

GLOBALIZATION AND THE SINGLE INDUSTRY TOWN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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It is sometimes assumed, perhaps wishfully, that “single-industry towns” are a thing of the past, mere nostalgic relics or signposts of how far we have collectively “advanced.” Paradoxically, however, many of the same characteristics, vulnerabilities, and engines that promoted such “company towns,” in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in Canada, the United States, the Former Soviet Union, and Australia, persist with today’s globalization. Indeed, single-industry towns can tell us a lot about both the “upsides” and the “downsides” of globalization today. Such communities have always had their impetus and their vulnerabilities linked to international trade and to both industrially-spurred resource production and manufacturing. Canada has been second only to the Former Soviet Union as home to such towns. This bibliography recognizes both the global and particular logic of their development and fate. Hence, though often isolated in their experience and problems, they are best studied and understood in comparison. For they reflect the real-life, day-to-day human experience of a sort of development that resulted from capital investors’ seeking out the cheapest and latest sources of forest, mine and energy resources and linking these to international, industrial markets. These communities’ boom and bust cycles of vulnerability to rapid growth, closure or shutdown have a long, if muted, history. Their growth, social conflict and community sacrifice remain microcosmic enigmas from which we can learn a great deal today.

With a primary focus on the Eastern Townships of Quebec, whose landscape is dotted with such communities based in pulp and paper production, asbestos, copper and other mining endeavors, we have sought to give those multiple, though often isolated experiences, a clearer voice and a broader context. Taking an interdisciplinary approach allows a multiplicity of experiences to be examined, understood and compared.

We have examined a variety of media on the topic to make this tool useful to both the lay public and a broad range of scholars. Journals, books, and news items in print and internet form, dissertations, theses and films are included. As well, various perspectives, theories, methods and data are used in understanding these phenomena. Annotations, though brief, are accompanied by “key words” and “key place names,” each indexed at the end, providing additional means of sorting for topics of special interest, like “gender,” “closure,” “multinationals,” and the like.

When I undertook graduate studies in sociology at McMaster University and was researching my dissertation – later published as the book, *A Staple State: Canadian Industrial Resources in Cold War* – I became interested in Canadian social history and political economy. I discovered a number of classic approaches and studies relevant to and included in the present bibliography. Indeed in reviewing this bibliography in order to pull forward examples for this brief report, I was struck by how wide-ranging, how timely, and how stimulating of new research this topic has proven to be, not only for sociologists, geographers, historians, and city planners, but for the community generally.

Rex Lucas produced the first comprehensive study of single-industry towns in Canada, called *Minetown, Milltown, Railtown*. Harold Innis invented the first and longest-relevant theory about their development, called the “staples approach”; first developed in the 1930s, in both *The Fur Trade and Settlement and the Mining Frontier*. It was republished in the 1970s and sparked interest in understanding economic dependency worldwide. For, traditional economic theories about development were being challenged anew by Latin American and European “dependency” theorists and critics of multinational expansionism or “neo-colonialism.” Innis first theorized the peculiarity of Canadian boom and bust development as driven by staples (worldwide, industrially marketed resources) in shaping this country’s original settlement and long-term economic development. Vulnerable work camps, company towns, and later single-industry towns were a typical result of domestic and international capital’s interest in Canadian forest, mine and energy resources. Meanwhile, the largest resource multinational corporations began undertaking enormous new forestry, mining and energy-related mega-projects, especially in the Canadian North, but also throughout the world, in an effort to monopolize and mobilize as many sources as possible. Thus, the staples approach, dependency theory, and other critical theories surfaced, to examine these dynam-

ics and the fallout for ordinary workers and communities of such “forced growth,” “staples traps,” or “global” expansion of control over production.

I examined its relation to post-war Canadian and American policies. Wallace Clement analyzed INCO’s investment and technology strategies and their impacts on class formation and control in *Hardrock Mining*. Pat Marchak described community and job control impacts in British Columbia’s forest industry, in *Green Gold*. Meg Luxton investigated gender relations in the single industry town of Flin Flon, Manitoba’s mineral mega-projects, in *More than a Labour of Love*. Elliot Leyton provided an account of the class conflicts, dangers and health consequences for miners in *Dying Hard*.

As early as 1848, Burton Ledoux had investigated massive premature deaths among mine-mill asbestos workers in Quebec. Indeed, Liddell and McDonald have recently traced mortality statistics for miners and millers of Asbestos and Thetford Mines, Quebec, from 1904 to the present. This kind of morbidity and mortality study is crucial to bringing justice and aid to such small communities, since, all too often their employers and insurance companies (sometimes abetted by governments) downplay environmental and health risks.

Once I began teaching sociology at Bishop’s University, I worked with others in a variety of disciplines to put on a nation-wide, bilingual, conference on single-industry towns. Another colleague, geographer Gill Ross, has studied the closing and environmental impacts of local mining villages in his book, *Three Eastern Townships Mining Villages in Quebec. 1836–1972*, which was republished in 1996. Indeed, our focus in this bibliography began with the Eastern Townships of Quebec, but necessarily expanded to encompass, not only the whole of Canada, but also comparisons found with Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

These comparisons as well as anthologies and longer-term studies on shutdown are very important. One key series of about forty articles involves closure at Elliot Lake, Ontario. Mawhiney and Pitbaldo’s 1999 book, *Boom Town Blues: Elliot Lake, Collapse and Renewal in a Single-Industry Community*, is a culmination of that work. John Bradbury and McGill University’s Centre for Northern Studies and Research have likewise been prolific sources, notably treating the decline and recent shutdown of Quebec-Labrador’s Iron-Mining Region. The best known and in some ways most important Quebec study is still Pierre Trudeau’s landmark: *The Asbestos*

Strike. Such class conflicts and threatened or actual shutdowns persist in the most recent news and internet sources on Schefferville and Murdochville, asbestos and paper mills. Recently the Canadian Press notes: "Asbestos Mine Faces Bankruptcy," "Jeffrey Mine Pulls Plug" and "Noranda to Shut Quebec Smelter, Lay Off 300." In more scholarly syntheses and analyses of these phenomena, Angus and Griffin used oral histories and archival sources in their 1996 book, *We Lived Life and then Some: The Life and Death of a Mining Town*; and, Neil, Tykkylainen and Bradbury edited a 1992 international anthology on this called, *Coping with Closure: An International Case Study of Mine Town Experiences*.

The "company town" also serves today as a metaphor for the contemporary phenomena of both continued globalization and for the design of professional workplaces, as seen in Kooijman's 2000 article, "The Office Building: Between Globalization and Local Identity" and Jerry Useem's 2000 article in *Fortune*, "Welcome to the New Company Town," describing how *Fortune*'s "100 Best Companies to Work for List" includes those that provide take-home meals, concierge services, clubs and support and study groups, a bit like the old "company store" syndrome, if less harmful. Chris Eipper uses the metaphor in its more fundamental or dynamic sense: "The World as Company Town: Multinational Corporation and Social Change" in *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*.

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