Planning and policing of public demonstrations.
A case study.

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General Context

One of the Portuguese biggest political events

since the 'carnation revolution' in April 1974

the 15th of September 2012 in Lisbon

18 events/demonstrations scheduled at national level

An event linked to the Day of Global Protest September 15! which was inserted in Global Revolution 2012. Wide dissemination on the Web for both initiatives.

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General Context

It was a time when the consequences of the financial crisis hit the majority of the citizens

AND

the government announced
a **Single Social Tax** modification,
along with several austerity measures
(september 7, 2012)

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General Context

A group of citizens launched a national protest on the internet called

"To hell with the Troika! We want our lives back!"

A few days before the event, on september 11, 22.297 people have said "I'll go" on the Facebook page.

Several other groups supported the protest:
15O platform, Anonymous, 12 M, Anarchists, Rise Up Portugal, Unions, Teachers, Indignantly, Extreme Right...

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General Context

Right of assembly and demonstration is a fundamental and constitutional right.

Police has the duty to maintain the citizens' security and the exercise of their legal rights.

Freedom   **Security**

General Context

Protest demonstration

Promoted by many organizations from outside the traditional political system

18 events/demonstrations scheduled at national level

A challenge for the police regarding the constitutional rights of assembly and demonstration, and public security

Aim and Method

Case study
of the whole policing activity
designed and implemented towards one of the biggest
political events during the Portuguese democratic regime

1. **to describe the security police planning and implementation procedures**;

2. **to analyse the do's and don'ts**;

3. **and to get some lessons to be learned**.

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Qualitative Methodological Approach

(1) police documents,

(2) interviews with police officers and commanders involved in this event policing,
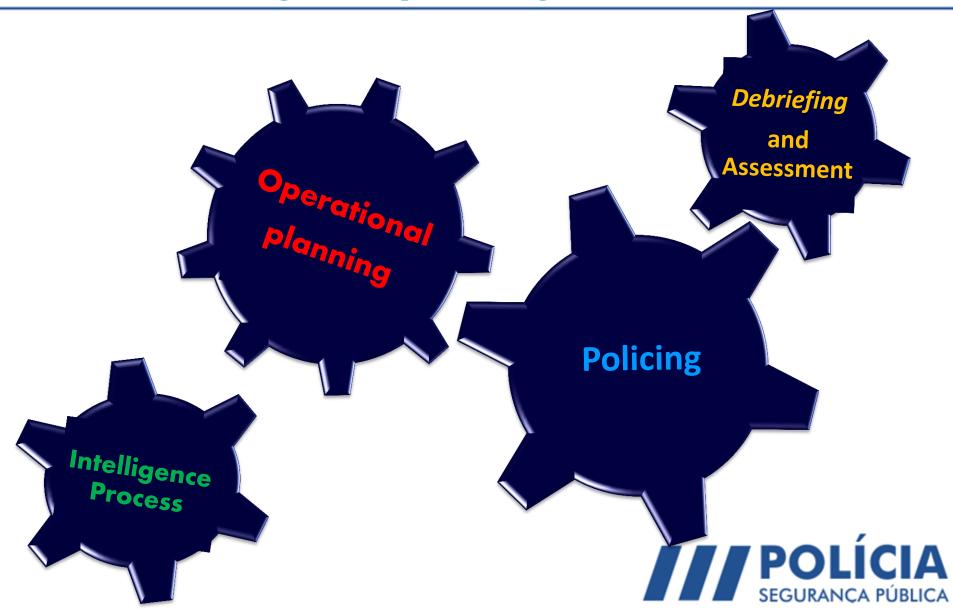
(3) social and traditional media.

Scrutinized through a content analysis procedure.

Triangulation of data sources and analysts was made.

Results are presented in a time line, enabling the assessment of the whole policing operation.

Planning and policing

Planning and policing

Intelligence Process

- Official information to the President of the Municipality by the organisers

- Research on open sources

- Processing intelligence

- Preparatory meetings with the organisers

Operational Planning

- Planning meetings with several Police departments

- Management of human and material resources

- Legal process for video surveillance

- Meetings with several entities (Medical Emergency, Civil Protection, public transport, etc).

- Preparation and dissemination of operational plan

Policing

- Briefing on the day of the event

- Command Post

- Communications (specific channel)

- Placement of police units on the ground (sectoral meetings)

- Cooperation and integration between different police units (Metropolitan Police and Special Police Unit)

Debriefing and Assessment

General Context

Policing

350 **Police officers**: **Gold and Silver Commanders** + **public order** + **crime investigation** + **intelligence** + **traffic control** + **special police unit**

Command post + **communications** + **monitoring social media (and chat rooms)**

Number of demonstrators was much higher than estimated (media speaks about 500.000 demonstrators versus 180.000 estimated by Police)

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Policing

Gold commander had to request more police resources during the event.

Police resources allocated close to the Parliament.

Demonstration was not planned to go to that spot, however, **risk groups** mentioned that possibility in social media.

Policing

- **traffic cuts**;

- **arrests and identification of suspects**;

- **few police officers, private security and citizens were injured**;

- **cooperation with other local entities: city council; medical emergency (first responders: fireman, civil protection).**

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Demonstrators

Concrete actions / Repertoire:

- **throwing** of tomatoes, stones and glass bottles against the IMF headquarter in Lisbon;
- **breaking** the storefront of a restaurant;
- **assaulting** at El Corte Inglês;
- **bringing down** police barriers in front of the Parliament;
- **starting** the march to continue the demonstration in another significant place for the city and the country.

Inferred intentions:
From specific features (clothing, dogs…).

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Iconic picture

Debriefing and Assessment

The demonstration had an horizontal leadership.

Protest events are increasingly organised by groups of citizens or informal and spontaneous movements, thus increasing the potential risk because of possible infiltration.

No possibility to make the usual planning meetings with the organisers and the police.

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Debriefing and Assessment

Collected information was fuzzy, giving no warranty of reliability and accuracy.

Police was dealing with a high degree of uncertainty.

This is becoming an increasing problem the police have to cope with.

Debriefing and Assessment

Commanders on the spot have verified that the demonstration was much bigger considering the initial expectations

Impact in police resources allocated, logistics (water + food) and working shifts

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Mediation, negotiation, dialogue, intelligence, public order, coordination, co-operation

Understand social networks and new forms of collective action

Identification of threats, vulnerabilities and risks

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Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Definition of policing strategy: **low profile and high visibility of police resources**. **High profile when and where it was needed**

Segregation of potential threats (monitoring of groups and individuals)

Need to improve public communication strategy

Need to improve CCTV

Need to monitor social media permanently

Need to train

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Thank you for your attention