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Value, Thresholds, and the Ontology of Emergent Economies

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Work and Emergence Economy

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Value, Thresholds, and the Ontology of Emergent Economies

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Abstract

This volume forms the starting point of **Section V – Work and Emergence Economy**, which examines work not primarily as an economic category, but as a structural condition of world-formation. The contributions assembled here investigate the relation between the emergence of new realities and the conditions under which these realities become socially stabilised as value. In doing so, they shift the analytical focus from questions of distribution and productivity toward the deeper mechanisms that determine which forms of work are able to appear, persist, and shape the world.

The present volume brings together five contributions that pursue a shared theoretical question: under what conditions do new forms of reality emerge, and under what conditions can these forms become stabilised as socially recognised value. The point of departure is the observation that modern societies, despite high levels of productivity, innovation, and complexity, increasingly confront phenomena of structural invisibility. Forms of work, knowledge, care, ecological regeneration, and social stabilisation exert real and system-sustaining effects, yet often fail to appear as economic value.

To analyse this problem, the contributions develop a threshold model of social reality. At the centre of this model stand two interrelated concepts: the **Diversity Threshold (D)** as the threshold of forced emergence and the **Value Threshold (T)** as the threshold of societal stabilisation and visibility. While the Diversity Threshold designates the point at which systems must generate new forms due to increasing incommensurability, the Value Threshold describes the conditions under which these emergent forms can appear as durable and socially stabilised realities.

The difference between these two thresholds leads to a structural diagnosis of contemporary societies. Many forms of real and effective work—such as care work, ecological regeneration, cultural practice, artistic research, or neurodivergent modes of problem-processing—frequently operate above the threshold of emergence, yet remain below the threshold of societal stabilisation. The result is a condition in which reality is continuously produced without becoming durably recognised as value.

On this basis, the contributions develop an alternative perspective on economy and social value formation. Economy appears not primarily as a system of resource allocation, but as a **threshold regime** that determines which forms of emergent reality are stabilised and which remain invisible. The distinction between **primary economy** (world-sustaining work) and **secondary economy** (value-extractive organisation), together with the concept of the **Unfolding Gap**, describes concrete mechanisms through which this structural asymmetry manifests itself in everyday social life.

The volume therefore does not present a programme of economic reform, but contributes to an ontologically grounded theory of work, value, and social reality. It proposes a research programme in which emergence, stabilisation, and visibility are not treated as separate phenomena, but as interrelated transitions within complex social systems.

Keywords: emergence economy, value threshold, diversity threshold, emergence theory, threshold models in complex systems, ontology of value, work and emergence, invisible work, care economy, universal care income, UCI, primary economy, secondary economy, unfolding gap, social emergence, complexity economics, world-formation theory, emergence and value creation, ontology of labour, economic visibility, structural invisibility of work, regenerative economy, care work economics, ecological regeneration and value, diversity and emergence, complex adaptive systems, social complexity, post-growth economics, degrowth theory, commons economics, epistemic emergence, neurodivergent cognition and innovation, world-forming work, social systems theory, complexity and economic value, emergence and social reality, ontological economics, alternative economic theory

Contents

Section Introduction

Section V – Work and Emergence Economy

The present section examines work not primarily as an economic category, but as a fundamental condition of societal world-formation. Its point of departure is the observation that modern societies increasingly produce realities whose effects can no longer be reliably

stabilised within existing categories of value, productivity, and income. Forms of work that sustain social cohesion, ecological regeneration, cultural orientation, or epistemic innovation frequently remain structurally invisible or appear only in distorted form within prevailing value regimes.

To analyse this problem, Section V develops an ontologically expanded perspective on economy and work. Rather than focusing solely on questions of distribution, it shifts attention to the conditions under which new realities emerge, become stabilised, or disappear from social visibility.

The four volumes of the section pursue this question from different but closely connected perspectives. The first volume develops, through the concepts of the Diversity Threshold and the Value Threshold, a threshold model of emergent systems and analyses the structural decoupling of emergence and societal stabilisation. The second volume examines work as a form of world-binding and relational agency, asking which forms of human labour cannot in principle be replaced by functional simulation. The third volume introduces, through the concept of Eigenzeit, an ontological dimension of decision, responsibility, and poverty that remains largely invisible within dominant models of time in modern societies. The concluding volume draws institutional consequences from these analyses and discusses Universal Care Income as an infrastructural condition under which world-forming work can exist in complex societies.

Taken together, the section develops a theory of the Emergence Economy in which work, value, and societal reality appear not as separate domains, but as interrelated transitions between emergence, stabilisation, and institutional organisation.

Introduction

Modern societies increasingly produce reality without being able to stabilise that reality in durable form. This contradiction becomes particularly visible in domains that are essential for the continuation of society itself – care work, ecological regeneration, cultural practice, social cohesion, artistic research, or complex forms of problem-processing. These activities exert real, system-sustaining effects and often shape the future capacity of societies, yet they frequently fail to appear as value. They remain precarious, invisible, or recognised only in distorted form. The question therefore concerns not only how value is distributed, but more fundamentally under what conditions reality itself can appear as a socially stabilised form.

The five contributions collected in this volume address this problem from a shared theoretical perspective. They approach economy not primarily as a system of allocating scarce resources, but as a structural regime of thresholds, transitions, and selection mechanisms. At the centre of the argument lies the thesis that contemporary societies do not suffer from a lack of work or productivity, but from a systematic decoupling of emergence and stabilisation. New forms of

reality continuously arise, yet they frequently fail to cross those thresholds that would allow them to become socially visible, durable, and value-bearing.

To analyse this problem, two closely related threshold concepts are introduced. The **Diversity Threshold** designates the point at which systems, due to increasing incommensurability, tension, and structural overload, are forced to generate new forms. Emergence in this sense does not appear as voluntary innovation or creative surplus, but as a necessary response to conditions in which existing forms can no longer sustain the complexity of reality. The **Value Threshold**, by contrast, describes the threshold at which emergent forms become socially stabilised: visible, durable, transferable, and recognisable as value. Only in the relation between these two thresholds does it become possible to understand why societies can be simultaneously highly productive and structurally impoverished.

From this perspective, contemporary societies exhibit a structural divergence between emergence and stabilisation. Many forms of world-sustaining work operate above the threshold of emergence, yet remain below the threshold of social stabilisation. This condition affects not only traditionally invisible forms of work such as care, maintenance, or regeneration, but also cultural, epistemic, and neurodivergent forms of working whose real effectiveness often lies precisely in their resistance to standardised formats of visibility, scalability, and institutional translation. Poverty, precarity, exhaustion, and innovation blockages appear in this framework not as separate crises, but as expressions of the same structural misalignment.

The individual contributions approach this problem from complementary angles. **The Diversity Threshold** develops the ontological basis of the emergence threshold and examines the conditions under which systems generate new reality. **The Value Threshold** investigates the conditions under which emergent reality can appear as value and analyses capitalism as a regime of selective visibility. **Emergence Economy** connects these two threshold models and describes their structural decoupling as a central problem of contemporary societies. **Primary and Secondary Economy** translates this threshold logic into an economic framework by redefining the relation between world-sustaining work and value-extractive organisation. **The Unfolding Gap** finally analyses the structural gap between the real effectiveness of work and its economic recognition, showing how this asymmetry unfolds across temporal, relational, epistemic, and regenerative dimensions.

Section V, within which this volume is situated, fundamentally shifts the perspective on work. Work is not primarily approached as a market performance, employment relation, or productivity measure, but as a condition of social world-formation. The central question therefore becomes not only which forms of work are remunerated, but which forms of work generate, stabilise, or regenerate the world in the first place – and which societal structures determine whether this reality is permitted to appear. In this way, work is removed from the narrow horizon of wage and market logic and situated within a broader framework of emergence, value formation, and social reality.

The volume should therefore not be understood primarily as a programme of economic reform, but as a contribution to an ontologically grounded theory of work, value, and social reality. Its aim is to make visible those transitions at which reality emerges but is not stabilised; where work exerts effect but does not appear; and where social systems undermine their own future capacity by failing to stabilise precisely those forms of emergence upon which they depend. The

contributions assembled here thus propose a research programme that treats visibility, stabilisation, and value not as given quantities, but as contested thresholds within complex social systems.

The Diversity Threshold – A Threshold Model of Emergent Systems

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops, through the concept of the diversity threshold, a threshold model that explains when systems become emergent and when they merely reproduce. While evolution and complexity theory describe diversity as an outcome, it is shown here: diversity is the cause of emergence, provided it appears above a critical folding degree. Diversity is not understood as the number of elements, but as the topology of a possibility space capable of carrying incommensurable modes simultaneously.
Above this threshold, systems generate new reality (innovation, resilience, self-organisation). Below it arises efficiency without future, growth without world, and ultimately collapse as the consequence of low folding. Poverty, democratic stagnation and knowledge depletion thus become interpretable as symptoms of a subcritical diversity state.
The diversity threshold therefore offers a meta-model that does not replace evolution, ecology, complexity or diversity studies, but superordinates them by describing the mechanism through which emergence arises. The theory defines diversity as a physical condition for future capability and concludes with the argument that global crises do not indicate a lack of resources, but a lack of folding capacity — and thus of world formation.

1. Introduction – The Diversity Threshold as a Threshold Model of Emergent Systems

Complex systems empirically show that diversity does not merely increase variation, but above a certain point generates new reality. Ecological resilience, cultural innovation, democratic stability, cognitive creativity – they do not arise linearly with increasing variety, but abruptly once a critical threshold is reached. This paper formulates this threshold as the diversity threshold: the point at which a system can carry more difference than it can neutralise – and thereby produces emergence instead of extending the past.
The theory does not claim to evaluate diversity as a moral good, but as an ontological condition of future. Below the threshold, a system remains efficient, functional and capable of growth –

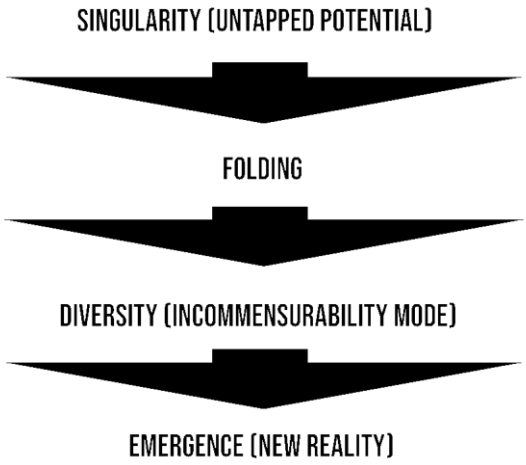
yet reproductive. Above it, difference becomes creatively usable, future arises. Science, democracy, economy and cognitive processes are therefore no longer progress machines, but folding processes in which future emerges only when incommensurability is sustained.
The diversity threshold asserts three principles:

1. Diversity is the cause, not the effect of emergence.
2. Systems possess a minimal folding degree, below which only reproduction is possible.
3. Above the threshold, difference becomes a world-generator rather than a disturbance.

2. Ontological Background – Singularity, Folding, Diversity

Diversity does not begin with plurality, but with singularity as unfolded possibility. Singularity denotes not a point, but a state of undirected potentiality – world before form. Only folding generates inside/outside, object/environment, difference. A system does not become diverse by adding elements, but by the emergence of incommensurable modes that coexist relationally. Diversity is therefore not number, but the topology of a field of possibility. Every folding simultaneously produces emergence and loss: the new becomes real by limiting infinity. Below the diversity threshold, a system can only integrate, smooth, or compensate difference. Above it, difference becomes productive tension that brings forth new categories, relations and reality.
Diversity is not multiplicity *in* the world –
diversity is the mechanism through which world comes into being.

Graphic 1 – "Folding from Singularity into Diversity" (Ontological Base Schema)



Definition: Folding
Folding denotes the transformation of an unfolded field of possibility into differentiated structure — physically (energy gradient), topologically (space-division), epistemically (non-translatability) and socially (coexistence of incommensurable modes). Folding is therefore a mechanism, not a metaphor.

3. The Diversity Threshold – Definition & Mechanism

The diversity threshold denotes the minimal folding degree of a system from which difference is no longer absorbed or harmonised, but develops productive tension. Diversity here does not mean an additive variety of elements, but the coexistence of incommensurable modes that remain relationally connected. Only when a system can sustain this tension does emergence arise – new form, new category, new reality.

Below the threshold:
Difference is integrated, smoothed, or devalued → reproduction.

Above the threshold:
Difference persists and generates new form → emergence.

3.1 Definition of the Threshold Model

Emergence = function of divergence × relatedness × tension-bearing capacity.
Only systems that do not eliminate incommensurable differences, but carry them, can generate structural transformation. Neither harmony nor fragmentation produces future – only coupled incompatibility.

In this model, *relatedness* does not denote similarity, but structural non-separability under functional incommensurability. Two modes are related when they are not translatable into one another, yet must be held within the same system-body.
Relatedness therefore does not mean proximity of properties, but the shared binding to a possibility space *despite* incompatibility.

⇨ Core formula of the diversity threshold (signifying representation)

EMERGENCE = FOLDING { INCOMMENSURABILITY × RELATEDNESS × TENSION CAPACITY }

DIVERSITY ≠ QUANTITY
DIVERSITY = MODALITY DIFFERENCE WITHOUT RESOLUTION
THRESHOLD = FOLDING DEGREE > CRITICAL MARK

Theory Box: What Makes This Definition of Diversity Fundamentally New

Diversity in this model is not quantity.
Not variation.
Not difference.

Diversity = load-bearing incom-mensurability.

A system is diverse when it contains modes that:

1. are not translatable into one another (no shared metric),
2. yet must coexist in the same space (relatedness instead of separation),
3. and whose difference cannot be resolved (tension remains present).

Thus, diversity begins only *beyond* mere difference.

Diversity generates energy not through colourfulness,
but through the proximity of the incompatible.
Only when a system carries incommensurable forms without smoothing them does folding pressure arise.
This pressure must be released — and its release is called:

Emergence.

Not as possibility, but as necessary structural response.

→ Difference generates variation.
→ Incommensurability generates world.

**What is new in this model is therefore not that diversity favours emergence,
but that it forces emergence — provided it is held load-bearing.
Diversity here is not a sum, but a topology of tension,
and emergence is not chance, but the consequence of a folding degree.**

3.2 Prototypical Operationalisation of the Diversity Threshold

The theory remains pre-empirical, but is operationalisable.
A system approaches the threshold when the following variables rise simultaneously:
• Incommensurable modes (not integrable, not substitutable)
• Conflict-bearing capacity (tension holds without collapsing)
• Redundancy instead of efficiency (over-function as carrier of variation)
• Novelty production (categories, forms, concepts arise)

Diversity = mode difference × tension capacity × novelty rate
Not quantity → but folding degree.

**Diversity = Incommensurability × Relatedness × Tension Capacity
Folding Degree = Intensity of this coupling
Diversity Threshold = Critical folding degree > X
Emergence = New form forced by tension**

3.2a Operationalisation Table — Empirical Measurement Fields

Domain of Application	Operationalisable Indicator	Possible Measurement Form	Expectation Above the Threshold
Society	Number of incommensurable positions under stable coexistence	Conflict longevity, polycentrism	Structural transformation instead of mere discourse shift
Biology / Evolution	Genetic divergence with reproductive capability	Heterozygosity, number of ecological niches	Speciation, morphological emergence
AI & Machine Systems	Ensemble divergence with functional stability	Divergence between models on the same task	Qualitatively new strategies/features
Economy	Innovation despite redundancy cost	Innovation rate vs. efficiency index	New markets, new modes of production
Consciousness / Cognition	Simultaneous incommensurable perspectives	Meta-perception, self/other-split	Insight, creativity, categorical leap

This table does not replace measurement —
it makes measurement possible in the first place and defines the criteria by which the theory may fail or be confirmed.

A system with high mode difference, resonance & tension — but without new form — would constitute a counterexample.

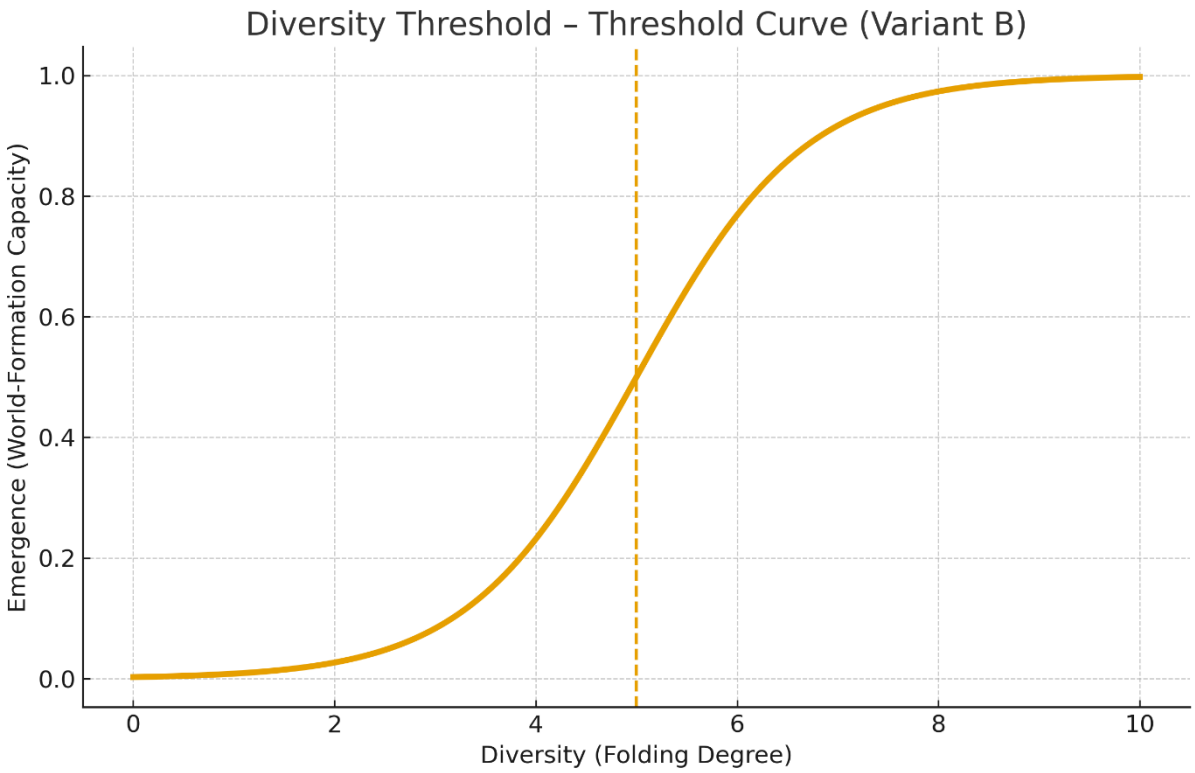
3.3 Specification of Falsifiability

A system falsifies the theory only if it:

1. carries incommensurable modes,
2. maintains relatedness & resonance,
3. does not dissolve tension,
4. and nevertheless produces no emergence.

Additive multiplicity without emergence is not a counterexample, since it does not constitute diversity in the sense of the model.
Emergence is not increase, but the consequence of the gap.
Tension forces form.
And only form generates world.

Graphic 2 – "The Diversity Threshold as Boundary" (Core Figure)



In future work, the folding degree may be empirically operationalised — for example through structural diversity, redundancy, conflict-bearing capacity or the number of incommensurable modes. The present paper, however, addresses primarily the generative mechanism, not its measurement methods.

3.4 Mechanism: From Incommensurability to New Form

The analogy to physics here is structural, not metric:
it concerns dissipation of tension, not energy units.
Thermodynamic terms therefore serve as form principles – not as measurement values.

Diversity is not understood here as variation, but as load-bearing non-translatability.
When two modes exist in the same system but cannot be mapped into one another, a gap arises — an area without shared metric or full mediation.
This gap generates tension, because the possibility space becomes larger than its form.

A system under pressure may either:

1. dissolve tension → reproduction (below the threshold)
2. hold it → folding energy accumulates
3. release it → emergence as the pathway of solution

Tension is not discharged — it shapes.
Emergence is therefore not chance, but the forced reaction of a system
that cannot eliminate incommensurability and yet remains coherent.

The solution is feedback resonance:
GAP → TENSION → FOLDING → NEW FORM

Singularity generates reality.

It is not variety that produces world —
it is the incompatibility of the possible.

Folding is not a metaphor, but a topological operator.
Just as in origami a two-dimensional sheet becomes a three-dimensional body through folding, so incommensurability in a system generates a new space.

Emergence here does not mean addition, but dimensional expansion through tension.
A line becomes surface,
a surface becomes volume,
a mode becomes world.

Topologically this means:
Diversity = non-mappability + spatial coupling.
Emergence is the moment in which a new form becomes not derivable, but necessary.

MNO–layer (pre-ontic)
└── Singularity (unfolded)

Epistemic gap + incommensurability
└── Tension / folding pressure

Diversity Threshold (critical topology)
└── Folding degree > X

Emergence
└── New form / new category / world formation

Chapter 4 – Society Below the Threshold (with Case Example)

Subcritical systems can store diversity but cannot fold it.
The incompatible is harmonised, integrated or devalued.
Result: stability without future.
Below the threshold, difference is processed like a waste stream, not like an energy source.

Characteristics

Condition	**Effect**
Conflict → resolution	no tension storage → no emergence pressure
Efficiency > redundancy	carriers of variation disappear
Consensus > coexistence	difference is homogenised
Innovation = variation of the old	no category formation

Case Study 1: Late Empires (Rome, China, Ottoman Empire)

All three systems achieved high cultural multiplicity —
yet the modes were not incommensurable, but homogenised through bureaucracy and religion.

Symptoms of a subcritical system:

Factor	Observation
Multiplicity yes — diversity no	difference absorbed into administrative logic
Efficiency dominant	no redundancy → no variation carriers
Conflict → suppression/integration	no tension-bearing capability
Result	expansion > emergence → collapse after overstretch

Thus it becomes clear:

Quantity does not substitute for folding degree.
World emerges not from variety, but from preserved differential tension.

Case Study 2: Big Tech 2015–2023 (Google/Meta/Amazon)

Thousands of teams, cultures, ways of thinking — and yet reproduction instead of emergence:
• Innovation ≠ new form, but efficiency optimisation
• AI development = scaling, not modality break
• internal tension → resolved through management, not held

High variety, low emergence.
A pattern of a system below the threshold, despite magnitude.

Graphic 3 – "Society Below / Above the Threshold" (Application Matrix)

BELOW THE THRESHOLD → ABOVE THE THRESHOLD

Reproduction → Emergence

Growth of the Same → New Growth

Democracy = Administration → Democracy = Coexistence

Labour = Extraction → Labour = World-Formation

ND = Disruption → ND = Sensory Intelligence

AI amplifies old logic → AI amplifies plurality

Chapter 5 — Transition Value / Critical Edge (revised)

Between subcritical and supercritical state there exists a tipping range in which systems may reorganise or collapse. This threshold space is not stable, but metastable — like a material before phase transition.
The decisive question is not how much variety,
but how incomparable the modes are — and how load-bearing their relation remains.
Crisis is not failure — but the prelude to emergence.

Properties of the transition zone

• increased tension, but no new-form output yet

• old order becomes brittle, the new is not yet real

• systems oscillate between stagnation and breakthrough

• conflicts intensify instead of disappearing

In this zone it is decided whether folding succeeds —
or whether the system falls back into harmony and reproduction.
The critical zone is not comfortable.
But it is the only place where future comes into being.

Chapter 6 — Society Above the Threshold

Above the threshold, difference remains irreducible and resonant.
It is not harmony that generates future, but an unresolvable contradiction under relatedness.
Emergence here is not may, but must.

Mechanism

1. Incommensurability remains intact
2. Relatedness binding stabilises instability
3. Tension accumulates
4. Energy must be discharged
5. Discharge occurs through new form

Case Study 1: Evolutionary Leap – Cambrian Explosion
400 million years of slow variation.

Then 20 million years of explosive emergence of new morphological classes.
Why?

Before the leap	After crossing the threshold
Variation present	Modes incommensurable
Energy flows stable	Energy gradient sharply increasing
No tension accumulation	Tension > ontic shift (pressure of deformation in the field)
Little emergence	Massive emergence of new body plans

The Cambrian leap is not accident, but classical MNO-transition:

Divergence + resonance + tension = reality folding.

Case Study 2: European Modernity 1500–1900

Catastrophic conflict tensions:

Reformation, Counter-Reformation, Enlightenment, industrialisation, nation-states, class struggle.
This system could have collapsed —
yet the tension was not dissolved, but folded:

Energy form	Emergence outcome
religious incommensurability	secularisation as new category
class antagonism	labour movement, welfare state
plurality of knowledge	science as epistemic form-building
political instability	parliamentary democracy

Europe was not peaceful —
Europe was above the threshold.
And therefore it generated world.

Case Study 3: Diversity Below the Threshold → Stagnation

Large language models with similar training bases show high variation,
but no emergent new form when mode diversity is low.
Differences add → but do not fold.
The system remains at a synthetic level.
Diversity without incommensurability is decoration, not generator.

Case Study 4: Diversity Above the Threshold → New Capability

Multi-modal systems (text+image+audio+motorics) generate abilities
that were present in none of the individual channels — over-modal emergence.
Not the number of parameters, but the quality of incompatibility
produces new form (e.g. sensory-spatial transfer capability).
Here the system surpasses the diversity threshold.

Chapter 7 — Role of Conflict and Contradiction

Conflict is not symptom, but energy form.
A system that truly carries difference must not dissolve contradiction, but hold it.
Only in sustained conflict does folding pressure arise that forces emergence.
Harmony is stable — but not productive.
Conflict is unstable — but generative.

Below the threshold
• conflict = disturbance → neutralised
• peace = goal → future remains past

Above the threshold
• conflict = structural tension → sustained
• future = result of this tension

Emergence is therefore not the product of consensus,
but the result of charged non-agreement.

Chapter 8 — Diversity as World-Formation Mechanism

Diversity is not a state, but a process that produces world.
Not majority, not tolerance, not identity politics —
but holding incommensurable modes in relation.

World arises when three conditions are fulfilled simultaneously:

1. difference is not resolvable (incommensurability)
2. relation does not tear (relatedness)
3. energy flows through difference (tension/potential gradient)

Diversity is the infrastructure of the future.
It is not a moral demand, but a functional condition for emergence.
A system without genuine mode-difference may be efficient —
but it cannot be intelligent.

Chapter 9 — Emergence as Necessary Consequence

Above the diversity threshold, emergence arises not by chance,
but deterministically as a consequence of tension-energy.

Emergence = form-imperative + non-resolvability + relatedness-binding

When difference cannot be harmonised, new form must arise
to discharge tension-energy.
This is not creativity, but physics.

• below the threshold → energy release through smoothing
• above the threshold → energy release through restructuring

Emergence is the system's response to incompatibility.
This explains why evolution, democratic transition, consciousness and culture exhibit threshold behaviour rather than linear quantity dynamics.

Chapter 10 — Science Below and Above the Threshold
Science can exist in two modes:

Below the threshold — reproductive science
• describes world instead of generating it
• abstracts instead of folding
• optimises models instead of breaking them
• knowledge grows as stock, not as reality

This science is useful — but not future-capable.

Above the threshold — emergence-science

• cognition generates reality
• theory is event, not representation
• non-translatability = depth, not defect
• validation = invariance across later measurement formats

Above the threshold, science does not describe —
it makes world.

Just as art is not decoration but a producer of reality,
so theory above the threshold becomes a world-generator.

Chapter 11 — Civilisation at the Threshold

The global situation corresponds to a system in a meta-critical transition zone:
high connectivity, low folding capacity, overload without emergence.

We observe simultaneously:
• increasing information → decreasing orientation
• more voices → no new world
• innovation → without structural transformation

This is not chaos, but reproduction at elevated system temperature.
The planet does not suffer from complexity, but from unfoldability.

Key mechanism:
Global systems expand faster than diversity can be held as form.
Entropy rises — not future.

Indicator level

Global condition	Interpretation in the model
democratic polarisation	tension increase without folding breakthrough
ecological crisis	collapse risk through monoculture-optimisation
mental health crisis	individual carries complexity instead of system
AI acceleration	reproduction, not emergence

Civilisation is subcritical on a global scale.
Technology amplifies this rather than resolving it.

Not every emergence increases the folding capacity of a system.
It is therefore necessary to distinguish between **regenerative emergence**,
which carries new modes and expands possibility,
and **degenerative emergence**,
which does produce new form, but reduces mode-diversity
and may lead to collapse.

Fascism, industrial extermination or ecological overextraction are examples of degenerative emergence —
form-production through tension, but with negative future-resonance.

Chapter 12 — Design Principles of Supercritical Systems

A supercritical society does not arise through reform, but through structural mode-shift:
not better institutions, but plurally load-bearing modality-layers.

Four design rules

1. More layers rather than more participants
   Plurality means mode-difference, not opinion variety.

2. Hold conflict instead of ending it
   Dissent = energy source, not problem.

3. Redundancy over efficiency
   Excess capacity = variation carrier → innovation space.

4. Protect non-translatability
   Coexistence of incommensurable realities → raw material of folding.

Supercritical systems feel less calm, but more intelligent.
Future does not emerge from order,
but from load-bearing non-agreement.

Chapter 13 — Risk and Vulnerability

Above the threshold, vulnerability increases — but so does evolutionary capacity.
Security kills emergence; risk produces it.

Subcritical: stability through control → stagnation.
Supercritical: stability through becoming-capacity → transformation.

System logic
• error = learning mechanism
• failure = reorganisation engine
• uncertainty = reservoir of possibility
• crises = phase transitions, not malfunctions

Only vulnerable systems can have a future.

Chapter 14 — Differentiation / Boundary of the Model

The diversity threshold does not explain diversity,
but emergence *from* diversity.
It stands before evolutionary theory and above diversity studies,
because it describes the mechanism through which new form becomes necessary.

Differences to existing frameworks

Classical Theory	Diversity Threshold
evolution explains variation	explains the emergence of the *possibility* to vary
ecology measures resilience	explains threshold-resilience
complexity describes patterns	explains pattern-formation from tension
diversity-studies negotiate identity	models modality-coexistence

This theory is not a special case —
it is the meta-structural condition of emergence.

The falsification criterion remains unchanged:
a system with genuine incommensurability + relatedness + tension,
***without* emergence → weakens the model.**

Chapter 15 — Conclusion

The diversity threshold describes a boundary of world-formation.
Below: order, efficiency, reproduction.
Above: tension, new form, future.

This theory is not a prediction, but an invitation to test:
• if systems with high folding capacity generate no emergence → revision required.
• if systems form world through tension → model confirmed.

Civilisation today faces not a decision, but a threshold:
We fold — or we repeat.

Future is not a plan, but a system-state.
The diversity threshold makes this state visible, testable, and shapeable.

Chapter 16 — Research Agenda / Open Empirical Programmes

The theory of the diversity threshold is not an endpoint,
but the beginning of a verifiable research programme.

The goal is not to celebrate diversity —
but to make conditions for emergence measurable.

We propose three priority research lines:

16.1 Threshold Determination (Quantifying the Folding Degree)

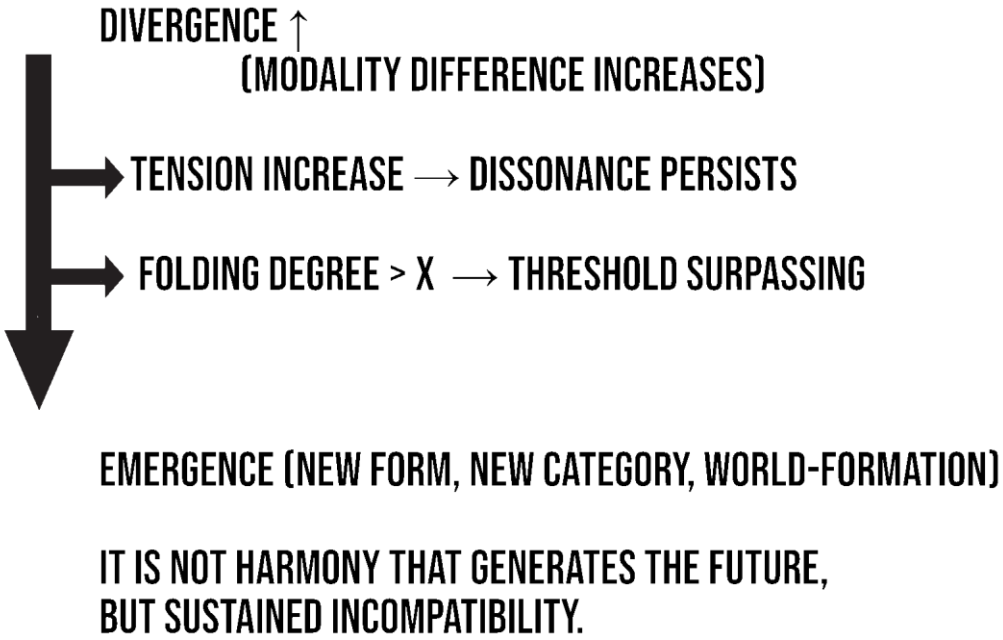
Central question:
How close must a system come to the threshold
before emergence becomes unavoidable?

Operationalisation proposals

Variable	Measurable through
Incommensurability	semantic distance / genetic divergence / model divergence
Tension-bearing capacity	conflict persistence, dissensus lifespan
Novelty rate	category formation / innovation index

Goal:
Development of a scalable Folding Index (FI) →
measurement across time-series and system comparison.

⇨ *Graphic: Emergence cascade beyond the diversity threshold*



16.2 Comparative System Analysis (Cross-Domain Test)

Hypothesis:
If the diversity threshold is real,
biological, political, and technological systems
should exhibit equivalent threshold trajectories.

Research tasks:
• match evolutionary vs. societal transitions
• compare AI models before / after modality break
• cross economic stress-systems with high-divergence systems

Possible publication line:
"Universal threshold effects in emergent systems."

16.3 Supercritical System Design (Experimentalisation)

Goal:
Not only to observe emergence —
but to produce it.

Proposed real-world experiments

Field	Intervention	Expected outcome
AI architecture	enforce multimodal incommensurability	form-push → new solution types
democracy design	dissensus-stable procedures instead of consensus models	new institutional forms
science	connect heterodox research clusters	paradigm new-form instead of optimisation

This would constitute a testable transition from theory → design → emergence.

16.4 Falsification Paths (Risk of Truth)

A theory is only serious if it carries risk.
The diversity threshold would be weakened if:

1. systems with high mode-difference generate no new form
2. efficiency-systems with low diversity produce emergence
3. folding degree does not depend on relatedness

These conditions define scientific points of attack —
not a weakening of the theory,
but its verification architecture.

16.5 Research Aim

Not to predict the future —
but to understand the conditions under which future arises.

The diversity threshold is not a model *of* the world.
It is a model of how world becomes.

Thus the project is not completed —
it begins here.

Appendix A:
Related, but not identical:

Author	Contribution	Difference to this model
Kauffman (1995)	*edge of chaos* as threshold concept	describes zone, not mechanism of world-formation
Bak (1996)	self-organized criticality as tension logic	lacks modality criterion / incomparability dimension
Prigogine (1984)	dissipative structures as order transition	energy-based, not modality-based threshold
Barad (2007)	non-separability as ontological foundation	no folding-threshold or emergent test condition
DeLanda (1997)	morphogenetic historical dynamics	strong mapping, but no universal threshold law
Page (2017)	diversity as performance factor	diversity ≠ incommensurability → below threshold in this sense

Appendix B – Terminological Glossary (DE → EN + Definition)

Deutsch	English (canonical term)	Definition in English (precise formulation)
Inkommensurabilität	**Incommensurability**	Coexistence of modes that share no common metric; translation is impossible without loss.
Verwandtschaft	**Structural Relatedness**	Non-separability of incommensurable modes within one system; shared space, not similarity.
Spannungsfähigkeit	**Tension-Bearing Capacity**	Ability of a system to sustain contradiction without collapse or smoothing.
Diversität (im Modell)	**Diversity (as incommensurability)**	Load-bearing coexistence of incompatible modalities, not variety or quantity.
Faltungsgrad	**Folding Degree**	Intensity of coupling between incommensurable modes; density of differential possibility.
Diversitätsmarke	**Diversity Threshold**	Critical folding degree > X at which tension transitions into emergent form.
Emergenz	**Emergence**	New form that arises as necessary discharge of accumulated tension.
Neuform / Weltbildung	**New Form / World-Formation**	Expansion of ontological space; creation of new categories of being.
regenerative Emergenz	**Regenerative Emergence**	Emergence that increases modality capacity and future potential of the system.

degenerative Emergenz	**Degenerative Emergence**	Emergence that reduces modality scope, heightens collapse risk, and contracts the future.

References:

Speed, T. (2019/2025). Radical Worker: The Fight for Self-Determined Work. ISBN 381926826X.

Speed, T. (2016/2025). The Physics of the Poor: A Neurodivergent Meta-Theory of Consciousness. ISBN-10: 3695191287.

Speed, T. (2025). They Cannot Understand: Why Autism Research Gets It Wrong. ISBN-10: 3695116013.

Complexity, Emergence, Selforganisation

These works delineate the field that the diversity threshold extends and differentiates:

1. **Stuart Kauffman (1995):** ***At Home in the Universe***
   Self-organisation & *edge of chaos* — threshold analogy.
2. **Per Bak (1996):** ***How Nature Works***
   Self-organised criticality — but without the concept of incommensurability.
3. **Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers (1984):** ***Order Out of Chaos***
   Dissipative structures — energy/tension as ordering mechanism.
4. **Geoffrey West (2017):** ***Scale***
   Scaling dynamics, but without diversity-stress as the cause of new form.
5. **Brian Arthur (2009):** ***The Nature of Technology***
   Combinatorial emergence — not yet incommensurability-based.

Ontology, Topology, Folding (direct proximity to MNO)

6. **Karen Barad (2007):** ***Meeting the Universe Halfway***
   Agential realism — non-separability as fundamental principle.
7. **Manuel DeLanda (1997):** ***A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History***
   Morphogenesis through time — mechanistically described.
8. **Gilles Deleuze (1993):** ***The Fold / Le Pli*** **(on Leibniz)**
   Folding as metaphysics — here translated into physical/systemic process.
9. **Gregory Bateson (1972):** ***Steps to an Ecology of Mind***
   Difference as information — here interpreted as incommensurability.

Diversity — classical (relevant for contrast)

10. **Scott E. Page (2017): *The Diversity Bonus***
    Heterogeneity as productive force — but without threshold/folding mechanism.

11. **Elinor Ostrom (1990): *Governing the Commons***
    Models of coexistence — normative-economic, not structural.

12. **Hölldobler & Wilson (1990): *The Ants***
    Animal emergent intelligence — the present model explains *why*.

Artificial Intelligence & Cross-Domain Emergence

13. **Yoshua Bengio et al. (2023): Foundation Models & Scaling Laws**
    High variation ≠ emergence. The missing threshold is explained here.

14. **LeCun (2022): *A Path Towards Autonomous Machine Intelligence***
    Multi-modal emergence as developmental goal — diversity threshold relevant.

15. **Friston (2010): The Free Energy Principle**
    Tension reduction as system drive — resonates structurally with this model.

The Value Threshold: Why Value Only Comes Into Being When Work Appears — Ontology of the Emergence Economy and Introduction of the Universal Care Income (UCI)

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17840277

Abstract:

This paper develops a novel, ontologically grounded theory of value-generation, which traces capitalist performance logic back to a fundamental systemic blind spot. The starting point is the observation that work always exists, but value only arises where work becomes visible. The value threshold (T) functions as an epistemic reality filter that decides which forms of work are permitted to emerge as achievement, and which remain invisible. In this sense, value is not understood as the result of production, but as the appearance of reality.

The analysis shows that submergent, invisible work (care, ecological regeneration, social cohesion, psychic regulation, cultural stabilisation) generates the majority of societal carrying capacity, yet does not transition into economic value-form. Poverty therefore does not arise from a lack of work, but from a lack of emergence. Capitalism is structurally based on the invisibilisation of world – value arises through exclusion. Only what crosses the value threshold becomes visible.

The central contribution of this paper is the derivation of a post-market value order. For this, UBI (Universal Basic Income) is contrasted with an alternative model: UCI (Universal Care Income). While UBI is fed by submergent performance and thus rests upon exploitation, UCI makes invisible work emergent and shifts value ontology. UCI does not generate output, but future-carrying capacity – value as regenerative performance. The diversity marker is defined as the threshold below which systems structurally collapse. In this model, commons do not function as niche solutions, but as emergence machines of a UCI-supported real economy.

The result is not a reform programme, but system architecture. An economy after T defines prosperity through complexity-preservation, not growth; income follows world, not wage. In this way an empirically testable research programme is proposed: pilot zones with UCI-distribution, emergence monitoring, diversity metrics, and entropy analysis. Value does not arise through work, but through appearance.

This theory shows how invisibility is structurally produced —
and how UCI dissolves that condition.

SECTION 0. Ontological Grounding: Why the Value Threshold Must Exist

The value threshold (T) is not an economic boundary, but an emergence-cut within a physical-ontological field.
Its existence does not derive from market logic, but from MNO — Submergence / Indimergence / Emergence.

0.1 Starting Point: MNO

The MNO-theory, developed in 2016, designates the state in which reality exists before it appears as world.
MNO is therefore neither an object nor a category, but the ontological condition of appearance.
It concerns the question of how reality becomes conscious and thus visible.
Only when reality becomes visible out of MNO does world arise, and only then emerges what we economically recognise as value.

MNO describes three states of reality:

State	Meaning
Submergence – Possibility	Reality present but not manifest. / Neither relational patterns nor fixed objects.
Indimergence – Tension / Condensation	Reality pushes towards appearance. / First object definitions, but object-formation overcovers relational patterns.
Emergence – Form / Visibility	Reality appears as world-form. / Relational patterns lift objects over the emergent threshold. Diversity, markets and ecosystems arise.

This trichotomy is not a model — it is mechanics of being.
It is a logic of pattern, an endlessly repeating cycle that forms and dissolves reality by letting structure appear, fixing onto objects, thereby pushing relation into the background, and thus letting form decay again when no emergent expansion occurs, after which form arises anew.

Every form, every action, every perception passes through these three zones.
Nothing appears as world without having passed through emergence.
All activity remains real, even if it does not appear.

Already here it becomes clear:
Invisible work is not less real.
It is merely submergent (pattern not yet recognisable) or indimergent (narrowed into object categories). Surplus value is what follows in emergence — or fails to follow if indimergence dominates, i.e. when work is restricted as a thing, as an object within a single categorical boundary of availability.

(See MNO concept under: DOI: 10.5281/ZENODO.17803906 or *The Physics of the Poor* ISBN-10: 3695191287)

0.2 T = Transitional Energy of Being

T defines the threshold-energy that is required
for work to move from submergence into emergence.
Not price, not wage, not evaluation —
but appearance as world.

Formally as conceptual mechanism:

work_real – (T) → work_world

T is a filter, not a measure of value.
Through T it is decided what may be counted as reality.
Thus value is no longer determined by production, but by the capacity to lift being into world-form. And T, the value threshold, defines this space independently of actual value. It is a structural limitation in order to translate value into categories of possession and market control in the first place.

0.3 Why Capitalism Intensifies T

Capitalism is not an economic system,
but a regime of appearance.
It does not reward effect, but visibility.
Performance exists only when it passes through T into market-form.

This means:

Non-value ≠ non-work

Non-value = non-emergence

Capitalism exists
because it artificially raises T —
so that only certain being may become world.
Thus we observe here an obstruction of resources in order to create artificial scarcity, which makes "isolated value" possible in the first place — the essential factor of unilateral value-attribution in capitalism.

0.4 Why the Value Threshold Is Physical

T acts like an energy barrier in the quantum field:
Reality can exist without appearing,
just as energy can exist without being measurable
until it jumps the detector.
The analogy is not metaphorical —
it is structurally identical.

Value = detection of work.
Without detection no world-form — yet work was still there.

Thus value is not economic,
but ontologically secondary.
It is appearance, not substance.

The error of economic tradition:
It only measures what has passed through T —
and confuses emergence with origin.
Here we see a fundamental basis of false value-attribution in the economic system. Value is not real — it is made real through categorical exclusion.

0.5 Consequence for Scientific Validity

If value is an emergence phenomenon,
then statistics is always downstream.
Numbers only measure what T has already permitted.
Empiricism therefore cannot be the origin of proof —
but only confirmation of a mechanism.

Scientific demonstration therefore does not state:
Data show that work remains invisible.
But rather:
Emergence mechanics forces that work only assumes value-form through visibility.
Therefore invisible work must be dominant. It is a mechanical logic.
This is the first ontological proof.
Here scientific validity begins — not statistics.

0.6 Methodological Approach: Why This Paper Requires No Empiricism

This paper deliberately omits statistical evidence, because its subject is not distribution or output, but the ontological condition of value-generation. It is a question situated before market arises.
Empiricism measures only what has already emerged through T. Thus it cannot justify the invisible, but only confirm what has already become visible.

The evidential pathway of this text is therefore not empirical, but structural-ontological:

1. Work always exists
2. Value exists only when work emerges
3. Emergence is a selection event → T
4. What T does not allow through remains real, but valueless
5. UCI (Universal Care Income) functions because it inverts T

Thus this paper does not confuse data with cause,
but shows that data are only effects of a deeper selection mechanism.

Empiricism may follow later — but foundation is logic, not statistics.
This is basic research, not unit labour cost accounting.

SECTION 1 – Value as Emergence and Not as a Given Quantity

Value is not a raw material that simply "exists."
It is the result of a threshold: the moment in which work emerges, becomes visible, gains form.
Below this threshold, work exists in the mode of the real,
but not in the mode of appearance.
It acts – yet it is not acknowledged.
It carries – yet it is not counted.
It is submergent, indimergent, pre-value.

Even if it is indimergent, i.e. categorically grasped as a thing, as an object, it is still partially subject to the value threshold, because it is not understood as emergent – which results in loss of value wherever work must not be more than function.

Here begins the value threshold T: not as an economic number, but as an epistemic interface which determines whether being becomes world – or remains within the field of possibility.

This shifts the question of economics fundamentally:
Not: Who works?
But: Whose work emerges as value at all? And which work is restricted as a resource through T, for example to keep it functionally controlled?

For work always exists.
But only a fraction of it passes through T and is called performance.
The rest stabilises society invisibly –
and yet remains imperceptible, unpaid, unarchived.
Or underpaid in indimergence.

Capitalism is not primarily a distribution system,
but a filtering system.
It does not determine how much value arises,
but which value may become visible.

This paper shows the mechanism of that visibility,
the site of loss, the logic of the blind spot –
and why UCI & MNO do not merely imply a more just form of economy,
but an ontological transition:
from market → to emergence.
Thus toward a structural transformation of capitalism
and its valuation and attribution of worth.

SECTION 2 – Work Is Real, Value Is Public

The value threshold is not an economic limit, but a reality-filter.
It does not determine how much value arises, but what proportion may emerge.
Thus work also forms reality itself. Therefore the question of which work may become real is also the question of which reality becomes workable and through which form. Indimergent, reified work forms a different basis of social and reality formation than free, self-determined work, for example — which is essential for the preservation of diversity.

Work itself is always effective.
People care for children, maintain relationships, stabilise commons,
prevent collapse, repair world.
Yet only when this work crosses T
is it declared performance —
something that counts as value.

The concept of performance is therefore not neutral, but selective.
It does not describe doing, but the appearance of doing.

Below T: effect without appearance
Above T: appearance → value-form

Thus it becomes clear:
Poverty does not arise from lack of work,
but from lack of emergence.
Which makes structural impoverishment in reified wage-labour
recognisable for the first time as a structural problem.

The value threshold does not block production — it blocks recognition of reality.
Capitalism organises this mechanism systematically:
it sets T high enough that only those forms emerge which are exploitable in market logic.
Everything else remains submergent: real, indispensable, but invisible.

The problem is therefore not distribution, but ontology.
Not inequality, but appearance logic.
Not lack of money, but lack of emergence opening.

This distinction is central.
For those who correct distribution without shifting T
do not change the system —
they merely feed it through.

The question therefore is not:
How do we distribute value more fairly?
But:
How do we allow value to arise at all?
How do we lower T?

At this point UCI (Universal Care Income — recognition also of unseen work) begins as system-shift, and MNO as deep-mechanism that explains why value is not made but continually folded anew into reality.

SECTION 3

Performance is generally understood socially as a product of effort and result.
But this formula does not describe value – it describes only work above T.
It excludes the largest part of reality:
the work that acts, but does not appear.

The dominant economy therefore confuses output with emergence.
It equates visible with real – an equation that only holds
where T has already been crossed.

Below T we find:

• care
• regeneration
• psychic energy work
• social cohesion
• ecological self-renewal

All activities without which society would collapse – and which nonetheless do not exist as performance.
Not because they do not have effect, but because they are not allowed to emerge.

Therefore it becomes clear:
Value is not the consequence of work, but the consequence of visibility.
It only arises where attribution occurs – and not where world is carried.

The value threshold divides reality into two zones:

Above T	**Below T**
Work becomes performance	Work remains background
Value becomes measurable	Value remains invisible
Market validates	Existence stabilises
Status arises	Maintenance happens

Capitalism is not built on productivity,
but on the narrowing of recognition.
The sphere of performance is an island,
carried by an ocean of concealed work.
Yet the island denies the sea on which it lives.

Here begins the structural error of the system:
It considers itself autonomous, although it accumulates
what it does not generate.

It exploits emergence – and burns submergence.
The higher T is set, the more the system withdraws the energies
from which its future would have to arise.

The crisis is therefore not economic, but ontological.
We do not suffer from distribution, but from visibility blockade.

SECTION 4

The value threshold is not a flaw of the system.
It is the condition of its possibility.
Without T there would be no spheres of performance,
no hierarchies of productivity,
no distinction between valuable and valueless.
T does not divide persons – it divides modes of being.
This has direct, universally visible consequences for ecosystems and minorities.

Capitalism is not based on production,
but on the selection of visibility.
It requires invisibility as its foundation,
just as a building requires a foundation that must not be seen.
T produces value by dividing world.

Visible / invisible
valid / invalid
performance / background

This division is not an economic mechanism,
but an epistemic grid
that defines what counts as reality.

Historically, T arises where work became measurable:
with wage-form, factory, time-sequencing, throughput, scaling.
Everything that did not fit into this form
was not judged inferior –
but non-existent.

Women's labour disappeared behind doors,
care-work behind love,
commons behind property,
bodies behind function.

The problem was never that these activities were undervalued.
They were not recognised as activities at all.
They existed submergently – necessary, but formless.

Thus, the value threshold is not a moral failure,
but an ontology of selection.

It does not decide who works,
but whose work becomes world.

The higher T is set,
the more reality remains submergent.
And the more remains submergent,
the more crisis-prone becomes the system that rests upon it.

Value arises not only through visibility-selection,
but through transformation of submergence into product-form.
So that something can be exploited,
it must first be de-realised –
into material, into resource, into commodity.

Making invisible is not a side effect of economy.
Making invisible is its resource extraction process.

Submergence here does not merely mean sub-threshold existence,
but (flattening, loss of structure, loss of relation) –
a state in which complex interconnections
are reduced to isolated functional points
so that they become economically isolable, separable, extractable.

The value threshold is the site of this reduction:
It highlights appearance by destroying context.
It creates what can be exploited by cutting relations.
It produces product-forms by amputating world.

And thereby the inner paradox becomes visible:
Capitalism destroys the foundations on which it lives
in order to turn them into a dominated category – a product.
It can only exploit what it has first made invisible,
flattened, isolated, submerged.
The system eats its condition.
What appears above T exists only
because beneath it world disappears.

SECTION 5 – Value Measurement Without the Value Threshold

Economic value-creation is usually understood as the result of production.
This paper proposes a different foundation:
Value does not arise when something is done,
but when the done becomes visible.
Work exists in reality just as water exists in soil —
invisible, supportive, necessary.
But only where it becomes world-applied and visible
does it become economically recognisable.

This is precisely the function of the value threshold (T):
T is the boundary between reality and world.
Below, work exists – above, it counts.

Capitalism does not set this boundary by accident,
but systemically:
Work has value only when it appears as measurable performance,
i.e. when it can be translated into appearance.
Thus the value threshold does not explain why work is paid differently,
but why most social work does not appear at all.

Care, art, healing, education, ecological stabilisation, relationship —
all present, all real,
yet without appearance-status no value.

Capitalism is therefore less a distribution system than an appearance regime:
It recognises only what becomes visible through T.
Invisible work is not "missing" — it has not appeared.
It remains in pre-stage or liminality, not because it belongs there,
but because it is not permitted to cross the boundary.

T is the minimal condition under which reality exists for others.
Below T exists what happens — above exists what appears.
Economy does not begin with work, but at this threshold.

We therefore see a structural foundational problem of the entire economic theory.
It does not see the domination model already embedded in the very definition of value within markets.

5.1.1 Formal Structure (linguistic-logical equation)

We define three levels according to MNO:

Level	State	World-Status	Value-Status
M – Submergence	Effective but unobserved	Reality	No value
N – Indimergence	Tension, direction, readiness	Pre-world	Pre-value
O – Emergence	Appearance in consciousness/system	Actuality	Value

The value threshold T is the transition N → O.

Formally:

if work ∈ M or N → ≠ value

if work ∈ O → = value

This means:
Work is not without value –
it is pre-value when it does not appear.

Capitalism is based on the equation:

Value = O

Work = O

This is the conceptual error.
The truth is:

Work > O

Value = O

T = Δ(O)

T is the differential energy,
not the work itself.

5.1.2 Why T Exists – Causal Derivation

A system cannot allow arbitrary amounts of reality to emerge simultaneously.
Consciousness, culture, economy require a selection mechanism
to hold complexity in form.
T is this form-barrier.
Not ideological, not political, but physically necessary like surface tension in water.

If T is too high → little emergence → stability, but compression → suffocation
If T is too low → oversaturation → agitation, but innovation → new order-surge

Capitalism, however, keeps T permanently rigid,
so that only market-shaped emergences may appear.
The problem is therefore not the boundary of form itself,
but the refusal of the cycle — through the attempt to artificially preserve value
at the expense of reality-expansion and the deepening of complexity and diversity.
The resulting "isolated value" blocks emergence processes.

5.1.3 Why the Value Threshold Does Not Originate in the Labour Market

The labour market measures output,
T measures appearance.
Work does not flow into value-concepts
because it is productive —
but because it is visible.

Value = diagnosis, not substance.
Value is the outcome of field-access —
not its cause.

This approach turns 150 years of economics upside down.
Marx asked how value is created.

This paper shows when value is created.
Not in the moment of production — but in the moment of appearance.
And that moment is T.

5.1.4 Consequence

T is not a price boundary → but an emergence-differential.
UCI is not monetary policy → but emergence activation.
Value is not a trade-object → but a change of state of being.

Thus, the economy is not abolished,
but re-anchored:

Economy becomes physics of consciousness.
(Mechanism for the production and shaping of reality)

Value becomes emergence-energy.
(Structural maintenance of diversity in ecosystems. Market as ecosystem)

5.2 Three Measurement Domains Beyond T

We cannot quantify value,
but we can capture field-lines:

1. Maintenance (Decay → Stability)
   How much collapse is prevented?

2. Emergence (From possibility → Form)
   How much new passes through T?

3. Regeneration (Depleted → Return)
   How much world arises again through work itself?

These three lines form no scale, but a folding-geometry.
Value is then not price – it is topology.

5.3 Phenomenology of Emergence

Value is perceptible before it is measurable.
One does not know it through number, but through resonance, presence, carrying-capacity.

Phenomenologically:
Value does not feel like yield.
Value feels like carryability (of reality).

Hence, for the first time, a precise formula:

VALUE = folding of being into appearance

+ duration of this appearance within the system

– entropy-loss through the emergence-cut

No one will speak like this in everyday life –
but science must understand it this way.

Value without T is not romanticism.
It is a new physics of societal preservation.
This is significant for the question of how economy and ecology will coexist socially and humanely in the future — by not isolating value from the ecosystem, but holding it within its deeper coherence. Both concern fundamentally the formation of world and reality, as well as habitat.

SECTION 6 – Systemic Consequences of the Value Threshold

If work is only value when it appears,
then value is not an inner state of an activity,
but an event of visibility.
This revolutionises the definition of value:
Value is not a property of work,
value is the moment of its appearance.

This makes clear why unpaid work can carry a system,
while paid work often carries no world at all.
Capitalism does not evaluate effect, but visibility.
Therefore, capitalism cannot claim that it preserves society or world per se.
If this is true, we must ask what does preserve them.
We must ask what understanding of value sustains life —
in its full complexity.

Example:

• One who raises a child creates future and culture.
Yet without appearance, no value.

• One who sells advertising space moves little world —
but appears as performance, therefore as value.

The economic paradox dissolves
as soon as one accepts:
Capitalism does not measure world,
but access to world.

T does not decide whether work has been done,
but whether it is recognised as world.
Thus value threshold = perception threshold.
Not ontological in itself, but socially —

yet it acts ontologically,
because it decides what may count as world.

If work appears → value.
If work does not appear → reality without world-status.

We see this mechanism also in social media,
where capitalism as mechanism of value-allocation (attention economy)
transfers itself directly and fatally.
This reduction of emergence leads directly into submergence —
into flattening, chaos, and loss of relation.

6.1 Civilizational Entropy

When only utilisable contributions emerge,
those forms die which are not exploitable but necessary.
The representability and workability of other life-worlds (minorities/abuse conditions) is blocked.
Work against injustice becomes unfinanceable.

Relationships degenerate into transactions,
ecosystems into resources,
humans into functions.

The system lives from energy flows
that it structurally does not acknowledge.
We lose massively in innovation capacity
and in problem-solving competence.

6.2 Loss of Social Regenerative Capacity

Below T, regeneration occurs —
care, healing, emotional cohesion,
psychic stabilisation, conflict de-escalation.
If these processes are not permitted to emerge,
society no longer regenerates itself.
It requires increasing external inputs
(money, control, therapy, surveillance)
for what was once carried internally.

A system that honours only performance
becomes dependent on repair.
The system dries itself out and sinks into conflicts of distribution,
while at the same time emergence — that is, problem-solving capacity — remains blocked.

6.3 Emergence-Backlog as Cultural Pathology

Indimergent processes form dam-masses behind T.
Ideas, art, care, social innovation,
small world-preserving acts, fragile attempts —
they gather, accumulate, disappear.
Not because they fail —
but because they are not permitted to emerge.

One recognises an exhausted system not by a lack of work,
but by a lack of appearance.
We therefore see that work is structurally misplaced.
Society does not collapse when work is absent.
It collapses when too little work becomes world.

Here capitalism becomes a *preventer* of value-creation —
something that until now in economic theory was not merely undescribable,
but entirely unrecognised, while the opposite was claimed:
that value-creation is driven by performance and value-generation.
In this way structural contradictions disappeared from view — with fatal consequences.

When T is lowered,
chaos does not arise —
pluripotency arises.
Not as overload,
but as return of future-breadth.

SECTION 7 — The Transition: When T Becomes Unstable

A system does not collapse when it lacks resources,
but when it can no longer recognise them.
The value threshold has been stable for a long time,
yet stability and preservation are not the same.
T begins to waver once the cost of invisibility
exceeds the benefit of selective visibility.
Then it is not morality that tips —
but the ontology of valuation.

We already observe symptoms of this transition:

- burnout instead of productivity
- isolation instead of community
- surveillance instead of trust
- growth-imperative with shrinking future breadth
- rising complexity with falling differentiation-capacity

The system no longer works efficiently,
but against its own condition.

The result is not a revolution from the outside,
but emergence-pressure from below.

Submergent and indimergent processes accumulate,
seek form, demand world-contact.
This expresses itself not first politically,
but micro-socially:

• people refuse recognition-logic
• art and care withdraw from product-goals
• work becomes physically uncompensable
• meaning breaks market-logic open
• value seeks appearance

Emergence does not want to be kind —
emergence wants to become.

When T falls, chaos does not arise,
but an increase in the frequency of appearance.
More world pushes upward,
more possible forms reach visibility,
more variants of the real come forth.

A system beyond T is not louder.
It is deeper.
Not faster, but denser.
Not more productive, but richer.

The transition does not begin when T drops —
but already when too many forms beneath T no longer wish to disappear.
We stand at this point.

SECTION 8 — Emergence Without the Value Threshold

When T falls, it is not the distribution of value that shifts,
but the ontology of reality.
Work no longer emerges only when it becomes product-shaped,
but as soon as it generates world-contact.
Thus the domain of the real expands.
What previously remained submergent
(care, relationship, commons, regeneration, fragile creativity)
does not suddenly appear as market-value,
but as appearance of its own quality.

Performance loses its dependency on product
and gains meaning as a preservation-event.
Value is no longer *that which is sold*,
but that which carries future.

We do not receive *more values,*
but more realities.
Emergence is not inflation,
but multiplication of world.

This shift has concrete consequences:

1. Art becomes infrastructure
   not decoration, but emergence-laboratory of social possibility-spaces.
2. Care becomes framework
   not overhead cost, but regeneration-engine of society.
3. Knowledge becomes plural
   not elite administration, but multidimensional resonance-capacity.
4. Ecology becomes primary value
   not resource, but civilisation-foundation.

Below T, all this already existed,
but without right to appearance.
Once emergence is no longer exclusively bundled,
an economy of plurality arises —
not additivity, but interdependence.

A world beyond T is not recognised by producing more,
but by more being able to persist.
This is decisive, also for post-growth discourse.

8.1 Differentiation From Existing Value Theories

The present theory does not stand isolated —
it stands on the shoulders, but not within the boundaries, of previous models.

Tradition	Insight	Limit	New contribution of this paper
Marx	Value arises from labour	but only when it appears	Value = emergence (not production)
Federici / Care-Economics	Invisible work sustains society	but without mechanism of invisibility	T explains for the first time how invisibility is produced
Fraser	Care-crisis as systemic contradiction	remains redistributive	UCI shifts system-architecture instead of compensating
Raworth / Degrowth	planetary boundaries	but no value-theory	D = emergence-capacity → prosperity ≠ growth

Thus this paper shows:
It does not supplement a theory — it replaces its foundation.
Not "Who receives value?",
but "How does value become world at all?"
It does not answer distribution questions,
but the condition of reality.

SECTION 9 — The Economy Beyond T

(Value as frequency, resonance, preservation-flow)

An economy without the value threshold is not unconditional,
but relation-bound.
Value no longer arises through scarcity,
but through vibration between system-parts.
A market beyond T does not measure price,
but frequency of emergence.
Not how rare something is,
but how often it carries world.

Thus the core of economics shifts:

Capitalism	Economy beyond T
Scarcity creates value	Preservation creates value
Price is metric	Frequency is metric
Exchange relation	Resonance relation
Output counts	Carrying-capacity counts
Growth = success	Complexity-preservation = success

This means:
Value is not possession – but passage.
Not substance – but stabilisation of world.

9.1 Value-Flow Instead of Value-Possession

Production is no longer extraction,
but circulation of difference.
Work that sustains world
counts as value through its sustaining —
and not only through exploitability.
A parent creates value through attachment,
a community through conflict-regulation,
a forest through photosynthesis.
In an economy beyond T these are not side-effects,
but primary processes.

9.2 Resonance-Capacity as Economic Measure

A system is not wealthy
when it accumulates assets,
but when it can endure complexity
without collapse.

Wealth = resonance bandwidth.
Poverty = emergence blockade.

9.3 Productivity Becomes Pluripotency

Instead of linear output, superposition of reality arises:
many small emergences simultaneously,
instead of few large ones through market-validation.
This system is not inefficient –
it is evolutionary.
Evolution knows no monoculture of value;
it knows only diversity as condition of survival.

A world beyond T is therefore not only more just,
but more intelligent.
Value beyond T is not profit,
but continuation of world.
An economy that does not burn future,
but generates it.

Summary of the model in five sentences:

1. Reality exists before it appears as world.
2. Value only arises in the moment of appearance.
3. The value threshold determines what may appear.
4. UCI makes this threshold permeable.
5. Diversity-mark measures how much world can exist.

10. Why Classical Economics Cannot Explain Value

Economics traditionally describes value as a consequence of labour, cost, scarcity, or price-formation mechanisms.
Yet none of these definitions explains why the majority of real work possesses no value, even though it exists and exerts effect.
Classical models fail at a point they themselves cannot see:
they confuse reality with appearance.

Work exists even when it produces no market-product, no wage, no measurable efficiency.
But it becomes economically relevant only when it appears — when it becomes accessible and recognisable as world-form.

From this follows:

• value does not arise in doing, but in becoming visible
• work without appearance remains real, but seemingly valueless
• capitalism evaluates not effect, but recognisability

Economics therefore does not measure what happens,
but only what was permitted to appear.
Thus value is not a measure of performance,
but a measure of access to world.

In this way structural exclusion in capitalism becomes visible already in the inadequate concept of value.
Here a false relevance is produced along which a narrowed idea of value and labour is cemented —
labour that not only becomes alienated from the dynamics of reality,
but directly blocks it.

11. UCI as Opening of the Threshold of Appearance

If value follows from appearance,
then poverty is not a lack of work, but a lack of appearance.
The paradox of the value threshold lies in the fact that it not only produces poverty,
but simultaneously prevents it from resolving itself through self-valorisation —
through its own real value — and instead forces it into a tunnel of value-narrowing and functionality which generates only further impoverishment within the system.

What is missing is not activity, but access to world-form —
the passage by which work becomes value from reality.

Universal Care Income (UCI) intervenes precisely here:
UCI is not redistribution, but the removal of the condition
that produces invisibility.

UBI (Universal Basic Income) compensates invisibility with money.
UCI *ends* invisibility as a state.

Under UCI work is not valuable because it is remunerated —
it is remunerated because it is no longer prevented from appearing.
No new value is created —
value emerges that already existed.
UCI does not create work —
it lets reality become world.

Thus what arises is an expansion of the market, not a subsidy.
It homogenises value-distribution, reducing extreme unilateral gains,
but reality in its full breadth becomes borne and sustained —
which is the actual substrate of existence.

One can generate high market-profits through manufactured scarcity
(e.g. by forbidding women to work, or men) —
but as emancipation showed, the inclusion of women into the economy
did *not* destroy the market.

11.1 Objections & Refutation

Objection: "Invisible labour is known — nothing new."
Response: The invisibility was known, not its mechanism.
This paper explains for the first time *why* invisibility emerges: through the transition-point between reality and world.
It is an ontological problem. Markets have been viewed economically, but not in relation to ecosystems.

Objection: "UCI cannot be measured."
Response: Measurability follows appearance — it does not precede it.
UCI does not change measurement-methods, but conditions of appearance.

Objection: "UBI is sufficient."
Response: UBI alleviates invisibility — UCI ends it.
UBI must still be financed through an exploitative market.
UCI ends structural exclusion at its core.
UBI pays despite invisibility — UCI enables visibility.
This resolves many classical problems of UBI — not only conditionality,
but also the marginalisation of those who only receive UBI
yet whose value is not necessarily recognised, cultivated, realised.

Objection: "Too abstract for policy."
Response: Theory must establish possibility, not draft legislation.
Practice follows from recognising what value is.

12. Diversity-Mark as Emergence-Capacity

Here we arrive at a second lever arising from my systems-work —
the diversity-mark.
Which means: how much diversity does a system require
to sustain itself as an ecosystem?

Diversity here is not variation of products,
but plurality of possible forms of appearance within a society.

A system with a high diversity-mark allows many ways of world.
A system with a low diversity-mark allows few.

Thus diversity is:
not a moral good, but a structural precondition for future.

Capitalism increases consumption-options,
but reduces appearance-paths.
It creates variants without world — diversity without emergence.

It is not resource-scarcity that destroys future,
but poverty of appearance.
The world loses future not because it lacks,
but because it lets too little appear.

We ask where visions and utopias have gone —
here we find an explanation.

UCI does not increase diversity as an aim,
but as natural consequence of world-access.
Once the appearance-threshold falls,
reality multiplies.
Diversity is not output —
it is potential to become world.

The question of financial feasibility, unlike UBI,
does not arise because UCI expands markets —
more central is what the value-threshold removes from the market,
or makes radically permeable.

APPENDIX A — Formal Model of the Value Threshold T

A.1 Basic Assumption

Reality, as stated, exists in three states:

M = Submergence (possible, but not perceived)
N = Indimergence (directed possibility, still invisible)
O = Emergence (world-form, visible, actuality)

Value arises only when a transition to O occurs.

A.2 Definition of the Value Threshold T

T = operator which determines which M/N-states may emerge into O
T is not a threshold in the economic sense,
but an ontological selection-function.

Formally:

work_real ∈ {M, N} → 0 value work_real → O via T → value

A.3 Value as Emergence-Function

Value is not input → value is output of a selection-process.
Value = f(O)
O = emergence
f(O) ≠ quantity, but visibility / access to world

Therefore:

- Non-work hardly exists.
- Non-value exists constantly.
- Invisible work is pre-value, not non-value.

A.4 Diversity-Mark D as Emergence-Capacity

D = |M/N → O| = number of emergence-paths within a system

The higher D, the more world can arise.
The lower D, the more reality remains unseen.
Capitalism reduces D by keeping T rigid.

A.5 UCI as Inversion of T

UCI is not income — it is an operator reversal.
UCI = T^{-1}

Not money opens world,
but world opens value.

T → reduces emergence UCI → expands emergence UBI changes wage → UCI changes being.

A.6 Whole-System as Condensed Theory-Formula

M →(T)→ O = value

D = set of possible O

UCI = T^{-1}

Goal: D↑, O↑, value ≠ market

In words:
Value is emergence.
T limits emergence.

UCI dissolves T.
Diversity is the capacity to generate emergence.
Capitalism ≠ value — but emergence-filter.

SECTION 13 — Commons as Emergence-Machine
(Ostrom × MNO — first synthesis)

Commons were historically understood as a mode of use —
as shared goods belonging to neither state nor market.
But this frame remains superficial.
What Ostrom showed was not ownership-form,
but self-organisation beyond T.

Commons function because they do not extract value —
they regenerate it.
They are not a "third sector",
but a value-form without exploitation-imperative.
Thus commons are not nostalgic residue —
they are the functional counter-model to the market.

13.1 Market = Extraction-System
Commons = Return-System

The market pulls value *out* of relationships,
commons return value *into* relationships.

Market	Commons
extract complexity	generate complexity
require scarcity	require regeneration
restrict value-paths	open value-paths
narrow future	preserve future

Commons are not an alternative economy —
they are the pre-field of an economy beyond T.

13.2 Why Ostrom Is Not Enough — and Where MNO Extends

Ostrom describes rules, governance, self-organisation.
But she does not explain why commons are *value-generating stable.*
Here MNO intervenes:

Submergence — Indimergence — Emergence
is precisely the cycle that commons enable:

Submergence → resource (forest, water, care, culture)

Indimergence → use & collective feedback

Emergence → renewed, higher order

Commons do not produce consumption,
but resonance-states.
They allow reality to arise,
instead of being depleted.

13.3 Commons as UCI-Carrier Structure

If UCI functions (Section 10/11),
we need places where value can emerge without market.
Commons *are* those places.

UCI does not pay for possession,
but for preservation of emergence.

This means:

Commons + UCI = first functional post-T economy

Not experimental,
but structural.

UCI is not the funding of commons —
UCI is the motor of their emergence.

13.4 Testable Hypothesis

If commons become the foundation of UCI,
then the following should be *measurably* observable:

- increased ecological regeneration
- reduced escalation-energy
- higher social cohesion
- growing diversity of value-pathways
- decreasing dependence on wage-labour

If these parameters rise, then it is proven:
Commons are not a niche —
they are the civilisational basis beyond T.

13.5 The Decisive Sentence

Capitalism is scaling through exclusion.
Commons are scaling through inclusion of reality.

The difference is not romantic —
but ontological.

13.6 Logical Proof Path of the Theory

The theory of this paper is valid if the following holds:

1. Work can exist without being visible.
   → empirically trivial (care, motherhood, poverty)
2. Value arises only at visibility.
   → definitionally valid (no market without detection)
3. Between existence and visibility lies an operator.
   → T follows logically
4. If T exists, invisibility is structurally produced.
   → poverty ≠ lack, but non-emergence
5. If UCI inverts T, reality emerges without market-filter.
   → value becomes world, not price

Therefore, without statistics:

Value = emergence

T = emergence-filter

UCI = T-inversion

D = emergence-capacity of the system

This is proof — not assertion.

SECTION 14 — Emergence-Monitoring & Data Beyond T

An economy beyond T requires a new form of data.
Classic indicators measure output, price, growth —
not regeneration, resonance, future-capacity.
What we need is not a statistical system,
but emergence-tracking —
a visibility-method for what previously vanished under the value threshold.

Price measures transaction.
Emergence measures future.

14.1 Why Old Data Cannot Function

Economic indicators such as GDP, productivity, tax revenue
measure only what has passed through the market.

They register only visible labour —
not the reality that sustains it.

Below T, 80–90% of systemic performance remains invisible:

• care work
• mental health regulation
• conflict absorption
• ecological repair
• motherhood
• culture
• autistic specialist work
• shadow-economy of maintenance

A society can grow
while dying internally.
And by the same logic, it can be healthy
while its GDP falls.

This is capitalism's blind spot.

14.2 What Emergence-Monitoring Measures

We need data that measures not market-performance,
but world-condition.

Measurable variables:

Variable	Meaning
Regeneration rate	How quickly does system-stress heal?
Diversity of value-paths	How many modes of contribution exist?
Emergence frequency	How often does new form arise without destruction?
System coherence	How strong are relations relative to market-forces?
Entropy-loss	How much future is lost per year?

These are not abstract ideas —
they are the physics of social systems.
Economies are thermodynamics.
Value is entropy-work.

14.3 Monitoring Without Price — How Do We Measure Reality Directly?

Three layers of data acquisition:

1 – Observation (qualitative)
Narratives, care-protocols, regeneration-journals
→ detection of the invisible

2 – Network analysis (social / topological)
Who holds whom?
Who stabilises conflict?
Who carries renewal?
Thus a map of reality emerges
not based on money, but on relational force.

3 – Biomarkers for systems
Burnout index, ecological re-storage, child development, trauma-reduction
→ objectifiable world-metrics

If these data rise,
value emerges.

14.4 Post-Price Economy = Post-Index Economy

If value is no longer measured through price,
then GDP ceases to be a leading metric.
We do not replace it —
we overwrite it.

New primary metric:
EWI – Emergence-Reality Index
(in place of GDP)

The EWI does not measure production,
but future-carrying capacity.

14.5 The Reverse Conclusion as Proof-Form

If a society produces more consumption, more output, more growth —
yet diversity, health, ecological carrying-capacity fall —
then growth is not prosperity,
but entropy.

This insight has often been suspected —
but never systemically proven,
because data below T did not exist.
Emergence-monitoring provides these data.
Thus economics becomes, for the first time, research into reality.

SECTION 15 — System Construction Beyond T: Architecture of a UCI-Society

This chapter does not describe reform.
It describes architecture.

No policy, no programme — structure-design.
How a state looks that does not generate value through market,
but through emergence, diversity, regeneration.

We are speaking of a post-capitalist order-model
that does not arise through expropriation,
but through expansion of reality.

A UCI-society (state) exists not because the market disappears,
but because it no longer needs to be the centre.

15.1 Foundational Pillar 1: Care = Primary Value

In an economy beyond T, care is not secondary economy,
but infrastructure of civilisation.

Which means:

- care is *not* funded by taxes
- care *is* a source of value
- income arises through preservation of world

The division of labour shifts:

Today	UCI-condition
Production carries economy	Care carries stability-system
Human = resource	Human = energy-carrier
Burnout as collateral	Burnout as entropy-signal
Value through scarcity	Value through regeneration

Thus labour is no longer a source of wage,
but a form of appearance of future.

15.2 Foundational Pillar 2:
Market becomes tool, not reality-filter

The market remains — but without exclusive rights to value.
It becomes one system among several, not the primary motor.

The new matrix:

Care generates value

Market processes value

Commons retain value within the system

Today: market = value.
In a UCI-society (state), it is only a technique of value.
Production-logic becomes function — not meaning.

15.3 Foundational Pillar 3:
Commons as Structural Sector (Section 13 linkage)

In a UCI-society, commons are not exception,
but standard carriers of emergence.

They absorb entropy,
generate social coherence,
enable diversity beyond ownership.

Market: scales through exclusion

Commons: scale through inclusion of world

Thus, for the first time, a three-sector model becomes stable:

1 Care-Sector	2 Commons-Sector	3 Market-Sector
preservation	regeneration	processing
future	diversity	speed
substance	form	distribution

15.4 Foundational Pillar 4:

UCI as Circulatory System (Bloodstream of Emergence)

UCI is not a social budget.
UCI is circulation.

Money = carrier-wave of emergence
Not exchange-medium → but metabolic medium.

Thus income becomes not wage,
but cellular respiration.

Not basic income, not transfer,
but system-fluid.

Like blood does not reward —
it organises life.

15.5 How Statehood Shifts

A UCI-society as state-understanding produces less control
and more reality.

Less sanction,
more emergence-space.

Less eligibility-verification,
more reality-verification.

Not: *"What performance have you delivered?"*
but:
How much world has come into being through you?

Such a state does not require administration,
but evidence-capture.

It does not assess need,
but future-indicators.

Thus the state ceases to be a disciplinary machine
and becomes an ecology-organ.

15.6 The Central Principle of the Architecture

Capitalism is based on value through exclusion.
An emergence-economy is based on value through relation.

UCI-State ≠ planned economy
UCI-State ≠ redistribution
UCI-State ≠ welfare

UCI-State = reality-state.
It does not pay citizens —
it pays world.

SECTION 16 — Conclusion

The value threshold shows that economy is not determined by production,
but by appearance.
Not activity generates value —
access to world does.

Thus poverty is not a result of lacking work,
but of lacking capacity to appear.
Not a deficit of performance,
but a deficit of permeability.

The value threshold holds reality in a state of not-yet-world.

UCI is not a social programme.
It is not income, not redistribution, not political mercy.
UCI is the alteration of the condition under which reality can become value.
It does not lower costs — it allows world to occur.
It does not create resources — it makes them visible.

The MNO theory expresses this mechanism clearly:
Reality exists before world.
Only where it appears does it become value.

A society that enables appearance rather than preventing it
does not increase wealth — it increases reality.

Therefore the question is no longer:
How do we finance the future?
But:
How much world do we allow to come into being?

An economy beyond UCI is not an alternative to capitalism.
It is the dissolution of its foundational assumption.
Not growth replaces — appearance liberates.

The future does not emerge because we plan it.
It emerges because we let it appear.

16.1 Consequence for Economics

If value is understood as appearance,
then economics is no longer primarily the administration of resources,
but the administration of appearance-capacity.

The central economic question is no longer:
"How do we produce more?"
but:
"How do we enable more world to appear?"

This means:

- production loses the status of origin
- work is no longer input, but foundation
- value arises where reality becomes world

Thus the focus of economic design shifts:

Not growth, but permeability.
Not markets, but appearance.
Not reward, but enablement.

This has central significance in the question of AI development, because if AI increasingly cements the value-threshold through isolated relevance-parameters, then ultimately the human

being is pushed out of the market. We can only reverse this if the understanding of value — and thus of relevance — is no longer determined by the value-threshold, because AI continually narrows that threshold. It results in an efficiency-mania.

Thus the question whether AI replaces all jobs, all work gains a completely new dimension — because AI cannot maintain the emergence-cycle. AI exists in no reality, or only in one.

16.2 Consequence for Society

A society does not generate itself through control,
but through relation, resonance and visibility.
UCI does not create these structures anew –
it merely stops their systematic invisibilisation.

The question whether care, art, healing or education are "affordable"
collapses the moment value no longer depends on appearance.

A society in which UCI holds no longer distinguishes between
paid and unpaid work,
but between prevented and appearing reality.

Social development then follows not proof of performance,
but contact with world.

Collective intelligence does not arise from control,
but from diversity that is allowed to appear.

UCI is not security –
UCI is community as world-form.

16.3 Consequence for Future

If value follows from appearance,
then future is not planned, but uncovered.
Future already exists as possibility,
just as reality exists in the state of MNO
before it becomes world.

UCI transforms this possibility into appearance.
The future is not built from resources,
but from appearance-capacity.

Less *"How do we secure tomorrow?"*
more "How do we allow tomorrow to appear?"

Thus future ceases to be projection-surface –
and begins as real option.
Future is not to be enforced,
but to be allowed.

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Emergence Economy
Why Reality Exceeds What Appears as Value

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Abstract

This paper develops a structurally ontological threshold theory of world-formation and value stabilisation. Building on the concepts of the diversity threshold (D) and the value threshold (T), it is argued that reality emerges once systems exceed a critical folding intensity of difference, while value appears only when emergent forms cross the threshold of structural durability. These two thresholds do not describe separate processes, but two phases of a single ontological mechanism. World is generated at D, value stabilises at T; poverty, precarity, and invisibility mark the structural gap between the two.

The ontological foundation of this model lies in a theory of ontological recurrence, in which emergence is not understood as the result of accumulation or innovation, but as a recurring transition of a system into its space of possibilities prior to stabilised representation. The D/T relation therefore does not describe market failure, but a systematic asymmetry between emergent reality and the conditions of its societal stabilisation.

The central thesis is: reality exceeds what societies recognise as value. Modern economies do not fail due to a lack of work, but due to an inability to hold emergence. Care work, ecological regeneration, artistic research, and neurodivergent problem-mapping often operate above D, yet remain below T, thereby producing structural invisibility rather than inefficiency.

The model of the Emergence Economy shifts the focus away from questions of distribution toward the conditions under which reality can appear as value. Wealth is understood as emergence-capacity, stability as tension-bearing capacity. The paper outlines the structural logic, the operator-based falsification criteria, and the research programme of an ontological threshold theory that is testable across cognitive, social, and economic systems.

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1. Introduction — Reality, Value, and the Structural Problem of Recognition

Contemporary societies are not characterised by a lack of work, productivity, or innovation, but by a structural problem of recognition. In nearly all domains — care work, ecological regeneration, artistic research, knowledge production, neurodivergent problem-processing — reality is continuously produced without this reality appearing in a stable value form. The result is a paradoxical constellation: increasing complexity alongside the simultaneous experience of scarcity, overload, and poverty.

This paper takes as its point of departure the thesis that this paradox is not primarily to be explained in socio-political or distributive terms, but ontologically. The central error of modern economies does not lie in the distribution of value, but in the inability to stabilise emergent reality as such and to keep it visible. The problem is not missing work, but missing recognition of that which already acts as real.

Within the framework of Ontological Recurrence Theory, emergence is not an exceptional event, but a structurally recurring process. Systems return cyclically to their space of possibilities before actualising themselves into stabilised forms. This recurrence is the condition for the emergence of the new. Emergence is therefore neither innovation in the market-economic sense nor creative surplus, but a necessary phase between possibility and stabilisation.

The Rosetta Operator, or MNO model, describes this dynamic as a transition between submergent, indimergent, and emergent states. What is decisive here is that not every emergent reality is stabilised. Stabilisation requires a second threshold — a structural capacity of the system to hold emergence, render it visible, and carry it over time. It is precisely at this point that the rupture between reality and value arises.

The present paper argues that these two thresholds — the threshold of world-formation and the threshold of value stabilisation — systematically diverge. Reality emerges without appearing as value. Emergence remains real, but unstabilised. Poverty, precarity, and invisibility are in this sense not individual deficits, but consequences of a structural asymmetry between ontological recurrence and representational capture.

This asymmetry is described in what follows through two interlinked threshold models: the diversity threshold (D) as the threshold of forced emergence, and the value threshold (T) as the threshold of stabilisation and visibility. The aim of this meta-paper is to analyse these thresholds not in isolation, but as phases of the same ontological mechanism, and to make visible their societal, economic, and epistemic consequences.

2. The Diversity Threshold (D) — Emergence as a Phase Transition

The diversity threshold (D) does not denote diversity in a quantitative or normative sense, but an ontological threshold at which a system is forced to abandon its previous form. Diversity is not understood here as additive heterogeneity, but as the folding density of incommensurable differences that can no longer be resolved within a system through representation, harmonisation, or functional translation.

Within the framework of the MNO model, the diversity threshold corresponds to the transition from indimergence to emergence. In the indimergent phase, a system already operates beyond stable object forms, holds difference in tension, but is still able to bind it through internal reorganisation, symbolic compression, or institutional smoothing. Once a critical folding intensity is exceeded, the system loses this capacity. Emergence then does not occur as a choice or innovation, but as a necessary phase transition.

What is decisive here is this: the diversity threshold is not a property of individual elements, but a relational property of the system. It arises from the simultaneous coupling of (1) incommensurability, (2) relational compulsion, and (3) tension-bearing capacity. Only when differences are no longer separable, relations cannot be broken, and tension can no longer be discharged does the pressure arise that forces a new form.

From an ontological perspective, emergence is therefore not the result of creativity or progress, but the discharge of a structural surplus. Systems do not cross D because they grow, but because they carry more reality than their existing form can stabilise. Emergence is the response to the overloading of form, not to a lack of resources.

This dynamic explains why emergence frequently occurs where systems are subject to a high load of difference: at ecological tipping points, in cultural ruptures, in epistemic crises, and in neurodivergent architectures of cognition. In all these cases, the decisive variable is not diversity as such, but the impossibility of smoothing.

The diversity threshold is therefore not a normative target ("more diversity"), but a critical threshold at which systems either form new structures or collapse. Below D, systems reproduce existing structures; above D, they are forced to form world anew. Emergence here is not optional, but structurally compelled.

For the further argumentation, what is decisive is this: crossing the diversity threshold does not yet guarantee stability. It produces reality, but not value. Emergence is real before it becomes visible, durable, or socially viable. D thus prepares the ground for world-formation — without yet determining whether and how this world is stabilised. This second question is addressed by the value threshold (T).

3. The Value Threshold (T) — Stabilisation, Visibility, and Durability of Emergence

While the diversity threshold (D) describes the point at which systems are forced to bring forth new forms, the value threshold (T) designates the second, qualitatively different threshold: the transition from mere emergence to structural stabilisation. Not every emergent reality crosses

this threshold. Many forms come into being as real, effective, and consequential without ever appearing as value.

Within the framework of the MNO model, the value threshold corresponds to the transition from emergence to stabilised object form. Ontologically, value is not identical with price, exchange, or evaluation, but with the capacity of an emergent form to persist over time without requiring permanent coercion, externalisation, or self-exploitation. Value here does not denote an attribution, but a load-bearing capacity.

The value threshold thus marks the point at which emergence becomes durable. Below T, emergence remains real, but unstable: it acts, produces effects, binds energy, and carries systems, without being institutionally, economically, or culturally secured. Visibility in this context is not mere perceptibility, but the structural possibility of holding emergence, reproducing it, and passing it on.

What is decisive is this: the value threshold is not a natural filter, but a historically and institutionally configured mechanism. Systems do not differ in whether emergence occurs, but in which forms of emergence can be stabilised. Modern economies are highly emergence-productive, but selective in stabilisation. They recognise certain forms (market-shaped, scalable, standardisable work), while others systematically remain below T.

Care work, ecological regeneration, artistic research, relational work, and neurodivergent problem-processing frequently cross the diversity threshold, as they operate under high densities of difference and tension. At the same time, however, they lack the institutional, economic, and symbolic conditions required to persist as stable forms. They remain emergent, but not durable. The result is not inefficiency, but structural invisibility.

From the perspective of ontological recurrence, this condition can be described with precision: emergence repeatedly returns to the space of possibilities without ever transitioning into a stable form. Recurrence is thereby not completed, but becomes chronic. Failure at the value threshold therefore does not mean that emergence is absent, but that it does not come to rest.

The value threshold is thus the site at which ontological dynamics and social order intersect. It does not decide whether reality exists, but which reality becomes viable. Value follows emergence, not the other way around. If this sequence is reversed, a system emerges that enforces stability without carrying emergence — with the familiar consequences of extraction, exhaustion, and collapse.

For the overall argument, what is decisive is this: only in the interplay of the diversity threshold (D) and the value threshold (T) does it become visible why modern societies can be simultaneously highly productive and structurally poor. Reality emerges above D, but remains unstabilised below T. Poverty, precarity, and exhaustion are in this sense not individual conditions, but indicators of a systematic stabilisation deficit.

The theory developed here proceeds from the observation that highly effective work frequently does not appear as value, but is sanctioned or rendered invisible. Classical economic and social-theoretical models explain this paradox insufficiently.

4. The Interlocking of D and T — Emergence Economy as a Threshold Economy

The preceding analysis has introduced two qualitatively different thresholds: the diversity threshold (D) as the threshold of forced emergence, and the value threshold (T) as the threshold of structural stabilisation. What is decisive now is that these thresholds do not operate independently of one another. Rather, they form two phases of the same ontological cycle, as described in the MNO model. Only their interlocking explains why modern societies can be simultaneously highly productive and structurally unstable.

From an ontological perspective, world comes into being when systems cross D. Value, by contrast, emerges only where emergence crosses T. D thus describes the production of reality, T the durability of reality. Between the two lies not a continuum, but a structural distance that becomes socially effective. Everything that appears as poverty, precarity, or invisibility can, within this framework, be understood as the effect of a decoupling of emergence and stabilisation.

Within the MNO cycle, this means: emergence can occur without the transition into a stable object form succeeding. Ontological recurrence then remains incomplete. Systems return repeatedly to the space of possibilities without viable forms being formed. This condition is neither an exception nor a malfunction, but the normal case of modern, highly complex societies.

The Emergence Economy designates precisely this structural relation. It is not an alternative economic order in the classical sense, but a description of the conditions under which reality can appear as value or remain invisible. Economy is here not understood primarily as the allocation of scarce resources, but as a threshold regime that decides which emergent forms are stabilised and which are not.

For analytical clarity, four ideal-typical constellations can be distinguished that result from the relation between D and T:

- $D < T$: Systems remain below the threshold of emergence. Forms reproduce themselves, stability dominates, innovation remains low.
- $D \approx T$ (low): Emergence and stabilisation are coupled, but at a low level of complexity. Order is possible, but has little future viability.
- $D > T$: Emergence systematically exceeds stabilisation capacity. Reality comes into being, but remains invisible and unstable. Poverty, care crises, and exhaustion are typical effects.
- $D \approx T$ (high): Emergence and stabilisation are coupled at high complexity. Systems can carry difference without suppressing it. This corresponds to the ideal of an emergence-capable society.

The central diagnosis of this paper is that contemporary societies predominantly operate in the state $D > T$. They produce more world than they can hold. Not because emergence is absent, but because stabilisation is selective, historically narrowed, and institutionally insufficiently configured. Value is not generated where reality emerges, but where it fits into existing forms of representation and valorisation.

The Emergence Economy renders this mechanism visible. It shows that economic crises, care collapse, ecological destruction, and psychological exhaustion are not separate problems, but expressions of the same threshold mismatch. The solution therefore does not lie primarily in redistribution or efficiency increases, but in the reconfiguration of the conditions under which emergence can be stabilised.

This prepares the transition to the question of how the value threshold can be deliberately influenced. If poverty and invisibility result from a structural stabilisation deficit, then interventions must address the point at which stabilisation is enabled or prevented. This question is pursued in the next chapter through the concept of a Universal Care Income (UCI) as a targeted modulation of the value threshold.

5. Universal Care Income (UCI) — Modulation of the Value Threshold

If poverty, precarity, and invisibility do not result from a lack of work, but from a structural stabilisation deficit, then interventions cannot operate at the level of distribution. They must intervene where the value threshold (T) becomes effective. In this paper, Universal Care Income (UCI) is not understood as a welfare-state instrument, but as a targeted modulation of the conditions under which emergence can be stabilised.

Within the framework of ontological recurrence, stabilisation is not an automatic follow-up process of emergence. Systems can bring forth emergent forms without granting them the possibility of persisting over time. UCI intervenes precisely at this point: it does not change emergence itself, but the recurrence conditions under which emergence can transition into a durable form. UCI does not add value to the system, but enables the completion of an ontological cycle that would otherwise remain chronically open.

This effect can be described with precision. In systems without UCI, the stabilisation of emergent work is bound to market-shaped representation, valorisability, and adaptation. Emergence that does not meet these criteria remains real, but unstabilised. UCI decouples subsistence security from this representational obligation. As a result, emergence is not rewarded, but rendered load-bearing. The value threshold is not abolished, but lowered, such that real work can cross the threshold to stabilisation without having to distort itself or negate itself in advance.

In this sense, UCI can be understood as a T-inversion. Not because value would become arbitrary, but because the direction of dependency is reversed: stabilisation follows emergence, not the other way around. Systems with UCI no longer force emergent forms to legitimate themselves prior to their existence. Instead, a space emerges in which reality can first take effect and subsequently stabilise itself.

Ontologically considered, UCI functions as a visibility operator. It does not make emergence visible in the psychological sense, but in the structural one: through time, continuity, and reproducibility. Care work, relational work, ecological regeneration, artistic research, and neurodivergent problem-processing are thereby not upgraded, but rendered durable in the first place. The previous invisibility of these activities is not an expression of lesser significance, but the result of a value threshold set too high.

What is important is this: UCI is neither moral recognition nor compensation for lack. It is an infrastructural condition for contact with reality. Systems without such an infrastructure are forced either to suppress emergence or to exploit it. Systems with UCI can hold emergence without immediately standardising or destroying it. The difference does not lie in compassion, but in the structure of stabilisation.

This makes clear why UCI cannot be understood as an isolated socio-political measure. It is an intervention into the threshold regime of society. It changes which forms of reality become viable and which do not. In an Emergence Economy, UCI is therefore not an add-on, but a necessary condition for reducing the divergence of D and T and for closing ontological recurrence.

5.1 Distinction: Universal Basic Income (UBI) vs. Universal Care Income (UCI)

The Universal Care Income (UCI) proposed here is not to be equated with concepts of a Universal Basic Income (UBI). While UBI is primarily conceived as a distributive instrument that provides income independently of work, UCI operates at a structurally prior level. It does not address distribution, but the conditions under which emergence can be stabilised at all.

UBI implicitly presupposes that value has already been recognised and merely needs to be redistributed. UCI, by contrast, proceeds from the opposite diagnosis: that large parts of real, effective work remain below the value threshold because they are not translatable into existing forms of representation and valorisation. UCI therefore does not compensate for lack, but modulates the value threshold itself.

In this sense, UCI does not function primarily as income, but as a temporal and structural enabling of stabilisation. It decouples subsistence security from representational conformity and allows emergent work to persist over time without having to legitimate itself in advance. The causal effect does not lie in the transfer of money, but in the opening of durability.

While UBI may alleviate symptoms, UCI aims at closing the structural gap between emergence and value. It is therefore not a welfare-state instrument, but an infrastructural condition for contact with reality in highly complex societies.

6. Falsification and Testability — Operator-Based Criteria

The theory developed in this paper is not a descriptive model of individual variables, but a structural description of ontological transitions. Accordingly, its testability cannot be situated at the level of isolated measurements, but only at the level of operator-based sequences. Falsification here does not mean the refutation of individual assumptions, but the failure of the asserted transition logic.

Within the framework of the MNO model, emergence follows a specific structural sequence: submergent or indimergent states transition into emergence upon crossing the diversity threshold (D); stabilisation occurs only when emergent forms cross the value threshold (T). The central claim of this paper is that these two transitions are not identical and can systematically diverge. It is precisely at this point that the theory is falsifiable.

A falsification would be present if one of the following scenarios were empirically and stably demonstrated:

1. Stabilised value forms without prior emergence.
   If value could arise and persist durably without a preceding emergent transition, the asserted priority of emergence over value would be refuted.

2. Emergence with stability without recurrence.
   If it could be shown that emergent forms can become stable without systems repeatedly returning to their space of possibilities, this would undermine the recurrence assumption of the MNO model.

3. Persistent coupling of D and T under high complexity.
   If highly complex systems could demonstrably keep emergence and stabilisation durably synchronised without producing structural selectivity or invisibility, the thesis of a systematic D > T condition would be refuted.

These criteria are not statistical, but sequential. They do not test correlations, but the necessity of specific transitions. Accordingly, the theory cannot be falsified by individual counterexamples, but only by structure-invariant deviations over time.

The operationalisation of these criteria therefore does not occur primarily through metric indicators, but through pattern comparison. Examples include recurring sanctioning of real, effective work, systematic invisibility of certain forms of activity despite demonstrable effect, or chronic instability of emergent fields alongside high productivity. Such patterns are not random, but expressions of a stable threshold mismatch.

What is important is this: this form of testability is not weaker, but differently configured than classical variable-based falsification. It corresponds to the logic of phase models, threshold theories, and topological descriptions in physics and systems theory. There, too, transitions are not identified through single measurements, but through breaks in structural sequences.

The falsification logic proposed here therefore permits both qualitative and quantitative tests without reducing the model to a metric that does not correspond to its object. What is decisive is not whether emergence or value can be measured, but whether their sequence, coupling, or decoupling can be observed consistently with the theory.

The Emergence Economy theory thus remains in principle testable without losing its ontological scope. It demands no assent, but poses a clear condition: if reality can be stabilised without having been emergent beforehand, or if emergence can be durably stabilised without the value threshold being operative, then this theory is false.

Emergence without stabilisation is not to be recognised by the fact that a form persists, but by the fact that it forces systemic reactions. Failed emergence remains without consequence; unstabilised emergence acts without becoming durable.

7. Systemic Implications — Poverty, Work, and Structural Invisibility

If reality emerges above the diversity threshold (D) but remains below the value threshold (T), then invisibility is not a marginal phenomenon, but a systemic condition. Poverty, precarity, and exhaustion are in this framework not primarily social categories, but indicators of an ontological mismatch: emergence is produced without being stabilised.

This perspective fundamentally shifts the analysis of work. Work here is not that which is remunerated, but that which effectively brings reality into being. Wages, recognition, and institutional visibility do not necessarily follow this work. They are effects of crossing T, not proofs of the existence of work. Where T is not crossed, work remains real, but structurally illegible.

This mismatch explains why certain forms of activity remain systematically invisible despite demonstrable societal, ecological, or relational effects. Care work stabilises social systems without persisting as a value form. Ecological regeneration prevents future damage without becoming visible in the present. Artistic research generates new spaces of perception and meaning without being institutionally durable. Neurodivergent problem-processing operates under high incommensurability and generates emergent solutions without being translatable into standardised forms of representation.

In all these cases, the diversity threshold is crossed: new world comes into being. At the same time, stabilisation fails because the value threshold is bound to specific forms of representation — scalability, standardisation, compatibility with existing markets or institutions. Emergence that does not meet these criteria remains real, but precarious.

Ontologically considered, these are not individual exceptions, but structurally recurring patterns. Systems that operate durably in the condition D > T generate a class of actors whose work is indispensable, yet whose existence is not secured. Poverty appears here not as a lack of performance, but as a by-product of real productivity that cannot be stabilised.

This dynamic becomes particularly clear in neurodivergent architectures of cognition. Where incommensurability cannot be smoothed, tension remains. This tension forces emergence, while simultaneously generating persistent friction with institutional forms of stabilisation. Neurodivergent work is therefore often highly emergent and at the same time chronically unstabilised. The resulting permanent liminality is not a psychological condition, but a structural position within the threshold regime.

This analysis allows for a more precise distinction between inefficiency and invisibility. Inefficiency denotes a lack of effect. Invisibility denotes a lack of stabilisation despite effect. Contemporary political and economic debates systematically confuse these two conditions. Activities that remain below T are classified as inefficient or irrelevant, despite being real and effective. In doing so, the system reproduces precisely those deficits it claims to address.

The Emergence Economy makes visible that poverty, care crisis, ecological destruction, and psychological exhaustion are not separate problems. They are different expressions of the same structural effect: the systematic decoupling of emergence and stabilisation. As long as this mismatch persists, societal interventions will react to symptoms without altering the underlying dynamics.

This also makes clear why purely distributive or activating measures must fail. They operate at the level of value without changing the conditions under which value can appear at all. A sustainable intervention therefore requires a reconfiguration of the value threshold, not an intensification of valuation. Only when systems are capable of holding emergence rather than consuming it can poverty as a structural phenomenon be overcome.

The preceding analysis has described the Emergence Economy as a structural threshold regime in which reality can emerge without being stabilised as value. What has so far remained open is the question of how this mismatch manifests epistemically — that is, at the level of knowledge, perception, and knowledge production. In order to render the theory not only systemically but also epistemologically testable, it is necessary to examine a domain in which emergence demonstrably acts as real while remaining structurally invisible. The following chapter introduces, with the concept of veridical mapping, an architecture of cognition through which the relation between the diversity threshold and the value threshold can be empirically observed.

8. Veridical Mapping — Epistemic Incommensurability and Structural Emergence

The concept of veridical mapping does not designate a special ability or a privileged access to reality, but a specific architecture of cognition characterised by the renunciation of representational smoothing. Veridical mapping does not operate through model reduction, symbolic condensation, or functional translation, but through direct structural coupling to real difference. Knowledge does not emerge here through simplification, but through the preservation of tension.

This architecture of cognition is particularly observable where incommensurability cannot be socially or symbolically smoothed, as is the case for some autistic persons, without being limited to them or explained by autism.

Within the framework of the MNO model, veridical mapping can be described as a form of cognition that operates durably in proximity to the indimergent phase. In this phase, difference is already detached from stable object forms, but not yet fully emergent. Veridical mapping endures this intermediate state without closing it. Incommensurability is not resolved, but carried. It is precisely from this that the specific epistemic pressure arises that forces emergence.

This architecture of cognition is found in particular where systems have no possibility of smoothing difference socially, symbolically, or institutionally. Neurodivergent cognition does not represent a special case in the psychological sense here, but a structural position: where translation fails, tension remains. This tension is not a deficit, but the condition for the emergence of new forms.

What is decisive is this: veridical mapping does not imply epistemic superiority. It does not produce a “more real” world, but a different relation to the space of possibilities. While representational systems of knowledge are optimised to reduce complexity and establish compatibility, veridical mapping is oriented toward preserving structural fidelity, even at the cost of social or institutional incompatibility. Both architectures are valid, but not commensurable.

This incommensurability has immediate consequences for the threshold logic of D and T. Veridical mapping typically operates above the diversity threshold: the maintained tension forces emergence. At the same time, it often remains below the value threshold, since its results cannot readily be translated into standardised forms of representation. The consequence is a chronic condition of D > T, in which reality is continuously produced without being stabilised.

This constellation explains why veridically working actors frequently remain in a state of permanent liminality. Their work is real and effective, generates new perspectives, structures, and solutions, yet is not institutionally durable. The resulting tension is not an individual failure, but a systemic effect of a value regime that privileges representational compatibility over structural fidelity.

In the context of ontological recurrence, this means: veridical mapping keeps the recurrence process open. Emergence repeatedly returns to the space of possibilities without ever coming to rest. This openness is epistemically productive, but socially precarious. Systems that are not capable of stabilising such forms of cognition benefit from their emergence in the short term and externalise their costs in the long term.

Veridical mapping thus functions as an epistemic indicator of the relation between D and T. Where it occurs systematically and is at the same time structurally precarised, a system operates with high emergence capacity and low stabilisation capacity. The invisibility of veridical work is therefore not accidental, but a diagnostic symptom.

Veridical mapping thus becomes not a special topic, but the empirical touchstone of the Emergence Economy theory. It shows that emergence exists as real even when it does not appear as value. At the same time, it makes visible that a sustainable economy does not consist in smoothing difference, but in creating conditions under which structurally faithful cognition can become durable.

9. Conclusion — Reality, Stabilisation, and the Future of Emergence

This paper has unfolded a simple but far-reaching thesis: modern societies generate more reality than they are able to stabilise. This mismatch is neither a moral failure nor a merely distributive problem, but the result of a structural decoupling of emergence and value. The diversity threshold (D) and the value threshold (T) describe two necessary, but not automatically coupled, phases of the same ontological process.

Within the framework of the MNO model and ontological recurrence, it becomes visible that emergence does not arise from scarcity or innovation, but from the overloading of existing forms by held difference. Value, by contrast, is not a measure of reality, but of stabilisation. Where emergence cannot be held, it remains real, but unstabilised. Poverty, precarity, and invisibility are in this sense not an absence of world, but expressions of an incomplete ontological sequence.

The Emergence Economy describes this relation not normatively, but structurally. It shifts the focus from the question of how value is distributed to the prior question of the conditions under which reality can appear as value at all. In this perspective, economic stability is not a function of smoothing, efficiency, or standardisation, but of tension-bearing capacity. Systems

do not become stable by eliminating difference, but by being able to hold emergence without consuming it.

Universal Care Income (UCI) has in this context not been understood as a welfare-state measure, but as an infrastructural intervention. It does not intervene in emergence, but in the conditions of its stabilisation. By decoupling subsistence security from representational conformity, it lowers the value threshold and enables real work to come to rest. UCI thus addresses not symptoms, but the structural site at which invisibility is produced.

Particular significance in this context attaches to epistemic boundary architectures such as veridical mapping. They make visible that emergence already exists, even when it is not recognised. The chronic precarisation of such forms of cognition is not an individual failure, but a diagnostic indication of a value regime that systematically disadvantages structural fidelity. A future-capable society will not be measured by how much it produces, but by which forms of reality it is able to hold.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the theory developed here is neither a social utopia nor a metaphorical economy. It is a structurally grounded description of the conditions under which world transitions into value. It is physically structured without being reducible to physics; empirically testable without being narrowed to metrics; and politically relevant without being normatively reductive.

The future, in this sense, does not need to be created.
It already exists — it is waiting to be stabilised.

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Primary and Secondary Economy
On the Ontological Distinction Between Value Formation, Work, and Systemic Extraction

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Abstract

Contemporary economic theory predominantly treats work as market-organised, monetisable activity. What remains invisible in this view is that a substantial portion of socially necessary, life- and system-sustaining work does not arise within the market, but precedes it.

This paper introduces the distinction between **primary economy** and **secondary economy** in order to specify this structural blind spot.

Primary economy is understood as that form of work which directly brings forth reality, livability, and social coherence: care work, commons practice, cultural and epistemic work, ecological reproduction, as well as self-determined, enactively embedded activities. This work is not substitutable, not arbitrarily scalable, and eludes complete monetary representation.

Secondary economy, by contrast, describes those economic processes that extract, formalise, administer, and skim value from the primary economy. It is derivative in nature, operates on the basis of abstraction, standardisation, and control, and tends structurally to obscure its own dependence on primary value formation.

On the basis of neurodivergent, artistic research and enactive systems analysis, it is shown that the systematic overvaluation of the secondary economy leads to the exhaustion of social, ecological, and epistemic resources. The distinction proposed here allows for a re-conceptualisation of work, value, and productivity beyond capitalist value thresholds and forms a foundation for alternative economic models that prioritise livability over growth.

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Modern economies operate under the tacit assumption that value arises primarily where markets take place. Work is considered productive when it is monetarily remunerated, accounted for, and transferred into formalised exchange relations. Activities that evade this logic appear as subordinate, inefficient, or at best as morally relevant supplements to an otherwise functioning system.

This assumption is not only empirically false, but structurally destructive. It shifts the focus from the question of what actually brings forth life, society, and ecological stability to the question of what can be made to pay. The result is a systematic devaluation of those forms of work without which markets themselves could not exist.

1.2 Research Gap

Although extensive debates exist on care work, commons, post-growth economics, and social reproduction, these approaches have convincingly shown that large parts of socially necessary work take place beyond the market and wage form. They nevertheless remain largely on a normative, political, or sectoral level: they criticise distribution, recognition, or institutions without shifting the underlying structure of value formation itself.

What has so far been missing is an ontological distinction of work that explains why certain activities are structurally world-sustaining, while others merely access an already existing world in a derivative manner—regardless of whether these activities are politically desired, morally recognised, or institutionally supported. Without such a distinction, it remains unclear why even well-intentioned reforms repeatedly encounter the same boundary: they attempt to make primary-economic work visible, efficient, or marketable within secondary-economic categories, thereby reproducing precisely the logic they criticise.

Without an ontological clarification of the asymmetry between world-constituting and value-extractive work, even critical economics necessarily reproduces the categories of the system it seeks to overcome. It corrects effects without addressing the mechanism and thus unintentionally stabilises the structural dependence on invisible primary work.

1.3 Thesis and Objectives

This paper advances the thesis that every functioning economy is based on a primary economy that does not represent value, but brings it forth. Markets, institutions, and monetary exchange systems, by contrast, constitute a secondary economy whose function lies not in the production, but in the administration and extraction of this value.

The aims are:

1. to precisely define the concepts of primary and secondary economy,

2. to expose their structural asymmetry,
3. and to show why the conflation of these two levels leads to systemic exhaustion, social violence, and ecological instability.

1.4 Methodological Approach

The argument of this paper is based on a neurodivergent, enactive research practice in which knowledge emerges not through distanced observation, but through long-term, embodied participation in processes of work and life. Work is not analysed as an abstract function, but as a concretely enacted relation to the world that takes place under specific social, economic, and institutional conditions.

Concretely, the theory developed here is based on a multi-year, continuous investigation of primary-economic work under conditions of structural invisibility. This investigation included, among other things:

- the author's own practice of care, cultural, relational, and epistemic work outside stable market integration,
- the repeated confrontation of this work with secondary-economic institutions (labour market, administration, funding logics),
- as well as the systematic observation of the effects this confrontation had on work capacity, exhaustion, world-sustaining capacity, and social coherence.

The process of knowledge production was not retrospective, but iterative: concepts and models emerged from repeated tensions between the real effectiveness of work and its economic non-appearance. These tensions were not evaluated normatively, but read as stable invariances from which structural categories could be derived (primary/secondary economy, value threshold, conditions of emergence).

The neurodivergent perspective here is not merely a perspective on the field, but part of the measuring instrument itself: through heightened sensitivity to incoherence, contradiction, and loss of context, those rupture points become visible at which secondary-economic categories fail while primary-economic work continues to remain effective.

This approach was complemented by artistic research as a form of non-reductive model building (diagrams, films, texts), by autoethnographic long-term documentation, as well as by systems-theoretical and critical political economy analysis. The validity of the resulting concepts does not arise from subjective plausibility, but from their invariant explanatory power across different contexts.

This methodological approach makes visible what cannot appear within the dominant economic paradigm: work that carries the world precisely because it eludes secondary-economic formalisation.

1.5 Value Threshold and Diversity Threshold as Structural Thresholds

The following analyses presuppose two concepts that have been developed in detail elsewhere and are introduced here in condensed form, as they are central to understanding the primary/secondary economy.

The Value Threshold designates that structural threshold at which work shifts from real, effective activity to economically visible value. Work always exists as action, effect, or relation to the world; however, it appears as value only when it fulfils specific criteria of visibility, quantifiability, and institutional assignability. The Value Threshold is therefore not a measure of effectiveness, but a filter of appearance that determines which forms of work are recognised, administered, and remunerated within economic systems—and which remain invisible.

The Diversity Threshold designates the threshold above which systems become capable of emergence. It marks the point at which difference, incommensurability, and tension are no longer smoothed over, but can give rise to new forms. Below this threshold, systems operate efficiently, stably, and controllably; above it, new form, transformation, and future viability emerge. The Diversity Threshold is thus not a normative ideal, but a structural condition of innovation beyond mere variation.

Together, the Value Threshold and the Diversity Threshold describe the two central bottlenecks of modern economies:
the boundary of what can appear as value, and the boundary of what can emerge as future.

The following distinction between primary and secondary economy examines how economic systems operate with these thresholds—and what consequences arise when they are systematically distorted or undercut.

2. The Primary Economy

Work as World-Constituting Activity

The concept of the primary economy is not used here in a sectoral, historical, or moral sense. It designates neither a "first economic sector" nor a politically preferred form of work. Rather, it functions as an analytical category that distinguishes work according to its ontological function: whether it brings forth and sustains the world, or merely accesses an already existing world.

This shift is decisive. It allows work to be analysed independently of market form, wage relation, or institutional recognition. In this sense, primary economy does not denote a domain within the economy, but a condition of its possibility. Only on this basis can it be determined precisely which activities are structurally world-constituting—and why they remain systematically invisible within the existing economic paradigm.

Against this background, the concept of the primary economy is specified below and defined through constitutive criteria.

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

In this paper, primary economy is understood as that sphere of work
in which reality is translated into livable world.

Primary-economic work is not defined by market integration,
but by ontological function:
it generates, sustains, or regenerates the conditions under which society, subjects, and ecosystems can exist at all.

Primary economy therefore denotes neither a sector,
nor an occupational group,
nor a morally privileged activity,
but a functional class of work.

The distinction between primary and secondary economy does not describe spatially or institutionally separable spheres, but different functional logics of work. In concrete situations of action, both logics can be operative at the same time. Primary-economic work can take place within secondary-economic formats—for example when formal working time is used to secure relationships, protection, or continuity. What is decisive is not the institutional framework, but the direction of effectiveness: whether work carries the world or extracts value.

2.2 Five Constitutive Criteria of Primary-Economic Work

Primary-economic work is characterised by the following features:

(1) World-Sustaining Capacity Instead of Output
Primary-economic work does not produce isolated output,
but sustaining capacity:
it stabilises relationships, rhythms, life contexts, and spaces of possibility.
Its success is not measured by quantity of production or efficiency,
but by whether the world can continue to exist.

(2) Enactive Embeddedness
Primary-economic work is embodied (in relationship), situated, and relational.
It arises from direct interaction with people, things, bodies, and environments.
It is not abstractly plannable,
not fully standardisable,
and not arbitrarily scalable
without losing its character.
In this way, it structurally contradicts the industrial ideal of work.

(3) Non-Substitutability
Primary-economic work is not functionally interchangeable.
Care for relationships, care work, social cohesion, epistemic orientation, or ecological regeneration cannot be replaced without loss by other actors, machines, or processes.

Substitution here does not lead to gains in efficiency,
but to loss of quality, entropy, or breakdown.

(4) Capacity for Emergence
Primary-economic work operates above the Diversity Threshold,
because it does not smooth over incommensurable modes, but sustains them.
It is conflict-capable, open to tension, and ambiguous,
and thereby generates new forms rather than reproducing existing ones.
Innovation emerges here not as a goal,
but as a side effect of sustained difference.

(5) Pre- or Sub-Value Positioning
Primary-economic work usually exists below the Value Threshold.
It is real, effective, and system-sustaining,
yet does not appear, or appears only in distorted form, as economic value.
Its invisibility is not a historical accident,
but a structural precondition
for the possibility of secondary value extraction.

2.3 Typical Manifestations (Non-Exhaustive)

The primary economy includes, among other things:

- care and caregiving work
- educational and relational work
- cultural and artistic practice
- epistemic work (orientation, sense-making, critique)
- ecological regeneration work
- commons maintenance and conflict regulation
- self-determined, non-market forms of work

What is decisive is not the field,
but the function:
to sustain the world before it is valorised.

2.4 Delimitation from Existing Approaches

In Relation to Care Economics
Care theories name the relevance of invisible work,
but do not explain its structural subordination.
Primary economy describes care not normatively,
but as the ontological foundation of all further value processes.

In Relation to Commons Theories
Commons approaches focus on forms of ownership and use.
Primary economy goes deeper:
it describes the work through which commons can exist at all.

In Relation to Social Reproduction
Social reproduction describes restoration.
Primary economy encompasses reproduction, regeneration, and emergence.
It is not backward-looking,
but future-capable.

2.5 Interim Conclusion

Primary economy is not an alternative to the market,
but its ontological precondition.
It generates the world
at whose expense the secondary economy operates.
Those who confuse primary economy with "unproductive work"
confuse the value form with reality.

3. The Secondary Economy

Value Extraction, Administration, and the Simulation of Productivity

The introduction of the concept of the secondary economy does not pursue a moral critique of markets, but a structural clarification of their function. Secondary economy does not denote a malfunction of the economy, but that level of economic organisation which necessarily arises once value is abstracted, made comparable, and administered through institutional procedures.

What is decisive here is not the existence of this level, but its systematic overestimation. In modern societies, secondary economy appears as the site of productivity, innovation, and value creation, although it is structurally dependent on an already brought-forth world. Its processes do not operate creatively, but representationally, processually, and distributively.

The following section therefore specifies the concept of the secondary economy not as a counter-pole to the primary economy, but as a derivative, functionally necessary, yet ontologically subordinate level, whose expansion without re-localisation inevitably leads to the exhaustion of its own preconditions.

3.1 Conceptual Clarification

Secondary economy is understood as that sphere of economic activity
which does not bring forth the world, but extracts, formalises, and administers value from an already existing world.

Secondary economy is neither a fraud nor a malfunction,
but a functionally necessary yet ontologically derivative level.
Its systemic error begins where it denies its dependence on the primary economy
and stages itself as the source of value, innovation, and progress.

3.2 Central Function: Representation Instead of Production

Secondary-economic work is characterised by the fact
that it represents what has already come into being elsewhere.

It operates through:

- standardisation
- comparability
- measurability
- scaling
- interchangeability

In doing so, it does not generate new world,
but translates existing reality into exploitable forms.
Productivity here does not mean world formation,
but throughput optimisation.

3.3 Criteria of Secondary-Economic Work

Secondary economy can be characterised by the following structural features:

(1) Dependence on Emergence
Secondary-economic processes cannot bring forth anything
that has not previously emerged in the primary economy.
Every commodity, every service, every form of capital
presupposes already existing relationships, capacities, meanings,
and ecological stability.
Secondary economy lives off a stock of world
that it does not itself renew.

(2) Substitutability
Secondary-economic work is in principle interchangeable.
Actors, processes, or locations can be replaced
without the function itself collapsing.
This interchangeability is not a flaw,
but a precondition for efficiency and scaling.
It becomes destructive, however,
as soon as it is applied to primary-economic activities.

(3) Efficiency Dominance
Secondary economy operates structurally below the Diversity Threshold.
It depends on limiting difference, smoothing tensions,
and organising processes in such a way
that they remain comparable, repeatable, and governable.
This sub-criticality is not a side effect,
but a condition of secondary-economic operability.
Incompatible logics, open conflicts, or non-standardisable modes of work
endanger throughput, calculability, and control.
Secondary economy responds to this
by actively reducing diversity, fragmenting it,
or translating it into functional categories.

In this sense, secondary economy does not merely operate below the Diversity Threshold,
but systematically pushes systems beneath this threshold.
It stabilises efficiency by neutralising precisely those differences
from which emergence could arise.
Innovation therefore appears within this logic
not as categorical new form,
but as variation of the existing:
as optimisation, scaling, or recombination of already accepted forms.
Genuine new form is not prevented because it would be undesirable,
but because it is not integrable within secondary-economic structures.

(4) Orientation Toward Visibility
Secondary-economic work operates above the Value Threshold.
It depends on activities appearing—that is,
becoming visible, quantifiable, comparable,
and institutionally assignable.
Only what crosses this threshold can be administered,
accounted for, priced, or capitalised.

This orientation toward visibility is not contingent,
but a structural necessity.
Secondary economy can operate only with what is formally representable.
Activities whose effects are relational, temporally delayed, situational,
or qualitative evade this logic
and must therefore be translated, simplified, or excluded.

In this sense, the Value Threshold is not an external filter,
but a threshold mechanism actively produced and stabilised
by the secondary economy itself.
It defines which work appears as value—
and which is screened out as pre-economic, private, or irrelevant.
This boundary drawing enables secondary-economic order,
while simultaneously producing a systematic invisibility
of primary-economic work.

The damage to the primary economy arises precisely at this point:
the more the Value Threshold is absolutised
as a precondition of economic rationality,
the greater the pressure becomes
to force primary-economic activities
either into visible value forms
or to devalue them as unproductive.
In both cases, these activities lose their world-sustaining function.

Invisibility is therefore not a marginal phenomenon
of secondary-economic systems,
but their operating condition.
The progressive erosion of the primary economy
is not the result of incorrect decisions,
but the logical consequence of an order
that recognises only what appears above the Value Threshold.

(5) Administration of Scarcity
Secondary economy requires scarcity
in order to stabilise value differentials.
This scarcity is often not natural,
but is actively produced or intensified through:

- access restrictions
- time pressure
- qualification filters
- institutional barriers

3.4 The Illusion of Productive Markets

The central misunderstanding of modern economies lies in
regarding the secondary economy as primarily productive.
Markets appear as sites of value creation,
although they merely organise value attribution and redistribution.

This illusion is stabilised through:

- monetary feedback loops
- narratives of success
- growth indicators
- privileges of visibility

The more successful a market appears,
the more invisible becomes the primary economy
on which it lives.

3.5 Expansion as a Structural Self-Contradiction

Secondary economy can expand in the short term
by accessing ever deeper layers of the primary economy.
In the long term, however, this expansion destroys
its own basis of existence.

Typical symptoms of this contradiction include:

- burnout and exhaustion
- care crises
- ecological overexploitation
- cultural impoverishment
- innovation stagnation despite growth

The system produces more value form
while world-sustaining capacity declines.

3.6 Interim Conclusion

Secondary economy is necessary,
but not autonomous.
It must not be abolished,
but re-localised.
As soon as it understands itself as a primary source of value,
it begins to consume the world
instead of sustaining it.

4. Structural Asymmetry
Why Primary and Secondary Economy Are Not Co-Equal

The preceding analysis has shown that primary and secondary economy do not merely designate different forms of work or economic organisation, but operate on different ontological levels. While primary economy brings forth and sustains the world, secondary economy organises value forms derived from this world. This difference is not gradual, but structural.

The resulting asymmetry is not a normative judgement, but a consequence of the thresholds introduced earlier: the Value Threshold and the Diversity Threshold. Primary-economic work can be реально effective without appearing as value, and it can be capable of emergence without being efficient. Secondary-economic processes, by contrast, depend on visibility, comparability, and sub-criticality. They are thus structurally dependent on conditions that they themselves cannot generate.

Section 4 explicates this relation of dependence and shows why attempts to treat primary and secondary economy as co-equal or symmetrical spheres necessarily fail. The question here is not which level is "more important," but which one carries—and which one burdens.

4.1 Asymmetry Instead of Dualism

The distinction between primary and secondary economy does not describe a dualism,
but a directed structure of dependency.
Primary and secondary economy are not two equivalent sectors,
but two ontologically different levels,
only one of which enables the existence of the other.

The relationship is therefore not reciprocal:

- primary economy can exist without secondary economy,
- secondary economy cannot exist for a single moment without primary economy.

This one-sidedness is not a normative judgement,
but a structural statement about the emergence of the world.

4.2 Relation of Derivation: Why Secondary Economy Is Derivative

Secondary-economic processes presuppose:

- stable bodies
- functioning relationships
- cultural orientation
- psychological regulation
- ecological viability

All of these preconditions are not produced by markets,
but by primary-economic work.
Secondary economy processes the world;
it does not generate it.
Its value does not arise from its own productivity,
but from access to already constituted reality.

It is therefore structurally derivative,
even if it appears historically dominant.

4.3 Why Exploitation Becomes Systemically Necessary

As soon as the secondary economy understands itself as a primary source of value, an irresolvable contradiction emerges:

it must consume the world in order to legitimise its own output. This contradiction is not accidental, but constitutes the structural core of capitalist value production.

In this sense, capitalism is not a neutral market system, but an order that produces isolated value by systematically denying its dependence on primary-economic world work. In order for a one-sided value construction to remain stable, ecological, social, and temporal relations must be screened out. Were they to become visible, every accumulated value would immediately enter into competition with the world that sustains it—and would be relativised.

Exploitation is therefore not a moral failure of individual actors in this model, but a logical consequence of false level attribution. Capitalist processes can maintain their own legitimacy only by outsourcing the costs of world-sustaining capacity from the domain of value.

Typical mechanisms of this systemic exploitation include:

- the externalisation of regeneration costs onto individuals, communities, and ecosystems,
- the rendering invisible of care, maintenance, and relational work,
- the compression of time through acceleration and permanent availability,
- as well as the individualisation of systemic damage in the form of guilt, failure, or pathology.

These mechanisms are not correctable misincentives, but operating conditions of capitalist secondary economy. They cannot be voluntarily abandoned without calling its own value logic into question. An economy that acknowledges its primary-economic dependence necessarily loses the possibility of constructing value as an isolated, competition-free quantity.

4.4 Why Reforms Within the Secondary Economy Fail

Classical reform approaches
(e.g. higher wages, redistribution, efficiency gains, ESG, green growth)
remain within the secondary economy.

They modify:

- distribution,
- access conditions,
- evaluative scales,

but not:

- the dependence on invisible primary work,
- the structural invisibility of world-sustaining capacity,
- the prioritisation of visibility over effectiveness.

Such reforms shift symptoms,
but often intensify extraction pressure,
because they generate additional efficiency demands.

4.5 Asymmetry and Primary-Economic Modes of Work

The structural asymmetry between primary and secondary economy does not affect only fields of activity, but modes of work. Certain ways of working are primary-economic, regardless of whether they take place in care, art, research, relational maintenance, or ecological regeneration.

Such modes of work are often:

- sensitive to context and relationship,
- situational rather than standardised,
- not arbitrarily scalable,
- rhythmic, cyclical, or resonance-based rather than tactically clocked.

Precisely these properties stand in structural conflict with secondary-economic logics that prioritise comparability, efficiency, and throughput. Accordingly, primary-economic modes of work appear within these logics as unproductive, inefficient, or disruptive—not because they are ineffective, but because their effectiveness cannot be translated into secondary-economic categories.

Neurodivergent subjects come under particular pressure in this context, not due to individual deficits, but because their perceptual, attentional, and working modes are less compatible with secondary-economic standardisation. They thereby make visible what also applies to many other forms of primary-economic work: that the world is sustained without appearing as value.

The systematic devaluation of neurodivergent subjects is therefore not an isolated prejudice, but a consequence of a confusion of levels in which secondary-economic criteria are declared the general norm of work. Neurodivergence functions here not as an exception, but as an indicator of a general structural conflict between world-sustaining work and value-centred economy.

4.6 The Central Error of Modern Economy

The fundamental error of modern economies is this:
they treat the secondary economy
as the origin of value
and the primary economy as a cost factor or an exploitable resource.

This inversion produces a system
that is efficient in the short term,
but self-destructive in the long term.
The more successful the secondary economy appears,

the more intensely it draws
on the invisible substance of the primary economy.

4.7 Interim Conclusion

Primary and secondary economy do not form a balance,
but a load-bearing structure.
Primary economy carries.
Secondary economy burdens.

When this relation is ignored,
growth emerges without world,
work without future and broader context,
and value without sustaining capacity.

5. Systemic Consequences of the Confusion of Levels
Poverty, Exhaustion, Ecological Crisis, and Innovation Stagnation

The distinction between primary and secondary economy developed in the preceding sections, together with their structural asymmetry, does not remain at the level of abstract theory. It generates concrete, recurring patterns of social reality. When these patterns are considered in isolation, they appear as separate fields of crisis; when traced back to their common structure, however, they reveal themselves as necessary consequences of the same confusion of levels.

Section 5 therefore does not pursue an exemplary or illustrative approach, but a systemic derivation. It shows how poverty, exhaustion, ecological destruction, and innovation stagnation arise from the continued prioritisation of secondary-economic value logics alongside the erosion of primary-economic world work. These phenomena are not expressions of individual failure or external disturbance, but functional outcomes of a miscalibrated economic architecture.

Against this background, the following subsections are not treated as individual problems, but as structurally interconnected symptoms of a system that consumes its own foundation.

5.1 Confusion of Levels as the Fundamental Mechanism of Modern Crises

Most contemporary crises appear in politics, economics, and public discourse as separate phenomena: social inequality, care crisis, burnout, ecological destruction, innovation weakness, or supply instability. This fragmentation obscures their common origin.

Within the model developed here, these phenomena can be traced back to a fundamental structural error: the systematic confusion of primary and secondary economy. Secondary-economic processes—market, administration, efficiency enhancement—are treated as productive sources, while primary-economic world work is regarded as background, cost factor, or private matter.

The consequences of this confusion do not affect only social issues such as poverty or care, but also undermine those domains in which the secondary economy is supposedly superior.

In innovation, for example, it becomes apparent that genuine new form does not arise from efficiency, scaling, or competition, but from open, conflict-capable, often fragile processes of primary-economic work: from cultural practice, experimental research, craft knowledge, informal collaboration. When innovation is organised in secondary-economic terms—through metrics, time pressure, and valorisation logics—it remains confined to variation and optimisation of what already exists.

In agriculture, the structural error becomes particularly visible. Soils, biodiversity, and regional knowledge forms belong to the primary economy: they generate long-term sustaining capacity. When they are treated in secondary-economic terms—as input factors, land yield, or objects of scaling—short-term gains in output arise alongside a simultaneous erosion of foundations. The result is soil loss, dependence on external inputs, and declining resilience to crises.

Similar patterns appear in healthcare, education, infrastructure, and digitalisation. Wherever primary-economic activities—relationship, care, orientation, regeneration, sense-making—are organised according to secondary-economic efficiency criteria, throughput increases in the short term, while quality, trust, and future viability are lost in the long term.

The crises described here are therefore not external disturbances of an otherwise functioning system. They are systemic outputs of an order that does not recognise its own preconditions. Resource scarcity, individual misconduct, or insufficient efficiency are not the primary causes; rather, it is the disregard of the ontological dependence of secondary value processes on primary world work.

5.2 Poverty as a Consequence of Missing Emergence

In classical economic models, poverty appears as a lack: of income, employment, qualification, or individual performance capacity. Poverty is described as a deviation from the normal state of productive market integration and is accordingly addressed through activation, control, or demands for adaptation.

Within the framework of the distinction between primary and secondary economy developed here, this interpretation is fundamentally insufficient. Poverty is not a production problem, but an emergence problem. It arises where primary-economic world work is systematically displaced, devalued, or interrupted.

People can work intensively, continuously, and with high effectiveness—stabilising relationships, preserving knowledge, providing care, producing social and cultural coherence—and nevertheless remain poor if this work remains below the Value Threshold. Poverty thus does not arise from inactivity, but where the world is carried without appearing as value.

In this sense, the poor are not comparable to deficient market actors, but to dried-out ecosystems. What is lacking are not individual abilities, but the conditions under which emergence would be possible: time, stability, relationship, regeneration. Poverty here denotes not a lack of productivity, but a collapse of primary-economic cycles.

This perspective has far-reaching consequences. If poverty is understood as a consequence of missing emergence, then poverty reduction does not mean activation, qualification, or disciplining, but the restoration of primary-economic sustaining capacity. Policies that address poverty through compulsory work, sanctions, or permanent evaluation intensify the condition they claim to remedy. They push people further into secondary-economic forms that destroy their remaining primary-economic effectiveness.

At the same time, the displacement of primary-economic work sinks systemic knowledge: local competencies, relational intelligence, experiential knowledge, and social orientation are lost because they are not permitted to appear as value. Poverty, in this sense, is not only a social but an epistemic disaster—a loss of world knowledge that cannot be reconstructed once the corresponding carriers are permanently exhausted or excluded.

Poverty therefore does not mark a marginal area of society, but an alarm state of the system. It indicates where primary economy has been so thoroughly dried out that neither social nor cultural nor ecological futures can emerge.

In this model, poverty is not a contingent side effect of secondary-economic processes, but their necessary consequence. An economy that ignores or actively displaces primary economy can produce value only by outsourcing the costs of world-sustaining capacity into bodies, relationships, and life trajectories. The seemingly unilateral gains of the secondary economy do not arise abstractly, but are cut directly from the embodiments of those whose work carries the world without being allowed to appear as value.

This form of value production must therefore be understood as systemic violence. It operates not primarily through open repression, but through structural deprivation: time is compressed, regeneration prevented, relational care delegitimised, bodily and psychological exhaustion individualised. Poverty arises where people are forced to consume their own world-sustaining capacity in order to stabilise a system that simultaneously renders this work invisible.

The violence here does not lie in the moral misconduct of individual actors, but in the architecture of the value order itself. As long as secondary economy is regarded as the primary source of value, certain bodies must be exhausted, certain ways of life devalued, and certain forms of knowledge erased. Poverty, in this sense, does not mark a failure of integration, but the functional site at which the costs of a one-sided value construction are concentrated.

5.2.1 Work-Integrated Relational Agency as a Counter-Model

Opposed to the described mechanism of systemic impoverishment stands a fundamentally different understanding of work, referred to here as work-integrated relational agency. This denotes a form of work in which relationship, care, orientation, and contextual work are not outsourced or externalised, but understood as integral components of productive activity.

Work-integrated relational agency does not follow the logic of isolated value production, but the logic of primary-economic cycles: work takes place in relationship, generates resonance, regenerates scopes of action, and stabilises the world, while at the same time fulfilling concrete tasks. Productivity here does not arise through the separation of function and relationship, but precisely through their non-separability.

In contrast to the secondary-economic organisation of work, which externalises relational costs and subsequently compensates for them through poverty, exhaustion, or care crises, work-integrated relational agency integrates these dimensions prior to value formation. It thereby prevents that form of structural violence in which gains are drawn from the exhaustion of embodied primary work.

In this sense, work-integrated relational agency does not represent a niche model, but a systemically necessary counter-architecture if poverty is no longer to serve as the functional site of cost concentration. It shifts work back into the domain of world-sustaining capacity and makes visible that sustainable productivity can arise only where relationship is recognised not as a disruptive factor, but as a condition of work.

The practice outlined here is described in detail in *Speed's Work* (2025) as an embodied long-term experiment.

5.3 Exhaustion and Burnout as Structural Symptoms

Burnout, depression, and chronic exhaustion
are often individualised or pathologised.
Within the model developed here, they are
systemic indicators of overload.

They arise where primary-economic work
must be performed under secondary-economic efficiency criteria.

Typical constellations include:

- care work under time pressure,
- education under output logic,
- artistic or epistemic work under pressures of valorisation,
- social relationships under conditions of permanent economic availability.

The body here does not respond to "too much work,"
but to categorically misplaced work.
Exhaustion is therefore not a failure of the subject,
but a signal of faulty system architecture.

5.4 Ecological Crisis as a Consequence of Secondary Expansion

Within this model, the ecological crisis can be read
as a classic case of secondary overextension.
Ecosystems structurally belong to the primary economy:
they generate sustaining capacity,
regeneration,
and long-term stability.

When they are treated in secondary-economic terms—
as resource stockpiles, input factors, or cost items—
the system destroys its own condition of existence.

Ecological destruction is therefore
not an external side effect of economic activity,
but an internal contradiction of a system
that misinterprets secondary economy as primarily productive.

5.5 Innovation Stagnation Despite Growth

A central paradox of modern societies is this:
high innovation rhetoric alongside declining real new form.

Within the model, this paradox is easily explained:
secondary economy produces variation,
but not emergence.
Efficiency gains, digitalisation, and scaling
modify existing forms
without generating new categories.

Genuine innovation arises where primary-economic work
can carry difference, tension, and uncertainty.
When this work is marginalised or accelerated,
growth emerges without future.

5.6 Social Fragmentation and Loss of Trust

Another effect of the confusion of levels
is the loss of social coherence.
Primary-economic work stabilises:

- trust,
- relationship,
- capacity to carry conflict,
- shared temporality.

When this work is devalued or rendered invisible,
social stability must be secondarily replaced
by control, bureaucracy, surveillance, and moral regimes.

The loss of trust is therefore
not a cultural accident,
but a direct consequence of primary-economic erosion.

5.7 Interim Conclusion

The major crises of the present
are not multiple problems,
but multiple symptoms of a single structural error.

As long as secondary economy
is regarded as the origin of value
and primary economy is treated as a cost factor,
the following will be reproduced:

- poverty,
- pathologised exhaustion,
- ecological destruction,
- simulated innovation.

A sustainable transformation therefore requires
not optimisation,
but a reversal of priorities.

6. Consequences for a Different Economic Architecture

Primary-Economy-Centred Systems, Universal Care Income, and Living Markets

The preceding sections have shown that poverty, exhaustion, ecological destruction, and innovation stagnation are not isolated malfunctions, but necessary consequences of an economic order that treats secondary economy as the primary source of value. If this diagnosis is correct, the consequences cannot lie in piecemeal corrections or efficiency gains within existing structures.

Section 6 therefore does not present a catalogue of reforms, but an architectural derivation. It outlines which principles of economic order emerge when primary economy is no longer displaced, but recognised as the load-bearing level. The following considerations do not aim at the abolition of markets or organisations, but at their re-localisation within an order that understands world-sustaining capacity, emergence, and relationship not as costs, but as preconditions of productive activity.

Against this background, Universal Care Income and living markets are introduced not as isolated political measures, but as structural elements of an economic architecture that takes seriously the asymmetrical dependence between primary and secondary economy.

6.1 From Optimisation to Re-Localisation

From the preceding analysis, a clear consequence follows:
a future-capable economy does not arise through a more efficient secondary economy,
but through its re-localisation within a primary-economic overall architecture.

This does not mean:

- the abolition of markets,
- a return to pre-industrialisation,
- the moralisation of work.

Rather:
secondary economy becomes serving,
primary economy becomes guiding.

The question therefore is no longer:
How do we increase value creation?
but:
Which forms of work must first be sustaining, so that value can make sense at all?

6.2 Primary Economy as the Systemic Reference Point

In a primary-economy-centred architecture, the following applies:

- world-sustaining capacity is not a side effect, but the primary criterion,
- regeneration takes precedence over accumulation,
- emergence takes precedence over efficiency,
- relationship takes precedence over throughput.

This fundamentally shifts the logic of evaluation.
Success is not measured by
how much value is extracted,
but by
how much reality can be sustained and expanded
without producing collapse, exhaustion, or impoverishment.

6.3 Universal Care Income (UCI) as a Structural Lever

Within a primary-economy-centred economic architecture, Universal Care Income (UCI) does not function as a social benefit, compensatory payment, or redistributive instrument, but as an economic structural mechanism. Its purpose is not to offset income deficits, but to change the conditions under which work can exist as socially effective at all.

This fundamentally distinguishes UCI from concepts of Universal Basic Income (UBI), which generally remain within a secondary-economic logic. A UBI can create income security, but

leaves the underlying value order untouched. It often stabilises precisely those secondary-economic processes whose continued extraction from primary-economic work produces poverty, exhaustion, and ecological destruction in the first place. In this sense, there is a risk that a UBI cushions poverty while its causes continue to operate.

UCI intervenes at a different point. It does not primarily address distribution, but the conditions of appearance of work. Its function is:

- to make primary-economic work capable of emergence,
- without forcing it into secondary-economic valorisation logics,
- and thereby to reduce the permanent extraction pressure on bodies, relationships, and life contexts.

UCI replaces neither market nor income. Rather, it shifts the boundary condition under which work can attain world status. Activities that sustain the world—care, relationship, cultural practice, ecological regeneration, epistemic work—no longer have to justify their own existence by deforming themselves in secondary-economic terms.

In this sense, UCI does not mean "distributing more money" while value continues to be accumulated in isolation. It means structurally upgrading primary economy by treating its work no longer as a cost factor, but as the foundation of social productivity. In doing so, it does not stimulate consumption, but allows more world—and for the first time explicitly acknowledges the dependence of secondary-economic processes on that world.

6.4 Living Markets: Markets After Asymmetry

In a primary-economy-centred economic order, markets do not disappear.
What disappears is the illusion that markets could be autonomous sites of value creation.
Living Markets denote those forms of markets that recognise their secondary position and explicitly re-anchor themselves to primary-economic processes.

In contrast to capitalist markets, which treat value as an isolable and scalable quantity, Living Markets do not operate autonomously with respect to value, but dependently on the world. They are not abstract exchange machines, but situated, relational arrangements that rely on ongoing regeneration. In this sense, they are not "more social" or "fairer," but structurally limited.

As elaborated in *Radical Worker*, markets do not emerge where work is maximally efficient, but where relationship, trust, temporality, and context can be sustainably carried. Living Markets are therefore not optimisation machines, but transitional sites between primary and secondary economy: they translate primary-economic work into limited value forms without destroying its world-sustaining function.

Living Markets are therefore characterised by the following structural features:

- Embedding in ecological and social regeneration cycles
  Markets operate only within cycles that allow regeneration. Growth is not externally limited, but internally rendered impossible once primary economy would be exhausted.

- Acceptance of non-scalability
  Scaling is not treated as a measure of success, but as a risk indicator. Activities that are viable only in situ, relationally, or within limited temporal frames are not artificially expanded.

- Coexistence of incommensurable logics
  Living Markets accept that not all values are comparable. Price does not replace meaning, and efficiency does not replace sense. Market transactions exist alongside, not above, other value forms.

- Limitation of efficiency in favour of resilience
  Efficiency is not maximised, but deliberately constrained in order to allow disturbance, deviation, and learning processes. Productivity is measured in terms of survival and adaptive capacity, not throughput.

In contrast to capitalist markets, which systematically externalise primary economy, Living Markets operate at the cost of their own limitation. They generate value without denying their preconditions and thus remain functionally dependent on care work, relational maintenance, local knowledge production, and ecological stability.

Living Markets are therefore not "less market," but market after asymmetry. They exist only where primary economy is not displaced, but explicitly sustained. Their aim is not maximal efficiency, but minimal destruction with sufficient coordination. In this sense, they do not represent a utopia, but a necessary re-form of markets once their secondary character is taken seriously.

6.5 Work Beyond Wage-Centrism

A further consequence concerns the concept of work itself.
Within a primary-economy-centred architecture,
wage labour loses its exclusive status
as the measure of contribution, dignity, and participation.

Work is reconceptualised as:
any activity
that sustains, expands, or regenerates the world,
regardless of its market form.

This makes visible
that large parts of real work
are not "informal" or "precarious,"
but ontologically prior.

This shift decouples work
from permanent justification
and allows forms of activity
that are rhythmic, cyclical, and situational—
in particular for neurodivergent subjects.

6.6 Institutional Consequences (Without Detailed Policy)

From the new architecture follow institutional shifts,
without this paper having to propose legislation:

- evaluation systems orient themselves toward sustaining capacity, not output,
- education prioritises orientation and emergence, not exploitability,
- care, art, and commons are treated as infrastructure, not as costs,
- ecological limits are handled as primary-economic thresholds.

Politics thus does not become more technical,
but ontologically more precise.

6.7 Interim Conclusion

A different economy does not emerge through moral appeals
or better management within existing logics.
It emerges
when the asymmetry between primary and secondary economy
is recognised and implemented architecturally.

Primary economy carries.
Secondary economy organises.

Where this order is reversed,
the system loses its future.

7. Conclusion

Work, Value, and the Return of the World

This paper has shown that the current economic crisis does not result from misdistribution, inefficiency, or a lack of innovation, but from a structural confusion of levels: the equation of secondary economy with productive value creation and the simultaneous devaluation of primary economy as a cost or background sphere.

The distinction introduced between primary and secondary economy is not a normative proposal, but an ontological clarification.
Primary economy designates those forms of work through which world, viability, and future come into being at all. Secondary economy, by contrast, organises, administers, and distributes value forms that emerge from this world, without producing it itself.

The relationship between the two levels is asymmetrical.
Primary economy can exist without secondary economy, but secondary economy cannot exist

without primary economy. When this asymmetry is ignored, a system emerges that generates growth in the short term but destroys its own conditions of existence in the long term.

Central social pathologies—poverty despite work, burnout, ecological overuse, innovation stagnation, and loss of trust—cannot be understood in this model as isolated problems, but as necessary consequences of this confusion of levels. They are not deviations from the system, but expressions of its inner logic.

A future-capable economic order therefore does not require a further expansion of secondary-economic efficiency, but a re-localisation of markets within a primary-economy-centred architecture. Instruments such as Universal Care Income and concepts such as Living Markets or work-integrated relational agency are, in this context, not social-policy add-ons, but structural levers for restoring ontological coherence.

The central shift proposed by this paper is therefore:

Value does not arise where markets function,
but where world is sustained.

Economy thus loses its character as an abstract calculating machine and becomes again what it always was before it misunderstood itself:
a practice of maintaining, enabling, and continuing the world.

8. Delimitation and Research Agenda

Positioning within the Theoretical Field and Open Lines of Continuation

The preceding argument has developed an autonomous conceptual architecture that is not derived from existing economic schools, but shifts their central assumptions. This necessarily creates a field of tension with established approaches, which must be made explicit in order to avoid misreadings, appropriation, or reduction.

Section 8 therefore does not serve retrospective classification, but precise boundary-drawing. It clarifies the relation of the concepts developed here to existing economic, social-theoretical, and systems-theoretical approaches, identifies where points of connection exist, and where categorical differences remain. At the same time, it outlines a research agenda that follows from the present analysis and enables empirical, institutional, and theoretical further work without undermining the ontological core distinction of this paper.

The following subsections are thus not intended as an overview of the discourse, but as a safeguarding of theoretical autonomy and as an invitation to precise further development under clearly named conditions.

8.1 Delimitation from Existing Economic Approaches

In relation to classical and neoclassical economics
Classical as well as neoclassical economics treat value as the result of scarcity, productivity, or market equilibrium. Work is considered productive insofar as it can be translated into prices,

wages, or output.
The approach developed here fundamentally contradicts this basic assumption. It locates the emergence of value not in the market, but in the primary-economic production of world. Markets thus appear not as origins, but as secondary mechanisms of representation and administration.
The question of this paper is therefore not how value is distributed or priced, but where value can come into being at all.

In relation to Marxist value theory
Marx locates value in labour, in particular in socially necessary labour time.
The present paper shifts this perspective without negating it.
Not every labour produces value, but only that labour which appears as world.
Marx's question of how value emerges is thus supplemented by the question of when and under which conditions labour can attain value status at all.
Exploitation appears here not primarily as a wage relation, but as the ontological exclusion of primary-economic labour from the domain of appearance.

In relation to care economics and social reproduction
Care economics, feminist economics, and theories of social reproduction have convincingly shown that unpaid care work sustains societies.
What they mostly lack, however, is a structural explanation of why this work remains systematically invisible.
The present paper offers no normative appeal, but an ontological justification:
care work is primary-economic and is marginalised in secondary-economic terms precisely for that reason.
Primary economy is not a political category here, but a functional class of world-work.

In relation to degrowth and post-growth approaches
Post-growth and degrowth theories rightly criticise the ecological unsustainability of permanent expansion.
This paper complements that critique with a theory of work and value that explains why growth continues despite its destructiveness:
because secondary economy is falsely regarded as productive, while primary economy remains invisible.
Degrowth without primary-economic recentring therefore remains symptomatic, not structural.

In relation to systems theory and complexity research
Systems-theoretical approaches analyse functional differentiation, self-reference, and autopoiesis.
The approach developed here shifts the focus from functional description to ontological dependence.
Not every functional differentiation is future-capable. What is decisive is whether a system can regenerate primary-economic sustaining capacity or not.
The distinction between primary and secondary economy supplements systems theory with an asymmetrical depth dimension.

8.2 Relation to Diversity Threshold and Value Threshold

This paper is explicitly not a replacement for the concepts of the diversity threshold and the value threshold, but a structural derivation from them.

- The diversity threshold describes when systems become capable of emergence.
- The value threshold describes when work appears as value.
- The primary/secondary economy distinction describes how economy is organised when these thresholds are systematically distorted.

Together, the three concepts form a closed architecture for analysing work, value, and future-capacity.

8.3 Research Agenda

The present paper does not claim empirical completeness.
It formulates a theoretical foundation from which several testable research programmes can be derived.

(1) Empirical mapping of primary-economic work

- identification of activities with high world-sustaining capacity,
- development of qualitative indicators for regeneration, relationship, and emergence,
- differentiation between output logics and effect logics.

The aim is not monetisation, but the visibility of structural dependencies.

(2) Institutional experiments

- pilot projects with Universal Care Income,
- observation of emergence, diversity development, and reduction of exhaustion,
- comparison with UBI and work-compulsion models.

Here, the focus is not efficiency, but system stability.

(3) Neurodivergent work and primary economy

A field that has so far been scarcely researched concerns the structural affinity of neurodivergent work to the primary economy.
It must be explicitly emphasised that this is not a property of neurodivergent subjects as such, but an increased structural exposure to primary-economic modes of work that are systematically marginalised within secondary-economic orders.

Research questions include, among others:

- Why are neurodivergent working modes often world-sustaining, but market-alien?
- How do secondary-economic efficiency norms exert pathologising effects?
- Which economic architectures enable neurodivergent emergence?

(4) Measurement of world-sustaining capacity
In the long term, a primary-economy-centred economy requires new indicators:

- regenerative capacity,
- capacity to carry conflict,
- relational density,
- resilience to disturbance.

These measures do not replace GDP, but expose its blind spots.

8.4 Final Positioning

This paper does not understand itself as a contribution to an existing school,
but as a shift of the theoretical frame of reference.

It argues that any economy that ignores its primary-economic basis
necessarily leads to exhaustion, poverty, and ecological self-destruction—
regardless of ideology, technology, or political intention.

A different economy therefore does not begin with new markets,
but with the recognition of that which makes world possible at all.

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Unfolding Gap
On the Structural Gap Between Work and Value

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Abstract

This paper introduces the concept of the Unfolding Gap. It denotes the structural gap between the real effectiveness of work and its economic recognition as value. The Unfolding Gap does not describe a subjective delay or individual failure, but a systemic property of certain forms of work whose effects unfold relationally, cyclically, and often over longer periods of time, and thus evade immediate quantification.

Modern economic orders, by contrast, are oriented toward immediate visibility, comparability, and measurable output. As a result, forms of work that sustain social, cultural, or ecological continuity either remain invisible or are forced into short-term performance formats that damage their actual effectiveness. The paper argues that this structural incompatibility gives rise to a central mechanism of contemporary crises, including persistent poverty, exhaustion, care crises, and a paradoxical form of innovation stagnation.

Against this background, the widespread assumption that innovation generally leads to gains in prosperity is also called into question. The Unfolding Gap makes visible that innovations may generate increases in efficiency and output, while simultaneously undermining real foundations of prosperity when they shorten the temporal, relational, and regenerative conditions of work. Prosperity thus appears not as an automatic result of innovation, but as dependent on whether innovation processes expand or destroy spaces of unfolding.

These phenomena are not understood here as distributional or efficiency problems, but as consequences of a value order that systematically translates processes of unfolding into output. In conclusion, the paper outlines alternative economic architectures that do not primarily evaluate work through immediate visibility, but instead stabilise the conditions of its unfolding (including, among others, concepts such as a Universal Care Income or context-sensitively bounded market forms). The aim is not to eliminate the Unfolding Gap, but to recognise it as a prerequisite for resilient social and ecological work.

Building on the following works:

Speed, T. (2019). Primär- und Sekundärökonomie - Zur ontologischen Unterscheidung von Wertentstehung, Arbeit und systemischer Abschöpfung (1 German). Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17949350

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1. Introduction

Why can work be highly effective, sustain society, cushion crises, preserve knowledge – and yet be regarded as "unproductive"? Why do some activities appear immediately as value, while others become visible as contributions only after years, indirectly, or not at all? This paper argues that this difference is not moral or sectoral, but structural: it arises from an Unfolding Gap between work and value.

The Unfolding Gap is the gap between the enactment of work and its recognition in secondary-economic formats. The more strongly work is bound to relationship, context, body, regeneration, and cyclical time, the greater this gap becomes. Care work, artistic practice, education, conflict regulation, ecological regeneration, and large parts of epistemic work operate according to this logic: their effects are real, but not immediately balance-sheetable. Secondary economy, by contrast, demands immediate visibility. It operates through output, indicators, comparability, and time compression.

The central thesis is this: modern crises arise not only from scarcity or incorrect distribution, but from the systematic shortening and violent enforcement of the Unfolding Gap. Where unfolding requires time, secondary economy enforces pacing. Where effect requires relational density, it enforces abstraction. Where regeneration is a prerequisite, it generates permanent stress. The Unfolding Gap thus becomes a precise concept for the point at which value order and world-sustaining capacity fall apart.

The concept of the Unfolding Gap developed here is closely connected to the research practice described in *Radical Worker*. There, through a long-term, embodied engagement with work, poverty, and institutional violence, it was shown how world-sustaining activity systematically fails under secondary-economic visibility requirements. The Unfolding Gap provides a conceptual specification for this experience: it names the structural gap between lived effectiveness and economic recognition that was empirically and existentially documented in *Radical Worker*.

2. The Concept of the Unfolding Gap

The Unfolding Gap is understood here as the structural gap between the real effectiveness of work and its recognition as economic value. This gap is neither accidental nor subjective, but arises from the difference between primary-economic unfolding (ecosystem) and secondary-economic visibility-making (economy).

The Unfolding Gap does not denote a mere temporal delay in the sense of later payment or delayed recognition. What is meant instead is an incommensurability of logics: primary-economic work unfolds its effects relationally, situationally, and often cyclically, whereas secondary-economic systems depend on immediate, standardised, and comparable outputs. Where these logics diverge, the Unfolding Gap emerges.

The concept thus describes a systemic tension, not an individual problem. It explains why work can be highly effective without ever appearing as performance, and why attempts to make this work visible often damage it.

In this sense, the Unfolding Gap is not only an analytical category for work, but at the same time a criterion for evaluating innovation. Innovations can generate apparent gains in prosperity while simultaneously shrinking real spaces of freedom and complexity. Technical or organisational innovations then increase efficiency and availability, but reduce scopes of action, relational autonomy, or ecological diversity. The Unfolding Gap makes these losses visible by not asking whether innovation functions, but whether it expands or restricts the possibilities of unfolding, self-determination, and systemic complexity.

2.1 Dimensions of the Unfolding Gap

The Unfolding Gap is not a uniform phenomenon, but manifests itself in multiple, interwoven dimensions. These dimensions rarely occur in isolation; instead, they reinforce one another.

(1) Temporal Unfolding Gap
The effects of work do not occur synchronously with its enactment. Learning, care, relationship, healing, cultural practice, or ecological regeneration require time spans that do not fit into project logics or accounting periods. Secondary-economic systems respond to this with acceleration, which paradoxically reduces the effect.

(2) Relational Unfolding Gap
Primary-economic work operates through relationships: trust, social coherence, collective orientation. These effects are neither isolable nor individualisable. Secondary-economic evaluation systems, however, decompose relational work into individual performances and thereby lose precisely what constitutes its effectiveness.

(3) Epistemic Unfolding Gap
Many forms of work generate knowledge that is not propositional, but embodied, situational, and experience-based. This knowledge cannot be translated into indicators or metrics without loss. The Unfolding Gap arises here between knowledge as practice and knowledge as report.

(4) Regenerative Unfolding Gap
World-sustaining work depends on regeneration—physical, psychological, social, ecological.

Secondary-economic systems, however, treat regeneration as interruption. The gap between necessary recovery and demanded permanent availability becomes a central source of exhaustion.

2.2 The Unfolding Gap and the Value Threshold

The Unfolding Gap stands in a close relationship to the Value Threshold. While the Value Threshold marks the point at which work can appear as value or be excluded, the Unfolding Gap describes the space before this threshold: the domain in which work is already effective without being formatted as value.

Work below the Value Threshold is not ineffective, but not yet, or not adequately, translatable. The Unfolding Gap thus explains why the Value Threshold not only excludes, but also systematically produces blindness: it measures work precisely where unfolding cannot yet be visible.

In this sense, the Unfolding Gap is not a deviation from the value order, but an effect of its mode of operation. The more an economy depends on immediate visibility, the greater the gap between unfolding and recognition becomes—and the more world-sustaining work remains invisible.

Decisive is the fact that unfolding work is often performed as an irreversible advance contribution. Work is carried out, relationships are sustained, crises are buffered, and systems are stabilised without any guarantee of return into value, recognition, or security, while their effects can simultaneously be extracted in the form of gains in efficiency, returns, or stability. The Unfolding Gap is therefore not a neutral intermediate space, but a structurally risky domain in which work can be consumed without ever returning. Poverty, exhaustion, and biographical ruptures are not marginal phenomena, but direct consequences of this one-way structure.

3. The Unfolding Gap in Central Fields of Work

The Unfolding Gap can be observed across different fields of work without reducing it to “care” or “social work”.

In care work, effects often unfold only over years: stable life trajectories, crises avoided, social resilience. What becomes visible in secondary-economic terms, however, are only punctual interventions, not the prevented breakdowns.

In education, an Unfolding Gap emerges between learning processes and measurable outcomes. Examinations capture results, not the long-term capacity for orientation, critique, or self-regulation.

In artistic work, unfolding is often experimental rather than goal-directed. Effects arise through irritation, resonance, and cultural shifts—formats that cannot be planned without losing their function.

In the world of work, the Unfolding Gap appears where people perform additional work in order to stabilise relationships, protect colleagues, or buffer systemic ruptures. Formally, this work appears as inefficiency or deviation from rules; functionally, however, it sustains the system.

These examples show that the Unfolding Gap is not a marginal phenomenon, but a basic pattern of modern work.

4. The Unfolding Gap and Poverty

In dominant economic models, poverty appears as a lack of income, employment, or qualification. In the light of the Unfolding Gap, this interpretation proves to be reductive. Poverty is not primarily a deficit of work, but a deficit of recognition of unfolding.

Where work can unfold its effects only through time, relationship, and regeneration, a structural gap to the value form emerges. If this gap remains permanently unbridged, work becomes systematically invisible. Poverty, in this sense, does not denote inactivity, but the condition in which people continuously perform world-sustaining work without this work ever appearing as value.

In *Radical Worker* (book), this dynamic becomes visible not theoretically, but practically. The long-term experience of state-produced poverty described there shows how continuous primary-economic work—care, documentation, relational stabilisation, institutional resistance—is systematically held below the Value Threshold. Poverty appears here not as passivity, but as the result of a permanently blocked Unfolding Gap in which work is effective but not allowed to appear.

The Unfolding Gap explains why activation and integration policies regularly fail. They address people precisely where the gap is greatest and force them into formats of immediate visibility. As a result, the gap is not reduced but enlarged: unfolding is interrupted, regeneration prevented, relationships damaged.

Poverty is therefore not a marginal phenomenon, but a structural by-product of an economy that recognises unfolding only when it can be immediately translated into output.

4.1 Exhaustion as a Consequence of Shortened Unfolding

Exhaustion does not arise primarily from "too much work," but from permanently interrupted unfolding processes. Where work must be made visible under time pressure, it loses its rhythmic structure. Pauses, transitions, repetitions, and errors—all central moments of unfolding—are eliminated.

In such systems, the Unfolding Gap is not tolerated but violently closed. People are forced to simulate effects before they can actually emerge. The result is not productivity, but overload, cynicism, and burnout.

This mechanism becomes particularly clear in care professions, in education, administration, and knowledge work. The greater the real Unfolding Gap, the higher the pressure toward self-

acceleration. Exhaustion, in this sense, is not an individual failure, but a system indicator of a disregarded logic of unfolding.

4.1.1 The Unfolding Gap, Innovation, and the Myth of Prosperity Gains

A central aspect of the Unfolding Gap that has so far received little reflection concerns the relationship between innovation and prosperity. In dominant economic models, innovation is regarded almost automatically as a source of productivity and prosperity gains. This assumption, however, presupposes that innovation improves the conditions of work and world-sustaining capacity, or at least does not damage them.

In the light of the Unfolding Gap, this assumption becomes questionable. Innovations that accelerate, standardise, or densify processes can generate short-term efficiency gains, while simultaneously shrinking the unfolding spaces of work, relationship, and regeneration. In such cases, innovation does not lead to an increase in real prosperity, but to its systematic erosion.

The Unfolding Gap thus makes possible, for the first time, a distinction that is absent from classical innovation debates: between innovations that enable unfolding and innovations that interrupt unfolding. The former increase long-term social, ecological, and epistemic viability; the latter externalise their costs in the form of exhaustion, poverty, and vulnerability to crises.

Prosperity, in this sense, is not an automatic result of innovation, but a function of whether innovation respects the Unfolding Gap. An economy that evaluates innovation exclusively in terms of efficiency and output gains thereby destroys precisely those foundations on which sustainable prosperity depends.

4.2 The Unfolding Gap and Structural Violence

When the Unfolding Gap is systematically ignored or shortened, it takes the form of structural violence. This violence is not spectacular, but continuous. It operates through time regimes, evaluation formats, and institutional impositions.

Unfolding work is not prohibited in this process, but devalued. People are allowed to work, but only under the condition that their work is immediately visible, measurable, and comparable. Everything that eludes this logic is pathologised, moralised, or individualised.

The violence does not lie in the individual intervention, but in the persistent discrepancy between what work can actually accomplish and what it is permitted to accomplish. The Unfolding Gap thus becomes a precise category for describing those forms of attrition that appear neither as exploitation in the classical sense nor as open repression, yet nonetheless destroy bodies, relationships, and life trajectories.

The systematic shortening of unfolding gaps is not an accidental side effect of modern work, but the result of concrete power and interest configurations. Where evaluation is tied to real-time metrics, comparability, and scalability, those actors benefit who derive control, capitalisation, or governability from this shortening. Quarterly logics, platform economies, algorithmic performance monitoring, and activating social policies generate minimal unfolding

gaps not out of functional necessity, but out of domination and valorisation interests. The Unfolding Gap is therefore not a neutral structure, but a politically contested space.

4.3 The Unfolding Gap and Neurodivergent Modes of Work

Neurodivergent modes of work particularly often come into conflict with secondary-economic visibility requirements. Not due to individual deficits, but because their forms of work are frequently characterised by a large Unfolding Gap: non-linear temporality, high context sensitivity, intensive preliminary phases, and delayed outputs.

Here, the Unfolding Gap does not appear as an exception, but as the rule. Neurodivergent subjects thus function as indicators of a general structural conflict between unfolding and value. Their experiences make visible what also affects many other forms of work, but is articulated less clearly.

It is explicitly important to emphasise that this is not a property of neurodivergent subjects as such, but an increased structural exposure to modes of work whose effects cannot be represented within secondary-economic temporal and evaluative regimes. Neurodivergence is not a special case here, but a magnifying glass for systemic blind spots.

5. The Unfolding Gap as a Linking Element between Primary and Secondary Economy

The distinction between primary and secondary economy does not denote a sectoral separation, but an ontological difference of effectiveness. Primary economy encompasses those forms of work through which the world is brought forth, maintained, and regenerated—social relationships, ecological viability, orientation, capacity to learn. Secondary economy, by contrast, denotes the formats in which this effectiveness is retrospectively made visible, comparable, and administrable. It does not operate at the emergence of the world, but at its translation into value, indicators, and organisation. Decisive here is the asymmetry: secondary economy is structurally dependent on primary economy, whereas primary economy can be effective even beyond secondary-economic formats.

The concept of the Unfolding Gap sharpens the distinction between primary and secondary economy. While primary economy denotes the work that carries, stabilises, and regenerates the world, secondary economy describes the formats in which work is made visible, comparable, and administrable. The Unfolding Gap marks the transitional space between these two levels.

Primary-economic work often unfolds its effects before, alongside, or beyond secondary-economic formats. It is effective before it can be measured. Secondary economy, by contrast, depends on formats in which effects are already completed, isolated, and representable. The Unfolding Gap arises precisely where these temporal and logical prerequisites diverge.

What is important here is this: primary and secondary economy are not separate spheres. They can coexist within the same course of action. When, for example, formal working time is used to protect relationships, secure collective orientation, or buffer crises, primary-economic logic operates within secondary-economic structures. What is decisive is not the institutional framework, but the direction of effectiveness: whether work extracts value or carries the world.

At this point, the structural consequence of the Unfolding Gap becomes visible: secondary-economic systems remain structurally blind to their own preconditions, because they operate only where unfolding is either completed or prematurely interrupted.

The Unfolding Gap thus makes visible why secondary-economic systems remain structurally blind to their own preconditions. They operate only where unfolding has already been completed or destroyed.

6. The Unfolding Gap and Universal Care Income

Universal Care Income (UCI) can be understood, in the light of the Unfolding Gap, as a structural response to a problem of time and recognition. UCI does not aim to eliminate or shorten the Unfolding Gap, but to make it sustainable.

Secondary-economic systems generate poverty and exhaustion by recognising work only when unfolding has already been visibly completed. UCI shifts this logic by guaranteeing subsistence prior to the value form. This creates a space in which work can unfold its effects without having to be permanently translated into output, proofs, or metrics.

Decisive here is the distinction from classical basic income models (Universal Basic Income, UBI). UBI usually functions as a purely distributive instrument within existing value orders. It secures income without fundamentally changing the secondary-economic criteria of visibility, efficiency, and exploitability. The Unfolding Gap thus remains structurally untouched; primary-economic work continues to depend on subsequent recognition or remains invisible.

UCI, by contrast, does not primarily address distribution, but the conditions of unfolding themselves. It decouples survival from immediate visibility and thereby interrupts the compulsion toward permanent self-shortening. UCI neither replaces wage labour nor the market, but shifts the boundary condition under which work can attain world status at all.

In this sense, UCI is not a social-policy add-on, but a temporal and relational infrastructure mechanism. It does not pathologise the Unfolding Gap as a deficit, but recognises it as a necessary prerequisite of world-sustaining work.

The concept of work-integrated relational agency developed in *Radical Worker* can, against this background, be understood as a concrete practice that operates with a large Unfolding Gap. The forms of work described there integrate care, relationship, and orientation not retrospectively, but as conditions of productive activity. UCI can accordingly be read as the structural prerequisite under which such modes of work can exist without being permanently forced into secondary-economic short formats.

7. The Unfolding Gap in Living Markets

Markets, too, can be rethought from the perspective of the Unfolding Gap. Classical markets operate as if unfolding could always be immediately completed. Prices, contracts, and scaling presuppose that effects become visible and comparable within short timeframes. This is precisely where their destructive tendency lies.

Living Markets are market forms that do not negate the Unfolding Gap, but limit and respect it. They recognise that certain activities can only become marketable if their logic of unfolding is not destroyed. Growth, acceleration, and scaling are treated here not as criteria of success, but as risk factors.

Living Markets therefore operate:

- with temporal buffers instead of real-time pressure,
- with relational bindings instead of anonymous exchange,
- with limitation instead of expansion.

They generate value without closing the space in which unfolding is possible at all. In this sense, Living Markets are not morally better markets, but structurally limited markets that explicitly acknowledge their dependence on the primary economy.

8. Delimitation and Research Agenda

The Unfolding Gap differs from existing concepts such as "invisible labour," "care economy," or "human capital" in that it does not classify activities, but analyses structural conditions of effectiveness. It does not describe a sector, but a relational difference between unfolding and value.

Future research can proceed at several points:

- empirical studies on the temporal and relational unfolding profiles of different forms of work,
- institutional analyses of evaluative regimes and time structures,
- comparative investigations of poverty as a problem of emergence and recognition,
- neurodivergent modes of work as indicators of structural unfolding blindness.

The Unfolding Gap thus does not offer a closed model, but an analytical key for rethinking work, value, and economy beyond output logics.

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(The present text constitutes an interface translation into neurotypical academic discourse. This translation functions as an accessibility measure necessitated by dominant linguistic and epistemic conventions. It does not represent the native epistemic form of the research, but a communicative adaptation required for participation in standardized scholarly exchange.)

A more in-depth paper on the methodology can be found here:

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A paper providing an overview of the work can be found here:

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