
Editorial

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The question of the complex relationships between the process of structuring new automobile industries and the process of restructuring old ones will be at the core of the next international programme of research of the Gerpisa international network.

This is already a fundamental issue for the stakeholders both in the automobile firms and in the main automobile regions, but there are many reasons to anticipate that it will be even more so in the years to come. Indeed, few decisions in the automobile industry are not linked, both in strategic and operational terms, to this double process of structuring and restructuring.

On the one hand, for the old production and design sites, and for their managers and employees, the question of their place in the global division of work and in the hierarchy of priorities of the top management is a permanent concern. On the other hand, the capacity of new sites to increase their strategic weight and to enlarge their panel of competences keeps growing. These concerns are at least as much as pressing for the carmakers as they are for the suppliers. In certain cases the competition is frontal and relates to relocation logics. In other cases, competition is more indirect and is linked to the fact that new subsidiaries in production and in design are meant to attract new markets and new products. In other terms, the place of each of the players in the organisation, in the future profits and losses, in the investment strategies, and in the design, engineering, production and purchasing within the value chain is a matter of relationship between the old and the new sides of the business.

In the great automobile region of the Triad, the question of this 'spontaneous' evolution of the automobile system and of the speed of the drifting of its 'barycentre' from the old automobile regions towards the new ones is compounded by the issue of the new policies that must be conceived to bring this dynamic under control. Since at least the impact of the 2008–2009 crisis, the interventionism of the states to rescue the old automobile industries has become the rule and is directly linked to the issue of relocations, on the one hand, and to the issue of the shifting place of these old industries in the world hierarchies, on the other hand.

The state also plays a crucial role in the new regions, in particular in the BRIC, but also in South East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Central America. Here, most of the governments pursue active politics that aim (with more or less success) at substituting local production for imports, attracting FDI, and shaping local markets according to the

specificities of the local supply in order to sustain the rapid development of fully integrated national industries.

Furthermore, the structuring/restructuring process does not only have geographical and geopolitical implications, but also a crucial technological dimension since what is restructured is a 'fossil' industry and what is structured is more and more the green (electric) industry of tomorrow.

What it is a stake therefore is a global reconfiguration of the automobile industry in a context of high uncertainty because both the companies' organisations and markets' architectures are rapidly and simultaneously changing.

The problem that we face with this new international programme is less to know whether this double process of global structuring and restructuring is pertinent to grasp the ongoing and future transformations of the global automobile industry, but rather how we can make sense of this sweeping transformation in analytical terms. Indeed, in many ways several trends (in design, innovation, purchasing, production, distribution and employment) entailed by this evolution are radically new and question our conventional comprehension of this industry and the analytical tools we have developed in the past to understand it.

The papers presented in this special number of *IJATM* provide some intriguing empirical and theoretical analyses of these key trends and a first preliminary attempt to synthesise the main research questions raised by the structuring and restructuring process of the global automobile industry.

B. Jullien and T. Pardi introduce this special number with a paper that raises two crucial questions for the future Gerpisa collective research: how the research assets of our previous international programmes can be mobilised to characterise these new trends in the evolution of the automobile industry? And to what extent the radically novelty of these trends require from us new analytical approaches and tools to make sense of them?

U. Jürgens and M. Krzywdzinski explore in their paper how local carmakers in the BRIC (GAZ from Russia, Mahindra & Mahindra from India, and Geely from China) are structuring their employment relationships between the influence of established local practices and the diffusion of global 'best practices' in human resources management linked with the implementation of lean production systems.

D. Coffey and C. Thornley raise in their paper a fundamental but often neglected issue for the transition towards low carbon vehicles in old and new automobile countries: the 'nurtured competition' generated by the second hand and after sales markets. Through the analysis of the British case they focus on how the design of new policy tools taking into account this issue might enhance both the structuring of green industries and the dynamism of automobile markets.

B. Domański, R. Guzik, K. Gwosdz and M. Dej provide an interesting account of how structuring and restructuring process can and in fact do coexist in the same country. In their paper, they analyse the impact of the on-going crisis on the Polish automobile industry and discuss the prospects, obstacles and limits of the upgrading process.

C. Donada explores in her paper the barriers that have prevented so far the structuring of both a viable market and a viable industry for electric vehicles. While arguing that the main barrier lies in the incapability of incumbent OEMs to break free from their old industrial paradigm, she suggests that the implementation of new managerial approaches to customer value and customer innovation could break this barrier and facilitate the required paradigm shift.

Finally, G. Balcet, G. Commisso and G. Calabrese analyse in their paper the carmaker that possibly best embodies the complex potential but also the ambiguous outcomes of the global structuring/restructuring process of OEMs, which is Fiat-Chrysler. The paper raises in particular an intriguing question: by undergoing this process of structuring and restructuring can two weak carmakers re-emerge as a viable one?