

“Leva e Traz” Project: The fight against the clandestine transportation through the supplementary operation system in Ribeirão Preto, SP Brazil

Le projet “Leva e traz”: le combat contre le transport clandestin au moyen d’une nouvelle forme d’organisation à Ribeirao Preto, SP Brésil

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ABSTRACT: The city of Ribeirão Preto developed a pioneer project in Brazil to fight the practice of the clandestine transportation, a phenomenon that has been growing in Brazil through the past few years. The drivers created a cooperative, were hired by the legal companies, and get paid by kilometer driven to assist the areas with low accessibility. Thus, the dispute for the passengers on the streets ended and the Transportation System could be organized and could receive more investments. This project has been used as a model for several different Brazilian cities

RESUME : la ville de Ribeirao Preto a développé un projet pionnier au Brésil, et qui visait à combattre la pratique du transport clandestin, phénomène qui n’avait fait que croître dans le pays au cours des dernières années. Les conducteurs ont créé une coopérative, sont engagés par les entreprises officielles et payés au kilomètre de conduite dans des zones d’accès difficile. De cette façon, les transporteurs ont cessé de se disputer les passagers dans les rues, et le Système de Transport a pu être organisé et a pu bénéficier de plus d’investissements. Ce projet a servi de modèle dans plusieurs villes brésiliennes.

1- INTRODUCTION

Brazil has watched for the past few years the appearance of the clandestine transportation and its consolidation in some of the big urban cities as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Individual drivers with low charge vehicles make its operation, organized in associations and cooperatives, disputing with the legal system the passengers on the city transportation net.

This phenomenon, previously restricted to the Asian, African, and other South American countries, came to oppose the Brazilian legal transportation systems idealized by the governors, through federal, state controlled and municipal laws. The management agencies, within their performance areas, establish to the companies the itineraries for the bus lines, time tables, operational fleet, and the fee rules with their exemptions and reductions.

In Ribeirão Preto, a middle sized city with 500 thousand inhabitants, the appearance of this kind of transportation happened at the end of 1998, starting by the suburban lines, and quickly expanding itself through the urban lines. Despite of the municipal legislation and the repressive operations against the clandestine transportation, at the end of 2000, around one hundred drivers using vans were already transporting passengers, assisting approximately around 400 thousand passengers monthly. Besides that, approximately one hundred and forty other

vans were transporting passengers on the suburban lines.

This phenomenon starts a misconducting process of the section, where the operational system emerges of the individual “staff’s” will, with time and itineraries scheduled by them, using unprepared staff, causing this way, insecurity to the system.

The result of this deregulation process for the passengers initially looks good. But it results on a lack of integration of the transportation system, on a loss in exemptions and fee reductions, loss in the trustfulness of the system, and an increase on the dislocation cost. This system does not guarantee the worker’s rights, and most of the time hires infantile labor as conductors. In a short period of time, the transportation system gets unfeasible with the lack of economic and financial balance, resulting on the unemployment of the workers in bus line companies, degeneration of the vehicles and of the public infrastructure.

Realizing this reality, Ribeirão Preto’s City Hall, through Transerp (public company that manages transport and traffic in the city), developed a pioneer project in Brazil called Supplementary Service of the Collective Transport System – “Leva e Traz”, which began operating in March 12th, 2001. The objective of this project is to incorporate the drivers who illegally drove vans, the end of the competition between buses and vans, the respect to the worker’s rights legislation, the fight against informality, and attending to the public interest.

2- THE CLANDESTINE TRANSPORTATION IN BRAZIL

Considering the different stages on the organization of the clandestine transport in the several different cities that have to deal with that problem, we can synthesize their characteristics according to the items presented below:

2.1 *The appearance of the clandestine transportation myths*

The main argument of the drivers is that they want to assist the extra passengers of the buses. They say that there is space for everyone, that the vans are an alternative option for transportation, and that is an extra job option.

2.2 *Causes of the clandestine transportation*

Within the causes of this phenomenon, we can point the increasing unemployment; the business opportunity; the imperfection of the Legal System; the great offer of station wagons after the opening of the importation market; the high profit in the first few years of operation and the reselling of the station wagons as an aggressive strategy, inclusively with the development of the Driver's Associations and Cooperatives. There is a high electoral interest from candidates to positions in the Legislative Government and the bad image of the bus companies and businessmen. The conflict between the Administrative Organ and Operation Companies results on a lack of inspection; lack of investments in fleet and infrastructure; and incapacity of operational strategies definition. Besides, there is the sight of a neoliberal market law that will balance offer and dispute.

2.3 *Characteristics of the clandestine transportation*

It's certified that the clandestine transportation is present in underdeveloped countries. This kind of transportation starts the process of misconduct of the section where anyone operates with their own time and itineraries competing with the buses. The staff is unqualified; there is insecurity for the passengers; high profit because it charges the same fee as the buses do with no gratuities (elderly, handicapped, etc.), no fee reductions (students), and no worker's rights, because they illegally hire the conductors. They withhold unlawfully taxes and only operate on the corridors in the rush hours.

They create Associations and Cooperatives and initially get the backing from the population. Illegal

jobs are created as the owner of the fleets accumulates money and explore other operators. They perform on the parallel market of bus tickets and it's also noticed stolen vehicles and/or false plates. In fact, they substitute the State on the organization of the public transport system.

2.4 *The negative effects of the clandestine transportation*

Disputing for the passengers on the streets misconducting the section; the Associations and Cooperatives do the auto-regulation creating their own rules; avoiding the ticket fee reduction; establishing market stock; marking the bus stops; creating private terminals and avoiding that new drivers be hired. Disputing the passengers using even violence in some cases, and operating only where is interesting for them. Raising the ticket fee for the passengers (payment of two tickets); degeneration of vehicles and public infrastructure. Thus, the clandestine transportation makes unfeasible to have a bus company and generates the unemployment of its drivers. The lack of trustfulness on the Transportation System generates problems on the economic development of the cities.

2.5 *The reality about the clandestine transportation*

None of the cities that legalized or regulated this system competing with the bus lines has been able to inspect it with full efficiency. They make predatory competition with the Bus System; perform in a cooperative way protecting the drivers, reserving the area and selling the lines. They clone the legalized/regulated vehicles; explore infantile work as conductors; loss of the tax revenue by the Public Government, resulting less savings in the bus line companies, traffic and pollution.

When the clandestine driver obtains his/her vehicle, he/she has to take all the inherent risks of operating it and being inspected by the Public Government, which gives fines and apprehends the vehicles. In front of the assumed risks, it is noticed that the clandestine driver starts a devilish relationship with the companies that sell vehicles, submitting themselves to exhausting work conditions to honor their financial obligation, deceived with false hopes to earn a lot of money.

The financing of the vehicle is usually made for a period of time superior to the vehicle's useful life. Which is already inferior because of the severe conditions of utilization on the collective transportation and because of the lack of preventive maintenance that is simply seeing as a cost as any others. It results in the exchange for a new vehicle in a short pe-

riod of time, consequently a new financing. Another circle of the vehicle exchange and desperate work to obtain the money to pay the financing begins. This fleet is then super used up and put to sale, starting then the clandestine operation in another city.

As the time runs by, we verify the appearance of some investors, who possess a lot of money to obtain several vehicles, illegally hiring drivers, saturating the market and making that people interested in the clandestine system migrate to other cities where the system doesn't exist, restarting the circle of illegal transportation not structured.

In Ribeirão Preto, the clandestine drivers used to work up until 12 hours a day to earn approximately US\$ 2,100.00 monthly. Their expenses were: pay the conductor US\$ 4.00 a day, parking garage approximately US\$ 3.00 a day, the portion of the financing approximately US\$ 800.00 monthly, plus the cost of the insurance, gasoline and maintenance. The other characteristic verified was that the clandestine drivers used to live in Ribeirão Preto.

3- REORGANIZATION PROJECT OF RIBEIRÃO PRETO'S COLLECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

3.1 Characteristics of the Transportation System

72 bus lines, 282 vehicles and 3 operating companies form the Public Transportation System of Ribeirão Preto. The monthly passenger average of 2000 was 4,216,850 passengers, keeping the rhythm of loss registered since 1997, against 5.5 million passengers transported in 1996, which was the highest volume registered since the beginning of the actual transportation system in 1984. The IPK (index of passengers by kilometer driven) dropped from 4.4 in 1991 to 2.4 in 2000). In the same time, the total of kilometers driven increased from 12 million to 16.1 million. Each bus company is responsible for approximately 33% of the dispute.

3.2 The System Diagnosis

The Collective Transportation System of Ribeirão Preto was showing several problems, which were identified and solved by the first trimester of 2001 through field researches with passengers and through written reports from the inspection and systemization of the complaints' team through a call center.

On the field research done in March 2001 the Transportation System obtained a positive valuation of 58% and a negative valuation of 42% by the passengers. The three operating companies were rated separately obtaining different results between them

when comparing to the average of the section. The best-rated company obtained 68.5% of approval against 31.5% of disapproval. The second best rated obtained 55.9% of approval against 44.1% of disapproval, and the third best rated, 51.1% and 48.9%.

When divided by categories the System was rated according to the attributes following presented with its respective rating positive percentages: Comfort (51.4%), Reliability on the Services (50.9%), and Quickness (46.9%). The results are very preoccupating because those items represent the minimum requisite that the public transportation should have. None of the services with essential features can live with that low approval index by their users. It is important to point that the development of the clandestine transportation reached the three companies. However it had the worst incidence in the lines of the lower rated company.

Besides the passenger's evaluation, we can add the insufficient infrastructure after the defusion of the two terminals located in the central area of the city, the existence of few sheltered bus stops, and the lack of a special bus line or corridor on the streets. The Information System to the passenger was insufficient and there were problems with the Electronic Ticketing System.

3.3 New Policy of the Collective Transportation

With the entrance into office of the new Municipal Administration, it was initiated at Transerp a Collective Transportation System Recuperation Program composed of several projects using guidelines to guarantee the citizen's mobility; to encourage the development of the Non-Transport to have a better organized city and a better utilization of the non-motorized ways of transport. The other guideline is to enable that the highest number of people use the streets, which are public assets, taking as priority the collective transportation.

The projects that have been developed have the following objectives:

- Reorganizing the collective transportation by bus, adjusting their lines and giving them the infrastructure necessary;
- Rationalizing the traffic, decreasing its negative effects: traffic jams, pollution, accidents, and degeneration of the residential areas;
- Establishing a Transportation Net with several different supplementary ways;
- Certifying quality, quantity, and fair price. The Public Government establishes how to operate specifying fleet, lines, time tables, and fees;

- Structuring Transerp as the management company for the public transportation and as organ of the executive traffic;
- Certifying good work conditions to the employees of that section.

4- “LEVA E TRAZ” PROJECT – THE COLLECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM SUPPLEMENTARY OPERATION

Starting from the reality found and from the objectives of the Re-structuring Program, the introduction of the operation of low charge vehicles – vans and minibuses – into the Collective Transportation System of Ribeirão Preto was studied considering the following conditions:

- Attending the public interest;
- Being entailed to the suitable bus operation, thus having technical feasibility;
- Don't compete with bus line operation, thus eliminating the dispute for the passenger on the streets;
- Having legal support;
- Respecting the worker's legislation, fighting the informality.

Assisting the low accessibility areas and transporting the handicapped passengers were the hypothesis that best attended all the conditions.

To operate in the “Leva e Traz”, the drivers that best attended to the minimum pre-requirements (minimum of 21 years of age, driver's license category D, no criminal passages and to reside in the city for over three years). They were hired by the three legal transportation companies of the city through a new Cooperative to assist the areas of the city where there were no bus lines or neighborhoods where the pause between one bus and the other was too long.

The vans would transport the passengers connecting the assisted areas to the nearest bus stop where there is high periodicity of buses. Other news about this project is that the transport is free for the passengers and the drivers are paid by kilometer driven. The passenger pay the fee when takes the bus on the bus stop connection.

Currently the driver gets paid the equivalent by 5 thousand km/month at a cost of US\$ 0.27 per km, total of US\$ 1,350.00 before taxes. Initially the operation was done by vans with 12 passengers of capacity then, after one year; the Cooperative exchanged them to minibuses.

This model of operation attends the two objectives as well chased. The first objective was to avoid that the project represented an increase on the cost for the passengers that would use the supplementary

transportation and that used the connection to the bus system. Having thus to pay for two tickets. The second objective was to characterize the free ticketing of the transportation by vans in Ribeirão Preto.

The solution for the transportation problem in Ribeirão Preto wouldn't be found if the bus companies wouldn't feel responsible for it too. Besides hiring staff from the cooperative and paying for kilometers driven, they are responsible for hiring an insurance company.

Other challenge was to convince the clandestine drivers that their introduction to the Collective Transportation System wouldn't be an idealized structure, but a feasible structure for the System. The purpose of clandestine drivers was to release the operation, at the Transerp, of one or two vans per bus line without bidding process.

There was an explanation about how the Collective Transportation System works and the analysis of the difficulties faced by them. This process enabled the consciousness, by the drivers, that their partnership association to obtain a vehicle would result in a lower operation cost with a higher profit, because a lower capital would be depreciated. Many drivers that used to operate with inadequate vans opted for this system to obtain their new vans and started to pay the financing of a vehicle, that operated in two shifts. When it came to exchanging the fleet to minibuses, there was an association among three drivers for each vehicle.

Its organization in Cooperative was stimulating to obtain facilities when buying gasoline and hiring an appropriate maintenance for the vehicles. Other advantage is the easy access to financing the new fleet. This way, we supplant the idea of the individual driver with your own vehicle and introduce the right to operate in the system, through arrest of a cooperative share that starts having market value. Thinking like that, the sale of vehicles to private drivers become less attractive

The introduction of the “Leva e Traz” program became possible to rationalize the bus lines itineraries, to defuse the lines or their inadequate prolongation and to incorporate the extra fleet of four bus in express lines, implanted in the corridors. Currently there are 35 neighborhoods assisted by 30 routes, 13 connecting bus stops and approximately 250 thousand passengers monthly. Initially, the operational fleet consisted of 50 vans in the “Leva e Traz” program, 9 in the transportation of handicapped and 85 cooperated drivers. On May 2002, after one-year contract, the vans were exchanged by 30 minibuses that increased the transportation capacity for the “Leva e Traz”.

4.1 Characteristics

- Assistance to the areas not yet assisted by the buses;
- Assistance to the areas with low periodicity from one bus to the other;
- Free transportation for the passengers;
- Drivers hired by the legal companies by means of getting paid by kilometers driven;
- Standardized fleet with its own visual identity;
- Regular services with itineraries and time tables pre-established;
- Operating the same shift as the buses.

4.2 Operation

- The vehicles transport the passengers connecting the assisted areas to the nearest bus stop where there is a high periodicity of buses from one or more lines;
- Physical connection of the lines and routes.

4.3 Benefits

4.3.1 Institutional

- The service is free for the passenger;
- The end of the illegality;
- The operation is the legal companies' responsibilities;
- The terms of permission of the legal companies were respected;
- There is no alternative transportation but a supplementary service to the legal one;
- It only exists supplementary transportation with zero fee;
- Respect to the worker's and to the transportation's legislation.

4.3.2 Operational

- Raising the periodicity to the furthest neighborhood;
- Better usage of the modal bus reducing the operational cost due to the elimination of the prolongations or full lines;
- Does not hurt the Bus System;
- Interruption of the bus line cloning process, thus do not disturbing the consolidated lines;
- Immediate assistance to the new neighborhoods and to areas with low density of population;
- Higher control over the drivers by the Public Government;
- Raise of the fleet to assist the handicapped;
- Assistance to the passenger with tax exemption and reduction.

4.3.3 Economic

- Elimination of the ruinous competition to the Transportation System;
- Interruption on the passengers loss process;
- Possibility of recuperating the passengers lost before to the clandestine drivers;
- Guarantee of good profit to hired drivers.

5- AFTER IMPLANTATION EVALUATION

The positive results can be measured by the passenger's approval and by the raise on the number of people using the service. Yonder reversing the dropping curve, the System had an increase of approximately 500 thousand passenger's monthly, equivalent to a 15% raise.

During the "Leva e Traz" introduction process, the population could watch on the press the debates about the necessity of the public transportation being legalized and could meet the negative effects of the clandestine transportation to the city. Thus, favorable arguments used by the illegal drivers to justify why they were doing the clandestine transportation were discovered.

The Public Transportation System can get into a virtuous increasing circle with investments by the operating companies and by the Public Government within the Reorganization Program.

Only the invariable improvement of the quality of the Collective Transportation System of Ribeirão Preto, the intensive inspection, and a correct articulation between established powers can guarantee the effective control over the System, preventing the beginning of the problem all over again.

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