COLLABORATING WITH MALIAN ARTISTS FOR

INCREASED NGO EFFECTIVENESS:

A BAMAKO, MALI CASE STUDY

by

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A THESIS

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Collaborating with Malian Artists for Increased NGO Effectiveness: A Bamako,
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Arising from drastically different world views, misconceptions between foreign NGOs working in Mali and local Malians often lead to actions that perpetuate unjust power dynamics and/or do more harm than good. In order to better align NGO sustainable development efforts in ways that are beneficial to the populations they serve, it is crucial to listen to perspectives that are typically marginalized in our current global system.

This thesis explores synergizing NGO-Malian artist partnerships in innovative, mutually understandable, and mutually beneficial ways to increase NGO project effectiveness and efficiency. This case study features twelve interviews with Malian dancers and musicians residing in Bamako, Mali. The intersections between these data and current academic sources indicate 1) processes to cultivate understanding and mindfully work to shift unjust power dynamics and 2) projects (themes, partnerships with existing opportunities, and innovations) that demonstrate promising, new potential to improve development efforts.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece to all people working toward a cross-cultural understanding and a more collaborative, holistic balance. I plan to incorporate the teachings from my interviews to prompt future sustainability-related dialogs in the hope that people will continue to make the necessary efforts to better work together as global citizens.

In particular I would like to dedicate this writing to three people who have passed away: the Professor Artist, Malick Mangane, and Mr. Camara. The Professor Artist, the interviewee who offered the most detailed interview for this research, especially touched my heart as he patiently spent three and a half hours explaining his ideas. Malick Mangane, younger brother to Gora Mangane, passed too early in his life. Finally, I wish to acknowledge Mr. Camara, director of one of the Guinean ballets, Soleil d'Afrique, with whom I danced. May they all rest in peace and may I continue my work in West Africa in alignment with the wisdom they have passed onto me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Arising from drastically different world views, misconceptions between local Malians and usually foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in agriculture, health, education, and/or the arts sectors in Mali often lead to unintentional actions that perpetuate unjust power dynamics and/or do more harm than good. In his 2007 article, "Fostering Social Sustainability: A View from the Trenches/Tools for Social Change," Carl Jeffry Goebel, a conflict management consultant and change catalyst, explains that first world countries have the largest amount of global wealth and are the greatest consumers of world resources:

> At the same time, drawing on their legacy of rational humanism with its master problem-solving methodology based on logical, binary, and confrontational scheme, these same First World cultures are also the engineers of strategies for defining, diagnosing, and treating problems in the social, ecological, and political spheres. The results are not entirely satisfying – as the continuing saga of conflict, aggression, and acute economic and social inequality reminds us. (Goebel, 2007, para. 1)

We need new systems to transform and create different results.

Goebel finds that problems arising from "conventional policies of resource exploitation, social planning, geopolitical administration, and population shift place increasing strain on...finding and implementing solutions" (Goebel, 2007, para. 1). He claims that "elaborating new models of change grows ever more critical" (Goebel, 2007,

para. 1) because, as Albert Einstein's famous quote reads: "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them" (Albert Einstein's Quotes, 2013, quote 10; Confino, 2013, para. 2; Harris, 1995, quote 281). This means that in order to create different outcomes and/or find solutions to our current problems, we must change our systems and thinking. Since NGOs working in Mali are often connected to first world countries and systems, NGOs should also reevaluate their thinking, systems, and practices.

At the same time, Goebel states that within the current global system, "the same cultural institutions that foster conventional approaches also permit the emergence, at the periphery, of more intuitive, holistic methodologies that hold considerable promise in the area of natural and social sustainability" (2007, para. 2). This periphery is oftentimes not financially wealthy, but embodies a deeper *intrapersonal richness*, or what many people refer to as a *Soul*. This thesis explores such a periphery. It is an attempt to include typically marginalized voices and encourages people to continue to learn about and with one another. This study creates a dialog between people from distinctly different cultures in the effort to better understand one another.

In this case study, I interview Malian musicians and dancers residing in the capital city of Bamako about their perspectives regarding NGO work in Mali. The goal is to explore mutually beneficial ways of partnering between NGOs working in Mali and Malian musicians and dancers, synergize our *collective consciousness* (a phrase that I discuss more in the next section), and thus generate new potential to solve today's local and global issues.

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[1] I was unable to locate academic literature that confirmed that this is an Albert Einstein quote. However, I found extensive other sources that attribute this quote to Einstein. I have only listed three of the uncountable sources here.

More specifically, I ask Malian musicians and dancers their 1) impressions of and experience working with NGOs in Mali, 2) if they would like to work with NGOs, and 3) if so, in what ways. The data collected from interviewees indicates processes and projects for improved NGO-artist partnerships that I triangulate with direct observation, current academic sources, and professional perspectives.

To further foreground this study, I include several subsections within this *Introduction*. In the first section, *Development—Building Our Collective Consciousness*, I briefly highlight authors who have contributed to the development field from the 1980s up to the present time in Mali and who have contributed to increasing sustainable development. Some of the more prominent *Sustainability Theories* in the second section also display a contribution to increasing sustainable development. Lastly, I offer the *Malian Context* section, in order to better foreground my interviewees' experiences, perspectives, and visions for sustainable development.

Development—Building Our Collective Consciousness

The following section explores academic perspectives, written since the 1980s, that relate to the *collective consciousness* in international community development that I use to 1) foreground my research; 2) interweave with the collective wisdom that emerged from my interviews; and 3) reinforce my final analysis that I organized into the final

Solutions chapter, in which I include my suggested processes and projects for NGO-Malian musician and dancer collaborations in the future.

According to the University of Chicago's School of Media Theory's Keyword Glossary, the *collective consciousness* is an:

> internal knowing known by all, or a consciousness shared by a plurality of persons. The easiest way to think of the phrase...is to regard it as being an idea or proclivity that we all share, whoever specifically 'we' might entail (Piepmeyer, 2007, para. 1).

Doug Cohen, Consultant and Resource Council Chair for National Youth Initiatives for the United States (US) Partnership for UN/UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, also frequently refers to the *collective consciousness*. He claims that if we effectively foster, mobilize, and tap our current *collective consciousness*, we could solve all of our current problems (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013).

In these next sections, I review writing from different disciplines, all of which were written specifically about the Malian context. One exception to the lack of Malian references is Goebel's practical experience that I discuss later in this subsection. Although the other pieces are not specifically aimed at the Malian context, they reflect only a tiny survey of our *collective consciousness,* or wisdom, that informs international community development today. In this section, I examine the work of: Robert Chambers, Ulf Hannerz, Robert Proudfoot, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, Margaret Ledwith, Kelly Feltault, Carl Jeffry Goebel, Iris Marion Young, UNESCO's (United Nations

Education, Science and Cultural Organization's) Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, and the 2013 United Nations Social Good Summit.

Robert Chambers

Robert Chambers' book, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (1983), is not specifically written about Mali, however it offers insights about the often drastic differences and perceived divides between NGO and Malians living in financial poverty. Chambers outlines the extensive ways in which *outsiders* have power advantages over insiders who live in rural poverty. *Outsiders*, according to Chambers, are relatively well-off, literate, come from an information-based education system, and are mostly urban-based. Their kids go to good schools, expect a healthy, long life, and eat more than needed. *Outsiders* live in all countries of the world, are of all nationalities, and work in all disciplines; very few have decided to reject the privileges of this class. *Outsiders* have the power to live lives which reflect their convictions (Chambers, 1983, p. 3)

Another difference between, *insiders* and *outsiders*, is that *outsiders* live more at the center of power while *insiders* live more at the periphery. Chambers would categorize personnel working for foreign NGOs with missions in Mali as *outsiders*. In contrast, *insiders* live with chronic, everyday problems such as soil erosion, health issues, irrigation systems, malnutrition, seasonal cycles of work, sickness, and indebtedness. More specifically, Chambers writes about the five disadvantages that poor people face that trap them in a deprivation cycle: 1) poverty, 2) physical weakness, 3) isolation, 4) vulnerability, and 5) powerlessness (Chambers, 1983, pp. 103-104). Chambers outlines

the trend that the poor naturally become poorer, the outsiders maintain their power, and the disconnect between insiders and outsiders continues.

When Chambers notes *insiders* do not go to good *outsider* schools, he is not suggesting *insiders* are not educated. *Insider* have a different type of education system. *Insiders*, unlike *outsiders*, come from a wisdom-based education system in which information is passed generation by generation and people-to-people over time (Chambers, 1983, p. 169). There is a continuous enterprise of seeking to learn from the rural poor and of exercising and correcting course. Without this, the poor would never understand changes (Chambers, 1983, p. 146).

Chambers argues that enough research has been presented to show that, contrary to certain professional prejudices, there is much for *outsiders* to learn from *insiders*, which matches Goebel's recommendation to look toward the periphery "of more intuitive, holistic, methodologies that hold considerable promise in the area of natural and social sustainability" (Goebel, 2007, para. 2). Ideally, those involved in development work would assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of *outsiders'* and *insiders'* knowledge and to look for ways to combine strengths and neutralize weaknesses. Chambers suggests analyzing *insiders'* languages, concepts, and categories for more insight into *insiders'* strengths and weaknesses. He also finds it insightful to look at the relationship between language, concepts and categories that, in turn, shape *insiders'* perception for wisdom (1983, p. 93).

Chambers also writes about the additional advantages that *outsiders* have over *insiders*. *Outsiders'* views and ideas are more at the center of powerful global, political, and economic, knowledge than *insiders'* views. In turn, *outsiders* generate mutual

attraction and reinforcement of power, prestige, resources, professionals, professional training, and the capacity to generate and disseminate knowledge. This then draws resources and educated people away from peripheries and pulls them toward the core (1983, pp. 4-5). *Outsiders* have the power and therefore should initiate helping *insiders*. Many *outsiders* often do.

However, there are also reasons they do not aid more. For *outsiders*, *insiders* are "out of sight out of mind" (1983, p. 3). Also, time, energy, money, imagination, and compassion are finite. People deal first with what confronts them within their daily reality, and rural poverty is remote even for people who choose to work in the field (Chambers, 1983, p. 3).

Chambers also claims that human selfishness is a powerful factor that limits *outsiders* from helping *insiders* more. My friend, Moussa Guissé, from Sigueri, Guinea referred multiple times to a proverb from the Malinke peoples who are found often in Guinea, Mali and Senegal: "Everyone has their interest" (multiple personal communications, 2002). Sometimes people are unable to see or work toward anything beyond their own, personal interest. Throughout his book, Chambers encourages multi-perspectivism in order to move beyond development challenges (1983).

Yet another reason for *outsiders* not doing more to improve the *insider's* lives is that many *outsider* workers become disillusioned with development failures and then look to rationalize their intervention avoidance. Chambers admits that convenient, suspect beliefs about social ills, require critical self-examination. This is not easy, but necessary, in order to truly help the rural poor (1983, pp. 3-4). In essence, Chamber's book is not specifically about Mali, but offers a dichotomous reflection about the

insider/outsider disconnect that likely exists between foreign NGOs and Malian artist cultures, making it difficult to accomplish effective and efficient NGO projects.

Ulf Hannerz

In Ulf Hannerz's article, "The World in Creolisation" (1987), Hannerz does not see such a clear dichotomy between *insiders* and *outsiders* or *periphery* and *center*. Rather, he is more fascinated with contemporary ways of life and thought that emerge from the "interplay between imported and indigenous cultures" (p. 546). He defines them as "the cultures on display in market places, shanty towns, beer halls, night clubs, missionary book stores, railway waiting rooms, boarding schools, newspapers and television stations" (p. 546). Hannerz's view of culture is more complex, including a more dynamic interaction of various cultural influences than Chambers' more dichotomous view.

Hannerz claims that from approximately 1967-1987, anthropologists focused on the center/periphery and development/underdevelopment dichotomies, metropolis/satellite relations, dependence, and the contemporary world system. He accuses these topics as being more concerned with bodies than with Souls. During this time, there was more of an economically and politically focused form of anthropology, rather than an "anthropology of structures of meaning...ideas-and-symbols" (p. 547). Anthropologists interested in "ideas-and-symbols, with culture in the stricter sense of the term" (p. 547) went to the villages, and their anthropology was "sharply defined as a study of the Other, an Other as different as possible from a modern, urban, post-

industrial, capitalist self" (p. 547). By differentiating "the other" from "the Self",
Hannerz's article emphasizes the disconnect, rather than the interconnect. Further,
Hannerz implies that the differences that anthropologists perceive and project are
artificial because "[i]n the end, it seems, we are all being creolised" (p. 557). Therefore,
we all have more in common than we might think.

Hannerz demonstrates that most anthropological writing from about 1967-1987
was about what interested academics, and was presented from their point of view. He
points out that "[t]here is surprisingly little of the post-colonial ethnography of how Third
World people see themselves and their society, its past, present and future, and its place in
the world..." (p. 547). He adds that "Third World cultures have been radically changed,
and more than ever, they must be seen as involved in an intercontinental traffic in
meaning" (p. 547). This implies that there is a need for more perspectives on how third
world people see themselves, their society, and their role within the global context.

Hannerz indicates that one of the main problems with including the third world
perspectives in academic research is that there are communication deficiencies that
impede the sharing of local peoples' perspectives about themselves and their culture. He
writes:

> As anthropologists we seem to have made no great progress...in developing a
> vocabulary for talking about [cultural complexities] in an acceptably subtle, well
> informed way.... And it is required...because no entirely coherent and credible
> macro-oriented perspective in cultural studies seems to have developed anywhere
> else in the human sciences, either. (p.547)

He argues there is not a sufficient working vocabulary to discuss cultural complexities, let alone create accurate conclusions about foreign cultures.

Hannerz writes that variation within a culture is normal and not often simple, "A culture need not be homogeneous, or even particularly coherent. The social organisation of culture always depends both on the communicative flow and on the differentiation of experiences and interests in society" (p.550). Hannerz wants to see people who are studying and/or working in foreign cultures improve their methods and academic vocabularies in order to better understand local cultures. Therefore, *outsiders* should more humbly examine and have more reverence toward local experiences, communication styles, perspectives of themselves, their cultures, and their worldviews, instead of interpreting foreign cultures from only a disconnected, *outsider's* perspective of local realities. As *outsiders*, we still have a lot to learn.

Robert Proudfoot

The late Robert Proudfoot, Iroquois native, Director and faculty member of the International Studies Department, and Director of the Center for Indigenous Cultural Survival at University of Oregon, and my professor of Cross-Cultural Communication class during my undergraduate studies in 1999, offered me a tool that I have used since my participation in his class. On the same wavelength as Hannerz, Proudfoot was acutely aware of cross-cultural complexities and could articulate the dynamic nature of cultural identities. In 1989, Proudfoot published his diagram the "Relational Model: Synergy of Interacting Cultural Phenomena for Cultural, Ecological, and Human Interaction in a

Global World Constant Contextual Process". Proudfoot's excellent depiction of culture

complexities is displayed in Figure 1:

Figure 1. The "Relational Model: Synergy of Interacting Cultural Phenomena for Cultural, Ecological, and Human Interaction in a Global World Constant Contextual Process" (Proudfoot, 1989).

Proudfoot used his *Relational Model* handout in his International Studies

communications classes to demonstrate:

communication and interaction as an integrated process both informed and

mediated by various cultural phenomena. Simultaneously, it recognizes that

communication as a process informs and mediates different cultural phenomena

as they combine to create unique synergies, manifesting through the individual.

These various cultural phenomena include: Historic Culture,

Contemporary/Personal Experiential Culture, Emerging Culture (Global-

Personal). (1989)

Proudfoot illustrates that our identities via experiences and communication are constantly

changing between the historic, contemporary/experiential, and emerging Self.

His model conceptualizes the complexity of each person's unique individual or

collective identity by presenting his model as a web of interrelated elements depicted as

spokes. Some of these elements include a person's relationship to space, time, religion,

language, politics, spirituality, ceremony, and history. All of these spokes influence an

individual and change over time as the individual has new experiences. Therefore, his or

her relationship with a collective group will also change and also affect the group

(Proudfoot, 1989).

Synergy is the unique context situationally created by the participants involved. A

person's identity is multifaceted, complex, and must be approached consciously through

critical thinking and evaluation. Identifying and understanding context is essential for

understanding synergies and interacting synergies. (Proudfoot, 1989) Proudfoot's

Relational Model offers insight into how dynamically complex each person is. It is

important to understand this dynamic reality because, when working within our own

familiar culture, we become aware that what is true in one moment and for one person,

may not be true tomorrow. Therefore, ongoing interaction and communication is key to

generating understanding.

Proudfoot's model also explains why, when working with people across drastically different cultures, it is even more difficult to understand their drastically different points of view. Communication styles are ever more foreign, misunderstandings are trickier, and it is easier to hurt people unintentionally. However, simply understanding that drastic differences exist between different cultures and unique and ever-changing individuals creates a more open, dynamic conversation. Hence, within the context of this study, being open to more dynamic interactions and understanding that our interactions with people affect their realities and vice versa empowers us to engage with other human beings more mindfully, depending on the relationship and participants.

Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz

In their book *Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument*, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz indicate that due to drastic and widely spread diversity and the complex events that occur on the African continent, Africa is not easily understood and things are often not what they seem (1999, p. xv). Chabal and Daloz argue, and Kedmon Hungwe in his essay review, "Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument*[2]" agrees, that patrimonialism is the main problem with African institutions. It is common for officials who manage public assets or resources to use them for private gain instead of for public benefit. In turn, officials profit from an ambiguous line between public/civic and personal/private affairs. The authors claim that in order for African institutions to be

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[2] In Hungwe's essay title, there is an asterisk. In Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz's book, there is no asterisk.

effective, they must become more neutral and rational when making decisions (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Hungwe, 2000).

Chabal and Daloz also discuss African corruption as pervasive in all societal sectors and involving the entire population. They call Africa's corruption a *vertical* corruption that functions according to unequal, vertical power relations (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 102). In other words, people with more powerful sociocultural roles, such as male elders, have more control over how money flows across sectors.

Although corruption in Africa is often perceived as dysfunctional or African institutions as disorderly, Chabal and Daloz disagree with these assertions. They view the disorder and corruption as signs that Africa is on its own functional development path. They claim that Africa's development will appear differently than the ways in which other societies have developed because its sociocultural context is different, and therefore will have its own unique development qualities and processes (1999, p. 102). Africa's path to modernity is a dynamic process, not a state of equilibrium (1999, pp. 144-145). Therefore, foreigners should have more faith in Africans' own processes.

As it applies to this thesis, Chabal and Daloz honor Africa's own learning and development path—despite how disorderly it looks from a foreign vantage point. It is wise to allow Africa to follow its own process because as *outsiders*, we cannot see everything and may misperceive what we think we see. Therefore, as foreigners, we must demonstrate reverence toward Africa's unique development process instead of arrogantly telling the citizenry what to do, otherwise we risk perpetuating oppression, and causing more harm than good.

Margaret Ledwith

In 2005, Margaret Ledwith published *Community Development, A Critical Approach.* When developing communities, Ledwith warns her readers to be aware of additional cultural complexities such as global forms of oppression (Ledwith, 2005, pp.100-103). She criticizes neoliberal globalization as being a form of Western corporate capitalism, which not only dominates the world economically, but reproduces political, cultural, racial, gendered, sexual, ecological, and epistemological hierarchies on a global scale. In the name of a free market economy, the same structures of oppression that exist under Western capitalism are being reproduced on a complex global scale. In the form of capitalism, imperialism, monoculturalism, patriarchy, white supremacism, and the domination over biodiversity under current globalization, we fall short of philosophical, political, ecological, and economic well-being. As a solution strategy, she proposes creating alliances across differences (Ledwith, 2005, p. 105) and therefore decrease the negative effects of the dominant culture and foster more biodiverse perspectives.

Ledwith's acknowledges that her approach resonates with Paulo Freire's philosophy in the 1972 edition of his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He questions the teacher-student power dynamic and insists that the oppressed reflect on their own concrete situation, because an authentic praxis will only occur if it stems from critical reflection (Freire, 1972, p. 41). Ledwith advocates for reciprocal relationships between student and teacher (2005, p. 119). She concurs with Freire that critical thinking about one's situation is the key to transforming the consciousness and creating meaning and value from this consciousness, which then leads to profound, sustainable change.

Freire and Ledwith both believe that people with perceptions of powerlessness erode hope and create a "culture of silence" (Ledwith, 2005, p. 96) in which they feel afraid to express themselves and/or do not feel worthy of giving their opinion (Ledwith, 2005, p. 96). Freire (1972) and Ledwith agree that personal empowerment through the process of critical thinking about one's situation and hence transforming consciousness and creating new meaning and value, is the beginning stage of collective action (2005, p. 94). Via my interviews, I attempt to empower Malian artists' opinions and reflections on their own reality in hopes of creating better cross-cultural understanding—a key step in working toward sustainable livelihoods. Ledwith and Freire also emphasize that listening, dialog, and praxis at the core of interactions drive a process of humanization. This process of humanization empowers oppressed people to work with their reality instead of reacting to what happens to them (Ledwith, 2005, pp. 94-99). Granted, my interviews were brief, and I had the power to form the general structure of the conversation (since I was asking the questions). I also initiated a dialog, however the interviewees determined their own answers and questions as well.

In 2007, Ledwith published an article entitled, "Reclaiming the Radical Agenda: A Critical Approach to Community Development." She warns that during changes within the political context, academics, community developers, cross-cultural workers, etc. must be vigilant and become better at applying theory into practices. In order to maintain our awareness throughout realms such as community development processes, academic research, and cross-cultural work, researchers should be able to explain our actions at any stage of the community development process. This will assure that we create "knowledge-in-action based on practical experience" (Ledwith, 2007, p. 8). As Ledwith

16

recommends, I take the knowledge, wisdom, and theories from the perspectives that I highlight in this *Introduction*, and put them into action by applying them to the 1) way in which I conduct my study, 2) analyze my findings, and 3) beyond this study, as continue to engage in a dialog between West African artists and NGOs.

Kelly Feltault

In support of a multi-perspective, human rights development paradigm, Kelly Feltault's article, "Development Folklife: Human Security and Cultural Conservation" (2006), urges folklorists to expand not only their definition of development, but also their development work outside arts agencies. She supports the potential for the development of folklife[3] as a subfield within the discipline of folklore because of folklore's typically dynamic cultural perspective. A more dynamic folklore perspective would mutually benefit and inform sustainable development processes (p. 90).

In a similar tone, but from a more local, United States perspective than Ledwith's global emphasis, Feltault criticizes the dominant folklore development model—cultural tourism—as an export-oriented economic growth strategy that does not challenge dominant, neoliberal development for economic growth. Neoliberal development transforms culture into a value-added commodity, if folklore-based cultural tourism projects ignore a more complex intersection involving traditional culture, public policy, human rights, environmental management, global capitalist economics, the people, and livelihood security issues (2006, pp. 90-92).

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[3] folklife: "the traditions, activities, skills, and products (as handicrafts) of a particular people or group" ("folklife", 2013).

Feltault suggests changing folklorists' tourism efforts away from the use of cultural resources for state-defined economic growth strategies, a practice that disconnects cultural history from development. Instead, she presents a rights-based or human security-based development paradigm that pushes folklorists to collaborate with communities in order to increase local capacity to address political, economic, and environmental changes affecting their cultural sustainability (Feltault, 2006, p. 90). Therefore, she advocates for folklorists to intervene directly with local communities, empowering local people to address their problems, rather than go through state governments which are more focused on economic growth.

Feltault does not refer directly to the African context. Rather, her philosophy is to empower local people, challenge dominant, neoliberal development view for economic growth, and avoid transforming culture into a commodity. Instead, she presses for a rights-based or human security-based development paradigm. It would be wise for NGOs to align their development efforts with Feltault's philosophy when working toward partnerships with Malian dancers and musicians.

Carl Jeffry Goebel

As I referenced at the beginning of this thesis, Carl Jeffry Goebel, Conflict Management Consultant and Change Catalyst, shifts power dynamics and inequity problems by tapping diverse perspectives which Chambers, Ledwith, and Young (whose work I discuss in the next subsection) all reinforce. In the case of a conflict, Goebel supports bringing opposing viewpoints together to discuss differences and collaborate for

change and a solution. He urges that while working within our current system, we should focus on listening to the periphery, or margins, for insight on how to recreate more sustainable, inclusive models and systems. As a Conflict Management Consultant and Change Catalyst, he facilitates community development visions by drawing from these perspectives (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; "Welcome," n.d., para. 1)

In his practice, Goebel reviews key sustainability concepts and offers case studies, gathered over the course of 20 years from diverse communities in crisis, to achieve productive and harmonious conflict resolution. These case studies are laboratories for testing the efficacy of insights into individual, group, and community psychology; the effectiveness of various non-aggressive and non-confrontational intervention techniques; and the possibility and feasibility of modeling win-win social interactions in a variety of conflict and scarcity scenarios (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; Goebel, 2007, para. 3)

His team's approach begins with seeking to understand the root causes of conflict, identifying all the individuals involved, and bringing them together in a collaborative process of visioning, trust building, and negotiation. This empowers all parties in the conflict and ensures that all voices are heard and that all interests are recognized and taken into account in the final decision. His team's vision of social harmony and sustainability is rooted in the belief that as humans, we are all endowed with the capacity to identify our needs, articulate our interests, and respond responsibly and respectfully to our social and biological world (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; "Welcome," n.d., para. 1-3).

He works with a multidisciplinary team, including facilitators, writers, and ecologists, with a wide range of backgrounds and extensive experience in facilitation, sustainability, and consensus building across a variety of contexts and fields. The team addresses conflicts involving issues of change, scarcity, and power. His team shifts these dynamics via conflict resolution, respectful listening, productive visioning, diversity systems analysis, research, and workshops and trainings tailored to participants' schedules and needs. The staff assists through all stages of consensus building, implementation, benchmark monitoring, and grant writing so that the process is interactive with and supportive of participants, so the participants can achieve the best envisioned outcomes (C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; "Welcome," n.d., para. 3).

As Ledwith suggests (Ledwith, 2007, p. 8), Goebel's work puts theory into practice. By compiling and empowering diverse perspectives, he facilitates emergent processes and outcomes based on the context—as Feltault promotes (2006, p. 90). Out of all of my subsections in this *Development—Building our Collective Consciousness* section, Goebel's is the only reference that specifically references Mali. He also has direct experience working in Mali and achieved great success. By using his sustainability facilitation model, and under United States Agency for International Development (USAID—a governmental organization) funding, his team activated local peoples in the Djenne Region in Northern Mali, to increase their own food production 78% in 15 months (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). With a small nudge from Goebel's team, the local people created their own plan and executed it.

Iris Marion Young

Iris Marion Young, author of *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (2011), explains how people in advantageous power positions must improve our work for social justice. She critiques the *distributive paradigm* of social justice to "tend to restrict the meaning of social justice to the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members" (Young, 2011, p. 15). Young thinks that this limitation fails to accurately reflect true justice because: 1) it ignores, and meanwhile presupposes, the institutional context that determines material distributions; and 2) the logic of distribution misrepresents nonmaterial goods and resources when extended to them. Until we learn how to balance equitable distribution of resources and jobs, failures to address power inequities in decision-making, procedures, division of labor, and culture, we will not truly address social justice. She argues, "Individuals are not primarily receivers of goods or carriers of property, but actors with meanings and purposes, who act with, against, or in relation to one another" (p. 28). In other words, people are not firstly consumers. Rather, we are human beings with deeper meaning and purposes with varying relationships to one another. Neither people nor groups are homogeneous. She advocates that true social justice is not only equal distribution of resources, but also embraces inclusion in decision-making processes and procedures.

She elaborates that oppression is complex in many ways. She outlines the "Five Faces of Oppression" as 1) exploitation, 2) marginalization, 3) powerlessness, 4) cultural imperialism, and 5) violence (2011, pp. 39-63). These are not necessarily the result of tyrannical forces, but of everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society (Young, 2011, p. 41). Oppression cannot be reduced to requiring an oppressor. Nor does

oppression require that an oppressed group have a corresponding oppressing group. Instead, oppression is structurally and systemically reproduced through daily practices within institutions and society (Young, 2011, p. 41). Because of its complexities, she urges that oppression be understood in plurality. No single oppressed group nor form of oppression can be considered more important or worse that another, and an individual can be privileged and oppressed in different ways because of multiple group identifications (2011, pp. 41-42).

Young's definition of social justice is "the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression" (2011, p. 15). Social justice requires institutions that promote respect for differences in social groups without oppression (2011, p. 46). In turn, she suggests aiming for "The Good Life" (2011, p. 37) or the ability to develop and exercise one's capabilities and experiences and participate in the determination and conditions of one's actions (2011, p. 37).

Therefore, NGOs distributing resources to local people in Mali will not result in true social justice. The local people in Mali must take part in project envisioning, planning, and implementation on their own land. In this way, projects will reflect the true spirit of the people. When local peoples are involved in the process, they also understand and have a stake in a project's success. Although Young does not speak directly to the Malian context, her social justice perspective helps to identify and therefore mindfully avoid the "Five Faces of Oppression" (2011, p. 41) and work toward more inclusive ways of engaging disadvantaged populations so that they can shape their own "Good Life" (2011, p. 37) and contribute to their wider societies.

UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO is the lead agency for the United Nations' current Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Their goal for the decade is to allow "every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future" **("**Education," n.d., para. 1). This includes taking key sustainable development issues, such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption, and transforming them with teaching and learning ("Education," n.d., para. 2).

It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development promotes critical thinking, imagining future scenarios, and collaborative decision-making. Education for Sustainable Development calls for drastic changes in most education practices today **("**Education," n.d., para. 2). As I mentioned earlier in this *Introduction,* Doug Cohen is the Resource Council Chair for National Youth Initiatives for the US Partnership for this UN/UNESCO's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The UN is not an NGO, but rather an intergovernmental organization. Oftentimes, however, the UN has similar goals as many NGOs. The UN charter has four main goals: 1) maintaining international peace and security; 2) developing friendly relations between nations; 3) collaborating in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights; and 4) being a center for according international actions (United Nations, 2009, para. 1-3). Therefore the UN's international collaboration coins themes and

initiatives that bring attention to global challenges and emerging best practices in order to address the global challenges that affect us all—in theory, but not always practice.

Although similar to NGOs, the UN is not always effective and efficient. Here are four examples among many criticisms regarding the UN. The first criticism is that disproportionate attention is focused on some nations, such as Israel and the US, which diverts time and resources from other serious situations (Freedman, 2013, pp. 297-298). Secondly, "national and regional political agendas have dominated...proceedings, particularly on contentious or politically sensitive issues" (Freedman, 2013, p.299). Thirdly, regional alliances place their "national and collective agendas above...protecting and human rights" (Freedman, 2013, p. 299). The last critique that I will mention is that although mandated to be impartial, objective, non-selective, and universally-minded, the UN "has failed universally to protect and promote human rights, particularly through its ignoring, or being prevented from addressing, many grave human rights situations" (Freedman, 2013, p. 298). Therefore, the UN has its biases. Theoretically the UN addresses human rights, however it too often does not practically or effectively address them.

The UN is far from perfect. However, it has created an intergovernmental alliance to talk about global problems that are connected to all of us either directly or indirectly. The UN has also managed to identify key global issues, via the UN charter and specific initiatives, such as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Even though not everyone within our human family agrees about these key global problems or how to solve them, at least the UN is attempting to create a dialog.

The UN works in Mali—as I observed while attending the *Festival Sur le Niger*, I saw their sponsorship signage for the event. However, for this study, I have been more interested in Malian artists' perspectives on questions such as: Which NGOs intervene for what cause? Are these causes seen as favorable or not? If so, in what ways? With what types of organizations and projects would they like to be involved? What would this collaboration look like?

2013 United Nations Social Good Summit

The September 20, 2013 article in *Forbes Magazine*, "The Power of Innovation and Technology to Change the World: An Inside Look at the 2013 Social Good Summit", summarizes the United Nations (UN) General Assembly's "2013 Social Good Summit". The UN summit was a three-day conference that used technology to provide a more accessible public forum in order to contribute to solutions to the world's greatest challenges. This summit occurred, and this *Forbes Magazine* article was published, approximately a year and a half after I conducted my interviews for this thesis. This means that many of the key themes that I depict in this thesis are pertinent to many more people and organizations working toward a more sustainable future.

The *Forbes* article features commentary from multiple representatives of various influential organizations. For example, Elaine Weidman-Grunewald from Ericsson, a telecommunications company from Sweden, commented that the summit explored what could be done to shape the sustainable development agenda. Weidman-Grunewald referred back to the Millennium Development Goals from the year 2000. Technology was

barely considered as a key facilitator then, whereas today, the UN leaders understand that technology is a key enabler to sustainable development in cities as well as rural developing communities (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 19). Besides using technology as a tool, three main themes of this article were pertinent to this thesis: 1) inclusion, 2) listening, and 3) learning. I had these themes in mind while synthesizing and analyzing this study.

Related to inclusion, technology was also instrumental in accomplishing increased inclusiveness during the Social Good Summit. Kate James of the Gates Foundation commented that there was a focus on "constructive disruption" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 5), or opening the doors of a traditionally closed-door decision process to a global audience. She said it is easy to talk about big ideas during an event, but the power of global conversation activates innovators and connects people with the work on the ground, which ensures that conversations sustain over time (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 5). Hence, a diverse, inclusive, ongoing dialog is crucial for truly sustainable solutions—which I have aimed for by conducting this research.

Another way in which the summit invited participation was by offering more than one opportunity to engage in development conversations. Weidman-Grunewald claimed that the summit had, and continues to have, an ongoing platform 1) for awareness-raising, 2) to support concrete action, and 3) to facilitate communities to localize the discussion on global sustainability problems (*Forbes Magazine,* 2013, para. 12). People from various backgrounds and interests can choose to learn about issues, take action, and strategize toward local-level sustainability solutions.

Weidman-Grunewald also agrees that there should be a platform created upon which anyone can innovate and share powerful ideas. She suggests using a mobile network platform, since nearly 90% of the world now has computer access—which is more than ever before (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 42). Therefore, theoretically, at least 90% of the global population could participate in a mobile network platform for change.

Weidman-Grunewald commented that in a networked society, social media is enabling people from nearly every part of the world to make their voices heard instantly. More than ever before, a higher level of inclusiveness is possible. There is also:

> a new level of ambition for transparency in national and international policy-making. There is a genuine desire to have stakeholder engagement on the post-2015 agenda, in order to ensure future sustainable development goals are substantive, equitable and achievable. (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 28)

Weidman-Grunewald explains that increased inclusion leads to more transparency at national and international levels.

Encouraging participation by creating an inclusive forum empowers people. Pete Cashmore from Mashable, a leading source for news, information, and resources for the *Connected Generation*, thinks that people may sometimes feel disenchanted that social change is seemingly not occurring, but all people have a voice and the ability to change power imbalances. "We are not powerless, we can take action to solve our problems. By giving everybody a voice, change can happen faster" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 29).

However, someone must listen in order for that voice to heard, and listening is an important way of learning. Kate James (Gates Foundation) noted that most conferences

and events focus on talking, but this forum was a place that global leaders came to listen and learn. Kathy Calvin of the UN Foundation added that the summit included an inaugural group of "keynote listeners" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 30), i.e. global leaders from business, government, philanthropy, and development who are usually people more commonly seen speaking at large gatherings and events. Some of the keynote listeners were World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, the UN's Amina Mohammed, philanthropist Melinda Gates, the Rockefeller Foundation's Judith Rodin, and ONE President and CEO Michael Elliott. James said that providing a platform for citizen input into global policy decisions is vital, and that the goal was for the Social Good Summit to be a marketplace of ideas where elite decision makers come to listen (*Forbes Magazine,* 2013, para. 30).

Henry Timms, representative of 92Y nonprofit community and cultural center, was also pleased because

[a]t the heart of 92Y is...learning. And what's been so exciting...[is] the dialogue and listening that takes place. A generation of people with new tools and ideas is connecting with some of the wisest and most experienced leaders in the world. (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 15)

Via dialog, listening, and learning we synergize our collective consciousness.

As Cohen promotes and Calvin stated, these dialogs lead to tapping the collective consciousness, or as she describes it: "harnessing the wisdom of the crowd" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 41). In the same *Forbes* magazine article, Calvin added,

The Social Good Summit is not about what will we 'tell others,' but what we learn from others. With this guiding principle...[we] use technology to broaden the

28

conversation and invite the global community to take part in [development]

conversations...[.] (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 11)

Through particularly listening across typically silo-ed social groupings, we cross-

pollinate ideas, learn together, and work toward improved development solutions. In the

same light, this study is an attempt to exchange across the foreign NGOs and Malian

artists' cultural silos.

However, one challenge of moving across cultural silos is, as Henry Timms

explains, the people typically involved in policy and development conversations are used

to thinking of themselves as *content*-creators (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 47):

But increasingly, we need to learn to be "*context*-creators". The big question

ahead is, how do we create the right context to allow other people to share *their*

ideas? In a world with more cell phones than people, we obviously see increasing

connectivity and – more importantly – an increasing desire to participate. It is

critical we provide better tools for engagement. (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para.

47)

Hence, they create an open discussion, because, according to Sigrid Kaag of the United

Nations Development Program, people know what their own needs are in their cities and

communities, and they must be involved in discussing and crafting their own solutions

(*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 48; Freire, 1972; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal

communications, 2012-2013; Ledwith, 2005, p. 96; Young, 2011, p. 37).

Timms' impression of the UN summit was that it encouraged a discussion about

what people can do today to create a better world in the long-term. It challenges us to

move away from "'three shorts' – short-term solutions in economics and politics, short-

form thinking in the digital world and shortcuts in our ethics and behavior" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 22). He stressed that we must act now toward more long-term viable solutions to our current global problems.

Weidman-Grunewald added that no one entity, government, NGO, or business will be able to solve our global problems alone. Ericsson's contribution is technology, and by working in over 180 countries around the world, they are able to replicate successful initiatives in one market to many more (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 44). Therefore, when working together, one good solution can ripple out and impact more communities very quickly. "However, it is with local partners within these markets, that we are able to create true sustainable development" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 44).

Calvin added that the collaboration will continue beyond three key aspects of the Social Good Summit: listening, learning, and "harnessing the wisdom of the crowd" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 41). There will be meet-ups around the world. Global leaders will be able to access the wisdom after the summit closes through a new massive open online course (MOOC) that Wesleyan University and 92Y are developing from this year's program. Therefore, the dialog will be ongoing (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 23).

In order to continue to build a *collective consciousness* around my research and more deeply foreground my study about how to increase foreign NGO sustainable development success in Mali, I now discuss some popular sustainability theories and vocabulary. Establishing and reviewing these sustainability concepts will facilitate talking about my data analysis throughout this thesis.

Sustainability Theories

Before exploring my interviews with Malian musicians and dancers about their opinions regarding NGO work, it is important to understand more about sustainability. Discussing sustainability issues is similarly challenging to the way in which Hannerz's describes discussing cultural studies; they are both difficult to conceptualize because we are still working toward finding appropriate terminology to discuss these topics. However, sustainability verbiage continues to emerge.

In this section, I discuss basic sustainability verbiage, concepts, and frameworks and introduce some of the complexities. Beyond understanding sustainability basics there are dynamic, complex systems and phenomena such as Proudfoot's *Relational Model* illustration regarding individual dynamic identity. Challenges compound when multiple, unique dynamic individuals interact with one another, their societies, and within a global context—especially across and between drastically different cultures. Sustainable designs and practices drastically vary depending on the geographic location, the sociocultural context and the person or people defining sustainability. This research seeks Malian musicians' and dancers' perceptions about NGO effectiveness and efficiency in their country. In order to help grasp sustainability verbiage, concepts, and frameworks, here is a brief overview of sustainability. I first explain the UN definition of sustainability, then explore three prominent sustainability theories: Triple Bottom Line, Four Pillars, and Permaculture.

United Nations' Sustainability Definition

       The UN's Brundtland Commission released *Our Common Future*, also referred to as the *Brundtland Report,* in 1987. This report coined and defined *Sustainable Development* as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Bruntland Commission, section 1). Therefore, according to the UN, for development to be sustainable, there must be a resource continuum available generation after generation.

       Within this UN definition of sustainable development, there are two key concepts: needs and limitations. The concept of people's needs prioritizes those in poverty's essential needs. The state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs determine limitations (Bruntland Commission, section 1). Granted, this top-down definition is written by the UN, an intergovernmental organization composed of diplomats and often criticized for its lack of inclusiveness (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013) and biases (Freedman, 2013, pp. 298-299). Hence, the goal of this study is to contrast sustainability ideals with more practical information from local Malian peoples for Mali's sustainable development. The intent to achieve a balance between needs and limitations that maintains a resource continuum indefinitely, helps establish sustainability vocabulary in order to explore a brief sustainability discussion related to my thesis. In working with the UN sustainability definition, I will now present three prominent sustainability theories: Triple Bottom Line, Four Pillars, and Permaculture.

Triple Bottom Line

The first of three sustainability theories that I discuss in this subsection is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). John Elkington first coined the TBL phrase in his book *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business (The Conscientious Commerce Series)* (1998). The book I most extensively reviewed was *The Triple Bottom Line; How Today's Best-Run Companies Are Achieving Economic, Social, and Environmental Success—and How You Can Too*, by Andrew W. Savitz with Karl Weber (2006), which echoes Elkington's publication. Both books include the same three areas as standard for organizational and societal well-being: social, ecological, and economic (or respectively, *People, Planet, and Profit*). Savitz and Weber use the TBL to measure corporate social responsibility (CSR) with the goal to maximize more holistic societal benefits in the social and environmental realms (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

The social or people aspect of the TBL refers to business practices that benefit and are fair to workers and the community where business occurs. A TBL company works toward social structures that reinforce prosperity of business, labor, and other stakeholder interests. TBL businesses seek to benefit rather than harm or take advantage of people. A common TBL social practice is *fair trade*—paying fair wages for goods and services, maintaining a safe workplace, and offering bearable working hours. TBL businesses usually reinvest wealth into strengthening their community's education, healthcare, and the like (Elkington, 1998; Savitz & Weber, 2006).

The ecological, planetary, or environmental quality component of the TBL implies sustainable environmental practices. TBL companies do not damage or deplete the environment. Rather they limit their impact on nature and maintain the environment.

33

They manage their energy consumption and maximize renewable energy. These companies reduce waste and toxins, and dispose of them legally and safely. They take responsibility for recycling, reusing, and cleanly disposing of their materials and products. From the TBL perspective, long-term, environmental sustainability is more profitable because their resource materials are available indefinitely (Elkington, 1998) (Savitz & Weber, 2006).

The TBL's economic or "profit" aspect is the financial value given by the organization after deducting material and production costs. From a sustainability perspective, "profit" is the host society's real economic benefit. A TBL approach is not traditional corporate profit accounting. Instead, social and environmental benefits add value to a more widely-defined profit perspective (Elkington, 1998; Savitz & Weber, 2006).

Four Pillars

Looking beyond the TBL, Four Pillars is the second of three sustainability theories that I review. There are arguably additional key sustainability factors. Jon Hawkes added a fourth bottom line. In 2001, he published his book *4th Pillar of Sustainability: Culture's Essential Role in Public Planning*, also referred to as the *Four Pillars*. His publication was for the Cultural Development Network of Melbourne, Australia, and advocated that culture is a key to public planning (Hawkes, 2001). In comparison, the TBL was intended more for the business community (Elkington, 1998; Savitz & Weber, 2006).

From Hawkes' view:

Cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as a social equity, environmental responsibility and economic vitality. In order for public planning to be more effective, its methodology should include an integrated framework of cultural evaluation along similar lines to those being developed for social, environmental and economic impact assessment. (Hawkes, 2003, p. vii)

In Chambers' book, his comment that "the material and the social are not the whole of life. There is also the spiritual side and the quality of experience and being" (Chambers, 1983, p. ii), also implies that there is additional depth to the material and social realms.

Hawkes defines culture as both "the social production and transmission of identities, meanings, knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, memories, purposes, attitudes and understanding" (Hawkes, 2003, p. 3); and "the 'way of life' of a particular set of humans: customs, faiths and conventions; codes of manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, science, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, traditions and institutions" (Hawkes, 2003, p. 3). Therefore the social production and transmission of identities and peoples' way of life are crucial parts of a vital, sustainable society.

According to Hawkes, culture has three aspects: 1) values and aspirations; 2) processes and mediums through which we develop, receive and transmit these values and aspirations; and 3) tangible and intangible manifestations of these values and aspirations in the world (2003, p. 4). Therefore, cultural processes (such as music and dance), values, and aspirations play vital roles in manifesting agreeable change in a community.

Hawkes writes: "Culture enfolds every aspect of human intercourse: the family, the education, legal, political and transport systems, the mass media, work practices, welfare programs, leisure pursuits, religion, the built environment..." (Hawkes, 2003, p. 3). Culture is not "...the decoration added after a society has dealt with its basic needs. Culture is the basic need—it is the bedrock of society.... Without culture, we are, quite literally, not human" (Hawkes, 2003, pp. 3-4). Culture is interconnected with every aspect of human life, which means culture has the potential to be a powerful alchemist and conduit in sustaining societies. This is a primary reason why I chose to interview Malian musicians and dancers.

Hawkes argues that "culture provides the most useful perspective for public policy development, planning and program implementation" (Hawkes, 2003, p. 4). Hence, in terms of this research, the cultural pillar is a crucial lens used to gain understanding in order to maximize NGO program effectiveness and efficiency in Mali.

On May 20, 2011, Dr. Rory Turner gave a presentation about cultural sustainability as part of the Sustainability and Music Lecture Series at Portland State University. According to Turner, cultural sustainability is a human creativity process that offers a broad range of possibilities and increases social engagement. It is a constant process of knowing, teaching, and learning. Throughout this process, it is important to honor the relationship between culture and nature instead of seeing them as separate (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011).

Turner argued that "we live in a world of connections" (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011) and asked his audience "how do we create a relationship with the web [of world connections]?" (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20,

2011). He was not referring to the World Wide Web. He was talking about how everything is connected somehow and all together into the form he referenced as a *web*. He explored sustainable cultures and how they support life and well-being. He highlighted that the most important way to sustain life and well-being was by bringing people together. Bringing people together facilitates a culturally sustainable process including meeting people, developing relationships, creating scenes of activity, starting relationships with the knowledge that there is something to exchange, and drawing attention to the new ideas created. These new ideas and interactions create new potential grounded in the interconnected, interdependent web (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). Therefore, based on Turner's web metaphor, we are connected. Thus we should explore these intersections as if there is something valuable, beyond mere financial value (Young, 2013), within our interactions with one another.

Permaculture

In comparison to the TBL and Four Pillars' perspectives on sustainability, Permaculture is a place-based framework that works from a ground-up philosophy. For example, if NGOs want to create sustainable Permaculture projects and systems, these projects and systems will look differently based on the sociocultural and geographical context. There are infinite possibilities for Permaculture project and system design, which challenges our current form of globalization that creates domination over biodiversity (Ledwith, 2005, p. 105). Permaculture encourages biodiversity and is more aligned with Feltault's advocacy for folklorists to collaborate with communities in order to increase

local capacity to address political, economic, and environmental changes affecting their cultural sustainability. Permaculture emerged from learning from "cultures that have existed in relative balance with their environment for much longer than more recent civilizations..." (Telford [Ethics], 2013, para. 3). Combining these longer-standing teachings with modern sustainability theories, Permaculture rendered concepts outside current social norms (Holmgren, 2002).

According to the interactive website generated from the book *Permaculture Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, Permaculture is best described in three layers: 1) ethics, 2) design principles, and 3) key domains required to create a sustainable culture. An "evolutionary spiral path" (Telford [Flower], 2013, para. 2) connects the three layers and demonstrates an ongoing, dynamic, interconnected relationship between these layers over time (Holmgren, 2002). In the next subsections, I further explain the three layers and add a fourth subsection: *Permaculture Critique*.

Permaculture Ethics

According to Permaculture, "[e]thics are culturally evolved mechanisms that regulate self-interest, giving us a better understanding of good and bad outcomes. These ethics are the first layer. The greater the power of humans, the more critical ethics become for long-term cultural and biological survival" (Telford [Ethics], 2013, para. 2). Permaculture's foundation is composed of three ethics: *Earth Care*, *Fair Share*, and *People Care*. These three ethics are common in most traditional societies, many of which exist in Mali. They are interdependent, as demonstrated in Figure 2 (Telford [Ethics], 2013):
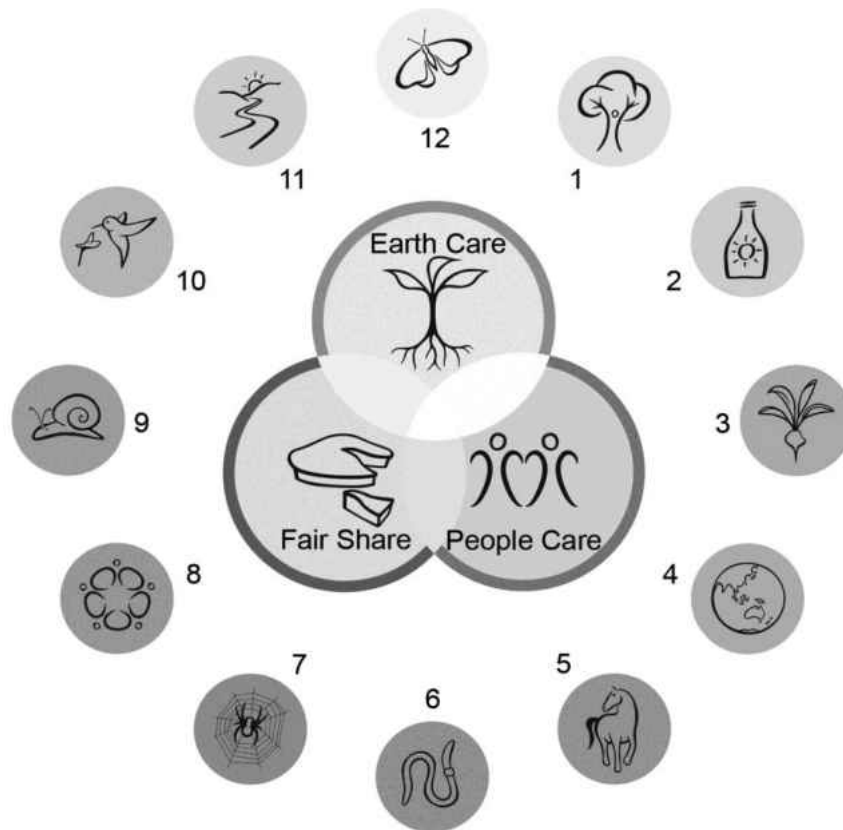
Figure 2. [Note: this image has been altered from its original form.] In breaking down the Permaculture Model into two parts, this is part one featuring the Permaculture Ethics and Design Principles. There are three Permaculture Ethics interlinked in the center: *Earth Care*, *People Care*, *Fair Share*. These three ethics are interconnected with and surrounded by the twelve Permaculture Design Principles: 1) Observe and interact; 2) Catch and store energy; 3) Obtain a yield; 4) Apply self-regulation and accept feedback; 5) Use and value renewable resource and services; 6) Produce no waste; 7) Design from patterns to details; 8) Integrate rather than segregate; 9) Use small and slow solutions; 10) Use and value diversity; 11) Use edges and value the marginal; and 12) Creatively use and respond to change (Holmgren & Telford [Ethics], 2011).

Earth Care: rebuild natural capital. Earth Care implies that humans are part of Earth, not apart from it. Organic growth is key to sustain life on Earth, as the source of life and as our home. From the Permaculture perspective, the Earth is a living, breathing entity. The consequences that will occur if we do not care for and nurture the Earth are too big to ignore (Holmgren [product], 2009; Telford [Earth Care], 2013, para. 1).

Fair Share: set limits to consumption/reproduction, and redistribute surplus.
We are provided with times of abundance, which encourage us to share with others. There
are limits to how much we can give and take. When a tree fruits, it usually produces more
than one person can eat and we should share what we cannot use. It takes time to pick,
eat, share, and preserve the harvest. There are limits to how much fruit we can produce
and use. Ongoing growth is impossible for our planet. Placing limits on consumption and
finding balance in our own lives provides a positive example for others, so that they can
find their own balance (Holmgren [product], 2009; Telford [Fair Share], 2013, para. 1).

People Care: look after self, kin, and community. *People Care* means if peoples'
needs are met in compassionate and simple ways, the environment surrounding them will
prosper. Similar to Turner's philosophy, people need companionship and collaborative
efforts to affect change. Starting with self-care, *People Care* expands to include our
families and neighbors, and local and wider communities. The challenge is to grow
through self-reliance and personal responsibility (Holmgren [product], 2009; Telford
[People Care], 2013, para. 1; R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011).

 Contrary to the essence of capitalism, self-reliance becomes more possible when
non-material well-being is the focus—taking care of ourselves and others without
producing or consuming unnecessary material resources. By accepting personal
responsibility for our situation, rather than blaming others, we empower ourselves.
Similar to the values Goebel and Cohen used during their facilitation, by working with
others to bring out the best outcomes for all involved, we recognize that the wisdom lies
within the group—in other words, the *collective consciousness*. Permaculture focuses on

positive and existing opportunities, rather than obstacles—even in the most desperate

situations (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel,

multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

Permaculture Design Principles

These three ethical components ensure that Permaculture design principles are

used in appropriate ways. The design principles compose the second layer of the

Permaculture model. In addition, there are twelve design principles to assist in practicing

Permaculture and understanding their relationship with the ethics foundation. All twelve

design principles are listed in the caption at the bottom of Figure 3. Each principle is a

portal that opens into whole systems thinking. Nothing is ever final; the process is

ongoing. Design principles, used together, allow creative environmental and behavioral

redesign and use less energy and resources. These principle tools render the best

solutions, encouraging an open-ended organic structure. The design principles are

universal, but the expression methods vary widely, depending on the place, people, and

situation (Holmgren [about], 2009). Having examined ethics, the first layer in

Permaculture, and design principles, the second layer, I will now discuss key domains,

which is the third layer in the Permaculture philosophy. The best way to show how these

layers relate to one another is to use the form of a Permaculture flower.

Permaculture Flower—Key Domains

The complete Permaculture model is depicted as a flower. The Permaculture

process begins with the ethics and design principles and moves through the seven key

domains required to create a sustainable culture. These seven domains are represented by seven flower petals and are included in the caption at the bottom of Figure 3. A spiral path connects the three ethics, twelve design principles, and seven key domains. The spiral integration process starts at the individual and local level, then moves to the community and global level. The spiral symbolizes that the process is ongoing and constantly evolving (Holmgren [about], 2009). In order to visualize the complete Permaculture model, see the Permaculture flower diagram in Figure 3. The complete Permaculture flower allows one to envision place-based, environmental, and behavioral creative redesign and reorganization, which in turn uses less energy and fewer resources. Though a popular philosophy, Permaculture is not without its problems. Some critiques are discussed in the next portion of my work.

Permaculture Critiques

Before further analyzing the sustainability definitions and theories in this section, I present some Permaculture critiques. Perhaps it is difficult for groups to communicate effectively, because Permaculture was first developed in Australia and fairly recently migrated to the United States. In his article "A Critical Review of Permaculture in the United States", Assistant Professor of Educational Policy, Robert Scott, claims that there is rarely a dialog between environmental science and the grassroots Permaculture movement in the United States. Scott writes:

> Recent permaculture literature in the United States does not often cite scientific research, and environmental scientists do not often test permaculture ideas.
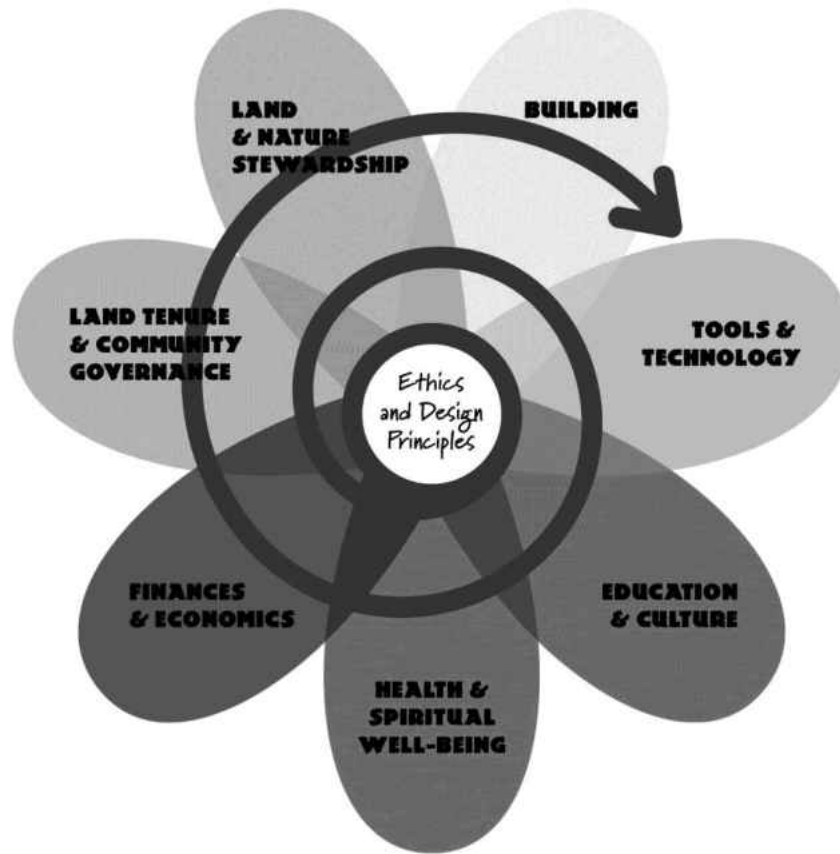
Figure 3. [Note: this image has been altered from its original form.] In breaking down the Permaculture Model into two parts, this is the second component featuring the Permaculture Flower. The Permaculture Ethics and Design Principles diagram has shrunk down to become the middle of this Permaculture Flower. Extending from the middle are seven flower petals that symbolize the *Key Domains* required to create a sustainable society: 1) Land and Nature Stewardship; 2) Building; 3) Tools and Technology; 4) Education and Culture; 5) Health and Spiritual Well-Being; 6) Finances and Economics; and 7) Land Tenure and Community Governance. The spiral symbolizes an evolutionary path that joins together the *Key Domains* (Holmgren & Telford [Flower], 2011).

Permaculture has served an important function in catalyzing action aimed at solving environmental problems in communities across the United States, and further benefits would likely result from refereed reporting of permaculture results. (2010, para. 1)

In his critique, Scott is not opposed to Permaculture, rather he seems to advocate for its environmental benefits. He indicates that currently, Permaculture's shortcoming in the United States is its lack of scientific backing. However, Permaculture has only been in the United States since the 1980s (Scott, 2010, para. 1), and therefore, relative to the bigger, global Permaculture movement, Permaculture has not been in the United States long. Hence, with more time, longitudinal studies should be more feasible.

> Scott also mentions that there should be a distinction between:
>
> the small self-reliant communities proposed by permaculture, compared to the current industry giants whose wealth is based on the anonymous exchange of agricultural commodities. Perhaps permaculture and environmental science have a common enemy in commercialism, which threatens to rob both of their calling to a higher ethic based on earth repair and people care, and not only the narrow pursuit of short-term profit. (2010, para. 39)

Scott suggests that there is tension between Permaculture and large agro-industry. The tension is because large agro-industry is based on capitalist growth economic principles, commercialism, and the commodification of agriculture, while Permaculture advocates for people to shift their ethics toward a balance with nature and sharing with other people, instead of focusing on maximizing profit (Scott, 2010, para. 39).

Even though Scott's article evaluates Permaculture in the United States, Permaculture offers similar benefits in Mali, due to Permaculture's core ethics, which I discuss later in this subsection. Permaculture empowers small communities to be self-sufficient so that they are empowered to live with their own unique bio-region, without depending on oftentimes foreign-controlled food pricing and access.

All three sustainability theories—TBL, Four Pillars, and Permaculture—explain that there is a more comprehensive relationship beyond mere consumerism and profit gain. They also encourage us to move past consumerism and profit gain and toward more comprehensive views, in order to work toward a more sustainable future. The TBL, Four Pillars, and Permaculture sustainability models demonstrate that there is interrelated tension between the highlighted aspects of each theory that must be evaluated and reevaluated in order to stay balanced. For the TBL, the main aspects are *economic*, *social*, and *environmental*. The Four Pillars uses the same three, but adds a *cultural* aspect.

The Permaculture model does not specifically include a cultural element, however it implies a cultural emphasis in the way in which it is place-based and sensitive to each unique human and environmental context. Permaculture contains all Four Pillars, but interweaves them throughout more complex layers and adds greater detail in the form of a design framework. Permaculture has similar ethics at its core—*People Care*, *Fair Share*, *Earth Care*—as the sustainability theories I have explored thus far. However, Fair Share refers more to limiting consumption and reproduction and encouraging trade and redistribution, whereas the economic aspect from the TBL and Four Pillars' point of view is more of a financial business transaction.

Permaculture places more emphasis on principle tools, portals into whole systems thinking, and a spiral that emphasizes ongoing adaption and re-adaptation to changes over time at the individual, familial, local, and global community levels. Permaculture's ground-up, place-based framework especially accentuates that in order to create a sustainable system, people must first understand the local context. Since understanding the local context is crucial, the local peoples' values and support are a critical component

in Permaculture design and success, which in turn, empowers the local culture to affect change for themselves and their communities. From this tenet, more appropriate sustainable solutions can be designed for a particular scenario. Thus, within the framework of this study, in order for NGOs to increase their effectiveness and efficiency in Mali, we must learn more about the Malian context.

Malian Context

As revealed in both academic theories and in my interviews, for NGOs' sustainable development efforts to become more effective and efficient in Mali, projects must be appropriate for the context and valuable to the populations they serve. In order to more generally contextualize Mali, it is important to first acknowledge that neither individuals nor groups are homogeneous, because individuals have fluid, unique identities, as depicted in Proudfoot's Relational Model (1989), and individuals form groups. Members of groups feel an affinity toward one another and have shared experiences as a result of being identified by and with others as part of the group.

Ideally, groups should be conceptualized in a "relational and fluid fashion" (Young, 2011, p. 47) in order to avoid harmful discrimination. At the same time, it is not realistic to deny that groups exist, nor is group differentiation automatically a means of oppression (Young, 2011, p. 46). Hence, this chapter is a brief overview describing only some of the shades and more drastic contrasts within Mali's national borders and a global

context. In this chapter, I include the following sections about Mali: *History*, *People*, *Communications*, *Geography*, and *Politics*.

History

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow wrote a preface for a collection that details UNESCO's 35-year collaborative effort to empower a team composed of two-thirds Africans and one-third international supporters and contributors. This effort resulted in a nine-volume book series called the *General History of Africa* (Niane, 1984). M'Bow starts by explaining the way in which African history has been drastically skewed by foreigners' misinterpretations of Africa:

> For a long time, all kinds of myths and prejudices concealed the true history of
> Africa from the world at large. African societies were looked upon as societies
> that could have no history...a great many non-African experts could not rid
> themselves of certain preconceptions and argued that the lack of written sources
> documents made it impossible to engage in any scientific study of such societies.
> (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii)

M'Bow argues that the European Middle Ages were unfairly the measure, point of view, and judgment of African modes of production, social relations and political institutions (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii). Thus, from their own ignorance, non-African experts could not understand the profound depths of African history.

M'Bow articulates, an "African oral tradition, the collective memory of peoples which holds the thread of many events marking their lives, was rejected as worthless"

(M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii). Further, in writing much of African history, "the only sources used were from outside the continent, and the final product gave a picture not so much of the paths actually taken by the African peoples as of those that the authors thought they must have taken" (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii). African factual history became the foreign author's story, rather than an African story (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii).

M'Bow offers further critique that,

In fact, there was a refusal to see Africans as the creators of original cultures which flowered and survived over the centuries in patterns of their own making and which historians are unable to grasp unless they forgo their prejudices and rethink their approach. (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii)

He attributes prejudices and misinterpretations to the way in which black Africans were depicted by foreigners. The slave trade and colonization perpetuated racial stereotypes and bred contempt and lack of understanding that became so deep-rooted foreigners distorted even the basic historiographical concepts (M'Bow, 1984, p. xviii). From these distortions, prejudices were formed, white superiority was rationalized, and objectification and commodification of black human beings ensued:

From the time when the notions of 'white' and 'black' were used as generic labels by the colonialists, who were regarded as superior, the colonized Africans had to struggle against both economic and psychological enslavement. Africans were identifiable by the colour of their skin, they had become a kind of merchandise, they were earmarked for hard labour and eventually, in the minds of those dominating them, they came to symbolize an imaginary and allegedly inferior Negro race. (M'Bow, 1984, p. xviii)

These false African identifications and histories passed on warped historical and cultural facts (M'Bow, 1984, p. xviii).

The situation has drastically changed since the end of World War II, especially after African countries gained their independence from European colonizers, played a more active role with the international community, and engaged in more mutual exchanges. Also,

> [a]n increasing number of historians [have begun to] study of Africa with a more rigorous, objective and open-minded outlook by using – with all due precautions – actual African sources. In exercising their right to take the historical initiative, Africans themselves have felt a deep-seated need to re-establish the historical authenticity of their societies on solid foundations. (M'Bow, 1984, p. xviii)

Therefore, post-independence, Africans are more often included in international dialogs, but also are more motivated to engage and reestablish their own identities for the world stage.

Socioculturally, although Mali's history and profound arts culture predate 16th century CE, from the 17th century, Mali grew from the roots of three main empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay (Niane, 1984). In addition to these three cultural influences existing in present day Mali, there are also strong overlays of Islamic and French influences. Although Mali became independent from France on September 22, 1960, the same French borders from the 1960s are still recognized internationally (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2013).

Challenging new layers of Western culture continued to influence the region even after Mali's independence from France—adding complexity to the existing Malian culture

and livelihood. For example, there is a relatively new tension between Malians' socialist tendencies and the pressures of global capitalism, since historically Malians tend to place more value on the collective over the individual (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Tensions such as these contribute to the current, complex global sustainability challenges.

A more recent colonization attempt encroached via northern Mali in 2012 that resulted in a coup d'état. In April 2012, this insurgency intensified with unprecedented organization and militarization (Genocide Watch, 2012, para. 2). Since there was violence involved, Young would classify this aggression as oppression (2011). It was related to a history of the Tuareg (descendants of the Songhay, insurgencies). During the insurgency, some Tuaregs served as mercenaries, with forces aligned with Colonel Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi—former dictator of Libya. After Gaddafi was overthrown in October 2011, the Tuaregs returned to Mali with heavy weapons and ammunition, and a new organization formed to fight for the secession of northern Mali: the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) (Genocide Watch, 2012, para. 3). The United States government also linked the NMLA forces to Al-Qaeda (J. Chevrier, multiple personal communications, 2012). The NMLA's main goal is for northern Mali to become an independent state. Many sources emphasize the connection between the Malian uprising and the defeat of the troops of Colonel Gaddafi (Genocide Watch, 2012, para. 3).

According to a BBC News Africa report from August 15, 2013, "In January, the former colonial power, France, helped Malian forces push back the Islamist insurgents from the northern towns of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal" (BBC News Africa, 3013, para. 12). After over a year with no official Malian president in power, a former prime minister, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, was democratically elected in August 2013 (BBC News Africa, 3013, para. 1). About this same time, the United Nations was in the process of sending an approximately 12,600-person peacekeeping mission to Mali, as France began to pull out its 3,000 troops (BBC News Africa, 3013, para. 16).

People

M'Bow (1984, p. xvii) writes,

It is now widely recognized that the various civilizations of the African continent, for all their differing languages and cultures, represent, to a greater or lesser degree, the historical offshoots of a set of peoples and societies united by bonds centuries old.

Young's more general theory resonates with M'bow's, as M'Bow acknowledges that there is commonality in Africa, but also mass diversity (1984, p. xvii). For example, as of July 2013, the estimated population for Mali versus the United States was 15,968,882 to 316,668,567, or approximately a 1:20 ratio. According to a 2009 census, approximately 50% of peoples in Mali are Mande (including Bambara, Malinke, Soninke peoples), 17% Peul, 12% Voltaic, 10% Tuareg and Moor, 6% Songhai, and the last 5% were from other ethnic groups (CIA, 2013)

Another way to observe Mali's rich diversity is via its spoken languages. As mentioned before, "[s]ome of the strengths and weaknesses of rural peoples' knowledge are embedded in their languages and concepts. What is perceived affects the language evolved to describe it; and language in turn provides concepts and categories which shape perception" (Chambers, 1983, p. 93). According to Ethnologue Languages of the World, people in Mali speak one or more of 66 current living languages. The most commonly spoken language is Bambara, even though, as mentioned previously, French is the official language (SIL International, 2013). Tapping these ethnically and linguistically diverse perspectives is a rich resource for Mali and the world.

From my direct observations and my readings, I notice some common Malian values. Mali is a collective society—Malians are interested in their collective value (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Chabal and Daloz write "...individual merit in Africa doesn't exist...it's collective" (1999, p. 129). During a community lecture in Portland, Dr. Peter Bechtold, the Director of the Middle East Studies Center at Portland State University, explained that in Mali, most people work on behalf of their family, not primarily for themselves. This is in contrast to the majority of people in the United States; we possess more individualistic tendencies, values, and perspectives (personal communication, March 28, 2013).

Family, which includes extended family, is extremely important in Mali. Within family units, societal roles are passed from generation to generation. Societal wisdom is learned in academic and Islamic schools more recently, but via family lineage, storytelling, apprenticeship, and oral traditions for millennia (Chambers, 1983, p. 89; B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; R. Neuenschwander, multiple

personal communications, 2010-2012). Therefore, Mali has a deep and diverse array of educational and communication lines that contribute to Malians' identities.

Mali's population is diverse and difficult to generalize. However, because Mande culture is the most prevalent group in Mali, it is pertinent to explore how Mande peoples tend to value, conceptualize, think, adapt, and take action within their reality via the *fadenya-badenya* relationship. *Fadenya*, or father-childness, "contains the essence of creativity, change, and transformation, while and *badenya*, [mother-childness,] represents the spirit of preservation, continuity, and conservatism. Both principles are prized and nurtured in Mande experience, and as such, provide a guide to ideology and practice" (Wooten, 2009, p. 33). The fluid interrelation between *badenya* and *fadenya* allows for change as part of Mande experience.

Synthesizing Mande *fadenya* and *badenya* provides perspective on how to analyze Mande livelihood:

> These interrelated values are in tension with one another, and that tension provides a catalyst for action and progress. People in the region regularly negotiate the dual pulses of *fadenya* and *badenya*, and the dynamic engenders creativity and improvisation, and frames their perceptions of these processes. (Wooten, 2009, p. 18)

Therefore, by working through the balance and re-balance between *fadenya* and *badenya* in Mande culture, Mande peoples consider tradition, and integrate innovation, creativity, and adaptation into their lives. This evaluation and reevaluation is a constant and ongoing process, and thus accords with the Permaculture design process (Holmgren [about], 2009) and influences communications.

53

Communications

Communications in Mali again are a mix between more ancient oral traditions of passing on social courtesies and culture and newer technologies. Malian culture has a distinct and extensive oral tradition. Historically in Mande culture, there has been richer oral literature, such as stories and proverbs, than written literature. The "[s]poken word is central to the development of society's new members and is the key to local understanding of history and identity" (Wooten, 2009, p. 152). Oral traditions are at the core of life for the Mande, "….but it is important to understand that the conveyed information is not rigid or static. Indeed, creativity and improvisation are integral components of the oral process" (Wooten, 2009, p. 152).

Traditionally, griots facilitate applying *badenya* and *fadenya* into Malian culture over time, and are in charge of keeping, applying, and passing on Malian oral traditions such as history and music. Dr. Eric Charry reserves:

the term griot exclusively for western African hereditary professional musical-verbal artisans whose calling in life is fundamental to the ethnic identity of their people. This definition limits their distribution to only a few societies, albeit highly influential ones.... [They] are distinctive in that the institution of the griot is an old and integral, even defining, part of their culture. (Charry, 2004, p. 109)

Therefore, griots facilitate social production and the transmission of identities and peoples' way of life, which are crucial parts of a vital, sustainable society (Hawkes, 2003, p. 3). This information regarding the griot's role in Malian culture is pertinent for this writing because I interviewed one griot for this study.

An aspect of more traditional communication that likely affected my research, but is not often overtly apparent, is that there are culturally taboo topics. As a foreigner, it is difficult for me to understand which topics are taboo and which ones are accepted. I do understand that Malians tend to avoid talking openly about culturally sensitive topics like intimate relationships, negative matters, and topics that intentionally make people feel bad—unless the goal is to make a person feel bad (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; R. Neuenschwander, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Instead, there are cultural protocols for discussing potentially sensitive subjects.

For example, if people want to respectfully confront a conflict, problem, and/or situation, they ask a mediator to initially investigate or introduce the issue with the other person first. Oftentimes, the mediator will tell a story or use indirect metaphors in order to obtain information from the other person. The mediator will reflect the information that he or she learned to the person who sent the mediator. This process can go through many exchanges before the two parties directly discuss the issue (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; R. Neuenschwander, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012). With this explained, it is easy to understand how someone could unknowingly offend people by trying to directly discuss culturally taboo topics in Mali. Therefore, with more time, I could have discovered much more information from interviewees via additional indirect communications.

Moving from oral traditions to more modern influences, increasingly Mali has had direct contact with other cultures beyond its national borders, due to growing access to multimedia services. This contact results in new opportunities to engage, exchange, speak

up, and be heard, as demonstrated in the 2013 UN Social Good Summit. In regards to telephone and Internet communications, in 2011, Mali had 104,700 land lines in use, equaling about 1% of the population; Mali was ranked at 145 in comparison to the rest of the world. Mali was ranked in 70th place internationally in mobile phone use at 10,822,000 users in 2011; approximately 70% of the population had mobile access. In the United States, the number of cellphones exceeds the number of people (CIA, 2013; Kang, October 11, 2011). Malian Internet use compared with the United States' was approximately 1:1,000 in 2009 (CIA, 2013). Hence, simply based on Internet access for information and communications, the United States and Mali are still drastically different. In comparison, cell phone access in Mali is at an impressive 70%.

Broadcast media is limited in Mali. In 2007, there was a national public television broadcaster and two privately owned companies providing subscription services to foreign multi-channel television packages. There was a national public radio broadcaster supplemented by a large number of privately owned and community broadcast stations. There are also transmissions of multiple international broadcasters (CIA, 2013). This translates into the Malian people have limited access to broadcast media.

Geography

It is likely difficult to create media and Internet access for Mali. The country is large—nearly 500,000 square miles. Mali is landlocked and divided into three natural zones. The terrain is mostly flat to rolling northern plains covered by sand and rugged hills in the northeast. In the south, where the capital city Bamako is located, there is

savanna (CIA, 2013). In each of these bio-regions, flora and fauna vary with some crossover, which affect local peoples' ways of life.

Politics

Another aspect affecting Malian peoples' lives is politics. In 2006, Robert Pringle, a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer and historian specializing in interethnic relations, economic development, and the role of culture, released an article: "Democratization in Mali, putting history to work". Among his posts, he worked as a U.S. Ambassador to Mali from 1987 to 1990. He writes that since the 1991 uprising, which ousted a long-standing military dictator and birthed a democratically elected government, "Mali has achieved a record of democratization that is among the best in Africa" (Pringle, 2006, para. 1).

From Pringle's experience, Malians attribute their democratic success to their "heritage of tolerance and decentralized government, dating back more than a millennium to the Ghana Empire and its two successor states. For Malians, democratization combined with decentralization is a homecoming rather than a venture into uncharted waters" (Pringle, 2006, para. 2). Even though Malians are generally pleased with the democratic shift, "[d]espite their legendary patience, Malians may eventually lose hope and faith in democracy unless economic growth accelerates"
(Pringle, 2006, para. 2).

Pringle thinks that Mali's local, rural communities are an advantage to Mali's development:

Mali's rural communes are critical to the success of its new democracy, but these new local governments are highly varied. Some are thriving, while others are limping.... Commune-level concerns are focused on local-level resource needs rather than policy failings.... Serious structural problems, such as looming land issues...need to be addressed at the national level. (Pringle, 2006, para. 5)

Therefore, there is a disconnect between local, commune-level resource needs and concerns, and serious national structural issues.

Addressing the Malian government and its foreign partners, including the United States, Pringle suggests the following strategies. To start, Malian democratization is currently driven by culture and history. Through the educational system, local radio, and a greater use of cultural preservation grants, more should be done to encourage preservation and transmission of traditional values and institutions (Pringle, 2006, para. 6), since Mali has a rich form of traditional law that should be utilized as an asset (Pringle, 2006, para. 7). The country can thus build from this natural cultural foundation.

Pringle does not agree with Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz in *Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument*. In their book, Chabal and Daloz claim that Africa's corruption is not dysfunctional, but rather a sign that Africa is on its own unique development path. Instead, Pringle states that corruption is a pervasive problem. To diminish the corruption problem, Pringle has three solutions: 1) The Malian government should take a tougher stand on high-profile cases of corruption. 2) Malian salaries should be in better alignment with middle-class aspirations. 3) Foreign missions, such as NGO work, should solve the corruption problem by announcing and upholding a zero tolerance

policy for corruption in their own operations (Pringle, 2006, para. 8-9; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Pringle sees:

Mali's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have become a fourth branch of government at the local (commune) level. Their role is so important that the time has come for more energetic self-regulation, if only to ensure that their services are equitably distributed. (Pringle, 2006, para. 9)

Malians are skilled at accommodating foreign aid donors' changing requests, but foreign assistance distorts the local economic policy framework (Moyo, 2009; Pringle, 2006, 10). Therefore, once Malians are in charge of both their economic policy and political system, Pringle projects that Mali will have a healthy democracy. He urges local Malians to do their own economic planning and encourages donors to spur them on in this way (Moyo, 2009; Pringle, 2006, para. 10). In this research, I explore new ways in which the NGO sector may empower and partner with Malian artists for more feasible, long-term Malian resilience.

In the *Introduction* unit, I have briefly explored multidisciplinary perspectives and literature informing present day sustainable development, presented an overview of sustainability concepts, and the provided the Malian context. Throughout the next units, I interweave concepts that I have established in this *Introduction*. These concepts guide me as I navigate the intersections between the academic perspectives in this *Introduction* and my interview research with Malian musicians and dancers. Hence, I move on to the *Research* unit, which includes the following chapters: *Research Perspective, Academic Strategy*, *Interview Process*, *Individual Interviews*, and *Collective Interviews*. Lastly, I

conclude my thesis with a *Solutions* unit featuring three chapters: *Suggested Processes*,

Suggested Projects, and *Conclusion*.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

The *Research* unit is composed of Chapters II-VI: *Research Perspective*, *Academic Strategy*, *Interview Process*, *Individual Interviews*, and *Collective Interviews*. Chapter II is composed of five sections: *Researcher's Personal Bias*, *Research Rationale*, *Conceptual Strategy*, *Academic Strategy*, and *Interview Process*.

Researcher's Personal Bias

I am of Kickapoo (Native American), Irish, Czech, and German decent. I am a middle class female. My undergraduate honors degrees are in International Studies and Spanish. This composition is part of my Masters coursework in Arts Management with a graduate certificate in Nonprofit Management. I am fluent in English and proficient in French and Spanish, three world languages with colonial reputations. I am also able to have conversations in indigenous languages such as Malinke, Bamana (also known as Bambara), and Pulaar.

This is significant because I see the world through the languages I use. In addition, perhaps because of my Kickapoo and Irish roots, I am deeply sensitive to social injustices and unequal power dynamics. I frequently witness misunderstandings between people from different cultures that lead to ongoing stereotypes and conflicts. Therefore,

this work is written for a Western audience, so that they may gain a better understanding of Malian perspectives. I find that Malian perspectives tend to be marginalized within a global context, which I explore more later in this thesis.

My sensitivity in general inspired me to become a Licensed Massage Therapist—a dynamic healing art. Heart-centered arts and creativity invigorate me. Each day I practice creativity, in the form of dance, music appreciation, healing arts, and my approach to life. I have successfully initiated projects, businesses, the nonprofit, international non-government organization (INGO) that I describe later in this section, and continue to have the energy to be a lifelong student.

Mesmerized initially by West African music and dance in the United States, I diligently worked and saved money in order to create my own immersion studies in dance, music, and languages in the Republic of Guinea, Senegal, and Mali, and have been studying as such for about five years thus far. Especially because I feel honored to have been taught by wonderful West African teachers since 1999, I continuously reflect on ways to best contribute something sustainable and uplifting back to West Africa. It is a constant learning process. Not only is cross-cultural communication challenging, but cross-cultural system translation is also a massive hurdle.

These divides are oftentimes why international development projects fail (Köster, Kathrin, 2010, p.10). During my time in West Africa, I observed many development projects lacking the multiple perspectives necessary to sustainably launch an initiative. Often, I see that native, indigenous populations that are not typically financially wealthy by global standards are not consulted before starting projects. This limits project effectiveness, and in many cases, harms the local people, environment, and culture, which

oftentimes leads to a new form of unintentional colonization. Although I have seen this divide frequently, I have not conducted an academic study about this phenomenon until now.

Through my quest to find effective solutions to chronic problems in West Africa, I co-founded and co-direct Lanyi Fan. We currently work in Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and the United States to facilitate cross-cultural education between West Africa and the United States, using arts and language as the media for this dialog. We have worked closely with Ko-Falen Cultural Center. I have used content from conversations with Ko-Falen Cultural Center nonprofit Directors Baba Wagué Diakité and Ronna Neuenschwander, as well as their connections for this study. I explain more about their mission and work in order to help frame my research in *The Connectors* section of this thesis.

I am also biased in that I believe sustainability includes our diverse, global *collective* consciousness, a phrase that I discuss in the *Introduction* unit. This means that I approach sustainability issues on both local and global levels. This acknowledges that each person has a sense of knowing that can provide input and feedback, and lead to solutions to today's issues. It also requires us to reflect and re-reflect upon scenarios, since we share a continually changing and interconnected reality. Oftentimes, cross-culture misunderstandings and value differences lead to further problems instead of the intended solutions. It is possible to nurture more effective solutions via emergent, inclusive processes and dialog in order to achieve a more balanced, resilient global community. I believe that our collective consciousness, innovation, and diverse creativity can lead to solutions for even the most complex problems—and I am determined to facilitate this magic.

In my attempts to facilitate creative problem-solving, I have learned that it is invaluable for people to admit they do not know everything, rather than claiming to be an all-knowing expert about a topic, because this opens them to new answers, information, and perspectives. I may have five years of experience living and learning in West Africa, but I realize how little I know. Because of this, I may seem hesitant or lacking confidence at times, but actually, I am doing my best to synthesize my own experience, what I know at a given point in time, in relation to the current situation, so that I can offer one possible perspective to inform a next step towards a more peaceful, sustainable planet.

This research is an attempt to synthesize, for an academic audience, not only my interviews for this study, but also interweave the lessons that I absorbed throughout my time in West Africa. Even though I appreciate the United States government for creating national service alternatives to military placements such as Peace Corps, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), or an official university immersion, I chose to learn and work independently in West Africa. By independently learning and working in West Africa, I have a unique perspective.

From an academic point of view, I have little research experience. Although I have used case studies, interviews, literature review, and observation in other research contexts, this is my first Master's thesis and the first time that I used these methods extensively. To complicate the process, this is a multidisciplinary, international, cross-cultural study. Many aspects of this research could be improved, however, I have done my best based on my current experience with Mali and my limited research training at this time.

Research Rationale

To guide this Research Rationale section, I divide it into three subsection questions: *Why Mali?*; *Why Malian Dancers and Musicians?*; and *Why NGOs?*.

Why Mali?

As I mentioned in the previous section, I have approximately five years of field experience in West Africa. Of this time, I spent about four years in Guinea, a half-year in Senegal, and a half-year in Mali. Because most of my experience has been in Guinea, I originally intended to do this research there. However, after having been evacuated from Guinea already once in 2007, and the subsequent political instability which occurred when I was in Guinea in 2011, I chose to graduate later and switch my case study to Mali. At the time I conducted my interviews, Mali had been more stable than Guinea. Granted, less than two weeks after finishing my interviews for this research at the beginning of March 2012, Mali faced a violent insurgency that, later in the *Malian Context* section of this thesis, I describe in further detail. I also chose to do my research in Mali because, from approximately 1230 C.E. to 1599 C.E., Guinea was part of the Malian Empire, which at the time contained current-day southern Mali and northern Guinea (Ly-Tall, 1984, p. 184; Niane, 1984, p. 148). Therefore, these regions are culturally similar.

Why Malian Dancers and Musicians?

More specifically in Mali, I sought to, as Carl Jeffry Goebel suggests, explore "the periphery, of more intuitive, holistic methodologies that hold considerable promise in the area of natural and social sustainability" (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). People in third world countries, such as Mali, and especially rural people's knowledge, are an enormous and underutilized resource according to Chambers (1983, p. 92). This underutilized knowledge that exists in the margins is a missing component that is needed to move toward a more sustainable planet (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013).

Even more firmly pushed into the margins are people who do not have a place in their own societies. In relation to my case study, artists are marginalized by their own Malian society. According to the Urban Artist, one of my interviewee's French mentor in Bamako, artists are poor. More specifically, griots do not have money, but they have a respected place in traditional Malian society. However, modern artists do not have money or respect in Malian society (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). This study attempts to include marginalized Malians into a sustainable development discourse.

Malian artists my not have money, but they are renowned for improvisation and inventiveness (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Chambers refers to the "benefits of improvisation and inventiveness" (1983, p. 64) in appraisal and research (1983, p. 64) and Cohen talks about improvisation and inventiveness being crucial in creating change in general (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013).

Also in Mali, the arts have a reputation to traverse and communicate across typically rigid obstacles, such as cultural barriers and international borders (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Pseudo French Arist, personal communication, March 5, 2012; Yvonne, 2011). When people have different perceptions, arts can help with communications to facilitate understanding and resolve conflict (Brunson, Conte, & Masar, 2002, p. 17) in ways other than language. Because Malian oral traditions are richer than written traditions and literacy rates are typically being measured in French (which it not most peoples' first language), literacy rates are low in Mali. For example, in 2002, according to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, adult and youth literacy was only at 26%. Thus, arts have the potential to reach out to Malian people who struggle with illiteracy (2011).

The reason I chose musicians and dancers specifically, is that art is an expression of place-based culture. Musicians and dancers reflect the creations that come from a specific place, in this case, Mali. The oral tradition, rituals, and interconnected livelihoods are cultural expressions that have survived millennia (Charry, 2000; Hawkes, 2003, p. 3; Wooten, 2009). These cultural roots unique to Mali help to contextualize and inform change and provide a necessary base to envision and implement effective and efficient NGO projects. As I included in the *Introduction*, Jon Hawkes states: Culture is not "...the decoration added after a society has dealt with its basic needs. Culture is the basic need—it is the bedrock of society.... Without culture, we are, quite literally, not human" (2003, pp. 3-4). Therefore, we should be empowering cultural conduits.

Turner reinforces that music is one of the best ways to connect people and create potential in general. He referred to music as having the power to facilitate participation,

adaptation, growth, performance, and rituals. Music can also facilitate individual and community emotional experiences and movement through experiences. Therefore, music has the power to unify, reconnect, and heal. Also according to Turner, music facilitates cultural sustainability, a human process that offers a broad range of possibilities and increases social engagement, and therefore inclusivity (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). Therefore, new solutions emerge by combining artists and a similarly vibrant and innovative NGO sector (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p. 19). Attempting to bridge an understanding between NGOs and artists with similar intentions seems to be a logical, exciting study.

I implemented my intention to craft this study in a way that honored M'Bow's concern that African factual history was more a foreign author's story, rather than an African story (1984, p. xvii). I also mindfully worked to align my work to honor Hannerz's sentiment that there is "surprisingly little of the post-colonial ethnography of how Third World people see themselves and their society, its past, present, and future, and its place in the world..." (1987, p. 547). Hence, this work aimed to more directly include Malian musicians and dancers in the "intercontinental traffic in meaning" (Hannerz, 1987, p. 547), and encourage them to take charge of their own voice and perspective. However, it helps to have allies.

Why NGOs?

Robert Chambers explores why *outsiders*, which includes foreign NGO personnel, should initiate re-balancing global power:

But who should act? The poorer rural people, it is said, must help themselves; but this, trapped as they are, they often cannot do. The initiative, in enabling them better to help themselves, lies with outsiders who have more power and resources and most of whom are neither rural nor poor. (1983, pp. 2-3)

Thus, according to Chambers, *outsiders*, and therefore NGOs, should initiate action toward a better quality of life for those who do not have the time, energy, or resources to initiate such actions for themselves.

In *Africa Works* by Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, they write that in the:

African post-colonial state[, there is] a general consensus that the state has patently failed either to contribute to the institutionalization of politics or to spur economic development on the continent. Current thinking stresses the need to cut back or bypass the state, seen as both supremely inefficient and fundamentally predatory, in order to stimulate the more dynamic forces of African societies. (1999, p. 17)

Thus, Chabal and Daloz suggest that, due to corruption in Africa, NGOs tend to be better facilitators for socioeconomic change than African governments.

Chabal and Daloz also explain that "[i]t is often argued that the most vibrant and innovative section of society are those linked with Non-Governmental Organizations..., associations of active citizens speaking for ordinary people and small-scale buy dynamic business groups" (Chabal & Daloz, 1999, p.19). This supports the hypothesis that NGOs are likely to be excellent Malian artist collaborators.

Although, it is common for NGOs to have good intentions of advancing the place in which they intervene, they are not always effective or efficient in the ways they use

their resources and may do more harm than good (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; R. Neuenschwander, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The French Mentor of one of my interviewees, the Urban Artist, echoed this notion. The Mentor said that some NGOs try to help, but the perspective of Western aid does not consider the more collective, Malian cultural context. Instead of helping, NGOs often destabilize Malian culture and open Mali to a "Chinese corporate infrastructure" (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Although I agree with all of these viewpoints, instead of comparing and contrasting *outsider* theories about Mali, this study attempts to gather feedback directly from Malians about NGOs and how they could become more effective and efficient in Mali, while also reinforcing Malians' own development dreams.

Conceptual Strategy

For this research, as Ledwith and Freire encouraged, I look to create listening, dialog, and praxis as the core of interactions, which will help to drive a process of humanization, in hopes that this process empowers oppressed people to work with their reality instead of reacting to what happens to them (Freire, 1972; Ledwith, 2005, pp. 94-99). Also, Timms explained that people typically involved in policy and development conversations are used to thinking of themselves as *content*-creators. He advised that this

particular group of people, "we need to learn to be '*context*-creators'...[. H]ow do we create the right context to allow other people to share *their* ideas?...and—more importantly—an increasing desire to participate. It is critical we provide better tools for engagement" (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 47). Hence, I aimed to generate a dialog between two very different cultures: NGOs and urban Malian artists.

The goal is to close the communication and comprehension gap that exists between NGOs and Malian dancers and musicians. I interview these musicians and dancers to capture a glimpse of various Malian artists' perspectives, which may improve current NGO-Malian artist partnerships and entice new mutually beneficial partnerships. The goal is that these relationships will benefit not only Malians and NGO that work in Mali, but the rest of the planet as well.

An additional strategy for this research is to create mutually beneficial partnerships between NGOs and Malian Musicians and Dancers. The idea is to accord NGO-Malian artist partnership participants' interests and join forces toward common goals, and therefore synergize efforts. Another way to rationalize this strategy via a psychology perspective, is to combine intrinsic motivation in order to more deeply synergize efforts for more effective and efficient sustainable development solutions.

In the attempt to honor and include perspectives from the margins without dominating them, NGOs should consider research about intrinsic motivation. According to Edward Vockell, Professor of Educational Psychology and Research at Purdue University Calumet, "intrinsically motivating activities are those in which people will engage for no reward other than the interest and enjoyment that accompanies them" (Vockell, n.d., ["Intrinsic Motivation" link] para. 5). In other words, intrinsically

motivating activities do not require external prompts and/or stimuli; rather the person voluntarily chooses to do them.

To clarify, for a project collaboration to work between NGOs and Malian dancers and musicians, both parties should be as intrinsically motivated as possible about the project vision. Implementing new projects is not typically easy; the participants must be motivated to follow through. It is desirable that motivation for teachers be as intrinsic as possible.

However, because I write this research about Malian musician and dancer perspectives of NGOs and potential collaborations with NGOs for a more Western, academic audience, I suggest that NGOs be mindful of and diligently reinforce Malian artists' intrinsic motivations. Paying attention to Malian artists' intrinsic motivations is also important because NGOs must be mindful of unfair power dynamics as they work in Mali. Vockell explains that "[w]hen people engage in behaviors without coercion, it is usually because they were motivated by [intrinsic motivation]" (Vockell, n.d., ["Intrinsic Motivation" link] para. 1). He adds that extrinsic motivators can enhance intrinsic motivation, however "extrinsic incentives should not be perceived as a bribe by the recipient." (Vockell, n.d., ["Summary" link] para. 5).

The study of what internally motivates Malian artists provides information and insight into what NGOs should listen for while shaping their projects, in order to maximize long-term effectiveness and efficiency. Intrinsic motivation is ideal. However, people engage in many activities that are influenced by extrinsic instead of intrinsic motivation, though extrinsic motivators often give rise to short-range activity and decrease long-range interest about a topic. Hence it is important that extrinsic motivation

is reinforced by intrinsic motivation for long-range interest. Otherwise it is likely that people will reduce the actual behavior they want to promote. Extrinsic motivation alone usually has the opposite effect on what a person would like another to achieve (["Intrinsic Motivation" link] n.d., para. 4).

This relates to my research because during my interviews I ask participants what they like and dislike regarding NGOs and NGO projects. I also ask them how they envision collaborating with NGOs. By using these types of questions, I am encouraging them to define what they need, want, and value. By understanding more about what Malian musicians and dancers need, want, and value, provides insight into interviewees' perceptions about the process in which they understand that there needs should be met. The goal is to explore how new and/or current NGO support could be beneficial to Malian musicians and dancers and vice versa. Before reviewing and analyzing interviewee feedback, I will explain more about my academic strategy and interview process.

Academic Strategy

In order to better access and analyze Malian artist preferences and perceptions as revealed in my interviews, I first must explain my academic strategy. I have broken this *Academic Strategy* chapter into the following sections: *Methods*, *Research Population and Recruitment Methods*, *Informed Consent Procedure*, *Potential Risks or Discomforts*

to Participants, *Confidentiality*, *Potential Research Benefits to Participants*, and *Methodological Paradigm*.

Methods

Working from this literature review, which involves document analysis, I conducted a case study in Bamako, Mali by observing and interviewing Malian musicians and dancers working and living within the Bamako urban environment. I used both participant and non-participant observation techniques before, during, and after interviews in order to gather information about the sociocultural and environmental context in Bamako.

Upon consent, interviewees participated in one in-person interview of approximately 60 minutes conducted by me in French and/or if needed, with a French-Bamana (the most widely-spoken national language of Mali) interpreter. Although the interpreter and/or I were available for clarification questions, there was no further clarification needed after the twelve interviews that I conducted.

I videotaped interviews so that I could more astutely observe nonverbal communication during and after the interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to review these recordings before I included them in my final research. Only interviewee who chose to look at the recordings was the Griot[4]. In order to keep all players informed and to create a safe and inclusive cultural exchange, participants will also have access to my final thesis that will be translated into French. My thesis will also be interpreted

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[4] I capitalize *Griot* in this case to specifically indicate my one griot musician interviewee. It is the pseudonym that I assigned him in order to uphold the confidentiality that I had promised all interviewees for this study.

through other means upon request for those who are unable to read or are unfamiliar with the Western academic context.

I analyze data qualitatively in the post-positivist paradigm. More specifically, I use a relativist perspective, or "[t]he rule that there are no universals, and that things like truth, morals, and culture can only be understood in relation to their own socio-historic context." (O'Leary, 2010, p.6). Rather, multiple perspectives are equally valid. I took on a "Bricoleur" researcher role. Bricoleurs see methods as emergent and dependent upon both question and context. They also apply a variety of methodological tools and create new ones as needed to solve a puzzle or find a solution (O'Leary, 2010, p.96).

Method flexibility is crucial when researching, especially in Mali. Unexpected situations occur daily anywhere, but in Mali there are many inconsistent systems that are typically more dependable here in the United States and that could easily disrupt investigation plans, such as electricity inconsistency, gasoline shortages that inhibit travel, political turmoil, such as the 2012 coups d'état and so forth. For these reasons, I triangulated this case study with three methods: interviews, document analysis, and observation.

I coded participant names into pseudonyms to protect their privacy. I also created a code for other identifiable characteristics of participants—although based on interviewees' enthusiasm, these coding steps did not seem to be important to them. No one seemed concerned about his/her name being mentioned in the research. In fact, many participants expressed interest in making contact with foreigners. Even so, this code and the data connected to it will only be seen by my research advisers and me. Otherwise, coded personal information has been secured by lock and key.

Research Population and Recruitment Methods

Interviewees were Malian musicians and/or dancers working and living in Bamako, Mali. I recruited at least eight Malian musicians and dancers from different neighborhoods, thus generating a variety of urban perspectives. They were each at least eighteen years old. I selected participants based on recommendations from the people and organizations that I refer to in *The Connectors* section of this thesis.

Based on Professor Wooten's advice and my student budget, I financially compensated interviewees approximately the equivalent of $20 US (in the form of CFA, Malian currency) for their transportation costs and loss of wages due to my study. I also compensated interpreters at the same rate instead of my projected amount of approximately $200-$375 US, because I did not end up using an interpreter for most interviews. When I did use an interpreter (in three cases), they did not work any longer than the interviewee did, which differed from the amount I initially projected: 15-40 hours/week respectively. The one exception was the Professor Artist interviewee. I paid him approximately $60 US because his interview lasted at least three times the length of the others.

Informed Consent Procedure

To ensure the protection of participants, I performed the informed consent procedure that I created via research classes in my program in the Arts and Administration and the School of Education and by completing the "Human Research Curriculum for Social/Behavioral Investigators". I used an official French-Bambara

translator/interpreter for only one interview. Prior to starting the interviews, the translator/interpreter read and signed the attached agreement, "Release Form for Translators, Transcribers, and Interpreters", that states the translator/interpreter will not divulge any information disclosed during the interviews or about the interviewees.

I used two informal French-English translators to help me with technicalities as well. One was the Mentor, a Frenchman who interjected at times to inspire answers from his mentee and my interviewee, the Urban Artist. The other was a Malian journalist, Adama Konta, who interrupted at times to fill in more of his own interpretation of the artists' responses to my questions during my more collective-style interviews on March 2, 2012 with the Comedian Dancer and his colleagues.

I assessed interviewees' understanding of my research procedures by giving each potential interviewee a "Recruitment Letter" summarizing my study, request for their participation, and confidentiality procedures (detailed in the next section). This letter also encouraged participants to ask questions before, during, and after the interview process so that they felt comfortable being involved in my study. I explained to participants that they could take part in as many of the interview questions as they would like based on their comfort level—if at all.

In order to ensure participant understanding of the process, I gave the "Consent to Take Part in Research" form to all research participants. This form summarizes my study again, states why the participant was selected for the study, how the study will be conducted, who will be involved in the study, expectations of the participant, risks that the participant may face, benefits of the study, and an explanation of confidentiality procedures. To ensure their comfort level, the consent form also encourages participants

to ask questions throughout the process and only take part in as much (if any) of the research process they wish to.

Potential Research Risks or Discomforts to Participants

This study has minimal psychological, emotional, economic, social, and political risks; they do not exceed more than common everyday risks. This does not mean that I allowed breeches of confidentiality that could divulge participant information they may not want shared. I strictly followed the confidentiality procedures outlined in the Research Summary I submitted to the Institutional Review Board to secure participant opinions and identities. I minimized risks via the informed consent procedures I already outlined in the *Informed Consent Procedure* section, so that participants felt encouraged to ask questions about my study and reflect upon and decided how and to what degree they wanted to participate.

However, I acknowledge that in my initial interviews with participants with primarily Malian language backgrounds, there is increased risk of misinterpreting dialogs due to differences in translation and interpretation. Since implied meanings are not always inherent, miscommunication could occur at various levels and therefore perpetuate similar ongoing power dynamics. Thus, I was particularly mindful to adapt research questions so that they made sense to each interviewee. I also reached out to both Malian and foreign observers to help interpret my interview questions in ways that made sense to each individual.

Confidentiality

Data has been stored as a password-protected copy on my password-secured computer. Besides myself, my research advisers, who have also appropriately completed the "Human Research Curriculum," are the only people with access to collected data. I audio and video recorded interviews to my camera's memory card and immediately transferred recordings from the memory card to my password-secured computer in an electronic form. I coded participants' names and identifiable information to maximize confidentiality. I did not delete the original memory card. Instead I have locked these cards in a drawer for backup. I also have electrically stored copies separate from the data on my password-protected copy on my password-secured computer.

Potential Research Benefits to Participants

There are no direct personal benefits for research participants. Indirectly, results from this study will add to the collective global knowledge on sustainability issues, and may eventually lead to better non-government organization support for Malian art, artists, their families and their communities, and improve their living conditions.

Methodological Paradigm

As demonstrated in the concept analysis section of this proposal, this work explores many relationship dynamics. Thus, multiple viewpoints are important to more accurately understand these dynamics. This study is therefore in the post-positivist

paradigm, or rather, it "accepts chaos, complexity, the unknown, incompleteness, diversity, plurality, fragmentation, and multiple realities" (O'Leary, 2010, p.6).

More specifically, within post-positivism, this paper stems from relativism, or "[t]he view that there are no universals, and that things like truth, morals, and culture can only be understood in relation to their own socio-historic context" (O'Leary, 2010, p.6). In this composition, Proudfoot's Relational Model (1989) articulately explains the relativist perspective, illustrating the interconnected complexity internally within cultures and externally between cultures.

In relativism, multiple points of view are equally valid. Hence, aligning and triangulating common themes is important in summarizing key findings. Relativism also indicates beliefs and behaviors and transforms cultures, societies, environmental influences, and economies. It is important to recognize that this investigation is useful now, but with time, it will be necessary to continually examine contexts in order to update changes within these contexts and relations, since reality is constantly dynamic.

I used primarily qualitative research techniques. Via a post-positivist, relativist lens, I carried out a case study of traditional Malian music and dance arts, as illustrated in my conceptual framework, via interviews with people from various perspectives involved in traditional Malian arts, such as administers of Malian arts, scholars in Malian cultural studies, and traditional and modern Malian artists.

As mentioned in the *Personal Bias* section of this study, I have used all of my proposed methods in other research contexts—case studies, interviews, literature review, and observation—but this is my first Master's thesis. This was the first time that I used these methods extensively—let alone in an international, cross-cultural situation. As a

result, I sought needed help navigating this writing process, primarily via my thesis

readers, Professors Stephen Wooten and John Fenn.

Interview Process

In order to decrease misconceptions between NGOs and Malians, this case study

narrows the distance between drastically different world views in order to more fully tap

our *collective consciousness*. It is an attempt to reach out to Malian artists, a population

that is not often involved in NGO development planning, in order to breakdown and

interweave the silos. By working to connect these two cultural silos (Malian artists and

foreign NGOs), this thesis cross-pollinates and yields new expression.

The process in which I set up and conducted my interviews yielded a poignant

theme: the importance of *connections* in order to learn and better understand one another.

This next section only reinforces this theme. To set up my interviews in Mali, I

networked through people who know far more people in Mali than I. I refer to these

networkers as *The Connectors*—the title of the first of two sections in this chapter. The

last section is called what I hope to emphasize: *Improvisation*.

The Connectors

The connectors are the people, centers, and events that led me to my interviewees. This information is pertinent because is highlights their background and helps contextualize my interviews. I used five main connectors. I could have used more, but due to the scale of my proposed research, I only proposed eight interviews for a case study that would last no more than two months. Therefore, five connectors seemed sufficient. The connectors for this study were: Ko-Falen, Stephen Wooten, Yeredon, *Festival Sur le Niger*, and *San Toro* restaurant.

Although I have known additional Malian contacts for a longer period of time, I stayed at Ko-Falen Cultural Center in Bamako under Baba Wagué Diakité's family in Bourkassoumbougou neighborhood in Bamako. Ko-Falen Cultural Center's mission is "to promote cultural, artistic and educational exchanges between the people of the United States and Mali through art workshops, dance, music and ceremony" (Ko-Falen Cultural Center, n.d., para. 1). They believe through personal exchanges people gain a greater understanding and respect between one another (Ko-Falen Cultural Center, n.d.).

I first met Diakité's wife, professional visual artist, and Managing Director of Ko-Falen, Ronna Neuenschwander, over the phone when I started to network with like-minded organizations in Portland, Oregon in 2008. Wagué is also a professional visual artist, storyteller, and the Executive Director of Ko-Falen. I have met and worked side-by-side with them and Ko-Falen's board of directors in various capacities since my volunteer internship with Ko-Falen in 2009.

I stayed at Ko-Falen in 2011 when I was both doing work for Lanyi Fan and also studying dance. Ronna and Wagué asked me to facilitate their dance and music workshop

in Bamako, Mali in 2012. The same year, after this workshop, I conducted my interviews. Ronna and Wagué suggested that I work with The Griot, one of my interviewees I describe later in this paper, to find dance and music teachers in 2011. The Griot introduced me to my dance and music teachers, who later introduced me to their teacher, the Pseudo French Artist.

Stephen Wooten, University of Oregon professor of International Studies and reader for this thesis, led me to Yeredon. The Yeredon Center was created to bring students of all ages, levels, and countries to Mali to discover and learn Bamana dance, music, and culture directly from the source. The center began as a cross-cultural partnership between Seydou Coulibaly, a nationally recognized Malian dancer and student of ancient Malian traditions, and Michelle Bach-Coulibaly, a multi-disciplinary dance professor at Brown University with a long-time commitment to the West African arts. They have been bringing students to Mali since 1992 (Yeredon, 2012, para. 1).

Their yearly educational trips have now grown into a fully functioning facility in Bamako, as well as an extensive network of artists, teachers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and community organizations working together to promote cultural exchange. Yeredon welcomes students and visitors from all ages and backgrounds: artists, post-graduates, researchers, undergraduates, schools, and volunteers. They adapt their program for foreigners' interests (Yeredon, 2012, para. 2).

Yeredon's mission is to "provide the groundwork for international education and awareness of Malian culture and art forms" (Yeredon, 2012, para. 3). They are committed to "stimulating cultural preservation by supporting Malian artists and scholars and their livelihoods" (Yeredon, 2012, para. 3) and "integrating their center into the Malian

community" (Yeredon, 2012, para. 3). They encourage "service projects and local partnerships that can incite social change through the arts and beyond."(Yeredon, 2012) Yeredon's programs manager put me in contact with both the Professor Artist and Comedian Dancer. In turn, the Comedian Dancer recruited the Traveler, Female, Village Percussionist, Rapper, Self-Taught Artist, and Village Musician.

In 2012, for the second year in a row, staff, friends, and board members of Ko-Falen attended the *Festival Sur le Niger*, where I met the Mentor. The Mentor is the person I mention later in this thesis as the Urban Artist's "French mentor". I met his mentor during a sustainability conference, a featured component of the *Festival Sur le Niger*. I interviewed the Mentor informally prior to his recommendation that I interview the Urban Artist—an official interviewee for my research. The Mentor generously offered many of his reflections and opinions about Bamako, arts, and NGOs from his experience living for over ten years in Mali. He also interjected clarifications, provocations, and opinions that facilitated my interview with the Urban Artist.

In doing work for a partnership between Lanyi Fan and Ko-Falen, a group of U.S.-Americans, who were board members and guests staying at Ko-Falen, and a group of Bamako youth, went to dinner at *San Toro*, a restaurant in Bamako known for its sustainable, organic cuisine. At *San Toro*, I saw a duet playing kora instruments. I later returned to the restaurant to formally meet and take down their contact information in order to interview them and their music group.

Jeremy Chevrier, working for USAID in Bamako at the time of my interviews, did not lead me directly to my interviewee, however he contributed considerable expertise, since he has lived in Mali for almost a decade. Since the time of my interviews, he has

relocated to Dakar, Senegal with his family and has started work at USAID in Dakar, due to the current political instability in Mali (multiple personal communications, 2012). I triangulate my research with his expertise later in this paper.

Improvisation

Despite having excellent connectors, as anticipated, I had to improvise during my study. Initially I projected doing eight interviews with individual Malian dancers and/or musicians in Bamako, Mali—the capital city. Instead, I ended up conducting twelve. Although I did not ask their specific ages, I controlled for participants eighteen and older, and asked my initial contacts in Mali, who were either working there or from there, to connect me with Malian musicians and dancers eighteen or older. Once I made contact with their potential participant reference, I verbally confirmed their age at the time of the interview with the participant as well before starting my questions.

As mentioned before, method flexibility is crucial when researching, especially in Mali. Paying attention in the present moment led to richer data than I imagined. Despite all of the potential challenges I could have had during my interviews, they were surprisingly easy to set up using people-to-people, word-of-mouth requests via *The Connectors*. Although I did not have to change my methods during my study, I did have to improvise based on the cultural context and opportunities that emerged. The most common improvisation I made was to allow for interview observers and coworkers to be present during the interviews so they could participate in pertinent ways related to my

research question. I will more specifically explain these adaptations in the *Individual Interviews* and *Collective Interviews* chapters later in this thesis.

As I acknowledge previously, my interviews are with participants with a Malian language base, unlike me. Thus, there is increased risk of misinterpreting dialogs via differences in translation and interpretation. Since implied meanings are not always inherent, miscommunication could occur at various levels and therefore perpetuate similar ongoing power dynamics. Because of this, I have been particularly mindful to adapt research questions so that they make sense to each interviewee. I specify this, when pertinent, as I describe each interview. Consequently, I have divided my interviews into two categories: collective and individual.

There were three interviews in which I had to adapt what I initially thought would be a one-on-one interview to a more collective style, specifically in my interviews with the Kora Players, Urban Artist, and Comedian Dancer. I chose to invite a more collective interview style because it reflects the collective nature of Malian culture. Also, since the main goal of this research is to explore Malian musicians'/dancers' perspectives of how NGOs could better support Malian music and dance, both individual and collective interviews seemed relevant.

Doug Cohen, Resource Council Chair for Youth Initiatives for the U.S. Partnership for the UN/UNESCO's Decade for Sustainability Education, has also coached me to encourage collective processes. This is another reason why I was open to this collective interview format. From Cohen's perspective, these collective, emergent discussions reflect the current collective consciousness via the life experience of all individuals present. By engaging these moments, opportunities for an improvised

interaction in the present moment leads to more extensive insight of the initial question and intent of the conversation. Therefore, I have chosen to include these collective interviews.

The next two chapters feature distillations of and comments on the interviews I conducted. I have split them into two separate chapters, since the first three interviews were with individuals and the other eight involved at least one additional collaborating participant during the interview. My research committee and I agree that I should emphasize the Professor Artist's interview because he is iconic in many ways. As I established, one of the main reoccurring themes is about *connections*. This first interview with the Professor Artist reaffirms that connections are important, but it also adds another component: *trust*. Trusted interpersonal connections are crucial in order to foster collaboration between Malian artists and NGOs and work toward sustainable solutions in Mali.

CHAPTER III

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

In this *Individual Interviews* chapter, I review my interviews with three participants, the: Professor Artist, Griot, and Pseudo French Artist. As I established, one of the main reoccurring themes of this work is about *connections*. This first interview with the Professor Artist reaffirms that *connections* are important, but it also adds another component: *trust*. Trusted interpersonal connections are crucial in order to foster collaboration between Malian artists and NGOs and work toward sustainable solutions in Mali.

As mentioned before, I choose to feature the Professor Artist first because he is symbolic in many ways. He thought deeply and critically and was extremely modest, brilliant, curious, inquisitive, and creative. He covered most themes mentioned by other interviewees and he extensively explained his positive and negative views about NGOs. He could also relate to NGO's frustrations working in Mali and Malian frustrations with NGO work in Mali. He clearly identified root causes as to why NGO work in Mali is unsuccessful, and proceeded to recommend mutually beneficial solutions to address the problems he identified.

The Professor Artist also lived between and bridged many different worlds. The Professor Artist was an excellent sociocultural intermediary between various groups and embodied multiple disciplines—sustainability, development, arts, culture, politics, education, and language. He not only could see that both Malians and NGOs contributed to project failures in Mali, but he could also clearly articulate his experience, philosophy,

and recommendations to address the problem. He was able to translate and interpret between languages and cultures. He could also discuss complex issues and his viewpoints within local, national, and global systems.

During our interview, we conversed far beyond the full length of the memory card and I ended up hand-writing the rest our exchange. I sensed that our conversation would extend beyond this one interview, but he passed before we interacted again. However, with this one interview alone, he gifted me wisdom to reflect upon for a lifetime.

Professor Artist

Interview Context

As with my initial connection with the Comedian Dancer, whose interview I review later under the *Collective Interviews* section, I met the Professor Artist via a recommendation from Sophia Shackleton, a Yeredon manager. However, a pivotal second connection emerged at the time of the interview, which is likely why my interview with the Professor Artist was by far the most robust. After reading over the summary of my study, the Professor Artist saw that I was a graduate student at the University of Oregon. The Professor Artist said that he knew Dr. Stephen Wooten, a professor at the University of Oregon. I confirmed that Professor Wooten was a reader for my thesis. We laughed and the Professor Artist said that Professor Wooten and he were good friends. I said that I had Professor Wooten's phone number saved in my cell phone as one of my primary research

advisers in Mali—especially useful since he and his family were living in Bamako at the time. I offered to call him so that they could talk. The Professor Artist encouraged me to do so, and I called and gave the Professor Artist the phone. The two professors laughed about the synchronicity and briefly chatted. This interpersonal connection helped the Professor Artist and I establish trust from the beginning. This bond, along with our mutual connections with Yeredon, were the main reasons why the Professor Artist chose to share so much of his time, expertise, and blunt critiques of NGOs working in Mali.

The Professor Artist was the only interviewee to feel comfortable enough to engage me in approximately fifteen minutes of questions before agreeing to sign the research consent form. He praised my research initiative, but said that before signing the consent form he wanted to express that he thought my thesis topic went beyond the framework of my research. He encouraged me not to limit my work to this thesis, and instead extend my efforts beyond my research. He assured me that "the discussion I have started interests many Malian artists" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He foregrounded our discussion by saying that the people are naturally conventional in Mali, that "[t]here is not much room for expansion. This project is an opportunity for Malian artists to become known after [my thesis] defense" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). My research offered new possibilities that previously had not been realized by Malians—his tone was supportive and encouraging.

I assured him that I planned to continue to apply my research findings beyond the completion of my thesis. I explained that at the time of our first interview, I had spent almost five years in West Africa in the Republic of Guinea, Senegal, and Mali and that the interviews I was conducting in Bamako for my thesis were only a small piece of the

long term work I would like to do in West Africa with the NGO that was emerging. I explained that I am part of a group of people of my generation in the United States who work directly with our peers in the following capital cities: Conakry, Republic of Guinea; Dakar, Senegal; and Bamako, Mali. We continuously generate and refine visions and mobilize projects. But since I am in school, we have not yet mobilized many resources. We also must grow our family which, as I explained in the *Introduction*, in West Africa means our immediate and extended family, but also includes neighbors, friends, and coworkers. The explanation of my mobilization efforts encouraged the Professor Artist to contribute more to our interview.

He questioned the sustainability of my NGO efforts by noting the challenges behind even well-intentioned initiatives, such as our nonprofit project. He acknowledged that to find the means to travel to Africa was not always easy. He asked me the questions: "What can you do as an international person planted in Africa? Do you have contacts? Or do you plan to continually travel here to Africa?" (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

I confirmed that, especially as a student, it was not financially easy to travel to West Africa every year, but that I would like to do so, and that it was my goal to create a system in which either someone who has followed the project extensively and/or I come each year to maintain our team momentum. I sensed by the Professor Artist's excited, smiling expression that he liked that I had already been thinking about the necessity of traveling regularly between West Africa and the United States in order to develop projects and relationships over time.

The Professor Artist's and my connection with both Yeredon and Professor Wooten, my mobilization efforts in West Africa, and my nonprofit plan to work in West Africa in the future made for a more open and trusting dynamic during our interview. The Professor Artist signed the consent form. This was the gateway into a conversation over three-hours-long—the longest, most in-depth interview I conducted during this study.

I began my interview by asking him about his background. He explicated that he was a professor and an artist in many realms. I was unable to find out where the Professor Artist worked as a professor during the interview. At the time of my thesis defense, Dr. Wooten explained that the Professor Artist was an English teacher at a secondary school. However, as demonstrated by his extensive knowledge on many topics that I feature in this chapter, the Professor Artist was clearly an informal educator in many ways.

I strongly believe that he could teach at colleges and universities as well. As demonstrated in this interview, he was a deep, critical thinker with much field experience. In the interview, he revealed that he had extensive theoretical and practical experience in 1) Malian music and arts, 2) international development, and 3) translation, interpretation, and cross-cultural differences. He was between and interconnected with these three realms. He was very modest, which made me think that his experience extended far beyond these three areas as well. Because of his experience in many realms, the Professor Artist is an idea interlocutor to bridge understanding and mobilize collaboration between NGOs and Malian artist cultures.

In the realm of Malian music and arts, his ability to detail instruments and musical regions in and around Mali and describe the interplay between Malian music and current global trends and systems proved that he was extensively knowledgeable in

ethnomusicology. Artistically, he sung, played djembe accompaniment, kora, modern guitar, and other instruments. However, his strength, specialty, and musical foundation was in playing the ngoni[5]. He has played it since he was a child. "It's a big harp....The amount of strings depends on the player" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). There are two types: *dozo ngoni* and *camala ngoni*. *Dozo* means *hunter, ngoni* means *harp*. Hence it is the *hunter's harp*. This harp is bigger than the camala ngoni and consists of a big calabash (gourd) and a box with six strings (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

He contrasted *dozo ngoni* with *camala ngoni*. He explained that *Camala* means *youth*. Therefore it is the *youth's harp*—played by the youth. When he moved to Bamako, he found out that people were more interested in *camala* than *dozo ngoni*. He was obliged to play with people in Bamako, so he initially started learning *camala ngoni* through his teacher, who is now in Wisconsin in the United States. The *camala ngoni* can have six strings, but the string number may increase to conform to other musical genres like jazz or reggae. Thus, today the same instrument can have twelve to fifteen strings. The Professor Artist said he plays up to eight strings (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

He sang in his local language: Wassouloukan. His native land is the Wassoulou region south of Sikasso, Mali at the Guinean border. The Professor Artist explained that the Wassoulou region is divided into three countries: Guinea Wassoulou, Mali

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[5] ngoni: a Bamana name for a plucked lute that is primarily found in the sahel and northern parts of the savanna and stretches across West Africa to Cameroon. The name of the four- or five-stringed lute that is traditionally played by highly-trained musical professionals who pass on their knowledge via their family lines, varies according to who plays it (Charry, 2000, p 10)

Wassoulou, and Cote Ivoire Wassoulou. Wassoulou is a Fulani area, however, his family and family's name is Malinke (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

He then connected how his music relates to his Malian culture. His music is part Wassoulou, but he embraced other cultures and peoples he encountered throughout his life. He deepened his description by stating, "the Wassoulou were between three countries...all of the ethnic groups of [these] three countries [are] found in Wassoulou" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He added that the reason much music from Wassoulou is popular is because it includes many genres from the Peul peoples from the Fouta Toro region of Senegal, Peul from the Fouta Djalon region in Republic of Guinea, and Peul from Massira of Mali. The music from Wassoulou also resembles the genres from the Senufo peoples of Mali, Senufo of Ivory Coast, Malinke peoples of Republic of Guinea, and Bamanakan peoples, because the Wassoulou region makes a border with the Bamana of Mali. There are connections with the Bobo peoples from Ségou, Mali and Dogon peoples in Wassoulou. He said, "My repertoire is from these musical genres" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). His *dozo ngoni* music base, however, comes purely from Peul peoples from Wassoulou (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist is a native of Wassoulou and more recently based in Bamako, but visits his roots regularly. His father's village is Balandougou, a mile northeast of Kankan, Republic of Guinea. However, he grew up in Kabaya, in the Wassoulou region of Mali. He first arrived in Bamako in 1973. He returns to his village in Wassoulou about once each year, for varying lengths of time. His most recent trip was for approximately three months. He described his music as being unique because he left his natal land, and

94

was now mostly in Bamako, where he has encountered and learned many other musical genres, like the Bamana *dozo ngoni* style (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist said that he does not play like he did when he was in Wassoulou—he has changed a lot. He said that this was also true for his friend who had learned how to play some *camala ngoni* with him. His friend is now in the United States. The Professor Artists talks about how his friend's style has changed a lot in the United States,

> He has even given another name to his music. When I hear...his [music] I hear a sort of ngoni played in the Wassoulou, but in a purely American music. Very Americanized. This has become universal music. And it's very important.
> (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

With a change of environment, his friend's music transformed into Malian music adapted to a U.S.-American palate in order to please a U.S.-American audience, which was not necessarily a bad change from the Professor Artist's perspective (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Professor Artist thought that because both he and his friend's newer, innovated music style (reflecting *fadenya*) still maintained traditional Malian music elements (reflecting *badenya*), both his and his friend's music were appropriate evolutions of Malian music. Later in this section, I discuss when the Professor Artist thinks this musical change can be bad.

His philosophy was that "When you are a musician one must not limit oneself to his country of origin. The musician is someone who improvises" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He believed that "music is not static, it evolves. Music should evolve with the time, with the genre with which you play" (personal

95

communication, March 3, 2012). Therefore a musician should be creative and reflect the experiences and changes throughout his/her life.

He gave more examples of how music and musicians evolve in Bamako in the process of improvising for other ethnic groups. Because "all of the ethnic groups are found here in Bamako. And one must play for all of the ethnic groups in Bamako. It is necessary to please them.... They are very happy with this. And I have learned that it is necessary...to improvise. Because you are invited by all of the ethnic groups" (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Once in Bamako, the Professor Artist also joined a theater group, which again, "expanded [his] ability to play theater-style music" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Therefore, he and his art evolved by connecting and working with a new group of people and engaging with and wanting to please his audience. He also adapted to the other artist collaborators' tastes, which he believes is a way of connecting and including everyone present. Therefore, by moving geographical locations, interacting and learning with people from different ethnic groups, and participating in new experiences, both he and his music evolved as Robert Proudfoot's *Relational Model* depicts it should—a potential implication of how NGOs should aim to work with Malian artists.

It was clear that the Professor Artist was extensively knowledgeable of ethnomusicology both in the Wassoulou region specifically and Mali in general. In great detail, he described the nuances between different types of ngoni depending on the region, the particular ethnic group, and who traditionally played the instrument. He could also explain how music naturally evolves with time, new environments, new collaborators, and their taste in music, which all contributes to musical creation at any

particular time and place. His interview is particularly powerful because he was gifted at articulating extensive details to a U.S.-American academic audience.

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Professor Artist could also eloquently describe his impressions and extensive experience working with NGOs in Mali. He stated that overall, "NGOs are more positive than negative in Mali" (personal communication, March 3, 2012), because in his lifetime he had seen many successful projects that improved the Malian peoples' basic needs. However, before making this statement at the end of this interview, he used a *double-edged sword* (personal communication, March 3, 2012) metaphor to describe NGOs. He said that the first edge represented the unhelpful, inefficient, and ineffective NGOs working in Mali, and the second edge symbolized the helpful, efficient, and effective NGOs working in Mali.

He eloquently articulated both his bad and good impressions of NGO efforts. Via his own extensive experience working with NGOs, his vivid examples, and his own theories and opinions of both sides of the *double-edged sword*, he delineated the unhelpful, inefficient, and ineffective NGOs first and the helpful, efficient, and effective NGOs second. However, for the purposes of this paper, I combined both sets of NGO descriptions to come up with the following thirteen suggested processes that he found help Malians a good deal.

Professor Artist's Suggested Processes

To begin, the two exemplary NGOs in the United States that the Professor Artist highlighted were 1) Mali Assistance Project (MAP) based in Boulder, Colorado working in Zambougou, Mali to increase water accessibility ("About Mali," n.d.) and 2) Build a School in Africa (BSA) based in Pepperell, Massachusetts working in the Sikasso region in Mali to build schools ("Build," 2013). The Professor Artist had been a representative of MAP and facilitated the beginning of Build a School in Africa (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He endorsed both of these organizations' projects because they followed the suggested processes that follow and, from his direct experience, have been effective and efficient in Mali. These suggested practices include:

Work inclusively with local Malians. The Professor Artist explained that it is important to engage local Malians from the start of a project in order to be efficient and effective in Mali. The Professor Artist spoke about his own experience as a translator with Engineers Without Borders (EWB) International Non-Governmental Organization. EWB went to work in Zambougou, in the Ségou, Mali region. The villagers wanted a garden, but to start, they needed a water source. Without consulting the local people throughout the process, EWB planned for and dug an artificial lake for water (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist noted that when one makes a garden like this in the village, in a location where there is not much rainfall, an artificial lake does not work well. In about one to two years, with the wind and finite financial resources, the lake will no longer exist. Project participants will have wasted the initial investment (personal

98

communication, March 3, 2012). When EWB implemented the project, they wasted the initial investment, because the project failed.

He also noted that the initial financial investment was excessive. He said, "to dig this artificial lake...uses millions of franc CFA[, Malian national currency,] because it is necessary to bring...bulldozers. And the work of bulldozers per day is very, very, very expensive" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz also warn about inefficient overspending by explaining that NGOs sometimes spend too much on furnishing their members with sophisticated and expensive equipment, which then leaves little for the development projects that justified the NGO work in the first place (1999, p. 23).

In theory, EWB's artificial lake was designed to please Malians, but in practice this was not the case. Knowing that EWB had spent millions of franc CFA for nothing, the Professor Artist expressed:

> I was very mad.... Now, when I pass through Zambougou, when I see the lake, I [am] very angry because [I know] Americans...contributed to Mali, but it did not work. Those who contributed money in America, they have problems also, but they wasted money here in Mali. I call this waste. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

The Professor Artist recognized the kind American donor efforts. It made him upset to see so much time, effort, and resources wasted when they could have included the villagers' ideas from the beginning and created a much cheaper and appropriate solution for the Zamougou context.

99

He explained that the villagers would never dig a lake like this because they knew that they would be wasting their time, efforts, and resources. "They [would] not do it. They [would] abandon the field" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He added, "The villagers know better" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). In other words, villagers know the local, rural context better than foreign NGO personnel. Villagers would never waste their time and effort on this kind of artificial lake project because they know that the project will fail.

In contrast to the EWB artificial lake project, The Professor Artist was also involved in MAP's excellently implemented well project in Zambougou that included the local people from the beginning. He started by describing the sociocultural and environmental context of Zambougou. He said:

> in Zambougou there were very few...wells, and around the month of December, there was not any more water. The water began to dry up. Zambougou began to no longer have water. The people in Zambougou were obligated to travel up to five kilometers…to go find water. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

He verified with the villagers that it would be most useful to have wells, as opposed to EWB's artificial lake. MAP agreed to help (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

This more practical well project featured "[w]ells with machines to pull up the water" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). By a *machine* he more specifically implied a *pump,* based on what I observed in and around Bamako. He detailed:

if the well is closed...very well..., and there is water in it the whole year,

[a] garden is workable. And the well costs less. Therefore digging a

well...for the same... population without bringing the [bulldozers]...it's less

expensive and it's more effective. (personal communication, March 3,

2012)

As a team, the villagers and MAP implemented a cheaper, more effective, and more efficient well project.

He reemphasized, "I think that one must always listen to the local people, even if they need something, it is necessary to listen to them before intervening. It's this that [EWB personnel] didn't do [in Zambougou]" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). EWB would have saved money and been more effective and efficient if the group had engaged the local people from the start and throughout the project implementation process.

Exchange understanding. The Professor Artist described that one way in which to engage with the local Malian people is by exchanging understanding. He recalled and recounted to me his first encounter with Peace Corps volunteers arriving in his village and illustrated that it is important for NGOs and local Malians to exchange understanding before starting a project. Referring to Peace Corps personnel, the villagers asked, "why are they here?... Why are the white people here?" (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). They did not understand. The Professor Artist suggested that a better way to implement the project would have been for the Peace Corps to inform the villagers of their arrival and engage the villagers in a conversation about why Peace

101

Corps work was important to the village, prior to their actual arrival. However, in the case of his village, the local peoples were not given any information (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Professor Artist's first experience with the Peace Corps—a United States government aid organization—is pertinent to this NGO-Malian artist collaboration study because the Peace Corps and many NGOs conduct similar aid projects. It did not surprise me that the Professor Artist's first experience with Peace Corps was confusing. As with any new experience, it is normal for people to be confused especially if the experience occurs suddenly with no prior notice. In the Professor Artist's case, it was probably odd to receive instructions to build a house for a foreigner with an ambiguous mission. It is not possible to know if the miscommunication was on the part of the Peace Corps introducing their project this way—without much explanation to the local people—and/or a miscommunication between the national and local Malian governments with their own citizens. Either way, exchanging understanding between foreign aid workers and local Malian peoples did not initially occur in this case.

It could also be that the Peace Corps was still learning how to culturally approach Malians at that time. A pioneer in this process was the late Robert Textor, a former Stanford Professor of Anthropology and early "consultant to the Peace Corps, starting in the summer of 1961 while a Ph.D. student at Harvard" (Coyne, 2010, Para. 2). He was asked to join the national Peace Corps office in Washington DC to help plan the training program for the first Peace Corps Volunteers. (Coyne, 2010, Para. 2). The Peace Corps had asked him to be a consultant for them because he had had five years of volunteer-

like, ethnographic research experience in Thailand at the time (Textor, 2011, p. 16). Textor deeply understood how crucial exchanging cross-cultural understanding was.

During his consultancy, Textor diligently advocated for Peace Corps volunteers to be educated with appropriate cultural and linguistic training, pertinent to their post location, prior to starting their volunteer work in the field. He also advocated that administrator be (Textor, 2011, pp. 12-23) "linguistically and culturally sophisticated" (Textor, 2011, p. 23) so that they could better relate to Peace Corps volunteers and field duties and make more informed administrative decisions (Textor, 2011, pp.12-23) . He was one of the "few people [working at Peace Corps] headquarters who had actually had a successful volunteer-type experience in a non-Western developing nation" (Textor, 2011, p. 16). Textor's advocacy process resonated with various highly-ranked Peace Corps administrators, who then mobilized many of his suggestions and "had a significant impact on giving a unique shape and vitality to the organizational culture of the Peace Corps" (Textor, 2011, p. 48). The Peace Corps evolved due to Textor's five years in Thailand, during which he had learned to exchange understanding with the local Thai people and learn more about their cultural and linguistic traditions. Textor brought back his wisdom and feedback to the United States, which made him an effective sociocultural intermediary—the next theme that the Professor Artist highlights.

Because the Professor Artist was born in 1953, he could have been referencing his first contact with the Peace Corps sometime shortly after 1971, Peace Corps Mali's nascence (United States Embassy, 2012, para. 4). The Professor Artist could also be referencing an example that even though the Peace Corps worked through the Malian government, this collaboration did not mean that rural peoples understood 1) what the

Peace Corps-Malian government's agreement was and/or 2) the purpose or value of the Peace Corps' mission. From what the Professor Artist explains in his interview, it is common for there to be a disconnect between the Malian government and the local people. They do not understand one another (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Instead of exchanging understanding with the villagers, the villagers were told "that it was necessary to construct a house for an arriving white person" (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Professor Artist continued by saying that the villagers did not understand why they were going to construct the house. They wondered why the white person was coming. "This is the problem" (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). It is therefore necessary to inform and convince the gift recipient first.

EWB had also not worked inclusively with the local Malians. The Professor Artist commented, "The fault comes a little from the experts who were here because they didn't listen to the local population. They didn't do the preliminary sociological work. It's necessary to work sociologically before starting everything" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). To start, EWB should have communicated with and worked to understand the local people and vice versa. With this dialog, the NGO could explain their intent and the local people could have added their insight. Then, the project would have better fit the sociocultural and environmental context, been less expensive and more successful. There was an obvious disconnect between cultures.

Involve appropriate sociocultural mediators. In order to better bridge and more deeply understand and manage drastic cross-cultural differences for increased NGO project success, the Professor Artist promoted the involvement of appropriate sociocultural mediators. Again, he used MAP's project in Zambougou as a good example. He approached the engineers for the Zambougou well project by introducing himself as a "visitor here from Mali Assistance Project" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Ahead of time, he told the MAP engineers not to go about their project in the way that EWB had conducted the lake project. Since the villagers know their town better than the foreign engineers, as an intermediary, the Professor Artist posed to the villagers questions like, "What sort of wells are good here?" and "what sort of wells are good for the soil here in Zambougou?" (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The villagers replied that they wanted wells with narrow openings rather than wide openings, because with the wide openings, "people can fall in them. When someone falls, he could die" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The wells with wide openings also do not work "[b]ecause there was too much sand in Zambougou. There is too much wind. Therefore the wells with a wide opening can close because of the [dust and sand] and it won't work anymore" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). A villager showed the Professor Artist an example. The Professor Artist took a picture to help demonstrate and relay the problem to their MAP collaborators.

In order to avoid massive logistical and strategic errors working through a sociologist, educator, translator, interpreter, and/or some other type of intermediary who asks the local people crucial questions, the NGO project will be more effective and efficient when coordinating an action plan between drastically different cultures—as in

105

the case of the Zambougou (personal communication, March 3, 2012). By involving the Professor Artist, a highly-skilled mediator, MAP was able to learn about the context and type of project needed and wanted in Zambougou so that aid was more effectively and efficiently applied and, consequently, used.

Also in the initial communications with the villagers, the Professor Artist discovered that "there was a well already there, [but it] didn't work well" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). As a team, the villagers, MAP, and the Professor Artist took action. Together, they discovered that the well pump was reparable and decided to fix it instead of bringing in new pumps.

The team then appointed:

[a] committee for pump restoration. They had learned [pump restoration] in Ségou [, a nearby Malian town]. Even though [the pump] was broken, it wasn't the engineers who are going to come to repair it again. There are villagers who are already trained to do this. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

From the beginning, via an intermediary, MAP tapped the local knowledge, so that the project participants were assured that if the pump broke in the future, it could be repaired locally—independent of additional foreign intervention.

He asked them how much it would cost to repair the pump; the Professor Artist then informed the Mali Assistance Project. He told me:

They brought the money, [and it] was directly invested there.... There is now sufficient water for the village, all of the animals and all of the people. In addition, it's drinkable. Before there were the illnesses because they drank very dirty water. Very dirty. Very dirty. They made their food with very dirty water. The people told

106

me "thank God" [they now have clean water]". (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

The villagers were thankful for access to potable water. The Professor Artist outlined that the Zambougou well pump project was a success, because the villagers, a highly-skilled sociocultural interpreter, and MAP worked as a team.

Agree about project usefulness. According to the Professor Artist, NGOs often have preconceived ideas about what project to implement before they arrive at a project site. This means that the local people have not yet agreed that the project is useful within their sociocultural and environmental context. Therefore, there is a disconnect between NGO and Malian perspectives and interests. In referring to EWB's artificial lake failure, the Professor Artist stated, "When [NGOs and the local people] are in agreement, you can begin the work" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Similar to the artificial lake failure, he said that there are certain types of projects that he thinks are destined to fail in Mali.

The Professor Artist explained that NGO family planning intervention does not work well in Mali because most people in Mali are not convinced that they should limit their number of children. He described what most Malians think about NGO family planning intervention, "We are Muslims, you are Christians. For the good Muslims, the Orthodox Muslims, it's not worth it to stop births. Because God does not ask this. And for the Orthodox Christians it's the same thing" (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

However, the Professor Artist believes that even though it is difficult for Malians to understand family planning, it is worth continuing the effort,

> [i]t is necessary to [help them understand] this. It is necessary to raise a lot of awareness because Malians are very conservative.... Those who are Muslim are conservative. Those who are Christian [in Mali]...and those who are Animists are also very conservative. They do not want to leave their tradition. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

The Professor Artist labeled Malian peoples as conservative, not usually open to changing their way of life. This conservatism reached across the major religions in Mali: Islam, Christianity, and Animism. According to the Central Intelligence Agency's 2009 census, 94.8% of the Malian population was Muslim, 2.4% Christian, and 2% Animist (2013). Therefore, the Professor Artist argued that in total, 99.2% of the Malian population is conservative—most are not open to family planning.

He continued by offering suggestions about how family planning efforts could better convince the Malian populations, given the context. "First," he said, "convince the population [that family] planning is necessary for very serious reasons" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He suggested telling them that, for example, a woman who continually has children can get sick or:

> that if they want several children, they are going to have several difficulties, because the world has evolved. When God had written the Koran there were not many people in the world. The Bible, there wasn't many people in the world. But now, it is well overpopulated, and life has become very, very, very expensive.

Very expensive, it is necessary to convince them. Otherwise they won't agree.

(personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Hence, if the locals "are not convinced, they are going to say that you are crazy"

(Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). If they do not agree, they will

not change their habits.

He also stated that the Malian population was not yet convinced that NGO

circumcision and excision projects work well in Mali either. Malians:

think that when you say, it is not necessary to excise a girl here, it's a Western

civilization that wants to impose on Malians. They are not in agreement. We are

Malians. We are not French. We are not Americans. Why do you want to impose

this custom? Excision is Malian culture...it's not [effective] to tell [Malians] to

stop excision. No, no, no, no. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Therefore, telling Malians to change their rituals, without convincing them why, makes

Malians feel like foreigners are imposing their values onto them by force and without

reason. According to Goebel, if the local population does not agree, it can be perceived as

aggressive towards local Malians (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

The Professor Artist continued by suggesting that if NGOs would like to convince

the Malian population to stop excision, "[i]t is necessary to tell them that when a girl is

excised, what kinds of problems [arise]...." (Professor Artist, personal communication,

March 3, 2012). However, this is challenging because even if the Malian government

tries to convince Malians who have not been to school and are illiterate, to stop

circumcision and excision, they will not understand. Since there are "more illiterate...than

literate [people]...here in Mali still.... It's not easy to convince them" (Professor Artist,

personal communication, March 3, 2012). According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, adult and youth literacy in Mali in 2012 was 26% (2011). It is thus necessary to convince the Malians in a way that they can receive the information (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Professor Artist suggested that NGOs should try to convince Malians of the negative excision consequences via photos, demonstrations, and in their local languages.

In contrast, the Professor Artist's collaboration with a German woman, who he did not name, in agricultural planning (hybrid sorghum crops) worked well—whether or not the German woman represented a NGO. Above all, he thought that NGO agricultural planning intervention was the most effective. Typically, both donor and recipient easily understand agricultural project values in the Malian sociocultural and environmental context.

Since Malians are easily convinced about and value agricultural projects, the Professor Artist reported that NGO agricultural projects are highly successful. In the case of the hybrid sorghum plant project, he was the cultural mediator, interpreter, and translator during the collaboration and wrote a book about the experience. He did not tell me the name of the organization with which the German woman worked (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The lack of information makes me wonder if the organization was truly a NGO.

Whether or not it was a NGO, the Professor Artist recounted that the hybrid sorghum project fit well with the sociocultural, environmental, and economic context in Mali. The Malian population in general eats sorghum and was in support of growing sorghum crops. Environmentally, there is not much

rainfall in Mali, and hybrid plants can survive in these drier conditions. Hybrid crops can be very profitable as well, because within only two months, crops are ready for harvest and can be traded or sold. Due to this hybrid plant success, the Professor Artist said that there are now projects implementing hybrid crops, such as ginger and potatoes, as well (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Seek mutual benefits. In theory, NGOs work in Mali to intervene on behalf of a benevolent mission, but this is not always what happens. He explains it is "because they receive money that they have collected in Europe and it's people who intervene here because they themselves have financial problems in Europe" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Therefore, these types of NGO workers may want to help, but ultimately they are being paid for a job, not doing the work without expecting anything personal in return, which in turn, could create a conflict between the NGOs mission and/or the beneficiary's interest.

This reminds me of the Malinke proverb that I learned from my Guinean friend that I already mentioned in the *Introduction*: "Everyone has their interest" (M. Guissé, multiple personal communications, 2002). This implies that it is normal for people and organizations to have interests, however some are more self-centered than others. Therefore, a more egocentric NGO may either be ignorant about how to work within Mali, or more interested in their own benefit rather than benefits for either the Malian people or the organization itself.

In these more egocentric NGOs, the Professor Artist describes that there is a sum of money for the project. This sum comes with the NGO workers and the same sum

111

returns to the workers' native country with them. The Professor Artist had directly observed this phenomenon multiple times. The Europeans in charge have the money to buy European labor. This type of NGO trusts and chooses European workers over local workers to carry out their mission. The Europeans in charge evaluate the project so that donors give money for the work. But when this work comes to Mali, it is not to help Malians, because Malians were not part of the project vision or implementation process (personal communication, March 3, 2012). As a result, the project is not helpful to Malians.

These NGOs are also financially inefficient because they rarely hire Malians, even though they know that it is cheaper to pay for Malian labor. The Malians do not benefit—they are not hired and the project often does not work either. Part of the money goes to NGO workers, another part to the government, "the [Malian beneficiaries do] not see anything" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The egocentric NGO and the intermediaries of the project benefited, but there was a disconnect with the intended project recipients, the local Malian population, did not.

Foreigners should intervene in a humble fashion. The Professor Artist expressed concern about foreign experts who are overconfident in their knowledge about implementing NGO projects in Mali. Like in the case of EWB:

> ...it's a big problem because the engineers come and they think... 'I am the
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> expert, I know everything...I have all of the talent.' It is true they have
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> studied in the universities.... Yes...they are truly experts, but they do not
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> know the social environment. Yes, intervene, but it is necessary to know

that also...[t]he context is very important...it is necessary to know the environment so that the work withstands (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist implied, and Chambers agrees (1983, p. 93), that the local people understand their environmental and sociocultural contexts more deeply than foreigners. It is dangerous for foreigners to overestimate their knowledge and underestimate local experts and their approaches. Foreign experts were trained in a different sociocultural and environmental context. Therefore, their training often does not apply in Mali unless there is appropriate adaptation—which should be synchronized with the local experts and peoples. When intervening, it is wise to be humble and work with and learn from the local population when implementing projects.

He added that foreigners, such as the Peace Corps staff and volunteers, should understand that they are limited in what they are able to do in Mali. Understanding this is very important in order to be effective. If foreigners want to be effective working in Mali, they must seek respectful collaboration with local peoples, as in the Professor Art's next example (personal communication, March 3, 2012). By combining foreign and local perspectives, it is possible to combine strengths and generate more ideas and strategies (Chambers, 1983, p. 93; D. Cohen, multiple personal communication, 2010-2013).

Professor Textor echoed the Professor Artist emphasis on foreigners intervening modestly by defining two types of ignorance. Primary ignorance "refers to the phenomenon of simply 'not knowing something you should know.'

Secondary ignorance refers to 'not knowing *that* you don't know.' Secondary

ignorance is a much more complex phenomenon, and much more serious in its

consequences" (Textor, 2011, p. 18). Thus, especially in regard to people working

in foreign contexts, because such workers do not always recognize that they are

unable to perceive their limitations, it is essential to intervene modestly.

    Equalize power dynamics. The Professor Artist thought that there were

unfair power dynamics in the case of EWB's artificial lake project in Zambougou.

People with money have an unfair advantage over people who do not have money.

People with money therefore have more power than people without money in

determining how projects are introduced and implemented (Ledwith, 2005, pp.

100-103; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Young, 2011).

He said,

> There are NGOs that intervene like this, they do not listen to anything
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> from the local population. We are the local population, they should consult
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> us. Even if we are not engineers, [we] know the place more than the
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> people who come. But they don't listen because they think they have the
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> money. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Another way of analyzing the EWB artificial lake project is that EWB had the

money, and therefore implemented the project without listening to the local

people, and the project was unsuccessful.

Also, if EWB had honored the Professor Artist, working as their translator, as an equal in their process, his ideas could have helped EWB. Instead, he did not interject his wisdom because his job was only to translate. He was not an engineer. He was neither the one spending his money, nor did EWB ever ask for his perspective, so he did not feel that he could give them advice (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The power dynamic weighted in favor of EWB deterred the Professor Artist from offering his wisdom.

   Accurately assess the context. The Professor Artist suggested working inclusively with local Malians, equally exchanging understanding, and intervening in a humble fashion will lead to foreigners more accurately understanding and assessing the context within which projects will be implemented (Chambers, 1983, p. 93; Professor Artist; personal communication, March 3, 2012). Assessing the context can include evaluating the location, sociocultural context, environment, and already-existing resources.

   In the case of BSA's project, the villagers in the Sikasso region needed a school. The Professor Artist described how they assessed the location by asking, "what are the local materials available in this moment?" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He stressed that this is very important,

   Because we cannot always import all of the materials to this village if there are

   local materials, we are going to work with the local materials, it's good that we do

   this. But if the local materials are not available, we take all of this into account,

   the many parameters. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Using local materials first is typically more sustainable and in alignment with Permaculture principles, because there is no need to pay additional transportation costs to import materials (A. Hamilton, multiple personal communications, 2009-2012).

Intervene directly with the local people. The Professor Artist advised against working with the national government when beginning and implementing NGO projects. From his experience, working with the national Malian government is a problem for four reasons (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The first reason is that there is a disconnect between urban and rural realities. "The government doesn't know the true problems of the villages. No, they don't know", he said (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Since politicians in general live in Bamako, they are more familiar with Bamako realities, not village realities. Urban Bamako is very different than the village context, which is a major domestic Malian disconnect.

The second reason is because the urban Malian government is ineffective at creating solutions for rural Malians' realities. Even if the Malian government intends to help villages, they do not understand the context or the problems that exist at the locations they are trying to improve. Since projects are most effective and efficient if they are in alignment with the context in which projects are implemented, the Professor Artist indicated that the urban national Malian government was unable to create effective, efficient solutions that address rural problems in Mali.

The third reason is when Malian government officials are interested in villagers' well-being, it is usually because of their own political interests. "[T]he politicians here in

Bamako need the villagers for their elections only—that's all" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Politicians use villagers for votes to maintain political power, but they do not proactively work to improve rural life. Politicians' interests are egocentric and promises are superficial with little to no follow through (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The fourth reason that it is important to avoid intervening through the Malian government's corruption. The Professor Artist said, "The danger of intervention of NGOs here in Mali—it's the corruption. Unfortunately, Mali is very corrupt. It is amongst the most corrupt countries in the world" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). As Chabal and Daloz described, corruption in Africa is a complex issue and may not actually be corruption, but rather Africa exhibiting signs of its own unique development path (1999, p. 102). As a foreigner, I am unable to assess the Malian corruption problem. However, I have heard from numerous Malians that the government is corrupt, which lead me to believe that there is a major corruption problem in Mali, since the Malians themselves indicate the problem. Therefore, due to the Professor Artist, a local Malian indicating the corruption problem in Mali, it is more helpful to circumvent the national Malian government as much as possible, and directly implement NGO projects firsthand with the local peoples.

MAP and BSA avoided the national government and went directly to the local peoples to intervene. More specifically the Professor Artist outlined, "It is [better] to pass by...the city council, at the base. And the city council gives you a paper/certificate [giving permission to] intervene in [their] district" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He reinforced that working directly with local mayors and city councils is a more effective

and efficient strategy, because they are often more sincere (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

He also noted that working with the local mayors and city councils is politically good for local leaders. Like politicians at the national level, the councilmen would like to be reelected and they are more invested in and aware of their community because they too live there. If a project benefits their village, it supports their interest to stay in power. He says, "[The mayors and other local elected officials] are happy, because it provides them an opportunity to be elected again...next time because they are going to bring something interesting for their district" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). By going to the local authorities, NGOs reinforce local action and appeal to the personal interests of the local political leaders who have the power to employ projects, while gaining personal popularity with their constituencies.

Intervene on behalf of a group, not an individual. The Professor Artist also advised to intervene on behalf of a group, instead of an individual "[b]ecause it's the community who has the problem. It's the community who suffers" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). I have worked with the Tostan Nonprofit International NGO, and in my experience I have noted that this NGO also insists on this protocol, because it creates more perspectives, checks, balances, and transparency, which, in turn, decreases the likelihood of one person to embezzle money, as multiple people from the community witness the transaction (C. Donahue, multiple personal communications, 2007-2008; D. Gueye, personal communication, March 23, 2012).

Also, by including the community in the project, there are more potential ideas, human resources, and engagement opportunities (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). As mentioned previously, if the local people are not in favor in the project, it will not succeed (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). It is crucial to guarantee that the local peoples are in support of the project.

Ensure local investment in the project. The Professor Artist said that it is a problem when NGOs "want to invest and the villagers think that it's given freely. And the NGOs pursuit is a catastrophe because the villagers have received everything freely. I always say to these villagers, "Nothing is free. You have something [to invest]. You must show...that you need [the project]"' (personal communication, March 3, 2012). If the local population is not invested in the project and the work is done for them, the local population will not value it and therefore not maintain the results of the project. It is important to have investment from the local people for the project to succeed and be maintained.

The Professor Artist found that if he insists that the villagers contribute to investments on the following terms, NGO projects are more likely to succeed in Mali. These local investments are signs that the Malians find value and feel a sense of *ownership* with the project (personal communication, March 3, 2012; S. Schirmer, personal communication, September 10, 2013). This sense of *ownership* and value leads to successful projects. He insists that the local people:

119

Understand and agree with the project. As mentioned before, the project will only be successful if the local peoples understand the project's vision (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Nourish the NGO workers. When NGO workers come to his village, the Professor Artist tells the local people, "You should give [the NGO workers] food. It's the work of the village, this is our work, our financial contribution. It is necessary to show that you love this work" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Providing food is a sign of support and investment in Mali.

Do the labor. He insists that the local people do the groundwork and local implementation of the project. As he explained earlier in the case of Zamougou, villagers know better and would never dig a lake like this, because they knew that they would be wasting their time, efforts, and resources on a project that they knew would fail (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Give 5%-10% of the financial investment for the project. Therefore, there is a direct relationship between the amount the NGO provides and the amount that the local people give (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Use their local resources first—as appropriate. As discussed in the *Accurately assess the context* section of this interview, the Professor Artist advocated for using local resources first, before importing and/or purchasing other resources and/or materials. This

strategy is both in line with permaculture design principles and helps to build projects in a way in which they can be maintained. It also save costs involved in transporting materials—which can be very expensive (personal communication, March 3, 2012; A. Hamilton, multiple personal communications, 2009-2012).

Create a fund. In the case of both the MAP and BSA projects, the organizations did not start pulling "money together" (personal communication, March 3, 2012) to financially contribute to their projects with local Malians until after the local people agreed to and followed through on the above five local investments that the Professor Artist suggested (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Collect receipts to track project spending. Again, MAP and BSA did not simply give money to the local Malians for their projects. Rather, they insisted the local people delineate their spending. As if the NGO were a bank, the MAP and BSA gave financial receipts to the NGO throughout the process of the construction. Receipts reinforce the professionalism, transparency, trust, and accountability of the organization, as if "an expert...did the work" (personal communication, March 3, 2012; R. Radostitz, multiple personal communications, 2010). According to my nonprofit NGO experience, it is also an accounting requirement in the United States.

The Professor Artist acknowledged that "[u]nfortunately, there are many cases that are not like this" (personal communication, March 3, 2012), speaking about projects that do not follow his suggested steps. If NGOs do not follow these steps that reflect local investment, they are far more likely to fail and be wasted. He emphasized that when

NGOs want to intervene, the quality is most important. Otherwise, it is not worth doing (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Collaboration Vision

Besides more general NGO aid in Mali that is aimed at benefiting the greater Malian population, the Professor Artist could not think of an already-existing NGO or NGOs that support structures and/or projects specifically for Malian musicians and dancers. He noted, "there are not very many NGOs that are interested in us, the artists. It's the first time I have encountered one. I am delighted to encounter you. NGOs do not intervene for the artists here" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). However, it "is a very good idea that you start that here" (personal communication, March 3, 2012), he said. Therefore, he seemed to understand that NGOs working more generally in Mali help artists, but NGOs do not aim to specifically help Malian artists. However, he liked this idea.

Tourisme Solidaire

He also depicted how Malian arts are related to a concept he called *tourisme solidaire*[6]. The Professor Artist emphasized that he has seen great results stemming from *tourisme solidaire*—a process that could also be considered a project. He also called *tourisme solidaire* the *art of solidarity*—as if they are one in the same. In explaining *tourisme solidaire* or the *art of solidarity*, he clarified that it should be with friends that

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[6] tourisme solidaire: a phrase in French that depicting conducting tourism with the intent of building solidarity. The Professor Artist uses this phrase to describe both a process and project.

come for tourism here in Mali (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Hence, he emphasized to start any project, a dedicated, trusted heart connection between people—an overarching theme in this research, is crucial.

Heart-connected dedication between foreigners and Malians, or rather a "cultural marriage" (personal communication, March 3, 2012), is the foundation of *tourisme solidaire* (personal communication, March 3, 2012):

> There is a marriage. There is an embracing of cultures. And this marriage is facilitated by your project exactly.... Without...this cultural marriage, the world rests static.... When a Malian starts to learn the dance from your home and stays in your home...he comes [back] and plays it. The people [here] are very happy.... And that will come through the music. It's this cultural marriage today that forgets hate between people. To forget aggression is very important...and this should be continual. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

A committed cross-cultural marriage is the key to *tourisme solidaire,* so that cross-cultural trust, respect, and learning develops over time.

I found multiple references to similar *tourisme solidaire* concepts on the Internet and in scholarly literature, all from 2006 and later. For example, I located the earliest and most frequent references in French for "tourisme solidaire" (Chabloz, 2007; François, 2007; *Le Monde*, 2006). I also found a recent peer-reviewed article in English referring to an analogous notion, "solidarity through tourism" (Asch, 2013). Lastly, I found references to "friendship tourism" on TripAdvisor (2013), a well-known travel website, and other business websites and blogs from many different countries. Hence, the Professor Artist is abreast with current, global tourism trends.

In order to foster *tourisme solidaire*, the Professor Artist encouraged foreigners to go to Malian villages, "for example, when a group of people come, a group of French [people]...they should not limit themselves in Bamako because Mali is not Bamako. The true Mali is in the countryside. They should go in the village" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). This way, people will see the true Mali.

He continued to explain why *tourisme solidaire* is best practiced in Malian villages:

Everything that is in Bamako here, they learned in the villages with the villagers. It is necessary to go the foundation to better know the foundation. Musically you are going to know the foundation, socially you are going to know it. Because in the group of people that you bring here, there are people who work with NGOs in Europe...go to [the villagers'] homes [to see their] problems. It is one way to help them. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

With a face-to-face relationships with Malian villagers, foreigners better understand Malian village realities. This helps to co-create experiences together, directly connecting the different cultural backgrounds (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). Face-to-face connections make it more difficult to cause harm to people if there is understanding and compassion between people. It also nurtures heart connections between oftentimes conflicting cultural realities (C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

He continued to delineate why he advocates for practicing *tourisme solidaire* with Malian villagers. The Professor Artist believes that Malian villagers are generally more sincere than urban dwellers. He urges foreigners who come to Mali to invest their money

124

in the villages rather than the urban centers, because villagers are more likely to follow

through, using donations in ways in which they promised. "NGOs that come [to the

villages], the money is used in a sincere manner. And the beneficiaries have always what

they want.... [E]very year, we go into the village...Zambougou. We can stay three days

there, and everyone is happy" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Baba Wagué

Diakité, a visual artist and storyteller from Mali now living in Portland, Oregon, as well

as the Executive Director and my host at Ko-Falen Cultural Center in Bamako during my

interviews and a *Connector* for this research, has also mentioned a number of times that

people in the villages tend to be more honest and sincere as they implement donations for

projects (multiple personal communications, 2012).

Villagers are also more likely to reciprocate, showing their appreciation for efforts

that have helped them (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The

villagers "[gave us a] piece of land, a space that we call *Americanbougou*, that means

America Land. It's there we build...[a] little gesture for you, the Americans.... It was the

exchange" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Permaculture also encourages

investing in reciprocal relationships, which creates a more sustainable base in the long

term (Holmgren, 2002). In this case, the villagers reciprocated. Now, when MAP

volunteers and donors visit Zambougou, they have a space where they are welcome to

stay during their visits.

The Professor Artist again referred to MAP and BSA as excellent *tourisme*

solidaire examples. He first explained how the Mali Assistance Project started via

tourisme solidaire with a village arts ensemble. "It's because of *tourisme solidaire* I have

been able to help the people with the wells. Because I heard that they had an instrumental

ensemble there—the *Koraduga*. The *Koraduga* are the *comedians*" (personal communications, March 3, 2012). Knowing this, the Professor Artist brought a group of U.S.-Americans who were visiting Mali to Zambougou to see the *Koraduga*. After meeting the people in Zambougou and being entertained by the *Koraduga,* a dialog started between the foreigners and the local Malians. The U.S.-Americans became curious and asked "what were [the] problems here?" (personal communications, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist interpreted their question to the villagers adding some culturally-appropriate finesse, "I asked the villagers, 'I cannot impose, but what is your problem here?'... [Their reply was:] 'Our big problem is that there is a lack of water'" (Professor Artist, personal communications, March 3, 2012). He was sure to emphasize that the intention was not to impose on the villagers, which is important in Malian culture (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012).

The project emerged. The Professor Artist obtained information about the people's water needs in Zambougou. He continued to describe the foreigner-villager collaboration process,

> In this group of Americans, there was a woman who had this idea. She [was]
> going to create what is called the 'Mali Assistance Project.' And [she said she was]
> going to start this NGO in America. [They were] going to collect a little money.
> It's like this that the project has come about. And this truly worked. (personal
> communications, March 3, 2012)

The Professor Artist credited his friends, Abdoul Doumbia (Malian Djembe player) and Karen Marx, currently both living in Boulder, Colorado, with the success of the endeavor.

They combine NGO work and art for efficient and effective NGO projects (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist also highlighted the NGO BSA starting via *tourisme solidaire* with his colleague, Judy, from Boston:

'Build a School in Africa' was born here at Yeredon.... There is a woman who comes here every year named Judy. I said to Judy, "Judy, Judy, Judy, you are in a country of illiterate [people] and you teach, like me...what can we do for education in Mali? Why can't we do something like fundraising with the artists there America...and African artists to build classrooms in the villages." We went into the villages. We saw them. They played well for us, the very, very, very nice people, but...[t]here were [no] classrooms...and the students were sitting on the soil. The conditions to practice their lessons are not good at all. And we created what we call.... You can look at the website: www.buildaschoolinafrica.com.... Every year she comes and does concerts with Malian, Senegalese, and African diaspora in Mali. She brings money and everyone goes to a village where there are no schools, where classes are not good. (personal communications, March 3, 2012)

Hence, via trusted, people-to-people dedication to one another and each other's interests, viable, long-term projects prospered. Today, BSA continues to build schools and creates programming that celebrates Malian arts.

In summary, via *tourisme solidaire* people from drastically different cultures co-create common cultural meaning, values, understanding, and experiences—ideally in mutually beneficial ways (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; R.

Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). Instead of commercial, patron-client

relationships, from the beginning, *Tourisme solidaire* sets a tone for more heart-

connected understanding, compassion, and exchange to be at the core of cross-cultural

interactions (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Suggested Projects

The Professor Artist not only gave me suggestions about best NGO processes and

practices, he also spoke about projects that he endorsed. In order to reveal more specific

project ideas from the Professor Artist's collaboration vision that would help Malian

artists, I asked him the same question as all of the other interviewees, "What do you think

is necessary for Malian music and/or dance to be sustained culturally, environmentally,

economically, socially, etc.?" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). When I asked

this question to the other artists, I would initially observe their confused expressions until

giving further explanation and examples. However, the Professor Artist enthusiastically

perked up and commented, "VOILA, another important question" (personal

communication, March 3, 2012). Again, he extensively described his perspective.

Similarly to the way he described his mixed feelings about NGOs as *double-*

edged swords, he prefaced his answer again by looking at both the negative and positive

aspects. He contextualized his answer by saying,

> Malian music is a victim of globalization. We are victims of this. And it frightens
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> me a little. This...makes me skeptical of the Malian music culture. But, at the
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> same time, this encourages me that it will be fine. Thus, I have the two ideas at

the same time. And now I will explain how. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

He immediately delved into his mixed feelings about globalization.

As mentioned earlier in the interview, the Professor Artists honors that reality and culture is ever-changing, which is not inherently bad:

But I'm not opposed to the evolution of the world. The world is evolved. Nothing is static. We all change...hip hop is good. It's oral tradition. Every musical custom has it's time to disappear...merengues, others, each one does it's time. In it's time the people love it, and each one has come with its style. All of the styles have done their time. Every musical genre has its style of life. When that style of life stops, there is a new wave that comes. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Neutrally, Professor Artist detailed that the reality of music trends is that they are dynamic.

He was not against change, but emphasized that he would like core Malian values to remain intact throughout Malian music evolution, "I am not opposed to evolution, but I want to maintain the culture. A little new, but that does not leave it's culture. When your culture is desperate, you are morally desperate and culturally desperate" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He implies that desperation breaks down people's moral and cultural core.

Within our current globalized reality, the Professor Artist then unfurled a list of projects that he thought would be important for long-term Malian arts vitality, which would, in turn, if tapped strategically, potentially benefit NGOs' effectiveness and

efficiency. The projects he listed fell into the following themed categories: Preservation, Exchange, and Support.

Preservation. The Professor Artist was calmly adamant about preserving *badenya* in following four aspects of Malian culture: music values, dance expression, attire, and music learning processes.

Music values. The Professor Artist advocated for preserving *badenya*, the traditional essence of Malian music culture. He believes that this essence is worth saving. The Professor Artist explained his concern about his perceived effects of globalization in Mali, "I'm afraid [of] globalization because the true Malian rhythms risk disappearing. By the profit of hip hop, of hip hop above all" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The young artists 18-25 are attracted to hip hop, "they always want to sing hip hop and other like Americans" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He did not think that hip hop was entirely bad, but was worried that the youth will not critically think about maintaining the good aspects of their culture.

> He clarified what he thought by contrasting it to American music,
>
> I don't want the American genre all of the time, it doesn't make sense. It teaches violence. I do not like this. All songs that teach violence should be eliminated. It is not Malian. It can teach prostitution—the degradation of morals. There are styles like this, eh. I do not want this [kind of music].... We have a culture here. It is the culture of excellence. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

He was concerned that oftentimes American music globally teaches moral degradation—which should not be openly accepted by Malians. The Professor Artist cautioned that Malians are at risk of similar degradation if Malian musicians and dancers prioritize their money-making over maintaining Malian integrity. If this occurs, Malian music becomes corrupted.

He continued with his music philosophy, "it's good to conserve the tradition, but also it is necessary to adapt to universal music because it is the [commercial] product that puts you on the market.... You want to sell the product" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Therefore, he thought that selling Malian music was generally good.

He also thought it was good "to satisfy your community...and the world in your music. And for this reason...camala ngoni.... Also the dozo ngoni...has changed a lot. There is an evolution. And it's like this that I have evolved also, with time, with space" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). As a musician evolves, recording, selling, and creating music are ways to please a musician's local and international audience.

The Professor Artist was not against making money off Malian music or adapting it to various local and international tastes. He thought that there were many valuable, positive ways in which Malian values can be beautifully and appropriately interwoven with other musical styles, like reggae, and evolve into new, appropriately Malian, art forms. However, his main distinction between moral and immoral Malian music depended on if the music maintained traditional Malian *badenya* values. Some of these values include: dignity, honesty, being helpful, and fostering nonviolence. These are all themes that are taught in Malian music and he thought that they should be preserved (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Ideally, he would like for Malians to not only maintain their own values, but also teach them to the rest of the world. He used the example of how in Malian values revere dignity not money:

It's this [Malian] custom that is useful in America, [and] in the whole world. Because they are values that start to disappear because of money. And this Malian repertoire...one does not sing them for someone who has money, no. They are sung for someone who has dignity. It is not a question of money...even if this same musical genre...is played with modern instruments, it's no big deal. Even if it's played in a reggae song, it's no big deal, but I want that the meaning to stay. The song stays. Because truly, this is what should stay. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

In Mali, the concepts of dignity, honesty, being helpful to others, and nonviolence are more honored and celebrated over money. Their Malian integrity is their gift to the world.

Dance expression. He expanded his opinion to include evolved Malian dance forms. These forms should also resemble the core values of Malian dance, instead of moving completely to foreign dance forms:

Dance is the same thing. I'm not opposed to the evolution of dance. No, but the dance can evolve with a sort of mix. Dance steps imported from Europe plus Malian steps together in the same ballet create a type of harmony. I agree with that. But when one deletes all of the Malian [steps] to consecrate...classic dance from the West, the Malian music will disappear for sure. Because we want

money.... The goal of the artist isn't to always look for money. (personal

communication, March 3, 2012)

He strongly believed that serving Malian cultural excellence was more important than

money. Again, as with Malian music, he was not opposed to the *fadenya* evolution of

dance. Rather, he advocated for Malian dance evolution to resonate with the original

badenya, core essence of Malian dance before adding in newer *fadenya* creations.

Attire. The Professor Artist applied the same concept, that evolved Malian culture

should also resemble Malian core values and identity, to attire:

> when you see someone dressed in Malian [attire], you don't have to ask them
>
> where they are from. We have a style of traditional [*badenya*] clothing. One must
>
> not reject it because of the West. Because that will allow us to be recognized even
>
> if we go to America.... It's the same thing with the Yoruba of Nigeria. When I see
>
> the Yoruba of Nigeria here, with their Adaga, I say, "voila, Nigeria". With their
>
> Adaga that they like to wear. It's very important. One must not reject all of this. It
>
> is a kind of identification. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Hence attire, dance, and musical genres identify a people. In the Professor Artist's

opinion, this identity is important to people in Africa even when popular American

culture is a current and powerful influence (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Music learning processes. The Professor Artist promoted maintaining Malian

music integrity via direct, interpersonal relationships and within settings that enforce

learning practices that preserve Malian arts. He used a music example to illustrate his

point: "We are in a traditional [*badenya*] setting. One must go [to the village]" (personal communication, March 3, 2012) and learn Malian arts there" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He encouraged transforming Malian music into new *fadenya* forms in more traditional *badenya* village settings, such as in ceremonies and celebrations.

He also suggested another way to reinforce Malian music integrity, "One must also teach them in school. It's very important. They must put them in the art schools here. One must always teach this repertoire" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He also liked the idea of school strengthening *badenya* by reinforcing a village Malian music base, as the music is passed on from generation to generation.

After the *badenya* music base is learned well in a village and school setting, he then endorsed *fadenya*—improvising and infusing other types of music with the Malian music base—as long as it resonates with Malian integrity and values. He gave the example, "One can interpret them also over the reggae...it can go with reggae" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He thought that reggae accorded well with Malian music.

Exchange. In the preservation section, the Professor Artist promoted maintaining Malian values when cultures interface. He thought that each unique cultural expression should be respected and treated equally. "No culture is savage, and no culture talks too much. All of the cultures have a vehicle of value" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He articulated examples of equal exchange in multiple realms: travel exchange, music exchange, performance exchange, instrument exchange, professor exchange, and fair trade.

Travel exchange. The Professor Artist loved the idea of travel exchanges, because they broaden peoples' perspectives and transform:

> the whole world to a planetary village.... I adapt a little to your home, you adapt a little to my home. You show my home to people from your home—you are going to show it to the United States. You should be the Ambassador of Mali to the United States. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

He was a proponent of cross-border travel in order to learn, exchange, and broaden perspectives. I am assuming that he also meant the opposite as well, specifically that there should be Malian ambassadors of the United States in Mali. Almost all interviewees referred to wanting to travel, but not many referred to reciprocal travel exchange—like the Professor Artist.

Music exchange. Specifically, he referred to traveling and exchanging music via travel, "I also, I go to America, I learn blues, jazz. I come to Mali, I play that. And the people will say, 'but that's extraordinary.' [I reply,] 'yes it's American music'" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He thought that this type of travel exchange helps "people open their eyes to the world and no one lives isolated in the world" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Both here and in other times throughout our interview, he implied that Malians have not had as much international exposure to realities outside of national Malian borders—which seemed true because only the Traveler (who I discuss in the *Collective Interviews* chapter) referred to having travel experience (personal communication, March 2, 2012). However, the Professor Artist noted that Malians are very curious about foreign culture, ideas, and experiences (personal communication,

March 3, 2012). Indeed, there were no exceptions; all interviewees, in some form, expressed curiosity and/or interest in foreign culture, ideas, and experiences.

Performance exchange. He also linked how artist travel exchanges could help educate U.S.-Americans about Mali, since there is much disconnect in the cross-cultural understanding between our cultures. He referred to a positive exchange in which the Malian National Ensemble was in the United States. He recounted that prior to this trip,

> Americans did not know Mali at all. When you say *Mali*, they said *Bali* in
> Asia...when you see Malian artists dance in every European country they say, 'but
> these artists come from what country?' From Mali. There are people who say *Bali*.
> No, *Mali*. These people have started to make contact. It is like this that Mali was
> known in America, through the artists. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Via Malian artists traveling to America, Americans can start to learn about and appreciate Mali. Thus, a cross-cultural awareness happens as a result of these exchanges.

When the Malian National Ensemble traveled to some socialist countries, people in these countries began appreciating Mali more as well (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012):

> It's the same thing in socialist countries.... When the artists had come, they had
> danced. They said "what an extraordinary group. Which country do they come
> from?"
> [The artists replied,] "From Mali".
> "Where is Mali?"
> "It's in Africa."

"From where?"

"In West Africa."

Through Malian artists, people from other countries grew curious of the Malian art and culture. The disconnect between US-Americans and Malians decreased and people learned.

This initial interaction led to new, broader perspectives for both the Malian artists and their audiences. It also created more opportunities for exchange. "[Foreigners] made contact. They took photos and there are people who have begun to come here like you. [They] come [on] diplomatic [mission] here to Mali. Mali begins to be known through who? The artists" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Via music, dance, and performance, peoples' consciousness expanded.

Instrument exchange. The Professor Artist mentioned instrument exchange as another example of exchange between cultures. Artists can see and learn about each other via playing music together, both in the U.S. and in Mali. This could create grounds for new creative collaborations and act as a way to exchange and learn from each other's cultures and life experiences. Based on the our prior dialog when the Professor Artist stressed the importance of arts ambassadors, I assume that ideally this instrument interchange could happen in Mali for foreigners, but also in other countries for Malians as well, since he spoke about it under the equal exchange theme (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Professor exchange. He saw great potential in music professors and teachers exchanging knowledge between one another. "I see people who are experts in music: the music professors of music in Europe [and] the music professors in Africa.... And in my opinion, the professor should be interested in music like you..." (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Again he saw potential to learn on both sides.

Fair trade. He was also in favor of direct trade and fair trade regulating systems. When possible, it is beneficial to artists to eliminate middle trades people so that artists can have a more equitable percentage of the profit. It also creates a relationship between the artist and consumer and an opportunity for dialog, sensitization, and human connection, which makes it more difficult to exploit one another (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Although, as Dr. John Fenn explained, depending on how the fair trade is conducted, it could perpetuate power inequities by maintaining a client-patron relationship, or power imbalance between Malians and foreigners respectively (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). Therefore, even if foreign fair traders' intentions are good, there is still a tendency to perpetuate foreigner power dynamics over local farmers. Dr. Steven Wooten also pointed out that fair trade is not a typical structure that NGOs use. Rather, fair trade is usually associated as a business model. However, with current trends moving toward more entrepreneurially-minded NGOs (R. Irvin, multiple personal communications, 2011), a similar fair trade model may be pertinent and legal for NGOs as well.

The Professor Artist advocated for NGOs to reinforce and support more fair trade practices and he highlighted one of his favorite fair trade projects: Kanaga System Krush

(KSK). According to my online research, KSK Records was founded in 2005 by owner

Aja Salvatore, in Nevada City, California (Kanaga Systems Krush, 2010). KSK has

started carrying documentaries recently, but originally KSK was known as:

> an independent record label, operating on a fair-trade principle, focused on the
>
> preservation and promotion of traditional music from West Africa. By bringing
>
> this music to the world market, KSK is opening new channels to an old tradition,
>
> as well as providing direct support to the carriers of this ancient knowledge.
>
> (Kanaga Systems Krush, 2010, para. 2)

The Professor Artist's impression was that KSK concentrated their efforts on producing

music in Bamako.

He would like to see the KSK reproduced in villages as well, to help maintain the

older traditions. He requested that I come with him to visit his network of village artists.

The idea was to eventually produce the village music with KSK or recreate a similar

program, operating with KSK's model (personal communication, March 3, 2012). I

surmise that he would appreciate NGO assistance to extend the KSK model to Malian

villages.

Support. Resonating with the Mentor's sentiment that artists do not have a lot of

money or a place in society (personal communication, February 29, 2012), the Professor

Artist was also sensitive to this injustice. He said that marginalization is global and

asked: "Why doesn't the marginalization stop?" (personal communication, March 3,

2012). More specifically, he mentioned six ways in which NGOs could help empower

and support Malian dancers and musicians.

139

Equalize power dynamics for local artists in Mali. The Professor Artist would like

NGOs to help Malian artists gain more respect within their own culture. He was

frustrated that in general Malian society does not respect local dancers and musicians.

Speaking of artists in Mali, he said,

> Because listen, the artist is marginalized by the rest of society. We are
>
> marginalized. It is the time now that we are focused on...that we are all from one
>
> family, to live. It is what I think. We are truly marginalized because to be known
>
> in Africa, one must go to Europe. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Therefore, if artists are not able to travel, they do not typically receive honor from their

own country.

He further explained that the Malian government officials do not value artists in

Mali. Rather, they think that "[i]t is the artists who need the state...but it's not true. It's not

true. It's not at all true" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). As he described

earlier, the artists in the Malian National Ensemble acted as ambassadors for Mali. As

already explained, it is via the artists that Mali is known internationally today (personal

communication, March 3, 2012). He implied foreign validation of artists' value helps

Malian artists gain respect from their own government that typically marginalizes them.

Choosing to directly interview Malian dancers and musicians for my study validates

Malian artists' value.

The Professor Artist said that Malian artists would greatly benefit from a NGOs

project focused on helping to decrease Malian artist marginalization by the Malian

government, "It is important for NGOs to assist artists because the Malian government

doesn't help artists. For example when sick..., [s]upposedly the Malian government gives

2,000,000 CFA for artist health issues, but no one knows where this money goes"
(personal communication, March 3, 2012). He would like NGOs to empower artists to
advocate for their own rights, which will help artists gain more respect from the Malian
government and Malian society overall.

Equalize power dynamics internationally for Malian artists. The Professor Artist
was also concerned about the broader, global marginalization of Malian artists. He
discussed that oftentimes internationally, people profit off of Malian music without
Malians benefiting from the profit. I explained my own experience in the U.S. When I see
people profiting from African goods/traditions, I ask if they give something back to
Africa in return. Usually, people profiting in the U.S. do not give back to Africa. Instead
they get defensive and mad at me for asking the question, but I sense in their heart they
know they should. He was familiar with this phenomena and simply replied, "Yes it's
marginalization of artists. It's all over the world" (personal communication, March 3,
2012). Similar to Ledwith's recommendation to create alliances across differences (p.
105), the Professor Artist would be helpful to manage Malian artist exploitation
internationally.

Material support. Because the Professor Artist had not yet mentioned material
assistance during his interview thus far, I wanted to get a sense of what he thought of
some of the other interviewees' examples. I then listed some of the other interviewees'
project collaboration visions. For example, I shared that it would be helpful to Malian
artists if NGOs could help artists have better access to instruments, facilities, centers,

places for people to exchange/practice, and more generally, health assistance and improved resources. I asked if all of these things would be helpful to artists; he concurred. However, he added assistance did not have to be material (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Moral support. The Professor Artist explained that my travels to meet village artists would be perceived as moral support and positive reinforcement for upcoming artists, to help them continue to persevere in an otherwise discouraging professional climate—as he described previously. He also detailed that by conducting my thesis interviews, I have provided moral support to Malian musicians and dancers:

> I was ready to abandon music. But with this interview, I have the appetite to continue. Because I feel that someone is interested in me. Even if you have not given me money. Even if you have not paid materials and my instruments for my music, I know that with this interview I have a value that it is necessary to preserve. It's very encouraging for the artists here in Mali. And many Malian artists have loved that you have come to our home to do such interviews. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

I do not believe that he was ready to abandon music—I have seen clips of him brightly smiling, playing the ngoni. Also, as he was talking about his music experiences, he had the same beaming smile—he loved playing music. I do believe however, that the Professor Artist felt frustrated about not feeling musically appreciated. Thus, I believe his

assessments that foreign curiosity and interest in Malian arts encourages Malian musicians to continue their practice and confirms their value.

He continued:

Many artists think like me. That one must keep their spirits up and maintain it. It's very important truly. Because listen to one thing, Mali is not known on the exterior. Mali doesn't know their artists, that's all. Through our art one does not have the means and resources here to be known.... Because of artists, Malians are known because of the artists. We want nothing...commercially, no. But unfortunately, [the general Malian population] is not interested in the artists. This is what we want. This moral support is very important. Your interview us about what we are, what we want, it's very important for us. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

The Professor Artist reemphasized that moral support is priceless to Malian artists, since they do not feel appreciated by their community.

The Professor Artist then emphasized that my interview was unique by the way in which I sought the opinion of Malian dancers and musicians directly:

I am very happy this morning, that no one has interviewed me in my life like you. Never. I have done years of theater here. In all of the years, no one has interviewed me about this problem except you. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

Whether or not anyone had ever interviewed him like I had, what I take from this quote, is that he appreciated my initiative. He not only expressed this to me verbally, he demonstrated his sincerity by spending almost four hours explaining his wisdom and

143

worldview to me without knowing, until afterward, that I would pay him more because he had invested so much time and energy. He reciprocated the moral support that he claimed I gave him by interviewing him, by giving me a deep, sincere, reflection of his experience over a lifetime. He expressed that he wished that more people cared about Malian artists' perspectives.

Technical support. "[A]rtist assistance, it is not always financial. It can be technical" (personal communication, March 3, 2012), he said. He clarified technical assistance by referencing both the realms of music technology and music technique, so that artists can produce their own recordings and presentations. Many artists would like to learn more about technique and music technology (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Create opportunities. He continued to demonstrate how my research also generates more potential opportunities for Malian artists, "Because they could be known on the exterior.... [Your research] is also going to be published, and you are going to know the problem. But when we stay here, it is not easy" to tell their story, exchange with different perspectives, and maximize their potential (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

He used the example, "artists who are internationally renowned here in Mali it is not [because of the NGOs]" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). However, the Professor Artist hints at a way in which NGOs could be helpful to Malian artists:

144

Oumou Sangare[7], Salif Keita are renowned. They have had a contract. They have

been to Europe—it is not through NGOs like you. This is an example that I see....

I hope very, very much that you succeed in what you are in the process of doing.

It's a beginning that develops for us, the artists. (personal communication, March

3, 2012)

It would be favorable for NGOs to create opportunities for artists to become known and

travel outside of Mali in order to increase their life possibilities.

Another way the Professor Artist agreed would help to provide new opportunities

for Malian dancers and musicians was by innovating microcredit systems for artists. I

asked him directly about his opinion both about microcredit in general and the potential

of innovating a microcredit system for artists. Unlike the other interviewees, the

Professor Artist seemed to be the only interviewee to comfortably discuss microcredit. He

was for the idea because it would loan artists a small amount of money to initially invest

in basic supplies and equipment, an investment that would help to facilitate the artists'

abilities to practice and develop their art. The other artists who I randomly asked about

microcredit answered more quickly.

Because both Yeredon and Dr. Steven Wooten already gained the Professor Artist's

trust, the Professor Artist's interview was deep, generous, and sincere. An icon in many

ways, the Professor Artist lived between and bridged many different worlds, which made

him an excellent sociocultural intermediary across multiple disciplines, languages,

cultures, and borders. He could see both Malian and NGO viewpoints, delineate root

causes as to why NGO projects fail in Mali, depict how to become more successful via

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[7] Oumou Sangare: "is the leading female star of the Wassoulou [region of West Africa] sound which is based on an ancient tradition of hunting rituals mixed with songs about devotion, praise, and harvest played with pentatonic (five-note) melodies" (Janet Planet, 1998, para. 1).

his extensive list of suggested best practices and projects, and explain how to align interests with Malians in order to synergize project efforts. He had much practical experience to back up his philosophy. The Professor Artist could also see both local and global power dynamics and systems, resulting in extensive potential for NGO-Malian artist collaborations, which outlined a perfect structure as I explore the other two interviews in this chapter by the Griot and Pseudo French Artist.

Griot

Interview Context

As I mentioned in *The Connectors* section, I met the Griot at Ko-Falen Cultural Center via Baba Wagué Diakité and Ronna Neuenschwander's recommendation. The Griot comes from a family lineage of griots. He described a griot's community role in Mali as the designated public mediators who maintain peace between different ethnic groups, and solve conflicts between different communities. They also transmit messages, knowledge, stories, and history from generation to generation. One of the many forms in which griots transmit their work is via staged animations for the community (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

He is a practicing musician—a drummer who specializes in two types of drums: the dundunba and even more so, tama. He learned tama as a child and this type of drum is

what he continues to practice and play the most. His musical experience comes from the knowledge that his griot family lineage passed on to him. He explained,

> [h]ere [in Mali], practice begins since childhood.... The way to play it resembles the tradition. The way to learn is in the different ceremonies. The 'big[, well-known,] men' come, the uncles, the relatives...and it is during the ceremony you understand and play with them. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

Therefore, ceremonies are live opportunities to immerse oneself in the music and learn, apprenticeship-style, with musicians. In both Mali and the Griot's music, there are components of innovation and tradition (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

He explained, "now with the modernization of art, music, dance, one learns them in different spaces...in centers for study...[like] in universities" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He continued,

> I imagine with time and as new situations occur...the tradition changes little by little with modernization.... Modernization changes the perspective, but not completely. Because in all things one must have a foundation...which is the tradition...one continues to learn art, but in a different manner. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

Hence, as the Professor Artist emphasized, even with change, there is a traditional base as illustrated by the interrelationship between *fadenya* and *badenya* or, creativity and tradition, respectively. Only the Griot and Professor Artist emphasized the importance of a traditional base for Malian musical expression, although the Griot did not define his perceived Malian tradition essence as did the Professor Artist.

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Griot had worked on and observed NGO projects. When asked his opinions

of NGOs, he answered, "NGOs are always welcome" (personal communication, March 2,

2012). He proceeded,

> When a person comes to help in something there is hope that the welcome is with
>
> open arms. If it is not good for us, it is not bad. You know, it is necessary to
>
> evolve with the time.... Change is necessary. And this change I hope it is for our
>
> good. NGOs are welcomed in Africa, more precisely here in Mali. (personal
>
> communication, March 2, 2012)

His answer reflected that he was not sure about what NGOs do, but knew that they were

at least neutral, if not good for Mali's evolution—which seemed to be a common

sentiment across the rest of my interviews.

The Griot expanded his feedback about NGOs in general by saying that he liked

"NGOs when...they talk of 'goodness'.... Goodness such as NGOs fighting against

poverty, drought, lack of water, and different illnesses. And there are the NGOs who

[intend to aid] certain cultures...but...good...for the whole world" (personal

communication, March 2, 2012). In other words, the Griot articulated that even if NGO

projects focused on a specific problem, such as poverty or desertification in a

geographical area for one ethnic group, it not only helps that group in Mali, but also the

entire planet.

From his experience: "[t]here are different [NGOs]...there are many here in Mali

[working in] different domains" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). For example,

some domains include: "people, health, education, environment, lack of water, fighting

against viruses, different illnesses...like malaria.... There are also ones, more precisely, for art and culture" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Griot noted the existence of environmental, art-based, and cultural NGOs, whereas in contrast, the Comedian Dancer pointed out that these types of NGOs did not exist.

Before talking about his NGO experiences the Griot admitted, "I cannot speak of the other NGOs without knowing their situations directly" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He acknowledged a bias, namely that he is personally "a member of a NGO Ben Kadi[8].... The activities are just beginning, the NGO is here for culture, education, health..." (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He recognized his NGO experience was not extensive (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

He also enjoyed being involved in what he described as an effective NGO project that distributed materials and served as a public health liaison to the community. More specifically, the NGO's content was "about washing hands with soap.... It very much helped. It was a great pleasure to help others...against dirtiness, against microbes, against different illnesses. It pleased me very much" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He seemed happy to participate in an effective NGO project that benefited his community's public health.

The Griot offered another positive example of a musician/dancer collaboration with NGOs that he did not participate in directly. It was in a case involving his father, who is one of three founders of RECOTRADE (in French: Réseau des communicateurs traditionnelles du Mali), an acronym meaning the "Traditional Communicators Network

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[8] Ben Kadi: a phrase that means "peace is good" (Griot, multiple personal communications, 2011-2012) in the Bamana language and the title of an emerging NGO in Bamako. Ben Kadi would like to partner with our Lanyi Fan, Nonprofit, INGO efforts as well. The phrase Lanyi Fan also means "peace is good" (K. Bangoura, multiple personal communications, 2007-2009), but is in the Sousou language most commonly found in Republic of Guinea.

of Mali" in English. RECOTRADE goes "into the field to better inform the population, the community...make them understand what the NGO does or what the different projects want to do for them" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). RECOTRADE has many contracts with NGOs because RECOTRADE helps "...to communicate their message" (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

I researched RECOTRADE via the Internet. Indeed, RECOTRADE helps mediate communications between NGOs and/or government messages and the Malian people. RECOTRADE itself is not a NGO; it is a national, governmental organization, according to their website (RECOTRADE, 2012). I am under the impression that the Griot thought that RECOTRADE was a NGO. Since RECOTRADE is governmental, their organizational structures are more abstractly related, and less easy to translate into best NGO practices. However, the Griot did use it as an example of a favorable, successful organization working with NGOs. Therefore, it is valuable to more abstractly learn from their practices and apply them to the NGO context.

The Griot's example demonstrates how NGOs are not only helpful to Mali, but why RECOTRADE, and therefore musicians and dancers, are important to NGOs' effectiveness, as stated by the Griot:

> ...we help NGOs so they can do their work...[t]heir animations in the field...through animations, messages, we explain the importance or idea of what the NGO wants to do. Because it is the Griots...the musicians and dancers in Mali here...who give the messages...who give the information and the people understand via the dance and music. The information is well passed on by the Griots. (personal communication, March 2, 2012)

The Griot explained how Malian griots are important in translating NGO projects to the local people, because they are socioculturally designated to and versed in interweaving *badenya* tradition with *fadenya* innovation, which creates new meaning and balance. As the Professor Artist described, when the local people understand and value the NGO's project, this understanding inherently increases the project's efficiency and effectiveness.

Out of all the interviewees, the Professor Artist, the Urban Artist (who I review later under the *Collective Interviews* section), and the Griot were the only ones to articulate why, as interpreters and transmitters, musicians and dancers are important to NGO projects' effectiveness and efficiency. The main differences that distinguished the Professor Artist from the Griot and Urban Artist, was that the Professor Artist promoted Malian musicians and dancers specifically as cultural ambassadors. The Professor Artist also talked about how important appropriate cultural mediators were in general, but did not specify dancers and musicians.

Collaboration Vision

The Griot elaborated on his comments by saying that when starting to work with a group of people, "it is necessary to exchange first. It is necessary to exchange with them. It is to know who they are in their heart, know what they want to do long term, know their living situation" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He emphasized it is important that if people take action in Mali, it is first crucial to exchange with the local people to understand the context: the people of the specific place, how they feel, and the social and cultural systems in each unique region. It is important to first know the

sociocultural context before starting a project. Therefore, as paralleled by the Professor Artist in our interview on March 3, 2013, the Griot emphasized exchanging understanding and aligning interests before starting projects (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

For long-term sustainability of Malian dance and music, the Griot suggested supports to promote Mali's cultural richness. In alignment with the *Introduction* section of this paper, the Griot commented about how vastly diverse Mali is. He said, "Mali is a country where one finds different cultures inside. There are multiple Malian cultures. In all regions of Mali one finds...a well determined culture" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). In order to help sustain the cultural richness, one must first understand that Mali is extremely culturally diverse and NGOs must design projects appropriately. What works for one culture may not work well for another, even though it is the same country. To reemphasize, one must understand the sociocultural context before starting a project.

After further online research regarding RECOTRADE's strategies and functions, it seems that RECOTRADE could be a helpful mediator for NGOs. Their motto is to create synergy between conventional and traditional media for the distribution and communication of materials, which results in positive personal and social behavior changes that improve the socioeconomic status of the population and their environments in Mali and Africa. RECOTRADE's strategy is to bring together *Niamakala* in Mali. *Niamakala* are communication experts with varying specialties. Some specialists include, but are not limited to: smiths, griots, promoters of Islam, shoemakers, weavers, and

sculptors (RECOTRADE, 2012). In alignment with the Griot's description of griots in Mali, *Niamakala* (and therefore griots) are sociocultural mediators.

RECOTRADE, the Malian government, and its development partners (including NGOs) facilitate and achieve national program results. RECOTRADE (RECOTRADE, 2012):

- facilitates communication between policy makers and the grassroots organizers.

- approaches decision centers through information, advocacy, dialog, and communication.

- contributes to peace and social stability.

- processes information so it is fluid and accessible to people at all levels.

- intervenes during baptisms, weddings, funerals, or any other social event in order to facilitate discussion.

- mediates, conciliates, and resolves conflicts by promoting the use of new information, training, awareness and advocacy for positive change in individual and social behaviors.

- recalls history received from predecessors to help build positive social harmony and peace.

The Griot emphasized that since Mali is so diverse, understanding the sociocultural context before starting a project is a key to NGO success in Mali (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Possibly RECOTRADE could more extensively partner with NGOs as sociocultural mediators in order to increase NGO effectiveness and efficiency in Mali. It is easier to partner with an already-existing entity than recreate an

organization to serve the same purpose (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013).

He continued by saying that there are already a multitude of musicians, dancers, and others in Mali who are experienced at their craft, but the financial side prevents what they can and want to do. "If there were the NGOs to help [musicians and dancers]...advance, that would be good" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He recommends NGOs assist artists' progress in their profession beyond what they are able to do on their own.

When asked what kind of help specifically, he responded similarly to the Urban Artist. "The structures are numerous.... Mali is a young country.... The majority [of the population] is young. Therefore the youth need the help. There are the youth here in Mali who have the experience but do not have the means to have what they want—to have the experience to...deepen their ideas. The financial and material aspects lack" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Hence, the Griot agreed with the Urban Artist that the youth need the most financial and material assistance. The Professor Artist also confirmed that financial and material resources were limited, but only briefly mentioned this topic, when I specifically asked him about it.

The Griot implied that there is a demand for space to practice and learn music and dance. "There are artists who do not have a space...to practice.... There are musicians with talents who have experience...[and] want to do the research to know what to do in life" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He repeated, "the financial aspect lacks" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Therefore, space is not typically financially accessible to young artists in Bamako. I noticed that at the beginning of the interview, the

Griot explained that the way in which he originally learned music was with his family and community mentors, in more traditional Malian ceremonial settings. However, since the world continues to evolve, the way in which he initially learned music with his mentors is not the only desired way to learn. Now, the Griot would like a different kind of space for training and acquiring information. As mentioned, he emphasized that the financial hurdle was the largest challenge in achieving a space.

The Griot generated other possible ideas for Malian music and dance realms for exchanges. He asked me, "Why not the exchanges between Mali and the U.S.? Why not the exchange between Africa and Europe?...why not the exchange between Africa and Asia" (personal communication, March 2, 2012)? He emphasized, "[m]usic does not have a border" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). In the Griot's questions to me, he spoke of the exciting possibilities for international exchange via music—a borderless frontier.

Pseudo French Artist

Interview Context

The final individual interview that I conducted was with the Pseudo French Artist. The Griot was young (probably in his late twenties or early thirties); in contrast, the Pseudo French Artist seemed more comparable in age to the Professor Artist. I interviewed The Pseudo French Artist at a cultural center, just before his West African

ballet troupe's rehearsal. I met him via the drummers who played for my personal dance class at Ko-Falen Cultural Center. The Pseudo French Artist is a professional singer, musician, choreographer, dancer, comedian, and actor. He is an instructor of these arts as well. He is also the director of his West African ballet troupe, which he claims to be, "the number one private troupe in Mali" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). As an elder artist, people come to train under him at his private arts school at the cultural center where I interviewed him. He did not lack confidence.

He was born in Bamako in 1950—ten years before Mali's independence from the French. Since the age of thirteen, the Pseudo French Artist trained intensively in music. He has a diploma in music, which is a French concept. His told me that his training was with "white people" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He identified himself as "pseudo French" (personal communication, March 5, 2012) because he was born before independence from France. His self-identification was peculiar and stood out to me. He continued, "I was colonized, therefore it was the French who taught me. So I am not from the Republic of Mali" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He added that he first started singing in a church, and facetiously reemphasized and called himself multiple times, in various ways, "I am pseudo French, therefore it was not the Republic of Mali who trained me.... I was colonized" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). Because he chose to voluntarily call himself "pseudo French", but also referred to himself as "colonized", I was lead to think that he felt conflicted about his training, but did not completely despise his French-like upbringing.

He implied that his exposure to a large range of international music was a positive side to being colonized. He said that this "is my luck because in this colonization, I saw

156

all of this, and I played all of this. I play all of these genres of music. Therefore we are the elder musicians of today, yesterday we were new, but now we are amongst the elders" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). More specifically, he referred to being able to play jazz, merengue, cha cha cha, rumba, waltz, and tango. He also said he could sing in Chinese, English, and Spanish. He is now able to teach these music forms to other people and the next generation (personal communication, March 5, 2012). More specifically, he plays saxophone alto, soprano, and trumpet. It appeared that he had much international exposure from a young age, but he neither spoke about having physically traveled outside of Mali, nor did I think to ask if he had during his interview.

I assumed he had traveled internationally because told me that he was an "excellent vocalist" and sings with the National Ensemble of Mali (personal communication, March 5, 2012). This seemed true, and if so, he was the only artist I interviewed who worked with the National Ensemble. He explained that his voice background was "prepared at church, by white missionaries" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He has sung extensively in churches, but emphasized that he is Muslim.

He also added that he trained generally in his art forms and that they are all interrelated and complementary. He says "it all goes together" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He added that he is a comedian and actor in movies, whom "everyone knows" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He proudly claimed that out of all of the films made in Mali, he is in almost all of them.

Although I do not doubt the Pseudo French Artist had a high level of expertise, he was overly confident. From my point of view, many of his statements were not logically possible. For example, he said that in his troupe's presentations, they sing in "almost all

of the languages in Mali" (personal communication, March 5, 2012) and play "all of the rhythms in Mali" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). I sense that they sing in many Malian languages and play many Malian rhythms, but as I mentioned before, according to SIL International's 2013 Ethnologue Languages of the World, there are 66 languages in Mali (SIL International, 2013), and I know from studying dance and music for five years in West Africa that there are many music traditions within most language groups. I believe that he knows a lot about various types of music in Mali, but it would be humanly impossible for any troupe to play all rhythms in Mali.

The Pseudo French Artist often exaggerated, but was indeed popular. He explained that he applies his musical abilities in varied contexts, including marriage and circumcision ceremonies, funerals, dinners, and festivals. He said the population always wants his group to perform, adding that "even tomorrow [he will musically] welcome the Prime Minister's wife" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). This seemed possible, but I had no way of validating this statement.

The Pseudo French Artist liked competition and promoting his group. At one point he recited a Malian proverb, "In all of the things where there is not competition, there is not progress" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). In full *fadenya*, he emphasized that his group was the best. "Today, here in Mali, we are the choice...of our Mali. Every time there are events...it's supported by our troupe" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He was comfortable promoting himself and his group by telling people that his group is the best. Because he quoted the proverb emphasizing competition is necessary to progress, then immediately promoted his group, I sensed he was interested in generating some business during our interview.

He described the group as unique because they are not part of any one ethnic group and open to both local and international exchange (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012). No interviewee had mentioned that their group practiced with people from multiple ethnic groups. However, everyone except the Female, Village Percussionist, and Village Musician mentioned being interested in some sort of international exchange. Maybe this is because these three interviewees had the least amount of foreign contact thus far in their lives.

He liked to learn. His philosophy was that one must listen and compare information, ideas, and styles with other people, then approach them to become a part of their group. He believed in and loved local and international music exchange. He used the example of working with Americans to exchange their ideas of jazz. He said that he had exchanged ideas with a lot with Americans (personal communication, March 5, 2012).

He agreed with the Griot and Urban Artist (who I highlight in the next section) in that "in music there are not borders" (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012). He said that, for instance, even if an American is with their group and he does not understand what they say, via the musical notes they are connected; they are able to recognize when they play jazz. In direct reference to music and what seemed to be an indirect reference to his disagreement with U.S.-American international politics, he summarized his musical philosophy, "we give without sanctions on any race or country" (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012).

NGO Impressions/Experience

When asked about his impressions of NGOs working in Mali, the Pseudo French Artist compared them to Malian long-term storage facilities for grain that do not have doors (similar to a silo), as if NGOs are in Mali to help provide basic needs and illuminate for Malians a good path to the future. The metaphor he used implied that NGO storage facilities without doors are not easily accessible. However, in general the Pseudo French Artist strongly supported NGO leadership by saying that without NGOs' help, "not everyone can follow a good path" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He insinuated that NGOs help Malian people satiate their basic needs in ways that are not otherwise possible. Because he otherwise spoke highly of NGO work, it makes me wonder if he meant to only emphasize the storage part of the storage facility without doors metaphor, rather than emphasized that these facilities have no doors. It is also possible that it was his way to indirectly imply (in the way that Malians often do) that he liked NGO work, but wished that it would be more accessible.

He used a hypothetical, not a concrete, school example to demonstrate his understanding of NGOs. He said that Malians who want to build a school approach NGOs. The Malians explain what they want to NGOs and, quickly, NGOs come to help without racial prejudgment. Because of this, he reiterated his contentment with NGO work, and he thanked NGOs on behalf of "Malian art and Malian artists" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). From the Pseudo French Artist's words, I sense he got the impression that NGOs listen well to the needs of the Malian population and have acted efficiently to address these needs appropriately and well. However, he did not reference an organization's name, location in which the project was implemented, or other

160

details about the project. These omissions led me to believe that he had heard this example from another person or the media. Maybe this is the type of project he would like a NGO to do, but has not directly observed or experienced yet.

When asked if he had a critique of NGOs, he replied, "One cannot please the whole world. All people cannot be satisfied. All of the needs cannot be satisfied.... One can give what one has. That which one does not have, one cannot give.... Therefore, I thank NGOs very much" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He acknowledged that NGOs are not perfect, but is grateful for the work they are successfully able to do.

He added an example that reinforced the Griot's idea that Malians like to feel respected during an exchange. When the Griot described creating successful NGO projects in Mali, he advised that it is important to "know who they are in their heart, know what they want to do long term" (personal communications, March 2, 2012). The Pseudo French Artist also appreciated when he sponsored or helped an artist and sensed the artist was sincere and serious. When the person obtained this information, he or she would use it for good work and with good intentions. He was directly referring his experience teaching other artists. He wanted his students to respect what he gives them.

Therefore, fostering this reverence and trust when working in Mali is important to genuinely align Malians and NGOs with similar interests and goals, and to decrease disappointments. From my experience working, learning, and volunteering in Mali, Guinea, and Senegal, after this cross-cultural trust and respect is established, and once people are convinced that my intentions are good and that I use the information they give me for good work, people often voluntarily contribute to projects. In contrast, I have seen countless situations in which people, whether or not their sentiment is true, who do not

161

feel respected or do not trust the situation. Then, they will not contribute and oftentimes sabotage joint efforts, which make long-term collaboration unlikely.

When asked what NGOs do and how they intervene in Mali, he verbally meandered for a while, repeating things like "we are together, we are always together" (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012), which reinforced a prime value in Mali—solidarity—but he did not answer my question. He also offered me the use of his performance group, if I knew of NGOs that were interested in working with them (personal communication, March 5, 2012). Therefore he appeared to value working with NGOs in theory, but did not offer any concrete ways in which he liked NGOs intervening in Mali. Perhaps he viewed NGOs merely as potential opportunities, however, it seemed clear that he genuinely loved exchanging, especially music, with foreigners. Hence, while analyzing my conversation with him, I intuit that he would probably resonate with the Professor Artist's *tourisme solidaire* concept.

In trying to find an example of NGO interventions, the Pseudo French Artist reiterated his NGO appreciation multiple times, "people in charge [of NGOs] are obligated to travel...to see our home to see what is happening. They give us a lot...very good advice. In addition to this, they back us...[with] cultural advice, support us physically and morally well...and they follow through" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He appreciated NGO workers because, from his point of view, they travel far to help, make a positive effort, and follow through. However, again, he did not give concrete, experiential examples—which means he may have been choosing his words simply to make me feel happy.

Still looking for more concrete instances, I asked him if he had solid examples of good NGO systems or projects that he particularly liked. Similar to the ways in which almost all of the other interviewees directly or indirectly gave examples of how some of their favorite types of NGOs work to improve health issues, the Pseudo French Artist explained, "without health a person does not have anything" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He said that once people have good health, then they can do their work. It does not matter what age a person is, health is important (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He was for good health because it was a universal benefit to the Malian population, and insinuated that he valued NGOs helping in this realm.

I asked him if he knew of NGOs that work to specifically help Malian musicians and dancers. He said yes, that one in three NGOs in Mali focus on helping musicians/dancers. He said that these NGOs work with arts teachers to help them become better teachers to their students, construct art schools, facilitate artists' travel outside of Mali, and provide scholarships to study abroad (personal communication, March 5, 2012). I believe that there are few NGOs who provide these services, but I doubt that one in three NGOs work to specifically help Malian musicians and dancers, since most interviewees were not able to think of a single one.

I asked the Pseudo French Artist if he could give me examples of NGOs who do this type of work for artists and he offered a list of governmental embassies: United States, French, and Canadian. I asked if these were governmental or non-governmental. He was under the impression that they were non-governmental (personal communication, March 5, 2012), when in reality, they are governmental. Hence, he confidently did not understand the difference between a governmental and non-governmental organization.

163

Rather, he apparently thought that all aid organizations are NGOs—which is not the case. Especially since we were in Malian culture and he was an elder Mali and I was a younger female, it seemed inappropriate for me to correct him, so I did not. From trends in my research thus far, and since he is an elder with much international exposure, I gathered that it was likely that many Malians misunderstand the difference between governmental and non-governmental organizations—another disconnect between NGOs and Malian artists. This disconnect leads me to believe that NGOs have not yet sufficiently generated enough awareness about who they are, how they are different, and their relationship with the Malian government.

Collaboration Vision

I asked what type of support would help musicians and dancers in Mali. He quickly answered, "pay them well for their work" (personal communication, March 5, 2012), which was a prominent theme for both the Kora Players and Traveler as well. He further explained that this financial support helps dancers and musicians advance in their life.

I understand that leading questions are not ideal in spurring original answers. In the attempt to garner some more of his ideas and also to see if he agreed, I used other examples of assistance ideas from other interviewees. I listed: assistance with accessibility to materials, instruments, medical care, general management, and contract facilitation. Although he did not come up with these examples himself, he agreed that all of these supports would be helpful (personal communication, March 5, 2012).

He then added to the ways in which NGOs could reinforce music and dance in Mali, by describing the types of assistance that facilitate musicians' and dancers' work. He detailed that the most important issues for musicians and dancers are their health and eating and sleeping well. It was also important that if Malian artists were contracted for a service that they have comfortable transportation so that they can do their job well. Like all of the other interviewees except the Kora Players and Village Musician (both of whom I discuss more extensively in subsequent sections), the Pseudo French Artist also could use a space for his work. For his situation, he said that a performance space would be helpful for their troupe because currently they practice in the open-air, "under the trees" (personal communication, March 5, 2012).

The Pseudo French Artist was one of the eight (out of my twelve) interviewees who would also like opportunities to travel abroad and exchange ideas with people in other countries. The Pseudo French Artist specified that fifteen days to three months would be a good amount of time to tour abroad. He would like to create relationships with more people outside of Mali and engage in an ongoing exchange, and that "our hearts are [cross-culturally] married" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). Unprompted, the Griot, Professor Artist, and Pseudo French Artist all referred to *cross-cultural marriages*—a concept that also resonated with the Professor Artist's *art of solidarity* concept (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012).

Overall, there was a rich progression in my interview with the Pseudo French Artist. It started with edginess as he repeated multiple times that he felt he had been

colonized. The tone lightened up when I first asked about his thoughts regarding NGOs. He talked about sincerely appreciating NGOs. Even after I had changed the subject, he emphasized that people in Mali should appreciate NGOs even if they are not solving all problems. He revered them for at least working to solve some issues in Mali. But since he could not articulate in what ways he respected the NGOs, it seemed his convictions came from other Malians' experiences and opinions and/or wanting to make me feel happy. His general comments about NGOs were positive (personal communication, March 5, 2012), which suggested he was also saying what he thought I would like to hear for the sake of a potential employment opportunity.

Toward the end of our interview, in a similar vein as the Professor Artist, the Pseudo French Artist expressed his deep gratitude for the types of questions that I asked him, which indicated to me indirectly that at some level, my interview encouraged his work. He ended by blessing me and my family (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012)—one of the nicest things that an elder can do to someone in Mali. Even though this interview started with an edgy tone, it ended with a softened blessing.

CHAPTER IV

COLLECTIVE INTERVIEWS

Unlike the *Individual Interviews*, the collective interviews in this chapter are grouped together because they are interviews that involved at least one additional person who also contributed to the interview. In this chapter, I feature eight interviews total, divided into three main interview sections in the following order: *Urban Artist*, *Kora Players*, and *Comedian Dancer and Colleagues*.

Urban Artist

Interview Context

The Urban Artist's interview took place at the Urban Artist's French mentor's residence in Bamako's Hamdallaye neighborhood. I met the Mentor at a sustainable development conference entitled "Creation and Development" during the *Festival Sur le Niger* in Ségou, Mali from February 15-19, 2012. The Mentor facilitates youth art collectives in both Bamako and Ségou. Although he is of French decent, he has spent over a decade facilitating youth arts programs in Mali. He encourages and assists Malian youth to express themselves freely and respectfully and thinks that with quality expression, the youth will successfully improve their current Malian reality (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

167

The Mentor and I spoke a few times before the interview; one of our conversations was an informal interview, conducted because I was interested in his experience of living in Mali for over a decade. He also shared many ideas during the "Creation and Development" conference. I wanted to learn more from his experience. Therefore, the Mentor and I had already started establishing trust by the time I interviewed the Urban Artist—who the Mentor recommended I interview.

During my interview with the Urban Artist, the Mentor proved to be a wonderful sociocultural mediator (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Mentor was present during the interview. Therefore, what started as an individual interview with the Urban Artist, turned into a collective interview as his mentor added to the conversation. Even though my subjects were to be Malian dancers and musicians, the mentor interjected at various times to help rephrase my interview questions in order to provoke the Urban Artist for more candid answers. This was helpful, since the Urban Artist has a slight stutter, was shy, and initially hesitant to share his thoughts. I chose to include the Mentor's interjections because they led to great feedback about what both the Urban Artist and the Mentor agree are problems in Mali today and how NGOs could potentially help (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

Out of all of the people I interviewed, the Urban Artist's tastes seemed to most favor artistic expression with origins from Europe and the U.S. He was also one of the more radical thinkers among my interviewees. I interviewed him where he met regularly with an urban youth collective who did "slam, hip hop, dance, tic toc...[and open to] all other forms" (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). In his early

168

twenties, he was one of the youngest if not the youngest person I interviewed. The Urban Artist explained: "Dance raised me here, around urban culture" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). He grew up dancing in Bamako, which lead to his dedication to the urban youth cooperative.

The urban youth collective he worked with creates United States-American and European-inspired art. He was motivated to create other forms of artistic expression that he believed were necessary beyond traditional art, "since Bamako is the capital city, not a village" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The youth who participate in this collective want to change things. He explains, "We want to gather and exchange ideas that...have not been done before" (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). In other words, he was interested in exchanging ideas with other people in order to inspire new creations—as do the other three interviewees I have reviewed thus far. Similarly in thought to the prior three interviewees, he was very curious about foreign ideas.

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Urban Artist had never personally worked with a NGO, but he wanted to. The Urban Artist claimed that he was "not very informed about NGOs" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). This seemed accurate, because the Urban Artist's NGO impressions were not detailed, despite me asking him additional clarification questions (personal communications, February 29, 2012).

He was under the impression that NGOs are comprised of people who help the Malian population with what they would like to plan and improve in Mali. He mentioned hearing about NGOs intervening in health issues and sometimes funding artists. He thought that NGOs were interested in youth who crave to change the culture—which was a good strategy in his opinion and his obvious bias. Even though he lacked NGO experience, he added great insight and potential solutions in other ways (Urban Artist, personal communications, February 29, 2012).

Collaboration Vision

The Urban Artist described his collaboration vision with NGOs by first explaining his philosophy, "when one talks about the future, one talks about the youth" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Therefore, if people truly want sustainable development that guarantees a good future, he said, "it is necessary to be interested in the youth" (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012), and not just any youth in Mali, but the artists, the dancers "who crave to change things" (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Hence, he thinks "NGOs should be interested...above all...in the young artists craving to change their culture" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). In other words, he believes the key to sustainability in Mali is to invest in creative, internally motivated, young change agents—like himself.

The Urban Artist talked extensively about the cultural issues that prevent artists from being more effective change agents and what leaves them at a disadvantage to change things in their society. He used the example that if youth want to do art, "they are

not supported by [their] family" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). His family told him that he should study an academic subject like engineering instead of wasting his time with the arts (personal communication, February 29, 2012). They were critical of his arts interest (personal communication, February 20, 2012). He said this was a common trend in Mali. During my time working and studying with artists in Guinea, a bordering country, I heard the same trend—Guinean families also discouraged their children to practice dance and music unless children were from a griot family line. I knew of uncountable incidences in which children would not stop attending their music and/or dance practices and their families would beat and/or disown them. Therefore, unless a child is from a griot lineage, it is not culturally respected for people to invest in an artistic livelihood.

At one point in the interview, the Urban Artist was conservative about revealing his true feelings. Knowing him better than I, his mentor could sense him holding back his opinions and provoked the Urban Artist to be more honest by saying, "You...are young. What pisses you off about the tradition?...What bothers you?" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). In response, the Urban Artist radiantly grinned. He blurted, "It is the ideas of the old people" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Now that he understood my question at a new level, he began answering more frankly, "[in general, t]he adults are not very open-minded...that is what bothers me...they do not look to understand me.... They do not look to understand the youth" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Therefore, he implied that the elders in Mali are neither aware of nor do they try to understand the new generations' perspectives. I too, have observed how rigid Malian elders can be. However, I admit that the Professor Artist was exceptionally

171

open-minded; when he was opinionated about a topic, he had a reason as to why. Since the Professor Artist was an open-minded elder and the Urban Artist more of a radical thinking youngster, I hoped to witness a frank conversation between the two one day.

The Urban Artist explained, "[w]e, the youth...don't have help to evolve with the tradition" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The elders too often want to repeat the past. He continued, "the elders did something, therefore they want you to do that. They do not give you the choice. The youth do not have a choice.... The youth want more freedom, more freedom" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Hence, the Urban Artist felt that the youth were forced to follow traditions whether or not they were helpful within the modern Malian context, and that the youth needed more freedom to choose how to manage new realities.

The Urban Artist reiterated it "is the youth who truly need help and support...today" (personal communications, February 29, 2012) and explained how NGOs could help young artists and, conversely, young artists could help NGOs with their mission in order to better Malian society overall. The Urban Artist (personal communication, February 29, 2012), the Professor Artist (personal communication, March 3, 2012), and the Griot (personal communication, March 2, 2012) were the three interviewees who talked about how Malian artists could reciprocate and help NGOs accomplish their missions. The Urban Artist would like NGOs to assist young artists upstart their career by helping them to explain themselves and evolve, and facilitate what they are motivated to do (personal communications, February 29, 2012). Since elders do not care to change their culture, the Urban Artist suggested that NGOs empower young

artists to evolve their culture, and respectfully circumvent the existing, deeply-rooted elder-youth power dynamics.

To help support the Urban Artist's point, his mentor clarified that 67% of the Malian population is under the age of 25. He explained that the elders hold most all positions of power and want to continue as if it is not necessary to change the tradition to adapt to the times. The youth want to invest in themselves because they have hope, and it bothers them that this is the reality in 2012 (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Mentor reinforced the Urban Artist advocating for change by providing facts about how the current system does not empower young people, who are currently the two-thirds majority of the population. Both the Mentor and Doug Cohen agree with the Urban Artist's thinking that the youth are the core for necessary change. They are a new generation, internally motivated, and optimistic that they can innovate new opportunities and change (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; Urban Artist, personal communications, February 29, 2012).

The Urban Artist responded to his mentor's thoughts by saying that this is why they would like to "help to create a space to express [ourselves]" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). He said they needed, "an office where all of the youth will come together: the rappers, dancers,…everyone who wants to play together in a showdown of all the forms of culture" (personal communications, February 29, 2012). The environment he described sounded inclusive and innovative.

The Urban Artist continued to describe a desirable space that could have instructors who helped the youth with expressing the changes the youth would like to create (personal communication, February 29, 2012). In other words, as a solution, the

Urban Artist suggested creating a space with instructors who empower youth to evolve their voices, explore their creativity and curiosities, and generate positive change. From his part of the conversation, I sensed that as long as the instructors' goal was to empower the young artists' expressions, not tell the young artists what to do, the Urban Artist would be open to "the ideas of the old people" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). After speaking with the Urban Artist's mentor prior to his interview, I found that his collaboration vision was similar to what his mentor was doing for the collective at that time, but the Urban Artist hoped for a bigger version that would be able to accommodate even more people.

The Urban Artist described another problem, namely that the elders do not include youth in leadership roles in Mali. He used an example of their public school system, "There are not any youth in the administration...that really irritates me. The administration is generally composed of old people. [This situation] cannot evolve. [This] cannot AT ALL evolve" (personal communication, February 29, 2012).

His mentor elaborated, "That is very important because this says what? This country does not have confidence in their youth" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Urban Artist echoed the Mentor's sentiment, shaking his head, "[Malian elders] don't have confidence in their youth" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Urban Artist and his mentor believe that Malian elders do not have the confidence in their own youth and are products of their own familial, societal, and academic structures.

The Urban Artist noticed the same lack of youth involvement in the *Miss Mali* pageant elections and in art schools as well. He thought this was a shame because "if

174

there are youth in the administration, it is easier for young people to understand other

[young people]. In contrast, if they are old people, they cannot ever understand us"

(personal communication, February 29, 2012). Yet again, he emphasized disconnect

between generations. The Urban Artist proposed that in order to make popular

programming more widely appealing, effective, and efficient, it was important to involve

youth in leadership structures.

The Urban Artist and his mentor agreed that life is dynamic, "[o]ne is never going

to know the same case" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Situations are

constantly changing, and the older third of the Malian population is not actively

integrating or empowering the younger two-thirds; the mentor emphasized the serious

lack of inclusion. He said that if youth "are 67%, how are they going to evolve?"

(personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Urban Artist piggybacked, "[it's] like

they ignore us" (personal communication, February 29, 2012).

The Mentor continued, "Do you see...the social disintegration here?...it is always

the elders who have the last word" (personal communication, February 29, 2012).

Granted, there are individual differences, but from my experience and observations in

Bamako in comparison to the capital cities in Guinea (Conakry) and Senegal (Dakar),

especially elder Malian males most strictly uphold their power to have the last word. I

found it sad that despite intelligence or having the ability to creatively problem solve, the

youngest two-thirds of the Malian population have little voice because of their age

(personal communication, February 29, 2012). Younger voices are omitted from the

Malian collective consciousness.

The Urban Artist agreed with his mentor's solution to harness the internal

motivation of the youth for projects and help develop them. He said:

I'm going to help their professional image, very seriously, to get the elders'

attention. And [the elders] won't say anything. It is necessary that the things that

they don't understand, the rap, hip hop, etc. we do them well and

perhaps...interestingly. This is the idea. (Mentor, personal communication,

February 29, 2012)

He continued, "use the word: integration. It is this that I will do for these youth. It

is...another expression style, but it's necessary to do it respectfully" (personal

communication, February 29, 2012). The Urban Artist and his mentor agreed that societal

integration and reconnection between the generations via introducing new, quality arts

was key to creating a respectable voice for the youth, so they can create a viable Malian

future. By the Mentor mentioning *integration*, my mind drifted to the Permaculture

design principle, "integrate rather than segregate" (Holmgren [About], 2009), which

resonates with both the Urban Artist and his mentor.

The Urban Artist expressed another common desire and why Malians feel limited:

travel. He asked me, "Who can travel to only one country and continue to develop?"

(personal communication, February 29, 2012). He pointed out that in order to learn, grow,

and broaden one's perspective, in general, people must explore different experiences,

realities, perspectives, and cultures. In response, the Urban Artist's mentor took his

statement to another level. "It is necessary that the border explodes...it is necessary that

the border explodes" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Urban Artist

beamed with excitement and approval. The mentor was not only speaking about the

borders that disconnect countries. He was also talking about the borders between the generations and how currently there is not much effort in investing in or engaging the youth in Malian society. Today's solutions will come from collaborations across formerly silo-ed regions, social groups, and ideas.

From my experience as an agent in the United States for five years, creating opportunities to travel to, tour in, and exchange with, for example, the United States, one encounters massive challenges that are often too difficult to invest in this type of artist's sponsorship. There are difficulties such as visa complexities. I have observed and spoken with dozens of people who have facilitated West African artists' visas to allow them to work and live in the United States. Unless artists obtain fiancée or marriage visas, is rare for an artist to enter the United States on an artist visa if they do not already have at least $10,000.00 United States dollars saved, maintained, and ideally growing in their bank account six months prior to submitting their visa application. This is a lot of money to a United States citizen and exorbitantly more to a Malian artist.

Strong applicants also should be able to prove high-levels of personal investments and assets in their country of origin. Supposedly artists who can prove prior travel to other second world or first world nations is very important. Also important is being able to prove that an artist visa applicant has highly valuable personal and financial investments and assets. This increases the chances that artists return to their country by the time their visa expires—since artist visa are temporary, non-immigrant visas (P. Hanrahan, multiple personal communications, 2007-2009). These are difficult requirements for artists coming from a low-income environment.

177

It is also very expensive to hire an immigration lawyer, though doing so increases the chances to obtain artist visas. Although it is not required to hire an immigration lawyer to obtain an artist visa, such lawyers understand the complex United States legal system, key vocabulary to convince United States government officials that a Malian artist would not be drain on the United States economy, and crucial strategies involved in successfully obtaining visas. Thus, it is usually necessary to hire a lawyer (P. Hanrahan, multiple personal communications, 2007-2009).

Another challenge, especially faced by small NGOs when they attempt to obtain artist visas to the United States, is that there are often limited financial and human resources to manage the guest artist once she or he arrives. Unless a NGO is well-organized with dependable administration, staff, and/or volunteers, it is tricky to coordinate and follow through on U.S. contract formalities and expectations. It then brings up a couple of ethical and logistical questions about whether to utilize limited NGO's financial and human resources on managing an artist in the U.S., or if would it be more effective and efficient to use the money on projects in Mali (R. Radostitz, multiple personal communications, 2011).

These are complex questions. From my personal experience, sometimes it is more effective to invest in bringing an artist to the United States to help also promote the NGO's work. As validated by the Kora Players' interview (in the next section) and the Professor Artists' interview, excellent artists have the capacity to capture the attention of wide array of people. Thus, ideally, there is co-promotion: the Malian artist promotes the NGO and the NGO promotes Mali and the Malian artist. This co-promotion typically inspires further conversations between people from the United States and people in Mali,

resulting in mutual worldview expansion (Kora Players, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

In the process of bringing our guest artist from West African to the U.S., I also discovered that there is a way to create a mutually financially beneficial work contract. The NGO can be an agent or hire an agent on behalf of their NGO to manage the artist. In this case, the artist and agent and/or NGO receive an agreed upon percentage of profits (P. Hanrahan, multiple personal communications, 2007-2009). In any case, in order to avoid disappointment on either side, it is important to work via an appropriate sociocultural mediator so that NGOs and artist exchange understanding, agree about project usefulness, and seek mutual benefits (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Returning to the Urban Artist's feedback, he thought that a good way to seek mutual benefits for positive changes for Bamako artists and the entire community was by NGOs investing in and helping to integrate dynamic, motivated youth artists into leadership roles. These artists can then respectfully introduce new ideas that resonate better with the 67% younger majority, and help heal the social disintegration. The NGO could train people and help develop youth projects that could potentially lead to including additional youth and potential financing. The Urban Artist would like assistance from NGOs to create a bigger space to empower young artists' voices, help them explore themselves, and get in touch with their deeper motivation and passion—like their collective was already doing. He added that he thought a space like this would encourage creativity and social action, and subsequently attract the support needed to start up and sustain youth projects in ways that Malian culture currently discourages.

179

The mentor summed it up well, with the Urban Artist beaming in agreement.

We must invest to evolve.... It is necessary that one invests in what belongs to

oneself, to better live and be together.... We don't pass through the youth today.

But it is necessary pass through the youth...67% are less than 25. (personal

communication, February 29, 2012)

New ideas are needed for a new time in history. It is a logical resource to tap: intrinsically

motivated, "*fadenyaly*" creative, young change agents.

Kora Players

Interview Context

As I mentioned in *The Connectors* section, I first saw two of my future

interviewees, a duo playing kora[9] instruments, while I was eating at *San Toro*, a well-

known sustainable, organic restaurant in Bamako. I returned at a later date and during a

respite at their gig, I approached them and asked one of the musicians if he would be

open to me interviewing them for my research about collaborations with NGOs and

musicians and dancers in Bamako. They were eager to continue the conversation and

gave the information to their manager—who later acted as our interpreter for the

interview. Their manager was another example of a helpful sociocultural mediator

(Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

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[9] kora: a twenty-one-stringed harp instrument played in West Africa (Charry, 2000, p. 9).

The day of the interview, I arrived in their manager's personal residence where four smiling faces greeted me as they held their instruments. Although I was only expecting to interview one person, they all seemed eager to participate in the conversation. I figured the more ideas the better and quickly improvised. I requested that we have one main spokesperson in order to avoid having everyone speaking at once. However, if there were ideas that other members of the group did not agree with or wanted to add, I encouraged them to also contribute to the dialog.

The main spokesperson studied kora for eleven years with Toumani Diabate, a world-renowned kora player. The main spokesperson also made and played koras. The first of the other three contributing interviewees was the hybrid artist—who played multiple instruments: calabash—a gourd percussion instrument, kora, bass guitar, and talking drum. The second of the other three contributing interviewees played kora. The third of the other three also played multiple instruments (Kora Players, personal communication, February 29, 2012). The interviewees' kora ensemble had been an official group for two to three years at the time of the interview. However, for the past ten years, some of them had played music together at, for example, the *Festival Sur le Niger* (Kora Players, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

NGO Impressions/Experience and Collaboration Vision

The Kora Players claimed that they had never directly collaborated with a NGO in Mali. However, indirectly, they played in the events that NGOs sponsored and they noticed other artists working with NGOs in various capacities. Because they did not have

direct experience working with NGOs, I chose to combine the *NGO Collaboration*

Experience and *Collaboration Vision* sections for this interview and expanded a more

general discussion that alluded to the interviewees' ideas and preferences.

The Kora Players performed at various events that, they were under the

impression, had been sponsored by NGOs: *Festival Sur le Niger*, *Serengue*, and

Bankuman [Multicultural] Festival. They had a difficult time remembering the specific

names of the sponsoring NGOs, but the first contributor finally added that the *Bankuman*

Festival was sponsored by Orange Mali Foundation.

In order to learn more about Orange Mali, I looked for their website,

www.orangemali.com. The website was rerouted to a page that said: "Service

Temporarily Unavailable" (Orange [Orange], 2013). I did, however, find an article about

Orange Mali in *Bloomberg Businessweek* that identified their services: "Orange Mali SA

is a telecommunications company that offers mobile, fixed line, and Internet services

through wholesalers, semi-wholesalers, and retailers in Mali." (*Bloomberg Businessweek*,

n.d., para. 1). I discovered an additional article in *Bloomberg Businessweek* that stated

Orange and Sotelma-Malitel are the two incumbent operators in the African nation..."

(Dembele, 2011, para. 3) with the third likely to emerge soon. In other words, Orange and

Sotelma-Malitel are powerful companies not only in Mali, but across the African

continent.

Orange Mali has a website exclusively for their Orange Foundation as well. Their

foundation supervises their corporate philanthropy work in Mali, with a focus on

children's education (Orange [Foundation], 2013). It is probable that Orange Mali would

sponsor art festivals for high visibility marketing since, at least with regard to the

festivals that I have attended in Mali, they draw a multi-generational audience. I remember seeing Orange Mali advertisements at the *Festival Sur le Niger*, although I do not know if their advertisement was present on behalf of the Orange Mali business or foundation side.

During this part of the interview, even though he was not officially an interviewee, the translator added that he thought that the Malitel (another phone company in Mali) Foundation also contributed to the *Bankuman Festival* (personal communications, February 29, 2012). However, unlike Orange, I was unable to find information on Malitel's website that mentioned a foundation. Rather, their website lists their services, business and management structure, and history of a privatized relationship with Maroc Télécom. They boast that they create jobs, and offer affordable services and advanced technology, but there was no mention of Malitel operating a foundation (Malitel, 2013). Perhaps Malitel's contribution to the *Bankuman Festival* was a business sponsorship in exchange for advertising, rather than a donation from a nonprofit section of their company, but based on what I found online, it did not seem that their *Bankuman Festival* sponsorship came from a foundation.

I asked the Kora Players if working at these festivals that Orange was involved with were positive experiences and they agreed that they were. I had to dig to get more information from them beyond simple one-word answers. I told them that I was looking for more detailed examples. I also asked more specific questions that I hoped would remind them of more information. For instance, I asked if "the payment was good", "did they have their needs sufficiently met?", and "were they treated nicely?" These additional questions helped them better understand and then expand their answers accordingly.

183

They agreed that "[t]he payment was not good...[they] did their presentation...every time [their compensation] was bad" (personal communication, February 29, 2012)—which matched the Pseudo French Artist's and the Traveler's advocacy for paying artists well for their work (personal communications, March 5, 2012). Even if they were paid, it would either be late or there would be no payment at all. I surmise that the Kora Players expected that they were to receive payment immediately after their performance; if they did not receive it immediately, they became mad. Perhaps there was a disconnect: the Kora Players did not understand that it is normal for NGOs to follow formal disbursement procedures that require that services be rendered before disbursement can occur. However, if they were promised payment, and did not receive it, understandably, it made them angry.

My impression from living in Guinea, Mali, and Senegal was that in general, people in these countries oftentimes depend only on verbal agreements, rather than written contracts. This would often create conflict, because what one person perceived as the agreement was not always in alignment with the other person's version of the same agreement. With verbal agreements, it is common to misunderstand what a person says or intended to say, potentially causing a conflict. Lastly, especially without any witnesses, it is easy to change one's word after the transaction has occurred or service is rendered. I suggest using a trusted appropriate sociocultural mediator (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012) for transactions and contracts, since there are many ways in which people risk disappointment.

Whether or not the Kora Players had signed contracts for the festivals explaining that their payment would be delayed, the fact was that Kora Players did not seem to

understand that, from their point of view, payment would be late. Either disbursement procedures were not explained in the contract, or this was not translated effectively to the Kora Players. Another potential disconnect could have been that the festival management did not realize that the Kora Players expected to be paid immediately after playing. Either the Kora Players had not communicated their expectation, or it had not been effectively translated through languages and/or cultural systems. Despite the true reason for this communication disconnect, this scenario implies that being clear about the payment date from the beginning would be a best practice for NGOs to follow in the future.

The Kora Players also mentioned that they were not content with the compensation amount. I asked them to give me an idea of what good payment was to them. They replied: "200,000 CFA...for one hour" (personal communications, February 29, 2012), which is approximately $400 US or $100 per person per hour (XE Currency Converter, 2013). This is a good wage for a decent musician in the US and a lot of money for someone in Mali, since the US dollar can buy far more food in Mali than in the US. However, in Mali, it is typical to barter for services and goods, so $100 per person per hour was likely an inflated price, because they were anticipating that they would have to bargain and settle for less. Intentionally inflated price or not, they implied they, like most human beings, appreciated fair wages. However, depending on the person, "fair" wages are subjective, and could vastly vary.

I did not think to ask them more about the issue of adequate compensation at the time of the interview. It makes me wonder if they had an opportunity to set their price from the beginning. Maybe they were not given an opportunity to negotiate the price. I considered whether or not the Kora Players had surrendered to a "culture of silence"

185

(Ledwith, 2005, p. 96) because they did not feel they could change their payment amount, or if they were also disappointed because they had not had the opportunity to set their price from the beginning.

Fair trade spurred yet another set of questions that I did not explore in this interview, including, "what is fair trade?" and "according to whom?" There are international fair trade standards, but depending on the location, the local population, and the consumer, this conversation drastically varies, since "fair" is a subjective word and dependent on a person's values. Who typically determines what is "fair"? How does this "fairness" affect the rest of the local sociocultural fabric? Can fair trade be more than a business structure? According to my experience working in the NGO field, I imagine that if project participants exchange understanding, involve appropriate sociocultural intermediaries, agree about project usefulness, practice the *art of solidarity*, and seek mutual benefits that are suitable for the context (Griot, personal communications, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, March 3, 2012), a legal NGO fair trade project could potentially be an excellent undertaking.

Beyond this, the Kora Players were having a hard time finding examples to clarify their positions. I therefore adapted my questions to generate more ideas. I asked, "Maybe you have not played for or worked in collaboration with NGOs, but have you heard of a good example of a project run by a NGO?" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). I then continued, "Even if...[you did not personally] work with the NGO, have [you] seen other artists work with a NGO in a project?" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). These questions reemphasized that the idea was to better understand which NGOs were doing a good job and in what ways, and that this information could

help inform NGOs as to what to do in the future. Therefore, I reinforced that good examples were helpful.

They then generated more examples of projects they liked. Toumani Diabate works with and is the ambassador for UNAIDS—the United Nations effort to prevent AIDS. He does presentations about how to prevent HIV/AIDS (personal communication, February 29, 2012). From this example, I surmise that they either learned from HIV/AIDS education programming themselves or saw that it is a much needed education program for Malians. Hence, the Kora Players resonated with the Professor Artist (personal communication, March 3, 2012) and the Griot (personal communication, March 2, 2012) in that Malian artists are good ambassadors and conduits for NGO messages.

They also mentioned Mamoudou Diabate, Toumani's brother-in-law, working with the Orange Foundation. In general, Mamoudou Diabate promoted causes that the Orange Foundation supports (personal communications, February 29, 2012). Their enthusiastic voice inflection, energetic eyes, and smiles insinuated that they too would like to be representatives of a foundation such as Orange Mali—if the foundation paid well.

We continued to discuss what kind of projects/programs would be helpful if they were to collaborate with a NGO or how already-existing collaborations could be improved. The musicians would like to use kora and calabash instruments to help children who beg in the streets or have lost their father or mother. They would also like to help women who have lost their husband and people who need assistance in general. The Kora Players would teach them to play kora and calabash, which would help them transform their tragedies into a musical expression for peace. Their idea was to bring these people together to speak for peace for all countries in the world and address

187

political problems, especially in Northern Mali, where there has been a history of violence. They would like NGO assistance to achieve this goal (personal communications, February 29, 2012).

The musicians also talked about Salif Keita, an internationally revered singer. He created what they thought was called the Salif Keita Foundation. Keita promotes better treatment of albino people. It was easy to find online, however it was technically called the "Salif Keita Global Foundation, Inc." ("Welcome to the," 2013) and this foundation helps many artists, such as Sine Syogo, produce their music as well (personal communications, February 29, 2012). In essence, both according to Keita's foundation and the Kora Players, Keita works to protect albinos and create more opportunities for oftentimes marginalized populations, focusing on albinos and musicians.

They liked Keita's attempts to protect albinos, but did not offer specifics as to why. According to the "Salif Keita Global Foundation, Inc." website,

[the rate of albinism i]n Africa, the ratio is as high as 1 in 1,000 babies. Unfortunately, albinos in many African nations are simply killed due to superstition and ignorance about the skin condition that is caused by a complete lack of pigmentation... 'whether it's due to discrimination or the hot sun, they are in perpetual danger' [explains Keita]. ("Welcome to the," 2013, para. 5)

Keita's promotes "[c]reating thoughts of love towards those with the condition is the first priority and the strongest power in changing the lives of those with albinism. After that, every other positive change will have to follow automatically" ("Welcome to the," 2013, para. 5). As I have experienced in my own friendships in Africa, creating loving thoughts toward people in general is often the strongest power in changing people's lives. It is

188

contagious, healing, deescalates tensions and conflict, and ripples out to other people as well.

Whether or not NGOs were effective in Mali, it seemed that they were interested in partnering with NGOs to try out new possibilities. More generally, the Kora Players asked me to help them collaborate with NGOs because they did not have any contacts with NGOs in Mali (personal communication, February 29, 2012). They seemed to perceive me as a connector/manager-type person, able to facilitate these new partnership possibilities. However, as Professor John Fenn pointed out, their vision seemed to perpetuate a patron-client relationship instead of challenging social injustices and working toward more equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships between a connector/manager-type person and themselves.

They also liked the idea of more opportunities to make a better financial living playing kora, especially in combination with making money to help people. The Kora Players talked about fair, punctual payment and whether or not these points were effectively communicated prior to their performance service. They also mentioned other potential NGO-Malian collaboration opportunities, such as being an ambassador for an organization or creating a foundation to help more artists become known. Next, I explore my interview with the Comedian Dancer and Colleagues, which was both similar and different than the interview I conducted with the Kora Players.

Comedian Dancer and Colleagues

This collective interview was similar to that of the Kora Players', but participants in this group were less interactive in forming their answers. Rather, I interviewed each separately. My initial contact with the group was the Comedian Dancer. Again, Sophia Shackleton, a manager for Yeredon Center for Malian Arts in Bamako, recommended that I interview him. After an initial conversation to set up an official session with him, the Comedian Dancer also recruited six colleagues to participate in my study.

The Comedian Dancer and the colleagues he recruited were all present at the same place and time. We met in the courtyard of a community center in Bamako. Because they were all present, and seemed to have widely unique music backgrounds in comparison to the Kora Players, I interviewed them separately. With the exception of the Rapper, who arrived after the first couple of people were interviewed, the other six interviewees involved in this group interview were all present at the beginning of the interviews. With the exception of the Comedian Dancer (who had accompanied me to find the location) and the Female, after each interviewee finished speaking, I compensated him and he left. This made me think that they were less interested in the study and conversation and more motivated by the compensation and opportunities. I also had the weakest personal connection and trust with this group of people, since I have never met Shackleton in person, and the group and I did not have any other mutual contacts in common.

I include all of the musicians and dancers who were present in the courtyard and contributed in the interview process together under the *Comedian Dancer and Colleagues* section heading, since they all seemed to know each other. Many heard each other's

answers prior to their own. I ordered this set of interviews chronologically. Since I interviewed the Comedian Dancer last, I include his ideas at the end of the *Comedian Dancer and Colleagues* section. In this section, the interviews are in the following order the: Traveler, Female, Village Percussionist, Rapper, Self-Taught Artist, Village Musician, and Comedian Dancer.

Traveler

Interview Context

The first interviewee amongst the Comedian Dancer's acquaintances was a dancer, singer, and guitar player that I refer to as the Traveler because he had traveled extensively. Now likely in his mid-thirties, he started studying with his first teacher as a child in a private West African ballet troupe. During his career, he toured throughout Africa: Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Togo. There were both Senegalese and Burkinabes in his troupe. Their troupe used traditional dance and music with elements of other influences, which sounded like a decent balance between *badenya* and *fadenya*. He participated in large performances, traditional ceremonies, competitions, marriages, and baptisms. He emphasized that his fiancée was French, and therefore he has had much exposure to French culture (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Traveler heard of NGOs working in Mali and had heard of AMAPROS in particular. He described them as a public health NGO that tours Mali and educates people about AIDS and how to avoid mosquitoes/malaria. Beyond his knowing this small amount about what AMAPROS does, he was not able to offer more details about the organization, which gave me notion that he was not deeply familiar with AMAPROS or NGOs in general (Traveler, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Via my research online, I did not find AMAPROS's website, but I found a website that featured the NGO. AMAPROS in French stands for L'Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel, and in English, The Malian Association for the Promotion of the Sahel. The information was limited on the website. However there was enough information to gather that AMAPROS is a Malian non-governmental relief organization that works with the poorest populations in Mali, especially in the Sahel desert (JAGA, n.d., para. 1). They intervene in various areas: agropastoralism, environment, democracy/human rights, education, and health (JAGA, n.d., para. 2)—and as the Traveler mentioned, in AIDS education as well ("Association Malienne," 2013, para. 1; personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Traveler claimed to have experience working with NGOs, although he did not tell me which ones he worked with. It made me sense that he did not have much experience working with NGOs or he could not remember their names. Regardless, from his experience working with NGOs, he believed they offered professional contracts to artists and paid well. He appreciated NGOs clearly-stated gig expectations. Like the Kora Players, he did not like it when NGOs took too long to pay the troupe, nor did he like

when he turned in applications to NGOs, trying to work with them, and never heard a response (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Therefore, the Traveler appreciated clear contract communication and fair, prompt payment when working with NGOs.

Collaboration Vision

According to the Traveler, NGOs could support Malian music and dance by helping to purchase the equipment, like drums and reparation materials, needed to do their art. Like the Urban Artist, he and his group needed help with finding space for their practices/rehearsals and more opportunities to present their art in public places like festivals (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

I specifically asked him: "What are some of your suggestions for future support structures/projects by NGOs for Malian music and/or dance?" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). I observed his confused expression and I then tried to prompt him by saying that examples could include: fair trade, cultural tourism, exchange programs, microcredit for music and/or dance, international performance, education, cultural centers, etc. (personal communication, March 2, 2012). His response was, "Yes they are good" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Even though I was looking for his critique of any one or more of these things, he neither had anything more to say, nor did he ask any questions. This led me to believe that he had not thought about these concepts much and did not understand them and/or feel comfortable or curious enough to ask for clarification.

I asked for his additional thoughts, and he replied that working with foreigners helps to open his consciousness (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Since he had traveled a lot, he seemed to sincerely comprehend the benefits of travel. Like the Urban Artist, it also seemed clear that he would like some assistance with his artistic endeavors by, more specifically, going abroad, because it opens consciousness and opportunities for creation. In contrast, the next interviewee—the Female—was one of the only interviewees who never mentioned wanting to travel or exchange specifically with foreigners.

Female

Interview Context

For this study, ideally I wanted half of my interviewees to be female. However, probably due to cultural tendencies, despite me asking dozens of people for female interviewees, only the Comedian Dancer connected me to a female interviewee. From a young age, the Female was trained at and participated in the same private West African ballet troupe as the Traveler. She also danced in two other troupes. Her guitar playing is modern (*fadenya*), but incorporates traditional (*badenya*) Malian music components (personal communication, March 2, 2012). She seemed to be in her early forties. Out of my five years living, studying, and working in West Africa, I had never met a woman guitar player, except the Female.

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Female did not have any direct experience working with NGOs, but she particularly liked NGOs that work to improve social supports, such as health and well construction for water accessibility. Even though I asked her specifically about NGOs, she used the example of how the Malian government funds healthcare for athletes. According to the Professor Artist, "when sick..., [s]upposedly the Malian government gives 2,000,000 CFA for artist health issues, but no one knows where this money goes" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Professor Artist's example was probably why the Female told me that healthcare benefits do not apply to artists in Mali—because she had never received health benefits from the Malian government. Whatever the situation may be, she communicated that she would appreciate this benefit whether it came from the government or a NGO (personal communication, March 2, 2012). She implied that this would be a good NGO-artist program in the future.

In the arts realm, she liked NGO-funded cultural centers such as Centre Ko-Donzo, funded by "ACTE 7", and the NGO Centre Togola cultural center. I extract why she liked the Centre Ko-Donzo and Centre Togola cultural centers and include them in her next section, in which she refers to creating a training and teaching center for children (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

I researched Centre Ko-Donzo, "ACTE 7", and Centre Togola online. I was unable to find Centre Ko-Donzo—they did not seem to have an Internet presence. Even though I could not find Centre Ko-Donzo on the Internet, I found, according to the Female, their supposed funder: "ACTE 7". I was able to find both a website and Facebook page for what is likely the same "ACTE 7", called: "7e ACTE" in French, or

"7th Act" in English. It is a contemporary acting and learning center based in Paris, France. They develop creativity and potential in student actors. Students undergo multidisciplinary training, work in small groups, and receive individual attention. They train in theater, film, body movement, and voice with professionals in these fields. Some additional features of the program on their website included ("L'Acteur," para. 2-4):

- a team of multidisciplinary professionals, such as directors, actors, writers, singers, dancers, and clowns.

- a dynamic group for project support.

- individualized monitoring, individual interviews, educational meetings, and advice spaces for classrooms, rehearsals, a library, and costumes.

- preparation for contests between national drama schools.

In the Female's collaboration vision, there are some similar general goals between her ideas and 7e ACTE's that I explore in the next section.

The Centre Togola community center is another good model that she brought to my attention. When looking for it on the Internet, I found multiple references to it from different people and organizations (Earth CDs, 2003, para. 2; Pluznick, 2014, para. 1), but never found their personal website or Facebook page. I also heard about Centre Togola from my professor and one of my thesis readers, Dr. Stephen Wooten. He referred me to Paul Chandler and Tama Wally, founders of a nonprofit, Instruments 4 Africa, in Mali. They use space at Centre Togola for their young girls performance troupe. I spoke with Wally briefly on the phone to confirm that Centre Togola existed (personal communication, March, 2, 2012), but she was very busy during my time in Bamako, and

thus, we never met. Therefore it is likely that Chandler and Wally have additional connections with Centre Togola, but I lacked the time to discover them.

Collaboration Vision

As is the case with the Griot, Urban Artist, and Traveler, the Female would like a space in which she could train and teach children, which seemed to be less focused on performance, unlike the Traveler. I noticed that the common goal between 7e ACTE and her center was arts training—a potential exchange and/or collaboration opportunity. Inspired by the Centre Ko-Donzo and Centre Togola cultural centers, she was able to define ideal qualities for her center: 1) a courtyard-enclosed space; 2) a roof with a "platform" to decrease heat in the building; and 3) in the middle of the center, a space for two or three training grounds (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Even though many of the interviewees spoke about wanting space, the Female gave me the most detailed characteristics about the type of center she would like to innovate.

Village Percussionist

Interview Context

The Village Percussionist originally came from the Malian village Bafoulabé, near the town of Kayes. He played the dundun drum and calabash, both Malian percussion instruments rooted deeply in his village's tradition or *badenya*. He also worked with the

same private West African ballet troupe as the Female and Traveler (personal communication, March 2, 2012). I thought that he was probably in his late twenties.

At the time of our interview, he had only been in Bamako for three years. In my impression, he was the first of the two interviewees who was the least familiar with urban Bamako life. Out of all of the interviewees, I sensed he knew the least amount of French as well, so we were attempting to communicate through an even more complicated communication barrier than with the other interviewees, despite there being multiple interpreters present to transmit our discussion between his native language, French, and English (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Village Percussionist thought that NGOs conducted good projects even though he had never worked with one. Because of his lack of detail, I sensed that he was relaying other people's and/or the media's opinions of NGOs. He indicated that he would like to work with a NGO and especially liked NGO projects implemented in the villages. Although he did not specify why, I supposed that he was most familiar with village settings, and therefore he could more easily envision projects there. He said he liked the SNFA, a NGO that works in agriculture. According to him, their activities include providing agricultural materials, such as fertilizer, to people such as farmers and gardeners (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Online, I found many organizations under the same SNFA acronym. However, they were organizations based in various other countries, none of which mentioned working in Mali. Thus, I did not find any NGOs with the acronym SNFA working in

agriculture in Mali either. It is possible though, that SNFA is a local, Malian NGO with no web presence; this is possible because Internet access compared with the United States was approximately 1:1,000 in 2009 (CIA, 2013). Also, towns and villages (where he is from) have far fewer Internet connections than in the capital.

Collaboration Vision

He would like to work with a NGO that works toward sustainability of Malian arts. More precisely, like the Urban Artist, he would like for NGOs to assist artists traveling outside of Mali, a desire that he shares with all other interviewees besides the Female, Village Musician, and Comedian Dancer. Similar to the Traveler, the Village Percussionist also liked the idea of increased material/equipment access for artists (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

He also referred directly to and agreed with the Female's collaboration vision of creating a music and dance training center for children. He would like to be a teacher there. He also shared and supported her ideas about medical issues. The Village Percussionist explained that medical problems are expensive to treat, and, in-so-doing, implied that he would like NGO medical assistance (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Village Percussionist was one of only two interviewees, besides the Professor Artist, who specifically emphasized that helpful NGO aid is not only financial. Similarly to the Professor Artist, toward the end of his interview, as if to thank me, he stressed that by me simply having come to Mali to do interviews with Malian musicians and dancers helps to encourage, extend and empower their voice more broadly (personal 0

communication, March 2, 2012). Although he did not say it directly, he obliquely implied that he appreciated the exchange.

Rapper

Interview Context

The Rapper is of Bamana decent. He loved music since he was a child. He learned outside of the classroom, because there were no opportunities to study music or dance at school. The Rapper stopped his academic studies at age twenty-two to focus on music. I guessed that he was in his early thirties. He continued to use this form of artistic expression today. He was unique in that he wrote his own lyrics and music (personal communication, March 2, 2012). No one else mentioned that they wrote their own lyrics, although both the Rapper and the next interviewee, the Self-Taught Artist, spoke about creating his own music without having teachers.

The Rapper appeared to be very innovative, because in the five years I have lived, studied, and worked in West Africa, I never met an artist whose specialties were rapping and djembe playing. This is probably because these two art forms are on the opposite sides of the modern-traditional (*fadenya-badenya*) Malian arts spectrum. Granted, I did not experience the presentation of either skill, so I do not know how well he does either one.

His music themes range from advice to his friends on how to live life to the realities of education and the government in Mali. He is one of the four artists I

interviewed (along with the Urban Artist, Kora Players, and Professor Artist) who talked about their political concerns. It seemed, however, that only the Rapper made a point to overtly incorporate his political views into his art (Rapper, personal communication, March 2, 2012). The other three also seemed to include their political views in their art, but more indirectly, like singing about peace (Kora Players, personal communication, February 29, 2012) or creating art that is different from typical elder values (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Professor Artist incorporated his political views into his music, but he definitely felt comfortable talking with me about his political view—probably due to our more trusted connection from the start.

NGO Impressions/Experience

Although the Rapper did not have any NGO collaboration experience, the Rapper felt that there were no bad NGOs and that NGOs working in all subject areas were welcome in Mali. This absolute statement makes me question its truth and/or his NGO knowledge depth. He has three favorite NGOs: 1) MaliCam, which works in the telephone/Internet sector—they make and install antennae; 2) Sahel—a well project; and 3) in general, NGO projects that conserve resources. Notably, he is the only interviewee who expressed interest in this third type of NGO and he is the only interviewee who expressed interest in projects that conserve resources (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

I found varying, but similar titles, multiple times, referencing: CAMUSAT International-MALICAM. I found information on Camusat International-MALICAM on the CAMUSAT International website. According to their website, "[o]n October 15th,

2002, MALICAM, CAMUSAT subsidiary in Mali was created" (Group Camusat [Celebration], 2013, para. 1). CAMUSAT International-MALICAM is a French headquartered international business (Group Camusat [Contact], 2013, para. 1), not a NGO.

However, the Rapper was correct that MALICAM is involved in the telephone/Internet sector in Mali, but also internationally (Group Camusat [Contact], 2013, para. 1). CAMUSAT International claims to be "one of the market leaders in the implementation of telecom infrastructures and one of the most experienced network developers with a history which starts back in the late 40's" (Group Camusat [About], 2013, para. 1). They also list on their website that they work in many other sectors as well. Therefore, the overall idea is that MALICAM does work in the telephone/Internet sector. However, it is a subsidiary of CAMUSAT International, an international corporation—not a NGO.

In contrast, according to the Internet, Sahel is an international NGO. Online, I found this NGO referred to as SOS Sahel UK (United Kingdom). According to their mission they "seek long-term, sustainable solutions to the poverty experienced by millions of people across the drylands of the Sahel region of Africa" ("Mission," n.d., para. 1). A fascinating aspect to their organization is that the claim that:

> SOS Sahel UK is committed to the principle of African-led development and in 2006 we successfully transformed from a conventional UK-based international charity with offices in Africa to working in partnership in a regional alliance with the now-independent African organisations that were our once-dependent country offices. ("Sahel Alliance," n.d., para. 1)

Therefore, SOS Sahel UK was originally a centralized office in the UK to an alliance of decentralized, locally-run organizations in four (and others in transition to be locally-run) nations in the Sahel region. The locally-run organization in Mali is called Sahel ECO in Mali ("Sahel Alliance," n.d., para. 1). If indeed SOS Sahel UK planned and executed decentralizing their operation to empower the local people to independently run their own organizations, SOS Sahel UK has moved toward what Feltault (2006, p. 90) and Young (2011, p. 37) advocate for: empowering the local people to take control of their reality and create their own solutions.

The Rapper is especially concerned with the question, "How [do Malian people] help [their] families when work is more important than school?" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He explained that it is hard to stay in school due to financial pressures that oftentimes families place on their children. He points out that frequently, Malian families sacrifice a longer-term education investment for a short-term financial benefit by sending their kids to work instead of to school. As a result, this pattern makes it hard to educate the next generations (personal communication, March 2, 2012). I also noticed these same pressures on students during the four years I lived in Guinea. Student families would put much pressure on the students to start work before they had finished their studies, which seemed to perpetuate similar problems generation after generation. The Rapper was able to critically think about social systems that contribute to the ongoing problems in Mali. He would be a great ally for an NGO working in the education realm.

He spoke about liking projects that conserve resources. Shortly thereafter, the Rapper said that he was most concerned about improving schools and health systems for

the future. In summary, he values systems that support resource conservation, education, and health. Out of all the interviewees, the Rapper seemed to be the only one who was concerned with a topic closely related to an environmental issue—resource conservation. This either means that interviewees did not perceive there were major environmental problems, or they chose not to prioritize them over more humanitarian-oriented topics.

Collaboration Vision

The Rapper would like NGO assistance to 1) create a studio, 2) organize and manage tours for artists, and 3) organize more arts competitions in various neighborhoods. He explicated that finding money to pay for renting chairs for such events and constructing studios is a common problem (personal communication, March 2, 2012). In alignment with all of the responses from interviewees thus far, except for the Kora Players, the Rapper said he would like assistance finding, and probably financing, space. He would like help with creating more presentation opportunities and visibility, like all interviewees, except the Female. Due to his unique arts background and ability to critically think about long term solutions, this interviewee could be a force working with a NGO project that aligned with the Rapper's interests.

Self-Taught Artist

Interview Context

The Self-Taught Artist described himself as a dancer and ngoni and guitar musician. He was in the same private West African ballet troupe as mentioned previously. He taught himself how to play guitar and had created his own guitar music since he was a child. The Self-Taught Artist's music is based in the Wassoulou region tradition of Mali. The way he improvised on his own was how he identified his music as being unique. He did not exchange with other people or have a teacher (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Although he claimed to be self-taught, he probably absorbed music and dance inspiration by observing other artists along his life path.

NGO Impressions/Experience

In general, the Self-Taught Artist was happy with NGOs. He particularly liked the NGO Sightsavers that has been in Bamako for "at least 50 years" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He liked them because they fix eye problems. When I searched the Sightsavers website, they were easy to find. Indeed, their organization has been around over 50 years. Sightsavers was founded on January 5, 1950, originally under the "British Empire Society for the Blind" ("Our history," n.d., para. 2). Sightsavers is an international NGO. On their website, they mentioned donor involvement from such places as Britain, the United States, Ireland, the Middle East, and India (Sightsavers, n.d., p. bottom of all). They work "to combat blindness in developing countries, restoring sight through specialist treatment and eye care" ("About us," n.d., para. 1). Sightsavers

provides support for people who cannot reverse their blindness by providing education, counseling and training. Lastly, they prioritize services to those "living in poverty in some of the world's poorest countries" ("About us," n.d., para. 1).

They highlighted that in 2009 they changed their strategy in order to achieve more long-term success. Sightsavers continues to support their partners in essential eye care and rehabilitation, but they have increased their efforts to influence governments. Their projects are now "small-scale models that demonstrate the best practices possible" ("Our history," n.d., para. 8) that they hope will be replicated by the governments of the countries where they work, so that these projects will sustain themselves without Sightsavers' assistance ("Our history," n.d., para. 8). Therefore, they are working toward a more decentralized model working with governments.

It was not apparent on the Sightsavers website how efficient their accounting or success rates are. However, they are pulling in sizable grants from large organizations. For example, pertaining to Mali, Sightsavers received a $880,000 grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation to assist the Malian government eliminate trachoma, a disease that causes blindness, by 2015 ("Sightsavers in," 2012, para. 2). I imagine that the Professor Artist would argue against supporting such a large operation that works via what he claims to be a corrupt Malian government. To review, the Professor Artist explained that NGOs that work through the Malian government end up losing large amounts of money for their projects due to government embezzlement (personal communication, March 3, 2012). In regards to the Self-Taught Artist's perspective, beyond this one example, like many of his other colleagues, he did not have more insight for me on this topic. This is

likely because he had never personally worked with a NGO (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Collaboration Vision

The Self-Taught Artist would like to work with a NGO that helps obtain art materials such as instruments, which is a similar to the Traveler's and the Village Percussionist's visions. He also specifically mentioned wanting NGO assistance with finding partners, marketing, networking, etc., but did not mention wanting travel assistance. When asked what else he might want to add, the Self-Taught Artist commented that he encourages foreigners to come learn Malian dance and music (personal communication, March 2, 2012). I deduct that he enjoys cross-cultural exchanges and education in the arts and is happy when foreigners are curious and open to his culture. He may also see a potential gig working with foreigners who come to learn Malian arts.

Village Musician

Interview Context

The Village Musician learns from his mentors at a cultural center in Bamako. He originally came from a village called Macina, Mali, outside of Ségou. Out of all the interviewees, he seemed like the second of two interviewees (along with the Village Percussionist) least familiar with urban, Bamako life (personal communication, March 2,

2012). Also similar to the Village Percussionist, communication was more laborious with the Village Musician because there was a bigger cultural and linguistic disconnect between him (from a Malian village) and I (from a United States city).

NGO Impressions/Experience

The Village Musician could not give me good examples of NGOs, their work, and possible collaborations. However, he did emphasize that when NGOs are not effective, it is because they do not understand Mali. He was one of three interviewees that mentioned this phenomenon (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The other two were the Griot (personal communication, March 2, 2012) and the Professor Artist (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Collaboration Vision

In theory, the Village Musician specifically favored NGOs that were focused on general education. He explicitly referred to Mali as lacking didactic materials and academic scholarships. He implied increasing access to didactic materials and academic scholarships would be a beneficial and effective NGO project in Mali. The fact that the Village Musician mentioned didactic materials illustrates how outdated Malian academic education systems are, especially in villages (personal communication, March 2, 2012). In fact, Dr. John Fenn, my thesis and academic adviser, initially questioned that someone would request didactic materials, because this style of learning was so outdated. However, after Professor Fenn considered the village context where Village Musician had been raised, requesting didactic materials became more logical.

The Village Musician did not mention any artist-related programming. Instead, he focused on general education, but did not do so specifically in the form of exchange. Perhaps this is because it is difficult to access academic education, especially in rural Mali (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012), where the Village Musician had lived much of his life.

Comedian Dancer

Interview Context

Lastly, I review my interview with the Comedian Dancer, who organized this set of interviews. He identified himself as a dancer, singer, comedian, and choreographer. In 2008, he was the number one comedian in Mali. At the time of this interview in 2012, it was his fourth year organizing a major percussion festival. He taught dance and music at a kindergarten and was the director of a private Malian ballet troupe based in traditional Malian dance and music. He facilitated workshops for foreigners visiting Bamako as well. The Comedian Dancer was clearly the oldest artist in this interview set (personal communication, March 2, 2012) and one of three interviewees who I would consider an elder—besides the Professor Artist and the Pseudo French Artist. By the list of his accomplishments, and the weathered appearance of his face, my guess is that he was in his early fifties.

He said that he had never received support from Malian organizations. He received support from foreigners and NGOs and he made money by animating marriages and other Malian ceremonies. In Mali, oftentimes live singing, dancing, and acting accompanies ceremonies. Sometimes music is also amplified via a DJ of sorts (personal communication, March 2, 2012). At a marriage ceremony that I attended in Bamako on February 4, 2012, I watched attendees tip musicians and singers for animating the ambiance. Since Mali is culturally similar to Guinea, I made this assumption from the tipping I saw in the towns of Kissidougou and Kankan, and the capital city Conakry, in Guinea. In Kissidougou, Kankan, and Conakry, in exchange for animating ceremonies, artists receive payment for their transportation costs, food and drinks at the ceremony, tips from the ceremony participants, and sometimes, depending on the contract, a base payment for equipment rental. Artists typically earn the most from tips, and because of these tips, no substantial earning is guaranteed despite the artists often spending four hours to a full weekend at an event. I asked the Griot to compare my observations with his experience in Mali. He affirmed what I observed in the Guinea and at the Malian marriage ceremony in Mali—the audience was tipping the performers and this was a crucial part of their income (personal communication, Feburary 4, 2102).

The Comedian Dancer also participated in performances. Such performers are not generally paid unless they organize the event himself. He emphasized that as a comedian, he liked to make people laugh, but it is not lucrative. Via observing ceremonies and arts events in Mali, Senegal, and Guinea over the course of my five years living in these countries, it seems that if and when he got paid for animating marriages, ceremonies,

performances, and comedic acts, he was probably most often paid by the local Malian population tipping him, rather than organizations' contracts, which was why he said he did not receive support from Malian organizations (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Comedian Dancer worked for NGOs who work in AIDS education. He respected the work of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Mali and found them to be very professional. The UNDP may be very professional, however, the UNDP is an intergovernmental organization, not a NGO. He made a point that as far has he knew, there were no NGOs specifically for artists or that work to help the environment in Mali. He said that "partnerships between NGOs and artists are not formal in Mali" (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Collaboration Vision

The Comedian Dancer suggested modeling more projects after CLAEC, an acronym in French for Centre de lecture, d'animation pour les enfants des communes. After studying their website, I discovered that they are neighborhood community centers for reading and entertainment for children in Bamako. There are six of these multicultural spaces dispersed around Bamako which were constructed between 1993 and 1996. CLAEC was created by an initiative between librarians in two cities: Bamako and its twin city, Angers, France ("Jumelage avec Bamako," 2010, para. 4-5). Even though this model is an intergovernmental partnership, for many reasons it offers insight into potential ways of teaming together drastically different cultures for effective and efficient projects that benefit Mali ("Centre," n.d.).

According to the Angers library website, the CLAEC objectives and missions involve the following: From the age of three, children are prepared to enter school and encouraged by learning and literacy training. Students also learn about health and sustainable development, which is directly related to this study, since sustainable development is a common goal for most NGOs (2010, para. 6-7). CLAEC also fosters socialization education from which children learn about community, respect, and how to listen to other people. They help young people develop their imaginations, create objects, images, texts, etc. (2010, para. 8-9; "Centre," n.d.), which could be a potential opportunity for Malian artist partnerships.

There is another part of the CLAEC mission I thought would appeal to the nine of twelve of my interviewees, based on the preferences and collaboration visions that they shared with me: some indirectly and others directly requested more opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges. CLAEC works to introduce and open young people to the world, with a strong focus on academic achievement ("Jumelage avec Bamako," 2010, para. 10; "Centre," n.d.). This could be a potential bridge and common ground for collaboration and a way for artists to team with academics for more effective and efficient development projects.

Angers' municipal library participates in leadership training and purchases books, educational games, and videos for the CLAEC in Bamako. In Bamako, the Angers' library manages and evaluates the activities of the CLAEC, while the National Center for Public reading and the Regional Directorate of Sports, Arts, and Culture are jointly responsible for supporting and supervising cultural activities ("Jumelage avec Bamako,"

2010, para. 11-12). Hence, this operation is already a multi-perspective, multi-sector collaboration.

The Comedian Dancer expressed interest in opening his own kindergarten focused in arts and education—similar to the CLAEC community centers (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Female and Village Percussionist shared similar visions to create arts education centers specifically for children. There are already multiple models of arts education centers: Centre Togola, Ko-Donzo, and the CLAEC. There is also Ko-Falen, a connector and center where I stayed, but no one mentioned Ko-Falen or Yeredon, another connector and center I visited. However, since multiple interviewees described these centers in their collaboration visions, they clearly want more arts education facilities. It makes me wonder—if they were included in the already-existing centers, would they still like their own space?

The Comedian Dancer would like financial assistance from NGOs for his percussion festival. The financial assistance would cover publicity costs, because good TV coverage can be 120,000 CFA, or approximately $240.00 U.S. (XE Currency Converter, 2013), which is a lot of money for Malians. He would like the festival to be advertised and broadcasted worldwide (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He said that broadcasting the percussion festival events and activities would give foreigners an opportunity to experience Malian arts even if they were unable to travel to Mali. So he, like the Self-Taught Artist, Griot, and Professor Artist, is eager to share Malian culture with foreigners.

This concludes my distillations and comments from the twelve interviews that I conducted in Bamako for this study. I continue to identify themes and problems that

interviewees indicated in the following unit. I also offer solutions and a conclusion to my

research in this next chapter, *Solutions*.

CHAPTER V

SOLUTIONS

In order to further synthesize my data, I have created a unit discussing suggestions for how to better nurture relationships between NGOs and Malian artists. I summarize some of the main points of my thesis, while suggesting potential solutions in which NGOs and Malian musicians and dancers may combine forces in order to implement projects that are more effective and efficient. I entitle this unit: *Solutions*. For this final unit, I synthesize interviewees' ideas into two parts that inform improved NGO-artist partnerships, *Suggested Processes* and *Suggested Projects*, and end with a conclusion chapter.

Suggested Processes

During our coaching sessions related to strategizing how best to implement our Lanyi Fan Nonprofit, INGO, Doug Cohen often reminded me to beware of "the tyranny of the method" (multiple personal communications, 2010-2013). In other words, he urged me to form partnerships and work with people who do not have dictatorship-like leadership tendencies. Instead, he coached me on how to facilitate teamwork so that the team synergizes our strengths and collective wisdom and mutes our weaknesses. This more facilitative-type leadership works to tap the team's most current, collective

consciousness in order to address some of the most pressing sustainability issues of our present era.

Along with this teamwork-style mentality, in my interviews with Malian musicians and dancers, I sought out mutually beneficial and understandable ways for NGOs and Malian dancers and musicians to join forces in order to accomplish more effective and efficient projects. Overall, interviewees had positive impressions of and/or experiences with NGOs. Only the Professor Artist deeply critiqued NGOs both positively and negatively.

The others seemed to have limited understanding of NGOs. The Pseudo French Artist mentioned that if there were NGO shortcomings, it was because NGOs could not give more than they have. He implied that it was normal for anyone to not be able to give more than what they have (personal communication, March 5, 2012). The other two slightly negative critiques about NGOs were from the Griot and Village Musician. Yet, their points were more focused on coaching NGOs toward learning information that will help their projects succeed in Mali. The essence of these slightly negative critiques was that if NGO projects fail, it is because they do not understand the Malian context. This brings me to an overall theme across my interviews: disconnect.

Disconnect

There was a major disconnect between interviewees' realities and NGO work in general. As the interviews revealed, apart from the Professor Artist, the other artists had little or no experience with NGOs. The Comedian Dancer also articulated it well,

"Partnerships between NGOs and artists are not formal in Mali" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Therefore, it was not easy for the interviewees to critically assess NGOs, especially considering how culturally different NGO and Malian cultures can be. However, even with this disconnect, interviewees offered valuable feedback as to their interests and what would be useful to them in sustaining their own livelihoods. From the artists' perspective, these preferences inform one side of potential mutually beneficial partnerships that could increase NGO projects' effectiveness and efficiency.

According to the Mentor (personal communication, February 29, 2012), Professor Artist (personal communication, March 3, 2012), and Urban Artist (personal communication, February 29, 2012), artists are often a marginalized population in Mali. Therefore, if NGOs are truly doing their job to assist people in challenging situations in Mali, artists are a possible constituency to benefit from NGO aid. However, with the exception of the Professor Artist, interviewees were not able to critically evaluate and express to me their critiques, even if the NGOs were doing a good job. The interviewees' inability to offer critiques reflects a disconnect between the NGOs and the Malian dancer and musician cultures that currently makes collaboration difficult. Because this disconnect exists, NGO-Malian artist collaborations have not yet been well explored or troubleshot in order to achieve increased project effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, Malian artists, together with NGOs, generate untapped synergy.

For the next *Suggested Processes* chapter, which is under this *Solutions* unit, I collected and analyzed Malian dancers' and musicians' ideas, and generated themes about positive ways in which to work with artists and implement aid work in Mali. I have

divided this chapter into two sections: *Cultivate Understanding* and *Alchemize Power Dynamics*.

Cultivate Understanding

An excellent example of cultivating understanding is the time that Baba Wagué Diakité mediated a conflict between a West African and me. From his Malian perspective, Diakité explained to me that the person I was irritated with, "just didn't 'get it'" (B. W. Diakité, multiple personal communications, 2010). The West African neither understood what I was trying to communicate to him, nor could I understand what the West African was trying to communicate to me. The details of the conflict are not important for this paper. I give this example because this type of misunderstanding is a common occurrence, especially between individuals from drastically different and constantly dynamic cultural backgrounds.

As Ulf Hannerz discussed in his 1987 publication, even amongst similar cultural backgrounds, historically in anthropology and human sciences there has been a deficiency in developing vocabulary that facilitates well-informed communication about subtle, cultural complexities (p. 547). Hannerz explains that we have all been *creolised* (1987). Every person is a unique mix of backgrounds and experiences that is constantly changing throughout his or her lifespan (Proudfoot, 1989). Each person is part of an interdependent *web* (R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). The Professor Artist was a perfect example of this evolution, as he articulated his personal life journey about where he came from (geographically, ethnically, professionally—to name a few),

where he traveled, and how he changed with new experiences along the way (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Thus, people, including Malian artists and NGO personnel, are interrelated and constantly changing. Therefore we must constantly manage and cultivate cross-cultural understanding in Mali in order to more effective and efficiently work together. From my data, I suggest cultivating understanding in three ways: *foster the art of solidarity, involve sociocultural mediators,* and *embrace ongoing dialog*.

Foster the Art of Solidarity

Solidarity is a core Malian value, which is reflected in the Malian national motto: "One people, one goal, one faith" ("Mali," 2013). I realize that not all Malians resonate with this motto, especially in the areas of the most recent unrest in Northern Mali, but I have never heard of one who spoke out against it in Bamako. Also, upon hearing that I had traveled overland from Bamako to Dakar, Senegal as part of a round trip, Senegalese people also referred to Malian solidarity—without me having to ask leading questions. Therefore, many neighboring Africans also view Malians as valuing solidarity.

Reinforcing that Malians value solidarity, the Professor Artist emphasized that when NGOs work in Mali, they use the *art of solidarity* (a more general phrase that aligns with *tourisme solidaire*) to foster compassion and build trust in order to work together long-term. In practicing the *art of solidarity,* Malians and foreigners deepen trust, create shared project visions, and join forces toward more sustainable livelihoods. This trust is important so that oppressed people feel safe to give their honest opinions throughout the envisioning and implementation process.

The benefit to developing trust was particularly demonstrated by the length of my interview with the Professor Artist. Initially, he and I were connected through Yeredon cultural center and Brown University. Then, serendipitously at the time of the interview, the Professor Artist and I discovered that he was good friends with Professor Stephen Wooten—one of the readers for this thesis. These important connections helped establish trust between the Professor Artist and me from the beginning. In turn, the conversation with the Professor Artist was the most in-depth interview I conducted (personal communication, March 3, 2012). I have no doubt that the Professor Artist was more forthcoming and generous with his time because of the compassion and solidarity that already existed between us, due to his already-established trust with Yeredon and Professor Wooten.

Another type of *art of solidarity* that the interviewees suggested in order to establish trust was via *cultural marriage*. *Cultural marriage* is a metaphor meant to encourage compassionate, long-term, connections between people from different cultures who are dedicated to nurturing an ongoing dialog and work toward peace and understanding between their two cultures. *Cultural marriage* was mentioned by three interviewees without me asking leading questions about this concept. It appeared to be a common cultural metaphor that was well-understood by many people in Bamako. This compassionate commitment between cultures fosters understanding and peace across differences (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, March 3, 2012; Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012). Therefore, the Griot, Professor Artist, and Pseudo French Artist encouraged *cultural marriages* between

foreign visitors to Mali and Malian artists as a solution to creating more effective and efficient project partnerships.

Lastly, by fostering the *art of solidarity*, participants co-create experiences and the solutions that emerge will reflect common, core values and ethics. These common core values and ethics then drive the project—which is a Permaculture core concept. Co-creating experiences also helps to synergize the collective consciousness (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012). According to Turner, co-creating culture generates common ethics and values, which are essential to creating sustainable cultures and fosters increased solidarity between people through common experiences (personal communication, May 20, 2011). In order to live sustainably, Goebel advocates for gathering as many vastly diverse perspectives as possible to inform a situation before moving toward action steps. Thus together, a broad collective consciousness survey generates understanding and encourages collaborative decision-making, envisioning, and action (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; Piepmeyer, 2007).

Mutual moral support also acts as part of the *art of solidarity*. Throughout my interviews, it became apparent both directly and indirectly that multiple interviewees appreciate moral support. Both the Village Percussionist and Professor Artist voiced directly that moral support is important for Malian artists to maintain the courage to continue to practice their art. However, additional interviewees also indirectly expressed gratitude toward moral support. For example, by the end of his interview, Pseudo French Artist thanked and blessed me. Also, the Self-Taught Artist stated that he was happy, in general, when foreigners who travel to his country are curious and open to his culture.

Since I traveled to Mali to conduct my interviews, it seemed that the Self-Taught Artist was positively reinforcing my efforts and showing his gratitude toward me indirectly. Their gratitude was morally supportive of my work and by me asking them for feedback for my study, they expressed appreciation for morally supporting their work as well. This mutually beneficial exchange is an ideal way to foster the art of solidarity so that everyone involved benefits.

Involve Sociocultural Mediators

Another way to cultivate understanding is to nurture peace by involving sociocultural mediators, particularly because NGOs and Malian artists tend to come from drastically different cultures. Sociocultural mediators are crucial for transmitting perspectives across differences in order to deepen understanding. In general, cultural mediators are people with extensive experience in cross-cultural realms who are familiar with how complex translation and interpretation can be. However, while working specifically in Mali, it is important to find cultural mediators, ideally one from each cultural side, who can see both sides' viewpoints well and interpret and translate between both local Malian and NGO participant cultures. Involving appropriate sociocultural mediators facilitates more effective and efficient exchanges in order to better mobilize projects together.

Sociocultural mediators also act as informants who address, manage, and facilitate understanding about misinterpretations between peoples involved in the cross-cultural collaboration (J. Chevrier, multiple personal communications, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; The Griot, personal communication, March 2,

2012). They are valuable conduits who facilitate language translation and interpretation, deepen understanding between parties, and often offer valuable perspectives during NGO project conception, planning, and implementation.

It is crucial for sociocultural mediators to be liaisons for translation and interpretation of not only words, but also the cultural context and local systems that could affect projects and implementation. Sociocultural mediators create dialog, meaning, and shared value between peoples who would otherwise never be able to hold a conversation, let alone create a sustainable project (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011). The Professor Artist was an excellent example of a knowledgeable, wise sociocultural mediator. He could see both Malian and NGO sociocultural sides.

As demonstrated in the Urban Artist's interview, his mentor, a cultural mediator, provoked deeper answers from the Urban Artist in a way that I thought would otherwise be inappropriate. For example, when the mentor prodded his mentee, "You...are young. What pisses you off about the tradition?...What bothers you?" (personal communication, February 29, 2012), the Mentor provoked from the Urban Artist a more candid, profound, and detailed response to my interview questions. However, since the Mentor had a more profound relationship with the Urban Artist than I did, he knew how to pull out more raw truth and depth from the Urban Artist's perspective than I could. Thanks to the Mentor, an excellent sociocultural mediator, my interview with the Urban Artist was far richer than it would have been without him.

In addition to communication facilitators, intermediaries such as the Professor Artist contribute valuable personal perspectives and wisdom to development projects. In

223

the Professor Artist's interview, he articulated, in great detail, numerous mistakes that

NGOs made that caused their projects to fail. At the time the NGOs were making these

mistakes, the Professor Artist could see the problems and would have interjected his

wisdom if the NGO had encouraged his feedback. However, as an interpreter, he was

supposed to only explain the exchanged words, which excluded and discouraged him

from participation and inclusion (Ledwith, 2005; Professor Artist, personal

communication, March 3, 2012; Young, 2011).

Involving sociocultural mediators is crucial to understanding the context in which

a project is implemented. Based on the process of my thesis and feedback from my

interviewees, I have compiled some of the various forms of intermediaries, which

include:

- interpreters and translators I worked through for this research during my
  interviews with the Kora Players' manager and the Comedian Dancer's journalist
  friend, Adama Konta.
- sociologists, anthropologists, and international studies professionals in Mali who
  explain cultural courtesies well (Professor Artist, personal communication, March
  3, 2012).
- nimakala in Mali, such as griots who specialize in oral histories, peacekeeping,
  and interweaving *fadenya* and *badenya* into Malian culture over time (Griot,
  personal communication, March 2, 2012; Wooten, 2009).
- foreigners to Mali who have been long-term residents in Mali for an extended
  period of time, such as: Professor Wooten (Anthropology and International

224

Studies professor at the University of Oregon), Jeremy Chevrier (USAID), and the Mentor.

- cultural centers such as Yeredon, Ko-Falen, and CLAEC (Comedian Dancer, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

- organizations specializing in mediating cultural differences, such as RECOTRADE (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012), CLAEC (Comedian Dancer, March 2, 2012), Yeredon, Ko-Falen, and Goebel and Associates (multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

- immersions and exchange programs that facilitate the art of solidarity and create opportunities to interact between cultures.

Sociocultural mediators are crucial in facilitating understanding of what already exists within a context in order to better comprehend if, what, and how things should change in that location. Sociocultural mediators are also key in facilitating an ongoing dialog.

Embrace Ongoing Dialog

When creating projects, participants must be dedicated to an ongoing dialog to ensure that both NGO personnel and local Malians continue to understand one another, adapting for changes in perceptions, ideas, conditions, and contexts along the way. By embracing an ongoing dialog, we co-create mutually-intelligible vocabulary to discuss cultural complexities that did not yet exist during Hannerz's publication in 1987 (p. 547). It then becomes easier to continue to build and continue to understand one another. Both the Professor Artist and the *Relational Model* described this dynamic. The Professor Artist described this dynamic via his own music evolution over time in respect to

relationships with new people, culture, places, and experiences (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). The *Relational Model* illustrated this fluid reality by mapping that each unique person's identity and perspective changes continuously over time, which becomes even more complex when working with multiple people between drastically different cultures. This model is pertinent in explaining why ongoing dialog is essential to NGO-Malian artist collaborations, because what a participant feels is important in one moment, may change in the next moment due to something he/she has learned and/or experienced (Proudfoot, 1989).

On multiple occasions, interviewees mentioned that reality is constantly changing, therefore again, ongoing dialog facilitates adaptation and improvisation with these changes, and is critical to understanding one another over time. As depicted in the Permaculture model's spiral, in order to be sustainable, project designs must be evaluated and reevaluated continuously and people must adapt and improvise for sustainability success. Therefore, over time successful projects will not remain so unless there is an ongoing process involving dialog, adaptation, and improvisation.

By 1) fostering the art of solidarity, 2) involving sociocultural mediators, and 3) embracing an ongoing dialog we cultivate understanding. This deeper clarity facilitates NGOs and Malian artists to more effectively and efficiently collaborate on more appropriate projects within a given context. Cultivating understanding leads to deeper comprehension of local sociocultural and environmental contexts that is important for project collaboration success.

Sociocultural context. It is essential that the sociocultural context is well understood to increase the probability of project success. However, my interviews indicated there was a disconnect between Malian artist and NGO cultures—it is not one-sided. Rather, NGOs misunderstand Mali and Malian artists misunderstand NGOs. I explore both sides in the next two subsections.

NGOs misunderstand Mali. From the perspectives of the Griot, Professor Artist, Village Musician, and a side conversation with the Urban Artist's mentor, when NGO projects fail in Mali, it is because projects and/or implementation processes are not appropriate for the intended Malian context (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Village Musician, personal communication, March 2, 2012).

In order to understand a foreign place, instead of making assumptions, it is better to observe, listen to the local people, and ask questions—as already established, using a mediator is helpful in order to ask questions and converse in culturally appropriate ways. It is important to learn about the Malian context within which NGOs work. People who want to help must be open and patient with local peoples in order to accommodate and interweave resident worldviews and wisdom (Professor Artist, March 3, 2012). By compiling the collective knowledge of the NGO and local project participants, projects more appropriately fit the implementation location.

In their interviews, the Professor Artist and Griot accentuate that NGO projects need to make sense to the local peoples. Otherwise, the local peoples will not value,

invest in, or maintain the project, and the result is an unsustainable project. Local peoples' value, investment, and maintenance are crucial to the long term sustainability of any project, since this is where the project resides (Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Hannerz, 1987; Holmgren, 2002; Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; R. Turner, personal communication, May 20, 2011).

Projects should also include Malians from the initial planning process in order to guarantee that the projects exist within Malian consciousness and belief systems. NGOs and Malians working at a project implementation location must be in agreement and understand one another in order to harness and synergize the team's intrinsic motivation and wisdom. Local Malian peoples must also work to understand NGO realities in order to accomplish effective and efficient projects (Hannerz, 1987; Holmgren, 2002; *Forbes Magazine*, 2013; Young, 2011). Hence, it is common for NGOs to misperceive Mali; it is also common for Malians to misperceive NGOs.

Malians misunderstand NGOs. With the exception of the Professor Artist, all other interviewees' ambiguous descriptions of and involvement with NGOs show that there is a general lack of understanding of what NGOs are, what they do, and how they function. Even the seemingly most academically savvy interviewee, the Professor Artist, when detailing what NGOs do to solicit funds for projects, briefly described that a fund for a Mali Assistance Project school was created by simply pulling "money together" in the United States (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The way the Professor Artist nonchalantly mentioned this step as if it was an easy, quick task to find funding, showed a

disconnect from the diligence, persistence, organization, and integrity needed to find funding for foreign aid projects.

Due to my experience volunteering for many nonprofits and NGOs, I am deeply familiar with how difficult it is and how much time it takes to generate funding. It is both a professional science and an art. I have also witnessed, while living in Guinea, Mali, and Senegal for almost five years, that if receivers of aid are aware of and appreciate what is given to them, they more likely respect and value the assistance, whereas if they do not perceive it as something valuable, 1) it is easier to waste and take the investment for granted, and 2) if the aid receiver has responsibilities related to the aid transaction, the person often neglects his or her role in reciprocation (C. Donahue, multiple personal communications, 2007-2008; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Despite nonchalantly describing how the administrative side of NGOs simply pulls money together, the Professor Artist offset his unawareness by thoroughly delineating his recommendations about how to guarantee investment of NGO aid to recipients in Mali. He recommended watching for signs that recipients value and will maintain what is offered to them. I listed these recommendations in the *Ensuring Local Investment* section earlier in this thesis and I reiterate them later as well (personal communication, March 3, 2013).

Another major indicator that interviewees misunderstood NGOs occurred when the Pseudo French Artist offered a list of governmental embassies (United States, French, and Canadian) when offering examples of NGOs (personal communication, March 5, 2012). He was under the impression the governmental embassies were NGOs. Rather, a more common relationship would be government embassies partnering and/or acting as

conduits for governmental donations to NGOs. The Pseudo French Artist clearly did not understand the difference. Granted, this example could be idiosyncratic, but since he is an elder and still unaware of the distinction between NGOs and government organizations, it is likely that this is a prevalent misconception.

Other misconceptions included the Rapper liking MaliCam, which is not a NGO, but rather a multinational business (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Comedian Dancer spoke about CLAEC and the UNDP as NGOs that he preferred. However, CLAEC is an intergovernmental organization between Mali and France—similar to a sister city program between Bamako and Angers, while the UNDP (personal communication, March 2, 2012) is part of the United Nations—an intergovernmental organization. Both the Female and the Village Percussionist agreed and promoted the idea that they wanted a healthcare system for artists like what already exists for Malian athletes. Again the athlete healthcare system is run by the Malian government (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Also, the Village Percussionist said that he liked the NGO SNFA. However, the only SNFA organization that seems potentially related to Mali was a national French construction union for windows, doors, and related activities. There was no reference to SNFA existing as a NGO on SNFA's website, although it is seems likely that they may partner with NGOs working in Mali in order to develop similar industries there (SNFA, n.d.). This is another example in which an interviewee mentioned that he liked an organization that he thought was a NGO, but in reality, was not.

Environmental context. Another major disconnect that emerged was with the environmental context. For instance, both the Urban Artist and Professor Artist said that village settings were much different from Bamako, which is an international city (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Depending on the neighborhood in Bamako, different cultural mixes co-exist. Hence, whether or not a NGO project is in collaboration with Malian dancers and musicians, NGO personnel must understand the intricate Malian environmental context within which a project is implemented. Otherwise, NGOs risk wasting time, energy, and resources, as demonstrated by the Professor Artist's EWB's artificial lake example.

In addition, in order for projects to be effective and efficient in the long-term, according to the UN's Brundtland Report 's definition of sustainable development, projects must meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (1987, section 1). However, according to the Urban Artist and his mentor, Mali is socially disintegrating. There is a disconnect between the elders and the next generations. The elders do not regularly include the youth in decisions that affect Mali's future. Hence, future realities will not reflect the consciousness of today's youth, and the youth will inherit the problems that the elders do not think or take initiative to address (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; Young, 2011).

Unfortunately, Mali is wasting 67% of its collective wisdom, since approximately 67% of the Malian population is under twenty-five years old (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2013). This statistic is particularly important because, out

of all interviewees, only the young Rapper referred to an environmentally-oriented collaboration vision with NGOs when he encouraged resource conservation. Adding resource conservation to mainstream Malian culture discussions would be an important sustainable development topic so that future generations may also be able to fulfill their needs long-term. However, since the Rapper was the only one who referenced resource conservation, it seems that, at least amongst my interviewees, there was a general lack of awareness about environmental problems. It was as if interviewees could not see how the people in general were dependent on their environment.

Therefore, I suggest NGO and Malian artist partnerships move toward working with local peoples to more widely understand that people are dependent on their natural environment, and this message must be conveyed in a way that makes sense to local Malians. Local Malians already have many structures that pass on environmental wisdom. However, to address new environmental challenges, it is beneficial to at least exchange additional collective consciousness in this field, such as the three sustainability theories that I discussed in the *Introduction* (the Triple Bottom Line, Four Pillars, and Permaculture). There are many more sustainability theories; these are a few theoretical examples of ways in which projects could maintain long-term viability, without fatiguing the environment.

All three sustainability theories work well depending on the context. Some possibilities include reflecting on the more simplified UN definition of *sustainable development*, which could be useful to introduce people to more long-term thinking about involving future generations. John Elkington, Andrew W. Savitz, and Karl Weber's *Triple Bottom Line* (TBL) focused on introducing sustainability to a business audience

(Elkinton, 1998; Savitz & Weber, 2006) that helps to conceptualize people, planet, and profit. However, it is still difficult to concretely measure the success of the people and planet aspects of the TBL.

There is a similar difficulty in measuring the *Four Pillars*. The *Four Pillars* added culture as an additional dimension to the TBL, which is also difficult to measure. In Jon Hawkes' book, he emphasized culture because it was particularly crucial for his community cultural development audience (Hawkes, 2003). Because the *Four Pillars* book was written for a Western community cultural development audience, it is likely to resonate with, empower, and help integrate potential Malian artist partners who are part of the implementation team. However, I am concerned that in isolation, local Malian artist would not deeply connect with how to implement the *Four Pillars* precisely because it is written more for a community cultural development audience.

In contrast, David Holmgren and Bill Mollison's *Permaculture* approach was compiled from various indigenous perspectives and from cultures that have existed in relative balance with their environment for much longer than more recent civilizations (Holmgren, 2002; Mollison, 1997). Critiques regarding Permaculture include the thought that there are not many scientific studies that examine Permaculture. Critics also point out the tension between Permaculture and large agro-industry, which challenges our current capitalist system, and depending on one's values, is not bad. In contrast, Permaculture creates self-sufficient systems coordinated with the local bio-regional landscape that empowers local people to generate their own livelihoods and food sources locally (Scott, 2010). I intuit that Permaculture is most relevant to Malian peoples, since it empowers

people to generate their own resources instead of depending on foreign imports for their basic needs.

There are also multiple specific, but adaptable, Permaculture Principles on which to reflect in order to help form Permaculture designs to fit varying local contexts. These principles help guide Permaculture designs, but not too rigidly, so that they may be applied to a wide array of situations and scenarios (Holmgren, 2002; Mollison, 1997). Therefore, for the Malian context, I suggest that Permaculture's more place-based design concepts are physically observable and tangibly applicable. Permaculture's place-based tangibility can be adapted and applied within Mali's varying bio-regions, ethnicities, and cultures.

Because everyone except the Professor Artist seemed confused by my broader sustainability questions, it is probable that global sustainability conversations are not accessible to most Malians. With this in mind, within the Malian context, I propose framing and connecting sustainability conversations around Permaculture concepts. However, Permaculture conversations must be presented in a way that is comprehensible to an appropriate Malian worldview. For example, one of many options could be to talk about Permculture concepts via *fadenya* and *badenya* relationships (Wooten, 2009), as these symbols emerge and/or make sense to many Malians.

Alchemize Power Dynamics

In addition to cultivating understanding, the other positive way in which to work with artists and implement aid work in Mali is to *alchemize power dynamics*. Robert

234

Chambers advocated that *outsiders*, people living beyond the confounds of rural poverty, should initiate actions to change current power imbalances, because outsiders have the power advantage to do so (1983, pp. 2-3), whereas Margaret Ledwith and Paulo Friere write about creating a safe space that empowers oppressed people to critically reflect on their own realities in order to more authentically change their mentality in finding and moving toward their own solutions (Friere, 1972; Ledwith, 2005, pp. 94-99). Iris Marion Young's opinion is that redistribution of resources is not the only component to social justice. Rather, the distributive paradigm is a commodity-based value system instead of true social justice. Young argues that oppressed people must be included in the decision-making processes, so that they are able to affect and create their lives in the way they wanted. Thus, social justice will only truly be achieved once all people have the power to affect and create their lives (2011).

The Professor Artist mentioned that NGOs could also help support and facilitate two processes, which are also projects as well, with Malian artists. He explained that because NGOs tend to be respected in Mali, by NGOs alchemizing power dynamics with local artists in Mali, Malian artists would more likely be respected and heard by the rest of Malian society. For example, NGOs could help empower artists advocate for healthcare benefits from the Malian government. These are benefits that Malians supposedly receive already, but do not receive in actuality. However, during this facilitation process, it is important that NGOs focus on empowering Malian artists to advocate for their interests, rather than on NGOs advocating for Malian artists. Therefore, Malian artists manage their own process and rights (Ledwith, 2005), and they do not depend on a patron-client relationship, perpetuating an imbalanced power dynamic.

Another potential intervention point emerged during my interview with the Urban Artist and his mentor. The French mentor's noted that, from his perspective, there were no statutes to protect artists in Mali (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012). Since the Mentor was French, I assume that he meant that Mali does not have anything similar to the French Artist Society's (Société des Artistes Français in French) Statutes that outline the 1) Aim and Membership of the Association; 2) Administration and Management; 3) Endowment, Reserve Fund, and Annual Revenue; and 4) Changes to the Statues and Dissolution ("Statutes," 2013). Not only do these statutes outline the way in which French artists organize and obtain funding, these statutes are legally enforceable so French artists maintain their rights.

Since there do not seem to be any Malian artist statutes yet, I surmise that NGOs could be powerful allies in mobilizing a Malian version of the French Artist Society's Statutes for Malian musicians and dancers. However, in creating such a document and organization, I suggest a multilateral NGO collaboration in order to mute bilateral organization bias, and to openly including Malian artists, so that no one NGO influences the process and guards its own egocentric interests (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Instead, ideally these statutes would aim for Malian artists' social justice rather than an external entity's self-interest.

The Professor Artist and the Mentor, and I from my own observations, are also highly aware that, unfortunately and too commonly, Malian artists risk international marginalization. All three of us are in favor of NGOs helping to alchemize these international power dynamics with Malian artists (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). For

236

example, NGOs could reinforce organizing and empowering a voice for Malian artists worldwide, such as broadcasting Malian arts programming internationally (Comedian Dancer, March 2, 2012). Also, NGOs could help to facilitate Malian artists to create statutes (Mentor, February 29, 2012), which could be a way in which to hold foreigners accountable for consuming Malian music products, copying Malian arts, and/or profiting from Malian artists and art. These are excellent ways in which NGOs could facilitate social justice for Malian musicians and dancers. However, these statues alone are not sufficient because in order for them to work, the statutes must be enforceable so that violators are held accountable.

By NGO personnel being mindful of power imbalances in implementing aid projects, they also have the awareness to intentionally foster equal exchange and alchemize injustice. If aware, NGO workers can help to decrease Malian musician and dancer marginalization, both within the Malian culture and internationally, which could empower a stronger Malian artist voice worldwide (Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012). As delineated in the *Introduction*, if mindful, NGOs also have power to affect change and help re-balance dynamics between *insiders*/*outsiders*, youth/elders, people with no money (typically the receivers of aid) and those with money (typically the donors), and local/global imbalances. However, to change power dynamics between populations, NGO workers must model social justice theories in their practices in the field (Ledwith, 2007). From interviewee feedback, I extracted the following themes that help to more practically alchemize power dynamics

during project implementation: *align interests*, *ensure local investment*, *intervene modestly*, and *include openly*.

Align Interests

As the Professor Artist articulated, it is important to align interests, or rather participants' intrinsc motivation, in order to synergize efforts and increase the likelihood for project success. He mentioned two strategies to assist in aligning interests: agree about project usefulness and seek mutual benefits. By Malian artists and NGOs agreeing about project usefulness from the beginning, both groups can coordinate their project vision to fit participant's project needs, interests, and best outcomes. The Professor Artist explained that, for example, it is not generally easy to convince Malians to decrease births or stop their circumcision practices. Therefore, projects involving family planning and eliminating circumcision are typically not successful. The Professor Artist advocated for agriculturally-oriented projects in Mali, because most Malians see value in food production (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

The Professor Artist also promoted seeking mutual benefits when creating projects. He pointed out that some NGOs create projects in isolation, so that they accomplish the NGO's own selfish interests without addressing the local populations' needs, while other NGOs more ignorantly, arrogantly, or naively do not work to align interests with local participants (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Ideally, when working on projects in Mali, NGOs should strive to not only fulfill their NGO mission, but also accord it with the local desired outcomes. According to Goebel and Cohen, it is possible to create win-win solutions in any situation, if the project process and structure

238

truly resonates with all participants (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). By aligning interests, collaborators synergize one another's' internal motivations toward a common vision.

Ensure Local Investment

When innovating a project, if the local people find value and are invested in the project, it is more likely that the local people will 1) take ownership in the project, and 2) maintain the project, so that the project is viable long-term. In order to guarantee local investment, the Professor Artist suggested insisting on the following signs that indicate the local Malian population is invested in the project (personal communication, March 3, 2012):

- Understand and agree on the project.

- Nourish the NGO workers.

- Do the labor.

- Give 5%-10% of the investment for the NGO project.

- Use local resources first in order to avoid finding, purchasing, and/or importing resources from another location.

- Collect receipts to track project spending and reinforce NGO professional practices, accountability, and transparency.

By securing local investment in the project, NGOs are assured that their efforts are valued and welcomed in that community. The NGO can proceed with intervention and will be less apt to be wasteful and more apt to be successful.

Intervene Modestly

In order to help alchemize power dynamics, NGOs must avoid misusing their own power. Foreigners, including experts, should intervene as modest learners who play a role, but do not control, the project vision and implementation. Foreigners must not intervene and presume that their knowledge is superior to Malians'. Instead, foreigners must realize that they are limited in what they are able to do in Mali without the collaboration and consent from the local people (Chambers, 1983; Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communications, March 3, 2012).

A lesson I learned from Goebel and Cohen's facilitation is that foreign perspectives are often useful in working with Malians to transform their own self-created parameters and limitations, by helping them identify *choice points*, or any point in time when a person consciously opts to assert their own decision and action in order to affect their reality (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013). Oftentimes, it is valuable for foreigners or anyone with a different perspective to point out situations in which people can choose to make an alternative decision that will in turn create a different outcome. Even very subtle decision changes can completely revolutionize an individual, community, and global reality (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2012; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

Include Openly

Another conscious decision that can profoundly alchemize power dynamics and therefore maximize project effectiveness and efficiency, is the open inclusion of local people in the beginning, as well as during project envisioning, planning, and implementation (Griot, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Village Musician, personal communication, March 2, 2012). Permaculture design principles promote this concept as "integrate rather than segregate" (Holmgren [About], 2009). Among the interviewees, the Urban Artist in particular was the most adamant about wanting to be involved in sociocultural problem-solving and processes in Mali (Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

In congruence with the Urban Artist's sentiments, in his lessons, Cohen reinforces that youth should be involved in decisions that affect the future, since these perspectives also play a role in our *collective consciousness* that helps people move toward a more sustainable future—generation after generation. Specifically, Cohen promotes intergenerational partnerships, so that exchanges between people of different ages form and reinforce our solutions for the future. Intergenerational partnerships in Mali could help to ease what the Mentor identified as "social disintegration" (personal communication, February 29, 2012). Cohen resonates with Goebel in that he also advocates for bringing together the most diverse perspectives, in order to innovate and mobilize more comprehensive, inclusive, and multi-dimensionally wise visions, actions, and projects for the future (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

At the 2013 UN Social Good Summit, the UN created a panel of keynote listeners and generated a platform for cell technologies to enable new populations to participate in development discussions (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013). I propose that with Malian cell access already at 70% (CIA, 2013), NGOs work with Malian artists to synergize a collective voice and add their thoughts to the ongoing UN Social Good Summit development conversation. Therefore, these are also examples of how NGOs can help facilitate and model inclusive practices to alchemize unequal power dynamics with Malians both locally in Mali and globally. These are a couple of ways in which NGOs could empower Malian artists' voices and reduce Malian artist marginalization (J. Chevrier, multiple personal communications, 2012; *Forbes Magazine*, 2013; Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Ledwith, 2005; Mentor, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012; Young, 2011).

Throughout this chapter, I reviewed the processes that have emerged and that will assist to reconnect the disconnect between Malian artist and NGO cultures. By being mindful of how to 1) cultivate understanding through fostering the art of solidarity, involving sociocultural mediators, and embracing ongoing dialog, and 2) alchemize power dynamics through aligning interests, ensuring local investment, intervening modestly, and including openly, we create a more nurturing environment towards sustainable local-to-global solutions.

In the next section, based on my data, I explore some of the uncountable project options that respect the current Malian context. These potential projects involve collaborations with both Malian artists and NGOs. These types of collaborations are

242

promising project examples that could increase NGO effectiveness and efficiency immediately and/or build toward long-term success.

Suggested Projects

Overall, interviewees expressed interest in collaborating with NGOs for the projects I detail in this chapter. Because most interviewees had little or no experience working with NGOs, I listened to ascertain what they were aware of and what they understood and perceived as good projects for themselves and Malian communities. What they are aware of, understand, and wish to promote reflects their intrinsic motivation and current awareness for potential intervention subject areas and/or projects. In this *Suggested Projects* chapter, I synthesize and discuss interviewee reflections about which types of projects would benefit their livelihoods. I also cover project themes and existing opportunities.

Project Themes

This section is an overview of project types that interviewees mentioned in our conversations. Even though many of these themes and projects are not directly related to the arts, they were topics that interviewees highlighted as important to them and their

reality. For purposes of this research, I organize project themes under the following

subcategories: *Environmental*, *Social*, *Material*, and *Managerial*.

Environmental

Only the Rapper very clearly referred to an environmentally-related theme:

resource conservation. He was also the only interviewee who specifically promoted an

environmentally-minded NGO, Sahel. Part of Sahel's mission is to resiliently increase

water accessibility for people ("SOS," n.d.). Others referred to environmentally-related

NGOs and causes more indirectly. In these indirect references, they focused more on

human interests for extracting resources from the natural environment, without

necessarily working toward maintaining or replenishing natural resources, which are

essential for sustaining human life long-term.

Some of the more human interest-related themes regarding the environment

included the Griot favoring NGOs that "fight against drought and lack of water"

(personal communication, March 2, 2012) and the Female, Village Percussionist, and

Griot favoring projects related to water accessibility. They did not mention a specific

NGO (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Maybe it is more difficult to analyze the

natural environment in Mali because the people live more directly with their natural

surroundings. However, based on my interview data, I am concerned that interviewees

almost never refer to our current, human impact on the natural world. Another concern

was generated when the Professor Artist clearly stated that almost all Malians do not

believe in limiting birthrates. With more people, there are more demands on the land,

typically resources often become scarce, and interpersonal conflict more probable (C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013).

The Interviewees' neglect in directly referencing environmentally-focused collaboration visions seems indicative of what Richard Louv claims in his book, *The Nature Principle*. He points out that there is a disconnect between people and nature. He explains that people are too unaware of how important our natural environment is for our sustenance and well-being. Louv writes about how today there is an industrialized pull and "outsized faith in technology that we have yet to fully realize or even adequately study how human capacities are enhanced through the power of nature" (Louv, 2013, para. 3). We are not only dependent on our natural environment, but we are also quite naïve about how beneficial our natural world is and can be. All in all, on one end of the spectrum, environmental intervention was mentioned the least.

Social

On the other end, socially-related projects seemed to be the most popular. The most common socially-oriented projects were in the following realms: agriculture, health, education, and exchange.

Agriculture. The Professor Artist and the Village Percussionist promoted agricultural NGO projects, which are related to the environment, but more grounded in human interest motivations. The Professor Artist thought that agricultural projects were extremely effective in Mali and gave two examples attesting to this effectiveness: 1) a well project that increased water accessibility for community gardens in Zambougou, and

2) a project in which he assisted a "German woman" with hybrid sorghum implementation and that led to implementing other types of hybrid plants for agricultural purposes as well (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Also agriculturally-related, the Village Percussionist encouraged supporting village farmers with agricultural supplies (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Health. Almost all interviewees, except the Urban Artist (personal communication, February 29, 2012), Comedian Dancer (personal communication, March 2, 2012), Village Musician (personal communication, March 2, 2012), and the Rapper (personal communication, March 2, 2012), favored NGOs intervening in the health field. The Pseudo French Artist liked health projects because good health is important for people of all ages (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012). The Griot enjoyed participating in and emphasized an effective NGO hand washing project aimed to prevent illness (personal communication, March 2, 2012), whereas the Self-Taught Artist encouraged the NGO Sight Saver's efforts to fix eye problems (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

There were additional interviewees that spoke about wanting increased access to healthcare in various capacities. For example, the Village Percussionist wanted to improve the accessibility to the healthcare system. The Female gave the most specific example to help increase access to healthcare. She described how the government provides health coverage for athletes in Mali and juxtaposed this idea by saying that Malian artists would greatly benefit from these same health coverage benefits (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Professor Artist stated: "Supposedly the Malian

government gives 2,000,000 CFA for artist health issues, but no one knows where this money goes" (personal communication, March 3, 2012). He explained that the Malian government already allots money for artist healthcare, but he has never seen any of this government-mandated coverage.

Education. In the education realm, interviewees mentioned two types of programs: academic and arts for children. In this subsection, I discuss mostly projects related to academic education, even though the Female, Village Percussionist, and Comedian Dancer all envisioned collaborations with NGOs in arts education for children. Because the Female spoke about her collaboration in relation to wanting a space for children's art education, I include more reflections on space for children's art education under the *Material* and more specifically, the *Space* subsection later in this section.

The Rapper, Professor Artist, Village Musician, and Griot saw great value in academic education. The Rapper was concerned about improving schools. He was especially concerned with the phenomenon in Mali in which children oftentimes prioritize working over going to school because of family financial pressures (personal communication, March 2, 2012). He said that when the youth do not go to school, it makes it hard to educate the next generation. He did not offer a solution, but he stressed that this problem must be solved in Mali (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Professor Artist reinforced projects that build schools in the villages, such as Build a School in Africa's work (personal communication, March 3, 2012). The Griot also reinforced the idea of NGO assistance to create spaces for learning exchanges (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Most interviewees mentioned wanting assistance to

obtain space for various reasons, as I demonstrated intermittently throughout the rest of this *Projects* section.

       Exchange. In general, interviewees were excited about the topic of various forms of exchange. The lone exception was the Female. The fact that the Female was the only interviewee who did not mention anything about exchanging with foreigners made me wonder if this had to do with socialized Malian gender roles. The Traveler said that working with foreigners helped him to open his mind (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Self-Taught Artist encouraged foreigners to travel to Mali to learn Malian dance and music. He liked it when foreigners were curious and open to his culture (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Professor Artist described an entire list of exchanges that he wanted to create: ambassador, travel, music, performance, instrument, professor, and fair trade (personal communication, March 3, 2013). Overall, the interviewees expressed curiosity and interest in foreign exposure in the form of travel and/or information exchange. According to Dr. Edward Vockell, curiosity is one of the major intrinsic motivations. As he established, intrinsic motivations are more long-lasting that extrinsic motivations (Vockell, n.d., ["Intrinsic Motivation" link] para. 4). Therefore, I propose that NGOs work to encourage Malian artists within the realm that they are curious, such as exchanging with foreigners.

Material

Across interviews, interviewees extensively requested material support for their artistic endeavors. I have ordered the primary material requests into the following two subsections, 1) space and 2) materials and equipment.

Space. Everyone except the Self-Taught Artist, Kora Players, and Village Musician believed that in general, Mali needed more spaces to practice and learn. The Griot said, "There are musicians with talents who have experience...[and] want to do the research to know what to do in life" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Pseudo French Artist, Traveler, and Urban Artist echoed the Griot's request for assistance to build a better practice/rehearsal space for their troupes (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012; Traveler, personal communication, March 2, 2012; Urban Artist, personal communication, February 29, 2012).

Other interviewees also referred to wanting space in similar, but slightly different, ways. In general, the Traveler supported the idea of a cultural center—a place for exchange and learning (personal communication, March 2, 2012), while the Rapper wanted assistance in creating a studio. However, the Rapper did not describe the studio's function or design specifically, nor did I think to ask, but I am under the impression that he meant a recording studio so that he could produce his and other Malians' music (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Female's space vision was the most detailed. She asked for assistance with creating a space for teaching children dance and music. Her center would have the following structures: 1) a courtyard-enclosed space; 2) a roof with a "platform" to

decrease heat in the building; and 3) in the middle of the center, space for two to three training grounds (personal communication, March 2, 2012). She also gave examples of two cultural education centers for children that she liked: Centre Ko-Donzo funded by "ACTE 7" and the NGO Centre Sereba Togola cultural center. After hearing the Female's space vision, the Village Percussionist echoed her idea and said that he aspires to teach at this center too (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Not directly connected to The Female's space vision, but similarly expressed, the Comedian Dancer also described wanting a community center where he could train the next generation of young artists (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Materials and equipment. From my own observations working with West African artists, and as revealed in my interviews, oftentimes the basics and the upstart costs impede musicians and dancers from practicing their art in Bamako. The Griot commented how, in general, financial assistance to help artists progress in their profession would be helpful (personal communication, March 2, 2012). In comparison, the Traveler wanted more access to materials and equipment and the ability to purchase materials and equipment needed to do his art, such as drums, reparation materials, and accoutrements (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Village Percussionist also wanted help to obtain easier access to materials and equipment (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Easier access could mean, similar to the Traveler's desires, buying materials and equipment. At the same time, it could also mean increasing access via borrowing or sharing—which has proven to be an extremely successful and cost-effective strategy, while I was working with people in Guinea.

The Rapper explained that for events, hosts typically rent chairs for attendees. Thus, if artists wanted to create and host their own event, it was often cost prohibitive, due to expensive chair rentals. In order to compare the Rapper's views with the Pseudo French Artist and Professor Artist's thoughts, I asked the Pseudo French Artist and the Professor Artist leading questions as to whether or not they agreed with the other interviewees' requests for materials and equipment assistance; they both agreed. By asking this leading question, I was trying to incite additional collaboration visions. However, contrary to my intent, and is often the result of leading questions, I only received a trite affirmative reply. All in all, it was clear that both the Pseudo French Artist and Professor Artist agreed with NGOs assisting with materials and equipment. However, neither one focused on material or equipment support when they articulated their collaboration vision (personal communication, March 5, 2012).

Managerial

Another example in which interviewees referred to ways in which NGOs could help Malian dancers and musicians, was for the NGOs to work in a managerial capacity to facilitate Malian artists' desires. Interviewees requested managerial assistance in the following categories: *festivals and competitions* and *promotion and travel*.

Festivals and competitions. Interviewees mentioned that they wanted managerial assistance to create more opportunities in the form of festivals and competitions. The Rapper and Comedian Dancer wanted more arts competitions in a broader range of neighborhoods. They implied that competitions were not geographically accessible to

much of the Malian population (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Comedian Dancer and Traveler wanted increased opportunities to perform at festivals (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Comedian Dancer is the only interviewee to express interest in also managing competitions and festivals (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

Promotion and travel. Additional interviewees requested management assistance and wanted support in the form of promotion and travel. Many artists who referred to wanting management assistance hoped to increase their exposure to the public. For example, the Self-Taught Artist wanted help finding partners and networking (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Both the Comedian Dancer and the Self-Taught Artist wanted NGO help with general marketing, publicity, and media coverage. Neither interviewee was familiar with these strategies, and these services and processes are often expensive in Bamako (personal communication, March 2, 2012).

The Professor Artist pointed out that NGOs could be helpful to Malian artists by helping them to become known outside of Mali. Oumou Sangare and Salif Keita are world renowned now because of their exposure to people beyond Malian borders. NGOs were not responsible for initiating travel and creating new opportunities for these two stars, but the Professor Artist thought that this would be an excellent NGO project (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

Foreign exposure for artists to become known, travel, and exchange artists' skills appealed to the Pseudo French Artist as well. He said a good amount of time to travel abroad would be anywhere from fifteen days to three months. Traveling appealed to him

because he wanted to help create relationships with more people outside of Mali. These travel exchanges lead to more ongoing exchanges with other cultures so that "our hearts are [cross-culturally] married" and solidarity deepened (personal communication, March 5, 2012).

The Traveler also wanted assistance with his artistic endeavors by going abroad. He explained that traveling broadens consciousness and opportunities for creation. Traveling also provides opportunities to present their art to a wider audience (personal communication, March 2, 2012). The Village Percussionist agreed with the Traveler (personal communication, March 2, 2012). I explained the difficulty around artist visas; it is not easy to facilitate travel to, for example; the U.S. It would be easier to facilitate Malian artists' travel to countries with less-strict visa requirements and less-expensive living expenses in order to satiate Malian travel curiosities. Travel to the U.S. would be far more feasible if a there was an already-existing Malian support and fan network and circuit so that upon arrival, Malian artists would immediately have a series of gigs organized and scheduled (P. Hanrahan, multiple personal communications, 2007-2009).

Suggested Partnerships with Existing Opportunities

As I learned from Cohen, partnering with already-existing organizations saves time, energy, and resources, because separate entities do not have to carry their burdens all alone. Thus together, partnerships tend to be more effective and efficient as long as both partners' values and interests are aligned (D. Cohen, multiple personal communications, 2010-2013). Thus, I surmise that partnering with already-existing

organizations would the easiest way of quickly building capacity toward projects that interviewees endorsed. Based on interview feedback, I suggest the following partnerships and existing opportunities for Malian artist and NGO collaborations: tourisme solidaire, Kanaga Systems Krush, RECOTRADE, CLAEC, 7e ACTE, Centre Togola, AMAPROS, SOS Sahel UK, and UN Social Good Summit/Wesleyan University.

Tourisme Solidaire

A way of fostering the *art of solidarity* is via *tourisme solidaire*, a model practice in which the Professor Artist advised foreigners who were interested in contributing to projects in Mali, that they should approach the local Malian people. *Tourisme solidaire* is tourism that fosters solidarity between the local, host population and the foreign visitors. *Tourisme solidaire* is one example of a "cultural marriage" (Pseudo French Artist, personal communication, March 5, 2012) (The Griot, personal communication, March 2, 2012), a long-term, heart-connected dedication to working toward the same goals (Professor Artist, personal communications, March 3, 2012). As aforementioned, *tourisme solidaire* or the *art of solidarity,* are both processes and projects.

The Professor Artist delineated that one way to foster *tourisme solidaire* was for foreign visitors to go to the villages in order to better understand the roots of Malian culture and directly witness some of the problems that villagers face.

Everything that is in Bamako here, they learned in the villages with the villagers. It is necessary to go the foundation. To better know the foundation. Musically you are going to know the foundation, socially you are going to know it. Because in the group of people that you bring here, there are people who work with NGOs in

254

Europe...go to [the villagers'] homes [to see their] problems. It is one way to help

them. (personal communication, March 3, 2012)

When foreigners are face-to-face with Malian villagers, foreigners can better understand

Malian village realities and problems, and learn how to better contextualize and work

toward solutions together.

At the beginning of his interview, the Professor Artist described two effective

NGOs working in Mali that were both started via *tourisme solidaire*: Mali Assistance

Project (MAP) and Build a School in Africa (BSA). He highlighted both of these multiple

times, however he did not spend much time describing the projects themselves. Instead,

he extensively emphasized that the project results were effective due to the processes

utilized to create them (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2013).

However, he also liked the projects themselves.

Firstly, the Professor Artist offered MAP as a good NGO example. This NGO

helps the villagers in and around Zambougou, Mali survive immediate crises of famine,

drought, and disease, and to build a sustainable infrastructure for their future health and

economic stability. It was founded by Malian Abdoul Doumbia and U.S.-American Karen

Marx in Boulder, Colorado. Abdoul is a Malian musician, but their focus is more general

and not specifically oriented to help artists ("About Mali," n.d.; Professor Artist, personal

communication, March 3, 2013).

Secondly, the Professor Artist emphasized Build a School in Africa as a good

NGO example of *tourisme solidaire,* primarily because of the way in which it developed

via *tourisme solidaire*. In BSA's case, solidarity and trust built up over time initially with

teachers from Mali and Massachusetts. Via ongoing dialog, direct visits to Malian

villages, and aligning interests, BSA began and continues to build schools in Mali today ("Build," 2013; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012).

In researching *tourisme solidaire*, I discovered multiple Internet references promoting, critiquing, and defining the phrase. There are fewer academic resources about *tourisme solidaire*, although they did exist, mostly coming out of France. I also explored potential English phrase equivalents to *tourisme solidaire*. The most logical translation seems to be *solidarity tourism*. I also found references to a similar concept, *friendship tourism*, but it was more difficult to find academic resources discussing *friendship tourism* than *solidarity tourism*.

Solidarity tourism is a community-based alternative to mass tourism. Industrial tourism has shown signs of over-exploiting local resources, folklorizing cultures (which contributes to losing local identity), and causing economic scarcity in realms such as employment and income. These effects reflect abuse and tourist exploitation of the local populations—especially the rural communities (Solidarity Tourism, 2009, para. 1).

In community-based tourism, the local populations control tourist activity. Village communities organize themselves to create tourist visits adapted to local realities, develop the culture and the human exchange, and operate in ways that respect the environment. They also manage the complementary incomes resulting from this activity. Community-based tourism empowers rural populations in order to defend their patrimony and rights, assert themselves as economic actors, and diversify their incomes to improve their living conditions (Solidarity Tourism, 2009, para. 2-4).

Kanaga Systems Krush

The Professor Artist highly suggested KSK, an independent record label operating on a fair trade principle and focused on the preservation and promotion of traditional music. He was under the impression that a sufficient amount of profits from music sales returned to Malian artists. He liked their model for fair trade. Therefore, becoming customers and/or partners with KSK would be a great way to positively reinforce KSK's efforts without having to create a new system.

RECOTRADE

RECOTRADE is a government organization consisting of traditional crafts people, historians, and artists who help to relate messages between the government and NGOs to the general population. I suggest partnering with this organization to help NGOs working in Mali and artist form partnerships for projects. However, because the Professor Artist adamantly warned against working through the national Malian government due to their corrupt tendencies, I would suggest that interested NGOs propose to partner with RECOTRADE as an additional branch of and/or a collaborating co-creator with RECOTRADE's already-existing organization. Because NGOs are a third party, they could not only reinforce RECOTRADE's work, but also serve as a controller for accountability and transparency. If RECOTRADE was willing to offer transparency and accountability, then the partnering NGO could significantly alleviate their concerns about potentially losing their resource investments and increase effectiveness and efficiency for a NGO-RECOTRADE partnership overall.

CLAEC

CLAEC is a librarian sister-cities program between Angers, France and Bamako that has created six cultural centers in Bamako, with the mission to promote literacy, cross-cultural understanding, creativity, and critical thinking. I suggest CLAEC as a center to partner with for space and/or assistance with cross-cultural mediation and exchange ("Centre," n.d.; "Jumelage avec Bamako," 2010). However, since CLAEC is also a government program ("Jumelage avec Bamako," 2010) in a similar partnership style that I suggest for RECOTRADE, I propose that a NGO pairs with CLAEC as a third-party partner, which likely increases transparency and accountability. If this is not possible, then innovating a new program based on the CLAEC model would be a great way to start and later adapt to project needs.

7e ACTE

I was unable to determine if 7e ACTE was a NGO, government agency, business development, or another structure. Despite this uncertainty, there is potential in creating a partnership with 7e ACTE for exchanges with Malian musicians and dancers because their mission focused on nurturing and developing creative expression (website cite correctly). The Female also spoke highly of Centre Ko-Donzo (personal communication, March 2, 2012). 7e ACTE contributes funding to Centre Ko-Donzo, hence an organization and partnership model worth working with and/or studying.

Centre Togola

The Female also brought Centre Togola community center to my attention. I found many references to Centre Togola on the Internet from outside sources, but never found Centre Togola's personal website or Facebook page. I also heard about Centre Togola from my professor, Dr. Stephen Wooten; I sense that he is supportive of their project. Professor Wooten also referred me to Paul Chandler and Tama Wally, founders and directors of their nonprofit, Instruments 4 Africa. This group already utilizes space at Centre Togola for their young girls performance troupe. Therefore, Centre Togola and Instruments 4 Africa already synergize efforts through a successful partnership (Wally, personal communication, March, 2, 2012) that is worth supporting and/or using as a model.

AMAPROS

The Traveler referred to AMAPROS (L'Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel, and in English, The Malian Association for the Promotion of the Sahel) as a model organization. I never found their website, but I found a different website that referenced AMAPROS. There was only enough information on this website to gather that AMAPROS is a Malian non-governmental relief organization that works with the poorest populations in Mali, typically in the Sahel desert (JAGA, n.d., para. 1). They intervene in multiple arenas: agropastoralism, environment, democracy/human rights, education, and health—and as the Traveler mentioned, in AIDS education as well ("Association Malienne," 2013, para. 1; JAGA, n.d., para. 2; Traveler, personal communication, March 2, 2012). Because AMAPROS appears to be a successful locally-based Malian NGO,

AMAPROS' model is worth studying and collaborating with to empower locally-based development efforts (Feltault, 2006, p. 90).

SOS Sahel UK

According to the Rapper's recommendation, SOS Sahel UK is a good NGO model. In looking at their website, I discovered that SOS Sahel UK demonstrated an active transition toward locally-based and primarily managed programs from an originally UK-centralized management model ("Sahel Alliance," n.d., para. 1). In comparison, the Sightsavers' website articulated their goal to transition toward a more decentralized management style through state governments; however I did not see proof of any successful decentralization transitions ("Our history," n.d., para. 8). Based on feedback from the Professor Artist, if Sightsavers works through the national Malian government, Sightsavers' Malian government managers are likely to embezzle significant portions of Sightsavers' resources (personal communication, March 3, 2012).

UN Social Good Summit/Wesleyan University

Global leaders are able to access the generated wisdom post-UN Social Good Summit through a new, massive, and open online course (MOOC) that Wesleyan University and 92Y are developing. The dialog will be ongoing (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 23). Technology is a key enabler to sustainable development in cities as well as rural communities (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 19). Since 70% of Malians have cell phone access (CIA, 2013), I propose organizing a Malian artist coalition to form a collective voice. By telling their own stories (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii), compiling a group

vision, and communicating via technologies to the ongoing UN Social Good Summit forum housed at Wesleyan, Malian artists have the potential to reach a wider audience. It also becomes possible for these artists to be heard by and collaborate with the UN Social Good Summit forum's keynote listeners.

To add, as a student at the University of Oregon, I nudge the University of Oregon to also participate in and collaborate with Wesleyan's program. If collaboration is not an option or not a sensible project, the University of Oregon could develop a similar project, including typically marginalized voices and exchanging between University of Oregon students, staff, and faculty and places similar to Mali. However, Mali would be an excellent place to start this project, considering Dr. Steven Wooten's experience in Mali.

Suggested Innovations

In addition to the project themes and suggested partnerships with existing opportunities that I have recommended, there are two more project innovations that I suggest to mobilize Malian artist and NGO collaboration efforts:

Malian Artist Statutes

As the Urban Artist's French mentor explained, in Mali, there are no statutes for artists (personal communication, February 29, 2012). As mentioned, facilitating artists to organize themselves to advocate, make laws for, and enforce their rights would be an excellent project. Facilitating local movement toward artist statutes would not only create

a more powerful voice for artists, it would also empower artists to take charge of their own reality.

Upstart Center

The Kora Players spoke positively about many different foundations (personal communication, February 29, 2012). The Professor Artist explained that there were no NGOs in Mali aimed to help artists (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Hence, a potential project could be developing a new foundation for upstarting artists' pursuits. This foundation could facilitate initial funds and strategic assistance that would then allow the artist to run his/her own vision based on his/her own time, energy, and investment. By investing in the upstart, there is not prolonged dependency on foreign money, which is ideal for NGOs (R. Radostitz, multiple personal communications, 2010) Also, as already-established, if the project is fueled by intrinsic motivation, artists will more likely self-sustain the upstarted project long-term.

Conclusion

Despite obvious disconnects, we human beings are interconnected. Together, we have a deeply wise *collective consciousness* (Cohen, multiple communications, 2010-2013; Piepmeyer, 2007, para. 1). Our diversity strengthens our knowledge about how to better our human existence on Earth (Cohen, multiple communications, 2010-2013; C. J.

Goebel, multiple communications, 2012-2013). As Tiffany Schlain, director of the award winning documentary *Connected,* states: "Instead of declaring our independence, isn't it time to declare our interdependence?" (Lewis & Evans, 2012). No one entity, government, NGO, or business will be able to solve our global problems alone (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 44). We humans must alter our habits in order to create different outcomes. By depending on already-existing government, NGOs, and business structures to solve our current global problems, humans risk repeating the same problems, inequities, and oppressions they have dealt with in the past (Feltault, 2006, p. 90; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; Ledwith, 2005; Young, 2011).

Voices are still not being heard. Sometimes this lack of attention is intentional; other times, it is unintentional. These marginalized human beings are not mere commodities or consumers, but hold the missing strengths that we need to build our human collective wisdom (Chambers, 1983; Goebel, 2007, para. 2; Young, 2011). In the attempt to include more frequently omitted voices, this thesis explored the margins, applied theory to practice (Ledwith, 2005, p. 8), and sought to combine intrinsic motivation and mutually beneficial collaborations from two distinct cultures: Malian dancers and musicians and NGOs.

The strongest bridge between the worlds of Malian artists and NGOs was the iconic Professor Artist. A Malian expert in many realms, he bridged academic, artistic, linguistic, cross-cultural, local, and global perspectives. He was also skilled at articulating the notion that by aligning interests and in collaboration with appropriate and invaluable sociocultural intermediaries, we cultivate understanding, alchemize power dynamics, and can synergize untapped potential to solve current problems (Professor

Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012). Professor Artist symbolized an ideal sociocultural intermediary.

The Professor Artist emphasized, and other interviewees reinforced, that the way in which NGOs conduct projects is as important, if not more so, than the type of development project. For example, via common friends and colleagues, the Professor Artist was the interviewee who *trusted* me the most. As a result, I gained the most extensive and sincere information from him. It is important for NGOs to establish a similar *trust* with local communities to more efficiently and effectively conduct sustainable development projects in Mali.

With the exception of the Professor Artist, interviewees' frequently vague responses to my questions about their interpretations, impressions, and preferences around NGOs and NGO projects reflected a general disconnect between Malian artists and foreign NGOs working in Mali. NGO personnel and Malian artists need to learn how to decrease this gap. Since each unique individual human reality and identity is constantly dynamic, ongoing dialogs are crucial to establish *trust*, create alliances across differences (Ledwith, 2005, p. 105), and manage cross-cultural tensions and misunderstandings that no longer serve a healthy global balance. Ongoing exchanges also engage local wisdom for successful, contextually appropriate projects.

Project partners must also be dedicated and work as a team toward an agreed upon vision. Egocentric and solely financially driven interests must fade into the past and interests that are more considerate of other humans and our environment must preside (Chambers, 1983; Professor Artist, personal communications, March 3, 2012; Textor, 2011, p. 18). In order to make this shift, project teams must avoid overly-simplistic,

materialistic motivations and work toward more holistic, mutually beneficial, and sustainable goals.

To accomplish more holistic, mutually beneficial, and sustainable goals, current power dynamics must become more balanced. At this point in history, with NGOs engaging in a more financially advantageous role while working in Mali, NGOs should engage and create more fluid, adaptable systems for greater long-term resilience. NGO personnel, as *outsiders*, must strive toward creating a more welcoming space for fluid exchanges with local peoples when working in Mali. More inclusive and fluid development conversations and processes better cross-pollinate ideas and challenge and innovate across silos so that local peoples discuss, craft, and take action for their own solutions (Chambers, 1983; *Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 48; Freire, 1972; C. J. Goebel, multiple personal communications, 2012-2013; Ledwith, 2005, p. 96; Young, 2011, p. 37).

Another essential aspect to change current power inequities is that, ideally, local peoples would empower themselves to activate change appropriate for their own specific sociocultural and environmental context. However, many interviewees thought of NGOs as *producers* for interviewee's art, rather than development *actors*. Thus, within collaborations between foreign NGOs and Malian artists, I urge NGOs to reflect on the following questions: How might NGOs transform Malians' and Malian artists' dependence on NGOs and foreigners in general? How could Malians and Malian artists tend to their own development realities, avoid perpetuating patron-client relationships, and therefore transform the current power differentials? How do NGOs engage Malian artists to *act with* rather than *for* artists' interests so that artists take ownership of projects

and empower themselves within their own reality while Africans reclaim their story within the global context? (M'Bow, 1984, p. xvii). These are merely a few of the uncountable, provocative questions that are crucial to transform and rebalance not only sociocultural, but also environmental aspects of Mali and, I intuit, our world in general.

To better bridge disconnects and rebalance power dynamics, and since people and realities constantly change, why not increasingly traverse literal and figurative borders and combine and innovate new expressions? This thesis explored a few possibilities. Although this works through a business concept, why not nudge fair trade toward NGO frontiers (Professor Artist, personal communications, March 3, 2012)? Urban artists' commentaries are rich (Wooten, personal communication, November 18, 2012) and versatile (Brunson, Conte, & Masar, 2002, p. 17); why not use these creative expressions to communicate beyond verbal language? NGOs have become an important, fourth branch of government that helps with self-regulation, especially at the local level. Why not work to more equally distribute these NGO services? (Pringle, 2006, para. 9). In short, why not have NGOs assist with transparency and accountability?

Another way to promote connections and rebalance power dynamics, while encouraging cross-pollination across silos, is by increasing both locally and globally diverse perspectives on project teams working in Mali. For example, folklorists who are not typically involved with international development issues should become more involved with these types of projects. Folklorists could emphasize a more rights-based or human security-based development paradigm that leads to collaboration with communities, which in turn helps these communities to improve local capacity to address their own sustainable development issues while challenging dominant development

models, such as cultural tourism (Feltault, 2006, p. 90; Ledwith, 2005, pp. 94-99; Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012; Young, 2011). Permaculture perspectives could also compliment project designs in Mali. All in all, there is a need for new solutions, models, partnerships, practices, and innovations that allow for more fluid adaptation across rigid borders.

Lastly, another vital element in establishing successful collaborations between Malian musicians and dancers and NGOs is the natural environment. I am concerned that only one interviewee, the Rapper, distinctly expressed concern about the environment— our human sustenance (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Perhaps other interviewees did not mention the environment because of their own lack of awareness, communication difficulties, and/or cultural orientation. The general interviewee-environment disconnect reflects a symptom that Malian artists and likely, Malians in general, do not have access to larger global sustainability movement theories and conversations. Nonetheless, for the global sustainability movement to succeed, sustainability theories must become more place-based and comprehensible to local peoples. Local peoples must be able to manage and practice sustainability in their own communities (Professor Artist, personal communication, March 3, 2012) and in sync with the rest of the world ("Education," n.d., para. 2).

I am optimistic that within our inter-human dialog and in concert with the natural environment, we will discover voices such as Richard Louv's that will help our human existence with the Earth. Even though today technology is a key enabler to sustainable development in cities as well as rural communities (*Forbes Magazine*, 2013, para. 19), we must not forget how Louv articulates that in our collective era, we will learn "about

the power of living in nature—not with it, but in it. We are entering the most creative period in history. The twenty-first century will be the century of human restoration in the natural world." (Louv, 2013, para. 3). I am optimistic that global peoples can and will synergize perspectives, actions, and co-create "The Good Life" (Young, 2011, p. 37) within each individual, in our relationships with people, between generations, across cultures, within our Earth, and beyond.

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