

## Original Paper

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## Challenges and potential of monotowns: a systematic literature review

**Relevance.** Monotowns, or single-industry settlements, are pivotal in the economic and social landscapes of former Soviet countries. This systematic literature review explores monotowns, examining their evolution, challenges and implications of these unique urban formations from the 18th century to the present day. The study's relevance lies in its comprehensive analysis of these towns, which have been significant yet underexplored in academic discourse.

**Research objective.** The objective of this review is to critically examine the multifaceted nature of monotowns, focusing on their socio-economic dynamics, challenges, and potential transformation. The review aims to elucidate the complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors that shape these towns and to identify unexplored areas in this field of study.

**Data and Methods.** To achieve these objectives, the study employs a systematic review protocol comprising four phases: search query, document type, publication stage, and language. This approach involves analyzing a wide range of sources from international and regional databases, ensuring a holistic view of monotowns that captures both historical and contemporary perspectives.

**Results.** Monotowns exhibit considerable resilience amidst economic fluctuations and confront distinct socio-economic challenges, including issues specific to mining monotowns and issues related to public health. The findings underscore the importance of adaptive strategies, corporate social responsibility, and proactive government intervention in addressing these challenges.

**Conclusion.** This review provides a comprehensive exploration of monotowns, contributing valuable insights for future research, particularly in understanding their socio-economic dynamics and the challenges they face. The study is significant for scholars in economic development of the territories and business studies, offering a foundation for further exploration of these unique urban formations.

### KEYWORDS

Monotowns, single-industry towns, company towns, single industry, systematic literature review, bibliometric analysis

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## Вызовы и перспективы моногородов: систематический обзор литературы

**Актуальность.** Моногорода, или монопрофильные населенные пункты, занимают центральное место в экономическом и социальном ландшафте бывших советских стран. В этом систематическом обзоре литературы исследуются моногорода, рассматривается их эволюция, проблемы и последствия создания этих уникальных городских образований, начиная с 18 века до наших дней. Актуальность исследования заключается в его всестороннем анализе этих городов, которые имеют большое значение, но недостаточно изучены в академическом дискурсе.

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### КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

моногорода, моноотраслевые города, промышленный город, моноотраслевая экономика, систематический обзор литературы, библиометрический анализ

**Цель исследования.** Целью данного обзора является критический анализ многогранной природы моногородов с акцентом на их социально-экономическую динамику, проблемы и потенциальную трансформацию. Анализ направлен на изучение сложного взаимодействия экономических, социальных и политических факторов, формирующих эти города, и выявление неизведанных областей в рамках этой тематики.

**Данные и методы.** Для достижения этих целей в исследовании используется протокол систематического обзора, состоящий из четырех этапов: поисковый запрос, этап публикации и язык. Этот подход предполагает анализ широкого спектра источников из международных и региональных баз данных, обеспечивая целостное представление о моногородах, отражающее как историческую, так и современную перспективу.

**Результаты.** Моногорода демонстрируют значительную устойчивость к экономическим колебаниям и сталкиваются с различными социально-экономическими проблемами, включая проблемы, характерные для горнодобывающих моногородов, и проблемы, связанные со здравоохранением. Результаты подчеркивают важность адаптивных стратегий, корпоративной социальной ответственности и активного вмешательства правительства в решение этих проблем.

**Заключение.** В этом обзоре представлено всестороннее исследование моногородов, что дает ценную информацию для будущих исследований, особенно для понимания их социально-экономической динамики и проблем, с которыми они сталкиваются. Исследование имеет большое значение для ученых в области экономического развития территорий и бизнеса, поскольку дает основу для дальнейшего изучения этих уникальных городских образований.

#### БЛАГОДАРНОСТИ

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#### ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

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### 单一产业城市的挑战与前景：文献系统回顾

**现实性：**单一城市或单一定居点在前苏联国家的经济和社会景观中占据着中心位置。这篇系统的文献综述探讨了单一城市的独特形态，研究了它们从 18 世纪初至今的演变、挑战和更广泛的影响。这项研究的意义在于作者对这些城市的全面分析，这些城市虽然很重要，但在学术讨论中尚未得到充分研究。

**研究目标：**本综述旨在批判性地分析单一产业城镇的多面性，重点关注其社会经济动态、挑战和潜在转型。分析旨在探讨影响这些城市的经济、社会和政治因素的相互作用，并确定这一主题的未知领域。

**数据与方法：**为了实现这些目标，本研究采用了一种系统性审查方案，包括四个阶段：搜索查询、文件类型、出版阶段和语言。这个方案包括分析国际和地区数据库中的各种资料来源，提供反映历史和当代视角下的单一产业城市。

**研究结果：**单一产业城市表现出对经济波动的显著适应能力。它面临着各种社会经济挑战，包括采矿产业城市特有的挑战和健康问题。研究结果强调了适应性战略、企业社会责任和政府积极干预在应对这些挑战方面的重要性。

**结论：**本综述对单一产业城市进行了全面研究，为今后的研究提供了有价值的信息，特别是有助于了解这些城市的社会经济动态及其面临的挑战。本文章为进一步研究这些独特的城市形态提供了基础，对经济地理学者和商业学者具有重要意义。

#### 关键词

单一城市、单一产业城市、单一工业经济、系统文献综述、文献计量分析

#### 供引用

Dirsehan, T., Shurenov, N., Tovma, N., Kozhamkulova, Zh., Akhmetova, Z. (2023). Challenges and potential of monotowns: a systematic literature review. *R-Economy*, 9(4), 437–455. doi: 10.15826/recon.2023.9.4.027

## Introduction

Monotowns, found in countries like Russia and Kazakhstan, are characterized not only by their demographic features but, more importantly, by their exclusive economic focus. Typically centered around a specific industry, these towns' economic and social prosperity depends on the success of that particular sector (Nurzhan, 2015). In Kazakhstan, towns with a population cap of up to 200,000 often exemplify the 'monotown' phenomenon, where the local economy is significantly influenced or dominated by a single industry. This demographic threshold underscores the tendency for smaller towns to evolve into monotowns, where the economic and social fabric is tightly interwoven with the fortunes of that predominant sector. The concept of monotowns is crucial not only for a better understanding of regional economic structures but also for analyzing broader socio-economic impacts and developmental strategies.

The conceptual inception of monotowns extends far beyond the Stalinist era. Although there's a prevalent narrative that links the prominence of monotowns primarily to the Stalinist period (Josephson, 2014; Venovcevs, 2021), it is essential to acknowledge the broader historical and global context of these urban formations. Monotowns have been a crucial element in shaping economic and social landscapes, especially in terms of industrial organization, since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century in Russia.

Analysis of these specialized settlements provides valuable insights when considering agglomeration, localized economies, and functional classification. This perspective reveals the complex interplay of their association with specific functional classes, influencing socio-economic trajectories and potentially leading to particular developmental patterns or lock-ins (Maksimova, 2015). The study of monotowns, therefore, offers significant value to both academic research and practical applications in regional development and urban planning.

This paper aims to bridge a knowledge gap by offering a comprehensive understanding of monotowns, a topic that has often been overlooked in systematic reviews. The study's objective is to present a nuanced examination of monotowns, exploring their characteristics, impacts, and evolution within different socio-economic frameworks.

To address this goal, we formulated the following research questions:

*RQ1:* What are the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of monotowns as discussed in the existing literature?

*RQ2:* What patterns can be observed in the publications discussing monotowns?

*RQ3:* What prospective avenues and focal points can be identified for future research on monotowns?

In dealing with these research questions, we adopted a dual methodological approach: firstly, through a systematic literature review (SLR) that canvassed international databases, and secondly, by delving deeper into non-indexed and regional studies via an extra literature review. This combined methodology not only enriches our understanding of the subject matter but also ensures a comprehensive analysis of both global and local perspectives.

In summary, this paper contributes to the existing literature by providing a detailed examination of monotowns, their role in socio-economic development, and their implications for future urban and industrial planning. The findings and discussions presented herein are intended to inform both academic discourse and practical decision-making in related fields.

## Theoretical framework

Even though they are not explicitly called so, monotowns or monotown-like cities exist in countries other than Russia and Kazakhstan, such as Slovakia and Poland. These cities display similar characteristics and challenges that can be observed in a global context.

In Slovakia, the term "monofunctional city" is used to describe monotowns, which emerged due to the country's previous industrial orientation. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, only a handful of cities with significant dominant companies successfully adjusted to the new socio-economic organization of the state. Monotowns like Podbrezová, Partizánske, and Svit exemplify this, being primarily characterized by steel and footwear industries. Nonetheless, these cities have diversified their economies in recent years by incorporating new industries and services (Blam et al., 2016).

While the term "monotown" is not explicitly used in Poland, the country has several "monofunctional cities" or small towns dominated by

a single enterprise or economic function. Typically small or medium-sized, these cities fall into three categories. Although certain cities faced challenges after the economic transformation, those within urban agglomerations have successfully developed new economic functions. Furthermore, some agricultural centers and specialized towns with exogenous economic functions have displayed signs of recovery (Blam et al., 2016).

The academic literature thoroughly explores the primary challenges encountered by monotowns, including environmental, economic, and social aspects, which we will consider in more detail.

### *Environmental challenges*

Historically, Russian monotowns have served as symbols of economic progress both in their respective regions and across the nation. However, these single-industry towns, predominantly established during the Soviet era around mining enterprises, have experienced significant environmental challenges over time (Pyzheva, 2020). Prominent challenges include mercury contamination causing the pollution of the Nura River in Temirtau, inadequate solid waste disposal facilities in Zyrianovsk, and occurrences of underground water flooding the town after mine inundations (Nurzhan, 2015). Consequently, these environmental issues have become urgent concerns for both residents and policymakers striving to tackle the complex problems encountered by monotowns.

### *Economic challenges*

Economic challenges in monotowns have become a significant problem, primarily arising from limited diversification, constrained prospects for further development of sustaining enterprises, and the local workforce and town budget's high dependence on these enterprises' performance (Nurzhan, 2015).

Economic factors, such as the type of industry, its level of development, the overall condition of the market, the level of competition, the profitability of the enterprise, and the state of its capital, contribute to the complex nature of unemployment. Demographic factors, including manpower strength, sex and age distribution, and workforce aging, also play a significant role in influencing employment outcomes. Furthermore, geographic factors like distance from major mar-

kets and urban centers can impact job availability and economic stability. It is also important to consider external factors, such as the global resource market, which can further exacerbate unemployment rates in monotowns (Nurzhan, 2015). Consequently, understanding and addressing these intertwined factors is crucial for tackling the economic challenges faced by monotowns.

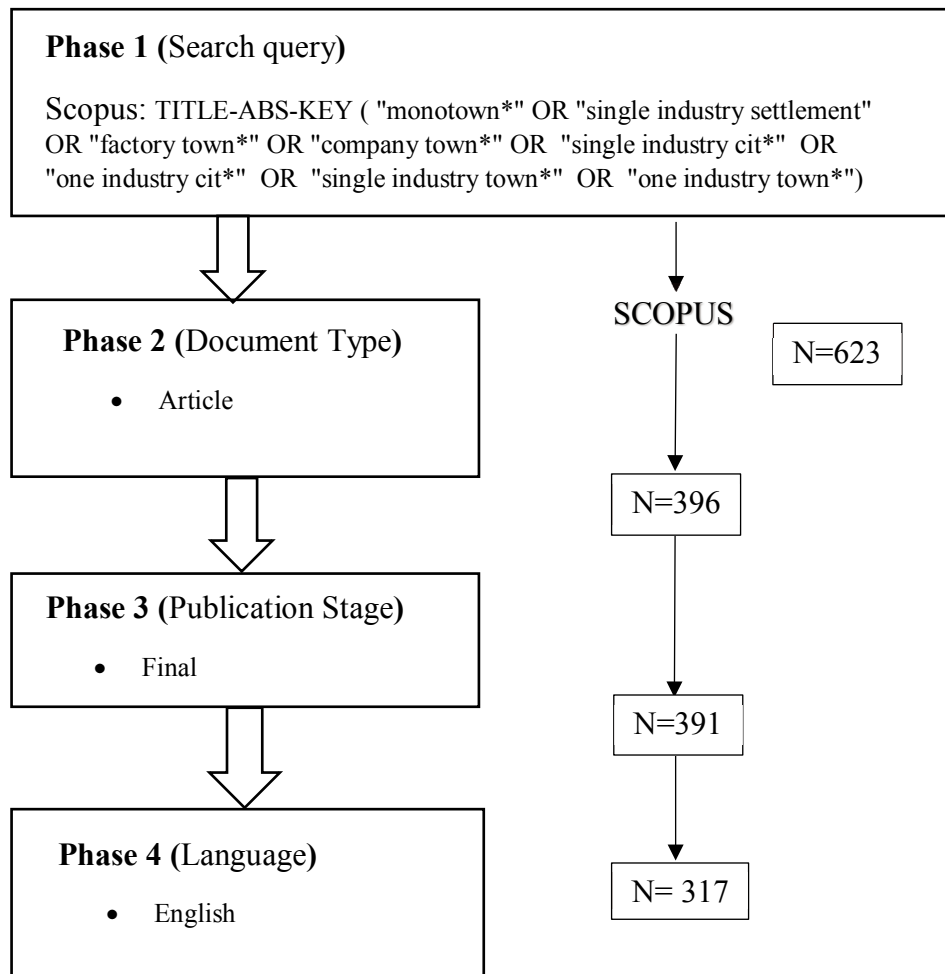
Monotowns face various social challenges, often stemming from the limited opportunities for diversification and growth beyond their dependence on dominant enterprises (Beleva et al., 2021). One such challenge is the recruitment, training, and retention of personnel in these towns. In monotowns employers face challenges in hiring skilled workers, providing specialized job training, and ensuring comfortable living conditions to attract and retain staff (Nikiforova et al., 2018).

For monotowns to achieve long-term sustainable development, there must be a balance of interests between the city, private capital, and the state. Among other things, it means that businesses need to be stimulated to be more socially responsible, local government and urban identity should be improved, while local communities should be more actively involved in municipal activities (Musina & Neucheva, 2018).

### *Social challenges faced by monotowns*

The economic challenges faced by monotowns often give rise to various social issues, such as high unemployment levels, low average incomes and living standards, population outflows, and an increased risk of social unrest (Nurzhan, 2015). Outbound mobility is common in these towns, as people believe that bigger cities offer more opportunities. In response, local authorities, main businesses and educational institutions are collaborating to promote education as an attraction and as a way to support progress (Veselkova et al., 2021).

Education plays a vital role in creating symbolic capital and enhancing the prestige of a locality. Cooperation between businesses, education, and municipal authorities should be an integral part of the town development strategy. Exploring new ways for businesses and education to interact, such as providing access to technical university degrees and trade schools in monotowns, has the potential to retain young people and generate the essential social and symbolic capital for development (Veselkova et al., 2021).



**Figure 1.** Review Protocol for the Data Collection Phase of the Systematic Literature Review

Ivanova (2021) points out the differences among single-industry towns based on factors like socio-economic development, population size, industry specialization, administrative status, and territorial distribution. Despite a decline in population in many of these towns, the current support programs lack customization. The population decrease is often linked to working-age people leaving due to environmental issues, inadequate healthcare, high unemployment, and low wages. The current diversification strategies haven't had a significant impact on labor market indicators, emphasizing the need for personalized measures tailored to the specific characteristics of each single-industry town when creating effective support programs.

### Methodology

Consistent with the purpose of our study, we conducted a systematic literature review (SLR). An SLR is a structured, transparent, comprehen-

sive, and replicable approach characterized by a pre-defined protocol. This method enables the identification and synthesis of all relevant published studies via a rigorous scientific methodology (Fink, 2019; Littell et al., 2008). To conduct SLR, a systematic reviewing protocol is needed to overcome bias (van Oorschot et al., 2018). Our review protocol starts with describing the rationale for the review and proposing the research questions. In line with the approach suggested by Crossan and Apaydin (2010), our study comprises the following stages: (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) synthesis. Additionally, we used the checklist described by Moher et al. (2015), recommending items to include in a systematic review.

Our systematic literature review began with a search query using the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus bibliographic databases, recognized for their comprehensiveness (Pranckutė, 2021) and widespread use in literature reviews (Martín-Martín et al., 2018). In the literature,

terms like “monotown,” “single-industry settlement,” “factory town,” and “company town” are often used interchangeably (Shastitko & Fatikhova, 2015). To align with the search capabilities of our chosen databases, we crafted a search query using these keywords along with ‘single industry cities.’ The search was limited to these terms appearing in the “title,” “abstract,” and “keywords” sections of research articles, and we focused on articles written in English. The steps and the number of articles at each stage in the data collection phase are detailed in the review protocol shown in Figure 1.

In the second stage of our SLR, the articles retrieved from the Scopus and WoS databases were meticulously read and examined by the authors. This rigorous review was undertaken to ensure that all results aligned with our research criteria. Following this comprehensive evaluation, all 317 articles initially obtained in the first stage were deemed suitable and, consequently, were selected to proceed to the next step of our systematic review.

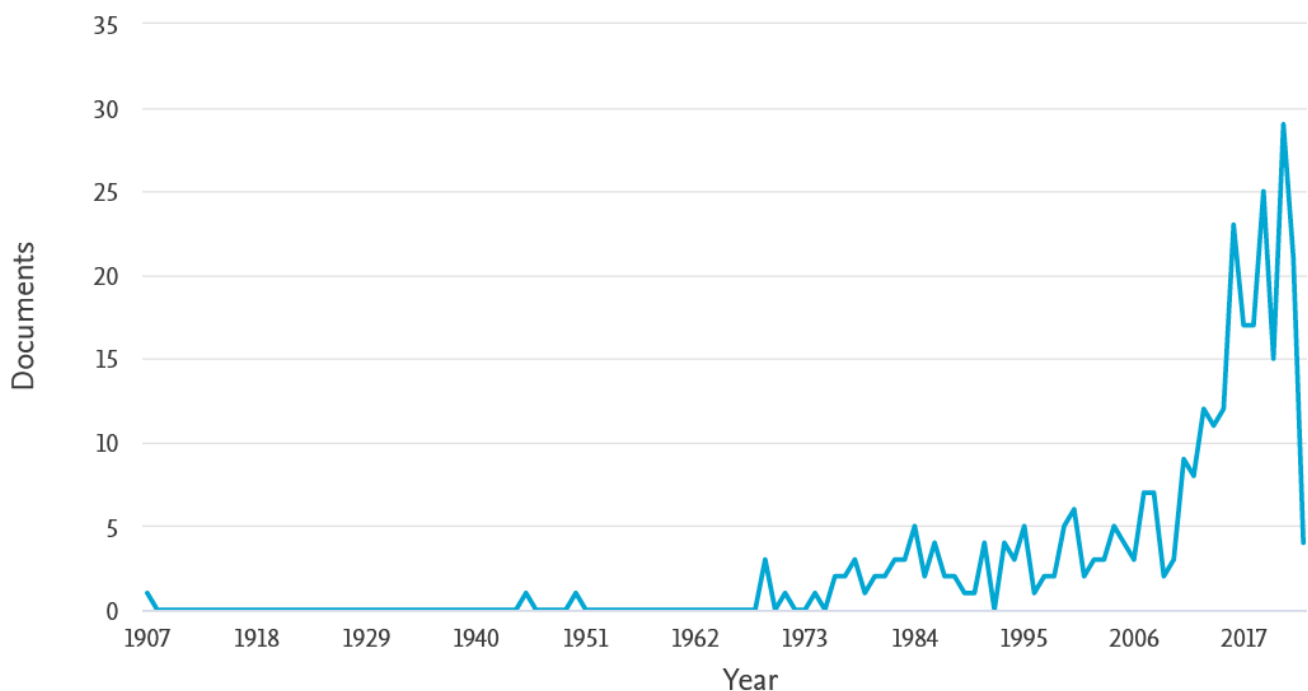
In the third stage of our systematic review, we employed the bibliometric analysis technique known as bibliographic coupling to uncover thematic similarities between studies. This method, particularly useful for new publications, emerg-

ing fields, and less developed sub-fields (Zupic & Čater, 2015), measures the similarities between two papers by examining their shared references, with the premise that papers with more common references are strongly interconnected (Suchek et al., 2021). The bibliographic coupling analysis was performed using VOSviewer software, version 1.6.19. This approach facilitated the identification of clusters representing more recent research themes, revealing interconnected themes and patterns in the selected studies.

## Results

### *Descriptive analysis*

The data collection protocol yielded a total of 317 articles pertaining to monotowns, single industry settlements, factory towns, company towns, single industry cities, one industry cities, single industry towns, and one industry towns, as depicted in Figure 1. The trends and fluctuations in the number of these articles published annually are illustrated in Figure 2. The oldest article identified in our data collection dates to 1907, even predating the establishment of the Soviet Union, which is notably associated with the concept of monotowns. This research, titled “The Social Work of a Church in a Factory Town” by Evans (1907), underscores the longstanding schol-



**Figure 2.** *The Cluster of Annual Output in Publications*

Source: Based on the authors’ analysis of publications in the Scopus database.

arly interest in such single-industry communities. The scholarly interest and research output on monotowns have notably increased, particularly from the 1980s onwards, culminating in a peak of 29 articles published in 2021 alone. This trend underlines the growing relevance and importance of studying monotowns in contemporary academic discourse.

The initial wave of articles from the 1970s to 1980s concentrated on the rise and growth of monotowns, exploring the topic mainly from an economic viewpoint. (Alanen, 1977; von Rabenau, 1976). From the 1980s to the 1990s, the analysis of monotowns extended to incorporate social (Krahn & Gartrell, 1983) and governmental perspectives (Krahn & Gartrell, 1983). The period between 1990 and 2000 was a time of significant transition for monotowns, with a series of important research contributions shedding light on the intricate interplay between dominant industries and the socio-economic fabrics of these single-industry towns. The era was marked by pivotal changes in global and local economies, including the closure or downsizing of major industries, which necessitated a shift toward economic diversification, as seen in the case of Kamaishi (Wiltshire, 1991). The research during this period began to investigate deeper into the labor dynamics in monotowns, exploring how dominant companies' efforts to stabilize their workforces could reinforce non-capitalist social structures, as exemplified by the Pilgrim's Rest study (Bonner & Shapiro, 1993). Additionally, researchers started to probe into the social dimension of monotowns, tying income, education, home ownership, and health status to neighborhood cohesion, as observed in the Elliot Lake research (Robinson & Wilkinson, 1995). The Kazakhstani research painted a vivid picture of the welfare impacts of company downsizing in these monotowns (Rama & Scott, 1999). Overall, the period of 1990-2000 marked a significant expansion and deepening of academia's understanding of the socio-economic realities of monotowns and the challenges they face.

Studies published between 2000 and 2010 show a shift in focus from the effects of industry downsizing or closure on one-company towns, which dominated the 1990s, to exploring the resilience, adaptability, and transformation of such towns in response to broader socioeconomic changes. This period saw an increased interest in

how these towns diversified their economies, capitalized on human capital, and reimagined their identities. The early 21st century was characterized by rapid globalization, technological innovation, and the growing influence of the knowledge economy, and these developments are reflected in the studies. The examination of Silicon Valley as a modern, high-tech variant of the company town illustrates this shift in focus (English-Lueck, 2000). Furthermore, there was an increasing emphasis on understanding the social and cultural dynamics of one-company towns, including the changing relationships between corporations and their communities (Phillimore & Bell, 2005), the impact of work on community life (English-Lueck, 2000), and the historical and colonial influences on urban planning in company towns (Rego & Meneguetti, 2008). This decade's research therefore presents a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of one-company towns, acknowledging their potential for transformation and reinvention in the face of industrial and economic changes.

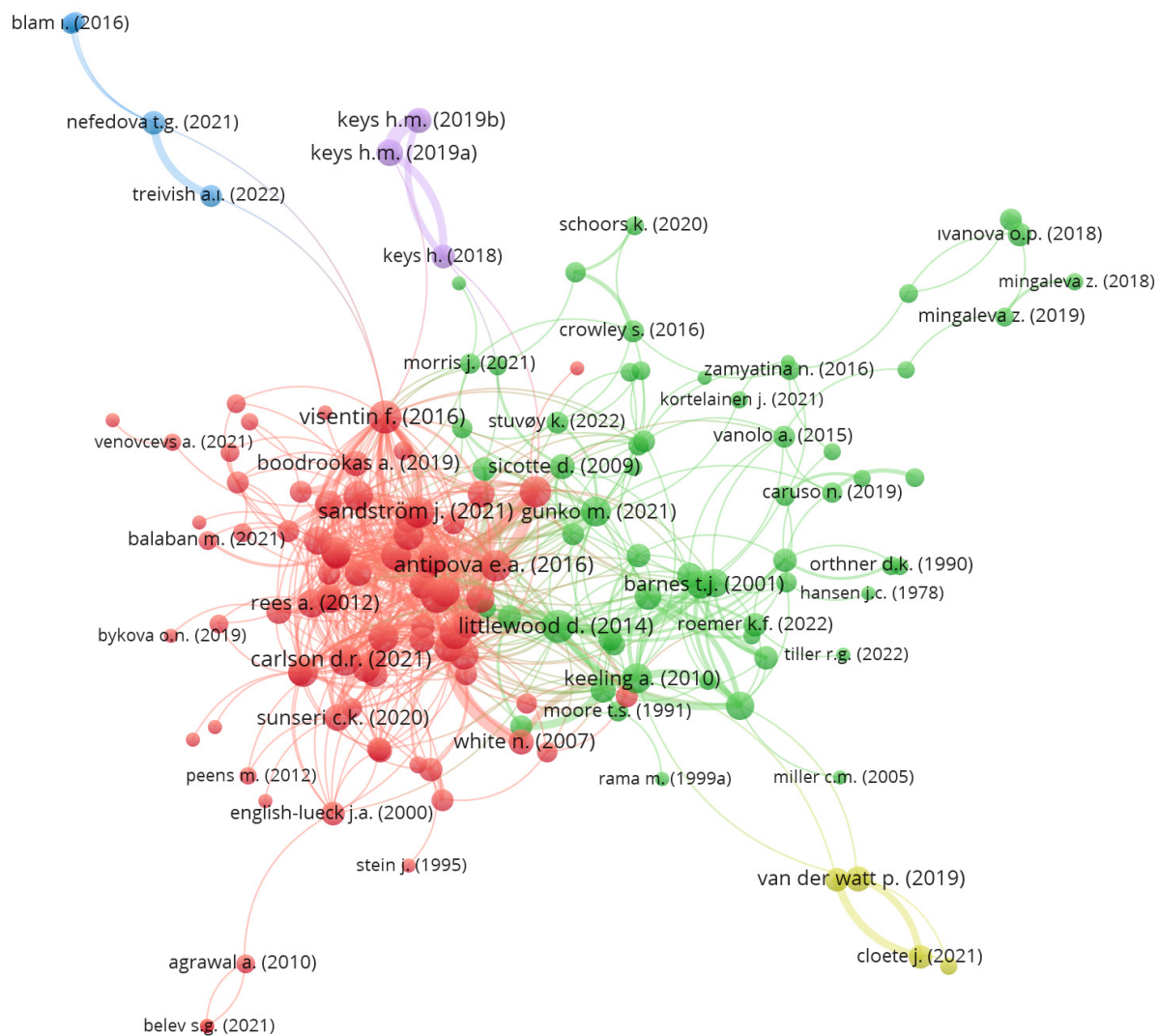
The post-2010 period marked a significant shift in the study of company towns, characterized by a deeper investigation into their socio-economic intricacies. Researchers turned their focus to understanding how broader global phenomena such as neoliberal policies, globalization, and changing labor practices affected these towns. Scholars also started to pay more attention to the historical context, the urban planning process, and the socio-cultural dynamics within these towns. Comparisons across cultures and continents became more common, with studies investigating parallels and differences between company towns in countries such as India (Sanchez, 2012), Iran (Jafari, 2013), Kuwait (Alissa, 2013), Russia (Satybaldina, 2013), and the United States (Satybaldina, 2015). The research also focused on the consequences of dependence on a single industry, including the resultant social risks and challenges in innovation and adaptability. There was an increase in studies dealing with specific cases, such as the collapse of unions due to political affiliations or the effectiveness of policy programs aimed at fostering growth (Cooly, 2014). This period represented a more critical and comprehensive approach to the analysis of company towns, showcasing the diverse and interconnected factors that influence their development and survival.

### Analysis of bibliographic coupling

We used the VOSViewer 1.6.19 program to perform bibliographic classifications of the documents, aiming to identify the main themes in research on monotowns. Out of the 317 articles, the program associated 150. Following this, we needed to establish two key parameters. The first parameter was the clustering resolution ratio, determining the level of detail in the clustering process. The second parameter was the minimum cluster size, setting a threshold for the smallest number of studies within a single cluster (Van Eck & Waltman, 2018). To ensure a comprehensive and meaningful analysis of the collected data, we established specific parameters after rigorous testing of several alternatives.

Finally, we chose a clustering resolution ratio of 0.25 and a minimum cluster size of 3. Applying these parameters led to the formation of five distinct clusters (refer to Figure 3), showing an uneven distribution of studies. The majority of the articles were found in the first two clusters, while the remaining three clusters contained fewer articles.

We manually executed cluster labeling by reviewing the full texts of studies within each respective cluster to discern common themes. Subsequently, we processed the abstracts and keyword sections of these studies using text cloud applications. Thus, we determined the most frequently used words based on their frequency distribution, guiding the naming of the clusters.



**Figure 3.** Cluster Network of Research Trends in Monotowns

Source: Based on bibliographic output from VOSviewer 1.6.19



### *Company towns and their impact on urbanism and society (n = 78)*

The articles in the first cluster collectively explore various aspects of company towns and their impact on society, economy, and culture. Some articles analyze the emergence and development of company towns, focusing on their role in providing social services and infrastructure for workers (Varini, 2016; White, 2004, 2007). Visentin (2016) looks at the ideological underpinnings of company towns, emphasizing utopianism, paternalism, and the myth of progress, and examines how these concepts manifested in towns like Pizzola sul Brenta in Italy and Borgonya in Spain, considering cultural and geographical influences on their development.

Agrawal et al. (2010) investigate the concentration of inventive activity in North American “company towns,” noting that large firms in these areas heavily rely on their own prior inventions, resulting in a narrower geographic scope of impact and less diverse innovation compared to more varied locations. Beleva et al. (2021) assess the effectiveness of the Priority Development Areas program in Russian monotowns, finding that while firms gain resident status based on prior success, this status does not significantly influence revenue growth, indicating limitations in the program’s effectiveness in supporting business growth in these settings.

English-Lueck (2000) provides a contemporary perspective by examining Silicon Valley as a modern company town, illustrating how its high-technology environment and global talent pool have created a community where work is the dominant social order, constituting a twenty-first-century reworking of the company town concept. Antipova and Titov (2016) offer an economic geographical analysis of single-industry towns in Belarus, shedding light on their role in the settlement system, functional typologies, and the development challenges they face amidst center-periphery polarization.

Others explore the impact of company towns on workers’ lives, including the manipulation of physical space to promote community surveillance and decrease interaction with neighbors (Westmont, 2022). Rees (2012) examines the distinct shift in spatial practices in the 1880s, where aesthetic applications of Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts in communities like Pullman, Illinois, and Port Sunlight near Liverpool were used as visu-

al ideologies for social control and brand identity, underscoring an important shift in spatial practices and the influence of these aesthetics on later City Beautiful and Garden City movements.

Sunseri (2020) investigates the historical emergence of an American working class, stressing the importance of shared material culture and the role of class consciousness as evidenced by labor organizing in company towns like Mono Mills, California. Furthermore, Carlson (2023) examines racialization processes in these towns, exposing how labor hierarchies and spatial segregation in Pacific Northwestern sawmill towns entrenched perceptions of Nikkei immigrants as “foreign,” impacting their social integration.

Several articles highlight the challenges arising when the needs of the local community conflict with the needs of the company, underscoring the importance of corporate social responsibility in maintaining a positive relationship with the community (Sundström & Hyder, 2008; Taizhanov et al., 2016). Moreover, the articles also discuss the relationship between company towns and broader economic and political structures, including the emergence of working-class consciousness (Sunseri, 2020), the impact of the Soviet legacy on resource extraction industries (Venovcevs, 2021), and the influence of political and economic processes on the design of New Urban developments (Veninga, 2004).

Finally, the studies in this cluster deal with the cultural significance of company towns, including the role of material culture in negotiating identity and status (Westmont, 2020), as well as the emergence of unique social networks based on mutual obligation and responsibility (Varini, 2016), and the materialized community responses to racial discrimination as evidenced in towns like Barneston, Washington (Carlson, 2023). In summary, these diverse studies collectively illuminate the complex interplay between company towns and various social dimensions, underscoring their significant role in shaping both local and broader socio-economic landscapes.

### *Evolving dynamics and community resilience in single-industry towns (n = 60)*

The articles in this cluster critically examine the evolving dynamics in single-industry towns and their effects on community resilience. Central to the discussion is Littlewood (2014)’s study on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in min-

ing communities in Namibia, offering a critical perspective on the sustainability and viability of towns post-industry. Roemer and Haggerty (2022) analyze the fiscal impacts of deindustrialization in fossil-fuel-dependent communities, focusing on Colstrip, Montana, as they navigate the U.S. energy system's decarbonization. Sicotte (2009)'s exploration of environmental injustice in Hayden, Arizona, reveals the complex relationship between economic decline, health issues, and power imbalances in resource-dependent towns.

Barnes et al. (2001) apply Harold Innis's economic theories to single-industry towns, using Port Alberni, British Columbia, as a case study to illustrate the "cyclonic" nature of resource-based economies. Keeling (2010) delves into the environmental and social impacts in Uranium City, further illustrating the consequences of cyclical developments. Gunko et al. (2021) emphasize the role of local agency in Russian monotowns (*monogoroda*), demonstrating how internal resources and leadership can drive positive change.

In addition, Tiller et al. (2022) contribute to this body of work by examining the role of community resilience in single-industry towns, particularly focusing on how these communities respond to and manage economic and environmental shifts. Rollwagen (2007), Ryser et al. (2020), and Schoors and Weill (2020) offer insights into labor force mobilization and community adaptation strategies, while Storey and Hall (2018) explore the implications of these dynamics for local economies. Ivanova et al. (2018) further enriches this discourse by focusing on the socio-economic development challenges in Russian single-industry towns, particularly examining factors affecting sustainable development and the potential for intraregional industrial clusters in areas like Yurga, Kemerovo region, to support growth and attract investment.

Cases from diverse geographical locations, including Canada, Russia, the United States, and Italy, provide a global perspective on single-industry towns. Key themes emerge, such as the importance of understanding historical traditions (Solecki, 1996), the dynamics surrounding mobile workforces (Ryser et al., 2020), the impact of branding strategies on company and community identities (Scott & Bennett, 2015), and the potential consequences for urban inequality and insecurity (Stuvøy & Shirobokova, 2022). This cluster, through its varied perspectives, underscores

the necessity for adaptability and resilience in single-industry towns facing economic, social, and environmental changes.

### *Socioeconomic dynamics and challenges in monofunctional towns (n = 5)*

The five articles in this cluster examined the socioeconomic dynamics, challenges, and corporate social responsibility practices in monofunctional towns, predominantly in Russia, with some comparisons to Poland and Slovakia. The studies focus on agglomerative relations (Averkiewa et al., 2015), population dynamics (Zemlyanskii, 2011), and production and nonproduction relations (Averkiewa et al., 2015) in these towns. A common theme across the articles is the crucial role of dominant local employers, often large companies, in shaping local and regional development through their direct influence on social policy (Blam et al., 2016; Nefedova & Treivish, 2021). The survival and development of these towns are closely linked to the success of these companies and their relationships with local governments and communities (Blam et al., 2016; Nefedova & Treivish, 2021). These single-industry towns face challenges such as population decline, economic dependence on key industries, and environmental polarization. Factors such as a successful "owner," state interest, and personal initiatives contribute to their development and resilience.

### *Transformation and challenges in mining company towns (n = 4)*

The fourth cluster of research papers focuses on the transformation of mining company towns, particularly in South Africa, Mexico, Australia, and Canada. These towns, historically managed by mining companies, provided not only work and housing but also various services and facilities for the workers. The process of "normalisation" has led to the towns being freed from company control, with a shift towards local government management (Cloete & Marais, 2021; Marais et al., 2018; van der Watt & Marais, 2019). The papers discuss various challenges faced by these towns, such as the path dependency of the migrant labor system (Cloete & Marais, 2021), goal dependency of government policy (Cloete & Marais, 2021), preservation problems of historical sites (Collazo, 2020), and the impact of globalization, corporate decision-making, political ideology, and government policies (Marais et al., 2018).

The studies in this cluster indicate that the process of normalisation, which involves the transition of mining company towns from company control to local government management, creates challenges for local governments. These challenges include the struggle to provide basic services like housing, utilities, and infrastructure for the communities in these towns. Additionally, the normalisation process does not effectively deal with the long-term risks that arise when mines decline or close, such as unemployment, economic downturn, and potential community displacement. The research emphasizes the need for a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the changes taking place in mining towns, as well as the difficulties faced by local communities during this transformation. This understanding is crucial for developing effective policies and strategies that address the challenges arising from normalisation and ensure the long-term sustainability and well-being of these communities.

#### **Health programs and social inclusion in monotowns of Hispaniola ( $n = 3$ )**

The three papers forming this cluster have a focus on the health programs aimed at eliminating lymphatic filariasis (LF) and malaria in the monotowns (agricultural company towns) of Hispaniola, an island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic (DR) (Keys et al., 2018; Keys, Noland, De Rochars, Blount, et al., 2019; Keys, Noland, De Rochars, Taylor, et al., 2019). These monotowns, known as *bateyes*, predominantly house marginalized Haitian migrants and their descendants, who often face social exclusion, discrimination, and barriers to healthcare access. The studies highlight how the LF elimination program (PELF) has helped improve the health of this population while generating trust in government health activities and counteracting some effects of social exclusion. Despite low transmission rates of malaria and LF in the monotowns, there are identified gaps in intervention coverage, malaria knowledge, treatment-seeking behavior, and service delivery. If these gaps are addressed, particularly in what concerns marginalized populations, this will help improve the quality of surveillance for these diseases and promote island-wide elimination. The studies also emphasize the importance of public health community engagement strategies in avoiding stigma, fostering active par-

ticipation, and working towards community ownership of disease control and elimination goals in monotowns.

#### **Further insights into monotowns: Urban development and governance in post-Soviet countries**

This section summarizes themes and findings from additional literature (including the papers that were not included in the SLR), offering an overview of diverse issues explored in academic research on monotowns.

– *Urbanization and sustainability.* Post-Soviet urbanization presents challenges and opportunities, particularly in sustainable urban development and governance. The rapid growth of megacities like Almaty and Astana in Kazakhstan emphasizes the importance of sustainable urban planning and resource management, considering factors such as energy consumption, resource utilization, and waste production (Turgel et al., 2016; Turgel & Zinovyeva, 2017).

– *Gender and urbanization.* The impacts of urbanization are not gender-neutral. Research reveals variations in gender interactions, stereotypes, and employment patterns in urban settings, particularly in monotowns (Khvan & Bulkina, 2018). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for promoting gender equality and inclusive urban development (Uzakova et al., 2022).

– *Regional economic development.* Monotowns, reliant on single industries, present challenges for regional economic development (Voronina et al., 2021). Research in Kazakhstan shows their role in economic growth and diversification but also issues of uneven development and industry dependence (Rastvortseva & Manaeva, 2016).

– *Regulatory impact assessment.* Regulatory impact assessment (RIA) plays a critical role in state economic regulation across post-Soviet countries (Voronina et al., 2021). The effectiveness of RIA is scrutinized, with emphasis on the need for improved methodological support, evaluation of its impact, and integration into national economic growth strategies (Fomin et al., 2020). Issues related to formalization risks and alternative solutions require attention in RIA implementation (Prishchepa, 2019).

– *Government initiatives and policies.* Government support and policies are central to urban development. The study on monotowns in the Republic of Kazakhstan emphasizes the significance

of administrative and economic methods in their regulation (Pyatsheva, 2019). Advocacy for integrating RIA into national strategies is proposed to stimulate business and economic growth (Malyy, 2020).

– *Global-local interconnections.* Urban development in post-Soviet countries is intricately influenced by global-local interconnections. Responding to global economic crises, federal policies have redefined monotowns as spaces for development. This resurgence of town-forming enterprises as urban governing bodies carries implications for urban inequality and insecurity, as highlighted by Asanova and Nurseitova (2022).

– *Mortality and indigenous populations.* The health of Arctic indigenous populations in monotowns is examined, with data on mortality rates presenting challenges that necessitate structured statistical diagnostic studies.

In summary, post-Soviet urban development and governance involve complexities such as urbanization challenges, regional economic disparities, regulatory impact assessment, government initiatives, gender dynamics, global-local interconnections, and health disparities among indigenous populations. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving sustainable, equitable, and inclusive urban development in the region.

## Conclusion

The systematic literature review, organized into five clusters, provides a nuanced understanding of the impacts, changes, and challenges associated with monotowns.

The first cluster explores how company towns extensively influence society, economy, and culture, covering aspects of surveillance, social responsibility, economic structures, and cultural identities.

The second cluster emphasizes the resilience required by single-industry towns amid changing economic and social dynamics. Insights from global cases discuss historical traditions, labor mobilization, branding, and potential inequality.

The third, despite its small size, sheds light on the socioeconomic dynamics and challenges faced by monofunctional towns. Survival is linked to dominant local companies, with challenges including population decline, economic dependence, and environmental issues.

Cluster four focuses on mining company towns, revealing challenges associated with the

transition from company to local government control, including struggles in providing basic services, economic downturn risks, and community displacement.

Lastly, the fifth cluster emphasizes the pivotal role of health programs in Hispaniola's monotowns, addressing social exclusion and healthcare access barriers.

In conclusion, the current research foregrounds the complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors influencing the evolution, resilience, and challenges of monotowns. Adaptive strategies, social responsibility, government intervention, and inclusive policies are essential for their sustainability and community well-being.

The identified clusters suggest potential avenues for further research. Clusters three and four indicate a need for more extensive research into socioeconomic dynamics, challenges, and corporate social responsibility practices in monofunctional towns, with potential exploration in various countries beyond Russia such as Poland and Slovakia. Cities dominated by a single industry might exist in various countries, even if they are not explicitly labeled as monotowns. Thus, additional countries might also be considered as potential subjects for research in this area. For instance, Turkey has several cities where certain industries are predominant. These include Zonguldak for coal mining, Isparta for rose cultivation, Adana for cotton production, Bursa for automotive, Antalya for tourism, and Aydin for fig production. The fourth cluster, focusing on the transformation of mining company towns, presents opportunities for more in-depth investigation.

While our systematic literature review (SLR) on monotowns was comprehensive, it became apparent that a significant body of knowledge existed outside of widely recognized international databases such as Scopus and WoS. Given the deep regional significance of monotowns, especially in Russia and Kazakhstan, an exploration beyond these databases was essential for a more holistic understanding. This led us to a more focused review of Russian journals, revealing nuanced insights.

Despite its significant contributions, this study is not without limitations. Based on their references, only 150 of the 317 articles were associated by the software used in this research. It could mean that the field is highly diverse, with

researchers drawing on a wide variety of different sources and theoretical frameworks. This might suggest that there isn't yet an established set of key references or seminal works that are commonly cited across the field.

In addition, the first two clusters encompass the majority of the articles, which suggests that these clusters might correspond to well-established and extensively studied areas within the monotowns research field. These could be domains that have traditionally drawn significant scholarly interest or are perceived as fundamental to the discipline. The third and fourth clusters, with fewer articles, may represent areas with po-

tential research gaps warranting further exploration. Despite their smaller sizes, these clusters offer pivotal insights and enhance the diversity and depth of the research field. The fifth cluster, containing only three articles by a singular author, could be a result of numerous shared references originating from the same project.

Another potential limitation of this study may stem from the data collection procedure, which is restricted to articles written only in English. Given the prevalence of monotowns in predominantly ex-Soviet countries, the exclusion of Russian-language sources could be considered a notable limitation of this study.

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