

# Liberation from mental colonisation

## A case study of the Indigenous people of Palestine

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### Introduction

*The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.*

Steve Biko

*Free your mind and your ass will follow.*

Saying from the 1950s Civil Rights Movement

Fanon argues in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* that during the period of colonisation, subtle and constant mental pathology develops within the colonial psyche and attempts to infect the colonised (Fanon, 1968). Colonisers want to build a new culture that excludes the natives and their associated ancient cultures while, at the same time, natives want to maintain what they have or rebuild a life that was destroyed by colonisers (Morris et al., 2015). The task of mental colonisation begins with the language, which shapes the minds of the colonisers and the colonised. Tsuda (2013) called this 'colonisation of the consciousness'. This is a common colonial technique to avoid psychological or physical assimilation, and leads to almost psychological dissonance (Stoler, 2010). Our task is monumental both during and after colonisation and it is no less than what is described as 'decolonising the mind' (wa Thiong'o, 1992, 1998). Stoler (2010) and Sternhell (1997) show that colonisers have always been obsessed with gathering information, shaping ideas, and in general having 'control' of the natives in such a way as to assert the colonisers' hegemony and notions of superiority. Colonial mental occupation is defined as the perception of ethnic and cultural inferiority and is a form of internalised racial oppression (Dascal, 2009; Decena, 2014). It is what explains black children preferring to play with white dolls during the era of the Jim Crow laws (Clark and Clark, 1950; see also Gopaul-McNicol, 1988). It is also why we find Palestinians working in Israeli markets as indentured labour (Farsakh, 2002) and those saying Israeli products and systems are better than anything they could come up with: it is a form of internalising defeat (Ganim, 2001).

Post colonisation, there is always a psychologically traumatic relationship between the colonised and colonisers that results in ‘deeply affecting their views of the world, of the other peoples, and of themselves’ (Licata, 2012: 159), causing significant damage (Tunteng, 1974). In Africa, for example, even after colonisation ended, the residual effects remained as ‘euphoria and rising expectation soon gave way to disappointment and despair because colonialism left behind enduring legacies – including not only political and economic, but also cultural, intellectual, and social legacies – that keep alive European domination’ (Bulhan, 2015: 240).

All these variables are now well understood in other colonial contexts. However, Palestine is in the grip of the last long-term unresolved colonial struggle and yet little work has been done on issues of mental colonisation. This is partly because Palestine is omitted from most of the scholarship of postcolonial literature (Said, 1985, 1989, 2012a; Mignolo, 1993; Loshitzky, 2013). In this field, we cannot address many of the aspects of mental colonisation due to a lack of space, so we will focus on issues of resistance to mental colonisation and project the future of post-colonial social transformations. We will explore the tactics, strategies and interactions of these colonisers as well as the variety of reactions of the colonised natives.

### The context of Palestine

Palestine is in a strategic position, connecting the continents of Africa and Eurasia, and thus provides the route of human expansion out of Africa. It is also part of the Fertile Crescent where humans first developed agriculture and had first settled into city-states. Various invaders came and went in Palestine but there has been large-scale ethnic cleansing by colonisers in the twentieth century (the myths of the ‘Bible’ notwithstanding). This process was needed to create a Jewish state (see Pappé, 2006). However, while 7.5 million Palestinians are refugees or displaced, over 6 million remain in historical Palestine. To continue to subjugate those Palestinians, a meticulous programme of mental occupation was structured which would ensure long-term hegemony over the remaining Palestinians who are increasingly isolated in shrinking ghettos (Said, 2012b). Alongside this was a unique attempt to create mythological histories and connections that allowed the colonisers to view themselves to be somehow different from other colonisers (Kimmerling, 2001; Sand, 2009, 2012).

A unique situation has thus developed in the past two decades which is characterised by:

- 1) Palestinian bureaucrats running (almost) self-ruled areas but whose primary function is to secure the status quo of occupation (Said, 1995)
- 2) a world community which is forced to believe in endless ‘bilateral negotiations’ between the colonised and the colonisers and being wedded to a mythical ‘solution’ of ‘two states’ (see Qumsiyeh, 2004)
- 3) further theft of land and natural resources from the natives
- 4) entrenchment of notions of Jewish-Israeli supremacy, with Israeli impunity (from international law) paralleled by internalisation of defeat and helplessness among many Palestinians.

After significant but incomplete ethnic cleansing (Masalha, 1992; Pappé, 2006), the situation today is sobering. About 7.5 million of the 13 million Palestinians are refugees or displaced people. Today, in historic (Mandatory) Palestine there are 12.4 million people, 51 per cent who are the remaining Palestinians (Christian and Muslim) and 49 per cent who are Jewish Israelis. The latter population (mostly immigrants) uses 91.7 per cent of the land, leaving the former with only 8.3 per cent of the land. Yet, such a situation cannot be sustainable as it offers no resolution to a colonial situation. Colonial situations end in one of three possible scenarios:

- (1) the Algerian model where colonisers and their descendants leave
- (2) the Australian model of genocide of the natives
- (3) the coexistence model that is found in most other countries (Latin America, Central America, Canada, Southeast Asia, South Africa, etc.).

Our task, while pushing for Scenario 3, is truth telling and resistance to physical as well as mental colonisation. In particular, we must understand the spectrum of myth and propaganda and power structures which surround us to ensure we do not lose faith in a better future and succumb to the attempts to force us to accept an inferior status (Ganim, 2001; Dabbagh, 2005; Abdelnour, 2010; Meari, 2015). But this also entails liberating Israelis from the mental occupation of being colonisers who are conditioned to believe in mythology, including mythologies of superiority and invented histories that justify repression of the native Palestinians (Weizman, 2007; Peled-Elhanan, 2008, 2012; Sand, 2009, 2012; Ra'ad, 2010; Whitelam, 2013; Halper, 2016).

While over 100 countries have lived through colonisation and moved to a postcolonial period, Palestine remains the exception. Part of the problem is also that postcolonial studies subsequently ignored Palestine, and this is detrimental to the field (Moore-Gilbert, 2018). Since the first Zionist colony was established in 1880 via the Jewish Colonization Association, the conflict has remained a major issue, not just locally in Western Asia but also globally, because the Zionist project relied heavily on Western support. Yet intellectual inquiry into this was dominated by the Zionists themselves and few natives have ventured into researching this conflict's issue of mental colonisation (Said, 2012c).

Many works have shown that Palestinians are just as resilient as South Africans have been under colonial apartheid or as any other people (Andoni, 2001; King, 2007; Qumsiyeh, 2017b). The South African situation might be interesting as it is still undergoing a process of decolonising to this day (Ramantswana, 2016). Palestine faces significantly bigger challenges than South Africa including a world-wide Zionist lobby, huge financial resources available to colonisers and the length of time that colonialism persists. It is worth reflecting briefly on the history of resistance but from the angle of mental resistance.

### Colonisation before 1948

The Zionist movement tried to cooperate with the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but failed to succeed. It had to wait for the arrangements of Sykes-Picot in 1916 and the promises of Balfour (UK) and Cambon (France) in 1917 and their implementation beginning in 1921 at the San Remo conference and the consecration of the British Mandate in Palestine (Qumsiyeh, 2004). A key effort to change educational systems and create apartheid laws ensued right after the British occupiers appointed Herbert Samuel as the first British High Commissioner of Palestine. Just before that he was representative of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) at the 1919 Paris Conference. Moreover, he is the one who segregated public schools and empowered the local Zionist communities to take over the natural resources of the country including the minerals of the Dead Sea. From 1921 to 1948, the British worked both with the WZO and collaborative quisling Arab governments to execute the Balfour Declaration which precipitated three uprisings in those years (1921, 1929, and 1936; see Qumsiyeh, 2017b).

Between 1917 and the end of the 1936 to 1939 Great Revolt, the British government had instituted programmes of 'surrogate colonisation' by cooperation with the WZO and the Jordanian monarch (Atran, 1989). The British policy of developing a surrogate population but

delaying sovereignty was well articulated by Winston Churchill in 1921: 'Step by step we shall develop representative institutions leading up to full self-government ... [but] our children's children will have passed away before that is accomplished' (Klieman, 1970: 272).

The British policies in this period were summarised by Atran (1989: 737):

To preserve bureaucratically the peasant's agrarian regime required altering it just enough to make it susceptible to administrative and fiscal control. The change wrought was enormous. By imposing land settlement, the British encouraged fragmentation and dispossession of landholdings as well as social dislocation and disaffection. Increasingly, this 'residual peasantry' would be compelled to work in towns yet continue to live in villages because they could not afford to live in towns.

Before the British occupation from 1918 to 1948, Palestinian resistance succeeded with the Ottoman Empire to change its discourse on Zionism. However, we had limited success with the British occupation despite three uprisings (1921, 1929 and 1936) (Qumsiyeh, 2004). Part of it can be attributed to psychological demoralisation due to Arab leadership collusion with Zionism that dates back to Weisman-Faisal and extends to the Abdullah-Meir agreements (see Shlaim, 1988). Much more psycho-social work needs to be done on that period to determine to what extent mental occupation and internalisation of notions of power-politics was important in reducing physical resistance.

### Colonisation after 1948

Israel evolved after 1948 because the Nakba and ethnic cleansing resulted in the destruction of 530 Palestinian villages and towns. Only 150 000 Palestinians remained against all odds and they now number some 1.6 million that the Israeli system likes to refer to as 'Israeli Arabs' (Qumsiyeh, 2004). The way Israel dealt with the artificially created remaining 'minority' was to marginalise them and create laws that discriminate against them in every sphere of life. The Zionist society continues to treat them as 'the other', which is related to what is called 'frontier society' in colonial structures (Peled & Shafir, 1996). The notion that Israel is the state of the 'Jewish people' and Jewish people are the only ones entitled to self-determination in the state of Israel, is effectively enshrined in the latest Knesset law.

Racism in Israel exists in institutional policies, personal attitudes, the media, education, immigration rights, housing, social life and legal policies. Some elements within the Ashkenazi Israeli Jewish population have also been described as holding discriminatory attitudes towards fellow Jews of other backgrounds, including against Ethiopian Jews, Indian Jews, Mizrahi Jews and Sephardi Jews. Pressures on the remaining Palestinians were a form of internal colonisation (Zureik, 1979) and gave little space for self-expression, although there were amazing stories of hope and empowerment among that community (Qumsiyeh, 2004).

The educational system implemented in Israel ensures erasure and distortions of Palestinian history and even geography (Ben-Ze'ev, 2015). Israeli schoolbooks teach the children to think of 'Jews' as superior to 'Arabs' and dehumanise the native Palestinians in many ways (Peled-Elhanan, 2008, 2012). Palestinians sometimes use terms and expressions that indicate the mental effect of the occupier, such as when they say that 'Israelis deserve the land more than us because they are keeping the place cleaner, more modern and developed'. Palestinians start using words in Hebrew language, such as *Ramzon* and *Mahsoom* and use expressions like 'the Israeli Arabs' or '48 Arabs' to indicate the Palestinians who still live inside the Green Line as if Palestine did not exist.

Palestinians who remained in the areas occupied in 1948 as well as Palestinians of the areas occupied in 1967 had to rely on themselves in the face of global and Arab complicity. Grass-roots community organisations like women unions, trade unions and resistance committees evolved soon after the shock of the Nakba. These organisations provided the needed social and psychological support for the victims of Israeli colonial oppression (Hiltermann, 1991; Qumsiyeh, 2017). In particular, we note with pride how organised grass-roots women's movements were important in maintaining social cohesion and social resilience during the difficult uprising years from 1987 to 1991 (Sosebee, 1990).

When the Palestinian cause seemed to have faded from the Arab and global agenda by 1986/1987, Palestinian civil society put it squarely back on the agenda via a largely unarmed uprising that began in October 1987. This was not the first intifada, but there were a dozen others that preceded it (Qumsiyeh, 2017). However, somehow this one felt different and for the masses that joined, it was looked at as perhaps the last shake-up that would shed, once and for all, colonial rule. For the purpose of our discussion, it also provided a good example of success in challenging mental colonisation. The organisations, groups and associations created during 1967 and 1987 were now mobilised and the whole society was buzzing with activities. These included programmes ranging from self-sufficiency to direct action, for example, civil disobedience. (For a good summary of civil society work in this period, see King, 2007). The cost to Israel in terms of international support and the impact on Israel's economy was high (e.g. Rosen, 1991). Israel was only saved via its lobbies which pushed new wars in the Middle East that served as a distraction from its own problems (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

The conflict with Iraq was manufactured when Saddam Hussein fell into the trap set for him in Kuwait. Immediately after, it was clear that no face-saving outcome was possible, and the US pushed for war followed by sanctions that devastated Iraq and, as a side benefit to Israel, drew much of the media attention away from the Israeli repression of the uprising. In 1991 and 1992, the US government, with the support of the international community, convened the Madrid 'peace' meetings that almost succeeded in harvesting the full fruits of the uprising. But Israel moved to secret negotiations with a marginalised Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that was content to harvest very few 'low' fruits and in return gave Israel many (for a discussion see Said, 1995). Few Palestinians in the occupied territories bothered to read the agreements (Declaration of Principles, Oslo I, and especially Oslo II). Instead, many were willing to give Arafat and those around him the benefit of the doubt. The dreams of a 'two-state solution', a propaganda ploy started by Ben Gurion in the 1920s, would soon evaporate as the Israeli plan was clearly visible (Qumsiyeh, 2017).

Under the Palestinian Authority post-Oslo 1993, many grass-roots organisations dissolved and were replaced by an era of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and proliferation of bureaucratic 'governmental' systems. When the uprising of 2000 happened, the young activists were basically orphaned and had no web of support from grass-roots organisations, as was the case in the intifada of 1987 to 1991 (Makkawi, 2009). The Oslo era also saw a proliferation of what can be described as a 'diagnosis-centric' approach to gathering data on the effect of occupation; yet many of these studies suffer from bias and a disconnection between scholarship and practice (see Haj-Yahya, 2007; Makkawi, 2009).

Since 1993, the Oslo period returned us to a worse mental colonisation than before 1967 but this is not to say that lessons were not learnt (see Qumsiyeh, 2017a, 2017b). Today, most Palestinians still remember with longing and with admiration the 1987 to 1991 Generation of the Stones, a generation that defied and succeeded to challenge not only physical occupation but mental occupation. Many aspire to recreate such conditions to reproduce this unique experiment in Palestinian resistance (Andoni, 2001; King, 2007; Qumsiyeh, 2017). A big impediment to that is mental colonisation, especially after the Oslo process.

Our major problem in doing this was the contribution of the Oslo process. As Meari articulated (2015: 77):

The object of the Oslo Accords has been the transformation of colonial relations of antagonism while preserving colonial conditions of domination. The Oslo Accords intended to be a framework for future 'coexistence' between Palestinians and Israelis amidst the continuation and intensification of colonial domination and dispossession.

This dealt a devastating blow to the culture of resistance (*sumud*). Security coordination with Israel (Weissman, 2007; Umbreti, 2016), cronyism and corruption (Abdelnour, 2010; Nakhleh, 2012), and the division between Hamas and Fatah (Qumsiyeh 2015) further debilitated efforts, including popular resistance (Qumsiyeh, 2015) and the nascent Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions (BDS) movement (Qumsiyeh, 2017a).

### How to get over mental colonisation

The Palestinian encounter with Zionism was one in which the natives faced well-organised colonisation with significant extraterritorial support from the World Zionist Organization and other powers. The local Palestinians were largely peasants who knew little of the machinations of power. The few intellectuals who tried to educate fellow citizens or directly challenge colonisation faced incredible odds (see Qumsiyeh, 2015). The range of atrocities committed against the Palestinians encompassed massacres, ethnic cleansing, home demolitions, restrictions of movement, economic deprivation and much more. Dealing with such atrocities is not easy and the society struggled with mechanisms of coping. The incidence of suicide was high (Dabbagh, 2005). This is directly related to the effect of colonisation (mental and physical). Yet many continue to resist; we saw amazing bravery, as, for example, in the recent Great March of Return beginning on 30 March 2018 when tens of thousands of Gaza Palestinians tried to go to the border and were met with live ammunition that killed 140 peaceful demonstrators and injured thousands.

Many Palestinians view resistance in many ways as *sumud* (persistence and resilience) and in the context of the genocidal effort to remove us from our lands via ethnic cleansing, merely staying and reproducing becomes a form of resistance which helps physically and mentally (Kanaaneh, 2002). In response to colonialism, group identities evolve, and stronger nationalism ensues (Khalidi, 1997). But hegemonic power is also associated with a kind of violence that scars the soul and psyche of the colonised in ways that entrench power (see Avelar, 2004). In the case of Palestine, how quickly freedom will come is directly related to how quickly we dismantle not only the physical matrix of control (Halper, 2016) but the mental matrix of control.

Colonisation affects social structuring, both in negative and positive ways. For example, in the patriarchal societies of the Bedouins in the Negev, one finds norms of society that both challenge and are challenged by resistance to colonialism (Rabia, 2011). Koensler (2015) noted that some Bedouins told him that more Jews care about home demolitions than Arabs. His explanation is centred on methodologies and anthropological social structuring instead of thinking about phenomena such as defeatism and mental colonisation, which are part and parcel of structured colonial programmes. We find this perspective of colonisers who instil defeatism and destroy social connectedness in natives and then observe this happening and blame the natives for being socially weak and without good leadership. In his work on orientalism, Said (1978) notes that the persistent use of dehumanising language can be internalised in both the coloniser and colonised societies.

Oren, Bar-Tal and David (2004) argued that a prolonged conflict – perhaps wishfully calling it ‘intractable’ – can create an ethos and social constructs among both the colonised and colonisers that can actually contribute to extending the duration of the conflict. While we agree that in some cases colonisers succeed in prolonging the conflict, there are many elements that affect the length of colonial enterprises including actions like international involvement (e.g. with a global campaign of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions being important in the case of South Africa). Thinking of effective strategies to challenging mental occupation/colonisation thus becomes an important factor, not only in determining the outcome of colonisation but also in the speed of decolonisation. Belizaire (2008) argues that the way for colonised peoples to transcend mental colonisation is to stop blaming all problems on the colonisers and to take responsibility for mental self-liberation. That is precisely what late nineteenth and early twentieth century Palestinian intellectuals asserted – people like Yusef Diaddin Al-Khalidi, Najib Azouri, Ruhi Al-Khalidi and Awni Abdelhadi (Qumsiyeh, 2012). The value of this mental liberation and the power of speech are so strong that such freedoms of expression were suppressed from the beginning. For example, under Zionist pressure the newspaper *Filastin* (founded in Jaffa in 1911 by Issa Alaisa) was closed on numerous occasions, including in January 1914, following a series of articles warning of the dangers of Zionism (Qumsiyeh, 2011: 45).

According to Hirsch and Kang (2016), the conflicted personality that can be produced by colonialism can cause significant psychological stress. They posited that there are strategies to deal with this:

- (1) Suppress the conflicted non-dominant identity and information; however, this can also cause a decrease in self-esteem and is particularly problematic in situations of lack of social support.
- (2) Enhance a dominant identity, which is usually associated with stronger personalities.
- (3) Avoid and deny conflicted ideas present in one’s own mind, which can work to some extent, but the conflict arises frequently in situations, which bring one’s own dominant feature and important identity (e.g. being Palestinian) into contact with the non-dominant idea (e.g. mental colonisation).
- (4) Modify or reinterpret the norms so that they are compatible with one another. (Adapted from Hirsch & Kang, 2016)

In our opinion, the most important aspect is not these four diagnostic areas but the therapeutic aspects of mental colonisation. In other words, what are the mechanisms for ‘decolonising the mind’, as discussed by wa Thiong’o (1992, 1998)? Much more work is needed in this regard beyond what is discussed below. But this also requires dealing with variables in different colonial settings. In South Africa and Palestine, attempts by the colonisers to place people in areas like bantustans and ‘people warehouses’, and ensuring that there is a compliant authority for ‘autonomy’ that is significantly short of sovereignty, was an important tactic. The creation of a ‘Palestinian Authority’ acts to help the Israeli occupation and suppress resistance (Qumsiyeh, 2017a, 2017b). It is one thing to go on a demonstration and face colonisers and it is quite another to face fellow countrymen in arms, clubbing demonstrators. Transcending the psychological injury caused by such a system is difficult, but it is doable. We believe that it is possible to challenge both the occupiers and any other people who help the occupiers.

Another strategy used by colonisers is ‘divide and conquer’ (in the case of Palestine pitting Palestinians against each other). Hence, Palestinian unity is becoming a significant issue in the fight against mental colonisation. We do try to reframe the language used during colonisation

(Halper, 2016) here in Palestine, including notions that this is an Arab–Jewish conflict or that the issue is somehow related to the main religion of the natives (Islam).

In July 2005, more than 170 Palestinian civil society organisations issued a historic document. It articulated Israel's persistent violations of international and humanitarian laws and conventions and called upon 'international civil society organisations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era' (see [bdsmovement.net](http://bdsmovement.net)). This was a significant and positive sign of Palestinian unity and defiance of mental occupation.

In Palestine, there is a need to address mental health issues under current colonisation practices (Rabaia et al., 2010). This becomes a form of therapy from mental colonisation. But even after the end of colonisation, indigenous people face many mental health challenges (Lavalée & Poole, 2010). People try to understand and give significance to diverse social phenomena, including their own past, present and future, in a post-colonisation era that may sometimes be traumatic. Yet, humans are highly adaptable and can move past their trauma in a post-colonising world (Ashcroft, 2013).

Bobowik, Valentim and Licata (2017) argue that colonial historical experiences, post colonialism, share these five characteristics:

- (1) they shape social identities (both of formerly colonising, and of formerly colonised, nations)
- (2) they foster social change for the groups involved
- (3) they are emotion-laden because they evoke, for instance, group-based guilt and shame among the formerly colonising peoples, and group-based anger but also feelings of shame and inferiority among the formerly colonised
- (4) they are transmitted, for instance, through anniversaries and other historical notations
- (5) their collective remembrance would still serve needs and goals of social groups.

The process of 'decolonisation' should not place emphasis on colonisation as the central point of our culture, let alone life, nor should it romanticise our indigenous past. A person with a decolonised mind accepts their past, loves their present and creates their future, regardless of what stands in their way (wa Thiong'o, 1992, 1998).

## Looking forward

We reject the notion that this is an 'intractable' interethnic conflict as portrayed by Zionist intellectuals (see e.g. Kriesberg, 1998; Salomon & Nevo, 2001; Coleman, 2003; Oren et al., 2004). In the same way, white elites in South Africa described their struggle as intractable interethnic conflict (Smith, 1979; Rothchild, 1986). History says otherwise because all settler colonial systems are resolved or stabilised, be it with an Algerian scenario, a US/Australian scenario (genocide) or a rest of the world scenario (integration into one country). We draw inspiration from the end of formal apartheid in South Africa (though economic apartheid remains) and from the integration of Spanish and Portuguese colonisers in the fabric of South American societies after colonisation ended.

One of the essential components of resistance is to free our minds from the different poisonous ideas that are being spread around us; we need to know our rights and our values to be able to defend and gain them (Leone, 2018). The other important part is to understand the coloniser's mind and be aware that we are not only occupied physically but also mentally, which helps the occupier achieve and maintain the physical occupation.

We are interested in the ways oppressed people deal with their oppression and challenge a hegemonic power that tries to subjugate them (see, for example, Freire, 1970). Meari (2015)



argues that one can look at this as two separate discourses: (1) trauma and human rights – this discourse disempowers people and encourages them to highlight the victimhood aspect of their experiences; and (2) the *sumud* model (for resilience/resistance) which emphasises individual proactive agency of positive change. We would argue that it is possible to recognise and deal with the trauma of injustice precisely by being proactively engaged in resistance. Furthermore, we must not underestimate the value of intellectuals who must be involved in framing history, culture and politics in ways that challenge physical and mental occupation (Yacoubi, 2005).

In this chapter, we did not discuss the psychological ramifications of the neocolonial models of control of economy and politics and its derivative forms masqueraded under the guise of globalisation (Bulhan, 2015). Bulhan (2015) argues that we need a psychological field that is itself free from colonial structures; one that promotes collective well-being, promotes human needs, empowers (beyond mere adjustment) and moves us from passive victims to self-determining actors. We also did not delve deeper into how the colonisers themselves are ‘mentally colonised’, a subject much debated since the interesting Stanford Prison experiment (Montuori, 2013). This chapter does highlight the value of further detailed studies.

There is much to be learnt from the Latin American models of social/community psychology, while avoiding the reductionist and individualistic approach of US psychologists (Makkawi, 2009). Essentially, this approach recognises that the root of the problem lies in oppression, that we must challenge oppression, and move on to build better lives free from this mental occupation (Hernandez, 2002). Much needs to be done to build local democracy during colonisation and to not put it off until a postcolonial era. Democracy helps create participation and this in itself is resistance to mental colonisation (see also Williamson et al., 2003).

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