Gentrified Humanities? An analysis of the main trends in the Scopus database

¿Humanidades gentrificadas? Un análisis de las principales tendencias en la base de datos Scopus

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ABSTRACT

The present bibliometric study examines the evolution and impact of gentrification within the humanities field. Using the Scopus and Lens databases, and through the VOSviewer software, documents, citations, areas and types of publication, keyword co-occurrence, and geographical distribution related to gentrification were analyzed. The results indicate a predominant concentration of research in Europe and North America, highlighting the need to geographically diversify the academic focus. Furthermore, an increasing thematic diversity and an interdisciplinary approach in the studies were observed, expanding the understanding of the phenomenon beyond its economic and social impacts to include cultural and identity aspects. The study also identified key works that have significantly shaped the academic discourse on gentrification in the humanities, highlighting established and emerging areas of study. These findings emphasize the importance of expanding bibliometric research to address gaps and foster a more complete understanding of the impact of gentrification.

Keywords: Cultural Impact; Community Displacement; Urban Transformation; Identity and Gentrification; Socioeconomic Dynamics.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio bibliométrico examina la evolución y el impacto de la gentrificación dentro del campo de las humanidades. Utilizando las bases de datos Scopus y Lens, y mediante el software VOSviewer, se analizaron los documentos, citas, áreas y tipos de publicación, co-ocurrencia de palabras clave y distribución geográfica relacionados con la gentrificación. Los resultados indican una concentración predominante de investigaciones en Europa y América del Norte, destacando la necesidad de diversificar geográficamente el enfoque académico. Además, se observó una creciente diversidad temática y un enfoque interdisciplinario en los estudios, expandiendo la comprensión del fenómeno más allá de sus impactos económicos y sociales para incluir aspectos culturales e identitarios. El estudio también identificó trabajos clave que han moldeado significativamente el discurso académico sobre la gentrificación en las humanidades, subrayando áreas de estudio consolidadas y emergentes. Estas conclusiones enfatizan la importancia de ampliar la investigación bibliométrica para abordar brechas y fomentar un entendimiento más completo del impacto de la gentrificación.

Palabras clave: Impacto Cultural; Desplazamiento Comunitario; Transformación Urbana; Identidad y Gentrificación; Dinámicas Socioeconómicas.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, gentrification has positioned itself as one of the most debated and studied urban phenomena, both for its ability to revitalize degraded urban areas and its implications for the Displacement of vulnerable populations.[1,2] This process, transforming low-income sectors into enclaves of higher economic and cultural value, presents unique challenges and opportunities for modern cities.[3,4] As gentrification progresses, not only a change in physical infrastructure is observed, but also a transformation in the cultural and social landscape of neighbourhoods.[5,6,7]

Academic studies on gentrification have proliferated, exploring its impacts in diverse spheres such as economics,[8,9,10] sociology[11,12,13] and urbanism.[14,15] However, the field of humanities has yet to be explored in the same depth, even though culture and identity are central elements in the gentrification process. Humanities research offers a critical lens for understanding how gentrification affects the cultural life of cities and how cultural expressions can, in turn, influence the course of gentrification.[16,17,18,19]

Given the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon, it is essential to address how gentrification has been treated in research within the humanities. Bibliometric analysis emerges as a fundamental tool for this purpose, allowing us to identify patterns, trends, and gaps in the existing literature.[20,21] Through this approach, we can map the main areas of study, assess the evolution of the academic dialogue, and highlight new research directions.[22,23,24]

Therefore, this bibliometric study is crucial to understanding the current state of gentrification research in the humanities and identifying underrepresented areas that require scholarly attention. Furthermore, it aims to provide a solid foundation for future research, helping to design studies that address the critical intersections between gentrification, culture, and society, a critical aspect noted in the literature on the subject.[25] Thus, this research not only contributes to the academic body but also informs policymakers and cultural activists on how to address the effects of gentrification in a way that benefits all urban communities.[26]

Fundamental concepts

The theoretical framework of gentrification encompasses several key concepts that facilitate understanding this complex and multifaceted phenomenon. The main terms used in the study of gentrification are defined below:

Gentrification

Gentrification refers to the transformation process of a neighbourhood with low incomes and a deteriorated physical environment through the arrival of residents of higher socioeconomic status. This demographic change is often accompanied by housing renovation, increases in property values, and changes in the character and culture of the neighbourhood.[27] Gentrification often results in the Displacement of the original residents, who cannot bear the increased cost of living.[28,29]

Displacement

A direct consequence of gentrification is that long-time residents, usually of lower income, are forced to move due to rising rents and cost of living, as well as the transformation of their environment's social and cultural fabric.[30,31] Displacement can be physical, when people move out of their homes, or economic when they can no longer afford to live in their neighbourhood due to rising costs.[32,33]

Cultural capital

This term describes the non-economic resources, such as knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that individuals possess, which enable them to gain power and status in society.[34,35] In the context of gentrification, newcomers often bring high cultural capital, which can alter neighbourhood dynamics and identity.[36,37]

Urban renewal

Often confused with gentrification, urban renewal involves planned interventions by the state or developers to improve and revitalize urban areas that are physically deteriorated.[38,39] Although renewal may be part of gentrification, it does not always involve demographic change or Displacement.[40,41,42]

Urban transformation

This refers to broad changes in the structure and character of urban areas, which may include gentrification and other types of development and socioeconomic change.[43,44]

These concepts form the basis for exploring how gentrification impacts not only the economy and demographics of an area but also its culture and social fabric.[45] The study of these terms and their interaction is crucial to a full understanding of the phenomenon of gentrification and its effects on urban communities.

METHOD

A comprehensive methodological design was used for the bibliometric study to explore the evolution of documents, citations received, areas and types of publication, co-occurrence of keywords and geographical distribution of studies on gentrification in the humanities. The research was based on data extracted from the Scopus and Lens databases, recognized for broad coverage of academic and scientific literature.

Initially, a search for terms related to gentrification in the humanities was conducted in both databases. The inclusion criterion focused on documents that explicitly addressed the topic of gentrification within the humanities framework. Hence, the filter (LIMIT TO) was employed. To obtain a representative view of the existing literature, documents were analyzed by type, including journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters.

Subsequently, VOSviewer software was used for keyword co-occurrence analysis, which allowed the identification of the main themes and trends within the selected corpus. VOSviewer also facilitated the visualization of collaborative networks between countries, while the geographical distribution of publications was analyzed in Lens. This provided insight into the global and regional scope of gentrification studies.

In addition, the evolution of papers over time was analyzed to observe trends in publication and scholarly impact by analyzing the citations received. This approach made it possible to discern the fundamental works in the field and to evaluate the influence of different currents of thought within the topic of study.

Finally, the findings were synthesized to highlight emerging lines of research and areas requiring further attention. This analysis provided a solid foundation for future research and the development of policy and practice informed by scholarly evidence in humanities and gentrification.

RESULTS

In the descriptive bibliometric analysis conducted on gentrification in the humanities, using the Scopus database, several key trends in the existing literature were identified. First, an increase in the number of publications dealing with gentrification within the environmental sciences was observed, highlighting a significant annual growth in this field since 1987, underscoring a growing interest in exploring the interactions between gentrification processes and environmental issues.

However, when filtering the search period, an intermittent trend was observed regarding total annual publications. It was observed in the distribution that the total number of publications increased and then decreased throughout the decade studied, except in 2018 and 2023. In contrast, the relevance of the field showed a growth trend, which was measured by analyzing the pattern of citations, which, unlike the papers, climbed steadily over the period with 556 papers cited, 5480 citations, an h-index of 33 (figure 1).

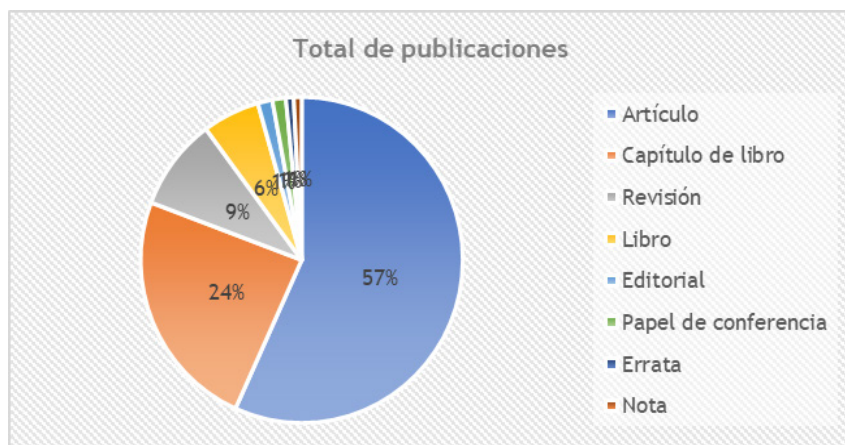**Figure 1.** Comparative graph document/citations

Figure 2. Publications by type

Regarding publication practices in the humanities, journal articles and book chapters were the most common channels. However, reviews also play a crucial role, especially in disciplines such as religion, philosophy and literature (figure 2). As for the areas with which collaborations were established, the social sciences and engineering stood out, with the rest of the disciplines coded by the base being unrepresentative (figure 3).

Figure 3. Collaborations by discipline

These findings suggest a diversity in citation and publication practices, where ancient literature and primary sources are frequently used, reflecting a less focused approach to immediate current affairs than in other sciences. To contrast these results, the analysis was replicated in the Lens database, allowing us to look at other fields, such as political science, geography, aesthetics, and cartography (figure 4).
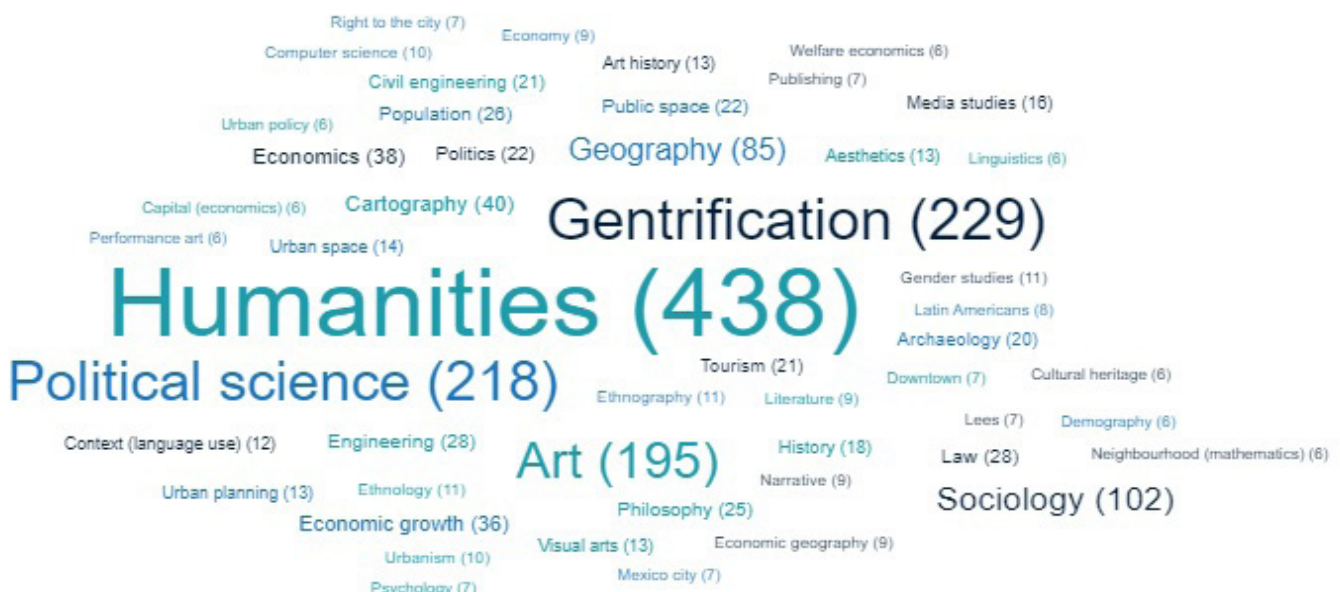

Figure 4. Most relevant fields according to Lens

In addition, persistence in using sources in languages other than English was noted, especially in literary and social science studies, which poses challenges for databases that predominantly index sources in English. This indicates the need for bibliometric methodologies considering the rich linguistic diversity and publishing practices in the humanities. As seen in the map of publications (figure 5), the greatest production is concentrated in the global North. However, after filtering, it was possible to appreciate the field's emergence in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador and Colombia.
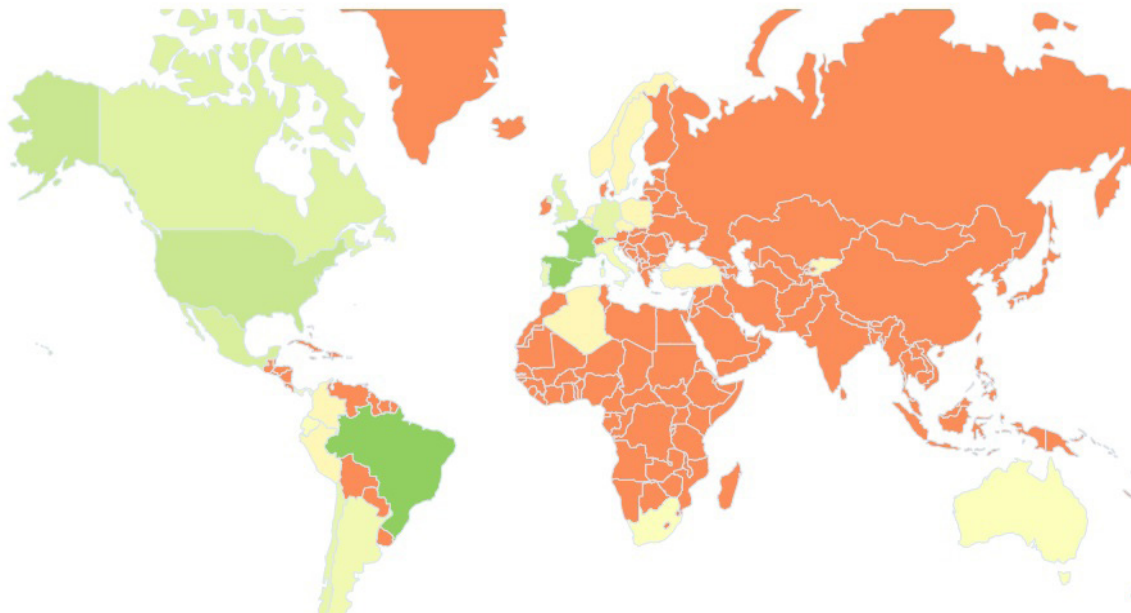

Figure 5. Global map of publications

Regarding keywords, the co-occurrence showed two major clusters, the first formed by seven clusters and the second, of lesser relevance, by two (figure 6). The two clusters of lesser importance showed a concentrated interest in social and sustainability issues. On the other hand, although several lines were overlapping in the remaining seven clusters, the use of terms from the humanities could have been more directly apparent; rather, the emphasis was on the social sciences, which contradicts what was revealed by the databases analyzed. This may suggest the need to analyze the keyword selection practices of journals and indexers.
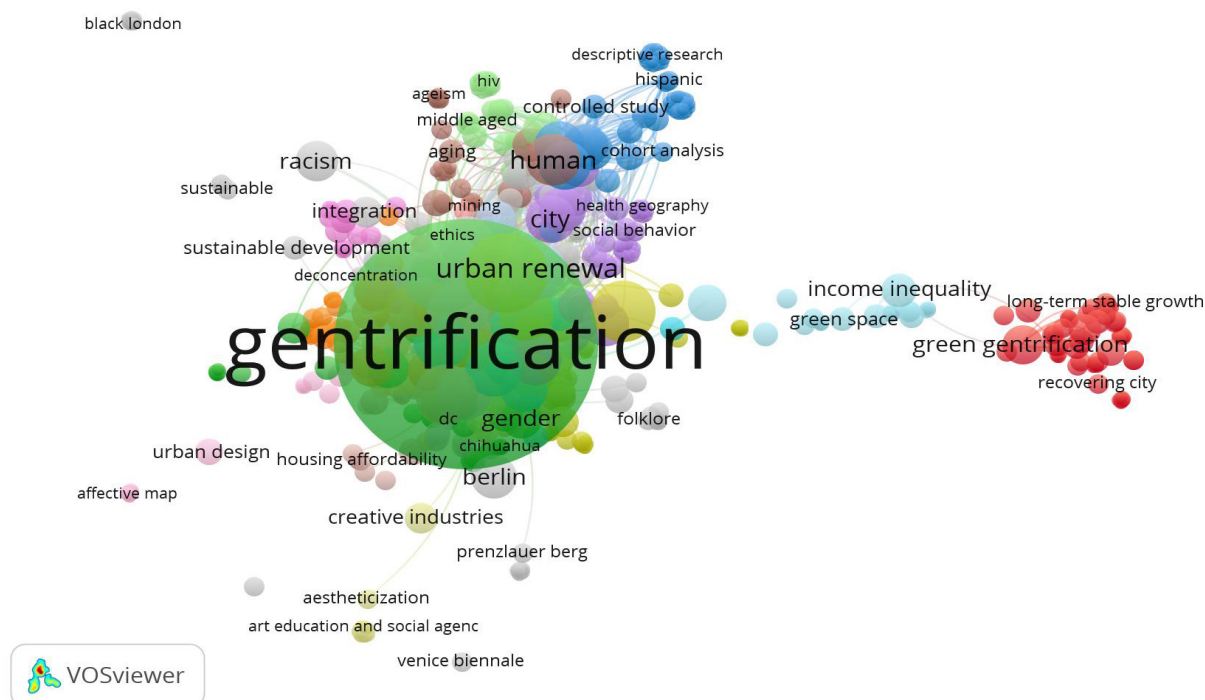

Figure 6. Co-occurrence network

Regarding evolution, the VOSviewer showed a trend from folklore studies, art education and agency towards descriptive research, racial and gender studies, ageing and other issues that, although not recent, have gained visibility. On the other hand, at the beginning of the decade, interest remained in studies directly associated with gentrification, the urban environment and renovation (figure 7).
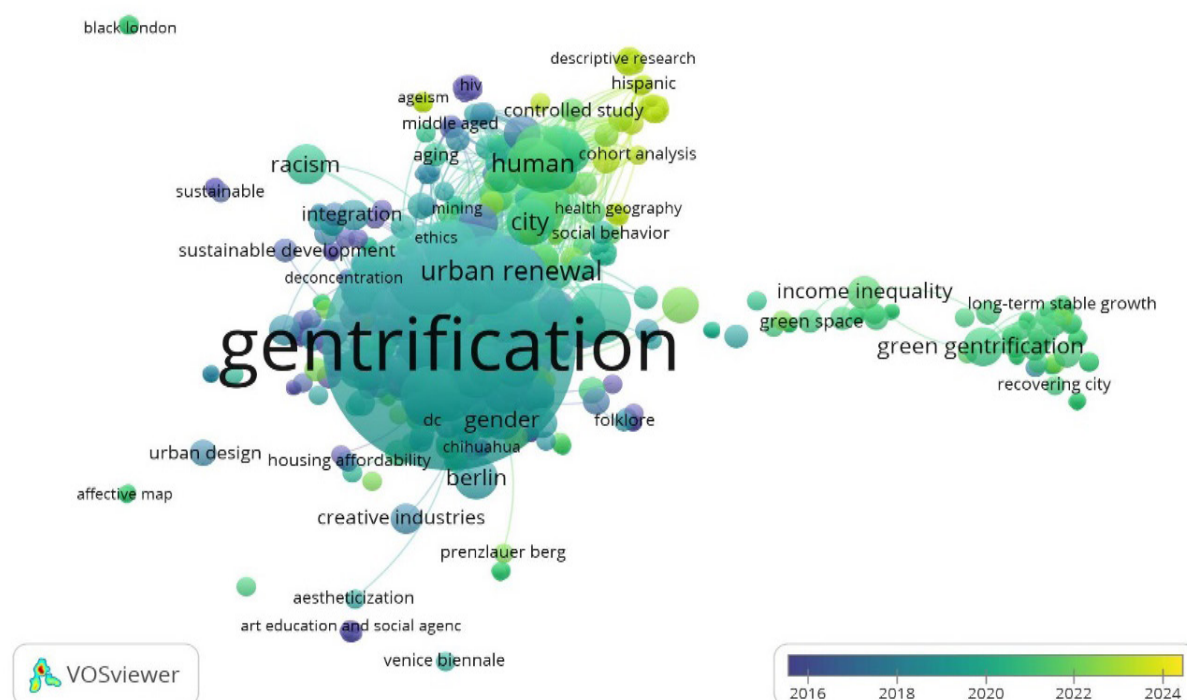

Figure 7. Evolution of the lines according to the co-occurrence of keywords

Finally, the collaboration networks between countries showed that the countries with the most links in the period were the United States, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Although Ibero-American countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Chile and Argentina (in addition to Spain above) stand out in these collaborative networks, it can be seen that the networks are not strong enough, and this could mark an important direction for the future development of the field (figure 8).
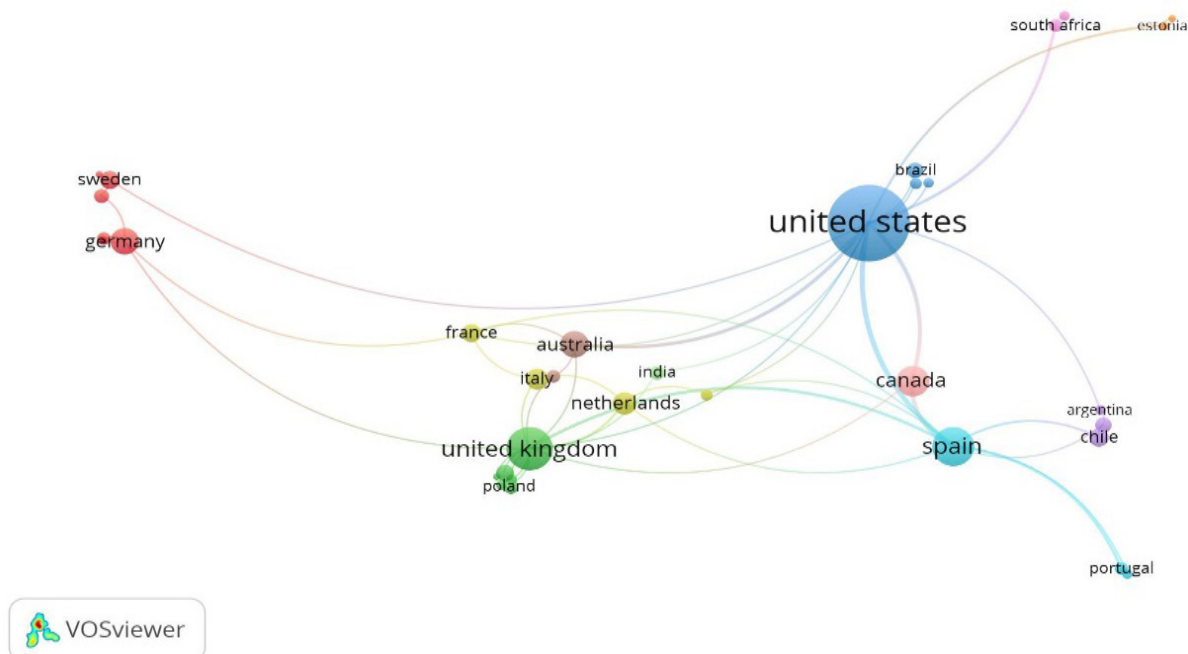

Figure 8. Collaboration networks between countries

These trends highlight the evolution of the humanities and suggest future lines of research that could focus on analyzing how publishing practices in the humanities respond to pressures for research outputs and how this might influence changing practices within this academic field.

Expanded Analysis

The expanded analysis identified several notable trends and developments. For example, recent studies have explored how gentrification can influence crime reduction in urban areas while emphasizing that this process should not ignore vulnerable populations. This multiperspective approach to gentrification brings a more nuanced understanding of its effects on the community, highlighting the importance of considering both benefits and potential negative consequences.

In addition, interest has emerged in how renewable energy communities are being driven by European Union legislation, reflecting dynamic growth in this sector and exponential investment in technologies such as photovoltaic and energy storage systems. This field offers an interesting parallel with studies on gentrification since both topics are intertwined with urban transformation and development.

The bibliometric methodology applied to these topics is evolving rapidly as well. Modern bibliometric techniques include citation network analysis and semantic approaches, allowing for a better understanding of the interactions and evolution of disciplines. In addition, including a wider range of bibliometric sources and methodologies designed specifically for the humanities makes it possible to more adequately capture the diversity of publications and citations in these areas.

Thus, future studies might consider how these trends in gentrification research connect to broader social and economic changes and how bibliometric methodologies can be adapted or expanded to capture the rich diversity of the humanities better. This will enrich the field and contribute to a broader scholarly dialogue on the implications of gentrification in the humanities disciplines.

DISCUSSION

In discussing gentrification in the humanities, it is crucial to identify and propose future lines of research, considering both current challenges and emerging opportunities.[46,47] One of the main areas of future interest is assessing the impact of gentrification on local communities, especially in terms of cultural and educational accessibility in revitalized urban areas.[48,49,50] Future research could explore how cultural and educational initiatives can serve as tools asto para mitigar los aspectos negativos de la gentrificación como para fomentar la inclusión social.

Challenges in this field include obtaining longitudinal data that allow for a detailed analysis of long-term social and cultural transformations.[51] In addition, the subjectivity inherent in the definition and perception of gentrification can complicate the comparability of studies and the generalization of results. Establishing clear and consistent methodological frameworks that allow for comparative studies across different regions and cultural contexts is essential.[52]

In the Latin American context, gentrification presents particular characteristics due to the region's specific urban and socioeconomic dynamics.[53,54,55] For example, in several Latin American cities, gentrification processes are often intertwined with problems of displacement and urban segregation, raising critical questions about equity and social justice.[56,57] Future research could focus on how urban and housing policies influence these processes and on strategies that governments and communities can employ to ensure that neighbourhood revitalization does not exclude the original inhabitants.[58]

Finally, researchers must address how cultural differences affect the experience and consequences of gentrification in Latin America, exploring in depth how local identity and culture can be preserved and valued amid rapid urban change. These approaches will enrich the academic understanding of gentrification and inform more effective and culturally sensitive public policies.

CONCLUSIONS

It was found that most studies on gentrification in the humanities were concentrated in Europe and North America. This phenomenon reflected the uneven distribution of scholarly focus and resources, suggesting the need to expand research to other regions to gain a more global and diverse perspective on the impact of gentrification on local communities.

The research revealed a growth in thematic diversity and the adoption of interdisciplinary approaches over time. Studies addressed the economic and social impacts of gentrification and its relationship to cultural identity and heritage, highlighting the field's evolution towards a more holistic understanding of gentrification.

Several key works were identified that have been widely cited and significantly influenced the humanities gentrification research. This underscores the importance of certain seminal studies in shaping academic discourse and suggests consolidated and emerging areas of study within the field.

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