

Why my startup scene is better than yours: Senegal

 By Tom Jackson

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African tech is booming, but which ecosystem has the most going for it, either for launching a business or making investments?



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Disrupt Africa [has been chatting to stakeholders](#) from various African tech ecosystems to find out what it is that makes them such a good place to operate from.

We've already heard from ecosystem players in [South Africa](#), [Kenya](#), [Nigeria](#), [Egypt](#), [Ghana](#) and [Tanzania](#), and now it is time for stakeholders in the Senegalese tech space to make their case.

Yann Le Beux, co-founder of YUX Dakar

“By order of importance I would say the assets that make Senegal a great place to start a tech company are the stability of the country, the number of talented people at local universities, several discrete but real IT companies, a good tech maturity of companies and a good digital literacy of populations, international transport connectivity and lots of headquarters for companies and donors, decent and pretty cheap internet connectivity, and amazing weather, the sea and the security.



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Pierre Gancel, co-founder of Weebi

“Have you ever heard of Systeme D? It stands for le Système de la Débrouille, which means to get by, to sort out the situation. Senegalese people are the masters of Systeme D. Facing trouble or challenges they always come up with a cheap and innovative solution. Daily scenes in Dakar illustrate this slyness and flexibility, like a taxi driver holding his falling door with a rope or people throwing stones in puddles to cross over.

“The problem is not the problem, it is one’s attitudes towards the problem. The lack of cash is not a problem to start a business, it is a constraint to manage on a regular basis, and an incentive to monetise resources. Learning from the street, starting a startup in Dakar is a rich experience.”

Jean-Pierre Mendy, co-founder of noflaay

“My first encounter with the ecosystem was at Jokkolabs in 2015. The very same day I met people working on solar energy, education software, and smartphone application development. Soon, I would discover all the networking events, incubators and startup contests to foster creation and innovation.



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“Networking events help entrepreneurs help each other and gain visibility. More recently, a TV show dedicated to entrepreneurship and venture capitalists are adding to tools entrepreneurs can leverage on.”

Bernie Akporiaye, managing director of MaTontine

“The education system is very good with young graduates well trained and able to go into areas like software development straight out of university. There is very good infrastructure: electricity, Wi-Fi hotspots, relatively cheap internet, high connectivity...

“An internationally-recognised incubator, CTIC, attracts funders and partners, and hosts regular events. There is a good amount of collaborative workspaces, an increasing number of investors, and a safe and well-organised city that is easy to navigate.

“You also have access to a regional market – the eight countries in the WAEC region using the CFA currency – and fairly consistent financial regulation across the aforementioned countries because they have the same central bank.

Aziz Yerima, CEO of PayDunya

“The West African countries are politically stable and the central banks support fintech players to take up financial inclusion challenges. Our economy is still very cash, but it changes. We have a real “digitalisation of cash”, and this will change the deal because it will allow people to have a first contact with digital financial services, and gradually, everyone can be embarked on the adventure of the digital.”

ABOUT TOM JACKSON

Co-founder @DisruptAfrica. Tech and business journalist in Africa. Passionate about the vibrant tech startups scene in Africa, Tom can usually be found sniffing out the continent's most exciting new companies and entrepreneurs, funding rounds and any other developments within the growing ecosystem.

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