



CASE STUDY

WALKING WITH AMADOU: CREATIVE ADVOCACY FOR URBAN ENVIRONMENTS



BEING 3 IN DAKAR

Amadou, Soukeyna and Antou

TECHNOLOGY4ECD

Tech sector meets ECD Innovators

INTRODUCING YUX

The Interview: Camille and Aissatou

APPS AND METHODOLOGIES

LOOKA and HCD Research

IMAGINATION AFRIKA

Findings, learnings, way forward

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BEING 3 IN DAKAR

THE CASE OF SOUKEYNA, ANTOU AND AMADOU


What is it like to be 3 in Dakar? This question was one of the fundamental drivers of this research. Are our assumptions about their environments and where we should be focusing our efforts justified?

Since 2011, ImagiNation Afrika has made child centered approaches central to its mission of changing the paradigms of learning for West Africa's most important citizens. As a small, innovative organization dedicated to changing the learning paradigms around children, ImagiNation Afrika's strength lies in its creative responses to the challenges that inhibit young children's learning and development. Including children's voices and children's experiences have informed the production and creation of all our exhibitions as well as the learning environments our learning and innovation hub, Ker Imagination provides.

The Walking With Amadou project began as a creative spark from the ImagiNation Afrika communications team. Inspired by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation's Urban95 project, the IA communications wondered what it would be like to see the Dakar from the point of view of a 3 year old?

The first walk was a revelation. Armed with a GoPro, our comms team, led by Chakera McIntosh set out alongside 3 year old Amadou, a Yoff native and Ker ImagiNation attendee to follow him as he crisscrossed the streets neighboring our learning and innovation center. Every day, Amadou navigated streets with no sidewalks filled with animals, most nearly the same height as him, environmental hazards such as trash and debris from half built homes, and people's attempts at meager livelihoods in the 15 minute perimeter to get from his home to our learning center.

As adults watching the video, the impact of this navigation gave us pause. How well did we know this environment we lived in every day? How could we assume that this environment was livable for children? Where else was our knowledge limited by our assumptions of the experience of children and their environment? How often were we walking through these spaces without an understanding of their impact on children? Most importantly, how could we find out?

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For practical reasons we decided to expand our pilot from just Amadou, to three year old Soukeyna and 2 year old Antou: walking to nine spaces could become repetitive for just one child and Amadou's interest at close to four year old was on other things much more interesting than just wearing a camera. We reached out to Suzanne Camara, mother of 2 year old Antoinette (known as Antou), and Ibrahima Samba, father to 3 year old Soukeyna Samba.

We explained to them both that at the core of our project was a profound curiosity to have a sense of what Dakar was like for Antoinette and Soukeyna. Perhaps it was our work to date and our transparent approach in working with communities and families, particularly with our work with children, but in an incredible spirit of trust and goodwill, their parents willingly consented to let their daughters participate. Antoinette, after a first solo adventure to the market, decided she preferred going only if Soukeyna went. And after a couple of trips, Soukeyna asked for ice cream on every outing.



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"No stone was left unturned. Children notice everything and are very honest about how they feel and what they see. If something is dirty, dangerous or fun Soukeyna will tell you!"

-Desja Fagins, IA Content and Communications Specialist



The weekly journeys with Soukeyna, Antou and Amadou were immersions in a Dakar seldom seen and barely understood. Over a three month period, Soukeyna, Antou and sometimes Amadou allowed us to see and know nine citizen spaces from the perspective of 95 inches. But the more we visited, the more it became apparent that despite what we were seeing, there was still even more we were neither seeing nor understanding.

The majority of our questions revolved around parent/caregiver perceptions and experiences. What were the differences in communities that had different socio-economic realities in terms of parent and caregiver expectations? What and how did parents understand how environments impacted their children's growth and development? And how could we capture this information qualitatively and quantitatively?

TECHNOLOGY4ECD

In 2016, Imagination Afrika founder and director, Karima Grant came across Yux Dakar's pivotal study on migrant fruit vendors. Although co-founder Yann le Beux was known to IA for many years, the user centered approach to design and research struck a chord. Recentring programming from the perspective of children has been a core approach for Imagination Afrika and has brought us recognition as a disruptor to the classic forms of education for children 0-10 years old. Perhaps it was this identity as an innovator in children's programming that made us natural allies to many in the tech sector, including parents. We were regularly approached by so many in the sector to co-create games and apps for children; to allow the children at Ker ImagiNation to test out new apps or tablets or mobile devices all deemed educational. While we kindly refused many of these apps and educational devices (so many of them still engaged children passively) we were eager to continue to work with tech partners, to get them thinking about children in the way we were thinking about children.

The Walking With Amadou project gave us a fresh way to engage tech start-ups and integrate the innovative thinking and paradigms tech start-ups used to addresss the challenges and needs in the ECD world.

YUX Dakar, a UX company specializing in HCD research and design, had been working since May 2016, capturing various user perspectives and using these perspectives to create and design better user experiences. Our first meeting with YUX was exciting but awkward. Researchers meet educators, tech geeks meet child centered approaches. It seemed a no brainer at first: what was the user experience of a city for children and their caregivers? And could that data inform advocacy toward new and important influencers on young children's lives, including civic government and private sector?

But as we met again and again, the process to achieve that goal was difficult. How to involve very young children and infants if they were users? What perspective could toddlers offer, if any? Who were the best allies in the community to work alongside to collect the data? How much data could we collect? YUX knew what they could do, we knew what we wanted - but it felt like we were speaking Wolof and they were speaking Swahili. Still, the energy was palpable. We were aiming at something never before done here in Dakar, - the learning curve was steep.

YUX had to understand something very quick about young children and their competencies to better immerse themselves in their environment. Despite their size, children were formidable learning machines and the experience of the environment had an enormous impact on their development. Their resilience was something to be captured beyond cute descriptions. Likewise, the IA team had to understand quickly that the goal of HCD research and data collection was a drive to solutions. We were not just collecting data for the sake of having data, but to co-create solutions to the problems they identified, alongside community members.

We stumbled, we shared information, drew up timetables, threw them out, restarted timetables and eventually, by mid January 2019 a mixed team of HCD/ECD expertise hit the ground awkwardly in YOFF, just as the ImagiNation Afrika comms team began to move into Dakar alongside Antou, Soukeyna and Amadou.



Introducing Yux...

CAMILLE AND AISSATOU

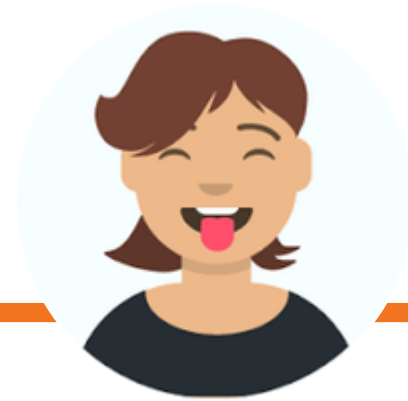
*"It was necessary to
innovate, to draw a portrait
of their situation."*

```
scientist.rb      x default.rb      x observation.rb
1 # Scientist: Result of running an experiment.
2 class Scientist::Result
3   attr_reader :observations
4   attr_reader :control
5   attr_reader :experiment
6   attr_reader :ignored
7   attr_reader :mismatched
8   attr_reader :observations_order
9   attr_reader :observations
10  # Internal: Create a new result
11  def initialize(experiment, observation)
12    @experiment = experiment
13    @observation = observation
14    @control = control
15    @candidates = observations - [control]
16    evaluate_candidates
17    freeze
18  end
19  # Public: the experiment's context
20  def context
21    experiment.context
22  end
23  # Public: the name of the experiment
24  def experiment_name
25    experiment.name
26  end
27  # Public: was the result a match between
28  def matched?
29  end
30 end
lib/scientist/result.rb 1:1
```


The Players

AT YUX DESIGN

Camille Kramer



Co-founder of YUX Dakar,
specialist in UX Design

"In addition to my social mandate
for the agency, I am also involved
in the research team's projects."

Aissatou Dione



Former midwife, Head UX researcher

"My role is to go out in the field to meet
people, to discover their frustrations
and from there, develop ways to
improve for them."

The Interview

What about the project appealed to you?

Camille

This subject is important. Personally I have plans to start a family in Dakar and of course the question of quality of life for children is a fundamental one, so I had an "interested" curiosity :)

In addition, I had heard many positive things about ImagiNation Afrika. When the opportunity to work with them on a project presented itself, it was perfect.

Aissatou

I liked a lot of things, mainly understanding how people perceive a child from 0 to 3 years of age. It was also very interesting to see the interactions between these children and their urban environment. I had many surprises!



On Partnerships

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX AND APPEALING TO NEW PARTNERS.

What about ImagiNation Afrika appealed to you?

Camille

Once again, I would say that early childhood is a subject that concerns us all, and beyond the project initiative, it is the values of ImagiNation Afrika that speak to me. As a designer, and therefore a creative person, I can only applaud and encourage initiatives that seek to stimulate children from an early age through play and creativity.

Aissatou

I like their concept, particularly involving all these stakeholders in early childhood. Involving the authorities too, that's also an approach that impressed me. I also find that using the environment to enhance child development is very relevant, even if it is new in Senegal.

Have you worked in the education sector before? What kind of projects? Have you worked on in early learning?

CAMILLE

I have absolutely no experience in the education sector. Or early childhood, for that matter. What brings me closer to early childhood is that I spend a lot of my time teaching and leading trainings. In the end, we always try to make learning fun, even for adults!

AISSATOU

I have never worked in the education sector. But I worked in an orphanage for 0 to 5 year olds in my previous role as a midwife . My role was in learning, monitoring child health and nutrition.

APPS AND METHODOLOGIES: LOOKA

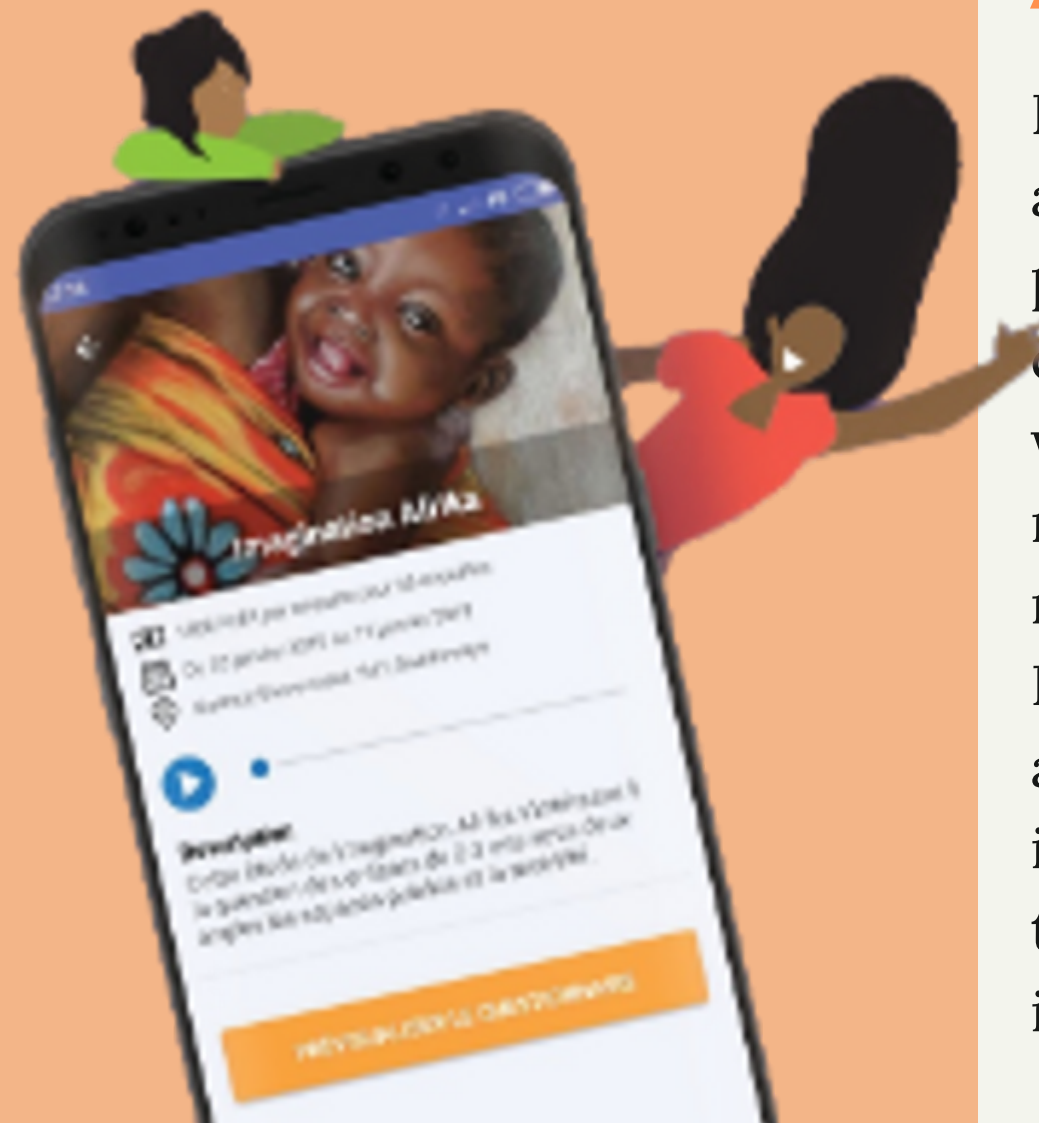
As part of data collection during the project, YUX used an application that they developed called Looka.

What benefit was the app to data collection?

How did the data collected challenge the app's design?

CAMILLE

Looka is crowd-sourced data. The interviewers come from the target communities, and therefore have no language or cultural barriers. They use the application to collect data, and we have a near real-time view in our back end. We collected responses from more than 300 interviews in 4 days across Dakar. Offline functionality is very important, as surveys sometimes take place in remote areas. In addition, some interviewers are not very good at reading, so questions are also recorded by voice messages.



AISSATOU

Looka allowed us to cover as many areas as possible in as little time as possible; to enter communities and collect as much data as possible. This was good because the interviews do not take too long for a satisfactory result. We had problems with the RAM of the phones, but using the application is easy, the interviewers who used it for the first time did not have any problems with it.




HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN :

Focusing on Infants, Toddlers and their Caregivers

Camille : In HCD research, two things are fundamental:

- 1) Beyond research, having the objective of being able to propose solutions.
- 2) Give pride of place to users throughout the project, involve them from research to ideation and solution testing... For us as researchers, what was most innovative about this project was that we could not ask our questions directly to the main stakeholders, because they were children under 3 years old! It was necessary to innovate to draw a portrait of their situation.

Aissatou : For me, HCD is the right methodology to better understand users, because it is around their lives and needs that research is built. In this particular project it is innovative because we are talking about children and their environment, we are trying to understand how these children live, in relation to their parents and their environment, through participatory research and creative approaches



What were the key challenges this project presented?

CAMILLE

The scope of the study. Understanding qualitatively 3 different districts of Dakar implies spending time there, meeting people. It is an ambitious project. There were also presidential elections in Senegal during the study, which made it difficult to make appointments with the town halls.

AISSATOU

Recruitment. Our targets were active populations, so finding availability slots was difficult. Sometimes they would respond at the last minute for the next day or even the same day, so the preparation times were short, but overall we did well.

What were the major lessons learned?

CAMILLE

I was surprised to see that play could have negative connotations for some parents. It would give the children "too much freedom". I have also learned that in some families, children who are too stimulated, or considered too bright are "hidden" in the houses. We don't want them to stand out from the crowd or attract the wrong eye. I think it's a pity because it's a huge potential that's being curtailed.

There was also the surprise to see that in traditional or popular neighbourhoods, such as Yoff or Guédiawaye, more time is spent playing with children than in a neighbourhood like Sacré Coeur, where families are better off but where children are often left to play on phones, so less interaction with other people.

Finally, we have seen with the quantitative data that, whatever the neighbourhood, it is very, very, very common for an aunt to look after her siblings' children, almost as common as looking after her own children! There is therefore a real "caregiver" theme.

AISSATOU

For parents and local authorities, we had the impression that this was the first time they had been questioned on this subject. They were surprised because they did not know that a child from 0 to 3 years old could have specialized needs.

They were interested and in the end they had a lot to say. Especially for parents, no one until then was interested in the challenges they had with children. It made them aware that a child from 0 to 3 years old is a being in its own right, and that the place where it lives has an impact on its development.

Another crucial insight we learned is that parents have a great need for space dedicated to their children. Whether for their education or development, there are no exclusive places for them. Otherwise, the main things they care about are child health and nutrition.



What have you learned or understood more clearly regarding Early Childhood Development that perhaps you hadn't understood before?

Camille

What impressed me the most was the long-term impact of good development and stimulation during the first 1000 days. A better salary, more chance of going far in school... it can really change someone's life. I think that every parent wants the best for his children but that we are not sufficiently informed.

Aissatou

Personally I have learned that in order for a child to grow up well, it is not only a loving home that the child needs, but also interactions with other children and stimulation, and this in a healthy environment. What I didn't know before also is that there is a growing tendency to replace these moments when they play with children their age with technology. I was a little aware of that, but with the study it became more striking.

What would be other collaborations you could imagine working on for ECD?

CAMILLE

We chose to focus on public spaces and mobility in this study. However, we were able to observe that mobility is not a central problem for parents of young children, while access to dedicated spaces is much more so. I would like to see a fundamental reflection with some of the actors met during the research to pursue initiatives in this direction. We could do a lot with a little!

AISSATOU

I think that the associations that are involved in the environment, all the people who sweep the streets, have a role to play too. An awareness of these people might be good. Greater involvement of local communities as well, as there is a tendency in Dakar to wait for the authorities to come and do things. I hope that some of the communities we have seen will be active, some have already promised to make resources available.



LEARNINGS, FINDINGS AND WAY FORWARD

CHAKERA MCINTOSH



I am the strategic communications lead at ImagiNation Afrika. My role is to develop and implement tactics that convey the organization's key messages around learning through play and catalyse advocacy in local communities to build strong ecosystems that support young children in Senegal.

The URBAN 95 project's focus on very young children was particularly appealing as it is very much in line with ImagiNation Afrika's approach. We also know the value and try to highlight the importance of environments that will help children to thrive. The URBAN 95 conference in California was truly inspirational and was the initial impetus for the Walking With Amadou video in Yoff. The overall idea of exploring the experiences of young children in their neighborhoods and seeing what is within close proximity (15 min walk) prompted the idea of the Walking With Amadou video. It was important for us to show Dakar from the point of view of the child.

One of our biggest challenge on this project was mobility, how to move around the city safely with a 3 year old, this was due to inappropriate public transportation, and limited services for young children in the immediate neighborhood. This helped us to understand what caregivers face and ultimately reported in the data.

THE LEARNINGS

OUR ADVOCACY, PARENT BY PARENT SECTOR BY SECTOR

What were the major lessons learned?

There are many actors/stakeholders who have a role to play in improving the environment for young children in urban centres such as Dakar. Presenting the data to different groups required adapted approaches, but when confronted with the data, all groups understood quite immediately the urgency of the circumstance and agreed there is major room for improvement in the lived environment of young children in Senegal.

So far, the groups that responded the most positively were in our meetings with the tech sector as well as media. They have echoed the call for improvements to the lived environments and helped tremendously in mobilizing community efforts. Here are links to the articles covered by local media.

- <https://naylerr.com/long-imagination-africa-releve-un-probleme-despaces-pour-les-enfants-a-dakar/?fbclid=IwAR0F9DLNrV7K9cnZadzCKUSLRvQZeJQACinyZwPFCIHcwg5HDKHuEqCab60>
- https://www.dakaractu.com/Etude-sur-la-situation-des-enfants-de-0-a-3-ans-Comment-ameliorer-les-espaces-publics-Imagination-Africa-pose-le-debat_a172589.html
- <https://www.facebook.com/ImagiNationAfrika/videos/474361783337767/>

Unsurprisingly, the hardest group to mobilize remained government. Despite repeated engagement, there exists little goodwill and/or political intention to engage meaningfully on the national level for all things ECD. Local governments however, were responsive to questions of quality of life and public spaces. As of this writing, ImagiNation Afrika has begun to successfully engage governments at the commune and the municipal level in discussions on creating better environments for young children. Interestingly, the most successful approaches to working with them has been through appeal to them as parents as opposed to civic officials.

What new lessons for advocacy has this project raised?

In order to create better urban environments for young children, partnerships must be built across sectors and organisations to be more effective and reach non-traditional audiences. The objective has to begin with building broad based understanding of the challenge of our current environments for young children and their caaregivers. Working with the tech sector also let us know that they need to be included in the advocacy. So many local start-ups are working on issues related to quality of services or access to services that have a direct impact on the environment surrounding young children. They are natural partners with whom we can think though innovative solutions.



Advocacy efforts must be led by an increased understanding of children's brain development and the influence of environments.

Countering misinformation (on what children know and how much there is to know about young children)

Young children are more than just burdens on the backs of their mothers. Every advocacy meeting became an opportunity to share and learn about how young children grow and the importance of environments to their learning and development. There was not one occasion when the reality of brain development and environmental impact did not stop and stun parents of all sectors.

Public advocacy campaigns

Political timelines are loaded with minefields particularly for municipal governments. The national elections created volatile political environments and caused some public spaces to be identified with different political factions. Municipal governments aligned themselves accordingly and suffered the fall out post elections both in the short term (changes in job posts and staff) and long term (budgets spent on political campaigns). Building community advocacy is the most sustainable approach to holding governments accountable. New partnerships with media were extremely helpful in this sense.

The research also demonstrated that for local authorities very young children are viewed as an extension of their mothers.

Local authorities do not consider any specialized needs for either caregiver or child outside the home. This provides another excellent opportunity for advocacy to include increasing the understanding of local authorities on ECD and brain development and connect that to improvement of existing services for which local authorities are directly responsible.





Parents across all three neighborhoods ranked nutrition highly as a main need for child development, making it a great opportunity to incorporate information on brain development into nutrition outreach, as well as incorporate aspects of nutrition into parenting programs. These need to be a part of the services delivered by local authorities.

Because 40% of surveyed parents take 4 or more trips a week on public transport with a child aged 0-3 years old, working with transit officials to increase solutions for caregivers and offer learning spaces for children on buses, and parenting information for parents is another important opportunity for advocacy.



Dakar has one
playground or park
for every **82,000**
inhabitants

42.4% of the population surveyed in Yoff believe that play is essential for development. This shows potential in mobilizing advocacy in the Yoff community for the creation of play spaces for children and their caregivers.



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Resources and Links

Hashtag - Use and search **#Villebicilabok**, which translates to 'I am a part of the community', to share and discover content related to the Walking With Amadou project.

Creative Advocacy Toolkit - Download our Creative Advocacy Toolkit in both french and english to discover how to advocate for better environments for children aged 0-3.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vd92k3VZTDQtOyeBz6iaSNJ_WZpbsD64?usp=sharing

Walking With Amadou Full Report - If you want to dive deeper into the WWA study, download the full report in both french and english.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VMVDgkG66nzc-eeig-l9Gn_kGwojtjhw?usp=sharing

Exhibition Storyboard - Our easy to follow storyboard will give you a visual idea of what our child environment study captured in Dakar, Senegal. Use this example to share data and visuals or, start planning your own exhibition.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fli0AM3rGDg6UcLO6nwixmCwzgQPkOIK/view?usp=sharing>

Walking With Amadou Videos - View the videos of 3yr olds Antou and Soukeyna in Dakar with their caregivers.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLd9GNfiKv0vcj2mCWAF13og_uMrXFAVUD

Walking With Amadou Study Presentation - Presented by ImagiNation Afrika founder and director, Karima Grant at the panel discussion on technology for early childhood development.

<https://youtu.be/UyyvRYNrqwI>

Press Kit - View the press kit for examples on how to present your data to the media.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16Jd4r20V-H6A01N7pFePg-z-7r6f1dEJ?usp=sharing>

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