



dustrialisation has been associated with rapid technological improvements and sustained growth in the western world, and more recently east Asia, gainfully employing millions of workers and helping it to close the income gap with richer countries.

Until the 2000s, sub-Saharan Africa was actually de-industrialising: the mood was gloomy as the little manufacturing activity that did exist was disappearing, and with it the traditional route to development and poverty reduction. In northern Nigeria's biggest city, Kano, for example, textile factories, leather tanneries and ceramics plants were visibly falling into disrepair. There were reports of empty industrial parks in Ethiopia, while South Africa's footwear industry had collapsed.

But recently the trend has reversed across the region. We have documented this in new research based on an in-depth investigation of national statistics in 51 countries, including 18 in sub-Saharan Africa, ranging from South Africa to Ethiopia to Nigeria to Kenya to Mauritius. These 18 countries account for nearly three-quarters of the GDP of the region, so they are a good representation of the overall picture.

**Similar to other developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa recorded a 2.6% decline, following strong growth of 3.2% in 2019.**

**By Gaaitzen de Vries, Emmanuel B Mensah, Hagen Kruse and Kunal Sen**

in the Conversation

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on the global economy, with world output contracting at 3.5% in 2020, and no recovery likely before the fourth quarter of 2021. Similar to other developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa recorded a 2.6% decline, following strong growth of 3.2% in 2019.

Unfortunately, this comes at a time when the region has been experiencing a surprising and very welcome manufacturing renaissance. Historically, in-

The graph below shows how this industrial renaissance affected the share of manufacturing employment in three of the countries in the study, namely Nigeria, Ghana and Rwanda. Manufacturing in Ghana and Nigeria started to expand from around 2010 onwards, while in Rwanda it had been steadily increasing as a share of employment since the 2000s. Rwanda's industrialisation includes the opening of its first car assembly plant by Volkswagen in 2018, for instance.