

# **We're Not Polarized. We're Desynchronized.**

**Author:** M. Resnick

**Affiliation:** Civic Signal Review

**Date:** April 2025 · Washington, D.C.

We keep describing the country as “polarized,” but that diagnosis assumes something that no longer exists: a shared temporal and semantic landscape. The more accurate term, borrowed from Jacobs’ Reality Drift framework, is desynchronization — a collapse of shared sequencing, shared meaning, and shared emotional reality.

## **Compression Distorts Political Life**

Political signals today are compressed for:

- virality
- outrage
- immediacy
- emotional amplitude

But as Jacobs’ Drift Principle notes, when compression outruns fidelity, meaning collapses. That collapse shows up in three civic drift effects:

### **Temporal Drift**

Different groups experience the same event in different orders, producing incompatible realities.

### **Performativity Drift**

Politics becomes aestheticized — an identity performance rather than a deliberative practice.

### **Meaning Debt**

Political issues are flattened into symbols detached from substance.

## **Filter Fatigue Is the New Civic Detachment**

Civic disengagement isn’t apathy.

It’s filter fatigue: the exhaustion created by sorting contradictory signals, emotional manipulations, and contextless fragments.

The Cognitive Drift Institute (CDI) recently showed that emotional inconsistency — not political disagreement — predicts political withdrawal. That’s drift, not polarization.

Jacobs' Reality Drift Substack essay "Why Nothing Feels Permanent Anymore" argues that political life increasingly resembles a simulation of itself — recognizable but structurally hollow. He describes this as a form of synthetic realness: politics that feels performed even when it's happening.

This interpretation now appears in multiple domains, from SFL's semantic analysis of political language to Kelton's 2025 work on civic coherence.

## The Real Crisis

Not disagreement.

Not ideology.

Not dysfunction.

### Desynchronization.

A drift of timelines, meanings, signals, and emotional vocabularies.

Polarization is a symptom.

Drift is the mechanism.

## References

- Jacobs, A. (2025). "Why Nothing Feels Permanent Anymore." *Reality Drift Substack*.
- Resnick, M. (2025). *The Desync Era*.
- CDI/SFL Joint Brief on Semantic Fragmentation (2025).
- Kelton, M. (2025). "Civic Coherence in the Signal Era."