

4 Expert interviews

4.1 Introduction

In this first research step, experts were interviewed to attain access to the current constitution of societal knowledge about climate change and -action. Questions asked related to this study's key concepts of responsibility, efficacy and knowing and either concerned the experts' own opinion or their take on what the public believed.

The aim was thus also to gain an insight regarding *to what extent*

- these experts conceived of responsibility in relation to or even in terms of efficacy,
- they valued the provision of (cognitive) information,
- they classified climate action as an inclusive project involving the whole of society – and –
- they observed diffusion of responsibility in society.

4.2 Statements concerning responsibility

This excerpt from one of the interviews immediately exemplifies the complexity the concept of responsibility conveys in connection with climate action:

I think, one takes responsibility for things one has not caused. And one causes things for which one does not take responsibility. I think, for a long time, this had been more or less congruent. And that's also how the term responsibility was meant [originally]. But, in the modern knowledge society, if you will, so at least since the sixties, these connections have become so complex that you can say: you are buying a piece of butter at a discounter. You are now responsible that nitrate levels¹ in the water are rising because this is why so many cows are on the

1 Nitrate contributes to climate change, see for instance: <https://www1.wdr.de/wissen/natur/nitrat-stickstoff-100.html> (accessed 16/09/2022).