

PULL QUOTE:

“Santiago’s island interurban transport is almost monopolized by Hiace minibuses, that reflect many features and cultural practices of working-class population, mainly through vehicle’s functioning as a ‘unity of cooperation’ between drivers and passengers before and during the trip”

Mobility, Social Status, and Cooperative Practices in the Sucupira Hiace Central Station, Santiago Island, Cape Verde

Abstract

Cape Verde’s main interurban public transport hubs, the Hiace minibus stations, provide a prismatic look into the patterns and processes of mobility, urbanization, and **aspirations for modernity** on the archipelago. **In this article, we examine the history of Hiace vehicles, the regulations and rules governing their circulation, the social status of drivers as mobility-providers and the everyday interactions between passengers and drivers in the central Hiace minibus station of the island of Santiago: Sucupira. The formation of a ‘unity of cooperation’ inside the Hiace is at the core of these interactions, challenging usual preconceptions about the practices of ‘capturing the passenger’ in the station.** The multiplicity of social relations embedded in the station and during the trips, we argue, reflects popular forms of self-organization and cooperation in traveling, as well as notions of mobility, social status and **culture that articulate everyday life for collective transport drivers and working-class users in Cape Verdean society.**

Keywords: Hiace minibus; minibus stations; sociality; island of Santiago; Cape Verde.

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Introduction

Generally, road traffic is light on the archipelago of Cape Verde. This relatively low level of traffic is linked to the poor economic conditions of Cape Verdean society and to the spread-out structure of their settlement. Efforts of state-driven infrastructural development and modernization, however, which increased since around the turn of the millennium as elsewhere on the continent, had a perceptible impact on the road and traffic conditions on the Cape Verdean archipelago as well. Data from the Instituto das Estradas [Roads Institute] (2017) shows that the roads of Cape Verde total 1,650 km, of which 1,113 km are national roads and 537 km are municipal roads. Forty years ago, these roads were made of dirt or, in some cases, they were built with cobblestones – following the Portuguese colonial model. During the last 15 years, then, more than 700 km of interurban roads in Cape Verde have been built, rehabilitated, or modernized, resulting in a general uplift of driving conditions. In this context, the more than 2,000 minibus vans, known locally as ‘Hiaces’ (*yasi* in Creole, from the Toyota model Hiace) and Hilux (open-bed pick-up trucks) started monopolizing interurban collective transportation on primary and secondary roads on the island of Santiago, which is the largest island in the archipelago.

The materials presented in this article draw from three fieldwork periods on Santiago Island, totaling about 10 months in different locales between 2009 and 2011. Our main goal was to understand the causes of road crashes and the high accident rate on the island. During our fieldwork, we accompanied several Hiace drivers, making dozens of trips between different towns, and participated in their leisure time while compiling biographical accounts through in-depth interviews and informal conversations with several protagonists of the Cape Verdean mobility sector (including officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and ordinary daily Hiace passengers). In this article we argue that the appropriation of Hiace vehicles in the urban environment by the drivers, assistants, passengers and other islanders in the Sucupira central station of Praia (Cape Verde’s capital on the Santiago Island) reflect central features and tensions of Cape Verdean society, **specially regarding social and spatial mobility, gender and self-organization of less-**

privileged populations. In other words: the patterns of cooperation, self-organization and socialization at work in Sucupira station and inside the vehicles are reflecting features of Santiago's working-class culture.

First of all we will present the history of the Hiace and its drivers in the context of Santiago's island, stressing that the status many drivers experienced as mobility providers was modified with the arrival of more vehicles, changing drastically the relationships between drivers and their passengers. After that, we will introduce the structure of ownership of Hiace vehicles, that originate differentiated road culture and lifestyles among drivers. Also, some aspects of regulation, prices and competition between vehicles will be presented, along with the importance of cultural representations inside and outside the Hiace. In the central section we will describe the context of Sucupira, the everyday practices in the station, the differences between drivers based on their town of origin and the techniques of drivers to fill up their vehicle. A portrait similar to the present one on the Hiace in Sucupira market station is constructed by Stasik (2013, 2017) in his ethnography of the Neoplan Station in Accra, Ghana, in the context of the social worlds of African roads (Beck, Klaeger, and Stasik 2017). In the last section section, we will challenge the common preconception about the role of interactions between passengers and drivers in the station, that are actually at the core of a temporary social contract: the unity of cooperation found inside the Hiace. Following this line of thought, we will examine the sense of cooperation and the practices of socialization between drivers, passengers and other actors around traveling (inside and outside the vehicle; before and during the trip) that are at the base of the Hiace system in Santiago. We will see empirical descriptions of popular uses and practices of solidarity that might reflect some aspects of Cape Verdean everyday working-class culture.

The Hiace vehicles and its drivers in the context of Santiago Island

Several informants remember that before the arrival of the Hiace, during the 1970s, going to the city from any part of the island to take care of medical or administrative issues meant sleeping in the street to claim a space in some truck that goes to the city in the morning. In the next decade two public buses started to make round-trips across the island daily, that were also insufficient facing the demand of mobility. The history of the Hiace on Santiago island begins in the late 1980s, when it started transforming Santiago's mobility through speed, flexibility, and comfort, especially when compared to

traveling with older and much slower trucks and public buses. Hiace vans were initially bought and sent by Cape Verdeans living in the diaspora (specially USA, Portugal and Holland) to provide livelihoods to their friends and relatives in the transport sector and were an immediate success. During the 1990s, following the transformation of neoliberal economic restructuring that was stimulated by the conservative party (MpD), hundreds of Hiace minibuses were imported to the island, crowding the market with offer. As a consequence, during the decade of 2000, the former high demand of space in the Hiace vehicles was overwhelmed by the massive offer provided by the many Hiace vans sent in the 1990s. At the same time the growing number of private vehicles and the multiplication of stores offering groceries and consumer goods in many localities made the Hiace vehicles less necessary than in the past two decades.

Following this process, the social relevance of drivers and the general consideration of his symbolic status has been suffered a severe transformation. The first Hiace vehicles sent to the island were objects of desire, which bestowed upon their first drivers the power to provide a degree of flexible mobility, which was unknown to the people of Santiago. Many of the first Hiace drivers became well known icons of mobility on the island. They used the social status conferred to them by their vehicle to construct somewhat mythical biographies for themselves. This was useful to harass women in exchange for mobility, an attitude that they were proud of calling it 'seduction'. While Santiago's women obviously had some room for negotiation in these unequal encounters and should not be outright victimised, also awful incidents of abuse occurred in those times. Another source of drivers' social status– and for the interest others had to develop relationships with them – was their relatively high income. On an island with a high degree of non-monetary, subsistence economy their access to money was a powerful source of social status. Van der Geest (2009: 260-261) relates a similar situation among collective transport drivers in Ghana, who, over generations, accumulated an image of social status: 40 years ago a driver who visited the capital five times a week embodied mobility and freedom. Many people in rural areas, especially the younger generations, looked up to the urban lifestyle of clothes and electronic devices, alcohol and cigarettes, that was carried into the rural areas by drivers from the city.

Whether in Ghana or in Cape Verde – or in other sociocultural settings across the African continent – the social status linked to mobility and its actors depended strongly

on the relative scarcity of vehicles. In Cape Verde this was challenged when hundreds of Hiace and private vehicles were imported during the 1990s and the 2000s. As a consequence of these influx of vehicles, drivers relaxed their attitude as mobility providers, becoming more dependent on the passenger's needs and the new requirements of mobility. However, the image of men spending time in the stations playing cards with other drivers and getting to know passer-by women in a central station such as Sucupira, works as an enticement for many young people. The affirmative image of a man working with his car, displaying an urban, global lifestyle corresponds with the social ambitions for modernization, mobility and success in Santiago's working-class society. Driver's social status is still perceived as such by women and younger people, who imitate them as a way to ascend socially: possessing their own Hiace is still a desirable and ambitious goal. Nonetheless, the real life of Hiace drivers is far to correspond with this ideal image of masculinity, success and modern lifestyle.

Culture, regulations, and the structure of ownership of Hiace vehicles

The structure of property in the Hiace business from the 1980s to our days presents a clear polarization between the owners of vehicles and the non-owner drivers, which originate two different lifestyles, driving cultures and systems of social status that are today in transformation. Among the first group we can find those owners who drive themselves to make a living, usually non-owner drivers who saved money for years to buy a Hiace. Also in the group of owners there are those who hire employees to drive the vehicle, sometimes controlling the business from the diaspora through a familiar member or a close friend who acts as representative. However, the majority of drivers are non-owner hired young people which suffer awful working conditions, forced to make long working hours on the road. In fact, there is a critical difference in driving styles and road culture between drivers who own the vehicle (who drive more carefully) and non-owner drivers, with the latter group being more inclined to perform an aggressive driving style that sometimes result in road accidents (author 2014, 2017). The price for a trip is fixed by the traffic authorities according to the distances between localities, and the drivers never inflate it. As a consequence, these young drivers need to make many trips during a day to make quick cash (that they hold) beyond the minimum daily income asked by the owner of the vehicle, which causes numerous tensions regarding

trust between the parts. Saving enough money to buy a vehicle – and to gain social status and increase one’s quality of life – is a usual aspiration of these young drivers, although just a few of them will succeed in it. This structure of property and the organization of work among drivers engender another difference between them: while the drivers who own the vehicle (specially those coming from small villages) spend more resting time in the stations to respect the timings of their usual customers from inland, non-owner drivers are circulating permanently to compete with other drivers catching random passengers which let them with no time to rest or socialize. We will develop this issue in the next section. Also, this is an economic sector highly gendered, with males occupying all the positions (drivers, assistants, owners, cleaners, mechanics) which also represents the position of women in Santiago’s society: Women are merely passengers and sometimes are harassed in the context of Hiace transport.

Hiace vans have a license to provide interurban transportation throughout the island and, as a consequence, are forbidden to circulate inside the towns to provide a personalized taxi service after bringing passengers to the city, which is asked for many of them. According with the rules, Hiaces must wait for passengers in the stations until departure time, but some drivers often ignore that, as we will see later. This is specially watched by police officers in the capital, Praia, where the lobby of taxis and buses (both public and private) has been trying to limit Hiace’s influence during the last two decades. At the same time, authorities and politicians have also been specially restrictive with the dominance of Hiace’s informal practices, worried about the appearance of “africanity” of the Hiace vehicular system (in an archipelago that boast about being almost an European country in some of its representations, see Vasconcelos, 2004). Although an interurban bus service there is still existent (two rounds a day), Hiace vans are virtually the only mean of interurban transportation for the lower and middle classes, who rarely own a private vehicle. As a consequence, the composition inside the vehicles in terms of class is relatively homogeneous, making the Hiace a point of observation that reflects specially Santiago’s working class and popular society.

Hiace vans served as local spaces of popular expression for religious (Jesus Christ), political (Che Guevara) and sportive (football) appreciation: badges, naming and stickers are common in the vehicles to stress the identity of the van. Hiace vehicles reflect many of the features and tensions of Cape Verdean society, which makes them indeed a ‘total social fact’ (Mauss’ 1954): inside them people discuss about every aspect of the island’s

history, recent news and gossip, and one can listen a wide variety of local musical traditions (which often triggers some discussions inside the vehicle). **Passengers from different social origins (although never the higher-classes) travel inside the Hiace for different reasons and to attend a wide variety of businesses, bringing with them a story that is sometimes shared with the other passengers.** Popular nicknames for different models of Hiace vehicles indicate that Cape Verdeans are familiar with the different shapes of Hiace vans through recent history: the Rostu Runho (Ugly Face) or the Boca Sapó (Frog Mouth) refer to the resemblance between animals and people's faces. Other names allude to historical phases, such as the Ana Mafalda (the name of the Portuguese Military ship used to send Cape Verdeans to work in forced labor to São Tomé island in the colonial period), or the Noventa (Ninety) in reference to the twentieth century decade defined by the massive arrival of Hiace vehicles to the island after the victory of the liberal government.

Hiace vans were always connected with Santiago's popular classes. Into the vehicles we can observe their daily struggles for representation, their economic practices and their ways of cooperation, in the dynamic form of interurban movement and connections. In fact, the country's upper classes, including European and North-American residents, Cape Verde politicians and state workers, embassy staff (the capital is in Santiago), and other more-privileged people, never travel in what is today considered for them a working-class, dangerous, and uncomfortable means of transportation. However, it is those who do not use the Hiace are the responsible agents for the many attempts to regulate their functioning, by imposing schedules, banning stops in the city when requested by passengers, and even planning the elimination of the central station of Sucupira to build high-class residences (author, 2014). In other words: it is members of the upper classes who tend to remove from Santiago's geography the elements of self-organization, cooperation, and solidarity that characterize the mobility of Cape Verdean working classes, ever since the end of the 1980s.

The Central Station of Sucupira in Praia: Social Dynamics and Interactions

Except for some several doctoral theses produced in Santiago assessing its urban structure, in particular its 'informal urbanism' (or 'spontaneous growth') and the construction of the high-class Palmarejo district (Medina de Nascimento 2009; Furtado 2008), the city of Praia has so far been ignored by academic scholarship (but see

Cusinato, Fontanari, and Varotti 2001). At the foot of the “Platô”, the nucleus of the Portuguese colonization on the plateau that now dominates the extensive city of Praia, there is the Sucupira market. This is where the Hiace central station is located in the country’s capital. Here, recent processes of urban transformation have pushed the Hiace vehicles out of the central position they previously held. And it is here that we can see, with particular intensity, the fierce competition between non-owner drivers, the consumption of alcohol by some of them to survive the long working days, and the forceful strategies that are used to recruit passengers.

To the non initiated visitor, Sucupira is like a labyrinth composed of cement structures and shacks closed off by fabric curtains. Seen from the top the area looks like a mosaic of corrugated and plastic roofs. There are countless stalls and colorful vending stands, such as those of the *rabidantes*, the women-emblem of the market who engage in transnational trade (Grassi 2003). Textile, edibles, technology, and music are sold here, but there are also food stalls, hairdressers and hair extension and nail care parlours, stalls with gadgets of all kinds. The casual visitor is prone to getting lost in this shadowy interior, bowing down underneath pieces of clothing and taking time and again a turn that leads to new nooks and crannies. Inside the market, the stallholders live in the spaces their business occupies: women breastfeed their children, eating food from the metal dishes provided by the *casas de pasto* (popular low-priced restaurants) found inside the market or on its perimeter. Women, men, and children sleep on piles of clothes in their own establishment, while music and television sets entertain the stallholders who run technology stores. Products of all kinds come together while sounds and smells intermingle in what is a sometimes gloomy and spooky, sometimes a chromatically explosive, underground-like landscape.

The market and the adjoining “Parque 5 de Julho” form a spatial unity in the shape of an irregular pentagon. Typically, the Hiace vans drive around the perimeter of this pentagon to collect as many passengers as possible by trying to give the impression that they are already heading out of the city. However, they are repeatedly passing through the same spaces in a circular way in order to pick up more passengers. Crowds of street vendors line the sidewalk adjoining Sucupira right next to the bustling traffic. Hiace drivers and their assistants shout and announce their destination. As a contrast, in the rear sides we can find a constant yet gentler bustle, characterized by the loading and unloading of goods, as well as the gathering of groups of sellers in conversation and at

rest. In another side of the market we can find the parking area, where the first thing that is seen are taxi drivers cleaning their vehicles or chatting, and Hiace vans, for whom this is the only permitted parking space. Here we can find also two old coaches, who have been converted into *casas de pasto*, as well as bars and a tobacco kiosk, which are like nodal points in this particular social space. This is where the most of our observations of, and conversations and interviews with, drivers have taken place in Praia.

Everyday life in the Hiace station is marked by the presence of drivers and assistants, vehicle cleaners, vendors, and passers-by, customers, passengers, and beggars. Whereas the organization of the parking space appears unregulated, the station is organized according to the vehicle's respective destination: those coming from Praia or Somada (the biggest cities in Santiago island) are generally in permanent circulation. This sometimes occurs because most of these vehicles are driven by non-owners, who generally are forced to work long hours on the road, competing with other drivers (author 2014). *As a consequence, the pressure of work and the need to make more trips a day, cause that Praia and Somada drivers are continuously circulating around the perimeter of the market (and sometimes beyond). This practice have two goals: to give the impression of being at the point of departure to collect unwary passengers around the market, and to avoid the police control picking up passengers one or two kilometers away from the station and then turn back, which is forbidden for Hiace vehicles.*

Drivers from smaller villages (Tarrafal, Cadjeta, Pedra Badejo) tend to occupy parking spaces, waiting for their regular customers, and postponing the circuit until the time of departure. While the first group is dominated by non-owner drivers – obliged to make many return trips each day –, in the second group there are more drivers who own their vehicle. The drivers from small towns, whether or not they own the vehicle, usually show a certain amount of respect and commitment to their everyday passengers who tend to be local acquaintances and to whom they must assure a certain degree of comfort and timeliness. *On the contrary, the Praia and Somada drivers generally do not care much about gain the trust of particular customers and usually transport unknown, random people from big town to big town. A vehicle of a non-owner driver from Praia and Somada could depart sooner than others, but usually means an overcrowded trip at higher speeds. As a consequence those passengers who want to be treated well, even if their vehicle last to depart, look for their drivers of choice who probably do not full the*

vehicle beyond the permitted capacity if this could make the trip uncomfortable. _

It is quite lively in the car park, adjacent to the market, where Hiace drivers in resting time meet, particularly next to the food and tobacco stalls where they wait for their vehicles to fill up again for the return journey. From the moment the Hiace arrives at the Sucupira station until it is time to set off again, drivers from Praia and Somada usually engage in trying to fill up the vehicle while Tarrafal, Cadjeta, and Pedra Badejo owners and non-owner drivers rest and socialize. In this way, day after day, there emerges an interlude of socialising, made up of conversations, peaceful contemplation, and the occasional abrupt appearance of thefts, fights, police arrests, but also moments of joy and play. Meanwhile, other paid men are hard at work cleaning the vehicles – interior, body, wheels – with meticulous dedication and under the watch of the police during certain periods (RTC 2015); sometimes mechanics – who usually work in their workshops - even appear in the station for an emergency (true appropriators and transformers of the technology that comes from central, rich countries, as pointed out by Bellucci and Zaccaria 2012). The Hiace drivers and their assistants from the communities and villages, with a much lower pressure of work than the drivers and assistants from Praia and Somada (author 2014, 2017), invest this time in joking with each other and with the vendors, playfully teasing each other ‘as if fighting’ and chasing each other, in a staged *basofo* (jovial and expansive cockiness) that is exacerbated if there is a woman around. In this sense, it is important to note that owning a car (or merely pretending to own one, as many non-owner drivers tend to do) is a central stage for the exhibition of masculinity. In Santiago, many drivers (owners or workers) offer free rides to women they know expecting sexual favors in return, which often leads to situations of abuse, as many women and also public authorities have alerted us. Ference (2016) highlights activities of socialization and camaraderie among the drivers of the *matatu* in Nairobi, who have even developed a variant of Sheng (a Swahili urban dialect) to speak discreetly about a ‘pretty woman’ in her presence, or to prevent the *gangs* or the police from understanding them. In Sucupira, drivers do not have a slang, but they also gather in specific places with their groups of friends and acquaintances to talk, eat and joke during their resting time, creating differentiated unities of socialization (Marie 1996).

The Organization of Travelling by Hiace: A self-regulated unity of cooperation

The Hiace in Sucupira functions as a vehicle perfectly mixed with the social landscape of the market: encounters, conversations and socialization start long before the trip itself. Already when passengers wait for the departure of their vehicle, it is common to leave the doors of the vehicle open since this facilitates communication with the outside and allows the passengers to contemplate the market and get in touch with street vendors or acquaintances who happen to be passing. In Goffman's (1979) terms, a 'team' is created, which consists of passengers inside a vehicle and other actors outside of the Hiace: there is no separation between the waiting passengers and any other passer-by in the market. Street vendors commonly lean into the vehicles offering sweets, chewing gum, cookies, candy, pork scratchings, apples, pears and oranges. There are also water sellers with five-liter containers of almost frozen water, which they keep in fridges in the market and which they offer at the door of the vehicles for five escudos a cup (€0.05). If called over by a client the water seller approaches and washes the edges of the metal cup by means of quick movements in a small bowl. She hand the cup to the client (water sellers are always women), who holds it while the water seller fills it. The client now drinks the water in one gulp, leaving a little, however, which he/she throws on the ground in an elliptical motion so as to rid the interior of saliva. This scene is repeated constantly since the consumption of cold water is very common among the waiting passengers.

However, the way in which Hiace drivers and their assistants 'capture' customers, and the resistance the latter display in the face of such general 'assault', is one of the most striking aspects of the socio-spatial dynamic that the universe of the Hiace generates in Sucupira¹. This usually happens after lunch when people return to their town after the working hours in the city willing to take a Hiace. It is one of the most important trips of the day for drivers because there is a huge demand and the Hiace vans can be filled up to the maximum amount of passengers permitted for this vehicle. Morning turns are also central to the Hiace economy, whereas noon and the night turns are economically of less interest. At this time each car's team, comprising of a driver and an assistant, is ready

¹ In order to provide rich descriptions of these situations we will use the english terms that match with the portuguese expressions used by drivers, assistants and passengers such as 'apanhar um passageiro' (to take a passenger); 'fui assaltado' (I was assaulted). Notice that these expressions are sometimes used in a funny or ironic way and others to complain about the intense situation of being 'captured'..

for the appearance of any potential customers among the pedestrian flows in the area. As soon as somebody appears looking for a ride, all active drivers and assistants in the proximity run up to capture him or her: whether it is an old man getting out of a taxi in the vicinity or a student returning to the village for the weekend, the drivers are able to spot from afar whether somebody is a potential traveler. Most of the time, clients do not resist the capture dynamics and appear to be literally driven into a vehicle, as they are physically held and pulled by different drivers, thus tolerating to be the object of a dispute for a few minutes. Among drivers it is usually decisive who first saw or spoke to the 'prey'. However, sometimes travelers attempt to subvert this situation of domination by trying to turn it into a joke, but usually the logic of the capturing takes the lead. This resembles closely the occupations and strategies at work in the management of transport in Accra's Neoplan Station, studied by Stasik (2013). Both at Neoplan station and in Sucupira station, apart from drivers and assistants, there are unsolicited informal workers who 'capture' clients and take them and their luggage to the vehicles, the so-called *balabala*. Stasik examines the frenetic activity of the station, the creative strategies of *balabala*, and the anxiety lived by novice passengers facing the 'choice' of a vehicle (Stasik 2013: 14-15). **How can we explain these practices of 'capturing' the passenger either on Sucupira or in Neoplan? Are they connected or reflect some parts of society?**

The 'educated classes' of the country, officials, and other positions that can afford to own a personal vehicle see this phenomenon as proof of the passivity and submission of the Cape Verdean people. According to them, the costume of 'capturing' the passenger is a legacy of slavery and colonial domination that they, apparently and through 'good education' (often in foreign institutions abroad), have shaken off. However, not all passengers are passive and accept this domination by drivers and their assistants. Many of them insist on choosing their vehicle, thus freeing themselves from the drivers' and their assistants' dictate, preferring to assess the situation from a distance in order to choose at the last minute. Other passengers leave the vehicle to which they had committed at the last minute, which is possible because passengers only pay upon arrival at their destination. This can easily create problems since the whole order of departures depends on it: in order to fill a Hiace quickly, it is necessary that passengers who have already been assigned to a bus stay inside it in order to attract more people. This will indicate to other potential clients that the vehicle is nearly full and will soon

leave for departure. The very context of competition thus generates a tacit sense of cooperation among passengers, drivers, and assistants, which is jeopardized if an already assigned client abandons the vehicle.

Thus, instead of explaining this phenomenon as the demonstration of passivity and submission of Cape-Verdeans, it is possible to read it as the preliminary tensions and negotiations of a strategy that will lead soon to a strong but temporary social contract: the unity of cooperation inside the Hiace. In the following lines we will present several examples of how the Hiace system do not confront drivers against passengers but on the contrary, unite them to organize many aspects of the travel, reflecting practices of cooperation and mutual help characteristic of the working-classes. The Hiace become step by step a collective entity until the time of departure: as soon as placed inside a vehicle, passengers usually even start collaborating in the efforts to 'poach' more travelers. It is not at all easy to abandon a Hiace in order to change to another one that, by chance, has filled up more quickly. In fact, when someone who already engaged with a particular van leave the vehicle, passengers could interpret this act as a selfish behavior, engendering a sense of annoying in the passage at losing a seat that must be filled. Mothers and babies are usually more easily excused to change the vehicle than other passengers: depending on the time of the day, it is not uncommon for a passenger, to spend two hours waiting inside the vehicle before it is ready to depart. Assistants and drivers do much to keep waiting passengers sitting inside their vehicle, although they cannot prevent those who simply get out, not wanting to argue.

Abandoning the vehicle is equally negative for drivers and for the other passengers, but none would say a word: the shame of abandon a vehicle is enough to prevent this leaving episodes of being frequent. Another aspect of the new unity of cooperation just created inside the vehicle is the sharing of various discomforts caused by others' freight. In Sucupira, Hiace vans also carry loads that passengers bring with them, especially on weekends. Often these occupy up to three or even four seats out of 12, 15 or 20 (depend on the Hiace model), and even from time to time passengers could travel in a Hiace with more than half of the places occupied by freight. It is very common to have boxes, bales, and plastic bags under one's feet, or to have to hold them on one's knees if there is no more room in the vehicle. If there is a bend certain items need to be held tight to prevent them from falling onto somebody. This applies also to children who do not occupy much space and whose care is usually socialized. If space or conditions require

it, children frequently sleep in the arms of strangers or sit on the lap of another passenger, so as to maximize space when there is no more seats in the Hiace. A passenger pay extra for their loads only if they are occupying a seat where other passenger could travel. In the case passengers collaborate in holding other's boxes and bags there is no extra pay applied to the owner of these freight.

Three more elements must be highlighted in order to understand the cooperation in the Hiace as an institution featured by some principles of self-regulation and inter-class solidarity. First, it is not unusual that the passengers force the driver to start the journey, even though the vehicle is still partially loaded. When enough passengers complain to the driver that they have been waiting for too long (especially when they do it collectively), the driver rarely denies this request and starts the travel. This collective negotiation is an important part of the Hiace system. It helps to understand the limited reach of drivers' authority, which seems to be subordinated to the collective interest of the unity of cooperation. The adaptation of drivers to the requirements of passengers is open and flexible, which also translates through the stops made outside the city, that are usually dictated by passengers. Second, this unity of social cooperation that is generated inside the vehicle is expressed with vehemence during the contingencies of the trip, when the passengers actively co-operate for the good development of the travel in various kinds of tasks: the indication of obstacles when reversing, assisting the driver to avoid police inspection, or even collective mounting pressure to convince an officer not to impose a fine. Passengers also become a conversation group that regularly debates controversial topics, makes jokes and shares anecdotes, funny stories, and discusses the latest news. The music played in the vehicle is often also negotiated, resulting in numerous disputes. Third, it is very common that some frequent passengers do not pay for the journey, especially those belonging to the lowest fraction of working-classes. This happens with the agreement of the driver, who often knows his passengers' personal situation. Solidarity and co-operation is also present among Hiace drivers and their assistants. At times, drivers stop in the middle of a trip to assist another Hiace driver with a flat tire by offering a spare one. It also happens that drivers transfer some passengers from a full vehicle to another one, instead of filling their own vehicle beyond the permitted capacity, although this also commonly happens. Summarizing, there is a strong solidarity and self-organization observable among the members of this temporary unity, who share both rights and obligations in order to organize the travel in

the better possible conditions for everyone.

Conclusion

In a way, the interactions and representations put to work by the Hiace vehicles and its various actors in Sucupira market-station and during the trips reflects many features of Santiago's lower-class populations: The solidarity among the drivers, the collective self-management of departure times and stops, and the system's flexibility in various regards reflect the wishes of the island and its inhabitants. **Seems that the aspects and features around mobility, as other goods or benefits that were always a scarce resource for Santiago's working-classes, tend to be negotiated by people.** In other words: Santiago's system of interurban transport is continuously shaped by the immediate needs of those who occupy it, reflecting the desires and moral geographies of the non-privileged islanders who must share a vehicle for their daily occupations.

In the absence of alternative means of interurban transportation everything that moves through the island of Santiago must travel aboard a Hiace vehicle, which is specially true for working-classes. Not only people and things, but also ideas, representations, and biographies are on the move: family tragedies are shared during such journeys; personal and commercial businesses are negotiated; distant love relationships follow the rhythm of the vans. The most part of Santiago's society (the lower classes) appears to be conditioned by the movements of these Hiace vans. Every journey aboard a Hiace vehicle carries a unique sample of Santiago's population and provides a unique social space for conversation and interaction. Rules are changed during the journey, from negotiating the music, to configuring the vehicle's unique trajectories and stops. The vehicle is alive and its lives socially.

We have described the workings of the Sucupira station, from the 'capturing' of passengers by drivers to the formation of a unity of cooperation inside the vehicle. These practices echo both recent historical trends and contemporary social processes. Historically speaking the relationship between drivers and passengers has changed: driver's status based on symbolic cleavage between rurality and the city lost its importance. Nevertheless, self-organization and solidarity in the Hiace system are reflecting a culture of cooperation built by working-class islanders, which the country's upper classes tend to limit and regulate. Thus, politicians, and investors keep projecting

a new city of Praia founded on the destruction of Sucupira station, threatening the livelihoods of drivers, assistants, *rabidantes*, beggars, and other 'itinerant characters' who meet every day at the Hiace stations. However, they are like to continue for a long time, to reflect Cape Verdean society and its contradictions, hopes and needs, and the stories of daily struggle that occur day in, day out.

References

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