lem now. So I am convinced, even if we practice 100 percent climate action, this will also not change the climate.

Extent of denial

In this group there existed several strands of collective denial with the most obvious being the unequivocal relativisation of climate change that generally culminated in climate scepticism and at times even outright climate change denial, most notably through the endorsement of a climate-related conspiracy theory that was either accepted and then built upon or ignored by the rest of the group. Even the participant who had reported that he himself practiced organic farming did not elucidate to climate action playing an important role in his professional everyday life.

Denial strategies

Particularly telling was also that the issue of climate change was collectively taken very personally by the group, one almost saw it as direct affront towards one's own occupation. At this point, generational and class conflicts played into what was being said (resentment towards elites) which resulted in further hardening of the fronts.

> **B6:** Recently there was this study, how many farmers travel by plane in comparison to, let's say, some office worker or something. There was this comparison, …
> **B?:** They have better lobbying. You never hear anything against air traffic.

6.6 I don't think flying per se is as bad as it is always made out to be – Mobility provider

This group was quite heterogeneous in terms of age (mid-twenties – late forties) and sex but its members had a similar educational level. Like the farmers, here the group members also collectively identified very strongly with their occupation. Climate change again (like with green startup and NGO) played a central role in their everyday working life, but in direct contrast to for example the group of the NGO, the moral aspect of the issue had not been internalised. Instead, personal freedom and the right to decide for oneself were underlined, which was reminiscent of statements made by those working for the green startup. Overall, one grappled intensely with the externally perceived contradiction between the particularly high emissions of the mobility sector on the one hand and the nature of the work of the sustainability department this group belonged to on the other. There was a lot of annoyance

amongst the group members since they themselves had been accused of hypocrisy on numerous occasions.

Table 9: Overview: The focus group of the mobility provider (sustainability division)

Group: Dimension	Mobility provider (sustainability division)
Responsibility	Relatively complex notion of responsibility, however at times strong rejection of individual responsibility; responsibility recognised in all spheres of life (work, private consumption); mobility perceived as achievement – society had responsibility to conserve it (incl. flying); Corporations were already behaving responsibly, thus no need for further political intervention
Efficacy	Both individuals and corporations perceived as efficacious when they voluntarily strive to protect the climate Politics also efficacious but should largely keep out and instead focus on solving the perceived conflict of 'jobs versus the climate' Besides, there was already a lot of effort invested to protect the climate, for example by corporate initiatives; here deep trust in technological solutions and innovation
Knowing	Extensive and in some ways sector specific knowledge; explicit rejection of 'alarmist' and emotional climate messages and strong preference for factual and rational knowledge
Denial tendecies	Denial pronounced, e.g., through the narrative of *a lot is already being done for the climate* Particular frustration about the frequent attribution of responsibility towards own industry

Responsibility

Widespread diffusion of responsibility amongst societal actors was what first came to mind in this group discussion when prompted about the responsibility for climate action. The group thought this was mainly due to laziness. Common sense should however result in the individual taking responsibility for oneself and one's direct surroundings instead. The following statement also indicated that the group had deeply reflected upon the notion of responsibility:

> **G3w**: I believe, and it sounds so lapidary, but every individual is responsible and that is the case in every role one has at each moment; so I am responsible here as someone from sustainability management, but I am just as responsible if I work in engineering or IT. And this also doesn't stop when I leave work, I go home and there

I also continue to carry responsibility. For me, climate change is actually too serious that the responsibility can be pushed into just one corner, I think this should be much more comprehensive, across all parties and all people (agreement).

It was easy for the members of this group to talk about responsibility for climate action in relation to mobility as it was obvious that this question had been playing a central role in their work. Initially, the individual was attributed considerable responsibility to reconsider mobility decisions due to climate change. When asked how the group itself approached flying, it was admitted that it was much appreciated by the members of this group and that one saw it as a technological attainment that one was not prepared to forego.

This was justified by seeking information on carbon offset options, which were however not used due to their alleged lack of transparency. Alternative mobility practices were in both cases, privately and professionally, deemed too time-consuming to be a viable alternative to flying. Here it was added that the employer had started to offset flying for work related reasons.

It was then reasoned that climate action had to be considered together with other matters and not everyone could afford to pay extra for climate action. One group member voiced that to her it seemed that in relation to mobility there was already a lot being done for climate action, also besides compensation, and those who could afford it were already *living their responsibility*.

Moreover, this group, similar to the green startup, was particularly offended by people 'pointing-the-finger', which they found presumptuous and had no time for. Furthermore, someone being told they had no right to drive an SUV by *Fridays for Future* protestors was vehemently rejected as *this was legally just not the case* the group thought. Accordingly, responsibility for climate action was thought to lie with the individual and should not be interfered with by others. Interestingly, at the same time, the importance of the relational was however recognised, which is quite a contradiction:

> **G4w:** Well, society only works as a community and I think these status symbols like SUVs are important for people because this way they can show what they have achieved, […] yes, and it is their right of course to show it when they have achieved something.

One group member stated in relation to this: I am just not in favour of everything being completely overregulated.

Thus, this group did not believe that politics needed to endorse further legislation when it came to climate action. It was also said that there was already a lot of responsibility taken by the corporate sector and that it could not necessarily be expected that this would be expanded as companies were exposed to many economic

pressures. In relation to the corporate sphere, the moral imperative to protect the climate was again not endorsed by this group (like in relation to individuals): green-washing was deemed acceptable if the net effect was positive for the climate. One did not appreciate too much criticism in relation to corporate efforts for climate action as in the eyes of the group many were already pouring their heart into finding new ways to advance it.

So whilst the group had this quite nuanced concept of responsibility, it was at the same time still deemed a free and personal decision (like it was the case with the green startup). This allowed the respondents to deny the direct consequences of (their) mobility practices, which was necessary for reconciling the at first sight conflicting aspects of this group's occupation, namely the carbon-intensive mobility sector itself on the one hand and the sustainability focus of the department on the other (see chapter 2, Norgaard on cognitive dissonance):

> **I:** Flight shame, yes. What do you think of that?
> **G2w:** Yes… Sorry… (rolls eyes)
> (Talking over each other)
> **G3w:** If you feel shame for flying, you also have to feel shame for eating meat and buying at H&M and driving…

Beyond this, it is particularly telling how in this group this new phenomenon of flight shame was perceived to have originated:

> **G4w:** So I generally find it interesting, how this emerged and how it spread, this, this idea of shame, that is very much triggered externally. So it is not the case that people experienced this feeling of shame themselves and this was then discovered, or something, it is more that this is being imposed onto someone, societally, through a movement, […]
> **G3w:** … yeah, that is quite crazy.

This excerpt indicates that the members of this focus group experienced the imperative to protect the climate as something that was being imposed onto them from the outside and not as something they themselves had internalised.

Overall, the group seemed to struggle profoundly with this contradiction that it had also been repeatedly confronted with in several social situations. One was particularly disturbed by having repeatedly been accused quite aggressively of hypocrisy in relation to flying. Thus, the group wished that the debate were carried out less emotionally and that in one's private life one would not continuously be on the receiving end of such accusations. In relation to this, one group member commiserated that the employer's mobility sector was currently generally treated as scapegoat in relation to climate matters.

Everyday efficacy

The group reported that they were observing many people being overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the climate crisis. Accordingly, it was emphasised that feeling as if oneself could make a difference was a necessary precondition for climate action. People also needed to be given ideas and information regarding how to begin reducing CO_2. Besides, an individual's relational efficacy was recognised like in several of the previous group discussions:

> Many business executives are today being briefed by their children [...]. It doesn't matter where the impulse is coming from. [...] and if it is only that I have impinged on my Dad and said, You are the boss, do something! (laughter)

Corporate entities were generally perceived as efficacious, including the group's own employer. Here, it was believed that corporate efforts were neither adequately seen nor acknowledged by the public. It was voiced that the public was by and large unreceptive towards the climate efforts made by the group's company and that the population only wanted to be told sensational, negative messages in relation to the issue.

Politicians were also deemed efficacious. Deviating from the other group discussions, here the participants believed that politicians were serious about climate action and already doing what they could, given the many social and economic hurdles they faced.

> **I:** So why else are we failing (to adequately protect the climate)?
> **G3w:** I don't think we are failing.
> **I:** Okay.
> **G3w:** ... it just takes longer, there is a lot of impatience.
> **G2w:** Yes.
> **I:** Aha.
> **G2w:** Exactly, that's also what I think. I think this should not be looked at so onesidedly. Yes, climate action, of course, and yes, something must be done, fast. But you also have to look at it from the other side, [...] and that's also the politician's job. [...] Nothing's won when I put billions into climate action but then five [...] million people lose their jobs.

Interestingly, at a different point in the discussion, more comprehensive and democratic ways of approaching things were questioned, as this was thought to decrease politicians' scope for advancing climate action.

> **G2w:** [...] certain things should simply be decided and then the discussion should only happen afterwards. This probably sounds really bad but if I need to push something through fast, I don't need to start with great transparency and much

discussion and grassroots-democratic voting, I can skip that because nothing will ever be achieved that way.

It was also stated that politicians were habitually criticised because the climate debate was approached so negatively overall, but the critics themselves did not actually have better answers either. It was deemed unfair that they were calling politicians incompetent as they were in fact doing their own honest best for the climate.

Embodied information

Ultimately, one was fairly relaxed in the face of the climate crisis – the group thought that firstly, the issue was not necessarily as serious as it was being portrayed in some instances and secondly that there was already a lot being done to avert climate change. The group was in favour of discussing the issue less emotionally and more rationally and fact-based. This was mainly because due to the nature of their profession they repeatedly found themselves to be on the receiving end of emotional responsibilisation in society, which they vehemently rejected:

> **G4w**: I think many people who are not 100 % informed just very much feel like bashing and then they join into those protests and I think we need more education on both sides, also to have a bit less emotion in it (the debate). I'm personally not a fan of such entirely emotional discussions, I also don't find them that interesting in my private life, I much prefer it if it goes into a more fact-based direction, because it A) relaxes the situation and B) makes you grasp arguments more clearly and so you can objectively try to analyse the situation and arrive at a shared opinion.

The group also firmly believed in the value of technological innovation.

Extent of denial

The members of this group thought that flying for work presented a professional necessity. In the private sphere, flying was deemed the personal and free choice of each individual. One did not have a problem with a frequent flyer status embodying a status symbol. The group noticeably struggled to align its occupational focus on climate action with the climate impact of the mobility sector, which it tried to reconcile through the use of several denial strategies:

Denial strategies

Therefore, and very similarly to the group of the green startup, flying was ultimately still approached in a positive way, despite this pronounced elite dilemma. It was seen

as admirable when someone had made it so far professionally that they managed to gain a frequent flyer status. Moreover, this group did absolutely not want to be attributed responsibility or be deemed hypocritical by others in relation to climate action.

> **G3w:** [...] (if you have a job) that brings a lot of flying with it and you can feed your family with it because it simply is your job, then, yes...
> **G4w:** These people also really work a lot. Such people, who have such cards (frequent flyer status)
> **G3w:** yes. (laughter)
> **G4w:** You don't get those for free just on the side...
> **G3w:** Yes.
> **G4w:** I'm not jealous here.
> **G3w:** And maybe this is somebody who offsets each and every single flight. And, erm, eats vegan the rest of the time, and, erm, would never buy fast fashion [...]. You don't know this, so...

Especially this last statement illustrates the efforts by this group to justify, relativise and defend flying.

> **G2w:** [...] I don't think flying per se is as bad as it is always made out to be. Because the question is, how do I fly, yes. Because you also have to consider, when I fly somewhere, then I have a four kilometre start- and landing strip, four kilometres sealed land. When I take the train, I have a sealed area of thousands of kilometres.
> **I:** Hm-mmh.
> **G2w:** I have thousands of kilometres of residents being impacted by the noise and the train also doesn't run completely without CO_2.

Another denial strategy was the underscoring of the harm other practices were doing to the climate.

6.7 I have not once heard the word 'sustainability' since working here – Industrial enterprise

The participants of this group were all students who were working part-time or doing an internship in different departments of the company whilst still studying at university. Therefore, the group was very homogenous in terms of age and educational level. In terms of cultural tendencies, the group was however not homogenous – different cultural orientations came together here (performance culture of an industrial enterprise, culture of a transformation division, green growth ideology, questioning of capitalism). One participant delineated that consumers were lim-