



**HANNA HALLIN** (b. 1985) holds a Master of Arts in Media and Communication Studies from Stockholm University and has a professional background in marketing and strategic communications. Her research focuses on the communicative aspects of corporate responses to environmental issues, and the consequences of digital communication for different actors' ability to exert influence.

Corporations are generally perceived as legitimate and indispensable actors in addressing societies' sustainability challenges. They have been assigned a prominent role in environmental problem-solving and have invested substantial resources in sustainability initiatives. Yet, progress remains limited, raising fundamental questions about the capacity of corporations to lead such transformations. Despite continued global failure to halt or reverse environmental destruction, corporations appear to retain their environmental legitimacy. How can this be explained?

*Smoke and Mirrors: The Promotion of Corporate Environmental Legitimacy as Climate Obstruction* examines how corporate environmental legitimacy is cultivated and maintained. The dissertation presents a multi-method case study of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF), a leading advocacy organisation promoting the concept of a circular economy. Combining critical political economy and critical discourse analyses, it examines EMF's funding, networks, governance, policy engagement, promotional practices and discourse, as well as EU circular economy policy to present a comprehensive account of how corporate environmental legitimisation is enacted and influences policy.

The dissertation demonstrates how the promotion of the circular economy contributes to shaping the boundaries of acceptable environmental action and, ultimately, how corporate actors consolidate legitimacy amid ecological crises. In this, it makes an important contribution to the field of climate obstruction research, advancing our understanding of climate obstruction as a relational and communicative process. It reveals how initiatives that present themselves as part of the solution may paradoxically help sustain the very conditions that prevent societies from returning to a safe operating space for humanity.

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Doctoral Dissertation

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