Organizational environments are constantly changing (Meyer, Scott, Rowan, & Deal, 1985). The introduction of a new policy, the outburst of a crisis, or the shifting behaviors of key stakeholders – such as competitors, publics and the media – all significantly affect organizational reality. Organizations’ survival depends upon their ability to anticipate and adequately respond to changes in this dynamic environment (Meznar & Nigh, 1995; more recent ref?). In sum, the characteristics of the organizational environment by and large mandate individual organizational behavior.

For organizations to anticipate on chancing environments and dynamic relations, *communication* has become a key aspect for organizational legitimacy. Accordingly, in this Chapter, we argue that a macro-level approach to corporate communication is crucial to our understanding of how organizations interact with their environment. More specifically, it is argued that by shifting towards a network perspective emphasizing the role of different types of nodes (such as resources, stakeholders, and events) – as well as the edges between them – a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved. In this chapter, we contend that Big Data and Big Data related methods are an increasingly valuable – if not indispensable – instrument to map the organization’s increasingly complex playing field. We sketch how Big Data and the related methods can be used to study the networks organizations operate in, thereby advancing knowledge about corporate communication and public relations (PR).

We contribute to the literature on corporate communication in two ways. First, the majority of studies in the field has adopted an organizational-centric focus. It has been noted that most literature on PR (Verhoeven, 2009), but also corporate branding and reputation management (Cornelissen, Christensen, & Kinuthia, 2012), stakeholder management (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010), crisis communication (Van der Meer, Verhoeven, Beentjes, & Vliegenthart, 2014), and CSR (Schultz, Castelló, & Morsing, 2013) has approached corporate communication from a functional perspective, focusing attention on the individual organization (Edwards, 2012) and unidirectional communication processes. Functional literature has added significantly to our understanding of the determinants of corporate communication on both the micro- and meso-level, but has neglected the influence of fluctuations in the broader environment in which organizations operate. Therefore, in this chapter, we combine the so-called ‘communicative view’ on corporate communication (Schultz et al., 2013) with media-effect theories such as framing (e.g., Verhoeven, 2016) and agenda setting (e.g., Carroll & McCombs, 2003) to conceptualize corporate communication from a macro-perspective.

Secondly, the field has relied primarily on case studies or small-scale content analysis. By linking large-scale automated content analysis data with macro-level indicators (such as market indicators and the occurrence of key events), the here-presented approach acknowledges additional sources of variation in corporate communication.

In the communicative view to corporate communication, communication is defined as an “ongoing process of making sense of the circumstances in which people collectively find themselves and of the events that affect them” (Taylor & Van Every, 2000, p. 58). The communicative view involves the idea that organizational structures, and events related to the organization are constituted in communication, because they emerge from the interplay between communicative actors who dynamically alter organizational reality (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011) by ‘talking situations into existence’ (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). This perspective has mainly been used to study internal communication, but can also be used to examine corporate communication at the macro-level (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). For example, Shultz et al (2013), argue that CSR is co-constructed in the public sphere by multiple actors mobilizing symbolic resources trough networked media platforms, such as corporate websites, Twitter, Facebook, and news media.

Over the last couple of years, an emerging research avenue has applied a more communication-centric approach to further understand the dynamics between organizations and their environments. Several communication scholars have applied communication theories, such as agenda setting and framing, to empirically examine the organizations-stakeholder interplay for situations such as organizational crises (e.g., Van der Meer et al., 2013; Schultz, Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, Utz, & Van Atteveldt, 2012) and CSR frames (e.g., Patriotta, Gond, & Schultz, 2011). In order to study these multifaceted and dynamic communication processes, these authors relied on large-scaled over-time datasets, aiming to grasp the complex and chancing character of corporate communication. Accordingly, these studies show how the usage of “Big Data” and more sophisticated network and content analyses are successful in translating aggregated communication theories to empirical exploration in an advanced manner. This Chapter argues that this bridge between communication theories and big data can offers a valuable contribution to the field of corporate communication.

Given the widespread and varied use of the term ‘Big Data’, it is important to be explicit about our understanding of the concept. We will discuss big data from the ‘3V’ framework, which captures three key characteristics of Big Data: Volume, Velocity and Variety. This indicates that Big Data is not only about its size (what's big today might be small tomorrow), but also about the velocity with which new data arrive (real-time character), and the variety of data that can be considered (e.g., policy documents, media coverage, social media, statistics, etc.).   
 While it may be true that much of big data research is primarily ‘data driven’, as the literature on Computational Social Science (e.g., REF\_KITCHIN) has pointed out, it is a misconception that the use of Big Data techniques is inherently atheoretical. In contrast, by making sense of data that are too voluminous, change too fast, and are too varied to be analyzed by humans in a meaningful way, big data techniques can help both with theory-building and theory-testing. This Chapter will demonstrate this point for the field of corporate communication and PR.

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