

Canonical Timeline

Development of the Reality Drift Framework – A. Jacobs

Status: Canonical

Version: v1.0

Issued: June 2026

The Reality Drift framework emerged through a multi-year process of inquiry, comparison, and refinement. Its earliest roots appeared in private writing, structural notes, and fragmented conceptual work before gradually consolidating into a broader framework for understanding how systems can maintain coherence while losing fidelity to the realities they were designed to track. What began as a loose inquiry into mediation, cognition, institutional abstraction, and the growing sense of unreality in modern systems eventually formalized into a more stable structural model for diagnosing drift across multiple domains.

The earliest identifiable phase of development, spanning roughly 2022 into early 2024, centered on foundational questions of representation, perception, institutional logic, and the relationship between symbolic systems and lived reality. During this period, much of the work remained informal and distributed across notebooks, private writing, fragmented essays, and adjacent writing projects rather than existing as a unified public framework. The core intuition began to form that many modern systems do not fail outright, but remain operational even as they become progressively misaligned with the realities they were designed to track.

By mid-2024, this intuition expanded into a broader comparative inquiry. Patterns observed across algorithmic media, institutional behavior, information overload, semantic systems, and artificial intelligence began to reveal recurring structural mechanisms. This phase produced the earliest working formulations of compression, proxy substitution, representational layering, and degraded feedback as recurring drivers of drift.

By mid-2025, these previously scattered lines of inquiry began to consolidate into a more public and structured research archive through Substack essays, independent publications, academic repositories, and conceptual briefs. This marked less the beginning of the framework than its first major phase of consolidation, where earlier fragments were gathered, formalized, and made legible as part of a larger developing system.

Throughout late 2025, the framework entered a more active developmental phase. The term Reality Drift stabilized as the central organizing concept, alongside related constructs including Synthetic Realness, Filter Fatigue, and the Optimization Trap. This period produced a growing body of essays, visual explainers, conceptual maps, and working documents used to stress-test and refine the framework's internal structure.

The publication of *The Age of Drift* in 2025 should be understood as part of this developmental process. It consolidated fragments, notes, and working intuitions that had accumulated across earlier writing and private inquiry throughout the preceding years. Rather than presenting a finalized

framework, it preserves a provisional stage of conceptual formation before many of the central distinctions had fully stabilized.

By 2026, the framework entered a refinement and expansion phase. Earlier concepts were clarified, reorganized, and linked into a more coherent internal structure. New emphasis was placed on semantic systems, retrieval fidelity, and representational integrity, leading to the development of the Semantic Fidelity layer as an extension of the original framework.

As of mid-2026, the Reality Drift framework exists as a layered ecosystem of canonical texts, visual explainers, archival essays, recovered developmental materials, and cross-domain applications. Canonical documents represent the most stable formulations of the framework, while earlier materials remain public as part of its developmental history. The framework remains open-ended, with active inquiry continuing at the boundaries of artificial intelligence, institutional complexity, and cognitive environments.