

AN AMBITIOUS FAILED PROJECT

Morning

Luciano could not sleep more than five hours this night. The combination of nervous and the high temperature of this summer day in Porto Alegre made impossible to stay more lying down in bed. He took advantage of this sleeplessness, and decided to make breakfast for Jaqueline, who was the first leaving home every morning, and his children, who were placidly sleeping. He usually used cooking in order to be more relaxed. Therefore, this morning he made good coffee, some eggs, and toasts with olive oil, salt and avocado, which was the favorite breakfast of Jaqueline. Since they were in Spain five years ago and discovered the olive oil, they felt in love with it. He also prepared the sandwiches and put them and the fruits in the bags for the children.

He was very nervous because today was the first day when the new system which connects all the self-driving cars between them will be working in Porto Alegre. It was the most ambitious project which the government of Brazil and the municipality of the state of *Rio Grande do Sul* has decided to establish in the area of transport, and thanks to this project the PT, the party which was running now in *Rio Grande do Sul* and in Brazil, expected to win the next elections in June.

Luciano, as transport delegate of the state of *Rio Grande do Sul*, was in charge of the project. He has been working on it during the last ten years and today everything starts. He knew that it was not going to finish today, but today was the first step, and everything had to be perfect in order to gain confidence and to start in the right way.

Half an hour later, Jaqueline was already awake. She was smiling as always, giving to him the peaceful that he needs, especially today. They had breakfast together while talking about non important things, totally different from Luciano's job. Finally, the children got up, Jaqueline went to her job, and Luciano left the kids in the school as usually and went to the job. While commuting by public transport, he thought that after all, it was a normal morning.

POA connection project

The project was called "POA connection project", it was a project which briefly described was based in the connection between all the self-driving cars which were circulating in the city of Porto Alegre. They were connected by internet, sharing all the information at every time. Thanks to this new system, traffic and road safety were expected to be improved drastically, each car was going

to know what other cars were going to do, optimizing times and flows, and decreasing or even eliminating risks.

This project was the most important project of all the initiatives that were included within the process of turning Porto Alegre into the smartest city in South America. A lot of people have been working on it for 10 years, and the investment required was very high.

The system was now possible to be implemented since the government had recently eliminated the few non self-driving cars which were circulating in the city. It was made using different policies such as subsidies in self-driving cars, or agreements with car brands which made you a discount for a self-driving car when giving your old car. This transition took more than 20 years, and during the last ten years engineers, urban developers and traffic specialists had been working together in order to have this project ready to the day when this transition was over.

Inauguration day

While commuting by metro ,which has been the most used mean of transport since cost was reduced eliminating the driver and optimizing the frequency, Luciano was thinking about how long and how hard this project had been, fighting against everyone and spending a lot of hours in the office or travelling, working in a project that sometimes was not sure if it would be finish or cancelled. He still remembers the day when the president of Brazil called him personally to offer him the position as minister of transport, and telling him that the government trusted him to be the responsible of the most ambitious transport project in Brazil. Actually, it was one of the happiest days of his life, fulfilling the dream of being able to help his country through improving the transport sector, the sector in which he had been interested since he was young.

After twenty minutes by metro, he arrived to the central station, where he took a "POAbike" to go to their office. Every day he took the bike there, but each time he took it, he had this sensation of proud, proud to have been involved in the creation of something which was useful and people like.

Finally, he arrived to the office, and as planned, everything was ready and the system was going to be activated in half an hour. He checked everything with his partners and all the team went to the main room to activate the system. At 9:30 a.m. the system was activated, connecting all the cars which were registered in the system. Every 15 minutes, the system gave an answer about the situation, and also if something was wrong the system communicated it immediately. After the first 15 minutes, everything was working correctly, and after the second 15 minutes, they started to congratulate oneself due to the success of the implementation. Obviously, the system could go wrong anytime, but the activation was one of the most dangerous moments, and everything had worked perfectly.

At the end of the day, traffic had worked as expected, even improving flows and decreasing congestions. It had been a long day, nervous were presented in the office. Therefore, Luciano's

team decided to go out to have dinner all together after work, and obviously Luciano, as a proper boss, had to pay everything.

Luciano

Luciano was 50 years old, black guy, from Porto Alegre. He grew up in the neighborhood *Partenon*, very close to the *Avenida Ipiranga*, one of the biggest roads in the city, which had an important influence in his life.

Since a child, he was always a smart and curious person. Although he was one of the best students of his school, he only was able to study in the public university thanks to the law which said that the 10% of the university students of the public university had to be black people. It happened because of the huge difference between private, where white people usually studied, and public schools, where black and poor people usually studied.

During the bachelor in *Engenharia de Produção*, he was a good student and although he finished the bachelor, he realized that he did not like it at all. As every younger, he had a time when he did not have any idea about what he would like to do with his life, spending a lot of time with his friends riding their bikes in the streets trying to save the world.

Brazil was a country totally designed for cars; even its capital was created thinking that the car would be the future. Porto Alegre was not an exception, with an enormous amount of cars every day in its roads. Maybe, due to the fact mentioned before that Luciano lived very close to one of biggest roads in Porto Alegre, cars had an enormous influence in his live, living with noisy and air pollution in his daily life. As a result, he had always hated cars and everything related to this.

One day, a university friend of him, who had been in Europe travelling for a while, talked to him about how in Copenhagen and Amsterdam everyone used the bike everyday as a way of transport. Since this moment, Luciano discovered a new world, he also watched a documental called "Bikes vs Cars" about how hard is the influence of the car lobby in urban politics, and it changed his mind. Before that, Luciano could not imagine bicycles as a way transport such as cars, motorbikes, buses or trains, and after this conversation and this documental, he decided that he had to figure out how he could improve transport in his country.

With this purpose in mind, he decided to study a master in transport in the same university where he studied the bachelor, *Universidade Federal de Rio Grande do Sul*, the most important public university in Porto Alegre, and maybe because of his motivation, he became the best student of his promotion.

After finishing the master, he was working as a professor for 15 years, and eventually working as a consultant and advisor in the public administration. He really liked his job as a professor, teaching was one of the most beautiful things that he had done, but when he received this call of the president of Brazil offering him the most important position of the country in the transport sector,

he had no doubts. Besides when sometimes he thought about the problems and the stress that he would probably have in the future, Jaqueline was always there to tell him that he had to try it, because it was not going to happen again, and he actually knew that she was totally right, like always.

Three months after the inauguration day

Jaqueline was looking through the window while having breakfast, it was raining heavily, Luciano was sitting next to her, reading the newspaper. The main new in the front page of the newspaper this day was about all the energy that Brazil produced was already renewable, like in all Europe, most of United States, China or Japan. They talked about how it seemed impossible when 26 years ago Donald Trump became the president of the United States of America, telling that the climate change was a Chinese invention. He also looked for a new about the project but he did not find anything, maybe tomorrow he thought, because this morning he was going to have the results of the first three months.

This morning, he decided to take an Uber with the kids due to the hard rain, Uber had become a very affordable option for commuting after the implementation of the system. They did not need a driver anymore, becoming much cheaper than before. While commuting by Uber, he was surprised by the way that the car chose to go to his office, he did not know this way but actually it was the fastest one because there were road works in the *Avenida Oswaldo Aranha*. It was not the first time that he was surprised for this reason, but he was not used to it yet and every time that it happened he was more convinced about the utility of the system.

When he arrived to this office, he already had the results on the table. After three months from the activation of the connection system, it can be said that the system had been a success. Traffic congestion had been decreased to less than a half, and accidents had drastically decreased as well, reducing road deaths to zero in this three months. According to the last transport model results, commuting times had been reduced to a third part and one survey showed that people were very satisfied with how the system was working.

On the other hand, there were some problems with car companies, which had decreased their sales. This was because taxis and Ubers were cheaper than before, increasing the use of them and reducing the necessity of own cars. Related with taxis and Ubers, there were protests of taxi drivers who had lost their jobs. It was predicted, but according to the calculations and statements, the problems caused were less important than the benefits.

Luciano spent the rest of the day giving interviews and responding to the press. The interviews were very relaxed because the results were good, he tried to be prudent about the expectations that the results were creating in the media. At the end of the day, he came back home. He was very tired but the night was really nice and he had this kind of energy that you usually have when things have gone well, so he decided to come back by walk.

While walking, Jaqueline called him telling that they had to celebrate it, and he thought that she was right, it had passed a long time from the last time when they went out together as a couple to have dinner and fun. They met in *Churrascaria Giovanaz*, in *Cidade Baixa*, it was a restaurant where they usually went when they were young. It was a place with a lot of different kinds of meat, and it used to be an all you can eat place before this kind of places were prohibited in most countries due to the waste of food. They talked about how they liked these all you can eat places before, but how this law was good in order to reduce the waste of food. After the dinner, they went to the Lucas's bar, in the *Joao Alfredo* street, to drink some *caipirinhas*. They spent a lot of nights in this street during the university, and they were always surprised about how it had changed but at the same time how it was the same than before.

After two *caipirinhas*, and with this feeling of happiness that you feel when you are a little bit drunk, Luciano was thinking that it had been a perfect day, from a professional and a personal point of view, it could not be better, but just when they arrived home, he received a call which changed completely the situation.

Jaqueline

Jaqueline was 48 years old, she was born in *Rio de Janeiro*, but she spent almost all her life in *Porto Alegre*. She was tall, thin and beautiful, during the university she was working as a model in order to have some money because her parents were not especially rich people. Although some people told her that she could have success as a model, she did not like it, what she really liked was medicine. Therefore, she studied a bachelor in medicine while working as a model, during this time she knew Luciano, but they were only friends.

She was a very friendly person, always smiling and trying to help. After the university, she spent two years living in Senegal, working as a volunteer in a NGO. She said that it was the best time of her life, having the sensation that she was actually helping people. After these two years, she travelled around the world, she was in many places trying to combine travelling and volunteering, and sometimes working in order to be able to do the two other activities.

Then, she had to come back to *Porto Alegre*, and she never went out of there again. Her mother was seriously ill, she had lung cancer, and according to the doctors, mostly because of the pollution. It was a very common illness in Brazil during this time, due to the enormous number of cars circulating in the city, pollution increased constantly during many years, affecting the population. Her mother died after two weeks from she arrived in *Porto Alegre*, they were very connected so it was hard to her. Therefore, she decided to focus her career as a doctor in injuries and health problems related with pollution. She worked hard on it, studying a lot about the topic and attending some meetings and talks about it.

Suddenly, in one of these meetings about it, Luciano was one of the invited talkers. He was talking about how to reduce traffic congestion in *Porto Alegre*, reducing also CO2 emissions. She almost

did not remember him, but she was fascinated about how enthusiastic he was about solving this problem. They talked during a long time after the speech, and they started to meet frequently to have a coffee or drink some beers. It was unexpected but after two months they were totally in love and they were officially a couple.

They worked together in some projects about pollution in transportation when Luciano was working as a university professor. Jaqueline was very successful, becoming the director of the pollution section of the *Hospital de Clínicas* of Porto Alegre, one of the most important in the city.

Problems in paradise

Leonardo, one of the members of his department, had called him immediately when he watched the video on internet. In the video, a 15 years old young was talking to the camera, almost crying, and explaining that his father had dramatically lost his job as a taxi driver from one day to the other. He explained that his family was not rich at all, and that his father had worked as a taxi driver for his entire life. Finally, after saying that his father was totally depressed, he sent a question out to all the citizens about if we actually want to be dominated by the machines, and about where we are going to set the limit.

The video was watched in Youtube for millions of people in a short time, being also shared on Facebook, Instagram and all the social networks for a lot of people. People from Europe or United States were talking about the video and a kind of social movement was created around the world against machines. This idea of the dominance of the machine in the future was not new. It was always there but with this video something new had been created. All this hatred that people had against machines suddenly exploded, becoming the city of Porto Alegre, and more specifically Luciano's project, the center of the volcano.

Luciano wanted to go to the office just after the call, but Jaqueline tried to calm him, saying that he would not fix anything now, and that maybe tomorrow the video would be almost forgotten. Finally, he took his wife's advice and went to bed hoping that tomorrow would be different.

As he expected, in the day after the situation was worse. He woke up with a lot of messages, even in his Facebook wall was the famous video shared for some of his friends. Some journalists were out of his house waiting for him, but the situation was even worse in the entrance of the office. There were much more journalists and people protesting against the connection system. Looking at the banners that people were holding, Luciano realized that his name was written in most of them. Not without problems, he was able to enter into the building, and an atmosphere of worry could be perceived in the office.

Luciano summoned a meeting with all the members of the ministry. He knew that he had to be brave but he did not know what he could do to improve the current situation. They decided to give a press conference this afternoon and they agreed in the opinion that the video had to be a

temporal problem which will be solved over time. During the press conference, Luciano said that cases such as the case of the father's kid of the video will be examine individually and he also tried to reassure the public explaining that people had the control of the machines, and they are used only to improve our quality of life. The results of the first three months were also used in defense of the project, concluding with the idea that an isolated case which is going to be solved cannot destroy all the developments.

The power of the social media

During the next three months, the situation did not improve. There were a lot of protests in the streets against machines, and the kid of the video became the symbol of the movement which increased its popularity around the world. In Brazil even a political party called "*Pessoas não máquinas*" was created taking advantage of the social support, becoming the most popular party in the last pools. They said that people had to be again the main characters of the society, coming back to the origins and making Brazil a country made by people instead of by machines.

The personal and professional situation of Luciano had worsened. The system was hacked several times by hackers who were representing the movement against the machines, causing accidents and traffic jams, and mainly dirtying the image of the system. There were people protesting in their office almost every week, Jaqueline had had problems in her job and even the children were insulted by other kids in the school. The situation was untenable and Luciano was not able to understand why. He always had been a person very interested in social problems, and now he was being hardly criticized saying that he was more interested in money than in people. He was thinking in leaving office, but the elections were very close so he decided to work there until the elections.

Then the elections finally arrived, as expected the new party "*Pessoas não máquinas*" won the elections in Brazil, in the state of *Rio Grande do Sul* and in the city of *Porto Alegre*. As a result, Luciano was fired, coming back to the university where he started to work again as a professor. The traffic system was deactivated and the project was totally eliminated.

At the end, he came back to his previous life. Actually he really liked this way of life, and after all, he had learnt that having good intentions in politics could not be enough because people behaviors are totally unpredictable.