

AI4COP

PACE

Principles for deploying AI in environmental decision-making

Participation · Accountability · Consent · Equity

ai4cop.org

Draft version for COP17, Armenia

ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES

Principles for algorithmic decisions

AI increasingly shapes how nature is monitored, valued and financed, and how countries report progress towards shared targets. CARE and FAIR set out how data should be governed. PACE does the same for the algorithmic decisions built on that data.

It has four parts: Participation, Accountability, Consent and Equity. Each applies wherever an AI system makes or shapes a decision that affects an ecosystem and the people who depend on it.

Drafted at the AI4PG workshop *Decision Sovereignty for Nature*, ETH AI Center, Zurich, 22 July 2026, and written up by Millie Chapman and David Dao.

WITH



P

PRINCIPLE ONE

Participation

People take part in the decisions that shape their places, from setting the goals to reviewing the results.

- P1 Decide close to the place.** The people who live with an ecosystem and look after it make the decisions about it, at the most local level possible. Owners, investors and outside managers can advise but they do not decide for them.
- P2 Participation is ongoing.** One consultation at launch is not enough. They can give feedback at any time, and operators show what changed because of it. If operators do not act on some feedback, they explain why.
- P3 Shape the goals and values.** Participation starts before a model produces anything. Communities help decide what the system is for, what counts as success and which trade-offs it may make. Those choices are built into its objectives, its data and its thresholds. The people affected shape these choices and can change them later, so the system keeps to their values over time.

A

PRINCIPLE TWO

Accountability

Every consequential decision has someone who is held to account for it. Nature cannot file a complaint, bring a suit or cast a vote, so someone must answer on its behalf.

- A1 Accountability is in place before deployment.** Before an algorithm makes or shapes a decision, whoever deploys it puts accountability mechanisms in place. Three questions need answers first. Who is accountable? How can the people affected reach them and raise a harm? Who takes over if the accountable person leaves or the organisation closes? If any answer is missing, the system does not go live. “The model decided” is never an answer.
- A2 Move at the speed of trust.** A model can change a land-use decision quickly. A forest shows the consequences over seasons or generations. The longer a decision’s effects last, the more review it gets before it takes effect.
- A3 People ratify the decision.** An algorithm can propose a decision. A person or a group decides whether it goes ahead, and they need enough time, information and authority to change it or reject it. Rejecting a proposal carries no penalty. Approval does not count if it comes after the system has already acted, or if nobody had time to review the proposal.
- A4 Make decisions as interpretable as possible.** Each decision shows where it came from: the data it used, where that data came from and which model version made the proposal. A decision log records what the system proposed, who ratified it and why. The log is kept for as long as the decision’s effects last. Interpretability tools show which inputs mattered most, such as the satellite images behind a deforestation alert. With all of this, the people ratifying a decision and the people affected by it can check the reasoning.

C

PRINCIPLE THREE

Consent

People and communities keep a standing right to say no.

- C1 Free, prior and informed consent.** A system is used on a territory, or with a community's data, only after the people concerned agree. Before they decide, they learn how their data will be used, in plain terms and in their own language, and nobody pressures them.
- C2 Remain unmodeled.** People and communities can refuse to be modeled at all, and refusing costs them nothing.
- C3 Credible exit.** People and communities can leave a system or its operator at any time, and leaving is easy enough that the option is real. They take their data, their records and their identity with them and lose nothing they have built.

E

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Equity

The benefits and burdens of a decision are shared fairly among the people it affects.

- E1 Fair along the whole chain.** Check who is missing from the data, who the decision serves and who lives with its impact. A fair model trained on skewed data still fails.
- E2 Share the value.** People whose data or land feeds a decision get a share of the value it creates.
- E3 Credible neutrality.** The rules behind a decision do not name or favour particular people, places or companies, and anyone can check this by reading them. The rules are public, simple enough to verify and rarely changed.

SIGNATORIES

Sign the PACE principles

By signing, we endorse the PACE principles for deploying AI in environmental decision-making.

NAME	ORGANISATION	SIGNATURE

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in environmental decision-making



Give your feedback

Vote on each principle, suggest changes and add what is missing. Scan the code or go to

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