A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND A DISCUSSION OF SIX ISSUES IN THE ANALYSIS OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE[1]

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1. Introduction

An unknown researcher once said: "This concept is like Australia: everybody knows it exists, many talk about it, some of them have been there but only a few really know it well". This colourful comment can also be applied to resistance to change. The concept of resistance to change (RTC) belongs to particular areas of research that are very popular and are discussed, even outside the academic and scientific world, but have not been studied to the same extent or with the same scientific rigour in all of their aspects.

The dominant perception of RTC as a negative phenomenon, the privileged position accorded to the perspective of the change agent in discussions of RTC and the lack of a focused research approach and methodology, have resulted in many unanswered questions about RTC. The scarcity of research regarding some aspects of RTC offers an interesting opportunity to develop original studies that may fill those gaps. This situation might equally discourage researchers and act as a deterrent to those who intend to conduct research in this area, because of the initial theoretical, conceptual and methodological deficiencies in the existing literature on the topic.

The present paper provides an overview of the key literature in this area. After a review of five articles that are considered as 'classics' in the study of RTC, I have felt the necessity to analyse the more recent literature through a crosswise examination of six general issues which are present in several contributions to the RTC research area. The identification and examination of such issues also helps to set the scene for the analysis of resistance to change within an organisational context. An awareness of these theoretical, methodological and operational issues, discussed in the second part of the present paper, is meant to render intelligible certain aspects of RTC examined in this research.

2. The Origin of the Debate on Resistance to Change

The origin of the debate on resistance to change coincides with the introduction of the structured system of industrial work associated with mass production. In fact, the first manifestation of resistance to change goes back to the Luddite movement when, in 1811, Nottinghamshire's employers were threatened by letters signed 'Ned Lud', and workers exhibited their opposition to the introduction of new machines, by destroying these production tools that were responsible for widespread redundancy[2]. Historians consider 1811 as the birth year of Luddism (their adopted name for this phenomenon), even though occasional attacks on machines had been recorded prior to this date (Thomis, 1970).

Those periods were characterised by growing anti-combination legislation. A collective response was very complicated to organise as agricultural labourers and hand workers were not concentrated in towns, but spread throughout the countryside with no easy means of contact. In these circumstances the sophisticated organisation of a modern union, with options of 'go slow' and striking, was not available nor such options feasible. Instead, machine-breaking was the most effective and quickest means of protest against a local employer. The Luddite movement was not only a form of protest against the introduction of new machines in the plants, but also a protest loaded with political meaning and directed towards defending the interests of the less-well-off.

> *"You appear to have contracted a great dislike to the use of what are termed Machines, and chiefly to the use of Thrashing Machines. You have never considered the reason of your dislike. You merely state, that Machines are hurtful to the Labourers - that they prevent the Poor being employed. Upon these grounds, you proceed to destroy them"*. (An Address to the Labourers, 1860, p.2)

Luddism came to an end, not because of the success of the authorities in restraining the leaders, but because of substantial improvements in living conditions, that originally gave rise to Luddism. If the conditions had not changed, then other leaders would presumably have continued opposing the introduction of machinery (Thomis, 1970). With better living and working conditions, confrontations between employers and employees lost that dramatic character.

Since then, resistance to change, as well as being more or less an expression of disagreement, has become part of every business organisation's daily life, and has contributed important pages to the history of industrial relations.

3. The Negative Perception of Resistance to Change

In organisational studies, the common denominator for much research on RTC is its association with a negative interpretation. Coch and French define "resistance to change as a combination of individual reactions to frustration with strong group-induced forces" (1948, p.520). Lawrence refers to resistance to change as "one of the most baffling and recalcitrant problems which business executives face" (1954, p.49). Klein (1984) refers to it as a negative attitude. Hirschmein and Newman (1988) associate it with an adverse reaction to a proposed change. Armenakis and Harris (1995) correlate it with failure. Nadler (1993), Pugh (1993) and Carnall (1994) simply refer to resistance to change as a problem to be solved or minimised. According to Frances (1995, p.62), "resistance is often seen as a generalised unwillingness to change, a reactionary negative attitude, or is seen simplistically as a kind of political flag-waving given the ideological nature of many recent changes". For McCrimmon (1997) resistance to change has become the major problem for business organisations all around the world.

The list of those that have perceived and described RTC negatively in every respect is much longer than the list provided here. This common tendency to label RTC with negative connotations has been shared over the years, not only by prominent academics and business executives, but also by 'pop-management' consultants and gurus. Not surprisingly, therefore, a dominant concern of much of the academic and management literature on RTC has been to identify ways of minimising it. What follows here is a selection of the most important classical studies that have favoured the 'overcoming perspective' in the evolution and development of the concept of RTC.

3.1. RTC and Participation: the Coch and French Study

The Coch and French study published in 1948 in *Human Relations* is commonly accepted as a 'cornerstone' in RTC research. This study analyses a change in products and methods, and the workers' resistance to such changes at the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation, a manufacturing company in Virginia (USA).

With the introduction of new products and working methods, workers exhibited resistance that manifested itself through:

> *"…grievances about the piece rates that went with the new methods, high turnover, very low efficiency, restriction of output, and marked aggression against the change"* (Coch and French, 1948, P.512).

Despite the workers' reaction, the change was necessary to maintain competitiveness, and so the management decided it was important to understand the workers' concerns and find a solution. First, a preliminary theoretical framework of resistance to change was formulated based on general observation and performance data. It was noted that transferred workers took much longer to learn new methods than new recruits. Therefore, it was concluded that resistance to change was not a technical problem, but mainly one of motivation. It was also thought that some group dynamics and rules, as well as individual characteristics, facilitate forms of resistance to change.

Coch and French set up an experiment involving groups of workers to whom the change and the reasons for it were explained, and were then encouraged to participate in discussions. More specifically, the first group was involved in a program of participation through worker representatives, while the members of a second and third group all directly participated in discussions prior to the change. At the same time, a fourth group of workers was also observed, but intentionally not involved in any form of participation.

The results showed that the rate of recovery was directly proportional to the level of participation, and that high turnover and aggression were inversely proportional to participation. Furthermore, a second experiment showed that, controlling for personality characteristics, individuals' resistance to change depended on their degree of exposure to participation. Total participation was demonstrated to be more effective than participation through representatives in recovering performance.

Coch and French have been criticised over the years, mostly in relation to the management and methodology of their research (e.g. Bartlem and Locke, 1981). However, their study remains a valuable and significant contribution to research on RTC. "It is the most systematic study of the phenomenon of resistance to change that has been made in a factory setting" (Lawrence, 1954, p.50). Their suggestion that the change

> *"can be accomplished by the use of group meetings in which management effectively communicates the need for change and stimulates group participation in planning the changes"* (Coch and French, 1948, p.531)

represents, to some extent, the first serious attempt to emphasise the significance of employee participation in the management of change, at a time when such forms of modern management were foreign to most companies.

3.2. RTC and the Driving Forces: the Lewin Model

Lewin's 'force field' model was published in 1951. The model refers to a group of individuals (an organisation) as a system that stays in equilibrium thanks to the effects of two opposing and balanced forces. On the one hand the 'driving forces' ('forces toward' or 'forces away from') tend to push the organisation in the direction of change (i.e. technological innovation, competitiveness, new business practices, and so on). On the other hand, the 'restraining forces' tend to retain the existing elements of the organisation (i.e. the same practices of the organisation, culture, climate and social interrelations). The clash of these two forces, that tend to prevail one over the other, determines the equilibrium position of the organisation (Figure 1). Imported from psychology and intrinsic to the concept of equilibrium is the notion of a dynamic and always changing condition rather than of a static and definitive stage. "The concepts of psychological force, of tension, of conflicts as equilibria of forces, of force fields and of inducing fields, have slowly widened their range of application from the realm of individual psychology into the realm of processes and events which had been the domain of sociology and cultural anthropology" (Lewin, 1951, p.235).

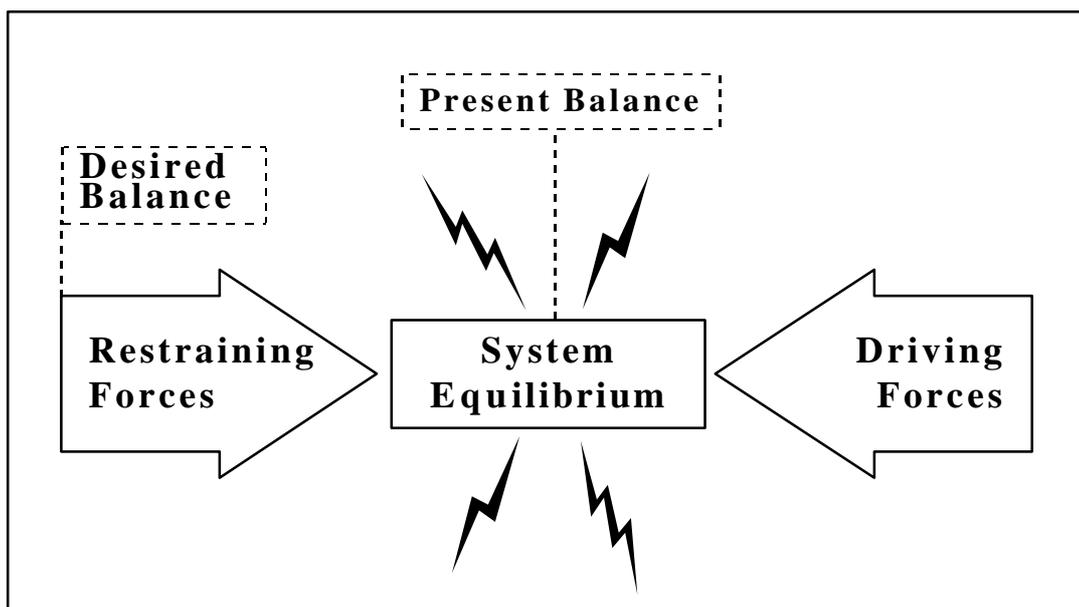*Lewin's Forces and Restraining Forces Scheme*

Figure 1

What happens in the event of an attempt at organisational change? 'Driving forces' (carried by a change agent) and 'restraining forces' (carried by a change resistor) confront one another aiming at different goals. The change agent intends to modify the existing equilibrium and reach a new, planned balance. The change resistor usually wants to maintain the status quo. Therefore, the matter is to substitute all the forces determining the initial equilibrium desired by the change resistor, with other forces resulting in a new balance wanted by the change agent.

Which is the best strategy to minimise the 'restraining forces', so that the change is achieved? The success of a change process depends, to a great extent, on the permanency of the change itself, since individuals have a tendency to return to the previous equilibrium. This might also be due to the difficulty individuals have in abandoning habitual practices termed 'additional force field'. On the matter of permanent change, Lewin suggests a process of change-implementation that can be summarised in three words: unfreeze, change and refreeze. The essence of this approach is that, before proposing and implementing any change, one must anticipate and minimise the resisting forces (the unfreezing phase), otherwise any action would face a force, of the same intensity and working in the opposite direction. This phase aims also at breaking entrenched habits. Once the potential 'restraining forces' are minimised, changes can be implemented (the change phase), the 'driving forces' and the 'restraining forces' should reach a new equilibrium at the desired balance position. Subsequently, the change requires a third phase (the refreezing phase), by which the organisation provides stability for the new equilibrium position.

Employee involvement and participation are recommended as part of the change process, as well as of the refreezing phase, when the change agent must take some measures to reinforce the change at both the individual and institutional levels. This model has become very popular in some areas of organisational behaviour and management studies. However, producing an original interpretation of the change process does not necessarily provide an in-depth exploration of the concept of RTC nor does it expose the reasons behind resistant behaviours (King and Anderson, 1995).

3.3. RTC and Human Changes: the Lawrence Study

The Lawrence study was first published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1954 and then reprinted in 1969. This article also underlines the critical role of employee participation in overcoming resistance to change, but it begins from a different assumption. Lawrence maintains that the origin of resistance to change lies more in the need to readjust the social system, rather than in the technical aspects of the change.

> *"The technical aspect of the change is the making of a measurable modification in the physical routines of the job. The social aspect of the change refers to the way those affected by it think it will alter their established relationships in the organisation"* (Lawrence, 1954, p.52).

To support his position, the author discusses two cases of technical change. In the first, the change does not require a 'tidying up' of the social interrelations and little resistance is noticed; in the second one, the change demands modification of the social system and strong resistance is revealed.

In addition, Lawrence expresses some criticism of the Coch and French study, regarding the concept of participation. The idea is that participation should not be a universal device to be used only before the introduction of a change, but must be an integral element of a consistent management style in order to be effective. Moreover, Coch and French (1948) refer to the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation[3] as a progressive, open and caring company; therefore the results of the experiment can be interpreted in a different light. Those workers who did not manifest resistance to change felt that the participation attempts they were involved in were in accordance with the participative management style they were familiar with; in contrast, those who demonstrated resistance to change felt that the progressive and open management style, with which they were familiar, had changed and they were being mistreated and deceived.

The Lawrence's study represents, in some way, a first attempt to break away from the dominant thinking of that period, as it presents a demystifying version of participation as a panacea for every misfortune. Furthermore, it introduces, even though timidly, a different perception of resistance to change, as a warning of other problems and a natural component of the human psyche[4]: "We are all, at times, resistors as well as instigators of change…resistance to change is by itself neither good nor bad" (Lawrence, 1969, p.6).

3.4. RTC and the Organisation: the Shepard Study

The Shepard study was published in 1967 in the *Journal of Business*. It focused on the distinction between those organisations that promote change and those that resist change. The author attributes to some characteristics of the organisation (structure, distribution of power, authority, responsibility, and so on) its tendency to produce or resist innovations, and distinguishes three stages in the innovation process - idea generation, adoption and implementation.

One of the reasons for organisations' resistance to innovation or change lies in the fact that new ideas are very often generated by people working at lower levels of the organisation, who know the context well. Unfortunately, this means that new ideas frequently have an origin far away from top management, whose support and legitimisation are necessary for the change to succeed. Under these conditions, change promoters sometimes opt for concealed initiatives that they make public once positive outcomes have been reached or guaranteed, and therefore it is difficult for top managers to stop them. This may signify that innovations imply risks, which have to do with job security and career opportunity for the 'conservative worker', and sense of self-worth and self-effectiveness for the 'innovative worker'. However, from the innovator's point of view taking risks does not represent a major obstacle, since innovations are mostly planned and implemented in times of crisis. The management of innovation for organisations that are not familiar with it, requires the development of new qualities: "a creative but pragmatic imagination; psychological security and an autonomous nature; an ability to trust others and to earn the trust of others; great energy and determination; a sense of timing; skill in organising; and an ability to be Machiavellian where that is what the situation requires" (Shepard, 1967, p.474).

Although the analysis is mostly concentrated on the organisational level, and therefore it is less central for the present study, this article is important because it has influenced many scholars of the following generation who wrote about innovation in organisations (i.e. Kanter, 1983; Rodgers, 1995). Furthermore, the author, in discussing issues and presenting examples of resistance to innovation or change, does not refer to it as a phenomenon applying only to blue-collar workers working in manufacturing. RTC is an universal phenomenon that is associated with change and innovation and, like any change, it can manifest itself in any type of organisation at any level.

3.5. RTC and the Strategies for Change: the Kotter and Schlesinger Study

The Kotter and Schlensiger (1979) article published in the *Harvard Business Review* probably symbolises the peak of research on overcoming resistance to change, among those that can be considered classical studies in the field. This study starts from the premise that, to sustain competitiveness, organisations and individuals need to change continually. Therefore, coping with change, minimising or overcoming RTC are among key priorities for management.

This is the first article that attempts to explore every aspect of RTC, from its causes to the actions to take to remove it, even though the different aspects are not equally developed and the strategies to overcome RTC are prioritised. It also presents a sequence of arguments that many

other scholars later utilised, especially during the eighties. The authors first indicate four major causes of RTC: the desire to preserve personal or group interests, misunderstanding what change involves and associated fears of personal loss, different perceptions of the needs of the organisation, and a low tolerance for change based on the anxiety of not being able to cope with change.

The bulk of their research is concentrated on the contingency approach to overcoming RTC. This model identifies six strategies for overcoming RTC - education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation, explicit and implicit coercion[5] - discussing advantages and disadvantages of each measure. An underlying premise of the model is that in choosing a strategy/measure, the change agent must consider the context in which the change will occur. Therefore, it is essential to have a through understanding of the organisation and its people, as well as of the change and its consequences. Only through a clear understanding of the context can the most appropriate measures be selected, that are likely to result in a successful change. The general indication is that when RTC is headstrong and firmly established, a more explicit and coercive strategy must be adopted.

Kotter and Schlesinger Strategic Continuum[6]

FAST STRATEGY ←—————————————————→	SLOWER STRATEGY
Clearly planned	Not clearly planned at the beginning
Little involvement from others	Much involvement from others
Attempt to overcome any resistance	Attempt to minimise any resistance
KEY SITUATIONAL VARIABLES	
The amount and type of resistance that is anticipated.	
The position of initiators vis-à-vis the resistors (in terms of power, trust, and so forth).	
The locus of relevant data for designing the change, and of needed energy for implementing it.	
The stakes involved (e.g. the presence or lack of presence of crisis, the consequence of RTC, etc.)	

Figure 2

In conclusion, four situational factors that can be useful in the choice of the strategy are presented in a continuum scheme (Figure 2). These include the amount and type of resistance that is anticipated, the power of the change agent in comparison with the resistor, the type of effort that the initiator needs from others, and the risk of facing a crisis. These four elements help to opt for the most appropriate of the strategies, that vary from a 'fast strategy' aiming at overcoming RTC, characterised by a clear plan and minimum involvement of others, to a

'slower strategy' intending to minimise RTC, characterised by a less precise plan and considerable involvement of others.

Despite the fact that many conclusions from this article have not been empirically tested and have enriched the long list of stereotypes about RTC, it offers a renewed basis for discussion. In fact, the analysis of the context and the choice of a contingent strategy, question the idea that participation and involvement are the magic recipe for any change process, and open up the debate for more effective and realistic solutions.

4. Different Characterisations of RTC

The degree of research on resistance to change varies from aspect to aspect. In reviewing the literature produced so far, it seems clear that a negative perception of RTC, and thus the measures to be taken in order to overcome resistance, has been extensively discussed. These particular aspects of resistance to change have been subject to such extensive research, that any supplementary research would contribute only marginally, whereas research into other unexplored areas of RTC can be expected to yield more fruitful results.

Several, important different characterisations of RTC have been ignored, above all by behavioural scientists, although the concept of resistance to change has also been used by Freud in the field of psychoanalysis. On this matter, King and Anderson (1995) indicate a choice of four different characterisations of RTC, mostly based on psychological components. Few studies have really analysed the reasons that drive individuals to resist change, the psychological impact of change in determining a certain level of resistance, or the consistency, or lack of it, between resistant attitudes and behaviours. What follows from considering RTC from a 'psychological' perspective is generally a less negative interpretation of the phenomenon. Along with the oldest and most classic interpretation of RTC as political and social class conflict, King and Anderson (1995) indicate three more 'individual' perspectives which view RTC as a constructive counter-balance, as a manifestation of difficulties in adapting to the new scheme or as an unavoidable behavioural response. The four broad interpretation of RTC identified by King and Anderson (1995) are outlined in slightly greater detail below.

4.1. RTC as Political and Social Class Conflict

Resistance to change was first expressed as a form of social or political class conflict at the beginning of the industrial era. As already mentioned, the Luddite movement, apart from being a confrontation between employers and employees, was also a class conflict between the upper

and the lower sections of society. The two dimensions of the confrontation, managerial and political, have become ingrained in the vast literature that has been developed over the years by two different schools of thought. On the one hand Marxists have identified in resistance to change, a defensive element against the alienation of workers and against the oppression perpetrated by the owners of the production tools. The key element is that the relationship between employer and employees is seen as antagonistic, therefore workers may exert their power only if they are able to mobilise collective action.

On the other hand, especially from the 1980s, management scientists and business executives have minimised the importance of resistance phenomena, reducing them to disturbance components encouraged by trade unions in the name of a united organisation that is launched towards a common and shared objective. Here the effort is to dissipate the antagonism of the traditional relationship between employer and workers, by providing better working and living conditions.

4.2. RTC as Constructive Counter-balance

The idea here is that individuals express their disagreement with a change process, because they genuinely believe, based on rational arguments, that the change has been poorly planned, badly implemented or incompetently delivered. The introduction of an orthodox, total quality management system into a company that operates in a territory characterised by poor infrastructure and service systems, the adoption of an elaborated individual performance appraisal system in a factory where work is organised on team basis, or the establishment of an advanced accounting management procedure in a company that has an inadequate organisational structure and management information system, are clear examples of circumstances in which people may manifest resistance as constructive counter-balance. The key point is that even those who do not agree with the resistors (the change promoters, for instance) recognise that the objections are not necessarily based on emotional considerations but may be based on rational arguments.

4.3. RTC as Manifestation of Difficulties in Adapting to the New Scheme

The idea here is that individuals resist change because they struggle to keep up with a new culture, climate, procedures and/or practices. People who witness or experience any kind of change find themselves unprepared before the event, if it requires them to modify their own cognitive and value systems. In this sense, resistance can also be considered part of an inevitable process of local cultural adaptation, guaranteeing the necessary time to adapt and

redirect the change in a more fruitful or convenient direction (Bauer, 1991). The difficulty individuals usually face may be connected with the content of the job (knowledge, skills and abilities) or with the form of inter-relationship with other actors inside and outside the organisation (social system, climate and culture). The key factor is that individuals may also resist change when they feel the emergent culture clashes and challenges the existing and dominant culture, bringing into question their cognitive and social framework.

4.4. RTC as an Unavoidable Behavioural Response

This is the emerging perspective on resistance to change. The idea is that RTC is a natural behavioural response to any kind of change. The difference from the classic approach to RTC research, is that in this case the negativity of RTC is not taken for granted. The contribution of this perspective is to introduce an additional dimension questioning whether some individuals are more resistant to change than others. Does it depend on the characteristics of the individual? Or is it a function of the way the change is announced and implemented? The answer to these questions would constitute the first step in the construction of a resistance to change paradigm, synthesised by dimensions that can produce predictions about each individual's degree of resistance to change.

5. Six Issues in the Analysis of RTC

The identification and examination of the following six issues in the analysis of resistance to change is based on an overview of the literature on RTC and on the management of change of the last twenty-five years. The literature on RTC seems, at first glance, abundant especially with regards to the identification of ways to overcome RTC and the description of the sources of resistance. However, as already mentioned, there is a need for empirical investigation of a range of different aspects of RTC. Notwithstanding, in the literature of the last twenty-five years interesting and significant contributions to the analysis of RTC are to be found, relating to a number of important theoretical, methodological, operational and empirical issues. Some of these issues - for example the difficulties relative to the measurement and operationalisation of RTC - are strictly peculiar to the analysis of RTC; other issues - for instance the importance of timing in the investigation linked to innovation-adaptation theory (e.g. Rodgers, 1995) - may be naturally associated to the RTC topic; while still others - for example the relation between attitudes and behaviours- are of a more general nature, but are also relevant to the RTC topic.

The six issues I discuss here are also very useful as they interest major decisive factors I have come across in exploring resistance to change. Throughout the entire study I have given

much consideration to these six issues and, where possible, I have attempted to respond to each one of them. My intention here is also to indicate and propose six different facets of RTC, the study of which might reveal aspects of resistance that will enlighten our understanding of this concept. What follows here is the identification of the issues and their potential repercussions for the analysis of RTC. In other words, it is time now to determine clearly the questions to keep at the forefront of the researcher's mind in order later to provide appropriate responses.

6. The First Issue: Resistant Attitudes and Behaviours

Although in this research the behavioural aspect of resistance to change is the core dependent variable, the attitudinal components of resistance to change will also be examined as part of the empirical investigation. The analysis of individual attitudes towards change efforts may be very important in explaining resistant behaviours, given prevalent theories concerning the determination of behavioural change in individuals (e.g. Fishbein and Ajzen [7], 1975; Bandura[8], 1977). Although the attitude-behaviour link is far from unequivocal, the predominant assumption is that changes in attitudes lead to changes in individual behaviours; changes in individual behaviours, at different levels, result in organisational change. Therefore change is like a conversion experience, having once changed attitudes towards a particular behaviour, it should follow that behaviour is likely to change (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1993).

The potential predictive ability of attitudes in relation to behaviours may also be valid in the opposite direction. From the way an individual behaves, it should be possible to infer her/his attitude. Although this might seem as a very obvious deduction, analysis of the relationship between behaviour and attitude, with the first as a predictor of the latter, is also very significant for understanding the RTC phenomenon, as in this case, for instance, of an individual who exhibits pro-change behaviour yet has an anti-change attitude. Social and group constraints, as well as internalised norms or personal conformity desires, can induce such behavioural-attitudinal patterns. As a matter of fact, this reverse pattern may be quite common in organisations. For example, it may be expected that new recruits in a compulsory military service environment would be against the military lifestyle, at the attitudinal level. Observing their behaviours, no dissension would be noticed because they conform to the norm for social or personal reasons. It is probable that, after a few months, many of the same individuals would have a different attitude, favouring the military lifestyle. Therefore, in such a case, I may observe that first, attitudes are not a reliable predictor of behaviour, and second, that the change in behaviour has provoked a change in attitudes but not vice versa.

In studying resistance to change, therefore, it must be borne in mind that sometimes a simple linear relationship between attitudes and behaviours may not exist and that attitudes towards a certain behaviour may, therefore, lose the ability to predict those behaviours. The relationship between attitudes and behaviours and the predicting effect have been tested and studied by many behavioural scientists[9], but the results are by no means conclusive (Pfeffer, 1997, Brief, 1998). In some cases, awareness of attitudes may enable us to predict behaviours while, in other cases, such awareness may fail to predict behaviours. One possible explanation is the fact that two people may have learned the same attitude about a precise situation, but they may respond in different ways to the same stimulus, depending for example, on the nature of the reinforcements they receive. It has been argued that the same attitude does not necessarily lead to the same behaviour. Therefore one can deduce that the predictive function of attitudes is not strictly connected to one single behaviour, but provides an idea of the overall behaviour path for the individual (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Eagerness to identify the reasons behind the problematic nature of the attitude-behaviour link, has encouraged much research on attitudes and actions over the years, with an overwhelming focus on re-examining the definition and measurement of attitudes. New studies, based on more complex assumptions, have essentially adopted two distinct interpretations of attitudes. According to the multi-component view[10], attitudes represent a more complex system that comprises the influence of other individuals, elements of the context, a person's beliefs and feelings about the object, the individual's tendency and other situational and personal factors (Rosemberg and Hovland, 1960). In contrast, the uni-dimensional approach considers that attitudes and behaviours are not the only components of their relationship, although attitudes remain the most effective measure for predicting behaviours (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). "How each person actually behaves when involved in the change is determined by the interaction of these attitudes with other forces generated by the work group and by the organisation as a whole" (Judson, 1991, p.23). Both approaches recognise that other components influence and disturb the relationship between attitudes and behaviours but, while the multi-component view considers those elements as intrinsic to the concept of attitude, the uni-dimensional approach regards the same elements as extrinsic to the concept of attitudes and behaviours.

In the presence of so many components, it would be difficult to argue that a very strong and simple relation links attitudes to behaviours. Nevertheless, the failure of a particular attitude to predict a particular behaviour does not necessarily yield a general conclusion that attitudes and behaviours are not correlated. It does question more closely which attitudinal factors are correlated with which behavioural factors in the analysed context (Kiesler, Collins and Miller,

1969). Therefore, in constructing the investigating tools, it is important, first, to identify the behaviour clearly, and then build the corresponding instrument for assessing an individual's attitudes towards that behaviour.

As a result of these complications, the empirical examination becomes a more difficult but also challenging endeavour. Indeed, whether there is consistency between attitudes and behaviours has to be investigated and, where a lack of consistency is to be found, the models of RTC should provide explanations for the observed phenomena. Finally, the elements that have a moderating or amplifying effect on the relationship between attitudes and behaviours help to elucidate reasons why individuals may think in one way and then act in another. Analysis of individuals' attitudes and the relationship between attitudes and behaviours are necessary steps for a complete understanding of RTC.

7. The Second Issue: 'Time' as a Critical Element

Behavioural scholars, business executives and management gurus all agree that timing is one of the most important elements in planning, delivering, implementing and managing change. From the change agent's perspective, timing is considered critical for carrying out the different consecutive steps that any process of change involves, from announcing the change itself, to speeding up or slowing down the focus, to informing others that the change has been successfully implemented. Putting considerable emphasis on the best possible time for carrying out these tasks is most important in rendering the change process, smooth and effective, natural and well-organised, mild and profitable. In practical terms, good timing minimises the risk and effect of resistance to change.

From my point of view, that of the impartial observer, the timing of the empirical investigation is essential for the detection of RTC behaviours. The trend of RTC[11] very often exhibits a bell-shaped curve, with resistance usually being greatest, either at the moment just before a change is announced, when rumours and expectations about the change are not under control, or immediately after such an announcement, when fears are confirmed and expectations are frustrated because they were too high and optimistic. Depending on the circumstances, once a change has been put into practice, another peak in RTC may be noticed. On this basis, the timing of the examination becomes a crucial determinant for the research since as time goes by, RTC will not have the same intensity, strength or power and may well not exhibit the same behavioural patterns, even for people inside the same organisation.

In the assessment of attitudes and behaviours time has to be considered a crucial variable (Brief, 1998). This basically means that individual reactions[12] are not permanent behaviours but

they are subject to modifications over time (Bushy and Kamphuis, 1993). For example, a person who is initially extremely reluctant about a change process, might eventually revise her/his position and exhibit a more moderate attitude. This concept is at the basis of the adaptation-innovation evaluation theory of behaviours as a result of innovation. It has been established that in most cases, all but a marginal minority of actors (the rejectors), will accept the change after a period of time. On this Rodgers (1995) distinguishes between six categories of behavioural reaction patterns (Figure 3), based on individuals' promptness to respond positively to an innovation. The categories move from innovators, who are the change promoters and/or implementers, through to early adopters, early majority, to late majority, laggards and rejecters.

Bushy and Kamphuis (1993) associate reluctance to be involved in orientation and training sessions, indifference and non-participation in the new procedures, with the late majority. Indeed, those that belong to the late majority manifest much of the behaviours that could be associated with indifferent resistance. Laggards are identified with tradition and they may be assimilated with passive resistors that slow the change down. Although they are against a change, laggards react in a more passive way, mainly by avoiding the change process altogether. Finally, rejecters are wedded to openly resistant actions that may encourage others 'follow suit'.
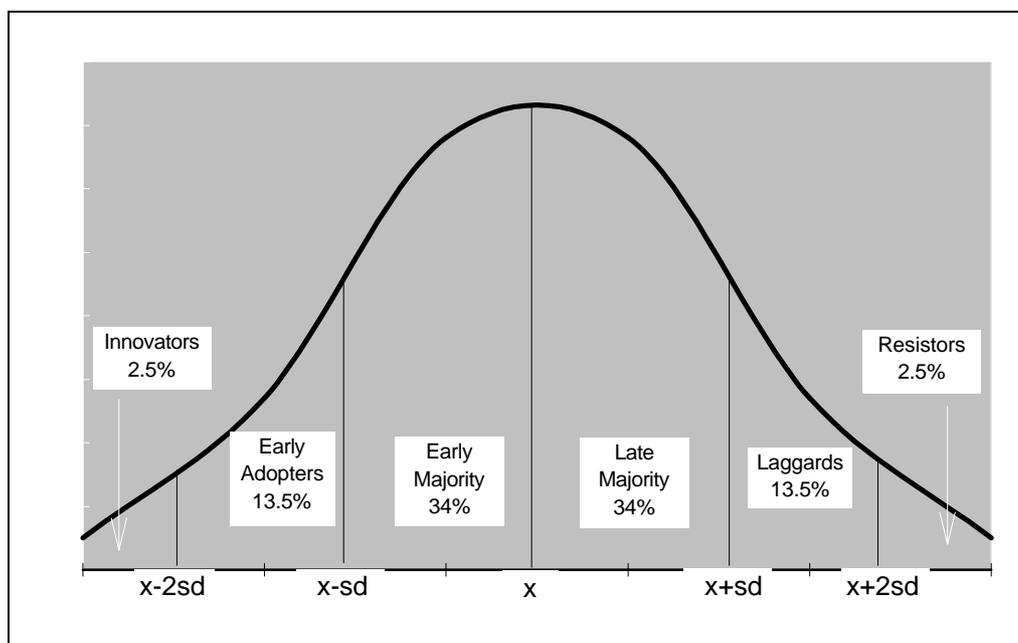
Adopter Categorisation on the Basis of Innovativeness[13]

Figure 3[14]

Of all the elements of the innovation-adaptation theory[15], including the number of adopter categories involved, the portion of members of a system included in each category, and the

method of defining the adopter categories, the last one is the most relevant to the objectives of this study. The innovativeness criterion, namely "the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of a social system" (Rodgers, 1995, p.261), and the associated analogy between late majority-indifferent resistance, laggards-passive resistance and rejecters-active resistance, serve to legitimise the presumption that timing of the empirical investigation is critical for good quality results. A delay, or haste, in gathering the data would have the effect of increasing the chances of failing to pick up or detect resistant behaviours since these are usually supposed to manifest themselves just before or just after a change has been announced and/or implemented[16].

In addition, the exact characteristics of the organisation, its climate and the way a change is proceeding must be borne in mind, because sometimes an organisation may not keep to the planned schedule. "Despite the assertion of managers that they were collectively both sensitive to the need for changes, and willing to embark on them, the time lag between the first public airing of the idea studied, and the date on which an idea was clearly accepted as a possible course of action, was a matter of years" (Kirton, 1984, p.138). Therefore, as well as for other aspects already discussed, careful 'reading' of the context is a key pre-requisite for a full understanding of the RTC phenomenon.

8. The Third Issue: the Type of Organisation, the Climate and the Culture

In extending Lewin's change model[17], Goodstein and Burke (1993) indicate that organisational change usually involves some change at three levels: individual, structures and systems, and climate or interpersonal style. Therefore, an individual's response to change depends not only on her/his personal characteristics, but also on the type of organisation, the existing climate and culture. A research on RTC that does not take account of these elements would neglect meaningful components for the explanation of individual and group behaviour.

It is generally believed that mechanistic organisations are far worse at managing and coping with change than organic organisations (Perrone, 1990). A mechanistic organisation, characterised by a hierarchical structure, dominated by vertical communication, with well defined job descriptions, and distribution of responsibility, authority and power based on seniority and experience, may naturally face difficulties in dealing with a change process that shakes and challenges the stable equilibrium of the organisation. An organic organisation, characterised by a flat structure, dominated by multidirectional communication, with flexible job descriptions and a distribution of responsibility, authority and power based on personal

abilities and performance, is usually more comfortable with a change process because continuous mutation is a stable part of the dynamic equilibrium of the organisation. In addition, the operative mechanisms of an organic organisation allow more participation, more autonomy, more creativity and thus more instruments of mutual adjustment that definitely assist the change in progress (Kanter, 1983).

In addition, organisational change commonly requires a modification of the organisational climate and culture. Culture is formed by the values and assumptions that characterise different organisations and their members, while climate is focused on the ways in which members experience the activities of the organisation (Schneider, 1990). Especially nowadays, when organisations are in a constant state of flux, managing change may indicate a capacity for taking risks, challenging competitors, assuming full and direct responsibility for performance and developing entrepreneurial skills, and so on. This may also imply a substitution or a manipulation of those values, assumptions and symbols that constitute the culture of the organisation. Even though many experts in managing change consider organisational climate and culture as tools for helping to achieve change successfully, it has been argued that this is much less likely to happen than the opposite situation. Indeed, managing change or preparing a suitable background for change, is predominantly a matter of leadership style, utilising operational and structural measures that influence and modify the organisational climate and culture in the medium term and in the long run.

Organisational structure, climate and culture are essential factors that can stimulate ideas about the way an organisation should be managed. A mechanistic organisation that has to deal with an inevitable problem would consider the existing structure, climate and culture as incorporated within, and treated as part of the change, therefore any solution would sound radical and innovative. In contrast, an organic organisation in this situation would not consider the existing structure, climate and culture as part of the change, but as tools for eventually resolving the problem, therefore any solution would seem milder and more adaptive (Kirton, 1976).

Moreover, the characteristics of an organisation, its climate and culture reflect that organisation's history. It is assumed that those organisations that cannot carry out changes successfully are those that do not undergo changes very often (Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992). This statement is supported by examples in several consultancy companies. In these companies, the change process constitutes a *status quo* of continuous policy. Every consultant is involved in several projects with different team members. Once a project is complete, the team separates and its members are not necessarily expected to work together again. In this way every member

develops a sense of equilibrium about the process of continuing change. Ironically, consultants might complain if they are forced to work on the same project for a long time. In this way the lack of stability in work sharing is being reversed. As the organisation mutates from a dynamic to a more static style, this results in consequences similar to those expected under the opposite and more common circumstances, that is fear, anger, alienation and a sense of frustration. In this situation, who is the change agent and who is the resistor?

The exact perception and analysis of the characteristics of the organisation may assume a crucial role in explaining an individual's behaviour and, above all, in clarifying the eventual discrepancy between that person's attitude and her/his behaviour. In these circumstances external and environmental components are the most common and realistic determinants of individual contradictions. As people are influenced by external factors in any sphere of their own lives, organisational assumptions and values, practices and customs can also exert an influence on the attitude or behaviour of the individual. This is particularly so when considering the acceptance or the refusal, the agreement or the disagreement, the assimilation or the rejection of a change process.

However, considering the organisational structure, climate and culture as key elements, is another step in the direction of contextualising the research. This process requires an aseptic approach, even in the characterisation of the organisation as mechanistic or organic. The fact that an organisation has an organisational structure, climate and culture that resemble those of a mechanistic (or organic) organisation, it does not necessarily follow that the organisation would respond to a change in that pre-determined way. Other components, like the type of change and the way a change is managed, must be taken into consideration to comprehend resistance to change fully.

9. The Fourth Issue: the Object of RTC

The label of RTC itself carries an intrinsic question: when individuals resist change, what kind or which aspect of change do people really resist? The response to this question would signal another notable issue in a research that aims to explore resistance to change: this is the identification of the characteristics of change, by which an observer can understand which components are being resisted. Once the features of a change are clear, the key point is to learn whether people resist a very specific and concrete change or a broader and diffuse change.

This categorisation of specific and concrete change, or broader and diffuse change is an acceptable generalisation of the existing literature on the subject. In addition, because technological change is easier to isolate and define than organisational change, the focus of

most research has been on resistance to a specific and concrete change, particularly resistance to technological innovations, such as the introduction of new machines at the shop floor or the arrival of computers in offices. By contrast, studies of resistance to broader and diffuse change generally focus on organisational, rather than purely technological change.

However, it is important to underline that generally change in organisations can have two dimensions: the practical dimension, which is relative to concrete and precise measures, and the strategic dimension, that regards systemic and general manoeuvres. The presence of one dimension does not exclude the other. On the contrary, concrete and precise, as well as systemic and general measures are very often managed together, because the implementation of a practical procedure may be instrumental in achieving a strategic manoeuvre. For instance, a utility company wishing to be a candidate for listing on the stock market (strategic manoeuvre), must improve its economic and financial performance through a new cost allocation system, a new policy of responsibility for results and a new managerial evaluation system (practical procedure). Even if it is less common, the opposite can happen. For example, the same utility company, wishing to reorganise its structure and reallocate its human resources (practical procedure), can take advantage by repositioning itself in the sector (strategic manoeuvre).

In classifying a change, even in the case of an organisation that is managing and implementing strategic measures, there has often been the temptation to focus on restricted practical aspects of the broader change, rather than consider its meaning as a whole. Both from a conceptual and methodological point of view, the tendency to investigate narrow and practical changes over broad and strategic changes (in a context characterised by both types of change), is a decision that may ultimately ignore important information for the full analysis and understanding of resistance to change. For instance, in the study from which the present paper is extracted I am observing and analysing an organisation that is interested in a robust and complete reorganisation, by reallocating resources, revising processes, re-defining organisational structures, and introducing new policies and practices. All these measures are driven by the original objectives, to redefine the mission of the company, maximise its economic and financial performance, and reposition the organisation in line with its privatisation. In this context, once it is ascertained that an individual is a resistor, would it be correct to assume that the individual is only resisting a particular concrete and precise change? Would it be correct to assume that the individual is merely resisting a certain lack of resources, a new cost allocation practice or a late responsibility policy? Certainly, all these assumptions could prove to be correct, but it must be noted that the same individual could be resisting the broad concept of reorganisation or privatisation, as well as the practical and strategic interventions.

The understanding of individuals' behaviour, induced and challenged by some kind of change, forces one to question the object of resistance. Whether people resist concrete and precise change, or broader and diffuse change or both, must be taken into account in the planning of the research and verified through the empirical investigation. This approach could allow one to avoid the biased theoretical position that people resist only concrete and precise change, because, such change directly affects their immediate personal interests more than a broader and diffuse change might do.

10. The Fifth Issue: Links with OCB

Among the six issues discussed here, this is the most original one. I will attempt to examine whether a relationship can be established between resistance to change and organisational citizenship behaviour. The attention moves from resistant behaviours to behaviours that do not manifest resistance, and are, in practice, in favour of change. Indeed, the emerging questions are meant to deepen the analysis of those individuals that are not resistant. Does being in favour of a change mean that the person also scores high on organisational citizenship behaviour? Can an individual be a resistor and an organisational citizen at the same time? Or does being a resistor imply that the individual is not a good organisational citizen? Is the non-resistant person only in favour of change or is that person a good organisational citizen too?

My view at this stage is that answers to these questions point to a relationship between OCB, RTC and pro-change behaviours, that could be expressed by a continuum. This speculation starts from Organ's definition of OCB:

> OCB is a *"behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation"* (1988, p.4)

Specifically, three characteristics are identified as peculiar elements of OCB: the behaviour is not part of the person's job description and therefore it is not formally rewarded; it is discriminating in the sense of being the personal choice of an individual, and it is meant to benefit the organisation. In a daring parallel with OCB, behaviours in favour of change are definitely performed to benefit the organisation, but whether they are not part of a person's job description is a debatable matter. In any position within an organisation, individuals have to follow the indications and dispositions of their superiors, thus the measures deriving from a change process can normally be considered as part of their job. Scholars may dispute whether

activities like promoting the change with subordinates, defending the change in public discussions or doing much more than required to help the change go through, are part of the behaviours required by that role or are better classified as extra-role behaviours activities. However, managing change has become such an important issue in contemporary organisations that all the activities linked to the planning, promotion and implementation of a change, naturally tend to be viewed as part of the duties of managers. In addition, OCB has been characterised by five dimensions (altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy and civic virtue) that surely go beyond a strict job description for any individual.

Based on the above considerations, one would expect good organisational citizens to score higher on a scale of agreement with change, than individuals who are simply in favour of the change. Therefore it could be anticipated that:

- good organisational citizens are in favour of change and do not manifest resistant behaviours;

- people who are in favour of change are not necessarily good organisational citizens, although the chances that they are both are likely to be quite high;

- resistors are obviously not in favour of change and they are not good organisational citizens.

If all these predictions are confirmed by analysis of the data, then OCB, pro-change behaviours and RTC can be argued to constitute a continuum with respect to behaviours in response to change (Figure 4).

Continuum of Behavioural Responses to Change

Resistance To Change	Low Organisational Citizenship Behaviour	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
	Low Pro-Change Behaviours	Pro-Change Behaviours

Figure 4

In the event that these assumptions are not confirmed by the empirical investigation, it would be very interesting to find out why the outcome is as it is. If a class of resistors also exhibits a high levels of organisational citizenship behaviour, the concept of resistance to change may be enriched by a complementary perspective.

The introduction of OCB into a research on resistance to change, may appear a strange choice. In my view, a supplementary characterisation of the resisting individual, as well as of

the non-resistor, represents an additional element in explaining resistance to change, so is worth exploring more fully.

11. The Sixth Issue: the Problems of Measurement and Operationalisation

Behavioural and management scholars agree that the concept of resistance to change presents many obstacles in relation to its measurement and operationalisation. One problem is that reliable and systematic scales for the measurement of individual-level resistant behaviours do not exist in the literature. The lack of research on this particular aspect of RTC is due to several problems.

The first problem is linked to the confusion surrounding the conceptualisation and its relationship to similar constructs. As already noted, the absence of a clear but broader conceptual and theoretical framework for the analysis of RTC has made progress more difficult in this area. The area that has suffered most from the lack of original contribution is precisely that related to the measurement of RTC. This should be developed through empirical investigation and not just by making theoretical assumptions.

The second problem relates to the fact that resistance to change is a very delicate and complex phenomenon, therefore its measurement is not as simple as may appear. On the one hand, the manifestations of resistant behaviours can be observed and listed by an external observer but, on the other, the building of a self-assessment scale requires some precautions. This is not the only difficulty that researchers have to face in dealing with resistance to change, but it is a problem common to all those topics that require self-evaluation by the individual.

The complexity and delicacy of the issues involved, together with the need for a self-assessment scale, leads to the third problem; the social desirability issue that is connected to resistance to change. Here, it is not plausible to argue that an individual would give an honest answer to questions like: 'Are you slowing down activities? Have you reduced your performance levels? Are you sticking to old ways of doing things? These questions are limited in being too obvious and predictable, therefore people are able to identify the issues that are being explored, and answer according to the way they think the social system would like them to respond.

The complexity and delicacy of the phenomenon, the need for a self-assessment scale and the social desirability issue, highlight the need to focus the investigation tool on concrete behaviours. A key requirement of an effective and original investigation of RTC is its ability to incorporate and reconcile these different issues and factors that are distinctive features of

resistance to change that cannot be ignored. Hence the construction of a self assessment scale for resistance to change suggests the use of more indirect and 'soft' items in order to avoid adding bias to the investigation. I agree with the much-shared observation that these are the most difficult components of RTC to come to grips with and study; but, once again, the possibility of making a contribution here is also correspondingly greater. Indeed, in many of the previous studies of RTC, the unwillingness to accept and face the restrictions placed upon the measurement and operationalisation of resistance to change, mainly due to its complexity, has discouraged many organisational behaviour scholars from developing these as well other meaningful aspects of the concept.

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Notes

[1] This paper is extracted from a dissertation submitted and completed for the degree of Ph.D. (Econ), Department of Industrial Relations, Faculty of Economics, LSE The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London.

[2] The Article on Machine-breaking (1831), London (UK), Westminster Review.

[3] This is the factory where the Coch and French study took place.

[4] This new perspective is stressed in the retrospective commentary in the 1969 version.

[5] These measures are listed according to an increasing order: from the most implicit and collaborative to the most explicit and coercive.

[6] Source: Harvard Business Review, March-April 1979, p.112.

[7] Theory of reasoned action, also in Ajzen and Fishbein (1980).

[8] Social learning theory.

[9] One of the earlier and more famous studies was developed by Richard La Piere (1934).

[10] Allport (1935) introduced this approach for the first time.

[11] RTC in relation to time.

[12] Here I refer to any kind of behaviour, not only to resistant behaviour.

[13] The innovativeness variable is divided into six adopter categories based on standard deviations units from the average time of adoption.

[14] Adapted from Rodgers (1995), Bushy and Kamphuis (1993).

[15] This method of adopter categorisation is the most widely used in diffusion research today.

[16] This depends on contingent circumstances.

[17] Field Theory in Social Science (1951).