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Unpacking Alienation: Women Workers and the Modernist Paradigm in Sudirman Central Business District, Jakarta

Lathiyfah S. Purnamasari[1]
[1]Architecture Department, University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia
lathiyfah.shanti11@ui.ac.id; lathiyfahshanti@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines the alienation of women workers within the Sudirman Central Business District (SCBD), Jakarta, as a result of the modernist urban development paradigm. Modernism in urban planning emphasizes economic growth, efficiency, and aesthetic uniformity, often at the expense of inclusivity and social equity. Employing Henri Lefebvre's framework of spatial production that focus on the representations of space this research investigates how the intersection of capitalism and patriarchy manifests in urban design and affects women workers. The SCBD, a high-profile business district marked by privatized public spaces and luxury-oriented infrastructure, exemplifies the dominance of economic priorities over human-centered planning. Women workers in this environment face dual marginalization: as laborers under capitalist pressures and as women navigating patriarchal constraints. The absence of affordable childcare, inadequate safety measures, and the privatization of public spaces exacerbate their alienation, making these urban spaces exclusionary. This qualitative case study relies on critical analysis of government regulations, developer guidelines, and corporate reports to understand the planning and design of SCBD from the perspectives of its creators. Findings reveal that the representation of space prioritizes economic gains while neglecting the lived experiences and needs of women workers, thereby perpetuating systemic inequalities. The study underscores the urgent need for more inclusive urban policies that address gender-specific challenges and prioritize equitable participation in urban life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern architecture strives to break away from traditional frameworks and develop new styles and working techniques that align with the modern era [1]. This principle also underpins the development of modern cities, which pursue similar efforts. As a result, cities have emerged as centers of industrialization. This industrialization brings numerous advantages, such as increased investment, improved infrastructure, and expanded job opportunities, which lead to urbanization [2].

Modernism offers a positive aspect: individual freedom to experience life as personally as possible, rather than collectively. This is one of the benefits of loosening traditional social bonds and the societal fragmentation brought about by modernism. These transformations are made possible by technologies that compress space through modern transportation and enhance time efficiency due to changes in labor, production, and commodity exchange, driven by advancements in manufacturing and communication technologies [3].

On the other hand, modernism has also contributed to poor urban environmental conditions. The physical aspects of the built environment can lead to alienation [4]. These include inadequate living environments, gigantism and loss of social control, extensive privatization and the erosion of public life, the destruction of valuable places, placelessness, injustice, and ungrounded urban planning professionalism that shapes cities in ways unfriendly to their inhabitants [5]. Classical critiques of modernism position it as a factor causing alienation between individuals and the external material world. This alienation results in a lack of personal identity, an inability to understand oneself, and a loss of self-identity within the urban context [3].

Modern architecture adopts a singular perspective and tends to operate in a top-down manner. This leads to urban spaces created under the paradigm of modern urban development failing to meet the needs of the increasingly heterogeneous urban population. Women, in particular, are a group whose needs are often overlooked in urban design processes. This results in economic and social marginalization, as well as a higher prevalence of violence against women in urban spaces [6].

The participation of women in the workforce exposes them to dual marginalization. Women workers are more vulnerable to experiencing alienation [7]. Women workers bear the dual identities of workers who face pressure under capitalism and women who face oppression under patriarchy. These two forces simultaneously impact women workers in urban spaces, making them more vulnerable in modern cities.

Given this, the discussion of women workers' alienation in modern urban spaces remains highly relevant. Although academic

discussions on urban design have entered a post-structuralist phase, these academic advancements remain challenging to implement in practice. The modernist urban development paradigm continues to be employed in various urban areas worldwide.

According to Lefebvre [8], the production of urban space involves three perspectives: representations of space (spaces designed by planners or authorities), spaces of representation (spaces experienced and felt subjectively by users), and spatial practices (everyday practices performed by individuals). These three dimensions continuously interact and influence each other, even producing contradictions in shaping urban spaces. The modern urban development paradigm views urban space primarily from the perspective of planners and authorities.

Understanding the alienation of women workers in modern cities requires a deeper examination of Lefebvre's triadic framework of spatial production. The dominance of representations of space, as prioritized by planners and authorities, often excludes the lived experiences of marginalized groups, including women, from the design and governance of urban environments. This exclusion reinforces systemic inequalities, particularly in spaces where women navigate both economic pressures as workers and social challenges as individuals subject to patriarchal norms.

To fully comprehend how modernist urban spaces function under the dual forces of capitalism and patriarchy—both of which profoundly affect women workers—it is crucial to inquire deeply into the perspective of *representations of space*. This perspective, as articulated by Lefebvre, emphasizes how urban spaces are conceptualized and designed by planners, policymakers, and neglecting the lived experiences and needs of marginalized groups, including women.

There exists a gap in understanding the relationship between modern cities and the alienation experienced by women workers. While extensive research has been conducted on urbanization, industrialization, and their effects on economic and social structures, discussions often lack a gender-sensitive lens. The intersection of capitalism and patriarchy, two forces that heavily influence the dynamics of modern urban spaces, is rarely explored in depth, particularly in relation to the lived experiences of women in the workforce.

Most existing studies on modernist urban development tend to focus on macro-level phenomena, such as infrastructure, industrial growth, and spatial organization, often sidelining the micro-level impacts these forces have on specific social groups. Women workers, who face dual oppression under the economic pressures of capitalism and the sociocultural constraints of patriarchy, are disproportionately affected by the alienating nature of urban environments. However, their experiences are frequently overlooked or generalized in broader urban studies.

This gap is further exacerbated by the dominance of modernist paradigms in urban planning, which prioritize efficiency, control, and economic growth over inclusivity and social equity. The resulting urban spaces often fail to address the specific needs of women, such as safety, accessibility, and opportunities for equitable participation in public life. Consequently, women workers are left navigating spaces that alienate them both as economic agents and as individuals, reinforcing their marginalization in modern cities.

Addressing this gap is critical, as it not only highlights the shortcomings of current urban development approaches but also paves the way for more inclusive and equitable urban policies. By focusing on the experiences of women workers, research can shed light on how urban spaces perpetuate structural inequalities and how they might be transformed to better support all inhabitants. This approach is essential for bridging the divide between academic discourse and practical urban design, ensuring that modern cities are not just economically vibrant but also socially just and inclusive.

From this research gap, a research question arises, namely "how does the modernist urban development paradigm bring the forces of capitalism and patriarchy that potentialy alienating women workers?". To answer this question, I use one of the most developed business area in Jakarta as a study case to explore the *representation of space* from the perspective of the developer and goverment.

The urgency of researching this topic lies in the pervasive impact of these spatial representations on the everyday realities of women workers. Urban environments shaped through top-down, modernist paradigms frequently fail to account for gender-specific challenges, such as safety concerns, unequal access to resources, and systemic barriers in the workplace. The intersection of capitalism and patriarchy in these spaces exacerbates the vulnerability of women workers, creating conditions of alienation, exploitation, and marginalization.

By critically analyzing *representations of space*, researchers can uncover the structural biases embedded in urban planning and design processes. This understanding is vital for identifying how these biases perpetuate inequality and hinder efforts to create inclusive and equitable cities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 MODERN CITY

In 1925, Le Corbusier presented his Plan Voisin proposal for the urban renovation of the French capital. He added a system of large straight avenues to the urban fabric. To realize it, it was necessary to demolish a large area on the right bank of the Seine. The symmetrical system of cross-shaped skyscrapers formed by rows of linear buildings meant that there were few historical buildings that could be preserved. Le Corbusier's design was designed to infiltrate the surrounding urban area and reorganize the area according to the principles of functionalism in proportion to the ramifications of the city center. This was done in order to obtain great economic benefits and financial productivity.

In this design, architectural functionalism became an undeniable urban policy, and "the machine for living in" *(machines à habiter)* subsequently became the solution won by the capitalist process of production and accumulation in the spatial design of the area. Thus the space of human habitation became an alienated space. Le Corbusier forgot the meeting place and social space, which has the potential to provide a rich experience of intimate, personal, and unpredictable situations unlike standardized life in a fabricated built environment [9].

In addition, urbanization that invites rapid immigration causes urban spaces to become heterogeneous places. Immigrants who occupy urban spaces also experience alienation in their new place [10]. This condition of heterogeneity naturally gives rise to struggles in shaping urban space, accessing the public realm, and the rights of residents. This struggle is what the city calls "ouvre". The loss of the right to "ouvre" results in alienation in the space of bourgeois cities because; (1) the city does not become a space for participation; (2) urban space is produced for workers, not by workers; (3) there is no desire to build the city as a place that accommodates differences [11]. Limited access for women in the struggle to shape urban space based on women's knowledge, both implicit and explicit, results in settlements and urban environments that are alienating and divisive [12].

2. 2 PRODUCTION OF SPACE

The dialectic of urban space according to Henri Lefebvre describes a process that is continuously open and full of contradictions. Lefebvre [8] emphasizes that contradiction is a central element in the dynamics of urban space that is always changing. In this framework, urban life is not only produced through an established order, but also through moments of contradiction, fragmentation, and reconstitution that continue endlessly [13];[14]. These contradictions are reflected in the relationship between physical, social, and political spaces that are always intertwined and influence each other.

One important aspect of this dialectic is gender inequality in women's participation in urban life. Although the number of women working continues to increase, they are still polarized in very different positions in the income hierarchy. Most women are trapped in low-income jobs, such as in the service sector, while others have succeeded in achieving high careers. These inequalities are driven not only by unequal social structures but also by limited public policies, such as the provision of adequate childcare, which further exacerbate the contradictions in class and gender distribution in urban societies [15].

In this context, women often face major challenges stemming from discriminatory employment structures and the lack of policies that support gender equality in public spaces. Women also face contradictions in meeting basic needs that are closely related to security and health issues. Providing adequate facilities to meet basic needs can reduce women's vulnerability to violence and improve their quality of life. However, on the other hand, large investments in the provision of these facilities are obstacles, especially in areas that still lack attention to gender issues [16]. Thus, the contradiction between basic needs and resource availability creates inequalities that exacerbate women's insecurity in cities.

3. METHOD

3.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN

The research paradigm used in this study is a critical paradigm. The critical paradigm focuses on criticism and resistance to power structures, inequality, and social injustice. This paradigm focuses on revealing and addressing problems of thinking, marginalization, and domination [17]. This paradigm is used because it is in accordance with the research objectives to reveal how the power of patriarchy and capitalism in urban design in modernist cities works and affects women workers.

Meanwhile, the research design used is a qualitative approach because the research objectives are in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research such as answering research questions that started with ‘how’, exploration of topics that require an in-depth approach, detailed presentation, study in a natural context, and placing researchers as active learners [18].

Specifically, the method used is a case study, with a locus in the SCBD area. The SCBD area was chosen because it is the largest business area with the most expensive property land valuation in Jakarta according to their public exposure. This shows that this area was built with a focus on economic growth. So far, several studies have discussed SCBD as an area with complex urban dynamics. SCBD is known to be a mega-infrastructure project that has disrupted the local area through the gentrification process, which has caused major changes in the city structure, including increasing property prices and congestion levels [19];[20].

3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Secondary data is needed in analyzing how representational space is designed and planned by developers and government. This data helps provide an overview of the vision, strategy, and policies underlying the urban space development process. The data sources used include documents that are publicly accessible, in the form of regulations, guidelines, annual reports, and public exposure documents from related companies. These documents were selected based on their relevance to spatial planning, regulatory frameworks, and development strategies that directly influence the formation of representational space. The documents used as secondary data in this study include:

The secondary data used in this study includes key regulatory and corporate documents that shape spatial planning and development strategies in Jakarta’s SCBD area. Government regulations, such as the Governor of Jakarta Province Regulations No. 82 of 2013 and No. 95 of 2017, provide guidelines for the spatial planning and integration of commercial, residential, and institutional areas. Additionally, corporate documents from PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk, including the SCBD Land Development Guidelines and General SCBD Area Regulations, outline land use provisions and management policies. The company's annual report and public expose further offer insights into ongoing projects, business strategies, and the competitive positioning of the SCBD area. These documents collectively reflect the intersection of government policies and private sector strategies in shaping urban space.

These sources were selected based on their credibility, official status, and relevance to the study's objectives. Government regulations provide insights into the formal planning and policy frameworks that shape urban development, while corporate documents reveal private sector strategies and their influence on spatial management. The data within this documents were selected based on the relevance of spatiality, urban design paradigm, and how the government and developer represent the space as align with this study’s aim to explore the representational space within the modernist urban development paradigm.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of relying solely on secondary data. These documents reflect official perspectives that build the representational space and may not fully capture informal or community-driven spatial dynamics. Additionally, the data may be subject to biases, as government and corporate reports often highlight achievements rather than challenges or conflicts. To mitigate these limitations, findings from secondary data will be critically analyzed and, where possible, complemented with qualitative insights from other sources, such as expert interviews, field observations, or case studies. This approach ensures a more nuanced understanding of the representational space and its underlying socio-political dynamics.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

1) Data selection

The initial process in this research is sorting data that is relevant to the general urban, architectural, and spatial themes in the SCBD area. The documents collected include various types of information, ranging from investment data to details of area utilities. However, irrelevant data, such as investments or technical utilities that are too specific, are not included in the analysis. My focus is on data that describes aspects of urban space, such as area development plans, public space management, and architectural design elements that

support the function of space. This selection is carried out to ensure that the data analyzed has direct relevance to the research objectives.

2) Compiling a descriptive narrative

After the relevant data is selected, the next step is to compile a structured descriptive narrative. The data is grouped into several main categories: general description of the area, history of SCBD development, policies related to area development, space management, and documents containing images of area planning. This descriptive narrative is then developed using two main perspectives: patriarchy, capitalism.

3) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The selected documents is analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover how urban space is represented, structured, and controlled through policies and planning documents. This method will examine the power relations embedded in regulations and corporate documents by identifying recurring languages, themes, and framing techniques that reinforce dominant ideologies, particularly related to patriarchy and capitalism. The analysis will focus on:

- Language and Framing: Identifying how key terms such as "economic growth," "business district," "modern urban space," or "sustainability" are used to frame urban development and whether they prioritize certain groups over others, in this case, over women workers.
- Omissions and Silences: Examining what is not mentioned in the documents, such as the exclusion of informal workers and gender-sensitive policies.
- Power Structures: Mapping how different stakeholders—government agencies, developers, and corporations—assert control over urban space through regulations, guidelines, and strategic plans.

4) Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis will be conducted to categorize findings into key themes related to the study's critical approach. The themes will be derived both deductively (based on theoretical concepts from critical urban studies) and inductively (emerging from the data). The key themes include:

- Economic Prioritization Over Social Welfare: Assessing how policies and regulations prioritize commercial interests over public needs, and how this reinforces capitalist urban development models.
- Spatial Marginalization of Women Workers: Investigating whether urban design choices reflect gender biases, such as lack of inclusive public spaces, inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, or limited accessibility for women.

5) Triangulation with Additional Qualitative Data

Given the limitations of secondary data, findings was cross-validated with other qualitative sources from field observations. This ensures that the analysis does not rely solely on official narratives but also considers alternative perspectives from workers that actively use the urban area.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 SCBD REPRESENTATION OF SPACE

4.1.1 Area Profile

Sudirman Central Business District (SCBD) is one of the largest business areas in Jakarta which is designed and developed to become an international superblock. With an area of approximately 45 hectares, SCBD is located in Senayan Village, Kebayoran Baru District, South Jakarta. This area is managed by PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk. The management of this area was planned to create an integrated, modern business environment that meets global standards.

4.1.2 Image of The Area

History of SCBD

The Sudirman Central Business District (SCBD) was developed by PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk, which was established in 1987 to manage and develop a 45-hectare superblock. In 1992, the company collaborated with international architects from Australia and Singapore to redevelop what they framed as a "slum area" with high crime and poverty rates into Indonesia's first and largest integrated business district. The transformation, completed in 1995, included major infrastructure developments and high-rise buildings, starting with the Artha Graha office tower in 1992-1993, followed by the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) twin towers in 1995-1998, positioning SCBD as Jakarta's financial hub. Further expansion continued with luxury developments like One Pacific Place (2007-2011), which integrated five-star hotels, premium offices, and upscale shopping centers. By 2013, SCBD's office occupancy rates surpassed the Jakarta market average, solidifying its position as a prime business district.

The SCBD development frames the pre-existing area as a "slum" with crime and poverty, justifying large-scale redevelopment while overlooking the displacement of lower-income communities. The narrative presents high-rise buildings, luxury developments, and economic growth as achievements, reinforcing an urban planning model that prioritizes commercial interests over social equity. By associating "modernity" with international architects and financial institutions, the project favors elite interests while sidelining local communities and informal economies.

In the development process, PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk collaborated with international consultants. According to the developer, this is intended to ensure that the design of this area meets international standards, both in terms of spatial planning, land use efficiency, and aesthetic quality and space function. The emphasis on "international standards" promotes a hierarchy where foreign expertise is seen as superior, legitimizing large-scale commercial projects while marginalizing traditional urban forms. This reflects a capitalistic approach, where cities compete for global investment at the cost of inclusivity and affordability.

From Lefebvre's perspective, SCBD illustrates how urban space is shaped by powerful economic and political forces. The project represents planned space controlled by developers and policymakers, prioritizing financial elites while erasing lived space—the everyday social dynamics of displaced communities. This transformation turns urban areas into corporate enclaves, reinforcing social and spatial exclusion.

SCBD's vision is to develop an international-standard, environmentally friendly, mixed-use, and integrated area, reflected in its slogan, "The Premium World Class Superblock." Its mission emphasizes business trust, service excellence, human resource development, technological advancement, and environmental and community care, with six key benchmarks: beauty, comfort, convenience, security, safety, and sustainability.

Based on the way developers and managers represent themselves, this area is designed to build an image as a beautiful, efficient, and internationally standardized modern area in order to attract global business entities to invest. The focus on business principles, services, and technological developments shows that

managers are trying to ensure smooth operations for business owners in the area.

However, the vision, mission, and jargon that are carried emphasize the attractiveness of the area for capital owners, without giving adequate attention to workers, who will actually be the majority of the population working there. Although their jargon emphasizes comfort and convenience that also seem to be aimed at workers, in its implementation, this aspect is more focused on the aspect of accessibility to the workplace. This approach has not fully considered the welfare of workers. Moreover, the specific needs of women workers do not receive attention. The jargon of security and safety, which is often a major issue for women in urban spaces, is considered sufficient by developers and managers to meet the needs of women workers. The welfare of women workers in urban spaces and women's rights to access urban spaces are still sidelined.

4.1.3 Location and Connectivity

SCBD, strategically located in central Jakarta along Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, is a key business hub with high accessibility through MRT and major road networks. Its urban planning, guided by the Governor's Regulation, emphasizes sustainability, accessibility, and spatial efficiency, particularly within a 350–700 meter radius of the MRT station. By optimizing land use and integrating pedestrian pathways, SCBD supports transit-oriented development (TOD), enhancing connectivity and mobility.

The area features two main gates: the north gate linked to MRT and TransJakarta, and the south gate connected to TransJakarta as shown in Figure 1. Within SCBD, a shuttle bus system with nine stops facilitates internal mobility. However, public transport users still need to walk about 200 meters and wait for the shuttle to navigate the area or walk up to more than 1 km to reach their office. This shows that inner area mobility is not integrated with Jakarta city's public transportation system. This disconnect is a disadvantage for workers in this area, especially women workers, since women tend to use public transportation more than their male counterparts [21]. This lack of integration between public transit and internal mobility creates a spatial disconnect that disproportionately affects women.

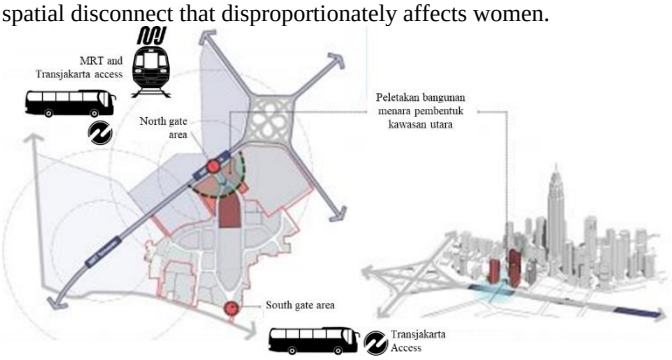

Figure 1. Public transportation access to the SCBD area
Source: Adopted from PRK Kawasan Integrasi SCBD, 2017[22]

This reflects a broader pattern in modernist urban planning, where space is produced and represented primarily through the lens of capital accumulation and corporate efficiency rather than inclusivity. Lefebvre's concept of the "representation of space" is evident in how SCBD is marketed as a seamless, high-end business district, yet its spatial realities fail to accommodate those who navigate it daily, particularly working class, especially women workers. The spatial design implicitly assumes an ideal worker—likely male, car-owning, or at least less burdened by safety concerns when walking long distances in a business district dominated by corporate structures and minimal pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.

For women workers, urban mobility is not just about efficiency but also safety, convenience, and time management, as they often do multifunctional trips to juggle professional and domestic responsibilities [23][24]. Long walks in corporate-dominated spaces with limited public facilities can expose women to security risks, particularly during early or late hours when foot traffic decreases. The absence of adequate last-mile solutions forces many to resort to costlier alternatives like ride-hailing services, adding financial strain. This alienation of women from fully participating in urban economic centers highlights the gendered nature of space production, where urban mobility infrastructure fails to consider differentiated needs beyond a generalized, gender-neutral urban subject.

4.1.4 Zoning

SCBD is divided into several function zones, including commercial, residential, and mixed zones. Most of the lots in this area are managed by a subsidiary of PT Danayasa Arthatama Tbk. SCBD is depicted as a superblock mixed-use area that integrates office, residential, and facility functions as can be seen in figure 2. However, although the development of this area aims to create an integrated urban space, the design perspective tends to focus on optimizing commercial functions and privatizing space.

The zoning of the area is divided into three functions, namely residential, commercial, and facility functions. This area is dominated by the commercial zone which shows that the priority for developing the area is its economic function. After the commercial function, the residential function in this area gets a fairly large portion in this area. The residential area provided is a luxury residence that also has an economic function since housing in this area also serves as investment and speculation instrument more than spaces for living. This is evident by how the residential management describe it using words such as "luxurious", "elite", "premium", and "magnificent" [25]. In addition, based on the tectonics of retidential buildings with gigantic masses on a large scale and the use of luxurious building materials, shows that in the design process, residential buildings in SCBD are intended to increase the economic value of the area.

The zone allocated for facilities is very small in the form of utility facilities for the control building area and 180 MVA substation. The facilities provided are not at all for workers and residents of the area, not in the form of community space for social interaction, nor are they green open spaces for the sustainability of the area, but are the bare minimum for the operation and maintenance of the area only. Furthermore, in the context of women workers, there is also no attention at all to facilities that cater to the specific needs of women workers such as childcare, children's play area, place to buy children's equipment that suits the worker's budget, etc. In extreme cases, workers have even been found to bring their children to visit a pub in the area when they gather with their colleagues after work.

This shows that although in its management vision SCBD puts forward the concept of mixed use, the idea of mixed use that is developed is very different from the mixed function put forward by urban theorists such as Jane Jacobs [26] whose goal is to encourage social activity and interaction, support the local economy, and increase connectivity and social diversity. The two main functions of the area, namely commercial and residential, are intended for economic interests. The lack of mixed use in this area, especially the function that related to community and social cohesion further solidify SCBD as an area developed using modernism paradigm.

Figure 2. SCBD Site Plan
Source: Skyscrapercity.com, 2013[27]

Capitalism separates the function of the area into separate zones by making detailed plans for land use. This functional separation of use, in addition to various forms of residential separation, separates users from each other, places them in sterile spaces that Lefebvre calls habitats, and prevents them from gathering in meeting, play, and interaction spaces [28].

However, despite this imposed functional separation, workers inevitably reclaim urban spaces in ways that defy rigid zoning logic. In SCBD, pedestrian pathways, initially designed solely for movement and transit, become informal sites of social interaction, respite, and even recreation. Lacking designated communal spaces within the business district, workers repurpose sidewalks, shaded areas, and open-air walkways as places to gather, unwind, and seek fresh air amidst the dense corporate landscape.

During lunch breaks and after working hours, small groups of employees can be seen chatting along pedestrian routes, sitting on steps, or standing while talking with their coworkers as shown in Figure 3. For many, these spaces serve as momentary escapes from the sterility of office environments, offering a chance to socialize beyond hierarchical work relationships. Women workers, in particular, utilize these pedestrian zones strategically, whether to find safer routes home, share informal networks of support, or briefly disengage from the pressures of professional responsibilities.

Women workers navigate and occupy pedestrian spaces in ways that reflect both social norms and spatial constraints. Unlike their male counterparts, who more freely appropriate urban elements such as curbs, pedestrian flooring, and barriers for seating, women tend to adhere to the intended function of pedestrian infrastructure. They stand or lean against street furniture rather than sitting in areas designated for circulation, reinforcing an implicit understanding of how space should be used within the rigid structure of corporate urbanism.

Figure 3. Workers activities in pedestrian ways during lunch breaks
Soure: Purnamasari, 2024

Beyond these spatial behaviors, women workers also form social clusters that reflect gendered patterns of urban interaction. They often gather in same-gender groups, seeking spaces that provide a sense of safety and familiarity within the impersonal landscape of SCBD. Even in mixed-gender settings, women tend to stay within their immediate circles rather than engaging with male colleagues in unstructured public interactions. This cautious spatial engagement is shaped by broader societal expectations regarding women's visibility and presence in public space, as well as concerns over safety and unwanted attention.

Lefebvre's concept of the production of space helps illuminate how these gendered spatial practices are not merely individual choices but rather responses to the way space is produced under capitalist urbanism. SCBD, as a space shaped by state and corporate interests, is designed primarily for economic productivity rather than human interaction, reinforcing what Lefebvre terms abstract space—a space dictated by power structures that prioritize efficiency, control, and order [29].

Women workers, in their careful occupation of pedestrian ways, embody a negotiation between this abstract space and their own lived experiences (lived space). Their preference for standing rather than sitting, their formation of same-gender clusters, and their reluctance to engage in mixed-gender interactions all reflect an internalized awareness of spatial hierarchies and social expectations. This dynamic highlights how SCBD's urban design, though seemingly neutral, produces a gendered experience of space where women must adapt their presence in ways that align with, yet subtly resist, the rigid structures imposed by modernist urban planning.

4.1.5 Design and Layout

The strategy of arranging the intensity of the area and skyline through the arrangement of building height patterns shows attention to the visual aesthetics of the area while ensuring synchronization with the broader spatial plan. This element is considered important in creating visual and spatial harmony between the District 8 area, SCBD, and the Jakarta Metropolitan Police. However, figure 4 shows that the design of the city skyline is depicted in isolation from the surrounding environment. The skyline is made centered in the middle of the area like a pyramid concept that has a peak in the middle of the area. This shows that in the planning process, the skyline of the area did not consider the context of the surrounding area.

Figure 4 shows that the skyline of the SCBD area with high-rise buildings, which visually can create an impression of vertical space dominance. This often creates a monumental and vehicle-oriented impression, so that it can reduce user comfort at the pedestrian level. Efforts to arrange the height pattern of this building show attention to visual harmony, but from the perspective of humans at street level, too sharp a height difference can reduce the sense of human scale.

Figure 4. 3D design of building mass in the area
Source: Source: PRK Kawasan Integrasi SCBD, 2017[22]

Stanley & Barnwell shown that women workers tend to feel alienated in urban spaces dominated by monumental-scale architecture that neglects human scale [30]. The towering high-rises in SCBD, designed primarily for visual harmony in the skyline rather than for the experience of individuals at street level, create an environment that can feel imposing and unwelcoming. The vertical dominance of the skyline, while impressive from a distance, contributes to a spatial experience that prioritizes corporate grandeur over everyday usability, making women workers feel small, detached, and disconnected from their surroundings.

At the human eye level on the pedestrian ways, this is overcome by providing a wide boundary distance between the pedestrian path and the building boundary line. With this distance, the human eye can rest from looking directly at the building. The space between the pedestrian path and the building is filled with shade vegetation that functions to soften the visual appearance of the rigid and hard building, while also providing shade for pedestrians.

In addition, in several specific areas there are bus stops equipped with canopies, thus providing a touch of human scale and comfort for users. Canopies are also provided at certain points for designated smoking areas, although the number of points is not many. Visual access that provides a contrast between the human scale and vertical buildings is generally found in zebra crossing areas at intersections or T-junctions.

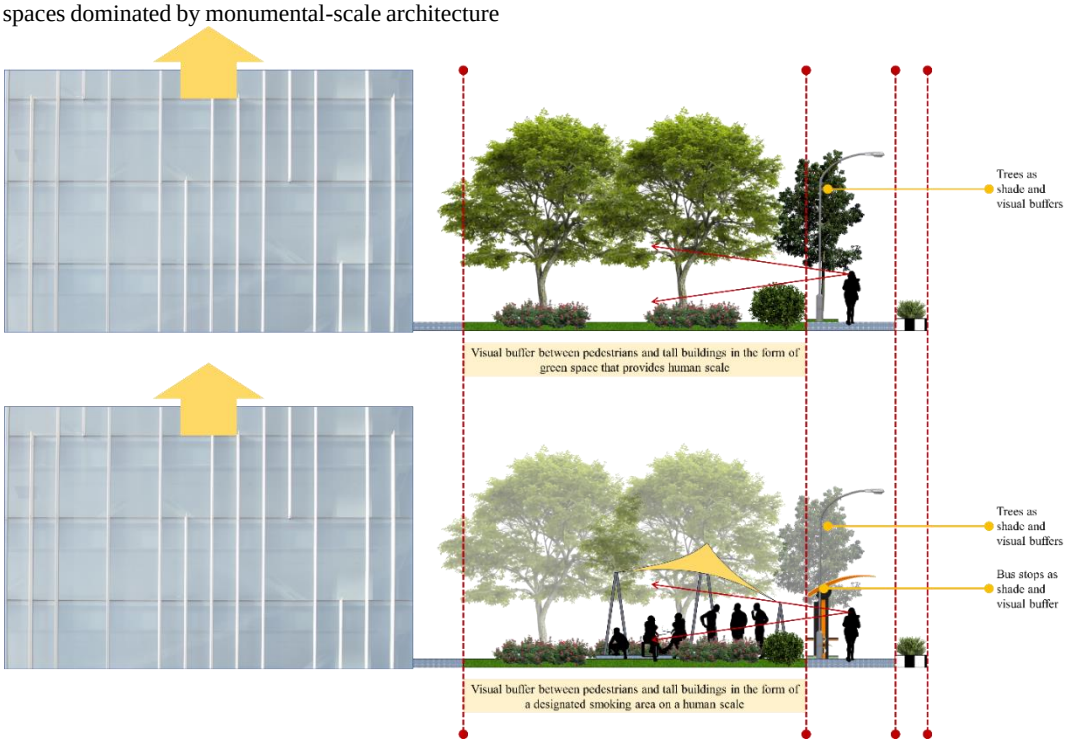

Figure 5. Visual barrier between pedestrian ways and buildings
Soure: Purnamasari, 2024

On a more micro scale, the area currently known as SCBD Park was not actually designed as a park from the start. The initial design was only a square, which is a small open space strip that functions as a circulation route to access commercial buildings in the area. From the planning image in figure 5, it can be seen that the buildings in this area are designed with functions that can strengthen social interaction, such as parks, restaurants, and sports centers. However, most of these facilities are commercials, except for the square as shown in Figure 6. Even the existing park actually only functions as a circulation route to commercial buildings, so it is not an exaggeration to say that its main function is to support commercial activities.

Although it was initially planned as SCBD Square, not intended for long gatherings, SCBD Park is now equipped with ample seating, allowing people to gather and chat comfortably. Aside from using pedestrian ways, women workers in SCBD also utilize SCBD Park as a space to chat, eat lunch, unwind, or even take short naps during lunch hour. SCBD Park, designed as a meeting point and commercial area for informal socialization, becomes a crucial space for women workers seeking respite from the rigid and monumental urban landscape of the

district. Unlike the towering office buildings that dominate SCBD's skyline, the shops surrounding the park are only one to two stories high, creating an environment that is more aligned with the human scale. This more intimate architectural setting, combined with the park's semi-enclosed nature, provides a sense of privacy and comfort, making it an ideal place for women workers to spend their times during their break hours [31][32].

Figure 6. SCBD Park Design
Source: Public Expose PT. Jakarta International Hotels and Development Tbk, 2022

In the context of Lefebvre's Production of Space, this illustrates the contrast between conceived space—where SCBD is planned primarily for business and corporate functions—and lived space, where workers, particularly women, utilize the park as a space for social interaction and personal relief. The presence of a visual barrier created by surrounding commercial buildings further enhances this function, as it offers a degree of separation from the larger corporate environment. While SCBD as a whole is structured around efficiency and capitalist productivity, the park becomes a pocket of human-centered space where workers can momentarily reclaim urban life on their own terms. This highlights how spatial design at a human scale—rather than monumental and vehicle-oriented urbanism—plays a vital role in fostering inclusivity and accessibility for diverse users, particularly women workers who may feel alienated by the dominant architectural paradigm of the area.

4.1.6 Social Activities and Dynamics

Based on the area planning and the image that the developer wants to build, SCBD has not included a perspective that includes workers, especially women. Women workers have more diverse needs because they still have domestic burdens and household care work that are disproportionately borne by women, even though they also work outside the home [33]. This double burden has not been examined and accommodated more specifically in area planning.

Privatization of space is also an important issue, where most of the open spaces in the area have direct connections to commercial facilities, such as cafes and restaurants, which are generally aimed at the upper middle class. This narrows the opportunity for the area to become an inclusive space and accommodate the diverse daily practices of urban communities especially people who work in the area.

SCBD reflects an urban design approach that prioritizes the economic value of the area. The dominance of the narrative of optimizing the intensity and aesthetics of the area, there is the potential to ignore the more inclusive social dimensions, especially the need for social spaces that embrace the diversity of city users. The arrangement of open spaces under the control of private land, for example, raises questions about real accessibility for the general public, especially for vulnerable groups who may not be able to use these facilities equally.

As more women enter the formal workforce, including those working in the SCBD Area, the demand for facilities that meet their specific needs is becoming clearer. One such important facility is childcare, which is especially important for working mothers with young children. Although they have the same professional responsibilities as their male counterparts, women often bear greater childcare responsibilities, making access to reliable childcare services essential to balancing their work and family obligations.

Currently, there is one childcare center available in the SCBD area, and two others in the surrounding area, which provide resources for women who have established careers and earn enough income to afford these services. However, for women who are early in their careers and earn lower wages, the cost of childcare is a significant barrier, making it less accessible. This gap highlights the ongoing challenges women face in achieving work-life balance and underscores the need for more affordable childcare options.

The availability of childcare facilities is not just a matter of convenience, but also a critical factor in supporting women's participation in the formal workforce. Without affordable and accessible childcare, women are often forced to make difficult choices between professional aspirations and family responsibilities [34]. Therefore, while the facilities in SCBD are a step forward in accommodating the needs of women workers, there is still an urgent need for more inclusive and economically affordable solutions. Addressing this gap will not only support gender equality in the workplace but also contribute to reducing the sense of isolation experienced by working mothers, allowing them to engage more fully in their professional and personal lives.

Figure 7. Childcare locations around SCBD
Source: Purnamasari, 2024

There is a disconnect between the representation of space and the lived space experienced by women workers, particularly due to the lack of adequate childcare facilities in SCBD. From Lefebvre's perspective, the representation of space—shaped by planners, policymakers, and developers—often prioritizes economic

productivity and aesthetic harmony over the everyday needs of its users. In this case, SCBD is designed primarily as a corporate and commercial hub, with little consideration for the lived experiences of women workers who juggle both professional and domestic responsibilities.

The absence of childcare facilities reinforces the gendered division of labor and exacerbates the "double burden" faced by women. While they participate in the workforce, they are still expected to manage childcare and domestic duties, often without institutional support. This spatial neglect marginalizes women's experiences and forces them to adapt by seeking alternative arrangements, such as relying on informal networks or commuting long distances to childcare services outside the area. Consequently, SCBD, as a space produced through modernist urban planning, implicitly privileges a male-centered workforce that assumes workers do not have caregiving responsibilities.

This disparity highlights how urban spaces, when designed without gender-sensitive planning, fail to accommodate the diverse needs of their users. It also underscores how women's lived space is shaped not only by the physical environment but also by broader socio-economic structures that continue to place the burden of unpaid care work on women.

4.2 SCBD AS A MODERNIST URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND ITS SOCIO-SPATIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN WORKERS

SCBD was developed within the framework of modernist urban planning. The area exemplifies the ideals of efficiency, functionality, and economic productivity, making it a prime case for analysis through Henri Lefebvre's concept of the production of space. By examining how SCBD is produced and represented by developers and the government, this review explores its socio-spatial consequences, particularly for women workers who navigate its environment daily.

SCBD follows a modernist approach to urban planning, prioritizing high-rise office buildings, commercial centers, and exclusive residential spaces. This reflects a technocratic and capital-driven vision of the city, where space is designed primarily for corporate interests and economic transactions. The master-planned nature of SCBD emphasizes zoning, pedestrian connectivity, and transit-oriented development, aligning with the rationalist ideals of modernist urbanism. The government and developers frame SCBD as a symbol of Jakarta's economic progress, reinforcing its representation as a space of prosperity, order, and global competitiveness.

Conceived Space (Representations of Space): The dominant narrative of SCBD, shaped by government policies and private developers, presents it as a futuristic business district essential to Jakarta's global image. Promotional materials depict it as a secure, efficient, and high-status location, reinforcing its role as a space for economic elites.

In Lefebvre's framework of the production of space, SCBD primarily exists as a *conceived space* (representations of space)—a space designed, planned, and regulated by powerful actors such as the government and private developers. The dominant narrative surrounding SCBD presents it as a symbol of Jakarta's economic progress, a globalized business district that embodies efficiency, order, and modernity. This representation is reinforced through master plans, zoning regulations, and promotional materials that depict SCBD as a secure and prestigious corporate hub, catering to economic elites and multinational businesses.

However, this representation of space does not fully account for the lived experiences of those who work and navigate within it daily, particularly women workers. The dominant production of space prioritizes corporate functionality and capital accumulation over inclusivity, resulting in an environment that is spatially fragmented and socially exclusive. The rationalist ideals of modernist urbanism, which emphasize sleek high-rises and commercial zones, often neglect human-scale design and the needs of diverse users. Consequently, SCBD's spatial organization produces a disconnect between its *conceived space* and the *lived space* of workers, who must navigate an environment that was not necessarily designed with their daily realities in mind.

This gap between representation and experience is particularly evident in how women workers interact with SCBD's infrastructure. While the district is marketed as pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented, its design remains more accommodating to corporate professionals with access to private transport rather than to workers who rely on public mobility. Additionally, the absence of gender-sensitive facilities, such as childcare centers and adequate informal rest areas, reflects the prioritization of economic transactions over social needs. Women workers, therefore, must find ways to appropriate space within SCBD—whether by using pedestrian pathways, parks, or commercial areas as sites for socialization, rest, or informal gathering.

Lefebvre argues that space is not merely a passive backdrop but a social product shaped by power relations. In SCBD, this manifests in the ways in which urban planning reinforces hierarchies of accessibility and exclusivity. While developers and policymakers dictate the *conceived space*, workers—especially women—continuously negotiate and reshape their *lived space*, often in ways that diverge from the district's intended function. This dynamic underscores the tension between top-down urban planning and the organic, everyday practices that redefine space from below.

4.3 PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for urban planning that is more inclusive and attuned to the diverse needs of those who navigate spaces like SCBD daily. The dominance of corporate interests in shaping the district has resulted in an environment that prioritizes efficiency and economic transactions, often at the expense of human comfort and social inclusion. Women workers, who make up a significant portion of the workforce in SCBD, experience this imbalance in ways that are both subtle and structural.

Pedestrian pathways, while designed to support connectivity, do not always consider the specific needs of women workers who rely on them more frequently than their male counterparts. The absence of sufficient shaded areas, resting spots, and well-lit, secure pathways creates an experience that is not always welcoming. Women tend to move through the space with more caution, adhering to designated areas and using available street furniture in a way that aligns with unspoken spatial norms. Yet, their use of these pathways is not merely functional; it is also social. While men may occupy curbs, barriers, or informal seating areas with ease, women often seek spaces that provide a sense of security and belonging, reinforcing the importance of human-scale public spaces in an otherwise towering and monumental district.

SCBD Park, despite being originally conceived as a circulation space for commercial buildings, has become one of the few places where workers can gather, unwind, and reclaim a sense of social life amidst the corporate landscape. The park's design, with commercial buildings surrounding it, provides a degree of enclosure that offers privacy and separation from the imposing vertical skyline. Women workers, in particular, utilize this space in ways that extend beyond its original function—sharing meals, taking breaks, and even finding brief moments of respite from the pressures of work. The presence of seating areas, shade, and a more human-scale architectural approach in this

part of SCBD makes it one of the few spaces where the lived experience of workers aligns more closely with their actual needs.

Yet, the gaps between planned space and lived space remain evident, particularly in the absence of infrastructure that acknowledges the realities of women workers' double burden. SCBD, like many modern business districts, lacks facilities that support those who juggle both professional and caregiving responsibilities. The absence of childcare services, lactation rooms, or family-friendly amenities reflects a spatial logic that assumes workers exist solely as economic agents, rather than individuals with complex social roles. The rigid separation of work and domestic life in urban planning has long been critiqued, and this study further underscores the ways in which such an approach continues to marginalize women within professional spaces.

If SCBD is to become a truly inclusive urban district, its planners and developers must rethink the relationship between monumental architecture and human-scale experiences, between corporate efficiency and everyday well-being. Spaces of work should not only accommodate economic productivity but also recognize and respond to the social, emotional, and physical needs of those who sustain them. An approach that integrates feminist and human-centered planning principles would allow for the creation of environments where workers—particularly women—are not merely moving through space, but actively shaping and thriving within it.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how the modernist urban development paradigm, as exemplified by SCBD, reinforces both capitalist and patriarchal spatial arrangements that have the potential to alienate women workers. Rooted in Lefebvre's concept of the production of space, the research reveals how urban environments are shaped by forces that prioritize economic efficiency, corporate interest, and monumental aesthetics while neglecting the social and lived realities of marginalized groups. SCBD's spatial configuration, with its towering high-rises, segregated functional zoning, and commercial-driven public spaces, reflects the dominance of conceived space—where planning decisions are dictated by technocratic and profit-oriented logics rather than by the everyday needs of those who inhabit the district. In doing so, the area becomes an exclusionary urban space that subtly reinforces gendered inequalities.

The alienation of women workers in SCBD is evident in multiple aspects of its spatial design. The district's focus on productivity and economic performance fails to account for the double burden that women face, where professional responsibilities are often coupled with unpaid reproductive labor. The absence of gender-sensitive infrastructure, such as childcare facilities, lactation rooms, and inclusive social spaces, exemplifies how the patriarchal logic of urban planning disregards women's lived experiences. Furthermore, the monumental scale of SCBD's architecture creates a built environment that is visually impressive yet physically unwelcoming, particularly at the pedestrian level where women workers seek spaces that offer security, comfort, and a sense of belonging. While they creatively appropriate SCBD's pedestrian ways and park to fulfill social and restorative needs, their reliance on these limited spaces underscores the inadequacy of urban planning in addressing gendered spatial exclusions.

By applying Lefebvre's theory through a gendered lens, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the production of space by demonstrating how capitalist urbanization is not only an economic process but also a gendered one. The study challenges the dominant notion that space is neutral; instead, it argues that spatial production is deeply intertwined with social hierarchies, where women's experiences are often sidelined in the pursuit of economic and visual order. This research highlights the importance of incorporating feminist urbanism into planning frameworks, ensuring that spaces are designed with inclusivity and lived experience at their core rather than as an afterthought.

However, this study has certain limitations. The analysis is largely centered on the formal aspects of SCBD's spatial structure and its impact on women workers, leaving room for further exploration of informal spatial practices that may resist or subvert dominant spatial arrangements. Additionally, the research primarily focuses on a specific group—women workers—without deeply engaging with other intersecting identities, such as class, race, or disability, that could further shape spatial experiences.

Future studies should expand on these limitations by examining how women across different socioeconomic backgrounds experience and negotiate space in elite business districts like SCBD. Comparative analyses with other urban areas—both within and outside Jakarta—could offer deeper insights into how capitalist-patriarchal urbanism manifests in different spatial contexts. Furthermore, participatory research involving women workers themselves could provide a richer, bottom-up perspective on how urban planning can be reimagined to create truly inclusive cities.

Ultimately, this study underscores the need for a paradigm shift in urban development—one that moves beyond efficiency and monumentalism to embrace human-centered, gender-responsive, and socially just planning principles. Only by recognizing space as a site of lived experience, rather than merely a tool for economic growth, can we begin to dismantle the alienation that women workers face and create urban environments that truly belong to all.

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