

“Caught in Transition? Organisational Change in Sport Between Systemic Pressures and Institutional Inertia”

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Sport organisations are increasingly confronted with demands for change—not only due to internal dynamics but as part of broader societal transformations. Digitalisation and sustainability have emerged as dominant transition narratives, often shaped by political agendas and pressures from private industry. This keynote examines how these narratives influence organisational change in sport, drawing on research from professional sport clubs and voluntary sport organisations. I will outline how multi-level drivers, organisational constraints, and individual-level resistance affect the adoption of digital technologies. In parallel, I will present recent findings on climate protection delay discourses, highlighting how actors in sport describe themselves as embedded in a carbon-intensive system—while simultaneously invoking voluntarism and limited responsibility. Overall, a recurring pattern emerges: many portray their organisations as constrained, describing resource limitations or awaiting leadership from other actors. Building on this synthesis, I will identify key obstacles to organisational transitions in sport and formulate hypotheses for how these challenges might be addressed.

