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The spatial subversions of global citizenship education: Negotiating imagined inclusions and everyday exclusions in international schools in China

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Abstract

In recent years, schools around the world have started to adopt curriculums that attempt to transform students into "global" citizens. Global citizenship education is, however, a homogenising abstraction that has been criticised for reflecting and reproducing (neo)liberal Western values; as such, it can be undermined by its delivery and everyday applications in non-Western contexts. This problem is pronounced in international schools, and is especially pronounced in China. By exploring the spatial subversions of international schools in China, this paper offers a new way of understanding the problems associated with delivering global citizenship education, and constructing global citizens. It draws on 76 interviews and small group discussions with students, parents, teachers and administrators representing three international schools in the eastern city of Suzhou. Specifically, it considers how the spaces of the official school, the informal school and the non-school can enforce exclusionary attitudes and behaviours, which in turn can undermine the imagined inclusions of global citizenship.

Keywords

International schools, global citizenship education, spatial subversions, exclusion, China.

1 Introduction

In recent years, schools around the world have embraced globally oriented models of education. This embrace has 'unsettled understandings of, and teaching practices around the notion of citizenship' (Yemini et al., 2018: 423), and has resulted in a shift from constructing a singular national identity, to more integrative understandings of globally oriented cosmopolitanism (Oxley and Morris, 2013). This is particularly true for "international" schools, and has brought about a reorientation of their operations, pedagogy and ethos. Once described as 'educational department store[s]' where students of different nationalities would be 'juxtaposed more than integrated' (Renaud, 1991: 6), a growing number of international schools have started to adopt broader, apparently more inclusive curriculums that aim to transform students into "global" citizens. Yet, as the number of international schools has proliferated around the world, so too have criticisms of this shift in pedagogy. Global citizenship education (GCE) has been described as an outcome of a 'sheer lack of alternatives' with the term itself being undermined by the fact that 'nobody really knows what [it] means' (Schmidt and May, 2014: 50). Global citizenship is an abstraction that is often undermined by its everyday applications, especially within communities of migrant students and teachers. Compounding this is the fact that the 'grounded workings and effects of such programmes and personnel, and how they actually "transform" young people into global citizens (or not) has hardly been interrogated' (Kong, 2013: 13; see also Cheng and Holton, 2018) by research. This paper addresses these shortcomings by exploring the everyday practices and politics of how GCE is delivered through international schools in China.

Our argument is that GCE is often an inclusive ideal that can be undermined by the day-to-day realities of life as an (international) student. Whilst it is by now generally accepted in the literature that 'global citizenship is understood in multiple and often contradictory ways' (Dvir et al., 2018: 470; see also Oxley and Morris, 2013), the spatial modalities – and the spatial *subversions* – of GCE remain underexplored. In this vein, international schools are problematic spaces of difference that 'can harden prejudices as much as they can dismantle them' (Wilson, 2013: 3; see also Valentine, 2008; Qian and Kong, 2017; Cheng and Holton, 2018; Yemini, 2018). Existing research has considered schools as spaces wherein social differences and identities are (re)produced, perpetuated and/or diminished (Collins and Coleman, 2008; Hemming, 2011a; Hopkins, 2011; Kong, 2013; Brown and Kraftl, 2019), yet such dynamics have not been explored within the implicitly more socially and culturally heterogeneous environments of international schools. Whilst international schools can be seen as spaces wherein differences are encountered and amplified, GCE attempts to overcome these differences, creating a dialectic of abstraction and reality that students (and staff) must constantly negotiate. Moreover, just as 'multiple temporalities, dispositions, materialities, biographies and expectations… are brought together within school spaces', so too are such spaces of encounter 'intimately connect[ed] with spaces beyond the school gates' (Wilson, 2013: 3; see also Madge et al., 2015). The negotiations that occur within the school are therefore mediated by various extraneous forces – the home, parents and other communities of belonging – which can serve to further complicate and disrupt the ideals upon which GCE is based.

With these ideas in mind, this paper's contributions to the geographies of education are threefold. One, it helps to advance the social and cultural geographies of education (after Holloway et al., 2010; Mills and Kraftl, 2016; Brown and Kraftl, 2019) by engaging with

'efforts to theorize the production of particularly neoliberal and/or global citizen-subjects' (Thiem, 2009: 161; see also Larner, 2000). In doing so, it contributes to broader debates within the study of GCE, and, by transgressing disciplinary boundaries, helps to realise a more "outward-looking" (Thiem, 2009) or "decentred" (Holloway et al., 2010) geography of education. Two, by focussing empirically on international schools as spaces of education – and globally oriented curriculums as spaces of pedagogy – it helps to develop an understanding of an understudied, yet increasingly important and potentially disruptive "type" of school (Kong, 2013; Madge et al., 2015). Three, it contributes to a nascent body of work published in English that explores the emergent (international) educational landscapes of China (Chang, 2010; Feng, 2012; Lai et al., 2014; Ma, 2014; Cai and Hall, 2015). The significance of this is not to be underestimated, as China continues to establish its place as an important market for both the supply of, and demand for, globally oriented education for Chinese citizens and migrants alike.

This paper comprises three sections. The first critically examines the ways in which GCE is (re)imagined. It starts by examining the proliferation and problematisation of GCE, and then considers how the spatialities of GCE can cause it to be subverted. The second introduces the empirical context of China, and outlines the methodology. The third is empirical, and explores the ways in which international students must navigate the (mis)aligned spaces of the international school. Through a focus on three types of spaces – those of the official school, the informal school and the non-school – we illustrate the ways in which different spaces can undermine the imagined ideals of GCE.

2 (Re)imagining global citizenship

Around the world, schools and educational systems are reorienting and reforming their curriculums in response to globalising forces. These reorientations and reformations reveal the positivist inflections of more globally oriented models of education. Often, however, these inflections are underpinned by neoliberal and/or cosmopolitan biases; GCE, for example, aims to 'prepare students to take part in the 'global competition' for future education and employment destinations, participate in 'global problem solving' and, broadly, to be better equipped to face the challenges globally connected contemporary societies must engage with' (Yemini et al., 2018: 423). As a result of these shifts, schools are now 'expected to achieve a far more complex set of purposes which broadly reflect the changing conceptions of what it means to be a good citizen' (Johnson and Morris, 2010: 77). Notwithstanding its (potential) value, the fact remains that GCE provides an abstract model of citizenship to which students are expected to adhere, but which is often undermined through its day-to-day applications. Indeed, to the extent that global citizenship education is meant to 'prepare students to navigate and thrive in modern global society' (Goren and Yemini, 2017a: 170), such ideals can easily be undone by the messy and contradictory nature of students' everyday lives (Goren and Yemini, 2016). This section considers these issues in detail; first it explores the proliferation and problematisation of GCE, then it considers the spatial subversions of GCE.

2.1 The proliferation and problematisation of GCE

The perceived value of GCE has caused it to be adopted in different schools and educational contexts around the world, the aim being to align otherwise diverse students according to a more holistic, and globally oriented, set of skills and attitudes. These alignments foreground the "imagined" inclusions of GCE. In this vein, Dill (2013) distinguishes between global

competencies and global consciousness as two overarching tenets of GCE; the former being more skills-based (and often rooted in English-medium instruction and assessment), the latter aiming to 'provide students with a global orientation, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, stemming from humanistic values and assumptions' (Goren and Yemini, 2017a: 171; see also Goren and Yemini, 2016). In this paper, we focus mostly on the problems associated with inculcating a sense of global consciousness. Recently, the proliferation of GCE has problematised the implicit value and meaning of the global. In particular, scholars have become more attuned to the fact that 'absent [of] specific definitions and taxonomies, the term GCE could become simply a token term, arbitrarily chosen from a list of similar generic terms (i.e. cosmopolitanism, global mindedness, global consciousness, transnationalism, global competencies, global education etc.)' (Goren and Yemini, 2017a: 180; see also Gaudelli, 2013). To sidestep the problem of tokenism, attempts have been made to demarcate the pluralities, limits and aims of GCE in different empirical contexts. Often, these attempts have yielded various typologies that attempt to categorise different expressions of global citizenship (see Goren and Yemini, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Dvir et al., 2018 for reviews). Beyond the problem of defining and classifying GCE, its proliferation has revealed broader concerns surrounding what exactly it attempts to achieve, and why. These concerns fall into three inter-related categories, summarised as the extent to which global citizenship can be constructed, the (re)production of power in and through GCE, and the influence of different stakeholders in imparting and undermining GCE. Each is now explored.

In the first instance, globalisation and economic restructuring have caused citizenship education to become a more contested topic (Thiem, 2009; Hemming, 2011b). Such contestations stem from the fact that 'children and young people lie at the heart of the wider philosophical idea that citizens can be 'made'' (Mills and Waite, 2017: 67, original emphasis;

see also Matthews and Sidhu, 2005; Hemming, 2011b; Cheng and Holton, 2018), with educational providers being responsible for imparting and enforcing a particular vision of citizenship upon students. This vision is guided by a scalar hierarchy that often envelopes the national within – and as subordinate to – the global. This hierarchical logic is, however, problematic as it 'detaches citizenship from practice, de-contextualises it, and leaves the association of citizenship with community and territory intact by simply replacing the national with the global' (Hörschelmann and El Refaie, 2014: 446). Enshrined in the dominant model of international education – the International Baccaleureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) – these contestations are rooted in the criticism that the IBDP reflects and reproduces a 'shared 'geoculture' of liberalism' (Dvir et al., 2018: 458) that nonetheless lacks a 'natural constituency', and, as a result, a sense of 'epistemological clarity' (Gaudelli, 2009: 77-78). Combined, these critiques highlight the idea that GCE is an idealised model of citizenship that can be pursued, but never actually attained.

These critiques are most audible amongst postcolonial and feminist scholars (e.g. Parekh, 2003; Hutchings, 2009; Charania, 2011) who have, in the second instance, drawn attention to the (re)production of power in and through GCE. In particular, they lament the associations of global citizenship with:

> hyper-mobile elite transnational workers and well-educated western citizens who are deemed to be more 'tolerant' and aware of their global responsibilities than others, but whose understandings of global problems and interdependencies is in fact strongly reflective of their privileged location within global power-geometries (Hörschelmann and El Refaie, 2014: 446; see also Stoner et al., 2014; Tarrant et al., 2014).

In this sense, global citizenship education reproduces the hegemony of liberal Western values, and thus serves to promote a form of educational imperialism. Taking these ideas further, some critics have highlighted the 'epistemic racism inherent in the articulations of GCE that results in an absence of other perspectives, voices, and positions' (Arshad-Ayaz et al., 2017: 22), and have called for renewed efforts to "decolonise" the notion of GCE from its normative Western underpinnings (Yemini, 2018). Yet, as much as GCE can marginalise communities and reproduce structural inequalities through education, so too does it provide a channel through which parents can ensure their children can reap the benefits of 'education as the cultural capital investment of the global elite' (Hayden, 2011: 218). In large part, this explains its popularity amongst parents and educational administrators alike. By reproducing the skills, dispositions and values associated with neoliberalism, GCE can be seen as part of a process of co-opting individuals into, or strengthening their position within, the global economy.

Finally, the abstract nature of GCE can render its delivery and application problematic. Invariably, it is delivered in ways that reflect the idiosyncrasies of context, rather than the ideals upon which it is based. In the third instance, then, GCE can be undermined by the channels – the schools and teachers – through which it is delivered. As Lai et al. (2014: 78) recognise, the discourse is often undermined by the great variety of contexts in which GCE is taught and applied, as 'the interpretation of international mindedness may vary between teaching contexts due, in part, to the fuzziness and abstractness of the concept itself'. Such "fuzziness" and "abstractness" render the construction of global citizenship liable to undoing by the grounded realities of lived experience, creating a paradox of global and national selfhood. Indeed, the abstractions of GCE can make it ill-suited to address the 'confused loyalties, a sense of rootlessness and restlessness, a lack of true identity, and unresolved

grief' (Rader and Sittig, 2003: 3; see also Grimshaw and Sears, 2008) that many international students in particular may encounter. Lough and McBride (2014: 458, original emphasis) argue that such a paradox is inherent to the discourse of global citizenship, as:

> one reason for the tenacious use of the term *global citizenship* may be to intentionally highlight the paradox between cosmopolitan notions of inclusion and parochial notions of exclusion that have traditionally been associated with national citizenship and identity.

Navigating this paradox is a daily reality for students and teachers of (international) schools, and helps to reveal both the difficulties of reducing complexity to a single, inclusive, and often imagined framework of citizenship, and the more broad-based politics that sit behind such an ethos. Not only that, but students are susceptible to various forms of informal influencing as well, which can cause them to 'learn, enforce, reject and rewrite' (Holloway et al., 2010: 588) what they are taught, and thus forge their own understandings instead. These informal influences involve 'diverse communities within and beyond the school environment' (Grimshaw and Sears, 2008: 263-264), and stem from friendship groups, parents, teachers and ethno-cultural ties to the homeland. Indeed, Matthews and Sihu (2005: 50) go so far as to argue that international schools can give rise to 'profoundly conservative ethnocultural affiliations and largely instrumental notions of global citizenship as to generate a collective and compassionate global subject'. Recently, however, scholars in general, and geographers in particular, have started to reconcile the paradox by exploring the spatial subversions of GCE.

2.2 The spatial subversions of GCE

The spatial subversion of GCE is a wide-ranging phenomenon that has only received limited research attention. At the global level, the holism of GCE according to Western pedagogical models is often undermined through its application in non-Western contexts. Throughout Asia-Pacific, for example, Goren and Yemini (2017a: 175) argue that GCE is often defined by its emphasis on 'providing skills [especially English language] rather than dispositions and often overlooked issues commonly associated with GCE elsewhere, such as human rights or global responsibility'. Importantly for the purposes of this paper, this trend was particularly noticeable in China. Specifically, Pan (2011) shows how students in Beijing 'maintain a national allegiance and identification while still learning *about* global citizenship and learning to participate in the globalized world as Chinese citizens' (Goren and Yemini, 2017a: 176, original emphasis). In this case, national citizenship is embedded *within* global citizenship; the former being used to cultivate a territorialised sense of the belonging, the latter a globally competitive skillset. The emphasis on skills reveals the neoliberal value of GCE for students, and for schools too. Put differently, as much as GCE can help students become more competitive within international labour markets, so too can it help schools become more competitive in (inter)national education markets. Engaging with this critical line of enquiry, Yemini et al. (2018: 425) note that some schools 'simply introduce GCE as a marketisation tool and provide minimal and abstract engagement with globally oriented contents', whilst Dvir et al. (2018) demonstrate how IB schools in Chicago, the Netherlands, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates use GCE to construct a particular self-image. With these cases in mind, we can begin to see how the spaces of GCE – in particular, the school as a space through which it is taught or imparted – can subvert its pedagogical ideals.

School spaces can therefore provide insight into the implicit challenge of embedding GCE into the everyday lives of students and their teachers. In a general sense, schools have been analysed as spaces wherein various forms of difference – social, cultural, ethnic and economic – are found and negotiated, and where young people become socialised into certain ways of thinking and acting (Fielding, 2000; Holloway et al., 2010; Holloway et al., 2011). In a more specific sense, schools that teach GCE have been conceptually located at the nexus of the global and the local, and must constantly negotiate the ways in which each may – whether intentionally or not – subvert the other. For example, in recent work on a "super-diverse" London school, Yemini (2018: 271) shows how integrating GCE into pre-existing curricula 'takes place alongside an increasing emphasis on local/national and nationalistic values within schools and education systems'. In doing so, it is shown that school life 'is shaped in accordance to the global/local nexus', which itself reflects tensions between 'diverse global and local aspects of the perception of citizenship as they are molded at this school' (Yemini, 2018: 271; see also Kong, 2013). The importance of this case study is that it highlights the potentially exclusionary implementation of GCE, and the dialectic of hegemony and subversion that defines the global/local nexus. Specifically, by recognising the 'potential of culture to exclude and privilege certain citizens over others', there is a need to explore the 'extent of acceptance and belonging within a community of *other* citizens' (Hemming, 2011b: 442; emphasis added). Spaces of cultural diversity can cause these exclusions to be acutely felt; they can, however, also result in situations of *non*-acceptance and *non*-belonging which can serve to undermine the inclusive ideals of GCE.

Indeed, whilst cultural diversity can be found in many different types of school, it is perhaps more commonly associated with international schools. Whilst all schools enable the creation and contestation of various types of citizenship, the spaces of international schools are yet to

receive adequate research attention. Exacerbating this oversight is the empirical reality that in recent decades, the number of international schools has proliferated, from around 50 in the 1960s to over 7,000 in the present day (Dvir et al., 2018). International schools are places wherein various types of citizenship exist alongside, and in tension with, each other, and therefore provide an important lens through which the spatial subversions of GCE can be better understood. As Goren and Yemini (2016: 836) recognise:

> International schools present a unique context for GCE because they are not required to foster a particular nationalistic sense of citizenship in their students. Neither towards the host country nor towards their country of citizenship. The schools often incorporate the development of global-mindedness or global citizenship into their mission statements, aiming to imply that they prepare their students to be members of a global society.

The "uniqueness" of international schools highlighted above underpins the potential for the imagined inclusions of GCE to be undermined by everyday forms of exclusion. In more concrete terms, what this means is that the abstractions of GCE can be undermined by the broader spatial ecosystem within which international schools are located. This ecosystem includes not just school spaces (within and beyond the classroom), but also those through which students, parents and teachers live their everyday lives. To fully understand how these spaces intersect with, and potentially undermine, the ideals of GCE, there is a need to develop empirical insight into the applications of GCE in an international environment, and its problematic effects. Doing so will enable us to unravel the politics of inclusion and exclusion that reside at the heart of GCE, and how these politics are reproduced through the spatial ecosystem of the international school. With these ideas in mind, we now introduce the

empirical context of international education in China, and provide an overview of the methodology employed.

3 Empirical context and methodology

China's international education landscape is complex and fragmented. Whilst the demand for international education has been described as "insatiable" (*South China Morning Post*, cited in Machin, 2017: 132) – the number of international schools offering the IBDP has, for example, increased sevenfold (to 64) between 2003 and 2014 (Wright and Lee, 2014) – strict regulation has brought about various nuances in supply and demand. In 2001, the government deregulated the marketplace for international schools, allowing the formation of Sino-foreign educational ventures where foreign partners could hold majority shares (Wright and Lee, 2014). Whilst deregulation helps to explain the rapid growth in the number of international schools in China, the marketplace in which they operate is restricted. Unless they have previously lived outside of China, Chinese nationals are not allowed to attend international schools (Hayden, 2011), which, combined with the relatively high fees they charge, has created a situation whereby 'access to IBDP schools remains restricted to a relatively elite minority of China's population' (Wright and Lee, 2014: 149). International schools do, therefore, supply education to a very limited, and mostly expatriate, subset of China's resident population.

Against this backdrop, in 2015 fieldwork was undertaken for a wide-ranging project examining the landscapes of international education in various cities across southern and eastern China. The discussion that follows focuses on findings from the eastern city of Suzhou. Suzhou is a city that has been aggressively developed in recent decades, with the

landmark project being the development of the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) by the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park Development – a joint-venture between the governments of China and Singapore. Initiated in the early 1990s, SIP is now home to many international businesses and approximately two million residents, including a significant proportion of Suzhou's expatriate population. To meet the educational needs of the expatriate population, it has attracted investment by three international schools to date: the Suzhou Singapore International School (SSIS – established 1996), EtonHouse (established 2003), and Dulwich College Suzhou (established 2007). Whilst the first two schools are operated by a Singapore-based company (in the case of SSIS) or school (in the case of EtonHouse), Dulwich College Suzhou is an international campus of the UK-based Dulwich College London. All tailor specifically to Suzhou's expatriate (i.e. non-Chinese) community, although it should be noted that a majority of students at each school were from Asian countries.

In recognition of Holloway et al.'s (2011) call for the geographies of education to focus on the everyday lives and experiences of young people, and to connect their voices to 'the wider processes, discourses and institutions to which these connect' (Ansell, 2002: 191), we adopted a qualitative approach that triangulated the opinions of various stakeholders. Specifically, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with senior administrators, and a series of small group discussions with teachers, staff, students (representing a range of age groups and nationalities) and parents from each of the three schools (after Hemming, 2008). Importantly, to mitigate against the problem of self-censorship, the discussion groups were homogeneous insofar as student groups only included students, teachers only included teachers, and so on. Across the three schools, we conducted 76 interviews in total; of which, 42 were with stakeholders from Dulwich College Suzhou (22 with students, 9 with administrative staff, 7 with teachers, and 4 with parents), 26 with SSIS (9 with students, 7

with administrative staff, 6 with parents, and 4 with teachers) and 8 with EtonHouse (4 with students, 3 with teachers, and 1 with administrative staff). The interviews and discussions aimed to understand the full spectrum of experiences that intersected with international education in China – ranging from the classroom, to social circles and the home environment. In doing so, we sought to critically engage with Madge et al.'s (2015: 686, original emphasis) observation that 'international students are often still depicted as subjects who are acted *upon* in the context of *study*; rarely are they envisaged as complex agents who alter the academic worlds around them through their *knowledge practices*'. In uncovering the diversity of their knowledge practices, we explore the academic, social and non-school spaces of knowledge transfer amongst international students in the analysis of data that follows. All data have been anonymised in order to ensure that the identity of each school is obscured; only the type of interviewee, and any other pertinent information regarding their positionality, are presented.

4 Negotiating imagined inclusions and everyday exclusions

The spaces within and without the school provide various opportunities for the global citizenship education that is taught by international schools to be enforced, negotiated and undermined. To provide a framework for presenting our empirical data, we draw on an expanded version of Gordon et al.'s (2000) tripartite categorisation of school spaces, which includes mental/cultural space (the "official" school), social space (the "informal" school) and physical space (the "physical" school). Specifically, the official school is the official mission of schools, and the learning outcomes that they strive to achieve; the informal school is the social space in which social networks of friendship and teamwork are developed and nurtured. We have expanded the physical school category to include physical spaces *outside* of the school itself, and to focus instead on the non-school spaces of students. Our inclusion

of the non-school spaces of students is in recognition of Wilson's (2013: 1; after Ansell, 2009; Holloway, 2011) argument that 'more work is needed to consider how parent or guardian encounters with multicultural schooling impact upon… relations with difference', the aim being to better understand the 'repeated concerns that the 'good work' of schools might be undermined by prejudiced home environments'. The non-school spaces of the home, for example, are 'primary sites for our identity expression' (Holton, 2015: 2) that therefore constitute a "hidden" geography of education (after Cook and Hemming, 2011) that has received hitherto little attention.

By considering these three distinct spaces of international education in China, we aim to highlight how their (mis)alignment can enforce and disrupt the ideals that GCE attempts to instil and uphold. Not only that, but integrating the perspectives of a range of stakeholders – including students, teachers, parents and school administrators – enables us to demonstrate how 'social ties do not only have positive and inclusive effects [but], they can, through the exclusion of individuals, reinforce different social identities, necessitating conformance to established cultural, ethnic and gendered identities' (Kong, 2013: 5-6). In the three sub-sections that follow, we consider these ideas in more detail by exploring the imagined inclusions and everyday exclusions that are reproduced through the spaces of the official school, the informal school, and the non-school.

4.1 Spaces of the official school

One of the defining features of GCE is that it attempts to actively transcend national (and associated ethno-cultural) differences. Programmes like the IBDP provide a holistic form of education that balances academic study with extensive group-based project work and extra-

curricular activities. Such holism can exist in a state of tension with the competitive nature of Asian educational philosophies; for example, Tamatea (2008) has shown how the competitive ethos of Asian parents of international school students in Malaysia and Brunei constrained the development of international mindedness amongst students. That said, the idea behind such programmes is that the diverse and potentially divisive ethnic and national populations of international schools is overcome through GCE, as you "forget about the national boundaries, and create the education that represents, basically, this world" (Head of Curriculum). The practice of overcoming boundaries and collapsing differences into one vision of the world goes beyond an idea, and is actually an ideal to which international schools subscribe. One Year 12[1] student perceptively observed that:

> I think what our school, and most international schools try to do is to, you know, eliminate differences, like cultural differences between us, so rather than, you know, insisting on the differences people have, they try to eradicate the differences so they don't really encourage the students, you know, to express their identity [i.e. ethno-cultural identity].

International schools therefore enforce an idea(l) of ethno-cultural inclusivism; one that can, as suggested here, be at the expense of ethno-cultural identification. Schools actively try to eradicate differences through the promotion of such inclusivism, with teachers "encourag[ing] the students to mix together, play together, and try to speak a common language, so that they're all involved" (Junior School Teacher). However, day-to-day efforts

[1] Note that throughout the empirical section we refer to students and teachers in relation to which "Year" or "Grade" they are in/teach. This accords with the different conventions used by the different schools in our sample.

to eradicate difference were sometimes undermined by events organised as celebrations of difference. Notably, each of the schools in which we conducted interviews held an annual "International Day" celebration within the school grounds. Such celebrations encourage students (and their families) to represent their national identity to others through the wearing of national dress, the preparation and distribution of national foods, and the performance of national culture (through, for example, music, dance and the display of artefacts). Whilst the idea is to help to forge a shared sense of global citizenship – "it's a celebration for all cultures, [it] really makes everyone feel included" (Year 11 student) – it was also criticised for turning the school into what one principal described as an "international zoo", whereby seemingly trivial forms of cultural exposure were believed to be a distraction that undermined the inclusive ideals of students as global citizens. This tension – between the eradication of difference on the one hand, and the celebration of difference on the other – manifests in various ways, and highlights the paradoxical underpinnings of GCE.

As much as students are encouraged to become more open to various forms of difference, so too are they encouraged to follow one particular vision of inclusiveness. In this sense, GCE is often believed to be associated with Western education, as 'what *is* being taught and learnt in the IBDP is the knowledge and understanding to integrate a powerful culture, in this case Western, without recognition of *local* identity and knowledge' (Poonoosamy, 2010: 21, original emphasis). In itself, this reveals both the potential for a more insidious form of cultural conditioning that has not yet been fully recognised, and the notion that GCE is less about overcoming difference as it is reproducing hegemonic interpretations of inclusion. An administrator of a Chinese school offering GCE to Chinese students explained how "one thing that made me happy is that our students act like American students", whilst a Chinese

student of an international school spoke of the cultural sacrifices he felt he was expected to make when choosing to pursue a more globally oriented education:

> I gain more exposure to some American ideals from our courses… We already made the decision that maybe we want to learn some more international knowledge, but it is also kind of hinted that we sacrifice the opportunities. Like I have found it has been a long time since I actually read a book that is written in Chinese, and I forget all the Chinese poems I had learnt before high school. So, I think it is about opportunity costs, like we want to be more international citizens, we just have to like… make compromises.

The consequences of such cultural "compromises" are varied, and are often based on the extent to which a child is willing to assimilate on the one hand, or substitute on the other, aspects of their home culture with that imparted by the school. Whilst some consequences are relatively benign, and can lead to a desired sense of inclusiveness instilled within students, others have the potential to be more damaging. For example, one Grade 5 teacher recounted an experience when a Muslim child was expected to negotiate her religious identity within a non-Muslim, and an apparently more globally oriented classroom. As she recalled:

> I have a Muslim child, of course she is not allowed to eat pork… so, just recently, we went to dissect the hearts, chicken hearts, and a pig heart. So, at the start, we said "okay, this is letting you know that here is actually a pig heart, okay, and we'd like Muslim children to know that you, if you feel not comfortable with this, you're welcome to step out of the class" … and the child said "yes, I'm not that… I know we

> don't eat pork, but I'm actually interested in seeing what it looks like, so I will stay". So, she was given the choice, right, to stay.

The child was also asked to make a similar choice when on a school camp and asked if she was willing to eat non-Halal food, whereby "because she is so understanding, she said "yes, it's okay"". Here, being "understanding" is presented as a virtuous outcome of being a global citizen, even when doing so could contravene religious beliefs and dietary proscriptions. More than that, this also reveals how the official spaces of the classroom are those in which students are expected to negotiate their markers of identity on a regular basis, sometimes without any support or guidance from sympathetic peers or teachers. In itself, this example adds a new dimension to Qian and Kong's (2017: 2) discussion of the 'prioritization of market-based rational logics over other values, including religious ones', by highlighting the privileging of cultural universalism over religious particularism. It also reveals the influential role of teachers in imparting GCE, and thus in constructing the spaces of the official school.

Teachers are expected to reconcile the disjuncture of GCE in its abstract and applied forms, by having to both *teach* students how to be global citizens whilst also providing a *behavioural* role model for students to emulate. Notwithstanding, the fact remains that 'teachers, regardless of where they come from, are themselves mostly products of national educational systems and hence rarely "globally focussed"' (Schmidt and May, 2014: 60). Given that most international school teachers were educated in not just national, but Western education systems, they can be seen to play a central role in imparting and enforcing the hegemony identified above. Despite representing and enacting the official school, teachers are therefore in a unique position to both enforce whilst also undermine the ethos of globally oriented curriculums. For example, Goren and Yemini (2016; see also Goren and Yemini,

2017b) highlight the importance of "teacher agency" in GCE, which results in 'greatly varied ways in which teachers may incorporate [GCE]… could cause discrepancies in the extent to which different students are taught about global citizenship'. In a similar, but more applied, vein, Doherty and Mu (2011) show how IBDP teachers in Australia often taught a diluted or distilled version of the curriculum, which specifically involved downplaying the interconnectedness of global issues, the complexity of cultures, and the promotion of active citizenship. In China, problems arose from the general distinction between Western teaching styles and the Asian context, and the more specific differences between the teaching styles of a heterogeneous body of teachers from around the world. A Korean Year 10 student recalled:

> Teachers are mostly from Western countries, where I believe their education has always been very open, and… they really talk about their own ideas. But, like, in Asian countries, I think people often are more shy, and that happens to be more often not understandable by the teachers… So, teachers often don't know how to interact with Asian students.

The struggle to connect and communicate with students can undermine any educational endeavour – whether globally oriented or not – and constitutes a point of weakness for international schools. Indeed, the different styles of teaching that students are subjected to were described as "crazy sometimes" (Year 12 student), with one student lamenting how "there are actually about five or six teachers that I don't really understand and I can't really adapt to, [it's] really hard" (Year 7 student). Indeed, the principal of one school admitted that "we try to recruit [teachers] from around the world… but people come with their own experiences and biases… So, trying to get everyone on the same page isn't always the easiest thing". Whilst for many teachers, their educational background and professional experience

was something that they had to learn to adapt to suit the more diverse environment in which they were teaching, others actively resisted such adaptations. One teacher, for example, claimed that he "sometimes use[s] vernacular, and slangs… it amuses me if I can get my students to use them – I think it's good for their education… British dialects are so distinctive, so if I can get them to adopt a particular northern or north-eastern dialect… that's good". Such actions – which serve to enforce, rather than overcome, parochialism – can undermine the inclusive ethos of the official school, and reveals the often compromised position of nationally oriented teachers as the disseminators of GCE. One Grade 5 teacher lamented such practices, suggesting that they are symptomatic of a broader problem which stems from the fact that teachers "say things, but they're not doing it". The importance of behaviours enforcing attitudes is necessary to ensure that students receive a consistent understanding of what they are aiming to achieve through GCE. Often, however, the spaces of the official school are misaligned, creating confusion and misunderstanding. More than that, however, the fact that students are influenced by the spaces of the informal school as well can serve to further undermine the objectives and outcomes of the official school.

4.2 Spaces of the informal school

The social spaces of international schools are unique in that they are socially and culturally diverse, and also highly transient. Accordingly, students learn to adopt a more flexible approach to forming, and maintaining friendships. For example, one Year 12 student from Taiwan spoke of her transition from being a primary to secondary school student, and how the transition affected her friendships:

> back in the days of primary school, all my friends, the majority of my friends, were Taiwanese… but now that's not the case. I'm sort of like, I'm friendly with them… but I don't associate myself on a day-to-day basis. And it's the fact that I just… just me changing identity and culture.

This more flexible, changing understanding of identity and culture both reflects, and is also a function of, the regular churn of international students. That said, one of the key problems with GCE is that it is reductive. It assumes that students of different nationalities, and of different ethno-cultural backgrounds will respond to diversity in the same way. Reflecting the Western underpinnings of GCE, students from Western countries appeared to be most appreciative of the mixing of nationalities, whilst those from Asian countries tended to be more critical. On the one hand, the Finnish parent of three boys recalled how "they love the international environment", whilst a librarian admitted that the school "lost some European students because their parents didn't like it that we don't have a *bigger* mix of nationalities". On the other hand, a Korean Year 9 student admitted that "when you're in an international school, you subconsciously realise that there is a lot of cultural clash", whilst a Korean parent claimed that "this is an international school, but not very international – still same grouping, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Westerner, American, European", and another spoke of there being a "glass wall" separating the different ethnic groups within the school. The same sentiments were heard at the other schools in Suzhou. In some instances, the separation within the informal school went beyond cultural (and, by extension, linguistic) differences. One Korean Year 12 student recalled his sense of affinity with other Asian students, which contrasts with his initial, visceral reaction to the phenotypical otherness of his Western classmates:

> I always had very strong connections with Asian people, like Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, Malaysian and Singaporean and all that, but others… when I came here, I've never been to any other countries other than Japan, and I… I talked to Chinese people, and I thought "oh, they're super cool!", but when I talked to white people, I'm not being a racist or something, I just get really scared by their… pale skin and big blue eyes, it just freaks me out.

Visceral reactions like this pose a more profound challenge to the imagined ideals of inclusivism that underpin notions of global citizenship. Simply put, physiological differences cannot be changed, and it is these differences that (can) provide a constant reminder of broader, more entrenched ethno-cultural differences. Such differences contribute to a degree of "ethnic federalism" (Peng, 2009; see also Brown and Kraftl, 2019) within international schools, whereby students tend to group together along ethnic lines within the informal school, despite the efforts of the official school to encourage mixing. In her study of international students in Taiwan, Ma (2014: 226) observes how 'international students tend to establish social ties with friends of the same nationality or a similar cultural background and form an ethnic community'. Within Suzhou especially, ethnic federalism was most commonly observed amongst the Korean student population.

Koreans form the largest expatriate community in Suzhou, with many Korean companies operating out of Suzhou Industrial Park. A Year 11 student described a social bifurcation of the school along Korean/non-Korean lines, as "Koreans usually hang out with Koreans, you know, and we [non-Koreans] usually hang out with us, and they speak Korean, and we can't, [and] because we don't have a similar language, so we just speak English". The reasons for

such bifurcation were explained by a school principal, who described a situation of self-regulation within the Korean student community:

> I think they are very obvious and they stick together the way that no other group does, that means… they actually regulate each other. It'd be very difficult, say, for a Korean girl to have a non-Korean boyfriend… the girls discipline each other not to have friends outside, or boyfriends, or other friends outside their group… a Korean girl who made a friend outside the group will be ostracised by the rest of the group… So, as a group they're quite effective [at] disciplining themselves to remain coherent, which is partly defined by what you apparently are, but also what you're not, which is rather unfortunate for us.

The practices described here – those of "ostracising" and "disciplining" each other – suggests that Koreans in Suzhou share a strong sense of ethno-cultural affiliation, which is resistant to the imagined inclusions of the official school. Whilst this is described as being "rather unfortunate for us [i.e. the school]", it also supports the fact that different ethno-cultural groups respond to the rhetoric of internationalism in different ways. Westerners are shown to be relatively more accepting of it; Asians (in this case, Koreans especially) relatively less so. Ironically, the Western biases of GCE were, in some instances, subverted by the cultural practices of Western students. For example, a Taiwanese Year 12 student recounted how:

> the white people we have in our school, I'm friendly, but, like… I haven't talked to them for ages. In terms of, like, day-to-day contacts, they have their own lifestyle. Some of them, well, not all of them, for example, in Grade 11, a lot of them, their

> lifestyle is a lot of drinking, all the partying, and that's not the kind of lifestyle that I need.

Again, this demonstrates how the official school may strive to emphasise similarities across ethno-cultural divisions, while the informal school tends to emphasise divisions. Most commonly this is through the formation and strengthening of friendship groups along ethnic lines, but it can also be through the cultural practices of students outside the school ("drinking" and "partying" in this case). This leads us to consider how the spaces of the non-school intersect with the provision and ideals of international education.

4.3 Spaces of the non-school

Outside of the physical school, students spend a majority of their time in their home environments, which often reproduce the socio-cultural norms of their parents and ethno-national communities of belonging. Such norms can enforce and justify the exclusionary rhetoric found within the informal school. The spaces of the non-school therefore play an important role in both enforcing a students' ethno-cultural identity, but in doing so it can also call into question the boundary-transgressing nature of GCE. Most students would speak their mother tongue to their parents, and engage in other cultural practices that would enforce a sense of cultural identity: "my family cares a lot, we care a *lot* about Korean culture" (Korean Year 12 student). In addition to the home environment, the Korean community in Suzhou was also strengthened by the presence of Korean migrant churches, which would act as another non-school space of community strengthening. As a school principal explained:

> They [Koreans] have their church, and they have their strong community, their own church, which in some ways is an issue with our own [school] community, because they're so coherent, as a community block. Not only because of the shared language, shared culture and institution, also their church, which means they've got a lot of opportunities to meet each other outside. So, when they come into our [school] community, they've already got their pre-existing community, whereas everybody else, across many, many nations [does not have that cohesion].

In this case, the "coherence" of the Korean community in the non-school spaces of Suzhou is believed to be an "issue" for the school. Such spaces are ethno-linguistically exclusive, creating a model of interaction and behaviour that students are then encouraged to replicate within the physical school.

Within the most common – and the most affective – space of the non-school, the home, the modelling of attitudes and behaviours by parents is most pronounced. This was recognised by another school principal, who admitted that "parents are our biggest challenge" as they often do not fully understand the aims, methods and outcomes of international education, and can therefore undermine the inclusiveness of the official school and enforce the exclusions evident within the informal school. The vice-principal of a different school added that the school actively strives to enculturate parents into the ethos of the school:

> One of the things we do say to our parents is… if you choose international education for your children, then you have to value what it means to be part of the international education community. So that means you have to embrace difference, and will do different things, some of them are not used to [it], that's a part of the challenge.

In particular, a teacher recalled that such enculturation efforts involved presentations to parents in order to "explain actually what we're trying to do". Parents thus play an important role in reproducing the tension between the overcoming and celebration of difference that international schools must continually navigate. They can serve to expand the paradox that sits at the core of GCE; that is, whilst parents are often the ones who choose a school for their children, it is also the parents that may not fully understand their choice. In doing so, they may stand in the way of the school achieving its educational outcomes, and their children benefitting from a more integrative educational experience. This sentiment was captured by a parent whose daughter attended an international school. He spoke of his fears that his daughter will become distanced from him as a parent (not least because he cannot communicate with her in English), and that his role as a parent will then be diminished:

> As family and as parents, if we cannot give her guidance, and we don't try to understand what she is actually going through and what she's learning and experiencing, the gap will be wider and wider. I think that will be causing a lot of problems in terms of family relations and emotional issues.

The implicit concern that the school is replacing the family as the primary disseminator of ideas, values and cultural belonging is amplified by the fact that the school is, in this case, so clearly misaligned with the ideas, values and cultural belonging of the parent. Students are caught in the middle of the resultant power struggle – between education and family, and between global inclusivism and everyday exclusivism – and are constantly expected to negotiate between the two. A Korean Year 12 student admitted that "I'm actually kind of struggling in-between… I'm really confused between where I should really go, between two

groups. That's really a struggle". The struggle of which he speaks is one that stems from the impasse between being educated to be a "global" student, and yet being encultured as a Korean citizen by his parents and peers. The misalignment of the spaces of the physical, official, informal and non-school schools serve to reproduce such a struggle, and to potentially neuter the efficacy of the education being delivered. The problem with GCE is the lack of alignment between (and within) schools, families, friendship groups and students. Lack of alignment results in confusion, with some students having to constantly negotiate multiple versions of the self; one for the classroom, one for their friends, and one for their parents. These negotiations not only undermine the development of both the "student" and the "citizen", but also calls into question who the beneficiaries of GCE really are. Whilst the rhetoric of those that deliver GCE highlight the recipients – the students – as beneficiaries, our findings suggest that such educational models are often and easily undermined by the inherent complexities that underpin the provision of globally oriented education in the contemporary world.

5 Conclusions

This paper has explored the ways in which the imagined ideals of GCE in general – and the construction of global citizens more specifically – is often undermined by various forms of spatial subversion that are reproduced through the international school, and through the broader socio-spatial environments in which students live. GCE is based on the assumption of inclusion and the desire to overcome difference; yet such assumptions and desires are often problematised through the everyday practices of teachers, parents, and the students themselves. Through an analysis of the negotiated spaces of the official school, the divisive spaces of the informal school, and the subversive spaces of the non-school, we have shown

how the misalignment of such spaces can compromise the stated applications and benefits of GCE. GCE may – to varying degrees of effectiveness – be taught to students in the formal space of the classroom, but it is rarely enforced through the informal spaces of the school, or the spaces of the non-school. As such, it can be seen as more of an imagined ideal than a realistic template through which new forms of citizenship and belonging can be forged. More than that, in unravelling the compromises embedded within GCE, and within the everyday spaces of international schools, we have highlighted the systemic risk posed by the ethos of inclusiveness. That is, in promoting an agenda of inclusiveness, international schools can lose sight of – or even undermine – their fundamental role and efficacy as providers of education. The importance of inclusivism can be seen to supersede the importance of education, whilst the delivery of education can become confused in the desire for inclusion. In this vein, we have shown how an inward-looking, subject-oriented approach can reveal the extent to which education can be subverted through the applications, translations and misappropriations of those it is intended to benefit (after Holloway et al., 2010). Schools, parents and students alike are entangled within a web of unsatisfactory compromises, each of which can confuse the development of both students *as* students, and students *as* citizens.

Beyond critically examining the value of international education practices, international schools are also embroiled in more broad-based debates about their value to communities beyond the (privileged) community of migrants that they predominantly serve. Without building stronger ties to local communities, international schools reproduce – and often amplify – the irony that their aim to 'promote greater social harmony and understanding between different peoples… [is] contributing to a growing educational gap between social groups and thus to growing inequality in societies' (Hayden, 2011: 221). International schools may service a market of internationally mobile families, but they themselves are

grounded institutions that are surrounded by – and that contribute to – local communities. As much as international students must negotiate the dialectic of being global citizens and ethno-nationally attuned students, so too must international schools negotiate the dialectic of being relevant and beneficial to both the global markets and local communities that they serve. In this vein, further research is needed to identify and explore the extent to which international schools engage with the local contexts in which they are embedded. Doing so accords with Thiem's (2009) call for a more "decentered" and outward-looking geography of education that explores (international) schools in relation to, and as embedded within, specific contexts. As much as they provide an international model of education to territorially dislocated families around the world, they also play a role in not just helping students to navigate the differences that come from growing up overseas, but also in helping them to understand the immediate environment in which they live and study. Understanding the extent to which they play such a role can help to elicit new insights into the value that international schools bring to the communities in which the serve, and the politics of international education that they create, and within which they are embroiled.

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