Culture as renewable oil: how territory, bureaucratic power and culture coalesce in the Venezuelan petrostate

Book

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It's July 2014. On a weekly routine trip to the nearest PDV petrol station in Caracas, whilst waiting for the tank to fill (Venezuela has the cheapest fuel in the world) I looked up to the fuel dispenser and its empty shelves, instead of the usual adverts for PDV lubricants or motor oil, it featured the nineteenth century white filigree gazebo of El Calvario park in Caracas; looming over it appeared a Gulliver-scale version of an oil worker wearing red coloured gear. I got off my car to take a photograph and noticed that the dispenser on the opposite lane also had a similar advert with another giant oil worker grazing the multicolour ceramic mural that covers Libertador Avenue in Caracas.

The presence of the giant oil workers in the images signalled that something different was at play in the manner in which the state-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela PDVSA has been extending its dominion over the city and its cultural symbols. Within contemporary scholarly work on the politics of culture of Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian revolution (Kozak Rovero, 2014, 2015; Silva-Ferrer, 2014), little attention has been paid to PDVSA's recent interventions in the city, which I regard as a clear sign of the increasing power Hugo Chávez had granted to the state owned oil company. Amid the myriad of recent publications on the cultural representations of oil capitalism in pop culture, literature and the visual arts (Barrett and Worden, 2014; LeMenager, 2014; Lord, 2014), far less attention has been paid to the spatial dimension of the material cultural effects of oil, both as a mineral and as a flow of energy, political power and wealth. Furthermore, recent cultural studies of oil have been predominantly focused on European and North American oil producing countries, with little focus on the Global South or OPEC countries more specifically. This book sets out to challenge the disciplinary compartmentalisation of the analysis of the material and cultural effects of oil. Tim Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy* (2011) marks the point of departure of this book's approach to look beyond the attention confined to the allocation of oil money to examine the processes through which oil flows are converted into political and cultural power (Mitchell, 2011, pp. 5–6). The particular case of the Venezuelan Petrostate in the era of Petro-Socialism serves to develop a reconsideration of the premises behind cultural analyses of oil. Historically, the formation of modern statecraft and society in Venezuela is inextricable from the oil industry; the influence of oil cannot be confined to a set of tropes or circumscribed to punctual interventions in the public sphere.

Hugo Chávez shifted the relationship between PDVSA and the state by making the state-owned oil company subservient to his centralist political project of Petro-Socialism, further coalescing oil, territory, state, and culture.

This book examines the discursive and spatial dimension of the entanglement between oil, territory, bureaucratic power, and culture in the contemporary Venezuelan Petrostate. To develop these themes, this introductory chapter is divided into three parts. The first part sketches the historical context of this study, situating it within debates around the pervasive presence of oil in the formation of the modern statecraft in Venezuela and the shift in the relationship between oil, modernity and statecraft brought by Hugo Chavez's Petro-Socialism. The second part presents the theoretical premises that inform this book and identifies the key themes that will be developed throughout, how in a Petrostate, oil traverses territory, bureaucratic power and culture. Finally, the third part presents the chapter outline, providing an introduction to the discussions and main arguments developed in this book.

The Making of a Modern Oil Nation

It wasn't until the rise of the oil industry in early twentieth century that Venezuela acquired the economic and political resources to develop modern statecraft with a centralised bureaucracy. But due to the strong legacy of Spanish colonial rule, decisions were founded on the traditions inherited from the colony, as the emerging nation declared itself the heir of the property rights of the Spanish Crown over vacant lands and ownership over all (Pérez Schael, 1993, p. 39). The property rights derived from the principle that what belonged to no one belonged to the King, so after gaining independence from the Spanish Crown, the new republic substituted the King (Pérez Schael, 1993, p. 39). The wealth extracted directly from the subsoil as rent became an affirmation of national sovereignty, the rent sanctioned the recognition of the nation's authority as analogous to the King's. Venezuela did not become a rentier state with the rise of the oil industry, it was born a rentier landlord state from the moment it became a modern republic and with the exploitation of oil the country inaugurated its modern history as a Petrostate. A Petrostate is a particular form of the rentier state, in which the majority of the state's revenue comes from abroad through oil exports. The concept of 'rentier state' was coined by Iranian economist Hossein Mahdavy (Beblawi and Luciani, 1987, p. 9) to refer to states whose main source of income comes from external resources, 'one whose capacity to create consensus and enforce collective decisions rested largely on the fate of the international

oil market' (Karl, 1997, p. 91). Rentier states can be traced back to the seventeenth century Spanish Empire and its exploitation of the vast mineral resources found in the Americas.

The sovereignty of the state was built around the notion of property thus annulling the mineral materiality of oil, reducing it to the 'fetish' of rent money that flowed from the subsoil directly to the state's coffers; therefore oil mattered as money and not as a complex technological new reality (Pérez Schael, 1993, p. 94). Early twentieth century Venezuela was still a rural society with predominantly agricultural economy dependent on exports of cocoa and coffee vulnerable to fluctuations of the international market, and deeply engulfed by political turmoil, debt and military unrest (Mommer, 1994, p. 27; Baptista, 1997, p. 131). Thus, country lacked the resources and the capacity to exploit and produce oil products, the only option for the state to secure revenue came in the form of concessions and royalties (Harwich Vallenilla, 1984). For the Venezuelan state the only matter to resolve was where, how and to who distribute oil rent money, not how to produce it.

Landowners, traditional elites and the intellectual class attributed an ephemeral quality to oil wealth because unlike agriculture, wealth relied on rent money and not on produce (Pérez Schael, 1993, p. 95). This apprehension and rejection was grounded on the invisibility of crude oil; it is a material entity hidden in the subsoil, its potential yield not as visibly quantifiable as land and hectares of crops on the surface. When foreign oil companies began to establish in Venezuela in early twentieth century, the material effects of oil wealth were not felt immediately on the areas surrounding oil drills and refineries, they materialised first in remote oil camps and fenced residential quarters built by foreign oil corporations, enclaves of modernity frequently surrounded by poverty belts (González Casas and Marín Castañeda, 2003, p. 381). The iron fences built to isolate the oil camps did not impede poor neighbouring communities to peep into the modernity of foreign capital: technology, urban planning, architecture, corporate culture and lifestyle (González Casas and Marín Castañeda, 2003, pp. 381–382). The belief shared by many intellectuals throughout the twentieth that oil wealth had become a colonising and demonic force (Pérez Schael, 1993, p. 9) is clearly expressed in the influential work of Marxist anthropologist and former oil camp dweller Rodolfo Quintero, who wrote in 1968 the influential essay titled *The Culture of Oil: essay on the life styles of social groups in Venezuela* (2011). Here he defined the 'culture of oil' as a foreign force of conquest with its own its own technology, instruments, inventions, equipment and non-material devices such as language, art and science that decimate local and indigenous cultures (2011, pp. 19–20), sustained by the exploitation of national oil wealth by way of monopolistic foreign companies. Quintero unequivocally demonised the United States, oil wealth, rapid

urbanisation and bureaucratic and technological apparatuses as predators and destroyers of national culture, dividing the history of Venezuela into an idyllic pre-oil era and a culture of oil era that brought the oil camp and the oil city (2011, p. 25).

Novelist, essayist and politician Arturo Uslar Pietri (coined the slogan 'to sow the oil' in a newspaper article published in 1936 (1936) using farming language as a didactic trope -oil becoming akin to a rare 'seed'- to propose that the oil windfall should be invested in development and modernisation of the agricultural economy, making a direct reference to the land where the 'seed' is sown and riches are harvested from, and not to oil as an ephemeral source of wealth and dependency (Straka, 2016, p. 139). Uslar Pietri was an advocate of taking advantage of the knowledge, technology and financial power of foreign oil corporations, he saw great benefits in keeping the country open to foreign capital, using it to invest in economic and social development, under the leadership of an illustrated elite, the owners of the 'seed' (Uzcátegui, 2010, pp. 37–38; Urbaneja, 2013, pp. 81–89). But by late 1940s Uslar Pietri identified an emerging 'feigned nation' (Uslar Pietri, 2001; Straka, 2016, p. 140) with a parapet of modernity built upon a transient oil wealth that once exhausted would lay bare the 'real nation' still backwards. Nonetheless, 'to sow the oil' became a guiding principle of political and economic policy of subsequent governments (Coronil, 1997, p. 134). Uslar Pietri's slogan 'to sow the oil' is at the centre of enduring conflicting views around oil. Behind the belief that oil can be 'sown' there is a lingering nostalgia about a lost ideal agrarian past that created a tension of simultaneous embrace and demonisation of oil.

Fernando Coronil's seminal study *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela* (1997) argues that the Venezuelan Petrostate exercised its monopoly over the oil rent dramaturgically, enacting collective fantasies of progress by way of spectacular projects of development and infrastructure to seize its subjects through the power of marvel rather than with the power of reason: 'the state seizes its subjects by inducing a condition or state being receptive to its illusions –a magical state' (1997, p. 5). In a country where the state had historically been very weak, the expansion of the oil industry promoted the concentration of power in the presidency, the embodiment of the 'magical' powers of oil; the Magical State is personified as a magnanimous sorcerer in the figure of the president. Venezuela's identity as a nation is deeply entangled with oil; as the Petrostate engaged with the oil industry Venezuelan society learned to see itself as an oil nation with the state as the single representative of a population unified by oil (Coronil, 1997, p. 84). The Venezuelan Petrostate came to be viewed as an enormous distributive apparatus of oil rent money, increasingly hollowed out by a breach between authority and territory, modernity and modernisation. Moreover, the oil industry in Venezuela exercised a pervasive influence on the

formation of political and social values promoting and influencing the emergence of a political and social order based on the entrepreneurial corporate model of the oil industry (Tinker Salas, 2014, pp. 12–13). Oil wealth suddenly made possible lavish and monumental works of infrastructure (Coronil, 1997, p. 76) for a country that had been in chronic debt and lacked basic infrastructure such as a national road network and systems of communications. And as oil wealth increased, so did the capacity of the Petrostate to construct itself as a national institution by expanding the range of its dominion over society with material 'illusions' of progress through massive works of infrastructure and a vertiginous process of urbanisation achieved in just a few decades.

Venezuela gave absolute freedom to foreign capital transactions, but this began to change in the 1970s. The oil boom of 1973 and 1979, produced a significant increase in oil revenues. This windfall prompted the then president, Carlos Andrés Pérez launch the ambitious development plan The Great Venezuela, promising that the increased financial power of the state would allow Venezuela to 'catch up' and become a developed country in just a few years. He nationalised the oil industry in 1975 and in 1976 created the state-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima PDVSA (Darwich, 2008, p. 50), carried out an ambitious program of infrastructure and project of state reform. But this oil windfall was soon followed by dramatic plunge in oil prices, the decade that followed The Great Venezuela was one of gradual economic and social decline (López-Maya, 2006, p. 21; Urbaneja, 2013, p. 279) suffering its final blow on 18 February 1983, when President Luis Herrera Campins devalued the national currency in the aftermath of a dramatic dip in oil prices in 1982, opening a cycle of economic stagnation, high inflation, increase of foreign debt, with the resulting deterioration of quality of life for large sectors of the population (Salamanca, 1994, p. 11; López-Maya, 2006, pp. 22–23).

With the steady decline in oil prices of the 1980s and 1990s 'to sow the oil' oil had become more elusive. Carlos Andrés Pérez's was elected for a second presidency in 1988, under the illusion that he alone could summon a 'magical state' to revive the opulent days of the Great Venezuela (Atehortúa Cruz and Rojas Rivera, 2005, p. 264). But in 1989, with barely a month in office, he announced an IMF-backed programme of macroeconomic adjustments which most notably included a one hundred per cent increase in the price of (López-Maya, 2003, p. 120). A country-wide popular revolt known as the *Caracazo* intensified the economic and social crisis. A political crisis unfolded in February 1992, when a small group of the army, with the support of leftist civilian groups, staged a failed coup d'état led by Lieutenant-Coronel Hugo Chávez Frías (Coronil, 2000, p. 37; López-Maya, 2003, p. 129); a second failed coup d'état took place in November. Pérez presidency survived the coups but it did not survive the deterioration of his political leadership; he was impeached and sentenced to house arrest in 1993 (Salamanca, 1994, p. 12).

A Petrostate that was navigating the tortuous path of consolidating a political consensus to modernise the country and develop an efficient bureaucratic apparatus modelled on oil overabundance fatally collided with the fall in oil prices, a rent seeking political class and widespread corruption which aggravated the gradual collapse of institutional stability and social welfare. It would be inaccurate to conclude that the Petrostate failed to 'sowed the oil'; throughout the democratic era of the Pact of Puntofijo the oil rent was invested in modernisation, infrastructure and industrialisation, but it was undermined by a deficient state apparatus and a rent seeking political class unwilling to carry out necessary structural reforms. The exhaustion of the Pact of Puntofijo became the backdrop of Hugo Chávez presidential election by a landslide in 1998 on an anti-establishment political platform outlined as an alternative to neoliberalism.

The three consecutive presidencies of Hugo Chávez (1999-2001, 2002-2007, 2007-2013) are characterised as a 'new debut of the magical state' (López-Maya, 2007; Coronil, 2011), there are close similarities between Chávez's government and the first presidency of Carlos Andres Pérez in the centralisation of power and the use of the oil windfall to completely reform the state (López-Maya, 2007). A new oil boom between 2003 and 2008 surpassed that of the 1970s (Corrales and Penfold, 2011, pp. 55–57), that translated into an increase in public spending, the politicisation of PDVSA and a radicalisation of Chavez's political project then onwards. In the midst of this unprecedented rise in oil prices he launched the *Plan Siembra Petrolera* (Sowing Oil Plan), a 25-year national plan and oil policy that formed the foundation to lay the foundations for the transition towards the Socialist State. Aware of the diminished capacity of the public sector, Chávez believed that 'an oil company would succeed where government ministries might not'(Maass, 2009, p. 215). He altered the established institutional channels for the flow of oil rent from the state-owned oil company to the state, PDVSA was put in charge of new government programs, effectively transforming the oil company into the 'engine of revolutionary change' (Maass, 2009, pp. 202, 215), a direct lifeline between PDVSA and public spending. He laid out his ambitions to transform Venezuela into a 'world energy power' formulated under the mirage that the oil windfall would be everlasting. He revived the use of the slogan 'to sow the oil' to frame the ambitions of the Petrostate during his regime. As the new owner of the 'seed'(oil) he vindicated oil wealth for collective benefit, similarly to governments in the past (Urbaneja, 2013, pp. 81–89) with the difference that his Bolivarian revolution was set to achieve what previous governments could not: the 'harvest' of oil. Thus, territory was fundamental for Chávez's political project, although in practice the bureaucratic structures of the Socialist State had to coexist uncomfortably with the structures inherited from previous governments that it was meant to substitute.

He declared his third presidential term (2007-2013) the dawn of a new era with the expansion of the Bolivarian Revolution towards Socialism, the path for transcending capitalism. He assured that his socialist project was unique, that it was 'different to the Scientific Socialism that Karl Marx had originally envisioned' because he was building a Bolivarian, Venezuelan, oil based *socialismo petrolero*, in other words, Petro-Socialism. Petro-Socialism broadly defines Hugo Chávez's political and economic project, in which the oil rent is funnelled into the construction of the Socialist State. Broadly speaking, Petro-Socialism is focused on using oil revenues to fund the transition towards a socialist state and a new socialist society. Petro-Socialism is a peculiar extreme form of oil rentierism. Underpinned by a steady rise in oil prices, the era of Petro-Socialism promised historically neglected social sectors that they would finally enjoy enduring prosperity provided by oil. The death of Hugo Chávez in March 2013 left the transition towards the Socialist State orphaned of its leader and mastermind. By then,Venezuela had become even more dependent on oil revenue than before.

Beyond a dramaturgical exercise of the monopoly over the oil rent, the close control over PDVSA enabled Chávez to summon all the bureaucratic powers of the State in his persona. But as will be made clear throughout this book, by transferring to PDVSA many of the bureaucratic powers of the state, he paved the way for the state-owned oil company to exercise power as a parallel state and develop a discursive narrative that deploys the 'magical' power of marvel of the New Magical State confined to the realm of oil around a dual narrative of 'sowing oil' and 'harvesting oil' where culture becomes akin to 'renewable oil'.

Interfaces of State Space, Bureaucratic Power and Culture as a Resource

Three interlocked theoretical premises guide this book: State Space, Bureaucratic Power and Culture as a Resource. The first premise draws on Brenner and Elden's reading of Lefebvre as a theorist of State Space as Territory. State Space is understood as land and as a political form of space which is historically specific, produced by and associated with the modern state, understandable 'only through its relation to the state and processes of statecraft'; accordingly, there can be no state without territory and no territory without a state (Brenner and Elden, 2009b, pp. 362–363). Brenner and Elden's reading of Lefebvre will be useful for this book as it provides a way to go beyond simplistic perceptions of territory by understanding that any State Space, and by extension, any 'territorially configured social space' is the consequence of specific

historical forms of economic and political interventions of the state. This book engages critically with a diverse mix of documents and topics, it utilises David Harvey's (Harvey, 2006, pp. 281–284) matrix of categories of space as a taxonomy to locate the spatiotemporal category of each document (defined and described in detail in chapter one) in order to disentangle the spatial and discursive mechanisms that constituted the spatial policies deployed under Petro-Socialism.

The second premise is Bureaucratic Power. Bob Jessop posits that the state does not exercise power, as the power of the state is 'always conditional and relational' it is defined as an institutional ensemble (Jessop, 1990, p. 367). Similarly, Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller (2008, p. 10) coincide with Jessop in arguing that the state does not and cannot exercise power, it can only do so through the complex network of organisations, institutions and apparatuses that compose it (2008, pp. 55–56). By the same token, Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce affirm that the state 'rather than a site from which this form of power originates or at which it terminates' is the site where bureaucratic power congregates (Joyce and Bennett, 2010, p. 2). Hence, when referring to the power of the state it is more accurate to talk about bureaucratic power instead of state power. This book adopts Bennett and Joyce's perspective of the state as the site where bureaucratic power congregates to explore the contradictory process of transition towards the Socialist State, as it entailed the concurrent fragmentation of the existing institutional apparatus and centralisation of bureaucratic power in the figure of President Hugo Chávez. The adoption of the bureaucratic power perspective also allows this book to integrate the idea of the state as an 'institution of territorial governance with vast powers over the material wellbeing of its people' (Mukerji, 2010, p. 82) considering that the modern state is the only agent with the capacity to manage territory on a large scale (Brenner and Elden, 2009a, p. 20). This book explores bureaucratic power as it derives from, and is subject to, the dominion over State Space as Territory, a crucial notion in a Petrostate as its political and economic power originates from the ownership of the subsoil and the monopoly over the oil rent extracted from it.

The third premise constructs the notion of 'culture as renewable oil', drawing on George Yúdice's expediency of culture as a resource. Yúdice's proposition is that culture has acquired to an extent the same status as natural resources as it is close to impossible to find public statements that do not instrumentalise art and culture, whether to improve social conditions or to foster economic growth (Yúdice, 2003, pp. 10–11). Through an exploration of the relationship between culture, management and power (McGuigan, 2003; Bauman, 2004; O'Brien, 2014) this book engages in particular with the social and cultural arm of PDVSA, social and PDVSA La Estancia, use of farming language and discursive fabrications to coalesce culture and

oil ('PDVSA La Estancia is oil that harvests culture') to argue that for the state-owned oil company it is close to impossible not to turn to culture as a mineral resource, in which culture becomes akin to an implausible 'renewable oil' . Given that in practice, cultural policy is the bureaucratic medium for the instrumentalisation of culture as a resource (Miller and Yúdice, 2002, p. 1), this book also engages with Jeremy Ahearne's category of implicit cultural policy (2009, p. 141) to demonstrate the use of the Organic Law of Hydrocarbons as a parallel instrument of territorial and cultural policy.

The three theoretical premises described above coalesce into a conceptual lens through the substantive chapters of this book, transcending the pitfalls of a compartmentalised analysis of the spatial and cultural dimension of oil, to demonstrate that within the Petrostate, oil inevitably intersects and interweaves State Space, Bureaucratic Power and Culture as a Resource. State Space as Territory condenses the notion of land and political space of statecraft, land being crucial to a Petrostate since the subsoil contains the deposits of crude oil that forms the basis of its financial and political power. Hence, the Bureaucratic Power of the Petrostate and its institutional apparatus relies and depends on the oil wealth extracted from the subsoil. Therefore, the manner in which the Petrostate conceives and manages culture as a resource is framed within an oil rentierist logic, where culture is tantamount to oil as a resource intextricable from State Space.

In this regard, the discussion developed in this book contributes to current debates and recent scholarly work on the cultural dimension of oil, particularly within the emerging field of Energy Humanities. Thus, by building on the relationship between territory, bureaucratic power and culture, this particular tripartite theoretical lens provides the ideal framework to scrutinise how they function in the particular context of the contemporary Venezuelan petrostate by addressing the relationship between the Petrostate, oil rentierism, statecraft, and culture in Petro-Socialism. Looking at this relationship through this lens encourages the advancement of an new way of understanding the spatial and cultural dimensions of oil, and how a certain form of understanding culture is privileged by the national oil industry and to what effect it constructs a parallel notion of territorial and cultural policy making.

In summary, this book is concerned with investigating the discursive and institutional mechanisms that enabled the state-owned oil company to constitute a parallel State Space to extend its dominance over the non-oil field spaces like the city of Caracas, to effectively reframe the city as an oil field by discursively construing a notion of culture as renewable oil that ties culture to the land, where the 'sowing' of oil can 'harvest' culture. It is also concerned with the

intrinsic contradictions within the model of Petro-Socialism that informs the paradoxical discursive notion of 'renewable oil' as an illusion of the New Magical State.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one develops a historical account of the Venezuelan nation state in the context of postcolonial state formation in Latin America. It then develops a discussion on the emergence of the modern Venezuelan Petrostate coeval with the arrival of the oil industry and corporate practices of foreign oil corporations to illustrate how the Petrostate approached oil predominantly as rent money and not as a modern technological reality, which marked the emergence of what Fernando Coronil has termed the Magical State. The chapter builds on Coronil to characterise Hugo Chávez as the embodiment of the New Magical State and PDVSA as the engine of his revolution. Finally, the chapter provides a discussion on the historical context of the intersections between oil and culture in Venezuela, focusing in particular on the enduring persistence of the 'sowing oil' slogan as a driver of policy making.

Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature that forms the theoretical premises of this book, divided into four parts. Part one explores Henri Lefebvre's and David Harvey's theorisation on space, to develop a discussion on the production of space and State Space in order to focus on Lefebvre as a theorist of State Space as territory. Part two develops a discussion on state theory and bureaucratic power, to focus in particular on rentier state theory in order to define the particular characteristics of the Petrostate. Part three reviews key literature from the field of urban sociology to differentiate the terms city and urban, and their relationship with space and culture, to understand the effects of oil capitalism in the production of urban society and culture in the context of the Venezuelan Petrostate. Finally, it reviews relevant literature on the cultural dimension of oil, as well as the role of oil in and within culture, to examine the spatial and cultural representations of Petrosocialism in Caracas.

Chapter three examines the centrality of territory in the transition towards the Socialist State guided by the principle of the New Geometry of Power (the Fourth Engine of the Bolivarian revolution) with the creation of new policy instruments to reconfigure the national territory as a socialist State Space. It traces the process of abrogation and substitution of the legal framework of political-administrative territorial management set up in the 1980s. It describes how Chávez's discourse informed the creation and implementation of new spatial strategies outlined in policy instruments created between 2005 and 2010 as a means of devising new spatial policies to

dismantle the existing institutional apparatus of urban governance. This process was fraught with inconsistencies that opened a legal vacuum that diminished State Space authority and enabled PDVSA La Estancia to establish that the Oil Social Districts defined by the new Organic Law of Hydrocarbons superseded the authority of regional and municipal governments.

Building on the previous discussion, chapter four deploys a critical discourse analysis framework focused on the relationship between power, discourse and performative utterances to examine public speeches of the three leading figures of the national oil industry between 2005 and 2014: President Hugo Chávez, former president of PDVSA Rafael Ramírez and former General Manager of PDVSA La Estancia, Beatrice Sansó de Ramírez. It demonstrates that Chávez did not envision a post-oil world, on the contrary, his model relied on the expectations of an inexhaustible supply of oil rent that assured the endurance of Petro-Socialism and the Socialist State. Thus, Ramírez's speeches discursively establish PDVSA's identity as a revolutionary oil corporation, he instrumentalises his share of bureaucratic power as the head of the state-owned oil company to contribute to Chávez's vision of Petro-Socialism. In turn, Sansó de Ramírez fleshes out two discursive strands: one, PDVSA La Estancia is an instrument of the Sowing Oil Plan that 'harvests culture' and two, the 'utopia of the possible'. This chapter draws on Zygmunt Bauman (2004) and Jeremy Ahearne (2009) to demonstrate how these discursive constructions, built on the stratum of the disjointed process to constitute the Socialist State Space, ultimately enabled PDVSA La Estancia to interpret Article 5 of the Organic Law of Hydrocarbons as an instrument of implicit cultural policy.

Chapter five explores the discursive construction of Culture as Renewable Oil of the advertisement campaign launched by PDVSA La Estancia in 2013 titled 'We transform oil into a renewable resource for you', featuring giant oil workers, through the semiotic lens of Charles Peirce semiosis and Roland Barthes' Mythologies. The giant oil worker functions as an indexical sign of PDVSA, their inclusion and interaction with the spaces depicted in the adverts visually reframes them as oil fields in a clear attempt at naturalising a direct and mechanistic relationship between oil, urban space and culture, functioning also as a visual metaphor of PDVSA's State Space. The giant oil worker metaphorically transforms oil into culture. The analysis draws on George Yúdice's expediency of culture as a resource to argue that PDVSA La Estancia discursively renders oil and culture equivalent by evoking a farming cycle ('PDVSA La Estancia is oil that harvests culture') that encapsulates the discursive strands of 'renewable oil' oil and 'utopia of the possible' to depict a novel dramaturgical act ofthe New Magical State: culture is renewable oil, as such it is to the land, territory and culture become indivisible. Hence, culture as

renewable oil becomes inextricable from the Oil Social District as PDVSA's parallel State Space. If culture can be 'harvested' from the subsoil, then the Petrostate can claim complete ownership and tight control over culture as a 'renewable resource' as established by the Law of Hydrocarbons.

Finally, the conclusion returns to the discussions developed in the individual chapters and locates them within the historical imperative to 'sow the oil' and the unravelling of Petro-Socialism, modelled on unrealistic expectations of enduring high oil revenues. It summarises that in a Petrostate, oil binds territory, bureaucratic power and culture, also makings wider points in regards to the state-owned oil company's ownership and authority over city spaces, bolstered by its direct access to oil revenue and the fragmentation of the bureaucratic structure of the state apparatus. In the particular case of PDVSA LA Estancia, the notion of Culture as Renewable Oil, personified by the giant oil workers in the adverts, negate the original political, economic and cultural processes that brought to fruition the public art and architectural structures depicted, for they were produced by a state that was considered by Hugo Chávez as bourgeois, capitalist and counter-revolutionary.

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