Immigration statistics in French online comment boards: mistrust discourse, anti-migrant hate speech

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Abstract: This chapter explores the discursive markers used by internet commentators to express their mistrust of scientists regarding immigration statistics in France. In online comments collected from the mainstream media *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, we observe that internet users adopt stances of mistrust or rejection of scientists and the media. The aim of this analysis is to investigate how the discourses of internet users coexist with hate speech against migrants by attacking academia and scientists and disqualifying the media. Hate speech against migrants is analyzed as a social phenomenon and as a polyphonic construct, whose targets that go beyond the migrants themselves. It is in this context that we seek to understand the various facets of anti-migrant discourses, in particular those that refer to epistemic processes. We conduct a qualitative analysis of comments and determine different modalities employed by internet users. We find that the latter justify their stances by appealing to their own perceptions, experiences or alleged scientific knowledge of immigration.

Introduction

In France, some polemicists invoke the declinist theory of the "Great Replacement" and often use catastrophist rhetoric to talk about immigration in Europe. As in the case of other conspiracy myths (e.g. Kallergi plan), the "Great Replacement" refers to a process of organized deculturation and substitution of the European population by non-Europeans. This narrative was popularized by the French author Renaud Camus and relayed in mainstream media mainly by journalists and essay writers Eric Zemmour[1] and Laurent Obertone (pseudonym). It advocates that white, Christian and European culture and values are in decline due to immigration. This theory has for example inspired the far-right extremist killer in the Christchurch 2019 shootings (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020).

Propagated within several right-wing and far-right media and supported by parts of the public, exclusionary discourses against foreigners, and particularly migrants, denounce the complicity of intellectual and political elites, who are accused of organizing immigration for the purposes of capitalist globalization (Bancel, Blanchard, & Boubeker, 2015, p. 150-151). Under the pretext of "speaking the truth", these discourses end up creating confusing interpretation grids, and raising more and more doubts about academic scholars, who presumably have the power and manipulate people[2]. Such discourses reflect the characterization of populist discourses set out by Christian Godin (2012): binary, anti-intellectual, distrustful of scientists and political leaders and skeptical of statistics.

Our contribution studies online comments published in reaction to immigration statistics. The latter are regularly produced by public administrations like the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (*Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*), created in

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[1] Eric Zemmour has several times been condemned for racial hatred (Corcuff, 2015).

[2] In his book *Destin français* (p. 37) Zemmour writes: "[Historians] have titles and positions, friends and supporters. According to mafia logic, they have integrated the places of power and hold the levers of the State. This reflects an observation from George Orwell's 1984: Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past."

1946, the French Institute for Demographic Studies (*Institut national d'études démographiques*), founded in 1945, or the General Directorate for Foreigners in France, part of the Ministry of the Interior. Statistics are calculated on the basis of census, longitudinal analyses of migration figures, and data coming from the administrations receiving migrants and issuing residence permits (Cadenel & Ménard, 2010). We focus on the reception of these statistics and the comments generated, within online media.

Our assumption is that discourses that deny or doubt data on immigration and its scientific reality contribute to creating a climate of rejection and hatred against migrants who are often seen as invaders (Beauchemin, Lessault, 2014**)**.

In this context, internet users elaborate, at different degrees, negative representations of migrants as well as researchers and journalists, considered to be complicit with an international conspiracy, and mostly seen as left-wing partisans. By doing so, users contribute to anti-migrant hate speech, understood as a "discursive universe" (Monnier et al, 2020), i.e., as a polymorphic construct that can be expressed through subtle discursive strategies (Baider & Constantinou, 2020). According to this perspective, conspiracy discourses appear to be an ideal framework for legitimizing hatred against migrants, circumventing scientific arguments, and putting forward prejudicial opinions and emotions.

Our analysis is exploratory. It builds upon a corpus manually extracted from comment sections under media articles published in 2018 and 2019 in *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* websites, regarding immigration statistics. We concentrate on the counter-discourse which seeks to deconstruct the scientific discourse, assuming that some of the rationales legitimizing the anti-migrant posture overlap with hate. We use the term counter-discourse adopting Micheli's point of view: "When we argue, we certainly aim to justify a point of view, but this aim of justification is accompanied by an aim of positioning the discourse in relation to another discourse […]" (Micheli, 2012). Within this frame, we study the most important semantic themes related to

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mistrust of scholars and institutions. We also pay attention to the "stance-markers" articulated with the notions of truth, reality and scientific lies. Finally, we attempt to capture and synthesize the predominant representations of scientific discourse in this rhetoric of rejection.

Xenophobic rhetoric in online comment sections

Studying comments is linguistically interesting on several levels. Paskin (2010) showed that the comment sections are conducive to interaction between Internet users. The author also points out that commentators tend to turn away from the original subject to discuss other unrelated subjects or to simply rant. Comment sections remain nevertheless a democratic space insofar as Internet users feel free to express their opinions and stances. As Barton and Lee (2013, p. 10) highlight, commenting is an important act of positioning oneself and others, called stance-taking. Commentary being conducive to the expression of ideological or political positions, stance-taking, as Schneebeli (2015) states, is discursive and social. More particularly, the author argues that commenting is "never only about giving one's opinion, it is also about giving oneself a place (grammatical, discursive, social), based on a scale (emotional, epistemic, and, again, social), as well as situating the interlocutors and the objects commented, in relation to oneself but also in relation to each other, hinged on value scales."

Comment sections represent a privileged space for sharing opinions and positions related to society debates and offer an interesting access to a part of social discourse (Carbou, 2015). According to Calabrese (2014), several aspects characterize comment sections: they are spaces for symbolic construction, controversy, argumentation, information production, but also spaces for the circulation and sharing of representations on media and journalists. Considered as hybrid discursive objects, they have a doubly dialogical form. Calabrese also argues that "in the context of online media, comments are triggered by a journalistic text, produced by journalists

or experts. This establishes an enunciating hierarchy between gatekeepers and other publishers within the media, whose words come second, and occupy a marginal place in the online media environment". Thus, the dynamics of the comments is influenced by the expert or the journalist as well as the comments previously posted. Calabrese observes that Internet users monitor information, demand that it be up to their expectations, and do not hesitate to express discontentment. Her analysis also highlights the possibility of dialogue in the comment sections, but also confirms traces of a normative and prescriptive discourse with signs of injunctions, calls to action and advice.

Insofar as rejection of the alleged dominant discourse is one of the strategies used by the right-wing, Wahlström and Törnberg (2019) point out that xenophobic rhetoric has become increasingly important and violent in the cyberspace. The xenophobic rhetoric also builds upon mistrust of the scientific and political elites, crystallized around populist themes. Wodak (2015) argues that right-wing populist strategies consist in constructing a scapegoat threatening the nation and the people (us *vs* them), along with exclusionary, anti-pluralist and anti-intellectual discourse built on a politics of fear:

"All right-wing populist parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a *scapegoat* for most if not all current woes and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and a threat '*to us*', to '*our*' nation; this phenomenon manifests itself as a '*politics of fear*'; and all right-wing populist parties seem to endorse what can be recognised as the '*arrogance of ignorance*'; appeals to common-sense and anti-intellectualism mark a return to pre-modernist rational thinking." (Wodak, 2015, p. 27)

According to Šori and Ivanova (2017), mistrust, fear, anger, dissatisfaction and frustration are not spontaneous feelings but are produced through political practices. Far-right discourses are therefore communication strategies aiming at re-mobilizing supporters around the idea of danger and of gaining the upper hand within the dominant discourse.

In that context, and according to Douglas and al. (2019), some conspiracy theories can satisfy important social psychological motives. These motivations can be epistemic (e.g., the desire for understanding, accuracy, and subjective certainty), existential (e.g., the desire for control and security), and social (e.g., the desire to maintain a positive image of the self or group). Conspiracy theories play an important role in ingroup cohesion, and group hierarchies:

"Conspiracy theories are linked to defensive ways of identifying with one's social group. This is captured by the concept of collective narcissism (Golec de Zavala, Cichocka, Eidelson, & Jayawickreme, 2009) —a form of ingroup positivity that reflects a belief in the ingroup's greatness associated with a conviction that others do not acknowledge the ingroup's worth enough. Golec de Zavala and Cichocka (2012) found that national collective narcissism in Poland predicted endorsement of conspiracy stereotypes of Jews." (Douglas and *al.*, 2019: 9)

In France, studies carried out among the French population showed that the electorate of the far-right political group (*Rassemblement National*, led by Marine Le Pen) is the most receptive to the "Great Replacement" as an organized project led by political, intellectual and journalistic elites[3]. The idea that intellectuals organize mass immigration is conveyed both by the party, but also by some media and extreme polemicists. The conspiratorial stance highlighting the imminent disappearance of the French culture and society because of immigration politics and flows inevitably engages with forms of hate speech against migrants, within the cyberspace and beyond.

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[3] https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/le-grand-remplacement-est-il-un-concept-complotiste

On the empirical study

This exploratory research seeks to investigate the discursive processes in the rhetoric of mistrust regarding scholarly discourse as expressed in hate comments against migrants. The main research questions that underlie our endeavour are the following: How do the commentators position themselves in relation to immigration? What kind of justifications do they resort to? How do commentators juxtapose and contrast existing statistics with their own perceptions? On what basis are experts and/or media disqualified? How is the collective ethos (we, us) discursively elaborated? Our premise is that insofar as identity is perceived as threatened, the need to reaffirm this identity and its values through the theme of "truth" emerges. However, this stance is not supported by counter scientific arguments. Discourse of mistrust in comment sections reveals to be a fragile posture, argumentatively poor, based on perceptions and experiences.

Our study draws on a qualitative analysis of a corpus of 258 comments. The latter were posted under two articles published in *Le Figaro* (188 comments), and three articles published in *Le Monde* (70 comments) related to (im)migration, in 2018 and 2019, the period in which the debate on immigration has been particularly heated in Europe:

(1) "Immigration: We must establish the figures with rigor and honesty", *Le Figaro*, 22/09/2019

(2) "What is the weight of economic immigration in France?", *Le Figaro*, 17/08/2018

(3) "Migrations: The question of ideologies and their legitimation which is at stake", *Le Monde*, 13/12/2018

(4) "Immigration: France is very far from having played its part during the crisis", *Le Monde*, 16/01/2019

(5) "11,439 migrants arrived in Europe via the Italian coasts in 2019", *Le Monde*, 26/12/2019

These articles have been selected because they contained the combination "figures + immigration" or "statistics + immigration". From all the comments (reference corpus), we have selected the ones containing marks of mistrust towards scientists and hatred against migrants (corpus of work). We chose *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* because these two emblematic mainstream French media have different editorial lines (right vs centre-left), which presume divergent readerships, but also because they still have open online comment sections, which becomes increasingly rare in France. Even though the corpus is limited, it still allows to observe preliminary findings of significance.

In order to analyse stance-takings in the comments, we rely on the concept of modalisation as defined by Galatanu (2018). Modalisation refers to a process and denotes the use of linguistic marks (modalities) in an utterance, as to reveal the attitude of the speaker with regard to the content of this utterance and its function in the verbal interaction in which it participates (Galatanu 2018: 87). Our approach seeks to identify the modal forms and values that "participate in the discursive construct" Galatanu (2018: 88), as well as recurrent semantic topoi and features that crystallise the discourse of exclusion, hatred and mistrust.

Analysis and findings

Mistrust of statistics on migration crystallises through three main stances: mistrust of scientific methodology, mistrust of scholars and intellectuals, mistrust of media and political institutions. We illustrate these stances through a selection of some emblematic excepts.

1) Mistrust of scientific methodology

The mistrust of scientific methodology is based on three alleged certainties: statistics are **incomplete**, **manipulated** or **unnecessary**. Readers espouse an epistemic posture but provide their own precisions using specific modal markers. Attention to "clandestine", "illegal" and/or "irregular" migrants aims to counter the discourse of the media or the researcher (comment 1). Others use a lexicon linked to secrecy and manipulation to prove the supposed dissimulation operated by official numbers: "fable", "masked", "manipulated", "our crypto-soviet country" (comment 2). They hold accountable the method (absence of an "ethnic census", which is a principle prohibited in France), and point to the inefficacy of annual reports which fail to capture long-term evolutions. For anti-migrants, the leftist elite, which dominates major key areas within society (universities and education in general, media, associations, etc.), influences migration policies (comment 3).

(1) *La statistique officielle ne dénombre pas les clandestins, évidemment [...] Les clandestins sont de l'ordre de 400 000.*
Official statistics do not count those who are clandestine, obviously [...]. There are around 400,000 illegals. (Le Monde, 2)

(2) *Dire que l'immigration de travail a été stoppée en 1974 est une fable inventée face au chômage croissant, elle a simplement été masquée dans les statistiques manipulées (pas de recensement ethnique) de notre pays crypto-soviétique. Plutôt que d'ergoter sur les chiffres annuels, il faut prendre en compte l'immigration globale depuis 60 ans.*
Saying that working immigration was stopped in 1974 is a fable invented in the context of the increasing unemployment, it has simply been masked in the manipulated statistics (no ethnic census) of our crypto-Soviet country. Rather than quibble over annual figures, global immigration for 60 years must be taken into account. (Le Monde, 2)

(3) *ça fait trente ans que l'on trafique les chiffres de l'immigration et du chômage. La gauche a la main mise sur tout l'appareil d'état, sur les universités, sur l'enseignement, sur les associations, sur les médias, sur le monde du showbiz, je continue ?*

We've been cooking the books on immigration and unemployment figures for 30 years. The lefties control the entire state apparatus, universities, education, associations, media, the world of showbiz, shall I continue? (Le Figaro 1)

Finally, others say advocate that even if the statistics are true, they are useless. Statistics don't matter anymore, there are already too many migrants, and the solution is to no longer accept them. Markers of deontic modality (how things should be) and a collective posture ("we", "our") are observed in these cases (comments 4, 5).

(4) *Il y a en a déjà trop, il faut en faire rentrer 0 et renvoyer ceux qui se sentent mieux dans un pays plus musulman que le nôtre.*
There are already too many, we must bring in 0 and send back those who feel better in a country more Muslim than ours. (Le Figaro, 1)

(5) *On s'en fout des statistiques, ce que nous voulons c'est 0 comme résultat.*
We don't care about the statistics, what we want is 0 as a result (Le Figaro, 1)

2) Mistrust of scholars and intellectuals

Within this stance, scholars are invited to leave their offices and houses ("leave your home") and engage with the reality of the field. Lexemes related to places are often: "lost territories of the Republic", "Seine-Saint-Denis" (a department in the Parisian suburbs often linked to negative stereotypes about violence and poverty) (comments 6, 7, 8, 9).

(6) *Les chiffres, on les voit dans la rue.*
We see the figures in the street. (Le Figaro, 1)

(7) *Ils essayent de nous endormir ... il suffit de se promener dans nos rues ..*
They try to put us to sleep ... just walk around our streets .. (Le Figaro, 2)

(8) *L'Homme Universel n'existe que dans la tête des idéologues [...]. Il faut être statisticien et ne rien savoir des territoires perdus de la République pour faire preuve d'un pareil aveuglement.*
The Universal Being only exists in the minds of ideologists [...]. You have to be a statistician to know nothing about the lost territories of the Republic to demonstrate such blindness. (Le Monde, 2)

(9) *Les chiffres seuls sont très loin d'être en mesure d'afficher la réalité et les dangers sociétaux et de sécession qui menacent aujourd'hui la France [...]. Une immersion en Seine-Saint-Denis pendant 3 mois donnera à François Héran[4] une bien meilleure mesure – concrète – de cette réalité. Encore faut-il sortir de chez soi.*
Figures alone are far from being able to display the reality and the societal and secession dangers that threaten France today. An immersion in Seine-Saint-Denis for 3

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[4] French sociologist, anthropologist and demographer specialising in migrations.

months will give François Héran a much better - concrete - measure of this reality. Leave your home to notice that. (Le Monde 2)

Scholars are accused of being outside the real world. They are "mandarins", "technocrats" and live in "theory", i.e. in a world that does not exist. They are disinvested and illegitimate. Distance is put between the people, who experience everyday problems and suffer from what is happening, and the decision-makers, who are stuck in their "Ivory Tower Syndrome"[5] and cut off from the rest of the world (comments 10, 11, 12, 13).

> *(10) Vous faites l'erreur de ne juger que sur les statistiques et penser qu'elles reflètent la réalité. Or le pan de l'immigration illégale est énorme et bien entendu non répertorié. De ce fait, toutes les études ne se fondant que sur ces chiffres sont très belles mais juste bonnes à jeter à la poubelle ! Le propre des mandarins et des technocrates est de croire que tout se passe comme en théorie. Or nous vivons en France, non en Théorie...*
> *You make the mistake because you consider only the statistics. It's wrong to think that they reflect reality. The pan of illegal immigration is huge and of course not listed. Therefore, all the studies based only on these figures are very beautiful but just good to throw in the trash! The characteristic of mandarins and technocrats is to believe that everything goes as in theory. Now we live in France, not in theory ... (Le Monde, 2)*

> *(11) Quand on se flatte de la natalité de la population Française, on a déjà une partie de la réponse qu'il suffit d'aller dans le métro ou à la sortie des écoles pour vérifier.*
> *When we pride ourselves on the birth rate of the French population, we already have part of the answer. One has just to enter the subway or wait outside schools to verify. (Le Figaro, 1)*

> *(12) Notre géographe peut venir faire le tour des villes de Paris et de Nantes, il verra à quoi sert son "consensus" pour ces hommes jeunes qui ne parlent pas notre langue*
> *Our geographer should come and make a tour of the cities of Paris and Nantes, he will see what his "consensus" is for these young men who do not speak our language. (Le Monde 3)*

> *(13) L'important ce ne sont pas les chiffres mais le ressenti de la population. La classe politique a échoué à promouvoir le bien fondé de l'immigration si toutefois il y en a un. On ne fait pas le bonheur d'un Peuple contre lui. Le Peuple n'en veut plus, il faut arrêter et vite.*
> *The important thing is not the numbers but the feelings of the population. Politicians have failed to promote the merits of immigration if there is one. We do not bring happiness against the People. People no longer want it, we must stop it and quickly. (Le Figaro, 1)*

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[5] Being locked in an "ivory tower "is an expression that often designates the elites as cut off from the outside world but exert a domination on people outside.

Alternative "real" journalists are mentioned to counter "immigrationists". Commentators denounce a lack of representativeness of scholars in the public sphere and criticize a dominant and imposed discourse relayed by media who chose to set aside a counter-discourse which might be disturbing (comments 14, 15).

> *(14) Un journaliste indépendant a écrit un bouquin bien documenté. LAURENT OBERTONE Un vrai boulot de pro indépendant.....*
> *An independent journalist wrote a well-documented book. LAURENT OBERTONE A real job made by an independent professional* (Le Figaro, 1)

> *(15) Merci à Michèle Tribalat, que j'ai eu le plaisir de lire. Je veux dire ma colère de voir sans cesse à la télévision Hervé Le Bras, immigrationniste sans complexes et ennemi personnel de Michèle Tribalat, tandis qu'elle n'est presque jamais invitée.*
> *I want to thank Michèle Tribalat, whom I had the pleasure to read. I want to express my anger to constantly see Hervé Le Bras on TV, unabashed immigrationnist and personal enemy of Michèle Tribalat, while she is almost never invited.* (Le Figaro 1)

Readers express, sometimes with irony, their perplexity towards the rationale used by researchers (comment 16). F. Héran is accused of fabricating incomprehensible categories to deceive people about immigration figures. Not only does he use incomprehensive words, he also participates in the creation of the secret of the elites regarding migration problems (comment 17). This is an ad hominem attack that goes beyond the person "insofar as the latter represents a system of thought (ideology), a collective opinion (doxa), an established group defending a doctrine" (Charaudeau, 2015: 114).

> *(16) Alors que 25% de la population du pays est constituée d'immigrés ou d'enfants de la 1ere génération, on ne comprend pas ce que signifie « prendre sa part » pour M. Héran.*
> *While 25% of the country's population is made up of immigrants or 1st generation children, we don't understand what it means to "take its share" for Mr. Héran.* (Le Monde, 2)

(17) François Héran est en effet une référence! : il a donc contribué à avaliser ou fabriquer ces catégories opaques de l'INSEE[6] qui font, par exemple, que l'on est obligé si l'on parle d'"immigré" de signaler: "selon la définition de l'INSEE", ceci faisant qu'Héran parle en général de toute autre chose que de ce que "les gens" parlent quand ils parlent d'"immigration". Cela lui permet de dire aux gens qu'ils ont tort - mauvaise foi que de ne pas vouloir comprendre exactement ce dont les gens parlent!
François Héran is indeed a reference!: he therefore helped to endorse or fabricate these opaque categories of the INSEE which, for example, mean that one is obliged if one speaks of "immigrant" to report: "according to the definition of INSEE" , making Heran generally speaking of something quite different from what "people" speak when they speak of "immigration". This allows him to tell people that they are wrong - bad faith not wanting to understand exactly what people are talking about! (Le Monde 2)

Mistrust of media and political institutions

Media and political institutions are severely criticized because they stir confusion and act against the people (comments 18, 19). The immigration debate often evoked by the elites is considered unnecessary (comment 20).

(18) En matière d'immigration, les élites trahissent, toujours le peuple. Les élites journalistiques, en matière d'immigration agissent contre le peuple.
As far as immigration is considered, elites betray always the people. The journalistic elites, when it comes to immigration matters, act against the people. (Le Monde 2)
(19) J'attends d'un journal comme Le Figaro qu'il fasse un article sérieux et documenté sur la question.
I expect from a newspaper like Le Figaro to do a serious and documented article on the issue. (Le Figaro 1)

Media are also held accountable for their moderation policies in the comment section. In comment 21, a commentator posted an answer to someone who denounced censorship on behalf of the media:

(20) Certains confondent lucidité du lancement d'alerte et haine : je ne sais comme on appelle ce dysfonctionnement mais c'est particulièrement visible sur les forums.
Some people confuse lucidity of whistleblowing and hatred: I don't know what this dysfunction is called but it is particularly visible on the forums. (Le Monde 2)

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[6] National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (*Institut national de la statistique et des études économique).*

This mistrust of the media, which are accused of being complicit with political leaders, is also expressed in a conspiratorial discourse. In the comment 22, the commentator affirms that there is a political calculation ("hidden", "hypocrisy") and that the statistics are hidden to prevent the far-right (FN[7]) from gaining power.

> *(21) Les chiffres sur les migrants sont cachés afin de ne pas faire monter le FN, l'hypocrisie des présidents successifs, n'est plus à démontrer.*
> *The figures on migrants are hidden in order not to strengthen the FN, the hypocrisy of successive presidents no longer needs to be demonstrated.* (Le Figaro 1)

Scholars have already observed the existence of prescriptive and normative discourses in the comment sections (Calabrese, 2014). In our corpus, we find this same kind of discourse where mistrust supports an injunctive speech addressed to media and political leaders.

Conclusion

This qualitative study of a limited corpus allowed us to define several stance-takings of Internet users vis-à-vis immigration statistics in France. Discourses of mistrust indicate that the Internet users juxtapose their own experiences and perceptions to alleged scientific knowledge. They feel misunderstood, or not heard, and denounce scientific methods, scholars and intellectuals, media and institutions. They feel that dominant discourses are imposed on them and express the distance felt, which is geographic, social, but also intellectual (in terms of overall framings and terminology). Suspicious Internet users express resentment at the words to deceive the people. Such conflict of perception and belief undermines the possibility of genuine dialogue and an attempt to find common ground between commenters and scientists who are deemed to be pro-immigrationist. It is rare for journalists or experts to contribute comments to Internet users. We did not observe any traces of dialogue between opposing stances. The inability to be

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[7] FN: Front National, former name of the far-right political party National Rally ("Rassemblement National").

heard marks the distance of experts with whom they cannot dialogue and reinforces a discourse of resentment or hatred toward the dominant discourse.

Several discursive processes underlie the commentators' stance-takings (epistemic, deontic, volitive etc.): amalgams between migrants and terrorism, expressions of danger and fear, conspiratorial narratives where statistics would be manipulated by a plural enemy and that intellectuals would be organizing immigration on a large scale. Internet users denounce a dominant/hegemonic discourse carried by scientists, supposed to be committed to the cause of migrants, and whose studies are relayed by non-rigorous media. Scientists are seen as ill-intentioned and deliberately misleading the people. Ocular proofs or the feelings take the step over statistical studies, opinions and emotions take precedence over facts and numbers.

These conclusions raise the question of the function of commentary sections and their role in strengthening radical postures. If, as Calabrese (2014) says, there is an enunciative hierarchy within online media comment sections, do the latter represent a space for biased discussions and manifestations of frustration? It would be interesting to conduct a more comprehensive study on the reception of scientific discourse in hate speech, also by considering the interactions between commentators. A future analysis could map the dominant themes and actors from comments from several news sources in order to identify the trends and the changes of the polymorphic character of hate speech.

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