

The Meaning Economy: Social Participation and Mechanisms for Rebuilding Value in an Era of Structural Unemployment

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Produced by Civilization Leap Research Group

P05-MEANECON-001 | V1.1 public publication edition with further reading

Complete English translation of the current 63-page public source

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Abstract

As automation and artificial intelligence develop in depth, employment structures in modern society are undergoing fundamental change. Traditional occupational systems provide income and also support essential functions in individuals' construction of meaning, including security of subsistence, social identity, and the realization of value. As structural unemployment and occupational instability intensify, individuals may face a systemic rupture in their sources of meaning. This paper proposes the “meaning economy” to describe a new economic form centered on opportunities to participate, identity, and value creation. It introduces time perception to show how the “surplus of free time” accompanying unemployment aggravates meaning deficits, and examines the formation of the meaning economy through a shift from consumption to production. It explores this economy's industrial structure and social functions, while warning of possible alienation: escalating competition over meaning, barriers to participation, and new inequalities. It further explains how a contribution-value system, as infrastructure for the meaning economy, can support new collaborative networks by recording contributions, establishing credit, and allocating rights to use resources. As technological change deepens, the meaning economy may evolve from a transitional mechanism into a social collaboration structure under a new normal, advancing the transition from a “production society” to a “participation society.”

Keywords: meaning economy; structural unemployment; social participation; identity; contribution value; time perception.

Public candidate revision note (R4B-B): This paper distinguishes five categories: theoretical propositions, external evidence, cases/scenarios, mechanism prototypes, and business assumptions. Figures without verifiable sources are not treated as empirical facts. Personal narratives unsupported by interviews or operational records are to be understood as composite or illustrative scenarios. Contribution records must not be interpreted as personality ratings, general-purpose credit scores, or financial credit, and contribution levels must not automatically determine basic rights, rights of appeal or exit, or governance rights.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Technological change and changing employment structures

For most of human history, production has been the central problem around which society operates: food production in agrarian society, mass manufacturing in industrial society, and information processing in the information age. Yet accelerating automation and AI allow machines to perform more and more productive activities: manufacturing, transport, data processing, software development, design assistance, and more. As productive capacity increases and material scarcity gradually declines, society faces a fundamentally new question:

When production is no longer scarce, what will human society organize itself around?

This question concerns both economic restructuring and the reconstruction of systems of meaning. This paper notes a related view: global development currently faces a structural predicament in which “the logic of efficiency above all overrides humanistic values,” manifested in the breakdown of social trust, weakened cultural identity, and increasing human alienation. Mainstream Western economics, centered on the “rational actor” assumption and the logic of capital, struggles to answer fundamental human demands for spiritual fulfillment, social fairness, and civilizational coexistence.

1.2 Occupational systems and the structure of individual meaning

In modern society, occupational systems serve economic functions and important functions of social meaning. Through the occupational system, individuals can obtain:

- Stable income (security of subsistence)
- Social identity (a defined role)
- Group belonging (relational connections)
- Developmental goals (realization of value)

This structure can be simplified as follows:

Occupational participation → Economic income → Social identity → Personal meaning

Profound changes in occupational systems therefore have cascading effects on individual structures of meaning. Relevant findings exist in previous research, but this version does not provide complete citations here sufficient for independent verification; they are offered only as research leads. The spread of digital technology has contradictory psychological effects on employees: it enhances capabilities and positive self-evaluation, but also increases technostress, burnout, and declining organizational commitment. This duality suggests that occupational transformation is a crisis of meaning as well as an employment issue.

1.3 Research question and framework

The paper's central question is: when traditional occupational systems cannot provide sources of meaning to growing numbers of people, how can society rebuild individuals' sense of value and belonging?

The study proposes the concept of the “meaning economy” and examines it through these dimensions:

- Structural analysis of individual sources of meaning (Chapter 2)
- Mechanisms producing ruptures in meaning (Chapter 3)
- Formation logic and industrial forms of the meaning economy (Chapter 4)
- Its social functions (Chapter 5)
- Its potential risks and future trends (Chapter 6)
- Its supporting mechanism: the contribution-value system (Chapter 7)

Chapter 2 Three dimensions of individual sources of meaning

Individual meaning is not an abstract concept; it comprises multiple sources. In modern society, these can be summarized in three core dimensions.

2.1 Security of subsistence

Security of subsistence underpins the structure of meaning and includes:

- Stable income
- Basic living conditions
- Predictability of everyday life

When these conditions are stable, individuals can maintain a basic sense of existence and security. Conversely, falling income brings financial pressure, uncertainty, and disruption of everyday routines.

2.2 Social relationships

Social relationships provide identity and belonging, including:

- Social roles (such as occupational identity and family roles)
- Group belonging (such as colleagues and interest communities)
- Recognition by others and social respect

Among modern urban professionals, this dimension depends heavily on occupational systems. Occupational identity is a marker of social position as well as a source of income. This paper notes a related view: modern culture is increasingly detached from unified meaning, and society lacks shared values and standards, making occupational identity even more prominent in the construction of meaning.

2.3 Spiritual value

Spiritual value concerns long-term development and self-realization, including:

- Growth and progress
- Creation and expression
- Self-realization and a sense of value

When people can continually create value and gain recognition, their sense of meaning becomes more stable and enduring.

2.4 Adding the dimension of time perception

Building on these three dimensions, the study introduces time perception as a fourth analytical dimension. Unemployment brings not only the loss of income but also extensive “surplus free time.” When time loses its structural organization, such as a nine-to-five routine, emptiness aggravates the meaning deficit.

Relevant discussions exist in previous research, but this version does not provide complete citations here sufficient for independent verification; they are offered only as research leads. Under digital capitalism, the “tyranny of immediacy” in technological media, “colonization of time” through flexible working, and “compulsory speed” in consumer culture intensify temporal alienation, surrender individuals' control over their time, and hollow out meaning. The meaning economy thus partly serves to give surplus time new value, turning unstructured time into a resource for creation, participation, and connection.

Chapter 3 Ruptures in meaning and the social effects of structural unemployment

Profound changes in occupational systems may cause systemic shocks to individual meaning in three respects.

3.1 Pressure on security of subsistence

Reduced income directly brings:

- Financial pressure and material hardship
- Uncertainty and anxiety about life
- Disrupted routines and a sense of losing control

3.2 Changes in identity

The loss of occupational identity may lead to:

- Unclear social roles and difficulty locating oneself
- Reduced group belonging and social isolation
- Declining self-worth and identity crisis

3.3 Stagnation of spiritual value

When career paths are interrupted, individuals may face:

- Stalled growth and unused capabilities
- Uncertainty and confusion about future direction
- Unclear life goals and a lack of meaning

3.4 Meaning deficit

When all three dimensions are affected together, individuals may enter a systemic condition: a meaning deficit.

A meaning deficit occurs when existing sources can no longer provide a stable supply of meaning, while new sources have yet to emerge. It is not merely psychological emptiness but a structural social predicament.

3.5 White-collar vulnerability

Experiential observation suggests that white-collar sources of meaning are highly dependent on occupational systems. Broadly, these sources include:

- Professional achievement: one analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
- Social identity: one analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
- Family responsibility: one analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
- Personal growth: one analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)

White-collar workers therefore often experience greater shocks when occupational systems change.

Unemployment may cause:

1. Interruption of sources of professional achievement
2. Blurred social identity
3. Stagnation of development pathways

This strong dependence makes white-collar workers particularly vulnerable to structural unemployment. (See Appendix 1 for detailed case analysis.)

Chapter 4 How the meaning economy forms

When many people face meaning deficits, new social needs gradually emerge. These needs drive a new economic form, called the meaning economy in this paper.

4.1 Definition

The meaning economy is an economic form centered on providing opportunities for social participation, identity, and channels for creating value.

The concept is related to, but distinct from, the “cultural economy.” This paper uses the following view as a theoretical reference awaiting verification: the cultural economy essentially concerns “the production and consumption of meaning,” while culture consists of meaning generated through human life activities. The meaning economy focuses more specifically on the shift in sources of meaning from traditional occupational systems to new modes of participation amid technological change.

4.2 Formation mechanism

The meaning economy forms through this logic:

Structural unemployment → Fewer sources of meaning → Greater demand for meaning → New participation opportunities → Formation of the meaning economy

This process can also be understood as a shift from consumption to production. People remain consumers when they cannot create value through traditional employment. If consumption, such as watching livestreams, joining communities, or tipping creators, can become a sense of participation and identity, the meaning economy gains room to grow.

4.3 Typical forms

Various related forms have already emerged, for example:

Type	Forms	How meaning is provided
Creator economy	Content creation, paid knowledge	Channels for expression and creation
Community economy	Interest communities, study groups	Belonging and identity
Skill-sharing platforms	Knowledge sharing, skill exchange	Opportunities to realize value
Psychological support services	Emotional counseling, growth consultation	Relief from meaning-deficit pressure
Career transition services	Career planning, skills training	Help rebuilding participation pathways

Consider the “one-person company”: more freelancers are choosing to run individual businesses through a company model, developing careers outside organizations. Unlike the “gig economy,” this form builds personal brands in a standardized way and seeks a value position in a wider market.

4.4 The deeper logic of the meaning economy

The rise of the meaning economy is closely related to changes in how meaning is generated in the internet age. Traditional views regard meaning as an absolute truth external and prior to people. In the internet age, people increasingly recognize meaning as plural, dynamic, and generated through participation. Each person's meaning is unique: no two people's meanings are identical, and meaning varies dynamically across subjects.

This shift provides an epistemological foundation for the meaning economy: meaning is created rather than discovered, and lived through participation rather than consumed.

Chapter 5 Social functions of the meaning economy

The meaning economy serves three important functions in social transformation.

5.1 Psychological buffering

First, it provides a psychological buffer, helping individuals relieve the pressures of changing identity and unstable employment. New participation channels and ways to express value offer transitional sources of meaning to people experiencing meaning deficits.

5.2 Structural transition

The meaning economy offers a pathway from traditional occupational systems to new participation structures. It serves as both a buffer zone and a connecting bridge.

This paper uses the following view as a theoretical reference awaiting verification: the internet age has seen a shift from the “digital divide” to “cognitive surplus.” Many individuals have obtained the means of producing information and can create and share content. Releasing this cognitive surplus requires new organizational structures to receive it. The meaning economy is such a mechanism: it organizes fragmented time, idle skills, and expressive needs into social activities that people can join.

5.3 Rebuilding value

Its deeper function is to help individuals move from dependence on occupational systems toward more autonomous sources of value. This entails a shift from “passive existence” to “active existence.”

Traditional occupational systems make individual meaning highly dependent on external systems. In the meaning economy, participation, creation, and connection gradually build internal sources of self-worth.

Chapter 6 Potential risks and future trends

6.1 Risks of alienation in the meaning economy

The meaning economy is not inherently a “cure.” Its development may involve multiple risks of alienation.

First, escalating competition over meaning. When “self-realization” and “spiritual value” enter the economic system as quantifiable indicators, such as likes, followers, or contribution values, they may create new anxiety: exhausting oneself to prove one's life is meaningful. While liberating people, the meaning economy may also impose new shackles.

Second, barriers to participation. Who can succeed in the meaning economy? Perhaps those who already possess cultural capital, expressive abilities, and social skills. The silent majority, those less articulate, and those with weak digital skills may be marginalized again.

Third, limits on ability to pay. Structural unemployment often reduces a group's purchasing power. If the meaning economy relies mainly on user payments, such as paid knowledge or community memberships, its market may be constrained. How meaning can circulate without depending entirely on money is a problem to address.

6.2 From a production society to a participation society

With technological development and changing employment structures, society's mode of operation may gradually undergo a fundamental transition:

Production society → Automated production → Participation society

In a participation society, individual value derives more from:

- Creation and expression
- Cooperation and connection
- Social participation and public life

This transition echoes Hannah Arendt's distinction among “labor, work, and action” in *The Human Condition*:

- Labor corresponds to subsistence needs (eventually largely replaced by machines)
- Work corresponds to making things (partly assisted or replaced by AI)
- Action corresponds to interpersonal interaction, expression, and creation (the core of the meaning economy)

For Arendt, political participation and active engagement in social life represent the highest ideal of human life. The deeper significance of the meaning economy may lie in giving more people the possibility of “action”: actively participating and creating rather than passively laboring or working.

Chapter 7 The supporting mechanism of the meaning economy: the contribution-value system

A healthy meaning economy requires three foundations: opportunities to participate, conditions for action, and recognition of value. Platforms such as demand networks and resource-sharing networks can address the first two, but recognition needs a more fundamental mechanism: contribution records and information on fulfillment of collaborative commitments. This paper treats the “contribution-value system” as a mechanism prototype awaiting validation, not a scoring system for personality, morality, or general-purpose credit.

7.1 Core functions of the contribution-value system

Here, contribution value is only an unvalidated prototype for event-level contribution recording and resource-coordination accounting, used to:

- Record individuals' contributions to platforms and communities
- Allocate rights to use shared resources
- Provide verifiable fulfillment facts for specific collaborations
- Encourage sustained participation

It is not money in the traditional sense, but closer to: contribution records + context-specific fulfillment records + revocable resource-coordination credentials.

7.2 Logical relationship between contribution value and the meaning economy

The meaning economy offers new forms of participation. These must be recognized, recorded, and rewarded to form a sustainable cycle. The contribution-value system is the “ledger” and “foundation of credit” for this cycle:

Participation opportunities (meaning economy) → Contributive action → Contribution-value records → Resource-use rights → More participation opportunities

Contribution value makes each instance of participation visible and allows each contribution to be exchanged for future conditions for action. This addresses trust and exchange while strengthening the meaning of participation: contributions are seen, accumulated, and recognized.

7.3 The two-layer contribution-value structure

To prevent imbalance, contribution value is divided into two types:

- Global CV: general-purpose contribution value usable worldwide for cross-regional resource exchange and platform-level benefits.
- Domain CV: specialized contribution value used within a particular field or community for everyday participation and internal collaboration.

The two-layer structure maintains stable global circulation while encouraging active local participation.

7.4 Structural differences from the traditional capital economy

The contribution-value economy and capital economy represent two different resource-allocation logics:

Structural element	Capital economy	Contribution-value economy
Core resource	Capital	Capabilities and collaboration
Recording value	Monetary transactions	Contribution records

Structural element	Capital economy	Contribution-value economy
Allocation basis	Capital ownership	Context-specific contribution facts and public resource rules
Resource use	Purchase or rental	Exchanging contribution value for use rights
Participation	Fixed jobs	Projects and collaboration
Organization	Companies	Networks

The two structures will coexist over the long term and play their respective roles in different fields. (See Appendix 5.)

Conclusion

The rupture in meaning caused by structural unemployment is a structural consequence of modern society's excessive dependence on occupational systems. When those systems cannot supply stable meaning to growing populations, individuals experience meaning deficits.

The meaning economy is a mechanism through which society offers new participation pathways and sources of value during technological transition. Centered on social participation, identity, and value creation, it offers alternative meaning across security of subsistence, social relationships, and spiritual value. Yet it also faces risks of alienation, requiring vigilance against escalating competition over meaning, participation barriers, and inequality.

As infrastructure for the meaning economy, the contribution-value system offers a workable mechanism for distributed collaboration and resource sharing by recording contributions, establishing credit, and allocating resource-use rights. It allows participation to accumulate, receive recognition, and be rewarded, supporting sustained operation.

As social structures continue to change, the meaning economy may play a growing role in buffering social pressures, fostering participation, and rebuilding social connections. The shift from a “production society” to a “participation society” will redefine human value: less from “what you produce” and more from “what you participate in and who you are.” The meaning economy is an important supporting mechanism for this transition.

Appendix 1

Individual case analysis of the meaning economy

The example of urban white-collar workers

1. Research background

In modern urban society, white-collar workers have long been regarded as central to stable occupational structures. Compared with manual workers or freelancers, their occupations typically feature:

- Higher educational attainment
- Relatively stable career paths
- Clear organizational identities
- Defined promotion and income systems

In traditional occupational systems, white-collar sources of personal meaning are often closely tied to employment. Occupations provide income, confer identity, connect people socially, and offer development pathways. For many, “what I do” is almost equivalent to “who I am.”

However, technological development, industrial restructuring, and accelerating AI adoption are changing the stability of some white-collar jobs. Office jobs once considered an “iron rice bowl” now face layoffs, substitution, and restructuring. A McKinsey Global Institute report projected that hundreds of millions of workers worldwide might need to change occupational categories by 2030, a substantial proportion from white-collar positions.

In this context, white-collar systems of meaning are beginning to be affected. How individuals rebuild sources of meaning when careers become unstable is a social issue that deserves attention.

2. Structure of white-collar sources of meaning

From individual experience, these sources can usually be divided into four main components.

1. Professional achievement

Professional achievement is the principal source of meaning for white-collar workers. It includes:

- Completing important projects
- Gaining promotion
- Increasing income
- Receiving recognition for professional capability

Occupational systems provide clear goals and evaluation standards. Career progress is often regarded as a direct expression of personal value.

2. Social identity

Occupational identity is also an important component of white-collar social roles. It includes:

- Social status associated with job titles
- Belonging to circles associated with industry identity
- Identification with a lifestyle associated with urban middle-class status

This identity affects both self-perception and others' assessment of one's social position. In many social settings, “Where do you work?” is often the first question.

3. Family responsibility

In many family structures, white-collar workers carry important economic roles and responsibilities. These include:

- Serving as the main household income source
- Supporting children's education and growth
- Providing stability in daily life

Family responsibility is an important part of their meaning system and motivates many to remain committed to their careers.

4. Personal growth

White-collar careers usually involve continued learning and capability development, including:

- Accumulating professional skills
- Expanding cognitive horizons
- Planning and realizing personal development

This experience of growth provides long-term purpose, making work a path to self-realization as well as a livelihood.

Analytically, white-collar sources of meaning can be examined through these four dimensions; the table does not represent fixed population proportions:

Source of meaning	Approximate proportion
Professional achievement	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Social identity	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Family responsibility	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Personal growth	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)

This structure means that white-collar meaning depends heavily on stable occupational systems. Clear career paths make sources of meaning relatively stable; changes in occupational structures put those systems under pressure to adjust.

3. Effects of occupational change on meaning

When occupational structures change through layoffs, role adjustments, or industry contraction, white-collar workers experience systemic changes in meaning as well as financial pressure. These usually operate at three levels.

1. Uncertainty in security of subsistence

Reduced or unstable income first creates pressures on daily life:

- Difficulty maintaining mortgage or rent payments
- The need to replan everyday household expenses
- Unclear future career paths

Illustrative scenario: a laid-off middle manager at an internet company might say, “The hardest part isn't failing to find a job. It's waking up every morning without knowing what to do. My schedule used to be packed; now all my time is empty.” This uncertainty affects expectations of stability and produces sustained psychological pressure.

2. Changes in social identity

When occupational identity disappears, individuals must redefine their social roles:

- Moving from “a director at a particular company” to “unemployed” or “job seeker”
- Difficulty answering “What do you do now?” in social settings
- Gradual distance from former industry contacts

Illustrative scenario: a white-collar worker leaving a large technology company might say, “At school reunions, people used to ask what projects our company was doing. Now when we meet, no one knows what to talk about, and things feel awkward.” Blurred social identity affects both self-identification and maintaining relationships.

3. Interrupted development pathways

Careers usually offer clear pathways: junior to senior, execution to management. When this structure breaks down, individuals must rethink future goals:

- Does previous professional experience still have value?
- Is learning new skills necessary?
- Where does the future lead?

Illustrative scenario: a long-time publishing professional might reflect, “I used to just follow the steps ahead. Now I have to work out what I really want.” Such uncertainty brings confusion and a reassessment of self-worth.

4. New conditions created by time and freedom

Occupational change produces pressure but also a new condition: the release of time resources.

Within occupational systems, most time goes toward organizational goals. Meetings, emails, and projects fill weekdays; weekends restore energy. When this structure pauses, individuals may gain more self-directed time.

The release of time has a dual significance. Without structure, extensive free time may deepen emptiness and anxiety: the “surplus time” problem discussed earlier. Yet the combination of time and freedom of action also makes it possible to explore new participation modes.

Illustrative scenario: a white-collar worker trying entrepreneurship after leaving employment might say, “When I was employed, things pushed me along every day. I had no time to consider what I really wanted. After leaving, my income became unstable, but for the first time I felt in control of my time.”

The transition from “structured time” to “time awaiting occupation” brings challenges and possibilities. The key is whether people can find new ways to invest time in meaningful activities.

5. Shifting sources of meaning

When occupation ceases to be the sole source of meaning, individual meaning systems may shift. This does not necessarily reduce meaning; it moves from a single source to multiple sources.

In practice, white-collar workers are beginning to explore various new modes of participation:

- Skill sharing: offering expertise through consulting, training, or content creation
- Project collaboration: joining several projects short-term or part-time instead of remaining tied to one organization
- Community participation: joining interest or professional communities to form new connections
- Creation and expression: expressing ideas and experiences through writing, video, podcasts, and other forms
- Cultural exchange: expanding spiritual horizons through reading groups, exhibitions, lectures, and other cultural activities

This process can be represented as:

Occupational meaning → A plural structure of meaning

In this new structure, occupation may remain one source of meaning but is no longer the only one. Individuals move from “I am a job” to “I am a collection of roles”: a professional in a field, a community participant, and a creator in a form of expression.

Composite illustrative scenario: someone leaving advertising to become an independent creator might say, “My identity used to be ‘strategy director at a company.’ Now I’m ‘a content maker, consultant, and workshop leader.’ My identity is more complex, but feels closer to who I really am.”

6. The two-way generation of meaning

In new participation structures, meaning is often generated through interpersonal interaction rather than received passively.

When individual capabilities connect with others' needs, both sides may gain new value. For example:

- One party shares professional skills or experience
- The other gains knowledge or experience
- Both develop new understanding and connections through interaction

Such relationships often produce an amplification effect:

Capabilities + Needs + Connections > Their combined value in isolation

Composite illustrative scenario: a freelancer might say, “At the company, I prepared proposals to meet KPIs. Now when I advise small teams, they really change direction because of my suggestions. Being needed feels very different.”

Interpersonal connections create value and may continually expand opportunities for interaction. One project brings new collaborators; one sharing session brings new participants; community connections keep growing. This dynamic makes sources of meaning self-reinforcing.

7. The emergence of the meaning economy

When many individuals undergo similar changes, a new structure of social demand may gradually form.

People need employment and income, but also:

- Rebuilding identity: locating themselves in new social roles
- Social connection: establishing relationships and group belonging
- Development pathways: finding directions and goals for continued growth
- Expressing value: opportunities to create and contribute their value

Against this background, a new economic form may gradually emerge. Its core functions include:

- Repairing meaning: helping people undergoing occupational change relieve meaning deficits
- Transferring meaning: supporting a shift from one occupational source to plural structures
- Recreating meaning: helping people establish lasting sources of value through new participation modes

This economic form can be called the meaning economy.

It supports renewed participation in various forms: knowledge-sharing platforms offer new outlets for professional skills, community collaboration spaces make interests a medium for connection, and the creator economy makes expression a source of value. Their common feature is that they provide “opportunities to participate” rather than traditional “jobs.”

8. Summary

The white-collar example shows that in modern occupational society, individual meaning often depends heavily on occupational systems. When occupational structures change, sources of meaning must adjust.

Adjustment involves several stages: occupational change disrupts meaning; released time creates new conditions; individuals explore diverse participation modes; and sources gradually diversify. Interpersonal connections become an important mechanism for generating meaning.

When many people experience similar changes, demand for a meaning economy emerges socially. Its emergence is both a way individuals adapt to social change and an opening for new socioeconomic forms.

White-collar experience suggests that rebuilding meaning is not simply “recovering the old meaning,” but establishing a more diverse, resilient structure through new participation. This requires individual exploration and sufficient social opportunities and support mechanisms.

Appendix 2

A global network for the flow of resources, capabilities, and meaning

A case model of a social collaboration structure

1. Background to the problem

Technological progress and accelerating AI development are profoundly changing traditional occupational structures centered on fixed jobs. Capabilities increasingly extend beyond a single organization or region, while social needs show pronounced geographical differences and uneven development.

Industrial restructuring may temporarily leave some capabilities without demand in certain cities, while those same capabilities remain useful elsewhere. Meanwhile, many communities and groups have real needs but struggle to find suitable participants locally.

Globally, a structural mismatch therefore exists between capabilities and needs:

- Some capabilities temporarily lack local demand
- Some needs elsewhere cannot find suitable people
- Some resources sit idle in certain areas while being scarce in others

Without effective connections, this potential value is difficult to activate and use.

A new social collaboration structure can be envisaged to address this: a global network for the flow of resources, capabilities, and meaning. Digital platforms connect needs, share basic resources, and support the movement of individual capabilities across regions, creating more open forms of participation.

2. How context changes the value of capabilities

In everyday life, many capabilities seem ordinary locally, or are not even regarded as “valuable skills.”

Take making dumplings. In many Chinese families, it is simply everyday life, an entirely ordinary household activity. Globally, however, many people have never tried this food and know even less about its culture or preparation.

An apparently ordinary capability can have a completely different value in another cultural environment.

Someone may have a simple idea:

“If I had the opportunity, I'd like to go there and let people experience the appeal of dumplings.”

They will soon encounter practical questions:

- Where would I stay?
- Is there a kitchen I could use?
- Would anyone join in?
- Where would I obtain ingredients?
- How would local people hear about the activity?

These are connection problems, not problems with the capability itself. The capability exists and potential demand may exist, but a structure linking capabilities, needs, and resources is missing.

This example reveals a general phenomenon: many capabilities remain “dormant,” not because they lack value, but because they lack pathways to encounter demand.

3. Basic framework of the global flow network

If a network connected global needs and shared resources, many capabilities could generate new value across regions. This structure combines three flows:

- Resource flows: sharing material conditions such as spaces, equipment, and tools
- Capability flows: moving personal resources such as knowledge, skills, and experience across regions
- Meaning flows: value and belonging generated through connection and participation

The three support each other:

Resource flows → Conditions for action → Capability flows → Value creation → Meaning flows

Within this structure:

- Resources provide basic conditions for action
- Capabilities meet real social needs
- Meaning arises from interpersonal interaction and connection

The network comprises three core modules, discussed below.

4. Dream Garden: a demand-discovery network

Dream Garden collects, organizes, and publishes real needs from different regions.

These needs may concern:

- Community cultural activities
- Cross-cultural exchange projects
- Skills training and knowledge sharing
- Creative collaboration and artistic creation
- Social services and public-benefit projects
- Project collaboration and problem-solving

A continually updated demand network shows people broader possibilities for social participation beyond local vacancies.

Basic operating logic:

Global needs → Organizing needs → Publishing needs → Matching capabilities

Unlike traditional recruitment platforms, Dream Garden focuses on broader “opportunities to participate,” not only “jobs.” These may lack fixed pay but offer accommodation, cultural exchange, skill exchange, or other returns.

Illustrative mechanism scenario: a participant seeing a cross-regional need might say, “I saw that a village in Thailand needed help designing English menus and teaching children basic English. I had a design background and two free weeks. What I gained was not just experience, but friends and an understanding of local culture.”

Dream Garden's core function can be summarized as: discover needs and connect capabilities.

5. Shared World: resources and a foundation for action

Even when needs and capabilities connect, action needs basic conditions. Someone may wish to share skills in another city or country, but without accommodation, workspace, and basic living support, the idea is difficult to realize.

Shared World provides these foundations, including:

- Short-term accommodation
- Rights to use transport
- Work and creative spaces
- Community connections and local support
- Shared tools and equipment

The platform brings these resources together through a Resource Pool mechanism. Individuals can add idle resources, such as:

- Spare rooms or apartments
- Infrequently used vehicles
- Idle studios or tools
- Shareable community spaces

Resources entering the system generate corresponding contribution records. Individuals can use corresponding resources elsewhere, creating reciprocity.

Basic operating logic:

Resource input → Contribution records → Global resource-use rights

Illustrative mechanism scenario: a resource-sharing participant might say, “I have an empty room in Beijing that usually goes unused. After listing it, I hosted visitors from Germany, Japan, and Brazil. Later, in Tokyo, I exchanged contribution value for a week's accommodation. It's more interesting than a hotel because you can really enter local people's lives.”

Shared World's core function is to provide a foundation for the movement of capabilities.

6. Contribution value: a recording and exchange mechanism

Sustainable resource sharing and collaboration need a mechanism to record participation and contributions. A contribution-value system can serve this function.

Contribution value is not traditional money but a structure for recording participation and contribution. Its sources include:

- Providing accommodation, spaces, and other resources
- Sharing skills and knowledge
- Collaborating on projects
- Organizing community activities
- Helping others

Contribution records enable a trustworthy exchange mechanism. For example:

- Accommodation providers can obtain accommodation-use rights in other cities
- Those sharing professional skills can receive help with other skills when needed
- Project collaborators can build reputation and initiate their own projects

This makes resource sharing and cross-regional action more sustainable and lowers barriers associated with purely monetary transactions.

Basic operating logic:

Participatory contribution → Contribution records → Accumulated reputation → Resource-use rights

The design principle is: make every act of participation visible and enable every contribution to carry forward.

7. The two-way generation of meaning

In this network, meaning is generated simultaneously through interaction rather than supplied in one direction.

When one person offers capabilities or experience and another participates, both may gain value:

- Providers experience being needed and recognized, alongside deeper cross-cultural exchange
- Recipients gain knowledge, skills, or cultural experiences, and the warmth of connection

This often produces an amplification effect:

Capabilities + Needs + Connections > Their combined value in isolation

Illustrative mechanism scenario: a designer joining a skill-sharing project might say, “I went to a rural community to run simple design workshops for children, assuming I was the one ‘giving.’ But their imaginative freedom inspired me. My creative style changed after I returned. It’s hard to say who helped whom.”

Interpersonal connections create value and continually expand interaction: a project brings collaborators, a sharing session brings participants, and community connections keep growing. This dynamic makes sources of meaning self-reinforcing.

8. Why the network must be global

In traditional society, most economic activity occurs within cities or countries. But growing information technology and global connections are changing relationships between capabilities and needs.

Regions differ considerably in development stage and cultural context:

- Industrial upgrading reduces demand for certain jobs in some cities
- Other regions still need similar capabilities
- Skills widespread in developed regions remain in demand in developing ones
- Cultural experiences ordinary at their origin are scarce elsewhere

Matching capabilities and needs only locally readily creates structural mismatch: idle capabilities coexist with unmet demand. Global connections greatly expand the matching space and reveal more potential value.

A global network has three distinctive advantages:

1. Larger demand space: capabilities can seek matches in more regions
2. Higher matching probability: diverse needs increase the likelihood of finding an outlet
3. Richer cultural exchange: cross-regional movement brings cultural encounters and new creative possibilities

Illustrative mechanism scenario: a frequent cross-cultural collaborator might say, “Without this network, my skills could only compete in the local job market. Now I can choose to go where I’m genuinely needed. It feels very different: I’m choosing how to participate in the world, rather than looking for a job.”

9. Changes in resource-use rights and ownership

Traditional economic systems center resources on ownership: owning a house, vehicle, or tools secures their use. Yet people often need access at particular times rather than permanent ownership.

For example:

- Staying in a city for a week
- Using a community kitchen for two hours
- Temporarily using professional tools for a project
- Using transport while traveling

Sharing and contribution recording allow efficient use over a wider area. Individuals retain ownership but contribute use rights during idle periods in exchange for opportunities to use resources elsewhere.

Basic logic:

Resource input → Contribution records → Rights to use resources elsewhere

This retains ownership’s security, improves utilization, and lowers barriers to cross-regional action. Moving from “owning” to “having access” is an important basis for supporting capability flows.

10. Possibilities for transferring and recreating meaning

When resources, capabilities, and needs move through a broader network, individuals' forms of social participation also change.

In traditional occupational structures, many people derive meaning heavily from fixed jobs and organizational identities. When these change through layoffs, industry adjustment, or personal choice, dependence on a single meaning source creates instability.

In a network connecting global needs, sharing resources, and supporting capability flows, individuals can participate across a wider social space:

- Skill sharing and knowledge transfer
- Project collaboration and creative co-creation
- Community participation and community building
- Cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding

Within this structure:

- Capabilities extend beyond a single job and can be used flexibly across settings
- Resources extend beyond one location and can be accessed through sharing networks
- Interpersonal connections continually generate new opportunities

The network thus provides a foundation for action and conditions for changing individual meaning sources. When old sources diminish or change, new social connections allow people to discover new modes of participation, enabling meaning to be transferred and recreated.

Composite illustrative scenario: someone undergoing career transition might say, “I used to think meaning was promotion and a pay rise; if my career path broke, everything was gone. Now I find meaning in many places: helping solve a problem, joining an interesting project, or simply talking with people from other cultures. Occupation still matters, but it is no longer the only frame of reference.”

11. Conclusion

A global network for the flow of resources, capabilities, and meaning offers the possibility of a new social collaboration structure.

Within this structure:

- Dream Garden discovers and connects real needs
- Shared World supplies basic resources for action
- The contribution-value system records collaborative relationships and sustains mutual trust

Connecting global needs, sharing basic resources, and supporting capability flows can reconnect capabilities and needs across a broader social space, revealing and activating more potential value.

When resources can be shared, capabilities can move, and people can connect deeply, meaning gains more room to emerge. This is a mechanism for responding to occupational change and may become a basic form of future social collaboration.

Appendix 3

Business-model assumptions and stress testing: commercial infrastructure for a global network of resource, capability, and meaning flows. All prices, commissions, city and user counts, revenue shares, and growth schedules in this appendix are unvalidated assumptions, not forecasts or verified operating data.

A global network for the flow of resources, capabilities, and meaning

1. Core value proposition

1.1 Three practical problems addressed by the platform

Problem 1: Difficulty discovering demand. Real needs are scattered across regions and communities: rural schools need short-term teachers, community centers need activity organizers, small businesses need professional support, and cultural institutions need cross-cultural projects. Effective channels to aggregate and display these needs are lacking.

Problem 2: Severe capability mismatch. Skills no longer needed in one place may be highly valuable elsewhere. A laid-off internet operations professional may be precisely the digital consultant a rural homestay needs; an idle designer may provide visual support urgently needed by a public-benefit organization. Capabilities and needs are structurally misaligned.

Problem 3: Excessive costs of action. Even matched capabilities and needs require accommodation, transport, workspace, and community connections for participation across cities or countries. Missing foundations leave many possible collaborations as mere ideas.

1.2 The platform's core value

In response, the platform's core value is:

Discover needs + Lower action costs + Establish trusted exchange

Together these form a complete loop: capable people can see needs, willing people can act, and contributors receive recognition.

1.3 Relationship to the meaning economy

The platform translates meaning-economy theory into infrastructure. It does not directly provide “meaning”; it provides three conditions for meaning to emerge:

- Participation opportunities (through the demand network)
- Conditions for action (through resource sharing)
- Recognition of value (through contribution records)

With these conditions, individuals can rebuild participation and sources of meaning across a broader social space.

2. The platform's three-layer structure

Three core modules each address a key problem, supporting one another to form a complete ecosystem.

Layer 1: Dream Garden (demand network)

Core function: publishing global needs and matching capabilities

Specific content:

- Publishing project collaboration opportunities
- Matching skill requirements
- Recruiting for cultural experiences

- Connecting community service projects
- Finding creative collaborators

Sources of demand:

- Community organizations
- Schools and educational institutions
- Small businesses and startup teams
- Nongovernmental organizations
- Cultural institutions and artistic groups
- Event organizers and community leaders

Value proposition: make real needs visible and give capabilities an outlet

Analogy: a combination of “Airbnb Experiences + Upwork + Meetup,” centered on “participation” rather than “employment.”

Layer 2: Shared World (resource network)

Core function: providing basic resources for cross-regional action

The shared Resource Pool includes:

- Short-term accommodation (spare rooms, apartments, homestays)
- Transport (cars, bicycles)
- Workspaces (coworking spaces, studios)
- Living facilities (kitchens, tools, equipment)
- Community connections (local guides, community access)

Operating logic: users earn contribution value by “providing resources” and spend contribution value or pay fees to “use resources.”

Value proposition: lower barriers to action and enable cross-regional participation

Analogy: “Airbnb + coworking,” with contribution exchange alongside monetary transactions.

Layer 3: Contribution-record system (collaboration-fact network)

Core function: recording participation and contributions and establishing trusted exchange

Sources of contribution value:

- Providing accommodation, spaces, and other resources
- Participating in projects and activities
- Sharing skills and knowledge
- Organizing community activities
- Helping others

Uses of contribution value:

- Redeeming resource-use rights elsewhere
- Obtaining fulfillment records in specific settings
- Participating in benefit allocation
- Assisting project matching under explicit rules and appeal conditions

Value proposition: make every contribution visible and enable trust to travel across regions

Analogy: “community credit points + collaborative contribution records,” a reputation system based on actual participation, not cryptocurrency.

Relationship among the three layers

Dream Garden (demand network)



Discover participation opportunities



Need conditions for action



Shared World (resource network)



Generate participatory contributions



Contribution-record system (collaboration-fact network)



Support further participation

The layers reinforce one another: demand attracts participants, resources support action, and contribution records encourage continued participation, forming a positive cycle.

3. User groups

The platform serves three core user groups, whose members may play multiple roles.

3.1 Participants

Group characteristics:

- White-collar workers (seeking career transition or supplementary meaning)
- Freelancers (seeking projects and collaboration)
- Creators (needing channels for expression and connection)
- Skill holders (willing to share expertise)
- Cultural communicators (interested in cross-cultural exchange)

Core needs:

- Join meaningful social projects
- Experience other cultures and lifestyles
- Earn income or contribution-value returns
- Build new social connections
- Find identity beyond occupation

Typical persona:

A 35-year-old former internet operations professional with a three-month gap after leaving employment. Rather than immediately taking another full-time job, they want to do something “different.” Skilled in event planning and data analysis, they are willing to join short projects in different cities.

3.2 Demand-side users

Group characteristics:

- Community organizations (needing activity support and capabilities)
- Schools and educational institutions (needing distinctive courses and exchange projects)
- Cultural institutions (needing content creation and event organization)
- Small businesses and startups (needing professional support)
- Nongovernmental organizations (needing project execution and volunteers)

Core needs:

- Find suitable capabilities and people
- Run distinctive activities and projects
- Obtain short-term professional support
- Bring in outside perspectives and innovative ideas
- Reduce labor costs and recruitment difficulty

Typical persona:

A homestay in Chiang Mai, Thailand, wants to offer guests local cultural experiences but lacks activity-design and organizing capabilities. It seeks experienced travelers through the platform, offering “free accommodation + a small allowance.”

3.3 Resource providers

Group characteristics:

- Property owners (spare rooms or homestays)
- Space operators (coworking spaces, studios)
- Equipment owners (tools, vehicles, gear)
- Community connectors (willing to provide local support)

Core needs:

- Improve utilization of idle resources
- Earn income or contribution value
- Meet interesting participants and projects
- Join a global collaboration network

Typical persona:

A Barcelona designer owns a studio idle on weekends and evenings. They are willing to share it with visiting creators in exchange for contribution value to use on future travels in Asia.

3.4 User role transitions

Role fluidity is a key feature: the same user can play different roles in different settings.

- Today, a participant working on a project in another city
- Next month, a resource provider hosting other participants
- Simultaneously, a demand-side user posting a local community activity

Multiple identities increase user retention and depth of participation.

4. Core product structure

Four core product types cover the entire participation chain.

4.1 Demand marketplace (Dream Market)

Product positioning: a discovery platform connecting capabilities and needs

Core functions:

- Publishing and browsing project needs
- Matching and recommending skill needs
- Displaying event collaboration opportunities
- Recruiting for cultural experiences

- Customizing individual requirements

Product forms:

- Demand listings filtered by region, type, and time
- Intelligent matching based on skills and interests
- Project detail pages covering needs, timing, and returns
- Application and communication system

User value:

- Participants: discover appealing opportunities
- Demand-side users: find suitable capabilities and people

Revenue model: project transaction commissions (5%-15%)

4.2 Shared Resource Pool (Shared Assets)

Product positioning: a resource network supporting cross-regional action

Core functions:

- Accommodation sharing (rooms, apartments, homestays)
- Workspace sharing (offices, studios, meeting rooms)
- Tools and equipment sharing (transport, creative tools, kitchen equipment)
- Local support sharing (guiding, community access)

Product forms:

- Resource map showing available resources
- Detail pages describing facilities, available periods, and exchange conditions
- Booking and confirmation system
- Usage reviews and feedback

User value:

- Participants: obtain resources for action at low cost
- Providers: activate idle resources and earn income or contribution value

Revenue model: resource-use commissions (10%-20%)

4.3 Global skills platform (Skill Network)

Product positioning: a marketplace for sharing knowledge, skills, and experience

Core functions:

- Skill-sharing courses (online/offline)
- One-to-one consultation and guidance
- Cultural-experience workshops
- Professional-experience sharing sessions
- Skill-exchange matching

Product forms:

- Skills directory categorized by field
- Content pages with course introductions, instructor backgrounds, and participation methods
- Booking and payment system
- Learning and review records

User value:

- Sharers: turn skills into value and influence
- Learners: access practical experience and knowledge at low cost

Revenue model: platform commissions (10%-20%)

4.4 Community Network

Product positioning: a network of long-term interpersonal relationships

Core functions:

- City communities gathering local participants
- Interest circles by field and topic
- Collaboration groups around specific projects
- Online/offline activities, gatherings, and sharing sessions
- Maintaining long-term collaborative relationships

Product forms:

- Community pages with members, updates, and activities
- Discussion and communication system
- Event publishing and registration
- Integrated collaboration tools

User value:

- Build long-term social connections
- Discover ongoing participation opportunities
- Gain belonging and identity

Revenue model:

- Membership subscriptions (prices are business assumptions only; transparent value-added services may be provided, but must not include “credit enhancement,” accelerated contribution accumulation, or purchasing governance rights)
- Community-operation service fees

4.5 Relationships among the products

The four products form a complete participation pathway:

Community Network (long-term connection)

↑

Demand marketplace (opportunity discovery) → Shared Resource Pool (action support) → Skills platform (value creation)

↓

Contribution-value system (trust mechanism across all products)

Users enter through communities, discover opportunities in the demand marketplace, obtain conditions for action through the Resource Pool, and create value through the skills platform. Contribution value records and incentivizes the entire process, which returns to the community network to deepen connections.

5. Revenue sources

The platform uses diversified revenue to balance short-term profitability with long-term ecosystem health.

5.1 Transaction commissions

Demand marketplace commission: charged after a project collaboration transaction

- Rate: 5%-15%, depending on project size and type
- Applies to project collaborations involving payments

Resource-use commission: a share of accommodation, tool, and space-use fees

- Rate: 10%-20%
- Applies when resource providers receive income

Skills-platform commission: a share of fees for courses, consultation, and similar services

- Rate: 10%-20%
- Applies to priced knowledge and skill sharing

5.2 Membership subscriptions

Individual membership: value-added services for frequent participants

- Basic: prices are business assumptions only; matching rules should be transparent and must not permit purchase of personality/contribution credit
- Advanced: prices and benefits are business stress-test parameters only; no “credit enhancement” or accelerated contribution records
- Professional: prices are business assumptions only; may include analytics, project diagnostics, and other value-added services

Institutional membership: bulk services for demand-side users and resource providers

- Community edition: \$50/month (demand publishing, talent matching)
- Enterprise edition: \$200/month (custom projects, talent-network access)
- Custom prices vary with needs

5.3 Corporate partnerships

Customized corporate services:

- Team-building design and execution
- Social-impact project partnerships
- Employee-development program access
- Talent-network connection services

Form: project fees or annual service agreements

Price range: \$5,000-\$50,000 per project, depending on scale

5.4 Courses and content

Skills courses: online/offline courses organized by the platform

- Single course: \$20-\$100
- Course series: \$200-\$500

Cultural experiences: distinctive experiences designed by the platform

- Per-session fees or packages

Paid content: high-quality experience sharing, industry reports, and similar material

- One-off purchases or subscriptions

5.5 Contribution-value-related value-added services

Contribution-value redemption:

- Establish redemption channels with partners, such as airlines and hotel groups
- Charge redemption service fees

Deleted item: paid acceleration of contribution value

- Paying to accelerate contribution records or purchase a higher “contribution status” is prohibited
- Commercial payments must not alter contribution facts, fulfillment records, or governance eligibility

5.6 Estimated revenue structure at maturity

Revenue source	Share	Explanation
Transaction commissions	40%	Demand marketplace + Resource Pool + skills platform
Membership subscriptions	25%	Individual + institutional membership
Corporate partnerships	20%	Custom projects and partnerships
Courses and content	10%	Paid knowledge products
Value-added services	5%	Contribution-value-related

6. Growth model

Growth proceeds in three stages, gradually building a global network.

Stage 1: Seed cities (0-18 months)

Strategy: begin with 5-10 representative cities

City selection criteria:

- International orientation, facilitating multinational user access
- Active cultural exchange and willingness to join cross-cultural projects
- Concentrations of creators/freelancers as a core user base
- Strong digital infrastructure for implementation

Illustrative candidate cities:

- Singapore (Southeast Asian hub, highly international)
- Barcelona (strong creative industries, diverse lifestyles)
- Chiang Mai (digital nomad concentration, low living costs)
- Lisbon (technology entrepreneurs, favorable policies)
- Tokyo (rich cultural resources, varied needs)
- Berlin (strong creative industries, active communities)
- Mexico City (Latin American hub, cultural diversity)

Stage targets:

- Build core groups of 50-100 active participants per city
- Gather initial needs and resources: 100+ per city
- Validate product functions and matching efficiency
- Develop a replicable city-operation model

Stage 2: Community-driven growth (18-36 months)

Strategy: organic growth through community networks

Growth drivers:

- City communities: seed users organize local activities and attract newcomers
- Content creators: participants share experiences on social media
- Project word of mouth: successful cases provide examples
- Community referrals: existing users invite friends

Key measures:

- Equip city community organizers with tools and resources
- Support user-created content, experience sharing, and project records
- Establish referral incentives through contribution-value rewards
- Hold regional gatherings and workshops

Stage targets:

- Reach 30-50 cities
- Reach 50,000-100,000 monthly active users
- Establish self-driven growth
- Build cross-city collaboration networks

Stage 3: Global network (after 36 months)

Strategy: form a global network of connected city nodes

Network characteristics:

- Stable routes between city nodes, such as Barcelona-Chiang Mai-Tokyo
- Routine cross-regional collaboration through multi-city projects
- Effective contribution-value circulation among nodes
- Community networks covering major regions

Key measures:

- Optimize cross-regional matching algorithms
- Establish regional operating centers
- Develop corporate partner networks
- Explore interoperability with existing platforms such as Airbnb and Upwork

Stage targets:

- Reach 100+ cities
- Form a self-reinforcing global collaboration network
- Become infrastructure for the meaning economy

7. Platform network effects

The platform's core competitiveness derives from three reinforcing network effects.

7.1 Demand network effect

Mechanism: More needs → More participants → Richer capability supply → Higher fulfillment rate → More needs posted

Key indicators:

- Number of needs posted
- Demand fulfillment rate
- Average response time

7.2 Resource network effect

Mechanism: More resources → Lower action costs → More willingness to participate → More accumulated contribution value → More willingness to provide resources

Key indicators:

- Total resources (accommodation, spaces, tools)
- Resource utilization
- Share of cross-regional resource use

7.3 Community network effect

Mechanism: More people → More connections → Stronger trust → Smoother collaboration → More people attracted

Key indicators:

- Active users
- Connections between users
- Repeat collaboration rate

7.4 Combining the three effects

When all three effects operate together, the platform develops:

Growth in demand	→ More participants
↓	↓
Greater resource demand	→ Greater resource supply
↓	↓
More connection opportunities	→ Greater community value
↓	↓
Stronger trust → Lower collaboration costs → More demand and participation	

Ultimately, a self-reinforcing global collaboration network forms.

8. Why this model works

The platform's feasibility rests on three concurrent social trends.

8.1 Trend 1: AI replacing jobs

Phenomenon: AI is replacing large amounts of routine work; white-collar job stability is declining and structural unemployment is increasing.

Significance for the platform:

- Creates large groups experiencing “meaning deficits” who need new participation modes
- Releases substantial mobile capabilities and time resources
- Creates social demand for “repairing meaning” and “transferring meaning”

Platform response: provide participation beyond traditional jobs and receive released capabilities.

8.2 Trend 2: Normalization of remote work

Phenomenon: remote working spread after the pandemic, greatly reducing geographical constraints; more people can “work anywhere.”

Significance for the platform:

- Lower barriers to cross-regional mobility
- A growing “digital nomad” population as early users
- Decoupling work and living locations creates conditions for a participation economy

Platform response: use the geographical freedom released by remote work to support capability flows across regions.

8.3 Trend 3: Growing demand for global cultural exchange

Phenomenon: deeper global connections bring continued demand for cross-cultural experiences; people seek “integration” and “participation” beyond “tourism.”

Significance for the platform:

- Creates extensive demand for cultural experiences
- Participants want both to “give” and to “receive”
- Provides natural ground for two-way meaning generation

Platform response: connect cultural-experience demand with capability flows, making participation a two-way cultural exchange.

8.4 Opportunity at the intersection of three trends

AI replaces jobs

↓

Capabilities and time are released

↓

New participation modes are needed

↓

The platform provides opportunities

↑

Remote work becomes normal

↑

Geographical barriers are removed

↑

Demand for cultural exchange

↑

Provides motivation to participate

The platform sits at the intersection: receiving released capabilities, using the removal of barriers, and meeting growing demand.

9. Long-term goals

9.1 The platform's ultimate form

Over time, the platform may form a new social structure:

A global network for the flow of resources, capabilities, and meaning

Within this structure:

- Capabilities no longer depend on jobs: people cross organizational boundaries and use capabilities flexibly

- Resources are no longer confined to locations: sharing networks efficiently mobilize idle resources for cross-regional action
- Sources of meaning diversify: varied participation provides identity and value beyond one occupation

9.2 Effects on how society operates

If the network reaches scale, three kinds of transition may follow:

For individuals:

- From “finding jobs” to “finding participation”
- From “one identity” to “multiple roles”
- From “passive adaptation” to “active choice”

For organizations:

- From “employment relationships” to “collaborative relationships”
- From “internal resources” to “network access”
- From “fixed boundaries” to “open connections”

For society:

- From “production society” to “participation society”
- From “occupation-centered” to “plural meaning”
- From “local matching” to “global flows”

9.3 Relationship to the meaning economy

Long-term positioning: infrastructure for the meaning economy.

It does not produce meaning directly, but supplies three foundations:

1. Participation opportunities through the demand network
2. Conditions for action through resource sharing
3. Recognition of value through contribution records

With these conditions, individuals can independently discover participation, build connections, and gain recognition in a broader social space, transferring and recreating meaning.

10. Conclusion

The global flow network is an exploration with both commercial value and social significance.

Commercially, it captures the intersection of three social trends, builds competitive barriers through three network effects, and supports sustainable operations through diversified revenue.

Socially, it offers new participation possibilities in an era of structural unemployment, enabling capabilities to move across a wider space and meaning to emerge from deeper connections.

When resources can be shared, capabilities can move, and people can connect deeply, meaning gains more room to emerge. This is both a business model and an imagined and practical exploration of future social collaboration.

Appendix 4

Prototype for contribution recording and resource coordination (formerly the “Contribution-Value Economic System”): public candidate governance-calibrated edition

1. System positioning

1.1 What contribution value is

Here, contribution value is only an unvalidated prototype for event-level contribution recording and resource-coordination accounting, used to:

- Record individuals' contributions to platforms and communities
- Allocate rights to use shared resources
- Provide verifiable fulfillment facts for specific collaborations
- Encourage sustained participation

It is not traditional money, but closer to:

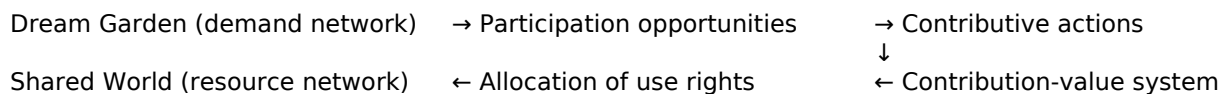
Contribution records + Context-specific fulfillment records + Revocable resource-coordination credentials

1.2 What contribution value is not

- Not cryptocurrency: no direct conversion to fiat money or speculative trading
- Not a points mall: redeemable only for collaborative resources, not standard goods
- Not a one-way reward: continued contribution is needed to maintain value

1.3 Position in the platform ecosystem

The contribution-value system is the trust infrastructure connecting Dream Garden and Shared World:



Without contribution value, resource sharing lacks a trusted exchange mechanism and demand matching lacks a reliable credit reference. Contribution value makes the three-layer structure a genuine closed loop.

2. Three core functions of contribution value

2.1 Allocating resource-use rights

Its first function is exchanging rights to use shared resources.

Basic logic:

Contribute resources → Receive contribution value → Spend contribution value → Obtain resource-use rights elsewhere

Specific examples:

- Provide a week's accommodation in Barcelona → Receive 500 contribution value
- Use a shared apartment in Tokyo for three nights → Spend 300 contribution value
- Use a workspace in Chiang Mai for a week → Spend 200 contribution value

This enables global resource flows without relying on monetary transactions. Providers need not seek cash returns; they may exchange resources for future freedom to act elsewhere.

2.2 Collaborative credit system

Contribution value records a person's collaboration history, including:

- Project participation and completion
- Skill-sharing quality
- Community contribution activity
- Reliability of resource provision

It therefore also forms the platform's credit system:

Credit level	Characteristics	Benefits
High contribution value	Good history and high participation	Priority for popular projects, higher resource-use allowance
Medium contribution value	Stable participation record	Normal access to platform functions
Low contribution value	New users or limited participation	Restricted basic functions; initial credit must be accumulated

People with high credit:

- Are more likely to be selected by project organizers
- More readily obtain scarce resource-use rights
- More readily establish new collaborations

3.3 Encouraging long-term participation

The contribution-value system creates a positive incentive cycle:

Participate and contribute → Earn contribution value → Gain more opportunities → Greater willingness to continue → Contribute more

Specific incentives:

- Accumulation: long-term contributors continually gain contribution value and access to wider resources
- Network effects: greater contribution brings broader influence and connections
- Meaning feedback: contribution value visibly confirms “I participated and created value”

3. How contribution value is generated

Four types of action generate contribution value, each with a calculation model.

3.1 Resource contributions

Contribution types:

- Sharing houses/rooms
- Sharing vehicles/transport
- Sharing tools/equipment
- Sharing work/creative spaces

Formula:

Contribution value = Base resource value × Usage duration × Resource-demand index × User-rating coefficient

Parameter	Explanation	Example
Base resource value	Set by resource type and reference market price	Room 200/night; vehicle 150/day
Usage duration	Actual sharing period	3 nights, 2 days
Resource-demand index	Local demand at that time	Peak season 1.5; off-season 0.8
User-rating coefficient	User feedback	Positive 1.0; neutral 0.7; negative 0.3

3.2 Skill contributions

Contribution types:

- Teaching/training
- Consulting/guidance
- Technical support
- Leading cultural experiences

Formula:

Contribution value = Skill-difficulty coefficient × Service duration × Learner rating × Number of people reached

Parameter	Explanation	Example
Skill-difficulty coefficient	Expertise and scarcity	Programming 1.5; language teaching 1.2; basic skills 1.0
Service duration	Actual service time	Two-hour workshop
Learner rating	Recipient feedback	Positive 1.0; neutral 0.7
People reached	Simultaneous recipients	Coefficient bonus for a ten-person workshop

3.3 Project contributions

Contribution types:

- Project development/execution
- Event organization/coordination
- Community building/maintenance

Formula:

Contribution value = Project value base × Individual contribution share × Project-impact coefficient × Completion level

Parameter	Explanation	Example
Project value base	Assessment of scale and value	Community activity 500; medium project 2000
Individual contribution share	Degree of participation	Core organizer 0.3; participant 0.1
Project-impact coefficient	Scope and effects	Reaching 100 or more people: 1.5

Parameter	Explanation	Example
Completion level	Execution quality	Completed successfully 1.0; partly completed 0.6

3.4 Community contributions

Contribution types:

- Organizing community activities
- Creating content: articles, video, podcasts
- Community management/maintenance
- Guiding/helping newcomers

Formula:

Contribution value = Number of participants × Activity-impact coefficient × Content-quality rating

Parameter	Explanation	Example
Number of participants	Activity/content audience size	30 people at an offline gathering
Activity-impact coefficient	Long-term community value	Establishing a lasting community: 1.5
Content-quality rating	Usefulness and feedback	Many likes and saves: 1.2

4. How contribution value is spent

Contribution value has three main uses.

4.1 Resource use

Redeemable resources:

- Accommodation (rooms, apartments, homestays)
- Transport (vehicles, bicycles)
- Tools (equipment, gear)
- Workspaces (offices, studios)

Spending logic:

Contribution value required = Base resource-use cost × Usage duration × Demand intensity

Examples:

- One night in a shared Tokyo apartment: 300 contribution value
- One day in a Chiang Mai workspace: 150 contribution value
- One week with a Berlin bicycle: 200 contribution value

4.2 Project participation

Some popular projects may require contribution-value thresholds:

- High-responsibility projects: may require directly relevant, verifiable fulfillment records or capability evidence; one total score must not replace specific eligibility judgments
- Limited places: popular activities should use public, explainable, appealable allocation rules; contribution records can only be one limited, task-relevant information source

- Core communities: necessary safety or responsibility thresholds should follow explicit role qualifications and behavioral records, without creating status hierarchies from total contribution scores

4.3 Platform services

- Advanced matching: contribution value assists project matching under explicit rules and appeal conditions
- Analytics reports: redeem contribution value for analysis of personal participation data
- Professional courses: some quality courses accept contribution-value payment
- Certification: skill or identity verification should use independent, auditable certification rules, separate from total contribution scores

5. Layered contribution-value structure

Two types of contribution value form a two-layer structure to prevent system imbalance.

5.1 Global CV

Definition: general-purpose contribution value usable worldwide

Scope:

- Cross-regional resource exchange: accommodation, transport, spaces
- Platform-level benefits: certification, advanced services
- Global project participation

Characteristics:

- Relatively stable value
- Cross-domain circulation
- Harder to acquire, requiring high-quality contributions

5.2 Domain CV

Definition: specialized contribution value used within a particular field or community

Scope:

- Internal technical-community collaboration
- Creator-community resource sharing
- Cultural-community activities
- Local city communities

Characteristics:

- Value related to community activity
- Circulation limited to the domain
- Relatively easy to acquire through everyday participation
- Partly convertible to Global CV at a specified rate

5.3 Significance of the two-layer structure

Problem	Solution
Preventing Global CV inflation	Domain CV absorbs small everyday transactions
Encouraging local community building	Domain CV strengthens belonging

Problem	Solution
Balancing scarcity and availability	Two layers meet different contextual needs
Preventing systemic risk	Fluctuations in one domain do not affect the global layer

6. Preventing system abuse

Anti-abuse mechanisms must ensure fairness and sustainability.

6.1 Multidimensional evaluation

Contribution value is determined by multiple weighted dimensions, not quantity alone:

Dimension	Weight	Explanation
User ratings	30%	Recipient feedback scores
Usage frequency	20%	Actual resource utilization
Task completion	25%	Project/task completion quality
Historical record	15%	Stability of long-term participation
Community feedback	10%	Overall assessment by community members

6.2 Trust-level system

A unified hierarchy of “higher contribution, higher personality credit, greater basic permissions” is not adopted. High-responsibility tasks may have directly relevant eligibility thresholds, but these must be minimally necessary, based on verifiable evidence, public, appealable, and revocable. The original L1-L5 scheme is retained only as a rejected historical prototype and is excluded from the public candidate mechanism.

Level	Acquisition conditions	Benefits
Historical prototype L1: not adopted. New users must not lose basic browsing, exit, appeal, or other fundamental rights because of insufficient contributions.		
L2: Ordinary user	Complete 1 contribution	Access basic resources
L3: Certified contributor	Accumulate 1000 contribution value	Priority matching, higher usage allowance
L4: Advanced collaborator	Accumulate 5000 contribution value + community recommendation	Project initiation, community governance participation
L5: Core network member	Accumulate 10000 contribution value + governance contributions	Voting on major platform matters

6.3 Anomaly detection

The system automatically detects:

- Fake transactions: contribution-value transfers without real interaction
- Contribution farming: repeated low-quality contributions for points

- Malicious use: occupying resources without using them
- Rating manipulation: fake positive or malicious negative reviews

When anomalies are detected:

1. First anomaly: record the specific event, notify the person, and provide explanation and appeal opportunities; freeze only directly related functions when necessary
2. Repeated or continuing anomalies: impose reviewable, context-specific restrictions based on evidence and proportionality
3. High-consequence or persistent malicious behavior: take necessary protective measures under applicable laws and rules, retaining review, appeal, and responsibility-takeover procedures

6.4 Contribution-value decay

Historical contribution facts are not automatically erased. Time-sensitive resource credentials may have public, advance-notified expiry dates for “available allowances,” but historical fulfillment records should be stored separately from spendable allowances. The following fixed annual decay rates are not part of the current candidate mechanism:

- Historical prototype: global allowances decay 5% annually; not currently adopted and requires independent validation; historical contribution facts must not be automatically erased
- Historical prototype: domain allowances decay 10% annually; not currently adopted and requires independent validation; historical contribution facts must not be automatically erased
- Long inactivity does not erase historical contribution facts; if available resource allowances are to expire, separate explicit rules should be established

7. Relationship between contribution value and the real economy

7.1 A dual-track economic structure

Contribution value coexists with money rather than replacing it, forming a dual-track economy:

Dimension	Monetary track	Contribution-value track
Uses	Purchasing goods, paying service fees	Resource exchange, credit evidence
Sources	Work income, investment	Participation, resource sharing
Characteristics	Unlimited accumulation	Decay; continued acquisition required
Circulation	Worldwide	Within the platform ecosystem

Users may choose either or combine them:

- Pay money for accommodation
- Redeem contribution value for accommodation
- Pay partly in money and partly in contribution value

7.2 Non-monetary design

Deliberate non-monetary features:

- No direct conversion to fiat: prevents speculation and financialization
- No lending or borrowing: value must come from real contributions
- Caps: annual acquisition limits per person

- Real-name system: contribution value tied to real identity

7.3 Interfaces with the real economy

Although not directly convertible, contribution value can:

- Offset monetary expenses by paying some platform service fees
- Provide priority: users with high contribution values take priority when competing for popular resources
- Convert to other benefits through partner redemption channels, such as airlines and hotel groups

8. Long-term significance

As the platform expands, contribution value may evolve into:

8.1 Collaborative credit profiles

It records a complete collaboration history, not merely numbers:

- Projects joined
- Reviews received
- Resources provided
- People helped

The profile may become part of a person's “digital identity” in a collaborative society.

8.2 Resource-use credentials

Within the resource-sharing network, contribution value represents:

“I have contributed to this network, so I am entitled to use its resources.”

This is a contribution-based logic of entitlement rather than a capital-based logic of purchase.

8.3 Social participation records

More broadly, the system may become a new mechanism for recording social participation:

- Record individual contributions to society
- Quantify and visualize participation value
- Visibly confirm sources of meaning

When someone feels lost, the records can answer: “You participated in these things, created this value, and helped others in these ways.”

8.4 From an economic system to a meaning system

The deeper design makes “contribution” visible, accumulable, and perceptible:

Real contribution → Recorded → Seen → Recognized → Stronger meaning → More contribution encouraged

This is a design for meaning infrastructure, not merely an economic design.

9. Distinctive value of the system

Compared with existing platforms, the system addresses three core problems:

9.1 Trust

Traditional platforms: centralized review and ratings that are easily manipulated

Contribution-value system: fully traceable contribution history, combined multidimensional evaluation, and detectable anomalies

9.2 Incentives

Traditional platforms: narrow incentives, such as money or points, struggle to encourage diverse contributions

Contribution-value system: all four contribution types receive recognition and can be converted into one another

9.3 Fairness

Traditional platforms: resource-use rights directly tied to purchasing power

Contribution-value system: resource-use rights tied to real contributions, so access is not reserved for capital owners

10. The system's closed loop

The three-layer platform and contribution-value system form a complete loop:

Capabilities + Resources + Needs

↓

Dream Garden (discover needs)

↓

Participatory action emerges

↓

Contribution-value records

↓

Shared World (use resources)

↓

New participation opportunities

↓

More sources of meaning

The contribution-value system sits at the center:

- Upward: receives opportunities generated by Dream Garden
- Downward: connects resource conditions supplied by Shared World
- Inward: records individual contribution and growth
- Outward: connects a broader social participation network

11. Summary

The contribution-value economic system provides a new collaboration mechanism for the global flow network.

Within this mechanism:

- Contributions are recorded: every participation leaves a trace
- Trust is built: collaboration history becomes reliable credit evidence
- Resources are shared: use rights depend on contribution, not only capital
- Meaning is confirmed: visible contributions strengthen the value of participation

When the system connects capabilities, resources, and needs, social participation becomes more diverse and meaning sources richer.

Contribution value is a means, not an end: it makes “participation” visible, “contribution” accumulable, and “meaning” perceptible. This is the infrastructure needed to move the meaning economy from theory to practice.

Appendix 5

Structural differences between the contribution-value economy and the traditional capital economy

1. Core differences between the two economic structures

In modern society, resources are allocated mainly through two logics: one centers on capital ownership and market transactions; the other on individual contribution and collaborative networks. The former is the capital economy, dominant since the industrial age; the latter is the contribution-value economy, gradually emerging with digital technology and global connectivity.

The capital economy's basic logic is:

Capital input → Organizing production → Goods or services → Market exchange → Monetary returns

Capital drives allocation, returns are distributed mainly in proportion to capital investment, and individual value often appears through fixed jobs.

The contribution-value economy follows a different logic:

Capabilities + Resources + Needs → Contributive actions → Contribution records → Resource-use rights → New participation opportunities

Value comes from participation and collaboration; contributions are continually recorded; resources are shared through networks; and use rights depend on contribution rather than capital alone.

These structures are not substitutes but allocation methods suited to different settings. The capital economy is efficient in large-scale standardized production, while the contribution-value economy better suits distributed collaboration and resource sharing.

2. Basic logic of the capital economy

2.1 Core elements

The capital economy rests on:

- Capital ownership: money, equipment, land, and other capital belong to individuals or legal persons; the owners of that capital hold rights of control and returns
- Market transactions: goods and services are exchanged through markets, with supply and demand determining prices
- Employment relationships: workers sell labor time for wages, while capital owners control the output
- Company organization: production occurs mainly in hierarchical companies with clear ownership boundaries and management levels

2.2 Operating logic

The typical process is:

1. Capital accumulation: savings, investment, or borrowing create capital
2. Production organization: owners hire workers, buy production inputs, and organize production
3. Value realization: products are sold for monetary revenue
4. Distribution: revenue is divided among capital owners as profits, workers as wages, and other factor providers

2.3 Strengths and limitations

Strengths:

- Efficient large-scale production
- Clear property rights and incentives
- Effective resource allocation through markets

Limitations:

- Some capabilities, such as idle skills or fragmented time, cannot readily take job form
- Resources may be underused, such as empty homes and idle equipment
- High cross-regional collaboration costs
- Capital-favoring distribution may increase inequality

3. Basic logic of the contribution-value economy

3.1 Core elements

The contribution-value economy rests on:

- Contribution records: participation, resource provision, skill sharing, and projects are systematically recorded as traceable history
- Collaborative networks: platforms connect participants in decentralized collaboration
- Shared Resource Pools: accommodation, spaces, tools, and other resources are shared, with use rights allocated by contribution
- Trust mechanisms: records reflect only historical fulfillment facts in specific settings, never cross-context personality credit scores

3.2 Operating logic

The typical process is:

1. Contributive action: individuals provide resources or skills, or join projects
2. Recording: contribution type, duration, ratings, and other factors determine recorded contribution value
3. Resource-use rights: accumulated value redeems resource access elsewhere
4. New opportunities: use rights lower action costs, support participation, and generate new contributions

3.3 Strengths and limitations

Strengths:

- Activates idle time, spaces, and skills
- Lowers barriers to cross-regional collaboration
- Makes contributions visible and strengthens participation's value
- Connects returns to contribution, not only capital

Limitations:

- May be less efficient at scale than the capital economy
- Depends on digital platforms and trust mechanisms
- Requires some community consensus and cultural foundations

4. Comparison of the two economic structures

Structural element	Capital economy	Contribution-value economy
Core resources	Capital: money, production inputs	Capabilities, time, idle resources
Value recording	Monetary transactions	Contribution records
Allocation basis	Capital ownership	Context-specific contribution facts and public resource rules
Resource use	Ownership/use rights through purchase or rental	Use rights exchanged through contribution value
Participation	Fixed jobs, employment	Projects, collaborative networks
Organization	Companies, hierarchies	Platforms, networks
Incentives	Wages, profits	Contribution value, recognition, use rights
Trust foundation	Legal contracts, brand reputation	Verifiable fulfillment facts, context-specific evaluation, appeals and correction
Applications	Large-scale standardized production	Distributed collaboration, resource sharing

5. Background to the emergence of the contribution-value economy

Its emergence is the combined result of technological and social conditions, not chance.

5.1 Technological conditions

- Digital platforms: internet and mobile technologies enable large-scale recording and tracing of collaboration
- Smart contracts: automated contribution recording and resource allocation lower trust costs
- Data analysis: multidimensional evaluation and anomaly detection protect fairness

5.2 Social demand

- Capability mismatch: traditional jobs cannot accommodate all skills, leaving many capabilities idle
- Idle resources: low utilization of houses, vehicles, and tools creates sharing demand
- Cross-regional mobility: normalized remote work creates demand for cheaper mobility and participation

5.3 Demand for meaning

- Occupational change: increasing structural unemployment creates a need for new meaning sources
- Desire to participate: people seek social connections and recognition as well as material returns

6. Functional positioning of the contribution-value economy

It supplements areas underserved by the traditional economy rather than replacing the capital economy.

6.1 Applicable settings

Setting	Capital-economy efficiency	Contribution-value-economy efficiency
Large-scale standardized production	High	Low
Local service transactions	Medium	Medium
Cross-regional resource sharing	Low: high transaction costs	High
Distributed skills collaboration	Low: high organizational costs	High
Community mutual aid	Low: market mechanisms unsuitable	High

6.2 Three core roles

Its main functions are:

1. Shared-resource management: mobilize idle resources through networks to improve utilization
2. Collaborative credit system: provide trustworthy credit references for decentralized collaboration
3. Social participation records: make individual contributions visible, accumulable, and recognized

7. Meaning and the connection between the two economies

Compared with the traditional capital economy, the contribution-value economy more readily supports interpersonal collaboration, creating a natural connection to the “meaning economy.”

In the capital economy, individuals relate to the system mainly through a one-way chain of “worker-job-wage.” Their value is often reduced to job functions and income.

In the contribution-value economy, relationships with the system are more diverse:

- Capability flows: skills can be used flexibly across settings rather than confined to fixed jobs
- Resource reciprocity: providing and using resources forms a reciprocal cycle that strengthens connections
- Visible contributions: records reveal positive impacts on others and communities

When networks connect capabilities and needs, participants obtain material returns such as use rights, and may also gain new connections, identity, and self-worth. This is the meaning economy's central concern: new meaning sources beyond traditional occupational systems.

8. Coexistence and complementarity

The two economies embody different allocation logics. They will coexist over the long term and operate in different fields.

Dimension	Capital-economy-dominant fields	Contribution-value-economy-dominant fields
Production	Manufacturing, large-scale agriculture	Creative industries, knowledge services
Resources	Scarce, capital-intensive resources	Idle, distributed resources
Collaboration	Long-term employment, fixed organizations	Short-term projects, flexible networks

Dimension	Capital-economy-dominant fields	Contribution-value-economy-dominant fields
Expression of value	Income, assets	Contribution records, social recognition

8.1 Possible integrations

The structures are not completely separate; integration may take several forms:

- Dual-track payment: platforms support money and contribution value
- Benefit redemption: contribution value offsets some monetary expenditure
- Corporate adoption: companies record cross-department collaboration through contribution value

9. Summary

The capital economy centers on ownership and market exchange, while the contribution-value economy rests on records and collaborative networks. They reflect allocation logics under different historical and technological conditions.

Capital will remain dominant in large-scale standardized production; contribution value better supports distributed collaboration, resource sharing, and participation. Amid increasing structural unemployment and diversified meaning sources, it offers participation beyond traditional jobs and workable infrastructure for the meaning economy.

Understanding the differences clarifies possible socioeconomic evolution: multiple logics coexist, complement, and integrate to sustain production and everyday life, rather than one model replacing another.

Appendix 6

From the AI era to the contribution-value economy: a complete logical chain

An extension of “Structural differences between the contribution-value economy and the traditional capital economy”

Introduction: overview of the logical chain

The preceding discussion examined structural differences. This extension asks why the contribution-value economy might emerge rapidly at this moment, and how it connects logically to AI development, white-collar meaning crises, and the rise of the meaning economy.

The chain can be summarized as:

AI development → Occupational restructuring → White-collar meaning crisis → Growing demand for meaning → Rise of the meaning economy → Need for contribution records and credit mechanisms → Formation of the contribution-value economy

Each link is developed below.

1. AI's impact on occupational structures

1.1 Scope of technological change

AI is entering many forms of cognitive work. Unlike the industrial revolution's replacement of manual labor, the AI revolution replaces some “mental labor”:

- Data analysis: report generation, trend prediction, anomaly detection
- Document processing: report writing, summarization, archiving
- Basic design: posters, layout, simple visual creation
- Programming assistance: code generation, debugging, basic functionality
- Customer and information services: question answering, process guidance, basic advice

These changes do not make human capabilities valueless; they change “which capabilities can be monetized in which ways.”

1.2 Characteristics of structural change

Compared with earlier technological transformations, this round has two distinctive features:

First, its reach extends from blue-collar to white-collar workers. Office jobs previously considered “safe” now face restructuring. McKinsey Global Institute projected that by 2030, hundreds of millions of workers worldwide might need to change occupational categories, a substantial proportion from white-collar roles.

Second, change is accelerating. Technological iteration has shortened from decades to years, making occupational adjustment less smooth than in the past.

1.3 “Changing job structures,” not “the disappearance of work”

This does not mean work itself disappears. More precisely, some jobs shrink, others transform, and some capabilities must find new applications.

For example:

- Basic data-analysis jobs decline while interpretation and strategy demand grows
- Document processing is automated while creative content and quality-control demand grows
- AI performs programming assistance while system-design and requirements-understanding demand grows

The problem is that new applications need not take the form of “fixed jobs.” They may be scattered across a wider space as projects, short-term partnerships, or remote collaboration.

2. The white-collar meaning crisis

2.1 Occupational systems and meaning sources are deeply tied

In modern urban society, white-collar meaning depends heavily on occupational systems. As Appendix 1 shows, its sources broadly include:

Source of meaning	Approximate proportion
Professional achievement	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Social identity	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Family responsibility	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)
Personal growth	One analytical dimension (no fixed population percentage)

Occupation provides income and also:

- Social roles: “I hold this position at this company” becomes central to self-understanding
- Daily structure: work fills weekdays and gives time a clear schedule
- Development pathways: junior-to-senior advancement offers direction
- Social networks: colleagues and industry circles form principal relationships

2.2 How meaning deficits arise

When occupational structures change through layoffs, role adjustments, or industry contraction, white-collar workers may face systemic shocks to their sources of meaning:

Security of subsistence: reduced or unstable income brings pressure and uncertainty

Social identity: the shift from “director at a company” to “unemployed” blurs social roles

Development pathways: established careers are interrupted and future direction becomes uncertain

When all three are affected, individuals may experience a systemic meaning deficit: old sources no longer provide stable meaning, while new sources have not yet formed.

2.3 The dual nature of released time

Occupational change brings pressure and also releases time resources.

Most time within occupational systems serves organizational goals. When that structure breaks, individuals may gain self-directed time, with two implications:

- Negative: unstructured free time may intensify emptiness and anxiety
- Positive: time combined with freedom of action makes new participation modes possible

The key is whether people can find new ways to invest time in meaningful activities.

3. The rise of the meaning economy

3.1 New social needs

When many people face meaning deficits, a new demand structure gradually forms socially:

People need jobs and income, but also:

- Rebuilding identity: finding their place in new social roles
- Social connection: establishing relationships and belonging
- Development pathways: finding directions and goals for ongoing growth
- Expressing value: opportunities to create and contribute value

3.2 Definition and forms of the meaning economy

This paper calls the emerging economic form the meaning economy. Its core functions include:

- Repairing meaning: relieving deficits among people undergoing occupational change
- Transferring meaning: supporting a shift from one occupational source to plural structures
- Recreating meaning: establishing long-term value sources through new participation

Several related forms already exist:

Form	Examples	How meaning is provided
Creator economy	Content creation, paid knowledge	Expression and creation channels
Community economy	Interest communities, study groups	Belonging and identity
Skill-sharing platforms	Knowledge sharing, skill exchange	Opportunities to realize value
Psychological support services	Emotional counseling, growth consultation	Relief from meaning-deficit pressure
Career transition services	Career planning, skills training	Rebuilding participation pathways

3.3 Core conditions for the meaning economy

Its operation requires three foundations:

1. Participation opportunities: discover and access suitable activities
2. Conditions for action: participate at an affordable cost
3. Recognition of value: contributions are seen, recorded, and rewarded

Platforms such as Dream Garden's demand network and Shared World's resource network can address the first two. The third, recognition of value, requires something more fundamental: contribution recording and a credit system.

4. Why a contribution-value system is necessary

4.1 Three core problems facing the meaning economy

Problem 1: Trust

Distributed participants come from different regions and backgrounds and do not know one another. How can we ensure:

- Resource providers actually receive returns?
- Project participants fulfill their promises?
- Skill-sharing quality is reliable?

Traditional trust mechanisms such as contracts and brand reputation are too costly and inefficient in this setting.

Problem 2: Exchange

Many meaning-economy exchanges are non-monetary:

- I accommodate you now and may need accommodation elsewhere later
- I teach you a skill and may need your help later
- I join a project and may need support from other projects later

Without money as a common medium, how can exchange cross time, space, and contribution types?

Problem 3: Incentives

Participants need sustained motivation:

- Why should I provide idle resources?
- Why should I share skills?
- Why should I help build communities?

One-off thanks or small payments are unlikely to sustain participation.

4.2 The contribution-value solution

The system is designed to address all three:

Trust: fully traceable contribution histories, combined multidimensional evaluation, and detectable anomalies. Contribution value is itself a trustworthy collaboration record.

Exchange: a common “collaborative accounting unit” supports value exchange across time, space, and types. Providing accommodation earns contribution value that can later redeem other resources.

Incentives: accumulation allows long-term contributors to gain value and access wider resources. Visible confirmation that “I participated and created value” reinforces meaning.

4.3 The distinctive logic of the contribution-value economy

Unlike the capital economy, its core logic is:

Contribution records → Accumulated credit → Resource-use rights → More opportunities → More contributions

This positive cycle is driven by participation's value, stronger social connections, and accumulated use rights rather than returns on capital.

5. Why the AI era accelerates its emergence

5.1 Supply: released capabilities

AI releases many capabilities previously fixed within jobs:

- Capabilities from automated jobs need new applications
- Changed work turns some skills from “job necessities” into “mobile resources”
- Flexible working time requires new uses for fragmented time

Released capabilities need new structures to receive them. The contribution-value economy is one such mechanism.

5.2 Demand: the need for meaning

The intensified meaning crisis of the AI era creates strong demand:

- People undergoing occupational change need new participation modes
- Even employed people ask, “Who can I be apart from my work?”

- Demand for cross-cultural exchange and varied experiences continues to grow

The contribution-value economy offers social participation and recognition alongside resource exchange, answering this demand.

5.3 Enabling conditions: technical feasibility

Digital technology makes the contribution-value economy possible:

- Platforms record and trace collaboration at scale
- Data analysis enables multidimensional evaluation and anomaly detection
- Mobile internet sharply lowers global connection costs

Technology, social demand, and capability supply intersect at this moment, giving its emergence a practical foundation.

6. The complete logical chain

We can now set out the full chain:

[Technology] AI development → Cognitive work assisted or replaced → Some white-collar jobs reduced or transformed

↓

[Individual] Occupational restructuring → Reduced meaning sources → Meaning deficit → Need for new participation

↓

[Society] Growing demand for meaning → Rise of the meaning economy → Need for supporting collaboration mechanisms

↓

[Institutions]

Three core conditions: participation opportunities, conditions for action, recognition of value

↓

Recognition requires: trust mechanisms + exchange mechanisms + incentive mechanisms

↓

Contribution-value system: contribution records + accumulated credit + resource-use rights

↓

[Outcome] A contribution-value economy forms, providing meaning-economy infrastructure and supporting capability flows and resource sharing

7. Relationship with the traditional capital economy

7.1 Coexistence rather than replacement

Its emergence does not mean the end of the capital economy. Each will operate in different fields:

Field	Capital economy dominant	Contribution-value economy dominant
Large-scale production	Yes	
Standardized services	Yes	
Cross-regional resource sharing		Yes
Distributed skills collaboration		Yes
Community mutual aid		Yes

7.2 Possible interactions

The structures may interact in several ways:

- Dual-track payment: platforms support both money and contribution value
- Benefit redemption: contribution value offsets some monetary expenditure
- Corporate adoption: companies record cross-department collaboration using contribution value
- Explicit prohibition: contribution records must not directly serve as general-purpose personality proxies for traditional financial institutions assessing personal financial credit, granting credit, or pricing insurance

7.3 Differences in the meaning dimension

The two structures have different characteristics:

- Capital economy: social status and identity through income and consumption
- Contribution-value economy: social connections and self-worth through participation and contribution

The two can complement each other in supporting individual meaning systems.

8. Summary

AI development is changing occupational structures and white-collar meaning sources. When traditional jobs decline, people need new participation modes and recognition mechanisms. The meaning economy responds, but its healthy operation needs contribution records and a credit system as infrastructure.

The contribution-value economy emerges in this context. It is not an invention from nowhere but the intersection of technological change, social demand, and institutional innovation. Recording contributions, establishing collaborative credit, and allocating use rights provide a workable foundation for the meaning economy and participation beyond traditional jobs in the AI era.

This chain clarifies possible socioeconomic evolution: from a single capital-centered structure to a plural structure where capital and contribution-value economies coexist; from job-centered meaning to richer, more diverse participatory meaning systems. (For details, see the separate appendix document.)

Further reading

Continue from The Meaning Economy to understand Civilization Leap

The Meaning Economy primarily asks how people can continue to gain social position, participation, contribution, growth, and a sense of being needed beyond income after AI and automation reshape occupations. It is a link, not an endpoint, in the Civilization Leap causal chain: the practical transition from “work-participation-contribution-position-meaning.”

Understand why civilization must change

[Civilization Leap: the five-volume series](#)

Continue at the level of civilization as a whole: why a leap is necessary, which boundaries must be upheld, and how civilizational dynamics can move from old ways of realizing interests toward new paths to shared prosperity.

Understand how future civilization enters real life

[Living Civilization: the trilogy](#)

From operating principles and real life in future civilization to the formation of a new civilization, examine how institutions and mechanisms enter work, family, relationships, communities, and an ordinary person's day.

Understand how meaning becomes a real driving force for individuals and civilization

[The Emergence of Meaning and related writings on meaning dynamics](#)

Continue asking where meaning comes from and how it emerges when survival pressure declines and intelligence is no longer scarce, and how to prevent unified scoring, standardization, or institutions from replacing it.

Understand how human judgment, responsibility, and correction are preserved

[Human-COS](#)

Explore judgment before irreversibility, responsibility windows, critical dissent, and correction mechanisms. Technology and institutions can assist judgment but cannot assume final responsibility for real-world actors.

Continue through the complete causal logic

[The Path of Civilization Leap | Complete causal map](#)

Online entry for this paper

[The Meaning Economy: online explanation and further reading](#)

Reading note: these recommendations are organized by relationships among questions, not a mandatory linear order. Interpret theoretical propositions, external evidence, cases and scenarios, mechanism prototypes, and business assumptions according to each document's own evidence and version boundaries.