



# LA LETTRE DU GERPISA

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Editorial

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## LE GERPISA N'EST PAS "UN TOUT PETIT MONDE"

Les nombreuses réponses aux appels à communication relatifs à la neuvième rencontre internationale du GERPISA et aux séminaires CoCKEAS organisés au printemps soulignent la forte mobilisation des membres du réseau autour des enjeux de notre troisième programme de recherche. Il est vrai que l'actualité mondiale de l'industrie automobile donne de multiples objets d'analyse qui nous invitent à développer des outils d'interprétation permettant de saisir les transformations engagées. Les programmes de ces réunions seront chargés et diversifiés et l'ensemble de ces contributions permettra certainement une progression significative dans notre réflexion collective autour du nouveau programme scientifique du GERPISA pour mieux saisir les enjeux et les formes nouvelles de la coordination des compétences et des connaissances dans les systèmes automobiles.

Alors que de nouveaux membres s'intègrent dans ce programme, il peut être utile de rappeler quelques règles du jeu de notre fonctionnement. Le GERPISA n'est pas la simple réunion de chercheurs en sciences sociales travaillant sur l'industrie automobile et ses salariés qui aurait pour seules fonctions, comme la plupart des associations scientifiques, de diffuser des informations et d'organiser des rapides et superficiels échanges lors de réunions périodiques, à la façon du "tout petit monde" (*Small World*) de David Lodge. L'ambition du GERPISA est de coordonner les compétences de ces chercheurs autour d'un programme scientifique en faisant converger leurs travaux et leurs préoccupations sur des thématiques partagées pour essayer de développer une recherche et une démarche collectives et produire ainsi des connaissances nouvelles.

Il ne s'agit certainement pas d'espérer une quelconque homogénéisation ou normalisation des idées et des méthodes visant à proposer une vision unanimiste et doctrinaire, mais il faut aller au-delà du simple échange d'idées pour amener les membres du réseau à reprendre leur propre questionnement scientifique en intégrant les préoccupations communes et prolonger les confrontations à l'occasion des rencontres renouvelées par les séminaires, colloques et échanges à

## GERPISA IS NO "SMALL WORLD"

We have received many replies to the "Call for papers" associated to the Ninth GERPISA international colloquium and the CoCKEAS workshops organised for this spring. This demonstrates the large involvement of the network's members for the issues that our third research programme are going to be covering. The meetings' agenda will be busy and diversified, and the numerous contributions will definitely help our collective thinking on the GERPISA's new scientific programme to make some significant progress. We will be in a better position to analyse the various issues of the structural changes occurring in the automotive systems, and the new forms of co-ordinating the competencies and knowledge in this industry.

With new members getting involved in this programme, we should remind people of a few of our operating rules. The GERPISA is not just a meeting of social science researchers with a particular interest in the automobile industry and its employees. Unlike most scientific associations, its sole function is not simply to disseminate information and organise sporadic meetings where rapid and superficial exchanges can take place (as described in David Lodge *Small World*). The GERPISA's ambition is to coordinate these researchers' competencies around a specific scientific programme by creating a situation in which their work and major preoccupations can converge on a number of shared themes, thus helping them to develop team research and collective approaches, and subsequently to produce new knowledge.

This should neither be seen as an attempt to homogenise and standardise ideas and methods, nor as some misguided effort to devise a unanimous and dogmatic view of the automotive world. But the GERPISA must be more than a simple place to exchange ideas if network members are to be encouraged to integrate into their own personal scientific questioning those preoccupations that their colleagues also is to fulfil through the renewed confrontation of

travers la *Lettre du GERPISA*. On peut, alors, progresser dans notre compréhension des changements en cours dans l'industrie automobile en faisant de la diversité de nos travaux et de nos approches, un atout.

### **L'ambition du GERPISA est de coordonner les compétences des chercheurs autour d'un programme scientifique ...**

Le soutien de l'Union Européenne, par le projet CoCKEAS, nous permet d'organiser plusieurs rencontres au cours de l'année 2001 qui s'avèrera essentielle pour l'avancement du troisième programme. L'organisation de ces rencontres visera à favoriser la réflexion commune et les débats, en sacrifiant parfois les conventions habituelles des réunions scientifiques formelles où chacun est d'abord attaché à sa prestation individuelle, pour mettre les différentes contributions en perspective des différents axes du programme scientifique. Cette démarche de recherche collective est indispensable pour donner du sens à notre activité et, donc, pérenniser le réseau. Le GERPISA aura en effet 20 ans en mars prochain : les séminaires de Lyon et de Bordeaux fourniront des occasions à cette célébration.

ideas which occurs at each of our workshops, colloquium and meetings, and by the mean of the *Lettre du GERPISA*. If so, we will be able to improve our understanding of the ongoing changes that continue to affect the automotive industry – in which case the diverse nature of the various works that we continue to produce, and of the different approaches that we follow, will become an advantage for all of us.

European Union support for the CoCKEAS project has allowed us to organise several meetings during 2001 - a year that will be crucial for the advancement of the research programme. These meetings will be organised in such a way as to encourage joint reflection and debate. On occasion, they will dispense with the customary rules governing formal scientific conferences (i.e., where everyone is primarily focused on his/her own personal production) in an effort to present and discuss individual contributions with the perspectives being developed in our scientific programme's various strands. This collective research approach is indispensable if our activity is to have any real meaning - and if our network is to survive over the long run. The GERPISA will after all be 20 years old next March; and the Lyon and Bordeaux workshops will be good opportunities to celebrate this landmark.

## Nouvelles du programme – New Programme

### COCKEAS SPRING WORKSHOPS

Three workshops are planned on Spring 2001 on behalf of the CoCKEAS project support by the EU (5<sup>th</sup> Framework, Key action 4) and its different work packages, and the GERPISA new programme *Coordinating Competencies and Knowledge in Regional Automotive Systems*. Detailed Call for papers are available on the web site: [www.cockeas.org](http://www.cockeas.org).

#### **Workshop Modular Production and Supplying Relationships #1 (CoCKEAS WP#1&2) – Lyon, March 15-16, 2001**

The workshop aims at top quality papers as well as intensive discussion. Each paper will have to be sent in advance in order for a *rapporteur* to prepare an introduction to discussion.

Papers should be ready by mid-February, absolute deadline, and sent to Jean-Jacques Chanaron or Guisepe Volpato.

*The workshop will be organised in two tracks:*

#### *Innovation and modular production*

This first track will discuss six selected papers which would be later published as a special issue of the *International Journal of Automobile Technology Management (IJATM)*. The workshop would discuss the first draft of such articles.

In principle, all papers for IJATM would have ultimately to be blind reviewed when officially submitted to the journal. This is why each paper must be introduced by a *rapporteur* who will eventually formulate critics and suggestions.

#### *Other topics in new productive organisation*

This second track will discuss any other paper submitted by the GERPISA members or associates which deals with new productive organisation. GERPISA members wishing to submit a paper have to contact urgently Jean-Jacques Chanaron. A second workshop on this topics will be organized in Venezia on 4-5 October 2001.

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#### **Workshop The Changing Geography of the Automotive Systems (CoCKEAS WP#4), Bordeaux – March 30-31, 2001**

This workshop will discuss the changing geography in regional automotive systems associated to structural changes occurring in the auto industry and firms' localisation strategies (spatial division of labour, relocation of activities, etc.). New productive principles, associated to the diffusion of modular production within the auto industry, as well as the growing role of services (tertiarisation) generate new driving forces in the spatial dynamics of automotive activities.

Spatial dynamics could be analysed through the industrial geography of *manufacturing activities*: location of assembly and manufacturing plants, and co-location of suppliers' plants for the preparation of modules (suppliers parks, industrial condominium) vs. relocation to peripheral regions and emerging countries to benefit from lower wage costs. But it has also to be studied through the geography of *non-manufacturing activities*, considering Product development and Services (Distribution, Repair, etc.).

Two main issues will be discussed:

Will these changes cause activities to move to new locations (i.e., trade-off between centralisation and relocation) ? Will they lead to the clustering of automotive activities (agglomeration) and a revival of automotive districts ?

How regional integrations (enlargement of the EU to Eastern and Central European Countries, ASEAN in Asia, Mexico in NAFTA, MERCOSUR in South America) affect the emergence of a new geography of production ?

The workshop will be organised on two days (Friday 30 and Saturday 31 March) with the presentation and in-depth discussion of a limited number of papers. The proposals could be papers analysing the new spatial dynamics in the auto industry and case studies based on changes in the European automotive system and other countries and world-regions where modular production is introduced (especially in emerging countries).

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**Workshop *The Tyranny of Finance? Cars, Companies and Motoring Services* (CoCKEAS WP#3), London, 27th-28th April 2001**

The workshop builds on recent research (see *Economy and Society*, February 2001) which highlights financialisation and the pressures on corporations to deliver shareholder value for the capital market. The questions here are about how financialisation affects car assemblers and component manufacturers inside and outside the American system of stock market capitalism and its associated forms of governance.

The issues here are especially interesting because, even in the good years of the 1990s, large assemblers have not met (and maybe cannot meet) the capital market's requirements for return on capital at the same time as they have retained a productionist orientation and continue to own substantial assembly and manufacturing operations despite the growing interest in spinning off and sub-contracting such activities. It is also true that, for many assemblers, the finance of car purchase or use is an increasingly important source of revenue and profit in a world where companies like Ford are attracted by the business opportunities of the large consumer spend on motoring services (see Froud et al. *Competition and Change*, 1998).

The questions here are about how and why the car companies are gravitating towards service businesses and whether such activities promise more than they can deliver in a world of intensifying competition which erodes margins in activities like finance.

As financialisation requires new understanding of the capital market, so tertiarisation requires a new understanding of expenditure consumption and the product market as well as a redefinition of the boundaries of the traditional industry. The 'Tyranny of Finance' theme draws together the two themes of external pressure for financial results and the internal attraction towards finance based activities. Because this workshop opens a discussion of new issues, the organisers have already solicited papers from academics known to be working on these issues. They will include also include practitioner sessions where non-academics from the car companies, consultancy firms and the financial markets participate.

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## Débat

### THE VW STRIKE OF 2000 : WORKER RESISTANCE IN A SETTING OF NEW INDUSTRIAL INTEGRATION

Huberto Juárez Núñez

Translated by David Alvarado and Steve Babson

Following a decade of success for management strategy, the Mexican auto industry in 2000 was stunned by a strike whose content and form represented labor's first national response<sup>1</sup> to the corporate push for production and productivity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clearly, there have been diverse resistance movements among autoworkers during the 1990s: the union at the privatized truck and bus maker, DINA, has struck frequently, and workers at Ford and GM have initiated work stoppages during negotiations at points where management has made excessive demands. But because these were local struggles or because of a press blackout, these movements did not gain national attention.

<sup>2</sup> In the last ten years, annual Mexican auto production went from 800,000 finished vehicles to nearly 2 million, with only a small growth in the assembly workforce. "One can say that there has now been established the capacity of Mexican auto labor for polyvalent, flexible, productive and competitive work, but at Mexican prices..." (Juárez, 99).

In the autumn of last year, the 12,700 workers at Volkswagen of Mexico (VWM) launched their strike in response to the company's ridiculously low wage offer. This was the start of a struggle that would be sustained far longer than anticipated by management, which initially assumed that it would be able to nullify the right to strike and thereby defeat a union known in Mexico for its tradition of militancy.

More surprising than the docile response of the government, which quickly declared the strike illegal ("the strike banners were raised one minute after the legally stipulated time," was the official justification) was the union response to this legal setback. Relying on its capacity for mobilization and communication, union members returned to the factory with a concerted campaign for continuing the struggle: refusing voluntary overtime—a potent weapon in a factory where.

30% of production in key areas depends on overtime— and mobilizing public demonstrations and solidarity actions on the national and international level, among autoworkers, allied trades, and service employees

This report will analyze the significance of this strike for Mexican autoworkers, who begin a new decade in a context where changes in national policy and the global economy can catalyze new scenarios in which unions play a larger role.

### Preliminary context

Volkswagen of Mexico's decision in the mid-1960s to locate its new plant near the city of Puebla, 70 miles southeast of Mexico City, marked a departure from the previous concentration of industrial investment in the Federal District and the State of Mexico. By moving away from its original plant in this congested region surrounding Mexico City,<sup>3</sup> VW was able to take advantage of public subsidies designed to decentralize investment and encourage industrial growth in new locations. In terms of economic policy, the beginning of VW's Puebla operations in 1966 heralded a new axis of development<sup>4</sup>

The region offered significant advantages for the company in terms of communication and infrastructure: a highway to the port of Veracruz and to the Federal District, access to railroad lines, and gas and electricity grids.

During the first 15 years of operations, this plant became the most important of its kind, that is, of those producing 4 cylinder automobiles (including the "Old Beattle" Sedan, propelled by an air-cooled engine). Most of its production was for the domestic market, which was controlled by protectionist regulations and was practically a captive market for established manufacturers. This allowed for high prices and low quality standards in comparison to those prevailing in international markets.

In terms of labor relations, VW started production in Puebla under roughly the same Collective Bargaining Agreement (CCT, *Contrato Colectivo de Trabajo*) that regulated production in its first plant near Mexico City. As before, VW's Puebla workforce was represented by the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM, *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos*), the dominant state-supported labor federation aligned with the PRI government. From the start, the CTM's collective agreement with VW included very flexible clauses, such as the right by the employer to change the work location of workers according to production needs. The prophetic clause 12 of the 1962 CCT stated: "The workers are under obligation to carry out their work with the intensity and quality that are adequate to service, with absolute good faith, as if it was their business. The workers will have the obligation of working on the tasks and in the place designated by the company.

<sup>3</sup> Its first plant was in Xalostoc, State of Mexico. Until recent years, a shell of the old factory existed, lost already among new construction caused by the urban sprawl from the Federal District.

<sup>4</sup> This was not successful in strict terms. Most of VW's suppliers were in the central Mexican highlands. The supply base in Puebla was always a small part of VW's supply network. (Juárez 1987).

Therefore, the company has the right to change workers from one place to another, to change their tasks, shift or department, as long as such changes do not affect their wages or dignity" (VWM, CCT 1962-64, Pg. 5. PIA-UAP Archive).

The VW plant in Puebla gained considerable notoriety in the early 1970s, not only because it produced the most popular car in Mexico with the nation's highest concentration of industrial workers— between 8 and 12 thousand— at the time, but also because these workers voted to disaffiliate from the CTM in 1972. The movement to overturn the CTM's control was an organized, expedient and radical expression of the explosive potential of the assembly line worker. This militant base clashed head on with control mechanisms and top-down negotiations that, in the manner of a "protection" union, delivered dues and favors to CTM leaders, while ignoring the rights of workers. (PIA-UAP Archives).

The challenge to the CTM was led by the alternative tendency in the union movement of the time, the *Unidad Obrera Independiente* (UOI, Independent Worker Unity). While independent of the CTM, the UOI adopted many of the top-down practices of its predecessor. The result was a new union structure with a dual personality: a) executive/directing powers still flowed in a vertical manner, from the elected Executive Committee and Secretary General to the Legal Advisor; b) at the base was an intermediate structure of shop stewards, which operated horizontally. In the latter, Section Stewards managed to take advantage of statutory legal protections to become, over time, the backbone of worker resistance. These stewards— numbering between 200 and 250, depending on the number of workers— were the champions of the rank and file by the end of the 70's, both in daily negotiations as well as in "illegal" struggles: work stoppages, slow-downs, and protests against union leadership or the Advisor. Some stewards were fired for leading these actions, singled out by the exchange of "black lists" between the union's incumbent leaders and the company's labor relations department.<sup>5</sup>

In the fall of 1981, as output was accelerating to record levels<sup>6</sup> stewards and dissident members of the Executive Committee led an illegal three-day work stoppage to protest the corruption and incompetence of UOI leaders and their collaboration with company managers. With the majority of union members joining the wildcat strike, the company and the Labor Ministry were forced to accept the strikers' demand for a new vote on union leadership. Winning a 4 to 1 majority among the 8 thousand plant workers who voted, the dissidents expelled the UOI and its leaders, charging them with treason, authoritarianism and corruption.

<sup>5</sup> The "exclusion clause" in the CTM's closed-shop contracts makes the dismissal of dissidents all the easier by requiring the company to fire any worker who the union declares to be no longer a member in good standing.

<sup>6</sup> VW reached a record production that year of 157,000 units.

This marked the beginning of a new era for the union and the company: the VW workers, without the UOI but with the same internal structure and union bylaws, would now face the restructuring process that VW implemented after the economic crisis of 1982.

### The first restructuring

Against the background of a severe drop in the domestic automobile market (down 40% for the automotive industry as a whole), VWM began in 1982 to manufacture engines and axles for export to its German and Brazilian plants. With this, “new messages” and “new languages” began to shape work organization along the production lines: continuous improvement, multiple tasks, quality circles, and exhortations to fight against the “*ahí se va*” culture. This discourse was accompanied by additional demands on work performance, especially in the new engine shop where automatic transfer systems imposed new dynamics. The use of temporary workers also expanded during this period, varying between 30 and 40 per cent of total union membership (PIA-BUAP Archive).

At the same time, management implemented very aggressive techniques for “softening” worker resistance, including the massive firings of 1983 – carried out as a “voluntary severance” program<sup>8</sup> and demands in 1987 for reduced benefits and a 15% cut in wages. The latter provoked a 57 day strike and escalating worker militancy, including the blockade, on two occasions, of the main highway linking Puebla and Mexico City. The strike, which won considerable public support and international solidarity from VW workers in Germany, forced VWM to agree to modest wage increases. (Garduño, Juárez 1987).

### The Second Restructuring, the new Cluster and the modular factory

Until 1992, demands for modernization and improved work performance were balanced within the regulations of the existing bargaining agreement. This agreement mandated a strong union presence in controlling work pace, in establishing preventive safety measures for high-risk areas, and in defending seniority rights in the workplace.

It was never a simple matter, however. Events which made clear the alliance of company/labor authorities, such as the conflict of 1987, led the workers to very significant demonstrations of organizing audacity, including the highway blockades. In regards to the internal life of the union, even when the leadership took a position of close collaboration with the company, the section stewards provided an alternative pole of resistance against speed up or the incompetence of union leaders.

<sup>7</sup> “Ahí se va” connotes careless work.

<sup>8</sup> In February of 1983, the company informed the union that, faced with a drop in production, it would no longer need 900 permanent workers. It proposed to pay an additional 20% in severance pay for workers who accepted “voluntary severance.” Hundreds of workers took this option and within ten days the severance list was complete. A few months later the severance pay was swept away by the economic crisis that forced several hundred of the 1500 workers who had accepted the severance to seek a return to work. Around 300 returned, giving back their severance pay. Some accepted employment as temporary workers.

The section stewards were the front line actors, for example, in the 1991 work stoppage in the painting area, protesting the company’s miscalculation of salaries. The importance of section stewards was such that the company always sought ways to establish control over this part of the union apparatus, through corruption, threats and firings. Nevertheless, the fact that the stewards could be almost automatically removed by their fellow workers as soon as the latter felt that they were distancing themselves from their roles compelled the stewards to act aggressively on legitimate demands from the base.

This feature of union life changed dramatically after 1992. In the negotiations of that year, the company persuaded union leaders to abandon the contract’s work rules in return for wage increases. There was no official vote to ratify the new agreement, nor did the leadership report that they had permitted the company to write new work rules that eliminated seniority rights, imposed work teams, and tied wage increases to merit assessments. When these secret clauses became known, 9,000 of 14,000 workers signed a petition calling for the removal of the Executive Committee. Continuing protests led to a wildcat strike and government intervention that declared the walkout illegal. VWM was thereby given the legal means to fire all 14,000 workers and, in rehiring roughly 90% of the previous workforce, cull out more than 1,000 dissident leaders. (See Juárez, 99 and Becerril, Andrea 1992). Equally significant, new union bylaws were imposed in which the general assembly (the mass meeting of all union members) disappeared and the structure of section stewards was substituted by a very simplified one of division stewards— with just one steward for each of 8 divisions<sup>9</sup>

Thus began one of the darkest periods in the union’s history. In this phase, in an orthodox Toyotist manner, the company took advantage of the virtual disappearance of intermediary union representatives, attempting to replace them with new company-appointed leaders— facilitators, coordinators, “godparents”— who would “represent” workers as they adapted to new tasks, qualifications, and levels of work performance. These new standards of performance imposed by teamwork, together with new forms of payment of wages, new qualifications, and periodic evaluations, created an interregnum during which it seemed that the powers of the company had no limits.

Finally, in 1996, workers voted to overturn the union leadership that had agreed to the drastic revision of the contract and bylaws in 1992. The election of a new Executive Committee was an eloquent worker response to the new labor relations, but the defeat of management in 1997 was surely more important.

<sup>9</sup> After the worker defeat of 1992, the evaluation of the role of the “seccionales” caused a sour discussion in political and academic circles because of the appearance of a group of sociologists and others interested in the subject who were of the opinion that the stewards were part of an obsolete union structure, which demanded substitution by another one more adequate to new needs (see texts and report from the Congreso Nacional de Sociología del Trabajo, Jalapa, October of 1992, and the book “La Productividad, distintas experiencias”. Garcia and De la Garza, Editors. UAM-F. Ebert. 1993).

In that year, a proposal for a new arrangement of work schedules and rotating shifts, called the German System, was put to a referendum. The workers answered with an overwhelming "no" (see Juárez 1999).

The other distinct element of this "second restructuring" was the outsourcing of manufacturing towards a new network of suppliers. During the preceding years of production for the domestic market, VWM's supplier network depended on imports and purchases from plants located in central Mexico. In restructuring for export production the company turned to transnational autoparts suppliers, who formed a Cluster around the Puebla plant and along the highway in a radius not exceeding 40 kilometers. These companies slowly displaced the suppliers of the previous period and took over areas such as wire harnesses, small presses, suspension system parts, seats, etc.

In the contract negotiations of 1996 and 1998, management presented a new request, calling for the presence of suppliers and their workers inside the plant, performing assembly work, carrying out tasks parallel to the lines, etc. These companies and their workers would be outside of the CCT and the union, that is to say, they would operate as production entities with their own work systems, their own salaries, their own unions. This was the beginning of attempts by the management of VWM to develop a variant of the Brazilian "Fractal Factory" of Resende. Despite the fact that Resende had not been successful in strict terms, it was being used as a pilot idea to be explored in the sites where the consortium was investing.

The proposal was rejected time and again by the union representatives. Opposition to the presence of third parties within the plant is something very deeply felt by unionists, for whom the "loss of work" to outside suppliers is a continuing concern. While this clause has remained on "standby" in the last three contract negotiations, the company continues to develop the other aspect of the Fractal Factory – that is, the integration of suppliers through modules manufactured elsewhere.

### The Cluster and the new labor arrangement

The outsourcing of modules became a priority with the arrival of the New Beetle (NB). Production began in late 1998, totaling just 320 units, and accelerated to 106,627 units during 1999, of which 103,064 were exported, mostly to the United States. The production estimate for the year 2000 is 160,000 New Beetles and total production of over 400,000 vehicles, the balance consisting of the Old Beetle, the Jetta, and the Cabrio. The production of parts and modules for dozens of variations of these models is a great achievement of management coordination and administration. The versatility and efficiency of this assembly/supply chain is currently sustained on a fragile and delicate equilibrium. A supplier company that, for any reason, fails to deliver on a Just-In-Time basis and stops the assembly line faces economic penalties of up to \$2,000 (U.S.) per minute.

However, the greatest accomplishment has been the building of a modern labor relations system in which standards of high performance, attentiveness to quality, and voluntaristic work attitudes are combined with new hiring and wage payment practices. The "fine print" in these arrangements

appears to parallel the agreements between the federal and state governments with the consortium in Germany<sup>10</sup> The workers of the supplier companies are assigned, without any consultation, one of the "unions" that act as holders of the rights over new collective bargaining agreements. These agreements cover the formalities of Mexican labor regulations, but function as what we know as "protection contracts."<sup>11</sup> From this point onward there is a careful selection process of young people with basic levels of technical training (sequencing and operations, machine operation, general maintenance, mechanical systems – graduates from such technical-education centers as CONALEP, CETIS; CEBETIS, etc.). Some companies prefer young women and single mothers, better yet if they are from Tlaxcala<sup>12</sup> rather than from Puebla, and, perhaps most importantly, people without any union background or connections to the VW assembly workers.

This arrangement allows for something vital in the company strategy: payment of wages in the autopart companies that are, as a general rule, around 40% or 50% of the wages of unionized workers in the VW plant. Benefits are those mandated "by the law," that is to say, far removed from the benefits mandated by the bargaining agreement of the VW plant workers. In order to maintain the level of work intensity that the production chain requires, and also to "compensate" for the weak protections in terms of job safety, a variety of "production incentives" have appeared. Many of these represent what some managers call, without embarrassment, a "moral wage"<sup>13</sup> food baskets<sup>14</sup> food vouchers, t-shirts with the company logo, photos of the best team, birthday greetings, raffles of a TV for the best team of the month, etc.

Therefore, on top of the delicate and fragile organizational equilibrium, the Cluster adds an additional feature—precarious wages and working conditions.

### An alternative in union resistance

Between 1996 and 1999, the VW union leadership brought up with the company on more than one occasion the possibility of unionizing the new supplier workforces

<sup>10</sup> Since 1993, visits of important figures from the Mexican government, including the President, have been important news items in the region. Agreements to start the movement of World-Class companies to Puebla have been widely covered by the regional media, and state government leaders have made repeated visits to Wolfsburg to "negotiate German investment in Puebla". Though the benefits of these agreements— jobs, technology, new productive chains— have been made public, the part concerning labor relations has been a top-secret matter.

<sup>11</sup> Corrupt union officials sell a "sweetheart" contract to an employer as "protection" against independent organization.

<sup>12</sup> Tlaxcala is the neighboring state to Puebla, a half hour drive from the VW plant, and generally poorer.

<sup>13</sup> "We do not intend to buy the loyalty and hard work of our employees, that is why they have a salary," as one labor relations manager put it. Thus, the incentives are precisely that, a moral recognition from the company to its best workers.

<sup>14</sup> A liter of cooking oil, two cans of tuna fish, half a kilo of sugar, a kilo of beans, a kilo of rice, a package of noodles, a small jar of mayonnaise.

as locals of the SITIASCVW (Sindicato Independiente de Trabajadores de la Industria Automotriz, Similares y Conexos Volkswagen. (Independent Union of Workers of Volkswagen Automotive and Similar or Connected Industries). The new locals would keep their own CCTs, and the standardizing of working conditions and wages would be sought over the medium and long term. The company's dismissive rejection of this proposal contributed to an already tense atmosphere, especially as production demands generated conflict and competition around quality issues between Cluster workers and the VW Union.

Even with its fragility and labor precariousness, the chain of production from the different parts of the Cluster to the VW assembly lines seemed to be operating well until 15 December 1999, when the female workforce at SIEMENS raised an alarm over the labor conditions predominating in the Cluster. Against a background of discontent due to work overload and low wages<sup>15</sup> more than 2,000 SIEMENS workers staged a work stoppage over irregularities in the payment of the Christmas bonus and unfulfilled promises concerning production incentives. The stoppage paralyzed the Cluster completely and forced management to accept negotiations on wage increases, improvement of working conditions, and replacement of the "charro"<sup>16</sup> holder of the protection contract with a legitimate union leadership.

For the first time, the Cluster was shaken by a worker-employer conflict that derived directly from the system that had caused the heavy workloads and that, until then, had eliminated all worker resistance<sup>17</sup> As a further surprise, it was a stoppage organized by the personnel that was thought to be more docile and more vulnerable to the methods for neutralizing discontent—the women workers and single mothers who predominated in the SIEMENS workforce.

The struggle of the women workers at SIEMENS had special importance because it opened a path of resistance for Cluster workers to the modern work systems that extract high degrees of human effort in environments of low wages and weak social protections. In the month of January 2000, other workers of the Cluster, those of SEGLO<sup>18</sup> and ATL<sup>19</sup> started their own struggles to improve conditions and establish legitimate union representation. By the spring of 2000, the workers at SIEMENS, SEGLO, and ATL had won recognition for their new union leaderships, had affiliated

<sup>15</sup> To which very pointed cases of sexual harassment must be added.

<sup>16</sup> "Charro" implies the authoritarianism and strong-arm tactics of traditional union leaders.

<sup>17</sup> In other factories, acts of protest and resistance were neutralized immediately by firings. The most famous of these was the case of around 40 workers in the Condumex plant in 1999.

<sup>18</sup> SEGLO is the company in charge of the Just-In-Time logistics. They operate within the factory, substituting the unionized workers that up until 1992 were known as "seguidores de material" (supply followers). It has 1,700 workers. The SEGLO workers formed a new union the same way the SIEMENS workers did, with support from the recent events, the unionized VW workers and the UNT. They were recognized in March of 2000.

<sup>19</sup> ATL is the company in charge of moving the vehicles from the final test drive to the transportation means to diverse sales locations (train cars, and "nodrizas"). They have less than 300 workers and their new union was also recognized last spring.

with the National Workers' Union (UNT)<sup>20</sup> and had secured the support and solidarity of VW workers and other regional unions (foremost among them the Puebla local of the telephone workers).

### The 2000 Strike at VW

Negotiations in 2000 for revising the CCT at VWM took place against a backdrop of heightened controversy over the financial condition of the company. In Mexico, determining a corporation's true level of profitability is a potentially contentious matter given the legal obligation, enshrined in the Constitution, that 10% of taxable profits be paid every year to hourly employees. During contract negotiations, disputes over a company's financial condition also have obvious implications for its ability to pay higher wages.

VWM is one of many large companies that take advantage of a tax system that is lax and especially benign to adjusting costs and benefits in the Yearly Income Declaration<sup>21</sup> Tax regulations in Mexico have diverse procedures that allow for reporting low profits, no profits or even losses. The key is that in Mexico the rate of taxation is established according to the so-called "Taxable Profits." Thus, a company can show no taxable profits while having real (accountable and net) profits. Such was the case with VWM, which declared taxable losses during the 1990s<sup>22</sup> This caused discontent amongst the workers, especially since the signs of growth and prosperity in production had been very visible. The declaration of losses or no profits during the decade was a reminder for the workers that the company has the resources to take maximum advantage of all forms of government support.

Thus, when the workers learned in April of 2000 that the company would share profits, there were expectations of amounts proportional to the results that the company had shown in 1999, when VWM not only had record production levels, but also record sales of \$7.4 billion (U.S.)—up 48% from the previous year. When VWM's Puebla workers found out that the average to be shared per worker was no greater than two thousand pesos (about \$200 U.S.), there was indignation. The union leadership, echoing this, made a surprising decision that caused irritation and empty explanations on the part of the company.

<sup>20</sup> Union Nacional de los Trabajadores. The UNT was formed in 1997 as an independent federation of unions opposed to the CTM's subordination to the PRI government.

<sup>21</sup> Which levies a tax of 36% on "taxable" profits declared.

<sup>22</sup> In 1991, after the company made discounts to wages for *incorrect payments* because of an advance on profit sharing, the first shift workers of the painting shop led a work stoppage that extended itself to the whole plant during 12 hours. The stoppage ended after the company agreed to reimburse the discounts. After the contract changes in 1992, in order to lessen discontent, it was "agreed" that advances would be made in two showings, one in December (already agreed upon in the 1980s) and another one in May, when companies are required to share 10% of their taxable profits.

It agreed to initiate a formal challenge of VWM's tax returns through the Ministry of Treasury and Public Credit<sup>23</sup> This was the first open confrontation between the new union leadership, which had been inaugurated in January of 2000, and the management of the company.

It was in this context that bargaining over the CCT began in the summer of 2000. The union's divisional assemblies agreed to demand a one-year wage increase of 35%, while the elected members of the union's Revision Commission worked arduously to put together a document detailing modifications to the CCT that would restore some of the powers the union had lost in 1992. After two weeks of bargaining, the negotiations became embittered when they turned to the issue of wages (a chronology of the negotiation can be found in the Archive of PIA-UAP). With the support of government mediators, VW proposed an increase that barely compensated for inflation: 11.5%. Management apparently assumed that union leaders did not have enough support to call a strike— as one of 20 slates that had contested the January elections for the union's Executive Committee, the winners had won a narrow plurality with barely 1,000 votes out of 12,000 members. But the company had underestimated the anger of VW M workers and the militancy of their new leaders. Confronted by the company's refusal to compromise, the union called a strike.

Immediately, the federal government granted the company's request that the strike be declared illegal. The appeal used by management to have the Federal Labor Board (JF) declare the strike "non-existent" was quite within the traditional arrangements between business and government, as has been widely documented. The argument of the JF that the strike began a minute after the legal time frame had expired did nothing but confirm the power of the company over the Mexican labor authorities. With this legal victory, it appeared the company had defeated the union once again.

If workers remained on strike, management could legally fire the entire workforce and impose its terms on those it chose to rehire. When the union called off the strike to avoid this replay of 1992, it was assumed that workers would return to the job in an atmosphere of defeat and demoralization.

<sup>23</sup> The union's challenge included the following statement: "During the last 8 years, the VW de Mexico SA de CV company has maintained a policy of structuring declarations where most of time it has declared taxable losses or taxable profits that are cancelled by the losses of previous years, which has impacted a part of the income of the workers... An evaluation of our situation compared to that of other similar companies in the automobile industry in Mexico shows that we have been left behind in terms of Participation of Workers in Profits (PTU). Clause 75 of the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, that grants us 32 days of wages as an *advance* of PTU, has been ignored considering the average levels of participation that workers in other companies in the same industry have. For example, the aforementioned clause gives us the right of PTU of \$6,000.00 on average for the last year, which added to an average of \$2,000.00 for differences in participation gives us a total of \$8,000.00 per worker; in the meantime, workers from other companies with similar incomes and deductions are getting two or three times this amount". [Money amounts in this quote are in pesos, which exchange with U.S. dollars at approximately 10-1.]

However, the return to work did not happen as the company had expected, in an ambiance of defeat. On the contrary, there was a climate of escalating mobilization. Inside the plant, workers refused voluntary overtime<sup>24</sup> and worked at a restrained pace, slowing production. Outside the plant, the union mobilized a continuing series of rallies and marches, including demonstrations at government buildings and an open-air general assembly that blocked the plant gates. Members of the Executive Committee and the Revision Committee communicated frequently with workers in a manner that contrasted with the top-down methods of previous negotiations. The campaign garnered a surprising degree of national solidarity, including a letter from the union in GM-Silao and support activities carried out by unions of the UNT. International solidarity was also significant. IG-Metall, the International Metalworkers' Federation, the AFL-CIO, and CUT from Brazil sent protest letters to management and declarations of solidarity to the workers. With public opinion mobilizing against the company, and with the union petitioning again for a legally sanctioned walkout, VWM finally opted for compromise, settling for a one-year wage increase of 18% and a further 3% boost in benefits<sup>25</sup> The new contract also boosted the number of divisional stewards, with the full-time representative in each division now joined by 3 part-time stewards. With this outcome, the VW union made its members among the best paid in the Mexican auto industry and established itself again as one of the most militant unions confronting the new business strategies of continental production. These gains have been widely recognized by other unions in Mexico's automotive industry.

## Conclusion

The work stoppage at SIEMENS in 1999 and the strike of the VW workers in 2000 are part of a wider union struggle within the new patterns of industrial integration emerging across North America. In Mexico, these struggles occur within a sophisticated chain of labor relations and weakened labor regulations.

The success of these movements has shown that workers can play a more active role in defining changes related to work and living conditions, as well as union life. Unions within the CTM have been very attentive to the development of these struggles in Puebla<sup>26</sup> especially since the modular system, of which VW is a pioneer company, is rapidly expanding in places such as Silao (GM), Ramos Arizpe (GM), Aguascalientes (NISSAN), and Hermosillo (Ford). In all these places, hiring and workplace practices follow "in step" the system of the VW Cluster.

<sup>24</sup> Mexican law permits only three hours of mandatory overtime per week, added to a regular shift of 48 hours.

<sup>25</sup> To obscure the union's success in breaching the government's proposed ceiling on wage increases, the final wage package was divided between a raise of 13% and a so-called productivity bonus of 5%.

<sup>26</sup> We have been able to verify this in the diverse activities of the International Research Network of Autowork in the Americas (IRNAA-RITIAAN).

Workers face the accumulated experience of companies with production policies geared towards (and dependent on) a kind of "labor peace" that is really designed to eliminate or inhibit union resistance. In this setting, unions view the events of Puebla as a real option because of three factors:

The unity of assembly-line workers with the workers in the supply chain around common resistance policies and equalization of contracts.

The possibility of reaching agreements with management to discuss the most noxious effects of the new work systems (excessive workloads for teams, exhaustion due to the creation of special shifts, and new evaluations for work that is heavy, high risk, or causes chronic back illness.)

The search for solidarity with Mexican unions and with workers in international settings<sup>27</sup> The process is at a beginning stage and is already facing the opposition and fear of a management accustomed to always imposing its conditions, in the best of cases by "paying" for new workloads with incentive bonuses. Yet the new union scenario in Puebla is a fact that should draw the attention of local and national unions throughout the auto industry. Finally, the defeat of the PRI in the recent elections has opened new space<sup>28</sup> for those who today want and can seek new forms of union action.

<sup>27</sup> The Silao union will soon affiliate to the International Metalworker's Federation. The Ford unions are formally affiliated and concrete benefits for unions from this affiliation are expected due to the placement of an office in Mexico.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the public statements of two conspicuous representatives of the CTM apparatus that have caused expectations, rearrangements and searches for new positions amongst intermediate regional leaders: Porfirio Camarena "put forth a new form of political dialogue" and Rodríguez Gamero "the CTM's alliance to the PRI is over."

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## L'actualité du produit

*Christian Mory*

### OLDSMOBILE : ON ACHEVE BIEN LES CHEVAUX

A la fin de 1999, dans le cadre d'un vaste programme de restructuration au niveau mondial, General Motors a annoncé la disparition progressive de la marque Oldsmobile, la plus ancienne des marques américaines encore « vivantes ». La disparition de Oldsmobile est d'autant plus déplorable que la marque a été longtemps synonyme d'innovations.

Oldsmobile était à l'origine une entreprise de mécanique créée durant la guerre de sécession par Pliny Olds (lequel s'installe à Lansing dans le Michigan en 1880). Son fils, Random Olds, avait mis au point en 1892 un moteur à combustion interne inspiré des moteurs Daimler.

La même année, un véhicule Olds à vapeur avait fait parler de lui dans la presse, attirant l'attention d'un client londonien et en avait fait le premier véhicule exporté des Etats-Unis.

C'est en 1897 que Olds a créé la Olds Motor Vehicle Company en s'associant avec quelques personnalités de la région de Lansing et faisant ainsi de Olds la première entreprise de construction automobile du Michigan. La société s'installera ensuite à Detroit et c'est donc à Olds que l'on doit d'associer la ville de Detroit et l'industrie automobile américaine !

En 1900, Olds Motor a mis au point un véhicule baptisé Curved Dash Oldsmobile, première voiture à connaître une production en série (et non plus à l'unité) puisque sa fabrication se transférait de poste de travail en poste de travail.

La Curved Dash a connu un grand succès (pour l'époque, tout au moins), car elle combinait trois ingrédients : un outil de production efficace, un bon produit et une approche commerciale (les propriétaires de chevaux étaient la cible visée !).

Random Olds a perdu le contrôle de sa société en 1904 et a créé une autre entreprise, Reo Motor, qui fabriquera des voitures jusqu'en 1936 et des camions jusqu'en 1967. Mais c'est une autre histoire.

**La disparition d'Oldsmobile ne constitue pas un phénomène isolé. Chrysler a déjà fait disparaître la marque Eagle et a déjà programmé la fin de Plymouth. Ford pourrait mettre un terme à Mercury. En Europe, Talbot (en fait Simca) et Autobianchi ont disparu et les différentes marques du groupe British Leyland n'en finissent pas d'agoniser**

En 1908, en raison de difficultés financières, Oldsmobile intègre la General Motors. En 1939, elle propose la transmission automatique Hydramatic, que General Motors présente comme la première transmission automatique au monde (il s'agit en tout cas de la première boîte automatique largement acceptée par la clientèle).

Oldsmobile sera également à l'origine du moteur Rocket en 1949 (moteur V8 à taux de compression élevé), de la première voiture américaine de série à traction avant en 1966 (une Oldsmobile Toronado) et du premier sac gonflable sur une voiture en 1974 (également une Toronado).

La marque connaîtra ses records de vente au début des années quatre-vingt grâce à la Cutlass Supreme (plus d'un million de véhicules vendus par an par la marque) puis déclinera progressivement (300 000 véhicules écoulés en 2000).

Les raisons de l'abandon de la marque Oldsmobile sont diverses :

- la marque a été incapable de rivaliser avec les marques japonaises chez qui passaient ses clients et qui constituaient les cibles assignées par la direction de GM

(comme General Motors a mis la main sur Isuzu, Suzuki, et Fuji, on sent bien qu'il existe une stratégie de rechange) ;

- la tentative de rajeunissement de la marque s'est faite au détriment d'une clientèle plus âgée et plus lucrative et qui était bien réelle ;
- la gamme Oldsmobile manquait d'originalité puisque de nombreux modèles étaient des clones de modèles vendus sous d'autres marques ;
- Oldsmobile a manqué le virage commercial des utilitaires légers (*light trucks*) qui constituent la moitié du marché américain, alors qu'Oldsmobile est longtemps resté le symbole de la voiture familiale pour l'Américain moyen ;
- le réseau Oldsmobile est devenu progressivement surdimensionné ; comme il était rarement exclusif, les concessionnaires Oldsmobile se sont mis à vendre des produits d'autres marques pour survivre, déclenchant un cercle vicieux de baisse des ventes ;
- General Motors, après la création de Saturn, disposait d'un éventail un peu surabondant de marques ;
- Saturn, justement, a englouti des milliards de dollars, milliards qui ont probablement manqué pour relancer la marque Oldsmobile.

La suppression d'une marque soulève un certain nombre de problèmes. D'abord, il y a l'effet d'annonce. Bien que la suppression de la marque Oldsmobile ne soit pas immédiate, l'effet sur le consommateur est instantané. A part, quelques collectionneurs, on ne voit pas très bien pourquoi les clients se mettraient à acheter le véhicule d'une marque en voie de disparition. Ensuite, se pose la question de l'avenir du réseau de distribution, les concessionnaires ayant alors de bonnes raisons de passer à la concurrence. Ne peut-on déjà prédire un nouveau recul de la part de marché de General Motors aux Etats-Unis ?

La disparition d'Oldsmobile ne constitue pas un phénomène isolé. Chrysler a déjà fait disparaître il y a quelques années la marque Eagle (la marque de voitures diffusée par le réseau Jeep) et a déjà programmé la fin de Plymouth. Il se dit également que Ford pourrait mettre un terme à Mercury.

En Europe, d'autres groupes ont été affrontés à des choix similaires : Talbot (en fait Simca) a disparu dans les années quatre-vingt, Autobianchi dans les années quatre-vingt-dix et les différentes marques du groupe British Leyland (devenu MG Rover) n'en finissent pas d'agoniser.

Par contre, les Japonais ont su créer de toutes pièces les marques de luxe Lexus, Infiniti et Acura, celles qui ont creusé la tombe d'Oldsmobile.

## Une année d'un constructeur

*Kémal Bécirspahic dit Bécir*

### OPEL

(réalisé grâce à la *Revue quotidienne de presse*, du CCFA)

« Arrêts de travail dans les usines de GM en Europe », écrivent les journaux fin janvier dernier. Les ouvriers de General Motors en Europe ont débrayé et manifesté le 25 janvier 2001 pour protester contre le projet du constructeur de supprimer quelque 5 000 emplois en Europe et de fermer l'usine britannique de Luton qui produit la Vectra. D'après le syndicat allemand IG Metall, près de 40 000 ouvriers ont cessé le travail en Belgique, en Allemagne, au Royaume-Uni, au Portugal et en Espagne. Chez Opel, en Allemagne, les lignes d'assemblage ont été interrompues pendant une heure. Les représentants du personnel ont indiqué que les dirigeants de General Motors en Europe étaient disposés à les rencontrer dans un bref délai. Outre le maintien des emplois, ils demanderont notamment que le constructeur lance une offensive dans les produits et des actions commerciales pour relancer les ventes. Un porte-parole de l'usine de Vauxhall de Luton a pour sa part démenti des propos du comité d'entreprise de Opel, selon lequel General Motors Europe serait prêt à reconsidérer son projet de fermer l'usine. Par ailleurs, M. Robert Hendry, président de Opel, souligne dans un entretien avec le *Handelsblatt* que le segment de la Vectra est en perte de vitesse et que l'Omega est également touchée. Ses ressources financières étant limitées, Opel a dû faire porter ses efforts sur des modèles plus importants comme le Zafira. M. Hendry réaffirme par ailleurs que la coopération avec Fiat n'entraînera pas de suppressions d'emplois chez Opel et qu'elle sera bénéfique pour l'entreprise. Opel et Fiat donneront bientôt des précisions sur leurs projets de coopération dans les véhicules.

Début 2000, Opel a annoncé une perte d'exploitation comprise entre 200 et 250 millions de DM pour 1999, contre une perte de 344 millions de DM en 1998. Le constructeur tablait sur un bénéfice d'exploitation en 2000 grâce à ses nouveaux modèles...

**Le constructeur a subi de plein fouet le recul de ses ventes en Allemagne, la hausse de ses frais commerciaux, la faiblesse de l'euro, des charges exceptionnelles et l'accroissement de la concurrence. Il n'a pas été en mesure de répondre à la forte demande de modèles diesel**

Selon *Autocar* du 29 mars 2000, General Motors et Fiat baseront toutes leurs voitures de petites dimensions et de catégorie moyenne en Europe (environ 4,7 millions d'unités par an) sur deux plates-formes. La prochaine génération des Opel Corsa et Agila et des Fiat Punto, Seicento et Palio utiliseront la même plate-forme. Il en sera de même pour les remplaçantes des Opel Astra, Vectra et Omega et les futures Fiat Bravo et Alfa Romeo 156.

Fiat estime que le partage des plates-formes entraînera une économie de 501 millions d'euros par an et augmentera sensiblement les économies d'échelle.

La presse allemande écrit, fin août, que Opel va prendre une série de mesures pour arrêter l'érosion de ses marges en Allemagne, laquelle touche particulièrement les Omega et Vectra (celles-ci perdent la moitié de leur valeur au bout de deux ou trois ans). Au début de 2001 l'écart entre le prix sortie d'usine et le prix de vente recommandé, qui s'établit habituellement entre 15 et 20 %, sera réduit. – Fin septembre, le *Handelsblatt* et *Die Welt* citent M. Hendry : Opel prévoit d'écouler 450 000 voitures en Allemagne en 2000, soit près de 100 000 unités de moins qu'en 1999. En outre, l'entreprise ne parviendra pas à renouer avec les bénéficiaires.

La *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* et *Die Welt* écrivent, fin octobre, que la direction et le comité d'entreprise de Opel ont signé un accord garantissant l'emploi jusqu'en 2010 dans les deux sociétés conjointes avec Fiat. En outre, le centre technique de Opel développera à l'avenir des moteurs diesel.

Fin novembre, le *Financial Times* signale que General Motors cherche à réduire ses coûts dans ses usines européennes. En décembre, la presse mondiale écrit que Opel investira 1,2 milliard d'euros en 2001 afin de poursuivre le renouvellement de sa gamme et la modernisation de ses installations. 418 millions d'euros seront consacrés à la nouvelle usine de Rüsselsheim et 92 millions d'euros à la mise en fabrication d'une nouvelle boîte à six vitesses dans cette usine. 332 millions d'euros iront à une usine de moteurs à Kaiserslautern et 77 millions au site de Eisenach qui assemble la nouvelle Corsa. Il s'agit d'un effort sans précédent destiné à sortir l'entreprise du rouge. Un membre du directoire a indiqué qu'il faudrait au moins cinq ans pour stabiliser les positions de la marque sur le marché européen...

Et mi-janvier 2001, la presse mondiale indique que pour la troisième année consécutive, Opel a enregistré en 2000 des résultats négatifs, à savoir une perte d'exploitation de 503 millions d'euros, plus de trois fois supérieure à celle enregistrée l'an dernier. M. Hendry explique : « L'entreprise a subi de plein fouet le recul de ses ventes en Allemagne, la hausse de ses frais commerciaux, la faiblesse de l'euro, des charges exceptionnelles et l'accroissement de la concurrence. Le constructeur n'a pas été en mesure de répondre à la forte demande de modèles diesel »...

## Activités des membres

**Michel Freyssenet** a été l'un des deux discutants de l'ouvrage de Luc Boltanski et Eve Chiapello, *L'esprit du capitalisme* (Gallimard, Paris, 1999, 843 p.), dans le cadre du séminaire Arc2 organisé notamment par le CEPREMAP.

**António Brandão Moniz, Mário Vale and Tiago Machado**, Gerpisa members from Portugal, just started working on a new research project, WorTiS. With the support of the National Foundation for Science and Technology (Portuguese Ministry of Science and Technology), this project will involve two institutions: the Faculty of Sciences and Technology (FCT-UNL) and the Geographical Research Center (CEG-FLUL).

Taking into account the global trends towards vertical de-integration and functional integration, WorTiS is expected to be able to determine to what extent the Portuguese automobile industry is experiencing far-reaching changes as far as innovative (post-fordist) work systems are concerned. With this purpose, it will pursue the crossing of perspectives among different scientific branches: sociology (work systems), history (time) and geography (space).

During the research activity, the sociologists team will conduct the fieldwork on *functional integration* matters, innovative work systems and new forms of work organisation in the automotive sector.

The technology historians will recover information that is somehow "lost" in the automobile firms, in order to analyse present concrete practices, but also how they have developed in time (and, afterwards, what potential for change they incorporate).

The analysis will focus on the cases of automotive firms that operated, and are still operating, in Portugal. The main goal is to reach wider conclusions regarding the sector under analysis within a new multi-disciplinary approach, in connection with other research networks (namely, GERPISA and IMVP-MIT).

WorTiS is intended to present a fieldwork methodology in order to analyse the variety and the contradictory character of changes in work practices (the effectiveness of such a tool should last far beyond the project itself) and also to update

the scientific knowledge with the development of new case studies (Mitsubishi, AutoEuropa, Opel-GM as well as other other sub-contracting firms).

This project started on November 2000 and should be concluded in 2003.

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## Interviews des membres du GERPISA

**Michel Freyssenet** a été interviewé par l'Agence de presse Bloomberg et Les Échos, le 26 janvier 2001, sur Toyota en Europe, à l'occasion de l'ouverture de son usine dans le Valenciennois.

**Bernard Jullien** a été interviewé sur France Inter dans l'émission "Rue des entrepreneurs" de D.Dambert et D.Adès le 21 janvier 2001 dont le thème était "Quatrième constructeur automobile français : Toyota".

L'émission en question peut être écoutée via le site Internet :

<http://www.radio-france.fr/chaines/france-inter/rde/>

## On parle des livres du GERPISA...

*One Best Way?* et *Between Imitation and Innovation*, les deux ouvrages du GERPISA publiés par Oxford University Press, sont sur le serveur Internet américain QUESTIA (<http://www.questia.com>).

Ce serveur destiné aux étudiants américains leur permet d'accéder aux textes complets de 50.000 ouvrages et revues de sciences humaines et sociales, à partir de mots clés, de concepts, de noms et de domaines, moyennant paiement d'une souscription qui peut être à la journée, à la semaine, au mois ou à l'année.

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## CALENDRIER DES RÉUNIONS DU RÉSEAU 2001

### Workshop CoCKEAS

Lyon, 15-16 mars 2001

*“Les nouveaux principes d’organisation productive : Innovation et production modulaire”*

*“New Principles of Productive Organisation : Innovation and Modular Production”*

### Workshop CoCKEAS

Bordeaux , 30-31 mars 2001

*“Les nouvelles géographies de la production automobile”*

*“The Changing Geographies of the Automotive System”*

### Workshop CoCKEAS

London, 27-28 avril 2001

*“La tyrannie de la Finance ? Les enjeux de la financiarisation pour les systèmes automobiles”*

*“The Tyranny of Finance ? Cars, Companies and Motoring Services”*

### Secrétariat - Journée de travail

Paris, 14 mai 2001

### Comité international de pilotage

6 juin 2001

### 9ème colloque international du GERPISA

7-9 juin 2001

*“Les reconfigurations de l’industrie automobile :  
alliances, cessions, fusion-acquisition, partenariats, scissions,…”*

*“Reconfiguring the auto industry :  
Merger & Acquisition, Alliances, and Exit”*

### Visite d’usine du GERPISA

11 juin 2001

### Workshop CoCKEAS

Venise (Italie), 4-5 octobre 2001

## LA LETTRE DU GERPISA

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