



Autopoiesis And Organizational Communication: How The Jember Fashion Carnaval Adapts Through Communicative Processes

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the adaptation of the Jember Fashion Carnaval (JFC) organization to the dynamic social connectivity of its environment. The imperative for this research stems from the need to examine how cultural organizations like JFC operate as autopoietic systems, which must continuously interpret and adapt to the "communications" from other encompassing social systems, particularly the political and governmental systems that establish policy frameworks and funding mechanisms, to ensure their viability. Employing a qualitative approach and digital ethnography, this research analyzes the organization's responses, structural couplings, and adaptation strategies. The findings indicate that JFC demonstrates responsiveness through innovative carnival themes and a diverse range of communication channels. However, limitations arise from programmatic constraints and individual influences within the organization. Furthermore, JFC's interpenetration into various societal sectors, including education, economy, and culture, shapes its policies and strategic decisions. This adaptation is evident in the evolution of fashion design, event concepts, and

community-inclusive management. This research contributes to understanding organizational adaptation within a rapidly changing socio-cultural context, highlighting the interplay between organizational systems and their environment. Grounded in Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, specifically the concept of autopoiesis, this study offers a unique perspective on how JFC, as an organizationally closed system, maintains its operational identity while adapting to its surroundings. The results provide valuable insights for the field of development communication and challenge traditional approaches focused predominantly on internal organizational factors by emphasizing the critical role of external systems in shaping organizational behavior.

Introduction

The Jember Fashion Carnaval (JFC) is a significant cultural phenomenon in Jember, Indonesia, serving as a platform for youth creativity and garnering considerable attention both locally and beyond. While widely celebrated, JFC has also faced criticism regarding its aesthetic choices, particularly concerning costume design, and its perceived divergence from traditional local cultural values. (Muntadliroh, 2016; Ningsih, 2021; Tampubolon & Darmawan, 2016). These criticisms highlight the inherent complexities of navigating cultural expression in a diverse and evolving society. Jember, characterized by a heterogeneous population comprising Madurese, Javanese, Chinese, Arab, and European descendants, a demographic shaped by significant migration in the late 1960s (Handayani, 2019) Presents a complex tapestry of cultural values and interests. This diversity underscores the challenges faced by cultural events like JFC in achieving broad social acceptance.

The initial years of JFC were marked by contestation, notably from religious leaders who expressed concerns about the perceived immodesty of some costume designs, viewing them as incompatible with prevailing local norms and ethics. (Tampubolon & Darmawan, 2016; Violeta, 2018). JFC's responses to these critiques,

including modifications to designs and event organization, demonstrate an ongoing negotiation between the organization and its social environment. This dynamic interplay underscores the inherent limitations faced by any organization in fully accommodating the diverse and often conflicting demands within its social context.

This study examines JFC through the lens of Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, with a specific focus on the concept of autopoiesis. We analyze JFC as an organizational system embedded within a broader social system, constantly interacting with and adapting to its environment. According to Luhmann, organizations, as a type of social system, reproduce themselves through communication, specifically through decision-making communication. (Seidl et al., 2014; Seidl & Mormann, 2015) This communication process allows the system to sense and respond to "irritations" from its environment, leading to internal adjustments and adaptations (Handaka et al., 2016; Luhmann, 2018; Nassehi, 2005). However, the complexity of modern society, with its inherent multiplicity of interests, means that JFC's decisions, while reflective of this adaptive process, cannot fully satisfy all societal demands.

To empirically trace these communicative processes, this study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing digital ethnography and in-depth interviews to gather data on public discourse and organizational decision-making. This research aims to explore how the JFC organization navigates the complexity of public discourse surrounding the event. It examines the interpenetration between the JFC organizational system and the broader community system, analyzing how this interaction influences organizational adaptation and contributes to the evolution of local culture. This study contributes to the field of development communication by providing a nuanced understanding of organizational adaptation within a complex social environment, utilizing Luhmann's autopoietic framework to illuminate the underlying processes. Moreover, the practical implications of this research extend to cultural event managers and policy makers, providing valuable insights for developing adaptive strategies that balance cultural innovation with social acceptance in rapidly evolving communities.

While previous research has explored JFC from various perspectives, including art (Proborini, 2017), management (Violeta, 2018), tourism (Muntadliroh, 2016), religion (Ningsih, 2021), and anthropology (Tampubolon & Darmawan, 2016). This study offers a unique contribution by focusing on the communicative

dynamics between JFC and its environment through the lens of autopoiesis. It differentiates itself from studies that focus solely on internal organizational adaptation (Amoako et al., 2022; As'adi, 2020b; Høiland & Klemsdal, 2022) or on organizational adaptation without considering cultural development (Adi et al., 2021; As'adi, 2020a; Scherer et al., 2013; Schildt & Perkmann, 2017). Furthermore, it challenges conventional communication theories that view conflict and noise as solely disruptive, aligning with Luhmann's perspective that these elements can be productive forces driving organizational adaptation and evolution.

Luhmann's framework, which posits that systems are simultaneously open and closed, forming their own structures in response to environmental disturbances (Luhmann, 1995), offers a valuable perspective for understanding JFC's evolution. The concept of autopoiesis highlights how a system maintains its identity while adapting to its surroundings (Bider et al., 2020; Nassehi, 2005; Pańkowska, 2021). In the context of JFC, communication serves as the fundamental element driving this process, facilitating interaction with the environment and enabling the organization to navigate challenges and make decisions (Arifudin et al., 2020; Handaka et al., 2016). The absence of continuous communication, as suggested by ((Daulay & As'adi, 2021; Kondolele et al., 2025; Marx, 2020)) would hinder JFC's ability to adapt and could ultimately lead to its decline.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore and understand the complex interplay between the Jember Fashion Carnaval (JFC) organizational system and its social environment. Following (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) framework, the research process involved systematic data collection from informants, inductive data analysis, and interpretation of emergent meanings. A descriptive-analytical approach was adopted to elucidate the multifaceted communication phenomena occurring between JFC and its social environment across multiple domains including education, economy, tourism, culture, religion, ethics, media, government, environment, health, and politics.

The study was conducted in Jember Regency, Indonesia, the home of the internationally recognized Jember Fashion Carnaval. Jember was selected as the research site due to its distinctive position as a regional city relatively distant from major governmental centers, yet demonstrating exceptional capacity to develop

and sustain a globally recognized cultural event through local cultural initiatives. The presence of a professional JFC organization that systematically manages the event, cultural development, and educational programs further justified this selection. Moreover, JFC's pioneering status as a local cultural tourism model with international recognition in Indonesia made it an exemplary case for examining organizational adaptation processes.

The study utilized multiple data sources, comprising both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through comprehensive observations, in-depth interviews, and systematic document analysis. These methods were specifically employed to investigate organizational responses, structural couplings between social systems, and adaptive mechanisms of the JFC organizational system. Secondary data were obtained from relevant governmental agencies and cultural institutions, complemented by an extensive literature review. Particular attention was given to JFC archival materials, including historical event documentation and visual records, to trace the organization's evolutionary trajectory in response to environmental changes.

Data collection employed the snowball sampling technique (Djamba & Neuman, 2002; McLaughlin, 2023), targeting both internal and external stakeholders of JFC. Informants were selected based on their substantive involvement with JFC and their representation of diverse community segments. This sampling strategy aligns with Luhmann's theoretical proposition that communication processes, as essential operations of social systems, inherently involve multiple actors within the system (Luhmann, 1995, 2000).

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2023; Bowen, 2009; Rejokirono et al., 2025), involving three concurrent processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initial data reduction focused on identifying and organizing data relevant to the research questions, specifically addressing: (1) community and social environmental responses to JFC, (2) structural couplings between the JFC organizational system, interaction systems, and broader community systems, and (3) organizational adaptation to internal and external environmental factors. Analysis of digital and traditional media content formed a significant component of this process.

To ensure research rigor, methodological triangulation was implemented (Snelson, 2016) analyzed, and coded through a qualitative content analysis approach.

Overall trends are presented with respect to the entire collection of articles followed by an analysis of mixed methods research approaches identified in the subset of 55 studies. The most commonly used research approaches involved collecting data from people through interview, focus group, and survey methodologies. Content analysis was the second most commonly used approach whereby researchers use Facebook posts, Tweets (Twitter posts through: (1) source triangulation: cross-verifying data from interviews, archives, and documents; (2) method triangulation: employing multiple data collection methods; and (3) temporal triangulation: collecting data at different time intervals to assess consistency. For instance, data gathered during morning interviews, when cognitive alertness was optimal, were systematically compared with data collected through alternative methods and timeframes to enhance credibility.

Result and Discussion

Organizations, as integral components of a broader social system, are inherently influenced by the conditions of their surrounding social environment. The Jember Fashion Carnaval (JFC) organizational system coexists and interacts with multiple social systems, including governmental, educational, religious, political, economic, tourism, media, cultural, and legal systems. The complex interplay of interests among these societal subsystems shapes organizational decision-making, often leading to adaptations in response to diverse, and sometimes conflicting, societal demands. However, the interconnectedness between the organizational system and other social systems restricts the organization's flexibility in adapting to its environment (Luhmann, 2000).

The relationship between the JFC and the governmental system exemplifies this dynamic tension arising from differing interests. While both entities share a common goal of promoting Jember as a "carnival city," their conceptualizations of this vision diverge. JFC initially leaned towards incorporating Western cultural elements into its events (Tampubolon & Darmawan, 2016) The local government advocated for a stronger emphasis on local culture, religious values, Eastern ethics, and established societal norms. Consequently, the government system holds significant sway over JFC's operations, particularly concerning the legalization of events. JFC's response to this dynamic has involved integrating local cultural elements and human development initiatives, such as art training, into its core activities. By reframing its

fashion-centric approach as a method for generating cultural expressions rooted in local traditions, JFC has been able to secure continued governmental support, including permits, venue facilities, security, and funding (Violeta, 2018).

The reliance on local government funding, however, necessitates JFC's engagement with the economic system, which is primarily concerned with the financial viability of the event. JFC's presence has demonstrably impacted the local economy, creating both benefits and challenges for different segments of the community. Notably, the event has significantly boosted the economic activity of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with a record 2,548 MSMEs participating along the 3.6-kilometer carnival route (Kumala Dewi, 2023). This has resulted in tangible economic benefits for lower-income communities. However, the event's logistical requirements, such as street closures, have negatively impacted some established businesses, particularly those in the middle and upper-income brackets. Furthermore, the substantial public funding allocated to JFC has drawn criticism, with some arguing that these resources should be prioritized for broader community welfare initiatives. To mitigate these concerns and demonstrate its social responsibility, JFC has implemented policies such as waiving fees for MSMEs and other business actors. To ensure the event's financial sustainability despite these concessions, JFC has adopted a tiered ticketing strategy, offering free access to the general public while charging for premium seating (VVIP and VIP) (Violeta, 2018).

As an extensive organizational system, JFC must also navigate the ethical considerations prevalent within its social environment. Given that a significant portion of Jember's population identifies as Muslim and the region is often referred to as the "City of Santri" (students of Islamic boarding schools), JFC's initial embrace of Western-inspired fashion, particularly costumes perceived as revealing, sparked controversy. Religious leaders and community members expressed concerns that these designs conflicted with local ethical and cultural norms (Ningsih, 2021). Additionally, the timing of JFC events, particularly the post-event music, sometimes clashed with religious observances at nearby mosques. JFC addressed these ethical concerns through ongoing dialogue with religious groups and community organizations. This communication process "irritated" the organizational system (in Luhmann's terms), leading to decisions to modify costume designs to better reflect Jember's cultural values. JFC also implemented event pauses during religious observances

as a gesture of respect for the diverse beliefs within the community.

JFC's engagement with the political system is crucial for realizing its organizational objectives. The composition of Jember's Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), predominantly occupied by political parties with religious and nationalist ideologies, significantly influences discussions surrounding JFC's operations. Consequently, JFC is compelled to prioritize religious and cultural ethical principles in its fashion productions while also promoting a sense of national pride through its cultural expressions. Political dynamics often manifest in debates over event legality and funding, with diverse party ideologies shaping the discourse (Sen & Wagner, 2009). To secure continued support, JFC has actively engaged with the DPRD, demonstrating improvements in its product design and emphasizing its commitment to building trust.

The organization of JFC is closely intertwined with the local cultural system. Initial criticisms from various community segments, including cultural stakeholders, centered on the perceived dominance of Western cultural elements over local and national traditions. In response, JFC has actively incorporated local cultural content into its internationally oriented carnival, fostering innovation and cultural development. This adaptation has gradually diminished the initial negative stigma associated with JFC among some cultural figures. JFC's commitment to local cultural development is further exemplified by its involvement in establishing the Wonderful Archipelago Carnaval Indonesia (WACI) association (Kusumawati et al., 2022) emphasizing the mediating effect on tourism sustainability.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative approach is used in this study to explain the causality relationship based on statistical analysis. The total sample collected in distributing questionnaires to the communities involved in the Jember Fashion Carnaval is 221 from various types of communities. Construct this study's validity, reliability and hypothesis testing using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM, which focuses on promoting Indonesian local culture.

The education system in Jember, which predominantly supports the development of art, fashion, and organizational management, has also played a pivotal role in JFC's evolution (Proborini, 2017). This represents a shift from earlier resistance, which stemmed from concerns about the perceived imposition of Western cultural values that diverged from local norms and the potential conflict with religious education. Furthermore, the demanding rehearsal

schedules leading up to the event sometimes led to students missing school. The ongoing communication between JFC and the education system has resulted in the integration of local cultural values, nationalistic themes, and local ethical considerations into JFC's designs and performances. JFC has further responded by developing educational initiatives in fashion design that emphasize national identity and international quality standards. The establishment of the Jember Fashion Carnaval museum and the provision of fashion training for various age groups and skill levels demonstrate JFC's commitment to nurturing local talent and fostering international competitiveness.

The staging of JFC events, which utilize public spaces, inevitably raises environmental concerns, particularly regarding waste management and potential damage to urban infrastructure. To address these issues, JFC has adopted a design philosophy that incorporates recycled materials into its performances and products. Furthermore, JFC collaborates with environmental organizations, such as those focused on earth care, to manage pre-event preparations, on-site waste management, and post-event cleanup. These collaborations often involve mobilizing volunteers, as exemplified by the participation of actress Prilly Latuconsina and her environmental advocacy during JFC 2023 (Prilli Latuconsina, 2023). JFC also works closely with municipal cleaning services to ensure the city's environment is restored after each event.

The relationship between the JFC organizational system and the tourism system is powerful. JFC has significantly increased tourist arrivals to Jember Regency, both domestically and internationally. However, inadequate management in certain areas has created challenges for tourism promotion and visitor experience. Limited transportation access and the distance of hotels from the event venue have negatively impacted tourist perceptions and their likelihood of returning (Denissa et al., 2015). The city's urban planning has not yet fully adapted to its status as a carnival city. Traffic management, venue arrangements, and the impact of road closures on local businesses require more comprehensive solutions. Other infrastructural limitations, such as inadequate transportation and lodging options, further hinder efforts to manage and attract visitors. The emergence of informal parking areas during the event, while intended to address a need, often disrupts the daily routines of residents.

Enhancing the quality of the JFC event necessitates improved spatial

planning that considers both the temporary demands of the carnival and the ongoing needs of the local community (Yulia & Nuryanti, 2016). Currently, JFC, in collaboration with the district police and the local government, implements temporary measures such as traffic rerouting and enhanced security. They also designate specific areas for parking and establish clear boundaries between the performance area and the audience.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge to JFC, forcing the organization to adapt to the prevailing health regulations. The health system during that period discouraged large gatherings to prevent the spread of the virus. To maintain its commitment to local cultural development and ensure the event's continuity, JFC adopted a modified approach (Angelia, 2022). JFC continued to hold its events in compliance with health protocols and utilized mass media and social media platforms to broadcast the carnival during the pandemic. Notably, JFC continued to achieve international recognition by participating in global fashion competitions, thereby promoting a positive image of Indonesia on the world stage.

The mass media system, with its constant demand for novelty (Suldani et al., 2023; Wahyuni, 2019) It plays a significant role in shaping public perception of JFC. Organizations like JFC respond to this demand by featuring celebrity guests, showcasing innovative art, and delivering spectacular performances. As noted by a media professional (*Didit Media Gempi*, 2023) Media outlets prioritize novelty, engaging visuals, and informative content, while social media often focuses on virality over informational substance.

JFC's organizational responses to these diverse societal demands demonstrate a consistent effort to integrate local culture, norms, and ethics into its core operations. However, the organization maintains its flagship programs, which are essential to its primary objectives. The presentation of artworks inspired by environmental phenomena, fashion trends, and global cultures reflects JFC's ongoing engagement with the complexities of its social environment.

The evolution of JFC's concept and its decision-making processes reflect its responsiveness to input from its external environment. Public responses, both positive and negative, serve as "irritations" that stimulate the JFC organizational system to reproduce itself and adapt. The interpenetration between interconnected social systems reveals that each system operates with its own set of interests and objectives.

The establishment and management of JFC initially centered on business and fashion. However, its designation as an annual tourism event marked a turning point, leading to significant organizational growth. Member recruitment and training have been instrumental in ensuring JFC's continued existence and its ability to generate decisions in the form of policies and culturally relevant art products. Organizational adaptation for local cultural development, achieved through autopoietic reproduction via communication, represents a strategic methodological advancement in navigating the complexities of modern society. Organizational systems require energy from their social environment, obtained through communication, to adapt to environmental challenges.

JFC, as a product of local cultural development in the realm of art and creativity, has elicited a wide range of responses, both positive and negative, from its social environment. Luhmann's social systems autopoiesis approach provides a framework for understanding the complexities of communication within society. This framework suggests that JFC will either successfully continue its autopoietic processes or ultimately fail, depending on its ability to adapt and respond to future challenges.

Successful and sustainable development hinges on recognizing and harnessing the vitality of a community's culture, lifestyles, values, traditions, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Development planners must possess in-depth knowledge of communities and their cultures to ensure that economic policies align with the needs and aspirations of those communities and effectively leverage cultural assets for successful implementation (A. et al., 2023; Tarwiyani Yuniar et al., 2022; UNESCO, 1996) contributes to the successful implementation of the development agenda known as the SDGs through one of its programs, UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Periods of significant development are often accompanied or preceded by a surge of creative activity and cultural energy. A culture's openness to external ideas and its capacity to assimilate other cultural influences appear to be crucial factors in fostering successful development.

JFC, through its autopoietic processes, has successfully transformed local culture into high-value products within the fashion industry, achieving both national and international recognition. The organization's openness to its social environment has facilitated acceptance of its role in local cultural development. JFC's success is a testament to its ability to respond to diverse social demands. The organization's

continued sustainability relies on member recruitment, ongoing capacity building, and effective communication among systems, enabling JFC to remain relevant and resilient within a complex and dynamically changing social system.

Economic development fundamentally depends on the efficient production and distribution of goods and services, which, in turn, rely on the effective application of technology to address related challenges. However, numerous other factors contribute to the development equation, including the selection of development models, the choice of technologies to be imported, adapted, or innovated, the design of the education system and its content, the chosen mode of production, and the organizational structure. All these choices must be deeply intertwined with cultural values. Countries with strong artistic traditions, such as Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, and Indonesia, can leverage their creative talents, particularly evident in their carnival traditions, for industrial design applications.

Establishing institutions like design schools or incorporating industrial design courses into existing educational programs can be instrumental in identifying and nurturing creative talent, channeling it towards development-oriented initiatives. Education plays a crucial role in fostering an environment conducive to artistic creation. Historically, the built environment has served as a primary form of cultural expression, reflecting a society's technological solutions to housing needs, aesthetic sensibilities, values, and religious beliefs. Architecture, as a communal art form, embodies a community's cultural values and has traditionally been a significant outlet for creative energy. Creating an environment that encourages and stimulates the generation of new ideas focused on specific problems or sets of problems is essential for fostering innovation and progress.

Conclusion

This study has examined the multifaceted relationship between the Jember Fashion Carnaval (JFC) organization and its complex social environment. The diverse discourses surrounding JFC, both in direct interactions and mediated representations, underscore the inherent complexities of local cultural development initiatives and illuminate the varied characteristics of communication within the community. As Luhmann (1995) posits, society itself is fundamentally constituted through communication.

The analysis reveals that different stakeholders, even within the same

governmental structure, perceive and engage with JFC in distinct ways. The interpenetration between the JFC organization and various societal subsystems, including education, economy, culture, health, tourism, law, social empowerment, and politics, provides the impetus for organizational adaptation. Through ongoing communication and negotiation, JFC generates decisions that guide its actions within a specific timeframe. Proposals and inputs from these diverse systems are considered and, when feasible, integrated into future planning.

Several key implications emerge from this research. First, the multiplicity of discourses surrounding JFC highlights the need for the organization to remain cognizant of the diverse interests within its social environment. Both JFC and the local government, particularly the regent, can play a crucial role as problem solvers, mediating between these different perspectives. The media, in particular, should strive to capture the underlying complexities of the situation, fostering a more nuanced public understanding of JFC. Second, the dominance of economic, political, governmental, and cultural considerations, as well as legal factors, underscores the importance of JFC's ability to effectively communicate and negotiate with policymakers to advance its local cultural development agenda. Third, the observed interpenetration between social subsystems can inform a communication strategy for stakeholders, particularly the government. This strategy should prioritize transparent information sharing, both directly and through media channels, to foster a more informed understanding of JFC, while also engaging in ongoing negotiations with relevant parties.

Based on the empirical findings, this study proposes three strategic recommendations to enhance the sustainability and social integration of cultural events: First, the establishment of a structured multi-stakeholder forum by the JFC organization to institutionalize continuous dialogue and co-create event concepts; second, the formulation of a comprehensive cultural policy framework by local government that supports creative innovation while providing specific funding mechanisms; third, the development of accessible collaborative platforms for community groups to facilitate constructive feedback and creative input through both digital channels and traditional meetings, thereby strengthening shared ownership in event development. These strategic recommendations aim to create a synergistic cultural ecosystem among organizations, government, and communities, while providing an operational framework adaptable for similar

cultural event development across various local contexts.

This research contributes to the field of development communication by offering a unique perspective on organizational communication within a complex social context. It challenges the traditional, internally focused approach to organizational studies by emphasizing the crucial role of external factors in shaping organizational behavior. This study provides valuable insights for development communication, highlighting the importance of recognizing the dynamic interplay between organizations and their social environment. The periodic process of information exchange, expression, and interpretation among various components of the social system is crucial for understanding and navigating the increasing complexity of contemporary societal issues.

In conclusion, JFC's success in navigating the complexities of its social environment and contributing to local cultural development is contingent upon its ability to continuously adapt, communicate, and negotiate with diverse stakeholders. This study highlights the importance of Luhmann's social systems theory in understanding the dynamics of organizational adaptation, offering a valuable framework for examining the complex relationships between organizations and their broader social context. Further research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of JFC on Jember's cultural landscape and investigate the applicability of this framework to other cultural development initiatives in diverse contexts. The findings also suggest that future research could benefit from a longitudinal approach to assess the evolving nature of these interactions and their influence on organizational sustainability.

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