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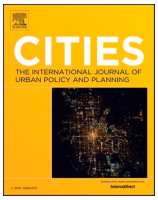

Who belongs where? Geographies of (inter)religion and urban segregation in Surabaya, Indonesia☆

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses urban segregation along religious identities in Indonesia's second-largest city, Surabaya, and explores the disruptive potential of short interreligious visits to places of worship. It contributes to the existing academic literature in at least three ways, namely (1) by expanding discussions about geographies of religion into discussions about geographies of (inter)religion; (2) by connecting interreligious education initiatives with urban democratic politics (i.e., urban subjectivity and citizenship), and (3) by demonstrating the powerful role of body spatiality in disrupting religious urban geographies. Based on organised visits to various religious sites and subsequent qualitative interviews, we found that the unusual visibility of religiously diverse visitors contributed to the normalisation of multi-religious diversity, and participants' positive experiences at places of worship contributed to the development of empathy and solidarity with the religious Other. In discussing the implications of the study, we suggest that deliberate efforts of interreligious place-making on the part of political and religious leaders can counter urban religious segregation and contribute to social cohesion.

1. Introduction

The world's cities continue to grow rapidly. In large parts of Asia, the growth of urban and peri-urban areas correlates with the continuing growth of the middle classes, whose rise is not, as scholars in a variety of disciplines have shown, readily comparable to Western middle classes, but who instead form a complex landscape of different socio-political groups and individuals (Goodman & Robison, 1996). As part of what may still be best described as "multiple modernities," cities are becoming more diverse with regard to class and socio-economic status, beliefs and religions, gender and sexuality, and other characteristics that have the potential to develop into social boundaries. In addition to the oft-studied racial, ethnic, and class-based urban segregations (Bayón & Saraví, 2018; Freeman, 2019; Jaffe et al., 2019), a number of researchers have begun to draw attention to religion as an axis of segregation, such as in the western Indian coastal state of Gujarat, where some Muslim and Hindu villages are spatially segregated (Bhatia & Pathak-Shelat, 2020), or in a study of an unnamed British city where Muslim and Jewish participants lived in different parts of the city (Mayblin, Valentine, & Andersson, 2016). Such research highlights how spatial boundaries tend to reproduce the assumption of inter-religious incompatibility, increase prejudice, normalise discriminatory practices, and prepare the soil for violence (Kong & Woods, 2016).

Sometimes, segregation in countries with a colonial past can be traced back to the colonial era, when Europeans built fortified port towns, with the Europeans within the walled city and non-Europeans outside. In cities without forts, the differentiation of European colonial sections from the rest of the city was still apparent in other aspects of European town planning such as infrastructure and building techniques (Padawangi, 2022, p. 9). In these ways, spatial segregation reflected both racial and class inequality in urban life. It would be too simplistic, however, to assume that colonial-era urbanisation only led to segregation, as historians point to various examples of integration. In fact, while official planning documents might have designated specific ethnic quarters, the realities were usually messier. The urban scholar Rita Padawangi points to the way locals transgressed Dutch colonial attempts

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at urban segregation in Surabaya. The Dutch ethnicity-based zoning policy *Wijkenstelsel,* coupled with the *Passenstelsel* policy that required members of the Chinese ethnic and other "foreign oriental" groups to obtain permits for travel outside their quarters, seems restrictive (Padawangi, 2022, p. 10), but historical evidence – such as intermarriage between prominent Chinese officials and Javanese royalty – suggests that the policy's implementation was not always effective (Sutherland, 1974).

Throughout history, people have organised their lives in complex ways that do not always align with official policies. Furthermore, Colombijn and Barwegen (2009) have convincingly argued that the from-race-to-class-segregation during colonisation is less likely to accurately capture the urban segregation of Indonesia than the class-segregation-throughout-decolonisation thesis. Contemporary urban segregations cannot be fully grasped as adherence or transgression of officially defined zones; instead, one needs to look closely to detect less obvious zoning practices. Segregations are often contingent on a wide range of factors and can take place on a micro-scale, making them not easily perceptible. Amidst the shrinking of public space, religious gatherings have not only other-worldly but also this-worldly dimensions, and provide arenas of information and opinion exchange and group organisation (Simone, 2014).

This article contributes to the emerging literature on segregation along religious lines by examining the ways in which youth in Indonesia's second-largest city experience this segregation and how deliberate interreligious place-making can, in turn, disrupt segregation, reconfigure urban religious geography, and advance social cohesion in a pluralist way. We invited a group of students from Surabaya of various religious backgrounds to participate in a series of religious site visits and documented their experiences. We purposely chose Surabaya as the research site as it represents Indonesia's religiously diverse urban metropolitan setting, where building harmonious interreligious relationships is of paramount importance – especially considering the recent major terrorist bombings at three churches in this city in 2018. In our analysis, we paid attention to interreligious place-making, bodily spatiality, and urban subjectivity.

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority Southeast Asian country with significant non-Muslim minorities and a long history of discrimination, tensions, and conflicts between the majority and minority religious groups, all of which have recently seen a new rise in the wake of growing majoritarianism. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions further limited intergroup interactions and accelerated tendencies towards segregation, especially in urban areas. Many members of the middle class reduced their private contacts to their immediate circle. This was facilitated by urban infrastructures that allowed members of the middle class to move some of their communication online and to move through the city mostly in cars. The pandemic thus accelerated the atomisation of individuals and nuclear families. Brubaker's (2012, p. 4) comment on social segregation certainly characterises parts of the Indonesian upper middle classes: "Even when they are territorially intermixed, members of different religious, ethnic or national communities may participate in separate, parallel institutional worlds … school systems, universities, media, political parties, hospitals, nursing homes and institutionalised sporting, cultural and recreational activities." As a consequence, positive, egalitarian, and meaningful contacts with the religious Other are often considerably limited, albeit being spatially close.

Our excursions to various religious sites in Surabaya show the potential for disrupting this segregation through excursions and deliberations. After a discussion of the literature, we offer a brief overview of Surabaya, after which we explain our methodology and present the findings.

2. Theoretical background

Our study combines and contributes to two fields: geographies of religion and worldview education. Both fields are relatively small vis-à-vis their own main academic disciplines, but both also include interdisciplinary debates about space and religion.

2.1. Geographies of religion

While anthropologists, sociologists, and scholars of religion have long been studying the growing impact of religion and belief systems on the urban sphere and the mutually constitutive relationship between these two analytical categories, the number of works explicitly linking studies of religion and space to debates within geography remains relatively small. As a subfield of geography, geographies of religion traditionally examined spatial patterns of religious distributions and their impact on demography and cultural landscapes (Park, 1994). The postmodern turn in urban theories and the lived religion turn in religious studies in the 1990s reinvigorated geographies of religion through the adoption of new cultural understandings of – among other things – the phenomenology of religious and spiritual experience, the intersectionality of identities, unofficial sacred space, religious politics, and post-secularism (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Cloke & Beaumont, 2013; Holloway & Valins, 2002; Kong, 1990, 2010; Molendijk, Beaumont, & Jedan, 2010; Tremlett, 2022). As part of the global rise of the visibility of religious practices and the decline of the secularisation thesis, geographers have highlighted the complex, multi-layered, and post-secular character of cities using concepts such as the Infrasecular (Della Dora, 2018), religious urbanism (Woods, 2019), and ReligioCity (Luz, 2022). Contemporary geographies of religion have been characterised by the growing understanding that space and experience, subjectivity and materiality, and the religious and the secular are intertwined, mutually constitutive, ever-shifting, and continuously reworked (Gökarıksel, 2009; Tremlett, 2022; Woods, 2019).

One of the recent interests in this subfield of the geography of religion has been how religious practices have been transforming into more flexible, temporary, and informal modes of urban spatial (re)production. Some examples include Bible study groups in McDonald's restaurants in China (Yang, 2005), house churches in Sri Lankan evangelical movements (Woods, 2013), and commercial theatres in Singapore rented by megachurches only on Sundays (Woods, 2019). Luz (2022) studies the religious processions and parades in the Israeli city of Acre to show how believers of various religions temporarily claim central parts of the city to demonstrate their identity to fellow city dwellers. Inhabiting these contingent, unofficial sacred spaces, individuals rework and reinvent their religious subjectivity into more flexible, momentary, less formal, and self-mediated forms of religiosity and spirituality (Gilliat-Ray, 2005), as opposed to the more formal and communal versions of religiosity found in officially designated places of worship. At the same time, some individuals make political claims of inclusion and practise conscious or unconscious resistance to top-down or official designations of urban space (e.g., Luz, 2022; Phadke, Ranade, & Khan, 2009). Simultaneously, state actors refashion urban policies, agendas, and politics in order to accommodate, control, or take advantage of these changing religious practices, subjectivities, and spatial (re)productions. Examples include the Turkish ruling party's (AKP) tapping into Islamic values and networks to advance their urban renewal agenda (Karaman, 2013), the South Korean government's campaign for cremation among Christians to reduce the demand for burial grounds (Park, 2009), and the Malaysian local governments' urban megaprojects that have expanded and intensified Malay majoritarian ethno-nationalist presence through urban architectures (Moser, 2019).

Our study complements studies that have focused on the transformation of religious institutions, state actors, and religious subjectivities in the urban sphere by exploring the understudied area of interreligious geography. We focus on the lack of interaction between members of different religions in urban settings, where a combination of factors has led to limited exposure to religions other than one's own and very little knowledge about the religions of one's neighbours. Assuming that religious cleavages are the outcome of political decisions, including

urban planning and worldview education, which we discuss below, we show how the emergence of interreligious spaces is prevented and how, conversely, it can be purposely installed and encouraged. The present study illuminates how youths make meaning out of their interreligious spatial experience, particularly in relation to their sense of place and sense of being urban citizens. Such exploration of alternative urban spatiality generates new insights for addressing contemporary urban religious-spatial segregation and connects geographies of religion with wider urban citizenry endeavours towards more democratic, inclusive, and socially cohesive cities. To this end, in the following section we draw on the fields of worldview education to show how temporal interreligious place-making can disrupt spatial religious segregation.

2.2. Worldview education and geographies of (inter)religion

In order to explore the interreligious spatial (re)production discussed above, our analysis draws on the literature on (inter)religious, multi-religious, and interfaith education and civic education; in short, worldview education. Those promoting interfaith work point out the degree to which worldview education is often still structured in segregated and monolithic ways and usually focused on classroom and textbook education. Literature on religious urbanism or ReligioCity also often remains focused on a specific religion (and its relationship with the state or the secular space). We argue that the analysis of interreligious spatial (re)production can benefit from insights from interfaith worldview education.

In its common usage, civic education usually refers to modern state education. In its broadest definition, however, civic education means "all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities, and actions as members or prospective members of communities" (Crittenden & Levine, 2018, para. 1). Civic education need not be intentional or deliberate. Instead, institutions and communities may transmit values and norms without meaning to, in some cases beneficial and in others less so. The causal relationship between good civic education and good citizenship is often traced back to Aristotle. Liberal reservations about the importance of civic virtues have been the subject of many debates in political theory, as has the importance that the founders of the United States gave to civic liberal democratic education. Liberal democratic states therefore see it as their task to prepare people for limited but sufficient participation. The place of religion in this vision varies. Depending on the relationship between religious and secular forces, religious education is either part of state education, mainly privately organised, or part of a hybrid model.

While traditionally religious education was confessional (i.e., the students and the teachers are adherents of the same religion), since the early 2000s there has been a rise in inter-religious, non-confessional educational initiatives. In some Western countries, this was partly due to the massive exodus of members from official churches, the increase in the Muslim population in these countries, and a new self-perception as countries of immigration. Conventional forms of these inter-religious educational initiatives were text-based and classroom-based, such as comparative reading, writing, and group discussion. Pertinent to geographies of religion, there has more recently been an increasing trend towards more experiential and spatial forms of interreligious engagement (Moyaert, 2018; O'Donnell, 2012; Pennington, 2015) that allow first-hand, sensory-based learning that involve all of a student's senses, such as site visits, field trips, and excursions (National Research Council, 2009).

Transferring some of the positive findings of field trips in science education to our project, we combined the pedagogic method of the field trip with subsequent moments for reflection and focused group discussions (FGDs) with the excursion participants. While the use of such field trips is not as common in religious pedagogy as in the pedagogy of geography, we believe that the method can be an important element in democratic, pluralistic, diverse, and heavily urbanised societies. In their analysis of field trips to churches, German religious pedagogues Ulrich Riegel and Katharina Kindermann (2017) show that field trips yield superior results to classroom teaching "if they enable the students to become familiar with the location." They find that this stronger effect can especially be observed among students "with little to no religious education in their family." Similarly, the US-American religious studies scholar Jeffrey D. Long (2018) argues that "site visits provide an irreplaceable learning experience to students in both religious studies and the emerging field of interfaith studies." He sees excursions as a key element of "a pedagogy which engages students not only intellectually, but as embodied beings who inhabit a space, engage in physical activities, and undergo various sensory experiences" and that this "is ultimately more enriching than a pedagogy centred exclusively in the classroom." In short, interfaith educational studies have evidenced that site visits can achieve powerful transformative effects on one's sense of empathy and understanding of the religious Other (Barkan & Barkey, 2015; Gill, 2016; Long, 2018; Mayblin et al., 2016).

However, most previous studies in this field focused on psychological transformations, that is, the knowledge, attitudes, or behaviours of the participants (Burdah, 2018; McCowan, 2017), and, more commonly, the pedagogical benefits of such interreligious experience (e.g., (Cordoves, 2018; Gill, 2016; Long, 2018; Mikoski, 2013). An alternative theoretical angle, such as one built on geographies of religion, urban spatial politics, and subjectivity, could offer a more enriched and nuanced understanding of the impacts of interreligious excursion. As Kong (2001, 2010) has noted, this is an area that needs more exploration in the subfield of the geography of religion, namely, the ways different religions are mutually co-constitutive in terms of spatial (re)production. Some studies that have been conducted in this area include Naylor and Ryan's (2002) study on the presence of a Hindu temple in a predominantly white Christian area in London, where the Christians developed a new sense of territoriality due to the perceived "invasion" of white British space. Another geographical study documented an interreligious cricket practice project that purposely engineered meaningful contact between a Muslim and a Jewish community in a large UK city (Mayblin et al., 2016). Here, a safe space to explore differences and shared interests, as well as banal sociality outside the designated purposeful activities, were found to be key pathways for meaningful interreligious contacts.

Responding to this research gap, our study analyses the ways youth participants make meaning out of their experience of emplaced interreligious education vis-à-vis urban place-making, urban citizenship, and democratic politics. By democratic we do not refer to narrow institutional definitions of democracy but more broadly to decision-making processes and the political involvement of members of society. As societies are urbanising, diversifying, and becoming more socio-economically unequal, questions of how to live together gain in significance and are negotiated, among other places, in the spatial competitions discussed above. Religion, and more generally worldviews, are key aspects of late modern discourses about living together. To further explore the productive possibilities of combining interreligious education and geographies of religion, in the following we link them with the literature on the role of the body in both geographical analysis and democratic politics.

2.3. Geographies of (inter)religion and the body

Geographers investigating religious contestations over space have viewed the body as the smallest scale of spatial analysis (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995; Holloway & Valins, 2002; Kong & Woods, 2016); therefore, we connect the examination of places of worship in urban settings with a focus on individual bodily experience. Like places of worship, the body is an important site of religious regulation, control, and politics. Religions are always already embodied. Religious meanings and practices are expressed through and internalised into the body, such as the wearing of religious garb, body movements during salah, consuming or not consuming certain foods, or kissing a holy book

(Moyaert, 2018). The religious body exists in space and is oftentimes socially identifiable. It is through and within bodily existence that religious place-making occurs. As Holloway (2003, p. 1966) puts it: "make-believe, then, not belief-make … the body makes (belief) as much as, or possibly more than, it is made (to believe)." While such analyses "remain relatively unexplored within geography" (Kong, 2010, p. 757), some notable examples include Holloway's (2003) study among New Age spiritual seekers in the UK and Gökarıksel's (2009) study among veiled Muslim women in Istanbul, both of which challenged the duality of the sacred/profane or secular/religious by considering the fundamental role of the body in the (re)production of urban space. Taking these insights of the fluid, co-constitutive nature of the secular and the religious space into interreligious spatial production, in the current study we examine how the body as "a site of signification in and of itself" (Holloway, 2003, p. 1962) plays a role in the affective production of (inter)religious space, that is, in the way that youth participants' embodied experience of interreligious visits may generate new meanings about place and religious spatial boundaries.

Bodies are not merely "passive vessels" that incorporate socio-political norms, but bodies can also "excorporate" or challenge those norms (Machin, 2015). The existence of certain bodies in certain spaces could disrupt stereotypes and spatial segregation. For instance, groups of ethnic minorities performed embodied resistance against the lack of ethnic diversity in British outdoor spaces by hiking, swimming, and walking in the outdoors in the form of Black Girls Hike, Black Swimming Association, and the Hillwalking Hijabi (Parveen, 2020). Not only the display of such bodies in unusual spaces is politically transgressive – the (re)making of bodily sensibilities through critical spatial engagement itself is already a transformative political strategy, or what Foucault (1985) called the "aesthetics of existence." As Connolly (2002, p. 168) puts it: "You thus participate, repetitively and experimentally, in a series of interceded activities that impinge upon the self at several levels, allowing a mixture of images, gestures, rhythms, memories, arguments, and ethical concerns to become folded into your sensibility." Such acts of cultivating alternative subjectivities and bodily spatiality against the hegemonic stereotypes are politically transformative in the way they promote "a reimagined identification of citizenship" (Machin, 2015, p.51). Here, the lived body is crucial to the co-constitution of urban religious geography and urban democratic politics. It is these intricate dynamics of (inter)religion, the body, space, and subjectivity that we sought to investigate in the current study.

2.4. Case selection: interreligious relations in contemporary Indonesia

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority Southeast Asian country with a population of approximately 270 million people. It is the world's fourth-largest country overall and home to the world's largest Muslim population (87.2 % of the overall population), with a significant number of non-Muslim minorities, including Christians (9.9 %), Hindus (1.7 %), as well as Buddhists, Confucians, and others (together 1.3 %). Indonesia is part of the trend of growing urbanisation in Southeast Asia, with the urban population growing at an annual urbanisation rate of 4.1 % (World Bank, 2016) and standing at 57.9 % of the total population in 2022 (CIA, 2022). By the mid-2020s, Indonesia is expected to house 68 % of its population in cities (World Bank, 2016). To accommodate this population growth, cities in Indonesia have been growing in two distinctive ways. The population density of inner-city areas has increased dramatically, while peripheral areas are expanding at a rate comparable to China, which has achieved the largest amount of urban land conversion within Asia. After China and Japan, Indonesia has gained the third largest amount of new urban land in the region (Hawken & Sunindijo, 2018; Schneider et al., 2015). We find the exploration and reflections of Indonesian experiences of urbanisation particularly timely because, at the time of writing, the country is building a new capital city, Nusantara, on the island of Borneo. In an attempt to escape the well-documented problems of Indonesia's current capital, Jakarta, the new city holds a range of ambitious promises. The present study offers insights relevant not only to Nusantara itself but to the management of urban diversity more broadly.

The official state ideology, *Pancasila* (Five Principles), has recognised religious diversity and emphasised Indonesia's unity as a multi-religious nation since its independence in 1945. This notion is represented in the slogan *bhinneka tunggal ika* ("diverse but one"), which is inscribed in the country's national emblem, the *Garuda Pancasila*. Despite being abused by Suharto to support his authoritarian regime (1966–1998), in the context of post-1998 democratisation *Pancasila* still provides at least an official ideological foundation for tolerant religious citizenship (Hoon, 2017). Contemporary nationalist politicians, interreligious activists, and religious tolerance educators have drawn upon *Pancasila* in their efforts against the rising Islamisation of the Indonesian state and society in the last two decades (Wijaya Mulya & Aditomo, 2019; Wijaya Mulya, Aditomo, & Suryani, 2022; Wijaya Mulya, Sakhiyya, Bukhori Muslim, & Suryani, 2022).

As Suharto's social and militaristic repressions against Islamic and Islamist groups were mostly lifted after the 1998 reforms, Indonesia has experienced a surge in the visibility of Islam, especially among urban middle classes. A simultaneous rise in nationalism and conservatism accelerated the growth of Islamist and extremist actors and discourses. After 1998, multiple terrorist bombings, aggressions framed as being of a religious nature, and the persecution of religious minorities such as Ahmadis, Shia, and Christians raised doubts about the previous characterisations of Indonesia as a pluralist and tolerant society. In addition to mainstream media reports of interreligious conflict, discrimination, persecution, and terrorism (Harsono, 2022; UCA News, 2022; Yulisman, 2022), rumours of conversions and intense missionary efforts circulate in social media,[1] resulting in scepticism and even fear of other religions. Some participants in the current study (e.g., Rizky, a Muslim participant) stated that efforts to build genuine and positive interreligious interactions were initially met with suspicion by their parents. To counter such scepticism, suspicion, and fear, interreligious educational initiatives promoting tolerance and co-existence were begun on the grassroots level (e.g., Huda, 2019; Jonathan, Widjaja, & Husein, 2018; Muwahidah, 2008). Such initiatives, however, mostly remained small-scale, sporadic, and short-lived. Often, they depended on the backing of individual progressive religious leaders. A more formal initiative was the government's establishment of provincial- and municipal-level bodies called *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (FKUB, Forum of Harmony among Religions), which consists of representatives from local leaders of major religions in the area (FKUB di Jakarta, Jakarta Aman, Damai, dan Sejahtera, 2022; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, n.d.). This institution often dealt with religion-related local conflicts as the official government representative. However, the availability and activity of the FKUBs differs considerably across provinces and municipalities. Furthermore, the formality of the forum did not always connect with the dynamics of youth citizenry.

We conducted our data collection in Indonesia's second-largest city, the port city of Surabaya. It has served as a key commercial hub in the region since the twelfth century and today has around three million inhabitants (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Surabaya, 2021). The population occupies a large conurbation and mostly resides in crowded low-income neighbourhoods (*kampungs*). A *kampung* is a form of urban settlement in Southeast Asia commonly inhabited by low-income households and characterised by irregular and narrow alleys, community-focused sociality, strong social interactions, and informal economic activities (Hawken & Sunindijo, 2018). Under the Dutch colonisers, the *kampung*

[1] "Indonesian Muslim Converts to Christianity After Witnessing Miracle" https://youtu.be/TVOqkRscGnc (web archive link,); "Muslims secretly converted to Christianity in Indonesia" https://youtu.be/m-u24Rc3ym4 (web archive link,); "Pancasila Interfaith Dialogue, Indonesia" https://youtu.be/-NlsbmJPq1g

was designated as the quarters for "other natives," which allowed locals in the *kampung* in Surabaya to welcome new migrants without ethnic restrictions and to accommodate interethnic families (Padawangi, 2022; Perkasa, Padawangi, & Farida, 2022). The *kampung* forms a fundamental part of the structure of most Indonesian cities and is inhabited mostly by Muslim middle and lower classes. *Kampung*s provide housing options (especially for low-income households) for both long-term residents and newcomers, sources of cheap labour, and an informal economy.

*Kampung*s are also the "internal other" of the shinier parts of Surabaya and form the sites of various urban struggles. Citizens evicted in the name of development under Suharto have been pushing back and forming communities of urban resistance (Guinness, 2009). In 1998, tension between the inhabitants of the *kampung* and the state contributed to riots that targeted Surabayans of Chinese origin, who the attackers associated with the entrepreneurial middle and upper classes (Peters, 2013). In the post-reform era since 1998, Surabaya has suffered from suicide bombings as well as attacks on churches, temples, and viharas (Harsono, 2020), and even on the last synagogue in Indonesia, which was eventually destroyed in 2013 (JTA, 2013). Since then, the aftermath of the financial crisis, the growing socio-economic inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions, and the rise of religious conservatism and nationalism have further increased urban tensions.

3. Material and methods

The methodology of the current study is informed by the concept of sensory urbanism, where embodied sensations become the focal point in analysing urban space, experience, and politics (Adams & Guy, 2007). In this view, one's sense of a city is a (re)collection of sensorial, embodied, and aesthetic experiences. Such experience is political in the ways it evokes a sense of normality, friendliness, belonging, or being excluded from certain places – which might result in urban segregation. Previous researchers in this field have demonstrated forms of engaged scholarship by experimenting with alternative spatial encounters (e.g., urban tours) to reconfigure socio-spatial (e.g., class) boundaries (Jaffe et al., 2019). By visiting unfamiliar places, participants may experience sensory rupture, and such rupture can be politically transformative when it redefines their urban subjectivity. Through bodily sensations of sameness/difference, proximity/distance, and dis/comfort, a shared sense of spatial experience – however temporary – may be cultivated (Jaffe et al., 2019) and, in turn, may foster affective responses of empathy and solidarity for the Other (J. D. Long, 2018).

In the present study, we co-constructed qualitative data with a group of youths from various religious backgrounds by conducting interreligious educational excursions to six different places of worship in Surabaya. We recruited these young people through an electronic advertisement poster distributed at different faculties of the University of Surabaya. Thirty-five candidates signed up and sixteen participants were selected based on their religion and gender to ensure a balanced mix of identities in the group (4 Muslims, 3 Catholics, 5 Protestants, 2 Buddhists, and 2 Hindus; 6 females and 10 males). They were given a research information sheet, a consent form, and a COVID-19 protocol commitment form. All participant names in this article are pseudonyms.

The excursions involved one introductory session, six visit sessions, and one closing session, all of which were conducted in September–October 2021, and four follow-up interviews in September 2022 with selected participants. Places of worship visited belong to the six officially recognised religions in Indonesia, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism. This time, our study focused on the officially recognised religions mainly for pragmatic and logistical reasons; a project of larger scope would ideally also include traditional belief systems. Six Religious Education lecturers from the University of Surabaya helped as guides during the visit to the place of worship corresponding to their religion. The places were chosen to represent the range of socio-spatial ambience of the city: the mosque was Masjid Baiturochman in North Surabaya near the old harbour, which has communities of Arabic and Madurese descent; the Hindu temple was Pura Segara in a military residential area; the Catholic church was St. Yakobus Church in affluent West Surabaya, the Protestant church was Yerusalem Baru Church in a *kampung* in Central Surabaya; the Confucian temple was Boen Bio Heritage Temple in the old town business district; and the Buddhist temple was a modern four-storey Buddhayana temple. We took ethnographic notes, and the participants filled out open-ended questionnaires about their emplaced sensorial experience. In addition, we held focused group discussions (FGDs) at the end of each session, which we recorded and transcribed. The data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and included the transcription of the recordings, reading and rereading the data, generating codes, and identifying, specifying, and reviewing themes pertinent to the research question, namely, ways to reconfigure urban religious geography through sensory immersion into the religious Other's sacred place. The data analysis was predicated upon the assumption that the generated narratives of participants' meaning-making were discursively constructed, momentary, and embedded in the specific contexts of this research; therefore, the analysis did not pursue reliability, representativeness, or generalisability.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis shows that the bodily-spatial experience of interreligious site visits can reconstitute urban subjectivity and religious geography in at least two broad ways, namely concerning visibility and aesthetic sensuality. These two themes will be discussed in the following section.

4.1. Unusual bodies in unusual places

While the presence of the religious other is nothing uncommon in Indonesian cities (particularly in *kampung*s), places of worship and religious sites are – spatially speaking – relatively more exclusive. Almost all participants had little or no experience visiting religious sites outside their own religions. Some participants even had close relatives from other religions – in one case, a father – but had never visited a religious site with them. Religious sites usually cater only to members of their own religious congregations. Even processions such as the Hindu Ogoh-ogoh *parade as part of the New Year's celebration* usually remain within the direct vicinity of the site or, as in the case of the Catholic re-enactments of the crucifixion, within the site itself. From our understanding, such rituals first and foremost address believers within the community rather than spectators across religious communities. Some of the places of worship in this study (i.e., the mosque, the Protestant church, the Catholic church, and the Buddhist temple) stated that our visit was their first experience of welcoming the religious Other in their sacred space. Thus it was readily apparent that neither the believers at the religious sites nor their neighbours were used to seeing people marked as members of other religions as visitors. This religious segregation turned *the scene of an interreligious visit* itself into a disruption of the established urban religio-spatial order. We argue that the interreligious site visits disrupted religious spatial exclusivism in two directions: for the visitors themselves, who experienced a transformation of their sense of being out of place into the creation of new affective place-connection, and for those watching the visitors and noticing this transformation taking place.

The display of participants' socially and religiously marked bodies in unusual places of worship exposed the subtle but powerful role of the politics of visibility in regulating urban space, including for participants and the neighbourhoods where the places of worship were located. During our visits, neighbours watched our arrivals closely, particularly at the mosque and the Protestant church, which were located in Muslim-majority *kampung* neighbourhoods. The *kampung* neighbourhoods around these two places of worship were busy. During our visits, people frequently passed by on foot as well as on bikes and motorcycles. Small

shops, coffee stalls, and peddlers are scattered throughout these neighbourhoods. There were also residents sitting in front of their homes, relaxing and talking to each other, and children playing together outside. Our socially and religiously marked bodies inevitably became a spectacle for these residents, peddlers, and passers-by. The gaze of the children playing in the neighbourhood was obvious, as they watched us and whispered among themselves. The middle-class, religiously diverse participants were perceptibly distinguishable from the surroundings because of their clothing, their hijabs, their bags, their shoes, their brighter skin, their hairstyle, and their cars and motorcycles. A rare visual scene during the visits was when a female Muslim participant wearing a hijab entered a church. The visibility of the participants disrupted the established socio-religious configurations of power, bodies, and space in these specific urban settings.

For the participants, the experience of the interreligious visits was both exciting and frightening, as they were physically entering unfamiliar space. In visiting a new, unfamiliar urban space, participants in the current study were challenged to recognise what socio-spatial orders were in place, to adjust their behaviour accordingly, and to (re)consider who they were and whether they did or did not belong. Upon arrival at the religious sites, the participants' bodies were visibly reserved and uncomfortable – some more than others. At the mosque, for example, some Christian participants arrived early and stood awkwardly in front of the gate, waiting for other participants to come. They were invited to wait inside by the hosts but politely refused, preferring the comfort of being in a larger group when entering terra incognita. Later, several participants confirmed this discomfort in the FGDs. They stated concerns around unintentional misconduct, for example whether to remove their shoes, where to sit, whether it was necessary to maintain silence, what not to touch, and so on. Anne, a Catholic participant, stated: "I was afraid of breaching their code of conduct which I didn't know and didn't intend to breach." Latif, a Muslim participant, said during the FGD that he had had a previous experience of entering another place of worship, and he was afraid of being perceived as "mad or schizophrenic" because he was wandering awkwardly on the premises. Latif came late to the visit to the Buddhist temple, missed the instructions, and thus wore shoes in an area in which shoes were supposed to be removed. He later recounted the guilt upon noticing his error: "I still feel very guilty even now during this FGD, although the guide was very gentle in telling me about my shoes." Similarly, Efendi, another Muslim participant, spoke about his past experience of entering a Hindu temple during a vacation in Bali, in which he "ended up being scolded for not wearing a special cloth" on his waist in the sacred parts of the temple. During our interreligious visits, participants became intensely cognisant of their conduct, manners, gestures, and, at a deeper level, of who they were and where they did and did not belong.

Nevertheless, participants' feelings of (not) belonging in the new place gradually changed, particularly "through embodied emotional responses to surroundings and activities perceived as normal and friendly" (Jaffe et al., 2019, p. 1017). As the visits proceeded from arrival to welcoming speeches and explanations about the place and the rituals, many participants displayed changes in their bodily and emotional expressions. As they entered the building, sat down together, and slowly absorbed the new stimuli, they became more "relaxed and comfortable" (Ketut, a Hindu participant) or "comfortable and calm" (Latif, a Muslim participant). When asked how and why they became more comfortable, participants attributed it to "the friendly welcome by the hosts" (Okta, a Catholic participant; Audrey, a Buddhist participant), the "serene ambience of the place" (Nehemia, a Protestant participant), and the "interesting and humorous ways of the guide explaining the place" (Rafael, a Catholic participant). During the visits, some guides liked to throw jokes when explaining aspects of their place of worship, making the visitors laugh. Coupled with the consumption of snacks and water provided by the hosts, participants' bodies became much more relaxed and comfortable. Although a feeling of belonging in the new place might not have occurred (belong/not belong is not a simple binary), at least a sense of "not being welcome" or "should not be there" gradually began to dissolve. This change was perceptible in bodily changes from tense to more casual.

As their bodies became more comfortable in the new, unusual spaces, the sacred places became infused with new meanings and new feelings that were different from what they had thought and felt before, leading to a (re)constitution of the participants' sense of place. Their preconceptions about urban religious geography began to be disrupted as they developed new affective place-connections through embodied socio-spatial experience. They reconsidered some taken-for-granted assumptions about space, religion, and other intersecting social identifications such as class, ethnicity, and cultural identity. An example is the association of Christians with the middle class, which was disrupted during the visit to a Protestant church in a *kampung* ("I thought Protestant churches are usually in wealthier areas or on larger roads"; Audrey, a Buddhist participant), as well as the association of Buddhism with traditional culture, architecture, and practices when visiting a four-storey temple ("The temple is very modern! I thought Buddhist temples were always traditional, like heritage buildings"; Rafael, a Catholic participant). The spatial, bodily experience of visiting, observing, and being in unusual locations of places of worship disrupted the participants', the hosts', and the neighbourhood's everyday visual perceptions and, in turn, presumptions about urban geography and the religious Other. In a wider context and in the long run, such subtle disruptions of taken-for-granted presumptions about identities (and intersections of identities) are crucial to advancing urban social cohesion where different groups in a society co-exist harmoniously. In this way, interreligious excursions demonstrated a pedagogical potential for civic education, in ways that foster a vision of democratic youth citizenship pertinent to Indonesia's multicultural contexts.

4.2. Aesthetic experience in the other's sacred place

In addition to the interreligious presence described above, the participants in our study were impressed by the sensual aspects of their visits. When asked to pay attention to their senses, participants became intensely mindful of the beauty and aesthetics of the Other's sacred place. Their responses to the questionnaires and FGDs were saturated with poetic expressions of admiration (e.g., "awe-spiring," "charming," "very aesthetic," "very touching," "stunning sensations") towards the place of worship visited. In terms of sight, participants admired the distinct architectures, interior designs (windows, altar, benches), and visual symbolism (colours, ornaments, paintings, praying tools, statues, calligraphy, and candles) in each place of worship. Various sounds were also characterised by participants as aurally pleasing, such as the contemporary gospel songs sung by the host at the Protestant church, the sound of the meditation bell at the Buddhist temple, the gentle call for prayer (*adzan*) performed by the host in the mosque (not through the minaret loudspeakers), and the serenity of the Hindu temple. While facemasks may have filtered most olfactory stimuli, some of them still got the attention of participants, particularly the "sweet smell of incense" at the Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian temples. Tactile-wise, participants recalled the sensations of sitting on the tiled floor at the mosque, on the grass at the Hindu temple, on old wooden benches at the Protestant and Catholic churches, and of touching the intricate carvings on the pillars at the Confucian temple. The participants also noticed the sounds of the urban environment, such as the loud sound of traffic at the Confucian temple in the old town business district and the sound of peddlers, children, and vehicles at the mosque in the small *kampung*s – constant reminders of how the religious sites are part of the city. Since the site visits took place after three months of COVID-19 lockdowns, they were multi-sensorial feasts.

These spatial-sensorial experiences contributed to the transformation of urban religious subjectivity in at least three ways. Firstly, the embodied aesthetics experienced during the visits provided an opportunity to interact with other religions in a pleasurable way, with little

fear of being proselytised or converted. During the introductory session, participants mentioned that the general concerns among Indonesian youth around interreligious initiatives were the fear of being converted and of getting involved in heated debates defending one's religious beliefs, as they often saw on YouTube. In contrast, the non-doctrinal, aesthetic experience of interacting with and learning about the religious Other through religious site visits may have opened up possibilities for interreligious affective place-making which contest the images of unfriendly interreligious contacts displayed in mainstream media and social media. As Rizky (a Muslim participant) said in the final FGD: "Now I know that other religions are not like what most people around me said about them. I will tell my parents about these positive things I learnt about other religions from these visits."

Secondly, as scholars in philosophy and political studies have demonstrated (Foucault, 1985; Linke, 2006; Panagia, 2006), politics – including urban religious politics – have sensorial, corporeal, and affective dimensions. The process of subject formation involves sensorial and bodily governmentality, and in the continuous process of subjectivation lies the possibility for discursive contestation and political resistance. In the current study, for instance, some of the recurring themes within participants' aesthetic interpretations were statements about the meticulous details, excellent cleanliness, careful maintenance, and evident preservation of religious and cultural history in each of the places visited. During the FGDs, participants talked about how clean and tidy the mosque was, how well-maintained the gardens at the Hindu temple were, how detailed the engravings in the Confucian temple were, how colourful and visually pleasant the altars and decorations in the Buddhist temple were, and how beautiful the paintings and sculptures in the Catholic church were. These forms of meaning-making might evoke a sense of care and protection which, in turn, may nurture political opposition against, for example, hard-line groups frequently involved in the destruction of places of worship in Indonesia (Lestari, 2022) and political parties connected with those groups (Subhanie, 2020). For example, Ketut, a Hindu participant, wrote after the visits: "I am convinced that there is no heretical religion," showing his opposition to the accusations of heresy often used by hardliners to persecute other religions and minority groups (Irawan, 2017; Schäfer, 2018). Speaking about these hard-line groups, Angel (a Protestant participant) said in the last FGD session: "After these visits, I believe there is no reason to do bad things to other believers. Those who harm other believers for religious reasons are clearly wrong." In this way, the bodily sensation of beauty in the Other's place of worship is political, that is, in its potential to generate feelings of empathy and solidarity beyond the established socio-religious-spatial boundaries.

Thirdly, the visits took the participants' sensual experience even further, namely from sensory immersion to active bodily imitation of the Other's religious traditions and rituals. As the participants narrated, embodied acts of imitating enabled new powerful, intimate ways of knowing the Other and themselves, particularly through the evocation of feelings of similarity between religions. These physical acts of experiencing the Other's religion in situ broke down notions of dissimilarity among some of the participants and reconfigured their subjectivity as urban dwellers by instilling a sense of commonality.

The participants enthusiastically took the opportunity to imitate rituals and traditions at the places visited. At the Hindu temple, they were sprinkled with holy water and wore the *anteng* (a special cloth worn as a belt; literally means "calm") before entering the main area as a symbol of quietening the heart before the worship. At the Buddhist temple, they engaged in a ten-minute guided meditation. At the Catholic church, two Muslim participants (Latif and Efendi) instinctively tried genuflecting while the guide explained the purpose of the cushion near their feet. After visiting the Confucian temple, participants keenly ate the traditional moon cake that is a part of Confucian autumn worship and the mid-autumn festival. By digesting the cake, genuflecting, or wearing the *anteng*, the Other's religion became a part of the participants' bodily knowledge. Their bodies developed a form of interreligious muscle memory while still safely maintaining affiliation with their own religion. Efendi, a Muslim participant, summarised his experience as follows: "(The visits) very much changed my perspectives as a Surabaya dweller! Because I had the opportunity to feel how the others worship, and it made me more tolerant." Rafael, a Catholic participant, concluded: "I was apathetic, self-oriented, and didn't care about other religions, but now (after the visit experiences) I know that I need to be open and aware of religious diversity."

Participants' reflections after the visits abounded with the perception of cross-religious similarities. Even though participants did not participate in all rituals demonstrated during the visits, they noticed striking similarities between the Other's and their own religions. Abigail, a Christian participant, was reminded of eating the consecrated host when watching Hindu worshippers swallow three grains of uncooked rice, and baptism when they were sprinkled with the holy water. Latif, a Muslim participant, could relate when the Buddhist guide demonstrated a prostration similar to *sujud*, a movement in *salah*, and saw a similarity between the rosary in Catholicism and *tasbih* (Islamic praying beads). Some participants of Chinese descent, like Nehemia (Christian) and Audrey (Buddhist), realised that parts of their cultural practice as Chinese Indonesians were actually Confucian religious traditions. Rizky, a Muslim participant, found that the cross at the church – explained as symbolising a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with others – was precisely the same as the Islamic teaching of *hablum minallah* (relationship with God) and *hablum minannas* (relationship with others), and if supplemented with *hablum minal a'lam* (relationship with the nature) became similar to Hinduism's *Tri Hita Karana* and Confucianism's *Tian-di-ren*.

In the context of Indonesia's deeply ingrained socio-religious boundaries, learning about these commonalities was a powerful pedagogical experience, especially since the participants noticed these commonalities themselves rather than indirectly hearing about them. In the embodied and affective meaning-making experiences of the interreligious visits, participants' ways of seeing and being religious urban citizens were infused with a sense of sameness, connectedness, and proximity between religions. At the same time, the visits also exposed the varying positions of the religions in relation to the state. This became especially explicit in the Confucian heritage temple. The temple community proudly looks back at their active role in the struggle for recognition during the Suharto regime (1966–1998). As a long-standing hub of the Chinese community in Surabaya, they have been fighting for their rights to exist since the colonial era – from fighting against the Dutch economic monopoly through the court, to labelling themselves as a Confucian "church" so that they would be treated as equal to the Dutch Christians, and to battling Suharto's repressions and erasure of Confucianism. The most recent milestone was a fight for marital recognition by a Confucian couple from that temple, which eventually got the attention of President Gus Dur (1999–2001), who then officially recognised Confucianism as a major religion in Indonesia (N. J. Long, 2019; Pausacker, 2007). Nehemia, a Chinese Christian participant in the study, was deeply touched when hearing this history, and in his reflection he emphasised "the right to exist for all religions." Similarly, Latif, a Muslim participant, concluded that "this experience made me realise that it's not only my religion in this country."

When we conducted follow-up interviews with some of the participants a year later, they remembered the visits fondly and emphasised that they were now more interested in befriending people of different religions. However, they did not report initiating involvement in any of the existing inter-religious youth organisations after the data collection. While these organisations exist in Surabaya, they are considered specific interest groups rather than a dominant feature of Surabayan youth citizenry. The interreligious site visits did, though, at least contribute to a memorable, visceral-spatial experience within the city for the participants, and in doing so reconstituted their urban subjectivity.

5. Conclusions

In the current study, we discussed the growing segregation along religious lines among Indonesian urban middle classes in Surabaya and explored the disruptive potential of short visits to places of worship. We found that the unusual visibility of religiously diverse visitors contributed to the normalisation of multi-religious diversity. We argue that accepting such visibility and normality of religions contributes to social cohesion and counters tendencies of suspicion and scepticism bred by increasing atomisation, segregating urban infrastructures, and growing digitalisation. We suggest that the participants' positive experience at the places of worship contributed to empathy and solidarity with the religious Other. Finally, the embodied acts of imitating or experiencing the Other's religion in situ fostered a sense of commonality between fellow urban citizens. These participants' positive interreligious experiences were supported by the opportunity to reflect on and purposefully talk about their experience in a safe and open environment in which their own religious beliefs were respected (see also J. D. Long, 2018). Our study contributes to the existing academic literature in at least three ways, namely (1) by expanding discussions about geographies of religion into discussions about geographies of (inter)religion, (2) by connecting interreligious education initiatives with urban democratic politics (i.e., urban subjectivity and citizenship), and (3) by demonstrating the powerful role that body spatiality plays in disrupting religious urban geographies. Future research may want to refine the evaluation and pedagogical implications concerning the participants' attitudes and behaviours, but even education research relying on quantitative data collection has difficulty neatly evaluating the results of specific educational measures due to the multitude of factors involved in educational outcomes.

Within the limits of qualitative and non-representative research, our study shows how inter-religious place-making and experiential education can disrupt religious segregation in the urban realm and reconfigure urban subjectivity. We suggest that urban planners and policymakers might find benefit in creating spaces for positive, embodied interreligious experiences which break down spatial religious boundaries and foster an inclusive urban subjectivity. As a start, the design, location, and accessibility of places of worship should ideally convey a sense of openness and be welcoming, for example, by being easily reachable by public transport. Places of worship should also be visible and should be the landmarks of a diverse and pluralist society. These suggestions are timely as, during the writing of the current article, Indonesia is building its new capital, Nusantara. Nusantara has the potential to prevent repeating the homogeneity and exclusiveness of its Southeast Asian counterparts: Malaysia's Putrajaya, a planned city used as the new seat of the federal government (since 1999) and judiciary of Malaysia (since 2003), and Naypyidaw in Myanmar, inaugurated in 2005. Putrajaya's architecture privileges Islam over Malaysia's other religions, mirroring the then-government's ethno-nationalist outlook. Naypyidaw is entirely car-centric in its planning and allows very little pedestrian urban interaction. More generally, urban planners and policymakers can deliberately encourage and create opportunities for inter-religious spatial experiences for urban dwellers. A comparative glance at another example of opening up places of worship illustrates the potential such efforts hold for countering urban segregation, such as the annual Open Mosque Day in Germany, where mosques all over the country have welcomed visitors since 1997. In 2015, the Muslim Council of Britain initiated a similar nationwide campaign called "Visit My Mosque." (Visit My Mosque, 2022). In Indonesia's neighbouring country Malaysia, the older generation often praises the tradition of "Open Houses," where religions would open their doors during particular festivities and thus offer members of other religions points of contact. In recent decades, Malaysia's ethno-nationalist government has hindered such interactions, but those concerned with the social fabric of societies may be well advised to consider taking an active and supportive part in fostering inter-religious encounters, particularly in our contemporary world, in which urban segregation is sometimes less visible, but perhaps more powerful than ever.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Teguh Wijaya Mulya: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft. **Saskia Schäfer:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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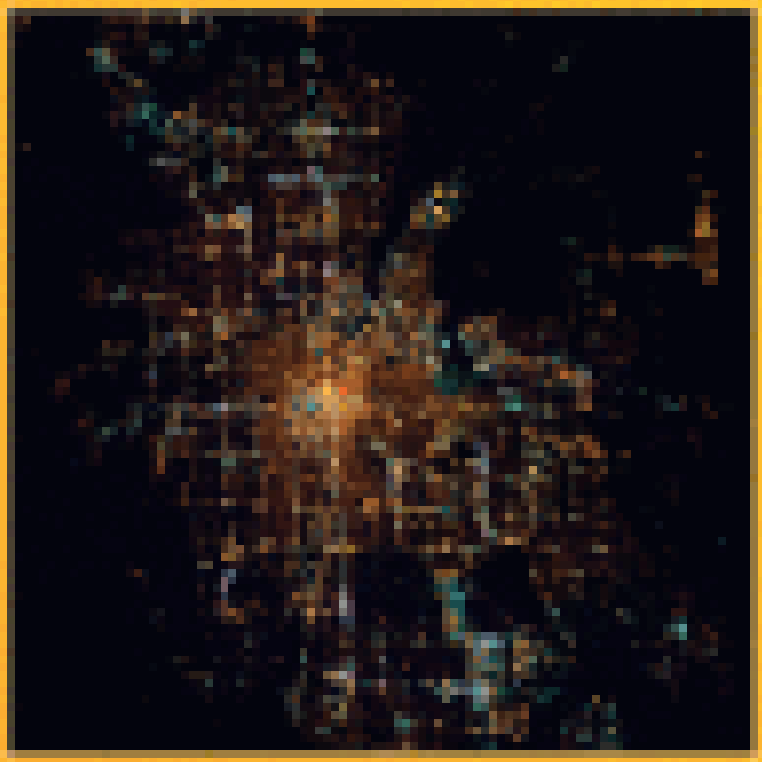

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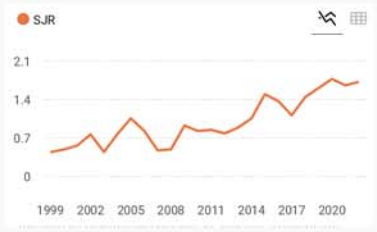

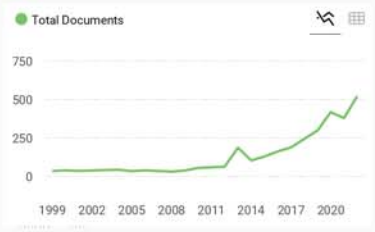

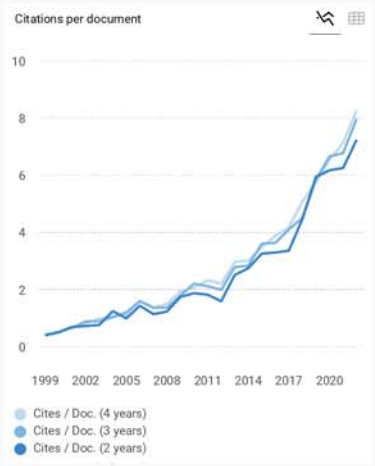

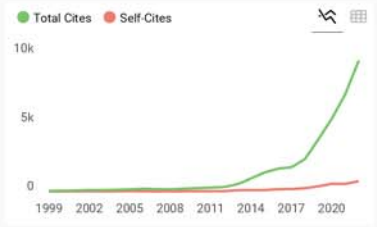

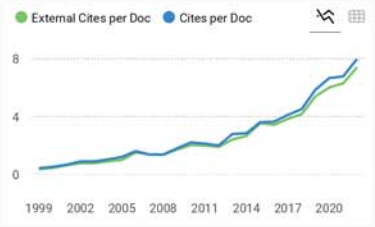

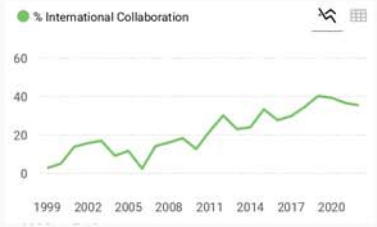

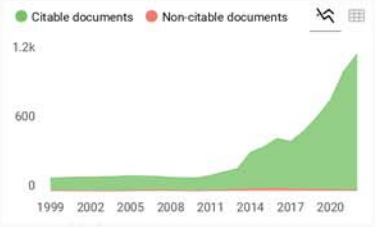

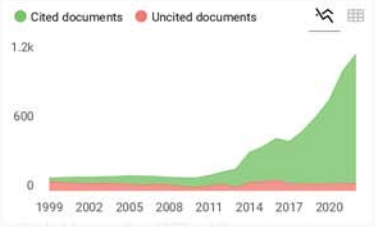

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