

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 CO₂.

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-

ited by diverging purchasing power, as you had to be able to afford climate action. In order to approach this dilemma, she herself often bought clothes 'second-hand'. Overall, the responsibility question's multidimensionality was recognised. Another group member described the current situation as one of radical change and thus tried to justify climate action not yet living up to what was needed. Someone else stated that this was mainly due to the current economic system. Thus, climate action played an (at times quite important) role for part of the group, whilst one participant clearly stated that she did not consider herself responsible. Thus, the attitudes towards matters related to the climate were comparatively heterogeneous. At the same time, the group members were well aware of being influenced by their own respective social circles. Like the two previous groups of the green startup and the mobility provider, this group did also consider it counterproductive to get involved in or voice one's opinion on other people's climate-relevant behaviour, since it was ultimately deemed a personal decision.

Table 10: Overview: *The industrial enterprise focus group*

Group: Dimension	Industrial enterprise
Responsibility	The whole of society carried responsibility, in particular corporate and political spheres; differing time scales of climate issues and solutions determined attribution of responsibility, individual responsibility at times rejected
Efficacy	High efficacy expectation of oneself, both individual and in relation to work sphere; here, in everyday work life conventional and climate-harmful behaviour not being questioned by other employees (although the working students themselves did so partially); large companies' potential efficacy thought to be substantial, but demand created by individual consumers also deemed influential
Knowing	Quite comprehensive knowledge concept, recognition of influence of social group; trust in innovation and technology pronounced; some statements critical of capitalism
Denial tendencies	Group very heterogeneous; responsibility outright denied by one member; trust in 'green growth' expressed by another, condoned emissions as a necessary relict of not having completed the transformation to a 'zero carbon future'; collectively, medium level of denial

Responsibility

This group believed that decision-makers in the political and corporate sphere were particularly responsible for climate action. At the same time, the respondents had a quite individualised concept of responsibility. Initially, it was directly stressed that responsibility for climate action should not be pushed away:

G1w: [...] issues such as the phasing out of nuclear energy, ending coal, these are all things that are far, far away in the future, so I say, things that concern the individual right here and right now, they have to be carried by everyone themselves.

This individualist view was then extended to encompass the different roles the individual carried, e.g., as a private agent but also as an employee of a large corporation:

G4m: I think it's important that you contribute in all possible spheres.

Then it was observed that climate action was a very polarising issue with some members of society simply declaring that it didn't concern them, whilst the group's consensus was that everybody had some responsibility to get involved. In relation to flying the group disagreed: one member said that the issue concerned her, another stated that she had flown twice that year¹, another stated she was indifferent and had taken several flights (8–10). The last participant also admitted to flying a lot (to visit his family in South America) while experiencing pronounced *flight shame* when doing so (also 8–10 flights). The group was annoyed that in Germany, travelling by train was often more expensive than flying so that as a student this more climate-friendly alternative was often out of reach. The description of the many perceived benefits of travelling to distant destinations by plane by one group member illustrated the extent to which flying played an important role in her life. She called flying her *biggest vice* which points towards her experienced ambivalence as she saw it as a means to bring people together and develop an understanding for other cultures.

In the end, both flying and driving an SUV (for 'long distances') were considered a necessity in people's professional everyday lives and the comforts they afforded were important means to be able to work productively the next day. At the same time, it was vehemently taken issue with for example influencers behaving inconsistently and dishonestly, for instance when they *preached climate action* but then also took many flights. Very similar to the group of the mobility provider, one member tried to justify certain climate-harmful practices:

1 Outbound and return flight = one flight; the interview was taken in October.

G1w: [...] on the other hand, maybe there are people who drive an SUV when they go long distance and then there are also just as many people who take their, I don't know, VW Up or whatever, to go each and any distance in the city. And those who have the SUV maybe say that they only drive it long distance and leave it at home the rest of the time. So I think either you extend this to driving in general or you...

Furthermore, the demands made by the *Fridays for Future* protestors were seen as problematic, immature, far removed from reality and at times hypocritical. It was not anybody else's business how one lived their life, which in turn pointed to an extremely individualised notion of responsibility.

G2w: Well, when you get older, other things become important. You think more about the future in the sense of that you have to make money, you have to maintain a certain standard of living, an apartment and a car, and all that was not an issue when I was 13, I didn't think about what kind of car I would drive one day either or which job I would do. So then I didn't really have a clear plan. But when you're about to graduate and you know: okay, I am going to have to enter my working life, then such things take a much more concrete form, and yes...

G1w (points to picture of the protest where a sign has been drawn on an amazon cardboard): and this is also great, climate change on the one hand, and then the amazon logo next to it, that's the kind of thing, ..., this person still orders things there that were then driven through half of Germany, but still....

The group perceived responsibility as a multidimensional issue however:

G4m: I am convinced it is the individual, because a company consists of individuals. And politics (consists of individuals). And I believe everything starts with one's personal attitude.

G3w: Okay, that's hard because it is a bit of a chicken and egg situation, because of course the consumer determines what a company produces and at the same time the consumer cannot buy anything the company does not produce. So if the company says from the start, we only produce climate-friendly things, then the consumer has no other choice. So I think at the end, maybe the corporation has more influence.

Ultimately, the industrial sector was ascribed particular responsibility, which probably was related to the group members being employed by this company.

Everyday efficacy

The industrial company the group worked for did however not remain true to this responsibility the participants thought. The group reported that there was not very

much budget attributed to climate-relevant matters when compared to for example measures for process optimisation. One group member, who worked for the transformation division, did then however emphasise that in his view the company was already doing a lot for climate action. It was concluded that the rest of the group worked more on the cost side of things and the transformation division was the only department in the company that actually had a budget for such matters:

G3w: I have not once heard the word 'sustainability' in my department since I have worked here. [...] I mean, I remember one conversation where Greta was used as a positive example for all she has managed to achieve. [...] I do have the feeling that there is an awareness and that it is being talked very liberally about such matters and there are colleagues who drive electro-cars [...], although I have to say, when you meet some colleagues who are a little more distant (in the company structure), and recently there was this debate about Fridays for Future and many actually think, and I was a little surprised by that, that Greta is, that she is being instrumentalised and many think there is an agenda behind it, yes, that's definitely the purport to an extent.

When prompted, the group considered these theories ridiculous and absurd. One group member then went on to say that in her everyday work life conventional and climate-harmful behaviour was not being questioned at all. The colleague who worked for the transformation division did however believe that the company cared about climate action but that it could only get so far and then it was on politics to set the concrete regulatory frameworks. Here the group member who was least involved with climate action objected that large industrial entities like their company even often had the means to escape regulations.

G1w: So I think there is always this kind of gap between what our climate cabinets decide on the one hand and what is actually being implemented by industry in the end. [...]

G2w: And I mean, politics almost always complies with what industry wants. I mean, how successful a government is is being measured by how well the economy is doing and so of course governments do what large corporations want.

Where companies made efforts towards climate action, they often actually only wanted to upgrade their image. Nevertheless, the efficacy large companies could potentially have was thought to be substantial. Here, demand created by individual consumers was also deemed influential and one participant said that consumers did have the responsibility to actually fulfil this role. In terms of the efficacy of the political sphere the group did not agree: on the one hand, politics was deemed to have particularly large influence, on the other side one did not trust that politicians were that serious about climate action since not much had been achieved so far.

Politics was perceived to have been going back on its promises and delaying its own deadlines instead of making true progress. This was due to too many people propagating too many different interests and lobbyism being too powerful.

Ultimately it was concluded that the individual carried the highest responsibility whilst the most efficacy lay with industrial entities. At the end of the day, politics was attested the principal responsibility to become active for the climate, but the group did by and large severely doubt that this would happen given that politicians were mostly inefficacious due to their alleged incompetence. Only one member of the group disagreed by emphasising that she believed in some green politicians' authenticity and competence. She then said that politics had the biggest potential to make a difference as it could influence the individual and the corporate sphere, but then she also agreed that this was happening too slowly and unsatisfactorily.

It was generally believed that it was counterproductive to get involved in or voice one's opinion on other people's climate-relevant behaviour, since it was ultimately deemed, again, a personal decision. Despite being known for precisely such pointing-the-finger the group detested, *Fridays for Future* protestors were still deemed influential and believed to have legitimacy in society.

Embodied information practices

The members of this group were well aware of the influence their respective social environments had on their decision-making:

I: Other opinions on the climate cabinet? Is it going to make a difference?

G1w: I think definitely not, but my thinking is of course always impacted by the kind of thinking that is being conveyed here (in the company).

The group thought that innovation could certainly be a potential solution for the issue of climate change. The media was thought to be the main source of information about climate change, which the group looked down upon since true scientific knowledge was what was considered truly necessary instead. *Fridays for Future* were then criticised as the group doubted they were supplied with sufficient scientific information that was initially seen as the only trustworthy source of knowledge. It was however then admitted that this kind of information was often too dry to reach people, therefore movies could have more of an impact. So emotional messages were definitely also seen as efficacious whilst at the same time, the role of factual knowledge was being stressed. Overall, the group considered itself much better informed than the average population:

G1w: The average person who works in production [...], also here in our company, those production workers will talk to each other, but, ... [...]

G4m: And there is also going to be a lot of ‘fake news’ being spread.

G1w: Definitely, yes. Definitely.

The group displayed cultural leanings that were both for and against more climate action.

G3w: [...] So I do think that it is more hip and cool than weak and laughable (to be pro climate action).

I: Yes?

G2w: So I think, this completely and entirely depends on in which social circle one moves about in.

Extent of denial

This group combined several cultural tendencies and climate action played an (at times quite important) role for the majority of the group, whilst one participant clearly stated that she did not consider herself responsible since her concept of responsibility did simply not include climate rationales.

Denial strategies

One group member considered the current situation a state of exception because of the transformation that society needed to go through and in this way attempted to justify where climate action was so far not going far enough:

G4m: So we are going through this radical change. There are initiatives that aim for a better future but right now we are still very dirty. And I think these contrasts are not rare to find. [...] They are already part of the transformation, these contrasts.

He then argued that the government had to play an important role in instigating such transformative change, but not thereafter (then it should not interfere any longer), which the recent example of France had shown (*yellow vest protests*).

G4m: When the government declares such an aim that has to be achieved and then the population says “no, no, no, that’s too expensive, [...] stop!” I think that’s what happens when you only count on the power of the government. But for the transition I do think that taxes... and that the ground can be evened a bit for climate-friendly alternatives and conventional technologies that are harmful to the environment.

Here, one participant said that there simply reigned other priorities in the industrial sphere which was mainly due to the current economic system as a third group

member pointed out. She went on to say that some studies had shown that continued economic growth would always remain unsustainable and in order to really achieve change, there would have to be *negative growth*. She was however the only one in the group who thought this would be sensible and present many advantages such as more time for private matters. The rest of the group did however not deem this desirable or realistic. One participant was convinced of green growth being the solution to reach the transformation towards a *zero-carbon future*.

6.8 Flying is indeed something that I don't prohibit for myself – Teachers

Table 11: Overview: The focus group of teachers

Group: Dimension	Teachers
Responsibility	Climate action seen as task for the whole of society (state, corporations, individuals); own occupational group carried special responsibility due to its role in education; thus responsible for leading with a good example, being a role model for younger generations; students took responsibility (e.g., <i>Fridays for Future</i>) – but a lot of them also just follow along (to get out of school)
Efficacy	Relatively pronounced expectation of individual efficacy, at the same time moderate trust in collective action for meaningful climate action (e.g., this accusation of following along within <i>Fridays for Future</i>)
Knowing	Very well informed and reflected, focus on factual knowledge, value agency gap raised (in relation to own person but also <i>Fridays for Future</i>); consideration of the practice of travelling long distance, its educational effect as opposed to its consequences for the climate
Denial tendencies	Little denial, overall reflected and strong emphasis on own responsibility

The male-female ratio in this group was balanced and the educational level was homogeneous. Some participants stood at the beginning of their professional lives, some were middle-aged. Climate responsibility was practiced only to an extent in these teachers' everyday lives. Members of the group were for instance willing to pay extra for climate-friendly clothes, but found the supply that was being offered to be very limited up to this point. Textile production in countries with low labour costs was criticised due to there being poor labour conditions – climate reasons were not raised, however. One group member stated that flying was still more important to