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.

1. Research strategy and conceptual clarification

1.1. 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. 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 hided 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 gerpisian 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 gerpisian 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 gerpisian approach we can do to investigate more efficiently the macro-micro links.

1.2. 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 optimun 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. .Il 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.

1.3. 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 "gerpisian 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 "gerpisian 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 "gerpisian 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.