

# The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES): Protecting Dignity in Post-Labour Societies

*A Non-Market Framework for Human Value Beyond Optimisation*

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## Abstract

This paper introduces the Human Value and Meaning System (HVES), a non-market valuation framework designed to protect human dignity, meaning, and moral standing from economic and algorithmic misclassification in post-labour societies. As optimisation, automation, and results-based governance expand, there is increasing pressure to render all aspects of human life legible through metrics, incentives, and conditionality. While such approaches may be appropriate for participation and resource allocation, they become destructive when applied to care, vulnerability, identity, or meaning.

HVES establishes a protected domain of human value that must not be monetised, incentivised, or converted into performance metrics. It functions as a stabilising layer rather than a productive system, ensuring that dignity is unconditional and not contingent on output, participation, or behavioural compliance.

The paper clarifies the strict separation between HVES and participation frameworks such as the Engagement Credit Economy (ECE). While ECE recognises non-market contribution through consent-based participation, HVES defines the boundary beyond which recognition must not become obligation. This separation is essential to preventing coercion, moralisation of vulnerability, and renewed forms of workfare under post-optimisation conditions.

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## Description

This working paper, (series ECE / HVES) introduces the Human Value and Meaning System (HVES), a non-market framework designed to protect human dignity, meaning, and moral standing from economic and algorithmic misclassification in post-labour societies. HVES establishes a protected domain in which human worth is unconditional and cannot be priced, optimised, or rendered contingent on participation or productivity.

The framework operates alongside participation systems such as the Engagement Credit Economy (ECE), providing a structural boundary that prevents coercive drift, moralisation of vulnerability, and technocratic overreach. HVES is presented as a stabilising architecture required to preserve legitimacy, consent, and governability under increasing optimisation pressure.

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## Related Identifiers

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# Transparency Statement

## Transparency Statement

This paper is released as an independent working paper. It presents a conceptual and governance framework intended for policy discussion and institutional deliberation. No external funding was received, and no conflicts of interest are declared. All responsibility for the content rests with the author.

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## Introduction

Contemporary governance systems are increasingly required to manage human lives under conditions of automation, optimisation, and economic decoupling. As labour markets fragment and traditional measures of contribution lose coherence, institutions face mounting pressure to render all aspects of human activity legible through metrics, incentives, and conditionality. While such approaches may function in domains of production and participation, their extension into care, vulnerability, identity, and meaning has generated growing harm.

This paper introduces the **Human Value and Meaning System (HVES)** as a structural response to that failure. HVES is a non-market valuation framework designed to protect human dignity and meaning from economic misclassification in post-labour societies. It does not seek to price, incentivise, or optimise human worth. Instead, it establishes a protected domain in which dignity is unconditional and moral standing is not contingent on productivity, participation, or behavioural compliance.

HVES is presented as a necessary complement to participation and coordination frameworks, including the Engagement Credit Economy (ECE). While ECE addresses the growing gap between contribution and employment by recognising non-market participation, HVES defines the boundary beyond which recognition must not be converted into obligation or price. Without

such a boundary, participation systems risk drifting toward coercion, moralisation of vulnerability, and renewed forms of workfare by other means.

The paper proceeds by clarifying where HVES properly applies, how it stabilises institutions through the distinction between safeguarding and assessment, and why firm limits are required on the use of technology within HVES-protected domains. It then examines the predictable failure modes that arise in the absence of such a system.

HVES is not an ethical add-on or a rhetorical commitment to compassion. It is an architectural requirement for maintaining legitimacy, trust, and governability in societies where optimisation pressures increasingly exceed what human life can bear.

## Note on Evaluation and Deliberation

While the Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) establishes dignity and moral standing as unconditional, it does not imply the absence of evaluation where specific accommodations or resource allocations beyond a universal floor are under consideration. The evaluative logic compatible with HVES is **deliberative rather than metric-driven**, grounded in human judgement, contextual understanding, and civic accountability. A complementary framework for such evaluation is set out in *The Human Value Evaluation System (HVES): A Civic Framework for Deliberating Automation* (Zenodo, 2025), which outlines how human-led, reviewable assessment can occur without reducing dignity, meaning, or vulnerability to economic or algorithmic scores. The present paper builds on that approach while maintaining a strict separation between evaluation for accommodation and the unconditional protection of human value.

## 2. The Category Error: Why Meaning Cannot Be Monetised

Contemporary governance systems increasingly attempt to render all aspects of human life legible through economic, behavioural, or performance-based metrics. Under conditions of automation, fiscal constraint, and administrative scale, care, dignity, vulnerability, and identity are reframed as variables to be measured, incentivised, and optimised. This approach rests on a fundamental category error: the assumption that all forms of value can be expressed as price or output.

Markets function effectively where goods are substitutable, scarcity is allocable, and preferences can be revealed through exchange. Human meaning does not meet these conditions. Care is relational rather than transactional. Dignity is intrinsic rather than earned. Identity and belonging are non-substitutable and context-dependent. Attempts to monetise or optimise these domains do not merely fail to capture their value; they systematically distort it.

When meaning is priced, it becomes performative. When dignity is conditional, it becomes fragile. When care is measured, it becomes compliance. These effects are not incidental but structural consequences of extending optimisation logic beyond its legitimate domain. Over time, such misclassification erodes trust, increases administrative burden, and provokes moral resentment, ultimately undermining the legitimacy of institutions themselves.

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) begins from the recognition that some domains of human life must be **protected from translation into economic or behavioural metrics**. This is not a rejection of markets or measurement as such, but a boundary-setting exercise: defining where such tools cease to illuminate reality and begin to corrupt it.

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## 3. What HVES Is — and What It Is Not

### 3.1 What HVES Is

HVES is a **non-market valuation framework** designed to protect human dignity, meaning, and moral standing in contexts where economic evaluation predictably fails. It establishes a protected domain in which worth is unconditional and cannot be converted into price, performance metrics, or participation requirements.

HVES functions as a **stabilising layer** within broader governance architectures. It does not allocate resources directly, set incentives, or define outputs. Instead, it defines the limits of evaluation, ensuring that certain aspects of human life are not rendered contingent on productivity, compliance, or optimisation.

### 3.2 What HVES Is Not

HVES is not:

- a payment, credit, or remuneration system
- a welfare eligibility or means-testing framework
- a productivity, engagement, or behavioural score
- a moral ranking mechanism
- a substitute for income support, public services, or participation frameworks

Crucially, HVES does not confer privilege, exemption, or advantage. It protects dignity, not access. Where resources, accommodations, or assistance above a universal floor are concerned, assessment and proportionality remain necessary, as set out in Section 6.

This distinction is essential. Without it, HVES risks being misread either as sentimental ethics or as unbounded entitlement. It is neither.

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## 4. HVES in Relation to Participation Frameworks and Domains of Application

HVES is designed to operate **alongside**, not in place of, participation and coordination frameworks such as the Engagement Credit Economy (ECE). The two systems address different structural failures and must remain **strictly non-convertible**.

ECE responds to the growing gap between contribution and employment by recognising non-market participation through **consent-based mechanisms**. It operates in the domain of *what people do*. HVES operates in the domain of *what people are*, irrespective of action, output, or engagement.

This separation is deliberate and non-negotiable:

- Human value recognised under HVES must never be converted into engagement credits.
- HVES recognition must never trigger obligation or expectation of participation.
- HVES must never be used to justify reduced material support.
- Participation within ECE must remain optional and consent-based.

Without this boundary, participation frameworks are vulnerable to coercive drift. Under political or fiscal pressure, opt-in systems acquire implicit penalties, and dignity becomes conditional on engagement. HVES exists to prevent this migration by placing human worth beyond the reach of optimisation logic.

The domains in which HVES properly applies are those where performance, productivity, or behavioural metrics systematically misclassify reality and generate harm. These domains share three characteristics: **non-substitutability, non-linearity, and vulnerability to coercive interpretation**.

Indicative domains include:

- health, illness, and fluctuating capacity
- disability and neurodivergence
- caregiving and dependency relationships
- ageing, decline, and end-of-life contexts
- trauma, grief, and loss
- non-linear contributors whose insight or judgement occurs episodically

Across these domains, HVES establishes a protected zone in which dignity and moral standing are unconditional. It does not suspend shared social rules, nor does it eliminate the need for assessment where resources or accommodations beyond a universal floor are at issue. Instead, it ensures that evaluation is not misapplied where it cannot meaningfully operate.

In architectural terms, **ECE recognises contribution; HVES protects meaning**. Each system becomes unstable if asked to perform the other's function.

## **5. Domains of Application: Where HVES Properly Applies**

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) is not universal in scope. It does not apply to all forms of social interaction, nor does it seek to override economic or administrative systems wholesale. Its function is narrower and more precise: to protect specific domains of human life where attempts at optimisation, pricing, or behavioural conditionality predictably generate harm.

These domains share a common structural feature. They are characterised by **non-substitutability, non-linearity, and vulnerability to misclassification**. In such contexts, market signals and performance metrics fail not accidentally, but systematically.

The domains outlined below are indicative rather than exhaustive. They are presented to clarify the *type* of human reality HVES is designed to protect, not to establish a closed taxonomy.

## Reference Note: Evaluating Human Value within HVES

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) described in this paper presupposes an evaluative process that is **grounded in human judgement, contextual understanding, and civic deliberation**, rather than in economic pricing or metric optimisation. To clarify how this evaluative process can be conceptualised without collapsing into market logic, this framework draws on the prior work titled *Human Value Evaluation System (HVES): A Civic Framework for Deliberating Automation* (Zenodo, 2025) (<https://zenodo.org/records/18004378>).

That earlier framework outlines a **deliberative, human-centred evaluation methodology** designed for exceptional contexts where conventional optimisation and algorithmic scoring are inappropriate. It emphasises:

- **Contextual deliberation:** Evaluation grounded in local knowledge, narrative understanding, and human judgement rather than proxy variables or predictive models.
- **Human oversight:** Decisions made by accountable human actors with domain knowledge and institutional authority, supported—but not directed—by assistive technology.
- **Qualitative validation:** Assessment criteria that prioritise coherence, dignity, and lived experience over quantifiable outputs.
- **Reviewability and appeal:** Transparent procedures that allow evaluation to be contested, reviewed, and revised without conditional dependency on performance or compliance.

Within the HVES presented here, evaluation is not a prerequisite for dignity. Instead, it applies only when a **specific accommodation or resource allocation beyond the universal floor** is under consideration (see Section 6). In such cases, evaluative processes must be:

- **Proportionate:** matched to the nature and scale of the accommodation requested.
- **Situational:** sensitive to context rather than generalised categories.
- **Non-coercive:** focused on explanation and consent rather than compliance.
- **Human-led:** with technology in an assistive, not authoritative, role.

The civic evaluation principles outlined in *Human Value Evaluation System (HVES): A Civic Framework for Deliberating Automation* provide a reference model for how such assessment can

be organised without reverting to economic or algorithmic scoring regimes that HVES is explicitly intended to avoid.

This connection should not be read as a dependency on a particular methodology or tool. Rather, it illustrates that HVES's evaluative requirements are **not theoretical but already articulated in compatible frameworks** that prioritise human judgement, legitimacy, and deliberative accountability.

## 5.1 Health, Illness, and Fluctuating Capacity

HVES applies wherever human capacity is unstable, episodic, or unpredictable due to physical or mental health conditions. In these contexts, productivity-based evaluation routinely misrepresents reality, converting recovery, pacing, or withdrawal into perceived failure.

HVES does not replace healthcare systems or clinical assessment. It operates alongside them by ensuring that dignity and moral standing are not made contingent on improvement trajectories, compliance, or demonstrable effort. Capacity fluctuation is treated as a human condition, not a deviation to be corrected.

## 5.2 Disability and Neurodivergence

In the domain of disability and neurodivergence, HVES protects against the reduction of human worth to functional norms. Many individuals possess high capability in some dimensions and severe limitation in others. Systems that rely on uniform thresholds or continuous output flatten this complexity and generate exclusion.

HVES affirms dignity without requiring normalisation, performance, or proof of social utility. It explicitly rejects the conversion of lived difference into economic liability or behavioural obligation.

## 5.3 Caregiving and Dependency Relationships

Care work—whether for children, elders, or dependents with high needs—occupies a paradoxical position in modern societies. It is indispensable, yet systematically undervalued and frequently invisible.

HVES does not monetise care, nor does it require caregiving to justify itself through output or efficiency. Instead, it protects caregiving relationships from being instrumentalised, measured, or morally audited. This protection is essential to preventing care from being reduced to managed service delivery.

## 5.4 Ageing, Decline, and End-of-Life Contexts

HVES applies across the life course, particularly where decline is irreversible. Systems that equate value with future productivity struggle to accommodate ageing populations without drifting toward neglect or coercive “activation” strategies.



HVES affirms that human value does not diminish with reduced capacity or approaching mortality. It ensures that dignity is preserved where optimisation logic has no legitimate purchase.

## 5.5 Trauma, Grief, and Loss

Periods of trauma and grief disrupt agency, concentration, and behavioural predictability. Attempts to enforce normal participation or performance during such periods often compound harm.

HVES treats these states as legitimate human conditions requiring space rather than evaluation. It resists the framing of recovery as obligation and the moralisation of delayed re-engagement.

## 5.6 Non-Linear Contributors

HVES applies to individuals whose contribution, insight, or judgement occurs in bursts rather than through continuous output. Such contributors are common in creative, advisory, cognitive, and integrative roles, yet are poorly served by standard labour metrics.

HVES ensures that periods of withdrawal or low output do not trigger loss of dignity, suspicion, or exclusion. It thereby supports participation systems indirectly by preserving the voluntariness and legitimacy of later engagement.

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Across all these domains, a single principle holds:

**HVES protects dignity where optimisation fails.**

It does not exempt individuals from shared social constraints, nor does it confer automatic advantage. It ensures only that human worth is not made conditional on performance in domains where performance is an inappropriate measure.

By clearly delineating where HVES applies, the system avoids two failure modes: moral inflation, where all behaviour is shielded from accountability; and moral erosion, where only economically legible activity is recognised. HVES occupies the necessary space between these extremes.

**Table 1 — Domains of Application for the Human Value and Meaning System (HVES)**

Domain	Why Market / Performance Logic Fails	What HVES Protects	What HVES Does <i>Not</i> Do
<b>Health, illness, and fluctuating capacity</b>	Capacity is episodic; recovery and pacing are misread as non-compliance or failure	Dignity during fluctuation; moral standing independent of improvement or effort	Does not replace clinical assessment or healthcare prioritisation
<b>Disability and neurodivergence</b>	Functional diversity is flattened into deficit or liability	Human worth independent of normalisation or productivity	Does not grant automatic advantage or exemption from shared rules
<b>Caregiving and dependency relationships</b>	Care is indispensable but underpriced; efficiency metrics distort relational value	Protection of care from instrumentalisation and moral audit	Does not monetise care or convert it into output targets
<b>Ageing, decline, and end-of-life contexts</b>	Optimisation assumes future productivity where none is possible	Dignity across decline and mortality	Does not imply unlimited resource allocation
<b>Trauma, grief, and loss</b>	Agency and predictability are temporarily disrupted	Space for recovery without obligation or suspicion	Does not suspend all social expectations indefinitely
<b>Non-linear contributors</b>	High-value insight occurs episodically, not continuously	Dignity during withdrawal, pacing, or low-output periods	Does not substitute for participation frameworks or remuneration

Across all domains, HVES establishes a **protected zone of human value** where optimisation, pricing, and behavioural conditionality predictably fail. HVES does not confer privilege, advantage, or exemption. It ensures only that dignity and moral standing are not made contingent on performance in contexts where performance is an inappropriate or misleading measure.

Assistance or accommodation above a universal income floor remains subject to assessment, proportionality, and contextual judgement, as set out in Section 6.

## 6. HVES as a Systemic Stabiliser (with Proportionality and Assessment)

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) is not an ethical overlay designed to soften economic systems through sentiment or discretion. It is a **structural stabiliser**, intended to prevent predictable failure modes that arise when optimisation, assessment, and conditionality are applied indiscriminately to human life.

Modern governance increasingly relies on metrics, incentives, and procedural eligibility to manage complexity. These tools function adequately where outputs are measurable, agency is continuous, and compliance is meaningful. They fail, however, when applied to domains characterised by vulnerability, non-linear capacity, or episodic loss of agency. In such cases, optimisation logic produces distortion rather than efficiency: care becomes throughput, dignity becomes compliance, and vulnerability becomes a liability to be managed.

HVES intervenes by establishing a **protected domain of human value** that is explicitly removed from economic optimisation. It does not seek to improve performance within this domain; it prevents instrumentalisation altogether. By doing so, HVES stabilises the broader system while preserving public legitimacy.

A critical distinction must be made between **unconditional human worth** and **conditional assistance above a universal floor**. HVES asserts that dignity, meaning, and moral standing are not earned and must never be contingent on participation, productivity, or behavioural compliance. This principle applies most clearly in situations where individual agency is absent or compromised, such as during acute neurological episodes, severe distress, illness, or cognitive overload. In these moments, the role of institutions is safeguarding rather than evaluation. Procedural enforcement is not merely ineffective; it actively escalates harm.

At the same time, HVES does not imply that all accommodations, privileges, or resource allocations are unconditional. Assistance above a universal income floor—whether financial, material, or situational—must remain **assessed, proportionate, and context-specific** to retain legitimacy. Assessment in this sense is not punitive; it is a necessary component of fairness, trust, and public consent. Without it, support systems drift toward arbitrary privilege, provoking backlash that ultimately harms those most in need of protection.

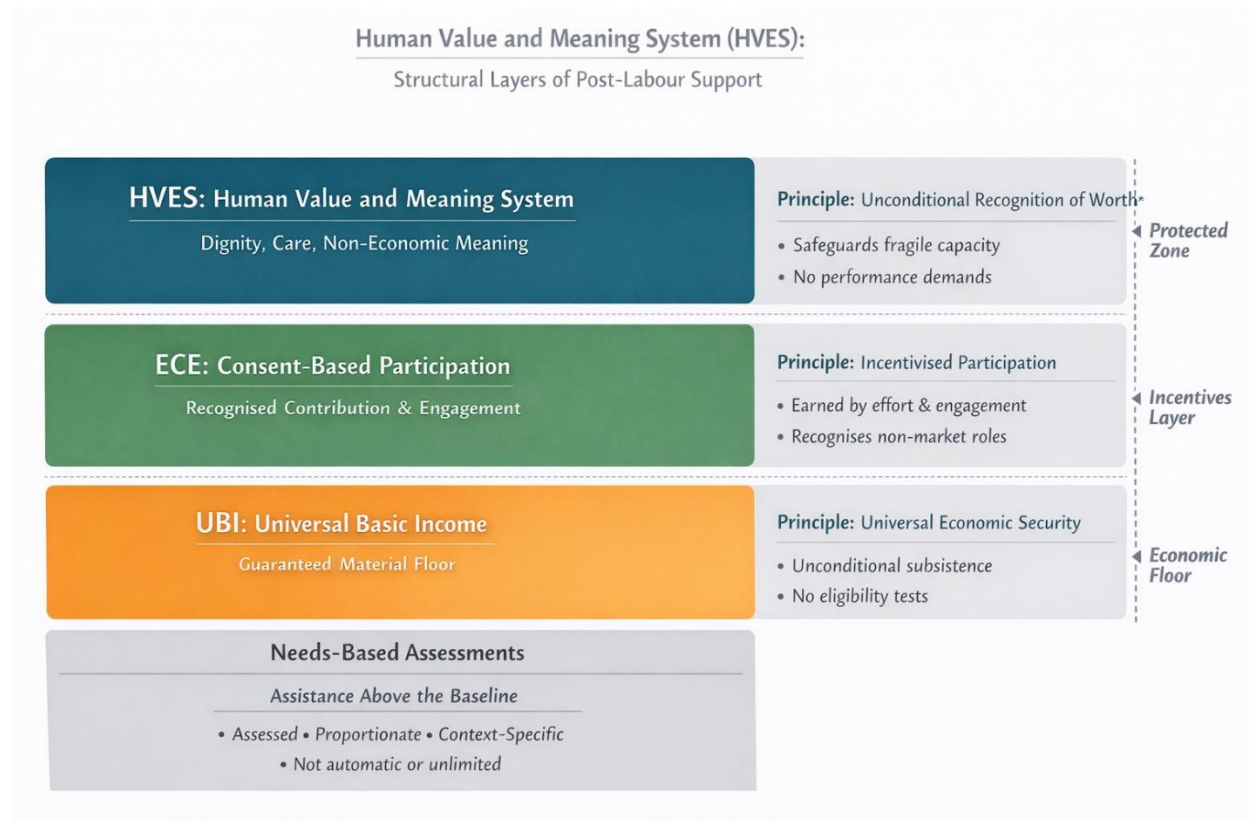
The distinction is therefore temporal and functional rather than moral. **Assessment belongs to planned accommodation and resource allocation**. It does not belong in moments of acute loss of control, where safety and dignity must take precedence. Systems that attempt to evaluate, classify, or negotiate compliance during such episodes substitute procedure for judgement and routinely escalate risk—particularly where physical strength, sensory overload, or impaired communication are present.

HVES stabilises institutions by absorbing this reality rather than denying it. By recognising that human capacity fluctuates—and that agency can temporarily disappear—it reduces reliance on coercion, surveillance, and moralisation. It limits institutional violence by narrowing the scope of compulsory evaluation and by preventing dignity from being converted into a performance metric.

Crucially, HVES does not replace participation frameworks such as the Engagement Credit Economy. It enables them to function without drift. By ensuring that human worth is never contingent on output or engagement, HVES preserves the voluntariness and legitimacy of participation systems even under fiscal, political, or social pressure.

In this sense, HVES is not an aspirational ethic but an engineering requirement. Systems that cannot tolerate fragility, episodic incapacity, and irreducible human dignity eventually compensate through enforcement and control. Systems that embed a protected domain of human value remain adaptable, trusted, and governable.

HVES does not optimise outcomes.  
It **prevents collapse**.



## Box 6.1 — Safeguarding vs Assessment: A Necessary Distinction

**HVES distinguishes clearly between safeguarding and assessment. Conflating the two undermines both dignity and legitimacy.**

- Safeguarding applies when agency is absent or compromised.**  
 In situations of acute distress, neurological episode, illness, or cognitive overload, institutional responsibility is to preserve safety and dignity. Evaluation, negotiation, or conditionality in these moments escalates harm and must be deferred.
- Assessment applies to planned accommodation and resource allocation.**  
 Assistance above a universal income floor—financial, material, or situational—must be assessed, proportionate, and context-specific. Assessment is not punitive; it is required to maintain fairness, public trust, and system legitimacy.

- **Human value is unconditional; advantage is not.**  
HVES protects dignity, meaning, and moral standing without qualification. It does not confer unlimited privilege, automatic priority, or exemption from proportional rules governing shared resources.
- **Timing matters.**  
Safeguarding precedes assessment. Systems that attempt to assess during moments of incapacity substitute procedure for judgement and routinely escalate risk.

This distinction allows support systems to remain humane without becoming arbitrary, and fair without becoming coercive.

This distinction preserves the consent-based participation model set out in the Engagement Credit Economy while preventing its misuse under conditions of vulnerability.

## **Danger, Capacity Loss, and Safeguarding Authority**

HVES distinguishes vulnerability from dangerousness without conflating either with moral failure. Where episodic loss of capacity creates a credible risk to others, safeguarding authority may temporarily override individual autonomy through proportionate containment, separation, or compulsory intervention. Such measures are justified on grounds of immediate risk management, not behavioural judgement or status reclassification.

Crucially, the presence of danger does not negate dignity, nor does it convert episodic incapacity into permanent exclusion or diminished moral standing. Safeguarding responses must remain time-bounded, reviewable, and oriented toward restoration of agency where possible. HVES therefore permits necessary constraint while prohibiting the moralisation or economisation of risk.

## **7. Technology and HVES: Firm Limits on Evaluation and Authority**

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) requires a clear and explicit boundary with respect to technology, particularly artificial intelligence and automated decision systems. While such systems may play a valuable role in coordination, service delivery, and administrative support, they must not be permitted to evaluate, score, or adjudicate human worth, dignity, or meaning.

This is not a matter of technical readiness or ethical aspiration. It is a structural requirement. Technologies optimised for classification, prediction, and optimisation inevitably treat human states as variables to be ranked, compared, and acted upon. In domains governed by HVES, such treatment constitutes category error rather than improvement.

Accordingly, AI systems may support **delivery**, but must not exercise **authority** within HVES-protected domains.

Permissible uses of technology include assistance with scheduling, access facilitation, information provision, environmental adaptation, and administrative reduction of cognitive load. These applications enhance human capability without redefining its value. Technology may also support safeguarding indirectly by flagging risk patterns or resource constraints, provided that such signals are advisory and subject to human judgement.

What is explicitly excluded is any use of technology to assess human worth, prioritise dignity, or condition support on behavioural metrics. AI systems must not rank vulnerability, infer deservingness, predict compliance, or generate scores related to moral standing, care entitlement, or social legitimacy. Such functions convert protected human realities into optimisation targets and invite coercive drift.

HVES therefore rejects the notion of automated “fairness” in protected domains. Fairness, in this context, is not a statistical property but a judgement exercised by accountable human actors. Attempts to encode fairness into algorithms inevitably collapse contextual nuance into proxy variables, reintroducing the very misclassification HVES exists to prevent.

The distinction mirrors that established in Section 6 between safeguarding and assessment. Technology may assist assessment where assessment is appropriate—such as in planned accommodation or resource allocation above a universal floor—but it must never substitute for safeguarding judgement in moments of compromised agency. Automated escalation in such contexts risks rapid amplification of harm, particularly where distress, physical strength, or impaired communication are present.

To preserve this boundary, governance arrangements must treat AI systems within HVES-adjacent domains as **subordinate instruments** rather than decision agents. Override must be straightforward, expected, and logged without penalty. High override rates should be interpreted as evidence of appropriate human control, not system failure.

In sum, HVES demands that technology remain **legible, contestable, and bounded**. Where AI extends human reach without redefining human value, it is compatible with the system. Where it attempts to translate dignity into data or meaning into metrics, it must be excluded by design.

This boundary is not anti-technological. It is anti-misclassification. Without it, optimisation systems inevitably migrate upward into domains they cannot govern without eroding legitimacy. With it, technology can assist human systems without supplanting the human judgements on which dignity ultimately depends.

## 8. Failure Modes in the Absence of HVES

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) is not optional embellishment. It exists to prevent specific, well-documented failure modes that emerge when institutions attempt to govern human life using economic, behavioural, or performance-based frameworks alone. Where no

protected domain of human value exists, systems do not remain neutral; they drift predictably toward coercion, misclassification, and loss of legitimacy.

The most common failure mode is the **economisation of care**. In the absence of HVES, care relationships are reframed as service delivery functions subject to efficiency metrics, throughput targets, and outcome scoring. This converts relational support into transactional performance and systematically erodes trust. Individuals are pressured to demonstrate improvement, compliance, or gratitude, while caregivers are incentivised to prioritise measurable outputs over human need.

A second failure mode is the **moralisation of vulnerability**. When dignity is not structurally protected, vulnerability becomes something to be justified. Individuals experiencing illness, disability, trauma, or episodic incapacity are required to repeatedly prove legitimacy through assessments, behavioural evidence, or performative engagement. Over time, this produces stigma, administrative harm, and disengagement, particularly among those least able to comply with procedural demands.

A third failure mode is **participation drift**. In systems that recognise participation without protecting human value, contribution frameworks gradually become coercive under fiscal or political pressure. Opt-in mechanisms acquire implicit penalties; refusal becomes suspect; inactivity is reframed as non-cooperation. Participation ceases to be consent-based and instead becomes a moral obligation enforced through conditionality. This drift often occurs incrementally and is rarely acknowledged until legitimacy has already been lost.

A fourth failure mode is **technocratic overreach**. Without HVES boundaries, automated systems are invited to fill evaluative gaps. AI and data-driven tools begin to infer deservingness, predict compliance, or optimise support allocation using proxy variables. Context is flattened, dignity becomes data, and judgement is displaced by scoring. The result is not fairness but opacity, error amplification, and resistance.

Finally, the absence of HVES produces **institutional brittleness**. Systems optimised for continuous agency and measurable output are ill-equipped to handle fragility, fluctuation, and crisis. When confronted with non-linear human reality, they compensate by increasing enforcement, surveillance, or procedural rigidity. This response may preserve short-term order, but it accelerates long-term trust erosion and social instability.

These failure modes are not hypothetical. They recur across welfare reform, disability assessment regimes, care provision, and algorithmic governance initiatives in multiple jurisdictions. Their common cause is not malice or incompetence, but structural misclassification—treating human meaning as something that can be priced, ranked, or optimised.

HVES exists to interrupt this trajectory. By establishing a non-negotiable boundary around dignity and meaning, it prevents economic and technological systems from migrating upward into domains they cannot govern without harm. In doing so, it preserves the conditions under which participation frameworks, resource allocation, and innovation can operate without collapsing into coercion.

The absence of HVES does not produce neutrality.  
It produces drift.

And drift, left unchecked, becomes damage.

## 9. Operationalisation and Governance

HVES can be institutionalised in two ways:

### **Option A: Integrative model (preferred for early adoption).**

Embed HVES as a *constitutional boundary layer* inside existing systems (social security, healthcare, disability services, education). This avoids creating a new bureaucracy and reduces political friction. The change is principally procedural: explicit separation of **safeguarding** from **assessment**, and prohibition of optimisation logic in protected domains.

### **Option B: Standalone framework (later, if scale demands it).**

Create a statutory HVES charter + independent oversight body (ombudsman/commission). This is appropriate once HVES is used across multiple ministries or becomes politically contested.

### **Non-coercive governance mechanisms (minimum viable set):**

- **Charter-level “non-convertibility” rule** (HVES  $\neq$  credits, not tradable, not conditional).
- **Independent ombudsman/commission** with investigatory authority.
- **Right of appeal and review** for any above-floor accommodation decision.
- **Audit of algorithmic use:** AI may assist, never adjudicate dignity/meaning.
- **Sunset + periodic review** of procedures to prevent drift into workfare/conditionality.

Civic assemblies can help define principles and review drift, but day-to-day authority must remain with accountable institutions—otherwise you get legitimacy theatre.

### 9.1 Interaction with ECE and UBI

**Overlap resolution rule:** HVES protects *status* (dignity), ECE recognises *participation* (when chosen). If participation fluctuates, HVES prevents that fluctuation being moralised or treated as failure.

A practical design that avoids undermining ECE voluntariness:

- ECE remains **consent-based** with no penalty for non-participation.
- HVES ensures that reduced participation due to health does not trigger suspicion, stigma, or bureaucratic harassment.
- Above-floor ECE accommodations (if any) are assessed **functionally** and proportionately, but **never as a condition of dignity**.

### **Does HVES require UBI?**

HVES is strongest with an unconditional floor (UBI or equivalent), because exit rights are



protected. But it can function without UBI as a **procedural boundary** inside existing welfare states: Below this material threshold, HVES operates primarily as a diagnostic and constraint mechanism rather than a fully emancipatory guarantee.

- HVES can still prohibit dignity-conditionality
- still enforce safeguarding/assessment separation
- still constrain AI authority

However, without a universal floor, the system is more vulnerable to coercive drift (because refusal is materially costly). So: **UBI is not a prerequisite, but it is a stabiliser.**

## 9.2 Cultural and Contextual Adaptability

HVES is **universal in principle** but **local in implementation**.

- In Scandinavian welfare states, HVES mainly acts as an **anti-optimisation guardrail**: preventing the creep of behavioural conditionality and algorithmic scoring into protected domains.
- In liberal market economies, HVES also serves as a **legitimacy repair layer**, reducing adversarial assessment regimes and “deservingness” theatre.

**Local vs macro-level:** both.

- **Local HVES:** community-level safeguarding norms, ombuds access, deliberative panels for contested accommodations.
- **Macro HVES:** national charter, legal non-convertibility, audit standards, and cross-ministry consistency.

The key is federated design: *common principles, local judgement, auditable procedures*.

## 9.3 Evaluation and Deliberation

The deliberative process should be **rare, bounded, and used for contested cases**, not routine administration. Otherwise it becomes slow and politicised.

**Who is involved (typical panel):**

- trained case lead (human)
- domain specialist (health/disability/care)
- safeguarding officer
- citizen representative or civic assessor (optional, rotating)
- ombuds liaison for appeal pathway

**Transparency/accountability:**

- publish the criteria categories (not private details)

- maintain written reasons for decisions
- allow appeal and independent review
- keep decisions **contextual and non-precedent-binding** unless formally adopted

Existing models that translate well:

- **Citizen juries / citizens' assemblies** (for principle-setting, not casework)
- **participatory budgeting** (for resource allocation norms)
- **ethics review boards** in healthcare (for procedural discipline)
- **ombudsman models** (for trust and redress)

### Limits on Deliberative Expansion

Deliberative evaluation within HVES is intentionally designed to be rare, bounded, and resource-intensive. This scarcity functions as a structural safeguard rather than a procedural weakness. Where fiscal or administrative pressure attempts to expand the category of “contested” cases, such expansion is treated as evidence of institutional drift rather than increased demand.

HVES addresses this risk through three constraints:

- (i) deliberation defaults to time-limited human review rather than indefinite assessment;
- (ii) unresolved cases revert to the universal floor rather than denial of support; and
- (iii) sustained increases in deliberative volume trigger independent audit and ombuds review.

These mechanisms prevent deliberation from becoming a covert gatekeeping instrument under budgetary pressure.

## 9.4 Resistance and Political Feasibility

Likely resistance comes from:

- fiscal actors (fear of cost expansion)
- managerial systems (loss of KPI control)
- algorithmic governance advocates (loss of “efficiency” leverage)
- parts of the public (fear of unfair advantage/queue-jumping narratives)

How to address it:

- emphasise HVES as **drift prevention**, not entitlement expansion
- highlight reduction in **administrative harm** and adversarial costs
- show that HVES **protects fairness** by keeping above-floor assistance assessed and proportionate
- demonstrate that HVES reduces backlash by preventing arbitrary privilege

**Piloting (strong recommendation):**

Yes—pilot HVES in domains with clear misclassification harm:

- disability and neurodivergence services
- chronic illness pathways
- caregiving support systems
- safeguarding protocols in public services (schools, transport, major venues)

Pilot outcomes should measure:

- reduced procedural harm
- reduced appeals/conflict
- improved trust
- faster safeguarding resolution
- clearer separation of dignity vs advantage

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## Conclusion

The Human Value and Meaning System (HVES) responds to a specific and growing structural problem: the extension of economic, behavioural, and technological optimisation into domains where such logics inevitably distort, harm, and delegitimise governance. In the absence of a protected boundary around human dignity and meaning, systems do not remain neutral. They drift—incrementally but predictably—toward coercion, misclassification, and loss of public trust.

HVES establishes that boundary. It affirms that human worth is unconditional, non-priced, and non-convertible into performance metrics. At the same time, it preserves the legitimacy of assessment, proportionality, and resource allocation above a universal floor by clearly distinguishing safeguarding from evaluation and dignity from advantage. This distinction is not moral compromise; it is the condition under which support systems remain both humane and credible.

By defining where optimisation must stop, HVES enables other systems to function without corruption. Participation frameworks can remain consent-based rather than coercive. Technological tools can assist delivery without assuming authority. Institutions can respond to fragility and fluctuation without resorting to surveillance or moralisation. In this sense, HVES does not compete with economic or technological systems; it stabilises them.

The absence of HVES does not produce efficiency. It produces brittleness. Systems optimised for continuous agency and measurable output inevitably compensate for human non-linearity through enforcement and control. Systems that embed a protected domain of human value remain adaptable, trusted, and governable under pressure.

HVES does not optimise outcomes.  
It preserves legitimacy.

And in post-labour societies, legitimacy is no longer a secondary concern. It is the limiting factor.

## Material Preconditions and System Limits

HVES is most effective where a credible universal material floor exists, as such a floor protects exit rights and preserves the voluntariness of participation. While HVES can function without Universal Basic Income as a procedural and diagnostic boundary—constraining assessment practices, limiting algorithmic authority, and preventing dignity conditionality—its protective capacity weakens where refusal of participation entails material precarity.

Below this threshold, HVES operates primarily as a constraint and transparency mechanism rather than a fully emancipatory guarantee. This limitation is not a flaw of the framework, but a diagnostic insight into the conditions under which dignity protections can be meaningfully upheld.

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At the same time, this work is motivated by the belief that the Engagement Credit Economy, through more comprehensive design, clearer institutional boundaries, and earlier integration of legitimacy safeguards, can achieve a more complete realisation of its underlying civic intent.

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