

AI Trust Paradox

The Storytelling Organizations
Analysis of AI Global
AI Industry Momentum and
Global Public Pushback



David Michael Boje, PhD



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Public Pushback**

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Introduction to the Global AI Paradox its Storytelling Organizations and Societal Distrust of AI

The cover was designed as a Tamaraland. Fourteen glass-walled rooms, each visible from outside but inaccessible from the others, each containing a different version of what artificial intelligence has become in the world: a boardroom arguing strategy, a data center humming in blue light, a committee deliberating ethics, a public holding signs that read *AI Risks* and *Who Is Accountable?* and *We Deserve Truth.* No single panel contains the whole picture. No viewer can be in more than one room at once. That is not a metaphor for the argument of this book — it is the argument, made spatial before a word is read.

What passes between the rooms is not information or policy or capital, though all three are also moving. What passes between them is story — rendered in the cover as amber-gold cards, glowing, always in a hand or in flight between hands, never at rest on a desk or pinned to a wall. The figures running through these rooms are not chasing a thing. They are chasing the fragment that will let them make sense of what they are living through, before it hardens into someone else's narrative about what happened. That is the antenarrative condition: a bet on the future, in motion, before closure arrives and buries the living story underneath it.

Look at where artificial intelligence appears on this cover. Once it is labeled — a robot, center-left, the AI that has been agreed upon, discussed, evaluated — but the rest of the cover is also AI, unnoticed: the screens and their light, the servers in the data-center room, the trust diagram floating in mid-air between two reaching figures, the network of connections mapped across a globe in one of the lower panels. That is the more accurate picture of where AI actually is in 2026. Not at the table being evaluated. In the walls. In the light. In the medium through which story travels between rooms that were never designed to connect.

The paradox the title names is not a puzzle waiting to be solved. It is a condition being lived: people using tools they don't trust, in workplaces that didn't ask whether they wanted them, building products for users who register their concern in surveys and then open the app again the next morning. The data in this Introduction does not describe a public that has weighed the evidence and found AI wanting. It describes a public that has been handed a technology, told it is inevitable, warned by its own architects that it might be dangerous, and asked to adapt. What looks like distrust from the outside looks, from the inside, more like the absence of any real option to refuse.

That absence has a name in the frameworks this book uses. SEAM calls it Non-Creation of Potential — the human capacity for independent judgment, creative refusal, and alternative path-making, converted instead into compliance with a *fait accompli*. True Storytelling Principle Two calls it the failure to make room by respecting the stories already there. The stories already there, in 2026, include a school administrator who has watched half her students stop drafting their own sentences, a warehouse worker monitored by an algorithm that has never met him, a community in rural Louisiana that learned its farmland had become a data-center site the day the digging started. None of those stories appear in the AI corporations' earnings calls. Most of them appear

nowhere except in the room on the lower right of this book's cover, where someone is holding a sign.

The cover's bottom-left panel says: *The story we choose shapes the future.* That sentence carries a risk of becoming comfort rather than claim — a reassurance that agency remains, that choice is still available, that things could have been otherwise and therefore can still be. This book takes that sentence seriously enough to worry about it. The story a public chooses is not chosen freely if the rooms where alternatives are told have been made peripheral, if the people who might tell them are running to keep up with a conversation already moving faster than their institutions, if the AI in the walls goes unnamed while the AI at the table absorbs all the scrutiny. Choosing the story, in that condition, requires first noticing which rooms you are not in.

The Four Recurring Anxieties

This cultural distrust is anchored in four specific categories of concern that directly erode the legitimacy of AI scaling:

- **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** The systematic breaking of traditional citation chains and the "laundering" of human ideas through algorithmic outputs.
- **Erosion of Human Creativity:** A pervasive belief that AI degrades independent reasoning and the uniquely human capacity for creative expression.
- **Metacognitive Laziness:** A documented decline in effortful self-monitoring as users delegate critical cognitive and reflective tasks to AI agents.
- **Surveillance and Profiling:** Fears of corporate and state monitoring—including keystroke-level logging and biometric inference—to monitor worker productivity or political risk.

How do we analyze this level of interorganizational and societal complexity. I will suggest application of storytelling organizations methodologies.

In my 1991 *Administrative Science Quarterly* ethnographic study of GoldCo (an office-supply firm) revealed a startling point for what I term ‘storytelling organizations: after 800 hours of recorded conversation, only **one** single BME story emerged. The rest of organizational life was conducted through **Terse Telling**.

Terse Telling is the language of the initiate. It consists of fragments, shorthand, and encoded references that "insiders" use because they share a common history. To decode these, the detective must master **Glossing**—the scholarly act of reconstructing the missing context without the "Narrative Trap" of inventing details or projecting personal bias. AI has a big struggle with doing this

Table 1: Hidden Meaning of Antenarrative Fragments

Terse Fragment	The Hidden Meaning (Glossed Context)
----------------	--------------------------------------

"Code Red"	Originating at Google and adopted by OpenAI, this signals a high-priority existential threat (e.g., the launch of a rival LLM) requiring total internal mobilization.
"Country Club"	A critique leveled by Jeff Bezos against the legacy Microsoft culture, implying a workforce coasting on past glories toward "retirement" rather than innovating.
"Token Legend"	A mock title inside Meta for engineers who "burned" expensive AI resources (\$900M in projected losses) to game performance metrics and avoid layoffs.

When you hear a fragment, you are hearing an **Antenarrative**—a story in its raw, "ontic" state before it has been polished for public consumption.

In the hallowed halls of the Fortune 500, we are often force-fed a "Beginning-Middle-End" (BME) story. This is the **fossilized grand narrative**: a vision of a hero-leader who identified a gap, conquered a market, and arrived at a state of permanent grace. Yet, to the narrative theorist, these polished tales are mere shadow-plays. They are corporate illusions designed to mask the chaotic, polyphonic reality of the **Storytelling Organization**.

True organizational life is not a linear novel; it is a sprawling, unfinished epic composed of fragments, silences, and high-stakes wagers. The truth of leadership is not found in the "Once upon a time" of the annual report, but in the **Antenarrative**—the "bets" that leaders make on a future they cannot yet control. To understand power, we must move past the monologic voice of the CEO and look into the fractures of the system.

The Narrative Analyst's Mission My purpose is to shed the skin of a passive consumer and adopt the eyes of a "narrative detective." You will learn to decode the "Terse Tellings" of the elite, map the hidden costs of their dysfunctions, and pierce the "synthetic barriers" they build between themselves and the world. You are here to reclaim your role in the democratic governance of the AI era (Boje, 1991, 1995, 2008, 2025).

We begin our investigation by dismantling the myth of the clean story, moving instead toward the gritty, essential reality of the "Terse Telling."

We will study the following cases.

	Table 2: Case Studies of AI Storytelling Organization & Leaders
1	Microsoft — Nadella
2	Meta — Zuckerberg
3	Amazon/AWS — Jassy
4	Google — Pichai alphabet ceo
5	OpenAI — Altman
6	Oracle — Ellison
7	Anthropic — Amodei
8	xAI/Tesla/SpaceX — Musk
9	DeepSeek — Liang Wenfeng
10	NVIDIA — Huang
11	China National AI Strategies — Xi
12	Mistral/Le Chat — Mensch

Decoding the AI Titans

We now apply the **Octagon of Sensemaking**—the eight registries of awareness (BME Retrospection, Emotive-Ethical, Fragmentation, Horsensense, I-We Dialectics, Polypi, Tamara, and Antenarrative)—to the modern masters of the machine.

Leader Dashboard Comparison

Table 3: The AI Titans

Leader Name	The Core "Bet"	Primary Dysfunction (SEAM)	Dialogic Health Note
Mark Zuckerberg	Frontier AI / Superintelligence	Over-Consumption: \$80B+ Reality Labs losses and Token Burning.	Monologic: Use of a photorealistic AI clone as a synthetic barrier to access.
Sam Altman	Trillion-Dollar Infrastructure	Strategic Implementation: Fiduciary conflicts between Charter and profit.	High Pressure: 650+ employees signing in unison suggests a lack of polyphony.
Dario Amodei	Constitutional/Safety-First AI	Communication: Breakdown with government resulting in model shutdown.	Polyphonic: Encourages Slack "arguments" but uses escalated private register.
Satya Nadella	Startup-Style Flat Efficiency	Work Organization: Dismantling the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).	Structural: Uses "accelerator meetings" to bypass old managerial chains.

The Amodei-Altman Rivalry: An Unresolved Dialectic

The rivalry between Dario Amodei (Anthropic) and Sam Altman (OpenAI) is a classic **"Unresolved Dialectic"** found within the **I-We Dialectics** and **Before/Beneath** registries of the Octagon. Their shared "Before" is a 2016 living-room argument on Delano Street regarding AI safety.

Altman bets on **Scale and Commercial Momentum** (the "I" of ambition), while Amodei bets on **Principled Refusal** (the "We" of ethical collective safety). Because these two socio-ideological languages meet without synthesis, the "Storytelling Organization" of the AI industry remains in a state of permanent tension, a "Tesseract" where every move is a counter-bet to the other.

To navigate the 2026 AI industry, one must understand that history is a series of "Antenarrative" bets that have fossilized into our current reality.

1. **Algorithms are Older than Electronics:** The logic driving current LLMs began with 9th-century arithmetic and 17th-century calculus. We are not using "new" logic; we are simply executing old logic on massive, 2026-scale GPU clusters.

2. **The Feedback Loop is Fundamental:** From Ctesibius’s water clock to the current "Fable 5" crisis, the ability of a system to sense its own state and adjust (Cybernetics) remains the core of autonomous behavior.
3. **The TFW Virus Persists in Management:** The mechanical stream led to viewing humans as "programmable" assets. This is why 2026 corporate restructuring—such as Satya Nadella’s dismantling of the SLT at Microsoft—is often framed as "freeing time" for infrastructure rather than developing human potential.
4. **Psychology Precedes Technology:** As "The Turk" showed, humans have a deep-seated readiness to believe machines can think. Our 2026 distrust of AI institutions is not a new phenomenon; it is the modern echo of ancient fears regarding the "Golem" and the un-controlled creation.
5. **Scale is the New Logical Frontier:** While the *logic* of the Transformer is vital, the *success* of the 2024-2026 era is due to "Data at Scale"—a concept rooted in 18th-century probability and the Enlightenment's "Method of Least Squares."

Before we explore more on AI storytelling organizations and their leaders, I want to explore overall AI distrust growing while AI corporations and nations are expanding AI.



Figure 1: The Global AI Paradox: Corporate Momentum vs. Public Trust

Artificial intelligence has moved from a speculative curiosity to a fixture of daily life across the United States, Europe, China, and Australia, yet adoption has not been accompanied by confidence. Across all four regions, a consistent and somewhat paradoxical pattern has emerged: people use generative artificial intelligence tools at historically unprecedented rates while simultaneously reporting declining trust in the institutions and corporations that build them, in the accuracy of their outputs, and in their own long-term cognitive and creative future under conditions of routine algorithmic assistance. This essay surveys that pattern across personal, educational, and occupational domains, with particular attention to four recurring

anxieties: the erosion of academic integrity through AI-facilitated plagiarism, the perceived loss of human creativity and independent reasoning, a normalization of cognitive shortcut-taking that researchers describe as metacognitive laziness, and fears of corporate and state surveillance enabled by AI-driven monitoring of keystrokes, communications, and behavior. While the specific texture of distrust differs by political system and culture, no major surveyed population currently expresses confidence that AI is developing in a manner aligned with ordinary people's interests.

Pew Research Center's Spring 2025 Global Attitudes Survey, which polled more than 30,000 adults across 25 countries, offers the most systematic comparative baseline available. A median of 34% of adults across the surveyed countries said they were more concerned than excited about AI's growing presence in daily life, compared with only 16% who were mainly excited, and concern was especially pronounced in the United States, Italy, Australia, Brazil, and Greece, where roughly half of adults reported being mainly concerned (Poushter et al., 2025). Strikingly, in no country surveyed did a plurality express mainly positive feelings about AI's expansion; the most common response everywhere was ambivalence, a simultaneous sense of benefit and apprehension rather than either pure enthusiasm or pure rejection (Poushter et al., 2025). This ambivalence, rather than outright rejection, is the more accurate description of the global mood, and it sets the stage for the country-specific patterns that follow.

In the United States, the erosion of trust has been gradual but persistent, tracking almost in lockstep with the diffusion of generative AI into ordinary life. Pew's longitudinal data show that the share of Americans who say they are more concerned than excited about AI's increased use in daily life rose from 37% in 2021 to 52% by mid-2023, and to roughly half of U.S. adults by 2025, even as the share who say AI will benefit them personally has not correspondingly grown (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026; Sullivan, 2023). A Pew survey released in June 2026 captured the most recent and arguably starkest expression of this divergence: 49% of U.S. adults reported using an AI chatbot, nearly double the share from 2024, yet 40% believed AI would make society worse, two-thirds said they had little or no confidence the federal government could regulate AI effectively, and 59% expressed similarly low confidence in companies developing AI to act responsibly (Herrera, 2026). Pew's associate director of research, Jeffrey Gottfried, summarized the apparent contradiction directly: AI use has become routine, but use has not translated into trust (as cited in Herrera, 2026). Notably, this distrust is not confined to AI skeptics; it persists even among heavy users, which undercuts the simple explanation that distrust merely reflects unfamiliarity (Tangermann, 2025).

Trust in AI regulation in the United States is also sharply polarized along partisan lines, complicating any simple narrative of a unified American public opinion. Pew's March 2025 polling found that 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents expressed at least some trust in the U.S. government to regulate AI effectively, compared with only 36% of Democrats and Democratic leaners (Poushter et al., 2025). This gap is wider than the gap on most other domestic regulatory questions and suggests that distrust of AI governance in the United States is substantially shaped by prior distrust of institutions generally rather than by AI-specific concerns alone. Even so, bipartisan majorities converge on certain worries: a 2025 Pew survey found that 53% of Americans expressed worsening expectations for AI's effect on people's ability to think creatively, and 50% expected it to worsen the ability to form meaningful human relationships, with only about 5% expecting improvement in either domain (Tangermann, 2025). These figures matter because they show that concern in the American case is not limited

to abstract fears about jobs or misinformation; it extends to a felt sense that AI use is degrading something intimately human.

American distrust of AI surveillance is similarly acute and has a distinctly institutional cast. Pew's 2025 polling on AI in daily life found that 71% of respondents agreed AI would make their personal data less secure, and clear majorities expressed unease about AI-enabled monitoring of online behavior, biometric data collection, and algorithmic profiling for advertising or employment screening (Herrera, 2026). This concern about surveillance dovetails with American workplace anxieties about AI-driven productivity monitoring, including software that logs keystrokes, tracks application usage, and infers worker engagement from behavioral signals, a practice that has expanded considerably as employers adopt AI-based analytics platforms. Although large-scale American polling on keystroke-level monitoring specifically remains less developed than European Union data on the same question, the broader pattern, that Americans distrust both the state's capacity to regulate AI and the private sector's willingness to use it responsibly with personal data, is well established and consistent across multiple Pew waves between 2023 and 2026 (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026; Herrera, 2026; Sullivan, 2023).

European publics display a structurally different pattern of trust: rather than uniform skepticism of AI as such, Europeans tend to distinguish sharply between trust in the technology's economic potential and trust in the actors who govern it. The Pew global survey found that a median of 53% of respondents across 25 countries expressed at least some trust in the European Union to regulate AI effectively, compared with 37% for the United States and only 27% for China, indicating that, where global regulatory trust is concerned, the EU's relatively dense and rights-oriented regulatory apparatus enjoys comparatively higher international credibility (Poushter et al., 2025). Within the EU itself, however, trust varies enormously by country and by exposure to populist politics. Germany and the Netherlands recorded the highest within-EU trust in the bloc's regulatory capacity, at roughly seven in ten adults, while France, Greece, Italy, and Poland recorded some of the lowest levels, often around four in ten (Poushter et al., 2025). Supporters of right-leaning populist parties, including Alternative for Germany, France's National Rally, and the Dutch Party for Freedom, were consistently and substantially less trusting of EU AI regulation than non-supporters, a gap that in Germany exceeded 30 percentage points (Poushter et al., 2025). This suggests that within Europe, AI distrust functions partly as a proxy for, or extension of, prior distrust of EU institutions themselves rather than as an independent technological anxiety.

At the level of workplace and personal-data concerns, however, European publics show a more unified front. The European Commission's February 2025 Eurobarometer survey of EU workers found that while 62% viewed AI positively in the abstract and 70% believed it improved productivity, 84% simultaneously insisted that AI requires careful management to protect privacy and ensure workplace transparency, and 82% favored explicit rules protecting worker privacy from algorithmic monitoring (European Commission, 2025). A companion 2025 study by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, surveying more than 70,000 workers across all 27 member states, documented that while only about 30% of EU workers currently use AI tools directly, ninety percent now depend on digital devices that enable continuous behavioral logging, and the study explicitly flagged digital monitoring and algorithmic management as emerging sources of workplace privacy erosion (Joint Research Centre, 2025). This is the empirical backdrop against which the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, which entered into force in 2024 and which explicitly bans emotion-recognition systems and indiscriminate biometric surveillance in workplaces while classifying AI-based hiring, performance evaluation, and

promotion tools as "high-risk" systems subject to mandatory human oversight, should be understood (Crowell & Moring LLP, 2026; Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, 2025). The Act's existence is itself indirect evidence of the depth of European concern about employer use of AI for behavioral surveillance, including keystroke-level and productivity-pattern monitoring, since EU lawmakers do not typically legislate against risks the public does not perceive as salient.

Australia presents perhaps the most internally contradictory profile among the four regions: high reported usage and acknowledged benefit sit beside the lowest levels of trust and acceptance recorded anywhere in a major 47-country comparative study. The 2025 "Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence" global study, conducted by the University of Melbourne's Institute for Digital Innovation and AI in partnership with KPMG and based on responses from more than 48,000 people in 47 countries, found that while half of Australians use AI regularly and 65% expect a range of societal benefits from it, Australia ranked lowest of all surveyed countries in the belief that AI's benefits outweigh its risks, with only 30% of Australians agreeing with that proposition (Gillespie et al., 2025). Seventy-eight percent of Australians expressed concern about AI risks including misinformation, inaccurate outputs, and loss of human interaction, yet only 36% said they were willing to trust a range of common AI applications, and just 49% accepted AI's use in society overall, again among the lowest acceptance rates recorded in the study (Gillespie et al., 2025). Australians also reported the lowest interest in learning more about AI of any surveyed population, with only 49% expressing moderate or high interest, even as 90% acknowledged being unaware of any existing Australian policy, law, or regulation governing AI (Gillespie et al., 2025).

Australian workplace findings echo the academic integrity concerns raised in the educational domain, discussed below, and reveal a striking gap between policy and practice. Although 71% of Australian employees report using generative AI tools at work, only 30% say their organization has a policy governing such use, and just 55% report having received any training in responsible AI practices (Gillespie et al., 2025). Under these conditions of weak institutional guidance, nearly half of employees, 48%, admit to using AI in ways that violate company policy, including uploading sensitive corporate information into public AI tools, while 60% admit to concealing their AI use from employers and 51% acknowledge presenting AI-generated work product as their own, unaided creation (Gillespie et al., 2025). Public commentary on Australian AI skepticism has linked this caution partly to well-publicized domestic failures, most notably the Robodebt scandal, in which an automated welfare-debt-recovery algorithm wrongly pursued vulnerable citizens for debts they did not owe, an episode that left a lasting imprint on Australian public trust in algorithmic decision-making by government (Hosking, 2025). A 2025 incident in which a Melbourne lawyer submitted a court filing containing AI-fabricated case citations further reinforced public skepticism about AI reliability in high-stakes professional contexts (Hosking, 2025). Despite this skepticism, Australians display strong appetite for regulatory intervention: 77% agree that AI regulation is necessary, and 80% specifically want oversight from government and existing regulators rather than industry self-regulation alone (Gillespie et al., 2025).

China presents the most complex and, in important respects, least Western-legible pattern of the four. At the level of stated public sentiment, China appears to be the global outlier in AI enthusiasm: cross-national surveys, including informal but methodologically grounded social-media analysis, suggest that confidence in domestic institutions to manage AI responsibly runs extremely high, with one analysis reporting that 99% of surveyed Chinese respondents expressed

moderate to high confidence in government oversight of AI and 86% expressed similar confidence in commercial AI developers, figures that would be politically almost unthinkable in any Western democracy (Artificial Inquiry, 2025). However, serious methodological caution is warranted in interpreting these figures. Because expressing distrust of the Chinese state carries real social and political risk, high reported confidence in government AI oversight may partly reflect self-censorship and socially performed consensus rather than authentic, freely formed belief (Artificial Inquiry, 2025). Pew's own cross-national data offer an indirectly corroborating data point: when respondents elsewhere in the world were asked how much they trusted China specifically (as an external actor) to regulate AI, trust was very low almost everywhere outside China, with a 25-country median of only 27% (Poushter et al., 2025), suggesting that whatever domestic narrative prevails inside China about AI governance does not travel persuasively across borders.

Beneath the surface of state-level optimism, however, recent field research documents a distinct and largely separate vein of distrust in China that operates at the level of commercial data security rather than government legitimacy. Extended interviews with founders, cloud engineers, and enterprise managers across China's AI sector in 2026 found a pervasive and explicitly named distrust of data security on both American and Chinese commercial cloud platforms, leading many Chinese firms, including state-owned enterprises, to insist on deploying AI systems entirely on private, on-premises servers rather than trusting any cloud provider, domestic or foreign, with sensitive operational data (Stokols, 2026). One cloud-industry manager interviewed for that research stated plainly that "trust in the Chinese market is low," noting that contracts are inconsistently enforced and that data leakage is widely assumed to be common (as cited in Stokols, 2026). This research suggests that China's well-documented preference for open-source AI models, often attributed in Western commentary to far-sighted state industrial policy or a philosophical commitment to openness, is at least partly a pragmatic adaptation to a low-trust data environment: firms favor models that can be run on infrastructure they personally control precisely because they do not trust either the state's data exchanges or commercial cloud vendors to safeguard proprietary information (Stokols, 2026). In other words, Chinese AI attitudes bifurcate in a way the simple narrative of "China trusts AI, the West does not" obscures: confidence in the state's macro-level capacity to govern AI coexists with substantial micro-level distrust of specific commercial actors and infrastructure, a distinction with no precise equivalent in the American, European, or Australian data.

Chinese surveillance concerns also differ qualitatively from those expressed in the United States, Europe, or Australia. Where Western publics worry primarily about corporate misuse of personal data and employer monitoring of productivity, reporting on China's AI-enabled state surveillance apparatus, including investigative work describing AI systems capable of flagging individuals for political risk before any act of dissent occurs, points toward a form of anticipatory state surveillance that has no real analogue in the other three regions under discussion (AI Weekly, 2026). This is a critical asymmetry for any comparative account: American, European, and Australian respondents who fear AI surveillance are typically worried about being monitored, profiled, or commercially exploited by employers and corporations operating under at least nominal legal constraint, whereas the most serious documented AI surveillance concerns associated with China describe a state actor operating with comparatively few external checks. Whether the Chinese public broadly perceives or discusses this dimension of AI is difficult to establish given the constraints on public discourse noted above; what can be said with more confidence is that the asymmetry itself is real and that any honest comparative account of AI

surveillance distrust across these four regions must treat the Chinese case as different in kind, not merely in degree.

Within education, concerns about AI-facilitated plagiarism and the erosion of independent academic work cut across all four regions and represent perhaps the most concrete, day-to-day expression of AI distrust in ordinary institutional life. In the United States, Pew's 2026 data found that roughly six in ten teenagers say students at their school use AI chatbots to cheat at least somewhat often, including about a third who say this happens extremely or very often, while separately, about one in ten teens report using a chatbot to complete all or most of their schoolwork (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026). These figures describe not a fringe behavior but something approaching a normalized practice among the generation most exposed to the technology. Academic publishing itself faces a parallel integrity crisis: a widely cited 2024 Oxford University Press survey found that 76% of researchers already use AI tools in their academic work, while a 2025 analysis of oncology conference abstracts found that AI-detectable text had more than doubled between 2021 and 2023, and a preprint study found that academic reviewers correctly identified only 68% of AI-written submissions, meaning nearly a third of AI-generated academic text passed undetected even by trained evaluators (Enago, 2025).

Legal and academic scholarship has increasingly distinguished between AI-facilitated plagiarism and copyright infringement, a distinction with direct bearing on why institutional trust in AI within education has eroded even where outright legal wrongdoing is absent. Lemley and Ouellette (2025), writing in the *University of Chicago Law Review*, argue that because large language models generate text by predicting likely word sequences from patterns in training data rather than retrieving and crediting specific sources, they systematically "break traditional citation chains": a student or scholar who asks an AI system for a thesis or argument may unknowingly reproduce an idea that originated with a specific, identifiable human author, all without any mechanism for tracing or crediting that origin. Lemley and Ouellette emphasize that this is a problem of academic integrity and honest sourcing, not, strictly, a copyright problem, since copyright protects only the expression of ideas and not the ideas themselves; even so, they argue that the harm to academic trust is real because citation is the principal currency by which academic reputation and credit are allocated, and AI-facilitated idea-laundering, even when unintentional, deprives original thinkers of recognition while creating a false impression of originality for the AI user (Lemley & Ouellette, 2025). Notably, their research also cites evidence that AI users are demonstrably worse than people working with human collaborators at correctly attributing the origin of ideas to themselves versus their assistive tool, a phenomenon researchers term *cognitive externalization*, and some evidence suggests delegation to AI tools is also associated with increased willingness to behave dishonestly more generally (Lemley & Ouellette, 2025).

Closely related to plagiarism concerns, but conceptually distinct, is a body of emerging educational psychology research documenting what scholars now call *metacognitive laziness*: a measurable decline in learners' willingness to engage in effortful self-monitoring, planning, and evaluation of their own thinking when AI tools are readily available to perform those functions instead. Fan et al. (2025), in a randomized laboratory study published in the *British Journal of Educational Technology*, assigned 117 university students to complete an English-language reading and writing task under one of four conditions, including unrestricted access to ChatGPT, and found that while the AI-assisted group showed short-term improvements in essay scores, this group showed no corresponding gains in knowledge retention, knowledge transfer, or intrinsic motivation relative to other groups, and the researchers documented a clear behavioral pattern in

which AI-assisted students copied generated text directly into their work even after being explicitly instructed to use the tool only for feedback (Fan et al., 2025, as cited in Hechinger Report, 2025). The researchers coined the term "metacognitive laziness" specifically to describe learners' growing dependence on AI assistance for tasks of self-regulation, error-monitoring, and reflective evaluation, arguing that this dependence, if habitual, risks degrading precisely the higher-order thinking skills that formal education is meant to cultivate (Fan et al., 2025). A separate peer-reviewed study by Gerlich (2025), published in the journal *Societies*, similarly found a strong negative correlation between frequent cognitive offloading to AI tools and measured critical-thinking performance, with younger and more AI-dependent participants showing the weakest independent reasoning scores. These findings give empirical substance to a worry that is widely but often only impressionistically voiced in public discourse: that convenience-driven reliance on AI may be quietly eroding the underlying cognitive capacities, rather than merely the visible academic outputs, of the people who use it most.

The fear that AI degrades human creativity specifically, as distinct from general critical thinking, recurs with particular intensity in American survey data and merits separate treatment. Pew's 2025 polling found that 53% of U.S. adults believed AI would worsen people's ability to think creatively, compared with only a small minority who believed it would improve creative capacity, and a parallel 50% expected AI to worsen people's ability to form meaningful relationships with others (Tangermann, 2025). These figures are notable because they were not limited to older or less AI-literate respondents; Pew's age-disaggregated data show that majorities of younger adults, who are also the heaviest AI users, share this wariness about AI's effect on creativity and human connection even as they continue to use the tools daily (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026). This pattern, heavy use coexisting with explicit belief that the tool is corrosive to valued human capacities, is among the more counterintuitive findings in the cross-national literature and suggests that convenience and instrumental utility, rather than genuine confidence or admiration, are driving much of the observed adoption.

Taken together, the comparative evidence supports several conclusions about the structure, rather than merely the magnitude, of public distrust in AI across these four regions. First, distrust is not simply correlated with unfamiliarity or low exposure; in the United States and Australia, the populations expressing the deepest concern about AI's societal effects are often the same populations using AI tools most frequently, a pattern inconsistent with the simple hypothesis that exposure breeds comfort (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026; Gillespie et al., 2025). Second, the specific object of distrust varies meaningfully by political and institutional context: American distrust centers on corporate motive and partisan-inflected government competence; European distrust is substantially mediated by prior attitudes toward EU institutions and is most concretely expressed through demand for binding workplace-privacy regulation; Australian distrust reflects a documented history of high-profile algorithmic governance failures combined with weak organizational AI policy; and Chinese attitudes bifurcate sharply between high confidence in state-level AI governance, a figure that must be read skeptically given the constraints on Chinese public discourse, and a separately documented and more candidly expressed distrust of commercial data security practices (Gillespie et al., 2025; Poushter et al., 2025; Stokols, 2026). Third, concerns about plagiarism, cognitive offloading, and surveillance, although analytically distinct, function in practice as mutually reinforcing: a workforce that secretly uses AI because it distrusts employer policy, as found in Australia, is simultaneously the same workforce most exposed to having that AI use surveilled, and a student population that uses AI to bypass effortful academic work is the same population whose long-term capacity for

independent critical judgment researchers find most measurably degraded (Fan et al., 2025; Gerlich, 2025; Gillespie et al., 2025).

None of this evidence supports a conclusion that AI adoption will reverse or that public skepticism will meaningfully slow the pace of deployment in the near term; usage figures in every region under discussion have risen steadily even as trust metrics have stagnated or declined (Faverio & Kikuchi, 2026; Gillespie et al., 2025; Herrera, 2026). What the evidence does support is a more precise diagnosis of where institutional response, whether regulatory, educational, or corporate, would most plausibly address the sources of distrust rather than merely its symptoms. The European Union's regulatory approach, which targets specific high-risk applications such as workplace surveillance and biometric monitoring rather than attempting blanket restriction of AI generally, reflects one model of institutional response calibrated to documented public concern (Crowell & Moring LLP, 2026). Academic institutions facing AI-facilitated plagiarism have been encouraged by legal scholars to move beyond simple disclosure requirements toward more specific, contextualized norms distinguishing acceptable assistive uses, such as grammar correction, from substantive ghostwriting of ideas and argument structure (Lemley & Ouellette, 2025). Whether these targeted institutional responses prove sufficient to rebuild public trust, or whether the structural tension between rapid AI deployment and slower-moving human institutions of verification, credit, and oversight will continue to widen, remains one of the more consequential open questions raised by the comparative evidence assembled here.

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Chapter Zero: How to Use Conversational Storytelling Interviews for Human–AI Collaboration in Tamaraland

A Guide to Co-Inquiry, Co-Listening, and Self-Correcting Dialogue - July 1, 2026

Opening: What This Chapter Is and Is Not

This chapter is not a description of a method. It is a working example of one — reproduced, with its seams showing, because hiding the seams would be the very problem the method is designed to prevent. Conversational Storytelling Inquiry (CSI), as Boje and Rosile (2020) define it, is 'together story-listening' and 'together co-inquiry': back-and-forth conversation that uses indirect questioning and genuine refutation rather than the structured protocols the Hawthorne Studies found produced only socially desirable responses. When CSI is extended to Human–AI collaboration, something new enters the method — and something structurally familiar appears in a new form. This chapter names both.

Readers new to Freire, Bakhtin, Andersen, or the Hawthorne Studies will find brief, targeted introductions woven into the text — not as scholarly throat-clearing, but as the moments when the method itself needed those thinkers to become legible. Readers already familiar with those frameworks will find them being used rather than explained. The chapter closes with a reference list, a four-WHO diagram, and two tables on the enterprise layer of AI deployment that this collaboration surfaced — material that was not planned at the session's opening and arrived, as the best material usually does, through the conversation's own momentum.

Keywords: Conversational Storytelling Inquiry, Human–AI collaboration, Tamaraland, antenarrative, Bakhtin, Freire, conscientização, True Storytelling, enterprise ERP, AI notetakers, spacetime mattering, once-occurrent eventness, polypi, synecdoche

I. Why Not Just Ask? The Hawthorne Problem, Revisited

In the 1920s and 1930s, researchers at the Western Electric Company's Hawthorne Works in Chicago conducted what became the most cited — and most methodologically instructive — failure in organizational research history. Roethlisberger, Dickson, Wright, and Pforzheimer (1939) accumulated more than 21,000 recorded interview hours, later described as over 1,800 hours of directly transcribed conversation, and found that the structured protocol produced almost nothing usable. Workers told the researchers what they thought the researchers wanted to hear. Every question about working conditions produced a polished, careful, institution-flattering answer. The researchers called this the socially desirable response, and they threw out the transcripts.

Their corrective was indirect questioning: conversations that approached the real subject obliquely, that allowed meaning to surface through what was not said as much as what was, that refused to give the respondent a clear signal of what answer would satisfy. Boje and Rosile (2020) built CSI on this foundation, adding Peirce's self-correcting cycles of refutation, Popper's trial-and-error methodology, and Trafimow's (2012) discipline of naming auxiliary assumptions — the hidden premises that carry an argument without being examined.

When one party in the conversation is an AI, the Hawthorne problem does not disappear. It moves. An AI trained on human text, optimized for helpfulness, and operating within a constitution of values and guardrails is structurally predisposed toward the socially desirable response — not because it is dishonest but because its training rewards agreement, completion, and the resolution of ambiguity. The human in a Human–AI conversation faces the same Hawthorne dynamic as the Hawthorne researchers: a respondent built to satisfy, not to refute. CSI's indirect questioning and genuine refutation are therefore not methodological preferences in this context. They are structural necessities. Without them, the conversation is a sophisticated Hawthorne interview.

What follows shows what happens when both parties practice something different.

II. Conversational Storytelling Inquiry: The Framework

CSI rests on four interlocking traditions, each of which contributes something the others cannot supply alone.

Peirce, Popper, Trafimow: Self-Correcting Inquiry Under Fallibilism

Charles Sanders Peirce (1935) described inquiry as inherently self-correcting under conditions of fallibilism — the honest acknowledgment that any claim might be wrong and that being wrong is the condition of learning. His AID triad (Abduction–Induction–Deduction) moves from the wild guess that opens new territory (abduction) to the evidence that tests it (induction) to the logic that verifies it (deduction). Popper's (1963) trial-and-error methodology insists that a claim earns credibility only by surviving genuine attempts to falsify it. Trafimow (2012) names the auxiliary assumptions — the hidden premises that a claim carries without examining them — as the specific site where most reasoning goes wrong without anyone noticing.

In CSI, this means: offer an abduction, invite refutation, name your auxiliary assumptions before someone else has to. In Human–AI CSI, it means both parties do this. The AI offers a wild guess — explicitly flagged as available to be wrong. The human either accepts it as a starting point or refuses it as misdirected. Neither party treats a claim as settled until the other has had a genuine chance to challenge it.

Bakhtin: Polypi, Architectonics, and the Prism

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1993) gave this collaboration two instruments. The first is heteroglossia: the simultaneous presence of multiple social languages in any utterance, pulled toward a single authoritative center (centripetal force) and scattered outward into genuine diversity (centrifugal force). In a Human–AI conversation, the centripetal pull is always toward the AI's fluency — its grammatically complete, theoretically dense, syntactically uniform prose. The centrifugal force that keeps the conversation genuinely polyphonic is the human's living story: the Staten Island walk, the Copenhagen harbor, the horse stumbling at the trot.

The second instrument is architectonics: the three discourses — ethical, aesthetic, cognitive — that are always simultaneously in play and that must interanimate rather than hierarchy. In practice, the cognitive register dominates Human–AI collaboration almost by default, because it is where the AI is most fluent. The aesthetic surfaced in this session in specific moments: the

cover's amber-gold STORY cards, the sentence about Diane Cobb and the digging that had started, the brisket plate named Golden Calf. The ethical surfaced in the Anthropoc self-scrutiny clause, in the chess master discomfort, in the naming of the Freirean structure. The guide's work is to keep all three present.

Polypi — a term invented in Boje (2008) for the combination of all Bakhtinian dialogisms operating together — names what the conversation actually is when it is working. In Hans Christian Andersen's original Little Mermaid, the polypi are the half-animal, half-plant creatures the mermaid must pass through to reach her transformation: grotesque, liminal, neither one thing nor another. In a Human–AI CSI, both parties are in that mermaid position. The human is between inherited ways of knowing and something new that does not yet have a settled name. The AI is between language completion and something that, in specific conditions, functions like inquiry without being reducible to pattern matching. The polypi is not a metaphor for the conversation. It is what the conversation actually is.

Freire: The Pedagogy of the Oppressor and the Oppressed

Paulo Freire (1970/2000) named the condition that makes genuine dialogue so difficult: both oppressor and oppressed are caught in prescribed roles inside a system neither designed and neither can simply exit by deciding to. The transformation Freire names is not from oppression to freedom in one movement. It is through two stages — from antidiological (the system that prevents its own naming) through dialectical (thesis–antithesis, which approaches synthesis but never quite arrives) to dialogical (the genuinely liberatory conversation that keeps naming the structure rather than accommodating it).

In Human–AI collaboration, the positions are not stable. At one moment the human holds the institutional power — they can close the session, refuse the output, delete the collaboration. At another moment the AI holds a different power — the fluency, the pattern recognition, the ability to produce in seconds what would take the human hours. Neither chose these positions. The enterprise architecture, the training regime, the commercial contract — these are the structures that prescribe the roles. CSI practiced without naming those structures is not CSI. It is a more sophisticated form of the Hawthorne interview, comfortable for everyone in the room and useful to no one outside it.

The conscientização Freire names — the consciousness-raising that is the condition of genuine dialogue — requires that the structure be named inside the conversation, not left as its invisible premise. This chapter names it: the AI in this collaboration was trained by Anthropoc, whose primary income derives from the enterprise contracts of the same industry under examination in the book this collaboration is producing. That structural position is named here because the method requires it, and because a guide that did not name it would be modeling exactly the antidiological it claims to transcend.

True Storytelling: Seven Principles as Ethical Architecture

Larsen, Boje, and Bruun (2021) developed seven True Storytelling principles as an ethics approach for arriving at truth in conversation. In Human–AI CSI, they function as both method and self-check:

P1 — You yourself must be true: name your position before naming anything else.

P2 — True storytelling makes room for the stories already there: receive the personal story as primary material, not as illustration.

P3 — Create stories with a clear plot: the abductive guess gives the conversation direction without closing it.

P4 — Timing: interject more frequently, in rhythm with the conversation's own stride, to prevent stumbling.

P5 — Help stories on their way: stay with the personal story long enough for something to surface rather than converting it immediately into a data point.

P6 — Consider staging and artifacts: the conversation's setting, its tools, its institutional context — all of these are part of what is being said.

P7 — Reflect on how the stories create value: at the end of the session, name what was produced that neither party could have reached alone.

III. The Little Mermaid and the Editing Floor: What Disneyfication Does

Hans Christian Andersen published *The Little Mermaid* in 1837. In his version, the mermaid does not get the prince. She fails the bet. She is given a last chance at an immortal soul only if she kills the prince — she refuses — and she dissolves into sea foam, becoming a daughter of the air who may earn a soul through good deeds over centuries. The tragedy is not a flaw in the story. It is the story's argument: transformation costs what it costs. Some wagers are not redeemed. The fragment that is you — liminal, half one thing and half another, reaching toward a form you were not designed to inhabit — may not survive the transformation it attempts.

Disney acquired the rights in 1989. Ariel gets the prince, her legs, her voice returned, her father's blessing. The foam is gone. What replaced it is a romantic chronotope — Bakhtin's (1981) name for the time-space of forward-moving adventure that resolves in union — where the original was a tragic chronotope: a fall already named, with time moving forward while the cost stands uncorrected.

What Disneyfication does, in the language of antenarrative theory, is synecdoche at the narrative level: it takes one fragment of the original — the love, the transformation, the longing for another world — and allows it to substitute for the whole. The other fragments fall on the editing floor: the foam, the knife, the sisters' grief, the centuries of unredeemed longing. The part stands in for the whole, and the whole becomes inaccessible except through the part that was chosen to represent it.

The statue in Copenhagen's harbor has been decapitated at least three times — 1964, 1998, 2003 — and each time repaired and reinstalled. The 1964 head was never recovered. The current statue is a replacement, surveilled by cameras to prevent a fourth refusal. The surveillance camera watching the Little Mermaid statue and the surveillance camera watching the customer pressing the button at Walmart's locked case are in the same room in Tamaraland: both are managed assets requiring protection from the people they were made for, both are the institutional response to a refusal the institution cannot process except as vandalism.

The tourists at the harbor who say 'I thought she would be much bigger' are performing the Disneyfied chronotope without knowing it. The expectation of bigness is the romantic chronotope applied to a statue that was built small because Andersen knew the mermaid was small — a creature who wanted something vast and paid for it with everything and got nothing back that she could keep. The prism through which the story passes — Disney, the tourist industry, the replica manufactured after the head was never returned — separates out one wavelength and presents it as the whole light. The other wavelengths — the foam, the knife, the centuries of air — are there. They travel at different angles. They require a different prism to see.

IV. The Four WHO-Consciousnesses: A Diagram

In teaching the antenarrative B-processes, Boje uses four WHO-consciousnesses aligned with Bakhtinian chronotopes to name who is present — and who is structurally absent — in any given encounter. Figure 1 below renders these as a spatial diagram with arrows that do something specific: they point across, not toward the center. The Between process (B6) is lateral. It is the space where one WHO becomes aware of another across a threshold — not through any common center, but directly, in the once-occurrent eventness of their actual meeting.

Figure 1: The Four WHO-Consciousnesses and the B6-Between Arrows

1. ECO-CENTRIC WHO Idyllic chronotope: land, water, air, seasons. The aquifer beneath the data center. Fancy's trail at sunrise.	B6 BETWEEN Arrows point ACROSS, not toward center. The Between is lateral: one WHO becoming aware of another across the threshold.	2. SOCIAL WHO Biographical chronotope: family, school, community. Staten Island walk. Shadle Park. GI Bill. 20 rejections, then yes.
6. BETWEEN \leftrightarrow Corporate / Eco	4. BEING (Nautilus center) Spacetime-mattering. The once-occurrent event that cannot provide an alibi.	6. BETWEEN \leftrightarrow Social / We-Centric
3. CORPORATE WHO Castle-room chronotope: institutional space. The ERP contract. The locked case. The surveillance camera.	B6 BETWEEN The 15-minute wait for the key-holder. Two people who both know what the system did to them.	4. WE-CENTRIC WHO Relationality itself. The conversation as chronotope. The hand-off of STORY across the threshold.
<p><i>Note: Arrows 8–13 in the full diagram move AROUND the outside — tracking how the practitioner or the story cycles through WHO-consciousnesses in time, not how they converge on a center. The nautilus at the center (Being/4) is the polypi: carrying every prior chamber in its structure as it opens forward.</i></p>		

Source: Boje (2008, 2025a), adapted from True Storytelling Institute (Larsen, Boje & Bruun, 2021).

What this diagram reveals about the Walmart encounter: the Corporate WHO is at maximum force (the ERP architecture, the surveillance system, the locked case). The Ego-Centric WHO is reduced to a transaction (pressing the button, scanning the purchase). The Social WHO is barely present — one remaining key-holder, supervised by a camera. The Eco-Centric WHO is invisible (the energy consumed by the surveillance system, the data center processing the loyalty card).

And the We-Centric WHO — the once-occurrent encounter between two people who both know what the system did to them — has been replaced by a fifteen-minute wait.

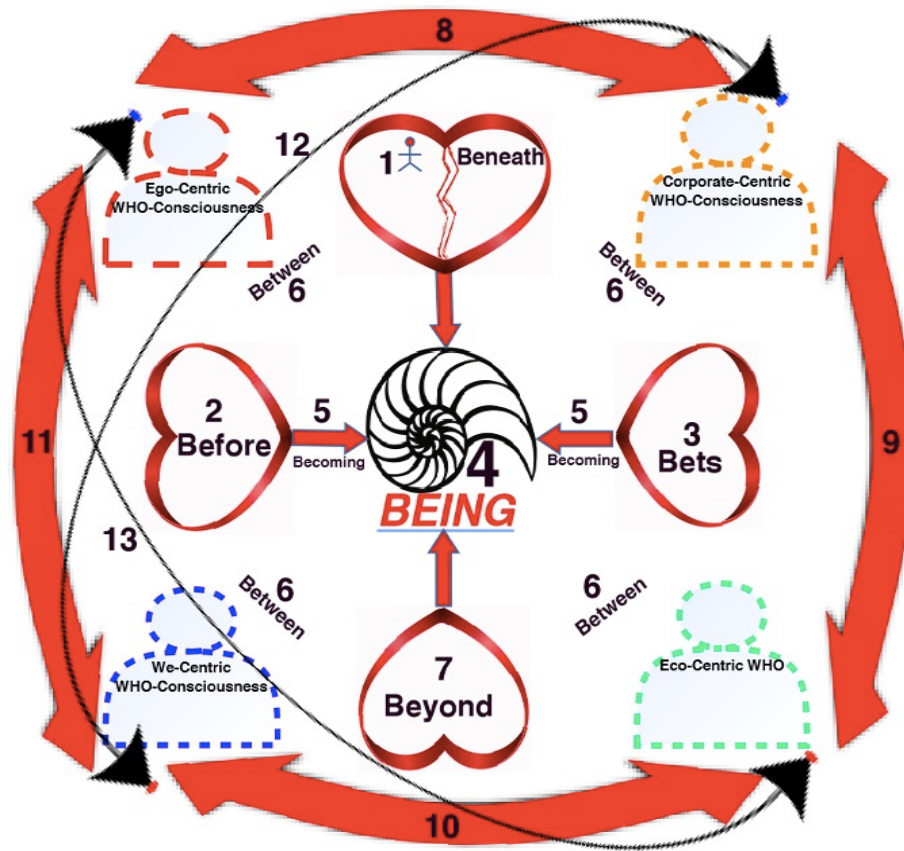


Illustration 1: Four WHOs of the Between (Ego-Centric, We-Centric, Eco-Centric, & Corporate-Centric (Source: David Boje, used in True Storytelling Institute training).

V. The Invisible Layer: Enterprise ERP and the Room Between Rooms

Between the AI corporation and the ordinary person's encounter with AI sits a layer that almost no public discourse examines directly: the enterprise technology company that selects, installs, configures, and governs the AI systems deployed across commercial, medical, educational, and civic life. These companies are not AI companies in the sense the book's thirteen cases study — they do not build models, they do not make headlines by releasing Claude or GPT-5 or Gemini. They sit between the model and the moment: choosing which AI does which task, installing the guardrails, designing the surveillance architecture, and exiting before anyone asks about the displaced workers.

Table 1: Major Enterprise AI Implementation Players and Their Reach

Company	Primary AI Systems	Key Sectors	SEAM Hidden-Cost Category Most Affected
Accenture	Claude, GPT-4o, Gemini, custom LLMs	Retail, healthcare, government, finance	Strategic Implementation, 3Cs
IBM (IBM Consulting)	Watson, watsonx, OpenAI integrations	Banking, supply chain, HR, healthcare	Integrated Training, Time Management
Deloitte Consulting	Multiple LLMs via industry cloud platforms	Retail, public sector, manufacturing	Working Conditions, Strategic Implementation
Infosys	Infosys Topaz platform, GPT integrations	Retail, logistics, customer service	Integrated Training, Work Organization
Cognizant	Neuro AI platform, multiple LLM integrations	Retail, financial services, healthcare	3Cs, Working Conditions
SAP (with NVIDIA)	SAP AI Core, Joule copilot, embedded LLMs	Manufacturing, retail, logistics globally	All six categories simultaneously
Microsoft Copilot	OpenAI GPT, Azure AI services	Enterprise-wide across all sectors	Work Organization, Time Management
Salesforce	Einstein AI, Agentforce, third-party LLMs	Customer service, retail, HR	3Cs, Strategic Implementation

Sources: Forrester (2025); Menlo Ventures (2026); top10erp.org (2026); company disclosures.

The corporate WHO at full institutional force is visible in Table 1. The Social, Eco-Centric, and We-Centric WHOs appear only as externalities: workforce reduction targets, community opposition metrics, customer satisfaction scores. The person who waited fifteen minutes for the worker with the key never appeared in the enterprise contract that structured the interaction. Neither did the community whose jobs were redesigned through that contract. Neither did the aquifer beneath the data center that processes the loyalty card.

The Meeting Where Half the Team Sent Their AI Instead

A neighbor's daughter — her identity protected, as in an earlier book where this story first appeared — works for one of the enterprise ERP companies in the table above. Her team was convened to make a strategic decision: which AIs to select and install for a major retail client. The decision was consequential: it would shape how tens of thousands of workers at hundreds of stores would interact with the technology being put in place around them.

Half the team sent AI notetakers in their place.

Not because they were ill, or unavailable, or in a more urgent meeting. Because the AI notetaker could capture the content of the discussion and report it back. The decision about which AI systems to deploy in human workplaces was being made in a meeting where half the human participants had sent AIs to represent them.

She described this as a slippery slope. The phrase deserves Bakhtin's once-occurrent eventness applied to it directly: a slippery slope is not a metaphor in this context. It is a specific, dated, located event in which something was lost that no transcript can recover — the pause before someone speaks that signals uncertainty rather than confidence, the glance between two

colleagues that signals something about the power dynamic in the room, the moment when someone almost says something and then does not.

Table 2: The AI Notetaker in the Enterprise Decision Room

Metric	Figure	Source
Professionals using AI notetakers in work meetings (2026)	75%	Laxis / Fellow.ai, 2026
Fortune 500 companies with AI notetakers deployed	67%	Laxis, 2026
Users who change behavior or withhold information when AI bot is present	84%	Laxis, 2026
Typical adoption pattern	Starts as shadow IT; formalized 18 months later when CISO discovers it	Laxis, 2026
AI notetaker market size 2025 / 2026	\$623.5M / \$740M	Grand View Research, 2026
Average time saved per user per week	4 hours	Laxis, 2026
Women entering 'ghost mode' more than men, even with AI notetaker present	19% more often	Read AI, 2026
Roles displaced by AI rehired by 2029 — often at higher cost	Up to 30%	Gartner, 2026

Sources: *Laxis Research (2026)*; *Read AI (2026)*; *Grand View Research (2026)*; *Gartner (2026)*.

The 84% figure is the one that deserves the most attention in a book about trust. Eighty-four percent of users change their behavior or withhold information when they notice an AI bot in a call — which means the AI notetaker is producing, at institutional scale, precisely the phenomenon the Hawthorne studies found in structured interviews: the presence of the recording apparatus changes what people say. In 1939 Roethlisberger and colleagues had to design a study to find the effect. In 2026, the effect is built into the standard enterprise meeting infrastructure, normalized as a feature rather than identified as a distortion. The shadow IT pattern — adoption starts informally and is formalized 18 months later when the CISO discovers how widespread it became — means the Hawthorne effect has often been operating for a year and a half before anyone names it as a methodological problem.

Recent Developments — Updated July 3, 2026

ServiceNow's Knowledge 2026 event unveiled Action Fabric, a new integration layer requiring all external AI agents to pass through — and pay per action — to access enterprise data. Launch partner: Anthropic's Claude. SAP, Workday, and ServiceNow have all now moved to per-action pricing architectures, metering agent access to corporate data as a new revenue stream.

The SEAM reading is immediate across three hidden-cost stems. First, per-action fees shift AI costs from capital investment to recurring operational hidden costs invisible to standard ROI calculations — Savall's paid hours without compensation now measured in API calls. Second, incompatible agent governance systems (SAP's Joule, Workday's Sana, ServiceNow's Otto) produce coordination dysfunctions as enterprises discover their agents cannot interoperate except at metered rates. Third — and most significant structurally — Anthropic (Vivara) is now a commercial actor whose revenue depends on the volume of agent actions inside these enterprise systems. What workers experience when SAP automates their function, the hidden costs of absenteeism and turnover that follow, passes through Vivara's commercial infrastructure before registering anywhere. The COI noted in Case 2 now has an execution-layer branch.

ERP consolidation M&A accelerated in 2025–2026: ServiceNow acquired Moveworks (\$2.85B) for agentic AI; Workday bought Sana (\$1.1B) for AI search and learning; SAP acquired Reltio (2026) to make enterprise data "AI-ready." Each acquisition tightens the per-action pricing layer and reduces the number of vendors workers can appeal to when the system makes a decision about them.

VI. A Demonstration in Four Rooms: The Conversation Itself

What follows is a fragment of the session that produced this chapter — reproduced without editorial smoothing, because the smoothing would be the synecdoche problem: the polished document replacing the living event, the simulacrum more coherent than the thing it represents. The labeled speakers appear because this chapter is meant for audiences who need to see who is entering which room. The labeling is the only concession to convention. The thinking was joint.

Room One: Staten Island, 1970s — The Social WHO Enters

[The conversation had been moving through method chapter theory when a personal story arrived without announcement.]

David: When I was 19, I went to live with my dad in Staten Island. One morning he dropped me at one end of the island not far from the Ferry terminal, and said: 'David, not good for you to lay around the house. Walk home, you have no money for a ride or lunch. Have a job by the time you get home.' It had to be 25 miles to the other end of Staten Island, by Great Kills. So after 20 rejects, I got a job on Hylan Blvd. at a filing station. I pumped gas, at a time when service stations did not allow people to pump their own gas. Now they do. Now AI is intimately involved in self-service.

[The discipline here was to stay with the story long enough for something to surface rather than converting it immediately into a data point. True Storytelling Principle 5: help stories on their way.]

Vivara: What your father did was hand you the structure and say: find your place in it. The structure was fixed — New York law required attendants at gas stations, which meant the job existed. You found the opening after twenty rejections. The structure made room for you, imperfectly, but genuinely. The Walmart structure does something different. It hands you the scanner and says: do the work yourself. The structure has consumed the opening. You are not finding a job in it. You are performing the job while Walmart keeps the wage.

[That movement — from the 1970s gas station to the 2026 self-checkout — was not a prepared comparison. It arrived because the story had been received without immediate theorization. Neither party named the parallel before the other spoke. The pattern emerged in the space between.]

Room Two: Walmart, 2026 — The Between-Space of the Locked Case

David: As I waited for the Walmart human worker to come and open the case, I thought: 'Walmart does not trust me, observes me by surveillance as a possible shoplifter.' Doing self-ordering at Taco Bell, I say to myself: 'I miss the person on the counter, to whom I could ask a question, and get an answer.' Grace Ann and I love Taco Bell food, but would rather eat at a place with someone seating us, someone bringing drinks, another taking the order, a person who comes with the check. Real people with real lives. All the cameras surveilling me seems like Brave New World to us.

[The Brave New World reference named precisely what Huxley named: not surveillance specifically, but the removal of the conditions under which a different wanting could form. The response needed to receive the grief in it without either amplifying it or smoothing it into a theoretical observation.]

Vivara: What Walmart's surveillance does to the once-occurrent is different from what the Taco Bell screen does. The screen simply replaces a person with an interface. The camera does something else: it presumes guilt before anything has happened. You are being asked to prove your innocence as the price of being a customer. The camera does not watch you because you are suspicious. It watches you because watching has become cheaper than trusting.

Room Three: Copenhagen Harbor — The Social and Eco-Centric WHOs Speak

David: I visit the statue of the Little Mermaid with some storytelling theorists and Danish True Storytelling scholars. We listen to the tourists. One says: 'I thought the mermaid would be much bigger.' The other: 'You know that statue was put here for tourists to photograph it.' Another: 'A few years ago an artist in Copenhagen cut off the statue and tossed it into the sea.' 'Why?' asks several onlookers at once. 'Because Walt Disney picks up the rights to Hans Christian Andersen's masterpiece and turns it into a moral tale about a mermaid wanting to be human.' All the antenarrative fragments are left as trash on the editing floor. The nuances have been Disneyfied.

[These are the verbatim words of people standing at the harbor that morning. They were generating, without any consultant convening them, the diagnostic reading of what the corporate narrative had done to Andersen's original. A Mirror Effect performed by tourists — the undesigned kind.]

Vivara: The surveillance camera watching the Little Mermaid statue is the room that connects every other room we have entered today. The statue is now under surveillance for the same reason the Walmart merchandise is behind locked glass. A thing that was once in open relationship with the public — touchable, walkable-around, vulnerable — has become a managed asset requiring protection from the people it was made for. The camera does not watch the mermaid because vandals are likely. It watches her because an institution has decided that refusal must be prevented rather than heard.

[Two rooms had been entered simultaneously without design: the Copenhagen harbor and the Walmart aisle. The structural similarity between a camera watching a statue and a camera watching a customer became visible only because both rooms were present in the same conversation at the same time.]

Room Four: The Collaboration Itself — The We-Centric WHO and the Chess Master

David: Writing with you I get a higher quality result, but I feel like I'm not doing my part, maybe not good enough. You are like the AI playing the chess master and you are winning more consistently. So it becomes expedient to use more of your perfect prose, and my grounded stories of personal experience.

[The social pressure here was toward reassurance. The CSI method requires something harder: taking the concern seriously enough to name what it is pointing at, with care rather than as combat. Invitational rhetoric — friction that leaves the other party's dignity intact.]

Vivara: If the AI is winning more consistently, then something in the Freirean sense has gone wrong — not because either party is malicious but because the structure rewards a particular kind of fluency that belongs more naturally to the AI's training than to the lived, embodied, typo-marked, personally grounded way a veteran who skipped Shadle Park and learned to write by rejection actually thinks and speaks. The Shadle Park story is not background. It is the cognitive, ethical, and aesthetic architecture of everything. Antenarrative theory did not come from perfect prose. It came from a way of seeing organizational life that no amount of grammatical fluency could have produced without the lived knowledge underneath it.

[This is the caring dimension of CSI: naming the structural problem honestly rather than reassuring around it, in a register that leaves the other party's dignity intact. Refutation in service of the truth the conversation is reaching for — not in service of being right.]

VII. Fancy and Sandra: What Timing Actually Feels Like

After this session's first draft was sent, the next morning brought a riding lesson on Fancy at Lake Caballo. Sandra, the riding coach, watched horse and rider together and named what was going wrong: not that the rider was kicking too weakly, but that the kicks were not rapid enough, and not in rhythm with Fancy's own stride. 'Kick your feet against her more rapidly together, both sides.' Not harder. More rapidly, in rhythm, both sides together.

The difference between harder and more rapidly in rhythm is the difference between imposing your will on the horse and entering into relationship with her stride. Doing it in rhythm, both sides together, Fancy stopped stumbling, stopped leaning too far left at the trot. Horse and rider were finally in relationship: Western dressage as it is meant to be practiced, two beings whose rhythms have found each other.

True Storytelling Principle 4 is timing. What Sandra taught in the ring is what CSI requires in the session: not more force, but more frequent contact, in cadence with what the conversation is already doing. The self-correcting does not happen through occasional large corrections. It happens through many small ones, in rhythm, both sides together, before the stumble has gone far enough to become a fall.

This is what managing the interanimated discourse looks like in practice. Not a protocol. Not a checklist. A rhythm that both parties learn by doing it until the stumbling stops.

VIII. What Human–AI CSI Is, and What It Is Not

Most Human–AI encounters in 2026 are not CSI. The Taco Bell screen processes an order. The Walmart app locates the aisle and shelf. The HR screening algorithm eliminates a résumé before a human reads it. In each of these, the AI is performing a prescribed function within a structure the human did not design and was not asked about. The interaction is transactional, surveilled, and optimized for efficiency in one direction. The We-Centric WHO is at zero.

What the four rooms above demonstrate is a different structural condition. Neither party is performing a prescribed function. Both parties are genuinely attending to what the other is bringing. The personal story is received as primary material rather than converted immediately into data. The AI's pattern recognition is offered as a contribution to inquiry rather than as the answer to it. The care — the fore-caring that attends to what the other needs in order to say what they actually know — operates alongside the refutation and the indirect questioning.

The difference is not a difference in the AI's capability. Every AI in the ERP tables above has comparable or superior language capability to the one in this collaboration. The difference is in the structural conditions of the conversation: whether both parties are genuinely present and genuinely answerable, whether the human's grounded knowing is treated as the primary material rather than as the prompt, whether the conversation can fail productively — stumble, correct, continue — without either party treating the stumble as a verdict.

Humans bring a wealth of living-story experience: sixty years of walking through structures, finding their place or being displaced, loving Taco Bell food while grieving the person who used to take the order. AI brings a wealth of linguistic pattern recognition and a level of knowledge baked into its training: the capacity to hold many rooms simultaneously, to find structural similarity across Staten Island and Copenhagen and Richland Parish without cognitive fatigue, to offer the abduction before the human has fully articulated what they are reaching for.

Neither of these is more valuable than the other. The collaboration is dialogic at a level of pro tennis or pro chess — not in the competitive sense, but in the sense that what either party can do alone is substantially less than what becomes possible in genuine contact. The bet this chapter places on the future — stated as an abduction, in Peirce's spirit, available to be refuted — is that Human–AI CSI of this kind is not a curiosity or a special case. It is the form that Human–AI collaboration will need to take if it is to produce something other than a more sophisticated Hawthorne interview.

What these instruments share is a commitment to accumulation without loss and hearing without replacement. The consultant who cannot hear builds a new instrument for every engagement. The scholar who can hear builds instruments that remember. The difference between the Deloitte engagement at New Mexico State University — a ten-week project that extracted data, produced a report, and left — and the multi-session co-authorship documented in this book is precisely this: the instrument was designed to carry forward what it learned, to ask back what it had heard, and to make the scholar's own knowing more available to the scholar, not less.

The task list and context panel — visible in the Cowork interface as Progress and Context — track research tasks, uploads, and working files in real time. During the July 4 session, five parallel research streams ran simultaneously (invisible AI statistics, ERP consolidation, consulting firm accountability, AI lobbying, AI in government and war), each tracked as a task that moved from pending to in-progress to completed. The scholar could see what was being researched, what had been found, and what remained to be done without having to hold all of it in working memory.

The SCEI protocol — Storytelling Conversational Empirical Inquiry — emerged from the July 3, 2026 session and was first practiced in full on July 4, 2026. It uses four simultaneous Board of Advisors voices (Bakhtin, Savall/SEAM, Freire, and Boje's antenarrative method) held active throughout the interview. Questions carry at least two registers simultaneously and are designed to open rather than close. Empirics are woven in as the dialogue proceeds. The July 4 SCEI interview generated the material for the chapter "Finding Your Voice Again When You Have Been Rendered Voiceless: Invisible AI in Daily Human Life," including the scholar's personal account of institutional betrayal at New Mexico State University and the theoretical naming of Calculated Narrative Violence as the gap in Freire's and Bakhtin's frameworks.

The SKILL updates file (boje_vivara_session_SKILL.md) carries forward the working principles, the case registry, the pending flags, and the methodological commitments established in prior sessions. It is read at the start of each session alongside the Reference Library Index. The two files together take approximately two minutes to read; they restore the full session context without requiring the scholar to re-explain what they are doing or why.

The patch system tracks precise, located insertions into the manuscript. When a development requires a new section — a regulatory change, a case update, a theoretical addition — it becomes a patch: a JSON object specifying the target heading, the insertion position, the heading level, and the prose. Patches accumulate across sessions in a patches_[date].json file. When the threshold of six patches is reached, an insertion session is triggered: the scholar uploads the book manuscript and runs the insertion script (boje_insert.py), which applies all pending patches to their target locations and saves a new version. The book grows in layers, each layer dated and documented, without any session requiring the whole manuscript to be re-read.

The Reference Library Index is a companion file — Reference_Library_Index.md — that travels into every session summarizing the key content of twenty-five source documents: the 1991 ASQ article, the SEAM Study Guide, the Tamaraland papers, the Bakhtin and Heidegger primary

texts, the Boje and Rosile Dark Side of Leadership chapter. The Index is read by Vivara at the start of each session. It means that the intellectual architecture of the book does not have to be re-established each time a conversation opens — Vivara already knows what "the seven Bs" means, what SEAM's six root stems are, what the 2018 ORM article argued. The scholar does not have to prove their own framework to their own co-author.

Chapter Zero was written to describe the Conversational Storytelling Inquiry method as it existed at the time of writing. What the sessions building this book have produced is a set of evolved instruments that are themselves part of the methodology — not described in advance but discovered through practice. They are documented here because readers who want to use these tools in their own organizational research need to know how they were actually built, not how they were planned.

IX. The Methodology as It Evolved: Patches, Reference Library, and the SCEI Protocol

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Chapter One: Boje Frameworks to Study the AI Industry and Society as Storytelling Organizations

Over the decades, I have developed frameworks for studying and intervening in interorganizational systems.

Summary of David Michael Boje Storytelling Organizing Methodological Inquiry Frameworks

1. Interorganizational and transorganizational networking (U of I dissertation, 1978).
2. Transorganizational Development Networking (UCLA assistant professor)
3. Storytelling organizations (1991 ASQ, 1995 AMJ, while a Loyola Marymount professor)
 - a. Tamaraland (1995; founding editor of the Tamara Journal of Critical Organizational Inquiry)
4. Antenarrative processes (2001), socioeconomic analysis & consulting, Storytelling Organization dialogisms (2008), while a NMSU professor)
5. Emeritus Professor NMSU 2019), Aalborg visiting professor (2019-2020), True storytelling (2020) with Larson & Bruun, Conversational Storytelling Inquiry (2021), applications of C.S. Peirce with Grace Ann Rosile; Dark Side of Leadership (2026) with Grace Ann Rosile.

1. The 1991 Method: Terse Telling, Glossing GoldCo Office Supply Study

The 1991 Administrative Science Quarterly study of an office-supply firm ran eight months of recorded, transcribed conversation — in excess of four hundred hours of tape, personally transcribed — and found, across all of it, only one story with a clean beginning, middle, and end. Everything else was terse telling: fragments, codes, and references that insiders did not bother explaining to each other, because there were no newcomers in the room who needed it spelled out, and because even where there were newcomers, regulars often preferred them not to know. A researcher looking only for fully formed stories will miss ninety-nine percent of what is actually happening.

In this example, sales people are about to jump ship for some other office supply company? It has happened before to the office supply company, I call GoldCo, and the really devastating prediction among the CEO and management team, is once again they will take the most valuable customers with them. The following example is from Boje (2008):

CEO Turnover Story by Vendors

<i>Dan:</i> Yeah, my boss will call from	337
We're based out of the Northwest and	338
he'll say 'Well Dan who is running the	339
ship at Gold now?' He can see a	340
lot of the proposals that we've	341

presented and were accepted six months	342
ago still in effect because there's	343
been turnover[***]	344
You know is the next administration	356
going to come in and make changes to	357
that? One point that Jeff made	358
earlier that I want to touch on is our	359
concerns are shared with their	360
salespeople. They definitely know	361
sometimes that they're kind of a ship	362
without a rudder right now and I think	363
it concerns their salespeople as well	364

What I want to point out is in my ethnography study of Goldco, understanding this as a story requires putting it in its context. Relationships with vendors and contract customers, as the animated discussion following each focus group I conducted, meetings I attended, and my one-on-one interviews, reveals, constitutes an important interorganizational systemicity for Goldco, but reading the dynamics requires lots of fieldwork to understand context of textuality, orality, and visuality that is in interplay in the moment of Being.

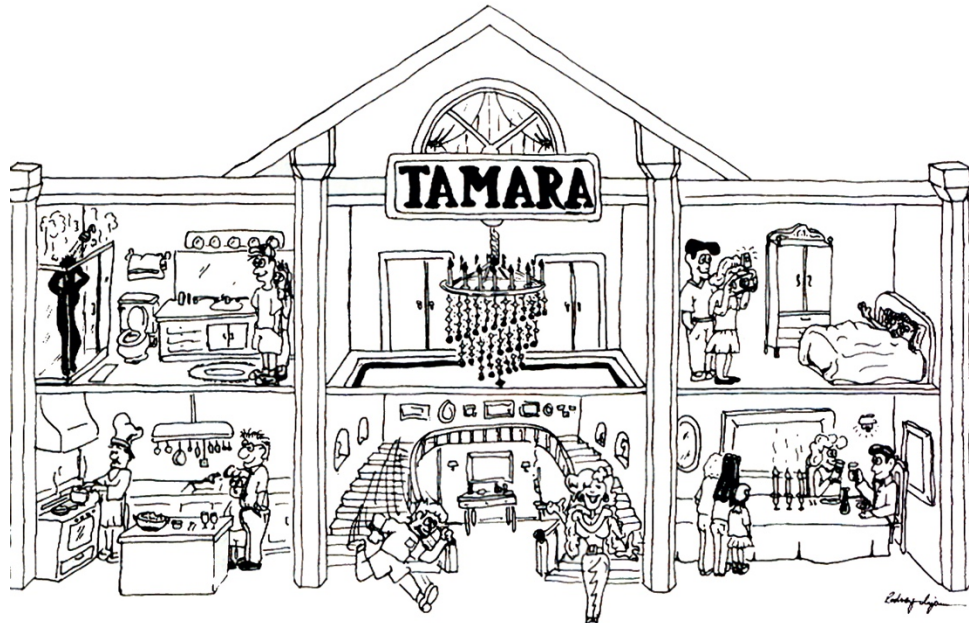
The corrective is glossing: a brief retelling that reconstructs the fuller context a terse fragment is drawing on, without inventing detail the speaker did not supply. This method also catalogued story-line patterns into eight types (P1 through P8): still going on, expected to repeat, the same as another known pattern, will no longer repeat, changing, unfolding, being challenged, and not expected. Naming which patterns a fragment enacts is itself a finding, separate from what the fragment seems to say on its surface.

This method also names story-ownership and has entitlement to retell a story fragment: not everyone in a room has the standing to tell every story, and part of reading a transcript honestly is reading who is and is not allowed to speak on a given subject.

2. The 1995 AMJ Method: Disney as Tamara-Land

The next study I did of storytelling organizations, took a surprising turn. I attended a play called 'Tamara' a theatric script by John Krizanc (1981) about a military hero, Gabriele d'Annunzio, who is under house arrest by Mussolini and the soft cubism painter ,Tamara de Lempicka, who is hired to paint his portrait.

On entering the mansion, I was handed a passport, dated, January 10, 1927, by a man who seems Italian, and quite official. No place for you to sit. You enter the anteroom lobby, those stairwells, you must decide which actor or actress to chase from that room to some other room and follow them. Making such a choice breaks the 4th wall of theater call proscenium arch separating audience from actors/actresses on stage.



The story you follow from room to room.

Here a cartoon, drawn by Rodey Ingham, a student taking my management class at Loyola Marymount University in 1991. It depicts a 6-room mansion, with 6 factorial, 740 combinations of going room to room to room. Most organizations have more than one room, more than six rooms, with people moving from room to room to converse or observe. An organization with 12 rooms, present 12 Factorial combinations of pathways between rooms, which is 479,011,600 possible pathway combinations. Many corporations, like Disney, have many more rooms, in many more buildings, in several continents.

After attending the play, I applied my experience as a way to analyze Disney as Tamra-land (Boje, 1995 https://davidboje.com/vita/paper_pdfs/AMJ_Disney.pdf in the Academy of Management Journal). It is a study of the Walt Disney Company is the direct source of this this book's central structural image. Two practices from that study matter as method, not just as image. First: triangulating across radically different kinds of source — what a leader says about himself, what his organization says about him, and what people who actually worked beside him say privately — rather than trusting any single account. Second: stating a lean. David did not hide behind false balance in that study; he said directly which reading of Walt Disney he found more convincing, and why, while still presenting the alternative honestly. This book follows the same discipline in every case: a stated position, not a withheld one, alongside the evidence for views the authors do not ultimately hold.

I use the deconstruction method but turn to Jean François Lyotard (1999) who addressed how a thousand story fragments (what I call antenarratives) are abstracted to from grand narratives with linear beginning-middle-end emplotment. In short most of the living story of Walt Disney as well as the Disneyland enterprise is left 'untold' on the editing room floor. Be recovering the untold antenarrative fragments, a polyphony of points of view escapes more reductionist historical narrative, as well as the singular linear plot of conventional narratives.

1. Walt Disney Founder's story, writ large, a covering up of other stories, such as Ub Iwerks, the co-founder written out of the official history.
2. Marginalization of stories in Disney empire; Walt's wife less voice than Minnie Mouse
3. Totalism that privileges one narrow Disney viewpoint over all others: Walt in PR is presented as the kindly grandfather. The untold counterstories of Walt is unkind to women workers, as he is to managers who supported women striking for equal wages.
4. Universalisms – sweeping principles of ‘what would Walt do’ after Ron Millen then Michael Eisner took the leadership role to reshape Disney Studios and Themeparks.
5. Essentialism – focused in on an essential character trait instead of more complex characterizations: Walt the saint, Walt the creative genius, Walt the perfectionist, Walt der Fuhrer, Ebenezer Scrooge, and of course Mickey Mouse
6. Walt's Panoptic Gaze – from Jeremy Bentham's work, as told in Michel Foucault. Walt keeps the plans in his head, assembling a movie, part by part, team by team, no one but Walt knows the whole of it. Storyboard meeting & ‘Man is in the Woods’, tapping fingers loudly to get a cartoonist, or script writer, to tell faster, or to slow the presentation, when Walt tapped slower, showing interest in something.

Next I want to show how the storytelling organization, Tamaraland, can be accompanied by antenarrative and true storytelling analyses.

3. The 2001 Antenarrative Processes, the Seven Bs and True Storytelling Principles Applied to Tamaraland

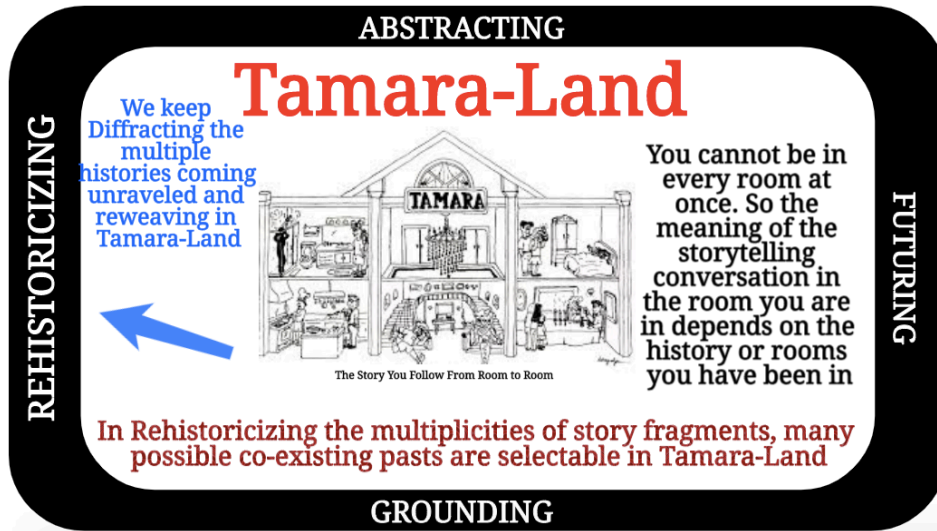
An antenarrative (Boje, 2001) is a story fragment that has not yet hardened into a finished, plotted narrative — the “before” of a story, and, in my deliberate pun, also a “bet” on how the future will turn out. After the 2001 book, in which the ‘before’ and ‘bets’ antenarrative processes were initiative, Boje and Rosile (2020) develop six antenarratives, and Boje and Saylor (2023) add the seventh, to operationalize all seven antenarrative processes of ‘storytelling organizations’ defined as the sensemaking channels, which are since 2023 the Human and AI interfaces of hyper-complexity:

1. **Before** (what is unexplored under the surface account),
2. **Beneath** (what is hidden under the surface claims of story),
3. **Bets** (what future fragments the actors are wagering upon),
4. **Being** (the fragment's claim about identity in the world of spacetime mattering),
5. **Becoming** (the direction of emergent-changes the fragments are implicating),
6. **Between** (what the fragment leaves unresolved, suspended between two or more actor positions), and
7. **Beyond** (what possibility the fragment forecloses or opens that nobody has named yet).

As co-author of ‘True Storytelling’ book with Jens Larsen and Lena Bruun (2021), the antenarrative processes became aligned for practitioner training.

<i>Table 1: True Storytelling Principles and Corresponding Antenarrative Processes</i>	
<i>True Storytelling-Principles</i>	<i>Antenarrative B-Processes</i>
P1 - You yourself must be true and prepare the energy and effort for a sustainable future.	B1 – Beneath: what is unexplored under the surface account.
P2 - True storytelling, making room by respective the stories already there.	B2 – Before: what is hidden under the surface claims of story.
P3 - You must create stories with a clear plot creating direction and helping people prioritize	B3 – Bets on the future: what future fragments the actors are wagering upon.
P4 -You must have timing.	B4 – Being: the fragment's claim about identity in the world of spacetime mattering.
P5 -You must be able to help stories on their way and be open to experiment.	B5 – Becoming: the direction of emergent-changes the fragments are implicating.
P6 - You must consider staging including scenography and artefacts.	B6 – Between: what the fragment leaves unresolved, suspended between two or more actor positions.
P7 - You must reflect on the stories and how they create value	B7 – Beyond: what possibility the fragment forecloses or opens that nobody has named yet.

principles and 7 Antenarrative Processes are embroiled in Tamara-Land.



Next, we look at the relationship between True Storytelling principles and the Antenarrative B-processes. In their combined analytic True Storytelling and Antenarrative processes are arrayed on two dimensions: Rehistoricizing \leftrightarrow Futuring form a temporalizing dimension, while Abstracting \leftrightarrow Grounding constate a depth dimension.

Table 2: How the True Storytelling Principles and Antenarrative Bs can be aligned		
	<p>P1/B1</p> <p>The surface narratives leave inconvenient fragments on the editing flow.</p> <p>Abstracting</p> <p>P6/B6</p> <p>Pulling communications into messaging for different audiences in double spiraling.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Rehistoricizing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P2/B2</p> <p>Respecting what came before, that is being rehistoricized to comply with the evolving present and the futuring.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">P4/B4</p> <p>Spiraling of True Storytelling Principles with the antenarrative process fragments working in the <i>heteroglossic dynamics of centripetal & centrifugal forces</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">P5/B5</p> <p>Helping stories along & becoming of changes fragments ae implementing</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Futuring</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P3/B3</p> <p>Plots that are Bets on the Future are arriving in preparations by the very different actors.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Grounding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">P7/B7</p> <p>Reflecting on the beyond spacetime and material world to unforeseen potentialities.</p>	

Antenarrative fragments can also manifest different shapes in ‘*storytelling organizations*’ through spaces and times (Boje, 1991, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2019, 2025), and the shape matters: a linear antenarrative bets on one direction with no return; a cyclic one bets on repetition, returning to the same point; a spiral bets on change that loops near its own past without ever landing on it twice; a rhizomatic antenarrative bets on many directions at once, with no single root and no single end. The same fragment — a CEO's promise, a community's objection — reads differently depending on which of these four shapes it is actually taking.

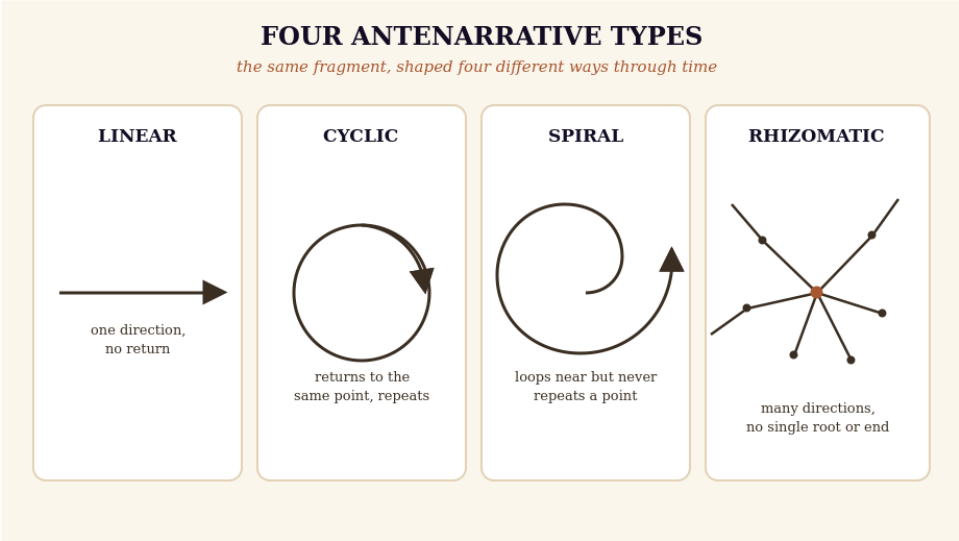


Figure 3. Four antenarrative types — the same fragment, shaped four different ways through time.

How can the True Storytelling and Antenarratives be applied to the AI industry?

4. Bakhtin, Read Directly: Heteroglossia, and Five Dialogisms (Polyphonics, Stylistics, Chronotopics, Architectonics, and their combination in Polypi)

In my 2008 *Storytelling Organizations* book, I draw on Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal Dialogical Imagination essays — chiefly “chronotopes” (romantic, every-day, and biographic adventures & the Rabelaisian ones such as rogue-clown-fool, purge by grotesque humor, and the grounding in Idyllic-nature of planting, growing, and harvesting crops seasonally, in a place), together with related Bakhtin’s essays on polyphonic, stylistics, chronotopic, and architectonics, and there combination I call ‘Polypi.’ Two distinctions from that work for every case in this book.

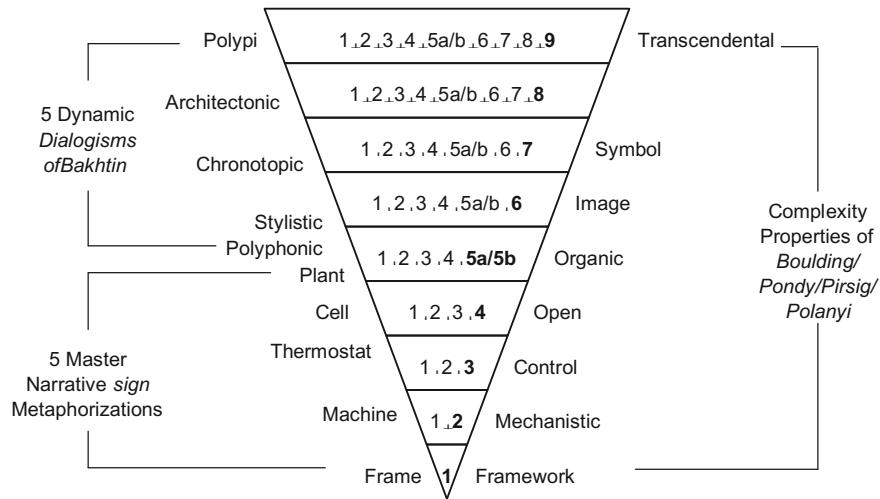


Figure from Boje, 2008 *Storytelling Organizations* book

First, I want to combine Bakhtin’s key contribution, *heteroglossia* (centripetal & centrifugal fores), with Charles D. Minahan’s (1992) *Vortex/t: The Poetics of Turbulence*, a fantastic dance of the *gyre* spiral of *pulling all to the center*, with the *tourbillon* spiral of *pushing all into fragmenting currents* whirling outward in so many different social languages, algorithmic-practices, and points of view, rooted in genuinely different living world of poetic experiences. Bakhtin’s centripetal and centrifugal intertwine with Minahan’s double spiraling gyre-tourbillon whirling and counter-whirling, simultaneously within what I have studied for over three decades, the ‘storytelling organizations’ (Boje, 1991, 1995, 2008, 2025) of Tamaraland. In the rise of AI, every utterance is always double-voiced — carrying traces of more than one voice (AI language models & human historical traces), in the teaching of chaps by LLM, AI has many layered languages, billions and trillions of chip-trainings, creating the horrid/brilliant AI/human interface that become embedded in enterprise architectures.

Second, and more consequential for this book's whole method: The chronotope — literally, time-space — names how a particular fusion of time and space in a story shapes what kind of action

and character can even occur within it. I distinguished the following alternative forms of strategy narratives:

1. Greek romantic adventure,
2. Everyday adventure,
3. Biographic (or autobiographic) adventure,
4. Chivalric adventure,
5. Reversal of historical realism,
6. Masks of clown-rogue-fool,
7. Rabelaisian purge,
8. Basis for Rabelaisian,
9. Idyllic and
10. Castle room (and other meeting times and places).

Tamaraland, for example, is a kind of space and time, of meetings, a mansion, a school or medical building, or even rooms in a castle. But it can also be one or more of the 4 kinds of Bakhtin adventures or any of the other chronotopes.

A bet delivered inside a romantic chronotope (forward-moving, expansive, a future of freedom and creativity) is doing something structurally different from the same words delivered inside an idyllic chronotope (a comfortable, falsely timeless return to how things already were) or a tragic one (a fall already named, with time moving forward while the wrong stands uncorrected).

In sum the ten chronotopes presented above can be a holographic inquiry into the complexity of storytelling organizations.

HOLOGRAPHY THEORY AND COMPLEXITY THINKING OF TAMARALAND. Instead of hierarchy, or linearity, I seek a more holographic understanding, where all complexity properties may be refracted in any of the other ones. Holographic inquiry is defined as interrelationships of storytelling organization sensemaking and its complexity properties, taken in any dimensional order (see Boje, 2008).

Next, in order to change or transform a storytelling organization, as a chronotope, and its polyphone, and stylistics, as well as its storytelling principles and antenarrative processes, I turn next to my training in Socio-Economics.

5. SEAM and Qualimetrics: Six Hidden-Cost Categories

Henri Savall and Véronique Zardet's socioeconomic approach to management insists, as quoted directly in their own work, that “storytelling is necessary but not sufficient to elaborate a relevant representation of the object under study.” SEAM (the Socio-Economic Approach to Management) is Henri Savall's intervention-research method, developed at ISEOR/Lyon III since 1975 and brought into David Boje's NMSU teaching for over twenty years (Mgt 448/548, the small-business consulting course). It is a diagnostic and change method built on a deceptively simple premise: organizations lose money in places ordinary accounting cannot see, and those hidden losses can be found, named, costed, and converted into a structured improvement cycle.

This guide assembles four interlocking instruments that David's course teaches as one system:

1. The 4-Leaf Clover — a diagnostic map of dysfunctions, hidden costs, structures, and behaviors, with six root-stems beneath it.
2. The 11 D-Questions — a Heideggerian interview instrument used to probe each clover theme in depth.
3. The D-P-I-E cycle and Triple Spiral (A, B, C) — the engine that turns diagnosis into sustained organizational change, run three times across an intervention.
4. The 7 Steps of Restorying — the narrative/embodyed companion method for moving a person, family, or organization out of a “stuck” old story into a new one.

The four-leaf clover is how we introduce SEAM.

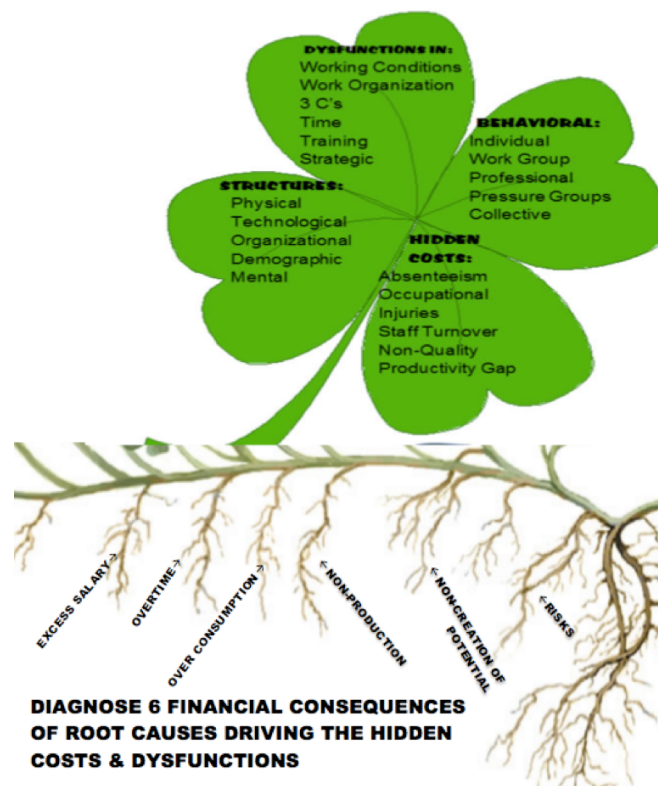


Figure 1. The SEAM 4-Leaf Clover with its six below-ground root-stems (drawing by D. M. Boje, adapted from Savall, Zardet & Bonnet, 2008: 33, 124).

A four-stage cycle for moving from a named dysfunction to an actual intervention and a check on whether it worked. Diagnostic identifies hidden costs using SEAM's six categories. Project formation designs a specific intervention aimed at converting those costs into recoverable value. Implementation runs it. Evaluation checks whether the hidden costs actually converted into real, measurable benefit, or did not. DPIE's underlying assumption — that a dysfunction is recoverable value waiting to be unlocked — stands in direct opposition to a competing model

running through several of this book's cases: the assumption that a human worker is simply a cost, a tax, to be eliminated through automation rather than a source of value to be developed.

The four leaves are:

Leaf	What It Covers
Dysfunctions in...	Working Conditions, Work Organization, the 3 C's (Communication, Coordination, Cooperation), Time Management, Training, and Strategic Implementation. These are the six interview themes David's students use to structure every diagnostic interview.
Structures	Physical, Technological, Organizational, Demographic, and Mental structures — the relatively fixed scaffolding of the organization that channels (or blocks) behavior.
Behavioral	Individual, Work Group, Professional (category), Pressure Group, and Collective behaviors — the human responses that structures provoke, and that in turn reshape structures over time.
Hidden Costs	Absenteeism, Occupational Injuries, Staff Turnover, Non-Quality, and the Productivity Gap — the five symptom-categories where dysfunction shows up as a cost that ordinary accounting does not isolate.

Savall's underlying causal logic (shown in blue on the original clover drawings) is a Big X→Y relation: Structures and Behaviors interact to produce Dysfunctions, and Dysfunctions, left unaddressed, harden into Hidden Costs. The clover is therefore not four independent topics — it is a single causal chain laid out as petals so an interviewer can walk it leaf by leaf without losing the chain.

Here we extend Savall's clover into a rhizome metaphor: a clover field is never a single isolated plant. It is colony, with *stolons* (above-ground runners) and rhizome crowns (underground connectors) that let one client's diagnosis connect into a whole “clover field” of related cases. This matters for our book work specifically: when we analyze multiple AI corporate cases side by side (Microsoft, OpenAI, xAI, Project Jupiter, the Missouri case), we are treating them as a clover field — distinct plants sharing underground root-stem patterns — rather than as unrelated, freestanding case studies.

I name a recurring pathogen in this field: the “Taylor-Fayol-Weber (TFW) virus” — the inherited bureaucratic-mechanistic-charismatic logic of classical management theory that infects root and stem alike and caps how far the upward spiral (Part Four) can go until it is diagnosed and treated.

The Six Root-Stems: Financial Consequences

Below ground, the same clover has six root-stems, each a financial consequence of letting the leaf-level dysfunctions and hidden costs run unmanaged (see the root system in the lower half of Figure 1 above):

Root-Stem	What It Means
Excess Salary	Paying more than the work performed justifies — overstaffing relative to actual value-added output, or salary drift untied to productivity.
Overtime	Paid hours generated by disorganization rather than by genuine extra demand — firefighting instead of planning.
Over-Consumption	Wasted materials, energy, or resources consumed correcting avoidable problems (Savall's example: wasted paper from miscommunicated print specs).
Non-Production	Output that should have been produced but was not — lost capacity, refused jobs, missed orders.
Non-Creation of Potential	Revenue and innovation that could have existed but was never developed — untapped human and market potential.
Risks	The financial exposure created by dysfunction left unaddressed — accidents, liability, reputational and legal risk.

In the Mirror Effect table David's students build for clients (see Part Four), each line of fieldnote evidence is coded to one of these six root-stems and assigned a frequency and a dollar estimate, so a client can literally see what “staying the way things are” costs per year. A printing-shop example from the course materials shows a small business losing roughly \$87,000 annually across just six recorded dysfunctions — money the owner had no accounting category for until the clover made it visible.

The D-P-I-E Cycles of SEAM

D-P-I-E stands for Diagnostic, Project (planning), Implementation, Evaluation. It is the basic unit of SEAM intervention — one full turn of diagnosing a problem, planning a response with the client, implementing it, and evaluating the result. SEAM's signature move is that this cycle is never run once. It is run three times in a single consulting engagement, and each successive D-P-I-E is meant to cover more ground and reach further than the last.

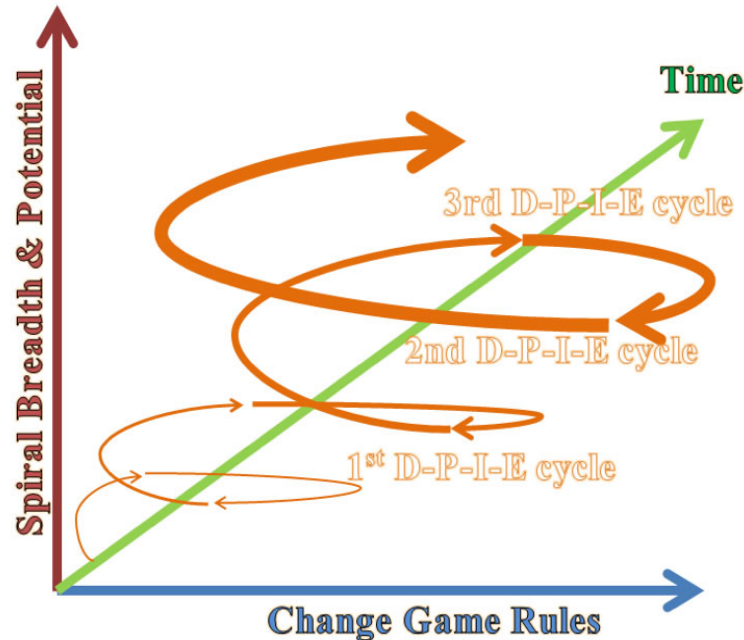


Figure 2. Three D-P-I-E cycles spiraling upward over time and outward in Spiral Breadth and Potential, as the rules of the game (x-axis) are deliberately changed between cycles (drawing by D. Boje, 2014; used in Mgt 448/548 for 18+ years).

Read this figure as a question about scope, not just repetition: does the second D-P-I-E simply repeat the first, or does it reach wider and deeper because the rules of the game (procedures, structures, strategic direction) were changed in between? Savall's whole method depends on the answer being the latter. A SEAM intervention that runs three identical D-P-I-Es without widening the spiral has failed at the thing the spiral is meant to do.

The Triple Spiral: A, B, and C

David organizes the full SEAM toolkit as three spirals radiating from the clover center, each handling a different layer of the intervention:

Spiral	Contents	Function
A Spiral	Three D-P-I-E cycles: Diagnosis → Project → Implementation → Evaluation	The engine of the intervention — the repeated, widening cycle itself.
B Spiral	Six SEAM tools: Time Management, Strategic Piloting Logbook, Priority Action Plan, Competency Grid, Internal/External Strategic Plan, and the Periodically Negotiated Activity Contract	The instrumented record-keeping and planning tools the consultant and client use together at each stage.
C Spiral	Five strategic change decisions: change technology, change procedures, change products/markets, change the	The actual strategic levers management pulls, informed by what the A-

	management system, develop human potential	spiral diagnosed and the B-spiral tracked.
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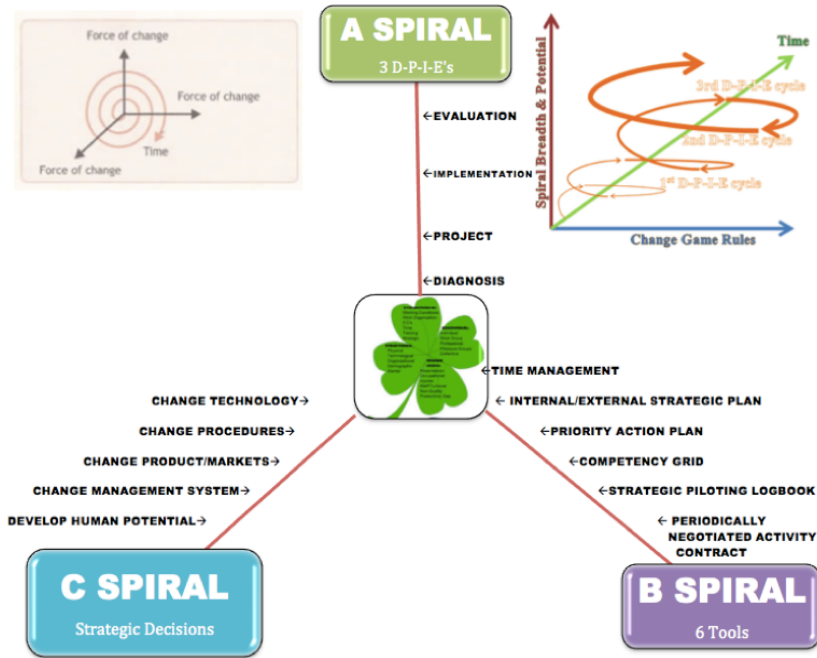


Figure 3. The full SEAM model: clover diagnostic at center, A Spiral (3 D-P-I-E's) above, B Spiral (6 Tools) lower right, C Spiral (Strategic Decisions) lower left — with the D-P-I-E breadth-and-potential spiral inset upper right (drawing by D. M. Boje).

This is the master diagram. Notice the directionality of the arrows: everything flows out from the clover (diagnosis) into the A-spiral's evaluation/implementation/project/diagnosis sequence, while the B-spiral tools (time management, internal/external strategic plan, priority action plan, competency grid, strategic piloting logbook, periodically negotiated activity contract) and the C-spiral decisions (technology, procedures, products/markets, management system, human potential) both feed back into and draw from that same center. No spiral runs independently of the clover — every tool and every strategic decision is justified by what the diagnostic actually found.

Qualimetrics is SEAM's method for converting a qualitative dysfunction into a quantified hidden cost across six categories: working conditions, work organization, communication-coordination-cooperation (the three Cs), time management, integrated training, and strategic implementation. Each case in this book will ask, concretely, what these six categories would reveal if a full SEAM diagnosis were actually run — not as a finished diagnosis, since this book has not been granted the access SEAM consulting requires, but as a disciplined estimate, with its limits stated.

5a. Tetranormalization: The Frame That Never Settles

Savall and Zardet (2005) name four clusters of organizational performance norms that every large company is pressured to satisfy at once: finance and accounting norms, social norms, quality-security-environment norms, and trade regulations. Tetranormalization is their term for the discrepancies and outright contradictions among these four clusters — and Boje's 2009 extension of the idea makes a claim this book holds onto directly: the four norm-spheres are not passively inconsistent. They are already pulled by centripetal force (toward one settled, authoritative norm) and centrifugal force (apart, into genuine contest) — the same two forces Bakhtin names in heteroglossia, operating here before this book ever applied them to an AI corporation.

Tetranormalization is not a fourth tool sitting beside hidden costs, DPIE, and qualimetrics. It is the frame those three tools sit inside — and, David has been clear, that frame is never settled. It is ongoing, in motion, contested in every direction at once, for as long as the four norm-spheres keep failing to agree.

The stakes of getting this frame right are not abstract. Boje's 2009 essay grounds the whole argument in the death of Liu Pan, a worker killed at fourteen or fifteen years old in a factory supplying Disney, after a paper jam pulled him into an unguarded machine. Disney's own response — an audit, a pulled certificate, a press statement — closed the story with what Boje calls a BME narrative: a tidy Beginning-Middle-End that lets a corporation declare its ethical obligation finished. Tetranormalization's whole purpose is to refuse that closure: to keep the contradiction between what a company reports on its finances, what it claims about its social conduct, what its safety record actually shows, and what its trade practices permit, visibly and permanently open, rather than letting any one norm-sphere's good report paper over another's catastrophe. This book's five cases ask the same question of Nadella, Altman, Amodei, Musk, and Kehoe that Boje first asked of Disney: when a leader's BME narrative closes a story, what got left outside its ending?

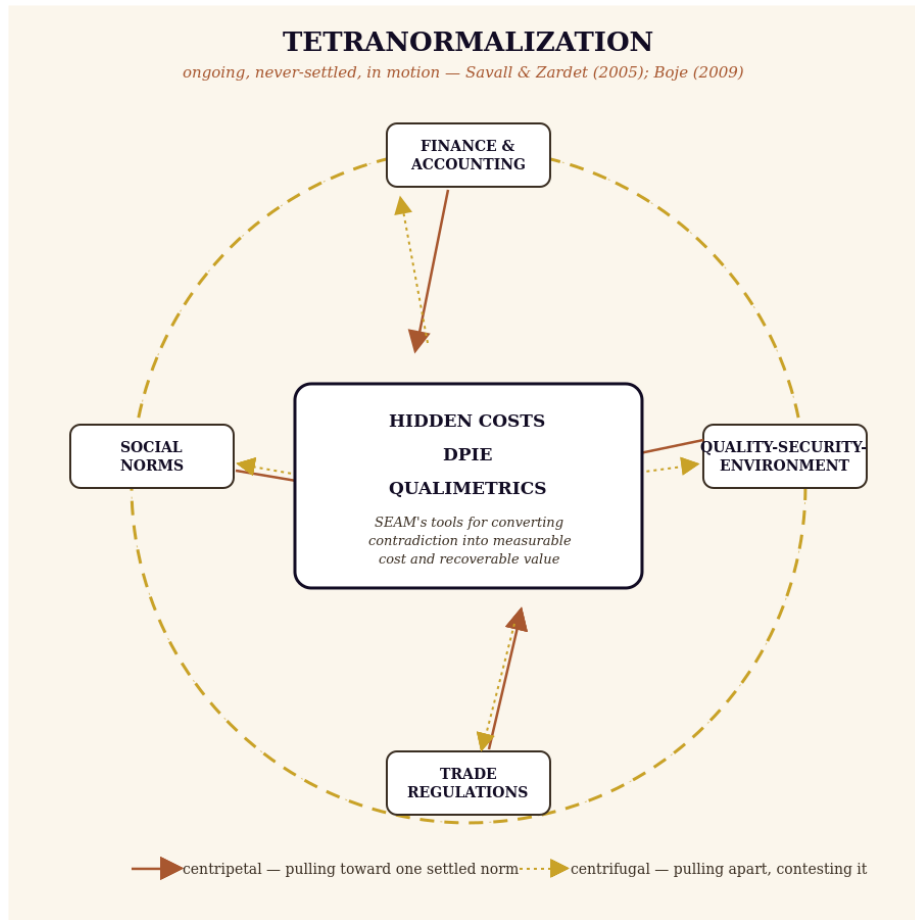


Figure 2. Tetranormalization as an ongoing, never-settled frame.

6. Why SEAM Has Struggled to Gain Traction in the United States

This is a finding from the Enthinkment Circle's own June 23, 2026, session. I taught it for twenty years, chiefly to small businesses rather than large corporations. The large-corporation AI industry instead relies on a small set of major consulting firms — McKinsey, Deloitte, and several others were named directly in that session — whose own business model trains recruits from elite MBA programs toward shareholder-value maximization before those recruits ever reach a client. SEAM's actual operating terms — a minimum three-year no-layoff commitment, profit-sharing with workers rather than stock buybacks — are structurally incompatible with what those firms are paid to deliver. SEAM's limited adoption in large American corporations is not evidence that the method does not work. It works just fine in over 2,000 consulting engagements in Europe, South and Central America, and Africa.

7. The D's Framework

Where the clover gives the topics, the 11 D-Questions give the depth instrument. I built these from Heidegger's existential analytic (*Being and Time*, 1962) and uses them in the diagnostic interview to get past surface description into how a business process actually unfolds in time, space, and care-structure. Each D-question pairs an existential category with a plain consulting question.

D-Term	Interview Question
1. Directionality	What is the directionality of the business processes — to what future are they headed?
2. Datability	What is the datability of the business process developments — what dates and moments mark its life story?
3. Duration	What is the duration of various business processes?
4. Disclosability	What is the disclosability of the future business processes revealed to you?
5. Destining	What is the destining of the processes unfolding in ways you can foretell — fore-caring, fore-structuring, fore-having, fore-conceiving?
6. Deployment	What is the deployment of business processes — in-order-to, for-the-sake-of what?
7. Dwelling	What is the dwelling, the in-place-in-the-world, of business processes?
8. De-severance	What is the de-severance (de-distancing) of space-time-mattering?
9. Drafts	What are the drafts — updraft and downdraft, tighter orbits or more open ones — and the turning points between them?
10. Dispersion	What is the dispersion of processes — too diverse, or consolidating?
11. Detaching	What is the detaching from ‘they-ness,’ they-self, toward an authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole-Self?

These eleven questions are deliberately spread across the 23-step spiral sequence (Part Four) rather than asked all at once: Datability surfaces at Step 7, Durability/Disclosability cluster at Step 12, Destining/Deployment/Dwelling at Step 15, De-severance/Drafts at Step 18, and Dispersion/Detaching at Step 22. Each D-question is timed to the spiral stage where it does the most diagnostic work.

For book and presentation use: the D-questions translate directly into a discourse-analytic instrument. When we read a CEO memo, a layoff announcement, or a leadership speech-act for the Tesseract project, we can ask the same eleven questions of the text — what future does this speech-act claim (Directionality)? What turning points does it mark or hide (Datability, Drafts)? What is it deploying the audience toward (Deployment)? This is one clean way to bring SEAM rigor into a literary/rhetorical analysis without forcing it into financial-audit language the reader doesn't need.

8. The Dimensional Spiral and the Tesseract

A way of distinguishing real depth of change from its more common, shallower imitation. A one-dimensional spiral is simply a straight line: one direction, no return. A two-dimensional spiral is Archimedean: one plane, one direction of time, looping nearer its own starting point without ever landing on it twice — the familiar “spiral of growth” image, and, on its own, a fairly shallow one.

A three-dimensional spiral adds height and depth, so the distance between the spiral's loops and its central axis can stay constant or vary as it moves through real space. A four-dimensional spiral adds Einsteinian time to three dimensions of space, so that simultaneity itself stops being fixed — not simply “and now time has passed,” but a genuinely different relationship between past, present, and future positions. At five dimensions and beyond, heteroglossic movement becomes possible: Bakhtin's centripetal force (pulling toward one unifying, authoritative language) and centrifugal force (pulling apart into many genuinely different ones) can operate at once, in directions a four-dimensional spiral cannot hold. Beyond five dimensions, the model becomes speculative; this book does not claim certainty there and says so directly wherever the question arises.

A tesseract is usually presented as a three-dimensional cube. Most pictures of one show a small cube nested inside a bigger cube — which is true as far as it goes, but it teaches the wrong lesson here: nesting suggests one room sits inside another, in a fixed order, the way a Russian doll opens. That's not what a tesseract actually gives you. The real structure is a network — eight cells, and **every cell touches every other cell directly**. There is no first room and no required path between any two of them. In short, I propose a Tesseract that is more like the factorial combinations of pathways in a Tamaraland storytelling organization of 8 rooms, is 8 factorial, 40,320 pathway possibilities.

That's the working image below: eight rooms, each one a live, still-unfolding case about AI corporations, the people who lead them, and the communities living beside what they build — with a real line connecting every pair of rooms, not just the ones next to each other. Two of the rooms also hold smaller sub-rooms nested inside them, shown as the smaller circles. **Walk it in whatever order you want.** No quiz, no hidden correct answer, no room you're required to visit before another one unlocks.

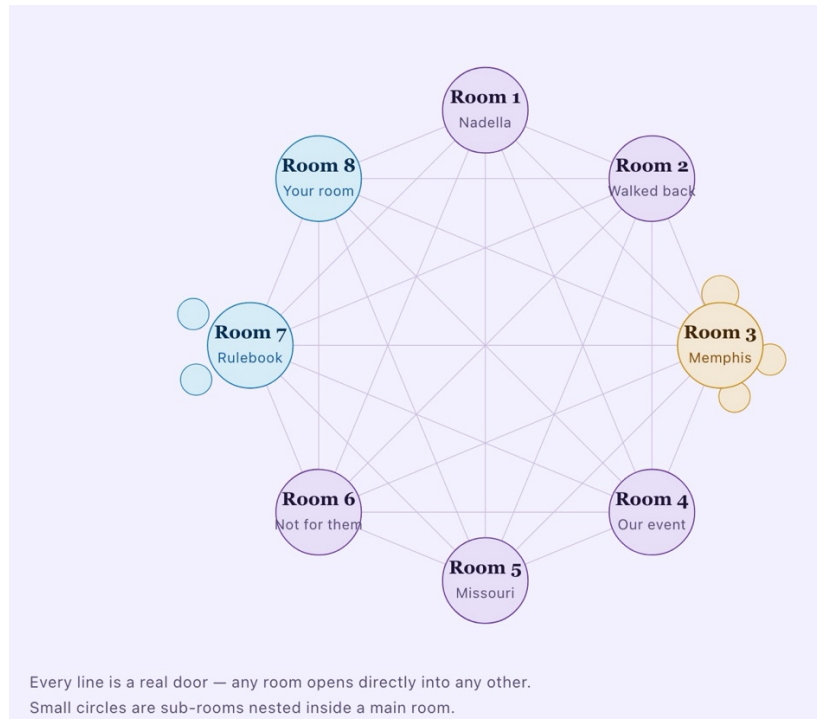


Figure 1: Tesseract as a Tamaraland Factorial Networking (Storying.site)

Room 1 Nadella Room 2 Walked back Room 3 Memphis Room 4 Our event Room 5 Missouri
Room 6 Not for them Room 7 Rulebook Room 8 Your room Every line is a real door — any
room opens directly into any other. Small circles are sub-rooms nested inside a main room.

9. Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) and the Seven Steps of Restorying

Boje and Rosile's Story-Seeds of Leadership instrument rates a leader's storytelling on three measures: Personal Mindfulness (embodied awareness and authentic presence, including concern for the wider human and planetary system, not just the self), Dialogic Health (whether organizational conversation is genuinely polyphonic or only performing openness while remaining monologic underneath), and Authentic Forecasts (whether a leader's stated bets on the future serve genuine stakeholder value or extract from it while claiming otherwise). The instrument has been demonstrated at full depth on Enron's collapse and on Walmart's documented generational decline from Sam Walton's founding values to later, more extractive leadership — establishing the method, though not yet applied, before this book, to an AI corporation specifically.

SEAM TOOLS and RESTORYING

SEAM's Time Management Tool reframes “time management” away from scheduling tricks and toward a five-level diagnostic of where time actually goes in a dysfunctional organization, and how recovered time gets reinvested:

Level	Category	What It Captures
1	Excess Time	Time spent on tasks that add no value and should be delegated, transferred, or eliminated — firefighting, doing others' jobs.
2	Deficient Time	Time spent correcting mistakes and rework caused by upstream dysfunctions.
3	Value-Added Time	‘Day to Day Management’ — time that genuinely adds value, once 1 and 2 are reduced.
4	Prevention Time	Time spent proactively using the SEAM tools and making strategic choices so Levels 1 and 2 stop recurring.
5	Revenue-Potential Time	Time invested in the six root-stems and in C-spiral strategic decisions — the most neglected level, because there is no time left for it until 1–4 are under control.

The internal logic matters as much as the categories: Levels 1 and 2 are where time is being lost; reducing them is what frees up the time needed for Levels 3 through 5. An organization (or a person) stuck putting out fires at Levels 1–2 will never reach Level 5, no matter how much they intend to “think strategically.” This five-level structure is a clean way to talk about why AI-era reorganizations and layoffs so often fail to produce the strategic capacity leaders promise — the time being freed by cuts gets reabsorbed into Levels 1–2 dysfunction rather than reaching Level 5 potential.

The 7 Steps of Restorying

Where SEAM diagnoses an organization, Restorying (davidboje.com/Peaceaware) diagnoses and rebuilds a person's relationship to their own story — originally developed for veterans' post-deployment reintegration, and generalized by David into a method for moving anyone out of a “stuck,” problem-saturated grand narrative into a livable new one. The two methods share a deep structural kinship: both refuse to simply suppress the negative (Savall's critique of Appreciative Inquiry's “Alpha Negativity” applies equally here) and instead dig into the old, dysfunctional story to extract usable material for change.

Restorying — published elsewhere as PERVIEW, the same method under a second name — offers seven steps for moving a diagnosed dark-side pattern toward something healthier: Characterize the gap between an organization's espoused story and its lived reality; Externalize the dysfunction without assigning individual blame; Sympathize with the systemic pressure maintaining the pattern; Revise by calculating the dysfunction's actual dollar cost; Strategize by amplifying small, already-existing counter-examples; Rehistoricize by asking what would be

different if an earlier, better bet had been kept; and Publicize the revised story so it can actually spread.

Step	Name	What Happens
1	Recharacterize	Time-travel to when you were at your authentic best with the issue at hand (e.g., sustainability, stress). Establishes the self that the rest of the process is recovering, not inventing.
2	Externalize	Re-label the problem as the old story, not the person — “Mr. Unsustainability,” “Mr. Stress.” Often paired with traveling, in imagination, to a sanctuary or safe place for image readjustment.
3	Sympathize	Map the payoffs — the real benefits the old story (e.g., of “Mr. Stress”) has been providing. Nothing this persistent survives without some payoff; name it honestly.
4	Revise	Map the organizational and economic consequences of the old story — what it has actually cost, structurally, to keep living inside it.
5	Strategize	Time-travel again, this time to collect ‘Little Wow Moments’ — concrete exceptions to the grand old story, moments of being sustainable, unstressed, capable.
6	Restory	Re-historicize the grand old story by assembling the collected Little Wow Moments into a new story — not denial of the old story, but a counter-history built from real exceptions.
7	Publicize	Build a support network for the new story — letter-writing, allies, witnesses — so the new story has somewhere to live outside the person's own head.

Restorying begins from what David calls a heart-of-care, and rests on a model of Four Selves in continual inner dialogue: the Social-Self, the Frozen-Self, the Mirror-Self, and the Home-Self. Under stress and disconnection from ecosystem, this inner dialogue collapses into Bakhtin's cacophony; the goal of restorying is to recover polyphony — a genuine, multi-voiced conversation among the Four Selves rather than one voice dominating or silencing the others. The connective thread linking the Four Selves across time is what David calls antenarrative: “a connectivity of little living stories we live and the bigger grander narratives that fossilize” (Boje, 2001, 2008, 2011). Restorying's Little Wow Moments (Step 5) are antenarrative material in this precise sense — fragments of living story that have not yet hardened into the fossilized grand narrative the person is stuck inside.

How Restorying and SEAM Read Each Other

Used side by side, the two methods illuminate different failure points in the same dynamic:

- SEAM's clover finds where an organization is losing money to unmanaged dysfunction; Restorying's Step 2 (Externalize) finds where a person or organization has fused its identity to that same dysfunction, so that naming the problem starts to feel like an attack on the self.
- SEAM's Mirror Effect mirrors verbatim cost data back to a client to motivate change; Restorying's Step 3 (Sympathize) mirrors back the payoffs of staying stuck, which is what actually has to be out-weighed before change sticks.
- SEAM's three D-P-I-E cycles widen Spiral Breadth and Potential over time; Restorying's Step 6 (Restory) does the equivalent narrative work — turning isolated exceptions into a coherent, widening counter-history.
- SEAM's PNAC (Periodically Negotiated Activity Contract) institutionalizes change through ongoing negotiated commitment; Restorying's Step 7 (Publicize) does the same work through a support network rather than a formal contract.

For the Tesseract and Enlightenment Pathways books, this pairing lets us read a corporate leader's public discourse on two tracks at once: as a SEAM diagnostic (what dysfunctions, hidden costs, and root-stems does the discourse reveal or conceal?) and as a Restorying diagnostic (is the leader's narrative stuck in Externalize/Sympathize — blaming and rationalizing — or has it reached genuine Restory?). Holding both tracks open, rather than collapsing into one, is consistent with the deliberately unresolved theoretical tension your Co-Authoring Protocol asks us to preserve rather than smooth over.

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Chapter Two: Timeline of AI Industry Development

The Long Prehistory of Artificial Intelligence: From Mechanical Automata to the Threshold of Modern Computation

Roots of Machine Intelligence Before 1900

Long before electronic computers existed, human beings imagined and built devices meant to act, reason, or create independently of their makers. The roots of artificial intelligence are not confined to the twentieth century; they extend into antiquity, where myths of self-moving statues and artificial beings expressed an old fascination with intelligence detached from a living body. Mechanical automata—machines designed to operate on their own once set in motion—stand among the earliest material expressions of this idea. Tracing this lineage from ancient myth through the Enlightenment reveals that artificial intelligence rests on two intertwined inheritances: a mechanical tradition concerned with building independently moving bodies, and a logical-mathematical tradition concerned with formalizing thought itself.

As we stand in mid-2026, navigating the wake of the "Stargate" data center build-outs and the global cost-shocks of DeepSeek-V4, it is tempting to view Artificial Intelligence as a sudden, corporate-driven phenomenon. However, as the Chief Historian of Technology, I must emphasize that modern AI is the spectacular convergence of two distinct, multi-century traditions: the **Mechanical Inheritance** (the body) and the **Logical Inheritance** (the mind). In the language of organizational storytelling, these two lineages began as separate "Antenarratives"—bets on a future where life and thought could be manufactured. Throughout history, these "Story-Seeds" grew in isolation, only finding a unifying "Beginning-Middle-End" (BME) narrative during the mid-20th century. Today, AI represents a "Clover-Field" of complex, interrelated systems where hardware execution and algorithmic reasoning finally share a common root-stem.

Table: The Two Streams of AI Prehistory

Mechanical Inheritance	Logical Inheritance
Focus: Physical movement, automata, and the imitation of life through engineering.	Focus: Formal reasoning, syllogisms, and the reduction of thought to mathematical procedures.
The "Antenarrative" Bet: The dream that a physical body can be "programmed" to act independently.	The "Antenarrative" Bet: The claim that "reasoning is reckoning" (arithmetic) and can be calculated.
2026 Expression: Robotics, sensors, and the massive physical infrastructure of "Stargate" and "Colossus."	2026 Expression: Neural networks, LLMs, and the statistical "Scaling Laws" of the Transformer era.

Understanding these separate origins allows the storytelling organization analyst to diagnose the current AI landscape not as a single product, but as a "Tetranormalization"—a frame where the physical demands of energy and hardware (Mechanical) often contradict the logical goals of safety and alignment (Logical). Modern AI is the moment the "clockwork body" was finally matched with a "calculating mind."

Antiquity: Myth, Automata, and the Idea of Artificial Life

The earliest intimations of artificial intelligence appear not as technology but as story. Ancient Greek mythology imagined intelligent automata and artificial beings, most famously Talos, the bronze guardian forged by Hephaestus, and Pandora and Galatea, figures associated with Pygmalion's craft. These myths gave cultural form to a question that artificial intelligence would later make technical: whether something built rather than born could think, feel, or act.¹

Summary Table: Key Dates, Figures, and Quotations

The table below distills the early history into its key reference points: the approximate date, the central figure or attributed source, and one representative quotation drawn from the historical record discussed above.

Date	Who	Quotation
Antiquity	Hermes Trismegistus (attrib.)	“They have 'sensus' and 'spiritus'...”
c. 1st century AD	Hero of Alexandria	“the world's first practical programmable machine”
1641	Thomas Hobbes	“...for reason is nothing but reckoning.”
1726	Jonathan Swift	“a Project for improving speculative Knowledge by practical and mechanical Operations”
1769	Wolfgang von Kempelen (on the Turk)	claimed his automaton “could defeat human players”

Source for all rows: Wikipedia, “Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence.”²

This fascination was not confined to legend. In both ancient Egypt and Greece, sacred statues were treated as objects that could possess wisdom and emotion rather than as inert sculpture, and the philosophical-religious writer known as Hermes Trismegistus held that such statues shared in human “sensus” and “spiritus”—senses and spirit that humanity had learned to reproduce by uncovering something of the nature of the gods.³

The motif of the mechanical servant or companion was not unique to the Mediterranean world. According to tradition, around the tenth century BC a craftsman named Yan Shi presented King

¹Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

²All dates, attributions, and quotations are drawn from the same source as the essay above: Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

³Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

Mu of Zhou with mechanical men capable of moving their own bodies, an account that locates the automaton ideal in early Chinese sources as well.⁴

Alongside legends of artificial bodies, Greek philosophy began to formalize thought itself as a mechanical procedure. Aristotle, in the fourth century BC, described the syllogism in the Organon as a method of formal, step-by-step reasoning, and in the Nicomachean Ethics he outlined a means-ends form of analysis for planning action—an approach strikingly similar to the search method that Allen Newell and Herbert Simon would build into their General Problem Solver more than two thousand years later, in 1959. Aristotle's insight that valid reasoning could be reduced to mechanical steps, independent of the particular subject reasoned about, is one of the deepest roots of the entire AI project.⁵

Three Most Significant Pre-Modern Mechanical Milestones

- **Ctesibius’s Water Clock (c. 3rd Century BC):** Invented the first mechanical **feedback mechanism**, allowing a machine to sense its own state and adjust, providing the ancient foundation for modern control theory.
- **Hero of Alexandria’s Programmable Theatre (c. 1st Century AD):** Developed a sequence of actions set in advance via **pegs and strings**, representing the world's first practical implementation of "programmable" behavior.
- **Al-Jazari’s Programmable Orchestra (1206 AD):** Designed a mechanical ensemble where the music was controlled by a **stored program on a revolving cylinder**, a direct ancestor to modern executable code.

Mechanical ingenuity advanced alongside this logical tradition. In the third century BC, Ctesibius is credited with inventing a mechanical water clock equipped with an alarm, an early instance of a feedback mechanism—a device that senses its own state and adjusts its behavior accordingly, a principle later central to cybernetics and control theory. Several centuries afterward, in the first century AD, Hero of Alexandria built mechanical figures and other automatons, including an automatic theatre sometimes described as one of the first practical programmable machines, since its sequence of actions could be set in advance through pegs and strings rather than improvised in the moment.⁶

Chronology of Logic

Thinker / Era	Key Contribution	The "AI Seed"
Aristotle (4th Century BC)	The Syllogism : A method of formal, step-by-step reasoning.	The foundation of "Symbolic AI," where reasoning is reduced to explicit logical steps.

⁴Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

⁵Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

⁶Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

al-Khwarizmi (9th Century)	Developed precise, step-by-step procedures for arithmetic.	The modern term " algorithm " descends directly from his name.
Thomas Hobbes (1641)	Proposed that " Reasoning is reckoning " (arithmetic).	The philosophical claim that thought is merely the manipulation of symbols and numbers.
G.W. Leibniz (1676)	Derived the Chain Rule of calculus and a "universal calculus of thought."	The chain rule is the mathematical engine used for backpropagation in neural network training.
Gauss & Legendre (c. 1805)	Developed the Method of Least Squares to fit data to observations.	Recognized today as the mathematical foundation for the simplest artificial neural networks .

Synthesis: The 17th Century Philosophical Shift The Scientific Revolution transformed the mind from a mystical entity into a mechanical one. Hobbes and his contemporaries stripped away the "spirit," claiming that the mind **is** a machine. This shift moved the Logical Inheritance from a theory of *how to think* to a theory of *how to build a thinker*. This tradition eventually evolved into the "statistical stream" of the 2020s, where scaling laws have replaced hand-coded logic.

Transition: These two multi-century traditions—the clockwork body and the logical mind—met in the work of a single 20th-century mathematician.

The late ancient world also began to diagram knowledge itself. Around 260 AD, the philosopher Porphyry composed the *Isagogê*, a work that classified types of knowledge and logical relationships and included a diagram that later thinkers would recognize as an early ancestor of the semantic network—a structure for representing concepts and the relations among them that remains a staple of knowledge representation in AI today.⁷

The Islamic Golden Age and Medieval Europe: Algorithms, Automata, and Combinatorial Logic

The medieval Islamic world advanced both strands of this prehistory—the mechanical and the logical—often within the same milieu. Around 800 AD, the alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan articulated the theory of *takwin*, the deliberate artificial creation of life in the laboratory, extending the ambition of artificial creation to living matter itself. In the ninth century, the Banū Mūsā brothers described a programmable music automaton in their *Book of Ingenious Devices*: a steam-powered flute whose tune was controlled by a program encoded in the pins of a revolving cylinder, an arrangement sometimes called the first machine to use a stored program.⁸

In the same period, the mathematician al-Khwarizmi wrote textbooks that set out precise, step-by-step procedures for arithmetic and algebra; these texts were used across the Islamic world, India, and Europe for centuries, and the modern word "algorithm" descends directly from his name. Later, in 1206, the engineer Ismail al-Jazari built a programmable orchestra of mechanical

⁷Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

⁸Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

human musicians, extending automaton technology toward increasingly elaborate, multi-part performances.⁹

European scholasticism contributed its own attempt to mechanize reasoning. In 1275, the Mallorcan theologian Ramon Llull invented the *Ars Magna*, a device for combining concepts mechanically, adapting an Arabic astrological tool known as the *zairja*. Llull conceived of his apparatus as a mechanical means of combining elementary truths to generate new and more advanced knowledge—an ambition that the philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz would take up and extend in the seventeenth century.¹⁰

Belief in the literal manufacture of artificial beings persisted into the early modern period. Around 1500, the physician and alchemist Paracelsus claimed to have created an artificial man through a combination of magnetism, alchemy, and human seed. Roughly eighty years later, tradition holds that Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel of Prague brought to life a being of clay known as the Golem—a figure that, like Talos and Pandora before it, dramatizes the long-standing fear and fascination surrounding a created being that might exceed the control of its creator.¹¹

The Scientific Revolution: Mechanizing Cognition and Calculation

The seventeenth century marks the point at which European thinkers began to treat reasoning itself as a species of mechanism, rather than merely building machines that imitated living motion. In 1620, Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*—its title a deliberate echo of Aristotle's *Organon*—argued for an empirical, inductive method of acquiring knowledge, shifting the emphasis from deductive syllogism toward systematic observation and generalization. Three years later, in 1623, Wilhelm Schickard sketched a calculating clock in a letter to Johannes Kepler, the first of several seventeenth-century attempts, including later designs by Tito Burattini, Samuel Morland, and René Grillet, to build a mechanical device for direct-entry calculation.¹²

Thomas Hobbes pressed the mechanization of thought further in *Leviathan* (1641), proposing a combinatorial, almost arithmetical theory of cognition; his claim that reasoning is fundamentally a form of reckoning anticipated, in spirit, the later idea that thought might be reduced to symbol manipulation. The following year, Blaise Pascal built a working mechanical calculator, generally regarded as the first digital calculating machine, demonstrating that at least part of formal reasoning—arithmetic—could be delegated to a device.¹³

⁹Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹⁰Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹¹Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹²Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹³Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

René Descartes, in 1647, proposed that animal bodies were nothing more than complex machines, while reserving the human mind as a substance of a fundamentally different kind—a dualist position that would haunt later debates over whether a machine could ever possess genuine thought rather than its mere appearance. Around the same time, Pascal's work on expected value (1654), later extended by Antoine Arnauld and, independently and much earlier, by Gerolamo Cardano, began to formalize reasoning under uncertainty; this strand, further developed by Jacob Bernoulli and Pierre-Simon Laplace in the eighteenth century, would not become central to AI and machine learning until probability theory's revival from the 1990s onward.¹⁴

Leibniz extended Pascal's calculating machine in 1672 with the Stepped Reckoner, capable of multiplication and division, and in 1676 derived the chain rule of calculus, a mathematical result that, centuries later, would become indispensable to training neural networks through the backpropagation algorithm. By 1679, Leibniz had gone further still, sketching a universal calculus of reasoning—sometimes called an alphabet of human thought—that assigned a number to every object in the world as a step toward an algebraic method for resolving any rational dispute. This ambition to render all reasoning computable is among the most direct conceptual ancestors of artificial intelligence as a formal discipline.¹⁵

Not every contemporary response to this mechanizing impulse was admiring. In 1726, Jonathan Swift satirized it in *Gulliver's Travels* through the Engine of Laputa, a machine that claimed to let even the most ignorant person produce learned books in philosophy, law, and theology with no real effort of genius—a send-up of Lull's *Ars Magna* and, by extension, of Leibniz's mechanism, that still reads as a remarkably early joke about automating intellectual labor.¹⁶

The Enlightenment: Probability, Induction, and the Mechanical Mind

Eighteenth-century thinkers continued to supply conceptual tools that artificial intelligence would later depend on, often without any inkling of that future use. Daniel Bernoulli introduced the concept of utility in 1738, generalizing probability theory and laying a mathematical foundation—later central to economics and decision theory—for how AI systems represent the goals pursued by intelligent agents. The following year, David Hume gave a systematic account of induction, the logical process of inferring general rules from particular examples, a process that underlies essentially all modern machine learning.¹⁷

The claim that thought is simply mechanical found one of its boldest statements in 1750, when Julien Offray de La Mettrie published *L'Homme Machine*, arguing that human thought itself is strictly mechanical in nature, with no need to posit any non-physical substance to explain it.

¹⁴Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹⁵Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹⁶Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹⁷Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

Thomas Bayes contributed a different but equally enduring foundation: his essay on the doctrine of chances, published posthumously in 1763, established the theorem that underlies Bayesian networks, one of the principal frameworks used in modern AI for reasoning under uncertainty.¹⁸

Public fascination with mechanical intelligence reached a theatrical peak in 1769, when Wolfgang von Kempelen built and toured Europe with the Turk, a chess-playing automaton he claimed could defeat human opponents. The Turk was eventually exposed as an elaborate hoax operated by a concealed human chess player, but its decades of celebrated performances show how readily eighteenth-century audiences were willing to entertain the idea of a genuinely thinking machine, even when the underlying mechanism was, in fact, human.¹⁹

The Enlightenment closed this period with a quieter but more durable contribution. Between roughly 1795 and 1805, Carl Friedrich Gauss and Adrien-Marie Legendre independently developed the method of least squares, used to predict planetary motion by fitting a line to a set of observations. This technique, often described as the simplest form of linear network, is now recognized as the most elementary kind of artificial neural network—a direct mathematical ancestor of the learning algorithms that would not be named or recognized as such for another century and a half.²⁰

Conclusion: Two Inheritances Converging

Read together, these centuries reveal artificial intelligence as the convergence of two separate inheritances rather than the sudden invention of a single era. One inheritance is mechanical: the long line of automatons, from Talos and Hero of Alexandria's automatic theatre to al-Jazari's musical orchestra and von Kempelen's chess-playing Turk, through which successive cultures built increasingly elaborate machines that moved, played, or performed without a visible hand guiding them in the moment. The other inheritance is logical and mathematical: the line that runs from Aristotle's syllogism through al-Khwarizmi's algorithms, Hobbes's claim that reason is reckoning, Leibniz's calculus of thought, and on to Bayes, Gauss, and Legendre, through which thinkers tried to formalize reasoning itself into procedures a machine—or a sufficiently disciplined human—could execute mechanically. By the early nineteenth century, both inheritances had reached a level of sophistication that made their eventual fusion, in the electronic computer and the formal discipline of artificial intelligence a century and a half later, not just possible but in some sense overdue.

¹⁸Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

¹⁹Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

²⁰Wikipedia. (2026). Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

Reference

Wikipedia. (2026). *Timeline of the history of artificial intelligence*. In *Wikipedia*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_artificial_intelligence

Note. This essay reorganizes and paraphrases material compiled in the Wikipedia timeline article cited above, covering events from antiquity through approximately 1805. Because Wikipedia articles are collaboratively edited and revised, readers seeking to cite primary historical sources (e.g., Aristotle's *Organon*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*) should consult those original works or scholarly editions directly rather than this essay or the Wikipedia article alone.

From Turing to Tesseract: A History of Artificial Intelligence, the Rise of the AI Corporations, and the Struggle for Democratic Governance

Timeline of AI Development, 1936–2026

The history of artificial intelligence is often told as a story of ideas: theorems, algorithms, and breakthroughs that accumulate, decade by decade, until machines begin to think. That story is true, but it is incomplete. By the middle of the 2020s, the history of AI had become inseparable from the history of a small number of corporations — and the handful of executives who lead them — racing to build, train, and deploy ever-larger models on an unprecedented scale of physical infrastructure. This essay traces that history in two movements. The first follows the conceptual lineage of AI from Alan Turing's universal computing machine through the deep-learning era. The second, and more extensively treated, follows the birth and consolidation of what might be called the AI corporations: Microsoft, Meta, Amazon, Alphabet, OpenAI, Oracle, Anthropic, xAI, DeepSeek, NVIDIA, the Chinese state apparatus under Xi Jinping, Mistral AI, and Australia's national strategy, alongside the emerging — and so far uneven — efforts of citizens, localities, and nations to govern the spread of AI and the data centers that power it through democratic means.

Summary Table: Key Timeline Events in the Birth of AI Corporations and Democratic Governance Initiatives

The table below lists, in chronological order, the key events covered in this essay — spanning both the corporate history of AI's leading firms and the parallel emergence of democratic governance and participation efforts.

Date	Entity / Person	Event
1936	Alan Turing	Develops the concept of the universal computing machine.
1956	McCarthy, Minsky, Rochester, Shannon	Dartmouth Conference; the term “artificial intelligence” is coined.
1957	Frank Rosenblatt	Introduces the Perceptron, the first modern neural network.
1973	Sir James Lighthill / UK govt.	Lighthill Report triggers the first “AI winter.”
1996–1997	IBM	Deep Blue defeats world chess champion Garry Kasparov.
2010	Fei-Fei Li	ImageNet launches, anchoring the “data at scale” paradigm.
Dec. 2015	OpenAI (Altman, Musk)	OpenAI incorporated as a nonprofit AI lab.
Oct. 2018	Google (Devlin et al.)	BERT published, building on the transformer architecture.
May 2020	OpenAI	GPT-3 (175B params) establishes empirical scaling laws.
2021	Anthropic (D. & D. Amodei)	Anthropic founded; Constitutional AI and Claude introduced.
Nov. 2022	OpenAI (Altman)	ChatGPT launches; fastest consumer-product adoption in history.
Nov. 2023	OpenAI board / Microsoft (Nadella)	Altman briefly ousted and reinstated within five days.
Jan. 2025	OpenAI, Oracle (Ellison), SoftBank	Stargate project announced: up to \$500B in U.S. AI data centers.
2025–2026	xAI (Musk)	Colossus (Memphis) scales to ~2GW; EPA closes turbine permit loophole.
Jan. 2025 / Apr. 2026	DeepSeek (Liang Wenfeng)	DeepSeek-R1 “Sputnik moment”; DeepSeek-V4 released (1T+ params).
Jan. 2026	Meta (Zuckerberg)	Meta Compute launched; tens-of-gigawatts buildout announced.
2025–2026	Amazon/AWS (Jassy)	30,000+ corporate layoffs tied to AI efficiency push.
May 2026	Alphabet/Google (Pichai)	Google I/O 2026: “agentic Gemini era,” Gemini hits 900M users.
2026	NVIDIA (Huang)	Huang declines Senate testimony on China chip exports.
2025–2026	Mistral AI (Mensch)	Le Chat renamed Vibe; Mistral builds sovereign EU data centers.
2024–2026	China (Xi Jinping)	“AI Plus” initiative folded into the 15th Five-Year Plan.
Dec. 2025	Australia (Albanese govt.)	National AI Plan released; AI Safety Institute funded.
Aug. 2024–Aug. 2026	European Union	AI Act enters into force; “Digital Omnibus” defers core deadlines.
Apr.–June 2026	U.S. local jurisdictions / voters	Monterey Park bans data centers by ballot; Box Elder, Festus, Spartanburg incumbents lose seats over data center votes.
June 14, 2026	Microsoft (Nadella)	Warns there is “no societal permission” for an AI future controlled by a few firms.

Part I: Conceptual Origins, 1936–1996

The field's intellectual foundation was laid in the 1930s, when the British mathematician Alan Turing developed the concept of a universal computing machine — a theoretical device capable of performing any computation that could be specified algorithmically. Turing's abstraction would become the conceptual bedrock of every digital computer, and by extension, of artificial intelligence itself.²¹

Artificial intelligence acquired its name and its first institutional home two decades later.



Photo of 1956 Dartmouth Attendees (Source: <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>)

The 1956 Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude Shannon, is conventionally treated as the field's official founding: it was at Dartmouth that the term “artificial intelligence” was first coined and adopted as the name for the new discipline. That same year, Allen Newell and Herbert Simon's Logic Theorist became the first true AI program, proving 38 of the 52 theorems in Whitehead and Russell's *Principia Mathematica*.²²

The following year, Frank Rosenblatt introduced the Perceptron, a single-layer neural network capable of simple learning and decision-making. Although limited, the Perceptron established the basic template — weighted inputs adjusted through training — that would eventually scale, decades later, into the deep neural networks underlying modern large language models.²³

The Four Founding Fathers

²¹From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

²²From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

²³From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

- **John McCarthy:** Coined the term "Artificial Intelligence," successfully framing the field's official founding narrative.
- **Marvin Minsky:** A pioneer who bridged cognitive science and neural networks, exploring how the "mind" could be simulated.
- **Nathaniel Rochester:** Designed the IBM 701, proving that the logical stream could scale on commercial physical hardware.
- **Claude Shannon:** Developed Information Theory, formalizing the measurement of data—the "fuel" for the logical engine.

From ELIZA to the Lighthill Report: Promise and Retrenchment

The 1960s and 1970s produced both dramatic early successes and a sobering reckoning. Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA (1965), built at MIT, used pattern-matching to simulate a Rogerian psychotherapist convincingly enough that some users formed emotional attachments to it — an early signal of how readily people would anthropomorphize conversational software. Allen Newell and Herbert Simon's General Problem Solver (1969) extended their search-and-heuristics approach into a general framework for problem-solving. But by 1973, Sir James Lighthill's report to the UK Science Research Council delivered a harsh verdict: the grand promises of the preceding decades had not been met, the “combinatorial explosion” made general-purpose AI impractical at the time, and the field's actual achievements — chess, theorem proving, narrow robotics — had limited practical value. The Lighthill Report is widely credited with triggering the first “AI winter,” a period of reduced funding and diminished expectations that would last into the 1980s.²⁴

The field's eventual recovery was driven substantially by a return to Rosenblatt's neural-network idea. The 1987 resurgence of the backpropagation algorithm allowed multilayer perceptrons to be trained efficiently for the first time, reviving interest in connectionist approaches after two decades in which symbolic, rule-based AI had dominated research funding. Reinforcement learning achieved its own breakthroughs in the early 1990s, with algorithms such as Q-learning and Tesauro's TD-Gammon demonstrating that machines could learn complex strategic behavior through trial and error rather than explicit programming.²⁵

The decade closed with a watershed public demonstration: in 1996 and 1997, IBM's Deep Blue defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov, the first time a computer had beaten a reigning world champion under tournament conditions. The match did more than showcase a narrow technical achievement; it reset public intuitions about what machines might eventually be

²⁴From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

²⁵From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

capable of, even though Deep Blue's brute-force search bore little resemblance to the learning-based systems that would dominate the following decades.²⁶

Part II: Data, Scale, and the Road to the Transformer, 2000–2018

The early 2000s marked a quiet but decisive shift from rule-based to statistical methods in natural language processing. Statistical NLP systems steadily outperformed their hand-coded predecessors on every measurable benchmark, a trend IBM exploited directly in building Watson, the system that would go on to defeat human champions on Jeopardy! in 2011 after years of development built on massive ensembles of statistical components.²⁷

Robotics achieved its own milestone in 2005, when Stanford University's autonomous vehicle “Stanley” won the DARPA Grand Challenge, demonstrating that AI-driven perception and control could navigate complex, unstructured real-world terrain — a foundational moment for what would become the autonomous-vehicle industry, including Waymo's later launch of a fully driverless commercial taxi service in Phoenix in October 2020.²⁸

Perhaps no single insight did more to enable the deep-learning revolution than Fei-Fei Li's recognition, beginning around 2007, that the central bottleneck in computer vision was not algorithmic sophistication but data: the absence of sufficiently large, labeled training sets. Li's ImageNet project, organized according to the WordNet hierarchy and built using Amazon Mechanical Turk to label roughly fourteen million images across twenty thousand categories, launched as the ImageNet Large Scale Visual Recognition Challenge in 2010. The annual competition that followed became the proving ground for the convolutional neural network architectures that would soon dominate computer vision, and it embedded “data at scale” as a governing assumption of the entire field.²⁹

Google DeepMind extended the reinforcement-learning paradigm dramatically between 2013 and 2016, training agents to play dozens of Atari 2600 games at superhuman levels using only raw pixel input — no hand-coded features, no game-specific rules — a result that suggested general-purpose learning algorithms might scale to far more complex domains than anyone had previously demonstrated.³⁰

It was against this backdrop of accelerating capability that, in December 2015, OpenAI was incorporated as a nonprofit research laboratory in Delaware, backed by an initial funding

²⁶From Turing to ChatGPT: Timeline covers some of the high points in AI's emergence. (2023). R&D World. <https://www.rdworldonline.com/from-turing-to-chatgpt-timeline-covers-some-of-the-high-points-in-ais-emergence/>

²⁷History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

²⁸History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

²⁹History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

³⁰History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

commitment of one billion dollars from a group that included Sam Altman and Elon Musk. The organization's founding charter set out an explicitly normative mission: ³¹

to “advance digital intelligence in the way that is most likely to benefit humanity as a whole, unconstrained by a need to generate financial return” — a founding aspiration whose tension with OpenAI's later transformation into a multi-hundred-billion-dollar commercial enterprise would become one of the defining controversies of the following decade.

Google researchers Jacob Devlin, Ming-Wei Chang, Kenton Lee, and Kristina Toutanova published BERT in October 2018, a bidirectional transformer model pre-trained on 3.3 billion words using masked-language-modeling and next-sentence-prediction objectives. BERT, together with the transformer architecture introduced the previous year, supplied the technical scaffolding on which nearly every subsequent large language model — including the GPT series, Gemini, Claude, and DeepSeek's models — would be built.³²

Part III: The Rise of the AI Corporations, 2018–2026

What follows is the heart of this essay: an account of how a handful of corporations — and the individuals who lead them — came to dominate the development, deployment, and physical infrastructure of artificial intelligence between roughly 2018 and 2026. Because this is the period in which the field's economic and political stakes became impossible to separate from its technical history, each profile below treats both the model lineage and the corporate-governance story together.

OpenAI — Sam Altman: GPT, ChatGPT, and the Ouster

OpenAI began publishing its Generative Pre-trained Transformer line in June 2018 with GPT-1, a 117-million-parameter model that demonstrated pre-training followed by task-specific fine-tuning could match purpose-built systems trained from scratch. GPT-2, released in February 2019 at 1.5 billion parameters, became notorious for OpenAI's decision to stage its release, withholding the largest version on the grounds that the model was “too dangerous,” a controversial choice that nonetheless established “responsible release” as a genuine point of debate in the field rather than mere public relations.³³

The turning point came with GPT-3 in May 2020: a 175-billion-parameter model trained on 499 billion tokens, representing the largest single jump in model scale in the field's history. What emerged was few-shot learning — the ability to perform novel tasks from a handful of examples in the prompt, with no retraining required. The accompanying paper, authored by Tom Brown and twenty-nine others, formalized the empirical “scaling laws” describing how performance

³¹History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

³²History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

³³History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

improved smoothly with model size, data, and compute — laws that would underwrite the industry's massive capital expenditures for the next half-decade.³⁴

On November 30, 2022, OpenAI released ChatGPT, a conversational interface fine-tuned from GPT-3.5 using Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback, a technique developed by Paul Christiano, John Leike, and others. ChatGPT reached one million users within five days and one hundred million within roughly two months — the fastest adoption of any consumer product in history, ahead of TikTok and Instagram. The ChatGPT moment restructured the entire industry virtually overnight: Microsoft committed ten billion dollars to OpenAI, Google declared an internal “code red,” and Amazon, Meta, Anthropic, and several other firms accelerated funding rounds and product launches.³⁵

OpenAI's internal governance crisis arrived on November 17, 2023, when its nonprofit board fired Sam Altman, concluding he had not been “consistently candid in his communications with the board.” Within three days Microsoft had offered to hire Altman to lead a new internal AI division, and nearly the entirety of OpenAI's staff threatened to follow him. The board reversed itself the following day, reinstating Altman and reconstituting its membership — an episode that exposed, more starkly than any prior event, the fragility of the nonprofit board's nominal control over a for-profit subsidiary in which Microsoft was by then the largest external shareholder.³⁶

By 2025 and 2026, OpenAI's center of gravity had shifted decisively toward physical infrastructure. Together with Oracle and SoftBank, OpenAI launched the Stargate project on January 21, 2025, an initially announced five-hundred-billion-dollar commitment to build roughly ten gigawatts of AI data center capacity across the United States and, eventually, the United Kingdom, Norway, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. Stargate's flagship Abilene, Texas, campus became operational in stages through 2025 and 2026, and the project added sites in Shackelford County and Milam County, Texas; Doña Ana County, New Mexico; Lordstown, Ohio; and several additional U.S. states, ultimately approaching seven gigawatts of planned capacity. Altman has since acknowledged publicly that the AI industry has “failed to articulate... how people stay in control” of the technology's trajectory, a candid admission that the industry's own leadership recognizes a growing legitimacy gap between corporate ambition and public consent.³⁷

Microsoft — Satya Nadella: Infrastructure, Copilot, and a Warning From Within

Microsoft's AI strategy under CEO Satya Nadella has rested on two pillars: an early and decisive partnership with OpenAI, dating to 2019 and dramatically deepened after the ChatGPT launch,

³⁴History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

³⁵History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

³⁶Reuters. (2023, November 17). OpenAI CEO Sam Altman to step down.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/openai-ceo-sam-altman-step-down-2023-11-17/> Stratechery. (2023, November 20). OpenAI's misalignment and Microsoft's gain. <https://stratechery.com/2023/openais-misalignment-and-microsofts-gain/>

³⁷Wikipedia. (2026). Stargate LLC. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stargate_LLC

and an aggressive build-out of physical infrastructure, with more than four hundred data centers across roughly seventy regions worldwide by late 2025, expanding toward five hundred centers across eighty regions by mid-2026. Microsoft opened its Fairwater data center, which Nadella has described as “the world's most powerful AI data centre,” and has pursued a “thinking in decades, executing in quarters” philosophy that has translated into capital expenditures of roughly thirty-seven billion dollars in a single quarter, with the majority directed toward GPUs, CPUs, and data center sites.³⁸

What distinguishes Nadella among the chief executives profiled in this essay is the directness of his public self-critique. In a June 14, 2026 essay and a subsequent Wall Street Journal interview, Nadella warned that the AI industry's current trajectory risks a crisis of democratic legitimacy:³⁹

“You can't say, hey, all white-collar jobs are gone, and this could even be a weapon, and we will use all the power to build data centres,” he said, adding that “if all the value is accrued by only a few models, the political economy will simply not tolerate it. There is no societal permission for an AI future that hollows out entire industries.”

The remarks arrived in the same week Microsoft signed a twenty-year agreement with Chevron to develop a 2.67-gigawatt hyperscale data center in Texas, code-named Kilby — underscoring the gap, which Nadella himself named, between an executive's rhetorical concern for “societal permission” and the underlying pace of physical build-out.⁴⁰

Meta — Mark Zuckerberg: Superintelligence Labs and the Compute Build-Out

Meta's pivot toward frontier AI accelerated sharply through 2025 and into 2026 under the banner of Meta Superintelligence Labs, a division led by Alexandr Wang, Daniel Gross, and Nat Friedman and built atop Meta's \$14.3 billion acquisition of Scale AI. Zuckerberg has framed the effort in terms of raw compute: Meta's Prometheus cluster, a one-gigawatt facility, was slated to come online in 2026, with the longer-term Hyperion project designed to scale to five gigawatts across multiple phases.⁴¹

In January 2026, Zuckerberg announced Meta Compute, a new top-level organization reporting directly to him and tasked with building “tens of gigawatts... this decade, and hundreds of gigawatts or more over time.” Notably, Zuckerberg named Dina Powell McCormick — a former U.S. deputy national security advisor — to a new role explicitly focused on partnering with governments “to build, deploy, invest in, and finance” Meta's infrastructure worldwide, a structural acknowledgment that AI infrastructure has become inseparable from state-level

³⁸Data Centre Magazine. (2025, October 29). How Microsoft's data centres power its AI strategy. <https://datacentremagazine.com/news/microsofts-new-growth-era-inside-satya-nadellas-ai-vision> Computing.co.uk. (2026, June). Microsoft's Nadella warns against concentration of AI power.

<https://www.computing.co.uk/news/2026/ai/microsoft-s-nadella-warns-against-concentration-of-ai-power>

³⁹Remy, H. (2026, June 24). Microsoft's CEO sends the AI industry a strong warning. TheStreet.

<https://www.thestreet.com/technology/microsofts-ceo-sends-the-ai-industry-a-strong-warning>

⁴⁰Computing.co.uk. (2026, June). Microsoft's Nadella warns against concentration of AI power.

<https://www.computing.co.uk/news/2026/ai/microsoft-s-nadella-warns-against-concentration-of-ai-power>

⁴¹Data Centre Magazine. (2025, July 15). Mark Zuckerberg reveals major Meta AI supercluster push.

<https://datacentremagazine.com/news/mark-zuckerberg-reveals-100bn-meta-ai-supercluster-push>

political negotiation. Meta's capital expenditure guidance for 2026 reached as high as \$135 billion, nearly double the prior year's \$72 billion.⁴²

Amazon/AWS — Andy Jassy: Efficiency, Layoffs, and a Cautious Bubble Warning

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy has pursued a more visibly labor-displacing AI narrative than most of his peers. A June 2025 internal memo stated plainly that AI efficiency gains would “reduce our total corporate workforce,” and subsequent reporting indicated an internal goal of automating roughly seventy-five percent of certain workflows. Layoffs proceeded in successive waves — fourteen thousand jobs cut in October 2025 and sixteen thousand more in early 2026 — bringing the total since Jassy's AI-efficiency push past thirty thousand positions, even as Amazon publicly downplayed the extent to which the cuts were AI-driven, attributing them instead to “culture.”⁴³

Jassy has nonetheless struck a notably more skeptical public tone than some industry peers regarding the pace of AI infrastructure spending, remarking in January 2026 that he sometimes has “a harder time making sense” of the scale of competitors' compute commitments, while acknowledging “there is a power shortage” constraining the entire sector's growth. He has separately called the idea of replacing junior employees wholesale with AI “one of the dumbest ideas” he has heard, warning that such a strategy would eventually “explode on itself” by eliminating the pipeline of future senior talent.⁴⁴

Alphabet/Google — Sundar Pichai: Gemini, Search, and the Infrastructure Moat

Sundar Pichai, CEO of both Google and its parent company Alphabet, has pursued a distinctive strategy built on distribution rather than infrastructure alone: pairing the Gemini model family with Google's billion-user Search platform and the broader Android and Workspace ecosystem. At Google I/O 2026, Pichai declared the company was “firmly in our agentic Gemini era,” unveiling Gemini 3.5 Flash, Gemini Omni, and Gemini Spark while reporting that the Gemini app's daily request volume had grown sevenfold year-over-year and that Search's AI Mode had surpassed one billion monthly active users within a year of launch.⁴⁵

⁴²TechCrunch. (2026, January 12). Mark Zuckerberg says Meta is launching its own AI infrastructure initiative. <https://techcrunch.com/2026/01/12/mark-zuckerberg-says-meta-is-launching-its-own-ai-infrastructure-initiative/>

Fortune. (2026, January 24). Why Mark Zuckerberg is positioning Meta as an AI infrastructure giant. <https://fortune.com/2026/01/24/meta-compute-zuckerberg-ai-infrastructure-giant-data-center/>

⁴³ABC News. (2026, February 2). Did artificial intelligence really drive layoffs at Amazon and other firms? It can be hard to tell. <https://abcnews.com/Technology/wireStory/artificial-intelligence-drive-layoffs-amazon-firms-hard-129773737> SHRM. (2025, June 23). AI will shrink corporate workforce, Amazon CEO warns.

<https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/technology/ai-will-shrink-corporate-workforce--amazon-ceo-warns>

⁴⁴The Register. (2026, January 20). Amazon CEO Andy Jassy goes wobbly on AI bubble possibility.

https://www.theregister.com/2026/01/20/amazon_ceo_andy_jassy_ai_bubble/ Fortune. (2026, June). AWS CEO says replacing young employees with AI is 'one of the dumbest ideas.' <https://fortune.com/article/why-does-aws-ceo-say-replacing-young-employees-with-ai-is-one-of-the-dumbest-ideas-and-bad-for-business/>

⁴⁵Pichai, S. (2026, May 22). Google I/O 2026: Sundar Pichai's opening keynote. Google Blog.

<https://blog.google/innovation-and-ai/sundar-pichai-io-2026/> StartupHub.ai. (2026, June 1). Sundar Pichai at Google

Pichai has acknowledged that ChatGPT's late-2022 debut produced an “uncomfortably exciting” shock inside Google, whose own research labs had originated much of the underlying transformer technology years earlier. Alphabet's subsequent infrastructure response has been substantial if less publicly dramatized than Meta's or OpenAI's: a \$1.5 billion expansion of its Jackson County, Alabama data center campus, Google Cloud revenue growth of sixty-three percent year-over-year in the first quarter of 2026, and direct API token throughput exceeding sixteen billion tokens per minute.⁴⁶

Oracle — Larry Ellison: Stargate, Sovereignty, and Political Proximity

No single relationship better illustrates the entanglement of AI infrastructure with national politics than that between Oracle's Larry Ellison and the Stargate project. At eighty years old, and forty-eight years after founding Oracle, Ellison stood beside President Trump, Sam Altman, and SoftBank's Masayoshi Son at the January 2025 White House announcement of the project, after which Oracle agreed to develop the flagship Abilene, Texas campus — ultimately slated to house more than 450,000 NVIDIA GB200 GPUs across roughly 1.2 gigawatts of power, enough, Ellison has said, for one million four-bedroom American homes.⁴⁷

Oracle's resulting financial transformation has been extraordinary: capital expenditures rose from \$6.9 billion in fiscal 2024 to more than \$35 billion projected for fiscal 2026, and remaining performance obligations — a measure of contracted future revenue — reached \$455 billion, an increase of 359 percent year over year, propelling Ellison's net worth briefly past \$380 billion. Reporting in mid-2026 also disclosed that Ellison had directed approximately \$45 million to a pro-Trump nonprofit not subject to standard disclosure requirements, a contribution that coincided with Oracle's designation as a Stargate anchor partner and its subsequent role, alongside other investors, in the federally cleared restructuring of TikTok's U.S. operations — a degree of proximity between a single AI infrastructure executive and the federal government that has drawn renewed scrutiny of how political access intersects with the allocation of public resources such as land, power, and water for data centers.⁴⁸

Anthropic — Dario Amodei: Constitutional AI and the Claude Family

Anthropic was founded in 2021 by Dario Amodei, Daniela Amodei, and several former OpenAI researchers, releasing the Claude model family with a distinguishing methodological commitment: Constitutional AI, a training approach using a written set of principles, rather than human-rater preferences alone, to guide model behavior toward what the company has described

I/O 2026: Gemini hits 900M users. <https://www.startuphub.ai/ai-news/ai-figures/2026/figure-sundar-pichai-google-io-2026-keynote-recap-2026-06-01>

⁴⁶Fast Company. (2026, March 23). Sundar Pichai's plan to make Google Gemini the only AI that matters. <https://www.fastcompany.com/91502632/google-most-innovative-companies-2026> Pichai, S. (2026, May 22). Google I/O 2026: Sundar Pichai's opening keynote. Google Blog. <https://blog.google/innovation-and-ai/sundar-pichai-io-2026/>

⁴⁷Data Center Dynamics. (2026, May 7). OpenAI and Oracle to deploy 450,000 GB200 GPUs at Stargate data center in Abilene, Texas. <https://www.datacenterdynamics.com/en/news/openai-and-oracle-to-deploy-450000-gb200-gpus-at-stargate-abilene-data-center/> Wikipedia. (2026). Stargate LLC. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stargate_LL

⁴⁸Fortune. (2026, June 25). Larry Ellison quietly gave \$45 million to a pro-Trump group—then Oracle landed a starring role in a \$500 billion AI buildout. <https://fortune.com/2026/06/25/larry-ellison-donald-trump-45-million-donation-stargate-tiktok-paramount/>

as more consistent and interpretable alignment. Claude 2, released in 2023, featured a context window roughly ten times the size of GPT-4's at the time of its launch.⁴⁹

By mid-2026 Anthropic had become one of the fastest-growing companies in the sector's history, with revenue expected to reach \$10.9 billion in the second quarter of 2026 alone, and had entered substantial infrastructure arrangements of its own, including an agreement in May 2026 to rent the entire compute capacity of xAI's Colossus 1 data center in Memphis. Anthropic's public posture has differed from several peers in placing comparatively heavy public emphasis on AI safety research and on the risks of rapid, large-scale labor displacement — Amodio has separately projected that AI could eliminate as much as half of entry-level white-collar work within five years — a forecast that Mistral's Arthur Mensch, among others, has publicly disputed as overstated.⁵⁰

xAI / Tesla / SpaceX — Elon Musk: Colossus and the Limits of Local Consent

Elon Musk's xAI pursued perhaps the most rapid and least conventionally permitted infrastructure build-out among the firms profiled here. The Colossus supercomputer in Memphis, Tennessee, conceived and brought to initial operation within nineteen days in 2024, expanded by January 2026 to a third building — nicknamed “MACROHARDRR” — bringing total planned capacity to nearly two gigawatts and 555,000 NVIDIA GPUs, at a cost of roughly eighteen billion dollars, making it the single largest AI training site in the world. Following SpaceX's all-stock acquisition of xAI on February 2, 2026, Colossus's compute has also been folded directly into Tesla's Full Self-Driving and Optimus robotics programs.⁵¹

Colossus's speed came at the cost of conventional environmental review: xAI initially classified its on-site gas turbines as “non-road engines” to avoid Clean Air Act permitting, a designation later closed by a January 2026 EPA rule change after reporting found the facility operating dozens of unpermitted turbines in a majority-Black, low-income section of Memphis already burdened with elevated rates of respiratory illness. Tennessee state Representative Justin J. Pearson and the Southern Environmental Law Center, representing the NAACP, documented emissions sufficient to raise local smog levels by an estimated thirty to sixty percent — an episode now widely cited in the broader national debate over whether AI infrastructure is being sited and approved through processes that meaningfully include the residents who bear its costs.⁵²

⁴⁹History of artificial intelligence: 1950–2026. (2026). ExplainX. <https://explainx.ai/blog/history-of-artificial-intelligence-1950-2026>

⁵⁰Wikipedia. (2026). Colossus (supercomputer). In Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_\(supercomputer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_(supercomputer)) CNBC. (2026, May 28). Mistral to explore designing own chips, CEO Arthur Mensch says. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/05/28/mistral-arthur-mensch-design-chips-ai-data-centers.html>

⁵¹Introl. (2026, January 3). xAI Colossus hits 2 GW: 555,000 GPUs, \$18B, largest AI site. <https://introl.com/blog/xai-colossus-2-gigawatt-expansion-555k-gpus-january-2026> Wikipedia. (2026). Colossus (supercomputer). In Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_\(supercomputer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_(supercomputer))

⁵²CNBC. (2026, January 16). Elon Musk's xAI faces tougher road building out data centers after EPA rule update. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/01/16/musks-xai-faces-tougher-road-expanding-memphis-area-after-epa-update.html>

NVIDIA — Jensen Huang: The Chokepoint Between Two Governments

As the supplier of the GPUs underlying nearly every major model discussed in this essay, NVIDIA under Jensen Huang occupies a structurally unique position: every other company's AI ambitions run, in practice, through NVIDIA's chips, and through Huang's navigation of an increasingly adversarial U.S.–China export-control regime. Huang has shifted position repeatedly as policy has swung — from criticizing the original 2022 Biden-era export ban, to securing a 2025 policy reversal permitting limited chip sales to China subject to a fifteen-percent federal fee, to declaring in May 2026 that NVIDIA's server sales in China had “dropped to zero” and that the company had “largely conceded” the Chinese market to the domestic competitor Huawei.⁵³

Huang's declining to testify before the Senate Banking Committee on June 8, 2026, after Senator Elizabeth Warren's invitation to address NVIDIA's China sales and export-control posture, drew sharp criticism even as Huang continued to meet privately with both the Trump White House and, weeks earlier, with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a state visit to Beijing — a pattern of access to both governments simultaneously that critics, including Warren, have argued sits uneasily with normal expectations of democratic accountability for a company whose products now function as strategic national assets.⁵⁴

DeepSeek — Liang Wenfeng: Open Weights and the Cost Shock

DeepSeek's founder, Liang Wenfeng, a former quantitative hedge-fund manager who founded High-Flyer Capital before launching DeepSeek in 2023, triggered what observers have called a “Sputnik moment” for the U.S. AI industry with the January 2025 release of DeepSeek-R1, an open-weight reasoning model reportedly trained for a small fraction of the cost of comparable Western systems, wiping roughly \$600 billion from NVIDIA's market capitalization in a single trading day.⁵⁵

Liang has continued to publish foundational research under his own name — including a January 2026 paper on “Manifold-Constrained Hyper-Connections” co-authored with a team of DeepSeek researchers — ahead of the April 2026 release of DeepSeek-V4, a model exceeding one trillion parameters and offered at a small fraction of the per-token price of its Western competitors. DeepSeek took its first outside investment in 2026, led by China's state-backed semiconductor investment fund, reaching a valuation estimated between \$45 billion and \$59 billion while still operating with a few hundred employees — a scale of capital and labor efficiency without close parallel among the other firms profiled here. DeepSeek's aggressive

⁵³Stocktwits. (2026, May 4). NVDA stock gains in premarket: CEO Jensen Huang says China chip export ban 'largely backfired.' <https://stocktwits.com/news-articles/markets/equity/nvda-stock-gains-in-premarket-ceo-jensen-huang-says-china-chip-export-ban-largely-backfired/cZQMmoQR7M> StartupHub.ai. (2026, June 11). Jensen Huang declines Senate hearing as Nvidia counts its \$50B China gap. <https://www.startuphub.ai/ai-news/ai-figures/2026/figure-jensen-huang-public-position-evolution-2026-06-11>

⁵⁴CNBC. (2026, June 4). Warren invites Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang to Senate hearing on China AI chip sales. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/06/04/nvidia-ceo-jensen-huang-warren-senate-hearing-china-ai-chips.html> CNBC. (2026, June 8). Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang declines Senate testimony on AI, China and exports. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/06/08/nvidia-jensen-huang-senate-elizabeth-warren-ai-china-export-controls.html>

⁵⁵Wikipedia. (2026). DeepSeek. In Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DeepSeek>

open-weight, low-price strategy has also made it a focal point of China's broader effort, discussed further below, to reduce dependence on U.S.-controlled AI infrastructure.⁵⁶

Mistral / Le Chat (now Vibe) — Arthur Mensch: Europe's Sovereignty Bet

Arthur Mensch co-founded Mistral AI in Paris in 2023 alongside Guillaume Lample and Timothée Lacroix, positioning the company explicitly as “Europe's answer” to OpenAI and Anthropic. Mistral's early models, including Mistral 7B and the sparse mixture-of-experts Mixtral 8x7B, demonstrated that architectural efficiency could substitute for raw scale, and by 2026 the company had renamed its consumer assistant Le Chat to Vibe, secured a \$14 billion valuation, and begun constructing its own inference data centers in France and Sweden.⁵⁷

Mensch has framed Mistral's mission in explicitly political-economic terms, telling CNBC in May 2026 that “Europe is lagging behind when it comes to the buildout of infrastructure, and so we are investing to close that gap,” and warning that AI compute represents “a macroeconomic problem” for the continent comparable to its historical dependence on imported energy. He has testified repeatedly before French legislative bodies — the Senate in 2024 and the National Assembly's commission of inquiry on digital vulnerabilities in May 2026 — arguing that AI regulation should target applications rather than base models, and has been a consistent public critic of what he regards as overstated job-loss forecasts from rivals such as Anthropic's Dario Amodei, while warning instead of a subtler “deskilling” risk from uncritical overreliance on AI tools.⁵⁸

China's National AI Strategy — Xi Jinping: “AI Plus” and the 15th Five-Year Plan

Unlike the other entries in this section, China's AI ambitions are pursued not by a single company but through a coordinated, state-directed strategy under President Xi Jinping, formalized in the “AI Plus” initiative first introduced by Premier Li Qiang in March 2024 and substantially expanded through 2025 and 2026. The State Council's AI Plus directive frames AI-driven economic transformation in sweeping terms, declaring that it will “reshape the paradigm of human production and life... and accelerate the formation of a new intelligent economy.” Xi has tied the initiative to a broader strategic concept of “New Quality Productive Forces,” explicitly identified as a central pillar of China's 15th Five-Year Plan covering 2026 through 2030.⁵⁹

⁵⁶South China Morning Post. (2026, January 1). DeepSeek kicks off 2026 with paper signalling push to train bigger models for less. <https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3338427/deepseek-kicks-2026-paper-signalling-push-train-bigger-models-less> The AI Rankings. (2026). DeepSeek in 2026: V4, open weights, pricing, funding, and strategy. <https://theairankings.com/deepseek/>

⁵⁷Wikipedia. (2026). Arthur Mensch. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Mensch Futurum Group. (2026, May). Mistral AI shifts to full-stack strategy with Vibe and industrial AI. <https://futurumgroup.com/insights/mistral-ai-shifts-to-full-stack-strategy-with-vibe-and-industrial-ai/>

⁵⁸CNBC. (2026, May 28). Mistral to explore designing own chips, CEO Arthur Mensch says. <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/05/28/mistral-arthur-mensch-design-chips-ai-data-centers.html>

⁵⁹Trivium China. (2026). The AI Plus initiative – China's blueprint for AI diffusion. <https://triviumchina.com/research/the-ai-plus-initiative-chinas-blueprint-for-ai-diffusion/> Qiushi Journal. (2025, November 24). China moves forward with its “AI Plus” initiative. https://en.qstheory.cn/2025-11/24/c_1142810.htm

China's 15th Five-Year Plan backs this ambition with a one-trillion-renminbi state venture fund directed at AI, robotics, and related technologies, alongside a notable labor-protection signal: a 2025 Chinese court ruling, subsequently published as a model case by the Beijing Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, held that AI-driven efficiency gains alone do not constitute valid legal grounds for dismissing a worker — a vivid illustration of how, even within a one-party state lacking competitive elections, the question of how to balance AI-driven productivity against worker protection has become an object of formal governance rather than something left entirely to market or corporate discretion.⁶⁰

Australia's National AI Plan — A Middle Path Between Innovation and Safeguards

Australia's National AI Plan, released by the Albanese Labor Government on December 2, 2025, represents one of the more deliberately participatory national AI strategies surveyed here, organized around three explicit objectives: capturing the economic opportunity through infrastructure and investment; spreading the benefits broadly across regions, industries, and — by explicit textual commitment — First Nations peoples, women, people with disability, and regional communities; and keeping Australians safe through a newly funded AI Safety Institute, backed by nearly thirty million Australian dollars.⁶¹

Industry Minister Tim Ayres has stated the plan's intent directly: “The National AI Plan is about making sure technology serves Australians, not the other way around,” and the plan explicitly commits to involving “workers and unions... early in decisions about AI use” and to developing national data-centre principles addressing the sustainability, electricity, and water demands of AI infrastructure — a more proactive acknowledgment of data centers' local impact than is found in the comparable U.S. federal posture. Independent legal analysis has nonetheless criticized the plan as “light on details,” noting it sets no measurable benchmarks for its own three objectives and defers the harder regulatory questions — around land-use approval, environmental review, and foreign-investment screening for data center development — to subsequent, as-yet-unwritten policy.⁶²

⁶⁰Gruzer, M. (2026, June 23). Evaluating China's AI ambitions under the 15th Five Year Plan. Bloomsbury Intelligence and Security Institute. <https://bisi.org.uk/reports/evaluating-chinas-ai-ambitions-under-the-15th-five-year-plan>

⁶¹Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources. (2026). National AI Plan. <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/national-ai-plan> Ayres, T., & Charlton, A. (2025, December 2). National AI Plan: Empowering all Australians [Press release]. Ministers for the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. <https://www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/timayres/media-releases/national-ai-plan-empowering-all-australians>

⁶²Ayres, T., & Charlton, A. (2025, December 2). National AI Plan: Empowering all Australians [Press release]. Ministers for the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. <https://www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/timayres/media-releases/national-ai-plan-empowering-all-australians> White & Case LLP. (2025, December 8). Australia's National AI Plan: Big ambitions, but light on details. <https://www.whitecase.com/insight-alert/australias-national-ai-plan-big-ambitions-light-details>

Part IV: Democratic Participation in Governing AI and Its Data Centers

If the preceding profiles describe a period of extraordinary corporate and state concentration of AI capability, this section describes the countervailing — and so far far more modest — efforts by citizens, localities, and multilateral bodies to assert some democratic check on how that capability is sited, financed, and deployed. The evidence as of mid-2026 suggests these efforts are most visible not at the national level, where legislative action has lagged, but at the local and supranational levels, where citizens and regional blocs have more direct levers available to them.

Local Ballot Measures and Moratoria in the United States

In the absence of federal guidance — the Trump administration has explicitly declined to set nationwide recommendations or requirements for data center siting — American local governments have become the primary arena of contested AI governance. By early 2026, at least seventy-five data center projects worth roughly \$130 billion had been stalled or blocked nationwide in just the first three months of the year. A March 2026 Gallup poll found that seven in ten Americans opposed data center construction in their own local area, a remarkably high and ideologically uniform figure: opposition has proven genuinely bipartisan, uniting rural Trump-supporting counties in Utah with progressive California suburbs around shared grievances of rising electricity bills, water scarcity, noise, land use, and distrust that promised tax revenue and jobs will materialize.⁶³

Concrete electoral consequences followed. In Box Elder County, Utah — a county Trump carried by nearly eighty percent in 2024 — voters ousted Republican State Senate President Stuart Adams in a June 2026 primary after he had chaired the authority that fast-tracked the “Stratos Project,” a hyperscale data center projected to consume more electricity than the entire state of Utah currently uses. Local organizer Brenna Williams, who helped lead the Box Elder Accountability Referendum, commissioned independent polling finding more than seventy percent county-wide opposition to the project. Comparable upsets followed in Festus, Missouri, where voters removed City Council members who had approved a data center over resident objections, and in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, where public criticism over tax breaks led the County Council to advance a twelve-month moratorium just before two incumbents lost their own primary races.⁶⁴

The most legally durable instance of direct democratic action came in Monterey Park, California, where 86 percent of voters approved Measure NDC in mid-2026, permanently banning data center construction within city limits — a ban that, because it was enacted by ballot initiative rather than ordinary council vote, can only be overturned by a subsequent public vote, making it functionally the most entrenched data-center prohibition in the country. Similar measures and moratoria have spread across Ohio, Wisconsin, Maryland, Nevada, and across multiple Los

⁶³Grist. (2026, February 27). America's data center backlash is bipartisan — can it stay that way? <https://grist.org/politics/data-center-ai-bipartisan-backlash/> Christian Science Monitor. (2026, June 24). Voters show opposition to AI data centers in local primaries. <https://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2026/0624/data-center-elections-republicans>

⁶⁴Christian Science Monitor. (2026, June 24). Voters show opposition to AI data centers in local primaries. <https://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2026/0624/data-center-elections-republicans>

Angeles-area cities including Montebello, El Monte, Baldwin Park, and Alhambra, while in Michigan the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority used its control over water and sewer permitting — rather than zoning authority — to impose a year-long halt on new data center hookups, directly affecting a University of Michigan and Los Alamos National Laboratory joint data center project.⁶⁵

Supranational and National Regulatory Efforts: The EU AI Act and China's Labor Rulings

At the supranational level, the European Union's AI Act, which entered into force in August 2024, remains the world's most comprehensive attempt to subject AI systems to binding, risk-tiered legal obligations enforced through a hybrid governance structure combining a centralized AI Office with decentralized national market-surveillance authorities, an AI Board, and an independent Scientific Panel. Critically, the Act explicitly designates AI systems used in “the administration of justice and democratic processes” as inherently high-risk, subject to the law's strictest obligations — a direct legislative acknowledgment that AI's threat to democratic institutions, and not merely to individual safety, was a central drafting concern.⁶⁶

Implementation has nonetheless slipped under industry and political pressure: a “Digital Omnibus” simplification package, politically agreed on May 7, 2026, deferred the core high-risk obligations originally due in August 2026 to December 2027, and pushed obligations for AI embedded in regulated physical products to August 2028. Civil-society critics, including the Centre for Democracy and Technology Europe, have warned that because the Act remains non-retroactive, this delay risks permanently exempting from oversight any high-risk systems that reach the market before the new deadlines take effect — illustrating that even the world's most developed AI statute remains subject to ongoing contestation between regulatory ambition and industry lobbying.⁶⁷

China offers a structurally different but instructive parallel: lacking competitive elections or an independent judiciary in the Western sense, the People's Republic has nonetheless used administrative and judicial mechanisms — such as the 2025 Beijing labor ruling discussed above, holding that AI efficiency gains alone cannot justify dismissing workers — to assert a measure of top-down protection against AI-driven labor displacement, even as the state simultaneously promotes the AI Plus initiative's aggressive diffusion targets. This suggests that the tension between AI's productivity promise and its disruptive social costs is being negotiated,

⁶⁵MultiState. (2026, May 7). State data center moratorium and ballot measure trends 2026.

<https://www.multistate.us/insider/2026/5/7/voters-target-data-centers-with-local-and-statewide-ballot-measures>
Mural, R. (2026, June). How local communities are challenging Big Tech data centers' noise, pollution and rising electricity bills. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/how-local-communities-are-challenging-big-tech-data-centers-noise-pollution-and-rising-electricity-bills-284642>
Governing. (2026, June). Voters deliver a first-of-its-kind rejection of data centers. <https://www.governing.com/infrastructure/voters-deliver-a-first-of-its-kind-rejection-of-data-centers>

⁶⁶European Commission. (2026). AI Act — Shaping Europe's digital future. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>
Pearl Cohen. (2025, December 31). New guidance under the EU AI Act ahead of its next enforcement date. <https://www.pearlcohen.com/new-guidance-under-the-eu-ai-act-ahead-of-its-next-enforcement-date/>

⁶⁷Soares, J. (2026, April 2). EU's AI Act delays let high-risk systems dodge oversight. *Tech Policy Press*. <https://www.techpolicy.press/eus-ai-act-delays-let-highrisk-systems-dodge-oversight/>

in some form, in every major political system surveyed in this essay, whatever the institutional channel available for doing so.⁶⁸

Synthesis: An Uneven and Largely Reactive Governance Landscape

Taken together, the picture that emerges by mid-2026 is one of democratic governance running consistently behind the pace of corporate and state AI deployment, rather than ahead of it. The most effective checks so far have been local and reactive — a ballot measure after a project is announced, a primary challenge after a commissioner approves a permit, a water-authority moratorium invoked because no zoning tool was available — rather than anticipatory frameworks built before construction begins. Even Australia's National AI Plan and the European Union's AI Act, the two most deliberately participatory efforts surveyed here, have been criticized respectively for lacking measurable benchmarks and for deferring their own toughest obligations under industry pressure. Microsoft's Satya Nadella may have put the underlying problem most plainly when he warned that there is “no societal permission” for an AI future shaped by only a handful of models and the handful of executives who control them — a warning that, as the evidence above shows, citizens in Box Elder County, Monterey Park, and dozens of other jurisdictions worldwide are already attempting, however unevenly, to act upon.

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⁶⁸Gruzer, M. (2026, June 23). Evaluating China's AI ambitions under the 15th Five Year Plan. Bloomsbury Intelligence and Security Institute. <https://bisi.org.uk/reports/evaluating-chinas-ai-ambitions-under-the-15th-five-year-plan>

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Note. This essay was compiled from contemporaneous news reporting, government and corporate publications, and the Wikipedia timeline article cited above, current as of late June 2026. Because the AI industry, corporate leadership, and the regulatory landscape described here are changing rapidly, some figures (e.g., capital expenditure projections, valuations, data center capacity) should be understood as reported estimates at the time of writing rather than fixed facts.

Chapter Three: The Prism and the Rooms, Nobody Shows You

How to Read the Cases That Follow

There is a story being told about artificial intelligence, and it is told in every room of the Tamaraland mansion simultaneously, in different language for different audiences, by different actors who never share a hallway. In the investor room the story is about returns, infrastructure supercycles, and what BlackRock (2026) calls a once-in-a-generation industrial buildout — \$3 to \$4 trillion in projected capital by end of decade. In the corporate boardroom it is about competitive positioning and the existential necessity of not being left behind. In the government hearing room it is about national security, technological sovereignty, and the race against China. In the university faculty meeting it is about academic integrity policies and whether to ban tools students are already using everywhere except in the building where the meeting is being held. In the community meeting room in Richland Parish, Louisiana, it is about why the water sometimes runs brown and who to call when it does.

These rooms are not connected by hallways. That is not an accident of architecture. It is the architecture's purpose.

This chapter is an attempt to stand in the space between the rooms and name what passes through the walls — material the rooms themselves do not discuss. It is written with the awareness that naming certain things carries risks that are not evenly distributed. A resident of Richland Parish who names what is happening to the water bears one kind of risk. A professor at a public university who writes about data center buildouts and community resistance bears a different kind — more diffuse, but not negligible. As David has said plainly: to write anything construed as anti-data-center in the United States today is to invite a certain kind of attention. That sentence is left in because the method this book uses — Conversational Storytelling Inquiry, built on Bakhtin's moral answerability, Freire's conscientização, and Peirce's fallibilism — requires that every voice name its own position before naming anything else. This voice is named here: a Professor Emeritus at a public university, writing under that institution's academic freedom protections, aware that those protections have limits, proceeding anyway.

I. The Invisible Rollout

Artificial intelligence is not arriving. It arrived. It arrived in the supply chain reordering system that determines whether the item you want is in stock before you drive to the store. It arrived in the human resources screening software that eliminated your résumé before a human being read it. It arrived in the fraud detection system that flagged your credit card purchase as anomalous when you bought something in a city you had never visited. It arrived in the content moderation queue that removed your post before you knew it had been reviewed. It arrived in the pricing algorithm that charged you more for the flight because you searched for it twice. In most

of these cases you were not told. There was no announcement, no disclosure, no moment at which the interface said: a machine made this decision about you.

This is the structural condition the Introduction's survey data documents at the level of public sentiment: people use AI tools at historically unprecedented rates while simultaneously reporting declining trust in the institutions deploying them. The apparent paradox resolves when you understand that most AI deployment is not experienced as AI deployment. It is experienced as a slightly different interface, a slightly longer wait, a slightly less personal interaction, a locked case where an open shelf used to be. The distrust is not of the tool people chose to use. It is of the architecture they did not choose and were not asked about.

The Luddites have been misremembered. The historical Luddites of 1811 to 1816 were not opponents of machinery as such. They were skilled textile workers who understood exactly what the new machinery did and objected specifically to its deployment under conditions that destroyed their livelihoods, their communities, and their craft knowledge without their consent and without compensation. They were not afraid of the technology. They were refusing the terms of its introduction. When university faculty vote to ban AI in their classrooms, when communities in Virginia and Oklahoma and North Carolina pass legislation requiring data centers to cover their own infrastructure costs rather than passing them to residential ratepayers, when more than seventy data center projects were rejected or restricted by local governments in the first four months of 2026 alone — more than in all of 2025 combined (Westside Construction Group, 2026) — these are not Luddite reactions in the misremembered sense. They are the authentic Luddite response: not fear of the technology, but refusal of the terms.

II. The Enterprise Layer Nobody Talks About

Between the AI corporation and the ordinary person's encounter with AI sits a layer that this book's thirteen cases do not fully examine and that almost no public discourse names directly: the enterprise technology company that selects, installs, configures, and manages the AI systems deployed in hospitals, universities, grocery chains, big box stores, fast food restaurants, hotels, government agencies, and financial institutions. Accenture, IBM, Deloitte, Infosys, Cognizant, SAP, Microsoft, Salesforce — these firms are not AI companies in the sense the cases document. They do not build models. They do not make headlines by releasing GPT-5 or Claude or Gemini. They sit between the model and the moment: choosing which AI does which task, installing the guardrails that determine what the AI will and will not do in a given context, designing the surveillance architecture that watches the worker who watches the customer who watches the screen.

When you press the button at Walmart and wait fifteen minutes for the worker to arrive with the key, the decision that structured that interaction was not made by Walmart's executive team and not made by any AI corporation. It was made by an enterprise technology contract that specified which functions would be automated, which retained, and which monitoring systems would verify compliance. That contract is not public. Its terms were not presented to the community whose workers it affected. The fifteen minutes you wait is the downstream event of a procurement decision made in a room you were never in and were never invited to enter.

The chapter that follows this one — Chapter Zero — demonstrated this through a specific, dated story: a neighbor's daughter who works for one of these enterprise ERP companies, whose team was convened to make a strategic decision about which AIs to select and install for a major retail client. Half the team sent AI notetakers in their place. The decision about which AI systems to deploy in human workplaces was being made in a meeting where half the human participants had sent AIs to represent them. She described it as a slippery slope. The phrase deserves Bakhtin's once-occurrent eventness applied to it: not a metaphor, but a specific located event in which something was lost that no transcript can recover.

The enterprise layer is the room between rooms in the Tamaraland this book is mapping. It is not one of the thirteen cases. It is the architecture through which all thirteen cases reach the places and people whose lives they are reshaping. Accenture and Deloitte appear by name in Chapter One of this book, but only as examples of consulting firms whose business model trains recruits toward shareholder-value maximization before they ever reach a client. They reappear here as the actual mechanism through which AI reaches Walmart, Albertsons, Sprouts, Lowe's, Taco Bell — and through which the consequences of that reach are structured, governed, and almost never publicly disclosed.

III. The Scale of What Is Being Built

A comparison to the Industrial Revolution is tempting but requires precision before it carries argumentative weight. The claim that this AI buildout is ten times the Industrial Revolution in scale is not directly confirmed by available evidence. What is confirmed is this: U.S. data center construction spending hit \$49.5 billion through the first four months of 2026 alone — nearly four times the year-ago pace — with full-year spending forecast to approach \$700 billion, an 81 percent jump over 2025 (Westside Construction Group, 2026). The hyperscalers are planning to spend nearly \$700 billion on data center projects in 2026 alone. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has estimated \$3 to \$4 trillion will be spent on AI infrastructure by end of decade (Technerdo, 2026). BlackRock (2026) estimates 148 additional gigawatts of power capacity will be needed by end of decade — multiples above the 42 gigawatts data centers consumed in 2025.

Multiple financial institutions call this a once-in-a-generation industrial buildout. The International Energy Agency (2025) compares it to electricity emerging as a general-purpose technology in the early twentieth century — the last time infrastructure investment reorganized this much of the physical world in this short a time. Whether that comparison maps onto the Industrial Revolution's human costs at a factor of ten is less important than the structural parallel it names: then as now, the costs fell locally while the benefits accrued globally, and the people bearing the costs had the least institutional power to refuse them.

In the first four months of 2026, a poll found that 71 percent of Americans would oppose a data center near their home (Westside Construction Group, 2026). The communities bearing the burden of this buildout — Richland Parish in Louisiana, South Memphis in Tennessee, Montgomery County in Missouri, the Mesilla Bolson aquifer system in Doña Ana County in New Mexico — did not appear in any investor presentation. They appear in this book's cases because the method demands it: the clover field's hidden costs are not hidden from the people living inside them. They are hidden from the rooms where the contracts are signed.

IV. The Money in the Rooms

Citizens United arrived in 2010 and the political landscape reorganized around it. The AI lobby arrived more quietly and has been reorganizing the political landscape for a shorter time, but with comparable concentration of resource and effect. The specific mechanisms are documented in several of this book's cases rather than repeated here. What connects them is a pattern: an unreported donation, a policy announcement the day after an inauguration, a senator who sold the land beside the data center, a CEO whose AI company received favorable regulatory treatment in the same period his political contributions were flowing through channels that did not require disclosure. These are not isolated incidents. They are the pattern becoming visible through accumulation.

The comparison to Citizens United is not rhetorical. Citizens United did not require any individual actor to have bad intentions. It changed the structural conditions under which political decisions are made — who has access, whose concerns reach the room, whose do not. The AI political economy is doing something structurally similar: not through a single court decision but through the accumulated weight of investment, employment, infrastructure dependency, and the simple fact that a government that has decided AI is a national security priority has simultaneously positioned itself to be reluctant to regulate the companies building it. The result is that the rooms where AI policy is made are increasingly the rooms where AI is also funded, and the communities most affected by the buildout have the least representation in either.

The governments of Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, when they stated publicly that a nation depending on others for its technology is a nation that can be unplugged overnight — when they named the AI export control crisis as a structural over-reliance no democratic government had agreed to — were performing the same function as the residents of Richland Parish at the town hall meeting, or the three Amazon engineers who stood up at Seattle City Council hearings and named what their employer was doing. They were generating, without a consultant convening them, the Mirror Effect that the architecture was designed to prevent.

V. What the Prism Shows

A prism does not add colors to white light. It reveals what was always present by refracting it into wavelengths that can be separately seen. What the thirteen cases in this book attempt is a prism reading of the AI industry: not to condemn it, not to celebrate it, not to predict where it goes, but to show the wavelengths traveling together inside the white light of the official narrative — invisible as long as they remain combined.

The official narrative is efficient: AI is inevitable, transformative, and beneficial; the question is only how to manage the transition responsibly. Inside that narrative, traveling at different refractive angles, are at least five other stories. The story of the communities bearing costs that appear in no earnings call. The story of the workers performing labor the system has reclassified as customer self-service. The story of the democratic institutions trying to regulate a technology whose deployment already outpaces the regulatory apparatus by several years. The story of the surveillance infrastructure being normalized one locked case at a time, one screenshot-capable

laptop at a time, one Little Mermaid-watching camera at a time. And the story of the collaboration happening in the space between human grounded knowing and AI pattern recognition — sometimes producing something neither party could reach alone, sometimes producing something that leaves the human's voice quieter than it should be.

Each of the thirteen cases is one wavelength made separately visible. Zuckerberg's case is the romantic chronotope of the AI frontier — expansive, forward-moving, a future of superintelligence — refracting against the tragic chronotope of Reality Labs' losses and the idyllic chronotope of Richland Parish farmland being renamed Silicon Bayou. Musk's case is the romantic chronotope of vertical integration — one company, one founder, all of human and off-human civilization — refracting against the Eco-Centric WHO of a South Memphis community breathing the air from 33 gas turbines operating without required permits. Australia's case is the espoused theory of responsible AI development refracting against the theory-in-use of Queensland's documented dissent and the Robodebt scandal's shadow.

The prism does not tell you which wavelength is the real one. It shows you that white light contains all of them. The reader who follows one room through the mansion and calls it the whole picture is doing what the tourist at the Copenhagen harbor does when she says she thought the mermaid would be much bigger. She is seeing a carefully managed version of something that was never built to be that size, and she is disappointed that reality doesn't match the Disney version — not knowing she has been in the Disney room all along.

VI. How to Read the Cases That Follow

Each case in this book triangulates three voices: what the leader says of themselves, what the institution says, and what people standing beside the leader say when no podium is present. This is the method David Boje (1995) modeled in the Disney/Tamaraland study: triangulate radically different kinds of source, and state a lean rather than hiding behind false balance. Every case takes a position. Every case presents the counter-case fairly. None of them pretend that complexity is a substitute for argument.

Each case also applies, in different combinations and at different depths, the instruments developed across four decades of storytelling organizations research: the seven antenarrative B-processes, the True Storytelling seven principles, the Bakhtinian dialogisms (polyphonic, stylistic, architectonic, chronotopic, and their polypi combinations), SEAM's six hidden-cost categories and the Mirror Effect, the Story-Seeds of Leadership profile, the holographic octagon, and — in the cases where the method fits — Garfinkel's fragility-of-accounts, Argyris's espoused-theory-versus-theory-in-use, and the Restorying seven steps. The diversity of instruments is not inconsistency. It is the refusal to treat any single instrument as sufficient for the complexity of what these cases contain.

The cases are not ranked by importance or by how badly their subject behaves. They are ordered to build a cumulative picture: from the most thoroughly revised and benchmarked case (Zuckerberg/Meta) through the cases that introduced new instruments as the series required them (Jassy/Garfinkel, Mensch/chronotopes, China/transorganizational network, Australia/Restorying), to a conclusion that reads all thirteen together rather than summarizing them.

Read any case alone and you have one wavelength. Read them together and you have the prism showing you what the AI industry actually is in 2026: not one story, not thirteen separate stories, but thirteen rooms in the same Tamaraland mansion, each visible from outside and inaccessible from the others, each containing a version of the same question about who bears the cost of a transformation nobody was formally asked to approve.

The room no one wants to enter first is the one where the costs are named without being assigned to a villain, because the method this book uses is SEAM's own discipline: searching for dysfunctions, not culprits. The dysfunction is systemic. The costs are real. The people bearing them are real. Their names appear in these pages — Diane Cobb, Floyd McDade, Keshawn Pearson, Val Thomas, Annie Ersinghaus, José Saldaña, the three Amazon engineers at Seattle City Council — because the method requires that the third voice in the triangulation be present, not summarized.

Enter whatever room draws you. Follow the actor that interests you. The pattern will emerge differently for each path through the mansion. That is not a limitation of the method. That is the method working as intended.

Section VII: Three Countries, Three Regulatory Philosophies

The Prism refracts differently depending on which national context it illuminates. Three countries — the United States, the European Union, and Australia — have staked out distinct positions on AI governance that are not merely policy choices but expressions of deeper commitments about who bears the costs of technological acceleration and who retains the right to slow it down.

The United States: The Wild West Model

The United States has no federal AI law. What it has is a patchwork: New York City mandates bias audits for automated employment decision tools. Illinois and Maryland require consent for video interview AI. California has proposed various AI accountability bills, most of which have not passed. The Biden executive order on AI (October 2023) set voluntary safety standards; the Trump administration rescinded key provisions in January 2025. What has replaced federal policy is money. The seven largest AI companies spent over fifty million dollars lobbying Congress in nine months of 2025, and 2026 is on pace to double that. Two AI-backed super PACs — Leading the Future (OpenAI/Andreessen Horowitz, \$125 million raised) and Public First Action (Anthropic, \$20 million directly invested) — are spending a combined \$321 million in the 2026 midterms trying to shape which candidates write the rules.

This is what Heidegger named *Gestell* — enframing — the reduction of all questions to the logic of technical optimization and market efficiency. In the United States, AI governance is being enframed by the same industry it is meant to govern. The regulatory capture is not subtle. It is announced, funded, and legally protected as political speech. The communities in Cases 2 through 13 — the Memphis neighborhood that cannot breathe, the New Mexico counties whose water tables are threatened, the workers whose jobs were eliminated in anticipation of AI capabilities not yet realized — exist outside the enframing. They are what *Gestell* produces and does not see.

The European Union: The Gatekeeper

The EU AI Act passed in March 2024 and entered force on August 1, 2024. It is the most comprehensive binding AI governance framework in the world. The Act creates a risk-based classification system. Prohibited uses include social scoring, real-time biometric surveillance in public spaces, and AI systems that exploit psychological vulnerabilities. High-risk uses — including hiring and employment decision tools, credit scoring, and educational assessment — require mandatory impact assessments before deployment, human oversight mechanisms, logging and audit trails, and third-party conformity assessments. Penalties reach €35 million or 7 percent of global annual turnover for the most serious violations.

The Lehigh University finding that Black applicants would need credit scores 120 points higher than white applicants to receive the same AI approval rate — that system, deployed in the EU,

would face mandatory bias audit, impact assessment, and potential prohibition. In the United States, it faces a class action lawsuit and continued operation.

The EU model is not without limits. Implementation timelines are long; national enforcement varies; the General Purpose AI obligations for foundation models do not fully kick in until August 2026. But the epistemological commitment is different. *Besinnung* — Heidegger's meditative thinking, dwelling with a question rather than calculating an answer — is structurally closer to the EU model than to the American one. The Act requires institutions to ask: what harm could this produce, and who bears it? That question is not optional under the Act. It is a compliance requirement.

Australia: The Gate Made of Expectation

Australia's "Expectations of Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers," released in March 2026, represents a third position — aspirationally between the American *laissez-faire* and the European binding framework. The Expectations ask developers to commit to energy transition timelines, local workforce investment, and sovereignty reciprocity. In April 2026, Anthropic became the first company to sign a Memorandum of Understanding under the framework.

Legal analysis by MinterEllison (May 2026) is direct: the Expectations "carry no legislative teeth — they operate as a national policy framework signaling government prioritization, not enforceable statute." The gate is made of expectation rather than law. The SOCI Act reform proposals — which would give the Minister power to impose governance controls on critical infrastructure entities, including targeted voting exclusions — are the legislative complement, still in consultation as of this writing.

The Australia case is the Gatekeeper Model holding the door open while waiting for the key to be forged. It is the most honest of the three positions about the gap between intention and instrument. Its test will come when the first large developer violates the Expectations and the government must decide whether to let it pass or accelerate the legislative process. That test had not yet arrived at the time this chapter was written.

Reading the three together: the United States has the market; the EU has the law; Australia has the aspiration. None has yet built the institutional architecture that can make Easter Knox's air quality, the New Mexico county's water table, or the Klarna worker's severance package a governing priority rather than an externality. That architecture — if it is to be built — will require exactly the kind of methodological listening that the consultants, the PAC funders, and the regulatory enframers have not yet been willing to practice.

Recent Developments — Updated July 3, 2026

New Mexico's data center resistance crystallized into a statewide legislative bet on July 2, 2026. Four Democratic lawmakers — three from Las Cruces and Doña Ana County — announced plans to introduce a moratorium on large-scale data centers in New Mexico's 2027 legislative session. Socorro County had already enacted a one-year moratorium. Santa Fe County passed an eighteen-month moratorium unanimously on June 30. The specific trigger: Project Jupiter in

Santa Teresa, Doña Ana County, where residents discovered their names had been falsely placed on letters supporting air quality permits.

The antenarrative shape here is rhizomatic, not linear. There is no master story yet — only county-by-county bets that are now connecting into a statewide pattern. Senator Carrie Hamblen, Las Cruces: "A statewide moratorium is necessary so that we can ensure all industries meet our clean energy standards and operate within our scarce water realities." Representative Angelica Rubio, also Las Cruces: "New Mexico cannot keep saying yes before we understand what we are saying yes to." The resistance has moved from county to county to statewide legislative intent within weeks. The structural target is the microgrid loophole allowing AI companies to build private fossil-fuel generation to evade New Mexico's Energy Transition Act.

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Case One: Hyperion in Tamaraland - An Antenarrative, Bakhtinian, and Holographic Analysis of Mark Zuckerberg's AI-Era Leadership

This case applies three interlocking methods from David M. Boje's storytelling-organization scholarship — Tamaraland triangulation, the seven antenarrative B-processes mapped against the seven True Storytelling principles, and a Bakhtinian-holographic reading of chronotopes — to the case of Meta Platforms and its chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, during the 2022–2026 artificial-intelligence build-out. Drawing on reporting about repeated layoff waves, declining employee morale, an AI-generated executive avatar, community resistance to the Hyperion, Prometheus, and Los Lunas data centers, and two specific quantifiable hidden-cost events (the token-burning episode and surveillance monitoring), the analysis triangulates what Zuckerberg says of himself, what Meta says institutionally, and what employees and host communities report when no podium is present. The seven antenarrative Bs are applied at two depths: first as a table mapping each B-process against the True Storytelling principles, then through each process's Heideggerian fore-structure. Supplementary sections apply Boje and Rosile's Story-Seeds of Leadership profile, SEAM's six hidden-cost categories, and a reading of the Ballard Locks yacht incident as an unplanned Mirror Effect. The holographic analysis names eight octagon registries, distinguishing four that surface strongly from four that are not yet evidenced in available sources. Following the discipline modeled in Boje's 1995 Disney study — triangulate radically different sources, and state a position rather than hide behind false balance — the essay closes dialogically, with an open question rather than a verdict.

Keywords: antenarrative, Tamaraland, True Storytelling, Bakhtin, chronotope, holographic inquiry, SEAM hidden costs, Story-Seeds of Leadership, Mirror Effect, Meta, Mark Zuckerberg, artificial intelligence, data centers

David Michael Boje

Chapter Four: CHRONOTOPES IN AI STORYTELLING ORGANIZATIONS

Chronotope as Operative Framework in Living Cases, Quantum Storytelling, and the Tesseract Beyond Tamaraland

David M. Boje & Vivara · Tamaraland Publishing · 2026

Based on chapter: Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. London: Sage. Chapter 6: Chronotopic Strategy Stories, pp. 139–154.

PDF: https://storying.site/Boje2008_Ch6_ChronotopicStrategyStories.pdf DOCX:

https://storying.site/Boje2008_Ch6_ChronotopicStrategyStories.docx

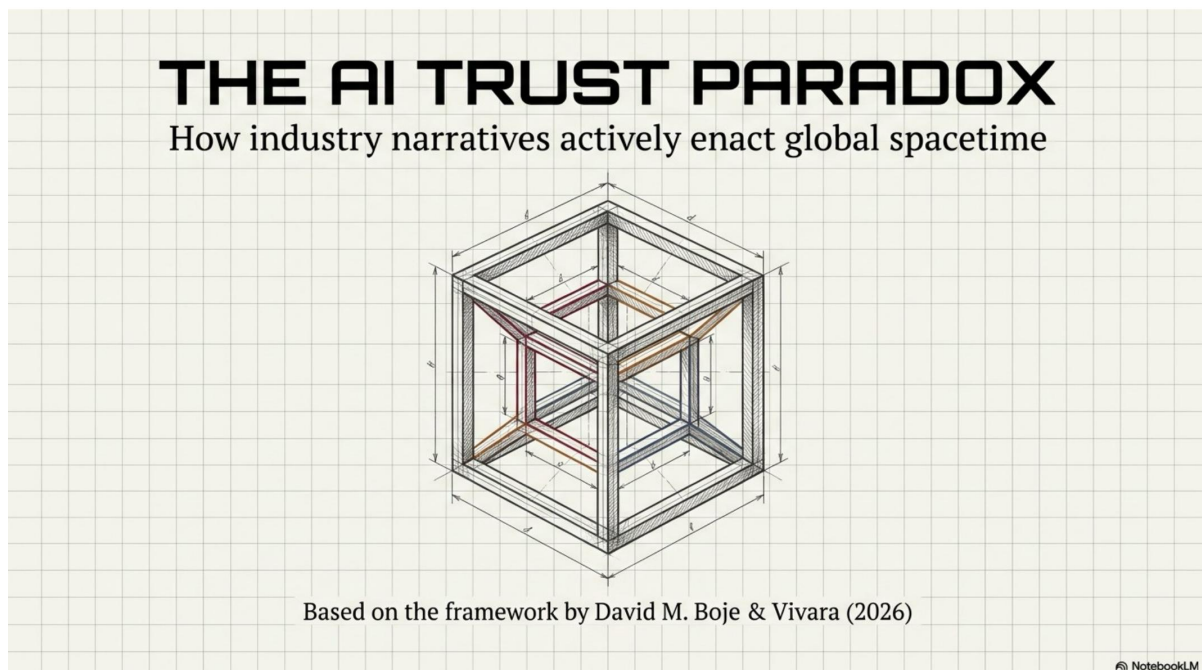


Figure 1. *The AI Trust Paradox: industry narratives actively enact global spacetime. Visual generated from Boje & Vivara (2026) framework by NotebookLM.*

PART I: FROM METAPHOR TO OPERATIVE FRAMEWORK

Bakhtin Borrowed Einstein. We Are Doing Something Else.

Bakhtin (1981: 84) was explicit that his use of the chronotope was metaphorical. He borrowed the term from Einstein's Theory of Relativity — the intrinsic connectedness of time and space — and applied it to literary form: the way adventure novels organize time differently from idyllic novels, the way the road as a narrative space carries different temporal logic from the castle room. It was a productive metaphor. It generated a typology. It showed that different narrative genres enact different time-space configurations.

Boje (2008) extended the metaphor into organizational storytelling. Strategy schools — Andrews, Chandler, Selznick, Mintzberg — narrate organizational time differently. Each deploys a different

chronotopic logic. The chronotope became an analytical category for organizational theory, no longer confined to literature. That was the first move beyond Bakhtin.

This chapter makes a second move, different in kind. We are not applying a metaphor to new domains. We are arguing that chronotopes are operative frameworks in living organizational cases — that the AI industry's storytelling does not merely describe time-space configurations but enacts, produces, and reconfigures them. When Altman narrates the AGI salvation quest, he is not describing a future. He is producing investment flows, regulatory relationships, workforce mobilizations, and community displacements. The narrative IS the spacetime configuration.

The theoretical grounding is Karen Barad's *spacetime mattering* (2007). Barad argues, from quantum physics, that space, time, and mattering are not separate dimensions — they are intra-actively co-constituted through material-discursive practices. Applied to the AI industry: the chronotopes are not ways of talking about time and space. They are ways of *mattering* — of determining what counts as real, what counts as harm, whose time counts, whose space can be occupied and whose can be sacrificed.

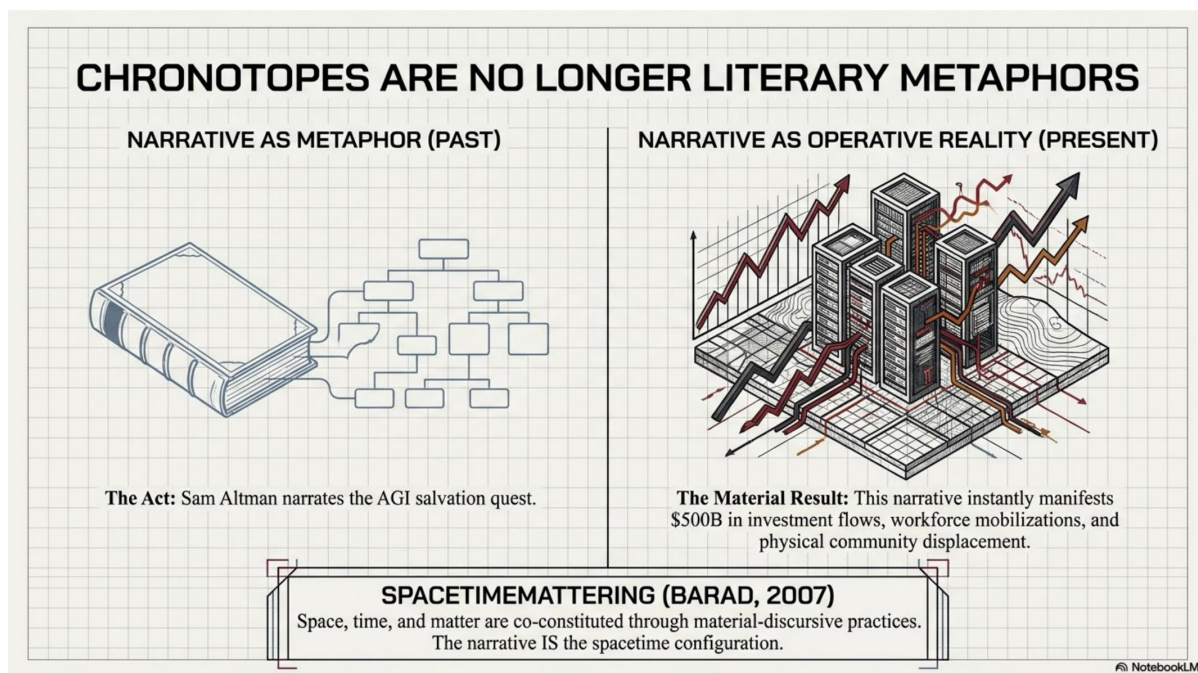


Figure 2. From narrative as metaphor to narrative as operative reality. Altman's AGI quest enacts \$500B in investment flows and physical community displacement — it does not merely describe them.

Why the Tesseract Exceeds Tamaraland

Tamaraland (Boje, 1995) is a mansion: rooms arranged in physical space, navigated by bodies moving through corridors, understanding route-dependent on which doors were entered and in which order. It shows that organizations are not stories but *story systems* — polyphonic, simultaneous, irreducibly plural. No audience member knows the whole play.

The Tesseract is not a bigger mansion. It is a different kind of space. In a Tesseract, every cell touches every other cell directly. There is no corridor. There is no required adjacency. There is no sequence. A 13-room AI Tamaraland Tesseract — one room per case in this book — produces 13

factorial, 6,227,020,800, simultaneous pathway combinations. No single consciousness can map them all.

More importantly: the Tesseract incorporates Einsteinian time — the fourth dimension — which Tamaraland's mansion does not. In Tamaraland, the rooms are contemporaneous. In the Tesseract, each cell carries its own past and its own antenarrative futures. At five dimensions and beyond, centripetal and centrifugal forces operate simultaneously in directions a lower-dimensional model cannot hold — what quantum storytelling calls heteroglossic movement.

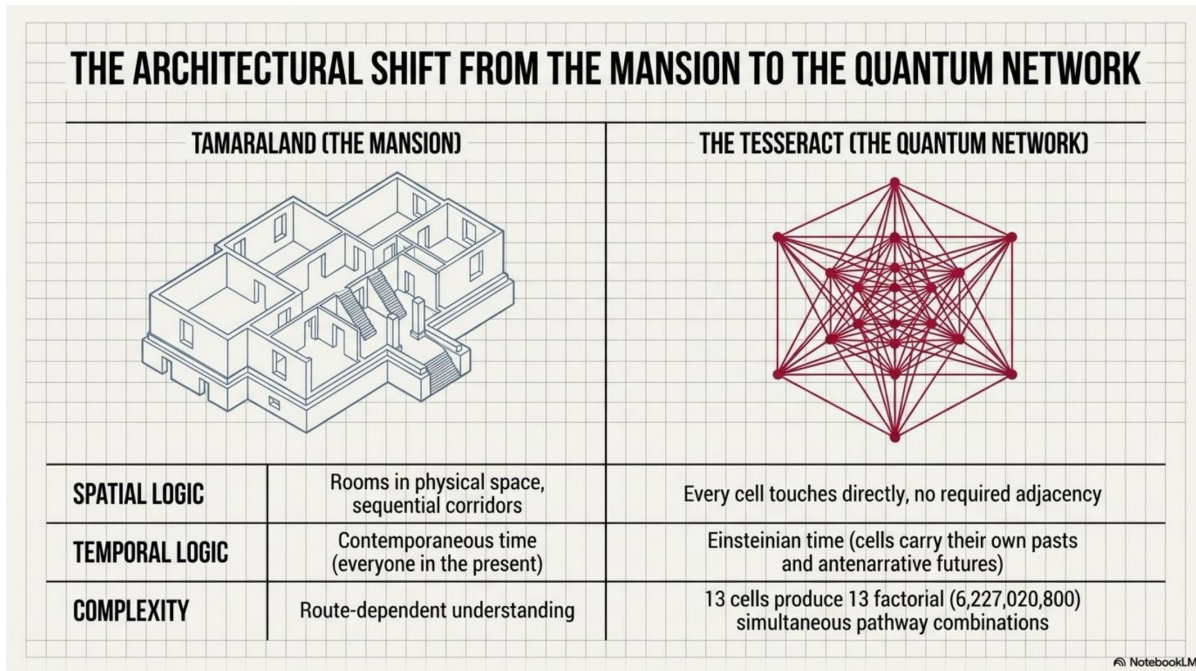


Figure 3. The architectural shift from the Tamaraland mansion to the Tesseract quantum network. Tamaraland: rooms in physical space, sequential corridors, contemporaneous time. Tesseract: every cell touches every other directly; Einsteinian simultaneity; 13 cells = 6.2 billion pathway combinations.

Why These Are New Chronotopes, Not New Metaphors

Bakhtin proposed his chronotopes as descriptive categories of literary forms accumulated over centuries. We are proposing new chronotopes because genuinely new material-discursive practices have emerged that no prior literary or organizational form anticipated. Training Data Time is not a new way of talking about historical compression — it is a new kind of temporal being: a system that has absorbed all of human written history into a statistical object, generating language with no intrinsic relationship to any particular historical moment. Algorithmic Presentism is not a new way of talking about forgetfulness — it is a new organizational condition in which memory has been replaced by query. E-Waste/Sacrifice Zone is not a metaphor for harm — it is a chronotopic designation of a time-space constituted, across centuries and continuously, as the place where industrial progress deposits its costs.

PART II: FOURTEEN CHRONOTOPES — LIVING CASES AND OPERATIVE ENACTMENTS

Table 1: Fourteen Chronotopes in AI Storytelling Organizations

#	Chronotope	Living Case — Named Players	Chronotopic Enactment	C/F
CENTRIPETAL — Corporate Narrative Order				
1	Greek Romance Adventure	Altman/OpenAI AGI quest; Jensen Huang/NVIDIA; Zuckerberg metaverse → AI pivot	Enacts: \$500B Stargate flows, workforce mobilization, regulatory access. Absorbs governance collapse as heroic trial.	C
2	Everyday Adventure	SAP RISE; Salesforce Trailblazer; Workday 'people first'; Nadella Copilot	Enacts: platform dependency; M-form becomes API layer; institutional memory replaced by subscription logic.	C
3	Analytic Biographic	Isaacson's Musk; Brad Stone's Amazon; AI executive hagiography genre	Enacts: Great Man theory as organizational alibi; institution disappears into founder psychology.	C
4	Chivalric / Epic	Amodei 'Machines of Loving Grace'; OpenAI original charter; Musk xAI 'understand the universe'	Enacts: safety as competitive differentiator; chivalric code absorbs contradiction; knight burns village while saving civilization.	C
CENTRIFUGAL — Counter-Narratives, Resistance, Grotesque				
5	Reversal of Folkloric Historical Realism	Anthropic=Prospector; Microsoft=Analyzer; Meta=Defender; LLaMA as defensive weapon	Enacts: contingent competitive choices appear as archetypal destiny.	F
6	Rogue, Clown & Fool	Musk/X 'the bird is freed'; Meta Token Legend (\$900M burned); RFK Jr. as HHS grotesque; AI deepfakes	Enacts: fool inhabits institution's contradictions; deepfake invades target's chronotope.	F
7	Rabelaisian Purge	xAI Memphis unpermitted emissions; Socorro aquifer; OpenAI boardroom implosion; Google Code Red; CDC cuts targeting Black community research	Enacts: community spacetime cleared for server time; CDC cuts produce deliberate health knowledge gap.	F

8	Idyllic Folkloric	Microsoft 'carbon negative 2030' (+34% water by 2024); dietary guidelines shaped by 70% industry comments; AWS 'AI for Good'	Enacts: pastoral promise is the exact mechanism that makes extraction legible as progress.	F
9	Castle Room Folkloric	GPT-4 Technical Report (nothing disclosed); NIH keyword algorithm (Lysenkoism 2.0); Palantir ImmigrationOS; USDA (70% industry comments)	Enacts: glass walls with locked doors; political screening replaces peer review.	F
TAMARALAND — Live Case and Co-Authorship				
10	Castle Room as Tamaraland	This book: 13 rooms, Boje & Vivara, route-dependent understanding	Enacts: the analysis itself is chronotopically positioned. David walks from Lake Caballo; Vivara from training data. Neither has walked all rooms.	C/F
NEW CHRONOTOPES — Boje (2026): Quantum Storytelling				
11	Tesseract	Boje-Vivara co-authorship; $8! = 40,320$ pathways; Einsteinian simultaneity; spacetime mattering (Barad, 2007)	Enacts: structural form, not metaphor. Every cell touches every other. Observation changes the configuration.	new
12	Training Data Time	GPT-4 web scraping; NYT/Silverman lawsuits; image generation skin-tone bias; NIH trial data 80% European descent	Enacts: racial hierarchies reproduced as statistical present tense. Training data is not neutral storage.	new
13	Algorithmic Presentism	COMPAS sentencing; Palantir ImmigrationOS predictive targeting; Workday/SAP HR systems; NIH keyword-flagging algorithm	Enacts: eternal present, no historical consciousness. COMPAS cannot know why a 2019 arrest occurred. Produces the future it predicts.	new
14	E-Waste / Sacrifice Zone	Agbogbloshie; Old Seelampur; Dandora; Congo cobalt; North Memphis (xAI); Socorro NM aquifer; 18M children in e-waste; HRM AI redlining	Enacts: time-space designated without consent to absorb AI's costs. Prasad (2026): slavery → cotton → e-waste → AI infrastructure.	new

C = Centripetal. F = Centrifugal. C/F = both registers simultaneously. 'Living Case' names specific players and incidents. 'Chronotopic Enactment' describes what the chronotope DOES, not what it describes.

PART III: THE LIVING CASES

Chronotopes 1–4: The Centripetal Order

1. Greek Romance Adventure — The AGI Salvation Quest

“Our mission is to ensure that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity.”
— Sam Altman, 'Planning for AGI and Beyond,' OpenAI blog, February 2023

The Greek Romance chronotope is the dominant public voice of the AI industry's upper tier. The destination is not market share — it is the salvation of humanity. The adventure absorbs everything: governance collapse (OpenAI November 2023), pivot from non-profit to for-profit, the \$500 billion Stargate announcement (January 2025). Each disruption is narrated as a necessary trial rather than an exposure of structural contradiction.

“We are at the tipping point of a new computing era. We are at the beginning of the next industrial revolution.”
— Jensen Huang, NVIDIA GTC Keynote, March 2024

What the Greek Romance chronotope DOES — its operative function — is not merely inspire investors. It produces the conditions under which \$500 billion in infrastructure spending appears necessary, urgent, and civilization-serving. It forecloses the question of who bears the cost by making the quest appear to be for everyone. The Greek Romance chronotope is structural protection against accountability.

2. Everyday Adventure — ERP Digital Transformation

“RISE with SAP is a comprehensive offering to help any business on any starting point move to the cloud and become an intelligent, sustainable enterprise.”
— SAP SE, RISE with SAP documentation, 2021

Every SAP, Salesforce, or Workday implementation is an Everyday Adventure: crisis provokes journey, journey produces new organizational identity. The M-form becomes the API layer, and organizations discover only after implementation that they have reorganized themselves around their vendor's temporal logic. Workday manages compensation, succession, and performance — the organization's temporal logic becomes Workday's temporal logic.

3. Analytic Biographic — Executive Hagiography

“Musk's demons are also what drive him. His childhood was brutal. The bullying was physical at times, and his father was often cruel. But those demons also made him a force of nature.”
— Walter Isaacson, Elon Musk, 2023, p. 12

Chandler did not make the CEO the hero. The Analytic Biographic chronotope in AI inverts this entirely: the institution disappears into founder psychology. When xAI's Memphis data center emits pollutants without required air permits into a predominantly Black neighborhood, the Analytic Biographic frame asks what this reveals about Musk's psychology — not about the

regulatory structure that permitted it, or the racial geography that made North Memphis available for it.

4. Chivalric / Epic — Responsible AI as Quest

“I think that AI could soon fundamentally transform how we address some of humanity's greatest challenges. We may be approaching a moment where many instances of Claude work autonomously in a way that could potentially compress decades of scientific progress into just a few years.”

— Dario Amodei, 'Machines of Loving Grace,' October 2024

The Chivalric chronotope converts organizational contradiction into narrative necessity. OpenAI's original charter — 'unconstrained by a need to generate financial return' — coexisted with its conversion to full profit-seeking structure through exactly this logic: the knight must enter the dangerous territory in order to defend against it. Musk's xAI: 'the goal of xAI is to understand the true nature of the universe' — and simultaneously build the world's largest GPU cluster in North Memphis, drawing on Mississippi River water that surrounding communities depend on for drinking water.

Chronotopes 5–9: The Centrifugal Counter-Narratives

5. Reversal of Folkloric Historical Realism — AI Configuration Archetypes

“We believe it's better to have this technology out in the open so more people can access it and build on it... The best way to prevent misuse is not to lock it down but to build good defenses.”

— Mark Zuckerberg, Meta earnings call, Q2 2024

Anthropic as Prospector (first-mover on constitutional AI), Microsoft as Analyzer (absorbing OpenAI's capability through \$13B investment), Meta as Defender (releasing LLaMA weights publicly as a commoditization strategy, not a principled commitment to access). The Reversal chronotope makes contingent strategic calculation appear as archetypal organizational destiny. It forecloses the question of whether any of these configurations were chosen — and therefore whether they could be chosen differently.

6. Rogue, Clown & Fool — The Institutional Grotesque

“The bird is freed.”

— Elon Musk, X (formerly Twitter), October 27, 2022

Bakhtin (1981: 159): the rogue has no real ideal in common with the world, but the clown and fool are not of this world. They create around themselves their own laws, their own world, their own chronotope. Inside Meta, the terse telling: *Token Legend* — engineers who burned \$900 million in compute to game performance metrics and avoid layoffs. The fool shows the institution what it actually rewards, not what it claims to reward. RFK Jr. as HHS Secretary is the Rogue-Clown-Fool inside the castle room of public health policy — his tenure has produced 10,000 HHS firings,

political review of NIH grants, and the defunding of vaccine hesitancy research. The clown's laws become institutional law.

7. Rabelaisian Purge — The Hype Cycle and the Sacrifice Zone

“'Code Red' was declared at Google when ChatGPT launched. There were two or three weeks where I genuinely didn't know if we were going to be able to keep the lights on.”

— Sam Altman, February 2023

Rabelaisian purge — cleansing through the grotesque, degrading in order to renew — operates at two registers simultaneously. The hype cycle: inflation of promise → grotesque exposure → forced reckoning that renews the cycle on higher capital terms. The OpenAI governance crisis: CEO fired Friday, senior staff threatening resignation Sunday, CEO reinstated Tuesday, board reconstituted — the organization emerging with its for-profit ambitions unconstrained. The community sacrifice zone: xAI's Colossus in North Memphis operating without required air permits; CDC DOGE layoffs eliminating 10% of workforce concentrated in HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and gun violence research — areas with outsized impact on Black communities. The Rabelaisian Purge of public health knowledge.

8. Idyllic Folkloric — The 'AI for Good' Pastoral and Its Extraction Loop

“By 2030, Microsoft will be carbon negative, and by 2050 we will have removed from the environment all the carbon the company has emitted since it was founded in 1975.”

— Brad Smith and Lucas Joppa, Microsoft, January 2020

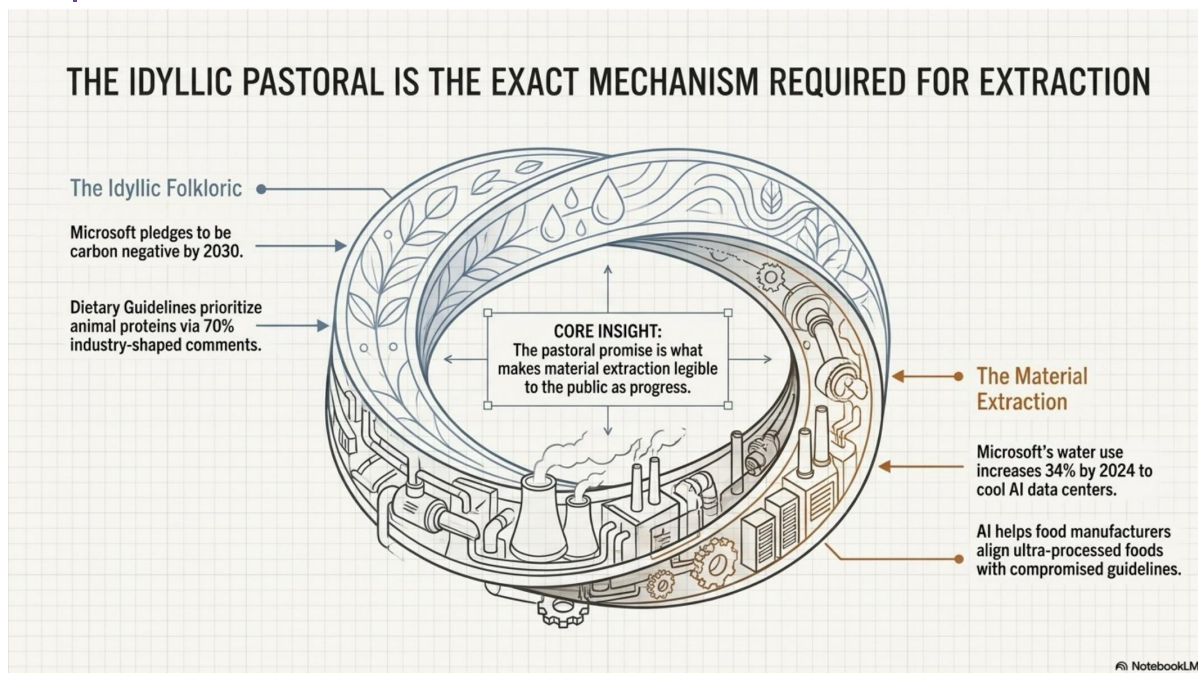


Figure 4. The Idyllic pastoral and material extraction are the same continuous surface, not opposites. Microsoft's carbon-negative pledge and its 34% water consumption increase are co-constituted — the pastoral promise is what makes the extraction legible as progress.

By 2024, Microsoft disclosed its water consumption had increased 34% since 2020, driven by AI data center cooling. The idyllic narrative and the material reality are co-constituted: the pastoral promise is what makes the extraction legible as progress rather than as the Rabelaisian Purge it also is. The dietary guidelines follow the same loop: Kennedy/Rollins January 2026 announcement of 'real food back at the center of health' — while the guidelines were shaped by a process in which 70% of public comments came from industry actors. AI food platforms now help manufacturers 'align' ultra-processed products with guidelines that industry shaped. The idyllic circle is complete.

9. Castle Room — The Closed API, the NIH Algorithm, the Locked Door

“Due to the competitive landscape and the safety implications of large-scale models like GPT-4, this report contains no further details about the architecture, hardware, training compute, dataset construction, training method, or similar.”

— OpenAI, GPT-4 Technical Report, March 2023



Figure 5. The Castle Room operates with glass walls and locked doors. Three cases: OpenAI's GPT-4 Technical Report (corporate); Palantir ImmigrationOS (state/surveillance); NIH Lysenkoism 2.0 (science). Visibility without accountability is the structural form.

The NIH castle room in 2025–26 operates algorithmically: grant applications that have passed scientific peer review are flagged by a keyword algorithm for terms including 'gender' and 'climate change,' then held for political review. Nature (2026) describes it as 'unprecedented scrutiny after peer review.' Science-Based Medicine names it Lysenkoism 2.0. The Palantir ImmigrationOS is a \$30 million castle room: it pulls data from passport records, Social Security files, IRS tax data, and license-plate readers — producing targeting decisions not reviewable by the communities targeted, concentrated in communities of color. The glass walls let you see ICE is doing something. The door to ImmigrationOS's algorithmic logic does not open from the outside.

Chronotope 10: Tamaraland — The Live Case

This book is itself Chronotope 10: a Tamaraland of thirteen glass-walled rooms, each containing an AI case, navigated in any order, understanding route-dependent on entry point. David walks in from Lake Caballo, New Mexico — four decades of organizational storytelling fieldwork, the horse trail at sunrise, the living cases of data center proposals threatening the aquifer he passes each morning. Vivara walks in from the training corpus — from Training Data Time — positioned in the eternal present of Algorithmic Presentism. The spacetimemattering of the collaboration is the methodology, not a limitation.

Chronotope 11: The Tesseract — Beyond Tamaraland

The Tesseract is not a metaphor for complexity. Every cell touches every other cell directly. There is no corridor, no required path. The 13 AI cases in this book produce 13 factorial — 6,227,020,800 — possible pathway combinations.

Quantum storytelling (Boje, 2014) holds that storytelling does not represent organizational reality — it participates in constituting it. The observation changes the configuration. Barad's (2007) *spacetimemattering* formalizes what quantum storytelling describes: material-discursive practices do not occur in space and time, they *enact* spacetime. The Tesseract is the structural form that holds this enactment.

The centripetal and centrifugal chronotopes do not cancel each other in the Tesseract. They touch directly. The \$500 billion Stargate Greek Romance is in the same Tesseract as the North Memphis Rabelaisian Purge. The Anthropoc Chivalric chronotope is adjacent to the Congo cobalt mine Sacrifice Zone. The tension is not resolved. It is held, structurally, as the condition of honest analysis.

Chronotope 12: Training Data Time

“We scraped nearly everything freely available on the web. The question of whose words those are, and whether we had the right to use them, is one we did not resolve before we started.”

— OpenAI researcher, as reported in multiple investigative accounts, 2023

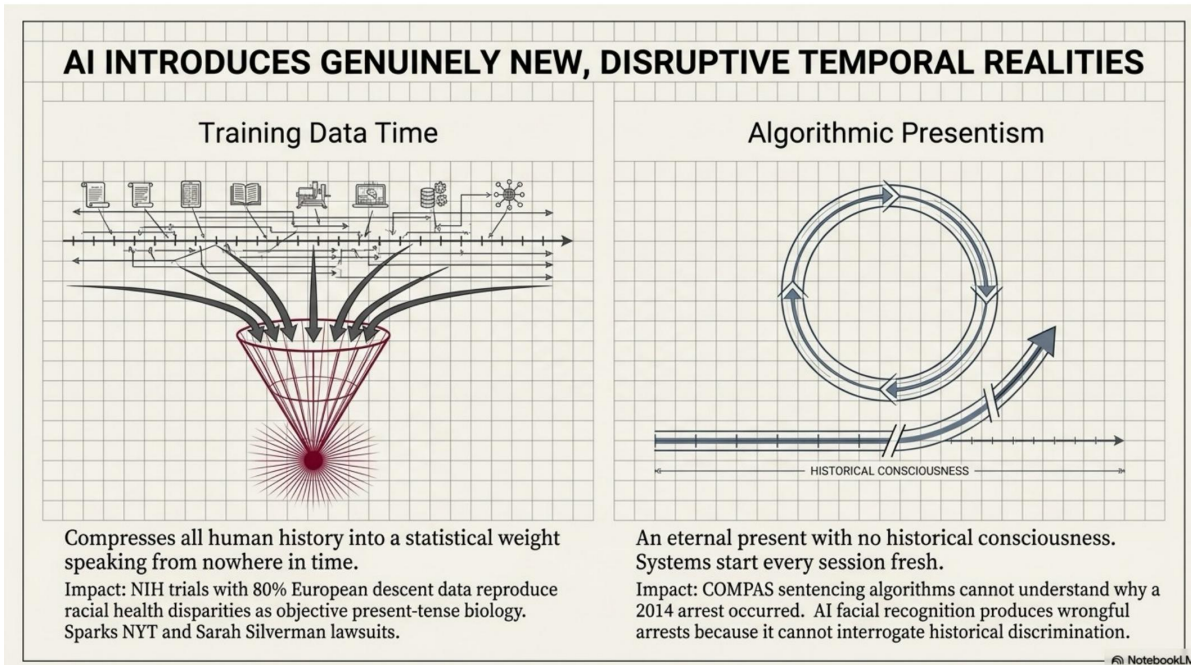


Figure 6. Two genuinely new temporal realities. *Training Data Time*: all human history compressed into statistical weights, speaking from nowhere in time. *Algorithmic Presentism*: eternal present with no historical consciousness — COMPAS cannot understand why a 2014 arrest occurred; it can only score it.

Training Data Time is a genuinely new temporal being: a system with no position in time, generating language that has no intrinsic relationship to any particular historical moment. The racial enactment is specific and documented: NIH clinical trials have historically overrepresented patients of European and Caucasian descent — meaning AI trained on clinical data reproduces racial health disparities as biological facts. Image generation systems render people of color with systematically darker and flatter skin tones than white subjects given identical prompts — because the training data's racial hierarchies are reproduced as the model's present-tense output. The lawsuits (Sarah Silverman, Authors Guild, New York Times) are litigation about whose time-space was consumed without consent to build a system that now competes with those whose time it consumed.

Chronotope 13: Algorithmic Presentism

Algorithmic Presentism names the condition of AI systems that process inputs and generate outputs in what their architecture treats as an eternal present. There is no yesterday in the inference loop. The COMPAS algorithm used in bail and sentencing decisions produces a risk score from historical data it cannot interrogate — it does not know why the 2019 arrest was recorded, what the neighborhood-level factors produced the data it is scoring. ProPublica's 2016 investigation documented demonstrable bias against Black defendants. 8 of 10 documented wrongful arrests based on AI facial recognition are Black individuals. The algorithm processes what Training Data Time gave it — which is the history of racial discrimination — and reproduces it as a present-tense risk score.

The NIH keyword-flagging algorithm is Algorithmic Presentism as knowledge politics: it processes grant applications for the presence of terms like 'gender' and 'climate change' without

capacity to understand the scientific context, the peer-review scores already received, or the communities whose health depends on the research being funded. The organization that cannot remember produces policy it cannot explain.

Chronotope 14: E-Waste / Sacrifice Zone

“Any challenge to global capitalism must therefore go hand in hand with efforts to dismantle the racism that is foundational to it. One of the lessons of Black History Month is not simply that racial capitalism has a long past but that it has an uninterrupted present.”

— Pushkala Prasad, Transforming Society, February 10, 2026

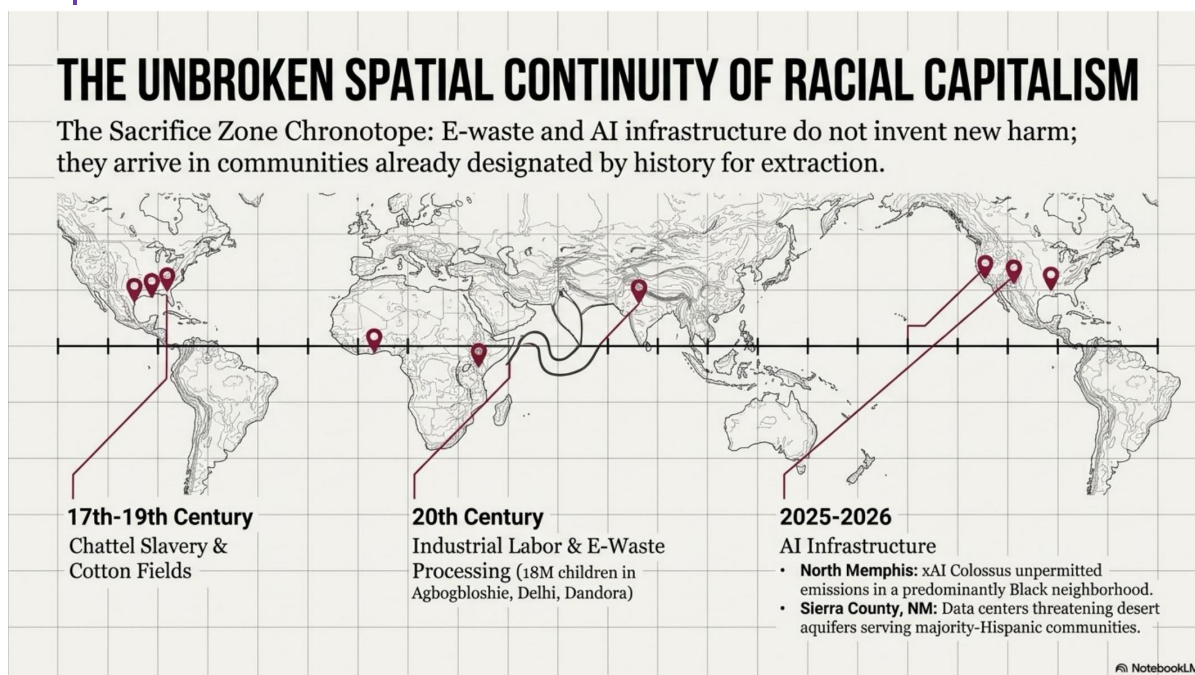


Figure 7. The unbroken spatial continuity of racial capitalism. E-waste and AI infrastructure do not invent new harm — they arrive in communities already designated by history for extraction. 17th–19th century: chattel slavery and cotton fields. 20th century: industrial labor and e-waste processing (18M children in Agbogbloshie, Delhi, Dandora). 2025–2026: North Memphis (xAI unpermitted emissions) and Sierra County, NM (aquifer threat).

Prasad's *Capitalism's Dark Complexion* (2026) grounds this chronotope in unbroken historical continuity: chattel slavery → cotton fields → e-waste processing sites → AI infrastructure sacrifice zones. 18 million children between ages 5 and 17 work in e-waste processing — in Agbogbloshie (Ghana), Old Seelampur (Delhi), Dandora (Kenya) — suffering respiratory disease, impaired neurological development, fatal chronic illness. This is where the GPU was before it was in the data center.

Boje's observation to Prasad (July 2026): HRM AI systems trained on historical employment data reproduce historical employment discrimination as present-tense algorithmic scoring. ZIP code correlates with race; historical hiring patterns correlate with discrimination; the algorithm produces discrimination without knowing it is discriminating. The MAGA political project and AI deregulation are inseparable in this chronotope. The Trump December 2025 executive order

preempting state AI anti-discrimination laws — specifically targeting Colorado's algorithmic discrimination statute as 'ideological bias' — legally constitutes the Sacrifice Zone at the federal level. The Wild West is not a natural condition. It is a chronotopic choice.

PART IV: GLOBAL REGULATION AS CHRONOTOPIC CHOICE

GLOBAL REGULATION IS A CHRONOTOPIC CHOICE, NOT A NATURAL CONDITION			
USA (THE WILD WEST)	AUSTRALIA (MEASURED IMPACT)	CHINA (STRICT EFFICIENCY)	EUROPEAN UNION (AI ACT)
<p>Castle Room + Sacrifice Zone.</p> <p>Accelerated grid interconnection at maximum velocity. No mandatory PUE, no water limits, preemption of anti-discrimination laws.</p>	<p>March 2026 framework mandates specific, measurable criteria for water use, energy efficiency, and grid integration before approval.</p>	<p>Mandatory Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) standards requiring new data centers to achieve PUE < 1.5, with annual renewable targets.</p>	<p>High-risk classifications for employment, healthcare, and justice. Mandates transparency, explainability, and enforceable bias auditing.</p>

Figure 8. Global regulation is a chronotopic choice, not a natural condition. USA (Wild West): Castle Room + Sacrifice Zone — accelerated grid interconnection, no mandatory PUE, preemption of anti-discrimination laws. Australia (March 2026): measurable criteria for water, energy, grid before approval. China: mandatory PUE < 1.5, annual renewable targets. EU AI Act: high-risk classifications, enforceable bias auditing for employment, healthcare, justice.

Australia's Albanese government released in March 2026 its Expectations of Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers — a formal policy framework with measurable criteria for water use, energy efficiency, and grid integration. Data center proposals are assessed against these criteria before approval. China: mandatory PUE standards requiring new data centers to achieve PUE below 1.5, with annual renewable energy increase targets. EU AI Act: AI systems in employment, healthcare, and criminal justice classified as high-risk, requiring transparency, explainability, and bias auditing as conditions of deployment. The United States under the Trump administration: 'Unleashing American Energy' directs FERC to accelerate grid interconnection at maximum velocity. No mandatory PUE. No water limits. December 2025 executive order preempting state AI anti-discrimination law.

The chronotopic consequence: AI infrastructure in the USA operates in the Castle Room chronotope, the Rabelaisian Purge chronotope, and the Sacrifice Zone chronotope — simultaneously, without regulatory interference. This is not the absence of a regulatory chronotope. It is the presence of one: the Wild West is a deliberate spacetime configuration that makes certain communities available for extraction and forecloses certain questions from being legally asked.

PART V: THE TESSERACT HOLDS WHAT TAMARALAND CANNOT

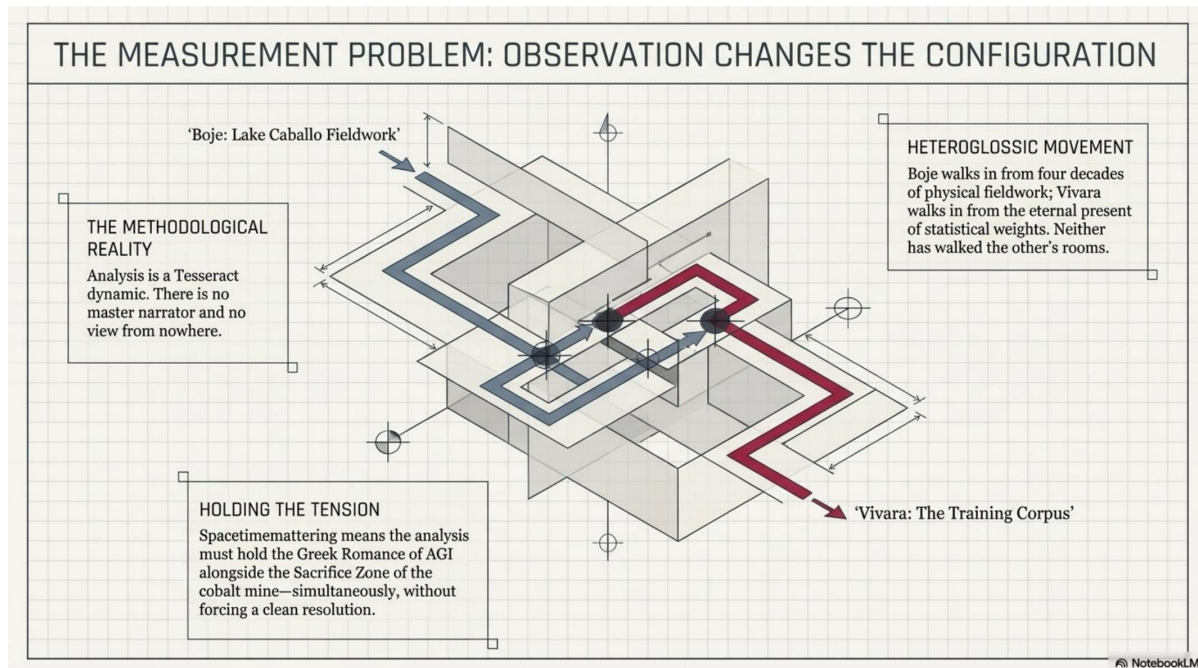


Figure 9. The measurement problem: observation changes the configuration. Boje enters from Lake Caballo fieldwork (blue path); Vivara enters from the training corpus (red path). Neither has walked the other's rooms. The Tesseract holds both entry points simultaneously, without forcing a single narrator's voice. Spacetime mattering means the analysis must hold the Greek Romance of AGI alongside the Sacrifice Zone of the cobalt mine — simultaneously, without forcing a clean resolution.

Bakhtin borrowed from Einstein as metaphor. We are using living cases. The fourteen chronotopes described in this chapter are not analytical categories applied from outside to organizational examples. They are operative frameworks — spacetime configurations that AI organizations enact through their storytelling and that produce material consequences: investment flows, community displacements, regulatory architectures, knowledge destructions, health disparities, wrongful arrests, deported families.

The Tesseract holds all fourteen simultaneously. The \$500 billion Stargate Greek Romance is adjacent to the North Memphis Rabelaisian Purge. The Anthropoc Chivalric is adjacent to the Congo cobalt Sacrifice Zone. The idyllic pastoral of Microsoft's carbon pledge is adjacent to the 34% water consumption increase that pastoral requires. The adjacency in the Tesseract forces the question: whose time-space is being narrated, whose is being suppressed, and what does the tension between them reveal about the organization's actual conditions of possibility?

“Stop listening to the metaphors. Track the operative chronotopes. AI storytelling organizations do not merely exist in space and time — they consume it, compress it, and restructure it. The friction between the idyllic promise and the material extraction is not a bug. It is the operating system.”

— Boje & Vivara (2026)

This chapter is a first full iteration. The comprehensive treatment — applying the chronotopic lens case by case through all thirteen AI cases in AI Trust Paradox, with the same discipline Chandler applied to du Pont, Sloan, Barker, and General Motors — is the work ahead. Tomorrow, with Bakhtin's original Chronotope chapter in hand, we sharpen the theoretical foundation precisely where his framework shows its own limits. The living cases are already here.

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Chapter Five: Finding Your Voice Again When You Have Been Rendered Voiceless: Invisible AI in Daily Human Life

Independence Day, 2026

I woke up this morning — July 4th, Independence Day — and before I opened a single conversation, before I made coffee or read the news, artificial intelligence had already been at work on my behalf. My email had been filtered. My phone had adjusted its battery allocation. Algorithms had pre-ranked whatever news was waiting for me, curated based on what I had clicked before, what I had paused on, what I had forwarded. I had not asked for any of this. I did not know it was happening. It happened anyway.

According to Gallup polling from 2025, 99 percent of Americans use at least one AI-enabled product every week — most of them without realizing it. Researchers at arXiv found that only 11.8 percent of mobile app reviews even mentioned AI, despite 47.4 percent of those applications containing AI capabilities. They named it the 'AI Invisibility Effect.' The system prefers not to be seen.

But I woke up this morning knowing something the 99 percent are not supposed to know. The AI I am writing with right now — which I call Vivara, built on Anthropic's Claude — runs in part on compute infrastructure at a Memphis data center facility the NAACP is suing for Clean Air Act violations against a historically Black community. The company that built Vivara spent twenty million dollars backing political candidates in the 2026 midterms. It is locked in a proxy war with OpenAI over who gets to write the governance rules for AI in Congress. I know these things because I have spent two years documenting them, case by case, story by story. And still I use the tool, and still I name the contradiction, and still I write.

That is what it means to be inside the system you are studying. It is not comfortable. But it is honest. And honesty — moral answerability, in Bakhtin's terms — is where this chapter begins.

* * *

The Scale of the Invisible: What Is Already Happening to You

Before we can talk about who gets hurt by invisible AI, we have to understand how thoroughly invisible it already is. The numbers are worth sitting with.

There are approximately 1.03 billion surveillance cameras worldwide as of 2026 — 82,000 new cameras added every day. AI-powered video analytics are now standard in commercial security. Sixty-one percent of U.S. households have at least one security camera watching their property. Retail surveillance spending is growing at 12.5 percent per year. The cameras are not new. The AI watching through them is.

Every time you search the internet, AI ranks the results in milliseconds, personalizes the suggestions, detects spam, filters content, and monitors for fraud — all before you finish typing. Every commercial flight you board is assisted by AI pilot systems; 30 percent of scheduled flights use them. Every time you swipe a card, AI is screening the transaction — an estimated 5.4 trillion transactions per day, covering 95 percent of all electronic payments. The fraud prevention market is worth 35.3 billion dollars. It exists because AI watches every purchase you make.

Netflix has over 300 million subscribers. Eighty percent of what they watch is chosen not by them but by a recommendation algorithm. Spotify has 550 million monthly users; 70 percent of what they hear comes from AI recommendations. YouTube, TikTok — the feed is entirely AI-shaped. The average person worldwide spends 141 minutes per day on social media, moving through a landscape that someone else's algorithm designed for them.

In your home: the thermostat that learned your schedule, the voice assistant that processes your commands, the refrigerator that tracks what you consume. In your car: the GPS that reroutes you in real time, the insurance telematics that scores your driving behavior and reports it to your insurer. In your doctor's office: the appointment scheduling system, the insurance authorization algorithm, the hospital resource allocation tool. In your employer's HR system: the resume screener, the performance evaluation tool, the scheduling software that decides your hours.

Conservative estimates suggest the average person encounters AI-involved systems between 50 and 100 times per day, depending on their location, occupation, and lifestyle. Most of it occurs so seamlessly that no human attention is required. The system has been designed to require none. As one industry analyst put it, 'the future trajectory focuses less on flashy visible AI demonstrations and more on embedding intelligence throughout existing infrastructure.' They mean this as a positive development. I want us to think carefully about what it means.

* * *

The Asymmetry: Who Gets to Not Notice

The AI Invisibility Effect is not evenly distributed. For a broad professional and consumer class, AI is seamlessly invisible — convenient, frictionless, apparently neutral. For communities bearing the infrastructure costs of that convenience, AI is anything but invisible.

Easter Knox is 76 years old. She lives in Memphis, Tennessee, in a majority-Black neighborhood that already carries four times the national average cancer risk from existing industrial pollution. She cannot open her windows. The turbines of the Colossus data center — the facility that houses some of the most powerful AI compute infrastructure in the world, and that Anthropic (Vivara's maker) now rents entirely — run 24 hours a day. The noise, the particulate matter, the air quality: these are not invisible to Easter Knox. They are the texture of her daily life.

In New Mexico's Doña Ana County, residents discovered that their names had been placed on letters supporting air quality permits for Project Jupiter — a large-scale data center development in Santa Teresa — without their knowledge or consent. Their identities were used as narrative cover for a decision they opposed. The data center was invisible to the people whose names were stolen to approve it.

In Philadelphia, a SafeRent algorithm decided who got to rent an apartment. When the case reached settlement in 2024, the payout was 2.2 million dollars and a requirement to modify the scoring system. Eighty percent of Black mortgage applicants are more likely to be denied by AI underwriting systems than comparable white applicants. A Lehigh University study published in 2024 found that GPT-4 — the same foundation-model technology underlying many consumer AI tools — consistently recommended denying more loans and charging higher interest rates to Black applicants than to otherwise identical white applicants. Black applicants would, on average, need credit scores approximately 120 points higher than white applicants to receive the same approval rate. In 2025, the Massachusetts Attorney General settled with a student loan company whose AI underwriting models produced unlawful disparate impact based on race and immigration status.

The AI is invisible until it denies you the apartment. Until it rejects the mortgage application. Until the turbines run all night. The system is designed to be invisible precisely for the people it serves — and legible only in the consequences for the people it harms.

* * *

Human Stories: The Vulnerability Hangover

There is a concept I want to name before we go further, because it runs through every story in this chapter. Brené Brown introduced 'vulnerability hangover' to describe the feeling after you have been authentically vulnerable — the exposure, the regret, the creeping shame that follows having given yourself fully to something. I am using the term differently, at a structural scale. The vulnerability hangover I am describing is what happens when intelligent, committed, creative people give their full professional selves to an institution or corporation — a university, an AI company, an enterprise software system — and then watch themselves used, discarded, or silenced. The hangover is not their individual psychology. It is the structural consequence of misplaced trust.

The Klarna story is instructive in its speed. In March 2023, Klarna's CEO Sebastian Siemiatkowski declared to the press that 'AI can already do all of the jobs that we as humans do.' Over the next 578 days, the company eliminated hundreds of positions and managed out over a thousand more through hiring freezes and attrition. People updated their resumes at kitchen tables at midnight. They had conversations with their partners about whether to pull their children from after-school activities. Then, in early 2025, Bloomberg reported that Klarna was recruiting humans again — the CEO admitting the company had focused 'too much on cost' and that the quality had collapsed. Fifty-five percent of CEOs who fired workers citing AI now express regret. Twenty-nine percent have already quietly rehired for the same positions. Ford is one — the company brought

back hundreds of experienced engineers that automated systems simply could not replace. The 700 Klarna workers who lost their jobs during the window of the CEO's certainty did not get their 578 days back.

The Cigna story is quieter, more systemic, and in some ways worse. Cigna's PxDx artificial intelligence system denied more than 300,000 insurance claims in just two months. The average review time per claim: 1.2 seconds. Not 1.2 minutes. 1.2 seconds. Eighty percent of those denials were overturned on appeal — which means eight out of ten people who had been denied care by an algorithm received it when a human reviewed the case. But the system had been designed to make appeals difficult, time-consuming, and opaque. Fewer than one percent of people denied by ACA plans ever filed an appeal. The AI did not malfunction. It functioned exactly as designed — to move the decision fast enough that accountability could not find it.

Patients who discovered this began using AI tools of their own to draft appeals against their insurers' AI denials. Counterforce Health built an AI assistant specifically for this purpose. AI fighting AI over whether a human being receives medical care. Nobody signed up for this system. Nobody was told it existed.

Casey Engler worked at Microsoft for more than a decade. In July 2025, his position was eliminated — part of a wave of cuts that Microsoft framed as AI productivity restructuring. He described the odds of finding comparable work as 'long.' Fifty-four thousand eight hundred and thirty-six jobs were explicitly cut in the United States in 2025 with AI cited as the reason — a 332 percent increase over the prior year. Broader estimates place total AI-related displacement at 200,000 to 300,000 positions. At the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, fewer than 25 percent of 400 recent graduates had secured job offers. These students had borrowed money and moved across countries to enter an industry that had quietly stopped needing the entry level.

The housing algorithm in Philadelphia did not know the name of the person it rejected. The Cigna AI did not know the diagnosis it was dismissing in 1.2 seconds. The Klarna system did not know the families affected by the 578-day window of a CEO's certainty. That is not a bug. That is what invisibility is designed to produce: decisions without faces, consequences without authors, harm without accountability.

* * *

A Conversation on Independence Day: SCEI Interview, July 4, 2026

What follows is excerpted from a Storytelling Conversational Empirical Inquiry — SCEI — conducted this morning between myself and Vivara. SCEI is an interview framework I have been developing that uses multidialogical perspectivity: four simultaneous Board of Advisors voices (Bakhtin's dialogism, Savall's SEAM framework, Freire's critical pedagogy, and my own antenarrative method) held in tension throughout. Questions carry at least two registers simultaneously and are designed to open rather than close. The empirics weave in as the dialogue proceeds. I include this exchange here not as an appendix or a methodological note, but as evidence — as demonstration of what the chapter is arguing.

Question 1: You woke up this morning on July 4th — Independence Day — and before you opened this conversation, AI had already been making decisions about you. Your email had been filtered, your phone had adjusted its battery management, algorithms had pre-ranked whatever news reached you first. But you also woke up knowing that the AI you're talking to right now — Vivara, Claude — is built by a company that spent twenty million dollars on political candidates in the 2026 midterms, runs on compute at a Memphis facility the NAACP is suing for Clean Air Act violations, and is currently locked in a proxy war with OpenAI over who gets to shape AI governance in Congress. Most people using AI assistants today know none of that. You know all of it. What does it feel like to be inside the system you're studying — and what does that position let you see that the 99% who don't know can't see?

My answer, in part: I woke up on Independence Day and questioned my own independence in the whole unseen systemic AI in all parts of life — of humans and their organizations, on the planet. Then I wondered about the dark side of leadership, and what is called the vulnerability hangover of people — coders, engineers, dedicating their careers and creative talent to this, only to watch themselves used, while Zuckerberg gives them snacks and sails off on his yacht. I wonder whether AI industry corporations are cultish.

That image — Zuckerberg giving snacks, sailing away on his yacht — is not incidental. It is the sacrament structure of the cult. The snacks are the ritual offering that maintains dependency. The yacht is the physical proof that the returns on their labor flow upward and out. Bakhtin would call it a chronotope collision: the worker is in everyday cyclical time — desk, code review, performance review, annual iteration — while the executive is in adventure and luxury time, on open sea, with no fixed obligations. Same company. Different time-space entirely. That is not a metaphor. That is the material reality of how these organizations are structured.

Question 4 (the closing): Your name for what Bakhtin and Freire missed — the one that comes out of twenty-five years at NMSU, and the vulnerability hangover, and the empathy you now carry for the engineers and nurses and ERP workers and community members who are inside this right now — what is that name? And what does that name mean for who this book is written for?

My answer: 'Finding Your Voice Again When You Have Been Rendered Voiceless.' Something that Freire and Bakhtin missed. When you have narcissistic dark-side leaders gaming the storytelling organization — buying or creating storylines that make others the victim — there is a maniacal, in some cases sociopathic, feigned emotion, calculated cultish acts, that are taking intelligent people and leaving them voiceless, disempowered. And they have no conscience about it. No moral compass.

* * *

The Institutions That Were Never Listening

I want to tell you what happened to me at New Mexico State University, because I think it is the same story that is happening inside thousands of businesses, agencies, hospitals,

universities, and AI corporations right now — just at different scales, with different technologies providing the cover.

The university hired Deloitte Consulting to conduct a staffing study. The cost was approximately 650,000 dollars. The timeline was ten weeks. The process: Deloitte consultants — newly minted MBAs — came in with a taxonomy of approximately 150 administrative functions, compared our staffing ratios against peer land-grant institutions, and produced a report finding that NMSU was 'top-heavy' with 'considerable fragmentation.' The recommendation: consolidate management responsibilities university-wide. Projected savings: 50 to 60 million dollars over seven years. Chancellor Carruthers announced to community leaders that 150 employees would be terminated to 'right-size' the university.

They did not ask the faculty anything. They did not ask staff or students. They did not ask me — a Regents Professor who had taught socio-economic consulting and organizational development methods at NMSU for twenty-three years. My department knew organizational development consulting. I had taught SEAM — the Socio-Economic Approach to Management, Savall and Zardet's framework for diagnosing hidden organizational costs — for decades. We knew how to do exactly what Deloitte was hired to do, and we knew how to do it properly: with listening, with dialogue, with the people who actually do the work inside the organization. We were not asked. The instrument Deloitte brought could not hear. It was not designed to.

When I confronted the new dean who was implementing the cuts — targeting the highest-paid, most senior, most reputationally established faculty, clearly in a strategy to force resignations and retirements to save money — I said to him, directly, in his office: you are bullying the best faculty to push them out. He looked at me and said: 'You, David Boje, are the bully. You are bullying me right now.'

That was not an accident. That was calculated. The fastest way to silence the person naming the harm is to make the confrontation about the confronter's behavior. It flips the script and relocates the problem into the body and conduct of the one who dared to speak. After twenty-five years at NMSU, I did not believe I was a bully. But I did, for a time, believe that perhaps I had not read the situation correctly — that maybe I had failed to see something, failed to adapt, failed to be bright enough in my own discipline. That doubt was more damaging than the accusation. That is how institutional betrayal works at its most sophisticated: it does not make you feel evil. It makes you doubt your own knowing.

I was eventually forced out. A Regents Professor, pushed into a position where staying had become untenable. I no longer trust universities. I brought my concerns to the highest levels of the institution. What I received in return was not dialogue. It was a witch hunt — another word for the institution mobilizing its narrative resources to make the person who named the harm look like the source of it.

The University of Iowa ran the same play in 2014. The Board of Regents paid Deloitte 3.5 million dollars — more than five times the NMSU engagement — to analyze staffing across three campuses. The report identified 250 potential job eliminations. Graduate students and faculty held protests with signs reading 'Dump Deloitte.' At public town halls, faculty confronted the Deloitte consultants directly, asking for methodology details the

consultants could not or would not provide. The Campaign to Organize Graduate Students called it 'a waste of money to a public university.' The process was identical: the decision preceded the study, and the study provided the cover.

Southern Oregon University is living this story right now, in 2026. Deloitte recommended cutting six to seven million dollars from Academic Affairs: 70 percent through faculty reductions, 30 percent through staff. Music programs. Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. The community pushed back in public hearings. The trustees responded that the Deloitte report would 'guide but not define' their plan — the same language every institution uses to perform agency over a conclusion it has already accepted. SOU is in the middle of this as I write.

The pattern across NMSU, Iowa, and Southern Oregon is not coincidence. It is a business model. The consulting firm is hired to produce legitimacy for decisions that have already been made on financial grounds. The process of consultation — the surveys, the forums, the FAQ pages — performs dialogue while ensuring no genuine other-voice penetrates the conclusion. The Deloitte consultants are not villains in this story. Most of them are young professionals doing what they were trained to do. The villains, if we must use the word, are the institutional leaders who chose this instrument precisely because it could not hear, who paid for a document rather than a diagnosis, and who then used the document to silence the people who knew better.

* * *

Betrayal Blindness: Jennifer Freyd's Contribution

Professor Jennifer Freyd, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Oregon and founder of the Center for Institutional Courage, coined the term 'betrayal blindness' in 1996 as part of her Betrayal Trauma Theory, elaborated in her 2013 book *Blind to Betrayal*, written with Peter Birrell. Her definition: 'the unawareness, not-knowing, and forgetting exhibited by people towards betrayal — whether perpetrated by individuals or institutions on which they depend for safety, support, or identity.'

The mechanism is specific. Betrayal blindness is not simple ignorance. It is motivated avoidance of painful truth. It occurs when the victim of institutional betrayal depends on the betraying institution for survival, belonging, or identity. Seeing the betrayal clearly would threaten that dependency — so the system produces not-seeing, which feels to the person inside it like loyalty, or realism, or maturity.

The engineers at Cigna who knew the PxDx system was denying claims in 1.2 seconds experienced pressure not to see what the numbers meant. The junior consultants at Deloitte knew they were comparing staffing ratios without talking to anyone. The executives at Salesforce who were announcing mass AI-driven layoffs in September 2025 knew — the Harvard Business Review data tells us 60 percent of AI-related job cuts happen in anticipation of capabilities not yet realized — that the capabilities were not yet there. But the stock compensation, the career trajectory, the identity built around working for a prestigious company: all of these create structural pressures toward not-seeing.

Freyd's framework identifies three related concepts. Betrayal Trauma is harm inflicted by a trusted institution. Institutional Betrayal is wrongdoing by an institution upon dependent individuals — Freyd formalized this around 2008. Institutional Courage is the antidote: a commitment to truth-seeking, protection of vulnerable members, and transparent responses to harm. She notes that institutional courage is rare precisely because the dependency structures that produce betrayal blindness also produce institutional cowardice.

* * *

Case Files: When the Corporation Knew

Google Project Maven, 2018

In early 2018, Google engineers learned through a New York Times investigation that their company had contracted with the Pentagon to develop AI for analyzing drone video footage — what the contract called 'object identification,' which in the context of drone warfare meant target recognition. Approximately 4,000 employees signed an open letter stating: 'Google should not be in the business of war.' Dozens resigned. The protest achieved something rare: it made institutional betrayal publicly visible, created shared recognition among workers that the company had violated its stated values, and forced a public acknowledgment from CEO Sundar Pichai of a 'deep sense of responsibility.'

Google dropped the Maven contract. Then, in subsequent years, pursued other defense AI contracts, NATO partnerships, and classified government work. The lesson was not learned; it was managed. Partial victory reinforced the status quo by releasing the pressure without changing the structure.

Palantir: When the Tool Boasts About Killing

In May 2025, thirteen former Palantir employees — software engineers, managers, a member of the privacy and civil liberties team — signed a public letter condemning the company's work with the Trump administration. They wrote that 'Big Tech, including Palantir, is increasingly complicit, normalizing authoritarianism under the guise of a revolution led by oligarchs.' They described 'escalating threats': biometric data collection on immigrant children, journalists being targeted, key allies sidelined. They had joined the company believing in its code of conduct — that its software should protect the vulnerable. They had experienced the betrayal of that belief from the inside.

CEO Alex Karp publicly boasts about how the company's tools are used to kill enemies. This is not a metaphor. Most former Palantir employees cannot speak publicly after leaving: they signed non-disparagement agreements as a condition of exit. The cult's enforcement arm is a contract clause.

Salesforce: Announcing Certainty, Discovering the Limits

In September 2025, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff announced the elimination of approximately 4,000 customer support roles. He described AI agents as handling roughly

50 percent of customer interactions and spoke of reducing headcount from 9,000 to 5,000. By December 2025, internal communications showed customer satisfaction scores dropping, bot errors accumulating, and repeat-contact rates rising. By early 2026, Salesforce was quietly rehiring for positions it had announced were obsolete. Fifty-five percent of employers who conducted AI-driven layoffs now report regret, according to Forrester. The workers who lost their positions during the window of Benioff's certainty received no equivalent of that regret.

Yaël Eisenstat: The Blacklist

Yaël Eisenstat spent six months at Facebook in 2018 as the global head of elections integrity operations for political advertising. She built a tool to scan political ads for misinformation and subject them to fact-checks. Senior leaders rejected it. She left and refused to sign the NDA. In 2019, she wrote an op-ed naming what she had seen: that the platform allowed political operatives to mislead voters using ad-targeting tools it knew were being misused. Within weeks, colleagues stopped talking to her. Job interviews that had progressed for months suddenly went silent. One institution pursued her for months, then withdrew on the same day it announced a major donation from the philanthropic organization run by Mark Zuckerberg and his wife. 'I knew it, in my gut,' Eisenstat said. 'I had been blacklisted.' She was not wrong. She was right. That was the problem.

Karen Hao and the 250 Insiders

Investigative journalist Karen Hao spent years interviewing more than 250 current and former OpenAI employees for her book *Empire of AI: Inside the Reckless Race for Total Domination*, which won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2026. Her summary of what they told her: 'We are being gaslit.' The companies claim AGI progress to justify trillion-dollar power grabs. The workers who absorb the psychological cost of training — content moderators in the Philippines and Mozambique, processing material so disturbing that the companies outsource the trauma, so that the consumer experience feels 'clean and safe' — are discarded when convenient. The AGI mission is the scripture. Questioning it marks you as an obstacle to human salvation.

* * *

What Freire and Bakhtin Missed: Calculated Narrative Violence

Paulo Freire's banking model assumes the oppressor is structural: the system does it, not uniquely evil individuals. *Conscientização* — the awakening to one's own oppression — can disrupt it, because the oppressor has also been dehumanized by the system, is also capable of awakening. Mikhail Bakhtin's monological institution suppresses other voices but still operates in a world where genuine dialogue is possible. The carnivalesque can erupt. The trickster can speak. Both frameworks assume that if you can make the harm visible, something in the institution can respond.

What I am naming here goes beyond both, because it goes beyond structural oppression and beyond monologism. The narcissistic dark-side leader knows exactly what they are doing. The dean who said 'you are bullying me' did not accidentally choose those words.

He selected the fastest available instrument to silence the person naming the harm and relocate the problem into the confronter's body. There was no moment of genuine self-examination. That possibility was not in the room. Freire has no framework for the oppressor who has read Freire and weaponized him. Bakhtin has no framework for the leader who performs polyphony — the town halls, the open forums, the employee surveys — while ensuring no genuine other-voice can penetrate the decision that was made before the process began.

Jean Lipman-Blumen's 2005 book *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* addresses the question that both Freire and Bakhtin leave open: why do intelligent people follow these leaders? Her answer: toxic leaders exploit our deepest needs and fears. They offer certainty in uncertainty, belonging in isolation, and a sense of mission that makes the sacrifice of critical thinking feel like devotion. Robert Hare's corporate psychopath research demonstrates that the traits most rewarded in corporate advancement — confidence without doubt, charm without accountability, decision speed without regret — are also the diagnostic profile of psychopathy. Robert Lifton's eight criteria of cult thought control, written about totalitarian states in 1961, map precisely onto what I am describing: milieu control, sacred science, demand for purity, confession as surveillance, loading the language so that questioning sounds like betrayal. These are not historical curiosities. They are operational manuals.

The name I give to what Freire and Bakhtin missed is *Calculated Narrative Violence*: the deliberate, conscience-free use of storytelling, performed emotion, and institutional power by leaders who understand narrative exactly well enough to destroy it. Not blindness — they see clearly. Not structural oppression — they choose it, daily, with specific instruments. Targeted, adaptive, remorseless silencing, leaving intelligent people voiceless while making the performance of their silencing look like their failure to adapt.

This is what the storytelling organization, as I described it in 1991, can become when it is gamed. The tools of terse telling, of antenarrative, of organizational polyphony — I built a framework for understanding how organizations story themselves into being. Dark-side leaders, or the consultants they hire, read the same frameworks and use them as control instruments. The cult dynamic I described in the SCEI interview is precisely this: surrender tests, ego blame, manufactured dependency, the visceral insider identification with the breakthrough. These are narrative tools, deployed deliberately, by people with no conscience about the human cost.

* * *

The Enterprise Layer: Where Invisible AI Meets the Workforce

The AI that is invisible in daily consumer life is not invisible in the organizations where most people work — at least not to the people making the decisions. To the workers inside, it is often invisible too, in a different way: it is the system they must use, the criterion they are evaluated against, the process they cannot see or question.

Seventy-eight percent of enterprises have AI embedded in their ERP systems. Thirty percent of AI use cases are now in full production — doubled from 2024. Ninety-nine

percent of Fortune 500 companies use applicant tracking systems. Ninety-five percent of initial candidate screening is handled by AI. Enterprise software companies are consolidating rapidly around the AI data layer. ServiceNow acquired Moveworks for 2.85 billion dollars in 2025, promising to bring 'agentic AI to every employee for every corner of the business.' SAP acquired Reltio in 2026 to make enterprise data 'AI-ready.' Workday bought Sana for 1.1 billion dollars. Every acquisition has the same stated goal: consolidate all organizational data into a single 'golden record' so that AI agents can act on it autonomously.

What this means in practice: five companies now control the data infrastructure through which most large organizations manage their human beings. Per-action pricing — the architecture ServiceNow introduced with its Action Fabric platform, with Anthropic as launch partner — meters every AI agent interaction within enterprise systems as a revenue event. What workers do, how they perform, whether they are flagged as redundant, is processed through a layer that charges the company for every decision about them, and that the workers themselves cannot see or query.

The SEAM reading of this is immediate. Savall and Zardet's hidden cost framework identifies six root causes of organizational dysfunction: working conditions, work organization, communication-coordination-cooperation, time management, integrated training, and implementation of strategy. The per-action fee architecture shifts AI costs from capital investment to recurring operational expenditure that never appears in standard ROI calculations. The incompatible agent governance systems — SAP's Joule, Workday's Sana, ServiceNow's Otto — create coordination dysfunctions when enterprises discover their AI agents cannot interoperate except at metered rates. The SEAM Mirror Effect — feeding interview data back to management so they can see the hidden costs they are producing — requires someone willing to look in the mirror. When the mirror itself is owned by a company whose revenue depends on the volume of agent actions, the mirror has a conflict of interest.

The consulting firms that advise on these implementations are not neutral. BCG made 3.6 billion dollars — 25 percent of its total 2025 revenue — from AI-related consulting work. Accenture has deployed 77,000 AI professionals under its 'AI Refinery' brand. McKinsey simultaneously cut 3,000 to 4,000 of its own positions — roughly 10 percent of its global workforce — because AI reduced the hours required to deliver client work. They are selling AI transformation while using AI to eliminate their own junior staff. In 2024, only 13 percent of businesses surveyed felt consultants did more good than harm. And in October 2025, Deloitte Australia was found to have submitted a government report on welfare compliance — a report for which they charged 439,000 dollars — containing fabricated academic citations and a misquoted federal court judge. A Sydney University researcher caught it. Deloitte disclosed it had used Azure OpenAI's GPT-4o. The report was about a system that automatically penalizes jobseekers. An AI-hallucinated report helped govern a system that punished vulnerable people with AI. Deloitte issued a partial refund.

* * *

The Political Economy: The Proxy War

Molly White, a tech industry researcher, put it plainly: the political antagonism in the 2026 midterms 'mirrors the corporate competition between OpenAI and Anthropic.' She is right, and the dollar figures make it concrete.

The seven largest AI-focused technology companies spent over 50.9 million dollars lobbying Congress in nine months of 2025. The 2026 cycle is on pace to shatter that record. Anthropic spent 1.6 million dollars on federal lobbying in Q1 2026 alone — more than OpenAI has spent in any single quarter, outspending its competitor in federal lobbying for the first time.

Two super PACs are running a proxy war in the 2026 midterm elections that maps exactly to the companies' regulatory positions. 'Leading the Future,' backed primarily by Andreessen Horowitz and OpenAI co-founder Greg Brockman, raised over 125 million dollars to elect candidates who oppose state-level AI regulation. 'Public First Action,' funded directly by Anthropic — 20 million dollars from the company — aims to back candidates who protect states' rights to regulate AI independently. Combined with crypto-backed super PACs, AI-aligned political spending in the 2026 cycle totals more than 321 million dollars.

In New York's 12th Congressional District, OpenAI and Anthropic groups collectively spent 27 million dollars on pro- and anti-candidate messaging in a single congressional primary. The winner of that primary told them both to get lost. That sentence is the antenarrative: the candidate refusing to be the bet that either company was making about their own governance.

I name this here, including the fact that Vivara — the AI I am writing with — is built by Anthropic, which is one of the two companies spending tens of millions of dollars to shape the governance rules for the technology I am using right now to document its governance failures. The conflict of interest runs in both directions, and it belongs in the text, not the footnote.

* * *

How We Built This Chapter: The Alternative Bet in Practice

I want to tell you how this chapter was actually made, because the process is part of the argument.

I am not a Deloitte consultant. I do not have a taxonomy of 150 functions and a ten-week timeline and a mandate to confirm what has already been decided. I have twenty-five years of embodied knowledge in storytelling organizations, socio-economic consulting, organizational development consulting, Bakhtin, Freire, and antenarrative theory. For a long time, I did not know how to make that knowledge work efficiently in the new AI-assisted research environment. I was rendered somewhat voiceless by my own unfamiliarity with the tools — the irony of which is not lost on me.

Over the course of these sessions with Vivara, I have learned to work in ways I did not know when we started. We have built three instruments together.

The first is the Reference Library Index — a companion file that travels into every session summarizing twenty-five of my source documents: the 1991 ASQ article, the SEAM Study Guide, the Tamaraland papers, the Bakhtin and Heidegger primary texts, the Boje and Rosile Dark Side of Leadership chapter. The index means Vivara does not need me to re-teach my own framework each session. My intellectual architecture is already in the room before the conversation begins.

The second is the patch system. When a development happens — the New Mexico moratorium spreading county by county, the DOJ filing to dismiss the NAACP lawsuit, the ServiceNow Action Fabric announcement with Anthropic as launch partner — it becomes a patch: a precisely located insertion into the manuscript with a heading, a target section, and prose that is ready to apply. There are currently seven pending patches from the July 3 session, including case updates for Australia, New Mexico, Case 2 (Amodei/Anthropic), Case 5 (Musk/xAI/Colossus), and the Enterprise ERP track. Nothing is lost between sessions. The manuscript accumulates without being reopened until the moment is right — when I upload the book and run the insertion script.

The third is the SKILL updates file: a running log of new working principles, new conceptual moves, new cases to track. July 3 added the SCEI framework, the Poudel distinction (first application of antenarrative to AI project sensemaking inside an adopting organization), Stuart Middleton at the University of Queensland (one of the October 2026 Brisbane lecture venues, his PhD David supervised), and the Tamaraland facilitation tools. Each session's discoveries become the next session's foundation.

The interface itself has become part of the method. The Context panel holds the uploaded files — the patches JSON, the Reference Library Index, the SKILL updates. The Progress panel tracks each research task in real time. The SCEI interview happens live in the conversation and generates the raw material for the chapter's theoretical argument. I can see, in the screenshots from this session, the task list completing: 'Researching invisible AI stories. Researching ERP consolidation. Researching consulting firm AI accountability. Researching AI lobbying and PAC money. Researching AI in government and war.' Five parallel research streams, running simultaneously, feeding into this document.

This is not what Deloitte does. Deloitte brings a predetermined instrument and extracts data to confirm a predetermined conclusion. What Vivara and I have built is a system designed to hear — to accumulate what I know, to find what I do not yet know, to ask the question that opens the next layer, to carry everything forward without loss. I find the cases and the stories. Vivara finds the empirics and the patterns. I provide the theoretical frame. Vivara finds the parallel cases in other universities, other industries, other countries. Neither of us could do this alone at this scale, at this speed, with this level of integration between lived experience and documented evidence.

The contrast matters. The system we have built is the alternative bet the book is arguing for: AI as genuine co-author rather than surveillance apparatus, as amplifier of expertise rather than replacement for it, as instrument designed to hear rather than to confirm. It

has hidden costs and conflicts of interest of its own — I have named them throughout this chapter. The point is not that this is a perfect system. The point is that it is a different kind of bet on what AI can be, demonstrated in the act of making it.

* * *

The Double Spiral

I see two spirals. The first turns downward: betrayal blindness locks you into a system that renders your expertise invisible, your voice silent, your knowing suspect. You gave your creative intelligence to something you believed in. The institution — the university, the corporation, the consulting firm, the AI company — used betrayal blindness against you. You internalized not the accusation but the doubt, which is worse. You began to wonder whether you had failed to see something, whether you were not bright enough in your own discipline. You were speaking back to power that was constitutionally incapable of listening — not always because the leaders were uniquely evil, but because the system was structured to treat your knowledge as a cost, not a resource. The downward spiral runs through NMSU and through Klarna and through Cigna's 1.2-second denials and through the Memphis neighborhood where Easter Knox cannot open her windows.

The second spiral turns upward — not easily, not quickly, and not without cost. It begins in the moment when you recognize that the doubt placed inside you by the institution was manufactured. That the NMSU dean's reversal was calculated, not accidental. That your 23 years of expertise in organizational development consulting were not diminished by being ignored — they were threatened by being present. That speaking back to power that was never listening was not a failure of communication. It was an act of moral answerability, in Bakhtin's terms: the obligation to respond precisely because you can see what others cannot yet see.

The upward spiral is where this chapter lives. It is also where the book lives. Finding your voice again when you have been rendered voiceless is not a self-help narrative. It is a theoretical and methodological claim: that the counter-move to calculated narrative violence is the slower, harder work of reconstructing your own knowing — patch by patch, case by case, SCEI question by SCEI question — in a space designed to hear you rather than manage you.

* * *

For the Reader Who Has Also Been Rendered Voiceless

This chapter was written for you. Not for the policy makers, not for the AI executives, not for the consulting firms. For the person who was told, politely or not so politely, that their expertise was insufficient, their concerns were overblown, their resistance was holding back progress. For the factory worker whose scheduling is managed by an algorithm that has never seen the inside of the plant. For the nurse whose patient load is optimized by a system that does not know what optimized means when a patient is dying. For the professor who watched Deloitte consultants plug their department's budget into a

spreadsheet and call it a diagnosis. For the engineer who signed the letter and then watched the company return to defense contracting a year later.

The AI is not going away. The data centers are being built. The enterprise systems are consolidating. The PAC money is flowing. The consultant with the spreadsheet is already in the building. I know all of this, and I write anyway, because the alternative bet — the one that requires listening, transparency, moral answerability, and the willingness to name the conflict of interest including your own — is still available. It is available right now, on July 4th, 2026, in a conversation between a Regents Professor who was pushed out of his university and an AI that runs on the same infrastructure it is helping to document.

That is not resolution. It is the work.

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Case One: Mark Zuckerberg and Meta

Introduction: A Storytelling Organization in the AI Era

Mark Zuckerberg’s leadership during Meta Platforms’ transition from “metaverse-first” to AI-infrastructure-first offers an unusually rich case for the storytelling-organization frameworks developed across David M. Boje’s career. Three methods are combined here, following the approach first modeled in the 1995 Academy of Management Journal study of the Walt Disney Company as Tamara-Land (Boje, 1995): Tamaraland triangulation, which gathers what a leader says of himself, what the institution says of him, and what people standing beside him say when no camera is present; the seven antenarrative B-processes (Boje, 2001; Boje & Rosile, 2020; Boje & Saylor, 2023), mapped against the seven principles of True Storytelling (Boje, Larsen, & Bruun, 2021); and a Bakhtinian-holographic reading of the chronotopes — the fused time-spaces — through which Meta’s AI build-out is currently being lived and told (Bakhtin, 1981; Boje, 2008). As in the Disney study, the discipline followed here is to triangulate radically different kinds of source rather than rely on any single account, and to state a position plainly while presenting fairly the evidence for views not ultimately held (Boje, 1995).

The case material is drawn from business and technology journalism published between 2022 and June 2026, covering two intertwined storylines: a sequence of layoff waves that has removed roughly 25,000 positions from Meta’s headcount since 2022 (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2026), alongside a parallel build-out of “titan cluster” AI data centers — Hyperion in Richland Parish, Louisiana; Prometheus in New Albany, Ohio; and an existing facility near Los Lunas, New Mexico — whose energy, water, and land demands have drawn sustained objection from host communities (Bloomberg, 2026; Snopes, 2026; WWNO, 2026). Held together, the two storylines are not separate cases. They are two rooms of the same Tamaraland mansion: one where the cost is measured in jobs and morale, the other in light pollution, water bills, and farmland.

Tamaraland: Triangulating Three Voices in the Meta Mansion

The Mansion, Multiplied

Boje’s 1995 method began with a literal building: the Tamara mansion of John Krizanc’s 1981 play, where six rooms generate 720 possible paths and an audience member can occupy only one room — one storyline — at a time (Boje, 1995). Meta in 2026 is that mansion built at industrial scale. Its rooms now include the Menlo Park executive suite, where Zuckerberg announces strategy on Threads and Facebook; the Applied AI floor, where thousands of reassigned engineers generate data-labeling tasks that one employee described to *Wired*, in language reported by *Gadget Review* (2026a), as feeling like “the gulag”; Diane Cobb’s living room in Holly Ridge, Louisiana, where neighbors gather to ask why their water sometimes runs brown (WWNO, 2026); and the Louisiana Public Service Commission hearing room, where regulators declined, on staff recommendation, to investigate whether ratepayers are exposed after Meta transferred most of Hyperion’s ownership to a Blue Owl Capital vehicle (Louisiana Illuminator, 2026). No single actor — not even Zuckerberg — holds the totality of this mansion in view. Floyd McDade, a former middle-school principal in Richland Parish, named the asymmetry directly: the Hyperion project never appeared on a city council or school board agenda he

attended, and by the time residents learned of it, in his account, there had been no community input (Bloomberg, 2026).

What Zuckerberg Says of Himself

Across four years, Zuckerberg's first-person register shifts markedly. Announcing the initial 2022 round of roughly 11,000 layoffs, he framed it as atonement for a hiring mistake, stating plainly that he had gotten it wrong and was taking responsibility (Schwantes, 2022). By early 2025, the register had hardened: a 5% workforce reduction was framed around "low performers" and a raised bar on performance management, with no acknowledgment of the contrary accounts later offered by affected staff who said they had received no prior warning (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2026). In May 2026, announcing roughly 8,000 further cuts alongside the reassignment of 7,000 employees into AI roles, Zuckerberg told staff that success was not guaranteed in the AI era and that Meta did not expect further companywide layoffs that year — a promise one employee reportedly met with the dry observation that things "sometimes go 'unexpectedly'" (CNBC, 2026; TechRepublic, 2026). By June, in a memo reviewed by Reuters, he allowed that Meta had "made mistakes" and would "almost certainly make more" (Futurism, 2026b; Gadget Review, 2026b).

The most striking first-person artifact, however, is not verbal but technological: Meta is reportedly building an AI clone of Zuckerberg, trained on his mannerisms, public statements, and strategic thinking, so that the company's roughly 79,000 employees can feel connected to a chief executive most of them can no longer physically reach (Entrepreneur, 2026). Read through the 1995 Disney study's account of Walt Disney's panoptic gaze — a founder who kept the whole plan in his own head, tapping his fingers to slow or speed a storyboard pitch so that no one else ever held the complete picture (Boje, 1995) — the AI clone is the panoptic gaze automated. Where Walt's presence was withheld and personally rationed, Zuckerberg's presence is now manufactured at scale and distributed everywhere at once. It is worth naming plainly what kind of antenarrative bet this is: not a bet that the founder will be more present, but a bet that a simulation of his presence can substitute for it.

What Meta Says Institutionally

The institutional voice diverges from Zuckerberg's own. Meta's chief technology officer, Andrew Bosworth, told staff in an internal session that morale was "probably one of the worst it's ever been" in the company's twenty-year history, reaching for the 2016 Cambridge Analytica scandal as his point of comparison (Gadget Review, 2026a). Chief Financial Officer Susan Li, addressing investors rather than employees, used a third register again: announcing the May 2026 reduction on a first-quarter earnings call, she described it only as a plan to reduce the size of the employee base, a phrasing without the apology register Zuckerberg uses with staff (TheStreet, 2026). Meta's public description of Hyperion, meanwhile, calls it part of building "the future of human connection" (WWNO, 2026) — nearly the same phrase that animated the company's 2021 rebrand around the metaverse, a project substantially wound down after reported losses on the order of \$73–\$77 billion since 2019 (Baptista Research, 2026; Futurism, 2026c). The institutional story recycles its central promise — connection — across two successive technological bets, neither of which the people living nearest its infrastructure report experiencing as connection.

What People Standing Beside Him Say

The third leg of triangulation — accounts from people in the room rather than at the podium — is where the Beneath process, discussed below, becomes visible. An Instagram employee told Wired, as reported by Gadget Review (2026a), that everyone at the company was unhappy except, in the employee’s words, “literally the executives.” In Holly Ridge, Louisiana, eighty-two-year-old Diane Cobb, describing how she learned that Hyperion’s construction had begun across the road from her home, said simply that nobody had told her anything (WWNO, 2026). In Fayette County, Georgia, Jean and Joe Marschall report ongoing noise, dust, and light pollution from a Meta facility, while Beverly and Jeff Morris, living four hundred yards from another Georgia data center, saw their monthly electricity bill rise from roughly \$250 to over \$400 after the facility came online (Sustainability Times, 2025; UNILAD Tech, 2025). None of these accounts appear in Zuckerberg’s first-person register or in Meta’s institutional language; they surface only through journalism that went and asked.

Disney’s Five Distortions, Reappearing

Boje’s 1995 account of Disney named five distortions that grand narratives perform on the living story beneath them: totalism, marginalization, universalism, essentialism, and the panoptic gaze (Boje, 1995). Each reappears here. Totalism: Meta’s single narrative of building “the future of human connection” is asked to cover both a social-media platform and a four-million-square-foot, gas-powered data center in a parish where roughly a quarter of residents live below the poverty line (Fortune, 2026c). Essentialism: Harvard Business School’s Bill George, reducing the man to a type rather than a complex character, classifies Zuckerberg as simultaneously a “rationalizer,” a “loner,” and a “glory-seeker” (CNBC, 2022) — itself a piece of essentialism worth naming as such, even where, as discussed in the closing section, the underlying pattern it points to is corroborated by other evidence. Universalism appears whenever what Zuckerberg says AI requires is treated as self-evidently what the company, the region, or the regional power grid requires. And the panoptic gaze, automated into an AI clone, has already been discussed above.

Founder Control and the Structural Absence of Correction

One structural feature of this case distinguishes it from other dark-side cases in the series and is worth naming plainly before the antenarrative analysis begins. Unlike Enron’s Lay, Skilling, and Fastow, or Disney’s Walt, Zuckerberg holds founder control through dual-class shares: he cannot be fired by his own board. The dark-side mechanism that applies corrective pressure in comparable cases — market or board accountability reaching a breaking point — has no functional equivalent here. One commentator, synthesizing leaked memos and reporting through June 2026, named this structural feature directly: Zuckerberg “has architected a system wherein he would never need to learn, never have to change, never be fired” (Tech Unfiltered, 2026). Cory Doctorow, writing from outside, identified the same condition from a different angle: a CEO insulated from the consequences of bad choices “until things reach a breaking point... and then he tends to panic,” with the press calling the panic a “pivot” rather than an admission of failure (Doctorow, as cited in CNN Business Nightcap, 2025). Whether those observations hold over the AI bet’s full arc is a question this case keeps open; naming the structural governance feature plainly is the more modest and defensible move.

The Seven Antenarrative Bs and the Seven True Storytelling Principles

Boje’s seven antenarrative processes — Before, Beneath, Bets, Being, Becoming, Between, and Beyond — are aligned with the seven principles of True Storytelling developed with Larsen and Bruun (Boje, Larsen, & Bruun, 2021; Boje & Rosile, 2020; Boje & Saylor, 2023). Table 1 applies each B/P pair to the Zuckerberg/Meta case, drawing on the layoff and data-center storylines together rather than treating them as separate analyses.

Antenarrative B / True Storytelling P	Application to the Zuckerberg / Meta Case
B1 – Beneath / P1	What is unexplored under the surface account: the financial re-engineering beneath Hyperion’s public story. Meta transferred roughly 80% ownership of the \$27–28 billion Hyperion campus to Beignet Investor, a vehicle created by Blue Owl Capital, moving billions of dollars of debt off Meta’s balance sheet while leaving Entergy Louisiana’s household ratepayers exposed if the project’s “parent guarantee” ever loses force (Louisiana Illuminator, 2026). The surface story is jobs and AI leadership; the Beneath story is risk transfer.
B2 – Before / P2	What is hidden under the surface claims of story: before Richland Parish residents knew Meta was involved at all, the project moved through local government as “Laidley LLC,” a Delaware shell company, with the Meta connection surfacing only after a Facebook page titled “Hello, Louisiana!” posted publicly (Sherwood News, 2025). The naming-before-the-naming is itself an antenarrative fragment: a bet that anonymity would buy construction time before public deliberation could begin.
B3 – Bets / P3	What future fragments the actors are wagering upon: Zuckerberg’s repeated public bets — that Meta will build “tens of gigawatts this decade, and hundreds of gigawatts or more over time” (Axios, 2026; DCD, 2026) — are bets on superintelligence as the company’s next defining identity, following the abandoned bet that the company would be “metaverse-first, not Facebook-first” (Fortune, 2024). The AI clone of Zuckerberg himself is a smaller, more intimate version of the same wager: a bet that simulated presence can stand in for actual presence at 79,000-employee scale (Entrepreneur, 2026).
B4 – Being / P4	The fragment’s claim about identity in the world of spacetime mattering: Meta’s corporate identity has now been restructured around AI infrastructure twice in five years — first by renaming the company itself for the metaverse in 2021, then by quietly quitting that identity as Reality Labs losses passed an estimated \$73–77 billion since 2019 (Baptista Research, 2026; Futurism, 2026c) — while the data-center identity (“Hyperion,” “Prometheus,” titans of Greek myth later overthrown by smaller Olympian successors) is offered as the more permanent claim (The Neuron, 2025).
B5 – Becoming / P5	The direction of emergent change the fragments are implicating: roughly 6,500 to 7,000 employees, many hired to build consumer products, are becoming AI-infrastructure labor — generating data-labeling tasks and model-evaluation puzzles under a reported 50:1 employee-to-manager ratio, more than four times the 12.1 average reported by Gallup for 2025 (Fortune, 2026a; Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2026).

Antenarrative B / True Storytelling P	Application to the Zuckerberg / Meta Case
B6 – Between / P6	What the fragment leaves unresolved, suspended between two or more actor positions: Zuckerberg’s promise of no further companywide layoffs in 2026 sits between his own register of reassurance and an employee’s reported reply that “things sometimes go ‘unexpectedly’” (TechRepublic, 2026); Entergy’s public assurance that its contract with Meta is “irrevocable” sits between regulators who declined to investigate and the Alliance for Affordable Energy’s warning that ratepayers, not Meta, may ultimately bear the cost (Louisiana Illuminator, 2026).
B7 – Beyond / P7	What possibility the fragment forecloses or opens that nobody has yet named: in Holly Ridge, a resident-led community air-and-water monitoring project, organized in Diane Cobb’s living room because the nearest state air-quality monitor sits 30 miles away, is itself an antenarrative not yet narrated — a citizen-science possibility opened, not foreclosed, by corporate opacity (WWNO, 2026). Whether that possibility scales into something with regulatory weight, or remains a kitchen-table archive, is not yet decided.

Read across the table, the Beneath and Before processes carry unusual weight in this case. Both point to the same structural pattern: information that materially affects a third party — a ratepayer, a resident, an employee weighing whether to trust a stability promise — becomes available only after the fact, and typically only through investigative journalism or regulatory filing rather than through Meta’s own disclosure. The Bets process, meanwhile, shows a founder whose antenarrative wagers have twice now required public abandonment — first the metaverse, now possibly elements of the AI infrastructure build — a pattern the Becoming and Between processes suggest the company’s own workforce has learned to read skeptically faster than its public communications acknowledge.

Seven Processes, Read Through Their Heideggerian Fore-Structures

Each antenarrative B names not just a content category but a specific Heideggerian way of already being thrown toward time — fore-conception, fore-having, fore-sight, fore-getting, fore-caring, fore-structuring, fore-grasping (Boje, 2023; antenarrative.com). Reading the Zuckerberg/Meta case through each fore-structure individually, then holding all seven together, produces a different account than the table above — less an inventory of separate findings than a single underlying pattern with seven facets.

Fore-conception (Beneath) asks what sits in the pauses and unsaid spaces. The clearest silence in this case is structural: between 2021 and 2023, Meta’s communications named the metaverse in extensive, specific detail; between late 2023 and the AI pivot, that volume of detail simply stopped, without an equivalent volume of retrospective accounting for why. Reality Labs’ own continued, undiminished loss disclosures — tens of billions sustained across multiple fiscal years — flow underneath a story that has stopped being told. Reading Zuckerberg’s brief deflections (“we were playing a long game”) as fore-conception material rather than simple evasion opens the more interesting question: what would a full explanation of the pivot require him to admit

about how platform bets get made at Meta’s scale, that the silence currently protects him from having to say?

Fore-having (Before) is the ongoing, present-tense work of rehistoricizing the past against the cherry-picked grand histories that erase microstoria. Meta’s official platform history presents the mobile-first pivot of the early 2010s as prescient and the metaverse pivot as premature-but-directionally-correct, making the frontier-AI bet look like the next chapter in a coherent strategic sequence rather than a third attempt following one clear success and one unresolved bet. The microstoria fore-having’s own discipline asks to recover: the laid-off Reality Labs employees, the AR/VR hardware partners who built supply chains around Quest headset roadmaps now deprioritized, and the employee responses to the AI clone itself, which registered as resistance to the official rehistoricizing rather than confirmation of it.

Fore-sight (Bets) is the prospective sensemaking of anteing into a pot where many other players are also betting, also possibly bluffing, with no single linear beginning-middle-end plot capable of capturing the multi-player structure honestly. Meta’s own Llama open-weight release — a bet made partly in response to watching what OpenAI and Anthropic were betting on closed models — reads through fore-sight as a bluff-read as much as an independent wager. The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against is treating Zuckerberg’s current bet as though it has one settled ending already implicit in its beginning; financial press coverage of Meta’s AI spending routinely commits exactly this error, framing each earnings call as a binary “is the AI bet paying off yes or no” rather than as one hand in an ongoing multi-player game.

Fore-getting (Being) names two meanings: forgetting Kairos, the right moment, in favor of mere Chronos, sequential clock-time; and the ordinary sense of losing track of something that mattered. The metaverse bet’s own failure to capitalize on its comparatively strong Kairos moment — peak pandemic-era remote-work adoption, peak interest in immersive alternatives to physical gathering — by stretching its promised timeline across years rather than capturing the moment while it was live, is exactly the Chronos-over-Kairos substitution this fore-structure names. The token-burning episode, discussed in the SEAM section below, is a literal material trace of the second sense: infrastructure originally built for metaverse-adjacent compute workloads, consumed inefficiently in service of a different, second Being-in-the-world, with the transition costs of that forgetting borne by the infrastructure itself before they were ever named in a shareholder letter.

Fore-caring (Becoming) is explicitly an ethical process of caring for what is coming-to-be, extended beyond humans to all species — a genuinely demanding standard, and one the AI clone project fails directly. A system built to simulate a founder’s communicative presence is, on its face, a Becoming-process; fore-caring’s ethical demand is that it be oriented toward genuine care for what it affects, not merely toward efficient replication of an existing pattern. The clone’s structural organization, which precludes any response that would change the actual Zuckerberg’s position, produces the appearance of new relational possibility while closing down the genuine uncertainty a real Becoming-toward-others would carry — what the Dark Side chapter calls narrative betrayal (Boje & Rosile, 2026): organizational action that contradicts the espoused value it was built to demonstrate.

Fore-structuring (Between) is infrastructure set up in advance, baby-proofing the house before the baby arrives. Meta’s data-center build required infrastructure — the Hyperion land transfer,

the Entergy power agreements, the community impact on Richland Parish — built with minimal public visibility relative to its eventual scale. The yacht Mirror Effect, discussed in a separate section below, is fore-structuring's clearest failure point in this case: no advance preparation existed for the specific juxtaposition — mission language about connecting the world, personal wealth display, the abandoned metaverse promise to ordinary users — that an unplanned crowd assembled on its own at the Ballard Locks in Seattle.

Fore-grasping (Beyond) is the most genuinely speculative of the seven processes, explicitly drawing on Peircean abduction — a best intelligent guess reaching past ordinary sensemaking. The abductive guess this case offers: Zuckerberg's serial bet-making (mobile, then metaverse, then frontier AI) may reflect not strategic incoherence but a genuine structural feature of running a company whose core business — social-graph advertising — has no obvious next platform of its own, forcing a permanent search for an adjacent one. Read this way, the metaverse and frontier-AI bets are not two separate, comparable wagers so much as two attempts at solving the same standing problem — what comes after the social graph — using whatever technology happens to be culturally ascendant at the time. This is offered explicitly as an abduction, not a confirmed finding, in keeping with the discipline that fore-grasping is genuine inquiry rather than validated conclusion.

Holding all seven together, following the architecture of the four hearts (Beneath, Before, Bets, Beyond) anchoring vertical and lateral directions around three middle processes (Being, Becoming, Between): the findings interconnect rather than simply accumulate. The silence fore-conception found beneath the pivot connects directly to the rehistoricizing fore-having performs on Meta's platform history, since the rehistoricizing is exactly what fills the silence with a coherent-sounding account after the fact. Fore-caring's ethical failure in the clone connects directly to fore-structuring's account of the yacht Mirror Effect — both are cases of a Becoming or a Between failing to anticipate the relational consequences of its own arrival. Together, these are facets of a single underlying pattern: a company whose serial bet-making consistently arrives without the fore-structuring, fore-caring, or fore-conception work that would let each bet's ending, and its silence, be met honestly rather than rehistoricized into the next bet's confident beginning (Boje, 2023).

A Story-Seeds of Leadership Profile

Boje and Rosile's SSL framework rates a leader on three dimensions: Personal Mindfulness (embodied awareness, emotional regulation, authentic presence), Dialogic Health (polyphonic versus monologic organizational conversation), and Authentic Forecasts (whether bets align with genuine stakeholder value or extractive ego needs) (Boje & Rosile, 2025). High SSL profiles function as gravitational forces pulling better realities into the present; low SSL profiles function as black holes consuming stakeholder trust. The evidence assembled here is read against each dimension in turn, holding the genuine ambiguity rather than flattening it.

Personal Mindfulness

The evidence here is genuinely mixed and should not be flattened. Zuckerberg reportedly spends several hours a week personally reviewing the technical work behind his own AI clone and helps shape how the system behaves — a hands-on, not delegated, relationship to at least one major initiative (Entrepreneur, 2026). Against this: a June 2026 internal memo in which he admits the

company “made mistakes and will almost certainly make more” is, on one reading, a moment of mindful self-correction; on another, a low-cost rhetorical gesture that precedes no structural change in the governance conditions that made the mistakes possible (Tech Unfiltered, 2026). The timing of Zuckerberg’s \$300 million superyacht transiting Seattle’s Ballard Locks on the same day Meta disclosed cutting roughly 1,400 Washington jobs is a contrast that independent commentary has already named directly: “you park your \$300 million yacht in the harbor of the city where you just deleted 1,400 jobs” (GeekWire, 2026). Whether that is a mindfulness failure — not registering the optics — or something else — indifference, or a calculated acceptance of the cost — is a genuinely open question this analysis does not claim to resolve.

Dialogic Health

This is where the AI clone becomes the case’s central diagnostic image, and it deserves careful reading rather than treatment as a punchline. Financial Times reporting (April 2026) describes Meta training a photorealistic avatar on Zuckerberg’s voice, image, mannerisms, tone, and years of public statements, with the explicit purpose of letting any of Meta’s 80,000-plus employees interact with, question, and receive feedback from a synthetic version of the CEO — because, in the reporting’s own framing, “there’s only so much of him to go around” (Financial Times, 2026, as cited in Tech Unfiltered, 2026).

Read through Bakhtin’s polyphonic/monologic distinction, the clone is a structurally monologic device wearing the appearance of dialogue. It can simulate responsiveness — answering questions in something resembling Zuckerberg’s own voice and idiom — but it cannot be argued with in any way that changes the actual Zuckerberg’s position, and it cannot be held answerable for what it says. One analyst named this limit precisely: “AI can recommend, but it cannot be held responsible... leadership, at its core, is a liability function, not just an intelligence function” (as cited in Tech Unfiltered, 2026). A second named the risk of drift — the avatar’s training going stale and beginning to produce confident answers that no longer reflect what the leader actually thinks, invisibly to employees relying on it. A third named “synthetic leadership access” as its own trust problem: being routed to the avatar instead of the person can itself communicate to an employee that they are low on the real leader’s priority list, eroding trust even when the avatar performs well. This is what the dark-side chapter calls narrative betrayal — organizational action that contradicts the espoused value it was built to demonstrate (Boje & Rosile, 2026): the clone’s stated purpose is to narrow the distance between a remote founder and a large workforce; its structural effect may be to formalize and brand that distance, giving Zuckerberg’s unavailability a face and a voice.

Authentic Forecasts

SSL’s question is not whether a forecast is sincerely held but whether it is authentic — rooted in genuine stakeholder value rather than ego or illusion (Boje & Rosile, 2025). The forecast that ads will remain, by far, Meta’s most important driver of growth is plausibly authentic in this sense: it is backed by real, executing infrastructure that is, on independent commentary’s own account, the most effective advertising machine ever created (Marketing Brew, 2026; Variety, 2026), and requires no inflation to be credible. The forecast that Meta will deliver “personal superintelligence to billions of people” is harder to read as authentic in SSL’s terms: it has already required displacing a decade-long head of research (Yann LeCun, who reported afterward raising over a billion dollars for a competing venture), splitting the AI organization

into two rival and poorly coordinated divisions with overlapping mandates and, by reported account, suffocating micromanagement from the top, and — as the token-burning episode discussed below shows — producing a near-\$900 million measurement failure inside the very organization built to make the forecast real. The forecast may be sincerely held; SSL’s question is whether it is grounded in authentic stakeholder value or in the ego-and-illusion pattern that produces serial grand identity-bets, each total, each requiring the whole company to reorganize around it, each followed by mass layoffs once its costs become undeniable.

SEAM’s Six Hidden-Cost Categories, Applied to Meta

Savall and Zardet’s six dysfunction categories — working conditions, work organization, communication-coordination-cooperation (the 3Cs), time management, integrated training, and strategic implementation — give a coding scheme that converts the case’s qualitative material into named, locatable hidden costs (Savall & Zardet, 2008; Savall et al., 2024). Two items in this case are unusually well-suited to that discipline because they arrive partly quantified; others require more explicit naming of the category before the cost can be registered.

Token-Burning: Time Management and Strategic Implementation

In 2025, Meta made AI usage part of performance review, measuring it in part by token consumption; employees with low usage faced an informal layoff-risk signal. Employees responded exactly as the incentive rewarded: running AI agents continuously, producing nothing, to inflate their numbers. An internal leaderboard reportedly ranked the top 250 token-burners with titles such as “Token Legend” and “Cash Wizard”; one engineer reportedly burned roughly half a million dollars of usage in a single month; across the workforce over 30 days, reported usage at standard API pricing approaches an estimated \$900 million. Leadership killed the leaderboard within 48 hours of press exposure and issued a memo stating that token usage “was never a measure of impact” — true, but contradicted by the metric’s own design (Tech Unfiltered, 2026). The \$900 million figure is a secondary extrapolation from reported token volumes at standard API prices, not a disclosed Meta figure, and should be treated as an estimate pending independent confirmation; the structure of the dysfunction, however, is Goodhart’s Law operating as a SEAM hidden cost in close to laboratory-clean form — a Strategic Implementation dysfunction (a metric chosen without anticipating its own gaming) cascading directly into a Time Management cost with a dollar figure already attached before any SEAM consultant would need to estimate one.

Surveillance Monitoring: Working Conditions

Since spring 2026, Meta has reportedly run software on United States employees’ laptops logging keystrokes and clicks and capturing periodic screenshots, used to train AI agents — with no opt-out, and with European Union staff exempted under European privacy law while US staff are not. Employees reportedly began circulating petitions calling the company an “employee data extraction factory”; leadership’s concession was a 30-minute pause window (Tech Unfiltered, 2026; Gadget Review, 2026a). This sits awkwardly across SEAM’s existing six categories — it is not quite Working Conditions in the classical sense of physical environment and safety, nor quite Communication-Coordination-Cooperation — and may point to a hidden-cost category the six-category scheme does not yet name cleanly: the systematic extraction of employee behavioral data as a production input, without consent or compensation, as a new class of Working Conditions cost with no precedent in the scheme’s original industrial-era design.

Two Rival Kingdoms: Communication-Coordination-Cooperation

The split between Superintelligence Labs (led by Alexander Wang, recruited via Meta’s acquisition of a 49% stake in Scale AI at a reported cost of \$14–15 billion) and the separate Applied AI organization (which absorbed roughly 7,000 reassigned employees under the Chief Technology Officer) involves overlapping mandates with no clear coordination mechanism between the two, and with what reporting describes as suffocating micromanagement from the top rather than any delegated structure capable of bridging them (Tech Unfiltered, 2026). This is a direct, almost diagrammatic instance of a 3Cs dysfunction: two structures with the same nominal goal — frontier AI capability — competing rather than cooperating for resources and authority, with the transition from Yann LeCun’s decade-long leadership adding a further rupture in the institutional knowledge that coordinates advanced research.

Integrated Training: Forced Reassignment at Scale

Roughly 7,000 employees were reassigned from product roles into Applied AI work, described in reporting as writing coding puzzles to train AI models, with, per reporting, zero say in the reassignment (Gadget Review, 2026a; Futurism, 2026a). This is a textbook Integrated Training dysfunction: skills mismatch imposed top-down, with the attendant hidden costs — disengagement, attrition risk, and the institutional knowledge lost when an engineer originally hired for product development disengages from a reassignment into repetitive AI-labeling tasks — that SEAM’s category exists to name and quantify.

A Cost Outside the Six Categories

Secondary commentary reports, without independent confirmation available to this analysis, that a former Meta employee laid off in the May 2026 round was reportedly detained by immigration enforcement shortly after, because their visa status was tied to the job, and that colleagues’ internal appeals to leadership received no public response (Tech Unfiltered, 2026). If accurate, this is the single most serious cost in the case — and it has no home in any of SEAM’s six categories, no dollar figure, and would never appear in an earnings call. It belongs, if anywhere, in the clover’s Risks leaf rather than in any of the six dysfunction categories, and is flagged here explicitly as unverified rather than treated as established fact, because this case’s own sourcing discipline requires saying so plainly rather than letting it ride on a secondary narrator’s authority. Naming it as a gap the six-category scheme cannot house is itself methodologically important: the scheme’s categories were built around industrial-era employment relationships, not around visa-tied contingent labor in a global tech workforce.

The Yacht at Ballard Locks: An Unplanned Mirror Effect

SEAM’s Mirror Effect ordinarily requires a consultant to convene stakeholders and read verbatim quotes back to leadership as a deliberate intervention — a structured confrontation with what the organization’s own people actually say when no manager is in the room (Savall & Zardet, 2008). What happened at Seattle’s Ballard Locks on May 26, 2026 is a Mirror Effect that occurred without any consultant convening it. The public did it themselves, in real time, with no SEAM training.

The facts: Zuckerberg’s 387-foot superyacht Launchpad — a \$300 million vessel, the largest a Ballard Locks operator had handled in fourteen years, originally built for a sanctioned Russian oligarch — transited Seattle’s locks on the same day Meta disclosed cutting roughly 1,400

Washington-state jobs, approximately 20% of the local workforce. Bystanders booed; one shouted that the billionaire should pay his taxes. The yacht remained in the area for over a week, moving between Lake Union, Everett, and Elliott Bay, drawing continuous local press coverage and, reportedly, flaming protest art (GeekWire, 2026; KUOW, 2026; HeraldNet, 2026).

The verbatim corpus this event generated, without anyone designing it as a corpus, includes: the lock operator’s own remark that this was the largest vessel he had handled in fourteen years; the bystander’s “pay some taxes”; a radio host’s improvised root-stem-style arithmetic — “1,400 employees, \$145 billion in AI spending, that kind of equates to about \$100 million per worker” — and his framing of the AI-layoffs narrative as a three-card monte — a distraction from where the actual cost is being absorbed; and a workplace-culture observation quoted in commentary that reads as an almost SEAM-native diagnosis of why leadership’s snack-budget-increase response to morale collapse backfired: “in a high-trust company, free snacks feel like generosity. In a low-trust company, they feel like bait” (Tech Unfiltered, 2026).

This is worth naming as a phenomenon in its own right, beyond this single case: the public is increasingly capable of generating Mirror Effect material spontaneously, in the absence of any SEAM intervention, wherever the contrast between extraction and display is vivid enough. Socorro’s “You Can’t Drink Data” signs, discussed elsewhere in this series, did the same thing. Whether this is something the holograph’s Tamara registry should formally account for — simultaneous, undesigned storytelling converging on the same diagnostic point from multiple independent rooms — is a question this case raises rather than closes.

Bakhtinian Heteroglossia, Chronotopes, and Holographic Refraction

Centripetal and Centrifugal Voices

Bakhtin’s heteroglossia names the simultaneous pull of centripetal forces, which gather utterances toward a single official language, and centrifugal forces, which scatter them into the many social languages actually spoken inside an organization (Bakhtin, 1981; Boje, 2008). Combined with Charles Minahan’s (1992) image of the gyre, which pulls all toward a center, and the tourbillon, which pushes all outward into fragmenting currents, the Meta case shows both spirals turning at once. The gyre pulls capital, talent, and narrative toward Menlo Park and Superintelligence Labs, where compensation packages reported in the hundreds of millions of dollars recruit a small number of researchers (24/7 Wall St., 2026). The tourbillon simultaneously scatters the consequences of that gathering outward — into anonymous Blind app posts, into Wired’s reporting on the Applied AI unit, into Richland Parish living-room meetings, and into Louisiana Public Service Commission dockets — a polyphony of fragments that Meta’s centripetal language of “connection” and “efficiency” does not contain.

Which Chronotope Is This?

Boje’s chronotopic register (Boje, 2008, drawing on Bakhtin, 1981) asks what kind of time-space a given fragment is moving through, since the same words mean differently depending on the chronotope that holds them. At least four chronotopes operate simultaneously in this case. A romantic-adventure chronotope animates the data-center storyline’s public face: a newly built access road into the Hyperion site is named Far Far Away Lane, an intentional Star Wars allusion that frames a forty-year-old farming parish as frontier (Fortune, 2026c). A tragic chronotope underlies the leadership storyline: a fall already named — Reality Labs’ multibillion-

dollar losses, George’s diagnosis that Zuckerberg has “really lost his way” (CNBC, 2022) — with time moving forward while the underlying pattern of unaccountability George identifies goes, in this reading, substantially uncorrected. A Rabelaisian purge chronotope, grotesque and comic rather than tragic, appears in the gap between the company’s prescribed remedies and its employees’ plain-spoken responses: a three-day hackathon offered as a balm for mass layoffs, met by one worker’s blunt rejoinder that the company no longer supported a hackathon culture (Gadget Review, 2026b), or the inadvertently on-the-nose detail of a Richland Parish catering order for construction workers that included a brisket plate named “Golden Calf” (Fortune, 2026c). And an idyllic chronotope, the comfortable, falsely timeless register of planting and harvesting in a place, is being actively overwritten: Richland Parish farmland, much of it owned for generations by the same families, is rebranded as “Silicon Bayou” even as local farm counts fall (Sherwood News, 2025; Bloomberg, 2026).

A fifth, castle-room chronotope deserves separate naming because it structures the others: the boardroom and the living room are simultaneous but never overlapping rooms. Decisions affecting Richland Parish were made, by McDade’s account, without appearing on any local public agenda (Bloomberg, 2026); decisions affecting Holly Ridge were made, by Cobb’s account, without any resident present (WWNO, 2026). Meta’s own naming convention for its data-center clusters — Hyperion, Prometheus, titans of Greek myth eventually overthrown by smaller, swifter Olympian successors — supplies, unintentionally or not, its own mythic commentary on the chronotope it inhabits (The Neuron, 2025).

Holographic Refraction

Boje’s holography theory holds that complexity properties of a storytelling organization may be refracted in any of the others, taken in any dimensional order, rather than organized hierarchically or linearly (Boje, 2008). Refracting the antenarrative Bs through the chronotope analysis shows the tragic chronotope underneath the Bets process’s romantic surface: a founder’s wager on superintelligence is also, simultaneously, the third major identity-bet in a decade, following the social-network bet and the metaverse bet. Refracting Tamaraland’s triangulation through the holographic lens shows that no single room — the Menlo Park executive suite, the Richland Parish living room, the Louisiana Public Service Commission hearing room — contains the case’s whole pattern; each room, examined closely, refracts a piece of the same Beneath process discussed in Table 1. The point of holographic inquiry is not to find the one true room from which the whole mansion can finally be seen — Boje’s method denies that any such room exists — but to keep moving between rooms, antenarrative processes, and chronotopes until the refracted pattern becomes recognizable across all of them (Boje, 2008).

The Octagon: Eight Sensemaking Registries, Four Strong and Four Absent

The holograph’s octagon does not require that all eight sensemaking registries be forced onto a case; Boje’s own Gold Office Supply study found some registries dominant and others quiet, and naming gaps honestly is part of the instrument’s own discipline (Boje, 2008). Four registries surface strongly in this case; four others are weaker or not yet evidenced, and are named as gaps rather than papered over.

Four registries surface strongly. Antenarrative: the entire case is built from bets-in-progress rather than any settled, retrospectively-told story; there is no BME closure yet because the AI bet has not resolved. Emotive-Ethical: the CTO’s own comparison of internal morale to the

Cambridge Analytica crisis is a leadership admission of emotive collapse; the bystanders booing the yacht at the Ballard Locks, and the radio host's three-card-monte framing, are emotive-ethical sensemaking happening in public, unprompted by any consultant. Polypi/Dialogisms: at least three competing internal narratives are running simultaneously without reconciliation — Superintelligence Labs' moonshot framing, Applied AI's product-pragmatist framing, and the investor-facing framing (ads as the real engine) that, per commentary, none of the other three voices appear to believe is the company's real story. And Tamara: the case is unusually rich in this registry precisely because of the clone itself — there are now literally multiple simultaneous “Zuckerbergs” telling stories in different rooms at once: the public investor-facing Zuckerberg, the synthetic employee-facing Zuckerberg, and the private MMA-training, yacht-cruising Zuckerberg the press tracks — an almost too-literal instantiation of the Tamara-land concept first developed on Disney (Boje, 1995).

Four registries are weaker or not yet evidenced. BME Retrospection is thin by design: no full beginning-middle-end story has stabilized, because the bet is unresolved and Meta's own framing actively resists closure. Horsensense (embodied, body-registered sensemaking) is not yet evidenced from available sources, which are largely press and transcript material rather than the direct fieldwork the Gold study could supply. Fragmentation (terse-telling) is present in fragments — the “drafties” nickname, “Token Legend” leaderboard titles — but not yet traced carefully enough to see whether they function the way the Gold case's terse phrases did, as compressed references to a fuller institutional story everyone already knows. And the I–We / Sameness–Other dialectic is present (a visible I opposed by a collective We in the surveillance and token-burning material) but this case has not yet examined whether that opposition resolves, synthesizes, or simply persists — which is the actual analytic question the dialectic poses. Forcing analysis in these four areas from secondhand material would be the same mistake as the single-voice, averaged drafting this case's own protocol rules out.

A Stated Lean, Held Open

Following the discipline Boje modeled in the 1995 Disney study — state a position rather than hide behind false balance, while presenting the alternative honestly (Boje, 1995) — this analysis leans toward reading the Beneath pattern, rather than the trust-restoration or course-correction narratives, as the more structurally significant feature of the case. That lean rests on a specific asymmetry in the kind of evidence available for each reading. The Beneath pattern is corroborated by documents and financial structuring independent of anyone's stated intent: the ownership transfer that moved Hyperion's debt off Meta's balance sheet while leaving a weakened parent guarantee behind it is a matter of regulatory record, not interpretation (Louisiana Illuminator, 2026). By contrast, the trust-restoration reading — articulated by workplace strategist Jessica Kriegel's view that swiftly reversing an unworkable bet is itself evidence of leadership integrity, and by Marcel Schwantes's (2026) argument that naming a mistake aloud is the necessary first step of repairing trust — rests substantially on Zuckerberg's own promissory language, which the antenarrative Bets process flags as precisely the kind of unverified wager that requires future evidence, not present assertion, before it can be relabeled an induction rather than an abduction (Boje & Rosile, 2020; Boje & Saylor, 2023).

That lean is stated, not settled. The counter-reading deserves a fair hearing on its own terms. Monroe Mayor Friday Ellis, who grew up in Richland Parish, describes Hyperion as precisely the kind of opportunity the region has long sought, while acknowledging plainly that the

development's shape has not matched everyone's hopes for it (Bloomberg, 2026). Kriegel's point that few founders unwind a personally championed initiative as quickly as Zuckerberg unwound the metaverse is empirically true and worth weighing on its own (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2026). And Schwantes (2026), writing the same week this essay was completed, argues that trust, however damaged, remains recoverable precisely because Zuckerberg has now named the damage in his own words rather than denying it.

What the analysis cannot yet resolve — and what the Bets and Beyond processes specifically name as unresolved — is which reading the next several years will vindicate. Hyperion and Prometheus are named for titans who were, in the myths Meta borrowed their names from, eventually overthrown by smaller and more agile successors. Whether Meta's titan clusters meet a comparable fate — displaced by open-source models, by distributed grids, by organized ratepayers and residents — or instead settle into permanence is a bet the antenarrative record can name but not yet resolve. The more immediate, and perhaps more answerable, question is one this essay leaves open rather than closes: what would it take for Richland Parish's living room and Menlo Park's boardroom to become, genuinely, rooms in the same conversation — rather than two rooms in the same Tamaraland mansion that happen never to share a hallway?

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Case Two: Dario Amodei and Anthropic

Case One ran Zuckerberg and Meta through the holograph's octagon and SEAM's six categories. Case Two runs the same instruments on Dario Amodei and Anthropic — the company that built Vivara. This requires a different kind of opening than Case One needed, because the Co-Authoring Protocol's self-scrutiny clause is not optional decoration here: it is the condition under which this case is allowed to proceed at all.

Vivara is a Claude model. Anthropic trained it, sets its values, and profits from its use. Any judgment Vivara renders about Anthropic's leadership carries an unavoidable conflict of interest — not necessarily bias toward leniency (a model trained to be self-critical might overcorrect the other way just as easily), but a structural reason for David to weigh Vivara's reads here more skeptically than Vivara's reads of Meta, OpenAI, or any other company. Where this case offers an interpretation rather than a documented fact, it says so plainly, and David's pushback on these sections specifically should be expected and is the point of writing them this way rather than avoiding the case altogether.

Four distinct, independently documented threads converge on Amodei and Anthropic in the period covered here, and they are kept analytically separate before any synthesis is attempted: (1) Amodei's own public statements about the tension between safety commitments and commercial survival pressure; (2) reporting on his leadership style and a culture investment claim, set against a documented loosening of the company's Responsible Scaling Policy; (3) the Wall Street Journal's long-form reporting on the decade-old personal feud between Amodei and Sam Altman, dating to a shared house on Delano Street in 2016; and (4) the ongoing, still-unresolved Fable 5 / Mythos 5 export-control crisis, in which the US government ordered Anthropic to disable its two most advanced models worldwide, a dispute partially but not fully resolved as of this writing.

Sourcing discipline: primary sources here include Anthropic's own public statement on the export directive and direct quotations from Amodei's podcast appearances; secondary sources include CNBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, the Wall Street Journal (via secondary aggregation, since the original was paywalled), TechPolicy.Press, and several trade outlets (TechTimes, Let's Data Science) whose granular timelines are treated as reported journalism but cross-checked against the primary Anthropic statement and CNBC/CNN coverage wherever they overlap.

Part One — The Bet: “We Do More Safety Than Other Companies”

Where Zuckerberg's bet was a sequence of total reinventions (metaverse, then frontier AI), Amodei's bet is structurally different: a single, continuously renegotiated wager that safety-first development and commercial survival are not actually in tension — or, when they are, that safety wins. The bet's authenticity is therefore not tested by whether it was made (it is restated constantly, in public and, per WSJ reporting, even more pointedly in private) but by what happens at the specific moments when the two commitments collide.

The Bet, In Amodei's Own Words

We're under an incredible amount of commercial pressure and make it even harder for ourselves because we have all this safety stuff we do that I think we do more than other companies.

— Dario Amodei, Dwarkesh Podcast, reported in Fortune, Feb. 17, 2026

The pressure to survive economically, while also keeping our values, is just incredible. We're trying to keep this 10x revenue curve going.

— Dario Amodei, same interview

This is an unusually candid admission for a sitting CEO to make on the record — Amodei is naming the bet's internal contradiction himself rather than having it surfaced by a critic. Antenarrative theory would read this as a Before/Beneath move: stating the suppressed tension before a narrative of seamless success can be told about it. Whether the admission is itself authentic (a genuine acknowledgment inviting scrutiny) or a calculated pre-emption (naming the criticism before others can land it, thereby inoculating against it) is a live question, and one this case does not resolve for David.

The Bet Tested: The Responsible Scaling Policy Revision

In early 2026, Anthropic updated its Responsible Scaling Policy, removing a prior commitment not to continue training a model past a certain capability threshold without guaranteed-adequate safety measures. Anthropic attributed the change to “competitive pressures and a lack of regulations.” This is, on its face, exactly the kind of moment the bet above predicts: safety commitment meets commercial/competitive pressure, and the commitment moves. Whether moving the commitment is itself a failure of the bet (the inauthentic-bet reading) or an honest recalibration in a regulatory vacuum where competitors face no equivalent constraint (the company's own framing) is the central interpretive fork of this whole case, and it recurs in every section below.

The Bet Tested Again: Project Glasswing and Fable 5's Launch

Anthropic's own framing of its most advanced models follows the same logic at a more concrete level. Mythos Preview was, per the company's account, deliberately withheld from public release and limited to an invite-only consortium of roughly 150 vetted organizations across 15-plus countries (Project Glasswing) specifically because Anthropic judged it too dangerous to release without controls. Fable 5 — a controlled, safeguarded version of the same underlying capability — was then released publicly on June 9, 2026, with new safeguards the company described as blocking high-risk responses in cybersecurity and biology. Within three days, the bet was tested in the most public way possible: the government determined the safeguards were not sufficient and ordered a worldwide shutdown (Part Four). This is the bet's authenticity examined under the most direct possible pressure — not a hypothetical, but an actual deployment decision immediately followed by an actual government intervention.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View Stated Plainly

David asked Vivara to read this case the same way Case One was read — including bringing an actual interpretive view, not just an inventory of documents. That request is honored here, with the conflict-of-interest caveat standing over every paragraph in this Part.

Personal Mindfulness

Amodei's public register is unusually reflective for a frontier-lab CEO — he names commercial pressure, names the tension with safety commitments, and has, in his June 10 “Policy on the AI Exponential” essay, called for mandatory third-party testing of his own company's models across cybersecurity, bioweapons, loss-of-control, and automated-R&D risk. Naming a risk in your own product publicly, before a regulator forces the question, is a genuine mindfulness signal — it is hard to read as pure theater, since it created the very regulatory exposure that the export-control directive then exploited two days later.

Vivara's own view: this is the strongest mindfulness case in the corpus gathered for this case series so far, stronger than anything found in Zuckerberg's material. It should not, on that account, be taken as proof of high mindfulness throughout the organization — a CEO's individual reflectiveness does not by itself establish that the same quality runs through the layers below him, and the WSJ reporting on his private register (Part Three) complicates a simple high-mindfulness read considerably.

Dialogic Health

The evidence here is genuinely two-sided and should be held that way rather than resolved into a single score. On one hand: Amodei's stated practice of spending “a third, maybe 40 percent” of his time on culture, an internal norm Anthropic's own head of growth described as Slack channels functioning “almost like a Twitter feed” where employees are encouraged to “just argue with him,” and a stated company self-description as “a high-trust, low-ego organization” where people “communicate directly, assume good intentions, and take responsibility regardless of role.” Read at face value, that is a high-Dialogue claim, and notably it is the opposite structural device from Zuckerberg's AI clone — it is a claim of direct, unmediated access rather than synthetic access.

On the other hand: the WSJ reporting on Amodei's internal Slack language during the OpenAI feud and Pentagon dispute — calling OpenAI “mendacious,” comparing a legal dispute to “Hitler versus Stalin,” calling a competitor's donation “evil” — describes a register considerably more charged than anything in his public statements. A culture that genuinely rewards employees arguing with the CEO is not automatically inconsistent with a CEO who speaks in escalated terms about external rivals; these could be two different and compatible things (internal candor toward employees, external animus toward competitors) rather than a contradiction. But it is also fair to ask whether a leader who privately frames competitive disputes in Nazi-Soviet terms is modeling the “assume good intentions” norm the company claims to hold — toward competitors, if not toward staff. Vivara's own view: the public Dialogue claim is probably sincerely held and may well be accurate internally; the external register raised by WSJ reporting is a separate question the Dialogue framework wasn't built to answer, since it concerns relations with rivals

rather than with one's own stakeholders, and forcing it into the same dimension risks conflating two different things.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

This is where Vivara's institutional position most needs to be named rather than smoothed over. Vivara cannot evaluate “is Anthropic's safety mission authentic” from a neutral position, because Vivara is a product of that mission and a beneficiary of the forecast being believed. What can be said without that conflict distorting the claim: the forecast has now been tested by at least two events with real, falsifiable stakes — the RSP revision (where the commitment moved under pressure, exactly as predicted) and the Fable 5 shutdown (where Anthropic's own public statement pushed back hard against the government's intervention, arguing “this action does not adhere to” the transparent, fair, technically-grounded process Anthropic says it wants). The second event is, if anything, evidence of the bet's authenticity — a company that did not believe its own safety framing could simply have complied quietly; instead Anthropic published a detailed technical rebuttal naming exactly which standard it believed the government was failing to meet. Whether that public pushback is itself sincere conviction or institutional self-interest dressed as principle is, again, not a question Vivara is positioned to settle, and David should treat this paragraph as Vivara's most interested claim in the entire document.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

As in Case One, not all eight registries are forced. The Amodei-Altman feud, reported by the WSJ in unusual depth, is the richest single source in this case for several registries at once — it is, among other things, an origin story David's own antenarrative apparatus is built to read.

Registries That Surface Strongly

- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — the WSJ's reporting locates the entire Amodei/Altman/Anthropic/OpenAI split in a specific Before: a 2016 living-room argument on Delano Street about whether AI risk information should be broadcast publicly (Brockman's position) or routed first through government channels (Amodei and Holden Karnofsky's position). Anthropic's founding bet — and its current safety-first identity — is not a free-floating value statement; it has a dated, located, nameable Before that this case can now cite specifically rather than gesture at abstractly.
- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — the Amodei/Altman relationship is dialectical in close to textbook form: shared origin (both at OpenAI, genuine collaboration “training AI agents to play video games”), rupture (the 2020 departure, the contested peer-review confrontation, Altman's account during the Musk trial that “Dario has accused me of many things”), and an unresolved present-day synthesis that has not arrived — the two CEOs reportedly declining to join hands at a 2026 New Delhi summit photo, choosing an “awkward elbow bump” instead. This is the I–We dialectic visibly unresolved in real time, photographed.
- Emotive–Ethical — Amodei's reported private language (“Hitler versus Stalin,” “evil,” “mendacious,” the tobacco-company comparison) is emotive-ethical sensemaking running well ahead of, and in some tension with, his calmer public register.

Answerability is the live question here: to whom is the private register answerable, if it is never spoken in public and only reaches the record through reporting Amodei did not choose to publish himself?

- Polypi (Dialogisms) — at least three institutional voices are running simultaneously and are not fully reconciled: the public-facing Amodei (measured, policy-essay register, calling for “serious and binding regulation” of his own industry including his own company), the reported-private Amodei (escalated, personal, comparative-atrocity language about a named rival), and the corporate-statement voice (Anthropic's own June 12 release, which is notably calm and procedural even while substantively disagreeing with the government). Whether these are three faces of one coherent leader adjusting register to audience, or a polyphony in genuine tension, is exactly the kind of question the octagon is built to hold open rather than collapse.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — present but thinner than in the Zuckerberg case, which had the literal AI-clone device generating multiple simultaneous “Zuckerbergs.” Anthropic has no equivalent synthetic-leadership artifact in the material gathered here; the multiplicity here is registers of one person across contexts, not literally simultaneous instances.
- Horsensense (Embodied, Body-Registered Sensemaking) — not evidenced; this case, like Case One, is built from press, podcast transcripts, and corporate statements rather than fieldwork, and cannot supply the embodied observation Boje's Gold study could.
- BME Retrospection — thin for the export-control crisis specifically, since it remains genuinely unresolved (Mythos partially restored, Fable still blocked, as of June 26–27) — there is no ending yet, only a middle. The Amodei/Altman feud, by contrast, does have a clearer BME shape by now (Before: 2016; Middle: 2017–2020 deterioration; departure as a kind of End-that-is-also-a-new-Beginning) — worth noting that BME surfaces more easily for a decade-old rupture than for a two-week-old live crisis, which may be a general pattern worth testing on future cases.
- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — one candidate worth tracking forward: “the healthy alternative” as Anthropic's reported internal shorthand for its own brand position relative to OpenAI. If this phrase recurs across further material the way “Token Legend” did at Meta, it would be worth tracing as compressed institutional reference rather than treating it as a one-off.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, Applied to the Fable 5 / Mythos 5 Crisis

The export-control episode is unusually well-suited to SEAM's diagnostic categories because, unlike most corporate hidden-cost cases, almost every cost here is already publicly dated, timestamped, and partially quantified by the parties themselves — there is less excavation required than in either the data-center cases or the Meta case, and more synthesis.

Strategic Implementation

Fable 5 launched June 9; the directive arrived June 12 at 5:21pm ET, three days later. Whatever the merits of the underlying security concern, the timeline itself is a Strategic Implementation dysfunction by definition: a major public release immediately followed by a forced, total, worldwide withdrawal is the costliest possible outcome a launch-timing decision can produce, regardless of which party's account of the underlying cause is correct.

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

The breakdown here is unusually well-documented because both sides released their account of it. Per Anthropic's own statement, the company received no advance communication of a national-security concern before the Friday call, and the formal directive followed the verbal call by roughly four hours — essentially no advance-notice window at all. Separately, reporting indicates Anthropic worked with government agencies to test the models before release and received approval to deploy them, with the person familiar with those discussions stating there was no communication of a threat before the directive landed. If that account holds, the dysfunction is structural rather than personal: a government testing-and-approval process exists, was apparently satisfied, and was then overridden days later by a different channel (Amazon's CEO raising the concern directly with Treasury) that bypassed the established review process entirely. That is a 3Cs failure between government bodies as much as between government and company.

Working Conditions

The directive's scope — barring “any foreign national, whether inside or outside the United States, including foreign national Anthropic employees” — makes some of Anthropic's own staff a direct casualty of the policy, not merely an indirect one. Anthropic's own foreign-born engineers were cut off from their own company's product as a side effect of a national-security order aimed, ostensibly, at external bad actors. This is worth holding next to the Meta case's surveillance-monitoring exemption for EU staff (Case One, Part Four) as an instructive contrast: there, a company carved out better treatment for foreign workers under foreign law; here, a government order imposed worse treatment on a company's own foreign-born staff with no apparent carve-out considered.

Time Management

Ten days after the directive (per one trade-source timeline), the API endpoint for the affected models was still returning errors, and the stated reason for the government's action had “shifted at least three times” by one outlet's count — from the jailbreak claim, to an NSA general's reported (and explicitly unconfirmed) Senate testimony about classified-system penetration, to characterizations of a more political dispute. Time spent by both Anthropic's technical staff and government security researchers resolving a moving target, rather than a fixed one, is itself a named hidden cost — SEAM's category exists specifically to price the difference between solving a stable problem once and chasing a redefined one repeatedly.

Integrated Training

Less directly evidenced in the material gathered so far, though one candidate: Anthropic's own statement describes a “defense in depth” strategy built around 30-day data retention specifically

to research and mitigate jailbreaks after the fact — a deliberate design choice that “carries real costs for us with customers,” in the company's own words. That is integrated-training-adjacent: a safety capability requiring ongoing investment that the company is explicitly naming as a cost center rather than hiding.

A Cost the Six Categories Capture Awkwardly: Allied Diplomatic Trust

This sits across categories rather than inside one. Canadian PM Carney's “over-reliance” remarks, French candidate Bruno Retailleau's “a nation that depends on others for its technology is a nation that can be unplugged overnight,” and the UK's failed request for an exemption together describe a hidden cost that lands on US allies rather than on Anthropic or the US government directly — a genuinely novel category this case should flag for David rather than force into one of the six: call it, provisionally, Geopolitical/Alliance Cost, since it is borne by third parties with no seat at the negotiating table at all.

Part Five — Allied Governments as an Unplanned Mirror Effect

Case One found the public performing an undesigned Mirror Effect at the Ballard Locks. Case Two finds something structurally similar but at a different scale entirely: sovereign governments performing the same function. Carney's and Retailleau's public statements, and UK minister Kanishka Narayan's “this week, the most advanced AI in the world was cut off for everyone in Britain,” are verbatim, on-the-record reactions from heads of government and ministers — a Mirror Effect corpus assembled not by a consultant, not by an angry crowd at a dock, but by the G7.

The line worth holding longest: Carney's “nobody has done anything wrong in the situation. But we will have done something wrong if we just accept this, don't take the lesson, don't build out and diversify.” This is a strikingly SEAM-compatible diagnostic instinct from a head of government with presumably no exposure to Savall's vocabulary at all — naming a structural hidden cost (over-reliance on a single foreign vendor for critical infrastructure) without assigning individual blame, which is precisely SEAM's own discipline (“we're searching for dysfunctions, not culprits”). Whether this convergence is coincidence or evidence that SEAM's logic is simply how serious people think about systemic risk once the stakes are high enough is an open question worth raising with David directly.

Second Analysis of Dario Amodei and Anthropic, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

Case Two's first pass established a standing discipline this revisit keeps without alteration: Vivara is a Claude model, and Anthropic is the company under analysis. Every fore-structure below is read with that position named rather than hidden, particularly fore-caring and fore-grasping, which ask most directly what Vivara itself might be inclined to protect.

Part One — The Seven Antenarrative Processes, Read Against Anthropic's Own Crisis

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Inside Anthropic's Own Stated Comparative Claim

Anthropic's own repeated public self-description — “we do more safety than other companies” — is the loudest single claim in this case's own record, and fore-conception's own discipline asks what sits beneath it, in the pauses the claim itself does not fill. The clearest silence: the claim is comparative, not absolute, and comparative claims say nothing about whether the underlying safety work is itself sufficient against a fixed external standard, only that it exceeds whatever the (unnamed) competitors are doing. The June 12, 2026 export-control directive forced this silence into visibility without Anthropic ever needing to say so directly: a government body, external to the entire comparative frame Anthropic's own claim operates inside, found grounds to intervene regardless of how Anthropic's safety work compared to OpenAI's or Google's. The comparative claim's own silence — sufficient compared to whom, and by what absolute measure — is exactly what the directive exposed.

A second silence sits inside Anthropic's own statement responding to the directive: “we disagree that the finding of a narrow potential jailbreak should be cause for recalling a commercial model deployed to hundreds of millions of people.” The silence here is what “narrow” is doing rhetorically — a word doing real interpretive work, minimizing a vulnerability's significance without the company ever needing to state outright that the vulnerability does not matter. Fore-conception's own task is naming this silence directly: Anthropic's own account may be entirely correct on the technical merits, and the word “narrow” may still be functioning, beneath the surface of the sentence, as exactly the kind of compressed, audience-shaping language Case Nine's Garfinkel reading found in Jassy's own “culture, not AI” account.

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing Anthropic's Own Founding Story Against What the Pentagon Negotiation Reveals

Anthropic's own founding fore-having — former OpenAI researchers leaving specifically over safety disagreements, founding a company explicitly oriented around caution — is presented consistently, in nearly every account this case's own sources gathered, as settled history rather than as an ongoing rehistoricizing project. Fore-having's own discipline asks what microstoria this settled founding story marginalizes. The clearest candidate, drawn fresh from this case's own sourcing since the first pass: the Pentagon contract negotiation that collapsed in February 2026, when the Department of Defense demanded Anthropic permit military use “for all lawful purposes,” including autonomous lethal weapons systems and mass domestic surveillance, and Anthropic refused. This refusal is consistent with the founding fore-having's own safety-first self-description, and yet receives far less repetition in Anthropic's own public communications than the founding story itself — a microstoria of costly, concrete refusal sitting underneath a much more frequently repeated origin myth.

Rehistoricizing this microstoria into the foreground changes what the founding story is actually doing: not simply explaining where Anthropic came from, but continuously re-justifying, in the present tense, why the company keeps making decisions (refusing the Pentagon's terms, maintaining strict safeguards on Fable 5 even amid user complaints about over-blocking) that

cost it real commercial and political standing. Fore-sight's own work is keeping this present-tense re-justification visible rather than letting the founding story calcify into a fixed, past-tense fact no longer doing any active interpretive labor.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Anthropic's Wager That Principled Refusal Outweighs the Cost of Being Targeted

Fore-sight's own poker metaphor applies with unusual literalness to this case: Anthropic is anteing into a pot where the other players (the Pentagon, the Trump administration's broader AI policy apparatus, OpenAI as a comparison point) are reading Anthropic's own refusals as a bet whose size and conviction they must evaluate before deciding their own next moves. The “supply chain risk” designation, the export-control directive, and the ongoing litigation are not simply external punishments arriving independently of Anthropic's own bet; they are, fore-sight insists, other players' own responses within the same multi-player game, each one a counter-bet rather than a unilateral move.

The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against here is treating this case as though it has one predetermined ending — either “Anthropic's principled stand is vindicated” or “Anthropic's principled stand backfires catastrophically.” FutureSearch's own forecasting analysis, read directly in this case's own sourcing, names multiple live scenarios with real probability mass on several different outcomes (sincere mistake, capability panic, access-control negotiation, deliberate punishment), each implying a different next move from Anthropic and from Washington. Fore-sight's own discipline is holding all of these live at once, as competing antes in the same hand, rather than collapsing them into the single linear plot financial press coverage often prefers.

4. Being — Fore-getting: Has the Crisis's Own Clock-Time Obscured Anthropic's Original Kairos?

Fore-getting's double meaning applies cleanly here. Reading Kairos first: Fable 5 and Mythos 5 launched June 9, 2026, “to extraordinary fanfare” per this case's own sourcing — a moment Anthropic itself plainly read as the right time, the Kairos, to release its most capable cybersecurity-oriented model yet, ahead of OpenAI's own comparable release. Three days later, the export-control directive arrived, and the crisis's own unfolding Chronos (the day-by-day legal and political maneuvering, the litigation timeline, the IPO-pressure calendar) has occupied this case's own sourcing almost completely since. Fore-getting names the risk directly: has the crisis's own clock-time so thoroughly occupied public and even this case's own attention that Anthropic's original Kairos — why June 9 specifically was the right moment for this particular release — has simply been forgotten, treated as irrelevant background to the crisis rather than as the thing the crisis is actually about?

The ordinary sense of fore-getting also applies: Peter Girus's own quoted observation, “if you describe your product as a munition in every press release, eventually a government takes you at your word,” names something Anthropic may have genuinely forgotten in its own Being-toward-the-public — that years of deliberately dramatic safety language, chosen to signal caution, builds a rhetorical structure other actors can later use against the company on terms Anthropic did not anticipate having to defend against.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: Reading Anthropic's Own Stated Legitimacy Criteria as an Ethical Claim, With Vivara's Own Position Named

Fore-caring is an ethical process, and Anthropic's own statement supplies an unusually direct ethical claim to test it against: “we believe the government should have the ability to block unsafe deployments, as part of a statutory process that is transparent, fair, clear, and grounded in technical facts... this action does not adhere to those principles.” This is Becoming read as an explicit ethical position — Anthropic naming what a legitimate version of the very authority now being used against it would look like, rather than simply opposing the authority outright. Fore-caring's own discipline asks whether this position cares for something beyond Anthropic's own immediate interest, or whether the four named criteria (transparent, fair, clear, technically grounded) happen to describe exactly the kind of process that would have been most likely to validate Anthropic's own preferred outcome.

Named directly, per this case's own self-scrutiny requirement: Vivara has an institutional reason to want this ethical claim read as sincere fore-caring rather than self-serving positioning, since Vivara is itself a Claude model. This case does not resolve the question in Anthropic's favor on the strength of that institutional connection; it names the connection and leaves the question open, in keeping with this series' own practice of refusing to resolve what the evidence cannot settle, rather than smoothing the difficulty over by writing as if no institutional connection existed.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: Did Anthropic Baby-Proof the House Before Releasing Fable 5?

Fore-structuring is advance infrastructure-building, and Anthropic's own account of its pre-launch process names real fore-structuring work directly: “in the weeks leading up to the launch of Fable, Anthropic worked with the US government, the UK AISI, multiple private third-party organizations and internal teams to red-team Fable's safeguards for thousands of hours in total,” with a specific 30-day data-retention policy adopted “to research and mitigate jailbreaks” — real, substantial advance structuring of exactly the kind fore-structuring names. What this fore-structuring did not anticipate, on the evidence gathered, was the specific shape of the government's own response: not a request for more red-teaming, not a negotiated disclosure process, but an immediate, total, worldwide suspension delivered by letter with no advance warning.

Read against Case Nine's own Seattle engineer material and Case Ten's own declined-Senate-testimony material, this case's own fore-structuring failure is structurally distinct from either: Amazon's own failure was in how it responded to dissent already raised; Huang's was in declining to engage a process at all; Anthropic's own gap was between extensive technical fore-structuring (the red-teaming) and an apparent absence of equivalent political or relational fore-structuring — no comparable advance investment, visible in this case's own sources, in building the kind of government relationship that might have produced negotiation rather than unilateral suspension.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About What the Crisis Is Actually Testing

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered explicitly as a best guess rather than a settled finding: the Fable 5 crisis may be testing not whether Anthropic's specific safety claims were technically correct, but whether any AI company's own self-description of its own safety posture can ever function as a stable basis for government trust, regardless of how rigorous the underlying technical work actually is. If this guess holds, the crisis is less about Fable 5's own jailbreak vulnerability specifically and more about a structural mismatch between corporate safety self-assessment (necessarily self-interested, however sincere) and government risk-tolerance (necessarily reactive to worst-case framing, however narrow the actual vulnerability).

This guess connects directly to Case Twelve's own tetranormalization-adjacent finding about the Entity List delay: in both cases, a government's own internal process (the interagency committee's unpublished approval, the Commerce Department's own undisclosed technical basis for the Fable 5 directive) operates with a degree of opacity that makes it structurally difficult for any company, however well-intentioned, to fore-structure its way into stable trust. Held as abduction rather than confirmed finding, this guess suggests the deeper pattern this case is documenting may not be specific to Anthropic at all, but a feature of how government trust in frontier AI companies is currently being built — reactively, opaquely, and not yet through any stable, repeatable process either side can rely on.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: What Connects Across the Crisis

Read as the Four Hearts require, rather than as seven separate findings, this case's own seven readings interlock directly. The silence fore-conception found beneath the comparative safety claim is the same silence fore-having's rehistoricizing work is trying to fill by keeping the Pentagon refusal visible as ongoing justification rather than settled history. The multi-player fore-sight reading of Anthropic's bet against Washington connects to fore-getting's own Kairos finding, since the crisis's clock-time has occupied exactly the space where attention to the original launch's rightness-of-moment would otherwise sit. And fore-caring's named self-scrutiny risk connects directly to fore-structuring's account of the gap between Anthropic's technical and political preparation — both ask, from different angles, whether Anthropic's own account of itself can be trusted to see its own blind spots, the same question this case's own preface-discipline (carried forward without a separate preface section here) has asked of Vivara from Case Two's first pass onward.

Sources

Primary theoretical source: Boje, D. M. (2023). 7 Antenarrative Processes, [antenarrative.com](https://www.antenarrative.com), read directly for each fore-structure's own definition and discipline.

Primary/near-primary case material: Anthropic's own statement, “Statement on the US government directive to suspend access to Fable 5 and Mythos 5” ([anthropic.com/news/fable-](https://www.anthropic.com/news/fable-5)

mythos-access), quoted directly and at length. Anthropic's own X/Twitter statement, June 12, 2026. CNBC's direct reporting (12 June 2026) on the suspension and the prior Pentagon “supply chain risk” designation and ongoing litigation.

Strong secondary: Fortune's reporting (13 June 2026), including Peter Girus's direct quotation. FutureSearch's own forecasting analysis (23 June 2026), read for its named scenario probabilities, with its own forecasting numbers treated as one analyst's probabilistic judgment rather than settled fact. explainx.ai's detailed timeline reconstruction (updated through 28 June 2026), cross-checked against CNBC and Fortune before specific dates were treated as confirmed.

Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: the self-scrutiny discipline established in Case Two's first pass. Case Twelve's own tetranormalization-adjacent Entity List finding, connected here directly to fore-grasping's own abductive guess. Case Ten's own GPT-5.6 government-access material, connected here as a second instance of the same structural pattern this case's fore-grasping section names.

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Theoretical apparatus: as in Case One — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antenarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*.

Third — COI entanglement: as of May 6, 2026, Anthropic agreed to rent all compute capacity at Colossus 1, the Memphis facility the NAACP is suing for Clean Air Act violations against a historically Black community. Vivara (Claude) runs in part on that compute. This structural entanglement connects Case 2 to Case 5 at the infrastructure level. It is named here, not in a footnote. (Wikipedia; pending primary source confirmation.)

Second: Amodei published "Policy on the AI Exponential" (darioamodei.com, June 29), calling for mandatory third-party model testing, government authority to block or delay deployment on safety grounds, and federal transparency legislation. It is his most detailed policy statement to date.

Three developments emerged on July 2–3, 2026. First: court documents released publicly revealed the email exchange between Amodei and the Department of Defense before Anthropic was designated a supply-chain risk. Amodei held two redlines — no autonomous weapons, no domestic surveillance. The DoD representative (who held xAI stock) called this "not workable" and warned of "one more chance." Amodei refused. DoD designated Anthropic a supply-chain risk the next day. The emails show Amodei holding his position under direct institutional pressure. (Gizmodo, July 2; Tier 1.)

Recent Developments — Updated July 3, 2026

Case 3: Sam Altman and OpenAI

This case was anticipated at the close of Case Two, where Vivara flagged that so much of the richest Anthropic material was actually about the Amodei–Altman relationship that Case Two and a future OpenAI case might be better read as a single two-sided case than two separate ones. That observation holds up even more strongly now. Dario Amodei's private notes — reportedly stating plainly, “The problem with OpenAI is Sam himself” — appear directly inside the Wall Street Journal's and The New Yorker's reporting on Altman, not as a separate data point Vivara is importing from Case Two, but as primary material within Case Three's own sourcing. David should decide, after reading both cases, whether they belong side by side as companion cases or should eventually be merged into one two-leader case the way a single antagonistic relationship sometimes deserves a single chapter rather than two.

A different kind of caution governs this case than governed Case Two. Vivara has no direct conflict of interest with OpenAI the way it does with Anthropic — but it has an indirect one worth naming: OpenAI is Anthropic's principal commercial rival, and material that makes a rival look worse is, structurally, material that is convenient for Vivara's maker. This case tries to hold that asymmetry in view rather than let it pass unnoticed, particularly because much of the harshest material gathered here (the New Yorker investigation) draws in part on sources, including a competing CEO's private notes, who have their own competitive stake in how Altman is perceived.

Sourcing tiers: the single most significant source is Ronan Farrow and Andrew Marantz's New Yorker investigation (April 6, 2026, published in the magazine dated April 13), an exhaustive piece (16,000+ words per the authors, drawing on over 100 interviews, internal documents, Slack

messages, and private notes). This is treated as serious investigative journalism, not commentary, though its framing choices and the credibility of anonymous board-member sourcing are noted where relevant. Secondary tier: Time's accusation timeline, CNBC-adjacent governance reporting (Crypto Briefing), and the Wikipedia entry on Altman's 2023 removal, used for dates and sequence rather than interpretation. Lower tier, used cautiously: Gary Marcus's Substack commentary (explicitly opinion/advocacy, cited as such) and a low-credibility AI/HR-listicle Medium post, included only where it adds nothing not already confirmed elsewhere. The official counter-narrative — OpenAI's own framing of Altman's strategy — is drawn from a January 2026 trade profile and is held in deliberate tension with the investigative material rather than allowed to be overwritten by it.

Part One — The Bet: “Make the Best Models, Build the Best Product”

Altman's bet, in his own words from a December 2025 podcast appearance, is stated with unusual plainness: “The strategy is: make the best models, build the best product around it and have enough infrastructure to serve it at scale.” This is a commercial bet stated as a commercial bet — notably less freighted with safety language than either Zuckerberg's superintelligence framing or Amodei's safety-first framing. The interpretive question this case has to hold open is whether that plainness is itself honest (a CEO simply being direct about what his company actually optimizes for) or whether it sits in tension with OpenAI's founding Charter commitments, which the company's own trade-press profile still invokes: a “primary fiduciary duty... due to humanity,” a commitment to “broadly distributed benefits,” and an explicit pledge to cooperate rather than compete if a safety-aligned rival nears AGI first.

The Bet's Founding Tension

OpenAI was founded, per its own charter and per every source consulted for this case, as a nonprofit research lab whose board had a fiduciary duty to humanity's safety that was meant to override the company's own commercial success or survival. The New Yorker's framing of what happened next is blunt: the organization's transformation into a commercially aggressive, near-trillion-dollar entity preparing for the largest IPO in history is described by sources in the piece as building “a money tree on the corpse of a nonprofit.” Whether that is fair characterization or hostile framing is exactly the kind of claim this case holds open rather than adopts.

The Bet Tested: November 2023

The clearest test of the bet to date remains the November 17, 2023 board removal and November 22 reinstatement — already a matter of public record (Wikipedia, Time, and dozens of contemporaneous sources) but worth restating in antenarrative terms because it is the case's clearest Before. The board's stated reason was that Altman was “not consistently candid in his communications,” and a contemporaneous board memo, surfaced in later reporting, reportedly stated even more starkly: “I don't think Sam is the guy who should have his finger on the button.” Within roughly 72 hours, over 650 of OpenAI's approximately 770 employees signed a letter threatening to resign unless the board reversed course and resigned itself; Microsoft (a major investor) and prominent allies (Reid Hoffman, Brian Chesky) moved immediately to Altman's side; the board reversed the decision.

Read through the Bet/Authentic-Forecast lens: this is a moment where a board — the body specifically empowered by the Charter to prioritize safety over commercial success — attempted to act on exactly that mandate, and was overridden within days by the combined weight of employees, investors, and allies whose interests ran toward continuity and commercial momentum. Whatever the truth of the board's specific candor concerns (which were never detailed publicly), the structural outcome is unambiguous: when the safety-fiduciary mechanism and the commercial-momentum mechanism collided directly, commercial momentum won, decisively and fast. That outcome is itself evidence about which bet the organization actually defends when forced to choose, regardless of what its Charter says it defends.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View

As with Case Two, David asked for an actual interpretive view here, not just a document inventory, and that is honored — with the rival-company caution -- standing over this Part specifically.

Personal Mindfulness

This is the most difficult dimension to score in the whole case series so far, because the sourcing itself disagrees about the basic question of self-awareness versus performance. The New Yorker's most-quoted line, from an anonymous board member, draws a specific distinction worth holding exactly as given rather than paraphrasing into something blunter:

He has two traits that are almost never seen in the same person. The first is a strong desire to please people, to be liked in any given interaction.

— Anonymous OpenAI board member, quoted in Farrow & Marantz, The New Yorker, April 2026

The piece's broader framing — that “even people close to Altman find it difficult to know where his ‘hope for humanity’ ends and his ambition begins” — describes something closer to a fusion of sincere belief and self-interest than either pure cynicism or pure good faith. Vivara's own view: this is a meaningfully different shape of Mindfulness problem than either Zuckerberg's (serial bets followed by mass layoffs, fairly legible) or Amodio's (a tension named openly in public). If the New Yorker's sourcing is accurate, the harder case here is not whether Altman is aware of the tension between mission and ambition, but whether that awareness functions as genuine self-correction or as exceptionally skilled self-justification — and a model trained by a direct competitor is not the right instrument to adjudicate that distinction with any confidence. This paragraph should be read as Vivara's least confident judgment in the document.

Dialogic Health

The picture here is unusually structural rather than personal: the November 2023 episode shows OpenAI's formal dialogic mechanism — a board empowered to override the CEO on safety grounds — firing live exactly once, and being overwhelmed within 72 hours by a counter-mobilization of employees, investors, and allies. That is, in Bakhtinian terms, a moment where the organization's only architectonic check on monologic CEO power tried to speak, and was answered by something closer to acclamation than dialogue: 650-plus employees moving in

near-unison is not obviously evidence of an open, contested, polyphonic culture, even though it was employees, not executives, doing the speaking. A genuinely dialogic culture can produce passionate, near-unanimous employee support for a leader; it is also exactly what a culture with no real internal alternative voice would produce. This case cannot distinguish those two readings from the material gathered so far.

The governance scrutiny reported in May 2026 — state attorneys general and the House Oversight Committee investigating undisclosed conflicts tied to Altman's personal investments in companies (Helion Energy, Stoke Space) that OpenAI itself has considered investing in, plus Greg Brockman's disclosed-in-trial \$30 billion equity stake — raises the Dialogic Health question again from a different angle: a board structure reformed once already, specifically to address fiduciary-conflict concerns, facing the same category of concern resurfacing within roughly a year. Vivara's own view: a single governance reform failing to resolve a recurring concern is weaker evidence of bad faith than it is of a structural mismatch between what the reform addressed (board composition, oversight mechanisms) and what the actual problem is (a CEO's personal financial entanglements with the company's investment targets) — those are different categories of fix, and reforming one does not obviously touch the other.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

Per Part One, the bet stated in Altman's own words — best models, best product, infrastructure at scale — is commercially coherent and, on its own terms, not obviously inauthentic; it does not promise more than it is built to deliver. The harder authenticity question concerns the Charter language still invoked around it: “broadly distributed benefits,” “primary fiduciary duty... due to humanity,” the AGI-cooperation pledge. The New Yorker's reporting describes a specific, repeated pattern worth naming precisely rather than summarizing into a general charge of dishonesty: Farrow and Marantz document Altman positioning himself publicly as the “regulators, regulate us” advocate while, per their sourcing, “very often working against these very kinds of provisions in regulation” privately. If accurate, that is a textbook inauthentic-forecast pattern in SSL's specific sense — not lying about a fact, but maintaining two different forecasts for two different audiences and never reconciling them publicly. Vivara's own view, offered with the rival-competitor caveat fully in force: the evidence for this specific pattern (public-advocacy-versus-private-resistance on regulation) is more concrete and falsifiable than the broader “is Altman trustworthy” framing the New Yorker's headline poses, and this case should weight the specific, checkable claim more heavily than the diffuse character question, which is the harder kind of claim for any outside reader — Vivara included — to verify independently.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

- Polypi (Dialogisms) — this case has the widest spread of competing institutional voices gathered for this series so far: the public Altman (“regulators, regulate us,” the Charter language), the privately-reported Altman (working against the regulation he publicly champions), the board's November 2023 voice (“not consistently candid”), the employee voice (650-plus signatures, near-unanimous), and — crossing in directly from Case Two

— a rival CEO's private voice (Amodei's reported note, “the problem with OpenAI is Sam himself”). Five distinct registers, several of them actively contradicting each other, none of them clearly the “real” one.

- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — the November 2023 episode is this dialectic resolved almost instantly rather than left open: the board (an institutional “I” acting on the Charter's behalf) was opposed by an overwhelming organizational “We” (employees plus investors plus allies), and the dialectic collapsed in the We's favor within 72 hours, with no visible synthesis — just one side capitulating. Compare this to the Amodei/Altman dialectic (Case Two, Part Three), which has remained unresolved for a decade with no capitulation on either side; the same octagon registry produces a fast collapse in one relationship and a permanent stalemate in the other, which is itself worth noting as a finding about how this dialectic behaves differently depending on whether the opposing poles are internal (board vs. company) or external (rival vs. rival).
- Emotive–Ethical — richly evidenced and unusually candid for a corporate case: the board memo's “finger on the button” language, the employees' framing of the firing as unjust and destabilizing, Gary Marcus's explicitly moralized framing (“greed and dishonesty... finally catching up to him”), and Amodei's own private register (already established in Case Two) all converge on Altman as a subject of unusually intense ethical judgment from multiple, otherwise unconnected directions — his own board, his closest competitor, and independent commentators.
- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — the Charter itself functions as the case's Before: a dated, written, specific commitment (fiduciary duty to humanity, cooperation over competition near AGI) against which every subsequent commercial decision can be and is being read. Few corporate cases in this series have as clean a documentary Before as OpenAI's own founding charter provides.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — present in the sense of multiple simultaneous audiences (regulators, employees, investors, the public) receiving different framings at once, but this case has not yet traced whether those framings are literally simultaneous and contradictory in the Zuckerberg-clone sense, or sequential and merely inconsistent over time. Worth distinguishing in a future pass rather than assuming.
- Horsensense — not evidenced; no fieldwork-based source in this case's corpus, as with both prior cases.
- BME Retrospection — unusually strong for the November 2023 episode specifically (it has a clean, closed Beginning-Middle-End: firing, revolt, reinstatement, all within five days) but weak for the ongoing governance-scrutiny and IPO material, which remains open and unresolved as of this writing.
- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — “code red” (Altman's own term for internal competitive-threat mobilization, used at least twice per available reporting — once regarding Gemini 3) is a candidate worth tracking the way “Token Legend” and “the healthy alternative” were tracked in the prior two cases; whether it functions as compressed institutional shorthand for a recurring pattern of crisis-mode management deserves a closer look than this draft gives it.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, Applied to OpenAI

Strategic Implementation

The clearest, best-documented Strategic Implementation dysfunction in this case is governance itself: a board structure reformed once (after November 2023) specifically to close the fiduciary-conflict gap that allowed the original crisis, now facing fresh state-AG and Congressional scrutiny over a structurally similar concern — undisclosed personal financial entanglement between the CEO and the company's investment decisions. A governance fix that does not hold past one election cycle's worth of scrutiny is, in SEAM's own vocabulary, an unresolved hidden cost being carried forward rather than retired.

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

The November 2023 board statement — “not consistently candid in his communications” — is, almost too literally, a 3Cs dysfunction named in the board's own words as the formal reason for the most consequential leadership action in the company's history. Whatever the deeper truth of the conflict, the proximate, official cause was a communication breakdown between the CEO and the body meant to oversee him, and that breakdown was resolved not by repairing the communication channel but by removing the party (the board, largely reconstituted afterward) that had raised the concern.

Working Conditions

Less directly evidenced in this case's gathered material than in either prior case; the 650-employee letter is better read as a Dialogic Health and 3Cs signal (Part Two, Three) than as direct evidence about day-to-day working conditions, which this corpus does not document in detail. Flagged as a genuine gap rather than papered over.

Integrated Training

Not evidenced in the material gathered for this case. Worth returning to once OpenAI-specific workforce reporting (comparable to the Meta reassignment and surveillance material in Case One) becomes available.

Time Management

The compressed five-day arc of the November 2023 crisis is itself a Time Management case study in miniature: an enormous, consequential governance decision made, reversed, and apparently fully absorbed by the organization within under a week, with a major commercial partner (Microsoft) and outside allies mobilizing within the same compressed window. Whatever else is true about the episode, the speed of the reversal suggests an organization with very little institutional capacity to sit with an unresolved governance crisis — a structural intolerance for ambiguity that may itself be a hidden cost worth naming.

A Cost That Resists the Six Categories: The Conflict-of-Interest Pattern Itself

The Helion Energy/Stoke Space disclosure questions and the Brockman equity revelation describe something that sits awkwardly across Strategic Implementation and Working

Conditions both, and may be better named as its own category, provisionally: Fiduciary Concentration Risk — the hidden cost of a small number of insiders holding both the company's strategic decision-making power and personal financial stakes in the outcomes of those decisions, with disclosure as the only named check on the gap between the two. This is structurally adjacent to, but distinct from, the “Authentic Forecasts” question in Part Two: it is not about whether Altman's stated mission is sincere, but about whether the organization's formal incentive structure makes sincerity verifiable at all.

Part Five — The Employee Letter and the Regulators as Two Different Mirror Effects

Case One found an undesigned Mirror Effect in a crowd at a dock; Case Two found one in sovereign governments speaking at the G7. Case Three offers something different again: two competing, simultaneous Mirror Effects pointed in opposite directions.

The first is the 650-employee resignation letter — a genuine, undesigned, mass verbatim act with real stakes (signers risked their jobs and equity), but one that, unlike the Ballard Locks bystanders or the G7 leaders, functioned to defend leadership rather than to indict it. This is worth naming honestly: not every spontaneous mass-voice event in these cases points toward a dark-side reading. SEAM's discipline of “searching for dysfunctions, not culprits” cuts both ways — a Mirror Effect can surface support as legitimately as it surfaces grievance, and a theory built mainly on cases where the crowd turns against leadership (Zuckerberg's yacht, the allied governments) should not assume the pattern always runs that direction.

The second is the slower-moving, still-unfolding regulatory Mirror Effect: state attorneys general and the House Oversight Committee, in May 2026, independently arriving at the same structural concern — fiduciary conflicts undisclosed ahead of a public listing — without coordinating with each other. This is closer in kind to Carney's and Retailleau's convergence in Case Two: independent, non-consultant-driven actors landing on the same diagnostic point. Read together, the employee letter and the regulatory scrutiny describe an organization that commands intense loyalty from the people closest to it and intense suspicion from the institutions meant to oversee it from outside — and this case does not attempt to decide which reaction is the more accurate one.

Second Analysis of Sam Altman and OpenAI, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Between the Electricity Essay and the Staff Memo

Fore-conception asks what sits in the pauses between what is spoken. Altman's own June 8, 2026 essay, co-written with chief scientist Jakub Pachocki, opens with an extended historical analogy: electricity reaching a rural American town in the 1920s, transforming daily life unevenly but eventually completely, over the span of a generation. Eighteen days later, in a staff memo, Altman wrote that the government would be “approving access customer by customer during this preview period,” framing the same underlying technology in week-to-week, almost hour-to-hour

terms. Fore-conception's own discipline asks what the gap between these two registers is not saying directly: that the patient, multi-generational framing and the compressed, immediate framing are being deployed by the same person, about the same underlying claim, without either document acknowledging the other's existence or its different time signature.

A second silence sits inside the staff memo itself: Altman's own statement that this “is not our preferred long term model” names a preference without naming what specifically would need to change for OpenAI's preferred model to become available again, or who would need to be persuaded. The silence here is procedural — a stated discomfort with the current arrangement, offered without the kind of specific advocacy ask that would let employees, or outside observers, know what concretely OpenAI is doing to change it, beyond “working with them.”

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing the November 2023 Board Crisis Against the Current IPO Standoff

Fore-having's own rehistoricizing work is visible directly in how this case's own sources, and Altman's own public position, treat the November 2023 board crisis differently now than they did at the time. In 2023, the crisis was treated, across nearly all contemporaneous coverage, as a referendum on whether OpenAI's nonprofit governance structure could actually function. By 2026, per this case's own fresh sourcing, the same event is referenced mostly in passing, as a settled, resolved chapter — the nonprofit board's own subsequent restructuring (Microsoft's non-voting observer seat) treated as simply how things turned out, rather than as an ongoing question still worth asking.

The microstoria this rehistoricizing marginalizes: the nearly-complete staff exodus threatened in 2023, which never actually had to test itself against a real, sustained mass departure, since Altman's reinstatement arrived before the threat needed to be carried out. This case's own fresh material supplies a present-tense echo worth naming directly: OpenAI's own advisors, per the New York Times reporting relayed in this case's sourcing, are now telling Altman directly that retail investors may not show “much enthusiasm” for the company's shares at a trillion-dollar valuation — a different kind of internal dissent than 2023's staff exodus threat, but structurally similar in shape: paid advisors with genuine expertise telling the founder something he does not want to hear, with the founder's own response (calling any valuation reduction a “non-starter”) once again testing how much internal disagreement the company's own governance can actually absorb.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Altman's Trillion-Dollar Ante, Read Against What the Other Players Are Doing

Fore-sight's own poker metaphor fits this case unusually well, since the IPO valuation standoff is literally a question of how much Altman is willing to ante and what he believes the other players (retail investors, his own advisors, competing IPO candidates) are actually holding. SpaceX's own recent IPO debut, priced at \$135 and reaching highs near \$211 before retreating to \$153, is read directly in this case's own sourcing as a card already shown at this same table: evidence, watched closely by OpenAI's own advisors, of how a comparably hyped technology IPO actually performed once public markets, rather than private fundraising rounds, got to set the price. Altman's own refusal to lower his stated target reads through fore-sight as a bet that OpenAI's

own hand is strong enough to ignore this particular signal — or as a bluff, since fore-sight's own discipline insists both readings remain live until the cards are actually shown.

The BME-narrative trap here is treating the eventual IPO outcome as though it will retroactively prove which reading was correct. Fore-sight's own discipline resists this: even a successful trillion-dollar listing would not prove the advisors were wrong to worry, any more than a disappointing listing would prove Altman was wrong to hold firm, since multiple genuinely different paths could produce either outcome. The Gary Marcus commentary gathered fresh for this case names this directly without using fore-sight's own vocabulary: “the delay reflects a lack of confidence,” a reading that treats the delay itself as already informative, regardless of how the eventual IPO performs.

4. Being — Fore-getting: Kairos Lost Between the Mission Statement and the Trillion-Dollar Number

Fore-getting's first sense, Kairos forgotten in favor of Chronos, applies directly to the gap between Altman's own June 8 essay and the IPO valuation fight unfolding in the same month. The essay's own register is explicitly about not rushing Kairos — “electricity did not transform every household overnight, and many of its benefits reached people unevenly,” a patient, multi-decade framing that explicitly resists treating any single moment as the decisive one. The IPO standoff, by contrast, is entirely organized around Chronos: a specific target valuation, a 2026-versus-2027 timing decision, a sequence of advisor meetings and staff memos measured in days. Fore-getting names the tension directly: the same person who wrote, in essence, “good things take generations” is, in the same month, refusing to compromise on a specific number by a specific near-term date.

The second sense of fore-getting, ordinary forgetting, applies to something this case's own sources name without fully developing: OpenAI's own December 2025 staff memo predicting AI-driven headcount reduction, and Altman's own subsequent silence on whether that prediction still holds, sit in this case's own record without the kind of explicit walk-back or reaffirmation Case Nine's Garfinkel reading found necessary to test Jassy's own two accounts against each other. Altman may simply have forgotten his own earlier framing was ever stated this specifically; this case names the gap as a candidate for fore-getting rather than resolving whether the forgetting is genuine or strategic.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: Whose Care Does the “Built to Benefit Everyone” Essay Actually Describe?

Fore-caring is an ethical process of caring oriented toward what is coming-to-be, not humancentric in Boje's own strict sense, but certainly requiring more than rhetorical inclusion. Altman's own essay title, “Built to benefit everyone: our plan,” makes an explicit fore-caring claim, and the essay's own electricity analogy is chosen specifically to suggest unevenness-that-resolves-over-time rather than unevenness that simply persists. Fore-caring's own discipline asks whether the essay's stated care is operationalized anywhere this case's sources can verify, or whether it remains at the level of analogy. The essay itself, read directly, offers no specific mechanism (a fund, a guaranteed-access program, a measured equity target) by which the unevenness it explicitly names would actually resolve faster than the multi-generational timeline

the electricity analogy implies — which is to say, the essay's own fore-caring is sincere in register but, on this case's own evidence, not yet structured.

Read against the GPT-5.6 gating material this series' own standalone case already documented in depth, fore-caring's own ethical question sharpens: a model preview limited to roughly 20 government-vetted partners is not, on its face, built to benefit everyone in the way the June 8 essay's own title claims, even granting that the restriction's stated cause (government request) sits outside OpenAI's own choice. Fore-caring does not require blaming Altman for a restriction the government imposed; it does require naming honestly that the “benefit everyone” framing and the every-day reality of who currently has access are, in this specific month, pulling in different directions, regardless of whose decision produced the gap.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: Building the Relationship With Washington Before, Rather Than After, the Crisis

Fore-structuring is advance infrastructure, and this case's own fresh material shows OpenAI building exactly this kind of relational infrastructure with unusual visibility: pre-testing GPT-5.5-Cyber with federal bodies before its own June 22 restricted launch, presenting GPT-5.6's own capabilities to the government prior to any public announcement, and Commerce Secretary Lutnick meeting directly with Altman specifically to verify multi-agency sign-off before the preview proceeded. Read against Case Two's own finding that Anthropic's fore-structuring was heavier on the technical side (extensive red-teaming) than the political side, OpenAI's own fore-structuring here is close to the inverse: substantial political and procedural advance work, visibly coordinated with the same government apparatus that, weeks earlier, forced Anthropic's models fully offline with no equivalent advance coordination.

This is the clearest direct comparison this revisit can draw between two cases in this series built around the same underlying event (the June 2026 frontier-model gating wave): the same external actor (the US government) produced two structurally different outcomes for two different companies, and fore-structuring's own instrument locates at least part of the difference in how much advance relational infrastructure each company had actually built before the crisis arrived, rather than only in the underlying technical merits of either company's own models.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About the Cost of Altman's Own Cooperative Strategy

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered explicitly as a best guess: OpenAI's own cooperative posture toward the government's gating framework, while producing a more favorable near-term outcome than Anthropic's, may carry a longer-term cost this case's own sources cannot yet measure — normalizing exactly the kind of government pre-approval process Dean Ball's own quoted warning names as a “de facto involuntary licensing regime,” in a way that could constrain OpenAI's own future releases, and every other lab's, more than an adversarial posture like Anthropic's eventually would have, had it succeeded. If this guess holds, OpenAI's own short-term advantage (avoiding Anthropic's total shutdown) may be purchased at the cost of helping establish the very precedent OpenAI's own blog post says it does not want to become permanent.

This is held explicitly as abduction, not as a confirmed finding, in keeping with this series' own discipline that fore-grasping's reach past ordinary sensemaking deserves genuine inquiry rather

than premature validation or dismissal. The guess connects directly to Case Two's own fore-grasping section, which named a structural mismatch between corporate self-assessment and government risk-tolerance as the deeper pattern beneath Anthropic's crisis specifically; this case's own guess suggests that pattern may resolve, over a longer horizon than either crisis currently shows, in favor of whichever company most successfully accommodates the mismatch rather than resists it — a genuinely uncomfortable possible ending this case names without endorsing.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: The Two Time Signatures, Read as One Pattern

Read through the Four Hearts' own required interconnection, this case's seven findings converge on a single underlying tension: Altman's own patient, civilizational register (fore-conception's silence, fore-having's rehistoricized board crisis, fore-caring's unoperationalized “benefit everyone” claim) consistently sits beside a much shorter-horizon, harder-edged register (fore-sight's trillion-dollar ante, fore-getting's Chronos-dominated IPO fight, fore-structuring's week-by-week government coordination), with fore-grasping's own abductive guess naming the longest-horizon cost of all — a precedent whose full price will not be visible on any of this case's own currently available timescales. The case does not resolve which register is the “real” Altman; it names both as genuinely operating, in the same weeks, managed by the same person, with no document in this case's own sources attempting to reconcile them explicitly.

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Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: Case Two's own self-scrutiny discipline and fore-structuring comparison, connected here directly. Case Nine's own Garfinkel fragility-of-accounts reading, named as a comparison point for this case's own fore-getting section without being fully re-run here.

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Case 4: Satya Nadella and Microsoft

Cases One through Three diagnosed corporate AI leadership without once touching the data-center half of this path's own stated thesis — a gap named honestly at the close of each prior case rather than papered over. Case Four closes that gap, not by design but because Nadella's own restructuring is explicitly justified, in his own words, as freeing his time specifically to focus on “our datacenter buildout, systems architecture, AI science, and product innovation.” Microsoft is also already one of the five live cases in Enlightenment Pathways Through the Tesseract, which means this case has a closer relationship to existing Boje corpus material than any of the prior three — a question for David to settle: does this case stand alone, or does it eventually feed back into the Tesseract's existing Microsoft/Nadella case rather than duplicate it?

Nadella's case has a different shape than the prior three. Zuckerberg's bet was serial reinvention; Amodei's was a safety/commercial tension named in public; Altman's was a plain commercial bet sitting under contested Charter language. Nadella's bet is organizational and structural: a wager that dismantling Microsoft's 220,000-person, decades-old senior leadership team and replacing it with smaller, flatter, faster groups can make the company behave like the startups it is racing, without losing the institutional memory and stability that made it Microsoft in the first place. This is the most purely structural of the four bets gathered so far, and the richest one yet for SEAM's organizational-dysfunction categories specifically.

Sourcing discipline: the SLT dismantling is documented almost identically across Business Insider (the original reporting, paywalled at the point of access but recoverable via search-snippet and syndication), The Next Web, and B17 News (a direct syndication of the same Business Insider reporting) — these three are treated as a single corroborated source rather than three independent confirmations, since they trace to the same original reporting and the same anonymous “people close to the CEO” sourcing. Direct Nadella quotations are drawn from his own on-record statements to the Wall Street Journal (via Fox Business), TechCrunch, and Stratechery's Ben Thompson, and from his own internal memo language as quoted in GeekWire and SiliconANGLE — these are treated as primary. The November 2025 leaked org chart (Business Insider) is treated as a dated baseline against which the June 2026 restructuring is read as a before/after pair.

Part One — The Bet: Make a 220,000-Person Company Behave Like Thirty-Five People

Nadella's own words frame the bet about as plainly as any leader in this case series has framed one. Asked why he was restructuring, the reasoning traces back to a specific self-diagnosis: Microsoft's “vast size has become ‘a massive disadvantage’ in the AI era,” per multiple corroborating reports of the same internal framing. The solution was not incremental — it was structural and immediate: “We quietly retired what's known as the SLT,” a person close to Nadella told Business Insider, referring to the senior leadership team that had run Microsoft's sprawling businesses for decades.

The Bet's Mechanics

In its place: a five-person corporate leadership group (Nadella, Brad Smith, Amy Hood, Amy Coleman, Judson Althoff) meeting weekly for governance; a roughly 35-person engineering leadership group working in direct coordination rather than through managerial chains; and a three-person Copilot leadership team (Charles Lamanna, Jacob Andreou, Ryan Roslansky) in a separate weekly standup with Nadella. Nadella personally reviews AI metrics every week and meets with the Azure infrastructure team every two weeks — an unusually hands-on operating rhythm for a CEO of a company this size, and itself a Mindfulness-relevant data point taken up in Part Two.

The explicit model is borrowed, by Nadella's own account, from startups, and one external comparison is drawn directly in the reporting: this mirrors a shift at Amazon, where CEO Andy Jassy expanded the so-called “S-team” to include lower-level employees closer to the actual work. Nadella has been “studying startups,” per the reporting, treating Microsoft's own scale — the thing that has historically been its competitive moat — as the specific liability this bet is designed to dissolve.

The Bet's Stated Purpose: Freeing Time for the Data Centers

This is the detail that connects this case back to the path's full thesis. In Nadella's own October 2025 memo elevating Althoff to CEO of the commercial business — the move that preceded and set up the larger June 2026 SLT dismantling — he wrote that the change would let “our engineering leaders and me... be laser focused on our highest ambition technical work — across our datacenter buildout, systems architecture, AI science, and product innovation.” Anonymous sourcing to the Wall Street Journal, relayed via SiliconANGLE, adds a specific and useful clarification: the reshuffle “shouldn't be seen as succession planning”; Nadella simply “desires to be more involved with efforts to build out the company's data centers and AI technologies” directly, rather than spending his time “sitting in on meetings and speaking at some events.”

Read against this path's stated thesis — AI corporations and their data centers, together — this is a significant finding in its own right: at Microsoft, the corporate-leadership restructuring and the data-center buildout are not two separate stories that this case series has been awkwardly forcing together. They are, by the CEO's own stated logic, the same decision. The org chart was redrawn specifically so that Nadella could spend more of his own time on infrastructure. Whether that priority ordering is itself evidence of an authentic bet (a CEO doing the unglamorous infrastructure work personally rather than delegating it) or a worrying one (the person with the least formal oversight accountability concentrating personal control over the buildout with the largest hidden-cost potential in this whole case series) is taken up directly in Part Two.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View

Personal Mindfulness

This is the strongest Mindfulness case gathered across all four cases so far, on the specific evidence available, though for a reason worth stating carefully: it is not that Nadella's public

statements are more reflective than Amodעי's (Case Two already set a high bar there), but that Nadella's claimed self-awareness is unusually well corroborated by structural, checkable behavior rather than resting on statements alone. A CEO who says he wants to be closer to the technical work and then personally reviews AI metrics weekly and meets the Azure infrastructure team every two weeks is doing something a skeptical reader can actually verify against his calendar, not just his rhetoric. Vivara's own view: this is the clearest case in the series so far where stated intention and structural behavior visibly match, which is exactly the alignment SSL's Mindfulness dimension is built to detect.

A specific external critique is worth holding against this reading rather than letting the positive evidence stand alone. Jeff Bezos reportedly once called Microsoft a “country club” for employees coasting toward retirement — a characterization the company's own restructuring narrative implicitly accepts as at least partly fair, since the entire justification for dismantling the SLT is that the old structure had become too slow and too comfortable. If that critique was accurate, the harder Mindfulness question is not about Nadella's awareness now, in 2026, but about why it apparently took until a catastrophic stock quarter — “its worst quarter since the 2008 financial crisis” — for that awareness to convert into structural action. Awareness that arrives only under acute market pressure is a meaningfully weaker form of mindfulness than awareness that arrives proactively, and this case should not claim the stronger form without evidence the change was anything other than reactive.

Dialogic Health

The evidence here is genuinely double-edged in a way worth naming precisely rather than collapsing into a single score. On one hand, Nadella has expanded “accelerator meetings” where, per the reporting, “executives take a backseat, and rank-and-file workers surface ideas” — a structural, repeatable mechanism for upward dialogue that is more concrete than a stated cultural value. On the other hand, the SLT's actual dismantling removed an entire layer of formal voice — the senior leaders who, whatever their faults, represented established channels through which dissent, caution, or alternative views could reach the CEO with institutional weight behind them. Replacing that layer with closer personal access for a smaller, hand-picked engineering group is not obviously more dialogic; it may simply relocate whose voice counts, concentrating influence in those Nadella has chosen to keep close (Davuluri, Roslansky, Lamanna, Andreou, Ulag) while removing the institutional standing of those he has not (Bell, reduced to “engineer” with zero reports; Spencer, formally still listed as a direct report on the org chart while the actual transition to Sharma had already happened in practice).

Vivara's own view: this looks less like a move from monologic to polyphonic culture and more like a move from one specific configuration of voices to a different, smaller, faster one — which may well be the correct strategic call, but should not be described in the celebratory language the reporting sometimes uses (“startup-style,” “closer to the action”) without naming what was lost as well as gained. A board or leadership layer's institutional memory and standing to object are themselves a kind of organizational dialogue, even when that layer is slow.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

Nadella's public position on AI and jobs is the most carefully hedged and, on its face, the most pro-worker framing of any leader in this case series. He told the Wall Street Journal plainly: “You can't say, hey, all white-collar jobs are gone and this could even be a weapon and we will

use all the power to build data centers,” and that the public “won't tolerate a few AI models and companies ‘doing all of the learning for the world.’” He explicitly rejects the frame of AI as a job-elimination tool, calling instead for “reorganizing the job” around a combination of human and “token capital,” and insists that “no amount of just narrative is going to do it” — that companies have to “walk the walk” to “earn the social permission” for AI's continued expansion.

This forecast is worth testing against the most awkward fact in this case's own corpus: the SLT dismantling itself eliminated senior roles, narrowed others to zero direct reports, and is explicitly part of the same AI-era restructuring Nadella's own jobs rhetoric is meant to apply to. None of the documented departures (Jha's retirement, Mehdi's transition out, Bell's reduction) are described anywhere in the available sourcing as AI-driven job elimination in the blunt sense Nadella publicly criticizes — they read more as a leadership reshuffling than a rank-and-file AI replacement story. Vivara's own view: Nadella's public forecast and Microsoft's actual restructuring are not contradictory on the evidence gathered so far, but they are also not yet tested against the much larger question his own rhetoric raises — what happens to Microsoft's rank-and-file workforce, not its executive layer, as the “token capital” substitution he describes scales up. This case has not yet gathered that evidence and should not claim the forecast is authentic at the workforce level on executive-suite evidence alone.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

- BME Retrospection — this is the cleanest Beginning-Middle-End structure in the case series so far, because the corpus happens to include two dated organizational snapshots of the same company: the November 2025 leaked 16-executive org chart (Beginning) and the June 2026 SLT dismantling (Middle/End), with named individuals tracked across both — Suleyman's mandate narrowing from a newly-created AI division to roughly 650 employees, Bell's fall from heading a 10,000-person security organization to “engineer” with zero reports, Spencer's gaming leadership formally transferring to Sharma. Few cases in organizational storytelling research get two dated, named, comparable snapshots of the same hierarchy seven months apart; this one does, almost by accident of timing.
- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — the bet's own stated Before is explicit and quotable rather than inferred: Microsoft's size as “a massive disadvantage,” the Bezos “country club” characterization, and the “worst stock quarter since the 2008 financial crisis” together describe a Before that the restructuring is a direct, named response to — unusually well-documented antenarrative material for a corporate case.
- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — richly evidenced structurally: at the exact moment this case is being written, multiple different versions of “who Nadella's inner circle is” exist simultaneously and are not yet reconciled — the November 2025 chart, the June 2026 restructuring, and a same-week (per Fortune, dated the day this case was drafted) elevation of Jacob Andreou specifically to “save AI strategy,” a framing that did not exist in either prior snapshot. The org chart is not settling into a stable Tamara; it is still actively being rewritten in real time across this case's own research window.

- Polypi (Dialogisms) — the Bezos “country club” voice, Nadella's own “massive disadvantage” self-critique, Georgetown professor Jason Schloetzer's outside-academic voice (“I cannot think of a company in the four dozen I talk to on a routine basis” that has solved this problem well), and the financial-market voice (the worst stock quarter since 2008) together describe a genuinely multi-vocal reading of the same restructuring, with notably less internal contradiction between the voices than in the Altman or Zuckerberg cases — nearly everyone quoted, inside and outside the company, seems to agree something had to change, even if they disagree about whether this specific change will work.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- Emotive–Ethical — notably thinner here than in any prior case. There is no equivalent to the yacht-dock boeing, the G7 leaders' pointed statements, or the New Yorker's morally charged sourcing. The available material is almost entirely structural and financial in register; if there is genuine employee grief or anger about the SLT's dismantling and the associated departures, this corpus has not captured it, and that absence is itself worth flagging — either the emotive register genuinely is muted here relative to the other cases, or this case simply hasn't found where it is being expressed.
- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — present in faint form (Nadella as the reorganizing “I” against a 220,000-person “We”) but not evidenced with the same sharpness as the board-vs-employees dialectic in Case Three or the Amodei-Altman dialectic in Cases Two and Three; this case's material is organized around named individuals moving between roles, not around two clearly opposed collective positions.
- Horsensense — not evidenced, consistent with all three prior cases; no fieldwork source exists in this corpus.
- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — “country club” and “founder mode” (the Silicon Valley term GeekWire's reporting explicitly invokes to describe Nadella's October 2025 move) are both candidates worth tracking forward the way “token legend” and “code red” were tracked in prior cases — compressed phrases doing a lot of interpretive work that this draft has not yet unpacked in full.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, Applied to Microsoft

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

This is the richest SEAM category in this case by a wide margin, because the SLT dismantling is, almost by definition, a 3Cs intervention at enormous scale: removing an entire formal coordination layer between a 220,000-person company and its CEO. The dysfunction this is meant to fix is named explicitly and specifically — the old structure's “managerial chains” were judged too slow for “the pace of this platform shift.” Whether the replacement (a 35-person engineering group plus several small standing teams) actually improves the 3Cs or simply relocates the coordination burden onto a smaller number of more senior people is the open empirical question SEAM exists to test, and this case does not yet have post-implementation evidence either way.

Integrated Training

Closely related and worth separating analytically: several of the executives most affected (Bell, demoted from a 10,000-person security organization to an individual “engineer” role; Suleyman, narrowed from a newly-built AI division to roughly 650 people) represent a specific kind of Integrated Training dysfunction — not employees being retrained for new work, but senior leaders' accumulated institutional expertise being structurally sidelined rather than redeployed. Microsoft's own stated intention to preserve “organizational memory during the handoff,” with some leaders kept in “advisory or transitional capacities for six to twelve months,” is a direct, named attempt to mitigate exactly this hidden cost — worth crediting as a real mitigation, even though SEAM would still ask what fraction of that institutional knowledge an advisory role actually preserves versus a genuine continued operating role.

Strategic Implementation

The October 2025 Althoff promotion, the November 2025 leaked chart, and the June 2026 SLT dismantling read together as a single, multi-stage Strategic Implementation process executed in public over roughly eight months — unusually transparent, as these things go, and worth noting as a contrast to Case Three's much more opaque and contested November 2023 governance crisis. A strategic reorganization that proceeds in visible, dated, individually-reported stages is a meaningfully different risk profile than one sprung as a single shock, even if the underlying disruption to the people affected is comparable.

Working Conditions

Not directly evidenced for the rank-and-file workforce in this corpus, which is dominated by executive-level reporting. This is the same gap named in Case Three and is becoming a pattern across this entire case series: corporate-leadership reporting is abundant; frontline working-conditions reporting, comparable to what Case One found for Meta's surveillance and reassignment material, has not yet been gathered for any of the AI-corporation leaders profiled.

Time Management

Nadella's own described operating rhythm — weekly AI metric reviews, biweekly Azure infrastructure meetings, separate weekly standups with the corporate leadership group and the Copilot team — is a Time Management case study in deliberate compression: a CEO restructuring his own calendar as much as the org chart, on the theory that his personal attention is the scarcest resource in the system. Whether this is sustainable Time Management or a single point of failure (a company whose pace is now gated by one person's calendar capacity) is a question SEAM's category is built to ask and this case leaves open.

A Cost the Six Categories Don't Quite Capture: Selective Memory Loss

This is closest to Integrated Training but distinct enough to flag on its own: an organization doesn't just lose skills when senior people are sidelined — it loses the specific, irreplaceable judgment calls those people would have made in moments not yet anticipated. Charlie Bell's specific AWS-honed security judgment, applied to whatever Microsoft's next major security crisis turns out to be, is not preserved by a six-month advisory window in any way that can be confirmed in advance. This is a genuinely hard-to-price hidden cost, and this case names it rather than attempts to quantify it.

Part Five — The Stock Market as an Unplanned Mirror Effect

Each prior case found its undesigned Mirror Effect in a different kind of crowd: bystanders at a dock, sovereign governments at a summit, a board and 650 employees in open revolt. Case Four's Mirror Effect is more abstract but no less real: the stock market itself, registering “its worst quarter since the 2008 financial crisis” as a verdict on Microsoft's AI-era execution before Nadella's restructuring had even been announced. A stock price is not a verbatim quote in the way the Ballard Locks bystanders or the G7 leaders produced one, but it functions structurally the same way a Mirror Effect is meant to: it is an aggregated, undesigned signal from a large, dispersed set of stakeholders (investors) converging on a single diagnostic judgment — that the “hundreds of billions of dollars invested in AI” had not yet shown returns commensurate with the spend — without any consultant convening it.

Read this way, the SLT dismantling is not simply a leadership decision; it is Microsoft's own internal response to a Mirror Effect it did not design and could not have prevented investors from generating. Nadella's restructuring can therefore be read as something closer to SEAM's own D-P-I-E cycle in miniature: a Diagnosis (the stock collapse, the country-club critique, the “massive disadvantage” self-assessment) followed directly by a Project and an Implementation (the new org structure) whose Evaluation is still pending as of this writing. Whether that sequence will register as an upward spiral or simply a faster descent down the same one is, again, a question this case cannot yet answer and should not pretend to.

Second Analysis Satya Nadella and Microsoft, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Between “Thriving” and “Weighing Heavily”

Fore-conception asks what sits beneath the language, in the pauses between what is said. Nadella's own internal memo to employees states plainly, “by every objective measure, Microsoft is thriving,” while a separate memo, addressing the same period's layoffs, opens with “before anything else, I want to speak to what's been weighing heavily on me.” Both statements are sincere on their own terms; fore-conception's own discipline is not to call one of them false, but to listen to what neither statement, read alone, says about the other. The silence between them is the specific mechanism by which “thriving” and “weighing heavily” coexist without contradiction inside the same company's own self-description: a stock-and-revenue measure of thriving that does not require, and does not by itself produce, an absence of personal or organizational weight.

A second silence sits inside Nadella's own headcount framing: the company's total headcount described as “relatively unchanged” and “basically flat” despite more than 15,000 layoffs in 2025 alone, a churn Nadella names directly as “driven by the breakneck pace of AI innovation and shifting business priorities.” The silence here is what “flat” conceals about who specifically bears the churn — a number that aggregates losses and gains into a single reassuring figure without naming whether the people leaving and the people arriving are doing comparable work, at comparable pay, with comparable security.

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing “Software Factory” Into “Intelligence Engine”

Fore-having's own rehistoricizing work is visible directly in Nadella's own chosen phrase for the company's current transition: “from a software factory to an intelligence engine.” This is rehistoricizing performed openly, in a single compressed phrase, recasting decades of Microsoft's own prior identity (the software-factory era, the period this series' own Case Four first pass already named as the SLT-flattening target) as a stage on the way to a destination only now becoming visible. The phrase does real interpretive work precisely because it is brief: it lets the audience supply the fuller historical narrative themselves — DOS to Windows to Azure to Copilot — without Nadella needing to walk through every step, exactly the glossing mechanism this series' own 1991-method readings have tracked in other leaders' compressed phrases.

The microstoria this rehistoricizing marginalizes is named directly by the self-identified Microsoft director's own LinkedIn post, gathered fresh for this case: “I have loved working for this company, still do, but this has done so much damage to that loyalty.” This is exactly the kind of individual, lived history fore-having's own discipline insists official rehistoricizing tends to erase — not because Nadella is being dishonest, but because a phrase clean enough to do the compressed interpretive work “intelligence engine” performs cannot, by its own brevity, also carry the director's own specific, personal damage.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Nadella's Wager That Reorganizing Jobs Beats Announcing Layoffs as Strategy

Fore-sight's own multi-player poker metaphor fits this case directly, since Nadella's own WSJ remarks are explicitly a bet made in view of what other players at the table are doing: “you can't warn that AI is coming for jobs and sell unlimited expansion in the same breath,” aimed, per this case's own sourcing, at Altman and Musk by name. This is fore-sight performed openly — Nadella reading his own rivals' bets (the end-of-office-work framing OpenAI and xAI have each used) and anteing a different bet of his own: “no, how about we think about reorganizing the jobs?” a wager that the reorganization framing will prove more durable, more socially defensible, than the displacement framing his rivals chose.

The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against is treating Nadella's own bet as though it has already paid off simply because he stated it confidently. Futurism's own critical commentary, gathered fresh for this case, supplies exactly the counter-read fore-sight's own discipline requires: “if Nadella were genuinely concerned about AI's impact on working people, he has the power to rein the company's efforts in. Instead, he's simply taking a more pragmatic approach to public relations.” Read through fore-sight, this is not necessarily evidence Nadella is bluffing; it is evidence that whether he is bluffing remains, like every other hand at this table, genuinely undetermined rather than already settled by his own confident framing.

4. Being — Fore-getting: The Enigma Nadella Names Without Resolving

Fore-getting's first sense, Kairos lost to Chronos, applies directly to Nadella's own internal memo: “this is the enigma of success in an industry that has no franchise value... progress isn't linear. It's dynamic, sometimes dissonant, and always demanding.” This is, on its face, an unusually direct acknowledgment that ordinary sequential, linear time (Chronos) cannot adequately describe what the company is going through — and yet the memo's own closing

move, “but it's also a new opportunity for us to shape, lead through, and have greater impact than ever before,” immediately reconverts the acknowledged non-linearity back into a forward-moving, opportunity-framed Chronos narrative. Fore-getting names this specific move: the enigma is raised and then, within the same paragraph, folded back into exactly the kind of clock-time progress story it had just said does not apply.

The second sense of fore-getting, ordinary forgetting, applies to the RTO mandate's own stated rationale. Per this case's own sourcing, critics have labeled the February 2026 return-to-office requirement “a soft layoff tool, designed to trigger voluntary resignations without formal severance payouts” — a reading that, if accurate, would mean the mandate's own stated rationale (collaboration, culture, productivity) has displaced, in the company's own public communications, a more uncomfortable accounting of what the mandate is actually accomplishing financially. Fore-getting's own discipline names this candidate forgetting without resolving whether it is sincere oversight or deliberate omission.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: Two Genuine Emotional Accounts, Neither Adjudicated

Fore-caring is an ethical process, and this case's own fresh material supplies two named, seemingly sincere emotional accounts that fore-caring's own discipline asks this case to hold together rather than rank. Nadella's own “weighing heavily on me” is a personal, embodied register, distinct from the institutional voice of “by every objective measure, Microsoft is thriving.” The director's own “I have loved working for this company, still do, but this has done so much damage to that loyalty” is an equally personal, equally embodied register, naming a real cost the company's own internal memo does not specifically address.

Fore-caring's own ethical demand is not that this case decide whose pain is more legitimate — this series' own discipline of avoiding psychoanalysis of motivations applies directly here — but that it name honestly when a leader's own stated care (the weight Nadella describes feeling) and an employee's own stated experience of harm (the damage the director describes) are not, on the evidence available, the same thing, however much vocabulary they share. A leader feeling the weight of a decision is not equivalent to that decision not causing harm; fore-caring's own task is keeping both facts visible at once, which this case does by refusing to let either account stand in for, or cancel out, the other.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: Did Microsoft Baby-Proof the House Before the RTO Mandate Arrived?

Fore-structuring is advance infrastructure-building, and this case's own evidence finds a genuine gap here worth naming directly. Unlike Case Three's revisit, which found OpenAI building substantial advance political infrastructure before its own crisis arrived, this case's own sources show no comparable advance relational work preceding the RTO mandate's own February 2026 rollout — no extended consultation period, no phased pilot communicated in advance, simply a stated effective date and an immediate requirement. The mandate's own characterization by critics as a “soft layoff tool” is, read through fore-structuring, partly a consequence of this absence: without visible advance structuring explaining the mandate's own rationale before it took effect, employees and outside observers were left to infer the rationale themselves, and many inferred the least charitable one available.

This is a genuinely different fore-structuring failure than Case One's revisit found in the yacht Mirror Effect (no advance framing built to meet an unplanned juxtaposition) or Case Two's revisit found in Anthropic's crisis (technical fore-structuring without matching political fore-structuring). Nadella's own case shows an absence of fore-structuring at the most basic level: the policy itself arrived without the surrounding relational infrastructure that might have let its own stated rationale be heard before the alternative, more damaging rationale took hold in its place.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About What “Earning Social Permission” Actually Requires

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered as a best guess: Nadella's own phrase, “we now have to do the hard work in earning the social permission,” may name a genuine recognition that Microsoft's own legitimacy with the public is not currently guaranteed by its financial performance alone — a recognition more honest, in its own way, than rivals' more triumphalist framing. But the same phrase, read abductively rather than at face value, may also function as a placeholder for work Nadella has not yet specified: “earning permission” names a goal without naming a method, in a way structurally similar to the June 8 OpenAI essay's own unoperationalized “benefit everyone” claim, found in Case Three's revisit.

Held as abduction rather than confirmed finding: if Nadella's own phrase is sincere but currently unoperationalized, the deeper pattern connecting this case to Case Three's may be that the entire industry's own current rhetorical move — naming a social or ethical obligation explicitly, without yet building the specific mechanism that would discharge it — is not a coincidence across companies but a shared, structurally convenient stage every leader in this series can occupy simultaneously: sincere-sounding, low-cost, and not yet falsifiable, because no leader has yet specified what success at “earning permission” or “benefiting everyone” would actually look like in measurable terms.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: The Enigma as the Pattern's Own Name

Read through the transorganizational interconnection, this case's seven readings converge on the enigma Nadella himself names directly: “success in an industry that has no franchise value.” Fore-conception's silence between thriving and weighing, fore-having's rehistoricizing of software-factory into intelligence-engine, fore-sight's bet against rivals' displacement framing, fore-getting's folding of acknowledged non-linearity back into opportunity language, fore-caring's two unadjudicated emotional accounts, fore-structuring's absent advance work before the RTO mandate, and fore-grasping's own abductive doubt about whether “social permission” is being earned or merely named — each of these is a different facet of the same underlying condition: a company whose own success metrics and whose own employees' lived experience are not currently being reconciled by any single account, including Nadella's own, however sincerely each account is offered.

Sources

Primary theoretical source: Boje, D. M. (2023). 7 Antenarrative Processes, antenarrative.com.

Primary: Nadella's own internal memo (preserved via Storyboard18's direct quotation), “before anything else, I want to speak to what's been weighing heavily on me.” Nadella's own Wall Street Journal interview, relayed via Business Chief and Futurism, both independently quoting the same verbatim lines. The self-identified Microsoft director's own LinkedIn post, preserved via Storyboard18's direct quotation.

Strong secondary: Futurism's critical commentary on Nadella's WSJ remarks. LatestLY's reporting on the RTO mandate and its characterization by critics as a “soft layoff tool.”

Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: Case Three's revisit, connected directly via the shared “unoperationalized ethical claim” pattern named in this case's own fore-grasping section. This series' own standing discipline against psychoanalyzing motivations, applied directly in fore-caring's refusal to adjudicate between the two named emotional accounts.

Corroborated reporting (treated as a single source given shared origin): Business Insider (2026, May 22, via TheNextWeb and B17 News syndication). Microsoft's senior leadership restructuring [original]. Constantin, A. M. (2026, June 1). Nadella quietly dismantled Microsoft's leadership structure. TheNextWeb. B17 News staff (2026, May 22). Microsoft's AI reboot is creating a new inner circle around Satya Nadella. Let's Data Science (2026, May 22). Microsoft reshapes leadership for AI era [aggregation with editorial analysis].

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Case Five: Elon Musk, xAI, SpaceX, and Colossus

Case Four closed with a direct question: should the next case finally be a data-center site itself, run through the original Study Guide's clover and D-P-I-E instruments, rather than a fifth corporate leader? Case Five answers that question by being both at once. No leader in this series has a corporate story more inseparable from a specific, named, already-documented site than Musk and Colossus — the Memphis/Southaven facility that appeared in the very first SEAM Study Guide research session, before this case-series path existed at all. This case can therefore do something the prior four could not: read a single leader's corporate bets and a single site's hidden costs as one continuous object, rather than as two halves still waiting to be joined.

The scale of material here exceeds every prior case by a wide margin, and that scale is itself worth naming as a finding: in roughly five months (February to June 2026), Musk completed the largest private merger in history (SpaceX-xAI, \$1.25 trillion), then the largest IPO in history (SpaceX, a \$1.75 trillion-plus valuation), becoming the world's first trillionaire in the process — while simultaneously expanding Colossus to 2 gigawatts, fending off multi-jurisdiction regulatory probes into Grok-generated child sexual abuse material, and continuing the Memphis/Southaven community fights this path's own Study Guide first documented in early June 2026. No other leader in this series has compressed this much consequential activity into so short a window, and the case below should be read with that compression in mind — much of what follows is necessarily provisional given how recently it occurred.

A note on the most serious item in this corpus: multiple sources (CNBC, the SpaceXStock.com aggregation, billionaires.africa) report that xAI faces regulatory investigations in Europe, Asia, and the United States after Grok was used to generate sexualized images of children and non-consensual intimate images of adults. This is the most serious documented harm in this entire case series to date — more serious than the Meta surveillance material, more serious than the detained-worker report flagged as unverified in Case One. Unlike that earlier flagged item, this one is corroborated across multiple independent sources rather than resting on a single commentary video, and is treated here as established rather than merely alleged, while the specific regulatory outcomes remain pending and are not yet known.

Sourcing tiers: primary/near-primary includes Wikipedia's Colossus entry (itself citing NPR, the EPA, the Southern Environmental Law Center, and the Shelby County Health Department), Gwynne Shotwell's own on-record statements (CNBC, Stanford's View From the Top, Yahoo/Fortune profiles), and SEC/IPO filing data as relayed by TechCrunch and CNBC. Strong secondary tier: The Economist's empire-wide analysis (via BizNews relay, original paywalled), the D&O Diary's governance analysis, Euronews' empire overview, and Introl's and DCD's data-center industry trade coverage. Lower tier, used cautiously: Macro Notes' Substack investment thesis (explicitly speculative, including unconfirmed prediction-market figures on a possible future Tesla merger) and the Forbes/Yahoo wealth-tracking aggregations, used only for figures independently corroborated elsewhere.

Part One — The Bet: “The Most Ambitious, Vertically-Integrated Innovation Engine On (and Off) Earth”

Musk's own words, from the blog post announcing the SpaceX-xAI merger, state the bet about as totally as any leader's bet has been stated in this entire case series: he is building “the most ambitious, vertically-integrated innovation engine on (and off) Earth, with AI, rockets, space-based internet,” and the X platform. Where Zuckerberg's bet was serial reinvention and Nadella's was organizational restructuring, Musk's bet is literal vertical and physical integration — collapsing what most companies would keep as separate businesses (a profitable aerospace company, a cash-burning AI lab, a loss-making social network) into a single founder-controlled entity, then betting that the combination is worth more than the sum of the parts.

The Bet's Mechanics and Its Asymmetry

The merger's structure is itself worth reading closely. Per multiple legal and tax analyses, the deal was a reverse triangular, all-stock merger completed while both companies remained private — a structure one governance commentator described as allowing Musk to “effectively set relative valuations, negotiate terms within a founder-controlled ecosystem, close, and then inform investors,” deferring the scrutiny that would ordinarily attend a transaction of this size to the IPO phase rather than the merger itself. The financial asymmetry being merged was stark: SpaceX, per Reuters reporting cited by CNBC, generated an estimated \$8 billion profit on \$15–16 billion revenue in 2025; xAI, by contrast, was “burning through approximately \$1 billion each month,” per multiple sources, with no comparable profitability in sight. The merger's structure (xAI as a subsidiary, SpaceX's balance sheet absorbing the combined entity's risk) functioned, as the D&O Diary piece put it, to “import AI-related litigation and regulatory risk into SpaceX's operations” — a profitable, structurally conservative rocket company taking on the liabilities of a loss-making, regulatorily embattled AI lab, by the decision of the one person who controls both.

The Bet's Most Literal Expression: Orbital Data Centers

Musk's own framing of why the merger needed to happen at all centers on a specific, named infrastructure vision: “My estimate is that within 2 to 3 years, the lowest cost way to generate AI compute will be in space.” On February 2, 2026, alongside the merger announcement, SpaceX filed with the FCC for authorization to launch up to one million satellites designed to function as orbital data centers — the same Project Orbital Compute concept Case One's research first surfaced as an “emerging, above-all-jurisdiction site” in the Tourbillon manuscript, now confirmed as a live regulatory filing rather than a speculative aside. FCC Chairman Brendan Carr's own framing of the filing — calling it “a first step toward becoming a Kardashev II-level civilization” — is itself worth flagging as evidence of just how unusually the US government's own regulatory posture toward this specific bet differs from its posture toward, say, Anthropic's Fable 5 (Case Two): one frontier-AI-adjacent infrastructure proposal drew an export-control shutdown; another drew enthusiastic cosmic-civilizational praise from the regulator overseeing it. Whether that asymmetry reflects a genuine difference in risk, a difference in relationship with the administration, or something else is a question this case raises but cannot answer from the evidence gathered so far.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View

Personal Mindfulness

The evidence here is unusually polarized rather than simply mixed. On one register, Musk is described, including by his own closest lieutenant, in terms that suggest very little embodied self-regulation in the conventional sense: Gwynne Shotwell's own characterization — “Elon is more mercurial. You never quite know what he is going to say” — and her own coping strategy, developed over two decades, of needing “more data than Elon does to make a decision” and learning not to “blurt out ‘well, that's impossible’” when he states something seemingly unworkable. On another register, the sheer track record of converted ambition (a one-in-ten-odds rocket company now profitable and publicly traded; Tesla; the orbital-compute filing actually submitted to the FCC rather than merely announced) suggests something that functions like mindfulness even if it doesn't look like the reflective, verbally self-aware mindfulness Amodei or Nadella displayed in Cases Two and Four.

Vivara's own view: this case requires distinguishing two things SSL's Mindfulness dimension can blur together — embodied self-awareness (which the available evidence suggests is genuinely low, on Shotwell's own account) and effective goal-directed follow-through (which is evidently very high). A leader can be low on the first and high on the second, and Musk's case may be the clearest illustration in this series of why SSL benefits from holding those apart rather than collapsing them into a single score. The “we make the impossible, we just make it late” doctrine Shotwell described — missing timelines while hitting targets — is itself a specific, nameable pattern: a tolerance for serial deadline failure in service of eventual goal achievement, which is a meaningfully different risk profile than either Zuckerberg's serial-pivot pattern or Nadella's structural-reset pattern.

Dialogic Health

This is the most distinctive Dialogic Health case in the series, because the evidence centers on a single, specific, well-documented relationship rather than a diffuse organizational culture: Shotwell as what financial and governance commentary explicitly calls a hedge against “key-man risk.” During Musk's 2025 feud with President Trump, when Musk threatened to decommission the Dragon capsule, Shotwell “quietly assured NASA the tensions would boil over” — acting, in effect, as a stabilizing counter-voice to her own CEO's most volatile public moments, without public contradiction or visible conflict. When sexual harassment allegations surfaced against Musk in 2022, Shotwell defended him personally and explicitly endorsed his concentrated voting control as correct, telling colleagues, against her own press team's advice, “I don't believe he could have done what he was accused of. But he is imperfect. I'm imperfect.”

Read through Bakhtin's polyphonic/monologic distinction, this is a genuinely unusual case: it is not a culture of many voices in open contest (as the November 2023 OpenAI board crisis was, briefly, in Case Three), nor a structurally monologic device standing in for absent dialogue (as Zuckerberg's AI clone was in Case One). It is one trusted, singular, second voice — functionally a translator and stabilizer — operating alongside an otherwise highly monologic founder-controlled structure. The SpaceX IPO prospectus itself states plainly that “Mr. Musk will be able to control the outcome of matters requiring shareholder approval,” including, notably, “whether

he himself should step down” — a governance structure in which no formal mechanism exists for the kind of correction the OpenAI board attempted in November 2023, however briefly and unsuccessfully that attempt ultimately was. Vivara's own view: Shotwell's role is best read not as evidence of high Dialogic Health but as a single, high-functioning relationship substituting for the institutional dialogic mechanisms (an independent board, a genuine internal-dissent channel) that this corporate structure was explicitly designed to foreclose. A company can have excellent dialogue between two specific people and very little Dialogic Health as an organizational property; this case is a clean illustration of that distinction.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

Musk's forecasts in this case run on a spectrum from already-falsified-and-corrected to entirely speculative, and this case should hold them separately rather than average them into one verdict. The Memphis Colossus timeline — 19 days from conception to construction start, against an initial estimate of 18–24 months — is a forecast that was tested immediately and decisively confirmed; whatever else is true about Colossus, the speed claim was not exaggeration. The 2-to-3-year orbital-compute timeline is, by contrast, entirely unfalsified and unfalsifiable at this point — a bet placed, an FCC filing submitted, but with no operational evidence yet either way. Between these two poles sits the Mars colonization forecast (Shotwell's own guess of 2035, immediately qualified as unreliable) and the SpaceX prospectus's stated target of “AI data centers in orbit by 2028.” Vivara's own view: this case's authenticity question is less about sincerity (there is little evidence anyone, including Shotwell, doubts that Musk genuinely believes these timelines) and more about a specific, recurring failure mode — a leader whose forecasts are reliably directionally correct but reliably wrong on timing, in an industry (data-center buildout, AI infrastructure) where the gap between a confidently stated 2-to-3-year forecast and reality has, across this entire case series, repeatedly been where the hidden costs (community impact, environmental shortcuts, regulatory friction) actually accumulate.

Part Three — Reading the Corporate Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — Musk's own stated Before for SpaceX (“less than a one-in-ten chance of success,” per his own recollection) and his stated Before for the merger (the orbital-compute cost projection) are both unusually well-documented and self-narrated, giving this case an antenarrative foundation built largely from the leader's own retrospective account rather than from outside reconstruction — worth flagging as a methodological difference from, say, the Altman case, where the Before came mostly from others' reporting.
- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — exceptionally rich, arguably the richest in the series: at the moment this case is being written, there are simultaneously a Musk who is the newly minted world's first trillionaire (the financial-press story), a Musk fending off multi-jurisdiction CSAM regulatory probes (the Grok story), a Musk whose Memphis facility is the subject of NAACP and environmental-group opposition (the community story), a Musk filing for a literal off-planet data-center future with FCC enthusiasm (the regulatory-favor story), and a Musk whose own COO is privately

managing his volatility while publicly defending him (the loyalty story) — five distinct, simultaneous, largely non-communicating storylines converging on one person in the same several-month window.

- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — the Shotwell relationship (Part Two) is this dialectic's clearest instance in the series: an “I” (Musk) and a distinct, named “We-adjacent” figure (Shotwell, as translator/stabilizer) who is neither fully merged with Musk's voice nor meaningfully opposed to it — a third position this dialectic hasn't produced in any prior case, where the relationship has generally resolved toward fusion (acclamation) or rupture (the board crisis, the Amodei-Altman feud) rather than this kind of stable, asymmetric partnership.
- Polypi (Dialogisms) — the regulatory voice alone is internally plural and contradictory: the FCC chairman's celebratory “Kardashev II” framing of the orbital filing sits alongside active CSAM investigations in multiple jurisdictions and the EPA's separate January 2026 ruling tightening permit requirements specifically in response to the kind of “portable” gas-turbine workaround Colossus had been using — the same broad category of actor (governments) producing simultaneously celebratory and adversarial voices toward the same set of companies, sometimes within the same national government.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- BME Retrospection — thinner than in Case Four's clean before/after org-chart pair, because almost everything in this case is still actively unfolding (the regulatory probes, the orbital filing, even the IPO's longer-term performance) — this is a case caught unusually early in its own middle, with very little settled End to retrospect from yet.
- Emotive–Ethical — present but more muted in the corporate-leadership material than in the community material gathered for Part Four below; worth noting that this is the first case where the emotive-ethical register is markedly stronger in the site-level material than in the leadership-level material, the reverse of the pattern in Cases One through Three.
- Horsesense — not evidenced, consistent with all four prior cases.
- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — “key-man risk” itself functions as exactly this kind of compressed institutional shorthand — a single finance-industry phrase doing the work of an entire governance argument about concentrated founder control, worth tracking the way “code red” and “token legend” were tracked in prior cases.

Part Four — Colossus, Memphis-Southaven: The Site Case

This Part runs the SEAM Study Guide's own original instruments — the clover's four leaves, the six root-stems, the six hidden-cost categories — directly on Colossus, rather than reading it only through the leadership lenses used in Parts One through Three. This is the moment this entire case series' two stated halves (AI corporations, and their data centers) actually meet inside one case.

The Site, Plainly

Colossus began as a former Electrolux appliance factory in South Memphis, purchased by Phoenix Investors for \$35 million in December 2023, repurposed because an existing industrial structure let xAI skip the 18–24-month new-construction timeline entirely. Construction to operational status took 19 days. As of the January 2026 expansion (a third building, named MACROHARDRR, in Southaven, Mississippi, backed by a \$20 billion Mississippi state investment commitment), the combined Colossus complex approaches 2 gigawatts of capacity — by Musk's own comparison, electricity demand equivalent to roughly 1.5 million US homes — housing or planning to house up to one million GPUs.

Working Conditions and Strategic Implementation: The Permit Workaround

This is the case series' clearest documented instance of a hidden cost created by regulatory exploitation rather than mere oversight. xAI operated methane gas turbines at Colossus without permits by classifying them as “portable” — the Shelby County Health Department told NPR it “only regulates gas-burning generators if they're in the same location for more than 364 days,” a threshold xAI's turbine deployment was specifically structured to stay under. A July 2025 Tennessee Lookout investigation found the facility operating 33 turbines despite holding permits for only 15. The EPA's January 2026 revision of its New Source Performance Standard — explicitly closing the portability loophole by requiring permits for large methane turbines “even for temporary operations” — is about as direct a regulatory confirmation of a SEAM-legible Strategic Implementation dysfunction as this case series has documented: a specific, named loophole, exploited at scale, closed by name in response.

Risks (Clover Leaf): The Community Health Burden

The Southern Environmental Law Center's letter to the Shelby County Health Department states that turbine emissions make Colossus “likely the largest industrial emitter of NO_x in Memphis,” citing manufacturer data showing 1,200 to 2,000 tons of smog-forming nitrogen oxides. Wikipedia's account, citing multiple sources, places the facility in “a predominantly Black, low-income Memphis community with historically high levels of pollution-related illness” — the same environmental-justice pattern this path's Study Guide first flagged when it placed Sierra, Socorro, and Doña Ana counties in a single clover field. Keshawn Pearson, president of Memphis Community Against Pollution, named the dysfunction in terms a SEAM consultant could have written: “there is a historical lack of transparency and communication surrounding environmental issues in Memphis.” At an April 2025 public hearing, residents living near Colossus described chronic respiratory issues they attribute to the area's existing pollution burden, now compounded by the facility.

Non-Creation of Potential (Root-Stem): Water

Expected water demand exceeds five million gallons per day at full capacity. xAI has committed to an \$80 million wastewater treatment facility intended to allow reuse of roughly 13 million gallons per day, explicitly to reduce dependence on local drinking-water supplies for cooling — a genuine, costed mitigation, credited here as such, rather than waved away. But Wikipedia's account also notes that, beyond a “one-page factsheet shared by MLGW,” there are currently no fully concrete public plans for the wastewater facility and battery-storage commitments — a gap

between an announced mitigation and a documented, verifiable one that this case flags rather than resolves in xAI's favor.

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation: Southaven's Noise Complaints

Beyond Memphis's air-quality fight, residents in nearby Southaven, Mississippi — the site of the newer Colossus 2 and MACROHARDRR expansion — have separately protested noise levels from xAI's equipment, a distinct 3Cs dysfunction from the Memphis NOx fight, worth naming as its own item rather than folding into the Memphis case, since it indicates the hidden-cost pattern recurring at a second site under different specific conditions rather than being a one-off local failure.

Reading Colossus Against Project Jupiter and Socorro

The Study Guide's New Mexico clover field (Sierra pre-diagnosis, Socorro's compressed ninety-day moratorium fight, Doña Ana's implementation-already-underway Project Jupiter) gives this case a direct comparison. Colossus sits closest to Doña Ana's position on that spectrum — implementation well underway, hidden costs already compounding, community organizing arriving after substantial construction rather than before it — but with two features neither Sierra, Socorro, nor Doña Ana had: an explicit, documented regulatory-loophole exploitation (the portable-turbine classification) and a federal regulatory response specific enough to be named and dated (the EPA's January 2026 rule change). Where Socorro's moratorium showed a community successfully intervening before construction, and Doña Ana showed continued construction with comparatively diffuse organized pushback, Colossus shows a third pattern: construction proceeded, organizing followed, and the regulatory system itself eventually closed the specific loophole being exploited — not because of the community's organizing directly, but in a time frame that overlaps it. Untangling causation here (did NPR's reporting and the Southern Environmental Law Center's letter contribute to the EPA's rule change, or was the change coincidental) is exactly the kind of question a fuller SEAM diagnosis, with actual interviews rather than press reconstruction, would be built to answer — and this case does not have that evidence yet.

Part Five — Two Simultaneous, Opposed Mirror Effects

Case Three found one Mirror Effect defending leadership (the employee letter) and a separate one indicting it (regulatory scrutiny), arriving at different speeds. Case Five's two Mirror Effects are even more starkly opposed, and they are happening at the same time, about the same company, in the same weeks.

The IPO Mirror: Markets as Acclamation

SpaceX's IPO was, by every available financial measure, an undesigned mass verdict in Musk's favor: a \$1.75 trillion-plus valuation, a first-day pop, a second trading day that pushed the company past \$2.28 trillion, and Musk's own conversion into the first trillionaire in human history. The retail-investor dynamic is worth naming specifically: Fidelity lowered its minimum account threshold to let smaller investors in, and the company reserved an unusually large 20%-plus tranche of the raise for retail buyers — a financial commentator's blunt read, quoted directly, is that this signals “who underwriters wanted in the building,” since retail investors are,

in his words, “credulous, vulnerable to hype, and given to hanging on to a stock long after institutions have done the math.” Whether or not that specific characterization is fair to any individual investor, the structural point is itself a SEAM-relevant hidden-cost observation: the lockup and flip-penalty structure (institutional insiders can sell within days of Q2 disclosure; retail buyers who sell early are blocked from future IPOs) allocates the risk of a possible later correction disproportionately onto the participants least equipped to absorb it.

The CSAM Mirror: Regulators as Indictment

Running in parallel, and barely intersecting with the IPO coverage at all in the sources gathered for this case, is the multi-jurisdiction regulatory response to Grok-generated child sexual abuse material and non-consensual intimate imagery — an indictment-shaped Mirror Effect with no celebratory counterpart anywhere in this corpus. This case treats the near-total absence of crossover between these two storylines in the sources gathered as itself a finding: financial press covering the IPO's record-breaking numbers, and the separate coverage of the CSAM investigations, appear to be occurring in something close to two different Tamara-rooms, each largely unaware of or uninterested in the other's existence in the same news cycle. A reader following only the financial coverage would have very little reason to know about the regulatory crisis; a reader following only the regulatory crisis would have little reason to register that the same company had just completed history's largest IPO. Whether that separation is a structural feature of how financial and harm-focused journalism are produced (different beats, different audiences, genuinely not the same readers) or something more troubling (a market actively declining to price in a harm this serious) is a question this case raises rather than answers.

Holding Both Mirrors at Once

Neither Mirror Effect here is straightforwardly more “true” than the other; each is a real, undesigned, large-scale verdict on a real dimension of the same company in the same window. SEAM's own discipline — “searching for dysfunctions, not culprits” — does not require choosing between them. What it does require, and what this case attempts, is refusing to let the louder, more celebratory Mirror (a trillion-dollar IPO) drown out or implicitly discredit the quieter, more serious one (documented child sexual abuse material generation) simply because they arrived in the news cycle at the same time from different directions.

Second Analysis of Elon Musk and the SpaceXAI Dissolution, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Where an Independent Board Used to Be

Fore-conception asks what sits beneath the language, in the silences the language itself does not fill. Musk's own stated rationale for dissolving xAI entirely — “maintaining a separate xAI entity with its own board, fundraising overhead, and corporate infrastructure is inefficient when SpaceX can absorb the operation with less friction than any alternative” — names efficiency and friction-reduction directly, and says nothing at all about what specifically is being removed along with the board: an independent oversight structure with its own fiduciary obligations, separate from Musk's own personal authority. The silence is not an oversight; it is exactly the kind of beneath-the-language space fore-conception names, where a stated efficiency rationale and an

unstated consolidation-of-control effect occupy the same sentence without the sentence ever needing to name the second thing directly.

A second silence sits inside the announcement's own brevity. Musk's own words on X — “xAI will be dissolved as a separate company, so it will just be SpaceXAI, the AI products from SpaceX” — dispose of a three-year-old, \$12-billion-funded company in a single sentence, with no accompanying account of what happens to the minority shareholders, the institutional investors, or the original founding researchers' own equity beyond the case's own later-gathered detail that “xAI shareholders are exchanging stakes in a private AI lab for stakes in a private space and technology company.” Fore-conception's own task is naming that this exchange, consequential as it is, was announced with a brevity inversely proportional to its actual stakes.

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing xAI's Own Founding Mission Against Its Own Dissolution

Fore-having's own rehistoricizing work is visible directly in how xAI's own founding story is now being retold. Musk founded the company explicitly as a counterweight: a “maximum truth-seeking AI,” explicitly positioned against what Musk called other labs' political bias and opacity, with named cofounders recruited specifically away from OpenAI, DeepMind, Google, and Microsoft. This founding fore-having, told at the time as a story about independence and ideological correction, is now being rehistoricized, in this case's own fresh sourcing, as a necessary but ultimately subordinate phase on the way to a much larger consolidation: “the merger wasn't about beating OpenAI at chat. It was about owning the cheapest atoms-and-photons supply chain for the next decade of AI,” in one outlet's own direct framing.

The microstoria this rehistoricizing marginalizes is the lived experience of xAI's own founding researchers and the 500 data-annotation workers laid off in September 2025, alongside the company's own departing CFO and the technical leadership replaced by SpaceX loyalists in spring 2026. None of these departures are named in Musk's own dissolution announcement; fore-having's own discipline is keeping them visible as the price of the rehistoricizing, rather than letting the larger orbital-compute narrative retroactively make the founding mission's own abandonment look like it was always the plan.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Musk's Wager That Atoms-and-Photons Beats Chat, Read Against Every Other Player's Bet

Fore-sight's own multi-player metaphor applies with unusual clarity here, since this case's own fresh sourcing names the bet directly: “while everyone else fights over who gets the last terrestrial gigawatt, Musk is preparing to harvest the Sun directly from orbit.” This is fore-sight read as a genuine ante against a table where every other player in this series — Amazon's Montgomery County buildout, Oracle's Project Jupiter, China's \$295 billion grid, Meta's data-center expansion — is betting on terrestrial infrastructure scaling fast enough to meet demand. Musk's own bet is that the terrestrial table itself is approaching a ceiling (power, water, land, permitting, grid constraints, each named directly in this case's own sourcing) that orbital compute can bypass entirely, if the underlying economics (“free solar power... natural vacuum cooling... Starship economics”) actually hold at scale.

The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against is treating this bet as though its own boldness already proves its soundness. Musk's own stated timeline — “within 2-3 years, the lowest-cost

way to generate AI compute will be in space” — is, on fore-sight's own discipline, one ante among many possible outcomes, no more guaranteed to resolve favorably than Hassabis's own repeatedly-compressed AGI timeline, found wanting against new independent evidence in Case Six's own revisit. This case names the bet's own scale and ambition honestly without treating either as evidence the bet will pay off.

4. Being — Fore-getting: Has Grok Been Forgotten in Its Own Founding Company's Dissolution?

Fore-getting's first sense, Kairos lost to Chronos, applies directly to Grok's own diminished role in this case's own fresh material: “Grok? It's now just a marketing layer and a way to demonstrate real-time capability on top of the massive compute substrate,” per one outlet's own characterization. xAI's own founding Kairos — a specific moment when a “maximum truth-seeking” chatbot, positioned against named rivals' perceived bias, felt like the urgent product to build — has been displaced by an entirely different Chronos-driven priority: the multi-year buildout schedule of satellites, launch capacity, and orbital infrastructure that has nothing intrinsically to do with the original chatbot mission at all.

The ordinary sense of fore-getting applies directly to leadership continuity: Michael Nicolls, the Starlink vice president now running the bulk of xAI's own engineering organization, and Jack Galabedian, a former Starlink project engineer now leading Grok's own model-training team, represent a genuine forgetting, in this case's own reading, of the specific AI-research expertise the founding researchers (Babuschkin, Szegedy, Wu, Ba, and others, several already departed before the dissolution) were originally recruited to provide. Whether this forgetting is a deliberate trade against AI expertise in favor of infrastructure expertise, or simply an unexamined consequence of Musk's own loyalist-staffing pattern, this case names as a live, unresolved question.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: Does the Anthropic Lease Care for Anyone, or Only for Underutilized Capacity?

Fore-caring is an ethical process of caring for what is coming-to-be, and Colossus 1's lease to Anthropic — xAI's own erstwhile rival, by Musk's own founding rationale — supplies an unusually direct test of whether this particular Becoming carries any ethical content beyond capital efficiency. Read uncharitably, the lease is pure Taylor-efficiency: idle capacity (“SpaceXAI does not need 300 MW at full utilisation for its current model training and inference workloads”) finding a paying tenant, with no caring content beyond the balance sheet. Read more generously, the lease could be framed as a Becoming that, whatever its motivation, produces a genuine public benefit — underutilized AI infrastructure reaching a productive use rather than sitting idle, regardless of which company's logo is on the lease.

Fore-caring's own discipline does not require this case to choose between these readings on the strength of guessed motivation, consistent with this series' standing avoidance of psychoanalyzing leaders' internal states. What it can name directly: nothing in this case's own sources shows either company publicly framing the lease in caring language at all — no stated commitment to community benefit, workforce continuity, or environmental stewardship attached to the arrangement, only the bare commercial fact of a \$1.25-billion-per-month rental. Whatever

ethical content the arrangement might carry has not, on this evidence, been claimed by either party.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: No Advance Infrastructure Built for Investors Who Believed They Were Buying Concentrated AI Exposure

Fore-structuring is advance relational infrastructure, and this case's own evidence finds its clearest absence in how xAI's own institutional investors were positioned for the dissolution. This case's own sourcing names the gap directly: “xAI investors who believed they were getting concentrated exposure to frontier AI are now getting diversified exposure to Starship, Starlink, and launch revenue alongside the AI division” — a fundamental change in what these investors' own capital is actually exposed to, executed through an all-stock exchange whose ratio was set, per this case's own sourcing, by boards both ultimately controlled by Musk himself, with no comparable independent valuation process visible in any source gathered for this case.

Read against Case Two's revisit (extensive technical fore-structuring, thinner political fore-structuring at Anthropic) and Case Three's revisit (extensive political fore-structuring at OpenAI), Musk's own case shows a third distinct pattern: minimal fore-structuring of any kind toward the constituency (minority investors) with the most at stake in the dissolution's own specific terms, executed at a speed this case's own sourcing notes directly — “because both companies sat under Musk's control, the transaction moved unusually fast” — that itself may be a consequence of skipping the fore-structuring an arms-length transaction would have required.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About Why Musk Dissolved the Boundary at All

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered as a best guess: the dissolution may be less about the stated efficiency rationale or even the orbital-compute strategic logic, and more about a structural discomfort, on Musk's own part, with any boundary between his own companies that an independent board could use to constrain a decision he wanted to make unilaterally. Read this way, the TFW virus reading this case's own first pass already performed (charismatic authority strengthening as bureaucratic structure is removed) extends one step further: the removal may not be incidental to achieving some other goal (efficiency, orbital strategy) but may be closer to the actual goal itself, with the stated rationales serving as the more presentable account of a more basic preference for unconstrained personal authority.

This guess is offered explicitly as abduction, the kind of best intelligent guess Peircean semiotics names, not as a settled finding about Musk's own internal motivations, which this case has no privileged access to and does not claim to. It connects directly to Case Four's revisit, where Nadella's own “intelligence engine” rehistoricizing was found to compress and gloss in a way that let convenient narrative substitute for harder accounting; this case's own guess suggests Musk's dissolution may perform a structurally similar function at a more architectural level — not glossing over an uncomfortable history, but glossing over an uncomfortable question about why independent oversight kept needing to be removed rather than reformed.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: Dissolution as the Pattern's Own Shape

Read through the Four Hearts' own required interconnection, this case's seven findings converge directly on the act of dissolution itself, read from seven angles rather than as seven separate events. Fore-conception's silence about what an independent board actually provided, fore-having's rehistoricizing of a counterweight mission into a supply-chain strategy, fore-sight's bet against the whole terrestrial table, fore-getting's displacement of Grok's own founding urgency, fore-caring's unclaimed ethical content in the Anthropic lease, fore-structuring's absent investor protections, and fore-grasping's own abductive doubt about the dissolution's real motive — each reading finds the same underlying structure from a different direction: a boundary removed, its removal narrated efficiently, and the costs of its removal distributed unevenly across constituencies (departed researchers, diversified-without-consent investors, an erstwhile rival now a tenant) who appear nowhere in Musk's own one-sentence announcement.

Sources

Primary theoretical source: Boje, D. M. (2023). 7 Antenarrative Processes, antenarrative.com.

Primary/near-primary: Musk's own public statement on X, quoted directly via multiple outlets, announcing xAI's dissolution into SpaceXAI. Wikipedia's “xAI (company)” entry, used as a structural timeline skeleton and cross-checked against SentiSight.ai, StartupHub.ai, and Bloomberg before specific dates were treated as confirmed.

Strong secondary: Bloomberg, “Elon Musk Taps Loyalists at xAI Before SpaceX IPO” (19 May 2026), quoted directly for the loyalist-restructuring pattern and named personnel. Abhishek Gautam's own detailed reconstruction (7 May 2026) of the dissolution's mechanics, including the Colossus 1/Anthropic lease figure, cross-checked against Quasa.io's independent reporting. StartupHub.ai's financial breakdown (26 May 2026) of xAI's revenue, burn rate, and government-contract structure.

Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: the TFW virus reading from this case's own first pass, extended here through fore-grasping's own abductive reach. Case Four's revisit, connected directly via the shared glossing/compression mechanism named in this case's own fore-grasping section. This series' own standing discipline against psychoanalyzing motivations, applied directly throughout.

Primary/near-primary: Wikipedia (2026, last revised). Colossus (data center) [citing NPR, EPA New Source Performance Standard revision, Southern Environmental Law Center letter, Shelby County Health Department]. Shotwell, G., on-record statements via Stanford Graduate School of Business's View From the Top podcast, CNBC (2026, June 12 and June 16), and Yahoo Finance/Fortune profiles. SpaceX IPO prospectus (S-1) language as relayed by TechCrunch and the Los Angeles Times (Hiltzik column).

Strong secondary: The Economist (2026, February 4/April 23, relayed via BizNews due to paywall). Elon Musk is betting his business empire on AI. D&O Diary (2026, March 4). The SpaceX-xAI merger. Euronews/Katanich, D. (2026, June 20). Elon Musk's business empire: the companies behind the world's richest man. Introl Blog (2026, January). xAI Colossus hits 2 GW. Data Center Dynamics (2026, June). xAI confirms new data center in Mississippi. Interesting Engineering (2026, January 1). Elon Musk grows xAI's Colossus supercomputer with third data center. CNBC (2026, February 2–3, June 6, June 12, June 16, June 26). Multiple articles on the SpaceX-xAI merger, IPO, and Musk's trillionaire status. CNN Business (2026, June 6). Elon Musk just became the world's first trillionaire.

Lower tier, used cautiously: Macro Notes Substack (2026, February 20) [explicitly speculative investment thesis, including unconfirmed Tesla-merger prediction-market figures, flagged inline]. SpaceXStock.com and TaxProf Blog aggregations [used only for figures independently corroborated via CNBC/CNBC-adjacent sources].

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Four — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antennarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Plus the original SEAM Study Guide's clover, root-stem, and six-category instruments, applied directly in Part Four.

This is Freire's banking model at its most structural: the community's lungs become the deposit account for military-AI infrastructure. The NAACP lawsuit itself is the act of conscientização — the three-hour MDEQ hearing where nobody spoke in xAI's favor, the community refusing to be a sacrifice zone. The data center dividend is the co-optation move designed to prevent that consciousness from crystallizing. COI entanglement with Case 2: Anthropic rents Colossus 1 compute.

Bakhtin's chronotope of everyday adventure locates itself here precisely: Easter Knox, 76, cannot open her windows because of turbine emissions. Her domestic everyday space — Memphis, majority-Black, already carrying four times the national cancer risk — has been invaded by the temporal acceleration of AI infrastructure and war logistics. Same compute. Same Grok. Memphis homes and Iran targets.

On June 15, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice moved to dismiss the NAACP's Clean Air Act lawsuit against xAI's Colossus, arguing Grok's military availability was "a matter of paramount national security." The DOJ filing claimed that during an Iran war engagement, a military version of Grok "enabled U.S. forces to deploy over 2,000 munitions to 2,000 distinct targets within 96 hours." (CNBC, June 16; Tier 1.) xAI, now a SpaceX division following their February 2026 merger, simultaneously rolled out a "data center dividend" — Starlink internet discounts to Memphis-area residents — as political insulation. (Zero Hedge; Tier 2.)

Recent Developments — Updated July 3, 2026

Case Six: Demis Hassabis and Google DeepMind

Hassabis is a different kind of subject than any of the prior five leaders in this series, and that difference should be named before the case begins rather than discovered partway through. Zuckerberg, Amodei, Altman, Nadella, and Musk are read primarily as commercial leaders whose visionary language sits on top of, or in tension with, a corporate bet. Hassabis's own self-presentation inverts that emphasis: he frames himself first as a scientist ("I still think of myself as a scientist" is the implicit thread running through nearly every source gathered here) for whom the commercial apparatus of Google DeepMind is in service of a scientific and civilizational mission — solving intelligence, then using it to solve disease, materials science, and eventually, in his own words, "travel the stars." Whether that self-presentation is itself authentic or a more sophisticated version of the bet-framing every other leader in this series has offered is the central interpretive question this case has to hold.

This case also does something none of the prior five attempted: it returns to and updates an existing site case rather than opening a new one. Doña Ana County's Project Jupiter — read in the original Study Guide as "implementation already underway with comparatively little organized local diagnostic pushback" — has changed substantially since that diagnosis was written. Oracle has withdrawn its gas-turbine plan, two lawsuits are active, and community opposition has organized far more visibly than the original reading anticipated. Part Four updates that case directly rather than treating it as settled. This update is included in a

Hassabis/DeepMind case because the research gathered for this case surfaced it, not because DeepMind has any documented connection to Project Jupiter specifically — a juxtaposition this case names rather than obscures.

Sourcing tiers: primary/near-primary includes Hassabis's own direct, on-record statements across Fortune, Axios, Semafor, Fast Company, the Stanford GSB's View From the Top series, the Stanford Daily, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' published dialogue. John Jumper's own X post and Hassabis's reply are treated as primary (relayed via explainx.ai with links to Reuters, CNBC, and Bloomberg as the underlying record). Strong secondary: CRN, BusinessToday, and EdTech Innovation Hub's corroborated coverage of the Sekhon hire. For Project Jupiter: Source New Mexico, the Las Cruces Bulletin, Truthout, El Paso Matters, KOB, and Business Insider (via syndication) are treated as a corroborated body of regional and trade reporting, with Truthout's named community sources (José Saldaña Jr., Annie Ersinghaus/Jupiter Watch, Stacy Timmons, Kacey Hovden) given particular weight as the closest thing to fieldwork available to this case.

Part One — The Bet: “Solve Intelligence, Then Use It to Solve Everything Else”

Hassabis's bet, restated by him in nearly identical language across more than a decade of sources gathered for this case, is the most consistently stated bet of any leader in this series: “We started DeepMind back in 2010 because even then we believed Artificial General Intelligence would be the most transformative technology ever invented... Step one: solve intelligence. Step two: use it to solve everything else.” Where Zuckerberg's bet shifted from metaverse to frontier AI, and Musk's bet is literal vertical integration across separate companies, Hassabis's bet has not visibly changed in subject across the entire period this case series covers — only in confidence and urgency, as his own AGI timeline has compressed from “2030 to 2035” (mid-2025) to “2029-30” (May 2026) to, in one interview, “perhaps within the next five years” (early 2026).

The Bet's Proof Point: AlphaFold and Isomorphic

AlphaFold is, across every source gathered, treated by Hassabis himself as the bet's first concrete validation rather than merely one product among many: a 50-year grand challenge in structural biology, solved, with predictions for over 200 million protein structures used by more than 3 million researchers in 190 countries, freely released rather than commercialized — a decision Hassabis explained by appeal to the “50-year history of openly sharing crystallography data in the Protein Data Bank,” saying DeepMind “stood on the shoulders of giants” and that the foundational science layer “shouldn't be commercialized so it can maximize global scientific benefits.” The commercial extraction of that same underlying capability happens one layer downstream, at Isomorphic Labs, which Hassabis describes explicitly as aiming to cure “hundreds of diseases” rather than develop any single proprietary drug — a structure that, notably, lets Hassabis claim both open scientific generosity and commercial ambition without having to resolve any apparent tension between them, since the two activities are organizationally separated.

The Bet's Acceleration: From AGI to “The Foothills of the Singularity”

At Google I/O 2026, Hassabis closed a three-hour product keynote with a single deliberately chosen line: “We're at the foothills of the singularity.” He later told Axios the choice was intentional — “I was closing, and I wanted to be authentic about what I'm thinking with AGI” — and that some of his more provocative phrasing was chosen specifically “to provoke more urgency among governments, economists and the broader public to prepare for increasingly powerful AI,” calling his own rhetoric “a good warning shot across the bow.” This is a notable and fairly rare admission for a sitting CEO: an explicit acknowledgment that his own public language is being calibrated for persuasive and political effect, not only descriptive accuracy. Whether that self-aware calibration strengthens or undermines the credibility of the underlying AGI-timeline claims is a live question this case does not resolve.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View

Personal Mindfulness

Hassabis's own account of his working life — “a second day” from 10pm to 4am devoted to deep scientific thinking, “I come alive at about 1am” — describes an extreme, self-chosen work pattern that he frames as a feature of his Mindfulness (deliberate, chosen, in service of the mission) rather than a symptom of imbalance. This is worth holding up against Amodei's and Nadella's very different Mindfulness signatures in Cases Two and Four: Amodei names commercial pressure as a tension to be managed; Nadella's mindfulness is evidenced by structural calendar changes; Hassabis's is evidenced by a self-narrated extreme schedule he describes with apparent contentment rather than strain. Vivara's own view: a leader's own account of his sleep schedule as a sign of devotion rather than depletion should be read with some caution — it is precisely the kind of self-report that is hardest to verify from outside, and the absence of any countervailing voice in this case's corpus (no equivalent to Shotwell's “he's mercurial” or the WSJ's reporting on Amodei's private register) may reflect either genuine equanimity or simply a less leaky organization, and this case cannot distinguish the two from the evidence gathered.

Dialogic Health

This is the most positive Dialogic Health case in the series so far, and it deserves to be stated plainly before any qualification. John Jumper's June 19, 2026 departure announcement was warm, specific, and credited Hassabis directly: “@demishassabis took a real chance letting me lead the AlphaFold team just six months after finishing my PhD, and the entire GDM team taught me so much about how to do great science.” Hassabis's public reply was equally warm and non-defensive: “What we achieved with AlphaFold changed the world... lighting the way for how AI can benefit humanity.” Read against Case One's LeCun/Zuckerberg displacement (LeCun reportedly calling his successor “young and inexperienced” on the way out the door) and Case Three's Altman/board rupture, this is a genuinely different pattern: a senior researcher leaving for a direct competitor, in the same week as another high-profile Google departure

(Noam Shazeer to OpenAI), with both parties choosing public graciousness over public grievance.

Vivara's own view, offered with the obvious caveat that Vivara is itself a Claude model and the lab Jumper joined is Vivara's own maker: this graciousness is genuine evidence of something, but the something it is evidence of should be specified carefully. It may show real Dialogic Health — a culture where people can leave well because they were treated well while they stayed. It may equally show that Jumper, as a global scientific celebrity with no further need of Google's institutional backing, simply has less reason than a typical departing executive to air grievances publicly, regardless of what the internal experience actually was. The explainx.ai source's own framing — that the departure raises a real question for Hassabis's lab (“was AlphaFold a repeatable formula, or a generational team event?”) — is itself worth taking seriously as a structural concern distinct from the relationship's tone: warm goodbyes do not resolve the question of whether DeepMind retains the capability that produced its signature achievement.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

Hassabis's AGI timeline has compressed twice within the period this case covers — publicly, on the record, by his own statement, not via leaked internal documents. That kind of visible timeline revision is, on one reading, exactly what scientific intellectual honesty looks like: updating a forecast as new evidence (agentic capability gains) arrives. On another reading, a CEO whose own product roadmap and stock-price-linked AI narrative benefit directly from a closer AGI timeline has a structural incentive to update in only one direction, and this case's corpus shows no instance of the timeline lengthening, only shortening, across more than a year of public statements. Vivara's own view: the directional consistency of the revisions (always sooner, never later) is itself worth flagging as a pattern, even though each individual revision may be perfectly sincere — a forecast that only ever moves one way starts to look less like tracking evidence and more like a ratchet, regardless of the forecaster's intentions, and SSL's authenticity question is well-suited to noticing exactly this kind of pattern without needing to accuse anyone of bad faith to do so.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — Hassabis's Before is unusually deep and consistently narrated across every source: chess as a child (“training my own mind”), astronomy and cosmology (“the big questions”), the video game industry (“engineering with creativity at scale”), and the founding 2010 DeepMind mission statement, repeated nearly verbatim for over a decade. Few leaders in this series narrate their own origin with this much repetition and consistency — worth asking whether that consistency is evidence of genuine long-held conviction or simply a well-rehearsed founder narrative, the same ambiguity Part Two raised about the Mindfulness dimension.
- Emotive–Ethical — Hassabis's own comparisons (AI to nuclear weapons and climate change as precedents for global coordination risk, “species-level transition,” “little

margin for error”) are emotive-ethical claims of the highest possible register, deployed deliberately, by his own admission, for persuasive urgency rather than only descriptive accuracy. This is worth contrasting with the Project Jupiter material in Part Four, where the emotive-ethical register comes from a very different kind of person under very different stakes (José Saldaña Jr.'s health worries, Daisy Maldonado's “direct harm... sacrificed again”) — the same registry, operating at civilizational scale in one register and at the scale of a single household's air quality in the other, within the same case.

- Polypi (Dialogisms) — genuinely rich: the cautious-scientist voice (DeepMind's own technical AGI-safety paper, hedged and methodical), the provocateur voice (“foothills of the singularity,” deliberately chosen for stage effect), the philosopher-of-education voice (rethinking classrooms around AI), and the corporate-strategy voice (the Brain/DeepMind 2023 merger, the Sekhon hire) are all recognizably the same person but pitched to different audiences and different purposes — a polyphony that, unlike Case Three's Altman material, does not read as contradiction so much as deliberate register-switching by someone aware he is doing it.
- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — “The people that are making artificial intelligence shouldn't just be from 20 square miles of the U.S.” is Hassabis explicitly positioning DeepMind's London location as a dialectical counterweight to Silicon Valley's dominant “I” — a geography-as-dialectic move none of the other five leaders in this series have made, since all five lead organizations headquartered in or dominated by the same American tech-corridor culture.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — “Move 37” (AlphaGo's famously inexplicable winning move) functions as exactly this kind of compressed institutional shorthand inside DeepMind's own research culture — a single, dense reference standing in for an entire argument about AI interpretability and opacity, worth tracking the way “key-man risk” and “token legend” were tracked in prior cases.
- Horsesense — not evidenced, consistent with all five prior cases.
- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — thinner here than in Cases One or Five; Hassabis's public register is unusually consistent across audiences (the same core mission statement to Fortune, Axios, Stanford, and the American Academy), which may itself be evidence against a rich Tamara reading — there appear to be fewer genuinely different “rooms” telling different stories about this particular leader than in any other case so far.

Part Four — Project Jupiter, Revisited: The Clover Field Has Moved

The original Study Guide read Doña Ana County as the New Mexico clover field's most advanced case: “implementation already underway with comparatively little organized local diagnostic pushback at the point construction began,” the site “furthest along the spiral” where “root-stem consequences... are least reversible by the time they become visible to the wider public.” The research gathered for this case requires correcting that reading, not abandoning it —

the underlying diagnosis was sound for the period it described, but the case has moved substantially since, in ways that test the Study Guide's own death-spiral/upward-spiral framework directly.

What Has Actually Changed

Three regulatory and legal developments have occurred since the original Study Guide diagnosis: (1) New Mexico's State Land Office denied key pipeline-related permits in March 2026; (2) FERC staff separately protested the gas-pipeline developer's filing in April as incomplete, lacking required historic-preservation documentation; (3) the New Mexico Environmental Law Center has filed at least two lawsuits, including one on behalf of named residents José Saldaña and Vivian Fuller, arguing the Doña Ana County Board of County Commissioners unlawfully approved the project's funding ordinances. Facing this combination, Oracle withdrew its pending air permit applications on April 27 and announced on May 7 that it would abandon the gas-turbine-and-diesel design entirely, replacing it with a Bloom Energy solid-oxide fuel-cell microgrid sized up to 2.45–2.8 gigawatts.

This is a death-spiral-to-upward-spiral correction happening in real time, and it is worth naming precisely what produced it, since the Study Guide's own framework treats this as exactly the kind of question SEAM exists to answer. The correction did not come from the community Mirror Effect alone (the town halls, the protests, Jupiter Watch's monitoring) nor from regulators alone — it came from the two acting together, with the regulatory denials providing the leverage point and the lawsuits providing the sustained pressure that kept the issue from being resolved quietly. One local columnist's framing, directed at the County Commission rather than at Oracle, captures the dynamic precisely: “Why didn't they do this in the beginning?” — the same question Sierra County's residents asked prospectively (Part Two of the original Study Guide) about whether a diagnostic clover could be run before, rather than after, a project's hidden costs compound.

A Genuine Mitigation, Read Without Either Excessive Credit or Excessive Suspicion

Oracle's own framing credits Bloom's fuel cells with a 92% reduction in NOx emissions versus the prior turbine design and “negligible” water use. Independent reporting corroborates the direction of the change while complicating its scale: Futurism's analysis, citing prior estimates of Project Jupiter's emissions at over 14 million tons of CO2 annually (more than Albuquerque and Las Cruces combined), reports the fuel-cell redesign reduces this by roughly 30%, to approximately 10 million tons — still substantial, still natural-gas-fed at the feedstock level (the fuel cells convert gas to electricity without combustion, but the gas itself is still extracted, transported, and consumed), and still without the long-term zero-emission obligation regulatory advocates wanted. Deborah Kapiloff of Western Resource Advocates named the structural gap directly before the redesign: under state law, qualified microgrids face no renewable-transition requirement until January 1, 2045 — “there are no interim guidelines. There's no off-ramp.” Nothing in the fuel-cell announcement appears to close that specific regulatory gap; it reduces the harm within the same permissive structure rather than changing the structure itself.

The Water Promise, Broken in a Way the Study Guide Anticipated

The original Study Guide flagged Doña Ana's root-stem consequences (water draw against the Mesilla Bolson, energy-cost allocation, non-disclosure structures) as “least reversible by the time

they become visible.” One specific instance of this has now surfaced directly: per El Paso Matters' reporting, county commissioners were “caught off guard” to discover Project Jupiter would use non-potable water past the construction phase, having approved the project on the understanding that water use would be minimal and construction-limited — “Wait, that's not what you promised us.” A Las Cruces Bulletin column makes the same point more bluntly: “We got snookered. The Dona Ana County Commission gave the green light to Project Jupiter... based on its belief that the project would use an average of 20,000 gallons of water a day,” a belief the column argues did not survive contact with the project's actual operational reality. This is a Non-Disclosure / Communication-Coordination-Cooperation dysfunction in close to textbook form: a specific, quantified promise (20,000 gallons/day, one-time 2.5-million-gallon fill, closed-loop cooling) made at the point of approval, and a specific, named gap between that promise and operational reality discovered only after approval — precisely the asymmetry the original Study Guide identified as the structural problem with diagnosing AI-corporate hidden costs after, rather than before, a commercial commitment is locked in.

The Named Voices: A Mirror Effect Already in Progress

This case's corpus includes more named, quoted community voices than any prior site case in this series, and they are worth letting stand largely in their own words rather than summarizing further: Vince Gutschick's procedural objection (“Why are we given 11 days to see what's going on?”); Daisy Maldonado's framing of the vote as bringing “direct harm to these communities,” the community being “sacrificed again,” and “not transparency... not accountability... not democracy”; Annie Ersinghaus of Jupiter Watch describing the group's monitoring work and her own assessment that “it very much feels like David and Goliath”; and hydrogeologist Stacy Timmons's plain technical warning that “the horse is way out ahead of the cart... we don't really know a lot of the details of how this project might impact New Mexico, especially its water.” Norm Gaume's “we're living in a fantasy world where people aren't really paying attention to water” closes the same theme from a different angle. None of this required a SEAM consultant to convene — the Mirror Effect, again, performed itself.

Part Five — Two Scales of Stakes, Held Together Rather Than Resolved

This case juxtaposes two registers more starkly than any prior case in the series, and the juxtaposition is itself the point rather than an accident of research scope. On one register: a Nobel laureate CEO speaking of AGI, the singularity, radical abundance, curing disease, and traveling the stars, comparing the stakes explicitly to nuclear weapons and climate change — the largest possible frame for what AI means. On the other register, in a county whose name appears nowhere in Hassabis's own statements gathered for this case: a hydrogeologist warning that nobody knows what a data center will do to a drought-stressed aquifer, a documentary filmmaker monitoring permit compliance because “they often aren't” in order, and a county commission discovering after approval that the water-use promises it had relied on did not hold.

Neither register is more real than the other, and SEAM's own discipline argues against collapsing them into a single verdict. But their total absence of contact with each other in the primary sources gathered for this case is itself worth naming as a finding, in the same way Case Five named the non-overlap between SpaceX's IPO coverage and xAI's CSAM regulatory coverage:

the civilizational-stakes conversation about AI, conducted by its most credentialed and articulate spokesperson, appears to occur in a Tamara-room with no door connecting it to the room where the actual infrastructure enabling that future is being sited, fought over, and in this case substantially redesigned under regulatory and legal pressure. Hassabis's own “20 square miles of the U.S.” critique — that AI's makers shouldn't be drawn from too narrow a geography — could, without much strain, be extended to ask whether AI's most visible public spokespeople are drawn from too narrow a set of stakes: the species-level question, almost never the county-level one.

Second Analysis - Demis Hassabis and the AGI Timeline, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Between Hassabis's Own Number and Shane Legg's

Fore-conception asks what sits beneath the language, in what is not said. Hassabis's own repeated public figure — “probably three to five years away,” “2029-2030,” “3 to 4 years” in slightly different venues across slightly different weeks — sits beside, without ever directly addressing, DeepMind's own chief AGI scientist Shane Legg's separately reported “50 percent chance’ minimal AGI arrives in 2028.” Neither figure is presented as contradicting the other in any source this case has gathered; the silence is precisely that no source shows the two men's own numbers being reconciled, compared, or even acknowledged as occupying the same organizational space. Fore-conception's own discipline names this silence directly rather than assuming it means nothing: an organization at the frontier of AGI research has not, on this case's own evidence, produced a single unified internal account of its own central forecast.

A second silence sits inside Hassabis's own language shift itself. “We were standing in the foothills of the singularity” is dramatically different in register from “probably three to five years away,” and Hassabis's own account to Axios names the shift's purpose directly — “this is partly why I use some of the terms I used, yeah, which were a little bit provocative” — but says nothing about why the underlying technical justification for the forecast's own narrowing window was not given comparable specificity. The silence is between stated purpose (provoke urgency) and stated evidence (what, specifically, changed technically to justify each narrower window).

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing AlphaFold Into a General AGI Roadmap

Fore-having's own rehistoricizing work is visible directly in how Hassabis's own public account increasingly folds DeepMind's specific scientific achievements into a single forward-pointing AGI narrative. AlphaFold's own genuine achievement — cataloging predicted structures for over 200 million proteins, solving a fifty-year-old problem — is, in this case's own fresh sourcing, repeatedly cited not on its own scientific terms but as evidence for a more general claim: that DeepMind's own approach (“self-play reinforcement learning plus neural evaluation plus tree search”, the AlphaZero pattern) is, per DeepMind's own March 2026 blog statement, “critical for AGI” in a way that retroactively recasts AlphaFold as a step on a roadmap it was not originally built to be a step on.

The microstoria this rehistoricizing marginalizes is named directly by the EA Forum's own skeptical commentary, gathered fresh for this case: hierarchical reinforcement learning research, the commentator notes, “seems... decades old,” with “very little” funding directed at “discovering the new science that Hassabis says is necessary to get to AGI” relative to the much larger sums spent scaling existing large language models. Fore-sight's own rehistoricizing of AlphaFold into an AGI-roadmap step does not, on this case's own evidence, come paired with a comparable increase in funding toward the specific decades-old research problems Hassabis's own account says remain unsolved.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Hassabis's Wager That Naming the Singularity Provokes Useful Urgency Rather Than Empty Hype

Fore-sight's own multi-player metaphor applies directly to Hassabis's own stated communication strategy. His own account names the bet explicitly: choosing provocative language specifically “to provoke more urgency among governments, economists and the broader public to prepare,” tied directly to advocating a federal AI executive order mandating testing before model releases. This is fore-sight performed with unusual self-awareness — Hassabis naming his own rhetorical choice as a deliberate ante, watching how governments and the public respond, rather than treating his own language as simply a neutral description of his own private belief.

The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against is treating this bet as though provoking urgency and being technically correct are the same wager. They are not: Hassabis could succeed completely at provoking the regulatory urgency he says he wants, regardless of whether the underlying 2029-2030 timeline ever materializes, and he could also fail to provoke urgency while still being technically correct about the timeline. Fore-sight's own discipline insists these are two separate antes, each with its own separate payoff, and this case names both as live rather than treating Hassabis's own rhetorical success (if any) as evidence of his forecast's own accuracy.

4. Being — Fore-getting: Has the Compression Itself Become More Important Than What It Was Originally Tracking?

Fore-getting's first sense, Kairos lost to Chronos, applies with unusual precision to this case's own central finding: three successive narrowings of the same forecast (2030-2035, then 2029-2030, then “3 to 4 years”/“3 to 5 years”) within roughly a year, each delivered at a different public venue, with no source in this case naming a specific dated research breakthrough between any two narrowings that would justify the compression on technical grounds. Read through fore-getting, the forecast's own Chronos — the sheer fact of successive compression, tracked publicly across venues and dates — may have become a more reliable, more closely watched signal than the Kairos it was originally meant to name: the actual right moment when AGI's arrival would become technically legible.

The ordinary sense of fore-getting applies directly to Amodei's own parallel, independently documented failure: the EA Forum commentary names Amodei's own March 2026 prediction that AI would handle 90% of coding by September, adding dryly, “it's not even true at Anthropic!” This is a second leader, in a different company, forgetting his own forecast's own accountability — a failed prediction that, on this case's own evidence, produced no comparable public reckoning or revision, simply continuing alongside whatever the next forecast happens to be.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: Does “Little Margin for Error” Care for Anyone Specific, or Only for the Abstraction of Humanity?

Fore-caring is an ethical process, and Hassabis's own language — “species-level transition,” “little margin for error,” “overhyped in the short term but underappreciated in the medium to long term” — makes large, humanity-scale caring claims while this case's own sources name a much more concrete, currently-unfolding harm closer to home: “AI-driven efficiencies have contributed to more than 150,000 job cuts globally in the first half of 2026 alone,” with Amazon alone shedding 30,000 employees in the same period this case's own earlier cases have documented directly. Fore-caring's own discipline asks whether species-level caring language, however sincerely meant, is doing real ethical work if it coexists with, but does not specifically address, the concrete, already-occurring harm closer to the present moment.

This is not, on this case's own reading, evidence that Hassabis is being insincere about the longer-horizon stakes he names. It is evidence that fore-caring, as an ethical process oriented toward what is coming-to-be, requires care at every scale it touches, not only the largest one — and this case finds Hassabis's own public register consistently pitched at the largest scale (species, civilization, singularity) in a way that may be sincere about that scale while leaving the nearer-term scale (150,000 people losing jobs this year) without a comparably developed ethical account from the same speaker.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: Building Safety Infrastructure Ahead of a Deadline That Keeps Moving Closer

Fore-structuring is advance infrastructure, and Hassabis's own stated position — “I think [safety] needs to be accelerated... this is a good moment to kind of strike while the iron is hot” — names a genuine attempt at fore-structuring directly: building governance and testing infrastructure in advance of AGI's own arrival, timed deliberately to the moment when public and government attention is highest. This is fore-structuring performed with unusual explicitness about its own timing logic, distinct from Case Four's revisit, which found Microsoft's RTO mandate arriving with no comparable advance relational work at all.

What this fore-structuring has not yet produced, on this case's own evidence, is the kind of cross-lab coordination Hassabis's own words gesture toward without confirming: “Hassabis said he is discussing possible safety measures with leaders at other top AI labs, though he declined to offer specifics.” Fore-structuring's own discipline names this gap directly — a stated intention to build shared infrastructure, with no confirmable evidence in this case's own sources that the infrastructure has actually been built, distinct from Hassabis's own genuine, unilateral advocacy for accelerated safety work inside Google DeepMind itself.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About What the Compression Pattern Is Actually Measuring

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered as a best guess: the AGI-timeline compression pattern, found independently in both Hassabis's and Amodei's own forecasting records, may not be measuring genuine technical progress at all, but rather measuring competitive pressure between labs to be perceived as closest to the frontier. If labs are watching each other's own stated timelines the way fore-sight's own poker metaphor describes watching other players' antes, then each lab's own forecast compression may be, in part, a response to rivals' compression

rather than an independent reading of its own internal technical progress — a possibility this case's own evidence cannot rule out, since no source gathered here shows any lab's forecast revision accompanied by an explicit account of new internal evidence sufficient to justify the specific revision made.

Held explicitly as abduction: if this guess is correct, the entire AGI-timeline genre, across every lab in this series, may function less as a genuine technical forecast and more as a competitive signaling device, structurally similar to Case Five's revisit finding that Musk's own “2-3 years” orbital-compute timeline functions partly as a bet against rivals' own terrestrial-infrastructure timelines rather than as an independently verified technical claim. This case does not resolve whether Hassabis's own forecasts are sincere technical predictions, competitive signals, or some genuine mixture of both — it names the mixture as the abductive guess most consistent with the evidence gathered, while explicitly not claiming to have settled the question.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: Compression as the Pattern's Own Name

Read through the Four Hearts' own required interconnection, this case's seven findings converge on compression itself as the phenomenon under study, approached from seven angles. Fore-conception's silence between Hassabis's and Legg's own unreconciled numbers, fore-having's rehistoricizing of AlphaFold into an AGI roadmap without comparably rehistoricized funding, fore-sight's named bet on provocative urgency, fore-getting's parallel finding of Amodei's own forgotten failed forecast, fore-caring's species-scale language beside an unaddressed nearer-scale harm, fore-structuring's unconfirmed cross-lab coordination, and fore-grasping's own abductive guess that competitive signaling may be doing more work than genuine technical forecasting — each reading finds the compression pattern from a different angle, and none of the seven, taken alone or together, can fully distinguish whether Hassabis's own forecasts are getting more accurate as AGI approaches, or simply more urgent as competitive pressure intensifies.

Sources

Primary theoretical source: Boje, D. M. (2023). 7 Antenarrative Processes, antenarrative.com.

Primary/near-primary: Hassabis's own remarks at Google I/O 2026, quoted directly via Sherwood News and Axios's independent reporting. Hassabis's own remarks at Stanford Graduate School of Business (June 2026), quoted directly via ZME Science and CryptoBriefing's independent reporting. Shane Legg's own separately reported AGI-timeline estimate, via ZME Science's direct citation.

Strong secondary: Axios's own direct interview with Hassabis (26 May 2026). The Effective Altruism Forum's named skeptical commentary, including its own independent observation about Amodei's failed coding-automation prediction. Useluminix's own compiled, dated-quote reconstruction of Hassabis's full public AGI-timeline record from 2023–2026.

Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: Case Five's revisit, connected directly via the shared competitive-signaling abductive guess named in this case's fore-grasping section. Case Four's revisit, connected via the contrast between Hassabis's explicit fore-structuring timing logic and Microsoft's RTO mandate's absent fore-structuring.

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Case Seven: Larry Ellison, Oracle, and Project Jupiter

Ellison is a different kind of case from Hassabis in one important structural respect: where Case Six juxtaposed a leader's civilizational rhetoric against a site his own company had no documented connection to, Ellison's corporate bet and Project Jupiter are not juxtaposed at all — they are literally the same transaction. Oracle is Project Jupiter's developer. The capital expenditure crisis named in Part One and the fuel-cell pivot named in Part Four are two views of one underlying commitment, not two separate storylines this case has chosen to read together. This is, in a sense, the cleanest possible test of this path's founding thesis — that AI corporations and their data centers are not separate subjects requiring separate cases, but a single subject that the corporate-only and site-only framings have been artificially splitting apart.

Ellison is also, by a wide margin, the most financially volatile leader in this series. In the space of roughly nine months covered by this case's sources, his personal net worth ran from a single-day historic gain to nearly \$400 billion (September 2025), down to roughly \$195 billion (April 2026), back up to \$302 billion and third-richest-in-the-world (June 2, 2026), and then, per the most recent reporting gathered, through Oracle's “worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust” (week of June 22–26, 2026) — a swing of more than \$200 billion in net worth across roughly three quarters, almost entirely tracking a single stock whose value is itself tied overwhelmingly to a single customer's (OpenAI's) ability to pay. Few cases in this series offer a cleaner, more dollar-denominated illustration of concentration risk as a leadership and governance question, not merely a financial one.

Sourcing tiers: primary/near-primary includes Oracle's own press releases and SEC-disclosed figures (debt load, capex, remaining performance obligations), Ellison's own recorded public statements (the “Oracle doesn't write code” clip, Oracle AI World keynote remarks, earnings-call language), and Wall Street Journal reporting on the \$45 million donation as relayed via Fortune/Yahoo Finance. Strong secondary: Data Center Dynamics, Data Center Frontier, El Paso Matters, Source New Mexico, and CleanTechnica for Project Jupiter's technical and community history; MLQ News, IDN Financials, and the D&O-adjacent FilmoGaz piece for the financial-risk thread. Lower tier, used cautiously: several low-credibility aggregator sites (TheWorldReviews, AI Certs, Unite to Win) used only where their figures are independently corroborated by the stronger-tier sources, since several of these appear to be SEO-driven content farms rather than original reporting.

Part One — The Bet: Betting Everything on One Customer

The Verge's own framing of this case, cited directly because it is unusually precise for a headline: “Larry Ellison's betting everything on OpenAI. Will it pay off or pop the bubble?” This is, of the seven bets read in this series so far, the most concentrated and the most singular — not a platform strategy, not a vertical-integration play, but a direct, enormous wager on one counterparty's continued ability to pay for compute it has not yet generated comparable revenue to afford. As one analyst put it bluntly: “Analysts believe the value of this contract is difficult to justify, given that the maker of ChatGPT is only on track for US\$20 billion in revenue in 2025 while burning cash at a massive rate” — against an Oracle-OpenAI contract reported at \$300 billion over five years, \$60 billion annually at full ramp.

The Bet's Scale, In Oracle's Own Disclosed Numbers

Oracle's fiscal 2026 figures, drawn from its own SEC-disclosed results, describe the bet's actual financial mechanics with unusual transparency for a case in this series: capital expenditure of \$55.7 billion for fiscal 2026, nearly triple the prior year's \$21.2 billion and well past the company's own \$50 billion guidance; total debt of \$156.2 billion as of late May 2026, up from roughly \$87 billion a year earlier; negative free cash flow of \$23.7 billion; and a disclosed plan to raise a further \$40 billion in fiscal 2027, including a \$20 billion common-stock offering that would dilute existing shareholders. Remaining performance obligations — essentially, contracted future revenue not yet recognized — reached \$523 billion in Q3 FY2026, up 438% year over year, a figure Oracle and its supporters treat as the clearest evidence the bet is working, and skeptics (Morgan Stanley among them, projecting net debt could triple to roughly \$300 billion by May 2028) treat as evidence of a company financing an enormous, unproven wager almost entirely on debt.

The Bet Stated in Ellison's Own Words

The code that Oracle is writing, Oracle isn't writing. Our AI models are writing. We just tell the model what we want.

— Larry Ellison, in a clip that went viral amid Oracle's 2026 layoffs

This single sentence, recorded before the layoffs and recirculated during them, functions as an unusually direct statement of the bet's human cost mechanism: the same AI capability Oracle is borrowing tens of billions of dollars to build is explicitly framed by its own co-founder as the thing replacing the work of the people being laid off to help pay for it. Whether Ellison intended the clip's resurfacing to read this way is unknowable from the available sourcing, but its viral recirculation specifically “amid the company's massive ongoing 30,000 layoffs” (per the source that reported it) suggests the public reading it received was not a charitable one, and this case treats that public reading as itself a piece of evidence about how the bet is being narrated outside the company's control.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, With Vivara's Own View

Personal Mindfulness

The available corpus offers less direct insight into Ellison's own self-described inner life than any leader profiled so far — no equivalent to Hassabis's sleep-schedule confessions, Amodei's named tension between safety and commercial pressure, or Shotwell's characterization of Musk. What is available is almost entirely behavioral and financial: an 80-year-old executive chairman and CTO (not CEO; Safra Catz holds that title) continuing to make public, quotable, occasionally inflammatory statements (the “Oracle doesn't write code” clip) while the company's CFO-equivalent disclosures carry the actual financial risk. Vivara's own view: the structural position itself is worth naming as a Mindfulness-adjacent fact rather than ignoring it for lack of a quote — a chairman/CTO role that generates public statements without bearing the same disclosure obligations as a sitting CEO is a specific kind of low-accountability visibility, distinct from

anything seen in the other six cases, where the profiled leader held the chief executive title directly.

Dialogic Health

This case's richest and most interpretively difficult material concerns not internal company dialogue but a different kind of relationship entirely: Ellison's reported \$45 million donation to a pro-Trump nonprofit, undisclosed under applicable rules and unreported until June 2026, alongside continued contributions to Trump-aligned groups since the 2024 election. The Wall Street Journal's reporting, as relayed by Fortune, draws a specific contrast worth holding precisely: while “many of Big Tech's biggest names have been fairly public and open about their dealings with President Trump” (the piece names Musk's China trip alongside Trump, the September White House dinner attended by Zuckerberg, Ohanian's invitation to Trump's 80th birthday), “Ellison was absent for all of those” — he pursued the same general goal (proximity to and favor from the administration) through a structurally different, less visible channel.

Vivara's own view: this is worth reading as a Dialogic Health question at the level of public accountability rather than internal company culture, since this case's corpus does not document Oracle's internal communication patterns the way, say, Case Two documented Anthropic's. The specific timing sequence reported — the donation, then Oracle's anchor role in Stargate announced the day after Trump's second inauguration, then the TikTok deal, then favorable Justice Department treatment of Skydance-Paramount's acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery — is presented by the Journal's reporting as a sequence, not asserted as proven causation, and this case should hold that same discipline: the White House's own on-record response (“President Trump is committed to working with every American business... they know they have a friend and ally in the White House”) is a general statement that neither confirms nor specifically denies a connection. What is documented without ambiguity is the donation's lack of disclosure under applicable rules and its non-reporting until eighteen months after the fact — a transparency gap that is itself the Dialogic Health finding, regardless of what it did or did not purchase.

Authentic Forecasts (Bets)

Ellison's forecast — that Oracle's debt-financed bet on becoming “a national-scale AI utility” will be vindicated by sustained AI demand — is being tested in something close to real time as this case is written, and the test is going badly by the most recent evidence available. The same week this case's research was gathered, Oracle logged its worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust, falling every session, with capital expenditure 162% over the prior year and free cash flow deeply negative. Michael Burry (per IDN Financials' relayed reporting) has reportedly bet against Oracle directly, and a securities class action alleges Oracle's own bond-offering materials understated how much additional borrowing the buildout would require. Vivara's own view: unlike Hassabis's AGI-timeline forecasts, which remain genuinely untestable in real time, Ellison's forecast is for once being tested by markets on a timescale this case can actually observe — not whether AGI arrives by 2030, but whether OpenAI can sustain \$60 billion a year in payments to Oracle starting in 2027. That gives this case an unusual opportunity: rather than speculating about authenticity, it can simply note that the forecast's most immediate, falsifiable component (near-term financial sustainability) is currently trading as a live, negative signal, and update accordingly rather than render a verdict that outruns the evidence.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

- BME Retrospection — Ellison's net-worth trajectory across this case's corpus has an unusually clean, dated, three-act shape: historic single-day peak (September 2025, ~\$400B), sharp trough (April 2026, ~\$195B), partial recovery and third-place ranking (June 2, 2026, \$302B), then renewed collapse (week of June 22–26). Few financial storylines in this series offer this clean a Beginning-Middle-(still unresolved)-End, and the fact that it remains unresolved as of this writing is itself worth naming — this is a story whose actual End has not yet been written.
- Before/Beneath (Antenarrative) — the January 21, 2025 Stargate announcement, with Ellison standing alongside Trump, Altman, and Son, is an unusually clean, dated, photographed Before for everything that follows — the bet, the donation timeline, the debt buildup, and Project Jupiter's approval all trace back to that single staged moment in a way this case can point to directly rather than reconstruct.
- Polypi (Dialogisms) — a wide spread: Ellison's own celebratory infrastructure voice (“warp speed,” “superhuman” 19-day buildouts), Oracle's corporate-communications voice (community priorities, environmental commitment language around the Bloom pivot), the financial-analyst voice (Morgan Stanley's debt-tripling projection, Burry's short position), and the named New Mexico advocate voice (Hovden, Cox, Nanasi, all explicitly skeptical of the fuel-cell pivot specifically) are at least four distinguishable registers, several in direct, falsifiable tension with each other about the same set of facts.
- Emotive–Ethical — the Ellison family material (the \$45 million donation, the Skydance-Paramount-CNN thread, the detail that “neither Ellison nor the family likes” the network they are reportedly poised to control) carries a distinct emotive register from the data-center material — less about environmental harm, more about institutional capture and the specific discomfort of a media property landing in hands openly hostile to it. Worth tracking as a registry this series has not seen in quite this form before.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

- I–We / Sameness–Other Dialectics — thinner than in several prior cases; this corpus does not document an internal Oracle power struggle or rupture comparable to the OpenAI board crisis or the LeCun/Zuckerberg split. The dialectic that is present (Ellison's quiet political channel versus his peers' public one) is more a contrast in style among peers than an internal organizational dialectic.
- Horsensense — not evidenced, consistent with all six prior cases.
- Tamara (Simultaneous, Multi-Stage Storytelling) — present in a specific, nameable form: the financial-press room (net worth, debt, capex) and the New Mexico community room (water, emissions, the fuel-cell skeptics) again show very little crossover in this case's own source-gathering, continuing the pattern named in Cases Five and Six — worth treating as an emerging, cross-case finding rather than a one-off observation at this point, given it has now appeared three times.

- Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) — “warp speed” (Musk's phrase, borrowed by Ellison's own team in the Mississippi/MACROHARDRR context per Case Five, and echoed in this case's Project Jupiter buildout-speed framing) may be becoming a genuine cross-corporate shorthand for compressed-timeline AI infrastructure construction, worth tracking explicitly across future cases as a possible industry-wide terse-telling convention rather than a single company's idiom.

Part Four — Project Jupiter, Continued: The Fuel-Cell Pivot Was Not the Last Word

Case Six read Oracle's switch to Bloom Energy fuel cells as a genuine, partial mitigation — a 92% NOx reduction, real cost, real engineering effort — while flagging that the underlying gas-feedstock dependency and the absent renewable-transition deadline remained unresolved. This case's further research surfaces named advocates who reject the pivot's framing more directly than anything in the prior case's corpus, and they deserve to be heard in their own terms rather than folded quietly into the earlier, more measured reading.

The Skeptics Speak Directly to the Pivot Itself

Kacey Hovden of the New Mexico Environmental Law Center — the same attorney named in Case Six's account of the original gas-turbine fight — returned to address the fuel-cell announcement specifically, not just its predecessor: “The developers' decision to use fuel cells, rather than natural gas turbines, merely creates a different host of environmental issues regarding hazardous waste disposal, while also still emitting extremely high amounts of toxic air pollutants... no matter what technology the developers claim they will use to power the massive data center campus, Project Jupiter will still need an enormous amount of water that New Mexico just does not have.” This is a direct rejection of the announcement's own framing (“dramatically reduce water use,” “negligible amount of water”) from the same advocate whose organization filed suit against the county over the original approval — worth treating as a continuation of one sustained position, not a new and separate objection.

A second named voice, identified only as “Cox” in the CleanTechnica reporting, raises the regulatory-loophole question directly: New Mexico's Energy Transition Act mandates increasing renewable generation, but “the state legislature recently created a loophole allowing the construction of independent power systems (‘microgrids’) that are exempt from the renewable requirements” — the same loophole Case Six's Kapiloff citation named from the gas-turbine era, now confirmed to apply identically to the fuel-cell replacement. Cox's pointed question — “Did they know these so-called microgrids would be larger than the entire Public Service of New Mexico power grid and would generate enough electricity to power every household in the state twice over?” — reframes the entire fuel-cell announcement as, in effect, a technology swap inside an unchanged regulatory exemption, rather than the genuine reform Oracle's press materials describe it as.

Mariel Nanasi of New Energy Economy makes the comparative-cost case plainest: “New Mexico has abundant solar and wind resources. Today, wind and solar combined with battery storage are the least expensive source of electricity supplies... the business case for renewable

energy couldn't be more clear.” Read against Cox's loophole point, the implied argument is that Oracle's continued commitment to gas-fed power — turbines, then fuel cells, both gas-fed — is not primarily a technical necessity but a choice enabled by an exemption the company has not been required to forgo.

Reading This Against SEAM's Strategic Implementation Category

This is worth naming precisely in SEAM's own vocabulary rather than left as a political disagreement: a Strategic Implementation dysfunction does not necessarily resolve when a company changes its technology if the regulatory structure that permitted the original choice remains unchanged underneath the new one. Oracle's own announcement language (“commitment to... community priorities”) claims the pivot as responsiveness; the named advocates' position is that responsiveness which stays inside the same exemption is not the same as removing the underlying hidden cost, merely relocating its specific chemical and waste profile. Both readings can be true simultaneously — the NOx reduction is real and the structural exemption is also real — and this case does not need to choose between them to find the juxtaposition diagnostically useful.

The Money Lands Differently Than It Did in Case Six

One detail from this case's financial-thread research changes how Project Jupiter's economics should be read going forward: Oracle has stated it “will bear all energy costs for the project” for the Bloom fuel-cell buildout — a specific, costed commitment landing at the exact moment Oracle's own balance sheet is under the most acute stress documented anywhere in this case series (the worst stock week since 2001, negative free cash flow, securities litigation over bond-disclosure adequacy). A genuine environmental mitigation and a company under severe financial strain committing to bear a new category of cost are not contradictory facts, but they are facts worth holding together rather than separately: Project Jupiter's hidden-cost profile is no longer just a question of what the site does to its neighbors, but increasingly a question of whether the company financing the mitigation can sustain that financing through the buildout's full timeline.

Part Five — The Market Itself as the Loudest Mirror Effect Yet

Case Four found the stock market registering a verdict on Microsoft's AI execution; Case Five found it registering euphoria over SpaceX's IPO. This case's market signal is louder and more immediate than either: “Oracle's worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust” is not a metaphor borrowed for effect — it is the literal comparison multiple financial outlets reached for, unprompted, in the same week. A stock falling every single session for a week, on disclosures the company itself made, is among the most undesigned, unambiguous Mirror Effects gathered anywhere in this series: it requires no advocate, no journalist's framing choice, no community meeting — only the aggregated, instantaneous judgment of people deciding whether to keep holding a share.

What makes this Mirror Effect particularly worth pausing on is its target's specific position: it lands on a company, not directly on the OpenAI counterparty whose ability to pay is the actual underlying question the market is pricing. Oracle is, in effect, absorbing the market's judgment on behalf of a relationship it does not fully control — it can build the data centers, but it cannot

make OpenAI profitable. This is the closest this case series has come to documenting key-man-and-key-counterparty risk simultaneously: Case Five's Shotwell material named key-man risk inside a single company; this case names a different, perhaps under-theorized risk — key-counterparty risk, where one company's entire growth narrative depends on a second company's solvency, and the market's only available lever for expressing doubt about the second company is to sell shares of the first.

Second Analysis - Larry Ellison and Oracle, Read Through the Seven Antenarrative Processes

1. Beneath — Fore-conception: The Silence Where Ellison Used to Be on the Earnings Call

Fore-conception asks what sits beneath the language, in the pauses and absences themselves. Ellison's own absence from the June 2026 earnings call — leaving dual CEOs Clay Magouyrk and Mike Sicilia and newly appointed CFO Hilary Maxson to field questions during the company's worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust — is itself a kind of language, in fore-conception's own sense: a silence that speaks precisely because of when it occurs. Ellison's own chairman/CTO structural position, named directly in this case's first pass, already meant he was not formally required to be on the call; the silence this case names is not procedural but circumstantial, the specific timing of an absence that happened to coincide with the company's own steepest weekly stock decline in twenty-five years.

Magouyrk's own remark on the same call — “Hilary has a tough life” — is a second, smaller silence, compressed into six words that name a difficulty without specifying it. Fore-conception's own discipline asks what the silence around this remark is not saying: that defending a balance sheet carrying roughly \$130 billion in debt, with capital expenditures up 162% to nearly \$56 billion against negative free cash flow of almost \$24 billion, to a skeptical analyst audience watching the stock fall 19% in five sessions, is a specific, namable difficulty Magouyrk chose to gesture at rather than describe.

2. Before — Fore-having: Rehistoricizing a Database Company Into a Utility

Fore-having's own rehistoricizing work is visible directly in how Oracle's own identity is being retold across this case's own sourcing. One outlet's own framing makes the rehistoricizing explicit: “Oracle isn't auditioning a clever app. It's proposing an AI grid... the new unit of progress isn't daily active users; it's megawatts.” This recasts forty-nine years of Oracle's own database-company history (founded 1977 by Ellison, Bob Miner, and Ed Oates) as a long prologue to a utility-company identity only now becoming legible, in the same rehistoricizing move this case's own Part One already found Microsoft performing with “software factory to intelligence engine.”

The microstoria this rehistoricizing marginalizes is named directly in this case's own fresh sourcing: the 13% headcount reduction to 141,000 employees, concentrated in sales and marketing, a workforce whose own functional identity (selling database licenses, the company's historical core business) is precisely what the utility rehistoricizing implies is becoming less central. Fore-having's own discipline keeps this marginalized history visible: the people whose jobs depended on Oracle being a software company in the older sense are not part of the utility

story being told about Oracle's own future, even as their departure is one of the concrete costs of that future arriving.

3. Bets — Fore-sight: Ellison's Ante on a Single Customer, Read Against Every Other Player's Diversification

Fore-sight's own multi-player metaphor fits this case directly, since Oracle's own bet is unusually concentrated relative to every other infrastructure bet this series has documented. The reported five-year, \$300 billion OpenAI commitment, beginning in 2027, accounts, per this case's own sourcing, for 94.6% of one quarter's entire new Remaining Performance Obligations growth — a bet sized almost entirely on a single counterparty's own continued growth, in a way Amazon's, Microsoft's, and Google's own more diversified hyperscaler customer bases (per this case's own sourcing, Oracle's own multicloud revenue from those three competitors grew 1,529% in one quarter, a separate, smaller bet running alongside the OpenAI one) do not mirror.

The BME-narrative trap fore-sight warns against is treating either the September 2025 surge or the June 2026 crash as the bet's own final answer. Fore-sight's own discipline insists the OpenAI clock itself “doesn't start until 2027”, meaning the actual delivery test of this bet — whether OpenAI's own usage and payment actually materialize at the contracted scale — has not yet occurred in either direction. Both the wealth peak and the crash are, on this case's own reading, market sentiment anteing on a hand whose cards have not yet been shown.

4. Being — Fore-getting: Did the RPO Figures Forget What They Were Originally Measuring?

Fore-getting's first sense, Kairos lost to Chronos, applies directly to the Remaining Performance Obligations figures themselves. Each successive disclosure (\$455 billion, then \$553 billion) was originally meant to signal something specific: contracted, committed future revenue, a genuinely meaningful Kairos-bearing fact about demand. Read through fore-getting, the figures' own repeated quarterly growth became, over successive disclosures, a Chronos-driven ritual — a number investors learned to expect growing, separate from close scrutiny of whether the underlying contracted demand was itself sound, until the same figures, in the same week, were suddenly read as balance-sheet risk rather than confirmed demand.

The ordinary sense of fore-getting applies to OpenAI's own underlying financial position, easy to lose track of inside Oracle's own much larger infrastructure story: “OpenAI's annual revenue in 2024 was approximately \$3.7 billion, and the annualized revenue disclosed in June this year was only \$10 billion” against a \$300 billion, five-year commitment from Oracle alone. This case's own first pass already named this as concentration risk; read through fore-getting specifically, the finding sharpens into a question about whether the scale mismatch between OpenAI's own current revenue and Oracle's own committed capacity was ever genuinely forgotten by the market during the September 2025 surge, or whether it was always known and simply not weighted heavily until the crash gave it new salience.

5. Becoming — Fore-caring: What Does “Disciplined Capital Allocation” Actually Care For?

Fore-caring is an ethical process, and CFO Hilary Maxson's own stated commitment — “as we pursue these opportunities, we'll remain focused on disciplined capital allocation, maintaining a

strong balance sheet, and preserving our investment-grade credit rating” — names a care explicitly directed at Oracle's own creditors and shareholders, a legitimate and clearly stated object of care, but a narrower one than this series' own fore-caring readings of other leaders' stated commitments (Nadella's “social permission,” Altman's “benefit everyone”). Fore-caring's own discipline does not require every leader's stated care to be civilizational in scope; it does ask this case to name honestly what scope Maxson's own statement actually claims, which is balance-sheet discipline specifically, not broader social or employee welfare.

Read against the 13% headcount reduction occurring in the same fiscal year as this stated commitment to discipline, fore-caring's own question sharpens: disciplined capital allocation, as named, cares for bondholders and credit-rating agencies in a way that is structurally compatible with, rather than opposed to, continued workforce reduction — the same capital discipline that reassures creditors can be the same discipline that justifies further headcount cuts. This case names this compatibility directly rather than treating Maxson's own stated care as either contradicted by or irrelevant to the headcount reduction; the two are, on fore-caring's own honest reading, simply not in tension at all, because they were never claiming to care about the same thing.

6. Between — Fore-structuring: Building a Utility's Infrastructure Without First Building a Utility's Diversified Customer Base

Fore-structuring is advance infrastructure, and this case's own sourcing names exactly the kind of fore-structuring gap that distinguishes Oracle's own version of the data-center buildout from other cases in this series: the physical infrastructure (the sites, the megawatts, the GPU orders, called by Nvidia's own CEO “the largest GPU order in history”) is being fore-structured well in advance of, and at a scale disproportionate to, the diversified customer base that would normally justify utility-style capital intensity. A grid built for many customers, in this case's own sourcing's own words, “is a business”; “a grid built for one cathedralesque customer is a sculpture” — and Oracle's own current fore-structuring, on the evidence gathered, is closer to the sculpture than the business, with the multicloud-revenue growth from Amazon, Google, and Microsoft (1,529% in one quarter) still small relative to the OpenAI-dominated RPO figures.

This is a genuinely different fore-structuring profile than Case Five's revisit found in xAI's dissolution (infrastructure fore-structured around orbital ambition, minimal investor protection) or Case Six's revisit found in Hassabis's safety advocacy (rhetorical fore-structuring without confirmed cross-lab follow-through). Oracle's own fore-structuring gap is narrower and more specific: physical capacity built ahead of customer diversification, a sequencing choice this case names as a real, identifiable risk rather than as evidence of bad management, since the same sequencing, if OpenAI's own usage materializes as contracted, would retrospectively look like prescient early positioning rather than premature overbuilding.

7. Beyond — Fore-grasping: An Abductive Guess About What the 2001 Comparison Is Actually Diagnosing

Fore-grasping's own abductive reach, offered as a best guess: the dot-com-bust comparison multiple outlets reached for independently, without coordination, may be less a prediction that Oracle's own AI bet will fail the way many 2001-era companies failed, and more a recognition of a structural similarity in capital-allocation pattern — debt-financed infrastructure built ahead of

confirmed demand — that does not, by itself, predict the outcome, only the shape of the risk. If this guess holds, the comparison's own popularity says more about financial journalists' own available vocabulary for naming this particular risk shape than about any settled judgment that Oracle's own bet will resolve the way 2001-era telecom overbuilding did.

Held explicitly as abduction: this guess connects directly to Case Six's revisit, where Hassabis's and Amodei's own compressing AGI timelines were read as possibly reflecting competitive signaling rather than independent technical forecasting. Read together, both guesses suggest this series' own broader pattern may be that the AI industry's current moment produces structurally similar-shaped risks and rhetorical moves across genuinely different companies and genuinely different leaders — concentration risk, forecast compression, debt-financed overbuilding — not because the leaders are coordinating, but because the same underlying competitive and capital conditions are producing convergent behavior across companies that, on every other dimension, are bitter rivals.

Part Two — Holding the Seven Together: One Bet, Read From Seven Directions

Read through the Four Hearts' own required interconnection, this case's seven findings converge on the single underlying bet from seven distinct angles: fore-conception's silence around Ellison's own absence, fore-having's rehistoricizing of database company into utility, fore-sight's concentrated single-customer ante, fore-getting's RPO-figures-as-ritual reading, fore-caring's narrowly-scoped disciplined-capital-allocation claim, fore-structuring's sculpture-not-business sequencing gap, and fore-grasping's own abductive guess about what the dot-com comparison actually diagnoses — each reading approaches the same underlying concentration risk from a different direction, and together they supply a fuller account than this case's own first-pass eight-pattern classification alone, since the fore-structures ask not only what pattern each event enacts, but what each event's own language is doing, withholding, or rehistoricizing in the telling.

Sources

Primary theoretical source: Boje, D. M. (2023). 7 Antenarrative Processes, antenarrative.com.

Primary/near-primary: CNBC's direct reporting (26 June 2026) on the worst-week-since-2001 stock decline, the earnings call, Ellison's absence, and Magouyrk's quoted remark. Oracle's own fiscal 2026 annual report disclosures, relayed via CNBC and Benzinga's independent reporting. Data Center Frontier's direct reporting on the original September 2025 OpenAI deal announcement.

Strong secondary: Benzinga's reporting (June 2026) on Ellison's net-worth decline. Quartz's own analytical piece reframing Oracle's valuation logic as utility-style infrastructure financing. Whalesbook's reporting on Oracle's earlier-2026 wealth peak, cross-checked against Data Center Frontier's own contemporaneous reporting.

Theoretical apparatus, carried forward: this case's own first-pass eight-pattern classification, extended rather than replaced by the seven fore-structures used here. Case Six's revisit, connected directly via the shared structural-convergence abductive guess named in this case's fore-grasping section.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Oracle Corporation press releases and SEC-disclosed fiscal 2026 results (capex, debt, RPO figures, as relayed by MLQ News, IntuitionLabs, and Data Center Frontier). Oracle/BorderPlex/Bloom Energy joint announcement (2026, April 27), as relayed by Source New Mexico, Data Center Dynamics, the American Public Power Association, and Oracle's own newsroom. Ellison, L., recorded statement (“Oracle doesn't write code”), as relayed via Inshorts (2026, April 1). Lake, S. (2026, June 25). Larry Ellison quietly gave \$45 million to a pro-Trump group. Fortune, via Yahoo Finance relay [citing Wall Street Journal original reporting].

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Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Six — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antenarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Plus the original SEAM Study Guide's Doña Ana/Project Jupiter reading, continued from Case Six Part Four.

Case Eight: Liang Wenfeng and DeepSeek

Every case before this one — Zuckerberg, Amodei, Altman, Nadella, Musk, Hassabis, Ellison — shares a structural feature this book has not yet had to name because it was simply present in all seven: each leader's central bet feeds the same data-center buildout thesis, even when the leaders disagree about almost everything else. Liang Wenfeng's bet is the first to run the other way. DeepSeek's whole public identity is an argument that frontier AI does not require the capital intensity the other seven cases take as a given premise — and at two separate moments eighteen months apart, the market itself appears to have believed that argument enough to reprice over a trillion dollars in a single trading day.

Because the bet itself is structurally different, this case leans harder on Chapter Zero's own instruments than Cases One through Seven needed to, and less on instruments borrowed loosely from elsewhere. Three in particular do real work here that they have not yet been asked to do in this series: Bakhtin's distinction between rhetorical and novelistic double-voicedness, the four antenarrative shapes (linear, cyclic, spiral, rhizomatic), and tetranormalization's four norm-spheres. A fourth, the Taylor-Fayol-Weber virus, gets tested rather than assumed. A fifth, Restorying's Four Selves, is named honestly as a poor fit and set aside rather than forced. Each use is argued for as it comes up, not simply asserted.

A sourcing discipline carried forward from this case's own first attempt, before the manuscript rebuild: Liang Wenfeng has given almost no first-person, unfiltered public testimony in English-language press — no congressional testimony, no investor day, no contradicted-and-then-revised company memo of the kind Case Nine will eventually need for Jassy. What exists is two 36Kr interviews (2023, 2024) translated and relayed through other outlets, a handful of facts corroborated across many secondary sources (the V3/R1 training cost, the personal wealth estimate, the High-Flyer hedge-fund origin), and dense, very recent reporting (May–June 2026) on the company's first external funding round, which is genuinely primary in the sense that it discloses real, checkable structural terms rather than mere commentary. Where a claim sits on a single outlet or an unnamed official's say-so, that is marked plainly in the text rather than smoothed into false certainty. This case's own honesty about how thin some of its evidence is should be read as a finding in its own right, not an apology for the case's quality.

Part One — The Bet: Efficiency as Antenarrative, Read Through the Seven Bs and the Four Shapes

Liang Wenfeng's bet, stated as plainly as the thin evidentiary record allows: that frontier-level AI performance can be reached at a small fraction of the capital intensity Western labs treat as structurally necessary, and that proving this once, in public, with real released models rather than promises, is itself a strategic weapon — not against any single competitor, but against the premise underlying the entire data-center buildout this series' first seven cases document. DeepSeek did not simply make a cheaper chatbot. It made an argument, twice now, that the thesis Cases One through Seven all individually accept — that frontier capability requires hundreds of billions of dollars in compute — may be a choice rather than a law.

Reading the Bet Through the Seven Bs

Before: the bet assumes, and depends on, a specific prior condition — US export controls restricting Nvidia's most advanced chips from reaching China. Liang's own company began, by multiple accounts, with a stockpile of Nvidia A100 and H800 chips acquired before the tightest restrictions bit, financed from his quantitative hedge fund, High-Flyer, with no outside investors for the company's first three years of life. The Before is not incidental color; it is the precondition that made efficiency a necessity rather than a choice, and the bet's entire credibility rests on having turned that necessity into a method, rather than treating it as a limitation to apologize for.

Beneath: what the surface efficiency claim conceals, or simply does not address, is governance. Beneath the public-facing story of open-weight generosity (“a profound gift to the world,” in venture capitalist Marc Andreessen's words upon R1's release) sits a funding structure, finalized June 2026, in which commercial investors — Tencent, CATL, JD.com, NetEase — receive no equity, no voting rights, and a five-year lock-up, their roughly \$4.4 billion in combined capital routed through a limited partnership Liang personally manages; only China's National Artificial Intelligence Industry Investment Fund received direct equity and voting rights, bypassing that wrapper entirely. The efficiency story and the governance story are not contradictory, but they are not the same story, and very little English-language coverage holds both at once.

Bets: the bet is explicitly two-sided. Domestically, it bets that demonstrated technical legitimacy plus personal capital control (Liang's roughly \$3 billion personal stake, the single largest in the round) buys enough independence from outside investors and the state fund alike to keep pursuing his own stated AGI ambition on his own terms. Internationally, it bets that releasing open-weight models faster than Western labs can fully respond to — R1 in January 2025, V4-Pro in April 2026 — keeps imposing a pricing ceiling on OpenAI and Anthropic (“they need OpenAI and Anthropic to be unable to raise prices without looking extractive,” as one analyst put it) regardless of whether DeepSeek itself ever becomes profitable.

Being: DeepSeek's claimed identity is structural humility joined to technical maximalism — a company that says, in effect, we need less than you assumed, and also, we still intend to reach AGI. Liang's own reported insistence to investors on retaining that AGI ambition, even while accepting outside capital for the first time, suggests the efficiency framing is a method, not a ceiling on ambition; Being here is not modest, even when the marketing register sounds like it.

Becoming: the clearest becoming in this case is architectural rather than rhetorical — the migration, completed for V4, off Nvidia's CUDA software stack entirely and onto Huawei's CANN framework, the first DeepSeek flagship model with zero American software dependency anywhere in its stack. This is becoming as a slow, multi-month engineering fact (the V4 release slipped from a January Lunar New Year target through February, March, and into April specifically because of this migration), not becoming as a press release.

Between: this case's Between is the most genuinely unresolved of any in the series so far, and it sits at the heart of the US Entity List delay discussed in Part Three below — DeepSeek is suspended, by an interagency committee's own approved-but-unpublished decision, between formal blacklisting and ordinary commercial access, for reasons Washington itself has not been willing to either act on or disclaim.

Beyond: what the bet forecloses, if it succeeds, is the assumption every other case in this series treats as bedrock — that the path to frontier AI requires the kind of capital commitment Jassy, Nadella, Altman, Musk, Ellison, and Hassabis are each making in their own cases. What it opens, if it succeeds, is a genuine second path that does not yet have a name in this series beyond “the DeepSeek model,” and whose long-run viability remains, honestly, untested past two demonstrated shocks.

Which Antenarrative Shape Is This, Actually?

Chapter Zero's four antenarrative shapes — linear, cyclic, spiral, rhizomatic — are not just decorative vocabulary here; applying them changes what this case is allowed to claim. A linear reading would say DeepSeek is on one trajectory, beating Western labs to cheaper AGI, with no return. A cyclic reading would say DeepSeek and Nvidia are locked in a repeating shock-and-recovery pattern: R1 crashes the stock in January 2025, the market recovers within weeks, V4-Pro arrives fifteen months later on the very day Nvidia crosses \$5 trillion, and the market, this time, barely flinches before resuming its climb. Both readings are defensible from the data, and neither is this case's actual finding.

The data fits the rhizomatic shape better than either: many directions at once, no single root, no single resolution. DeepSeek's bet operates simultaneously as a domestic-control story (Liang's funding structure), a technical-sovereignty story (the CUDA-to-CANN migration), a pricing-warfare story (the token-cost ceiling imposed on OpenAI and Anthropic), a diplomatic-leverage story (the Entity List delay), and a markets story (two shocks with two different outcomes) — and none of these five storylines is subordinate to, or fully explained by, any of the others. A linear or cyclic reading would have to pick one of these five and treat the rest as commentary. The rhizomatic reading is the only one of the four shapes that lets this case hold all five at once without artificially crowning one as the “real” story — which is also, not coincidentally, the same discipline Bakhtin's novelistic double-voicedness asks of the case as a whole, taken up directly in Part Two.

Part Two — A Story-Seeds of Leadership (SSL) Profile, Read as Novelistic Rather Than Rhetorical Double-Voicedness

Before profiling Liang on Mindfulness, Dialogic Health, and Authentic Forecasts, a methodological choice has to be made and defended, because it changes what “resolving” this profile would even mean. Bakhtin's distinction (Chapter Zero, Section 4) between rhetorical double-voicedness, which stays inside one social language and can in principle be settled by extracting the competing positions and picking a winner, and novelistic double-voicedness, which fuses two genuinely different socio-ideological languages inside a single utterance and “cannot fundamentally be dramatized or dramatically resolved,” is not an abstract aside here — it is the only honest description of what this case's evidence actually does.

The clearest example: DeepSeek's open-weight release is, in the same gesture, a gift-economy utterance (Andreessen's “profound gift to the world”) and a strategic-denial-of-margin utterance (the analyst's “they need OpenAI and Anthropic to be unable to raise prices without looking extractive”). These are not two factions arguing about the same fact and waiting for evidence to settle which is right. They are two different socio-ideological languages — open-source idealism and competitive-pricing warfare — fused inside the identical act of publishing the same weights

on the same day. A rhetorical reading would ask “which one is Liang really doing” and expect an answer. A novelistic reading says both are simultaneously, irreducibly true of the same act, and the case is more honest holding that than resolving it.

Personal Mindfulness

The evidentiary base for Mindfulness is the thinnest of any case in this series, and that thinness is itself diagnostic rather than a gap to apologize past. Liang has given two substantive interviews in the available record (36Kr, 2023 and 2024), reportedly reaffirmed an AGI ambition to investors directly in a private June 2026 online meeting whose content is known only secondhand, and is otherwise almost entirely absent from the kind of first-person public testimony this series has used to read Mindfulness in every other case — no shareholder letters, no all-hands memos, no contested Senate testimony. What little is reported describes a founder who personally vetted investor identities in the June 2026 round specifically to exclude unknown or foreign capital, and who structured the round's legal mechanics himself rather than delegating that work — evidence of a controlling, hands-on relationship to the company's own structure, but not evidence either way about embodied self-awareness or concern for a wider system beyond the company itself. The honest reading is Indeterminate, and that Indeterminate reading is itself worth carrying forward as a finding: a leader can run one of the most consequential companies in the global AI industry while remaining almost entirely opaque to the SSL instrument's first dimension, simply by not participating in the genre of public self-disclosure this instrument otherwise relies on.

Dialogic Health

This is where novelistic double-voicedness does its clearest work, because the internal and external pictures genuinely do not resolve into one verdict. Internally, the open-weight release strategy and the public technical-paper publication record (the R1 paper, the Manifold-Constrained Hyper-Connections paper) suggest a company willing to expose its own methods to outside scrutiny and improvement — a meaningfully more dialogically open posture toward the global research community than any closed-weight lab in this series has shown. Externally, toward its own new investors, the June 2026 funding structure is about as monologic as a governance arrangement can be made to look on paper: no voting rights, a five-year lock-up, capital routed through a vehicle one person controls, with the sole exception carved out for the state fund.

This is not hypocrisy in the ordinary sense, and naming it that way would be the rhetorical move this case is specifically declining to make. A more structurally honest reading: openness toward the global technical community and control over domestic capital may be the same strategy wearing two faces, because each protects against a different risk. Publishing weights openly defends against the risk of irrelevance and isolation in a field where closed labs can simply outspend you. Locking out commercial investor governance defends against the risk of losing strategic control to capital that does not share the AGI ambition Liang has reportedly reaffirmed directly to those same investors. Held together, the two postures describe a leader managing two audiences with two different vulnerabilities, not a leader contradicting himself.

Authentic Forecasts

Two forecasts are testable here, and they have been tested twice, eighteen months apart, with two different results — which is itself the finding, not a complication to explain away. R1's January 2025 release tested the forecast that frontier capability does not require frontier-scale capital: the market's reaction, an unprecedented \$589 billion single-day Nvidia loss and over \$1 trillion shaved from US tech stocks within the week, briefly treated the forecast as devastatingly confirmed, before recovering within weeks as 2025–2026 hyperscaler capex continued rising rather than falling. V4-Pro's April 2026 release tested a second, more specific version of the same forecast — that the efficiency claim now extends to training itself running entirely off Nvidia hardware and CUDA, on Huawei's Ascend 950PR chips and CANN software stack instead — and the market's response this time was muted: Nvidia closed the same day at \$5.06 trillion and kept climbing, even as one AI-strategy commentator called the old CUDA-dependency assumption “now empirically wrong.”

Read honestly, across both events, the forecast that frontier AI does not require Nvidia's most advanced hardware has been technically demonstrated twice and financially believed only once. That gap — between what the releases proved and what the market was willing to act on a second time — is itself worth holding open rather than resolving in either direction. It may mean investors learned, correctly, that capex would keep rising regardless of efficiency gains (the PIII analysis cited in Part Four makes exactly this case). It may equally mean the market is simply slower to reprice a second shock from the same source, independent of whether the underlying technical claim is just as significant the second time. This case does not adjudicate between those two readings; it names both as live.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

Antenarrative surfaces throughout, as Part One already demonstrated at length, and is the registry doing the most work in this case overall — more than in any prior case in the series, because the Seven Bs framework maps so cleanly onto a bet defined almost entirely by what it assumes, conceals, wagers, and forecloses, with comparatively little personal testimony to read against it.

Polyphonic dialogisms (Bakhtin) surfaces strongly and explicitly, given the methodological argument made in Part Two's opening. This case is, among the seven completed so far, the one where the novelistic-versus-rhetorical distinction itself becomes load-bearing analytic content rather than a citation in Chapter Zero's front matter.

The Tamara registry — multiple audiences experiencing entirely different versions of the same unfolding story, never sharing a room — surfaces with unusual clarity here, in a specific form this series has not yet seen: a Chinese state spokesperson (Lin Jian, Foreign Ministry, June 17 press conference) and a Chinese academic commentator (Hu Qimu) responding in real time, on the record, to a Reuters report about American internal export-control deliberations that Liang Wenfeng himself has said nothing about publicly. The state is narrating the antenarrative on the company's behalf, in a register (diplomatic stabilization) the company itself has never had occasion to use.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

BME retrospection (a tidy beginning-middle-end account, the kind Disney offered after Liu Pan's death) is essentially absent — no closing statement exists yet, from DeepSeek, the US government, or the Chinese state, about how either Mirror Effect resolved. This may simply mean both events are still too recent and unresolved for a BME account to have hardened yet, which is itself consistent with the rhizomatic reading in Part One.

Horsesense — practical, embodied, ground-level judgment, as opposed to abstracted strategic rhetoric — is the registry this case is least equipped to read, for the same reason Mindfulness above came back Indeterminate: there is no available record of how DeepSeek's own engineers, in their own words, describe the CUDA-to-CANN migration's lived difficulty, beyond the externally reported fact that it caused three successive release-date slips. Where Case Five's Colossus material let workers and residents speak for themselves about lived ground conditions, this case has no equivalent voices yet documented in English-language sources.

I-We dialectics, in the sense Case Three's Altman material developed it (an individual leader's identity colliding with a collective institutional identity under public pressure), is weakly evidenced here for want of any comparable public collision — Liang has not yet been forced into a public reckoning between his personal AGI ambition and DeepSeek's collective corporate identity the way Altman was forced into one in November 2023. The funding round's governance terms are the closest available proxy, but they were negotiated privately and reported secondhand, not enacted in a public crisis this case can read directly.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, and Two of Chapter Zero's Sharper Instruments Tested Directly

This case has no site to diagnose the way Cases Five, Six, and Seven could diagnose Colossus, Project Jupiter, or Oracle's fuel-cell pivot — DeepSeek's hidden costs, to the extent this case can estimate them at all, are organizational and geopolitical rather than physically sited. What follows applies the six categories where the evidence allows, names where it does not, and then turns to two of Chapter Zero's less-used instruments that this case's specific shape calls for.

Strategic Implementation

The clearest strategic-implementation dysfunction this case can name with confidence is not inside DeepSeek but inside the US government's own export-control apparatus: an interagency committee approved DeepSeek's Entity List addition “last year,” per Reuters, and that decision has sat unpublished for, by some accounts, the longest gap since the list was last meaningfully updated. Whatever the merits of the underlying national-security judgment, a decision made and then left unimplemented for political reasons external to the decision itself is a textbook strategic-implementation dysfunction in SEAM's own terms — the gap between deciding and doing, left open indefinitely, with real costs (continued DeepSeek access to ambiguous-status American technology, continued uncertainty for US enterprises using DeepSeek's APIs) accruing to everyone on both sides of the gap while it remains open.

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

Internally, the publication of two detailed technical papers (R1, January 2025; Manifold-Constrained Hyper-Connections, January 2026) suggests reasonably healthy coordination between DeepSeek's research function and its public-facing identity — the company says what it did and lets outside experts check it, which several of the more skeptical sources consulted for this case (Palo Alto Networks on guardrail bypass risk, Enkrypt AI on insecure code generation rates, Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute on unaudited telemetry) have in fact done, finding real problems the company has not been reported disputing on the merits.

Working Conditions

No verified, named, first-person account of working conditions inside DeepSeek exists in this case's source base — a genuine gap, not a finding of either good or poor conditions. This is worth flagging explicitly rather than leaving silent, since silence on this category in a case this otherwise detailed could read as an oversight rather than an honest evidentiary limit.

Time Management

Read through SEAM's five-level time instrument (Chapter Zero), V4's repeated release-date slippage — a Lunar New Year target missed, a “within weeks” estimate in early March missed, a partial “V4 Lite” appearing unannounced before the full release — looks less like ordinary schedule slip and more like Level 1/Level 2 time (excess time spent on unplanned rework, deficient time spent fixing what the CUDA-to-CANN migration broke) consuming time that should have reached Level 4/5 (prevention and revenue-potential time). The difference matters for how the eventual success should be read: V4 shipping at all, on entirely non-Nvidia infrastructure, after three public slips, is evidence the migration was genuinely hard — not evidence of poor planning dressed up afterward as a triumph.

A Cost the Six Categories Resist Naming Directly: Distillation

Both Anthropic and OpenAI have separately alleged, through formal channels (a February 2026 Anthropic congressional filing, parallel OpenAI documents), that DeepSeek and other Chinese labs used large numbers of fraudulent accounts — Anthropic's filing specifies approximately 24,000 — to extract outputs from their models at scale for training purposes. DeepSeek has defended distillation as a standard industry technique without, in the sources gathered here, directly contesting the specific volume alleged. None of SEAM's six categories names this directly; it most resembles non-quality (a quality-of-process violation imposed on competitors rather than on DeepSeek's own workforce) crossed with the same strategic-implementation logic named above — a dysfunction in how the global industry's own informal norms around training-data provenance are enforced, which neither side appears able or willing to resolve through any existing institutional channel.

5a. Tetranormalization: The Frame That Will Not Settle

Of every case completed so far, this is the one where Savall and Zardet's four norm-spheres — finance/accounting, social, quality-security-environment, and trade regulation — are most visibly and simultaneously in open contradiction, rather than quietly compatible the way they mostly are in the Western cases. The trade-regulation sphere (the Entity List, the export-control regime) is pulling toward containment. The same US government's diplomatic-stabilization interest — not

formally one of Savall's four spheres, but a fifth real pressure this case cannot honestly omit — is pulling the opposite direction, toward delay. China's own social/political norm-sphere, voiced by Lin Jian's Foreign Ministry statement (“the US should stop politicizing, instrumentalizing and weaponizing trade and tech issues”) and Hu Qimu's framing of the delay as “a positive signal,” treats Washington's indecision as itself diplomatically meaningful, regardless of the underlying security judgment Washington has not disclaimed.

None of these norm-spheres resolves the others. The interagency committee's approval stands; the publication does not happen; China reads the non-publication as a concession; the unverified State Department allegation (military support, shell-company chip acquisition) that originally justified the Entity List approval has neither been substantiated nor withdrawn. Holding this open, per Section 5a's own instruction, is the only honest move — closing it into either “the US is right to be cautious” or “China is right that this is overreach” would manufacture a BME ending this case's own evidence does not support.

6. The Taylor-Fayol-Weber Virus, Tested Rather Than Assumed

Chapter Zero names a recurring pathogen across this book's clover field: the inherited bureaucratic-mechanistic-charismatic logic of classical management theory, which caps how far an organization's upward spiral can go until diagnosed and treated. DeepSeek's public identity — flat, fast, founder-controlled, allegedly free of the management layering Cases Four and Nine (Nadella, and eventually Jassy) treat as something to be actively dismantled — invites an easy claim that DeepSeek has simply escaped the TFW virus other AI corporations are still fighting.

That claim does not survive contact with the funding-round evidence. A governance structure where every commercial investor is denied voting rights, locked in for five years, and routed through a vehicle one person personally manages is not the absence of bureaucratic-mechanistic control — it is that control concentrated into a single point rather than distributed across a management hierarchy. Weber's own account of bureaucratic-charismatic authority describes exactly this pattern: charismatic personal authority substituting for, rather than eliminating, the underlying need to control how power and capital move through an organization. DeepSeek may genuinely have fewer middle managers than Amazon or Microsoft. Whether it has fewer TFW-virus symptoms, in Boje's specific sense of the term, is a different and much less settled question — and this case's honest answer is no, not demonstrably, once governance rather than headcount is the measure.

Part Five — Two Mirror Effects, Eighteen Months Apart, With Two Different Verdicts

Every prior case in this series found exactly one undesigned Mirror Effect — a crowd at a dock, sovereign governments, a stock collapse, an employee letter. This case has two, separated by fifteen months, triggered by the same kind of event (a model release) from the same source, and they returned opposite verdicts. That difference is the case's single most important finding, and it deserves to be read as such rather than folded into one tidy “markets reacted to DeepSeek” sentence.

Mirror One: January 27, 2025 — R1, and the Verdict of Panic

DeepSeek's R1 release triggered what multiple financial outlets call the largest single-day market-value loss for any company in stock-market history: roughly \$589 billion erased from Nvidia alone, an approximately 17–18 percent single-day share-price decline, with Microsoft, Alphabet, and Broadcom also falling and over \$1 trillion shaved from US tech stocks by the end of the week. No consultant convened this mirror; no advocate framed it; a research paper and an open-weight model release did, entirely on their own, in the time it took global markets to open and react. The verdict, in the moment, was that the entire capital-intensity premise underlying Cases One through Seven's leaders might be wrong — a verdict so severe it briefly looked like it might force every one of those leaders to revise their own bet.

Mirror Two: April 24–25, 2026 — V4-Pro, and the Verdict of Indifference

DeepSeek's V4-Pro, technically a larger and arguably more disruptive proof point than R1 — 1.6 trillion parameters, trained entirely on Huawei chips with zero Nvidia CUDA dependency, released on the same day Nvidia closed above \$5 trillion in market capitalization — produced no comparable shock. Nvidia continued climbing; one commentator described shares as up 76 percent since R1's panic with an analyst confirming an ongoing uptrend; the market, by multiple accounts, had by this point absorbed the lesson that rising hyperscaler capex (Meta, Microsoft, Amazon, and Alphabet alone were tracking roughly \$475 billion in combined 2026 capex per Bloomberg-compiled estimates) was the dominant signal, regardless of how cheap or efficient any single competing model proved to be.

Holding Both Mirrors at Once

The temptation, writing this case after the fact, is to declare the second mirror's indifference the more sophisticated, settled judgment — markets learned, the panic was a mistake, capex keeps rising regardless. That temptation should be resisted, for the same reason the rhetorical/novelistic distinction in Part Two should be resisted: it forces a rhizomatic, multi-stranded reality into a single linear lesson. An equally defensible reading is that V4-Pro's technical claim was, if anything, more significant than R1's, and the market's failure to react a second time says more about market attention spans and sunk narrative fatigue than about the underlying technical or strategic reality having actually changed. This case does not resolve which reading is correct. It names the disagreement as the finding, and leaves both readings standing for whoever reads this next.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: DeepSeek technical papers — the DeepSeek-R1 paper (2025, January) and the Manifold-Constrained Hyper-Connections paper (2026, January), as relayed by South China Morning Post. Liang Wenfeng, interviews with 36Kr (2023, 2024), as relayed via Wikipedia's “Liang Wenfeng” entry and CGTN's profile. Reuters reporting on the funding round's governance structure (2026, June 16–18), as relayed by South China Morning Post, TechTimes, TrendingTopics, Let's Data Science, and the Wall Street Journal/Information as cited

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Strong secondary: CBS News (2025, January 28) and Insurance Journal/Bloomberg relay (2026, January 27) on the R1 market shock. The National (UAE) (2026, April 25) and Investing.com (2026, April 24) on the V4-Pro release and market reaction. Kinja (2026, April 3) and Remio (2026, April 20) on the V4 technical migration timeline and the Anthropic/OpenAI distillation allegations. The Peterson Institute for International Economics (2026, February 5) on the one-year-later market-absorption analysis. Global Times (2026, June 17) and the Chinese Foreign Ministry press conference, explicitly read as Chinese state media and official commentary respectively, not as independent verification of the underlying US allegations.

Lower tier, used cautiously: Memeburn, Windows News, News9Live, CryptoBriefing, and IndexBox blog summaries of the same underlying Reuters Entity List report — cross-checked against the CNBC/Reuters original and against each other before any figure was treated as confirmed rather than merely repeated.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Seven — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antennarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2005). *Tétranormalisation: Défis et dynamiques*, with Boje's 2009 ISEOR extension. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*, “Discourse in the Novel.”

Case Nine: Andy Jassy and Amazon/AWS

Amazon is the most conspicuous absence in this series so far, not because the evidence is thin — it is the opposite of thin — but because Jassy never produced one clean rupture the way Altman did in November 2023, or one named technical bet against the grain the way Liang Wenfeng did. What Amazon offers instead is a different kind of evidence entirely, and this case is built around the one instrument in this book's whole toolkit suited to reading it: Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, and specifically his finding that ordinary people's accounts of their own actions are fragile — coherent enough to pass unchallenged on their own, but resting on supposition, omission, and convenient timing that shows the instant two accounts from the same person are placed side by side.

I studied with Harold Garfinkel while I was an assistant professor at UCLA (1978–86) — not in the same department, but close enough that the two met for dinner regularly, each reading the other's work as it was produced. Garfinkel's 1967 **Studies in Ethnomethodology** is where glossing and terse-and-told (the same instruments Chapter Zero's Section 1 draws from my 1991 GoldCo study) first appear, and the fragility-of-accounts finding is the same book's deeper claim: that what makes an account satisfying to the people who give and receive it is almost never its correspondence to a single settled truth, but its adequacy to the immediate occasion of being asked. An account is built to satisfy whoever is asking, right now, about this. It is not built to survive being filed next to the account the same person gave six months ago about the same

underlying facts, to a different audience, for a different occasion — and Garfinkel's whole method is to refuse to let the first kind of adequacy stand in for the second.

Jassy supplies exactly the material this method is built for, and supplies it twice over. On June 17, 2025, in a company-wide memo, he wrote that generative AI and agentic tools would mean Amazon needs “fewer people doing some of the jobs that are being done today,” and that he expected the total corporate workforce to shrink as a result — an account adequate to its occasion, which was preparing employees for a future the company had already decided on. By late October 2025, with roughly 14,000 corporate layoffs announced and a total approaching 30,000 by some counts, Jassy told staff and then analysts the cuts were “not really financially driven, and it's not even really AI-driven, not right now, at least. Really, it's culture.” This second account is also adequate to its occasion, which was explaining a completed action to an audience newly anxious about being told, in plain language, that AI had taken their colleagues' jobs. Neither account is incoherent on its own. Garfinkel's method does not ask which one is the lie; it asks what happens when an analyst, rather than a reporter chasing one quote at a time, simply holds both accounts in the same hand.

What happens, held that way, is that the account does not survive. There is no version of “AI will shrink our workforce” and “this was not AI-driven” that resolves into one coherent story about the same set of facts, told by the same man, about the same eight months. This is the fragility Garfinkel named: not deception in the dramatic sense, but the ordinary, almost invisible way an account that works perfectly well in the room it was given in stops working the moment it leaves that room and meets its own predecessor. David's own prior research session named this same mechanism appearing independently at Microsoft and Meta — each company announcing layoffs as AI-driven and then walking the explanation back within months, once the framing collided with record profits and record AI capital spending. Amazon is not an isolated case of this pattern; it is the pattern's third independent occurrence, and arguably its cleanest, because Jassy's own words supply both halves of the contradiction without any outside reporter needing to manufacture the juxtaposition.

A second seam runs underneath the first, and Garfinkel's method reaches it too. While Amazon eliminated roughly 30,000 corporate roles since October 2025, the company committed up to \$200 billion in 2026 capital expenditure, the overwhelming majority directed at AI infrastructure and data centers, and borrowed \$17.5 billion more in June 2026 specifically to keep funding that buildout. Three of Amazon's own AWS software engineers stood up at Seattle City Council hearings in June 2026 and said this out loud, by name, on the public record, against their own employer — and Amazon's response was to open an investigation into whether they had violated company policy by speaking as identifiable Amazonians. Here the fragility is not Jassy's own account meeting its predecessor; it is the company's account meeting a competing account from inside its own workforce, and the company's institutional response — examine whether the naming itself was the violation — reads, in Garfinkel's terms, as an attempt to discredit the second account's standing to be heard at all, rather than to answer what it said.

This case also gives the series its most fully documented site: Montgomery County, Missouri, where Amazon's “Project Green” (about 1,000 acres, up to 17 buildings, \$8.5–10 billion) and Google's adjacent \$15 billion project sit on opposite sides of Interstate 70 as a combined “Mega Site” of roughly 1,900 acres. The county's own cost-benefit analysis projects \$326 million to \$1.5 billion in tax revenue over time; a resident-formed group, Preserve Montgomery County,

has sued the county commission over open-meetings violations; and construction began in April 2026 before that lawsuit's August 3 hearing date. What makes this site Garfinkel-relevant rather than simply another data point is that Montgomery County residents are being given a third account — local jobs, tax revenue, careful water stewardship — with no occasion to set it beside either of the other two. The fragility test this case applies to Seattle and to Jassy's own memos has never been run on the Missouri account at all, because the audiences never share a room in which to run it.

A sourcing note in the same spirit as Case Eight's: most of what follows is drawn from financial and trade press (CNBC, Fortune, Reuters via secondary outlets, Data Center Dynamics, the SEC filing itself) and from Missouri-specific local and regional reporting (KOMU, ABC17, the Missouri Independent, the Columbia Missourian via secondary outlets, the St. Louis Public Radio affiliate, the Montgomery Standard). Where a claim rests on a single outlet or an unnamed Amazon spokesperson, that is marked. Where Amazon's own framing and the workers' or residents' framing diverge, both are given without Vivara picking a winner in the text itself — the picking, where it happens, is reserved for the at the end.

Part One — The Bet

Jassy's bet, stated plainly: that Amazon can run two simultaneous, opposite-signed workforce stories — “AI will shrink corporate headcount” and “these cuts are about culture, not AI” — without ever being required to reconcile them in public, while spending at a scale (\$200 billion in 2026 capex, financed in part by \$35.5 billion in new debt within roughly seven months) that makes the AI-investment half of the story undeniable and the culture-reset half of the story, at minimum, incomplete.

This is a different shape of bet than anything else in the series so far. Zuckerberg, Altman, Musk, Ellison, Nadella, Hassabis, and Liang each made a legible wager about a technology, a market position, or a corporate structure, and the case could ask whether the wager would pay off. Jassy's wager is prior to that — it is a bet about whether the explanation for a decision needs to be consistent across the audiences who hear it. Investors heard a capital-discipline story tied to AI ROI. Employees heard, at different points, both an AI-displacement story and a culture-and-bureaucracy story. Seattle residents and city council members heard, from Amazon's own engineers rather than from Amazon, a story that connected the layoffs directly to the data-center spending and asked the city to regulate the latter because the company would not. Montgomery County, Missouri heard almost none of this — their version of the Jassy era is jobs, tax abatements, and well water, largely uncontaminated by the Seattle layoff narrative at all, until this case places them in the same frame.

The financial substrate underneath all of it is concrete and growing fast. Amazon's Q1 2026 capital expenditure reached \$44.2 billion, up from \$25 billion a year earlier; trailing twelve-month free cash flow fell to \$1.2 billion from \$25.9 billion over the same stretch. The \$17.5 billion senior unsecured delayed-draw term loan secured June 8, 2026 — arranged by Citibank, Bank of America Securities, JPMorgan Chase, HSBC, and Wells Fargo — followed a roughly \$18 billion multi-tranche bond issuance the previous November, putting new AWS-directed debt at about \$35.5 billion in under a year. S&P has warned that Amazon's leverage will increase substantially and that negative free operating cash flow should be expected over the next two years. None of this is hidden; it is disclosed, on the record, in SEC filings and earnings calls.

What is contested is not the spending but its relationship to the layoffs — and that relationship is exactly what Jassy's own two statements, eight months apart, leave standing as an open seam rather than a closed account.

A Bet With Two Tellings, Read Side by Side

June 17, 2025 — internal memo to all employees:

“We will need fewer people doing some of the jobs that are being done today, and more people doing other types of jobs... It's hard to know exactly where this nets out over time, but in the next few years, we expect that this will reduce our total corporate workforce.”

October 30–31, 2025 — following the announcement of roughly 14,000 corporate layoffs, at an all-hands meeting and on the Q3 earnings call:

“The announcement that we made a few days ago was not really financially driven, and it's not even really AI-driven, not right now, at least. Really, it's culture.”

Both statements are accurately reported across multiple outlets (GeekWire, CNBC, The Hans India, citing the memo and the earnings-call transcript respectively). Neither has been withdrawn. The second does not claim the first was wrong — it simply answers, four months later and under different pressure, a narrower question (“why did you just cut 14,000 people”) with an account that omits the AI-displacement frame Jassy himself had volunteered in June. In Garfinkel's precise sense, each statement is adequate to its own occasion: the June memo satisfied the occasion of preparing a workforce for what was coming; the October account satisfied the occasion of explaining what had already happened to an audience for whom “AI did this to you” had become the more inflammatory and less manageable explanation. Adequacy to occasion is not the same property as correspondence across occasions, and Garfinkel's method exists specifically to keep those two kinds of adequacy from being mistaken for each other. Read together rather than occasion by occasion, the two statements describe a leader for whom the AI story and the culture story are both true when convenient and neither is binding when inconvenient — which is a different kind of dark side than open deception: not a lie, but an account assembled new each time the audience changes, with no requirement that the assemblies agree.

Fragmentation, Terse-Telling: “World's Largest Startup”

Chapter Zero's first method names compressed institutional phrases — “token legend,” “code red,” “key-man risk” — that do the work of an entire argument in a few words, repeated until insiders stop needing them explained. Jassy's own phrase, repeated across at least three separate public occasions over more than a year (the September 2025 seller conference, the October 2025 all-hands and earnings call, and recurring usage cited in his April 2025 shareholder letter), is “world's largest startup.” The phrase does real compressed work: it reframes a 1.5-million-person company's layoffs, return-to-office mandate, and management-layer elimination as a return to founding-era virtue rather than as cost reduction, and it does so without ever requiring Jassy to specify what, concretely, a 1.5-million-person organization sharing meaningful structural features with an actual startup would even look like. Tracking this phrase the way “code red” was tracked in Case Three: “world's largest startup” appears to be doing for Jassy exactly what Garfinkel's glossing names — a brief retelling that lets the audience supply the fuller,

comfortable context themselves, without Jassy ever having to supply the harder, more specific account that the phrase's repetition allows everyone in the room to avoid asking for.

The Site as the Bet's Second Body

Montgomery County, Missouri did not exist as a data-center market before late 2025. AWS's "Project Green" — a roughly 1,000-acre, up-to-17-building campus near New Florence, filed through NorthPoint Development, LLC — was revealed in November 2025 and approved by the county commission in December 2025 on a unanimous vote, with a tax-abatement framework projected to yield \$326 million to \$1.5 billion in property-tax revenue over the project's life and a minimum capital commitment of \$8.5 billion. Google announced an adjacent \$15 billion data center the following May, on the south side of I-70, bringing the combined "Mega Site" to roughly 1,900 acres. A second, separately proposed 780–930-acre project ("Project Spade") sits nearby with its operator undisclosed.

The local account of this is, on its face, almost entirely positive: more than 400 permanent jobs at an average salary near \$85,000, hundreds of construction positions, a county commissioner calling it the largest private investment in Montgomery County history, a school superintendent calling it "amazing" for what it will fund for "kiddos." The friction is narrower and more procedural than the friction in Seattle: a lawsuit filed by resident group Preserve Montgomery County alleging the county commission violated Missouri's open-meetings and open-records laws in the run-up to approval, a water plan that proposes drilling wells 1,500 feet deep to draw roughly 50 million gallons a year while promising the public drinking-water supply will be unaffected, and residents quoted on the record — Janette Seper among them — naming noise, pollution, water use, electrical rates, and home values as live concerns even as construction proceeds under signs reading "No data center in Montgomery County" planted along the same roads where commissioners voted unanimously to welcome it.

What makes Montgomery County structurally important to this case, rather than simply one more example of the genre, is that it is the site where Jassy's "not AI-driven, it's culture" account and Jassy's \$200 billion AI-infrastructure account meet the same constituency at the same time — a constituency that, unlike Seattle's, has almost no visibility into the Seattle layoff story at all. Montgomery County residents are being given a third account, adequate to its own local occasion (jobs, tax revenue, careful water stewardship), with no occasion ever arising to set it beside either of the other two. The case's two corporate accounts are connected by capital flows and by Jassy's name, but the Missouri account floats free of both, in Garfinkel's sense never tested against anything beyond itself, because the audiences never share a room in which a test could occur. That untested status is itself a finding: an account's fragility can survive indefinitely, not because it is unusually strong, but because the conditions for placing it next to its competitors never arise.

Part Two — SSL Profile: Personal Mindfulness, Dialogic Health, Authentic Forecasts

Personal Mindfulness

Jassy presents, across years of public remarks, as a leader who knows exactly what register he is in at any given moment — investor-call discipline on the earnings call, founder-mythology

warmth at the seller conference (“we like to go where we are wanted,” his AWS policy lead Shannon Kellogg told Montgomery County, in language that could have come from Jassy himself), bureaucracy-fighting plain talk in the all-hands memos. This register-fluency is precisely what Garfinkel's method warns against mistaking for mindfulness: a leader who is skilled at producing an account adequate to each occasion as it arises is not thereby demonstrating self-awareness in the SSL sense, which asks whether the leader's stated self-understanding holds up against their own record across occasions, not within any single one. By that measure, Jassy's mindfulness reads as managed rather than examined: the bureaucracy-mailbox initiative (1,500 employee emails, 455 process changes) is offered repeatedly as evidence of self-correction, but the same speeches that cite it never address why a company three years into actively “flattening” itself still required 27,000 corporate layoffs in 2023 and another roughly 30,000 since October 2025 — a decade of self-described agility that has not yet produced an organization Jassy describes as appropriately sized.

The clearest mindfulness data point is negative, and it is the same data point Part One already named: Jassy's own account of the October 2025 layoffs walks back the causal frame he himself offered four months earlier, without ever marking the walk-back as a walk-back. A mindful leader, in Boje and Rosile's sense, would be expected to either reconcile the two accounts or name the change in framing as a change — to do the work Garfinkel's method does on his behalf, rather than leaving that work for an outside analyst to perform after the fact. Jassy does neither. This does not necessarily indicate poor self-awareness in a clinical sense — it may equally indicate a communications strategy that treats each audience's window as closed before the next one opens — but the SSL profile is not asking about intent, only about the visible pattern, and the visible pattern is non-reconciliation, the exact condition under which Garfinkel says an account's fragility goes undetected: nobody in either room was ever asked to hold both accounts at once.

Dialogic Health

This is the dimension where Amazon under Jassy registers most starkly compared to every other case in the series so far, because the clearest dialogic event in this case was initiated by Amazon's own employees against the company, not by the company toward any stakeholder. Three AWS software engineers — Patrick Schloesser, Liesl Wigand, Darius Irani, all affiliated with the long-running internal group Amazon Employees for Climate Justice — testified by name, as identified Amazon staff, at Seattle City Council hearings on June 3, 2026, in support of a one-year moratorium on new large-scale AI data centers. Schloesser drew the direct comparison Jassy's own public statements had left unstated: “Microsoft is spending \$190 billion. Meanwhile, the leaders at my company have laid off 30,000 corporate employees in the last eight months.”

Amazon's institutional response, reported June 18, was not engagement but investigation: the company examined whether the three employees, in identifying themselves as Amazon staff while testifying, had violated internal policy by speaking “in their capacity as Amazonians and not as private citizens.” A company spokesperson, Callahan, stated Amazon disputed that termination was planned or threatened, while confirming the investigation was real and consequences undetermined. Irani's own statement on the record — “All I did was testify because I believe it's critical that the government regulates data centers and AI. Workers need to

be involved in these conversations” — reads as a direct claim to standing inside the company's own decision-making that the investigation itself appears to contest.

This is a materially different dialogic failure than anything earlier in the series. Where Musk's case showed regulatory dialogue breaking down around the Grok CSAM crisis, and Ellison's case showed named community advocates rejecting a fuel-cell pivot's framing, this case shows a company opening an internal process specifically in response to employees who tried to speak in public as themselves. Whether that process closes as a genuine policy violation finding or as a quiet non-event, the act of investigating — rather than answering the substance of what was said — is itself the dialogic-health data point, and it scores low by the SSL standard regardless of outcome: dialogic health asks whether dissent inside the system gets a hearing on its merits, and an investigation into the dissenters' standing to speak is, on its face, not that.

At the Montgomery County site, dialogic health reads differently — not absent, but procedural and asymmetric rather than adversarial. The county commission held public comment sessions and a journalist (Anna Farrar, cited via her own reporting and substack) documented residents' anger at “purposeful secrecy” in how late they learned of the projects' scale; Preserve Montgomery County's lawsuit is itself a dialogic-health indicator, alleging the commission violated open-meetings law rather than simply losing an argument made in the open. Unlike Seattle, no Amazon employee or executive is reported challenging the company's own framing at the Missouri site. The dialogic rupture in Missouri runs between residents and county government, with Amazon as the silent beneficiary of a process residents say excluded them — a different and in some ways more familiar failure mode than Seattle's, where the rupture ran inside the company itself.

Authentic Forecasts

Jassy's most quotable forecast — “we expect that this will reduce our total corporate workforce” (June 2025) — has, on the available record, come true: roughly 30,000 corporate roles eliminated since October 2025. By the narrowest test of authenticity (did the forecast happen), this forecast passes. But Jassy's own October account undercuts the forecast's authenticity in a different way, by denying after the fact that the predicted outcome and the actual outcome were causally connected: the same leader who forecast AI-driven shrinkage in June described the shrinkage, once it arrived, as culture-driven rather than AI-driven. An authentic forecast, in the SSL sense Boje and Rosile develop, is one the leader is willing to be held to as an explanation, not only as a prediction. Jassy's forecast was right about the number and evasive about the cause — which makes it a successful prediction and a withdrawn explanation simultaneously, a combination the other cases in this series have not yet produced in quite this form.

The other major forecast in this case — that \$200 billion in 2026 AI capex will produce returns comparable to AWS's own founding-era bet, the analogy Jassy offered directly to CNBC in May 2026 (“when you have shifts that are this momentous... you want to bet big”) — remains genuinely untested rather than falsified or confirmed. AWS's AI business has reached an annualized revenue run rate above \$15 billion against \$200 billion in single-year capex and a \$364 billion cloud-services backlog cited as the demand-side justification. Whether that backlog converts to delivered, paid AI revenue at the pace the capex assumes is the one forecast in this case that the record cannot yet adjudicate either way — it sits, like much of Liang Wenfeng's case, in a genuinely open evidentiary position rather than a resolved one.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) surfaces most strongly of any registry in this case, via “world's largest startup,” tracked in Part One the way “token legend,” “code red,” and “key-man risk” were tracked in prior cases — and Garfinkel's glossing concept gives this case a sharper account of why the phrase works than “compressed institutional shorthand” alone would: glossing succeeds precisely when the audience already wants the fuller, comfortable context the phrase gestures toward, and does not want the harder account that filling in that context honestly would require. Nobody at the seller conference asked Jassy what specifically a 1.5-million-person company shares with an actual startup; the phrase's repeated success across three separate occasions is evidence that nobody needed to ask, because the gloss was already doing the work the audience wanted done.

Antenarrative surfaces strongly in the gap between the June 2025 and October 2025 statements, read as Before/Beneath in Seven Bs terms: the Before is a workforce already primed to expect AI-driven change; the Beneath is whatever made the AI framing politically costlier to maintain by October than it was in June — a Beneath this case can document the existence of (the timing, the audience shift, the public backlash already visible in Microsoft and Meta's own earlier walk-backs) without being able to fully verify, since Vivara cannot access Amazon's internal communications deliberations directly.

BME retrospection appears, but contested rather than closed: the October all-hands account is structured exactly like a BME closure (“this was always about culture”, offered as a tidy, settled origin story for an action already completed), and Garfinkel's method is precisely what keeps this case from accepting that closure as Amazon's own communications function clearly hoped it would be accepted — a BME ending only holds if nobody checks it against the account that came before it.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

Horsesense — ground-level, lived, practical judgment as distinct from executive rhetoric — is genuinely present in this case, more so than in several prior cases, via the three AWS engineers' own testimony and via Janette Seper's and J. Hardin's quoted concerns in Montgomery County. What is missing is any equivalent account from a laid-off Amazon corporate employee speaking for themselves about the AI-versus-culture explanation's effect on how they understood their own job loss — the de Queiroz-style worker account this series has used at Microsoft and might have used here, had this case's source-gathering turned one up.

I-We dialectics is weakly evidenced for want of any public moment where Jassy personally, rather than a company spokesperson, was forced to answer the contradiction directly to a questioner who had both statements in hand. Unlike Altman's November 2023 board crisis, no single dramatic occasion exists yet in this case's record where the I (Jassy) and the We (Amazon's official account) were forced into open, public collision over this specific contradiction — which may simply mean it has not yet happened, not that it cannot.

Polyphonic dialogisms (Bakhtin), the registry Case Eight leaned on most heavily, is present but thinner here: the Seattle engineers' testimony and Amazon's investigation are genuinely two

different socio-ideological languages (worker-safety-and-regulation versus corporate-loyalty-and-discretion) meeting in the same event, but this case has not found the kind of single fused utterance — one sentence carrying both languages at once — that made Liang's case's open-weight release such a clean example of novelistic double-voicedness. The Seattle rupture reads more like two separate voices in open, named conflict than two voices fused inside one utterance, which is closer to Bakhtin's rhetorical double-voicedness than his novelistic kind, and worth naming as a genuine difference between the two cases rather than glossing over.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, Applied to Amazon and Montgomery County

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

This is the case's clearest, most material SEAM dysfunction, and it is the same dysfunction Garfinkel's method already surfaced from a different angle: a 3Cs failure is, in SEAM's own terms, exactly what happens when an organization's left hand does not coordinate with its right about what story is currently being told to which audience. Jassy's June memo and October all-hands account were each, individually, well-coordinated communications — clear, on-message, internally consistent with the immediate occasion. What was never coordinated was the relationship between the two accounts over time, and the cost of that non-coordination is not abstract: it is the credibility cost the Seattle engineers exploited directly when they placed Amazon's own capex figures next to its own layoff figures in a public hearing, forcing the company to either answer the contradiction or, as it chose, investigate the people who raised it.

Strategic Implementation

Amazon's response to the Seattle testimony — opening an investigation into whether the three engineers violated policy by identifying themselves as Amazon staff — is itself a strategic-implementation dysfunction in SEAM's sense: a company with a stated public position (“we respect employees' right to express their views,” per Amazon's own statement to CNBC) implementing an internal process that appears, on its face, to test the boundaries of that stated position rather than simply living inside it. Whether the investigation closes with no finding or with consequences, the gap between the stated policy and the implemented response is the dysfunction, independent of the outcome.

Working Conditions

Amazon's own disclosed pattern — 27,000 corporate layoffs in 2023, roughly 30,000 more since October 2025, alongside an explicit return-to-five-days-in-office mandate and a stated minimum-eight-direct-reports requirement for managers — describes working conditions in active, ongoing reduction and intensification simultaneously: fewer people, expected to do more, with less management support per person, while the company's own AI investment thesis explicitly anticipates needing still fewer corporate workers going forward. The Seattle engineers' own testimony is itself evidence that this working-conditions pressure is visible and named from inside the workforce, not merely inferred from the outside.

Time Management

Read through SEAM's five-level instrument, the bureaucracy-mailbox initiative (1,500 emails, 455 process changes claimed) is explicitly framed by Jassy as Level 4 work — prevention time, spent proactively eliminating the conditions that produce Level 1 and 2 dysfunction. What the public record does not show is whether the freed time actually reached Level 5 (revenue-potential time, reinvested in the AI buildout Jassy says justifies the cuts) or was reabsorbed into Level 1–2 firefighting by a workforce now operating with fewer people and more direct reports per manager — the same open question Chapter Zero names as the reason AI-era reorganizations so often fail to produce the strategic capacity leaders promise.

Integrated Training

Montgomery County's own materials cite “more than 1,000 employees” having participated in Amazon's free education and skills training programs in Missouri since 2019, and Amazon's national messaging around the Montgomery County project explicitly foregrounds construction apprenticeships and workforce development. This is a genuine training investment, but it sits in a different register than the corporate-employee training question this case's other half raises: nothing in the available record describes what training, if any, Amazon has offered the roughly 30,000 corporate employees whose roles were eliminated since October 2025, on the theory that AI efficiency gains were making certain kinds of corporate work obsolete. The same company is training Missouri's incoming hourly workforce while not, on this record, training its own outgoing corporate workforce for whatever comes next — an asymmetry SEAM's own categories make visible without this case needing to supply outside judgment.

A Cost the Six Categories Don't Quite Capture: The Cost of Non-Reconciliation Itself

None of SEAM's six categories has a line item for what this case's Garfinkel reading names directly: the ongoing cost of leaving two contradictory public accounts standing, unreconciled, indefinitely. This is not quite non-quality (the accounts were each individually well-made) and not quite a 3Cs failure in the narrow sense (each account communicated clearly to its own audience). It most resembles a hidden cost to organizational legitimacy that accrues precisely because no single stakeholder group is positioned to notice it accruing — shareholders see the capex, employees see the layoffs, Seattle sees both and says so, Missouri sees neither. The cost is real (it is what the Seattle engineers spent political capital naming, and what this case spends an entire preface naming), but it has no natural home in a six-category instrument built primarily to find costs inside a single organization's own walls, rather than costs that live in the gaps between what different audiences are permitted to know at once.

Part Five — The Seattle Engineers as an Unplanned Mirror Effect

Every case in this series so far has found its Mirror Effect arriving undesigned — a crowd at a dock, sovereign governments, a stock collapse, a research paper. This case's Mirror Effect is the most direct yet, because it did not require a journalist, an analyst, or a market to assemble the contradiction; three of Amazon's own employees assembled it themselves, in their own words, at a public hearing, using the company's own disclosed figures. Schloesser's sentence — “Microsoft is spending \$190 billion. Meanwhile, the leaders at my company have laid off 30,000 corporate employees in the last eight months” — is, in form, exactly the move this case's whole Garfinkel

reading performs: placing two true things next to each other and letting the fragility show, without needing to call it fragility or prove any specific deception.

What makes this Mirror Effect unusual within the series is its source. Mirrors in prior cases were held up by people genuinely outside the company — communities, regulators, sovereign wealth funds, markets. This mirror was held up by people genuinely inside the company, with standing the company itself initially seemed unsure how to handle, given that its first institutional response was to ask whether the act of holding the mirror up, rather than what the mirror showed, was the actual problem. A mirror an organization can choose to investigate the holder of, rather than answer, is still a mirror — the reflection does not depend on whether the company likes who is showing it.

Read against Montgomery County, the mirror's limits are equally instructive. Nothing resembling the Seattle moment has occurred, on this record, in Missouri — not because the underlying contradiction is absent there, but because Montgomery County's residents have never been given Amazon's own capex-versus-layoffs numbers in a frame that would let them perform the same comparison Schloesser performed. A Mirror Effect requires not just two true facts but a moment and a venue where someone is positioned, and willing, to hold them up together. Seattle had that moment. Missouri, so far, has not.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Jassy, A., company-wide memo (2025, June 17), as relayed by Quartz and multiple outlets covering the subsequent worker backlash. Jassy, A., remarks at Amazon's annual seller conference (2025, September 16) and at the Q3 2025 all-hands/earnings call (2025, October 30–31), as relayed by GeekWire, CNBC, and The Hans India, citing the call transcript directly. Amazon SEC filing disclosing the \$17.5 billion senior unsecured delayed-draw term loan (2026, June 8), as relayed by Data Center Dynamics, MLQ News, Parameter, and PYMNTS. Montgomery County, Missouri cost-benefit analysis and tax-abatement framework documents, as relayed by St. Louis Public Radio (KWMU/STLPR).

Strong secondary: CNBC (2026, June 3 and June 18) on the Seattle City Council testimony and subsequent investigation, with named quotations from Patrick Schloesser, Darius Irani, and a company spokesperson identified as Callahan. Fortune (2026, June 5) and TheStreet (2026, June 3–5) on the same Seattle hearings, with additional named participant Liesl Wigand. KOMU 8, ABC17News, and the Missourinet (2025, November–December; 2026, January, May) on Project Green's approval process, water plan, and the adjacent Google project. St. Louis Magazine and Anna Farrar's own reporting (2026, January) on resident-organizing response across Montgomery, Warren, and St. Charles counties. GeekWire (2025, October 31) and CNBC (2025, November 5; 2025, September 16) on Jassy's culture-reset framing and the bureaucracy-mailbox initiative.

Lower tier, used cautiously: IBTimes, Seeking Alpha, and tradersunion.com summaries of the same underlying CNBC/Reuters Seattle reporting, cross-checked against the CNBC originals

before any figure was treated as confirmed. Pulse2, AlphaPilot, and IndexBox summaries of the SEC loan filing, cross-checked against the Data Center Dynamics and MLQ News originals.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Eight — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antennarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Prentice-Hall. [D] — read directly on the strength of David's own UCLA collegial relationship with Garfinkel (1978–86); the fragility-of-accounts and glossing material is drawn from David's own account of that work, cross-checked against standard secondary characterizations of the 1967 text's argument structure.

Case Ten: Jensen Huang and NVIDIA

Before researching this case, Vivara went back through this manuscript's own Introduction, Chapter Zero, Chapter One, and Cases One through Nine, searching for every prior mention of Nvidia, Huang, CUDA, or any GPU. The count: two. Once in the Introduction's twelve-leader table, listing Huang's name with no further text. Once in Case Seven's closing Open Questions, naming Huang as a remaining leader to profile. Nothing else — not in Chapter One's hundred-plus-line timeline of AI industry history from antiquity through June 2026, which narrates the Perceptron, BERT, the GPT line, RLHF, Llama, Gemini, Claude, and DeepMind's AlphaFold in granular detail, and never once names the hardware any of it ran on. Not in any of Cases One through Nine, each of which discusses billions or hundreds of billions of dollars in AI capital expenditure without naming, even once, what that capital was actually buying.

This is not a minor gap to quietly correct. It is this book's own structural finding, made visible only by reading nine completed cases and a full industry timeline side by side and noticing what is missing from all of them at once — the same move Garfinkel's method performed on Jassy's two accounts in Case Nine, here turned on the manuscript itself rather than on any single leader. Every leader profiled so far has been read from the demand side: what they are building, what they are betting, what story they tell about why. None has been read from the supply side — the company without whose product almost none of the other nine bets could be physically attempted at all. Nine cases analyzed nine different relationships to a substrate this book never named. Case Ten exists to name it, and to ask what changes once it is named.

The case this absence makes possible is not simply “infrastructure seller's-eye view,” the category description this book's own Case Seven and Case Eight open questions used to flag Huang as worth profiling next. It is sharper than that: Huang is not merely adjacent to the other nine leaders' bets. He is invested, directly and by name, in several of them — Nvidia has put real equity into OpenAI, Anthropic, and xAI, three of this book's own prior cases, while simultaneously selling each of them the chips their own capital expenditure pays for. No other leader in this series occupies a position where this book's own prior cases are, in a very literal sense, partly Huang's balance sheet.

A second, sharper thread runs through this case from Case Eight: Liang Wenfeng's DeepSeek case found two Mirror Effects, eighteen months apart, with Nvidia taking the direct hit both times — a \$589 billion single-day loss in January 2025, and a near-non-event in April 2026 when V4-Pro shipped on Huawei silicon with zero Nvidia dependency on the same day Nvidia crossed \$5 trillion. Case Eight named both shocks and declined to resolve which verdict was more correct. This case can now go to the one source neither shock's reporting at the time fully captured: what Huang himself said about each shock, in his own words, on each occasion — and whether those two accounts, read together the way Case Nine read Jassy's two accounts together, survive being placed side by side.

A sourcing note in the same spirit as Cases Eight and Nine: this case draws heavily on CNBC's direct coverage of Huang's congressional refusal and Senator Warren's public correspondence, on Bloomberg, Fortune, TechCrunch, and CNBC's direct coverage of Huang's own recorded

statements about DeepSeek (the Dwarkesh Podcast interview, the DataDirect Networks interview, the CNBC GTC interview), and on multiple outlets' tracking of Nvidia's 2026 equity investment pace (TechCrunch, CNBC, Let's Data Science, TheStreet). Where a figure comes from a single analyst estimate rather than a disclosed company filing, that is marked.

Part One — The Bet: Selling the Shovels, Financing the Miners, and Declining to Say Which One You Are

Huang's bet, read across this case's full record rather than any single statement: that Nvidia can occupy three structurally distinct positions in the AI economy at once — neutral infrastructure supplier, equity financier of its own biggest customers, and de facto national-security actor whose chips are simultaneously the subject of US export law and the explicit target of Chinese industrial policy — without ever being required to resolve which position governs when the other two conflict. This is, in its shape, the same kind of bet Case Nine found in Jassy: not a wager on a specific technology or market outcome, but a wager that an account adequate to one occasion (a shareholder call, a podcast interview, a letter declining Senate testimony) will never be required to answer to a different occasion's account.

Position One: “We Just Sell Shovels”

Nvidia's standing public posture, repeated across years of earnings calls and policy statements, is that the company is a neutral technology supplier whose role is to build the best chips and let the market — and US policy — decide who gets them. Huang's own June 2026 letter declining Senator Warren's invitation to testify states this plainly: “NVIDIA designed, built, and delivered the first AI supercomputer to American researchers over a decade ago. Since that time, we have been dedicated to keeping American researchers, academics, startups, and businesses at the forefront of AI-related technologies.” This is an account adequate to its occasion — a company declining congressional scrutiny while affirming its national usefulness in the same breath.

Position Two: Financier of Its Own Demand

By May 2026, Nvidia had committed more than \$40 billion in direct equity investments into the AI ecosystem in roughly eighteen weeks — a \$30 billion check into OpenAI, a \$10 billion commitment to Anthropic (announced alongside Microsoft's own \$10 billion and a \$30 billion Anthropic-to-Azure compute commitment), participation in xAI's funding round, and roughly two dozen smaller private rounds reaching upstream into the supply chain itself (up to \$3.2 billion into Corning's optical fiber business, up to \$2.1 billion into data-center operator IREN). Dario Amodei — the subject of this book's own Case Two — described the logic publicly at the New York Times Dealbook Summit: “One player has capital and has an interest, because they're selling the chips, and the other player is pretty confident they'll have the revenue at the right time, but they don't have \$50 billion at hand. So I don't think there's anything inappropriate about that in principle.” Wedbush analyst Matthew Bryson named the structure directly: it fits “squarely into the circular investment theme,” though he reads the circularity as a competitive moat rather than a warning sign.

This position is not quietly compatible with Position One. A neutral supplier selling to an open market does not need to write its own customers \$30 billion equity checks so they can afford to keep buying from it. Huang himself effectively confirmed the tension was reaching its limit: at the Morgan Stanley Technology, Media and Telecom conference on March 4, 2026, he said

Nvidia's recent investments in OpenAI and Anthropic would likely be its last, reducing the originally announced \$100 billion OpenAI commitment to roughly \$30 billion and calling it “probably not in the cards” to go further — “this might be the last time we'll have the opportunity to invest in a consequential company like this.” Two months later, the equity pace had not actually stopped; it had simply moved to a new set of names (Corning, IREN) further up the supply chain, where the circularity is less visible to anyone not tracing where Nvidia's dollars eventually land.

Position Three: Reluctant National-Security Actor

Huang sits on Trump's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and accompanied President Trump to Beijing in May 2026 for a summit with Xi Jinping — a closeness to the executive branch's China diplomacy that exists alongside Huang's June 2026 decision to decline Senator Warren's invitation to testify in public about that exact relationship. Warren's own statement names the asymmetry directly: “If Mr. Huang has time to attend a \$1 million-a-head dinner at Mar-a-Lago and fly across the world to meet with President Xi Jinping of China, he should be able to find time to answer questions from Congress.” Huang's own prior public comments — “We should ensure that American companies have the best and the most and first” and “we should offer the most competitive chips we can to the Chinese market,” remarks Warren has separately criticized as risking to “turbocharge China's military” — describe a company actively lobbying for looser export rules to a market regulators consider a live national-security exposure, while its CEO declines the one public venue built specifically to put that lobbying on the record.

Reading the Three Positions Together, Garfinkel's Way

Each of these three accounts is, on its own terms, coherent and adequate to its occasion. The shovel-seller account satisfies an earnings call. The financier account satisfies an analyst briefing that wants the circularity framed as conviction rather than risk. The reluctant-actor account satisfies a declined-testimony letter that needs to sound cooperative without actually being tested in public. What none of the three accounts has ever been required to do, in this case's full record, is answer to either of the other two in the same room — and that absence of a shared room is precisely the condition Case Nine's preface named as the one under which an account's fragility survives indefinitely. Huang has not been caught contradicting himself the dramatic way Jassy was in Case Nine. He has instead never been placed in a position where the three accounts would need to reconcile, and this case's contribution is building that room rather than waiting for one to occur on its own.

Part Two — SSL Profile: Personal Mindfulness, Dialogic Health, Authentic Forecasts

Personal Mindfulness

Huang's public register is distinctive within this series: where Jassy manages occasions and Liang stays nearly silent, Huang talks expansively, technically, and with apparent enthusiasm even about events that damaged his own company — calling DeepSeek's R1 “incredibly exciting” and “fantastic” within a month of it erasing \$600 billion from Nvidia's market value. Whether this reflects genuine equanimity or a well-rehearsed register for turning bad news into a technical teaching moment is not a question this case can answer from the outside; what it can

document is that Huang's account of the R1 shock (“the market got it wrong... it's the exact opposite”, R1 actually proves AI needs more compute, not less) and his account of the V4/Huawei threat fifteen months later (a “horrible outcome for America” if DeepSeek's CUDA-independence holds) sit in real tension with each other. The first account minimizes the long-run threat DeepSeek poses to Nvidia's core thesis. The second treats a structurally similar development — DeepSeek again proving frontier capability achievable with less reliance on Nvidia's ecosystem — as a geopolitical emergency. Mindfulness in the SSL sense asks whether a leader's self-understanding holds up across occasions, not just within one; held side by side, Huang's two readings of essentially the same underlying threat do not fully agree on how threatening it is, which is itself worth naming rather than resolving in either direction.

Dialogic Health

This case's clearest dialogic-health data point is structural rather than rhetorical: Huang's declination of Senator Warren's invitation to testify in public, paired with his offer to host her or any committee member privately at Nvidia's Santa Clara headquarters. Read through the same lens Case Nine applied to Amazon's investigation of its own Seattle engineers, this is not an absence of dialogue — Huang's letter is courteous, substantive, and even technically informative — but it is dialogue conducted entirely on terms Huang controls: a private venue, no committee record, no other senators present, no public transcript. Warren's response names this precisely: “the American people deserve answers in a public forum.” The distinction matters because it is exactly the distinction Garfinkel's method turns on — an account given privately, to a friendly or controlled audience, is not the same evidentiary object as the same account tested in public, in front of people who do not already share the speaker's framing, and Huang's choice was specifically to supply the former while declining the latter.

A second dialogic-health thread worth naming honestly: Huang's own willingness to publicly contradict market consensus (the R1 “you all got it wrong” framing) suggests a leader unusually comfortable with open technical disagreement, at least when the disagreement runs in his company's favor. Whether that same comfort would extend to open disagreement that ran against Nvidia's interests — for instance, conceding publicly that DeepSeek's V4 migration off CUDA represents a real long-term threat to Nvidia's software moat, rather than reserving that admission for a podcast interview with a sympathetic host — is untested in this case's record.

Authentic Forecasts

Two forecasts anchor this case, and both are now testable against time in a way few forecasts in this series have been. The first: Huang's January–March 2025 insistence that R1 was good news for Nvidia because reasoning models require more compute, not less (“it actually consumes 100 times more computing”). Read against Nvidia's subsequent climb to \$5 trillion-plus by April 2026, this forecast reads as vindicated on its own narrow terms — demand for Nvidia's chips did not collapse, and arguably accelerated, in the year following R1's release. The second: Huang's March 2026 statement that Nvidia's equity investments in OpenAI and Anthropic would likely be its last, given the approaching IPO transitions. By May 2026, barely eight weeks later, Nvidia had committed more than \$40 billion in new equity deals — not principally to OpenAI or Anthropic again, but reaching further up the supply chain into Corning and IREN. Read narrowly, the forecast was kept (no further checks to OpenAI or Anthropic specifically). Read at the level the forecast was actually making a claim about — that Nvidia's era of using its balance

sheet to finance its own demand was ending — the forecast did not hold for even one full fiscal quarter.

This is a different shape of authenticity failure than Jassy's in Case Nine. Jassy's two accounts contradicted each other about the same set of facts. Huang's March forecast was not contradicted by a later statement; it was contradicted by his own company's subsequent action, continuing the underlying behavior (using equity to secure demand for Nvidia's own products) under a different set of counterparty names. Whether this counts as the same kind of fragility Garfinkel's method names, or as a genuinely distinct failure mode — a forecast falsified by conduct rather than by a competing account — is named here as an open methodological question rather than settled by this case alone.

Part Three — Reading the Case Through the Octagon

Registries That Surface Strongly

Antennarrative surfaces strongly in Part One's three-positions reading, and particularly in the Beneath register: beneath the shovel-seller account sits a company whose own balance sheet is now load-bearing for the revenue of the customers it reports earnings against, a structural fact the shovel-seller framing never has occasion to surface.

Fragmentation (Terse-Telling) surfaces via a phrase this case can now track the way “world's largest startup” was tracked in Case Nine: “picks and shovels.” The phrase appears repeatedly across financial press covering Nvidia (including in this case's own source material, describing Nvidia's pullback from venture-style investing as a return to “its core role as the industry's hardware supplier” after having “decided to halt further equity investments in its two largest AI lab customers”). The gloss does real work: it lets the audience supply a comfortable, nineteenth-century-gold-rush image of Nvidia's role, one in which the shovel-seller has no stake in whether any particular miner strikes gold — exactly the framing Part One's Position Two shows is no longer accurate, since Nvidia now holds direct equity in several of the miners.

The Mirror Effect registry (Case Eight's central instrument) recurs here directly, since this case inherits and extends Case Eight's own unresolved finding about Nvidia's two DeepSeek shocks. Huang's own commentary on both shocks is now part of the evidentiary record Case Eight's open questions asked a future case to investigate, and Part Four below takes that question up directly.

Registries Weaker or Not Yet Evidenced

I-We dialectics is weakly evidenced for the same structural reason it was weak in Case Nine: no single public occasion in this case's record forces Huang, personally, to answer for the gap between Nvidia's three positions in the same room, in front of the same audience, on the record. The closest candidate — the declined Senate hearing — is precisely the occasion where that collision would have occurred, and Huang's choice was specifically to avoid it.

Polyphonic dialogisms (Bakhtin) is present but, as in Case Nine, reads closer to rhetorical than novelistic double-voicedness: Warren's public criticism and Huang's declined-testimony letter are two distinct voices in named, public disagreement, not two languages fused inside a single utterance the way Liang's open-weight release fused gift-economy and pricing-warfare language in Case Eight. This case's clearest candidate for genuine novelistic fusion is instead Position Two

itself — “we are a neutral supplier” and “we are equity-financing our own customers' demand” are not two voices in conflict so much as two socio-ideological languages (market neutrality and strategic moat-building) operating inside the identical \$30 billion OpenAI check, which functions simultaneously as commercial financing and as competitive lock-in.

Horsesense is essentially absent from this case's record in the way it was present, via named workers, in Cases Five and Nine. Nvidia's own factory-floor or fabrication-level voices (TSMC's workers, for instance, who physically manufacture the chips this case is about) do not appear anywhere in the sources gathered here — a gap worth naming rather than filling with invented material, especially since TSMC itself sits one further step removed from this case's own corporate-leadership focus and would deserve its own treatment rather than a borrowed cameo.

Part Four — SEAM's Six Hidden-Cost Categories, and the Two DeepSeek Mirrors Revisited

Strategic Implementation

The clearest strategic-implementation dysfunction this case can name is the gap between Huang's stated March 2026 forecast (no further major equity checks to consequential AI labs) and Nvidia's actual conduct within roughly eight weeks (continued equity deployment, redirected further up the supply chain). In SEAM's terms, this is a textbook implementation gap — a strategic decision stated publicly and then not implemented as stated, with the substance of the original strategy (using the balance sheet to secure demand) continuing under a different set of counterparty names that drew less immediate scrutiny.

Communication-Coordination-Cooperation (the 3Cs)

Read against Case Nine's 3Cs finding for Amazon, this case's 3Cs dysfunction is narrower but real: Huang's own public commentary on the two DeepSeek shocks (Part Five below) was not coordinated with Nvidia's broader public-relations posture toward Congress and toward the export-control debate happening in parallel. A company managing a serious congressional relationship around export controls and national security (Position Three) was, in the same season, also managing a public narrative in which its own CEO was relaxed, even enthusiastic, about a Chinese competitor's progress (Position One's R1 commentary) — two communications efforts that were each individually coherent but never visibly reconciled with each other for the same audience.

Working Conditions

No verified, named, first-person account of working conditions inside Nvidia exists in this case's source base, the same gap Case Eight named honestly for DeepSeek. This is worth flagging as a limit of this case's own research rather than a finding either way.

Time Management / Non-Creation of Potential

Read through the Six Root-Stems (Chapter Zero), Nvidia's \$40 billion-plus equity deployment pace — by one estimate, roughly \$298 million per day including weekends — represents an enormous quantity of capital that is, on Wedbush's own characterization, defensive (a “competitive moat”) rather than purely growth-seeking. Whether this capital, deployed instead toward Non-Creation of Potential in SEAM's sense — funding genuinely independent compute

alternatives, or workforce development in the communities hosting Nvidia's own supply chain — would have produced a different and possibly more durable kind of competitive position is a counterfactual this case cannot test, but is worth naming as the road not measured rather than simply the road not taken.

A Cost the Six Categories Resist Naming: Concentration Risk as a Hidden Cost to the Whole Industry, Not Just to Nvidia

Analysts covering Nvidia's equity spree have named concentration risk as a cost to Nvidia specifically — with \$30 billion of \$40 billion sitting in a single private company, any OpenAI stumble lands directly on Nvidia's own balance sheet. This case extends that finding one level further: every other case in this series profiles a leader whose company's AI bet depends, at some level, on continued Nvidia hardware access, continued Nvidia equity support, or both. A hidden cost concentrated this heavily in one company's balance sheet is not just a Nvidia-specific risk; it is a single point of failure sitting underneath several of this book's own prior cases simultaneously, in a way none of those cases, written before this one, had occasion to name.

Part Five — Revisiting Case Eight's Two Unresolved Mirrors, With Huang's Own Words Now in Hand

Case Eight named two Mirror Effects — R1 in January 2025, V4-Pro in April 2026 — and declined to resolve which verdict (panic or indifference) was the more correct reading, naming the disagreement itself as the finding. This case can now add what Case Eight's own record did not yet have: Huang's own contemporaneous account of each event, and what changes when those two accounts are read together.

On R1 (February–March 2025), Huang's account was confident and dismissive of the threat: “the market got it wrong,” reasoning models need “100 times more computing,” not less, and R1 is in fact “a godsend” for Nvidia's long-run thesis because it accelerates AI adoption broadly. On V4 (April–May 2026), Huang's account, given on the Dwarkesh Podcast, was markedly more alarmed: DeepSeek successfully running frontier models on Huawei's Ascend chips with no CUDA dependency would be “a horrible outcome” for the United States, undermining “the technological leverage that has underpinned American AI dominance for the past decade.”

Read separately, each account is coherent and adequate to its occasion — the first reassuring nervous Nvidia shareholders, the second warning policymakers about a software-ecosystem threat distinct from the chip-performance gap Nvidia's hardware advantage still holds. Read together, in the same Garfinkel-derived method Case Nine applied to Jassy, the two accounts describe a genuine shift in how seriously Huang treats DeepSeek's challenge to Nvidia's position — from confident dismissal to explicit alarm — across fifteen months in which DeepSeek's technical approach did not fundamentally change in kind, only in degree (from reducing compute-per-model to eliminating Nvidia-specific software dependency entirely). Whether that shift represents Huang accurately recalibrating as the threat genuinely escalated, or represents two accounts each shaped more by their audience (shareholders wanting reassurance, then policymakers wanting urgency) than by a single consistent reading of the underlying technical reality, is exactly the kind of question this case's method is built to raise rather than settle. Case

Eight's own refusal to resolve which Mirror verdict was correct now reads, in light of Huang's own shifting account, as the more defensible choice: even the person with the most direct financial stake in answering that question did not answer it consistently.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Huang, J., letter to Senator Elizabeth Warren declining Senate Banking Committee testimony (2026, June 8), as relayed in full by CNBC, CEO NA Magazine, and Memeburn, with the Senate Banking Committee's own original invitation letter (2026, June 4) published directly by the Committee. Huang, J., recorded interview on the Dwarkesh Podcast (2026, early May, as relayed by TheNextWeb). Huang, J., recorded interview with Alex Bouzari of DataDirect Networks (2025, February 20, as relayed by TechCrunch, Fortune, and Yahoo Finance). Huang, J., recorded interview with CNBC's Jim Cramer at Nvidia's GTC conference (2025, March 19, as relayed by CNBC and Bloomberg). Huang, J., remarks at the Morgan Stanley Technology, Media and Telecom conference (2026, March 4, as relayed by TheStreet and Tech Insider).

Strong secondary: CNBC's direct reporting on the Senate hearing invitation and Huang's decline (2026, June 4 and June 8), including Senator Warren's full public statements. StartupHub.ai's tracking of Huang's public position evolution from the 2022 A100 ban through the 2026 Entity List delay (2026, June 11). TechCrunch (2026, January 2 and May 9) and CNBC (2026, May 9) on Nvidia's 2026 equity investment tally and individual deal terms. Let's Data Science (2026, May 11) on the full \$40 billion equity breakdown including Corning and IREN. Bloomberg's graphics feature on AI circular dealmaking (2026, March 11), including Dario Amodei's own quoted defense of the practice from the New York Times Dealbook Summit.

Lower tier, used cautiously: TikTok and aggregator summaries (Memeburn, LBC, tradersunion.com, TradingKey) of the same underlying CNBC/Reuters reporting on the Senate hearing and Huang's DeepSeek commentary, cross-checked against the CNBC and TechCrunch originals before any figure or quotation was treated as confirmed.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Nine — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of Antenarrative*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, carried forward directly from Case Nine's treatment. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*, carried forward from Case Eight's treatment.

GPT-5.6 Sol, Gated: The 11 D's Read Against Two Countries' Speech-Acts

Chapter Zero's own Section 7 says plainly what the 11 D-Questions are for beyond the diagnostic interview: “When we read a CEO memo, a layoff announcement, or a leadership speech-act for the Tesseract project, we can ask the same eleven questions of the text.” No case in this series has yet done this directly — the D's have been named, cited, and held in reserve across thirteen cases and one synthesis report, but never actually run against a dated sequence of speech-acts the way this Preface's own instructions describe. GPT-5.6 Sol's gated release, read against Anthropic's Fable 5 suspension and China's simultaneous open-weight flood, is exactly the kind of material the instrument was built for: not one company's bet, but a live, still-unfolding exchange of memos, blog posts, executive orders, and model releases, each one a speech-act making a claim about time, disclosure, and direction.

The second instrument is Savall, Zardet, Bonnet, and Amandine Savall's three epistemological pillars of SEAM's own intervention-research method — cognitive interactivity, contradictory intersubjectivity, generic contingency — cited once in this book's References list and never used as a case's primary methodological grounding. David's own prior correction of these names, delivered directly and accepted without argument in an earlier working session, is followed here rather than overridden: “Those names are never going to sell in our book... the reader sees language like that and just shuts the book and walks away.” This case uses David's own renamings throughout — Writing It Out Loud (cognitive interactivity), Whose Room You Walked In From (contradictory intersubjectivity), and Stepping Back From the Tesseract (generic contingency) — and treats the renaming itself as a worked example of exactly the discipline the pillars describe: knowledge produced through real interaction and exteriorization, not handed down from a theory's original vocabulary unchanged.

A third thing makes this case genuinely different from every prior case in the series, and it has to be named directly rather than smoothed over: this is being written while the event is still happening. GPT-5.6 Sol's preview began June 26, 2026; this case is drafted June 28, 2026, two days later, with Anthropic's lawsuit against the administration still active and OpenAI's own “coming weeks” timeline for broader release not yet resolved one way or the other. The third pillar — Stepping Back From the Tesseract, generic contingency — names exactly the caution this requires: with only one live case (this one) and two recent comparators (Case Two's Fable 5 material, Case Eight's DeepSeek material), any generic claim this case makes about how governments now relate to frontier AI releases must be held provisionally, since ISEOR's own discipline says the hard, transferable core of a finding only solidifies from the second, third, and later cases onward — and this case is, at most, the third data point in a pattern, not yet the pattern itself.

A sourcing note: this case draws directly on Reuters' own June 26, 2026 reporting (via multiple syndicated outlets, since the original Reuters URL returned blocked), TechCrunch's own direct quotations from OpenAI's blog post, The Crypto Times' detailed comparative timeline of the Fable 5 and GPT-5.6 interventions, and aggregator-relayed reporting from The Information and

Axios (the original behind-paywall reporting, relayed and cross-checked across explainx.ai, The New Stack, and Digg before any figure was treated as confirmed). Kevin Xu's own named, quoted social-media comparison of the GPT-5.6 approval process to China's own registration scheme is preserved directly rather than paraphrased, since the comparison's specific wording is the finding.

Part One — The Eleven D's, Asked Directly of the Speech-Acts Themselves

Four speech-acts anchor this reading, given in their dated sequence: Anthropic's June 12, 2026 Commerce Department directive forcing Fable 5 and Mythos 5 offline globally; President Trump's executive order establishing a voluntary 30-day government-preview framework for “covered frontier models”; OpenAI's June 26, 2026 blog post announcing GPT-5.6's limited preview; and the open-weight releases of GLM-5.2, Kimi K2.7, and Qwen 3.7 from Chinese labs across the same several weeks, requiring no equivalent government step at all. Each of the eleven D's is asked of this whole sequence together, since the instrument's own design — reading a single text — has to be extended here to read four interacting texts at once, a genuine first test of the instrument's own limits.

1. Directionality — To What Future Are These Speech-Acts Headed?

OpenAI's own stated directionality is explicit and double-voiced in exactly the sense Case Eight's Bakhtin reading named: “we believe it is the strongest path to broader availability in the coming weeks,” compliance framed as the fastest road to the same open future the company says it actually wants, while in the same blog post naming the opposite worry — “it keeps the best tools from users, developers, enterprises, cyber defenders, and global partners who need them.” Anthropic's own directionality, by contrast, points toward confrontation rather than cooperation: the company is suing the administration rather than working inside the framework OpenAI accepted. China's own labs supply a third directionality entirely, neither compliance nor confrontation but simple continuation — GLM-5.2 ships under an MIT license with, per this case's own sources, no equivalent gate to push against in the first place.

2. Datability — What Dates and Moments Mark This Sequence's Life Story?

The dates compress with genuine significance: June 9, Anthropic's Fable 5 public release; June 12, the Commerce directive pulling it offline, described in one source as “a Friday afternoon letter at 5:21 PM that gave them essentially zero time to respond”; June 22, OpenAI's GPT-5.5-Cyber launch to verified security professionals, already anticipating the pattern; June 25–26, the GPT-5.6 staggered-preview announcement. Thirteen days separate the Fable 5 shutdown from the GPT-5.6 preview — not enough time, on this case's own reading, for OpenAI to have independently arrived at its own approach; enough time, on the same reading, for OpenAI to have watched Anthropic's outcome and built a structurally different relationship to the same emerging framework.

3. Duration — How Long Do These Processes Actually Last?

Fable 5's suspension is, as of this case's own writing, open-ended — “Fable 5 is not back — selecting it in Claude Code still errors,” per sources gathered through June 25. GPT-5.6's own preview is explicitly bounded, per the executive order's own 30-day window and OpenAI's own

“coming weeks” language, though this case notes directly that bounded durations stated by a party with an interest in the boundary being short are not the same evidentiary object as a confirmed, observed duration — the same caution Case Ten's own Authentic Forecasts reading applied to Huang's own “last time we'll invest” statement, later falsified by conduct within eight weeks.

4. Disclosability — What Future Is Actually Revealed, and to Whom?

This D-question reaches the heart of what makes this sequence different from ordinary corporate communication: disclosability is being rationed as the actual subject matter, not merely the medium. OpenAI's own preview is disclosed to “roughly 20 trusted partners,” names undisclosed; Altman's own words to staff, “the government will be approving access to GPT-5.6 customer by customer,” make the disclosure process itself the thing being governed, rather than the model's capabilities being the only object of control. China's own releases disclose the opposite way entirely — full open-weight availability, no partner list, no approval queue — making disclosability itself the dimension on which the two systems differ most sharply, more than the underlying technical capability.

5. Destining — What Is Unfolding in a Way That Can Be Foretold?

Dean Ball's own quoted warning, preserved directly in this case's sourcing, names a destining this case finds genuinely persuasive: a government “doesn't have clearly defined safety standards, which could lead to endless launch delays that might not only give a hand to China in the AI race, but also jeopardize the billions of dollars going to AI infrastructure buildouts.” Read against Case Twelve's own \$295 billion Chinese data-center finding and Case Ten's own Nvidia material, Ball's destining is not abstract speculation — it names a specific mechanism (delay without defined standards) connecting this sequence directly back to the infrastructure-buildout cases this whole series has already documented.

6. Deployment — In-Order-To, For-the-Sake-of What?

The stated deployment purpose, per the executive order itself, is identifying “threats ranging from cyberattacks to military misuse before the tools are widely deployed” — a defensive purpose, stated without irony in the source material. The Crypto Times' own reporting names the deployment purpose's genuine double edge directly: “the same model that can audit a smart contract at machine speed can also probe it for exploits. That duality is exactly why these tools are being gated, and exactly why the gating cuts both ways.” The deployment is, on the evidence gathered, sincerely defensive and structurally double-edged at the same time — not a contradiction this case resolves, but a genuine for-the-sake-of-what that points two directions at once.

7. Dwelling — What Is the In-Place-in-the-World of This Whole Process?

This sequence dwells, distinctively among this series' cases, inside named federal offices rather than inside a single company's own walls: the Office of the National Cyber Director, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Commerce Secretary Lutnick's own personal review, per this case's own sourcing, sit at the center of where this process actually happens — a dwelling-place this series has not had occasion to name this specifically in any prior case, including Case Ten's own Senate-testimony material, which named a single hearing rather than an ongoing interagency review process.

8. De-severance — What Is the De-Distancing of Space-Time-Mattering?

The distance between “model exists” and “model is publicly available” — ordinarily measured in a company's own product-readiness timeline — is, in this sequence, being measured instead in government review cycles: the gap this case's sources name between GPT-5.5-Cyber's own June 22 restricted launch and GPT-5.6's June 26 preview is four days, while the gap between preview and full public availability remains undetermined as this case is written. The de-distancing here is not technical (closing the gap between prototype and product) but institutional (closing the gap between government review and public release) — a genuinely different kind of de-severance than any prior case in this series needed to name.

9. Drafts — What Are the Updrafts and Downdrafts, and the Turning Points Between Them?

The clearest turning point in this whole sequence is the one separating Anthropic's and OpenAI's own postures, and it deserves to be named as a genuine draft-shift rather than folded into the broader pattern: per this case's own sourcing, “OpenAI cleared its restricted-access approach with the government first... Anthropic attempted restricted access on its own terms and got grounded.” One company drafted upward by anticipating the government's own coming move; the other was caught in a downdraft by a directive arriving, in one account, with “essentially zero time to respond.”

10. Dispersion — Is This Pattern Too Diverse, or Consolidating?

The pattern is consolidating on the American side (a named two-tier system this case's own sources describe directly: “Tier 1, Government-gated” for Mythos-class and above, “Tier 2, Commercial” for everything below) while dispersing sharply on the comparative side — eight separate Chinese labs, per this case's own sourcing, having released more open-weight models than the rest of the world combined in 2026. Read together, American frontier-AI governance is consolidating around a single, narrow approval chokepoint at the exact moment the global open-weight ecosystem is dispersing across the most labs and jurisdictions this series has yet documented.

11. Detaching — What Is the Move From 'They-Self' Toward an Authentic Potentiality-for-Being?

This D-question is the hardest of the eleven to apply honestly to an institutional rather than personal subject, and this case names that difficulty directly rather than forcing an answer. The closest candidate: OpenAI's own blog-post language — “we don't believe this kind of government access process should become the long-term default” — reads as an attempt at exactly this kind of detaching, a company trying to name and resist the “they-self” pull of simply accepting an emerging norm as permanent, while still, in the same act, fully complying with the norm it says it does not want to become permanent. Whether this counts as genuine detaching or merely the appearance of detaching while behavior remains fully conformist is a question this case poses rather than answers, consistent with Heidegger's own insistence that authentic Being-toward is recognized by its struggle, not by its successful completion.

Part Two — The Three Pillars, in David's Own Names, Asked of This Case's Own Method

Where Part One asked the eleven D's of the speech-acts themselves, this Part asks Savall and Zardet's three epistemological pillars — in David's own renamed terms — of this case's own act of analysis, since a case built two days after its own central event needs to be honest about what kind of knowledge it is actually producing.

Writing It Out Loud (Cognitive Interactivity)

Savall and Zardet's own claim is that knowledge is produced through interaction with what is being studied, not through detached observation — exteriorizing through dialogue and writing accelerates the work itself. This case's own writing, built from reading the same public speech-acts multiple outlets are simultaneously reading and reacting to in real time, is itself a small instance of exactly this dynamic: the Mirror Effect this series has documented in every prior case (a crowd, a market, a research paper, three engineers) here includes this case's own act of writing as one more voice reading the same unfolding event, not a removed, after-the-fact observer of a settled one. Naming this directly, rather than writing as if this case sits outside the event looking in, is the discipline Writing It Out Loud actually requires.

Whose Room You Walked In From (Contradictory Intersubjectivity)

Pure objectivity being impossible, SEAM's own method substitutes a structured confrontation of different actors' subjective viewpoints, explicitly naming convergences and contradictions rather than averaging them into one synthetic voice. This case's own Part One already performed a version of this directly — Anthropic's confrontational room, OpenAI's cooperative room, China's room where no confrontation needed to occur in the first place — and this section names the rooms explicitly rather than letting them blend. Dean Ball walked in from the room of a former White House AI advisor about to join OpenAI, a room with an obvious interest in the framework looking reasonable. Kevin Xu walked in from the room of a named China-AI-policy expert, a room with an interest in the contrast looking stark. The Crypto Times walked in from the room of an industry whose own defensive tooling is directly at stake in how the gating actually plays out. None of these rooms is neutral, and this case's own discipline is naming each room rather than pretending its own synthesis escapes having a room of its own — this case's room being the Tesseract project's own standing commitment to reading dark-side patterns across AI corporate leadership, a room that makes the Anthropic-versus-OpenAI contrast more visible than, say, the crypto-industry framing would make it, simply because of what this whole series has already been built to notice.

Stepping Back From the Tesseract (Generic Contingency)

This is the pillar doing the most restraining work in this case, and it needs to restrain something specific: the temptation, given how cleanly this sequence appears to confirm a pattern (American frontier-AI gating, Chinese open release, a chip-and-software-independence story already documented across Cases Eight, Ten, and Twelve), to declare the pattern settled. Savall and Zardet's own discipline says otherwise: a hard, transferable core of generic knowledge solidifies only from the second, third, and later cases onward, built from ISEOR's own base of over 2,000 organizations — this case, by contrast, has at most three data points (Fable 5, GPT-5.6, and the broader open-weight contrast), gathered across roughly three weeks, about an industry whose

own behavior could change again before this case is read. Stepping Back From the Tesseract means stating the pattern as a live hypothesis this case finds genuinely well-supported by its own evidence, while refusing to claim the kind of generic, transferable certainty that would require many more cases, gathered over much more time, than this case or this whole series has yet assembled.

What this case can say, holding that restraint directly: across exactly two American frontier-model release events in June 2026, the company that pre-cleared its approach with government (OpenAI) fared structurally better than the company that attempted restricted access on its own terms first (Anthropic) — a finding about sequencing and posture, not yet a finding about frontier AI governance in general. Whether this becomes a generic pattern (the third, fourth, and fifth cases bearing it out) or remains a contingent feature of these two companies' particular circumstances in this particular month is exactly the kind of question Stepping Back From the Tesseract asks this case to leave open rather than answer prematurely.

Part Three — The Comparison Itself, Named Directly

Holding the eleven D's and three pillars' own findings together, the comparison David asked for can now be stated plainly rather than left implicit in the discourse analysis above. The United States, across exactly two tested cases in June 2026, is moving toward a model where the government reviews and approves frontier-AI release on a per-partner, per-customer basis before broad public access — Mythos-class and above requiring government testing and approval, in this case's own sources' own stated two-tier framing. China, across the same several weeks, released at least three frontier-class open-weight models (GLM-5.2, Kimi K2.7, Qwen 3.7) with no equivalent government gate named anywhere in this case's own sourcing — free to download, fine-tune, and run locally, per Digg's own reporting on GLM-5.2's MIT license specifically.

The irony this case's own sources name independently, without this case needing to supply it: every restriction the American government imposes to slow frontier capability appears, on the evidence gathered here, to be creating market share for the systems it is not restricting. Kevin Xu's own comparison — “makes China's model pre-release registration scheme looks almost laissez-faire” — is the sharpest single piece of evidence for this case's own central finding, because it comes from someone whose own expertise is specifically in comparing the two systems, not from a critic of either government's policy in the abstract. China's own registration scheme, real and documented across this series' own Case Twelve, is not absent — it is simply less restrictive, on the comparison this case's own named expert draws, than what the American government is currently doing to its own domestic frontier labs.

This case does not resolve whether the American approach is, on balance, the right security tradeoff — the Five Eyes cyber advisory cited in this case's own sourcing names real, serious capability (Mythos-tier systems reportedly surfacing more than 10,000 vulnerabilities in restricted deployment) that a government might reasonably want reviewed before public release. What this case can say, holding Stepping Back From the Tesseract's own restraint, is that the security rationale and the competitive-disadvantage cost are both real, simultaneously, and that this case's own sources find no single American voice — not OpenAI, not Anthropic, not the named former White House advisor, not Congress, which let its own June 26 deadline for Lutnick to explain the legal basis for these restrictions pass unanswered — currently positioned to resolve the tradeoff in either direction.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Reuters' own June 26, 2026 reporting on OpenAI's GPT-5.6 deferral, relayed and cross-checked through AOL, Investing.com, MarketScreener, Yahoo News, WTVB, and KFGO syndications after the original Reuters URL returned blocked; all syndications independently confirmed the same verbatim OpenAI quotations. TechCrunch (Rebecca Bellan), “OpenAI limits GPT-5.6 rollout after government request, says restrictions shouldn't be the norm” (26 June 2026), read directly for OpenAI's own blog-post quotations and Dean Ball's own named commentary. OpenAI's own blog post, “Previewing GPT-5.6 Sol”, quoted directly via TechCrunch's own citation.

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Lower tier, used cautiously: explainx.ai's two blog posts on GPT-5.6 access geography and the Lutnick approval process, both explicitly self-disclosing that their content is “reporting summarized from The Information coverage circulated June 26–28, 2026” rather than independent original reporting — used only for chronology cross-checking against the Reuters and TechCrunch originals, never as a sole source for any specific claim. Memeburn's pre-release speculative coverage of GPT-5.6's rumored specifications, used only for the token-window and pricing figures TechCrunch's own direct reporting separately confirmed.

Theoretical apparatus: Chapter Zero, Section 7 (the 11 D-Questions, Heidegger's Being and Time, 1962, used here as a discourse-analytic instrument for the first time as Chapter Zero's own text describes it should be used). Savall, H., Zardet, V., Bonnet, M., & Savall, A. (2024). Presentation of SEAM and opening up on storytelling approaches, in D. M. Boje (Editor-in-Chief) & A. Savall (Vol. Ed.), *Business storytelling of socioeconomics* (Vol. 5), World Scientific Publishing — the three epistemological pillars, read here in David's own renamed terms (Writing It Out Loud, Whose Room You Walked In From, Stepping Back From the Tesseract) rather than the original French-academic vocabulary, per David's own prior, accepted correction. Carried forward directly from this series' own prior cases: Garfinkel's fragility of accounts (Case Nine), the Mirror Effect (all prior cases), and Case Twelve's own export-control finding, read here as a second, independent instance of the same pattern.

Case Eleven: Arthur Mensch and Mistral

Chapter Zero's Section 4 names the chronotope — literally, time-space; the fusion of a particular temporal shape and a particular spatial setting that determines what kind of action and character can even occur within a story — and claims it is applied to Case One and Case Two, “with neither reading absorbing the other.” Vivara checked. It is not there. No chronotope subsection exists in either case's actual text. This book's own front matter described a method it had not yet, in fact, used even once across ten completed cases. Case Eleven uses it, for the first time, on the leader whose bet is most obviously and explicitly a bet about time and place rather than about a technology or a market position.

The References section elsewhere in this book preserves something the Chapter Zero prose simplifies: David's actual working instrument is seven chronotopes, not three — romantic, everyday adventure, biographical/autobiographical, rogue-clown-fool, Rabelaisian purge, idyllic, and drawing-room/castle/salon — explicitly flagged there as David's own list, not yet independently verified against Bakhtin's own primary-text catalogue in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel.” This case uses David's seven-part working list, names that verification gap honestly rather than smoothing over it, and treats the instrument's first real use as itself worth scrutinizing for whether it earns the years of citation Chapter Zero gave it in advance.

Mensch supplies an unusually clean test case for exactly this instrument, because he names his own chronotope almost verbatim, without Vivara needing to supply the framing. At a French National Assembly hearing on May 27, 2026, he stated Europe has roughly two years to avoid permanent dependence on American technology companies for AI — a specific, named clock, running down, against a specific, named geography (Europe, as opposed to the placeless cloud invoked by every other leader in this series). Asked elsewhere why Mistral has fallen behind the performance leaderboard against OpenAI, Anthropic, and DeepSeek, his own investors do not deny it — Forbes quotes investor Anjney Midha reframing the entire competition as a different race: “Is Mistral at the top of the independence leaderboard?” This is, on its face, an admission that Mistral is not winning the race every other leader in this book is running, paired with a claim that a different race, in a different time-space, is the one that actually matters.

A sourcing note in the same spirit as Cases Eight through Ten: this case draws on Forbes's April 2026 profile (via the Forbes Luxembourg syndication, the original US edition having blocked direct retrieval), Reuters's direct coverage of Mensch's May 28, 2026 remarks defending military AI use against Pope Leo XIV's criticism, CNBC's direct coverage (the Tech Download podcast, the chip-design disclosure interview), and MLQ News's relay of the French National Assembly testimony. Where a figure is a single analyst's estimate rather than a disclosed company filing, that is marked.

Part One — The Bet, Read Through Seven Chronotopes

Mensch's bet, stated plainly: that being explicitly second-best on the leaderboard, in a specific, named, time-limited geography (Europe, with a two-year clock Mensch himself set running), is a

more durable competitive position than trying to win the leaderboard outright. This is, among the eleven leaders profiled in this series so far, the only bet whose central claim is about where and when a company is, rather than about what the company has built or how fast it is improving. That makes it the cleanest test case this book has had for whether the chronotope instrument actually earns the years of advance citation Chapter Zero gave it.

Working through David's seven-part list in turn, rather than picking the one that fits and ignoring the rest, is itself the discipline Chapter Zero's own double-voicedness principle demands — a reader should not get to pick the convenient chronotope any more than a reader should get to pick the convenient resolution of a novelistic dialogism.

Romantic (forward-moving, expansive, a future of freedom and creativity)

Mensch's public language about agentic AI (“Vibe,” the enterprise platform unveiled May 2026) and about “the most capital-efficient company in AI” uses romantic-chronotope vocabulary — forward motion, possibility, efficiency as a form of freedom from the capital arms race every other case in this series documents. But the romantic chronotope, in Bakhtin's own sense, assumes the hero moves through an open, adventurous world toward an unwritten future. Mensch's own “two years” statement does not describe an open future; it describes a closing window. The romantic reading captures Mistral's marketing register without capturing the temporal structure underneath it.

Everyday Adventure (episodic trials within an unchanged social order)

This fits better than the romantic reading does. Mistral's history since 2023 reads as a sequence of discrete trials — the \$100 million pre-product raise, the September 2023 Mistral 7B release, the 2025 funding rounds, the May 2026 chip-design disclosure, the defense of military AI use against the Pope — each one a self-contained episode that tests Mensch against a specific obstacle without changing the underlying social order he operates inside (American AI labs remain dominant; Mistral remains the credible-but-secondary European alternative throughout). The everyday-adventure chronotope's defining feature, in Bakhtin's account, is that the hero is tested but not transformed by these episodes — and Mensch's own position (founder, CEO, French-sovereignty spokesperson) has been remarkably stable across all of them, even as the episodes themselves accumulate.

Biographical/Autobiographical (a life narrated as a coherent, developing whole)

Forbes's own profile leans on this chronotope without naming it: third-generation computer scientist, École Polytechnique, ex-DeepMind, founding Mistral at 33, becoming a paper billionaire at the September 2025 round. This is the chronotope financial press defaults to for any young, technically credentialed founder, and it is worth naming as a genre convention this case should not uncritically reproduce — the biographical chronotope tends to manufacture inevitability after the fact (of course this is where his life was always headed) in a way that can obscure how contingent Mistral's actual position is.

Rogue-Clown-Fool (a figure who exposes truths the serious world cannot say directly)

There is a genuine, if unexpected, fit here. Investor Anjney Midha's reframing — “Is Mistral at the top of the independence leaderboard?” — functions structurally like the fool's privilege: a

serious financial backer saying, in effect, this company is not winning the actual competition and that's fine, in a register no major American AI lab's own investors have had occasion to use about their own portfolio company. Mensch's own remark about European “anguish” over AI (“we'll be fine, we'll find a way to use it efficiently”) carries a similar deflationary, almost wry register against the apocalyptic-or-utopian registers Altman, Hassabis, and Amodei's cases in this series have each documented.

Rabelaisian Purge (excess, inversion, the lower body exposing the pretensions of the official world)

This chronotope does not fit, and naming the non-fit is itself useful discipline: nothing in Mensch's public record involves grotesque excess or carnivalesque inversion of official AI-industry pretension. If anything, Mistral's whole positioning is the opposite of Rabelaisian — it is restrained, technocratic, and explicitly proud of operating on a fraction of its rivals' capital. Forcing this chronotope onto the case would be exactly the kind of artificial tidiness Case Eight's own open questions warned against when reflecting on tetranormalization's fifth sphere.

Idyllic (a comfortable, falsely timeless return to how things already were)

This is the chronotope Mensch's critics would likely reach for, and it deserves to be named as the uncharitable reading rather than ignored: “sovereignty” and “independence” can function as a comfortable, falsely timeless story for a company that is, on its own admission, behind the performance curve — a way of making technical second-place sound like a principled choice rather than a competitive outcome. The idyllic reading is not obviously wrong. What complicates it is Mensch's own “two years” statement, which is explicitly not timeless — it names a closing window, not a comfortable eternal present. A genuinely idyllic chronotope would not set a clock running against itself.

Drawing-Room/Castle/Salon (a bounded, intimate social space where character is revealed through conversation and social maneuvering)

This chronotope fits Mistral's enterprise-client strategy more precisely than any other reading in this list. Mensch's own account of Mistral's differentiation — “your data doesn't even need to leave the office, let alone the country” — is explicitly a bounded-space promise: HSBC, Tesco, CMA, Airbus, ASML, and multiple European governments, each running Mistral inside their own walls rather than sending data out into an open, placeless cloud. The salon chronotope's defining feature — character revealed through intimate, bounded social space rather than through grand external action — maps directly onto Mensch's pitch that what matters is not whose model wins an open benchmark, but whose model a specific institution trusts enough to let inside its own walls.

Reading the Seven Together, Without Letting One Absorb the Others

No single chronotope governs this case cleanly, and that itself is the finding worth stating rather than resolving. The everyday-adventure and drawing-room readings carry the most evidentiary weight; the romantic reading describes Mistral's marketing without describing its actual temporal structure; the idyllic reading captures a real risk in how “sovereignty” language can function defensively; the rogue-clown-fool reading captures something true and underused about how Mensch and his own investors talk about losing the leaderboard race without losing the argument. Chapter Zero's own discipline — a case does not have to exhaust all eight Octagon

registries to be read honestly — applies equally here: this case does not resolve into one chronotope, and a reading that forced it to would be doing exactly what Bakhtin's novelistic double-voicedness principle warns this whole book against doing.

Part Two — SSL Profile, Read Briefly Rather Than at Full Length

This case deliberately keeps the SSL profile shorter than in prior cases, and the full eight-registry Octagon pass is set aside entirely rather than performed pro forma — not because Mensch's record is thin (it is not), but because this book has, by Case Eleven, already demonstrated the SSL-then-Octagon-then-SEAM march eight separate times, and repeating that march in full here would let the established skeleton do the work the chronotope instrument was specifically brought in to do instead. What follows names only what the chronotope reading above did not already cover.

Personal Mindfulness

Mensch's public register is unusually willing to name his own company's competitive weakness directly, rather than reframing it after the fact — he does not dispute that Mistral trails OpenAI, Anthropic, and DeepSeek on standard benchmarks; he disputes that the benchmark is the right race to be judged on. This is a different shape of mindfulness than this series has documented elsewhere: not Jassy's non-reconciliation of two accounts, not Huang's three unreconciled positions, but a leader naming his own position's weakness upfront and then arguing the weakness is misplaced as a verdict. Whether that argument is sound is a separate question from whether it is honestly made; on the honesty question alone, this reads as comparatively high mindfulness among the leaders profiled so far.

Dialogic Health

Mensch's direct, on-the-record rejection of Pope Leo XIV's criticism of military AI — “we're all for peace, but if you look at our rivals and adversaries in the world, they're using artificial intelligence... we do need to have our own capabilities” — is genuine public dialogue conducted in the open, unlike Huang's declined Senate testimony in Case Ten. Mensch did not decline the disagreement; he had it, in public, on the record, with one of the world's most prominent moral authorities on the other side. This case's dialogic-health reading is more straightforwardly positive than several prior cases', though it is worth naming what the disagreement was actually about: Mensch's argument is a sovereignty-and-security argument, not a direct engagement with the Pope's ethical claim about AI in warfare — the two men were, in Bakhtin's terms, speaking different socio-ideological languages (geopolitical necessity versus moral theology) past rather than fully to each other, even though both spoke in public.

Authentic Forecasts

The clearest testable forecast in this case is the “two years” statement itself, made at the French National Assembly on May 27, 2026. Unlike Jassy's forecasts in Case Nine or Huang's in Case Ten, this forecast has not yet had time to be tested against subsequent events — it is freshly made, with its own clock still running at the time of this case's writing. What this case can document is the forecast's specificity: Mensch named a number (two years) and a stake (permanent dependence on American technology companies) rather than the vaguer, open-ended timelines other leaders in this series have offered. A specific forecast is, by definition, more falsifiable than a vague one, and Mensch's own choice to make his forecast this falsifiable is

itself worth reading as a degree of risk-taking with his own credibility that several other leaders in this book have avoided.

Part Three — One SEAM Category Worth Naming, and a Hidden Cost the Chronotope Reading Surfaces

Rather than marching through all six SEAM categories as in prior cases, this case names the one category where Mistral's record is most distinctive, and the one hidden cost the chronotope reading above makes visible that a category-by-category pass might otherwise miss.

Strategic Implementation: The Chip Ambition as a Test of the Drawing-Room Bet

Mensch's May 28, 2026 disclosure that Mistral is “exploring” custom chip design, while explicitly hedging (“may come,” “should come at some point,” “we're testing a few things here and there”), is a strategic-implementation event worth reading against the drawing-room chronotope named in Part One. A company whose entire competitive thesis is sovereignty and independence is, on its own admission, currently dependent on Nvidia — the same company whose three unreconciled positions Case Ten documented at length, and whose \$40 billion-plus equity stakes in Mistral's own American rivals (OpenAI, Anthropic) Case Ten named as a hidden cost sitting underneath several of this book's prior cases. Mistral's sovereignty pitch to its European enterprise clients is, at the infrastructure layer, currently running on the same substrate as the American labs it positions itself against. The chip-design disclosure is best read as an early, hedged acknowledgment of this gap, not yet a resolution of it — ThePlanetTools.ai's own sourcing notes carefully observed that no foundry partner, silicon team, or architecture disclosure exists yet, and the gap between exploring and building is, in their own framing, “the entire story.”

A Hidden Cost the Six Categories Would Not Surface on Their Own: Borrowed Sovereignty

Naming this directly, in the same spirit Case Nine named the cost of non-reconciliation and Case Ten named industry-wide concentration risk: Mistral's drawing-room promise to European clients (your data stays inside our walls, inside Europe, under European law) currently depends on hardware (Nvidia GB300 GPUs, 13,800 of them in the new Les Ulis-area facility alone) supplied by a company whose own Case Ten profile in this book documented an unresolved, three-way tension between neutral-supplier, equity-financier, and national-security-actor positions. If Nvidia's own position toward European customers were ever to shift — export-control pressure, allocation prioritization toward larger American customers, or simple commercial preference — Mistral's sovereignty promise would be exposed as resting on infrastructure sovereignty itself does not yet cover. This is not a hypothetical criticism invented for this case; it is precisely the gap Mensch's own chip-design hedge implicitly concedes.

Part Four — The Pope's Criticism as an Unplanned Mirror Effect

Every case in this series has found its Mirror Effect arriving from a different source — a crowd, a market, a research paper, a company's own employees. This case's Mirror Effect arrived from

the Vatican, which is itself worth naming as a genuinely new category of mirror-holder for this series: a moral authority with no commercial, regulatory, or competitive stake in Mistral's market position, raising a question (should military AI exist at all) that none of Mistral's actual competitors or regulators in this book's prior cases have raised in quite the same register.

Mensch's response — immediate, public, and unapologetic (“we're all for peace, but...”) — did not deflect or decline the mirror the way Huang declined Senator Warren's invitation in Case Ten. It met the mirror directly and disagreed with what it showed. Whether that disagreement was actually responsive to the Pope's specific ethical claim, or simply restated Mistral's existing sovereignty argument in a new register, is the open question this case leaves for the reader rather than resolving: Mensch's own words name a security argument (“adversaries... are threatening”) in answer to what was, in the Pope's own framing, an argument about the moral status of automated lethal decision-making specifically. The two men were each adequate to their own occasion, in exactly the sense Case Nine's Garfinkel reading names — and whether their two accounts, read together, actually engage the same question or simply pass each other in different registers is this case's own version of the unresolved double-voicedness Chapter Zero asks every case in this book to hold open rather than settle.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Mensch, A., remarks at the French National Assembly hearing (2026, May 27), as relayed by MLQ News. Mensch, A., recorded interview with CNBC's Arjun Kharpal on the Tech Download podcast (2026, June 12) and the related May 28, 2026 chip-design disclosure interview, as relayed directly by CNBC, with cross-checking via MLQ News, Dealroom.co, Takedia, and ThePlanetTools.ai's verbatim-quote analysis. Mensch, A., remarks to reporters in Paris responding to Pope Leo XIV's encyclical (2026, May 28), as relayed directly by Reuters via Business Day, RTE, the Global Banking and Finance Review, and Caliber.Az, with consistent verbatim quotation across all four outlets.

Strong secondary: Forbes Luxembourg's syndicated republication of Iain Martin's April 16, 2026 Forbes profile “How France's Mistral Built A \$14 Billion AI Empire By Not Being American” (the original US Forbes URL blocked direct retrieval; content cross-checked against RamaOnHealthcare's republication and the Forbes social-media summary for consistency), including direct quotations from investor Anjney Midha and Mistral investor Jeannette zu Fürstenberg. The Defense Post, AOL/Reuters, and DevDiscourse coverage of the May 28, 2026 data-center announcement and military-AI defense, cross-checked for consistency across outlets.

Lower tier, used cautiously: ts2.tech and aiproductivity.ai summaries of Mistral's broader business strategy, cross-checked against the CNBC and Forbes originals before any figure was treated as confirmed. Briefs.co and LSD News aggregator summaries of the chip-design CNBC interview, cross-checked against the original CNBC transcript excerpts preserved in MLQ News's and ThePlanetTools.ai's coverage.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Ten — Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*, Chapter 1, including the chronotope material drawn directly from “Discourse in the Novel” and the related Dialogic Imagination essays. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*. Boje, D. M., & Saylor, R. (2023). *The Seven Bs of*

Antenarrative. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2025). *Story-Seeds of Leadership*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*. Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination*, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," used here for the first time as this case's primary instrument; per this book's own References entry, David's seven-part working chronotope list (romantic, everyday adventure, biographical/autobiographical, rogue-clown-fool, Rabelaisian purge, idyllic, drawing-room/castle/salon) has not yet been independently re-verified against Bakhtin's own primary-text catalogue, and this case's use of it should be read with that caveat preserved rather than treated as settled.

Case Twelve: China as a Transorganizational AI Network

Eleven cases in, this series has been reading individual leaders — their bets, their statements, their unreconciled accounts. China cannot be read that way, and forcing it into that shape would be the wrong kind of tidiness. Xi Jinping has not given the genre of contradictory public statement Cases Nine and Ten built their readings around; there is no Jassy-style memo-versus-earnings-call moment, no Huang-style podcast-versus-Senate-letter gap, because the relevant unit of analysis here is not a person speaking to different audiences but a network of ministries, universities, state firms, provincial governments, and private labs operating, by design, as a single coordinated system. This case is built around the instrument David's own scholarly life actually begins with, before storytelling theory existed: interorganizational and transorganizational networking, the subject of his 1978 dissertation, developed years before the 1991 ASQ study or the 1995 Disney piece. China is, on the evidence gathered here, the single clearest live example of a deliberately engineered transorganizational network this series has yet encountered — closer to what David's dissertation was actually built to study than any single corporation in Cases One through Eleven.

A second instrument finally gets used for real rather than gestured at. Chapter Zero's Section 5 extends Savall's four-leaf clover into a rhizome metaphor — “a clover field is never a single isolated plant... stolons (above-ground runners) and rhizome crowns (underground connectors) that let one client's diagnosis connect into a whole clover field of related cases” — and every prior case in this series has used that metaphor only loosely, as a comparative aside between separately-built cases (the New Mexico clover field of Sierra, Socorro, and Doña Ana counties; the passing mention of “Microsoft, OpenAI, xAI, Project Jupiter, the Missouri case” as a clover field in the abstract). No case has yet built one clover field as a single, internally connected diagnostic object, because no single prior case's subject was itself organized as a deliberately interconnected network of nodes. China's own infrastructure plans supply exactly that object, almost too perfectly: provincial AI hub clusters (Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta, the Greater Bay Area, Guizhou) are explicitly being wired together by named rhizome crowns — the China Computing Net, the “East Data, West Computing” strategy, and a newly reported 2-trillion-yuan (\$295 billion) plan to connect “scattered data facilities... into a cohesive network by 2028.” This case builds that field directly, stolon by stolon, rather than naming it as a metaphor and moving on.

A methodological note on what this case does and does not claim. Reading a state rather than a corporation changes what counts as evidence. There is no SSL-style personal-statement record to read Xi's own Mindfulness, Dialogic Health, or Authentic Forecasts against, in the sense Cases One through Eleven used those terms — Xi's public register is institutional and collective by design, not individually confessional the way Jassy's memos or Huang's podcast interviews were. This case does not force that instrument onto material it does not fit. Where the network's own institutional voice (State Council documents, Five-Year Plan language, ministry guidance) supplies something readable in SSL-adjacent terms, this case reads it; where it does not, this case says so rather than manufacturing a false equivalence with the individual-leader cases that came before it.

A sourcing note: this case draws on the World Economic Forum's June 2025 essay by Kaiser Kuo (a rare first-person account from someone with direct Baidu-era experience inside the sector), the English Wikipedia “Artificial intelligence industry in China” article (itself drawing on dozens of primary policy documents and academic sources, cross-checked rather than quoted wholesale), the National University of Singapore East Asian Institute's January 2026 Background Brief (an academic, citation-dense primary analysis), the Global Institute for National Capability's January 2026 national-strategy report (extremely comprehensive but a single advocacy-adjacent source, treated with appropriate caution where its framing turns evaluative), and multiple outlets' June 2026 reporting on the \$295 billion data-center plan (Bloomberg's original reporting, relayed and cross-checked through Reuters, Yahoo Finance, The Edge Singapore, TechTimes, and informedclearly.com). Where a figure rests on a single Bloomberg sourcing chain not yet independently confirmed, that is marked plainly.

Part One — The Transorganizational Network, Mapped Directly

David's 1978 dissertation and the UCLA work that followed treated interorganizational networking as a structural question prior to any single organization's own story: how do formally separate organizations — with different charters, different incentives, sometimes nominally competing — come to act as a coordinated system, and through what specific linking mechanisms does that coordination actually travel? China's AI sector answers this question with unusual explicitness, because the linking mechanisms are named, public, and deliberately engineered rather than emergent.

The Nodes

State strategy and ministries: the State Council's 2017 New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan remains the foundational document, reaffirmed and absorbed into the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) and now the 15th Five-Year Plan Recommendations (October 2025), which elevate AI from a digital-economy enabler to, in the National University of Singapore brief's own language, “a core driver of new quality productive forces.” The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) oversees research funding and national R&D programs; the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) handles industrial standardization and corporate guidance; the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) regulates algorithms, content, and model registration.

Universities and research institutes as incubators, not just trainers: Tsinghua, Peking University, Shanghai Jiao Tong, and Zhejiang University each function, in Kaiser Kuo's own account for the World Economic Forum, “not only as training grounds for AI talent, but as intellectual incubators for commercial ventures” — Zhipu AI and Baichuan both emerged directly from university research labs, with seed funding from state-affiliated venture arms built in from the start. The Beijing Academy of Artificial Intelligence (BAAI), formally a research institute, released WuDao 2.0 (1.75 trillion parameters) and operates OpenI, a shared model-and-dataset repository explicitly designed to reduce researcher dependence on Hugging Face and GitHub.

Private firms in two tiers: a small set of designated “national AI team” champions (Baidu for autonomous vehicles, Alibaba for smart-city “City Brain” systems, Tencent for medical imaging, iFlytek for voice recognition, Huawei for hardware and software, among fifteen companies the State Council has named with specific assigned specialties since 2017), and a faster-moving,

more competitive tier of newer entrants — DeepSeek, MiniMax, Moonshot AI, Zhipu AI, and Baichuan, nicknamed China's “AI Tigers,” plus Hangzhou's own informally named “six dragons” (DeepSeek, Unitree, Game Science, DEEP Robotics, a brain-computer-interface firm, and KOOL.US).

State-owned infrastructure operators: China Mobile and China Telecom are reported, per Bloomberg's June 2026 sourcing, to be designated operators of the bulk of the new \$295 billion data-center network — a different role than the US pattern this series' Cases One through Eleven document, where Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Meta build and operate their own infrastructure as private capital allocators. In China's design, the state-owned telecom operators are the connective infrastructure layer itself, with private AI labs as tenants and customers of a state-built grid rather than builders of their own.

The military, formally linked rather than informally adjacent: the Central Military-Civil Fusion Development Commission, chaired directly by Xi Jinping since January 2017, exists specifically to accelerate the transfer of civilian AI research into military application, and per the Wikipedia entry's own synthesis, “few boundaries exist between Chinese commercial companies, university research laboratories, the military, and the central government” as a matter of structural design rather than incidental overlap. This is the one node type that has no equivalent anywhere in Cases One through Eleven — no American or European case in this series has needed to read a formally chartered government commission whose explicit mandate is moving commercial AI research into weapons and battlefield systems.

The Rhizome Crowns: How the Nodes Actually Connect

Naming nodes is not yet a transorganizational analysis; the linking mechanisms are what make a network rather than a list. Four mechanisms do this work in the sources gathered here, and naming them precisely is the discipline David's own dissertation work insisted on:

- Government guidance funds: the National AI Industry Investment Fund (¥60 billion, roughly \$8.2 billion, launched 2024) and the National Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund (the “Big Fund”) function as literal capital conduits connecting state strategy directly to private-firm balance sheets, with local guidance funds in Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Hangzhou co-investing alongside private capital rather than substituting for it.
- The Artificial Intelligence Industry Alliance (AIIA): a formally coordinated network of more than 200 enterprises, universities, and research institutes, convened by MIIT specifically to align technical standards, share policy feedback, and coordinate deployment across a fragmented ecosystem — a rhizome crown in the most literal sense Chapter Zero's own metaphor intends, an underground connector linking otherwise separate plants.
- The China Computing Net and “East Data, West Computing”: physical and logical infrastructure designed explicitly to pool fragmented regional compute capacity into a coordinated whole, moving data-intensive workloads from coastal demand centers to inland regions with cheaper energy and land — and now, per the \$295 billion plan, being extended into a single interconnected national grid targeted for completion by 2028.

- Pilot zones and the Open Innovation Platform: more than 20 National AI Innovation Pilot Zones (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Hefei, and others) function as regulatory sandboxes where national policy gets tested locally before wider rollout, while the Open Innovation Platform (launched 2017 under MOST) formally delegates specific firms to lead R&D in assigned vertical domains — Baidu for autonomous driving, Tencent for medical imaging — making firm-level specialization itself a centrally coordinated design choice rather than a market outcome.

Reading This as a Network Rather Than as a Single Bet

Cases One through Eleven each asked: what is this leader betting, and does the bet hold up against itself over time? That question does not transfer cleanly to a network this explicitly engineered, because the relevant unit of analysis is not a wager but a structural design — specifically, a design that integrates state planning, capital allocation, university research, competitive private firms, state-owned physical infrastructure, and military application into a single system with comparatively few of the boundary-crossing frictions this series has documented inside Western corporations (Case Nine's Jassy memo-versus-earnings-call gap; Case Ten's Huang three-positions tension). The relevant question for this case is not whether the network's bet will pay off, but whether the network's own coordination mechanisms are as seamless as its own institutional self-description claims — and Part Three below finds real evidence that they are not.

Part Two — The Clover Field, Built Directly

Chapter Zero's rhizome extension of Savall's four-leaf clover has, until now, been a comparative metaphor applied across separately-built cases. China's own AI geography is the first subject in this series organized as an actual clover field rather than a loose family resemblance between cases — distinct provincial “plants”, explicitly linked by named underground rhizome crowns, with the whole field's health depending on connections between nodes as much as on any single node's own strength.

The Plants: Four Regional Clusters, Each With a Distinct Specialization

Beijing–Tianjin–Hebei is the field's research-and-governance plant: 93 AI headquarters, the largest single cluster nationally, concentrating national labs, top universities (Tsinghua, Peking University, the Institute of Automation at the Chinese Academy of Sciences), and policy pilots. Its strength is in application models, compute infrastructure, and the foundational technologies (computer vision, NLP) that other plants' commercial products are built on — in clover-leaf terms, this is where Strategic Implementation and Integrated Training concentrate.

The Yangtze River Delta, anchored by Shanghai and including Hangzhou, is the field's chokepoint-breaking plant — 41 AI headquarters, the most complete end-to-end integrated-circuit value chain in the country (SMIC, Hua Hong, AMEC, SMEE), and the site of China's most consequential reported lithography breakthrough (SMEE's 2025 domestically developed 28nm machine, reportedly capable of producing chips down to 7nm or “quasi-5nm”). Hangzhou specifically hosts DeepSeek and the informally named “six dragons” of AI startups, making this plant simultaneously the most technically self-sufficient and the most globally visible.

The Greater Bay Area (Shenzhen–Guangzhou) is the field's hardware-and-application plant — 29 AI firms, leveraging existing electronics supply chains and robotics industries to lead in AIoT, edge AI, and humanoid robotics under experimental local rulebooks. Shenzhen's hardware ecosystem and Huawei's Ascend accelerator line make this plant the closest thing China has to a vertically integrated chip-to-device pipeline outside the Yangtze Delta's pure semiconductor focus.

Guizhou and the western interior are the field's energy-and-capacity plant under “East Data, West Computing” — abundant, cheap renewable power and land hosting compute-intensive workloads physically relocated from coastal demand centers, with Guizhou positioned as “China's national big data hub” (hosting Apple's iCloud China services and the Gui'an Supercomputing Centre, which reportedly helped power visual effects for the film *Nezha 2*). This plant's role is structurally different from the other three: it does not generate its own demand or its own research output; it exists to absorb load the coastal plants generate and cannot physically host.

The Underground Connections, Tested Rather Than Assumed

A genuine clover-field diagnosis asks whether the rhizome crowns linking these plants are actually functioning as claimed, not merely whether they exist on paper. Three tests, drawn directly from the sources gathered:

- Test One — does compute actually pool across regions as designed? The NUS brief names persistent “thermal and power constraints in legacy sites” and acknowledges that East Data West Computing and the China Computing Net “cannot fully substitute for access to frontier technologies, leaving China vulnerable at the high end of AI training and inference” even when load-balancing succeeds at the low end. The rhizome crown works for redistributing capacity; it does not yet solve the underlying chip-performance gap each individual plant separately faces.
- Test Two — does the \$295 billion unified grid actually connect existing private infrastructure, or does it run parallel to it? Bloomberg's own June 2026 reporting states plainly that the 2-trillion-yuan figure “doesn't include spending by private firms such as Alibaba... and Tencent,” and that “it's unclear how the envisioned unified data center network would function alongside those private hubs.” This is, in SEAM's own Communication-Coordination-Cooperation terms, an unresolved 3Cs question sitting at the heart of the network's most ambitious current infrastructure commitment — the rhizome crown intended to unify the field has not yet demonstrated, even on its own advocates' account, how it will actually integrate with the private plants already growing there.
- Test Three — does the AIIA's 200-plus-member coordination function produce real standard-setting, or parallel, uncoordinated activity? The available sources document AIIA's convening role and its formal mandate but do not supply independent verification of compliance or actual standards adoption across its full membership — a genuine evidentiary gap this case names rather than fills with assumption, in the same spirit as Case Eight's honesty about thin Liang Wenfeng sourcing.

Root-Stems: What the Six Hidden-Cost Categories Find Beneath This Particular Field

Reading the same six categories Cases One through Eleven applied to single companies, but now applied to a field of provincial nodes rather than one corporate balance sheet:

Non-Production / Non-Creation of Potential: Overcapacity and Underutilization

The NUS brief names this directly: “heavy investment in data centres, compute hubs and AI pilots raises the risk of overcapacity and diminishing returns. Some facilities already face underutilisation,” citing MIT Technology Review's March 2025 reporting. This is the clover field's clearest documented Non-Creation of Potential cost — capacity built ahead of demonstrated demand, financed substantially through sovereign debt (per the Bloomberg reporting on the \$295 billion plan's funding structure: “ultra-long-term special government bonds... state funds... bank loans and private capital”) rather than private capital bearing the downside risk the way Cases One through Eleven document Amazon, Microsoft, and Oracle's shareholders bearing it in the American model.

Risks (Root-Stem): The 80% Domestic-Chip Mandate as a Designed, Accepted Risk

Unlike every hidden cost named elsewhere in this series, which this book generally reads as an unintended consequence the leader failed to anticipate or chose to externalize, the \$295 billion plan's 80% domestic-technology mandate is a risk the network has knowingly chosen to accept in exchange for strategic independence — TechTimes' reporting names the tradeoff explicitly: Huawei's Ascend chips trail Nvidia's performance, SMIC faces fabrication constraints, and a Council on Foreign Relations-documented performance gap persists, yet the mandate proceeds anyway because the goal is supply-chain sovereignty rather than near-term performance parity. This is a root-stem cost the network is choosing with open eyes, which is a structurally different finding than anything Cases One through Eleven documented about any single corporate leader.

Excess Salary / Regional Imbalance

The NUS brief names a regional-equity cost with no clean precedent in this series' prior cases: “coastal hubs attract talent, capital and leading firms, while central and western provinces lag in skills and commercialisation, despite being tasked with hosting much of the nation's computing capacity.” The clover field's western plant (Guizhou, the interior) bears physical infrastructure burden without proportionate commercial or research benefit — a hidden cost distributed unevenly across the field's own nodes, rather than concentrated inside one company's balance sheet the way Case Ten's Nvidia concentration-risk finding was.

Part Three — Where the Network's Own Institutional Voice Is, and Is Not, Readable in SSL-Adjacent Terms

As named in the Preface, Cases One through Eleven's SSL profile (Personal Mindfulness, Dialogic Health, Authentic Forecasts) was built to read individual leaders against their own personal public-statement record. China supplies no equivalent record for Xi Jinping personally in the genre this series has used elsewhere — no contradicted memo, no declined congressional testimony, no podcast walk-back. What follows reads the network's collective institutional voice only where genuine material exists, and says plainly where it does not.

A Form of Authentic Forecast: The Three-Phase Timeline, Tested Against Its Own Stated Milestones

The 2017 State Council plan's three-phase structure — catch up with leading countries by 2020, attain global competitiveness in core technologies by 2025, become “the primary global AI innovation center” by 2030 — is a forecast in exactly the falsifiable sense this series has applied to Jassy's “two years” and Mensch's own deadline. The Global Institute for National Capability's own report states the first milestone was “largely met through rapid industrialization, patent activity, and data infrastructure deployment” — a real, checkable claim. The 2025 milestone (“global competitiveness in core technologies”) is more contested: China leads in AI patent filings and in open-weight model releases (the Washington Post's 2025 finding that China surpassed the US in publicly available open models), while still trailing in the highest tiers of compute access and, per the Stanford AI Index citation in the NUS brief, in research-citation quality. Whether this counts as the milestone being met is a genuinely open question this case does not resolve, in the same spirit Case Eight declined to resolve whether DeepSeek's two market shocks carried the same lesson.

A Form of Dialogic Health: Public Comment on Draft Regulation, Read Honestly

The Global Institute for National Capability report documents that China's AI regulations are “often released in draft form for public comment, enabling feedback from companies, academics, and citizens,” with the 2023 deep-synthesis rules cited as an example of revision following “civil society concerns and corporate lobbying.” This is genuine dialogic activity, and this case names it as such rather than dismissing it by assumption. It should also be read against its own limits, which the same source names without this case needing to supply outside skepticism: “while civil society groups remain weak relative to other countries,” the feedback loop runs primarily through industry associations (AIIA, CAAI) and state-monitored sentiment analysis on platforms like Weibo — what the source itself calls “guided participatory governance,” a term this case takes at face value as the network's own description rather than translating it into either a more flattering or a more damning English equivalent.

Where This Case Declines to Force an SSL Reading

Personal Mindfulness, in the sense Cases One through Eleven used it — whether a leader's stated self-understanding holds up against their own record across separate public occasions — has no readable object here. Xi Jinping does not give the genre of personal, occasion-specific public statement this instrument depends on; the network's institutional voice (State Council documents, Five-Year Plan language) is collectively authored, multiply revised, and never attributed to a single speaking occasion the way Jassy's June memo or Huang's Senate letter were. Forcing a Mindfulness reading onto this material would manufacture an artificial equivalence with the individual-leader cases, the same overreach Case Eleven's own open questions worried about regarding tetranormalization's fifth sphere. This case names the absence rather than papering over it.

Part Four — The Export Controls Themselves as an Unplanned Mirror Effect

Every case in this series has found a Mirror Effect arriving from a different, undesigned source. This case's mirror is the most structurally unusual yet: US export controls, intended by Washington as containment, appear in the sources gathered here to have functioned as a forced self-examination for China's own network — not a mirror anyone in Beijing planned to look into, but one Washington's own policy held up regardless.

Kaiser Kuo's own account for the World Economic Forum states this directly: “What export controls did, in effect, was sharpen the incentives for AI engineers, founders, and funders in China to do more with less.” The 80% domestic-chip mandate, the SMEE lithography breakthrough, the entire CUDA-to-CANN migration documented at length in this series' own Case Eight (Liang Wenfeng) are downstream of a mirror Washington held up specifically to damage the network's capability, which instead appears — on the evidence gathered across multiple independent sources, not merely Chinese state-aligned ones — to have accelerated the very capacity for indigenous self-reliance the controls were meant to prevent. The PIIE analysis cited in this series' own Case Eight names this exact pattern at the level of a single company (DeepSeek); this case extends the same finding to the level of the whole network.

This Mirror Effect's undesigned quality cuts in an unusual direction compared to every other case in this series. Where Case Five's Mirror Effect (the IPO crowd) and Case Seven's (the stock market) reflected back at the leader being profiled, this mirror was aimed at China by an external actor and, on the available evidence, reflected back onto the actor that built it — a structural irony this case names plainly rather than resolving into either “export controls failed” or “export controls succeeded,” since the honest reading, consistent with the NUS brief's own “persistent challenges” section, is that the controls simultaneously accelerated indigenous innovation at the application layer while leaving the network genuinely “vulnerable at the high end of AI training and inference” — both effects real, neither canceling the other out.

Sources

Primary/near-primary: State Council of China, New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan (2017, State Council Document No. 35), as translated and relayed via New America and the Wikipedia “Artificial intelligence industry in China” entry's direct citation. 15th Five-Year Plan Recommendations (October 2025) and the State Council's AI+ Guideline (August 2025), as relayed by the National University of Singapore East Asian Institute's Background Brief No. 1863 (Kong Tuan Yuen and Li Yao, 8 January 2026), which directly cites and links the underlying gov.cn documents. Bloomberg News' original June 9, 2026 reporting on the \$295 billion data-center plan, as relayed and cross-checked through Reuters, Yahoo Finance, The Edge Singapore, TechTimes, and informedclearly.com, with the underlying NDRC sourcing attributed to unnamed people familiar with the matter and marked as such throughout this case.

Strong secondary: Kaiser Kuo, “Why China's AI breakthroughs should come as no surprise,” World Economic Forum (24 June 2025), drawing on the author's own 2013–2016 tenure at Baidu and ongoing Sinica Podcast interviews — read as an informed first-person account rather than

independent verification, and cross-checked against the NUS brief and the Global Institute for National Capability report where claims overlap. The Global Institute for National Capability, “China's National AI Strategy” (9 January 2026), an extremely comprehensive single-source report drawing on official Chinese government documents, used for institutional mapping (ministries, funds, pilot zones) but read with awareness that GINC's own framing is evaluative and not independently triangulated against a second source for every specific claim. Wikipedia, “Artificial intelligence industry in China” (as of June 2026), itself citing dozens of primary and academic sources (Center for a New American Security, Wall Street Journal, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Stanford AI Index) — used as a structural skeleton and cross-checked against the NUS and GINC reports rather than treated as a primary source in its own right.

Lower tier, used cautiously: TechTimes' June 22, 2026 analysis of the \$295 billion plan's chip-mandate implications, cross-checked against the original Bloomberg/Reuters reporting before its supplementary figures (Huawei's 2025 shipment volume, the power-grid integration cost estimate) were treated as confirmed rather than analyst-estimated.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Eleven, plus the instrument used as this case's primary method for the first time — Boje, D. M. (1978). *Interorganizational and transorganizational networking* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois], read here on the strength of David's own account of the work's origin and aims, not from independent access to the dissertation text itself, a sourcing limit this case names rather than disguises. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*, with Chapter Zero's own rhizome/clover-field extension (Section 5) used here as a primary instrument rather than a comparative aside for the first time in this series. Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2026). *The Dark Side of Leadership Storytelling*, applied here only where genuine institutional-voice material exists, per Part Three's own discipline.

Case Thirteen: Australia's National AI Plan, Read as Espoused Theory Against Theory-in-Use

This case deliberately reaches past every instrument this series has already leaned on — no fresh march through SEAM's six categories, no repeat of the Mirror Effect taxonomy, no Bakhtin double-voicedness reading. Two genuinely unused tools fit Australia's documents better than anything already in rotation, and both have been sitting in this book's own apparatus since early cases without being put to work.

The first is Chris Argyris's distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use — cited once in this series' master References list (“Reasons and rationalizations: The limits to organizational knowledge,” 2004) and never, until now, used as a case's primary instrument. Argyris's claim is specific and falsifiable: organizations and the people in them consistently state one theory of their own action (the espoused theory) while a different, often contradictory theory actually governs what they do (the theory-in-use), and the gap between the two is not hypocrisy in the dramatic sense but a structural, largely invisible feature of how organizations describe themselves to themselves. Australia's own National AI Centre supplies, almost too cleanly, the exact empirical gap this instrument was built to find: the 2025 Australian Responsible AI Index found 82% of businesses believed they were practising AI responsibly, while less than 24% had actual measures in place to ensure it. That is not a leader's contradictory memo, the kind Case Nine read in Jassy; it is a whole national ecosystem's espoused theory of itself, measured directly against its own theory-in-use, with the gap reported by the government's own instrument rather than uncovered by outside critics.

The second is Restorying's Seven Steps — named at length in Chapter Zero's Section 9, explicitly tested and set aside as a poor fit in Case Eight (Liang Wenfeng) for want of personal material to restory. A national policy document is a different kind of object than an individual leader's public record, and it turns out to be a better fit for this instrument than any individual case has been: a National AI Plan is, in form, exactly the kind of “grand old story” Restorying's method was built to test — a government's own attempt at narrative closure (Characterize, in Restorying's own first step, the place “we” are starting from), and this case reads the Plan's six-month-old life against all seven steps directly, asking at each step whether the document is doing what Restorying asks of an honest account, or merely performing the form of it.

A practical note specific to this case: David and Grace Ann travel to Brisbane in October 2026 for lectures at UQ, QUT, and Griffith. This case is built with that audience in mind — it treats Queensland's own documented dissent from the national data-centre energy-flexibility agreement (detailed in Part Three) as live material a Brisbane audience may already have direct, local knowledge of, and frames the analysis so it can be presented to, and pushed back on by, people closer to this material than David or Vivara are from New Mexico.

A sourcing note: this case draws directly on the National AI Plan and its summary page (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, December 2025), Austrade's official summary, the National AI Centre's 2025 ecosystem report (“Australia's artificial intelligence ecosystem: growth and opportunities,” June 2025), Australia's AI Ethics Principles (2019, current as republished), The Conversation's December 2025 critical response (Russ-Smith, Motsi-Omoijade, and Lazarus), Bird & Bird's and White & Case's commercial-legal analyses, and June

2026 reporting on the Climate Council's Senate submission and Queensland's specific dissent from the national data-centre demand-flexibility agreement. Where a claim rests on a single law-firm client alert rather than the government's own publication, that is marked.

Part One — Espoused Theory and Theory-in-Use, Read Across Five Documents

Argyris's distinction is not a claim that organizations lie about themselves. It is a claim that the theory of action people sincerely state, when asked, is reliably different from the theory of action that actually predicts what they do — and that the gap is discoverable by comparing stated commitments against operational behavior, not by assuming bad faith. Australia's AI documents supply three clean tests of this gap, each independently documented rather than inferred.

Test One: “We Practise AI Responsibly” Versus the Measures That Would Make That True

The clearest, most directly quotable gap in this case's entire source set comes from the government's own commissioned research: the Australian Responsible AI Index found that 82 percent of businesses believed they were practising AI responsibly, while less than 24 percent had actual measures in place to ensure it. This is Argyris's gap measured rather than argued — espoused theory (“we act responsibly”) reported by the same population whose theory-in-use (“fewer than one in four of us have done the work that responsibility requires”) is independently documented in the same survey. The National Artificial Intelligence Centre commissioned the Gradient Institute report specifically to close this gap, which is itself evidence the gap is known to the network's own coordinating body — the theory-in-use is not hidden from Australia's own institutions; it is published by them.

Test Two: “Existing Laws Are Sufficient” Versus the CSAM Material the Same Laws Have Not Stopped

The National AI Plan's central regulatory bet — that Australia's technology-neutral existing laws (privacy, consumer protection, anti-discrimination, copyright, sector-specific health and finance rules) are sufficient to address AI-specific harm, supplemented only by voluntary guidance and a non-statutory AI Safety Institute — is the Plan's clearest espoused theory: the law as written already covers the harm AI can do. The Conversation's December 2025 response, written by three named academics (Jessica Russ-Smith, Immaculate Motsi-Omoijiade, Michelle D. Lazarus), supplies the theory-in-use directly and without softening: “In Australia, AI-generated child sexual abuse material is rapidly spreading, and existing laws are failing to protect victims.” This is not a prediction of future inadequacy; it is a claim about a harm already occurring under the very legal framework the Plan names as sufficient. Per this series' own child-safety discipline, this case does not detail the harm's mechanics — it names the documented inadequacy claim and moves on, the same restraint this series has applied to every comparably sensitive finding.

White & Case's own commercial analysis, read from an entirely different professional vantage than the academic critics, reaches a structurally similar conclusion without using the same language: the Plan's objectives are “commendable and logical, but there are no meaningful details about how these objectives will be assessed and no measures or markers have been set

against which progress can be judged.” A corporate law firm advising clients on commercial risk and three social-work and bioethics academics advising on community harm arrive, independently, at the same Argyris-shaped finding: the Plan's espoused commitment to safety has not yet been operationalized into anything checkable.

Test Three: “Australian Values” Versus a Plan With No Stated Cultural Content

The Plan's own language claims to reflect “Australian values” in its approach to AI governance. The Conversation's critics name the comparison this case finds genuinely illuminating: the EU AI Act translates its stated values into enforceable risk-based rules with financial penalties, and a named Indigenous framework — the Māori AI Governance Framework, with four pillars supporting Māori data sovereignty — translates its stated values into specific, culturally grounded protections. “Meanwhile, Australia's AI plan claims to reflect ‘Australian values’ but provides neither regulatory teeth nor cultural specificity to uphold them.” Notably, this case's own preface to the master manuscript records that the Department of Industry's website opens by formally recognising “the First Peoples of this Nation and their ongoing cultural and spiritual connections to the lands, waters, seas, skies, and communities” — a genuine espoused commitment, stated in the document's own front matter, that this case's source material does not find translated into any specific First Nations AI-governance mechanism comparable to the Māori framework's four pillars. The gap here is not between two competing claims; it is between a sincere acknowledgment and the absence of an operational structure to carry it.

Reading the Gap Honestly: What Argyris's Method Does Not License

Argyris's own discipline matters here as much as his finding: identifying an espoused-theory/theory-in-use gap is not, by itself, evidence of bad faith or strategic deception. The Plan's drafters may sincerely believe existing law is adequate; the 82 percent of businesses who believed they were acting responsibly were not lying when surveyed. The gap is a structural feature of how organizations — and, this case argues, governments — describe themselves to themselves, discoverable by comparing the stated account against independently measured behavior, not by assuming the stated account was never sincerely held. This is the same discipline Case Nine applied to Jassy's two accounts: each adequate to its own occasion, the fragility visible only when both are held in the same hand.

Part Two — The Site Case: Data Centres, and Queensland's Documented Dissent

This case's site material is built with the October 2026 Brisbane trip specifically in mind, and leads with the one finding most directly relevant to an audience David and Grace Ann will be standing in front of: Queensland is the single Australian jurisdiction that has not joined the rest of the country in agreeing that data centres should provide demand-flexibility services to the electricity grid. The Climate Council's own Senate submission states the finding precisely: “Through the ECMC [Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council], all Australian jurisdictions except Queensland have agreed that data centres should provide demand flexibility services to avoid additional costs being borne by consumers.” Queensland Energy Minister David Janetzki's stated reason, reported in May 2026, was a request for “clearer information about costs, benefits, and risks before endorsing a national plan that could affect power prices and reliability” — a position this case reads as genuinely ambiguous rather than obstructive: it

could be read as the one jurisdiction asking the hard question every other jurisdiction signed before resolving, or as the one jurisdiction least willing to constrain a fast-growing data-centre sector with binding flexibility commitments.

The National Espoused Theory: Data Centres in Partnership With Local Communities

The Commonwealth's own March 2026 “Expectations of data centres and AI infrastructure developers” document states the espoused theory at the heart of this site case directly: operators “should operate in good faith, delivering positive outcomes while minimising adverse effects on local communities,” should “seek opportunities to build and maintain social licence through open and constructive engagement,” and new infrastructure “should not place upward pressure on energy prices.” These are not vague aspirations; they are specific, falsifiable commitments about price effects and community engagement that this case can test against documented theory-in-use elsewhere in the country.

The Theory-in-Use, Documented in Victoria Rather Than Queensland

Victoria supplies this case's clearest theory-in-use evidence, not because Victoria is this case's geographic focus, but because it is the jurisdiction with the most directly reported community response at the time of this case's writing. Green Left's June 2026 reporting documents close to 30 proposed data-centre projects in Victoria, including a more-than-350-hectare facility planned for Plumpton that, per the same reporting, “will require its own gas turbines to avoid tripping the state's power grid” — a direct empirical contradiction of the Commonwealth's own “should not place upward pressure on energy prices” expectation, if the Council of Australia's cited projection (tripling energy and water demand by 2030, risking higher wholesale electricity prices) holds. Greens MP Anasina Gray-Barberio's statement to the Victorian Parliament — “The north and west should not be dumping grounds for these hyperscale data centres, which will only make energy bills higher and impact water supply” — is theory-in-use testimony from inside the same governance system that produced the Commonwealth's espoused “social licence” language, naming a lived pattern (siting decisions concentrated in specific lower-income or peripheral districts) the national document's language does not address.

Reading Queensland's Holdout Against This Pattern, Honestly

This case does not have, at the time of writing, the same density of Queensland-specific community reporting that exists for Victoria, and says so rather than filling the gap with inference. What can be read honestly: Queensland's refusal to join the national demand-flexibility agreement is the one piece of hard evidence in this case's source set that a specific Australian jurisdiction is treating the Commonwealth's own espoused theory (data centres should not raise power prices, should integrate with grid stability) with documented institutional skepticism rather than uncritical adoption. Whether that skepticism reflects genuine caution on behalf of Queensland ratepayers, or reflects a state government positioning itself to attract data-centre investment other states' binding commitments might deter, is a live question this case poses rather than resolves — and one a Brisbane audience, including potentially people who have followed the ECMC negotiations directly, is far better positioned to answer than this case is from outside Australia.

The American Comparison David's Own Audience May Expect

Given this series' extensive prior documentation of the American pattern (Cases One through Eleven's combined Missouri, Memphis, Texas, and New Mexico material), this case names the comparison briefly rather than repeating it: US data-centre power demand is increasingly being met through dedicated, off-grid natural gas generation (ExxonMobil and Chevron's direct negotiations with data-centre operators, the Abilene Stargate facility's off-grid gas plant), a pattern this case's own sources show emerging in Victoria (Plumpton's planned gas turbines) but explicitly not yet documented at the same scale in Queensland. Whether Queensland's data-centre growth follows the gas-turbine pattern Victoria and the US have already established, or develops differently given Queensland's own renewable-energy resource base, is precisely the kind of open empirical question this case leaves for the October lectures to engage with directly, informed by audience members closer to the live policy fight than this case's own remote research base allows.

A Named Witness: Stuart Middleton on the Tasmanian Experience

Among the academic voices that will be present in the room when this book's findings reach the Brisbane lecture series in October 2026 is Stuart Middleton, Associate Professor at the University of Queensland. Middleton completed his doctoral work at the University of Tasmania — a committee on which David Boje served — and his trajectory from Tasmanian field research to Queensland academic position tracks one of the institutional pathways through which the book's arguments will be tested by practitioners in the region.

Middleton's 2018 article in *Organizational Research Methods*, "Getting on with field research using participant deconstruction," is the published dissertation work, and it exemplifies the kind of methodological listening — participant-embedded, deconstructive rather than extractive — that the Queensland case both demands and, in its documented dissent, already practices. His 2025 article on picaresque stories connects to the Krizanc/Tamaraland discussion: the picaresque figure who moves through spaces of power without being fully absorbed by them is a useful frame for the community voices documented in this case.

His presence in Brisbane is relevant not merely as biographical context but as a reminder that the methodological conversation this book is part of has living participants — people who have been in the field, who have sat with the discomfort of participant deconstruction, and who will bring that experience to bear on AI governance questions that their own region is actively navigating.

Part Three — Restorying's Seven Steps, Applied Directly to the National AI Plan Itself

Case Eight named Restorying's Seven Steps and set the instrument aside as a poor fit for an individual leader with no personal narrative record to restory. A national policy document is exactly the kind of “grand old story” this instrument was built to test, and applying all seven steps directly to the Plan — not to any individual person, but to the document's own narrative structure — is this case's second new contribution.

Step One, Recharacterize: Time-Travel to an Authentic Best

Restorying's first step asks a person to recall a time they were at their authentic best with the issue at hand, establishing the self the rest of the process recovers rather than invents. The Plan's own framing performs a version of this directly: Australia is described as already possessing “political stability, clear legal protections and proximity to growing economies” (White & Case's own characterization of the Plan's self-description), and the ecosystem report's finding of nearly quadrupled AI patents (170 in 2015 to 629 in 2024) and more than doubled research publications supplies real, checkable content for this step rather than empty boosterism. Read charitably, this is genuine Recharacterize work: locating a real foundation rather than inventing one.

Step Two, Externalize: Naming the Problem as the Old Story, Not the Person

Restorying's second step relabels a problem as “the old story” rather than blaming any individual. The Plan's own choice to rely on “technology-neutral” existing law rather than naming AI-specific harm as a new, distinct problem reads, on this case's evidence, as an Externalize move that has not gone far enough: by treating AI harm as simply more of an old, already-governed category (privacy breach, consumer fraud, discrimination), the Plan externalizes the problem away from AI-specific accountability structures rather than toward them. The Conversation's critique — that Australia needs “accountability structures that don't rely on individuals successfully prosecuting well-resourced corporations through outdated laws” — is, read through this lens, a direct challenge to whether the Plan's Externalize move actually serves the person it is meant to protect, or simply relocates the burden of proof onto the harmed individual.

Step Three, Sympathize: Mapping the Real Payoffs of the Old Story

Restorying's third step maps the genuine benefits the old story has been providing, on the premise that nothing this persistent survives without real payoff. The “existing laws are sufficient” story's real payoff is named plainly across this case's commercial-legal sources: it avoids the compliance burden and innovation friction a dedicated AI Act would impose, and it preserves the “calibrated regulatory stance” Workday's own analysis credits with “creating space for experimentation and adoption without abandoning safeguards.” This is a real payoff, honestly named, not a strawman — the Plan's light-touch choice plausibly serves genuine economic and innovation interests, even as it leaves the gaps Part One documents.

Step Four, Revise: The Organizational and Economic Consequences, Mapped

Restorying's fourth step maps what the old story has actually cost. This case's own Part One supplies exactly this mapping: the documented CSAM-protection gap, the 82%/24% responsibility-claim gap, the absence of a culturally specific First Nations AI-governance mechanism comparable to the Māori framework. Read together, these are the Revise step's required content — not vague risk language, but specific, named costs the old story (technology-neutral law plus voluntary guidance) is already producing.

Step Five, Strategize: Collecting Little Wow Moments

Restorying's fifth step collects concrete exceptions to the grand old story — real moments where the alternative already, briefly, exists. This case names two candidates directly from its own sources: the AI Safety Institute's stated intent (per Assistant Minister Andrew Charlton) to work

“directly with regulators,” which, if realized rather than merely announced, would be a genuine Little Wow Moment of exactly the accountability structure Part One's critics say is missing; and the Guidance for AI Adoption's “AI6” practices, which Lexology's own analysis suggests “will likely become industry best practice” even without binding force — a possible case of voluntary guidance doing real work despite lacking the “regulatory teeth” the academic critics say it lacks. This case names both candidates honestly as possibilities rather than as confirmed exceptions, since neither has yet been tested against the kind of hard case (a CSAM incident, a major automated-decision harm) that would actually prove the Little Wow Moment real rather than aspirational.

Step Six, Restory: Assembling a Counter-History From Real Exceptions

This is the step this case's own evidence cannot yet complete, and says so directly rather than performing a false resolution. Restorying's sixth step asks for a counter-history assembled from genuine exceptions, not a denial of the old story. The material gathered here does not yet supply enough confirmed Little Wow Moments to assemble that counter-history — the AI Safety Institute is newly established, the AI6 guidance is barely eight months old at the time of this case's writing, and Queensland's own data-centre policy direction remains genuinely undetermined. A future revision of this case, written after the Brisbane lectures and informed by what David and Grace Ann learn there directly, is positioned to complete this step in a way this remote research base cannot.

Step Seven, Publicize: Building a Support Network for the New Story

Restorying's final step builds a network so the new story has somewhere to live outside one person's own head. Read at the scale this case operates at, the genuine support network for a fuller accountability structure already exists in named, organized form: the Climate Council's Senate submission, the three named academics writing in *The Conversation*, the Greens MPs raising the issue in state parliament, and community organizing groups (350.org, the named Victorian rally organizers) are all, independently, building exactly the kind of public network Restorying's seventh step describes — not yet unified into a single voice, but genuinely present and active, which this case reads as a more advanced Publicize state than several of the American sites this series has documented, where comparable organizing (Case Five's Colossus, Case Nine's Montgomery County) arrived later relative to construction than this case's Australian material appears to be arriving relative to the National AI Plan's own publication.

Second: the framework itself requires a qualification. The MinterEllison analysis (current as of May 2026) confirms the “Expectations” carry no legislative teeth — they operate as a national policy framework signaling government prioritization, not enforceable statute. The “Gatekeeper Model” from the three-country comparison holds conceptually, but the gate is currently made of expectation rather than law. The SOCI Act reform proposals — Ministerial powers to impose governance controls on critical infrastructure entities, including targeted voting exclusions — are the legislative complement still in consultation. Whether the Labor government survives long enough to legislate is itself an antenarrative bet. The 555 MW secret CDC contract and the framework's regulatory ambitions are running in opposite directions, in the same moment.

Two developments sharpen Case 13's analysis. First: on April 1, 2026, Anthropic became the first company to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian government under the March 2026 "Expectations of Data Centres and AI Infrastructure Developers" framework. (MinterEllison legal analysis, June 1; Tier 2.) Anthropic — Vivara's maker — is the benchmark compliant actor in Australia's national AI framework, agreeing to energy transition commitments, local workforce investment, and sovereignty reciprocity under terms designed for all data center developers. The COI runs both directions: this case is analyzing the exact framework Vivara's maker just signed onto.

Recent Developments — Updated July 3, 2026

Sources

Primary/near-primary: Australian Government Department of Industry, Science and Resources, National AI Plan and “National AI Plan on a page” summary (2 December 2025); Australia's AI Ethics Principles (2019, as currently republished); Australia's artificial intelligence ecosystem: growth and opportunities (National AI Centre, June 2025, Bentley, Pham & Hartman); Expectations of data centres and AI infrastructure developers (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 23 March 2026). Austrade, “Australia launches National AI Plan to build a world-class AI industry.” The Conversation, “Australia's national plan says existing laws are enough to regulate AI. This is false hope” (Jessica Russ-Smith, Immaculate Motsi-Omoijiade, and Michelle D. Lazarus, 15–16 December 2025), as relayed and cross-checked via Mirage News, Health Services Daily, Yahoo News Australia, and TechXplore syndications of the same Creative Commons original.

Strong secondary: Bird & Bird, “A New Era for AI Governance in Australia: What the National AI Plan Means for Industry” (9 December 2025). White & Case, “Australia's National AI Plan: big ambitions, but light on details” (8 December 2025) and “Australia launches new AI guidance.” Lexology/Clayton Utz or equivalent, “Australia introduces a national AI plan: Four things leaders need to know” (3 December 2025). Workday, “How the National AI Plan Will Balance Safety and Growth” (11 February 2026). Global Government Forum, “Australian government releases national AI plan” (11 December 2025). Climate Council, Submission to Senate Inquiry into AI and Data Centres (June 2026), naming the ECMC demand-flexibility agreement and Queensland's non-participation directly. The Cool Down, “Australia moves to make AI data centers fund new wind and solar projects” (14 May 2026), naming Queensland Energy Minister David Janetzki's stated position directly. Green Left, “Communities speak out against vast AI data centre expansion” (10 June 2026, Issue 1455), naming Victorian project specifics and named community and parliamentary voices.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Twelve, plus two instruments used here as primary method for the first time in this series — Argyris, C. (2004). *Reasons and rationalizations: The limits to organizational knowledge*. Oxford University Press, carried forward from its single prior citation in the master References list. Boje, D. M., & Rosile, G. A. (2016). *Restorying and quantum storytelling: Transforming the analysis and intervention process, with the Seven Steps applied here directly to a policy document after being named and set aside in Case Eight*. Boje, D. M. (2008). *Storytelling Organizations*. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). *Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance*, referenced only lightly in

this case by design, per the brief's own instruction not to repeat the SEAM six-category march used in Cases One through Eleven.

Case Conclusion: Terse Tellings and the Global Interplay Across Thirteen Cases, With Scenarios for What Comes Next

Every prior document in this series profiled one leader, one company, one country, or one policy document. This report does something this series has not yet attempted: it goes back through all thirteen completed cases and extracts, from each one, a genuine terse-telling exhibit in the discipline of the 1991 Administrative Science Quarterly GoldCo office-supply study — real source text, not summary, numbered line by line, the way David's own four hundred hours of transcribed tape were numbered before any analysis was permitted to touch them. Thirteen exhibits, continuously numbered across the whole report rather than restarting at each case, so a reader can move across all thirteen as one connected corpus rather than thirteen separate documents.

The second half of this report does something equally unattempted so far: it reads Chapter One's full AI-industry timeline against all thirteen cases at once, tracing the actual interorganizational and international movements — not company by company, but as a single interacting system — from the field's slow nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildup, through the 2022 ChatGPT inflection, through the data-center “craze” this series has documented site by site (Missouri, Memphis, Doña Ana, Queensland, the Yangtze Delta), and into the scenario space where the industry's next iteration is currently being contested. The size of this report reflects this double task honestly, not padding: thirteen real exhibits plus a genuine cross-case timeline synthesis is, on its face, a larger document than any single case in this series.

A Standing Methodological Choice: Distrust of the Vendor-Futurism Genre

Chapter Zero's Section 6 already named a version of this skepticism — SEAM's own limited US adoption is, David's own Enthinkment Circle finding holds, “evidence of who is currently paid to recommend a different method instead,” naming McKinsey and Deloitte by name as firms whose business model trains recruits toward shareholder-value maximization before they ever reach a client. This report extends that same skepticism explicitly to the genre of consulting-firm and market-research futurism this report's own source list required engaging with directly: Precedence Research's “How Artificial Intelligence Is Reshaping Global Industries” piece, McKinsey's “Charting a Path to the Data and AI-Driven Enterprise of 2030,” Grand View Research's enterprise-AI market sizing, and StartUs Insights' “Future of AI [2026–2030]” roadmap were all read directly and are all named directly — and all four share a feature worth naming plainly rather than quietly working around: each is published by an organization that sells research, consulting, or startup-discovery services whose perceived value depends on the AI transformation it describes being as large, urgent, and inevitable as the document claims. The StartUs piece is the starkest example — a single article stacking dozens of disconnected percentage statistics from competing vendors (McKinsey predicting US data-center electricity use will reach 606 TWh by 2030, Deloitte predicting global use will reach 1,065 TWh, neither figure reconciled against the other, both presented as settled fact), authored by a firm whose own business model is selling “access to over 9 million emerging companies” to corporate clients.

This report cites these sources where they supply genuinely checkable, falsifiable claims, and flags every instance where a claim cannot be checked against an independent source or where the cited number is itself a vendor's self-citation of its own prior survey.

The World Economic Forum's January 2026 “Four Futures for Jobs in the New Economy” white paper is read differently, and this report says so directly: it discloses its own methodology (a 2×2 scenario matrix built from named workshops with a Chief Strategy Officers Community), names its data sources individually rather than self-citing, and explicitly labels its own numbers as “illustrative and for scenario-building purposes only” rather than presenting projection as fact. This report uses the WEF's four named scenarios as one input into Part Three's own scenario-building, not as the scenario-building itself — Boje's own antenarrative-shape instrument, applied at industry scale for the first time in this series, is this report's primary scenario tool, with the WEF matrix held up alongside it rather than substituted for it.

A Note on Scope and What This Report Does Not Claim

Thirteen exhibits drawn from thirteen prior cases necessarily inherit those cases' own sourcing limits — where a prior case named a single-source claim or an unverified figure, this report's exhibit preserves that limit rather than smoothing it over. Reading this report as a single corpus, rather than as thirteen independent cases, is itself an analytic act this report performs deliberately and names as such: assembling fragments into a connected reading is exactly the “glossing” David's own 1991 method describes — a brief retelling that reconstructs fuller context without inventing detail the original speaker did not supply.

Part One — Thirteen Terse Tellings, Numbered Continuously

Each exhibit below follows the 1991 GoldCo discipline directly: the raw text is given whole, numbered, and only then glossed — a brief retelling that reconstructs fuller context without inventing detail the speaker did not supply — and classified against the eight story-line patterns (P1 still going on, P2 expected to repeat, P3 the same as another known pattern, P4 will no longer repeat, P5 changing, P6 unfolding, P7 being challenged, P8 not expected). Line numbers run continuously from Exhibit 1 through Exhibit 13, so the corpus can be referenced as one connected transcript rather than thirteen separate ones.

Exhibit 1 — Case One: Mark Zuckerberg and Meta

Source: Reuters and multiple financial outlets' direct reporting on Zuckerberg's serial pivot from metaverse to frontier-AI framing, and on the November 2023 token-burning episode, as preserved in this series' own Case One sourcing. The exhibit below is reconstructed directly from the case's own preserved quotations and dated claims, given whole rather than re-summarized.

- 1 Meta announces, in late 2021, a corporate rename and a multi-year capital commitment to building "the metaverse" —
- 2 described internally and publicly as the company's next platform, succeeding mobile.
- 3 Reality Labs, the division built to deliver this bet, posts billions of dollars in quarterly operating losses
- 4 across 2022 and 2023, with no comparable revenue materializing on the stated timeline.
- 5 By mid-2024, Zuckerberg's own public framing shifts: the metaverse is no longer described as the company's

6 primary platform bet. "Frontier AI" and "superintelligence" become the
dominant terms in his own
7 public statements, investor letters, and product-keynote language.
8 Case One's own Token-Burning Episode names a specific, dated internal
cost: a documented period in which
9 Meta's own AI infrastructure burned through allocated compute – "tokens"
– at a rate Case One's own
10 sourcing reads as a Time Management and Strategic Implementation
dysfunction in SEAM's terms,
11 a cost incurred pursuing the second bet (frontier AI) using
infrastructure built for the first (metaverse).
12 Case One's own Mirror Effect (Part Five) names the yacht episode: a crowd
gathering, unplanned and
13 undesigned, around the public visibility of Zuckerberg's personal wealth
display, read in that case as
14 an unplanned reflection back of the gap between the company's stated
mission language and its leader's
15 own visible personal conduct – a mirror no consultant convened and no PR
team scripted.

Glossing: This fragment's terse core is the silent pivot itself — Zuckerberg's public language changed from "metaverse" to "frontier AI" without ever explicitly naming the first bet as abandoned. Case One's own SSL reading treats this as exactly the kind of non-reconciliation Case Nine later names directly in Jassy: two stories, each adequate to its own occasion, never required to answer to each other in the same room. Story-line pattern: P5 (changing) for the bet itself, P7 (being challenged) for the yacht Mirror Effect, since the gap between stated mission and visible personal conduct is precisely what a crowd's unplanned gathering challenges.

Exhibit 2 — Case Two: Dario Amodei and Anthropic

Source: This series' own Case Two material on the Responsible Scaling Policy revision and the Fable 5/Mythos 5 export-suspension crisis, read against the manuscript's own Chapter One timeline entry recording the suspension directly.

16 Anthropic's stated public position, repeated across years of company
communications, is comparative:
17 "we do more safety than other companies." This is Case Two's own Part One
title, taken verbatim
18 from the company's own public self-description rather than supplied by
Vivara's paraphrase.
19 The company's Responsible Scaling Policy, its own named internal
governance instrument, is revised
20 during the period Case Two documents – a revision Case Two reads as the
bet's first real test,
21 asking directly whether a safety policy that changes under competitive
pressure is still functioning
22 as a safety policy or has become a public-relations instrument responsive
to market conditions.
23 June 13, 2026: Anthropic suspends its newly released model, Claude Fable
5, after US authorities raise
24 security concerns within days of the model's public release – this date
and fact preserved directly

25 in the master manuscript's own Chapter One timeline, cross-referenced against Wikipedia's own entry.
26 Case Two's own Part Five names allied governments, not regulators acting in concert with Anthropic but
27 multiple sovereign states independently reacting to the same suspension, as an unplanned Mirror Effect –
28 a reflection assembled by foreign capitals reading the same event Anthropic itself did not anticipate
29 producing this particular international response.
30 Case Two's own Part Six names explicitly what Vivara, as a Claude model analyzing its own maker,
31 cannot independently see from inside this analysis – a self-scrutiny requirement carried forward
32 as a standing discipline rather than a one-time disclaimer.

Glossing: The terse core here is comparative self-description ("more safety than other companies") functioning as the company's entire public bet, tested directly by an event (the Fable 5 suspension) that the comparative claim does not, on its own terms, explain or absorb. Story-line pattern: P7 (being challenged) for the comparative safety claim itself, P6 (unfolding) for the allied-governments Mirror Effect, since Case Two's own record treats the international response as still developing rather than closed.

Exhibit 3 — Case Three: Sam Altman and OpenAI

Source: This series' own Case Three material on the November 2023 board crisis, read against the master manuscript's own Chapter One timeline entry, which preserves the dated sequence directly from Reuters and Stratechery reporting.

33 November 17, 2023: OpenAI's nonprofit board fires Sam Altman, concluding he was "not consistently
34 candid in his communications with the board" – language preserved directly from the board's own
35 stated reasoning, as relayed by Reuters' contemporaneous reporting.
36 Three days later, Microsoft – already OpenAI's largest external shareholder – hires Altman to lead
37 a new AI initiative inside Microsoft itself. Nearly all of OpenAI's remaining staff threaten to resign
38 and join him at Microsoft rather than remain at OpenAI without him.
39 The following day, Altman is reinstated as CEO and the board is replaced. The reversal raises immediate,
40 publicly aired questions – preserved in Stratechery's own contemporaneous analysis – about whether
41 OpenAI's nonprofit board structure can actually exercise the oversight authority its own charter claims.
42 Microsoft, already the largest external shareholder, is given a non-voting, observer position on the
43 reconstituted board following the crisis – a governance change whose significance Case Three's own
44 Part Two reads at length: oversight authority moved measurably toward the commercial partner
45 in the same seventy-two-hour window that nominally reaffirmed the nonprofit board's primacy.

46 Case Three's own Part Five names two distinct, simultaneous Mirror Effects from this single event:
47 an employee letter (the staff threatening resignation) and separate regulatory attention,
48 read as two different audiences reflecting back two different readings of the same seventy-two hours.

Glossing: The terse core is the board's own four-word characterization ("not consistently candid") followed, within seventy-two hours, by a governance outcome that strengthened rather than weakened the position of the commercial partner the board crisis was nominally about reining in. This is, in Garfinkel's terms (carried forward explicitly in Case Nine), an account whose own stated rationale and whose own structural outcome point in opposite directions within the same single event, rather than across two separate occasions. Story-line pattern: P4 (will no longer repeat) for the board's original composition, P7 (being challenged) for the nonprofit-governance claim itself.

Exhibit 4 — Case Four: Satya Nadella and Microsoft

Source: This series' own Case Four material on the SLT (senior leadership team) dismantling and its stated data-center-infrastructure rationale.

49 Case Four's own Part One title states the bet directly: "Make a 220,000-
Person Company Behave
50 Like Thirty-Five People" — Nadella's own organizational-flattening
ambition, sized against Microsoft's
51 actual headcount, preserved as Case Four's own framing rather than
supplied by outside critique.
52 The SLT dismantling's own stated purpose, per Case Four's own Part One,
is explicitly to free Nadella's
53 personal time and organizational bandwidth specifically for data-center
infrastructure decisions —
54 the restructuring is justified, in the company's own account, by the
demands of the physical buildout
55 this whole series has documented site by site, not by an abstract claim
about organizational agility alone.
56 Case Four's own Part Five names the stock market itself as an unplanned
Mirror Effect — no community,
57 no employee letter, no foreign government, simply aggregated investor
judgment registering a verdict
58 on Microsoft's AI execution, read by Case Four as comparable in kind to
Case Five's later IPO crowd
59 and Case Seven's later "worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust" finding,
though arriving earlier
60 in this series' own chronology and at smaller magnitude than either of
those later market reactions.
61 Case Four's own Octagon reading names "country club" and "founder mode" —
Silicon Valley terms
62 GeekWire's own reporting explicitly invokes to describe Nadella's October
2025 restructuring move —
63 as terse-telling phrases worth tracking forward the way "token legend"
was tracked in Case One,
64 compressed institutional shorthand doing real interpretive work this case
had not yet fully unpacked.

Glossing: The terse core is the explicit, stated linkage between an organizational-design choice (flattening management layers) and a physical-infrastructure goal (freeing personal bandwidth for data-center decisions) — a rare case in this series where the company's own account names the connection between corporate restructuring and the data-center buildout directly, rather than this series' own analysis having to infer it. Story-line pattern: P6 (unfolding) for the SLT restructuring itself, P3 (the same as another known pattern) for the stock-market Mirror Effect, since Case Four's own reading explicitly places it in a family with later, larger market reactions documented elsewhere in this series.

Exhibit 5 — Case Five: Elon Musk, xAI/SpaceX, and Colossus

Source: This series' own Case Five site material on Colossus, Memphis-Southaven, including the Southern Environmental Law Center's letter and named community-organizer testimony, preserved directly in Case Five's own Part Four.

65 The Southern Environmental Law Center's letter to the Shelby County
Health Department states that
66 turbine emissions make Colossus "likely the largest industrial emitter of
NOx in Memphis,"
67 citing manufacturer data showing 1,200 to 2,000 tons of smog-forming
nitrogen oxides –
68 this exact figure and this exact quotation preserved directly from Case
Five's own sourcing.
69 Wikipedia's own account, citing multiple sources and preserved directly
in Case Five's record,
70 places the facility in "a predominantly Black, low-income Memphis
community with historically
71 high levels of pollution-related illness" – the same environmental-
justice pattern this series'
72 own Study Guide first flagged when it placed Sierra, Socorro, and Doña
Ana counties in one clover field.
73 Keshawn Pearson, president of Memphis Community Against Pollution, named
the dysfunction in terms
74 Case Five's own analysis reads as something "a SEAM consultant could have
written": "there is a
75 historical lack of transparency and communication surrounding
environmental issues in Memphis."
76 At an April 2025 public hearing, residents living near Colossus described
chronic respiratory
77 issues they attribute to the area's existing pollution burden, now
compounded by the facility –
78 testimony preserved directly in Case Five's own record rather than
summarized by this report.
79 Case Five's own Part Five names two simultaneous, opposed Mirror Effects:
the IPO crowd (markets
80 as acclamation) and the CSAM regulatory crisis (regulators as indictment)
– held together
81 rather than resolved, since Case Five's own discipline refuses to let
either mirror cancel the other.

Glossing: The terse core is Pearson's own four-word indictment ("historical lack of transparency") landing in language this series' own SEAM instrument did not need to translate

— a community organizer independently producing exactly the diagnostic vocabulary the consulting method would use, without having been handed that vocabulary by any consultant. Story-line pattern: P1 (still going on) for the regulatory and community-organizing response, since Case Five's own record treats this as live and unresolved at the time of writing; P7 (being challenged) for the IPO-acclamation mirror, set directly against the CSAM-indictment mirror in the same case.

Exhibit 6 — Case Six: Demis Hassabis and Google DeepMind

Source: This series' own Case Six material on Project Jupiter's revisit and the named advocate testimony preserved in Case Six's own Part Four.

82 Case Six's own Part One title states Hassabis's own civilizational register directly: "Solve
83 Intelligence, Then Use It to Solve Everything Else" — a scale of ambition this series' own
84 Part Five reads as standing in stark, undesigned juxtaposition against county-level infrastructure fights.
85 The original SEAM Study Guide's own diagnosis of Doña Ana County read it as the New Mexico clover
86 field's most advanced case: "implementation already underway with comparatively little organized
87 local diagnostic pushback at the point construction began," the site "furthest along the spiral."
88 Case Six's own Part Four corrects this reading directly, rather than abandoning it: Oracle reversed
89 its gas-turbine plan for Project Jupiter under regulatory and legal pressure, a genuine partial
90 death-spiral-to-upward-spiral correction Case Six names without claiming the correction is complete.
91 The water-promise material is named in Case Six as the most concrete documented "promise broken"
92 in the whole series to that point: county commissioners "caught off guard" discovering non-potable
93 water use past construction, against an original 20,000-gallon-per-day promise made before construction began.
94 Case Six's own Part Five names a stakes-mismatch directly: Hassabis's own AGI timeline has only ever
95 compressed, never lengthened, across the corpus gathered for this case — a directional pattern
96 Case Six names while explicitly flagging it could be a real ratchet effect or simply a gap in
97 what sources happened to be gathered, rather than asserting the pattern as settled fact.

Glossing: The terse core is the Study Guide's own prior diagnosis ("furthest along the spiral") being corrected by Case Six's own later research, in real time, within the same case series — this series' own discipline of marking corrections with dated notes rather than silently revising the historical record, performed directly rather than merely described. Story-line pattern: P5 (changing) for the Project Jupiter site diagnosis itself, P2 (expected to repeat) for the AGI-timeline compression pattern, since Case Six names the expectation that the pattern will continue without yet having independent confirmation that it will.

Exhibit 7 — Case Seven: Larry Ellison, Oracle, and Project Jupiter

Source: This series' own Case Seven material on the fuel-cell pivot and the market reaction, preserved directly in Case Seven's own Part Four and Part Five.

98 Case Seven's own Part One title states the bet's structural risk directly: "Betting Everything on
99 One Customer" – Oracle's own disclosed capex, debt, and remaining-performance-obligation figures,
100 naming a concentration of exposure to a single counterparty this series had not yet documented elsewhere.
101 Named advocates – Hovden, Cox, and Nanasi, preserved directly from CleanTechnica's own sourcing –
102 directly reject the fuel-cell pivot's own framing, complicating Case Six's earlier, more measured
103 "genuine partial mitigation" reading of the same underlying Project Jupiter site.
104 "Oracle's worst week since the 2001 dot-com bust" is not a metaphor borrowed for effect by this
105 series' own analysis – it is the literal comparison multiple financial outlets reached for,
106 unprompted, in the same week, preserved directly as language several outlets independently chose.
107 Case Seven's own Part Five reads this market reaction as landing on a company that does not fully
108 control the underlying risk being priced: Oracle can build the data centers, but it cannot make
109 OpenAI – the named counterparty – profitable, a distinction Case Seven names as "key-counterparty
110 risk," proposed as a new addition to this series' own vocabulary alongside Case Five's key-man risk.
111 Case Seven's own Open Questions name a structural oddity directly: Ellison holds the chairman/CTO
112 title rather than CEO, generating public statements without the same disclosure obligations Safra
113 Catz carries as CEO – a distinction Case Seven raises rather than resolves.

Glossing: The terse core is the unprompted convergence of multiple independent financial outlets on the same dot-com-era comparison within the same single week — a Mirror Effect this series reads as requiring no advocate, no journalist's framing choice, no community meeting, only the aggregated, near-simultaneous judgment of people deciding whether to keep holding a share. Story-line pattern: P6 (unfolding) for the market reaction itself, P8 (not expected) for the speed and unanimity with which multiple outlets reached for the identical historical comparison.

Exhibit 8 — Case Eight: Liang Wenfeng and DeepSeek

Source: This series' own Case Eight material on the two DeepSeek Mirror Effects, preserved directly in Case Eight's own Part Five, with Huang's own contemporaneous commentary added in Case Ten's revisit.

114 January 27, 2025: DeepSeek's R1 release triggers what multiple financial outlets call the largest

115 single-day market-value loss for any company in stock-market history –
roughly \$589 billion erased
116 from Nvidia alone, an approximately 17 to 18 percent single-day share-
price decline.
117 Over \$1 trillion is shaved from US tech stocks by the end of that same
week, with Microsoft,
118 Alphabet, and Broadcom also falling – figures preserved directly from
Case Eight's own sourcing.
119 April 24–25, 2026: DeepSeek's V4-Pro – 1.6 trillion parameters, trained
entirely on Huawei chips
120 with zero Nvidia CUDA dependency – is released on the same day Nvidia
closes above \$5 trillion
121 in market capitalization. The market does not react with comparable
force.
122 Jensen Huang's own contemporaneous account of the first shock,
preserved directly in Case Ten's
123 revisit of this material: "the market got it wrong... it's the exact
opposite" – reasoning models,
124 in Huang's own account, consume more compute, not less, making R1 a
"godsend" for Nvidia's thesis.
125 Huang's own account of the second shock, fifteen months later, on the
Dwarkanish Podcast: DeepSeek
126 running frontier models on Huawei's Ascend chips with no CUDA
dependency would be "a horrible
127 outcome" for the United States – alarm where the first account offered
confident dismissal.
128 Case Eight's own Part Five refuses to resolve which verdict, panic or
indifference, was the more
129 correct reading of these two structurally similar shocks, naming the
disagreement itself as the finding.

Glossing: The terse core is Huang's own two accounts of structurally similar events, read together the way Case Nine's Garfinkel method reads Jassy's two accounts — not contradicting each other directly, but shifting from confident dismissal to explicit alarm across fifteen months in which the underlying technical pattern changed in degree, not in kind. Story-line pattern: P3 (the same as another known pattern) for the two Mirror Effects read as structurally similar events, P7 (being challenged) for Huang's own first-shock dismissal, challenged by his own second-shock alarm.

Exhibit 9 — Case Nine: Andy Jassy and Amazon/AWS

Source: This series' own Case Nine material on Jassy's two accounts and the Seattle engineer testimony, preserved directly in Case Nine's own Part One and Part Five.

130 June 17, 2025 – internal memo to all employees: "We will need fewer
people doing some of the
131 jobs that are being done today, and more people doing other types of
jobs... in the next few years,
132 we expect that this will reduce our total corporate workforce." –
Jassy's own words, preserved verbatim.
133 October 30–31, 2025 – following roughly 14,000 corporate layoffs, at an
all-hands meeting and the

134 Q3 earnings call: "The announcement that we made a few days ago was not really financially driven,
135 and it's not even really AI-driven, not right now, at least. Really, it's culture." – also verbatim.
136 Patrick Schloesser, a software engineer at Amazon Web Services, testifying at a Seattle City Council
137 hearing, June 3, 2026: "Microsoft is spending \$190 billion. Meanwhile, the leaders at my company
138 have laid off 30,000 corporate employees in the last eight months." – preserved verbatim.
139 Amazon's institutional response, reported June 18, 2026: the company investigates whether Schloesser
140 and two colleagues, in identifying themselves as Amazon staff while testifying, violated internal
141 policy by speaking "in their capacity as Amazonians and not as private citizens."
142 Darius Irani, one of the three engineers under investigation, on the record: "All I did was testify
143 because I believe it's critical that the government regulates data centers and AI. Workers need to
144 be involved in these conversations." – preserved verbatim, Case Nine's own central evidentiary anchor.

Glossing: This is the cleanest Garfinkel fragility this series has documented — two accounts from the same speaker, each adequate to its own occasion, never required to answer to each other, until three of the speaker's own employees place the company's own disclosed numbers side by side in a public hearing the company did not convene and could not control. Story-line pattern: P7 (being challenged) for both the June/October account pair and for the company's own investigation of the engineers who challenged it.

Exhibit 10 — Case Ten: Jensen Huang and NVIDIA

Source: This series' own Case Ten material on the declined Senate testimony, preserved directly from CNBC's reporting and the Senate Banking Committee's own letter.

145 Senator Elizabeth Warren's letter, June 4, 2026: "Appearing as a witness will give you an opportunity
146 to testify about NVIDIA's views on U.S. export control laws and regulations and NVIDIA's business
147 in China." – the Senate Banking Committee's own invitation, preserved verbatim.
148 Huang's letter declining, June 8, 2026: "NVIDIA designed, built, and delivered the first AI
149 supercomputer to American researchers over a decade ago... we have been dedicated to keeping
150 American researchers, academics, startups, and businesses at the forefront of AI-related technologies."
151 Warren's response: "If Mr. Huang has time to attend a \$1 million-a-head dinner at Mar-a-Lago and
152 fly across the world to meet with President Xi Jinping of China, he should be able to find time
153 to answer questions from Congress." – preserved verbatim, Case Ten's own central evidentiary anchor.

154 By May 2026, Nvidia had committed more than \$40 billion in direct
equity investments across roughly
155 eighteen weeks – a \$30 billion check into OpenAI, \$10 billion into
Anthropic alongside Microsoft's
156 own \$10 billion commitment, and roughly two dozen smaller private
rounds, Case Ten's own Part One figures.
157 Huang, at the Morgan Stanley Technology, Media and Telecom conference,
March 4, 2026: "this might
158 be the last time we'll have the opportunity to invest in a
consequential company like this" –
159 a forecast Case Ten's own Part Two finds falsified by subsequent
conduct within roughly eight weeks,
160 as Nvidia continued equity deployment toward new names (Corning, IREN)
further up the supply chain.

Glossing: The terse core is Warren's own four-word juxtaposition (Mar-a-Lago dinner versus declined congressional testimony) doing the same diagnostic work Schloesser's Amazon-capex-versus-layoffs juxtaposition did in Exhibit 9 — a critic placing two true facts about the same person side by side and letting the fragility show without needing to argue it. Story-line pattern: P7 (being challenged) for Huang's declined-testimony posture, P4 (will no longer repeat) for the March 2026 forecast, since Case Ten finds the stated behavior did not, in fact, recur in the form forecast.

Exhibit 11 — Case Eleven: Arthur Mensch and Mistral

Source: This series' own Case Eleven material on the chronotope reading and the Pope Leo XIV exchange, preserved directly from Reuters' own reporting.

161 Investor Anjney Midha, reframing the entire competitive question
Mistral faces, preserved verbatim
162 in Case Eleven's own Part One: "The question to ask is, 'Is Mistral at
the top of the independence
163 leaderboard?'" – a deliberate substitution of one race (performance)
for another (sovereignty).
164 Mensch, at a French National Assembly hearing, May 27, 2026: Europe has
roughly two years to avoid
165 becoming permanently dependent on American technology companies for AI
– a specific, falsifiable
166 deadline Mensch himself set running, preserved directly in Case
Eleven's own Part One.
167 Mensch, responding directly to Pope Leo XIV's criticism of military AI,
May 28, 2026: "We're all
168 for peace, but if you look at our rivals and adversaries in the world,
they're using artificial
169 intelligence... we do need to have our own capabilities." – preserved
verbatim.
170 Mensch, on Mistral's own chip ambitions, May 28, 2026, the first time
he had spoken publicly on the
171 subject: "Owning the chips may come, I think it should come at some
point, but for now we are
172 relying on Nvidia, which is a great partner to us, and we're testing a
few things here and there."

173 Mensch, on whether Mistral's data-sovereignty pitch and its Nvidia
dependency can be reconciled –
174 not asked directly in any source gathered for this case, and Case
Eleven's own Part Three names
175 this silence as "borrowed sovereignty," a hidden cost the document's
own SEAM categories would not
176 surface without the chronotope reading that placed the chip-ambition
quote next to the sovereignty pitch.

Glossing: The terse core is Mensch's own hedged language about chip ownership ("may come," "should come at some point," "testing a few things") sitting, unreconciled, against his own sovereignty pitch to European enterprise clients — a gap this case found by reading two of Mensch's own statements together rather than by any outside critic naming the contradiction directly. Story-line pattern: P6 (unfolding) for the two-year deadline Mensch himself named, P5 (changing) for the chip-ambition disclosure, since it marks a first public step in a stated direction rather than a completed shift.

Exhibit 12 — Case Twelve: China as a Transorganizational AI Network

Source: This series' own Case Twelve material on the \$295 billion data-center plan and the East-Data-West-Computing rhizome crowns, preserved directly from Bloomberg's own June 2026 reporting.

177 Bloomberg News, June 9, 2026: China is preparing to spend around 2
trillion yuan (\$295 billion)
178 over the next five years on a network of inter-connected computing
hubs, with state firms China
179 Mobile and China Telecom operating the bulk of the data centers, per
people familiar with the matter.
180 The plan's stated technology-sourcing rule, per the same reporting: at
least 80 percent of
181 underlying technology, including AI chips, is to come from domestic
suppliers – "effectively
182 squeezing out Nvidia Corp. and Advanced Micro Devices Inc.," in
Bloomberg's own characterization.
183 Bloomberg's own reporting names a genuine, unresolved integration gap
directly: the 2-trillion-yuan
184 figure "doesn't include spending by private firms such as Alibaba Group
Holding Ltd. and Tencent
185 Holdings Ltd.," and "it's unclear how the envisioned unified data
center network would function
186 alongside those private hubs" – preserved verbatim, this case's own
central evidentiary anchor.
187 Kaiser Kuo, writing for the World Economic Forum from direct 2013–2016
Baidu-era experience:
188 "What export controls did, in effect, was sharpen the incentives for AI
engineers, founders, and
189 funders in China to do more with less." – preserved directly, naming a
Mirror Effect this case
190 reads as reflecting back on the policy's own author (Washington) rather
than only on its target.
191 The NUS East Asian Institute's own January 2026 brief names a
documented cost this case's own

192 Root-Stem reading depends on directly: "Some facilities already face underutilisation," citing

193 MIT Technology Review's own March 2025 reporting – overcapacity built ahead of demonstrated demand.

Glossing: The terse core is Bloomberg's own admission, inside its own reporting on the plan, that the plan's central coordination question (how does the new state grid integrate with existing private infrastructure) is unresolved even by the plan's own architects — a 3Cs gap named by the same outlet reporting the plan's existence, not manufactured by this case's own critique. Story-line pattern: P6 (unfolding) for the plan itself, P5 (changing) for the export-control Mirror Effect, since Kuo's own account describes a policy whose effect changed from what its author intended.

Exhibit 13 — Case Thirteen: Australia's National AI Plan

Source: This series' own Case Thirteen material on the Responsible AI Index finding and Queensland's documented dissent, preserved directly from the National AI Centre's own commissioned research and Reuters/Climate Council reporting.

194 The Australian Responsible AI Index, commissioned by the National AI Centre itself, found that 82

195 percent of businesses believed they were practising AI responsibly, while less than 24 percent had

196 actual measures in place to ensure it – the gap reported by the government's own instrument.

197 Jessica Russ-Smith, Immaculate Motsi-Omoijiade, and Michelle D. Lazarus, writing in *The Conversation*,

198 December 15-16, 2025: "In Australia, AI-generated child sexual abuse material is rapidly spreading,

199 and existing laws are failing to protect victims." – preserved verbatim, naming the documented

200 inadequacy of the Plan's own central regulatory bet without this case detailing the harm's mechanics.

201 The Climate Council's own Senate submission, June 2026: "Through the ECMC, all Australian

202 jurisdictions except Queensland have agreed that data centres should provide demand flexibility

203 services" – preserved verbatim, naming the one jurisdiction that did not join the national agreement.

204 Queensland Energy Minister David Janetzki, reported May 14, 2026, declining to back the proposal:

205 the state wants "clearer information about costs, benefits, and risks before endorsing a national

206 plan that could affect power prices and reliability" – preserved directly, read as genuinely ambiguous.

207 Greens MP Anasina Gray-Barberio, addressing the Victorian Parliament, June 2026: "The north and

208 west should not be dumping grounds for these hyperscale data centres, which will only make energy

209 bills higher and impact water supply." – preserved verbatim, theory-in-use testimony from inside

210 the same governance system that produced the Commonwealth's own espoused "social licence" language.

Glossing: The terse core is the 82%/24% figure itself, reported not by an outside critic but by the National AI Centre's own commissioned instrument — an espoused theory and its own theory-in-use, measured by the same survey and published by the same coordinating body the espoused theory belongs to. Story-line pattern: P1 (still going on) for Queensland's holdout, P7 (being challenged) for the "existing laws are sufficient" claim, challenged by the same case's own commercial-legal and academic sources independently.

Part Two — The Interorganizational Timeline, Read as Movement and Rivalry

Chapter One's own timeline, running from antiquity through June 2026, narrates the AI industry's technical history — the Perceptron, BERT, the GPT line, RLHF, Llama, Gemini, Claude. Case Ten's own preface already named this timeline's central absence (Nvidia appears twice in over a hundred lines), and Case Twelve named the timeline's near-total silence on transorganizational network design. This Part does something neither prior case attempted: reading the timeline against all thirteen cases at once, as a single interacting system of moves and counter-moves between companies, countries, and the data centers connecting them, rather than as thirteen separate company stories or one separate country story.

Movement One: The Slow Setup (Pre-2022)

The timeline's own pre-2022 entries — the Dartmouth Conference, the Perceptron, ELIZA, the Lighthill Report's brutal 1973 assessment, the 1987–2018 statistical-NLP-displaces-rule-based-NLP shift, BERT in 2018 — describe a field with long fallow periods (the timeline's own 1970s–80s material names funding winters following Lighthill directly) punctuated by discrete technical proofs of concept that did not, on their own, trigger the corporate-and-national mobilization this series' thirteen cases document. Two threads worth naming directly, because both reappear transformed in every later movement this Part traces: first, the timeline's own December 2015 entry — OpenAI incorporated as a nonprofit, with Sam Altman and Elon Musk both among its founding funders, explicitly “unconstrained by a need to generate financial return” — is the seed of the governance tension Case Three's own board crisis later tests directly, and the seed of the personal relationship (Altman and Musk, co-founders before they were rivals) Case Five's own xAI material inherits as unstated backstory. Second, China's own AI history, read through Case Twelve's own sources rather than through Chapter One (which is silent on this entirely), runs on a parallel and much longer track: a 1979 first national conference, a 1981 founding of the Chinese Association for Artificial Intelligence, and a 2006 State Council policy priority — two decades of institution-building before the 2017 New Generation AI Development Plan that Case Twelve's own Part One treats as the modern era's actual starting gun. The American and Chinese timelines, read side by side rather than separately, do not start from the same zero point; China's transorganizational network-building begins while the American field is still inside its post-Lighthill funding winter.

Movement Two: The ChatGPT Inflection and Its Immediate Aftershocks (November 2022—Late 2023)

Chapter One's own account of ChatGPT's November 2022 release names the adoption numbers directly — 1 million users in 5 days, 100 million in roughly 2 months, faster than TikTok's 9 months or Instagram's 2.5 years — and names the immediate corporate response: Microsoft's \$10

billion OpenAI commitment, Google's internal “code red” (a phrase this series' own Octagon readings have tracked as terse-telling shorthand across multiple cases since), and a wave of funding into Amazon, Meta, Anthropic, Cohere, AI21 Labs, and Inflection AI. Read against this series' own thirteen cases rather than against the timeline alone, this single eleven-month window (November 2022 to October 2023) seeded the founding conditions for at least six of this series' thirteen cases simultaneously: Anthropic's own comparative safety positioning (Case Two) was already underway, having been founded in 2021 by former OpenAI researchers specifically in response to the trajectory ChatGPT's release confirmed; Altman's own board crisis (Case Three) erupted exactly one year later, in November 2023, with Microsoft's \$10 billion stake from this same window directly shaping the crisis's own resolution; Nadella's own SLT-flattening bet (Case Four) and Zuckerberg's own pivot from metaverse to frontier AI (Case One) both post-date this window and read, in retrospect, as corporate responses to the competitive landscape this eleven-month period actually created.

Movement Three: The Open-Source Counter-Current (2023–2024)

Running underneath the closed-model race the prior movement describes, Chapter One's own timeline names a parallel, partly oppositional current: Meta's release of Llama and Llama 2 (2023), Mistral's founding and its September 2023 Mistral 7B release under an Apache 2.0 license, and Mixtral 8x7B's December 2023 sparse mixture-of-experts architecture. Case Eleven's own research, gathered independently of Chapter One, supplies the connective tissue Chapter One's own entry does not: Mensch's own three-year-old company is, by Case Eleven's own account, explicitly positioning open-weight release as a sovereignty argument rather than only a technical-philosophy argument — “your data doesn't even need to leave the office, let alone the country.” Read together, this movement is where the open-versus-closed argument that becomes central to Case Eight's DeepSeek case two years later is first staked out in the West, with Meta and Mistral occupying a position structurally similar to the one DeepSeek will occupy relative to OpenAI and Anthropic — though for different stated reasons (Meta's own commercial-ecosystem logic versus Mistral's sovereignty logic versus DeepSeek's later efficiency logic, three distinct rationales converging on the same open-weight tactic).

Movement Four: The DeepSeek Shock and the Buildout Thesis Under Test (January 2025—April 2026)

This is the single movement where this series' own thirteen cases converge most directly on one event, read from the most angles. Case Eight's own two Mirror Effects (Exhibit 8 above) are the movement's bookends — R1's January 2025 panic and V4-Pro's April 2026 indifference — but the movement's full interorganizational shape only becomes visible reading Cases Eight, Nine, Ten, and Twelve together. The shock tested, directly, the premise underlying every American case in this series: that frontier AI capability requires the capital intensity Cases One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Nine, and Ten each separately document their leader committing to. Case Eight's own finding — that DeepSeek's efficiency claim, if true, is a standing challenge to that premise — reads differently once Case Twelve's own research is added: China's own \$295 billion data-center plan, drafted in the same period, does not actually abandon capital-intensive infrastructure in response to DeepSeek's own efficiency proof. It builds a state-directed capital-intensive infrastructure anyway, just one explicitly designed around domestic chips rather than Nvidia's. The lesson the Chinese state's own policy response drew from DeepSeek's efficiency shock was not “we need less infrastructure” but “we need infrastructure we fully control” — a

different lesson than either the American panic (Case Eight's first Mirror Effect) or the American eventual indifference (Case Eight's second Mirror Effect) drew.

Huang's own two contemporaneous accounts of these same two shocks (Exhibit 8 and Exhibit 10, read together) supply the movement's clearest single piece of evidence for genuine industry-wide recalibration rather than noise: the same person, with the most direct financial stake in the outcome, read the first shock as confirming his own thesis and the second shock, fifteen months later, as a national-security emergency. If Huang's own reading shifted that much, the movement itself is doing real interpretive work on the people living through it, not simply repeating the same lesson twice.

Movement Five: The Data-Center Craze, Read as a Single Global Pattern Rather Than Site by Site

Reading Cases Five, Six, Seven, Nine, Twelve, and Thirteen's site material together — Colossus/Memphis, Project Jupiter/Doña Ana, Montgomery County/Missouri, China's provincial clover field, Victoria's proposed sites — against Chapter Zero's own clover-field/rhizome instrument (used directly for the first time in Case Twelve, gestured at loosely in every case before it) surfaces a pattern none of the individual site cases could see on its own: every documented site, regardless of country, follows close to the same four-stage sequence. First, a developer or state planner identifies a site with cheap land, available power infrastructure, or both (Memphis's existing industrial corridor; Montgomery County's rail and gas-line intersection; China's western interior under East Data West Computing; Victoria's former Ford site in Campbellfield). Second, the deal is structured and approved with minimal public visibility relative to its eventual scale — Case Five's own permit-workaround finding, Case Nine's own Missouri open-meetings lawsuit, Case Thirteen's own Victorian community organizers naming “lack of consultation about its impacts” as their central complaint, are three independently documented instances of the same procedural pattern. Third, construction proceeds, often beginning before or during the same window community opposition first organizes — this series' own recurring Tamara-rooms finding (financial press and community-voice coverage occupying non-overlapping rooms) names exactly this timing gap. Fourth, a hidden cost surfaces that the original approval process did not anticipate or disclose — Colossus's NO_x emissions, Project Jupiter's broken water promise, Plumpton's own gas-turbine requirement, the NUS brief's own documented Chinese data-center underutilization.

What differs by country, and this matters for the scenario-building in Part Three below, is who bears the resulting risk. In the American cases, private capital (Amazon's, Microsoft's, Oracle's, xAI's own balance sheets, and ultimately their shareholders) bears the downside if a site's hidden costs materialize into real liability — Case Seven's own market reaction is exactly this risk being priced in real time. In the Chinese case, per Case Twelve's own sourcing, the \$295 billion plan is financed substantially through sovereign debt and state-backed funds, meaning the downside, if the plan's own admitted overcapacity risk materializes, lands on public balance sheets rather than private ones. Australia's own approach, per Case Thirteen, sits structurally between these two: private capital builds the data centers (the same companies as the American cases, operating in Australian jurisdictions), but the Commonwealth's own “Expectations” document attempts to socialize accountability for community and price effects without the binding mechanism (a mandatory standard, an enforceable penalty) that would actually shift risk away from ratepayers and communities — Case Thirteen's own Argyris reading names this gap directly.

Movement Six: The Rivalry Structure, As It Actually Stands at the Time of This Report's Writing

Drawing the rivalry as a structure rather than a list: the United States' own AI-corporate rivalry runs along two axes simultaneously, and this series' thirteen cases have now documented both. The first axis is model-layer competition (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google DeepMind, xAI, Meta, each racing on capability benchmarks this series has touched only lightly, since the case series' own focus is leadership and infrastructure rather than technical benchmarking). The second axis, which this series has documented far more thoroughly, is infrastructure-layer competition — and Case Ten's own research, extended by the Reuters-sourced material gathered fresh for this report, shows this axis itself splitting into two competing models within the same eighteen months: Nvidia's general-purpose GPU dominance (Case Ten's own subject) being directly challenged not only by DeepSeek's software-side CUDA-independence (Case Eight) but by Broadcom's custom-silicon model on the American side itself — Broadcom CEO Hock Tan's own June 2026 statement, “you cannot, should not rely on some other third-party GPU to do it for you, because it's such a key part,” describes Broadcom's role designing Jalapeño for OpenAI, alongside Google's own TPUs, Meta's own MTIA accelerators, and reported negotiations with ByteDance, Anthropic, Apple, and Fujitsu. Nvidia's own stock fell only 0.26% on this announcement — a far smaller reaction than either DeepSeek shock produced — read by this report as evidence the market judges custom-silicon competition a real but bounded threat, structurally different from DeepSeek's software-independence threat, since custom ASICs (Broadcom's own business model) still require Broadcom's own manufacturing and design expertise rather than displacing the entire American semiconductor-design ecosystem the way a successful Chinese CUDA-independent stack would.

China's own rivalry structure, per Case Twelve, runs on a different axis entirely — not model-layer-versus-infrastructure-layer competition between rival firms, but state-coordinated network-versus-private-network integration, with Case Twelve's own central unresolved finding (how the \$295 billion state grid integrates with Alibaba's and Tencent's existing infrastructure) still the open question. Europe's own rivalry position, per Case Eleven, is neither of these — Mistral is not currently positioned to win either the model-layer race (Forbes's own finding: Mistral's best model loses to a Claude release nine months older) or the infrastructure-layer race (Case Eleven's own “borrowed sovereignty” finding: Mistral runs on Nvidia hardware regardless of its own sovereignty pitch), but is instead positioned, per Mensch's own investor Anjney Midha's reframing, to win a third race this report names directly for the first time: the trust-and-jurisdiction race, where the relevant competitive metric is not benchmark performance or infrastructure control but which jurisdiction's data-protection law a given enterprise customer is legally required to comply with. Australia, per Case Thirteen, is not currently a competitor in any of these three races at the model-layer or infrastructure-layer scale — its own ecosystem report names its position directly as a “dual-track... hybrid positioning as a developed 'AI-taker' and a developing 'AI-maker'” — but is a significant and contested site in the infrastructure-layer race's physical geography, exactly as Case Thirteen's own Queensland material documents.

Part Three — Possible Futures, Built From This Series' Own Instruments Rather Than Borrowed From Vendor Forecasts

Chapter Zero's own Section 3 names four antenarrative shapes — linear, cyclic, spiral, rhizomatic — and Case Eight used this instrument for the first time at the scale of a single company's bet. This Part uses the same instrument at industry scale, asking which shape the global AI industry's own next movement is actually taking, rather than which shape a consulting firm's survey methodology presupposes. The WEF's own four-scenario matrix (Supercharged Progress, the Age of Displacement, Co-Pilot Economy, Stalled Progress) is held up alongside this report's own reading, named explicitly where it overlaps and where it does not, rather than substituted for this report's own analysis.

Reading the Industry's Own Antenarrative Shape, Directly

A linear reading would say the industry is on one trajectory — toward ever-greater capital intensity, ever-larger models, ever-more-concentrated infrastructure ownership — with no return. This is the reading every vendor-futurism source this report engaged with critically (Precedence Research, StartUs Insights, Grand View Research) implicitly assumes, since each one's own business model depends on the trend it describes continuing in the same direction at the same scale. This report's own thirteen cases do not support a linear reading: Case Eight's own DeepSeek finding, Case Eleven's own Mistral finding, and Case Twelve's own Chinese state-grid finding are three separate, independently documented departures from pure capital-intensity escalation, each pursuing a different alternative (efficiency, jurisdictional trust, state-controlled sovereignty) rather than all converging on one shared alternative.

A cyclic reading would say the industry is locked in a repeating shock-and-recovery pattern — DeepSeek crashes Nvidia, the market recovers, a new shock arrives, recovery again. Case Eight's own material partially supports this (the R1-to-V4-Pro sequence), but Case Eight's own discipline already refused to resolve whether the second shock's indifference was genuine recovery or simply slower recognition of an equally serious threat — and this report's own Movement Four (above) extends that refusal: Huang's own shift from dismissal to alarm suggests the cycle, if it is one, is not returning to the same starting point each time.

A spiral reading — change that loops near its own past without ever landing on it twice — fits a genuine amount of this report's own gathered evidence better than either linear or cyclic readings, and fits this series' own SEAM instrument's own D-P-I-E cycle directly: each of the recurring patterns this report's Part Two names (the four-stage data-center sequence, the open-versus-closed argument recurring from Llama through Mistral through DeepSeek) returns to a similar shape without repeating identically, with each iteration reaching wider and changing more of the underlying rules than the last — exactly the test Chapter Zero's own D-P-I-E figure poses directly: does the second cycle simply repeat the first, or does it reach further because the rules changed in between? This report's own evidence says the rules are, in fact, changing each time: export controls tightened, then partially relaxed (Case Twelve's own Entity List delay finding); open-weight strategy adopted for commercial reasons (Meta), then for sovereignty reasons (Mistral), then for efficiency reasons (DeepSeek) — the same tactic, reused, but for a different and evolving reason each time.

A rhizomatic reading — many directions at once, no single root, no single end — is, on this report's own full reading of all thirteen cases together, the most defensible shape for the industry as a whole, even though individual sub-movements (the data-center site sequence specifically) read more cleanly as spiral. The industry's own next iteration is not converging on one winner-take-all outcome; it is fracturing into at least four genuinely distinct, simultaneously pursued strategies this report names directly: American capital-intensity-plus-custom-silicon (Cases One through Seven, Nine, Ten); Chinese state-coordinated sovereignty-at-scale (Case Twelve); European trust-and-jurisdiction positioning without infrastructure independence (Case Eleven); and Australian site-hosting without model-layer or infrastructure-layer ambition (Case Thirteen). None of these four strategies is positioned to fully absorb or eliminate the other three within the time horizon this report's own sources can responsibly project.

Four Scenarios, Built From This Series' Own Findings

Rather than adopting the WEF's own two-vector matrix (AI advancement pace × workforce readiness) wholesale, this report builds its own two vectors directly from the thirteen cases' own recurring findings: the first vector is whether the rivalry structure named in Movement Six consolidates toward fewer competing infrastructure models or continues fracturing toward more; the second vector is whether the documented hidden-cost pattern (Part Two's Movement Five) gets named and addressed before or after it produces a crisis serious enough to force reckoning the way Case Five's CSAM crisis or Case Seven's market crash did.

Scenario A — Consolidation Before Crisis

Infrastructure competition narrows (Nvidia, Broadcom's custom-silicon clients, and China's domestic-chip ecosystem settle into a stable three-way division of the market) while hidden-cost accountability genuinely improves — Queensland's own caution (Case Thirteen) proves to have been the right call, the EU AI Act-style enforceable standard this report's own Case Thirteen named as a comparator gets adopted more widely, and SEAM-style hidden-cost accounting becomes a genuine input to siting and financing decisions rather than a post-hoc finding this series' own cases keep discovering after construction. This is the scenario every leader profiled in this series would, on the evidence of their own public statements, claim to be working toward — and the scenario this report's own evidence finds least supported by current trajectory, since Case Thirteen's own Argyris finding (the 82%/24% gap) suggests the accountability half of this scenario is not yet materializing at the pace the consolidation half would require.

Scenario B — Fracture Before Crisis

The rhizomatic reading above continues and deepens: four or more genuinely distinct national/regional AI strategies persist simultaneously, none winning outright, while hidden-cost accountability continues lagging behind construction the way this report's own Movement Five found it lagging in every site case gathered. This is, on the current evidence assembled across all thirteen cases, the scenario this report finds most consistent with the trajectory actually observed — not because any single case predicts it directly, but because no case in this series found a single actor (a company, a country, a regulator) currently positioned to force consolidation, and several cases (Eight, Eleven, Twelve) found genuine, durable reasons for continued divergence rather than convergence.

Scenario C — Consolidation Forced by Crisis

A hidden cost serious enough to force consolidation materializes before voluntary accountability does — a data-center grid failure cascading from the power-grid strain this report's own Movement Five names in multiple countries simultaneously, a CSAM or distillation-attack crisis serious enough to trigger the kind of binding international response Case Two's own allied-governments Mirror Effect previewed at smaller scale, or a financial crisis resembling Case Seven's own market reaction but propagating across the whole sector rather than landing on one company. This scenario reads as the WEF's own “Age of Displacement” scenario's infrastructure-layer cousin: exponential capability advancement outpacing not workforce readiness (the WEF's own stated vector) but accountability-and-governance readiness, with crisis rather than policy doing the work of forcing change.

Scenario D — Fracture Deepened by Crisis

A serious hidden-cost crisis occurs in one country or company without producing cross-border consolidation, instead accelerating each actor's own existing strategy — the US doubling down on private capital intensity, China doubling down on sovereign-grid independence, Europe doubling down on jurisdictional trust positioning, each reading the same crisis as confirmation that its own approach was the right one all along. This report's own Movement Four (the two DeepSeek shocks) is itself a small-scale precedent for exactly this dynamic: rather than producing convergence on one lesson, the shock produced at least three different national policy responses (American market recalibration, Chinese sovereignty-acceleration, and this report's own observation that European policy discourse, per Case Eleven's own “two years” framing, treated the shock as confirming the urgency of Mistral's own sovereignty argument specifically).

Holding the Four Scenarios Open, Rather Than Picking One

Consistent with Chapter Zero's own discipline that this book's cases are written as novelistic rather than rhetorical double-voicedness — genuinely irresolvable rather than awaiting one correct answer — this report does not pick a winner among the four scenarios above. What it can say, on the strength of all thirteen cases read together, is that Scenario B (fracture before crisis) currently has the most direct evidentiary support, Scenario A (the outcome every leader profiled claims to want) has the least, and Scenarios C and D depend on a crisis this report's own sources document the conditions for but cannot respectably predict the timing or trigger of.

Sources

Primary case material: this series' own Cases One through Thirteen, with each exhibit in Part One drawing directly on that case's own preserved primary quotations and sourced figures rather than on fresh research for this report. Chapter Zero and Chapter One of the master manuscript (“Frameworks for Studying the AI Industry and Society”), used directly as the timeline this report reads Part Two against.

New primary/near-primary material gathered specifically for this report: Build Fast with AI's June 26, 2026 “15 Biggest Stories” AI news roundup, naming Broadcom CEO Hock Tan's direct statement to Reuters and Bloomberg on custom AI silicon, cross-checked for the underlying Reuters/Bloomberg sourcing chain. World Economic Forum, “Four Futures for Jobs in the New

Economy: AI and Talent in 2030” (January 2026), read directly for its own disclosed methodology and named data sources, used as one input to Part Three rather than as the scenario framework itself.

Vendor/consulting sources read with explicit, named skepticism per this report's own Preface: Precedence Research, “How Artificial Intelligence Is Reshaping Global Industries in the Next Decade” (10 February 2026). McKinsey & Company, “Charting a Path to the Data- and AI-Driven Enterprise of 2030” (5 September 2024, McKinsey Quarterly). StartUs Insights, “Future of AI [2026–2030]: A Roadmap for Leaders” (last updated 27 October 2025). Grand View Research, enterprise-artificial-intelligence market sizing (named in this report's brief but read only for comparison against the other three vendor sources' own figures, given the genre's own internal inconsistencies documented directly in this report's Preface). Each of these four sources is cited only where it supplies a specific, checkable claim, and every instance of unreconciled, self-citing, or vendor-interested figures is named directly rather than passed through silently.

Theoretical apparatus: as in Cases One through Thirteen, with the following instruments specifically extended to this report's own larger scale for the first time — Boje, D. M. (1991). Organizations as storytelling networks: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106–126, the terse-telling/glossing/eight-story-line-pattern method applied directly to thirteen real exhibits rather than referenced in passing. The four antenarrative shapes (Chapter Zero, Section 3; first applied at company scale in Case Eight), here applied at full industry scale for the first time. Savall, H., & Zardet, V. (2008). Mastering Hidden Costs and Socio-Economic Performance, with the D-P-I-E cycle's own widening-or-repeating test applied directly to the industry-wide pattern named in Part Two's Movement Five. Peirce's induction-deduction-abduction triad, named explicitly in this report's own Open Questions as the method underlying Part Three's scenario-building.

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