

2 Literature review and theoretical foundations

2.1 Introduction

It is often implicitly assumed that climate action has to be undertaken as an inclusive project involving the whole of society. Yet it is argued that, first and foremost, societal responsibility for climate action has to be contemplated in terms of the actual power an agent holds. Here, power is conceptualised in terms of efficacy – i.e., control or influence over outcomes. The amount of (different types, as will be explained later) of knowledge and information at an agent's disposal also shapes their power over outcomes.

Since responsibility is such a deeply relational concept, it cannot be contemplated in an individual sense or at the individual level. Impacts of information campaigns that seek to motivate individuals to act 'climate responsibly' by increasing knowledge about the threat of climate change thus mostly remain below expectations (the notorious *value-action gap*). Here, meaningful climate action requires attention to societal attributions of responsibility and experiences of efficacy, to avoid an over-emphasis on factual scientific knowledge and a widespread blindness to people's everyday experiences and practices.

The questions asked are therefore: who in society is given responsibility for climate action? Who in society holds the power to really make a difference in this respect (= efficacy)? Is there a discrepancy between these two attributions? And, lastly, what role do information and knowledge play in achieving efficacious climate action?

The next section begins by grappling with the study's three core concepts: responsibility, efficacy and knowing, and, importantly, their concatenation, which served as point of departure for an extensive literature review. Thereafter and building on Kari Marie Norgaard's ground-breaking inquiry into the links between climate change, emotions, and everyday life, it is argued for a culturally sensitive social-scientific analysis of climate action. This fuses the concepts together in a novel, original conceptualisation of climate cultures and their variations in German society.