

Special Issue on Sports, Economy and Media: Sports 4.0 - The Virtual Reality of Sports

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Editorial

The dynamically progressing digitalization – keyword for new communication technologies, complex online portals, fast gathering and exchange of data, the usage of independent algorithms, improved sensors and replacement of physical work through robots – all of this accelerates globally controlled processes in employment, infrastructure, education and spare time. This creates an artificial, virtual world – which is only perceived through screens and audio-visual aids. The human being acts less as a physically deciding person, but rather plans, controls, coordinates and manages anonymously. Igel, Ulrich & Kravcik (Educational Technology Lab, DFKI) are looking on these developments with main focus on Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things. They show us how these technologies are used in a smart factory and influence the culture of movement and youth.

Digitalization has arrived in the world of sports as well. Controlled training, observation of referees and the competition itself, transmission technologies and rights, new formats of organizations, sports offers, and traditional organizations are changing dramatically – immense databases are developing and international websites are marking their place in the system. Experts expect a radical change in Sports, possibly resulting in competitions, which can only be attend virtually and viewed over a screen, and sports, which are controlled through individualized computer programs. IOC and FIFA as well as health insurance companies and politics, who deal more explicitly with future scientific research and support, discuss this possibility.

Sport clubs and associations use online technologies and thus become media houses that act independently of traditional media channels. Borges (Lusófona University) discusses reasons and consequences for the relationship between clubs and fans with selected examples.

Wherever sporting events and not least the Olympic Games take place, the communication of these events plays an important role. Sports has always had a strong interdependence with the technological development: On the one hand side, the sports benefits from a media technology, which enlarges the communication range but also transport emotional experiences. On the other hand, because of its structure and demand, sports is an ideally object for media-technological developments and the promotion of its dissemination. Civilian drones

are an example here that opens up new possibilities for staging, communication and training within sports. At the same time sports offer a positively occupied object for communication and marketing for drone companies. Hebbel-Seegeer & Horky (Macromedia University) describe in this context how drones become an object of higher education.

Gebler-Branch (Ghostthinker) points out how education and training in sports is changing through the use of media technologies. With focus on the usage of video she shows structural change processes in the organized sport and consequences for teaching and training.

eSports, which would not exist without digital technology and is now not just a high economic factor, but also increasingly and self-confidently competing with the organized sports, represents a special kind of interdependence. While initially the organizational and staging styles of traditional sports have been adapted, Wewer (Nordlicht Management Consultants) figures out, eSports has succeeded in developing innovative communication formats in a much more successful way than the organized sports and thus becoming more and more attractive to sponsors outside the digital business. In addition, Lemcke & Weh (Hamburg Institute for Vocational Education) shows that eSports also penetrates into areas that traditional sports has exclusively claimed so far: the promotion of personal and societal valuable and important competencies; from orientation in space to the ability to act successfully under time and precision pressure, up to communication and team skills.

Interdependencies in eSport and Motorsport's coverage of Formula E are the topic of Robeers (University of Antwerp) while Torrijos & Ramon-Vegas (Sevilla University, Pompeu Fabra University) are taking a closer look on the work of sports journalists on the perspective of accountability.

As part of our annual congress, we have always asked questions about digitalization, not at least because the global organization, communication and marketing of sports and sporting events without digital transformation is fundamentally impossible. The rapid development of immersive (especially VR) technologies as well as the importance of eSports has prompted us to place 2017th conference explicitly under the title "Sports Events 4.0 - The virtual reality of sports". As the selected contributions within this Special Issue of the Athens Journal of Sports will show, this will not serve a niche but will illuminate relevant aspects for the organized sports, sports communication and the event sector in total.