
Editorial

Bernard Jullien and Tommaso Pardi*

Ecole Normale Supérieure de Cachan,
Bât Laplace, 61, Avenue du Président Wilson,
94235 Cachan cedex, France
E-mail: bernard.jullien@ens-cachan.fr
E-mail: tpardi@gerpisa.ens-cachan.fr
*Corresponding author

Biographical notes: Bernard Jullien is a Senior Lecturer in Economics at the University of Bordeaux's GREThA Research Centre, France, and the Director of the GERPISA network of research on the car industry.

Tommaso Pardi is a Researcher at the CNRS (IDHES), France, and the Associated Director of the Gerpisa network of research on the car industry.

The Sixth International Programme of Gerpisa (2012–2015) focuses on the interconnected process of structuring and restructuring of new and old automotive industries. It has been conceived as an analysis in vivo of the new geopolitics of the automotive sector such as they are emerging shaped by the development of new markets and industries, and by the requirements of sustainable development.

This special number of *IJATM* gathers a selection of significant communications presented at the last Annual International Colloquium of Gerpisa which took place at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Cachan in June 2013. This colloquium occurred at the mid-term of the international programme and provided consistency to the agenda of research that was initially defined and presented in this journal (volume 13, no. 2). What we suggested in this agenda is that the research in social sciences on the automobile should try to identify the features of the new automotive industries by looking into:

- 1 the strategies of the multinational firms that continue to be the main actors of these dynamics
- 2 the strategies of the states and, more generally, of the designers of public policies who try to influence the behaviours of private actors in this double process of structuring new spaces and restructuring old ones
- 3 the technological dynamics that shape the product policies and productive organisations of the firms and that guide their strategies of R&D and the public policies of support to research and new technologies.

This special number is representative of the varieties of ways in which this large field of research can be explored. It combines three different perspectives on one of the major markets where new industries are emerging: the South American region where Brazil plays a leading role.

The three contributions focus on the question of the 'upgrading' of national industries and on the issues linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public policies.

They allow a crosswise grasp of the structuring dynamic of the South American space where markets, productive competences, technological skills, and regulation forms are all developing together in a context structured by systematic interactions between public policies and firms' strategies.

M. Obaya, whose paper on the geographical distribution of product development capabilities in the Mercosur's automobile industry has been awarded the 2013 young author prize of the Gerpisa International Colloquium, carries out in this special number a detailed analysis of the 'upgrading' of South-American automotive industries that is so eagerly sought by public policies but also so difficult to make effective. He shows that beyond the capacity of each of these geographical spaces to participate in the logics of upgrading, what is at stake is their relative position in a sort of 'international division' of technological labour arbitrated by multinational firms. What Obaya proposes in this paper, besides his original contribution on the case of Mercosur, is a comprehensive approach to the issue of upgrading that is of course of great interest for our programme and could be easily applied to other regional automotive industries.

N.M. Pereira and M. Amatucci approach the global and regional strategies of multinational firms by looking into the way they treat the issue of CRS. They show that in this field the interaction of 'global integration' vs. 'local responsiveness' plays a pivotal role both in determining the firms' performances and in explaining the forms taken by the local translation of CSR. They argue that besides the quality of the global strategy of each firm in this field, their capacity of translating it locally is decisive in terms of results. They point therefore to the fact that in this field, as in many others, the meaning and nature of the strategic issues raised at the scale of the firm change significantly when they are applied to differentiated spaces, in the process either of structuring or restructuring new and old industries.

Finally, concerning Brazil, R. Marx and A.M. de Mello propose a detailed examination of the new industrial policy put in place in 2012–2013 around the initiative 'Innovar Auto'. More precisely, they raise the question of whether such a policy could effectively make of Brazil one of the major places of development of the electromobility. They note that the automobile development of Brazil has taken place at the junction of multinational firms' investments and powerful public policies aimed at promoting the emergence of a 'complete' national industry based not only on the local assembly of vehicles but also on the development of a supplier industry and of Brazilian R&D and design. From this perspective, Innovar Auto appears as a logic step in this Brazilian trajectory: its purpose, as Marx and de Mello argue, is more to exploit the relative good position acquired in the design and production of traditional internal combustion vehicles, rather than to impose Brazil as a privileged place of development for future technologies.

We see therefore covered on the specific case of Brazil all the great domains of research proposed by the programme. We can also see how such overlapping of works on other spaces could contribute, in the years to come, in grasping all the dimensions of the structuring process.

In addition to these three papers on the South-American configuration, the other two contributions to this special number emphasise the importance of two other key issues: the first concerns the technological dynamic and is analysed by M. Dijk; the second is related to the structuring process of 'old' industries and is examined by M.C. McDermott.

M. Dijk explores a topic that is related to the work of Marx and de Mello and which refers to the evolution of the technological field. He focuses on the scope and content of

the changes that are taking place at the level of engines and powertrains. He notes that in 2013 the ‘disruption’ promised by the new engines, such as the electric vehicle, do not manage to impose themselves as new standards. He suggests however that we should not limit ourselves to this *prima facie* reading and that we should ask how these niche technologies affect in depth the ‘dominant regime’ based on the internal combustion engine. In his analysis, Dijk re-establishes a balanced perception of the complexity of the ongoing changes, a conclusion that is a good example of the kind of results we wish to obtain in the research programme.

Finally, by combining – as in most of the other papers – a rich review of the literature with a detailed examination of the choices of sites of production of Daimler and BMW in the USA, McDermott raises the central issue of the choice of location of firms in their internationalisation. As the paper shows, these choices are not only very important for the performance and the trajectory of multinational firms, but they also play a decisive role in shaping the new geography of the automobile in the new spaces as in the old ones. What is grasped through this particular issue is the underlying nature of the process of internationalisation of firms. Indeed, the structural requirements of internationalisation are weighted here against the more contingent factors that determine the actual shape taken by these processes and that play a key role in the history of these firms and of this industry.

The five papers presented in this special summarise well the underlying aim of this programme of research and more fundamentally the role of the Gerpisa which is indeed to tell *in vivo* the history of an industry that owes as much to global necessities as to local contingencies. This is indeed where the importance of mobilising a very large international network of researchers embedded in different disciplines becomes all the clearer.