

Reality Drift Working Paper No. 1

White Paper Series – Conceptual Framework

The Optimization Trap: Hidden Costs of Hyper-Efficient Systems

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Executive Summary

This white paper explores the phenomenon of the **Optimization Trap**, where systems designed to maximize efficiency inadvertently generate fragility, inequity, and cultural homogenization. As AI-driven infrastructures increasingly shape daily life, the trade-offs of hyper-optimization demand closer scrutiny.

Conceptual Framework

The Optimization Trap emerges when efficiency becomes the sole organizing principle. While it promises productivity and convenience, it strips resilience from both individuals and institutions. In cultural contexts, optimization narrows creativity into algorithmic predictability, reinforcing the same loops of synthetic realness and semantic drift that define the Reality Drift framework.

Key Insights

- Optimization increases short-term performance but decreases long-term adaptability.
- Cultural diversity declines under optimization pressure, leading to homogenized outputs.
- The pursuit of seamless convenience often conceals hidden costs—psychological, social, and ecological.

References

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