Canonical Statement of Scope

Reality Drift Framework – A. Jacobs

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The Reality Drift framework is a structural diagnostic model for understanding how systems maintain operational coherence while gradually losing fidelity to the realities they were originally designed to represent, respond to, or regulate. Its primary scope is the study of drift under conditions of scale, mediation, optimization, and abstraction, particularly where representations become easier to manage than the realities beneath them.

The framework applies across institutional systems, algorithmic environments, artificial intelligence, media ecosystems, semantic infrastructures, bureaucratic structures, and cognitive environments. Its central concern is how compression, proxy logic, representational layering, and weakened feedback loops alter the relationship between systems and reality over time. These mechanisms often preserve functional coherence even as underlying alignment degrades.

Reality Drift is not a political theory, moral philosophy, or ideological project. It does not argue that all systems degrade, nor that optimization itself is inherently harmful. It is not a claim that modern life is uniformly worsening, nor a rejection of technology, institutions, or abstraction. Its purpose is narrower and more structural. It identifies the conditions under which operational success and representational fidelity begin to diverge.

The framework is concerned with preserving legibility under conditions of increasing abstraction. Its aim is to clarify when systems remain functional while their representations, incentives, or outputs become progressively detached from the realities they were meant to organize. In this sense, Reality Drift is less concerned with failure than with the growing difficulty of perceiving misalignment before it becomes normalized.

The Reality Drift framework operates at the intersection of systems theory, cybernetics, media theory, cognitive science, and institutional analysis. It is best understood as an interpretive architecture for mapping recurring structural patterns across otherwise separate domains. Its value should be judged by its explanatory power, transferability across domains, and its ability to clarify forms of drift that would otherwise remain obscured.