Build Your Own *Principles*

A guide to creating socio–technical AI principles rooted in your team's context, values, and needs.

Louise Harder Fischer, Sanna Marttila & Martin Lassen–Vernal

IT University of Copenhagen · April 2026

www.STAIRmethod.org

Make it yours

STAIR provides eight foundation principles as a universal starting point. But the real power comes from building your own — grounded in your specific context, professional identity, and the conversations your team actually needs to have.

Step 1 gives you a structured process for that. You'll answer five foundational questions together, and the answers become the raw material for your own principles.

The process

Gather your team

Bring together the people who will work with AI. This isn't a management exercise — it's a team conversation.

The model

Explore five questions

Use the STAIR model diagram to work through five foundational questions — one quadrant at a time.

The outcome

Write your principles

Turn your notes and patterns into short, clear statements. These become your compass for AI decisions.

HUMAN GOALS

WORKFLOWS

AI

ECONOMIC GOALS

Five questions, four axes

The STAIR model maps the relationship between people and technology across four dimensions. Each quadrant holds a foundational question. The center — question 5 — is where your core values live.

The four axes represent the socio–technical lens: the balance between human goals and economic goals, between existing workflows and new AI capabilities.

| HUMAN GOALS | ECONOMIC GOALS | WORKFLOWS | AI |

How to use the model

This is a conversation guide, not a test. Take your time. The goal is honest reflection, not perfect answers.

FIRST

Describe your context

What does your team do? Which AI scenario are you exploring — a specific tool, a workflow change, or a general discussion about AI's role?

THEN

Explore each question

Work through the five questions on the following pages. You don't have to go in order — start where it feels most relevant. Use the discussion prompts to go deeper.

THROUGHOUT

Take notes

Write down what emerges. Agreements, disagreements, open questions — all of it. Your notes become the foundation for your own principles.

1

What value is added?

What value should AI create for you? Think beyond speed and efficiency. Value can mean quality, trust, learning, professional growth, well-being — or something else entirely.

The key is to be conscious of what you're gaining and what you might be giving up. One type of value isn't inherently better than another — but you need to know which ones matter to you.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

What would a *good* outcome look like for everyone involved — users, employees, the organization?

Is there a risk of losing value as well? Where? Are you willing to take that risk?

What's the relationship between short-term gain and long-term value?

If AI saves time but no one knows what to do with that time — is that value?

✎ SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

2

What role does AI play?

Is AI a helper, a partner, a decision-maker? The answer will be different depending on the task — and it should be. The question is whether you've made that choice deliberately.

Consider where AI's involvement should stop. Not everything benefits from automation, and some things need to remain fundamentally human.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

For the scenario you're exploring — what role is AI actually playing? Is that the role you intended?

What should remain fundamentally human in your work?

Are there tasks where AI feels like the wrong tool entirely?

Where does "assisted by AI" end and "replaced by AI" begin?

✎ SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

3

QUESTION 3 · HUMAN GOALS ↔ WORKFLOWS

What changes do you see?

AI changes things — sometimes in ways you expect, sometimes not. Roles shift. Collaboration patterns change. Competencies that were central may become less relevant, and new ones emerge.

This question asks you to look ahead honestly. What excites you about those changes? What worries you?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

What shifts do you expect in roles, collaboration, and daily routines?

Which competencies might become more important? Which might fade?

Are there changes you'd want to resist or slow down?

What would you miss about how you work today?

✎ SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

4

Well-being and efficiency?

This is the tension at the heart of most AI conversations. How do you ensure AI supports both productivity and a meaningful work life? The two aren't always in conflict — but they aren't always aligned either.

Consider whether you can stand behind the work AI helps produce. Whether it reflects your standards, your professionalism, your judgment.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Does AI make your work feel more meaningful — or less?

Can you stand behind the quality of work AI helps produce?

How would you know if AI was negatively affecting well-being in your team?

If efficiency goes up but job satisfaction goes down — is that a good trade?

✎ SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

5

Which core values must we preserve?

This is the question at the center of the model — literally and figuratively. Every organization, every team, every professional has values that shouldn't be compromised, regardless of the technology.

Name them. Make them explicit. They become the anchor for everything else you build.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

What are the non-negotiables in how you work?

If you could protect one thing about your professional practice from being changed by AI, what would it be?

Are there values you share as a team that you haven't articulated before?

What would your work lose if it lost its human signature?

✎ SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES

The five questions at a glance

Use these cards as a quick reference during your session. Each maps to a quadrant of the STAIR model.

1	2	3	4	5
What value is added?	**What role does AI play?**	**What changes do you see?**	**Well-being & efficiency?**	**Core values?**
Beyond speed — quality, meaning, growth?	Helper, partner, or decision-maker?	In roles, routines, and competencies?	Can you have both? How?	What must never be compromised?

From notes to principles

Look at what you've written down. The patterns — values you kept returning to, boundaries you drew, concerns you shared — are the raw material for your principles.

What is a principle?

A short, clear statement about what matters to your team when using AI. It doesn't need to be perfect. It doesn't need to be academic. It needs to be yours — something you recognize and can stand behind.

How many do you need?

There's no magic number. The STAIR foundation has eight, but your team might have four or twelve. What matters is that each one captures something real from your conversation.

What comes next?

Your principles become the foundation for Step 2: regular, structured conversations about AI using your own principles. They're not rules carved in stone — they evolve with your experience.

The mission statement

Once you have your principles, they can serve as a shared commitment — a declaration of how your team chooses to work with AI. Something like this:

> *"When we implement and use generative AI, we want to ensure productivity, well-being, and a sense of meaning in our workflows. That is why we at [your organization] have developed the following socio-technical principles to help us continuously reflect on our use of AI — and to serve as guardians of what we consider a responsible and balanced approach to the everyday use of artificial intelligence."*

This is a template. Rewrite it in your own words. What matters is that it captures why your principles exist and what they protect.

Every principle has dimensions

Each principle can be reflected on at different levels. How does it apply to you individually? To your team? To the organization as a whole? And beyond?

EXAMPLE PRINCIPLE

"AI must not erode workplace collaboration or professional identity."

INDIVIDUAL → GROUP → UNIT → ORGANIZATION → CORPORATE → NATIONAL

Each level asks: how does this principle apply at this scale?

LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS FOR THIS PRINCIPLE
Individual	How does this affect me personally? My skills, my confidence, my sense of purpose?
Group	How does this affect how our team collaborates, shares knowledge, and supports each other?
Unit	How does this affect our department's workflows, roles, and ways of working together?
Organization	How does this shape organizational culture, policies, and the way we talk about AI?
National	How does this connect to national regulation, industry standards, or societal expectations?

 #STAIRMETHOD

Running the session

The person leading the Step 1 conversation doesn't need to be an AI expert. They need to be curious, neutral, and good at making space.

Set the frame. Explain that this is a reflective conversation, not a decision meeting. There are no wrong answers.

Start with context. Have someone describe the AI scenario you're exploring. Get specific — a real task, a real tool, a real workflow.

One question at a time. Don't rush through all five. It's better to go deep on three than shallow on five.

Capture everything. Assign a note-taker. Write down exact phrases — the language your team uses naturally is the best raw material for principles.

Name the tensions. When the conversation reveals a tension (e.g. efficiency vs. quality), don't resolve it — name it. That's where principles live.

Close with patterns. At the end, read back the notes. Ask: what themes keep coming up? Those are your draft principles.

What comes next

Step 1 gives you your principles. Step 2 puts them to work. Together, they form a continuous practice — not a one-time exercise.

STEP 2

Put Principles into Action

Have regular, structured conversations about AI using your principles. Appoint a STAIR Master to facilitate. Capture reflections and feed them back in. Build shared intuition over time.

QUICK START OPTION

Use the Foundation Principles

If you're not ready to build your own, start with the eight research-based STAIR foundation principles. Download the Beginner's Guide at www.STAIRmethod.org for the full set with questions and facilitation tips.

Download the Beginner's Guide

The complete guide to using the eight foundation principles — with clarification questions and facilitation tips.

Explore the full method

See how both steps work together at www.STAIRmethod.org/how-it-works

Our Team

Louise Harder Fischer

PhD, Associate Professor

IT University of Copenhagen

linkedin.com/in/louiseharderfischer

Sanna Marttila

Associate Professor of Digital Innovation

IT University of Copenhagen

linkedin.com/in/sannamarttila

Martin Lassen–Vernal

Head of Communications
External Lecturer, IT University of Copenhagen

City of Copenhagen

linkedin.com/in/martinlassenvernal

Morten Christian Andersen

Web Consultant & AI STAIR-master

City of Copenhagen

linkedin.com/in/mortenchristianandersen

#STAIRMETHOD