

CONFLICT AND PARTICIPATION IN BARGAINING AT COMPANY LEVEL: THE LAMBORGHINI CASE*

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In the last 50 years, the nature and quality of industrial relations in Italy have changed considerably. The national bargaining process has been severely weakened and, in the past decade, the social dialogue between parties has been questioned on several occasions. Based on an original corpus of texts documenting bargaining at company level over 50 years within Lamborghini (which was acquired by the Audi VW group in 1998), in this article we analyse the core issues of the debate between the parties, and the very ways in which the debate takes place. Combining techniques of automatic text analysis and reading of individual documents, we obtain a periodisation of the issues at the heart of corporate bargaining that contribute to a discussion of the key elements characterising the virtuous circle of company development and quality of industrial relations.

Negli ultimi 50 anni, la natura e la qualità delle relazioni industriali in Italia sono notevolmente cambiate. Il processo di contrattazione a livello nazionale è stato fortemente indebolito e, nell'ultimo decennio, il dialogo sociale tra le parti messo in discussione in diverse occasioni. Basandoci su un corpus che documenta 50 anni di contrattazione di secondo livello in Lamborghini (acquisita nel gruppo Audi VW nel 1998), in questo articolo analizziamo le tematiche al centro del confronto tra le parti, e le modalità stesse in cui avviene il confronto. Affiancando tecniche di analisi automatica dei testi e lettura di singoli documenti, otteniamo una periodizzazione dei temi al centro della contrattazione aziendale che ci aiutano a discutere gli elementi chiave che caratterizzano il circolo virtuoso di sviluppo dell'impresa e qualità delle relazioni industriali.

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* This essay develops and goes in greater detail into many of the topics already addressed in Russo et al. (2018). For a more detailed reading of the various results of the automatic and critical analysis on the Lamborghini database, see the cited working paper. The authors are responsible for the database of documents used in the analysis. The interpretations of the results presented in this article reflect exclusively the opinions of the authors and do not therefore intend to represent official positions of the management of Lamborghini or of the Unitary Workplace Union Structure (*Rappresentanza sindacale unitaria*, RSU) of Lamborghini. Fulvia D'Aloisio (Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli) contributed to the beginnings of this project as a specific topic of the research "Multinationals in Emilia", carried out in cooperation with Margherita Russo in the context of the collaboration agreement between the two departments. During the phase of the collection and study of the documents, the collaboration of the Human Resources Department and of Lamborghini RSU was fundamental. The authors, who are solely responsible for errors and omissions, recognise that this study would not have been possible without the collaboration of Giuseppe Nardacchione and Alberto Cocchi (respectively, responsible for Lamborghini human relations management and representative of Lamborghini RSU), who nurtured a productive discussion on the topics of the research, of Pasquale Di Domenico, Giandomenico Ciampoli, Enrico Toto, Chiara Florini, and Marco Pedà, who assisted with the conversion of the documents into text format and in the classification of the metadata, of Simona Iannelli and Alessandro Caprara, who collected information and data on management and the trade union, and of the Italian Federation of Metalworkers – Italian General Confederation of Labour (FIOM-CGIL) Bologna, for their help in the consultation of the archives. Our thanks also go to Anna Simonazzi for the precious suggestions she made on a first draft of the study, the organisers Lisa Dorigatti and Matteo Rinaldini and the participants in the session "Workers 4.0: organisation and work processes, collective action and political participation" of the III Convention of the Italian Society of Economic Sociology, for the discussion on the methodology and results of the empirical research, the editor of the journal and the two anonymous reviewers, for their comments, which gave us the stimulus to contextualise better the results of the research, and Jane Stevenson for her collaboration with the translation of the text into English.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fifty years on from the time in 1968 that marked a turning point in industrial relations in Italy, it is interesting to analyse the changes in the nature and quality of industrial relations as well as the regulation of the labour market. The bargaining process at national level has been severely weakened, and the new era of consultation at corporate level introduced by the Ciampi Protocol in 1993 has never really begun. Given the limited use of company-level bargaining by small and medium-sized companies (Bordogna, 1997, Cardinaleschi, 2015), the Ciampi Protocol of 1993, which was modified only in June 2011 (Carrieri and Treu, 2013), has in fact brought about greater “centralisation” and “institutionalisation” of bargaining (Giugni, 2014; Baccaro and Howell, 2017). In the last twenty years various labour reforms have been introduced, from the Treu Package to the Jobs Act. They have aimed at reducing the labour market’s rigidity (Fana *et al.*, 2016), following the dictates of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1994) and the European Commission (2007), but without enhancing the simultaneous provision of measures to stimulate employment and productivity, in a context in which the social dialogue between the parties has been seriously questioned on several occasions (Bruno, 2011; Loreto, 2017; Fiorani and Simonazzi, 2018). A leading sector in bargaining at national level, that of the metalworkers, has experienced moments of tension and internal divisions that in recent years have led to the signing of separate contracts (Loreto, 2017; Carrieri and Pirro, 2016) and to the exit of the biggest Italian automotive company from Confindustria in 2012. Corporate bargaining in the automobile group Fiat has been through a period in which the trial of strength between company management and unions seemed to be played on the field of economic development founded on the denial of workers’ rights, and where the global dimension of industrial relations in a multinational company could not be called into question since it was not seen as an important issue for company bargaining¹.

Within this framework, based on information gathered from company bargaining over a period of 50 years, this article puts forward an interpretation of the specific conditions in which a different reality emerged, that of Lamborghini: integrated into an international context, it seems to contradict the interpretation put forward of the Fiat case as the only model for bargaining in multinational companies. In particular, the case of Lamborghini is interesting for three reasons.

A first reason is the context of specialisation of the area where Lamborghini is situated: since it was established in 1963, it has been in Sant’Agata Bolognese, half way between Bologna and Modena. Not only is the factory and the commercial department still located there, but also a considerable part of research and development. The company is positioned in a region with a high concentration of manufacturing districts (automotive, packaging, textiles, ceramics) and services (logistics, tourism) which characterise the dynamics of economic growth of Emilia-Romagna.

Further factors of specific interest are the circumstances of ownership transformation and the company’s niche specialisation within the automotive market. The company was established by an eccentric entrepreneur from Emilia, Ferruccio Lamborghini, who decided,

¹ For an in-depth study of the history of industrial relations in FIAT through the analysis of company contracts, see Damiano and Pessa (2003). On working conditions within the FIAT-FCA group in relation to the implementation of the World Class Manufacturing (WCM), see, on the one hand, Pero (2015) and, on the other hand, Bubbico and Di Nunzio (2019) and Bennati *et al.* (2019) for different points of view.

together with the production of agricultural machinery², to also produce luxury cars, which quickly achieved international recognition, thus abandoning the other specialisation. In fact, the business choice of Ferruccio Lamborghini well fitted into the Emilian panorama and in particular that of the provinces of Modena and Bologna where Ferrari and Maserati, prominent companies in the sports and luxury car sectors, were already located.

The presence of an active and established trade union, especially with regard to the category of the workers, is the third interesting fact: it characterises the history of Lamborghini right from the start, and represents, as we shall see, one of the elements of continuity that in our opinion are important to interpret the direction and intensity of industrial relations.

Beginning as a small company with small-scale production, Lamborghini went through different phases alternating investment projects, crises, and sudden changes of ownership, ending up becoming a large company, part of the Audi Volkswagen (VW) group, with distributors all over the world, an internal workforce of nearly 1,400 in 2017, an extensive network of suppliers in the region, a strong productive connection with the Audi VW supply network, and an ambitious project involving productive expansion with the production of the SUV Urus from 2018 on, in the plant located in Sant'Agata Bolognese.

It is within this framework of structural and corporate changes and of positive industrial relations that we set out to position the interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative development of Lamborghini and of the specific industrial relations that have characterised the key moments of its transformation. In particular, we will investigate how the high degree of unionisation, which characterised the strong social and political identity of workers in Emilia, encountered the model of industrial relations of Audi VW, typified by participatory methods, the continuous exchange of information, and intense conciliatory activity.

The analysis is essentially based on the study of the company-level contracts, of the topics they regulate, and their evolution. In the analysis of company-level bargaining, reference will also be made, for the last 10-year period, to the work of the Bilateral Technical Commissions (CTB) with regard to work organisation, health and safety, training and workers' careers, and performance incentives.

For the longitudinal study of the documents, automatic text analysis was used. This is a methodology that has not, up to now, been used in studies of decentralised bargaining. These studies normally analyse the agreements of several different companies on one specific aspect of the bargaining, such as productivity (Bavaro, 2014) or the general trends of company-level bargaining (Brachini *et al.*, 2019), or more rarely they propose a critical, expert reading of the texts of a single company together with a historical account of the changes that have come about (Damiano and Pessa, 2003). In this study, automatic text analysis provides a systematic analysis of the textual content and a periodisation of the themes that scan the 50 years examined. The analysis was accompanied by an interpretation of the texts: the terms characterising each period were interpreted within the context of the documents they were taken from, thus giving significant insights into the transformations taking place in the company (in the contexts of production, technology, and ownership), the specific dynamics of industrial relations, and the changes in the socio-economic context. All these transformations led to demands for change in the sphere of the rights and obligations of all parties concerned: company management, the workers employed by the company, but also external companies supplying components and services, and

² It was an already established specialisation in the region (Brusco, 1989; Russo, 2008).

their workers, schools, and local administrations. The research horizons within which the analysis develops are wide-ranging, and in this article we offer an initial scrutiny of the results, which unfolds in seven main sections. Section 2 presents a brief overview of the corporate and productive transformations of Lamborghini, drawing on some information from the corpus of documents. In Section 3, the characteristics of the corpus of texts are illustrated, and in Section 4 we briefly present the methodology of automatic text analysis and the results of the cluster analyses on which the periodisation of the documents is based. In Section 5 we put forward an interpretation of the themes characterising each period, and in Section 6 we set out a synchronic reading of the changes in the ownership of the company, in the management of human resources, and in the union representation of FIOM³ at provincial level. Considering the long period of time taken into consideration, the analysis of company bargaining and of the various vicissitudes of the company allows us in the Conclusion (Section 7) to express some considerations about the virtuous circle of the development of the company and the quality of the industrial relations, while simultaneously opening the way to new questions and future research developments.

2. FROM FERRUCCIO LAMBORGHINI TO AUDI VW

Right from its establishment, the company created by Ferruccio Lamborghini in 1963 distinguishes itself immediately for its original and extremely innovative nature. The two engineers, Paolo Stanzani and Giampaolo Dallara, called to head technical management, begin to design several models, all characterised by their refined originality and engine power. They achieve high praise at the official appointments of the Motor Shows of Turin in 1965 and Geneva in 1966. In particular, at the Geneva Show, the presentation of the Miura arouses great amazement and is followed up by a large number of orders. Less than ten years later, Ferruccio Lamborghini decides to sell a part of his quota to the Swiss entrepreneur Rossetti, only to relinquish the whole of his share capital the following year.

After the years of ownership of Lamborghini (1963-1972), Lamborghini and Rossetti (1972-1973), and Rossetti and Leimer (1963-1977), followed by two years of receivership and then bankruptcy, “La nuova Lamborghini Automobili” is set up by the Mirman brothers (1981-1986). This is followed by seven years of Chrysler ownership (1987-1993). In 1994, Lamborghini is bought by the Megatech society, which had nothing to do with the automobile industry and belongs to the Indonesian group Sedtco Ltd; but very soon, in 1995, there is a new transfer of ownership with the sale of the shares to another company belonging to the Sedtco Ltd group.

After numerous changes of ownership and various economic vicissitudes and periods of severe internal conflict, in 1998 the company is acquired by the German car manufacturer Audi, belonging to the VW group. Audi relaunches production with a complex combining of local production, in the plant in Sant’Agata Bolognese and the network of local suppliers, and specialised production of components, but also of brands, within the group at international level.

At the same time, Audi decides from the beginning to follow a path that will lead to the construction of open and collaborative industrial relations, inspired by principles of participation and cooperation between the social parties, which in Germany find their ultimate expression in the model of co-determination – “Mitbestimmung” (Addison,

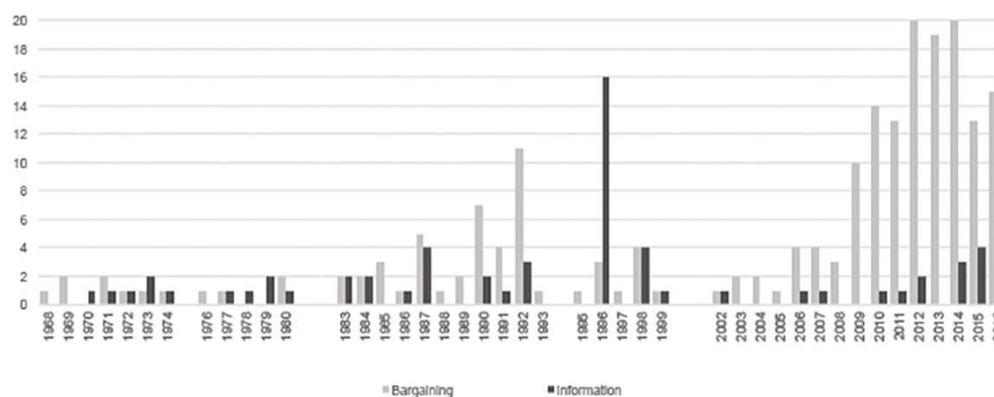
³ FIOM-CGIL has the highest number of union members in the company during the whole period analysed.

2009) – and which in Lamborghini permit the development of a concertation potential bearing witness to an ongoing virtuous mechanism of exchange and relations between the parties, which however is not devoid of obstacles and delays.

In the course of 50 years, Lamborghini presents a complex identity – which we will attempt to investigate in depth – that blends its origin and transformation within the system of small and medium-sized companies in Emilia, the specificity of trade union bargaining in Bologna within the national panorama (Baldissara and Pepe, 2010), and the direction of the transformations made possible by the Audi VW group (Telljohann, in Carrieri, 2015).

3. THE DOCUMENT DATABASE

Figure 1. Documents by category (bargaining and information), by year



From the 1990s on, the union delegates of Lamborghini had already gathered, in a paper and digital archive, the documents concerning bargaining. In this study, that nucleus has been extended to cover the entire document base of company-level bargaining at Lamborghini. It consists of 270 documents over a time span of 48 years, from 1968 (in other words: five years after the founding of Lamborghini) to December 2016⁴. With regard to the context in which they were drawn up, the documents obtained after a period of bargaining between the parties have been classified as “Bargaining”, and the documents containing information and/or communications between the parties as “Information”. From Figure 1, which shows the distribution of the documents over time in the two

⁴ When collecting the documents, some gaps have been found in periods characterised by economic instability and uncertainty: there are years in which there are no documents because no contracts were signed, and sometimes even information documents are missing. For each document we have identified the following metadata: the date and year of the signing of the document, the title of the document, the signing party (trade union, company, or both), the writing medium (paper or digital), and the original source the document was obtained from (union or company source).

categories, it clearly emerges that about three quarters of the 270 documents relate to “Bargaining”. Each category, in turn, groups together different types of documents.

Figure 2. Bargaining documents by type and by year

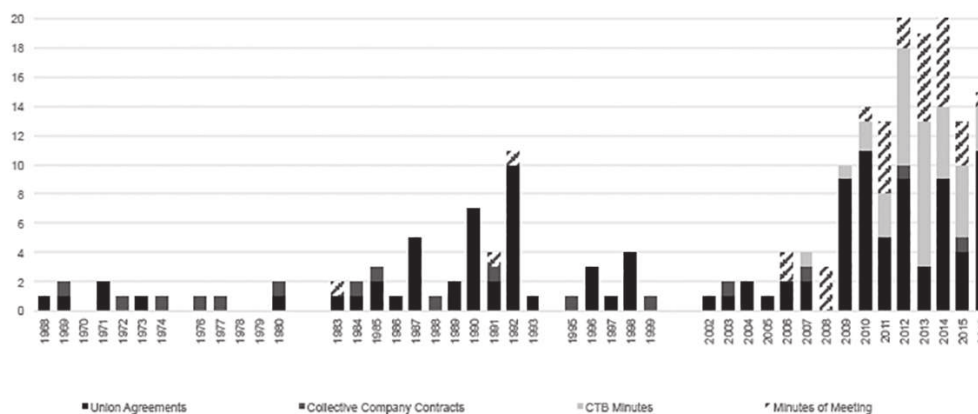
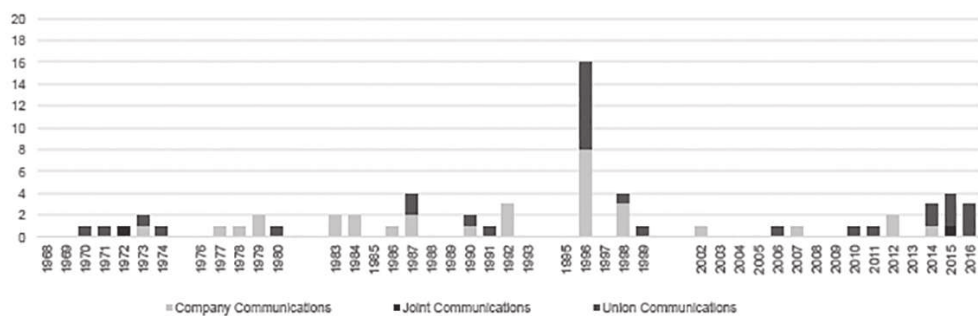


Figure 3. Information documents by type and by year



Under “Bargaining”, four types of documents were identified (the information is reported in Figure 2): Collective Company Contracts; Union Agreements; Minutes of Meeting; and Minutes of the Bilateral Technical Commission (CTB Minutes). In the category “Information”, three types of documents were distinguished (Figure 3): Company

Communications; Joint Communications, that is communications signed jointly by company and union; and Union Communications.

The documents in the “Information” category pose a series of problems. First of all, the total number of documents is very limited, considering the length of the period investigated. In particular, after 1993, apart from 1996, there are relatively fewer documents, not so much because the exchanges were re-dimensioned over time, but because the information and communications of various kinds exchanged between the parties were imparted more and more frequently through digital mediums online and via email. Even though it was thus not possible to retrieve the whole corpus, it was decided nevertheless not to exclude the category “Information” from the automatic text analysis. Although they are mostly present in the first 20 years of the existence of Lamborghini, which coincides with a period of important union struggles both nationally and in particular in Emilia (Baldissara and Pepe, 2010), it is possible to trace historically particular episodes of conflict inside and/or outside the company, precisely thanks to some communications of the Works Council (*Consiglio di Fabbrica*). In fact, these documents have a dual function: on the one hand, they reflect the general climate, for example of the periods of tension when the demands of the workers were often accompanied by long periods of strikes⁵; on the other, they provide precious indications for the analysis of the construction of union identity in the area of Sant’Agata Bolognese, and thus of the history of the social parties being studied. With regard to the categorisation of the documents, a substantial change should also be pointed out: with the acquisition of the company by Audi in 1998, information in Lamborghini gradually becomes an integral part of industrial relations and is in fact often mentioned as premise to the stipulation of numerous agreements. The larger amount of documentation in the last 10-year period, characterised mostly by CTB Minutes and by Minutes of Meeting, is therefore incorporated into the “Information” corpus. The specific nature of the two categories of documents, Bargaining and Information, thus altered over time, precisely as the result of new forms and content in the dialogue between the parties involved in the industrial relations. This is a topic we will return to in the text analysis.

4. AUTOMATIC TEXT ANALYSIS

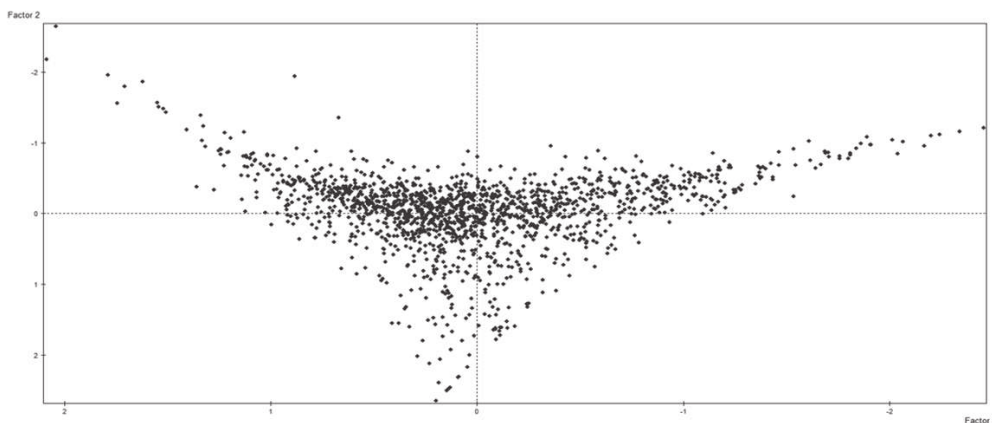
Automatic text analysis is a technique widely recognised as an instrument that underlines recurring themes within a corpus (Bolasco, 2013). In order to identify themes contained in the corpus, we apply a factor analysis on which we develop a cluster analysis (Benzecri, 1976, 1992; Greenacre, 1984, 2017). The multidimensional analysis makes it possible to observe similarities between documents on the basis of their lexical content (Bolasco, 1999). The clustering phase based on words is an unsupervised classification that reflects semantic similarities between documents (Bolasco and Pavone, 2010). This conceptual homogeneity makes explicit the prevalent theme or semantic feature

⁵ Precise information about participation in strikes and their duration is not to date available. In general, from the information gathered in interviews with RSU, it emerged that there was a severe polarisation between the 1970s, marked by numerous strikes underlining the fierce conflict characterising also the industrial relations in Lamborghini, and the last two decades in which, with the advent of the Audi period, recourse was made to strikes for company disputes only on very few occasions, whereas participation in strikes organised at national level was constant.

in that group of documents, which can be summarised in a category that has not been defined a priori but is obtained through the automatic text analysis. The categories are labelled through the expert reading of dictionaries associated with each group of documents.

In this paper, the automatic analysis of the corpus was effected through the use of two software applications: Taltac⁶, used for the identification of the units of Lexical Analysis, intended both as simple forms and multiword expressions, present in the corpus; Spad, used for the factor analysis of the simple Correspondences and the Cluster Analysis. Reconstructed on the basis of the lemmas of the words, the corpus is made up of 9,778 graphic forms of different lemmas, for a total of 141,553 occurrences. Applying grammatical tagging of the graphic forms and the textual lexical model for the identification of the multiword expressions (Pavone, 2010, 2018), 1,637 lemmas of nouns and adjectives are selected as units of lexical analysis, of which 151 are multiword expressions. In order to identify the evolution of the topics dealt with over the time period, a factor analysis on the matrix Year x Lexical Units (42x1,637) is carried out. Analysing a matrix of this kind, in which the years are considered as units of textual analysis, it is possible, by means of a Cluster Analysis applied to the results of the Analysis of Correspondences, to group the years on the basis of their similarity in terms of the contents expressed by the lexical units.

Figure 4. Distribution of the lexical units on plane *f1f2*



⁶ Cf. <http://www.taltac.it/it/index.shtml>, Bolasco (2010).

Figure 5. Distribution of the textual units per year, convex hulls, and partitions on plane $f1f2$

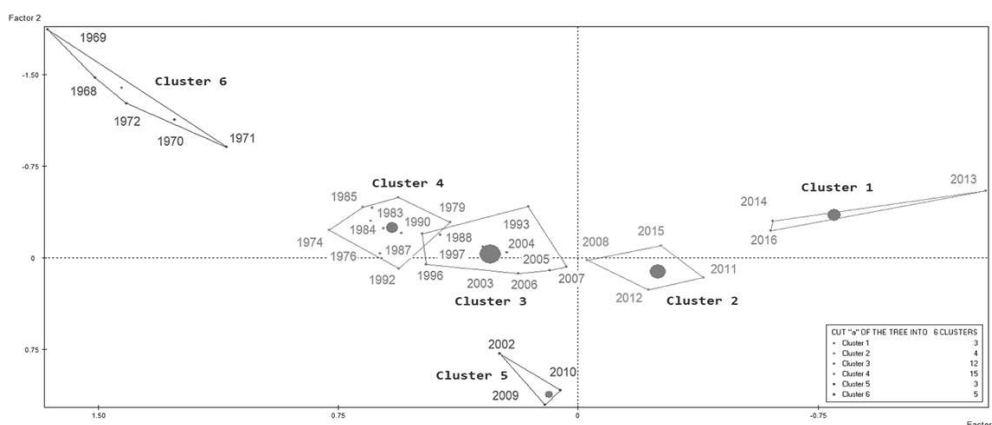


Figure 6. Number of graphic forms under analysis (vertical axis on the left) and number of years with documents (vertical axis on the right), for the six clusters, in chronological order of initial year

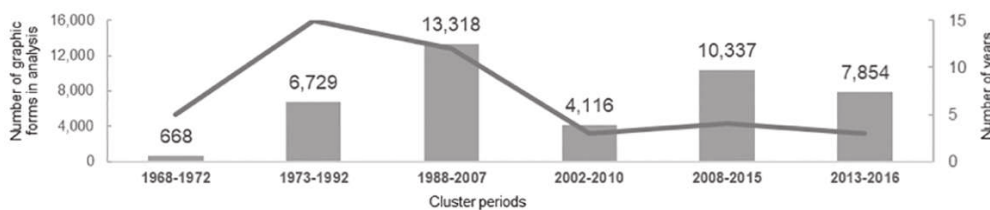


Figure 7. Percentage, out of the total in the database, of documents and occurrences (vertical axis on the left), per category and per cluster, and number of years for which there are documents (vertical axis on the right), in each period

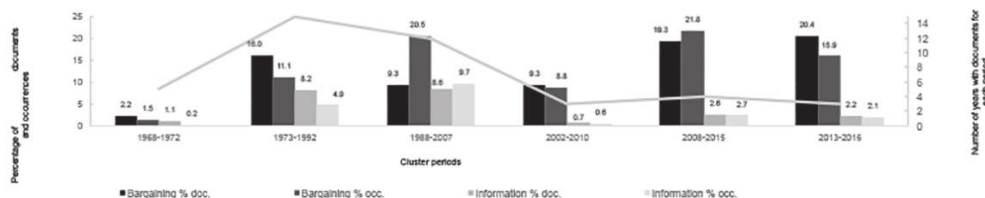


Figure 4 presents the distribution of the lexical units on the plane $f1f2$ of the six clusters that emerged from the analysis. Figure 5 highlights the convex hulls of the partitions on the plane $f1f2$. The six clusters characterise the evolution over time of the lexis. The intervals of time become longer, from five to 15 years, up to the end of the 2000s, and then become shorter in the last decade, associated with three thematic groups, which cover three, four, and three years, respectively. Figure 6 represents for each cluster, in the chronological order of the first year, the number of years for which there are documents and the number of occurrences of the graphic forms under analysis. The relative weight of the two categories of documents per year, with a prevalence of documents and occurrences relating to bargaining, is synthesised in Figure 7, which records the data per cluster.

5. THE TOPICS AT THE CENTRE OF BARGAINING: AN ANALYSIS OVER TIME

For each cluster, we will now analyse the predominant topic, defined on the basis of the interpretation of the most characteristic words. In the comment, we consulted the concordances of the terms in the single documents, and were in this way able to interpret the characteristic terms within the semantic context in which they are used. Whereas from 1968 to 2007 the automatic text analysis returns three clusters of documents regarding fairly unconnected periods, each one characterised by a predominant topic, in the last decade three groups of topics emerge, such that three clusters of clearly distinct documents that overlap in time are created. For the last decade, therefore, we will highlight the themes of the three clusters and the period of time they cover, precisely in order to underline that it is the specificity of the documents, which in some cases are of a periodic nature, that marks the temporal overlaps.

1968-1972, production incentives and career advancements

The first period, 1968-1972, comprises a very small number of documents: just nine in five years. In the characteristic lexis we find production incentive (working hours, month, remunerated, paid), the salary specified with respect to career advancement and to discretionary allowances, to actual pay, and to wage increments based on merit. In the contracts there are, for the first time, mentions of work environment, canteen services, career advancements, and discretionary allowances. References are made to blue collars, white collars, and middle managers, but also to apprentices and workforce. The themes that characterise this period reflect wholly the main concerns of the union in those years (Gallo in Baldissara and Pepe, 2010, p. 51). In particular, the request for a production incentive is present in 291 contracts out of a total of 339 contracts stipulated in the metalworking industry of Bologna in the period 1968-1972 (Baldissara and Pepe, 2010, p. 246, Table 11). The production incentive, in fact, on the one hand guaranteed an increase in salaries, which in the early 1960s were lower in Emilia-Romagna compared to the national average (Baldissara and Pepe, 2010, pp. 290-1); on the other, it was seen positively by entrepreneurs because potentially associated with an intensification of rhythms of work (Baldissara and Pepe, 2010, p. 50).

1973-1992, the encounter between school and world of work, productive reconversion

The documents belonging to the period 1973-1992 embrace 20 years in which there were four changes of ownership, a period of bankruptcy, and receivership: overall, the

documentation produced is relatively small, and there are four years with no documentation at all.

The emerging topic in this period is an openness to the themes of training and education between school and factory: a dialectic relation that opens the factory to young students (also with summer jobs as well as with student grants), and enters the school with specific projects of an experimental nature that offer professional training and have the dual objective of contributing “to overcome the division between school education and work qualification, [...] and to intervene in the difficulties young people have in entering the world of work”. This is the recurring theme in seven union agreements signed between 1983 and 1991. One of the declared objectives is precisely the “construction of a dialectic relation between schools and factory”. These are the foundations on which three decades later, precisely in Lamborghini (and Ducati), the most important experimentation in Italy of a dual education system was initiated, in the form of the Dual Education System in Italy (DESI) project.

If, on the one hand, the theme of opening up to schools significantly typifies this period, the vicissitudes of ownership are evident in other characterising themes: productive reconversion (the subject of bargaining in 1974), protest strikes (1987 and 1990) or their regulation, and wage support measures (1974, 1976, 1977, and in the company communication of 1978). It is a critical context involving discussion about restructuring plans (union communication and company agreement 1977), controlled management (1978), strategic investments (1984), and also technological innovation (union agreement of 1986 and union communication of 1987), of which traces are again found only in documents of 20 years later.

The term “problem” introduces the sphere of bargaining (“Greater sensitivity to the problem of absences”, Minutes of Meeting, October 1983, at the point regarding the organisation of holidays), and is used to pinpoint the specific questions the union wants to deal with: the production places (for the qualitative and quantitative development of the company), the organisational models, equal opportunities, and workers with disabilities, perceived by both parties as a social problem to take care of. A further theme emerges – the organisation of work – which will be the subject of bargaining in the following years, and which in fact is one of the most frequent multiwords in the entire corpus. For example, confronted with the first proposals for important change on the part of the company during the Chrysler period, the Works Council immediately demands the right to discuss them and to intervene to avoid adopting a “passive role”. The proposal to introduce quality groups (Minutes of Meeting, 1991) is at the time interpreted by the Works Council as an opportunity to “go beyond repetitive, monotonous, harmful, and disqualified work” and to introduce “consensual governance of the organisation of work”, notwithstanding the awareness that in order to achieve such a result “a harsh conflict” (Union Communication, 1991) might be necessary. In this case, Lamborghini is one of the few metalworking companies (only 12.6% in Emilia-Romagna) that in the two years 1991-1993 discuss organisation of work within the ambit of company-level bargaining (Lugli and Tognoli, 1998, p. 21).

1993-2007 and 1988, remuneration

The third period covers a time span of just over 20 years, 1993-2007, and what links it to the documents of 1988 is the theme of “remuneration”. If in the first period identified in our analysis, 1968-1972, the theme of remuneration centres on production incentives and career advancements that contribute to determining salaries, in the documents of

the period 1993-2007 and in 1988 it is on the contractual definition of what determines the components of remuneration: quotas (fixed, maximum, hourly, matured, etc.), grades (seniority-linked, from 1998), indemnities, redefining modalities, equalisation and compensations, and shift work⁷. Another characteristic theme of this period is the “working time accounts”, envisaged by the National Collective Bargaining Agreement (NCBA) to compensate for the use of overtime, which anticipates the “positive flexibility” that comes into use in the following years.

From 1995, some actions are indicated as “priorities” in the bargaining, and some are mentioned as “shared priorities” (“a computer lab and a multimedia language laboratory”, Collective Company Contract of 2003).

“Improvement”, a term that was first used in the company contracts of 1985 and had gone again in 1988, typifies the bargaining of this period with regard to the professionalism of workers, the working conditions and individual abilities, the efficiency of the company (1988), and the quality of the product/production process and productivity (1995).

In the contract of 1995, for the first time there is a chapter entitled “School Work”, in which “in addition to what is laid down in the NCBA and the existing legislation in this area”, 40 paid hours are recognised to each worker for exams, and 80 hours for university graduation. The attention given to the education of workers, both of a professional nature and more general, characterises the whole of the subsequent history of Lamborghini, up to the introduction, in 2017, of an actual incentive for workers who obtain an educational qualification.

The “range” of products and engines is mentioned in the union agreement of February 1997 to indicate the sector/range of cars produced by Lamborghini: the last agreement before the acquisition by Audi. It is in fact in this period that the last turning point in the season of ownership changes comes about. And it is precisely in 1998 that some terms of the new society are used for the first time: “Lamborghini holding spa” enters the text of the collective company contract in 1999 to denominate the firm.

In this group of documents, we find the characteristic term “marine” referring to the production of marine engines, which began in 1985 and ended in the second half of the year 2000, after having several times put Lamborghini on the podium of the Class 1 offshore speedboat racing championship. In the documents of the following years, it is no longer referred to.

Another term that comes into use is “world”, which refers to the market of Lamborghini products, while in the following years it is used to indicate the world Works Council of the VW group.

Two documents close the period: the first, of a technical nature, synthesises the meeting of a specific commission on work organisation, and pre-announces the establishment of the Commission on Time and Method of Work; the other is a company-level contract, signed in December 2007, just before the economic crisis breaks on the scene. It is a contract that reaffirms comprehensively the core issues of bargaining, but in which the chapter on the right to study and to education stands out, because never before had it been formulated in these terms in an agreement between the parties. The stipulation of the supplementary contract before the onset of the crisis is an event that would be difficult to imagine coming about even just a few months later, but also reflects a certain proactivity of the parties to act simultaneously to the changes, and in

⁷ This result of the analysis is in line with what emerged from the investigation carried out by Lugli and Tognoli (1998) on company contracts stipulated in Emilia-Romagna: in all sectors, in the period 1994-1997, remuneration was the most frequent topic (Lugli and Tognoli, 1998, pp. 19-22).

subsequent months was to facilitate forms of management that were less traumatic for the already-employed workforce.

The last 10 years

In this period, three main topics are intertwined; we will analyse the specific spheres and the contingencies in which they emerged.

Work suspension and redundancy, training and education, participation 2002-2010

This topic comprises documents from only three years: 2002, 2009, and 2010. This is documentation with dense content, expressed for the most part in the 25 bargaining documents, predominantly union agreements (21). Two special documents of this period are the *Declaration on social rights and industrial relations at Volkswagen*, in 2002, and the *Charter of employment relations within the Volkswagen Group*, in 2009.

There is a larger amount of characteristic terminology compared to the documents of the previous periods and three principal nuclei on which bargaining centred can be identified. The first nucleus is the application of the redundancy guarantee fund, with suspension of work at zero hours, which is negotiated on several occasions in 2009 and in 2010: the last decade opens in fact with the effects of the crisis, which dictate massive recourse to redundancy. There is then the specific nucleus that concerns training and education. In particular, the training account is introduced for “the training of workers and the competitiveness of the company”, which is present in a number of union agreements (2009-2012). In general, bargaining regarding the development of competencies is embarked upon, and the evolution processes of company organisation are discussed.

A third nucleus regards the two documents that constitute the Charters of the VW group, which connect the earliest year of this group of documents, 2002, and the year 2009. In 2002, the first “Declaration of the social rights and industrial relations in Volkswagen” is stipulated between the World Works Council of the VW group, VW management, and the International Metalworkers’ Federation. In 2009, on the other hand, VW management, the European Works Council (EWC), and the World Works Council together adopted a Charter on labour relations for all the companies and production plants belonging to the VW group. This is officially implemented in Lamborghini in the memorandum of understanding of February 2011, and is then mentioned specifically in the supplementary contracts of 2012 and of 2015. These documents of international source represent the most significant example of the concertation activity of Volkswagen at European and global level within the framework defined by the transnational company agreements (TCAs) (Whittall *et al.*, 2017).

The Charter is the document that regulates conflicts between the parties (the overcoming of which can be founded “on cooperation and social commitment”), and promotes “a culture of performance and of participation of workers, intended as cooperation”. What is striking in the characteristic lexis of this group of documents is a significant deviation from the language briefly outlined in our presentation of the documents of the first three periods. The Charter is a document drawn up at international level. This feature gives the document base of this period and subsequent periods, a semantic articulation that underlines for example “development and professional growth” as a component of the “evolutionary processes of the organisation” of the corporation (and not of the “company”, thus introducing in a systematic way the use of this term, which before was used only sporadically), and makes

precise reference to legal lexis in defining the “narrative” terms of the text of an agreement; but it also introduces new lexical items that have become of current usage (“business”, “management”, “parties involved”, “social parties”, “efforts”) and characterises, with the use of the term “country”, the international dimension of the debate between the parties (“trade union traditions of the different countries”, “existing rights and customs in the different countries”, “norms”, but also the “automobile market in the different countries”). The Charters make explicit various rights: the right to work and the right of association (Charter, 2002), the right of co-management, “which consists in the right of consensus, of monitoring, of initiative, to convene up to four meetings a year in order to deal with economic questions or issues connected with bargaining” (Charter, 2009) and, in the Charter of 2012, the right to be informed and to have information becomes explicit⁸.

In the international context in which the debate between the parties takes place, systematic attention is given to the theme of work done outside the company, but which is indispensable for its functioning: we find traces of this specific point in the reference to the list of suppliers, which is updated and shared between the parties.

Temporary work, performance incentives, and positive flexibility 2008-2012

There are 59 documents in the four years that comprise this group of documents, of which approximately one third are those of the CTB, which meet periodically.

A first thematic nucleus concerns the regulation of temporary work. The recourse to atypical work is in fact for the first time the subject of a specific agreement in 2010 in which, in the face of the temporary need to increase production, the company informs the union that they want to use “atypical work contracts”, but accepts the request of the union to make use of “apprenticeships” where possible and to grant workers employed on fixed-term contracts “the priority option in the case of subsequent recruitment under different conditions”. Subsequently, in the company contract of 2012, a whole section regulates recourse to these “atypical” contracts (with regard to agency and fixed-term contracts). The union manages to impose a series of restrictions on purposes, length of the fixed-term contract, minimum level of classification, possibility of moving to a contract of unlimited duration, and maximum percentage of atypical workers out of the total (10%). Moreover, a “ranking list” is set up that the company undertakes to use in the case of new recruitments. In this way, the union achieves significant decision-making margins with respect to employment policies, if we consider that the criteria for compiling the ranking list will be the subject of a specific agreement in 2013 and of the subsequent work of the Training and Careers Commission. The attention of the union to the regulation of “atypical” work represents an element of similarity with the line adopted by the German union IG Metall within Audi VW. It is no coincidence that a specific Charter issued in 2012 regulates precisely the recourse to temporary work. FIOM and IG Metall seem both to interpret the use of atypical forms of work not only as the desire of the company to have at its disposal a more flexible and less costly workforce, but as a possible strategic choice aimed at segmenting the workers in the same workplace, thus weakening their possibilities of aggregation and creation of common requests (Benassi, 2015).

There are then two specific terms that deserve particular attention: “performance incentive” and “positive flexibility”. They appear as characteristic terms of this group of

⁸ For an in-depth study of the Charters, see Telljohann (2012).

documents and the subsequent one because they are repeatedly present in the tables of some of the documents. A union communication of May 1999 talks of the performance incentive, indicating it as an incentive “to be asked for”, but it appears explicitly only eight years later, in the supplementary company contract of December 2007, which sets up the technical commission that begins work immediately on this topic. The reference to parts of the salary linked to “incentives” was already present in the previous decades, but in that case it was called “production incentive”. The semantic difference is introduced for the first time in 2007, and is a regular feature in the documents from 2011.

“Positive flexibility” is a recurring term in this group of documents, but more in general in the entire corpus, although it is only in 2004 that recourse to “flexibility” is systematised in a specific company-level agreement in which, having ascertained the existence of a “recurring cyclicality in the case of the launching of new products”, “it is agreed to experiment a different management of working hours” envisaging recourse “in a non-structural way” to forms of positive flexibility (45-hour weeks) or negative flexibility (maximum 64 hours per year)⁹.

Bilateral Technical Commission (CTB) 2013-2016

This group comprises 61 documents, over a period of three years, of which 55 are bargaining documents, with 18 CTB Minutes. The characteristic lexis is structured around the work of the CTB that orients the specific subject, subsequently regulated by the agreements, and outlines methods and metrics for evaluation (indicative values, corrective actions, points, averages, arithmetic averages, parameters). During this last period under analysis the DESI project is activated, first introduced experimentally in 2014, then confirmed in 2016, and frequent reference is made to the joint action with the Regional Department for Education, Work and University, which contributed to the implementation of the project.

The notion of “cognitive surplus” also enters the scene, and this opens the way to a new evaluation of the contribution that the worker gives to the process of the creation of value. Following various meetings of the CTB Training and Careers Classification, in February 2016 an agreement is stipulated introducing an “incentivisation system” aimed at recognising and sustaining “the personal initiative of both female and male workers at Lamborghini Automobiles”, and which gave financial remuneration to “the incrementation of acquired professionalism” (or in other words “cognitive surplus”) as a result of obtaining an educational qualification. The achievement of the cognitive surplus value seems to reconfirm the attention addressed in Lamborghini to the education of the workers and the conviction that having a workforce that is trained, qualified and, we would add, stable is a strategically winning factor for the purpose both of ensuring innovative and high-quality production, and of maintaining a cooperative and participatory working climate¹⁰.

Lastly, it is in this period that we find the term “URUS” referring to the project of producing a Lamborghini SUV, which will be the subject of a specific agreement with the Italian-German authorities, and will lead to the planned recruitment of about 300

⁹ As Giovannini and Tuccino (1998) point out, there is an “inversely proportional correlation” in the bargaining of a company between recourse to overtime and recourse to flexibility. In fact, the choice of Lamborghini (and the readiness of workers and unions) seems clear: to adopt for personnel working on the production line, a more systematic and longer-term instrument like positive flexibility compared to overtime.

¹⁰ These are, for example, some of the themes that Bruno Trentin underlined in his *lectio magistralis* in Venice in 2004 (Casellato, 2014).

people, between white and blue collars, and to the enlargement of the production site at Sant'Agata Bolognese from around 80,000 square metres to around 150,000 square metres, which will be completed by the end of 2019.

6. PERIODISATION EMERGING FROM THE ANALYSIS

In the 50 years taken into consideration, the interruptions in ownership (eight changes), together with the strong continuity in the directorship of human resources (only three directors from 1973) and in union representation (11 at provincial level and four at territorial level, from 1985), would have been unlikely to give, taken singly or in any combination, a viable key to the interpretation of the changes of the subjects of bargaining.

From the information gathered, presented in Table 1, it emerges clearly that, during the phases in which various changes of ownership of Lamborghini come about, there is a strong continuity in the Human Resources Department, but there is a turnover of the provincial union representatives¹¹, which is pretty much in alignment with the periodisation theme emerging from the automatic analysis of the documents.

Table 1. Cluster of documents 1968-2016: periodisation of ownership, Human Resources Department, and union representatives

Period	Ownership	Human Resources Department	Provincial FIOM representative
1968-1972: production incentives and category advancements	Ferruccio Lamborghini/ Lamborghini and Rossetti	N/A	Claudio Sabattini
1973-1992: encounter between school and world of work, productive reconversion	Rossetti and Leimer/ receivership/Mimran/ /Chrysler	Claudio Galli	Romano Capelli/ Francesco Garibaldo/ Stefano Borgatti/ Gianguido Naldi
1993-2007 and 1988: remuneration	Chrysler/ Megatech/Volkswagen	Claudio Galli / Umberto Tossini	Stefano Borgatti/ Gianguido Naldi/ Maurizio Landini/ Bruno Papignani
2008-2016			
Temporary work, achievement bonuses and positive flexibility, 2008-2015	Volkswagen	Umberto Tossini	Bruno Papignani/ Giordano Fiorani/ Alberto Monti
Suspension of work and redundancy, education, participation, 2002-2010	Volkswagen	Claudio Galli/Umberto Tossini	Maurizio Landini/ Bruno Papignani
Bilateral technical commissions, 2013-2016	Volkswagen	Umberto Tossini	Giordano Fiorani/ Alberto Monti/ Michele Bulgarelli

¹¹ Reference is made only to information about the provincial FIOM, for which for the moment information has been obtained.

The Audi VW period is characterised by the largest number of documents, in particular by those belonging to the category “Bargaining” (Figures 1 and 2). This is determined by a number of factors: first of all, the period of Audi VW ownership is the longest of all the sub-periods of prior ownerships (19 years), and well exceeds the average of around five years of the other ownerships. At the same time, it is not only the quantity of documents that has increased, but also the variety (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3). For example, the CTB Minutes belong only to the Audi VW period because the CTB are in fact instituted fully in 2012. However, it is interesting to note how the request to institute CTB is put forward for the first time in the platform hypothesis of the Metalworkers’ Federation (FLM)¹² in 1987, on the occasion of the acquisition of the Lamborghini company by Chrysler. In fact, precisely at the beginning of the 1980s, CTB begin to spread in the Bologna area, although initially involving only a small percentage of companies (between 10% and 20% of companies at a national level, according to the indications of Lugli and Tognoli, 1998, p. 3). What’s more, since there are four different commissions that tend to meet several times during the year, also relating to the definition of the same item (for example, achievement bonuses), the overall number of minutes does not always correspond to the number of new items regulated, but rather testifies to the intensity of the exchange between the parties concerning the same item. In general, the characteristics of the document corpus regarding bargaining mark the shift from traditional industrial relations to participatory ones.

Concerning company contracts, the initial period of Lamborghini is characterised by a large number of contracts, almost as many as those belonging to the Audi period. In the early years of the existence of Lamborghini Automobiles, company bargaining is poorly regulated at national level, and is used little and only marginally. In the Audi VW period, following the Social Pact of 1993, however, it becomes a crucial element of bargaining between the parties. This difference becomes evident when studying the actual contracts, and observing the data about the number of occurrences by type of document: those belonging to the first period are in effect very short documents that discipline two or three items (salary increases, working hours, and shifts), and have mostly annual validity; those belonging to the last period are, on the other hand, long documents that discipline numerous contractual items, and have multi-annual validity.

Another key to the interpretation of the periodisation of the documents regards the people holding positions of direction and coordination. The models of management and of technical direction developed by these directors at times represented an element of important continuity not only with respect to the productive orientation of the company, but also in the everyday handling of relations, notwithstanding the instability in ownership for the years prior to 1998. For example, in the company-level contract stipulated in 1980 between the new society Mirman and the unions, the society delegates “with full powers” the engineer Guido Alfieri to manage “relations with personnel and with union organisations”.

The union delegates, in turn, are testimonies and protagonists of the industrial relations within Lamborghini. With the new ownership of Audi, it is in fact the unions that give the company precise indications about the relevant collective contracts on which to base future bargaining (Bargaining Platform, 1999)¹³. In general, we believe it is important to

¹² *Federazione lavoratori metalmeccanici* (FLM) is the name by which in the early 1970s the trade union federations of metalworkers – members of the CGIL, CISL (Italian Confederation of Workers’ Unions) and UIL (Italian Labour Union) confederations – joined together.

¹³ Equally, it would be fundamental to consider the union officials nominated at territorial level who in the course

underline that some of the protagonists of the bargaining (union delegates and company representatives) remain the same over the years. This continuity, notwithstanding a context of profound transformations, undoubtedly fostered not only the taking root but also the development, within the union, of those competencies that appeared in a more explicit way during the Audi period, but that already previously had been necessary in order to be able to have an impact on the decision-making processes within the company (a similar consideration, albeit found in a very different context, on the relation between the role of the actors and “the incisiveness of the contracts” is developed by Damiano and Pessa, 2003, p. 43 e p. 388).

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE RESEARCH

Through the analysis of the documents subject of investigation, it is clear how the participatory collaborative model that characterises the Audi VW ownership of Lamborghini was facilitated by the practices that were consolidated during the bargaining history prior to that acquisition, and that we have described in this article. However, the history of Lamborghini acquires greater interest if it is dialectically inserted within the context of the Italian, and more in general European, industrial relations.

According to various authors (Baccaro and Howell, 2017; Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013), from the 1970s on, and consistently with the profound transformations of the whole institutional set-up (Streeck, 2014), there is a progressive weakening of the bargaining power of the unions, and a gradual liberalisation of the system of industrial relations. This liberalisation, despite taking on different forms and connotations depending on the national institution in question, seems to converge along a neoliberal path aimed at increasing the discretionary power of the working class (Baccaro and Howell, 2017). In this context of transformations, Italy too went through a season of profound changes, conditioned by elements of specificity and difference compared to the other European countries in relation to the low level of institutionalisation and regulation of the system of industrial relations (Carrieri and Treu, 2013, pp. 73-108), to the ambivalent role of government powers as intermittent interlocutors between the social actors, and to the limited diffusion of bargaining at company level, in spite of the drive towards greater decentralisation (D’Amuri and Giorgiantonio, 2015a).

If, as Cella and Treu (2009) maintain, Italian industrial relations respond more to a pluralistic-competitive model than to a participatory-collaborative one, the study of the Lamborghini case – in which, from 1998 on, a model of industrial relations is experimented, inspired by the principles of German co-management – becomes interesting in order to understand a diverse reality on the national scene: with complete discontinuity, if we consider the limited involvement of the workers in Italian companies, and the low level of social dialogue compared to the European average (Eurofound, 2013, 2018); or rather in virtuous continuity with the most advanced elements envisaged by the Italian regulations¹⁴.

of the various decades followed the dynamics of company-level bargaining and who transmitted at local level the experience and political orientation of the territorial organisations. The effective contribution of all these protagonists could be the subject of future research, through interviews and consultations, where possible, of the archives of the union and of the company.

¹⁴ The metalworking sector recognises, for example, important rights of consultation and information in companies with more than 50 employees, as reported by D’Amuri and Giorgiantonio (2015b).

The automatic text analysis gives a key to interpreting the results of bargaining, which the contracts and information documents testify to. A non-deterministic periodisation of the documents under analysis emerged, compared to a thesis that it is only the owner of the company or the union that determines the specific topic and methods of bargaining. Over time, contents and modalities of company-level bargaining alter and, in the case in question, the pathway mapped out by the new ownership Audi VW in 1998 leads to a season of participation, which institutionalises the right to information of the parties and to the reciprocal respect of the agreements undertaken. Conflict expresses the legitimate right of the parties to express specific divergent interests and objectives, which become an opportunity to both parties for a better condition, of work and of profit. We have referred to these results, which recall some of the characteristic dilemmas of the action of unions both at national and at local level (Regini, 1981), in our comments on the contents of the contracts and information documents.

One of the indirect contributions of this study is to underline the need to study bargaining at company level with the aim of characterising decision-making processes within places of production (Bordogna and Pedersini, 2013), to analyse the mechanism by means of which organisational routines are developed (Coriat and Dosi, 1998), innovative participatory practices favourable to innovation are experimented (Leoni, 2008; Antonioli *et al.*, 2011) and, looking ahead, the impact of the introduction of new technologies is evaluated (Cirillo *et al.*, 2019). Lastly, the emergence in our analysis of the specificity of documents having an international source, like the Charters, confirms the importance of considering the role of international bargaining within large multinational groups and of discussing its potentialities (Leonardi, 2012; Guarriello and Stanzani, 2018).

From the results coming out of the analysis presented in this article, numerous lines of research and reflection emerge. In a first line of research, at present under preparation, we propose a diachronic reading of the topics in the two levels of national and corporate bargaining, also in order to evaluate to what extent Lamborghini constituted on some topics a laboratory that anticipated themes and objectives of national bargaining, or put into practice and refined what was indicated in the national contract.

Another line of research combines with the analysis of industrial relations, a study of the economic and employment results of the company. Lamborghini underwent numerous changes, not only in terms of ownership status, but also of production (from the first 350 GT produced in 120 units¹⁵, to models like the Gallardo, of which more than 14,000 pieces were produced), commercial results and employment (going from a few dozen workers at the beginning of the 1960s, to 312 employees in 1998, and reaching almost 1,400 employees in 2017)¹⁶. Throughout the years, however, the level of unionisation has remained constantly high, despite a decline from 1992 to 2001, in particular in the years of ownership instability, when it was below 50% of the total number of workers. It will be interesting to analyse to what extent and in what way union relations were influenced by the economic fluctuations of the company, or, on the contrary, whether the degree of conflict and participation affected the economic dynamics of the company, and to contribute to the

¹⁵ Source: www.lamborghini.com.

¹⁶ Data on employment are taken from documents present in the corpus and from information on the elections of RSU. The relevant graph is available in the Appendix. The gradual change in the composition of the workforce deserves particular attention: the share of workers decreased from almost 60% of Lamborghini's employees in 1998 to just below 48% in 2017.

empirical literature on the role of corporate bargaining¹⁷ through a case study that is able to cover almost entirely the history of the company analysed.

We are convinced that these and other aspects can be investigated further drawing on the digital archive created by the research group and already shared with the management and RSU of Lamborghini. Access to this archive will allow the use (in paper or digital form) of the documentary database for further indexing, consultation, and analysis.

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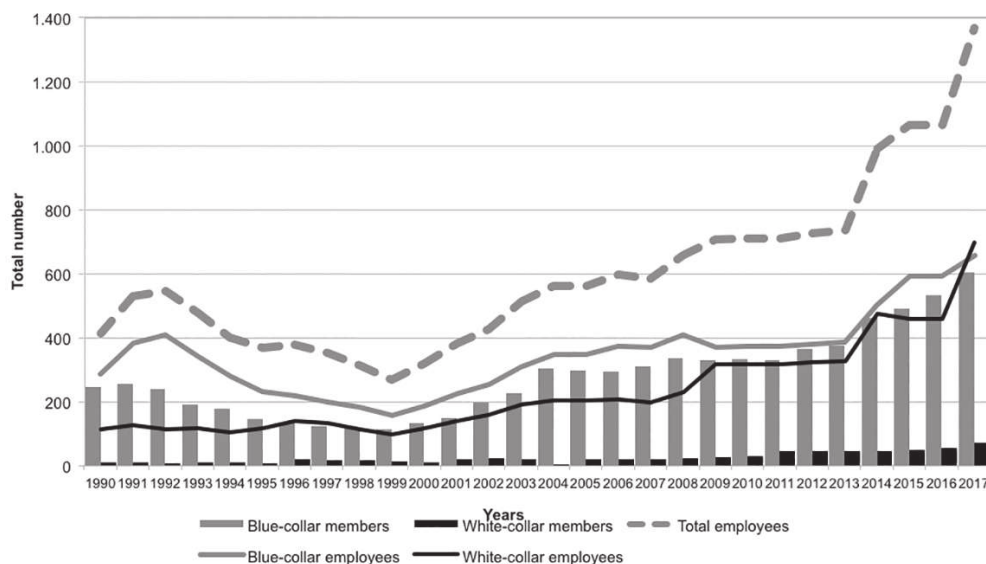
¹⁷ For a critical review, see Leoni (2018).

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APPENDIX

Number of employees and number of union members in Lamborghini, 1990-2017*



* The figure of the total number of employees includes the number of middle managers, which goes from 3-5% of the total in the 1990s, to just under 1% in recent years. The number of middle managers enrolled in the union is not recorded.

Source: FIOM Bologna, Workforce 1990-2017.