


Daniel and the "schemes": Illegalisms and complementary transportation in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.007-014>

Eduardo de Oliveira Rodrigues¹

ABSTRACT

Cities around the world have different times that are articulated in the construction of their daily lives. This dialectic between speed and slowness can be perceived in several ways, including the careful observation of their modes of transport. They allow the operation of different regimes of movement of people and goods, and that, in the case of a city like Rio de Janeiro, cannot be understood without the contribution of vans and kombis to its transport system. These complementary modes reproduce even more clearly the dialectic between speed and slowness, especially due to an element that makes a difference: the combination of a series of illegalisms in their operationalization. In this sense, this paper aims to understand the tactics that enable the entanglement of a complementary transport "scheme" in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro – a region of the capital of Rio de Janeiro that encompasses dozens of neighborhoods geographically and symbolically distant from the "center" of the metropolis and its wealthier tourist neighborhoods. I seek to describe the operation of this market embedded in the borders of the legal/extralegal as a way of thinking about the different times that shape the illegalisms that cross Daniel's relationship (a van driver who aims to be a military policeman) with the city. This exercise allows us to shed light on some dimensions of the complementary transport market in Rio de Janeiro from the point of view of a possible future "policeman" who was already experiencing a daily work marked by precariousness and violence. This text presents part of the results of my doctoral thesis, built on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the environment of a "preparatory course" for the next competition of the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PMERJ). My interlocutors are not "recruits" already enrolled in police training schools, but simple young people between the ages of 18 and 32 who aim, for various reasons, to join the PMERJ. Over the course of fifteen uninterrupted months (nine face-to-face and six "remote"), I tried to understand the motivations that lead these young people to want to pursue this profession before any formal contact with the military corporation. Thus, the structure of the text seeks to outline a leaner analytical approach to this problem, bringing the interests in the police career from the perspective of a van driver. The narrative develops through the accompaniment of an afternoon in Daniel's van, when I was designated his "ticket collector" within the route traveled by him daily within the scope of his work.

Keywords: Illegalisms, Alternative transport, Police, Militia.

¹ Dr., Colégio Pedro II/RJ



INTRODUCTION²

FIRST WORDS: THE CITY, ITS TIMES AND ITS DIFFERENT USES

"Bro, for those who work on the "track", you have to know how to "read the track". You have to stay on all the time, otherwise you fuck yourself. Here in the van: it's the traffic, the inspector, the passenger... That's a lot to handle. If it wasn't for us, the city would stop bro, stop! We are the ones who carry the city on our backs."

Daniel's energetic outburst contrasts with the slow pace of that early afternoon trip. It rains, but not too much. This does not prevent traffic on an important thoroughfare in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro from being practically stopped. On the windshield of his van, rests a thin layer of rain that makes the contours of the city lose sharpness. The landscape behind the wet glass presents itself as a kind of impressionist canvas dominated by shades of gray and red. In it, the asphalt is enlivened by a slow procession of three parallel rows involving different arrangements of cars, vans, kombis and buses, each with its respective position lights on. From time to time, motorcycles pass through the "corridors" left by the vehicles and manage, without major difficulty, to overcome the slowness of traffic. Daniel is impatient and laments: "If I had my bike, I wouldn't have this. Traffic jam is always a loss." I then ask him if free traffic is better for working. He replies with conviction: "Of course! Traffic has to flow. It's easier to pick up and drop off passengers. It's not even for us to run, that's going to depend. But every day is a day. Every day has a different 'pique'." The above lines seem to me to introduce the path chosen for the construction of Daniel's narrative in his work with the vans³. They initially tell us about the different times that govern the city. It's the use of these different times, in part, that allows him and other drivers to "carry the city on their backs." On another occasion, VIRÍLIO (1997, p. 22) suggested that the spectacle of the street would be circulation. The streets would be like crossing places, ports through which waves of different magnitudes overflow and where *speed* takes on the role of protagonist in the processes of capitalist accumulation. For SANTOS (1996, p. 220), the urgency of this same time appears linked to hegemonic processes that operate from the global scale towards our daily lives. It is a time that compresses space through technique, science and information and that points to a "convergence of moments" (SANTOS, 1994, p. 49) in the creation of a single rationality in the form of management and management of

² This chapter is a synthetic version of an article originally published in Rodrigues (2021).

³ Different lines of vans and kombis offer passenger transport services throughout the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro (RMRJ). However, this offer is not homogeneous. As MAMANI (2004, p. 335) explains, since the 1990s it has been guided by the patterns of socio-spatial segregation present in the RMRJ, with a greater concentration in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro and in the municipalities surrounding the metropolitan nucleus. Some of the vehicles are legalized by the local municipalities and the Rio de Janeiro government (in the case of intercity lines), while other cars do not have permission from the Government to circulate. In the capital alone, city hall data show 143 lines and 2,279 vans tendered in the city in 2020 (SECRETARIA MUNICIPAL DE TRANSPORTES, 2020). The absence of reliable figures to quantify drivers and unregulated vehicles suggests a considerable addition to the official data. Thus, this article partially explores the plurality of this universe, since the empirical reference of the description refers only to the daily life of a driver of legalized vans.



territories. In his relationship with the local times, he finds, however, a series of frictions and resistances that suggest a rhythm relatively closer to *slowness*.

In fact, speed and slowness establish lines of continuity and rupture if we imagine cities far from the "*Global North*" referenced in Virilian's work. From the point of view of complementary transport⁴, a metropolis like Rio de Janeiro seems to me a good case to think about the dialectic between speed and slowness by the vans to be reproduced even more clearly, especially due to the need to combine a series of *illegalisms* (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 261) in their operation. I argue that such a dialectic should be considered because the times of a van "scheme" do not happen only from a linear and chronological logic, since the streets may not be just in-between, that is, roads that connect two or more points in an urban plan. In a different way, the experience of the city is also inscribed in a universe of multiple events and relationships that present themselves before our eyes not only as a path, but also as an end in themselves or the arrival itself (VOGEL and MELLO, 2017).

For individuals who work and spend most of the day on the streets, they insinuate themselves as a source of *opportunities* that can be enjoyed. To this end, the time that governs the daily lives of such subjects is close to the Greek notion of *kairós* (the "opportune time"). According to DÉTIENNE and VERNANT (1991, p. 20), events involving *kairos* are characterized by their multiplicity and ambiguity, by situations of great fluidity that tend to change constantly. Knowing how to undertake a correct reading of the opportunities of time – as well as knowing how to use it – is a fundamental virtue for mastering this regime of circulation. Unlike the acceleration resulting from chronological circularity, mobility and speed will not always mean power under the domains of the *kairos*. I mean, in other words, that when driving a van, more than always be as fast and punctual as possible, Daniel needs to know how to "read the track" in a timely manner. In the native view, this means having full knowledge of the path to follow on your route, the pace of passenger demand, the dynamics of bribes paid to the police, among other things.

It is from the different uses of time that Daniel and other drivers create a set of "tactics", in the sense employed by CERTEAU (2014, p. 45-46), in the specific forms of their daily work. It is precisely these "tactics" that blur the boundaries of legal/extralegal for my interlocutors. However, when thought of as actions of resistance to a given system of social control in a country like Brazil, this category deserves an important caveat for its dialogue with Foucauld's work. As KANT DE LIMA (2019, p. 209) shows, disciplinary power refers to the process of normalization that progressively homogenizes social conduct through the indoctrination of society. It is a disciplinary

⁴ Regarding the city of Rio de Janeiro, MARCHIONE (2013, p. 39) points out that, since 2012, with the creation of the "Special Coordination of Complementary Transport", the official nomenclature of the passenger service generally offered by vans has officially changed from "alternative" to "complementary" transport. In the present article, I have chosen to use the official nomenclature since both categories, in the native discourse, are mobilized without major differences in meaning (although other terms such as "informal" or "pirate" transport are rejected by their stigma). On the political disputes involving these categories, see the work of MAMANI (2004).



strategy that is not merely repressive, which does not aim to suppress but rather to reproduce a "normal" behavior in individuals. In the Brazilian case, the author warns us that the normalization process took place in a different way, since our social relations develop in a hierarchical, authoritarian manner and guided by enormous inequalities of rights between different social segments (KANT DE LIMA, 2008). Thus, the use of the category "tactical" in the text should be understood as an analytical tool of very limited scope, which refers only to the specific uses of time in relation to my fieldwork.

In this sense, this chapter aims to understand a little better the universe of complementary transport in Rio de Janeiro in its relationship with illegalisms. To some extent, other studies have already partially touched on this problem due to the proximity that mainly the militias have established with the transport of vans and kombis in Rio de Janeiro (CANO and DUARTE, 2012; BRAMA, 2019; ALVES, 2020; among others). Since at least the 2008 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI), the economic importance of complementary transport for different paramilitary groups operating in the RMRJ has been very clear (ALERJ, 2008, p. 111-126). However, as I will try to show, the illegalisms inscribed in the operation of this modal overflow the relationship with these groups – which indicates not only a possible contribution of this article on the subject, but also a gap still little explored in the academic literature.

Therefore, I suggest approaching the problem through the ethnographic description of the different uses of time by the operators of a van "scheme" in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro⁵. The structure of the article will be developed through the accompaniment of an afternoon alongside Daniel, which allowed me to follow, over the last few months, his work and study routine in a preparatory "course" for the next "soldier" contest of the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PMERJ). This fact, in addition to the component linked to the operation of the vans, also seems to me to allow us to apprehend some meanings about the illegalisms in the logic of a possible future military police (PM).

THE "SCHEME" OF VANS AND THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN SPEED AND SLOWNESS

Slow traffic made the return trip take longer than usual. At that time, it usually took cars just over an hour to complete the entire journey. It took us almost two. Arriving at the final point, we got out of the van and found other of Daniel's colleagues on a street corner eating. It was normal for drivers' lunches to take place outside the usual noon hours, when they were not replaced by quick

⁵ The "scheme" refers to a native category used among my interlocutors, which referred to any arrangement of relationships of a personal nature that involved individuals, groups or institutions, and that were articulated around the operation of some illegal or partially illegal market. On the analytical exploration of this category, see Rodrigues (2021a).



meals made on the street as they were that afternoon. Everything would depend on the pace of work, that is, if the day was being "rushed" or if it was a "quiet" day.

In fact, at that time the drivers ate with a certain tranquility because the movement was very small. There were too few passengers to board the van, which usually did not leave the bus stop until most of its sixteen-seat capacity was filled. This did not give her a precise departure and arrival time, as was the case with buses that ran a similar route. Sometimes, with the van already full from the end point, it traveled its route in the shortest possible time, trying to reach the passengers' most common destinations quickly so that the "turnaround" time between boarding and disembarking was significantly reduced. At other times, when the vehicle was emptier, the route was traveled more slowly, often with the van stopping longer at each point waiting for possible new customers. The passage of time thus varied not exactly, but by the rhythm of the opportunities that presented themselves⁶.

At a slower pace that afternoon, we sat down and half-chatted about Daniel's younger brother. The boy's name was Guto and he was also a driver and colleague for all of them. His van had been seized that morning during a raid in another area of the suburb. Despite being a legal vehicle – just like all the other vans in the line – it could not be circulating outside its area of jurisdiction. Previously, Daniel had explained to me that the city of Rio was trying to regulate complementary transport. The implementation of the "Local Public Transport System" (STPL) made it possible to partially register and regulate vans and drivers. As MARCHIONE (2013, p. 39) points out, implementation has occurred more consistently since 2012 in the wake of the sporting "mega-events" that took place in the city. The STPL provides for its own paint layout that varies according to each region, in addition to a red "plate" license plate, an annual inspection seal, a certificate of authorization from the city hall and a driver's identification badge. The problem with the van in question is that it not only traveled outside its area of jurisdiction, but was also driven by a driver who did not even have a valid National Driver's License (CNH).

Daniel was uneasy about this matter from an early age. Although the "outsourcing" of the van was a common practice among drivers, driving in other areas was quite risky in their eyes. "Outsourcing" the van, to some extent, was allowed by the city. Each "permitted" driver may request the inclusion of an auxiliary driver to operate the vehicle registered on their behalf. Daniel does it too. As my interlocutor uses the morning to go to the "cram school" or do other activities, he informally charges one hundred reais "per day" to the other driver for owning the van between six in the morning and two in the afternoon. During this period, the assistant is responsible for the fuel

⁶ During the month of April 2020, as an example, Daniel did not work with the van despite the authorization of the city hall. He explained to me that the low number of passengers was not worth putting it to circulate, since the buses covered all the demand during the first month of the COVID-19 quarantine.



spent and, eventually, for any traffic violations committed. All the money accumulated after paying the expenses is your profit – something like three hundred dollars on a "good" day's work.

In some cases, Daniel and his colleagues "outsource" the van through some other kind of "scheme." It may involve the payment of a "daily rate" higher than the standard amount – like Guto, who had charged two hundred reais instead of the usual one hundred of the driver caught in the *blitz*. In addition to the 100% surcharge charged for the eventual risk, renting the van on those terms was perhaps the only possibility, in the short term, for Daniel's brother to recover at least part of a debt that the driver had with him. In addition to needing the money quickly, the boy was unemployed and did not have the resources to renew his driver's license. He persuaded Guto not only to rent the van for a week, but also to allow it to circulate outside the region determined by the city. The arguments seemed consistent. Because it is an area with less movement of vans and buses, he could supposedly make more money during the days worked. In addition, the driver claimed not only to have "unwinded" the situation with the local militia, but also to have always lived in the area. There would be no problem.

However, neither Daniel nor the other drivers could tell me the reasons that led the venture to actually fail. The ill-fated maneuver generated a fine of approximately two thousand reais to be added to the debt that the driver already had with Guto. All this made Daniel's irritation even greater, as he had called his brother's attention to the risks – especially because the van had circulated in another area outside the jurisdiction of his STPL. The conclusion was that Guto and the driver simply "went soft" and that was enough to explain their *misfortune*. In general, the "soft start" evoked for the drivers a set of moral justifications glimpsed as a practical result of not knowing how to "read the road" in a timely manner⁷.

Our conversation had to be abruptly interrupted. The queue of passengers had grown and some were already impatient with the delay. The drivers finished their meal and one of them got up to start a new trip. The vans were arranged in a line of three cars, with Daniel occupying the last position. While waiting for his turn, our conversation continued inside the vehicle because the rain had poured in. He turned on the radio and started talking about some other successful "schemes" that countered the previous case. They were different forms of "use", in the sense inscribed in CERTEAU (2014, p. 87), which reused a simple complementary transport van in other types of actions.

It started for the time when his vehicle was used to transport weapons between two favelas of the same illicit drug retail group. Two rifles were disassembled and hidden under the trim lining of the doors and rear seat. The "tactics" to carry out the freight were proudly described: in addition to the van being able to legally circulate along the entire stretch between the favelas, it was also placed

⁷ On the category of "giving a soft" and its role in the causal explanation of the consequences of an action, see SILVA (2019, p. 153-158).



on a small "trailer" also regularized to transport it with the weapons inside. The action was completely successful. Daniel received two thousand reais for the undertaking, passing only five hundred to the owner of the trailer on the condition that he would be cleared if the weapons were discovered. Unlike his brother, he said he took the risks less for the money involved and more because of the *consideration* he had for his former son-in-law⁸. Having accepted the help of his ex-son-in-law under those conditions meant that that "gift" (MAUSS, 1974, p. 102) had to be reciprocated. In relationships animated by individuals who are liminal to the "world of crime" (FELTRAN, 2008, p. 93), to reciprocate in that way would be to act "for the right", that is, to follow the direction of a criminal morality that is learned throughout the experience with the crime itself (GRILLO, 2014, p. 366). In that situation, both Daniel and his former son-in-law were guided by a similar moral compass.

In the same vein, he tells me of another occasion when the van was used to take a state representative to a favela during the elections. In an election year, Daniel is always called to be a driver for the team of three candidates (two deputies and a councilwoman) in their "hand-to-hand" with voters and other local leaders. The work is very well regarded by Daniel, since it guarantees him up to three thousand reais a week and opens up possibilities to meet "important people". On these occasions, the van usually circulates with the candidate himself, his aides and "security guards" – mostly PMs doing "odd jobs" during their days off work.

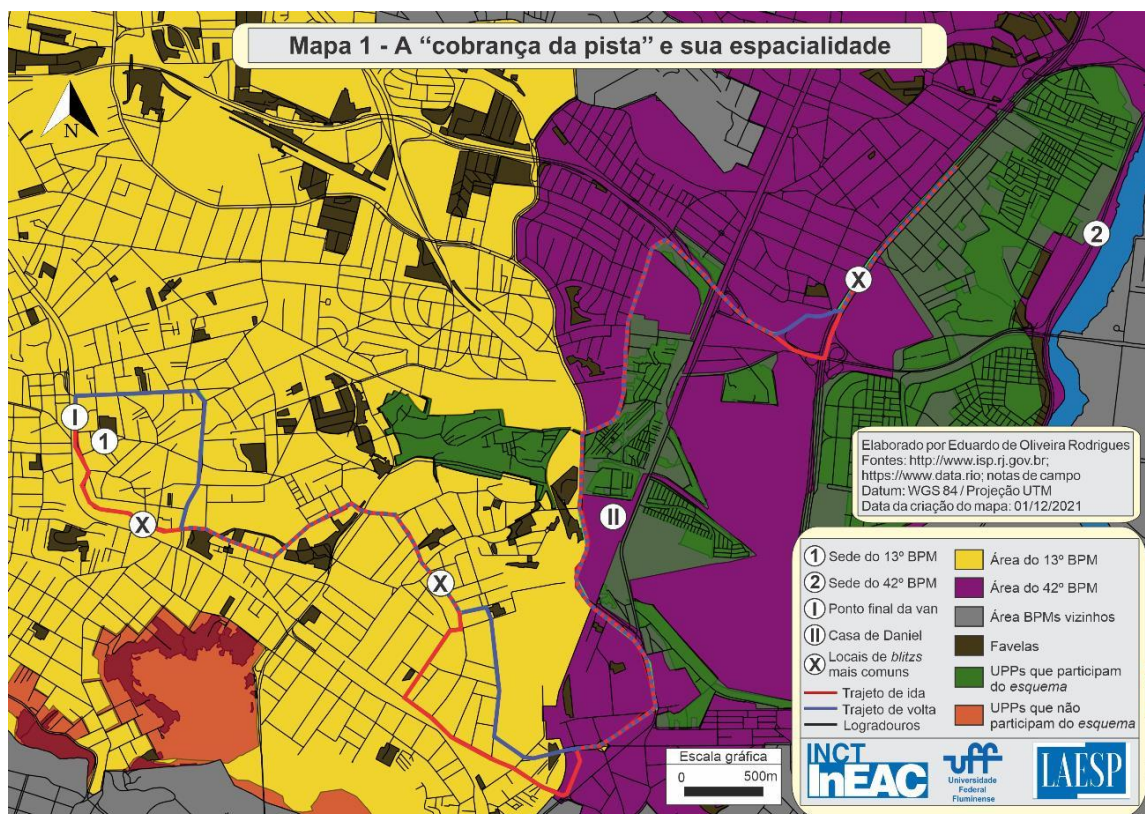
The person who inserted him in this other "scheme" was a friend, a former driver, who worked together with him and his brother. The young man, since 2014, has been a PM and also acts as a "security" for different parliamentarians. On the occasion narrated, both were in the van heading to a favela territorialized by militiamen when they were stopped at a *city hall inspection checkpoint*: "Bro, just roll down the window. The [sic] 'police' showed the wallet and said it was 'Mike.'⁹" The van passed through the roadblock and continued on its way undisturbed, despite the fact that it was illegal to drive in that area. I asked him if the inspectors knew his friend PM to release them like that. Daniel explained to me that the person who was mediating between the candidate and the community was a sergeant, a friend of his friend, assigned to the Military Police Battalion (BPM) in the area and also a member of the local militia. He was the one who guaranteed not only the free circulation of the van, but also the candidate's access to community leaders. It was curious to realize that although the concession of the lines is regulated by the STPL, no van transits in that region of

⁸ Consideration is a category that involves values linked to "trust" and "honor." The honorable man, for BOURDIEU (2002, p. 20), is the one who is defined by a fidelity to himself, by the concern to be worthy of an image that seems to me, in this case, to refer to a certain ideal of masculinity. To return such a favor was a moral challenge. Daniel viewed retribution as a "man's matter" because he had been powerless to provide for his family while imprisoned. His first wife's brother is a drug retailer and helped his sister and son financially during that time.

⁹ "Mike" is the shortened version of "Papa Mike", PM in the police universe. The PMERJ and other security forces around the world adopt the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) international spelling alphabet, where the letter "P" is spelled "pope" and the letter "M" is spelled "mike".

the city without authorization from the militia. This authorization does not happen without the weekly payment of bribes, which reinforces the economic importance of this mode of transport for these groups (ALERJ, 2008; CANO and DUARTE, 2012; BRAMA, 2019; ALVES, 2020; among others). The regulated service thus creates a perverse obligation on drivers. They are required to pay twice for their legal right to work: both to the city hall and to the militiamen.

This situation was similar to Daniel's own van "scheme." The path of the cars passes through the area of two different BPMs. Although it is not an area territorialized by militiamen, circulation is only allowed through the weekly payment of bribes to the command of the two battalions. The "charging of the lane", as the drivers claim, demands eighteen hundred reais weekly only from Daniel and his co-workers. In addition to the two commands, this money is also shared between different public agents who directly and indirectly supervise traffic, such as municipal guards, police officers who work in traffic, among others. Not even the area's Pacifying Police Unit (UPP) – located in a favela near the van's end point – is left out of the "scheme."¹⁰ Below, it is possible to see a map that seeks to spatialize the "scheme" of the allowances paid to security agents:



¹⁰ Data worked by BRAMA (2019, p. 90) point in the same direction by identifying similar dynamics in other locations of Daniel's STPL. This shows us how such illegalities are not limited only to militiamen, but also encompass other public agents who act in the organs of state control.



I was struck by the fact that extortion is practiced not only on illegal van drivers, but also on workers who are absolutely legalized by the city. Daniel explained to me that even in the case of "permitted" drivers, the non-payment of the bribe leads the agents to practice fines or seizures for any extralegal reason: a supposedly "bald" tire, some defective position light, small dents, parking in a prohibited place, etc. If we imagine that only the neighborhood where he works is crossed by dozens of complementary transport lines, the extortion "scheme" becomes a lucrative business.

The conversation had to be interrupted again. Daniel's turn in line had come, and he would be the next driver to greet passengers. He opened the van by a hydraulic device installed in the door, activated on the vehicle's own dashboard that facilitated the boarding and disembarking of customers. As it is legal, the payment of the R\$ 4.05 fare can be made in cash or through the electronic ticketing system "*RioCard* Mais". Most passengers pay for the ticket in cash with "two" or "five" reais bills. On average, Daniel earns R\$ 430.00 for a strenuous day of up to ten hours of work a day – usually divided between R\$ 230.00 in cash and R\$ 200.00 in the "*RioCard*". As the passengers board, Daniel collects the money and gives change. He keeps in a compartment in the panel some banknotes of lesser value and mainly coins attached to a magnet. For security reasons, unused cash in the "cash flow" is placed in a more reserved compartment under the bank. At the end of the day it is accounted for and carefully tied by an elastic band. As these are banknotes that are usually of small value, the volume of the pouch is significant. With his braggart spirit, I am surprised by a challenge: "I'll send you the talk: in my van no one rides for free! Since you're here, I'm going to put you to work on this trip, right?" There's no way we can't help but burst out laughing. I then proceed to collect the money with Daniel guiding me. I fumble at first but, luckily, on that trip, most of the passengers decide to pay with the "*RioCard*". This makes me feel more comfortable to continue our conversation.

With a "cake" of bills in my hands, it is inevitable that the subject does not fall on money. I ask him if he prefers payment to be made in cash or by electronic ticketing. "Money," he replies. I then question if the payment on the card would not be safer, as he would not carry all the money of the day in cash, or even more practical and efficient, since he would not need to divide himself between the functions of driver/collector. That option seemed much more "rational" to me at that moment, especially because of my "plight" faced as a "collector". Upon hearing my question, Daniel couldn't help but smile wryly: "nothing replaces the feeling of money in hand." His answer made me think about the possibilities of money being used also according to local and specific "exchange values" (PIRES, 2013, p. 155). For my interlocutor, the materiality of the money in hand was important not only as a "use value", that is, as a means to obtain different consumer goods, but also because of the possibility of differentiated insertion in a market of exchange relations based on *status* – especially in relation to women.



It was common for Daniel to post a lot of photos and videos on his "Whatsapp" *status*. The subjects were as varied as possible, and a detailed scrutiny of each of them is beyond the scope of the article. However, it is worth saying that a significant part of the images and videos took as the protagonist of the scenes his car, his motorcycle and the "thick pouch" of money that he accumulated at the end of each day worked. From time to time, usually on Fridays or weekends, such images were shuffled into a scenic composition with the "thick pouch" being placed on the hood of the car next to other banknotes (of fifty or one hundred reais), accompanied by bottles of *whiskey*, "energy drink" or beer. It was a composition that suggested a kind of *potlach* (MAUSS, 1974, p. 175), that is, a demonstration of status superiority through the celebration of consumption and ostentation. He didn't hide that it was part of a performance whose main objective was to "make a wave with friends" and, above all, attract the attention of the opposite sex.

On different occasions, Daniel told me stories that reinforced how the ownership of a comfortable *sedan*, a powerful motorcycle or even "money in hand" were fundamental in his "development" with women. When we were driving in the car, I witnessed him roll down the "filmed" windows of the vehicle several times and turn the sound to a higher volume as we approached his place of residence. It was inevitable that we wouldn't get everyone's attention – especially, in his view, women. In the very compartment of the van where he kept the "thick pouch", there were also several packages of "condoms" and "lubricating gel". The money in the compartment was a "special money" (ZELIZER, 2013, p. 98) that functioned as a kind of "enchanted artifact" capable of attracting women. That very arrangement of the three objects was not gratuitous. They were articulated there in the daily exercise of their sexuality in the midst of a market of symbolic exchanges.

On the other hand, the choice of payment in cash also revealed reasons of a different order. The vast majority of drivers were individuals with no credit in the conventional financial market. None of them had a fixed income, nor did they have significant assets or property to their name. It was also not uncommon for them to have a "dirty name" in the "Credit Protection Service" (SPC). This made it impossible, for example, to obtain a loan from any financial institution at reasonable interest rates to finance the purchase of a van or the payment of late fees. Like other drivers, Daniel chose to finance his SUV with the help of Rodrigo – a man who provided part of the necessary credit to discredited drivers with the banks. He worked mainly with the purchase, sale and refurbishment of vans obtained at auctions, where cars usually from an accident or seizure were sold at a lower price than in the conventional market. Rodrigo opened lines of financing from a down payment (of at least 10% of the value of the utility) plus variable installments plus interest. The differential of this "scheme" was precisely the way in which the collection was made. All the benefited drivers were required to register the checking account receiving the payment of the "*RioCard*" tickets in the name



of "oranges" linked to Rodrigo. That is, the installment payments were daily, deducted directly from the electronic ticketing machine of each van. The harder the driver worked, the more Rodrigo was paid. If we consider that the amount paid on the card represented 40-50% of the daily profit of each driver, the amount paid per month was very high. To give you an idea, Daniel spent between four and five thousand reais a month to finance his van, since he did not have access to more attractive lines of credit.

Such an organization allows us to perceive the existence of hierarchies within a "scheme". Rodrigo works as a kind of "financial" for the drivers. Everyone depends on it in some way, which makes the control of payments be done by the drivers themselves who, under no circumstances, wish to be denied the possibility of credit¹¹. He was in a position above the owners of the vans – drivers who can make money either by driving their own vehicle or by "outsourcing" the cars (like Daniel and his brother). Below them are the "day laborers", who, because they do not own the "means of production", are subject to possible (but not certain) fluctuations in the daily rate according to the status of the driver. Finally, further down the hierarchy, there are the bikers who serve as the drivers' "scouts".¹² They are the ones who usually dictate the faster or slower pace of the vans, as their information updates in real time the "lane reading" through "Whatsapp".

I had realized the importance of this app as soon as Daniel started the trip, because all the time he drove with simultaneous attention in traffic and on his cell phone. At first, I imagined that it was a *chat* with friends and that he was just another driver who drives around on his phone. But I soon realized that it was something connected to his work – not only because of the volume of audio, video and text messages exchanged, but mainly because of their content. In the final part of the trip, when I was closer to the point where I would disembark, I had the opportunity to talk to him better about using the app.

In general, that "Whatsapp" group establishes what CERTEAU (2014, p. 89) again called "anti-discipline" – or a "counterpanopticon" – if we consider the case in description. I have said before that one of the problems faced by the "scheme" of the vans is the inspections and extortion undertaken by public agents. To try to make control more difficult, the virtual group was created as a

¹¹ In addition, because he works in the business of buying and selling damaged and seized vans, Rodrigo seems to have some knowledge in public inspection agencies. It is an important "knot" in the articulation between different "schemes" that work in the "folds" of legal/extralegal. In addition to controlling the supply of credit, there is a certain fear among drivers that default will lead Rodrigo to activate his "meshes" in the Public Power to strengthen the inspection against the group or one of its members. As we can see, symbolic violence here plays an important role in the systems of regulation of defaulters as well.

¹² It is important to clarify that this hierarchy is not fixed. There are relative possibilities for vertical mobility within a "scheme" given its dynamism. Before being a "landlord", Daniel was a "scout" and then a "day laborer". He got to know the "scheme" of the vans when he was a cargo robber. Due to his skill on the motorcycle, he was invited to be a "scout" and soon stood out in the group for his ability not to lose sight of the inspection teams. In a short time, he qualified as a truck driver (Modality "D" of the CNH) and rose to "day laborer" - although he still worked occasionally as a "scout" and robber. With the money from the vans and the robberies, he was finally able to finance his car and move up another rung in the hierarchy by becoming an "owner".



defensive "tactic" that allows monitoring the progress of inspections around the city. It contains approximately 250 members (mostly legal and illegal van drivers from across Daniel's STPL region), of which the five fixed bikers and eventually some temporary ones function as the long-range "eyes" of the drivers. The number of motorcycles in action varies according to the number of enforcement teams on the streets. They travel the entire region of the aforementioned STPL literally following, monitoring and informing in real time the location and possible routes of the inspectors.

The "owners" of the group charge the drivers forty reais per week for the service. It is their job to monitor the group by mediating and organizing message exchanges. Of this amount collected, five hundred "clean" reais are paid for each motorcycle per week, that is, already discounted for fuel expenses, maintenance and traffic violations¹³. Each motorcycle carries not only the "rider" responsible for following and not losing sight of the agents, but also a "pillion" who has a cell phone in hand to pass on the pertinent information to the "owner". Generally, the five hundred reais are divided equally between the two occupants of the motorcycle.

When rangers set up a *checkpoint*, the job is to stop and monitor them from a safe distance. When cars are moving, they must follow them and report their location in real time, since agents can intercept any van or kombi to carry out a surprise inspection. As the cars are not identified, a curious scene takes place daily before dawn: the bikers gather before five in the morning in front of the police battalion from which the teams leave. The starting point hardly changes. But any possible change is alerted by some agents who receive bribes from the "owners" of the group themselves to keep them informed.

A question that soon came to me if the agents didn't realize they were being followed. Daniel replied that not only did they understand, but they even knew the "scouts". But he argues that, once detained, there was no way for them to be incriminated: "Oh, there have been many cases of the PM arresting the motorcyclists. But take it to the police station, so what? The motorcycle is all legal, the guy has a [driver's] license. What are the police going to do? Accuse him of riding a motorcycle?" The solution found by the agents, he says, is to try to "mislead" the motorcycles by taking different paths than usual – such as a wrong way, a prohibited U-turn, or even streets that pass through favelas with UPPs. In these areas, other police officers may be called in to intercept the motorcyclists and perform some routine checks. Once out of the field of vision of the "scouts", the teams return to circulate freely, momentarily interrupting the "counterpanopticon". It is at these times that the streets become much more dangerous, as drivers are forced to circulate without any predictability.

¹³ Unlike the case of the "day laborers" and "owners", the fines committed by the bikers are paid in full by the group. This happens because during monitoring, various traffic violations such as "signal advancement" and "speeding" have to be committed so that the inspection teams do not disappear from the sight of the "scouts".



As you can see, this is an extremely dangerous job that often leads to serious and even fatal accidents. The motorcycles carry out real chases of the inspectors where each street or avenue of the Rio suburb becomes a new "trench" in the battle for speed. The "pilots" must be faster than the inspectors. The "pillions" have to not only "map" the circulation, but also predict, whenever possible, where the inspectors will go. The "owners" of the group, in turn, need to quickly systematize this intricate network of "information vs. counter-information" to provide the best evasive route option. At the other end of the flow are drivers, who must use the information to calculate their movements and refine their "lane reading." When eventually in trouble, they take advantage of the fact that they know the territory through which they travel better and "cut" paths or even enter well-known favelas where the inspectors hardly venture. In these places, many support bases of the drug retail end up serving as "containment" for the inspectors. Daniel tells me that just as accidents involving motorcyclists are not rare, it is also not uncommon for teams of inspectors to be threatened or even have their car shot for some unsuccessful invasion. This is where the dimension of the *speed* of the "scheme" explodes, since stopping can literally mean dying (VIRÍLIO, 1996, p. 28).

The daily coexistence between the "scouts" and the inspectors also reveals other important differences in the times of illegalism. Because they are mobile teams made up of different Military Police, municipal guards and agents of DETRO (Department of Road Transport of the State of Rio de Janeiro), it is difficult to organize a "lane charge" as is done with public agents who work relatively fixed on the streets and corners. Daniel explains to me that the work schedule of the teams being mobile and articulating three different public institutions is deliberate, since this makes it difficult to stretch the "scheme" to them. This does not, however, prevent other types of relationships of trust from being built. Because "scouts" and inspectors are on the street all the time, under the eyes of the whole city, negotiations that directly involve money in the open are not welcome. Unlike Daniel's example with women, the same cash, in this context, ceases to be enchanted and becomes something cursed. This creates new possibilities for exchange. From an economic point of view, sometimes teams are surprised at the end of lunch, when they ask for the bill and are told that the invoice has already been paid. Or, on other occasions, street vendors offer candy, candy, cookies, water, soda and other goodies to agents in the areas where the blitzes are usually installed. Or even tickets for Flamengo games, from the "socio-supporter" program, are offered to the red-black fans of the teams. All of this is accepted with great description and respect because, after all, they are "gifts" that do not constitute a practice of corruption, since such a category is linked to relative processes of "social classification" (BEZERRA, 2017, p. 126).

But it is the moralities also inscribed in this "game" that manage to consolidate such exchanges. "Gifts" are generally only accepted by team members under codes of conduct that must be followed by the "riders" and "pillions". The recommendations deal with the obligation of



motorcycle occupants to wear helmets, the use of cell phones to be restricted to the "pillion", or even, when they are not chasing an inspector, motorcycles cannot commit traffic violations. In short: "scouts" must show recognition by law enforcement. It is a fundamental requirement that their *status* be considered, that is, that no "moral insult" (CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, 2002, p. 110) be perpetrated by motorcycles. The provision of these economic and moral goods provides the "scouts" with the opportunity to carry out their monitoring work. But it is also imperative that they do not lose sight of the fact that on the other side of the street there are honorable public officials who must be respected. This is a way of maintaining the honor of the agents participating in the "scheme" not only in relation to the public, but also in relation to colleagues who do not accept the "gifts". Such a dynamic is tolerated since the teams still fulfill their function of impounding or fining the vans. The "scheme" functions only as a condition for this "cat and mouse game" to be played.

Daniel's van was approaching the railroad track again, and I realize it's time to disembark. I take advantage of the stopped traffic and ask him to drop me off near the sign. Before leaving, I thank you for the long conversation we've had and make my way to the station. We arranged to meet the next morning at the "cram school". That was the end of our journey.

FINAL WORDS: THE *OPPORTUNE USES OF TIME* AND THE "SPELLS OF THE STREET"

By describing a "scheme" of vans in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, this article sought to better understand the relationship between the universe of complementary transport and illegalism. Such dynamics, animated by the dialectic between speed and slowness, reveal a series of uses of "opportune time" that are intertwined with the city's own times. As pointed out earlier, the complexity of urban markets spills over the boundaries of the legal. The illegalisms that permeate the described "schemes" should not be seen as a type of "moral deviation" of their operators, but rather as a political tactic constructed in the daily actions of those subjects in their relationship with the law and its agents. Without the use of these "tactics", the dynamism of urban markets would not be animated in the same way as in a Brazilian metropolis such as Rio de Janeiro.

On the other hand, the present paper also has analytical limits, since the entire description was based on only one among many other lines of vans that exist in the RMRJ. It is reasonable to infer that there are specificities in other van "schemes" if a broader scale of analysis is considered, in particular regarding the particularities about the location, the "permission" or not character of the drivers, whether the vehicle is a van or kombi and, above all, the different relationships established between its operators and other local actors. As an example, if we consider not only the heterogeneity of practices and forms of organization among the different militia groups in Rio de Janeiro (BRAMA, 2019), but also the high degree of discretion of actions on the part of the Military Police



at the policing end (MUNIZ, 1999; LEMGRUBER, MUSUMECI, CANO, 2003; among others), it is reasonable to infer again that each local political arrangement manages different "schemes" in the operation of complementary transport. However, a more precise diagnosis of these dynamics has yet to be made, since this problem needs to be further explored by the specialized academic literature.

In any case, what can be affirmed based on the description made is that such arts of "do with" CERTEAU (2014, p. 87) are not created, established or operated outside the State or the market. In fact, the "schemes" seem to me to be one of the possible consequences of the very "effects" (MITCHELL, 2006, p.182-185) that the State brings with it in its formation processes. The data presented by the ethnography sought to show how these formative processes appear in the construction of the daily life of the van operators, where the boundaries between the legal and the extralegal, or even between the State, the market and society are permanently renegotiated and updated. When thought of from the perspective of Daniel – a van driver who sees in the police career a possibility of "social ascension" – the desire to become a PM ends up being part of this same formative process of the State from his daily life. The "ascension" in question is glimpsed through the legal carrying of weapons, the use of uniforms and the possession of the functional police card. Together, these three objects "open doors" – as Daniel and many other interlocutors have already told me in the "cram school" aimed at preparing for the PMERJ exam¹⁴. This assertion means, in the native discourse, that the use of these objects at the "opportune time" can open up greater possibilities of insertion in different "schemes" linked to the countless urban markets operated in the streets and corners of Rio de Janeiro.

For individuals like Daniel, contact with police officers in different situations shows how the police are configured as one of the most important "centers of power" (GEERTZ, 1997) for the precarious urban population. His condition as a driver allows him to grasp some meanings about the illegalisms and forge expectations for a possible future job under the uniform of the PMERJ. Becoming a police officer, in this sense, is perhaps the fulfillment of an intimate desire to master the "spells of the street". This desire comes from the daily consecration of police officers as sorcerers capable of transforming the streets, as we have seen, into places of opportunity or curse. These sorcerers, it is important to say, are part of a caste capable of gathering powerful forces that influence the opportune uses of the times of illegalism – including in a "scheme" of vans that happens daily somewhere in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁴ Between July 2019 and March 2020, I carried out participant observation in a preparatory course for the next PMERJ "soldier" competition. Through face-to-face and virtual contact with the candidates, I sought to understand not only their social representations about the police before any formal contact with the institution, but also the motivations that led them to try their careers in the circle of the "squares".



REFERENCES

1. ALERJ - ASSEMBLEIA LEGISLATIVA DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO. Relatório final da Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito destinada a investigar a ação de milícias no âmbito do estado do Rio de Janeiro. Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2008. Disponível em: [link]. Acesso em: 01/10/2020.
2. ALVES, José Cláudio de Souza. Dos barões ao extermínio: uma história da violência na Baixada Fluminense. Rio de Janeiro: Consequência, 2ª ed., 2020.
3. BARBOSA, Antônio Rafael. Um Abraço para todos os amigos: algumas considerações sobre o tráfico de drogas no Rio de Janeiro. Niterói: EdUFF, 1998.
4. BEZERRA, Marcos Otávio. Corrupção e produção do Estado. Revista Pós Ciências Sociais, v. 14, n. 27, 2017. p. 99-130.
5. BOHANNAN, Paul & DANTON, George. Introduction. In: BOHANNAN, Paul & DANTON, George (orgs.). Markets in África – Eight subsistence economics in transition. S.I.: Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1965. p. 1-26.
6. BOURDIEU, Pierre. O sentido da honra. In: BOURDIEU, Pierre. Esboço de uma Teoria da Prática: Precedido de três estudos de Etnologia Cabila. Oeiras: Celta Editora, 2002. p. 5-35.
7. BRAMA, Leonardo. As diversas milícias do Rio de Janeiro: entre expansões práticas e semânticas. Dissertação (Mestrado em Sociologia) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2019.
8. CANO, Ignácio & DUARTE, Thaís (orgs.). “No sapatinho”: a evolução das milícias no Rio de Janeiro [2008 – 2011]. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Heinrich Böll, 2012.
9. CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, Luís R. Direitos republicanos, identidades coletivas e esfera pública no Brasil e no Quebec. In: CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, Luís R. Direito Legal e Insulto Moral: dilemas da cidadania no Brasil, Quebec e EUA. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará: Núcleo de Antropologia Política, 2002. p. 95-128.
10. CERTAU, Michel de. A invenção do cotidiano: Artes de fazer. 22ª ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014.
11. CONQUERGOOD, Dwight. Performance Studies: Intervention and Radical Research. The Drama Review 46, 2 (T174), 2002. p. 145-156.
12. DÉTIENNE, Marcel & VERNANT, Jean-Pierre. Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
13. FELTRAN, Gabriel. O legítimo em disputa: As fronteiras do “mundo do crime” nas periferias de São Paulo. Dilemas – Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social (1), 2008, p. 93-126.
14. FOUCAULT, Michel. Vigiar e punir: nascimento da prisão. 38ª ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2010.
15. GEERTZ, Clifford. Centros, reis e carisma: reflexões sobre o simbolismo do poder. In: GEERTZ, Clifford. O saber local. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1996. p. 182-219.



16. GRILLO, Carolina Christoph Grillo; POLICARPO, Frederico; VERÍSSIMO, Marcos. A dura e o desenrolo: efeitos práticos da nova lei de drogas no Rio de Janeiro. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, 19(40), 2011. p. 135-148.
17. GRILLO, Carolina Christoph. Pelo certo: o direito informal do tráfico em favelas cariocas. In: WERNECK, Alexandre & CARDOSO DE OLIVEIRA, Luis Roberto (orgs.). *Pensando bem: estudos e sociologia e antropologia da moral*. 1ª ed. Rio de Janeiro, Casa da Palavra, 2014. p. 337-366.
18. KANT DE LIMA, Roberto. Tradição Inquisitorial no Brasil, da Colônia à República: da devassa ao inquérito policial. In: KANT DE LIMA, Roberto. *Ensaio de Antropologia e Direito: acesso à justiça e processos institucionais de administração de conflitos e produção de verdade jurídica em uma perspectiva comparada*. Rio de Janeiro: Lumens Juris, 2008. p. 127-160.
19. _____. *A polícia na cidade do Rio de Janeiro: seus dilemas e paradoxos*. 3ª ed. rev. Rio de Janeiro, 2019.
20. LEMBRUGER, Julita; MUSUMECI, Leonarda; CANO, Ignacio. *Quem vigia os vigias? Um estudo sobre controle externo da polícia no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2003.
21. MAMANI, Hernán Armando. Alternativo, informal, irregular ou ilegal? O campo de lutas dos transportes públicos. *El Rostro Urbano de América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Clacso, v. 1, 2004. p. 321-346.
22. MARCHIONE, Allan Gomes. *A formalização do informal: o transporte alternativo de kombis e vans na Ilha do Governador*. Monografia (Especialização em Política e Planejamento Urbano do Instituto de Pesquisa e Planejamento Urbano e Regional) – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2013.
23. MISSE, Michel. Trocas ilícitas e mercadorias políticas: para uma interpretação de trocas ilícitas e moralmente reprováveis cuja persistência e abrangência no Brasil nos causam incômodos também teóricos. *Anuário Antropológico [Online]*, II, 2010. p. 89-107.
24. MITCHELL, T. State, Economy, and the State Effect. In: SHARMA, A.; GUPTA, A. *The Anthropology of the State: a Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. p.169-186.
25. MUNIZ, Jaqueline de O. *Ser policial é, sobretudo, uma razão de ser: cultura e cotidiano da Polícia Militar do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*. Tese (Doutorado em Ciência Política) – Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1999.
26. PIRES, Lenin dos S. *Esculhamba, mas não esculacha! – Uma etnografia dos usos urbanos dos trens da Central do Brasil*. Niterói: EdUFF, 2011.
27. _____. Entre notas e moedas: trocas e circulação de valores entre negociantes em Constituição. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, Porto Alegre, ano 19, n. 39, Jan./Jun. 2013. p. 149-178.
28. RODRIGUES, Eduardo de Oliveira. “‘Feitiços da rua’: os diferentes tempos dos ilegalismos e seus usos a partir da descrição de um ‘esquema’ de transporte complementar no subúrbio carioca”. *Antropolítica - Revista Contemporânea De Antropologia*, (53), 2021. p. 347-370.
29. SANTOS, Milton. *Técnica, espaço e tempo: globalização e meio técnico-científico informacional*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1994.



30. _____. A Natureza do espaço: técnica e tempo; razão e emoção. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1996.
31. SECRETARIA MUNICIPAL DE TRANSPORTES. Município renova contrato de 179 permissionários de vans até 2022. Prefeitura da cidade do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 06 de fevereiro de 2020. Cidade. Disponível em: [link]. Acesso em 29/09/2020.
32. SILVA, Gabriel Borges da. “Quantos ainda vão morrer eu não sei”: o regime do arbítrio, curtição, morte e a vida em um lugar chamado de favela. Tese (Doutorado em Ciências Sociais e Jurídicas) – Programa de Pós-Graduação em Sociologia e Direito, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2019.
33. TELLES, Vera da Silva; HIRATA, Daniel Veloso. Ilegalismos e jogos de poder em São Paulo. Tempo soc., São Paulo, v. 22, n. 2, 2010. p. 39-59.
34. VIRÍLIO, Paul. Velocidade e Política. São Paulo, Estação Liberdade, 1996.
35. VOGEL, Arno & MELLO, Marco Antonio da Silva. Quando a rua vira casa. 4ª ed. Niterói: EdUFF, 2017.
36. ZELIZER, Viviana A. The Social Meaning of Money: “Special Monies”. In: ZELIZER, Viviana A. Economic lives: how culture shapes the economy. 3ª ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. p. 93-127.