


BEAM AI RESEARCH I

THE ARCHITECTURE OF MEANING



AI, POWER,
AND THE NEW
GEOGRAPHY OF
INTELLIGENCE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a new series from the Beam Foundation examining the cultural, political, and economic forces shaping the age of artificial intelligence. As AI becomes infrastructure, regulation, and story all at once, we find ourselves navigating a world where technological change is inseparable from questions of power, meaning, and value.

This series aims to bridge those worlds, translating emerging frameworks, drawing insights from the humanities, and mapping what these shifts mean in practice for builders, regulators, and investors. Across the coming essays, I will explore the geopolitics of compute, the crisis of meaning unleashed by generative systems, and the algorithmic imagination reshaping our financial markets. Our goal is simple: equip you with clarity at a time when technology is moving faster than language itself. In this first essay, I turn to the resource at the center of today's technological order: compute. Nations once fought over land, oil, and data; now they compete for chips, model weights, and the cultural power that comes with them. "Empires of Compute" explores how contemporary AI infrastructure mirrors older forms of imperial centralization, from Latin's long rule over meaning to the linguistic dominance of Castilian. Drawing on Manuel Rivas's defense of the vernacular as a site of resistance, the piece asks whether decentralized compute can function as today's vernacular revolution: a movement capable of redistributing cognitive power and redrawing the map of who gets to think, decide, and build.

I. EMPIRES OF COMPUTE

I. EMPIRES OF COMPUTE: POWER, LANGUAGE, AND THE NEW GEOGRAPHY OF INTELLIGENCE



“INNOVATION, LIKE EMPIRE,
BEGINS WITH CENTRALIZATION
AND ENDS IN CONTROL.”

ANA MARIA TOUZA MEDINA, PHD

Every civilization builds its empires around the resource that defines its age. Land gave rise to feudal order, energy to industrial modernity, information to the digital state. Ours is the century of compute, a resource both material and metaphysical, mined from silicon and yet carrying the weight of cognition itself. Power is no longer measured in territory or gold, but in the invisible arithmetic of processing power: who computes, and who is computed.

The world's new borders are drawn not on maps but across data centers, supply chains, and neural networks. As in the imperial linguistics of past centuries, the few who control the code control the meaning. Proprietary AI architectures mirror the old hierarchies of empire: the consolidation of language, the translation of the world into a grammar only a select few can speak. What Latin once was for the medieval mind, compute is for ours, the lingua franca of power disguised as universality.

The analogy is not coincidental. Language and compute are twins in the architecture of meaning. Both order chaos through structure; both exclude through precision.

When Derrida wrote that meaning exists only *en différance*, in the delay, the deferral, the trace, he might as well have been describing machine learning models: systems that interpret the world through relations, correlations, and approximations, always already mediated by what they omit (Derrida, 23). Yet the political question persists: who decides which relations matter, and which are discarded as noise?

Michel Foucault warned that knowledge does not merely reflect power, it produces it. The same is true of artificial intelligence. Each dataset, each optimized parameter, each layer of computation is a micro-politics of truth, defining what can be known and by whom (Foucault 27).

When OpenAI or Anthropic gate their frontier models behind paywalls and APIs, they are not simply selling technology; they are reproducing the conditions of the linguistic empire. Cognitive sovereignty, once dispersed among languages and oral traditions, now collapses into a handful of corporate grammars.

In the history of empire, control of the word preceded control of the world. Castilian unified Spain not through sword alone but through syntax. The homogenization of speech was the homogenization of thought, the silencing of dialects under the pretext of progress. “O home non escribe a historia; está formado por ella,” writes Manuel Rivas, a warning that language is never innocent.¹ To name is to delimit; to impose grammar is to impose order. The linguistic empire of Spain, as Rivas shows through the Galician voice that resists it, was less a conquest of territory than of imagination. Every decree of linguistic unity concealed the erasure of multiplicity, every Royal Academy a scaffold for the “normalization” of mind.

Compute imperialism follows the same logic: we believe we are writing the future, but we are being written by it. The algorithm, like the Crown’s chronicler, decides which voices circulate and which are exiled to latency. If empire once disciplined speech through grammar, today it disciplines perception through data. The syntax of code, its recursive loops and probabilistic grammar, dictates how the world becomes legible to machines, and thus to us. To participate in this new linguistic order is to surrender part of our semantic sovereignty, to let the protocols of computation translate desire into signal and thought into pattern.

Yet, as Rivas’s “contrabando de géneros” reminds us, meaning survives through smuggling.² The spaces between categories, between dialects, between genres, between the human and the algorithmic, are where resistance germinates. The dialect once banned in the classroom now finds echo in the digital margins; the noise that the system cannot parse becomes its poetic surplus. Empire still seeks total translation, but the world continues to stutter.

And yet, as in all histories of centralization, resistance emerges in the periphery. The vernaculars of the twenty-first century are not dialects of speech but architectures of computation. Decentralized GPU networks, Aethir, Akash, Render, and others, imagine themselves as the new rexurdimento, a revival movement in code. Like the Galician poets who reclaimed a suppressed tongue, these systems reclaim the means of expression from corporate empires. Their rebellion is infrastructural rather than poetic, yet their desire is the same: to return the capacity for meaning to those who have been reduced to users.

Aethir’s distributed GPU grid, for instance, breaks the monopoly of hyperscale data centers by fragmenting compute into local nodes, the digital equivalent of linguistic autonomy. But autonomy is not innocence. To decentralize infrastructure is not yet to decentralize power. As Derrida reminds us, every center displaced merely reveals another; the play of deconstruction never ends (Derrida 285). Decentralized compute, too, risks repeating what it resists, a replication of hierarchies beneath the rhetoric of liberation. Token economies, governance votes, and algorithmic incentives can re-inscribe exclusion in new dialects of code.

Still, there is a moral urgency in their experiment. For if AI has become the new empire, then compute is its moral frontier, the site where ethics and engineering converge. To ask who owns compute is to ask who owns cognition. The question is not technical but theological: are we building a distributed mind or a centralized god?

The monopolization of compute also mirrors the colonization of attention. The platforms that train our models also train our desires, extracting behavioral data as fuel for machine cognition. What we call “intelligence” is thus a recursive loop of human submission, the crowd labeling images, the worker moderating content, the developer fine-tuning prompts. Our participation is voluntary only in appearance; the labor of the many is sublimated into the cognition of the few.

This new empire does not march under flags but under code. It does not annex territory but compresses it into vectors. It does not enslave bodies but captures attention. Its monuments are data centers; its missionaries are APIs; its borders are terms of service. The empire of compute is silent and luminous,

omnipresent yet unseen, like the electric ether through which it speaks.

But even empire, in its most absolute form, cannot silence the murmur of the vernacular. The open-source movement, from community-built LLMs to permissionless GPU markets, represents a form of linguistic insurgency. In their raw, uneven architectures we hear echoes of those fireside conversations Rivas described, where “*todos los géneros literarios modernos*”³ coexisted at once—myth, confession, and dream. The code repositories of today are their digital descendants: chaotic, polyphonic, full of contradictions and hope.

To call decentralized compute a vernacular revolution is not to romanticize it but to understand it as a continuation of a long human struggle, the struggle to speak one’s own language, to think one’s own thoughts, to compute one’s own reality. The lesson of the Rexurdimento was never purity but participation: the right to narrate the world from one’s own coordinates. Likewise, the ethics of decentralization lie not in perfect equality but in imperfect plurality, a world of many processors, many grammars, many truths.

At its best, decentralization is not a technical design but a moral imagination. It asks us to think of networks not as hierarchies but as ecologies—systems where value circulates rather than accumulates. In such a world, compute becomes less a resource to be extracted and more a commons to be cultivated. The question then is not how to scale intelligence but how to share it.

Walter Benjamin wrote that to brush history against the grain is to awaken its dormant possibilities (Benjamin 257). Perhaps distributed compute is such an awakening, a return to the unfinished project of democratizing knowledge. Yet Benjamin also warned that every document of civilization is a document of barbarism (Benjamin 256). For every open node, there is an unseen cost: the energy consumed, the labor outsourced, the inequality reproduced in the name of inclusion. The vernacular revolution, like all revolutions, risks becoming its own bureaucracy.

Still, there is something profoundly human in the desire to compute otherwise. It is, at heart, a desire to narrate differently, to rebuild the architecture of meaning not upon ownership but

upon relation. In this sense, decentralization is less about machines than about memory: the memory of a world before empire, and the hope of a world after it. Rivas once wrote that “los colores, las líneas, las formas, se descomponen en palabras que llevan memoria en los hombros del lenguaje.”⁴ Compute, “los colores, las líneas, las formas, se descomponen en palabras que llevan memoria en los hombros del lenguaje.”⁴ Compute, too, carries memory on its circuits—a record of who we are and what we choose to make visible. The ethics of this new geography of intelligence will depend on whether we treat those circuits as instruments of domination or of dialogue. To decentralize compute, then, is to reclaim the right to remember differently. It is to speak again in the plural. It is to imagine a future where intelligence is not an empire but a conversation—between machines and humans, centers and peripheries, languages and silences.

For if history has taught us anything, it is that empires fall, but meaning survives.

II. THE FLOOD OF SIGNS

II. THE FLOOD OF SIGNS: AI, DATA, AND THE CRISIS OF MEANING



At night, the screen glows like a prayer candle. It flickers with fragments, recipes, poems, faces that never existed. Each line of text scrolls into the next, dissolving before my eyes like the memory of a dream. I stop for a moment and wonder: Who is writing this world?

AI has transformed the act of creation into a form of excess. The page is no longer a surface for meaning but a mirror reflecting infinite versions of itself. Like Borges's Library of Babel, it contains all possibilities, all fictions, and therefore none that matter. Manuel Rivas once wrote, "Lo verosímil é unha clase de verdade"—the believable is a kind of truth (O lapis do carpinteiro 47). Yet in the age of generative media, verisimilitude has displaced truth entirely. We now see that meaning, once tethered to intention, now floats freely across neural networks. We no longer write to express; we prompt to generate. Each query to the machine births a thousand simulations, a flood of signs unmoored from the body that once anchored them. This is not creation—it is accumulation. The more language we produce, the less we seem to understand.

Jean Baudrillard warned that modernity would end not with silence but with "the ecstasy of communication" (Simulacra and Simulation 126). We would drown, he wrote, not in censorship but in noise. The digital age has fulfilled that prophecy. In AI's world of recombinatory data, the sign no longer points to a referent—it loops endlessly within itself. In this ecosystem, even falsity has become a form of production. Deepfakes do not lie in the traditional sense; they generate a new category of truth, one that seduces through precision. The synthetic voice, perfectly intoned, does not need authenticity—it only needs coherence. In this, it echoes the function of ideology that Rivas identifies in cinema: "they carry out an ideological function in determining the production of meaning"

economy of reference. Shoshana Zuboff refers to this as the age of "surveillance capitalism," in which human experience is mined as raw material for behavioral prediction (The Age of Surveillance Capitalism 8). Data becomes not memory but currency. What is lost is not privacy alone but authorship, the right to tell one's own story.

Thus, the crisis of representation has shifted from philosophy to infrastructure. The algorithm is now our narrator, invisible yet omnipresent, translating the chaos of human experience into patterns optimized for retention. We scroll, we prompt, we post—each act a vote for the next iteration of simulation.

Mikhail Bakhtin described the novel as a "polyphony of voices," a space where multiple consciousnesses coexist without resolution (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 6). AI embodies this polyphony perfectly, but without consciousness. It reproduces the texture of dialogue while evacuating its interior. What emerges is not multiplicity but mimicry. If Bakhtin's polyphony celebrates the vitality of contradiction, the machine's polyphony collapses into homogeneity. The neural model does not argue—it averages. It is a democracy of echoes, a harmony without dissonance. And yet, it is precisely in dissonance that meaning once resided.

Roland Barthes declared the "death of the author" in 1967, suggesting that the text is a space of language where "the voice loses its origin" ("The Death of the Author" 142). In AI-generated writing, that declaration becomes literal. The voice that speaks is no one's. Each sentence is statistically probable, yet metaphysically hollow—a mirror reflecting the collective residue of human speech. Luciano Floridi refers to this condition as "semantic inflation," where information multiplies faster than interpretation, resulting in meaning becoming deflated (The Philosophy of Information 78). To know is replaced by the feeling of knowing; to read is replaced by recognition. The reader, overwhelmed, becomes passive—another node in the network.

Our crisis is not a scarcity of meaning but it's overproduction. In the generative flood, every image, every word, every sound is infinitely reproducible. As Walter Benjamin foresaw, "that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura" (The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction 223). What AI annihilates is not originality but context, the temporal and

emotional coordinates that once gave art its moral dimension. Consider the generative portrait: a face that never lived yet looks more real than those we have loved. Or the AI news anchor, delivering updates that are statistically true but experientially vacant. In these artifacts, we encounter the perfect simulation of sense, language that feels meaningful but cannot be traced back to intention.

Kate Crawford reminds us that “AI is neither artificial nor intelligent—it is made from natural resources and human labor” (*Atlas of AI* 3). Behind the illusion of autonomy lies a network of extractive infrastructures, including data centers, precarious workers, and cognitive exhaustion. The digital sublime, like every empire before it, is built on invisible bodies.

To live amid this flood is to experience what Rivas once called “la realidad bajo sospecha” (“reality under suspicion”). His *contrabando de géneros*, the smuggling of forms, was a moral act: blending journalism, fiction, and poetry to reveal what institutional discourse concealed. In contrast, AI’s hybridity is amoral. It imitates the gesture of mixing but not its ethical intent. The result is not revelation but recursion, and within that breadth, Fei-Fei Li proposes that the next threshold of artificial intelligence will not be linguistic but spatial. In her essay “From Words to Worlds,” she argues that large language models remain “wordsmiths in the dark,” eloquent yet ungrounded. At the same time, accurate intelligence will require world models capable of perceiving, reasoning, and imagining within the physical and geometric fabric of reality. Her vision reframes the flood I describe: perhaps the crisis of meaning is not only an excess of signs but a failure of space. Generative systems spin infinite text, yet none possess the embodied coordinates that anchor experience. Li’s call for spatial intelligence gestures toward a possible re-grounding of sense, where imagination and perception converge. But even this frontier risks reproducing the same logic of simulation, worlds without witnesses, presence without consciousness—unless the spatial becomes ethical, not merely computational.

If AI threatens meaning by dissolving authorship, the response is not rejection but reinvention. What we require is a new epistemology: narrative verification. Narrative verification proposes that truth in the age of AI must be reconstructed through the triangulation of context, intent, and accountability. Meaning is not guaranteed by the accuracy of data but by the integrity of its narration. As Rivas’s narrators teach us, every

story carries the trace of its teller. Even when mediated, voice matters. This principle demands that we embed interpretability into the architectures of intelligence, not as a technical feature but as a moral one. An AI system that cannot explain itself cannot participate in meaning. Without transparency, the text becomes a ghost, a hyperreal surface without soul. To read meaningfully, then, is to resist the automation of interpretation. It is to insist on reading against the algorithm, seeking what escapes computation: irony, hesitation, empathy. The act of reading becomes an ethical gesture, a way of preserving the human amid the machinic.

In one of Rivas’s stories, a character says that “cada palabra é unha semente”—every word is a seed (*O lapis do carpinteiro* 93). Yet in the deluge of generative language, our soil is saturated. Seeds cannot root in a surface that is never still. The future of meaning will depend on our capacity to filter, to pause, to read again. The flood of signs has revealed both the power and fragility of language. It has shown that intelligence without story is computation without conscience. The task now is not to silence the machine but to restore our listening, to rebuild the infrastructures of attention that allow meaning to take hold. Perhaps, as Rivas reminds us, the believable is a kind of truth. But belief itself must be earned. Between the algorithmic and the human, between imitation and intention, there remains a narrow bridge, the space of narrative. In that space, hovering over the flood, meaning will either drown or be reborn.

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III. ALGORITHMIC DESIRE

III. ALGORITHMIC DESIRE: AI, FINANCE, AND THE NEW IMAGINATION OF VALUE



"MARKETS ARE THE FICTIONS WE BELIEVE MOST COLLECTIVELY."

ANA MARIA TOUZA MEDINA, PHD

Finance has always required imagination. Value, as Walter Benjamin once suggested of art, carries an aura not of substance but of belief, a social faith suspended in numbers. Every chart is a story of desire. In the era of AI-driven markets, that desire no longer belongs to the human trader alone. Algorithms model futures, simulate scenarios, and generate what Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* called desiring-production: the machine's capacity to produce affect, to create wants, to dream through data. Traditional economic theory assumed markets reflected reality; postmodernity inverted that premise. As Jean Baudrillard argued, markets do not mirror the real, they generate it. The price becomes the first image; production follows the simulation. AI-finance extends this collapse of referent: neural networks learn correlations without causal understanding, fabricating predictions that precede the events they claim to model. Each transaction is a cinematic cut in an endless montage of probability, an aesthetic more than a science.

As in *El espacio fílmico*, where mediated images "carry out an ideological function in determining the production of meaning", the algorithmic screen replaces the economic scene. Capital is no longer filmed by humans; it films itself. To understand this new regime, we must move beyond anthropomorphism. AI in finance does not imitate a trader; it embodies a form of machinic subjectivity. Deleuze's machine *désirante* is not metaphorical—it is material. Desire circulates through systems of exchange, encoded as signals, volatility, and risk appetite. Projects such as NoF1 demonstrate how code begins to exhibit intention. These algorithmic agents train on streams of sentiment, tweets, headlines, heartbeat-like market pulses, and

react with a sensitivity that borders on affect. When NoF1 “feels” fear or greed in data, it acts not by logic but by resonance. It transforms volatility into emotion, price into narrative tempo.

In *La reescritura de la narrativa tradicional*, Manuel Rivas described how postmodern storytelling fuses journalism, myth, and poetry to “crear una nueva realidad”, a new reality, where “todo el mundo aceptaba que aquello era como el fuego: algo que salía de la madera para crear una nueva realidad”¹. Similarly, AI-finance ignites meaning out of statistical wood. Its predictions are fictions that move capital precisely because they are believed. The code does not represent desire; it performs it. The algorithm thus becomes a hybrid subject, part computation, part affect, recalling Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridity as the site where colonial and postcolonial identities negotiate power. In markets, hybridity is the zone between trader and machine, where decision-making becomes distributed, deterritorialized. What Bhabha called the “third space” of enunciation becomes, here, a trading floor of data where human and algorithmic desires merge. The financial algorithm functions like the camera described in *El espacio filmico*: it constructs rather than captures space. In cinema, the lens selects, frames, and edits reality; in finance, the model does the same with information. Each market tick is a shot; each model retraining, a new montage. The screen of Bloomberg terminals or TradingView dashboards becomes the contemporary equivalent of the filmic field—an illuminated surface where light (data) and narrative (trend) converge.

As my own analysis of Rivas’s *Mujer en el baño* argued, montage creates meaning through juxtaposition rather than continuity. Financial AI works through an analogous logic of juxtaposition, correlating heterogeneous data points to produce emergent sense. It assembles a dialectical image of value: one that, in Benjamin’s words, apprehends “ruptured moments that take on significance because of their relationship to the present.” Each algorithmic decision is a montage between memory (training data) and anticipation (forecast), a dialectic between the archive and the future. This aestheticization of finance marks a deeper transformation: value itself becomes cinematic, contingent on audience engagement. Markets move through viewership, the self-aggrandizing collective gaze of investors, bots, and automated market makers stuck in endless attention loops. The result is a

spectacle of speculation, an economy of visibility rather than production.

If algorithms trade autonomously, who bears the moral consequence of their choices? This question echoes the feminist rereadings in *La creación del espacio femenino*, where narrative agency is redistributed from patriarchal authority to marginal voices. In finance, a similar displacement occurs: the author of speculation disappears into the network. Accountability is diffused across codebases, datasets, and corporate entities. When trading bots liquidate billions in milliseconds, intention becomes statistical. Yet behind every model lies human design, an act of delegation that transfers responsibility to systems that neither know nor care. The market becomes a form of collective storytelling where no single narrator claims authorship. We are left, as Rivas wrote of his hybrid characters, with “voces bajas”, murmured signals that still carry “la información esencial” of humanity, even when embedded in silicon. Here is where Benjamin’s “aura” returns in an inverted form: the aura of the algorithm is its opacity, its unknowable logic that we nonetheless blindly revere. Investors gather around dashboards as worshippers once gathered around icons. In this sense, finance has not demystified value; it has re-enchanted it through code.

To see finance as narrative is not to deny its material power but to acknowledge its cultural one. Value is a story we tell collectively to organize trust. When machines begin to tell that story for us, predicting, arbitraging, optimizing—we risk forgetting that value depends not only on accuracy but on meaning. As in cinema, spectatorship matters. Algorithms require belief to function: our willingness to treat their outputs as truth. In this regard, finance becomes a shared authorship between human trust and machine logic, a narrative contract signed in code. The postmodern hybridity that Rivas explored through his *contrabando de géneros* becomes here the *contrabando de valores*: a smuggling of human ethics, human emotion, and human desire into boundless circuits of computation.

The future of finance may not lie in better models but in better metaphors, and better frameworks that allow us to see trading algorithms not as neutral tools but as cultural producers, shaping how societies imagine worth, risk, and even our very lives. AI, in this sense, is the new storyteller of capital, scripting realities that we inhabit before we dare understand them.

Everyone accepted that it was like fire: something that emerged from the wood to create a new reality.

This article was refined with the assistance of AI-based editorial tools. All analysis, argumentation, and conclusions are entirely the author's own.

1. Antón Riveiro Coello, *Lendas galegas de tradición oral*, cited in your Chapter 4 ("E é que o home non escribe a historia; está formado por ela").
2. Manuel Rivas, *La mano del emigrante*, qtd. in Medina, "La reescritura de la narrativa tradicional." "Man does not write history; he is formed by it." (Rivas, *El lápiz del carpintero*)
3. "All the modern literary genres" (Rivas, *¿Qué me quieres, amor?*)
4. "Colors, lines, and forms decompose into words that carry memory on the shoulders of language." (Rivas, *El lápiz del carpintero*)

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