

Does Technology Make Us More or Less Sociable? The Effects of Smart Surveillance Technologies on Citizens' Sociability

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps governments offer citizens important benefits like disease control or crime prevention. Although publicly deployed AI monitoring systems can be seen as neutral tools to be evaluated on efficiency, this approach does not consider their potential social repercussions. Will citizens still help each other when technology can do the work from them? Drawing on the literature of bystander effect and social norms, in this paper we propose that surveillance technology might make us more or less sociable depending on the extent to which technology is seen as active or passive social actor. Two studies show that people believe they will help less when the technology is anthropomorphic, allocating part of the responsibility to intervene to the technology itself. Moreover, people partially tend to help more when they are observed by a non-anthropomorphic camera. Our findings contribute to the current debate on the effect of smart technologies on behavior.

Keywords: *Smart surveillance; Sociability; Anthropomorphism*

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