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EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMET: THE DAVOS PROCESS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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EPISTEMIC COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT: THE DAVOS PROCESS AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

By

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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 **Date: July 10 2009**

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter Mandisa Ayanda, and that she is inspired to reach her potential.

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ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
ANC	African National Congress
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CEI	Centre d'études Industrielle
DFI	Development Finance Institution
ECs	Epistemic communities
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EMF	European Management Forum
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FISCU	Finance and Investment Sector Coordinating Unit
FLS	Front line States
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GCN	Global Competitiveness Network
GRN	Global Risk Network
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICF	Investment Climate Facility
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LPA	Lagos Plan of Action
MAP	Millennium African Renaissance Program
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non- governmental organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference

SDIs	Spatial Development Initiatives
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SATCC	Southern African Transport and Communications Commission
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization
UN	United Nations

ABSTRACT

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.