COVID-19

What is the impact on Event safety?

Study carried out in the framework of the SAFE Project

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Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Safe PROJECT
Education programmes in Event Safety

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"A crisis is characterised by a situation that goes beyond the usual framework of known incidents, with the need to take urgent strategic and organisational decisions. The stakes appear exorbitant, multiple, and for the most part only become apparent over time. »

Laurent Combalbert, "Le management des situations de crise",
ESF Editeur, 2000.

Prologue

Since February 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic has hit the events sector like no other risk in the past, resulting in a ban on concerts, festivals and all types of gatherings. After the shock of this sudden halt in activities, the sector lives in hope of a recovery, which has thus far been constantly postponed. In this situation of great uncertainty for the future, with the pandemic still active, the decontamination process bogged down in controversy and the chaotic progress of a massive vaccination that is supposed to save us, when and how will we be able to return to some form of normality?

One year after the start of the crisis, it is time for event organisers to work on new models to accommodate event participants while minimising risk. What kind of risk assessment method can we develop to avoid overreaction with disproportionate and ineffective health plans? How can we professionally manage this new situation to integrate risk into our processes?

The eruption of COVID-19 has had a huge impact on our daily behaviour. Respecting the social distance, wearing a protective mask, respecting the "barrier gestures" have very quickly become the new standards of our lives. The result is a collective adaptation to risk, with individual variations in compliance with rules and recommendations, depending on the risk perception of each of us. Taking into account the health recommendations as well as the participants' own expectations, how can we anticipate a future resumption of festivals and concerts by adapting our safety concepts?

Introduction: From terrorist risk to COVID, the challenges of event security management

How should we view the COVID crisis, which has hit the events sector hard since March 2020? What are the issues at stake in this unprecedented sequence for show organisers, promoters, artists and, of course, audiences? Above all, how can we try to come out on top after this period of closure of event venues, which has now lasted for more than a year? If every crisis invariably generates "creative ruptures"[1], what will we be able to learn collectively from what we are experiencing?

This report is an intellectual production resulting from work carried out within the framework of the SAFE project (European project financed by the Erasmus+ programme) for more than 3 years on the issues and challenges posed to event security today. The project began in 2018 with a crisis - that of the terrorist risk since 2015 - and ends today in the midst of a new crisis for our

[1] Patrick Lagadec, Ruptures créatrices, Editions d'Organisation, 2000.

sector, that of COVID-19. This five-year period has put the organisers of public events under great strain, forcing them to integrate unconventional risks into their strategies and practices, which until now have been seldom or not taken into account in terms of operational management. Caught off guard by the emergence of these spectacular and unexpected risks, all the players in the events sector have tried to adapt as best they could, under the pressing gaze of the authorities, the media and the public.

At the end of this project and as a (provisional) assessment of this landmark moment in the history of event-based activities, we would like to present an analysis on three different levels in this report. The first concerns the way in which the COVID risk (and before that the terrorist risk) questions knowledge and practices in the field of risk management. Indeed, we will wager that the situation in which the crisis has plunged us requires a profound paradigm shift in approaches to event-related risks. The resumption of event activities after the COVID crisis will require a much stronger integration of security issues in the broadest sense into organisational strategies. It is not a question of over-investing in the last (or most spectacular) risk in the implementation of prevention and treatment measures, but rather of standardising these exceptional risks, taking them out of the category of the exception in order to align them with all the other risks likely to have an impact on the smooth running of an event and to methodically determine an optimal management strategy. In this sense, we will see in this first chapter of the study how the tools of risk management applied to the event industry and the practical knowledge of event security and crowd management standards constitute resources that must be disseminated within organisations in the sector in order to gain resilience in their activities.

The second part of the analysis will concern the implementation - on the basis of these standards of event security practice - of operational measures aimed at integrating the issue of health security into the process of welcoming and securing the public

during an event. After discussing the case of the test concerts set up since autumn 2020 (to which should be added the test concerts initiated by PRODISS to be held in spring 2021), we will look at two complementary experiments provided by the SAFE project partners: the experiences of concerts in COVID mode in Holland (involving TSC - Crowd management), and the protection plan developed for the Roundhouse Theater in London by Mind over Matter (UK).

Finally, the third part of the analysis will concern the preparation for a return to activity by imagining what a "post-crisis world" would look like for the organisation of events, capitalising on the lessons to be learned from the COVID crisis in order to improve the overall reception and safety conditions for spectators. The results of the collective ideation implemented in the framework of the two hackathons organised by the SAFE project, in July 2019 and February 2020 will input into the thinking in this area.

Starting with an initial concern about integrating the risk of terrorism into a spectator experience, in order to standardise the accompanying security and safety measures as much as possible, the collective reflection then turned to organisational, technical and practical innovations that would allow for efficient, adjusted and acceptable management of health protection measures on the scale of the event. In so doing, the players in the sector participating in the discussion outlined a new approach to event security, more oriented towards the service to be provided to spectators rather than surveillance missions, more proactive in the management of risks and in the formalisation of operating and emergency procedures, inspired above all by the principle of putting oneself in the place of the user/participants in order to encourage them to adhere to the measures taken to ensure their safety.

At the end of an extensive reflective process, of which this report is a testimony, we would like to propose a perspective for the renewal of event security activities, so that the right lessons can be learned from the crisis in which we find ourselves and the

event sector can emerge from it stronger, more professional and more resilient. In doing so, we will be true to the objectives of the SAFE project, which aims to collectively raise the level of competence of the event industry in order to face the challenges of tomorrow.

Chapter 1: COVID risk and event security

Management of the COVID risk for events and its integration into current practices in terms of event security has been the subject of a great deal of reflection on the part of players in the sector over the past year. After the initial shock of the total shutdown of activities in March 2020, many initiatives have been taken to define the conditions for the reopening of venues for shows and events. Numerous health protocols and other models of protection plans have been drawn up at both national and international level, demonstrating the desire of the event industry to help find a way to resume activities while guaranteeing the health safety of participants. In terms of occupational health and safety for event industry staff and service providers, a number of recommendations were issued in June 2020 by professional bodies such as SYNPASE in France[2] and the Production Services Association (PSA) in the UK[3]. At an

[2] https://www.cmb-sante.fr/_upload/ressources/01actualites/011actualites_cmb/synpase_-_protocole_de_securite_sanitaire-prestation_technique_spectacle....pdf

[3] https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/2569/3604/files/TPG_COVID-19_Guidelines_30th_July.pdf

international level, the Event Safety Alliance (ESA) published a "Reopening Guide For Event Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic" in May 2020, which has since been updated and translated into several languages[4]. More recently and for the case of festivals, the Yourope association has published a substantial and prospective work, integrating the use of health filters at the entrance of events (verification of vaccination or negative COVID tests) in a "Guidance for approvability of festivals in times of COVID"[5].

Without embarking on a laborious and pointless enumeration of all the guides and recommendations that have been forgotten in the past year in the events sector in Europe and throughout the world, let us take note of the fact that although these documents undeniably mark a stage in the process of understanding the risk, they are often redundant (repeating the same protection measures promoted by the health authorities) and are not very explicit on the practical details of implementing these health protection plans. Furthermore, by targeting only the COVID risk, this type of approach tends to make this risk autonomous and to slow down its integration into an overall strategy for welcoming the public during events. By not taking into account the issues of flow management or communication with spectators, and by thinking of health measures as subordinate to a higher principle of public safety which would be imposed on all (organisers and public), this type of approach does not allow the integration of the COVID risk into a robust risk management approach applied to the world of events. This is illustrated by the current public debates, which are largely marked by the stigmatisation of public events or gatherings as particularly risky activities from an epidemiological point of view, without any scientific data to seriously support this hypothesis.

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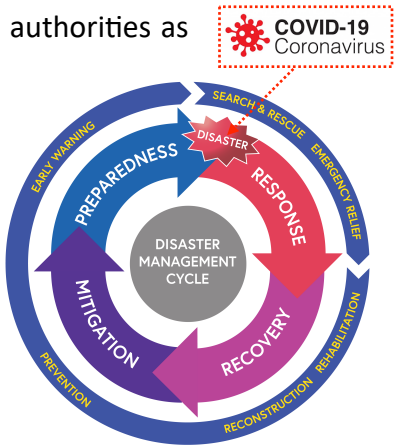
4 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aec979d3e2d09db8bcad475/t/5eb86f694a67d30048528163/1589145456606/2020-05-11+Event+Safety+Alliance+Reopening+Guide.pdf

5 https://yourope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NEW_Guidance-for-Approvability-1.pdf

Before returning to these points and arguing for a 'normalisation' of the COVID risk in order to envisage a resumption of event-based activities, we would like to take a step back from the crisis experienced over the past year and the way in which it disrupts our understanding of the issues at stake in terms of prospects for a future resumption. The non-linear and unpredictable nature of the development of the COVID crisis is indeed challenging our management models, which are oriented (even unconsciously) towards a logic of emergency treatment and reconstruction allowing a return to 'normal'. Understanding the crisis and *ultimately* finding solutions to 'live with' COVID for the events sector no doubt implies moving away from a simple list of sanitary measures to be put in place on a provisional basis while waiting for better days. On the contrary, it is necessary to understand the depth of the crisis in all its aspects in order to enter into a logic of change in the approaches to event security which places risk management (in its entirety) at the heart of any organisational process.

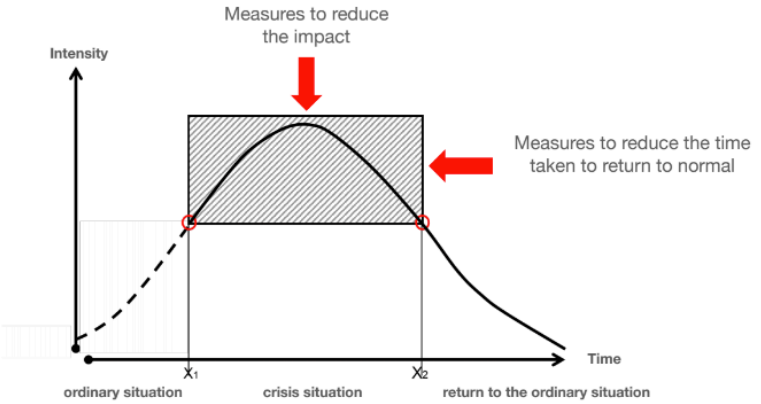
What crisis are we dealing with in COVID?

Our crisis management models today are largely inspired by a cyclical vision where a disaster or a catastrophe triggers emergency actions to deal with the immediate consequences, followed by reconstruction to return to an initial state. The objective is invariably to 'return to normal'. Traditionally, the approaches of the authorities as well as those of the actors in the event industry have conformed to this vision, which has the great merit of giving visibility to the different stages of the process and of being oriented towards known benchmarks. One year after the start of the crisis, it appears that the COVID cycle is

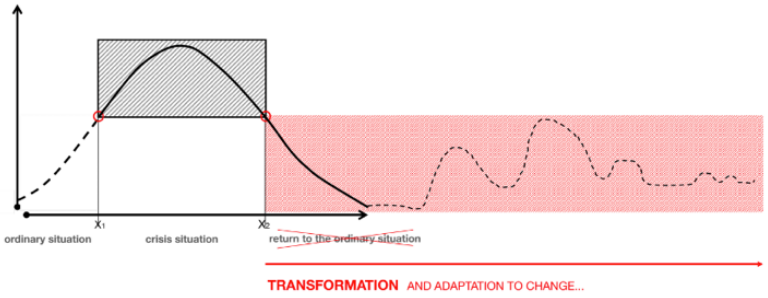


struggling to follow this standard pattern.

The same applies to projections in the form of epidemic curves, which are the main artefact for visualising the health crisis process. It also corresponds to a linear and processual vision where the intensity of the phenomenon gives rise to measures aimed at reducing the impact or the duration of the crisis in order to return as quickly as possible to an acceptable level.



In the case of COVID, this linearity of the situation is confronted with contraries, called 2nd or 3rd wave, English or South African variant and ethical or logistical controversies. This makes the COVID crisis not a classic crisis and it is now seen as a never-ending story... It therefore becomes particularly uncertain to make any predictions about the outcome of the crisis and its duration. This situation, marked by destabilising uncertainty, is at the heart of the crisis we are currently experiencing.



In fact, it urges us to mourn a return to an initial state (the one before the crisis) in order to accept the transformations at work in the ordeal we are going through and to be open to adapting to the changes that the "next world" will inevitably bring us.

Towards a "normalisation" of COVID risk?

It is a question of identifying today, in the chaos and uncertainties of the crisis, the current and previous elements of knowledge that enable us to give meaning and traction to risk management. Making the switch from a state of exception approach to risk (justifying restrictive measures that partially infringe on democratic freedoms) to a state of normalisation requires the normalisation of COVID risk. This requires the implementation of evaluation methods, realistic and proportionate preventive measures, and specific training for the personnel responsible for applying them, all of which must be specifically adapted to the characteristics of the project.

Standardising the COVID risk also means being able to convert the recommendations issued by the health authorities into an event context. This requires a method based on risk management approaches to event safety, in order to assess the specific risk factors (composition and characteristics of the public, expected

behaviour, configuration of the venues used, etc.) so as to ensure that protective measures are consistent with the characteristics of the events or shows open to the public.

This exercise of putting health protection plans into operation, as illustrated by the above process, is *in the end* inseparable from communication actions and even the enrolment of the public in the proposed measures in order to facilitate their successful adoption. Finally, this approach requires taking into account the most operational level, close to the ground, and training the personnel in charge of the reception and safety of spectators in the concepts developed to guarantee health safety during the operational phase. It is precisely these practical ways of adapting missions and know-how that we will address in the second chapter to come, based on experiments carried out in COVID mode. We hope that this approach to adapting to change will help to pave the way for a virtuous recovery of event activities.

Chapter 2: Test Concerts and Experiments

In order to facilitate a rapid return to event activities, the sector's stakeholders in several European locations have set up experiments to assess the risk of contamination between participants and the effectiveness of protective measures at the venue level. In association with scientists and supported by local authorities, some test concerts have been organised (or will be in the near future) in order to influence official decisions in a reopening strategy. Also, during the autumn 2020 period (and even beyond in some countries), concert halls have been or are being operated under conditions of strict protective measures. In this chapter we would like to report on several examples of test concerts and their results (based on sources published by the organisers), in order to understand the perspectives that emerge from such experiences. We will first discuss the tests carried out at the Leipzig Arena in August 2020, Primavera Sound in Barcelona in December 2020 and those to come in France in April-May 2021. We will then look more specifically at the case of Holland with the Fieldlab project, supported by the local government and in which TSC - Crowd management, a partner in the SAFE project, is a stakeholder. This initiative aims to structure the process of

reopening cultural and sports venues by the summer of 2021 with a series of tests on different event formats in order to define the most effective measures to be put in place. Finally, we will take the example of the approach implemented by the Roundhouse Theater in London, for which Mind over Matter (another SAFE Project partner) has carried out a consultancy project for the implementation of a health protection plan adapted to the specificities of the venue and the types of shows hosted.

Test concerts under scientific supervision

On 22 August 2020, the RESTART 19 project led by the Medical Faculty of the Martin-Luther University of Halle (Germany) offered three concerts by singer Tim Brendzko, each with a different health protocol. In addition, airflow simulations in the Leipzig Arena, which served as the concert venue, and interviews with the audience were conducted. Epidemiological models and a computer reconstruction of the Arena were used to observe the movement of aerosols during the three concerts. The audience was equipped with tracers, which make it possible to follow the movements of people in the crowd and to model them.

By October 2020, the first results of the study were known and lead to the conclusion that the moments when contact between participants could be critical in terms of the risk of contamination are actually few. These contacts take place in particular at the time of entry into the hall and during breaks in the performance. It is therefore necessary to prepare these moments in particular. In addition, poor ventilation drastically increases the number of infections. 90% of the participants in the study stated that wearing a mask during the concert was not a problem for them and that they were willing to do so in order to attend cultural or sporting events again.

In conclusion, say the researchers, when the sanitary protocols are respected, the consequences on the development of the epidemic are very limited. They therefore recommend as a matter of priority the installation of ventilation systems allowing regular

air renewal and the implementation of protective measures (masks and ambassadors to ensure compliance with sanitary rules). Particular care should also be taken with flow management in order to avoid congestion in certain places, in particular for access to theatres where it is recommended to provide sufficient entrances and to relegate waiting areas to the open air[6].

The PRIMA-CoV study is a randomised clinical trial testing the hypothesis that a live concert performed under safe conditions would not be associated with an increased risk of SARS CoV-2 infections. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the German University Hospital Trias i Pujol in Badalona (Barcelona). The performance took place on 12 December in the Sala Apolo, Barcelona. All participants signed an informed consent, were 18-59 years old, had no underlying health conditions, did not live with previous family contacts and had not been diagnosed with COVID in the last 14 days. All underwent same-day entry screening with negative SARS-CoV-2 antigen testing of nasopharyngeal swabs by health personnel.

A series of security measures were also implemented within the venue. The bar area (with a capacity of 1600 participants) was located in an additional room and drinks were only served in this area. Alcoholic beverages were allowed. Participants were asked to remove the face mask only when drinking. A certified N95 cloth mask was given to each participant at the entrance to the site. Masks had to be worn throughout the event, but no physical distance was required in the concert hall (capacity 900), where singing and dancing were also allowed.

The concert consisted of 4 performances: 2 Dj sessions and 2 live music sessions with bands, for a total of 5 hours. The median time that participants spent inside the concert was 2 hours and 40 minutes. The flow of all participants within the venue was already defined and marked, clearly delineated and observed by the security team during the event. Measures were implemented to avoid queues in the toilets and at the entrance and exit of the

[6] https://restart19.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20201029_Results_RESTART19_English-1.pdf

concert. All 1047 participants selected before the concert were antigen negative. Subjects were randomly assigned to go into the concert (active group of 463 people) or not (control group of 496 people). All had to return after 8 days to repeat a second PCR to identify possible infections, and completed the follow-up visit.

None of the 463 participants in the experimental group were infected with COVID (incidence 0%; 95% credibility intervals: 0% -0.7%) while 2 of the participants in the control arm (without access to the concert) were infected (incidence 0.4%; 95% credibility intervals: 0.1% -0.8%). The two infected individuals in the control arm were detected by PCR and antigen test. Therefore, attending a music concert organised with a series of safety measures including a negative antigen test on the same day was not associated with an increase in COVID-19 infections. In a post-event questionnaire, those who were randomised to assist at the event reported that they enjoyed the show and behaved perfectly normally without feeling subjected to scrutiny from the security checks. [7]

In France, PRODISS (partner of the SAFE Project) is active in the organisation of similar test concerts taking place in April-May 2020, notably at the Accor Arena in Paris[8]. These experiments conducted on the risk of contamination in concert halls make it possible to question the evidence of the suspicion of "risky places". Under the sanitary conditions of the tests carried out, it seems that it is possible to minimise the health risk for spectators. However, this raises two questions: firstly, the practical feasibility of implementing such protection plans (particularly tests at the entrance) and secondly, the acceptance by the public of such experimental conditions for access to theatres and events. It is precisely these two aspects that the Fieldlab project in Holland, which will be launched at the beginning of 2021, aims to investigate.

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[7] https://www.primaverasound.com/en/news/resultados-estudio-prima-cov

[8] https://www.bfmtv.com/people/musique/covid-19-ce-que-l-on-sait-du-concert-test-a-l-accor-hotels-arena-de-paris_AN-202103020192.html

The Dutch experience of Fieldlab Events

The Fieldlab Events project was created by representatives of the cultural and sports events sector in collaboration with the Dutch government. The programme was initiated as a result of discussions that the event industry had with various ministries, and its common ambition is to test various elements within the framework of health and safety that can give insight into the possibility of easier limitations for event organisers. The Fieldlab programme has been developed in collaboration with scientists and is supported by the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK) and Justice and Security (J&V). The aim is to build trust with the national government by defining COVID risk assessment frameworks for events and to adapt the roadmap for a reopening[9].

The programme involves the organisation of several test events of different nature (company events, cultural or sports shows open to the public) and in different situations (indoor and outdoor, static or dynamic, etc.) according to a precise calendar between 15 February and 21 March.

Source: Fieldlab events

9 https://fieldlabevenementen.nl

The stated objective is to refine scientific knowledge as quickly as possible on the risk of contamination in different event contexts and on effective measures that would make it possible to envisage operation in COVID mode, with a view to resuming in the summer of 2021[10]. On 7 March 2021, the project included a concert at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam with 1,300 visitors[11] and an electronic music festival (20 March 2021) with 1,500 people[12]. In addition to the Leipzig and Primavera test concerts mentioned above, the aim of these two tests was also to test crowd management measures in relation to the COVID risk and the degree of public acceptance of these potentially restrictive measures.

10 http://durevie.paris/pays-bas-le-gouvernement-veut-autoriser-les-festivals-a-partir-du-1er-juillet/

11 https://nltimes.nl/2021/03/07/fieldlab-trial-event-1300-visitors-ziggo-dome

12 https://nltimes.nl/2021/03/21/final-fieldlab-experiments-test-whether-festivals-can-held-safely-covid

The photographs opposite[13], taken during the Ziggo Dome experiment, give an idea of the type of crowd management plan required to guarantee the health safety of the participants while respecting the measures in force (social distances) and taking into account their inclusion in the context of a theatre of this size.

The electronic music festival on 20 March was held in Biddinghuizen, in the province of Flevoland, where the Lowlands[14] festival is usually held every year. The event welcomed 1,500 people without social distancing or masks, a first in Europe. The protocol required all participants to present a negative test at the entrance. As mentioned earlier, this was not only a medical experiment, but also a 1:1 analysis of the event and the behaviour of the spectators: "Where do crowds form? Can you solve this problem by installing more toilet blocks, for example?" Tim Boersma of the Fieldlab organisation told Dutch television. Although a mask was requested, festival-goers were soon not wearing it in the euphoria - a negligible risk, according to the organisation. The participants will be tested again in the days following the event in order to analyse the results of the study, which is expected to be published within two to three weeks.

With the same intention of measuring the gap between the theoretical measures decreed by the health authorities and their practical implementation conditions on the scale of the events, we would like to conclude this chapter by also addressing the case of the Roundhouse Theater in London, a sort of prototype for the implementation of a COVID protection plan during its partial reopening in October 2020.

Case study of the Roundhouse Theater in London

The case of the Roundhouse Theater allows us to get to the heart of the many questions raised by the implementation of

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13 Copyright G. van Duykeren, TSC - Crowd management

14 https://lowlands.nl

sanitary safety measures adapted to performance venues. The experiment in question consisted of modelling the experience of the theatre's spectators by testing the implementation of control logics (temperature, security checks) and audience flows (access to the theatre and then to the various spaces inside). The test took the form of a detailed analysis of the building's space in an attempt to determine the best use for compliance with health standards in COVID mode. This modelling was then tested by a team of investigators consisting of 28 Roundhouse staff, including two dedicated Covid referents, a full team of security guards and a consultant (Mind over Matter) who oversaw the testing protocols and wrote up the final results in an expert report which forms the main source of the analysis presented here.

The starting point for the approach proposed in this test was the need to plan a communication strategy before, during and after the event to ensure that spectators understand and support the event. The result is a communication project for visitors, which is reproduced below.

The Roundhouse Theater may look different than what people are used to, but we have done a tremendous amount of work over the past few months to test and design the best and safest experience for performers, audiences and staff. We are pleased to announce that we have been awarded the Covid-19 Industry Standard 'We're Good To Go' award. In line with current government advice, we have put in place a range of health safety measures.

We ask that you download the NHS Track & Trace app before you arrive at the venue and scan the QR code on arrival. We will also retain your booking information for at least 21 days in accordance with government track and trace regulations. If you are experiencing any of the main symptoms, please do not attend the venue and if you experience symptoms during the show, please either go home and isolate yourself or speak to a member of staff whilst maintaining a social distance and wearing your mask.

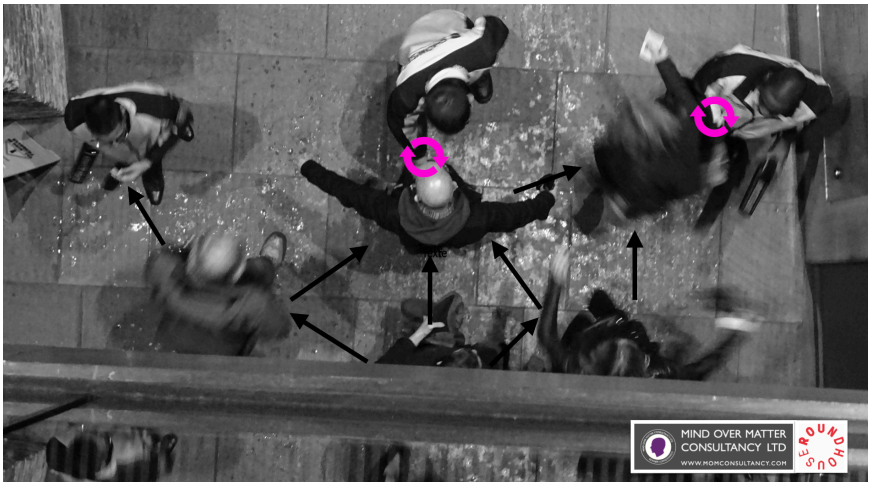
Source: Roundhouse Theater

The test included the installation of a temperature control at the entrance to the building. This measure gave rise to a great deal of investigation into its positioning in the space and its integration into the logic of the spectators' route. Initially, the detector was installed outside the building (photo below left), in order to screen people before they entered the building and ensure that the virus did not enter. The test showed that this choice was not effective, as the detector was not able to take a reliable temperature reading if other people were around the person being tested. It was therefore necessary to move the detector to the entrance hall (pictured below right) to ensure individualised monitoring. This also required a redefinition of the flow management and the layout of the outside waiting areas in order to ensure the necessary distances and throughput for the entrance of spectators while limiting access to the entrance hall to a few people at a time.

This first COVID-oriented check is followed by another security check, in the form of a bag check and a security check. This routine operation has now become a generalized standard at the entrance to theatres since the attacks of 2015-2017. The new situation generated by the irruption of the COVID risk forces us to rethink this operation and to question its place in the spectators' experience. To be honest, the question was already being asked beforehand as to whether the security check should be carried out as a first measure (in order to secure the rest of the process) or after an initial pass control in order to limit congestion and avoid a fixation point that could constitute an easy target for ill-intentioned individuals. The reflection on the "health bubble" in

COVID mode, which would lead to health checks being the first measure, is in direct competition with the objective of the "security bubble", which would like security checks to take precedence.

Furthermore, the risk of contamination by COVID between spectators and control officers seems to be increased during this operation due to the proximity necessary for its realization, as shown in the surveillance camera capture in the Roundhouse Theater hall below.



In order to ensure that this security check could be carried out in acceptable health safety conditions, it was completely redesigned. Limiting the number of people in the Roundhouse hall to ensure the effectiveness of the temperature check also freed up space for a different security check, where the distance between the security guards and the spectators is guaranteed by a table where the people being checked can themselves present their bags and open their jackets for a visual check, as illustrated by the photo below taken during the test.

In doing so, the security pat-down operation, which consists of body contact between security guards and spectators, was quite simply abolished in the name of the higher interest of managing health risks. Far from being offended by this, as security pat-downs have been the subject of debate in terms of coherence and

efficiency in the management of terrorist risk[15], the Roundhouse test should be seen as a way of experimenting with a reasonable and operational middle way to respond to the successive demands for security at events.

As we can see from this example, finding this path implies considering prevention and protection strategies not only from a theoretical and external point of view, but also from the point of view of thinking about the measures as an integral part of the activity. As in the case of the terrorist risk, it is illusory and counterproductive to aim for total protection against the health risk of COVID in the operation of theatres and events. Finding the way to a new normality that integrates risk means moving away from an ideal of absolute protection and taking a pragmatic approach to tested and validated operational solutions that offer the best guarantees of safety in all its forms.

[15] See on this point: https://www.iq-mag.net/2017/07/measures-security-pascal-viot-chris-kemp/

Chapter 3: Design thinking for COVID-proof events

The experiments presented in the previous chapter give us a glimpse of the future of the events sector faced with the COVID risk. In concrete terms, what lessons can be drawn from these multiple tests to define the contours of "COVID-compatible" events? This is the question that the participants of the hackathon organised by the SAFE project in January 2021 tried to answer, bringing together a group of recognised experts from the live performance and security sectors, from around twenty countries[16]. These experts worked on four issues. Firstly, data tracking, to ensure compliance and acceptance of the processing of participants' data. Secondly, the pathway of the public, to imagine and design the implementation of COVID protection measures in the participant's pathway while limiting the friction points. Thirdly, the management of flows and distances, to think about the right tools to facilitate crowd management and meet

16 See https://www.thesafeproject.eu/hackathon-live-event-facing-covid-challenges/

the requirements in terms of physical distance. Finally, fourthly, social acceptance, to address the social acceptability of protection measures against Covid-19 and to try to find a balance between control and freedom. The collective intelligence produced during this hackathon has enabled us to develop concepts and prototypes capable of responding to the unprecedented constraints faced by the live performance sector. We will discuss and comment on some of the elements in order to give an account of this unprecedented work and to propose a roadmap for the next steps in defining the conditions for reopening events in COVID mode.

Tracing and health passport for events

After a year of almost complete stoppage in 2020, the outlook for 2021 in the events sector is very uncertain. The vaccination campaigns launched between December 2020 and January 2021 in the various European countries are faced with problems of access to available vaccines and the logistics of vaccinating an entire population within the timeframe expected to be as short as possible. According to established state strategies, priority for the order of vaccination is given to the oldest age groups and to people at risk. Given the difficulties of implementing this extraordinary operation on the scale of an entire country, it is unlikely that the vaccination rate will allow a return to normal for many months.

Furthermore, the appearance of new strains of the virus and the uncertainties about the duration of protection provided by the vaccine raise doubts about the expected switchover effect once a sufficient number of vaccinated individuals have been reached. It is therefore likely that the resumption of events will take place in a context of a sufficiently slow epidemic, but before the risk of COVID is fully controlled. This is why it is important to anticipate measures that will provide sufficient guarantees from the point of view of risk control during events or gatherings. The principle of "tracing", which consists of collecting data on participants in order

to stop chains of contamination by alerting people in contact with a declared case, is one of the tools currently being promoted by the health authorities.

When applied to an event attended by the public, the principle of tracing takes many forms. To design a tracing protocol, it is first necessary to correctly identify the purpose of the data collection and the way in which it will be processed in order to guarantee a certain efficiency. The visual control of identity documents or negative test certificates - such as handwritten lists filled in by restaurant customers - cannot constitute credible and sustainable solutions from the perspective of serious control of the process. It therefore seems obvious that any tracing solution for events must be thought out in conjunction with the digitalisation of the controlled documents. The most fruitful innovations seem to be those developed by operators already familiar with event environments.

Ticketing solutions, for example, which already deal with data collection systems, could constitute interesting avenues for verifying the identity of participants and tracing prolonged contacts in seated shows. Cashless or electronic access control solutions could also be used to trace the movements and points of possible prolonged contact between participants, moments of risk in terms of viral transmission. As regards places where people eat and drink (F&B), existing solutions in the field of catering in various countries could also be used (scanning of a bar code to indicate one's position). And in free walking areas, such as urban public spaces, government geolocation applications could be promoted.

These different solutions for tracing participants are for the moment only technical solutions. It is now necessary to open a debate on the adequacy of this personal data processing within the existing legal framework (RGPD among others) as well as with the capacity of state operators in charge of processing these same data to aggregate these technical systems and these information flows within a timeframe that allows them to have an effect on the virus transmission chains.

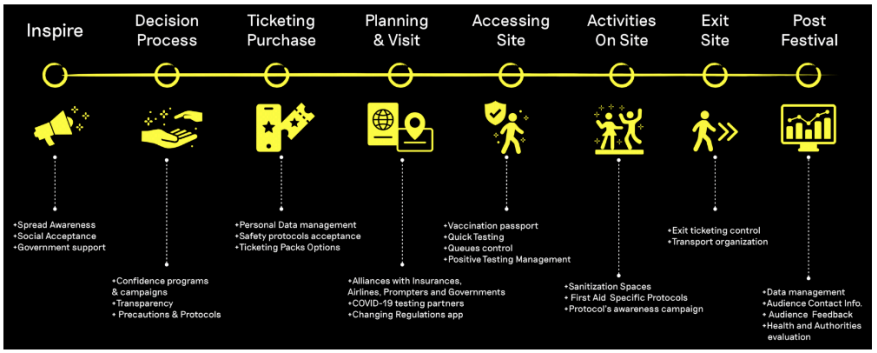
With regards to antigenic or saliva tests at the entrance, detection of the virus by temperature control or sniffer dogs, electronic control of a future "health passport" allowing access to events to be reserved solely for people who have been vaccinated, tested negative or immunised, these solutions all refer to the principle of "health screening" aimed at guaranteeing a form of sealing off the event area from risk. In addition to the many ethical, practical, economic and efficiency issues raised by this filtering horizon, it is striking to note the consistency of thinking about risk management in relation to events in terms of the boundaries between inside and outside. As with post-2015 approaches to terrorist risk, the horizon of health security strategies to protect against COVID struggles to think of protective measures in terms other than a (largely futile) attempt to keep the risk at bay, maintaining the illusion of the possibility of 'COVID-free' events. Conversely, we would like to argue for a 'COVID proof' approach, without deluding ourselves about the risk generated by the nature of the activity itself, and by thinking responsibly about the ways in which the COVID risk can be integrated and normalised in the process of facilitating the smooth running of the event. In order to make this paradigm shift, it is necessary to look at the spectators' experience and the most effective way of integrating a shared "COVID concern" into it.

Experience path in COVID mode

Imagining and designing the implementation of COVID protection measures in the participant's journey while limiting the friction points: this is the problem posed to a COVID risk assessment taking into account the experiential dynamics of the participant. This approach is based on the renewed principles of current theories in crowd psychology[17], for which the crowd complies with safety instructions (whatever they may be) as soon

17 See the fascinating work of John Drury, Professor at Sussex University: https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/crowdsidentities/2020/12/27/mitigating-the-new-variant-sars-cov-2-virus-how-to-support-public-adherence-to-physical-distancing/

as it feels considered, respected and therefore belonging to the same community of interest and destiny as the rule-maker. To facilitate this adherence, it is advisable to place oneself on the side of the participant and to seek to understand the criteria for the relevance of the measures planned from the point of view of coherence (in the experience pathway) and the adequacy of the measure in relation to the perceived risk. It is therefore essential in this vision to break down the festival-goer's experience into its different stages (from preparation to completion) and to disseminate the most appropriate information at the right moment in the journey, as shown in the diagram below.



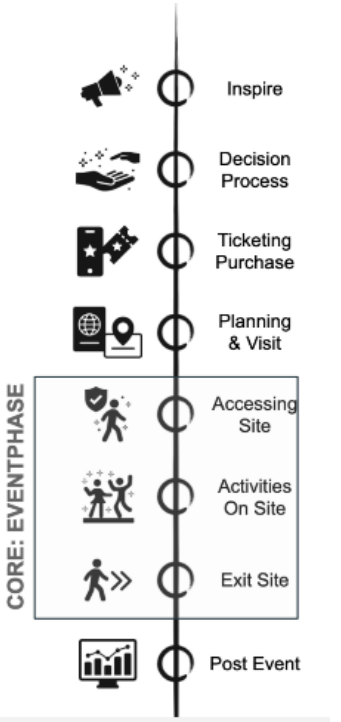
This attempt to model the experience in COVID mode is very enlightening. It makes it possible to understand the health strategy throughout its deployment, and to appreciate the complexity of the chain of action to be implemented on the side of the participant as well as that of the organisers. It also has the merit of thinking about the implementation of health measures right down to the level of the target audience's experience, in order to measure the coherence and appropriateness of these measures and maximise adherence.

Flow management and physical distance between spectators

Moving from the theory of the participant experience in COVID mode to the practice of operational management of event security means taking seriously the issues of flow and density

Source: Hackathon SAFE project

management in order to guarantee as much distance as possible between spectators. If we take the diagram of the participant's journey opposite, this know-how in terms of crowd management will be applied during the event, i.e. at the stages corresponding to access to the site, participation in the activities on offer and exit at the end of the event.

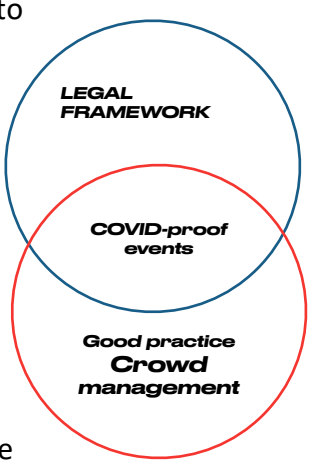


Planning the smooth running of any event involves placing flow management at the heart of the visitor journey. To achieve this, it is necessary to understand the logic of the participants' actions: who they are (social characteristics), where they come from (geographical origin), how and when they will access the site (mobility preferences), and what peaks in attendance should be anticipated (spectator arrival profile)? These elements will make up what should be called the demand in terms of expected flows due to the foreseeable behaviour of the participants. This demand must be correlated with a capacity, which corresponds to the calibration of the access system to the site in order to optimise waiting times, limit congestion and, *in fine,* make it possible to manage the distance between participants.

This question of distance also needs to be clarified and put into context. How can standards be defined in practice? Here again, it is advisable to refer to existing know-how in this area, as the event security sector has developed proven skills in crowd management over the last twenty years. The guide 'Planning for social distancing at sports grounds' published in August 2020 by the Sport Grounds Safety Authority in the United Kingdom raises a certain number of fundamental questions, such as how to measure the distance between two people (nose-to-nose or

shoulder-to-shoulder?), or the logic of distribution in spaces depending on whether the crowd behaves statically or dynamically[18].

In addition, a multitude of other questions need to be asked: how is the available space defined in order to comply with the rules laid down by the health authorities (1 person/4 m2 , 1 person/2 m2 ?), what to do with groups of participants belonging to the same group or even the same family, is the distance defined as a behavioural standard (to be respected at all times and in all places) or as a theoretical unit of measurement encouraging the organiser to provide a surface area that allows participants to have enough space to respect the distances - in a self-regulated approach? In the end, these very practical questions are the operational translations of theoretical standards that have been enacted in a general way and not thought through in their applicability. To ensure that these protection standards are made operational in practice, it is necessary to consider the convergence and eventual interweaving of a legal and normative framework with professional know-how and good practice in crowd management.



The clarification of practical rules and methods for the implementation of measures is a prerequisite for the development of realistic and applicable health security concepts. This definition of new standards of practice in the field of event safety requires a convergence of vision and interest between the health authorities and the organisers. It must also take into account the perception of these measures on the part of the public, who are the target of the protection strategy.

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[18] See https://sgsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SG02-Planning-for-Social-Distancing-at-Sports-Grounds.pdf

Social acceptance and public support

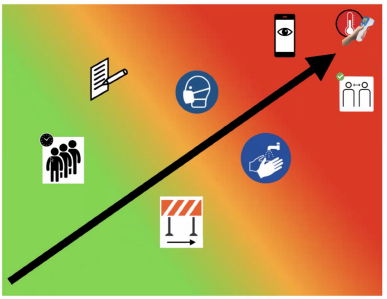
Often neglected, the question of social acceptance and public support for health security measures is nevertheless at the heart of the issues at stake in the effectiveness of the measures put in place. Put simply: a "good" rule that does not gain acceptance becomes a "bad" rule. Blaming those who do not comply reinforces distrust of the authority that issues them and takes us further away from efficient collective risk management. The right strategy in defining health safety measures is therefore to detach oneself from an essentialist vision of risk management where the theoretical search for maximum protection annihilates any possibility of thinking about "living with risk". A risk management approach should not aim to eliminate risk but to mitigate it, in other words, to reduce it through the implementation of accepted and applied preventive measures.

"We are all in the same boat": this is how the Event Safety Alliance's Reopening guide opens in May 2020[19]. This guide for event professionals (now available in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean and Russian) emphasises the importance of involving the public in the prevention process. Beyond the objective of reassuring spectators, the decision on the health measures to be taken must be oriented towards adherence to the objective, in other words, making the public actors in a collective prevention approach in order to encourage the adaptation of behaviour to the new rules. Through appropriate communication, it is a question of creating a feeling of community of destiny between organisers and the public (as well as between members of the public) in order to share responsibility and for everyone to take part in the objective of health safety for the good of all.

With this in mind, we need to move away from a top-down approach with the rules laid down "from above" by the health authorities and put these rules to the test in terms of their

19 https://www.eventsafetyalliance.org/esa-reopening-guide

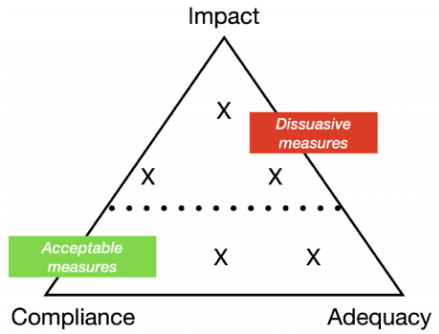
acceptance by the target population, in this case the audience. This leads us to the idea of measuring the level of acceptance of the proposed measures by the audience. What are the criteria for acceptance of a given measure, how can health constraints be made compatible with the spectators' expectations of experience? These questions are important and must be addressed in a dynamic vision. Indeed, one of the characteristics of this crisis (which confirms that it is indeed a crisis) is that there are multiple uncertainties. The epidemic situation is constantly evolving, and our ways of understanding the issues are marked by multiple controversies, whether on the effectiveness of health measures, the temporalities of the vaccine solution, or more broadly the mode of democratic governance of the crisis. In such a context, perceptions of the risk, relevance or appropriateness of measures are constantly changing, and it is essential to think about regular and even constant monitoring of opinions.



The diagram opposite, taken from an Openlab organised in May 2020 by the Centre for Digital Humanities of the UNIL-EPFL on the theme of "Creating cultural experiences for a post-pandemic society"[20], represents the gradient of acceptance of different health measures that could be envisaged for the reopening of performance venues. The challenge of the reflection is to situate these measures according to the degree of acceptance of the target audience, with the green zone corresponding to easy acceptance and the red zone to the identification of strong potential reticence. As we have pointed out, these positions evolve over time: who would have imagined, for example, a year

20 https://actu.epfl.ch/news/creer-des-experiences-culturelles-pour-une-socie-3/

ago that wearing a mask during an event would be perceived today as a totally acceptable constraint by spectators[21]?



The construction of acceptance actually involves three criteria which we have tried to represent by the triangle opposite. The first criterion at the top is the impact on the expected experience, followed by adherence to the measures because they are seen as new, effective and acceptable standards, and the perceived adequacy of the measures with regard to the individual's perception of risk. Positioning the health measures in relation to these three criteria would allow us to sort out the acceptable measures from those that are dissuasive for spectators, in that they degrade expectations in terms of experience too much to continue to be an attractive activity.

Entering into a process of integrating the social acceptance of measures into the definition of health strategies for demonstrations may seem somewhat iconoclastic, in view of current approaches which are at best based on condescending pedagogy (the population does not adhere because it has not understood), and at worst on the principle of constraint (without strict rules accompanied by sanctions, the population does not comply). In reality, it is our models of governance that are being put to the test in this crisis, which is as much a health crisis as a political and democratic one, where the population (although supposedly sovereign) is largely relegated to a secondary role in

[21] Up to 80% support for this measure in the survey of We Love Green festival-goers (https://www.welovegreen.fr/make-our-green-come-true/), 72% for Eurockéennes festival-goers (https://www.eurockeennes.fr/consultation-eurockeennes-2021/), both conducted in France in February 2021.

decision-making[22]. In this context, events and their audiences could constitute an interesting laboratory for testing an alternative approach to enlisting audiences, monitoring the acceptance of measures (through surveys, discussion panels targeted at specific types of audience or monitoring social networks) and promoting civic-mindedness based on a different sharing of burdens, duties and responsibilities within the community.

[22] See on the subject https://www.letemps.ch/opinions/covid19-plan-continuite-population

Provisional conclusions...

The analysis proposed in this report is just one step in the complex process of understanding the issues and identifying ways to resume event activities while taking into account the COVID risk. There still seems to be a long way to go before a balance is found between risk prevention during shows and events and a return to a certain normality, which is part of the organisation of such events.

In this report we have tried to highlight the blind spots in the current crisis management for this sector. Focused on the objective of a rapid recovery and lulled by the illusion of a return to the initial situation, many of the actors involved are struggling to initiate a process of risk acceptance, which is a prerequisite for finding realistic and proportionate solutions. The collective reflection and intellectual effort produced by the SAFE project in order to define the terms of the problem to be dealt with certainly contributes to triggering the process of active risk acceptance in a context of generalized tetany.

Finally, we would like to express the hope that the previous know-how available in the field of event security will be taken into account more in the future as key resources in the conceptualisation and modelling of COVID-proof events. This is undoubtedly how we will emerge from the crisis better equipped to face the challenges ahead.

About the author

Dr. Pascal Viot is a sociologist and associate researcher at the Urban Sociology Laboratory of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (LASUR - EPFL). He is the author and co-author of numerous publications in the fields of activism, risk management, crowd phenomena and urban and event security (political rallies, sports events, concerts and festivals). He is also Coordinator of the Welcome and Security Department of the Paléo Festival in Nyon and of the YES Group (Yourope Event Safety Group, a consortium of major European festivals). In 2016, he created iSSUE, the Swiss Institute for Urban and Event Safety (www.issue.ch). As an expert in crowd management and event safety, Pascal Viot is regularly mandated as a consultant and trainer by event organisers as well as institutions and official authorities.

The SAFE project

Launched in 2018 in a context of increasing attacks on events and venues, SAFE is a European programme coordinated by PRODISS aiming to develop the skills of people in charge of security at events and music venues.

In 2020, SAFE has evolved to include health security in its remit, in order to rapidly provide practical and theoretical approaches to the main challenges of crowd management in times of health crisis. SAFE is funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ Education and Training programme.

Partners:

We would like to thank all the contributors to this project, and in particular the participants of the SAFE hackathon organised on 21, 22 and 29 January 2021. This report owes much to their creative impulse and the innovative and relevant ideas they agreed to share.