

Changes in rhetorical climate (an editorial aside)

Special issue has a special editorial written by the guest editors. If not all papers in the issue belong to the special theme, an editorial aside or a mini-editorial for the remaining few papers, is called for. Or is it? The present streamlining of academic publications has already entered the era of Big Data. Management of periodicals is linked to the filling of online slots by robotized and computerized procedures. The publishing side is still run by commercial organizations, which fear the fate of brick-and-mortar bookshops and the editorial side is still managed by individuals with university credentials, who fear the end of the peer review magic. The authors still keep coming, mainly because they fear that without publications duly noted by the evaluation and performance assessment routines – their individual career mobility will be threatened. But this meeting place of the authors willing to communicate, editors willing to evaluate and publishers willing to supply the libraries and data bases becomes unhinged. My British colleague and a fellow Editor-in-chief, Martin Parker, had already noted some of the consequences of this long-cycle change in academic communications a while ago. He left the post of an editor-in-chief and enjoyed the escape from the status and favors game. But the larger picture is much more serious – we are not in a game of status only. We are in a game of totally transformed rhetoric of academic communications. It happens, that all the papers, which accompany special issue papers on rhetoric and narrative methods in business studies, an interesting tradition of international conferences and workshops in Barcelona's ESADE, deal with topics directly related to these forthcoming changes in rhetoric, which will probably change the way, in which we communicate and allow knowledge clusters to drift through our social interactions.

The first paper, by Christina Oberg and Seppo Leminen – “Gap analysis for innovative firm acquisition – acquirer and acquired party perspectives” – testifies to an attempt to render the human, humanist, ethical aspects of a process of organizational change visible and accessible for a relatively unbiased discussion. Veni, vidi, vici? Not necessarily.

The second paper, on “Grasping the business value of online communities,” has been written by Zilia Iskoujina, Malgorzata Ciesielska, Joanne Roberts and Feng Li. The process of a rapid penetration of online communities by all kinds of commercial agents is, indeed fascinating, and it is quite likely that in future, companies of the past – say – Googles, Amazons, Ubers, Facebooks and the like – will be viewed primarily as the first crude attempts to cash in on sociability, socializing and social airs and graces.

The third, with a longer title – “A revelation of employee feelings of alienation during post-mergers and acquisition: an outcome of perceived organizational justice” – has been submitted by Anjali Bansal and it tackles the problem of fairness in the management of business companies increasingly managed, coached, transformed and consulted by professional organizations. No amount of rhetoric can hide the perceived unfairness – no PR can cover all injustices nor can it sugarcoat the ideological assault upon common sense and the injuries of unjust exercise of power.

Finally, last not least, the paper by Joseph Samuel Schultz, Endre Sjovold and Beate Andre is entitled “Can group climate explain innovative readiness for change?” and with the concept of climate we are entering one of these levels of analysis, which are potentially promising for the understanding of the new rhetoric of academic and corporate communications. The two are not so far away as one might suspect. In fact, they overlap (having sat for 20 years on a jury of the master's thesis prize for the best theses written by



graduating students of corporate communications master at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam I feel entitled to venture this opinion).

Thus, we are entering the mid-2017 issue 3 of *JOCM* with the bunch of papers on rhetoric and narrative methods in management studies and with accompanying papers, which are not linked to the conference in Barcelona, but which share the newly found focus on the rhetoric and ethics.