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**Two new and contrasting ways of producing cars: Uddevalla and Hambach. What does the future hold for them in the new world automobile environment?**

The Uddevalla factory (Sweden) was officially reopened on March 24 last. The start up of production at the Hambach factory (France), where the Smart will be assembled, is still set for the last quarter of this year. These two factories represent two new ways of producing automobiles, and give rise to a lot of discussion and questioning. Are these methods forerunners to new production systems which are likely to develop? Both of them make an effort to lower costs for varied production and specialized production (which should continue to increase, so it is said), using different and even contrasting socio-productive forms of flexibility. But the creators of both methods claim that it is also possible to apply them to large scale production, be it diversified or not, to increase performance and to overcome structural rigidity. The new developments in this domain are sufficiently unusual for us to give them attention. We can also question the potential offered by both methods for producing cars in developing countries.

The GERPISA members are aware of the active part played by our colleague Kajsa Ellegard, along with Lennart Nilsson and Tomas Engstroem in the creation of the production system at the origin of the Uddevalla factory (see *Actes du GERPISA* N°9, March 1994). In this issue of *La Lettre* she gives us the latest news about the reopening of the factory. Let us remember that the cars were assembled at a fixed work station by two or four workers, in less time than was necessary to assemble the same model on an assembly line in another Volvo factory. Uddevalla had been closed down a while after the Kalmar factory, because of the persistent decline in sales of the Swedish constructor. The fact that demand picked up, caused Volvo to reopen it, in the form of a subsidiary, called Autonova, created jointly with the English firm TWR, to manufacture top of the range coupes and cabriolets, at a rate of 20,000 a year. Kajsa Ellegard confirms for us that the preparation of parts which was carried out, with certain difficulty, by a particular category of workers from administrative lists in the former organization, is now integrated to the holistic work of the assembly workers (see *La Lettre du GERPISA*, N°101, March 1996). "Reflexive Production" has found a field for experimentation again, which will enable it to validate or not its socio-productive possibilities.

On the other hand, if we can say that, from the point of view of the principles it inspires, the Hambach factory, where the Smart, the two seater urban car designed by Swatch and Mercedes will be produced, is going to scale itself down to a final assembly line in the form of a cross where eight first class suppliers installed a few meters from there, will bring the

complete sub-units for which, each one is responsible. It is foreseen that Hanbach will produce 140,000 vehicles a year, in two teams. It will be the first vehicle factory to put Ignacio Lopez's "dream factory" into practice. At the moment Valerie Mazeau is following the realization of the project, for her DEA, and should dedicate her thesis to the study of this factory, during the first years of its existence. She has already done a presentation on it, which was written when she was beginning her work using the documentation that she disposed of at the time. You can find her text in the "Programme News" section, as well as the rubric about Autonova.

Robert Boyer's recent visit to the Boeing is related her in the open debate. Production at a fixed work station is not something new. It exists in many sectors, notably in aeronautics. What is different about production in this sector and what was created and realized at Uddevalla? What lessons can be learned in terms of flexibility, quality, deadlines cost, implication and the development of skills. In short, the debate is open and everyone is invited to participate. It will be the object of several papers at the 5th International Colloquium; It is one of the questions that the group "Productive Organization and Worker Relations" will deal with.

The announcement about the closure of the Renault factory at Vilvoorde brought the question of the negotiation between social partners on a European level, brutally to the public fore. In fact the next GERPISA France work day will be dedicated to it. The topic is introduced here with a text about the "committees for European groups" for the automobile, by Udo Rehfeldt, a researcher at IRES, a research institute which serves the trade unions. His text and his introductory expose will be commented on by Emmanuel Couvreur, a CFDT administrator for the Renault board of directors. The trade union movement and the current forms of internationalization constitute another theme for the programme for the group "Productive Organization and Worker Relations".