Power and Placenames:
A Case Study From
the Contemporary Amazon Frontier[1]

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A political economy of placenames is proposed in an attempt to discover who has the power to name places and what values the names represent. Studies of power and placenames are reviewed and directions for further research are indicated. Placenaming in the state of Pará on the Brazilian Amazon frontier is examined and settlement names are analyzed. Government map-makers and politicians, relations with indigenous populations, and settlers' hopes for better lives are shown to interact with other factors and with chance to create the changing "namescape" of the Amazon frontier.

I. INTRODUCTION

Just as landscapes reveal the traces and scars of past human use, placenames reflect the values and goals of past settlers. Though history's odd twists often leave places with idiosyncratic names, overall they indicate (like all cultural texts) what was important to the people who left them, and how the namers perceived their environment. Placenames also provide hints about who had the power to leave the names to posterity. The United States, for example, is becoming increasingly commodified and rationalized and power is becoming more centralized. Naming places has thus become almost exclusively the domain of government planners, real estate developers and politicians.

I propose in this article a political economy of placenames — an attempt to decipher our namescape in order to discover the power struggle that lies behind the names.[2] Who has the power to name places? What will the names represent? How will we perceive the places because of their names?

Because the name carried by a place affects how we perceive it and how we perceive ourselves, names contribute subtly and forcefully to our relationship with our planet. Atchison, for example, laments the adoption of *outback* over *interior* to describe Australia's central regions:

> The term *outback* came into being to describe the regions remote from the settled districts.... Its adoption...accompanied a rejection of the beautiful generics of an intimate English country-side.... *Outback*, originally a slang term and now orthodox, was accepted rather than *interior* which implies a spiritual, intellectual and emotional acceptance of the moderately arid shield and platform deserts with their distinctive vegetation, boulders and gibbers. White Australians are still learning to see the interior as a rich and diverse range of beautiful and delicate ecosystems. (Atchison 153).

The result, he points out, has been an ecologically devastating relationship between the country's crowded coastal cities and a hinterland appreciated only for its natural resources and their potential exploitation. In the same way, placenames reflect and affect relations of domination and subordination between social groups.

For a case study, in this article I examine placenaming in the Brazilian state of Pará, which covers 474,000 square miles (1.25 million square kilometers), about one-fourth of the entire Amazon forest. Pará lies in the east of the Amazon region at the river's mouth, and the state has received intense waves of migrants since the building of the Belém-Brasilia Highway in the late 1950s and the Trans-Amazonic Highway in 1970 (Fig. 1). With Rondonia, the Southeast of Pará has seen the most rapid colonization and destruction of Amazon forest since 1960. My research included twelve months of case study observations and interviews in 1988, 1989-1990, and 1992 around the Carajás mineral project, where construction began on uninhabited and isolated rainforest moun-
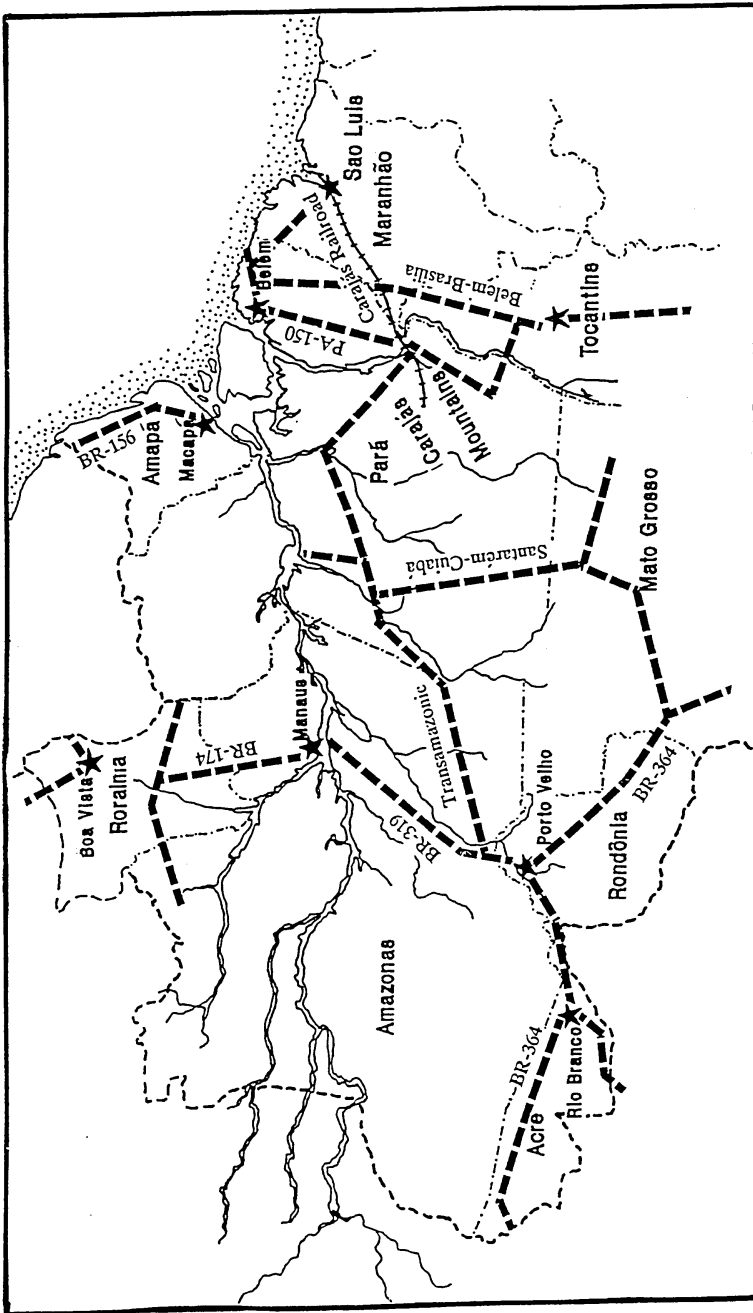
Fig. 1. States and major highways in the Brazilian Amazon. Location of case study in Carajás region of the state of Pará.

tains only in 1980. While there, I focused especially on the satellite boomtown of Parauapebas, which lies just outside the mine's gates.[3] This part of the Amazon provided an exceptional opportunity to observe placenaming and to interview those who participated in the original settlement of the region.

The article begins with a brief look at the thin literature on power and placenames and a proposal for how to proceed. I then briefly provide some background on the Amazon's colonization, discuss placenames and the role of the state in Amazonia, and develop hypotheses on placenaming based on theories of internal colonialism. I next quantitatively analyze the content (settlement names) of current maps of Pará state, and before concluding provide examples of the actual naming process from observations of squatter land invasions.

II. POWER AND PLACENAMES

G.F. Delaney, secretary of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, stated two decades ago that "No body of scholarly knowledge has evolved which would make straight and clear the torturous paths the practical toponymist must tread..." (304). Though toponomy is quite an old field, the same could be said of the political economy of placenames. Over a century ago Isaac Taylor began his classic book *Words and Places* with a statement of the importance of such study:

> Local names — whether they belong to provinces, cities, and villages, or are the designations of rivers and mountains — are never mere arbitrary sounds, devoid of meaning. They may always be regarded as records of the past, inviting and rewarding a careful historical interpretation.[4]

Taylor, like most European toponymists, confined his study to etymology: the linguistic search for the roots of words.[5] Stewart disparaged the exclusive focus in Europe on the meaning of names: "There is little interest in the *giving* of the name" (44).[6] Stewart is led to conclude:

> Though we must pay the very highest tribute to this linguistic
> research, the explanatory note is at best what anyone could have
> supposed for himself, and at worst it does positive harm by oversim-
> plification.[7]

Such studies are important linguistically but dangerous
sociologically because they usually imply peaceful coexistence
and deny differing levels of power of different actors and classes
during the origination and evolution of names. Leslie and Skipper
rightly state that "the meanings of names are the result of
complex social negotiations" (273). To the contrary, linguistic
studies often make it sound as if the languages, not the people,
are interacting.[8] Though languages have their own structures that
somewhat shape human thought (Chomsky), chronicling language
change can assist a history of the interactions of dominant and
subordinant cultures. This is true of the confrontation of colonizers
and colonized, and for interactions between classes, genders, and
ethnicities within a population.

Beyond reams of linguistic sleuthing, at this point we appear
to have no theory of how social power relates to placenaming, and
only anecdotal evidence from field observations of actual place
naming. Written descriptions of historically-recorded placenaming
and map studies need also to be reinterpreted in a sociological
light. Some comparative historical studies may be usefully applied
with some reinterpretation. The latter category, the ethnography
of placenaming events, appears to be the most neglected. While
Harris provides a detailed case study of one street's naming, she
does not sufficiently explain why one faction rather than another
won out in the naming process.

Naming on the North American frontier has been discussed for
more than a century, from Taylor's 1882 disdainful remarks on
borrowing from the Old World (313-15) to more recent systematic
studies of street and town names in the United States.[9] Because
of our obvious inability to interview planners and inhabitants of the
time, however, all these studies must resort to historical sleuthing
and an ultimate best-guess. As Grant Smith and Norris note, many
of the current residents of a location have erroneous stories for
how particular placenames originated. Research in a contempo-

rary frontier area or boomtown should provide critical insights into the process of naming new places by allowing more direct observation of the naming process, including interviews with the persons involved. Who gets to name a settlement and what will its name represent?

Nicolaisen notes that placenaming is an intensely political activity. After reviewing debates over placenames in a number of countries, he states:

> Contrary to their supposed 'neutrality,' in their primary task of designating individual geographic features, placenames, when employed as evidence in the arena of politics become highly charged objects provoking emotive responses. (202)

For example, a substantial literature and debate has developed in Canada over the eighteen percent of all placenames which differ on French and English-language maps (Delaney 318-19).

Moving the field ahead will require three emphases. First, and most important, we need a theory which will predict who will win the naming game and why. Second, comparative historical research should test the robustness of such a theory, and third, case studies should be made in which the actual process of placenaming can be observed. The current study attempts only modest contributions in each of these areas, focusing on a case study in the eastern Brazilian Amazon.

III. RUSHES TO THE AMAZON

The Brazilian Amazon today is the site of thousands of hopeful, dreamy names: towns called *Eldorado*,[10] *Novo Esperança* 'New Hope,' *Boa Sorte* 'Good Luck,' *Bom Lugar* 'Good Place,' *Nova Vida* 'New Life,' etc. Migrants to today's Amazonia come from a wide variety of backgrounds and carry their own cultural baggage and utopian images of the open frontier.[11] They range from poor farmers and rural day laborers looking for land or gold, to middle-class lumbermen and merchants, to prostitutes, land speculators, circuit preachers and other frontier hopefuls.

There are many similarities — as well as profound differences — between the current Amazon and the settling of the American West. One key difference is the uneven role of the Brazilian state, which has in some cases designed and directed massive settlement, mining, and dam projects and in other cases intervened only as late-arriving tax-collector and law-enforcer at gold rush and lumber-town sites.[12]

Like landscapes, placenames are mosaics of local and external forces from both the recent and distant past. It is therefore worthwhile to sketch in broad outline certain aspects of the Amazon's history.

The Amazon's more distant economic history (before 1960) was one of cyclic boom and bust. The region was brought into the world economy as a source of a series of single commodities: spices, medicinal herbs, rubber, and brazil nuts. Each time world demand for an Amazon product grew, a complex society of extraction emerged which concentrated significant wealth in the hands of a very few. The opulent opera-houses of Belém and Manaus, for example, were constructed at the peak of the rubber boom by European craftsmen and with imported materials. They were built with the revenues of only a few hundred rubber barons who controlled hundreds of thousands of square miles of rainforest and tens of thousands of rubbertappers, most kept in a state of debt-slavery (Santos). Often, just as quickly as a boom arrived, a cheaper substitute was discovered or the original material was produced more cheaply elsewhere. Such was the case with rubber, which was smuggled out of the Amazon by the British to be grown in Malaysian plantations, then later largely supplanted by petroleum derivatives. When the price collapsed in 1911, the rubbertappers were left in the jungle to fend for themselves, and the region was left in a backward state with no alternative products.

Since the building of the Belém-Brasilia highway in 1958-1960 (Fig. 1), however, the Amazon region has been invaded in a more systematic and multifaceted way. Because of its active role in surveying the region and in establishing massive colonization and infrastructure projects since that time, the Brazilian state has had a curious top-down influence in naming towns and other features.

For the twenty years following a 1964 coup, the military regime dreamt of leading Brazil in a massive industrializing push that would bring them into the First World within just one generation.

While inviting international corporations to take advantage of the Amazon's wealth, Brazil's military regime also sought to protect the vast region from armed foreign invasion (Reis; Katzmann). Presidents and generals therefore planned to establish a Brazilian presence in what they saw as a "demographic vacuum" (Superentendência para o Desenvolvimento da Amazônia 8). President-General Medici thus undertook in 1970 to colonize the vast region with landless poor from the country's drought, famine, land-poor and conflict-ridden northeast. In this way he sought to solve two problems with one stroke of the pen: defusing pressure for land reform, and providing an enormous cheap workforce to help bring the Amazon region into the national economy. In 1970 he proclaimed that the Amazon was a vast "land without men for men without land," (Schmink and Wood 1). Government propaganda campaigns offered subsidized lots for homesteading along the new Transamazonic highway, which stretched 2000 miles from the northeast through the heart of the Amazon to the rubber-tapper groves of Acre along the Bolivian border (Fig. 1). Meanwhile, through intense lobbying, capitalists from the south of Brazil won generous tax breaks and other incentives for large-scale cattle and lumber projects.

The Amazon was thus brought hurriedly into the national and international economy in the last three decades and in a triple role. First, as raw materials hinterland to the country's south and the metropolitan centers of the world-economy; second, as safety-valve for the excess population expected from the mechanization and concentration of agriculture; and third, as target for geo-political occupation. The Amazon's placenames today reflect the paradox of the region's occupation, a curious legacy of struggle resulting from uneven government initiative in the region, waves of colonists from the poor northeast and metropolitan southeast and south, and the expansion of large capitalist firms and the cattle frontier from the country's center-west.

It is important also to keep in mind that Brazil is a country of stark social contrasts, with some of the world's most extreme

poverty and also some of its greatest fortunes.[13] The inequality itself is unevenly distributed: the north and northeast have remained backward while São Paulo led the southeast in becoming a powerful industrial core partly by extracting surplus from much of South America. By exploiting a backward region of its own country for cheap labor (the Northeast) and another for cheap resources (the Amazon), Brazil's government and capitalists from the country's more "developed" regions are participating in a new version of "internal colonialism."[14]

IV. ANALYSIS

Ideally, research on placenames should link the state of origin of migrants and their relative wealth and power to predict who would be most able to influence the naming process. I began by searching for towns named "Novo [New] Rio de Janeiro," "Novo São Paulo," or after some other hometown in the country's wealthy southeast. However, such placenames are rare for towns in the Amazon. Many ranches and stores carry such names, but not towns. This may be due to the fact that most southern migrants to the Amazon plan to return home once they have made their fortunes. Southern merchants and speculators also often follow booms begun by poor Northeasterners. Also, as previously mentioned, placenames are mosaics of old and new influences. In order to understand these earlier influences, we need to examine the role of Indian and Catholic placenames in the region.

Thousands of Amazon placenames remain from native South Americans. For North America, Grant Smith used the percentage of placenames of Indian origin in Washington counties to indicate the degree of Indian-White relationships, hypothesizing that the relative absence of such names reflected a greater rejection of native American presence, both physical and cultural. In the Amazon many natural features, such as rivers and mountain ranges, retain their Indian names. For example, the mountain name *Carajás* is a derivation of *Karayá*, the name of a local tribe and the nearby Araguaia river probably got its name from the Arayá tribes that lived along its banks (Nimuendaju).

The names of current settlements, however, have more varied origins. I analyzed 871 settlement names on a recent political and highway map of the State of Pará (Table 1). The majority of names of larger settlements in Amazonia date to the forts established at strategic points along the region's vast river system (Santos; Loureiro). Most old river towns have biblical names reflecting the Catholic (especially Jesuit) roots of the settlers: *Belém* 'Bethlehem,' *Conceição do Araguaia* 'Conception on the Araguaia' River, *São João do Araguaia* 'Saint John of the Araguaia.'[15] A significant number of names describe physical features of the local landscape or the hope that it will bring future prosperity to the migrants. The names can be classified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Placenames in Pará State, Brazil, 1988.

Allusion	Number	Percent
Catholic Names	163	18.7%
Indian Names	151	17.3
Indian Villages (inside reserves)	55	6.3
Hopes	25	2.9
Descriptive of Natural Features	21	2.4
Number or Rational Planning Name	08	0.9
Compound Indian-Catholic	07	0.8
Named after other Brazilian Cities	03	0.3
Presidents	02	0.2
Others and not classifiable	436	50.1
Totals	871	100.0

Source: Map of the State of Pará, 1988. Belém.

In each category we face the problem of compound names, those which combine a native American with a European name. How are these to be counted? Norris considered each part of a name as an "element," double-counting such compounds as *Calm Lake* and *Little Creek* (2). (Some place-names in his study,

such as *Stonefield Village Estates*, were counted four times). For purposes of this study, I created separate categories for simple and compound names of each type and counted each name only once. In this way each name receives equal weight and the number of places can be compared, rather than place name elements. Counted in this way, compound hagiolatrous names (which combine Indian placenames with Catholic names) make up only an additional 0.8% of the settlement names.

One in five towns (18.5%) founded by Europeans have names of obvious Indian origin.[16] Many of these are badly corrupted, and some are compounds, such as Xinguara, the name of the boom-town lying midway between the rivers Xingú and Araguaia.[17] Another 4.4% were Indian villages with indigenous names, all lying within Indian reserves. Thus a total of 22.8% of all town names were of Indian origin, more than double that of any county Smith studied in Washington, and ten times the average statewide. This point deserves further consideration.

A preliminary proposition is testable with the following information: if Indian-White relations were generally bad and if Smith's hypothesis is correct, then the number of Indian names should decrease in areas with the greatest concentration of settlements.[18] Surprisingly, there was a moderate correlation between Indian names (including those of Indian villages) and Catholic names.[19] However this relationship fell to zero when the proportion of all names with indigenous elements was compared with the density of settlements.[20] Some Indian reservations were the site of both Catholic missionary-named and Indian-named villages. Graphic analysis showed that the average of one-in-six towns having an Indian name was fairly constant over all densities of habitation. Whether ten times more Amerindian placenames than in Washington means a ten times greater acceptance of Indian presence throughout the history of the Amazon is, of course, questionable since today many of the Amazon frontier dwellers still feel and openly express the attitude that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian."

Rather, the key seems to be the way in which indigenous peoples were integrated into the local economy, as Smith also suggests. For Spanish and Portuguese settlers, colonization was

usually a lower priority than exploitation of wealth. Lacking cheap labor because population was thin and African slaves tended to escape into the rainforest, Amazon Amerindians were widely coerced to work in the extraction of rubber, medicines, brazil nuts and spices. When the boom for these products turned to bust, the poor laborers of (often mixed) European descent who had come to the Amazon in search of work reverted to subsistence farming and many, in order to survive, were forced to use techniques learned from "detribalized" Indians. There were many intermarriages between Europeans and indigenous peoples, and by 1989 an estimated 72 percent of the Amazon region's population called themselves "mixed" (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística 227).

A key difference between the Amazon and Washington situations (and those of the United States in general) is that the Amazon remained exclusively an extractive frontier until recently, seeing massive waves of colonists — who compete with Indians for land — only since 1960. By that time many names were already in place. The extreme labor shortage in the area forced greater contact with the Indians. Another possible reason for a positive correlation between density of settlements and frequency of Indian names might be the greater ability of urban dwellers to romanticize indigenous culture.

Many settlements have arisen since the highways from the country's South and Northeast began to stretch into the vast forest. These roads followed the highlands, distant from the wildly flooding rivers, through areas far less populated than the fertile lowlands.[21] The towns along the Belém-Brasilia Highway have diverse origins: *Dom Eliseu* 'Elija,' *Ligaćão do Pará* 'Connection to Pará,' *Vila Arco Iris* 'Rainbow Village,' *Gurupízinho* (probably a diminutive of an Indian name), *Serraria* 'Sawmill,' *Paragominas* (perhaps a combination of the state names *Pará/Goias/Minas Gerais*), *Vila Ipixuna* (probably of native origin), among many others.

In contrast, the names of towns along the Transamazonic Highway reflect their imposition by the military's centralized planning bureaucracy. *Medicilândia* and *Presidente Medici*, for example, were named by planners after President-General Medici,

who called for the highway's construction in 1970. The planners intended a hierarchy of urban units along the seemingly endless strand, each fulfilling an increasing number of urban functions.[22] These were to be named, from larger to smaller, *Ruropolis, Agropolis, Agrovila*, etc., names which in some cases remain today. A pattern shared with many other Amazon highways is that dozens of the settlements have names such as *Km95, Km139* and *Km130* — their mile-markers on the rutted dirt pikes.

The "International Map of the World on the Millions Scale" of 1979 shows 25 such numerically-named towns out of 33 along the Transamazonic Highway (76%). Many of these "towns" are nothing more than roadhouses where the bus stops and locals can drink, play pool and eat; they do not appear on the 1987 State of Pará map analyzed above. Larger towns are named *Agrovila Nova Fronteira* 'New Frontier Agrovillage,' *Agrovila Planaltina* 'Little Highplains Agrovillage,' *Agrovila Grande Esperança* 'Big Hopes Agrovillage,' all of which were named top-down in plans from Brasilia or Rio in 1970. The hopeful names are especially ironic because the highway's distances and eroding passability have left thousands of farmers stranded for months on end in the jungle. As a result of the poor road, malaria, problems of land titling, credit and questionable farming techniques there have been extremely high abandonment rates of Transamazon farms.[23]

A Case Study: Naming a New Town

I spent six months just outside the enormous Carajás Iron Mine in southeastern Pará living in a small town created in 1980 to service the project. The town has grown explosively in just ten years, largely through squatter settlement, to around 30,000 people.[24] The name — *Parauapebas* — was itself a mystery to virtually everyone who lived there. One of the first residents of the town said "that's just always been the name of the river, since I got here when there was nothing, just three other houses."[25] Even some maps and newspaper articles have misspelled the name — as often happens with frontier towns — as *Paraoupebas* (Gabeira), and *Paraopebas* (Estado do Pará), apparently confusing the name with the valley in Minas Gerais state, "Paraopeba."

More than a month of intermittent investigation with a Brazilian playwright who was attempting to document in theater the origin of the name "Parauapebas" and the roots of the region's history did not uncover its source. Finally, an interview with the adult son of a 1960s Brazil nut collector provided a critical clue. Difficult access to the area had left its Brazil nut reserves untapped by the powerful Brazil nut barons of nearby Marabá through the 1930s-1970s boom. The informant's father had reconnoitered the unutilized, uninhabited area for Brazil nut groves in 1967, and had set up claims and collection trails for a few men to gather in the area. The informant, named Raimundo Nonato, reports the river was then known as the *Rio Branco* 'White River,' because of the color of its water compared to the tea-colored waters of the Itacaiunas. Nonato reports that the name of the river changed about the time the RADAMBRAZIL radar mapping project was being conducted in the early 1970s. His theory is that the name was applied in Rio de Janeiro where no one in the cartography department knew the name of the river which flowed between two of the ranges of the Carajás mountains.

This theory makes a great deal of sense. Carajás was gaining an international reputation after its discovery in 1967 by Breno Augusto dos Santos, a member of a United States Steel prospecting team. The American firm had been searching for manganese, but instead discovered billions of tons of high-grade iron, with nearby deposits of bauxite, nickel, copper, gold, and manganese (Roberts *Forging Development*). The Brazilian state-owned firm Companhia Vale do Rio Doce was foisted on U.S. Steel in a joint venture, and finally U.S. Steel was forced out after ten years of foot-dragging. The RADAMBRASIL project, completed with the help of the U.S. Air Force, mapped and surveyed the resources of the vast Amazon region.[26] The images were completed in 1971-1972 with RADAR GEMS 1000 from an altitude of 11,000 meters.[27] These radar image maps superimposed a minimum of names — just enough to orient the viewer. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics released the first topographic maps for the region in 1971 and 1973 with the name river *Parauapebas*.

"Paraupava" was the mythical lake from which ran the rivers of gold that Brazil's famed *Bandeirantes* 'fortune-seeking

frontiersmen' sought in earlier centuries (dos Santos 9). Later the *Paroapeba* Valley in Minas Gerais was the site of the massive iron deposits exploited by Bethlehem Steel and other national and international firms. Carajás was to be the new Paroapeba Valley, the El Dorado of the entrepreneurial state (Roberts *Forging Development*).

The case of Parauapebas shows how local placenames may be lost through lack of communication between mappers and planners, thousands of kilometers away, and the people who live in the settlements. Without knowledge of this site's customary names, new migrants readily adopted the externally-imposed ones.

Squatters vs. Planners

There are two types of agricultural settlements in the Amazon region — top-down and bottom-up; the naming histories of each type are polar opposites. One town in the "Carajás II and III" agricultural settlements near Parauapebas was a unit of the settlement agency Instituto Nacional de Colonizacao e Reforma Agraria (INCRA), which was linked with an agency called GETAT, itself tied to the military. The planned urban hierarchy was based on a system of "Centers for Rural Development," or *CEDERE* for short. CEDERE II was dubbed *Canaa do Carajás* 'Cannan of Carajás;' this name never caught on. It is still called CEDERE 2 today, an example of top-down planning and naming. Field called the process of numbering streets "too ruthless [an] administrative logic;" he would certainly find numbered villages far worse.[28] Still the strategy is not surprising when one imagines planners staring at maps of an area of continental proportions. Algeo said the practice of using numbers by planners represents the simplest and most practical way of naming vast numbers of streets in new cities or neighborhoods.[29]

In contrast, squatter settlements in the Amazon often get colorful names which reveal the struggle of the poor to gain a piece of land on what is increasingly seen as "a closing frontier."[30] An organized squatter invasion into the massive area (more than 2.6 million acres) of the mining company Companhia

Vale do Rio Doce in March, 1990 pulled 300 families into coopera-
tive land clearing, planting, house-building, and cooking tasks. It
was named "Marcos Freire Colony" after the former head of the
land-reform agency who died at Carajás in a suspicious airplane
accident the squatters were certain was murder. Similarly, an
urban neighborhood formed by squatters at the edge of the
mining company's planned urban center was called Bairro da
Uniao 'Unity Neighborhood.' In an odd twist, one town in
Parauapebas County is called Vila da Uniao 'Unity Village.' It,
however, did not get its name for solidarity by squatters in gaining
the land, but rather in their defending it from later waves of
squatters.[31]

     I also observed a series of urban land invasions in June and
July of 1990 aimed at opening up new neighborhoods because
rents exceeded the incomes of most residents (Roberts "Squat-
ters and Urban Growth"). A political candidate had bought an
enormous ranch on the edge of town which he intended to
distribute before the elections in order to gain votes. Because he
delayed in distributing lots, hundreds of families invaded the ranch
on an afternoon in July of 1990. Within 48 hours, over 2,000 lots
were demarcated. A number of names were being tossed about
for the new neighborhood. Some thought it should be named
"Neilandia" to commemorate the man who had lost millions of
Cruzeiros with the invasion. Another consideration was "Faisa-
landia," after the mayor who moved in and registered all invaders
and others seeking land in the town. De Soto reports that most
organized squatter invasions in Peru and Mexico cannily name
their new neighborhoods after key political figures whose support
they need for their invasion to succeed (22). In the end the mayor
named the site Bairro da Paz 'Neighborhood of Peace' in
keeping with his earlier naming of the town's new plaza after
Mahatma Ghandi. The name has stuck, but many townspeople
think it ironic given the struggle that continues to rage over its
legality.

     Most street names in already-regularized, squatter-settled
neighborhoods in Parauapebas are those of Brazilian military
presidents or important dates in Brazilian history. Some are
named after Brazilian cities, a few are local Indian names, several

are named after Catholic saints. These street names were apparently given by squatters and then regularized by the land reform agency GETAT. Naming some streets after military presidents and other military figures may have been a strategy to appease the military-led GETAT, convincing them to cede the land (similar to the squatter invasions de Soto describes). The contrast with the numbered and lettered streets in the planned neighborhoods is striking, but the diversity of the names themselves complicates any attempt to apply theories of political economy to all cases.

IV. CONCLUSION

Earlier, I mentioned that moving the field of placename socio-onomastics ahead will require three thrusts. While the work is still preliminary, naming practices in this contemporary frontier allows the combining of these three elements: ethnographic examples of naming in progress, some comparative perspective, and minor movement on a theory of placenames. First, this case-study of the Amazon reveals the potential of class analysis and the need to attend to the role of the state in building a theoretical framework for the field of toponymics. Local and national governments sometimes clash on placenames, but map-makers and planners in a few key agencies far from the areas involved have left many enduring names. The Amazon namescape is littered with the names of government officials, naive images of the area, as well as more rational numbering or lettering systems.

Second, the analysis of maps and historical sleuthing, especially *comparative* research on recent placenaming, should continue to test the robustness of claims that there is a ruling or managerial class with the power to name. My analysis of maps of the Amazon state of Pará did not find the inverse relationship between Indian and White names which I had expected; rather there was no relationship. Still, names of indigenous origin were ten times more common than in Smith's study of Washington counties.

Finally, anthropological field studies should be undertaken in strategic places to observe the actual process of naming. The Amazon provides such an opportunity, but it is not likely to be

available to many researchers. In North America, studies should focus on comparative historical analysis, theory-building, and perhaps field observations of real-estate developers, planning commissions, or cartography departments, especially in rapidly-growing cities or new suburbs. For studies to move the political economy of placenames ahead they should address these three simple questions: "Who has the power to name places?" "What will their names represent?" "How will we perceive the places because of their names?"

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Notes

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2. "Namescape" was apparently coined by Norris.

3. See Roberts, Forging Development, "Squatters and Urban Growth."

4. Taylor 1.

5. It is not until the final chapter, however, that he admits the pitfalls of any analytical science of names.

6. Stewart lists three assumptions traditionally underlying European toponym research: 1. Every place name has a meaning. 2. Place names must be either descriptive or personal. 3. Place names follow normal patterns of phonetic development (44-46).

7. This was confirmed, at least, in my brief review of the English, Spanish, and Portuguese literature; most of the German and Russian contributions remain untranslated (Stewart 46).

8. An example may be found in Moller's recent study of German placenaming in colonized Namibia: "The cultural, linguistic and onomastic influence between the various colonizing and indigenous language groups was inevitably mutual" (408).

9. Baldwin and Grimaud compared street names in Washington, Montana, the Dakotas and Massachusetts. Grant Smith studied Indian placenames in several Washington counties. Gasque and Van Balen suggested the value of early maps of the Dakotas as an insight into name origins.

10. Still called Km02 by residents for its mile-marker.

11. Moore discusses in detail the illusions North Americans carried to their frontier and continue to use when discussing their frontier history.

12. For historical studies of Brazil's Amazon, see Hemming; Bunker; Moran; Foweraker; Schmink and Wood; Hecht and Cockburn.

13. Available data show that Brazil is one of the three top countries in the world in economic inequality. (World Bank; Alhuwalhia; Wood and Carvalho).

14. Earlier manifestations of Brazil's internal colonialism have been well documented by a number of scholars, who link it directly to Brazil's own subordinant position in the world economic system. See for example the review by Love. Specifically, classic treatments of internal colonialism related the unequal exchange within countries to dependency and unequal exchange abroad (Stavenhagen; Furtado; Galeano).

15. Zelinsky calls religious placenames "hagiolatrous." Examples in English would be "St. Mary's," and "Sacred Cross."

16. Or 17.3% of all names. The map of Pará is divided into 2 x 2 degree quadrants, and each of these were counted separately. There were 42 quadrants with settlements. Map scale 1:1,630,000.

17. See Schmink and Wood.

18. This proposition, however, rests on the assumptions that Indian-European relations were relatively constant over the vast expanse of the state and over time. Both of these assumptions are doubtful and may help explain the low correlation.

19. R-squared = .424, d.f.=39, p<.01.

20. Here r-squared =.0224, d.f.=31; not significant.

21. Virtually all fertile soils in the Amazon lie in the floodplains, and these represent less than 10% of the region. Most of the colonization projects mentioned here have been terrible failures.

22. The national agency of land reform and colonization (INCRA) documents provide a transparent view of the conceptualization of the settlements (e.g. Camergo/INCRA).

23. See especially Wood and Schmink; Bunker. For a comparison with other colonization projects see Hecht and Schwartzmann.

24. See Roberts "Squatters and Urban Growth."

25. Francisco Nunes da Silva, *interview*, May 10, 1990.

26. See Galeano and Gama e Silva for critiques of placing such critical information in foreign hands.

27. Aerial photo DNPM, 1981 Folha SB.22-X-D.

28. Cited in Baldwin and Grimaud.

29. Cited in Baldwin and Grimaud (118).

30. *e.g.* Schmink.

31. Interview, official of State of Pará Extention Agency (EMBRAPA), Xinguara, June, 1990.

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