



## AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE

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### TITLE: THE SOCIAL MEANINGS OF FREEDOM

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### ABSTRACT:

Drawing on the work of Paul Gilroy my paper will consider the social meanings of freedom in relation contemporary patterns of consumption. The paper will argue that so-called 'conspicuous consumption' amongst members of South Africa's new black middle class or aspirant middle class is not evidence of crass materialism or the post-colonial condition - zombi-like mimicry of white standards and norms. Instead, drawing on evidence from fieldwork in Roodepoort, Johannesburg, I will argue that the pursuit of expensive cars, clothes and houses is intimately linked to a notion of freedom; one that takes as its object the individual and as its measure a concept of self-realisation. I will end by considering this notion of freedom in relation to other notions of freedom inherent in the anti-apartheid struggle.

### AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

*Ivor Chipkin completed his PhD at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in France and was based at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) between 2001 and 2004. He received an Oppenheimer fellowship in 2005 and took up a position at St Anthony's college at the University of Oxford. He spent 4 years in the Democracy and Governance Programme at the Human Sciences Research Council where he acquired an intimate knowledge of government departments and agencies. In 2007 he published "Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of 'the People' " with Wits University Press. Ivor has also published widely on questions of government, governance and the State in South Africa. He is currently finishing a new book on the history of public sector reform in South Africa and its consequences for development and democracy.*