Chapter 5: The Changing Meanings of Ethnoracial Identifications in Cala Cala

The two preceding chapters have introduced what I call the different horizons of community in Cala Cala. With the word horizons, I refer to the local perspectives on different categories of identification, related frames of reference and ways of representing sameness and difference. By examining different contexts of social, economic and political relations, I have fleshed out two basic horizons of community. One is based chiefly on kinship, local origins and ethnoracial affiliation. The collective identification most salient within this horizon is called *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* in emic terms. The second basic horizon grounds community mostly in economic and ritual practice, as well as in political cooperation and emphasizes the importance of coca cultivation, regional identity, and festivities in the *comunidad*.

The two horizons in Cala Cala are not mutually exclusive. Following Eidson et al.'s recent contribution, they can be understood as relating to each other in syntagmatic and/or taxonomic ways (Eidson et al. 2017:343–344). This means that identifying oneself or others as *"Afro de Cala Cala"* does not preclude identification as a *comunario de Nogalani* and vice versa. Locally, there is no problem in situationally emphasizing one or the other horizon of community and people in Cala Cala generally do not conceive of *Afro* and *comunario* as representing conflicting collective identifications. Variable identification (or "re-identification") understood as "alterations in the actor's orientation, attitude, and behavior with reference to selected categories of identification" (Eidson et al. 2017:343) is thus unproblematic and occurs frequently. As I have shown in chapter 4, *sindicato* organization, the coca economy, and local festivities are framed within the horizon of the *comunidad cocalera*. At the same time, there are networks of solidarity and cooperation based on kinship and collective identification as *"los Afros de Cala Cala."*

There is, however, a second dimension to identity change that goes beyond situationally changing between horizons of community, emphasizing one or the other – or both simultaneously – at different times and in different circumstances. Eidson et al. (2017:343) refer to this process as "re-definition of categories of identification" (as opposed to re-identification). In Cala Cala's case, the category *Afro* is undergoing a process of re-definition through engaging with notions of *el*

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pueblo Afroboliviano (see chapters 8 and 9 for a detailed discussion of the process of articulating this concept). At the same time, basic assumptions concerning collective identification as a *comunidad cocalera* are also being transformed.

In this chapter, I argue that friction between horizons of community is most strongly expressed by people in Cala Cala when local social relations are interpreted within a conceptual framework privileging emerging legal and political discourses on Afroboilvianity over more local understandings of community. I have pointed out the general tendency to view plurinationality as *"discurso ajeno"* (foreign discourse) and have also addressed the limited significance of Afrobolivian identity politics in everyday contexts (expressed, for example, in the marginal importance of *Radio Afroboliviana* in Cala Cala). Yet the discourses of plurinational ID-ology and Afrobolivian particularities are not without consequences. As I will argue in the following sections, plurinational ID-ology on the one hand serves as a backdrop for deploying ethnoracial stereotypes in Cala Cala. On the other hand, the increasing political salience of Afrobolivianity significantly alters the strategic advantages of collective identification as *Afrobolivianos*. Together with a parallel weakening of the ties of solidarity and reciprocity that bind together Nogalani as a *comunidad cocalera*, this leads to a situation where the conceptual relationship between collective identifications, as well as their respective strategic advantages, are rapidly changing.

Analyzing contexts of complementarity and friction between different collective identifications also helps in avoiding a common problem of many of the publications that deal with Afrobolivians in the Yungas. Two main thrusts of argument – depending on the position of the researcher and the main focus of the study – can be identified here. On the one hand, in publications focusing on 'Afrobolivian identity,' contexts of cooperation and collective identification beyond the realm of the ethnoracial (i.e. Afrobolivian) are briefly recapped in a few pages before turning to 'Afrobolivian particularities' that take center stage for the argument. This perspective tends to downplay the fact that Afrobolivians engage in most of their day-to-day activities within contexts where it is indeed of hardly any consequence that they are Afrobolivian. On the other hand, scholars interested in the functioning of *comunidades cocaleras* in the Yungas – for the most part skeptical of claims to ethnic particularity by any group in the region as a whole and on the part of Afrobolivians specifically – downplay ethnoracial affiliations and privilege non-ethnic *sindicato* politics and the coca economy to such an extent that ethnoracial distinctions are rendered close to meaningless. I argue for a more nuanced view that neither overstates nor downplays the significance of ethnoracial classification and self-identification *a priori*, but rather inquires into the interdependencies of ethnoracially defined belongings and other affiliations. In what follows, I will first discuss how people talk about ethnoracial differences and the meanings people in Cala Cala ascribe to them. I will then sketch two parallel developments occurring

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in Cala Cala recently: on the one hand, the coca economy has been undergoing significant changes in recent years, transforming the relationships in the *comunidad Nogalani* in general. On the other hand, the revitalization of Afrobolivian culture originating in urban contexts and legal recognition of Afrobolivians in the Constitution has given ethnoracial differences new meanings. As a consequence, the relationship between the different horizons of community is shifting, both in institutional settings *(sindicato)*, as well as with regard to a sense of shared common history and tradition.

"No se juntan así nomás": ethnoracial identifications and individual social relations

As I showed in chapter 4, a large part of everyday activities in Cala Cala can be accounted for without reference to ethnic and/or racial distinctions. What is more, race, ethnicity and skin color are fairly muted themes in everyday conversations and one has to look for them very closely. The question then is in what sense and to what extent does being 'Afrobolivian' in Cala Cala have an impact on concrete social relationships between individuals and groups. When I once asked Roberto during a break in the coca field who he considered to be his best friends and why, he started to name a number of individuals and gave me short summaries of the histories of their friendship. I had met most of them and knew that they were all Afrobolivians. Since it was not at all uncommon to see him interact with Aymara on a daily basis and these exchanges – from my perspective – were marked by a great deal of familiarity and seemed fairly unstrained, I asked him if he thought that this (i.e. all the people he considered "friends" being Afrobolivian) was a coincidence or if he could think of any other reasons. He told me: "*Afros* and Aymara don't get together just like that." *("Afros y Aymaras, no se juntan así nomás.")*. The crux, I think, of this statement lies in the meaning of *"así nomás"* ("just like that"). As I have shown, there are a myriad of contexts in which Afrobolivians and Aymara do get/work together *(se juntan)*, be it the ever-present coca economy, religious ceremonies and *fiestas,* trade and transportation, political organization and matters of infrastructure that are discussed in the *sindicato* or the regional branch of ADEPCOCA. Yet, according to Roberto, if there is no economic, political or otherwise contextually predetermined occasion – and that is what I believe is meant by *"así nomás"* – Afrobolivians and Aymara do not get together. When I asked him what concrete contexts might be implied in this statement, he again referred to 'friendship' in a very general sense. He went on to detail that it was not common for an Aymara to simply stop by at his house to chat and chew coca as was the case with Afrobolivians. If Aymara did visit, he said, it was always because they had something else in mind, for example to ask for a favor or discuss past or future *sindicato* meetings. In the same vein, he also

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cited an occasion when he and I attended the *fiesta patronal* in Nogalani, sharing a table with other Afrobolivians and not mixing with the rest of the *fiesta* – unlike what happened during *Todos Santos* and the *velorio* described in the preceding chapter. He explained this particular situation and his general comments on friendship with reference to a set of character traits that, from his perspective, made it difficult to establish closer personal relationships between Afrobolivians and Aymara. Although Roberto attempted to make a very strong case for the generalized importance of ethnoracial identifications and differences, I find myself unable to fully subscribe to his view. Most of the time he only made this kind of comment in private settings and I was hardly able to detect any recurring contexts in which his alleged reservations against Aymara would have had tangible consequences. Moreover, concerning the topic of friendship and sociality, it must be remarked that casual visits to people's houses did not happen very often to begin with – neither between Afrobolivians, nor between Aymara. Most of time in the *comunidad* is dedicated to work – thus the importance of social interaction in the coca field – and scarce spare time is mostly spent with the members of one's household.

What is more, in concrete cases, conflicts were also not addressed with reference to ethnoracial identifications. For example, when I returned to Cala Cala in 2017, Roberto told me that he was in the middle of a court trial. He had gotten into a fight with a man originally from Dorado Chico, but intermittently living in Cala Cala for many years. According to Roberto, they had gotten into a fight that resulted in a physical struggle during which the man threatened to beat Roberto and his daughter visiting from Santa Cruz with a metal chain. After describing the details of the struggle, Roberto declared in outrage: "And he isn't even a *comunario*" (*"Y ni siquiera es comunario"*). The fact that the man was considered an 'outsider,' in Roberto's view, made the physical assault all the more serious. But the relevant collective identification in this case was *comunario*, not *Afroboliviano* or Aymara. In fact, Roberto never mentioned if the assailant was Aymara or Afrobolivian. I found out one day by coincidence when I asked Roberto how Gustavo was doing, an Afrobolivian man I had met in Cala Cala in 2014 and whom I hadn't seen there in 2017. It was only then that Roberto disclosed that Gustavo was in fact the man he had been fighting with.

"Es bien abierto por más Aymara que sea": ethnoracial stereotypes

Like Roberto, many people in Cala Cala employ a very subtle set of distinctions in order to position themselves as 'a different kind of people' vis-à-vis other groups in the *comunidad*. For example, when I asked people in Cala Cala about a person from Nogalani that I wanted to interview on a specific topic, one *Cala Caleño* told me: "You should go talk to him. He is nice, he is very open, even though he is Aymara" (*"Es bien abierto por más Aymara que sea"*). Similar to the situation in this example,

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differences in character between Afrobolivians and Aymara are often mentioned when trying to account for the distinctions between those groups in Nogalani. Although these differences are stereotyped to a great extent, they nevertheless have considerable impact on how people perceive of the social networks that surround them and use these widely accepted ascriptions as a basis for action in social contexts. Afrobolivians consider themselves to be cheerful *("alegre")* and open-minded *("abierto")* people, who have a more relaxed view on things *("relajado")*. Aymara on the other hand are said to be stubborn *("terco")* and closed-minded *("cerrado")*. From an Aymara point of view, this translates to Afrobolivians being somewhat lavish, not taking things as seriously as they should, whereas they consider themselves to be humble and serious people. As can be observed, the characterizations correspond to each other from both perspectives; the point of observation just determines if they are evaluated positively or negatively. What appears to be cheerfulness from an Afrobolivian perspective is seen as lavish behavior by Aymara. Accordingly, what Afrobolivians interpret as stubborn and closed-minded is for Aymara a positively evaluated seriousness vis-à-vis the imponderability of life.

Besides the *abierto-cerrado* dichotomy, there are other stereotyped ascriptions employed to characterize Afrobolivians and Aymara. A widely held belief – and one that is furthermore maintained by both groups in almost the same way – is that while Afrobolivians are lazy *("flojos")*, Aymara are hard-working *("trabajadores")*. For both groups this in part explains the different levels of economic success within the *comunidad*. In a decisively self-reflexive way, many Afrobolivians see the economic advancements of many Aymara families to be the outcome of their hard work and almost all-encompassing work ethic. I have not gathered sufficient statistical data to corroborate the accuracy of the impression that Aymara in Nogalani are indeed better off economically, but it is a widespread belief among the residents of Cala Cala. On the one hand, they self-critically represent this situation as an outcome of an Aymara virtue that Afrobolivians allegedly lack; on the other hand they relativize the desirability of such a life by pointing out that Aymara are ambitious *("ambiciosos")* to an extent that Afrobolivians do not approve of. Aymara households are of course far from homogenous in economic terms, displaying great variation in the amount of cultivated and uncultivated land, as well as in the amount of work force at their disposal (cf. the ethnographies of *cocalero* communities by Léons 1966; Léons 1998; Pellegrini Calderón 2016; Spedding 1994; Spedding 2004). The same goes for the Afrobolivian population in Cala Cala, where some households are better off than others. Additionally, as Alison Spedding (1994) has pointed out, discourses pitting hard-working individuals against lazy ones are also very common within the Aymara segments of the population and within *comunidades* comprised entirely of Aymara. That is, the topic is not reserved to *comunidades* in which Afrobolivians and Aymara live in close proximity. Spedding attributes the importance of such discourses to the importance of manual labor in the Yungas coca economy

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on the one hand, and the overarching ideology of equality in the Yungas on the other. She argues that economic inequalities, if they are admitted at all, must be legitimized through linking economic gain to hard work rather than to an unequal distribution of land and exploitative work arrangements (Spedding 1994:204–207). This trope is central to the moral universe of all *cocalero* communities. It is interesting to note, however, that the moral universe that Spedding describes for Aymara *comunidades*, obtains an ethnoracial dimension in *comunidades* with Afrobolivian presence, providing an additional (ethnoracial) frame of reference to discussions of virtue, integrity and standing in the *comunidad*.

A third and very important pair of characterizations remains to be discussed. Aymara are characterized as united *("unidos")* and together with their characterization as *cerrados* this makes it difficult for a non-Aymara individual to become close friends with them. Interestingly, the higher degree of unity that is ascribed to Aymara is framed in clearly ethnic terms. People repeatedly characterized Aymara as exhibiting a stronger sense of ethnic identity, whereas Afrobolivians lack a deeply-rooted commitment to their "race" *("raza")*. Afrobolivians are deemed more resentful *("resentidos")*, often letting personal animosities get in the way of ethnoracial solidarity. This assumption is especially important since it directly touches on the subject of ethnic identification and group cohesion. From the perspective of the people in Cala Cala, it is less a strong commitment to their ethnic identity on part of the Afrobolivians that prevents closer friendship from developing, but rather the relatively strong ethnic community spirit of the Aymara population, which excludes Afrobolivians. From the perspective of many people in Cala Cala, their ethnic solidarity – their "groupness" (Brubaker 2002) in a political sense – has enabled Aymara to furthermore act as a corporate entity in negotiations with the state and has enabled them to gain significant political and economic advantages over the Afrobolivian population. This 'folk' conceptualization of ethnicity and the conclusions that are subsequently drawn from it by many Afrobolivians is of course not unproblematic. On the one hand, the very question of whether an ethnic group can/should be considered a corporate entity – or even a group (cf. Brubaker 2002) – is highly contested. On the other hand, numerous studies have shown that there is a great level of factionalism among different parts of the Aymara population (see Albó [2016] on the question of Aymara factionalism). Yet most of my interlocutors emphasized that – in their view – what distinguishes Afrobolivians from Aymara most clearly is the fact that the former lack a sense of political groupness, while the latter not only exhibit a strong sense of ethnic identity as Aymara, but also manage to appear before the state and society (including Afrobolivians) as a corporate entity capable of achieving their collective goals. The alleged ethnic groupness and solidarity of Aymara from the perspective of Afrobolivians in Cala Cala is also not something I have been able to document in practice. Not only are there numerous conflicts between and within Aymara households, but the moments of

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greatest cooperation were always marked by solidarity as *comunarios* and *cocaleros* – thus including Afrobolivians – and not as Aymara linked to ethnic politics on the national level. It is very important, however, that from a local perspective, Afrobolivians lack a feeling of groupness in a political sense, explaining at least partially why it has been so difficult for ethno-political entrepreneurs to make the concept of an overarching *pueblo Afroboliviano* a meaningful frame of reference in Cala Cala.

It was only in very particular moments that the described stereotypes and discourses on ethnoracial differences did influence the way people approached each other and interpreted social reality through an ethnoracial lens. Before I address these instances, it is crucial to introduce two developments in Cala Cala: on the one hand, it is important to sketch recent trends towards the monetarization and individualization of the coca economy that transform how the members of the *comunidad Nogalani* relate to each other as *cocaleros*. On the other hand, it is vital to understand how Afrobolivian cultural revitalization and the discourses of plurinationality and recognition are reaching Cala Cala.

Economic individualization and the weakening of the *cocalero* community

One of my main arguments for the importance of viewing Cala Cala as a community beyond *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* is the paramount importance of the coca economy and its quite far-reaching consequences. Taking cues from ethnographies of *cocalero* communities in the Yungas (Léons 1966; Léons 1972; Pellegrini Calderón 2016; Spedding 1994; Spedding 2004), I have made the point that the coca economy and its sociocultural and political repercussions tie the *comunidad* together beyond economic calculation. Very importantly, the coca economy has great influence on how and under what circumstances households relate to each other. I have briefly introduced the practices of *libreada* and the growing importance of cash payments *(jornales)* as new ways of organizing the distribution of labor. Even though the effects of *libreada* and *jornales* on the distribution of wealth and economic benefits within the *comunidad* seem to be limited due to the fact that each household eventually occupies each of the roles in the networks of exchange, it does have a significant impact on group cohesion, solidarity and the importance of the idea of reciprocity. The *libreada*, and especially the growing proliferation of cash payments *(jornales)*, effectively undermine the reciprocal basis of *ayni* exchange networks and introduce more flexibility in the relationships between the households in their exchanges of labor. Those practices are so popular largely because they provide immediate cash returns, which are growing in importance since many daily necessities are no longer produced locally, but have to be bought on the market. While a household could do fairly well without cash income in the past, producing many subsistence crops

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on its own land and being able to survive until the next coca harvest could be sold on the market, it is now imperative to maintain a steady flow of cash income. Most households have focused on the production of coca almost exclusively, maintaining only a small number of fruit plantations that cannot support the needs of the family in terms of subsistence goods. Before, each household planted *yuca* (manioc) and *walusa* (a type of potato very common in the Yungas) for subsistence, a practice that has almost completely ceased to be of any importance in Cala Cala. Nowadays, the diet consists of rice and noodles that are bought on occasional trips to La Paz, in neighboring towns at the weekly market or in the small shops that have opened in the *comunidad* in recent years. What is more, most families also heavily depend on cash income for transportation (either hiring a car or buying gasoline) and most people have children in the cities that they regularly support with money.

The growing monetarization and liberalization of the coca economy has to some extent undermined the social fabric that had developed based on this economy in the past. It opens up spaces for individualization in economic and social terms and changes the value judgements associated with certain practices. Whereas in the past, working as a *jornalero* was considered a disgrace in the Yungas, I have met a number of individuals who work as *jornaleros* in the Yungas not as a last resort, but as a temporary strategy in order to progress economically and make some cash. Mostly young people work as *jornaleros* before they acquire a plot of land of their own. However, as we have seen in the case of Gerardo described in chapter 3, working as a *jornalero* can also become an option for elderly people who cannot sustain *cocales* of their own anymore. People who work as *jornaleros* enjoy a much greater level of independence since they are neither tied to a specific plot of land, nor face the obligations of *sindicato* membership. They do, in most cases, eventually aspire to acquire their own land and not work as *jornaleros* forever, but it gives them a certain amount of flexibility knowing that they could survive as *jornaleros*.

Yet flexibility and individualization are not the only outcomes of the transformation. The weakening of the ties associated with the expanded coca universe allows for new positionings to arise. These positionings are in part based on alternative collectivities that are emerging along the way. One tendency is the strengthening of the already important role of the household as the fundamental unit of agricultural production, consumption and solidarity. Given the decreasing importance of structures of support and solidarity spanning the whole *comunidad*, many people resort to their more immediate kin for support and identification. Additionally, in the case of the Afrobolivian parts of the population, the idea of solidarity as an ethnic group is also on the rise. In light of the experiences of fragmentation, economic self-interest and declining solidarity as a community of *cocaleros* – most clearly expressed through the logics of economic flexibility and individual/household self-interest in the practice of *libreada* – discourses about uniting as Afrobo-

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livians become increasingly important. This also entails a de-localized perspective on community. Many younger members of the families live in the cities, so relying on kinship ties for financial or moral assistance very commonly means crossing the territorial and social borders of the *comunidad cocalera* localized in the Yungas. The networks spanning to urban areas have only emerged in recent decades, adding a de-territorialized dimension to the notion of a kin-based Afrobolivian community. As I have pointed out, the emerging sense of belonging to a translocal community of relatives from Cala Cala resonates to a certain extent with notions like *el pueblo Afroboliviano*. In my view, the transformation of systems of labor exchange – most notably the declining importance of *ayni* and the growing rationalization of exchange – is leading to a situation where the ethnoracial bases for imagining belonging are increasingly important as ties established through the *cocalero* community become less rigid.

Cultural revitalization and the ID-ological force of the Constitution

Parallel to the weakening of the ties associated with coca cultivation, another development deserves attention when trying to account for the changing meanings of ethnoracial identifications. By way of Afrobolivian political activism, and more recently as an outcome of official recognition, *"Afroboliviano"* has become an increasingly important category of self-identification in political contexts and the source of quite some attention from the media and international development. Although Cala Cala always played a very marginal role within the broader efforts at Afrobolivian cultural revitalization in the 1980s and 1990s, people do recall participating in a meeting held in Coripata in 1993 and some representatives from Cala Cala were also part of a visit by a group of Afrobolivian *saya* performers to the Presidential Palace in 1994. However, *Cala Caleños* generally agree that the revitalization of their *saya* group only gained momentum in 1998 when a team of researchers and *saya* performers associated with the *Centro Pedagógico Simón I. Patiño* came to Cala Cala in order to record *sayas* for a documentation project including a book and a CD (Centro Pedagógico y Cultural "Simón I. Patiño" 1998a). The visiting researchers and activists from La Paz motivated the people not only to partake in the process of documentation, retrieving their *saya* instruments and recording for the CD, but also meant engaging with the discourses on Afrobolivian cultural particularity of the urban movement. The ideas of cultural particularity and discourses on Afrobolivians as an ethnic group *("etnía")* and later as a *"pueblo"* championed by urban Afrobolivians fed into local concepts of Afrobolivianity as described in chapter 3. Yet rather than grounding Afrobolivianity in local history and kinship, the notions of Afrobolivianity put forth by the agents of cultural revitalization grounded *"lo Afro"* in culture, and mainly in the practice of *saya*. This not only prompted younger

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Cala Caleños to play *saya* but also intensified Cala Cala's contact with the neighboring Afrobolivian communities of Dorado Chico and Coscoma, which were equally drawn into the project of revitalization by urban residents. As many *Cala Caleños* recall, the relationship between the three geographically close communities (Cala Cala, Dorado Chico and Coscoma) was not as close as it had been in earlier decades, even though it was still quite common to marry across community boundaries. The renewed interest in *saya*, and the growing momentum of discourses surrounding Afrobolivian cultural identity, however, sparked a series of opportunities to come into closer contact once more. This was not always conflict free. Roberto remembered *comunarios* from Dorado Chico demanding that Cala Cala give them their *saya* drums. The people from Dorado Chico argued that since they had been performing *saya* together with Cala Cala before and immediately after the Agrarian Reform, it was only fair that their community get at least a share of the instruments that had been salvaged. Cala Cala refused these demands, stressing its independence from Dorado Chico and the exclusive ownership of all instruments left in the community. In Cala Cala, people take considerable pride in emphasizing that Cala Cala is the only community with a proven history of *saya* dating back to before the Agrarian Reform, whereas the other Afrobolivian communities in the Municipio Coripata (Dorado Chico, Coscoma, Chillamani) have only recently founded new *saya* ensembles.

The aftermath of legal recognition: "We have to think about identity"

Legal recognition and political reform in the Yungas have built on those discourses of cultural particularity and have expanded their reach. Whereas the revitalization of *saya* was initially framed as the recuperation of 'tradition' mostly relevant in enhancing the repertoire of Bolivian national folklore, recent efforts at political reform at the municipal level carry the logics of *pueblos indígena originario campesinos* and *el pueblo Afroboliviano* to Cala Cala. One interesting example was a workshop explaining the government project of municipal reform *(autonomías municipales)* to local leaders that I attended in Coripata in 2014.

The workshop was held by two representatives from the *Escuela de Gestión Pública Plurinacional EGPP* (School of Plurinational Public Administration) who had arrived from La Paz that same morning, fairly typical 'experts' sporting the hiking gear many middle class *paceños* (urban La Paz residents) wear when travelling to the Yungas countryside (cf. Goodale 2009 for a similar description of the "experts" roaming the Bolivian countryside on certain occasions). The EGPP is an institution that depends on the *Ministerio de Educación* whose mission is to

> "contribute to the development, construction and consolidation of the new public administration of the Plurinational State through the formation and training of

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> public servants, members of social organizations, leaders, and authorities of the *pueblos indígena originario campesinos*." (www.egpp.gob.bo [30/05/17], my translation)[1]

Accordingly, workshop participants included the members of the *Consejo Municipal* (Municipal Board), the delegates designated by every *comunidad* for the committee, as well as some employees of the mayor's office *(alcaldía)*.

The first half of the workshop was an introduction to Bolivia's recent political history, especially the series of political upheavals that led to Evo Morales' watershed electoral victory in 2005 and the arduous process of constitutional reform from 2006 through to 2009 (for a recent, very well-balanced overview see Postero 2017). Aided by animated Powerpoint presentations, the EGPP representatives introduced the audience to the basics of constitutional theory *("¿Qué es una Constitución?")*, explained the ideological outlines of the *Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS)* reform project and summarized the contents of the New Bolivian Constitution that would become relevant for the second half of the workshop, which would be concerned with putting the constitutional principles into practice while elaborating the *Carta Orgánica Municipal*, a document serving as the legal basis for the municipality's autonomous government. The presentation they gave – including a Powerpoint projection packed with diagrams and bureaucratic terminology – seemed to be fairly standardized and also informed the audience about the ways that the EGPP goes about its task to

> "recover, generate, integrate and transfer intercultural, multilingual and decolonizing knowledge with regard to public administration […] in order to support the construction of the Plurinational State." (www.egpp.gob.bo [30/05/2017], my translation)[2]

The lecture by the EGPP officials was an interesting mixture of political propaganda, legal theory and community organizing and in many regards exemplifies the intermingling of collective identifications, politics and law that this book is concerned with. Much emphasis was placed on the fact that the New Constitution was based on the values of pluralism, indigenous culture, communitarian organization, and interculturality. Very importantly, and *Cala Caleños* also attributed great value to this when I later asked them what they thought of the lecture, they reminded the audience of the fact that Bolivia was now a Plurinational State fundamentally based on the recognition of different *naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos*

1 *"Contribuye al desarrollo, construcción y consolidación de la nueva Gestión Pública del Estado Plurinacional, mediante formación y capacitación de las y los servidores públicos, miembros de organizaciones sociales, líderes, lideresas y autoridades de los pueblos indígena originario campesinos."*

2 *"Recupera, genera, integra y transfiere el conocimiento intercultural, plurilingüe y descolonizador, sobre la Gestión Pública […] para coadyuvar a la construcción del Estado Plurinacional."*

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and the *pueblo Afroboliviano.* By invoking the categories employed by the Constitution, the workshop is thus a striking example of one fundamental aspect described by Jan Hoffmann French as constituting the process of legalizing identities:

> "[T]here is the experience of new or revised ethnoracial identities in the lives of the people who invoke rights based on newly codified legal identities. As the new laws are invoked and the rights associated with or extrapolated from them are put into practice, people begin to revise their self-identifications to some extent as their designation by the larger society is also revised." (French 2009:13)

A decisive moment came when the EGPP representatives urged the assembled community leaders to think of an adequate preamble to their *Carta Orgánica*, one that captures and expresses the identity and essence of Coripata: *"Tenemos que pensar en la identidad"* – "We have to think about identity," was a slogan repeated multiple times during the presentation. Before elaborating specific regulations, they argued, it was important to determine what constitutes "the identity of Coripata and its people." From this essence, they insisted, the contents of the document should emerge. What is more, however, the *Carta Orgánica Municipal* would have the power to transform Coripata, to bring a desired identity to fruition and to produce the society that most aptly fits the essence of the region. As one of the EGPP officials repeatedly emphasized, the New Constitution and thus also the *Cartas Orgánicas Municipales* are supposed to restructure society and relations between people. This restructuring ought to happen according to the logics of the Plurinational Constitution. The relationship between society and social identity on the one hand and law on the other hand that is expressed through these statements is twofold: while law should emanate from social relationships and identities – expressing and representing them – it also has the capacity to change them or even bring social identities into existence (cf. French 2009). With their emphasis on the overarching and seemingly unquestionable salience of 'identity' as the starting point of any further deliberations, they soon placed matters of ethnic identity at center stage. Nobody seemed to question the basic assumption that the most important essence of human beings and any form of sociality is in fact 'identity.' The purpose of the preamble was to capture this essence, crystallize it into written form and proclaim it for all to read. This was one of the first – and by far not the only – instances in which I was reminded of the pervasive presence of identity politics in 21st century Bolivia and the proliferation of what I have described as plurinational ID-ology.

Taking the importance of coca for the region as a starting point, the EGPP speakers sparked the discussion by raising the following rhetorical question: Is there anything else besides coca that is important and should be mentioned in the preamble? After some deliberation, the present community representatives came up with further aspects. "Aymara culture" could be named as a fundamental pillar of Coripata's cultural history, one participant proposed, since most of the

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inhabitants of the town and neighboring *comunidades* speak Aymara and most families have a history of migration from Aymara communities in the highlands to the Yungas. One Afrobolivian representative from Dorado Chico argued, of course, that "Afrobolivian history and culture" (slavery, African cultures, Afrobolivian cultural expressions) should be part of the document, highlighting not only the notable Afrobolivian presence in Coripata since its foundation but also the fact that Afrobolivians were explicitly mentioned in the Constitution and could thus not be left out of a *Carta Orgánica* that purported to rely on the Constitution and its principles.

It was not only the representation of an Afrobolivian presence in Coripata that was at stake and the participants were less interested in the big picture of decolonization and indigenous emancipation the EGPP tried to conjure. Instead, they focused on concrete issues affecting their access to power, resources and political positions. The crucial point is this: access to political positions and economic funds was framed as corresponding to discrete ethnoracially defined groups, the *pueblos* the Constitution makes so much of. By way of being introduced to the idea of plurinationality and the logics of culturally distinct *naciones* and *pueblos* as the conceptual bases for how the Plurinational State addresses its subjects, participants were inspired to think about themselves and others in terms of ethnoracial differences (as Aymara and *Afroboliviano*), rather than approaching the reform as *cocaleros* that share a collective identification. In plurinational discourse the complementary horizons of community based on identifications such as *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* and *comunarios de Nogalani* are replaced by the collective identifications of *"Afrobolivianos"* and "Aymara." Since they are regarded as different *pueblos* by the Plurinational State, the categories of identification *Afroboliviano* and Aymara are not compatible and their relationship is seen as paradigmatic, i.e. incompatible and mutually exclusive, a matter of "either, or" (Eidson et al. 2017:344–345). Afrobolivians and Aymara were addressed and encouraged to speak to (and about) each other as 'different people' even though they are often neighbors, have known each other for decades, are occasionally related through affinal or ritual kinship ties and share almost their entire political, economic, and religious institutions. Local leaders engaged those discourses, for example, when referring to their struggle for the direct participation of 'their people' in order to represent 'their interests' and protect 'their culture and identity.' The local repercussions of this particular project (municipal autonomy) became apparent to me just a few days later: As I arrived in Cala Cala for the first time (recall the episode I described in chapter 1), I met Juan Angola Maconde breathlessly collecting signatures to press for direct representation of Afrobolivians on the municipal board. Juan Angola was the representative for the *comunidad* Dorado Chico in the municipal reform project and very practically carried the logics of the workshops to local communities, highlighting the import-

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ance of rallying around ethnoracial identification behind the category *Afroboliviano* to achieve greater political influence within the municipality.[3]

Through projects like those described above – recording *saya* and restructuring municipal politics along ethnoracial identifications – being Afrobolivian has become an increasingly important factor when people speak about their sense of identity, belonging, community and political participation. In what remains of this chapter, I will discuss two concrete examples from Cala Cala where tangible consequences of plurinational ID-ology emerge in local settings.

The *sindicato* as an "Aymara affair"

Although the *sindicato* in *comunidades cocaleras* is often considered 'neutral' in ethnic terms and as guided mostly by the interests of a territorially and economically defined collective, many comments from Cala Cala suggest that we ought to reconsider this assumption. Although the *sindicato* is not structured according to or usually represented as a space that follows the logics of ethnoracial categorization, the workings and happenings within the *sindicato* are nevertheless increasingly interpreted under these premises from an Afrobolivian perspective. What is at stake is the very representation of the *sindicato* as a context that is not shaped by ethnoracial categorizations. From an Afrobolivian viewpoint, the Aymara majority in the *sindicato* is normalized to an extent that makes the *sindicato* look neutral in ethnic terms, when in fact it is an institution shaped mainly by Aymara concerns excluding specifically Afrobolivian sensitivities and demands. When making those claims, Afrobolivians resort to the ethnoracial stereotypes described above. Similar attitudes have been described by William Léons in his ethnography of the Sud Yungas town Chicaloma (Léons 1972). According to Léons, Afrobolivians there sought political participation not through the *sindicato* structure that they perceived as being "an Indian affair" but through the pursuit of positions in the municipal government. Léons explains this in part with reference to the language barrier – *sindicato* meetings were often held in Aymara – but also with a more generalized rejection of indigenous ways of organizing on the part of Afrobolivians. Instead of participating in the *sindicato*, Afrobolivians in Chicaloma organized in so-called

3 Juan Angola Maconde, one of the most well informed researchers and experts on Yungas society, details hybrid Afro-indigenous cultural practices in a variety of publications and has pointed out the existence of an *Afro-mestizo* culture in urban areas. Both these concepts run counter to the essentialist pigeonhole logics of the Plurinational Constitution. Yet, as a strategy, he embraces these logics, introduces them to his *comunidad* and motivates others to mobilize around an Afrobolivian identity conceived of in essentialist terms as something other than *cocalero* or Aymara identity and 'culture,' not something that is commonly *Yungueño* (see also my remarks on the invisibility of Afro-Aymaras in chapter 6).

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juntas (working groups). In recent years, these parallel Afrobolivian and Aymara institutions seem to have disappeared in Chicaloma, as Charles Sturtevant's (2013) ethnography of the town suggests. In Cala Cala, nobody mentioned parallel institutions and according to my interlocutors *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* have always been engaged in the *sindicato*. Yet people occasionally expressed a feeling of being left out of complete participation in the *sindicato*. Many Afrobolivians framed this problem of participation in explicitly ethnoracial terms and attributed the problems in the *sindicato* to what they considered a specific Aymara 'mentality' and their exclusion as racial discrimination.

A frequent topic of conversation, therefore, involved the question of whether close cooperation or a certain distance should be the guiding principle in negotiating relations between Nogalani and Cala Cala. The households in Cala Cala that I spent most time in represent somewhat different opinions on that question. Whereas Roberto maintains a position that is very critical of Cala Cala's close association with Nogalani, Víctor, a highly respected individual in the *comunidad* and one of the leaders of the Afrobolivian community, stresses the importance of cooperation. They also differ in their opinions on the type of relationship Cala Cala and Nogalani actually maintain. Roberto interprets the relationship with Nogalani as one of dependence (also due to racial discrimination) that Cala Cala has to overcome, whereas Víctor stresses the strategic importance of joining forces with the significantly bigger Nogalani and points out the historical continuities, the common struggle of both communities and the closely intertwined economies of the two parts of the *comunidad*.

The relation between Cala Cala and Nogalani in formal and institutionalized contexts was discussed in Cala Cala in the context of two initially unrelated but eventually intertwined developments. On the one hand, the *sindicato* leaders of Nogalani approached Cala Cala residents with the idea of forming a separate *sindicato campesino* for Cala Cala. The motivation behind this idea was the fact that Nogalani leaders aspire to claim the status of a *subcentral* (a federation of local *sindicatos*), which is only possible if a certain number of local *sindicatos* are affiliated. Therefore, splitting the *sindicato* of Nogalani into smaller parts (Cala Cala, Bella Vista and Nogalani) would enable its leaders to formally form a *subcentral* and thus enhance their power in negotiations with institutions higher up in the hierarchy of unions, the municipal government and other state institutions. From the perspective of leaders in Nogalani, the initiative was motivated by strategic considerations and had nothing to do with ethnoracial differences. In Cala Cala, however, the proposal was debated from a different perspective: At about the same time as *Cala Caleños* were approached by leaders from Nogalani with plans to split up the *sindicato*, Cala Cala was also in the process of participating in a Ministry of Tourism (*Viceministerio de Turismo)* program in order to benefit from a national project that aimed at fostering community tourism (see chapter 10). Cala Cala therefore had founded an

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Asociación de Turismo in order to coordinate the negotiations with the representatives of the ministry and the funding party, the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB). The efforts of the *Viceministerio de Turismo* were based on singling out Cala Cala as an 'Afrobolivian community.' The parallel developments catapulted debates on Cala Cala's status as a separate entity to center stage. What is more, due to the explicitly ethnic dimension of the tourism project, they also stirred up discussions of Cala Cala's status as an 'Afrobolivian' community and the consequences this assertion should have for the relationship with Nogalani. Most hotly debated among *Cala Caleños* was the question of whether people from Nogalani – who had expressed interest in participating in the tourism project – should be allowed to be members of the *Asociación de Turismo* and on what terms. Many argued that they shouldn't, based on the fact that they were not Afrobolivian and were thus not qualified to participate in the realization of a project based on 'Afrobolivian culture.' Others seconded that position by pointing out that people from Nogalani had only become interested in 'Afrobolivian culture' after learning that money could be made from it. Other voices stressed the vital importance of cooperation not only because of strategic calculations, but also because of the long history of a shared *sindicato*, and they argued the case for the participation of people from Nogalani. Yet another faction supported a somewhat ambiguous position. They argued that if Nogalani's leaders got the impression that Cala Cala's residents would exclude them from the tourism project based on ethnic differences, they would never let Cala Cala form their own *sindicato* for fear of further weakening their position vis-à-vis Cala Cala – Nogalani's strategic intentions regarding becoming a *subcentral* notwithstanding. All this shows that the conceptual basis (i.e. which horizon of community is foregrounded) of formal political organization is by no means uncontested. In part due to the new salience of the category *Afroboliviano* (expressed through interest in developing Afrobolivian community tourism), but also because of strategic maneuvers by Nogalani's leaders that were based on political and economic calculations, the question of what horizon of community determines the make-up of formal organization is highly contested. Beyond the realm of institutionalized relationships, the relationship between Cala Cala and Nogalani, Afrobolivians and Aymara, and different horizons of community was debated in terms of local history.

Reinterpreting history and inequality through an Afrobolivian lens

In my earlier account of *Todos Santos*, as well as in my description of the *velorio* for a deceased community member, I emphasized the importance of common practices of the *comunidad cocalera* and related discourses on shared history, tradition and values that encompass the whole *comunidad*, not only Cala Cala explicitly. However, there is also an increasingly important 'Afrobolivian side' to history that people

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do put forth when referring to their understanding of the present with relation to the past. I have discussed the importance of tracing one's family back to what are considered the original inhabitants of Cala Cala, and have also pointed out the importance this has for claims to land, as well as for a local history. The identification of *"los Afros de Cala Cala,"* however, has undergone decisive transformations. This shift becomes apparent when comparing Gerardo Angola's comments on the meanings of *"lo Afro"* for his generation (roughly people born in the 1940s and 1950s), with the opinions expressed by people in the context of the reorganization of the *sindicato* and the tourism project. Not only is Afrobolivianity increasingly considered a category of cultural and ethnic difference, it is also summoned to explain a much wider range of phenomena. At one occasion, during a gathering of the tourism association in Cala Cala (see chapter 10), some Afrobolivian inhabitants of Cala Cala started discussing the inequalities with regard to land tenure in the *comunidad*. Interestingly, they framed this in terms of racism. They argued that the fact that Aymara from Nogalani *("los de arriba")* owned land within 'their jurisdiction' (i.e. the territory associated with Cala Cala), whereas *Afrobolivianos* from Cala Cala do not own parcels of land within the territory of Nogalani, was clearly a form of racial discrimination. Although there are various possible explanations for this situation, during the discussion people exclusively referred to ethnoracial distinctions and heavily relied on ethnoracial stereotypes. As the debates went on, they took a turn towards even more generalized characteristics of inter-ethnic relations as seen from the perspective of Cala Cala. In the end, people did not simply debate a concrete case of land distribution (as is the case when tracing specific parts of land to specific ancestors) but debated inter-ethnic relations more generally. The participants of the meeting reached the conclusion that "they" *("ellos," "los Aymaras")* had "always" *("siempre")* gotten the better of Afrobolivians and that Afrobolivians had been victims of discrimination.

Such ethnoracial interpretations of past and present leave unmentioned a variety of factors that might support an explanation completely devoid of any ethnoracial content (or at least one that complicates the clear-cut designations). First of all, it is not 'all of them,' but only a few Aymara from Nogalani that do in fact own land in Cala Cala. Secondly, this version of the story leaves out the important fact that Cala Cala had been incorporated into the jurisdiction of the *hacienda Nogalani* even before the revolution, being absorbed by a much bigger *hacienda* and administratively integrated into its structures on unequal terms. It ignores the complexity of the year-long negotiations between the institutions introduced by the Revolutionary Government, the landowners, *hacienda peones*, village and *sindicato* authorities and a variety of other actors that shaped the land reform process (for an overview of the very heterogeneous outcomes of the Agrarian Reform on land distribution in the Yungas see Léons 1967; and the case studies in McEwen 1975). Finally, representing *"los de arriba"* as usurpers of Cala Cala's land and Afrobolivians as victims

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masks the fact that – according to *hacienda* documents – both Aymara and Afrobolivians appropriated land that legally belonged to the patron even after the Agrarian Reform. With this in mind, the straightforward 'ethnoracial' view on history becomes increasingly volatile. Yet this way of thinking about the past is on the rise in assessing the community's history. Just as Jan Hoffman French (French 2009:16) has observed in Brazil, in the process of legalizing identities, not only can present-day social relations be re-interpreted and re-shaped, but past developments and struggles can also acquire new meaning.

Entangled horizons of community in Cala Cala

As I have argued throughout the preceding chapters, in Cala Cala there are different horizons of community and collective identification. In chapter 3, I introduced a first horizon that coalesces in the collective identification *"los Afros de Cala Cala"*. Belonging to *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* is fundamentally based on kinship and local origins. Yet, although discourses on *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* are mostly local in scope and heavily rely on references to specific individuals *("los abuelos Afros")*, the collectivity it refers to transcends the locality and includes Afrobolivian kin living in different urban centers of the country. References to *"los Afros de Cala Cala"* are important aspects when accounting for a local history as a separate community and the contemporary relationships between households and families in Cala Cala. They are furthermore crucial – and therefore conspicuously on the rise in certain contexts – in efforts to latch onto emerging plurinational discourses on culture and identity as part of the *pueblo Afroboliviano*.

In chapter 4, I discussed a second horizon of community – what I have referred to as *la comunidad cocalera Nogalani* of which Cala Cala is a part. Rooted mainly in *sindicato* organization and economic cooperation through coca production, belonging to *la comunidad cocalera* is achieved through specific practices, namely the emic concept of *cumplir función social* (performing a social function) and participation in systems of labor exchange. For the practices associated with performing a social function, as well as for arrangements concerning the distribution of labor, collective ethnoracial identifications are secondary. Moreover, there is a strong sense of regional identity and shared traditions as *cocaleros Yungueños* within the *comunidad* that serves as a discursive backdrop for strong collective identification as *comunarios*. Finally, being a *cocalero* is also a political identity, crucial for the mass mobilizations of *Yungueños* over several decades.

In Cala Cala, the two horizons are integrated mostly in a non-conflictual manner. I have proposed considering them as complementary ways of conceptualizing and organizing community, sameness and difference and not as conflicting frames of reference for collective identification. Their complementarity stems mostly from

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the fact that each of the horizons functions according to its own set of logics. Therefore, it is possible for individuals from Cala Cala, as well as for Cala Cala as a whole, to situationally switch between horizons of community and even to express commitment to Afrobolivian identity and to *comunario* identity simultaneously. The relationship between identification as *comunario* and as *Afroboliviano* only becomes problematic in specific contexts. These contexts are marked by processes of "re-definition of categories of identification" (Eidson et al. 2017:342). In the concrete context, the local meanings of being *Afro* are enhanced with the plurinational logic of *el pueblo Afroboliviano* and, at the same time, the hitherto non-ethnic categorization *comunario* is increasingly associated with the ethnic categorization Aymara, for example by viewing the *sindicato* as an 'Aymara affair.' Through this re-definition of both *Afro* and *comunario* identifications, complementary collective identifications suddenly appear as mutually exclusive, making variable identifications increasingly complicated. Although I have not gathered sufficient systematic data on this subject among Aymara households, my general impression, corroborated by Pellegrini Calderón (2016) and Spedding (2009), is that this is mostly relevant from an Afrobolivian perspective. Aymara in the Yungas deploy plurinational ID-ology to a much lesser extent and their understanding of *comunario* remains essentially inclusive and rooted in "performing a social function." For Afrobolivians, on the other hand, *comunario* is increasingly associated with Aymara and their response is to rally more strongly around the ethnoracial identification *Afroboliviano*. This tendency is furthermore strengthened by the experience of weakening reciprocal ties as a *comunidad cocalera*.

Under those circumstances stereotyped characterizations of ethnoracial 'others' emerge as a factor that influences certain aspects of institutionalized relationships between Afrobolivians and Aymara. It furthermore leads to the reinterpretation of certain aspects of local history and social inequality as rooted in ethnoracial differences. In most day-to-day social interactions, an individual's ethnoracial identity is seldom the reason for open conflict and generalized mistrust, and the overarching identification as *comunarios de Nogalani*, *cocaleros* and *Yungueños* provides sufficient grounds for cooperation and solidarity. Yet, and given the fact that ethnic categorizations play such a fundamental role in shaping the emerging political practices of the Plurinational State, hitherto subtle distinctions become increasingly salient and begin to shape the way people interpret and – as a consequence of this interpretation – orient their social relationships with each other.

This is not to say that previously stable categories and collective identifications are only now being transformed. As I have shown, identification as *Afros*, as well as identification as *comunarios* must be seen as processual. From the narratives I have collected in Cala Cala – recall my remarks on the life of Gerardo Angola – as well as through the scarce historical records and the *hacienda* documents, it is

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furthermore possible to trace various shifts and show how ethnoracial differentiations and their social consequences have been in constant flux. On the one hand, the Afrobolivian population was highly endogamous until the middle of the 20th century. Afrobolivians from various *haciendas* maintained close-knit networks of integration through marriage across communities. With the abolition of the *hacienda* and the formation of *comunidades* and *sindicatos*, the ties between dispersed Afrobolivian parts of the Yungas population weakened and Afrobolivians developed common institutions and practices with Aymara in *comunidades cocaleras*. What is more, the years after the revolution in 1952 were also the time when the Bolivian central government introduced a large-scale educational reform in the countryside, propagating the use of Spanish, national citizenship and the ideal of cultural *mestizaje* as Bolivia's way into the future: *Indios* and Afrobolivians were to become *campesinos* and citizens, and ethnoracial labels lost traction in political discourse for a while. From the perspective of most of Cala Cala's residents, the period after the revolution and land reform was marked by the declining importance of a collective identification as *Afros* and a 'loss' of Afrobolivian culture. Important factors were the assimilationist policies of the educational reform, political and economic integration with the Aymara majority, as well as massive migration and dispersion of the Afrobolivian population throughout the country. It was only in the 1990s, after a constitutional reform and a multicultural law of education had been passed, that the tides began to turn. Afrobolivians in Cala Cala began engaging with the ideas of cultural diversity, multiculturalism and Afrobolivian mobilization through their contact with urban migrants. This engagement reshaped the way Afrobolivian culture was conceived of, articulated and discursively framed. In 2018, yet another constitutional reform later, Afrobolivians are negotiating their place in plurinational Bolivia.

Making sense of the changes with regard to what it means to be *Afro* in Cala Cala is, however, not only related to plurinational ID-ology. Although many state-sponsored campaigns and many contexts of Afrobolivian engagement with the state, the development industry and wider society suggest that ethnicity and collective racialized identity are the main frames of reference and also the routes to a vision of Bolivia's future, analyzing Cala Cala's situation points to the importance of other interpretations. For example, discourses of cultural particularity and the growing political salience of ethnoracial identifications go hand in hand with increasing rates of interethnic marriage. Ever more localized definitions of identity and belonging cannot mask massive migration and the dispersal of Afrobolivians from Cala Cala. Contrary to the ubiquitous talk of salvaging 'genuine local culture,' Cala Cala has furthermore entered an age of unprecedented exposure to globalized mass media and communication, as not only radio and television, but also mobile phones and internet access have reached the community. It is thus vital to not lose track of a great range of multidirectional processes that shape the way people

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make sense of their place in history and society, as well as the way they position themselves vis-à-vis topics of community, diversity and difference.

In order to contextualize Cala Cala's particularities, the following chapters will widen the scope of analysis to include discourses on Afrobolivianity circulating nationally in political, legal and mass media contexts.

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