

What needs to be done

With an outdated story that gives up on manufacturing, Africa will fail to close the huge digital gap it still faces. The gap is reflected in the fact the continent contributes less than 1% of world's digital knowledge production. To reduce this gap, African countries will have to start by expanding internet access and use. If internet use across the continent can be expanded to the same rate as in high-income countries, 140 million new jobs and US\$2,2 trillion could be added to GDP.

What must be done to change the narrative? What do African governments need to do? The first is that its leaders need to start telling more stories about the future than about the past. Perhaps, like China's leaders, they can even be inspired by science fiction. British best-selling author Neil Gaiman relates

how China started to embrace science fiction after sending a delegation to

the US, to Apple, to Microsoft, to Google, and they asked the people there who were inventing the future about themselves. And they found that all of them had read science fiction when they were boys or girls.

Helping to imagine the future of African industrialisation, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa recently stressed that fact that Africa is one of the early adopters of mobile telephony and moreover that the continent needs to aspire to more:

We need to focus on the new technologies that are going to revolutionise the world, and we need to be ahead of the curve.

This is the right narrative. It is necessary, although not suf-

ficient for African industrialisation. For this, words need to lead to actions. And some consistent actions, at least for a start, would be for African governments to refrain from creating stumbling blocks for their brave new tech-entrepreneurs, such as curbing access to the internet, restricting digital information flows, under-investing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, neglecting data-privacy legislation, and restricting the rights of women to work in manufacturing.

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