Firstly, I am a little confused about your searching approach by title and then by title & abstract. This is not a method I have had experience of before. I can understand that you will hopefully screen out more irrelevant articles this way but I expect you will also get a lot of duplication. Are you also using the title searches to refine inclusion criteria – using these searches as a scoping search? Have you checked that the searches are bringing up relevant articles and have you kept a record of your scoping searches?

We have some software to eliminate duplication, so there will be no extra screening work from running two searches. Yes, that is the plan, I hope that some further keywords can be developed from this. I have a small set of relevant articles to test the queries, and have manually checked results in Web of Science/Scopus.

I would also like to ask if you intend to carry out the following. These are normally part of the detail provided in a protocol (for examples see Environmental Evidence journal e.g. Neal Haddaway’s latest protocol on metal mining https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13750-019-0152-8) :

* At the moment you appear to be only searching 2 ‘academic’ databases and there is no mention of grey literature searches. Guidelines for conducting systematic maps and reviews strongly recommend that evidence is gathered from as wide a base as possible, including grey literature. Is it possible to search any organisations for the type of literature that you are trying to obtain? I realise that you are under time constraints but I think you need to widen your searches.

This is true, I’ll look into it.

* Is the focus of your systematic map global? Or are you focussing on a specific area e.g. EU? Are you looking to collate literature from all years or a particular timeframe e.g. from 1980s to present? By framing your question in terms of PICO criteria this will help you to define your inclusion criteria.

Global, from 1990 – present.

* When screening your searches at title and abstract you really need to carry out some consistency checking between reviewers to make sur you are applying inclusion criteria consistently. I’m not sure how familiar you are with this process but all reviewers need to screen a proportion of the same articles and carry out a Kappa analysis or something similar to see if you all agree with the articles that you have decided to include and exclude. I’m not sure what software you are using for screening but if you are using Eppi Reviewer it is possible to set up comparisons between reviewers. I think this is also possible in Nvivo.

Yes we plan to do this already at the screening and coding stages. I’ll update the protocol to be more clear on this.

* Have you decided what meta data you will extract from articles and how this will be presented e.g. Excel file, Access etc. Are you using any specific software for coding articles (you don’t need to but I realise you may be using software like Nvivo?? This software can be used to check if you are coding consistently as well).

I have not thought about it, but using coding software seems to be a very good suggestion.

* Just be aware that most systematic maps do not report whether the outcomes of studies are positive or negative to avoid ‘vote counting’ by readers. However, I realise that this is what most people are actually interested in! A systematic map just provides an overview of what research has been done and does not answer the questions as to whether interventions work or not. Instead topic areas that are suitable for future systematic review can be identified from the map and used to answer whether a particular intervention works or not. If you do report positive and negative outcomes in your systematic map I recommend you add a caveat about ‘vote counting’ and drawing any conclusions.

Good point, this seems already to be a problem with this project (too many negative effects!).