

**The nature of communication and its influence on resistance to  
change: three radical change cases**

By

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## **Abstract**

It has long been established that communication supports organizational change management, but there remains a lack of understanding of the role played by the nature of communication (COM) and its impact on resistance to change (RTC). This research seeks to fill this gap by examining respondents' sensemaking about change, considering either a predominant monologic or dialogic COM and its influence on RTC, in three case organizations. It adopts the principles of dialogic communication (Commitment, Risk, Empathy, Propinquity and Mutuality) as dimensions of COM as well as the Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural as dimensions of RTC.

The research was set in organizations in Brazil that were subject to an acquisition, which were studied over a period of up to 18 months. The research adopted a mixed method approach in a comparative case study design that included 84 individuals involved in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires at two points of data collection as well as documentary and observational sources. The interview, observational and documentary data were analyzed through thematic analysis and the questionnaire through descriptive statistics.

Findings reveal that perceived RTC extent can decrease in situations with a perceived predominant dialogic COM. Empathy and Commitment were the COM dimensions perceived as those contributing most to a reduction in RTC. The theoretical importance of these findings includes contributions to change communication and RTC theories and empirical evidence for a perceived inverted relationship between dialogic COM and RTC. The practical importance of these findings includes managers being able to manage change more effectively through the prioritization of communication efforts.

Finally, this research challenges the widespread assumption that all communication minimizes resistance. This work sustains that by adopting a dialogic COM as an organizational change approach, change leaders are better able to embrace RTC, with the main support of two COM dimensions of Empathy and Commitment.



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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Change is present to many dimensions of life, impacting individuals and organizations. That relevance is probably one of the reasons why change is theoretically well explored and its field is vast. Organizational change is a multifaced phenomenon and it is important to acknowledge that there are numerous well-recognized concepts and approaches to understanding it, that Weick and Quinn (1999:364) have called “the sheer sprawl of the change literature”. As a primary definition, organizational change can be fruitfully defined as:

*“any change, be it planned or not, to organizational components – people, jobs, formal structure, culture – or to the relationships between the organization and its environment that can produce relevant impacts, whether positive or negative, to the efficiency, efficacy and/or organizational sustainability” (Lima and Bressan, 2003:25).*

Stories of successful change are rarely heard. While Beer and Nohria (2000) estimate that about two-thirds of change projects fail, Burnes (2004) argues that the number may be even higher. Resistance to change has been widely blamed for its failure (Atkinson, 2005; Lines, 2007; Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008) and often, an increase in communication is widely recommended to minimize resistance in a change initiative (Ford, 1999; Dunford and Jones, 2000; Lewis, 2007; Russ, 2008; Ford and Ford, 2009).

There is a lack of clarity in this regard, with a few studies pointing to contradictory results (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006). Some of the studies indicate communication positively influencing resistance, while others depict no influence or a negative influence, all depending on the aspects of communication investigated. This research is about these two aspects of organizational change: 1) communication and 2) resistance. It aims to address the research gap regarding the dynamics between the two. Specifically, it explores how communication may reduce perceived resistance. The dynamics between communication and resistance is addressed in this work with the aid of

a third relevant concept: sensemaking. Communication, resistance and sensemaking are conceptually defined and explored in the next section.

The remainder of this chapter introduces the research as follows: Section 1.2 is dedicated to its theoretical underpinnings, exploring the main concepts used; Section 1.3 states the research questions and Section 1.4 briefly introduces the research design and settings. Section 1.5 outlines the findings and contributions. Section 1.6 explains the structure of the thesis and Section 1.7 summarizes this chapter.

## **1.2 Theoretical underpinnings**

Change communication has been studied with different aims, including the structures for participation, levels of hierarchy of the audiences involved, or the opportunity to voice opinions during different stages of change implementation (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006; Lines, 2007).

However, little empirical research is available regarding the nature of communication, an approach that has been theoretically advanced (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, 2012) and still lacks direct observations to strengthen its support. Nature of communication is conceptualized in this research as a stance or an orientation rather than a specific method or tool (Botan, 1997:191), a communication stance that may be understood in different ways. The two main ways, detailed in this thesis, are monologic and dialogic.

While monologic nature of communication is a stance in which communication is approached as a top-down transmission of information (Deetz, 1995), dialogic nature of communication refers to a stance with a spirit of inclusion and mutual equality (Frahm and Brown, 2003). The nature of communication reflects how communication is approached, that is, either as mere transmission of meanings (monologic) or as the joint construction of meaning (dialogic). It is important to enquire what effects a monologic or dialogic nature of communication have on resistance to change (Jabri, 2012) because of a different focus in terms of change communication and resistance to change theories and managerial practices.



Empirical data about the influence of the nature of communication on resistance to change constitutes a relevant support to the advance of theory and practice of change management. This research focuses on the influence of the nature of communication, through and with the support of sensemaking, on resistance to change (Jones *et al.*, 2004; Nelissen and Selm, 2008), understood as feedback that can become a resource for change if properly used (Ford and Ford, 2009). These concepts (nature of communication, resistance to change and sensemaking) are briefly defined in the next paragraphs and explored in more detail in Chapter 2. This study provides one step towards closing this gap about the dynamic between communication and resistance in current research and practice and such empirical findings will enhance theoretical understanding about both change communication and resistance to change.

This investigation adopts the principles of dialogic communication developed by Kent and Taylor (2002) to conceptualize and better outline the nature of communication: commitment, risk, empathy, propinquity and mutuality. Commitment is related to genuineness, commitment to conversation, and commitment to interpretations. Risk means recognizing to not know and assume uncertainty, vulnerability of not having control. Empathy is about the environment of support and trust, supportiveness, communal orientation and confirmation or acknowledgement. Propinquity refers proximity, nearness both in place and in time (Dictionary.com), to 'immediacy of presence', 'temporal flow', and 'engagement'. Mutuality is related to collaboration and spirit of mutual equality, subjects of change and avoidance of superiority. Kent and Taylor (2002) developed these principles as guidance initially in the area of public relations and Frahm and Brown (2003) adopted them as a lens to study organizational change. Those principles are important to this research as dimensions that are perceived by respondents and indicate how the nature of communication is occurring within the organizations under radical change. These dimensions are central to a dialogic nature of communication, while a monologic nature of communication is normally characterized by the absence of these principles (or extremely low levels). The nature of communication and its dimensions are explored further in Section 2.4 and constitute the focus of research question 1, introduced in Section 1.3.

In this research, resistance to change is understood as a response that can contribute to change. Piderit (2000) proposed a reconceptualization of resistance to change as a multidimensional phenomenon, which was largely acknowledged in the organizational field. To identify the extent of resistance to change, the Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural dimensions were adopted as proposed by Piderit (2000) and similar to what was previously applied in an instrument by Oreg (2006). The Cognitive dimension is about thoughts (e.g. if change is necessary, if beneficial or not). The Affective dimension refers to feelings about change (e.g. anger, anxiety, fear) and the Behavioural dimension involves actions or intention to act in response to the change (e.g. complains, attempts to convince others that the change is bad). Oreg (2006) developed and applied an instrument and scale aligned to this original proposal that was adapted to this research to allow the collection of the perceived resistance to change at an organizational level. Resistance to change and its dimensions are conceptually detailed in Section 2.5 and the focus of research question 2, introduced in Section 1.3.

If one considers that resistance does not come only from recipients (Ford and Ford, 1995; Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008; Ford and Ford, 2009), and if change leaders do not receive and incorporate counter arguments into the content and process of change, then communication – the etymology of which means to participate, to pool or to take common action – is not really happening. In such cases, change participants are considered as objects that are merely allowed to voice their opinions, which means it is monologic nature of communication. It is possible then, that not all communication would minimize resistance because of how it is perceived by participants. A monologic nature of communication could lead to higher resistance because it may not allow for co-construction of meanings. This research attempts to create a deeper understanding of if and how the nature of communication, particularly dialogic, may influence resistance to change (Lewis, 2006).

Besides nature of communication and resistance to change, sensemaking takes an important place in the investigation. Sensemaking in this research is defined as a process through which individuals create intersubjective meanings from environmental cues through cycles of interpretation and action and thereby

enact a reality from which further cues may be drawn (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), as detailed in Section 2.3. The relevance of sensemaking in this research is set as it is through and with the support of sensemaking that nature of communication relates to resistance to change, and therefore it is with the respondents' sensemaking that such relation is established.

The relation between nature of communication and resistance to change and sensemaking, briefly introduced above, is discussed in Section 2.6 and constitutes the focus of research question 3, described in Section 1.3.

### **1.3 Research questions**

To reveal how the nature of communication influences resistance to change, this research examined organizational communication in radical change cases, seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the perceived predominant nature of communication and the behavior of its dimensions over time?

To answer this question it was necessary to describe organizational change communication including components such as: target audience; communication objectives; messages; channels; intensity and duration; feedback; and evaluation mechanisms, to conclude about its predominant stance, that is, nature of communication. In addition, it led to developing an instrumental grid based on the principles of dialogic nature of communication briefly introduced in Section 1.2 above and explored in more detail in Section 2.4.3, to support this identification.

2. What is the perceived extent of resistance to change and the behavior of its dimensions over time?

To answer this question it was necessary to develop an instrumental grid based on the tridimensional concept of resistance to change, as outlined in Section 1.2 above and detailed in Section 2.5.2, to support the identification of its extent.

3. What is the perceived influence of the predominant nature of communication (monologic or dialogic) on resistance to change, through and supported by sensemaking, revealing the dynamic among their dimensions?

To answer this question it was necessary to observe how the nature of communication and resistance to change developed over time, to explore the relations, through sensemaking, between them and their dimensions, according to respondents' perception, as outlined above in Section 1.2, detailed in Section 2.6 and illustrated by Figure 2.4.

#### **1.4 Research philosophy, design and settings**

This research adopts a constructionist ontology and therefore assumes that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction, but they are in a constant state of revision (Grix, 2002; Bryman, 2004). As detailed in Chapter 3, this research adopts an interpretive epistemology and relies on respondents' perceptions, experiences and the meanings they attribute to their acts and the acts of other within their real-life context (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The ontology and epistemology implicate an emphasis on perceptions and meanings socially constructed in the context of change. A case study approach was adopted since it allows contextual analysis of the phenomena, in this case, of the role of perceived nature of communication on perceived resistance to change as they unfold on real-life situations (Yin, 2010).

Case studies of radical change, prompted by acquisitions, were conducted in three organizations in Brazil called Generics Corp/FPG, Chem Solutions/GCHE and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. in this research. The organizations were acquired by foreign companies operating globally a few years before the beginning of data collection. There were different contextual profiles, involving pharmaceutical, chemical and engineering services markets, staff integration of about 250, 1000 and 1500 people, and annual revenues in a range of 57 to 250 million pounds sterling at the acquisition time (see Section 3.5 for details).

Data collection in a (quasi) longitudinal format resorted to several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. Data collection involved respondents' recollection of a few occasions including the acquisition and other subsequent change milestones. In this research, interviews were combined with a questionnaire, documentary analysis and observations (Minayo, Assis and Souza, 2005; Yin, 2005) to provide rich contextual information and both a factual and a meaning level (Kvale, 1996) of data. Data analysis was conducted with a qualitative approach and dealt with 84 different respondents. Most of the data (115 interviews, 75 documentary sources and 6 observational files) was treated with thematic analysis and the questionnaires (85 in total) were treated with descriptive statistics, which results were combined to answer the research questions, as further explained in methodology (Chapter 3) and findings and discussion (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).

### **1.5 Findings and contributions**

Findings were comparable across case studies, despite their different contexts, revealing a perceived inverted relationship between nature of communication and resistance to change through sensemaking. Under a predominant dialogic nature of communication (characterized by a predominantly dialogic stance in practice of communication and perceived higher scores of five dimensions), guided sensemaking seems to contribute to co-constructed meanings of change that lead to a lower perceived extent of resistance to change. Under predominant monologic nature of communication (characterized by a predominantly monologic stance in practice of communication and perceived lower scores of five dimensions), a perceived higher resistance to change was observed, which seems to be result of fragmented sensemaking (Weick 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014).

This research adds to extant theory in two main streams of organizational change research. In a higher level of abstraction, it adds to the change communication stream, by reinforcing the need to understand change and communication as being intertwined. It means conceiving a change plan that encompasses communication (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Russ, 2008; Jabri, 2012) and recognizes sensegivers and sensemakers throughout the organization. It

also adds to the stream of resistance to change, by prompting scholars to adopt resistance to change manifestations *a priori* as a response to change, which has the potential to produce knowledge that advances the current understanding of the meanings and practices of change management. This research also contributes to investigations across both streams, to the intersection between change communication and resistance to change, by revealing the dynamic between the dialogic and monologic natures of communication to perceived resistance to change.

By empirically indicating that not all communication contributes to minimizing resistance (Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Jarret, 2004; Lewis, 2006; Ford and Ford, 2009), this research adds to theory by revealing that perceived predominant dialogic nature of communication contributes to minimizing perceived resistance to change, while perceived predominant monologic nature of communication does not. It is an empirical contribution of this research the perceived inverted relationship between nature of communication and resistance to change extent, functioning in both directions: while the nature of communication was perceived to be predominant dialogic, resistance to change was perceived as descending, and vice versa.

Conceptual contributions include offering a conceptual model that extends definitions of nature of communication (dialogic dimensions) and an organizational-level, socially constructed concept of resistance to change. Those conceptual advances enable researchers to better support research operationalization, following the development of its dimensions over time and allowing structured comparison among cases. It also contributes to depersonalizing resistance to change as centered in individual dispositions and to adopting a more contextual and systemic approach. This research corroborates the value of the intersection between both theories (change communication and resistance to change), indicating the further need to explore this common ground (see Chapter 8), as it yields important insights into the dynamics of organizational change management.

Those findings are theoretical advances and simultaneously aid practitioners to prioritize resources when defining communicative efforts to

support change process. This is important since this research started as a DBA project. In practice, it means the research provided founding arguments and suggestions for the organizational coordinated endorsement and support of dialogic nature of communication throughout change, including the efforts to establish and follow up this dialogic nature of communication.

This research is a timely contribution to approach organizational change as meanings under construction and considering those meanings as relevant contributions of change participants to organizational change.

## **1.6 Thesis structure**

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature focusing on organizational change, with a special emphasis on sensemaking, nature of communication and resistance to change as the three pillars of this research, also depicted in a conceptual framework (see Section 2.6). Within this chapter, the main concepts of organizational change are discussed, central concepts for this research as the features of sensemaking theory, monologic or dialogic nature of communication as change implementation approaches; and also resistance to change as a communicative response, as represented in Figure 1.1.

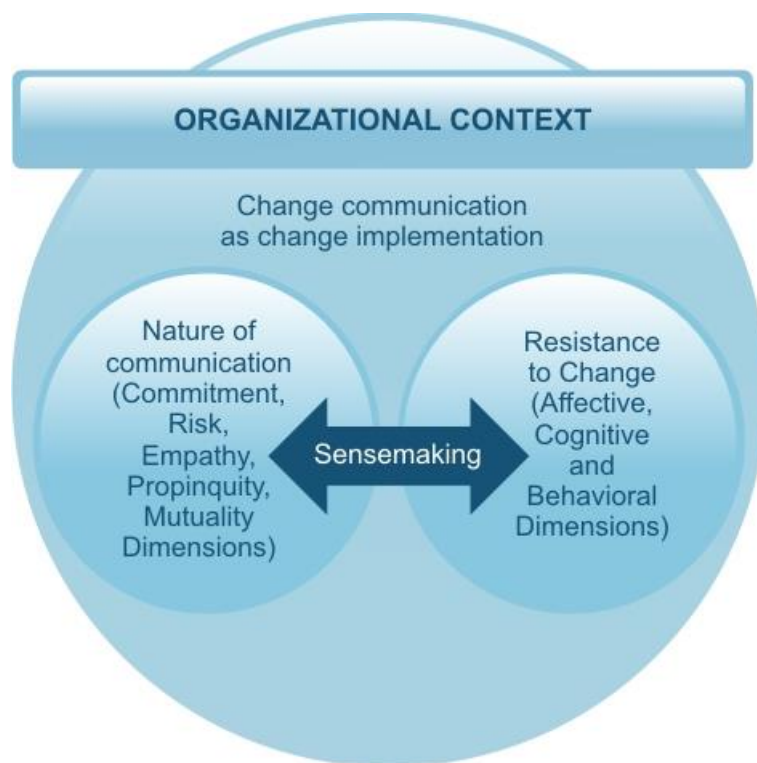


Figure 1.1: Pillars of investigation  
 Source: Compiled by the author.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to research methodology. The constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology of this research are explained, as well as the research design. The three case organizations are briefly introduced, revealing they were radical change cases, taken over by globally operating firms from overseas, which indicates settings where resistance to change was expected to exist. Later the chapter introduces methods of data collection and analysis, revealing a largely qualitative approach. The data collection conception and execution are described in detail, including the design of the research instruments. In this chapter, translation and interpretation issues are discussed as well as research ethics, research quality and the limitations of this research.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present and discuss findings, respectively about Generics Corp/FPG, Chem Solutions/GCHE and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Each case is analyzed, based on documentary, observational, interview and questionnaire sources. For each organization there are sections introducing not only the context of change, but also nature of communication and resistance to change as perceived by respondents. Qualitative accounts reveal respondents' sensemaking and the dimensions that support the perceived nature of communication and perceived resistance to change respectively over time and



the questionnaire data provides the same perceptions in numeric format. The main outcome of these chapters is the dynamic of the nature of communication influence on resistance to change, through sensemaking, and empirical evidence of a perceived inverted relationship between the nature of communication and resistance to change.

In Chapter 7, the findings presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are synthesized to add a comparative analysis and answer to the research questions. It consolidates the understanding about contextual elements, nature of communication and its dimensions path (Commitment, Risk, Empathy, Mutuality and Propinquity), as well as resistance to change and its dimensions path are related (Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural). The main finding is that Empathy and Commitment (nature of communication dimensions) have a comparatively strong impact on perceived levels of resistance to change.

Chapter 8 provides the main conclusions of this research, highlighting the main contributions to theory, conceptual and empirical, and to practice. It also brings forward some further recommended streams of investigation that connect to this one and assist the advancement of the field.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This research sought to investigate empirically the influence of the nature of communication on resistance to change extent in three organizations under radical change. Supported by a constructionist ontology and an interpretive epistemology, a qualitative case study approach generated findings that a perceived dialogic nature of communication would lead to perceived less resistance to change. By adopting a dialogic nature of communication during change, those involved in it come to embrace a stance that shows appreciation for other people's contributions, as opposed to being overly sure of the reality (Tsoukas, 2009), influencing the meaning and the perception of resistance to change extent. Such findings have theoretical and practical implications that may aid to set priorities and guide scholarly and managerial organizational change efforts in the future.



## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter offers conceptual recollection and clarifications of the three central subjects to this research that are sensemaking, nature of communication and resistance to change. Sensemaking is explored as a lens to understand organizational change and therefore as the way in which communication and resistance to change relate to each other.

The chapter is divided into four sections and a chapter conclusion. Section 2.2 introduces organizational change, paying special attention to radical change definition and change ontologies. An emphasis on the sensemaking theory is given throughout Section 2.3, revealing change communication, as the general concept where the nature of communication is inserted in and resistance to change aspects pervading it. Change communication is defined and explored in Section 2.4 with a focus on the nature of communication, i.e. monologic and dialogic communication, as well as on its dimensions, which work as operational definitions for this research. Section 2.5 is dedicated to resistance to change, revealing the approaches that the concept has received in theory and practice, as well as the dimensions, adopted as operational definitions for this research. Section 2.6 establishes the conceptual framework adopted, by explicit nature of communication connections to resistance to change as a central aspect to this research, as well as the role of sensemaking within it. Section 2.7 concludes the chapter.

### **2.2 Positioning organizational change**

#### ***2.2.1 Characteristics and classifications of change***

Organizational change is seldom described unless any two points in time are evoked, a combination of past, present and/or future, or before and after. The temporal nature of change significantly increases the complexity of the process to manage the gap between the perception of reality and the proposal for change. The notion of temporality supports the need for more processual thinking, and

complexity calls for a rejection of simple prescriptive models of change (Dawson, 2000). That is, as change is not an action but a process, successful change will depend not only on its initial clarity of purpose, but also on keeping it permanently re-elaborated. Change proposals involve several aspects, and they consist not only of reasons for being, but also of the scope, the shape and the consequences forecast from several perspectives. Possibly due to the complexity of this process, about 50% of all change efforts have been shown to fail, that is, they will not be satisfactorily completed (Kotler, 1996 and Quinn, 2004, cited in Self, Armenakis and Schraeder, 2007).

Due to the several potential perspectives through which change can be analyzed, it is possible to adopt different classifications. One perspective considers size or depth of implementation (Devos, Buelens and Bouckenooghe, 2007). Mainly, dichotomies have been created to capture the differences between small-scale changes generally intended to improve efficiency and large-scale changes that aim to revolutionize an organization and touch its core.

The most common terms are incremental / radical change (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996), which are used for this study as they indicate different probable individual responses in organizational environment. Incremental changes are limited to spot initiatives and do not affect referential cognitive schemes at an individual level, as it happens when implementing new procedures or changing offices location. Conversely, radical or transformational changes generate alterations in referential cognitive schemes of organizational members that lead to a greater chance of resistance to change, for example in mergers and acquisitions, turnarounds or encompassing organizational restructurings (Motta, 1997). Table 2.1, below, summarizes the main aspects discussed previously and the main perspectives adopted by this research that will be explored further in this section.

<b>Change perspectives</b>	<b>Radical</b>	<b>Incremental</b>
<b>Definition</b>	As large-impact change	As small impact change, or also defined by continuous, sequenced change
<b>Time</b>	Discontinuous and rapid or no time frame criteria	Continuous and gradual
<b>Basic assumptions</b>	Total transformation	Progressive transformation
<b>Novelty origin</b>	Confrontation to the usual: order and stability as a threat	Progressive variations: order and instability as source of the change
<b>Source of achievement</b>	Audacious vision and fast connection between imaginary and reality	Audacious vision and caution in connection between imaginary and reality
<b>Impact</b>	Dramatic, global, short and long term	Moderate, progressive and long term
<b>Impact on individuals</b>	Generate alterations in referential cognitive schemes of organizational members	Spot initiatives do not affect referential cognitive schemes at an individual level
<b>Program</b>	People mobilization to radical change	People conquest to spontaneous and programmed change
<b>Level of resistance to change</b>	Higher – radical threat to “status quo”	Lower – preserves part of “status quo”.

Table 2.1: Comparison between Radical and Incremental Change

Source: Adapted by the author based on Motta, 1997 and Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008.

While progressive transformation can be seen in incremental change, in radical change there is the basic assumption of total transformation, including systems, people, processes, the organization's name and brand, for example, which usually occurs in organizational acquisitions. This is also reflected in terms of novelty origin; what is stable and ordered in a radical change environment represent threats to the change process, as there is a need to revolutionize and to abandon the status quo.

The impact of radical change is expected to be seen in the short and the long term, and due to its nature, it is dramatic and global. In contrast, in incremental change both the process and the impact of change are moderate, progressive and usually long term. Achieving a vision of change in radical

processes makes it necessary to mobilize people for the great effort required, whereas in incremental change the constant nature of the process requires a different kind of engagement to support the change by carrying on with the planned activities while also dealing with the unpredictable variables that emerge along the process.

This research adopts the proposition that resistance to change may be particularly evident in cases of radical change, where there is a greater likelihood that existing agreements will be broken, procedures will be modified and relations will be reconfigured, all of which will subject an organization to uncertainty on a comprehensive scale (Motta, 1997; Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). Resistance to change is a relevant aspect underpinning this research, together with the understanding of nature of communication, and to further comprehend both concepts, there are specific sections dedicated to each one of them. However, before advancing in this direction, it is necessary to understand other elements that are revealing of the ontology of this research, and they are related to the comprehension of the change process itself.

### ***2.2.2 Change ontologies***

The impact and frequency of change efforts are not exhaustive criteria to characterize organizational change. As complex phenomena, they can be examined from several dimensions. A possible organization of ontological assumptions is offered by Palmer and Dunford (2008), who, from the start, break the notion of change down into two main types of approaches: the ones that share a concept of organizations as machines versus the ones that understand them as live organisms. For each of these types of change management Palmer and Dunford (2008) correlate the belief of achieving the outcomes proposed by the change and split them into intended, partially intended and unintended ones. As can be seen in Table 2.2, the predictability of change and the assumptions about being able to control or to influence an organization result in six different images of change: Directing, Navigating and Caretaking – connected to mechanistic management, and Coaching, Interpreting and Nurturing – connected to organicist management. Each of them, called images by Palmer and Dunford (2008), holds conceptual propositions of how change ought to be managed.

Assumptions about change outcomes predictability	Assumptions about change management		
	Ontology	Controlling (mechanistic)	Shaping (organicist)
	Conception	Instrumentalist	Constructivist
<b>Intended:</b> proposed change outcomes are achievable	Image	<b>Directing</b> (driving - manager way)	<b>Coaching</b> (directing - team way)
	Theory and some Reference Authors	N- step's Models (Kotter, 1996) Contingency Theory (Huy, 2001; Stace and Dunphy, 1992)	Organization Development Theory (French, 1971)
<b>Partially intended:</b> some but not all intentions are achievable	Image	<b>Navigating</b> (Replot process)	<b>Interpreting</b> (to make sense)
	Theory and some Reference Authors	Contextualist or Processual Theory (Dawson, 1994; and Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993)	Sensemaking Theory of Organizational Change (Barge and Oliver, 2003; Weick, 2000; Balogun and Johnson, 2005)
<b>Unintended:</b> planned is not achievable, but for serendipity/ Change is emergent	Image	<b>Caretaking</b> (outset models)	<b>Nurturing</b> (self organizing)
	Theory and some Reference Authors	Life Cycle Theory (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) Population Ecology Theory (Hannan and Freeman, 1984) and Institutional Theory (Oliver, 1988; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991)	Confucian/Taoist Theory (Marshak, 1993) Chaos Theory (Lichtenstein, 2000)

Table 2.2: Organizational Change Assumptions

Source: Adapted by the author from based on Palmer and Dunford, 2008.

1. **Directing:** 'N-step' (Kotter, 1996) and contingency theories of change (Huy, 2001), Stace and Dunphy (1992) assume that the change manager is responsible for directing the organization in particular ways that lead to predicted outcomes. This is a very common stance in the practice of change management.
2. **Navigating:** The image contains the contextualist or processual theories of change associated with Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) and Dawson (1994). The former assumes that change needs to be re-plotted as new information arises, implying that there is partial control of change and that it is possible only to navigate to the planned

outcomes. To Dawson (1994), the unexpected will occur and therefore change cannot be reduced to a list of steps, so he is not against planning for change, but alerts about the unpredictable nature of change and the need to constantly readapt (Dawson, 2005).

3. **Caretaking:** Despite varying in their explanation of change, theories under this image consider that managers have only limited capacity to implement change. Lifecycle theory espouses the view that organizations undergo developmental stages from birth, to growth, to maturity and then to decline or to death, and that these stages are independent of management control (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Population ecology theory focuses on how the environment selects organizations for survival or extinction (Hannan and Freeman, 1984), while institutional theory postulates that similar actions are taken across entire organizational populations because of pressures associated with the interconnectedness of organizations within an industry or environment (Oliver, 1988).
4. **Coaching:** The image relates to shaping (rather than controlling) an organization. It embraces high predictability, by building a desired set of values and skills and assuming that they will lead the organization to the desired outcomes. Organization development theory (French and Bell, 1971), also very common, is aligned to this image.
5. **Interpreting:** The sensemaking theory of organizational change represents this image of change. Karl Weick (2000) is probably one of the best-known proponents of this perspective that advocates that managers are interpreters of change. They help to deal with the ambiguity of organizational change because as change unfolds, different assumptions and accounts are required timely in the process (Isabella, 1990). In other words, sensemaking is a social process of making sense, through communication (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). It is up to managers to interpret how and why adaptive, emergent changes are occurring, provide meaning, and “connect the dots” (Balogun and Johnson, 2001, 2004, 2005). This is related to the emergent nature of the change process as the “ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations... produce fundamental change without *a priori* intentions to do so” (Weick 2000:237). In radical



change, with its complexity and relatively long time range, that is also likely to occur. However, as Balogun and Johnson (2005) illustrate, individuals in organizations are “sense-makers”, not just “sense-takers”, allowing them also to deal with uncertainty (Maitlis, 2005).

6. **Nurturing:** The theories contained in this image sustain that organizations are self-organizing and that the predictability of future outcomes is severely limited. According to Lichtenstein (2000), chaos theory assumes that it is possible to cultivate the capacity for self-organization while spontaneous new orders emerge. In the same vein, Confucian/Taoist theory sees “organizational change outcomes as emerging through the nurturing of a harmonious yin–yang philosophy in which each new order contains its own negation” (Marshak, 1993:397).

Communication and resistance to change have different values in each image. They are treated instrumentally nature under a mechanistic approach (Directing, Navigating and Caretaking images), or more attained to a constructionist contribution, when connected to an organicist understanding (Coaching, Interpreting and Nurturing images). Such understandings stem from their ontological assumptions, which in turn determine the efforts pursued in terms of both communication and resistance to change, concepts that are relevant to this research. For the mechanistic images, there is an urge to control the interpretations and responses, while for constructionist images it is more about shaping or negotiating them.

The appropriateness of a change approach, varying from directed, planned or guided, would result from analyzing the business complexity and uncertainty. Adopting a constructionist/organicist interpretation of organizational change can be advocated as an alternative to an instrumentalist/mechanistic one. That is based on the widely announced scenarios of broader, faster changes organizations are immersed in (Eisenhardt, 1989; Burnes and James, 1995) and the high levels of uncertainty these contemporary changes promote. Such is especially true when change impacts many units in an organization, as it is often the case with radical change, thus amplifying the number of people and perspectives involved and leading to higher business complexity

(Buono and Kenneth, 2008; Jabri, 2012). This line of thinking is highlighted in the second column of Table 2.2, which shows organicist theory clusters.

In line with these reflections, not all change outcomes would be achieved as a result of influencing the organization, as the coaching image proposes, nor would the results be completely unachievable, as the nurturing image states. Actually, results would be only partially predicted, as with the intentionality of actions and discussions, proposed outcomes and several forces influencing it in different directions would coexist. Returning to the review of organizational change, we can conclude that the Interpreting image would better suit the reality present in radical change. The focus of communication in this perspective is to be aware of this multiple sensemaking and so stimulate shared understanding. Interpreters recognize “[t]he power of conversation, dialogue, and respectful interaction to reshape ongoing change” (Weick, 2000:237 in Palmer and Dunford, 2008). Accordingly, the interpreting image and therefore the sensemaking theory of change will be adopted by this research as an appropriate lens for contemporary radical changes in organizations and, therefore, deserves a deeper analysis in the next section.

## **2.3 The sensemaking theory of change**

### ***2.3.1 Definition and Characteristics of Sensemaking***

There is a clear link between sensemaking and change theory derived from the concept of organizing. For these theorists, an organization is both prearranged and emerging. According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), it is simultaneously a set of established generic cognitive categories and the constant adaptation of those categories to local circumstances. Looking at daily life in an organization, one can find events or circumstances such as meetings, presentations, actions, responses, decisions, talks and texts, where organization exists. Interpretation is the process of translating these events of internal and external organizational life, into models for understanding, and generating meaning. This occurs not only at an individual, but also at an organizational level that is described by the thread of coherence among organizational members. As stated by Daft and Weick (1984:285), “reaching convergence among members

characterizes the act of organizing (Weick, 1979) and enables the organization to interpret it as a system”, or in the words of Taylor and Van Every (2000:275): “[S]ensemaking is a way station on the road to a consensually constructed, coordinated system of action”. In the same vein, this research adopt the sensemaking definition proposed by Maitlis and Christianson, briefly stated in Section 1.1, which assumes it is:

*“...a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn”* (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014:67).

According to Maitlis and Christianson (2014), there are four levels of sensemaking, varying according to the leaders and organizational stakeholders’ relative influence on it. **Guided sensemaking** occurs when leaders are actively engaged in trying to influence beliefs, constructing and promoting understanding and explanations of events, and stakeholders are actively in doing so. **Fragmented sensemaking** processes are ones where leaders are less energetic; stakeholder raises the issues and accounts of a situation, argue for potential solutions, but leaders do not attempt to organize or control discussions. **Restricted sensemaking** seems to be predominant in organizational life, as usually in change processes inspired by traditional conceptualizations of change, leaders try to drive the process, eventually consulting other members about certain issues. In addition, a fourth type of sensemaking may occur, although rare, called **minimal sensemaking**. It emerges when both leaders and stakeholders expect others’ interpretations of and reactions to the issues.

Despite the level, sensemaking is about the interplay of action and interpretation. So it is about change and the meaning of alterations perceived in organizational life. According to this perspective, when it gets to the micro-level change interventions are constituted of emergent and unpredictable course (Balogun and Johnson, 2005:1574). In other words, different meanings are given by individuals to a change situation and can lead to negative affections among them resulting in less motivation to cooperate (Pieterse, Caniëls and Homan, 2012).

Weick (1995) alone and with co-authors (Daft and Weick, 1984; Weick and Browning, 1986; Weick, 1993; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005), as well as other authors (Maitlis and Ozcelik, 2004; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007; Vuuren and Elving, 2008; Rutledge, 2009), have published a significant body of literature on sensemaking. By analyzing the main characteristics given to those theoretical definitions of sensemaking, Rutledge (2009) identified eight features that have often been highlighted. These features are discussed next, exploring the main connections with prominent scholars of this field, especially Weick (1995) and Maitlis (2005):

### **1. In sensemaking, communication is not a tool, but the process.**

Sensemaking is primarily a conversational and narrative process (Brown, 2000) that involves many forms of communication such as written, spoken, formal, informal, that may occur as gossip, negotiations, presentations, experiences, signs and signals such as actions or behaviours (Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). As stated in Section 2.2, the interpretation image considers communication to be the change, the organizing process itself:

*“We see communication as an ongoing process of making sense of the circumstances in which people collectively find ourselves and of the events that affect them. The sensemaking takes place in interactive talk and draws on the resources of language in order to formulate and exchange through talk symbolically encoded representations of these circumstances. As this occurs, a situation is talked into existence and the basis is laid for action to deal with it” (Taylor and Van Every, 2000:58).*

Nevertheless, as it is essentially a social process, it is usual for sensemaking to occur in talks and meetings. Thus, change is expected to come about through shifts in conversation and language (Ford and Ford, 1995; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Thus, change implementation is essentially a matter of conditions for which shifts in conversation and language may occur.

### **2. Sensemaking acts as a response to uncertainty.**

The combination of contradictory internal standpoints under a changing

environment brings about uncertainty (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Allen *et al.*, 2007). While change is occurring, part of the established meanings no longer adequately describe people's experiences (Reissner, 2008). In order to arrive at a renewed meaning, or to originate meanings from what is occurring, members go through sensemaking in an attempt to establish a plausible order for what is happening: Sensemaking responds to ambiguity and uncertainty (Weick, 1995) and "organizes flux" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005:412).

Eisenberg (1990:160) states that after tasks are no longer constant and the environment is no longer stable, what is needed, among other things, are relationships rooted in collective action by aligning cognitions, agreement, empathy, tight coupling and candor. It is not easily accomplished, *vis-à-vis* the effort to build anything collective versus individual. Time, language and interests, among others, are examples of simple but comparatively hard aspects to address during the creation of a collective system. Contrary to intuitive conclusion, all the complexity of pursuing relationships rooted in collective action may lead to faster and better performing organizational processes (Raelin, 2012).

### **3. Sensemaking is about what has already happened.**

Sensemaking uses retrospect to make sense of reality (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005:413). This means that members of a group or an organization begin to notice specific uncertainties after they are somehow expressed or observed. By revisiting such events and explicitly or implicitly asking what has happened, it is then possible to shape meaning, which in change may represent an opportunity to influence interpretations and build a shared understanding about it. Being aware of this process may inform change communication decisions. From this retrospective examination, members can move forward. In fact, for didactic effects, the sensemaking operation can be presented in stages. The following features, items from 4 to 8, are related in a staged manner (Rutledge, 2009) as depicted in Figure 2.1.

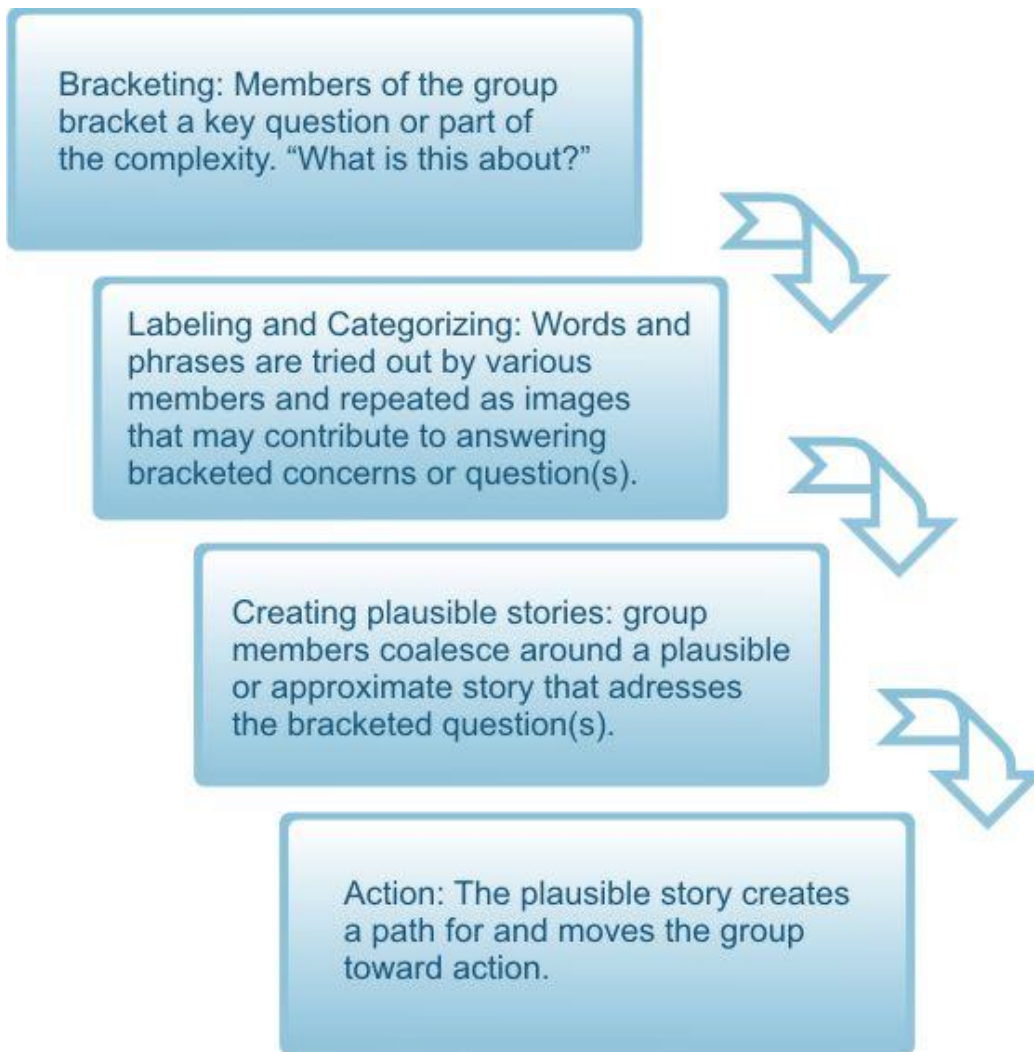


Figure 2.1: Sensemaking staged process

Source: Adapted by the author based on Rutledge, 2009.

#### **4. Sensemaking begins by defining a central issue according to the subjects involved.**

While looking back at uncertainties, part of the complexity is highlighted and becomes the center of analysis, bracketing takes place. Members start discussing a key issue while still wondering what is this about (Reissner, 2008). During this stage of bracketing, mental models are actively working, although generally not consciously, and members' concepts and beliefs are influencing the appearance and the treatment dispensed to central themes and issues. Interpretive schemes are frames of reference shared among members of an organization or its subgroups (Balogun and Johnson, 2004:525). Shared interpretive schemes inside an organization may allow similar interpretations that are "made possible by prejudice and pre-understanding that are built into the

language that one inherits and uses”, as defined by Gadamer (1979, cited by Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar, 1995:357). These interpretive schemes also greatly influence the next stage, when categorizations occur.

Here it is important to establish that this research adopts a social perspective and therefore encompasses both individual and collective ones (Weick, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). It means not focusing on the internal mental cognitive process that each individual carries out, but the social interaction required in organizational meaning construction.

### **5. Common classifications inside this central issue start to become visible.**

Categorizing and labeling are extensively studied in cognitive psychology, decision-making and learning (Gioia and Manz, 1985; Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). At this stage, illustrated in Figure 2.1 above, words and phrases are tried out by various members, as they may contribute to answering bracketed concerns or questions (Weick, 1995). The rise of interpretive patterns is built by several members’ similar ways of categorizing and labeling. It is when some labels arise and members begin to repeat them that they will grow strong and become common expressions within the discussion, contributing to the constitution of a revised interpretive scheme.

Each interpretive scheme is distinguished from another by categorizations or defining features that evolve from similar concepts and from experiences collected (Isabella, 1990). This is how they operate as filters, as data reduction devices that make it possible to interact with a dense and perplexing context. Such filtering operation is also recognized by Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005).

### **6. Plausibility rather than accuracy is the main driver of sensemaking.**

According to Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005:409-13) “sensemaking creates understanding through approximations” or plausible images. At this stage of sensemaking, group members do not decide for a common path. The group is

in a stage before doing so, as it is not in a position to apply strategic rationality, as they do not have clear questions and clear answers yet (Daft and MacIntosh, 1981). Sensemaking is about contextual rationality, about negotiating agreements out of unclear questions and muddy answers (Weick, 1993). Thus, instead of making decisions, members coalesce around an emergent 'story', that is, the same labels and categories woven to answer the bracketed question. The greater the number of group members that coalesce around it, the more this story is accepted as plausible by the group. The lack of accuracy does not mean it would lead organizations to inappropriate paths, people can act effectively simply by making sense of circumstances in ways that appear to move toward general long-term goals.

**7. Sensemaking leads to action:** "What is going on here? Followed by: "What do I do next?" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005:414).

After having a credible story that addresses the bracketed issue, members are ready to advance to the next stage: defining a path towards action. It is necessary to recall that sensemaking is about plausible answers and a strong coalition around a theme, which makes it easier to move towards implementation, since there is prevailing support for the action. In addition, it is important to emphasize that counting only on sensemaking does not lead to a plan of action, but only to guidelines. As advocated by Barrett, Thomas and Hocevar (1995:367) "the interpretive repertoires are not monolithic and explicit set of directions, but a general project" whose implementation involves the continual discovery of its own content and encompasses its own alteration.

If sensemaking is about plausible answers that generate action, but yet with a large variability of directions, it is needed to consider that as a process, it has an iterative nature, as clarified next.

**8. Sensemaking is progressive.**

As sensemaking is about plausible stories that generate actions, some of the propositions (words, phrases and story threads) will fall by the wayside, some will be carried forward, and some may be revised. In that way, sensemaking is frequently about leading the group back again to the stages of categorizing, coalescing and redefining a course of action. "Because people are always in the



middle of things” (Weick, 1995: 43), sensemaking involves updating and is progressive (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005).

There is significant interdependence of sensemaking and sensegiving, a concept first proposed by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991). Sensegiving is a sensemaking variant undertaken to create meanings for a target audience (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), then a key function of managing change. Sensegiving is an attempt to intentionally alter how people attribute meaning and is itself the result of sensemaking at work (Dunford and Jones, 2000; Smerek, 2011). In other words, a vision is expressed as a representation of an initial act of sensemaking. By engaging with the vision, organizational members will seek to make sense of it (Hanke and Stark, 2009). If only one or a few individuals in the group bring the same concept to the table, then it will not become a relevant discussion unless other individuals share this classification, if not the same one, at least one close to it or one that bears equivalent understanding. Thus, this classification sharing highlights the fact that sensemaking, as fluid and democratic as it is, may take longer or even not happen in groups without equivalent schemata. It also explains, from this perspective, the large investment organizations make in training and providing language uniformity about organizational life, therefore in sensegiving. All investments to avoid what has also been called fragmented sensemaking, individualistic accounts and inconsistent actions with no shared meaning (Maitlis, 2005).

When sensemaking is approached as an individual and cognitive process, consequently, collective sensemaking occurs as individuals defend a particular view and engage in influence tactics to shape others’ understandings. In this case, sensegiving is present from change agents towards other organizational actors. Alternatively, when sensemaking is seen occurring as between individuals, intersubjective meanings are constructed through a mutually co-constituted process (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). That means sensegiving is active, occurs in several directions, it is followed by negotiating meanings, as members jointly engage with an issue and build its meaning together. This links sensemaking and sensegiving to COM, as will be explored in Section 2.4.2.

The dynamics and phases of sensemaking become clearer, both

theoretically and processually, after the eight features have been analyzed. Nevertheless, some questions remain: How does sensemaking occur during radical change? How is construction of meaning affected by nature of communication and how this influence resistance to change? This research aims to contribute to fill this gap by proposing some answers at a more detailed and practice-oriented level.

### **2.3.2 Sensemaking and radical change**

In sensemaking, not all type of interactions are expected. After analyzing sensemaking disruptions in a fire disaster experienced by a group of firefighters, Weick (1993) found that reducing vulnerability requires a stance that keeps minds open and avoids fixed positions. In other words, overconfidence may harm the change process because it shuns curiosity and openness and means probably deepening uncertainties. The claiming is that sensemaking would be sustained better through respectful interactions. Respectful interactions, in turn, would depend on intersubjectivity (Wiley, 1988:258, cited by Weick, 1993), which is defined by two characteristics: (1) it arises from the interchange and synthesis of meanings among two or more communicating selves, and (2) the self or subject gets transformed during interaction in a way that a joint or merged subjectivity develops.

Synthesis is what emerges from the interaction of the original interpretive schemes (thesis) and alternative ways of understanding (antithesis) during radical change. In other words, intersubjectivity means that a person does not immediately weigh the beliefs of others, but rather considers and toys with them “until he has formed an appreciation of how the other came by and held his subjective belief, and what that belief means within his world” (Eden *et al.*, 1981:42). So, during radical change, when change in people’s interpretive schemes are likely to occur it is better that these occur after a formed appreciation and in respectful manner (Bartunek, 1984; Weick, 1993).

These fundamentals of sensemaking show that human interaction is needed, mainly face-to-face interaction, to allow and promote not only expression of ideas but also a genuine embracing of others’ ideas. Therefore, participation

emerges as a central activity in organizational change. Promoting participation throughout the organization would be a significant focus of communication goals and incentives during radical change.

Change leaders may benefit from finding a way to become increasingly involved in communication and interaction. Monitoring multiple sensemaking means they should be able to encourage more interactions to take place in their presence, and thus improve their opportunities to contribute to sensemaking in the organization (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Balogun, Bartunek and Do, 2015) through being aware of plural meanings and through providing opportunities to sensemaking among members.

While promoting sensemaking, change leaders must be aware of a contextual dimension relating to an organization's culture and capabilities in understanding change implementation (Jones, Jimmieson and Griffiths, 2005). For instance, Eby *et al.* (2000) have demonstrated the potential role such contextual variables play in change attitudes, as employees who found their division had flexible policies and procedures were more likely to evaluate their organization as being more responsive to change (Jones *et al.*, 2004:363).

In any context, it is necessary to look deeper into relational and communicational processes while recognizing that sensemaking and consequently change, is not under the complete control of managers. All that is involved in change will also bring about change through social interaction and the meanings they develop as a result (Berger and Luckmann, 1976). As employees are acknowledge to play an important role in change, they might be better denominated change participants, due to the active role they play in change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

The characteristics of participation and intersubjectivity in promoting interactions are key themes developed in the next section, which will be dedicated to exploring change communication, including the nature of communication and its dimensions, which support operational definitions for this research.

## **2.4 Change Communication**

### ***2.4.1 Definition and characteristics of Change Communication***

By recovering the etymological root of the word “communication” one can find in Latin the meaning to participate, to pool or to take common action (Harper, Douglas Online Etymology Dictionary). More closely aligned to this original connotation, communication can be taken as a social process where people, immersed in a particular culture, create and exchange meanings, thus addressing the reality of everyday experience (Gill and Adams, 1998:41, cited by Souza, 2006:22). Therefore, communication, although in practice usually associated with informing employees about change (transmission of information), is about the joint construction of meaning. This definition implies that messages exchanged only have cognitive effects and create meaning because they are assigned meanings by all interlocutors involved through sensemaking, and that such meanings depend on the context in which it occurs.

Communication has been recognized as a relevant dimension for the success of organizational change, and it is considered important in building change readiness, reducing uncertainty, and as a key factor in gaining commitment (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, 1993; Klein, 1994). The design and conduct of communication in change require decisions that integrate different perspectives of analysis and relative effort, but that may be required to minimize the resistance to change (Argyris, 1994) as discussed later in this chapter.

According to Caldwell (1993), change communication has been seen as a way to inform, involve and even motivate employees to participate in change. Generally, however, it has been approached as a technique and a tool (Reis, 2004), with a certain emphasis on the best performance of messages, channels and speakers, while attributing to the receiver of the communication much of a reactive role only. Communication is by no means limited to verbal productions or even written expressions. Its scope is larger, and it includes gestures, actions and behaviours in general (Watzlawick and Beavin, 1967). In all communication there are two elements called content and the relationship aspects of message material. Their importance varies, but it is not possible for communication to

consist of only one of them. The same content can be composed with a different tone, expression, voice stress, etc., resulting in different relationship aspects.

Just the existence of content and relationship can produce several results. Alternatives are a) two people can disagree about an object issue (content) but understand each other as human beings (relationship); b) agree but fail to understand each other; c) agree and understand each other; and of course, d) disagree and misunderstand one another. It is not rare for the two elements to be mixed up, in the sense that the communicants try to resolve a relationship problem on the content level, arguing about a specific issue in order to establish a relationship status. This simple preliminary analysis is adequate to provide the sense of multiple meanings that one single interaction can produce, and therefore, the scale of the challenge of managing change.

Communication has also been considered as human interaction that is carried out by means of signs organized into messages (Bordenave, 2001). However, message exchanges do not necessarily lead to a set result because there is a selection and an “internal processing” of the information (message) received through perception, and such interpretation leads to personal meaning. A continuous exchange of messages can allow for the development of new meanings, and these will stem from changes in each individual’s original understandings, which can lead to a process convergence that can be understood as the beginning of communication.

Another way to look at the impact of different ways to understand the role of communication is to recover the significant classification of communication within the organizational context, which constitute functional, critical and interpretive perspectives (Putnam, 1983). From the functional perspective, communication is viewed as an object that runs upward, downward and laterally. The central focus is on the message (content). When adopting a functional perspective, usually the aim of research is to identify effective ways of communicating. This perspective is critiqued for simplifying communication to the level of transmitting messages (Johansson and Heide, 2008). In the critical perspective, “the basic outlook is the same as in the interpretive scheme, but the aim of research is social change; to free individuals from sources of domination

and repression” (Johansson and Heide, 2008:291). In the interpretive perspective of communication adopted here, the emphasis is on a meaning-centered view of organizational communication. Like the constructivist processes described by Deetz (1992), social reality is constructed through the words, symbols and actions of the members involved. So, that language is not simply reflection of organizational meanings, but also of the ongoing processes that constitute organizational life (Putnam, 1983; Putnam, Phillips and Chapman, 1999).

A derivative of the concepts of communication previously explored is the assessment that a broad provision of initiatives and communication tools do not necessarily lead to the intended results of change. Therefore, studying communication in terms of communicative practices only may not be enough. For instance, Lewis (2006) conducted an empirical analysis focusing on communication quality (from various perspectives) and meaning construction. The purpose of the study was to describe how employees experienced the communication of change messages, which channels were used to communicate with implementers, and the quality of the change communication offered by implementers' that employees associated with successful outcomes. Lewis concluded that the quality of information is negatively associated with resistance and that the forced nature of change is positively associated with resistance to change. In highlighting employee perspectives, the results suggest that participation during planned change should not be conceptualized as information exchange or transmission. She questions then the use of a transmission view of communication and reminds to embrace more dialogic approaches to the study of communication in this context (Lewis, 2006:13).

In other words, it is not only the quantity of communication, but mainly its quality and the manner in which is occurring that can influence change, or as this research proposes, the nature of communication (COM) implemented (Reis, 2002). Nature of communication (COM) in this research is a stance revealed by communication initiatives constituted by a combination of its goals, format, content and means.

Regarding communication goals, it is worth recalling a distinction in the communication strategies: expressive or constitutive. Organizational

communication has two goals (Francis, 1989, cited by Elving, 2005:131): (1) to inform employees or, in other words, to provide information - “communicatio”, in Latin and also be called expressive communication strategies (Deetz, 1995) and (2) creating a community spirit - “communicare” in Latin, also called constitutive communication strategies (Deetz, 1995). In other words, within organizational change, there will be processes and activities of both informational and a communicative nature (Reis, 2000). The predominance of these strategies is revealing of the stance adopted by change leaders.

The connection between communication and organizational change has attracted significant interest from scholars and practitioners during the last decade (Johansson and Heide, 2008) who have emphasized the important role of communication in change (Ford and Ford, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Lewis and Seibold, 1996; Daly, Eague and Kitchen, 2003; Elving, 2005). They have established that communication and organizational change are inextricably linked (Lewis, 1999). It can be easily found, throughout the literature review, that change implementation is primarily a communication issue (Lewis and Seibold, 1998; Bordia *et al.*, 2004) and that, simultaneously, change is a communicative challenge (Allen *et al.*, 2007). As explained by Taylor and Van Every:

*“... organization emerges in communication (and nowhere else). It emerges in two distinct ways: as described, and thus an objective about which people talk and have attitudes, and as realized, in its continued enactment in the interaction patterns of members’ exchanges” (Taylor and Van Every, 2000:372).*

By following these authors, it is easy to understand not only that organizing occurs through communication, but that change is implemented through communication (Lewis 2007; Russ, 2008). In this research, change implementation is regarded as communication therefore, it is important to explore how change communication is managed in organizational change. If communication could be understood exclusively as a description of reality, it could be managed instrumentally through expressive strategies (Deetz, 1995). Alternatively, if it is understood as a construction of reality, the perspective taken in this research, it can perform a central role in change processes, correlated to the so-called constitutive processes (Deetz, 1995).

If we take this strategic position into account, it becomes important to understand what characterizes COM, in terms of the different goals, formats and dynamics of change communication, the contributions to the cognitive process of individuals and the meaning-building opportunities it promotes, thus leading to different behaviours in the continuum of adopting-resisting to change. That is the main objective of Section 2.4.2 of this literature review.

#### **2.4.2 Nature of change communication (monologic and dialogic)**

Distinctions between communicative stances can receive several designations. For this research, Jabri's (2012) two different natures of change communication are adopted: (1) Monologic change communication, a stance that understands communication as a top-down transmission of information (Deetz, 1995) and (2) dialogic or constructivist change communication, which refers to "a stance or an orientation rather than a specific method or tool" (Botan, 1997:191). Drawing on the processes inherent to the communicative perspective of change, Table 2.3 shows a comparison between these two modes in a compiled format from several authors that adopt the same perspectives with different names, as will be explored next, overleaf.

The way communication is understood during change by its leaders, that is, the scope (verbal or written, messages vs. behaviour), its function or goal (to describe reality vs. to construct reality), and therefore its nature (monologic vs. dialogic) influence the direction of change communication and implementation, including communicative actions, goals, audience involved, roles of each part. While in monologic COM participants are seen as recipients of the message, in dialogic COM they are part of a meaning construction process that is carried out through dialogue and, therefore, the focus is on their relationships and attitudes. In monologic COM, the effort is about driving recipients towards a goal, while in dialogic COM the style of communication is predominantly a spirit of inclusion and mutual equality.



<b>Nature and Approach</b>	
<b>Monologic Communication</b>	<b>Dialogic Communication</b>
<b>Programmatic Informative</b>	<b>Participatory Communicative</b>
<b>Process</b>	
Seeking to instrumentalize receivers by engaging in goal directed, feedback orientations.	Both parties have genuine concern for each other, rather than seeking to fulfill their own needs. Relational
<b>Purpose</b>	
Achieving a relationship characterized by “power over people and viewing them as objects for enjoyment or as things through which to profit”.	Creating meanings by means of dialogue Move a discussion up or down between levels of abstraction
<b>Style</b>	
Command, coerce, manipulate, exploit: driving toward a goal. Generally Top Down.	Authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, supportive climate, a spirit of mutual equality. Messages flow in multi-directionally.
<b>Focus Communicators</b>	
There is a “right” message and approach.	Relationships and attitudes that participants have toward each other. Usually request for input.
<b>Typical Communicational Activities</b>	
Presentations, general information meetings, memos, newsletters, brochures, posted information), websites, videos, and podcasts and informal small group information meetings as well as word of mouth.	Open forums; working groups; informal conversations; focus groups and brainstorming sessions; morale, attitude, and opinion surveys; formal assessments and evaluations; and unsolicited complaints or praise.

Table 2.3: Differences between monologic and dialogic COM

Source: Adapted by the author based on Frahm and Brown (2003) and Russ (2008).

Jabri (2012) explores several aspects, as expertise location and outcomes expected, to further differentiate both stances of communication. Monologic agency pushes for a dominant view about how change should progress, not acknowledging different courses of action. In a contrasting view, a dialogic stance recognizes that expertise in various aspects of change is not exclusively centralized in formal agents, but widely disseminated among the members of organizations. The foundational difference is related to the different paradigms each COM adopts:

*“In general terms, the monologic perspective sees change as an objective reality that requires rational management of*

*structures by the application of methods in accordance with a prescriptive model. In contrast, the dialogic perspective sees change in largely social terms as an open-ended process that is dependent on what others say about their experiences of the situation requiring change” (Jabri, 2012:62).*

Monologic COM can be clearly related to the programmatic approach, which emphasizes a top-down dissemination of information about organizational change to generate compliance and encourage the desired positive attitudes and beliefs about the planned change. Clearly analogous to the mechanistic images of change (see Table 2.2), the programmatic or monologic approach usually targets the dissemination of information and counts on communication activities such as presentations, general information meetings, memos, newsletters, brochures, posted information (e.g., posters, signs, bulletin boards, charts, dashboards, scorecards), one-way media (e.g. websites, videos, and podcasts), and informal small group information meetings as well as word of mouth (Russ, 2008). According to Lewis (1999), two programmatic channels - small informal discussions and general information meetings - are the vehicles most frequently used to disseminate information during organizational change. Russ (2008:203) questions if this approach can actually help change implementation in the long term or if it merely “elicit[s] short term compliance”. In addition, he alerts that recipients can be overloaded with information, which may potentially “lead to greater anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, and resistance about the organizational change effort” (Russ, 2008:203). Moreover, as Langer and Thorup (2006:375) alert in our contemporary society, where cultural liberation and individualism prevail, a monologic communication denies independence of employees and prevents innovation or change, leading to paralysis and resistance. The logic underpinning the programmatic approach is that there is a “right” message and that by using the “right” approach it may be possible to reduce or avoid implementation problems. Under a programmatic approach, as change is presumed to be most effective as a top-down process, there is almost no demand for organizational participation. In sum, leaders occupying the highest positions will define and delegate what is to be changed and how that change process should occur. Based on Botan (1997), Kent and Taylor (2002), and Pearson (1989), Frahm and Brown (2003) argue that under the monologic approach communication is an instrumental tool used to effect planned change.

In an opposing view, some change communication scholars have taken a constructivist approach where “change communication is the instrument used to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct existing realities to effect change” (Frahm and Brown, 2003:2). Lewis (2006) for example, suggests that communication during planned change should be conceptualized as a dialogic process wherein various stakeholders engage one another in clarification, meaning negotiation, and perspective taking. In a more recent work, of Bushe and Marshak (2014) also argue for a dialogic approach to organizational development and change. This stance is notably closer to constructivist images of change summed up earlier in Table 2.2 and sensemaking (Section 2.2.2).

The participatory or dialogic communication approach also generally aims to gather input and feedback, and so it promotes events such as: open forums (large formal meetings or smaller informal ones where feedback is given and ideas are exchanged); working groups (problem-solving teams, ad hoc groups, committees, councils, and task forces); informal conversations (checking in with line supervisors or lower level employees for on-the-spot feedback regarding change efforts and/or implementation processes); focus groups and brainstorming sessions (live or electronic); morale, attitude, and opinion surveys; formal assessments and evaluations; and unsolicited complaints or praise (verbal or written feedback; suggestion boxes). All these activities characterize a participatory approach and allow messages to flow multi-directionally, potentially characterizing dialogic COM (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Frahm and Brown, 2005; Langer and Thorup, 2006).

Analyzing scholarly production in this field, one can note that participation, involvement and decision-making are used alternatively as synonyms or with differentiated meanings in change management. Although later in this section these concepts are explored for each study presented, before moving on, there is a note about some of the distinctions among these concepts.

Involvement is a recommended means to bring about change and one of possible outcomes of communication (Thomas, Zolin and Hartman, 2009). According to Caldwell (1993:136), it is an “umbrella term covering a wide range of employer-led actions designed to encourage more active employee

participation in company affairs". In recent studies (Shapiro, 2000; Shadur, Kienzle and Rodwell, 2008) involvement is a term often replaced by participation, engagement or voice, but in fact, it may mean informing or consulting employees about issues of their interest; it may mean allowing contributions in decision-making. Therefore, involvement is a broad concept that may encompass the specific definitions of participation and decision-making.

Participation is a special case of organizational communication, made up by the interactions of individuals or groups resulting in cooperative linkages, suggesting effort and interaction beyond what is usually associated with work activities (Stohl and Cheney, 2001). Under a communicative perspective, the concept of participation may assume different meanings that depend on a subtle observation. Lines (2004) analysed two types of participation: consultative (based on process control) and veto (based on decision control). Results pointed to a strong negative relation between consultative participation and resistance, thus reinforcing the understanding that it is not the right to decide change but the process of actually influencing it that could be characterized as the great contribution of participation in reducing resistance to change. Not only voicing their opinions, but in fact being heard and considered, seems to be an important dimension of participation (Lines, 2004:212) and therefore, of communication. Jabri (2012) supports this line, as he contends that in monologic COM, agreement from those receiving the message is expected. Then, the invitation to participate extends no further than the call to agree with a pre-determined outcome. Even within participatory structures what is communicated in an apparently participative way, does not necessarily break out the monologic frame (Jabri *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, it may be considered merely as nominal participation. Alternatively, genuine participation, present in dialogic COM, is about inviting the interpretations of others to clarify a previous interpretation (Jabri, 2012).

In other words, the distinctiveness of participation between monologic and dialogic COM comes from the nature and the use of inputs, such as opinions and perceptions of actors involved. In dialogic COM, the process "invite[s] input by using involving and empowering methods to gain the insights of various stakeholders to shape the change programme and not merely to 'receive' it" (Russ, 2008:204). That is, in this approach change is a dynamic process

constructed through collaboration among individuals from several hierarchical layers on how to implement it, while input collection in monologic COM is usually used to check if the message has been understood for compliance with the change.

To operationalize the differences between these two proposed natures of participation, it is worth building up from the concept of dialogue “as the ability to state your perspectives, values, and desires while remaining open to the perspectives, values, and desires of others” (Heath *et al.*, 2006:341). In fact, the concept of dialogue offers “a different perspective on participation: a perspective whereby one person’s message joins with that of another and one person’s meaning joins with that of another” (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008:677). To engage in dialogue participants have to practice skills such as attentive listening, clarity of expression, and critical reflection (Skordoulis and Dawson, 2007), and therefore need to learn how to hold meetings differently and to engage in dialogue and reflection in striving for agreed solutions to complex problems.

Decision-making is another concept tangent to participation. And these differences between the concept of participation under monologic and dialogic COM are observable for decision-making. While in monologic COM decision-making is a separate phenomenon, in dialogic COM, participation and the process of decision-making are interconnected. According to Conger and Kanungo (1988) participation is a relational construct, and while participation does not offer any real control or input into decision-making, it allows (under dialogic COM) “recipients” to take part in its process. It does not mean the recipients have the final decision within their control, but they have shared power with the organization, as they have their input into the process (Jabri, 2012).

Under monologic COM, as the emphasis remain on the transmission of information, decision-making is a separate process, that even when invited to take part in it, employees join in with just a nominal contribution. In other words, they would be avoiding offering further arguments, sometimes contributing to what may be called a monologic consensus. Specifically, the essential difference between monologic and dialogic resides in the notion of participation, with dialogic communication acknowledging “interpretive rights” in addition to

acknowledging voice, as it may be observed in monologic communication (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008:679).

Participation and decision-making, and therefore, involvement, may be adopted in the study of change management with different meanings. In line with the literature review provided above, each one of these concepts could be comprehended in a nominal or real, respectively present in monologic or dialogic frames. Next, several studies that investigated these and other concepts are introduced, as well as their findings relevant to this research.

In a dialogic approach to change communication, the role of management is to facilitate dialogue among organizational actors and to draw up, and subsequently adjust, the organization's vision and strategic goals (Langer and Thorup, 2006). The participatory approach leverages communication to involve most employees by requesting their input on both the change and the implementation process. But, monologic and participatory approaches are not mutually exclusive and may in fact co-exist within the same organization. According to Taylor and Kent (2014), one can imagine a continuum, with monologic communication at one end and dialogic communication at the other. Monologic COM is dedicated to achieving only the goal of the message creator. Dialogic communicators also have goals and key messages, however, "individual or organizational goals are secondary to achieving understanding and being open to new possibilities" (Taylor and Kent, 2014:389).

There is an assumption that monologic COM is inferior to dialogic COM (see Grunig and Hunt's, 1984, seminal work about managing public relations which shares similarities with change communication, such as it is concerned to achieving communication effectiveness and managerial skills required to do so). This is related to the belief in a progressive linear relationship between the two, i.e. "dialogue necessarily follows persuasion and its better because it is more balanced" (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012:11) in regard of the two-way and often symmetrical communication that it allows. This belief is supported by the idea that monologic COM creates awareness, much in the same way that publicity and advocacy do in the form of persuasion.

According to Pearson (1989) very often there is a need to engage in monologue before entering a dialogue, but it is not always occurring in this order. Also, it is not always clear where monologic COM ends and dialogic begins, or vice versa. For example, a persuasion effort could be inserted in a dialogic conversation or the other way around. Therefore, a dialectic relationship may exist where dialogue could potentially precede monologue. That implies that dialogic COM may precede monologic and both alternate in a complementary and effective way (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012), where persuasion and co-construction are on-going.

Yet exploring the differences and co-existence of monologic and dialogic COM, it could be proposed that in monologic COM the communicative effort mostly moves unidirectionally from change leaders towards recipients of change. The difference between monologic and dialogic COM relies on the acknowledgment of the sensegiving and sensemaking flows. Sensegiving is only an attempt to influence meaning, as those receiving sensegiving have their own interpretation (Sonenshein, 2010). In dialogic COM, it is accepted that meaning is contested and negotiated among participants, either managers or non managers (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Humphreys and Brown, 2002). Participants may engage in their own sensemaking and accept, transform, resist, or reject the sense they have been given (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010) which means that in dialogic COM sensegiving and sensemaking may be perceived in many directions and in several waves.

Guided sensemaking, as explained in Section 2.3.1, can be related to dialogic COM, as there is acknowledgment of the interpretive rights of each other and the full mutual engagement to co-construct meaning. In fragmented sensemaking there is a monologic COM, although one cannot find a leader-stakeholder attempt to shape meaning, the process of advocacy seems to occur in the opposite direction – from middle managers to senior leaders, and maybe laterally as well. It may be also the case of a dialogic COM among middle managers, depending on the level of co-construction allowed. In a change process, probably restricted sensemaking reveals monologic COM, as there is a small number of different understandings emerging. Additionally, what happens

after minimal sensemaking, i.e. leaders and stakeholders awaiting others' interpretations and reactions, may be the most relevant characteristic to reveal COM, if monologic or dialogic. It may lead to dialogic COM as both parties are considering each other's interpretations and reactions, and therefore, it is possible that a joint meaning is developed and enacted. Maitlis and Christianson (2014) maintains that these types of sensemaking may alternate around the same issue, meaning that over time guided sensemaking and a restricted one for example are different approaches adopted. That reinforces the previously stated about the alternance as well between monologic and dialogic COM within the same change process, as been argued by Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) and adopted in this research.

Another aspect relevant to the concept and applicability of dialogic COM is the limitations this type of communication may face. By analyzing potential risks of dialogue for public relations, the following three limitations to dialogic communication in organizational change can be found (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). The first limitation derives from the fact that dialogic COM stems from the multiplicity of voices and thrives by not declaring a single voice to be final word (Jabri, 2004, 2012), what requires a constant state of alert from all parties involved. That means dialogic COM it is not always achieved in organizational change even within dialogic initiatives, because it depends on the individual consciousness and capabilities of each participant to occur. The second limitation relates to a reality that in many cases organizations are looking for immediate results within a change effort. It may be harder to achieve short-term goals with dialogic COM, as it requires time to establish the conditions and promote dialogue. Usually, long-term goals are easily overlooked under pressures of a competitive market place (Botan, 1997:198), implying that dialogic COM is not the best approach to all circumstances. The third limitation refers to practicability because dialogic COM may not be applied universally. The amount of calls all participants in a change process may receive may extrapolate the feasibility as they occur simultaneously in many occasions, not to mention the different level of interest in different issues that may affect also the engagement in dialogic conversations (Botan, 1997). That leads to another limitation from a critical perspective; too much dialogue can be, under certain circumstances, as oppressive as a complete lack of it would be (Botan, 1997).



In conclusion, as a discipline, communication has much to contribute towards specifying the means by which interaction takes place, i.e. sensemaking, and identifying the important contingencies that affect the influence participation has on individuals, organizations, and change programs (Seibold and Shea, 2001). One relevant justification for this quest to gain a better understanding of the means by which participation can influence change is that employees “who feel that participatory opportunities are widespread and that the organization genuinely values their input are more likely to judge the success of change initiatives favorably and to observe less resistance to change” (Lewis, 2006:7).

#### ***2.4.3 Dimensions of nature of communication (COM)***

Several studies of change communication adopted an instrumental approach with a focus on transmitting information (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Washington and Hacker, 2005). Other studies recognize the interactive nature of change communication and explore participation during change implementation rather than the flow of information. Indeed, the latter often have different emphasis and so they reach contradictory results. These studies were operationally concerned with the structure or design of participation (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995), the levels of the audiences involved (Lewis, 2006), or the opportunity to voice opinions during different stages of change implementation (Lines, 2004).

In operationalizing differences between monologic and dialogic COM, it is worth looking at Kent and Taylor’s (2002) study in public relations that identifies five principles of dialogic COM after an extensive literature review in psychology, philosophy and communications. It is a relevant contribution to the study of communication, as an effort to make the concept of dialogic COM more accessible to scholars in related areas and therefore useful to empirical research. As such, the study has been referred to in many scholar productions, in public relations, marketing and organizational change fields (researchgate.net). A dialogic approach is not easily operationalized, nor it can be reduced to a series of steps, but those principles may assist as coherent dimensions of COM that can become the foundation needed to investigate the authenticity of dialogic participation.

The five principles of dialogic COM, an essential part of this research conceptual framework, as adopted by Frahm and Brown (2003), are Mutuality, Propinquity, Empathy, Commitment and Risk. In the next paragraphs, they will be introduced and defined.

1. **Mutuality** means that participants in dialogue are viewed as persons and not as objects, or “targets of change”, featuring collaboration and spirit of mutual equality. The exercise of power or superiority should be avoided. However, mutuality should not be taken as equality since in relationships there are different levels of knowledge, vulnerability and power associated with different roles (Cissna and Anderson, 1998; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). In fact, mutuality means removing the badges of authority, not leading to complete equality, but to the sense of no superiority of the other part and the comfort of being free of ridicule and contempt.
2. **Propinquity** is proximity, nearness both in place and in time (Dictionary.com), or in other words, it is created by three features of dialogic relationships: “immediacy of presence,” “temporal flow,” and “engagement.” According to Kent and Taylor (2002:26) and sustained by Frahm and Brown (2006), the immediacy of presence corresponds to the fact that parties are communicating in the present rather than after decisions have been made. This feature is also related to the temporal flow, which means that there is acknowledgement of past, present and future conversations. In other words, dialogue aims to set up a future for participants that is both equitable and acceptable to all involved. Propinquity is also related to a willing engagement in change. All parties should respect each other and “risk attachment and fondness rather than maintaining positions of neutrality or observer status” (Kent and Taylor, 2002:26).
3. **Empathy** refers to the environment of support and trust required for dialogue to happen, embracing supportiveness, communal orientation and confirmation or acknowledgement. Supportiveness involves creating a climate where participation is facilitated, since accessible locations to materials made available and there is encouragement to participate. Communal orientation is about involving a diversity of

audiences and promoting this collective relation, where each participant has his or her own desires but seeks the others good. Confirmation is acknowledging the voice of the other in spite of a given ability to ignore it. In dialogic COM participants demonstrate capacity to listen without interfering, disproving or distorting meanings into preconceived interpretations (Kent and Taylor, 2002:22; Schein, 2003; Heath *et al.*, 2006; Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008). Empathy, in other words, represents the suspension of judgement of the surrounding issues (Senge, 2010).

4. **Risk** means that participants in a dialogic COM are able to recognize what they do not know and assume uncertainty as part of the process as well as the results. Karimova (2012) explains that all change participants are in a vulnerable position and that many voices competing and at the same time undermining each other's authority allows to say those voices are permanently changing from dominant to subjugated and vice versa. In such cases, the vulnerability of not having such control reveals itself as a position of strength rather than weakness, and then new meaning can be developed collectively. According to Kent and Taylor (2002:28) vulnerability comes from the possibility of growth that each encounter offers, as participants may emerge changed. Another feature of this dimension of dialogic COM is the unanticipated consequences, related to the fact that dialogic COM is unrehearsed and spontaneous.
5. **Commitment** can be understood as genuineness, commitment to conversation, and commitment to interpretations. Genuineness means also to deal truthfully with one another. Dialogue is honest and forthright. Conversations are not held to defeat the other or to exploit their vulnerabilities. Sharing the same meanings or working toward common understandings is crucial to dialogic relationships, and that is commitment to conversation. Commitment to interpretation is, as there is always room for ambiguity, to be constantly fine-tuning language and trying to grasp the positions, beliefs, and values of others before their positions can be equitably evaluated. It is important to bring assumptions into the open and respond without reacting judgmentally in a first place. Although dialogue is not equivalent to agreement, it

involves purposeful attempts to “increase understanding or shared meaning, raise awareness of taken for granted assumptions and beliefs, enhance learning, encourage collaboration and enhance the quality of decisions and actions” (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012:11).

Low levels of some of these principles would not lead to monologic, but to a weaker dialogic communication. The low level or lack of all principles would be the characterization of monologic COM.

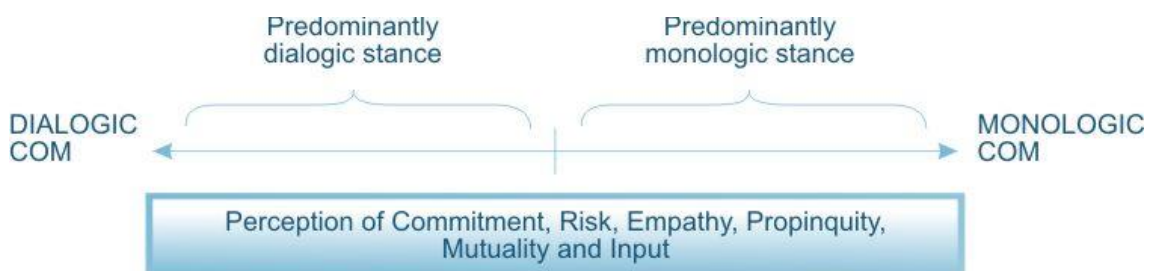


Figure 2.2: Monologic and Dialogic COM  
Source: Compiled by the author.

As Figure 2.2 above illustrates, COM is a stance that, following Taylor and Kent (2014), is placed in a continuum, with monologic at one end and dialogic at the other. For this research, variations from dialogic to monologic are related to the presence of the dialogic dimensions and revealed also in the characteristics of change communication initiatives. The more the dimensions are perceived, the more COM is dialogic, and the less the dimensions are perceived, the more COM is monologic as the fading colour of the bar illustrates. For this research, the existence of a theoretical cutting point will be assumed from which one COM or the other is characterized. As this point is not known, the COM will be considered predominantly dialogic or monologic by combining the analysis of the communication initiatives and respondents’ perceptions about these dimensions.

Frahm and Brown (2003) applied Kent and Taylors’ (2002) five principles of dialogic COM to an organizational change setting, establishing a starting point for further investigations by means of comparisons between two organizations immersed in incremental change. They studied the impact of change communication on change receptivity and their findings indicate that a shift from

monologic to more dialogic COM occurred during the first 100 days of change and improved receptivity to change. Little is known about these principles in a radical change context, a further reason for this research to be considered relevant.

Frahm and Brown (2003) established the similarities between public relations campaigns and change communication to argue for the transferability of those five principles of dialogic COM to organizational change. They highlighted three main aspects. The first is the plurality of audiences consisting of diverse groups. The second is the medium used, including intranet, internet, tv, radio, meetings, reports, among many others. That variety allows for different approaches, in terms of speed, cost, interaction, etc. Finally, communication goals may vary from informational to meaning construction purposes.

Although Kent and Taylor's work was developed in a different discipline (Public Relations), these authors have been used in organization studies. For instance, Frahm and Brown's later work (2006), also based on Kent and Taylor's five principles, was also published in organizational journals. Patsioura, Malama and Vlachopoulou (2011) are another example of the recognition of Kent and Taylor's work in the organizational literature. It is relevant to note that Frahm and Brown (2007) were also recognized by Jabri (2012) in his change management textbook and by many other authors (Kemp, Keenan and Gronow, 2010; Azzone and Palermo, 2011; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2012; Hill *et al.*, 2012), specific covering organizational change.

In addition, in a conceptual article Karimova (2014:2) proposes to bring a dialogic COM model to the center of leadership and management theory. She advocates that the dialogic model she has initially developed for marketing communications "can be successfully applied to the communication process in any field." That suggests a high transferability of concepts from one area to another as long as it is for communication. Karimova's work in organization studies recognizes Kent and Taylor's propositions as an effort to how organizations can incorporate dialogue in their communication with publics in general (external or internal) and recognizes Jabri, Adrian and Boje's (2008) work on communication in change management.

One of the challenges in promoting dialogic COM is to recognize the interpretive rights of others, something not easily achievable in one single interaction, and even more in one ongoing process; the roots of dialogue lie in discovering our internal choice process regarding when to speak and what to say. In other words, while the information raised during dialogue is important, the development of trust and shared understanding over time may be the key outcome of a dialogic COM, as proposed by Skordoulis and Dawson (2007). Interestingly, these authors argue that power focus is shifted from people to propositions, reducing them the adverse effects of power within the change process. So, the key to dialogue is to keep open to new interpretations, and this is deeply connected to resisting change, as it will be explained next. As the sensemaking process makes clear, our own interpretations are implicit and our framings of reality are rarely conscious. It is by interacting with other participants that one ends up either validating or not one's interpretations. All is well when interaction reveals alignment between interpretations. It is when responses vary from the expected that it is time to reconsider one's own interpretations, if there is space for doing so. However, if there is no acknowledgment of the other's right to interpret reality differently, the usual effect is to classify the response as not valid or to start a persuasion effort.

## **2.5 Resistance to change**

### ***2.5.1 Definition and Characteristics of Resistance to change***

Resistance to change (RTC) has been recognized as a significant factor that can influence the outcomes of an organizational change effort (Chiung-Hui and Ing-Chung, 2009). The verb resist comes from Latin *re* "against" + *sistere* "taking a stand" (Roux, 2007:60 in Jabri, 2012:220), but the organizational change literature go beyond this literal meaning and offers several definitions for RTC. What they have in common is that resistance is seen as an important reason for change process to fail (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, 1993), a form of dissent to a change process, manifested in a range of individual or collective actions that may arise as non-violent, indifferent, passive or active behaviors (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005). It so often seen as a problem to be minimized or overcome (Nadler, 1993).

Although representing a broad stream of thought, this previous understanding about RTC, as opposing effort to change, is not only traditional but it is an over-used label in many studies of change, where it is assumed to be an automatic response to change. In this research, as introduced in Section 1.1., RTC is re-elaborated towards a communicative aspect of the change process, and its meaning is entirely different. That is, RTC is understood as a response, a feedback, and can contribute as a resource to improve quality and clarity of change objectives and strategies. As to Ford and Ford (2009:103), “properly used, it can enhance the prospects for successful implementation”.

There are also operational differences as regards understanding RTC as a separate, punctual expression or as a continuum, a point in a range of expressions towards the change in motion. There are scholars who analyze it punctually, as the case of Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) and Nadler and Tushman (1989) who focus exclusively on commitment and involvement, or the case of Kotter and Schlesinger (1979), who focus on its management. For instance, Judson (1980:48) viewed active resistance and commitment as linked poles intermediated by other two stages: indifference and passive resistance. Drawing upon this proposition, Coetsee (1999) puts forward a conceptual model for commitment (acceptance of change) and resistance (rejection of change) as duality, polarity, in the same continuum. Other scholars equate openness to change as the opposite of RTC, and one can find those who embrace it either explicitly (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Ford and Ford, 2010) or implicitly (Wanberg and Banas, 2000).

Several studies have been developed mixing various theoretical and operational models, using different scales and techniques to measure resistance (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Stanislao and Stanislao, 1983; Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel, 1985). All of these efforts contribute toward understanding RTC as an individual or collective occurrence, and it is worth analyzing some initiatives, mostly as recollected by Washington and Hacker (2005).

Firstly, the findings are predominantly related to RTC as an individual process within organizational change. Among them, Isabella’s work (1990)

deserves some attention because it identified trigger events that enable individuals to move between stages associated with change (anticipation, confirmation, culmination and aftermath) and considered RTC inherently transitional. Lowstedt (1993) found that employees' views of organizational change were personal, depending on the cognitive structures, also called organizing frameworks, which each person holds. Along the same line, Jaffe, Scott and Tobe (1994) provided a four-stage model of change: denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment. In their proposition, denial and commitment are internal aspects of change, focus on the self, respectively the starting and final points of the process. Moving from denial, the next stages were resistance and exploration meaning the engagement with external aspects, when the focus is on the contextual reality. Eventually one got to commitment stage, where the new future was embraced.

A different tone can be observed in authors interested in the information and the message itself. Although focused on the effects on recipients, they have emphasized the collective occurrence of resistance. Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994) found that the quality of information employees received influenced their willingness to change, while Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) explored reducing RTC through incorporating the following components into the change message: the need for change, the ability to change, the valence for change, the existing support for the change, and the appropriateness of the change.

Another stream of development as regards understanding RTC is more related to the context of its occurrence. Judson (1980) argues that six factors determine RTC in an organization: feelings about change, conflict between existing culture and what is to be changed; the uncertainty generated, historical events, the extent that change threatens basic needs and the extent the change affects feelings of self-worth depending on the competencies required for the change itself. It is notable that the majority of factors are related to the change characteristics (such as scope, previous changes, etc), not to individual traits.

Burnes and James (1995) find that operational context is a critical factor in evaluating planning for change and RTC. For example, changes that are in consonance with the established culture may imply a need for elaborate



consultation and involvement, because they would give rise to little dissonance. More recently, Wanberg and Banas (2000) related personal resilience (individual differences as a composite of self-esteem, optimism, and perceived control) to higher levels of change acceptance. Another finding is that context variables (information received about the change, self-efficacy for coping with the change, and participation in the change decision process) were predictive of employee openness to change. Finally, Washington and Hacker (2005) enriched the understanding of the role of knowledge or information on resistance and reached the conclusion that managers who understand a change effort are more likely to be less resistant to change.

To clarify this matter it is valuable to consider the assumptions and counter-assumptions as summarized in Table 2.4, overleaf. According to the counter-assumptions, resistance is a result of a perception of more losses than benefits and can reveal aspects of change that need more care and attention. As also advocated by Ford and Ford (2009) and Courpasson, Dany and Clegg (2012), in this case seen as something that can be dealt with as a positive and contributive phenomenon.

Table 2.4 highlights some fundamental differences between the traditional understanding of RTC (assumptions) and a more holistic conceptualization outlined above (counter-assumptions). If RTC is considered as something detrimental and worth working against it – as seen in the left column - the assumption is that the way in which the change agents are driving change is correct and that others must be persuaded or forced to go along. But, if RTC is considered as potentially leading to better change solutions - as seen in the right column - it makes sense to embrace and work with it, taking the best from others' input (Maurer, 1996; Esposito, Williams and Biscaccianti, 2011; Simões and Esposito, 2014).

Several focal points presented on Table 2.4 can be further explored to understand RTC. The first consideration Hernandez and Caldas elicit is about how automatic the phenomenon is. That is to say, the traditional assumption is that to every change effort there will be a resistant response. A counter assumption, shown on the right column of the table, is that resistance would

appear only in certain situations that, depending on the action of the change agent, can be even aggravated (Powell and Posner, 1978). Secondly, the traditional view holds that resistance is natural, again as something that appears as a response to any change in life, and that it is a collective phenomenon. As a counter-assumption, Hernandez and Caldas propose that it is not change that causes fear, but the loss it may represent (Dent and Goldberg, 1999a). Consequently, since the same change can be evaluated differently by each individual, the phenomenon turns into an individual response, but if several individuals share the same evaluation, the response may be collective.

	<b>Assumptions</b>	<b>Counter-assumptions</b>
1. Nature	RTC is a “life fact” and must happen during any organizational intervention. It is related to a pathological response.	Resistance is rare / only happens in exceptional conditions, and is a behaviour boasted by power owners and change agents when they are challenged in their actions. No resistance at all is related to a pathological response.
2. Impact	Resistance to change is prejudicial to organizational change efforts, so it needs to be overcome.	Resistance is a healthy and contributive phenomenon, and is constantly used as an excuse to unsuccessful change processes. It may lead to better change solutions.
3. Source	Human beings are naturally resistant to change.	Human beings resist losses, but desire change.
4. Actors	Employees are organizational actors with higher probability of resisting to change.	Resistance – when occurs – can arise among managers, change agents and employees.
5. Unit	Resistance to change is a group/collective phenomenon.	Resistance is as much individual as collective as function of many situational facts and perception.

Table 2.4: Classic assumptions about RTC and possible counter-assumptions  
Source: Adapted by the author based on Hernandez and Caldas, 2001.

These three aspects discussed previously are related to the sources of resistance. Aligned with the proposition that RTC is connected to loss, Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) identified the four most frequent reasons for people to “resist changing”, including 1) the wish not to lose something valuable; 2) a misunderstanding of change and its implications; 3) the belief that change will bring more costs than benefits to the organization; and, finally, 4) a small

tolerance to change, due to the fear of not having the right skills and behaviours required at the time imposed by change. Two decades later, Kets De Vries and Balazs (1999) would find very similar categories and present six blocks of source of RTC, amplifying the importance of loss and uncertainty. Once again, they identified the same sources, like fear of losses and doubts about being competent for what change entails, and some new aspects as the fear of the unknown and the impression that change is punishment.

Aligned to the definitions of actors, as can be seen in the fourth row of Table 2.4, the traditional assumption is that RTC is most probably an employee response. As a counter-assumption, it can be a response from all organizational actors. Ford, Ford and D'Amelio (2008:362), contend that, usually, "change agents are portrayed as undeserving victims of the irrational and dysfunctional responses of change recipients", and declared that RTC may be more appropriately understood as a dynamic among the following three elements.

They called the first element the "recipient action", that is, any behaviour or communication that occurs in response to a change initiative and its implementation. There is also "agent sensemaking", made up by meanings given to actual or anticipated recipient actions as well as the actions agents take as a function of their own interpretations and meanings. As it has been previously understood in terms of sensemaking, this would be clearly connected to the categorizing and labeling phase (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005:412) as discussed above. As RTC has been widely associated with the difficulties in change processes, any similar occurrence can be easily reduced to this label (Bartunek and Moch, 1987), even when it is not relevant. The third element is the "agent-recipient relationship" that provides the context within which the first two elements occur and that shapes, and is shaped by, agent-recipient interactions (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). That turns RTC into a possible response derived not only from recipients, but strongly dependent on the interaction among them and on the change agent or the context they are inserted into.

Analogous to the findings in the sensemaking theory of change, where change recipients play an active role in change (and therefore may be better called change participants), change agents can be active contributors in change

in some instances and active resistors in others (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). In the same vein, Jabri (2012) recalls Agócs (1997) and sustains that RTC stems from situations in which decision makers refuse to be influenced or affected by alternative ways of implementing change practices, therefore implying change agent and managers as important players in the emergence of resistance.

Taking a psychodynamic stance, Jarret (2004:249) suggests that resistant tendencies arise from regressive and unconscious pulls that are unprocessed or poorly resolved conflicts that crop up as defense mechanisms. These include a wide range of ego defenses, and the way one reacts to these expressions severely impacts outcomes. It could be named counter-resistance when the reaction is to remove, ignore or fight resistance, and Jarret classifies it as “ill-informed actions” that may undermine the very change. The cost of this defensiveness is not only enduring resistance, but also the installation of a vicious cycle in which resistance brings about more resistance (Powell and Posner, 1978). Or in the words of Lapoint and Rivard (2005), negative responses to resistance behaviours ultimately provoke an escalation in resistance (Jabri, 2012:222). Therefore, the way change participants react, and how unaware they are of their own defense mechanisms may turn them an important part of such a vicious cycle of resistance.

A variety of behaviours associated with RTC is widely present in organizations: foot dragging, failing to follow procedures, being late for or missing meetings, complaining, gossiping, failing to perform, quitting the job or being dismissed, and so forth (Coch and French, 1948; Wanberg and Banas, 2000). They are widespread, in varying degrees, in all organizations, and not present only as regards change processes. Still, these common actions are often considered evidence of RTC (e.g., Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel, 1985; Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). The issue then is when to consider them as evidence for RTC and how scholars and practitioners could distinguish between those common behaviours and the resistant-related ones.

In any case, the answer is related to the fact that observable recipient actions are the triggers for agent sensemaking, meaning that they are the basis

for the *resistance* label. There are actions and reactions to change, but they do not become resistance unless and until someone assigns that label as part of his/her sensemaking or as an automatic response. It often happens that actions or reactions are named resistance only because they are considered contrary of what should be done, or what is appropriate, in the view of the ones labeling them, that is, senior management/change agents (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008:371). Stohl and Cheney (2001:394) alert is often that numerous forms of opposition or just questioning are labeled resistance by initiators of change. And they request a careful handling of these situations by not casting them as destructive at first sight and by placing mechanisms to reassure the possibility of discussing serious issues that those questions may rise.

As demonstrated above, from a sensemaking perspective, RTC is understood as a likely occurrence because of the lack of understanding of what is going on and of what personal impacts are involved. Or, as Randall and Procter (2008:688) state “the individual is resistant to change if he/she can see no way of reconciling the dimensions of ambivalence that ambiguity has triggered”. The literature shows that RTC may emerge as an evidence of real obstacles to implementation (Piderit, 2000; Hernandez and Caldas, 2001), as a consequence of people’s perceptions and understandings, that is, the meanings of change that they create.

Studies on self-representations (Graham, 1986; Hooks, 1989) reveal that “resistance is often motivated by some very good reasons – much more than the mere selfishness of people” (Jabri, 2012:221). By conceptualizing resistance as a personal reaction opposed to what is desired by change agents rather than treating it as the interactive systemic phenomenon envisioned by Lewin (1951), there is a shift of responsibility from the individual to the system. Instead of looking at resistance as one of several systemic factors under the influence of change agents, and looking at it as a result of the characteristics and attributes of recipients (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel, 1985), scholars and practitioners can conveniently be blind about specific behaviours and the underlying communication between both agents and recipients. That is why Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) alert about the fact that recommended strategies for dealing with resistance focus on doing things

to or for change recipients, while saying little or nothing about the actions of change agents.

Another aspect of RTC that is brought up in previous discussion is about the impact, or the inherent value of resistance, as it is highlighted in Table 2.4. It is only recently that the rescue of what can be called positive or neutral perspective of RTC has recurrently appeared in literature. As a systems response, resistance can be a sign of an impeditive problem for change implementation (Hernandez and Caldas, 2001). The paradigm of resistance as a problem itself – as traditional assumptions hold - can be confronted with another reference, present since Lewin (1951) and Lawrence (1954), when the term was introduced as a systems concept, as a force affecting managers and employees equally. In terms of this alternative perspective, it is seen as a natural, acceptable occurrence. Even within this approach, resistance is seen as damaging to the organization. However, depending on the nature of the change, the surrounding environment and the conditions in which change takes place, resistance needs not necessarily be a negative event (Dent and Goldberg, 1999a and 1999b). Thus, resistance is understood as a source of criticism and creativity to use human abilities better, and criticism means exercising divergent thinking from different perspectives (Motta, 1997).

From a similar perspective of RTC, Klein (1969) and Johns (1973) cited in Giangreco and Peccei (2005) argue that behaviours often associated with resistance (such as simple questioning of the change effort) are a necessary prerequisite for successful change, as they can provide constructive feedback to the change process. Binci, Cerruti and Donnarumma's (2012) findings indicate that the successful change implementation they investigated was possible because of what they called an active and constructive inertia, revealed through criticisms, suggestions and discussions, contributing to preventing future failures.

The proposition of working with instead of against resistance is supported by Goldstein (1988), who adopt resistance as a type of organizational "autopoiesis". This term was coined by two biologists, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, to explain how a living system survives as an autonomous identity even though its components are in constant exchanges with the

environment. By explaining how resistance may function as a survival mechanism when change is perceived as a threat, Goldstein (1988:17) states “that a counter response should be shaped more by respect and less by pushing back harder”.

The way to react to resistance after considering the above point of view is to understand it as a form of communication, as adopted in this research. As Jarret emphasises:

*“Rather than see it as an enemy of truth: consider it another truth. It has to be acknowledged that resistance is an integral and necessary part of the change process. No resistance: no change. Thus, our engagement with resistance needs to move from something that needs to be removed or counter-resisted to taking up a different consulting stance. In other words, resistance needs to be given meaning and interpreted. It can be used as a source of data and inform and complement the range and quality of existing interventions” (Jarret, 2004:256).*

Other scholars support this approach. Ford, Ford and D'Amelio (2008), and Ford and Ford (2010) reflect that when much responsible insight about resistance is present, if change agents consider it as a result of their own actions and sensemaking, they can purposively opt to make sense of recipient expressions as a counter offer. Therefore, in this case the change agent takes charge of the change dialogues to overcome apparently resistive behaviours “by bringing both agent and recipient background conversations to the fore” (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008:373). A truly provocative idea is that expressing opposition can be, in fact, a sign of deep commitment to change by showing concern about obstacles not yet seen (Stohl and Cheney, 2001:380).

Due to this more comprehensive point of view on RTC, it is necessary to recognize that the term should be altered purposively as a response to change, echoing Dent and Golberg (1999) and Oreg's (2006) claims that the term RTC is limiting and not appropriate when referring to general reactions during change processes. Such alteration emphasizes the nature of subjective experiences to obtain a more valid understanding of what resistance is actually about, and it leaves room for analysis of reactions before labeling them as resistance. Still, as the predominant term used in the literature provided on empirical studies is RTC,

it will be useful to adopt the same term and construct as the basis for operational application. However, with neither a demonizing or celebrating approach (Thomas and Hardy, 2011), this research takes RTC under a communication perspective, not only emphasizing resistance as a neutral element, but also acknowledging other actors besides the agents, to influence on the outcome of the change process.

### **2.5.2 Dimensions of Resistance to Change (RTC)**

Taking the sensemaking perspective, RTC can be primarily considered as a one-dimensional, cognitive driven phenomenon, as in the investigations carried out by Diamond (1986), Bartunek and Moch (1987), Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder (1993) and Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky (2005). Nevertheless, other dimensions have already been identified and tested. RTC was first analyzed in its behavioral elements through various effects and forms, ranging from expressions of concern for their peers or supervisors to more severe actions such as slowdowns, strikes, or sabotage (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, 1993). Still, it is recognized that there is an interference of internal stimuli to the attitude formation process and consequent behavioural predispositions (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Kotler and Keller, 2000; Bordenave, 2001; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Neiva, 2004).

However, it would be naive to believe that RTC derives only from subjectivities and emotional reactions. Therefore, RTC is better defined as a tridimensional attitude towards change, which includes Behavioural, Affective and Cognitive components (Piderit, 2000). As advocated by Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns (2008:316), “a multidimensional view of resistance encompasses both employees’ behavioural responses to change and their internal (i.e. cognitive and affective) reactions, and thus provides for an inclusive assessment of resistance”. Based on Oreg (2006), the following dimensions of RTC are adopted in this research: Cognitive, Behavioural and Affective.



1. **Cognitive:** is about thoughts (e.g. if it is necessary, if beneficial or not).
2. **Behavioural:** involves actions or intention to act in response to the change (e.g. complains, attempts to convince others the change is bad).
3. **Affective:** refers to feelings about change (e.g. anger, anxiety, fear).

There is some interdependence among the three components, as what change agents and participants feel about a change will often correspond to what they think about the change and to their behavioural intentions in its regard. Nevertheless, the components are considered distinct for analytic purposes and each one highlights a different aspect of the resistance structure.

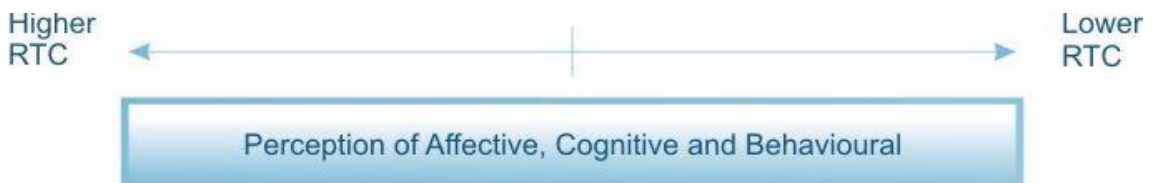


Figure 2.3: RTC Extent  
Source: Compiled by the author.

As Figure 2.3 above illustrates, RTC extent can be higher or lower. For this research, variations from higher to lower are related to the presence of the affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions as the fading colour of the bar illustrates. The more the dimensions are perceived, the higher RTC, and the less the dimensions are perceived, the lower is RTC.

Change and therefore RTC, occurs simultaneously in three levels, namely individual (micro), group and intergroup (meso) and organizational (macro) levels. A significant overlap exists between all three. If there is a change at one level, it may result in changes at other levels too. That means change is triggered by conversations people have relating to how one level impacts or relates to another. Resistance is in fact dependent of what other members of the organization see, experience and convey. This recalls the sensemaking perspective, supporting that is from interactions individuals make sense of the change around them, that they can either reduce/eliminate fears and uncertainties or intensify them (Jabri, 2012:124).

As such, this research adopts the perspective that resistance is found in conversations (interactions) in which people engage during change (Dent and Goldberg, 1999a). Typically, at the individual level perceptions and reactions about the change are formed. But, they are also formed at collective level, as conversations take place not only about the clarity of goals, roles and procedures, but also about the composition of the group and how each group member is able to affect it. Taking a social-constructivist perspective of change (see Section 2.2.2) implies acknowledging that RTC is therefore – at an organizational level – “a socially constructed reality in which people are responding to conversations” (Ford, Ford and McNamara, 2002:105).

Hence, this co-construction dynamic not only works for the cognitive dimension, but also for the affective and behavioral dimensions. That is because at a basic level, conversations are about informal discussions, regarding “opinions, ideas, feelings or everyday matters ... When conversations carry reasons for resistance, they become something that actually exists” (Jabri, 2012:124).

Recollecting Ford and Ford (1995, 2010), conversations provide opportunities for individuals to understand how others are coping and allow the various sources, reasons and manifestations of resistance to be understood and appreciated. More than just reasons, emotions and intentions are shared among participants in a change context. According to Jabri, (2012:124) through interactions members of an organization “share their experiences, stories, aspirations and fears through oral and written language”.

Following Dent and Goldberg’s (1999a) recommendation to let go of the psychological connotation of RTC, in this research a social construction perspective is adopted, reflected by an emphasis on the context and on the collective perception of RTC, as will be further explored in the next paragraphs and also in Chapter 3.

In line with a tridimensional view of RTC, Oreg (2006) identified that different forms of resistance can indicate different types of antecedents, and thus would point to different measures to alleviate resistance. The investigation

adopted the tridimensional attitude model for RTC and two main categories of context variables: anticipated change outcomes and change process. Specifically, “anticipated change outcomes” were measured by three factors: (1) power and prestige, (2) job security, and (3) intrinsic rewards. “Change process” was measured by three process variables: (1) trust in management, (2) information, (3) social influence. Anticipated changes in outcomes, such as job security, intrinsic rewards, and power and prestige, were associated with the Affective and Cognitive components of resistance.

One of the most significant findings in Oreg’s study was that “trust in management” is the only variable which significantly influences the Affective, Cognitive and Behaviour dimensions of RTC, while “Information” influenced the Behaviour and Cognitive dimensions of RTC. Although it had been anticipated that there would be an inverted relation with Cognitive dimension, that is, the more information given, the less resistance shown (based on the assumption that resistance is due to unfamiliarity with details of change), the opposite was found to be true. Oreg states that the relationship between information and resistance “would therefore appear to depend on the content, rather than on the mere existence of information. Furthermore, **the manner** in which the information is communicated is also likely to influence change acceptance” (Oreg, 2006:94, emphasis added), which means acknowledging the relevance of how communication occurs and the stance adopted to make it happen.

As Washington and Hacker (2005:402) and Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns’s (2008) have already declared, there is room to explore the link between resistance and change, and “future research should expand the context characteristics studied”. Recent studies also claim for the relevance of context and change management to understanding RTC (Michel, By and Burnes, 2013). This research is an effort to address the still existing gap in the understanding of the mechanisms that allow RTC – understood as a communicative expression – to be embraced and positively managed. It seeks to clarify those mechanisms, contributing towards change theory and supporting change leaders to perceive and collaborate with a so-called resistant as a contributor to change, acknowledging that the change itself may be adjusted after all.

## 2.6 Nature of Communication and Resistance to Change

By understanding how COM makes a positive contribution to RTC it is possible to advance in the quest for effective ways to promote change. This research is a contribution in the direction proposed by Lewis (2006) of embracing a more dialogic approach to the study of communication as its goal is to reveal, in a more operative way, evidence for the influence of the perceived COM, adopted as monologic and dialogic (as discussed in Section 2.4.2. above), on RTC in radical change contexts. But, why to adopt monologic and dialogic COM as a relevant variable to influence RTC?

There are numerous situations within organizations undergoing change in which communication is handled as an instrumental method to promote change compliance, similar to Lawrence's (1954) observation of deliberate attempts to manipulate. It would also apply to occasions when participation opportunities are provided only with a symbolic intent, a gimmick without any intent of real contributions to the change itself but only as a mechanism to allow participants room for discussion and leave them with a feeling of inclusion. What some scholars suggest is that those illegitimate participations may not contribute to minimizing resistance but, on the contrary, may make it subtle and harder to manage (Lawrence, 1954; Powell and Posner, 1978; Stohl and Cheney, 2001).

By adopting a communication lens to the change effort, as proposed by this research, the challenge of investigating communication could be better understood after considering Jabri, Adrian and Boje:

*“much of organizational change work around achieving consensus through participation in dialogue, remains quite monologic (one logic); even when a diversity of points of view interact in dialogue, the stress is placed upon achieving consensus, or in utilizing rhetorics of persuasion to arrive at common ground for all (to keep contentious point of view on the margin) ... A supposedly polyphonic dialogue can remain monologic (one logic) and not achieve polylogical (multiple logic) aims” (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008:678-9).*

Consequently, on several occasions during activities designed to produce dialogic COM, the so-called participants, although supposedly participating, are not really doing so. They are involved in monologic COM through which they are at most allowed to voice their opinions, without any real possibility of influencing the change process. On those occasions, the strong presence of the rhetoric of persuasion and the goal of convincing participants will impede the construction of new co-shared meanings. It will just allow selling the meaning proposed by one, instead of influencing one another. Summing up, different participation processes may occur within a change implementation: what could be called dialogic participation (participants considered as authentic subjects) or monologic participation (where participants are treated as objects).

This could be correlated to the suggestion that when change agents expect that employees will resist, they “may actually encourage and listen to employees’ suggestions but more as a manipulative tactic to make them feel better than really to get anything from the suggestions” (Powell and Posner, 1978:34). The problem when there is such a foundational assumption is that most employees quickly catch on to this strategy, as previously discussed in Section 2.4. In other words, despite the rhetoric of openness, people involved in a meeting perceives when consultation is not real and things were “set in stone” (Randall and Procter, 2013:153).

As a result, people involved in the meeting learn that what they suggest will seldom be favorably evaluated, and so they tend to be skeptical and cynical. It is clear that change communication needs to be tailored to its goals, which implies not using group participative methods only because it worked for someone else, but because it means an expectation of employees’ contributions. As Stohl and Cheney (2001) alert, even when following classic prescriptions to deal with resistance by informing and allowing participation, there are authentic and feigned ways to do so.

*“If disagreement remains a phenomenon to be corrected, rather than discussed ... participation, under those circumstances will only produce more of the same; participatory work groups will become rubber stamps for managerial prerogative; and the advantages and benefits of participation will be lost” (Stohl and Cheney, 2001:380).*

The claim here is that participation will never work if it is treated as a device to get people to do what a change agent wants them to, as it could lead to deeper and more disguised RTC. Once more, the mechanistic understanding of organizational change seems to be challenged (as shown previously in Table 2.2). Genuine participation, or in other words, dialogic communication, is based on respect, which comes from recognizing real interdependence regarding people's contributions. This can drive the agent to gather ideas and suggestions, not in a backhanded way to get compliance, but in a straightforward way to gather some good ideas and avoid some unnecessary mistakes. It can be possible to discuss, accept or reject ideas on their own merit.

The premise of this research is that such difference in COM (monologic and dialogic) is not only related to different ontologies about change, but that it will also subsequently influences the way RTC is dealt with. If change is understood as a social-constructivist process and RTC is understood primarily as a response that needs to be understood, then it is a dialogic COM that will likely be observed. If change is regarded as a mechanical process and resistance as a phenomenon to be overcome, then monologic COM is more likely to occur. The effects of such different natures of communication will have a bearing on the RTC extent as well. An increase in dialogic COM may mean embracing instead of overcoming RTC and lead to less or lighter extent of it, and supposedly to a more constructive change process and outcome perceptions.

Under dialogic communication and participation, unexpected reactions to change would not promptly be seen as resistance. In fact, responses are recognized as "expressions that are informed by what was said previously and what is happening currently", without the negative label of representing a threat to what has been agreed before. Influencing change is later an essential indicator of a dialogic COM. When carried out under dialogic COM "change initiatives would be open to change as they were implemented" (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008:680).

Such understanding brings about the need to identify the implications of COM, identified as dialogic or monologic, in RTC; and such a line of investigation would contribute to that line of research that explores the communicative nature

of influences on change. Thus, it would be simultaneously strongly coherent with the logic underpinning a participatory approach (Russ, 2008) to constructivist ontology. Besides, as other scholars have already alerted, for practitioners to be able to make good use of advice on involving employees when dealing with RTC, they need to know how employees react to the different nature through which such participation can be promoted (Seibold and Shea, 2001; Lewis, 2006). This study takes one step toward closing this gap in current research.

The illustration of the conceptual framework can be seen in Figure 2.4 below:

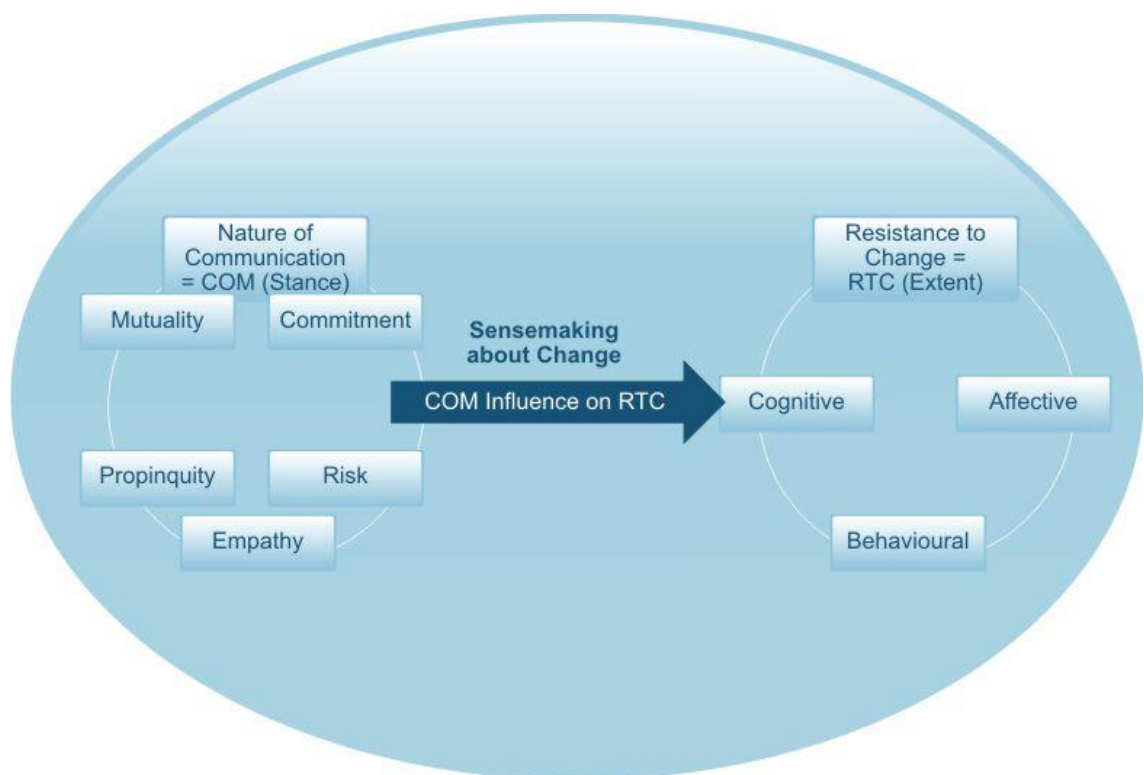


Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework  
Source: Compiled by the author.

As Figure 2.4 summarizes, this research explores the influence of COM (nature of communication) on RTC (resistance to change). COM is constituted of Commitment, Risk, Empathy, Propinquity and Mutuality dimensions (see Section 2.4.3). And RTC is constituted of affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions (see Section 2.5.2). The purpose of this research is to reveal the dynamic between COM and RTC, through sensemaking about change, and among its dimensions as well.

As an influenced but not controlled process, sensemaking can generate disparate senses in comparison to what was expected from change leaders. If sensemaking occurs in the direction expected, or leads to an unexpected response, this information is essential and needs to be monitored by change leaders. Such challenge is especially true in large organizations where the number of possible interpretations is higher and where different subcultures prevail. The proposal here is that by understanding how each dimension of COM relates to RTC dimensions, it is possible to contribute to support change. As an expected contribution by this research, this proposition will be operationalized in methodology, and resumed in data findings and conclusion chapters.

## **2.7 Conclusions**

The literature review established a theoretical foundation of organizational change, about the sensemaking theory as the lens adopted by this research and the key concepts of COM and RTC. The connection between sensemaking and change communication was set and also clarifications about central aspects for this research as COM and its dimensions (mutuality, propinquity, empathy, commitment and risk). RTC was conceptually defined as a communicative response and its relation with COM explored. RTC dimensions, cognitive, affective and behavioral, were discussed as tools for investigation and a final conceptual framework was introduced. The next chapter explains not only the foundations, but also the methods and technical choices made to allow this research to be carried out and generate the expected contributions, both theoretically and practically.



## **Chapter 3. Research Philosophy and Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Theory and research are fundamental to the accumulation of social science knowledge. Facts are empty unless they are supported by a theory, and theory without facts may have little practical effect (Skordoulis and Dawson, 2007). It is necessary then, to constantly review theory and identify questions, and therefore the method to answer them, that enhance theoretical understanding of social reality while also leading to contributions to practice. This chapter offers clarification of the research questions and methodology for this research, as well as the introduction of the three case organizations selected.

This chapter starts with explanations to reveal the philosophy and methodological decisions taken. Also, it focuses on the data collection and analysis methods, detailing how data derived from all techniques adopted (interview, questionnaires, documentary and observational) was gathered and treated. Section 3.2 reveals gaps, assumptions and research questions. Detailed information about research philosophy are presented in Section 3.3 and research design is explored in Section 3.4., which provides the rationale for the methodological choices. A description of case organizations is the focus of Section 3.5. Section 3.6 focuses on data collection planning and execution across cases and Section 3.7 presents a summary of data collection in each case organization. Section 3.8 reveals how interviews, documents and observations were coded and categorized, and how questionnaires were treated as a complementary source for analysis. Section 3.9 explains translation procedures, while research ethics is explored in Section 3.10. Finally, research quality and limitations as whole are discussed in Section 3.11, followed by conclusions in Section 3.12.

### **3.2 Gaps, assumptions and research questions**

The overall issue guiding this study were to understand how the nature of communication (COM) influence resistance to change (RTC), and accordingly,

how change participants respond under authentic dialogic COM as change implementation.

This research was designed on a mainly deductive approach, that is, designing data collection from theoretical bases, considering the following shortcomings of the extant research:

Firstly, studies of change communication and RTC tended to adopt an instrumental approach that focuses on the informational communication (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Washington and Hacker, 2005). In other words, those works focus attention on more operative aspects of change communication, such as sources, channels and frequency, for example. This instrumental approach does not reveal much about the stance of communication and its role in organizational change and the relations between communication and RTC (see Section 2.6).

Secondly, change communication has been studied with an emphasis on structure for participation (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995), levels of hierarchy of the audiences involved (Lewis, 2006), and the opportunity to voice opinions during different stages of change implementation (Lines, 2004), as explored in Section 2.4.3. There is a claim that increases in change communication practices affects RTC positively (Kotter, 1996), while some scholars suggest that not all change communication minimizes resistance, but may make it more subtle and hence harder to manage (Lawrence, 1954; Powell and Posner, 1978; Stohl and Cheney, 2001). So, the extant research may be complemented about the effects of change communication on RTC. This study contributes not only by studying change with an emphasis on change communication, but also by using the COM (monologic and dialogic) in empirical settings to identify its influence on RTC.

This study is based on the following assumptions about the COM:

1. Differences in the nature of change communication (dialogic or monologic) are not only related to different ontologies about change, as discussed in Section 2.2, but also influences the way RTC is perceived and managed.

2. There is a lack of clarity of the role of dialogic COM in RTC, as discussed in Section 2.4.2. Empirical findings by Lewis (2006) indicate that not all dialogic efforts have positive results, implying a need to deepen the understanding of dialogic COM, by adopting and studying its dimensions, and by observing how they may influence change.
3. Monologic and dialogic COM co-exist during change (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004; Taylor and Kent, 2014). That means it is expected within each case studied, to find evidence of both monologic and dialogic COM. Consequently, the goal of this research is to identify the predominant COM in each change initiative.

Hence, the research sought to answer the following questions:

**Research question 1:** What is the perceived predominant COM and the behavior of its dimensions over time, according to respondents' perception? That requires describing change communication role and components as target audience, communication objectives, messages, channels, intensity and duration, feedback and evaluation mechanisms. In addition, it led to developing an instrumental grid based on the principles of dialogic COM (see Section 2.4.3) to support this identification.

**Research question 2:** What is the perceived extent of RTC and the behavior of its dimensions over time, according to respondents' perception? That led to developing an instrumental grid based on the tridimensional concept of RTC (see Section 2.5.2) to support this identification.

**Research question 3:** What is the perceived influence of the predominant COM (monologic or dialogic) on RTC, according to respondents' perceptions, through and supported by sensemaking, revealing the dynamic among their dimensions? That led to developing an instrumental grid to capture the relation according to respondents' perception and analyzing the paths of COM and RTC over time, to explore the relations between them and their dimensions.

As this research adopts the change epistemology of interpretivism (see Section 2.2), sensemaking takes an important place in the investigation. It works

as the process through which COM relates to RTC, and therefore it is with the support of respondents' sensemaking that this relation is established. This sensemaking centrality is in line with the ontology and epistemology of this research, as explored in the next Section.

### **3.3 Research philosophy**

There is a directional relationship between ontology, epistemology (explored in this Chapter), methodology and methods (explored in Chapter 4) (Grix, 2002). This research adopts a constructionist ontology that considers that "social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision" (Bryman, 2004:18). In other words, this position assumes that valid knowledge can be gained from research participants' perceptions, experiences and interpretations within their real-life context. The constructionist position is generally more adequate to study perceptions of people and relations (Shkedi, 2005:9).

Therefore, the subject [here: respondents and researcher] and the object [here: the change initiative, the COM and RTC of study] are interrelated resulting in "a lack of neutrality, persuasive intent and politicization, [which] applies both to respondent accounts and to research-based narratives" (Buchanan and Dawson, 2007:677). In other words, the researcher beliefs, including ontological and epistemological positions, as well as the ones from respondents, constitute a central element of the research itself. To investigate, write and theorize about social reality is to inhabit the world of social construction, is to take part in it (Foster and Bochner, 2008).

In line with a social constructionist ontology (see Grix, 2002), the epistemological position of interpretivism was adopted in this research as it respects "the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman and Bell, 2015:29). As interpretive research this is founded on the premise that participants act based on the "meaning they attribute to their acts and the acts of other" (Bryman and Bell, 2015:30) and the main effort in this research was to "understand [organizational] phenomena through accessing the

meanings that participants assign to them” (Orlikowsky and Baroudi, 1991:5). That was pursued while taking into account the cultural context of the case organizations and their members (Darke, Shanks and Broadbent, 1998). Therefore, the research questions were answered in a specific temporal and social-economic context, described in Section 3.5 below, which makes the researcher’s voice is just one of many possible attempts to make sense of participants’ accounts (Cunliffe, Luhman and Boje, 2004), as it is explored in Section 3.11.2.

### **3.4 Research design**

A case study approach was chosen for this research as it is particularly fruitful to study organizational phenomena in their real life context, mainly when between phenomena and context there are not clear boundaries (Yin, 2005), as it is the case of organizational change. A case study approach was an appropriate research design since it “can “close in” on real-life situations and observe directly the phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg and Sridhar, 2006:235) allowing for contextual analysis of the role of COM on RTC (see Yin, 2010). As part of organizational change, COM and RTC are operationally defined and studied in this research, with a predominant deductive strategy. According to Bryman and Bell (2015:25) “deductive and inductive strategies are better thought as tendencies rather than as hard-and-fast distinction”. In this research, deductive tendency means that design and conduction were driven by theory and through an induction final movement, contributed by its revision, revealing implications for it (see Section 7.5 for details). Therefore, it is possible to provide a strong foundation for subsequent investigations (Eisenhardt and Grabner, 2007).

Three (quasi-) longitudinal case studies were selected to allow for cross-case comparison, allowing the researcher to emphasize complementary aspects of a phenomenon, as common and distinguishing elements among cases, explaining patterns (Pettigrew, 1990:271), while evidencing the different components (Eisenhardt, 1991:620). The research comprised two stages of data collection plus documentary evidence over a period of time (see Section 3.6 for details). This research was set in companies in which radical change was identified as having taken place and where RTC was perceived to exist. It

required access to the adopted change communication strategies and activities. Thus, the criteria to select such companies were purposeful, judgmental, non-probabilistic, following Stake's (2000:447) argument that it is appropriate "... to examine the case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the one most accessible, the one we can spend most time with".

A certain diversity was purposeful, in regard to industries, sizes (revenues and number of employees), locations and acquirer origins, as it would provide rich contextual differences and facilitate highlighting the phenomenon itself. A cross-case comparison permits to make taken-for-granted assumptions to be made explicit and issues to be identified that apply in more than one setting. The number established as a goal was three different organizations, in the sense that it would allow a richer comparison than with two organizations, but was doable within the scope of this study. More than three in-depth case studies would not be feasible for the researcher during the period of the doctorate. A multiple case also meant a better chance of identifying cross-contextual patterns that would enhance the generalizability to theory.

The unit of analysis in these case studies was the organizational level with a focus on COM and RTC. The units of observation consisted of organization, change leaders, managers, employees, and communication experts, as they could offer opportunities to examine the relation between COM and RTC dimensions (Yin, 2010:74, 76). There is an assumption that the respondents (including change leaders, managers, employees and communication experts) are constituting the organization, and that inferences about the organization can be made from their accounts.

### **3.5 Research Settings**

This research was carried out in Brazil, where the researcher works and lives. Contact with potential case organizations was facilitated by the business school where the researcher has been working for several years. Enterprises of all sizes operating in Brazil and subject to an acquisition that were in the beginning, the middle, or wrapping up a change program were adopted as a unit of analysis. Acquisitions are usually announced and often become contexts of

radical change, and therefore, more likely to be identified and then confirmed, after preliminary interaction with the researcher, as potential case studies. The case organizations participating in this research were carefully selected following conversations with managers from a range of possible organizations.

The three case organizations are presented in anonymized form (that is, through the use of pseudonyms) but with real characteristics in Table 3.1 below.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Revenues (in GBP)</b>	<b>Nº Employees</b>	<b>Radical Change Trigger</b>	<b>Acquired by</b>
Generics Corp.	Pharmaceutical	São Paulo	£250 million	1.500 in Brazil	Acquisition Apr/2009	French Pharma Group – revenues of €48 billion
Chem Solutions	Chemical	São Paulo	£57 million	250 in Brazil	Acquisition Dec/2010	German Chemical Group (GCHE) revenues of €2,1 billion (in Brazil)
Consulting Engineering Ltd.	Engineering Services	Minas Gerais	£130 million	1.000 in Brazil	Acquisition Dec/2007	Canadian Engineering revenues of €3,5 billion)

Table 3.1: Case Studies – Key features of the organizations selected

Source: Compiled by the author.

The case organizations have in common that they were acquired by a foreign company, but they differ in terms of industry and size, enriching the contexts studied, It is varying, for example, from 250 to 1500 the number people affected by the acquisition in Brazil. It must be clarified, however, that the smaller one (with 250 people integrated in this operation) was an integral part of another large and multinational company with more than 5.000 people worldwide. In addition, for all three cases, the change trigger was the acquisition by a foreign

multinational organization, but with different origins and cultural lineage affecting the process, two being European and one North American. Critical evaluation of the cases revealed that beyond the different sectors, the two industrial organizations, Generics Corp. and Chem Solutions, had very different change contexts in terms of acquisition drives, especially regarding the goals of the acquirer; and cultural contexts. These and other similarities and differences can be extracted by reading following Sections 3.5.1, 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 and Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 where a detailed description of each organization and change context is provided.

### **3.5.1 Introduction to Generics Corp/French Pharma Group**

*Generics Corp Indústria Farmacêutica Ltda* (hereafter Generics Corp) started in 1932 as a small family business, a laboratory. This organization bought two other laboratories and kept product brands separate for a time, but in 1997 they were incorporated in a new company named Generics Corp. It has been the market leader in generic medicines and among the largest pharmaceutical companies in Brazil since 2002. It owns two manufacturing plants, develops and produces a diversified line-up of generic medicines. In 2008, company sales amounted to around £100 million, which was mainly due to significant growth in the generic medicines market in Brazil. In 2009, Generics Corp was sold to French Pharma Group (hereafter FPG) for £500 million, by its owners as its majority share belonged to a single family. Generics Corp was facing financial difficulties and the sale was the chosen solution for the company.

FPG, a global, diversified healthcare company that is present in over 100 countries, is a world leader in the pharmaceutical industry. The FPG is the leader in the Brazilian pharmaceutical industry where its Brazilian subsidiary (French Pharma Group Brazil) has been offering a wide portfolio of branded, OTC (over the counter), and generic medications since the 1950s. With the acquisition of Generics Corp in April 2009, FPG employs over 3,800 people in Brazil (around 1,500 were from Generics Corp) and its local production capacity stands at over 300 million units a year. Generics Corp became financially and administratively integrated to FPG, but remains as a separate organization with an independent legal entity, name and brand in the market.



### ***3.5.2 Introduction to Chem Solutions /GCHE***

Chem Solutions, originally a business unit of another chemical company, was created as a separate organization in 2001, becoming a worldwide supplier of specialty chemicals and nutritional ingredients headquartered in Germany. Chem Solutions delivered natural source raw materials and ingredients for the food, nutrition and healthcare markets, and the cosmetics, detergent and cleaner industries. It also offered a number of products for other industries such as coatings and inks, lubricants, agriculture and mining. When acquired by German Chemicals (hereafter GCHE) in 2010, the company employed globally about 5,600 people and had around 250 employees in Brazil. It was mainly based in São Paulo through its plant, but it operated commercially on a national scale. Other Latin America plants were also integrated under a global integration plan orchestrated by its headquarters in Germany.

GCHE is a company of German origin that employs more than 110,000 people worldwide. GCHE production units are distributed in 39 countries and have clients in more than 170. With a portfolio of 8,000 products, the company has offered important contributions for segments of products for agriculture and nutrition, chemical, performance products, plastics and oil and gas.

Chem Solutions stopped existing as an organization and its employees, assets, products, etc, were fully integrated to GCHE. Chem Solutions was made up of three strategic business units that GCHE integrated to Care Chemicals, Nutrition and Health, Performance Chemicals and Dispersions and Pigments divisions, meaning that the largest impact of the integration was felt by the divisions of the Performance Products segment.

### ***3.5.3 Introduction to Consulting Engineering/Canadian Engineering***

Consulting Engineering Ltd (hereafter Consulting Engineering) was founded in 1990, operating as a consulting engineering firm in the mining sector in Brazil. Its team comprised approximately 1,100 professionals in mining and metallurgy, many of them having joined the organization at its foundation and

almost together with the three founders; Ed Dawson, Peter Atkins and Stewart Allen (all names are pseudonyms to ensure anonymity).

The purchase of Consulting Engineering by Canadian Engineering (hereafter Canadian E.) occurred in December 2007 after some months of negotiation between the three Brazilian partners and the Canadian representatives of Canadian E.

Canadian E. is a world-leading engineering and construction group and a major player in the ownership of infrastructure and provision of operations and maintenance services. Canadian E. companies provide services for a variety of industry sectors, and its principal business worldwide consists of full development and services in specific phases of projects in the mining industry. Canadian E. also has expertise in the implementation of projects in the EPCM (Engineering, Procurement and Construction Management) mode, having undertaken a large number of projects worldwide, which is a technical aspect that interfered in the change process. Consulting Engineering stands as a separate brand, but it is financially, administratively and operationally integrated to Canadian E.

### **3.6 Overview and justification of data collection methods**

In line with the adopted case study design (see Section 3.4), this research employed several research methods. In this research interviews were combined with a questionnaire, documentary analysis and observation, as multiple sources of data can lead to a more encompassing data collection (see Minayo, Assis and Souza, 2005; Yin, 2005). Interviews were the main source of data for this research, to cover both a factual and a meaning level (Kvale, 1996), aided by questionnaires that assisted in creating a grid for comparison among cases in terms COM and RTC.

To facilitate reading comprehension, the process of data collection is presented in the next sub-sections. Data collection planning is explored in Section 3.6.1, the data collection procedures and instruments design in Section 3.6.2 and a summarized chronology of data collection is shown in Section 3.6.3.

### **3.6.1 Data collection planning**

The first planning effort was to define data collection goals for each technique, as summarized in Table 3.2, overleaf.

Once a case organization was identified (see Section 3.5), documentary data collection started, in the form of public information via websites and the press, regarding the context experienced around the time of acquisition. Further collection of documentary and observational data varied according to the specificities of each case study, as detailed in Section 3.7. The definitions resulting from this planning also guided the design of the instruments of data collection themselves, as detailed in Section 3.6.2.

A second planning effort was made to determine a data collection plan; in each case study, data collection was performed at two points in time (Time 1 and Time 2) as explained in Section 3.4., to capture how COM and RTC developed over time in the respondents' perception. In Time 1 and Time 2 data collection, the same respondents were asked to recollect perceptions about change communication and RTC considering several occasions, the first one being the moment right after the acquisition, and other two main occasions after that (during Time 1 data collection). After, in Time 2 data collection, other two main occasions were established as reference for respondents. Occasions for recollection were established by the researcher, according to the characteristics of each case (acquisition announcement, system cut off, general meeting, president's substitution, and so on), as detailed in Section 3.7. In other words, there was a pragmatic judgement of relevance and amount of occasions in the light of the research questions and the empirical setting of the research, driven by organizational facts and feasibility of the research, but also driven by the possibility of recall of certain events that were relevant to respondents (Pettigrew, 1990). In other words, data occasions were also set considering to facilitate the retrospect respondents were solicited.

	Data Collection Techniques / Data Use			
	Document	Interviews	Direct Observation	Questionnaire
Description of data collection techniques	Annual Reports, Institutional Presentation, Web site, Intranet, Clippings (Mass media news), other internal organizational reports, Pieces of internal communication (photos, exemplars, files), Communication plans /projects and reports, corporate e-mails, meeting minutes.	Semi-structured interviews with Organizational/Change Leaders, Communication Experts, Participants.	Site observation for collection of material evidence of change and communication strategies and activities. (registered by pictures or description) Meetings proposed or organized with aid of corporate communication experts concerning the change effort, involving change leaders and participants.	Structured questionnaire about RTC level. Structured questionnaire about Communication Nature.
Unit of observation: Organization	Organizational characteristics: (historical elements, structure, size, societal facts) Change characterization: how change is denominated, reasons, main efforts, projects, deadlines, stage, main actors, (leaders) Communication Strategies: historical elements and practices, dominant objective, channels, frequency, content, feedback and evaluation mechanisms. Communication plans and documents for main activities.		Visual identification of communication efforts/ channels/campaigns: amount, location, content, use, availability, conditions. Events/Meetings 'logistics aspects: location, meeting rooms, meeting layouts, symbolic indicators (type of room, pomp) Events/Meetings 'dynamic: who speaks, frequency, type of interactions, content involvement, feedback and evaluation mechanisms and general mood.	

	Data Collection Techniques / Data Use			
	Document	Interviews	Direct Observation	Questionnaire
Unit of observation: Communication experts	Team size, structure.	Individual characteristics: age, gender, time in the company, background, position in the team. Perceptions about change process and the nature of actual communication within the organization Perceptions about the actual RTC within the organization, main manifestations. Description of specific communication activities events and meetings analysed during the case study: Strategy: dominant objective, channels, frequency, content, feedback and evaluation mechanisms	Role and Interactions during Events/Meetings considering the frame of the 5 Principles of Dialogic Communication	Evaluation of RTC Evaluation of Communication nature

	Data Collection Techniques / Data Use			
	Document	Interviews	Direct Observation	Questionnaire
Unit of Observation: Change Leaders	Team configuration, number of people, level of integration.	Individual characteristics: age, sex, time in the company, background, position in the team. Perception about the change process and the nature of actual communication within the organization Beliefs about RTC, what is, how it can be observed, how to deal with it. how communication influences RTC. (intentionality of communication towards RTC) Perceptions about the actual RTC within the organization, main manifestations.	Role and Interactions during Events/Meetings considering the frame of the 5 Principles of Dialogic Communication:	Evaluation of RTC. Evaluation of Communication nature
Unit of Observation: Change Participants	Team configuration, number of people, level of integration.	Individual characteristics: age, sex, time in the company, background, position in the team. Perception about the change process and the nature of actual communication within the organization. Perceptions about the actual RTC within the organization, main manifestations.	Role and Interactions during Events/Meetings considering the frame of the 5 Principles of Dialogic Communication.	Level of RTC Evaluation of Communication nature

Table 3.2: Units of Observation and Data Collection Techniques/Data Use

Source: Compiled by the author.

The data collection plan that was conducted is introduced next:

### **Time 1 Objectives (First data collection)**

- **Documentary:** To collect internal documents, including reports, charts, letters, newsletters related to the change process during the period under investigation;
- **Interview:** To interview change leaders and employees and tape-record the conversation. Respondents came from various hierarchical levels and departments within the organizations, since it is important to gain a fuller picture of organizational change (Hollinshead and Maclean, 2007). The majority of respondents were working in managerial positions, as detailed in Section 3.7. They were identified according to the area in which they worked, with priority being given to those areas that were most affected by change, such as change leaders and communication managers.
- **Questionnaire:** To identify respondents' perceptions about the dimensions of COM and RTC, as recollected in the interviews, but in a succinct and numeric format. Two questionnaires (COM and RTC) were designed (Appendix C) to be applied at the end of the interview and capture evaluations over time of COM and RTC dimensions for the occasions established for each case study.
- **Observation:** To observe public and semi-public spaces within the organization by invitation (e.g. cafeteria, corridors, etc.) to collect visual evidence and witness interactions revealing about the organizational change, COM and RTC.

### **Time 2 Objectives (Second data collection)**

- **Interview:** To interview, where possible, the same respondents from Time 1, aided by the script interview and to audio-record the conversation.
- **Questionnaire:** To repeat the questionnaires (COM and RTC) from Time 1 for the time elapsed since the first data collection. The questionnaires contained the same questions and format, to capture the perceptions of

interviews in a succinct and numeric format, but also allowed numeric and descriptive notes to be added to explore perceptions of how each dimension of COM influences the dimensions of RTC in two steps:

- Naming process: the respondents named each COM and RTC dimensions in their own way in the questionnaire. After informing about the perceived existence of all assertions in recent periods, complementing Time 1 data collection, respondents were requested to name each group of assertions, establishing their own naming for each dimension of COM and RTC. In addition, each respondent was asked to recall some examples of occurrence of RTC dimensions, as named by him/her.
- Connecting process: the respondents ordered the COM dimensions from the highest to the lowest as regards its perceived impact on each RTC dimension in the questionnaire, using the names they attributed in the naming process, in the light of the overall change in their organization.
- Observation: To observe public and semi-public spaces within the organization by invitation (e.g. cafeteria, corridors, etc.) to collect any new evidence revealing the organizational change, COM and RTC.

This data collection plan was presented to the gatekeeper in question and after the research in the respective organization was approved, an interlocutor (typically an employee from HR or Communications) was designated to assist the researcher. This interlocutor sent an e-mail to each potential respondent, introducing the primary research goal and researcher profile (Endorsement e-mail in Appendix A) as well the information about the organizational authorization received. The message was designed by the researcher and sent by the main interlocutor within the organization to add credibility.

A third and final planning effort was to design data collection instruments, namely the interview scripts and questionnaires. The next section will clarify the predominantly deductive nature of this research by revealing which theoretical aspects were recollected from the literature review and are supporting the instruments conception. It is worth noting, however, that the inductive components also integrate this research, as it will be also explored in Section 3.8.



### **3.6.2 Instruments design**

Interviews are the essential sources for this research, offering the best way to access participants' views and interpretations of events (Walsham, 1995; Kvale, 2008). Questionnaire, observations and documentary are complementary sources of data. In this section, the main theoretical concepts and the process used to develop instruments for data collection are detailed.

For the interview, an integrated script was designed to explore simultaneously perceptions of COM and RTC dimensions during the change experience, using both the operational definitions of the COM and RTC (see Sections 2.4 and 2.5 for details). The interview protocol (see in Appendix B) was developed in collaboration with the doctoral supervisors and included specific questions to initiate the conversation; establishing purpose and process of the interview and confidentiality agreement, detailing the estimated duration of the interview and interviewer reminders for taking notes about location, date and time. A pilot interview was conducted with five business school colleagues to check understanding and duration, generating eleven adjustments to the final script. The main adaptation was in the wording of questions to provide clarity.

The choice for semi-structured interviews was based on the benefits of its format, that relies on a prepared script, allows respondents freedom to express their views in their own terms, and allows the researcher to explore new aspects if they are brought up during the interview (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The first elements of the semi-structured script refer to the acquisition, how the respondent perceived the subsequent changes, who was involved, who was experiencing the highest impacts (people, areas) and the general evaluation of the amount and quality of information and communication.

In order to assist the retrospective evaluation of the acquisition and subsequent changes, respondents were asked to give examples of communication activities. For those examples, the researcher explored COM and also perceptions of RTC. The over-arching structure of interview script, (see Appendix B for details) was:

- Interview context and agreements.
- Characteristics of the respondent: name, position and education, length of service in the organization, previous change experiences and line of subordination.
- Research focus: exploring how change was perceived in general and expressions of COM and RTC.

Since the script was semi-structured, it was possible to go further in each answer with the specific goal of generating explicit evidence in terms for COM and RTC dimensions. Typical questions of exploration were elaborated and included in parenthesis the letters of dimensions expected to be revealed (see in Appendix B) in the respective answers. Interviews lasted an average of 1.5 hours. Interviews were digitally recorded, allowing verbatim transcription of responses and helping the researcher to dedicate herself entirely to the interview process. Notes were taken when necessary, about conditions, surroundings and impressions (Darke, Shanks and Broadbent, 1998).

The final component of the interview was the questionnaire response. In this way, it was possible to collect and structure the elements firstly brought up during the interview, while also interacting with the respondent at any sign of difficulty in understanding the instructions. The interactions with respondents were limited to clarifications of timeframes and scope of evaluations, and aimed also at reassuring a supportive environment. As meanings are so relevant in social-constructionist research, the final comprehension about the constructs was only possible by analyzing questionnaire data with the aid of the accounts provided in the interviews.

Two questionnaires were designed to complementarily capture each concept; COM and RTC (see Appendix C for details). Although the questionnaire format could not capture fully COM or RTC, it added to the research by presenting respondents' perceptions of the intensity of the COM and RTC dimensions over time in a comparable numeric format. In sum, a different format of expression of respondents' perceptions that support the interview, documentary and observational data.

The COM was based on principles of dialogic communication developed for public relations, adopted in former theoretical studies that led to the creation of a new instrument for this research. Oreg's (2000) scale (see Section 2.5.2), which has been empirically tested in several contexts, was adapted to evaluate RTC as follows. The goal of this research was to evaluate COM according to the elements of dialogic communication, which are Mutuality (M), Propinquity (P), Risk (R), Empathy (E) and Commitment (C). This component is part of the deductive reasoning in this study. The presence of those principles in organizational communication indicate the occurrence of a dialogic COM.

As summarized in Table 3.3, overleaf, each dimension of COM was measured by two assertions. It was a challenge to select from each dimension the aspects that would be explicit in the questionnaire, as it will be explored next. On the one hand, it was not possible to have assertions for each and all features as presented by Kent and Taylor (2002) and Frahm and Brown (2003), for each dimensions, otherwise the questionnaire would be too long. On the other hand, the assertions were elaborated to express the main concepts of each dimension (in bold) in two day-to-day phrases (regular font in Table 3.3). In this line, some assertions were reverse coded (stated in the opposite direction) to promote respondents attention, as it requires careful reading and inhibits automatic responses. One of the problems is that reverse-coded items frequently produce misunderstanding, which in this research was eliminated by the fact that questionnaires were answered during the interview and in the researcher's presence. That meant that the researcher read the assertions aloud and gave time to the respondent to note down his/her choices. This enabled the respondent to seek clarification where necessary.

As can be seen in Table 3.3, another dimension (Input) was proposed by this researcher to constitute COM and therefore it is present in COM questionnaire available in Appendix C. It was motivated by the literature review indication (Larkin and Larkin, 1994; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006) that in employees' perspective, change adaptation as a result of their influence would be a relevant component for COM evaluation. However, after data collection and analysis it was clear that this dimension was reflecting the overall meaning of dialogic COM (and would not stand as a dimension, with a different nature of the principles

proposed by Kent and Taylor), but also was not playing a relevant role according to respondents' perceptions. Therefore, despite being present in instruments, it was not considered for the analysis, discussion and conclusion chapters.

<b>Mutuality (M) - related to collaboration and spirit of mutual equality, subjects of change and avoidance of superiority.</b>
During change the contributions of those involved were equally important. People co-constructed the change and had not received it ready.
<b>Empathy (E) - environment of support and trust, supportiveness, communal orientation and confirmation or acknowledgement.</b>
The climate during change and about the contributions was of confidence and support. There was much distortion of the meaning of employees' contributions. *
<b>Commitment (C) - genuineness, commitment to conversation, and commitment to interpretations, constantly fine-tuning language and trying to grasp the positions, beliefs, and values of others.</b>
Before evaluating each contribution, there was an effort to understand views, beliefs and values. The language was constantly revised over the contributions, to check understanding.
<b>Propinquity (P) - "immediacy of presence," "temporal flow," and "engagement".</b>
Contributions to the change occurred during the decision-making (not after decision) There was awareness of the past decisions and future ones.
<b>Risk (R) - recognition to not know and assume uncertainty, vulnerability of not having control.</b>
It was possible for those involved recognizing that did not know something without losing power. It was common not to have answers.
<b>Input (I) - related to if within the change process some changes were promoted according to considerations made by the participants.</b>
There was a lot of adjustment on the change as employees were involved. A small portion of the change was influenced by the employees, the major part of the change came ready*

Table 3.3: Items for nature of communication (COM questionnaire)

(\*) Items marked with an asterisk were reverse coded.

Source: Adapted by the author based on Kent and Taylor (2002) and Frahm and Brown (2003).

Each one of COM dimensions may have different implications on each dimension of RTC. The extent of RTC was measured by a scale developed by Oreg (2006) that consists of three dimensions, that include Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioural reactions to change (see Section 2.5.2 for details).

Oreg's (2006) original scale was largely applied in several other contexts and proved a relevant instrument to assess RTC (Oreg *et al.*, 2008; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008). Originally, these dimensions are seen as arising from the individual, rather than from within the system of relationships between individuals, as an epistemology adopted in this research. Therefore, for this research, it made sense to adapt the scale from a focus on individuals (I) to the organization as a collective (They). Hence, it would remain at least partially, the benefits of using the well developed components of the instrument.

Following the intent of interviews, this questionnaire was adapted to collect respondents' perceptions about their colleagues in the organization. Oreg expressed support to this adaptation (Personal communication, 2015) as it may mean an organizational appraisal of RTC instead of an individual one. This adaptation produced a qualitative different result, focused on perceptions, once at individual level it is about people's expressions of their own thinking, feeling and behaviour, and at organizational level it is about perceptions about what their people might think, feel and do. This adaptation was motivated by the literature review that previously established (Section 2.5.2), mainly supported by Jabri (2012), that not only ideas, but also emotions and intentions are shared among change participants, creating awareness of others and of a general mood. It is important to emphasize that the search is for perceptions about thoughts, feelings and behaviours, as their perceptions do affect their practices. Therefore, data were about how individuals perceived RTC as expressed by others and the organization as whole, as detailed in Table 3.4. It is also possible that by referring to colleagues, respondents were influenced by their own perceptions, which they would be otherwise uncomfortable acknowledging, and there is no problem in that, once these issues are real for them and therefore impact how they interact with people in the organization.

<b>Affective</b>
There was fear of the change There was a bad feeling about the change There was excitement about the change* The change made them upset They were stressed by the change
<b>Behavioural</b>
They looked for ways to prevent the change from taking place They protested against the change They complained about the change to colleagues They presented their objections regarding the change to management They spoke rather highly of the change to others*
<b>Cognitive</b>
They believed that the change would harm the way things are done in the organization They thought that was a negative thing that we were going through this change They believed that the change would make their job harder They believed that the change would benefit the organization* They believed that they could personally benefit from the change*

Table 3.4: Characteristics and assertions of RTC questionnaire

(\*) Items marked with an asterisk were reverse coded.

Source: Adapted by the author based on Oreg (2006) to apply to organizational level.

Both questionnaires were designed using a 7-point Likert-type scale to indicate respondents' perceptions regarding the statements listed as detailed in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. The 7-point range varied from strongly agree (1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), neither agree nor disagree (4), somewhat agree (5), agree (6) to strongly disagree (7) (see Appendix C). This scale was adopted in Oreg's original questionnaire and therefore kept in this research, for both questionnaires to facilitate respondents understanding.

For the time 2 data collection the COM and RTC questionnaires were adapted to the naming and connecting processes (see Section 3.8.2 for details). In these questionnaires versions, separate fields were created in the form to register naming information.

After that, respondents were asked to rank those communication dimensions that they perceived to be more or less conducive to RTC using the

names they attributed to them in the light of the overall change in their organization. At this point inductive reasoning took part as the observations produced contributed to the generation of new theory, regarding change communication and RTC, and also the dimensions of COM that are more influential to RTC (details in Section 8.3).

### 3.6.3 Data collection general chronology

Table 3.5 and Figure 3.1 detail the chronology of the research to elicit a similar time of memory recollection concerning the most relevant facts (that support respondent retrospection) and a similar interval between data collections, thereby establishing comparability despite the fact that the acquisitions occurred in different calendar years.

Cases	Generics Corp/FPG	Chem Solutions/GCHE	Engineering Consulting/ Canadian E.
Timeline	Acquisition date – ACQ: Apr2009	Acquisition date – ACQ: Dec 2010	Acquisition date - ACQ: Dec 2007
	Time 1 – Data collection: beginning of 2011 (predominantly in march) Data referred to: 2 years ago (2009) /6months ago (midtoend2010)/ March 2011	Time 1 – Data Collection in three main periods: end of 2011, beginning 2012 and end of 2012 Data referred to: Dec 2010, Mar-Apr 2011 / Dec 2011.	Time 1 – Data Collection: end of 2011 (group) Data referred to: 2008, 2009/2010, 2011
	Time 2 – Data Collection: End of 2012 Data referred to: 6months ago (May 2012 Oct 2012)		Time 2 – Data Collection: Jan/Feb 2013 Data referred to: 2012 and Jan 2013
	Memory effect up to 2 years	Memory effect up to 2 years	Memory effect up to 4 years (but after effectively integration up to 2 years)
	Total time: 3 years and 7 months (date ACQ to last period evaluated) Interval between data collections: 1year and a half	Total time: 1 year (date ACQ to last period evaluated) Interval between data collections: NA	Total time: 5 years (date ACQ to last period evaluated) Interval between data collections: up to 1year and 2 months

Table 3.5: Overall data collection information

Source: Compiled by the author.

The timeline of acquisitions and data collections is summarized in Figure 3.1 below.

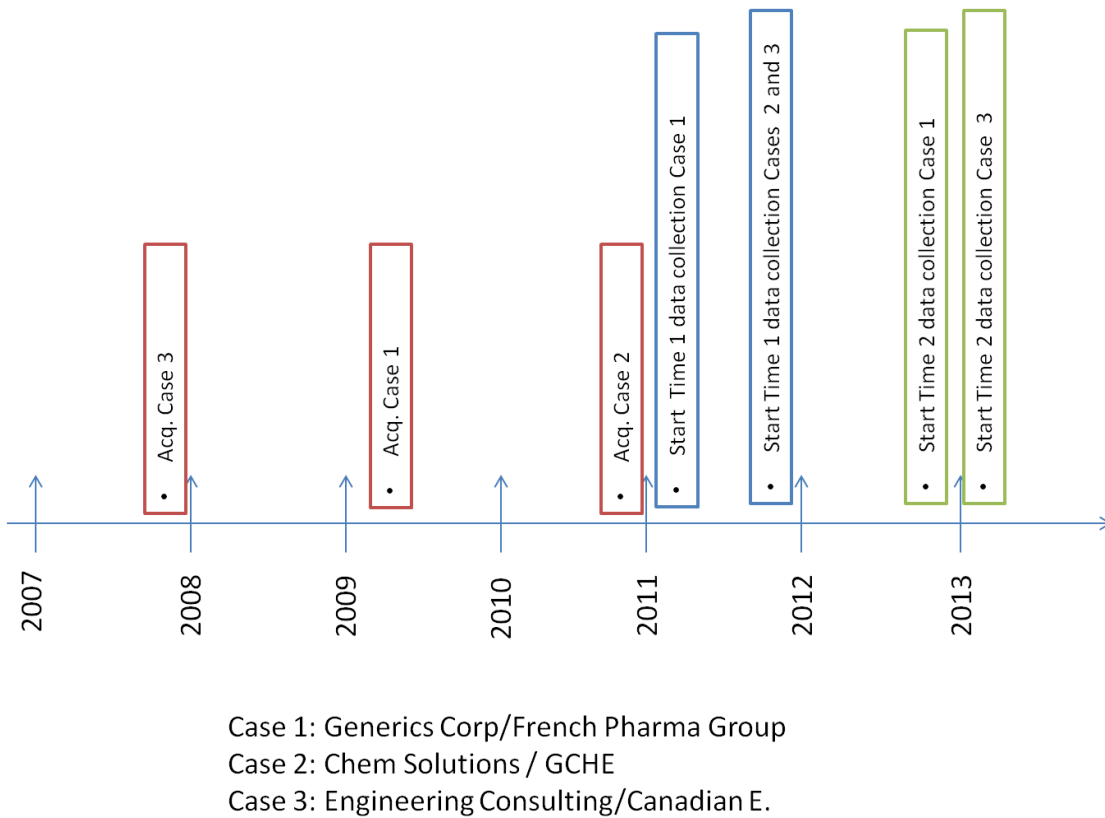


Figure 3.1: Overall timeline of the investigation

Source: Compiled by the author.

In the next sections, the data collection summary for each case studied will be presented. Overall, there were 84 different respondents involved in this research, being all of them interviewed in Time 1, among individual and group interviews, and 31 of them involved again in Time 2 data collection. The total number of documents, observations, interviews and questionnaires answered in each case is summarized overleaf, in Table 3.6.

There were both individual and group interviews, either in Time 1 and Time 2 data collections due to the opportunity to involve respondents available at the same time and location, for instance after an organizational event. It proved valuable as a spontaneous and mutually supportive environment was created and the accounts of some respondents were discussed by others, allowing different perceptions to be explicit and clarified.



	Doc.	Obs.	Time 1		Time 2	
			Int.	Quest.	Int.	Quest.
Generics Corp./FPG	34	2	10 + 27 (in groups) = 37	17	7 + 8 (in groups) = 15	13
Chem Solutions/GCHEGroup	18	1	18	14	-	-
Consulting Engineering Ltd./Canadian E.	23	2	11 + 18 (in groups) = 29	28	5 + 11 (in groups) = 16	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>

Table 3.6: Data collection totals

Source: Compiled by the author.

Moreover, the number of interviews and questionnaires responded are different within the same Time data collection. In Time 1, for example, 84 people were involved in interviews, but only 59 responded the questionnaires; while in Time 2 this relation is 31 to 26 respondents. This occurred in all case studies and it was caused by 1) some individual interviews that ended earlier due to respondent request, therefore not having the time to answer the questionnaire, 2) questionnaires returned by some of the group participants that were present, but did not complete them.

### 3.7 Summaries of data collection

#### 3.7.1 Case 1 (*Generics Corp./FPG*)

Generics Corp. approved the research in February 2011 and data collection started immediately through website information analysis, reports analysis and an onsite visit. This documentary analysis was further completed through press releases, organizational charts, newsletters, billboards announcements, internal plans and formal internal letters, as summarized in Table 3.7:

Type	Document Title	Format
Websites	1. www.Generics Corp*.com.br 2. www.FrenchPharmaGroup.com.br 3. www.FrenchPharmaGroup.com	Web
Reports	4. Sustainability and Social Corporate Responsibility Report	PDF
Charts	5. General Chart 6. Business Unit Pharma chart 7. Sales Directory (Exc.Sales Force) 8. Sales Directory (Sales Force)	PPT
Pictures	9. Site visit /Billboards	JPEG
Plans	10. Internal Communication Plan 11. Internal Communication Events Calendar	PPT DOC
Newsletters	12. News letter Issues: 13. May/2009 14. Jun/2009 15. July/2009 16. Aug/2009 17. Sep/2009 18. Oct/2009 19. Nov/Dec/ 2009 20. Jan/Feb /2010 21. March/2010 22. Apr/2010 23. May/2010 24. Jun/2010 25. July/2010 26. Aug/2010 27. Sep/2010 28. Oct/2010 29. Nov/Dec/2010 30. Jan/Feb/2011 31. March/2011	Printed/PDF
Internal Letters	32. Letter about acquisition	Printed / PDF
Billboard Sheets	33. Billboard news	Printed / PDF
Press releases	34. Acquisition Press Release	PDF

Table 3.7: Generics Corp./FPG Documentary Analysis Items

(\*) pseudonyms

Source: Compiled by the author.

**Time 1 data collection:** The interviews were largely facilitated by the HR department. All individual interviews were recorded in Generics Corp.'s main plant or over the phone – with loud speakers. Audio-recordings were later

transcribed by a professional transcriber, revised by the researcher for verification and sent to respondents for validation to assure the veracity of what was said. Group interviews were conducted in a private room at a hotel near the factory, where the respondents were already participating in a training program.

The respondents were identified by researcher based on preliminary interviews with HR and the CEO, from areas most affected by the changes in the wake of the acquisition that supported the integration of processes and systems into French Pharma Group. Also in favor of a varied perspective about change, some diversity of representatives from different sectors and levels in hierarchy was encouraged. Tables 3.8 to 3.11 provide details of the individuals' functional areas (head office, commercial or industrial areas) and the hierarchical levels involved, being 1 for the first level (director and senior management) and 2 for the second (subordinate to the first) and so forth. Several respondents were involved due to their positions, regardless of their profile or indication, as it is the case of communication heads/directors and individuals directly involved with the change project, that is, the integration.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/level in hierarchy*</b>
15/03/2011	1. HR Director 2. General Director (CEO)	1. Head Office/2 2. Head Office/1
18/03/2011	3. Industrial Director 4. Product Group Manager	3. Industrial /2 4. Head Office/3
21/03/2011	5. Business Support Director 6. Communication Coordinator	5. Head Office/2 6. Head Office/3
13/04/2011	7. Pharma Business Unit Director 8. Marketing Manager / Generics Unit 9. Sales Director	7. Commercial/2 8. Commercial/3 9. Commercial/2
09/05/2011	10. HR People Development Manager	10. Head Office/ Industrial/3

Table 3.8: Generics Corp./FPG Interviews - Time 1

Source: Compiled by the author.

In addition, one audio-recorded group discussion was part of data collection. This group consisted of 27 individuals who were interviewed after attending a leadership program. This presented an opportunity for the researcher

to request their authorization and availability to answer some questions. The discussion was characterized by a high level of energy as well as a good amount of participation and spontaneity. Table 3.9 presents details of this group interview.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Group Participants' Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level in hierarchy *</b>
18/03/2011	1. Researcher/Pre formulation Coord. 2. District Manager 3. District Manager 4. Customer Service Coordinator 5. Account Manager 6. District Manager Farma 7. District Manager 8. Account Manager 9. Production Coordinator 10. HR Coordinator 11. Account Manager 12. IT Coordinator 13. Sales Coordinator 14. Regulatory affairs Manager 15. District Manager Farma 16. General Director (CEO) Secretary 17. Training Develop. Manager Farma 18. Product Group Manager 19. Laboratory Coordinator 20. Warehouse Coordinator 21. Regional Manager 22. District Manager 23. District Manager 24. Sales Coordinator 25. Shipping Coordinator 26. Production Coordinator 27. District Manager	1. R&D/3 2. Commercial/5 3. Commercial/5 4. Head Office /3 5. Commercial/4 6. Commercial/5 7. Commercial/5 8. Commercial/4 9. Industrial/4 10. Industrial/4 11. Commercial/4 12. Head Office/3 13. Commercial /3 14. Head Office/2 15. Commercial/3 16. Head Office 17. Head Office/3 18. Head Office/3 19. Industrial/4 20. Industrial/4 21. Commercial/4 22. Commercial/5 23. Commercial/5 24. Commercial/3 25. Head Office/4 26. Industrial/4 27. Commercial/5

Table 3.9: Generics Corp./FPG Interviews - Time 1

Total: Industrial/P&D: 7 / Commercial: 14 / Head Office: 7

Source: Compiled by the author.

Out of this 37 people involved in Time 1 data collection, 17 answered the questionnaires.

Moreover, the researcher was allowed to join and observe one internal communication event, on 15/03/2011 of four hours duration. The focus of the event was to align all managerial levels concerning goals for the next period. The

event was carried out with around 120 managers in an auditorium with a stage where directors presented their slides about the strategic directions for the year. Despite this formal spatial arrangement, there was ample interaction during the presentations and the questions and answers period.

Another observation was conducted during site visits and in relation to the informal climate and affection demonstrated in relations among employees in general, including the directors. The informal conversations observed during Time 1 in the cafeteria were about daily activities, but also revealed a high level of enthusiasm. This could not be observed during the Time 2 data collection, when the researcher did not meet many people in the site visits apart from the respondents.

**Time 2 data collection:** Tables 3.10 and 3.11 present data collection details about Time 2. Time 1 respondents were invited to a second interview and the group participants as well. As can be observed, 15 individuals attended the interviews, and 13 of them also answered questionnaires.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees Functions/Área</b>	<b>Area/ level in hierarchy *</b>
13/10/2012	1. HR Director	1. Head Office/2
13/10/2012	2. Product Group Manager	2. Head Office/3
13/10/2012	3. Business Support Director 4. Communication Coordinator	3. Head Office/2 4. Head Office/3
13/10/2012	5. Pharma Business Unit Director 6. Marketing Manager / Generics Unit	5. Commercial/2 6. Commercial/3
13/10/2012	7. HR People Development Manager	7. Head Office/ Industrial/3

Table 3.10: Generics Corp./FPG Interviews - Time 2  
Source: Compiled by the author.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees' Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level in hierarchy *</b>
13/10/2012	1. District Manager	1. Commercial/5
26/10/2012	2. Regulatory affairs Manager	2. Head Office/2
02/11/2012	3. Training Develop. Manager Farma	3. Head Office/3
16/11/2012	4. Product Group Manager	4. Head Office/3
10/12/2012	5. Regional Manager	5. Commercial/4
	6. District Manager	6. Commercial/5
	7. Production Coordinator	7. Industrial/4
	8. District Manager	8. Commercial/5

Table 3.11: Generics Corp./FPG Former Group/Individual Interviews - Time 2  
Source: Compiled by the author.

In Generics Corp/FPG the data collection process was largely facilitated by the internal friendly environment, as briefly described above and detailed in Chapter 5, along with all data analysis and discussion related to this case.

### **3.7.2 Case 2 (Chem Solutions/German Chemical Group)**

German Chemical Group approved the research in August 2011 and data collection started immediately through websites information analysis, reports analysis and site visits. This documentary analysis was further completed through press releases, charts, newsletters, as summarized in Table 3.12, overleaf.

**Time 1 data collection:** The HR and Corporate Communications departments proposed the respondent profile. Despite their input, the scheduling of interviews was challenging due to a lack of contact with the main interlocutor for about 4 months, who was expected to provide access to respondents (e-mail and telephone numbers) and to help schedule the interviews. As a result, data collection was finalized later than planned, with the implication that Time 2 data collection could not take place due to the time constraints of the overall study.

Type	Document Title	Format
Websites	1. www.German Chemical Group*. com.br 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chem Solutions*	Web Web
Reports	3. Premio USP 2006 (Dialog with Communities Award)	PDF
	4. Premio USP 2007 (Integrated Communication in Acquisition Processes Award)	PDF
	5. Premio POP 2007 (Integrated Communication in Acquisition Process Award)	PDF
	6. German Chemical Group Brazil 100 years	PDF
Charts	7. Global Acquisitions German Chemical Group 2006-2010	PDF
Newsletters	8. German Chemical Group Notícias Issues:	Printed/PDF
	9. Jul/2010	
	10. Set/2010	
	11. Oct/2010	
	12. Nov/Dec/2010 (Special Edition)	
	13. Jan/2011	
	14. Feb/2011	
	15. Mar/ 2011	
	16. Apr /2011	
	17. May/2011	
18. Jan/Feb/2012		

Table 3.12: Chem Solutions/GCHE Documentary Analysis Items

(\*) pseudonyms

Source: Compiled by the author.

The respondents were selected based on preliminary interviews with HR, Corporate Communications and a business unit vice president who stated (and later it was continually confirmed) that clearly the most impacted people were the ones under the Care Chemicals (EM) area. This area absorbed most of the former Chem Solutions activities and employees and it was clearly affected most by integration. Respondents were selected after meeting the criteria of being from EM and from different sectors and levels in hierarchy. Out of the 18 people involved interviewed, 14 also answered the questionnaires. Table 3.13 provides details of the individuals' functional areas and hierarchical levels involved.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level in hierarchy *</b>
09/08/2011	1. Corporate Communication Manager	1. Head Office COM/3
20/09/2011	2. Compensation & Intl Transfers Manager	2. Head Office HR/3
21/09/2011	3. HR Manager – Chemicals	3. Head Office HR/2
10/10/2011	4. Director of Corporate Communications	4. Head Office COM/2
25/10/2011	5. Technical Development Manager	5. EM/5
27/02/2012	6. Strategic Business Development Manager to Nutrition and Health, Latin America	6. EN/5
27/02/2012	7. Marketing Manager Latin America /Former Chem Solutions Chem Solutions Integration Project Manager	7. EN/5
27/02/2012	8. Senior Vice President	8. EM/1
28/02/2012	9. Director Performance Chemicals S. America	9. EV/1
28/02/2012	10. Business Manager S. America Formulation Additives	10. ED/5
07/03/2012	11. Formulation Business Manager	11. EM/5
25/10/2012	12. Business Manager Hygiene, GKA Home and Personal Care and BCS South America	12. EM/5
25/10/2012	13. Planning Coordinator - Care Chemicals South America	13. EM/5
21/12/2012	14. Vice-President Care Chemicals	14. EM/2
21/12/2012	15. Director Home and Personal Care S. America	15. EM/3
21/12/2012	16. Latin America Segment Marketing Manager	16. SC/5
15/01/2013	17. Head Supply Chain & Asset Mgt Care Chemicals S. America	17. EM/4
15/01/2013	18. HR Partner	18. HR/5

Table 3.13: Chem Solutions/GCHE Group Interviews - Time 1

Source: Compiled by the author.

A very important observation for this case was the hierarchical, yet friendly environment detected during the site visits. Secretaries were largely mediating the contact with many respondents, in some cases strongly contributing to speeding the scheduling of interviews. That cultural trace will be further explored in Chapter 6, dedicated to the analysis and discussion of this specific case.



### 3.7.3 Case 3 (Consulting Engineering Ltd./Canadian E.)

Research was approved by Canadian Engineering in September 2011 and data collection started immediately, through websites information analysis, reports analysis and onsite visits. Documentary sources were further completed by pictures, institutional material, newsletters, billboard announcements, charts, formal internal letters and press releases, as summarized in Table 3.14:

Type	Document Title	Format
Websites	1. www.Canadian E*.com	Web
Intranet	2. Intranet New Logo 3. Intranet Headquarters location change	PDF
Charts	4. Organizational Chart – Dec11	PDF
Pictures	5. Site visit /Billboards	JPEG
Plans/ Institutional Materials	6. Canadian Engineering A Company, a World of Experience 7. Mining and Metallurgy in Brazil	Printed/PDF Printed/PDF
Newsletters	Newsletter Issues: 8. No 4/2010 9. No 1/2011 10.No 3/2011 11.No1/2012 12.No 2/2012 13.No3/2012 14.No 4/2012	Printed/PDF
Internal Letters	15. Letter about acquisition 16. Letter welcome acquisition Canadian E. 17. Letter acquisition Consulting E	PDF PDF PDF
Billboard Sheets/ Posters	18. Poster New logo 19. Poster New Badge 20. Poster Strategic Planning	PNG JPEG PDF
Press releases/ News	21. News Canadian E. acquires new company in Brazil 22. News former CEO arrested	DOC DOC

Table 3.14: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Documentary Analysis Items

(\*) pseudonyms

Source: Compiled by the author.

**Time 1 data collection:** The HR department supported the research throughout and facilitated the interviews. This support was essential to clarify contact information (e-mail, telephone), schedule the interviews and confirm organizational details after transcription.

The respondents were identified based on preliminary interviews with HR and the CEO – one of the founders of Consulting Engineering Ltd. Although the Finance / Controlling area was affected first, the Engineering area suffered the greatest change and systems adjustments. The majority of respondents were selected from these groups and represented different levels in the organizational hierarchy. A smaller number of respondents were involved due to their positions, such as the HR Manager/ Administrative Director and people directly involved with the change project. Tables 3.15 and 3.16 (overleaf) provide details of the respondents' functional area and hierarchical level. Out of the 29 people interviewed in Time 1 data collection, 28 answered the questionnaires.

**Time 2 data collection:** in Time 2 data collection the relation was 17 interviewed to 13 questionnaires answered. Tables 3.17 and 3.18 (page 116) provide details of the respondents' functional area and hierarchical level.

Group interviews were conducted in a very similar way to individual interviews, but with more people expressing their opinions each time. This allowed a larger number of opinions to be collected and some of them to be confronted by the participants themselves, which allowed the researcher to gain and confirm perceptions about controversial themes, such as leaders change during the data collection period. In contrast to Generics Corp/FPG, these group interviews occurred with small groups, with 3 respondents in average, that allowed a more supervised questionnaire answering and therefore, a better ratio between interviews and questionnaires completed. Group interviews were conducted on different days and at different times, according to the availability of respondents.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level of hierarchy</b>
13/10/2011	1. CEO 2. Jr Engineer	1. Head Office/1 2. Engineering/5
04/11/2011	3. HR Manager	3. Head Office/3
30/11/2011	4. RD Project Automation 5. RD Mechanics 6. RD Instrumentation and Control 7. Commercial Manager 8. Supply General Manager 9. Project Control Manager	4. Engineering/3 5. Engineering/3 6. Engineering/3 7. Commercial/3 8. Procurement/3 9. Project Control/3
09/12/2011	10. Administrative Director	10. Head Office/2
15/03/2012	11. Construction Manager	11. Construction/2

Table 3.15: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Interviews - Time 1

Source: Compiled by the author.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Group Participants' Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level of hierarchy</b>
20/08/2012 30/08/2012 20/09/2012	1. Project Manager 2. Executive Secretary 3. Supervisor Architect 4. Supervisor Planning 5. Supervisor Planning 6. Legal Assistant 7. Contract manager 8. RD Architecture 9. RD Project Controller 10. Engineer 11. Project Manager 12. Senior Engineer 13. Project Manager 14. Planning Engineer 15. Project Administrative Supervisor 16. Directors Assistant 17. Supervisor Mechanics 18. Controller Analyst	1. Proj. Manager/3 2. Head Office/6 3. Engineering/4 4. Planning/3 5. Planning/3 6. Head Office/6 7. Contr. Manager 8. Engineering/3 9. Proj. Control/3 10. Engineering/5 11. Proj. Manager/3 12. Engineer/5 13. Proj. Manager/3 14. Planning/3 15. Proj. Manager/4 16. Market. & Bus. Development/2 17. Engineering/4 18. Proj. Control/5

Table 3.16: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Group Interviews - Time 1

Source: Compiled by the author.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Interviewees Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level of hierarchy</b>
	1. HR Manager	1. Head Office/3
30/01/2013	2. RD Project Automation 3. RD Mechanics 4. Supply Chain Manager 5. Project Control Manager	2. Engineering/3 3. Engineering/3 4. Procurement/3 5. Proj. Control/3

Table 3.17: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Interviews - Time 2

Source: Compiled by the author.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Group Participants Functions/Area</b>	<b>Area/ level of hierarchy</b>
	1. Project Manager	1. Proj. Manager/3
	2. Supervisor Architect	2. Engineering / 4
	3. Supervisor Planning	3. Planning / 3
	4. Supervisor Planning	4. Planning / 3
31/01/2013	5. Legal Assistant	5. Head Office/6
31/01/2013	6. RD Architecture	6. Engineering / 3
27/02/2013	7. RD Project Controller	7. Proj. Control/3
	8. Engineer	8. Engineering/5
	9. Project Manager	9. Proj. Manager/ 3
	10. Planning Engineer	10. Planning 3
	11. Proj. Administrative Supervisor	11. Project / 4

Table 3.18: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. Group Interviews - Time 2

Source: Compiled by the author.

One event was observed on 01/03/2011, lasting two hours and held in the main meeting room of the company. This concerned the opening class of a management development program that was attended by more than 40 employees. The former president of Consulting Engineering Ltd. gave an opening speech and the program was introduced as an investment in managerial improvement for employees. This opportunity revealed an informal environment, but simultaneously tense, with little interaction between employees. Also, it was used the same former name of the organization: Consulting Engineering, and not the alleged new name that should have Canadian E. in it. In Chapter 7, this aspect and all data collected are analyzed and discussed to reveal the main findings related to this case.

## **3.8 Data analysis**

### ***3.8.1 Documentary, Interview and Observational data analysis***

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that qualitative data analysis should occur in three concurrent flows of activity (i) Data reduction, (ii) Data display, and (iii) Conclusion drawing/verification. Accordingly, several efforts of data display and reduction were carried out, to transform 84 different respondents' accounts (84 in Time 1, out of which 31 again in Time 2), 75 documentary sources and six observational data into meaningful evidence, as described next. All data were supported by NVivo 10 software, since this aids coding and constant dialogue with the conceptual framework.

In terms of data display the main initiatives were to organize files per type (interviews, documents, observations) and per case study. After that, two efforts of data reduction were carried out aiming to select those aspects of the data that were most relevant to the research questions. The first effort was to create a coding framework and apply it to all data; and the second effort was to reduce data by revising and selecting the main quotes.

Based on the conceptual framework and research questions established respectively in Section 2.6 and 3.2, four nodes were defined for the coding framework: Acquisition (the beginning of the change), Change (description of initiatives and characterization of process), COM (nature of change communication) and RTC (resistance to change). These nodes encompassed nine subnodes, one for each dimension of COM and RTC and reflect the deductive element of this research.

#### **Coding framework – Initial stage (all deductively derived):**

1. Acquisition
2. Change
3. COM
  - 3.1. COM Commitment examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.2. COM Empathy examples, impact, evolution

- 3.3. COM Input examples, impact, evolution
- 3.4. COM Mutuality examples, impact, evolution
- 3.5. COM Propinquity examples, impact, evolution
- 3.6. COM Risk examples, impact, evolution
- 4. RTC
  - 4.1. RTC Affective examples, impact, evolution
  - 4.2. RTC Behavioural examples, impact, evolution
  - 4.3. RTC Cognitive examples, impact, evolution

However, the initial analysis revealed that additional refining was possible as across the cases there was relevant data to characterize differences and similarities among cases, especially about acquisition and change itself (Flyvbjerg and Sridhar, 2006; Cresswell, 2009). Therefore, reflecting the inductive reasoning present in this research, new subnodes were created relating to initial communication initiatives announcing the acquisition, acquisition characterization (including the means and relations among actors involved) and agreements about how change would proceed. In terms of the change itself, subnodes regarding the timeline, the perceptions about before and after the change, and about the characterization of the process (goals, most affected areas/people, main decisions). Two further new nodes were created as they were perceived important to support COM characterizations and that were not related to a specific dimension, but to an overall characterization of communication and information characterization. A final node was inserted, considered relevant according to the literature review as a control variable, referring to previous experiences with change management.

In sum, 7 master nodes and 15 sub-nodes were designed and the final stage of the coding framework was:

**Coding framework – Final stage (inductively derived are in italic):**

- 1. Acquisition
  - 1.1. *Acquisition communication – initiatives and internal climate*
  - 1.2. *Acquisition agreements about change process*
  - 1.3. *Acquisition characterization*

2. Change
  - 2.1. *Change Timeline*
  - 2.2. *Changes - before and after integration*
  - 2.3. *Integration Change process characterization – decision process, goals, areas highly affected*
3. COM
  - 3.1. COM Commitment examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.2. COM Empathy examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.3. COM Input examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.4. COM Mutuality examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.5. COM Propinquity examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.6. COM Risk examples, impact, evolution
4. *Communication characterization, initiatives, evaluation*
5. *Information characterization, initiatives, evaluation*
6. *Previous experiences with change management*
7. RTC
  - 7.1. RTC Affective examples, impact, evolution
  - 7.2. RTC Behavioural examples, impact, evolution
  - 7.3. RTC Cognitive examples, impact, evolution

Next, all data collected was coded in the nodes and generated quotes listed in approximately 450 pages in Portuguese.

A second effort of data reduction was the revision and selection of most relevant data. The researcher identified the indispensable parts of each quote and reviewed the multiple relations each one had to several nodes, reducing data quotes to one file per case study, totaling 86 pages of the quotes that were deemed most relevant. The main efforts were 1) to identify which quote illustrated which node, when most of the time respondents mix in one example various dimensions of COM or RTC at the same time; and 2) when the text was long to select sentences that better explicit the node.

After that, all quotes were translated into English by the researcher, which helped in preserving the meaning of each quote as the researcher was not only aware of Portuguese colloquial language, but also of the intonation used during

the interview, which was important to avoid ambiguity in some sentences. Moreover, a professional translator who brought vocabulary precision and grammatical correctness to the text reviewed all quotes, as explained below.

### **3.8.2 Questionnaire analysis**

All questionnaires were tabulated in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and averaged. Such simple descriptive statistics allowed for a succinct and numeric comparable data. In this research are not the scores themselves that determine what the predominant COM is, but the sensemaking provided about it and therefore, the accounts of respondents collected through interviews. Besides, the goal of questionnaires was to provide complementary data in regards to COM and RTC in general, and mainly indicate increases or reductions of COM and of RTC and its respective dimensions, over time.

In order to argue the value of these variations registered, it was necessary to count on the interview data, in order to bring the respondents' sensemaking and complete the change depiction. There was not an effort to justify every variation (every point of the intervals) of every COM and RTC dimensions, but to support the characterization of their paths and establish the ground for later relating RTC and COM in this research.

The total number of answers (59 in Time 1 plus 26 in Time 2, see Table 3.6) would allow the use of more sophisticated quantitative techniques, but as this research adopted a qualitative approach, it was a deliberate decision to treat it just as complementary information to the analysis of the interview and observational data.

The naming process produced a list of words that respondents attributed to each group of assertions that was related to each dimension, either COM or RTC ones. This strong qualitative element in the questionnaire – connecting process as well, as will be explained next - brought more meanings into the analysis.



During data analysis, Nvivo was not used for analysis of naming and connecting processes. Namings were listed in a table along each respective dimensions and compared. Names given were analyzed regarding similarity of meaning or disparity in comparison to the names adopted for each dimension, as revealed in the conceptual framework (Sections 2.4.3 and 2.5.2) and among the various words used by respondents. That made it possible to check how dimensions were perceived and to reveal misunderstanding about any of them, as it is explored in Sections 4.5 and 6.5.

The connecting process required respondents to relate the COM dimensions that were perceived to have the most impact on RTC dimensions. As respondents ordered from the most influencing COM dimension to the least influencing one, it was possible to calculate a weighted average with all respondents' answers and find the main COM dimensions in terms of influence in RTC in each case studied. Orders of influence attributed to COM dimensions were used to identify the communication dimensions that were most often perceived as great influencers to each RTC dimension, as detailed in Chapter 7.

This naming process eliminated the potential bias of informing the dimensions names and influencing the respondent with other meanings than the ones they assumed during their own evaluation. Besides, it allowed the researcher to verify similarities and differences among names attributed by respondents and the literature. It was possible to observe that in general the meanings of respondents naming were very similar to the meanings of the dimensions according to the literature, indicating that the assertions were conveying what they were designed to express and therefore the questionnaire was able to capture what it was expected to.

### **3.9 Translation and interpretation**

This research was conducted in Brazil, and therefore all interactions with the case organizations and data collection were in Portuguese, which is also the researcher's native language. This means that the source text was Portuguese and the target text was English, therefore involving translation from Portuguese into English. Translation always involves interpretation, so the meanings

attributed in the source text (by the researcher and/or the participants) are communicated in the target text as close as possible to the original. That means the translator (comprising in this study both the researcher and a professional translator) interprets and transfers text from the original into the target language, using words that give the closest similar meaning possible. Considering that meanings are central in qualitative research, this research aimed to achieve validity by adopting the following procedures regarding translation.

The interview script was conceived in Portuguese and translated into English. The COM questionnaire was designed in Portuguese. The original RTC questionnaire was translated from English to Portuguese and adapted as explored in Section 3.6.2. For this RTC questionnaire, after translation of the assertions, from English to Portuguese by the researcher, the Portuguese version was submitted to an English speaker and Portuguese reader to a back-translation effort, which led to validation of the version produced (Appendix C).

With the researcher and respondents speaking the same language, no language differences are present in data gathering, transcription and during the first data analyses, as coding was conducted in Portuguese too.

Translation of respondent quotations posed specific challenges, because it is difficult to translate cultural expressions. To minimize the loss of meaning, the researcher translated the quotes in such a way as to capture the expected sense of expressions, which was facilitated by constant verification of the audio files. After this first effort, those quotes were submitted to a professional translator to avoid grammatical errors, to refine vocabulary and therefore avoid any loss of meaning for more structural reasons (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

### **3.10 Research ethics**

As the DBA Programme, as part of which this research started, did not require previous ethics approval, so before transferring to the PhD programme the researcher sought a full ethics approval at Newcastle University. The Faculty Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has

confirmed that this research would be granted ethical approval if it had been sought at the beginning of the project.

### ***3.10.1 Organizational and respondents' access and protection***

Key ethical principles of any social science research are to prevent harm to research participants, obtain voluntary participation and informed consent and provide anonymity and transparency (ESRC Framework for Research Ethics, 2015).

**Prevention of harm:** In this study, specific measures were adopted to avoid harming participants. This is pertinent in case study research as there is usually a gatekeeper involved to grant access and facilitate the conduct of the research, who may also have an interest in regulating the research findings. In this research, the gatekeeper, one of the main change leaders (CEO, VP or Director), granted permission for the research to be conducted in each case organization. Such authorization brings legitimacy to the research and give respondents confidence that it is institutionally safe for them to contribute. Each case organization had access to findings in aggregate form only, meaning no respondent or group of respondents were identified.

**Voluntary participation and informed consent:** The identification of potential respondents is described in Section 3.6, but it is worth highlighting that by accepting to be interviewed, each respondent was agreeing with the terms previously presented in the invitational message. To guarantee the respondents' full understanding, research questions and the confidentiality terms were reiterated before the start of each interview. Interviews were conducted and audio recorded after receiving the respondents' oral, fully informed consent to participate in the research in line with Brazil's strong informal culture.

Although there was a gatekeeper involved to grant access to the research settings, other individuals with administrative roles mediated the scheduling process. The tone of the endorsement e-mail (Appendix A) was one of invitation to participate in the research to minimize the risk of coercion. Not all individuals who were invited chose to participate in the research, which was fully accepted

by both the organizations and the researcher. Several respondents commented that the research interview was a great opportunity to reflect on important aspects of their work and that it felt good to do so, which generated positive meaning to the interview invitation within the organization.

As a second phase of data collection had been planned from the outset, all respondents were informed they would receive a future invitation to be interviewed again. The researcher stressed that it would be important for the research to count on their time again. However, not all respondents were able to participate in the second phase of data collection (due to time/geographical constraints, turnover, etc.), but about 40% were happy to be interviewed again. In other words, participation in the research was entirely voluntary (See Table 3.6 in Section 3.6.3).

**Anonymity and transparency:** Respondents received the interview transcript for validation not only to ensure that it was a true record of the interview, but also to offer an opportunity to review any statements that they were uncomfortable with. In each organization, a meeting was held to share initial findings in anonymized form to ensure that the organization would learn about the research findings early on and remain involved in the research.

### ***3.10.2 Data and human security***

The participants were presumably healthy, non-vulnerable adult professionals and the topic of research is not particularly sensitive. The main risk management procedures, therefore, were to assure anonymity and to store the data securely. All audio and written data collected solely were kept in a secure business school network (Fundação Dom Cabral) with password access to avoid unintended loss or exposure of data. The anonymity, offered in the letter of endorsement and also in the beginning of each interview, is preserved in all publications by giving pseudonyms to all respondents.

Data collection took place on the premises of the case organizations, all of which take security, health and safety seriously and have rigorous risk management procedures in place. Interviews were conducted during office hours

and in the respondents' private office to minimize inconvenience and maximize privacy avoiding major disturbances to their work, performance and agendas.

It was necessary to consider a conflict of interest. The research was conducted exclusively for doctoral study and it was agreed that until authorized by the organization, no findings would be explicitly shared within the business school where the researcher works. Authorizations to share findings were never needed, facilitated by the change of the researcher's role in the business school, as she moved to a different business unit, providing some distance from the solution designing process and also allowing a more critical stance towards data analysis.

### **3.11 Research quality and limitations**

#### ***3.11.1 Research quality***

Research quality may be evaluated through several criteria and for this research Tracy's (2010) eight features for high quality qualitative methodological research were adopted: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010:839).

Firstly, the notion of a worthy topic refers to a relevant, timely and interesting theme of investigation, relating to the research questions and the overall contribution of the research. Besides exploring organizational change in Brazil, which contributes to exploring in the future if there are differences and similarities in organizational change by country comparisons, this research adds to the current knowledge about change management by demonstrating that RTC may be influenced by COM.

Secondly, the richness of rigor was provided by a large data set of socially situated and contextual data. Rigour is also revealed in the coherence among the study's research philosophy, design, planning and execution; aspects discussed throughout Chapters 3 and 4. It could also be claimed that RTC is affected by other contextual elements other than the ones researched here, including:

- Individual characteristics: personal traits that are more likely to produce RTC;
- Individual leadership style: more or less participative and open;
- Information about change: clarity of change vision;
- Organizational culture: history of change: more or less participative and used to internal uncertainty;
- It takes time to understand and process change: naturally influencing for higher RTC in the beginning and a lowering path over time.

To strengthen the validity of this study and to help to keep those influences neutralized, data collection was conceived to include the gathering of information concerning previous organizational change experiences and to adopt a quasi-longitudinal format as a way to validate perceptions in time (Pettigrew, 1990). In addition, the goal to maintain individual traits and leadership style controlled or minimized was achieved by focusing on the same respondents through the two collection periods where possible.

Thirdly, sincerity was characterized by transparency about methods, challenges and limitations, including the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions, role and deliberate choices, as explored mainly in Section 3.3.

Fourthly, credibility was marked by a detailed description of research design and conduct, explained in this chapter, and the use of multiple sources of evidence to reach multiple points of reference to gain in richness in evaluations. Moreover, the interview transcripts were made available to respondents, allowing them to check the veracity of content and amend it if necessary.

Fifth, resonance refers to influencing, affecting or moving readers through historically and culturally situated knowledge (Tracy, 2010). Formal generalizations are not possible in this research, but qualitative research achieves resonance through transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Transferability was sought in this research, by offering the reader the chance to feel that the story of the research "overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (Tracy, 2010:845) through rich

and detailed descriptions. In addition, this research aimed to achieve analytical generalization, meaning that case study results can contribute to the theory primarily used to analyze the phenomenon. To do so, it was necessary to replicate findings in several cases where similar results may occur.

Sixth, significant contribution is achieved in several facets, as for example, conceptually/theoretically, practically, methodologically and heuristically (Tracy, 2010:840). Theoretical significance means that this research should build theory, extend or problematize current theoretical assumptions. In this study new understanding emerged about the dynamic between COM and RTC in contexts of acquisition by a foreign organization. Practical significance in this research means that the knowledge generated through the research is useful for practicing managers. Empirically answering the question of how the COM influences RTC, adopting the five dimensions of dialogic communication is new and lead to theoretical insights with both theoretical and practical usefulness, as discussed further in Chapter 9.

Seventh, ethics should also be a quality evaluation criterion. In this research, not only procedural ethics were pursued, as demonstrated in Section 3.10, but relational ethics as well. In other words, the researcher was mindful of her actions and consequences during all process regarding respectfully treating all involved in the research process and preserving existing relations. That included choosing the format for anonymized data presentation in this research, preserving identities, and the impartial description of context, avoiding judgmental positions regarding choices and decisions made in each change implementation. That allows the respondents to read and reflect on the findings without triggering several defense mechanisms and therefore with greater possibility of producing contributions to their practice.

Finally, to achieve meaningful coherence a research project should achieve what it was purposed to; interconnect all its components and use methods and procedures that fit its goals. In other words, this study claims its coherence as it accomplished its goals (see Chapter 7 for details) without losing perspective throughout its parts of the ontology and epistemology adopted, as largely explore in this chapter.

### **3.11.2 Limitations**

Limitations could be identified in several components of this study, from research settings, to sampling, respondents' candidness, contextual elements and language bias.

**Research setting:** All three case organizations were clients of the business school where the researcher works, which may have impacted positively on the quality of the findings since there was a previous relationship and credibility and trust transfer from the business school to the researcher, which is important in Brazil. That not only provided better access to data collection, but also made it easier to foster a good environment for the respondents to answer candidly. However, it might also imply that the case organizations were biased towards the research, potentially at least, as they share a similar understanding about the value of how to promote organizational development and potentially had a more favorable context to organizational change. However, it is arguable not only if they had in fact a comparatively better environment, but also the effects of this aspect on the phenomenon studied. In other words, valuing the promotion of organizational development do not represent similar stages in really doing so. Besides, in the cases studied there were different managerial and organizational development practices, which leads to not considering this a potentially strong bias.

**Sampling:** The respondents were not representative of all employees of the organization, which may provide partial insights into COM and RTC. This said, efforts were made to interview employees at different levels of the organizational hierarchy to derive a rounded picture of change (Hollinshead and Maclean, 2007). Therefore the use of documentary data is relevant, as well as observations, since those sources refer to the organization as a whole and not only to the sample. To complement the managers' views group discussions and interviews sought to elicit non-managerial employees' responses to understand their perceptions of what type of change was occurring, how they felt about it, and their beliefs about how change communication was being conducted.



**Respondents' candidness:** Despite explicit instructions to the contrary and a promotion of a very informal and relaxed mood to the interviews, there is always the risk that respondents may have answered based on what they thought either the researcher or their organizations expected (Jupp, 2006). However, the focus of this research were the perceived relations among the topics investigated (change, COM and RTC), not the assessment of each one per se, which make respondents less vulnerable to this bias, as they do not anticipate any answer as either positive or negative.

**Questionnaires:** COM questionnaire was designed to capture through two assertions each dimension of the dialogic COM. This decision entails a limitation and a strength – a limitation as two assertions only may not capture the complexity of each dimension and therefore turn the questionnaire insufficient to record the predominant COM on its own. RTC questionnaire also is limited to capture the complexity of the phenomenon, although it counts with five assertions per dimension. However, as with all instruments, both questionnaires play with a reality reduction, adopted in this case with the certainty that the questionnaires would be a complementary tool to interview data. Besides, both questionnaires provided the respondents with the consolidation of previous discussions raised during the interview, turning them into a numeric expression of their already elaborated thinking regarding the change, COM and RTC. The strength comes from the short length of the questionnaire and it was pursued to avoid taking too much of the respondents' time, which would mean an extra barrier and possibly an attention loss during data collection.

**Effects of contextual elements:** One relevant limitation refers to the monitoring contextual elements. It was intended to minimize the effect of individual characteristics, information about change, organizational culture and time to understand and process change, which was made possible by adopting a quasi-longitudinal approach. As two cross sectional data sets were collected in Generics Corp./FPG and Consulting Engineering Ltd./Canadian E., it was possible to elicit that COM and RTC varied in time, while the contextual elements mentioned above remained the same. However, another contextual element - leadership style - was also intended to be minimized by having the same participants during Time 1 and Time 2 data collections. Although the same

participants joined the research, some of the respondents (a small number) began to work under different direct leaders during the interval between data collections. Therefore, it was not possible to guarantee a minimum impact of this contextual variable in the findings.

**Language bias:** Language bias may have occurred in the questionnaire design and reporting of interview data, since translation was needed from English to Portuguese during the instruments design phase, as discussed in Section 3.9. More importantly, all interactions with organizations were in Portuguese while all findings provided in this research are in English, a foreign language to the author, which also represents potential limitation to the interpretation. Potential limitations are related to the loss of meaning that is inherent to all translations, but especially in the respondents' quotations. To minimize such bias, a professional translator reviewed the thesis; mainly the quotes discussed from the interview reports, to guarantee a sound translation. Additionally, an effort to minimize misinterpretation was made by submitting the findings to the respondents for validation (Bryman, 2004; Buchanan and Dawson, 2007).

All limitations acknowledged above are typical of social science and related to the context where this research was produced, unavoidably linked to the organizational world and its respective requisites. As Flyvbjerg and Sridhar (2006:223) state, "social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and, thus, has in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge". The value of this research is then avoiding some of the limitations and remaining aware of these intrinsic ones to produce valid knowledge as argued in the previous Section 3.11.1.

### **3.12 Conclusions**

In this chapter the choice for a qualitative study, based on a constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology was justified and linked to the research questions and objectives. The main deductive nature of this research was advocated, as well as the final induction portion that indicates the implications for theory and practice. In addition, the comparative case study design and the choice of the three case organizations were justified.

This chapter also provided a detailed explanation and justification of data collection and analysis of this research. A detailed list of items of data collected in each organization along with procedures adopted for analysis, allows the reader to understand the composition of the data set from which the findings presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 were taken. The conceptual framework introduced in the literature review, combined with the research philosophy, implicated in the choice of the adaptation or creation of data collection instruments, which may represent also a methodological contribution that goes beyond findings related to understanding how COM influence RTC during radical change. Research ethics was explained, revealing the key ethical principles and respective measures adopted to prevent any kind of harm to research participants. Finally, considering this nature of social science production and the case studies performed, research quality was discussed and limitations were acknowledged.



## **Chapter 4. Generics Corp/FPG: Predominant dialogic COM and influences in RTC**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings for the Generics Corp/FPG case study. Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are based on the coding framework adopted for the data analysis (as explained in Section 3.8.1). Therefore, these sections describe the main driver for the acquisition, the change timeline, as well as characterizations of the nature of change communication (COM) and resistance to change (RTC), based on interviews, documentary, observations and questionnaire data. This discussion reveals the predominant COM, in this case dialogic (Cunliffe, 2002; Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008; Jabri, 2012; MacIntosh *et al.*, 2012) and the evolution of COM and RTC dimensions corroborating a perceived inverted relationship between COM and RTC. Section 4.5 recollects the main findings and explores the dynamic between COM and RTC in this case. The chapter concludes in Section 4.6.

### **4.2 Acquisition and change - context and timeline**

In 2008 Generics Corp faced financial difficulties. Although extremely respected by its partners and customers, the organization had accumulated a considerable dependence on bank money for day-to-day cash flow. Suppliers were concerned and employees lived in a climate of uncertainty, worrying about whether they were going to be paid, laid off or be able keep their jobs. Rumours spread through the market about the possibility of the company being sold. The Board tried hard to resolve the issue, but found that there was no other choice than to find a partner, issue shares or sell the company. Employees knew that negotiations related to all these alternatives were being considered.

French Pharma Group's (FPG) purchase of Generics Corp is part of an aggressive policy of acquisitions in developing countries. Shortly before buying Generics Corp, for example, FPG had announced the acquisition of another South American laboratory and in February 2009, bought a group with a strong presence in Central and Eastern Europe, Turkey and Russia. The acquisition of

Generic Corp. strengthened FPG's market strategies in two respects: betting on emerging markets - and in Brazil and Latin America in particular - and growth in generic drug sales. As FPG's Annual Review 2009 indicates: "Generics Corp is very well positioned to benefit from the growing generics market in Brazil, which should remain above 20% annually over the next year".

When the acquisition of Generics Corp by FPG was announced internally in 2009, staff were relieved, because it meant the end of uncertainty about the future of the organization. Both employees and the Board were happy with the perspective of strong financial support by a respected global pharmaceutical group.

By the end of April 2009 there was already a group of leaders from FPG onsite at Generics Corp. The first team was made up of finance people, including a new Head of Finance, Human Resource and Business Support. This signalled a clear starting for subsequent changes, as to managerial practices and decision making, for example.

David Yan, Generics Corp's General Director, was dedicated to the commercial strategy and team before the acquisition. His charismatic, relational and friendly style was widely recognised by the employees, as well as by other industry players, as reflected in the following quotes:

*"... Because David had a very open profile. He had great powers of relationship ... Because we were a company, Generics Corp remains, but in the past it was built on the basis of relationship, proximity, being open."* (Interviewee A – Time 1).

Right after the acquisition announcement, Finance Director Robert Morris left the organization, being substituted by FPG's personnel, while David Yan and George Reeves stayed in their positions as President and Industrial Director. The main changes in leaders made in this case can be seen in Figure 4.1, below.

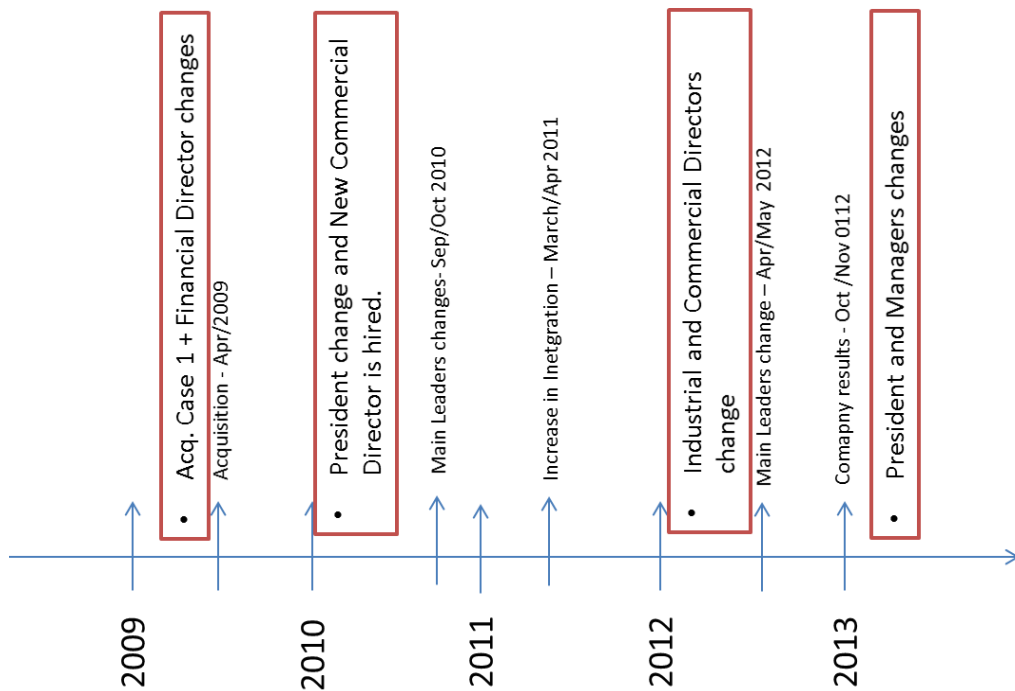


Figure 4.1: Generics Corp/FPG Timeline: change leaders / occasions  
 Source: Compiled by the author.

It is important to register some of the main leadership changes and main change milestones since the acquisition. The data occasions (see Section 3.6.1.) that respondents were asked to recollect are also indicated below.

- 2009 – April – Time of acquisition.
- 2009 – Financial Director leaves the organization and is replaced by FPG counterparts as Finance Head and as HR Head. Data Occasion: Apr/09 (Time 1).
- 2010 – March – The President leaves and FPG’s president for Brazil, takes over the position temporarily. A Commercial Director is hired. In July, a new President for Generics Corp is hired. Data occasion: Oct/2010 (Time 1)
- 2011 – Increase in management integration. Data occasion: March/2011 (Time 1)
- 2012 – Industrial Director and Commercial Director leave at the beginning of the year. Data occasion: May/2012 (Time 2). A temporary Commercial Director is appointed from FPG. At the end of the year, another President leaves and FPG’s president takes over the position temporarily. Data occasion: Oct/2012 (Time 2)

- 2013 – Feb/13 – A new President takes over the position at the end of the data collection period.

This change timeline will be detailed next, revealing main leader changes, cultural impacts and managerial alterations occurred in Generics Corp/FPG. Although not totally deliberate, leadership changes occurred in a transitional form, preserving to some extent the former main leaders and preventing too many changes in a short time period.

Mark Olive, President of French Pharma Group Brasil (FPGB), was involved in the negotiations and had seen and heard much from the way Generics Corp was led and influenced by its President, David Yan, and the other two main executives, George Reeves (Industrial Director) and Robert Morris (Finance/Administrative Director). According to the interviewees, the first directors who came into Generics Corp from FPG were briefed by Mark Olive about their roles and the way integration should be carried out:

*“We received three messages: ‘Open the drawers, look at everything and find out how the business works’, the first point. Second point, ‘preserve the culture, though you are FPG, preserve Generics Corp’s culture because there is a very strong thing there, a thing called ‘Proud to be Generics Corp’ and it has to be preserved’. And the third point, ‘protect the people’.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

These instructions were in line with the objective of maintaining Generic Corp’s business model and structures while integrating back office operations. Although FPG already had a large portfolio of branded drugs, vaccines and over-the counter medicines, generic medicines were not part of FPG portfolio. Generics Corp’s expertise and success in the generic market was to be respected while it was to be combined with FPG’s management style, comprehended as a need to gain better financial control of the organization. Interviewee D explained.

*“Front office is the visible area of the company dealing with the market and customers. I mean the commercial area, sales, marketing, anything that is related to consumers and customers. In the field of consumer and client relationships, we took the conscious decision to keep Generics Corp and FPG separate ... and to integrate some areas that stand*



*behind the company, that is the back office, where you might have some operational synergies.” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

In other words, change was envisaged to combine FPG’s managerial procedures that would ultimately improve business success, while preserving those elements of Generics Corp that were considered to be important to a successful business in the generics market: simplicity, informality, transparency, and human warmth (Generics Corp Sustainability and Social Corporate Responsibility Report). Such cultural aspects were reflected spatially and in interactions. For instance, at the factory, the cafeteria and coffee bar were always crowded, with people interacting in a lively manner and staff even from different levels of hierarchy greeted another with hugs, kisses or other affective expressions. During visits for data collection, several corridor walls of the plant, to the cafeteria for instance, were covered with stickers referring to post acquisition prizes, market recognition, brand rankings, etc., which reflects the pride to be Generics Corp (Observation 2 Generic Corp/FPG).

The decision about integration was meant to be for the back office, at least at first, while the front office was meant to be kept apart due to the different business models both organizations would be using. Initially, the integration of Generic Corp’s back office into FPG was perceived as “intelligent”:

*“It was an intelligent integration, it worked. There was not much tinkering here ... I mean, not much was changed. Mainly in the industrial division ... what was changed? Nothing. Nothing. I cannot say that there was any change ... Of course I had no report to do and now I have 300 ... but just get on with it! ... So, it worked. Is it complex? Yeah, the decision-making process is complex and it takes much longer. I used to decide to do something here, sit right there and agree, just the three of us, and we would go out to get it done. If that went right, all right, if that went wrong, then we would undo it the next day. Nowadays it is not like that, we have to do spreadsheets, design, demonstrate, and it takes longer. And sometimes this delay disturbs, but they (FPG) are understanding ... Generics Corp needs to be looked at differently...” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

This balance between culture preservation (related to Generic Corp’s business model for the generics market that promotes speed, innovation and

flexibility) and all the control and structured processes that were characteristic of FPG, was explicitly requested at several stages. Even in July 2010, more than a year after the acquisition, the new General Director who was replacing Generics Corp's former President requested it:

*“Because this is the ideal ... how can we preserve the best of both worlds? ‘How can we keep this entrepreneurship, this willingness to make it happen, this informality of the company that was a good thing, and how can we also begin to establish some controls needed to operate so that the business does not once again have problems? And I think this was the big challenge’. So David was the former manager of the company and ended up leaving in January 2010. Then Mark, the current president, took over and remained for six months and then I was hired and came in with exactly the same briefing: ‘Seek the best of both worlds, that is, find the middle ground there’.” (Generics Corp General Director – Time 1).*

After a review promoted by FPG, Generics Corp's Ambition and Values changed and were officially announced to Generics Corp's employees in December 2011(see Appendix D for details). The new formal ideology did not directly conflict with the former ones (2008 Corporate Social Responsibility Report). In fact, both state similar values and did not alter much in format, but it may alter the language and possibly the meaning of the actual values within the organization (Weiss and Miller, 1987; Burnes and Jackson, 2011; Maclean *et al.*, 2014). One relevant aspect to this research is a statement on the company's website, from before the acquisition and still remaining that: “The crowning of our policy of human valuation is our company's distinctive participative management” (Company's website and internal newsletter Jan-Feb 2011).

Despite these recommendations for preserving the culture, there was a perceived difference after acquisition, regarding the internal environment, as Generics Corp was changing from a management style said to be based on relations to the more procedural, standardized and regulated managing style characteristic of large organizations, as Interviewee G explained.

*“The biggest challenge for me here was not a matter of process, it was a cultural issue. Because we leave a family management style where having the most beautiful blue*

*eyes is often worth more than competence. And then you get stuff like 'I am his friend, it was X who brought me into the company, and things like this ...' This stuff is over, you have an office and you begin to act alone, here are the rules and procedures to follow and you will work in this direction ..."* (Interviewee G – Time 1).

Although there is no indication that at Generics Corp. the family management style occurred at the expense of professionalism, on some occasions the criteria of decision-making may not have been entirely rational and impartial. The decision-making process and autonomy were the changes really perceived in the integration of Generics Corp into the FPG. It can be comprehended also as a facet of leaving the family management style for a multinational management style. This new characteristic of decision-making decentralization was described within the organization by the word "transversality", referring to the need to consult and get validation from several functional areas in advance. That was also influenced by the replacement of former VPs and Directors, as the ones arriving at the company would not have the previous reference of autonomy within the Generics Corp. While at first decision-making was concentrated in the President and the VPs, it became more decentralized, more collective, meaning less autonomy or power to individual decision-making.

The changes of directors of the main areas such as finance and commercial ones, as previously explained, helped in the rapid adoption of the new practice of transversality,

*"In the past we had three Generics Corps: Industrial Generics Corp under George, Commercial Generics Corp under David, something like that, and another one that was not even on one side or the other and what we call the Financial Generics Corp, under Robert Morris ... So there were three large areas of influence and each one was about a third of the power and power to do anything – there was never consensus among the three and I did do not know if they had personal differences - each created its own world... So today we want to focus on a culture where transparency is the background, where respect is the background, where we have criteria for doing things. Of course we do not want to lose the passion, lose all the cool part of the story. But we also could not live with some benefits that some people had and others did not. But why?"*

*Just because some people were closer than any others to the King ... Those who were very much down (in the hierarchy) did not realize what was going on ...”* (Interviewee U – Time 1).

The process of integration had been considered successful until the end of 2011, as evidenced by the majority of the testimonials collected during Time 1 data collection (from Oct/2009 to March/2011). In those accounts, the meaning of change is connected to a different management model, that is, different processes of decision-making levels of control and formal managerial style.

*“I think that today the vast majority of staff is used to it (the change in management model). And then what happens is this, companies are like that, we were the very different one. In terms of documents and reports, we were very informal. And it helped, but it also hindered much. Because information took time to arrive. We had no commitment to information.”* (Interviewee J – Time 1).

During Time 2 data collection (from May/2012 to Oct/2012), as a consequence also of the company’s financial results not following the prediction, some criticism arose relative to FPG’s ability to manage the integration as commented by Interviewee U.

*“We are 33% below budget. And it is hybrid, we have two components: It has to do with strategic planning, no doubt, but it also has to do with the integration process, in the sense FPG thought that ‘generic is not so difficult, we also understand this market’. Early on, we took a careful stance: ‘because it is a new business and we do not know it, we should take it easy’ ... And as we did this we had two years of excellent results post-acquisition. What is curious is that when we started not to look at market differences and culture as being so sensitive, bingo, coincidentally the results were bad. Of course, not only because of failure to comply with this, but it was not only due to strategic decisions. I think half and half here in this story, it is partially strategic positioning, yes, but also partially the fact that we started to change a little in our essence ... We could continue being a soft company and also a company with economic awareness.”* (Interviewee U – Time 2).

As can be seen above, prior to the acquisition there was a perception that Generics Corp was a 'soft' company, in which relationship was central to all

managing process, close and empathetic. FPG is perceived as a company with a strong economic focus with comparatively little room for relationship making, and this is a relevant cultural difference between both organizations. This excerpt reveals a complementary sensemaking about change, connecting the ability to comprehend the generic business, knowing the market and the differences in organizational culture required by it, to generating good financial results (Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2005).

A possible explanation for not being capable of understanding the business, and the connection between change and results, are given by other respondents.

*“FPG made only one mistake, which I believe was the major cause of what is happening now, and that was not to have Generics Corp leaders run it. People were being moved away and people from FPG did not understand the business.”* (Interviewee LA – Time 2).

*“In general, results will say if this change is successful or not. In the beginning as we were coming into an unchanged process, a process maintaining the pace of production, still selling well, the company continued with the prospect of very high growth. And we did feel that the change was being well done. Until production began to fall and the numbers started not being ... the volumes ... reflection inside the factory, even if we did not look at the market, but we felt the repercussions of this when the equipment began to fall idle. Then the questions began, something wrong was done halfway. That the change was not well done.”* (Interviewee KA – Time 2).

As interviewee KA posits, alternative interpretations always exist and may eventually gain force depending on other members' acceptance of reasons and consequences plausibility during the progression of change. Sensemaking can be recalled here, where retrospectively selecting some facts people progressively review the meaning initially attributed, as advocated by Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) (see Section 2.3.1).

In sum, early on in the change respondents' sensemaking was that developments were positive and there was enthusiasm, despite the difficult

circumstances of selling and then integrating the organization. During Time 2 data collection, respondents' sensemaking had changed as new details became available, such as the latest figures tracing progress against expectations, and culminated with strong doubt about the success of change.

#### **4.3 Nature of change communication (COM)**

For the integration of Generics Corp into FPG there was no broadcasted medium-term change plan as such, but an acquisition communication plan developed by Generics Corp and supported by FPG. The responsibility for internal communications at Generics Corp is shared by two areas: (1) Human Resources responsible for face-to-face communications, handling events and participating in the regular, so-called managerial meetings of each division and (2) Corporate Marketing responsible for institutional external communication and internal written communication on the intranet, billboards, occasional formal e-mails and letters, and the in-house newspaper.

There were formal (written) and face-to-face communications announcing the acquisition. The letter to the employees signed by Generics Corp's president at that time, David Yan, with expressions reinforcing the end of hard times, states that:

*"Above all, I want to reassure you about the direction of the company. The most troubled moments have passed. From now on, it is a new life, with the resumption of normality in our operations, and especially the effort and individual commitment of all to our continuing escalation in the market ... A relationship is always more durable when there is affection and understanding even in difficult times. Together we went through positive situations and some not so positive over the past years, but maintained trust and harmony ... Today's announcement is a major milestone for everyone. It shows the company's success. The demonstration that all the work was valued and became the object of desire for one of the largest groups in the world."*  
(Letter of Acquisition, 9 April 2009).

Yan spent the first two days after the acquisition was announced explaining the immediate consequences of the deal and clarifying the most

common doubts that the acquisition generated for the employees. Face-to-face meetings in all shifts were organized so the conversation could address items such as company brand, vision, mission and values alteration, changes in staff, in trading strategies, plants operation, if there would be personnel cuts, and generally speaking what would be preserved and what would be changed (Internal Communication Plan – Face-to-Face Meetings – Acquisition April 2009).

This plan consisted mainly of meetings and was put together by HR and the President, following an established tradition of openness and relational interaction about the main facts involving the organization. The meeting was formatted to start with an informative speech, answer some questions that were anticipated and open the floor to questions from the audience, which reflects the nature of change communication at that moment, aimed at sensegiving and constructing meaning.

In Time 1 data collection in March 2011, there were regular meetings as described below, according to the Internal Communication Events Calendar and interview data:

- **General Committee meetings:** attended by the directors of Generics Corp and selected senior managers. For the first two years, they were weekly and then became monthly or biweekly in 2011, returning in 2012 to the regular once-a-week schedule. Dialogic in nature, this informational and work meeting is the forum for introducing new projects, sharing and discussing strategic information and plans.
- **Industrial meeting:** weekly meeting attended by the Industrial Director and his direct report team of managers. Mainly for decision making, it is dialogic in nature. Areas like HR (Human Resources), IT (Information Technology), Procurement and Engineering generally had an active listening role, identifying connections with their own activities, projects and systems.
- **Management meeting** (all managers except commercial): a monthly informational and dialogic in nature meeting, where financial results and market information are regularly discussed, as well as production and backorder indicators.

- **Gemba Walks:** (gemba means “the real place” in Japanese). From 2012 on, they were introduced by FPG to see the actual process on the plant floor, understanding the work, asking questions, and learning. Those were daily predominantly monologic meetings, mainly informational, about Lean management in the production area involving managers and supervisors.
- **Coordination meetings:** (all coordinators: from Industrial, Commercial and Internal areas) monthly, following the same dialogic format and nature of management meetings, cascading down the information and alignment.

It is important to notice not only the amount, but the different hierarchical levels involved, and mainly the dialogic nature and structure of the majority of the meetings, dedicated to decision-making supported by discussions and learning or listening to the participants in general.

Among institutional face-to-face communication initiatives/events, a few are noteworthy, as they reveal the structure and intentions for communication in Generic Corps/FPG:



Event name	Audience and Duration	Goals	Nature
<b>LEO – Leadership Engagement for Objectives</b>	Directors, managers and coordinators 4 hours/ 4times a year	Strengthen employee’s bond with the company; consolidate organizational culture; share goals, strategies and priorities, clarify to participants their role in the business, and contribute to better relations between management and staff	Dialogic communication
<b>CHAT – POT - letters POT mean Proximity, Openness and Trust</b>	Aimed at non-managers 1,5 hours/3 times a year	Share information, receive and provide feedback, question, clear up doubts, exchange opinions and make suggestions	Dialogic communication
<b>National Sales Conventions</b>	All Commercial staff 2 days/ 2 times a year	Strategic alignment (goals and motivational)	Monologic communication
<b>Proud To Be Generics Corp :</b> namesake former organizational value	All personnel (1300 people) 1 day /once a year	Cultural and strategic alignment	Monologic communication

Table 4.1: Events Generics Corp/FPG

Source: Adapted by the author from Documentary and Interview data.

One of initiatives, LEO, the researcher was possible to attend to, as part of the data collection (Observation 1 Generics Corp/FPG). Just before the acquisition, in 2008, LEO was temporarily downsized due to a lack of funds. After the acquisition, this event was suspended due to other priorities and CEO changes but was taken up again in March 2011 with approximately 120 managers and coordinators in attendance, as well as the researcher. It was possible to observe a predominantly dialogic COM, as during the meeting many interactions occurred and out of the four hours, final 15 to 20 minutes were dedicated to answering questions from the audience. That can be argued because of the way interactions and questions were posed, revealing that there was a general alignment among people, and the doubts were related to very specific points. It is interesting to note that the General Director wrapped up the meeting asking participants to send to HR the themes they would like to hear about in the next LEO meeting.

Other internal communication channels were:

- **Newsletter:** the primary vehicle of internal communication. It is well known and associated with the organization's history and published on an almost monthly basis, with an informational nature and therefore monologic COM.
- **Billboards:** are a relevant vehicle of written communication, located in strategic points of the plant. They are updated almost daily in terms of anniversaries, HSE (Health, Safety and Environment), HR news, Restaurant news, Corporate Social Responsibility, Classified ads, etc. Typically informative and with a monologic nature.
- **Intranet:** is a still important vehicle, mainly focused on technical news and as an access portal to all operational information. The Intranet is updated with the same regularity as the billboards, but with media campaigns, industry news and formal internal procedures. Although the intranet offers a feedback channel, the predominant nature is still monologic.

Most institutional communication activities at the time of data collection recollected above existed before the acquisition, showing a consciousness about the relevance of internal communication, with the basis being face-to-face communications (including LEO and CHAT-POT initiatives) and where written communication works to support face-to-face. Written communication in this case worked to provide information and face-to-face communication not only provided information, but mainly supported collective sensemaking. It was explored in Section 2.4.1 that conducting a face-to-face meeting does not guarantee a dialogic COM as it is related to the stance not exclusively to the format of the communication (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Russ, 2008; Jabri, 2012). However, within Generics Corp the frequency of meetings, the informality, the structure for conversations and the overall leadership style were evidence of opportunities were to engage in dialogue and collectively construct meaning and therefore characterizing dialogic COM (Jabri, 2012).

*"I believe that formal communication, and when I say formal, I mean the written medium, is powerful but cold ... each receiver will interpret my message in his/her own way"*

*... So the important thing was face-to-face communication and this I think was very well run, both at the moment of acquisition and when the President left. It was at this time when David [former president] left us that Mark [interim president] gathered everyone and made a face-to-face communication again. ... And at this moment where everyone is so sensitive, imagine if we didn't explain things, then people would really ... Because we were a company, Generics Corp remains, but in the past it was built on the basis of relationship, proximity, and great openness. Then at the stage of acquisition if you lose it you would have a natural break.” (Interviewee A – Time 1).*

There is evidence that proximity dedicated to explaining the change in an open conversation – not totally structured, as seen before – characterizes a dialogic COM. This is a clear relevant element of Generics Corp as the formal meetings were improved after acquisition both in terms of frequency and in terms of the levels of hierarchical involvement, as can be demonstrated above and explained in a respondent account:

*“Then we had to format some more formal meetings, which I held once a month, and now I have to do once a week, but also for the staff to be involved. Yesterday we held a meeting ... my level and my management level (meaning directors and direct managers) are not enough anymore. The coordinators have to be on the same level of knowledge. Because managers cannot deal with it alone anymore. There are meetings lasting two hours, three hours, and they are very fond of this business meeting, to sit down and discuss an entire afternoon. And in our model (former Generics Corp) this was not needed. But in their model, which is formal, it is.” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

In terms of the quality and the amount of information available concerning the acquisition and associated changes, there is a general understanding among respondents that both quality and quantity of information are adequate. As explored in Section 2.4.2 it is not a determining factor of the COM per se, but data regarding these aspects support the understanding about the change communication in general. Although a great consideration of these aspects does not guarantee dialogic COM, a poorly evaluated quality and quantity of communication hardly supports the existence of a dialogic COM. As it is to be expected from a theme that requires permanent attention, there were alerts not to overload people with information:

*“I think it was an excellent amount. ... Since the beginning, we had, not only internally, but even for the market, our general managers positioning themselves clearly about what would happen. And I think that too much information is distracting, so I think it was in the right measure.”*  
(Interviewee N – Time 1).

The quality of information seems to be well appraised, too, but with room to develop through detailing and timing.

*“I think the amount of information is appropriate. Because if you work with too much information you will confuse people. It has been almost two years since the acquisition and we have an adequate amount of good quality information ... The quality is good but it needs to be improved. Because what happens in the day-to-day processes sometimes makes us fall down on the details of this information and we need to improve this a little. Refine some things a little bit.”*  
(Interviewee G – Time 1).

The speed of change, new initiatives, adjustments and projects as well as the large number of procedures, patterns and policies to be aware of, are the causes of the general perception by respondents that there is a need to take care of information quality. In fact, no new vehicles of communication were created after the acquisition, but the existing ones were preserved.

*“We had only a few extra letters, some more specific things about the subject (the change). But the media as a whole maintained the same pattern. Billboard, Newsletter, Intranet and e-mail. That is what we are talking about. And the letters that were a little something extra. There was nothing exceptional, but those face-to-face communications.”*  
(Interviewee A – Time 1).

It seems that an informal and open internal climate helped to maintain the flow of information during the change process, and as respondents highlighted, face to face communications were the main effort in regards to change communication. Although with room for improvement, the quantity and quality of information flow were good, which also contributes to a dialogic COM.

The general evaluation of Generics Corp’s communication is that it had a fertile starting point, an open and relational internal climate, created before the

acquisition and sustained in the initially change communication/implementation activities. By analyzing the format, frequency and duration, messages, channels and the respondents' perceptions regarding the change communication, as presented above, predominance of a dialogic nature communication can be inferred. As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 and Time 2 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about COM dimensions that support characterizing the predominant COM in this case, as it will be explored in next paragraphs. The COM dimensions are Mutuality, Propinquity, Commitment, Empathy and Risk as previously theoretically discussed in Section 2.4.3 and detailed in Table 3.3 (see Section 3.6.2).

Respondents' perceptions were assembled in quotes, derived from interviews; and in graphics, derived from questionnaires, revealing averaged evaluations of each dimension over time. The interviews were the main source for revealing the sensemaking and for characterizing COM in the case. The questionnaires aided by providing the respondents perceptions about increases or reductions of each COM dimension over time. Therefore, by combining interview and questionnaire data it is possible to clarify the path of COM during change and its predominant dialogic or monologic nature.

Figure 4.2 below depicts respondents' collective perception with averages about COM dimensions from April 2009 to December 2012. Time 1 data occasions (see Section 4.2) are ACQ2009: April 2009 (acquisition date); DASMA: six months after acquisition and DAMA11: March 2011 (data collection period). Time 2 data occasions are DA2ND6M: six months before and DA2ND12: December 2012 (data collection period).

The average agreement about the existence of each dimension can be observed in the vertical axis, as attributed by respondents, with a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7 the highest score possible reflecting a strong perceived dialogic COM (in contrast, a smaller score reflects a weak perceived dialogic COM). The higher the average, the higher the perception of existence of that specific communication dimension at that point in time.

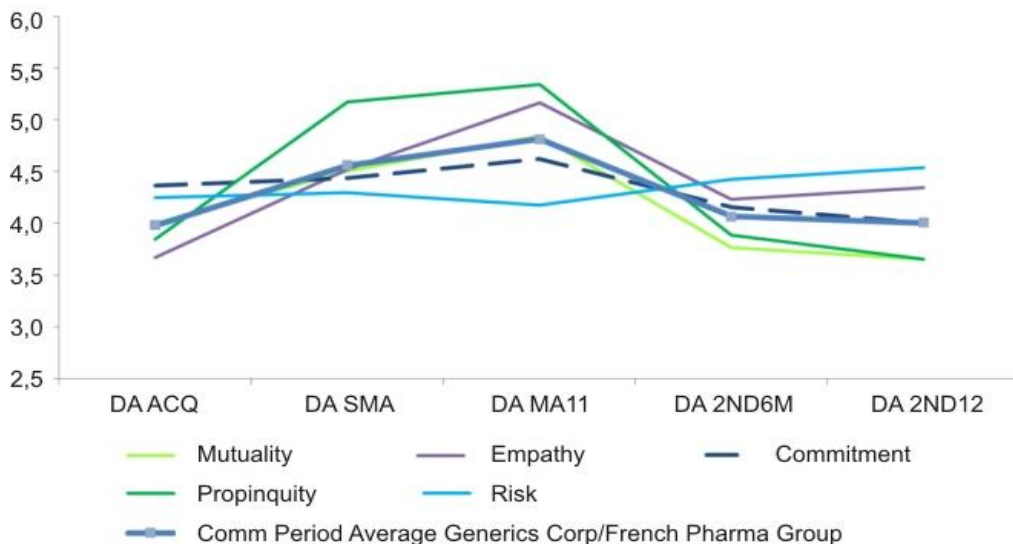


Figure 4.2: COM Evolution - Generics Corp/FPG

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA ACQ: acquisition period; DASMA: six months after acquisition; DAMA11: March 2011; Time 2: DA2ND6M: – March 2012; DA2ND12:– December 2012. Vertical Axis: Communication Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

The focus of the analysis is on the general outlook of the lines in this graphic. Dimensions overall showed an increase in the level of dialogic COM during Time 1 data collection (highest point in DAMA11: March 2011) and a decrease in Time 2, achieving at the end the same levels of the beginning of change, around 4.0. This overall path is reflected in the “Comm Period Average” line that combines all dimensions averaged. In order to argue the relevance of these findings and evidence of a predominant dialogic COM, it is necessary to come back to the respondents’ sensemaking, and therefore to rely on the interview data.

This is pursued next, by bringing respondents’ perceptions about what was going on in Generics Corp/FPG and relating these accounts to the respective COM dimensions they reveal. As previously established in Section 2.4.1, change implementation is regarded as communication. Those sensemaking evidences about the way change is conducted are then related to COM dimensions’ scores in Time 1 and Time 2. This is not an effort to justify every variation (every point of the intervals) of every COM dimensions, but to support the characterization of a path towards higher or lower dialogic COM and therefore establish the ground for concluding about the predominant COM in the case.

There is much evidence of a deliberate intention and practice in terms of dialogic COM in areas like the Commercial, Pharma, Industrial, Human Resources, etc. In each example described below, it is possible to identify one or more dialogic COM dimensions: Propinquity (P), Mutuality (M), Empathy (E), Risk (R) and Commitment (C). The following quotes were selected to display the various levels, areas and change efforts where the occurrence of those dimensions is evident, indicated by their initials in brackets.

#### **4.3.1 Time 1 COM Dimensions**

As can be observed in Figure 4.2, **Risk** (i.e. recognition to not know and assume uncertainty, vulnerability of not having control) and **Commitment** (i.e. genuineness, commitment to conversation, and commitment to interpretations) were the dimensions with the highest scores at the time of the acquisition (DA ACQ) and the ones that had less variation over time, according to respondents' evaluation. That is coherent with the descriptions previously presented about the internal openness and relational climate:

*“We try to have an open-door policy where people can talk. And this informality - we are very informal here - and I think informality is vital for you to be confident and relaxed about coming and expressing your opinion (R). I am trying to remember, that is what my arsenal of tools is for, people can talk about ideas and feedback. I think we have nothing very formal. What we have are opportunities to meet, opportunities to mingle with people very informally. I walk round the factory, I talk with people, I encourage people to do the same (C).” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

In other words, right after the acquisition Generics Corp was a place where people felt encouraged to express opinions, not only what was known as established facts. Not knowing something did not mean power loss, as reflected by the relaxed environment described above, a key feature of the **Risk** dimension (Bachmann, 2001; Bouquet and Birkinshaw, 2008; Dörrenbächer and Geppert, 2009; Karimova, 2014). In addition, there was a goal to try to grasp other people's positions, as **Commitment** defines (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012), and can be deduced from the value

given by the respondent to talking to people about ideas and giving and receiving feedback.

In respect to FPG's contribution to the process, respondents explained that they have been able to respect the generics business model, that is, understanding frequent variations in demand as well as associated differences in product and corporate brand management, to name but a few. That happened mainly due to a strong **Commitment** to understand that business model. It can be found in the following metaphor:

*“Again, a little change for me, a bit of change for the managers. But did a rule come out to state ‘today you are black and tomorrow you will be white?’ No! Are you black? You are still black (C). Maybe some white dots, or some blue specks, which is the French flag (laughs). But we will not look white and blue ... Because the more I lived with them (FPG) the more they understood me, actually more than I understood them (C).” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

As can also be seen in Figure 4.2, Propinquity, Mutuality and Empathy were, in this order, not clearly present right after the acquisition, when compared to Risk and Commitment. Those dimensions increased during the Time 1 data collection (DA SMA and DA MA11) and then varied somewhat, as it will be explored next.

Before the acquisition, vice-presidents would usually take decisions separately and announce them to the rest of the organization, characterizing that employees in general were not part of a dialogue or engaged in the decision-making, which refers to a low **Propinquity** (i.e. immediacy of presence and engagement in decision making, as in Kent and Taylor, 2002; Frahm and Brown, 2006). This was gradually altered by the new management style, which was later reflected in the growth of this dimension's evaluation. The charismatic style of the former President (David Yan) is an iconic example of how **Mutuality** (i.e. spirit of mutual equality, subjects of change and avoidance of superiority) was different under his leadership, in terms of his unquestioned power. As previously stated, employees were pleased to count on what was perceived to be a charismatic leader, that although concentrated the decision-making provided the managers in



interaction with no superiority and a sense of mutual value, in other words, mutuality (Cissna and Anderson, 1998; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). The following respondent explains the differences between Propinquity and Mutuality before and after acquisition, clearly indicating a movement towards a more dialogic COM, due to the increased presence of both dimensions. He refers to “Transversality” as previously introduced, as the common practice to involve different functional areas in each decision-making. It means that decisions previously understood only as with commercial stance, and taken by the commercial director, were, after the acquisition, defined by the Board as a group, considering many other perspectives as legal, financial, production and people management, for example.

*“... And this has changed. And it is a multinational culture, which has no owner, it has a president, but tomorrow or later it can have another one. ... This transversality came in the wake of a culture that FPG itself is trying to implement. But I think that here it was very well accepted. Perhaps because it is the opposite of what they had, because people can express themselves today, ‘I will tell you my opinion’. And so it was a bit of a change, you came out of a paternalistic model, which is not bad, not to think too much and have someone who protects you (M) ... and you move into a model in which people are exposed to more, there are more complex matrix structures and relationships ... to achieve greater professional intellectual growth you have to think (M) and have to participate in the decision (P).” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

Although first exemplified by the President’s authority, this model cascaded down and all leaders within their areas of influence replicated this transversality model somehow, which is easily expressed as an owner’s behaviour that is characteristic of a family company:

*“When you have the culture of a multinational one says ‘I have changed the rule, from tomorrow on it will be like this’. When you turn the key, everyone turns. People are used to it. In a company like it was here, a family business, things were more... ‘there’s that thing I own, I decide it (P) ... I own, only I have the door key, and people only come in and out when I want it’. This has disappeared. Before, they (some area heads) decided what the policy was, they decided what car, they decided the benefits. Today it is not like that anymore, decisions are taken collectively (M)(P) and they implement them. The steering committee decides it.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

Although very open, centralized decision making – low propinquity - lasted to some degree for the first year after the acquisition, it was progressively modified by the new management model, the so-called transversality, influencing in the sense of propinquity becoming more present towards the end of Time 1 data collection (March 2011).

In terms of the **Empathy** dimension (i.e. the environment of support and trust (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Schein, 2003; Heath *et al.*, 2006; Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008); it is clear that it was largely facilitated by the informal atmosphere that existed within Generics Corp before the acquisition. Right after the acquisition, empathy was not higher as the colleagues and leaders that came from FPG to integrate some areas were still to be known, the relations to be established and there was a context of uncertainty that prevailed.

*“I think the feeling was bad in the sense of uncertainty about what would happen with this change ... This informality is one thing that really came to stay and it had already been built up over the years, the staff was informal and we try to keep it informal and people feel very comfortable (E) to talk.”* (Interviewee D – Time 1).

In the three to six months after the acquisition, the **Empathy** dimension was not perceived by the respondents as high (see Figure 4.2, DA ACQ and DA SMA). This may be related to the fact that the main changes in the first months were focused on financial controlling, which was non-negotiable because of the fragility of Generic Corp’s control and analysis processes. The majority of the finance team was changed, and it was visible to the entire organization.

*“In the Finance area, it was hard, because everything changed, the way analysis was done, all internal controls, all internal audits, everything was changed.”* (Interviewee G – Time 1).

*“The area that was most changed, the most impacted, was Finance. Totally.”* (Interviewee J – Time 1).

It is important to establish that, different from the change in financial practice that was characterized by the adoption of FPG procedures, all the other aspects of integration were perceived to be defined by Generics Corp and FPG

Brasil.

*“So I say here that this was not an acquisition process. I think it was very important and smart that we have called it since the beginning a process of combining two entities that have their value (M)... And coming here (from FPG) we sought to continue Generics Corp’s trajectory. It was made very clear, ‘you agree to go, but you are Generics Corp now’, it was clear to me. And it also helped a lot in integrating with the people here.” (Interviewee N – Time 1).*

That means that there was room for **Empathy** to increase, as integration was supposed to bring together knowledge and working practices from both organizations, both valued **(Mutuality)**. The increase in these dimensions towards a more dialogic COM can be observed in Figure 4.2. from DASMA to DAMA11 (from the acquisition until March 2011).

Being dialogic means having both a clear direction and space for adjusting the implementation according to employees’ contributions (Jabri, 2012). By analysing the previous quotes, it seems that by providing an authentic meeting for expressing concerns it ultimately turns into an opportunity for improving the model:

*“I’ll tell you that half the questions expressed doubt or rejection and the other half were contributions, people who were already in the model helped to disseminate it to the rest of the group. So, one began: ‘Will we launch product so and so? Then we will launch this other one, we will resume working this product because it allows us to do the same! And let’s launch a short brand name because it helps us to talk more often!’ Then that starts to contribute to the model. (M,P).” (Interviewee N – Time 1).*

As this respondent states, having a forum to discuss may contribute to sensemaking, by turning what first were rejections into discussion and better decisions in the forum (Propinquity), as they were taking into account others’ perceptions of how to progress and their reflexions were considered as relevant as any others (Mutuality).

In Time 1 data collection, dialogic COM was primarily expressed by respondents, as can be seen in previous excerpts and analysis of all communication dimensions (mutuality, propinquity, empathy, commitment and risk). As argued in Section 3.1, monologic and dialogic COM co-exist (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012; Taylor and Kent, 2014) and even with a predominant dialogic nature, monologic COM was also described in the same period in this case. The compliance policy is one of the examples mentioned that was a monologic COM (mono). Compliance is a set of practices to enforce laws, regulations, policies and guidelines established for the business, like for example, those who approve an investment could not be the same as those who audit it.

*“Compliance policy came from FPG, we have not changed it. And did not shape how it would be presented, because someone showed it to us, although we shaped how to approach it. ... First we did a job with regional managers and then they understood what compliance was, why compliance, because within this new reality we are running bigger risks today as we have become part of a much larger group and then have much more visibility... The way the GD's (District Managers) and GR's (Regional Managers) worked with the group (representatives) was a way of simplifying and selling (Mono). The work we did was also to make them feel valued so that they would be better and more aggressive. ‘Yes, it was now time for them to show they were good and, of course, some of the group left ... And at the November meeting we were sure that the model - the essence and the bases, were already in place, and now the business is flowing.” (Interviewee PE – Time 1).*

An interesting aspect to note is the perception that being monologic in this prevailing dialogic COM environment is well accepted when it is clearly admitted and there is no attempt to make it look different:

*“... the issue of compliance was really a culture change. What really helped? A presentation was made during a sales convention **and it was explained** to the sales force why Generics Corp was going to work with compliance ... because it is publicly traded in New York and so it undergoes audits. That is, it was not forced down our throats, it was explained why it works, how it has to work and then it made it much easier for us to accept this change and these new processes. And there was this question of transparency. **Transparency about why it was important to be deployed in the company.** And shortly thereafter it*

*was included in performance assessments. And it creates culture.” (Group discussion - Time 1, emphasis added).*

It seems that the sensemaking in these circumstances were that not everything had to be communicated with a dialogic nature and that both COM, dialogic and monologic can be effective to promote change (Botan 1997; Jabri, 2014). Just by providing information of why it could not be the case and by making it explicit, it supported the acceptance of this imposition. In other words, it was a compliance policy to be followed with no room for negotiation, as it is a legal requirement of a public traded company. That made the obligation well received and set out satisfactorily, as the interviewee PE posed above that it was accepted.

In sum, at Generics Corp, it seems that the change process was perceived by respondents as being successful at this point, explicitly relating it to the dimensions of dialogic COM, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

*“Success is there, we're selling more and more ... So this is the first success, we're selling a lot. The second, I think is the way it was done. The decisions were postponed (P), and some sort of pushing sometimes happened in one area or another, but the collective decisions (M), even if you did not agree with the whole decision, you signed on the dotted line, and then you took them to your group. And over time this was proving to be the best decision. And this helped, it really helped, I think this is the greatest success. And the other was, I kid a lot with Mark, who is the Chairman of the holding company and he is now Latin America, I tell him, I think of the freedom that we had here to work. The freedom we had, because while we have here faced some barriers, on the other side there is the whole of the FPG saying ‘they are doing something that cannot be done within the group’. And we found a middle of the road formula (C) ... do not ask me how! Things were happening and we were addressing them to the extent that was possible. And then I think it was the coolest thing of all. And I feel very happy, very happy.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

Interestingly, the success is not only related to the company’s commercial results, as the respondent emphasizes, in terms of selling, but also in terms of the process, the way change was implemented. It is exactly in the explanations about this way that the several dimensions of dialogic COM are recalled.

The predominant dialogic COM during Time 1 seemed to have supported the change in Generics Corp/FPG and there still the need to analyse the accounts related to Time 2, as will be explored next.

#### **4.3.2 Time 2 COM Dimensions**

After 2011, it is possible to notice a change in the COM as can be noticed in Figure 4.2 (DA2ND6M: March/2012 and DA2ND12: December 2012). From this moment on decisions were perceived as being taken without the real involvement of others (**Propinquity**).

*“People comment that sometimes change arrives ready-made. What people complain about is that they would like to get a little more involved in the decisions. The perception of some is that sometimes empathy (E) and taking part (P) are more symbolic, because in the end it was ready-made ... I think they were invited to participate more in decisions previously taken (Mono). You can participate here, but the final decision is that way.” (Interviewee PE - Time 2).*

This account reveals the perception that although there was consultation on a subject, the decision was not really to be made taking into consideration the involved ones, lower **Propinquity**, and the interaction goal was in fact to convince staff of a decision previously taken. There was a feeling of being manipulated by those who came from FPG to top management positions, which relates to several COM dimensions, indicating a decrease in dialogic towards monologic COM (see Figure 4.2). The previous excerpt reveals this perception of manipulation with the use of the word “symbolic”, meaning only superficial appearance, but not actual reality. This perception about manipulation was primarily led by a sensemaking that juxtaposes FPG respecting the generics business model (see Section 4.2) contrasted with actions that were not perceived as aligned to that. As the following excerpt reveals, at Time 2 data collection, respondents perceived the original intention of considering contributions from Generics Corps and respecting accounts from both organizations (**Mutuality**) as no longer present.

*“People were confident that the company (FPG) wanted the best for everyone (M). Except that not everyone was being engaged (C) in the best possible way. I think everything was being too imposed (C). And people were not having time to be able to adapt. I think the weakest point was the lack of a careful construction process (of the new practices).” (Interviewee A – Time 2).*

The internal climate was still supporting this intention (**Empathy**), however, the **Commitment** to comprehend the other perspective was not really going on:

*“At first it seems that there was an attempt at involvement (I). But all the people at Board level, senior management who came to Generics Corp, came from FPG Pharma market. And the mental models of those working with the Pharma market are completely different from those who work with generics. Because Pharma works with greater profit margins and with prescriptions, demand does not change over time as abruptly as generic medicines. And I think this mentality prevailed over the generic mindset that we had in Generics Corp (M). I believe there was a mood (E), but there was no willingness to understand (C), willingness to listen, but I think anyone who has come here has come in with the mindset of what should be done (I).” (Interviewee KA – Time 2).*

It seems that in Time 2 a different sensemaking about the change process started to arise. Perceptions that FPG started to intervene more strongly in Generics Corp’s practices than at the beginning. At the end of Time 2 data collection, communication was perceived as monologic.

*“I think the reaction to change was always gentle indeed, because FPG entered mildly, in 2009 and in 2010 ... and in 2011 we felt it a little more. So I think the issue of equality and balance (M), at the beginning it was more engaging perhaps.” (Interviewee B – Time 2).*

At this point, some explanations were related to FPG’s imposition of its managerial processes and controls, in a way that would have harmed the change, a way that lacked acknowledgments that the generic business model was not yet entirely known (**Risk**):

*“And for me I guess there was a lack of humility from FPG to recognize that it is a different business. A business it had no expertise in (R), that it actually had to operate differently. You cannot bring in FPG processes in the way that FPG does. I guess a bit of humility was missing ... we wanted this change since the beginning, we wanted it, but in the end we did not achieve it.” (Interviewee Z – Time 2).*

Talking about being dialogic, but unfounded on dialogic COM practice, seems to generate a worse response than monologic COM. In Generics Corp this seems to be related to a stark change in the COM during 2012, which appears to be related to RTC that will be explored in the next section (Ford and Ford, 2010; Courpasson, Dany and Clegg, 2012).

Hence, Generics Corp/FPG was able to sustain the previous internal climate and even increase the strength of dialogic COM during Time 1 data collection (see DA ACQ to DA MA11 in Figure 4.2). This increase was mainly due to a significant amount of face-to-face change communication/ implementation and the institutional request to deeply understand practices. Although there was a loss of strength towards the end of the data collection period (see DA MA 11 to DA2ND12 in Figure 4.2), it was possible to maintain a predominantly dialogic COM throughout the change. A similar evaluation of RTC over time will be explored in the next section.

#### **4.4 Resistance to change (RTC)**

First of all, the concept of resistance to change (RTC) is something that respondents sought to understand (Courpasson, Dany and Clegg, 2012), as can be seen in the following extract. This stance about RTC is aligned to concepts explored in the literature review related to the constructivist perspective as a whole (Palmer and Dunford, 2008) and more specifically to the sensemaking process (Weick, 1993) that requires avoiding fixed positions (see Section 2.5 for details).

*“Some resisters are truly insurmountable and over time we try to circumvent that resistance. Some resistances are healthy as I told you, and it shall be recognized. I say that we try to talk to people with the empty glass ... The empty*



*glass means without prejudices and with an open mind, let's listen. If it is a reasonable resistance 'wow, it's true' ... If the resistance does not fit the strategic direction that we want for the company, this person does not fit, and then she will leave naturally or the company ends up helping her out. But eventually this person will not be adapted to the regimen ... Many protested leaving ... but there is something else, usually the person who debates with you is a person who believes it is worth it. And if you do not debate, it is like the way it is with marriage, when we do not fight anymore it is because it is no longer worth it.” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

It is a positive stance once is perceived as a response from people committed to change, and to whom it is worth to listen with an open mindset. Interestingly, as also can be seen in the quote, there is a perception that people may leave after some time, after some efforts, if there is a divergence between views that cannot be reconciled. It is worth recollecting from Section 2.6 that dealing with resistance understood and treated as a communicative response, worthwhile of debate by those genuinely interested in contributing to company's success, is a characteristic of change under a dialogic COM (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Russ, 2008; Jabri, 2012).

Next, another respondent complement the picture, revealing that dismissing people would be easier, but an undesired first reaction to RTC, as also can be observed in Section 2.6 as a feature of change when taken under a dialogic COM. From a strategic perspective, imposing one dominating view may prevent the development of new innovative solutions for the organization (Ford and Ford, 2009; Courpasson, Dany and Clegg, 2012). Besides, laying people off and replacing them with new employees may look like a less troublesome way, but the time and cost of integrating each new employee must be considered. In sum, although it demands more time and effort, for those involved it is an achievement and personal satisfaction, to be able to deal with all the different perspectives and produce business and personnel continuity as stated by one respondent:

*“It would be much easier [to lay people off]. Easy in terms of enforcing the decision, without business continuity. Faster ... Yeah, but the messages we received, get to know the business, preserve the business and preserve the people ... that's what we did, that was how this group ended*

*up finding out how to take this forward. I'll tell you, I'm 48 years old and I have been in the pharmaceutical industry for 26 years. It was an experience; it has been a fantastic experience because it is very different from what I knew. I'm speaking from a personal point of view. It was very different. It was gratifying.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

Noticeably, according to several respondents, the number of people dismissed was comparatively low as many of them could enumerate the alteration in several areas naming each one of the replaced people. In the commercial area, for example, during Time 1 data collection, it was said that no one had left:

*“And I have this case [history of success] in my life, it was not the growth that we had from March 2010 until now, as the leader in the generics market to date, far ahead of the company in second place. It was not. We increased this margin, this distance. But this is not my case. My case is not losing anyone in the team. So you take a team created over 10 years, with the former directors, with their rationale, a team that was passionate about them. In a change, it is natural for people to leave ... as it is natural and it has happened here ... several people left or went to work for other companies. And the commercial team didn't leave. Even when they [former directors] set up other firms, people were invited to go to work with them and they didn't go. So, this is my case...” (Commercial Director – Time 1).*

The HR director summed this up, referring to the company as whole, as follows: *“Our turnover is kind of normal, but still lower than the market's.”* (HR Director – Time 1). It seems that during Time 1, in GenericsCorp/FPG the collective sensemaking about the change was not to relate resistance automatically to dismissals, which is corroborated by the low number of dismissals in total.

The initial evaluation of RTC in Generics Corp's reveals that despite manifestations, the request from FPG to “preserve the business and the people” were influencing the way to deal with RTC. As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 and Time 2 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about RTC dimensions, as it will be explored in next paragraphs. RTC dimensions are Affective (i.e. feelings about the change), Cognitive (i.e. thoughts about the change) and Behavioural (i.e. involves actions or intention to

act in response to the change), as previously theoretically discussed in Section 2.5.2 and detailed in Table 3.4 (see Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008 and Section 4.2.2).

Respondents' perceptions were assembled in quotes, derived from interviews and in graphics, derived from questionnaires, revealing averaged evaluations of each dimension over time. The interviews were the main source for revealing the sensemaking and for characterizing RTC in the case. The questionnaires aided by providing the respondents perceptions about increases or reductions of each RTC dimension over time. Therefore, by combining interview and questionnaire data, as it is provided next, it is possible to clarify the path of RTC during change and later to analyse its relations with COM.

Figure 4.3. shows the progress in time of each dimension of RTC, that is, Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive, from April 2009 until December 2012. The vertical axis represents the average agreement about the existence of each dimension, as attributed by respondents, in a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7 the higher level of RTC. The higher the average, the higher the agreement about the expression of that specific RTC dimension, at that point in time.

There is a clear decrease in levels of RTC, starting from an average of 5 points (on a scale of 7 max) right after the acquisition (DA ACQ) to an average of around 3.5 at the end of the data collection phase (DA2ND12).

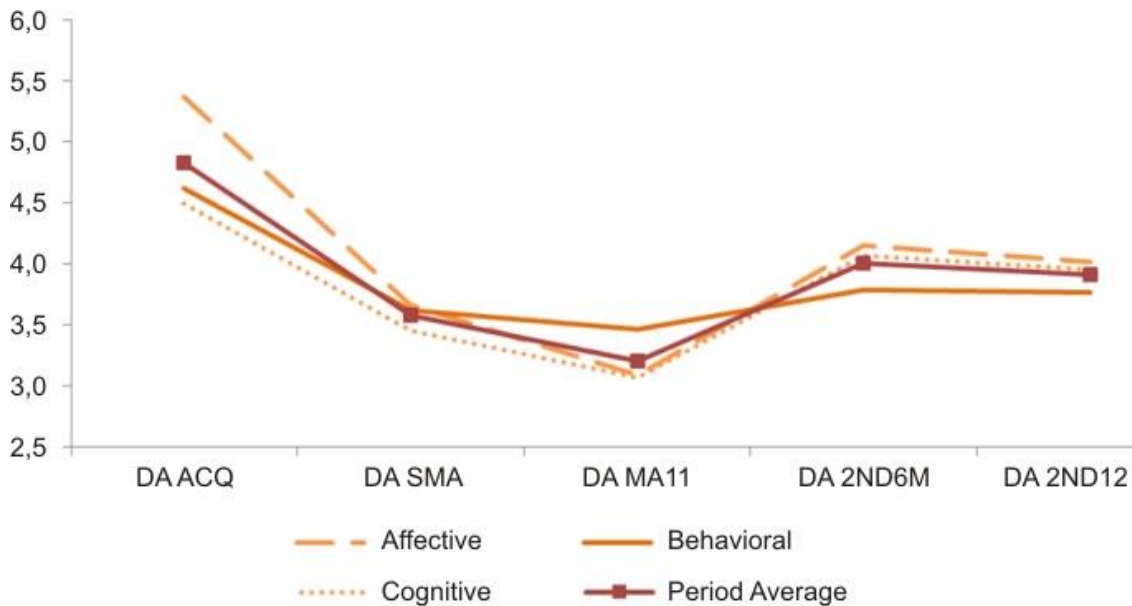


Figure 4.3: RTC Evolution - Generics Corp/FPG

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline - DA ACQ: acquisition period; DASMA: six months after acquisition; DAMA11: March 2011; Time 2: DA2ND6M: March 2012; DA2ND12: December 2012. Vertical Axis: RTC Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from RTC Questionnaire responses.

During the first years after the acquisition (Time 1 data collection), RTC overall was reducing (from a score of 4,8), and in 2012 (Time 2), it increased again, although not achieving the same levels of the beginning of change (with a score of 3,9). This averaged evolution of RTC is reflected on the “Period Average” line. Next, respondents’ sensemaking derived from the interviews, about what was going on in Generics Corp/FPG are related to the respective RTC dimensions they reveal. In each excerpt below, it is possible to identify one or more RTC dimensions: Affective (A), Behavioural (B), and Cognitive (C), indicated by their initials in brackets.

#### 4.4.1 Time 1 RTC Dimensions

It is observable in Figure 4.3 that **Cognitive** was the weakest dimension of RTC for the respondents during Time 1 (from the acquisition period until March 2011) and yet it decreased during this period (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, 1993; Diamond, 1986; Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Stanley, Meyer and Topolnytsky, 2005; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008). As explained earlier, the acquisition was understood since the first stages of the

change as a good solution for Generics Corp's financial instability. In addition, people understood that they had to adjust to being part of a multinational corporation, with global standards, and they understood there would be more work to do, more procedures to follow.

*“Now we have cross-sectional areas that need to talk, that have to speak, and then sometimes it is much more bureaucratic. But, I understand that it is due to the company’s size, it is like that anyway (C). ... So, often you want to do one thing and how can I achieve this? With only one person trying to, he will not do it. I have to ask for help with this, for this and that, have a three-hour meeting, or an hour and a half, talking to everyone and then make a budget, and approve, and put a million here, but it's a bureaucratic thing. But there is no other way (C) for such a large company ...” (Group discussion – Time 1).*

This quote reveals collective sensemaking that a multinational and large corporation as FPG really requires this amount of procedures and “bureaucracy”, what made it easier for the respondents to accept, reducing Cognitive RTC. It was also understood that there were improvements for them in Generics Corp after integration, not only in terms of management, but also in terms of acquiring global experiences, exposition and professional opportunities to grow. This clearly contributes to a smaller level of **Cognitive** resistance in terms of benefits of the change for the respondents:

*“And my folks are realizing, they are learning (C). Now they have a professional horizon that did not exist before. What was the professional horizon before the acquisition? This little world here. And today what is the professional horizon? The world. ... So this is a factor that helps a lot. There is now the visibility, the opportunity to be head of a site in Latin America or go to Europe, it may be possible. ... And this is very good for the new staff, very good. They get to know people, get to know countries, learn about and have opportunities (C). It is excellent.” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

There is evidence of self-awareness about the process and justification about how new procedures and activities needed to be adjusted. This reveals that FPG was respected for its management know-how, while Generics Corp was respected for its know-how of the generics market. This also collaborated to reduction in levels of **Cognitive** dimension of resistance, as this aspect of change

was benefiting Generics Corp development in planning and managerial practices, as the quote below suggests:

*“I get it, FPG is a multinational, FPG is a publicly-traded company, very organized, capitalized and so on, we see the shock, perhaps due to wide market fluctuations in the generics market question of how much to produce here, or a close partnership there ... ‘But I think in this part of generics FPG is beginning to understand now. Because it needs to understand us, moreover, after all FPG bought Generics Corp for this reason, right?’ ... And we were so poor in planning. FPG has taught us many things (C), we could not organize anything. We did everything in the short term and it was very rushed, and we could not sell with quality ...” (Group Discussion – Time 1).*

The **Affective** dimension started as the highest one among all RTC dimensions, meaning that feelings of fear, anger or anxiety were the strongest resistance components immediately after the acquisition (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008), but was also the largest drop up to DAMA11 (March 2011, Time 1 data collection).

*“... There was such a thing it was not so much to be against it, but of concern. Because what we see in the market, the acquisition model is to add what was bought and send everyone that was purchased to the street. And so it was this fear (A), based on the model that exists in Brazil.” (Interviewee PE – Time1).*

It seems that the initial fear of being laid off was present and explained the reactions at a first moment. As the goals of integration were to maintain Generics Corp as a stand-alone business and to integrate managerial practices, dismissals caused by acquisition were rapidly no longer the main concern and leading to a fall in the Affective dimension, especially with the acquiring organization being considered as a saviour:

*“The company in a bad situation and it is bought by another company. That generates a feeling of salvation (A).” (Interviewee FA – Time 1).*

Interestingly, the **Behavioural** dimension of RTC (i.e. complaining about the change, trying to convince others that the change was bad [Gioia and Manz,

1985; Kotler and Keller, 2000; Bordenave, 2001; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Neiva, 2004; Oreg, 2006]) fell from 4.6 to 3.5 during Time 1 (see Figure 4.3 for details). One possible explanation is the fact that there was some institutional support to act or express the response to the change (formal spaces for discussing proposed changes, with a dialogic communication nature) and so people were encouraged to express their understanding (**Cognitive**), their feelings (**Affective**), impacting their intent to act (**Behavioural**). This was occurring in regular meetings as a contribution to shaping the change itself through the practice of transversality, as previously explained.

*“I think that the moment you open yourself up to transversality you have an opportunity for it to happen. The decision can be a little slower, but it is more widely discussed. ... I think it is cool to discuss that subject ... that was transversality, people have the opportunity to share their views (C). And thank God we did pursue transversality, because if we had taken the decision alone in a room, it would have been the wrong one.”* (Interviewee D – Time 1).

A very concrete case of employees' expressing themselves about a proposed operational change and how this shaped the final solution to be implemented is described below:

*“The commercial call center system will no longer be operated by Generics Corp. It will be a third party that will operate it. And so, how to package it? Nobody's stupid, huh? And then there's everything to do with communication on this issue. Call the staff (who? would be outsourced) into the room. When we were doing this in this area, we saw that people did not want (B) to be outsourced because they have so much pride (A) in working at Generics Corp ... If you don't put pressure, no one will want to go, we will lose the 'Generics Corp way' (C) in this process. So let's take another 6 months and those 6 months we will have more time to relocate the people inside and get the commitment (B) from these people to come here and start the process for another company that will enter. Time goes by and people stay here. So let's do it this way.”* (Interviewee U – Time 1).

It seems that by taking into consideration employees' opinions about the pride in being part of Generics Corp and their wish to remain in the company even if they had to do a different job, and by shaping the final solution accordingly,

Generics Corp/FPG was able to reduce RTC perception in general. **Behavioural** especially, by counting its manifestation (convincing them that the outsourcing was a bad choice) as an expected and legitimate response, channelled to cooperative environment and turned into support to the outsourcing effort for the commercial call centre. **Affective** and **Cognitive** RTC were influenced as well, as the respondent highlighted the conversations was about fears (A) and the possibility of losing the Generic Corps way of working (C) in the call centre.

In other words, finding ways to adjust patterns, surmount procedures and innovate is what was expected and allowed when dealing with RTC through dialogic COM, nevertheless it takes a clear resolution to pursue that and takes time to be carried out, as explored theoretically in Section 2.4.2.

*“We must call for speedier processes. It is one thing that maybe is not only within the scope of people here. I mean the company as a whole will have to see what the limit is between speed and being cost-effective ...”* (Group discussion – Time 1).

Although perfecting the processes seemed to be going on in some extent so far, it mattered to Generics Corp how to get to quicker solutions and lower levels of RTC, without damaging the organizational practices of collective decision-making and the corporate performance results achieved during the Time 1 data collection. It must be verified then, how RTC performed according to respondents accounts, during Time 2 data collection, as will be explored next.

#### **4.4.2 Time 2 RTC Dimensions**

During Time 2 data collection and going against the common sense view that time would naturally decrease RTC, all dimensions, Affective, Cognitive and Behavioural, showed a substantial increase (from 3,2 to 4,0 in average). They did not reach the levels of the beginning, but still revealed deep changes in the internal environment at Generics Corp. One of the encompassing reasons for this path may be the sensemaking regarding company’s results. While in 2011 it was still achieving the forecasted goals, the poorer than expected results of 2012 may have impacted all dimensions of RTC, as it will be explored later in this section.



The **Affective** and **Cognitive** dimensions followed the same pattern of increase during Time 2 and both ended up at the same level. A respondent explains that although it started with great expectations, even idealizing FPG, the perception of change as a good thing for the company does no longer make sense:

*“And then, geez, belief is half crumbling, you idolize the colonizer, the buyer, as having skills that you don’t, and after three years we returned to the stage before 2008. And then I would say that this is a movement, that this belief (C) is shaken today, in the second semester ... And then it is not only a local thing, it’s something broader in the model ... The belief remains developing ... So where are we going, what will become of this business in the short, medium and long terms?(C).”* (Interviewee B – Time 2).

Besides the financial results, there is some similarity to 2008 regarding the level of uncertainty. At Time 2 data collection, respondents collectively had doubts about the future of the organization, in both the short and long term, regarding the fit between Generics Corp market and FPG management model.

*“Things that are in the voice of the people: ‘we know that the result is bad, but do not know why (C).’ ‘FPG is taking control.’ ‘Generics Corp is going broke.’”* (Interviewee U – Time 2).

Even not knowing exactly the reasons why the results were disappointing, clearly contributed to the increase in **Cognitive** RTC:

*“...the issue is that the lack of results of the company might lead to a thought (C). So, I do not know... I believe it’s not the integration process that is generating the results. I think the paths chosen, some decisions, external problems and such that have caused the company not be achieving the results ... But what might happen is that this fact leads to another interpretation (C).”* (Interviewee A – Time 2).

This previous account needs to be explored in two ways. Firstly, sensemaking about causes for results may vary. Several respondents explained such changes as having been caused not only by market circumstances, but also due to internal decisions that were not well conducted, including the choice of the former President / General Director, as the following quote illustrates:

*“I know David’s succession was dealt with by Mark, himself, and then they asked people and tried to find someone soft to lead Generics Corp, which was essentially a relationship business. Here was the error (C): it was essentially different, David had nothing soft, it was a business relationship, dealing with people face to face because he cared about people. And it was not soft in the sense that it was not passive, quite the opposite, he was active. And they turned their backs on that (succession) and did not follow up on it. And that is when it began to unravel ...”*  
(Interviewee B – Time 2).

Secondly, as the quote above reveals too, more uncertainty seemed to influence the sensemaking, by altering the meaning of previous facts to find plausible explanations for the current perceptions of reality (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). This uncertainty also reflects on the increase of fear and tension, altering the **Affective** dimension of RTC as well. Anxiety and annoyance are typical consequences of sensemaking about these bad results and the expectation of layoffs, which occurred gradually at the end of the year. Just in the first months of 2013, about 130 employees of the sales force, as well as the President, were dismissed, reducing the workforce from 1.500 in 2009 to 1.200 employees.

*“And then in the emotional field is fear of change (A)...So I have less autonomy and with less autonomy I feel weaker. Feeling weak I’m emotionally shaken (A).”* (Interviewee M – Time 2).

Even not knowing the relative contribution of changes in leadership styles, of the new process implementation, or of market conditions, it is clear that Generics Corp ended up in an uncomfortable situation regarding operational financial results. As observed during Time 2 data collection, and through the excerpt above, results and internal climate are understood as being cause and effect of each other, disrupting the integration process that was evolving promisingly.

The **Behavioural** dimension also increased during Time 2: it seems people were tired with change and less enthusiastic about the company itself because the perception was they were no longer heard in the institutional opportunities. What during Time 1 was carefully considered as legitimate

response became “noise” that tended to be ignored, characterizing an alteration towards monologic COM. The following account corroborates that:

*“I think there is a blanket of silence that is very dangerous. Silence encourages, represses, almost unconsciously... The deal is simple, at the beginning there was screaming, attention was called, shouts, e-mails sent and various forms of communication tried to solve things. When it was realized that noise was not in the least a source of attention that made people stop and look, then the noise stopped. And now you see a lot more communication taking place along corridors (B), more veiled ... But then again today it's shy behaviour, people's expectations have been levelled down.”* (Interviewee M – Time 2).

The quote before also reveals the effect of less dialogic COM; a silent form of RTC regarding the organizational channels, but expressed in corridors with complaints with colleagues only, in a veiled way, a much harder one to identify and deal with (Lawrence, 1954; Powell and Posner, 1978; Stohl and Cheney, 2001).

Another respondent reinforces the perception of veiled RTC:

*“... For that I say that is a veiled resistance, because you talk, talk, talk and you think you're involving, you are committing, you are creating an appointment, you are sharing, but deep, deep there the staff does not trust you yet (A).”* (Interviewee Z – Time 2).

In sum, Time 2 is marked by less RTC than in the beginning of change, but higher levels than in the end of Time 1 data collection. The relation between this overall RTC path and between each of its dimensions with COM will be explored in the next Section.

#### **4.5 Dynamic between COM and RTC**

The analysis of the change communication presented in Section 4.3 has demonstrated the predominantly dialogic COM during change in Generics Corp./FPG that increased, even though towards the end of the data collection period, it lowered in some extent. In that Section this evolution was explored

aided by data in text and graphic format, revealing the collective perception about COM dimensions over time. The analysis of RTC showed in Section 4.4, characterized an average reduction in the levels of resistance, although towards the end of the data collection period, this increased to some extent. Section 4.4 also revealed a collective perception of respondents in text and graphic format, observing its dimensions evolution over time.

By connecting the previous findings, it is possible to argue the perceived existence of an inverted relation between COM and RTC. While dialogic COM was increasing RTC was reducing, and towards the end of data collection both COM and RTC change paths, but again in opposite ways. This overall mirrored evolution in COM and RTC implies that under a dialogic COM the way RTC is dealt with can transform responses into a more constructive change process and outcomes. In accordance with the literature review, Section 2.6, this finding empirically supports COM as a relevant influence to RTC.

Besides previous accounts that reflect respondents' sensemaking connecting COM and RTC, by mapping the COM and the RTC graphs against each other, one can also see their collective perceptions interrelated. This analysis may be seen in Figure 4.4, combining how COM and RTC performed is revealed during Time 1 and Time 2 data collections.

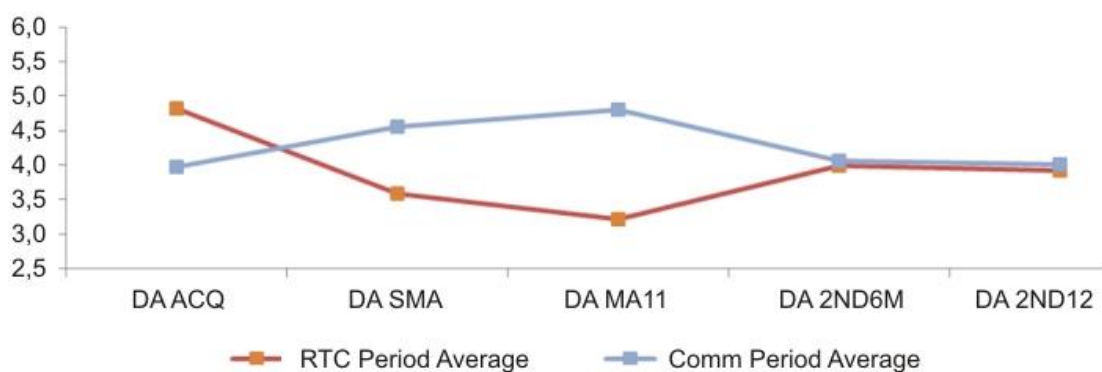


Figure 4.4: COM/RTC Evolution - Generics Corp/FPG

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. Time 1: DA ACQ: acquisition period; DASMA: six months after acquisition; DAMA11: March 2011; Time 2: DA2ND6M–March 2012; DA2ND12– December 2012. Vertical Axis: Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

Figure 4.4 highlights graphically respondents' perceptions about this

inverse relation between COM and RTC averages in this case, which will be detailed and explored comparatively across cases in Chapter 7. Still pertained to this case exclusively, the focus of the next Section is on the dynamic of how each COM dimension influences each RTC dimension.

#### ***4.5.1 Dynamic between COM and RTC Dimensions***

In order to further explore the dynamic between COM and RTC dimensions, as defined in Section 3.6.1, in Time 2 data collection respondents were asked to do the naming and connecting processes as part of the questionnaire. Those answers sought to identify perceptions of how each COM dimension influences the RTC dimensions. Respondents were asked to name each dimension of communication and RTC. In the next step was the connecting process, when they were asked by the researcher to prioritize the more conducive and the less conducive communication dimensions, using the names they attributed to each dimension, to the progress of RTC (also using attributed names) and to the change process they were immersed in. Those answers were tabulated to identify the COM dimensions that most often were perceived as great influencers to each RTC dimension. This naming process revealed sometimes through different names a great similarity of concepts among all 13 respondents related to communication dimensions, as can be checked in Table 4.2, presented overleaf.

In the case of the **Mutuality** dimension, the most common concepts were balance, equality, while for the **Empathy** dimension the names used most were Trust/confidence and climate/environment. For **Commitment** the major concept present was related to understanding and for **Propinquity** the concepts of time and decision were predominant. **Risk** had the higher variability of concepts, but yet very related to power. In all cases, the words used were very similar to the expected meaning of the dimensions and the sentences used in the questionnaire to evaluate their extent, thereby validating the instrument and the means used to obtain the respondent perception.

<b>Mutuality</b>	<b>Empathy</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Propinquity</b>	<b>Risk</b>
Integral Part	Sentiment and Feeling	Commitment	Understanding Time	Complicity
Construction and Involvement	Environment and Clarity	Commitment to justice	Sharing Decision	Risk
Involvement of both parties and Balance	Engagement and Trust	Awareness of the process	Planning and Time	Uncertainty
Balance	Confidence	Understanding	Time for change	Lack of full mastery of change
Equality	Climate and Environment	Attention to the contributions	Moment in time	Safety and Concern
Involvement	Confidence	Willingness to understand	Consciousness in Time	Power and risk
Share and Give and Take	Empathy	Mutual Respect and Consideration	Decision time	Opening
Participation	Climate	Communication	Decision Time	Posture and Share
Value Balance Equality	Trust and Environment	Mutual Understanding	Connection with this	Power and direction
Be heard and work with	Respect for the opinions	Learn to listen	Decision Time and Strategy	Acceptance not know
Construction and Balance	Confidence	Understanding Convergence	Decision making in Time	Openness and willingness
Participation	Environment for understanding	Effort of interpretation (translation)	Consciousness Status	Power and direction
Sharing and Equality	Climate	Communication effort	Participation time	Unpredictability

Table 4.2: Naming COM dimensions - Generics Corp/FPG

Source: Adapted by the author from Questionnaire responses.

Regarding RTC dimensions, the similarity of the respondents' definitions was even larger, and the majority of respondents named **Affective** as Feeling (11 answers out of 13), **Behavioural** as Action/ Reaction (13 answers out of 13), and **Cognitive** as Beliefs/Thinking (10 answers out of 13). That means the sentences used in the questionnaire were capable to evaluate the respective dimensions, thereby corroborating the instrument used to obtain respondents' perception.

The naming process is a step towards the connection process that was one of ordering COM dimensions that most influenced each RTC dimension. The

results of respondents' perceptions for Generics Corp/FPG were as shown in Table 4.3, below, regarding all three RTC dimensions (Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive) and also a final evaluation also produced by the respondents, about the most influential COM dimensions to RTC dimensions, considering the change as whole.

GenericsCorp/FPG			
AFFECTIVE	BEHAVIORAL	COGNITIVE	CHANGE
Commitment	Empathy	Mutuality	Empathy
Empathy	Mutuality	Empathy	Commitment
Mutuality	Propinquity	Commitment	Mutuality
Propinquity	Commitment	Risk	Propinquity
Risk	Risk	Propinquity	Risk

Table 4.3: COM Dim ordered by influence to RTC Dim - Time 2 data collection Generics Corp/FPG. From 1

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

**Empathy** and **Commitment** are frequently present, across the Table and among the first three more influential dimensions in RTC, according to respondents' perceptions. **Mutuality** holds the following position as the most influential dimensions. Moreover, clearly **Propinquity** and finally **Risk**, in this order, are the ones less relevant to RTC evolution, in terms of the respondents' perceptions. These findings implicate on clear directions for change leaders about communication priorities, as investing efforts promoting some of the dimensions (Empathy and Commitment) seem to be more important than in promoting others (as Propinquity and Risk), considering the expected effect of embracing RTC and lowering its extent.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the overall paths of COM and RTC in Generics Corp/FPG were explored, as well as the dynamic between both constructs. An increase in a dialogic COM seemed to allow a reduction in RTC in Time 1 data collection, while towards the end Time 2 a reduction in dialogic COM seemed to relate to an increase in RTC. Besides, COM and RTC dimensions evolution over time were discussed, facilitating the understanding of its paths, mainly by connecting questionnaire and interview data and exploring respondents' collective

sensemaking. The paths juxtaposition of COM and RTC along with its dimensions, revealed a mirrored pattern that will be further explored in a comparison among cases (see Chapter 7) and finally in the Conclusion chapter (see Chapter 8).



## **Chapter 5. Chem Solutions /GCHE: From monologic to dialogic COM and influences in RTC**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses findings specifically for Chem Solutions/GCHE, based on the coding framework adopted for data analysis (as explained in Section 3.8.1). Section 5.2 describes the main driver for the acquisition and the overall change context and timeline. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 respectively depict the characterizations of the nature of change communication (COM) and resistance to change (RTC), based on interviews, documents, observations and questionnaire data. This data discussion reveals the predominant COM, in this case a dialogic, and the evolution of COM and RTC dimensions during Time 1 data collection (Time 2 data collection was not possible in this case as discussed in Section 3.7.2). Section 5.5 explores the perceived inverted relationship between COM and RTC, and the dynamic among its dimensions. Section 5.6 concludes the chapter.

### **5.2 Acquisition and change – context and timeline**

Chem Solutions was a recognized player in the chemical market in Brazil and Latin America and belonged to financial groups from 2001 that had no interest in operating it, but in selling the company again, with profit. Chem Solutions has a history of spin-offs and acquisitions. It was an integrated part of a German consumer products company until 1999 when it became an operationally independent business unit, already anticipating that it would be sold off later on. In November 2001, Chem Solutions was bought by private equity funds and its employees knew then that they would be acquired after a reorganization. As preparation to sell it had been going on a few years, the internal climate before acquisition was one of looking like a good “bride”. That meant a constant quest for productivity improvements and awareness about the possibility of being acquired.

German Chemical Group (GCHE) adopted a strategy of acquisitions in past years (Global Acquisitions Chart 2006-2010). Synergies of several million

pounds per annum were expected by 2010 to be generated by the acquisition of three other companies. Those synergies would result mainly from the elimination of overlapping functions and processes such as in administration, sales and marketing, and logistics. There was a reduction of approximately 1,000 positions worldwide. According to GCHE Chairman, John Hertz, the company was looking to divert to activities that are less tied to economic swings.

GCHE objectives in integrating with Chem Solutions was not only to gain synergies, but also to grow its product portfolio. For GCHE, that meant that they were buying Chem Solutions' people and their knowledge, too (Larsson *et al.*, 2004). According to Michael Munt, Senior Vice President for Chemical, Plastic and Performance Products, as stated in GCHE News, the in-house newsletter, GCHE hoped to achieve millions of pounds in synergies by integrating Chem Solutions to GCHE in South America:

*“The know-how of the GCHE and Chem Solutions product portfolio is quite complementary. Combination will expand our portfolio of specialty chemicals and boost innovation for our customers.”* (John Hertz, Chairman of the Board of GCHE).

Chem Solutions was bought by GCHE in December 2010 when employees were already expecting the acquisition to happen.

*“Chem Solutions had no air to breathe. It was prepared and structured by an investment bank to pass the baton. Our shelf life had expired as an organization. The chance that we had to keep succeeding was over. We did not even have a survival rate.”* (Interviewee N – Time 1).

The previous excerpt reveals an awareness that although the company was “a good bride” it could not stand alone for much longer in a market that was consolidating and being dominated by few players. There was an understanding about the relevance of being acquired by other player as a long-term guarantee of survival.

At least theoretically, Chem Solutions' previous experiences of adapting to new structures and governance would contribute to this new adaptation process.

Besides, the desired outcome was being acquired by a chemical company, a player in chemical market and not another short-term financial investor. As expected, the acquisition meant recognition of the company's value, after the managerial effort made in the previous years:

*"... people were euphoric because the company that bought us (GCHE) was a reference. But at the same time, I was part of such a fantastic company (Chem Solutions), it is valuable and it is recognized."* (Interviewee K – Time 1).

Since 2001 Chem Solutions focused on profitability through low cost and high efficiency. It started in 2001 with approximately 10,500 employees, and at the moment of acquisition, in 2010, there were 6,500 employees. Despite an extreme focus on productivity, the internal climate was described as one of proximity and relationship, helped by the fact that there were only 450 Chem Solutions staff in Latin America, out of which there were 250 in Brazil. Coherent with the goals of acquisition, most former Chem Solutions employees were allocated to GCHE, and specifically to the Care Chemicals area.

*"And Chem Solutions professionals came for functional areas, I think the fact that they worked for a company that was very lean, where you had two or three, perhaps four functions, I think you have well-trained and qualified employees with great potential for reaching higher positions within GCHE in the coming years. I think Chem Solutions set up a good team and this will only add to the business within GCHE. And the strongest point of all this for us, to stress what I'm saying, is that 98% of Chem Solutions people are within GCHE today."* (Interviewee E – Time 1).

Chemicals are the main GCHE business worldwide, the largest in terms of revenue and number of people, and where former integrations had a large impact. Differently from previous integration processes conducted by GCHE, the internal climate at the beginning of Chem Solutions' change was largely positive. It was helped by the fact that both organizations were complementary instead of overlapping. The main objective was to grow and strengthen the care chemical business instead of just gaining scale and reducing costs, so to amplify markets and product portfolio. It started an integration process that aimed to bring all of Chem Solutions into the GCHE Group, planned to be finished by October 1st,

2011, when a new legal entity would arise, meaning that Chem Solutions would no longer exist as a company.

*“Our highest priority is to ensure a smooth integration process while maintaining the highest standards of customer service and product quality.”* (John Franz, member of the Board of Directors of GCHE and responsible for the Performance Products segment).

This decision of abolishing Chem Solutions meant changes to formal and legal contracts with employees, changes in functional titles, as well as in hierarchy positions. For instance, there would be no president for Chem Solutions anymore and the resignation of the former one meant a strong symbolic and practical change in terms of main leadership.

Changes in leadership were characterized in the first moment after acquisition, in the first period of integration due to the absorption of Chem Solutions former leaders by the GCHE structure in the beginning of 2011, as summarized in Figure 5.1.

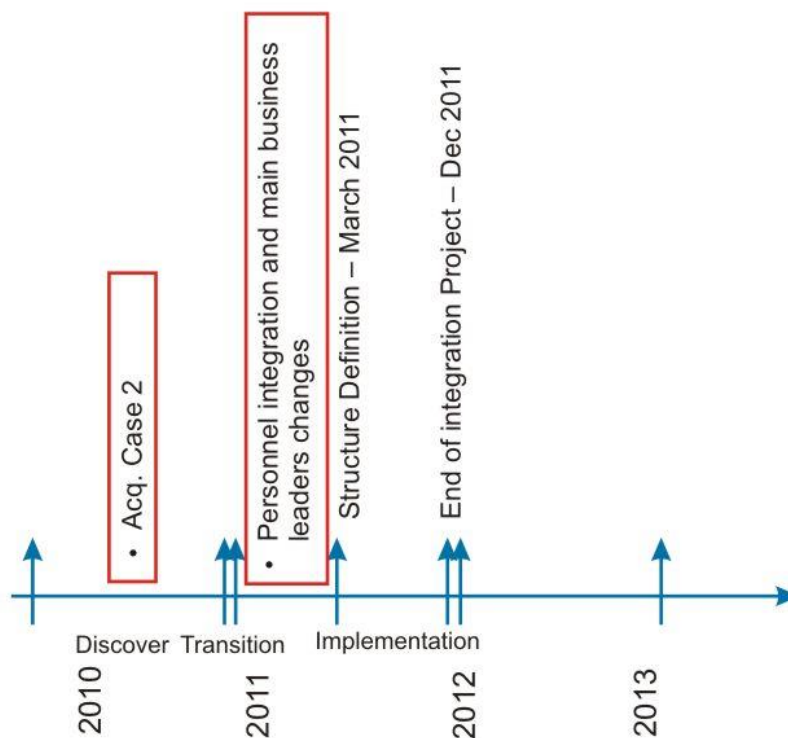


Figure 5.1: Chem Solutions/GCHE Timeline: change leaders/occasions  
Source: Compiled by the author.

It is important to register some of the main leadership changes and change milestones since the acquisition, as listed below. The data occasions (See Section 3.6.1.) that respondents were asked to recollect about are also indicated:

- 2010 – July: Sales announcement and Discovery stage of change plan. December: Day One, internal announcement of acquisition – Data occasion: Dec/2010 (Time 1).
- 2011 – Structure definition and Transition stage of change plan – Data occasion: March/Apr 2011(Time 1).
- 2011 - End of implementation stage of change plan. Data occasion: Dec/2011 (Time 1).

This change timeline reveals that the integration was accomplished within approximately one year following a structured plan. The Time 1 data collection (from Dec/2010 to Dec/2011) is equivalent to the plan execution that was staged in three main phases: Discovery, Transition and Implementation that will be detailed next, with an emphasis on revealing main leader changes, cultural impacts and managerial alterations occurred in Chem Solutions/GCHE.

The first stage post acquisition is preparatory, called Discovery, when under certain communication restrictions between the two organizations, the main effort is to understand how the other organization works, to identify cultural aspects in common and also their main differences.

The next step was Transition, made up of intense planning where teams were oriented to analyse what each organization had at that moment and what the final integrated organization should have in the future, what must be cut and what must be built, what will need some changing in regards of products, people, plants, etc. Also in this stage, which lasted for around four months, from December to April, the structure and the main leaders in the areas affected by the integration were announced. The main leadership chart was released in January 2011 and the organizational one completed by April 2011. All positions transposed to the GCHE career path were nominally downgraded one level; for instance, a director became a department manager and a middle manager was demoted to coordinator.

The final stage was Implementation, which it was expected would integrate systems, legal entity, functional alterations, also when the announcement of all positions would be made. There was also a cutover plan (GCHE IT and Supply systems adjustment to Chem Solutions' products, clients, vendors, etc.), that mobilized efforts for several weeks before and after the day set to turn the key. At Chem Solutions – GCHE integration this stage formally lasted from April to November 2011. By the end of the period of data collection, according to respondents, the change was perceived as successfully conducted.

To manage this prearranged and staged integration plan GCHE put together a governance structure with regional teams coordinated by a global one dedicated to integration. This team was led regionally by the VP of the most affected business, of Chemicals, Plastics and Performance Products. This group had a project leader and representatives of several areas within GCHE and Chem Solutions and was in charge of centralizing information and coordinating efforts to carry out the plan and of promoting alignment between regional and global integration efforts.

*“We have a group we call SAIMO (South America Integration Management Office). In SAIMO we have people from communication, HR, IT, supply chain and a controller. It is coordinated globally. We have global coordination – GAIMO, which is the global group (Global Integration Management Office). And we have local coordination, but always with global integration.” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

This is one example of a highly structured organization, to which former Chem Solutions employees had to adjust to, as a main characteristic of GCHE's management style. The latter is a structured company, process driven and with well-developed management models. This could be observed after some visits to plants and company headquarters, by noting the strict safety procedures even to access offices that are not related to chemical safety (Observation 1 - Chem Solutions/GCHE). In addition, that structure can be noted by the frequency and quality of plans and processes mentioned during interviews and others announced in the internal communication media.

For Chem Solutions the integration to GCHE meant also new relations with the employer's values. Former Chem Solutions employees were introduced to GCHE ideology and strategic principles (See Annex D). Among the values present in pursuing the strategic principles, the most relevant to this research was the second one, named "Open", as it reveals adherent components to the dialogic COM: "Open: We value diversity – in people, opinions and experience; We foster dialogue based on honesty, respect and mutual trust; We use our talents and capabilities".

An internal survey was carried out with GCHE and Chem Solutions leaders, by change leaders, about cultural aspects from both organizations. It revealed GCHE to be perceived to be much slower than Chem Solutions and Chem Solutions more focused on clients than GCHE. They found Chem Solutions to be more open to dialogue and diversity and differences than GCHE. Conversely, GCHE was perceived to be much stronger, with more processes, greater facility to acquire things, to achieve improvements, including money, than Chem Solutions. Conversely, GCHE was more bureaucratic than Chem Solutions. Therefore, there were several cultural and managerial style adjustments to occur during integration, requiring a significant sensemaking effort from all involved (Maitlis, 2005; Maclean *et al.*, 2014).

As the goal of the acquisition was to not only reduce costs and gain synergies, but mainly to expand the portfolio and improve the market position, there was adherence to an intended respect, an openness to understanding the model of the acquired organization and the desire to incorporate in the acquirer the best practices of the acquired.

So, despite previously mentioned favourable aspects, as the growth goal of integration, the amount of challenges were still considerable in terms of the COM, especially the difference in openness that is found in the research. While in GCHE 'Open' it is a stated value, Chem Solutions was perceived as much more open to dialogue. That anticipates an important issue of the sensemaking process in terms of COM.

### 5.3 Nature of change communication (COM)

For the integration of Chem Solutions into GCHE there was a highly structured change plan. GCHE had previous integrations, some of them very difficult and others more easily accomplished. This produced internal knowhow of change management and therefore change communication, which was gradually acquired by Communication and HR teams within the corporate headquarters in Brazil. For previous changes those areas developed change management projects, encompassing activities and tools, that were in the case of Chem Solutions perfected and formatted in a deliberate plan, also called as a change model:

*“We had a project we had developed during the acquisition of the previous company, for the first time. And now we used 80% of it, and then it was very clear. We used a lot of these models and tools we had developed in the Chem Solutions integration. GCHE has been carrying out acquisitions and integration for more than 100 or 150 years, and we did not have any model. It was a good idea at that time to think ‘this time we will make an acquisition to create all these tools, these principles, planning and this way you can use it in other acquisitions’.” (Interviewee L – Time 1).*

According to the respondents, one of the most significant developments over the last acquisitions is a much larger respect for the acquired organization. The respect for people can also be considered the acknowledgment of the individuals in the interaction, the right to interpretation recognized as a value, something that is clearly relevant for a dialogic COM, as explained previously by Jabri, Adrian and Boje (2008) (See Section 2.4.3). Other characteristics of dialogic COM were implicit in the following quote:

*“We got into this new organization with the concept of far greater respect for differences; it is totally different from how it was conducted back there. Where we ended up talking and had a very similar discourse, but in practice it was somewhat different ... The leaders, the heads of business, are much more accessible, open to understanding the model of another company and wanting to understand and acquire what is actually the best. Before, the discourse keep ‘the better of the two’ was strong, and today it is practical. I see this difference.” (Interviewee A – Time 1).*



Notably, by being open and interested to understand the model of the acquired organization in order to keep the better elements of the acquirer and acquired ones, reveals that GCHE was explicitly requiring a dialogic COM from those leaders involved in the integration.

The integration plan at GCHE was clearly structured, with global and local governance and deadlines, indicative about the importance of planning implementation and level of exposition of change management related issues. Detailed integration plans were developed and largely communicated by the end of the first quarter of 2011. As explained before, the completion of the structural integration was planned and executed by late 2011 and there were three main stages of discovery, transition and implementation, of which main communication characteristics will be described in next paragraphs to reveal the predominant COM over the period.

During the Discovery stage, GCHE defined together with Chem Solutions the main concepts and values that could not be lost during integration and some principles for the integration process, such as transparency, a sense of justice and respect for people.

*“We did meet all the leaders and we set out six important principles about how we would make the acquisition. And we worked hard. We spoke of the GCHE principles and we also listened, we did a workshop with people from Chem Solutions to know what their expectations were and if they were realizing them, and where they could see risks and so on. And we worked to take these points into account in the work plan. We had such a principle of respect for people, so eventually everyone would be judged on skills. And everyone would have their chance during the integration ... It was a very long process in the beginning to show the opening, which goals, the boundaries of how we were going to go about it. Then we asked people what was important not to lose in this acquisition. Because we were on the market before as competitors, what there was to build on that. And then how we had to treat people, how we had to pay attention. They spoke highly of the innovation process, the contact process of market presence, the same business processes.” (Communication Director – Time 1).*

Notably in the previous quote, the first interactions with Chem Solutions affected the integration plan, revealing that GCHE was not only interested in listening, which could still be a monologic COM (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Russ, 2008; Jabri, 2012), but also in adjusting its work plan accordingly, contributing to the characterization of dialogic COM. These adjustments were to minimize risks of integration and to preserve the strengths of Chem Solutions.

In the beginning of the Transition stage, when contact between organizations was fully allowed (see Section 5.2 for details), it was time for the Welcoming Event, also called Day One, a presentation and a meeting that characterizes the official welcoming for the acquired company. That was synchronized all over the world and followed main informational deliverables, as deadlines for each stage for example, typical of monologic COM. It is interesting to note that this informational meeting was part of a dialogic stance, as its content and format were already adjusted according to previous interactions with Chem Solutions in the Discovery stage. In Latin America, it was coordinated to occur within a few days for all plants, telling the history and the common facts about both companies, including strategies, main team, the structure of the change project and the planned phases of the integration process. Furthermore, this event was also used to let people know when major announcements would occur in the next months about downsizing, factory closings, etc. Day one for Chem Solutions in Brazil occurred in December 2010, with predominantly monologic nature, as besides the presentation delivery, clearly informational, there was the distribution of a welcoming kit (GCHE brochure, badge strings and a pin). It was also a little dialogic nature as there was a Q&A (Questions and Answers) session with the intent to clarify doubts. As the following quote explains, the interaction in this moment was between local leaders and employees, clearly to set the start for future dialogue.

*“We also trained everybody (that would present), and then we made calls to everyone for alignment and comments on the presentations. It is important that a person from the country should do the welcoming. Because it is no use sending the VP there and he will not be the one who will speak to these people there on a day-to-day basis.”*  
(Interviewee J – Time 1).

One of the contributions by the South America Integration Management Office (SAIMO) to change management was to maintain a regular evaluation of change through an internal data collection effort, named Pulse Check, comprising of a survey and some focus groups. Findings of these evaluations reveal at least partially the sensemaking process (see Weick, 1995; Maitlis, 2005; Rutledge, 2009 and Section 2.3.1) and to this end, Pulse Checks revealed meanings in progress, allowing SAIMO to react to it by reorienting or instituting new training, promoting new decision-making, other meetings or releasing information, among other types of responses.

*“So, to understand the scenario, we do a global search which is what we call a pulse check, to get a feeling for the atmosphere, for what is happening. And on top of that, we do a few focus groups with a few things to understand what is happening and what action to take. Some things end up being HR and others end being in communication. But everything ends up falling where? In leadership, communication or in HR ...”* (Interviewee J – Time 1)

The relevant aspect of the governance structure is that more than just controlling tasks implementation. It was focused on promoting communication and decision-making with leaders from many organizational levels, in line with an understanding that change is really accomplished by constantly adapting it.

*“Change has no beginning, middle and end, it happens in a process that sometimes gets out of control of the top management of the company. The change is dynamic, it happens every day. What we have done was to try to predict the most important or critical changes for people and for business, and also to plan how you’ll solve them... Good communication I would say it is the most critical part of the process and more important. And it has to be taken in a steady manner. You can never lose communication, never relax. You have to create discussion forums that allow decisions to be made.”* (Interviewee K – member of SAIMO – Time 1).

From these Pulse Checks and regular meetings within SAIMO, the change leaders were constantly required to collect, reorganize and make sense of new facts and messages, characterizing the openness to review its previous integration plan and adjust it according to meanings offered by other leaders and

employees in general. This stance is characteristic of a dialogic COM and it is revealed by the following quote of the Communication Director that clearly relates it to the way the company brings about change. The concept of communication and change being intertwined is an important foundation to approach change communication within an organization, as established in the literature review (see Section 2.4.2) carried out for this research (Lewis, 2007; Russ, 2008):

*“Let's put it under the umbrella of communication, because we understand communication as a whole. It's very important that everyone be informed about the process, about everything that is happening – and, of course, what can be said. Now, communication is one step further, which is to bring on engagement, raise awareness about the change process. And where is the biggest challenge? To ensure that everyone is informed is OK. But to take a step forward depends on the person and it depends on how the company will conduct the change. And at GCHE we do this communication / engagement and we work a lot with HR, which is part of change management. Because this is the catch: you don't have change if you don't have communication. So, that's it, you would have only the information delivered and it is done. But, it [communication] is more, because it's in the process, when you invite people to do, because you did not buy assets, or the product, it is the people... you bought talent, intelligence. And this is the great catch!” (Communication Director - Time 1).*

It was not only the Day One event, but several exclusively created meetings and training sessions that supported acquisition and integration sensemaking. Those activities were mainly orchestrated by HR and Communication and they were central to understanding and providing feedback about the pace of change, counting on the help of the Team Leaders, a group of representatives who were chosen due to their leadership skills, as well on all leaders (people with team managing responsibilities) in the affected business areas.

*“I believe that, as HR, we prepared leaders a lot because ....We made communication more continuous and more frequent than we did with the previous acquisition. We made clearer communication. We told the leaders, look, this is what has to be communicated. Did you hold the meetings? Then we started to hold some meetings, to schedule them weekly, fortnightly. Clearly, communication depends largely on the leader having this interest to be*

*close to employees, to see what is happening, the climate, possible problems that will arise and then alert HR. I think it was well-conducted, but far from perfect. There is still much room for improvement.” (Interviewee O – Time 1).*

As the quote alerts, even if promoting the face-to-face interactions – that support dialogic COM, in fact it depended on the leaders in each meeting to conduct it in a monologic or dialogic nature. The HR and the Communication areas within GCHE had a major part to play in this regard. As can be inferred from the previous quote, HR and Communication departments understand that it was the business units’ leaders who were the real operators of change. Leaders had to inform and help their staff in sensemaking by sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Pratt, 2000; Sonenshein, 2010) and by being committed to understand other possible meanings, but that does not leave HR and Communication to play a secondary role. On the contrary, their main function was to analyse and think of the change as communicative process strategically, to check, advise and support the daily actions of the leaders in a pursuit of a dialogic COM (Sims, Huxham and Beech, 2009).

*“We work the strategy along with the leaders and with the HR department. It can’t be different, because HR, let’s say, is the articulator in people management along with the leaders. Because it is the leaders who manage people, but communication brings in communication techniques, i.e., you use the science of communication so you can work on issues, e.g., how am I going to engage this scenario, the feeling people have, because communication deals with something that no other area deals with, perception. We are builders of perceptions ... it depends on each one, how this leadership is conducting this process with employees. Because sometimes an action that you do in South America it does not impact the same way as in Germany, each has a value of receiving it. So, communication is everywhere, which means it comes from the bottom and from the top. Then again, it is not only having a well-built information process.” (Interviewee F – Communication department - Time 1).*

It was possible to adjust much of the change plan as it advanced because this systematically close communication gave insights about perceptions and possible gaps that needed to be addressed. In sum, supporting dialogic COM in this case, there is a structured communication plan with the main goal of

supporting guided sensemaking, constructing and coalescing around change (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). It seems that HR was closer to the leaders, making suggestions about what they could do to improve in terms of information and sense giving, and therefore supporting monologic COM. But they were also aiding leaders to interact driven by the value of openness, to consider how change was impacting and what adjustments were needed, typical of a dialogic COM (Langer and Thorup, 2006). A good example of how change was adjusted as effect of a dialogic COM comes from the following quote.

*“And these breakfast meetings ... I think they were something cool that brought people closer, these were meetings more to listen than to talk. One of the complaints they brought up in one of these breakfast meetings was about the lack of technical knowledge about the GCHE product line. And we didn’t do this prior preparation, this we could have planned before. This person is coming (from Chem Solutions) to the sales area for example, so he had to know about the GCHE portfolio. We could have had training about it, we could have anticipated this. But we hadn’t. But we listened and we responded quickly and this was a positive thing.”* (Interviewee O – HR department - Time 1).

The respondent refers to a new training initiative, not previously planned, that was created in response to complaints of employees to their leaders during breakfast meetings, promoted to listen and understand rather than to convince about the change.

Although there is good evidence of face-to-face meetings designed to accomplish dialogic COM at Chem Solutions / GCHE, it does not mean that all communication was dialogic. In fact, typical monologic activities, as extra informational meetings were also made as key milestones were reached in the staged plan for the integration.

*“And then we brought everyone into the auditorium to do the most important communications. So we put everyone together to have the same discourse. And then there was a leader and he spoke, and afterwards the other leader went up and talked about another topic. We would send the same message to everybody at the same time. And there were topics about business, where we are, where we are going. Who we are.*

*These meetings were meetings to give information. Not to listen. Information! I am here to give you information. But it was done in a way with a single speech. I think this made the process easier.” (Interviewee O – Time 1).*

Sensemaking goes hand-in-hand with sensegiving, as managers need to carry the organization with them by producing belief among employees (Maclean, Harvey and Chia, 2012). Besides giving information, those meetings were about building meaning for what was going on and “who” they were, as the respondent states. Meetings were then structured and speeches prepared as important sensegiving efforts (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007), aimed to reduce the occurrence of different understandings than the expected ones. In addition to these face-to-face efforts, there were other regular written communication channels largely used to address related issues, such as:

- **GCHE Informs:** a daily e-mail released by the Communication area with up-to-date information, such as if GCHE won an award, if there was a stoppage in the system, changes to the health plan. This also included news about personnel benefits, informational in nature and mainly monologic COM.
- **Intranet:** right from the beginning Chem Solutions staff were allowed access to GCHE’s intranet, there were people together in photos, GCHE and Chem Solutions teams, in major banners. This was to generate the feeling “we are already on the main page”, mainly monologic.
- **GCHE News:** an in-house newsletter with a special edition to coincide with Day One, and its entire content dealt with the acquisition/integration. And after that, almost every issue carried some article talking about integration and echoing the actual stages of the integration plan: discovery, transition or implementation. Although informational (monologic) in nature, content in GCHE News was reinforcing process and outcomes of a dialogic COM, as for example, Chem Solutions employees telling how they were treated as equals by GCHE, the adoption of commercial practices from Chem Solutions, etc.

In sum, in Chem Solutions/GCHE it seems that a mix of monologic and dialogic COM practices were common, which in time, combined with explicit intention and support to conduct change with a dialogic COM, gradually became predominantly dialogic. As one respondent states, it took some time for the organization to understand and practice communication – meaning co-construction and dialogue / dialogic nature – rather than just informing and trying to convince – monologic nature.

*“... So I think communication involves many people. People communicate often, they go into details that are often not dealt with by information itself. I think we had enough information, it was well played, it was quite effective. But in terms of communication, in the beginning it was still a little lost, I'd say ... So until people understand and fully get this communication, there was a long process in the middle.”* (Interviewee J – Time 1).

Besides, in terms of quality and amount of information related to the integration process, there is a general feeling that both quality and quantity were adequate. Other respondents support this as well:

*“I think the information leaders had was well prepared, about what questions could arise and what answers the company wanted to give regarding them, and also about who was actually involved in the integration. We had a really important information kit. I really was not aware of the many questions that those who were actually involved in the integration process could not answer.”* (Interviewee H – Time 1).

In terms of communication, it seems that all the efforts to promote face-to-face dialogic opportunities were made, and that it had reached its limit; if there were a little more it would have been excessive.

*“... It is just to add more communication; more meetings than we already had ... it would be virtually ‘The meeting company’! All the time there was a meeting going on.”* (Interviewee C – Time 1).



In addition, in respondents' perceptions there was room to improve the information access by lower levels in the hierarchy since the beginning. It was taken for granted that the majority of employees from the lower levels would look for information needed in one or more of the available informational channels, such as intranet, mail and newsletters. However, as an effect of different existing practices of making information available in both organizations, it was difficult for people from one organization to think of looking for information in certain channels that are almost naturally consulted by people from the other.

*"We received very clear communication that we would not close the site. But we had the information, it was in the intranet and so on, but for the operators we never told them this very clearly. Then the operators went into a bit of a panic, as they wondered if the site would go on operating. And we missed this level down, to tell them: you can rest assured the site continues; we will make even greater investments and you will have more opportunities than you have now ... the information did not reach all the people who were directly involved ..."* (Interviewee N – Time 1).

So, it took time for leaders to understand and adjust the company's informational practices to guarantee access at all levels. It must be considered that in an integration process there is a period where people need to be guided to get used to new flows of information, what and when to expect certain information and where to find each piece of it. In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge that sensemaking will occur supported by different forms of communication (Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). An "information channel learning" period then must be one of the key concerns in any change plan (Martinez and Jarillo, 1991). During this learning phase, the former channels, in this case, relationship and face-to-face contacts, would have to had been promoted in parallel.

*"... The information may not be very systematized in Chem Solutions, but it was very fluid, and it relied on relationships and contact. At GCHE it was all very structured, information was very clear, but the people who had the other culture (Chem Solutions) were not used to the process of distributing it. You can search on the intranet, or you ... but people came from another form of communication and did not have this habit. And maybe some people who worked on the case did not realize this."* (Interviewee N – Time 1).

Overall, the quantity and quality of information in Chem Solutions/GCHE were good with room for improvement. As discussed previously, information per se is not an indicator of the COM, but they are related, as an extremely poor quantity and quality of information would hardly support a communication with a dialogic nature.

The general evaluation of Chem Solutions/GCHE communication is that it had a challenging starting point, an acquirer organization with a clear intention of promoting a dialogic COM, but with less openness than the acquired organization and much more structured managerial practices. Therefore, leading to a first monologic COM/change implementation. By analyzing format, frequency and duration, messages, channels of communication and mainly the stance of the well structured and frequent follow up of the change, as presented above it is possible to infer the predominance of a dialogic COM towards the end of the data collection period. As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about COM dimensions that support characterizing the predominant COM in this case, as it will be explored in next paragraphs. COM dimensions are Mutuality, Propinquity, Commitment, Empathy and Risk, as previously theoretically discussed in Section 2.4.3 and detailed in Table 3.3 (see Section 3.6.2).

In addition to the previous analysis, Figure 5.2 shows respondents' collective perceptions in a graphic format, about the progress of each communication dimension over time, from December 2010 until December 2011. Time 1 occasions were DA ACQ (acquisition - Dec 2010); DAFMA: March 2010 and DADEC11: December 2011. Time 2 data collection was not conducted (see Section 3.7.2 for details).

On the vertical axis can be observed the average agreement about the existence of each dimension attributed by the respondents, on a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7, being 7 the highest score possible reflecting a strong perceived dialogic COM (in contrast, a smaller score reflects a weak perceived dialogic COM). The higher the average, the higher the agreement about the expression of that specific communication dimension at that point in time.

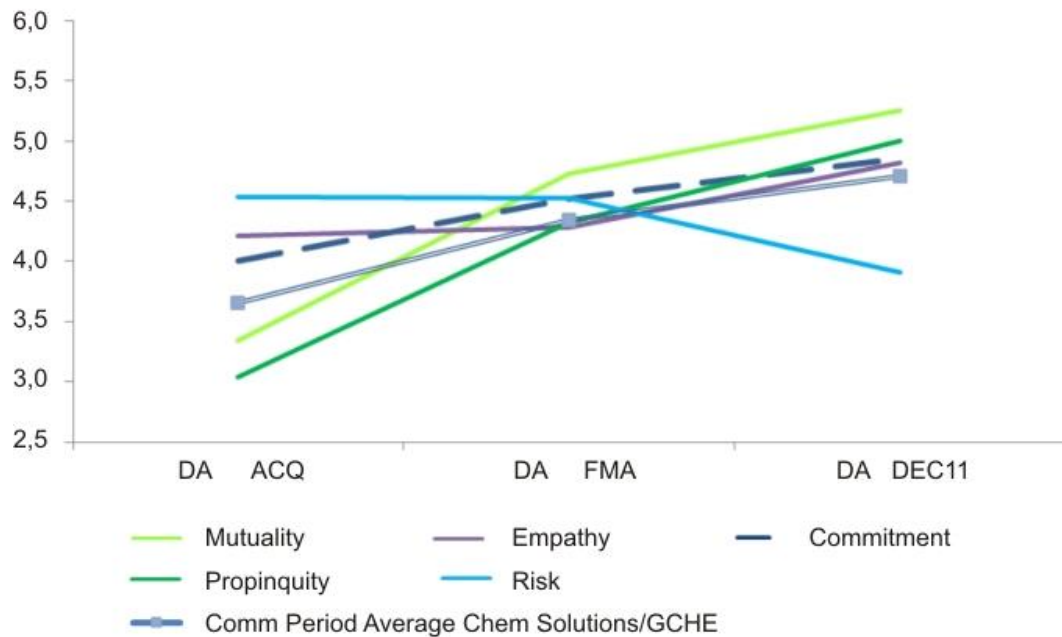


Figure 5.2: COM Evolution - Chem Solutions/GCHE

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA ACQ: acquisition period; DAFMA: March 2010; DADEC11: December 2011. Vertical Axis: Communication Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

As can be seen above, the questionnaire data provided respondents' perceptions of increases or reductions of each COM dimension over time. The focus of the analysis is on the general outlook of the lines in this graphic. Dimensions overall showed an increase in the level of dialogic COM during Time 1 data collection (highest point at the end, in DEC2011, around 4.3) that is reflected in the "Comm Period Average" line that combines all dimensions averaged. In order to argue that the relevance of these findings and evidence of a predominant dialogic COM, it is necessary to come back to the respondents' sensemaking, and therefore to rely on the interview data as it is presented next. In each example described below, it is possible to identify one or more dialogic COM dimensions: Propinquity (P), Mutuality (M), Empathy (E), Risk (R) and Commitment (C).

### 5.3.1 COM Dimensions

**Risk** dimension (i.e. recognition to not know and assume uncertainty, vulnerability of not having control [Frahm and Brown, 2003; Karimova, 2014]) was

the highest dimension at the beginning of the process with a score of 4,5. It suffered significant decrease between DA ACQ and a DADEC11, although with 3,9 it still attained a high score at the end of data collection. That is probably related to the very short timeline and the broadcasted integration plan that was carried out in one year, with deadlines set for each important definition concerning major impacts on people involved. This reduction of uncertainty and dissemination of dates generated a sense of control among respondents, which explain the Risk reduction perception. As the change timeline shows (see Section 5.1), four months after integration started all employees in Brazil already knew their position and responsibilities as well as the main business goals they would be in charge of. The very procedural GCHE profile that allowed people to have most of the answers while not feeling threatened for not knowing some, i.e. showing some vulnerability (Karimova, 2014), as **Risk** dimension requires, culminated with the publicized conclusion of the integration at the end of data collection.

*“Today I see, for example, at Chem Solutions you would lose a lot of power if you did not know (**R**). At GCHE you lose much less power. I do not know if the answers were most appropriate, but it was common to have answers. Today, not having the answers is common, but it remains something that is not very traditional. Here again I think not having an answer at GCHE is less problematic (**R**) than at Chem Solutions, it feels better, it is tolerated.” (Interviewee M – Time 1).*

**Empathy** and **Commitment** behaved similarly during change in Chem Solutions/GCHE, as they started with good scores (4,2 and 4,0 respectively) and progressively rose to reach even higher dialogic profiles (4,8 and 4,9 respectively). Empathy relates to environment of trust and support and Commitment to constantly fine-tuning language in order to grasp the positions, beliefs, and values of others (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). As explained by respondents, these dimensions were noted and perceived to occur across time:

*“The climate for change and about the changes was of trust and support. I fully agree (**E**). If we look at our Pulse Checks (internal research) it is stated there ... There was a willingness to understand positions (**C**), Chem Solutions*

*and GCHE... I did not see the effort, that is, I think this came naturally.” (Interviewee E – Time 1).*

Although one respondent contends that it was something that occurred with no effort, which implies that there was from the beginning a careful search for understanding others’ positions, another respondent perceived it evolving gradually and becoming an important element for attention:

*“I don’t think there was much checking [language and meaning]. At first, it was scarcely checked. And ... I think it started to improve gradually. And today it is very present here. Today we have a very big attention. Questions are much fewer, but today we check the information very well to see if what the person is saying is really what she means (C). So I think this here was one of the things that evolved.” (Interviewee N – Time 1).*

**Mutuality** (i.e. spirit of mutual equality and avoidance of superiority) and **Propinquity** (meaning the engagement in decision-making instead of being informed later) were the biggest transformations that occurred during the change process in Chem Solutions integration (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Frahm and Brown, 2006). They started among the lower dimensions with scores of 3,3 and 3,0 respectively and progressed to become the first and the second, respectively, best evaluated components of a dialogic COM nature. This is probably a consequence of the effort expended through the systematically coordinated follow-up staged change plan. **Propinquity** seems to have started at one organizational level, senior managers, and ended up involving other layers of the organization, as can be seen from the following quotes, that reveal progressive involvement of staff and operational people:

*“I think that there was still much that was decided and communicated later. But today, if I look at the last periods, I think I largely agree. So, today it is very much a construction (P). So it has progressed well here. I think there was too little awareness, especially as regards Chem Solutions staff on decisions. I think they were very ... as it was not involved before, it was basically a statement; there was no awareness. And this changed quickly, I think people started to be aware and today I dare to say there is full awareness (P). Sure, there are decisions that cannot be discussed, but what can be, I think there is full awareness.” (Interviewee N – Time 1).*

Another example of how decisions were taken engaging Chem Solutions and GCHE, is provided below:

*“The integration plan was designed from the client perspective, customer service, considering both organizations. But then, who made the plan considered ‘customers are basically the same and there will only be an increase of the amount of products, we have the opportunity to reduce people here’. And then I think we both [GCHE and Chem Solutions] (P) underestimated the level of work and the complexity of having a factory producing here and having a different process than GCHE used to have. And then there was chaos at the beginning, and it even reached the market, with many customer complaints. And we had (P) to start looking at this process more carefully and listening to the people who were involved in day-to-day operations to start changing (P) and even hiring more people. We had to hire temporary and effective people.”* (Interviewee M – Time 1).

Finding synergies and market gains for both businesses, besides the motive for the acquisition was a clear guideline throughout the integration in Chem Solutions/FPG case. Although named differently this closely relates to **Mutuality**, as it is the reflection of a sense of collaboration and avoidance of superiority among parts (Cissna and Anderson, 1998; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). Respondents felt respected and valued, as shown in the following respondents’ accounts:

*“Being Chem Solutions and GCHE was equally valued (M) at the time of a discussion or construction of a solution.”* (Interviewee N – Time 1).

*“We were treated as professional equivalents (M), that is, you did not feel that the company had been purchased. You were not an asset being purchased, I bought you and you are less than I am because I bought you. No. I always, I’ll speak for myself, I was always treated as an equal, as a peer (M). For me it was the most important thing. I felt that I was treated like a professional and listened to as if I were a member of the group; no difference. I was treated like a person, with respect (M), by people who know my legacy and my story.”* (Interviewee C – Time 1).

Respect was perceived in valuing the knowledge employees coming from

both organizations and giving this professional opinion importance when discussing a solution. That also meant for Chem Solutions employees a sense of recognition of their individual valued experience, their “legacy” as explained above.

Some divergent behaviours among change leaders existed, not expressing the same respect, but they were perceived by respondents as of an exceptional individual nature instead of a general institutional understanding about the expected role of Chem Solutions:

*“Because some people think they know everything. And there's nothing worse than not knowing what you think you know but don't know. Then there is the person who comes and speaks, I'm here and this is my position within the organization and I know how things are. I know what to do and then you have to change this way. It is personality. It's the issue of personality and also the pressure from the leader of the leader for results.” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

Hence, after a predominantly monologic COM at the start, within one year of integration and close follow up of the characteristics of interactions and of the sensemaking process. Leaders were largely involved, supported and encouraged by HR and Communication, leading to a turn into a predominantly dialogic COM nature in Chem Solutions/GCHE. A similar evaluation of RTC over time will be explored in the next section.

#### **5.4 Resistance to change (RTC)**

The respect shown during Chem Solutions/GCHE integration was made explicit through the planning for the change process, the speed forced to achieve certain definitions (as hierarchical structure) and mainly through the relations established between GCHE and former Chem Solutions employees. Affecting the relations specifically, as the following respondent explains, there was an explicit guidance to get the best solutions from both organizations, which led to what was perceived to be genuine interest in understanding others' perspective:

*“You have the guidelines of what you should and what you should not do. So one of the things we must do is ... we*

*have a conversation guide and has been ordered so that we can get the “Best of the both”. And often the best of both can be theirs (Chem Solutions) and not ours (GCHE). Or it could be ours and not theirs. But we have to understand until the last level ... You cannot be a tyrant, that thing is ‘now eliminated’.” (Interviewee F - Time 1)*

This is fundamental to sensemaking about change, therefore to RTC and the reactions when any issue is brought up. When an issue arises, instead of labelling it resistance in a first place, there is an organizational quest to look for reasons and different meanings that may be supporting it to find the best solution (Piderit, 2000; Hernandez and Caldas, 2001; Ford and Ford, 2009). As the following respondent explains:

*“We will not be fighting for our business mode, our value, our culture, saying ‘well, because GCHE is a robust enterprise, because GCHE is a secular firm, this and that ... and Chem Solutions has only 10 years of existence ... No, it has a wealth, it has a value, it has a way and we have to learn. They have things in what they are better than us. I think this was a great thing.” (Interviewee A - Time 1)*

This is revealing of a stance of suspending judgement and promoting dialogue that may contribute to lower RTC, as observable especially from GCHE in relation to Chem Solutions:

*“We arrived and we want to know. And knowing has no time limits. Of course that 2012 is coming and we have to give a direction, but we have to give this dialogue opportunity, it is important, because if this does not happen I think it's even arrogance.” (Interviewee F - Time 1).*

The goal of acquisition (to grow in chemical market) associated with the timed communication about the integration made it possible to retain people even at the very beginning of the process with low rates of dismissals and resignations, as mentioned in previous Section 3.5.2. Dismissals or resignation is treated in the literature review (see Section 2.5.1), as atypical RTC evidence, that is worth analysing. As the following respondent stated:

*“And with the market overheated and hiring as we were and are, the chances of these people leaving is very real. We*



*lost some in a process of this size, but it was not a significant number for our business. I would not consider it relevant to our business ... If we say we were 250 and you have 50 potential people to leave, I'd say 3 or 4 people left, very few.”* (Interviewee E – Time 1).

Even knowing the goal of the integration was to grow the business and not to dismiss people, in a scenario of national economic growth with lots of opportunities in the market, if the internal prospects were not positive, people could have left the organization, as perceived by the following respondent:

*“Because it was an interesting time that we were going through. It was a moment, especially in Brazil, when there was a lot of demand for skilled labor, and when you merge organizations all headhunters know that there is uncertainty and they grab people. We were very concerned about talent retention, people who were key to the success of the process. And then, we had to achieve this balance because people were living an uncertainty with an interesting promise, but reality was the guy outside offering him another job. Still, we managed to retain most people ... to maintain some interest, some excitement about what GCHE will offer me, what is it going to give me up front and almost a year forward.... It was an interesting time because people knew they were going to participate in the company, the largest chemical company in the world and it was appealing.”* (Interviewee K – Time 1).

So, it looks like that during data collection period, in Chem Solutions/GCHE the collective sensemaking about the change was not to relate RTC automatically to resignation, which is coherent with the low number of dismissals in total: “98% of people from Chem Solutions are within GCHE today” (Interviewee E - Time 1).

Yet referring to the previous quote it is important to clarify that the excitement mentioned refers to belonging to a chemical company. As previously explained, success in Chem Solutions employees’ perspective was to be acquired by a chemical group instead of by other financial player. However, such a positive posture was not the only manifestation during change. In fact, several respondents accounted the existence of RTC, as highlighted by the next quote:

*“From the cultural point of view there was a resistance on both sides. I think you could notice by the attitudes of many*

*people that did not understand GCHE processes, saying they are really bureaucratic. Many people talking, "but this at Chem Solutions we did it another way", and saying it a long time after the company was acquired."(Interviewee H - Time 1)*

Although stating that RTC was perceived from employees of both organizations, this quote reveals it especially manifested from Chem Solutions in relation to GCHE, in regards to its management style, considered bureaucratic (Ferner, 2000). It is also important to highlight that the manifestations of RTC were not explicit. When referring to the first months of change (from December/2010 to April/2011) the following respondent clarify that RTC was evident not in meetings, but in informal conversations where objections occurred, which is coherent with Chem Solutions' previous relational and friendly environment.

*"Look, rather informally, had much grapevine, lot of gossip. And then I would say that the protest was more informal. They presented their objections with respect to the change to managers in the informal atmosphere of that great family, that is, in everyday conversations people had, in the café." (Interviewee H -Time 1).*

This example reveals a dangerous manifestation of RTC that is much harder to deal with, as it is not made explicit during meetings. As could be seen in previous Section (5.3), the close follow up from HR and Communication allowed Chem Solutions/GCHE to not only identify RTC existence, but also to deal with the meanings that were being progressively adopted and to influence them through adjustments in the integration plan itself. As it is explained by a respondent:

*"I think it [change plan] came to something super top-down. It follows the book. If you see this side of communication, fine, you have to make some adjustments to what is characteristic of the locality, of Brazil, or the region, but the guideline was global. And then here [in the beginning] there was not much participation process. Around April I think we already had a stake slightly better, yes. For example, in the construction of organizational structure they [employees in general] had a larger share. In April, in the earlier business model mapping, they were already all involved." (Interviewee M -Time 1).*

RTC in Chem Solutions/GCHE case seems to be related to the stages of integration. At the beginning, the mixed manifestations of uncertainty about the near future, balanced with the high expectations related to the acquirer organization's profile were combined with an integration plan that was mainly pre-defined, leaving the Chem Solutions employees with a perception that there was no room for their objections, which explains the higher starting RTC manifestation. It took some time for Chem Solutions/GCHE to perceive that practices would need to be adjusted, to lower RTC. In sum, the initial evaluation of RTC in Chem Solutions/GCHE reveals that despite clear manifestations, the request from GCHE get the "best of both" helped deal with RTC in a more positive way.

As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about RTC dimensions, as explored in next paragraphs. RTC dimensions are Affective, (i.e. feelings about the change), Cognitive (i.e. thoughts about the change) and Behavioural (i.e. involves actions or intention to act in response to the change), as previously theoretically discussed in Section 2.5.2 and detailed in Table 3.4 (see Oreg, 2006 and Section 3.6.2).

Figure 5.3, overleaf, shows the progress over time of each RTC dimension from December 2010 until December 2011. The average agreement about the existence of each dimension as respondents attributed it can be observed on the vertical axis, on a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7 the higher level of RTC. The higher the average, the higher the agreement about the expression of that specific RTC dimension at that point in time.

During the first months after the acquisition (December/2010 to March/2011), RTC overall in the Chem Solutions/GCHE case increased (from a score of 4.3), and from then on (until December 2011), it decreased, and achieved lower levels than in the beginning of change (with a score of 3.4).

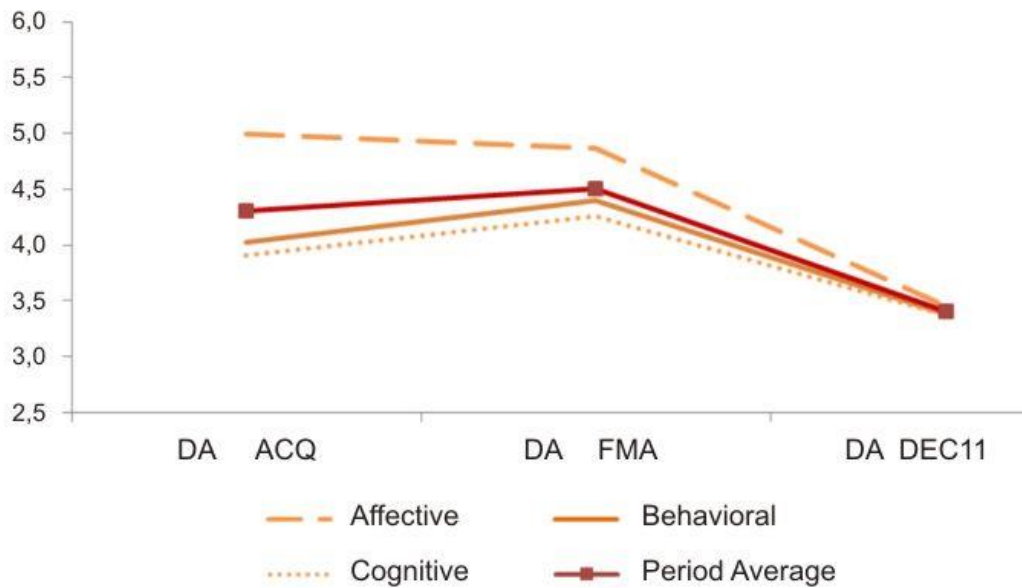


Figure 5.3: RTC Evolution - Chem Solutions/ GCHE

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA ACQ: acquisition period; DAFMA: March 2011; DADEC11: December 2011. Vertical Axis: Communication Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from RTC Questionnaire responses.

This averaged evolution of RTC is reflected on the “Period Average” line in Figure 5.3. Next, respondents’ sensemaking derived from the interviews, about what was going on in Chem Solutions/GCHE are related to the respective RTC dimensions they reveal. In each excerpt below, it is possible to identify one or more RTC dimensions: Affective (A), Behavioural (B), and Cognitive (C), indicated by their initials in brackets. By combining interview and questionnaire data, the goal was to clarify the path of RTC during change to later analyze its relations with COM.

#### 5.4.1 Time 1 RTC Dimensions

As can be observed in Figure 5.3, the **Affective** dimension of RTC (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008) started out as the highest one with a score of 5,0, remained stable for four months, and then decreased rapidly and intensely to the same level as the two other dimensions, Cognitive and Behavioural, ending at a relatively low level with a score of 3,9. That is because fear and tension characterized the first months, from both parties, acquired and acquired ones. As the following respondent explains, at GCHE the fear derived from the expertise Chem Solutions had:

*“People at GCHE were afraid (A) because people came from Chem Solutions and it was the market leader within the personal care market. They said: but they are good, they are very knowledgeable. They have a very large portfolio of products within the personal care.” (Interviewee B - Time 1).*

At Chem Solutions, the fear derived from being integrated into a company that was managed with a larger emphasis on standardized processes rather than the experience and judgement of its people. That fear remained until the importance of personnel gained more meaning:

*“And after some time I understand that the process is very important, but still are people who make these processes. So still very important ... but at that moment (acquisition) we [Chem Solutions] didn't have this understanding (C). We had a lot of fear (A) of losing importance.” (Interviewee N -Time 1).*

Related to **Affective** RTC, but to **Cognitive** dimension of RTC as well, the definition of the organizational chart that happened around March/2011 was expected to contribute to reduction in uncertainty, and therefore in fear and anxiety levels. This structure definition was able to produce just a small reduction in the Affective dimension, because on one hand, positions were defined, meaning the end of potential redundancy. But, on the other hand, there was some frustration with the positions themselves. As a respondent explains:

*“And I think the feeling ... some people [Chem Solutions] were a bit disappointed (A) with what happened to them afterwards... because they imagined that they would have a better position. It is the perception of the group.” (Interviewee P – Time 1).*

The structure definition had the potential to increase the perception of benefits generated by the change (Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder, 1993; Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Washington and Hacker, 2005; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008), and therefore produce a decrease in **Cognitive** RTC. However, as the names of new defined positions meant a lower status for those

coming from Chem Solutions, producing first a light increase in the **Cognitive** dimension. As the following respondent stated, the predominant meaning was of a personal loss:

*“Later I could understand the various losses. There is the loss of autonomy, loss of decision-making, is the loss of status (C), they had status, who was vice president became director, who was director turned into manager, and then it messes a lot with the professional”. (Interviewee A - Time 1)*

In fact, it is interesting to note that **Behavioural** and **Cognitive** dimensions increased for the first four months (DAFMA) after the start of the integration process and once all boxes in the organizational chart had been defined, they began to fall. One explanation may be that there were negative effects of the position downgrade, as previous quote explained, but they were overcome in time. So, the first reaction was to complain about a change, called also as protests, and therefore higher **Behavioural** RTC (Gioia, 1985; Kotler and Keller, 2000; Bordenave, 2001; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Oreg, 2006).

*“So this [positions downgrade] generated quite a protest (B), and so here I totally agree, as there was protest this period in Brazil, March and April. Then post integration in 2011 we were having protest from both sides - Chem Solutions and GCHE - because the system was new to everyone and then there were light protests ..., and now at the end of the year I think it is more consolidated and then I largely disagree that there were protests (B).” (Interviewee B – Time 1).*

The quote describes that it took some time to assimilate this, and the perception of the **Behavioural** dimension was decreasing in line with protests. There was a Cognitive element in this reduction, reflecting that in March the negative impact of the structure was greater than other positive facts.

*“Not so much in March, there have appeared more problems instead of the positives. And even that GCHE made investments.... So positive was overshadowed by the lack of autonomy (C) that you had to decide certain things.” (Interviewee M – Time 1).*

It was just after all arrangements were complete (knowing its responsibilities and understanding benefits from the new post and from the organization itself) that it was possible to significantly reduce **Cognitive** resistance, from 4.5 to 3.4 on average, as can be seen in Figure 5.3. That was favoured by the perception of opportunities for personal development and organizational benefit as well:

*“What made it easier is that the two organizations are in the same market and are very knowledgeable. And the union of the two teams is something productive for those in the group, there are great opportunities to increase your knowledge (C), being in a group with more opportunities to internal movements and also investment opportunity to technology development (C), and to stand before the client with a better offer (C). This is a very positive point.” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

Learning and having career developments prospects, for instance are among the individual benefits that the change meant to employees after all. For the organization the gain was perceived through investments and offering to the market a more complete solution.

In this integration, there was the intention to promote and instill GCHE’s values in former Chem Solutions employees. That seems to explain the path of **RTC** in general, with an initial increase and a decrease towards the end of the data collection period, as the Care Chemicals Vice President concludes:

*“This problem existed for the Chem Solutions people ... because they had to lose their identity (C). Chem Solutions is gone and we are now part of GCHE and we have to follow GCHE procedures. I had to have a meeting with all the Chem Solutions people to say to them, ‘Guys, Chem Solutions is gone, it no longer exists. You have to change and you have to think and do things as they have to be done within GCHE (C), procurement procedures, everything has to be done according to the GCHE model. And this does not mean that everything that was done in Chem Solutions will be thrown away. On the contrary, things were well developed at Chem Solutions and now we will deploy within GCHE’. We had a procedure for global marketing management that was a very structured one. And then when GCHE discovered it the decision was made to integrate it not within the chemical unit but within GCHE as*

*a whole! 'The integration process is over, here we are one team, there is no Chem Solutions system', no one speaks of Chem Solutions. I tell you, everyone changed their mindset (C) and we are really together. No one says, I used to do so at Chem Solutions, this thing is gone. It is no longer there. Everyone is really working together (B). And we are all trying to work as a team.'* (Care Chemicals Vice-President – Time 1).

An important facet of this quote is how it reveals the relation between the acceptance of this new proposed way of doing things and the dialogic COM explored in Section 5.3 above. Recognizing the value of Chem Solutions through incorporating some of its practices and modifying GCHE former ones is a clear example of how change is conducted under a dialogic approach, which reinforces the proposition of this research.

As can be seen in Figure 5.3, RTC average decreased towards the end of the data collection period, which may be supporting the sense that the integration and change is over. According to GCHE's staged plan, the integration process should have been completed by the end of 2011, approximately one year after it started. According to the Senior Vice-President for Chemical, Plastic and Performance Products, it was accomplished and the integration process itself has been almost finalized as well:

*"I think it is not finished yet, but we are at 80% of the way. It will never end. There will always be some tweaking to do with some people. Right now it's more to do with individual settings. The adjustment of the concept we had ... we were at the intensive phase of integration and change management and I think that now our life working together will do the rest. We cannot forget (change and integration), but it is no longer the focus."* (Senior Vice-President for Chemical, Plastic and Performance Products).

In sum, the RTC path in Chem Solutions/GCHE is marked by higher levels in the beginning of change, increasing in the first months and then decreasing towards the end of Time 1 data collection. In this case it was not possible to conduct a Time 2 data collection, limiting the overall analysis to Time 1. The relation between the overall RTC path and between each of its dimensions with COM will better explored in the next section.



## 5.5 Dynamic between COM and RTC

The analysis of the change communication presented in Section 5.3 has demonstrated the predominantly monologic COM in the beginning of change and its turn to a more dialogic COM towards the end of the data collection period in the case of Chem Solutions/GCHE. In that section this evolution was explored aided by data in text and graphic format, revealing the collective perception about each COM dimension over time. The analysis of RTC shown in Section 5.4 characterized an average reduction in the levels of resistance, although in the first months it increased in some extent. Section 6.4 also revealed a collective perception of respondents in text and graphic format, observing evolution of the RTC dimensions over time.

By connecting the previous findings, it is possible to argue the existence of an inverted relation between COM and RTC. When monologic COM was predominant, RTC was increasing and after an increase in dialogic COM, RTC was reducing as happened towards the end of data collection. Clearly, COM and RTC change paths, based on respondents' perceptions, were performing in opposite ways.

This overall mirrored evolution in COM and RTC suggests that under dialogic COM the way RTC is dealt with can transform responses into a contribution to change process and outcomes (Ford and Ford, 2009), and in accordance with the literature review (see Section 2.6) this finding empirically supports the COM as a relevant influence on RTC.

Moreover, besides previous text accounts that reflect respondents' sensemaking about COM and RTC, by juxtaposing COM and the RTC graphs, one can also see their collective perceptions interrelated. This analysis may be seen in Figure 5.4, where the overall outlook of how COM and RTC performed is revealed during Time 1 data collections. Although it does not bring any new information compared to the previous discussions, it makes the inverse relation between COM and RTC averages graphically explicit. It highlights respondents' perceptions about COM and RTC averages in this case.

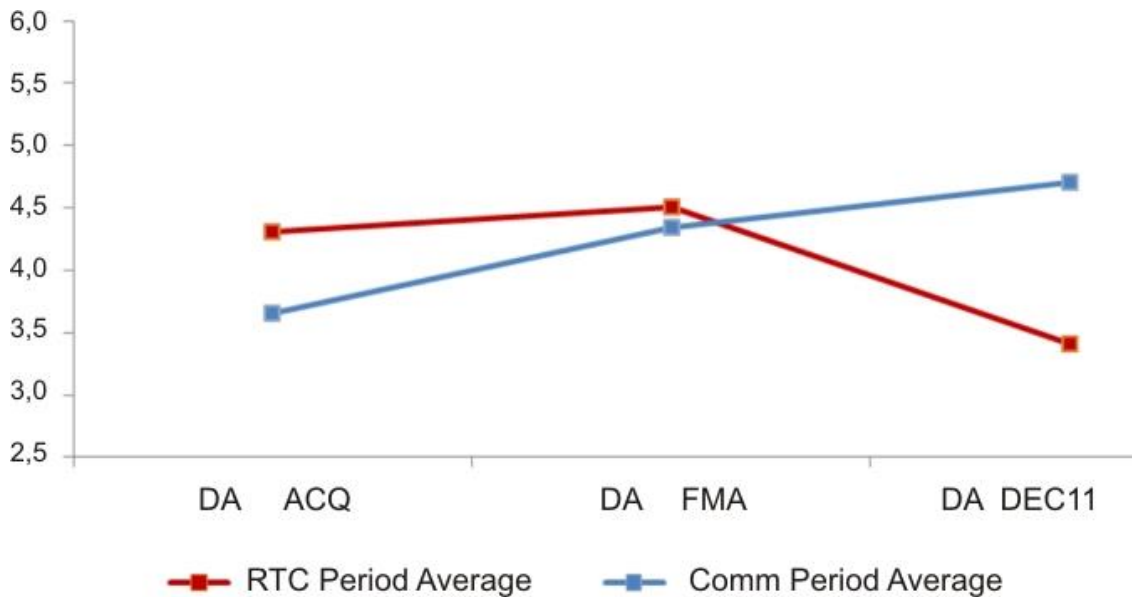


Figure 5.4: COM/RTC Evolution - Chem Solutions/GCHE

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA ACQ: acquisition period; DAFMA: March 2010; DADEC11: December 2011. Vertical Axis: Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

By periodically evaluating internal climate and expectations, and counting on a change plan and management with a communicational stance, built with a dialogic nature, the change process was relatively smooth. It seems that RTC was embraced at Chem Solutions/GCHE and, as suggested in the literature review (Maurer, 1996; Hernandez and Caldas, 2001; Esposito, Williams and Biscaccianti, 2011), it was seen as a powerful engine for change. Such relation among COM and RTC and its dimensions will be detailed and explored comparatively across cases in Chapter 7.

In this case organization it was not possible to conduct Time 2 data collection and therefore, there are no naming and connecting data available for analysis.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the overall paths of COM and RTC in Chem

Solutions/GCHE were explored as well as the dynamic between both constructs. An increase towards dialogic COM, even from a monologic start, seemed to allow a reduction in RTC, in Time 1 data collection. Besides, COM and RTC' dimensions evolution over time were discussed, facilitating the understanding of its paths, mainly by connecting questionnaire and interview data and exploring respondents' collective sensemaking. The paths juxtaposition of COM and RTC along with its dimensions revealed a mirrored pattern that will be further explored in a comparison among cases (see Chapter 7) and finally in conclusions chapter (see Chapter 8).



## **Chapter 6. Consulting Engineering/ Canadian E.: Predominant monologic COM and its influences in RTC**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses findings for the Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., based on the coding framework adopted for data analysis (as explained in Section 3.8.1). Section 6.2 describes the main drivers for the acquisition, in addition to the main contextual elements and the overall change timeline. The characterizations of the nature of communication (COM) and resistance to change (RTC) are introduced respectively in Sections 6.3 and 6.4. This data, based on interviews, documentary, observations and questionnaire data reveals the predominant COM, in this case monologic, and the evolution of COM and RTC dimensions during Time 1 and Time 2 data collection. Section 6.5 explores the perceived inverted relationship between COM and RTC and the dynamic among its dimensions and Section 6.6 concludes the chapter.

### **6.2 Acquisition and change – context and timeline**

Since 2003, Consulting Engineering has witnessed a significant change in market profile and the average size of projects in Brazil. Such an interesting market started to attract competitors from all over the world and that was when Consulting Engineering founders realized that staying small would not help to compete in this context.

*“And then we went through a process of growing very fast, very busy, always chasing after more work, offices, people, resources, and some of these contracts even required us to begin partnerships with foreign companies.” (Ed Dawson – President).*

In 2006, after several purchasing attempts from different companies, which the founders rejected, two opportunities appeared to collaborate with Canadian E. These were opportunities to get to know each organization’s main traits and also an opportunity for Canadian E. to gain a better understanding of the Brazilian

market by acquiring the tacit local knowledge which only being present in the country could afford (Gertler, 2003; Maclean and Hollinshead, 2011).

The purchase of Consulting Engineering by Canadian E. at the end of 2007 was aligned with Canadian E.'s strategy for widening its geographical horizons and enhancing its technical qualifications. Canadian E. already operated projects in more than 100 countries and held offices in more than 34 nations. From Consulting Engineering's perspective, it meant permitted growth in the services portfolio and a geographical expansion of the company's activities in the international market. There was also an expectation to preserve all the features and agility that Consulting Engineering was already recognized for. Incorporation of the EPCM mode (Engineering, Procurement and Construction Management) in its services portfolio would be the most relevant difference in terms of solutions available to its customers. It is important to clarify that turning the core business into EPCM was something proclaimed as a goal, but faced a dominant belief in Consulting Engineering that it would not happen, because the largest clients already had teams within their organizations in charge of these services and, accordingly, would not require solutions from an outsourcing provider.

*“We also have to consider that companies in Brazil do not practice this methodology called EPCM, because they do the P and CM by themselves.” (Interviewee I – Time 1).*

The news of selling Consulting Engineering was regarded as something positive in the view of those of its employees who were worried about the future.

*“So I was already feeling that Consulting Engineering had overgrown itself, thankfully, but with the work that was done it was becoming unfeasible, in my way of looking at it. I even said so to one of the owners at that time, because suddenly it was a company that had more than a thousand employees and it still had the same management. With the same management ... three people managing it all and putting their efforts into it, but they could no longer manage it. And it was very centralized ... And I was thinking I had no way out, it was not going to be that way for much longer. And then when the sale came up I personally took it as a solution. Not the only one, but as a solution that could drive the work and make it grow.” (Interviewee C – Time 1).*

The growth Consulting Engineering was facing in the previous three years was about 60-70% per year in terms of size, number of people and billing. Such growth, and the challenges that come with it, was perceived by some managers as difficult to sustain due to the number and the profile of the three owners (Ed Dawson, Stewart Allen and Peter Atkins) who controlled the direction of the company, as they were in charge of daily activities. High dependency on their capital, guidance and action to bring about all that had to be done continuously and the new efforts to sustain such growth were regarded with concern.

However, most employees were not aware of the challenges that were foreseen if Consulting Engineering remained on its own. Only a few employees knew of the proposals to buy the company and finally a smaller group of people were involved in the due diligence process that occurred regarding Canadian E. At the time, no information was given to Consulting Engineering employees in general about a possible sale to another company.

Surprise and deception were common reactions observed in all interviews related to a general shock about the sale of the company:

*“Look, the day 4 years ago that I came to announce to the staff, put about 120 people in a room, and had to announce that we had made the deal ... there were people who cried, one only just stopped himself taking his shoes off and throwing them away, another said he had been betrayed, said he refused to work for gringos and he wouldn't stay here anymore. Calm down, people, it's nothing, let's sit down and talk.”* (General Director – former Consulting Engineering President).

Several interviewees reported that they felt like they had lost a relative, had lost their bearings, and they felt angry and deceived. The words used were strong to refer to the previous decision not to reveal the intention of selling the company:

*“We have been bought, I was betrayed. Some people said it here, I was betrayed ...”* (Interviewee I – Time 1).

With regard to the chief leaders of this change process, Figure 6.1 reveals the main movements, as it depicts the change general timeline that will be explored next.

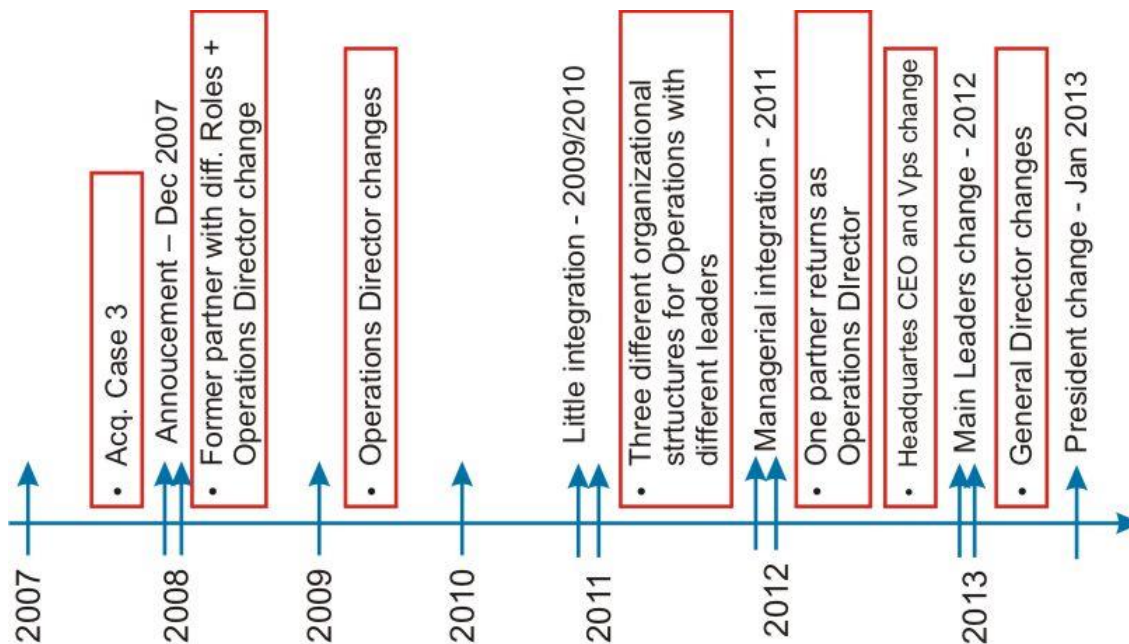


Figure 6.1: Chem Solutions/GCHE Timeline: change leaders/occasions

Source: Compiled by the author.

The data occasions (See Section 3.6.1.) that respondents were asked to recollect about are indicated below, according to the main leadership changes and change milestones since the acquisition:

- 2007 – December: Acquisition.
- 2008 - One of the former partners remained as General Director and the other had different functions. Company name change. Data occasion: Jan/2008 (Time 1).
- 2009/2010 – Operations Director changes. Data occasion: Little integration (Time 1).
- 2011 – New Operations structures and procedures adoption, characterizing integration. – Data occasion: Managerial integration/2011 (Time 1).
- 2012 – Former partner returns as Operations Director. End of 2012: Headquarter CEO and Board changes. Data occasion: Main leaders change – 2012 (Time 2).



- 2013 – January: General Director changes. Canadian E executive takes place, Data occasion: President change: 2013 (Time 2).

In this timeline it is possible to observe many leaders changes that will be detailed next, along with cultural impacts and managerial alterations occurred in this case.

Ed Dawson remained the main leader and the other two former partners also remained connected to the organization, but not as executives. This bond of the three partners with CE was established by contract and guaranteed for the first four years after the acquisition. Stewart Allen was in charge of one technical discipline and stayed in this position throughout the data collection period. Peter Atkins, who was previously in charge of Operations, kept working but as a technical consultant. His withdrawal right after the acquisition from the executive position caused great sorrow throughout the engineering team that valued his profound technical expertise and understanding of market conditions.

In terms of cultural aspects of the organization, one of the main themes was the family feeling of all that worked there. A sense of mutual belonging existed, that is, people felt they belonged to the company and vice versa. And it was they who felt betrayed by not being informed about the possibility of the company being sold.

The former owners of Consulting Engineering reassured employees through a letter (see Section 6.3) that the internal atmosphere, cultural values and management style would remain the same. The text refers to the management of Consulting Engineering remaining the same and is related to the fact that the directors would remain working in this subsidiary of Canadian E. Besides, this reassurance message was deeply related to the foundation of Consulting Engineering, as a company that was born from colleagues that worked together and envisioned market opportunities. Even if employees were not partners in a legal sense, the atmosphere was one of a collective enterprise. There was also a shared sense of pride in the organization's achievements that

the senior employees felt as their own, as they had been working together for many years. The main traces perceived through observation at the very beginning of data collection, were simplicity and easy access among them – professionally and as friends – giving the sense of a family business (Observation 2 Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.).

Right after the acquisition, symbolic changes occurred within Consulting Engineering. From the acquisition on, it was called either Canadian E., CE or the same Consulting Engineering as before. It was adopted Canadian E.'s mission, vision and values with adaptations, as they were not in conflict with former Consulting Engineering values (See Appendix D).

Now retitled as the general director of Consulting Engineering, Ed Dawson was still processing the meaning of this operation and somehow denying that the company had been sold, explaining it as a merger. When explicitly asked during the interview about the nature of the operation, approximately four years after the acquisition, he explained:

*“Here [in Brazil – in Portuguese] we say transaction, in English we say merger, it is less painful to the heart. But they took 100% control.” (Ed Dawson – Time 1).*

On many occasions, Consulting Engineering employees heard expressions reassuring them that very little would change as a consequence of the acquisition, beginning on the day the “transaction” was announced, repeating it on other occasions when Canadian E. representatives were in Brazil, and echoed by the general director very often.

*“Now, one of the things that also caused an impact was that Canadian E. came and said: ‘... nothing will change. You do not need to worry because nothing will change. Our policy when we acquire a company is to keep everything working the way it was. So they made a commitment here, that the three ex-owners here have to stay with the business for at least four years, it is a contractual commitment, and they will remain as heads of the company. And the only difference is that we'll have two people, two areas, a controller that does not exist in the company yet, who would be here, and also a person who will be the head of the legal*

*department ...' So these were the changes announced.”*  
(Interviewee H – Time 1).

That is probably correlated to several conversations that led to an informal agreement made during acquisition negotiations. Canadian E. would respect some practices that CE already had, of course when not confronting the compliance policy terms that would harm competitive edge, change abruptly the way to deal with clients or the speed to respond to market needs. This was settled by the former owners and directors of Consulting Engineering with the Canadian E. Board and nurtured a certain autonomy after the acquisition or at least the capacity to not implement any new practice without questioning. This was perceived by senior managers in CE as a respectful way to deal with their experience and opinions.

*“But one thing that made a big difference, we heard this several times and I do not know if you heard it, it was their concern to be respectful, effectively. After the acquisition, one thing that was important in administration, according to them, was that they respected this local culture, this way of being. Did you hear that? A: No. B: I heard. C: This was said very frequently on several occasions and their [Canadian E.] staff there reassured us.”* (Group interview D – Time 1).

Aligned with that, local employees of Consulting Engineering had the impression for almost four years that change was limited to those areas that had been announced, that is, finance/controlling and the legal department. However, during 2011 Consulting Engineering began adjusting to adopt new managerial practices, as a list of technical procedures that largely impacted the Engineering division, the organization's core team and that characterized the main aspect of the integration with Canadian E.

According to the testimonies, it was difficult to manage the adoption of these procedures, such as a project description for example, as they were considered much more applicable to a developed market than to a country like Brazil. Different treatments were applied to the original procedures versions, depending on each department's head, varying from a careful and collective analysis to simple translation. However, regardless the treatment, these

procedures as a whole were taken as a bureaucratic thing of little value to the Brazilian market.

*“Obviously, it's a Canadian company and it has all the procedures of a hundred-year-old company. It has excellent procedures and processes, but we have detected great difficulty inserting these procedures into our regional context ... It's a cultural situation here in our region in Brazil, because competitors do not practice this type of process that greatly increases costs.”* (Interviewee I – Time 1).

Besides adopting some standardized reports and procedural practices, it seems there was no goal for further managerial integration at that point in time. Even the name CE or Canadian Engineering was not being used in all times by all employees in Brazil. There was much reference to the organization as “Consulting Engineering” in the interviews, even though they took place four years after the acquisition.

*“But I tell you this is superficial. Because the truth is cultural integration that should have happened, the integration to be proud to belong to, to feel part of, people to be coming and going, people doing immersions, attending training courses, etc., This definitely does not exist. There is a name that we're incorporating ... but even this, for example, you see in our own way of speaking ... people still refer to Consulting Engineering ... (not to Canadian E).”* (Interviewee A – Time 1).

As this previous quote states, besides this evidence regarding the name of the organization, no other efforts in the direction of a more encompassing integration were perceived, and that frustrated those that kept in mind the words previously stated about professional development and greater perspectives. This reveals the lack of clarity in regard to the change project, the extent and the consequences of the integration in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

It was only during 2011 that a managerial effect of the integration was felt, and interestingly, this was perceived as having a certain degree of imposition and with a connection to not having achieved the planned financial results for 2009 and 2010.

*“Today there isn’t much more flexibility. Firstly, I think the good relationship that existed was between the Chair, our Board, with the Chair and the Board in Canada, and there was a high degree of confidence that Canada had regarding Consulting Engineering because before the purchase it was so far up, profitable, a reference in Brazil, the largest in mining and so on. They said, let these guys row the boat forward because they know what they are doing. And so I think there was a lot of flexibility and it has even been said by one of the former owners: look, we need to have our autonomy in here the way we think; this is the key to success for us. Over time, even though we had this autonomy, we did not reach the goals in terms of expectations of Canada regarding profitability, revenues etc. And so, at least I could see more rigour in controlling this integration. Like, (.Canadian E. thinking that) the way they are doing is not working and so now we will be stricter in our way of being. And so I think this was like 2008 to 2011.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

This previous quote synthesizes the general perception of change in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., which was almost not occurring during the first 3 years and at first was perceived as a recognition of Consulting Engineering competence. It was followed by a managerial integration in the fourth year, noticed as a direction correction imposed by Canadian E, as consequence of a lack of competence to produce the expected results.

The intricacy of the integration arises when the distance and respect that seemed to be deliberate on the part of Canadian E. at the beginning, subsequently was interpreted as a lack of knowhow in terms of managing the integration of a company such as Consulting Engineering. Concept of retrospective sensemaking, as proposed by Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005), can be recalled here, as respondents were selecting some facts and progressively reviewing the meaning initially attributed (see Section 2.3.1). That sensemaking was clear to respondents that realized this integration was not similar to previous Canadian E. experiences. Consulting Engineering was a larger company in terms of number of people and with a certain management complexity:

*“Canadian E. is a monster and in the world there are only five companies its size, with its proposal. And it has projects in 100 countries, it works in six languages, and it has been*

*buying companies for at least 5 years. Naturally, Consulting Engineering was the largest acquisition since the 70s, when they bought another large organization. And then it is very difficult to manage it ... I agree that it does not come in a manual, the guys are accustomed to buying tiny companies and putting them in their pocket and it is all right, and there is no owner. But it is different here.” (Group Interviewee E – Time 1).*

In other words, according to some respondents, preparation for integration was perceived as not being sufficient and change as not managed appropriately by Canadian E:

*“In my view, this change should have been managed differently. The changes that are occurring, they are occurring more or less on the job, it is on a daily basis that you will discover what is changing ... Because every time you go through a change of this magnitude and there isn't management - a change of this size had to be managed by those who are purchasing and not by those who are being acquired - this change is much slower, much more traumatic and generates more insecurity for those who are being impacted by it.” (Group Interviewee E – Time 1).*

In a general view, change in this case had many intervening variables such as local culture, foreign leaders with a third different culture besides the local one and Canadian E's; lack of leadership and management practices that increased the challenge to bring about change and a lack of a change management project and team. Last but not least, all the changes that went on in Operations department at the same time (leaders and working flow), as will be explored next.

The role of the Operations Director, a core responsibility, was shifted around in the organizational structure and given different positions in the hierarchy. The position was filled by three different people and that had both a real and a symbolic effect on the team. Real effects were felt as a consequence of different management styles and different subordination proposed by each of the directors. Symbolic effects related to the power and relevancy of the area (which includes Engineering) when compared to other supports, corporate ones, that enjoyed a more stable leadership.

*“How can I put it, they changed the chart every two months and they never published that chart. It’s set. Change all the time, a change here and another there, but never a publication. They called and said; now it has moved here. I would say it was all small solutions for small problems. There was not one thing that was consistently analysed. It lacked decision-making consistency. Look, I have decided to put it here because of this and that and our goal now is this and that and from now it is so and does not change. Consistency in decision-making. There was not a firm decision, it kept changing all the time.” (Interviewee F – Time 2).*

The perception was that those leader changes were not sufficiently careful, leading to failed attempts to select the leader and to a kind of trial and error when structuring the area, opposed to the expectation of a more strategic design for the structure. The parallel creation and structuring of support areas, such as HR and Legal departments, required by Canadian E. reinforced the perception of being left aside. Besides changing the director himself, Operations had different models of operation, which affected the working flow, responsibilities limits of each function and therefore, left middle managers with ambiguity about their roles. The dominant sensemaking was:

*“Middle managers, including me, have a notion that there is a melting pot and there are no guidelines and we’ve been suffering constant change. It is the feeling that someone is missing in the middle. And people, especially senior management, either fail to notice this whole cauldron or cannot admit it.” (Interviewee K – Time 2).*

Since the beginning, and for different reasons, there was a perception of a fragile, continuously changing top leadership for the core of the company. During this research, there were several configurations for Operations/Engineering, core areas in CE, and it seems that for the most of the time that there was no clear understanding of roles or even of hierarchy.

*“And several people have told me and I’ve heard it, too: I do not know who my boss is. I mean, the very top there, you do not know who your boss is, your direct leadership, who you will meet?!! And many people say this, I do not know.” (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

In 2012 Peter Atkins, one of the former owners, came back to an executive position, as the main leader for the Operations department, but remained for only 6 months. Peter Atkins's return was also celebrated instilling new hope of an effective working method. When he left, it was a time of more widespread changes in leadership: Ed Dawson left the organization as the main leader and a new chief executive, Yan Sthan, was designated by Canadian Engineering. At headquarters Canadian E.'s President and CEO had recently changed and several other vice presidents were also leaving or retiring, bringing internal instability.

*"I mean, the market is not buying as it was before. From the international point of view, it is also bad due to all this issue of economic crisis, Europe and suchlike, and then external factors are bad. Internal factor, local, we have the change in top management that we still do not know exactly what it will look like. And if we move to international issues, I don't know if you've been following it, but our headquarters is involved in issues that are being investigated in Canada and there was also a change of CEO." (Interviewee K – Time 2).*

In fact, during the Time 2 data collection, and referring to the year 2012, the prevailing feeling was a mix of strong criticism, balanced with a great hope of finally establishing the company's new cultural outline. The integration process is perceived as taking too long. The criticism was about the implementation of Canadian E. practices and policies, which was more encompassing in Time 2 data collection and clearly less open to adjustments to the local practices.

*"So I think this alignment with Canada is very important, but it should happen in a different way. Not so much imposition." (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

*"In our case almost five years of going back and forth, extremely long, and this cannot go on forever, things get harder. Much more difficult ... Now it is Canadian E., forget Consulting Engineering." (Group interview C – Time 2).*

*"The company is in the process of change, it is as if we were here in 2008. Many mistakes ... too much delay in decision-making. Decision-making is based on opinions of a small group without the participation of the majority. Most people are dissatisfied." (Interviewee I – Time 2).*



Hope, on the other hand, is also connected to this clear definition of policies that would redound to a clear belonging to Canadian E., an office in Brazil of a world organization.

*“Coincidentally, the last 6 months led to closer ties between Canadian E. and Consulting Engineering as they got together and turned into one thing, the Canadian E group. And then I see that today, we are referenced much more as a group than a while ago ... we are starting to create a global thing.”* (Interviewee E – Time 2).

Overall, early on in the change respondents interpreted the lack of integration as positive, followed by a sensemaking change due to the difficulties of managerial integration, perceived as consequence of a lack of managerial expertise from Consulting Engineering added by a lack of change management by Canadian E. Later, during Time 2 data collection, as a new president was recently appointed and the change was perceived as finally ending, although through a more imposed way.

### **6.3 Nature of change communication (COM)**

When referring to integration all respondents in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. mentioned the adoption of procedures, characterizing that there was no formal integration or communication plan for company as a whole. The acquisition-announcement was a main initiative led by the president that was to invite all managers to a meeting and tell them the news. As one respondent described, even for this announcement itself, there was a latent need for better planning and implementation:

*“And they met a group of managers in this room right next door to break the news, and it was a shock to all. Because the news was: the company was sold. I mean, fait accompli ... and this was the first part of the meeting. In the second part of the meeting the executive vice-president of the mining and metallurgy division had come from Canadian E. to say some words. ... On the communication process, perhaps the company had made a mistake of having done it the way it was. Of course, it had to start in secrecy, but maybe at some point where the process was already mature and the decision to buy and sell had already been*

*taken, just leaving out details, might have had a better preparation.” (Interviewee H – Time 1).*

The expectations were clearly about a two-staged announcement, a first one explaining the rationale for a possible sale and the other to introduce the acquirer organization, to allow employees to process the meaning of the sale itself, before knowing the company was actually acquired and by which organization.

After the announcement, the former owners of Consulting Engineering released a letter, with a clear message of pride for having conquered this recognition by Canadian E., while also reassuring them, as can be seen in the following excerpt (author's translation):

*“... Among the many new features that will come along with this new stage, some deserve to be made immediately, as they are the result of the conquest of all professionals that made Consulting Engineering a company with enough visibility and knowledge to integrate a large international group.*

*Consulting Engineering will become a Global Center of Mining Excellence, it will become a world reference. In addition to maintaining the current mining portfolio, other segments could be developed. This translates into opportunities for personal and professional growth for all of us, as exchanges of experiences among professionals from various countries will bring together the best of both companies.*

*The management of the company will remain the same as today. We will continue with the same family that grew with transparency, ethics and professionalism, pillars that will be held today and always. Those were some of the reasons that have made us recognized, respected and valued.”*  
(Letter of Acquisition – Consulting Engineering).

This letter reveals an explicit promise to maintain managerial practices and also to provide organizational and professional development, expanding opportunities for projects and employees. In January 2008, the Executive Vice President for Mining and Metallurgy, from Canadian E., released a letter addressing “Consulting Engineering Ltd Professionals”, reinforcing investment in developing professional knowledge. He stated that:

*“... We will also ensure that all our employees, especially newcomers, can develop and acquire knowledge necessary for the success of Canadian E. in the coming years. We also need to constantly strive to maintain the quality of services we provide. Only satisfied customers will bring new projects that will ensure our future growth. Consequently, we will increase our investment in training and development of our standards and procedures, as well as our operating systems.”* (Letter Welcome Acquisition. Canadian E., author translation).

However, the message also signals developing standards and procedures as well as operating systems. Several repercussions of these ambiguous messages – that there were no changes to be made in management style and at the same time, there would be a development of training, standards and procedures, were broadcast on the Intranet and e-mails. As monologic COM, this broadcasting had no room for collective meaning making, but can be characterized as sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). That ended up allowing readers to expect a situation where all good things would come to them from this acquisition, such as training and international exposure, but no major changes in management and operations. That implies an idea that the company was not really sold, that there would be no changes, but also that there would be some for the better, as explored previously in Section 7.2 from the words of the former General Director.

In December 2007, Canadian Engineering had already announced the renaming of Consulting Engineering to Canadian E.–Consulting Engineering (CE), (Acquisition letter – Canadian E.) followed by logo and badge alterations (to adopt Canadian E’s logo) at the beginning of the following year. There was a slogan at that time which was expected to reassure people about maintaining a certain freedom in adaptation, and the maintenance of values:

*“We proudly present our new logo. Welcome to a new era, your way. A new identity, the same values.”* (Poster new logo Canadian E. – Consulting Engineering).

In several pictures depicting Poster New Badge, Intranet New Logo and Boards, for example, there were different name references and logo signatures for internal communication, varying from Consulting Engineering, Canadian

Engineering and Canadian E.-Consulting Engineering, without any clear reasons. At that time, no one seemed to be in charge of communication, which was the main cause of the divergence. On Canadian E.'s side, in contrast, all references to the new company are uniform, as can be seen in the newsletter editions – from 01/2008 to 04/2010, for example, as to Canadian E.-Consulting Engineering.

There were several information channels available at Consulting Engineering, although they were not used to inform or disseminate the integration process with Canadian E. This is yet another indication that communication was not treated as a relevant aspect of the change process, probably related to the lack of clarity about the integration: as the change project was not clear, consequently communication was not considered as an important change issue as well. There were several channels, but only one was used to support the change itself:

- **Consulting Engineering net:** an Intranet for CE, managed by Consulting Engineering HR.
- **Infozone:** an Intranet channel for integration news, managed by Canadian E.
- **Consulting Engineering Mail:** a frequent e-mail, with timely information, launched whenever necessary.
- **Consulting Engineering News:** an in-house quarterly printed newsletter that was replaced by an electronic fortnightly newsletter with plans, at the time, to make it weekly.
- **Newsletter:** the in-house printed newsletter issued globally by Canadian Engineering.
- **Pocket:** a single board in front of the elevator, for special news, no specific periodicity.
- **Bulletin board:** a board with multiple thematic news and basic information, about birthdays, safety and health tips, placed near coffee tables/rooms and updated every week.

With the exception of Infozone that was an intranet channel for matters related to integration, these channels were not even being much used to convey

information about the integration. Moreover, according to the respondents, despite available, Infozone was not consulted by CE employees. In a contrast to the previous cases studied, these above were all in essence monologic COM channels, not much used, and there was no evidence of complementary dialogic support for the change.

*“Today there is Infozone, a portal that is linked to Canadian E. but doesn’t interest anyone. So the question of what it is going to be, if it’s going forward or not, what the prospects are even in terms of this integration, it’s not passed on, it’s not disclosed.” (Interviewee N – Time 1).*

So, information of change and integration was really going on through only one of the written regular channels. In addition, as employees did not read it, it means that the sensemaking process was hindered by the lack of information. As Maitlis and Christianson (2014) sustains, sensemaking may take longer or may even not occur when individuals are not sharing the same schemata, which in turn is fed by information, communication and other sensegiving efforts, not very present in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. case. Besides, collective sensemaking in this case was relying much on the face-to-face information taken from regular interactions among employees in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. However, there was no institutional and systematized face-to-face communication.

It looks like the relationship with Canadian E. remained limited to CE Board, while the rest of the company, except for the company name and procedures adoption, did not know what it was like being part of Canadian E.

*“And so, for me, the major bottleneck that comes to mind now I think is this that would be an important point; I mean the integration of our Board and the presidency with Canada is very good, in my view, from what I see. We know people there, you know who to talk to, who to look for, the way we have to follow, we know the procedures ... Now, it does not permeate through the rest of the company.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

The initial analysis of communication in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. indicates a lack of systematic attempt to influence employees' collective sensemaking regarding the integration through coordinated organizational efforts encouraging dialogue. This characterizes fragmented sensemaking according to Maitlis and Christianson (2014), as there is almost no attempt to organize or control discussions and therefore meaning about change. Some one-off initiatives were described, but with predominantly monologic nature, i.e., as information broadcast and not many conversational and meaning co-construction opportunities.

As previously introduced in Section 6.2, it was during 2011 that the procedures were brought by Canadian E. to Consulting Engineering. Operations department was in charge of translating and adapting those procedures to the local context. This process was decentralized, involving all internal experts and therefore considered respectful, (despite not much value given for the procedures themselves) as their expertise and considerations were used for adapting and deciding whether or not using them in ongoing projects.

*“So well, in this integration what has happened too: they bring procedures and we have adapted, tropicalized. So it's up to us to use and does not fit we do not use or so we adapted to our reality... Canadian E. has a very interesting way, it does not impose its culture, no ... It does not come and speak with Brazil: this way. There is a culture and way of doing, let's do an integration and what is yours we will respect. This they have, just that I think is an advantage.”*  
(Interviewee A – Time 1).

This recognition of the local knowledge about Brazilian market specificities was the main force towards a perceived dialogic COM in a predominant monologic COM in this initiative of the integration. In respondents' perception, this Canadian E. stance is related to the internal agreement from the acquisition period (See Section 6.2), which claims to respect local current practices.

*“So ... it is not that the Canadian E. group had a formula ... I bought a business and then it's all written here, and so on and so forth. You really have to build it on a daily basis and understand the needs of one another and learn how to balance it, to know, well, wait a minute, Canadian E.,*

*'Canada guys', you're going too far here in this demand, we'll do it this way because here in Brazil that's the way it's done.'* (Interviewee H – Time 1).

As the respondent states, listening and accepting local way of doing things was achieved after exposing reasons and explaining the gains of maintaining practices. So, it was a result of a negotiated action between Consulting Engineering and Canadian E.

In addition, at the end of 2011, the HR department created a plan to address the perceived lack of coordinated organizational communication:

*"We had little information, its quality was poor and there was no communication. Almost no communication. It is one of our weaknesses that we are trying to address now. We're doing a restructuring plan in the area of internal communication."* (Interviewee A – Communication department Time 1).

The internal plan to address the situation was constituted by a "communications committee" that was created together with the "antennas of communication", that is individuals from different parts of the organization responsible for capturing meaning in progression and supporting sensemaking and information dissemination. The 'antennas' were responsible for sharing their perceptions with the committee that in turn shaped the weekly meetings within departments. The creation of this "leadership model for communication" reveals the acknowledgement of the several flows of meaning construction and the importance of bringing these meanings in the definitions of change conduction. A short course on communication was also offered for managers to help them communicate better face-to-face. Plans included that leaders would come out of the weekly meetings with a roadmap they would discuss with their staff, cascading down the communication. This would characterize a step towards a more structured communication, but not yet guaranteed as it was intended to be, as a predominately dialogic one, as it had to heavily rely on the meetings conduction. In sum, a large gap in communication had been perceived and it was thought that structured face-to-face meetings would help fill it. As a respondent confirms:

*“I think there is a lack of meetings, closer conversations so you can deal with issues, ask questions, clarify, give feedback, because putting it in writing can be dangerous, sometimes a person will interpret it some other way. We see very interpersonal problems here due to emails because an email can be very aggressive and people do not have the skill to write correctly and sometimes it becomes a real war. And we see this a lot. And so I think we seek to be closer to the teams. To be close to you and you have this information. Directly. We have management meetings with the board which were more empowered. And we formerly had them, but not with the same frequency... In the projects is expected that each Project Manager to establish regular weekly meetings with the supervisors of the project (Responsible for each subject under each project).” (Interviewee I – Time 1).*

However, this communication enhancement worked partially and only for a short period. The organization faced hard times in 2012 (in terms of sales, revenues, profits) and this demoted strategic communication so that it was no longer a priority and eventually the project died. So, regarding information and communication quantity and quality, the general sense is that both were lacking all years after the acquisition.

*“... if the information is already truncated, imagine communication! We complained about communication, they created an intranet as a communication channel, and that somehow improved it, because there are emails with news. But one important point that I think the company should be touting does not happen. For example, if we win a project, we learn about it because one day someone calls and says, look I need to know who is going to do this job.” (Interviewee F – Time 1).*

As the respondent reveals, there was an effort to increase information distribution, the intranet was not being successful and e-mails were created, but it continued to be perceived as poor in quantity and quality. There was not enough information, considered by the respondent as a minor challenge compared to providing communication. Interestingly, it recalls Deetz (1995) and Reis (2000) differentiating between informative and communicative nature of initiatives (See Section 2.4.1). This perception of lacking information is also valid to face to face channels and throughout the change, as can be seen in this excerpt from Time 2 data collection:



*“There is almost carelessness in disclosing information ... There wasn’t a restriction on disclosure, but there is no effective disclosure mechanism. Strategy is defined in a meeting with the directors and suchlike, and then it’s alright, it’s not advertised and no one understands it. And then six months later: how come nobody knows it? We decided that 6 months ago ... Why would anyone know it? There is no efficient disclosure mechanism! And sometimes you get the information to management level ... But I think the alignment of management here, to pick your team and notify them of the information you’re getting, I think there is no such process. People do not care about this. And this leads to misinformation.” (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

The general evaluation of communication in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. is that it had very few organizational initiatives, making it harder to establish the predominant COM in this case. By analyzing format, frequency and duration, messages, channels and the temporarily structured communication efforts, as presented above, two main movements can be inferred. The first one is marked by a light progression of dialogic COM, concomitant to an increase in structured efforts of communication towards the end of the Time 1 data collection period. The second is characterized by a cut in systematized communication efforts and then the COM moved towards monologic again in Time 2 data collection.

As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about COM dimensions that support characterizing the predominant COM in this case, as it will be explored in next paragraphs. COM dimensions are Mutuality, Propinquity, Commitment, Empathy and Risk, as previously theoretically discussed in Section 2.4.3 and detailed in Table 3.3 (see Section 3.6.2).

Figure 6.2 represents each communication dimension over time from 2008 until January 2013. It depicts respondents’ collective perception in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. with averages about COM dimensions from Dec 2008 (Acquisition) to January 2013. Time 1 data occasions are DA2008: acquisition period; DA2009/10: one/two year(s) after acquisition; DA2011: 2011; Time 2: DA2012: 2012; DA2012/2013: December 2012/Jan2013.

The vertical axis shows the average agreement about the existence of each dimension as attributed by respondents, on a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7 the highest score possible reflecting a strong perceived dialogic COM (in contrast, a smaller score reflects a weak perceived dialogic COM). The higher the average, the higher the agreement about the expression of that specific communication dimension at that point in time.

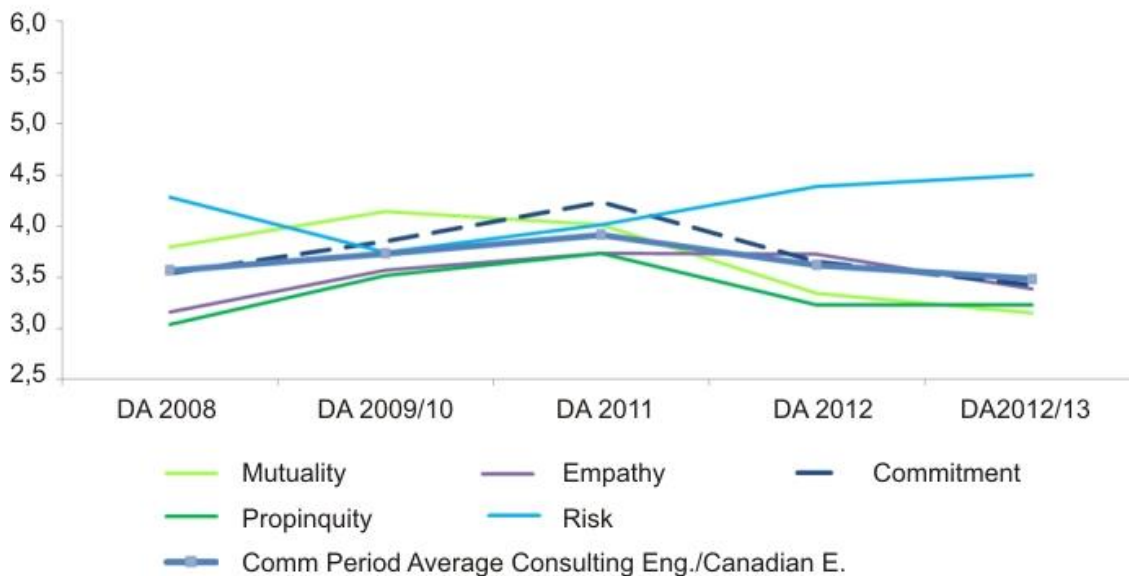


Figure 6.2: COM Evolution - Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA2008: acquisition period; DA2009/10: one/two year(s) after acquisition; DA2011: 2011; Time 2: DA2012: 2012; DA2012/2013: December 2012/Jan2013. Vertical Axis: Communication Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

The focus of the analysis is on the general outlook of the lines in this graphic. Dimensions overall showed a light increase in the level of dialogic COM during Time 1 data collection (highest point in DA2011: 2011) and a decrease in Time 2, achieving at the end the same levels of the beginning of change. This overall path is reflected in the “COM Period Average” line that combines all dimensions averaged. In order to argue that (or if) the relevance of these findings and evidence of a monologic COM most of the time with just a few dialogic moments (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012; Taylor and Kent, 2014), it is necessary to come back to the respondents’ sensemaking, and therefore to rely on the interview data. In each example described below, it is possible to identify one or more dialogic COM dimensions: Propinquity (P), Mutuality (M), Empathy (E), Risk (R) and Commitment (C).

### 6.3.1 Time 1 COM Dimensions

As can be seen in Figure 7.2, **Risk** (i.e. assume uncertainty, vulnerability of not having control) started high with a score of 4,3, revealing a trace of Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. culture of admitting not knowing everything and accepting the uncertainty. It declined slightly and rose to almost the same level than at its commencement during Time 1 data collection. Its decrease is related to a period of uncertainty reduction, when little integration was going on. In 2011, its increase may be tied to higher levels of uncertainty as managerial integration started simultaneously with various changes in Operations department leaders (the organization's core). As a respondent from the area referred to the several attempts to find an effective structure for the area:

*“We have no certainties (**R**) within the company. Everything that comes is like a fantastic and miraculous cure.”*  
(Interviewee C – Time 1).

That explicates that the Risk dimension was much present, as uncertainties were assumed (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Karimova, 2014).

It is interesting to note that all dimensions but Risk started with low levels of dialogic nature and collectively underwent small improvements during the first period. **Commitment** (meaning paying attention and trying to understand others' ideas, values and beliefs) was gradually following this described path of increase.

*“Bosses who can, and obey whoever shows judgment. At first, this was the mantra, yes, but then it was interesting that progress has been remarkable. Progress made the Canadians realize that the path was not to reach and enforce (**C**). And then this exchange of experiences (**C**) also showed that they needed to adapt (**I**). They could not reach and see it would be done the way they wanted, because results began to appear after they yielded a little.”* (Group Interviewee E – Time 1).

During the projects jointly delivered right before the acquisition, “Canadians” were perceived as very enforcing, in the sense that they would like their way and their technology to prevail. After acquisition this was changing through the understanding of local beliefs and practices, and they were gradually,

and for a while, considered interested in understanding and respect local knowledge (Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012), reflecting in a **Commitment** increase.

**Empathy** (i.e. the environment of support and trust [Kent and Taylor, 2002; Schein 2003; Heath *et al.*, 2006; Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008]) was reasonably stable during the whole period. And although very slowly, it seems that Canadian E., often referred to as Canada or Canadians, was able to build an atmosphere of trust and goodwill from employees at Consulting Engineering. As the following respondent explains, it is reflected even in the way a language barrier is overcome:

*“I think we [Consulting Engineering] felt very intimidated, especially in meetings that were in English, it was a matter of complete understanding of the language and then the person would be closed about it there.... Today we already know a bit of English, many meetings are no longer in English, is required to be in Portuguese. So who is from Canadian E here and does not speak Portuguese they must have a translator by their side and then it improved our posture (**E**). But at the beginning we were positioned more defensively and thought, if I'm getting 50%, is better to keep quiet. I will not reach out and expose (**E**) myself.”* (Interviewee F – Time 1).

**Mutuality** (i.e. spirit of mutual equality, subjects of change and avoidance of superiority) suffered little variation during Time 1 data collection, which may be influenced by adopting different practices in Brazil and preventing the changes desired by Canadian E. that they would harm the Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. competitiveness. That would bring about the perception of equality (Cissna and Anderson, 1998; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012), especially manifested about technical procedures, as the following respondent highlights:

*“It's an interesting thing because the EPCM now, right now we are in the viability Two. And we're just developing procedures for one EPCM project ... Do not have to get the translation of the EPCM procedures as they have there in Canada. It's no longer this. Now we're being respected for the initiatives that are being made here (**M**).”* (Group interview D – Time 1).

In contrast, as change progressed and procedures were implemented, the sensemaking about differences in treatment received from leaders changed from individual traits to cultural differences. It connected the personal characteristics of the leaders that were chosen by Canadian E. to head certain departments/areas to the perceived superiority of one nationality in relation to another, leading to a slight decrease in **Mutuality**, as perceived by respondents.

*“... Bad in many aspects, Canadian culture is very different from ours. Initially, the company placed here a number of new professionals who came from abroad ... They came with another mindset, with excessive power (**M**), a form of work thinking that Brazilians don't work well They wanted to change the entire shape of our thinking (**M**). They messed up several times. And this was a very inefficient start for Canadians here.” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

In a first moment, the decision-making seemed to more distributed to the board of directors as a whole, not only the three owners as it was before, implicating in an increased **Propinquity**, with more people engaging through decision making participation (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Frahm and Brown, 2006), as can be observed in Figure 6.2, during Time 1 data collection. As the following respondent explained, the distribution of power was observed:

*“Before, there were three partners; Peter, Ed and Stewart, who were actually hands on and insisted in leading the company. It was a smaller sized company and all decisions were taken by these three people (**P**), who were the owners of the company ... This culture change has demanded a spread of the power to decide.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

As the integration developed, besides these expected changes in decision-making, there was a perceived lack of connection between the board and the management level and the staff in general, implying a lower **Propinquity** perception (i.e. immediacy of presence and engagement in decision making) by respondents.

*“But therein lies ... Board awareness was one, but the staff's was another, and that we have to be careful about because we are evaluating the whole. The Board is saying, we'll make EPCM, we will win (a project bid) ...the company as a whole did not know where it was going.” (Interviewee I – Time 1).*

That explains why during all periods evaluated, it remained as the lowest dimension perceived in change, as can also be observed in Figure 6.2.

As could be seen, despite in a predominant monologic COM during Time 1 in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. there was a light increasing of dialogic dimensions towards the end of the period. There still the need to analyse the accounts related to Time 2, as will be explored next.

### **6.3.2 Time 2 COM Dimensions**

During 2012 and the beginning of 2013, the Time 2 data collection, there was a change in the COM as can be noticed in Figure 6.2 (DA2012: 2012 and DA2012/2013: December 2012/Jan2013). All dimensions in average decreased during this period, except Risk.

The **Risk** dimension increasing during Time 2 is probably connected to the perception that the change process was re-starting at the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, with president changes.

*“I always saw it as a smooth thing. Ed would say: I’ll have to study that. As president, he didn’t have an answer for everything (R) and he was very humble in this sense. Yan likewise (R), our directors I think the same way (R). I think there isn’t a perception, in my view, a loss of power (R) because you do not have an answer, even for the amount of change that we have been through.” (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

Uncertainties about the working process and subordination re-emerged, and in a culture where not knowing is not a power threat, that leads to explicit admitting not knowing about the organization’s future.

In contrast, the other COM dimensions decreased towards the end of data collection period. In fact, the overall evaluation at the end of the second period was that the change was imposed, which influenced the level of all other dimensions other than Risk.

During Time 2 there was recognition of the efforts from Consulting Engineering and Canadian E. to build a trustful environment with a communal orientation (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Schein, 2003; Heath *et al.*, 2006) while acknowledging that this was not really achieved. As the following respondent explains, the perceived imposition, although well intended, harmed the perception of **Empathy** being present:

*“I think there is good faith (E) on both sides. I think the relationship with Canada is a very good one. The people there rely on people here and we rely (E) on them too. But what I think is the point is really a different culture. Sometimes you want to help, but end up hindering, that happens in our lives every day. You believe that you're doing the right thing, but it's not what you should do.”* (Interviewee G – Time 2).

This unachieved **Empathy** is also related to Mutuality evolution during Time 2 data collection. Comparing **Mutuality** levels in Figure 6.2, from the second highest dimension at the beginning of change (score of 3.8), to the lowest in Time 2 (score of 3.2), it is clear that the respondents' view about the sense of superiority from the other parts worsened. Affected by the general perception of imposed change, it also seems that when opinions were required the communication environment did not allow them to be honestly given as the following interviewee explained:

*“I think it was really a lack of understanding. I think it has improved [reduced], but it existed before; there was a certain fear of expressing opinions contrary to what senior company executives (M) thought was right. So, in several meetings that I attended this was very, very common. A director speaks and asks if everyone understood, if everyone agrees, and no one says anything. Leaving the meeting, one guy pulls you aside and says it is all nonsense. But why didn't you say this there? You had the chance to... Today this channel is more open.”* (Interviewee G – Phase 2).

Finally, this overall perceived decrease in dialogic COM was impacted by the change of presidents at Consulting Engineering, which was followed by the removal of Consulting Engineering's name and the implementation of other Canadian E. policies.

*“And now with the change of presidents and everything, now it goes the way. Canadian E. wants it to. At least it will be the way that Canadian E. wants. If it is right, if it is good, it will be correct ... I'm not saying it will not be, but now it will be the Canadian E. way (M), that I have no doubts about. Now if you do not know it, then it will not work.”* (Group interview C – Phase 2).

Hence, after predominantly monologic COM start, within four years of integration a few initiatives moved the COM towards a more dialogic stance. However, as it was not entirely supported by explicit organizational actions it was not possible to be sustained. The sensemaking was fragmented (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) most influenced by individual experiences within change rather than the organizational leaders sensegiving efforts. Overall this led to a fall back into a predominant monologic COM nature in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. A similar evaluation about RTC over time will be explored in the next Section.

#### **6.4 Resistance to change characterization (RTC)**

In Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., there was no clear guidance about the approach expected for the integration. In fact, the agreement between the Consulting Engineering former owners and Canadian E., of respecting local practices was recalled a few times, offered guidance in respect to how Canadian E. should approach the integration. It is important to note however, that it offers no directions in regards to how Consulting Engineering should do so.

Another guidance for the change could be extracted from the letter where former Consulting Engineering owners reveal the expectation to get the best of both companies, but those lines were not recalled or regarded as significant from respondents. Anyway, it is really important to note that these expectations of respecting local practices and getting best of both organizations were proclaimed by Consulting Engineering and not by Canadian E. That may indicate that there was not much guidance on Canadian E.'s part to be shared with the acquired organization, as no other statements about the expected relations were found.



Not having a clear definition of integration boundaries was a characteristic of this case. Integration started with the promise to be restricted to a few back office departments and evolved to affect the core of the company and many other supporting areas such as HR, Procurement, etc. In the beginning, on the one hand, Canadian E's way of promoting the integration – with almost no enforcement, was comprehended positively, perceived as respect and autonomy for the Brazilian operation. However, on the other hand it also had a down side, as explained by a respondent:

*“... But, they're just missing the other part, that is, this is lost a bit along the way, on the path of realization. You can even have a policy, but the realization ... to put it into practice on a daily basis and make it happen effectively ... And then they have several management tools.... We have to walk alone at times ...”* (Interviewee A – Time 1).

As it can be seen in the previous quote, Canadian E, was perceived as with a narrow competency in implementing the integration. Despite the fact that the company has well developed managerial practices it seemed incapable of supporting the transfer of tools and knowledge to make integration happen. Besides, Canadian E. is supposed by Consulting Engineering employees to be not entirely prepared to manage an acquisition with different characteristics from the previous ones. As the same respondent continues:

*“I attribute this lack of ground preparation to receive this type of ... first we have a Brazilian culture that is not used to having it ... We are the South American country that has less contact, always had less contact with the outside world. And then people do not speak English. Second, besides being Brazilian, we're from Minas Gerais, which is worse. You arrive in a company where almost no one speaks English, a company that felt very strong pressure from the owners. And they say, look we were sold to a superior being - because it still has this issue: I feel inferior compared to those Canadian gentlemen in North America ... So, I think this type of acquisition requires prior work. The work of due diligence just deals with financial expectations and how much it costs and suchlike, but nobody thought about people... when I arrived here this integration project was already ongoing. ... I think people felt that there was shallowness in the process. And I cannot tell you exactly how it [integration] was defined.”* (Interviewee A – Time 1).

This lack of an integration plan, lack of a principle or approach to be respected during integration, and even the procedures adoption itself, were perceived as a lack of leadership by Canadian E. during the first years of Consulting Engineering integration.

*“I feel here that a person is lacking to assume this function as integrator. For example, at the beginning there was a team that worked taking care of it. In order to have an overview of what this integration was and to be triggering areas to do this and do that ... But there wasn't an area that had a full knowledge of the thing ... But they missed part of the implementation. It's like; the procedure is already translated and now you know how it works; now it runs. But these links were not well made.” (Interviewee D – Time 1).*

These quotes are doubly central to comprehend respondents' sensemaking about change in this case. Firstly, the described criticism about the integration project itself is an initial evidence of RTC (Piderit, 2000; Hernandez and Caldas, 2001; Ford and Ford, 2009), as extracts are revealing of thoughts and complaints about Canadian E. capabilities to conduct change.

Secondly and more importantly, Consulting Engineering seemed to have approached the integration with unrealistic expectations (the consequences of a lack of communication and information) which fostered RTC. In addition, Canadian E. seemed to accept reactions from Consulting E. to its requests of respect, cited above, with some degree of interest in better understanding the local practice (Gertler, 2003), probably to avoid disrespecting the agreement in the first place. At the same time, the agreement about respecting local practices may have been understood as a priori authorization against all that Canadian E. represented. It may have sustained a certain pre-indisposition from Consulting E., supported by a defence of Brazilians and their expertise. As it was not clear which organizational approach from Consulting E. towards change should be, when any issues arose, the first reaction was to criticize it instead of trying to understand and contribute, which led to RTC. That can be seen in regards to the integration project, for example, as presented above.

Many respondents spontaneously mentioned the high degree of RTC, the general feeling was of a loss and a not yet clear connection with Canadian E:

*“But I think there is too much resistance, too much crankiness ... ‘because they do not want to, because engineering ...’. Resistance: instead of trying to look ahead and advance, no, clinging to the past ... I prefer to cling to the past and chew over all of my complaints because it makes me comfortable. There is a lot of it ... And at the same time, Canadian E. failed to fill this empty space. There is a shortage in relation to what existed. It was paternalism, proximity to managers, festivals, state fairs, which were fantastic. The Christmas parties were also fantastic and things like that. And this space has not been filled by Canadian E.” (Interviewee A – Time 1).*

In Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., it seems that not many roles have changed because of the acquisition or the integration itself (Larsson *et al.*, 2004), that is, the acquisition did not result in layoffs or many voluntary turnover. Therefore, it looks like the collective sensemaking about the change was not to relate RTC automatically to resignation, which is coherent with the low number of dismissals in total.

*“We had a few layoffs back there (right after acquisition), a very small number. What we talked about was about this tremendous opportunity to work, to grow, to develop. Today, most people understand this.” (Interviewee B – Time 1).*

Nevertheless, some key roles have changed over time, as explored previously in Section 6.2 and structures were redefined frequently, which, combined with fragile change communication, allowed multiple expectations that were kept unknown for the change leaders and nurtured RTC. As a group of respondents phrased:

*“When you stretch that process out and you do not hand out information; you do not determine what comes around, then you demotivate people. You create a sense of insecurity in staff. You do not hand out data. You inhibit leadership ... if you had done things, people would have liked, disliked, bye and ready. But it would be almost painless because there would be no time for certain processes to flourish. And then the result would be more immediate. And it would be very clear and it would be something that everyone could see.” (Group interview C – Time 2).*

The outcome of an ever changing context and fragile internal communication is that during the Time 2 data collection, although almost five

years after acquisition, perceptions of misalignment and a lack of direction still pervaded the organization.

*“And so what I see is that many times the new guidelines, the new decisions and new agreements do not permeate through the rest of the company. And then the company is totally unaware of and blind to the guidelines that are being followed, the decisions that are being taken. This does not reach the level that it should reach. And it often gets dammed up at a certain level. And so I think that this ignorance, this lack of alignment between the new philosophy, the new direction, the new president and the rest of the company generates a lot of discomfort, generates much misunderstanding, generates much rumor.” (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

The path of RTC in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. seems to be related to the path of change, as discussed in Section 6.2. The acquisition meant for employees high levels of uncertainty, as they did not know that the company might be sold. As managerial integration started, by revising and implementing procedures, Consulting Engineering employees felt they were heard and valued, leading to a reduction in resistance levels. It was complemented by temporarily structured face-to-face communication that supported sensemaking and information flow. At this point, a move from fragmented towards restricted sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) was ongoing, as it changed from no attempt to some degree of efforts to organize discussions about the meanings in progress. Around Time 2 data collection, however, several leadership and structural changes led to sensemaking that posed the acquirer as not prepared to handle the change and led to new complaints about a lack of direction. The collective sensemaking was connecting the lack of information from Canadian E. to not knowing how to manage the integration. This culminated with a change in president, changes to practices and the imposition of values, which led a perceived increase in RTC at the end of the data collection period.

As proposed in Section 3.6.1, during Time 1 data collection it was possible to bring together respondent perceptions about RTC dimensions as will be explored in next paragraphs. RTC dimensions are Affective (i.e. feelings about the change), Cognitive (i.e. thoughts about the change) and Behavioural (i.e. involves actions or intention to act in response to the change), as previously

theoretically discussed in Section 2.5.2 and detailed in Table 3.4 (see Oreg, 2006 and Section 3.6.2).

Figure 6.3 shows the progression over time of each RTC dimension from January 2008 until January 2013. The average agreement about the existence of each dimension as respondents attributed it can be observed on the vertical axis, on a scale that allows variations from 1 to 7, being 7 the higher level of RTC. The higher the average, the higher the agreement about the expression of that specific RTC dimension at that point in time.

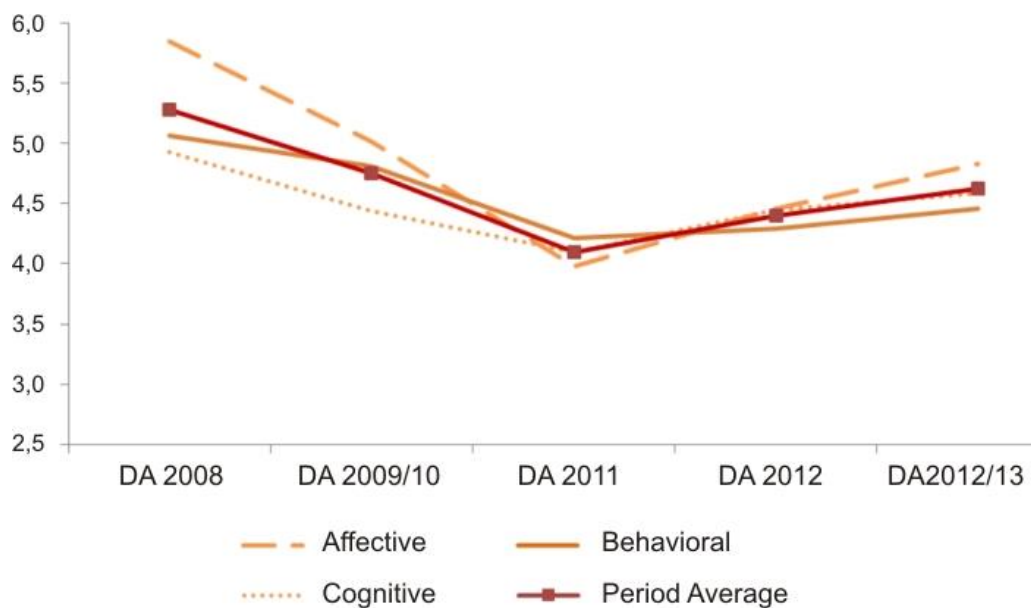


Figure 6.3: RTC Evolution - Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA2008: acquisition period; DA2009/10: one/two year(s) after acquisition; DA2011: 2011; Time 2: DA2012: 2012; DA2012/2013: December 2012/Jan2013. Vertical Axis: RTC Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from RTC Questionnaire responses.

RTC overall started at a very high level (with a score of 5.3), achieved its lowest level (with a score of 4.1) during the change process in 2011 (DA2011) and then increased again to a high score of 4.6, at the end of data collection in January 2013. This averaged evolution of RTC is reflected in the “Period Average”. All three dimensions of RTC followed a similar path over time, but never falling below 4.0.

Respondents' sensemaking (derived from the interviews) about what was going on in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. are related to the respective RTC dimensions they reveal. In each excerpt below, it is possible to identify one or more RTC dimensions: Affective (A), Behavioural (B), and Cognitive (C), indicated by their initials in brackets. By combining interview and questionnaire data, the goal was to clarify the path of RTC during change and analyze its relations with COM (presented in in Section 6.5 below).

#### **6.4.1 Time 1 RTC Dimensions**

During the first period evaluated (DA 2008 to DA2011), all dimensions were decreasing, but nevertheless retained high scores. The **Affective** dimension suffered the largest variation during Time 1, as it started as the highest among RTC dimensions and ended up as the lowest one. Considering the internal atmosphere of fear and tension (Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl, 1996; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008), one respondent clarified:

*“There are always people who like to change, but most were afraid (A) in 2008. But there was some who were enthusiastic: ‘Now I’ll have opportunity and that things will change ...’ there were these people too ... Suddenly, it came the decision, we will turn this division here in an EPCM company [in 2011]. So I’d say it continued, fear (A), resistance, still remained a little, maybe in a lower level, but still had a lot like that.” (Interviewee H – Time 1).*

All the fear and tension remained present in this process:

*“... the bad feeling (A) is decreasing, but it still needs to decrease more. I think that after four years it had to be so ... Because otherwise the person will not take it anymore, he will pick up his stuff and take off, because staying four years in a place and not knowing what will happen ... This is the overall feeling ...” (Interviewee J – Time 1).*

And these feelings were connected to two major changes that were proposed to Consulting Engineering after the acquisition as summarized by the following respondent:

*“We changed two very serious things in the company, in my opinion, which should not have been changed at the same time. We changed the company's management for a multinational one; the owners left, the whole administration changed. And the core business was also changed. It dealt with engineering and went on to focus on EPCM, which encompasses everything. When you make two changes as broad as these, for me it was chaos.” (Interviewee C – Time 1).*

These two previous quotes reveal meanings that affected both the **Affective** and **Cognitive** dimensions, as engineers, the core function in CE, had to carry out the transformation required by the EPCM mode in their daily jobs (with derivations for future projects within the company) ...

*“... it is not only a management change, a change of leadership, but a change, let's say, in focus. This shift in focus has caused a very big initial shock, because employees / professionals began to think that engineering was being lost (C) to go in this new direction of EPCM, and it remains true and this set off a very big initial shock. And then, after this fact, there was the difficulty of people being trained to learn (C) and to perform company procedures. I consider it a very arduous process.” (Interviewee I – Time 1).*

... while wondering if there would be room for all of current engineers in CE in the near future in case the company becomes really EPCM sustained.

*“And then I think people's greatest fear (A) is not that they do not believe that this really benefits (C) by bringing added value with differentiated engineering and so on. It is that it can be restrictive and cut back on the company's technical staff because there may not be enough projects to support today's structure. I think this is what is feared (A). It is feared because much of the company's accounts today, the spending, i.e. persons, positions, teams, is supported by these traditional engineering projects, which are often not that profitable but generate scale. And the new philosophy, in my perception, is not to generate scale. It is to generate money. So maybe these accounts for some of the fear ... imagine that with this new philosophy, and not that it is wrong, but it will impact layoffs, a reduced structure (C) and these kind of things.” (Interviewee G – Time 1).*

There was also an understanding that adjustments to Canadian E. practices meant increasing the overhead, with more HR, controlling and legal professionals making company operations more expensive.

*“You have a process department where there are 25 or 30 people, a process which is the core of our engineering, and there is an HR department with 23 people! Today, it is engineering that supports this office (C), there’s no EPCM supporting this! This wasn’t Canadian E.’s purpose. What exists here is being pressured to do engineering projects cheaper while sustaining an absurd structure.” (Interviewee F – Time 1).*

In terms of its **Behavioural** dimension, RTC at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. was perceived as high and despite a slight decrease, remained high during Time 1 data collection. It was expressed through complaints and a constant recall of past practices of Consulting Engineering.

*“There was many protests (B) “it was much better before”, “this will not work, that does not fit here” and “They [Canadian E] can’t do anything right.” (Interviewee A – Time 1).*

It was expressed not only by complaining, but also by deliberately avoiding certain practices (Gioia, 1985, Kotler and Keller, 2000; Bordenave, 2001; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Oreg, 2006):

*“Because we were labelled resistant (B) but we were absolutely aware that it wasn’t resistance. We were just saying, wait there, you [Canadian E] want to do something that directly affects another one here [operations area] ... We were trying to work for the progress of the company and to the comfort of the people who needed our support. We – the administration staff, finance, purchasing, etc. - we support operations to enable it to produce and bill clients to pay people’s wages. And then you put up obstacles with inflexible rules, or rules that do not apply to this reality... there was no reason for it to be (B) so.” (Interviewee H – Time 1).*

Although there was a light RTC decrease during Time 1 data collection, the average extent of RTC was still high (4,0). Next, it will be explored how RTC performed according to respondents accounts, during Time 2 data collection.

#### **6.4.2 Time 2 RTC Dimensions**

During Time 2 data collection all dimensions increased again (DA2012 and DA2012/2013). That not only goes against the common sense view that time



would naturally decrease RTC, but also seems to be connected to the COM change path in the Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. case and the imposition of change as will be explored next.

As explained by a respondent, and fully in line with the literature review (Stohl and Cheney, 2001), this behaviour of trying to argue in a different direction to that of the one proposed, may reveal a desired commitment to the success of ongoing organizational change and represent little or no harm at all to the process. It is a reason for concern for managers when change reaches a point of indifference.

*“People's behaviour was perhaps more like protest (B) behaviour, then it improved and then there was disappointment (A) I would say ... Today, it is apathy (A). Today, I tell you that there is great apathy ...”* (Interviewee F – Time 2).

*“When the first changes happened, there was a fuss, a mess, ‘it will change the business’ (B)... And now everyone says, changed the badge?, took the name Consulting Engineering?, took the mail?, Okay... Funny that people who have worked here for about as long as I have, 7 or 8 years, used to speak well of the company and, until last year, ‘gave their all’ and wanted to retire here, today will say they do not want to work here anymore (B). I want to work, but if you start to demand a lot from me and there is a job out there, I'm gone.”* (Group Interview D – Time 2).

An overall evaluation about change at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. reveals a difficult process that has led to the perception that the organization's efforts have met with little success. As summed up:

*“Not that I'm against it, but it was unsuccessful (C). Five years and you're at the stage you are today ... It changed much but did not get anywhere (C). Everything has changed, but nothing has changed.”* (Group Interview C – Time 2).

However, the integration is also seen as having brought positive effects. Somehow, the metaphor is of an injection that hurts more or less, depending on the way it is given, but is good for the body. Here the analogy is that becoming a

multinational is a need, but that the process is painful in terms of the way it has been done.

*“And our feeling is that: come soon. Explain to us just how it will be because then we can adapt. I think there are many people who still resist, but I think that today most people want to know the new rule. If you have to take an injection and there is no way to resist it, then what do you prefer, to take the injection at once or to take the injection slowly? How does the nurse stick the needle into you, you don’t even have time to see it and she has already done it. So, things have to be quick not to give time to create rejection. When the staff speak, you can see it, it’s 5 years old and it does not work because this change should not have been made. But they are taking what did not work to say that things should not have been changed. You are making pessimists stronger.” (Group Interview C – Time 2)*

Remarkably, a respondent outlined a comment that may assist this new phase of the integration:

*“Change is never one-sided, it has two sides. And when one says adaptability it means, not only the adaptability of the organization to adapt, but it is also a lack of adaptability of the local body to adapt. And then not only place (responsibility) on the other side’s shoulders.” (Interviewee G – Time 2).*

It can be extracted from the respondent account, the expectation of a higher level of openness from Consulting Engineering in regards to Canadian E. The expression local adaptability in this quote refers to Consulting Engineering adopting a more dialogic stance, avoiding an anticipated judgment and therefore co-constructing change with Canadian E., as discussed in Section 2.4.3 and advocated by Senge (2010).

In sum, RTC path in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. is marked by higher levels in the beginning of change, decreasing towards the end of Time 1 data collection and increasing again towards the end of the data collection period. The relation between the overall RTC path and between each of its dimensions with COM will be explored in the next section.

## 6.5 Dynamic between COM and RTC

The analysis of the change communication revealing the collective perception about each COM dimension over time presented in Section 6.3 has demonstrated the predominantly monologic COM in the beginning of change, with a turn to a more dialogic COM towards the end of Time 1 data collection and a return to a monologic COM towards the end of the data collection period. The analysis of RTC shown in Section 6.4, was characterized by a small reduction in the levels of resistance until 2011, but increased towards the end of the data collection period, in the beginning of 2013.

By connecting the previous findings, it is possible to argue the existence of a perceived inverted relation between COM and RTC. While dialogic COM was increasing, although in a predominately monologic stance, RTC was decreasing and after a decrease in dialogic COM, RTC was increasing again. This overall mirrored evolution in COM and RTC implies that under a dialogic COM the way RTC is dealt with, as a response, can transform it into better change process and outcomes. In accordance with Lewis (2006), Section 2.6, this finding indicates that COM influences RTC.

Moreover, besides previous quotes that reflect respondents' sensemaking about COM and RTC, by juxtaposing COM and the RTC graphs, one can also see that their collective perceptions are related. This analysis is portrayed in Figure 6.4, where the overall outlook of how COM and RTC performed is revealed during Time 1 and Time 2 data collections. Although it does not bring any new data compared to the previous discussions, it makes the inverse relation between COM and RTC averages graphically explicit and highlights respondents' perceptions about COM and RTC.

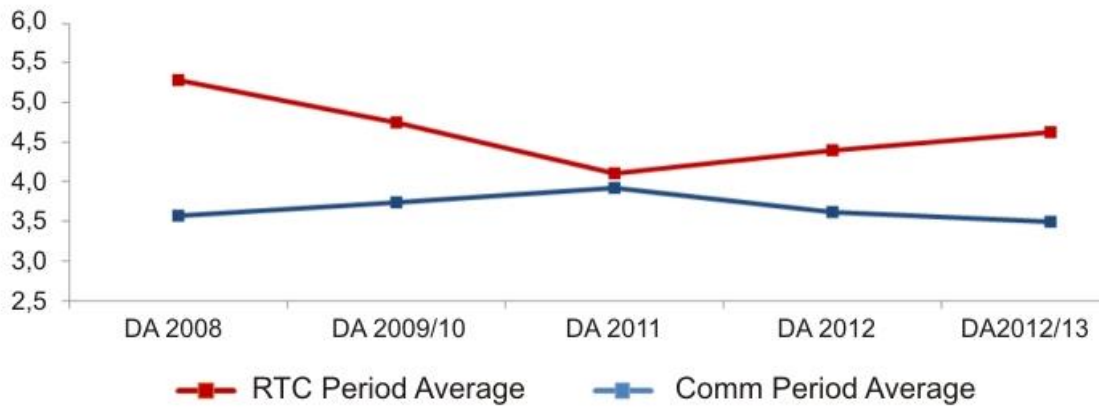


Figure 6.4: COM/RTC Evolution - Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA2008: acquisition period; DA2009/10: one/two year(s) after acquisition; DA2011: 2011; Time 2: DA2012: 2012; DA2012/2013: December 2012/Jan2013. Vertical Axis: Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

### 6.5.1 Dynamic between COM and RTC Dimensions

To further explore the dynamic between COM and RTC dimensions, as defined in Section 3.6.1, in the Time 2 data collection respondents were asked to name each dimension of communication and RTC. Later, respondents were asked to connect and prioritize those communication dimensions they perceive to be more or less conducive to RTC, using the names attributed to both. The answers were tabulated to identify the communication dimensions that were perceived to have the biggest influence on each RTC dimension.

This naming process revealed remarkable similarity of concepts among the 13 respondents related to communication dimensions, as summarized in Table 6.1, overleaf.

In the case of the Mutuality dimension, the most common concepts were contribution/participation and balance, while for the Empathy dimension the names used most were climate/environment. For Commitment the major concept present was related to understanding and for Propinquity the concepts of decision /lack of decision and time were predominant. Risk was closely related to risk itself and uncertainty. In all cases, the words used were very similar to the expected

meaning of the dimensions and the sentences used in the questionnaire to evaluate their extent, thus validating the instrument and the means used to obtain the respondent perception.

<b>Mutuality</b>	<b>Empathy</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Propinquity</b>	<b>Risk</b>
Climate change	Contribution waived	N / A	N / A	Wait and see
Contribution	Measure of safety	Understanding	Imposition of Change	Confidence
Participation	Climate	Communication	Evaluation	Risks
Acceptance	Contribution	Understanding	Decision (no involvement)	Indecision
Involvement / Commitment	Expectation	Communication	Strategy	Risks Involved
Involvement	Climate	Empathy	Timing	Transparency
Balance	Environment	Understanding	Consistency in Decision	Opening the question
Importance of Contribution	Environment Trust	Understanding Guarantee	Sync	Opening
Balance	Environment	Understanding Guarantee	Participation	Size of Uncertainty
Participation	Alignment	Understanding	Time / Schedule	Ignorance
Confidence	Collaboration	Respect	Participation / knowledge	Security
Balance	Relationship Environment	Understanding Guarantee	Participation	Size of Uncertainty and Risk
Contribution	Transparency	Communication	Planning	Ignorance

Table 6.1: Naming COM Dim - Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

Regarding the RTC dimensions, the similarity was even more pronounced with the majority of respondents naming Affective as Feeling (10 out of 13), Behavioural as Action/Reaction (11 out of 13), and Cognitive as Beliefs/Thinking (8 out of 13). It means that the questionnaire was capable of conveying the dimensions meanings and thus effective the instrument to collect respondents' perception.

The connection process was of constituted of ordering COM dimensions from the ones that most influenced to the ones that less influenced each RTC

dimension. The results of respondents' perceptions are shown in Table 6.2 below, regarding all three RTC dimensions (Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive) and also a final evaluation also produced by the respondents, about the most influential COM dimensions to RTC dimensions, considering the change as whole.

Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.			
AFFECTIVE	BEHAVIORAL	COGNITIVE	CHANGE
Mutuality	Mutuality	Empathy	Empathy
Empathy	Empathy	Risk	Commitment
Commitment	Risk	Commitment	Mutuality
Propinquity	Commitment	Mutuality	Propinquity
Risk	Propinquity	Propinquity	Risk

Table 6.2: COM Dim ordered by influence to RTC Dim. Time 2 data collection Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

**Empathy** and **Commitment** are frequently present, across the Table among the first more influential dimensions in RTC, according to respondents' perceptions. **Mutuality** is perceived as the third most influential dimensions. And **Risk** and **Propinquity** are perceived to be least relevant.

Those answers may represent a new stream of investigation for further research, because they may indicate guidance and some prioritization for a change management effort as it will be explored in Chapter 8, Conclusions.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the overall paths of COM and RTC in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. were explored, as well as the dynamic between both constructs. An increase towards dialogic COM seemed to allow a reduction in RTC. However, as the predominant COM was monologic and this temporarily increase was not sustained and led to a decrease in levels of dialogic COM that were trailed by a new increase in RTC. Besides, COM and RTC' dimensions evolution over time were discussed, facilitating the understanding of its paths, mainly by connecting questionnaire and interview data and exploring respondents' collective sensemaking. The juxtaposition of COM and RTC paths

along with its dimensions, revealed a mirrored pattern that will be further explored in a comparison among cases (see Chapter 7) and finally in conclusions chapter (see Chapter 8).





## Chapter 7. Discussion: Nature of communication and resistance to change

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to reveal a comparative analysis among the three case organizations, reinforcing the similarities and distinctiveness of their contexts, highlighting the dynamic between COM and RTC and establishing links with the literature review and the conceptual framework adopted in this research. Section 7.2 introduces this perspective regarding context and timelines. Section 7.3 explores COM and Section 7.4 continues, focusing on the RTC, following the same order and focus of the research questions. Therefore, Section 7.5 closes the analysis, shedding light into the dynamics between them and the most influential COM dimensions to RTC dimensions, according to respondents. Finally, the chapter is summarized in Section 7.6.

### 7.2 Acquisition and Change – context and timelines

The previous three chapters have highlighted the contextual elements of the cases with regard to the drivers for the acquisition, the change goals and paths. Taking the perspective of the three cases and to allow better insights into how such elements may have shaped COM and RTC, these contextual elements have been summarized in Table 7.1, overleaf, and will be explored in the next paragraphs.

***Acquisition drives and change projects:*** the acquisition in all organizations was aimed at pursuing growth and better positioning. There were few dismissals, meaning that this aspect could not explain the different perceived levels of RTC (Piderit, 2000; Hernandez and Caldas, 2001; Ford and Ford, 2009). The main difference between the cases was employees' initial perception about the acquisition. In Generics Corp/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE the acquisition was perceived as a way out of a difficult situation, while in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E the acquisition was not expected by employees, pushing RTC to higher levels, as will be further explored in Section 7.4.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Generics Corp/FPG</b>	<b>Chems Solutions/GCHE</b>	<b>Consulting Engineering/ Canadian E.</b>
Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected by employees</li> <li>• Goal: Growth and Positioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected by employees</li> <li>• Goal: Growth and Positioning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected by employees</li> <li>• Goal: Growth and Positioning</li> </ul>
Change Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain as a separate business</li> <li>• No plan publicized</li> <li>• Integrate management practices, increasing standardization and control</li> <li>• Change is not clearly defined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total integration to GCHE</li> <li>• Structured plan with schedule, publicized</li> <li>• Change is complete, although there is a cultural element that still requires management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear, report as an office</li> <li>• No plan publicized</li> <li>• Integrate some technical and management practices</li> <li>• Change is not clearly defined, has been perceived as beginning five years after the acquisition.</li> </ul>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main leader maintained during first years</li> <li>• Senior leaders had some turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main leader quit immediately</li> <li>• Senior leaders had low turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main leader maintained during first years</li> <li>• Senior leaders had high turnover</li> </ul>
Management style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From oriented to External environment and Flexibility to External and Control</li> <li>• From structured to highly controlled management system</li> <li>• Management model in development</li> <li>• From centralized and adaptive decision making to collective and procedural decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From more oriented to External environment and Control to stronger Control</li> <li>• From structured to complex management system</li> <li>• Set management model</li> <li>• From personal/ experience based decision making to procedural decision making – clear flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From oriented towards External environment and Flexibility to External and Control</li> <li>• From unstructured to structured management systems</li> <li>• Management model in development</li> <li>• From centralized/ personal/ experience based decision making to procedural decision making – but with unclear flow</li> </ul>

Table 7.1: Comparison of Change Contexts

Source: Compiled by the author.

Despite the comparable motivations from the acquiring companies, integration projects differed considerably. While in Generics Corp/FPG there was a

clear statement to keep the acquired company as a separate business and only to integrate back-office operations, in Chem Solutions/GCHE there was no intention to preserve Chem Solutions as a company. However, in both cases there were clear announcements of these intents, reducing uncertainty as largely aligned with current knowledge about change (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Bordia *et al.*, 2004; Allen *et al.*, 2007) and supporting employees' sensemaking. With regard to the integration project for Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., there was an ambiguity of purpose: the goal of integration was initially limited to financial concerns, but was later followed by technical and procedural integration. Prospects of professional development were announced, but not executed in a systematized way. Besides, the change was perceived as re-starting until the final stages of data collection. That ambiguity generated multiple and concurrent understandings in regard to the extent of integration and therefore about its consequences for individuals (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). That provided fertile ground for frustration, as expectations were not met and, consequently, resulted in a perceived increase in RTC.

It is inferable then, that clarity in change projects associated with a coordinated organizational effort to communicate them may have assisted the establishment of perceived predominant dialogic COM and guided sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), while the lack of those elements may have assisted the establishment of perceived predominant monologic COM and fragmented sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014), as will be further explored in Section 7.3. Similar reasoning is applied to RTC, as it may be influenced both directly by those contextual elements (that reduce or increase uncertainty levels) and also through the sensemaking and predominant COM, which will be explored in Section 7.4.

**Leadership and management styles:** The main leaders were preserved during the first years of change for Generics Corp/FPG and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., bringing some stability and promoting a transitional atmosphere. Keeping the main leaders was in line with the change projects, with practical and symbolic effects. In Chem Solutions/GCHE the main leader resigned immediately after the acquisition as the integration made his role redundant. At other management levels, the key senior managers of Chem

Solutions were incorporated in GCHE, offering some stability. Arguably, leadership was less stable at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., where it took several attempts to find the right person to lead the core area, which led to a perceived lack of direction, influencing the perceived RTC extent. In sum, the leadership stability, either deliberate or not, may have contributed to RTC extent in the studied organizations. Change leaders instability hindered sensemaking, as the leaders' language and behavioural references were not familiar, making it harder for change participants to engage in sensemaking and therefore create a plausible story and act accordingly (Balogun and Johnson 2004; Rutledge, 2009; Smerek, 2011).

Yet, the managing styles' changes were similar to some degree. Generics Corp/FPG and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. had a family business atmosphere, meaning that both internal climates were of affective relations and somehow decisions were more personal, "case to case". In Chem Solutions/GCHE, in preparation for the company to be sold, standards and professional relations were tightened. Generics Corp and Consulting Engineering moved from adopting flexibility as the main value towards a focus on planning, reporting and control. There were similar developments at Chem Solutions/GCHE. The impact of change was perceived to be higher in Consulting Engineering where, additionally, decision-making and leadership structures were not very clear and had a negative impact on operations, amplifying uncertainty, impacting sensemaking and increasing perceived RTC extent (Motta, 1997).

Where sensemaking is not particularly supported, different meanings remain, generating less motivation to cooperate (Pieterse, Caniëls, and Homan 2012). As can be seen in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E case (see Chapter 6) this may lead to higher levels of perceived RTC when compared to the other cases as will be explored in Section 7.4. The specific role of COM in this dynamic will be explored in Section 7.5.

In line with extant research (Motta, 1997; Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008), the previous contextual elements are relevant to characterize the radical change in the three case organizations, by revealing the different perspectives under transformation that needed to be reconfigured. All these indicate uncertainty on

a broad scale, which requires more sensemaking and sensegiving efforts about change (Weick, 1995; Maitlis, 2005). The variety of organizational contexts exemplified in the three case studies, do strengthen the findings about the impact of the COM on RTC as they demonstrate similar developments in all three cases (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6), and as will be explored in next Sections.

### **7.3 Nature of change communication (COM)**

The first research question sought to identify the perceived predominant COM and the behavior of its dimensions over time. To accomplish that it was necessary to analyze change communication within each organization studied. The findings were explored in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, and a comparative analysis revealing the following additional elements is pursued next.

Communication is one of the most prominent recommendations to minimize RTC, however with a lack of consistent guidance about how to do so (Ford, 1999; Dunford and Jones, 2000; Lewis, 2007; Russ, 2008; Ford and Ford, 2009). Corroborating the existence of different practices, the change management/communication initiatives in all cases studied varied much. In Generics Corp/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE there were different communication activities and channels, with different degrees of planning and sophistication and therefore different supports to promote change sensemaking. In contrast, at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. there was a lack of information and communication in daily practice, with little support to promote sensemaking. These contextual differences reinforce the relevance of findings, as explored next.

Interestingly, in all three organizations there was an analogous motto for managing change: parties should respect one another, notably the acquiring organization was expected to respect the knowledge and people from the acquired organization. Although it is possible to question the extent to which this was really meant, it seems that even if authentically desired, there were a few factors that intervened in the way it was pursued. The genesis of this motto and the way in which change was implemented led to distinct perceptions and outcomes. While in Generics Corp there was an explicit request by FPG to

understand the business before any transformation, in Consulting Engineering it was a condition requested by the acquired organization's directors, negotiated and accepted by Canadian E. Even such a seemingly small difference may have a significant influence on the awareness of the importance and the opportunities and means to express the expected mutual respect. That is, a request firstly envisioned by the acquirer organization may mean it was deeply rooted, with a greater number of people coalescing around it, therefore generating awareness in all subsequent decisions. Besides, in Chem Solutions/GCHE, this motto was practised in earlier acquisitions and therefore more established. It led to a creation of principles of change that explicitly stated the expectation for respect and were publicized to all, through written and face-to-face communications. The specific governance created a change committee and team leaders that were constituted by people from both organizations. While in a negotiated practice proposed by the acquired organization, as in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., that request may or not be integrated to the acquirer's way of leading the integration project, thus, being less coherently present. In sum, it is not enough to announce the request for mutual respect between organizations, there is a need to sustain this motto throughout the organizational levels, supporting sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005) and coherent communication practice.

Generics Corp/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE used several informational and communicational channels, which is evidence of understanding about the importance and role of communication in change, and has the consequence of influencing sensemaking. Even though, Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. did not. In the former cases, preserving existing vehicles to communicate change and an increase in face to face interactions allowed for the perceived prevalence of dialogic COM as established in Chapters 4 and 5. It is not surprising that in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., the lack of information and communication is related to the perceived predominance of monologic COM, as established in Chapter 6. It is not exclusively about the amount of information and the number of communication channels, but this has some influence on collective sensemaking. This relation between COM and sensemaking is detailed next.

Maitlis and Christianson's (2014) concepts of guided, restricted and fragmented sensemaking are important here. In Generics Corp/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE there was an alternation between guided and restricted sensemaking through systematic attempts to co-construct or negotiate meanings involving change leaders and employees (for example in face to face meetings and interactive events), which revealed predominance of dialogic COM. In Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. there was little effort from change leaders to influence change participants' sensemaking, leading to more fragmented sensemaking. In other words, few informational efforts (e.g., few channels available) combined with few opportunities to engage in systematic co-construction of meaning (e.g., few face to face meetings and events) indicated a perceived predominance of monologic COM. In other words, the findings suggest that there is a link between the type of sensemaking happening in the organization and the perceived nature of communication in the organizations studied.

Table 7.2 synthesizes the comparison of these elements as well as the average scores of COM in all three cases that are further analysed right after.

Communication	Generics Corp/FPG	Chem Solutions / GCHE	Consulting Engineering/ Canadian E.
Change Management/ Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle requested by FPG board: preserve people and culture.</li> <li>• Integrated to daily management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles constructed by managers involved and publicized to all</li> <li>• Specific governance created: change committee + team leaders</li> <li>• Periodic formal evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principle asked by Consulting Engineering board : leave room for local practices</li> <li>• Integrated to daily management</li> </ul>
Nature of Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many efforts of communication coordination: Several internal communication channels preserved, to some extent focused on change. Face to face communication increased.</li> <li>• Good climate</li> <li>• Comparatively high increase in dialogic COM followed by a decrease</li> <li>• Dialogic predominance, average of 4.3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many efforts of communication coordination: Several follow up face to face meetings highly related to change project itself. No communication channels preserved, but integral adoption of GCHE ones. Highly focused on change. Face to face communication increased.</li> <li>• Good climate</li> <li>• Comparatively very high increase in dialogic COM</li> <li>• Dialogic predominance, average of 4.2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few efforts of communication coordination: Lack of communication channels. The existing ones were preserved, but little focus on change process. Face to face communication remained the same.</li> <li>• Good climate but with feeling of deception about acquisition</li> <li>• Comparatively low increase of dialogic COM followed by a decrease.</li> <li>• Monologic predominance, average of 3.7</li> </ul>

Table 7.2: COM summary - Comparative Analysis

Source: Compiled by the author.



To support discussion, it is helpful to recall the COM path in all three cases. Next, Figure 7.1 represents summaries of previous COM data introduced in Figures 4.2, 5.2 and 6.2, contrasting the data already discussed there to aid the comparison among cases. It depicts the COM averaged over the whole research period, for each of the cases studied and reveals the similar behaviour of COM during Time 1 for the three cases compared, and Time 2 for two cases only. It started comparatively low, increased for a while (indicating increasing perceived dialogic COM) and then decreased again (indicating a decrease in perceived dialogic COM). The time intervals vary from one organization to another, but the general development is the same.

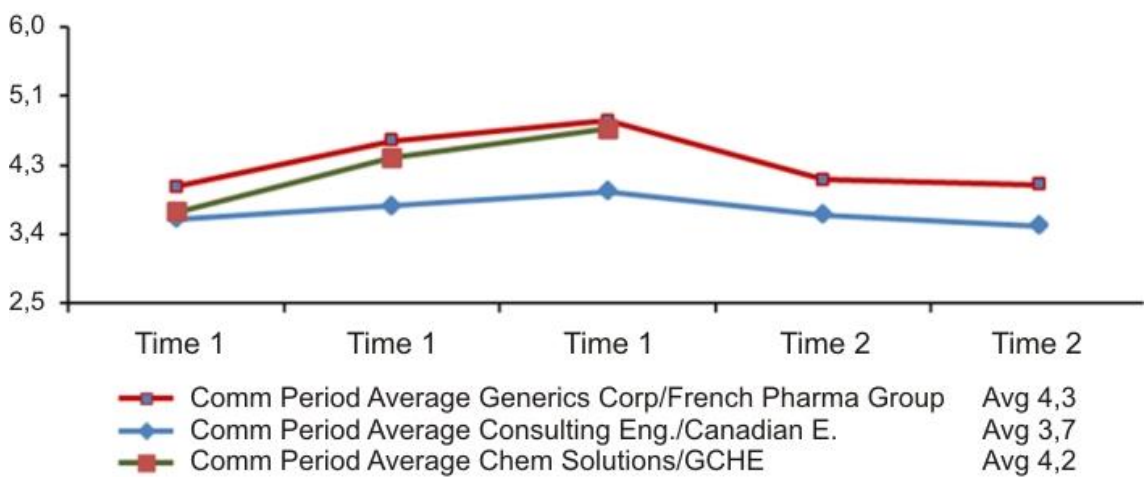


Figure 7.1: COM Comparative Analysis - All cases

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. Time 1 and Time 2 data collections. Vertical Axis: Communication Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

The two cases where dialogic COM was perceived as predominant hold the highest averages: Generics Corp/FPG with 4.3 and Chem Solutions/GCHE with 4.2 over the data collection period. Consulting Engineering/Canadian E, in contrast, where COM was perceived predominantly monologic holds the lowest average among the three cases, with a score of 3.7. In Generics Corp, comparatively to the other cases, there was a high increase in dialogic COM followed by a high decrease, while in Chem Solutions/GCHE there was a comparatively higher increase in dialogic COM during Time 1. In Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. lower increase of dialogic COM was followed by a lower decrease. These findings give a quantitative indication of research participants' perceptions of the perceived predominant COM as established qualitatively in the

preceding chapters. The quantitative format provides a valuable indication of how perceived predominant COM develops over time. This is further explained in Section 7.5 where a comparison to RTC paths is explored and reveals the relation between perceived higher dialogic COM and perceived lower RTC extent.

As discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, in all cases there were accounts of perceived monologic and dialogic COM. However, in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. and Chem Solutions/GCHE it was also possible to observe alternation between perceived predominant monologic and dialogic COM. That confirms the current knowledge about COM that establishes monologic and dialogic COM co-exist during change (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004; Taylor and Kent, 2014; see also Sections 2.4 and 3.2). But this study adds to current knowledge as it reveals the alternation from a predominant monologic to a predominant dialogic and again back to monologic COM over time, amplifying the understanding about the nature of communication in organizational change, through empirical evidence that they can alternate from one to another in both directions (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). It is necessary to highlight that these alternations took place in a comparatively short period determined by the scope of the project. It is possible that they develop different and perhaps unexpected ways during longer periods of observation.

Analysis regarding COM dimensions path are explored conjointly with RTC dimensions path in Section 7.5, as its major relevance rests on the relation between both constructs. Before then, there is a need to explore RTC in all three cases, in a compared perspective.

#### **7.4 Resistance to change (RTC)**

The second research question sought to identify the perceived extent of RTC and the behavior of its dimensions over time. Therefore, it was necessary to analyze manifestations of RTC in each organization studied.

According to the literature, among other manifestations, dismissals may be considered evidence of RTC (e.g., Caruth, Middlebrook and Rachel, 1985;

Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). That could be the result of change leaders' resistance in acknowledging real obstacles, therefore labeling others unexpected responses as resistance and leading to dismissals. In the three cases, dismissals were neither collective nor numerous and the perceived levels of RTC were diverse, maybe exactly because this is neither the only reason, nor the only evidence of resistance. Table 7.3 synthesizes the comparison of this and the average scores regarding RTC in all three cases that are further analysed right after.

<b>RTC</b>	<b>Generics Corp/FPG</b>	<b>Chem Solutions / GCHE</b>	<b>Consulting Engineering/ Canadian E.</b>
Resistance to Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few dismissals</li> <li>• Comparatively high extent, fast decrease and some increase after bad business results</li> <li>• Average of 3.9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few dismissals</li> <li>• Comparatively high extent and gradual decrease</li> <li>• Average of 4.1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few dismissals</li> <li>• Comparatively very high extent, gradual decrease and some increase after bad business results and spread of integration actions</li> <li>• Average of 4.6</li> </ul>

Table 7.3: RTC summary - Comparative Analysis

Source: Compiled by the author.

To support discussion, it is helpful to recall the RTC path in all three cases. Figure 7.2 depicts summaries of Figures 4.3, 5.3 and 6.3, revealing RTC path over time. Perceived RTC extent starts comparatively high at the beginning of Time 1 data collection and reduces as the change evolves, increases at Time 2 and ends lower than it began. The outline of the three cases is very similar.

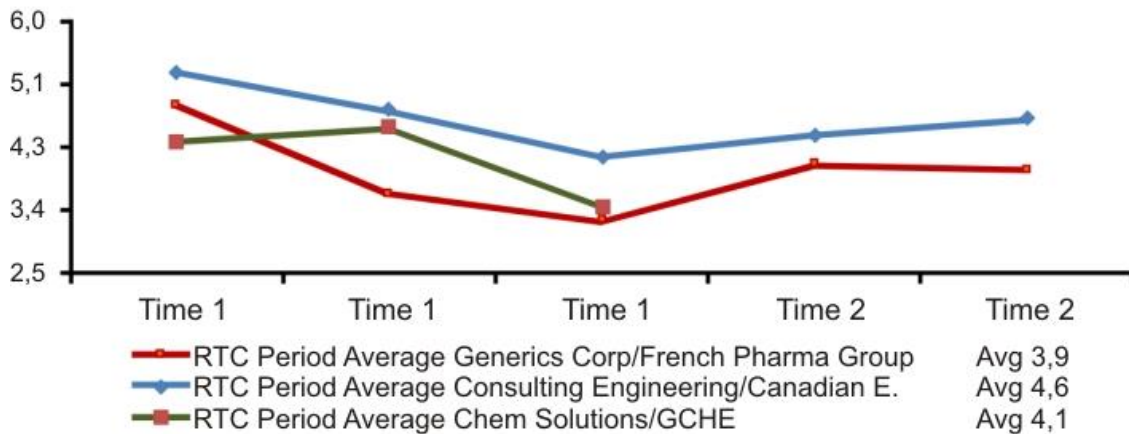


Figure 7.2: RTC Comparative Analysis - All cases – Time 1 and 2 data collection/dim

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. Time 1 and Time 2 data collections. Vertical Axis: Resistance to Change Dimension Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from RTC Questionnaire responses.

Generics Corp/FPG holds the lowest RTC score among the three cases, with 3.9 average over the data collection period and Chem Solutions/GCHE is the second lowest with 4.1 RTC average. Consulting Engineering holds the highest RTC average (4.6) among the three cases. As the analysis of contextual elements had already indicated (see Section 7.2) the larger the uncertainty the bigger the chance of a higher perceived RTC extent. Three main discussions arise from this comparison.

Firstly, the comparatively high average score in Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. seems to corroborate current knowledge related to the role of information on RTC (Washington and Hacker, 2005). In this case, as discussed in Section 6.4, the collective sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) connected the lack of information from Canadian E. about the change to a lack of change management. As Washington and Hacker (2005) concluded, information supports understanding and therefore the likelihood to be less resistant to change, and this finding confirms it by revealing that the lack of information contributed to a higher perceived RTC. Paradoxically, findings at Generics Corp/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE also shed light into a different perspective of analysis: the availability of information may not imply in less RTC, as information was available and yet the RTC was perceived high. That is an empirical knowledge that reinforces the proposition adopted by this research, that

the manner in which the information is made available may be the defining element for RTC extent (Oreg, 2006).

Secondly, in Chem Solutions/GCHE there was a larger variation in RTC during Time 1, increasing and then decreasing in the period, in contrast to the path of RTC in the other cases that were evolving to a decrease. That variation is relevant to inform the relation between perceived higher dialogic COM and perceived lower RTC extent, which will be explored in Section 7.5.

Thirdly, a decrease in RTC is not explained by the passing of time. In the two cases where it was possible to collect data in Time 2, RTC decreased during Time 1 and increased towards the end of data collection period. It means that taking time as a solution to “set things”, “heal wounds” and just expecting compliance does not guarantee a less extent of RTC, as part of an expected stability (Lewin, 1951). When adopting a sensemaking perspective it is tempting to assume that more time will increase the likelihood that a shared understanding of change can be negotiated. However, a shared understanding depends on elements as support for negotiated sensemaking (Weick, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). So passing time alone cannot automatically be associated with less resistance as the Generics Corp/FPG and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. cases demonstrate: even after some time, there was a decrease in RTC followed by an increase. As discussed in Section 2.3, change is about an ongoing interaction that progressively generates a shared understanding about what happened (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

These findings indicate that change leaders need constantly bear in mind the sensemaking process once it may allow facts and meanings once shared to be reviewed and new meanings attributed to them. In other words, change leaders are advised to bear in mind the role of sensemaking and to interact with employees in such a way that sensegiving and sensemaking can take place. Clearly, it is challenging for change leaders to put it into practice, as a complex process that it is. Findings indicate also the need to look further the relation between COM and RTC as it reveals the dynamic in sensemaking in which the former influence the latter, which may contribute to execution of this monitoring and constant revision of meanings.

Other findings of this research related to RTC regard the starting extent of Affective, Cognitive and Behavioural dimensions (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008). They are explored conjointly with COM dimensions path in next Section 7.5.

## **7.5 Dynamic between COM and RTC**

The final research question was about the perceived influence of the predominant COM (monologic or dialogic) on RTC, through and supported by sensemaking, revealing the dynamic among the dimensions that constitute each of the constructs. It means further exploring previous research questions that focused separately on COM and RTC and combining their findings.

In line with the perceived predominant COM (dialogic or monologic), RTC was inversely perceived. In Generics Corp/FPG where dialogic COM prevailed at an average level of 4.3 – the highest among the three cases, there was the lowest average RTC level for the change period evaluated, at a level of 3.9. In Chem Solutions/GCHE dialogic COM was also predominant at an average level of 4.2, and RTC was, comparatively to the other cases, at what could be considered the medium point of 4.1. It is possible to see then, that a relative medium level of dialogic COM, compared to the other cases, is related to an also medium compared level of RTC. In Consulting Engineering/ Canadian E. monologic COM was perceived to dominate, reflected by a comparatively low level of dialogic COM of 3.7, RTC was comparatively high with 4.6 points.

It is important to highlight that the dialogic COM lowest level of the three case studies was found in the same case with the highest level of RTC. And the opposite is also true; the highest dialogic COM was found in the case with the lowest RTC. That confirms and extends the current knowledge about change: the finding confirms current knowledge in the sense that employees who feel that the organization genuinely values their contribution and considers change as an open-ended process – labeled dialogic COM (Jabri, 2012) - are “more likely to judge the success of change initiatives favorably and to observe less RTC” (Lewis, 2006:7). It extends current knowledge by empirical data indicating in a cross-organizational study, that COM – i.e. the communicative approach that

support change - influences RTC in a perceived inverted relationship. It is important because it reorients scholarly research. It moves the focus from looking for the best instrumental usage and description of communication regarding channels, messages and tools usually found as prescriptions in literature about change communication (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Reis, 2004; Washington and Hacker, 2005), as mechanisms to deal with RTC, to look for the best ways to promote and support dialogic COM. That also confirms the value of the position adopted in this research that RTC may be understood as a possible communicative response derived not only from individuals, but strongly dependent on the interaction among them and on the change agent disposition to be influenced or affected by alternative ways of implementing change (Ford and Ford, 2009; Agócs, 1997 in Jabri, 2012).

It is true that there may be other factors outside the scope of this research that may influence RTC as for example individual traits and cognitive structures (Lowstedt, 1993; Jaffe, Scott and Tobe, 1994, see Section 2.5.1). However, it is very reasonable to propose, based on the literature review and the findings, that the perceived COM influences perceived RTC: predominantly dialogic COM reduces RTC (low scores in the RTC questionnaire), while predominantly monologic COM increases RTC (high scores in the RTC questionnaire). In all three cases the perceived COM and RTC have mirrored development, that is when dialogic COM increases, resistance decreases, and vice versa. That is associated to the assumption of this research that more dialogic COM would lead to less RTC extent, as explored in literature review (see Section 2.6) and advocated by Lewis (2006); a perceived decrease in dialogic COM occurs simultaneously with a perceived increase in RTC. COM seems to impact sensemaking and therefore support reducing RTC, which is detailed next.

### ***7.5.1 The COM influence on RTC through sensemaking***

Figure 7.3 illustrates the main contributions of this research about the dynamic between COM and RTC. COM and RTC and their relation were considered as individual elements in this research for analytical reasons, but are part of a more complex system of relations that is depicted next.

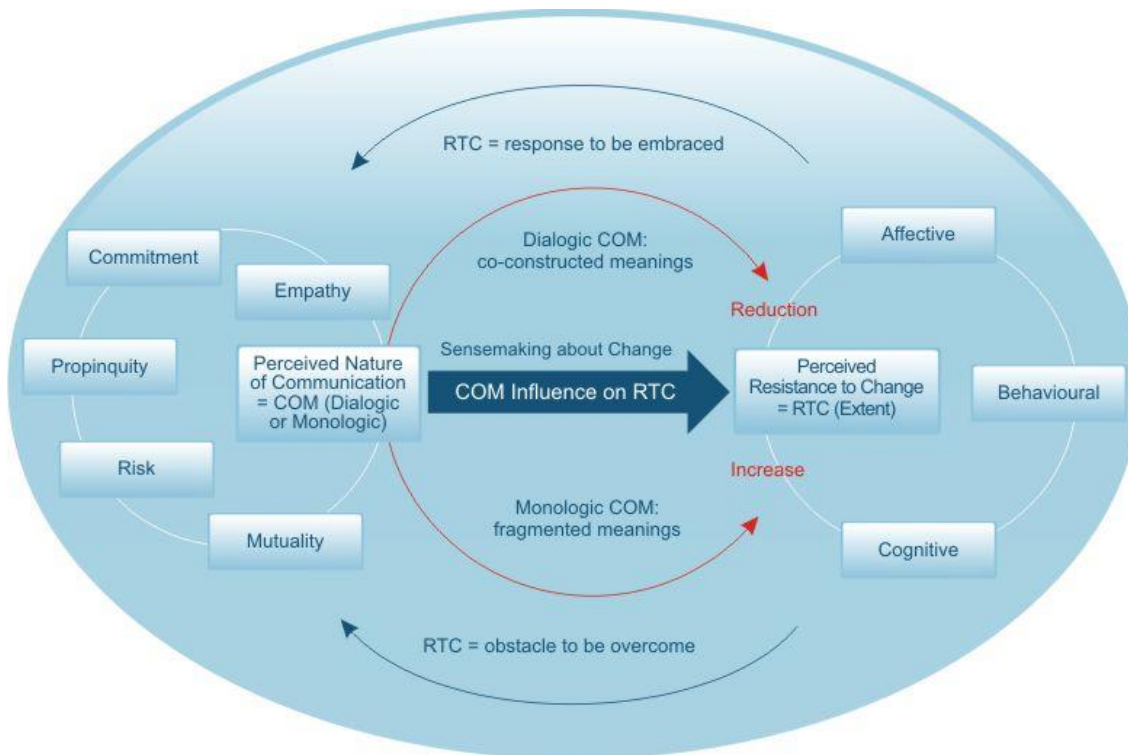


Figure 7.3: Dynamic of COM influence on RTC

Source: Compiled by the author.

Figure 7.3 illustrates the conceptual model adopted for the deductive part of this research (depicted in blue) and extended through the inductive part of this research (depicted in red). In Section 2.6 monologic and dialogic COM were discussed in relation to RTC. The premise was that a difference in COM (if monologic or dialogic) was not only related to different ontologies about change, but that it would influence the way RTC is perceived and approached (Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006). COM was conceived as being constituted by five dimensions (Commitment, Risk, Empathy, Propinquity and Mutuality) and RTC was conceived as being constituted by three dimensions (Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive). When change is understood by change leaders as a social-constructivist process and RTC is understood primarily as a neutral or positive response to change, then dialogic COM can be observed. When change is regarded as a mechanical process and resistance as a negative phenomenon that needs to be overcome, monologic COM is more likely to occur (Lewis, 2006; Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008; Jabri, 2012; Randall and Procter, 2013).



This model outlines expectations and findings of this research. The gap this research intended to close was about the influence of different COM on the extent of RTC. An increase in dialogic COM would lead to less RTC, and supposedly improve change process and outcome perceptions. According to extant literature (Jabri, Adrian and Boje, 2008:680) when carried out under dialogic COM “change initiatives would be open to change as they were implemented” and by turning RTC manifestations into a communicative response that would be taken into consideration, it was expected that it could alter RTC extent.

Findings reveal that COM does influence RTC and that this dynamic occurs through and supported by sensemaking (see red arrows in Figure 7.3): under predominant dialogic COM, co-constructed meanings of change take place and include co-constructing the meanings that influence Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive dimensions of RTC. For example, fear about how change (Affective) would affect daily work may be reduced if there is room for expressing, informing and negotiating the specific elements of change that relates to that fear. In addition, not only there is a reduction in the perception of Affective RTC extent, but also other elements that would arise and lead to other RTC manifestations in Cognitive and/or Behavioural dimensions are known and treated (meanings progressively negotiated), minimizing the risk of RTC increasing. Following in this example, besides revealing fear causes (Affective), other assumptions about the change evaluation, for example as a damaging course for the organization (Cognitive) and/or related complains and protests (Behavioural) may be revealed and dealt with simultaneously. Under predominant monologic COM, as there is limited co-construction of meaning of change, and fear about how change would affect daily work would be dealt with by informing about change, providing a potential meaning (monologic COM), but leaving the sensemaking less supported (Weick, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). That could generate different fragmented meanings that neither alleviate the perception of fear nor coalesce around joint sensemaking. There is no room for anticipating obstacles and reducing the risk of RTC increasing.

### 7.5.2 COM and RTC Dimensions

Regarding the relation between COM and RTC dimensions as defined for this research, little theoretical knowledge is documented to support the following analysis (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, 2012). That means that these findings extend current theory about the COM and RTC.

In all three cases, there are small variations in the COM dimensions at different points in time, which may be related to the pace of change in each organization, and/or the different organizational context. However, the general outlook of perceived COM dimensions was very similar among cases. To highlight the development of COM and RTC among the cases, Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 are shown in sequence. Figure 7.4 shows Generics Corp/FPG case, COM and RTC and its dimensions' performance across the data collection period, covering from 2009 to 2013. The objective of this figure and the following, 7.5 and 7.6, is to place alongside evidence of opposite behaviour between COM and RTC and its dimensions in general, of all three cases simultaneously. It is notable by following the COM Period Average and the RTC Period Average lines, that while COM is increasing, RTC is decreasing and vice-versa.

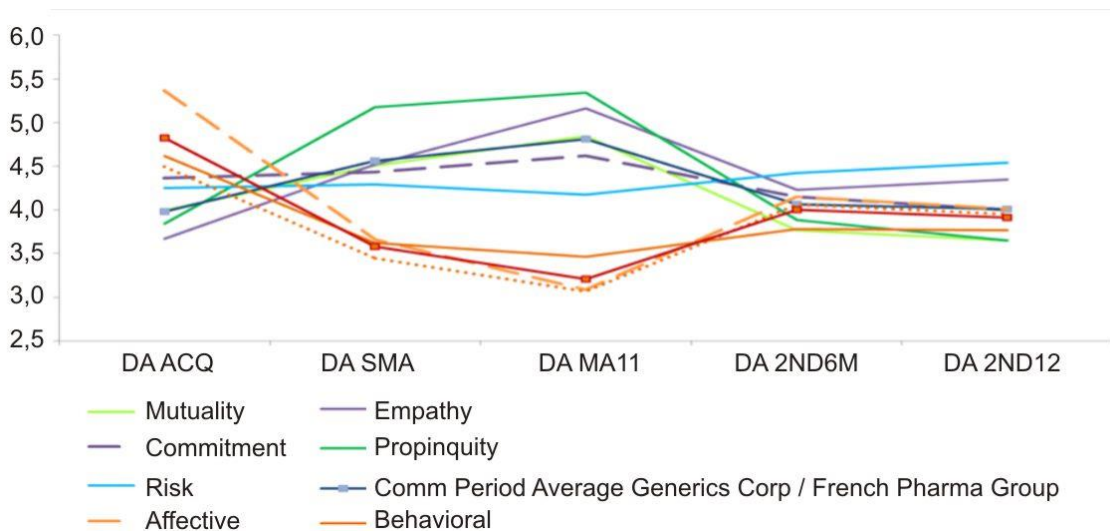


Figure 7.4: COM/RTC Dim Evolution - Org: Generics Corp/FPG

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. Time 1: DA ACQ: acquisition period; DASMA: six months after acquisition; DAMA11: March 2011; Time 2: DA2ND6M: – March 2012; DA2ND12: – December 2012. Vertical Axis: Dimensions Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

Figure 7.5 shows the Chem Solutions/GCHE case, COM and RTC and their dimensions' performance during the whole data collection period, covering 2010 to 2013. It is notable by following COM Period Average and RTC Period Average lines, that although in the first six months the first was increasing and the second was slightly increasing, after that, both COM and RTC adopted opposite paths.

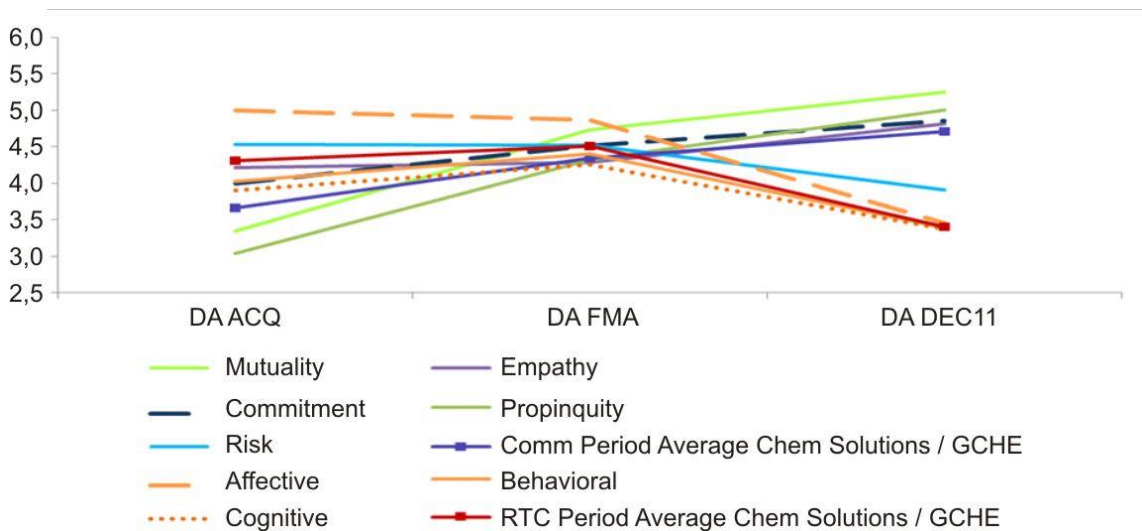


Figure 7.5: COM/RTC Dim Evolution - Org: Chem Solutions/GCHE

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. DA ACQ: acquisition period; DAFMA: March 2010; DADEC11: December 2011. Vertical Axis: Dimensions Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

Figure 7.6 shows the Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. case, COM, RTC and their dimensions performance during the whole data collection period covering from 2008 to 2013. It is notable by following COM Period Average and RTC Period Average lines that during the whole period evaluated, COM and RTC had opposed paths.

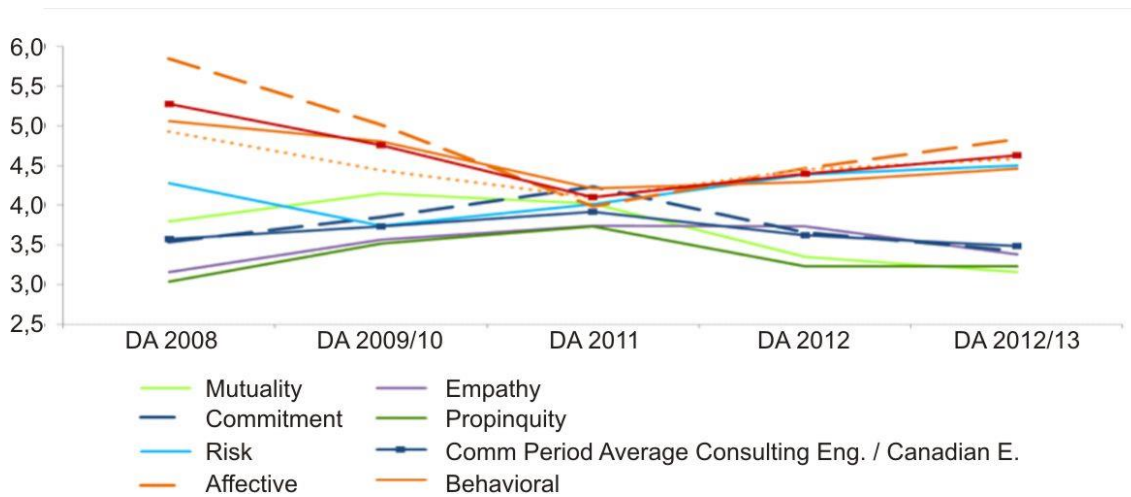


Figure 7.6: COM/RTC Dim Evolution - Org: Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.

Note: Horizontal Axis: Timeline. Time 1: DA2008: acquisition period; DA2009/10: one/two year(s) after acquisition; DA2011: 2011; Time 2: DA2012: 2012; DA2012/2013: Second December 2012/Jan 2013. Vertical Axis: Dimensions Average Agreement.

Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

Looking more closely at the variations of each COM and RTC dimension in all three cases, one can find that in general they evolve in a very similar way. Each COM dimension behaves with the same profile of the average COM and each RTC dimension behaves very consonant with the average RTC as well. One exception can be found about Risk that refers to the vulnerability of revealing uncertainty (Kent and Taylor, 2002; Frahm and Brown, 2006; Karimova, 2014). It does not seem to be as consonant as other dimensions, as it started and remained with good scores (Risk started at 4.3, 4.5 and 4.3 and ended at 4.2, 3.9 and 4.5 respectively for Generics Corp/FPG, Chem Solutions/GCHE and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E) and suffered less variation than the other dimensions. Sometimes, it presented divergent variation as well, which may indicate that this dimension may not be as relevant as the others are to explain the perceived COM. This can be supported by a little perceived influence of Risk dimension to RTC according to respondents' perceptions, as it will be explored in the next paragraphs. Altogether, that may lead to a theoretical revision about the principles of dialogic COM applied to organizational change (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri 2012); in other words, it indicates that Risk may not be relevant in a potential future list of dimensions for revealing COM in organizational change context.

Table 7.4, next, summarizes the relevant aspects of the evolution of all COM and RTC dimensions depicted in Figures 7.4 – 7.6 above. The **Affective** dimension starts as the highest in all cases (5.4; 5.0 and 5.8 scores with a maximum 7) and remains the highest at the end (4.0; 3.5 and 4.8). While the **Cognitive** dimension starts as the lowest (4.5; 3.9 and 4.9), **Behavioural** ends as the lowest in all three cases studied (3.8; 3.4 and 4.5). As the ending point of the cases studied were not the perceived end of change, but the deliberate end of data collection period, little interpretation can be made about the ending scores of RTC dimensions. It is also important to note that it is not inferable how RTC scores may be in the future as findings are limited to a detailed look over a short period of time (two data collection points).

However, the similarity of starting points may indicate an expected higher Affective RTC dimension and an expected comparatively lower Cognitive RTC dimension, despite the predominant COM, adding propositions about how RTC dimensions perform in the beginning of change to the known existence of those dimensions as advocated by Van Dam Oreg and Schyns (2008), Oreg (2006) and Piderit (2000).

<b>GENERIC CORP/FPG</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher COM: Commitment</li> <li>• Started Lower COM: Empathy</li> <li>• Ended Higher COM: Risk</li> <li>• Ended Lower COM: Propinquity</li> <li>• Average: 4.0 to 4.0 Var 0.8</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Started Lower RTC: Cognitive</li> <li>• Ended Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Ended Lower RTC: Behavioural</li> <li>• Average: 4.8 to 3.9 Var 1.6</li> </ul>
<b>CONSULTING ENGINEERING/ CANADIAN E.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher COM: Risk</li> <li>• Started Lower COM: Propinquity</li> <li>• Ended Higher COM: Risk</li> <li>• Ended Lower COM: Mutuality</li> <li>• Average: 3.6 to 3.5 Var 0.3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Started Lower RTC: Cognitive</li> <li>• Ended Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Ended Lower RTC: Behavioural</li> <li>• Average: 5.3 to 4.6 Var 1.2</li> </ul>
<b>CHEM SOLUTIONS/GCHE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher COM: Risk</li> <li>• Started Lower COM: Propinquity</li> <li>• Ended Higher COM: Mutuality</li> <li>• Ended Lower COM: Risk</li> <li>• Average: 3.7 to 4.7 Var 1.0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Started Lower RTC: Cognitive</li> <li>• Ended Higher RTC: Affective</li> <li>• Ended Lower RTC: Behavioural</li> <li>• Average: 4.3 to 3.4 Var 0.9</li> </ul>

Table 7.4: Highest and lowest Dim over time - Comparative Analysis All Cases  
Source: Adapted by the author from COM and RTC Questionnaire responses.

Comparatively among the cases, Generics Corp/FPG was the case that started with the highest average in terms of perceived dialogic COM (4.0) and ended the data collection period with the same score (4.0), but relative to the others in a medium position. Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. started with the lowest COM average (3.6) and ended with the lowest as well (3.5). Chem Solutions/GCHE started with a medium COM score and ended with the highest perception of dialogic COM score (4.7). In terms of perceived RTC, the highest score in the beginning belonged to Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. (5.3) that ended with the highest as well (4.6). The lowest initial RTC score was of Chem Solutions/GCHE (4.3), and it ended with the lowest as well; while Generics Corp/FPG started with a medium score (4.8) and ended with a medium as well (3.9).

This detailed analysis of scores over time indicates that the perceived starting point of COM and RTC does not guide their paths over time, as different COM scores and RTC scores evolved in different directions. Whichever the starting point of COM and RTC, the more the perception of dialogic COM the less perceived RTC extent. That extends current knowledge (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, 2012) about the relation of COM and RTC, as previously it was unknown if the starting COM or RTC would have a greater influence on their paths that could not be overcome in time. That reinforces the focus on change management as a process, either in theory or in practice (Dawson, 2000).

Further comparative analysis reveals the perceived influence of specific dimensions of COM on specific dimensions of RTC. In Time 2 data collection, which was possible at Generics Corp/FPG and Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., respondents were asked to name each COM and RTC dimension and then to rank each COM dimension – from the most influential to the least – in terms of its impact on RTC as summarized in Table 7.5.

Dimension	Generics Corp/French Pharma Group	Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.
Affective	Commitment Empathy Mutuality Propinquity Risk	Mutuality Empathy Commitment Propinquity Risk
Behavioral	Empathy Mutuality Propinquity Commitment Risk	Mutuality Empathy Risk Commitment Propinquity
Cognitive	Mutuality Empathy Commitment Risk Propinquity	Empathy Risk Commitment Mutuality Propinquity

Table 7.5: COM Dim influence in RTC Dim. Cases 1 and 2

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

As previously explained (see Section 3.6.1), respondents were rating according to their nomenclature, and the researcher just made the parallel with the dimensions of COM and RTC. Therefore, as introduced in Chapters 4 and 6, in Generics Corp/FPG Commitment and Empathy were perceived as major conducive elements, while Mutuality, Propinquity and Risk were perceived to have less impact on change. In Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., Mutuality, Empathy and Commitment were considered the three major influences on change evolution, while Propinquity and Risk, were perceive to be less influencing.

In terms of the **Cognitive** dimension of RTC, presented in Table 7.5, Generics Corp/FPG respondents ordered the COM major influences as Mutuality, Empathy and Commitment, as most relevant, and Risk and Propinquity as less conducive. Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. respondents elected Empathy, Risk and Commitment, as the main influencers and Mutuality and Propinquity as the lesser ones. For Cognitive RTC, Propinquity was in both cases the least relevant communication dimension, while Empathy and Commitment appear

among the three first dimensions of communication that bear great influence. The order of influence credited to each COM dimension varies among organizations when analyzing how the **Affective** dimension progressed during change. However, it is remarkable that Empathy and Commitment were perceived consistently to be among the three most relevant dimensions. Risk is the least influential dimension in both cases. In sum, findings indicate that the intentional strengthening of dialogic COM, which shows and values Empathy and Commitment in all relations, would help embracing Cognitive and Affective RTC.

Regarding the **Behavioural** dimension, in Generics Corp/FPG Empathy, Mutuality and Propinquity were perceived as the three major conducive dimensions, while Commitment and Risk were perceived to have less impact on change. In the Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. case, Mutuality, Empathy and Risk were considered to be the three major influences on change, while Commitment and Propinquity, the ones that impacted less. At Generics Corp/FPG, Empathy was considered the most influential COM dimension to Behavioural RTC dimension, while at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. it ranked second. Mutuality, in contrast, was considered the most important dimension at Consulting Engineering/Canadian E., remaining in second position at Generics Corp/FPG. That indicates that Empathy and Mutuality represent the strongest COM dimensions to be perceived while dealing with Behavioural RTC. Those findings represent that **Behavioural** RTC may be better dealt with through enhancing **Empathy** and **Mutuality**, to the effect of reducing RTC perceived extent.

Finally, when asked to prioritize the communication dimensions that influenced the **change** process as a whole, respondents from Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. and Generics Corp/FPG revealed an astonishing similarity in their evaluations. **Empathy** and **Commitment**, were greatly considered and also appeared among the top positions. As can be seen in Table 7.6 below, Generics Corp/FPG respondents adopted exactly this order, Empathy and Commitment, leaving Mutuality, Propinquity and Risk as the three last ones. Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. respondents ordered as first Empathy and Commitment, while Mutuality, Propinquity and Risk remained the last. Also it is notable that the three least relevant dimensions were not only the same for both



cases, but were ranked in the same order, adding to the credibility of these findings and to the strength of conclusions, since theorizing is based on two cases.

Generics Corp/FPG		Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.	
Change		Change	
1 <sup>st</sup>	Empathy	1 <sup>st</sup>	Empathy
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Commitment	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Commitment
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mutuality	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mutuality
4 <sup>th</sup>	Propinquity	4 <sup>th</sup>	Propinquity
5 <sup>th</sup>	Risk	5 <sup>th</sup>	Risk

Table 7.6: COM Dim influence in Change - Cases 1 and 2

Source: Adapted by the author from COM Questionnaire responses.

**Empathy** and **Commitment** being the most relevant dimensions strengthen Lines' (2004:212) proposition that "not only voicing their opinions, but in fact being heard and considered" would be the key contribution of participation/communication to change. It also adds empirical evidence to the call of Jabri, Adrian and Boje (2008:679) about the need to acknowledge "interpretive rights" in addition to acknowledging "voice", since both Empathy and Commitment refer to a dedication to understand the other part and temporarily take his/her place, suspending one's own interpretations and judgment.

Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994) cited by Kent and Taylor (2002), sustain that under dialogic COM change leaders would be more interested in access than in domination, which suggests that mutuality may be a relevant dimension of dialogic COM. But findings so far indicated that Mutuality, Propinquity and Risk are secondary aspects and that Empathy and Commitment can be considered the main contributors for trust and respect, "to both continuous improvements of existing change efforts as well as the ability to generate novel changes and solutions" Buono and Keeneth (2008:107).

**Propinquity** and **Risk** are dimensions that may not attract much attention in organizational change. Especially may be because engagement at the time decision-making is happening (features of propinquity), is not something really

expected to occur all the time. In hierarchical contexts, it is likely to occur and somehow desired that main strategic decisions should be taken by a smaller group and that broader participation is due in the next phase of implementation of that decision. In the organizations studied, it may have been the case that the decisions were perceived as adequate, or even if not, they were not impacting on RTC.

**Risk**, nevertheless, was clearly the least influential dimension, maybe because in radical change contexts such as acquisitions, it is mandatory to recognize uncertainties and therefore showing not to be in control. Thus, in relation to other variables, it becomes something less affecting to the progression of change.

In sum, the comparative analysis of the three cases revealed both significant commonalities and very important distinctions that assisted in showing an inverse relation between the dialogic COM and RTC, despite the different organizational contexts. It allowed for better understanding of possible varied relevance of each dimension of COM on RTC. The implication of knowing each dimension relevance is to only giving more precise guidance for the promotion of communication during change process, but also indicating priorities for attention – either in research – as future investigations focus – or in practice – in terms of resources investment. Therefore, this study contributed to closing the gap pointed by several researchers (Lewis and Seibold, 1998; Doyle, Claydon and Buchanan, 2000:159; Buchanan, 2001; Lewis, 2006) of usually vague advice for communication management during change process.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated the dynamic relationship between COM and RTC. There was a striking similarity of findings related to each of the three research questions among the cases, despite the difference in context observed, which denotes evidence to support theoretical indications that dialogic COM through sensemaking assists change, allowing RTC to be embraced, by considering the contributions of the participants in the change. The relations between COM and RTC were indicated, pointing to a greater relevance of

Empathy to all three Affective, Cognitive and Behavioural dimensions of RTC. Empathy and Commitment were the most influential in relation to RTC as whole. These findings and prior analysis may indicate relevant priorities when leading a change, from theoretical and practical perspectives, which will be better explored in the following chapter, dedicated to Conclusions.



## Chapter 8. Conclusions

### 8.1 Introduction

With the finalization of this thesis, it is important to highlight the most relevant aspects. In this concluding chapter, Section 8.2 provides a summary of the key findings for each research question, followed by discussion of the contributions of this investigation in Section 8.3. Key areas for further development are explored in Section 8.4. A final Section, 8.5, concludes the thesis.

### 8.2 Key research findings

This research sought to answer three questions. In the next paragraphs, key findings for each of the questions are recalled.

**Research Question 1:** What is the perceived predominant COM and the behavior of its dimensions over time?

To answer this question, it was necessary to describe change communication. It was chosen to do so in radical change started by acquisitions, and it was accomplished by revealing the main goals, channels, activities, contents, audiences and frequencies perceived by respondents in each of the three cases studied. Those descriptions of change context and communication activities together with the findings about the perception of its dimensions are the foundation for research participants' characterization of the predominant nature of communication (COM), provided by interviews and questionnaires, documentary and observational data.

Identifying the predominant COM (i.e. monologic or dialogic) was achieved by developing a scale and instrumental grid to explore COM dimensions and identify the path of COM over time. The Principles of Dialogic Communication (Kent and Taylor, 2002) were adopted as dimensions of COM and converted into an interview script and a questionnaire. The interview provided qualitative data and the questionnaire provided quantitative summary data. The analysis of all

data revealed that in two cases (Generics Corps/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE) there was more dialogic COM than in the third (Consulting Engineering/Canadian E.). Moreover, it was possible in two cases to identify the development of COM dimensions over time (Chapters 4,5,6 and 7) and to reveal empirical evidence that they can alternate from predominant monologic to dialogic and vice versa (Waterhouse and Lewis, 2004; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). Besides, all these alterations in COM were related to the type of sensemaking that was in progress in each case, either guided or fragmented one.

These findings advance the current understanding of change communication as it offers a conceptual model of how to identify and follow COM in organizational change with the aid of the five principles of dialogic communication. This research extends the extant literature on change communication that referred to those principles as lenses or approaches (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, 2012) by applying a model with a structured constitution of COM. In contrast to extant research, it enables researchers to better support research operationalization, following the development of its dimensions over time and allowing structured comparison of COM among cases. It is important to highlight that the principles of dialogic communication reflect research participants' perceptions of the predominant nature of communication in their organization and not an objective measure. Nevertheless, their perceptions affect their behaviour and interaction at work, so have a real impact in the management of radical change.

**Research Question 2:** What is the perceived extent of RTC and the behavior of its dimensions over time?

To answer this question it was necessary to identify the perceived extent of RTC and its dimensions, during the same periods in which communication activities were analyzed. It was enabled by Oreg's (2006) RTC scale and instrument, adapted for this research to collect a perceived organizational extent of RTC (see Section 3.6.2) at different times in the change process. The analysis of all data revealed that RTC was comparably higher (4,6 in average) in one case (Consulting Engineering/Canadian E) than in the others (Generics Corps/FPG and Chem Solutions/GCHE, respectively 3,9 and 4.1 in average). It was also

possible to reveal the path of RTC dimensions and collect empirical evidence that they can alternate over time. Variations towards higher or lower depended on the support for sensemaking (Weick, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) and indicated that passing time alone cannot be associated with less resistance to change.

This research advances current theory of RTC dimensions behavior over time in radical change contexts (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006; Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns, 2008) by revealing RTC dimensions' patterns of evolution: Affective starting higher and Cognitive lower when compared to Behavioural dimension. It enables researchers and practitioners to orientate efforts to Affective and Behavioural dimensions, dedicating theoretical and practical resources to these elements in the beginning of the change. Those efforts include observing these two dimensions in terms of how they have been manifested and perceived. In addition, it includes paying close attention, for instance in the case of the Affective dimension, to fear, tension, excitement and stress signs. While, in case of Cognitive dimension, it includes closely observing signs of the value attributed to change in relation to the organization and to the change participants (if it is perceived to benefit or harm each of them).

**Research Question 3:** What is the perceived influence of the predominant COM (monologic or dialogic) on RTC, through and supported by sensemaking, revealing the dynamic among their respective dimensions?

The third and final research question required further exploration of the implications of predominantly monologic or dialogic COM on RTC, revealing the dynamic among the dimensions that constitute each of the constructs, extensively dealt with in Chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7. Crossing RTC and COM over the period studied revealed not only how participants respond to a perceived dialogic COM, but also a perceived inverted relation between the two. It means when dialogic COM is perceived as predominant, RTC is perceived to decrease and vice versa.

Specifically, the findings reveal that COM influences RTC and indicate that this influence may happen through and supported by the different types of sensemaking that Maitlis and Christianson (2014) identified. Under

predominantly dialogic COM, guided sensemaking seems to facilitate co-constructed meanings of change that influence the perceived extent of RTC. Similarly, under predominantly monologic COM, fragmented sensemaking seems to result in fragmented meanings that have little impact on the perceived extent of RTC. Due to a lack of meaningful interaction between different groups in the organization, monologic COM implies that change leaders are unable to transform what they perceive as RTC into a constructive response for change.

One of the main findings of this research is that Empathy and Commitment are the most influential COM dimensions on RTC. According to respondents, Empathy among the five COM dimensions is the one that affects Affective, Behavioural and Cognitive with greater strength. That implies there are priorities to embrace each RTC dimension: Focus on Empathy and Commitment for Affective and Cognitive RTC and on Empathy and Mutuality to deal with Behavioural RTC. If pursuing to enhance specifically some COM dimensions, as Empathy, Commitment and Mutuality, it becomes essential to explicitly discuss these stances with change leaders and design initiatives that allow these dimensions to be perceived. Concrete suggestions include efforts in change implementation and guidance to leaders (offering education and coaching for example) that could enhance components of Empathy, like trust and acknowledgment, constructing a communal orientation. Efforts could also include steady dedication to enhance Commitment, by acknowledging other interpretations, and through conversations intended to reveal beliefs and values to bond into common understanding. Regarding Mutuality, actions can include designing activities where change leaders avoid a superior being, leaving participants with the same relative power status. In other words, this leads to greater focus during change, to promote not all COM dimensions, but these specific ones when aiming at perceived less RTC extent.

### **8.3 Key research contributions**

#### ***8.3.1 Contributions to theory***

At the outset, findings in this research reverberate and contribute to, in a higher level of abstraction, two main streams of organizational change research.



Both streams refer to change communication (Section 2.4) and RTC (Section 2.5), as discussed in the literature review.

First, the findings strengthen the need to develop theory that understands change and communication as being intertwined; in other words, change does not exist without communication (Bordenave, 2001; Reis, 2004; Lewis, 2007; Russ, 2008). This is a fundamental difference from the mainstream approaches, and implies reinforcing the adoption of a constructivist ontology of change, as the meaning of change is created during the process itself, through communication among the people involved (Palmer and Dunford, 2008). Therefore, change and change communication ought to be conceptualized differently, not as if there were a change plan and a separate communication plan with transmitters and receivers of information (as common in monologic COM). It rather means that there is a change plan that encompasses communication (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Russ, 2008; Jabri, 2012) and recognizes sensegivers and sensemakers throughout the organization, alternating in these roles and therefore implementing change, as widespread in dialogic COM. Besides, this research contributes clarifying the dynamics in which COM and RTC relate to each other, through and supported by sensemaking. Monologic COM sustains fragmented sensemaking (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) that in turn reduces the possibilities for more engaged and collaborative change, while dialogic COM enables intersubjective sensemaking through the co-construction of collective meanings and interpretations about the changes that are occurring. The results are respectively, an increase or a decrease in perceived RTC.

A second contribution to theoretical field regards RTC. These research findings prompt scholars to adopt RTC manifestations *a priori* as a response to change, that is, without the negative and reactive burden that is usually associated with it (Klein, 1969; Maurer, 1996; Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Giangreco and Peccei, 2005; Ford and Ford, 2009; Esposito, Williams and Biscaccianti, 2011; Binci, Cerruti and Donnarumma, 2012). By assuming RTC as a contributive factor to the change process, it is possible to provide a constructive response to it. In other words, by simultaneously exercising interest in perceptions and the capacity to listen, and by suspending judgment and avoiding contest, it is possible to explore the value within RTC, co-constructing meanings and therefore the

change itself. In sum, by taking RTC as a response to change, scholars have the potential to produce knowledge that advances understanding of the meanings and practices of change management, as explored in Section 8.4.

A third contribution relates to the perceived link between COM and RTC in the organizations studied. This research contributes in two ways to the conceptual relation between communication and resistance. First, by challenging the assumption in the extant research that all communication minimizes resistance to change (Lewis, 2006). Second, it contributes to advancing extant theory by providing insights into the COM and RTC dimensions and their relationship, such as indicating this relation between COM and RTC can vary during change, functioning in both directions. That is, while COM was perceived predominant dialogic, RTC was perceived as descending, and vice versa. Those findings and respective contributions stimulate further investigation (see Section 8.4). Change communication and resistance to change are distinct lines of scholarship within the wider field of change management and findings of this research indicate that an integrated approach could benefit the field. Instead adopting fragmented approaches, studying relations, across streams, would yield important insights into the dynamics of organizational change management.

## **Empirical**

Although explored conceptually (Jabri 2012; Frahm and Brown, 2003), the relation between dialogic COM and RTC extent to date has not been supported by empirical findings. Following Washington and Hacker's (2005:402) and Van Dam, Oreg and Schyns's (2008) recommendations to further explore RTC, this research provided an understanding of the influence of COM on RTC in organizational change, drawing on previous investigations, such as that of Lewis (2006). The empirical gap this research addressed was in the understanding of the mechanisms that allow RTC, understood as a communicative expression, to be dealt with (Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Jarret, 2004; Ford and Ford, 2009). In other words, knowledge of how employees may react to the different natures of communication (Seibold and Shea, 2001; Lewis, 2006).

This research confirms that COM is relevant to RTC and extends current

knowledge by offering empirical data to support a perceived inverted relationship between dialogic COM and RTC extent. It extends the current knowledge by revealing that monologic COM does not contribute to minimizing RTC, while dialogic COM does; adding to Lawrence (1954); Powell and Posner (1978); and Stohl and Cheney (2001). As the findings are derived neither from statistical analysis, nor from a sample that can be generalized, it is not possible to establish a cause-effect relationship (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2010). Nevertheless, from a qualitative angle of expressing how both constructs are related in respondents' perceptions, it highlights the importance of further investigating this stream of COM and its empirical and conceptual contributions to change management as outlined in this section. Furthermore, this research indicated the most relevant dimensions of dialogic COM that impact on RTC. Empathy and Commitment were identified as the main influencers of the path of RTC in general, and also specifically to Affective and Cognitive dimensions of RTC, while Empathy and Mutuality were most influential to Behavioural RTC.

In sum, this research supports scholarly and practical prioritization of resources when defining communicative efforts to support perceived RTC reduction in organizational change processes.

## **Conceptual**

This research conceptual contribution to theory is threefold:

First, the conceptual gap addressed is that change communication is predominantly understood as an instrumental facet, like messages, channels and speakers, as discussed in Section 2.4. (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Washington and Hacker, 2005). The few studies that address change communication from a stance perspective (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006; Lines, 2007), when adopting a change communication model based on dialogic and monologic COM, do remain in a primary level of conceptual definition (Frahm and Brown, 2003; Jabri, 2012), that do not inform research operationalization. So, this research adds to extant change communication theory by offering a model that extends definitions to the level of the nature of change communication constitution and operationalization, through

the adoption of dialogic dimensions and respondents' perceptions about them. It indicates a need for conceptual revision on the COM dimensions when applying them to organizational change, as Risk appeared to be less important than the other four dimensions. The revision is twofold: 1) by reviewing how this dimension is defined and captured in interviews and questionnaires and 2) by analyzing its need as one of COM dimensions. A suggestion would be to reconsider the phrasing of the assertions 'if it was possible for those involved recognizing that did not know something without losing power' and 'It was common not to have answers' as an exercise that can inform a conceptual revision of how this dimension is inserted in the other four dimensions of COM.

Second, this research advances the current understanding of perceived RTC as it draws on an original proposition derived from individual perceptions of RTC (Piderit, 2000; Oreg, 2006) and offers an operationalization of organizational-level RTC. It is a social-constructionist perspective of resistance, in the sense that it does not adopt RTC as a sum of individual perceptions about themselves (psychological approach), but a sum of individual perceptions about others, founded on in the interactions in which people engage (Dent and Goldberg, 1999a). It also contributes to depersonalizing RTC as centered in individual dispositions and to adopting a more contextual and systemic approach.

In sum, the conceptual model of COM and the operational socio-construction of RTC constitute not only relevant contributions to organizational change and change communication fields, but also add to RTC theoretical and practical advance as detailed next.

### **8.3.2 Contributions to management practice**

A practical contribution of this research was pursued in its conception, especially as it started as a DBA project, and is related to how practitioners fruitfully approach change. There are three practical pieces of advice stemming from this research that practitioners may want to take into account when designing, implementing and managing change.

Firstly, change and communication are deeply intertwined. Rather than treating change and communication as interdependent (as is the case in (Miller, Johnson and Grau, 1994; Washington and Hacker, 2005), practitioners need to adopt a more holistic understanding: communication is change. Change participants – including managers – are sensegivers and sensemakers throughout the change and they must support and be supported in this regard.

Secondly, RTC is a response to change that signals to change leaders that employees care for the organization and what is happening therein. Rather than treating RTC as a response through which employees seek to jeopardize the change effort, change leaders need to understand that manifestations of RTC demonstrate employees' critical engagement with change and a demand for managers to listen, try to understand and respond. By taking RTC as a response to change, practitioners can get awareness of real obstacles for change and to co-construct change with participants.

Thirdly, a dialogic nature of communication demonstrates that change leaders take change communication seriously, that they seek to interact with employees and engage in discussion about how to best implement change. This dialogic COM in change should be explicitly endorsed and managed together with the people involved in the change.

As a result, more responsibility for change management must be placed at the organizational level, such as communication departments. However, a central coordination responsibility must not be focused only on designing and promoting general informational efforts and institutionalized team communication practices through a multitude of formats, but also on supporting a dialogic stance and sustaining leaders in this regard. That means agreeing on values such as openness and constructiveness, discussing questions such as "To what extent are all involved relevant? What are the values that would guide the interaction among them and what are the concrete demonstrations of those values in daily life?" throughout change. For each RTC dimension, specific COM dimensions would be emphasized. To all of them, however, managers need to establish how they can be put into practice, according to the specific context of each organization.

For instance, to better deal with Affective RTC, it may be particularly beneficial to strengthen Empathy and Commitment. All efforts in change implementation and guidance to leaders could enhance components of trust and acknowledgment, constructing a communal orientation (E). That could be accomplished through steady dedication to support and develop leaders to better acknowledge other interpretations (C), and to reveal beliefs and values through conversations as the main opportunities to bond into common understanding. That emphasis on Empathy and Commitment would also help with Cognitive RTC, as well. Behavioural RTC may be better dealt with through enhancing Empathy and Mutuality. That means adding efforts to create and sustain a spirit of reciprocal equality (M), reverberating acknowledgements of parties involved. A superior being must be avoided in all relations and expressions, leaving parties with the same relative power status from all possible perspectives. That too, may be encouraged and recognized by corporate change coordination, with examples varying from best practices dissemination in corporate communication channels to creating a coaching team to follow up with change leaders.

It is worth underlining that Propinquity and Risk are, according to this research, dimensions that do not benefit from much attention. That may represent that the engagement in the present, at the time decision-making is happening (P), is something not really expected to occur often or all the time. At least in hierarchical contexts, it is likely to occur and somehow desired that main strategic decisions should be taken by a smaller group and that broader participation is due in the next phase of deployment of that decision. In the organizations studied, it may have been the case that the deployments were perceived as adequate, or even if not, this was not as if they were impacting on resistance to change. Risk, nevertheless, was clearly the least influential dimension of all six, maybe because in radical change contexts it is absolutely unavoidable not to recognize uncertainties openly and show you are not in control (R). In relation to other variables, therefore, its impact on the progression of change is limited.

Thus, by discussing the previous collection of implications this research maintains that it has contributed to the theory and practice of change management, specifically regarding radical change implementation, by informing

some paths to be further explored in future research and experienced in other change contexts, as it is described in the next section. A predominant dialogic COM does not imply that all communicative practices could be carried out in a dialogic manner due to limitations like short-term goals, practicability and individual capabilities (Botan, 1997; Jabri, 2004, 2012; Theunissen and Wan Noordin, 2012). That includes understanding and acknowledge of some monologic communicative practices. While dialogic communication practices already offer a monitoring opportunity within themselves, as discussed in Section 2.4, the practices oriented to RTC ought to be supplemented by other institutional backup initiatives. The methods and instruments adopted in this research may help change leaders to do so.

#### **8.4 Further research**

To develop current knowledge about COM and RTC, three avenues should be taken in further investigations.

First, the current line of investigation should be continued by adopting the same propositions and conceptual framework model in either larger samples, specific respondents, or other change contexts. This would allow stronger theoretical support and broader empirical findings to assist practitioners involved in change. Outcomes, for instance, include exploring if Risk is the only COM dimension that behaves dissociated to the COM average and divergent of the others over time. Similarly, in terms of RTC, revealing if Affective and Cognitive start comparatively as the higher and lower dimensions in other change contexts, as it may generate knowledge about potential reasons for being so. Additionally, it is possible to comprehend the extent of this phenomenon, amplifying the investigations to several layers down the hierarchy.

Second, future research should study organizational capacity to sustain dialogic COM, possibly supported by self-evaluation from change participants could bring a different perspective. Studies could not only be about organizations being able or not to promote dialogic COM, but also focus on elucidating the types of efforts needed to support individuals in this route. Findings of such studies could lead to the creation of a heuristic to guide practitioners towards constructive

action that would influence RTC. In addition, considering the relevance of Empathy and Commitment, further investigations about the implications could focus on how to prepare and support change participants to better practice these dimensions during change, or also be about HR and Communication systems that better support these dimensions, or yet, about the best indicators to adopt regarding the support offered.

Third, future research should advance the research about COM and RTC, exploring in depth its dimensions and their paths over time. That includes researching when, after being dialogic, COM starts decreasing and RTC starts increasing again, to elicit the specific context and mechanisms related to this change in both paths. Although this research is not enough to define a cutting point score (from above which a COM could be predominantly dialogic or below which it could be considered predominantly monologic), findings about this may be considered relevant to better understand change management. They represent an important support for research and practice in change management, because they may indicate the scores range of dialogic and monologic COM to be pursued or avoided, considering the influence on RTC extent.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This work sought to contribute to better prospects for change within the organizational world, by revealing the dynamic between two frequently evoked aspects of change, communication and resistance to change. It advocated an understanding about change communication and change implementation as intertwined, placing the focus on the nature of communication not in its instruments and taking resistance as a potentially contributive response to change. As change communication is widely recommended for managing resistance to change, it was important to explore how perceived nature of communication (COM) would reduce perceived resistance (RTC), as there is a lack of clarity in this regard, with a few studies pointing to contradictory results (Sagie, Elizur and Koslowsky, 1995; Lines, 2004; Lewis, 2006).

The main findings refer to the dynamic of COM influence on RTC, through and supported by sensemaking, and empirical evidence of a perceived inverted



relationship between COM and RTC. It also includes that Empathy and Commitment (COM dimensions) have a comparatively strong impact on perceived levels of RTC. The key contributions to change communication and RTC theories include, besides the empirical evidence about their relation, a conceptual model of COM and an organizational-level and socially constructed RTC.

Findings place this research as a fruitful investigation about the COM and its implications on RTC extent, thus, contributing to the advancement of theory by exploring insights into the dynamic of both, during radical change. In addition, practical contributions were achieved, as managerial guidance may be found in the findings. Therefore, researchers and practitioners have stronger rationale for adopting a social-constructionist approach to change, communication and resistance, contributing to an organizational change process that acknowledges participants as subjects and not as objects that have a vital role in constructing, managing and dealing with change – through their interaction, perceptions and behaviours.

This work aspires to support change leaders so they can better contribute to organizational change, with an increased awareness about their influence on RTC and their role as promoters and sustainers of a predominant dialogic COM towards change. Consequently, transforming RTC into a constructive response and change itself into a co-constructed, meaningful and rewarding process.



## Appendices

### Appendix A - Messages of request and endorsement

**Letter of Introduction in English (to companies)** This letter was sent previously to each organization. The letter format used is based on the Brazilian mode to write formal letters:

**(City, date)**  
**(Title)**  
**(Name)**  
**(Company/Institution/Address)**  
**(City)**

**Ref: Request for Research**

**Dear (name),**

The increased amount of change efforts within organizations raises a renewed interest in research around this topic. As a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) student in Grenoble Ecole de Management (FR) and University of Newcastle (UK) joint DBA program, I wish to conduct a Multiple Case Study to explore how communication nature influences resistance to change.

I would greatly appreciate if (organization X) were willing to support this study by allowing me as a researcher to conduct some observation within the company, attend some corporate meetings or events and interview some representatives. As one of the contributors of this research, I will like to share the findings, visions and knowledge derived from this research at any point of the process and particularly after conclusion. (Organization X) would benefit from knowing in advance about practical implications in change communication management and in resistance to change management. All the findings would be discussed before publication.

Naturally it would be requested your authorization to reveal the source of the findings at a proper occasion. Each interview would take approximately two hours and would be booked directly by me. Naturally, each interviewee would be able to revise the transcripts. Information will not be made public, since it is presented as confidential. Detailed data collection plan is available in case you need to know better the process.

I will personally contact you soon in regard of this request. If you need further information, please do not hesitate in contacting me. I hope (Organization X) is able to participate in this research, and I look forward for your response.

Best regards,

**Paula Matos Marques Simões**

Doctorate in Business Administration Candidate/Researcher

Grenoble Ecole de Management and Newcastle University joint DBA Program

paulamatos.simoes@terra.com.br Tel.: (31) 9133 8023 or (31) 3589 7420

**Letter of endorsement (in English)**

Ref: Participation in Research

Dear (name of respondent),

The increased frequency and speed of change efforts within organizations generate a renewed interest in research around this topic. The Organization (name of organization) is participating in a case study to explore the relationship between communication and organizational change.

For this, we would like to invite you to offer your views on this subject and receive a researcher who will attend some meetings or corporate events and interview representatives. The researcher Paula Simões, currently pursuing a doctorate in business administration in the joint program of Grenoble Ecole de Management (FR) and Newcastle University (UK), will soon contact you.

The Organization (name of organization) will benefit by knowing in advance about the practical implications in the management of communication for change and resistance to change, as the results will be made available before final publication of the work.

Each interview will last approximately two hours, will be previously scheduled and each respondent will be asked to review a transcript of his/her conversation. The names of each individual respondent and the information presented to the researcher as confidential will not be published, which means that your identity is preserved as well as the strategic aspects of (name of organization).

If you need more information, please do not hesitate to seek Paula directly through the contact details below.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.  
Sincerely,

name of interlocutor  
post  
organization

Researcher's contact details:

**Paula Matos Marques Simões**

DBA Candidate – Grenoble École de Management and Newcastle Business School

Phone 31 91338023

E-mail address: paulamatos.simoies@terra.com.br

## **Appendix B - Interview protocol**

### **Expected preparation prior to site visits**

To prepare the interviews phase, it would be necessary to collect, organize, and analyze the document obtained. This preparation will help the researcher to obtain more valuable information during the interview. Additionally, the researcher must use the interview protocol.

The interview protocol should be evaluated after every interview, and improvements can be made (add or eliminate questions, adaptations needed to be done, etc.).

Given the diverse publics to be interviewed, not all questions must be addressed to all interviewees. The protocol for interviews is a guideline, not a strict rule.

For this reason, it is very important to carefully explain to each interviewee the purposes, objectives, and uses of the data collection. Also, the organization must be aware of all the sources of information that will be part of each case.

Before interviews, the researcher might contact previously the interviewee, introducing the objectives of the study and establishing a date and hour for the meeting to take place (Letter of introduction, See Appendix A). To start the interview, the researcher must explain to each interviewee the purposes, objectives, and uses of the actual research. Confidentiality and validation issues should also be discussed, as well the authorization for audio recording.

It is important to define communication to the interviewee as “a social process where people, immersed in a particular culture, create and exchange meanings” (Gill and Adams, 1998:41), so “It can flow through many channels and combinations of these channels, and certainly also through the context in which an interaction takes places. All behaviour, not only the use of words, is communication” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). And for this research, change communication are the efforts orchestrated by corporate communication area/personnel, and so they are many times institutional communication (newsletters, intranet, internal ads, fliers, etc), but also they include events, meetings, and cascaded face-to-face communication.

## **Data collection periods**

To each case study two cross sectional data collection will be performed:

### **First data collection (Time 1)**

- Document analysis will be carried out to inform the researcher about the organizational context, change in process and communication activities.
- In order to identify and select respondents, around three initial interviews are necessary. With the main leader of the change (CEO) and the main internal change communication designers, that is, generally the chief communication representative and the chief HR representative. Through this interviews it will be detected the main change leaders and the employees most affected by the change in course.
- The above interviewees, plus the change leaders and employees indicated will be interviewed to characterize communication nature for the former quarter and evaluate perception about RTC dimensions.
- In parallel to interviews direct observation will be performed in order to collect tangible evidences of the communication activities' nature. In this occasion it will also be requested to be informed about and participate (when applicable) in main communication activities during the interval of each data collection (between time 1 and time 2).

### **Second data collection (Time 2)**

- The same respondents from Time 1 will be invited to characterize communication nature for the former quarter and evaluate perception about RTC dimensions.
- Simultaneously it will be performed the direct observation in order to collect tangible evidences of the communication activities' nature.

## **Interview script – Time 1**

As in case study interviews require you to operate on two levels: “at the needs of your line of inquiry (Level 2 questions) while simultaneously putting forth “friendly” and “nonthreatening” questions in your open ended interviews (level 1 questions)” (Yin, 2010:133), the interview would follow approximately the line of conversation bellow. Under each question directed to the interviewee, the inquiry

questions that would not be phrased (belonging to the level 2 questions) are stated and indicated with letters a, b, c, etc. The following questions are a guideline for the interviewer, not the interviewee.

### **Interview context and agreements**

- 1) Information about the research: purpose and process. Consent to participate.
- 2) Confidentiality agreement, permission to tape record.
- 3) Estimated duration of the conversation.
- 4) Note down about location, date, time.

### **Characteristics of the respondent**

Prior to the formal interview, it would be necessary to ask questions to identify the characteristics of the interviewee. These questions include:

- 5) Name, age, gender, position and function in organization, education level (bachelor degree, unfinished graduate studies, graduate degree), contact information (phones and e-mail).
- 6) Seniority (how many years in the organization (when integrating, it can count the years of the other organization)).
- 7) Previous change experiences (overall evaluation of them).
- 8) Line of subordination (names and positions) (control variable).

### **Research focus**

- 1) Tell me about the change that is going on, how do you see it?
  - a. How change is perceived, names, terms, the general understanding.
- 2) How change communication is conceived? Who is involved? Who can be considered that is experiencing the highest impacts of this change effort? (Groups of employees, areas, etc.)
- 3) Who can be considered the leaders of this change effort besides you? Why?
- 4) How do you consider the amount of information about this change? (Control variable)

- 5) How do you consider the quality of information (frequency, content and channels) about this change? (Control variable)
- 6) How do you consider the quality of communication about this change? (Remember/Explain the concept of communication)
- 7) How change was / is being developed and communicated? (M)
  - a. General understanding about what and how to communicate changes within the organization.
- 8) Cite examples of communication activities carried out during the change. Would you say that there were opportunities to contribute to change? What? Explore CREPM:
  - Comittment – fine tuning language, getting to shared meanings;
  - Risk – vulnerability of not knowing/controlling. Different understanding of power;
  - Empathy - wish to get the meaning, not to react to the words without trying to understand them first;
  - Propinquity – engagement in the present (decision making time) plus awareness of past and future too;
  - Mutuality – persons not objects, subjects not recipients of change.

Typical questions of exploration:

- How participants contribute to change? Who were the participants? Examples. (P, M). a. If contributions, the type of involvement (to evaluate proximity) and the levels in the hierarchy of contributors.
- What are the effects of these contributions / inputs? (I)
  - a. Change initiatives are open to change how they are implemented? The contribution is highly valued by decision makers? (I) Could you describe some examples or situations of how these contributions that happened? a. What kind of contributions occurred? (I, P)
- During these communications activities in which the contributions occurred as was the climate in general? What were the feelings? How comfortable were participants to contribute? a. Could you tell a spirit of mutual equality? (M) b. There is trust, support, listening, or anticipations, interference, competition, rejecting, warping meanings preconceived interpretations? (E)
- How was the reaction of each participant when the contribution was made? Illustrate. a. It can be observed in the interaction / discussion



/ meeting / participants reporting efforts of the intention to be constantly fine tuning the language and trying to understand the positions, beliefs and values of others prior to the evaluation of these positions? (C) b. When did the discussion / communication about the change before, during or after decision-making? Examples. (P) c. Do the participants recognize the decisions of the past, present and future? They want to be involved in change? How was this expressed commitment? (P)

- What would the reaction be if the participants in a communication activity as such do not know the answer about the process and / or the results of change? Did they ever? a. Participants are able to acknowledge openly that they do not know anything about the process and / or results? (R) b. How they are perceived, then? What does this mean for their power? (R)

9) Reply Questionnaire RTC and COMM

10) Thanks and commit to a second data collection for Time 2.

Once the pilot interview is conducted, these questions must be revised, adapted, changed, or eliminated or other questions must be addressed in order to comply with this multiple case study.

For the main Change Leader (usually the CEO) and Chiefs of Communication and HR, little variation of the questions above may arise, and other questions to be addressed might include (depending on the participant):

- Which specific programs or projects constitute this change effort?
- Who can be considered the change leaders of this change effort besides you?
- Who can be considered the main impacted employees of this change effort? Why?

To Communication and HR:

- Tell me about team size, roles, structure and main processes.
- How change communication is designed? Who is involved?
- How communication can contribute to organizational change (intentionality of communication nature)? And to RTC? How communication influences RTC (Intentionality of communication

towards RTC?

- How do you believe RTC operates in this organization?
- What is RTC, how it can be observed, how to deal with it.

## **Interview script – Time 2**

### **Interview context and agreements**

- 1) Recall purpose and process of research.
- 2) Confidentiality agreement, permission to write or tape record.
- 3) Estimated duration of the conversation.
- 4) Note down about location, date, time.
- 5) Check if there are any changes in line of subordination (names and positions) (control variable).

### **Research focus**

- 6) Tell me about the change that is going on, how do you see it?
  - a. How change is perceived, names, terms, the general understanding.
- 7) How do you consider the amount of information about this change? (Remember/Explain the concept of communication. Control variable)
- 8) And the quality of information (frequency, content and channels) about this change? (Control variable).
- 9) How do you consider the quality of communication about this change?
- 10) During this period (between 1<sup>st</sup> data collection and now), how change was/ is being developed and communicated? (M)
  - a. General understanding about what and how to communicate changes within the organization.
- 11) Cite examples of communication activities carried out during this period.
- 12) Reply Questionnaire RTC 2<sup>nd</sup> fase and COMM 2<sup>nd</sup> fase (Annex). Let the respondent see his last questionnaire and complete a 4<sup>th</sup> period.
- 13) Read Questionnaire RTC (each five assertions (1 to 5; 6 to 10 and 11 to 15) characterize one dimension) and ask the respondent to name himself each dimension. Later, ask the respondent to recall one iconic case/situation in the change process that express what happened in

time with this dimension of RTC (Affective, Behavioural, and Cognitive).

- 14) Read Questionnaire COM (each pair of assertions characterizes one dimension) and ask respondent to name himself each dimension. Ask respondent to identify which were the **more contributive and the less contributive** dimension to the progress of the case/situation. A blank form was created to aid the respondent in visualizing his options (according to the names he gave to each dimension). \*

Explore CREPM:

- Comittment – fine tuning language, getting to shared meanings.
- Risk – vulnerability of not knowing/controlling. Different understanding of power.
- Empathy - wish to get the meaning, not to react to the words without trying to understand them first.
- Propinquity – engagement in the present (decision-making time) plus awareness of past and future too.
- Mutuality – persons not objects, subjects not recipients of change.
- Input.

- 15) Thanks and explain next steps (organizational approval for the data use).

For the main Change Leader and Chiefs of Communication and HR, little variation of the questions above may arise, and other questions to be addressed might include (depending on the participant):

- How do you characterize this period (between 1st data collection and now) in terms of change?
- And what where the main communication activities/efforts in this period?

## Appendix C - Questionnaires

### Time 1 - Communication Questionnaire in Portuguese

Entrevistado:  
 Empresa:  
 Data:

Período:

Período:

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande	7Concordo totalmente
1. Existia muita adaptação na mudança, à medida que os colaboradores eram envolvidos							
2. Uma pequena parcela da mudança sofreu influência dos colaboradores, a maior parte da mudança já veio pronta							
3. Durante a mudança as contribuições dos envolvidos foram igualmente importantes							
4. As pessoas construíam a mudança e não recebiam a mudança							
5. O clima durante a mudança e à respeito das contribuições era de confiança e apoio							
6. Existia muita distorção do significado das contribuições dos colaboradores							

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande	7Concordo totalmente

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande	7Concordo totalmente

7. Antes de avaliar cada contribuição, havia um esforço de entender posições, crenças e valores							
8. A linguagem era constantemente revisada durante as contribuições, para checar entendimento							
9. As contribuições para a mudança ocorreram durante a tomada de decisão (não após a decisão).							
10. Havia uma consciência sobre as decisões anteriores e as futuras							
11. Era possível aos envolvidos reconhecer que não se sabia algo sem perder poder							
12. Não ter respostas era comum.							



## Time 1- Communication Questionnaire in English

Company:  
Interviewees:

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewaht agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
1. There was a lot of adjustment on the change as employees were involved.							
2. A small portion of the change was influenced by the employees, the major part of the change came ready*							
3. During change the contributions of those involved were equally important.							
4. People co-constructed the change and had not received it ready.							
5. The climate during change and about the contributions was of confidence and support.							
6. There was much distortion of the meaning of employees' contributions.*							
7. Before evaluating each contribution, there was an effort to understand views, beliefs and values.							

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewaht agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewaht agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree

8. The language was constantly revised over the contributions, to check understanding.							
9. Contributions to the change occurred during the decision-making (not after decision)							
10. There was awareness of the past decisions and future ones.							
11. It was possible for those involved recognizing that did not know something without losing power.							
12. It was common not to have answers.							



\* Words marked with an asterisk (\*) were reverse coded.

Table of Correspondence for Communication Questionnaire

- Assertions 1 and 2 – Input Evaluation
- Assertions 3 and 4 –Mutuality Evaluation
- Assertions 5 and 6 – Empathy Evaluation
- Assertions 7 and 8 – Commitment Evaluation
- Assertions 9 and 10 – Propinquity Evaluation
- Assertions 11 and 12 – Risk Evaluation
- \* Assertions 2 and 6 were reverse coded.

Time 1 - Resistance to Change Questionnaire in Portuguese

Entrevistado:  
 Empresa:  
 Data:

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem discordo	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente
1. Havia medo da mudança							
2. Havia um sentimento ruim sobre a mudança							
3. Havia entusiasmo sobre a mudança *							
4. Eles estavam aborrecidos por causa da mudança							
5. Eles estavam tensos pela mudança							
6. Eles procuravam formas de evitar a mudança							
7. Eles protestavam contra a mudança							
8. Eles reclamavam da mudança para os colegas							
9. Eles apresentavam suas objeções em relação à mudança para os gestores							

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem discordo	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem discordo	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente



10. Eles enalteciam a mudança para outros *							
11. Eles acreditavam que a mudança prejudicaria como as coisas são feitas na organização							
12. Eles pensavam que a mudança era uma coisa negativa que estávamos passando							
13. Eles acreditavam que a mudança tornaria seu trabalho mais difícil							
14. Eles acreditavam que a mudança beneficiaria a organização *							
15. Eles acreditavam que poderiam se beneficiar pessoalmente da mudança *							



## Time 1 - Resistance to Change Questionnaire in English

Company:  
Interviewee:

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewahat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
1. There was fear of the change							
2. There was a bad feeling about the change							
3. There was excitement about the change*							
4. The change made them upset							
5. They were stressed by the change							
6. They looked for ways to prevent the change from taking place							
7. They protested against the change							
8. They complained about the change to colleagues							
9. They presented their objections regarding the change to management							

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewahat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree

Period:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 SDisagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree or	5 Somewahat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree

10. They spoke rather highly of the change to others*							
11. They believed that the change would harm the way things are done in the organization							
12. They thought that was a negative thing that we were going through this change							
13. They believed that the change would make their job harder							
14. They believed that the change would benefit the organization*							
15. They believed they would personally benefit from the change*							



Table of Correspondence for Resistance to Change Questionnaire

- Assertions 1 to 5 – Affective Evaluation
  - Assertions 6 to 10 – Behavioural Evaluation
  - Assertions 11 to 15 – Cognitive Evaluation
- \* Assertions 3, 10, 14 and 15 were reverse coded.

## Time 2 - Resistance to Change Questionnaire in Portuguese

Entrevistado:  
 Empresa:  
 Data:

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem discordo	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente
1. Havia medo da mudança							
2. Havia um sentimento ruim sobre a mudança							
3. Havia entusiasmo sobre a mudança							
4. Eles estavam aborrecidos por causa da mudança							
5. Eles estavam tensos pela mudança							
6. Eles procuravam formas de evitar a mudança							
7. Eles protestavam contra a mudança							
8. Eles reclamavam da mudança para os colegas							
9. Eles apresentavam suas objeções em relação à mudança para os gestores							

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem discordo	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente

10. Eles enalteciam a mudança para outros							
11. Eles acreditavam que a mudança prejudicaria como as coisas são feitas na organização							
12. Eles pensavam que a mudança era uma coisa negativa que estávamos passando							
13. Eles acreditavam que a mudança tornaria seu trabalho mais difícil							
14. Eles acreditavam que a mudança beneficiaria a organização							
15. Eles acreditavam que poderiam se beneficiar pessoalmente da mudança							


## Time 2 - Communication Questionnaire in Portuguese

Entrevistado:  
 Empresa:  
 Data:

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente
1. Existia muita adaptação na mudança, à medida que os colaboradores eram envolvidos							
2. Uma pequena parcela da mudança sofreu influência dos colaboradores, a maior parte da mudança já veio pronta							
3. Durante a mudança as contribuições dos envolvidos foram igualmente importantes							
4. As pessoas construíam a mudança e não recebiam a mudança							
5. O clima durante a mudança e à respeito das contribuições era de confiança e apoio							
6. Existia muita distorção do significado das contribuições dos colaboradores							
• Antes de avaliar cada contribuição, havia um esforço de entender posições, crenças e valores							

Período:

	1Discordo totalmente	2Discordo em grande parte	3Discordo levemente	4Não concordo nem	5Concordo levemente	6Concordo em grande parte	7Concordo totalmente

Nome da dimensão e ordem de contribuição


• A linguagem era constantemente revisada durante as contribuições, para checar entendimento							
7. As contribuições para a mudança ocorreram durante a tomada de decisão (não após a decisão).							
8. Havia uma consciência sobre as decisões anteriores e as futuras							
9. Era possível aos envolvidos reconhecer que não se sabia algo sem perder poder.							
10. Não ter respostas era comum.							


## Appendix D - Cases characterization – supplementary information

### D.1 Ideology comparison 2008 x 2011 – Generics Corp/FPG

Ideology 2008	Ideology 2011
Vision: To be an internationally admired brand for our excellence of operations and our contribution to a healthier society.	Ambition: to become a sustainable global partner in health with a focus on patient needs. To demonstrate leadership both in conducting business as in the communities where we operate. We want to be recognized for our ability to turn scientific innovation into solutions and hope for patients.
Mission: To facilitate and broaden access to health through products, services, and initiatives, in full integration with partners and employees, always enthusiastically, responsibly, and respecting the values of sustainability.	Mission: to facilitate and expand access to health, through products, services and initiatives, in full integration with partners and collaborators, always with enthusiasm, responsibility and respect for the values of sustainability.
Simplicity: Choices based on simple, direct, and objective paths.	Respect: we recognize and respect the diversity and needs of our employees, patients and partners, ensuring transparent and constructive interactions based on mutual trust.
Business excellence: Commitment to the search for excellence, through innovation, quality, speed, and results.	Innovation: we encourage our employees and partners to brainstorm creative solutions and to give the best of their entrepreneurial spirit.
Integrity: To act with integrity, complying with existing legislation and respecting employees, partners, suppliers, and clients.	Integrity: We pledge to respect the strictest ethical principles and standards of quality without compromise.
Responsible actions: Look to fulfill the needs of society responsibly through actions involving our employees and communities, while respecting the environmental and social aspects.	Solidarity: Together, we will take full responsibility for our actions towards our employees and the welfare of patients, and to respect the environment in a sustainable manner.
Proud to be Generics Corp: To be a company where employees are proud to work.	Confidence: We have confidence in ourselves, defend our values and pursue our goals with passion. We are always ready to react and to dare to challenge standards.



## D.2 Chem Solutions/GCHE ideology after acquisition:

The answer to **Why** explains the purpose, or the mission the organization has: “We create chemistry for a sustainable future. We combine economic success, social responsibility and environmental protection. Through science and innovation we enable our customers to meet the current and future needs of society”.

The **What** question and answer are related to the strategic direction for the organization: “Our unique position as an integrated global chemical company opens up opportunities. We do this by focusing on four strategic principles: We add value as one company; We innovate to make our customers more successful; We drive sustainable solutions; We set up the best team”.

And the **How** is about the four values present in pursuing the strategic principles, the most relevant to this research being the second one, named “Open”, as it reveals adherent components to the dialogic COM:

- Creative: We have the courage to pursue bold ideas; We inspire each other and build value-adding partnerships; We constantly improve our products, services and solutions.
- Open: We value diversity – in people, opinions and experience; We foster dialogue based on honesty, respect and mutual trust; We use our talents and capabilities.
- Responsible: We act responsibly as an integral part of society; We strictly adhere to our compliance standards; We never compromise on safety.
- Entrepreneurial: We all contribute to our company’s success, as individuals and as a team; We turn market needs into customer solutions; We take ownership and embrace personal accountability.

### **D.3 Consulting Engineering/Canadian E. ideology after acquisition:**

- **Vision:** To be a leader in engineering solutions and project implementation in the mining and metallurgical sector, in Brazil and in the world.
- **Mission:** Facilitate and implement projects through mining and metallurgical engineering sustainable solutions, quality and safety practices, respecting the environment and local communities.
- **Values:**
  - Ethics, transparency and integrity;
  - Tenacity;
  - Innovation;
  - Commitment and long-term relationship with customers;
  - Good working environment, respect and appreciation of staff;
  - Encouraging and promoting professional development;
  - Commitment to results;
  - Safety, environment and health;
  - Social Responsibility.
- **Business:** Engineering solutions and mining and metallurgy implementation.
- **We Care:** Canadian E. Consulting Engineering is integrated and practices the values of the We Care program, Canadian E. Global, and it consists of five pillars:
  - The welfare and development of our employees;
  - Health and Safety;
  - Communities in which we operate;
  - Respect for the environment;
  - The quality of our work.

## Appendix E - Nodes and subnodes – supplementary information

1. Acquisition
  - 1.1. *Acquisition communication – initiatives and internal climate*
  - 1.2. *Acquisition agreements about change process*
  - 1.3. *Acquisition characterization*
2. Change
  - 2.1. *Change Timeline*
  - 2.2. *Changes - before and after integration*
  - 2.3. *Integration Change process characterization – decision process, goals, areas highly affected*
3. COM
  - 3.1. COM Commitment examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.2. COM Empathy examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.3. COM Input examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.4. COM Mutuality examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.5. COM Propinquity examples, impact, evolution
  - 3.6. COM Risk examples, impact, evolution
4. *Communication characterization, initiatives, evaluation*
5. *Information characterization, initiatives, evaluation*
6. *Previous experiences with change management*
7. RTC
  - 7.1. RTC Affective examples, impact, evolution
  - 7.2. RTC Behavioural examples, impact, evolution
  - 7.3. RTC Cognitive examples, impact, evolution



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