EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT: THE DAVOS PROCESS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT: THE DAVOS PROCESS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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Research output and Publications as of January 2008
WEF active initiatives with NEPAD
WEF meetings in Africa since 1993
WEF Partner Institutes for the Competitiveness Program
WEF members and partners in Africa
DECLARATION

Student No: 0419713X

I declare that

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is my own work and that all the sources used have been acknowledged by means of complete references. To the best of my knowledge, this dissertation has not been submitted before, for any degree or examination in any university in South Africa or elsewhere in the world.

Supervisor: Prof. Gilbert Khadiagala
Candidate: Dimpho Motsamai

Date: July 10 2009
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter Mandisa Ayanda, and that she is inspired to reach her potential.
I wish to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

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Johannesburg, July 2009

ACRONYMS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AfDB</td>
<td>African Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APRM</td>
<td>African Peer Review Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEI</td>
<td>Centre d’études Industrielle</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFI</td>
<td>Development Finance Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECs</td>
<td>Epistemic communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMF</td>
<td>European Management Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
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<tr>
<td>FISCU</td>
<td>Finance and Investment Sector Coordinating Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLS</td>
<td>Front line States</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GCN</td>
<td>Global Competitiveness Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRN</td>
<td>Global Risk Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICF</td>
<td>Investment Climate Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labor Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPA</td>
<td>Lagos Plan of Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>Millennium African Renaissance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEPAD</td>
<td>New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RISDP</td>
<td>Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern Africa Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADCC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Coordination Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDIs</td>
<td>Spatial Development Initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SATCC</td>
<td>Southern African Transport and Communications Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
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This dissertation seeks to examine the role of an international institution, the World Economic Forum (WEF), its meetings (referred to as the Davos process), in determining the global development agenda particularly that of Africa. The research is anchored in the conceptual framework of epistemic communities, as explored by Peter Hass. This conceptual framework aims to explain how ideational structures routinely influence policy and decision making. The dissertation interrogates why and how actors coalesce around the WEF, and help the WEF in shaping decisive debates which have profound implications for important development issues such as poverty alleviation, debt reduction, private sector development and the future of the global economy. Starting as an informal interaction of leading Western European businessmen, the annual conclave of the WEF at Davos, Switzerland, has grown into leaps and bounds to incorporate core corporate, political and non state actors across the globe in a structured framework of influence and agenda setting. In addition to its influence on contemporary economic debates, the WEF has established formal knowledge creation and knowledge management structures, in which it conducts research across a wide array of domains. The dissertation also examines how the WEF has gradually expanded into Africa, helping shape the discourse at the level of the African Union (AU) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), through the Africa WEF summits and the sub regional WEF summits. The dissertation concludes that although the WEF has been instrumental in shaping knowledge about African development issues, there is need to engage more African voices in future development debates. Yet, the dissertation also concedes that the WEF dominates in the development arena largely because of the persistence of global asymmetries in the global production of knowledge and ideas. So, for Africa to overcome these asymmetries, it will have to evolve sound endogenous sources of knowledge systems.