

*Adriana Lima–Patricia Carvalhinhos*

***Toponymic Inflation: When the Politics Dilates Names.  
The Bridges of São Paulo (São Paulo, Brazil)***

With about 12 million inhabitants,<sup>1</sup> São Paulo is continuously changing its urban landscape and toponymy. Recently, places such as the bridges on the Tietê and Pinheiros rivers, watercourses of historical importance, suffered peculiar changes in their toponymy, reflecting how recent this political action is.

This study proposes a structural and motivational analysis of the bridge toponyms that were changed from 2010 until the first half of 2017. Our main objective is to understand the mechanism used by the Municipality to assign new names to these bridges, seeking to recognize the toponymic structure and the role of this new designation pattern in the city.

We used the methodology of the project entitled *Toponymic Memory of São Paulo, neighborhood by neighborhood*, of the University of São Paulo, which aims to construct a toponymic profile of the uptown city.

With about 65 thousand official public places (Prefeitura de São Paulo 2009), almost all of São Paulo's toponymy is recent and presents many tributes to important people. There are few spontaneous names. Most of the city bills aim to name and change toponyms. However, only in limited situations, can the toponym of public places' be changed. Terminologically, small modifications in toponyms are also considered changes, as well as a whole substitution of a toponym: there is no clear data on how the municipality conceptualizes *changes* and *substitutions*.

The current toponymic pattern differs from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when there was only a slight territorial and demographic growth and few roads were built in the Historic Center. Names were mostly spontaneous. Since the first historical records of the city, Tietê and Pinheiros are very representative toponyms. Tietê, which means “genuine watercourse [...]” (SAMPAIO 1901: 153).<sup>2</sup> in Tupi (Brazilian indigenous language), is a spontaneous name given by natives. Pinheiros is the name assigned to both the river and the Indian village (still in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and to a small population occupying one end of the village for a long time (DICK 1997).

---

<sup>1</sup> Consult the website <http://www.cidades.ibge.gov.br/v4/brasil/sp/sao-paulo/panorama> for further information.

<sup>2</sup> The authors have opted for a free translation into English when citations are written in other languages.



In the first records referring to the names of the bridges found in the *Atas da Câmara* ‘Minutes of the Chamber’ (official documents of the city’s public life) of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were indeed no names (specific element): merely “bridges” (generic element). Exclusively the toponym *ponte grande* ‘big bridge’ was accompanied by a specific adjective (Atas I). There are also expressions steeped in orality with a toponymic value, such as “the bridge over the river tamedoati<sup>3</sup> near the villa” (Atas I, 273; 31/08/1585) and “the bridge over the river tomãdoati” (Atas I, 104; 22/09/1576), in a referential mechanism.

Different forms of how the bridge was registered appear in the Minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, we cite the Ponte Grande do Rio Tietê ‘Great Bridge of the Tietê River’: “the bridge of guaré, the great” (Atas X, 276; 19/09/1733), “the bridge that goes to Nossa Senhora da Luz” (Atas X, 461; 18/02/1736), “the great Theethé bridge of Nossa Senhora da Luz” (Atas XIII, 487-488; 06/02/1754). This reveals spontaneity in naming these bridges, which floated with orality – and lacks a public policy regarding how to name public places that, actually, were a few in a small village.

With the increase in population and the intensification of economic activities, the construction of new bridges was observed at the edges of main rivers, as well as the aim of many proposals being to modify the toponymy.

Marginal Tietê is a spontaneous name, characterizing a group of several avenues forming a single route in both directions along the banks of the Tietê River. Marginal Pinheiros is equally formed by several avenues (CARVALHINHOS–LIMA 2013). These banks are connected, forming one of the main transit corridors of the metropolitan region (approximately 42 kilometers long).

## 1. Substitutions and changes in São Paulo toponymy

When analyzing changes in naming the bridges in Marginal Tietê and Pinheiros that took place in the city until 2009 (LIMA 2012), these can be grouped into two types: a) substitution, in cases of total replacement of a specific element with another, and b) overlap, when there is already a specific element but this receives another one with or without the hyphen, which results in a double name, with two distinct semantic nuclei, in the same toponym. Such changes continue to occur and the use of the hyphen to connect a new name to the old acquired expressiveness, thus appearing in many bills, laws, and decrees. Actually, during 2017 some bills present the same new naming mechanism.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The both forms refer to tamanduá, the anteater. The etymology of this Tupi toponym is “genuine tamanduá’s river” (NAVARRO 2013: 599).

<sup>4</sup> Legislative activity, history of names and biography of honourees was surveyed in City Hall of São Paulo (Câmara Municipal de São Paulo 2017) and in the Municipality of São Paulo (Prefeitura de São Paulo 2017).

*Toponymic inflation* is a term proposed by CARVALHINHOS to describe the association of ideas between the growth or augment that currently occurs in some names of São Paulo (including in bridges) and the economic inflation, which corroded (and erodes) the country, in a growth that, often, has neither logic nor ways of being detained. Thus, this association of ideas leads to the proposition of this term to illustrate the names that “grow” or inflate for political reasons.

In toponymy, hyphenization refers to the use of hyphens, to connect the various components of a composite name, avoiding changes in the word order. The hyphen is also used between syllables and words (United Nations 2002: 13).

In Portuguese, the hyphen is described as a traditionally and poorly systematized graphic sign (CASTILHO 2012: 95). In Portuguese grammar, the hyphen is used: “in composite name, locutions, and vocabulary sentences”; “in pre-fixation and suffixation word formations”; “in enclisis, mesoclisism and with the verb to have”. As for places’ names, the hyphen is used in composite toponyms that start with a verb (Passa-Quatro, because a stream pass 4 times in the land) or with adjectives “grão”/“grã” ‘great’ (Grã-Bretanha) or in toponyms presenting elements joined by an article (such as Albergaria-a-Velha, BECHARA 2003: 613–617).

Thus, the current political mechanism that makes use of the hyphen to inflate a specific toponymic element with tributes damages the rule of the Portuguese language. This combination of two different and semantically disconnected nuclei has become more and more commonplace in the city.

What makes this process so blatantly political is the fact that the name does not change. The change of name could be justified from the point of view of the Critical Toponymy, which considers, in Bourdieu’s analysis (1985 in MADDEN 2017: 3), the official toponymy as “the practices by which names are invested with the prestige and authority of the state, and hence legitimized and naturalized. Renaming can be a way to buy political loyalty”.

Considering that there are not ideologic proposals in renaming, such as MADDEN (2017) and ROSE-REDWOOD–ALDERMAN–AZARYAHU (2009) understand, it is possible to think about several possibilities. Bourdieu (1985 in MADDEN 2017: 3) calls it “a way to buy political loyalty” – in this situation, it is the loyalty of the honorees, the family or the group that he represents (businessmen, communicators, other politicians, etc.). The other hypothesis is that this kind of toponymic change is so subtle that it supposes little popular resistance. The last hypothesis – in fact, a pure speculation – is that the enormous quantity of bills regarding name changes should serve to make a sort of “approval rates” in the City Council, revealing the “productivity” of the councilman.



From an administrative point of view, the elected representatives (councilors and mayor) act as namers, by proposing these changes and many others. The tribute to people who died, facts or relevant historical dates, respectively, are first and second place among the current criteria to name public places. After the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, this pattern became very productive, and a wealth of options contributed to completely delete older references to that place. Nowadays, a different toponym can no longer be attributed to one that has been already traditionally established (dates, historical facts, location or geographical reference) and incorporated into the culture of the municipality.

Changing the names of public places is forbidden and occurs only in cases of: a) homonymous designations, b) similarities of several origins that produce a certain ambiguity in the identification and c) designation that can expose residents to ridicule. As we mentioned, changes are treated as alterations – there is no difference between substitution and tributes' addition or information about the hyphen in these situations.

Another possibility of replacement occurred in 2015: a program was established with the objective of carrying out a progressive change of toponyms that pay tributes to people and facts related to serious violations of human rights, as those occurred during the military period (from 1964 to 1985).

## **2. Toponymic inflation in the Marginals Tietê and Pinheiros: the expansion of the bridges' names**

We identified and analyzed 34 bridge names in the first semester of 2017 through documents and mechanisms of maps viewing. We observed that 17 names were modified after officialization, and of these 11 occurred from 2010 until mid of 2017.

Comparing the new data with those of a previous study (LIMA 2012), we found substitution changes and overlap. Only one toponym was replaced. The exchange of the toponym Ponte 'Bridge'<sup>5</sup> General Milton Tavares de Souza to Ponte Domingos Franciulli Netto deletes a tribute to one of the generals of the Dictatorship. This replacement took place before 2016 and occurred only to change the name related to the violation of human rights.

Ten of the registered toponymic changes overlap anthroponyms (personal names and titles plus personal names) to the old toponyms. Eight of ten (80%) bring a hyphen between the two semantic nuclei of the specific. As there is not a connection between the two nuclei, the specific becomes strange or semantically incoherent. It seems, by the way, that to add a new nucleus to a specific element of a pre-established toponym is a good way to convert it into a politic currency



<sup>5</sup> Onwards, we maintain the original generic and specific elements in Portuguese.

tool. In these cases, the change in the toponym doesn't bring problems to the people because they will always and ever use the original nomination – after changes, the second nucleus use to be ignored from people to media.

The hyphen is also used in subway stations names. In these cases, however, the composite toponyms have a completely different administrative motivation, for example, the stations Corinthians-Itaquera and Guilhermina-Esperança.

The old toponyms and toponymic inflation from our survey can be observed in more details in Table 1:

Marginal	Old Toponym			Actual Toponym		
	Year	Generic	Specific	Year	Generic	Specific
Tietê	1979	Ponte	Tatuapé	2010	Ponte do	Tatuapé Dep. Ricardo Izar
Tietê	1979	Ponte da	Vila Guilherme	2016	Ponte da	Vila Guilherme - Eng. Curt W. Otto Baumgart
Tietê	1979	Ponte	Cruzeiro do Sul	2010	Ponte	Cruzeiro do Sul - Jornalista Ary Silva
Tietê	1979	Ponte das	Bandeiras	2017	Ponte das	Bandeiras Senador Romeu Tuma
Tietê	1979	Ponte da	Casa Verde	2013	Ponte da	Casa Verde - Jornalista Walter Abrahão
Tietê	1979	Ponte	Freguesia do Ó	2017	Ponte	Freguesia do Ó - Padre Noé Rodrigues
Tietê	1979	Ponte do	Piqueri	2016	Ponte	Piqueri - Joelmir Beting
Tietê	1979	Ponte dos	Remédios	2013	Ponte dos	Remédios - Carmen Fernandes Neves
Pinheiros	1979	Ponte	Jaguaré	2012	Ponte do	Jaguaré - Hirant Sanazar
Pinheiros	s/d	Ponte	Laguna	2016	Ponte	Laguna - Vice-Presidente José Alencar

**Table 1:** Toponymic inflation in bridges' names of the Marginals Tietê and Pinheiros between 2010 and the first half of 2017 (old and current toponym with and without hyphen)

Hyphenization is used to connect the old toponym to the new one in 8 of the 10 toponyms analyzed. In general, this second nucleus brings homages to journalists, the journalist's mother, politicians (mayor of a neighboring city and vice-president of the Republic), an engineer and a priest. Although the hyphen is used in these toponyms, the rules of Portuguese grammar that refers to hyphenization uses had not been obeyed. As we said previously, these examples show the graphic sign connecting different nuclei born at distinct times: an old specific element is linked to a recent tribute.

Other additions without hyphen pay a tribute to two politicians, one deputy, and one senator.

These examples of toponymic inflation (with and without hyphens) preserve the traditional toponyms, which usually have a deep connection with the place where they were built: hydronyms (such as Tatuapé), neighborhood and region (Piqueri, Remédios, Jaguaré, Vila Guilherme, Casa Verde, Freguesia do Ó and Tatuapé), odonyms interconnected by the bridge (Remédios, Jaguaré, Cruzeiro do Sul and Laguna), and a historical fact from the Brazilian colonial period



(Bandeiras). The preservation of the first specific element allows the approach to the pattern prevailing in the city since the colonial period when the few existing bridges were known by a hydronym, a region where it had been built or by the bridge's own attributes.

Traditional names would be easily erased if they would not generate a certain resistance by the population. An example of a traditional toponym that is not erased from people's and media's minds is a bridge over Pinheiros River, at the Marginal Pinheiros. The toponym *Ponte Cidade Jardim* was replaced in 1995. Since then, its official toponym is *Ponte Engenheiro Roberto Rossi Zuccolo*. In its first nomination, the bridge “*Cidade Jardim*” had the same toponym already spread over the region (the neighborhood and an important local avenue). The proof of this resistance (a kind of toponymic attachment) can be found making a brief search in the collection of a traditional newspaper of São Paulo. The old news (since 1995) shows that the toponym “*Ponte Cidade Jardim*” is more common than the current toponym.<sup>6</sup> The nameplate of that bridge has been changed several times over the last years. Nowadays (2017), the former toponym remains highlighted on the nameplate – so drivers can identify the bridge, which is not possible with the “new” 22 years-old name.

Actually, this toponymic change (and others) is still a subject of protests among the population. In a blog post, SARQUIS (2012) states that “renaming” the Marginal's bridges only confuse people. According to him, the use of the toponym “*Ponte Cidade Jardim*” is common in daily life and in the oral language. This habit of using the former toponym builds a discrepancy with the official information, creating a lack of effective communication. The former toponym is so strong that it continues being used in parallel in everyday life. Thus, for most people, *Cidade Jardim* remains the official name of the bridge.

The old toponym *Ponte do Piqueri* became the *Ponte Piqueri-Joelmir Beting* in 2016. It shows the same nomination mechanism of the previous example. *Piqueri* is Tupi and it means “river of the small fish” (NAVARRO 2013: 593). *Piqueri* was an old settlement in earlier times in the history of the city (DICK 1997). Nowadays, it is a neighborhood that can be accessed by that bridge. It is also a toponym that identifies a train station (*Estação Piqueri* ‘*Piqueri Station*’) and other places of the region. The insertion of a new nucleus by hyphenization commemorates a Brazilian journalist that died in 2012. Here again, the addendum does not represent a reference or a historical relationship with the region, providing a semantic disconnection between the two specific

---

<sup>6</sup> In the aforementioned collection, there are 485 occurrences of the “*Ponte Cidade Jardim*” after 1995. Most of them appear in 2000s news. On the other hand, there are only 4 occurrences of the “*Ponte Engenheiro Roberto Rossi Zuccolo*” (Estadão 2017).

elements. In the same way, people don't use the new toponym and the bridge still remains Piqueri.

The latest toponymic inflation in São Paulo occurred in 2017. The Ponte das Bandeiras is a bridge inaugurated in 1942. Since April 2017 this toponym has received a second specific element, another homage. The recently named Ponte das Bandeiras Senador Romeu Tuma is a construction that replaced the most ancient bridge of the Tietê River, rebuilt over the centuries at the same place where the old "Ponte Grande" (DICK 1997) was built the first time. It's a spontaneous and descriptive name ("Big Bridge") and an important place because it marks where expeditions ("Bandeiras") to hinterland used to depart. The very historical meaning of the word Bandeiras refers to this land clearing of the country in the colonial period (Priberam 2008–2013).

The tribute to the Senator, who died in 2010, happened by the addition of his name as the second specific element to the Ponte das Bandeiras after the approval of a bill proposed by councilor Eduardo Tuma, nephew of the honoree. The request makes clear the intention to pay tribute to his relative. The motion was accepted by his peers. However, after a legal dispute, the new nomination has been forbidden and the original toponym kept.

The two examples (Piqueri and Bandeiras bridges) show that the preservation of the former toponym is important for the insertion of tributes to "distinguished" individuals with or without the use of the hyphen, whose grammatical function in Portuguese seems completely strange to Councilors. If it was not for this newly discovered mechanism of toponymic inflation, it is possible that substitutions (which means to take off traditional toponyms and to set tributes instead) never occurred, first because there is a legal obstruction (established toponyms cannot be replaced) and second because there would be popular resistance, as it occurs for 22 years with the former Ponte Cidade Jardim.

Maintaining the traditional toponym and including new nuclei with or without a hyphen reveals how it is easy to take advantage of a "closed structure" crystalized at people's minds. Adding a new nucleus that always pays homage to "important" personalities does not represent a problem to people that live and use the urbanonym everyday: the orality guarantee that people will just use the first part of the new toponym (which corresponds to the traditional one) to communicate. As we have said, it can be assumed that this system of maintaining the traditional toponym and overlapping tributes emerged to avoid popular resistance – which seems to reveal "buying of loyalties".

Since bridges play a very important role in the movement of people and traffic, their names are also influenced by an entire social and political framework. That being said, every new change made official means an intentional change in that framework. We conclude this paper by emphasizing that the swelling of some



traditional toponyms in São Paulo shows a new synchronic denominational trend being established in the city (the toponymic inflation), a comfortable policy and apparently more popular than toponymic substitution.

### References

- Atas I = *Atas da Câmara da cidade de São Paulo, 1562–1596. Vol. 1.* [Minutes of the Chamber, 1562–1596.] 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. São Paulo, Divisão do Arquivo Histórico, 1967.
- Atas X = *Actas da Camara da Cidade de S. Paulo, 1730–1736. Vol. 10.* [Minutes of the Chamber, 1730–1736.] São Paulo, Arquivo Municipal de S. Paulo, 1915.
- Atas XIII = *Actas da Camara Municipal de S. Paulo, 1749–1755. Vol. 13.* [Minutes of the Chamber, 1749–1755.] São Paulo, Arquivo Municipal de S. Paulo, 1918.
- BECHARA, EVANILDO 2003. *Gramática escolar da língua portuguesa.* [School Grammar of the Portuguese Language.] Rio de Janeiro, Lucerna.
- Câmara Municipal de São Paulo 2017. *Consulta rápida: atividade legislativa.* [Legislative Activity.] <http://www.camara.sp.gov.br/> (Accessed July 19, 2017.)
- CARVALHINHOS, PATRICIA–LIMA, ADRIANA 2013. Denominaciones en el espacio público brasileiro: algunas palabras sobre São Paulo. [Denominations in Brazilian public spaces: a few words about São Paulo. Extended version.] *Rivista Italiana di Onomastica* 19/2: 605–632.
- CASTILHO, ATALIBA TEIXEIRA de 2012. *Nova gramática do português brasileiro.* [New Grammar of Brazilian Portuguese.] São Paulo, Contexto.
- DICK, MARIA VICENTINA de PAULA do AMARAL 1997. *A dinâmica dos nomes na cidade de São Paulo 1554–1897.* [The Toponymic Evolution in the City of São Paulo 1554–1897.] São Paulo, Annablume.
- Estadão 2017. *Acervo.* [Collection.] <http://acervo.estadao.com.br/> (Accessed July 31, 2017.)
- LIMA, ADRIANA 2012. Alterações toponímicas no município de São Paulo: as pontes sobre os rios Tietê e Pinheiros. [Toponymic Changes in São Paulo's city: the Bridges over the Tietê and Pinheiros Rivers.] In: CORBARI, ALCIONE TEREZA org. *Anais do X Encontro do Celsul: Círculo de Estudos Linguísticos do Sul.* Cascavel. I, 1–12.
- MADDEN, DAVID J. 2017. Pushed off the map: toponymy and the politics of place in New York City. *Urban Studies.* [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69568/1/Madden\\_Pushed%20off%20the%20map\\_2017.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69568/1/Madden_Pushed%20off%20the%20map_2017.pdf) (Accessed August 2, 2017.)

- NAVARRO, EDUARDO de ALMEIDA 2013. *Dicionário de tupi antigo: a língua indígena clássica do Brasil*. [Ancient Tupi Dictionary: the Classic Native Brazil's Language.] São Paulo, Global.
- Prefeitura de São Paulo 2009. Secretaria Municipal de Cultura. Arquivo Histórico de São Paulo. Acervos. [Collections.] *Logradouros*. [http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/cultura/arquivo\\_historico/acervos/index.php?p=6974](http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/cultura/arquivo_historico/acervos/index.php?p=6974) (accessed July 28, 2017).
- Prefeitura de São Paulo 2017. Secretaria Municipal de Cultura. Arquivo Histórico de São Paulo. *Dicionário de Ruas*. [Street Names Dictionary.] <http://www.dicionarioderuas.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/PaginasPublicas/ListaLogradouro.aspx> (accessed July 26, 2017).
- Priberam = *Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa [em linha]*. [Online Priberam Portuguese Language Dictionary.] <https://www.priberam.pt/dlpo/bandeira> (accessed July 28, 2017).
- ROSE-REDWOOD, REUBEN—ALDERMAN, DEREK—AZARYAHU, MAOZ 2009. Geographies of Toponymic Inscription: New Directions in Critical Place-Name Studies. *Progress in Human Geography* 34/4: 453–470. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0309132509351042> (Accessed August 2, 2017.)
- SAMPAIO, THEODORO 1901. *O tupi na geografia nacional*. [Tupi at National Geography.] São Paulo, Typ. da Casa Eclectica.
- SARQUIS, NICOLAU 2012. Nome das Ruas. [Street Names.] In: *Nicolau Sarquis. Idéias e Minhas Opiniões. Um local onde falo minhas opiniões sobre o que eu vejo, sobre as notícias, e algumas idéias*. <http://nicolausarquis.blogspot.com.br/2012/07/nome-das-ruas.html?q=nome+das+ruas> (Accessed July 27, 2017.)
- United Nations 2002. *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*. New York. [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/pdf/Glossary\\_of\\_terms\\_revised.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/pdf/Glossary_of_terms_revised.pdf) (accessed July 26, 2017).

## Abstract

The city of São Paulo has an urban landscape that receives frequent changes; a common feature of metropolitan areas. In recent years, we have observed peculiar changes in the naming of public spaces that have a prominent position, such as the names of the bridges over the Tietê and Pinheiros rivers. Dilation in the structure of these toponyms, especially the alterations made after the works of improvement that occurred in 2010 in the marginal avenues of these rivers, reflects how speedy an urbanonym can be changed or substituted in São Paulo. This study proposes an analysis of these toponym changes in order to understand



the mechanisms that the municipality uses to attribute new names to bridges. The data collection and the documentary research were considered as a basic methodological procedure for the construction of a toponymic profile of these transformations. The results show that the adoption of a hyphen to connect new elements to the previous toponym indicates an odd pattern to rename landmarks, characterizing a synchronic denominative tendency featured by expansion (or a swelling called toponymic inflation) of the original toponym.

**Keywords:** São Paulo toponymy, toponymic changes, bridges