

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE AND CULTURAL VALUE IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY: TRANSFORMING CREATIVE LABOR AND CINEMA

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Received 20.03.2026. | Send to review 07.04.2026. | Accepted 17.08.2026.

Original Article



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JEL Classification:
Z11, Z10, L82, O33, L86

Doi: 10.61432/CPNE04012410

UDK: 339.5(4-672EU):004.738.5

ABSTRACT

This study develops an original analytical framework that systematically conceptualizes the role of artificial intelligence in the cinema industry through the lens of algorithmic governance. The framework comprises four dimensions: visibility management, value attribution, labor management, and predictive management. It is applied to examine how AI technologies, including platform recommendation algorithms, generative visual systems, and data driven script evaluation tools, are reshaping film production and distribution.

Drawing on media studies, cultural political economy, and critical algorithm studies, the paper employs a hybrid deductive and inductive thematic analysis of 19 open access studies published between 2023 and 2026. The sample includes 14 peer reviewed articles, four preprints, and one repository paper, with 15 studies published in 2025 or 2026. The analysis is supplemented by publicly available platform policies and documentary evidence concerning industry disputes and litigation.

The findings indicate that algorithmic systems improve production efficiency but may also reduce cultural diversity, increase the precarity of creative labor, and intensify unresolved tensions concerning intellectual property and creative authorship. The paper concludes with policy recommendations on algorithmic transparency and cultural diversity, drawing on the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act, the Digital Services Act, and existing European and East Asian content promotion frameworks.

Keywords: *Cinema, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy, Creative Labor, Algorithmic Culture, Platform Economy, Cultural Value*

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital economy has transformed artificial intelligence from a supportive technology in the cultural and creative industries into a central force shaping production, distribution, and value creation. Cinema represents one of the most visible and contested areas of this transformation, where the economic, aesthetic and cultural consequences of technological innovation converge. Recent research indicates that AI challenges not only established production practices but also fundamental concepts in film theory, including the notion of the creative auteur (Uddin et al., 2025).

Although AI has long been used in cinema, the development of generative AI has produced a qualitative shift in its role. AI tools are now integrated into nearly every stage of filmmaking, including screenwriting, visual effects, editing, content evaluation, and audience recommendation. [Inie et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight both the expectations and concerns of creative professionals, emphasizing that generative AI no longer merely analyzes human created works but can also produce original content. This development requires a reconsideration of cultural value, creativity, and labor within the digital economy.

This article conceptualizes AI in cinema not merely as a production tool but as a mechanism of algorithmic governance that reorganizes creative processes, market structures, and the production of cultural meaning. Drawing on media studies, cultural political economy, and critical algorithm studies, it examines how generative visual systems, editing technologies, and platform recommendation algorithms are transforming film production and distribution. The central argument is that algorithmic systems may improve efficiency while simultaneously reducing cultural diversity, increasing the precarity of creative labor, and intensifying unresolved tensions concerning intellectual property and authorship.

Existing research has rarely examined cinema comprehensively within the broader contexts of platform capitalism and algorithmic governance. The connection between industry reports and critical theoretical perspectives remains underdeveloped. Moreover, the literature has not provided a systematic framework for examining the four dimensions of algorithmic governance in cinema: visibility management, value attribution, labor management, and predictive management. Comparative research, particularly from the perspective of the Global South, also remains limited. This study addresses these gaps by applying a four dimensional analytical framework to the existing empirical literature and by proposing relevant policy recommendations.

2. METHOD

This study is designed within the qualitative research paradigm using an exploratory research design. By systematically examining the existing literature and secondary data relevant to the field, the study aims to explore and identify the underlying dynamics shaping the domain ([Lin, 1976:137](#); [Stebbins, 2001](#)).

2.1. DATA SOURCES AND SAMPLE SELECTION

The study draws on academic articles, reports, policy documents, and documentary evidence identified through predefined search terms. Scopus and Web of Science served as the primary databases. Searches combined the following terms: “artificial intelligence and cinema,” “algorithmic governance and film industry,” “creative labor and platform economy,” “generative AI and cultural production,” and “streaming platforms and cultural diversity.” These searches were supplemented by targeted queries in arXiv, DOAJ, and Google Scholar.

Because much of the recent research on generative AI in film is available as open access preprints and has not yet been indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, five sources were retrieved through supplementary searches. These comprised four arXiv preprints and one repository paper, all of which are identified in the Appendix. The search process was completed on May 30, 2026.

The initial search identified 174 records. After duplicates were removed, [n1] records were screened by title and abstract, of which [n2] were excluded as irrelevant. The full texts of the remaining [n3] records were assessed, and [n4] were excluded for failing to meet one or more inclusion criteria. The final corpus consisted of 19 publications.

The inclusion criteria required that publications were written in English, openly accessible,

published between January 2023 and May 30, 2026, and substantively focused on cinema or the film and streaming industries. The year 2023 was selected as the lower boundary because the public release of large generative AI models in late 2022 marked a shift from speculative discussion to direct scholarly examination of their application in the film industry.

The corpus is dominated by recent publications. It includes one publication from 2023, three from 2024, eleven from 2025, and four from 2026. Fourteen sources are peer reviewed journal articles, four are arXiv preprints, and one is a repository paper. One peer reviewed publication, [Thomas and Johnson \(2026\)](#), is an opinion article rather than an empirical study. The preprints and the opinion article are identified in the Appendix and are treated in Section 4 as contributions to the broader debate rather than as independent empirical evidence.

This selection criterion replaces the formulation “published after 2025,” which appeared in an earlier version of the article but did not accurately reflect the analyzed corpus. Earlier foundational studies, including [Hallinan and Striphas \(2016\)](#), [Gaw \(2022\)](#), and [Lotz \(2022\)](#), were not included in the coded corpus. They are used exclusively as theoretical sources in Section 3.

Purposive sampling was applied to identify publications that were recent, accessible, and directly relevant to the research question. This approach facilitated the selection of information rich sources appropriate for qualitative analysis ([Patton, 2015](#)). Criterion sampling was also employed, meaning that all publications satisfying the predefined inclusion criteria were included in the final corpus.

In addition to the academic corpus, the study examines publicly available corporate documents issued by major streaming platforms. Official support, developer, and partner portals were systematically searched for content, delivery, and metadata policies. The search covered six leading subscription video on demand services operating in European and North American markets: Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Apple TV+, Max and Paramount+.

Only Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV+ provided publicly accessible documents of this type. Table 3 reports both the available documents and the negative search results, since the absence of public documentation may itself indicate limited transparency in algorithmic governance.

These materials are treated as an illustrative corpus of platform self representation rather than as coded data. They were interpreted in relation to the four dimensions of the analytical framework but were not included in the thematic coding process. No finding presented in Section 4 is based solely on these documents.

The Apple TV+ document is a style and metadata standards guide. It specifies how titles, credits, and descriptive metadata should be structured but provides no information about ranking or recommendation systems. Its inclusion is justified by the role of metadata standardization in algorithmic sorting. Content must be described in a structured and machine- readable form before it can be classified, matched, ranked, or presented to users. The document therefore illustrates the infrastructural basis of visibility management rather than the operation of recommendation algorithms. No conclusion regarding Apple’s recommendation system is derived from this source.

The study also considers documentary evidence concerning the 2023 Hollywood labor disputes, the collective agreements that followed, litigation related to the use of copyrighted works in AI model training, and documented applications of AI in individual film productions.

This evidence was collected through targeted searches corresponding to the five coding themes. Three categories of sources were examined. The first included official websites and published agreements of relevant professional organizations, including the Writers Guild of America, SAG AFTRA, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, and the Directors Guild of America.

The second category comprised official legal and policy documents issued by EUR Lex, the European Commission, the European Audiovisual Observatory, and the Korean Film Council. The third included established litigation trackers and specialized trade publications reporting on production related cases.

Primary and official sources were used whenever available. Press reports were consulted only when no primary source could be identified, and information was accepted only when confirmed by at least two independent outlets. These materials provide contextual and illustrative support for arguments derived from the coded academic corpus. They are analyzed separately, do not form part of the coding framework, and are not included among the 19 publications.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#). The analysis focused on five main themes: algorithmic governance, creative labor, economic value, cultural diversity, and ethical and regulatory issues. The findings were subsequently interpreted in relation to the relevant theoretical literature.

The study adopted a hybrid deductive and inductive approach based on [Fereday and Muir Cochran \(2006\)](#). The five main themes were defined in advance and derived from the conceptual framework. Four operationalize the dimensions of algorithmic governance presented in Section 3.1, while the fifth captures the ethical and regulatory implications associated with these dimensions.

Coding nevertheless began inductively. Each article was read in full and divided into meaning units. Open codes were generated using the terminology and concepts found in the sources rather than those imposed by the analytical framework. This procedure allowed the evidence to challenge or extend the predefined framework. In the second stage, the open codes were compared with the five predefined themes and refined into themes and subthemes according to their similarities and differences.

Codes corresponding to an existing theme were incorporated as subthemes. Codes that did not fit the predefined structure were retained as candidate themes and reassessed across the full corpus. Two notable cases emerged. The first concerned unequal access to AI infrastructure among large studios, independent producers, and producers in the Global South. As these codes did not fit the four dimensions of algorithmic governance, they were retained under cultural diversity as the subtheme of marginalization. The second concerned the attribution of authorship in human and machine collaboration. Because these codes intersected two areas, they were coded under both creative labor and ethical and regulatory issues.

Table 2 presents the relationship between the 19 sources and the final thematic structure, allowing the contribution of each publication to the findings to be traced.

2.3. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

The thematic analysis of the 19 articles was conducted by a single researcher. To assess coding stability and reduce potential subjectivity, intra coder reliability was evaluated following [Miles and Huberman \(1994\)](#). Ten articles, representing all five themes and publication years, were re coded after a two week interval without reference to the initial coding.

The coding unit was the meaning unit, defined as a passage ranging from one sentence to one paragraph that expressed a single analytically relevant proposition. Before coding, a written codebook was developed for each of the five main themes, including definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and illustrative examples from the corpus.

Agreement was calculated as the proportion of meaning units assigned to the same main

theme in both coding rounds. Of 212 meaning units, 191 were coded identically, resulting in an agreement rate of 90.1 percent.

The 21 discrepancies were concentrated in two areas. Fourteen involved the distinction between predictive algorithmic governance and platform based economic value creation, particularly in passages concerning box office forecasting and demand prediction. Five concerned the overlap between creative labor and ethical or regulatory issues in discussions of authorship. The remaining two reflected inconsistent application of the codebook. The codebook was subsequently revised. Passages describing how predictive systems operate were assigned to algorithmic governance, whereas those emphasizing the financial rationale for their use were assigned to economic value. Double coding was permitted where authorship issues overlapped with both creative labor and ethics and regulation. The full corpus was then re coded using these revised rules.

This procedure has two limitations. First, percentage agreement does not correct for chance. Since the analysis involved one researcher, inter coder statistics such as Cohen's kappa were not applicable. The reported figure therefore measures coding stability over time rather than intersubjective reliability. Second, coding consistency does not demonstrate that another researcher would adopt the same interpretive framework. As [Braun and Clarke \(2021\)](#) emphasize, reliability measures cannot replace transparency in interpretive analysis. Accordingly, the codebook structure and source to theme mapping presented in Table 2 allow the analytical reasoning to be examined and critically assessed.

Overall, this procedure strengthens the consistency and transparency of the thematic analysis and remains compatible with the approach developed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#).

2.4. ETHICS AND LIMITATIONS

As the study relies exclusively on secondary and publicly available data, formal ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, the proprietary nature of platform algorithms and the resulting lack of transparency represent important limitations. The analysis is restricted to publicly accessible documents and therefore cannot examine the internal operation of closed algorithmic systems directly.

The findings are also limited to the selected corpus and are not intended to support statistical generalization. However, the depth and contextual detail of the analysis allow for analytical generalization to comparable settings.

2.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ₁: *How do platform-based algorithmic governance mechanisms produce structural effects on cultural visibility, content diversity and creative labor in the film industry, and how do these effects deepen the tension between economic value production and cultural autonomy?*

RQ₂: *How does the integration of artificial intelligence technologies into film production and distribution processes transform creative labor practices, intellectual property regimes, and safeguards for cultural diversity and what ethical and regulatory mechanisms are required to govern this transformation?*

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE AND DATA-DRIVEN CULTURAL PRODUCTION

The concept of algorithmic governance refers to institutional arrangements in which decision making is increasingly shaped by data and automated systems rather than by human actors alone ([Kitchin, 2017](#)). In cultural production, this shift means that creative

and commercial decisions are progressively informed by audience data, predictive models, and performance metrics.

Gillespie (2014) argues that algorithms are not neutral technical instruments but socio-technical systems that embody particular norms, assumptions and values. Similarly, Beer (2017) conceptualizes algorithms as forms of social power that influence visibility, ranking, classification, and value attribution.

Building on the approaches of Kitchin (2017) and Beer (2017), algorithmic governance in cinema can be examined through four interrelated dimensions:

Table 1. Algorithmic governance in the context of cinema

Category	Description	Cinema Context
Visibility Management	Algorithms determine which content is made prominent	Recommendation systems, platform homepage curation
Value Attribution Management	Algorithmic metrics define cultural value	View counts, engagement rates, completion rates
Labor Management	Algorithms organize and regulate creative processes	Automated editing tools, data-driven script evaluation
Predictive Management	Algorithms forecast future preferences	Box office prediction systems

Source: Adapted to the context of cinema based on the conceptualizations presented in Kitchin (2017) and Beer (2017)

The literature on creative labor identifies precarity as a structural feature of the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Digitalization and AI driven automation have further expanded project based employment, freelance work, and forms of invisible labor. Wood et al. (2019) show that algorithmic control can intensify work processes and create new forms of dependency that challenge claims of worker autonomy.

The reorganization of cultural production through digital platforms has also become central to research on platform capitalism. Srnicek (2017) demonstrates how platforms place data collection and analysis at the core of economic value creation, while Faraoun (2024) extends this perspective to creative labor. In the film industry, platform companies often finance production while simultaneously controlling distribution. As a result, decisions about which stories are produced and which formats are prioritized are increasingly shaped by data analytics.

Gaw (2022) argues that Netflix's recommendation system does not simply reflect audience preferences but actively contributes to their formation. This has important implications for the political economy of culture, since algorithmic design can obscure the influence of commercial interests on cultural visibility and diversity. Similarly, Thuillas and Wiart (2024) show how Netflix incorporates diversity into its corporate strategy through three partly contradictory dimensions: algorithmic diversity, globalized diversity and inclusive diversity.

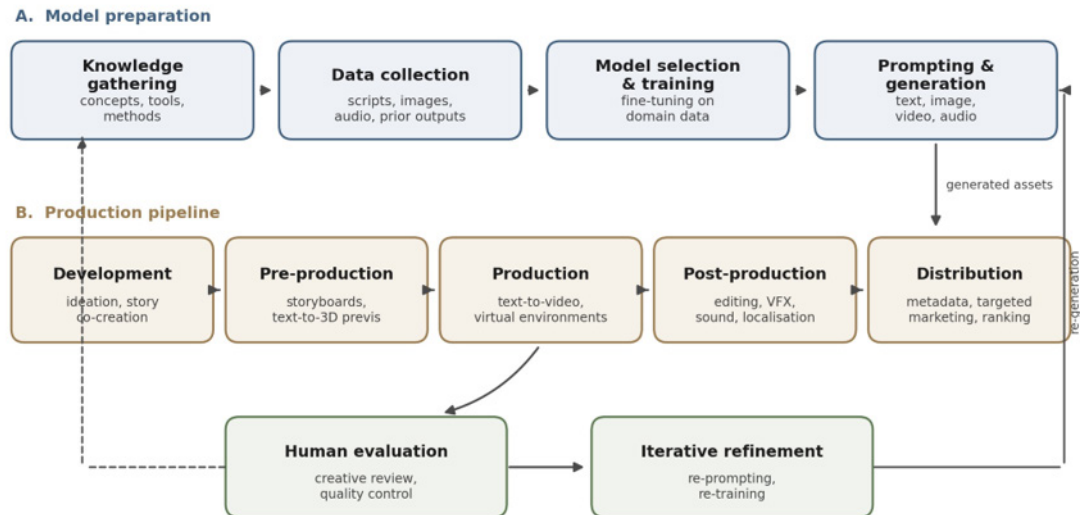
In a systematic review of AI in the cultural and creative industries, Gürel (2025) finds that Industry 5.0 requires the cultural sector to balance tradition and innovation, although this balance often favors commercial interests. While AI can enhance cultural experiences and audience engagement, it may also weaken spaces for authentic and diverse cultural expression.

3.2. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CINEMA: THE TRANSFORMATION OF PRODUCTION PROCESSES

The use of artificial intelligence in cinema is rapidly expanding through applications of generative AI, machine learning, and deep learning. Visual effects production, editing, sound design, and even screenplay drafts are increasingly supported by these technolo-

gies. [Manovich \(2019\)](#) addresses this transformation through the concept of “AI aesthetics,” arguing that aesthetic decisions are partially delegated to algorithmic systems. In their study titled “*Innovations and Challenges of AI in Film: A Methodological Framework for Future Exploration*,” [Uddin et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasize the importance of finding a balance between technological innovation and artistic integrity, while also visualizing the fundamental workflow of AI-assisted filmmaking.

Figure 1. The workflow of AI-assisted filmmaking



Source: Redrawn and adapted by the author from [Uddin et al. \(2025\)](#)

Debates on algorithmic creativity challenge conventional distinctions between human creativity and machine generated output. [Boden \(2016\)](#) argues that AI does not merely imitate human creativity but reshapes how creativity itself is understood. In cinema, this development requires a reconsideration of authorship, originality and artistic responsibility. Recent industry reports and academic studies indicate that the global film industry is being reorganized within platform based digital economies. Streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video influence not only content distribution but also production priorities, narrative formats, and systems of cultural valuation. Through data driven decision making and AI supported algorithms, these platforms continuously measure and classify audience behavior to reduce investment risk. This process may encourage content standardization, genre convergence, and market oriented storytelling ([Srnicek, 2017](#); [van Dijk, Poell, & de Waal, 2018](#)).

Algorithmic governance provides a central framework for understanding this transformation. [Gillespie \(2014\)](#) and [Kitchin \(2017\)](#) emphasize that algorithms are not neutral technical instruments but normative systems that shape visibility, value attribution, and power relations. In cinema, recommendation systems therefore influence which films reach audiences and which remain less visible. Netflix engineering and research publications identify personalized recommendation as a central component of the platform’s competitive strategy, illustrating the close relationship between algorithmic visibility and economic value ([Netflix Research, 2025](#)). However, as corporate publications, these sources represent the platform’s own account of its technological infrastructure and do not independently establish its broader cultural effects.

The integration of AI into film production has also renewed debates concerning creative labor and authorship. Automated editing, generative visual systems, and data driven

script development can accelerate production while redistributing creative authority between human workers and technological systems (Manovich, 2019; Boden, 2016). Research on creative labor suggests that these developments may intensify precarity and transfer decision making power toward centralized platform actors (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Wood et al., 2019). Cinema is therefore increasingly constituted not only as a field of aesthetic expression but also as a domain of algorithmic governance in which economic and cultural value intersect.

Taken together, the literature moves beyond narratives of technological innovation and highlights the need to examine AI in cinema through the perspectives of cultural diversity, ethical governance, and sustainable creative ecosystems. The frameworks of platform capitalism, algorithmic governance, and creative labor demonstrate that digital platforms are no longer merely distribution channels. They have become influential actors in shaping cultural value, aesthetic norms, audience visibility, and labor relations. Nevertheless, existing research has not sufficiently integrated industry evidence with critical theoretical approaches.

3.2.1. PRE-PRODUCTION AND SCREENWRITING

The use of AI in screenwriting is expanding rapidly. Mirowski et al. (2023), in a study presented at the CHI Conference, examine the use of language models in screenplay and theatrical writing through evaluations by industry professionals. Their findings indicate that AI can support routine writing tasks and function as a collaborative tool, but remains limited in areas requiring dramatic originality, contextual sensitivity, and cultural depth. Systems such as ScriptBook can also analyze screenplays and predict box office performance, thereby linking production decisions more closely to algorithmic assessments of commercial risk.

These developments challenge the traditional concept of the creative auteur. Whereas auteur theory identifies the director as the principal creative force behind a film, AI-assisted production distributes creative authority across directors, data scientists, software engineers, and algorithmic systems. Uddin et al. (2025) show that algorithms can influence visual style, narrative development, and casting decisions, while Moruzzi (2022) argues that agency and creativity must be reconsidered in relation to both human and artificial systems.

3.2.2. POST-PRODUCTION PROCESSES AND VISUAL EFFECTS

One of the most visible effects of AI in film production can be observed in postproduction. AI-assisted editing, color correction, noise reduction, sound design, and synthetic media tools can shorten production cycles and reduce costs. Runway ML and Adobe Sensei illustrate the growing integration of automated systems into these processes.

The production of *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022), for example, relied on specialized performance capture and simulation pipelines to combine footage recorded above and below water. Although industry accounts often refer to this case in discussions of machine learning-assisted visual effects, the specific techniques have not been documented in peer-reviewed research. It is therefore presented as an illustrative example rather than as empirical evidence.

These efficiency gains may nevertheless disrupt established forms of skilled labor. Animators, visual effects specialists, and editing assistants are among the groups most exposed to automation pressures. Inie et al. (2023) document concerns among creative professionals that AI may weaken recognition of human contribution and diminish creative control. Deepfake and digital replication technologies also raise ethical questions concerning the future of acting, consent, and the commercial use of performers' digital identities.

3.3. DISTRIBUTION AND RECOMMENDATION ALGORITHMS

Perhaps the most influential application of AI in cinema is found in platform based distribution. Services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ use recommendation systems to analyze viewing behavior, preferences, and user data. These systems influence not only which content becomes visible but also which types of content are commissioned and produced.

Gaw (2022) shows how Netflix's recommendation system contributes to the construction of cultural taste through commercial and industrial logics. The personalization of promotional images according to inferred user characteristics has generated concerns about manipulation and the algorithmic shaping of audience preferences. Similarly, Thuillas and Wiart (2024) argue that Netflix may use diversity as part of its corporate positioning rather than as a consistent cultural commitment.

Lotz (2022) further demonstrates that platform metrics can influence narrative structure, including episode endings and pacing, in order to improve audience retention. Such data driven intervention may encourage greater standardization in content production. Research on music and video streaming also suggests that recommendation systems can marginalize minority content and reinforce feedback loops that repeatedly expose users to similar material.

3.4. THE PRECARIZATION OF CREATIVE LABOR

AI based tools increasingly support data driven assessments of the economic potential of film projects. Box office forecasts, audience analytics, and platform performance metrics enable the commercial value of films to be calculated with greater precision. However, reliance on such systems may discourage creative risk taking and contribute to genre homogenization.

The literature identifies two competing perspectives on the implications of AI for creative labor. Some scholars argue that AI can democratize creative production by expanding access to advanced tools and lowering technical barriers (Manovich, 2019). Critical approaches, however, emphasize its potential to intensify precarity, strengthen algorithmic control, and weaken worker autonomy (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Wood et al., 2019). Faraoun (2024) situates these developments within the broader historical restructuring of labor under platform capitalism.

The 2023 Writers Guild of America and SAG AFTRA strikes provide a prominent example of collective resistance to the use of AI in cultural production. Writers sought restrictions on the use of AI in script development, while actors demanded protections against the unauthorized replication and commercial use of their digital likenesses. These disputes illustrate the broader tension between automation and human creative agency. As Mirowski et al. (2023) suggest, AI can assist with particular creative tasks but remains unable to reproduce the full range of human originality, judgment, and cultural understanding.

Precarity extends beyond employment insecurity to include threats to professional identity and creative autonomy. Inie et al. (2023) report that many creative professionals fear that AI may obscure or diminish their individual contributions. This concern is closely connected to the unresolved question of authorship. Moruzzi (2022) argues that agency and creativity must be reconsidered in relation to both human and artificial systems. In practice, this raises difficult questions about the attribution of authorship when AI contributes to screenwriting, editing, or other creative decisions.

A qualitative study of Latin American filmmakers by Burkhardt (2026) adds an important Global South perspective. Participants tended to view AI less as a creative collaborator than as a technology associated with surveillance, social control, and labor exploitation.

3.5. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, TRANSPARENCY ISSUES, AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

The integration of generative AI into cinema presents significant challenges to existing copyright frameworks. [Mazzi \(2024\)](#) examines originality and authorship in AI generated works, showing that legal systems based on human authorship are difficult to apply to machine generated outputs.

A related issue concerns the copyrighted material used to train AI systems. [Geiger and Iaia \(2024\)](#) examine the tension between copyright protection and text and data mining exceptions, while [Tyagi \(2024\)](#) analyzes the use of copyrighted works in generative AI training and the resulting claims of infringement. AI models may be trained on extensive datasets containing film frames, visual effects, and cinematographic styles, raising unresolved questions concerning consent, compensation, and lawful use.

Copyright litigation against generative AI developers expanded rapidly after 2023. Independent trackers reported more than 80 AI related copyright cases in the United States by early 2026, alongside proceedings in Germany, Italy, India, and the United Kingdom ([Copyright Alliance, 2026](#); [ChatGPT Is Eating the World, 2026](#)). These figures change frequently and should therefore be interpreted as approximate. Most cases concern text, image, and music generation rather than film specifically, and relatively few have reached final judgment. Nevertheless, they illustrate the legal uncertainty surrounding AI based cultural production.

AI recommendation systems also redistribute cultural visibility by promoting certain narratives and aesthetic forms while marginalizing others. Their use therefore raises broader ethical and regulatory concerns regarding cultural diversity, fair representation, and access to audiences.

Transparency presents an additional challenge. Studios and filmmakers do not always disclose their use of AI, partly because of anticipated public criticism. A notable example arose during the production of *The Brutalist*. Editor Dávid Jancsó stated that Respeecher voice cloning technology had been used to refine the Hungarian pronunciation of the lead actors and that generative tools had contributed to a sequence of architectural images. The disclosure generated controversy during the awards season, after which director Brady Corbet clarified that the performances had not been altered and that no English language dialogue had been modified ([Variety, 2025](#)). Although the intervention was limited, the case is significant because disclosure came from a technician rather than the production itself and was treated as a scandal rather than as routine postproduction information.

[Liu et al. \(2023\)](#) further emphasize that the absence of clear ethical standards creates uncertainty regarding responsibility, attribution, and creative integrity in AI assisted media production. Limited transparency may also affect the preservation of cultural heritage and the reliability of the historical record.

Finally, access to AI driven innovation is uneven. Major studios and established platforms possess financial and technological resources that remain unavailable to many independent producers. This disparity may reinforce existing inequalities and further concentrate decision making power within the film industry.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The nineteen open-access, English-language articles published between 2023 and 2026 that make up the coded corpus were analyzed using the thematic analysis method ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). During the analysis process, coding was conducted around the main themes of “algorithmic governance,” “creative labor,” “economic value,” “cultural diversity,” and “ethical/regulatory issues.” As set out in the Method section, the publicly available policy documents of digital platforms (Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV+) were read against the

four dimensions of the analytical framework. They were not subjected to the coding procedure. They are reported separately in Table 3, and no finding below rests on them alone.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis and Coding

Main theme	Sub-themes	Sources in the coded corpus contributing to the theme
Algorithmic governance	Visibility management; value attribution management; labor management; predictive management	Chapman & Abraham (2025) ; Gao & Lin (2025) ; Lai et al. (2025) ; Sun et al. (2024) ; Thomas & Johnson (2026) ; Tsiavos & Kitsios (2025) ; Zeng & Zhang (2023) ; Zhang (2025) [n = 8]
Platform economy / economic value	Data monopoly; content investment; market concentration	Kim (2025) ; Tsiavos & Kitsios (2025) ; Xu (2025) ; Zeng & Zhang (2023) ; Zhang (2025) [n = 5]
Creative labor	Precarization; loss of autonomy; invisible labor; distributed authorship	Burkhardt (2026) ; Masai et al. (2026) ; Swarnakar (2024) ; Uddin et al. (2025) ; Xu (2025) ; Yousefimehr et al. (2026) [n = 6]
Cultural diversity	Homogenization; genre convergence; marginalization; representation	Burkhardt (2026) ; Chapman & Abraham (2025) ; Gürel (2025) ; Ocal (2025) ; Tores et al. (2024) ; Zhang (2025) [n = 6]
Ethics and regulation	Transparency; intellectual property; accountability; evaluation standards	Gürel (2025) ; Masai et al. (2026) ; Swarnakar (2024) ; Tian & Lee (2025) ; Tores et al. (2024) ; Uddin et al. (2025) ; Yousefimehr et al. (2026) [n = 7]

Source: Author's coding of the 19-article corpus listed in the Appendix. Themes are not mutually exclusive. Several articles contribute to more than one theme, so the column totals exceed 19.

Full bibliographic details of the coded sources are given in the Appendix and in the reference list

One item in the corpus ([Thomas and Johnson, 2026](#)) is an opinion article and four are preprints.

These are identified in the Appendix and are weighted accordingly in the discussion below.

The five themes are presented sequentially below, with direct reference to the studies supporting each one. Given the limited size and heterogeneous composition of the corpus, the purpose is to identify convergence across studies rather than to aggregate their findings. The evidential basis of each theme is therefore assessed separately.

Algorithmic governance. Eight of the 19 studies directly examine recommendation systems. They can be divided into two groups that are seldom considered together. The first is technical. [Gao and Lin \(2025\)](#) and [Lai et al. \(2025\)](#) develop and assess recommender architectures for film, while [Sun et al. \(2024\)](#) reconsider the evaluation problem by asking what deep learning movie recommendation systems are actually designed to optimize. From the perspective of the framework proposed in this study, the main significance of these contributions lies less in their engineering outcomes than in what their objective functions reveal. Visibility is treated as an optimization problem, and cultural considerations can influence the system only when they are translated into measurable targets.

The second group adopts a critical perspective. [Chapman and Abraham \(2025\)](#) investigate the effects of streaming recommendation systems on aesthetic choice, while [Zhang \(2025\)](#) interprets streaming platforms as a redistribution of power within the film and television industries. [Thomas and Johnson \(2026\)](#) extend this argument to predictive systems, suggesting that the anticipation of audience response influences prevailing definitions of cinematic authenticity. As this contribution is an opinion article rather than an empirical study, it is treated as a position within the wider debate. [Tsiavos and Kitsios \(2025\)](#) and [Zeng and Zhang \(2023\)](#) place both technical and critical approaches within

the broader industrial transformation of film distribution. While one body of research explains the mechanism, the other identifies its cultural implications. Their convergence supports the interpretation of recommendation systems as instruments of governance rather than neutral tools for matching content with audiences.

Platform economy and economic value. Kim (2025) examines whether platform series are displacing cinema as a cultural form. Tsiavos and Kitsios (2025) analyze the digital transformation of the film industry as an industrial process, while Zeng and Zhang (2023) focus on AI based distribution practices. Xu (2025) considers the balance between creativity and automation in production and dissemination, and Zhang (2025) examines the associated redistribution of power.

Together, these studies suggest that the economic significance of AI lies primarily in the reorganization of distribution rather than solely in reductions in production costs. The ability to direct and allocate audience attention becomes a scarce economic resource. Through vertical integration across financing, production, and distribution, platforms are able to capture the returns generated by this capacity. In the context of film, this interpretation is consistent with Srnicek's (2017) broader theory of platform capitalism. However, none of the studies included in the corpus tests this relationship econometrically. The argument should therefore be understood as qualitative evidence based on convergence rather than as proof of causality.

Creative labour. The corpus provides relatively limited direct empirical evidence concerning labor, and this imbalance is itself an important finding. Burkhardt (2026) offers the strongest evidence through interviews with practicing filmmakers. Masai et al. (2026) examine the incorporation of generative AI into filmmaking as a transition from collaborative creativity to distributed creativity, with direct implications for the attribution of authorship. Uddin et al. (2025) and Yousefimehr et al. (2026) document the spread of AI and deep learning technologies across different stages of production but do not assess employment effects. Swarnakar (2024) and Xu (2025) discuss professional consequences more generally.

No study in the reviewed corpus measures employment levels, earnings, or contractual conditions in film occupations affected by AI. The argument that AI intensifies the precarity of creative labor therefore derives more strongly from the wider literature on creative work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Wood et al., 2019) and from the industrial record of the 2023 labor disputes than from recent film specific research. This limitation is explicitly acknowledged in the present study.

Cultural diversity and perspectives from the Global South. The theme of cultural diversity is the area in which evidence from outside dominant metropolitan centers makes its most significant contribution. Burkhardt's (2026) interview study includes 11 filmmakers from six Latin American countries and finds that their representations of AI differ systematically from those prevalent in Western science fiction. Rather than imagining AI primarily as autonomous machine intelligence, participants associate it with surveillance, social control, labor exploitation, data colonialism, and the concentration of power in governments and corporations.

Burkhardt further argues that these perspectives are rooted in participants' lived experiences and material production conditions rather than in abstract academic or technological debates. Aesthetic strategies such as retrofuturism are adopted partly in response to financial constraints and structural inequalities in cultural visibility.

Viewed through the framework adopted here, these findings extend beyond differences in thematic preference. First, they qualify the dimension of visibility. When filmmakers outside dominant production centers experience platforms primarily as barriers to recognition, the composition of catalogues becomes an inadequate measure of cultural pluralism.

This interpretation is consistent with [Thuillas and Wiart's \(2024\)](#) claim that Netflix uses diversity discourse as a source of corporate legitimacy.

Second, the findings relate to value attribution. Representations of AI centered on surveillance and data extraction raise the question of who controls the infrastructure through which cultural value is measured. They therefore echo [Srnicek's \(2017\)](#) account of data as a central asset of platform capitalism, but from the perspective of those whose data and cultural production are subject to extraction.

Third, they relate to labor. In these accounts, exploitation is not presented as a future consequence of automation but as an existing condition of transnational cultural production. The current debate on precarity in the Global North may therefore describe the spread of conditions that have long characterized production elsewhere. This inference must nevertheless be treated cautiously. It is based on a single exploratory study involving 11 participants and cannot be generalized to the Global South as a whole. Its value lies in challenging the implicit universalism of theories developed mainly from North American and European cases and in identifying the need for further comparative research.

Two additional studies examine diversity through representation rather than distribution. [Tores et al. \(2024\)](#) conceptualize visual objectification in film as a computer vision task, while [Ocal \(2025\)](#) models the relationship between screenplay content and audience emotion. Both illustrate a methodological shift with important governance implications. Features of film that were traditionally interpreted through qualitative criticism are increasingly being converted into machine readable variables. This development may improve accountability by enabling large scale measurement of representational patterns, but it may also extend optimization into the sphere of cultural representation. The present corpus does not provide sufficient evidence to resolve this tension.

Ethics and regulation. The literature on ethics and regulation is primarily programmatic. [Gürel's \(2025\)](#) systematic review identifies tensions between innovation and tradition in the cultural and creative industries under Industry 5.0 but does not assess particular regulatory mechanisms. [Uddin et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Swarnakar \(2024\)](#) call for rules governing the responsible use of AI without specifying their institutional form. [Masai et al. \(2026\)](#) raise questions concerning authorship under conditions of distributed creativity. [Tian and Lee \(2025\)](#) examine the aesthetic evaluation of AI generated short films but leave unresolved the standards by which such works should be judged.

None of the studies in the corpus analyzes the application of a binding regulatory instrument to the film sector. The policy proposals presented in the Conclusion are therefore based on primary legal sources rather than on the reviewed academic literature. They should be understood as recommendations derived from the analysis, not as findings directly established by the corpus.

Overall, these themes are consistent with the wider literature on the transformation of cultural industries through platformization. [Srnicek \(2017\)](#) and [Nieborg and Poell \(2018\)](#) argue that platforms reorganize economic value creation through data extraction and algorithmic governance. Studies of cinema similarly suggest that digital platforms are weakening established relationships between production and distribution.

The findings also correspond with research on algorithmic culture and filter bubbles. [Gillespie \(2014\)](#) and [Bucher \(2018\)](#) conceptualize algorithms not as neutral technical systems but as mechanisms of cultural selection and curation. Research on Netflix, including [Hallinan and Striphas \(2016\)](#), demonstrates that algorithmic personalization exerts a normative influence on audience preferences. Although algorithmic systems may accelerate production and reduce costs, they may also restrict creative autonomy and complicate established understandings of authorship.

These developments are likewise consistent with the literature on creative labor and digital capitalism. Existing studies identify precarity as a structural feature of cultural production, while research on AI and creative work suggests that algorithmic systems increasingly treat labor as an input that can be measured, monitored and optimized.

Table 3. Publicly Available Policy Documents of Digital Platforms

Platform	Document / Source	About the Content	Link
Amazon Prime Video	Content Policy and Technical Guidelines	Rules forming the basis of the content strategy. Details include which types of content are accepted/rejected, quality standards, and the possibility of content removal based on audience engagement (e.g., completion rates).	Video Central Documents
Apple TV+	TV Style and Data Standards Guide	A strategic document defining titling, metadata, and technical standards for content published on the platform. Focuses more on standardization of content presentation than on algorithms.	Apple TV Style Guide
Netflix	No publicly available official document	Netflix does not publicly share detailed technical documentation regarding its content strategy or algorithms (e.g., recommendation systems).	—
Paramount+	No publicly available official document	No detailed public technical documentation regarding content strategy or algorithmic governance has been identified.	—
Disney+	No publicly available official document	No public technical documentation is available regarding the platform's content management or recommendation systems.	—
Max	No publicly available official document	No such documentation has been found for Max, the platform of Warner Bros. Discovery.	—

Source: Compiled by the author from the official support, developer and partner portals of the listed platforms. A dash (—) indicates that no such document is publicly available.

The rapid growth of content investment by digital streaming platforms indicates that value creation in the film industry is increasingly shaped by data driven and algorithmic decision making. AI supported predictive systems are now used not only to analyze audiences but also to guide content development, production, and distribution.

Taken together, the findings show that AI in cinema has developed from a production aid into a broader mechanism of governance that restructures cultural value creation. This transformation generates three interconnected tensions.

The first is between efficiency and creative originality. Although AI can accelerate production, data driven decision making may encourage standardized narrative forms. As [Lotz \(2022\)](#) suggests, algorithmic systems prioritize audience retention, often at the expense of broader cultural meaning and artistic experimentation.

The second tension concerns global reach and cultural diversity. [Thuillas and Wiart \(2024\)](#) show that, despite their commitment to diversity, streaming platforms often adapt content to the demands of global markets. This may promote the diffusion of dominant, particularly Western centered, aesthetic norms and intensify concerns about cultural homogenization.

The third tension lies between technological democratization and market concentration. AI tools may broaden access to advanced production capabilities for independent filmmakers. At the same time, platforms continue to strengthen their market position through algorithmic control over visibility, discovery, and audience access.

Digital platforms should therefore be understood not merely as distribution channels but as algorithmically organized centers of cultural production. Their growing influence re-

distributes economic power in the film industry and aligns creative decisions more closely with market priorities. Recommendation systems do not simply reflect audience preferences. They also function as cultural filters that determine which narratives gain visibility and which remain marginalized.

Ultimately, AI based systems in cinema operate not only as technical instruments but also as governance mechanisms that shape economic value, cultural visibility, and creative labor. Cinema has therefore become an important cultural and political field of contestation within platformized digital economies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the transformation of cinema through artificial intelligence extends beyond technological innovation. AI based systems increasingly function as mechanisms of algorithmic governance that shape creative production, economic value, cultural visibility, and labor relations. Within platformized digital economies, streaming services no longer operate solely as distribution channels but increasingly influence which films are financed, produced, recommended, and ultimately seen. The findings reveal several interconnected tensions. AI tools can improve efficiency, reduce production costs, and expand opportunities in screenwriting, visual effects, editing, and postproduction. At the same time, data driven decision making may encourage narrative standardization, reduce creative risk taking, and align production more closely with predicted audience behavior. Similarly, although streaming platforms provide global access to diverse content, their recommendation systems may reinforce dominant preferences and limit the visibility of minority, regional, and independent productions. The democratizing potential of AI is therefore accompanied by increasing market concentration and platform control over cultural circulation.

The analysis also shows that AI is transforming creative labor and established understandings of authorship. Generative systems redistribute creative authority among writers, directors, technical specialists, software developers, and algorithmic systems, while raising concerns about employment security, compensation, consent, digital replicas, and the use of copyrighted works in model training. Existing agreements developed by organizations such as the Writers Guild of America, SAG AFTRA, and IATSE provide important safeguards, but their applicability remains limited in industries with weaker collective bargaining structures.

These challenges require a regulatory approach that combines algorithmic transparency, cultural diversity protection, labor safeguards, and fair access for independent producers. The transparency provisions of the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act and the Digital Services Act offer useful foundations, although recommendation systems used by subscription video on demand services remain insufficiently regulated. Similarly, catalogue quotas under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive should be complemented by effective prominence requirements, since regulating what is available does not necessarily determine what audiences are able to discover. The introduction of cultural diversity criteria into recommendation systems may offer a possible response, but such mechanisms require careful design. Any cultural value translated into a measurable ranking parameter may itself become subject to optimization and standardization. Cultural diversity weighting should therefore be treated as an area for regulatory experimentation and further research rather than as a fully developed policy instrument.

Overall, AI in cinema should not be understood merely as a collection of production technologies. It is a structural force through which economic power, cultural value, creative autonomy, and visibility are increasingly negotiated. Governing this transformation re-

quires a multidimensional approach based on transparency, cultural sustainability, ethical responsibility, labour protection and social justice. Such an approach is essential if cinema is to retain its cultural diversity and artistic autonomy while benefiting from the opportunities created by digital transformation.

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Appendix: Articles included in the coded corpus (n = 19)

1. Burkhardt, A. (2026). Artificial intelligence in the work and view of Latin American filmmakers. *AI & Society*, 41(2), 969–987.
2. Chapman, H. E., & Abraham, A. (2025). Because you watched. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(11), 1544.
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18. Zeng, R., & Zhang, H. (2023). Analysis of film distribution methods based on artificial intelligence technology. *Applied Mathematics and Nonlinear Sciences*.
19. Zhang, R. (2025). Algorithms as a cage and creative freedom. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*.