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A critical reconceptualization of the International Baccalaureate as a potential force for democratisation in global-heritage schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to make a conceptual contribution to the role of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in regard to global education within state global heritage (multicultural) schools – using England as a representative example – in an age characterised by epistemological, historical and cultural securitisation. This paper recruits ideas and concepts taken from Lefebvre and Bourdieu in a discussion focussed on the IBO's potential role in resistance to the dominant neoliberal imaginary and cultural securitisation. However, in order to be a force for democratisation, the IBO must itself democratise through a reconceptualisation of the school spaces it operates in/produces. It will also involve a process of reassessing its notion/positioning of what constitutes symbolic (and therefore valuable) cultural capital. This will mean untethering global education from the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. This paper highlights the possibility of a new space for global education, operationalised by moving beyond the 'IB school' to the potential of the more informal IB supported school. It is argued here that the IBO has the potential to galvanise a new wave of *inclusive* global education.

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Introduction

This paper aims to make a conceptual contribution to the role of the IBO in regard to global education within state schools (see also Marshall 2007b, 2007c). Specifically, it looks to theoretically demonstrate how the IBO could galvanise a new wave of global education within global heritage (multicultural) schools, using England as a representative case study (England is a particularly striking example of how schools have been subjected to securitisation policy, especially cultural securitisation in the wake of Islamic terrorism from the turn of the century onwards, where regular cultural and political issues have become de-democratised and enclosed within a discourse of security). While there has been considerable debate around the terminology used to define global/international education (Marshall 2007a), this paper argues that key components of global education should include epistemological, historical and cultural democracy. This paper aims to highlight and foreground the meso-level space of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy as a space for political action, democratic education and cultural equality.

The international significance of this space is that it provides a rare opportunity for teacher and student agency within a globalising neoliberal policy discourse (Ball 2012; Lingard, Martino, and Rezai-Rashti 2013; Biesta 2015) ascribed to by many national governments in the turn towards

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authoritarian neoliberalism (Hursh 2019) and, consequently, democratic erosion (Kulz 2021). It is argued here that this current global trend acts as a form of colonisation of which global heritage schools and their students are particularly vulnerable to. With sustained post-Second World War migration from the global South to the global North, these global heritage schools have become increasingly prevalent in Europe, Australia, and the USA, where often the white population of students is in the minority (for an overview in England, see The Challenge, SchoolDash, The iCoCo foundation 2017). The connection between global education and multiculturalism/multicultural environments has been established in the literature (for example, Hayden, Thompson, and Williams 2003; Hill 2007; Oord 2008; Resnik 2009).

Therefore, in light of the overarching question directing this special issue, this paper recruits ideas and concepts taken from Lefebvre and Bourdieu in a discussion focussed on the IBO's potential role in resistance to the dominant neoliberal imaginary (Ball 2012) that negates cultural diversity through a supposedly 'post-cultural' philosophy (see below). It highlights how an escape from disciplinary and cultural enclosure can be achieved through the democratic production of meso-level space within culturally diverse schools. This paper foregrounds the idea that the IBO can enable students to produce an authentic *representational* space (Lefebvre 1991) for global education based on the symbolic recognition (Bourdieu 1986) of global heritage, of global multicultural capital (Matas and Bridges 2008). It is argued here that this would necessarily involve a process whereby the IBO untethers conceptions of global education from restrictive classroom-based *spatial practice* and neoliberal/colonial policy *representations of space* (see below) so that this cultural diversity can be recognised as symbolic and valuable cultural capital.

This paper, therefore, develops by, firstly, outlining the theoretical position taken in relation to the IBO; secondly, contextualising the importance of the IBO's affective education within the global neoliberal imaginary; thirdly, providing a spatial and cultural critique of the IBO as it currently stands with its implicit colonial agenda; and fourthly, providing a case study of global heritage schools within England as a theoretical demonstration of how a democratised IBO could facilitate a democratically-produced global education.

Space and cultural capital

It is argued here that in order to be a force for democratisation, the IBO must itself democratise through a reconceptualisation of the school spaces it operates in. This paper does this through the prism of Lefebvre's spatial triad. This triad consists of: (1) *Spatial practice*, which is the perceived space and embraces production and reproduction and, in the terms of this paper, corresponds to the micro-level space of the formal received curriculum, teaching and learning. This includes the IB curriculum and wider classroom-based 'global education'. (2) *Representations of space*, which is the conceived (planned) space and takes the form of buildings, policy directives, and such like, and in the terms of this paper corresponds to the macro-level space of global and national neoliberal education policy. (3) *Representational spaces* which are the lived, everyday spaces that for this paper represent the meso-level space of institutional ethos and cultural pedagogy, encompassing its objective structures. This space is 'directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols' by 'users' and 'inhabitants' (Lefebvre 1991, 39). It is here that the IBO could assist in the production of a new representational space for global education, based on diverse and global cultural capital.

Bourdieu defines *embodied* cultural capital as existing 'in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu 1986, 17), in the form of 'what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*' (Bourdieu 1986, 18). By 'Bildung' he refers to the cultural shaping of the human being, and he states that 'the subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history' (1990, 91). This is important because it implies social and historical inheritance. It is the social 'embedded and embodied in people (agents) through their immersion in social fields and in the overall field of power' (Thomson 2017, 14). People carry with them traces of a collective past whether they are aware of it or not and this has the effect of 'positioning' them

within the field of power. This diverse and often *global* embodied cultural capital (as in the case of multicultural schools used as an example in this paper) is evident in the school's *representational spaces* – the lived spaces of socialisation and collective knowledge construction (Barnard 2022).

However, it is argued here that the IBO's focus on becoming a symbolic *institutionalised* cultural capital in pursuit of global growth has contributed to the marginalisation of student *embodied* cultural capital. Institutional cultural capital 'is a form of objectification which must be set apart' as it 'confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee' (Bourdieu 1986, 17). Furthermore, it institutes a formally recognised capital that sets it apart from 'simple cultural capital' which is a capital that is 'constantly required to prove itself' (Bourdieu 1986, 21). Simple cultural capital in this context is the embodied cultural capital of global heritage students that remains embodied within individual agents and does not have the symbolic power of 'institutional recognition' (Bourdieu 1986). Often this institutionalised cultural capital comes in the form of qualifications such as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) that – as will be highlighted later on – privileges Western cultural capital over non-Western cultural capital, in what Said (2003) refers to as 'othering'. It is therefore argued that the IBO must move beyond the 'IB school' to the potential of the more informal IB *supported school*: from implicit spatial 'ownership' (Lefebvre 1991) to democratically-produced representational space in order to facilitate a more culturally inclusive global education.

Background: the importance of the IBO within the global context

It is argued that schools have an important part to play in the governance of the population, as places of enclosure and surveillance (Flint and Peim 2012): schools have become a 'protected place of disciplinary monotony' (Foucault 2020, 141). Furthermore, Lefebvre and Bourdieu argue that this control is exercised through the production of space – especially abstract space – and through symbolic capital or 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Increasingly, this control originates from the political rationality of neoliberalism which, according to Ball (2012), is the dominant social imaginary of our time. Rizvi and Lingard (2010, 34) define a social imaginary as

> a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people. The common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. It is largely implicit, embedded in ideas and practices, carrying within it deeper normative notions and images, constitutive of society.

This social imaginary is promoted at the global level – the level that the IBO operates at – within a system that attempts to realise a post-modern utopia on a global scale (Featherstone 2017). This is done through national education systems that are often influenced by hegemonic 'global governors' (Robertson 2021) – such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – within a wider neoliberal authoritarianism (Hursh 2019) that looks to promote an ideational global project: 'the cultural production of the new worker citizen able to participate in the global economy who, at the same time, learns to mediate the consequences of unequal outcomes by managing their effects' (Robertson 2021, 168), rather than directly challenging this system and this dominant neoliberal imaginary.

It is in this context that the IBO must assess its position as the most widely recognised body of *affective* global education. It is this aspiration of the IBO that sets it apart from other global education platforms; especially global measurement platforms such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) that promote a technological, (en)closed, input-processing-output model of education (Biesta 2015). It is argued here that programmes such as PISA's 'Global Competence' assessment simply restates global neoliberal governance in promoting uncritical – but economically competent – 'human capital' (Spring 2009). Indeed, Andrews (2021) employs Bourdieu's Theory of Practice to demonstrate how the OECD legitimises inequitable power relations through the assessment of 'Global Competence'. On the other hand, the IBO's focus on global education has been *interpreted* as aspiring for something more critical and democratic than this, at least

in theory (and hope) if not in practice (see below). This is what makes the IBO unique within the global education context, and presents possible opportunities for a counter-balance to extremely rationalised, decontextualised and post-cultural understandings of education as promoted by PISA.

However, what makes the IBO's task of fostering a democratic global-mindedness (that promotes cultural and epistemic diversity) especially difficult is that it is part – at least implicitly – of this global, undemocratic neoliberal process of governance (Robertson 2021; Resnik 2009) that includes such organisations as the OECD. Consequently, as will be detailed below, the champion of affective global education does not actually have a distinct space for authentic, democratic global education. Global education's 'space', such as it is, is a governed, restricted space tied to neoliberal *representations of space* and the IBO's *spatial practice*. Global-mindedness/global education does not therefore – paradoxically – have a *global* space for recognising and utilising embodied *global* cultural capital and heritage. The IBO has simply not *produced* such a space. The section below will detail why and in further detail.

A spatial and cultural conceptualisation of the tension at the heart of the IBDP

The tension at the heart of the IBDP has been well documented and researched (see Tarc 2009, for a comprehensive account). Essentially, this enduring tension involves the friction between its pragmatic and idealistic aims; between a global education that promotes moral development, peace and international understanding, and a more pragmatic 'globalist' form of international education concerned with skills, the economy, and qualifications (Cambridge and Thompson 2004; Oord 2007). That is to say, between being 'a force for change' (Wilkinson 2001, 232) and 'a means of enhancing positional competition and personal economic advancement' (Cambridge and Thompson 2004, 172) through the acquirement of individualised cosmopolitan capital (Weenink 2008) within a global ideological status-quo. It arises out of its historical formation but also – as this paper will highlight – its spatial and cultural understandings of global education. This will be discussed in more detail in the ensuing parts of this section, where it will be theoretically demonstrated how simply adopting the IBDP within culturally diverse schools will not in itself produce the democratic and dynamic global educational space that this paper calls for. However, this first part aims to provide a brief overview of the IB's development in regard to these competing aims because as Lefebvre points out, 'If space is produced, if there is a productive process, then we are dealing with history' (1991, 46).

The IBO 'has been central to the development of international education in a practical context' (Cambridge and Thompson 2004, 162) from its focal point in Geneva in 1962. IB schools have subsequently increased significantly, especially from the mid-1980s onwards, as 'the IB has been increasingly adopted in schools serving local, high- and middle-class families' (Resnik 2016, 299). As well as international schools, the IBDP has also expanded into state schools although, globally, this growth has been 'disparate' (Bunnell 2015). The IBDP take-up is particularly impressive in the USA. However, this qualification was essentially motivated not just by internationalism and international understanding, but by the needs of an elite group of people in ensuring their children were adequately prepared for – and accepted into – the world's elite universities:

> The leverage of a number of highly placed international civil servants grouped in Geneva … was another factor in bringing about the creation of the IB Diploma Programme. (Hill 2002, 20)

These historically elitist and western-centred origins do not in themselves confirm a development set in stone, but it does point to a certain evolutionary direction that has been borne out through further analysis and research accompanying the IB's subsequent growth (Geller 2002; Gardner-McTaggart 2021; Maire and Windle 2022). This scholarship suggests a diversification and democratisation of the IB's DNA is required, and this will be looked at later on in this section.

In terms of governance and organisational structure, the IBO is now a somewhat dispersed organisation, although it is difficult to define it as 'democratic'; it seems to operate more as a global, franchise-based business model:

> With headquarters in Switzerland, assessment centre in the United Kingdom, and regional centres in the Netherlands, Singapore and the United States, the IB is transnational and a key player in the global education industry. (Fitzgerald 2022, 2)

However, it is The Board of Governors along with the Director General that sets the strategic direction for the IB (IBO.org n.d.). The Board elects its own members from a short-list of potential Board members maintained by the Governance and Organization Committee, which itself receives suggestions as to who should be on this list from the Board in what appears to be a somewhat circular arrangement. There is also a Heads of Council structure that advices the Director General. This consists of four members from each of the IB's 3 regions (Africa, Europe, Middle East; Americas; Asia-Pacific) located in various IB Schools. This dispersed organisational structure could – as Fitzgerald's research (2022, 16) suggests – contradict to some extent 'the widely perpetuated notion of the IB as a single standardised entity'. This paper argues that this may apply in terms of organisation, but not in terms of strategic governance, in control over IB programs delivered through the infrastructure of the IBO (Dvir, Shields, and Yemini 2018); that is to say, through *neoliberal (and neo-colonial) representations of space* (see below). And while Dvir, Shields, and Yemini (2018) suggest that schools may 'transform standardized IB programs to their particular contexts and needs' within each institution's *spatial practice*, it is argued here that this is only possible to some extent: ultimately, the IBO's high-stakes exams still need to be undertaken (the ultimate 'quality assurance' in this regard) and it is the IBO that sets the content to be examined on. That is to say, the IBO's spatial control of 'global education' means that it is not sufficiently culturally inclusive either in representations of space (policy and ideology) or spatial practice (teaching and learning), as will be demonstrated below.

Space

Lefebvre (1991, 154) states that 'space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning'. Furthermore, groups or classes seek to 'appropriate the space in question' (Lefebvre 1991, 57) and the production of space

> serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power. (Lefebvre 1991, 26)

It is argued here that the fundamental reason for the IB's 'tension' is that 'international mindedness' is conceptualised through – and tethered to – the IB qualification and therefore to classroom-based *spatial practice* with all of its associated restrictions and disciplines. That is to say, the IBO has attempted to enact global education through spatial practice, a space which is controlled by wider neoliberal representations of space within a globalised neoliberal education movement (Robertson 2021; Resnik 2009) with colonial implications (Gardner-McTaggart 2021). It will later be argued that it is global heritage students – especially students of colour – who are now particularly vulnerable to the control and domination that Lefebvre speaks of through this global/national neoliberal representation of space which makes demands on spatial practice, on the formal curriculum, on teaching and learning. These demands include homogeneity and conformity (Lefebvre 2009b), because this neoliberal representation of space is a conceived and planned 'frontal' space which is 'tied to the relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose' (Lefebvre 1991, 33). In other words, the IBDP cannot escape the 'relations of production' and order imposed on it by the dominant neoliberal representation of space, of which the IBO is in part a producer of. As Resnik (2016) points out, the 'meteoric expansion' of IB schools has mirrored the expansion of the global economy and job market, as well as global neoliberal education policies.

This dominant representation of space favours individualism and competition over global care and concern and returns us to the perceived tension at the heart of the IB. This is demonstrated, for example, in how there are concerns as to whether the IB curriculum can make for a better world

even in regard to its Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) component. Hayden et al. (2020, 600) state that:

> The majority of respondents perceived CAS to have had a positive impact, particularly for developing individual skill sets. The impact of CAS beyond the individual, although difficult to evaluate quantitatively, did not realise the same level of positive outcome as did the impact on the individual.

In fact, the IB curriculum, according to Resnik (2008) simply produces the required characteristics of the global worker (although with a view to superior managerial positions) within its spatial practice. The IBO then, can be very much seen to be a producer of the dominant neoliberal representation of global space, of global utopia (Featherstone 2017). Indeed, it can be argued that the IB's spatial practice within schools is merely a further rehearsal of discipline (Foucault 2020) that succumbs to the demands of neoliberal representations of space and the 'order' it imposes on spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991) through a focus on 'its particular brand of distinction for rigorous academic standards and its implied promise of positional advantage' (Doherty 2013, 395). Certainly, Maire and Windle (2022) appear to concur with this, stating that

> Against its perceived innovative status, the IB Diploma has paradoxically contributed to fostering traditional forms of schooling – including within-school tracking – and a narrowing of the curriculum – including through its strong focus on examinations.

Stobie (2007, 148) found in case studies of IB schools that 'the overriding priority identified by administrators and teachers was preparing students for the demanding IB external examinations'.

Indeed, this rehearsal of discipline and enclosure can be traced back to the IB's Learner Profile itself, which, according to Oord (2013, 33) is not supportive of student autonomy and personal sense making, and is in fact 'a move away from the overall aim of an IB education, which was to teach students how to think instead of what to think'. This analysis returns us once again to the perceived dualism at the heart of the IB and to this paper's argument: the IB's spatial practice cannot escape the compliance demanded of it from the dominant (Western) neoliberal representation of space. The IB's spatial practice does not produce a space for critical thought, for change, for questioning, but rather compliance with 'the cultural production of the new worker citizen able to participate in the global economy' (Robertson 2021, 168). As Oord (2013, 214) writes in regard to the IB Learner Profile:

> students should not modify their own environment; they should stick to a set of noble habits decided upon at the IB head- quarters. Students are asked to conform, and autonomous decision-making is only allowed within the parameters of the learner profile attributes. Not dissimilar from other programmes of character education, the singular scope and canonical nature of the learner profile easily drift into a breach of students' ownership over their own self-formation.

This indicates how 'the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body' (Foucault 2020, 26) within the 'noble' (and thus superior; see Lefebvre 2009b above) spatial practice of the formal IB curriculum. It is, in fact, a securitisation of space and mind enacted through spatial practice within a wider authoritarian neoliberalism, and thus normalising the 'post-cultural'/Western neoliberal imaginary. It is difficult to see how – within the spatial practice – the IB can overcome this. The marriage of global understanding and positional advantage within this space has been unproductive in terms of creating questioning and critical citizens.

Marshall (2007a) expands on this point further when she writes that global – or international – education in general, may well need

> an empowering and critical pedagogy, but the technical-instrumental role of global education may simultaneously advocate a counter-active top-down pedagogical and curricula model that aims to best serve the needs of future, economically active global citizens. (48)

This paper, therefore, disagrees with Haywood's (2007, 88) assertion that 'international learning outcomes must be identified just as precisely as those we set for mathematics, science, humanities

or other components of the traditional curriculum' as this will simply reproduce the uncritical neoliberal citizen through assessments such as the OECD's Global Competence Framework (see above).

Cultural capital

Oord's (2013) critique of the IB Learner Profile begins to hint at the IB's spatial practice of *inscribing* cultural capital on students rather than excavating and utilising their *embodied* cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) identifies three forms of cultural capital. These are embodied cultural capital, objectified cultural capital, and institutionalised cultural capital. It is with embodied and institutionalised cultural capital that this paper concerns itself.

It is argued here that the IBO's focus on becoming a symbolic *institutionalised* cultural capital in pursuit of global growth has contributed to the marginalisation of student *embodied* cultural capital and the further fragmentation and silencing of 'other' (Said 2003) collective and historical dispositions. This has resulted in the IB inscribing its own institutionalised cultural capital upon students through its character education pedagogy: an 'anomaly appears to exist between the IB learner profile and the diverse, international context in which it is meant to be implemented' (Oord 2013, 214). The IB appears to prescribe a cultural capital that is 'too Western humanist in origin' (Oord 2013), and is 'largely monocultural' where 'Western thought remains a cornerstone of its epistemology' (Oord 2007, 387). From the brief overview of the IB's historical roots detailed above, we can observe an evolutionary development that centres and foregrounds Western cultural capital and historicises (Chakrabarty 2000) non-Western cultural capital through its *spatial practice* (Lefebvre 1991). This is because, again, the IB's spatial practice is dominated by neoliberal/Western representations of space and is 'tied to the relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose' (Lefebvre 1991, 33) at the level of teaching and learning.

Neoliberalism presents itself as inevitable: the next stage in capitalist – and therefore human – development. This idea is intrinsically rooted in European (Western) capitalism:

> Historicism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it […] Historicism thus posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance (at least in institutional development) between the West and the non-West. (Chakrabarty 2000, 7)

Historicism, therefore, has the effect of promoting capitalism/neoliberalism as superseding non-Western knowledge and practice. This is, supposedly, demonstrated most markedly in the West's 'superior' institutional development, borne out by the global proliferation of Western international schools, a very significant number of which are IB schools. Neoliberalism therefore implicitly maintains the 'flexible positional superiority' (Said 2003) of the white Westerner by being positioned as a timeless and universal truth discovered by white and enlightened European culture: it is the white Westerner who truly *embodies* it, and it is the Western state/international/IB school that truly *institutionalises* it. As will be demonstrated in the example of global heritage schools in England below, students of colour and from 'other' cultures, on the other hand, find their own embodied cultural capital devalued within these institutions (Barnard 2022), historically and culturally decontextualised: at once both structured as ahistorical (Ghaill and Haywood 2017) *and* historicised in the supposedly 'post-cultural' realm of the school's 'modern' spatial practice.

It is only a short step away from viewing this process as another form of colonialism, by devaluing diverse embodied cultural capital and 'othered' ways of understanding the world through a 'superior', 'legitimate' and symbolic *institutionalised* cultural capital that is promoted through a global neoliberal ideational project (see above). As Gardner-McTaggart (2021, 5) states:

> The shift from imperial to international opened up a new demographic; resident in formerly colonised nations to becoming a part of a capitalist initiative which is modern and individual, rather than colonial and national.

In other words, a utopian 'internationalism' that is taken-for-granted and its symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) misrecognised as simply 'the way of things' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) in spatial practice and representations of space (Lefebvre 1991).

In the case of the IB, this paper reiterates that this form of colonisation arises from the spaces that the IB operates in/produces, where there is a neoliberal/Western compulsion to govern in the pursuit of a post-modern utopia on a global scale (Featherstone 2017). The IB, therefore, produces neoliberal/Western space, not the representational space of cultural and epistemic democracy. This paper – like others – has traced this to the tension at the heart of the IB, between its pragmatic and idealistic aims. However, perhaps it can be concluded here that *there is no real tension*; that any such 'tension' is simply a mirage. The IB/IBO is what it has always been: a Western-centred product/producer of neoliberal and 'modern' representations of space that emerged out of the post-colonial period of formal European decolonisation; but also during a period where Europeans refused to decolonise their minds (Buettner 2016). The West was still best, still culturally and politically 'superior'. Colonisation therefore largely migrated from physical and perceived spatial practice to the more abstract and dominant conceived representations of space which 'neoliberal ideology attempts to conceal' (Lefebvre 2009a, 176). That is to say, from direct territorial control to the control of an abstract and global ideal or utopia. Indeed, abstract space – working at a global level – 'is the codified logic of modern power' (Stewart 1994, 610).

It could be argued, then, that the IBO is in fact achieving its idealistic aims *through its pragmatic and business-orientated aims*: a post-modern, Western utopia on a global scale (Featherstone 2017), which is realised through the production of the new high-functioning worker citizen who is inscribed with the (Western-centred) cosmopolitan cultural capital (Weenink 2008) able to lead in managing and maintaining this ideal. However, the result of this on the IBO's legitimacy as a champion of democratic and inclusive global education is an unfavourable one.

It should be clear then, that the IBO's evolutionally path orienteers it to the homogenisation of space and cultural capital within a broader Western urge to govern the world, to make 'them' more like 'us': a legacy of the colonial metropole, of *colonial space*. Furthermore, while the IBO may *think* it is producing a global space for global education, it is in effect producing a utopian *provincial space* on a *global scale* (see Chakrabarty 2000; Robertson 2021, above) rather than producing global space provincially and inclusively. It is for these reasons that the IBDP, whether in global heritage state schools in England or elsewhere, would be inadequate in promoting an authentic, democratic global education based on diverse cultural capital. But as the next section will hopefully demonstrate, this does not necessarily mean that the IBO should be discounted entirely in this regard.

The meso-level space and global heritage schools in England

This paper identifies the meso-level space as a space of possible resistance, of staff and student agency, and a space that could potentially be harnessed by the IBO in order to democratise history, culture and epistemology within global heritage schools. The meso-level space identified in this paper consists of institutional ethos, cultural pedagogy and social space, rather than the government/IB-directed micro-level space (the formal curriculum) and macro-level space (neoliberal education policy at both the national and global level). This meso-level space corresponds with Lefebvre's *representational spaces* which are the lived, everyday social spaces of the institution. It is argued here that where neoliberalism within education is at its most assertive, we see the 'noble' spaces of policy (*representations of space*) and curriculum (*spatial practice*) at the macro and micro levels. But it is in the 'crude' space of *representational space* that we see opportunities for difference, for the more democratic production of space, and for heterotopias to emerge. For Lefebvre (2003), heterotopia is theorised as a place of difference, distinct from isotopy and a space of resistance to homogenisation. It is a space that could be activated for resistance to political, epistemic and cultural securitisation.

In this instance, England has been chosen as a representative example of how global heritage schools and students are particularly vulnerable to political/cultural securitisation (Winter and Mills 2020), as well as marginalisation through neoliberal 'post-cultural' education policy, where the dominant culture is presented as 'neutral' and 'universal'. We see this securitisation enacted through policies such as Prevent[1] (HMG 2015; DfE 2015) and Fundamental British Values[2] (DfE 2014; O'Donnell 2016; Winter and Mills 2020). Indeed, within the English schooling system, there has been a general erosion of democracy, for example, through academisation, 'part of a global policy trend where privately run, publicly funded institutions are meant to drive up standards' (Kulz 2021, 67). Increasingly, neoliberal rationalities are shaping social relationships as democratic ideals are hollowed out and the marginalised become increasingly excluded (Kulz 2021). This has also contributed to the erasure of structures that once supported marginalised voices (see Barnard 2021 , for examples of this) within an age where multiculturalism within England has been proclaimed as 'dead' (see Joppke 2017) and has also been implicitly blamed for Islamic terrorism.

Consequently, there is little in the way of educational opportunity for recognising – *and learning from* – the global heritage now to be found in contemporary multicultural England. This lack of opportunity for such learning not only applies to England but also has wider global significance in terms of 'racialised governance under neoliberalism' (Winter and Mills 2020, 51) and the Western retreat from multiculturalism and anti-racism (Kapoor 2013; Joppke 2017) in official policy discourse in favour of a reductionist (Keddie 2014) and racist nativism (Smith 2016) across the global North (Winter and Mills 2020). However, this is particularly evident in England, now seen as an important player globally in the development of securitisation policy (Jerome, Elwick, and Kazim 2019).

It is for these reasons that a *democratised* IBO could be highly significant in promoting global education within this increasingly securitised schooling environment. It could act as a counter-balance to culturally hegemonic policy such as Fundamental British Values. However, within England, there has been a 'sudden, and largely unpredicted, fading away of the IBDP' (Bunnell 2015, 389) since its peak in 2010. This appears to mirror the continued decline of global education within official government discourse since the publication of documents and policy such as *Developing a Global Dimension in the School Curriculum* (DfES 2005). Instead, there is now a focus on Fundamental British Values and the insular narrative of 'our island story' (Cameron 2014) while the IBDP is for the most part restricted to independent schools and some state schools within London and the South-East of England, 'thus reinforcing the connection established between the IBDP's wider curriculum and global capitalism' (Outhwaite and Ferri 2017, 402).

However, it is argued here that the meso-level space vacated by neoliberal policies (that establish relations between central government and micro-level institutional control; see Lingard, Martino, and Rezai-Rashti 2013; Sobe 2015) can be leveraged as a way of recognising and valuing diverse cultural capital in order to create an institutional ethos/cultural pedagogy based on shared cultural production, a collective global multicultural capital (Matas and Bridges 2008) within global heritage schools in England. The objective structures of this meso-level space – such as the institutional newsletter, the open social spaces, extra-curricular provision, fieldtrips, assemblies, school websites and so forth – could be extremely important in the democratic production of space as an alternative to cultural, political and historical securitisation: 'space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity' (Massey 2005, 10). It is a space where history continues, for 'there is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 102).

Central to this idea is the democratisation of the institution's meso-level objective structures to include diversified embodied cultural capital. It is through this representational space, and the recognition and utilisation of global heritage within this space, that culturally diverse schools can create an inclusive global education. *All* staff and students need to have access and equality of cultural production within these structures in order for an institution's diverse capital to be recognised as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1990) and to be developed as part of the school's vital intellectual capital. These structures ought to be *active* structures that distribute ownership of the means of cultural

production. However, in an age of school academisation and marketisation, and in an age where neoliberal technologies of control continue to disrupt and dismantle collective structures and dispositions (Foucault 2020; Bourdieu 1998), the meso-level space is often a 'fragmented' (Lefebvre 2009b) space. That is to say, there are no unifying collective structures able to assist in the democratic production of this space, in assisting staff leaders and students in recognising the potential of their agency within the meso-level space. However, this is potentially where the IBO could bring democratic coherence.

Future directions: recognising and networking provincial resistance

It is argued here that the lived, *representational spaces* of socialisation and collective knowledge construction are the spaces where a democratic global education could be fostered within culturally diverse schools. It is a space that has largely been neglected by the IBO. This is because the IBO has focused its attention on the 'noble' space of the formal curriculum, on *spatial practice* (Lefebvre 1991) in order for its tightly-controlled brand to become an established *institutionalised cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1986). But as this paper has argued, this spatial practice is essentially dominated by a Western, neoliberal *representation of space* and its conceptions of 'legitimate' (symbolic) cultural capital within an ideational and provincial global project (Chakrabarty 2000; Resnik 2008; Featherstone 2017; Robertson 2021). This excludes and marginalises the embodied cultural capital that exists in global heritage schools (Barnard 2022). Unlike the school's spatial practice where an instrumental 'global education' (Marshall 2007a) – in whatever form it may exist – is prescribed, inscribed and measured, the global education of the representational spaces has the capacity to be continually produced and reimagined. It, therefore, has the capacity to continually resist the authoritarian neoliberal imaginary (Hursh 2019) and the tide of democratic erosion (Kulz 2021) if this space is recognised by school leaders as one of the few spaces left for staff and student agency. It can provide an escape from cultural, political, historical and epistemological securitisation and enclosure, for *heterotopia* (Lefebvre 2003) to emerge, rather than a flawed, securitised *utopia* (Featherstone 2017).

But in order for this to happen, the (re)construction of democratic structures within these school spaces are vital for this process to succeed. It is to this end that the IBO could have a pivotal role to play. This is due to the size and the prestige of the IB brand. In other words, the IBO now has the possibility to utilise its prestigious institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) in another direction: not directed at the 'noble' macro-level or micro-level, nor through the usual IBDP rehearsal of discipline (Foucault 2020; Oord 2013; Ball 2003) with its colonial implications (Said 2003; Oord 2007; Gardner-McTaggart 2021), but rather at the 'crude' meso-level of representational space. It is in this space that the IBO could democratise the global education it *supports* rather than *inscribes*.

The IBO is, in this writer's view, one of – if not the only – international educational organisation with the size and gravitational pull to help staff and students democratically produce an inclusive global education within the meso-level space. The IBO has the potential to (re)construct collective and democratic structures within this space with development and provision of free-to-use networked structures for this space. It is important to recognise that the emphasis is on *structure* here, not *content*. This paper envisions a situation where the use of these structures does not involve any contractual obligation to adopt the IB programme or the learner profile. As has been demonstrated in the above sections, the democratic production of the school's representational spaces for the purpose of making a better world necessarily involves the unanchoring of this space from the 'old' world of IBO spatial practice and representations of space (Lefebvre 1991). This does not mean that the global education component of the formal IB curriculum – inadequate though it is – must be removed. But it does mean that global education within global heritage schools should not be dependent on the IBDP *per se*. Essentially, the IBO could democratise global education by allowing provincial (and often marginalised) voices to democratise the IBO.

And in supporting schools to recognise their staff and students' diversity in the pursuit of collective constructions of global education, in the democratic production of space, there is an opportunity here for the IBO to finally *produce* the space for global education on a global scale; a democratic global learning that is not necessarily bound by school-space. Through assisting global heritage schools in producing their own meso-level space, there is the possibility of the IBO producing a networked and global meso-level space in which an authentic and democratic global education can be created. If this space is untethered from IB/national curriculum spatial practice and global neoliberal/Western representations of space, the possibilities for this new space would seem to appear endless. In producing this global meso-level space, the IBO could become the collective structure that networks and provides a sharing platform for this resistance, for new imaginaries, and escape from cultural and epistemological securitisation. For the culturally marginalised, there are possibilities for a decolonised global education here. It is these students who can provide the IBO with legitimacy as a force for democratic action, and in return, through its prestigious brand, the IBO can provide these students with all-important symbolic and institutionalised cultural capital through the symbolic recognition of their diverse cultural heritage.

The question is, will the IBO sanction any such evolutionary off-shoot? Will it allow for a new stage of development of the prestigious IBO brand? That is to say, a democratically-produced brand, where control (at least in regard to the meso-level, representational spaces) is not centralised and homogenised, or located in the hands of a global elite/cosmopolitan class (Weenink 2008), but is rather – truly – global, with all the cultural and epistemological diversity that necessarily *includes*?

Notes

1. Prevent is part of central government's counter-terrorism strategy where certain authorities (such as schools) look to identify those in danger of being drawn into terrorist-related activities.
2. Fundamental British Values consist of four values to be 'actively' promoted in schools as part of central government's Prevent strategy.

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