

13th RMER CONFERENCE

2.–4.9.2026 AT LEUPHANA UNIVERSITY, LÜNEBURG

PRME Principles for Responsible
Management Education
CHAPTER DACH


LEUPHANA
School of Management and
Technology

Track Title

Making Science Great Again - Defending, Reclaiming and Reimagining the Public Role of Sustainability Research

Track Chairs

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Keywords

Sustainability Science; Academic Freedom; Public Scholarship; Climate Neutrality; Responsible Management Education

Track Description

In recent years, sustainability science and climate research have increasingly become subjects of political contestation, polarization, and strategic misrepresentation. Public trust in science is challenged, sustainability commitments are diluted, and short-term economic narratives are often positioned against ecological responsibility. Against this backdrop, the proposed panel discussion “Making Science Great Again” seeks to critically examine how scholars in sustainability and responsible management education can reclaim, defend, and reimagine the societal role of science.

The track directly engages with the overarching conference theme “Reclaim, Resist, Reimagine.” It asks: How can we reclaim the normative foundations of science as a public good? How do we resist anti-scientific populism, green backlash, and the instrumentalization of research? And how can we reimagine the role of management scholars as public intellectuals and institutional change agents?

The panel will invite researchers and academic activists who have publicly articulated positions on sustainability and climate responsibility. Potential contributors include signatories of the open letter “Climate Neutrality is Europe’s Greatest Economic Opportunity”, representatives of Scientists for Future, and scholars engaged in the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) community. Further invitations could extend to contributors to The Club of Rome, or authors associated with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The discussion will be structured around three thematic pillars:

1. Science Under Pressure: Political and Institutional Backlash

Recent developments in Europe and beyond show growing resistance against sustainability agendas in academia and business. Budget cuts, ideological reframing of climate neutrality as economic threat, and the rise of “anti-woke” discourses affect research funding and curricular priorities. The panel will analyze how such pressures reshape responsible management education and what institutional strategies can safeguard academic freedom and evidence-based policymaking.

2. From Neutrality to Responsibility: Should Scientists Advocate?

The classical ideal of value-neutral science is increasingly questioned when fundamental values are at risk and neutrality lead to false balance. Should sustainability scholars remain detached observers, or do planetary boundaries and social tipping points imply a moral duty to speak out? Drawing on literature on post-normal science (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993), transformative science (Schneidewind 2015), and public scholarship, the panel will debate the legitimacy, risks, and limits of scientific advocacy.

3. Reimagining Impact: Beyond Publications and Rankings

If science is to be “made great again,” impact metrics must extend beyond journal rankings and citation indices. How can business schools incentivize societal engagement, transdisciplinary collaboration, and long-term systemic thinking? What institutional reforms are necessary within accreditation systems and research evaluation frameworks to align with sustainability goals?

The format will combine short impulse statements (5–7 minutes each) with moderated discussion and interactive audience participation. We propose integrating live polling or short reflection prompts to engage early-career researchers and doctoral students in the debate.

Indicative Literature

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