Chapter 21

An Information and Cooperation Portal for Supporting Public Authorities and Organizations with Safety and Security Responsibilities Before and During Large Public Events

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ABSTRACT

Large public events are quite common and lead to peak usage of urban transport systems. Clear planning and communication processes which involve relevant parties for event management, traffic and security issues are needed due to the increasing number and complexity of events. When planning an event, overall organizational and technical issues as well as the preparation for unexpected incidents are asked for to plan for maximum safety and security. Within the research project VeRSiert, a web-based information and cooperation portal was designed for the region of Cologne and implemented for these purposes. Its intention is to support collaboration of the participating organizations prior to, during execution and post-event analysis of a large public event, while taking into account unplanned risks ranging from storms to acts of terrorism.

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INTRODUCTION

The needs of cities to increase their attractiveness for citizens and visitors, as well as the growing degree of mobility of many people, have led to more public mass events. Such events include regular traditional conventions, sport events, fairs and artistic shows as well as political demonstrations. Usually it is the responsibility of the city council to coordinate the different public authorities and their collaboration in order to permit a large public event with respect to certain requirements (López Remondes, 2009). These events, in addition to the daily use of public transport for work, leisure, shopping, etc., put more demands on public transport. Even during the planning stages of a mass event, concerted actions by decision-makers is becoming more and more difficult due to numerous private players, fragmented responsibilities, competition in rail traffic and outsourced departments. Aside from the overall organizational and technical issues, the adequate reaction in case of unexpected incidents such as thunderstorms or bomb warnings has to be prepared for in all involved organizations.

The guarantee of safety and even more security during large events is aggravated by the fact that a variety of public and private enterprises and organizations is involved. Due to the distribution of competences of those institutions, mutual coordination is very hard to achieve in preparation of a large public event (López Remondes, 2010). Organizers, operators of the event locations, the responsible municipality, different transport companies, organizations with safety and security responsibilities (e.g., police, fire brigade), private security providers work together before, during and after the event, but each of them under their own rules. Thus, the responsibilities, standard action plans and contact details of relevant persons may not be transparent for every involved partner today. Insufficient sharing and communication of information between the responsible stakeholders, missing propagation of information to and from public authorities and organizations with safety and security responsibilities, insufficient trainings of acquired security personnel, insufficient funds of the institutions involved and heterogeneous data management in the various control rooms, are only some of the challenges created (Roßnagel, Engelbach, & Frings, 2008).

For critical incidents during large public events (i.e., fire, storm, rampage, terrorist attack like bomb threat) 70% of all researched communities showed no usable strategic standards in order to respect the complexity of different threats during planning and execution of large public events (Leven, Langenscheid, & Gerlach, 2010). An exchange of information and communication during critical situations is only restrictively possible in such cases (Engelbach, 2011; López Remondes, 2006). Having all those issues in mind, which could increase risks during a public event, the research project VeRSiert (Project VeRSiert, 2011; VeRSiert 2011) was initiated.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT VERSIERT

VeRSiert (Networking of local passenger transport companies, relief personnel, organizers and passengers for greater security in public transport at mass events) aimed at improving the security of event participants, security personnel and skilled help, as well as personnel of transport organization during mass events, e.g., by introducing mobile IT-services (Roßnagel, Zibuschka, & Engelbach, 2011), analyzing critical situations through simulations (Junker, 2011) and video analysis (Klausmann & Majer, 2011), preparing adequate training of staff (Leven, Langenscheid, Rudolph, & Gerlach, 2011), as well as doing research on the customer satisfaction (Nicklas, Schützer, Schulze-Bramey, & Winzer, 2011). A central integrating element of VeRSiert is the information and cooperation portal to support optimal information sharing and improved networking of all participants. This portal was implemented as a demonstrator.