Space, State, and Life: A Systematic Literature Review of Theoretical Synthesis in Property Economics

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Abstract

This systematic literature review addresses the theoretical fragmentation in property economics, which traditionally treats property as a fixed entity rather than a relational process embedded in spatial, political, and socio-lived dimensions. The paper aims to synthesize scholarship theoretically integrating space, state, and life, evaluate supporting empirical evidence, and delineate an integrated framework to inform theory, policy, and practice. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, 383 records were screened, resulting in 27 studies appraised for quality using MMAT 2018 and synthesized across eight thematic domains. The results demonstrate a convergence on a relational, state-contingent view of property, emphasizing spatial justice, state entrepreneurialism, valuation ethics, and necroeconomic dynamics in housing. However, theoretical integration remains largely partial across existing literature, and empirical support relies heavily on qualitative single-case studies with limited comparative or longitudinal validation. In conclusion, while the synthesized framework highlights the mutual constitution among property rights, state power, spatial configurations, and lived reality, further research requires stronger comparative empirical testing and address emerging digital and ecological transformations across diverse state regimes.

Keywords: property economics; space-state-life nexus; spatial justice; state entrepreneurialism; theoretical synthesis

I. INTRODUCTION

Property occupies an important place in economic thought, yet it has long been understood primarily as a physical, measurable object that can be bought or sold. While this traditional view makes property easier to value and regulate legally, it often overlooks the broader social, political, and personal dynamics that shape how property operates in daily life. A growing number of studies suggest that property is better understood as an evolving arrangement influenced by state policy, legal rules, social norms, and local environments. This shift points to a central question: how might we better connect the distinct yet overlapping dimensions of space, state, and everyday life within property economics?

Although research touch upon these themes, the insights remain scattered across different fields. Urban planning studies often focus on how power structures and regulations shape spatial development (Gerber & Debrunner, 2022); sociological work explores how legal rules condition local environments (Herbert & Orne, 2021); and critical property research shows how ownership rights depend on state authority (Dawson, 2022). Other studies look into community resource management, state involvement in property markets (Li & Sheng, 2026), or the ethics of land rent. These varied perspectives offer rich insights, but they also highlight a divide: many studies consider only two of these three dimensions at a time, leaving the connection between space, state, and life largely incomplete.

Synthesizing this literature helps address three practical needs. First, pulling these scattered ideas together helps clarify whether researchers are building a shared framework or simply using different terms for similar concepts. Second, much of the existing evidence comes from conceptual papers or isolated case studies, making it helpful to take stock of

what the data actually shows. Third, property economics faces pressing real-world issues such as housing affordability, regional inequality, environmental pressures, and informal tenure that require connecting broader policy decisions with everyday lived experiences. Without a clear overview, discussions in the field can easily default to narrow technical assumptions or models that do not fit every local context.

To explore these issues, this review considers four guiding questions: how current research connects space, state, and life (RQ1); what main elements make up an integrated view of these three dimensions (RQ2); what empirical evidence supports or challenges this perspective (RQ3); and what this means for property theory, policy, and practice (RQ4). By doing so, this paper seeks to offer a balanced overview of the field—mapping the main theoretical perspectives, summarizing the strengths and limits of existing qualitative evidence, and highlighting insights that can help inform policies focused on fairness, community engagement, and supporting vulnerable groups.

II. METHOD

This systematic literature review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The operational protocol encompassing the research questions, eligibility criteria, search strategies, and quality appraisal tools was established prior to data collection, though it was not registered in a public registry. To structure the review, the research questions were contextualized using the PICOS framework (Population: property economics contexts including land, real estate, and urban development; Intervention: theoretical frameworks synthesizing space, state, and life; Comparison: non-integrated, single-dimension theoretical approaches; Outcomes: conceptual models, theoretical propositions, and policy implications; Study design: peer-reviewed empirical and conceptual literature).

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criterion

Category	Code	Criterion Description
Inclusion Criteria	IC1	Studies focusing on theoretical or conceptual development in property economics, including the integration of space, state, and life dimensions.
	IC2	Empirical studies that test or apply integrated frameworks involving space, state, and life in property contexts.
	IC3	Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or book chapters published in English.
	IC4	Studies published from 2000 onwards to capture contemporary theoretical developments.
	IC5	Studies that explicitly discuss at least two of the three concepts (space, state, life) in relation to property economics.
Exclusion Criteria	EC1	Studies focusing solely on one concept (space, state, or life) without attempting to link it to property economics or the other concepts.
	EC2	Purely descriptive case studies lacking theoretical or conceptual contributions.
	EC3	Studies published in languages other than English.
	EC4	Grey literature, conference abstracts, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed sources.
	EC5	Studies addressing property economics exclusively from a technical, financial, or legal perspective without theoretical synthesis.

	EC6	Studies published before 2000, unless recognized as seminal theoretical works widely cited in the field.

The search strategy involved systematic queries executed on September 2026 across the OpenAlex and Semantic Scholar databases using the search string ("Space" OR "State" OR "Life" AND "Property Economics"). Search limits were restricted to English-language journal articles published between 2020 and 2026 containing abstracts, retrieving up to 300 top records by relevance per database. Following collection, duplicate records were identified and removed based on DOI and title matching. The initial title and abstract screening was conducted with artificial intelligence (AI) assistance using predefined criterion codes, with every inclusion and exclusion decision directly verified by the author. Full eligibility was evaluated using open-access full texts where available, supplemented by detailed abstract analysis when full-text access could not be secured.

Data collection and extraction were conducted using a standardized extraction form capturing study metadata including geographical setting, sample characteristics, methodological design, key findings, limitations, and specific thematic contributions addressing each research question. Initial data extraction was AI-assisted from available full texts or abstracts and subsequently reviewed and verified by the author. Methodological quality was evaluated using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) 2018 version (Hong et al., 2018), evaluating study design categories against two preliminary screening questions and five category-specific criteria rated as "yes", "no", or "can't tell". In alignment with official MMAT guidelines, aggregate numerical scores were avoided in favor of criterion-by-criterion narrative evaluations. Finally, due to the conceptual and methodological heterogeneity of the included literature, a quantitative meta-analysis was not conducted; instead, findings were synthesized narratively through thematic analysis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) by coding, grouping into core themes, and mapping directly onto the four research questions.

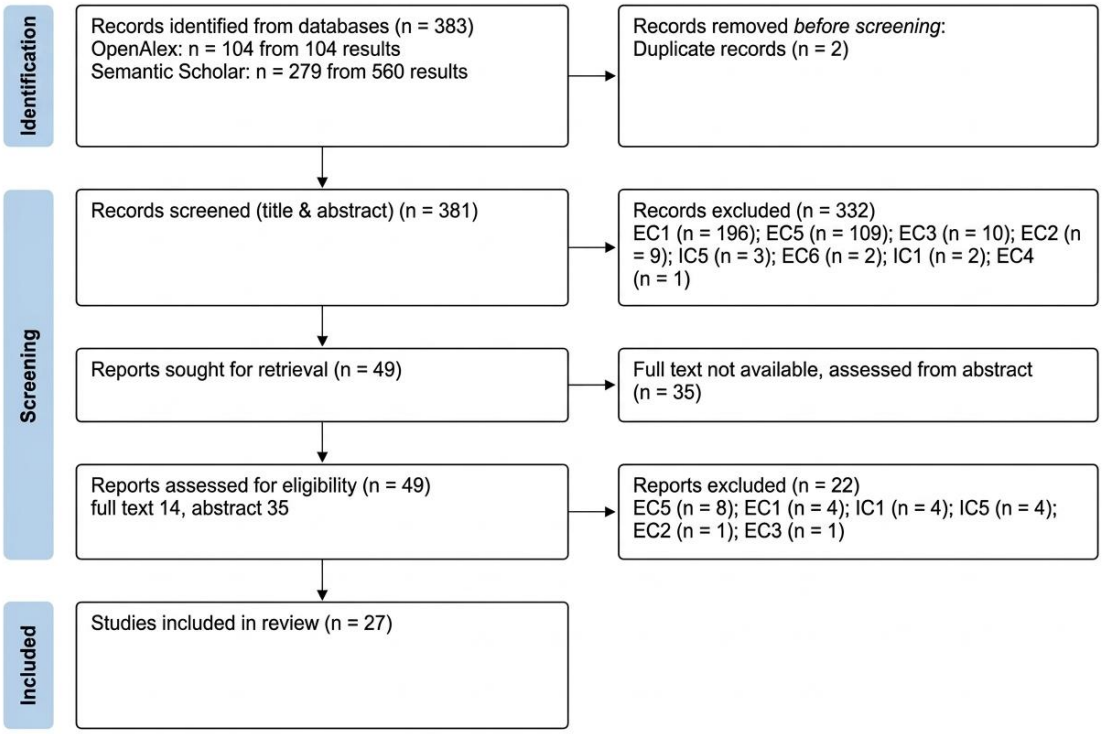
III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Result

1. Study selection

The search retrieved 383 records from OpenAlex (104) and Semantic Scholar (279). Following the removal of two duplicates, 381 records underwent title and abstract screening, resulting in 332 exclusions based on specific criteria such as single-concept focus or technical-only perspectives. Forty-nine reports were subsequently assessed for eligibility; full texts were obtained for 14, while 35 were evaluated via abstracts. An additional 22 reports were excluded due to lack of theoretical synthesis or overlapping constraints, ultimately yielding 27 studies included in the final qualitative synthesis.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process.



2. Study characteristics

The 27 included studies show a surge in recent publications from 2021 to 2026, reflecting a growing theoretical interest in property. Methodologically, the corpus is diverse, dominated by unspecified designs (16) and qualitative studies (7), largely due to abstract-only assessments and conceptual orientations. Geographically, contexts span the United States, China, Greece, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Indonesia, Ukraine, and multi-country settings, examining varied settings such as urban gardens, densification conflicts, and informal settlements. Participant reporting is frequently omitted, constraining transferability. Outlets include *Land Use Policy*, *Land*, and various interdisciplinary venues.

Table 2. Characteristics of included studies.

Study	Country	Design	Participants/sample	Key findings
Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024	Greece	Qualitative	Not reported (abstract does not specify number or characteristics of participants)	Adherence to a specific political ideology may increase community coherence but jeopardizes sustainable management of the common resource, since the resource becomes a means of political expression rather than the primary concern of the group; this has implications for theory and policy.
Azzam et al., 2022	Multiple countries: Haiti, Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia, United States of America	Other/unclear	96 studies reviewed	Challenges include legal deficits, multiplicity of tenure systems, discrimination in access rights, insecurity of property, and forced migration. Real estate innovations can promote spatial balance in disaster-prone nations. COVID-19 impacts on spatial balance examined.

Study	Country	Design	Participants/sample	Key findings
Dawson, 2022	United States	Qualitative	Not reported (author as organizer, observer, and participant)	Property is relational and contingent on state force and social behavior; transgressing property markers desanctifies property and challenges social order, reflecting abolitionist practice.
Gerber & Debrunner, 2022	Switzerland	Qualitative	Not reported (focus on inhabitants and stakeholders in a redevelopment case)	The study develops a framework bridging planning, new institutionalism, and power to analyze spatial development projects. Using the Zurich densification case, it shows that such processes create winners and losers, particularly affecting inhabitants who cannot afford higher rents. The conflictual nature of densification makes it ideal for studying power in planning.
Gojali, 2023	Indonesia	Other/unclear	Not applicable	The study presents a classification of ownership in Islam into private (al-milkiyyat al-fardiyyah), public (al-milkiyyat al-ammah), and state (al-milkiyyat al-daulah) forms, each with fiqh foundations. It argues that the Islamic concept of ownership helps eliminate injustice in property control by individuals, the public, and the state, contributing to solving economic crises.
Herbert & Orne, 2021	Not reported	Quantitative descriptive	Not reported (two cases: a neighborhood and a bathhouse)	Property regulations shape place characteristics; attending to the 'legal life of place' reveals hidden mechanisms and challenges assumptions; property is central to sociological concerns like power, state, and inequality.
Kleiner, 2024	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not applicable (theoretical study)	The study finds mutual conditionality between economic and ethical structures, with economics comprehensive and ethics pervasive in economic subjects' consciousness. Together they determine the structure and functions of socio-economic space-time. Strengthening the institution of reputation is recommended for socio-economic development strategies.
Kostko, 2021	Not reported	Qualitative	Not reported (theoretical article, no human participants).	The article argues for an integrated approach to studying city social space, emphasizing relationships between urban identity (thick/thin), identity of the city, and citizen involvement. It aims to translate abstract categories into management indicators for smart city development.
Lai et al., 2021	Hong Kong	Mixed methods	Not reported in detail; sample >1% of the workforce of the constituency	Government should prioritize usable open spaces to improve public health, counterbalancing indoor focus post-SARS; links property rights and social justice in open space provision.
Lauer, 2023	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not applicable (conceptual paper)	State support, including funding, technological help, risk underwriting, and ensuring private property rights, is critical for the viability of the asteroid mining industry; without sufficient government backing, private space endeavours are likely to fail, as seen in recent asteroid mining companies.
Li, 2021	China	Other/unclear	Not reported	Residents understand public space as shared property separate from public life, shaped by historical state-individual relationships. One experiment to rebuild social life failed, while another adjusting public-private boundaries

Study	Country	Design	Participants/sample	Key findings
				succeeded, showing public reconstruction requires adjusting the state-individual relationship.
Li & Sheng, 2026	China	Other/unclear	Not reported	The paper argues that the Western-centric framework of urban entrepreneurialism is insufficient to explain China, where culture and tourism in micro-regeneration function as a dual-purpose state mechanism. Culture and tourism serve both as a strategic vehicle for national-cultural mandates such as cultural confidence and as an ideological governance resource legitimizing state intervention in urban space, property relations, and local social life.
López-Morales, 2023	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not reported	The rent gap theory, originating from Neil Smith, explains urban land rent extraction and displacement, extending beyond gentrification to various forms like density rent gaps and Airbnb rent gaps. It highlights the political and moral dimensions of land rent internalization and its implications for housing affordability and the right to the city.
Nebrat, 2023	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not reported	The concept of the social state developed over centuries by linking state, law, and economy. John Locke framed private property as a prerequisite for civil society and contractual state powers. The economic basis of the welfare state is a socially oriented market economy.
Nguyen, 2023	Vietnam	Mixed methods	Farmers in Hue's peri-urban areas affected by compulsory land acquisition; total of 2,830 households affected across nine localities between 2000 and 2018. Specific sample size and characteristics of participants in the study are not reported.	Complaints are a common reaction among farmers to compulsory land acquisition, while collective resistance or rightful resistance are rare. Losing land while remaining in one's social and physical environment within a more dynamic economic context significantly influences forms of resistance. Complaints reflect social tensions but are not strong enough to fundamentally change local government decisions.
Noga, 2024	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not applicable	Common property arrangements are relevant for Coasean bargaining; commons can be understood as a common property institution suitable for Coasean bargaining; international human rights law can support commons and facilitate bargaining for environmental improvement. The article argues that commons permeated by common property facets and human rights can empower people to protect their environments through Coasean bargaining without direct state interference.
Nur et al., 2025	Indonesia	Non-randomised quantitative	Not reported; the study is a normative legal analysis and does not involve human participants.	Land Banks can act as dynamizers, facilitators, and capacitors in assisting KMHA to manage Customary Land Management Rights. Management rights over state land by the Land Bank are regulated in the Job Creation Law, but management rights over customary land are not further regulated after administration and registration, potentially weakening KMHA. Land Banks can cooperate with

Study	Country	Design	Participants/sample	Key findings
				third parties to support investment while securing customary land rights.
Obeng-Odoom, 2025	Not reported (author affiliation: Finland)	Other/unclear	Not applicable (conceptual paper, no human participants)	The study finds that dominant economic schools (orthodox environmental and heterodox ecological economics) downplay global social stratification, perpetuating ecological crises. Stratification economics, with its property theory of power, offers a transformative alternative by centering social stratification and property relations.
Özdilek, 2024	Canada	Other/unclear	Not applicable (conceptual paper, no human participants)	The study defines Sustainable Land Rent (SLR) and demonstrates the feasibility of separate valuation of land value from improvements using PCI methods. It argues for institutional mechanisms to redistribute SLR benefits for community welfare and environmental sustainability, highlighting SLR as a catalyst for integrating sustainability into economic valuation models.
Rios et al., 2023	United States	Qualitative	Not applicable	The essay explores how sound and listening practices contest racialized legal spaces of segregation, gentrification, and private property. It proposes sonic mutuality as a way to challenge state authority and create extralegal social arrangements, reimagining the city as a sonic commons.
Roy, 2026	India	Qualitative	Migrants from the Indian Sundarbans living in an informal settlement; rural migrants	Migrants actively produce Kolkata's urban frontier through everyday practices of settlement, labor, social reproduction, and claims-making. The frontier is an assemblage of migrant labor, informal property relations, ecological transformations, infrastructures, and political practices, reproducing inequalities while generating possibilities for housing, livelihoods, and recognition.
Rubanov, 2026	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not reported	The article analyzes integrated territorial development (ITD) as part of state legal policy, examining its determination by constitutional and legal foundations such as the human right to a dignified life and free development, guaranteed unity of economic space, protection of private property, support for competition, state obligations regarding land and natural resources, promotion of housing construction, and the right to a favorable environment.
Stovpets et al., 2026	Not reported	Other/unclear	Not reported	Cryptocurrencies are interpreted as a partial realisation of private money where trust relies on algorithmic transparency rather than institutional guarantees. The crypto-sector challenges traditional views of the state, centralised issuance, autonomy, and value.
Tyler & Skeggs, 2025	United Kingdom	Other/unclear	Not reported	The case of Awaab Ishak, a child who died from mould in social housing, reveals how necroeconomic policies and state invitations to asset managers have made intimate domestic spaces dangerous and granted property owners a licence to kill.
Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024	Russia	Other/unclear	Not reported	The study argues that Russia's spatial development has shifted from Soviet directive planning to post-Soviet

Study	Country	Design	Participants/sample	Key findings
				decentralization and then to excessive state regulation. The current Strategy of Spatial Development (up to 2025) is criticized for ignoring the systemic nature of spatial organization, which should be viewed as an anthropogenic megasystem with self-organization and state regulatory influences. Foreign experience is deemed inadequate for Russia's unique transitional context.

3. Methodological quality

Methodological quality across the corpus is uneven and, in a substantial proportion of studies, only partially assessable. Using MMAT 2018, two qualitative studies met all five criteria {S21, S22}, and one mixed-methods study met three of five with none unassessable Nguyen (2023), indicating that rigorous qualitative and mixed approaches to the space-state-life nexus do exist. Several qualitative studies met only one of five criteria with four unassessable {S1, S3, S5, S7, S9, S25}, a pattern that typically reflects insufficient reporting of sampling, data collection, and analytic procedures rather than demonstrable methodological failure. One normative legal study met none of the five criteria Nur et al. (2025), and several studies were not formally appraised because assessment was based on abstracts alone {S2, S6, S8, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S17, S19, S20, S23, S24, S26, S27}. The most frequently unmet or unassessable criteria relate to the appropriateness of qualitative methodology, the coherence between data collection and analysis, and the adequacy of the researcher's account of findings, which is unsurprising given the conceptual and abstract-only character of many contributions.

These patterns carry two implications for weighing the evidence. First, where integration claims rest on abstract-only accounts, the quality assessment cannot verify whether analytic rigor accompanied conceptual ambition, so such studies should be treated as theoretically suggestive rather than evidentially probative. Second, the concentration of higher-quality ratings among empirically grounded qualitative and mixed-methods studies indicates that the strongest evidence for integrated perspectives comes from in-depth contextual work {S16, S21, S22}, even though such work cannot by itself support generalizability.

4. Thematic synthesis

Table 3. Synthesised themes and supporting studies.

Theme	Description	Studies	n
Property as relational and state-contingent	Property is conceptualized not as a fixed object but as a relational and contingent institution shaped by state force, legal regulations, and social behavior. This theme highlights how property arrangements are continuously negotiated and contested.	Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021; Nebrat, 2023	4
Spatial justice and uneven development	Spatial development under property regimes produces winners and losers, generating inequalities and conflicts over land use, housing affordability, and access to resources. The theme emphasizes distributive outcomes and power asymmetries.	Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023	4
State entrepreneurialism and spatial governance	The state actively intervenes in property markets and spatial development through entrepreneurial strategies, legal frameworks, and institutions to pursue economic, political, and ideological goals, often reshaping property relations and social life.	Li & Sheng, 2026; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024	4
Commons, community, and sustainability	Property arrangements such as commons and community-based resource management are examined for their potential to balance	Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025	3

Theme	Description	Studies	n
	individual and collective interests, with attention to sustainability, political ideology, and human rights.		
Everyday life and spatial practices	The lived experiences, identities, and daily practices of individuals and communities shape and are shaped by property and spatial structures. This theme foregrounds agency, resistance, and the production of space from below.	Kostko, 2021; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026	3
Valuation, ethics, and economic paradigms	Theoretical and ethical foundations of property valuation, land rent, and economic systems are critically examined, including the integration of sustainability, reputation, and moral considerations into economic models.	Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026	3
Institutional and legal foundations	Legal and constitutional frameworks, including property rights, land management, and territorial development, provide the institutional scaffolding for integrating space, state, and life in property economics.	Gojali, 2023; Lai et al., 2021; -, 2023	3
Necroeconomic and deadly consequences	State-enabled profit-seeking in housing and property management can have lethal consequences, particularly for marginalized populations, revealing the darker side of property regimes.	Tyler & Skeggs, 2025	1

How have existing studies in property economics theoretically integrated the concepts of space, state, and life?

The theoretical integration of space, state, and life in property economics is best understood as a family of overlapping rather than unified moves, as mapped across the themes in Table 3. In the theme of property as relational and state-contingent, property is not treated as a fixed object but as an institution continuously shaped by state force, legal regulation, and social behaviour (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021; Nebrat, 2023). The spatial justice and uneven development theme pushes this further by linking property regimes to distributive outcomes, conflicts over land use, housing affordability, and access to resources (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023). The state entrepreneurialism and spatial governance theme offers one of the most explicit three-way integrations, because the state is positioned as an active actor whose legal and entrepreneurial strategies reshape property relations and social life (Li & Sheng, 2026; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Together, these themes indicate that the literature increasingly treats space, state, and life as co-present dimensions of property rather than as separate analytical domains.

At the same time, integration remains uneven. The commons, community, and sustainability theme integrates property, state, and life through collective resource arrangements, but it does so with different normative emphases: Arvanitidis & Nasioka (2024) shows that political ideology may increase community coherence while undermining sustainable management, whereas Noga (2024) and Obeng-Odoom (2025) use commons, human rights, and stratification economics to foreground empowerment, ecology, and power relations (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025). The everyday life and spatial practices theme integrates space and life most strongly, with state often implicit through governance, law, or municipal authority (Kostko, 2021; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026). The valuation, ethics, and economic paradigms theme links land, institutions, and moral or ecological considerations, but its synthesis is often abstract and model-oriented (Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026). The institutional and legal foundations theme supplies constitutional and regulatory scaffolding, yet some contributions connect

only state and life or state and economy without fully spatializing the argument (Gojali, 2023; Lai et al., 2021; -, 2023). Tyler & Skeggs (2025) adds a darker integration by linking state-enabled property management to lethal consequences for marginalized populations, showing that the space–state–life nexus can also be a matter of life and death (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025).

The result is a theoretical landscape marked by convergent trends and persistent fragmentation. There is growing agreement that property is relational, dynamic, and contingent rather than simply technical or fixed (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021; Nebrat, 2023), and that power asymmetries and distributive outcomes are central to spatial development (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023). However, several studies integrate only two of the three concepts, and many remain abstract, normative, or illustrative rather than systematically theorized across all three dimensions (Gojali, 2023; Lai et al., 2021; Lauer, 2023; Nebrat, 2023). Quality appraisal reinforces caution: most available assessments report low MMAT scores or cannot assess criteria because of abstract-only evidence, while only a small number of studies meet all five MMAT criteria (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Dawson, 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Kostko, 2021; Lai et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2023; Nur et al., 2025; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026). Thus, while Table 3 shows a clear movement toward relational, power-sensitive, and life-centred property theory, a comprehensive synthesis of space, state, and life remains more fragmented than cumulative.

What are the key components and relationships in a synthesized framework of space, state, and life for property economics?

Across the themes in Table 3, a synthesized framework requires at least four interlocking components: property rights and regulations, state institutions and power, spatial configurations, and everyday life practices. Property rights and regulations appear as the legal-institutional grammar through which place characteristics, access, and exclusion are organized (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021; Nebrat, 2023). State institutions and power operate through planning, constitutional mandates, land banks, entrepreneurial strategies, and regulatory authority (Li & Sheng, 2026; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Spatial configurations include urban land, densification sites, peri-urban areas, open spaces, informal settlements, and territories of investment and extraction (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Lai et al., 2021; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023; Roy, 2026). Everyday life practices include inhabitants' claims, migrant place-making, sonic contestations, resistance, complaints, and social reproduction (Kostko, 2021; Nguyen, 2023; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026). To these, the valuation, ethics, and economic paradigms theme adds land rent, reputation, sustainability, and digital value as mediating components (Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026), while the necroeconomic theme adds the possibility that property management may directly threaten life (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025).

The relationships among these components are characterized by mutual constitution rather than linear causation. State actions shape property and space, which in turn condition social life: entrepreneurial intervention, compulsory acquisition, densification policy, land-bank arrangements, and constitutionalized territorial development all reorganize property relations and life chances (Li & Sheng, 2026; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Conversely, life practices and resistance feed back into property and state arrangements, as seen in transgressions that desanctify property, experiments in public–private boundaries, farmers' complaints, sonic practices, and migrant claims-making (Dawson, 2022; Li, 2021; Nguyen, 2023; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026). Property itself functions as a relational and state-contingent institution, so the framework must account for negotiation, contestation, and contingency rather than treating ownership as a stable backdrop (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021;

Nebrat, 2023). The spatial justice theme makes power asymmetry explicit: property regimes distribute benefits and harms unevenly, producing winners and losers (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023).

A further set of relationships concerns how collective and ethical dimensions mediate the nexus. Commons and community-based arrangements attempt to balance individual and collective interests, though their sustainability depends on how political ideology and legal support are configured (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025). Valuation and ethics connect land value, public revenue, community welfare, environmental restoration, reputation, and trust, thereby linking economic calculation to social and ecological life (Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026). Institutional and legal foundations provide the scaffolding that connects constitutional rights, property management functions, and spatial development goals (Gojali, 2023; Lai et al., 2021). The necroeconomic theme introduces a negative relational possibility: when the state invites asset managers into housing and property management, the result can be deadly exposure of intimate domestic life (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025). Taken together, the synthesized framework is less a linear model than a circuit of co-production: state power and legal regulation shape property and space; property and space condition everyday life; and everyday practices, ethics, and resistance loop back into property and state arrangements, all under conditions of contingency and unequal power.

What empirical evidence supports or challenges the integrated perspective of space, state, and life in property economics?

There is empirical support for the integrated perspective, but it is uneven and often case-bound. Urban community gardens show that political ideology affects community coherence and the sustainability of common resources (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024). The Zurich densification case demonstrates that planning and property redevelopment create winners and losers, especially inhabitants who cannot afford higher rents (Gerber & Debrunner, 2022). Post-disaster real estate research, drawing on 96 studies, identifies legal deficits, multiple tenure systems, discrimination, insecurity, and forced migration as spatial challenges (Azzam et al., 2022). Compulsory land acquisition in Vietnam, covering 2,830 affected households and 427 hectares acquired between 2000 and 2018, shows that complaints are common while collective resistance is rare, indicating that social and spatial attachments shape reactions to state-led property change (Nguyen, 2023). Ethnographic evidence from 2018–2023 on informal settlement shows how migrants assemble labour, informal property relations, ecology, infrastructure, and political practices into urban frontiers (Roy, 2026). Additional supporting cases include public-space experiments that reveal state–individual negotiations over property and social life (Li, 2021), property regulations shaping neighbourhood and bathhouse places (Herbert & Orne, 2021), open-space provision linked to public health (Lai et al., 2021), land valuation based on 400 sales using OLS (Özdilek, 2024), protest ruptures that challenge property arrangements (Dawson, 2022), sonic contestation of racialized legal space (Rios et al., 2023), and the deadly case of housing-related exposure (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025).

Yet the evidence also challenges any claim that the integrated perspective is already empirically established. A substantial share of the included studies are theoretical, normative, or conceptual and report no systematic empirical testing (Gojali, 2023; Kleiner, 2024; Lauer, 2023; Li & Sheng, 2026; Noga, 2024; Nur et al., 2025; Obeng-Odoom, 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Stovpets et al., 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Some provide only illustrative examples rather than designed empirical tests (Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Li & Sheng, 2026; Stovpets et al., 2026). Several findings rest on single cases or two cases, limiting generalizability (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Li, 2021). Evidence drawn from abstracts rather than full texts further weakens confidence, especially

where methodological detail on sampling, data collection, or analysis is unavailable (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Azzam et al., 2022; Dawson, 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Kostko, 2021; Lai et al., 2021; Lauer, 2023; Li, 2021; Li & Sheng, 2026; López-Morales, 2023; Nebrat, 2023; Rubanov, 2026; Stovpets et al., 2026; Tyler & Skeggs, 2025; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Quality appraisal sharpens this concern: only a few studies meet all five MMAT criteria (Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026), one meets three of five (Nguyen, 2023), one meets two (Lai et al., 2021), several meet one or cannot be assessed (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Dawson, 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Kostko, 2021), and one meets none (Nur et al., 2025). The stronger empirical contributions therefore sit alongside a larger body of suggestive but methodologically thin evidence.

The evidence also contains productive contradictions. State support is presented as necessary for private space-sector viability in one context (Lauer, 2023), whereas state-enabled property management is shown to produce lethal consequences in another (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025). Commons arrangements are treated as empowering when supported by human rights and common-property institutions (Noga, 2024), but community coherence organized around political ideology can undermine sustainable resource management (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024). Densification is challenged as an eco-friendly narrative because it distributes costs and benefits unevenly (Gerber & Debrunner, 2022). These contrasts do not invalidate the integrated perspective; rather, they show that the space–state–life nexus is contingent on state form, legal configuration, property regime, and local social practice. The overall pattern is supportive but cautious: case evidence demonstrates that state interventions and property regulations shape spatial justice and lived experience, yet the field still lacks sufficiently broad, comparative, and methodologically robust testing across diverse geographical and cultural contexts.

What are the implications of such a synthesis for property theory, policy, and practice?

For property theory, the synthesis in Table 3 implies a decisive move beyond Western-centric, technical, and narrowly financial accounts of property. The relational and state-contingent theme requires theory to treat property as an institution continuously produced through state force, legal regulation, and social behaviour (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Li, 2021; Nebrat, 2023). The spatial justice theme requires explicit attention to distribution, power asymmetry, and the political and moral dimensions of land rent and urban development (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023). State entrepreneurialism and spatial governance show that the state is not an external referee but an active producer of property relations and social life (Li & Sheng, 2026; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Commons, community, and sustainability frameworks broaden property theory toward collective interests, human rights, ecology, and stratification (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025). Valuation, ethics, and economic paradigms further demand that land value, reputation, sustainability, and digital trust be integrated into economic models rather than treated as externalities (Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026). The necroeconomic theme adds an ethical limit case: property theory must account for situations in which state-enabled profit-seeking in housing becomes deadly (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025).

For policy, the synthesis calls for distributive justice, community participation, and protection of vulnerable groups. Densification policy should acknowledge power and conflict and protect inhabitants who cannot absorb higher rents (Gerber & Debrunner, 2022). Compulsory land acquisition requires attention to livelihood reconstruction and spatial justice, especially where complaints reflect social tension but do not alter government decisions (Nguyen, 2023). Open-space policy should prioritize usable public spaces for health

and social justice (Lai et al., 2021). Land-bank and customary land arrangements require clearer regulation to secure customary rights while facilitating investment (Nur et al., 2025). Sustainable land rent points toward institutional mechanisms that redistribute land-value benefits for community welfare and environmental restoration (Özdilek, 2024). Constitutionalization of territorial development links private property, economic space, housing, land, natural resources, and the right to a dignified life (Rubanov, 2026), while spatial development policy should recognize self-organization and avoid uncritical borrowing of foreign models (Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). Commons and human rights frameworks suggest policy support for collective environmental bargaining and protection (Noga, 2024), while community-garden policy should prioritize resource sustainability over political expression (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024). These implications are strongest where supported by full-text and higher-quality evidence, and weaker where derived from conceptual or abstract-only studies; policy design should therefore be treated as provisional and subject to evaluation.

For practice, the synthesis implies adaptive management, recognition of informal property relations, and integration of sustainability and human rights into property governance. Property management functions should be adaptive and spatially informed, linking forecasting, planning, coordination, and control to socio-economic goals (-, 2023). Practitioners should recognize migrants and informal settlers as active producers of housing, livelihoods, and urban space rather than as peripheral actors (Roy, 2026). Everyday life and spatial practices must be taken seriously in design and governance, including sonic contestations, identity, municipal management, and experiments in state–individual boundaries (Kostko, 2021; Li, 2021; Rios et al., 2023). Practice should also incorporate human rights, commons, and ecological sustainability into land and property decisions (Noga, 2024; Özdilek, 2024), and it should remain alert to the deadly consequences of negligent property management (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025). At the same time, these implications expose unresolved gaps: comparative evidence across different state forms remains limited, dynamic feedback loops over time are under-examined, digital and virtual spaces are under-theorized, and explicit evaluation of policy interventions based on integrated frameworks is still scarce (Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026; Stovpets et al., 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024). The synthesis therefore offers a stronger theoretical orientation and a more ethically alert policy vocabulary, but it does not yet provide a fully validated operational template for property practice.

B. Discussion

The synthesis of 27 studies indicates that property economics is undergoing a significant theoretical reorientation. Rather than treating property as a static, bounded object defined primarily by legal title or market price, the reviewed literature increasingly conceptualizes property as a relational and state-contingent institution continuously produced through the interplay of spatial configurations, state power, and everyday life. This finding aligns with long-standing critiques of narrowly technical or financial approaches to property, but it extends them by demonstrating that the three dimensions—space, state, and life—are not merely coexisting analytical categories; they are mutually constitutive. Property arrangements shape spatial outcomes, which in turn condition lived experience, while social practices and resistance feed back into the reconstruction of property and state institutions (Dawson, 2022; Herbert & Orne, 2021; Nebrat, 2023). This recursive relationship represents a meaningful advance over earlier work in property economics that typically privileged one dimension—most often the state-legal or the market-functional—while treating the others as background conditions.

Comparing across studies reveals both convergence and productive tension. A cluster of contributions converges on the view that state action is not external to property markets

but constitutive of them, whether through entrepreneurial strategies (Li & Sheng, 2026; Nur et al., 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024), constitutional-legal scaffolding (Gojali, 2023; Lai et al., 2021), or the licencing of profit-seeking in housing that can produce lethal outcomes for marginalized populations (Tyler & Skeggs, 2025). The necroeconomic perspective articulated by Tyler & Skeggs (2025) is particularly striking because it radicalizes the state-contingency thesis: if property is constituted by state force, then state-enabled property regimes can be implicated in premature death, not merely in distributive injustice. This contrasts with more optimistic accounts of commons and community-based arrangements (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025), which suggest that property institutions can be reoriented toward collective well-being and sustainability. The contradiction is instructive: it indicates that the space-state-life nexus is not inherently emancipatory or oppressive but is contingent on power configurations and institutional design. Studies emphasizing spatial justice and uneven development (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023) occupy the middle ground, documenting how densification, compulsory acquisition, and rent gaps systematically generate winners and losers while acknowledging the possibility of corrective policy.

The everyday-life theme (Kostko, 2021; Rios et al., 2023; Roy, 2026) provides the most significant corrective to state-centric and capital-centric accounts. By foregrounding migrant place-making, sonic contestations of racialized legal space, and the identity practices of urban residents, these studies demonstrate that life is not a residual category but an active force in the co-production of property and space. This resonates with Dawson (2022) arguing that property is desanctified through transgressive social behavior, and with Li (2021) showing that public space reconstruction requires adjusting state-individual relations rather than merely redesigning physical space. The convergence across these studies suggests that a synthesized framework must treat agency and resistance as constitutive, not epiphenomenal. However, the evidence base for these claims is uneven. Several of the most theoretically innovative contributions (Dawson, 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Kostko, 2021; Rios et al., 2023) were assessed using the MMAT 2018 instrument, and while Rios et al. (2023) and Roy (2026) met all five quality criteria, others met only one or could not be fully assessed because they were available only as abstracts. This quality differential means that the more radical theoretical claims—particularly those concerning the lethal consequences of property regimes and the transformative potential of everyday practices—rest on a narrower evidential foundation than the more established findings on state entrepreneurialism and spatial injustice.

The implications for property theory are considerable. The reviewed literature collectively challenges the Western-centric and technocratic premises that have historically dominated the field. Studies from China (Li & Sheng, 2026), Vietnam (Nguyen, 2023), Indonesia (Nur et al., 2025), India (Roy, 2026), Ukraine (Dyomin et al., 2024), and Russia (Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024) demonstrate that property dynamics are deeply embedded in specific state formations, legal cultures, and everyday lifeworlds, and that frameworks developed in Anglophone contexts cannot be transplanted without substantial adaptation. This finding has direct policy relevance: interventions ranging from land banking to densification to post-disaster reconstruction must attend to distributive justice, community participation, and the protection of vulnerable groups, rather than assuming that market mechanisms or legal formalization will automatically produce equitable outcomes (Azzam et al., 2022; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; López-Morales, 2023; Nguyen, 2023; Nur et al., 2025). The emphasis on sustainability and valuation ethics (Kleiner, 2024; Özdilek, 2024; Stovpets et al., 2026) further suggests that property governance should integrate ecological and moral considerations into economic models, moving beyond narrow efficiency criteria.

Several research gaps emerge from this synthesis. First, despite the theoretical richness of the literature, there is a paucity of systematic empirical testing of integrated frameworks across diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Many studies remain theoretical (Kleiner, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025; Rubanov, 2026; Николаевич & Shvetsov, 2024) or rely on single illustrative cases (Arvanitidis & Nasioka, 2024; Gerber & Debrunner, 2022; Li, 2021), limiting the generalizability of their claims. Second, the dynamic feedback loops between space, state, and life over time are under-theorized: while several studies acknowledge mutual constitution, few trace how social practices reshape property and state institutions longitudinally. Third, digital technologies and virtual spaces receive only marginal attention (Stovpets et al., 2026), despite their growing role in transforming property relations and state sovereignty. Fourth, comparative studies that systematically analyze how different state forms—welfare, entrepreneurial, authoritarian—mediate the space-state-life nexus are virtually absent. Fifth, the intersection of property, ecology, and life in the context of climate change remains underdeveloped, notwithstanding contributions on sustainability and environmental justice (Noga, 2024; Obeng-Odoom, 2025; Özdilek, 2024). Finally, few studies explicitly connect property theory to policy implementation or evaluate the outcomes of policy interventions based on integrated frameworks. Addressing these gaps would require mixed-methods and comparative research designs capable of capturing the recursive dynamics that the literature identifies but rarely empirically demonstrates.

IV. CONCLUSION

This systematic review shows property economics shifting toward a relational and power-sensitive view shaped by space, state, and life. The twenty-seven studies confirm that property arrangements are continuously contested through state action, spatial development, and daily practice. While integrated frameworks capture these dynamics, they remain fragmented and geographically narrow. Critical perspectives complement established literatures on spatial justice and state entrepreneurialism by confronting the darker consequences of property regimes. Consequently, theory must move beyond technical silos toward frameworks theorizing power and co-production, policy must prioritize distributive justice and human rights, and practice must embrace adaptive management and informal relations. Future research should prioritize comparative, longitudinal designs across diverse contexts, explore digital transformations, and engage deeply with ecology and climate change to strengthen theoretical coherence and policy relevance.

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