

# Conceptualizing ‘Realistic Hope’: Implications for Tackling the Climate Crisis

**Sai Prashanth Ramachandran**

Audencia Business School

**Laurent Bertrandias**

Toulouse Business School

**Amir Grinstein**

Northeastern University/VU Amsterdam

**CAMILLA BARBAROSSA**

TBS Business School

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## **Abstract**

Wicked problems such as the climate crisis are persistent and uncertain, raising the question of whether hope can motivate meaningful action. Yet hope-based appeals often appear unrealistic and risk creating “false hope.” We therefore conceptualize realistic hope as a bridge between individual (e.g., academic) and societal goals (e.g., mitigating wicked problems) pursuit. Using 20 semi-structured interviews and a word-association task, we define realistic hope as: “a belief that a positive or partially positive future outcome is attainable amid challenges, coupled with an aspiration to act toward it.” Realistic hope emerges through recalibration: for individual goals, from adjusting excessive hope; and for societal goals, from responding to tangible actions by brands or policy makers that counter looming hopelessness. It lowers disappointment at the individual level and supports meaningful engagement at the societal level. We outline future research directions in consumer research.

**Track:** Social Responsibility & Ethics