists we interviewed, perceptions of the coverage were slightly different and sometimes contradictory. Thus, while one journalist contended that he was informing in a “constant” manner (Interview, Journalist 2, February 27, 2018) and another stated that healthcare was always on the agenda (Interview, Journalist 3, February 27, 2018), others maintained that “the fusion issue was covered but it did not have much importance” (Interview, Journalist 1, February 26, 2018).

Nevertheless, there is also no shortage of self-criticism, with journalists recognizing that “the media reported when there were important events, but they did not reflect on the debate prior to the merger and did not explain the consequences of the merger for the citizens” (Interview, Journalist 3, February 27, 2018). In this sense, it is necessary to highlight that the journalists we interviewed admitted that they tended to use a lot of official or governmental sources (Journalist 1 and Journalist 3):

The spokespersons of the regional government . . . took care to make a campaign of dissemination, without hearing all the opinions of the employees, and they covered up any attempt at opposition from within, although this existed in great numbers. The media mainly disseminated this official opinion. (Interview, Journalist 3, February 27, 2018)

In a veiled way, some reporters pointed to political reasons to minimize coverage of the merger and offered a kind view of it: "The media have a powerful economic relationship with the Junta de Andalucía [regional government], and obviously, news media take into account if they receive money from an administration for public advertising" (Interview, Journalist 1, February 26, 2018). This position was reinforced when some of the interviewees refused to answer questions about the existence or absence of guidelines on the coverage to generated.

Among the journalists, however, there was unanimity when considering that among citizens, there was no special awareness of or concern about the merger: "The citizenship, however, was not reactive or aware of the change despite the publication in the media of news about it. There were no letters to the editor about it or feedback regarding that information" (Interview, Journalist 2, February 27, 2018). Along the same lines, another interviewee stated, "Another problem is that the citizens were numb and oblivious to the healthcare problem in the whole phase prior to the start of the merger" (Interview, Journalist 3, February 27, 2018).

At this point, it is necessary to consider what caused the increase in the attention that the media devoted to the merger during the summer of 2016 and to the social mobilization against it. The answer must be linked to the effective implementation of the merger and the irruption of Spiriman on social media from June 2016 on. The materialization of the merger led to multiple problems and complaints from both professionals and patients. Some complaints were channeled through calls to the Physicians Union of Granada, publication of letters to the editor in local media, etc. (Interview, Vicente Matas, December 21, 2017). However, it was the beginning of Spiriman's activity on social networks that had the greatest impact. Initially, he used videos in which he revealed the difficulties that the merger would cause for patients and professionals, and starting on August 28, 2016 he became openly critical and denunciatory: "After more than 10 years working as an emergency doctor, I can no longer tolerate the situation that I am experiencing day in and day out after this 'wonderful' hospital merger in the city of Granada, I am so fed up." He continued,

So here begins my little struggle to prevent this public health situation and these exhausting working conditions, from demolishing my enthusiasm and passion for a great profession full of dedication to others. We cannot accept that some are going to take advantage for their "political" or "personal" gain. (Spiriman, 2016a)

The president of the Physicians Union of Granada acknowledged that their actions had not received any attention at the media level, so they joined the Granada Platform for Health, in which there were also political parties; however the success is generally attributed to Spiriman: "He achieved what no one has achieved. This was like a volcano about to explode, and Spiriman has managed to crystallize this" (Interview, Carmen Serrano, December 21, 2017). In a similar vein, a journalist from the media we analyzed manifested

that there was a “clear correlation” between Spiriman’s role on social media and the amount of information published by the legacy media before and after his appearance: “When Jesús [Candel] began to launch his videos, suddenly a subject that did not exist in the collective imagination of the citizens of Granada started to be important. He entered with great force; he installed himself and stayed there” (Interview, Journalist 1, February 26, 2018).

The news media’s lack of attention to the issue, as noted earlier, has also been acknowledged by the president of the Physicians Union; he believes that while the social networks were on fire, local and regional media behaved as if the problem did not exist (Interview, Carmen Serrano, December 21, 2017). Jesus Candel shared the criticism that the media have no credibility; “It is what I have learned from all this” (Interview, Jesús Candel, December 29, 2016). Candel believes that the media acted as mouthpieces of the regional Health Ministry.

They [the media] do not read what happens on social networks, with the amount of information they have, [information] from people who denounce the wrongdoing regarding the hospital merger . . . but no journalist makes use of all this free information. (Interview, Jesús Candel, December 29, 2016)

### ***Mobilization and Social Media***

Jesús Candel successfully channeled a part of the anger in Granada society through social media. Although he stated that there was no preconceived strategy for the use of social networks (Interview, Jesús Candel, December 29, 2016), his use of them constitutes a case of best practices. He initially used Facebook as a platform to publish his posts and videos: “It is very useful, and you can publish more information.” However, he took advantage of Twitter and YouTube to viralize the content on Facebook:

I did not use Twitter before. I created an account because a friend recommended it, and now I’m using it. . . . Now, I upload videos to YouTube, and I also post things on Twitter, but the tool that has helped me the most is Facebook.

Although Spiriman claims that he did not have a predesigned strategy, the facts show that he skillfully combined the various platforms within his reach. He used Facebook as a central point of communication and denunciation by creating the group “Granada 16-O for a dignified and supportive public health,” which has more than 65,000 followers. From there, he published his posts and announced the broadcast of new videos on YouTube. Indeed, he used his YouTube channel like a television program. Through Facebook and Twitter, he called on his audience members at a certain time of a certain day to show them the latest video he produced, creating expectation about the content that would be released: “@spiriman: At 11pm I will be live on Facebook live!! See you soon. 📺📺 #yeah” (Spiriman, 2017).

As we can see, he used Twitter to spread his messages. Although his Twitter profile had existed since June 2013, it was not until June 5, 2016, that he began publishing tweets about the hospital reform.

The success of Spiriman, however, cannot be dissociated from a series of characteristics that converge and influence each other. Among Jesus Candel’s followers, we find offline organizations that have

hierarchical structures, with strong ties among their members and connected to public health issues. Thus, among his followers are Granada's main medical organizations, such as the Medical Union and the Medical Association of Granada, and many other organizations that defend public health and its quality. These organizations participated and showed their support through the conversations that took place on Twitter during the demonstrations. In addition, Spiriman has a considerable number of followers among professional health organizations, as well as other similar organizations elsewhere in Andalusia and Spain. Among his followers are also many individuals from the community of healthcare practitioners.

Among Spiriman's followers on Twitter are a significant number of journalists and media outlets. Among them, we find journalists, local media (*Granada Hoy*, *Canal Sur*, *Diario de Sevilla*, etc.), national media (TVE, Antena 3, Telecinco, *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, etc.), news agencies (Europa Press, EFE), and freelance journalists. Spiriman has emerged strongly as a source of information and as a notable part of the media agenda. His emergence has broken up the information monopoly held by official sources, as one of the journalists we interviewed acknowledged when commenting on the use of sources: "I also remember that they [the media] used official sources most of the time, without resorting to sources that were critical of the merger" (Interview, Journalist 1, February 25, 2018).

Finally, the third group of followers, the most numerous, were anonymous citizens who joined the cause denounced by Candel; they would enable the virtual upheaval to move to the streets of Granada. It is through majorities of average citizens that weak ties are built. These kinds of weak ties generally lack a centralized leadership structure and a defined authority; as a result, they have real difficulties reaching a consensus and setting goals, which adds complexity to political action and agency (Gladwell, 2010). In our case study, the leadership is clearly represented by Spiriman, giving this online movement a special strength and capacity for self-organization.

From his initial message published on August 28, 2016, in which he announced his goal of fighting for quality public healthcare, until the call for the first demonstration on October 16, Spiriman used social media to detect citizens' discomfort and to expand the dissemination of their message. Spiriman himself explained this in an interview with one of the most popular talk show hosts in Spain, Andreu Buenafuente, on his late-night show *Late Motiv* on Movistar + on March 20th, 2017.

The strategy of using the networks to announce new mobilizations is a strategy that he repeatedly follows:

@spiriman: Come on Granada. just one week left! @susanadiaz we want our 2 complete hospitals! #27nyovoy #granada27n @MartinGBianco go home!! [Spiriman, 2016b]<sup>3</sup>

Analysis of the activity on Twitter confirms the existence of a structure built around the figure of Spiriman, who acts as a source of information. Spiriman occupies a central position not because of his intense publishing activity, but because his messages have a strong diffusion capacity, and he becomes one of the

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<sup>3</sup> All tweets included in the article were originally written in Spanish.

most mentioned characters (retweets and reply-to). In the total data set, we observed a predominance of retweets, which represents more than 95% of the total, and these retweets are an important resource for disseminating information (Table 1).

**Table 1. Actions on Twitter.**

Action	N	%
Tweets	1,720	3.8
Reply to	288	0.6
Retweets	43,257	95.6
Total	45,265	100

Spiriman does not appear among the most active users on Twitter (Table 2). It was not necessary; his tweets were widely disseminated by his followers, which allowed him to increase the scope of his activity. Hence, retweets and replies-to are good visibility indicators.

**Table 2. Most Active Users on Twitter.**

User	Profile	N	User	Profile	N
eliseo_gokusei2	Citizen	623	bellonix	Citizen* (HS)	334
gugupe1	Citizen* (HS)	563	luzmareu	Citizen* (HS)	326
teresa_gaaz	Citizen* (HS)	508	Fimalour	Citizen	317
espesreyes	Citizen* (HS)	437	channel_68	Citizen* (HS)	301
carmenlosa0	Citizen* (HS)	413	Pilarica314	Citizen	296
Jesusrubio111	Citizen* (HS)	395	95mochon	Citizen	293
bernardacruz1	Citizen* (HS)	387	Macarmari	Citizen* (HS)	283
Nazzaritt	Citizen	348	lolaole2	Citizen* (HS)	276
Charomerlos	Health sector	346	1jorge1mh	Citizen	177
espigarescano	Citizen* (HS)	340	fimalour	Citizen	169

\* Citizen unrelated to the healthcare system according to the description provided in Twitter profile, but that the content of his/her timeline allows to deduce that he/she is part of the healthcare system (a doctor, a nurse...)

The structure described earlier, with Spiriman in a central position and being widely replied to, is referred to as a Broadcast Network by Smith, Rainie, Himelboim, and Shneiderman (2014). It is typical for the news media to have many followers repeat (retweets) what they have published. Members of a Broadcast Network are often connected only to the news source, with no connections between them.

Among the most mentioned accounts, there was essentially a division into three main groups: politicians, the health sector, and media and journalists (Table 3).

**Table 3. Most Mentioned Users.**

User	Profile	N	User	Profile	N
susanadiaz	Politician	5,764	anaterron_	Politician	375
pacocuenca	Politician	2,582	juanmi_news	Media / Journalist	361
spiriman	Health sector	2,082	rcabrero75	No available	357
2hospitales2	Health sector	1,685	podemos_AND	Political party	321
lopez_espada	Health sector / Politician	1,126	jjalonso_grx	Citizen	309
ierrejon	Politician	1,089	jordievole	Media / Journalist	279
davellanedar	Consumer rights assoc.	547	noadya1	Citizen	273
ideal_granada	Media / Journalist	412	ferminius	Media / Journalist	251
carmenhtenorio	Citizen	412	marajvilara	Health sector	243
fidel_fq	Health sector	389	Josepiino	Politician	229
saludand	Regional gov.	377			

The users of each group were mentioned for different reasons. Politicians—@Susanadiaz (president of Andalusia), @Pacocuenca (mayor of Granada), and @lopez\_espada (former manager of one of the Granada hospitals)—were mainly mentioned because they were the object of criticism by other users, largely regular people. Some tweets appealed to politicians to pay attention to the people:

@rafaelismo74: #2hospitalesya ¿How do you want to govern Spain @susanadiaz if you are unable to listen to the Andalusian people? We're going from bad to worse (RLJG, 2017)

Different accounts called for the resignation of the mayor of the city, the president of the Junta de Andalucía, and those whom @Spiriman himself considered “ideologues” of the situation, which generated this controversy:

@Noadya1: Granada screaming together!! #2hospitalesya.@susanadiaz.@PacoCuenca @lopez\_espada. Resignation of all those responsible for this mess!! (Laguna García, 2017)

However, some tweets appealed to the apolitical character of the mobilization:

@sickmandante: #2hospitalesya @susanadiaz @pacocuenca, you must listen to the people, make these demands in an apolitical way. (Piñas, 2017)

Political parties and regional government (@JuntaInforma) took part in the conversation generated around the hashtag, with the aim of generating new opinion streams in favor of or against the government in Andalusia:

@JaviBonillaGar: In Andalusia the government of @susanadiaz assures a quality public healthcare system #2HospitalesYa (Bonilla, 2017)

@mundodenadia: Today Andalusia takes to the streets for a universal, public and quality healthcare system #Granada #2hospitalesya @Podemos\_AND (Azougagh, 2017)

The second largest group in terms of mentions were people and institutions connected to the public healthcare system: @Spiriman, @2hospitales2 (the account of the Granada platform for Health), and @medicosgranada, among others. Finally, the third main group, and the most important one for the aims of this research, was that composed of journalists and the media: @idealgranada, @juanmi\_news, @jordievole, @salvados, @lasextatv, @elmundoes

Although the social media end up setting the agenda, it is interesting to observe how activists try to draw media attention; this confirms that in a hybrid system (Chadwick, 2013), the mainstream media still have a role to play. They remain central, although no longer hegemonic (Masip, Guallar, Suau, Ruiz-Caballero, & Peralta, 2015). One way to do this is to use "mention," adding journalists' and media outlets' accounts to one's tweets and retweets, and doing this consistently:

@itsmjr\_: We do not want doctors taking taxis from one hospital to another #Granada27N el #27Nyoyoy @jordievole @laSextaTV @antena3com @tve\_tve (Chemical, 2017)

Although there is no shortage of criticism of media coverage:

@NataliaCPe: #2hospitalesya national news media stop selling out and report about what is going on in Granada (CP, 2017)

@JokerVallecas: I do not hear, I do not see @el\_pais @elmundoes @abc\_es @24h\_tve @canalsur INFORM #2hospitalesya about Granada ¿Partners in crime @susanadiaz? (JokerVallecas, 2017)

### Conclusions

First, it is necessary to point out that our case study does not constitute any attempt to generalize findings. We do not intend to establish a new theory. Rather, we strive to identify the relevant elements that allow us to determine the capacity of social media to elude the traditional media and set the agenda for relevant public issues. Our research demonstrates the ability of users of social media to introduce a topic on the media agenda, thereby turning previously anonymous citizens into the main sources of information. Likewise, it allows us to see how an anonymous user can be considered an influencer by an important part of the public (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013).

Even though healthcare was considered one of the main concerns of the Granada's residents, traditional media paid scarce attention to the merger of the two publicly owned hospitals. In addition, they offered an uncritical and friendly vision of the merger, merely reproducing the regional government's position. Indeed, one could make the case that the media gave up exercising the watchdog function assigned to journalism in democratic societies. This accommodative attitude adopted by the media changed during the summer of 2016. It was then that social media became a space for vindication, criticism, and debate

about public healthcare reform thanks to the media-savviness of Jesús Candel. From that moment on, the news media had no choice but to follow the promoter of the demonstrations, Spiriman, who set the agenda and used the news media as his very own megaphone.

The case of Granada illustrates the mobilizing effect of social media among those sectors of society that consume less news from traditional sources (Best & Krueger, 2005; Jensen, 2006; Norris, 2001), thereby highlighting the public's ability to overcome the traditional lack of agency that the virtual mobilizations are often accused of having (Suau, 2015). It also demonstrates the ability of social media to set the social agenda and to influence the media, which end up reintroducing healthcare reorganization and social mobilizations into their agendas. This capacity, however, occurs because a series of elements converge. First, there must be concern about an issue—in this case, the healthcare system. The surveys confirm this. A second factor is the emergence of a new social leader who becomes a microcelebrity (Tufekci, 2013) with a strong mobilizing capacity (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013).

The power of Spiriman cannot be understood unless the concept of leadership is addressed. Leaders are those who "take the lead," the "motors and agitators" of collective action (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Analysis of the use of social media and Twitter during the time of the three successive demonstrations clearly shows that he commanded an undisputed leadership.

As Gerbaudo (2012) stated, leadership, understood as the process of directing collective action, puts into question two central elements of the techno-libertarian narrative regarding digital movements: the absence of a leader and a hierarchical, horizontal structure. We find this interesting because the dominant interpretation considers digital social movements as those that are without leadership and nonhierarchical (Castells, 2009; Mason, 2012)—or, using a popular term among activists, horizontal (Sitrin, 2006). Spiriman acts alone, without a team or a Gramscian digital vanguard. He makes the decisions, designs the strategies, and communicates them to his followers, who respond not only on social networks, but also on the street. He defines his own means to communicate with his followers and tries to mobilize them through his accounts on YouTube, Facebook (and his television channel on Facebook Live), and Twitter. Thus, by having his own means and audience at his command, Spiriman has the ability to elude the news media: not being mediated or having one's message edited, interpreted, or filtered by the legacy news media. Indeed, Trump's famous phrase could be applied to our main character: "Well, let me tell you about Twitter, I think that maybe I would not be here if it was not for Twitter" (Cillizza, 2017).

In addition, the role of Spiriman responds to what Tufekci (2013) calls networked microcelebrity activism. This type of activism is often carried out by a politically motivated noninstitutional actor who uses social media to engage personally and politically and to attract public attention through a combination of personal testimony, defense, and citizen journalism. Spiriman has all the trappings of what Tufekci regards as a microcelebrity. First, he is a simple emergency room doctor who, based on his professional experience, denounces a situation that he considers harmful to the users of public healthcare and the quality of medical services. Second, he displays political commitment by denouncing his superiors and the highest Andalusian political authorities through information that he has personally gathered. In addition, his social media engagement attracts citizen attention, as evidenced by his 18K followers on Twitter (@spiriman), his

Facebook profile (Jesus Candel), which boasts 14,755 followers, and his Facebook fanpage "Spiriman," which has 297,787 followers.

Nevertheless, those characteristics are not sufficient to explain how he managed to mobilize not only so many people in social networks, but also thousands of people who joined offline and attended the largest demonstration in Granada in the last decade. In relation to this, Gladwell (2010) differentiates between high-risk activism and online activism. Regarding the first, there is a strong link between the members of the various organizations that participate in a certain type of action and that also have a hierarchical structure. Social media, on the other hand, serve to build networks, which is the opposite of a hierarchy, and the links that bind people are weak (weak-tie). Gladwell argues that because the networks "lack a centralized leadership structure and a defined authority, they have real difficulties in reaching consensus and setting objectives" (Gladwell, 2010, para. 20). However, in the case of Spiriman, as we have seen, there exists an online hierarchy. Additionally, among the active followers of the leader are important professional healthcare organizations. These constitute another element that warrants consideration of the existence of strong links that make this offline mobilization successful. Leadership and the presence of preexisting offline organizations are two prerequisites for online activism to provide the strong links needed for activism to jump from the networks to the streets. Following Charron (1998), we consider that Spiriman has influence, understood as the capacity to configure media coverage and to use it to serve the purposes of the political leader's agenda or, in this case, the purposes of a networked microcelebrity activist. The quantitative difference between the media coverage before and after the actions undertaken on social media by Spiriman are a clear example of this power to influence. The leading figure of Spiriman had a crucial role in the mobilizations and the attitude change of media coverage regarding the merger—and yet, he is not devoid of controversy. After the success of the protests, Spiriman became a very popular person, not only in Granada, but also in the whole of Andalusia; in addition, he has been involved in various disputes, some of which have ended up in court.

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