



Gender-responsive public space: An inclusivity perspective toward sustainable urban development

Rika Triyunia Savitri^{1,*}

¹ Independent Researcher, Bogor, West Java 16969, Indonesia.

* Correspondence: rikatriyunia17@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Gender-inclusive public spaces play a crucial role in supporting social interaction, safety, and economic participation for diverse user groups, particularly women and vulnerable communities. In the Indonesian urban context, the integration of gender-responsive architectural principles in public space design remains uneven and is often constrained by normative and policy-oriented approaches. This study aims to identify key principles of gender-responsive architecture and examine their relevance to social and economic impacts in public spaces. **Methods:** This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach using document analysis. Data were collected from international guidelines, national policies, and academic literature related to gender-responsive planning, inclusive design, and public space development. The documents were selected based on relevance and credibility, and analyzed using thematic coding to identify recurring architectural principles and their associated social and economic implications. **Findings:** The findings reveal several core principles of gender-responsive architecture in public spaces, including accessibility, safety, visibility, spatial legibility, and universal design. These principles are closely associated with positive social outcomes such as increased sense of safety, social interaction, and inclusiveness, as well as economic impacts through the activation of informal economic activities, micro-enterprises, and community-based creative initiatives. **Conclusion:** The study concludes that gender-responsive architectural principles provide an essential framework for creating inclusive and human-centered public spaces in Indonesia. By systematically linking design principles with social and economic outcomes, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of gender-inclusive public space development. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This article offers an original contribution by synthesizing gender-responsive architectural principles and explicitly linking them to social and economic impacts in Indonesian public spaces, thereby advancing human-centered public space design and placemaking evaluation within urban streetscape and public realm studies.

KEYWORDS: economic sustainability; gender equality; gender inclusive; public space; urban architecture.

1. Introduction

Public spaces are areas accessible to all groups of society and have the potential to influence individuals' psychological responses and behaviors. Urban streets play a crucial role as part of a city's public space. It is functioning as a medium that supports transportation, recreation, social interaction, economic, and commercial activities in everyday life (Carr, 1992; Gehl, 2010; Wronkowski, 2024). According to the ideal of public spaces, it should be designed to be accessible and enjoyable for all members of society, regardless of gender, age, race, physical ability, or socio-economic status. Meanwhile, economic and social sustainability inherently includes environmental aspects, with

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increasing awareness of sustainability and the strengthening of regional collaboration being key to building more resilient and sustainable communities (Suwartha et al., 2021). The balance among social, economic, and environmental dimensions are fundamental to understanding the benefits of sustainability for societal well being (Goosen & Cilliers, 2018).

Several cities around the world have successfully implemented public areas through creative urban planning. For instance, city parks in Copenhagen integrate universally accessible pathways, sensory gardens, and user friendly interfaces designed for individuals with varying levels of ability (Hersperger et al., 2019). The High Line Project in New York City serves as an example of urban infrastructure redevelopment, where spaces are redesigned with an emphasis on accessibility through carefully planned pathways, seating areas, and the arrangement of pedestrian routes (Taylor et al., 2002). Meanwhile, Singapore's Barrier-Free Access program aims to ensure that public spaces such as parks and coastal areas are accessible by providing ramps, elevators, and tactile paving patterns (Amir, 2015; Liang & Zhang, 2018).

In Indonesia, although attention to universal design and accessibility has increased, most public spaces in various cities are still not optimally utilized by all user groups. For example, a study in Ahmad Yani Park, Medan revealed that facilities for women remain inadequate, and most victims of harassment in public spaces are young women (Siregar et al., 2021). In Kali Ngrowo Park, Tulungagung, women reported discomfort and a sense of insecurity due to incomplete facilities and poor lighting (Prahaditya et al., 2024). An evaluation of accessibility in Tebing Tinggi City also showed that people with disabilities still face structural barriers in urban open spaces due to insufficient public facilities (Maharani et al., 2023). Studies in Bandung, specifically in Teras Cikapundung and in Surabaya further demonstrated that aspects of universal design have not been fully implemented, making it difficult for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities to use public spaces (Ismail & Suprapti, 2023; Sari & Soeskandi, 2022). Architectural barriers, non-inclusive policies, and facilities that fail to respond to the needs of women and vulnerable groups contribute to feelings of insecurity and limit social and economic participation, leading to unequal quality of life.

Meanwhile, according to a national survey conducted by the Safe Public Space Coalition/*Koalisi Ruang Publik Aman* (KRPA), three out of five women in Indonesia have experienced some form of sexual harassment in public spaces, including on public transportation, minibuses, or commuter trains. Data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), indicate that approximately 41% of women have experienced at least one form of violence, whether physical, sexual, emotional, or economic during their lifetime. A safety report by UN Women (2017) in three areas of Jakarta also revealed tangible risks in public spaces, particularly in pedestrian pathways and communal areas that remain unsafe for women and girls. These discoveries highlight the need for public space design incorporating safety, visibility, and universal accessibility is a concrete mandate rather than merely a theoretical ideal.

The development of gender-responsive public spaces is not only a demand for social justice but also part of global and national commitments to sustainable development. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there are 17 goals and 169 targets, including Goal 5, which focuses on gender equality and women's empowerment, and Goal 11, which highlights the importance of creating safe and inclusive public spaces for all members of society. The SDGs serve as a globally endorsed action plan adopted by countries worldwide to enhance the quality of life for future generations. Indonesia is among the signatories of the SDGs and has integrated them as a foundation for national as well as regional development planning.

In addition to the SDGs, at the national level, Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning stipulates that spatial planning must be safe, comfortable, productive, and sustainable for all members of society. Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming mandates that all government institutions incorporate gender perspectives into policy-making and development implementation, including in the design and management of public spaces. The implementation of technical regulations such as the Minister of Public

Works and Housing Regulation/*Peraturan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum dan Perumahan Rakyat* (Permen PUPR) No. 14 of 2021 on Guidelines for the Provision and Utilization of Green Open Spaces, as well as the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation (Permendagri/*Peraturan Menteri Dalam Negeri*) No. 67 of 2011 on Gender Mainstreaming in Regional Development, further reinforces that aspects of safety, accessibility, and comfort for women and vulnerable groups must be integral components of urban planning. The National Medium Term Development Plan/*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional* (RPJMN) 2020–2024 also emphasizes the direction of inclusive urban development that considers social, environmental, and gender balance.

Although the aforementioned policies and legal frameworks are well established, their implementation in practice often faces significant challenges. Several studies indicate that the architectural design of public spaces still lacks a systematic consideration of gender perspectives. Xu et al. (2024) noted that the principles of feminist architecture often remain at the level of discourse and have yet to translate into concrete aspects of design and user participation. Gudekli et al. (2023) emphasized that, despite the growing body of publications on gender and urbanism, few studies have examined the intersection between public space design, local economies, and women's access. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2021) and Azura et al. (2024) found that young women reported a lack of safe zones and supporting facilities in city parks, which hindered their free use of public spaces, as well as inequalities in access to public amenities such as cafés, sidewalks, and street lighting.

Research on gender equality and public space has been widely conducted. However, most of these studies remain focused on social issues, safety, and community participation, without examining how architectural principles and spatial design can serve as strategic instruments in realizing gender-responsive public spaces. In Indonesia, architectural studies tend to emphasize aesthetic and functional aspects of space while overlooking gendered experiences as an integral part of the urban social and economic dynamics.

However, most studies on inclusive public spaces in Indonesia have primarily focused on social and safety aspects, while the architectural dimension as a strategic instrument for achieving spatial justice has received limited attention. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how architectural design can support the creation of gender-inclusive public spaces while contributing to sustainable development (SDGs), particularly Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities in the context of Indonesia's urban social and economic environment. By employing a review of previous research and regulatory policies, this study is expected to provide both conceptual and practical contributions. Recommendations for gender-responsive spatial design, along with supporting policies, strengthen equitable access and economic empowerment.

2. Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the role of gender-responsive architectural principles in the development of inclusive public spaces in Indonesia. This approach is appropriate given that the study seeks to explore conceptual understandings, design principles, and policy frameworks, rather than to conduct quantitative measurements or empirical field experiments (Morgan, 2022). An interpretative analytical strategy is applied to examine how architectural design can contribute to gender inclusivity as well as to social and economic sustainability in urban public spaces.

Data are collected through document analysis comprising three primary categories, (1) international guidelines and frameworks addressing gender-responsive planning, inclusive design, and sustainable urban development; (2) national and local policy documents relevant to public space planning, urban design, and gender mainstreaming in Indonesia; and (3) peer-reviewed academic literature examining gender-responsive architecture, public space design, and social inclusion. The documents are sourced from academic

databases, official government publications, and reports produced by international organizations.

Document selection is guided by criteria including direct relevance to gender inclusivity and architectural design principles, substantive engagement with spatial or design-related dimensions, credibility of the policy or academic context, and relevance to urban conditions in Indonesia. Documents that do not explicitly address architectural or spatial aspects of public spaces are excluded from the analysis. The research framework integrates document analysis with the identification of gender-responsive architectural principles and an assessment of their implications for the development of inclusive public spaces.

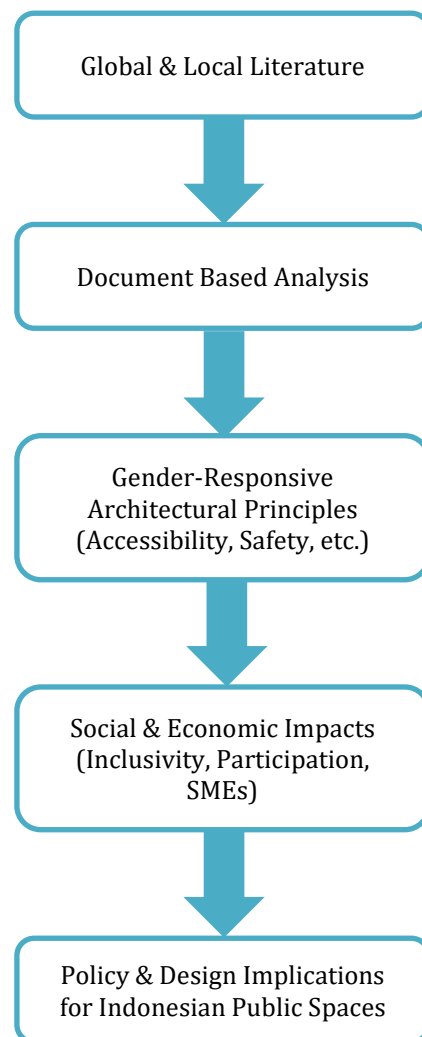


Fig. 1. Research framework for analyzing gender-responsive architecture in public spaces in Indonesia

3. Results and Discussion

Based on a systematic review of international guidelines, national policies, and relevant academic literature, this study identifies a set of key principles of gender-responsive architecture that hold strategic relevance for the development of public spaces in Indonesia. These principles consistently emerge across multiple sources and reflect the imperative to create public spaces that are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all segments of society. Through a thematic coding process, the study formulates five primary themes that constitute the conceptual framework of gender-responsive architecture, namely accessibility, safety, visibility, spatial legibility, and universal design. These five themes are interrelated and operate synergistically in shaping inclusive spatial experiences,

particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, children, older adults, and persons with disabilities.

The findings further indicate that the application of gender-responsive architectural principles has significant implications for strengthening the economic functions of public spaces. Inclusively designed public spaces tend to better support small-scale economic activities, including micro-enterprises, informal vendors, and creative communities, by fostering environments that are safe, comfortable, and easily accessible to all users. Overall, the results of this study underscore the role of gender-responsive architecture as a critical linkage between spatial design and socio-economic sustainability. The design principles identified in this study provide a robust conceptual foundation for the development of public spaces that function not only as arenas for social interaction but also as catalysts for community-based economic activities and social inclusion.

3.1 Existing conditions of public spaces in Indonesia

Physically, the availability of public spaces in Indonesia is relatively adequate. However, they have not yet fully provided an inclusive experience for all user groups, particularly women and persons with disabilities. Various barriers are still encountered, including limited access routes, insufficient lighting, inadequate supporting facilities, unsafe semi-private areas, and inconsistencies in the management and control of space use. These conditions indicate that aspects of safety, accessibility, comfort, and gender representation have not been fully accommodated in the design of public spaces. This discovery is consistent with several international studies that highlight the persistent gap in implementing the principles of universal design and gender-responsive urban planning across different urban contexts.

Meşhur & Çakmak (2018) indicate that many public spaces in developing countries have not yet met universal design standards, particularly regarding pedestrian pathways and spatial connectivity that ensure safety for users with mobility limitations. This finding is further reinforced by analyses conducted in major Indonesian cities such as Bandung, Jakarta, and Semarang, which reveal similar patterns in existing public spaces. A study by Syachputra & Budiyantini (2024) found that facilities for persons with disabilities in the Bandung City Square (Alun-Alun) still do not meet technical standards. Narrow pedestrian walkways and the lack of visual accessibility features hinder the participation of vulnerable user groups. In residential areas such as The Jarrdin Cihampelas Apartment complex, public spaces are available; however, comfort aspects such as shaded areas, public seating, and private zones remain insufficient, limiting social interaction and the sense of safety among residents, particularly for women and users vulnerable to weather exposure and visual privacy issues (Rachmat, 2023).

A similar condition is found in Kota Lama, Semarang, where pedestrian facilities, active parks, and supporting amenities have not yet adequately addressed the needs of persons with disabilities, elderly users, and women (Esariti et al., 2020). In Blang Padang, Banda Aceh, accessibility for persons with disabilities remains limited, as guiding blocks do not function optimally and visual connectivity to public facilities falls short of inclusive standards. This situation makes it difficult for vulnerable users to freely utilize public spaces (Fakriah, 2020). Similarly, Benny et al. (2024) and Jabeen (2020) explain that the major barriers faced by women in using public spaces are limited physical access and insufficient supporting facilities. This issue stems from the lack of integration of gender-sensitive design principles at the micro scale such as pedestrian pathways, lighting, and resting points, which significantly influence perceptions of safety and comfort.

3.2 Architectural design aspects supporting inclusivity

The aforementioned findings form an essential foundation for architects and urban planners to develop public spaces that are not only physically adequate but also meaningful, safe, and equitable for all users. Zysk (2024) highlights that elements such as lighting,

visibility, maintenance, and surrounding social activities significantly influence women's sense of safety and comfort. Consistent with these findings Rusmana & Abigail (2024) identify specific needs of female users, such as ergonomic seating, soft lighting, natural ventilation, and adequate mother-and-child facilities, as key indicators of inclusive spatial design. Furthermore, Rampaul (2025) emphasizes the concept of intergenerational inclusive urban design that integrates gender mainstreaming and community participation as part of sustainable urban planning strategies. Meanwhile, Kamaruddin et al. (2023) underline the application of passive architectural principles as a crucial strategy to achieve universal comfort through natural ventilation, daylight optimization, and energy-efficient spatial orientation, which collectively enhance safety and comfort across different age and gender groups.

Subagya et al. (2025) added a cultural perspective by examining design principles relevant to inclusivity and universality, emphasizing that the values of openness, equal access, and environmental balance are integral components of architectural practices that accommodate all users. Ikhsani & Setyowati (2021) asserted that inclusive design plays a crucial role in ensuring every citizen's fundamental right to engage freely in public activities without physical or social barriers. Furthermore, Mela & Tousi (2023) highlighted that women's sense of safety in public spaces is significantly influenced by the quality of lighting, spatial visibility, and the presence of other users in the surroundings. The arrangement of architectural elements that enhance the visibility of public activities has been shown to reduce perceived threats of violence. This perspective aligns with the *eyes on the street* concept proposed by Domper et al. (2025), which emphasizes that visibility and the intensity of social activities in public spaces strengthen natural surveillance, thereby reducing the risk of harassment and gender based violence.

Beyond gender-related aspects, barriers for persons with disabilities also remain significant. A study by Adi et al. (2024) found that most pedestrian pathways in Indonesia do not yet meet basic accessibility criteria in terms of slope, material, or visual continuity. This reinforces the evidence that many public spaces have not fully implemented the principles of *equitable use* and *flexibility of use*, as explained by Maulana et al. (2022) which emphasize inclusive design practices with pedestrian access that is easily comprehensible and accessible for elderly users and wheelchair users, along with the provision of affordable facilities. Furthermore, a study conducted by Ortiz et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of adopting a cross-identity approach that integrates aspects of gender, age, and disability in public space design to ensure that spaces are not only functional but also foster a sense of belonging among all users.

In addition, empirical and conceptual research demonstrates that universal design in public spaces should be understood as a holistic framework that transcends mere technical compliance. Esfandfard et al. (2018) emphasizes that effective accessibility strategies must combine physical solutions such as slope gradients, surface materials, and sidewalk continuity with sensitivity to user experience, including cognitive orientation, sensory comfort, and social context. In his analysis, such integrated approaches not only improved the mobility of disabled users but also enhanced cross-group social engagement and reduced barriers to economic participation. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where the main challenge lies not in the absence of infrastructure but in the lack of alignment between technical design elements and users' social experiences. Therefore, participatory design processes involving diverse social groups including women, the elderly, and people with disabilities from the planning stage to post implementation evaluation are essential. Furthermore, long-term monitoring and maintenance mechanisms are needed to preserve accessibility and ensure sustainability. By adopting this holistic and participatory framework, architecture can function not merely as a physical intervention but as an instrument to strengthen belonging, expand social participation, and advance spatial justice in urban environments.

Furthermore, Lid (2014) expands the discourse of universal design by positioning it as both a physical and ethical framework that integrates human diversity as a fundamental design principle. She argues that universal design must move beyond functional

accessibility to include relational and emotional dimensions that affect how users experience public space. This perspective reframes the role of architects and planners from problem-solvers to mediators of social interaction and inclusion. In doing so, design becomes an ethical practice that acknowledges interdependence among citizens and supports dignity, autonomy, and agency. In the Indonesian context, this view emphasizes the need for an interdisciplinary collaboration between designers, policymakers, and communities to transform accessibility from a technical specification into a shared cultural value embedded in everyday urban life.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by Gupta et al. (2025) reveals that the consistent implementation of accessibility standards and universal design principles is fundamental to creating inclusive and sustainable public spaces. Compared to the context of Indonesia, the main challenge does not lie in the absence of public spaces, but rather in the quality of design and management that has yet to comprehensively accommodate social, gender, and disability aspects. Accordingly, these international findings reaffirm that the issues surrounding urban public spaces in Indonesia are part of a broader global challenge, while also presenting opportunities to adopt best practices such as the integration of gender sensitive and universal design principles into urban planning and policymaking for greater spatial equity. Moreover, adopting a gender-inclusive architectural approach serves as a crucial strategy in creating public spaces that are safe, comfortable, and representative of all social groups. Architecture thus plays a direct role in shaping inclusive public spaces and promoting socio-economic sustainability in urban environments.

Based on the results of document analysis of various international guidelines, national policies, and academic literature, this study identifies a number of gender-responsive architectural principles that consistently emerge in discussions on the development of inclusive public spaces. These principles reflect the need to create public spaces capable of accommodating diverse user groups, particularly women and other vulnerable populations, through design approaches that give careful consideration to spatial configuration, accessibility, and user experience. The findings indicate that, despite the diversity of contextual backgrounds from which the documents originate, there is a recurring pattern in emphasizing specific design elements as the foundational components of gender-responsive public spaces. A summary of the gender-responsive architectural principles identified through the thematic coding process is presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Gender-responsive architectural principles based on document analysis

No	Design Principle	Description of Findings	Implications for Public Space
1	Accessibility	Public spaces should be designed to be accessible to all user groups without physical or social barriers, including women, older adults, and persons with disabilities.	Enhances the participation of diverse users and expands the function of public spaces as shared environments.
2	Safety	Lighting elements, spatial layout, and natural surveillance are key factors in creating a sense of safety, particularly for women.	Reduces perceived risk and increases the intensity of public space use.
3	Visibility	Spaces with high visibility enable users to feel safer and more socially connected.	Encourages social interaction and more active communal activities.
4	Spatial Legibility	Clear and easily understandable spatial organization facilitates user orientation and movement.	Reduces feelings of alienation and enhances user comfort in public spaces.
5	Universal Design	Design principles that are inclusive of diverse physical abilities and age groups.	Supports equitable access and the sustainable use of public spaces.

3.3 Impact of inclusive public spaces on the social environment

Public spaces designed with inclusivity in mind have a significant impact on creating safe, healthy, and socially cohesive environments that support interaction across diverse groups. A study by Moonen (2024) reveals that gender-sensitive public space design emphasizing visibility, lighting, and clear circulation routes enhances women's participation while reducing fear of violence. This principle aligns with the "*eyes on the street*" concept, which positions social activity as a form of natural surveillance, thereby fostering more vibrant and inclusive spaces. Furthermore, Patrick & McKinnon (2022) argue that community involvement in the design process strengthens the sense of belonging, enhances social participation, and broadens accessibility across gender and age groups.

The inclusive design approach has been proven to strengthen social solidarity and reduce spatial segregation. A study by Selanon et al. (2024) in Thailand found that the implementation of ramps for wheelchair users and equitable seating areas enhances cross-group interactions and fosters mutual respect among users. These findings are consistent with the UN Women (2023). Safe Cities and Public Spaces initiative, which demonstrates that the application of gender-responsive design principles directly contributes to reducing levels of violence and increasing women's social participation in urban areas.

Various international and national studies indicate that physical factors such as spatial visibility, spatial connectivity, and the availability of public facilities play a major role in shaping perceptions of safety and social interaction. Chen et al. (2024) found that environmental characteristics such as sky view factor, green index, and spatial openness influence women's sense of safety and the quality of their social interactions. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2023) highlighted that micro-scale urban revitalization, such as improved lighting, vegetation, and strategically placed seating areas in informal settlements, can strengthen social networks and enhance community safety. In the Indonesian context, studies by Esariti et al. (2020), Prayitno et al. (2021) and Rusmana & Abigail (2024) demonstrate that adequate lighting, safe pedestrian pathways, and family-oriented facilities can promote social interaction and community engagement.

The social impacts of inclusive public spaces also encompass the enhancement of women's representation and participation in urban planning. Anneroth et al. (2024) and Hermaputi & Hua (2024) emphasize that the implementation of universal design, the provision of adequate sanitation facilities, and participatory planning approaches can broaden women's opportunities for social participation. Spatial behavior studies conducted by Jalalkamali & Doratli (2022) further reveal that gender-inclusive design enhances users' intention to interact as well as their actual social behavior within urban contexts.

Overall, gender-responsive architectural design principles not only enhance the aesthetic quality of space but also function as a social strategy to strengthen spatial justice and community sustainability. Inclusive architecture serves as a social instrument that fosters a sense of safety, expands cross-gender interactions, and builds social cohesion in equitable urban environments. Inclusive public space design also generates positive impacts on the local economy. For instance, in Jombang City, improved accessibility in public spaces that comply with disability regulations has contributed to increased local economic activity, as comfortable and easily accessible spaces attract more users and street vendors Srihono et al. (2024). Another study by Safira & Kinasih (2024) highlights that accessibility elements such as signage, tactile wayfinding for the visually impaired, and braille information boards bring public spaces closer to all users, thereby expanding their economic utilization potential. Furthermore, Purnamasari et al. (2025) found that the use of third places by female workers demonstrates how inclusive public spaces can promote sustainable practices (active mobility) and strengthen social networks that serve as vital social capital for community resilience.

Inclusive public spaces are directly associated with the formation of urban social cohesion. Qi et al. (2024), in their synthesis of 60 international studies, they found that spatial attributes such as accessibility, connectivity, and spatial legibility are critical factors

that foster social cohesion by enhancing the intensity of cross-group interactions and strengthening place attachment. Within the context of inclusive design, these dimensions become increasingly significant, as they expand the range of public space users including women and persons with disabilities and cultivate a more equitable sense of belonging within the urban environment.

Furthermore, Haselbacher et al. (2024), in their study on practices of inclusion and exclusion in public spaces in Vienna and Helsinki, emphasize that the design of public spaces not only reflects social values but can also reinforce or mitigate social inequalities based on gender, class, and cultural background. They highlight the importance of an intersectional approach that considers the diversity of user identities from the earliest stages of design. By involving various community groups in the processes of design and evaluation, cities can reduce the potential for social exclusion that often emerges unintentionally within large-scale architectural policies or projects. This approach shifts the design paradigm from one that is merely form- and function-oriented toward a social interpretation of space as an instrument of justice and inclusion.

Gender-responsive and participatory public space design affects not only aspects of safety and comfort but also contributes to the formation of collective identity and the long-term social resilience of communities. The inclusivity of public spaces cannot be achieved solely through physical interventions; it must be realized through cross-sectoral collaboration involving governments, academia, practitioners, and user communities. Consequently, public spaces become social arenas that foster solidarity, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to the realization of a just and equitable urban order.

Based on the various studies discussed above, architecture plays a crucial role in the design of gender-sensitive public spaces. This underscores that architects and urban planners are not merely improving physical environments but also shaping inclusive and sustainable social conditions for all segments of society. Moreover, gender-sensitive public space design contributes to both social and economic environments. Design principles such as adequate lighting, clear pedestrian pathways, well-defined spatial orientation, high spatial visibility, green areas, and universal accessibility have been proven to be key determinants in creating a sense of safety and comfort, particularly for women. These findings also reaffirm that architecture functions not only as an aesthetic expression but as a social instrument capable of transforming power relations and access within public spaces.

3.4 The impact of inclusive spaces on a sustainable economy

The impact of gender-responsive public spaces can be observed through the growth of local economic activities, the expansion of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and the emergence of community based creative sectors. Jennings & Bamkole (2019) revealed that increased social cohesion in green public spaces can foster *economic resilience* by promoting healthy social interactions and expanding informal business networks. When people feel safe and comfortable engaging in public spaces, they are more likely to participate in economic activities such as community markets, street food enterprises, and creative industries. The principles of gender inclusive public space not only contribute to social well-being but also play a significant role in urban economic development. Various studies indicate that the presence of safe, comfortable, and accessible public spaces for all social groups including women and persons with disabilities can stimulate local economic activities and enhance the overall attractiveness of cities (Gehl, 2010; OECD, 2021; UN Habitat, 2020).

Facilities that are responsive to the needs of women and children create an inclusive economic space while strengthening social connections between business actors and consumers (Widjajanti et al., 2025). In addition, urban spatial planning that considers accessibility and connectivity not only increases economic opportunities for vulnerable groups but also enhances local innovation through social entrepreneurship (Smith, 2023). The report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2024)

reinforces evidence that cities committed to gender equality and inclusive public space access experience more inclusive and stable economic growth. Equal access to public spaces increases women's labor force participation, expands local entrepreneurial potential, and reduces socio-economic inequality. This approach demonstrates that spatial inclusivity is not merely a social agenda but also an economic strategy that supports sustainable growth.

In the context of urban architecture, spatial designs that consider safety, comfort, visibility, lighting, and universal accessibility create environments conducive to fostering community-based economic growth. A study by Shaftoe (2008) suggests that public spaces designed to support social interaction across genders and age groups indirectly expand opportunities for informal economic activities, such as small-scale trading, service sectors, and creative economies around public areas. This aligns with the World Bank (2024) report, which indicates that cities with higher levels of women's engagement in public space use tend to show increased female participation in microeconomic and small business sectors. Another study conducted by Esariti et al. (2020) in Kota Lama, Semarang, revealed that the provision of gender-responsive public facilities such as adequate street lighting, proper public toilets, and safe pedestrian zones encourages women to be more active in public spaces. This increase in participation positively impacts informal economic activities, including the emergence of small vendors and creative services around the area. Meanwhile, Srihono et al. (2024) found that public spaces meeting inclusivity standards can act as drivers of the local economy by attracting more visitors and stimulating micro level economic activities. From an architectural perspective, public space design that incorporates the principles of Universal Design and Gender-Sensitive Planning can create environments that are adaptive to diverse user needs. These principles not only enhance mobility and socio-economic participation but also strengthen a city's competitiveness as a vibrant, safe, and productive space. In this context, architecture serves as a tool of socio-economic transformation, bridging the gap between physical space and social justice.

The relationship between gender-responsive architecture, supportive public policies, and community awareness of sustainability can shape a more resilient and inclusive urban ecosystem. Gender-inclusive public spaces are not only symbols of social progress but also foundations for sustainable economic development. This connection reinforces the relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) emphasizing that safe, equitable, and inclusive cities are fundamental to achieving balanced economic growth. Beyond economic participation, gender-inclusive public spaces foster the development of micro-scale creative industries that depend on social interactions, such as local crafts, cultural performances, and community markets. As highlighted in the UN Habitat (2020) report, inclusive spatial policies can catalyze new economic opportunities by integrating informal and formal sectors through shared physical environments. This approach reflects a shift from growth-oriented planning to human-centered economic sustainability. In the Indonesian context, such integration could strengthen the role of women entrepreneurs and community-based enterprises by providing safer and more visible public platforms for economic engagement. Therefore, inclusive architecture not only enhances urban aesthetics but also plays a fundamental role in promoting equitable economic transformation. Future urban policies should ensure that design guidelines explicitly address these socio-economic linkages to sustain the long-term vitality of local economies.

Based on the results of the document analysis and the theoretical framework outlined earlier, the findings indicate that the identified principles of gender-responsive architecture are not only associated with improvements in the spatial quality of public spaces but are also strongly linked to broader social and economic impacts. Multiple documentary sources emphasize that the implementation of accessibility, safety, and visibility principles contributes to enhanced social inclusivity, a stronger sense of safety, and increased intensity of interactions among public space users. Furthermore, public spaces designed in a gender-responsive manner tend to support the sustainability of small-scale economic activities, such as micro-enterprises, informal vendors, and community-based creative activities, by fostering environments that are comfortable, accessible, and

appealing to diverse user groups. The relationships between gender-responsive architectural design principles and the identified social and economic impacts, as derived from the thematic coding process, are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Linkages between gender-responsive architectural principles and social and economic impacts

Design Principle	Social Impacts	Economic Impacts
Accessibility	Enhances social inclusion and the presence of vulnerable groups in public spaces.	Expands the user and consumer base for micro-enterprises and informal businesses.
Safety	Strengthens users' sense of safety and trust, particularly among women.	Increases the duration and frequency of economic activities in public spaces.
Visibility	Reinforces social interaction and community cohesion.	Supports community-based economic activities and the creative sector.
Spatial Legibility	Improves comfort and ease of use of public spaces.	Encourages visitor movement and more evenly distributed economic activities.
Universal Design	Promotes social justice and equitable use of space.	Enhances economic sustainability through adaptive public spaces.

The findings indicate that the principles of gender-responsive architecture play a critical role in shaping inclusive and sustainable public spaces. These results are consistent with international literature that emphasizes accessibility, safety, and universal design as fundamental elements of human-centered public spaces. However, within the Indonesian context, the implementation of these principles continues to face significant challenges, particularly the limited integration between gender mainstreaming policies and architectural design practices. Gender issues are often framed primarily as social concerns, and therefore have not been fully internalized as spatial considerations from the early stages of the planning process.

Beyond policy related factors, cultural norms and social perceptions also influence the effectiveness of inclusive design. The restrictions on access and the sense of insecurity experienced by women and other vulnerable groups in public spaces indicate that architectural design must be supported by cross sectoral approaches involving policy frameworks, spatial governance, and community participation.

From a socio-economic perspective, this study suggests that gender-responsive public spaces have the potential to strengthen local and community-based economic activities. Principles of accessibility and visibility enable public spaces to be used more intensively and diversely, thereby supporting social interaction while simultaneously creating economic opportunities for vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, limitations in resources, technical capacity, and coordination among stakeholders remain major barriers to the sustainable realization of inclusive public spaces. Therefore, the integration of gender inclusivity indicators into the planning and evaluation processes of public spaces constitutes a strategic step to ensure that design principles extend beyond the conceptual level and generate tangible improvements in urban quality of life.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm that public spaces designed with gender-inclusive principles play a strategic role in realizing cities that are just, empowering, and sustainable. Architecture functions as a bridge between human needs and urban systems through designs that are adaptive, participatory, and contextually responsive to user diversity. This approach strengthens social connections among citizens, enhances the sense of safety, and supports local economic opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups and women.

Conceptually, these findings demonstrate that the inclusivity of public spaces not only broadens access to the urban environment but also contributes to equitable economic

opportunities and the enhancement of environmental quality. Gender-responsive public spaces foster more balanced social and economic activities, reinforce community participation, and maintain ecological equilibrium through sustainable design practices.

These insights hold important implications for spatial planning policies and architectural practices. Governments and urban planners should integrate gender-responsive design principles into regulations, technical guidelines, and participatory mechanisms that involve women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. For architects and practitioners, the application of human-centered and universal design principles is crucial to creating public spaces that are safe, inclusive, and socially equitable.

Academically, this study reinforces the understanding of the interrelationship between architecture, gender equality, and sustainable development, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 on gender equality and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Architecture not only shapes the physical environment but also influences the social and economic structures of urban life. Therefore, the development of gender-inclusive public spaces should be regarded as a core strategy for creating humane, equitable, and resilient cities for all segments of society. Future research is recommended to deepen the analysis of gender-responsive design practices across diverse social and geographical contexts through comparative studies among cities. Furthermore, the establishment of measurable evaluation indicators and cross-sectoral collaboration among governments, academia, and professional architectural communities are essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of gender-responsive public space policies.

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Author Contribution

The author contributed fully to all stages of the research, including the formulation of the research concept and objectives, data collection and analysis, interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the final manuscript. All sections of this article represent the author's own ideas, analysis, and writing, with no involvement from other parties in the development of the scientific content.

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All data used in this study were obtained from publicly available secondary sources, including official documents, government policies, and scientific articles from online databases. No new data were generated in this research. Additional information is available from the author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this work, the author used *ChatGPT* (OpenAI, GPT-5 version) to assist in improving grammar, sentence clarity, and academic writing style. After using this tool, the author thoroughly reviewed and edited the entire manuscript and takes full responsibility for the substance and accuracy of the content in this publication.

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Biography of Author

Rika Triyunia Savitri, is an independent researcher. Her research interests center on gender equality in architecture, gender-responsive design, and inclusive public spaces. Her academic work explores how architectural design can promote social equity and spatial justice through inclusive and human-centered approaches. She is particularly interested in advancing design practices that empower women, support equitable participation, and foster a more just and inclusive built environment.

- Email: rikatriyunia17@gmail.com
- ORCID: 0009-0009-1922-4761
- Web of Science ResearcherID: N/A
- Scopus Author ID: N/A
- Homepage: N/A