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Anthropology in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Bibliometric Analysis of Global Research Trends in Web of Science (2000–2025)

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ABSTRACT

This paper conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on artificial intelligence (AI) and anthropology, focusing on their dynamic interactions in complex sociocultural systems from 2000 to 2025. The anthropological perspective has become an indispensable tool for analyzing the cultural, social, and ethical implications of AI, questioning power structures and inequality, and supporting the responsible development of technology in contexts where technological progress is intertwined with human experience and social values. Bibliographic data from Web of Science (with a focus on 1,742 documents from 2020-2026) were analyzed to examine publication trends, thematic clusters, co-authorship networks, citation structures, and keyword co-occurrences using bibliometric tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix. Conceptual mapping highlights the dominant domains the ethical and sociocultural implications of AI (including algorithmic bias, AI ethics, and ethnography) and methodological applications and growing technologies (such as machine learning, forensic anthropology, and generative AI), all of which are connected through the overarching topic of human experience and social organization in the digital age. The results offer a structured overview of the field's evolution, providing researchers and decision-makers with a valuable reference point for advancing AI applications in anthropological research.

Key words: *bibliometric analysis, artificial intelligence (AI), anthropology, AI ethics, digital ethnography, machine learning, sociotechnical phenomenon,; research trends*

Introduction

Interdisciplinary literature on artificial intelligence in anthropology has been developing dynamically over the past few decades, and this paper aims to present its main directions and contributions systematically. The focus of the analysis is on the historical development of this field, from early theoretical reflections to contemporary ethnographies of algorithms and digital technologies. Particular attention is paid to identifying key authors, institutions and thematic frameworks that shape research production, including issues of AI ethics, human-machine interactions and the social effects of automation. In addition, the paper seeks to look at the geographical patterns of knowledge production, exploring which regions, countries and research centers are at the forefront of developing anthropological approaches to AI and how global differences are reflected in topic selection and methodological innovation. Such an overview provides a holistic view of how anthropology participates in the critical understanding and shaping of AI technologies. Anthropology is increasingly examining artificial intelligence as a complex socio-technical phenomenon that requires nuanced, interdisciplinary investigation. The evidence reveals multiple research approaches document anthropological encounters with machine systems across research labs and museums, while "AI and Organizational Transformation: Anthropological Insights into Higher Education" employs ethnographic frameworks to explore AI's cultural implications[1]. Investigates explicitly how technological systems are reshaping societal membership and human-machine interactions[2]. Scholarly work spans from early cyberculture analyses.

Contemporary explorations of AI's societal integration, indicating a sustained, evolving academic interest in understanding how artificial intelligence transforms human experience and organizational practices[3]. The field re-

mains emergent, with researchers calling for more nuanced, culturally-sensitive approaches to studying technological transformation. An anthropological perspective is crucial for understanding the development and social implications of AI because it reveals the cultural, social, and organizational dimensions that purely technical approaches often overlook. Also uncovers the hidden assumptions and "characteristic deletions" in engineers' epistemologies, including the belief that automation can remove the inexact and uncontrollable nature of human interaction[5]. Anthropological approaches also illuminate power structures and inequalities, noting that AI development is primarily driven by for-profit corporations, which limits scrutiny of how systems are produced, integrated, and how they affect stakeholders—particularly concerning the concentration of power within opaque algorithms and the marginalization of vulnerable groups.

Cultural analysis further reveals the challenges of AI implementation, examining encounters between humans and emerging machine systems. At the same time, organizational ethnographies document tensions between "enthusiasts" and "apocalyptic" viewpoints, reflecting deeper cultural conflicts over technology's role in human institutions[1]. Ultimately, anthropology provides essential frameworks for ethical and responsible AI development by foregrounding the cultural norms, values, and power dynamics that shape how AI is designed, deployed, and experienced.

Anthropology in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The development of artificial intelligence has transformed social processes, knowledge production, and institutional decision-making, with anthropology occupying a key position in analyzing the cultural practices, meanings, and power relations that are inscribed in technology. Anthropological perspectives thus reject technodeterministic narratives and emphasize that technological systems are the result of historical, political and economic contexts Eu[6,7]. From Early Analyses of Material Culture to the study of technological dramas, the anthropology of technology indicates that techniques and technological systems are not neutral but are culturally and socially shaped. In the field of AI, this becomes evident in analyses of algorithms as socio-technical constructs that reflect institutional interests and values[8,9]. The development of algorithmic culture has focused attention on the way algorithms structure visibility, knowledge, and social relationships, creating new forms of symbolic power[10]. Studies on platforms and intermediary systems[11,12] show how algorithmic infrastructure participates in identity production, attention management, and shaping the public sphere. In parallel, cognitive anthropology contributes to debates about the representation of knowledge in AI[13–15], while papers on classification [16,17] expose the ways in which algorithmic knowledge reflects data constraints and categorization structures.

Digital Ethnography[18,19] provides a methodological framework for analyzing everyday interactions with digital systems, but also for studying the AI development process. Ethnography of Data Work and Algorithm Design [20] show that behind the technological infrastructure there are moral dilemmas, negotiations, and the "hidden work" that makes the system function. Feminist, Critical and Postcolonial Perspectives [21–25] of the reproduction of social inequalities and global asymmetries through AI systems and call for epistemological and political responsibility in the development of digital technologies. AI ethics are increasingly understood as a social and institutional practice [26,27], and not just a normative set of guidelines. Anthropological analyses show that ethical frameworks often serve to legitimize technological decisions without deeper transformations of power relations. In this context, there is a growing interest in bibliometric studies that map the development of AI anthropology, identify thematic clusters such as bias, digital ethnography, algorithmic management and institutional applications, and contribute to the understanding of the position of anthropology within the broader field of social sciences. Bibliometric approaches provide insight into research networks, the dynamics of knowledge production and the trends that shape the interdisciplinary development of technology studies. The integration of anthropological theories, digital ethnography and bibliometric analyses shows that AI is not just a technical system, but a sociocultural phenomenon deeply rooted in global power relations. Anthropology thus becomes a key discipline for analyzing and questioning the algorithmic structures that shape the modern world.

Materials and Methods

For this research, a bibliometric analysis was conducted to gain insights into the dynamics of scientific publication and to uncover trends related to the topic under study. This analysis allows for tracking citation incidence, identifying trends, and mapping collaboration networks. This comprehensive analysis employs a range of quantitative techniques and robust statistical methods to examine the intricacies of scientific dissemination, illuminating the pathways by which knowledge spreads and influences diverse fields[28].

The R package Bibliometrix (version 4.3.1) was utilized to generate annual publication statistics, analyze country-specific outputs, identify the most relevant countries and journals, and create thematic maps, co-occurrence networks, and topic trends [29].Additionally, VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) was employed for a more comprehensive thematic analysis, yielding network visualization maps and revealing clusters and the predominant research trends[30].

In constructing the bibliometric networks, we adopted a full-counting method rather than a fractional-counting method, as we aimed to capture the overall volume of contributions rather than adjust for author/institution size. Normalization was performed using association strength, which balances the influence of highly productive nodes. We further applied a basic thesaurus approach, merging

singular/plural forms, spelling variants (e.g., "organisation/organization"), and close synonyms to improve map interpretability. These choices follow standard practices in bibliometric analysis and enhance the clarity of thematic clusters.

To ensure transparency in the search and data analysis, a few steps were applied. First, we adopted a thesaurus approach in VOSviewer and manual preprocessing to reduce synonym-related inconsistencies. A literature search was conducted in the Web of Science Core Collection. Shearch query was: ("artificial intelligence" OR "AI" OR "machine learning" OR "deep learning" OR algorithm* OR "algorithmic" OR "algorithmic bias") AND ("anthropology" OR "anthropological" OR ethnograph* OR "cultural anthropology" OR "social anthropology" OR "digital ethnography"). Covering terms related to artificial intelligence — including "artificial intelligence", "AI", "machine learning", "deep learning", as well as "algorithms" and "algorithmic bias" — combined with anthropology terms such as "anthropology", "ethnography", "cultural anthropology", "social anthropology" and "digital ethnography", yields a total of 2,959 hits across all fields. When results are limited to the time span 2020-2026, the number of documents narrows to 1,885**,** demonstrating the intense, rapidly growing interest in the encounter between anthropology and advanced technologies in recent years. Of these, 1,742 documents are in English. These data confirm that research into the relationship between AI and anthropological approaches has become a highly dynamic and relevant field in contemporary science.

Results

The results of this bibliometric research reveal interesting findings and are presented in Figure 1 where basic information about the researched corpus is presented.

The analysis of bibliometric data for the period 2020–2026 includes a total of 1,742 documents published in 961 sources, which indicates a wide prevalence of research in different scientific and publishing contexts. The average age of the documents is 1.84 years, and the papers have an average of 21.17 citations, which testifies to the relatively rapid scientific response. The content of the documents reflects a high level of conceptual diversity, with as many as 2,565 Keywords Plus and 6,167 author's keywords. 11,972 authors participated in the corpus, with 464 authors publishing documents independently, while the average number of co-authors per document is 12.1, which confirms the strong collaborative character of the research, a large number of authors suggest that these are clinical, biomedical interdisciplinary teams that deal with this issue, this also confirmed by the analysis according to the top 10 publications titles. The share of international cooperation is 27.21%. The most common type of documents is scientific articles (1,285), followed by documents in proceedings (157), reviews (59) and editorials (28), while other types are represented to a lesser extent. Together, these data point to a dynamic, highly collaborative and multidisciplinary research field with a solid international component. (Figure 2)

The annual scientific production that connects the fields of artificial intelligence and anthropology (based on the search terms) shows stable and accelerated growth from 2020 to 2025. The number of documents is growing from 159 in 2020 to 196 in 2021, 208 in 2022, and then jumps significantly to 300 in 2023 and 404 in 2024. The highest value was recorded in 2025, with 466 papers, indicating a strong expansion of research at the intersection of these two areas. By analyzing these data, we can see that this is an area that will certainly arouse the interest of the research public in the future.

Figures 1 and 2 refer to the English-language subset of documents from the period 2020–2026 (n = 1,742). Figure 3 presents country scientific production based on the full Web of Science dataset covering the entire period (2000–2026) across all languages (n = 2,959). These two datasets are shown in parallel to distinguish recent English-language publishing trends from the broader, long-term global research landscape. (Figure 3)

The largest number of documents in the analyzed corpus comes from the United States of America (2630), which clearly positions it as the dominant producer of scientific publications in this field. It is followed by Iran with a very high 1957 papers, while the UK is third with 1253 papers. India and Australia also record significant production, with 1030 and 977 documents, respectively. Chi-

Fig. 1. Main information

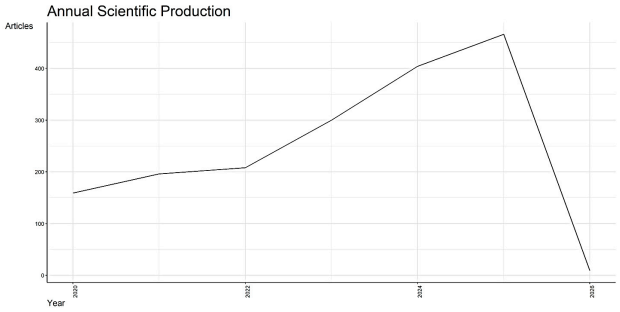

Fig. 2. Annual scientific production

na contributes 844 documents, followed by Ethiopia (624), Italy (537), Germany (501) and Canada (500). This distribution shows that research related to the given topic is conducted globally, with a strong concentration in the USA, Iran and Western European countries, but also an increasing presence of Asian and African countries. The interesting discovery in the list of countries is Ethiopia. Its presence among countries engaged in AI-anthropology research can be attributed to several interconnected factors identified in the documents. Abstracts of papers were analyzed to determine the reason. In health, studies focus on predicting abortion, infant mortality, and pregnancy risks, particularly concerning HIV and HBV in urban children. The agriculture sector examines complementary nutrition for children and challenges in small ruminant breeding. Ecological studies address land use changes and forest cover loss. The integration of AI in health data analysis is crucial, while complex social issues in health and education underscore the need for targeted policy interventions. This overview emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to local challenges and confirms the great interest in this area. (Figures 4, 5)

Figure 4 shows the most relevant affilations. University of Tehran Medical Sciences leads with 276 publications, showcasing its prominent role in research. Following it, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences and Iran University of Medical Sciences have achieved 168 and 161 documents, further highlighting the growing importance of medical research in the country. On the international stage, University of Washington (146 publications) and Harvard University (120 documents) contribute to knowledge on a global scale, emphasizing a holistic approach to health and education. Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, with 114 and 110 documents each, along with University of Oxford (92 documents), further enrich this field of research, while Monash University (84 publications) and University of Copenhagen (82 publications) round out the list of leading institutions. This collection of knowledge and research potential indicates global interconnectedness and the growing collaboration among universities, fostering advancements in medical science and education.

Figure 5 shows most relenavt sources. Among the most prominent is the International Journal of Legal Medicine with 39 published documents, which focuses on the legal aspects of medicine. The American Journal of Biological Anthropology follows with 36 documents, exploring human biology through the prism of anthropology. Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences, with 26 documents, contributes to the understanding of the cultural and physical evolution of man. Other journals, such as AI & Society and Big Data & Society, with 21 documents each, explore the impact of technology on society, while PLOS

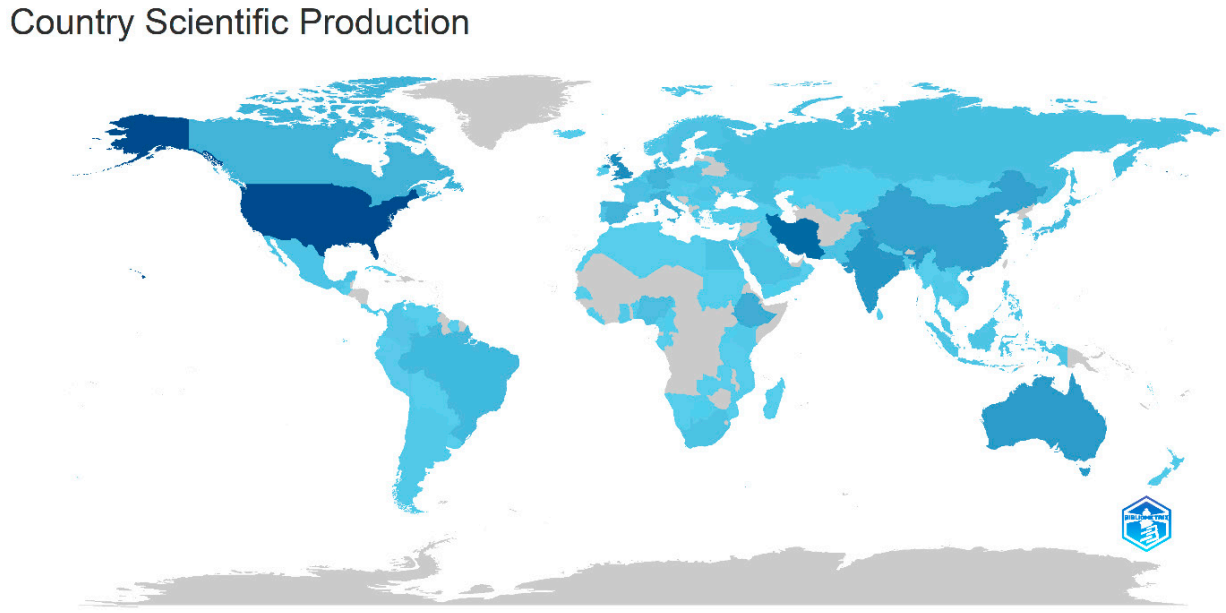

Fig. 3. Country scientific production

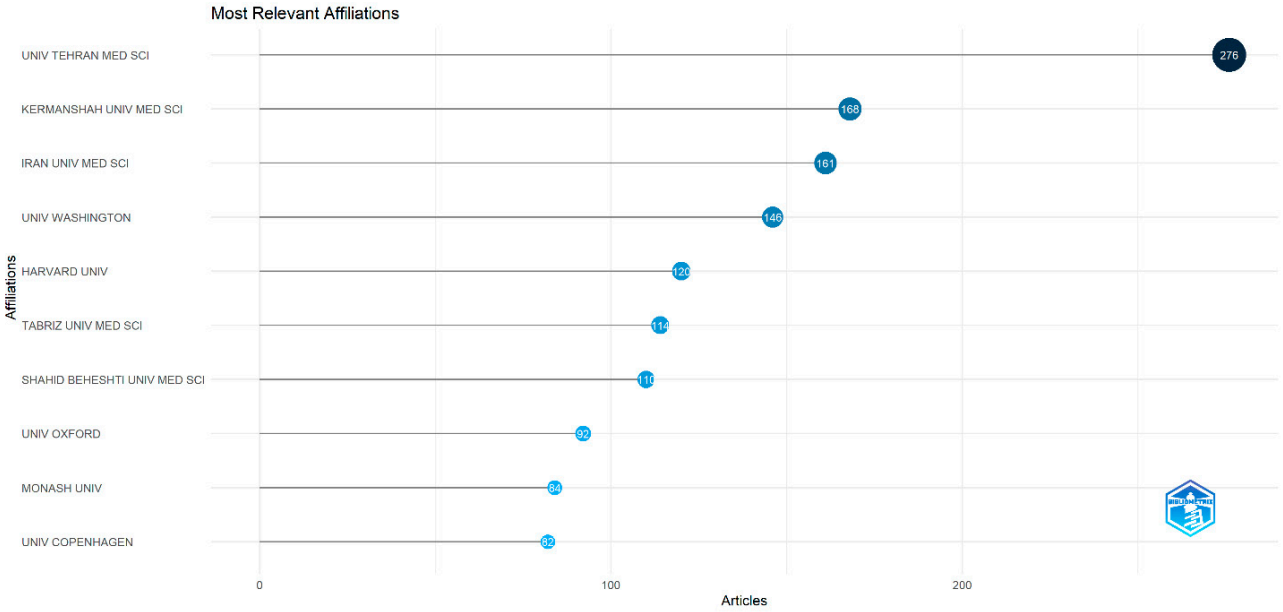

Fig. 4. Most relevant affilations

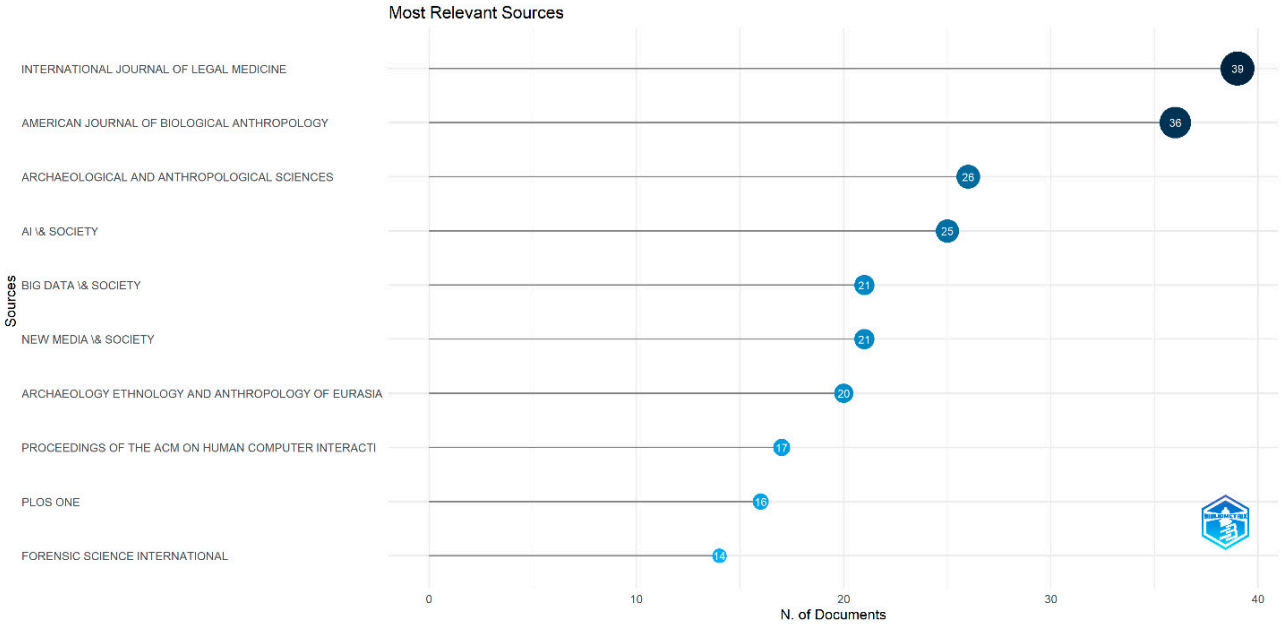

Fig. 5. Most relevant sources

ONE and Forensic Science International focus on general science and forensics, with 16 and 14 articles, respectively. These journals not only promote interdisciplinary research, but also shape future directions in their fields.

Discussion

The Bibliometrics-generated thematic map provides valuable insights into global research trends in artificial intelligence in field of anthropology. A thematic map in Bibliometrix (or Biblioshiny, its Shiny web interface in R) is a powerful visual tool used in bibliometric analysis to explore and interpret the structure of research themes within a scientific field, revealing how themes or topics are distributed, their level of development, and how central they are to the field. In the thematic map diagram, themes are positioned by centrality (relevance to the field) and density (internal development). (Figure 6)

Figure 6 showes analysis of trend topics, the analysis shows that "ethnography" has the highest frequency with 164 occurrences, indicating that this term is a key focus in exploring the interrelationships between AI and anthropology. Next in importance, "algorithms" appear 144 times, with an emphasis on ethical aspects and algorithmic biases, while "artificial intelligence" has 115 occurrences, suggesting a growing interest in the use of AI in anthropological methodologies. In addition, "machine learning" appears 84 times, indicating its relevance in data analysis and interpretation of anthropological phenomena, "forensic anthropology" records 93 frequencies, which illustrates its application in the context of automated analytical methods. Interest in "generative AI" is growing, with 26 appearances in recent years, and "visibility" on social networks recording 18, which indicates the ubiquity of these technologies in the dissemination of anthropological knowledge and practices. (Figure 6)

These data indicate a growing focus on the ethical aspects of algorithms and their applications in anthropological research, which highlights the need for further research and critical reflection on the role of technology in social and cultural contexts. This growing interest can serve as a basis for future research that will deal with the connection of artificial intelligence with anthropological theories and methodologies, in order to understand the complex interactions between these two fields. (Figure 7)

In exploring the overlap between artificial intelligence (AI) and anthropology, key concepts have been identified that reflect the scope and focus of current academic interest. These terms point to different aspects and topics that are explored, with an emphasis on central concepts such as "artificial intelligence" and "algorithms", which appear most often and serve as a basis for the study of ethical challenges and applications in an anthropological context. Methodologies such as "ethnography" and "digital ethnography" signify a focus on qualitative approaches to the analysis of cultural and social phenomena in the age of digitalization. The importance of recognizing "algorithmic bias" is also emphasized, which emphasizes the study of bias in algorithms used to analyze anthropological data. The terms "machine learning" and "deep learning" indicate the application of sophisticated data processing techniques in anthropological research, while "forensic anthropology" refers to an interdisciplinary approach that connects criminology and anthropology with the use of AI in data analysis. The terms "social media" and "visibility" reflect the ways in which anthropological research is presented and communicated in the digital environment. These relevant terms clearly indicate a growing interest in exploring the interactions between AI and anthropology, as well as the need to further study the ethical and methodological challenges arising from these connections, providing valuable insights into the complex dynamics shaping our understanding of society and culture in the digital age. (Figure 8)

This thematic map visually shows the relationship between different topics in the context of artificial intelligence and anthropology, using two main indicators: the degree of relevance and the degree of development. On the x-axis, the "Relevance Degree" indicates how relevant the topics are, while the y-axis, the "Development Degree," reflects the level of development of each topic. In the first quadrant (Niche Themes) are "machine learning," "forensic anthropology," and "deep learning," suggesting that

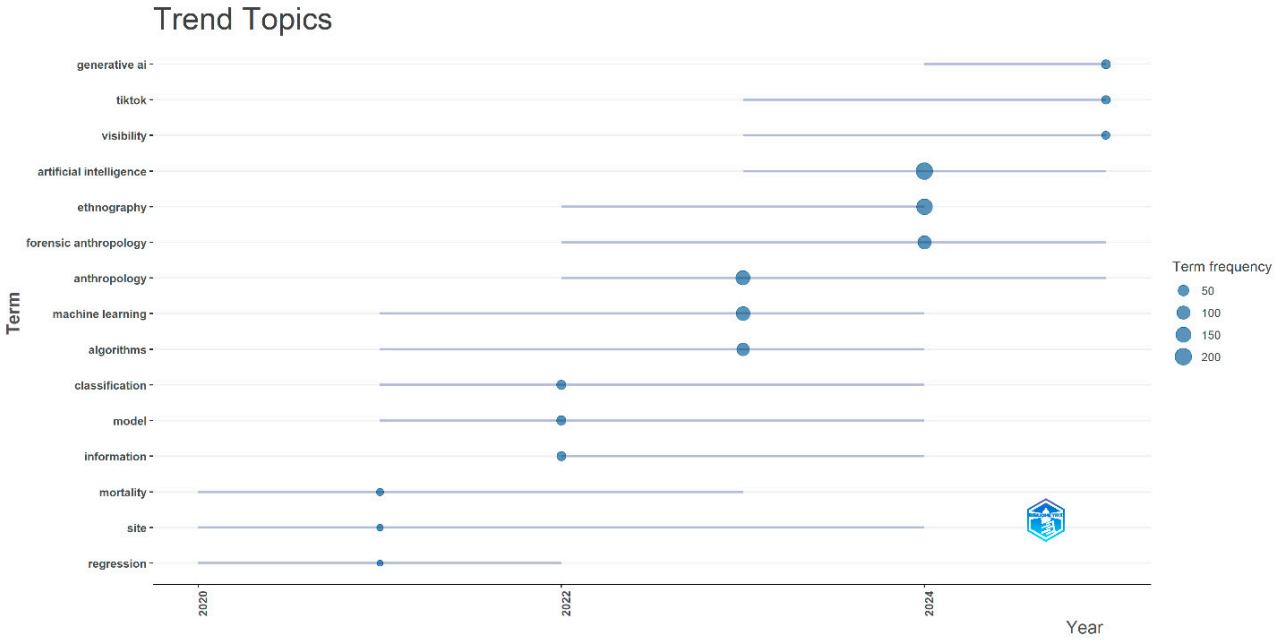

Fig. 6. Trend Topics

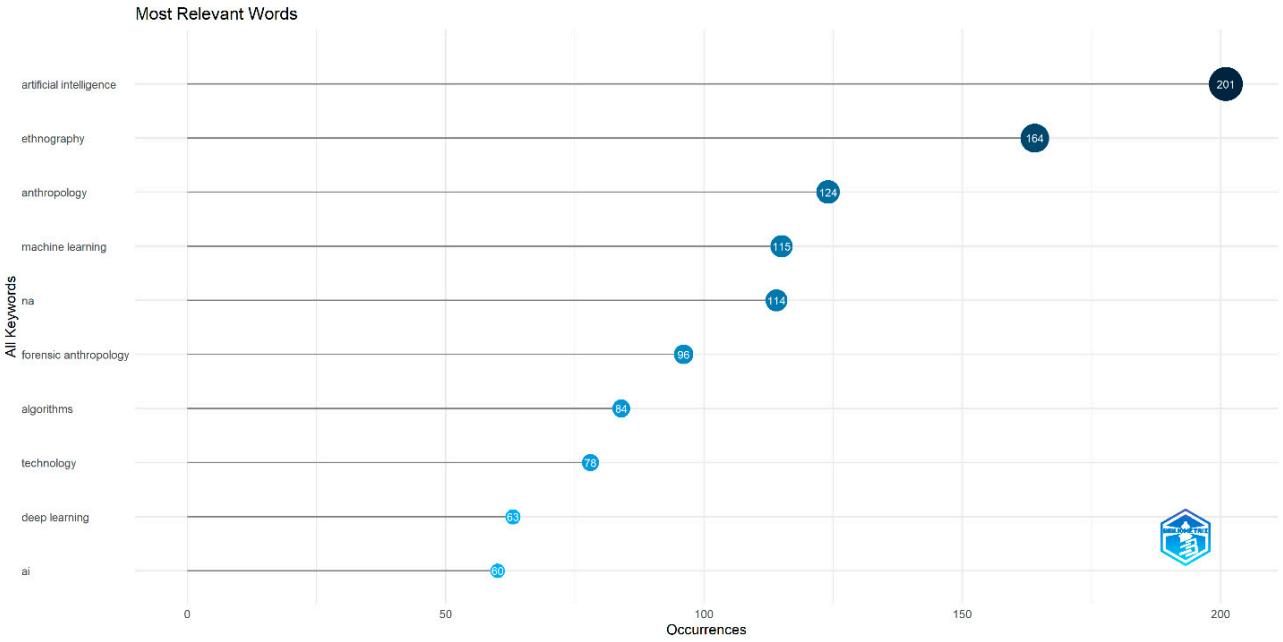

Fig. 7. Most Relevant Words

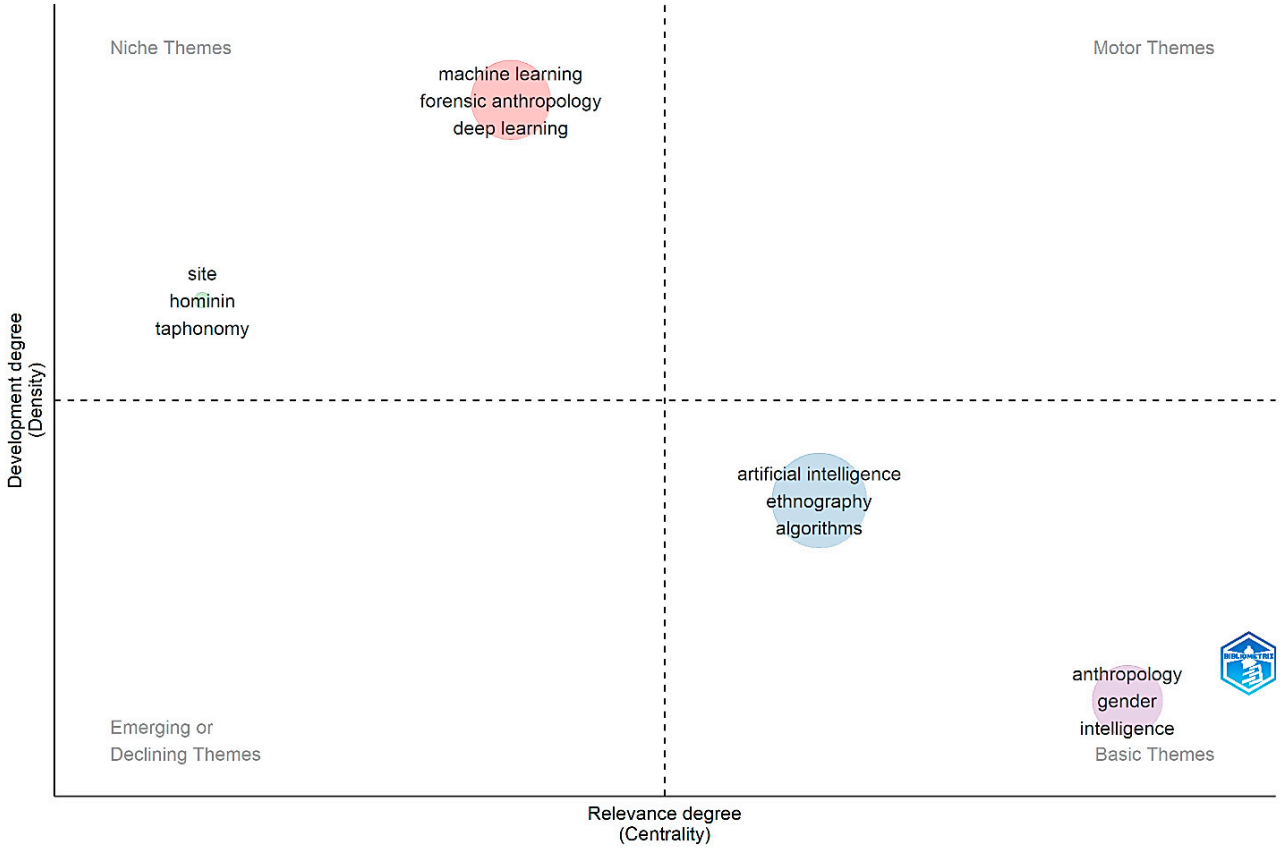

Fig. 8. Thematic map

these topics are increasingly relevant, but not yet fully established in discourse. In the second quadrant, "site" and "hominin" were found as topics that are on the rise but do not yet have a solid foundation. The third quadrant (Motor Themes) includes "artificial intelligence," "ethnography," and "algorithms," indicating that these topics are central and widely recognized in research. Finally, in the fourth quadrant (Basic Themes) are "anthropology," "gender," and "intelligence," which are fundamental concepts that are slowly evolving in the context of AI and anthropology. This analysis highlights dynamic changes in research focuses, suggesting that innovative and emerging topics such as machine learning are becoming increasingly important, while traditional concepts continue to provide the basis for further research. (Figure 9)

The factor analysis shown in this concept map visualizes the relationships between different concepts and topics related to artificial intelligence and anthropology, using latent factors that explain the variations between concepts. The axes on the map represent these latent factors, making it possible to visualize the interrelationships between concepts. Terms such as "machine learning," "deep learning," and "artificial intelligence" are grouped together, suggesting their connection within the context of modern technology. On the other hand, "forensic anthropology" and related terms such as "age estimation" and "sex estimation" suggest common methodological approaches. The space on the map also illustrates the importance of ethical issues, where the terms related to "ethics," "accuracy," and "reliability" are at the intersection of technology and anthropology. The shape and size of the polygon emphasize the heterogeneity of thinking and the diverse aspects of research. This analysis points to a strong interdisciplinarity between technology and the social sciences, highlighting the need to consider the ethical implications of new technologies. Terms such as "future" and "evolution" suggest that research evolves in line with advances in technology and societal challenges. (Figure 10)

For deeper thematic analysis, additional data was conducted using the VOSviewer. The program is used for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, as shown in Figure 10. In the keyword analysis, a threshold of a minimum of five impressions was used. Out of a total of 5882 analyzed keywords, 175 of them meet the set frequency threshold.

This data provides a comprehensive overview of key terms related to the overlap between artificial intelligence (AI) and anthropology, highlighting their frequency and overall strength of connectivity. The most prominent term,

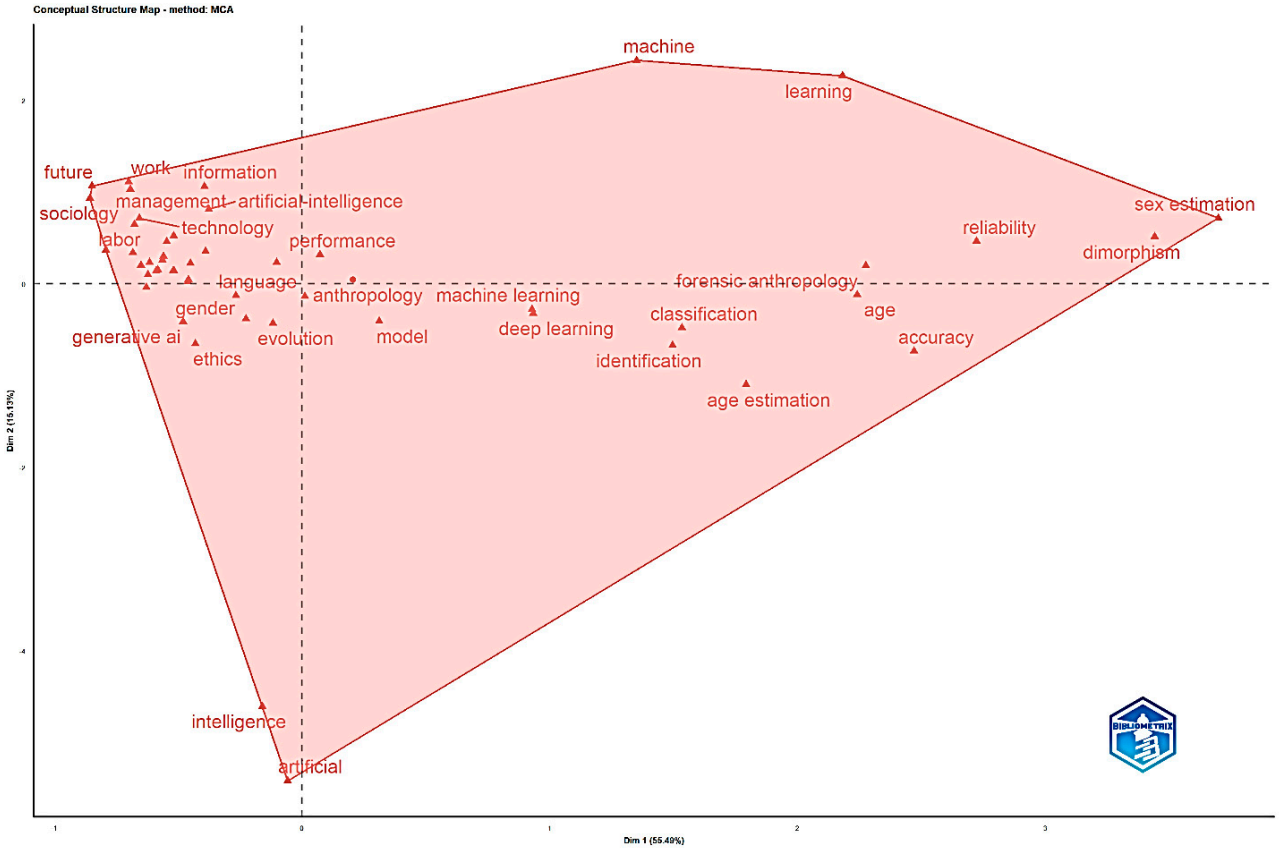

Fig. 9. Conceptual Structure Map

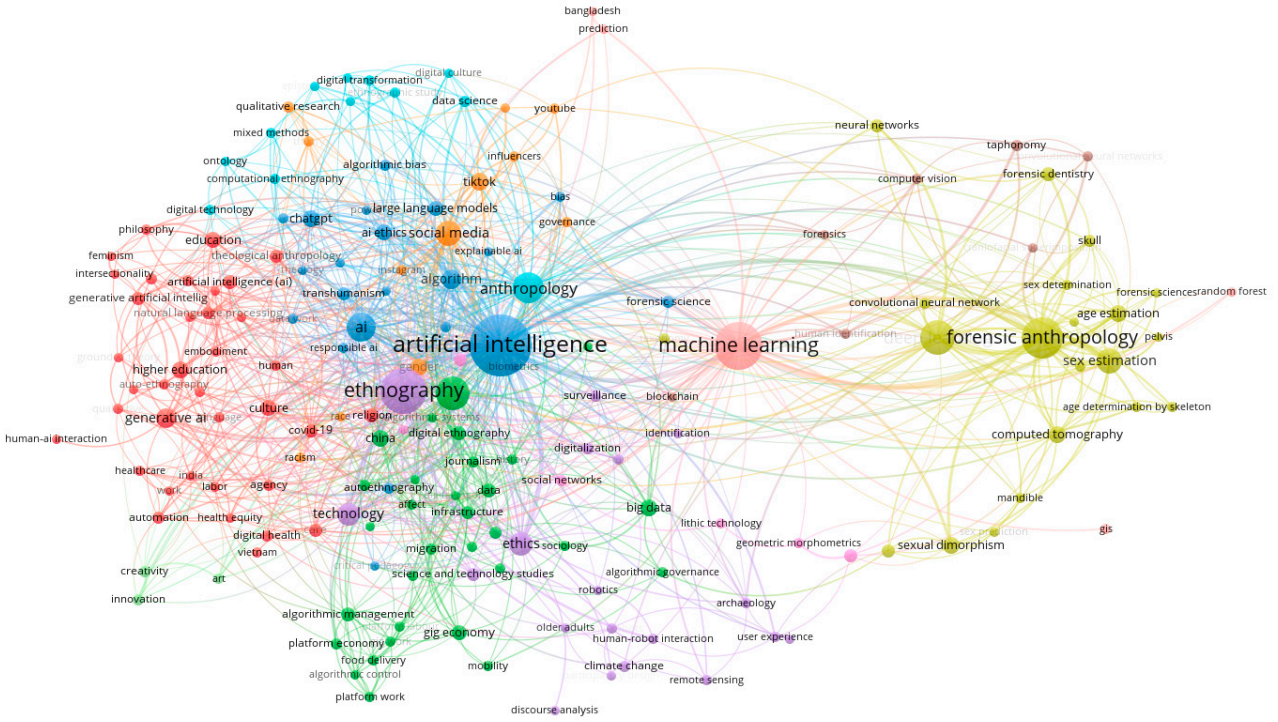

Fig. 10. Network visualization map

"artificial intelligence", appears 219 times, with a high total link strength of 157, indicating its central role in this research discourse. This high frequency suggests that AI is a key focus of contemporary discussions, with numerous links to other topics and areas of research. It is followed in importance by "machine learning", which appears 128 times with a connection strength of 106. This figure indicates that research on machine learning is developing intensively, and its impact on anthropology is growing as it seeks to integrate into the analysis of human behavior and cultural patterns. Related terms such as "algorithms" with 64 occurrences and "algorithmic bias", which occurs 8 times, indicate the importance of ethical considerations related to algorithms in the context of anthropological studies. Concerns about algorithm bias are essential to ensuring fairness and transparency in research used by AI. The growing importance is also shown by terms such as "generative AI", with 23 impressions and a connection strength of 18. This term reflects the latest technological advances that enable the creation of original content, including text, images, and multimedia, and its potential use in cultural and social analysis. In addition, "digital ethnography" and "computational ethnography" (with 12 and 7 occurrences, respectively) point to innovative research methodologies that integrate digital assets, and thus seek to enrich anthropological approaches and research. Particularly important in this context is the term "AI Ethics", which appears 15 times with a bond strength of 11. This term emphasizes the necessity of discussing ethical issues and implications related to the application of AI in the social sciences, especially in the context of human behavior and cultural practices. In this sense, key terms such as "bias," "algorithmic bias," and "accountability" reflect concerns about fairness and balance in the application of AI, and are essential for understanding the ethical challenges in this domain. Interdisciplinarity can also be observed through terms such as "sociology," "digital culture," and "social media," implying that such research does not take place in isolation, but is part of a broader discourse that includes different social sciences. These terms show how anthropological research is increasingly linked to the digital and cultural analysis of contemporary communication and interaction. The term "forensic anthropology" was singled out as extremely significant with 97 occurrences. The term emphasizes the importance of AI in practical applications, such as human identification and criminal justice, indicating the synergy between technology and traditional anthropological practices. This opens up new fields of research that deal not only with scientific, but also with social and ethical issues. Finally, these data highlight the dynamic and complex environment at the intersection of artificial intelligence and anthropology, and suggest a growing awareness of the complexities related to the use of technology in understanding human behavior and cultural contexts. Connecting traditional anthropological methods with modern technologies represents a challenge and an opportunity for new perspectives and innovations in this field of research.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis highlights that the field of research at the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and anthropology is dynamic, interdisciplinary and in a phase of intensive growth. The paper confirms that an anthropological perspective is not only essential but also crucial for understanding AI as a complex sociotechnical phenomenon that cannot be reduced to technical aspects alone. The analysis, which included 1742 documents, revealed key topics. Topics within the area of interest address the ethical implications of AI. This domain includes topics related to algorithmic bias and the concentration of algorithmic power. Part of the research interest is directed towards methodological approaches and tools, so the importance of digital ethnography as a new, innovative methodology for the analysis of everyday interactions with digital systems is highlighted. The ethnography of data and algorithm design are also presented, revealing moral dilemmas and the "hidden work" behind technological infrastructure. Part of the topic concerns the cultural and social construction of artificial intelligence, showing that these systems are shaped by historical, political, and social contexts. Topics include also algorithmic culture, platforms, intermediary systems, identity production, attention management, and the design of the public sphere. Looking at the results, we can conclude that dynamics cannot yet be called a full-fledged discipline but more of a "contact zone" between anthropology and AI. We conclude that there are many research questions in this area that need answers and new research. Limitations that have been detected show that the emergent field of AI anthropology faces challenges in establishing nuanced, culturally sensitive approaches, overcoming corporate dominance that limits critical insight, and deepening ethical frameworks that often serve only to legitimize technological decisions, while constantly needing to integrate a variety of methodologies. In conclusion, anthropology is an indispensable discipline for analyzing and questioning the algorithmic structures that shape the contemporary world. Future research must continue to engage critical thinking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the development of innovative methodologies to address the complex ethical, methodological, and societal challenges posed by the age of artificial intelligence.

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ANTROPOLOGIJA U DOBA UMJETNE INTELIGENCIJE: BIBLIOMETRIJSKA ANALIZA GLOBALNIH ISTRAŽIVAČKIH TRENDOVA U BAZI WEB OF SCIENCE (2000.–2025.)

S A Ž E T A K

Ovaj rad provodi sveobuhvatnu bibliometrijsku analizu istraživanja umjetne inteligencije (AI) i antropologije, fokusirajući se na razumijevanje njihovih dinamičkih interakcija u složenim sociokulturnim sustavima između 2000. i 2025. godine. Antropološka perspektiva postala je neizostavan alat za analizu kulturnih, društvenih i etičkih implikacija AI-a, propitivanje struktura moći i nejednakosti, te podršku odgovornom razvoju tehnologije u kontekstima gdje se tehnološki napredak isprepliće s ljudskim iskustvom i društvenim vrijednostima. Analizirani su bibliografski podaci iz Web of Science (s fokusom na 1.742 dokumenta iz razdoblja 2020.-2026.), ispitujući trendove publikacija, tematske klastere, mreže suautorstva, citatne strukture i supojavljivanja ključnih riječi pomoću bibliometrijskih alata poput VOSviewera i Bibliometrixa. Konceptualno mapiranje ističe dominantne domene: (i) etičke i sociokulturne implikacije AI-a (uključujući algoritamsku pristranost, AI etiku i etnografiju) te (ii) metodološke primjene i rastuće tehnologije (poput strojnog učenja, forenzičke antropologije i generativne AI), pri čemu je sve povezano kroz sveobuhvatnu temu ljudskog iskustva i društvene organizacije u digitalnom dobu. Rezultati nude strukturirani pregled evolucije polja, pružajući istraživačima i donositeljima odluka vrijednu referentnu točku za unaprjeđenje primjena AI-a u kontekstu antropološkog istraživanja.