

## ONZIEME RENCONTRE INTERNATIONALE DU GERPISA ELEVENTH GERPISA INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

Les acteurs de l'entreprise à la recherche de nouveaux compromis ?  
Construire le schéma d'analyse du GERPISA

Company Actors on the Look Out for New Compromises  
Developing GERPISA's New Analytical Schema

*11-13 Juin 2003 (Ministère de la Recherche, Paris, France)*

### **AFTER THE LOSS OF JAPANESE AUTONOMY. THE MERGER OF NISSAN/RENAULT AND MAZDA/FORD IN COMPARISON**

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Looking back the world automotive industry passed a decade characterized by a wave of mergers, acquisitions and alliances. Against the background of the discussion about the Japanese automotive industries' story of success leading from the 'Machine that changed the world' to the 'World that changed the machine' it is an astonishing and rather unexpected fact that Japanese carmakers have been involved in this development in the manner as could be observed. The Japanese automotive industry has been impacted by several macroeconomic developments. The implosion of the 'bubble economy' in Asia especially Japan, a strong Yen and a reserved domestic market have been the major external threats for Japanese automotive industry in this years. Nevertheless not all of the Japanese carmakers were challenged by these macroeconomic developments in the same way (e.g. Toyota and Honda). Nowadays seven of eleven carmakers are no longer self-determined including two former 'core companies' of the Japanese automotive industry Nissan and Mazda.

Both of them Nissan and Mazda were seen as exponents of a forward looking and outmatching production regime condensed as 'lean production'. Nevertheless in the late 1990s both companies were forced to approve of an alliance with another company and now have to deal with the fact of a foreign leadership namely Nissan with Renault and Mazda with Ford (with Mark Fields at Mazda and Carlos Ghosn at Nissan both companies are governed with two outstanding personalities who stand for a successful financial consolidation process).

Our comparative analysis describes the implementation of the massive restructuring process by the respective foreign management including not only the financial consolidation but also the product strategies and management structure. Assuming that this situation implies a variety of dynamics we attach importance to point out the specific 'Japanese' perception of this process at Nissan and Mazda well considering that these incidents mentioned above accompanying restructuring measures, which would have been volitional and/or unintentional, reflected from the Japanese side.

So within a two years lasting research project we focused our view on the post-merger situation at Mazda and Nissan asking how they deal with this situation. According to our interest targeted on the scheme to gain an insight into the Japanese perception of the two mergers we nominated an interdisciplinary researcher team consisting of Sociologists and members of the Seminar for Japanese Studies at the University Erlangen-Nuremberg. Our

survey bases on three major columns: The appraisal of available economic data, the triage of relevant Japanese, European and American literature and expert interviews held with representatives of the Nissan and Mazda management on-sight.

In the view of Japanese management the major challenge for the management of the two companies still is to re-build a brand identity and establish a consciousness for the necessity and acceptance for the implementation of a management culture not only evaluating the effectiveness on the shop floor level but also benchmarking and improving continuously the white collar and upper management level. Above all these are the main fields in which each of them Mazda and Nissan identify their chance to profit from the mergers with Ford or Renault respectively. Besides the management of both companies expresses a rather strong self-confident regarding their 'core competences' which includes above all technological know how in the aggregate development and -building sector and the specific capabilities concerning "how to produce a car".

So far the Japanese side describes both alliances not so much as a love marriage but more than an association for answering the purpose. These alliances are seen as a chance to initiate and accomplish necessary learning processes concerning the organizational sectors brand image/identity and management restructuring (sic!) as mentioned above. Up to now in their opinion both companies are relatively autonomous in relationship to their 'senior partners' indicated by a high level of self-determination according to human resource management or model strategies. In the year 2002 at both companies the financial turnaround seems to be reached and a product offensive was initiated. But it remains to be seen whether the new configuration at Nissan and Mazda will prove successful. If not, different scenarios are plausible and one of them includes the collision of corporate governance aspirations and autonomy requirements.