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How a Continent Is Escaping Silicon Valley's Long Shadow

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The Geonet project incorporated three core research areas, of which the work in the book represents one. Each area of the project has been shaped by the innovative research and hard work of our colleagues in the rest of the team. Therefore, we wish to thank our Geonet collaborators: Mohammed Amir Anwar, Fabian Braesemann, Chris Foster, Sanna Ojanperä, Stefano De Sabbata, and Ralph Straumann. We are especially thankful to Sanna and Fabian for providing data-scientific inputs to this book.

This book is an exercise in empirical grounding and, as such, it could not be written without the participation of the people "on the ground": Africa's digital entrepreneurs and their supporters. We conducted 202 in-depth research interviews including with 143 digital entrepreneurs, plus countless informal conversations with people we met during field visits. Many of these individuals are pioneers and leaders in their local communities, making them sought-after candidates for studies and media pieces. We found it fascinating and inspiring to be invited into their professional lives, and we are grateful for their hospitality and the time they dedicated to participate in our research. We especially want to thank the founders of AgroCenta for allowing us to profile their companies as a case study.

Our fieldwork spanned eleven African cities. To make such ambitious data collection effective, we relied on help from friends and colleagues who live in those cities or have experience working in them. They introduced us to participants, showed us around the most important spots of entrepreneurial ecosystems, and sometimes even helped us with travel essentials like visas and accommodation. We want to extend our thanks to Claude Migisha for Rwanda; Tessy Onaji, Abi Jagun, Tunde Akinnuwa, David Souter, and Tim Kelly for Nigeria; Gerawork Aynekulu, Enku Wendwosen, Seyram Avle, and Markos Lemma for Ethiopia; Bitange Ndemo, Tim Weiss, and Moses Kemibaro for Nairobi; Maxine Moffet and Arielle Kitio for Yaoundé; Parfait Ouattara for Abidjan; and Linda Swart for Johannesburg. We also thank all representatives of local organizations who reviewed and approved the research ethics of our project: Olufunbi Falayi, Akintunde Oyebode, Kayode Adegbola in Nigeria; Dr. Ernest Mwebaze and Dr. Grace Kamulegeya in Uganda; Adama Camara and Baidy Sy in Senegal; Thomas Herve Mboa Nkoudou and Horace Fonkwe in Cameroon; Jean-Jacques Bogui Maomra and Obin Guiako in Côte d'Ivoire; and Francisco Mabila and Ruben Manhica in Mozambique.

We presented the findings discussed in this book in talks and workshops with Humboldt University in June 2017; with the DIODE group in Oxford in October 2017; with the GIZ Make IT Alliance in Berlin in May 2018; and with audiences at Freie University Berlin, Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, the World Bank, Michigan State University, Weizenbaum Institute, and University of Bayreuth audiences throughout 2019. We thank all participants for their feedback and encouragement. We also want to acknowledge the Higher Education Impact Fund at Oxford which was the source funding for the Geonet conference in South Africa, where a large majority of presenters and panelists were the digital workers and digital entrepreneurs who had informed the research. This was an invaluable opportunity to share and validate analyses, and to engage in constructive debate and discussion with participants.

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