Crisis communication applied to mega-events and festivals

A multi-method analysis of communicative preparedness

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ABSTRACT

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Crisis communication has been widely researched for an economic purpose, with the focus on preventing damage to a corporation’s reputation or the restoration of a politician’s image. Additionally, crisis communication also found its utility for natural hazards as well as for terrorist attacks. However, identified as being a research gap, this thesis focuses on studying the prepared crisis communication of mega-event and festival organizations in case of a serious incident. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the area of crisis communication in the way that it focuses on the process of preparing for a possible crisis with the creation of effective communication manuals, action plans, etc. rather than investigating the post-crisis communication. Through using the uncertainty reduction theory and the chaos theory, it is possible to investigate the internal crisis management processes of organizers that go beyond protecting its reputation, but focus more on saving human lives as uncertainty and chaos get reduced. A deductive approach was taken through conducting interviews and carrying out a thematic analysis of written documentary sources, such as manuals and action plans, as well as the transcripts. In general, one can say that the awareness about the importance of a crisis management and communication plan rises. Regular trainings and a constant collaboration with external partners, such as the blue light organizations, are seen as central to the emergency planning process. Moreover, to guarantee an effective crisis communication, often smaller task groups within the crisis management team are in charge of instructional crisis communication. Knowledge about different threat-scenarios and functions of external specialists reduces uncertainty and supports actions to reduce chaos. This thesis and its findings have a societal relevance, in the sense that it allows a wider and deeper understanding of crisis communication in an area of application that does not seem to be very common. Through insights into the crisis management process of the different event- and festival organizations, one can become active today and threats to human lives can be minimized or even avoided in the future.

Keywords: crisis communication, mega-events, festivals, uncertainty, chaos, interview, thematic analysis.
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Introduction

May it be a music festival, an international conference, a congress, a trade fair, or a show of an entertainment and theatrical company like the Canadian “Cirque du Soleil”, in every case it is a public mass gathering, a congregation of hundreds of people. For the public, the priority at such events and festivals is to have fun and to enjoy an extraordinary experience. For the organizers, the aspects of security, health, and safety are to be put in the foreground.

The biggest Swedish music festival Bråvalla had to deal with several sexual attacks in 2017 and the years before (The Guardian Online 2017). During a concert of the American singer Ariana Grande, there was a suicide attack at the Manchester Arena in the UK in 2017 (Dodd et al. 2017). In 2016, Germany’s Hurricane music festival had to be evacuated due to severe weather conditions (Murphy 2016). All of these incidents show the necessity of effective crisis management which goes hand in hand with crisis communication. When organizing mega-events and festivals the first priority is, or should be, to keep the public safe as well as preventing the crisis from escalating into a disaster.

Risk and crisis communication is a topic that is becoming more and more important. In times of terror and sexual attacks as well as climate change, which influence the course of action at mega-events and festivals, it is important to respond quickly and organized to such risks and crises.

According to Reynolds and Seeger (2005, 46-47), there is a difference between risk communication and crisis communication. The authors state that crisis communication “seeks to explain the specific event, identify likely consequences and outcomes, and provide specific harm-reducing information to affected communities in an honest, candid, prompt, accurate, and complete manner.” In contrast, the sector of risk communication is often associated with identifying risks to the personal health and efforts to recommend change to adopt healthier and less risky behaviors (Freimuth et al. 2000, 339). The distribution of information to the public makes it possible for them to make choices to avoid or to reduce the exposure as well as to manage a risk. Therefore, one can say that risk- and crisis communication complements each other, as both are aiming at reducing, limiting, and controlling public harm. Additionally, the messages spread to the public, “largely are mediated through mass
communication channels, although they also have public communication and group communication dimensions” (Reynolds and Seeger 2005, 47).

Risk and crisis communication have been widely researched for an economic purpose with the focus on preventing damage to a corporation’s reputation or restoring a politician’s image. Additionally, crisis communication also found its utility for natural hazards as well as for terrorist attacks. However, identified as being a research gap, this thesis focuses on studying the prepared crisis communication of mega-event and festival organizations in cases of a serious incident. This, in order to understand how crisis issues are communicated, by following the prepared guidelines, to reduce chaos and uncertainty among the crisis management and the audiences and therefore being able to save human lives.

**Purpose, aim, and research questions**

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the area of crisis communication in the way that it focuses on the process of preparing for a possible crisis with the creation of effective communication manuals, action plans, etc., rather than investigating the post-crisis communication. Through using the uncertainty reduction theory and the chaos theory, this thesis seeks to gain knowledge about the questions how and in what sense, crisis communication goes beyond protecting an organization’s reputation, but is also needed to protect the public at events and festivals from physical and psychological harm (Coombs 2007, 165). It studies the actions that are needed to reduce uncertainty and chaos within the crisis management, but also among audiences.

The aim is to investigate the prepared crisis communication at certain festivals and mega-events in Scandinavia and German-speaking EU countries, to gain knowledge about how communication professionals prepare for a serious incident, in case a crisis appears and how manuals, action plans, etc. are created, in order to follow them in the worst case scenario. Having an effective crisis management plan in place certainly helps to fulfill the audience’s need for information if a crisis appears. Within this study, it is also desired to identify similarities and differences in the prepared crisis communication between the chosen organizations and their events and festivals.
In this connection, it is to mention that this thesis is interested at analyzing crisis communication applied to different possible crises at festivals and mega-events, regardless of its geographical placement and origin, may it be a crisis due to sexual attacks, extreme weather or terrorism.

In order to study the field of crisis communication for festivals and mega-events, the following research questions are of interest:

**RQ 1:** How do communication professionals get prepared in case of a crisis?

**RQ 2:** What are central topics of prepared crisis communication?

**RQ 3:** What are the organizer’s understandings of the effects of crisis communication?

**Previous Research**

The review of the previous literature has been divided into two sections that are crisis preparedness and crisis/emergency communication.

**Crisis Preparedness**

When it comes to corporations’ crisis preparedness and management, it is central dealing with the question, what role do crisis communication plans have (Lando, 2014). A lot of corporations already have a crisis management plan (CMP) in place. But, when it comes to communication during a crisis, many organizations would be ill-prepared, because often they do not have a prepared crisis communication plan (CCP) in place. The crisis management plan is designed to handle crises and consists of e.g. manuals, evacuation plans, as well as crisis response drills (Lando 2014, 5).

A three-stage crisis management model by Coombs (2012) considers the pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stage. It is stated that organizations which have outlined a crisis communication plan (CCP) are better prepared to “appropriately address a crisis and return to normalcy in a relatively short time.” A prepared crisis communication plan provides information about the main spokesperson, the value of communication as well as other vital activities in case of a
crisis. That means a CCP does not only give information but also shows preparedness of the organization in case a crisis appears (Lando 2014, 5-9). In this case, Coombs’ (2012) Situation Crisis Communication Theory supports the understandings of how different aspects of a crisis situation affect how a crisis and a corporation’s reputation are perceived. Unfortunately, “crisis management is not seen as a very important activity when things are going well in the organization. It is, however, impossible to plan during a crisis because, at this time, people are moving fast to protect their own interests” (Lando 2014, 11). Consequently, crisis communication goes beyond protecting one’s reputation and is not just an after-the-crisis activity. It needs pro-active pre-crisis communication preparedness, as well as two-way communication with the aim of reducing fear, uncertainty, and chaos. As it seems, officials often get caught unaware of risks and crises. Therefore, developing and implementing CCPs in a corporation’s CMPs is essential (Lando 2014, 10-11).

Moreover, crisis management plans find their application also in the field of hospitality and tourism. A well prepared crisis management plan supports the protection of the welfare of guests and employees, as well as the resources and assets of a hotel property (Tavitiyaman et al. 2008, 25). According to Castillo (2005, 14), a disaster preparedness model consists of preparedness, response and recovery. This means, preparedness is all about practice and training. The response includes activities to prevent physical harm, as well as assuring information flow and using blue light organizations, such as the police, paramedics, fire departments, and recovery efforts, which involve actions in order to restore order and get back to normalcy (Castillo 2005, 15). Furthermore, a crisis management plan offers a “written protocol that serves as a script described to booting crisis to speed the return to normal operations. Some examples of planning criteria relate to a written plan, informal planning, staff training, and annual revision” (Tavitiyaman et al. 2008, 31). When it comes to the efficiency of crisis management in the hospitality and tourism area, the perceptions and expectations of important values in a CMP are higher than the actual performance activities (Tavitiyaman et al. 2008, 51-52). Also, in general, hotel managers would appreciate a well written CMP, which will support the staff and management team to prepare before, during and after a crisis. Without a CMP, organizations, not just in the hospitality and tourism field, function less effectively and spend too much time trying to create solutions that are hard to identify. Organizational response and recovery are perceived as more important than the CMP itself, but on the other hand, CEOs have to show their leadership abilities to protect human welfare, as well as resources and assets (Tavitiyaman et al. 2008, 55).
Another aspect to be communicatively prepared for is the threat of (bio-) terrorism. A study revealed that among Michigan’s (USA) largest corporations that had a prepared crisis communication plan in place, just a minority dealt specifically with the threat of bioterrorism (Wrigley et al. 2003, 281). In 2001, seventeen years ago, Michigan’s crisis managers were not very aware of the threat of bioterrorism as the majority of the corporations had not heard about previous bioterrorism attacks throughout the nation states and also confused bioterrorism with biological and chemical weapons. When asked about their risk perception of bioterrorism, 31 percent said that their own company is highly unlikely to be affected by it in the next five years (Wrigley et al. 2003, 284-286). However, in general, bioterrorism is perceived as a serious threat to businesses and employees and would therefore have serious consequences. To remark positively: It seems that there are strong indications of willingness to develop a crisis management plan for future threats of bioterrorism (Wrigley et al. 2003, 287-289).

When threats and crises are a concern for the emotional and physical harm to people, it is necessary to send out clear information and to have a well-structured crisis management and crisis communication plan in place, especially when it concerns communities or a larger group of individuals. Information that aims to empower a community has to be widespread, evaluated by different voices and tested against past experiences. Emergency managers in the private and public sector face the challenge of planning, managing, and communicating in a way that helps to protect the health, safety, and welfare of a specific group or population. The key part of emergency management communication is the power of persuasion of expert advice, or the willingness of people to receive and produce advice, which again can result in a feeling of being sufficiently informed or a feeling of being uninformed (Heath et al. 2009, 124-126). Apparently, community members have different perceptions of “the amount, source, and quality of information they expect to receive prior to and during a crisis event.” Furthermore, a study found that individuals would prefer different sources of communication before and during a crisis and expert advice was the preferred source. An effective crisis communication plan that would allow crisis managers to respond appropriately is essential. The communication by officials prior and during an incident would be shaped by the sense of concern shared in a community (Heath et al. 2009, 137-138).
Crisis Management Team

When it comes to effective crisis management, considered as a whole, one essential part is to have a well-functioning team of experts that know how to respond and communicate with the aim to protect human lives and prevent an even bigger disaster. It is suggested that effective crisis management is also dependent on different team related factors and can influence an organization’s response to a crisis. In case an incident appears, an organization has to have formal guidelines and procedures how to communicate to employees and the general public (King 2002, 235). Organizations that prepare for a crisis often employ the use of teams in developing a crisis management plan (Dorn 2000, 18). A crisis management team should consist of experts from all departments of an organization, as the crisis response will have a greater success if there is more than one individual responsible. This provides a clear structure of who is responsible for what and removing the chance of confusion about who should handle which task in the event of a crisis. Also important, is that the teams have a high level of communication, trust, involvement, commitment, and delegation. The difference between crisis communication and crisis management is that the latter is a systematic effort by organizational members with external stakeholders to stop a crisis, which means that the organization attempts to remove the risk and uncertainty, which would not allow gaining control over the situation (King 2002, 236-238). The effectiveness of a crisis management team depends on different factors and although it is not possible to prepare for every incident, it is the organization’s responsibility to prepare for those that are most likely to occur. The issue of corporate responsibility has gained attention not only in business ethics but also in crisis management. Often, the emphasis is put on corporate responsibility during or after a crisis, but the same level of responsibility should be addressed prior to a crisis (King 2002, 246). Before a crisis occurs, it is the organization’s and the crisis management team’s responsibility to “periodically update the crisis plan, teach new skills to the crisis team, reassess the crisis portfolio and make any improvements in the crisis communication system” (Coombs 1999, as cited in King 2002, 246). It might even be helpful to conduct a mock crisis prior to an actual incident. This would allow the crisis management team to gain valuable information towards the effectiveness of the crisis plan and communication concerns, but also to gain information about what failed, why did it fail, and what changes are needed. Also, a hypothetical scenario would provide information about what employees, managers, and other staff thinks they should or would do in the case that a crisis occurs (King 2002, 246).
To be prepared with CMPs, CCPs and an effective crisis management team also means that planned emergency action responses should be morally, ethically and legally reasonable. A well-written crisis management plan can give a certain feeling of security to everyone involved, that in the case of a crisis, their action is justifiable. With this, organizers gain certainty, rather than being uncertain in a highly chaotic situation. An article by St. John Lii and Pearson (2016) discussed ethics in crisis management and took a view beyond the construct of a Public-Relations-Person-as-Corporate-Conscience (PRPaCC). In academia ethics is a “systematic examination of moral agents and their actions” (St. John Lii and Pearson 2016, 20). Identifying ethical issues allows an organization to take moral aspects into consideration as various threat scenarios are planned. Such moral aspects provide and support guidance to what organizers and their crisis management teams should do. It is suggested that a public relations (PR) expert has a certain key role in the organization’s conscience by gathering and distributing information internally but also to audiences. This means that a PR person assists in the discourse of ethical choices and deliberations (St. John Lii and Pearson 2016, 21). However, one has to be critical of the PRPaCC construct. A communication professional can be short-sighted when it comes to responding to crises with meeting ethical issues. A PR person should rather be seen as an ethical counselor that needs training in ethical analysis as well. Moreover, a conscience, whether it is private or organizational, it is not a complete guide to action, nor is it the only influential factor when moral decisions have to be made. It is not exactly clear what role a PR person has, should it be the conscience or just assisting in the process. Therefore, it is argued that communication concepts in a crisis have to move beyond the idea of the PRPaCC construct and instead focus more on how several team members can learn about the importance of ethics in dealing with a crisis (St. John Lii and Pearson 2016, 22-24).

Crisis /Emergency Response Communication

A well-prepared crisis management team that has a CMP and a CCP in place, have created the prerequisites to respond quickly and effectively to any incident that might appear at mega-events and festivals.

Authorities, blue light organizations and organizers have to be aware of potential crises and be able to apply their knowledge on how to handle them. In order to educate organizations, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (2008) – Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB) published a crisis communications handbook in 2008. The agency is, among others,
responsible for issues regarding national public safety and emergency management as long as no other authority has responsibility for measures taken before, during or after an emergency or crisis. It covers the range of subjects beginning with an explanation of what a crisis is, developments and learning’s, fundamentals of crisis communications, communication and cooperation, media relations, and communicating with people in a crisis. Effective crisis communication should, in the best case, be developed even before a disaster unfolds. This can be achieved through training as well as spreading and acquiring knowledge. Regardless of the working title, it is important to be involved in communication issues. Through critical incident exercises with personnel responsible for emergency planning, including the use of appropriate communication channels and a good flow of information will be assessed (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency 2008, 15-17). For developing effective crisis communication, it is suggested to plan and organize prior exercises where both the public and the audience can take part. Training with the public but also with the media requires exercising communications through various methods and channels. Crisis communication has the power to affect the development of events/festivals and can shape the crisis response (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency 2008, 17-26). Comparatively, Austria’s Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs also focuses its national crisis- and disaster protection management more towards natural- and humanitarian disasters and national catastrophes. Its governmental brochure (Bundesministerium für Inneres, Republik Österreich 2018) covers legal and organizational fundamental principles about the basics of catastrophe management, its phases, international cooperation, self-protection, information, and elucidation. Their national crisis and disaster protection management works with a five-forces-model which includes the blue light organizations as well as federal agencies, but also the economy, science, and members of the public (Bundesministerium für Inneres, Republik Österreich 2018).

Crisis Communication at Humanitarian Hazards

Outside of Europe, Sweden and Austria respectively, in America a so-called Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) program was created and published in book-form by the U.S. Government (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014). It provides a training program that educates people on principles and applications of crisis and emergency risk communication, when they have to respond to public health emergency and humanitarian hazards. However, it is stated not to be an in-depth manual on risk communication, issues management, crisis communication or disaster communication. It is more a combination of all topics, incorporated from theory and practical applications. CERC is supposed to function as a
guideline for authorities and officials to make the best possible decisions for the physical and mental/emotional well-being during a crisis or disaster.

Throughout the book, there are six principles emphasized in order to provide effective risk- and crisis communication: “be first, be right, be credible, express empathy, promote action, and show respect” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014, 2).

The Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication was also used as an integrative model by applying it, among others, to the humanitarian/natural crisis of the anthrax attack in September 2001 in the USA (Reynolds and Seeger 2005, 43-44). In practice, risk communication is mostly applied to produce public messages regarding health risks and environmental hazards. But, it “is also grounded in an assumption that the public has a generalized right to know about hazards and risks.” Connected with humanitarian/natural disasters risk communication also finds its application in the form of pre-event warnings which means, advice for evacuation, but also in the form of post-event communication about recommendations on how to behave in order to prevent additional harm (Reynolds and Seeger 2005, 45-47).

In addition, the IDEA model serves as a best practice example for effective instructional risk and crisis communication. IDEA stands for internalization, distribution, explanation, and action. It should function as an “easy-to-use and situationally generalizable framework for quickly developing effective messages instructing people on how to protect themselves before and during high-risk events, crises, disasters, and other emergencies” (Sellnow et al. 2017, 552). Through studying and using that model current understandings of instructional crisis communication could be broadened in the sense that the main focus should be put on offering messages to audiences during acute crisis situation which might endure over a longer time period. A sudden realization that there is a crisis leaves individuals in shock. In this aspect, chaos theory describes these emotional reactions and seeks to understand how communication can help to make sense in a severe situation. Furthermore, emphasis was put on the conjunction of the model with the experiential learning theory, because “it’s utility can be measured using affective, cognitive and behavioral learning outcomes” (Sellnow et al. 2017, 552-553). IDEA model messages are mostly different from public health communication in the way that the focus is intentionally put on learning as the outcome variables, which means that “the messages are strategically constructed to include appeals to affective and cognitive
learning as the means to achieve desired behavioral learning outcomes” (Sellnow et al. 2017, 555). However, as a study by Sellnow et al. (2017, 563-564) suggests, traditional media like TV news broadcasts remain an effective means for risk and crisis communication and should, therefore, not be discounted, despite the fact that social media may also be fruitful.

Although crisis and emergency response communication has predominantly positive aspects, it also has its boundaries. Organizational crisis, natural disasters, community tragedies, and other crisis-events are always increasing powerful social forces. Crises like natural disasters “demonstrate the need for an approach to crisis communication that moves beyond the traditional parameters of image restoration” (Sellnow and Seeger 2001, 155-156). From the perspective of the chaos theory, the procedures used to prepare for exceptional events and crises are often dangerously inaccurate. Instead of including communication, which takes the variability caused by other factors into account, officials often seem to stick to habits and information that were used last time. Another aspect to mention is the people’s expectations. The expectations held by community leaders influence the process of sense making. When individuals do and behave as they have always done, it hinders the crisis planning process and the mitigation (Sellnow and Seeger 2001, 159-160). Chaotic situations enhance the need for timely and correct information as well as new sense making structures. As chaos theory suggests, “crises may be a necessary cyclical stage in a process leading to reorganization and renewal” (Sellnow and Seeger 2001, 164-165).

Bringing together the best practical and theoretical approach from risk and crisis communication applied to natural and humanitarian disasters, a study by Steelman and McCaffrey (2013, 683-688) found that communication dynamics are different during an event as the affected people, may it be first responders or impacted civilians, need to create a sense of control in a highly uncertain situation. However, official crisis communicants usually do not tend to focus on crucial information for community members but on what is remarkable to first responders and other authorities. Interactive communication and reliable information can be seen as the most effective (Steelman and McCaffrey 2013, 702).

**Instructional Crisis Communication**

When communication professionals should respond to crises and emergencies, clear instructional crisis communication is needed. Being a subfield of what is understood as the traditional crisis communication, it often focuses on public warning messages via mobile
devices. In the USA, public warning messages are generally delivered by the government through systems like the Warning, Alert, and Response Network (WARN), or the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), which aim at a more reliable system to notify and alert the U.S. citizens about war, terrorist attacks, natural disasters or other hazards (Bean et al. 2015, 60-61). Research in the field of instructional crisis communication addresses understandings on how audiences make sense of warning messages, whereby the relatively new subfield of crisis communication tends to focus on pedagogical practices, learning outcomes, and message exchange in crisis situations. Just little research has been done on instructional crisis communication in other fields, e.g. in a mock food-related health crisis or a natural hazard. Emphasis is put on the importance to research best practices for communicating messages to the audience on how to avoid threats or seek treatment through mobile devices, as they see it to be a research gap. However, health communication researchers took a more broadly defined view on mobile health communication (mHealth). The strength of the mHealth system is that text-based mobile messages can reach the public in every circumstance of their life and are not limited to words and characters (Bean et al. 2015, 67-70). It is suggested in research on the development of a “mWarning” system that allows crisis communication through mobile devices and enables direct-to-the-public communication about how to prepare, avoid or respond to immediate threats, including the role of emotions in message processing (Bean et al. 2015, 73). In Austria, e.g. citizens could already get warning messages through a mobile app called “KATWARN” which distributes information and catastrophe push notifications in case of a natural or humanitarian disaster. The national government and federal agencies are eligible to send out messages which are locus-oriented and based on international research of crisis communication and usability (Bundesministerium für Inneres, Republik Österreich 2018).

To expand the knowledge of instructional communication further research in that field could be fruitful in the contexts as follows: “risk and crises situations, technology-enhanced environments, digital games, and forensics education” (Sellnow et al. 2015, 417). Furthermore, “messages informed by instructional communication research can literally be the difference between life and death.” Considering the fact that technology is ever-present, it also functions as a delivery mode for instructional crisis communication, anytime and anywhere. Although, so far, technology for instructional communication found its utility and research only in an academic setting (Sellnow et al. 2015, 420-423).
Other than natural and humanitarian hazards, which pose a risk to public health, are situations of terrorism. Researchers studied the perceptions of communication experts regarding chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) terrorism crises, including challenges and best practices. The critical areas which needed to be taken into consideration were identified as resources, competences, and cooperation in preparedness communication as well as providing information during a crisis. Being involved in a crisis situation of terror, either as civilian or as the first responder, creates intense reactions that have to do with perception factors like uncertainty, uncontrollability, and lack of understanding and mental/emotional violations (Ruggiero and Vos 2015, 138-139). The urge for quick actions and the importance of effective crisis communication including identifying challenges and possible risks is common sense.

In case of terrorism, communication can be used before crisis to inform, educate, and prepare the greater public to increase the understanding of risks, during crisis to share current and updated information including instructions for people how to prevent further harm, and post-crisis to reestablish order and trust, as well as to support the process of understanding and sense-making. People, who are affected by situations of terror, experience a lack of knowledge and understanding and could, therefore, engage in unsafe behavior which emphasizes the important role of risk and crisis communicators that could help to sooth how crisis-events unfold (Ruggiero and Vos 2015, 139).

Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) terrorism crises clearly include a high level of complexity, which emerges from the nature of the risks and crises and also cause uncertainty, chaos, and mental/emotional harm. Threats of terrorism are unpredictable and complicate the communication with the public. Communication specialists and crisis managers reported that the most challenging task would be to calm the public in order to prevent panic. Moreover, it would be important to address this aspect in crisis communication training in order to close the gap between advised and actual behaviors. On the contrary, people also should not be underestimated to handle a situation as it can undermine successful communication. The best practices, as found in a study by Ruggiero and Vos related to “transparency and openness about uncertainties, using multiple communication media, and personal communication involving trusted sources” (Ruggiero and Vos 2015, 146-147).
If the terrorist attack happens to be a (school-) shooting or an explosion at the same time, it could present the worst case scenario, not just for communication specialists but for everybody involved.

This kind of crisis constitutes a challenge to preparedness and the spreading of information as there can be a high level of uncertainty. Knowledge about terrorism, as strategic communication or PR, needs to be increased in order to develop new strategies and tactics which oppose and stop the perpetrator’s communication goals (Falkheimer 2014, 52).

Crisis communication and terrorism, among others, discussed and linked with the aspect of Beck’s risk society, suggests that crisis communication is a theory and its practice gets used for increasing control when risks have turned into crises. On the contrary, traditional crisis communication does not work within a terrorism setting with multiple actors, an uncontrollable situation, and a power struggle between governments, the media and terrorists (Ashcroft 1997, 326; Falkheimer 2014, 55).

Communication during a crisis, or immediately after, respectively has often too little support and receives limited attention by law enforcement and first responders. Media relations are handled in an ad hoc basis. In the post-crisis phase, criticism directed towards first responders repeatedly emerges with accusations of being too slow and not able to communicate relevant information fast enough. But not just the first responders are getting criticized, also the general crisis communication in its whole. Regularly, it is said that the personnel were poorly prepared, failed to practice crisis handling as well as communicate instructions and information via social media. Special emphasis is put on the importance of crisis communication knowledge when it comes to analyzing terror plans and acts, but also the need to develop risk- and crisis communication strategies in the face of contemporary societal development and the rising threat of terrorism (Falkheimer 2014, 59-60).

Considering the rising number of school shootings, e.g. in the U.S.A., crisis communication in communities has especially been studied in combination with insights from chaos, uncertainty reduction and sense making theories. The purpose was to understand the mechanisms through which a college community responds to crises (Xu 2017, 1). Additionally, a challenge was to apply existing crisis communication literature from a corporate context to specific targeted communities, as this approach is underdeveloped. Further, taking a community approach
makes sense as a university campus “is a physical confined environment of which connections among the members are close and organic” (Xu 2017, 1-2).

Information gaps created by crises are different, as terror attacks are different from sexual assaults or extreme weather conditions. Therefore, differences among crises need different approaches to spreading information. In regard to chaos theory, it was found that there will be a new structure in the system after a chaotic period of time. A person’s feeling of belonging to a community may influence the decision if they depend on the community for information needs which lead to collective sense making and self-organizing (Xu 2017, 6). For the reduction of uncertainty, it seems that community members use local resources for information and making sense of a crisis. Moreover, community members organize themselves and construct shared experiences through interpersonal communication, which is driven by informational needs. It is argued that the aspect of interpersonal communication has been left aside for crisis communication research. Scholars started to pay increasing attention to the role of social media and mediated communication during crises, as social media has the ability to create and maintain a community in a situation of crisis, although that might be limited in terms of mental/emotional support (Xu 2017, 6).

The Research Gap

This thesis is positioned to the previous literature in the sense that, this field of risk- and crisis communication has mainly been researched in the academic context or in the wake of natural or humanitarian hazards, like food-borne health crises, flooding, or wildfires, but not outside those areas. Furthermore, it relates to the previous literature of risk- and crisis communication in the way that also mega-events and festivals are not immune from situations of terror. If an attack or a shooting happens e.g. on festival grounds or in an event arena, there are a lot of people congregated and constitute in “the perfect” circumstances to harm as many as possible, for someone with a radical mindset. Therefore, it is also important to take the aspect of terrorism into account when studying risk and crisis communication for mega-events and festivals. So far, crisis communication has been researched in a broader sense and for general aspects, like wildfires and other humanitarian disasters. The research gap is to enquire into crisis communication to threats, risks, crises, and disasters at mega-events and festivals, as there has not been much research outside of the area of crisis communication in the aftermath of natural and humanitarian crises.
Theoretical Frame and Concepts

According to Beck’s theory of risk society (1992, 4), risks are defined as the probabilities of physical harm due to given technological or other processes. Therefore, experts are put in charge to define and create agendas, a priori on risk discourse. He argues that in a classical industrial society, the ‘logic’ of wealth production also dominates the ‘logic’ of risk production, in a risk society, this relationship is reversed. At the center of modernization and globalization lie the risks and consequences that can be a threat to human life, and they cannot be limited to certain groups or localities, but can rather affect everyone (Beck 1992, 12-13). Living in a risk society means that the unknown and unintended consequences become a dominant force in history and society (Beck 1992, 22). Although, there already has to be a distinction between destructive consequences and the potential element of risk. As Beck states, risks express a future component. It is partially based on assessable damages in the future and also partly on a general loss of confidence or certainty. In the risk society, one becomes, “active today in order to prevent, alleviate, or take precautions against the problems and crisis of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow” (Beck 1992, 33-34).

The basis and motivation of Beck’s risk society is safety. Compared to the ideal image of equality of a class society, which focuses on positive goals and social change, the utopia of the risk society remains negative and defensive. In other words, one is no longer concerned to reach something good, but rather prevent the worst (Beck 1992, 49). People’s safety lies in the knowledge of external specialists who decide whether yes or no, the degree, the extent, and the symptoms of people’s endangerment. Risk experts argue and discuss with each other, choose the victims and even announce whether one has to fear or not (Beck 1992, 53-54). Concepts of risk and risk society bring together what seem to be mutually exclusive, such as nature and society, social science and material science, the discursive construction of risks and threats to physical integrity.

In a modern world, a system of social rules, compensations and precautions creates a sense of security in the face of an open and uncertain future. Uncertainty is seen in every niche of life which comes with the need of insurance contracts and therefore, renews trust in corporations and governments (Beck 2009, 27). However, large-scale risks and threats, whose origins lie in the modern society, have a social explosiveness. Promises of security are demanded from
institutions with the emergence of threats, for which they are responsible, but simultaneously not. This results in promises being made that they are completely unable to keep. Insurance institutions and emergency staff are pressured to make even the safest thing safer, which also raises expectations of the breaking point but also raises the awareness. This means, in the end, not only real disasters, but also the possibility of a threat-scenario can cost the loss of security and the feeling of safety (Beck 2009, 28-29).

In companies, risk and crisis communication have the purpose to protect the reputational assets during a crisis. To use a more precise definition, “a crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat” (Coombs 2007, 164). A crisis can be harmful physically, emotionally or financially. Also, the news media and the internet play a crucial role, as most people will first hear of a crisis through different media channels. Here, the exceptions are victims, or potential victims who are experiencing the crisis, or are waiting to be informed by the organization in regards to the crisis (Coombs 2007, 164).

For organizers of festivals and mega-events, the priority in any crisis is, and Coombs (2007) pointed out as well, to protect the public as well as the artists from harm, not to protect the reputation. Further, he mentioned, ethically correct crisis communication has to start with addressing physical and psychological concerns of victims. Clear and quickly communicated information and instructions can save lives when telling the audience what they have to do to protect themselves from the physical threat of a crisis (Coombs 2007, 165). Instructional information can be done in many different ways, e.g. through sirens, loudspeakers, stage announcements, etc. Any form of information helps the public to cope emotionally with crises as the uncertainty of an unfolding crisis produces stress for everyone involved. Therefore, it is crucial to start the organizer’s efforts by using effective communication to address the physical and emotional/psychological concerns of the people involved. According to Sellnow et al. (2012, 633), “the relevance of instructional messages in restoring order during the acute phase of a crisis is established through the lens of chaos theory.”

Therefore, it is important for communication professionals of festivals and mega-events to be prepared for any possible crisis in order to reduce unknown and unintended consequences.
To narrow it down more, the theoretical framework is also built on chaos theory and the uncertainty reduction theory.

Chaos Theory (CT)
The chaos theory “contextualizes a crisis as a disruption to the order and equilibrium of a system. The chaos theory provides a framework to analyze the dynamics that take place within a community when crises happen” (Xu 2017, 2). Chaos theory is used to address both the panic felt when sudden and unexpected events produce confusion, uncertainty and the emotional/psychological need to understand what has happened and how to behave in order to reestablish order, as well as prevent hysteria (Sellnow et al. 2012, 633-634). It is stated that chaos theory applies to risk and crisis communication “as a means for understanding both the bewildered sense of helplessness victims experience at the onset of an acute crisis and the urgent desire it instills to restore a sense of understanding and order” (Sellnow et al. 2012, 634). Furthermore, the order is also restored in the form of self-organization by sharing instructional information that helps with self-protection and recovery. In case of failing to provide effective lifesaving instructional messages by festival organizers, it can lead to misunderstandings which may turn into even bigger and more devastating harm (Sellnow et al. 2012, 634). Chaos theory also finds its application to model public relations situations and also gets applied to issues of management, crisis, and rumors. It is used to “understand the behavior of systems that do not unfold in a linearly predictable, conventional cause-and-effect manner over time” (Murphy 1996, 96). Further, chaos theory represents a postmodern social science worldview that has its roots from theories about the astronomic universe. Chaos theory forces us, the society, to reinterpret the universe as constituted by forces of disorder, therefore, it is possible for seemingly chaotic systems to re-self-organize and self-renew, including periods of order as well as unforeseen transformations whose directions cannot be changed (Murphy 1996, 96).

The main contribution of chaos theory to PR and social sciences may be the offering of new models for public opinions on how organizations can control the public’s perception of issues and crises. It also raises questions about the role of PR and communication professionals as it emphasizes uncertainty and change, as chaos theory works against the certainty-seeking mode. In PR, chaos theory has the most relevance in the patterns of media coverage, sudden-onset crises, or upcoming rumors. The main issues and crisis manager can react to those and respond before the chaos sets in. (Murphy 1996, 102-103). If a crisis appears, an organization
may have a certain power to influence what is happening, but after an escalation point, this capacity is often lost. Therefore, chaos theory provides a good model for crisis situations as their dynamic resembles that of a chaotic system. In those situations, chaos theory suggests that organizations cannot manage an outcome but they have to allow things to sort out themselves while trying to fit into the emerging aftermath. That means, through crises, organizations redefine themselves permanently in a new and unexpected light. Moreover, at severe incidents, chaos theory suggests that uncertainty and chaos will always dominate relations with the public as they have a life and logic of their own with a limited room for intervention (Murphy 1996, 105-108). To understand how instruction and information needs may translate themselves into self-organizing, the uncertainty reduction theory is a compatible framework.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)
When risks have already developed into crises like sexual assaults at festivals or bomb threats at mega-events, there is always uncertainty, e.g. who/what caused the crisis, the number of injured people and lost human lives and what each and every person can do to protect themselves or to prevent an even bigger disaster.

According to Liu, Bartz, and Duke (2016, 479), although communication professionals and organizers are aware of the uncertainty in risk and crisis communication, “research has not theorized exactly how communicators should ‘manage’ uncertainty to help publics cope and respond appropriately.” Uncertainty is linked with information seeking, because it is uncomfortable for people if they are uncertain about their own state of knowledge (Heath and Gay 1997, 351; Liu, Bartz, and Duke 2016, 480). Brashers (2001, 478) states that uncertainty evolves when details of situations are “ambiguous, complex, unpredictable, or probabilistic; when information is unavailable or inconsistent.” Taking Berger and Calabrese’s (1975, 100) uncertainty reduction theory into account, uncertainty is defined as the way an individual has to select from his / her own available response alternatives, which might be the most suitable to predict the reaction of the other. URT was proposed by Berger and Calabrese (1975, 100) as a theory for interpersonal communication. It consists of different axioms and theorems, but just two axioms are essential when studying URT in the context of crisis communication. One of them states that “high levels of uncertainty will result in information seeking and the other states that as communication increases, the level of uncertainty decreases” (Kramer 1999,
This said axiom three and one provide the most important assumptions of URT while the remaining axioms and theorems would depend on them.

When it comes to negotiating uncertainty reduction theory within close relationships, it is argued that the connection between uncertainty reduction and information acquisition often gets confused by scholars. Therefore, one needs to reconsider the role of relational uncertainty reduction by dividing relational uncertainty reduction from the goal of eliminating ambiguity. Within close relationships, uncertainty reduction takes on different forms than within acquaintance relationships. Moreover, processes within a group and interaction with strangers, like the situation is to be found at mega-events and festivals, may be motivated by gathering as much information as possible. As noted previously, uncertainty reduction theory stands in a close connection of uncertainty reduction and the goal of information acquisition (Knobloch and Solomon 2002, 246-247).

There is an importance of reducing the uncertainty during a crises, as it is stated that “immediate communication needs are to reduce the uncertainty, allowing audiences to create a basic understanding of what happened so that they may act appropriately” (Reynolds and Seeger 2005, 50). The chosen theoretical framework supports this thesis in the understanding of what dynamics take place in a crisis and how organizers and communicators of mega-events and festivals can help in restoring order. Also, it is addressing the psychological/emotional need of making sense for self-organization. Furthermore, the high level of uncertainty in times of crises can be reduced through spreading well structured, immediate and effective information to the public, including instructions on how to behave and what to do in order to avoid further harm.

**Methodology**

In order to answer the research questions, manuals and action plans of festivals and events as well as transcripts of follow-up in-depth interviews with the responsible communication professional in charge, are of interest. Many different mega-event and festival organizers were contacted, as diverse viewpoints from experts would allow a greater understanding of organizational preparedness. However, it appeared much more difficult than expected to convince unfamiliar respondents to participate in the study. As I had decided to put my focus
point on written documentary sources, German and English speaking organizers within the EU were enquired because the author was fluent in both languages. All of the German speaking organizations were familiar, which made it simpler to convince them to participate in the study. The enquired English speaking organizations were all within Scandinavia because this thesis was written at a Swedish University and therefore served as a common ground that might have been a reason for respondents to agree on participating in the study. Those that could provide written documents and, or, further explanation and information through interviewing for this thesis are mixed organizers of mega-events and festivals in Scandinavia, Austria, and Liechtenstein. The respondents identified as spokespersons for crisis management and communication work under various job titles as follows: head of marketing and communication, head of security, health and safety, head of techniques and infrastructure, as well as head of event management, marketing, and communication.

The documents, as well as the interview transcripts, are going to be analyzed with a thematic content analysis according to Kuckartz (2014), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), Guest et al. (2012), and Berg (2009). The follow-up in-depth interviews are seen as complementary to the thematic content analysis to gain further and deeper knowledge about the wider context of prepared crisis communication. Another aspect of studying social settings is the analysis of written documentary sources, such as manuals and transcripts. They can give information about the setting, the wider context, or even about key holders or organizations (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 122). Here, key holders is meant in the sense of designated persons that work under a specific job title and therefore are in charge of a final decision, due to their expert knowledge.

Thematic Analysis (TA)
For the process of a thematic content analysis, an objective coding scheme must be applied to the data. The analysis of interview transcripts and other written documentary sources is dependent on the theoretical orientation taken by the researcher and therefore, it is also subjective. Through this approach, it is possible to discover different practical understandings of actions. If a more general interpretative orientation is desired, the data gets reduced, so patterns of human activity, action and meaning can be discovered (Berg 2009, 238-239). The first step is to create themes and categories. A theme can be a word, a simple sentence, or a paragraph, because themes may be identified in a variety of places in most written documents, therefore, it is necessary to specify which places will be searched (Berg 2009, 245-246).
The initial task of identifying themes and categories is a detailed and repeated reading of the transcripts and the written documentary sources. In the beginning, the data is used to see whether any interesting patterns can be identified (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 162-163). The process of open coding includes reading verbatim transcripts, identifying possible themes, comparing and contrasting themes, identifying structure among them, as well as constructing theoretical models (Bernard and Ryan 1998, as cited in Guest et al. 2012, 11, Kuckartz 2014, 23-24). The elaboration and analysis of the themes are performed through a deductive approach, but the ‘codebook’ is never really finalized until the last written documentary source has been coded (Guest et al. 2012, 12). Consequently, the qualitative content analysis works with open-ended interview questions. Those are structured in the sense that the questions relate to the identified themes and the chosen theoretical framework. TA aims at identifying themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible (Guest et al. 2012, 15).

One tool of the thematic analysis is content segmentation. Segmentation is a tool, especially for moderate and large documents, to limit the text. There is a relationship between the process of segmenting text, identifying themes and coding the content. Labeling a segment represents a minimal meaning of a code. The description of the meaning of a segment leads to the identification of a theme, but there has to be made a distinction between the identification of themes and the specification of codes (Guest et al. 2012, 52). It has to be acknowledged that through segmentation and reducing complexity, some information might get lost. First some of the conversations of the original text might be disregarded because it may not be relevant to the research questions, but also, some of the analyzed conversations were similar to each other. Within qualitative text analysis, a thematic category refers to specific content, such as specific topics like ‘preparedness’, ‘involvement’ or ‘crisis minimizing’ (Kuckartz 2014, 39-41). The technique of reducing the data is not something separate from TA, but it is part of the analysis. It can take on many forms, however, for answering the research questions, the data set gets limited to those items relevant to the analysis (Guest et al. 2012, 129).

When it comes to creating a codebook for the thematic text analysis, one can say that the identified themes already resemble the codes. In this deductive thematic analysis, the theoretical framework of chaos theory and uncertainty reduction theory is used to analyze the
data. This approach is especially useful here because the specific research questions, as well as the main themes, are already identified (Resource-center 2018). The main themes are based on the research questions as well as on prior knowledge through the chosen theories and the previously discussed literature (Kuckartz 2014, 71). The three general aims in TA are the examination of commonalities, identifying differences, and relationships (Guest et al. 2012, 52-54).

The relationships between the themes can be analyzed in different ways. The analysis can be within the main themes and/or between them. When analyzing within the main themes, relationships between the sub-themes can be studied. This involves naming the sub-themes by defining which is seen as most important and which appears to be irrelevant. If it was decided to analyze the relationships between the main themes, a larger-scale analysis can be conducted. Two main themes can be compared, such as the ones that seem to be the most important, or the analysis can be extended through a comprehensive study of the complex relationships between the diverse themes (Kuckartz 2014, 85).

For preparing an interview guide, seven themes, or components, were identified and used to represent areas of interest, theoretically and practically. Those are preparedness, communication chain management, involvement, values and risk perceptions, emergency communication, crisis minimizing and learnings. The first four themes are theoretically grounded in the uncertainty reduction theory, whereas the last three themes are based on chaos theory.

In-depth Interviews
Qualitative interviews are one of the most common research tools in ethnography (Myers 2013, 119). However, in this thesis, the follow-up in-depth interviews are seen as complementary to the applied thematic analysis. The gathered primary data and the interview transcripts will be analyzed through the thematic content analysis. The interviews will be prepared with a semi-structured interview guide and conducted through a Skype or phone call because of the physical distance between the interviewer and the respondents. Also, the conversation will be taped as it provides the possibility to give an exact quotation for what the interviewee said (Myers 2013, 132). Furthermore, it is important to obtain consent from the interviewee to tape the interviews first, reassure confidentiality according to ethical guidelines, as well as the option of a restriction note in case of any sensitive data.
Nevertheless, there are potential difficulties, problems, and pitfalls that can occur. As a qualitative interview involves interrogating complete strangers, it can be a concern on the part of the interviewee on how much the interviewer can be trusted, or a lack of time that can create a problem of reliability in regard to the gathered primary data. Also, as an interviewer is mostly not a neutral entity, rather a part of the interactions one seeks to study and might influence those, or the meaning of the interviewer’s words can be ambiguous and it is not always assured that the respondents fully understand the questions. In general, interviews can go wrong and fail which raises the need for a good solution (Myers 2013, 125-126).

The prepared interview guide consisted of twelve questions which were structured and identified according to the pre-defined themes and therefore also stood in a close relation to the chosen theoretical framework. Although, the first question was rather intended to be a so-called “ice-breaker” to get a general feeling about the topic.

1. **What kind of crisis did your organization experience before?**
   
a. **What were your experiences?**
   
b. **How did you handle your internal and external communication?**

The first theme “preparedness” is based on the uncertainty reduction theory (URT). Within this theme, the following interview questions were of interest:

2. **What kind of a best practice model/method is considered in your crisis management?**

3. **Do you have Crisis Management Plans and Crisis Communication Plans in place and are they updated regularly? Why/ Why not? Would you be willing to create and imply it to your organization?**

These two questions and their answers relate to URT, in the sense that they give indications on how uncertainty can get reduced within the event and festival organization, but also among the audience. If a crisis management plan exists and includes best practice models, the responsibilities should clearly be divided in order to act quickly and effectively.

Also grounded on the URT, was the theme “communication chain management”. Pertaining to this, one important aspect to enquire about was:
4. How does your pre-event and pre-festival communication and training look like?

This aspect relates to URT in that a clear communication chain management and training can help the staff of an event and festival organizers to be informed sufficiently, so that they can share crucial information with the audience and other responsible people, resulting in a reduction of uncertainty.

However, the theme “communication chain management” and the theme “involvement” are interlinked and can, therefore, be combined. In crisis communication, it is crucial to know who is involved in a certain process and therefore, the theme “involvement”, based on the URT, consisted of the following questions:

5. Who is in charge of deciding? What personnel are included in the crisis management team? How does your crisis management team look like?
6. Are the PR/communication departments and the Security Management strictly divided or how far are departments working together?
7. In your experience, what is the key to developing a good crisis management team?

In order to reduce uncertainty, it is important for every official of an event, or organizers of festivals to know who is involved and responsible for what. Then, nobody will have to wonder who has to be called in and the communication chain can function without disruption. Clear structures and ranges of duty allow reducing uncertainty among a crisis management team, which in turn is able to act quickly, if necessary.

When it comes to different kind of crises, might it be severe weather or sexual harassment, a crisis manager has to have in mind every possible scenario and then be prepared as best as possible. This is necessary in order to reduce uncertainty about a specific course of action for any imaginable crisis. The theme “values and risk perceptions” is also perceived to be grounded on the uncertainty reduction theory and asks the following question:

8. How does your risk evaluation look like?
The next three themes are based on chaos theory. The themes “emergency communication” and “crisis minimizing” can be combined and therefore pays an interest in answering the following questions:

9. How do you inform visitors, artists, exhibitors, etc. pre-event and pre-festival?
   a. What are your plans for how to inform the audience and artists if an incident happens? On-stage screens/mobile apps/etc.?

10. Share an experience of a previous crisis where you as a person in charge had to act.
    a. Would you feel more secure if you had a plan and a structure in place that gives you guidelines on how to react in the case of a crisis?

Those questions are based on chaos theory because their answers help to get a better understanding of how a highly chaotic situation, in case of a crisis, could be prevented. CT also addresses both the panic felt when unexpected crises happen as well as understanding about how to behave in order to get back to normalcy and prevent hysteria (Sellnow et al. 2012, 633-634). In the aftermath, crisis managers can learn a lot from the executed course of action, because it enables visibility of what has failed, why it failed and how the crisis managers can come to a conclusion in the best possibly way, on what would be necessary to do it better the next time. The theme “learning’s”, grounded in chaos theory, consists of the following questions:

11. What are the challenges in preparing crisis communication?
12. What is the one thing you would like to improve in the communicative preparedness for a crisis?

The last two questions relate to chaos theory in the sense that CT also provides a model for crisis situations as their dynamic resembles that of a chaotic system. In those situations, chaos theory suggests that organizations cannot manage an outcome of a crisis, but rather have to try to fit into the emerging aftermath. Through a crisis, organizations redefine themselves permanently and take on learning’s to be better prepared for a possible upcoming crisis (Murphy 1996, 105-106).
In the following table a structured mapping of the material to be used in the thesis is presented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event-Organizer</th>
<th>Type of Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization A, Austria</td>
<td>Emergency action plan, Alert plan, Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization B, Finland</td>
<td>Code of conduct, Blogpost about values of event, Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization C, Austria</td>
<td>Crisis prevention concept, Crisis management plan, Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization D, Austria</td>
<td>Fire safety regulations, Fire safety instructions, Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization E, Liechtenstein</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization F, Sweden</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization G, Denmark</td>
<td>Volunteer’s guidebook, General press-kit, General festival guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization H, Sweden</td>
<td>Interview transcript</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Ethics**

Some of the documents noted above are analyzed, but are not publicly available and were given to the author under strict confidentiality. Moreover, regarding the documents that were not publicly available, the author was asked by the organizations to destroy them from her computer’s hard drive and any other USB flash drive after the analysis and the completion of the thesis writing process. Also, all of the disclosed documents whether they be a documentary source or an interview transcript, were only available to the author for the analysis and were not given to third parties. It is a general obligation not to reveal any sensitive data that could reveal a person’s or an organization’s identity and therefore, all the documents, transcripts, and direct quotes from the interviews are concealed for anonymity.

In general, when it comes to conducting interviews and analyzing written documentary sources, it is necessary to take research ethics into consideration. As this thesis also aimed at receiving a post-graduate degree from Jönköping University, the ethical guidelines given by Vetenskapsrådet – the Swedish Research Council – in 2017 were followed. People who
participate in academic research “as subjects or informants should be protected to the highest degree from harm or wrongs in connection with their participation in research” (Swedish Research Council 2017, 12). This meant that all sensitive data which could signify a possibility to discovering a respondent’s identity or position, as well as the organization’s name, needs to be disguised through the use of code keys, as well as by masking and de-personalizing answers, hence, such information will not be revealed. Those asked to participate were informed of exactly what the researcher intended to analyze. If participation was agreed on, under the condition that the analyzed research data was destroyed after finalizing the thesis, this was done. The author of the thesis ensured that only the authorized person got access to written documentary sources, voice recordings and interview transcripts (Swedish Research Council 2017, 27). All sensitive information was given under confidentiality. It is more of a general obligation not to communicate information that was given in confidence and entailed protection against unauthorized persons partaking the information (Swedish Research Council 2017, 40).

Limitations of the Study

Without regard to the chosen research method, there were limitations to this thesis. If there had been a longer time period to conduct the study, it would have been possible to interview more respondents and therefore make this study more thorough. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that crisis communication is a sensitive topic in general, and therefore, it was rather difficult to convince many respondents to share documents and experiences, or they denied to participate at all. The main reason for refusing to participate was because they had not formulated their organization’s crisis communication in detail, as they have never experienced a crisis before, or they were just in the process of re-structuring their crisis management and could not provide resources, or even found that it was enough to concentrate on the “problem-solving” as it occurs. Secondly, they did not want to share written documentary sources or talk to me because they were not allowed to reveal any crisis communication data of their organization to external third parties. At first sight, the number of participating organizations might seem modest, but due to these facts, the author was deeply grateful that they could work with the above-mentioned organizations and was appreciative of the received support for this thesis. Considering the rather smaller scope of this research, it might not be possible to establish full generalizations, but it was interesting to discover different points of view, practices, and courses of action regarding the same topic by interviewees that shared common points, such as their position and their fields of work.
Analysis

The deductive analysis of the material began through transcribing the conducted interviews, which also supported the process of immersing oneself into the data. The written documentary sources that were given in advance were read thoroughly before the interview with the particular organization, in order to ask in-depth follow-up questions pertaining. After transcribing, the texts were read several times to make out the details and important aspects of the pre-defined themes that stand in a close relation to the chosen theoretical framework. In this chapter, all seven pre-defined themes will be analyzed and links to the uncertainty reduction and chaos theories will be illustrated.

Preparedness

The main-theme “preparedness” was analyzed through the URT, whereby four sub-themes were identified: practicality, plan-structure, prepared communication, and training.

In order to reduce uncertainty among a crisis management team or an internal task force, it is necessary to be prepared for certain risks and crises that can interrupt the course of action of a mega-event or festival. When a special group of experts is prepared, they can act quickly and effectively to reduce uncertainty among audiences who might otherwise panic, turning the original crisis into an even bigger disaster. For organizers of mega-events and festivals, the priorities lie in a trouble-free execution. Aspects of security, health, and safety are to be put in the foreground. The majority of the asked respondents had some sort of crisis management already in place or they were in the phase of creating it. This was influenced, due to the rising number of incidents that had been appearing on the news. Organization F explained (E-Mail interview, 2018): “We have a risk evaluation and short steps what to do if each risk happens. But every risk needs to have an action plan that is more detailed and that is still on the to-do list.” Furthermore, Organization E explained (E-Mail interview, 2018): “There is a plan which is currently reviewed, edited and extended with scenarios. The basis is built through the risk evaluation.” In the few organizations that did not yet have a specific crisis management procedures defined, the aspects of preparations are going towards practicality. This means that they had defined professional good practices as well as instructions for the security personnel and first responders. For instance, Organization D (personal interview, 2018) worked with certain guidelines, but had not defined further plans or other instructions yet. The spokesperson explained, “Those directives are the most important ones for us at this
moment.” Organization H stated (E-Mail interview, 2018) that they took specific decisions when a problem occurred, as every situation was unique, “We have plans as detailed as possible: if this happens, we do like this and if that happens we do like that etc. and then if we need to do some changes for a unique situation we take that decision if needed.” Additionally, Organization H performed a yearly course in both cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and crisis management for the key staff in charge of personnel and in the reception. The spokesperson explained further, “We are currently working on guidelines and a course of action about mental health and that we will have ready before the event starts. Every year we control and update all available phone numbers, contact information and opening hours to local hospitals, apothecary, police, fire department etc.” (Organization H, E-Mail interview, 2018). When the question came up why a professional crisis management plan has not yet been established, a satisfactory answer could not be provided. On the other hand, there were organizations that had never experienced any crisis or incident before, but have a CMP in place because they acknowledged the importance of being prepared and to have answers for essential questions, should there be an incident at their mega-event or festival.

In the emergency action response plan of organization A and in the crisis management plan of organization C, there are different threat scenarios that had been pre-defined, such as a bomb threat, killing spree/speed killing, plot perpetrator, hostage-taking, demonstrations, squatting, evacuation, medical emergency, robbery, blackmailing, and suspicious objects. For all these scenarios, a course of action had been defined, to answer the questions of “what if,…”. Organization A had structured the emergency action response plan into basic tasks for involved authorities, first responders, representatives, and executive staff for each threat scenario. An attachment provided a position plan and templates for official public releases. The crisis management plan (CMP) of organization C was structured into scope of application, risk analysis, emergency numbers, safety- and alert concept, threat-scenarios, crisis management team, crisis management process, crisis communication, regular awareness-building, training and education, and templates. The volunteer’s guidebook of organization G offered a “care and safety” chapter. It provided instructions for festival volunteers at scenarios of physical injuries, fires, general violence and theft, as well as psychological and emotional emergencies. Furthermore, the general press-kit and the general festival guide of organization G included a safety chapter in each case. Those focused on issues with fire, medical care, psychological care, theft, extreme weather conditions, and food safety. In the general festival guide, attendees could read safety instructions to follow in case
of an emergency and also find specific numbers and responsible authorities who serve with further guidance and support. Organization B stated in the interview that they had a crisis management plan in place with pre-defined threat-scenarios and their courses of action. Furthermore, organization B also focused specifically on issues of sexual harassment. Therefore, attendees had to agree with a prepared and pre-defined code of conduct and the values of the mega-event beforehand, in order to be able to participate. Organization B (personal interview, 2018) explained further, “We have plans and also some prepared message bases for those events because it is good to have those written down in advance in case something happens, but so far we have managed to avoid this kind of situations really good and we hope we will do that in the future as well.” Moreover, in the pre-event communication of organization B, F, and H, they sent out newsletters and information pieces, which always contained messages about emergency services and the importance contacting the emergency staff if an attendee witnessed or faced any uncomfortable situation, or if one saw an emergency situation developing. Also, organization E worked on early safety messages that were sent out prior to their mega-event. Those should have included e.g. regular weather updates in order to be prepared for possible extreme weather conditions. Furthermore, organization A, B and C had prepared emergency messages for various scenarios in advance either for the website, social media, e-mail notifications or for the specific event-mobile-app that could be put online or sent via push-notifications, in case they were needed quickly. All the mentioned documents, crisis management plans, etc. were updated regularly to guarantee safety and preparedness.

When it came to practicality, organization D, E, F and H, were working with pre-defined professional good practices, best-practice models, as well as instructions for the security personnel and first responders. Those guidelines were written down and stood in close relationships to fire safety regulations and instructions for each of the building plans. Organization D (personal interview, 2018) stated that the security executives were responsible for the adherence to these standards, as well as maintaining close contact with authorities and first responders. The spokesperson explained: “Regular fire safety trainings are conducted through our operating manager and he also hands out the current and updated building plans with the marked emergency exits” (Organization D, personal interview, 2018). Organization E (E-Mail interview, 2018) worked with best-practice models for the involved first responders that were defined by federal agencies, the police, and emergency aid workers. Practicality is also of high value in the other organizations of mega-events and festivals. Regular trainings
and security instructions with the staff were seen as invaluable. There, the staff is observed in order to evaluate the trainings afterward. This brought a chance of improvement to everybody involved, so that they were prepared as much as possible for a real emergency. Organizer A explained (personal interview, 2018): “All security and other staff members get a prepared folder from us with the most important information and the emergency phone numbers. Also, prior to every event we give instructions to everybody and work closely with our action plan. The plans are created by us and external partners, authorities and federal agencies.”

Commonalities, differences and relationships were found through an analysis between the sub-themes practicality, plan-structure, prepared communication and trainings within the main-theme of preparedness. The most important sub-themes were identified to be practicality and training. Those two sub-themes also stood in a close relationship to each other, whereas prepared communication and plan structure were seen more as side issues, or generally, rather not yet developed thoroughly among asked respondents. However, a well-structured CMP and CCP were not to be scoffed at, because through their application, a smooth training and preparation of practicalities could be guaranteed. With practicality and training it was meant that organizers defined good practice and instructions for the security staff and members of the blue light organizations. Moreover, prepared emergency action response plans give clear instructions about important persons to call, fire safety regulations and always include each of the building plans. Mock-alarms are set off on a regular basis, so that the permanent staff was trained in proper evacuation procedures. These trainings were evaluated by external specialists, who then could recommend improvements and changes in the course of action. Nevertheless, many organizers already created and implemented CMPs and CCPs to their mega-event and/or festivals, because the importance of having such plans in place was acknowledged. A clear structure and several pre-defined threat-scenarios, as well as communication processes gives the crisis management team a certain feeling of safety and certainty. These organizers with prepared plans in place also included the creation of prepared communication in their emergency planning process, may it be safety messages in newsletters or emergency messages for websites. The risk evaluation stood in a close relationship to those with prepared CMP’s and CCP’s because it already took place through defining threat-scenarios and their response actions. Although, a risk evaluation is also possible through long-standing previous experience, with happenings at venues and festival grounds. Consequently, there is a difference between practicalities and emergency planning on a higher level. The preparedness differs from event to event and from festival to festival, a reason for this could
also be seen in the geographical difference and the country’s standards of law and federal agencies.

Each step of preparing crisis communication and the theme “preparedness” is linked to the uncertainty reduction theory because clear definitions, plans, ready-made messages, and trainings support the feeling of safety and therefore reduces uncertainty among a crisis management team. If the involved event and festival personnel knows who is responsible for what, who has to be called in, what steps have to be taken, and who should be informed about the emergency in order to take action, a lot of unpredictability is already taken away. The prepared emergency messages can help audiences to find reliable, trustworthy information which reduces uncertainty among attendees. As Heath and Gay (1997, 351) and Liu, Bartz, and Duke (2016, 480) remarked, being uncertain about their own state of knowledge is uncomfortable for people and therefore, uncertainty is linked with information seeking, may it be between staff members or between attendees.

Communication Chain Management and Involvement

To start up a mega-event or festival, it is not enough to just have plans in place if they are not used to communicate and train prior to the event. Through the specific knowledge that is gained in trainings and instructions, the staff and other involved experts feel safer and more ready to take action if necessary. Consequently, uncertainty gets reduced and certain situations become more predictable.

The main-themes “communication chain management and involvement” were situated within the URT and consist of the two identified sub-themes, information flow and team building.

For example, organization A (personal interview, 2018) does a yearly schooling of their personnel where they also train for a real-life threat situation. “Once a year, the alarm gets set off and we train the building evacuation with our permanent staff” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018). When this training is done, everybody involved follows the prepared emergency action response plan. Often, the responsible people who create this kind of informational material are federal agencies, first responders, management members, and building or venue managers, “The training consists of an orientation that includes our brand book, our overall strategy and the communication plan” (Organization F, E-Mail interview, 2018). Through a conducted simulation game, different aspects are discussed. Organization A
explains, “In that process, we try to train our staff theoretically, to be prepared as best as possible if one of the threat-scenarios should occur” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018). Prior to every mega-event and festival, staff members of the security, volunteers and others from every interviewed organization, receive safety instructions and a briefing about how to act in an emergency case and what kinds of signals are important. Moreover, organization C also hosts external mega-events and does not accept events with a political or religious background, in order to avoid certain issues that could be provoking to others. Regarding the communication chain management, small task-force groups are seen as the most effective. Organization A and B highlighted the importance of group leaders, “It works like a snowball principle. Per zone, there is a group leader, but firstly the head of security gets informed, who then informs all the partners” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018). At organization B, the process was similar, “We recruit team leaders, who then recruit group leaders, and those are working closely together with our smaller volunteer groups. We think the information flow is more efficient when you have small groups. But every group leader has to go through the instructions and information with every volunteer to guarantee safety” (Organization B, personal interview, 2018). In addition, organizations who worked together with volunteers at the venues provided a specific volunteer’s guidebook to make sure they get all the important information. The responsibility of spreading the word and to inform everybody in charge about safety issues was the sole responsibility of the (crisis-) communication person, in cooperation with other internal and external members of the crisis management team. Within these groups and teams, the members were connected by radio, which allowed them to be able to communicate with each other in case the telephone networks broke down and/or online messengers did not function properly due to a possible internet disruption.

Furthermore, the emergency action response plan of organization A and the crisis management plan of organization C included a structured crisis communication process. There, it stated clearly who was responsible to call specific persons in charge and what information had to be provided, including specific phone numbers and contact. If a key person was on sick-leave or on vacation, this information will be noted, with the information that they were available by phone, but the next level of responsible person should be contacted, using the following contact details. Also, information about core messages for the website, social media, e-mail and the press, as well as about a necessary press conference were provided in this section.
A good crisis management team should, therefore, consist of members from each department, as well as include external professionals like first responders, representatives of federal agencies and in every case the head of government. Every participating organization stated that through cooperation with different experts, the best possible preparation could be achieved. The spokesperson of organization B explained, “Our CEO, the president, our operational COO, then the communication responsible persons and the security is the personnel that builds our crisis management team” (Organization B, personal interview, 2018). Organization A, C, E, and H also included the building manager, first responders of the blue light organizations, and crisis intervention team members. As the crisis management teams could be different among the participating organizations, this could result in the person in charge and making decisions varying from location to location. For example, in organization F (E-Mail interview, 2018) the head of communication was in charge of decisions and the team consisted of members from the festival’s board, a PR agency, and the internal communication team. Organization H described that their structured communication process varied from case to case, but always included a medical doctor who is at the scene, “Normally the reception is first contacted. The reception staff then contacts the doctor. The one working with security, notifies the staff coordinators, someone from the board and the transportation manager” (E-Mail interview, 2018). If the medical doctor from organization H decided that there would be surgery or other professional care needed, the transportation manager would make sure that there is an available car and a designated driver available for transportation to the hospital. Organization C further pointed out, “For us, it gives us a feeling of safety to have knowledge about the different threat-scenarios, but also to know that there are escalation levels where we are allowed to hand over to specialists from outside. It is important to know who has to be alarmed and what decisions lie in our competencies and abilities” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018).

A key to developing a good crisis management team is, according to the participating organizations, an evaluation of competencies and abilities. Organization H summed-up the most important viewpoints (E-Mail interview, 2018): “Having a good and clear communication, being prepared and having plans about what to do in various situations, that everyone knows both their role and what the others know and can do”, is seen as the key. Different tasks have to be given to different personnel. Also, including external professionals, such as the blue light organizations and security staff, is seen as absolutely essential.
Organization B explained further, “To build a good team around it is to include people from different teams, even though they are not communication experts, but they can bring in different points of views. Also, I think it is super important to have a clear plan and have clear roles e.g. who is the one that makes the final decision in a crisis situation” (Organization B, personal interview, 2018). Furthermore, when it came to crisis communication, if there was a threatening situation organization C remarked, “In a crisis situation, our CEO becomes the spokesperson. The head of marketing and communication is responsible for accurate statements and a competent person speaks in front of the camera, if necessary. That person has someone at his/her side as support and who can take over, should there be any problems” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018).

Within the main-theme “communication chain management” and “involvement”, the sub-theme team building is more prominent than the information flow. Throughout the interviews, organizers stated that it was important for team building to include external specialists that could bring different points of view in order to be prepared as much as possible. Furthermore, smaller so-called task-groups were seen to be the most effective when it came to the flow of information. Every group leader instructed each team member. However, the responsibility of spreading the word and to inform everyone involved often with the (crisis-) communication person. Through cooperation with first responders, blue light organizations, federal agencies, managers and building or venue managers, professional trainings, simulations and instructional training can be performed. As crisis management teams can be different, consequently the person in charge of deciding also varies. Not to forget, a designated PR spokesperson who is able to speak professionally with the media should also be included when a crisis management team is built up. As Beck (1992, 53-54) mentioned, the public’s safety lies in the knowledge of internal and external specialists who, in case of an emergency, decides, among others, the degree of people’s endangerment and can inform victims regarding whether there are reasons to fear for their lives or not.

Values and Risk Perceptions
Crises can appear in various forms, may it be sexual harassment, a mass shooting or extreme weather conditions. Hence, a crisis management team has to have possible scenarios in mind to prepare an appropriate action and response. Consequently, a great amount of uncertainty can be avoided prior to any mega-event or festival.
The main theme “values and risk perception” was analyzed through the viewpoints of the URT. Within this main-theme, two sub-themes were identified, risk evaluation, and core values.

Organization A (personal interview, 2018) explained that the considered risk scenarios in their emergency action and response plan arose from incidents that have happened in surrounding countries. Further, the spokespersons of organization A and C stated, “Of course there are lots of scenarios that you can be prepared for. Those that we chose have the highest probability and there are many scenarios in-between, but you cannot prepare for everything and every smallest detail” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018). The most common scenarios in prepared plans are bomb threats, speed killings, shootings, plot perpetrators, hostage-takings, evacuations, medical emergencies, sexual harassments, blackmailing, and the handling of suspicious objects found at the venues. The risk evaluation of organization E (E-Mail interview, 2018) and organization C (personal interview, 2018) took place through a matrix of the status quo, where they add together the probability of occurrence and the extent of damage and conclude with defining risk levels of each scenario. To finalize the process, a risk response and options for actions for a target state are defined. The regular trainings and instructions are observed by external agencies and evaluated afterward, firstly to prepare the staff as well as possible, and secondly, to improve the emergency action and response plan as well as the crisis management plan. Risk evaluation could also be conducted through previous experiences as Organization H said (E-Mail interview, 2018), “We have run the event for [excluded] years, so we have a good knowledge about what has happened before and what usually happens. We imagine what situations may happen again and try to identify what else could happen.” In addition, organization F (E-Mail interview, 2018) described that their risk evaluation depends on the quality of the communication’s team work, “We have a risk evaluation for the entire event and most of the risk act plans cover actions including external communication activities. Therefore, the outcome of the crisis management is depending on how we in the communication team succeed with the crisis communication.”

Organization C pointed out five core values that they define to be the most important aspects for crisis communication experts, in case they have to respond to an incident, “Just communicate what you know. Do not sojourn yourself with conjectures. Do not tell anything that cannot be revised afterward. Do not lie. And stay calm,” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018). Also, a continuous scanning and monitoring of the social media channels, as
well as communication with traditional media are considered to be of great value too, “The press and media have to be informed in the sense that they trust us to contact them in case a crisis unfolded, so they do not come up with strange thoughts or abnormal ways to get information” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018). Moreover, as an organizer of mega-events and festivals, it is also important to take the legal side into consideration. Organization A highlighted that one always has to balance ethical and legal decisions.

“Of course we also discussed the question of acting right in a way that you do not find yourself in the courtroom, charged with something. Often lawyers have had already more time to prepare for that specific case, but in the moment of a crisis, you have to make a decision within seconds. It might sound cruel and it should not be the priority because first and foremost it is about human lives, but you always have the question of liability in the back of your mind” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018).

Within the main-theme “values and risk perceptions,” it is not really possible to clarify differences between the two sub-themes risk evaluations and core values. They rather stand in a close relationship to each other. Through evaluating risks, a crisis management team continually learns about certain core values and thus, can improve their preparedness. The most common threat-scenarios are defined due to previous longstanding experience or due to a probability, because those scenarios have already happened in neighboring countries at other mega-events and festivals. Maybe the most important point to mention here, as it has never been stated before, is the aspect of the legal side of the emergency planning. Defining various threat-scenarios and creating an emergency action response plan supports the validation of organizers on the legal side. A balance between ethical and legal decisions is provided by these prepared plans, in order to follow the documented instructions. As uncertainty is also produced when information is unavailable or inconsistent, a great share of it, among the crisis management team, can already be taken away when positions, tasks and actions are clearly defined.

Therefore, it is important for an organization to have a prepared plan in place and that it is strictly followed. It also has the purpose to give everyone involved a safe feeling that the emergency action and response was done in the correct way and that nobody could be accused of failure. However, the most important value for event- and festival organizers are seen in the cooperation and the inclusion of different people from diverse departments, so that it is
possible to bring in various viewpoints and support the communication experts in preparing the crisis management team and then the crisis communication itself.

Emergency Communication and Crisis Minimizing
A mega-event or festival can be called successful, among others, when there were not any incidents. But, if something disrupts the course of action, it can quickly evolve into a crisis and then it is essential to quickly communicate instructions and information. These two themes in combination support a deeper understanding of how a highly chaotic situation could be prevented but also responded to. Through the viewpoint of chaos theory, it is described how panic will be addressed and what steps or behavior is necessary, in order to get back to normalcy and prevent an even bigger hysteria.

The two main-themes “emergency communication” and “crisis minimizing” were situated within the CT, whereby two sub-themes could be identified that are, communication channels, and safeness.

Dependent on the sort of mega-event or festival, visitors, attendees, and audiences will be instructed differently. As mentioned previously, in the “preparedness” section, organizers have defined different methods to inform audiences, either pre-event/festival or as emergency communication. Organization C, for example defined different audio signals for different incidents, such as fire or speed killing/shooting, and those are communicated to attendees in advance. Moreover, descriptions can be found at the venue, which are quickly accessible for everyone. Organization C explains further, “In combination with the audio signals, our notifications also take place through mobile and E-Mail messages, because nowadays everybody uses their devices constantly anyway” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018). In addition, organization B focused on mobile alerts with prepared messages for push notification via an app. Furthermore, social media channels like Twitter were taken into consideration, “Our attendees are tweeting constantly, therefore, we also chose that channel to reach them” (Organization B, personal interview, 2018). More traditional communication and notification in an emergency situation can take place through information screens, loudspeakers and event staff, who inform audiences directly through a microphone. A close collaboration with the security and the blue light organizations allows a quick evacuation, if necessary and a chance for organizers to hand over the reins to specialists.
Those steps or behaviors are trained with the personnel to learn how to respond to a highly chaotic situation that is prevalent in a crisis situation. If the personnel are calm and organized, audiences get a feeling of trust, do not panic even more and can fulfill their need for information seeking. Throughout the interviews with different organizations, it was made clear that too much crisis communication in advance can also pose a problem as it can produce uncertainty and mistrust, “We as experts also try to stay in the background because we want the audience to feel safe and secure at a mega-event, so they are not wondering what we are doing all the time” (Organization C, personal interview, 2018). The spokesperson of organization A added (personal interview, 2018), “When there is a show or something, people are already used to, also from stadiums, that in a crisis situation organizers, first responders and federal agencies are in charge and that they have to follow their instructions.”

Organizations that were just still in the process of defining their crisis management and working on CCP’s, stated that they would feel more secure and better prepared if certain clarifications were written down. Organization F acknowledged (E-Mail interview, 2018) that the experience can also be used as a foundation of knowledge to lean back on, as it is an important part of the crisis management process. They continued, “But to function well as a team in a crisis, structure and a plan makes it so much easier for everybody to know what to do and what not to do, especially if every role is well defined.” Although organizations work with practical methods, a CMP is seen as being of high value. Organization E, shared an experience where there was a technical malfunction and audiences started to feel uncomfortable. The spokesperson acknowledged, “It was not a crisis but an incident that strongly bothered our security personnel. This will definitely be considered as a threat-scenario in our crisis management plan which we are currently working on” (Organization E, E-Mail interview, 2018). When there is a gathering of hundreds of people, organizers understand that basically anything can happen and that everyone reacts differently to various situations. Therefore, organizers have to be prepared as well as they can, in the event that anything happens, “Things that have happened at our event have been theft, sexual harassments, mental issues and sudden heart failure which lead to one person dying. An experience personally is that it reminds us that we are all humans and that even if it feels like you are inside this special protected bubble of the event, life still goes on” (Organization H, E-Mail interview, 2018). Organizations that already have a prepared CMP and/or CCP in place stated that they felt very well prepared at the time of their interview.
Commonalities and relationships were found between the two sub-themes of communication channels and safeness. Whereby, the major focuses on communication channels like the fact that team members and volunteers are connected through radio because they are aware of the possibility of technical malfunctions. In addition to traditional communication ways like audio signals and explanations from hosts on the stage through a microphone, new ways of communication are applied, such as Twitter or mobile messengers. In a highly chaotic situation, the sense of helplessness and the urgent desire to restore a sense of understanding have to be addressed by sharing information and if necessary, lifesaving instructional messages (Sellnow et al. 2012, 634). In this context, chaos theory offers new models on how organizers can control public perceptions of issues and crises. Chaos Theory has most relevance when it comes to media coverage, sudden-onset crises, or upcoming rumors (Murphy 1996, 102-103). A clear communication through different channels supports a feeling of safety and trust. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that crisis communication in advance can also be too much as it could produce even more uncertainty and mistrust as well. Therefore, a good balance has to be found between too much and not enough information.

**Learning’s**
The main-theme “learning’s” was analyzed through CT and consisted of the two sub-themes, “challenges” and “improvements”.

The process of creating a CMP and executing trainings can be time-consuming and nerve-wracking. Certain challenges could appear that were not considered prior to the emergency planning and thoughts on improvement for the next planning could come up. Those points of learning’s, in addition to knowledge from previous courses of action, can help with the preparedness for the next possible crisis. In the aftermath of a crisis, it becomes clear what failed, why it failed, and ways for improvement become evident. To a certain escalation point, an organization has the power to influence what is happening, but often this capacity is lost. Chaos theory suggests that the desired outcome cannot be fully managed, but they have to allow things to sort themselves out, while trying to fit into the emerging aftermath. In other words, through crises, an organization redefines itself permanently in new and unexpected ways (Murphy 1996, 105-106).
A prominent challenge in preparing crisis communication seems to be the information and communication itself. To bring everybody to the current state of knowledge is considered to be the most difficult part. The spokesperson of organization A pointed out (personal interview, 2018): “It is difficult to involve everybody. Especially, when there are external partners. At first, we try to be theoretically best prepared with our permanent team and then we inform external associations.” Keeping an accurate headcount of who has been trained to which topics, can also prove to quite challenging, when there is a high number of staff-turnover. Through constant crew changes, knowledge can get lost and new members have to be trained and instructed again, instead of preserving and improving knowledge throughout the years with permanent staff. Organization B (personal interview, 2018) added, “Our team changes quite a lot from year to year. To keep up the work, so that you have to start everything from the beginning each year, that is also a challenge.” Further, understandings of the importance and the execution of emergency and crisis management planning present challenges too, “Ten years ago, this topic was rather smiled at. But today, everything can happen everywhere. That is taken seriously” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018).

Moreover, as organization C said, the preparation of different appropriate threat scenarios, assignments of key-roles and knowledge about key-action steps constitute challenges for the process of preparing and creating effective crisis management procedures. Another challenge is seen in the communication to audiences and the media. Organization H pointed out that they wanted especially focus on the question of how to make all attendees aware of changes and improvements, “Many who attend our event have done it for many years, and some are possibly not aware of the changes we have done and just believe that everything is like it used to be; if people do not read the welcoming email, if they do not read our newsletters, if they do not attend the meetings where we announce it, then the information does not reach them. We still try our best to make it impossible to miss” (Organization H, E-Mail interview, 2018).

Uniform messages to the public, the media, event attendees, and global audiences should bring back a certain amount of order in a highly chaotic situation, “Our attendees are from over 130 countries and they are used to different communication channels as well, such as apps or Twitter. That is also a challenge – that we would reach everybody in the way that is natural for them, in all communications that we do, and not only when it comes to crises,” explains Organization B (personal interview, 2018).

Fortunately, the respondents interviewed for this study have not experienced a real crisis yet. However, throughout the planning process ideas and wishes for improvements and changes
were brought up, in order to be even better prepared. One point considered the training and the time, “It is more of a wish, but it would be ideal to have more time for trainings, evaluations, and controls of the courses of action. That would be, for instance, a monthly training and evaluation. But otherwise, twice a year has to be sufficient” (Organization A, personal interview, 2018). Further, everybody that worked within organization F was a volunteer, which affected the outcome and the effects of the project. “Everybody in my communication team has full-time jobs and other engagements, so there is often a time issue. This often leads to the fact that we have to do what is the most alerting there and then. This results in that more long-term strategic work does not get prioritized” (Organization F, E-Mail interview, 2018). Also, a more constant planning process, ongoing throughout the year, that concerned other aspects, and not just prospects right before a special mega-event or festival, admits improvement, which was accounted for by organization B.

Within the main-theme learning’s, the two identified sub-themes challenges and improvement stand in a close relationship as they have more commonalities than differences. The interviewees raised similar points about challenges in preparing an effective crisis communication. The main challenge is seen in the inclusion of everybody and a clear information flow. Therefore, a wish or a suggestion for improvement would be to have more time for trainings and evaluations. External partners can bring in different points of view, but simultaneously, through a changing head count, knowledge gets lost, new members have to be trained and instructed again, instead of improving knowledge throughout the years with permanent staff. Also, communication to audiences and to the media constitute a challenge, as organizers have to deal with international people, different habits and an accurate information flow to different media companies. All these identified challenges open up possibilities for improvement in the emergency planning process. Minimizing challenges and improving trainings, minimizes chaos too. Through knowledge gained from previous courses of actions with crises, chaos and uncertainty could be reduced or, in the best case, even avoided in the future. If organizers become active today, they are able to prevent, lessen, or take precautions against crises and problems of tomorrow and the near future (Beck 1992, 34).

In the course of the thematic analysis of the written documentary sources and the interview transcripts, one can say that the main-themes of “preparedness” and “emergency communication” in combination with “crisis minimization” are seen as the most important working areas. The chapter of the previous research was also divided into preparedness and
emergency communication, which makes the structure coherent and represents a clear line of thoughts through the overall topic of crisis communication. In addition, the expert statements from the interviewees prove that assumption. In general, a good communication chain management, involvement of different specialists, defining various risk scenarios and learning from failures, contributes to preparing an effective and quick crisis management. After finalizing the analysis, it makes sense that these issues are identified as the essential main themes. If a crisis management team is prepared for diverse threat-scenarios and has knowledge about an appropriate emergency action response, a certain order through emergency communication can be brought back. Also, minimizing of a possible crisis can be achieved.

Discussion
Regarding the research question one, how communication professionals get prepared for the case of a crisis, the answer is that there are differences, and therefore, it depends on who is being asked. Differences occur between mega-events and festivals, but also between interviewees and how their job title makes them responsible for the crisis management. Every organizer of a mega-event and a festival had their own ways and practices of preparing their communication experts. Among the asked organizations that participated in this study, the majority of the communication professionals prepare with the creation and implementation of a CMP and/or an emergency action response plan. In those plans, clear roles and tasks are registered, phone numbers and contact persons are available, various threat-scenarios and their responses are defined, and external specialists are brought on board to bring in different viewpoints. Furthermore, if the organization works with volunteers and other temporary staff members, guidebooks and prepared folders with the most important information are provided. Also, emergency messages for different scenarios are prepared, in order to be able to communicate quickly and adequately – may these be for on-scene audiences or for the corporate communication towards the outside. Other aspects of the preparedness are trainings and instructions. The trainings are conducted regularly, with the updated plans, and instructions follow the guidelines, provided in the CMP. To improve this process and be even better prepared, the trainings are evaluated by external consultants. Communication professionals are also responsible to spread the word and to make the information available to everybody within the organization, so all staff knows where to find the CMP and/or CCP and how to apply it to various threat-scenarios.
Regarding the second research question, what the central topics of prepared crisis communication are, the answer reads as follows, first and foremost, a well thought through crisis management plan with various threat-scenarios and the response actions is absolutely essential. Although it is impossible to prepare for every small incident that could occur, the most common scenarios in prepared plans are bomb threats, speed killings and shootings, plot perpetrators, hostage-takings, evacuations, medical emergencies, sexual harassments, blackmailing, and the handling of suspicious objects found at the venues. These scenarios are labeled with the highest probability because of past crises in other European countries that one could read about in the news. Furthermore, central to being prepared for crisis communication is the continuous scanning and monitoring of the social media channels as well as communication with traditional media. However, according to the interviewed organizers, the most important topic or value of prepared crisis communication is the cooperation and the inclusion of different people from diverse departments so it is possible to bring in various viewpoints and support the communication experts in preparing the crisis management team and then the crisis communication itself. Central to crisis communication is the information itself. The main challenge constitutes the accurate communication within the crisis management team and to provide the information about emergency action responses to everyone included in the process. When it comes to the aftermath of a crisis, it is important to have prepared emergency messages for the media and for the organization’s website. Also, a well-prepared person that speaks in front of the camera and has knowledge about the earlier mentioned five core values is essential.

Regarding research question three about the organizer’s understandings of the effects of crisis communication, the answer here is that in every case, the awareness about the importance of a crisis management plan (CMP) and a crisis communication plan (CCP) rises and also the knowledge to inform audiences previously about their safety to prevent disasters. Organizations without a CMP or CCP or those who are currently in the process of creating and defining them, concede that they would feel more secure and better prepared if certain clarifications were written down in a plan. Although, organizations work with practical methods, a crisis management plan (CMP) is seen as being of high value. An effective and clear communication chain management has the power to make a difference and in the best case save many lives. Like organization C stated, knowledge about different threat-scenarios gives a certain feeling of safety to the team and also the knowledge about the possibility to
hand over to external specialists who have precise competencies and abilities. This can provide a sense of order in a highly chaotic situation, when uncertainty can be rampant. In addition, organizers understood that there has to be a balance between ethical and legal decisions in order to avoid negative effects for the organization, but also for the audiences, because protecting human lives has the highest priority.

An effective disaster preparedness model, according to Castillo (2005, 14), consists of preparedness, response, and recovery. However, this thesis focused primarily on the first and the second step, in order to investigate how organizers of mega-events and festivals prepare with crisis communication to prevent a crisis or a disaster. Preparedness is all about training and practice, while response includes activities to prevent physical harm, assuring an information flow and using the blue light organizations (Castillo 2005, 15). The results of this thesis match previous studies. A novel contribution can be seen in that the disaster preparedness model also finds its application in settings of mega-events and festivals, although it seems as if this has not been studied in this area before. Therefore, this thesis is a contribution to academic research in the field of crisis management and communication, but also to theory. Furthermore, in coherence with previous research, managing and communicating in a way that helps to protect human lives, constitutes a challenge to emergency managers in the planning process. A key part, is the power of persuasion of expert advice, e.g. from first responders and federal agencies. In relation to previous literature, this thesis validates that crisis management is dependent on team-related factors and can, through clear communication guidelines, influence an organization’s response to a crisis. All interviewed organizers of mega-events and festivals stated that an effective crisis management team should consist of experts from all departments and external specialists. This provides a clear structure of who is responsible for what. In addition, it guarantees a high level of involvement and communication. Although it is not possible to prepare for every incident, organizers have the responsibility to prepare for those that are most likely to occur. These threat-scenarios are defined in the crisis management plans with their emergency action responses. Related to previous research, often the emphasis is put on corporate responsibility during and after a crisis, but the same level of responsibility and preparedness should be addressed prior to a crisis. The created CMPs, CCPs and emergency action response plans that are already in place are updated regularly and trainings are conducted at least twice a year.
However, often training programs are applied and used as an integrative model for public health emergencies as well as humanitarian and natural hazards. Organizers of mega-events and festivals do not use specific training programs. It is more likely that the blue light organizations train and work with common best practice models and methods that are provided by federal agencies and first responders. Moreover, early warning messages that are prevalent in countries such as the U.S.A. warn about public health risks and environmental hazards, but have not yet found their application outside this field. Here, this thesis found out that organizers of mega-events and festivals started to use push notifications on mobiles to send warning messages to attendees and audiences, in case a crisis unfolds. Therefore, a contribution to the area of warning messages and crisis communication is seen, because technology for instructional crisis communication has previously been used in the sector of health communication and instructional classroom communication. However, this application has never been used outside of those settings for mega-events or festivals. Organizers think outside the box when it comes to instructional crisis communication because traditional as well as new methods are used, such as loudspeaker announcements, audio signals or notifications via mobile and e-mail.

Related to previous research, communication during a crisis faces criticism of too little support and ad hoc actions with the media. Furthermore, there are often accusations of being too slow and not being able to communicate relevant information fast enough, due to ill-preparedness of the crisis management team. This thesis opposes such accusations towards crisis communication, not just for terror scenarios, but more for settings of mega-events and festivals. Contributions to the field of crisis communication are made as it was found out that organizers communicated prior to mega-events and festivals with newsletters and information papers and digital documents that always contain messages about emergency services. Moreover, prepared emergency messages for various scenarios, on the one hand for the media and on the other hand for audiences and involved personnel, conquer accusations of being too slow with accurate information.
Conclusion

Crisis management and crisis communication are becoming more and more important. A couple of years ago, this topic was not regarded with as much importance, leaving organizations to learn the hard way that anything can happen anywhere. This field of study is now acknowledged to be of increasing value. Still, in line with previous literature, crisis management is not seen as a very important task when things are going well and/or nothing has happened yet. However, many organizations have begun creating and implementing crisis management plans, although when it comes to communication during a crisis, the preparations seem to be incomplete because of a missing crisis communication plan. As Lando (2014, 11) stated in the previous research, crisis communication has the power to reduce fear, uncertainty, and chaos.

Further contributions to crisis communication applied to mega-events and festivals are seen in the practices and acknowledgments. Regular trainings and small task force groups at events and festivals guarantee good and effective communication chain management. Moreover, an interesting point to highlight is that within these groups, the members are connected by radio, because they are aware of technical malfunctions, so they are still able to communicate when phone networks and the internet become inoperative. Organizers stated that the risk evaluation takes places through a matrix and/or through previous experiences that qualify them to assess an emergency action response plan and/or a CMP.

Rarely mentioned before, or perhaps not seen as important, was the legal side of the crisis management and emergency planning. Organizers have to balance ethical and legal decisions when creating a CMP and CCP, in order to guarantee the best possible outcome of a crisis, both for the audience, but also for the organization itself. When a crisis unfolds, the responsible person in charge of making the final decision can also deal with questions of liability. A prepared CMP in place that is strictly followed also has the purpose to give everyone involved a safe feeling that the emergency action and response was done in a right way and nobody can be accused of failure. Knowledge about different threat-scenarios and external specialists that can take over the reins gives a feeling of safety to everyone involved and can bring back a certain sense of order in a chaotic situation with a high level of uncertainty. In addition, a close relationship with blue light organizations, federal agencies,
and governmental authorities is seen as essential. In addition, a close contact with the media is an advantage to make them trust the organization to be contacted if a disastrous crisis unfolds.

When it comes to theory, uncertainty reduction theory is employed in the sense that uncertainty is linked with information seeking, because uncertainty evolves when details of information are unavailable or inconsistent (Brashers 2001, 478). Summed up, in order to reduce uncertainty among crisis management members, but also among audiences, it is crucial to be prepared, have a well-structured communication chain management in place, to know who is involved in different processes, and to know about the most important risks and values. With this given, the need for information seeking of the audiences can be followed to reduce their uncomfortable state of knowledge (Heath and Gay 1997, 351; Liu, Bartz, and Duke 2016, 480). Communication and information help to reduce the level of chaos, because chaos theory is used to address the panic felt when sudden and unexpected incidents produce confusion (Sellnow et al. 2012, 633-634). The aim is to get back to normalcy as soon as possible and to save as many lives as possible. Emergency communication leads to crisis minimizing and allows crisis managers in the aftermaths to learn for the future. As chaos theory suggests, organizations cannot manage an outcome, and to a certain degree, they have to allow things to sort themselves out. However, through a crisis process, an organization redefines itself while trying to fit into the emerging aftermath (Murphy 1996, 105-106). To the best of my knowledge, URT and CT have been widely used to study instructional and emergency communication in settings of natural and humanitarian disasters like wildfires, flooding, and medical epidemics, but were never mentioned in relation to mega-events or festivals. Therefore, a contribution to the theoretical framework is given through applying URT and CT outside of their common research area.

This thesis and its findings have a societal relevance, in the sense that it allows a wider and deeper understanding of crisis communication in an area of application that does not seem to be very common. Organizers and their crisis managers have the power and resources to minimize risks, prevent crises, and therefore, protect their audience at mega-events and festivals from physical and emotional consequences. Through that, attendees are able to enjoy the special experience without fear. If more public institutions put more focus on protecting its visitors, a great share of risks can be avoided. But a world with risk societies, where globalization and modernization are centerpieces, can also mean that risks and their consequences cannot be limited to a certain group or a certain locality, but can have an effect
on everyone (Beck 1992, 13). Consequences are, most of the time, unknown and unintended, therefore, producing a high level of uncertainty and chaos. Applying crisis communication in the field of mega-events and festivals opposes certain risks with planning ahead and being prepared for various threat-scenarios. Through insights into the crisis management process of different events and festival organizations, one can become active today and threats to human lives can be minimized or even avoided in the future.

**Inspirations for Further Research**

Inspirations for further research in the field of crisis communication that is applied to mega-events and festivals could be found, due to the limitations of this study. First of all, with a longer time frame, more organizers could be convinced to participate in the study. Moreover, this thesis was interested in studying organizer’s crisis communication regardless of their kind of mega-event or festival. Therefore, further research could contribute through comparing organizers to find out more distinctive differences between mega-events and/or festivals, e.g. comparing the sector of music festivals and mega-events at trade fairs such as conferences and congresses. Also, an interesting aspect to study could be to compare organizers of mega-events and festivals in Europe and the U.S.A. because, as previous research suggested, overseas public warnings and best-practice models seem to be already employed in certain areas of crisis communication.
References

Primary sources

Organization A (April 23, 2018). Personal interview via Phone.


Organization B (April 24, 2018). Personal interview via Skype.


Organization C (April 25, 2018). Personal interview via Skype.


Organization D (April 25, 2018). Personal interview via Phone.


Secondary sources


