Chapter 10: Plurinational Afrobolivianity on the Ground and Built Identity Politics

La Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala and the *Centro de Interpretación de la Cultura Afroboliviana*

The project I will address in the following sections is a community tourism project that people from Cala Cala were developing with assistance from the IDB (Interamerican Development Bank) and the Coripata Municipal Government in the framework of the PNTC (*Programa Nacional de Turismo Comunitario,* National Community Tourism Program). The project initially consisted of funding the construction of a community center and shelter for tourists named *La Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala*. When I first arrived in Cala Cala in late 2014, the project was in the planning stage and I constantly found myself involved in meetings and discussions on anything from architectural plans or environmental sustainability certificates to statutes for a communitarian tourism association. Moreover, I accompanied people from Cala Cala in various meetings with municipal officials in Coripata or PNTC representatives in La Paz. Talk of the project was ubiquitous and even though the number of individuals seriously involved in the planning and organization was fairly limited, they continually engaged all other members of the community in conversation about the project. The project was the talk of the moment and seemed to occupy an important place in the community's collective consciousness. When I left Cala Cala in mid-2015 after my initial research stay, the necessary documentation had just been handed in to the PNTC and was awaiting evaluation. The project was granted funding in October 2015 and by the time of my return to Cala Cala in early 2017 for a follow-up research stay, the construction was almost finished. People in Cala Cala were awaiting the arrival of PNTC officials and the *Viceministro de Turismo* (vice minister of tourism) to approve their efforts and give the green light for the opening of the *Casa Cultural*. With the opening just around the corner, the tourism project was of course still an important point of discussion, and the subject of meetings and organizational activities. As far as my interlocutors told me, the tourism project was unprecedented in the sense that throughout the construction phase the whole *comunidad* – including Nogalani – had been highly engaged in terms of

the money and manpower that every member of the *comunidad* contributed to the construction.

What sets the tourism project apart (at least with regard to Cala Cala) from other projects or workshops, is the significant amount of money the government, as well as people from the *comunidad*, invested and the immediate tangible material benefits it promised to deliver. This explains why the project became the center of attention for many in the community, more than any workshop or rights campaign ever could have. People felt that there was much more to gain from this project than from an ephemeral training workshop or from some abstract political rights in the future. A whole set of actors – including the Aymara segments of the wider *comunidad* who usually cared little about matters framed as "Afrobolivian" – was very eager to partake in the project, offered assistance, made claims and lobbied to receive their share of the benefits. For example, a recently founded local construction company with ties to community leaders in Cala Cala made great efforts to win the contract to build the infrastructure. The unionized taxi and minibus drivers claimed (exclusive) rights to bring the expected tourists directly to the *comunidad*. Families positioned themselves as possible hosts for tourists, hoping they would receive funds to build additional rooms for their houses and generate income from hosting, feeding and guiding tourists through the *comunidad*. In sum, talk of the project was widespread in the community and people were staking their claims to the promised benefits of the endeavor.

My aim in this chapter is to trace the planning, construction and eventual completion of the project *Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala* from its beginning in the initial planning stages throughout the years 2014 and 2015 to its near completion in 2017. I discuss this example at length because it shows how different actors negotiate competing ideas of Afrobolivianity and how these ideas interact in practice. What I want to flesh out in the context of the project are the concrete negotiations originating from the encounter between the plurinational perspective on community and culture, and the lifestyles of the community. The former rely on ethnically defined and clearly bounded collectives and furthermore highlight Afrobolivianity as the collective identification most consequential for social differentiation. The latter, however, are marked by far-reaching entanglements and integration across ethnoracial boundaries. The project brought to the fore many latent conflicts, contradictions and frictions within the community, but also served as a starting point for forging new alliances, taking advantage of new opportunities and (re-)envisioning Cala Cala as a community. I will show how the period of envisioning and planning the project brought the people involved in this process into contact with specific technical, legal and political logics; I will then sketch how the very practical and material process of building the infrastructure put the premises laid out in the planning process to the test, and I will finally address some points related to the envisaged functioning of the project in the future. On the way, I will introduce both

the political and institutional actors involved in the process, as well as account for community and individual responses to the frameworks and procedures proposed by those actors.

On a conceptual level, I want to problematize the concepts of community, culture and identity propagated by the project's financial and technical sponsors by juxtaposing them with what local people understand by these terms. Furthermore, I will show the subtle but pervasive influence of legal and technical categories that circulate among the people involved in the project. As will become clear through my discussion, the crucial question is whether and to what extent the notion of Afrobolivianity articulated according to these categories and logics (Clifford 2013) – and the ethnicized or indigenized subjectivities this engenders (Restrepo 2004) – can be brought into dialogue with the ways social relations are handled in practice and in local settings. My analysis in this chapter intends to explore the possibilities and limitations of "legalizing identities" (French 2009) (i.e. the processes by which social identities are re-shaped in response to legal provisions based on specific categories), as well as examine a concrete instance of ethnicized "group-making" (Brubaker 2002). I approach the collective identifications relevant in this context as "we-group processes" (Elwert 2002), where group boundaries may be widened, narrowed, re-drawn or re-conceptualized to a certain extent. Yet, as this case also shows, collective identities and boundaries between groups are not entirely flexible and have to make sense within the conceptual spaces of the societies in which they are embedded (Schlee 2004).

Origins and background of the project

The fact that the *Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala* was even built is the result of mere coincidence – at least from the perspective of the people mostly involved in its planning. Originally, as Roberto told me multiple times, he and Víctor, another Afrobolivian community leader from Cala Cala, approached the *Mancomunidad de Municipios de los Yungas de La Paz* – a regional association of the municipal governments of the Yungas – in order to inquire into the possibility of obtaining funding for the construction of a building in which Cala Cala's residents could gather on various occasions, for example when holding a community meeting. The representatives of the *Mancomunidad* had told them, Roberto recalls, that there were no funds available in the Association's budget, but that "just down the hall" in the same building, were the offices of the PNTC and that they could ask there since the PNTC had just obtained funding for projects through an Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) credit. So Roberto and his companion went and asked and were received with open arms. They were told that their community could definitely apply for funding for

an infrastructure project within the framework of the IDB-funded program aimed at fostering community tourism in Bolivia.

Applying for funding under the umbrella of the PNTC, however, made it necessary to reframe Cala Cala's request and make it compatible with the program's goals and conceptual framework. It was decided, therefore, not to apply for a meeting place for the community, but to redirect the project to fit the framework proposed by the PNTC and adjust it to the needs of community tourism.[1] According to the IDB, the program is designed to

> "stimulate community-based tourism, where rural communities of rural or indigenous origins are responsible for the organization, administration and receipt of the benefits of tourism activity in its territories, with the purpose of generating real sustainable development alternatives which allow for the increase in their standard of living." (http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-description-title,1303.html?id=bo-l1039) [14/09/2017]

According to the IDB, this strategy is consistent with the institution's broader country strategy for Bolivia that aims at "providing […] local *development with identity*, given that community-based tourism promotes the *living cultural heritage* (Interamerican Development Bank 2009:5 emphasis added by the author). Moreover, the program is also consistent with Bolivia's National Development Plan and its National Tourism Plan, and was designed in close cooperation with the Vice Ministry of Tourism *(Viceministerio de Turismo)* "through a broad participatory planning process". It departs from the very general premise that Bolivia

> "is one of the richest [countries] of the continent in living cultures. It has more than 36 ethnic groups, or aboriginal peoples, and owners of lands, where, in addition to their present-day culture, customs, and worldview, the important archaeological and historical heritage has on occasion been declared a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization."(Interamerican Development Bank 2009:2)

What is more, "the fact that they are rural sites and to a certain extent remote or isolated locations has allowed them to retain and preserve their natural and cultural wealth" (Interamerican Development Bank 2009:2).

When Roberto and Víctor returned from La Paz to Cala Cala, they took with them not only a fifty-page technical manual called the *"Reglamento Operativo de Co-*

1 The idea of engaging in tourism was not completely new to the community. For example, the *Plan de Desarrollo Municipal de Coripata (2001-2005)* already stated that "*la cultura y costumbres afrobolivianas en los sectores de Coscoma, Nogalani, Dorado Chico y Calacala, que permita promocionar el Etnoecoturismo como una vocación futura, aunque en el presente solo se constituye en una potencialidad*" (p.290).

financiamiento" (ROC) (Operative Manual for Co-Financing) establishing the technical and legal details of the application they had to prepare, but also the conceptual baggage of a program employing vocabulary like "development with identity," "living cultural heritage," "ethnic groups," "aboriginal peoples," "remote and isolated," "retain and preserve." This is not to say that people in Cala Cala are generally unfamiliar with such discourses or that these buzzwords do not resonate with many of their aspirations. In fact, the discourses of Afrobolivian organizations employ a similar vocabulary. However, in this very concrete case, leaders from Cala Cala entered an office building in La Paz with the intention of approaching an institution that is regional rather than ethnic or cultural in focus (in this case the *Mancomunidad de Municipios de los Yungas*) to ask for funding for a meeting place. They left with documents and ideas from the PNTC – an institution concerned with culture, tourism and cultural heritage – planning to apply for a community tourism project based on their culture and identity. This case, in a nutshell, thus serves as a vivid example of how a particular articulation of Afrobolivianity focused on ethnicity and culture can take center stage when Afrobolivian individuals or organizations approach government institutions or NGOs, as well as how this articulation relates to life in Cala Cala.

In what follows, I want to highlight two fundamental aspects of negotiating the relationship between a particular political and legal articulation of Afrobolivianity and community life in Cala Cala through an ethnography of the process of planning and building *La Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala*. The first aspect is concerned with the question of how and through which categorical distinctions the boundaries of Cala Cala as a community should be drawn. The second aspect is concerned with defining what constitutes 'Afrobolivian culture' in Cala Cala (and elsewhere). For the people involved, these aspects crystallized in two very simple, practical questions: "Who should participate and what will we show the tourists?"

Who should participate? Or: ethnoracial particularities and the limits of Cala Cala as a community

In the days after the initial meeting with the PNTC, Roberto and Víctor discussed the idea of applying for funding from the PNTC with other individuals from Cala Cala. They introduced the assembled community members to the ideas of the Operative Manual (ROC) they had obtained from La Paz and went through the nine initial legal requirements listed in the document. The first and fundamental requirement is presenting *"Personería Jurídica"* (legal credentials) of the *"Emprendimiento Turístico Comunitario"* (Community Tourism Enterprise; ETC) that will administer the funds. In the case of Cala Cala's application, the ETC was supposed to be based on an *organización social* (social organization), defined as

> "an entity of individuals that in consideration of the territory they occupy and/or common activities and similar interests that they pursue, organizes and/or advances initiatives of common interest for its individual members […]" (ROC, p.14, my translation).[2]

In light of the different horizons of community in Cala Cala that I have analyzed in previous chapters, the PNTC's definition of *organización social* presents the challenge of determining on what grounds and referring to which specific "common activities" and "similar interests" the community should be delimited.

There were two takes on this question, each emphasizing a different horizon of community. For Roberto, it was clear that the relevant entity in this case would be *"los Afros de Cala Cala."* He argued that since the project was based on Afrobolivian identity and culture, it was only logical that the line between those who should and should not participate ought to be drawn in ethnoracial terms. Dividing people along the boundary of *Afro*/non-*Afro* and including only the former left him with a list of about twenty people, since *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* in the strictest sense comprise only about two dozen adult Afrobolivian individuals that reside in the community. Due to the small number, he decided to extend his list by recurring to a broader definition of what *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* means, including relatives of the residents of the community, like his three daughters living in La Paz and Santa Cruz. This left him with a longer list, yet one consisting mainly of dispersed individuals only linked through kinship ties to Cala Cala. While compiling the list, Roberto seemed to have no doubts determining who would rightfully belong to the group he termed *"los Afros de Cala Cala,"* since it was mostly a matter of tracing kinship ties to and from Cala Cala for each individual. He also did not express any concerns with regard to the question of whether the translocal *"Afros de Cala Cala"* could possibly be considered a group of people with common interests and activities, as is suggested in the PNTC manual's definition. Finally, he also did not find it problematic that the few *"Afros de Cala Cala"* actually living in the community would eventually have to do all the work – although his list suggested to the PNTC that there were many people ready to participate in the project.

Víctor took a different angle on the subject: for him, the tourism project would not be able to flourish without the participation of the wider *comunidad* of Nogalani. He repeatedly challenged Roberto's approach by pointing not only to the formal necessity of including the *sindicato* from Nogalani for legal reasons, but also to the practical impossibility of advancing the project without more people. Víctor argued that Cala Cala not only needed Nogalani's credentials for the paperwork and the *sindicato's* backing for proving ownership of the land that the *Centro Cultural Afro*

2 *"El conjunto de personas que en atención al territorio que ocupan y/o actividades comunes e intereses afines que desarrollan, se organizan y/o impulsan iniciativas de interés común para sus componentes […]"* (ROC, p. 14).

Cala Cala was to be built on. He urged Roberto to consider that – when the time of construction came – they would actually be obliged to provide a significant amount of manpower and monetary contributions that *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* could not possibly provide by themselves.[3] Finally, Víctor also made a point of emphasizing the close and ongoing relationships between Cala Cala and Nogalani in many aspects of economic, social, religious and political life. In short, he argued for regarding *"la comunidad cocalera"* (community of coca farmers) as the collective with common activities and interests that the PNTC proposed as the beneficiary of the project.

Roberto and Víctor's disagreement vividly exemplifies what is at stake when trying to determine what horizon of community ought to be the guiding principle for collective efforts. Whereas Roberto openly embraced discourses of Afrobolivian cultural particularity, Víctor paid more attention to local entanglements blurring the boundaries between allegedly homogenous cultural and ethnic collectives. Roberto's point was backed up by the PNTC's fundamental interest in 'Afrobolivian culture' and he could draw from the well-known discourses of Afrobolivian identity politics. To support his view, he also often cited the Bolivian Constitution and its method of presenting discrete *pueblos* as the fundamental units of social organization. Víctor's take on the subject, on the contrary, was more grounded in the local situation of close entanglements between Afrobolivian and non-Afrobolivian parts of the population. As such, his view resonated directly with the PNTC's aim to foster projects through collectives defined by territory and common activities and interests. The practical challenges Cala Cala's inhabitants were facing in those moments mirror one of the fundamental contradictions of Bolivia's current plurinational moment, namely the assumption that *el pueblo Afroboliviano* is an "entity" occupying a specific territory and sharing common activities and similar interests.

People in Cala Cala had to find a way to balance the PNTC's legal and conceptual requirements with local social practice while at the same time keeping the project within the control of a group that they considered the legitimate administrators of an "Afrobolivian" cultural center. In community meetings, it was decided to found a Tourism Association *(Asociación Turística)* that would serve as the ETC's representation vis-à-vis the PNTC and would organize the tasks the community's inhabitants had to fulfill in order for the project to be put into practice. People agreed that Roberto and Víctor, who had organized the first negotiations with the PNTC and who were considered 'Afrobolivian leaders,' should be named as members of the association's board of directors. As a third member of the board, people agreed to Celia, an Aymara women from Nogalani who at that time also served as a member of the municipal council of the nearby town of Coripata. Her appointment was mostly explained in strategic terms since she was said to have good connections in municipal

3 In total, the PNTC required the beneficiary community to make a contribution (in money and manpower) covering one third of the total cost of the project.

politics. Reservations against appointing an Aymara individual to the board were mitigated by the fact that she was considered by many people from Cala Cala to be "friendly" towards the claims of Afrobolivians *("es una amiga de la comunidad")*. Including her secured the legal backing of the *sindicato* in the early stages of planning when the Tourism Association had not yet obtained legal credentials and Roberto and Víctor hoped it would also help them secure Nogalani's support in the future. In fact, Celia's presence on the board proved to be highly valuable, not only for her contacts in municipal politics, but also due to her personal experience with regard to the formalities of Bolivian legality. For example, Celia's expertise was crucial in documenting all the decisions that had been taken in informal gatherings in order to meet legal requirements. Celia's presence on the board, however, must also be considered an important concession to the *sindicato* of Nogalani, securing access to information and participation for the community beyond *"los Afros de Cala Cala."*

Cala Cala's application for funds was presented to the PNTC in April 2015. Beyond the documents testifying to the organizational structure and the legitimacy of the leadership of the Tourism Association, it included the signatures and photocopies of the identity documents of *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* that Roberto had compiled on his list. It was furthermore accompanied by a written promise from the *sindicato* in Nogalani to support the construction with manpower from all *comunarios*, plus a certificate that ensured that the *Asociación de Turismo* could provide the necessary land to build the *Casa Cultural* and take legal ownership of it. What is more, Cala Cala's leaders also obtained and included a statement of commitment from the mayor's office in Coripata to provide cement for the construction.

In order to make all this work, Cala Cala had to mobilize support through different channels, appealing to different but essentially entangled horizons of community. *"Los Afros de Cala Cala"* were, on paper, the beneficiaries of the project. Although territorially dispersed, they were present as a list of individuals backed by photocopies of their identity documents. The *cocalero* community contributed by way of offering the legal backing of the local *sindicato*, as well as a contribution of labor to Cala Cala's efforts. Finally, a regional political institution (the *Municipio de Coripata*) offered some assistance in providing cement. The task of assembling the network of support the project required challenged people in Cala Cala in various ways. Conceptually, it demanded that *Cala Caleños* imagine the organizational structure, purview and function of an organization based on an Afrobolivian ethnoracial collective. Secondly, it meant adjusting this organization to the requirements of the nationally organized tourism program. Moreover, it required obtaining support for the project among those people of Nogalani who had no direct attachment to the Afrobolivian cause, but who were nevertheless crucial for many practical aspects of the plan. In sum, it required *Cala Caleños* to develop an interpretation of their reality that would meet the requirements of plurinational identity politics filtered

through the PNTC, while simultaneously being sensitive to local ways of defining and organizing community.

The balancing act of bridging the gap between the two horizons of community worked fairly well within the confines of the project. Roberto and Víctor, for instance, decided to put their different perspectives aside for the sake of the project and sought to combine concepts, discourses and organizational logics in a way that would help advance the project. However, beyond the specific context, in which everybody in the community was quite happy about the project due to the fact that the application had been successful, the initiative also sparked debate and uncovered latent conflict. For example, many people in Cala Cala did not interpret the composition of the directors (two people from Cala Cala and one from Nogalani) of the *Asociación de Turismo* in such a positive light. I have presented this as an instance of pragmatically reconciling local sensibilities with strategic and legal requirements, a view most people in Cala Cala shared. Others, however, argued that Aymara people from Nogalani had again managed to obtain a share of an organization and project that did not belong to them. In this context, people explicitly mentioned rivalries dating back to the land reform period in the 1950s. The explicit framing of the project as "Afrobolivian" emphasized divisions of 'us' and 'them,' of identity and difference, and gave these additional resonance (Eidson et al. 2017; Schlee 2008). Moreover, by granting the category "Afrobolivian" such a fundamental role in allocating significant material resources and thus raising the stakes significantly, stories of conflict and competition were provided with an updated reference and ethnic framing (Brubaker 2002:173). Unfair treatment, discrimination and inequality are often linked with ethnic stereotypes that are re-activated in such contexts. Alison Spedding (1994) describes intra-community rivalries and factionalism at length in her excellent ethnography of the Yungas. Comparing her findings to my data shows great similarities. What is decidedly different from her study and others (Léons 1978; Spedding 1994), however, is the fact that I have found ethnoracial categories to be explanatory features of these conflicts. Similar to the Brazilian case described by French (2009:13), the "experience of new or revised ethnoracial identities" – in this case filtered through the logics of the tourism project – transforms notions of community, belonging and the interpretation of past and present conflict.

What are we going to show the tourists? Or: cataloging culture and the conceptual space of Afrobolivianity in the Yungas

During my stay in Cala Cala, the tourism project became the most important context in which identity, difference and concepts of community were negotiated. On the one hand, Cala Cala's encounter *par excellence* with plurinationality meant that

a focus on ethnoracial differences between clearly defined entities *(pueblos)* clashed with alternative visions of social relationships within the community. The project thus reflected the tendencies I have described with regard to the changing meanings of ethnoracial identifications in the context of Bolivia's plurinational re-founding in chapter 5. On the other hand, the project also highlighted another process, which I discussed in chapter 7 with regard to the elaboration of regionally specific school curricula *(currículos regionalizados)*. Not only did the project propagate the salience of exclusive ethnoracial identifications and corresponding entities, it also inspired people in Cala Cala to compile a list of objective criteria for identifying those entities. Cala Cala's inhabitants engaged with the latter question when trying to determine what kind of activities for tourists they would offer as an 'Afrobolivian community.' Fundamental to the whole project was the idea that the *Casa Cultural* would be a shelter for tourists interested in getting to know *"la cultura Afroboliviana"* over the course of several days. So a question arose as to what the community could offer in order to entertain visitors for a number of days. With my participation and after some deliberation that also included the opinions of urban *Cala Caleños* (for example one of Roberto's daughters who had studied Tourism in Cochabamba for a few semesters), Cala Cala's tourism coordinators set out to elaborate a draft plan for hosting tourists. For this purpose, they set up a meeting with all the interested community members, invited me as an 'expert' and presented their plans for the tourism package. They had already been made familiar with the basics of the IDB's general strategy and major buzzwords like "development with identity," "living cultural heritage," "ethnic groups," "aboriginal peoples," "remote and isolated," "retain and preserve." Filtered through the PNTC and Bolivia's *Viceministerio de Turismo*, these basic assumptions concerning what the project was all about heavily influenced the way people set out to conceptualize their program. Following the PNTC's guidelines that highlight first and foremost the Yungas' "lush landscape" that resembles an "earthly paradise," as well as the region's particularities in terms of population ("Afro-Bolivians managed to establish themselves in this region […] as a plus to the tourist attraction of the place" [Ministerio de Culturas y Turismo - Viceministerio de Turismo 2017]), the coordinators of the tourism association discussed the community's potential in terms of natural beauty and 'cultural traditions.'[4] The equation of cultural and natural assets was something I found highly problematic, yet the PNTC's assumption that landscape and culture are to some

4 Initially, also taking hints from the PNTC guidelines that prioritize "*Turismo de Aventura*" (mountain biking, canoeing, paragliding and the like) in the Yungas region, they thought about adding a sporting aspect to their package. Due to the lack of experience with any of the aforementioned activities and the lack of funding for, say, acquiring mountain bikes, the deliberations quickly focused on natural beauty and cultural traditions as the most important aspects of the program.

degree phenomena of the same order was never questioned in the meetings. The attendance of Cala Cala's residents was fairly limited and after the initial meeting it was mostly Roberto, Víctor and me (serving as a scribe since mine was the only computer available in the community) drafting the description of the project.

Roberto and Víctor quickly agreed on certain places that could be interesting for tourists, such as hiking paths, natural river basins and hills with nice panoramic views. In terms of defining appealing aspects of "Afrobolivian culture and tradition" the first element *(elemento cultural)* that people thought of was the Afrobolivian dance *saya*. This is not surprising given the central role of *saya* in the Afrobolivian cultural revitalization movement and in most representations of Afrobolivian culture, addressed in preceding chapters. However, and in spite of the repeated reference to *saya* as the most emblematic and most important cultural element of the Afrobolivian people of Cala Cala, *saya* hardly plays a role in Cala Cala's everyday life as an actual practice. When I left the community in mid-2017 after long stretches of fieldwork adding up to almost 12 months, I departed without ever having witnessed a *saya* performance by the community's residents. Nevertheless it was agreed that besides taking the tourists hiking and swimming, Cala Cala would offer visitors the opportunity to experience Afrobolivian culture and tradition through *saya*.

Another element people in Cala Cala considered suitable for touristic exploitation was *"el Matuasi,"* the ruins of the *casa de hacienda* (the landowner's mansion and administrative building prior to the 1952 Revolution) located in Cala Cala. Being an independent estate up until its integration into the larger *hacienda* of Nogalani around the end of the 19th century, Cala Cala had its own *casa de hacienda* located near the village church roughly at the geographic center of the settlement. Only ruins remain of the once grand mansion and the whole area is covered by thick vegetation. Yet *el Matuasi* is an important physical remnant of what *Cala Caleños* consider a particular aspect of their history. Interestingly, Roberto and Víctor both thought of it as a remnant of the past that said something about a specifically Afrobolivian part of history. Rather than representing common *Yungueño* rural history and the exploitation of *peones* (*hacienda* laborers) at the hands of the landowning elite, *el Matuasi* was framed as a reminder of "black slavery" *("esclavitud de los Afros")*. As I discussed in chapter 6, referring to narratives of slavery has become an increasingly important form of Afrobolivian engagement with diasporic frames of history and belonging. In Cala Cala, where connections to the wider African Diaspora are otherwise seldom made, the framing of *el Matuasi* as a reminder of "black

slavery" situated *Cala Caleños* within a transnational framework of diasporic identity politics.[5]

As things turned out in the end, however, Cala Cala's efforts at making sense of their lifestyles by means of a tour for visitors were eclipsed by an unexpected change and the advent of a much larger project.

Interpreting Afrobolivian culture

Before even one tourist visited Cala Cala's *Casa Cultural Afro*, events took an unexpected turn that would change the course of the project significantly, exacerbate some of the underlying conflicts within the wider *comunidad* (and also in Cala Cala internally) and take the issue of compiling and adequately representing Afrobolivian culture to a completely different level. Cala Cala's very particular and small touristic endeavor, as I have described it in the sections above, already served to illuminate the workings and impacts of international cooperation, development discourse and categories and their interaction with local ways of belonging and organizing community relations. In 2017, in addition to overseeing the final preparations to start operating Cala Cala's *Casa Cultural Afro*, people had become involved in a much larger project. In an area located geographically between the settlements of Cala Cala and Nogalani that locals refer to as Bella Vista or Vaquería, a huge building had been erected in close proximity to the community school and soccer fields and I soon learnt that this was the *Centro de Interpretación de la Hoja de Coca, Café de Altura y Cultura Afroboliviana* (Center of Interpretation of the Coca Leaf, High Altitude Coffee and Afrobolivian Culture).[6] According to statements from employees

5 On notions of 'Africa,' the African Diaspora and transnational identity politics in Latin America see (Matory 2005; Rahier 2012a; Wade 2006b; Wade 2006a; Yelvington 2001; Yelvington 2006).

6 When I left Cala Cala in mid-2015 there was no talk of building this center in Bella Vista. During my occasional exchanges with people from the community during the year 2016, I heard no mention of the project and was puzzled to find the infrastructure almost completely finished in early 2017. Upon my return to Cala Cala, people were only waiting for the center's equipment to arrive. Originally, the center had been designed to be located in the nearby village of Coripata. As far as the story in Cala Cala goes, Nogalani *sindicato* leaders seized the opportunity to build the *Centro* in Bella Vista when they heard of problems concerning the property rights of the construction site in Coripata, and without having had any say in the initial design, concept or thematic focus of the project, were awarded the infrastructure. During my stay I was able to document several visits from technical commissions in La Paz, speak to the people in charge at the PNTC and the *Viceministerio de Turismo* (Vice Ministry of Tourism), as well as participate in the first official visit of the vice minister of tourism who arrived in April 2017 with a commission to oversee final preparations for the inauguration ceremony to be held in 2017 (see my description of the event in the introduction).

of both the PNTC and the *Viceministerio de Turismo*, a *Centro de Interpretación* is a museum whose concept is based on participatory engagement of the visitors with the topic of the exhibition and the objects displayed. The centers are designed to provide people with an interpretation of the topics in question through a combination of material exhibits, guided tours and interactive engagement with the contents. Since most people in Cala Cala most commonly referred to the *Centro de Interprectación* as *"el museo,"* I asked people at the PNTC and at the *Viceministerio de Turismo* what distinguishes a *Centro de Interpretación* from a museum. Besides referring to the rulebook definition cited above, one PNTC representative told me that they decided to avoid the term "museum" since people would then expect to be able to see "important historical artefacts" *("artefactos históricos importantes")* which, in his view, most communities where such centers were built are not able to provide.

The center's concept is interesting for various reasons. The three topics the center singled out for "interpretation" (coca, coffee and Afrobolivian culture) and the way they are represented tell us a great deal about how the Yungas and their society and economy are viewed through the lens of plurinationality. Through the center's exhibition, *Afroboliviano* is singled out as the most salient and relevant culturally constituted category of difference in the Yungas. This is especially striking in contrast to earlier depictions of the region. The widespread opinion prevalent until well into the 1980s was that Afrobolivian culture was in fact on the verge of obliteration due to acculturation to the Aymara culture of the Yungas (Pizarroso Cuenca 1977). Nowadays, however, statements like this one from a tourism leaflet on the Yungas are ubiquitous: "In actuality, peasants [*campesinos*] and Afrobolivians live and work together for the productive development of the region."[7] As we can see, the logic and rhetoric of such statements separates Afrobolivians from the rest of society – juxtaposing the categories peasant and Afrobolivian. Aymara culture, on the other hand, is not seen as something playing a role in social differentiation in the Yungas by the initiators of the project. Afrobolivianity is thus granted a special place in the cultural geography of the Yungas and of plurinational Bolivia more generally.

When Roberto first showed me the center right after my arrival it was already equipped with the information panels on Afrobolivian culture, coffee and coca cultivation. When I asked him who had designed the panels he told me that *"el arquitecto"* had brought them and that he did not know who had written the text, selected the photos or compiled the information. He could not tell me how and by whom certain very important decisions regarding the exhibition were made. Neither he nor any individual from Cala Cala was involved in determining what topics would be addressed, nor in determining how they would be presented or what 'interpretation' of Afrobolivian Culture the center would provide. Some weeks later,

7 *"Actualmente tanto campesinos como Afrobolivianos viven y trabajan conjuntamente en el desarrollo productivo de la región."*

officials at the *Viceministerio de Turismo* told me that the panels, as well as the photographs and the entire *"guía museográfica,"* i.e. the basic concept of the exhibition, had been designed by an independent consultant. Even though the documentation I was able to consult at the *Viceministerio de Turismo* suggested that there ought to be workshops – first in order to compile information and then to present the *guía museográfica* to community members and discuss its adequacy – no such workshop had taken place in Cala Cala and the residents of the community first laid eyes on the content of the museum when everything was finished.

The exhibition features panels on Afrobolivian history in colonial times (entitled: *"de Potosí a los Yungas*), during the Republic and the National Revolution of 1953 (*"Tiempos de hacienda"*). Furthermore, there are panels on Afrobolivian culture and religion (*"La cultura Afroboliviana"* and *"La cultura, la religión Afroboliviana"*), Afrobolivian knowledge in medicine (*"Saberes Afrobolivianas en medicina"*), Afrobolivian dress (*"La vestimienta Afroboliviana"*), Afrobolivian hairstyles (*"Las Pichicas y seques"*), Afrobolivian soccer players (*"Afrobolivianos y la selección nacional, El legado de Ramiro Castillo"*), *saya* and its instruments (*"La saya Afroboliviana," "La construcción de instrumentos musicales, instrumentos de la saya y su materia prima"*). Additionally, there are some photographs, mainly of *saya* dancers, ornamenting the walls of the center. The information included in the exhibition is very basic and provides a very general overview of what is considered important regarding Afrobolivians, and the panels hardly contain any information on local specificities. Since the *Centro de Interpretación* was a top-down project, it reflected basic notions of Afrobolivianity articulated in the national context, rather than locally grounded particularities important for *"los Afros de Cala Cala."*

According to the references on the panels, the information regarding 'Afrobolivian culture' was derived mainly from three written sources: The main thread of the exhibition follows the *Registro de Saberes y conocimientos del Pueblo Afroboliviano* (Registry of wisdom and knowledge of the Afrobolivian people) published by the *Minsterio de Educación* and elaborated under the supervision of the *Consejo Nacional Afroboliviano (CONAFRO)*, the *Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Afroboliviana (ILC-AFRO)* and the *Consejo Educativo del Pueblo Afroboliviano (CEPA)*. All of these institutions – CONAFRO, ILC-AFRO, and CEPA – are important actors shaping Afrobolivian interaction with the state and thus rely heavily on the articulated notion of Afrobolivianity circling around the idea of *pueblos*. The *Registro de Saberes y conocimientos del Pueblo Afroboliviano* is probably the most palpable representation of the pervasive tendency of cataloging, formalization and homogenization of Afrobolivian culture. This document serves as a guideline for government agencies, development actors and the general public when dealing with anything concerning *el pueblo Afroboliviano*. Thus the elements listed in this document also became the guiding principles of the exhibition. Besides taking cues for relevant topics and basic information from the *"Registro de Saberes,"* the exhibition draws on two additional sources, each pro-

blematic in their own way. Juan Angola's "*Raíces de un Pueblo*" (Angola Maconde 2000) is a book thoroughly grounded in Yungas ethnography, yet when addressing Afrobolivian cultural distinctiveness it remains largely speculative, establishing analogies with 'African cultures' that are dubious at least (Angola Maconde 2000: 17-23). In the same vein, Martín Ballivián's (Ballivián 2015) work on Afrobolivian culture, *saya* and the *hacienda* period sometimes sounds more like an invocation of African cultural roots than a substantiated analysis and is therefore, likewise, to be treated with caution as a source for an exhibition.

As for the *saya* pictures, I later found out just how these pictures came to figure so prominently in the exhibition. When I obtained the document containing all the information on the exhibition from the PNTC, it listed links to internet pages as the sources of the images. Indeed, a quick cross-check showed that almost all of the pictures I had seen on the panels in Cala Cala's *Centro de Interpretación* could be found on the first two result pages of a Google image search with the keywords *"saya afroboliviana."* Upon seeing those pictures on most of the panels and the photographs adorning the walls of the exhibition hall for the first time, people from Cala Cala immediately remarked that most of the photographs did not show Cala Cala's *saya*, but groups from Coroico, La Paz and Chicaloma. Given the importance of local variation in terms of *saya*, this was a serious issue and many people demanded that the pictures be taken down and replaced. In a similar vein, people complained about the *saya* outfits that the PNTC had brought from La Paz for exhibition on mannequins (see fig. 1 in the introduction). The garments had been styled according to photographs and thus looked very similar to outfits found among La Paz-based *saya* groups, rather than the less ostentatious outfits *Cala Caleños* are used to.

The fact that the planners of the exhibition had not consulted with people from Cala Cala before and during the designing of the center was heavily criticized on a number of occasions. Following the discussions and complaints, in internal meetings, informal conversations and in conversations with PNTC personnel, I got the impression that there was more at stake than the replacement of certain pictures and the correction of small errors. Woven into the criticism of those very obvious and superficial mistakes, people voiced their concerns over the general thread of the exhibition. The faults of many parts of the exhibition brought to the fore what was tacitly present: a certain unease many people felt when faced with an objectified image of what was considered their culture. For me, one of the decisive moments in the process of what it meant to deal with the *Centro de Interpretación* for people in Cala Cala was a meeting in which the architect responsible for the interior of the infrastructure explained to Roberto and Víctor how he wanted Cala Cala's *saya* drums to be part of the exhibition. He informed them they were required to deliver Cala Cala's *saya* drums *(cajas)* to the museum in order for them to be part of the exhibition. In exchange, the PNTC would provide the community with at least four

brand new drums. Those new drums would serve for drumming in order to show the visitors how *saya* is played and could also be used by visitors to try drumming as part of their interactive experience in the *Centro*. "The old ones will not be played anymore," the architect concluded. The matter-of-fact tone and the complete lack of discussion of the issue struck me as quite remarkable. Although Roberto strongly opposed the idea that Cala Cala's *cajas* should rightfully belong to a museum, depriving the community of access to them, he did not object to the architect's plan on the spot. In conversations with me he repeatedly stated that he was absolutely sure that his opinion on the subject represented the majority within Cala Cala. Consequently, he was shocked find the *cajas* in the exhibition room on the day of an official visit by a delegation from La Paz, since he had even the night before stated that in his eyes there was absolutely no way the old *cajas* would end up on the wall of the center. It was Víctor – at whose house the drums were stored – who had brought the drums to the museum. Again, neither Roberto, nor any other *Cala Caleños* objected on the spot and Víctor's unilateral decision was not questioned. Later, Roberto remarked that he did not consider the issue of the drums resolved and that he would prefer that the original drums remain in the hands of the community, while equipping the museum only with newly crafted ones. It remains to be seen how the issue of the drums is resolved in practice. Yet it is undeniable that Cala Cala's Afrobolivian population is facing a powerful impetus towards objectifying their cultural practices and fixing them as 'tradition' and 'heritage.' While I have addressed this trend as part of my discussion of the pitfalls of folklorization in abstract terms, here we are talking of literally attaching the drums to the wall, removing them from cultural practice and reducing them to the role of representing Afrobolivian tradition in a museum.[8]

Reifying Afrobolivianity through infrastructure: the *Centro de Interpretación* as built identity politics

Whereas radio broadcasts on (indigenous) rights, the circulation of government leaflets highlighting cultural diversity, as well as the recurring references to *pueblos*, identity and culture in workshops and campaigns directed at Afrobolivians are often momentary and volatile in their outcomes, the *Centro de Interpretación* gives the plurinational perspective on diversity and culture a material expression and

8 In mid-2018, I was told by Roberto's eldest son that Roberto is busy making drums for the museum. This suggests to me that his perspective eventually prevailed and that he volunteered to craft the additional drums.

presence.[9] This presence goes beyond documents, action plans, and laws. If many of the examples of the pervasive presence of identity politics and the circulation of plurinational ideas regarding the functioning of Bolivian society I have discussed throughout this book largely remain in the realm of the discursive, the *Casa Cultural* and the *Centro de Interpretación* are almost excessively material results of the state's outlook on culture and society. The sheer size of the buildings and the somewhat out-of-place modernist design make them stand out in the Yungas landscape as beacons of the new plurinational age. This is certainly, at least in part, intended by the designers and planners of such infrastructure who wish to highlight their impact and activities for everybody to see. The question then is what these buildings represent and how they come to affect how people interpret their world and their position within that world. When once I was waiting for a car to take me from Arapata (a town located on the opposite mountain ridge) to Cala Cala, a woman approached me and asked me where I was going. When I told her that I was waiting for someone to take me to Cala Cala, she asked me if I knew what those orange buildings were that could be discerned even at considerable distance. I told her that it was the *Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala*, a shelter and cultural center for tourists, to which she replied, smiling: *"Entonces han hecho construir eso con los Rubios"* ("So they built this with the Blondes"). *Los Rubios* (lit. the Blondes) is a common way to playfully refer to Afrobolivians, particularly among the non-Afrobolivian population of Coripata (see also Equipo CIPCA 1977:122). The *Casa Cultural* and the *Centro de Interpretación* thus inscribe plurinational logics into the territory for everybody to see. The mere presence of the building reminds the people in and around the *comunidad* of the presence of Afrobolivians and the alleged importance of Afrobolivian culture as a feature of social differentiation. Discourses on Afrobolivian cultural particularity have found material confirmation and reification through the presence of the buildings. Without even considering the details of the exhibitions, the *Centro de Interpretación* makes a powerful statement in terms of what the state considers relevant collective subjects and categories in the context of the Yungas. Most Afrobolivian inhabitants interpreted this statement in a very positive light. For most, it was empowering to be singled out, *"finalmente reconocidos"* ("finally recognized") and represented as a relevant cultural collective. The emphasis on Afrobolivian culture was generally seen as a timely recognition by the state that Afrobolivians 'exist' (i.e. recognized as a culturally distinct entity) and an important aspect of the recognition Afrobolivian organizations have so long been struggling for.

Recognition and representation comes at a price, however. What is represented in the exhibition is often not directly controlled by people from Cala Cala, and the Afrobolivianity depicted in the exhibition is a highly generic one, suffering from

9 The presence of anthropologists researching Afrobolivianity can be considered another momentary factor in this regard.

the general fallacies of the plurinational view of Bolivian reality and the homogenizing force of Afrobolivianity as a political and legal concept. Interestingly, and although the center is focused on Afrobolivian 'culture,' the exhibition also reifies racialized images and stereotypes about Afrobolivians. It features a statue that is intended to depict an Afrobolivian coffee cultivator (see fig. 1 in the introduction) which gives people a material phenotypical reference for how an Afrobolivian ought to look in the eyes of the planners. Given the complicated relationship between the denominations *negro* and *Afroboliviano* and with that the varying influence of phenotype, race and ethnicity for discourses on Afrobolivian identity, it is interesting that a *negro* is posited as most representative in this regard. This not only shows the continuing importance of phenotype, but also exemplifies the images of Afrobolivians circulating in Bolivia more generally. People did not generally comment on this statue and it received significantly less attention than the parts on 'culture' and 'tradition.' The only comment on it that I recall came from Roberto, who remarked that he would have chosen to make the nose flatter, since a "true *negro*" (*"un negro verdadero*"), in his view, doesn't have such a pointy nose.

Conclusion

Cala Cala's venturing into the world of community tourism catapulted its inhabitants into a web of relations including the Interamerican Development Bank, Bolivian central government institutions, regional political brokers and *sindicato* leaders. Their initial engagement with the PNTC led to a series of occasions where members of the community debated questions of culture, community, development, economic necessity and interethnic relations. The conceptual framework that they engaged through these encounters relies on an eclectic mixture of transnational development logics (efficiency, transparency and formalization), plurinational perspectives on cultural diversity, collective rights and discrete group boundaries. Local perspectives on collective identity and alternative ways of organizing social relations in the *comunidad* also shaped these encounters. At times, the logics of the tourism program clashed with perceptions of specific individuals in the community as well as causing difficulties with regard to practical issues of organizing the project.

Given the unexpected turn the engagement with tourism took through the construction of the *Centro de Interpretación*, the project shifted in focus and some frictions already present in the initial scheme were exacerbated. On the one hand, being largely a top-down project with little participation from within the community, the influence of the overarching conceptual framework of plurinationality increased. The exhibition's perspective on Afrobolivians is even more firmly grounded in plurinational ID-ology and a notion of Afrobolivianity articulated nationally.

Cala Cala's specificities are largely absent from the exhibition and the Afrobolivianity that is represented in the exhibition is highly generic. Its primary sources are documents and publications crafted under the influence of the plurinational goal of cataloging the culture of clearly bounded *pueblos*. I have analyzed the contradictions of this process at length in chapter 7. The *Centro de Interpretación* is thus a striking example of how those logics reach the local contexts and how they are engaged by people.

Moving beyond the aspects that the planners of the project associate with the idea of a *Centro de Interpretación* (i.e. a specific novel museological approach directed at the visitors) it is fruitful to inquire into the "interpretations" of the world the *Centro* and its exhibition proposes to the people in Cala Cala. First of all, its interpretation of the Yungas explicitly singles out three elements: coca, coffee and Afrobolivian culture.[10] Thus Afrobolivianity is marked as a consequential category of collective identification. In this context, what the exhibition does not explicitly name is also important: Aymara culture, which is not explicitly represented as salient or consequential in the Yungas context. Moreover, the exhibition specifically focuses on Afrobolivian 'culture,' thereby adhering to a very particular notion of Afrobolivianity that is not uncontested, as I have shown in chapter 6. What is more, the center offers an interpretation of what 'culture' is: a discrete list of elements (see chapter 7), mainly *saya*, represented through material objects (the drums), through photographs and through performances within the space of the museum. In a way, the project also highlights what the plurinational state thinks about the question of where 'culture' belongs. Although there are references to lived culture *("culturas vivas")*, the fact that the architect expected people in Cala Cala to give their drums to the museum is quite telling. Cala Cala's most important material expression of Afrobolivian 'culture' should belong to the museum, where it is to be preserved as patrimony. Moreover, there are less explicit aspects and interpretations to be found in the museum. I have hinted at the racialized imagery of the Afrobolivian coffee cultivator and have also mentioned the dark-skinned mannequins (see the opening vignette in the introduction) that are used to display the *saya* outfits. Thus, although emphasizing culture in explicit terms, the exhibition also perpetuates racialized notions of Afrobolivianity through the absent (i.e. unnamed) material presence of race (Wade, Deister, et al. 2014).

Following James Clifford's (2013) approach to indigeneity as a process of becoming through articulation, performance and translation, I argue that the *Centro de Interpretación* is an important site of the articulation, performance and translation of Afrobolivianity in Cala Cala. The exhibition of the *Centro de Interpretación* provides us with a concise summary of many of the elements that I have described as

10 For reasons of space, I cannot discuss the first two aspects, but will focus only on 'Afrobolivian culture' *("cultura Afroboliviana")*.

important in the process of articulating Afrobolivianity in contexts of cultural revitalization, political activism and plurinational recognition. The center also serves as a privileged site where this particular notion of Afrobolivianity is performed. Although the project focuses on the performances directed at tourists, the performances of Afrobolivianity in the context of the center also engage people from the *comunidad Nogalani* and *"los Afros de Cala Cala."* Finally, the element of translation is crucial. For people in Cala Cala, engaging with the *Centro de Interpretación* also means engaging with the apparent gap between local notions of what it means to be *Afro*, the Afrobolivianity the center depicts, as well as the expectations of experts and tourists. Recall the episode that I described in the ethnographic vignette in the introduction to this book. Prompted by the vice minister's visit, Roberto explained what the *saya* drums, representing Afrobolivianity, meant to him. His performance failed to meet the expectations of the experts, who took their view as representative of what visitors will expect. In that particular moment, the performative translation of Roberto's local, "intimate" Afrobolivianity into the plurinational idiom of the experts was not achieved.

This last aspect points us towards an important characteristic of articulations and the collective identifications they engender. Articulations are always contested, processual and unfinished (Clifford 2013:61–62). They can be made, unmade and adopted within the social, cultural, economic and legal contexts they are embedded in (Schlee 2004). The contested nature of articulations and the particular plurinational perspective on collective identification becomes most apparent in my discussion of the early stages of the project. When planning and conceptualizing the *Casa Cultural Afro Cala Cala*, people in Cala Cala had to find ways of accommodating the logics of the project within local perspectives and different horizons of community. The heated debates on delimiting the beneficiaries of the project ("Who should (be allowed to) participate?") among *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* point towards the contested nature of seemingly clear-cut boundaries of collectivity in Cala Cala. In the end, *Cala Caleños* resorted to translocal kinship ties (by including urban migrants from Cala Cala), as well as to broader overarching notions of collective belonging to *la comunidad Nogalani* (by relying on the support of the *sindicato*), in order to pursue the project. They thus simultaneously and interchangeably activated different frames of collective belonging. On the one hand, a frame based on kinship and ethnoracial identification, and on the other a frame based on cross-cutting ties, integration and overarching similarities within Nogalani (Eidson et al. 2017; Elwert 2002; Schlee 2008).

I have analyzed the case of Cala Cala's *Casa Cultural Afro* and the *Centro de Interpretación* as a concrete example of the processes this study as a whole is concerned with. My discussion sheds light on a complex field of entangled practices and discourses. I have ethnographically explored how "legalized identities" (French 2009) influence "we-group processes" (Elwert 2002) on the local level. I have high-

lighted how local notions of Afrobolivianity interact with plurinational groupism (Brubaker 2002), most clearly expressed in the concept of *el pueblo Afroboliviano* and its related notions of 'culture.' Beyond collective ethnoracial identifications – local or plurinational – an alternative perspective on community and belonging, namely the overarching *comunidad cocalera* rooted in practice (*"cumplir función social,"* see chapter 4) also plays a crucial role. The outcomes of the negotiations those encounters engender cannot be prefigured. It must be noted, however, that if we perceive of articulation as a "process of social and cultural persistence [that] is political all the way" then we have to take into account that collective identifications are often negotiated "in power-charged, unequal situations" (Clifford 2013:61–62). Thus the agents of the plurinational machinery of ID-ology who are backed by law, as well as political and economic power and legitimized by technocratic knowledge, enjoy significant advantages when it comes to propagating their "interpretation" of Afrobolivianity. However, this does not preclude resistance and contestation. The evolving social and cultural practices of Afrobolivianity in Cala Cala constantly undermine and decenter the plurinational narrative of what it means to be *Afro* in contemporary Bolivia.