

Small Corgi, Big Systems

For those who might be less familiar with the realities of social impact work, I want to share some context about my systemic work and why my initial enthusiasm about its resonance shifted into a more critical perspective.

First, my concerns are not directed at those of you who connected with my work because it brought you joy, hope, or a sense of belonging. Knowing that it resonated with so many people in meaningful ways has been deeply rewarding. Our corgi friend from the future and the many acts of kindness it inspired brought me immense joy, as did all the artists who generously shared their own work with us.

From the beginning, my systemic work was meant to make complex, interconnected challenges more visible and easier to understand. My goal was to communicate systemic issues in a way that reaches people beyond perceived categories and invites constructive, future-oriented thinking about the systems that shape our shared reality.

Your response showed me that this intention resonated, and for that I am truly grateful. If my work has inspired you to question beliefs or structures we often take as given, or to imagine new possibilities for the future, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

At the same time, this kind of work is very difficult to sustain financially. The pieces I shared publicly were entirely self-funded, and I did not earn anything from them, even though they have been clearly valuable to many others.

This is where much of my disappointment comes from. I had hoped that people in my (extended) professional circles, many of whom speak about collaboration, trust, and fairness, would approach independent work in the same spirit. Instead, my work was adopted without acknowledgment or any effort to connect and collaborate.

The same applies to organizations that have the means to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships, for example through joint projects or consulting, yet leverage strategic insights and implement ideas without offering a reciprocal exchange of value. This does not refer to grassroots initiatives with limited budgets, but to institutions with the resources to act more responsibly.

At first, I wondered whether I had been naïve to expect a different outcome or to use my platform to spotlight others. Over time, I came to see this as consistent with how I believe knowledge and impact work should function. Ideas and research rarely emerge in isolation, even though recognition tends to accumulate around established actors within institutional structures. Ultimately, our behavior reflects who we are, and actions often speak louder than words.

These experiences have also made me more cautious about labels such as “thought leader,” “researcher,” or “writer” when the actions behind them do not align with the professional standards they imply. Personally, I find the notion of a “thought leader” problematic, since ideas or opinions should never be adopted uncritically. In my experience, the best leaders and teachers encourage people to think for themselves and support them in discovering their own path.

For me, the purpose of my work has always been to share knowledge in accessible ways and to co-create better futures with those who care about the world we all inhabit, rather than to position myself as a “hero figure.”

For this reason, I chose not to monetize attention through social media or encourage parasocial dynamics. However, I recognize the dilemma many well-intentioned creators face in this context, which underscores the need for alternative ways to support and sustain meaningful systemic work without turning attention and trust into commodities.

Even though my choices came with a cost, I feel at peace knowing that I prioritized creating real value and acted with integrity toward the people and organizations who trusted and engaged with my work.

Of course, I would have appreciated a more equitable and respectful acknowledgment, where my contributions were valued as those of a partner, rather than a free or underpaid source of expertise and direction. Still, the global response to my work affirmed its impact, and it has touched more lives than I ever imagined.

Moving forward, I will focus on building genuine connections and collaborations that are rooted in mutual respect, shared benefit, and long-term sustainability.

Since my work has sparked meaningful action, I hope to share more projects and explorations in the future. Some drafts already exist, and I want to preserve the joy and creativity of bringing them to life with you. For now, I am leaving space for whatever emerges next.

Thank you, truly, for your kindness and integrity. You give me hope for what lies ahead.

Stay kind,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe" followed by a stylized flourish or symbol.