



A New Conceptual Framework of Civic Settlement: Bridging Citizenship, Civilization, and Sustainable Human Habitat

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: Apr 20, 2026

Revised: Aug 24, 2026

Accepted: Sept 12, 2026

Keywords:

Civic Settlement; Human Settlement; Citizenship; Sustainable Development; Civilization Formation.

Abstract

Settlement scholarship has increasingly addressed sustainability, resilience, governance, and socio-ecological change, yet it still tends to treat settlement primarily as a spatial or functional system. Citizenship research, by contrast, examines participation, belonging, responsibility, institutions, and public life, but rarely theorizes permanent settlement as the enduring socio-spatial setting in which these civic relations are produced. This article develops Civic Settlement as an integrative conceptual framework linking these literatures. Using a Narrative Literature Review, the study compares and synthesizes interdisciplinary scholarship on human settlements, citizenship, civic culture, governance, sustainability, community development, and civilization. The synthesis identifies five interrelated dimensions: human; cultural and spiritual; governance and political; spatial-ecological; and economic and knowledge. Together, these dimensions explain how permanent communities organize belonging, shared values, institutions, environmental relations, productive activity, learning, and intergenerational continuity. Civic Settlement is therefore conceptualized as a permanent human living system in which people collectively transform inhabited space into an organized civic environment. The framework contributes a relational account of settlement that connects everyday community life with sustainable human habitat and longer-term processes of civilizational continuity, while remaining a conceptual proposition that requires empirical validation across diverse contexts.

To cite this article: Rahmadi, H. B., Darmawan, C., Syaifullah, S., Anggraeni, L., Tanszil, S. W., Junaidi, J. & Sari, M. (2026). A New Conceptual Framework of Civic Settlement: Bridging Citizenship, Civilization, and Sustainable Human Habitat. *Al Qodiri: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Keagamaan*, 24(3), 165-186.

INTRODUCTION

Human settlements are simultaneously material environments and organized forms of collective life. Recent research has expanded settlement analysis beyond morphology and land use toward sustainability, resilience, socio-ecological relations, and the interaction among spatial, institutional, and human systems (Gao et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024; Zhong et al., 2023; Zhu & Wang, 2022). This shift is important because the quality and continuity of a settlement depend not only on where people live but also on how residents relate to one another, use shared space, and respond to environmental pressures. Contemporary assessments of urban and rural settlements consequently incorporate governance, health, adaptive capacity, and social conditions alongside physical indicators (X. Chen et al., 2024; S. Chen et al., 2024; Tian et al., 2024). Yet settlement scholarship still tends to explain these elements as dimensions of habitability or resilience rather than as components of an explicitly civic system. The unresolved issue is therefore how a permanent living environment

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becomes a setting in which collective identity, responsibility, participation, and institutional life are formed and sustained.

This issue is increasingly visible in rapidly changing communities where spatial transformation affects belonging and social integration. Studies of migrants and urban residents show that neighborhood conditions, social ties, tenure arrangements, and perceived environmental quality shape attachment to place and the experience of belonging (Liu et al., 2022; Schmidt et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Urban redevelopment research similarly indicates that changes to the built environment can strengthen or weaken place attachment depending on whether memory, local identity, and community action are recognized in the process (Falanga, 2022; İnal-Çekiç et al., 2024). These findings complicate the idea of settlement as a neutral container for population because the same physical setting can support inclusion, exclusion, attachment, or displacement. They also suggest that social continuity is produced through everyday relationships between people and place rather than through infrastructure alone. A concept capable of linking these relationships to citizenship is therefore needed to explain why some settlements develop as shared civic environments while others remain socially fragmented.

Public space and local governance provide a second empirical reason for developing such a connection. Systematic evidence shows that accessible and socially supportive public spaces can facilitate interaction and social cohesion, although these effects depend on safety, inclusiveness, cultural meaning, and the characteristics of local users (Clarke et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2024). Participatory planning studies further show that citizen involvement is not equivalent to civic empowerment, because consultation may remain symbolic when residents have limited influence over decisions (Abas et al., 2023; Heyik et al., 2024). Research on urban governance has likewise documented tensions between participation, institutional authority, and unequal access to decision-making (Gong et al., 2023; Guillard & McGillivray, 2022). At the same time, self-organized civic activity can shape services, public places, and neighborhood development outside formal planning channels (Horelli & Wallin, 2024). These studies collectively indicate that settlement quality includes a political dimension concerning who participates, whose interests are recognized, and how collective decisions become embedded in shared space.

Cultural meaning and ecological continuity add further dimensions to this problem. Place attachment research shows that identity, memory, social ties, and cultural heritage influence how residents interpret changes to their living environments (Boffi et al., 2023; Schmidt et al., 2024). Religious and cultural spaces can also operate as settings through which communities produce belonging and negotiate relationships between private meaning and public life (Mei et al., 2022). At the same time, settlement continuity depends on ecological resilience and the capacity of communities and institutions to respond to environmental pressures (X. Chen et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). Evidence from formal and informal settlements further indicates that social capital and civic participation can contribute to resilience by connecting social networks, knowledge, and collective resources (Shahid et al., 2022). These strands of research demonstrate that cultural, civic, and ecological processes interact in lived environments, but they are commonly examined in separate conceptual traditions. Bringing them together is necessary if settlement is to be understood as both a habitat and an organized form of collective life.

The state of the art therefore reveals several converging but incomplete research trajectories. Settlement studies have developed increasingly sophisticated accounts of spatial systems, resilience, and sustainability (Elburz & Çubukçu, 2026; Gao et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024; Tian et al., 2024), while citizenship and participation studies explain how belonging, civic engagement, and local decision-making are enacted in place (Abas et al., 2023; Guillard & McGillivray, 2022; Horelli & Wallin, 2024). A third strand examines social networks, public spaces, cultural identity, and community attachment as mechanisms through which people develop relationships with their surroundings (Lin et al., 2024; Qi et al., 2024; Schmidt et al., 2024). These literatures increasingly overlap in their attention to people, institutions, space, culture, and environment. However, their dominant unit of explanation remains different: settlement research centers on human habitat and spatial systems, whereas citizenship research centers on civic relations and participation. As a result, the enduring settlement itself has not been sufficiently theorized as a system in which spatial and civic processes are mutually constitutive.

This conceptual separation creates a specific research gap. Existing notions such as human settlement, sustainable settlement, civic space, place attachment, community, and infrastructural citizenship illuminate important parts of collective life, but they do not fully explain how a permanent settlement integrates human agency, cultural meaning, governance, ecological relations, productive activity, and knowledge transmission within one conceptual structure. Recent work on multicultural place governance, community renewal, and civic engagement illustrates the need for such integration because it shows that spatial planning, social diversity, institutional arrangements, and everyday civic practices operate together rather than independently (Lu et al., 2024; Mateo-Babiano & Fong, 2024; Masrom et al., 2024). Similarly, research on settlement sustainability increasingly uses multidimensional indicators, but the civic mechanisms connecting these dimensions remain less explicit (S. Chen et al., 2024; Zhong et al., 2023). The gap is thus not a lack of studies on individual components, but the absence of an integrative framework that treats settlement as a durable civic and socio-spatial system. Addressing this gap requires a conceptual synthesis rather than the addition of another isolated settlement indicator.

Accordingly, this study develops Civic Settlement as a conceptual framework for explaining how permanent human settlements become organized civic environments and how such environments may support civilizational continuity. The central question is: How can Civic Settlement be conceptualized through the interaction of human, cultural-spiritual, governance-political, spatial-ecological, and economic-knowledge dimensions? A Narrative Literature Review is used to compare concepts and relationships across settlement studies, citizenship, governance, community development, sustainability, and related interdisciplinary scholarship. The theoretical contribution is an integrated five-dimensional framework that positions civic life as an internal process of settlement formation rather than as an activity occurring only within a pre-existing spatial container. The framework also offers a basis for future empirical research to examine how the five dimensions interact across different cultural, geographical, and institutional contexts. Because the present study is conceptual, its contribution lies in theoretical integration and proposition development rather than in claiming empirical validation of the framework.

METHOD

Review Design

This study employed a Narrative Literature Review (NLR) to develop the Civic Settlement framework through interpretive comparison and synthesis of multidisciplinary scholarship. NLR was appropriate because Civic Settlement is an emerging concept that crosses established disciplinary boundaries and does not yet have a standardized conceptual vocabulary or a stable empirical literature. The review was therefore designed to clarify concepts, compare theoretical emphases, identify areas of convergence and omission, and formulate an integrated conceptual proposition rather than to estimate an effect size or produce an exhaustive quantitative inventory of publications. The methodological orientation followed established guidance that narrative reviews should make their interpretive logic, source selection, and synthesis process explicit (Green et al., 2006; Juntunen & Lehenkari, 2021; Theile & Beall, 2024).

Literature Identification and Selection

The review process began by defining the central question and the conceptual domains required to address it. Literature was identified iteratively from scholarly sources, with particular attention to publications indexed in academic databases such as Scopus, using combinations of terms related to human settlement, settlement system, citizenship, civic culture, community development, sustainability, governance, public space, and civilization. Because the source manuscript did not report a fixed search period, exact search strings, or numerical screening counts, no such information is introduced here. Selection was based on substantive relevance to the conceptual question, theoretical contribution, interdisciplinary significance, and the ability of a source to clarify relationships among settlement, civic life, institutions, culture, economy, knowledge, and environmental conditions. Titles, abstracts, keywords, and, where relevant, full texts were examined to determine conceptual relevance.

Thematic Analysis and Critical Synthesis

The selected literature was then organized thematically and comparatively. The analysis focused on recurring concepts, disciplinary differences, relationships among constructs, and the functions attributed to people, values, institutions, space, ecology, economic activity, and knowledge within settlement systems. Rather than treating frequency as evidence of conceptual importance, the synthesis examined how different literatures explained the role of each component and where explanatory connections were missing. A meta-narrative orientation was used as a methodological reference for tracing how different research traditions frame related problems, while critical synthesis was used to connect insights that had developed separately across fields (Jamal et al., 2015; Wong et al., 2013). This process produced provisional thematic clusters that were repeatedly compared against the reviewed arguments before being consolidated into the five dimensions of Civic Settlement.

Framework Development

Framework development constituted the final analytic stage. The study compared established concepts to identify dimensions that were well explained within individual literatures but insufficiently connected across them, then specified the conceptual role of each dimension and its relationship to the broader settlement system. The resulting framework defines Civic Settlement as a permanent human living system in which communities organize collective relationships with their inhabited environment through human agency, cultural and spiritual meaning, governance and political arrangements, spatial-ecological adaptation, and economic and knowledge processes. Throughout the synthesis, emphasis was placed on consistency of terminology, traceability of claims to the literature, and distinction between source-based findings and the authors' conceptual interpretation. The procedure is summarized in Figure 1, which represents the review logic without implying unreported screening counts or a systematic-review protocol.

The five dimensions were treated as analytically distinct but relational components rather than as independent variables. Their inclusion was based on whether each dimension explained a necessary function in the transformation of inhabited space into organized collective life: actors and social relations; shared meanings and normative orientations; rules and decision-making; environmental and spatial conditions; and material and knowledge-producing capacities. This functional criterion helped prevent the framework from becoming a simple list of themes and provided a basis for interpreting relationships among dimensions in the Results and Discussion.

As an NLR, the study prioritizes conceptual integration and interpretive coherence over exhaustive coverage. The framework should therefore be read as a theoretically grounded proposition derived from the reviewed literature, not as an empirically validated model. This distinction also sets the boundary for the conclusions: the review can identify conceptual relationships and propose dimensions, but it cannot establish their relative strength, causal ordering, or universal applicability across settlement contexts.

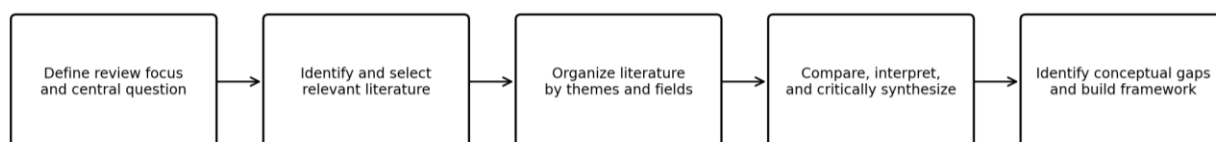


Figure 1. Narrative Literature Review and Conceptual Development Process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Human Dimension: People as the Fundamental Foundation of Civic Settlement

The first and most fundamental dimension of civic settlement is the human dimension. This dimension positions human beings as the primary actors in the formation, continuity, and transformation of settlements into increasingly complex social systems. Unlike conventional understandings that tend to conceptualize settlements primarily as physical configurations of

buildings and infrastructure, civic settlement should be understood as a socio-spatial entity shaped by the dynamic relationships among people, space, values, institutions, and collective identity.

The presence of human beings constitutes a fundamental distinction between a merely geographical space and a civic settlement. A territory cannot meaningfully function as a settlement without a population that permanently inhabits, manages, and attributes meaning to that space. This condition can be observed in the phenomenon of ghost cities, referring to areas that once supported active human life but subsequently lost their social functions because of population decline or displacement. Various factors, including natural disasters, resource depletion, policy changes, armed conflict, economic crises, and disease outbreaks, may undermine the continuity of a settlement by eliminating the human community that sustains and activates it (UBE, 2024).

At a broader level, the presence of a permanent population is also closely related to the concept of statehood. The Montevideo Convention of 1933 identifies a permanent population, a defined territory, an effective government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states as essential elements of statehood (League of Nations, 1936). Although civic settlement operates at a different analytical level from the state, both share a fundamental characteristic: the existence of a settled human community that establishes and sustains an organized system of collective life within a particular territory. This parallel reinforces the importance of population and human agency as foundational elements in understanding how spaces develop into organized social entities.

The human dimension of civic settlement extends beyond demographic size and density to encompass the formation of collective identity. Human beings are not merely occupants of space; they are active agents who produce meanings, cultures, social relationships, and systems of collective life within that space. This relationship can be illustrated through the historical concept of *pueblo* in the United States. Etymologically, *pueblo* derives from Spanish and refers to a village or town, while its Latin root, *populus*, denotes a people or population. The evolution of these meanings demonstrates that the concept of settlement cannot be separated from the human communities that inhabit and constitute it. Moreover, the linguistic relationship among *pueblo*, people, and public suggests that settlement spaces have historically embodied social and collective dimensions rather than merely physical ones (Fletcher, 1984).

From this perspective, people constitute the people-centered foundation of civic settlement. The development of a settlement is not determined solely by geographical conditions but also by the capacity of human communities to organize collective life, generate innovation, develop economic activities, and establish social institutions. The development of *Pueblo de San José* in California provides an illustrative example. Initially established as a relatively simple community serving colonial purposes, the settlement gradually developed into an economic and technological center through population growth, productive activities, transportation development, and broader processes of social transformation (Wolff, 2002). This historical trajectory illustrates how human agency can transform a settlement from a basic place of habitation into a more complex social and economic system.

Accordingly, civic settlement can be conceptualized as a process through which a place of habitation develops into a space of collective life. A settlement becomes civic when its inhabitants do not merely occupy a physical territory but also establish social relationships, shared rules, collective values, and a common orientation toward the continuity and well-being of the community. From this perspective, civilization is not simply the outcome of physical development or infrastructural advancement; rather, it emerges from the capacity of human beings to construct, organize, and sustain systems of collective life.

The human dimension also explains why migration, integration, and intergroup relations are important components of civic settlement. Settlements continually evolve through interactions between established populations and newcomers. In the context of migration, settlement involves more than physical relocation or residence; it also encompasses the process through which newcomers establish their social position and develop a sense of belonging within a new community. The integration of migrants involves multiple dimensions, including employment, relationships with local populations, government policies, and participation in everyday social life (Sayyad Abdi et al., 2019). These processes demonstrate that the continuity and transformation of settlements depend substantially on how different groups negotiate social relationships and construct forms of collective belonging.

Nevertheless, the human dimension of civic settlement also reveals the potential for social exclusion. Settlement spaces do not invariably function as sites of integration; under certain conditions, they may reproduce social hierarchies, marginalization, and segregation. An illustrative example is the *velivada* in India, residential areas deliberately located outside the main settlement to spatially separate particular social groups according to the caste system (Santhosh, 2014). A comparable pattern can be observed in the history of Batavia, where colonial settlement design was employed to reinforce social, cultural, and racial distinctions among population groups within the colonial power structure (Wan, 2022). These examples demonstrate that the organization of settlement space is closely connected to the distribution of social power and can either facilitate inclusion or institutionalize inequality.

Therefore, the human dimension of civic settlement encompasses two potentially contrasting trajectories. On the one hand, human communities can generate social integration, collective identity, institutional development, and the conditions necessary for civilizational advancement. On the other hand, when the values and social systems embedded within a settlement are discriminatory or exclusionary, settlement space may become an instrument for segregation, marginalization, and social injustice. The defining feature of civic settlement, therefore, is not merely the presence of human beings but the manner in which people construct social relationships, institutions, and value systems within their shared living environment.

Based on this discussion, the human dimension can be positioned as the fundamental foundation of civic settlement. Human beings transform geographical space into socially meaningful space through permanent habitation, collective interaction, cultural production, institutional development, and the construction of shared values. Through these processes, communities create the social conditions necessary for increasingly complex forms of collective life. Thus, civic settlement can fundamentally be understood as a settled, organized, and people-centered system of collective life in which human agency provides the basis for the formation, continuity, transformation, and transmission of civilization.

Cultural and Spiritual Dimension: Values, Religion, and the Formation of Civic Settlement as a Way of Collective Life

The cultural and spiritual dimension constitutes a critical element in the formation of civic settlement, as the existence and development of a settlement are determined not only by physical conditions and population, but also by systems of values that give meaning to human living spaces. From this perspective, religion, spirituality, traditions, and cultural practices function as important forces in shaping collective identity, strengthening social cohesion, and contributing to the development of civilization. These dimensions provide communities with shared meanings and normative orientations through which people understand their relationships with one another, their environment, and the places they inhabit.

The relationship between civic settlement and spirituality can be traced back to the development of early human societies. Throughout history, many settlements have emerged around locations endowed with particular religious or spiritual significance. Sacred places have frequently served as centers of social, economic, and cultural activities, subsequently encouraging the formation and continuity of permanent communities in their surrounding areas. The birthplace of the Buddha in Nepal, for example, illustrates how a religiously significant space can become a center of spiritual community development and contribute to the long-term growth of settlements through pilgrimage, visitation, religious activities, and community life (Lamichhane, 2023). Such examples demonstrate that spiritual significance can contribute to the social production of space by attracting people, establishing collective practices, and creating enduring forms of place attachment.

A similar pattern can be observed in the historical development of Christian communities across different regions. Churches have not functioned solely as places of worship but have also served as institutions through which broader forms of social life are organized. In various historical contexts, the development of churches occurred alongside the establishment of public facilities, including schools, hospitals, economic centers, and community spaces. The development of Hispanic communities in Texas, for instance, demonstrates the relationship between religious institutions and the formation of increasingly complex settlement communities. Likewise, the historical development of European cities such as Antwerp, San Sebastian, and Karlsruhe indicates that religious institutions contributed to the formation of social structures and urban spaces (Krüger, 2022). These historical

trajectories suggest that religious institutions can operate as social anchors through which communities organize collective activities and construct shared identities.

The relationship between religion and civic settlement further indicates that places of worship have functions extending beyond ritual practices. Religious spaces can become centers of social interaction, solidarity building, community organization, and even local economic activity. The presence of cathedrals and congregational communities in modern England, for example, has functioned in some contexts as a catalyst for economic activity, employment generation, and community revitalization. A comparable historical pattern can be observed in Lübeck, Germany, where the development of surrounding community areas occurred between two major centers: the cathedral as a spiritual center and the marketplace as an economic center (Stammwitz, 2019). This relationship illustrates how spiritual and economic institutions may interact within settlement systems and collectively contribute to the development of community life.

More broadly, the spiritual dimension of civic settlement functions not only as a force in the formation of settlements but also as a source of values that contributes to community continuity. In some communities in early twentieth-century London, the weakening of religious life was associated with declining social vitality and deterioration in the quality of the settlement environment. This suggests that spiritual values may operate as a form of social capital that strengthens interpersonal relationships, collective responsibility, and attachment to place. In other contexts, religious values have been consciously mobilized to restore community well-being within a settlement. The account of Nehemiah in the history of Jerusalem, for instance, illustrates how the reconstruction of the city's walls involved not merely the restoration of physical defenses but also efforts to restore the social and spiritual well-being of the community (Fulton, 2015). From this perspective, rebuilding a settlement involves more than reconstructing its physical environment; it also requires the restoration of shared values, collective identity, and social order.

Within the Islamic tradition, the relationship between religion and the formation of civic settlement can be illustrated by the historical development of Medina. Although the explicit use of the term civic settlement remains limited in Islamic scholarship, the development of Medina demonstrates important characteristics of a community organized around shared values, norms, institutions, and social order. Formerly known as Yathrib, Medina developed into a major center of civilization through a social system and normative framework introduced during the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (Lukman, 2019). The concept of Madinah itself carries meanings extending beyond a geographical designation of a city and has been associated with notions of social order and organized communal life (Aziz, 2010). Conceptually, this interpretation is also related to the notion of civil society, which in the development of Indonesian intellectual discourse has often been translated as *masyarakat madani* (Aziz, 2010; Elfia, 2019). Medina therefore provides an important historical illustration of how religious values, social organization, governance, and spatial settlement can interact in the formation of a more complex civic community.

In Indonesia, the relationship among religion, culture, and settlement has likewise played a significant role in the historical development of communities. Long-term interactions among diverse cultural traditions have produced patterns of collective life that connect residential spaces with religious values and local cultural practices (Arif, 2012). One important example is the *surau* in Minangkabau society, which has historically functioned not only as a place of worship but also as a center of education, social interaction, economic exchange, and community development (Baso, 2016). The *surau* therefore illustrates how a culturally and spiritually meaningful institution can become embedded within the everyday structure of community life and contribute to the formation of a distinctive social and spatial order.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the cultural and spiritual dimension transforms civic settlement from a merely physical environment into a meaningful social space. Religion and culture provide systems of meaning through which communities construct collective identities, regulate social relationships, establish shared norms, and sustain continuity across generations. Consequently, settlement spaces are not neutral geographical containers; they are socially and culturally produced spaces shaped by historical experiences, cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and collective memories. The meaning attributed to a place can therefore become an important mechanism through which communities develop attachment, solidarity, and a sense of collective belonging.

Accordingly, the cultural and spiritual dimension of civic settlement can be conceptualized as a system of values, meanings, beliefs, and cultural practices that provides direction, identity, and social legitimacy to the existence and continuity of a human community. If the human dimension explains who builds and sustains civic settlement, the cultural and spiritual dimension explains the values and meanings that guide communities in building, organizing, and sustaining their shared living environment. In this sense, culture and spirituality provide the normative and symbolic foundation through which human habitation develops into a meaningful form of collective life and, ultimately, contributes to the formation and transmission of civilization.

Governance and Political Dimension: The Formation of Order, Legitimacy, and Institutions within Civic Settlement

In addition to human agency and cultural-spiritual values, the existence and development of civic settlement are strongly shaped by a community's capacity to establish systems of governance, law, and institutions. A settlement cannot develop into a complex social entity if it consists merely of a group of people occupying a particular space without shared rules, decision-making mechanisms, and institutions governing relationships among community members. The governance and political dimension therefore constitutes a critical element in transforming a settlement from a place of habitation into a shared living environment characterized by civic relationships, collective responsibilities, and institutional order.

Conceptually, the political dimension of civic settlement concerns the formation of social order through the distribution of authority, formulation of rules, and legitimation of leadership. The literature on political settlements demonstrates that the stability and continuity of communities are strongly influenced by relationships among power, institutions, and the rules governing collective life. Institutions should not be understood solely as formal organizational structures; they also encompass norms, conventions, and social practices that shape individual and collective behavior. Within civic settlement, therefore, governance provides the institutional framework through which community members negotiate interests, exercise authority, manage shared resources, and establish mechanisms for collective decision-making.

Historically, systems of law have frequently emerged alongside increasing social complexity. As populations expand and social and economic activities become more diversified, communities require increasingly sophisticated rules concerning territorial ownership, conflict resolution, resource distribution, public responsibilities, and spatial management. Law, therefore, functions not merely as an administrative instrument but also as a mechanism for maintaining social relationships and sustaining collective order within a settlement. The institutionalization of rules enables communities to establish predictable patterns of interaction and provides mechanisms through which competing interests can be regulated.

This process can be observed in the historical development of San José, California. Following its establishment in 1777, San José subsequently received formal legal recognition as a city through the State of California in 1850. This trajectory illustrates that the development of a civic settlement depends not only on the presence of a community and its social and economic activities but also on institutional processes that provide political and legal recognition to its existence. At the local level, settlements also develop internal rules governing collective life. Such rules may concern territorial boundaries, resource management, conflict resolution, and sanctions for violations of community norms (Seeliger, 1909). These arrangements demonstrate that communities within civic settlements may develop regulatory capacities and forms of self-governance even before acquiring more formal administrative status.

The development of civic settlement is also closely associated with the emergence of governmental structures. As communities grow in size and complexity, they require individuals or institutions with recognized authority to coordinate collective interests and manage common affairs. This can be illustrated by the development of early communities in Texas, which gradually evolved toward forms of local government involving public officials and municipal councils as early manifestations of civic government (Gonzales, 2019). Government, therefore, should not be viewed merely as an institution that emerges after a city has been fully established. Rather, governance can constitute a formative mechanism through which communities coordinate collective action and develop increasingly complex forms of social organization.

From this perspective, governance serves as a critical link connecting people, space, and social systems. Without effective governance, shared resources, public facilities, and communal spaces may become sources of competing interests and social conflict. Conversely, governance that is responsive to community needs can transform a settlement from a merely habitable environment into a space capable of supporting the development and well-being of its residents. The quality of a civic settlement, therefore, is determined not solely by the availability of physical infrastructure but also by the quality of relationships between communities and the institutions responsible for governing their shared environment.

Nevertheless, the political dimension of civic settlement is inherently complex because authority and legitimacy are not necessarily stable or permanent. They may change in response to shifts in political power, institutional arrangements, and competing claims to authority. The case of Nitra in the historical Kingdom of Hungary illustrates how the legal status and political authority of a settlement can be transformed through changes in political power. In 1248, Nitra was granted autonomous privileges in recognition of the services provided by its inhabitants to the king; however, these privileges were subsequently lost in 1288 when authority shifted toward the local ecclesiastical institution (Szende, 2016). This historical example demonstrates that the institutional character of a civic settlement is continually shaped by processes of political negotiation, authority, and legitimacy.

The political dimension is also evident in the relationship between settlements and the formation of states. As stated in the Montevideo Convention of 1933, effective government constitutes one of the essential elements associated with statehood (League of Nations, 1936). Within the conceptual framework of civic settlement, this relationship can be interpreted as indicating that settled communities provide an important context in which humans initially develop systems of rules, leadership, authority, and institutional organization that may subsequently contribute to more complex forms of political organization. Civic settlement, therefore, can be viewed as an important socio-spatial foundation through which political institutions and collective governance develop.

Beyond civil administration, security and defense also constitute important components of the political dimension of civic settlement. Numerous historical settlements developed in response to military requirements, either as defensive centers or as communities supporting military activities. Pueblo de San José, for example, was initially closely associated with the logistical requirements of the Spanish military. Civilian inhabitants were established in the area to support food production and other material needs of military forces (Connors, 2016). Similarly, various Roman settlements developed around military forts that subsequently became centers of urban growth. Manchester, for instance, developed from a settlement surrounding the Roman fort of Mamucium (Pelzer et al., 2012). These examples demonstrate that security, defense, and military organization can influence the spatial development and institutional transformation of settlements.

Taken together, these historical and conceptual perspectives demonstrate that the governance and political dimension transforms civic settlement into an organized system of collective life characterized by rules, authority, institutions, and mechanisms of decision-making. If the human dimension addresses the question of who builds and sustains civic settlement, and the cultural and spiritual dimension explains the values and meanings that guide collective life, the governance and political dimension explains how communities organize themselves, regulate relationships, exercise authority, and sustain their collective existence.

Accordingly, civic settlement should not be understood merely as a group of people permanently occupying a particular geographical space. It represents a form of political and social community in which people establish rules, institutional structures, authority relationships, and mechanisms for collective decision-making. The governance and political dimension consequently provides an institutional foundation through which settlements can evolve from relatively simple communities into increasingly complex, organized, and civilized forms of collective life.

Spatial-Ecological Dimension: Space, Environment, and the Sustainability of Civic Settlement

The spatial-ecological dimension is essential to understanding the development of civic settlement because human communities are inherently connected to the spaces in which they live, interact, and organize their collective activities. A civic settlement does not emerge within a neutral spatial context; rather, it develops through reciprocal relationships between human communities, geographical conditions, natural resources, and the surrounding environment. Accordingly, space should not be understood merely as a physical location but as a living environment that influences

the social, economic, political, and ecological trajectories of a community. The spatial-ecological dimension therefore emphasizes that the development and continuity of civic settlement depend on the interaction between human agency and environmental conditions.

From this perspective, space functions simultaneously as a setting and a formative factor in the development of civic settlement. Every location possesses particular characteristics that may facilitate or constrain community growth, including resource availability, geographical conditions, accessibility, and the capacity of communities to adapt to environmental circumstances. Almeida (2003) argues that settlement development cannot be separated from geographical features because the characteristics of space influence the physical and political boundaries within which communities develop. Spatial conditions therefore constitute not merely a background to human activity but an active component in shaping the possibilities and limitations of collective life.

One important aspect of the spatial dimension is the use of mapping as an instrument for documenting, understanding, and organizing the existence of civic settlements. Throughout history, maps have served not only as geographical representations but also as forms of documentation that establish the presence of communities and contribute to the recognition and legitimation of the territories they occupy. The historical map of Beauvais, France, for example, demonstrates how settlements and civic structures could be documented through detailed spatial representations. In contemporary contexts, the mapping of historical civic settlements has increasingly incorporated technologies such as drones, ground-penetrating radar (GPR), and computer-based modeling to identify traces of settlements that were previously difficult to detect (Abshire et al., 2018; Garcia, 2020; Verhagen, 2017). These developments demonstrate that spatial knowledge is important not only for identifying settlement patterns but also for understanding their historical continuity and transformation.

Beyond mapping, access to water represents one of the most influential geographical factors in the development of civic settlements. Historical evidence indicates that many major settlements emerged along rivers because waterways provided essential resources while simultaneously supporting agriculture, trade, transportation, and human mobility. The development of settlements along the Gradac River in Serbia and the Bassiana area in Hungary, located near the Rába River, illustrates how access to water contributed to the establishment and persistence of settled communities (Buda et al., 2012; Matić et al., 2007). Water resources consequently functioned not only as sources of basic human needs but also as strategic assets that supported the expansion of social and economic systems.

The relationship between rivers and settlement development is also evident in the history of major cities around the world. London, for instance, developed from the Roman settlement of Londinium, established in the first century CE in a strategically important location near the River Thames. Its geographical setting provided opportunities for transportation, trade, communication, and economic development. Similarly, Kansas City in the United States developed from an early river-based stopping point that subsequently evolved into an important center of community and economic activity (Priest, 2004). These historical trajectories illustrate how geographical accessibility and water-based networks can influence the emergence and transformation of settlements into more complex civic centers.

The significance of water within civic settlement extends beyond human consumption. Water resources support production systems, transportation, sanitation, public health, and broader economic activities. Rivers have historically functioned as strategic life-support systems that enable communities to develop socially and economically (Martinez, 1998; Wilby, 2012). In the Roman context, water-management infrastructure represented an important indicator of the organizational and technological development of civic settlements, while during the Ottoman period, public facilities such as baths and fountains demonstrated how water management became embedded within everyday public life (Evans, 1885; Özgüven, 2004). These examples demonstrate that the capacity to manage water is closely associated with the institutional, technological, and social complexity of a settlement.

Nevertheless, the relationship between civic settlement and the environment is not inherently beneficial. Dependence on natural resources, particularly rivers, can simultaneously generate ecological vulnerabilities. Proximity to rivers may provide substantial economic and social advantages while increasing exposure to hazards such as flooding. Urano et al. (2025) demonstrate

that the historical tendency of communities to establish settlements near rivers creates continuing challenges associated with hydrological hazards. In addition to flooding, historical civic settlements have faced geological hazards, including land movement and ground instability, which can disrupt settlement continuity and threaten community well-being (Meurs & Colautti, 2006; Meurs & Verhoef, 2006). These conditions demonstrate that environmental resources and environmental risks are inseparable components of settlement development.

Consequently, the long-term development of civic settlement requires a capacity for ecological adaptation. Communities that successfully persist over time are not necessarily those with the greatest abundance of natural resources, but those capable of managing the relationship between human needs and environmental carrying capacity. This adaptive capacity becomes increasingly important in contemporary contexts, where population growth, industrialization, and urbanization intensify pressure on land, water, ecosystems, and other environmental resources. Sustainability therefore requires communities to move beyond resource exploitation toward forms of spatial and ecological management that maintain the conditions necessary for collective life across generations.

The need for ecological balance is reflected in the importance of public open spaces, parks, and green areas within civic settlements. Green spaces serve functions extending beyond aesthetic improvement; they contribute to quality of life, facilitate social interaction, reduce psychological pressures, and support environmental health. Urban forests and other natural resources likewise need to be incorporated into spatial planning and sustainability strategies so that settlements can accommodate population growth while maintaining environmental capacity for future generations (E. Summerfield, 2023). In this sense, ecological planning is not an external consideration added to settlement development but an integral component of sustaining civic life.

The ecological dimension is also closely connected to public health. A growing civic settlement requires adequate sanitation, environmental cleanliness, and health infrastructure to maintain the well-being of its population. Historical experience demonstrates that failures in environmental and health management can contribute to the decline or even collapse of communities through the spread of infectious diseases such as malaria (Craik, 2020). Thus, the sustainability of civic settlement depends not only on the capacity to construct and organize physical space but also on the capacity to maintain a healthy and resilient living environment. Environmental quality consequently becomes a fundamental condition for the continuity of collective life.

Taken together, the spatial and ecological dimension demonstrates that civic settlement emerges through a dynamic relationship between people and the environments they inhabit. Space provides resources, boundaries, opportunities, and constraints, while human communities attribute meaning to space, manage its resources, adapt to its conditions, and transform it through collective action. If the human dimension identifies the primary actors who constitute civic settlement, the cultural and spiritual dimension identifies the values and meanings that guide collective life, and the governance and political dimension explains the mechanisms through which communities organize and regulate themselves, the spatial-ecological dimension explains how relationships between communities and their environments enable civic settlement to persist, adapt, and develop.

Accordingly, civic settlement should not be conceptualized merely as a place where people reside, but as a socio-ecological system that integrates space, natural resources, environmental conditions, and collective human life. Its long-term sustainability depends on the capacity of communities to maintain an adaptive balance between human needs, spatial development, resource utilization, and environmental carrying capacity. The spatial-ecological dimension therefore provides an essential foundation for understanding how civic settlement can remain resilient, sustainable, and capable of supporting the continuity of collective life and civilizational development.

Economic and Knowledge Dimension: Productive Activities, Innovation, and the Transmission of Civilization within Civic Settlement

The economic and knowledge dimension is a critical component for explaining how civic settlement develops from a place of residence into a center of productive activity, innovation, knowledge generation, and civilizational development. Human settlement within a particular space generates not only basic needs for survival but also the emergence of economic networks, production systems, knowledge exchange, and educational institutions that enable communities to develop and sustain increasingly complex forms of collective life. From this perspective, economic capacity and

knowledge production constitute important mechanisms through which a civic settlement acquires the capacity to grow, adapt, and transmit its accumulated achievements across generations.

Throughout the historical development of civic settlements, economic factors have frequently served as major drivers of territorial and community growth. Settlements tend to expand when they have access to transportation networks, natural resources, trading centers, markets, or productive opportunities. Economic activity provides communities with the material resources required to maintain their population, develop infrastructure, and support institutional development. Consequently, the existence and continuity of civic settlement cannot be separated from the capacity of communities to establish economic systems capable of sustaining collective life.

One of the principal factors contributing to economic development within civic settlement is connectivity through transportation networks. Strategically located settlements along major trade routes or transportation corridors have often functioned as catalysts for population growth and economic expansion. Munoz et al. (2010) and Roell (2014) demonstrate that several settlements developed because of their location along important transportation routes connecting different territories. La Bahia in Texas, for example, developed into an important commercial area partly because of its strategic position along routes facilitating the movement of people and goods. Such cases demonstrate that accessibility can create economic opportunities that encourage settlements to become increasingly interconnected and functionally complex.

The relationship between transportation and economic development is also evident in the history of Carnuntum, a Roman civic settlement that developed partly because of its location along trade routes connecting raw-material-producing regions in the Baltic area with the Roman world. Its strategic position facilitated economic activities, infrastructure development, and increasing social complexity. This trajectory demonstrates how accessibility can contribute to the transformation of a settlement into an economic center. Maritime transportation networks have likewise played a major role in the development of coastal civic settlements. Many communities emerged and expanded around coastal areas because of their proximity to maritime trade routes, facilitating the exchange of goods, cultural practices, and knowledge across regions Muth et al. (2016). Transportation, therefore, functions not merely as a means of physical mobility but also as a mechanism connecting communities through broader social, economic, cultural, and intellectual networks.

Economic development within civic settlement is further associated with trade, production, and population concentration. Historical evidence suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship between population growth and economic activity. Increasing populations generate demand for goods and services, while expanding commercial opportunities attract additional residents and productive activities. Archaeological evidence, including coins, production tools, and food remains, provides important indicators of economic interaction and the development of settlement systems. Such evidence demonstrates that economic activity is an integral component of understanding how settlements evolve from relatively simple communities into more complex social systems.

Economic relationships among settlements can also be identified through the geographical distribution of similar currencies across different locations. The discovery of common monetary forms indicates the existence of trade networks connecting one civic settlement with another (Zhivkov & Varbanov, 2024). A civic settlement, therefore, does not develop as an isolated entity but as part of broader networks of exchange and interdependence. These networks expand the economic and social horizons of communities while simultaneously facilitating the circulation of materials, technologies, cultural practices, and knowledge.

Nevertheless, economic development is not limited to trade and exchange; it is also strongly associated with technological capacity and productive innovation. Technology enables communities to increase production, manage resources, improve infrastructure, and respond to changing environmental and social conditions. Evidence from Roman civic settlements, for example, indicates the development of metalworking technologies and industrial production, reflecting substantial levels of economic specialization and organizational complexity (Evans, 1885). Metalworking was important not only for economic production but also for technological development and defense capabilities (Brown, 2011). The emergence of specialized production thus demonstrates how economic activities can contribute simultaneously to material prosperity, technological advancement, and institutional complexity.

The adoption of technology within civic settlements does not occur uniformly because it is conditioned by geographical circumstances, economic resources, social structures, and political decisions. Technological development therefore depends on whether communities can adapt innovations to local needs and institutional conditions rather than simply acquire new tools. In this framework, technology is treated as part of the capacity through which communities reorganize productive systems, manage resources, and respond to changing social and environmental demands. Its relevance to Civic Settlement lies in this adaptive function, which connects material production with accumulated knowledge and collective problem solving. Technological innovation should consequently be interpreted as one component of settlement continuity rather than as an independent indicator of civilizational advancement.

Alongside economic and technological development, knowledge constitutes a fundamental resource for the continuity of civic settlement. Education serves as a mechanism for transmitting values, cultural traditions, skills, knowledge, and collective experiences to subsequent generations. L. Summerfield (2017) emphasizes that educational facilities are integral to settlement development because communities require knowledge and skills to understand, manage, and utilize the facilities and resources available within their environment. Education consequently contributes not only to individual development but also to the reproduction and advancement of the collective capacities upon which settlement continuity depends.

Historically, education has not been limited to formal institutions because communities also transmit practical knowledge, norms, and cultural meanings through everyday and intergenerational learning. Biobaku and Fatonji (2022), for example, discuss educational processes in the Nigerian context, while the Akur community in Indonesia illustrates how schooling can combine national values with local cultural traditions (Indratno et al., 2020). Such examples suggest that education within Civic Settlement performs both adaptive and continuity functions: it equips community members with knowledge while transmitting shared cultural and civic orientations. The educational dimension is therefore not restricted to schools but includes the wider social processes through which a community reproduces and revises what it knows. This interpretation links knowledge transmission to the continuity of collective life without assuming that all communities organize learning in the same institutional form.

The relationship between education and civic settlement is further reflected in approaches that integrate educational institutions with their surrounding communities. Scott & Bromley (2013) introduced the concepts of *civicollege* and *civicentre*, emphasizing that educational environments should not be isolated from the communities in which they are located. Instead, they can function as collaborative spaces that facilitate knowledge exchange, community engagement, and mutual learning between educational institutions and local residents. From this perspective, education contributes not only to the production of educated individuals but also to the development of collective knowledge, social capacity, and civic participation within the settlement.

Preservation and recreation also constitute important components of the knowledge dimension because they contribute to the maintenance of collective memory and the transmission of historical identity. Preservation initiatives such as the Historic Landscape Project in England demonstrate that territorial development does not necessarily require the removal of historical characteristics. Instead, development can incorporate the preservation of historical landscapes and cultural heritage (Council, 2009). Heritage preservation enables civic settlements to function as educational environments while also creating economic opportunities through tourism, cultural activities, and recreation. In this respect, collective memory becomes not merely a symbolic resource but also an asset that can support cultural continuity and sustainable local development.

Taken together, the economic and knowledge dimension demonstrates that the development of civic settlement depends not only on the presence of people and the availability of space but also on the capacity of communities to create, organize, exchange, and transmit knowledge while developing productive economic systems. Economic activity provides the material and organizational vitality necessary for collective life, whereas education, innovation, and knowledge transmission provide the adaptive capacity required for long-term continuity. The interaction between these elements enables settlements to respond to changing circumstances while preserving and developing the knowledge and cultural resources accumulated over time.

Based on this synthesis, the economic and knowledge dimension can be conceptualized as a transformative mechanism through which civic settlement develops from a basic community into a center of productivity, innovation, knowledge, and civilizational development. If the human dimension identifies the actors who constitute civic settlement, the cultural and spiritual dimension identifies the values and meanings that guide collective life, the governance and political dimension explains the mechanisms through which the community is organized and regulated, and the spatial-ecological dimension explains the relationship between the community, space, and environment, the economic and knowledge dimension explains how civic settlement grows, adapts, produces knowledge, develops innovation, and transmits accumulated civilizational achievements to subsequent generations.

Discussion

The synthesis indicates that Civic Settlement is best understood as a relational system rather than as a synonym for a physically developed settlement. Contemporary human-settlement research increasingly treats settlements as socio-ecological systems in which actors, resources, governance, and environmental conditions interact (Liu et al., 2024; Zhong et al., 2023). This systems orientation supports the present framework but does not by itself explain the civic processes through which residents develop shared obligations, participation, belonging, and institutional relationships. The proposed concept extends settlement analysis by treating these processes as constitutive of the settlement rather than as external social outcomes. This interpretation is also consistent with multidimensional sustainability research showing that settlement quality cannot be reduced to infrastructure or environmental performance alone (S. Chen et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2023). The contribution of Civic Settlement is therefore the integration of socio-spatial and civic logics within the same analytical unit.

The human dimension clarifies why population should be interpreted as organized agency rather than as demographic presence alone. Studies of migration and neighborhood belonging show that settlement experiences depend on social ties, institutional access, residential conditions, and opportunities for participation, all of which shape whether residents experience a place as socially meaningful (Liu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023). This supports the framework's emphasis on collective identity and social relations, while also placing a limit on any assumption that permanent residence automatically produces civic integration. Research on urban and migrant communities demonstrates that exclusion, uncertainty, and unequal access to local resources can coexist with long-term habitation (Liu et al., 2022; Lin et al., 2024). Civic Settlement therefore requires attention to the quality and organization of social relationships, not merely the stability of population. The human dimension contributes to the framework by specifying the actors through whom all other dimensions are enacted and negotiated.

The cultural and spiritual dimension explains how inhabited space acquires shared meaning, but the literature suggests that this process is neither automatic nor culturally uniform. Place-attachment studies identify memory, identity, social ties, and cultural heritage as important in residents' relationships with their neighborhoods (Boffi et al., 2023; Falanga, 2022; Schmidt et al., 2024). Research on religious space similarly shows that places of worship can contribute to belonging and social integration while retaining meanings that differ across communities and migrant groups (Mei et al., 2022). These findings support the inclusion of cultural and spiritual values as a distinct dimension, while cautioning against treating any single religious or cultural model as universally constitutive of Civic Settlement. In the proposed framework, the relevant mechanism is the production and transmission of shared meanings that orient collective life. This formulation preserves cultural variation while explaining why symbolic and normative attachments to place matter for settlement continuity.

The governance and political dimension positions participation, authority, and institutional arrangements as mechanisms through which collective life becomes organized. Recent reviews of local planning show that public participation ranges from information access and consultation to more active involvement, and that the depth of participation affects whether decision-making is experienced as legitimate or merely procedural (Abas et al., 2023; Heyik et al., 2024). Case studies of redevelopment also show that collaborative governance can improve negotiation and spatial outcomes while still excluding less powerful groups (Gong et al., 2023). Similarly, analyses of event and public-space governance warn that participatory rhetoric does not necessarily redistribute

decision-making power (Guillard & McGillivray, 2022). These studies refine the Civic Settlement framework by indicating that governance should be evaluated through relationships among rules, authority, participation, and inclusion rather than by the presence of formal institutions alone. Civic engagement may also emerge through self-organized practices outside official planning structures, further supporting a broader conception of local civic agency (Horelli & Wallin, 2024).

The spatial-ecological dimension provides the material conditions within which civic relations operate and sets limits on settlement continuity. Research on rural human-settlement resilience shows that environmental resources, governance systems, and community actors interact in determining adaptive capacity (X. Chen et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024). Studies of community conservation similarly demonstrate that education, cultural practices, environmental quality, and management arrangements can jointly shape socio-ecological resilience (Zhou et al., 2024). This means that environmental stewardship in Civic Settlement is not simply an ecological add-on but part of the collective organization of shared resources and risks. The importance of public and green space also connects ecological quality with social cohesion because accessibility, safety, design, and cultural inclusiveness influence how spaces support interaction (Clarke et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2024). The spatial-ecological dimension thus links habitat sustainability to the civic capacity to manage common environments across time.

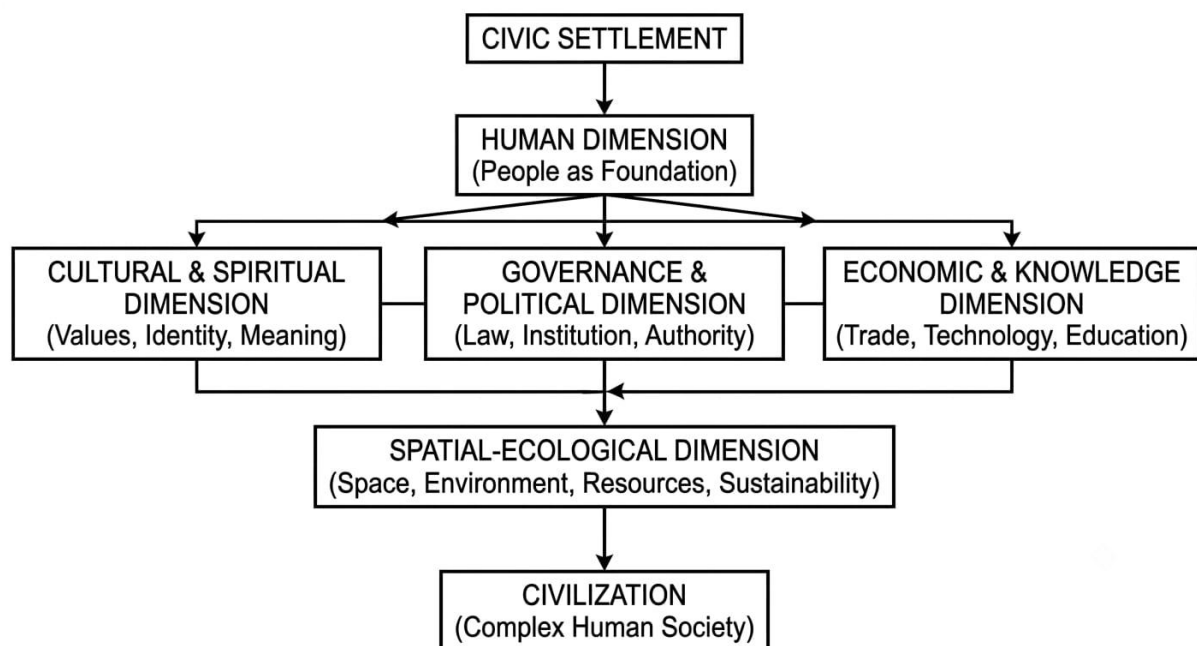


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Civic Settlement as a Foundation for Civilization Formation

The economic and knowledge dimension explains how settlements sustain material life while generating the adaptive capacities needed for continuity. Knowledge-centered urban research shows that innovation depends on learning, networks, and interaction among institutions and communities rather than on technology in isolation (Anthony, 2024; Banerjee & Petersen, 2024). This complements historical evidence in the source literature that trade, transportation, production, and education contribute to increasing settlement complexity. Within Civic Settlement, economic activity supplies material resources, while knowledge production and transmission support adaptation, institutional learning, and intergenerational continuity. These functions also interact with governance because access to resources and knowledge is shaped by institutional arrangements and patterns of inclusion. The dimension should therefore not be interpreted as an argument that economic growth automatically produces civic development; rather, it identifies productive and learning capacities that can support or constrain collective life depending on how they are organized.

The five dimensions are analytically distinguishable but function as an interdependent system. People enact values and institutions; cultural meanings shape interpretations of place; governance coordinates shared decisions; ecological conditions create opportunities and constraints; and economic and knowledge processes supply material and adaptive capacity. Recent research on community renewal and multicultural place governance reinforces this relational interpretation by

showing that physical change, institutional structure, social diversity, and everyday practice must be considered together (Lu et al., 2024; Mateo-Babiano & Fong, 2024). The conceptual figure should therefore be read as an integrative representation, not as a causal hierarchy in which one dimension mechanically produces the next. This distinction is important because the present review does not provide evidence for a universal sequence or relative weighting among dimensions. What it proposes is a set of necessary analytical domains through which the civic character of permanent settlements can be examined.

In the global literature, the framework occupies a position between human-settlement studies and place-based citizenship research. It differs from sustainability frameworks that primarily assess settlement performance by making civic relationships, meaning, participation, and knowledge transmission internal to the definition of settlement. It also differs from citizenship approaches that focus principally on rights, identities, or participation by specifying the ecological, spatial, productive, and knowledge conditions through which civic life is materially sustained. Recent work on civic engagement, multicultural governance, and social cohesion confirms the value of connecting everyday spatial practices with participation and belonging (Horelli & Wallin, 2024; Mateo-Babiano & Fong, 2024; Qi et al., 2024). The novelty of Civic Settlement therefore lies in conceptual integration rather than in claiming that any of its individual dimensions is new. Its empirical value remains to be tested through comparative research capable of determining how the dimensions interact, which configurations are context-dependent, and whether the framework can be operationalized without reducing historically and culturally specific forms of collective life to a single universal model.

CONCLUSION

This study conceptualizes Civic Settlement as a permanent and dynamic human living system in which collective life is organized through five interrelated dimensions: human; cultural and spiritual; governance and political; spatial-ecological; and economic and knowledge. The framework responds to a conceptual separation between settlement studies, which commonly emphasize spatial and socio-environmental systems, and citizenship scholarship, which emphasizes participation, belonging, responsibility, and institutions. By integrating these traditions, the study proposes that a settlement becomes civic not merely through physical permanence or administrative status, but through the ongoing organization of social relationships, shared meanings, governance, environmental stewardship, productive activity, and knowledge transmission. The framework therefore provides a conceptual vocabulary for examining how inhabited environments can support collective continuity and how everyday community organization may connect with broader processes of sustainable human development and civilization formation.

The conclusions should be interpreted within the limits of a Narrative Literature Review. The study does not establish causal relationships, assign weights to the five dimensions, or empirically demonstrate that the framework operates identically across cultural and geographical contexts. Future research should test the framework through comparative case studies, develop context-sensitive indicators for each dimension, and examine whether different configurations of the five dimensions are associated with different forms of civic integration, resilience, and settlement continuity. Empirical validation is also needed to determine which relationships are stable across contexts and which are historically or culturally specific. Such work would move Civic Settlement from a conceptual proposition toward an empirically assessable framework while preserving the interdisciplinary character established in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

HR: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, and Visualization. **CD:** Supervision, Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, and Writing – Review & Editing. **SF:** Formal Analysis, Data Curation, Investigation, and Writing – Review & Editing. **LA:** Methodology, Validation, Formal Analysis, and Visualization. **ST:** Investigation, Data Curation, and Writing – Original Draft. **JN:** Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, and Writing – Review & Editing. **MS:** Data Curation, Visualization, Project Administration, and Writing – Review &

Editing. All authors contributed to the interpretation of the results, reviewed the manuscript critically, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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