



**BMW mais compacte.** Chez BMW, spécialiste des berlines longilignes, la nouvelle Série 1 fait figure de révolution. Sa cible affichée : les compactes haut de gamme (Audi A3, Mégane, Golf et autres Alpha 147).

# LA LETTRE DU GERPISA

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## Editorial

Yannick Lung

### LE QUATRIEME PROGRAMME DE RECHERCHE INTERNATIONAL DU GERPISA EST LANCE

Après le dernier colloque international de juin dernier où les débats ont pu s'engager, le séminaire de lancement du projet ESEMK organisé à Paris les 7 et 8 octobre 2004 a permis de finaliser les thèmes des recherches sur lesquelles les chercheurs du GERPISA vont être amenés à se mobiliser durant le quatrième programme *Variété du capitalisme et diversité des modèles productifs*.

Trois groupes de travail centrés sur les modèles productifs vont développer des approches comparatives mettant en perspectives les évolutions en cours dans l'industrie automobile avec les transformations qui interviennent dans d'autres secteurs, sur les enjeux associés à :

- ✓ la financiarisation,
- ✓ la relation salariale
- ✓ la politique produit et l'organisation productive.

Au-delà, l'articulation des modèles productifs avec leur contexte économique et social renvoie à la question de la diversité des modèles socio-économiques. Nous sommes entrés de plein pied dans le cœur du débat, que plusieurs contributions à la présente lettre alimentent. Le programme est donc bien lancé.

### GERPISA'S FOURTH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME IS UNDERWAY

Following trailblazing work done at last June's international conference, a ESEMK project launch seminar was run in Paris on 7 and 8 October 2004 to help finalise the research themes GERPISA's researchers will be concentrating on during our fourth programme, to be entitled *Varieties of capitalism and diversity of productive models*.

Three productive model-focused workgroups are developing approaches that will put current developments in the automobile business in perspective, comparing them with transformations occurring in other sectors as regards issues associated with:

- ✓ financialisation
- ✓ the employment relationship
- ✓ product policy and productive organisation.

At a deeper level, productive models' interrelationships with their economic and social environments raise questions about socio-economic models' diversity. This goes straight to the heart of a debate that already constitutes a focal point for a number of the contributions made to the present *Lettre du Gerpisa* - proving that the new programme is well and truly up and running.



**In English:** Editorial (p.1): GERPISA's Fourth International Research Programme is Underway –*Programme News* (p.2): To Pursue the Macro-Micro Link Analysis, Discussing the Both Notions: "Growth Mode" and "Productive Model" - (p.6): Thinking about Coordination in ESEMK : Building the Articulation between GERPISA and CEPREMAP Approaches - *Firms News* (p.9) : The Opel-Conflict in October 2004 or : Lessons in the Unintended Consequences of Intentional Action.

## Nouvelles du programme – Programme News

*This feature is dedicated to the new research program launched by the GERPISA : the 4th GERPISA International Research Program on « Variety of capitalism and diversity of productive models », linked to the european research project ESEMK\* The two following papers, by Michel Freyssenet and Tommaso Pardi, both deal with articulating micro and macro levels in our analysis frameworks.*

### TO PURSUE THE MACRO-MICRO LINKS ANALYSIS, DISCUSSING THE BOTH NOTIONS : "GROWTH MODE" AND "PRODUCTIVE MODEL"

*Michel Freyssenet*

From its creation, more than twenty years ago, the GERPISA put explicitly the investigation of the macro-micro links among its main objectives. The choice of an industrial sector as the study field, in this particular case the automobile sector, was considered a good level of observation and of analysis to identify the links between the societal context and the actors practices.

Effectively, the works realized until now by the network led us to identify two general conditions for the continuity of the capitalist firms : a macro condition and a micro condition. The macro condition would be the acceptability of the "profit strategies" of firms by the "growth modes". The micro condition would be the construction of a "company government compromise" between actors allowing them to find coherent and acceptable means to apply the chosen profit strategy. No capitalist "one best way", but a limited variety of "productive models" (of value) periodically renewed.

The thesis of the « limited and renewed variety » of the productive models is now widely shared within the GERPISA. In return, the characterization of these models is always in debate. For Robert Boyer and myself, the same national growth mode allows a limited number of profit strategies, and the same profit strategy can be implemented by several productive models. But some other members of the GERPISA think, as for example Ulrich Jürgens, that the national context is so strong that it leads the companies to adopt common solutions, at least concerning productive organization and employment relationships. Some others else think on the contrary, as for example Giuseppe Volpato, that the world context, if it was overestimated in the turn of the century, should not be however underestimated in the construction of the various productive models. This debate shows that we have to go more ahead to the investigation of the macro-micro links. It is the main reason of the fourth GERPISA program: "Variety of the capitalism and diversity of the productive models".

If we keep as temporary analysis tools the notions that we elaborated until now, the questions at which we have to answer can be formulated as follows:

- ✓ How the actors of the company are forced to use or use as resources the institutions and the national and

international policies to find acceptable means that are coherent in the same time with the chosen profit strategy?

- ✓ How the compromises at the firms' level influence the construction of the national and international compromises concerning the sources of the growth, the modalities of the national income distribution, the labour nexus, the commercial law and the Labour Law, the public policies, the code of the investments, etc.?

Do the available typologies of nations we find in the social sciences literature help us to answer these questions? If it isn't the case, do they suggest us at least methods that would allow us to reach to elaborate our own typology? Do the notions of "growth modes" and of "productive model" we elaborated draw a way of macro-micro links investigation?

In a first part, we will examine the attempts of characterization of the capitalisms and their impasses. Then we will show the limits of the notions of "growth modes" and of "productive model", but also the fruitful approach that permits to build them. After having shown the enrichment of this approach during our works, we will justify its use again to elaborate a more rigorous typology of the various political and economic spaces.

In the second part, we will implemente this enrich approach to build an analysis schema and to define two new notions: the "growth strategies" and the "societal model". In so doing, we will investigate the links of the national growth strategies and societal models with the profit strategies and the productive models of firms.

In the third part, we will sketch what could be a plan of work corresponding to this approach and to this analysis schema.

### RESEARCH STRATEGY AND CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

#### The "models tinkering" and the "statistical constellations": contributions and limits

The attempts made to identify and characterize the various types of capitalism consist very often in making appear institutional configurations differentiated enough to convince the reader of the existence of a real variety, from supposed important components for any capitalism. The suggestive differences brought to light had had the merit to shake the homogenizing visions of the capitalism.

\* European Socio-Economic Models of a Knowledge-based Society.

\*\* The text below is the English version of Michel Freyssenet's article published in the previous Letter of GERPISA. This article is the first part of the oral communication presented by Michel Freyssenet for the 12-th International GERPISA Colloquium in Paris, June 9-11, 2004

They permit to question the hypotheses of the convergence “spontaneously” accepted by many people and to invite to overcome the incapacities of the historical periodisations. The way of building these typologies presents however important risks.

Indeed it is very difficult to find a consensus on the essential components of capitalism. Why for example to privilege the innovation and not the cost of the workforce? Why the education and not the technology, or vice versa? Why the wage nexus and not the finance? Etc. Every one has excellent reasons for preferring such or such component. The debate, when there is a debate, shows rapidly the presuppositions of the authors concerning what they consider actually as the engine of the history or as the universal factors of differentiation.

A solution of this difficulty is to assume its theoretical choices. The discussion is clearer and some times every one can progress in his perspective. But in so doing, there is no chance to reach to an agreement on the inquiry to lead. The consequence is parallel investigation producing by construction different results. If we want the social sciences are sciences, we must find devices allowing to overcome clearly and strictly the debates we have.

Using an opposite approach, some researchers still believe it is possible to identify socio-economic configurations by calculating the correlations between the maximum of features, without selection. As we know it, the obtained constellations are dependent on the available information and on the number of considered cases. But the most important is the statistical correlations say nothing by themselves on the sense to attribute to them. It is so for numerous reasons. Some are well known and others must be developed.

A statistical correlation suggests only to look for by the historical inquiry if there is effectively a link and what is its nature. On the contrary the absence of statistical correlation does not mean that there is no link. Taking an example that the researchers of GERPISA know well, it is impossible today to find at the level of companies a correlation between the just-in-time and the guarantee of the employment. And nevertheless these two features are essential component of the toyotian model.

Besides, a correlation is never complete. How interpret the cases out correlation? One knows the unconvincing answers: period of transition, resistance to change, local variants, etc. Add the statistical constellations become vague when one increases the number of features and the duration of considered period. Then the researcher is led to allocate coefficients to some facts and to reduce the considered periods. In so doing, he does what he didn't want to do: to privilege some features.

But there is still more decisive. A model is not a question of statistical correlation. If our historical analyses are correct, the toyotian model existed only in a single company: Toyota, and only during a period ended in 1990. A model is identified by its coherence, its viability and its efficiency and not by the frequency of the supposed cases that they represent it.

We are led to an essential criticism that concerns also the first approach. The selected features are rarely homogeneous.

Taking again the example of the just-in-time, we know that its real contents (expanse, level, intensity, forms, etc.) and its sense (the reasons for which this term is used by the company, the pursued objectives, and the devices effectively implemented) can be very different from a company to an other one. The differences of devices and objectives that are hid by the use of a same word, just-in-time, should lead strictly to build different notions.

The statistical categories or the “indigenous” notions cannot be used without criticism, especially when one can easily verify that they change easily with the managerial fashions or with the political orientations. If the problem of the real contents and the sense of the used means concerned only some features, one could imagine that it would be still possible to collect the information and to build original statistics. But in fact, the problem concerns almost the totality of the features.

Let us mention a third approach that consists in combining both previous approaches. The statistical correlations are calculated only to confirm the models intuitively or theoretically constructed. In so doing, it adds the inconveniences : contestable choice of components, correlations proving nothing.

From the beginning, GERPISA faced these methodological and theoretical difficulties and tried to overcome them. The elaboration of an original method was the issue of its efforts. After the decisive phase of clarification of the terms of the question in debate (for example the term of model), the approach consist to analyze the facts in a substantive way (description of the real contents of the practices, the devices, the institutions, beyond the words used to name them), in an historical way (identification of the successive encountered problems to understand the sense of these practices, devices and institutions invented to try to solve these problems) and in a systematic way (analysis of the conditions of possibility and viability of the implemented solutions).

This approach very demanding for all allowed a fruitful confrontation between disciplines, national scientific traditions and different theoretical orientations that exist within GERPISA. It is the reason for which there was no other condition to be GERPISA member than to realize field works and naturally to wish to contribute to the progress of the scientific debate in another way than the sterile confrontation thesis against thesis. The gerpisan approach led to enounce the paradigm of the periodically renewed limited variety and to build analysis tools of firms profitability and of actors practices. In so doing, the gerpisan approach became richer.

The analysis of the encountered problems and of the founded solutions led to identify empirically a major stake for the enterprise actors. This major stake becomes then a powerful tool to order the inquiry and the treatment of the materials. It allows indeed to express a logical series of questions and to determine the relevant features.

Let us look at the way that permits to arrive at this point. We shall see then what use of the enriched gerpisan approach we can do to investigate more efficiently the macro-micro links.

## Relevance and incapacity of the notions of “growth mode” and of “productive model” The enrichment of the gerpisian approach

The notion of “growth mode” was built to answer the following question. What are the necessary and sufficient macro conditions in order that a profit strategy is relevant? Then we didn't try to elaborate a typology of the capitalisms. It wasn't our objective. A posteriori *vg* however, it seems the notion and especially the followed method open interesting tracks.

By analyzing finely the trajectories of the carmakers and of their subsidiaries, through times and different spaces, we noticed that the conditions of possibility of the identified profit strategies concerned on one side the market of products and on the other side the offer of work. Each of these strategies required a particular type of demand and a type of work capacity. The question became then: in what context does one observe these types of demand and these types of work capacity? We noticed that it was necessary a particular structure of national income and a structuration of labour that depended on the engine of the national growth (consumption, exports, investment) and on the form of national income distribution (‘coordinated’, ‘competitive’, ‘shortage’ and ‘inegalitarian’). The observed compatible combinations of the growth engines and of the forms of distribution led to a typology we called the “growth modes”. If growth and distribution influence so strongly the choice of the strategies of the capitalist firms and of their actors, it is likely that they are for them a major national stake. This result is at the same moment insufficient and promising.

It is insufficient because it doesn't say to us if this stake is the same for the whole national community. Consequently, it says yet nothing to us about the institutional frame, the policies and the practices that result from the confrontation of the national actors belonging to different spheres: capitalist, public, commercial, associative, domestic, etc... Now institutions, policies, practices impose themselves since they are the issue of compromises, agreements, laws, rules, ‘modus vivendi’. So they intervene inevitably in the choice of the means used by every actor in his own area.

This incapacity of “growth mode” notion had consequences on the notion of “productive model”. Although much more elaborated than the notion of “growth mode”, it lets think that the productive models are conditioned by the national context only through the profit strategies. The used means would have no other constraint than to be coherent with the strategy and acceptable by the company actors. The notion indicates nothing about the way to find these coherent and acceptable means, except that the concerned actors must construct a compromise, explicit or implicit, resulting from a confrontation or from a progressive evolution.

Now, the actors act not only in their company. They act also at national and international levels, through their professional, political, religious, cultural organisations, through their vote and their “social movements”. By this way, they try notably to influence the place of capitalist sector with regard to the other sectors, the engine of the growth and the forms of distribution, the international relations, the rights and the duties of every one etc., and so more or less directly the acceptable compromises at the company level. However the elaboration of the notion of “productive model” allowed us to enrich considerably the

gerpisian approach. The analysis of the automobile firms trajectories and of their subsidiaries, particularly the analysis of the successive problems they faced led us inexorably to a reasonable hypothesis: the major stake the company actors are forced to face was indeed to reach a sufficient profitability, if they don't want disappear as collective actor. The inquiry and the logical reasoning permit us to discover that firms don't exploit the same sources of profit and that the exploitation of these sources required particular conditions. Then a lot of economic, sociological, historical data, etc., became clearer. A new series of questions emerged. Did these different profit sources correspond to necessary phases towards an optimum characterized by an exploitation of all the sources with equal intensity? Were they totally or partially incompatible? Could the conditions of possibility from the various profit sources be gathered in any capitalist country? One knows the continuation of this reasoning to the analysis schema of the productive models.

At this point, we can characterize the “enriched approach” by an hypothesis, a method, a logical succession of questions of inquiry, a criteria and a test. We could call it “gerpisian 2”, to distinguish it from the initial approach, the “gerpisian 1” !

- ✓ The hypothesis is the actors act and interact when they have to face a common stake from which they can't escape as collective actor.
- ✓ The method concerns the identification of the major stake that binds the actors within the entity to which they belong: company, association, household, nation, etc. It consists in analyzing the trajectory of the considered entity (according to ‘gerpisian 1’), notably the problems that this entity met, with the intention of identifying the conditions of its viability and so the stake that bind its actors
- ✓ A logical succession of questions ensues from this identification. What are the strategies of the actors to face the common stake, considering their divergent perspectives? What are the conditions of possibility of these strategies? What are their requirements of implementation? What are the means found by the actors to answer these requirements? How did they find them? What compromise did the actors built to accept them? etc. The documentation of these questions is realized by constant backward and forward motion between data of inquiry and logical reasoning.
- ✓ The criteria of viability of the configuration of the adopted means are first the compatibility of the chosen strategy with the context, second the coherence and the acceptability of the means used to satisfy the requirements of the strategy to be implemented.
- ✓ The test is the result obtained in relation with the major stake (for example, in the case of the capitalist companies, the value realized beyond the “break-even point”).

As one sees it, the determination of a major stake for the actors has the immense merit to order the inquiry, to sort out what is relevant with regard to this stake, to mobilize information in all the levels and in all the domains, to help to understand the contents of the practices and devices beyond the words used to name them, etc., in brief to solve a lot of methodological

difficulties met by the “models tinkering” and the “statistical constellations approach”.

Can we follow this method to analyze countries and their national configurations? As any social entity, a nation is not eternal. It is a historical shape of the “to live together” in a trajectory which is not drawn beforehand. So there are internal and external conditions of its viability. Do they amount in a stake? A nation is not governed by a single social nexus, as it is the case for the capitalist companies by the capital-labour relationship. Even it is characterized by the articulation-confrontation of several spheres: capitalist, public, commercial, associative, domestic, religious, etc. .It seems so difficult to hope to identify a stake from which we could analyze the national trajectories.

However, we reached a result more important than it appears. The engine of the growth and the shape of distribution are effectively for the capitalist sphere the major national stakes, because the profit strategies depend on them. Considering the dominant place taken by this sphere, the nation is directly implied. But the nation has naturally also its own requirements.

**The location of the models thanks to a major stake empirically identified. From the notion of “growth mode” to the notions of “growth strategy” and of “societal model”**

A political entity exists only if it is recognized by the other political entities and if the social forces that compose it renew their agreement (voluntary or forced) to live together. One can summarize it by saying that the independence and the unity base a political entity, even if one observes numerous degrees and numerous forms of independence and unity. What conditions, a country succeeds in conserving its independence and its unity?

It must have necessary and sufficient means of defence, negotiation, persuasion, cohesion and national police force, etc. Should the opposite occur, the country undergoes more easily interventions, pressures, even external contestations and internal tensions that question its national pact and its sovereign power.

So, to remain viable a nation needs more ‘wealth’, in other words it is necessary that its population reproduces with the standard of living it reached using less working time. In this search, the capitalist sector plays for two centuries an essential role because it is yet the only sector having in itself an unlimited, aimless mechanism, without pilot, of productivity growth. This increase is transformed into additional national income only when the new goods are effectively sold.

So everything urges yet to propose the reasonable hypothesis according to which the major stake for a nation in a world dominated by the capital-labour relation is the national income growth. Only the analysis of the national trajectories (according to the “gerpisan 1”) will consolidate or not this hypothesis.

But already we can try to see to where the hypothesis of the growth as major national stake could lead us in the investigation of the macro-micro links. So if the stake is the growth, we have to wonder (according to “gerpisan 2”) first: what are the sources of the growth?

The sources of the national growth come down classically to three sources: the investment, the domestic consumption and the export. It is necessary probably to add them a fourth source to consider all the historic situations. This source we can call it “predation”. Even if it is generally based on the force, it can be possible by mechanisms of market, as we shall see in the following part.

The investment creates employment and conditions favorable to the production generally. The domestic consumption incites to invest and allows economies of scale or margins thanks to the variety, the quality or the innovation. The net export gets supplementary incomes that can be distributed. The predatory import brings free goods or not paid in their costs.

Countries exploit every these three or four sources, but not in the same proportions. Two reasons: the conditions of internal and external possibilities are not the same, and their requirements of implementation can be contradictory. So a source is privileged actually. It becomes driving and pulls the others according to a sequence that can change in the time and the space.

A driving source is recognized thanks to the indexation of the national income distribution to what makes it possible: forced or voluntary savings for the “investment”, the internal productivity for the “consumption”, the external competitiveness for the “export”, volume of free goods for the “predation”.

The “choice” of an engine of growth can be considered as a growth strategy. If we continue to follow “gerpisan 2”, we should wonder then successively what are the conditions of possibility and the requirements of implementation of each of four growth strategies, and what are the coherence of the means used by countries with regard to their strategy.

Already, we see that the notion of “growth mode” we built seems still tinkered. It associates indeed two aspects: the source of the growth and the shape of national income distribution (coordinated, competitive, inegalitarian, shortage), which appear not to be at the moment for the same level in the reasoning.

So we shall be led probably to devise the notion of “growth mode” into two: on one hand the notion of “growth strategy” and on the other hand the notion of “growth model” or better maybe of “societal model”.

We know that the distinction strategy/model was major in the study of the productive models. Two companies can follow the same strategy and nevertheless they can obtain opposite results. When the strategy is relevant in the context, the results depend on the coherence of the used means, and consequently the compromise between actors to put in coherence the means. If we argue in the same way for the national growth, we can maybe solve certain logical and empirical difficulties as we met by using the notion of “growth mode”.

We arranged indeed all the countries that interested us in a compartment of the typology of the “growth modes”. In fact we hesitated a lot in certain cases either because the engine of the growth was not stable, or because the

results were not there. We went out of the difficulty only by specifying a period, sometimes very short. What does not go without setting a problem, because a “growth mode”, such as we defined this notion, is supposed to indicate structural characteristics of a country at least during a middle period.

In the second part of this article, we shall present the four “growth strategies” and the “societal models” implementing each “growth strategy” we can identify from what we know today about some countries.

## THINKING ABOUT COORDINATION IN ESEMK : BUILDING THE ARTICULATION BETWEEN GERPISA AND CEPREMAP APPROACHES

*Tommaso Pardi*  
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The ESEMK kick-off meeting of last 7th and 8th of October has confirmed that despite the interesting developments in terms of research agenda and organisation within each of the different work packages, the project still suffers of what we might call “coordination problems”. This is of course quite normal since we are in the very early stage of the project, but it might become an issue if the question is not raised, clarified and if possible solved in relatively short terms. The reason for this concern is that the theoretical and methodological connections between the different WPs are still confused and underdeveloped in comparison with the degree of advancement within each of them. To put in other words, if we already can see how each WP will be able to work in its own way, it is quite difficult to understand how they will work together.

One of the roles of SAPAI could be to help the coordinators of the project in this difficult task of developing the links between WPs. The idea here is to start by opening a space of internal debate within the GERPISA letter where the analysis of the theoretical and methodological problems arisen during the meetings can be developed further in a constructive way. This paper has to be considered from this perspective a first experimental step in this direction and, of course, all kind of reactions are welcome.

The coordination problems faced by ESEMK can be divided in two different categories. On the one hand, there are the horizontal coordination problems, those which concern the relationship between the three “GERPISA” WPs (3-4-5), the issue here is how to coordinate research on different institutional environments and through different countries and sectors. On the other hand, there are the vertical coordination problems, which affects the relationship between the “CEPREMAP” WP (2) and the “GERPISA” WPs, and where the question is how to build up the theoretical and methodological interface between the different levels of analysis (micro [meso] macro).

Even if our paper will focus mostly on the latter, it is important to spend few more words on the horizontal coordination problems and their implications for the future developments of the ESEMK programme.

It is clear from the general architecture of the project that the three “micro (meso)” WPs (3-4-5) should develop at least in two other “extra” directions apart from making sense of the dynamics of their own institutional domain. First, they should explore the institutional complementarities and the institutional dynamics that connect finance, employment relationship and distribution issues one to each other by using the productive model framework as a theoretical point of departure. We believe in this respect that the notion of compromise of government might play an important role here, and that the integration of finance and distribution (and the State), which have been previously quite overlooked by the GERPISA approach, might lead to interesting theoretical evolutions in the framework itself.<sup>1</sup>

Second, they should try to investigate to what extent the dynamics observed at the firm and sector level have influenced or/and have been influenced by the institutional change (or stability) observed at the meso-macro level. Now, it seems to us that in order to advance in this second direction, it is crucial to have accomplished some preliminary steps in the first one, since, as we will try to argue later, the notion of “institutional complementarity” has a central theoretical place both in the GERPISA approach (at the micro-level) and in the CEPREMAP approach (at the macro-level), and it could therefore be an important key to solve some of the vertical coordination problems related to the second direction. Nevertheless, to advance in the first direction it is very important to know whether or not the research questions, the countries and the sectors selected by each of the “GERPISA” WPs share between them a certain degree of complementarity, and to understand where this degree of complementarity lies and how it can be developed further. Our understanding is that Olivier Hirt (in cooperation with Yannick Lung and Bruno Amable) will start to take care of this task delivering some results before the next general meeting of ESEMK. As SAPAI we hope to be able to participate actively to this process through our systematic contributions to the GERPISA letter and our participation to the “journées du GERPISA” in Paris.

\* SAPAI (State and Politics in the Automobile Industry) is a new GERPISA work group created in 2003 and supervised by Sigfrido Ramirez and Tommaso Pardi. Previous contributions to the GERPISA letter: S. Ramirez, “A contribution of SAPAI work group to ESEMK work package on ‘product policies and productive organisation’”, in *Lettre* 178, September – October 2004; F. Ricciardi, “Quelques notes autour d’un effort d’institutionnalisation du compromis de gouvernement: le problème de l’encadrement culturel et socio-politique”, in *Lettre* 177, June 2004; T. Pardi, “An agenda for a new GERPISA working group: exploring the notion of compromise of government”, in *Lettre du GERPISA* 175 and 176, March and April 2004; S. Ramirez, “An agenda for a new Gerpisa working group: from the analysis of the state to the political and cultural embeddedness of the productive models”, in *Lettre* 174, January and February 2004.

<sup>1</sup> See Pardi, “An agenda for a new GERPISA working group: exploring the notion of compromise of government”, in *Lettre du GERPISA* 175 and 176, March and April 2004.



The vertical coordination problems have so far taken the lion's share of our debates within ESEMK, and it is clearly one of the main targets of this first phase to bring together the macro-economic research agenda, carried on essentially by the CEPREMAP, and the micro-meso economic agenda split between the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> WP, and which we may associate on general terms with the GERPISA network. What we would like to do with this paper is to show how the CEPREMAP approach of the Diversity of capitalism and the GERPISA approach of the Productive models are in fact quite similar despite some differences that have of course to be taken in account. Our argument will be that they share a common theoretical background which should work as a constructive platform to foster their mutual linkages. By looking at this common background we will try to make sense of the points of friction emerged so far during the debates (notably the role of history and trajectories and the question of knowing what can be compared and how). Our point of view on this issue is that these problems have much more to do with methodology than theory. Therefore, in the second part of this paper, we will try to understand why the methodologies of the two approaches differ and how they might eventually work together.

The notion of variety is the most evident common feature shared by the two approaches. In both cases the idea of variety implies that it does not exist an optimum organisational solution to assure economic performance and efficiency. By doing that they both place themselves as critical counter-arguments against powerful ideological narratives asserting the superiority of a unique model and the imperative for other organisational forms to converge toward this model. In the case of GERPISA that was the "lean production" thesis, in the case of CEPREMAP this is the "Anglo-saxon neo-liberal model". In developing their argument, the two approaches share to a certain extent a same theoretical structure.

First, they both show that it is not true that good economic performance are only associated with organisations which have adopted the one best model. In the case of GERPISA, this is done by showing that not only Toyota and Honda, but also Volkswagen and to a certain degree Volvo have been profitable during the late 1970s, the 1980s and early 1990s.

In the case of CEPREMAP,<sup>2</sup> Amable refers to the example of the USA and Switzerland that according to Maddison's data have followed a very similar growth path despite complete "different institutional features in terms of labour markets, the structure of the financial system, product market-competition regulation, etc." (Amable, 2003, p 57), which leads him to deduce that "different combinations of institutions may deliver near-identical economic performance" (ibidem). Then, he tests this hypothesis by comparing the economic performances of the 21 countries considered, showing that different institutional configurations (different capitalist models) can deliver relative similar performance in terms of value added per hour, GDP per hour and ratio of R&D expenditure to GDP (idem, p 213-224). On the basis of this analysis he concludes "that both coordinated and uncoordinated industrial relations can deliver good productivity growth performance, but in association with specific institutional arrangements."

(idem, p 220), and that there should be "at least two ways to obtain a high-innovative performance. The first one is the liberal market way, with product market deregulation combined with labour 'flexibility'. The other way would combine coordination with product-market regulation provided a centralized financial system is present in order to secure long-term financing. This model would come near to the ideal-typical social-democratic model but also to some features of the Continental European model." (idem, p 224).

Second, both GERPISA and CEPREMAP characterise the different "empirical" organisational forms considered (firms and countries) by making sense of their institutional complementarities under a limited set of ideal-typical models which involve a certain degree of specialisation. The notion of institutional complementarity is explicitly placed at the core of the argument by the CEPREMAP but is also clearly implied by the GERPISA approach. The CEPREMAP argues that one cannot measure the efficiency of one particular institution without considering the complementarity between this institution and others institutions of the system, so "one would expect institutions to be coherent" (Idem, p 54). For example, if the capital supply is deregulated (i.e. financial markets, pension funds) this will lead to short term constraints on the capability of firms to obtain capitals, which will make them more reactive to new technologies and market opportunities, but which will also entails a more flexible workforce to be competitive, which in turn will imply a more deregulate work market and will reduce the incentives for workers to engage in the acquisition of competences specific to the firm, which will finally make harder for firms to "upgrade" and to change the competences of their workers according to their needs. On the other hands, if the capital supply is regulated (i.e. Japanese main-bank system or the German *Hausbank*), this will allow long-term business plan and closer relationship between firms and capital, which will make firms more efficient in exploiting existing technologies, which will be compatible with strong unions and regulated labour markets, which will push workers to engage in specific training and allow company to "upgrade" their workforce and increase their competences through the time. Of course the structures of these complementarities are much more complex than this simplified example, since they are developed from the analysis of 5 different institutional domains (product markets, labour market, financial system, social protection, education system) according to the empirical variations of an extensive number of variables (see appendix in idem, pp 266-289). In the end, the CEPREMAP approach leads to the identification of 5 different ideal-typical models of capitalism based on different coherent configurations of institutional complementarities between the five institutional domains analysed and which entail each a certain degree of specialisation stressed by the notion of comparative institutional advantage (Idem, table 5.5 p 208-209). For GERPISA the notion of institutional complementarity is resumed by the idea that in order to have a viable productive model there must be a strong degree of coherence between its three main institutional domains: the product policy, the employment relationship and the productive organisation. This degree of coherence changes radically according to different form of specialisation,

<sup>2</sup> We refer here essentially to B. Amable, *The diversity of modern capitalism*, Oxford University Press : Oxford, 2003.

which are identified by GERPISA under the term of profit strategies. A possible point of divergence between the two approaches is that the notion of profit strategy, in comparison with the notion of comparative institutional advantages, seems to be associated with a much more intentional shaping by a limited number of actors (notably managers, stake-holders or share-holders). Nevertheless, GERPISA clearly argues that both profit strategies and productive models are the result of non-intentional social process where at their best the actors may try to act strategically to influence the outcome of the institutional change without having the possibility to determine it.<sup>3</sup> That is why in both approaches the notion of social compromise plays a very central role. Third, both GERPISA and CEPREMAP assume that their models are submitted to external and internal conditions of viability. In the case of GERPISA, productive models must solve the uncertainties of markets and work and have to rely on a stable compromise of governance between the actors of the firm in order to sustain their long-term viability. In the case of CEPREMAP, the external constraints are less structured. Amable (2003) for example cites changes in technological domains and in the supranational institutions configuration as possible exogenous pressure on the models of capitalism. In contrast, the internal conditions of viability are much more developed and formalised than in GERPISA. The different models of capitalism, conceived as sets of institution complementarities, rely on specific political and economic equilibria between all the actors of each society. These equilibria “depend on the formation of a stable dominant social bloc coalescing different socio-political groups prone to support a coalition with a certain political strategy” (Idem, p. 66). Each institution within these equilibria is intended as an equilibrium strategy which neutralises the conflict between actors with diverging interests, “in the sense that agents will agree on a solution, but not necessarily suppress the reasons for conflict altogether, since they do not remove heterogeneity” (p. 39). Heterogeneity comes from asymmetries in power and wealth and results in ex-post asymmetries in pay-offs (embodied by the institution). Therefore, “institutional change comes from a change in the pay-off distribution or from a change in bargaining power” (p. 46) affecting the asymmetries between actors. According to the principle of institutional complementarities, a change in one institution may lead to changes in other institutions, as a result under certain circumstances institutional change in some specific domain might lead through the effect of complementarity to a complete new political and economic equilibrium. Nevertheless, each specific politic and economic equilibrium is associated with a particular hierarchy of institution which reflects the history of the institutional process and which defines in a way the logic of the complementarity between institutions, since an institution which has emerged before will be assumed to a certain extent as a rule of the game by the institutions which have emerged later. Therefore, institutional stability will be guaranteed to a certain extent by the relatively high political cost involved in changing institutions which are at the top of the hierarchy and which reflect at the same time the main interests of the dominant bloc. Now, one could argue that the different emphasis on external and on internal conditions of viability leads in

fact the two approaches to diverge sensibly as far as the dynamics of the models are concerned. For GERPISA the viability of productive models would be fully tied to their capability of delivering profits by solving the exogenous uncertainties, while for CEPREMAP the viability of models of capitalism would depend completely on the endogenous stability of the political-economic equilibria according to the notion of institutional complementarity and institutional hierarchy. These differences certainly exist, but a closer look to both approaches reveal that are not as deep as one might think. Gerpisa for example through the notion of compromise of government has assumed that socio-political compromises on the institutional configuration of the company are a condition of viability for productive models. Moreover, recent theoretical debate on this notion has led to a general consensus<sup>4</sup> within GERPISA on the need to explore further the social and political dimension of productive models, by extending the notion of compromise of government from the relationship between the actors of the firm to incorporate also the relationship that these actors have with their institutional environment. Which means including in the compromise of government, and therefore as a condition of viability of the productive models, the relationships with the State (supranational, national, regional, local), the other firms of the sector (competitors, suppliers, distributors) and the customers (also associations and ONG). Conversely, the CEPREMAP approach implies that institutional change happens constantly, even within stable political-economical equilibria, and that under certain circumstances new political-economical equilibria might emerge from institutional change happening in some specific institutional domain, nevertheless in order to change the institutional hierarchy (which can be considered as the spinal column of each model of capitalism) the economy system has to be in a situation of crisis (Amable, 2003, p 73). *In this sense we may consider that the economic performance of countries has an impact on the viability of their models of capitalism by increasing or lowering the political cost related to institutional changes at the top or near the top of their institutional hierarchy*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We refer here to the Journée du GERPISA of 5 March 2004, when has been discussed the text of T. Pardi, “An agenda for a new Gerpisa working group: exploring the notion of compromise of government”, 144th journée du GERPISA. See also M. Freyssenet, “Poursuivre l’exploration des relations macro-micro en re-interrogeant les notions de ‘mode de croissance’ et de ‘modèle productif’”, Lettre du GERPISA 178, September-October 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Our hypothesis is that this may happen either through changes in the bargaining power or in the pay-off structure within specific institutions due to variation of the economic growth which might lead to changes in the “perception of agents with respects to their own interests, their situation in society, and their relation to other ‘similar’ agents” (Amable, 2003, p 47), or/and through changes in “the system of representations that individuals have, i.e. by ideas and theories about the state of society” (ibidem) which can be directly or indirectly correlated to the capacity of the society to deliver economic growth and to reduce uncertainties towards the future for the actors involved. Which is also a way to emphasise the importance of “narratives” in the shaping of this “system of representations”, which is something that has a very important place in the approach of Karel Williams and his team of research within the WP 3 on finance.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Freyssenet, “Introduction”, p 14 in Freyssenet, M., Mair, A., Shimizu, K. and Volpato, G. eds., *One best way? Trajectories and industrial models of the world's automobile producers*. Oxford University Press : Oxford, 1999.



In conclusion to this first part of our analysis it seems clear to us that the two approaches of productive models and diversity of capitalism have much more in common than things that divide them, at least at the theoretical level. We think therefore that by fostering our mutual knowledge, as this paper tries to do, we should be able to find ways to build up the mutual linkages between the three “GERPISA” WPs and the “CEPREMAP” WP and to resolve the vertical coordination problems arisen so far. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the main area of conflict in this early phase of development has not been really the theory, but rather the methodology,<sup>5</sup> even if we can assume that there must be at

<sup>5</sup> See M. Freyssenet, “Poursuivre l’exploration des relations macro-micro en re-interrogeant les notions de ‘mode de croissance’ et de ‘modèle productif’”, Lettre du GERPISA 178, September-October 2004.

least some kind of loose connection between them. Therefore, in the second part of the paper we will try to make sense of the different methodologies adopted by the two approaches (role of history and trajectories, degree of comparability between institutions), and to see if they can coexist in a same theoretical project and how.

A solution which seems to involve a much lower “political cost” than expecting them to converge towards a common methodology.

## Nouvelles des firmes - Firms News

### THE OPEL-CONFLICT IN OCTOBER 2004 OR: LESSONS IN THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

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On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of October the workers of the Opel plant in Bochum/Germany stopped production and blocked the main entrance. They protested against a declaration of the GM Europe management to reduce about 4000 workers in Bochum in the context of an overall 12.000 staff reduction plan. On Monday 18<sup>th</sup> production in the Opel plant in Antwerpen and Rüsselsheim were affected, after the Europe wide protest day on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> these plants had to stop production. On Wednesday in a general workers assembly the vast majority voted for returning to work, but due to the lack of some autoparts coming from Bochum the Opel Rüsselsheim plant had to wait until Monday 25<sup>th</sup> for resuming work.

What had happened in Bochum? Was the work suspension the signal of a new worker and union movement against globalisation and continuous cost reduction programmes of the multinational firms? Or was it just the hopeless last Don Quichotian fight of a plant which had no chance to compete with the new Polish Gliwice plant of General Motors where quite the same cars could be built as in Bochum? Why was it Bochum where the protest took such a sharp expression, meanwhile the plants in Trollhättan/Sweden and Rüsselsheim/Germany had been said to be the most affected by the most recent staff reduction plan? To answer these questions structural factors and dynamics of social actor groups have to be taken into consideration.

#### STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF THE GENERAL MOTORS COMPANY

The broader context of the conflict is the difficult situation of the GM group in general reflected in product and production problems, but also in deep financial trouble. Still the biggest car producer all over the world the company is stagnating at about eight million produced cars since at least six years. In the same period Toyota raised up production from about five to more than seven million cars in 2003, outstripping Ford and attacking now GM.

But also other companies like Peugeot or BMW, Susuki and Honda did quite well in the past years. The GM management failed in product politics and production strategies, and admitted these mistakes in the Annual Report 2003 (p. 9): “To be honest, there were times in our history where it seemed that we lost that spirit, that aggressiveness, that passion. Several years ago, veteran automotive journalist David E. Davis Jr. quoted a dealer who told him, ‘The trouble with GM is that nowhere in America is there a 14-year-old boy with tears in his eyes saying, “Please, Dad, buy a Lumina!”’”

The structural product problems of the GM company as a hole are still more accentuated in Europe and Germany. For the European customer a car is just more than a medium to go from place A to place B on a highway putting the tempomat at 60 mph. The European car market is strongly oriented in cars as status symbols, technical playing tools and emotional attractions; cars have to be of high quality and finish. Additionally, whereas due to tax exemptions the US automobile market is highly marked by four wheel trucks and sport utility vehicles (about 51% of all new cars in 2002 as compared to about 11% in the European Union), in the EU it is the Diesel engine which characterises the new cars market (41% in the EU as compared to about 1% in the USA in 2002).

All these differences in the market specificities of the USA and the EU could be considered more or less systematically by the differentiation between the GM and the Opel management in former times. But in the 1990s a centralisation process began and led to a stronger subordination of the Opel company to the Detroit and European Zürich GM headquarter. Management of Opel was increasingly dependant of and imposed by US managers. From 1998 to 2004, that is, in six years the Opel company had five different CEOs – that would have been too much for every soccer team changing the chief trainer so often!

Hand in hand with this centralisation process of product policies there was an increasing Americanisation of production philosophies, especially referring to the OEM-supplier-relations. With the famous López-policies GM Europe began a harsh outsourcing and supplier beating process. Whereas assembler-supplier relations in Europe traditionally were strongly trust and long term cooperation driven, Ignacio López introduced a special market and short term competition driven 'supplier squeezing'. Especially in the case of Opel in Germany, this had fatal effects on quality. At the beginning of the 1990s, the image of Opel was at its worst: many customers saw the brand as offering low quality and boring cars. Since the end of the 1990s car design and quality, as well as the image began to improve, but the CEO carousel went on. During the last ten years Opel market share in Germany reduced from about 17% to 10%.

The product and production failures led to a severe deficit of GM Europe in the overall consortium in the last years: 676 mio. in 2000, 765 mio. in 2001, 1011 mio. in 2002 and 504 mio. US \$ in 2003! As announced in the Annual Reports, GM North America made profits during this period, but it is quite difficult to follow the taking into account R&D services and investments in Europe, especially in Rüsselsheim, the largest R&D centre after Detroit. For the same time period of the last four years the Annual Reports indicate growth in productivity rates in GM Europe significantly higher than in GM North America. There have been claims by German managers and workers representatives that their R&D efforts and outputs had been used in car production in the world wide GM consortium (e.g. the Corsa development sold as Chevy in Latin America) without an adequate financial and bookkeeping recognition. Especially the company works council and the workers' representatives in the supervisory board criticised management failures in product and production decisions since the 1990s – therefore blaming the German co-decision system for the GM Europe case is like playing the role of the thief who is crying 'stop the thief'.

Apart from the very fact that there are severe losses in GM Europe (and ignoring the specific internal accounting mechanisms) there is a much stronger and structural finance problem in GM USA. In 2003 the GM company had liabilities to its employees' and former employees' pensions (18 billion US \$) and medical care service (41 billion US \$) of a total of 59 billion US \$ - that was little less than the double of the liabilities to the shareholders (20 billion US \$) and to the creditors (15 billion US \$).

As Glenn Mercer from McKinnsey put it in a GERPISA conference: the GM company could be considered as a socialist company because its workers have more financial claims than the shareholder and banks! Definitely: all the structural problems of many European societies and welfare states with demographic change and shifting rates of active to pensioned workers we can find in GM (and also in Ford!) at a company level! In 2003 there were 2,8 retired employees (370.000 in total) to 1 active employee (132.000 in total) in GM, the average age of the latter was 48,5 years and their average seniority was 23,5 years. This is exactly the type of problems of getting older in European societies – with the small difference that these structural financial challenges are discussed and have to be taken at a societal level in Europe, whereas in the case of GM they must be resolved at a company level.

## THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL ACTION

Framed in the context of these structural problems obviously there was a tremendous pressure on the GM Europe management to reduce costs and to recover profits immediately. At the beginning of 2004 the prognostics of car sales in Germany and Europe were quite optimistic, but several factors (social reform insecurity, oil and fuel price increases etc.) led to a stagnation in car sales in general and to a further loss in the market share of GM and Opel in Europe. European overcapacities of the GM consortium were still increased by the new Gliwice plant in Poland where production capacities increases for the Opel Astra and – recently announced in autumn this year - the Opel Zafira models at least in part resulted from an arms order of the Polish government (the Polish Prime Minister admitted the link between the Polish arms order for US companies and the GM commitment to expand production activities in Poland). Meanwhile since summer 2004 there were ongoing negotiations between management and the works councils at plant and company level in Germany and Europe (Rüsselsheim, Bochum, Trollhättan etc.), since September there raised rumours that either Trollhättan or Rüsselsheim could be seen as excess capacities and that about 10 to 12 thousand employees remained unnecessary in GM Europe. Although only Trollhättan and Rüsselsheim were mentioned at this moment, the Bochum plant also was an implicit target of management cost and staff reduction reasoning. Even at plant level management and works council in Bochum were negotiating these topics.

Then GM Europe management shocked on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of October with press announcements that Bochum was planned to be affected by reduction of more than 4.000 workplaces. The midday shift did not initiate working but went outside the building blockading the main entrance and asking information from its works council – this 'leaving the workplace for asking information from the works council' is a legal right set up in the works councils law, but it was interpreted in a quite extensive way by the workers. In front of the main administration building members of the works councils called the responsible plant manager by phone asking for information. As the GM Europe management had forbidden the plant managers to give any information or declaration, the workers and their works council members were left without any clear answer. The management refusal, respectively ban to give any information was he formal-legal and the real starting point of the one week 'information session' of the workers and their works councils. This acting of the Bochum plant workers has to be understood in the tactical power game in the overall consortium.

During the 1990s there were some investments in the Bochum plant, for instance, when the Zafira and Astra production had begun. But despite the good quality and productivity indicators the Bochum plant had remained relatively old fashioned as compared to the completely renewed Rüsselsheim plant. Whereas Bochum had had a certain and important share of the Astra production and later on was the exclusive plant for producing the (quite well accepted) Zafira model during the second half of the 1990s, it lost increasingly its exclusiveness in the Astra production because the Belgium Antwerp and the British

Ellesmer Port plants produced also the Astra model and then production of the Zafira model was announced for the Polish Gliwice plant. For Opel Bochum workers and management this was – combined with the announcement of more than 4.000 staff reduction – a substantial and existential threat.

For the Opel Bochum workers and most of their works council members the walk-out of all production activities was not only a protest signal or the management, but also aimed at recovering a strong position in the intra-organisational bargaining in the Opel company works council (which includes representatives of the three plants o Rüsselsheim, Bochum and Kaiserslautern; the Eisenach plant remains outside because it has its own legal status as GmbH). Meanwhile the plant works councils had remained in a difficult and contradictory situation – on the one hand – of concession bargaining with local management to secure production projects and quota and – on the other hand – of looking for the common interests with the other plants, the walk-out in Bochum cut off for a certain moment and time the coordination of interest representation between the plant works councils. Tensions mainly between the Rüsselsheim and the Bochum works council could not be overseen during the protest week from 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of October. Workers and works councils in Bochum, Rüsselsheim and Kaiserslautern had some common interest, but also were and are located in quite different situations of production scope, recent investment, strategic positioning and cultures of work,

conflict and labour regulation. Workers and works councils had to act between general and long term solidarity and defence of common interests, on the one hand, and a zero-sum-game (every job saving in one plant could or will lead to job losses in another one), on the other hand.

The future of work and employment in the GM Europe consortium has to be negotiated in a complex twofold figure of inter-organisational management – workers council bargaining and of intra-organisational company works council bargaining. The Bochum plant works council will have no chance to negotiate with the GM Europe management but has to negotiate with local (quite powerless) management and inside the company wide works council. Therefore the walk-out at the Bochum plant redefined and reconfigured both, the inter-organisational and the intra-organisational bargaining power structures. At this moment it is difficult to estimate the positive and negative effects of the walk-out, because these depend on the future proactive and constructive ability of the Bochum plant (its management, workers and works council) to define the assets and capabilities which could guarantee some exclusiveness compared to other plants. Without developing a long term and propositive strategy for the plant the conflict of October 2004 could remain in history as a Pyrrhic-victory.

## L'actualité du produit

*Ugo Puliese*

### BMW SERIE 1 : RIEN QUE DU PLAISIR

Les trois champions allemands de la construction automobile, BMW, DaimlerChrysler et Volkswagen viennent de se lancer dans un combat féroce dans le segment des berlines de prestige, avec respectivement les marques Rolls-Royce, Maybach et Bentley, mais un autre combat est en train de se faire jour dans le segment dit des voitures de catégorie moyenne-inférieure (celui des Peugeot 307) et c'est sans doute BMW qui est le mieux placé pour l'emporter, non pas en volume mais d'un point de vue stratégique.

Traditionnellement, le segment est dominé en Europe par la Volkswagen Golf qui assure une bonne partie des bénéfices du groupe de Wolfsburg sous le double effet des volumes (la Golf étant produite à cadence élevée) et de ce qu'on appelle dans le jargon des constructeurs le PVC (prix de vente au client), c'est à dire le fruit d'une excellente image permettant de ne pas trop sacrifier à une politique de rabais. En l'occurrence, la Golf s'est toujours vendue à un prix élevé et avec les marges qui en découlent parce que c'est une Golf.

Par la suite, Volkswagen a habilement décliné son concept à succès d'abord au sein des trois autres marques (Audi A3, Seat Toledo et Skoda Octavia) en jouant toujours sur un effet volume (plates-formes communes) et la diversité. Avec la Golf V et sa plate-forme PQ 35, Volkswagen a joué en outre sur la variété au sein même de la marque Volkswagen (avec notamment le Touran) et en faisant le ménage pour éviter le cannibalisme entre marques (la nouvelle Octavia avec une carrosserie presque tricorps s'éloigne davantage de la Golf et tend à mordre sur la Passat ; la nouvelle Toledo, dérivée du monospace Altea, devient un modèle sans équivalent dans le groupe).

Le fait que ce segment des moyennes inférieures soit lucratif n'a échappé ni à Mercedes ni, plus tardivement, à BMW. Il n'est bien entendu pas question pour ces deux marques de rêver aux volumes de vente de la Golf mais d'aller grappiller des clients qui se laissent tenter par les versions sportives ou luxueuses de la Golf, là où se trouvent les plus belles des marges. Une partie de la clientèle, bien que disposant de revenus élevés, ne se laisse en effet plus tenter par des voitures de grandes dimensions, mais pour des questions de dimensions de places de parking, de discrétion, voire démographiques (vieillesse, absence d'enfants) se laisse tenter par des voitures plus petites qui, comme le disait un slogan de Renault, ont tout d'une grande.

Cette descente en gamme permet non seulement d'aller chercher de la croissance dans des segments nouveaux (les segments supérieurs sont considérés comme saturés) mais aussi de répondre, tout au moins en Europe, à une demande politique, à savoir la baisse des émissions de CO<sub>2</sub>. Le fait d'ajouter à son offre des voitures plus petites doit mécaniquement permettre de faire baisser la moyenne de consommation de carburants et donc d'émissions de gaz carbonique de la marque.

Mercedes a été le premier à se lancer dans l'aventure avec sa Classe A. Malheureusement, celle-ci a connu des déboires techniques avec le problème du test de l'« élan », ce qui l'a contraint à renchérir le contenu technique de son modèle sans pouvoir en transférer au client le surcoût (la première génération de Classe A faisait encore perdre 130 millions de dollars par an à Mercedes après six ans).

De plus, la Classe A se trouve positionnée curieusement dans le segment en donnant l'impression d'un monospace compact trop petit pour se vouloir l'égal d'un Scénic. Les tentatives de Mercedes pour rectifier le tir avec notamment une version rallongée baptisée Vaneo n'ont pas donné grand chose. Le lancement de la deuxième génération de Classe A en 2004 doit permettre de corriger le tir mais la voiture reste encore décalée par rapport à la concurrence. La Classe B, version rallongée de la Classe A attendue au printemps 2005, devrait corriger le tir. Mais la rupture des liens avec Mitsubishi ne laisse guère entrevoir d'économies d'échelles à long terme à moins que la marque Smart ne finisse par s'ancrer sur le marché automobile mondial.

Audi, qui en est depuis 2003 à sa deuxième génération d'A3 s'en est beaucoup mieux tiré. A l'image des Classes A et B, il a lancé en 2004 une version cinq portes de l'A3 qui se démarque assez nettement de la version trois portes puisqu'elle est présentée comme un break de chasse sous le nom de Sportback.

Par contraste, BMW a choisi de faire de sa Série 1 une voiture à propulsion (une vraie originalité dans ce segment), non seulement pour obtenir un véhicule parfaitement équilibré (répartition des masses entre l'avant et l'arrière) et une architecture mécanique qui puisse vraiment transmettre la puissance lorsque la version à moteur V6 apparaîtra, mais aussi pour récupérer des synergies en conception et en fabrication avec la Série 3, elle aussi à propulsion.

BMW n'a pas non plus été parfait dans ses tentatives qui ont débuté avec le rachat désastreux de Rover à qui avait été dévolu le rôle de complément par le bas de la marque bavaroise. Seul le lancement assez réussi de la marque Mini, mais tout de même avec des volumes de ventes assez limités (moins de 200 000 par an) a pu consoler les dirigeants de Munich. Ceux-ci ont également tenté de promouvoir une Série 3 compacte qui constituait un exercice à moindres frais (puisque'il s'agissait en fait d'un modèle dérivé directement d'un modèle existant) mais qui n'a pas non plus donné de résultats probants. BMW a finalement franchi le Rubicon en concevant un modèle spécifiquement conçu pour le cœur du segment des moyennes inférieures, à savoir la Série 1. Le fait que cette nouvelle voiture soit, contrairement à la Classe A, non décalée par rapport au segment constitue probablement un atout car elle sera immédiatement perçue comme une voiture présentant les caractéristiques principales du segment tout en se présentant comme une vraie BMW (malgré ses airs de Mazda 3).

Il n'en reste pas moins que BMW s'expose à quelques risques. D'abord celui d'une cannibalisation avec la Série 3 qui était pour l'instant la moins chère des BMW et donc le passage obligé pour les amoureux désargentés de la marque. Ensuite, celui des volumes car la Série 1 ne sera jamais produite à des cadences égales à celles d'une Golf ou d'une 307. En outre, il n'est pas forcément moins cher de produire une « petite » voiture (une Série 1) qu'une plus grosse (Série 3) alors que les prix devront bien refléter la différence de taille.

Il faudra donc que BMW joue habilement sur des économies trouvées sur d'autres modèles de sa gamme (la Mini ou la Série 3) ou avec des partenaires (les moteurs à essence seront partagés avec PSA Peugeot Citroën).

Un autre risque peut venir de la cannibalisation avec la Mini (est-il plus valorisant de rouler en Mini qu'en BMW Série 1 ?). Enfin, BMW a décidé de jouer la carte du « made in Germany » ce qui est sans doute un gage de qualité (quoique Audi produise des coupés TT en Hongrie ou Volkswagen des Touareg en Slovaquie) mais pas forcément de compétitivité. Grâce à sa nouvelle usine de Leipzig (ouverte en 2004) dans l'est de l'Allemagne où il produira des Séries 3, BMW libèrera de la place sur son site de Ratisbonne pour y fabriquer la Série 1. Il n'est pas du tout dit que la Série 1 constitue un projet rentable. Par contre, elle permettra à BMW de ratisser plus largement la clientèle qui, par fidélité, viendra ensuite rejoindre les bataillons d'acheteurs de Séries 5 et 7.

En fait, c'est probablement de façon comparative qu'il faut analyser l'enjeu pour BMW de la Série 1. Il est difficile de bien mesurer les gains que ce modèle apportera au constructeur mais on sent déjà bien ce que vont perdre ses principaux concurrents. Il est indéniable que la Golf, qui était déjà dans la ligne de mire des autres concurrents généralistes, va perdre une partie de ses meilleurs clients si BMW n'exagère pas sa politique tarifaire (ce qui ne semble pas vraiment le cas). La Classe A quant à elle va se trouver encore plus décalée car sa nouvelle génération ne présente toujours pas l'image de dynamisme, pour ne pas dire de sportivité, de sa rivale munichoise. Comble de l'humiliation pour Mercedes, grâce à la Série 1, BMW va durablement dépasser en volume Mercedes, ce que ne manquera pas d'exploiter médiatiquement la marque blanche et bleue.<sup>1</sup> On éprouve parfois plus de plaisir dans les difficultés de ses rivaux que dans ses propres succès.

BMW et Mercedes se sont dans le passé longtemps épié avec chacun trois familles principales qui se faisaient directement concurrence (les Séries 3, 5 et 7 face aux Classes C, E et S) mais Mercedes avait pris une bonne avance en élargissant son offre (Classe A, Classe V, coupés, cabriolets). BMW est en train de remonter son handicap et envisage même d'élargir son offre à des monospaces sportifs (projets RFK1 et RFK2). La marque bavaroise ambitionne de produire 1,4 million de véhicules en 2008 contre 1,1 million en 2003 et la seule Série 1 doit lui apporter un volume de 100 000 voitures supplémentaires dès 2005. Munich a de quoi inquiéter Wolfsburg et Stuttgart.

<sup>1</sup> En mai 2004, le groupe BMW, c'est-à-dire en incluant Mini et Rolls-Royce a vendu pour la première fois plus de voitures que le groupe Mercedes en incluant Smart et Stuttgart. Au seul niveau des marques, BMW a vendu plus de voitures que Mercedes.

## Les activités des membres

Yannick Lung (Université de Bordeaux 4 and GERPISA) and Attila Havas (Institute of Economics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) have participated into a summer school (Cursos de Verano), organized by Ricardo Alaez and Juan-Carlos Longas in Pamplona (Spain), on July 20-22th, on the topic : **“El sector de automacion en Navarra : El impacto de la ampliacion de la Union Europea”**.

Diane Gabrielle Tremblay (Université du Québec, Montréal, and GERPISA) notices us of the publication of two new books :

Tremblay D.-G., 2004, *Travail et société. Evolution et enjeux*, Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 650p. (2<sup>ème</sup> édition revue).

Tremblay D.-G., 2004, *Economie du travail. Les réalités et les approches théoriques*, Montréal, Editions Saint-Martin, 610p. (3<sup>ème</sup> édition revue).

## Colloques

Colloque sur l'élargissement de l'Union Européenne : **« Enlargement of the European Union : what are the stakes and potential ? »**, Université de Lille 1, 9 et 10 décembre 2004. Les débats seront introduit par une conférence de Bronislaw Geremek, et porteront sur les aspects économiques, sociaux, démographiques et géopoliti-

tiques de l'élargissement de l'UE. Le colloque est organisé par le laboratoire MEDEE (Mécanismes Economiques et Dynamiques des Espaces Européens) de l'Université de Lille 1, sous la responsabilité de Hadjila H. Krifa-Schneider. (Informations : <http://www.univlille1.fr/medee/>).

## CALENDRIER DES RÉUNIONS DU RÉSEAU 2004 - 2005

### Journées de travail du GERPISA, 2004-2005

- vendredi 5 novembre 2004, MSH
- vendredi 3 décembre 2004, MSH
- vendredi 7 janvier 2004, MSH
- vendredi 4 février 2005, EHESS (105)
- vendredi 4 mars 2005, EHESS (105)
- vendredi 8 avril 2005, Maison Suger (à confirmer)
- vendredi 13 mai 2005, Maison Suger

*Les Journées de travail du GERPISA pour l'année 2004-2005 seront pour l'essentiel consacrées aux questions et travaux du 4<sup>ème</sup> programme de recherche international du GERPISA : « Variété du capitalisme et diversité des modèles productifs » et du programme européen ESEMK (Elles porteront notamment sur le Work Package 5 du projet ESEMK : l'organisation productive des firmes abordée à partir de la construction de leur relation au marché).*

### Journée du vendredi 5 novembre 2004

- Paris, MSH (54, bd. Raspail, Paris 6<sup>ème</sup>), salle 214
- 14h00 – 17h00
- **Michel Freyssenet** : « Poursuivre l'exploration des relations macro-micro en ré-interrogeant les notions de « mode de croissance » et de « modèle productif »

### 13<sup>ème</sup> Rencontre Internationale du GERPISA

- 15-17 juin 2005, Paris

*La 13<sup>ème</sup> Rencontre Internationale sera centrée sur le Quatrième programme du GERPISA – « Variété du capitalisme et diversité des modèles productifs » - et sur le projet européen ESEMK.*

## LA LETTRE DU GERPISA

### Sommaire du n° 179

- P.1 **Éditorial :**  
Le quatrième programme de recherche international du GERPISA est lancé.  
*Yannick Lung*
- P.2 **Nouvelles du programme :**  
To Pursue the Macro-Micro Link Analysis, Discussing the Both Notions :  
« Growth mode » and « Productive Model ».  
*Michel Freyssenet*
- P.7 **Thinking about Coordination in ESEMK : Building the Articulation between GERPISA and CEPREMAP Approaches.**  
*Tommaso Pardi*
- P.9 **Nouvelles des firmes:**  
The Opel-Conflict in October 2004 or : Lessons in the Unintended Consequences of Intentional Action.  
*Ludger Pries*
- P.12 **L'actualité du produit :**  
BMW série 1 : Rien que du plaisir.  
*Ugo Puliese*
- P.13 **Activités des membres**
- P.13 **Colloques**
- P.13 **Calendrier**

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Les manuscrits sont à envoyer avant le 20 du mois  
 The manuscripts have to be sent before the 20th of the month