

Olympics not likely to swallow up skateboarding's subversive nature into its corporate spectacle, researchers say

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The subversive nature of skateboarding is not likely to be affected by its continuing place in the corporate world of the Olympics, experts have

predicted.

The inclusion of the street sport—which happened for the first time in Tokyo 2020—could help to promote pacifism and egalitarianism and help to combat sexism, homophobia and racism, research suggests.

Some had suggested the subversive sport and its links to rebellion, pools, ramps, and skateparks, as well as less typical type of competition, would not fit easily into a world of sponsors and broadcast deals.

[The research](#), by Brian Glenney, from Norwich University, and Paul O'Connor, from the University of Exeter, says the inclusion of skateboarding can help the Olympics keep pace with the modern world.

Dr. O'Connor said, "Skateboarding is mainstream and yet there remains an irony that skateboarders can now win an Olympic gold medal in a stadium for acts that are deemed illegal in the streets outside it. To emphasize this contrast, it would be like graffiti vandalism becoming an Olympic event.

"Skateboarding's inclusion in the games is the final rung on the sportification ladder that has been evolving since the late 90's ESPN X Games and 2010's Street League. Yet skateboarding remains stubbornly moored to its anti-sport subversive ethos of cooperative fun defined by use of illegal street locations. And though the inclusion of skateboarding in the Olympics is made possible by commodifying international sport conglomerates like VF Corp. and Nike, Inc, core elements of skateboarding's messaging remain anti-corporate.

"It is tempting to suggest that both skateboarding and the Olympics will benefit most by remaining non-overlapping activities after this collision of worlds; skateboarding will retain its subcultural and niche style, and the Olympics will become more open and accessible to activities that

emphasize play, lifestyle, unity, and fun."

Dr. Glenney said, "The modern Olympics has become so aligned with the economics of broadcast rights that the IOC is dependent on expanding its waning viewership; skateboarding is one opportunity to capture a lucrative youthful demographic of viewers. But can the Olympic myth survive in a globalized media-rich era?

"Can it absorb these media enriched lifestyle sport myths unfettered and often antagonistic to nationalism, corporatism, and politics, capturing the public imagination with their own unique and diverse narratives of individualism, authenticity, and transcendent defining moments?

"The skateboarding myth holds no such restrictions and largely answers to the culture rather than a corporate board. This appears to be a key reason why the Olympics have sought to include lifestyle activities like surfing, skateboarding, and most recently, break-dancing in its games.

"What remains to be seen is how the Olympic myth can move beyond its reductive nationalist frame and be a more authentic source for pacifism and human egalitarianism. Here we are hopeful that skateboarding might be able to offer its humble contribution. While it is far from devoid of sexist, homophobic, and racist elements, it has proven to be remarkably open and fertile in addressing these changes above and beyond other sports."

More information: [Skateboard. From the streets to the Olympics](#)

Provided by University of Exeter

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