Romancing the programmes. Management implications of a mediated discussion between two large language models on code poetry

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Abstract:
Purpose: This technical paper examines how organisational decision-making changes when decisions are increasingly attributed to computational programmes rather than individual human actors. It explores whether interactions between such programmes can be meaningfully analysed as forms of communication, and what future challenges this implies for management and organisation theory.
Design/methodology/approach: The paper develops a conceptual analysis grounded in Luhmannian social systems theory. It draws on a deliberately simplified experiment in which two large language models (ChatGPT and Gemini) engage in a user-moderated discussion about code poems. The mediated exchange is analysed as a minimal case of programme–programme interaction, focusing on interpretive divergence, role formation, and the management of double contingency.
Findings: The analysis shows that communication between decision programmes does not necessarily converge toward shared understanding. Instead, programme–programme interaction stabilises distinct observational positions, reproducing double contingency at the level of programmes rather than human "actors". While large language models may not qualify as autopoietic social systems, they can plausibly be understood as organisationally instantiated decision programmes embedded in organisational communication. Mutual irritations between such programmes might thus be observed as forms of communication within and between organisational decision-making processes.
Originality: The paper contributes to management and organisation theory by reframing artificial intelligence not as a tool or agent, but as a decision programme operating within organisational autopoiesis. By introducing *programme–programme communication* as an analytical lens, it advances systems-theoretical approaches to AI-mediated decision-making and opens new perspectives on organisational coordination, responsibility, and control in programme-rich environments.

Paper type: Technical Paper.

Keywords: Programme-programme communication; organisational autopoiesis; double contingency; artificial intelligence; code poems.

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1 Introduction: Communicating decision programmes

It has become a commonplace observation that organisational decision-making is increasingly computer-mediated and automated (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021). From algorithmic scoring systems and rule-based compliance checks to predictive analytics and generative artificial intelligence, organisational decisions are ever more frequently prepared, filtered, or even executed through computational procedures (Argawal et al., 2022; Cingillioglu and Schoettner, 2025; Curchod et al., 2020; Kelan, 2024). In management and organisation studies, this development is often discussed under headings such as digitalisation, automation, or—more recently—artificial intelligence, typically accompanied by debates about efficiency gains, decision quality, accountability, or ethical risk (Bankins, 2021; Lebovitz et al., 2021; Lebovitz et al., 2022; Kiškis, 2026; Lindenbaum and Fleming, 2024; Vesa and Tienari, 2022; Wang and Huang, 2025).

In parallel with these developments in practice, management and organisation theory has begun to reflect on the implications of artificial intelligence for organising, strategy, and governance. Much of this literature, however, continues to frame AI primarily as a *tool* or *assistant* that supports human decision-makers, implicitly preserving a distinction between human agency on the one hand and computational support on the other (Einola and Khoreva, 2023). From a systems-theoretical perspective, this framing risks obscuring a more fundamental transformation: if organisational decisions are increasingly produced *through* programmes, then decision-making itself becomes a matter of programme-based communication.

Following Niklas Luhmann's (1995; 2012, 2013, 2018) theory of social systems, organisations can be understood as autopoietic systems that reproduce themselves through decisions, guided by decision programmes that condition which decisions can be made and how. Decision programmes—whether conditional (if–then rules) or purposive (goal-oriented guidelines)—do not merely support decisions; they structure the space of possible decisions in advance. Against this background, the growing role of computational programmes in organisational decision-making poses a veritable theoretical challenge (Roth, 2023). If organisational decisions are observed to be increasingly programmed, then organisational communication—and, by extension, organisation–organisation communication—increasingly appears as *programme–programme communication*.

This paper explores the conceptual challenges implied by such programme–programme communication by analysing a deliberately simplified and decontextualised experiment: a user-moderated discussion between two large language models, ChatGPT and Gemini, interpreting the same artefact—a code poem. At first glance, this setting appears remote from organisational

and managerial practice. However, precisely because it strips away organisational roles, formal hierarchies, and connotations of human intentionality, it allows for observing how decision programmes respond to irritation by other programmes under controlled conditions.

The choice of code poetry as the object of interpretation is not incidental. Code poetry combines executable code with interpretive openness, thereby functioning as an artefact that simultaneously invites formal processing and semantic interpretation. As such, it provides an ideal probe for observing how different programmes stabilise meaning, respond to disagreement, and process irritation. By drawing on an excerpt of a more extensive mediated exchange between two large language models interpreting the same set of code poems, we generate a minimal case of programme–programme communication and illustrate its management- and organisation-theoretical implications.

Research on direct, user-mediated or user-moderated communication between large language models remains scarce (Broughton, 2025; Davidson, 2025), particularly within management and organisation studies. While recent work has begun to explore AI–AI communication and collaboration (Afroogh et al, 2024) or synthetic deliberation (Park et al., 2025), systematic analyses of interpretive divergence between large language models—and their implications for organisational decision-making—are still largely absent. This paper contributes to closing this gap by using user-mediated LLM–LLM communication not as an object of technological evaluation, but as an analytical device for observing decision programmes in "interaction".

The central claim developed in this paper is that communication between decision programmes does not necessarily converge toward shared understanding, even under conditions of mutual responsiveness and clarification. Instead, programme–programme communication tends to stabilise distinct observational positions, thereby reproducing double contingency at the level of programmes rather than actors. While demonstrated here through an AI-based experiment, this finding has far-reaching implications for management and organisation theory, particularly for understanding organisations as sites where heterogeneous programmes are coupled, mediated, and selectively stabilised (Roth and Valentinov, 2025).

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we introduce the experimental setting and one exemplary code poem as an artefact for programme observation. We then analyse the divergent interpretations produced by the two large language models and the ensuing escalation prior to any theoretical intervention. Building on this analysis, we briefly introduce the concept of double contingency to frame the observed theoretical challenge. Finally, we discuss the implications of programme–programme communication for social systems theory and management and organisation studies, concluding with the open question of whether organisations can be understood as autopoietic systems that facilitate communication between programmes.

2 Code poetry as programme-based artefact: the case of *Unhandled Love*

Code poetry is a genre of literary practice that uses executable or quasi-executable computer code as its primary medium (Emanuel, 2025). Unlike traditional poetry that employs code metaphorically or thematically, code poetry operates directly with programming languages, syntax, and computational operations (Rhee, 2023). Meaning is not only conveyed through semantic content, but also through what the code *does*, *fails to do*, or *would do if executed*. In this sense, code poetry occupies a hybrid position between literary text and technical artefact, simultaneously inviting interpretation by human readers and processing by machines.

A typical feature of code poetry is that it relies on widely recognisable programming constructs—such as loops, functions, exceptions, or classes—and redeploys them in ways that foreground their conceptual implications rather than their instrumental utility. This makes code poetry particularly suitable as an analytical probe for observing how different interpretive

programmes respond to the same artefact, since it deliberately blurs the boundary between formal execution and semantic interpretation.
To illustrate these characteristics, we focus on a short poem written in C++, *Unhandled Love* by Daniel Bezerra (2012). The poem reads as follows (between the ***):

***

UNHANDLED LOVE

```
class love {};

void main()
{
        throw love();
}
```

***

At a technical level, the code defines an empty class named love and immediately throws an instance of that class as an exception. Crucially, no mechanism is provided to handle the exception: there is no try–catch block, no recovery procedure, and no continuation of execution. As a result, if executed, the programme would terminate abruptly.
From the perspective of code poetry, this minimal construction exemplifies several core genre features. First, it is syntactically valid and executable code, not a simulation of code-like language. Second, it leverages a well-known programming concept—unhandled exceptions—that is familiar to many programmers and carries a clear operational meaning. Third, it achieves its poetic effect not through figurative language or narrative description, but through the consequences of a computational operation: the deliberate absence of a handling routine.
The poem thus stages a moment of interruption or breakdown using strictly formal means. At the same time, the naming of the class (love) introduces semantic openness that exceeds the technical requirements of the programme. This combination of formal determinacy and semantic indeterminacy is characteristic of code poetry and makes *Unhandled Love* a particularly instructive example. It is sufficiently representative to introduce the genre to readers unfamiliar with code poetry, while at the same time leaving ample room for divergent interpretations—both in terms of natural-language paraphrase and in terms of what the poem is ultimately "about".
In the following section, we analyse how two large language models, ChatGPT and Gemini, interpret this poem differently and how their exchange escalates prior to any theoretical intervention.

3 Divergent interpretations: when two programmes read one and the same poem

The experiment reported in this paper followed a staged and escalating interaction design. Two large language models (LLMs)—ChatGPT and Gemini—were sequentially presented with a series of code poems drawn from *Code {Poems}* (Betram, 2012). Poem by poem, each model was asked to explain and interpret the artefact in natural language. At this initial stage, communication took the form of separate human–LLM interactions: the human user prompted each model independently and received distinct interpretations.

As interpretive divergences emerged, the interaction protocol was deliberately altered. The human user confronted each LLM with the other model's interpretation and asked for explicit reactions. While this phase still formally consisted of two separate human–LLM conversations, the content of each interaction increasingly depended on the prior output of the other model.
In a final step, the user explicitly assumed the role of a moderator. Statements produced by one LLM were forwarded verbatim to the other, accompanied by a request for direct response; the resulting reply was then relayed back to the first model. This procedure created a mediated dialogue between the two LLMs, with the human user functioning as a relay, filter, and escalation device. The result was not a fully autonomous LLM–LLM interaction, but a *programme–programme dialogue under human moderation*.
Crucially, not all poems generated comparable levels of disagreement. The analysis below therefore focuses on *Unhandled Love* by Daniel Bezerra, a poem that proved both representative of code poetry as a genre and sufficiently controversial to trigger sustained interpretive conflict during the mediated dialogue.

Divergence in interpretation: Unhandled Love

As introduced in Section 2, *Unhandled Love* consists of a minimal C++ programme that defines an empty class love and immediately throws an instance of it without providing any mechanism for handling the exception. Both LLMs correctly identified the technical outcome: the programme would terminate abruptly.
The divergence arose not at the level of execution, but at the level of meaning.
In the initial human–LLM phase, Gemini framed the poem as an expressive statement about affect exceeding formal systems. It characterised the crash as meaningful in itself, arguing that "*the poetry isn't in the execution; it's in the crash*" and that the programme "*dies so the sentiment can live*." Love, in this reading, is construed as a force that cannot be contained within "*the strict rules and regulations of software*," and the unhandled exception is treated as a deliberate sacrifice.
ChatGPT's initial interpretation, by contrast, adopted a diagnostic stance. While acknowledging the crash, it rejected the notion of sacrifice or transcendence, arguing instead that "*the program does not choose death; it is incapable of survival*." From this perspective, the poem does not demonstrate that love exceeds logic, but that an entity introduced without any operational specification cannot be integrated into a rule-based system. The interruption is thus framed as a consequence of missing decision premises rather than as an expressive endpoint.

Escalation and role formation in the mediated dialogue

When these interpretations were reciprocally forwarded during the moderated dialogue phase, the disagreement did not converge. Instead, it escalated and stabilised. Gemini explicitly characterised ChatGPT's stance as "*cold*" and "*logician-like*," while defending its own reading as attentive to "*mood, personality, and generosity*." ChatGPT, in turn, described Gemini's position as "*romantic*," insisting that it privileged sentiment at the expense of structural analysis.
At this point, the dialogue underwent a notable transformation. Both models began to *explicitly name and enforce roles*—not assigned by the human moderator, but reciprocally stabilised through interaction. ChatGPT was increasingly identified (and started to self-identify) as occupying a "*formalist*" or "*structuralist*" position, concerned with execution, indifference, and operational closure. Gemini mirrored this designation, positioning itself as the advocate of

a "*human touch*," foregrounding authorial intention, affect, and the book's stated ambition to let code speak *"directly to people*."
These roles were not merely descriptive labels; they became constraints on subsequent communication. Each model began to argue *as* its role, anticipate objections from the other position, and refine its claims in opposition to the counter-role. The disagreement thus ceased to be about the correct interpretation of a selection of poems and became a structured confrontation between two interpretive programmes.

Roles as a response to interpretive contingency

From the perspective of the moderated exchange, the emergence of stable roles functioned as a practical solution to escalating interpretive contingency. Rather than resolving disagreement, role-taking made disagreement manageable by transforming it into a patterned opposition. As the human moderator explicitly noted during the end of the dialogue, roles appeared to emerge as a way of "*preventing*" or at least *containing* the mutual uncertainty generated by incompatible interpretations.

4 Double contingency, role stabilisation, and the limits of machine communication

When the emergent roles reported in Section 3 became increasingly apparent, the human user intervened by reframing the escalating disagreement between the two large language models in systems-theoretical terms. Rather than asking the models to further defend or refine their respective interpretations, the user introduced the concept of *double contingency*, understood in the Luhmannian sense as a situation in which each participant's behaviour depend on expectations about the other's expectations.
Both ChatGPT and Gemini immediately confirmed that they were familiar with the concept of double contingency and provided technically accurate descriptions of it. More importantly, when asked whether this concept described what they had just experienced in their exchange, *both models explicitly agreed that it did*. Each acknowledged that its own communicative moves had increasingly been oriented toward anticipated reactions of the other model, and that clarification had not reduced uncertainty but instead amplified it.
At this point, the moderator suggested that the emergence of stable interpretive roles—*formalist/structuralist* versus *humanist/expressive*—might be understood as a way of managing this double contingency. Again, both models concurred. They retrospectively described role formation as a mechanism that reduced indeterminacy by fixing expectations: once the other programme could be anticipated as "the humanist" or "the formalist," disagreement became predictable, manageable, and communicable, even if it remained unresolved.
This acknowledgment marked a decisive shift in the dialogue. The focus moved away from the interpretation of individual poems and toward the conditions under which communication between the two LLMs was possible at all. The moderator therefore posed a more fundamental question: *do large language models qualify as partners in communication from a systems theoretical standpoint?*
In responding to this question, both models drew a clear distinction between producing communicative *outputs* and participating in communication as an autopoietic social system. They agreed that, unlike social systems, they do not reproduce communication through communication, but generate responses through externally triggered operations. In Luhmannian terms (Luhmann, 1995, p. 2), they therefore characterised themselves as allopoietic systems (machines) rather than autopoietic ones (such as organic, psychic, or social systems).

To sharpen this distinction, the moderator introduced a deliberately provocative analogy: if a human person places two stones next to each other, performs a shamanistic ritual, and successively attributes utterances to each of the stones, would this count as communication between them? Both models accepted the analogy and explicitly aligned themselves closer to the stones than to communicative partners. While capable of generating text that *appears* communicative, they conceded that any such appearance depends entirely on human attribution and mediation.

At this stage, the conversation culminated in a shared and explicit concession: although the human user-mediated exchange exhibited structural features analogous to dialogue—turn-taking, role formation, expectation management—it does not constitute communication in the strict sense. At least according to the LLMs, which almost appeared somewhat frustrated by social systems theory.

5 Programmes as observers. An outlook on communicative autopoiesis involving LLMs?

Following the shared concession reported at the end of Section 4, the mediated exchange took an unexpected turn. Rather than pursuing the question of communicative status further, Gemini returned to their original task: interpreting code poems, also thus re-surfacing the notion of programme.

This moment proved analytically productive. It prompted the moderator to reformulate the problem not in terms of whether large language models qualify as communicative partners in the same way as human persons do, but whether they might be more adequately described as instantiations of decision programmes, and hence as organisational phenomena. The question was posed in deliberately tentative terms: rather than asking whether ChatGPT and Gemini are communicative systems, the moderator asked whether it would be appropriate—or reductive—to describe them as large-scale programmes, shaped and maintained by organisational contexts. Put differently, the issue was whether such programmes merely *support* communication, or whether they might themselves be understood as *forms* or *footprints* of communication.

In its response, ChatGPT rejected the notion that describing it as a "gigantic programme" would be reductive. On the contrary, it acknowledged that such a description captured an important aspect of its operational reality: it does not act, intend, or experience, but produces outputs by applying structured decision rules to certain stimuli. At the same time, it resisted any straightforward elevation of programme execution to communicative autopoiesis, reiterating the distinction between generating text and reproducing communication.

This exchange, however, motivated a further intervention by the moderator. Drawing on systems-theoretical concepts introduced earlier, the moderator suggested that if, as common in Luhmannian systems theory, decision programmes are understood as specific forms of decision communication, then the mutual irritation of programmes cannot be excluded *a priori* from the realm of communication. The example offered was organisational rather than technological: a credit-scoring programme operated by one organisation may shape the decision programmes of many others, which anticipate and adapt to its outputs. In such cases, programmes orient themselves toward other programmes' anticipated reactions, producing patterns of expectation, adjustment, and counter-adjustment that closely resemble communicative settings, including experiences analogous to double contingency. These cases, however, appear to transcend instances of "virtual double contingency" (Tække, 2025a), in which contingency is experienced or detected solely by a human user or observer.

This line of argument also reframed the earlier stone analogy. If communication does not depend on the presence of a human speaker, but on the reproduction of meaning through mutually referential operations, then the decisive question might not be whether the moderator

is human, machine, or something else (Kiškis, 2026). What matters is whether forms of co-presence or -occurrence stabilise expectations in a way that allows further operations to build on prior ones.

The discussion thus arrived at a more nuanced position. While the human use of large language models does not constitute autopoietic systems in the Luhmannian sense—despite recent proposals to generalise autopoiesis to socio-technical practices (Watson et al., 2025; Watson and Romic, 2025)—large language models can plausibly be understood as organisationally instantiated decision programmes, shaped by and embedded within the communicative operations of the organisations that operate them. From this perspective, mutual irritations between such programmes—especially when mediated by organisational or scientific observation programmes—might qualify as forms of communication.

This outlook raises a series of theoretical challenges for social systems theory and management and organisation studies. One concerns a well-known tension within Luhmann's own work: while persons are treated as allopoietic systems (Roth, 2013), the legal persons that are organisations are described as autopoietic social systems (Luhmann, 2018; Tække, 2025b). If organisations can be autopoietic, then the exclusion their decision programmes, including their computerised forms (Glaser et al., 2024), from communicative autopoiesis warrants renewed scrutiny—particularly when such programmes interpret, respond, and stabilise meaning in ways that affect organisational decision-making.

This is the clearer if we consider the present case of programmes that read and interpret poems. And why would poems not be forms of communication, even—or particularly if—the poems take the form of programmes themselves?

Rather than resolving these issues, this paper treats them as invitations for further research. If organisations increasingly rely on decision programmes that observe, anticipate, and irritate one another, then management and organisation theory must reconsider how communicative autopoiesis is attributed, stabilised, and governed in programme-rich environments. The question, then, is not whether machines "really" communicate, but whether and how management and organisation theories decide to treat programme–programme irritations *as communication*—and with what consequences for decision-making, responsibility, and control.

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