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# **Introduction and Personal Reflection**

## **Abstract**

This chapter provides a rationale for the book, along with the method used and a personal reflection on how the book idea evolved. The central arguments of the book are outlined, along with the structure of the book. The book argues that economic growth and environmental protection do not go together and that the Earth is being violated through the masculine practice of domination. The book embarks on a multi-tier analysis of ecofeminist theory, critical (ecofeminist) reading of corporate social responsibility and then also an analysis of the national press in the UK, the Daily Mail and the Guardian and their coverage of CSR, economic growth and environmental affairs (food waste, plastic and global warming), thus showing how the neoliberal policy of economic growth and the free market is perpetuated through news coverage of environmental affairs and CSR.

The idea for this book did not start from a large project or a PhD thesis, but from a combination of various researches I've done since 2014. I first became aware of the corporate social responsibility concept when I accepted a job at Leeds Beckett University in 2014. I embarked on a second PhD and the original topic was in the field of cultural diplomacy and cultural imperialism following my first edited book (Topić & Rodin, 2012). Upon starting a job, I soon realised that Universities are privatised and capitalist to the point that objectives, metrics and KPIs are the new divine in a marketised and liberalised higher education system such as the British one, and I was advised (in good faith) to change my PhD topic so to fit more into School's research agenda as this could then be useful for School's REF policy. As a large part of the research agenda in Leeds Business School is centred on studying corporate social responsibility (CSR), I was advised to consider a topic around this area. Since I came from journalistic professional background and experience in media research (including a first PhD tackling the role of the press in national movements), this naturally led towards a thesis studying CSR and the media, and I researched the coverage of the sugar debate and the supermarket industry in the British press (2010-2015) using an agenda-setting theory of the media. I argued that there are an anti-business hostility and bias in media writing and sourcing of stories on sugar and supermarkets where the press promotes a CSR agenda and actively advocates for the sugar agenda and pressurises supermarkets to subscribe to this agenda and engage in what I saw as undermining their own business model and refraining from selling and making a profit (Topić, 2020; Topić & Tench, 2018). I instantly found myself in cognitive dissonance because, from one side, I agreed with Milton Friedman and his view that

corporations are not responsible for the wellbeing of society but only obliged to work for profit (Friedman, 1962; 1970). On the other side, I consider myself a socialist only to find myself supporting one of the most prominent capitalist names in the world of business and economic theory.

In the same way as with CSR, I found myself doing liberal feminist studies of looking at the glass ceiling and pay gap (Tench & Topić, 2018; Tench et al, 2017) and once again I felt discomfort for only tackling stuff I find fundamentally capitalist. Then I started looking at how women communicate where I initially did not find differences between men and women (Tench et al, 2017), but this did not grasp under the surface either. So, I went back to the comfort zone of media research and looked at women in the media, which resulted in a programme of projects I was leading, studying lived experiences of women, the office culture and leadership in journalism, public relations and advertising industries. Throughout these explorations, I embraced a Difference Approach (Tannen, 1995; 1990; 1986; West & Zimmerman, 1983; Vukoičić, 2013; Merchant, 2012; Yule, 2006; Maltz & Borker, 1982) and Bourdieu's (2007) habitus theory, and I started to develop the concept of blokishness and cultural masculinities in these industries (Topić, 2018; 2020; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c), thus tackling more structural issues with the equality and the fact women work in a masculine culture and face expectations they cannot always meet (see also Mills, 2014; 2017; Gallagher, 2002; Ross, 2001; North, 2009, 2009b; 2016; 2016a; Lobo et al, 2017; Alvesson, 2013; 1998; Acker, 1990; 2006; 2009; Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Topić, 2018; 2020; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). The Difference Approach is thus something that derived from my initial work on differences between men and women because while initially I just looked at the European Communications Monitor data and argued that women non-stereotypically show a preference towards what is normally considered as a masculine form of communication, which effectively refuted the Difference Approach (Tench et al, 2017), further research took me towards embracing it by discontinuing looking at large data and engaging in qualitative research, talking to women and studying cultural masculinities (Topić, 2018; 2020; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). This research programme using the Difference Approach is relevant for this book because the Difference Approach has a link to ecofeminism in a sense that authors working in this field argue women and men are different and do things differently, yet organisations and societies, in general, seem to work in a masculine way (Nicolotti Squires, 2016; Mills, 2017, 2014; Topić, 2018; 2020; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c). The works on women in journalism are particularly relevant because women have merged into the masculine culture of newspapers (Gallagher, 2002; Mills, 2014;

2017; Topić, 2018; Ross, 2001; North, 2009, 2009b, 2016, 2016a; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021) and this opens up a question whether we can expect any meaningful change in journalism practice if both men and women embrace masculinity. In journalism, this means hard news reporting and newsrooms remaining places for blokes, which impedes women from taking a stance different from the one of men (Gallagher, 2002; Mills, 2014; Ross, 2001; North, 2009, 2009b; 2016; 2016a; Topić, 2018; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021), and this has relevance for women because women have historically been more inclined to embrace environmentalism (Mallory, 2006; Brownhill & Turner, 2019; Goldstein, 2006; Leahy, 2003; McStay & Dunlap, 1983; Poole & Harmon Zeigter, 1985; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986; Steger & Witt, 1988; Diani, 1989; Schahn & Holzer, 1990; Blaikie, 1992; Franklin & Rudig, 1992; Stern et al, 1993; McAllister, 1994; Hampel et al, 1996; Tranter, 1996; Godfrey, 2005; Shiva, 1989; Brownhill, 2010; Godfrey, 2008; Holy, 2007; Mann, 2011; Stoddart & Tindall, 2011; Giacomini, 2014; Kirk, 1998; McMahon, 1997; Salleh, 1984; Topić, 2020d; Topić et al, 2021), however, as they work in a masculine environment the question is to what extent can we expect women to drive change when journalism remains one of the bastions of masculinity.

Ecofeminism encompasses, in my view, elements of both radical and socialist feminism (as I have argued in some of my works, Topić, 2020a; Topić et al, 2021) and nevertheless, there is a branch of ecofeminism called socialist ecofeminism. This approach is particularly suitable for analysing the CSR discourse and the media agenda on CSR-related topics because ecofeminism is fundamentally an anti-capitalist theory but the one, unlike for ecosocialist theory, that links capitalism with patriarchy and argues that the oppression of women and Nature are interlinked and “the late 20<sup>th</sup> century crises – social and environmental – are inevitable because of “masculine” values and behaviours. The keystone of this destructive patriarchalism is identified in the everyday notion that men represent the sphere of “humanity and culture”, while women, indigenes, children, animals, plants, and so on, are part of “nature” (...) Ecofeminists focus on the dominant Eurocentric industrial capitalist patriarchal formation and its material impacts” (Salleh, 2001, p. 109, emphasis in original; see also Salleh, 2000; Waldron, 2003; Sydee & Beder, 2001). In the case of CSR, this approach helps in understanding why CSR seems to be such a stalemate and the debate does not move forward from describing the phenomenon and making claims that CSR helps. Ecofeminism made me ask, *‘CSR helps but to whom and to do what precisely?’* Thus, through reading of ecofeminist critique of capitalism, I concluded that CSR must be studied in the context of capitalism because corporations are capitalist enterprises and we have to examine the concept of CSR

within a capitalist framework. What is more, journalism also needs to be examined in the context of capitalism because media organisations also nowadays profitable capitalist enterprises and are prone to influence from owners and other corporations because of advertising income (Sandoval, 2013; Mosco, 2009; Herman & McChesney, 1997; Garnham, 1998). Ecofeminist theory links capitalism with patriarchy (Saed, 2017; Brownhill & Turner, 2020; Sydee & Beder, 2001; Delveaux, 2001), thus proving a rounded up concept for the analysis.

When it comes to CSR, whilst the mainstream literature on CSR would have one believe that Milton Friedman (1962; 1970)<sup>1</sup> alone is a capitalist who wanted to protect corporations by indeed arguing it is not the responsibility of business to look after society<sup>2</sup>, I am arguing that

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<sup>1</sup> The term social responsibility (SR) gained prominence in academic debates during the 1960s when American economist Milton Friedman criticised proponents of the social responsibility concept. According to his opinion, social responsibility advocates were trying to dominate the system without an armed revolution (Friedman, 1962; 1970). Friedman believed corporations have to pay taxes and report to shareholders, while proponents of social responsibility initially advocated the protection of the environment, as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Since then, the concept of CSR turned into a stakeholder approach, where corporations are expected to consider the interests of all stakeholders, and not just shareholders as Friedman argued. In other words, the stakeholder approach argues, that corporations must think of the interests of customers, suppliers and employees, to be seen as socially responsible (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The majority of works published on the issue of corporate social responsibility (or social responsibility of business) only mentions Friedman's understanding of the business ethics presented in chapter VIII (Monopoly and the Social Responsibility of Business and Labor, pp. 119-137) of his famous book *Capitalism and Freedom* (see e.g. Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Falck & Heblich, 2007; Golob & Bartlett, 2007; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Bowie, 1991). By doing that, his thoughts are taken out of context because one cannot understand Friedman's strong opposition to imposing philanthropy or any similar form of obligation on businesses if a whole view is not taken into account, and if his view on liberalism as a doctrine and the notion of freedom that is central to liberalism is not considered. A notable exception when it comes to analysing Friedman is Bowie (2012) who also recognized misunderstanding of his work albeit not when it comes to defending liberalism as a doctrine. Bowie (2012) emphasised that Friedman's influence on debates on CSR should not be neglected and that "academic defenders of corporate social responsibility and business leaders that practice it needs either to refute Friedman or accommodate him" (p. 2). This is indeed the truth, and there is a lack of academic literature seriously considering Friedman or offering criticism of CSR as a concept, and asking why is it the role of business to help society by going beyond laws? There is even less work on the role of the media and on the gender problem, and it seems as if the whole field is taken for granted, with very little critical research on CSR. The shareholder/stockholder approach (shareholder hereafter) has been advocated by Milton Friedman (1962) who positioned himself as a defender of liberalism, and this defence of liberalism and opposition to what he perceived as socialism is at the

mainstream scholarship is preserving the capitalist status quo and further contributing towards marketisation and liberalisation of the economy which then leads to environmental degradation by supporting CSR initiatives that serve as a smokescreen to the fact corporations still enforce consumerism that damages the environment and perpetuates inequality of women, working classes and indigenous population through mass exploitation, over-production and creating the need that simply isn't there through corporate advertising and marketing. Nevertheless, by being forced to spend on CSR, companies further run for profit to make up for money lost in these initiatives, which does not serve society as the environment is constantly degraded and humanity is faced with climate change. It would be, of course, naïve to think corporations would not run after profit had they not had to donate to CSR due to pressures from various NGO actors and the public on social media (through the influence of mainstream media that sets the agenda), however, my thesis is that CSR can only exist in the context of capitalism where companies work for profit and then donate part of it, with which CSR becomes a fundamental part of what I call the wheel of neoliberalism and I am arguing that CSR has saved capitalism as it emerged at the time of unease and criticism of corporations (Cutrone, n.d.; Waterhouse, 2017; Pillay, 2015; Nunn, 2014; Gamble, 1989; Jessop, 2003; Gareau, 2013). Sandoval (2013) argued that "it is unlikely that corporations will voluntarily refrain from irresponsible behaviour if this undermines their profit interests. This, therefore, points at the limits of voluntary CSR. The idea of voluntary corporate self-regulation is deeply flawed; it strengthens rather than limits corporate power, it depoliticises the quest for a responsible economy, and it ideologically mask how corporate interests, competition and power structures are related to irresponsible conduct" (p. 51). In addition to that, Banerjee (2014) argued that "the limits arise from both the structure of the modern corporation and the political economy in which it is embedded. The current structure and purpose of corporations is designed to deliver shareholder value, which limits a corporation's ability to pursue social goals" (p. 3).

In my view, the problem is fundamentally in the capitalist and neoliberal system and the corporate/capitalist media that promote capitalist policies, and the issue of blokishness and

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centre of his understanding of business ethics. While much of Friedman's work is concentrated on the notion of philanthropy, which is where CSR originates, the definition has moved forward and thus today CSR goes that far to include interests of anyone considered a stakeholder whereas philanthropy is seen in a cynical view and considered as PR or greenwash.

masculinity in newsrooms play a role in this process. Media play a fundamental role in enforcing CSR discourse and while on the outset they appear to campaign for environmentalism, I am arguing that this is not the case. I am arguing that media serve in preserving the status quo of capitalism through coverage that can be defined as an attempt to create better capitalism that allegedly cares for people and the environment and where economic growth can somehow go hand in hand with environmental protection and businesses can solve social problems. I am arguing that this is impossible and that CSR is just one part of the capitalist policies, which are pervasive in society and perpetuated by media coverage and this is visible in the coverage of CSR-related initiatives such as environmental coverage. Nevertheless, I am arguing that whilst women generally show more interest in engaging in environmental affairs (Mallory, 2006; Brownhill & Turner, 2019; Goldstein, 2006; Leahy, 2003; McStay & Dunlap, 1983; Poole & Harmon Zeigter, 1985; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986; Steger & Witt, 1988; Diani, 1989; Schahn & Holzer, 1990; Blaikie, 1992; Franklin & Rudig, 1992; Stern et al, 1993; McAllister, 1994; Hampel et al, 1996; Tranter, 1996; Godfrey, 2005; Shiva, 1989; Brownhill, 2010; Godfrey, 2008; Holy, 2007; Mann, 2011; Stoddart & Tindall, 2011; Giacomini, 2014; Kirk, 1998; McMahon, 1997; Salleh, 1984; Topić, 2020d; Topić et al, 2021), in the case of media, this activism is largely lacking due to blokishness and the lack of women in business sections, and journalism and the media generally remain a domain for men and masculine practice. Therefore, by capitalism and news media being inherently masculine where even women who succeed have to merge to blokish culture, no change is in sight unless the gender dynamic and expectations in the journalism profession change. To that end, I am arguing that whilst we do not need the CSR concept because it only perpetuates capitalism and hides the real problem of consumerism and environmental degradation, we do need socially responsible media because media have a different role in society and should not be driven by profit and interests of owners, editors, or journalists. In a nutshell, I am rejecting the CSR concept whilst concurrently endorsing the media social responsibility concept, both of which will be elaborated on in the book.

I am focusing on analysing media coverage of CSR and environmental affairs. I am looking at who writes about environmental affairs and in what way and also who and how writes about CSR and economic growth in media to show the interconnectedness of neoliberal policies of economic growth, the introduction of CSR and the view that environment and Nature can be managed, with liberal media and their coverage of these affairs. In other words, this book is first and foremost about neoliberalism and CSR being just one cog on a larger wheel of

neoliberalism with media coverage consistently showing the same line of argumentation embedded in neoliberalism, thus spanning across all debates, CSR, economic growth and environmental affairs. In even more words, the media are looking for environmental solutions by preserving capitalism and capitalist status quo, and while on the outset it appears they are anti-business, in reality, the criticism is only visible in the so-called dirty industries such as fossil fuels and coal but there is no meaningful criticism of capitalism and consumption as drivers of environmental degradation, with which they ultimately keep the capitalist system intact and CSR is there to keep companies in line as a useful smokescreen to avoid protests and discontent unseen since the 1970s and 1980s, which is when CSR got operationalised by neoliberal politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (Pillay, 2015). In the same way, as Thatcher thought businesses could solve social problems by asking them to help with youth unemployment (Moon, 2004; 2005), the media perpetuate this discourse by pushing companies to give more to societies, ultimately endorsing the politics of economic growth and draining of resources.

Thus, this book looks at how media report on CSR, economic growth and environmental affairs and makes sense of news media coverage on these issues and how media perpetuate capitalism. I am also looking at coverage of CSR as a concept and of three main elements of the environmental debate, which constitutes CSR policies. CSR originates from environmentalism and charitable giving where companies have historically given to causes to show goodwill and they also implemented policies to protect the environment. While there was a period of the shift towards stakeholder orientation of looking into how companies treat communities, suppliers, employees and everyone who could be seen as a stakeholder, recently, the CSR policies again shifted more strongly towards environmentalism, thus raising the question of whether CSR is indeed just a greenwash and whether companies only mirror the zeitgeist with their policies (Topić et al, 2020). Therefore, I am looking at the coverage of CSR, economic growth, food waste, global warming and plastic.

By media, I am focusing on the press as the form of media that still sets the public agenda and influences public debates and attitudes (McCombs, 2014; 2005; 2004; 2003; McCombs & Stroud, 2014; McCombs et al, 2011; Tan & Weaver, 2013)<sup>3</sup>. In that, I am arguing that the press,

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<sup>3</sup> The existing research shows that the power of the press did not decrease with the growth of social media, and increased diversity in media outlets which now include blogs, news websites, etc. (Cushion et al, 2018; Tan & Weaver, 2013; Meraz, 2011; 2009; 2008; McCombs, 2004; 2014; Hamilton, 2004; Dearing & Rogers, 1996;



which I see as patriarchal and fundamentally masculine (Topić, 2018; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021; Mills, 2014; 2017; Gallagher, 2002; Ross, 2001; North, 2009, 2009b; 2016; 2016a; Lobo et al, 2017; Alvesson, 2013; 1998; Acker, 1990; 2006; 2009; Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) perpetuates status quo by supporting CSR concept whilst also supporting both business growth and environmental initiatives, which does not go together (Salleh, 2000; 1994; Shiva, 1999; d'Eaubonne, [1990]1997; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971, Meadows et al., 1972; 2004, Ehrlich & Holdren, 1971, Cleveland, 1984; Douthwaite, 1999; Mishan, 1967). Thus, a status quo remains and the UK is facing a prospect of public encountering fatigue with environmental affairs due to incessant and repetitive coverage of issues that do not lead towards a sustainable solution.

Since ecofeminist theory argues that capitalism goes hand in hand with masculinity and patriarchy, the link emerges with the way media operate, and I am arguing that media's support of CSR and anti-business coverage is a smokescreen for preserving the capitalist status quo because the media also support economic growth and have a managerial approach to environmental affairs. In order to explore these issues, I embarked on a comprehensive analysis of the press coverage of five topics, economic growth, CSR, global warming, plastic and food waste. All these topics are relevant because, as already emphasised, economic growth is often seen as incompatible with environmental protection (Salleh, 2000; 1994; Shiva, 1999; d'Eaubonne, [1990]1997; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971, Meadows et al., 1972; 2004, Ehrlich & Holdren, 1971, Cleveland, 1984; Douthwaite, 1999; Mishan, 1967), whereas remaining topics cover the CSR coverage. Media do not write so much about CSR as CSR, which is why the sample is low in two selected newspapers, however, they do extensively cover environmental policies that constitute CSR and nationally there is an overview of how media write about CSR. In this case, plastic, food waste and global warming are hot topics that the public, policymakers and the media debate, and these policies are often debated in environmental studies as constitutive of the environmental problem.

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Breed, 1955; Manheim & Albritton, 1984; Winter & Eyal, 1981; Weiss, 1974). While some authors debate the future of journalism and the death of the press, this is far from happening. As correctly argued by Cushion and associates (2018) press still has an agenda-setting potential, not just because people still read the press (albeit in an online form; for more details on changes that journalism as a profession is going through, see Franklin, 2014) but also because the press content is still discussed in TV shows, and journalists from the press are invited to speak about the so-called mood of the press. Nevertheless, the press still plays an agenda-setting role for broadcasters that report on debates from the press (Lewis & Cushion, 2017).

Therefore, in this book, I am critically analysing the existing understanding of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept from an ecofeminist point of view and as part of a larger wheel of neoliberalism where CSR presents just one cog in the wheel. I am also arguing that the CSR concept in itself is irresponsible and I am supporting Friedman's view that businesses only have responsibilities to comply with laws and satisfy their shareholders, however, I am not doing this from a capitalist or pro-market perspective. I am arguing that it is the job of the Government to regulate working rights, the rights of suppliers, environmental protection and other elements that proponents of CSR currently support, however, my argument is that CSR actually serves as an extension of marketisation and liberalisation that has been happening in the UK for a while now. I am also arguing that the reason for the prominence of CSR lies in the national media. I see the issue of CSR and environmental protection as sensationalised without actually offering any meaningful solution. Nevertheless, I argue that it is the liberal media that enforce this incomprehensible discourse of promoting the economic growth and CSR and sustainability initiatives, but ultimately these do not work together and only lead towards further liberalisation of the market where corporations self-regulate with pressures from the public and the media, thus public and the media effectively taking the role of policing corporations whilst the market further liberalises and the UK further sinks towards a corporation-led country with a weak state regulation.

Promotion of economic growth and trade policies is something that ecofeminists see as fundamentally masculine (Salleh, 2000; 1994; Shiva, 1999; d'Eaubonne, [1990]1997) and thus I am exploring whether this applies to the British press and if so, what is the role of women in promoting these (masculine) policies. In that, I am arguing that the masculinisation of women in journalism has further exacerbated the problem with environmental affairs as it is hard for mainstream women to succeed in journalism, and thus potentially engage with environmental activism. In other words, numerous studies have shown that women are more likely to support environmentalism (Mallory, 2006; Brownhill & Turner, 2019; Goldstein, 2006; Leahy, 2003; McStay & Dunlap, 1983; Poole & Harmon Zeigler, 1985; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986; Steger & Witt, 1988; Diani, 1989; Schahn & Holzer, 1990; Blaikie, 1992; Franklin & Rudig, 1992; Stern et al, 1993; McAllister, 1994; Holy, 2007; Hampel et al, 1996; Tranter, 1996; Godfrey, 2005; Shiva, 1989; Brownhill, 2010; Godfrey, 2008; Mann, 2011; Stoddart & Tindall, 2011; Giacomini, 2014; Kirk, 1998; McMahon, 1997; Salleh, 1984; Topić, 2020d; Topić et al, 2021), however, the question that led me to do this research is whether all masculinisation of women in journalism has led to a situation that women journalists act like men and engage in hard news

reporting and sensationalising whilst not offering any meaningful solution to the problem. Also, are women journalists promoting economic growth and CSR, and thus engaging in creating the so-called better capitalism?

Therefore, I am analysing the CSR concept using the ecofeminist understanding of Earth being a victim of a patriarchal and masculinist way of exploitation, and I am extending this argument to argue that the rise of mass media, press in particular, continually perpetuates this inequality. Ecofeminism argues that the attitudes that lead to environmental degradation and women's oppression are grounded by the social construction of patriarchy where both women and Nature are dominated as property (Adams, 2007; Holy, 2007; Besthorn & Pearson McMillen, 2002; Warren, 2000). The earth is "being violated and degraded resulting in damage that is often irreparable, yet only a small proportion of humans have engaged their consciousness with this crisis" (Spretnak, 1988, p. 2). I am following an anti-essentialist view of ecofeminism – that is, I do not assume that women are inherently connected to Nature nor that all men seek to destroy Nature; instead, I recognise that women's lived realities place women's issues and sustainability as inextricably intertwined (Puleo, 2017; Dimitropoulos, 2018; Topić et al, 2021). As ecofeminist theory postulates, women do not have enough power to change things and are thus not responsible for environmental degradation (the exception being a small number of successful elite women) and not less importantly, in some cultures women are blamed for diseases, get thrown out of communities out of fear they will spread the disease and women (generally) face job losses when they are no longer economically useful or in time of crisis. For example, during the COVID-19 crisis, researchers reported soon after the introduction of national lockdowns that women are losing jobs disproportionately, and for example, women in academia immediately started to fall behind men in the number of academic papers they were able to write due to the burden of caring and housework (Frederickson, 2020; Zimmer, 2020).

First findings on media and CSR reporting highlighted that the media assign meaning to CSR and contribute to the enforcement of CSR as debate drivers. For example, Buhr and Grafström (2006) analysed the *Financial Times* coverage of CSR between 1988 and 2003 and found that the newspapers attempted to contribute to "shaping the meaning of a new management concept" (p. 1). The analysis showed how the concept of CSR evolved from a concept related to the creation of jobs and charitable contributions, which would belong to Friedman's (1962; 1970) understanding of CSR to the responsibility that companies have towards society. The debate on CSR already started during the 1990s when CSR was firstly associated with

marketing and demands to run only ethical advertising campaigns, however, towards the end of the 1990s the concept got associated with ethics and this trend continued after the turn of the millennium when debates intensified putting the business under pressure to be ethical and consider environmental and social issues in their businesses (Buhr & Grafström, 2006). Corporate scandals contributed to both an increase and negative tone of future coverage. For example, in the period of 2006/2007, major news media in Britain reported their own CSR while at the same time expressing pressure on British companies to perform better in terms of their social commitment, however, CSR still remained driven by internal rather than external factors (Gulyas, 2009). In other words, it was media organisations themselves that enforced CSR, and not the external factors that forced them to do so. This can also be because of a desire for higher financial performance as results from Zyglidopoulos, Georgiadis, Carroll and Siegel (2011) confirmed. It has been acknowledged, however, that the media set an agenda on business and this is because people learn about companies from the media, with which media become drivers of corporate reputation (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Staw & Epstein, 2000). Tench, Bowd and Jones, on the other hand, argued that media see organisations that enforce CSR through five characteristics, or “conformist, cynic, realist, optimist, and strategic idealist” (Tench et al, 2007, p. 355).<sup>4</sup> Among media professionals, it seems they see CSR mostly through obligation, or something that companies have to do. But, a majority of practising journalists agreed that CSR should include donations and community development (ibid). These findings were confirmed in a study by Grafström and Windell (2011) that showed financial newspapers see CSR as soft regulation and as something that should go beyond the law; and human resources where CSR is seen as a tool to ensure better working conditions and as a means to promote the employer to their employees. This immediately brings a question of whether CSR is then indeed a tool of further liberalisation of the market where companies will start self-legislating and the market will become independent from the Government.

The reason for this focus of the book lies in the fact that the majority of studies do not question whether the concept of CSR was a good idea or why is it a responsibility of the business to

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<sup>4</sup> In other words, organisation is conformist if it is involved in CSR “because everyone else is”, and they see CSR as a cost that needs to be paid off. Cynic organisations are those that perceive companies that have CSR as self-promoting themselves, and CSR is seen as “a cost, a management fad and something to be endured”. Realist companies are those that see CSR as a concept that includes self-interest, but they are ok with the concept because they also see it as something that has a “potential to transform business, social, economic and other practices for the better”. However, these companies also think that CSR should not be imposed, but that the change will come with time. Optimists are companies that “focus on the positive benefits of CSR for themselves, their communities and their businesses”, and tend not to see negative aspects of the concept. Finally, strategic idealists are companies that “seek to maximise the positive benefits and minimise the negative effects of CSR”, and these companies do this by developing long-term strategies (Tench et al, 2014, p. 356).

self-restrict instead of the Government that collects taxes. Is this way of businesses self-regulating another way of further imposing an open market, liberal ideology? While media coverage of CSR has been the subject of the analysis (Buhr & Grafström, 2006; Christensen et al, 2007; Gulyas, 2009; Grayson, 2009; Grafström & Windell, 2011; Zyglidopoulos et al, 2011), no works are offering an ecofeminist analysis of this debate, specifically looking at capitalism and patriarchy and their interplay in CSR and the news media within a neoliberal context and thus CSR as just a small part of neoliberalism and as a policy that preserves the status quo.

The media analysed are two newspapers, *The Guardian* (often considered as centre-left albeit I am arguing that the Guardian is neoliberal whilst nominally supportive of environmental policies) and *The Daily Mail* (often considered centre-right and in my view neoliberal expressing hostility towards environmentalist movement). The Guardian is a broadsheet and seen as a quality newspaper whereas the Daily Mail is often labelled as the tabloid, however, this is not true because the Daily Mail does not have a red top on the cover page and journalism the newspaper produces is different and more detailed than what tabloids produce albeit the coverage is often sensationalist. The reason these two newspapers have been selected lies in their diametrically opposite ideologies where the Daily Mail supports right-wing initiatives such as focusing on immigration and Brexit whereas the Guardian traditionally supports more left-wing and liberal initiatives such as the relationship with the EU and equality and diversity. In terms of circulation, and if tabloids are put aside, the Daily Mail and the Guardian have high readership and popularity on their respective sides of the political spectrum. According to the data from the Press Gazette from November 2020, the Daily Mail is the most read newspaper in the country<sup>5</sup> whereas the Guardian is the most read newspaper on the left albeit its readership is a fraction of the readership of the Daily Mail (990,106 vs 111,953 respectively) (Press Gazette, 2020). Equally, Guardian's Observer has a readership of 152,129 whereas the Mail on Sunday has 870,745 (ibid). Both regular edition and Sunday editions were included in this analysis, which was deemed relevant as these two editions, in each newspaper, have different editors. Whilst the Guardian and the Observer follow similar editorial policy, the Daily Mail has been known to conflict with the Mail on Sunday. For example, during the Brexit referendum, the editor of the Mail on Sunday supported remaining in the EU whereas the Daily

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<sup>5</sup> In the previous years, tabloid the Sun was the most read newspaper in the country, however, as of beginning of 2020, the Sun no longer provides data on ABC circulation. The Telegraph and the Times have also decided the same (Press Gazette, 2020).

Mail was one of the strongest advocates of Brexit (The Mail on Sunday Editorial, 2016; Tobitt, 2018; The Guardian staff and agencies, 2016).

Articles were selected using the Lexis Nexis database. Keywords were used to select articles, namely economic growth, global warming, plastic, food waste and corporate social responsibility. The CSR was analysed twice, on a national level analysing all national and regional press, and then separately in the Daily Mail and the Guardian. The articles were analysed in a period of 12 months, thus providing a good overview of the media agenda and the coverage on these issues.<sup>6</sup> The dates selected for the analysis were from 25 February 2019 to 25 February 2020, which is a period preceding coronavirus pandemic, which would skew the data as it is logical that the media will write about the economic impact of extensive worldwide lockdowns. Therefore, a period preceding the pandemic provided a good ground on the media agenda at the time when there is no obtrusion from a major crisis such as a pandemic. In February 2020, it was already known that something is happening and there are reports on potential impact if pandemic escalates, which then provides a good overview of media coverage of environmental affairs and economic growth at the time of no crisis as well as at the beginning of an unfolding crisis.

Articles that were removed were duplicates, as well as articles that appeared in searches because of a keyword but had nothing to do with the researched topic. For example, articles that discuss personal growth appeared in a search for economic growth. Equally, some articles discuss toxic waste instead of food waste, etc. In addition to that, many articles that the press publishes were written by activists, politicians, academics and experts and these were all removed from the sample as they present an opinion and even though the fact newspapers published this type of opinion shows editorial policy, these articles still cannot be considered as media writing of the problem nor would it possible to discuss how journalists write about these issues if authors are not journalists. Nevertheless, not all articles had a note emphasising that the article was written by an external person, for example when someone famous such as an environmental activist Greta Thurnberg or British MP Caroline Lucas were authors. Therefore, all articles were checked to identify potential external authors and when found, these

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<sup>6</sup> Winter and Eyal (1981) argued that a period between four and six weeks is the optimal effect span for the transfer of the single issue to the public agenda (cited from Kim et al, 2010). On the other hand, Stone and McCombs (1981) argued that at least four months must be analysed for a multiple issue to make an impact (quoted from Kim et al, 2010).

articles were removed. Equally, a careful check was made on the gender of the journalist. For example, BAME names were checked by googling journalists to check their gender because this is not always clear due to diversity of names and cultural conventions, and also journalists with names that have historically belonged to men but were often used by women (e.g. Chris, Alex, etc.) were also checked. Only journalists' names who could be labelled as unconditionally male or female were included without googling journalists to check for gender (e.g. Mark for men, Fiona for women, etc). The number of articles on issues selected for the analysis immediately revealed a major interest of the press on environmental affairs as well as economic growth. Table 1 shows the number of articles that appeared in searches as well as the number of articles selected for each topic that was subjected to the analysis.

**Table 1. Selection of Articles (The Daily Mail and the Guardian)**

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ARTICLES FROM THE SEARCH (The Daily Mail)</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SELECTED ARTICLES (The Daily Mail)</b>	<b>NUMBER OF ARTICLES FROM THE SEARCH (The Guardian)</b>	<b>NUMBER OF SELECTED ARTICLES (The Guardian)</b>
<b>Economic growth</b>	114	99	905	352
<b>Corporate Social responsibility</b>	2	2	25	23
<b>Food waste</b>	69	56	180	109
<b>Global warming</b>	145	112	581	313
<b>Plastic</b>	918	268	1892	426
<b>Total national newspapers</b>	<b>1248</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>3553</b>	<b>1223</b>

In addition to the analysis in table 1, and due to the low number of CSR articles in the two analysed newspapers, CSR coverage was also analysed in totality by looking at CSR coverage in all national and regional newspapers, which resulted in a total of 110 analysed articles (459 results overall). Therefore, in total, 1248 articles from the Daily Mail, 3553 articles from the Guardian and 459 articles from all national and regional press were analysed to establish their

suitability for the analysis. Of that, a total of 537 articles from the Daily Mail, 1223 articles from the Guardian and 110 articles from the national and regional press were selected for the analysis. This brings a total of analysed articles to 1870 articles altogether. A sample of this size enables a meaningful discussion on the role of the media in CSR and environmental affairs and the media social responsibility problem, and this sample also enables a discussion on the role of women in the media coverage of what was historically known as a feminine area of interest and passion (environmentalism).

The articles were first compiled as explained above and then subjected to rigorous reading and analysis. After initial analysis tackling who writes on issues and to what extent, the writing is then analysed using an ecofeminist analysis. Ecofeminist analysis is conceptualised as a sense-making analysis exploring how media write and whether the media could be seen as neoliberal. For example, on CSR, do they take a critical stance or a supportive stance and on economic growth, whether the media support economic growth. Finally, with three environmental topics (global warming, food waste and plastic) the analysis concentrated on exploring *whether writing shows hierarchy in which Nature exists to serve the interests of humanity, to what extent women write more supportively of environmental affairs than men* (as per ecofeminist studies that have been showing for decades that women are more inclined to support environmental activism due to their social experiences and realities) and also *to what extent media express support for capitalism through environmental reporting* (either by directly arguing that capitalism is the desirable system or through calling for changes in policies that fit into neoliberal support for economic growth, CSR and environmentalism or by writing in a way that preserves capitalism). In other words, the media's view of capitalism is explored through a dual analysis of the media coverage of economic growth as one of the founding postulates of capitalism but also through environmental coverage and the coverage of CSR to explore in-depth to what extent media propose solutions that are meant to preserve capitalism or fix it rather than criticise the regime and to illustrate how neoliberalism works where, as already emphasised, I am arguing that the CSR is a smokescreen and just a part of neoliberalist policies that promote capitalism, overconsumption and a domineering view of Nature.

The method used for the analysis of newspaper coverage is thus a sense-making method of news writing using concepts identified in ecofeminist theory. This means I have first conducted a content analysis of media coverage of economic growth, CSR and environmental affairs and I analysed tones of articles using positive, negative and neutral variables. The latter is common



in works analysing media coverage of CSR (Deephouse, 2000; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). After that, I conducted an ecofeminist sensemaking reading of media coverage of these complex issues and read them by trying to make sense of whether media enforce hierarchy and neoliberal policies. In the findings chapters, this sensemaking analysis reads as an analysis of narrative using ecofeminist concepts and I am providing a narrative and sensemaking analysis of media coverage embedded in literature which has extensively been reviewed in the first two chapters, as well as a case study literature on food waste, plastic, global warming and economic growth which is reviewed in findings chapters.

In a nutshell, my view is that everything needs to be analysed in the context of neoliberalism and that includes women's position, CSR concept as such as well as media coverage of CSR and environmental affairs. However, even more importantly, I am a constructionist and my view of the media is that we cannot observe what media and journalists do impartially, as the postulate of positivism proposes, but that we need to see the world (and this includes media too) as a construct of humans. The constructionist approach means that researchers have to "make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed by those who take part in research about the phenomenon being studied. Social constructionism indicates that meanings are dependent on human cognition – people's interpretation of the events that occur around them" (Saunders et al, 2012, p. 546). In the case of media, if journalists and editors are considered responsible for media content and if this media content is considered to have an impact on audiences, then it is possible to see both journalists/editors and the public as co-creators of everyday reality. The constructionist approach is common in media studies because it enables meaningful analysis of the media content and the way media construct realities. For example, using the social constructionist approach, Boero (2007) explored how the media define obesity as a social problem and a problem of individuals at the same time. According to her findings, the media are framing obesity as an epidemic, with which they are creating chaos and fear (ibid). In research on framing, constructionism has a prominent role. Gamson offered a constructionist understanding of framing where he treats media discourse and public opinion "as two parallel systems of constructing meaning" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 1). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) furthermore argued that policy issues should be seen as "a symbolic contest over which interpretation will prevail" (ibid, p. 2), and this symbolic contest then forms a cultural system that "has logic of its own" (ibid). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) also saw this cultural system through cognitive lenses arguing that besides cultural level psychological level that enables the construction of meaning must also be considered. Ecofeminism is also a

constructionist approach because ecofeminists are analysing the way societies are constructed and embedded in patriarchy, which is also a social construct. Wilson (2010) defined ecofeminism as a typical left-wing critical academic approach that belongs to the same group of approaches as postmodernism, constructionist social anthropology, critical socialist scholarship, deep ecology, neo-Marxism, etc.

Finally, something needs to be said about the writing style of the book. Susan Griffin in *Woman and Nature* uses two writing styles, passive and first-person writing (Griffin, 2015) following observation from Julia Stanely who made an argument that using passive in analytical writing is a masculine practise that this type of writing hides who did or said something with which the structures of power are shown as stable and unquestionable. At the time of writing, Griffin (2015) was worried about how would this be received but then decided it would give the book a dramatic tone (ibid), however, nowadays she writes in the first person only. She also correctly argued that men are not inherently antagonisers but it is the thinking that founds masculine domination that has an antagonistic view of everything different, and one does not have to be a man to hold that view (ibid). It is indeed inherently against the ecofeminist worldview to write in the 'objective' way because this distanced view from the research an individual conducts is seen as masculine and patriarchal. In other words, it is men who are taught since an early age to be distanced, reserved and hide emotions (Salleh, 1993; 1984; Griffin, 2020; Gilligan, 1993) and it is also men who started the modern science, at some points in history, also at the expense of burning women healers as witches and by writing so-called intellectual documents that argued women are inferior to men (Gaard, 2011; Griffin, 2020; 2014; Marjanić, 2020; Milardović, 2016; Holm & Jokalla, 2008; Holy, 2007; d'Eaubonne & Michel, 1997). Therefore, ecofeminists believe that with so-called objectivity in writing, authors hide their connection with the topic of research and since ecofeminism insists, among many things, on personal responsibility on each individual, writing in the third person is often seen as cowardice and an attempt to show alleged superiority (Holy, 2007). Whilst it is mainstream in some disciplines or in some journals to write in a third-person under the claim that texts are not scientific or scholarly enough if written in the 1<sup>st</sup> person, ecofeminists often see this view as a patriarchal and masculine way of talking and writing. Many women throughout history, and up to the present day, accepted this practice either because they feared they will not be taken seriously or simply because some journals refuse to publish papers written in the first person (myself included). Nevertheless, it was quite common in history, and this still happens today, that women use masculine versions of their names to conceal their feminine identity (e.g.

signing work as Alex rather than Alexandra, etc) or they used pseudonyms when writing fiction.

In this book, I am embracing an ecofeminist approach and when referring to my work, I am writing in the 1<sup>st</sup> person. However, I also write general information and an analysis of the work of others in a neutral style as per usual standards of writing literature reviews and presenting the work of others, which can be seen as masculine, but it also provides a dramatic connotation as argued by Griffin (2015) and it re-enforces arguments more strongly. In the same way, I have chosen to write the term Nature with capital letters when referring to Nature as a whole ecosystem encompassing not just humanity but everyone who exists in the ecosystem in living or any other form.

In the subsequent part of the book, I am first analysing ecofeminist theory outlining the main arguments of ecofeminism. In that, I focus on main arguments on the interplay between the oppression of women and Nature, and I also engage (albeit less extensively) with outlining arguments from different streams of ecofeminism and criticism of ecofeminism. After that, I am critically analysing CSR literature using ecofeminist thinking and arguments as well as the argument from critical CSR scholarship. Finally, I present and analyse media data on the news coverage of economic growth and environmental affairs in two daily newspapers, the Daily Mail and the Guardian as well as a general analysis of CSR coverage in both national and regional press.