



## Toponymic commodification and the neoliberal city: on the sale of naming rights for São Paulo's subway stations

### Comodificação toponímica e a cidade neoliberal: sobre a venda de direitos de nomeação das estações do metrô de São Paulo

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**ABSTRACT:** After being practiced for nearly three decades in the city of São Paulo for privately-owned venues such as cinemas, theaters and, more recently, sports stadiums, the sale of naming rights is being applied to state-owned spaces: in April 2020, the *Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo (Cia. do Metrô)* announced a plan to grant to private exploitation the right to name its stations. This article analyzes this plan, its premises and expectations. It concludes that, while a series of conflicts related to the memory of the city and its spatial landmarks have been identified by recent studies on toponymic commodification and suggested by the city's antecedents on this matter, such conflicts do not seem to be considered in the plan's agenda.

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**RESUMO:** Depois de quase três décadas sendo praticada na cidade de São Paulo em equipamentos privados como cinemas, teatros e mais recentemente estádios esportivos, a comercialização de direitos de nomeação chega também a espaços de propriedade estatal: em abril de 2020, a Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo (Cia. do Metrô) anunciou um projeto de conceder à exploração privada o direito de nomear suas estações. Este artigo analisa esse projeto, suas premissas e expectativas. Conclui que uma série de conflitos relacionados à memória da cidade e a seus marcos espaciais, embora apontados em estudos recentes sobre comodificação toponímica e também sugeridos pelos próprios antecedentes paulistanos no tema, não parecem fazer parte da agenda de preocupações do projeto.

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## 1 Introduction

The sale of naming rights for urban spaces and structures is not a recent phenomenon. Its origins date back to the 19th century or earlier, mainly in the United States, a country with “a long history of places being named after wealthy elites, property owners, and corporations” (ROSE-REDWOOD; VUOLTEENAHO; YOUNG; LIGHT, 2019, p. 748). It is a tradition, particularly with universities, schools and hospitals, and is historically used to encourage donations by persons and companies.

In the last few decades, however, the traditional philanthropy-based model in which an honorific name is permanently attributed has evolved to a new modality. The sale of *temporary* naming rights began to develop in the 1970’s as an innovation introduced by large sports teams. The first experience was in 1973, when the American football team Buffalo Bills and the food products company Rich Products Corp. signed a commercial agreement whereby the team’s stadium changed its name to *Rich Stadium* for a period of 25 years, i.e., until 1998 (LEEDS; LEEDS; PISTOLET, 2007). Ever since then, this type of place naming has become common in the sports industry (MEDWAY; WARNABY; GILLOOLY; MILLINGTON, 2019).

Since the 1990’s, the modality spread from stadiums to an increasing range of urban spaces, thus encompassing not only private, but also public property: theaters and show venues, conference and entertainment centers, parks, bridges, etc. In the public sector, this practice was quickly adopted by many municipal and local governments, which began to see it as a revenue-collection instrument particularly valued amidst the rise of neoliberal urban management practices (ROSE-REDWOOD; VUOLTEENAHO; YOUNG; LIGHT, 2019, p. 748; ROSE-REDWOOD; SOTOUDEHNIA; TRETTER, 2019).

In this context, public- and private-sector companies operating the public transport system in various cities have also taken to the modality. Train, subway and monorail stations, for example, have become a frequent focus of renaming (LIGHT; YOUNG, 2015; VIDALES, 2012). The first city where this practice was adopted, in 2003, was Las Vegas, quickly followed by Chicago, New Delhi, London, Madrid, Mumbai, New York, Philadelphia and Riyadh, among many others (ROSE-REDWOOD; SOTOUDEHNIA; TRETTER, 2019).

As sponsored renaming spreads to reach different types of urban structures and spaces, it causes considerable change in cities' toponymic landscape, which becomes increasingly similar, in Madden's (2019, p. 888) words, to a "constellation of corporate trademarks". This characterizes the phenomenon that many authors denominate toponymic commodification<sup>1</sup>: a widespread transformation of places' names into merchandise and, consequently, their detachment from places' history, memory and identity (VUOLTEENAHO; AINIALA, 2009; ROSE-REDWOOD; ALDERMAN; AZARYAHU, 2010). Madden (2019) exemplifies:

Contemporary London, for example, is home to a cable car named after Emirates Airline and is dotted by a network of rentable bicycles and their docking stations emblazoned with the name of the Spanish-based bank Santander. Tourist attractions have names such as the Coca-Cola London Eye and the ArcelorMittal Orbit. Notable entertainment complexes include the O2 Arena, the Kia Oval, and, again, Emirates Stadium. The branded place names immediately signal that powerful corporations and public-private partnerships dominate the city. Soon, basic infrastructure will also carry branded sponsorships. One west London council is already seeking to sell the naming rights to a proposed new bridge over the River Thames [...]. Corporate names are

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<sup>1</sup> Although the terms commodification and commoditization usually appear in dictionaries as synonyms, various authors have attributed different meanings to them. Commoditization refers to the act of turning into commodity something previously unavailable for trade, while commodification refers to situations where such an act is undesirable, i.e., when something that should not be marketed becomes commodity. Authors such as Beck and Cunha (2017) discuss in further detail about commodification and commoditization as synonyms.

featured prominently on digital platforms like Google Maps, where the official place names of commercial entities and paid advertisers take precedence over names derived from everyday linguistic practice. (MADDEN, 2019, p. 888).

In Brazil (and in the city of São Paulo in particular), the sale of naming rights began in the 1990's for privately owned urban facilities and structures, such as cinemas and show venues. It then advanced to football stadiums, and has recently reached the public sector. On April 30, 2020, the *Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo (Cia. do Metrô)* announced its intention to grant to advertising exploitation the naming rights for subway stations in the city. If this materializes, it will be the first Brazilian experience in the sale of naming rights for state-owned urban facilities.

This article aims to examine how (i.e., with what assumptions and expectations) the sale of subway station naming rights has been planned in São Paulo. By analyzing the history of naming rights sale in the city of São Paulo and conducting a brief review of the literature, we will discuss the possible problems, limits and risks involved in this practice and how they are being considered in Cia. do Metrô's plan.

To that end, the article is organized into three main sections, in addition to this Introduction and the Final Considerations. The second section presents our conceptual framework, seeking to show the main risks and problems associated with the sale of place names that have been identified by academic research, especially in the area of Critical Toponymy. In the third section, we look briefly into the history of such practice in the city of São Paulo, from the early experiences in the 1990's to Cia. do Metrô's recently announced plan. The fourth section focuses on Cia. do Metrô's plan in order to assess the extent to which the risks and problems indicated by experience and the literature are being considered in this initiative.

As for methods, section 2 is based on a non-systematic review of recent literature on toponymic commodification. Section 3, despite doing some literature review on the case of São Paulo, is constructed mainly from the experience of the

authors, who have both long lived in the city. Thus, any unreferenced factual information that appears in this section comes simply from the authors' remembering. Finally, section 4, where most of the analytical content is presented, is based on documentary analysis (CELLARD, 2008) applied to the most important official piece of documentation currently available about the Cia. do Metrô's plan.

## **2 Toponymic commodification: a few questions raised by the literature**

The study of toponymy, an academic field with a long tradition that encompasses areas such as archeology, geography, history and linguistics, among others (DICK, 1990), has undergone significant renewal in recent decades (ROSE-REDWOOD; ALDERMAN; AZARYAHU, 2010). Historically, the field has been characterized by a certain encyclopedic emphasis, i.e., by being primarily concerned with cataloging place names and studying their origins and derivations, thus viewing them as traces left in the landscape by past cultures or occupations. Little attention was dedicated, however, to the political or economic determinants of naming per se, which gave the field an "atheoretical and apolitical" character (LIGHT; YOUNG, 2015, p. 436). Recently, mainly in the first decades of the 21st century, a movement of change has been brought about with the emergence of the so-called Critical Toponymy, a trend that recognizes that naming places is a political practice and proposes studying the struggles and power relations that place names comprise. In Critical Toponymy, the city is considered a text-object: the names of places show certain identity-based narratives and memories of the territory, while silencing others, and are therefore the object of struggles (CARVALHINHOS; LIMA-HERNANDES, 2020).

A research topic within the field of Critical Toponymy is toponymic commodification, a term that has been used by Vuolteenaho and Ainiala (2009) and later by Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2010), Light and Young (2015), Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young and Light (2019), and several others. As defined

by Giraut and Houssay-Holzschuch (2016), toponymic commodification “covers all the contexts in which powerful individuals, or corporations, annex the toponymic landscape that forms part of the commons for their own (financial or symbolic) profit” (GIRAUT; HOUSSAY- HOLZSCHUCH, 2016, p. 8). It is also

[...] a new, neoliberal, toponymic governance whereby private actors, especially business, contribute strongly to place naming. Cash-strapped municipalities, business associations, or even private property owners, might want to sell this exposure on the monetary market and expect dividends for selling, or just temporarily leasing, the naming rights of places geared to consumption, such as sport arenas, leisure resorts, and shopping malls. (GIRAUT; HOUSSAY- HOLZSCHUCH, 2016, p. 4).

The debate about toponyms as commodities developed concomitantly with the rise of the neoliberal model of city, in which the production of urban space obeys corporate strategies based on the reproductive logic of capital, “[...] where everything has a price and it is necessary to make a profit [...]” (PAIVA, 2017, n.p.). Place names do not escape this logic, and become a profitable commodity, a resource to be sold. This implies that place names must be seen as multidimensional social phenomena, in which a significant economic dimension interact with other dimensions more traditionally taken into account in toponymic studies, such as the political and cultural ones (BASIK, 2020). As pointed out by Medway and Warnaby (2014), recognizing such economic dimension of place names may even imply an overlap between toponymic studies and some theories and concepts from the marketing literature, especially those regarding brand naming.

While studies on toponymic commodification are not yet numerous and their

theoretical framework can vary<sup>2</sup>, they have created a critical mass regarding the often harmful effects that place names trade has had on the cultural landscape of cities. Their overall reading reveals that, despite the enthusiasm often shown by public and private managers, the sale of naming rights has brought about considerable conflicts related to local memory and identity, and involves not insignificant risks.

For example, it is not uncommon for corporations to suffer damage to their image from the exposure of corruption scandals, corporate crime and other irregularities. When a company that has lent its name or brand to urban facilities is involved in crises of this nature, the damage can easily extend, with intensity and consequences that are difficult to predict, to the named places and the community itself. Rose-Redwood, Sotoudehnia and Tretter (2019) refer to this risk, which is generally underestimated in naming rights sale plans:

If the brand image suffers, then a station bearing the corporation's name, and, by extension, the government approving the naming rights agreement, could also be affected to the extent that they are perceived as part of that brand's asset. (ROSE-REDWOOD; SOTOUDEHNIA; TRETTER, 2019, p. 855).

There are also cases where the community rejects the sponsored name through various mechanisms of identity-based resistance. An example, to be detailed in the following section, was the case of the Palmeiras community in São Paulo. Other cases are described by McElroy (2019) and by Kearns and Lewis (2019). The former study analyzes a reaction movement in the city of San Francisco, in 2015, which was triggered by the announcement that a traditional local hospital would be renamed in exchange

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<sup>2</sup> In Brazil, an example is Demuru's (2016) study cited in section 3. Abroad, a significant part of this output was collected in two special issues published by *Urban Geography* (v. 40, n. 6, 2019) and *Urban Science* (v. 4, n. 4, 2020), and also in a book organized by Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009). Theoretical frameworks vary widely, including for instance the theories of capitalist urbanization by David Harvey, of symbolic capital by Pierre Bourdieu, of power hegemonies by Gramsci, among others (ROSE-REDWOOD; VUOLTEENAHO; YOUNG; LIGHT, 2019).

for a large donation made by Facebook. The latter describes the community resistance that prevented a more radical plan from being carried out: renaming an entire city in New Zealand as a way of promoting the region's wine industry. In both instances, as in the case of São Paulo, the highly contentious nature of renaming processes became evident.

A third issue concerns the temporary character given to toponyms to the detriment of places' identity and functionality as urban landmarks. An example in São Paulo, also described in the following section, is the venue that is currently called Unimed Hall after having undergone numerous name changes. The problem is aggravated as it extends to names used in public transport systems, due to their even greater role as a system of guidance for people around city. Rose-Redwood, Vuolteenaho, Young and Light (2019) express the problem in these terms:

The time-limited nature of most contemporary naming rights agreements has resulted in urban namescapes that remain in a constant state of flux as one corporate sponsor's name replaces another when naming rights contracts expire. These tumultuous changes in the place-identities of major urban landmarks have significant implications for urban wayfinding and the creation of a "sense of place" in contemporary cities. (ROSE-REDWOOD; VUOLTEENAHO; YOUNG; LIGHT, 2019, p. 748).

In sum, this literature, albeit recent and not very numerous, allows concluding that, while viewed by local governments as an opportunity to generate revenue and often advocated as a "[...] harmless trend with few serious consequences" (MADDEN, 2019, p. 888), toponymic commodification is actually a major source of problems and conflicts. Renaming places by incorporating sponsor brands can be an interesting source of revenue and business for corporations and governments, but, at the same time, it erases local identities, blurs landmarks and deprives cities of an important intangible heritage.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence that these issues are being seriously



considered in plans of sale of naming rights around the world. In sections 3 and 4, we look particularly into the case of São Paulo.

### 3 Antecedents in São Paulo

In the city of São Paulo, the first experiences involving the sale of naming rights date back to the 1990's. In September 1993, a traditional cinema that had been operating since 1947 on *Rua Augusta*, in central São Paulo, adopted the name of a sponsor bank, thus changing its name to *Espaço Banco Nacional de Cinema*. It quickly ceased to be known by its traditional name, now forgotten (*Cine Majestic*), and had its official name changed two more times as it changed sponsors: in 1996 it became *Espaço Unibanco de Cinema*, and in 2010, *Espaço Itaú de Cinema*. Today, although ten years that have passed since the last renaming, the last two names still compete in everyday use: it is still relatively common for the place to be called *Espaço Unibanco*, whether by its regular customers or those referring to it as a landmark in that area of the city.

The next experience was a show venue that opened in 1999 in the area of Santo Amaro, in the city's south. Built to seat 7,000 people, the venue is still one of the largest of its kind in Latin America. While no traditional name was removed in this case, since the place was named after a sponsor company from the beginning, its recent history has been marked by a quick, confusing sequence of changes in name: it was called *Credicard Hall* from 1999 to 2013, *Citibank Hall* from 2013 to 2018, *Credicard Hall* again from 2018 to 2019, and *Unimed Hall* from October 2019 until today, which has harmed the name's functionality, including with regard to its role as a landmark.

A third precursor case was that of the old *Cineteatro Paramount*, a theater that dates back to 1929 and is located in the neighborhood of Bela Vista, in central São Paulo. In this case, we are talking about a place whose historical importance is recognized. Its architectural project was developed by the studio of Francisco de Paula Ramos de Azevedo (1851-1928), considered one of the main Brazilian architects of the

late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1967 and 1968, at the height of Brazil's dictatorship (1964-1984), the theater, then called *Teatro Record Centro*, housed the notorious *Festivais de Música Popular Brasileira* [Brazilian Popular Music Festivals], a milestone in the resistance against dictatorship. Designed in the eclectic style, the building had its architectural and historical value recognized in 2002, when it was declared a heritage site by the São Paulo Municipal Council for Historical, Cultural and Environmental Heritage Protection (Conpresp). However, that recognition did not cover any of its old denominations: in the same period, the theater had its naming rights sold to Grupo Abril, a Brazilian media conglomerate, and its name became *Teatro Abril*. In 2012, after a new commercial agreement, it was renamed again, this time as *Teatro Renault*.

These three cases were precursors to many others, and the sale of naming rights would become a common way of defining (and frequently redefining) the names of spaces for culture and leisure in the city of São Paulo. National brands such as Bombril, Bradesco, Caixa, Itaú, J. Safra, Net, Petra, Porto Seguro, Sabesp, Prevent Senior, Unimed, and international brands such as Citibank, Claro, Credicard, HSBC, Renault, Santander, Vivo, among others, have come to name and rename many of the city's main cinemas and theaters throughout the 2000's and 2010's.

The case with greatest repercussions, however, took place in another industry. In 2013, the traditional football stadium belonging to *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras* (*Palmeiras*) was renamed for 20 years, renewable for another 10 years, through an agreement with the German insurance company Allianz. Under the agreement, a place connected to the memory of Italian immigration in the city, which for about a century (1917-2013) had been known as the field (later stadium) of *Palestra Italia*<sup>3</sup>, had its name

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<sup>3</sup> From 1902 to 1917, the area belonged to the *Companhia Antártica Paulista*, which used it to make a leisure park. Part of the park's area, with its sports facilities and a football field, was leased in 1917, and then sold in 1920, to *Societá Sportiva Palestra Italia* (today *Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras*), which built its stadium there (SOUSA, 2017).

suddenly changed to *Allianz Parque*, an intervention that was not free of opposition and resistance.

Due to its importance as a memory place (as defined by NORA, 1993), the displacement of the toponym *Palestra Italia* in São Paulo's cultural landscape characterized, according to Demuru (2016),

[...] a step further towards the privatization of the city and, in particular, its toponyms; an issue that calls for a broad reflection on the strategies of manipulation and appropriation of sociocultural life in São Paulo by the power of the private sector. (DEMURU, 2016, p. 299)<sup>4</sup>.

The case also stood out for not being restricted to São Paulo, since it was part of a strategy at the global level on the part of the multinational sponsor: in addition to the São Paulo stadium, the German company also bought the naming rights for another five stadiums, whose names became *Allianz Arena* (Munich, Germany), *Allianz Riviera* (Nice, France), *Allianz Park* (London, England), *Allianz Stadium* (Sydney, Australia) and *Allianz Stadion* (Vienna, Austria). The erasure of local memory and identity through the substitution of such a traditional toponym is thus combined with a homogenizing component perceived in the equalization of the identities of such diverse places, an equalization that stems purely from the sponsor's corporate interests.

The difficult dialogue between global homogenizing forces and local identity resistance is a topic that has been extensively explored in the social sciences. It has long been recognized that globalized capitalism has led to a model of interconnected society, a "network society" (CASTELLS, 1999), and to the perception of the world as a homogeneous space, a "global village" (McLUHAN, 1964). However, we also know that this homogenization occurs to a much greater extent in the economic and technological field than in that of culture, where resistance and oppositions arise

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<sup>4</sup> We have opted for a free translation into English whenever quoting texts in other languages.

between the global and the local (ROBERTSON, 2000; LOURENÇO, 2014). There would be no reason why such resistance and oppositions would not occur in the case of the São Paulo stadium, and Demuru (2016) describes the chronology of events in a relatively detailed manner. The choice of the new name was delegated to Palmeiras' fans and club members, through online voting, from three options that were pre-defined by the sponsor: *Allianz 360*, *Allianz Center* and *Allianz Parque*. Such options (including the winning one) were met with rejection by fans, who demanded greater similarity to the previous name, i.e., *Palestra Italia*. Demands on this respect were even made on social networks, and *#AllianzPalestraJá* [*#AllianzPalestraNow*] eventually became a Twitter trending topic, though without success. However, the mobilization was not completely fruitless: in 2015, it managed to get the City Council to, as a kind of compensation, rename the street where the stadium's entrance is located; that section of *Rua Turiassu* officially became *Rua Palestra Itália*.

As Demuru (2016) notes, the case shows a true semio-political struggle that, in turn, reveals hierarchies and power relations in the city: Allianz appropriated the name of Palmeiras' stadium, and Palmeiras appropriated the street's name. In this new disposition of names, the biggest victim was neither the football club nor the Italian culture: the native memory symbolized in the toponym Turiassu<sup>5</sup> ended up being the only element excluded from that narrative. The native people, to whom "[...] toponymy often represents one of the few places of survival [...]" (DEMURU, 2016, p. 305), have no one to dispossess.

The sequence of name changes was not restricted to the stadium's surroundings. It was also necessary to rename the old *Rua Palestra Itália*, in the district of Parelheiros, in the city's south end, since municipal legislation does not allow two

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<sup>5</sup> The name, which appears as *Rua Turyassu* on an 1897 map, became official in 1923. As with other street names in the neighborhood, it was not directly given by any a native people, but was applied considering the theme of toponyms of Brazilian native origin (PREFEITURA DE SÃO PAULO, 2020).

or more streets with the same name. Here is yet another reflection of hierarchies and power relations in the city: the central, wealthier area appropriated a toponym previously belonging to a poorer outlying district. The old street with that name became *Rua do Terceiro Lago* (SÃO PAULO, 2015).

It is in this field marked by semiotic power struggles that, in 2020, Cia. do Metrô announced its plan to sell naming rights for its stations. If it materializes, the initiative will be the first of its kind for state-owned facilities in São Paulo.

#### **4 The plan for the São Paulo subway**

After being practiced for nearly three decades for privately-owned establishments like cinemas, theaters and sports stadiums, the sale of naming rights ended up reaching also the public sector in São Paulo: in April 2020, Cia. do Metrô, a state-owned company belonging to the State of São Paulo which operates part of the city's subway system, announced a plan to grant to advertising exploitation the right to rename its stations.

The announcement was accompanied by the issuance of an Invitation for Bids and the respective Term of Reference<sup>6</sup>. This is not yet the bidding process for actually selling the naming rights, but an earlier stage: Cia. do Metrô is selecting a consulting company that will develop a preliminary study to assess the feasibility and define how this sale will take place.

In Brazilian legislation on public procurement, the Term of Reference is a mandatory document in bidding processes via procurement auction; it is a document where the government details the object of the contract. In this particular bidding process, the object of the contract is a study that “[...] provides technical, economic and legal elements to underpin the development of a technical, economic-financial and

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<sup>6</sup> Invitation for Bids PE10015006, from 04.30.2020 (COMPANHIA DO METROPOLITANO DE SÃO PAULO, 2020).

legal model of concession for exploring naming rights for the existing stations [...]” (COMPANHIA DO METROPOLITANO DE SÃO PAULO, 2020, p. 1). The study to be contracted should contain information corresponding to a series of items defined by the client (i.e., Cia. do Metrô) concerning: the potential market for the sale of these rights, the prices and concession terms that can be established, the legal and contractual instruments to be used, the estimated revenue, the risks involved. In sum, the Term of Reference shows the topics of concern on the part of Cia. do Metrô in designing its plan for the sale of naming rights. Hence the relevance of analyzing it.

The Term comprises eight items, the first four of which are of interest for our analysis. These four items describe: the “object” of the contract; its “justification”; the list of “expected results” (also called “goals” in the document); and the specification of the “products” to be delivered to Cia. do Metrô by the company that is awarded the contract<sup>7</sup>. The content of these items is reproduced, in a summarized manner, in Chart 1.

Chart 1 – Summary of the Term of Reference for the Invitation for Bids via Electronic Procurement Auction nº 10015006 of Cia. do Metrô.

Item of the Term of Reference	Location in the document	Content/description
Object	p. 1	“A study that provides technical, economic and legal elements to underpin the development of a technical, economic-financial and legal model of concession for exploring naming rights for the existing stations of Cia. do Metrô”.
Justification	p. 1	“Among Cia. do Metrô’s goals are the generation of revenue through the exploitation of business opportunities in its facilities, stations and remaining areas, thus also contributing to increase the value of its assets. [...] Ancillary

<sup>7</sup> The other items in the document which are not considered in this analysis are: “work methodology”, “evaluation of the studies’ technical quality”, “obligations of the contracted party” and “obligations of Cia. do Metrô”.

		<p>revenues play an important role in the pursuit for Cia. do Metrô's financial balance in line with several other measures to reduce costs and expenses. [...] A source of non-fare revenue not explored by Cia. do Metrô refers to the exploration of naming rights for its stations. This practice has been adopted by train and subway companies in several cities around the world, but it is still not common in Brazil [...]"</p>
<p>Expected results</p>	<p>p. 2</p>	<p>"Analyzing the current legislation in order to find the best legal means to make the concession feasible";          "Assessing the market and the potential feasibility of concession of naming rights for the stations";          "Indicating the possible models for the concession, including the bidding model, whether individually or by lots, etc.";          "Analyzing possible sources of additional revenue resulting from the simultaneous exploration of stations' names with other services provided inside Cia. do Metrô's stations and facilities";          "Establishing scenarios that consider pessimistic, optimistic and most likely premises";          "Assessing the expenses and costs of operating the concession";          "Assessing the costs of implementation, operation and maintenance, considering changes in signage and visual identification throughout the subway system and audio contents";          "Performing financial simulations to analyze the impact on the Internal Rate of Return - IRR and Net Present Value - NPV [...]";          "Analyzing possible urbanistic implications of the plan and the necessary regulations so that the concession complies with current legislation";          "Defining the value of the 'naming rights' asset and possible variations according to the profile of each property (station, line)";          "[Defining the] business models possible and/or resulting from naming rights";</p>

		<p>“[Defining the] possible selection models, considering current legislation and the internal contracting instruments”.</p>
<p>Products to be delivered</p>	<p>p. 2 to 7</p>	<p>“Current Situation Diagnosis Report”: It should contain a description of all facilities that may be considered for concession of naming rights, a benchmark study and a “survey of the advertising market for outdoor media in São Paulo [...]” (p. 3);</p> <p>“Model and Technical Feasibility Report”: Based on the previous report, it should provide a model for the plan by describing its deadlines, costs and other technical parameters, including figures concerning the dimensions of facilities, human resources and necessary information systems;</p> <p>“Economic-financial Feasibility Report”: It should contain an “analysis of the potential revenue from the concession of naming rights for stations [...]” (p. 3), as well as a forecast of costs to Cia. do Metrô. It should show the premises on which the financial analysis is based, including the “concession term” and the “the initial fixed amount for the concession, as well as the remuneration of Cia. do Metrô throughout the concession term” (p. 4);</p> <p>“Legal Analysis Report”: “It should [...] identify possible [legal] impediments and limitations [...]”; analyze the legal means to make the concession feasible; and present “[...] the drafts of the legal instruments necessary for implementing the proposition, including the invitation for bids, contract and other related documents” (p. 5). In addition, it “may indicate [...] the requirements for compliance with the rules for the protection of historical and cultural heritage” (p. 6);</p> <p>“Final Considerations Report” showing the plan’s economic, financial, legal and technical feasibility, the parameters to be practiced (such as the amount for the concession per property, and concession terms) and “recommendations for continuing works” (p. 7). It should address the “the plan’s urbanistic implications [...]” so “[...] that the concession complies with current legislation” (p.7).</p>

Source: prepared by the authors - a summary of the information contained in Companhia do Metropolitano de São Paulo (2020).



The information in Chart 1 shows that the problems identified by the studies referred to in section 2 of this article, or even those suggested by São Paulo's own experience, which are the object of section 3, do not seem to be part of the plan's agenda.

As seen in the "object" and "justification" items, the sale of station naming rights is presented as justified in two ways: by Cia. do Metrô's interest in increasing its sources of revenue, and also because it is practiced by similar companies in other parts of the world. At the same time, in the expressions "*its stations*" and "*its assets*" (both in the "justification" item), as well as in the phrase "*according to the profile of each property (station, line)*" (in the tenth result in the "expected results" item), we note that the stations are treated as owned by Cia. do Metrô: they are part of its *assets*, and, as such, they can be put to use for generating that increase in revenue.

We certainly know that the company owns the stations. In referring to this ownership, however, the Term of Reference makes no distinction between the ownership of the station and that of the name. This is reinforced in the fourth expected result, which refers to "*additional revenue resulting from the simultaneous exploration of the stations' names with other services provided inside Cia. do Metrô's stations and facilities*": the premise is that the ownership over the station (its facilities, its space, its "*inside*") and the ownership over the name constitute one and the same thing.

The name is thus disregarded as a heritage that precedes the construction of the Company's stations by decades and even centuries. The names that, by the time the subway was built, already belonged to the city and were already part of its cultural landscape, and which were adopted for naming the stations precisely because of their key role in urban orientation due to their relationship and identification with the place, have come to be considered as assets owned by the company alone, which can put them to use to generate revenue for its financial balance.

The collective consequences of this appropriation, as well as the risks of erasure of urban memory and local identities - especially in a city like São Paulo, so much marked by erasures and losses in this field<sup>8</sup> - are not presented as a topic of interest in any of the five “products” commissioned by Cia. do Metrô (Current Situation Diagnostic Report, Model and Technical Feasibility Report, Economic-financial Feasibility Report, Legal Analysis Report and Final Considerations Report).

Concerns about urban cultural heritage appear only in the specifications for the Legal Analysis Report. This report “should [...] identify possible impediments and limitations [...]”, and in doing so, it “may indicate [...] the requirements for compliance with the rules for the protection of historical and cultural heritage”. Here, three considerations are in order. First, the protection of historical and cultural heritage is mentioned only as a possible source of legal obstacles, not as a direct and genuine concern. Second, the language used (*should* identify impediments, but *may* include rules for the protection of historical and cultural heritage) suggests the little importance given to the subject. Third, the lack of concern is justified: as seen in the previous section, where we referred to the case of the *Paramount/Abril/Renault* theater, the Brazilian heritage protection tradition usually encompasses buildings and other tangible property, but it is less comprehensive in relation to immaterial property, and there are no precedents for restrictions imposed by such rules on the change of urban toponyms.

Twice (in the ninth expected result and in the specifications for the Final Considerations Report) the document makes reference to the “urbanistic implications” of the sale of naming rights. In both, the expressed concern is “that the concession complies with current legislation”. The legislation of the municipality of São Paulo on urban matters, whose main instrument is the Strategic Master Plan (Municipal Law

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion on the processes of erasure of urban memory in the city of São Paulo, see, e.g., Jayo and Vargas (2019), or Silva (2020).

16,050 from July 31, 2014), does establish rules and guidelines for “protecting the historical, cultural and religious heritage, as well as valuing the memory, the feeling of belonging to the city and diversity” (Article 7, item 12); however, it makes no reference to the relationship between this heritage and the city’s toponyms (SÃO PAULO, 2014, p. 1). Thus, it seems unlikely for obstacles to the plan to arise from this legislation.

As a whole, the analyzed document sidesteps concerns with local identities, landmarks and urban intangible heritage. The specifications in the Term of Reference seem to us to be consistent with what Madden (2019) considers the “major motif” of the neoliberal city: “[...] dispossession, in the form of city dwellers stripped of common identifiers, spaces, property, and institutions; governments stripped of their budgets; and cities stripped of their assets” (MADDEN, 2019, p. 889).

## 5 Final considerations

If the specifications in the Term of Reference for contracting a feasibility study can provide indications of the topics of concern of Cia. do Metrô as it prepares its plan to sell naming rights, then it seems to us symptomatic that those specifications dedicate no attention to the importance of the names of stations as a collective heritage, or to the conflicts of identity and memory that the renaming may trigger in São Paulo. Such discussions are clearly absent from the Company’s agenda of concerns, even though their relevance is highlighted by academic literature and by the history of sale of naming rights in the city of São Paulo.

Thus, we believe we have answered the question proposed for the article, which concerned Cia. do Metrô’s premises and expectations for the sale of the immaterial collective heritage represented by the names of the stations.

This article certainly has limitations. During the period it was written (July 2020), the Term of Reference we examined was the document available for analysis.

Soon, another document will be available, i.e., the actual technical study on the object of the bidding process. Thus, the elements we present here can be viewed less as conclusions than as indication for continuing and furthering the discussion. From an academic point of view, we believe that the present study is relevant as it is, to our knowledge, the first to examine the plan of renaming São Paulo's subway stations. From a practical point of view, the relevance lies precisely in the fact that said plan is still in progress, which makes it possible to raise awareness among those responsible for it about the relevance of identity issues, urban memory and intangible collective heritage that until now have been ignored.

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