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Intelligent Video Surveillance in Agadir: Info-Communicational Mediation and Social Acceptability Challenges in an Emerging Metropolis

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Abstract: The integration of algorithmic video surveillance in Agadir's urban space, as part of the national strategy for the development of Smart Cities, raises fundamental questions at the intersection of information and communication sciences, urban sociology, and data ethics. This article offers an empirical and theoretical analysis of the social acceptability of intelligent video surveillance (IVS) through a quantitative survey conducted among 200 residents of the Agadir metropolitan area (February 2026). The results reveal a dual communicational paradox. On the one hand, 78.6% of respondents perceive IVS as a necessary technological advance, while 90.5% are unaware of the conditions governing the retention of and access to their data. On the other hand, while 54.8% believe that the city does not communicate sufficiently about its Smart City projects, 59.5% trust the technology itself. By analyzing these dynamics through the conceptual lenses of media framing, algorithmic governmentality, and info-communicational mediation, this study demonstrates that citizen resistance is structurally linked to an institutional communication deficit rather than technophobic opposition. Subsequently, a semantic requalification model is proposed, which operates a discursive shift from the register of "surveillance" to that of "urban service," as a strategic lever for ensuring the social sustainability of Smart City projects in emerging metropolises.

Keywords: Smart City, Intelligent Video Surveillance, Social Acceptability, Info-communicational Mediation, Algorithmic Governmentality, Semantic Requalification

1. Introduction: The Algonic City in Search of Social Legitimacy

The digital transformation of African and Maghreb cities constitutes one of the most structuring phenomena of the 21st century urban policies. As part of the global Smart City dynamic, Morocco has pursued since 2015 an ambitious strategy for the digitalization of its major urban agglomerations, among which Agadir, the economic engine of the Souss-Massa Region, stands out as an emblematic laboratory. At the heart of this framework, intelligent video surveillance (IVS), defined as all systems for capturing, automatically analyzing, and algorithmically processing video flows in real time, occupies a strategic place in Agadir's Urban Development Plan.

Yet the implementation of these algorithmic technologies in public space raises deep tensions between two apparently irreconcilable imperatives: securing the city and individual data protection. These tensions are not only legal or ethical in nature, they are fundamentally communicational. The way public institutions frame, narrate, and mediate their technological devices directly conditions the way citizens perceive, accept, or reject them (Entman, 1993, Gitlin, 1980). It is precisely this problematic question that this article seeks to explore.

Starting from the central thesis that citizen resistance to IVS is not intrinsically technophobic but structurally linked to a deficit in info-communicational mediation, this paper examines the conditions under which a durable social acceptability of algorithmic innovation in emerging metropolises becomes possible. By positioning this inquiry within the broader challenges of data governance and sustainable urbanization, this research provides a scalable framework applicable to other emerging Smart Cities facing democratic trust deficits. Two working hypotheses structure the investigation:

> **H1:** *Citizen resistance to intelligent video surveillance is not opposition to technology in itself, but the result of a deficit in institutional communication regarding data governance and anonymization.*
>
> **H2:** *Social acceptability is correlated with the city's ability to semantically requalify 'surveillance' as 'urban service,' transforming the digital eye into a tool of comfort and sustainability.*

To test these hypotheses, a mixed methodology was mobilized, combining a theoretical review and a quantitative survey conducted among 200 residents of the Agadir metropolitan area in February 2026. This article is organized into six parts: after presenting the theoretical perspective in Section 2, the methodological framework is detailed in Section 3. Section 4 presents the empirical results followed by a discussion articulating theory and data in Section 5 and conclude with operational recommendations and research perspectives in Section 6.

2. Theoretical Framework: Smart City, Governmentality, and Mediation

2.1. The Smart City as a Communicational Project

The notion of the Smart City cannot be reduced to its technological components. Above all, it constitutes a discursive and communicational device through which institutional actors, technology firms, and international organizations construct a normative vision of the ideal city (Vanolo, 2014). As Hollands (2008) points out, the 'smart' label functions more as a floating signifier than as a rigorous analytical category. It symbolically legitimizes political and technical choices by embedding them in a narrative of inevitable modernity. Recent critical literature on urban digital twins and algorithmic spaces underlines how this discursive alignment is essential to minimize public friction and manufacture civic buy-in.

In the Moroccan context, this discursive project is part of a logic of territorial competition on an international scale. Agadir, a city of tourism and economy and of a regional importance, seeks to position itself as an African technological hub, which gives its Smart City projects a performative dimension. The goal is not only to modernize infrastructure, but also to signify modernity to investors, partners, and visitors. IVS fits into this logic of institutional staging, in which visible technology, cameras in public space, constitutes a sign of urban sophistication as much as a management tool. Consequently, the social sustainability of this urban transition hinges heavily on the communicative strategies deployed to bridge the gap between technical infrastructure and civic perception.

2.2. Algorithmic Governmentality: Surveillance Without Discipline?

The concept of governmentality, developed by Foucault (1978) to account for the mechanisms by which power directs and shapes individual and collective behavior, has today been deeply reconfigured under the effect of the expansion of digital technologies.

Rouvroy and Berns (2013) proposed the notion of 'algorithmic governmentality' to designate this unprecedented form of government, which no longer acts on individuals through norm and discipline, but on populations through statistical calculation and predictive modeling. The algorithm does not judge individuals, it anticipates behaviors, classifies risks, and optimizes flows.

This transformation has profound consequences for political imaginaries. In the context of IVS, the gaze of the state is no longer that of a human watcher who observes and evaluates, it is that of a system that detects anomalies, patterns, and deviations from a statistical norm. This apparent dehumanization of the gaze can paradoxically reinforce the panoptic feeling, because the absence of an identifiable human observer makes surveillance more diffuse, more total, and more anxiety-inducing for those who are aware of it (Lyon, 2007). The 'algorithmic panopticon' described by Bauman and Lyon (2013) differs from the Benthamian panopticon in that it requires no visible central observer, it operates through the silent accumulation of data and the invisible correlation of digital traces. In modern smart city configurations, this structural invisibility often generates an "informed acceptability paradox," where citizens tolerate pervasive systems due to convenience while remaining profoundly alienated from their underlying data governance mechanisms.

2.3. Media Framing as a Question of Acceptability

Framing theory, developed by Entman (1993), posits that the way a problem is defined, its causes identified, its consequences assessed, and its solutions considered conditions public reception and opinion. Applied to institutional communication on surveillance technologies, this theory predicts that the dominant frame used by public actors, security versus control, service versus surveillance, will have a decisive impact on citizen attitudes.

Goffman (1974) had already shown that interpretive frames are not simple cognitive filters but active structures for making sense of the social world. In the case of IVS, two frames confront one another: the 'public safety' frame promoted by institutions (crime reduction, emergency management, traffic fluidity) and the 'social control' frame mobilized by defenders of civil liberties (mass surveillance, profiling, invasion of privacy). Institutional communication plays a crucial role in the negotiation of this conflict of frames. This framing battle is a core dimension of smart city governance, determining whether algorithmic deployment is perceived as a democratic asset or an intrusive panopticon.

2.4. Info-Communicational Mediation as a Regulating Third Party

In the tradition of Information and Communication Sciences, mediation is not a simple intermediary between sender and receiver, it constitutes an active process of transformation of meanings (Davallon, 2004). Jeanneret (2014) showed that info-communicational mediation involves a 'triviality,' in the etymological sense of a crossroads, of circulation, through which technical objects and the discourses accompanying them are transformed, simplified, and reappropriated in their social trajectories.

Applied to the Smart City context, this perspective invites researchers not to separate technology from the discursive support that accompanies it. An IVS system is not just an assemblage of cameras, servers, and algorithms, it is also a set of institutional narratives, graphic charters, urban displays, press releases, and political speeches that socially and culturally constitute it. The absence or failure of these mediation devices creates a semantic vacuum that collective imaginaries fill with their own representations, often inspired by media technological dystopias (Orwell, Black Mirror, etc.).

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3. Methodology

3.1. Research Strategy and Epistemological Positioning

This research adopted a moderately positivist stance, combining quantitative rigor with an interpretive sensitivity characteristic of Information and Communication Sciences. The research strategy was based on a self-administered questionnaire survey, an instrument particularly well suited to measuring attitudes, perceptions, and social representations. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of a literature review on the social acceptability of surveillance technologies and indicators of institutional trust, drawing on the models developed by van Dijk et al. (2019) for urban surveillance technologies and by Tene and Polonetsky (2012) for privacy in algorithmic contexts.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The survey was conducted in February 2026 among residents of the Greater Agadir metropolitan area (Agadir, Aït Melloul, Dcheira, Biougra, and adjacent municipalities). To anchor this case study within its physical metropolitan context, the spatial distribution of the survey zones and the density of the urban lab setup are mapped out in Figure 1.

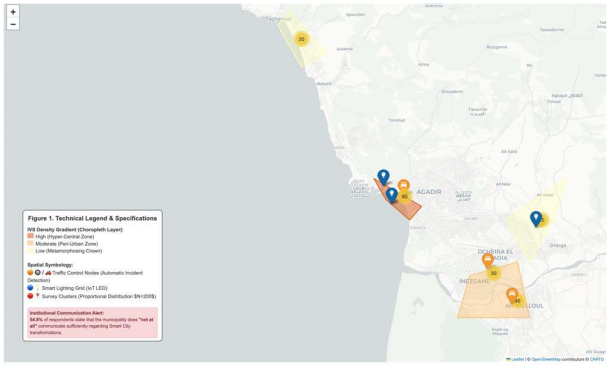

Figure 1. Interactive Socio-Spatial Mapping of IVS Density, Smart Infrastructure, and Survey Respondent Clusters in Grand Agadir.

The final sample included 200 valid respondents, obtained through a reasoned convenience method (quota sampling), aiming at a balanced representation of relevant socio-demographic criteria: gender, age group, and neighborhood of residence. Table I presents the socio-demographic distribution of the sample.

Table I. Socio-demographic distribution of the sample (N = 200)

Variable	Category	N (%)
Gender	Female	119 (59.5%)
	Male	81 (40.5%)
Age group	18-25 years	57 (28.6%)
	26-45 years	90 (45.2%)
	46-65 years	43 (21.4%)
	66 years and over	10 (4.8%)
Smartphone/internet access	Yes	190 (95.2%)
	No	10 (4.8%)

3.3. Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire included 17 items divided into four dimensions: (1) awareness of IVS and sources of information, (2) attitudes and first reactions, (3) conditions of acceptability and the effect of semantic requalification, (4) communicational expectations toward the municipality. The item measuring institutional trust was formulated on a five-point Likert scale. The items on conditional acceptability explicitly tested hypothesis H2 by proposing functional requalifications of IVS (reduction of traffic jams, detection of accidents, optimization of street lighting).

4. Empirical Results

4.1. A Structural Information Deficit on IVS

The first dimension analyzed concerns the level of knowledge among respondents regarding the deployment of IVS in Agadir. The results reveal a situation of structural under-information. Only 21.4% of respondents declare that they had heard about it 'precisely,' whereas 57.1% have only a vague understanding of it and 21.4% were totally unaware of it. This information deficit is particularly significant in a context where cameras constitute visible devices in public space.

The analysis of information channels reveals the predominance of social networks (28.6%) and word of mouth (23.8%) as the main sources of information on IVS, while official institutional communication (urban signage: 9.5%, press: 4.8%) remains marginal. This finding illustrates a form of institutional communicational failure. Information about a major public device is primarily disseminated through informal and uncontrolled channels, exposing the technology to competing frames that may be unfavorable.

Even more revealing is the result concerning data governance: 90.5% of respondents do not know how long their data are stored or who can access them. This percentage, representing almost the entire sample, is a particularly salient indicator of the information transparency deficit surrounding the device. It provides strong empirical convergence supporting hypothesis H1: potential resistance to IVS is rooted not in technophobic opposition, but in an informational vacuum produced by the institution itself.

4.2. Ambivalence of Representations: Between Progress and Control

The representational dimension of attitudes toward IVS reveals a structured ambivalence that deserves careful analysis. On the one hand, 78.6% of respondents spontaneously associate the term 'intelligent video surveillance' with 'a necessary technological advance,' a clearly majority proportion that invalidates the thesis of generalized technological hostility. On the other hand, 16.7% associate it with 'an excessive social control tool' and 4.8% with 'an expensive gadget.'

This distribution is all the more interesting because it is in tension with the data on immediate emotional reactions to the installation of cameras. While 59.5% of respondents say they feel 'a sense of security' in the presence of these devices, 23.8% express 'a feeling of being watched' and 16.7% display indifference. However, the paradox persists: some respondents may simultaneously perceive IVS as technological progress (cognitive framing) and feel a sense of surveillance (affective reaction). This gap between cognition and affect illustrates the complexity of the reception processes surrounding control technologies.

Table II. Representations and reactions toward IVS (N = 200)

Item / Reaction	N	%
The term IVS evokes a necessary technological advance	157	78.6%
The term IVS evokes an excessive social control tool	33	16.7%
The term IVS evokes an expensive gadget	10	4.8%
Reaction: sense of security	119	59.5%
Reaction: feeling of being watched	48	23.8%
Reaction: indifference	33	16.7%

4.3. The Effect of Semantic Requalification: Support for H2

The most significant results of the survey concern the effect of semantic requalification tested in the third dimension of the questionnaire. Respondents were provided with three propositions for the functional requalification of IVS, shifting from the frame of 'surveillance' to that of 'urban service': (a) reducing traffic jams, (b) automatically detecting accidents to dispatch emergency services, and (c) optimizing public lighting for energy savings.

The rates of conditional acceptability are striking: 83.3% declare themselves favorable to IVS if it is used to reduce traffic jams, 92.9% if it is used to detect accidents and call emergency services, and 88.1% if it optimizes public lighting. These figures, compared with the 59.5% rate expressing a sense of security in spontaneous reaction, show that semantic requalification produces a significant and measurable acceptability effect. The technology has not changed, only the discursive frame in which it is presented has evolved.

Table III. Conditional acceptability according to the type of semantic requalification.

Note: Delta vs. spontaneous = difference in percentage points compared with the spontaneous sense-of-security rate (59.5%).

Requalification proposed	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Delta vs. spontaneous
Reduce traffic jams	167 (83.3%)	33 (16.7%)	+23.8 pp
Detect accidents / emergency response	186 (92.9%)	14 (7.1%)	+33.4 pp
Optimize public lighting	176 (88.1%)	24 (11.9%)	+28.6 pp

The proposition concerning the detection of accidents records the highest acceptability rate (92.9%), representing a difference of +33.4 percentage points compared with the spontaneous reaction. This ranking is not accidental, it reveals a marked preference for humanitarian and emergency uses of the technology, which activate an emotional register (empathy, solidarity, protection) rather than a managerial one. This result has direct implications for institutional communication: the humanitarian framing of IVS generates stronger acceptability than security-oriented or economic framing.

4.4. Communicational Expectations: Between Transparency and Participation

The fourth dimension of the survey concerns the assessment of current institutional communication and citizens' expectations. It is noted, however, that the picture is severe: 54.8% of respondents believe that the city of Agadir does 'not at all' communicate sufficiently about its Smart City projects, compared with 35.7% who consider the communication 'fairly' sufficient and 9.5% who find it excessive. This result reveals a communication deficit perceived by a majority of respondents.

The question regarding reassuring communication actions reveals a hierarchy of preferences that deserves attention. 40.5% favor a mobile application providing data transparency, 31.0% an ethical charter displayed throughout the city, and 28.6% citizen meetings to explain the technical functioning. This distribution indicates an aspiration to digital transparency (priority given to the mobile application) but also to participation and deliberation (citizen meetings), that is, two complementary dimensions of demanding democratic communication.

Furthermore, 47.6% of respondents consider the creation of a digital platform allowing them to visualize how the city uses their data to be 'essential,' and 40.5% are favorable to it ('why not'), representing in total 88.1% support for this principle of algorithmic transparency. This particularly high figure illustrates the social demand for digital accountability that is expressed in connected urban contexts.

As for the level of trust in the city regarding the protection of images, the results reveal a distribution concentrated around the median level. Nearly half of respondents (45.2%) place themselves at level 3/5, reflecting an ambivalent position that is neither fully trusting nor fully distrustful. Extreme positions remain in the minority, with 9.5% expressing total trust (5/5) and 14.3% total distrust (1/5). The overall mean stands at 2.95/5, that is, just below the median threshold, which indicates fragile but not hostile trust, likely to be strengthened through targeted communicational actions.

5. Discussion: Toward a Model of Ethical Mediation for the Smart City

5.1. Confirming the Communicational Paradox

The empirical results provide clear support for the thesis of the institutional communication deficit. IVS in Agadir is confronted with what this study conceptualizes as the 'informed acceptability paradox.' Citizens are favorable to the technology (78.6%

perceive it as a necessary advance), but they do not know its data governance modalities (90.5% are unaware of the conditions of retention and access). This situation produces default consent rather than informed consent, which, in the vocabulary of data ethics, constitutes a form of structurally vitiated consent (Nissenbaum, 2010). Citizens have not refused the technology, but neither have they accepted it knowingly, they have simply acquiesced in silence, for lack of having been informed of the governance modalities of their data.

This finding resonates with Zuboff's (2019) work on 'surveillance capitalism.' For this author, the system 'unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material', a logic of extraction that is also found, transposed to the public sector, in the opaque deployment of urban IVS. Indeed, the extraction of value from behavioral data relies on a systemic information asymmetry, in which public institutions and their technological providers possess opaque knowledge of processing modalities that citizens ignore, as evidenced by the 90.5% of the sample respondents who do not know the conditions under which their data are retained. This asymmetry cannot be resolved by institutional good will alone, it requires structural devices of transparency and accountability that are central to the democratic legitimacy of sustainable smart city ecosystems.

5.2. Semantic Requalification as an Operation of Mediation

It is important to recall the starting point: with no explanation at all regarding the usefulness of IVS, 59.5% of respondents spontaneously declared that they felt a sense of security in the presence of cameras, which constitutes the reference value. Yet when they are offered a functional reformulation of the same technology, presenting it no longer under the register of 'surveillance' but under that of 'urban service,' acceptability rates rise significantly: 83.3% declare themselves favorable if IVS is used to reduce traffic jams (+23.8 points), 88.1% if it optimizes public lighting (+28.6 points), and 92.9% if it enables accident detection and the dispatching of emergency services (+33.4 points).

The technology has not changed. Only the discursive frame in which it is presented has evolved, and it is precisely this measured and significant gap that constitutes the central empirical support for working hypothesis H2.

The semantic requalification effect measured in the survey is particularly remarkable. It empirically demonstrates what framing theory posits theoretically: the same technological reality can generate very different levels of acceptability depending on the discursive frame in which it is embedded. IVS presented as an accident-detection tool mobilizes a stock of trust far superior to IVS presented in its general form, even though the underlying technical devices are identical. To synthesize and map this transformative process, Figure 2 provides a conceptual flowchart illustrating the semiotic and discursive shifts required to operationalize this mediating requalification model within smart urban spaces.

Figure 2. Conceptual Flowchart of Mediating Requalification: Semiotic and Discursive Shifts for Smart IVS Acceptability.

In the vocabulary of info-communicational mediation (Davallon, 2004, Jeanneret, 2014), this operation of requalification is not merely rhetorical packaging, it is a transformation of the semiotic status of the technology. By moving from the register of 'surveillance' (marked by negative, asymmetrical, coercive connotation) to the register of 'urban service' (characterized positive, symmetrical, benevolent connotation), the institution performs a genuine mediation that creates a new social referent for the

technological object. At the intersection of framing theory (Entman, 1993) and info-communicational mediation (Davallon, 2004, Jeanneret, 2014), this paper proposes the notion of 'mediating requalification' to designate the discursive operation through which an institution deliberately transforms the semiotic status of a controversial technology, replacing a negative interpretive frame with a functional and benevolent frame in order to foster its social acceptability.

5.3. Limits and Avenues for Further Research

This research has several important limits that should be made explicit. First, although the sample size (N = 200) provides satisfactory descriptive robustness, it does not make it possible to perform more advanced multivariate analyses. A replication on a larger sample would notably allow the use of logistic regressions, that is, statistical techniques capable of identifying which socio-demographic factors (age, gender, neighborhood of residence, level of information) best predict the acceptability or rejection of IVS, as well as confirmatory factor analyses, which would make it possible to verify that the questionnaire items effectively measure the theoretical constructs they are intended to represent, notably institutional trust and social acceptability. These two approaches ideally require a sample of 300 to 500 respondents in order to produce statistically robust results.

Second, the quantitative method, while offering an overall view of attitudes and perceptions, does not allow for a complete grasp of the depth of subjective meanings and deliberative processes through which citizens construct their opinion of IVS. A mixed approach, combining the quantitative survey with semi-structured interviews, would offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Finally, this study concerns a specific moment, the beginning of IVS deployment in Agadir, and does not capture the temporal dynamics of social acceptability. Longitudinal studies, measuring the evolution of attitudes before and after targeted institutional communication campaigns, would make it possible to empirically validate the effectiveness of the semantic requalification strategies proposed here providing a scalable roadmap for other emerging smart territories facing similar regulatory and cultural landscapes.

5.4. A Communicational Re-reading of the Pillars of the Ethical Smart City

Based on the results and the theoretical framework mobilized, this study proposes a critical and communicational re-reading of four notions that already structure the literature on Smart City governance. These are transparency, semantic requalification, accountability, and deliberation, which can be reinvested with an affective connotation and a communicational intentionality that their usual technical use tends to erase. The point is not to introduce new concepts, but to shift them from the sphere of institutional engineering into that of the relationship between the city and its inhabitants, while recognizing that each of these terms engages an emotional and subjective dimension that cannot be reduced to its procedural definition alone.

The notion of transparency is omnipresent in Smart City charters (Corbett & Le Dantec, 2021, Meijer & Bolívar, 2016), but it is generally conceived there as a formal obligation of disclosure and as a legal or technical imperative. The empirical data invite a different reading: for the 90.5% of the respondents who do not know the conditions under which their data are retained, transparency is not an abstract requirement but a concrete need for reassurance. It is experienced as a question of trust and respect, an affective expectation before it becomes a procedural demand. As recent critical studies on smart governance suggest, classical data transparency fails to foster civic trust if it lacks a dedicated relational and human mediation layer (Kitchin & Fraser, 2024). Communicational transparency, strongly favored by the respondents, must therefore be formulated in ordinary language, disseminated through the channels citizens actually use such as social networks and mobile applications, and above all conceived as a relational act rather than an administrative document.

Semantic requalification constitutes the principal theoretical contribution of this transferable mediation framework. Framing theory (Entman, 1993) clearly shows that the way a subject is presented influences the opinion one forms of it. But it does not say how an institution can deliberately alter this presentation in order to transform the reception of a technology that citizens initially perceive negatively. The results show that such a shift, from the register of 'surveillance' to that of 'urban service', produces a measured and significant effect of adherence (+23 to +33 percentage points). This socio-discursive transition aligns with contemporary frameworks that advocate for redefining city-dwellers not as passive surveilled targets, but as active co-producers of the digital urban ecosystem (Cardullo et al., 2021). But beyond rhetorical effectiveness, emphasis is placed on the affective dimension of this operation. Indeed, if requalification works, it is because the proposed uses, emergency assistance, fluidity, and lighting, activate emotional registers of solidarity, comfort, and care. It is not manipulation, it is an invitation to feel the technology differently within a co-constructed urban ecosystem.

Algorithmic accountability is also a well-established term in the literature on digital governance (Danaher et al., 2017, Kroll et al., 2017), where it mainly refers to mechanisms of auditing, traceability, and appeal. Recent critical data studies (e.g., Sadowski, 2021) further emphasize that data extraction without civic feedback loops breeds deep institutional mistrust. The communicational re-reading adds a participatory and emotional dimension to it: 88.1% of respondents want to be able to visualize concretely how their data are used. This demand is not merely technocratic, it expresses a desire for presence and recognition within the device that concerns them. For accountability to be socially effective, it must therefore be made visible, accessible, and embodied in interfaces that citizens can appropriate affectively, rather than reserved for experts and auditors.

Finally, citizen deliberation, theorized by Habermas (1992) and operationalized in numerous experiments in participatory democracy (Sintomer, 2007), is often invoked in Smart City discourse as a rhetorical injunction without real institutional translation. The data suggest that 28.6% of respondents concretely aspire to it, in the form of citizen workshops and public forums.

6. Conclusion

This article examined the conditions of social acceptability of intelligent video surveillance in Agadir, starting from the assumption that citizen resistance is linked less to opposition to technology than to a deficit in info-communicational mediation. The empirical survey of 200 residents of the metropolitan area confirmed the assumption that the inhabitants of Agadir are largely favorable to IVS when it is presented as an urban service (92.9% for accident detection), but they are almost unanimously unaware of the governance modalities of their data (90.5%). This paradox, technological acceptability without informed consent, constitutes the main fragility of the Smart City in Agadir.

Two working hypotheses received strong empirical support. On the one hand, citizen resistance, measured by the feeling of surveillance (23.8%) and fear of the misuse of data, was correlated with the deficit in institutional information rather than with a principled rejection of technology. On the other hand, semantic requalification produces a measurable and significant effect on acceptability: the discursive shift from 'surveillance' to 'urban service' increases citizen adherence by 23 to 33 percentage points depending on the proposed uses, thus supporting H2.

On the theoretical level, these results show that surveillance devices are not neutral technical objects, they are semiotic constructions whose acceptability depends as much on the narratives that mediate them as on their technical performance. This empirical demonstration contributes to enriching media framing theory (Entman, 1993) by adding an institutional and deliberate dimension to it, and extends the reflection on algorithmic governmentality (Rouvroy & Berns, 2013) by showing that its effects on populations are not irreversible, they can be reconfigured through ethical and intentional communicational mediation.

These theoretical implications find a direct extension on the practical level. The analysis supports a communicational and affective re-reading of the classic pillars of Smart City governance, transparency, semantic requalification, accountability, deliberation, by re-anchoring them in the concrete relationship between the city and its inhabitants, beyond their solely procedural and technical dimension. This analytical perspective, built from the case of the city of Agadir, is fully transferable and applicable to other emerging metropolises in Morocco, the Maghreb, and the wider African continent engaged in comparable digital transitions.

Longitudinal and comparative studies, measuring the evolution of citizen attitudes before and after targeted institutional communication campaigns, would make it possible to confirm the generalizable scope of the notion of mediating requalification proposed here and to refine its conditions of effectiveness according to cultural and institutional contexts.

The ultimate challenge goes beyond the simple improvement of public communication. It is a matter of ensuring that the algorithmic transition of the city does not take place to the detriment of citizens' 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968), a right that the digital sphere can enrich or impoverish depending on whether institutions choose transparency or opacity, dialogue or technocracy, mediation or imposition.

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