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## Youth impact on the public sphere in Press and Twitter: The dissolution of the Spanish Youth Council

### El impacto de los jóvenes en la esfera pública: La disolución del Consejo de la Juventud de España en la prensa y en Twitter

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### Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to the study of the difficulties that young people face in accessing the public sphere as political actors. It looks at the Press coverage and the Twitter activity surrounding the restructuring process and the subsequent dissolution of the Spanish Youth Council (Consejo de la Juventud de España - CJE). A content analysis was carried out on the news published in 22 newspapers between 2012 and 2014, as well as on the use of Twitter within the framework of the "Salvemos el CJE" campaign during the same period of time. The main objective of the analysis has been to see the prominence of this issue on both the media and citizens' agendas. In most newspapers, the measures taken by the government vis-à-vis the CJE were treated as punctual news of peripheral importance. The online campaign, mainly orchestrated by youth grassroots movements, raised the controversy on the biased nature and the political consequences of this plan. The core of the campaign addressed the representation of young people in public institutions. The results of the study suggest that the increased potential for visibility offered by social media is not always maximized and does not necessarily alter the prominence of an issue in the public sphere.

### Resumen

Este artículo pretende contribuir al estudio de las dificultades que encuentran los jóvenes a la hora de acceder a la esfera pública como actores políticos. Concretamente, se centra la atención en la cobertura en prensa y la repercusión en Twitter de la información relativa al proceso de disolución del Consejo de la Juventud de España (CJE). El texto da cuenta del análisis de contenido realizado sobre las noticias aparecidas en 22 periódicos españoles entre los años 2012 y 2014, así como del análisis del posicionamiento en Twitter de la



campaña «Salvemos el CJE» durante el mismo período de tiempo. El principal objetivo es ver cómo la cuestión de la disolución del CJE es planteada desde la agenda mediática y desde la agenda ciudadana. En la mayoría de periódicos analizados, las medidas tomadas por el gobierno respecto al CJE son tratadas como un hecho noticioso puntual y de baja repercusión. La campaña online ofrece un discurso gestado desde los movimientos juveniles de base y plantea abiertamente la controversia acerca del sesgo y las consecuencias políticas de esta medida. La campaña gira entorno a la representación de la juventud en las instituciones públicas. Los resultados del estudio muestran cómo las crecientes oportunidades de visibilización que ofrecen las redes sociales no siempre comportan un mejor posicionamiento de un tema en la esfera pública.

## Keywords / Palabras clave

Youth, public sphere, Press, Twitter, youth agencies, cyberpolitics, media agenda, citizens' agenda. Juventud, esfera pública, prensa, Twitter, agencias de juventud, ciberpolítica, agenda mediática, agenda ciudadana.

## 1. Introduction

The youth is under scrutiny in numerous studies aimed to analyze their access to the public sphere as political actors (Briggs, 2017; Cammaerts & al., 2016; Chou & al., 2017). In Spain, some analyses have pointed to the need of considering the “question of youth” as a structural element that places young people as a group characterized by lingering inequality and poverty, which significantly curtails the democratic quality of today and tomorrow's societies (Tezanos & Díaz, 2017; Observatorio Social La Caixa, 2017). Under worsening conditions of precariousness, according to these studies, the capacity of young people to access the public sphere is doubly hindered: youth find themselves in a situation of inferiority in public debates; on the other hand, the problematic that results from their secondary role go largely unnoticed as a structural social issue.

The present case builds upon the first results of the research developed within the framework of the H2020 EURYKA Project. A study of the public policies and practices promoting youth inclusion and participation has just been carried out (EURYKA, 2017), across the nine countries of the project. Youth agencies were one of the aspects that had been taken into account. The sampling focused on contemporary policies, including recent changes related to the economic crisis. The results of this particular study placed Spain at the bottom of the list, having obtained the only negative score as far as government policies on youth agencies are concerned. This result reflected the dissolution (decreed by law in 2014) of the youth independent agency Spanish Youth Council (CJE), as well as the fact that Spanish youth demands regarding this decision went unanswered.

This article will present the results of a research addressing the question of how a relevant issue remains of secondary importance in the public sphere. It aims to look at how the dissolution of the CJE has been reported in the Spanish press; and on the other hand, the way in which Twitter has been used to put the issue on the citizen's agenda.

## 2. Context

Spain has two legally constituted youth agencies: The Youth Institute (Instituto de la Juventud - INJUVE) and the Youth Council (Consejo de la Juventud de España - CJE). Whereas the INJUVE is a governmental body that provides public services to the youth under the direction of a policy officer appointed by the Executive power through the corresponding Ministry, the CJE is an autonomous organism composed of 60 associations and youth organisations from across the country, and which representatives are elected and not appointed by bureaucrats. It is in charge of developing specific programs fighting social inequalities affecting young people. The CJE's Presidency and Permanent Commission are chosen by the entities that take part in the Council's General Assembly. Furthermore, the CJE is the Spanish agent in the European Youth Forum (YJF). Five years ago, in a context of economic crisis in response to which the EU demanded austerity



measures, the Spanish government decreed the Organic Law 2/2012 on Budgetary Stability and Financial Sustainability and created the Commission for the Reform of Public Administrations (Comisión para la Reforma de las Administraciones Públicas, CORA). It was then entrusted to carry out a comprehensive study of Public Administrations in order to identify areas of improvement and to propose a course of action. The CORA Executive Report was submitted to the Council of Ministers on June 21, 2013. It recommended the dissolution of the CJE (among other agencies), arguing that its functions duplicated those of the INJUVE. The Council of Ministers agreed on a bill that would eliminate the Youth Council, claiming that its suppression would bring savings of about EUR 4,3 million to the national administrative budget. The CJE was one of the smallest organisms inside the Administration (0.08% of the budget of the ministerial structure) and was already subject to a 54% budget reduction during the period 2008-2012 (CJE, 2013).

As a result, defenders of the CJE started an online campaign, first on the Internet at the URL <http://salvemoselcje.com/>, and later on Twitter (with the hashtag #salvemoselcje). “Salvemoselcje” (meaning in English “let us save the CJE”) was a campaign aimed at denouncing the fact that the CJE’s “restructuring” process was, in fact, a means of making it disappear. Defenders of the CJE criticized the political bias of this measure, in line with the well-known critical positioning of this organism vis-à-vis the Government’s youth policies.

The Law of Rationalisation of the Public Sector was approved in September 2014 (Ley 15/2014). It declared the dissolution of the CJE and its subsequent conversion into a private entity. This was followed by a long period characterized by an absence of news regarding this issue. Two years later, on July 20, 2017, the CJE and the INJUVE signed an agreement to unlock the situation. During the negotiation between both agencies, the Secretary of State for Social Services and Equality was also present. It culminated with the signing of the draft of the Royal Decree that will govern the future Spanish Youth Council as a private entity. In its press release on July 21, 2017, the CJE reported that the processing of the legislative decree had begun, although further changes in the text could take place until its final publication. None of the newspapers analysed in this case study mentioned this event, just like on Twitter, where the campaign #Salvemoselcje came to an end in November 2015 (the hashtag has never been used since).

### 3. Theoretical framework

This article builds upon some of the theoretical premises that try to shed light on the formation of public opinion and the processes of deliberation. About this, it is essential to go back to the debate between theories of deliberative democracy, based on the works of Habermas, and theories of agonistic pluralism, of which Mouffe is a prominent representative. The Habermasian conception of the public sphere and communicative action starts from the understanding of deliberative processes as opportunities for consensus (Habermas, 1994). Agonistic pluralism criticizes, however, that this consensus can only be built at the expense of the dissenters’ voice. Mouffe argues that the constitution of citizens as political subjects goes through their identification with the values that define democracy, not understood as universal and normative values, as Habermas held, but as values that give meaning to the different conflicting identities that make up society (Navarro, 2014).

At present, cyber politics introduces an important questioning of both perspectives. Like never before, social networks open new forms of political expression that give rise to an interconnected public sphere, in which immediacy marks the rhythm of communication (Cotarelo & Gil, 2017; Kurban, Peña-López, & Haberer, 2017). However, we are now also witnessing the hegemonization of some forms of government in which statism or immobility of democratic principles in times of crisis generate an increase in inequality. Thus, while the technological revolution seems to open up a scenario in which agonistic pluralism is possible, the truth is that even in a context characterized by multiple voices and the right to communication, the dissolution of counter-hegemonic discourses is still possible.

The configuration of the citizen’s agenda (Miralles, 2001) must confront the problem of the atomization of the social subject, while the media agenda seeks to preserve its privileged position in



the expression of public opinion (Coleman & Ross, 2010). One can wonder whether the factors that currently put forth or silence a given controversy can simply be justified as consequences of the increased complexity of communicative action or if they continue to respond to old schemes of political action. Beyond the technological determinism that accompanies the emancipatory vision of the new media (Castells, 1996), it is necessary to consider whether the mediations about which Martín-Barbero (1987) was talking have been strengthened or weakened by the advent of social networks. Which groups are effectively capable of accessing (and transforming) the spaces of deliberation?

Several works take a critical stance against the stigmatization of young people with an image of apathy, consumerism, and anomie (Cammaerts & al., 2014; Chou & al., 2017). Authors such as Tezanos and Díaz (2017) have come to equate the political relevance of the issue of the youth with the former one of the working class. The economic and social crisis manifests itself particularly among young people, who often have to delay the age of economic and social emancipation. According to Eurostat, the youth unemployment rate in Spain was 40.5% (which puts the country in second place, behind Greece, regarding youth unemployment in Europe) in 2017.

This being said, the youth have not always assumed a passive role (Giugni & Lorenzini, 2017). In Spain, for instance, the organization –by the youth– of massive citizen mobilizations such as the one of the 15M (Indignados movement) have proven that ICTs offer key advantages for activism (Hernández, Robles, & Martínez, 2013) and that in certain circumstances these movements have the capacity to influence media coverage (Casas & al., 2016; Monterde & al., 2017), although other studies have proven that the relationship between journalists and activists remains a difficult one (Micó & Casero-Ripollés, 2014). We can also highlight their capacity to access social capital through the use of mobile technology (Vidales-Bolaños & Sábada-Chalezquer, 2017), or their active participation in the network society (García, Del-Hoyo, & Fernández, 2014). What makes the political action of these young people different from that of other generations in Spanish democracy is that, despite their greater use of communication technologies, they have neither the effective capacity to alter the status quo nor ways to influence the political decisions that affect the country's future. The dissent that the youth can manifest is diluted in a public sphere that reproduces the discourse of the normative and the prescriptive, and that provides, at last, no room for controversy.

## 4. Methodology

A quantitative approach was used to study the prominence of the “Salvemos el CJE” campaign in the public sphere through the press and Twitter. On the one side, a content analysis was performed on newspaper articles that included the keyword phrase “Consejo de la Juventud de España”. On the other side, a Twitter analysis of the campaign against the CJE's dissolution was performed by looking at the use and circulation of the hashtag #salvemoselCJE.

The choice of (and limitation of the study too) these two media follows the initial hypothesis that the traditional public sphere does not end up being reshaped or supplanted by the “new public sphere” (Castells, 2008) for the mere fact of providing new online opinion and political spaces. To test this hypothesis, the following objectives have been set:

- Demonstrate that the configuration of the media agenda about the dissolution of the CJE has been determined more by the journalistic routines than by the editorial lines (or the ideological slant) of each specific newspaper.
- Demonstrate the low impact of young people's voice on this issue, which is partly due to its articulation around offline organizational structures that are neither able to act as primary sources for mainstream media nor adapted to (or with little capacity for integration in) the dynamics of online networks and social media communication.



## 4.1. Newspaper analysis

The database used for retrieving data from the Spanish newspapers was Factiva (a database with more than 32.000 sources, 100 of them from Spain). A set of 22 sources were selected according to the criteria of daily publishing and national coverage: “20 Minutos”, ABC, “El Confidencial Digital”, “El Confidencial.com”, “Crónica Global”, “El Correo”, “El Diario Montañés Online”, “Diario Siglo XXI”, “El Diario Vasco Online”, “El Diario.es”, “Diariocritico.com”, “El Huffington Post-Spain Edition”, “Elmundo.es”, “El País”, “El Pais.com”, “El Español.com”, “Gaceta.es”, “El Imparcial”, “El Independiente”, “Infolibre”, “El Mundo”, “El Periódico de Catalunya”.

The data retrieval covered a five-year period, from 2012 (when the campaign started) in July 2017 (when the CJE signed an agreement on its dissolution). No data appeared from 2015 onwards. This situates the press coverage of the CJE's dissolution between the years 2012 and 2014.

A codebook was used in order to code the 81 retrieved articles. Two variables were identified: The coverage and the degree of visibility assigned to the CJE's dissolution, as well as the temporality (permanence of the news in the media agenda). As far as the first variable is concerned, the codebook established four types of news: (1) News that mentioned the CJE somewhere in the article, but did not mention the agency's dissolution; (2) News that mentioned the CJE's dissolution, but that was not specifically about the CJE and/or its dissolution; (3) News about the CJE's dissolution; (4) News about the dissolution that identified the CJE as a source.

## 4.2. Twitter analysis

The Twitter analysis looked at the use and circulation of the hashtag #salvemoseJCJE. The study consisted in an analysis of the tweets that were posted between the 20th of June 2013 (date of the first tweet including the campaign's hashtag) and the 23rd of November 2015 (date of the last tweet). The study also looked more specifically at the tweets that were posted on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 (date of the announcement of the Spanish Congress Plenary's approval of the Law 15/2014). By looking at the Twitter activity on such a crucial date, the study aimed to identify the key actors of the CJE's defense and their interactions.

The purpose of the analysis was to assess the virality of #salvemoseJCJE on Twitter during the campaign, following Gladwell's model, which studies the users as sources, the content and the spread of the messages (Gladwell, 2000). By looking at the Twitter activity over the course of one day, the study aimed to gather precise information on the type of account that issued each tweet, the number of followers that these had, the number of likes, retweets, and answers that each tweet received, as well as the positioning of the tweets in relation to the campaign.

A set of related hashtags was also identified, and a tag cloud analysis was performed, through TagCrowd, which helps to visualize the frequency of the different hashtags that were used. Twitter accounts were identified and classified as “institutional” or “individual”, and (in both cases) additional data on the identity of each actor (in terms of political affiliation, belonging to a group, etc.) was gathered whenever possible. Each of the accounts was subsequently typified in relation to a specific network profile. In this case, the effort was centred on confirming the existence or absence of “influencers” (actors who run accounts with more than 100.000 followers) (Jivkova-Semova, Requeijo-Rey, & Padilla-Castillo, 2017).

## 5. Analysis and results

This section will focus on the quantitative analysis of the 81 newspaper articles that were published between 2012 and 2014, and the 184 tweets that used the hashtag #salvemoseJCJE on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This analysis will evaluate the extent to which the CJE's dissolution was treated as a controversy in the press and on Twitter. Based on the analysis, this section will try to answer the following research questions:



## 5.1. Did the CJE's dissolution represent a controversial issue in Spanish newspapers?

### 5.1.1. How long had the dissolution of the CJE been visible for?

The first appearance of the CJE and/or its dissolution in the news dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2012, one month before the approval of the Law 2/2012. The last news published on this issue appeared on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2014, two months after the publication of the Law 15/2014). As figure 1 shows, June and August 2013 were the most active months, with 14 and 12 articles, respectively. This was due to the fact that on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 2013 the Council of Ministers announced its decision to dissolve the CJE as part of a larger plan to rationalize the public administration. In August 2013, the CJE released a report on youth housing opportunities in Spain. Later, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2017, the CJE and the INJUVE finally signed the dissolution agreement. Between the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2017, 15 newspaper articles mentioned the CJE but none of them addressed the issue related to the press release.

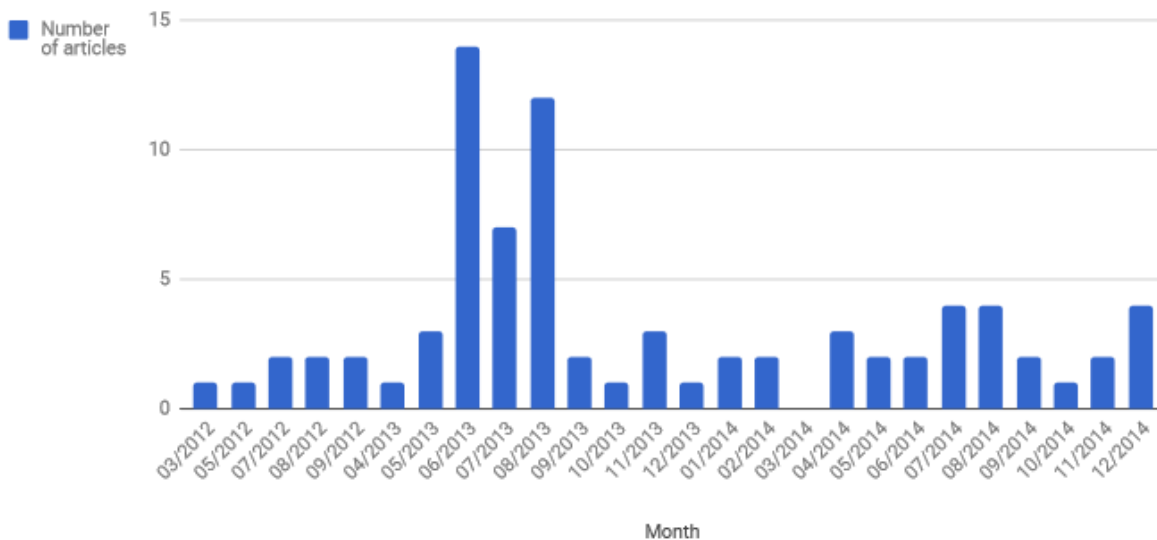


Figure 1. Monthly evolution of the number of news articles during the campaign.

### 5.1.2. Did the CJE's dissolution occupy a prominent place in the news?

The CJE was mentioned in 81 articles of the 22 newspapers during the campaign's timeframe. A significant majority of the news (86.5%) merely mentioned the CJE and/or its dissolution somewhere in the article. The remaining 11 articles (13.5%) were about the CJE, of which 8 (9.8% of the total) were about its dissolution. Only three newspapers ("El Diario.es", "El Periódico" and "Infolibre") published articles about the CJE's dissolution, and in which the CJE was identified as a source ("El Diario.es" published three articles, and "El Periódico" and "Infolibre" both published one). The newspaper that covered this issue the most was "El Diario".es, which dedicated three news articles to the CJE's dissolution, and relayed the CJE's voice as a source.

The press coverage of the CJE's dissolution varied significantly from one newspaper to the next. While "El Diario" published 3 articles on the dissolution of the CJE (out of 4 articles mentioning the CJE), other newspapers such as "El Mundo", "La Vanguardia" or "ABC" did not publish any (out of 12, 4 and 8 articles mentioning the CJE, respectively). Moreover, out of the 81 retrieved articles and the 11 articles that were about the CJE and/or its dissolution, only 8 had "Consejo de la Juventud de España" or "CJE" in the headline.

This discrepancy and the dramatically low number of articles that directly addressed the dissolution of the CJE show that this issue has at no point been considered as an issue of primary concern,



despite the fact that the youth represent an important part of the Spanish population. Indeed, 10.533.437 people (22.59% of the Spanish population) were between the ages of 15 and 35 in 2015 in Spain (INJUVE, 2016).

## 5.2. How influential has the hashtag #SalvemoseJCJE been on Twitter?

### 5.2.1. How long has the campaign been active for on Twitter?

There was a first period of intense activity between the 20th and the 30th of June 2013, during which a total of 902 tweets were posted. As shown in Figure 2, the next peaks of activity were few and far between. A more detailed study focused on the last peak of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2014, when the Spanish Congress Plenary announced the approval of the Law of Public Sector Rationalization which would definitively dissolve the CJE (although, as Figure 2 shows, this was not the most active period in terms of the number of tweets).

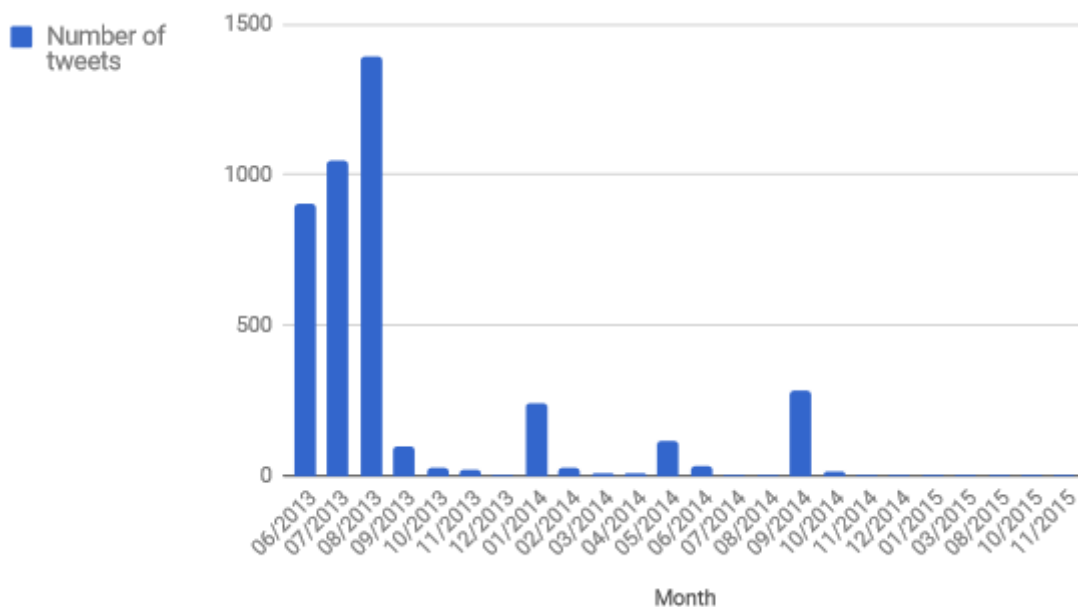


Figure 2. Monthly evolution of the number of tweets (#salvemoseJCJE) during the campaign.

### 5.2.2. What was the impact of #salvemoseJCJE on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2014?

The hashtag #salvemoseJCJE appeared in 184 tweets from 123 accounts on the day the Law 15/2014 was approved. The most significant result of the data analysis shows that there was no disagreement or controversy within the content of the #salvemoseJCJE campaign, as its name suggests. Indeed, as it is often the case on Twitter, the activity surrounding the #salvemoseJCJE campaign very much resembled an “echo chamber” in which all users agreed, effectively canceling the potential for debate beyond this “circle” of CJE defenders.

Figure 3 below illustrates the relevance of each of the hashtags that were used within the campaign. The size is proportional to the frequency of appearance.



Figure 3. The relevance of related hashtags on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

### 5.2.3. Did the information circulate broadly on a crucial date (September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014)?

Around half of the 184 tweets that have been analysed were published by institutions and the other half by individuals. There were a few more individuals (65) than institutions (58) tweeting the hashtag, but this result is not clear-cut as a significant number of them (44.6%) could be identified as being linked to an institution. These results suggest that the Twitter protest that followed the approval of the Law 15/2014 (the day of its announcement) had a potentially significant impact among the members of offline (and probably linked) organisations. This structure shows a centripetal flow of connections, placing the CJE as a very important node in the information circulation (this coincides with the fact that the CJE works as an umbrella organisation).

The tweets including the hashtag #salvemoselcje posted on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, did not have a significant impact in quantitative terms, mainly due to the actors' low capacity for influence. 8 institutions (6.5%) had more than 10.000 followers (see Table 1). The institutional account with the highest number of followers was that of UGT union (with 32.000 followers), whereas only one individual account exceeded this amount (a journalist with 78.600 followers who tweeted once and got one retweet, 16 likes, and two replies). This means that none of the actors of this campaign could be identified as “influencers”. According to Jivkova-Semova & al. (2017), this category could only be attributed to accounts with more than 100.000 followers.

Nevertheless, following Congosto (2015), among the Twitter accounts with the highest number of followers, five institutional users could be identified as “influencers” as their number of retweets was high in this context (the coefficient between the number of tweets and the number of retweets was bigger than 4). These “influencers” (INF) are represented in Table 1:

Table 1. Most followed institutions that tweeted #salvemoselcje on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Account	#followers	#T	#replies	#RT	#likes	type	INF
Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) @UGT_Comunica	32,000	2	2	13	1	union	no
Área de Juventud de Izquierda Unida @JovenesIU	30,100	1	0	14	3	youth party	yes
European Youth Forum @Youth_Forum	23,200	1	1	31	11	umbrella association	yes
Cumbre Social @SocialcumbreS	19,300	5	1	55	8	umbrella association	yes
EQUO Madrid @equomadrid	13,500	1	0	7	1	association	yes
Juventudes Socialistas de la Comunidad de Madrid @JSMadrid	11,700	1	0	21	2	youth party	yes
Federación de Scouts- Exploradores de España ASDE Scouts España @scout_es	11,000	3	0	66	20	scouts	no
Consejo de la Juventud España @_CJE	10,900	14	13	398	84	public agency	no





Congosto's Twitter actor classification in relation to their activity and impact (2015) has been used in order to analyse the institutional and the individual accounts. A relevant result has been obtained in relation to this question, as data confirmed that the activity surrounding #salvemoseJCJE was not highly influential: almost 25% of the institutions and individuals were passive, in that their number of tweets was inferior to the average (1.6 tweets). Another 13.9% of the actors were considered as "isolated" users, as they did not receive any retweet nor any like. Only a small minority (4%) were identified as "networkers", as they published more tweets than the average, and received a proportional amount of retweets.

## 6. Conclusions

This article contributes to understanding the possible reasons why issues concerning young people's political claims in Spain do not reach the status of public controversies in the public sphere. In relation to the initial hypothesis, the results of the analysis suggest the idea that Spanish youth political demands do not succeed when only their interests (as young people) are at stake. The study has raised a paradox in describing a well-established and traditionally organized youth agency that fails in its attempt to reach the public sphere.

Following the first objective of the study, the results demonstrate that the newspaper coverage of the CJE's dissolution did not trigger any controversy. The evolution of this press coverage over time has shown that the relevance of the topic was determined by a journalistic routine that conceives the news under an ephemeral logic. This same routine placed the focus of interest on governmental action rather than on the social demands and activity of the "SalvemoseJCJE" campaign. All the newspapers adopted the productive routine when placing the issue on the media agenda at the very beginning of the process. However, none of the analysed newspapers covered the outcome - whether positive or negative - of this issue, in July 2017. The CJE's dissolution exit the media agenda before becoming a public controversy. This statement confirms one of the main points of the article, as described in the second objective. That is, the idea that Spanish young people do not have access to political debates and do not reach the public sphere. Although their demands produce a questioning of the status quo, they are often dismissed by the press and seen as marginal. In general, their voice does not have a prominent place in the news.

The peaks of attention that the hashtag #salvemoseJCJE received on Twitter largely coincide with the peaks of interest that the dissolution of CJE generated in the press. This result shows a parallel running of both the citizens and the media agenda. However, this does not mean that the press and Twitter share productive routines, but rather that their respective agendas follow the flow of the Spanish Government's decision making concerning the case under scrutiny. This could be confirmed by the fact that the peaks of activity (both circulation of news and tweets) coincide with the Government's political moves. This behavior can be seen as being normal when it comes to press coverage, but an organized civil society should not need to set its public agenda the same way.

Another finding helps to explain why young people's ability to reach the public sphere through Twitter has remained limited in the case of this campaign. As the case study shows, the high organisational capacity of the youth can prove useless when potential controversies are kept within the realm of "internal youth affairs". The campaign "SalvemoseJCJE" has been kept within the very same networks that already exist offline in the form of youth organizations under the CJE's umbrella. Even if the Twitter hashtag #salvemoseJCJE has circulated, it does not mean that young people's claims and demands can effectively transcend the walls of a "gated community". The Twitter discussion analysed in this case study shows how the lack of external actors expressing dissent could limit the success of the campaign, as far as there is no possibility to bring the issue "out there", particularly in the absence of an elaborated communication strategy. Youth matters remain, thus, mostly invisible to the broader society.

In this conclusion, the importance of reviewing principles of agonistic pluralism in light of the digital society can be stressed. Internet and social media open the possibility of competing with the dominant position of traditional media, which could lead to the configuration of a new public sphere,



more open to a diversity of voices and issues. Notwithstanding, this should not be considered as a rule or as a given just yet. By considering the absence of coverage of the outcome of the case under scrutiny and contextualizing it, along with other such “silences” that have characterized youth issues, we could get a glimpse of the mechanisms that contribute to consolidating structural inequalities. In future studies, it would be interesting to broaden the scope of the analysis beyond this particular case in order to better grasp the position and impact of youth opinions and youth-related issues in the public sphere, as well as within the wider realm of social demands. In this sense, one might call for a more arduous analysis of the way in which counterpublic discourses weigh on the public agenda through offline and online media (including audiovisual content). The study also points to the challenge of uncovering how youth agencies and campaigns can use social networks as effective spaces of political action instead of reproducing a usage pattern that, far from maximizing the significant potential of these online networks, leads to self-referencing and “ghettoization”.

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