Conclusion: *"Eso de lo Afro, es un caminar"*

Shortly before I left Cala Cala for the last time in 2017, Roberto asked me if my stay had been "successful." He asked me if I "had found what I was looking for" (*"¿Encontraste lo que has buscado?"*). I told him that my time in Cala Cala had been enlightening in many ways and thanked him for his generous guidance, the time he and his family had shared with me, and their friendship. He then – just as he had innumerable times before – told me that he was exceptionally sad that I had not been able to witness a performance of *saya* in Cala Cala, despite the fact that we had talked so much about that topic. I told him that I would of course have liked to see him and the other *Cala Caleños* perform, but that he shouldn't worry. What I was interested in, I told him, was how people in Cala Cala live: how they spend their days, how they make a living, how they socialize and, ultimately, what they make of "being *Afro*." I reminded him of the many conversations we had had in the context of the tourism project during which he would always ask me what was "interesting," "unique" and "characteristic" about Cala Cala. Since on those occasions he expected strategic advice from me with regard to the Afrobolivian tourism project, I always told him that he should try to approach this question by focusing on the possible expectations of tourists, as well as on the things he and his fellow *comunarios* do in everyday contexts. On this occasion, however, I decided to tell him that – as an anthropologist – I do not share the expectations of tourists. Consequently, I neither came to Cala Cala expecting to see a performance of *saya*, nor did I think of "being *Afro*" as exclusively based on *saya*. What is more, I told him, my anthropological perspective on culture in general and on Afrobolivians in particular is decidedly different from what the Constitution states, what the 'experts' say or what the exhibition in the *Centro de Interpretación* portrays. He astutely captured the meaning of my improvised statement on Afrobolivianity and culture as contested, processual and inherently flexible phenomena, by replying: "So you're telling me that culture and *lo Afro* are like a journey [*un caminar*]."[1] I told him that

1 *"Me haces entender que eso de la cultura, de lo Afro, entonces es un caminar."* There is no single straightforward translation of his expression *"un caminar"* derived from the verb *"caminar"* meaning (to) walk, but also (to) wander and (to) travel. What he mainly wanted to express, I argue, was movement and process.

this is precisely what I meant, that culture, as well as *"lo Afro"* are not stable things or concepts but that they mean different things to different people in different places and contexts.

The aim of this study was to trace the changing and contested meanings of *"lo Afro"* in contemporary Bolivia and to analyze the significance of Afrobolivianity in processes of collective identity formation and social differentiation. As a key aspect of these processes, I have identified the tension between a specific articulation of Afrobolivianity, which I have termed plurinational Afrobolivianity, and the practices of people like Roberto and other individuals who self-identify as Afrobolivians. Approaching this key aspect as a tension, I do not wish to imply conflict or contradiction, since this tension is also productive, bridging different contexts of social and cultural practice and fostering exchange and interaction. I introduced my study by pointing out how this tension shaped the atmosphere during the inspection visit to the newly constructed *Centro de Interpretación* and detailed its local ramifications through my case study in the preceding chapter. Roberto's sadness with regard to the 'missing' *saya* performance in Cala Cala and his worries that this would make my stay in Cala Cala and my understanding of Afrobolivianity somehow incomplete, is another example of it. Further hints at the inherent discursive and practical multidimensionality of Afrobolivianity are the sometimes uneasy relationship between racialized images of Afrobolivians and the ubiquitous references to culture as constitutive of Afrobolivianity. Moreover, although current political and legal discourse incessantly propagate this perspective, 21st century Bolivian society cannot be conclusively described as characterized by the coexistence of discrete *pueblos*. In Cala Cala, "being *Afro*," is not the only modality of 'being' and consequently also not the only way of experiencing and expressing identity and belonging.

By focusing on this productive tension and through analyzing it in its different historical and ethnographic contexts, my study enriches the scholarship on Afrobolivians in decisive ways. The existing literature emphasizes either the national (mostly political) dimension of Afrobolivianity or focuses on Afrobolivians as part of the *comunidades cocaleras* in the Yungas. The former approach often uncritically adopts the concepts of political discourse and the rhetoric of activists and thus tends to overstate the salience of Afrobolivianity in local contexts. Proponents of the latter approach, in contrast, argue from the perspective of the *comunidad cocalera* in the Yungas. In their view, ethnic and/or indigenous identities are not salient in the Yungas, where identification as *cocaleros* prevails. Collective identifications as Afrobolivians are considered impositions from outside the local context. Afrobolivianity, to their eyes, is a matter of urban-based activists and their strategic use of identity politics and is of no further significance. The contributions of both perspectives thus remain partial and fail to holistically explain Afrobolivianity and its inherent multidimensionality.

I have approached collective identifications and how they are deployed in processes of social differentiation in Cala Cala by drawing on perspectives proposed by Schlee (1997; 2004; 2008), Elwert (1995; 2002) and Brubaker (2002; 2014; Brubaker and Cooper 2000).[2] As I have shown, being Afrobolivian in Cala Cala is not merely a physical characteristic just as inconsequential for social organization as being tall or fat. It is also, however, not simply a matter of objectified cultural difference. Belonging to *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* fundamentally means being part of a collective based on kinship ties in Cala Cala, as well as transcending the geographical boundaries of the community. The members of this collective furthermore ground their belonging in notions of shared local history and culture. Beyond Afrobolivianity, there are alternative frames for collective identification, mainly the processual notion of belonging to the *comunidad cocalera* by "performing a social function" *("cumplir función social")*. I have argued that collective identifications as Afrobolivians and as *comunarios* are not only complementary but intertwined. It is possible to identify as a *comunario* and as Afrobolivian simultaneously or interchangeably. It would be misleading to analyze the entanglements of *Cala Caleños* with Nogalani merely as cooperation in economic (within the coca economy) and political terms (through the *sindicato*). Coca plays a fundamental role as a "total social fact" (Spedding 1997) beyond the economy in Cala Cala. Similarly, the *sindicato* is not only an institution of political mobilization: in a way "it is the community" (Conzelman 2007).

However, neither Afrobolivianity nor identification as *comunarios* are stable identities. Their meaning is contested and their relationship to each other changes. These changes have to do with local processes, as well as with national and international political and legal developments, and how they are experienced in local contexts. Besides pointing out changes in the local economy, namely the increased monetarization and individualization of the coca economy, my study focuses on the changing notions of Afrobolivianity that emerge in the context of Bolivia's plurinational conjuncture (Canessa 2012a; Farthing and Kohl 2014; Postero 2017; Schilling-Vacaflor, Brand, and Radhuber 2012). Drawing on James Clifford's (2007; 2013) suggestion to engage with indigeneity as an articulation, I have described the contested articulation of Afrobolivianity. As I was able to document, this articulation combines elements of indigenism (Niezen 2003) with influences stemming from the transnational discourses of the African Diaspora (Wade 2006b; Yelvington 2001; 2006) as well as the language of citizenship (Canessa 2012b; Yashar 2005; Van Cott 2000). It is furthermore shaped by processes similar to those Jan Hoffmann

2 For a recent attempt at synthesizing those approaches in order to develop a "comprehensive framework for the comparative analysis of collective identities and corresponding processes of identification" see Eidson et al. (2017).

French (2002; 2004; 2009) has described as "legalizing identities" in her study of a village in northeastern Brazil.

Following important contributions in the field of the anthropology of Afro-Latin America (Anderson 2007; 2009; Greene 2007a; 2007b; Ng'weno 2007; Restrepo 2004; 2007), as well as in the study of indigeneity in Latin America (de la Cadena 2008; de la Cadena and Starn 2007b; Canessa 2007; 2012c; 2018; Goodale 2006; Halbmayer 2011), I also inquired into the possible articulations and disjunctions of Afrobolivianity and indigeneity with regard to what Shane Greene (2007a) has described as Latin America's "Afro-Indigenous Multiculturalisms." Broadening my perspective beyond the commonplace association of indigenous people with ethnicity, culture and pre-Colombian roots and Afro-Latin Americans with race and a routed diasporic identity (Wade 2010) made it possible to flesh out the discursive entanglements of the idioms of indigeneity and autochthony, as well as the idiom of diaspora in the articulation of Afrobolivianity. However, I would not go as far as Mark Anderson, who coined the terms "Black Indigeneity" and "Indigenous Blackness" in his study of Garifuna communities in Honduras (Anderson 2009). Although the discursive articulation of Afrobolivianity owes at least as much to indigeneity as it does to diaspora and blackness, and the legal status and political positioning of Afrobolivians is strikingly similar to that of indigenous people in Bolivia, Afrobolivianity and indigeneity continue to be imagined as clearly separate modalities of belonging. If anything, the legalization (French 2009) of Afrobolivian and indigenous identities in Bolivia has led to an even sharper distinction between the two categories. The constant denial of being in any way "like indigenous people" by Afrobolivian activists, as well as the widespread avoidance of terms like *"Afro-Aymara"* are a clear indicator of this. This has to do with the plurinational logics of recognition and representation that rely on the concept of *pueblos*, conceptualized as bounded, discrete, culturally homogenous and mutually exclusive entities.

The influence of these logics is most clear in the political discourses of Afrobolivian organizations, but also shapes notions of collectivity and culture more generally, especially since legal recognition has fueled efforts at cataloging and categorizing Afrobolivian culture. In order to benefit from the plurinational politics of recognition, activists positioned Afrobolivianity according to specific logics. It is important to note that those logics are not entirely new, despite the continuing insistence on the revolutionary character of the "process of change" *("el proceso de cambio")* and the groundbreaking importance of Bolivia's re-founding as a plurinational state in 2009 (Escobar 2010; García Linera 2008; 2009). Their conceptual roots date back to indigenous mobilizations beginning in the 1970s, Bolivia's enga-

gement with multiculturalism in the 1990s and the transnational political and legal discourse on indigenous people and indigenous rights.[3]

Starting out as a movement of Afrobolivian cultural revival based on the dance *saya*, the *Movimiento Afro* set in motion an important set of processes that have to be taken into consideration for the contemporary plurinational articulations of Afrobolivianity. The very term *Afroboliviano* emerged from those efforts, as did the idea that Afrobolivianity was to be approached as a phenomenon beyond skin color. Racialized *negros* and *negras* were fundamentally repositioned as *Afrobolivianos/as* in Bolivia's "structures of alterity" (Wade 2010). This culturalization of Afrobolivianity initially emerged from urban Afrobolivians. It went hand in hand with the establishment of a politicized Afrobolivianity. As a result of these processes, the contexts of expressing and experiencing Afrobolivianity also changed. For the growing urban Afrobolivian population, Afrobolivianity was no longer rooted in village settings and in everyday practices in local contexts. *Saya* as cultural performance (Cohen 1993; Guss 2000; Parkin, Caplan, and Fisher 1996) and workshops as spaces for the articulation of collective identification became the primary contexts in which an increasingly "lite" Afrobolivianity (Canessa 2018; Grisaffi 2010) – relying more on key symbols and formal recognition of Afrobolivianity than on everyday cultural practice – was experienced and expressed. Recent developments include the judicialization of Afrobolivian activism and political rhetoric (Couso, Huneeus, and Sieder 2010; Sieder, Schjolden, and Angell 2005b; de Sousa Santos and César A Rodríguez-Garavito 2005), most clearly expressed in the proliferation of "rights talk" (Merry 2003). Moreover, I have described a process that I have termed the *pueblo*-ization of Afrobolivianity. Similar to the processes described as an "ethnicization of blackness" in Colombia (Ng'weno 2007; Restrepo 2004; Wade 1995), notions of Afrobolivianity were fashioned according to the plurinational logics of *pueblos*. The *pueblo*-ization of Afrobolivianity inspired the foundation of a novel type of Afrobolivian organization, the *Consejo Nacional Afroboliviano (CONAFRO)*, designed according to the logics of indigenous mobilization in Bolivia. *Pueblo*-ization is not limited to the political and legal context, however. It increasingly shapes Afrobolivian subjectivities and notions of Afrobolivian culture, as I have shown in the context of cataloging and codifying Afrobolivian culture.

In the last chapter I analyzed a concrete case from Cala Cala, where local notions of community and belonging interact with broader conceptualizations of Afrobolivianity that were shaped by Afrobolivian activism and plurinational ID-ology. In the context of these interactions, *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* are drawn into national

3 As has been observed, for example, by Robert Albro (2010a), the definition of "*naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos*" in the Plurinational Constitution of 2009 is heavily influenced by the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," as well as by ILO 169.

and transnational spaces of identity politics, legal recognition and cultural performance. Consequently, local processes of collective identification and social relations are transformed. From cases like this, we can develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of collective identities and corresponding processes of identification by not only focusing on "re-identification," that is, "alterations in the actor[s'] orientation, attitude, and behavior with reference to selected categories of identification," but simultaneously taking into consideration what has been referred to as the "redefinition of categories of identity" (Eidson et al. 2017:342). The redefinition of categories of identity involves multiple processes such as strategic repositioning, changing political and legal circumstances, but also "largely unintended effects of the combined actions of multiple actors over several generations" (Eidson et al. 2017:342). In order to grasp the processes of redefinition and show how they are intertwined with processes of re-identification in social practice, I have proposed drawing on articulation theory (Clarke 2015; Clifford 2013; Hall 1985) and combining it with actor-centered approaches to collective identifications (Eidson et al. 2017; Schlee 2004; 2008).

This study fills an ethnographic lacuna by documenting and analyzing the cultural practices and political discourses of Afrobolivians in a comprehensive manner, a topic that is underrepresented in anthropological writing on Bolivia. It also contributes to discussions of Bolivia's plurinational conjuncture by adding a fresh perspective on the political and legal transformations in the country, transcending the focus on indigenous groups as the prototypical 'others.' In a broader comparative framework, my analysis of Afrobolivianity engages with the anthropology of Afro-Latin America, where the Bolivian case has not been systematically taken into consideration in debates on race and ethnicity, as well as with regard to the transformations of *Afro*/black identities in the context of transnational diaspora politics and Latin America's Afro-indigenous multiculturalisms. Finally, my study suggests that combining actor-centered approaches to collective identification with theories of articulation can be a fruitful way to approach the subject of collective identities in Bolivia and Latin America, as well as on a global scale.