



The Hybrid Isomorphism of Public Action: Culture, Crises and Communicative Modernity in Morocco (2020–2024)

Faiçal Arbaoui¹

¹PhD in Information and Communication Sciences, Language, Communication and Culture Laboratory (LLAC) — Moulay Ismaïl University, Meknès, Morocco, faicalarbaoui7@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0008-5681-9011

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PREFIX :

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IJSRIS JOURNAL



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ABSTRACT

How does the Moroccan state navigate the imperative of communicative modernity without breaking with its anthropological foundations? This article explores this fundamental tension by moving beyond purely managerial frameworks. To analyse public policy in Morocco, we construct a novel integrative theoretical framework: the

influence of cultural legacies (Hofstede's dimensions) interacts with the agency and reflexivity of institutional actors (Giddens' structuration theory), all set against the unpredictability of an open ecosystem (Morin's complexity paradigm). The empirical investigation is based on a semiotic-discursive analysis of the state mechanisms deployed during a period of acute systemic stress (2020–2024), encompassing the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Al Haouz earthquake and the architecture of Special Fund 126. The

findings demonstrate that the bureaucratic apparatus does not experience the digital revolution as an identity crisis. Rather, it orchestrates a genuine ‘hybrid isomorphism’: technological innovation and the demand for transparency are actively grafted onto the reactivation of traditional values (verticality of authority, the ‘*Touiza*’ narrative). By conceptualising this model of ‘hybrid modernity’, this research opens up new heuristic avenues for rethinking the resilience and evolution of state apparatuses in societies of the Global South.

Keywords: public communication; hybrid isomorphism; institutional culture; Hofstede; Giddens; Morin; Morocco; Global South.

1. Introduction

To understand the transformations of the contemporary state, one must look to the places where power is displayed and attempts to justify itself. In Morocco, public communication has long since transcended its purely instrumental or administrative framework. Today, it stands as a complex symbolic theatre, the nerve centre where the relationships between a deep-rooted anthropological heritage and the imperative of modern legitimacy clash, are negotiated and reshaped. It is an eminently paradoxical subject of research: it serves to consolidate the social order by reviving the nation’s founding myths, whilst at the same time offering, often unexpectedly, a breach through which managerial innovations and new civic demands pour in.

The theoretical ambition of this research does not lie in yet another description of the digital tools adopted by public administrations, but in constructing a cross-disciplinary perspective capable of grasping their sociological depth. The challenge is to foster a dialogue between epistemologies which, although stemming from distinct backgrounds, find particular resonance in the Moroccan context. Geert Hofstede’s model (1994) provides us with the basic framework, demonstrating the extent to which hierarchical distance and collectivism influence bureaucratic behaviour. But this framework would remain a dead letter without Anthony Giddens’s theory of structuration (1987), which reminds us that institutional actors are not cultural automatons: they manipulate these norms, twist them and reinvent them through their everyday discursive practices. Finally, the paradigm of complexity developed by Edgar Morin (1990) frames the whole, enabling us to understand these frictions not as anomalies, but as the necessary regulatory mechanisms of a system open to uncertainty and globalisation.

Consequently, the true Gordian knot of this study can be formulated as follows: how does the Moroccan cultural framework determine the processes of public discourse, and how does a resolutely systemic approach enable us to account for the construction of this hybrid modernity?

To explore this question, we needed a context subject to intense pressures. Our attention therefore focused on the period 2020–2024, a time of vulnerability and ‘systemic stress’ for the Kingdom, marked by two extreme events: the protracted COVID-19 health crisis and the trauma of the Al Haouz earthquake. It is through the study of this empirical corpus — by analysing pandemic management strategies, the post-earthquake information emergency and the unique structure of Special Fund 126 — that we will test the operational viability of our model.

To carry out this demonstration, the analysis will begin with a reconceptualisation of public communication as a critical tool in power relations (Section 2), before laying the theoretical foundations of our triangulation (Section 3) and deriving a novel three-dimensional analytical model (Section 4). This conceptual framework will then be tested, through the lens of a rigorous constructivist methodology (Section 5), against the data from our empirical study (Section 6). The concluding discussion (Section 7) will highlight the dynamics of restructuring at work, prior to our conclusions (Section 8), which will outline new approaches to understanding societies in transition in the Global South.

2. Public communication as a subject of critical analysis

To conceptualise public communication requires, first and foremost, stripping it of its purely functionalist and managerial trappings. It is by no means merely a technical showcase for an administration politely seeking to inform its users. Quite the contrary: it lies at the very heart of the fabric of the state and its logics of power. When Pierre Bourdieu (1982) posits that linguistic exchange is fundamentally a matter of power relations and that language is an ‘instrument of power’ (p. 40), he invites us to scrutinise institutional discourse with the utmost sociological scepticism. The discourses of public authority never possess the benevolent neutrality they purport to have. It carries out a silent yet formidable task of normalising asymmetries, shaping collective representations to better entrench existing hierarchies. For the institution, the act of communicating amounts, first and foremost, to imposing a legitimate vision of the social world and drawing the lines of demarcation between civic inclusion and exclusion.

However, to confine state communication solely to this role of conservative reproduction would be a form of intellectual short-sightedness. Institutional discourse is permeated by a profound dialectical tension. As Michel Foucault (1971, p. 12) masterfully demonstrated, discourse does not merely passively reflect the world order: it possesses a formidable performative power; it produces reality by delineating the boundaries of what can be said, thought and envisaged within a society. This performativity carries within it the seeds of transformation. It is into this gap that Jürgen Habermas's (1987) interpretation steps, perceiving in the act of communication a dialogical dimension that embodies a rationality oriented towards mutual understanding. Viewed through this lens, public discourse ceases to be a top-down monologue and becomes a genuine arena for negotiation. The state finds itself compelled to justify its actions, to build consensus through reasoned debate, and to adjust its stance in the face of an increasingly demanding civil society.

This ontological tension — constantly oscillating between the temptation to dominate and the necessity of negotiation — has been radically exacerbated by contemporary technological upheaval. For Manuel Castells (2009), the communicational space is no longer a mere peripheral tool; it has become the nerve centre where power relations in our networked societies are forged, contested and reconfigured. The bureaucratic apparatus no longer holds an exclusive monopoly on meaning.

When applied to the Moroccan context, this critical framework takes on a unique depth. In the Kingdom's context, this dual nature of public communication resonates with particular acuity. It is not an inert or antiquated extension of the administration. It functions as an extremely sensitive seismograph, a space of strategic friction where the state attempts daily to solve a complex equation: how to preserve the framework of legitimacy rooted in centuries-old history and cultural values, whilst absorbing the impact of the democratic and technological demands of the present. It is precisely this constant redefinition of the discursive pact that lies at the very heart of our research.

3. Theoretical foundations: culture, structure and complexity

The aim of our approach is not to pile up disparate theoretical frameworks, but to construct a lens capable of encompassing Moroccan reality in all its complexity. It is a matter of understanding how the cultural depth of a society clashes with, adapts to, and ultimately hybridises with the demands of public communication that aspires to be modern. To this end, our analysis navigates between the constraints of culture, the

freedom of the social actor and the unpredictability of the global system.

3.1. Cultural dimensions according to Geert Hofstede: the authority matrix

To grasp the invisible underpinnings of bureaucratic action, Geert Hofstede's (1994) managerial anthropology stands as an essential starting point. By organising global cultural variability around key dimensions, his model provides valuable macro-sociological frameworks for deciphering the rituals specific to each geographical area.

If we turn our attention to the Moroccan institutional ecosystem, two variables immediately shape the landscape: a deeply internalised hierarchical asymmetry and, the absolute prevalence of the collectivist paradigm. This social grammar is not mere folklore; it operates at the very heart of the state through an order governed by the principle of authority and the sanctity of community solidarity. Such a configuration dictates its own rules to public communication, whose rhetoric naturally revolves around the celebration of the institutional pact and deference to established bodies.

Yet this culturalist lens harbours a formidable methodological pitfall: that of determinism. McSweeney (2002) has, moreover, rigorously denounced the essentialist nature of this model, which tends to reify national cultures by obscuring their divisions and transformations. It is here that Edgar Morin's (1990) warning takes on its full meaning: to confine socio-cultural dynamics within immutable statistical models is to blind oneself to their phenomenological plasticity. Culture is not a fixed destiny; it possesses its own capacity to transform itself in response to historical contingencies.

3.2. Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration: the reawakening of agency

To escape this cultural inevitability, Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration (1987) serves as an indispensable corrective. Giddens shatters the traditional opposition between the overwhelming objectivism of structures and the illusory subjectivism of individuals. By asserting that 'social structures are not merely contexts for human actions, but also their product' (p. 19), he introduces a revolutionary concept: the duality of the social.

Applied to the sphere of public communication, this perspective proves to be highly fruitful from a heuristic point of view. It reminds us that Moroccan civil servants, whilst operating under the sway of deeply ingrained traditions and strict regulatory routines, are not merely automatic cogs in a machine. They are reflective agents, endowed with agency.

When faced with crises, they do not hesitate to draw on the very resources of the system to subvert its rules, inventing new discursive and managerial syntaxes. State communication thus appears for what it is: a theatre of constant negotiation where public officials reproduce the authority of the state whilst, through their statements, creating transformative breaches.

3.3. The paradigm of complexity: Morin and Bateson on disorder

But the institution and its stakeholders do not exist in a vacuum. They are immersed in a noisy, unstable and unpredictable environment. The integration of Gregory Bateson's cybernetics (1972) and Edgar Morin's epistemology (1990) therefore necessitates a radical shift in scale. Bateson invites us to break away from the telegraphic and linear view of the administrative message. Communication is not a projectile launched by the state towards the citizen; it must be understood in terms of the networks of relationships and feedback loops that inexorably link the sender to the receiver.

Morin takes this further by establishing the paradigm of complexity. He demonstrates that any living system survives only by recursively articulating order, disorder and organisation. Applied to institutional issues, this framework dispels the illusion of perfectly controlled state communication. The Kingdom's information apparatus can no longer be thought of as an isolated fortress. It becomes an open system, fundamentally homeostatic, perpetually torn between its quest for traditional stability and the surges of uncertainty generated by the digital civil society.

3.4. Organisational culture according to Schein: the artefact as an anchor

Finally, to anchor this broad theoretical framework to the material reality of public administration, Edgar Schein's (2010) microsociological approach proves decisive. By shifting the focus to the symbolic infrastructure of organisations, Schein demonstrates that an institution's culture rests on an invisible accumulation of fundamental assumptions, stated values and ritual artefacts.

Within the Moroccan bureaucratic landscape, this perspective enables us to decipher the subtlety with which the state manages its own transformation. Far from simply importing Western managerial techniques (the famous *New Public Management*), public organisations are engaged in a fascinating process of acculturation. They adapt their communication mechanisms — from official press releases to

the algorithms of their digital platforms — so that they resonate deeply with the semantic structures and symbolic expectations of the population. Technological innovation is accepted only if it respects the organisation's cultural choreography.

4. Towards an integrative conceptual framework

4.1. Epistemological complementarity of paradigms

The various theoretical approaches examined above, beyond their respective conceptual boundaries and heuristic limitations, harbour fruitful areas of convergence; articulating these allows us to move beyond explanatory monisms. The key challenge of this research lies precisely in establishing a dialogue between Hofstede's culturalist modelling, Giddens's structure/agency dialectic and the reticular interdependence of the systemic tradition (Bateson, Morin). Such a synthesis aims to model the intrinsic complexity of the discursive and managerial apparatus of public communication in Morocco.

Whilst Hofstede's matrix has the merit of isolating the impact of anthropological constants on bureaucratic behaviour, its tendency towards determinism requires a theoretical counterbalance. Giddens' theory of structuration acts here as an indispensable corrective, restoring to social actors their status as active agents, capable of appropriating norms, reproducing them or, conversely, diverging from them to alter institutional trajectories. This dialogical tension fits harmoniously within systemic epistemology, which views the phenomenon of communication not as a linear, unilateral act, but as an open process characterised by self-organisation, feedback and sensitivity to environmental disturbances. Consequently, rather than positing a fruitless dichotomy between inertia and change, this integrative framework highlights the constant interplay between macro-cultural structures, organisations' strategic trade-offs and the creativity of individual agents.

4.2. A three-dimensional model of analysis

Thanks to this theoretical hybridisation, Moroccan public communication can be understood through a three-dimensional analytical model, in which each level of observation is recursively linked to the others:

- **Macro-cultural anchoring (the level of habitus):** Inspired by Hofstede's perspective, this first level encompasses the shared values (status asymmetry, primacy of the group, attitude towards unpredictability) that underpin the social sphere. These variables implicitly guide the design of

messages and shape the ways in which institutional legitimacy is received.

- **Structural operationalisation (the level of agency):** Drawing on Giddens' ontology, this level examines the formal rules and the material or symbolic resources of the administration. Conceived both as inhibiting constraints and as sources of opportunity, these structures are both the product and the means of action: every public statement simultaneously contributes to the consolidation of bureaucratic routines and to their subtle reconfiguration.
- **Systemic regulation (the level of emergent phenomena):** Drawing on the work of Morin and Bateson, this third level examines the homeostatic adjustment between the organisation and its ecosystem. It is the arena of complex feedback loops where historical compromises between traditional continuities and modernising forces are constantly renegotiated.

Ultimately, this analytical framework helps us understand why institutional communication in Morocco cannot be reduced to a mere mechanical replication of the ' ' archetypes of the past, nor to a mimetic assimilation of globalised managerial standards. It asserts itself as a process of dynamic hybridisation. To borrow Edgar Morin's phrase (1990, p. 62), 'complexity lies in the interplay between unity and diversity, between order and disorder'.

4.3. Key insights into the Moroccan institutional ecosystem

When applied to the empirical realities of the Kingdom, this integrative model sheds light on the semantic and structural tensions that run through state communication. On the one hand, institutional discourse remains dependent on deep-rooted symbolic frameworks, centred on the sanctity of authority, the protection of national cohesion and the ethos of community solidarity. On the other hand, the imperatives of managerial efficiency, integration into the flows of globalisation, and the emergence of public demands for accountability and participatory democracy necessitate a reworking of discursive repertoires.

Moroccan public communication is thus evolving at the intersection of two normative logics: the preservation of traditional legitimacy and the imperative for innovation dictated by contemporary changes in the political and social spheres. This dialectical tension is evident at the very heart of the administration's information and communication systems,

whose purpose is to strike a balanced synthesis between respect for historical continuity and openness to the demands of modernity.

5. The methodological framework of the study

5.1. Epistemological stance and paradigmatic grounding

This research is deliberately situated at the intersection of organisational sociology and the information and communication sciences (ICS). To grasp a subject as fluid as the State's discursive action, we felt it was essential to rule out from the outset rigid positivist approaches and their illusions of purely quantitative neutrality. We have opted instead for a constructivist and interpretative paradigm. This choice is based on a fundamental premise: bureaucratic structures, administrative rituals and information flows are by no means objective data frozen in time or external to the individuals who bring them to life. On the contrary, they emerge, become established and transform through ongoing processes of negotiating meaning, symbolic conflicts and social co-construction in everyday life.

This epistemological stance aligns organically with Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, which serves as a theoretical compass throughout our approach. Applying this perspective to Morocco's public and institutional sphere requires the formulation of a clear working hypothesis. The discourses of state institutions do not stem from a mere legal automatism or immutable bureaucratic inertia; nor do they arise from a wholly disembodied managerial opportunism. The reality lies in a constant duality, a perpetual dialogical tension.

We observe a communicative praxis in which senior civil servants, guided by their own agency, appropriate formal rules and cultural codes deeply rooted in history in order to reinvent them in response to the pressing needs of the moment. Consequently, the act of interpretation becomes our primary methodological tool. It is this that enables us to look beyond the surface of official statements to understand how the state gives meaning to its own decisions in times of crisis and attempts, through subtle discursive adjustments, to maintain its historical legitimacy amidst contemporary socio-political changes.

5.2. Composition, representativeness and contextualisation of the study corpus

From an empirical perspective, adopting this approach requires a method that is both qualitative and systemic, built around a meticulous analysis of textual, linguistic and visual material. To this end, we have compiled a reasoned sample

covering a strategic time frame stretching from 2020 to 2024. Far from being arbitrary, this timeframe corresponds to a period of intense historical upheaval, which can be described as a period of ‘systemic stress’ for the Kingdom’s institutions. The state apparatus was, in fact, forced to face, in quick succession, two major crises which acted as revelations – or rather as catalysts for tensions – within its communication model: first, the protracted and unprecedented management of the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022; then, the human and logistical tragedy of the Al Haouz earthquake in September 2023.

These two moments of historic upheaval literally forced the Moroccan administration to seek a precarious balance – often under extreme urgency – between two profoundly contradictory approaches. On the one hand, we see the age-old reflex towards centralisation, the withholding of information and a top-down, sovereign discourse, inherited from a long tradition of authority. On the other, the absolute necessity for immediacy, transparency, responsiveness and empathy has emerged, dictated both by the digital ecosystem and by the expectations of a connected civil society. It is precisely to map this structural tension that our corpus brings together and creates a dialogue between four major types of documentary sources.

Firstly, the Royal Speeches and the strategic decisions issued by the Prime Minister’s Office embody the sovereign’s voice and the general political direction. These foundational texts establish the semantic architecture of crisis management by invoking the notions of historical legitimacy, the sanctity of institutions, national unity and supreme authority. They constitute the essential foundation of trust upon which the rest of the state apparatus relies.

Secondly, we include statements from sovereign and sectoral communications, primarily the official press releases issued by the Ministry of the Interior — the traditional epicentre of territorial command and the management of public order — and those from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. These documents reflect the executive branch’s operational response and the normative exercise of authority in the face of health crises and natural disasters.

Added to this is the specifically digital and interactive dimension of public action. To track how ministries have adapted to the languages and codes of social media platforms, the corpus includes all official posts produced by these ministries on their verified Facebook, Twitter/X and YouTube accounts. This aspect is not limited to the analysis of texts; it takes into account a remarkable linguistic hybridisation (the constant interplay between classical administrative Arabic,

technical French and an increasingly institutionalised *Darija*) as well as the visual semiotics of the media, whether these be awareness-raising video clips, crisis infographics or live broadcasts of digital press briefings.

Finally, to understand how this state discourse is staged, popularised and conveyed to the national public, our corpus draws on official dispatches from the Maghreb Arab Press Agency (MAP) as well as news programmes—notably television news bulletins and special debate programmes—from the two major public service television channels, namely Al Aoula (SNRT) and 2M. This diversification of the empirical material ensures robust data triangulation, which is essential for validating the scientific rigour of our conclusions.

5.3. Analytical protocol and heuristic approaches

The analysis of this extensive body of material deliberately moves away from automatic lexical counts or simplistic thematic analyses, which are often too superficial. We employ a semiotic-discursive and systemic analysis that takes account of the contexts of utterance. The coding framework developed to analyse this material is structured around three major complementary heuristic axes, specifically designed to highlight the dialectic between Moroccan cultural constants and the imperatives of managerial innovation.

Theme 1: Identifying markers of verticality and hierarchical distance

This initial level of investigation focuses on detecting the persistence of deep-seated cultural structures within Moroccan organisations, as modelled in particular in Hofstede’s work on hierarchical distance. The aim is to identify how administrative texts, whether consciously or implicitly, reactivate the classic patterns of asymmetrical power. The analysis here centres on the use of a strictly top-down rhetoric, saturated with injunctions, prohibitions and formal reminders of the regulations in force.

We also examine the ways in which the discourse is legitimised, often drawing on the sanctity of national duty, the legal framework and institutional predictability. Finally, this strand examines the staging of statutory distance through the solemnity of the chosen formats, such as the terse and unilateral official communiqué. Within this traditional communicative framework, the administration positions itself as the sole legitimate source of a top-down truth, whilst the social body is placed in a position of passive reception and civic obedience.

Theme 2: Identifying areas of discursive innovation and organisational agency

The second axis takes the opposite approach to the previous one to map the actual changes in public discourse, which were particularly evident on digital platforms during the acute phases of the pandemic or in the aftermath of the earthquake. The aim is to highlight the adaptive efforts of public communication professionals who, in the face of the crisis, have embraced the codes of interactivity to meet contemporary demands for transparency and real-time responsiveness.

The analysis here traces the gradual shift from command-based communication towards communication that explains, simplifies and supports. The indicators selected are extremely concrete: the relaxation of discursive formats through the widespread use of minimalist infographics, the publication of highly informative daily statistical reports, and, above all, the strategic use of *Darija* as a means of fostering emotional closeness and providing psychological reassurance. This linguistic choice marks a clear break with the usual austerity of classical administrative Arabic. This strand thus serves to restore the full significance of the agency of the behind-the-scenes actors within ministries, who are modifying and modernising bureaucratic routines from within.

Theme 3: The study of hybridisation and systemic complexity

Dedicated to the systemic synthesis of our research, this final strand focuses on the processes of interpenetration, recursion and feedback between tradition and modernity. The aim is no longer to contrast the past and the present, but rather to observe how the oldest cultural and anthropological references in Moroccan society — such as the spirit of the *Touiza* (ancestral collective solidarity), the celebration of community resilience, or, the guardian figure of the protective state — are not erased by the modernisation of digital tools, but are, on the contrary, reinvested within them.

Communication is understood here as an open, homeostatic system, constantly shaped by citizen feedback and environmental noise. Technological and discursive innovation (the modern ‘container’) thus revitalises, embellishes and consolidates enduring cultural structures and political constants (the traditional ‘content’).

Ultimately, this methodological triangulation provides us with the tools needed to underpin our central argument: in Morocco, communication by public institutions is neither a rigid repetition of past archetypes nor a mimetic acculturation

to globalised managerial standards. It functions as a living, hybrid system, in which traditional codes provide the administration with the symbolic capital and trust essential for gaining acceptance of, and putting into practice, a discursive innovation that is now vital.

6. Empirical analysis: the logics of state reconstruction (2020–2024)

The test of reality always confronts theoretical models with their own blind spots. By focusing on the period 2020–2024 as our field of observation, our aim is not to chronicle recent crises, but to understand the Moroccan state apparatus at a time when its seams are under strain. This period, marked first by the violence of the pandemic and then by the seismic upheaval, acts as an open-air laboratory. It reveals an institutional ecosystem forced to cobble together, in a state of emergency, new discursive frameworks whilst clinging to its most ancient anthropological reflexes.

6.1. Pandemic management: from sovereign edict to data-driven governance

The health crisis has not only frozen social time; it has exacerbated the salient features of Moroccan bureaucratic culture. A close examination of the measures deployed between March 2020 and the end of 2021 reveals not one, but two communicative rationalities operating in parallel, reflecting an almost surgical division of symbolic labour within the state.

6.1.1. The martial framework and reassurance through distance

During the first few weeks of lockdown, the Ministry of the Interior dominated the public discourse. The tone was immediately stern, as evidenced by the foundational press release of 19 March 2020 declaring a state of public health emergency. The text stipulates that ‘*health isolation is a mandatory measure*’ and warns that ‘*any breach of these directives will be subject to criminal sanctions*’. This lexicon of absolute coercion, saturated with verbs of obligation, prohibition and threats of punishment, leaves no room for negotiation: the rule is imposed, and the citizen complies.

Whilst a superficial reading might see this as mere administrative authoritarianism, Hofstede’s framework allows us to grasp its underlying rationale. In a societal context characterised by a strong avoidance of uncertainty and an internalised hierarchical asymmetry, the symbolic violence of state discourse paradoxically acts as a social anxiolytic. By reviving the image of the protective yet coercive ‘*Makhzen*’, this communication through injunctions meets a cultural

expectation of order. The statutory distance does not reflect a disconnect from the administration, but rather a strategy of reassurance: for the system to survive the unknown, the centre must project absolute rigidity and invulnerability.

6.1.2. The breach of horizontality: when emergency unleashes agency

But the state apparatus did not content itself with repression; it had to explain. It was in this arena that the Ministry of Health opened an unprecedented breach in the tradition of administrative secrecy, bypassing the usual bureaucratic filters.

The cornerstone of this transformation lies in the daily publication of data. Through the *covidmaroc.ma* portal and the daily press briefings (notably those hosted by Dr Mouad Mrabet), the administration employs a discourse centred on support. An analysis of the video clips broadcast in autumn 2020 reveals a major semantic shift: the discourse repeatedly emphasises that *'improving the epidemiological situation depends on our collective commitment'* and calls for *'civic responsibility'*. The authority of public discourse no longer rests solely on the blind authority of the State, but on the sharing of tangible indicators (reproduction rate, occupied intensive care beds, positivity rates). This shift from a criminal threat to a moral and scientific imperative establishes a form of pedagogical horizontality. It is empirical proof that state officials, far from being prisoners of the Giddensian structure, reinvent it from within when a crisis unlocks the system.

6.2. The Al Haouz earthquake: harnessing emotion and the homeostasis of power

September 2023 marked a turning point. The Al Haouz earthquake imposed a radically different temporal framework: that of immediate catastrophe, rubble and collective trauma. This moment of physical collapse tested the institutional system's ability to stem the nation's psychological collapse.

6.2.1. The engineering of collectivism: transforming trauma into a resource

In the hours following the disaster, civil society mounted an impressive, organic response of solidarity, the logistical scale of which threatened to overwhelm the state's channels. The shrewdness of the public communication strategy lay in not stifling this momentum, but in channelling it on a symbolic level.

Official statements immediately set about framing the situation. Press releases from the Royal Cabinet, the epicentre of crisis management, emphasised as early as 9 September *the*

'outpouring of solidarity from all sections of Moroccan society' and called for a *'comprehensive mobilisation'*. Spontaneous acts of mutual aid (food lorries, blood donations) were reported by the MAP news agency and public television channels not as a stopgap for the administration's logistical shortcomings, but as vivid proof of 'national cohesion'. By invoking the concept of belonging to the *Ummah* (community), institutional communication has transformed raw emotion into a formidable source of legitimacy, demonstrating that culture is not a relic of the past, but a strategic asset for government.

6.2.2. The sovereign image as a means of reducing complexity

Faced with the chaos of the disaster and the deafening clamour of rumours on social media, the system needed an anchor point. This was provided by the extremely rapid broadcast, on national channels, of silent footage of the Sovereign chairing emergency working sessions, surrounded by senior military and civilian officials.

From the perspective of Morin's concept of complexity, this semiotic sequence constitutes pure homeostasis. The visual staging of the central authority—serious and hard at work—immediately brings order to the chaos. The supreme authority acts as a complexity reducer: it signals to the periphery (the anxious social body) that the centre is holding firm. This symbolic sovereignty is the *sine qua non* condition enabling the lower echelons of the administration to subsequently carry out complex engineering operations on the ground without fear of the system's implosion.

6.3. Fund 126: the anatomy of a hybrid isomorphism

If one were to single out a single case study to demonstrate the Moroccan state's ability to blend its traditional roots with modernity, it would be Special Fund 126. Its discursive and technical architecture represents the culmination of what we seek to demonstrate throughout this doctoral thesis.

6.3.1. The convergence of the Touiza and the dashboard

The rhetoric accompanying the creation of this special-purpose account drew directly from the tradition of the *Touiza*, that time-honoured rural practice of mutual aid for harvests or construction. The Ministry of Economy and Finance's discourse publicly calls on *'natural and legal persons, both public and private'* to participate in this *'effort of national solidarity'*. The moral obligation to contribute has become established in the public sphere as a cultural given, even before it is regarded as a civic duty.

Yet the presentation of this age-old appeal was strikingly hyper-modern. For the first time on this scale, the state has underpinned this traditional narrative with a digital infrastructure modelled on the standards of neoliberal auditability: the instant integration of QR code payment modules into banking apps, the publication of financial dashboards, and the traceability of remittances from the diaspora. This collision between the archaic economy of gift-giving and contemporary *data* requirements produces a form of hybrid isomorphism. The institution adopts the technological form (transparency, interactivity) demanded by international scrutiny and new public expectations, whilst preserving the symbolic substance (the duty of solidarity) that ensures its local roots.

6.3.2. An open system in a state of constant reorganisation

This financial and communicational framework demonstrates that the Moroccan administration does not merely submit to external pressure for modernisation. It integrates it, assimilates it and adapts it to its own ecosystem. The new accountability practices do not abolish tradition; they are layered upon it through a process of sedimentation. This is the hallmark of an open system which, to quote Bateson and Morin, manages to survive by increasing the complexity of its internal organisation rather than by retreating into its dogmas.

Beyond internal management, this alchemy has a formidable impact in the realm of digital diplomacy. By presenting to the whole world the image of a nation capable of combining traditional resilience with technological efficiency, the Moroccan state has achieved a brilliant re-shaping of its identity on the global stage, establishing itself no longer as a developing country struck by misfortune, but as a sovereign, agile and resilient system.

6.3.3. Summary of the logic behind this repositioning

A cross-analysis of the 2020–2024 period demonstrates that the Moroccan state apparatus manages major crises by deploying a genuine ‘hybrid isomorphism’. Faced with the shockwaves of the health and seismic crises, the institutions did not seek to erase their anthropological reflexes in order to mimic external standards; on the contrary, they strategically reactivated them. The reaffirmation of hierarchical distance acted as an immediate social stabiliser, whilst endogenous collectivism (amplified by the symbolic ‘*Touiza*’) made it possible to harness and channel the energy of civic solidarity. Far from being a conservative hindrance, this deep-rooted cultural foundation provided the administration with the necessary capital of legitimacy to secure acceptance for radical discursive innovations: governmentality through

scientific data, the digitalisation of auditability, and reflexive transparency. By thus grounding contemporary digital rationality in the permanence of its traditional values, the public communication system manages not only to preserve its homeostasis in the face of chaos, but also to impose the narrative of a sovereign, resilient nation, in control of its own complexity, on the international stage.

7. Discussion: from institutional isomorphism to hybrid communicational modernity

An analysis of recent crises compels us to rethink the very foundations of public action. By testing our theoretical frameworks against the harsh realities of empirical evidence, one thing becomes clear: the Moroccan state is not modernising by erasing its past; it is transforming itself by assimilating it. The aim of this discussion is to theorise this phenomenon, by showing how public institutions transcend their own constraints to forge a novel communicational model.

7.1. Overcoming cultural determinism: tradition as a teleological resource

Whilst Geert Hofstede’s analytical framework has provided us with the initial keys to unlocking the invisible matrix of Moroccan bureaucracy — that formidable alliance between hierarchical distance and endogenous collectivism — it would be intellectually perilous to allow ourselves to be confined by it. Viewed in isolation or in purely static terms, the culturalist approach risks freezing the institution into an ontological destiny from which it could never escape. Our field observations demonstrate exactly the opposite. Moroccan culture does not function as a straitjacket that would eternally condemn the state to authoritarian verticality. Rather, it unfolds as a vast reservoir of legitimacy, endowed with tremendous elasticity.

The case of Fund 126 is archetypal in this respect. The state has not been constrained by its collectivist roots; it has reawakened and harnessed them in a profoundly teleological manner. By combining a state-of-the-art financial traceability infrastructure (QR codes, *open data*, real-time accountability) with the age-old, mobilising myth of the *Touiza*, the administration has bypassed resistance to change. What is unfolding here is a masterful transcendence of essentialist ‘*culturalism*’. We are witnessing a strategy of modernisation *through* tradition, in which filial respect for supreme authority and community cohesion paradoxically become the conditions for feasibility — the breeding ground for acceptability — of the most disruptive technological innovation.

7.2. Agency and double hermeneutics: reflexivity at the heart of public action

For this interweaving of tradition and modernity to take place, there must be actors capable of conceiving it. It is here that Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration comes into its own. By shining a spotlight on the duality of the system, this research liberates civil servants and public communicators from their status as mere executors. Moroccan communication engineering is not a matter of blindly reproducing norms. It is the result of constant reflexivity, a genuine production of meaning orchestrated by actors endowed with great strategic clarity.

The shift that took place during the health crisis perfectly illustrates this dynamic. The transition from an injunctive and security-focused discourse during the first lockdown to a reflective, educational approach based on the sharing of epidemiological data was no accident. Institutional actors engaged in what Giddens would call a 'double hermeneutic': they interpreted the social anxiety of their environment in order to reinterpret, as a matter of urgency, the rules governing state discourse. State discourse ceases to be a unilateral broadcast and becomes a space for ongoing negotiation, a site of friction where the administration's security-oriented habitus is forced to reconcile, in real time, with the demands of an efficiency now measured against global standards.

7.3. Complexity as the horizon of homeostatic regulation

Only the paradigm of complexity, as formulated by Edgar Morin, allows us to grasp the full scope of this shift. The state is no longer that monolithic bloc towering over an inert mass; it is forced to evolve within a highly unstable ecosystem where hyper-connected citizens, transnational flows of information and endemic waves of disinformation collide. Public communication is being redefined within this context, abandoning the comfort of the sovereign monologue to embrace its nature as an open system, permeable to the contradictions of its environment.

Faced with this turbulence, the Moroccan model is developing its own immune response: a hybrid form of institutional isomorphism. The administration readily adopts the trappings of global modernity — the language of social media, interactivity, the culture of *data* — but takes care to neutralise their destabilising impact by grafting them onto its own cultural foundation. This ability to absorb the shock of globalisation whilst preserving the core of its identity is a matter of pure organisational complexity. It enables the energy of crises and social tensions to be transformed not into

catalysts for dissolution, but into formidable levers of regulation and homeostasis.

7.4. Epistemological implications for SICs through the lens of the Global South

The findings of this research extend far beyond the Moroccan case alone to challenge the epistemological foundations of Information and Communication Studies. Our integrative framework opens up a major heuristic breakthrough for rethinking the study of bureaucracies across the Global South. It invalidates the developmentalist orthodoxy — often modelled on an ethnocentric vision — which posits that communicational modernity necessarily requires a painful and radical break with the legacies of the past.

What our fieldwork in Morocco teaches us is that institutional change proceeds through a process of sedimentation. Tradition does not stand in the way of innovation: it provides it with its framework, its capital of trust, and its foundation of legitimacy at the very moment when urgency makes that innovation imperative. Recognising the infinite plasticity of these cultural structures and their formidable capacity for hybridisation becomes the *sine qua non* for analysing new social contracts in societies in transition. Ultimately, Morocco offers researchers an exceptional laboratory for observation, proving that public communication can never be reduced to a mere technical tool. It remains the symbolic process par excellence, the theatre of shadows where, with every upheaval of history, the very conditions of sovereignty and national cohesion are re-enacted and preserved.

8. General conclusion

Reaching the end of this research journey requires us to view Moroccan public communication no longer as a mere administrative conduit, but for what it fundamentally is: the beating heart of the state's symbolic production. By weaving together, the threads of Hofstede's cultural anthropology, Giddens's sociology of action and Morin's epistemology of complexity, our approach has sought to break free from the one-dimensional frameworks through which the state apparatuses of the Global South are all too often observed. What we have unearthed beneath the surface of discourses and mechanisms is the depth of an uncertain *praxis*, a space of constant tension where the weight of centuries and the urgency of the moment clash, size each other up and ultimately merge.

From this immersion at the heart of the institution — which was particularly put to the test during the period of 'systemic stress' from 2020 to 2024 — three theoretical certainties emerge to forge a new understanding of public action.

The first challenges a certain managerial cliché: the persistence of the cultural substratum is by no means a pathology of modernisation. The significant hierarchical distance and endogenous collectivism do not constitute immutable shackles that stifle the administration. Faced with danger, whether viral or seismic, they act, on the contrary, as formidable resources of resilience. They provide the sovereign voice with the symbolic resonance it vitally needs to be believed, accepted and put into practice in the public imagination.

The second certainty lies in the fascinating dialectic that links continuity with transgression. The Moroccan model demonstrates that institutional evolution is not achieved by erasing the past, but through a process of sedimentation. The State has demonstrated its unique ability to channel an authoritative discourse – which is, by its very nature, vertical – into the agile, interactive and horizontal frameworks of social media. The institution is not merely enduring the digital revolution; it is harnessing it to make it the new vehicle for its long-standing values.

Finally, our third pillar affirms complexity as an insurmountable analytical horizon. Administrative communication has ceased to evolve in a vacuum. Today, it operates as a fundamentally open system, criss-crossed by feedback loops, where attempts at central control must constantly negotiate with peripheral disorder, the pressures of civil society and citizens' creativity. The system's homeostasis no longer arises from imposed order, but from the unstable equilibrium found at the very heart of the movement.

Beyond its specific context, this research has significant epistemological implications for the field of Information and Communication Sciences. It calls for a shift in perspective. There is an urgent need to revive the concept of 'hybrid modernity' in order to analyse state action in the Global South, by ceasing to evaluate these trajectories exclusively against the yardstick of a standardised Western rationality. From a praxeological perspective, the message to decision-making circles is clear: bureaucratic engineering is no longer sufficient. The effectiveness of public authority is now gauged by its capacity for institutional empathy, by its ability to engage in dialogue with a connected social body without ever squandering its capital of historical legitimacy.

All scientific research comes to an end at the very gaps it has itself opened up. The point of equilibrium we have described is, by definition, merely a snapshot captured amidst the stormy. Already, the silent yet massive integration of artificial intelligence and generative algorithms into the very fabric of public discourse promises to reconfigure the notion of

administrative truth. This creeping technologisation of discourse calls for immediate further exploration. On the one hand, it is becoming necessary to undertake a longitudinal study of post-2024 discursive shifts, at a time when crisis ceases to be the exception and becomes the state's natural environment. On the other hand, the robustness of our conceptual framework would benefit from being tested through comparative analysis. Comparing this Moroccan case study with the trajectories of other countries in the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America would enable us to test the universal validity of this contemporary equation: how can an institution embrace the tools of global modernity without losing the uniqueness of its spirit?

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