

Proposition de synthèse 1

Diverging approaches to whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is at the heart of 4 documents. Document 1: "Whistleblowers - Heroes or traitors?" (*euronews.com*, 18/01/2017) gives examples of whistleblowers. Document 2: UK Government's Plans To Silence Whistleblowers In "Full-Frontal Attack" (*anyvoice.co.uk*, 22/04/2017), reports the British government's position. Document 3: While the UK attacks whistleblowers, the EU is defending them – that is, until Brexit happens. (*independent.co.uk*, 20/02/2017), describes the EU's approach. Document 4: Illustration: Life after whistleblowing, (*timeshighereducation.com* 31/07/2014), is a visual metaphor. The titles reveal discrepancies in the political approaches to whistleblowing. Should whistleblowers be protected or convicted?

Doc.1 gives examples of uncovered scandals: illegal mass surveillance (Snowden), civilians killed by the U.S Army (Manning and Assange) as does doc.3: large-scale tax evasion (Panama Papers) or sexual abuse by peacekeepers.

Although for the media world, artistic circles and civil rights groups whistleblowers are heroes since they uncover wrongdoings, they are often considered as traitors (doc.1) and many western governments, particularly the US and UK governments are trying to silence them using punitive measures (doc.2). According to doc.1, although after his revelations the NSA practices were reformed and people's privacy better protected, Snowden is in exile in Russia, Assange in London and Manning was sentenced to 35 years. Doc.3, too, reports that a number of whistleblowers have faced penalties at work or been prosecuted.

This is denounced by doc.4: with his backpack, the character is trying to escape the sanctions, threatening him, symbolised by black clouds and rain. Like a convict, he is hindered by the chain around his ankle, the whistle-shaped ball symbolising both the alarm he sounded and the crime he is accused of.

Doc. 3 reports that the European Parliament prompted by the Greens/EFA group intends to propose a union-wide law to protect whistleblowers and investigative reporters, extending to corruption, violations of human rights, environmental crimes, and concerning both the public and private sectors.

Conversely, doc.2 reveals that Theresa May's government intends to deter whistleblowers and prevent the public from obtaining access to sensitive information by reinforcing its Espionage Act, increasing maximum sentences and adding bureaucratic difficulties for whistleblowers.

In complete disagreement, doc.3 states that, for the E.U, laws should protect those who provide information thus acting in the public interest, which sometimes differs from the interests of government and big corporations.

While the E.U favours the idea of protecting whistleblowers, the U.K, like the U.S, intends to silence them. This sheds light on the concern expressed by the author of doc.3 about how far Brexit might lead the UK to drift away from European common values.

Proposition de synthèse 2

The perception and treatment of whistleblowers

As the titles of these four documents indicate, whistleblowers spark controversy. The article from *euronews.com* wonders whether «Whistleblowers [are] heroes or traitors?», 18/01/2017, while the opinion pieces (from *anyvoice.co.uk*, 22/04/2017, and *independent.co.uk*), 20/02/2017 detail the action plans of whistleblowers' detractors, and supporters. The document from *timeshighereducation.com*, 31/07/2014 illustrates the impact of whistleblowers' actions on their lives.

The issue is twofold, revolving around the way whistleblowers are perceived and treated. To explore it, this paper will first define whistleblowing, then study and ultimately explain the conflicting perceptions and treatments of whistleblowers.

Doc1 defines whistleblowers as people exposing wrongdoings in government bodies and organisations (military forces, pharmaceutical groups, security agencies, industries) (doc1,2,3). Wrongdoings include corruption, illegal mass surveillance, tax avoidance, child abuse, killings, lies, threat to public health (doc1,3). Whistleblowers, like Snowden, or the outlet Wikileaks are mentioned (doc1,2,3).

The documents reveal antipodal visions of whistleblowers: seen as traitors by the US (doc1,2) and UK administrations (doc2,3), they, in contrast, are heroes in popular culture (doc1), for the media (doc1), and civil rights groups (doc2).

These diverging views lead to opposite treatments: The US and UK have similar tough approaches, the US sentencing some to prison, compelling others to a life on the run (doc1,4), the UK contemplating hardening its position on whistleblowing (longer condemnations, more activities labelled «espionage», more abstruse procedures to expose illegality, doc2,3). The picture of a man, shackled to a whistle, trying to escape a storm metaphorically foregrounds the dire consequences of whistleblowing: the clouds, the rain are threatening symbols of the severe measures against whistleblowers, while his bundle, backward glance, chains, reveal the lasting impact of whistleblowing (doc.4)

Conversely, advocates glorify whistleblowers' actions, eternalising them in songs, films, artwork (doc1). The EU seeks to protect them through the law (doc3): this article considers their protection an advantage which investigative journalists should also receive.

The reasons behind such antagonistic positions are manifold:

Detractors explain whistleblowers only want attention (doc1), while for supporters, governments, corporations increasingly, worryingly, tend to consider themselves omnipotent and unaccountable (doc2,3).

Defenders justify whistleblowing, saying it protects public interest (doc1,3) in the face of other groups' interests. appears as a bulwark (in the UK since Brexit may further question central freedoms (doc3), represents the best way to divulge harmful secrets, reveals the breaking of a moral or legal code and ensures the proper functioning of the private and public sectors (doc1,3). Its impact, leading to reform laws (doc1), is a case in point.