School of Human Kinetics
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EXECUTIVE MASTERS IN SPORTS ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT

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"Pro-Olympic Influence: Redefining Skateboarding's Organizational Landscape Through World Skate's Leadership"

"Influence Pro-Olympique: Redéfinir le Paysage Organisationnel Du Skateboard Sous la Direction de World Skate"

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Abstract:

This research focuses on the transition of a culturally rooted sport into an Olympic discipline, highlighting its organizational evolution. Born in the streets as a countercultural movement that welcomed those who didn't confine their practice to courts or tracks, skateboarding has successfully integrated into the world of mainstream sports, now taking center stage at the Olympics. But how did this street-born sport manage to break into the elite sports arena without losing its essence? This study delves into this evolution, focusing on the influence of the pro-Olympic movement, emphasizing its impact on governance structures, and the pivotal role played by the International Federation, World Skate, in this adaptation process. It also explores how skateboarding has tackled significant challenges related to transparency, communication, and fairness.

Using a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection, this research employs tools like surveys and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to identify the main barriers and opportunities for enhancing the integration of skateboarding into the Olympic framework.

Finally, strategic recommendations are offered to strengthen organizational practices and promote inclusive participation, while also ensuring the preservation of the cultural values that define this sport and will be crucial to solidifying its Olympic institutionalization.

This study not only aims to provide a roadmap for the institutionalization of skateboarding within the Olympics but also seeks to serve as an example for other urban sports aspiring to join the Olympic movement without losing their cultural identity. Additionally, it contributes to understanding how urban sports can be effectively integrated into traditional sports structures, offering valuable lessons on maintaining a balance between modernization and cultural identity.

Natalia Patricia Sanchez

Version française de l'abstract

Cette recherche porte sur la transition d'une pratique sportive à forte connotation culturelle vers un sport olympique, en mettant en avant son évolution organisationnelle. Né dans les rues comme un phénomène contre-culturel accueillant ceux qui ne se limitaient pas aux terrains ou aux pistes traditionnels, le skateboard s'est progressivement intégré au monde des sports conventionnels, jusqu'à briller aujourd'hui sur la scène olympique. Mais comment ce sport, né dans la rue, a-t-il réussi à s'imposer dans le cadre du sport d'élite sans perdre son essence ? Cette étude examine cette évolution, en se concentrant sur l'influence du mouvement pro-olympique, et en soulignant son impact sur les structures de gouvernance et le rôle clé joué par la Fédération Internationale World Skate dans ce processus d'adaptation. Elle aborde également la manière dont ce sport a relevé des défis majeurs en matière de transparence, de communication et d'équité.

En adoptant une méthodologie mixte qui combine la collecte de données qualitatives et quantitatives, cette recherche s'appuie sur des enquêtes et des entretiens semi-structurés avec des acteurs clés de la scène, afin d'identifier les principaux obstacles et opportunités pour consolider l'intégration du skateboard dans l'olympisme.

Enfin, des recommandations stratégiques sont proposées pour renforcer les pratiques organisationnelles et encourager une participation inclusive, tout en veillant à préserver les valeurs culturelles qui caractérisent ce sport et qui seront essentielles à la consolidation de son institutionnalisation au niveau olympique.

Cette étude ne cherche pas seulement à offrir une feuille de route pour l'institutionnalisation du skateboard au sein de l'olympisme, mais aussi à servir d'exemple pour d'autres sports urbains qui souhaitent intégrer le mouvement olympique sans perdre leur identité culturelle. Elle contribue également à une meilleure compréhension de la manière dont les sports urbains peuvent être intégrés de manière efficace dans les structures sportives traditionnelles, tout en tirant des leçons précieuses pour maintenir l'équilibre entre modernisation et identité culturelle.

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Natalia Patricia Sanchez

I. Introduction

"Skateboarding is not a crime; it's a revolution." – Anonymous.

1.1 Skateboarding, now an Olympic sport, was born in the streets and has undergone a significant transformation. It originated in California as a way to surf the streets during the 1950s, a creative response to days without waves. When droughts led to water rationing, empty pools became the perfect playgrounds for skaters, leading to the development of various styles and disciplines within the sport. Over time, skateboarding evolved and became integrated into the structure of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), debuting at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has been confirmed as an Olympic sport through the Los Angeles 2028 Games.
For many practitioners, skateboarding is more than just a sport; it's a way of life. According to authors like Batuev & Robinson (2017), skateboarding as a sport is intertwined with other forms of expression, values, beliefs, and concepts that make it a solid and integrated cultural movement, characterized by a countercultural expression against dominant thought systems, which researchers have termed an "anti-culture." The confrontation of seemingly opposite ideas has generated both friction and conflict, but the transition to Olympism has also created opportunities for growth and education, especially for women who were previously excluded from this predominantly male domain. The inclusion of skateboarding in the Olympics opened new doors, making the sport more accessible and safer—an outcome that is not only positive in terms of gender equality but also fosters greater visibility and acceptance of the sport.
The formalization of skateboarding within the IOC structure has brought order and organization to a discipline that once seemed informal. Although the sport has been industrialized since the 1980s, with international representation in governmental bodies since the 1990s and 2000s, it was only under the regulatory legitimacy provided by the former Fédération Internationale de Roller Sports

(FIRS), now World Skate, through its acceptance by the IOC, that skateboarding has gained international recognition as a sports discipline. This has had commercial, marketing, and venue-related implications, and has even influenced the behavior of athletes interested in representing their countries professionally. Today, aspects such as clothing, training, nutrition, and injury prevention—once uncommon—are receiving attention. This regulation has also improved the quality of skateboarding education, preventing negligence and promoting the advancement of practitioners. Additionally, particular emphasis is being placed on the care of women and children who practice the sport.

However, this transition has not been easy. Older generations often resist change. Those who consider skateboarding their own often feel uncomfortable with this new formalization and inclusion in the Olympic movement. This cultural conflict arises because younger generations see skateboarding as a sport and a discipline, while older generations view it as a way of life.

The lack of understanding about the functioning of the Olympics and the formal structure of the sport generates friction, also justified by the historical context of the "sportization" of cultural movements (Batuev & Robinson, 2018), making them vulnerable to commercial exploitation by those outside the culture who do not practice the sport. In many developing countries, the lack of sports infrastructure, government and financial support, and adequate training has slowed the development of skateboarding. This is particularly evident in countries like Argentina, where the lack of growth within the National Federation and the perception of corruption have impeded significant progress.

1.2 These challenges manifest at various levels: local, provincial, regional, national, continental, and international. Locally, individuals must adapt to new structures and regulations. As skateboarding becomes more formally organized at provincial or regional levels, barriers must be overcome to achieve national cohesion. Finally, on an international level, the World Skate Federation plays a crucial role in bringing skateboarding to the Olympic Games. This process

requires a solid foundation from the smallest to the largest levels, ensuring that all participants are aligned with the new norms and expectations.

Can skateboarding coexist as both a formal discipline and a passionate way of life? The professionalization of the sport need not detract from its essence. On the contrary, it can enrich the experience of practitioners and open new opportunities. The evolution of skateboarding into an Olympic discipline offers a space for growth, inclusion, and global recognition, benefiting both older and newer generations.

How can urban sports like skateboarding maintain their spirit and cultural authenticity while integrating into formal and Olympic structures? Is it possible to preserve their free essence in this new context? What responsibilities do federations and Olympic committees have to ensure that the sport's growth benefits both local communities and the international arena? How can they balance commercialization with authenticity and social inclusion?

In a globalized and digitalized world, how does the transition of urban sports like skateboarding to an Olympic stage influence the formation of youth and community identities? What are the implications for public perception and the cultural dynamics of new generations?

II. Review of Existing Knowledge

Skateboarding has come a long way from its street origins to its inclusion in the Olympic Games. This process has been complex and has generated conflicts, but it has also created significant opportunities. The acceptance of skateboarding as a formal sport not only enriches its practice but also expands its cultural and social impact. Below are key historical milestones that have been crucial for the cultural and regulatory legitimization of skateboarding. Although, as mentioned earlier, skateboarding began in the 1940s, it wasn't until the 1980s, when skaters sought

to make skateboarding their livelihood and the sport's industrialization led to the development of the necessary equipment, that skateboarding gained recognition beyond being just a rebellious teenager's hobby.

2.1. History

Historical Context: The inclusion of skateboarding in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games marks a crucial moment in the history of this dynamic sport. Originally perceived as a marginal activity, skateboarding has transcended its contra cultural roots to become a globally recognized sport. This transformation reflects broader trends in global sports governance, where there is an increasing emphasis on diversifying Olympic events to attract younger audiences and reflect contemporary cultural trends. The integration of skateboarding into the Olympic Games also represents an intersection of culture, economy, and global sports politics, offering a unique perspective for examining issues of commercialization, legitimacy, and cultural adaptation (Borden, 2019; Howell, 2008).

2..2 **Historical Overview:** Skateboarding originated in the United States during the 1950s as an extension of surfing. It began as an improvised activity on days without waves, with surfers taking to the streets with wooden boards and roller-skate wheels. Over the decades, skateboarding has evolved through significant cultural and technical phases:

- **The 1970s:** Marked by technological advancements like urethane wheels, which drastically changed the dynamics of the sport by allowing greater maneuverability (Brooke, 1999).
- **The 1980s and 1990s:** Saw the rise of street skateboarding and the deep integration of the sport into punk and DIY cultures, highlighting its appeal as a form of expressive counterculture.
- **The 21st Century:** Witnessed a substantial shift as skateboarding gained general acceptance and began to be recognized as a professional

sport, culminating with its inclusion in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games (Borden, 2019).

2.3. Hypothesis:

"The organizational structure and communication strategies are critical factors for the successful integration of skateboarding into formal sports structures, impacting its growth and acceptance globally."

Problem:

Lack of Organizational Structure and Communication Challenges

It is observed that the organizational structure and communication challenges may be suboptimally influencing the integration of skateboarding into established sports structures. This situation could be limiting the full development of the sport at a global level.

III. Methodology

3.1 Justification and Explanation of Data Collection Techniques and Results/ Evidence Obtained

An organized and articulated structure can be crucial for the impact of sports initiatives based on skateboarding, as the standardization of minimum conditions for skateboarding practice guarantees not only the practice of the sport but also protective factors for communities in vulnerable conditions. Additionally, it offers an opportunity for personal and community development through the creation of life projects centered around skateboarding. For this reason, it is necessary to identify the cultural, socioeconomic, and political determinants that hinder the formalization of initiatives around skateboarding. Identifying all the factors

contributing to the lack of regulation in the sport could be a great opportunity to design tools and interventions that facilitate the formalization of skateboarding and propose minimum conditions that allow for the destigmatization and dignification of the sport.

The chosen methodology for this research was an ethnographic design of participatory research. Various instruments were designed for data collection, ranging from literature reviews, interviews with senior executives, athletes, and other representative figures in skateboarding, to surveys conducted at national competitions and training processes led by World Skate in more than five Latin American countries. These efforts helped identify opportunities for improvement in the development and formalization of skateboarding at local, provincial, regional, national, and continental levels. Furthermore, possible recommendations were made to World Skate on how to improve their practices regarding four key thematic areas: transparency, rule and policy enforcement, judging, and communication.

The data obtained were differentiated by sociodemographic factors such as age and gender, allowing for a contextualized analysis that facilitated comparison with theoretical references. This helped identify the concomitant phenomena around the effects of Olympism on skateboarding and how these present a significant opportunity for improvement for international federations like World Skate. This recognition of sportification, commercialization, and Pro-Olympism (Batuev & Robinson, 2018) as mechanisms to legitimize sports practice through the destigmatization of the sport has also led to significant frictions with the more traditional sectors of the sport.

3.2 Generational Perspectives on Sports

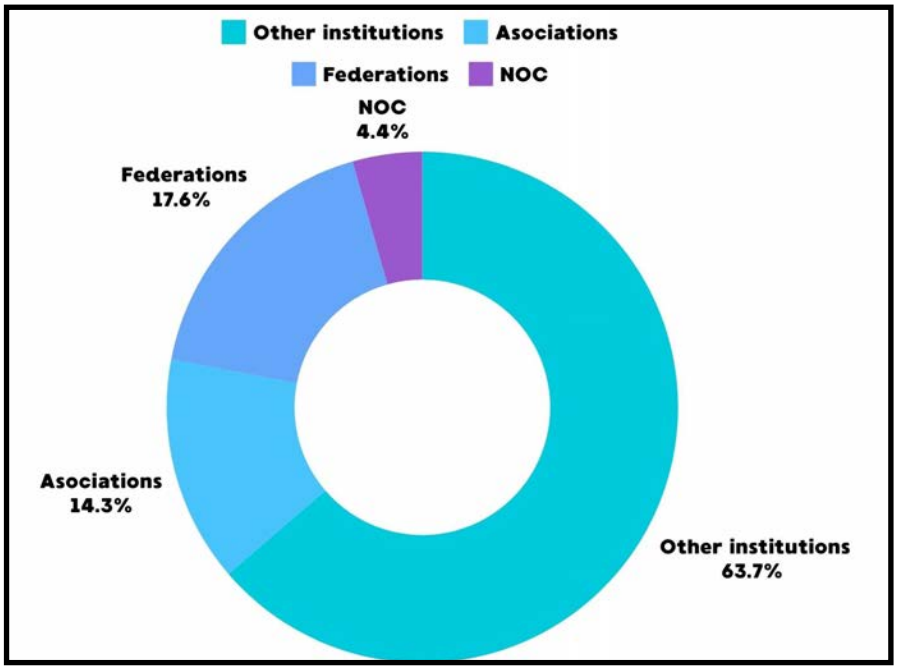
Survey data suggest that people born in the 1970s and 1980s have a strong sense of belonging to sports. This sense of belonging may be influenced by the historical context of these generations, often marked by periods of social and political oppression, as well as precarious economic conditions. In regions like Argentina and other parts of South America, where cultures have experienced significant abuses and cultural mixing, this connection to sports is particularly pronounced (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2020). The conditions of this historical context were also reflected in the lack of resources, such as access to sports equipment and support for skateboarding during the 1980s and 1990s in Latin America. This led to ingenious countercultural responses like DIY (an abbreviation for the Do it Yourself movement), resulting in a strong connection and sense of value towards skateboarding.

These historical experiences have shaped attitudes toward sports and inclusion. For example, older generations (those born before the 1990s) often exhibit closed and patriarchal views, restricting access to sports to a specific niche and excluding women and outsiders. This mentality creates barriers to modernization and inclusion in sports, reflecting broader cultural resistance to change (Brooke, 1999; Howell, 2008).

In the context of action sports like skateboarding, these generational attitudes can manifest as resistance to government and organizational intervention. This resistance may stem from deeply rooted beliefs such as: these sports belong to the practitioners and not to external authorities, formalization is seen as a way to trivialize the sport and make it less friendly or fun, among others. This phenomenon is not exclusive to skateboarding but can also be observed in other sports where communities feel a strong sense of ownership and identity (Borden, 2019).

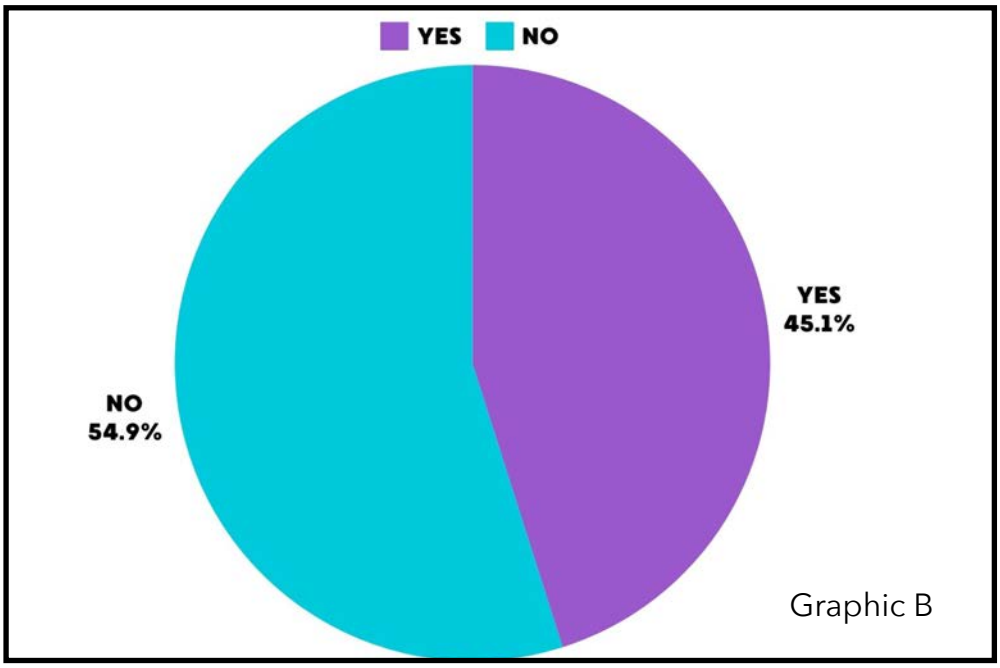
3.3 Survey Results and Female Participation in Sports

Recent technical courses conducted in five Latin American countries highlight the significant challenges faced by women in sports. Surveys from these courses reveal that women feel underrepresented and undervalued, despite many having substantial experience in the industry. Additionally, issues of harassment and discrimination are prevalent, particularly among those with more than 15 years of participation in the sport. These findings underscore the need for more inclusive environments, where protective factors and minimum conditions for sports practice are promoted, alongside support for women in sports (Taylor & Zintz, 2024). Moreover, follow-up on the impact generated by the courses offered by World Skate has found significant effects on the consolidation of processes and private projects, as well as the influence achieved by course beneficiaries on local decision-making structures regarding skateboarding, with some of them taking on representative positions in federations and national teams. These advances could only have been achieved through the formalization of both competitive and non-competitive processes around skateboarding, which has even motivated the beneficiaries to develop their own initiatives and ventures around the sport.



Post-Skateboarding Technical Course: Institutional Integration Results
This chart illustrates the percentage of participants who, after completing the technical course, successfully joined or collaborated with various institutions. Notably, 63.7% engaged with other institutions or private entities, highlighting the significant role of private initiatives in the development of skateboarding at both local and international levels.

beneficiaries is directly related to their understanding of the processes that consolidate and allow the proper functioning of federations through activities that make up the Olympic cycle, ranging from grassroots training, local competitions between schools and clubs, to high-performance training processes, cycles of national and international representation, which enable individuals to understand how their actions promote or affect these processes.



Graphic B

Prior to the Technical Skateboarding Course: Did you understand the functioning of the structures of associations, federations, international federations, confederations, Olympic committees, etc.?

3.4 Urban Tribes and Sports Communities

Urban tribes, a term referring to small groups united by common interests, show a strong sense of identity and belonging within sports. This cohesion and exclusivity can present both advantages and challenges for modernization and inclusion in sports. In the case of skaters, they exhibit cohesion and a sense of belonging with practices and values they feel represent them. As an action sport regularly practiced in urbanized spaces, skateboarding has certain contextual characteristics and relational dynamics that have notably shaped the most

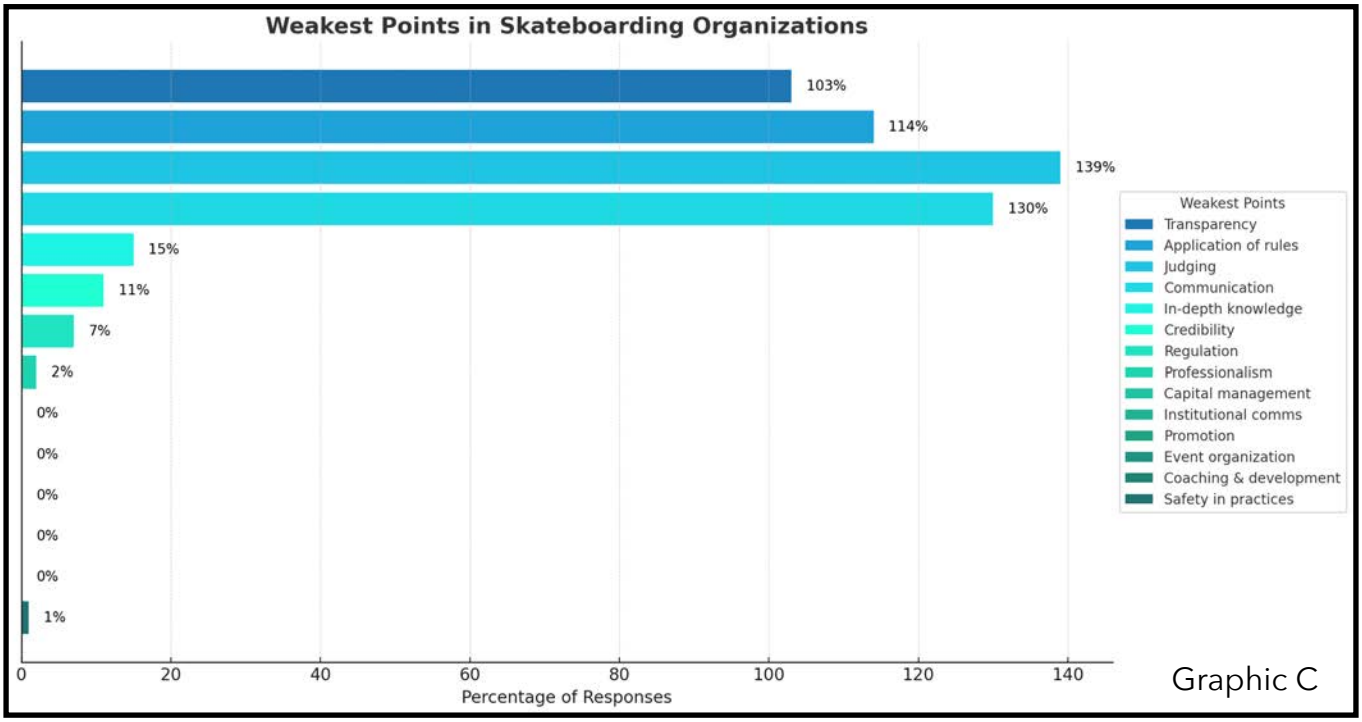
significant values, ideals, and aspirations of its culture. While the criminalization of skateboarding was much more noticeable in the 1990s and 2000s, even now there is a common sense among skaters of aversion to any form of institutionalization, control, or discipline that limits the creative and divergent spirit of skateboarding (Batuev & Robinson, 2017).

To address these challenges, modernizing the presentation of data and the policies of national organizations is essential. In a world where access to the internet and smartphones is widespread, it is crucial to adapt regulations, codes, policies, and procedures to modern times to ensure that the entire community understands the sports structure (Jenkins, 2006; Wheaton, 2004).

Organized and efficient structures in skateboarding are not new. Authors like Batuev & Robinson (2017) have meticulously traced the milestones that have significantly marked the consolidation of organizational structures around skateboarding, such as the International Skateboarding Federation (ISF) and the World Skateboarding Federation (WSF), among other entities, which have driven the sport's organizational structure in order to maintain representativeness and control in the management of skateboarding, commonly known as "skateboarding from skaters to skaters." It is only through regulatory legitimacy that the recognition of skateboarding as a sport has been possible, which has forced two completely different systems of values and beliefs to work together not only to make skateboarding an Olympic discipline but also a model of sports management from its athletes for its athletes.

In order to contrast these changes and phenomena in Latin America and the world, the instruments were designed starting from small, focused samples in Latin American countries around courses taught by World Skate, to surveys at national competitions with international guests, and international competitions with the presence of major decision-makers, belonging to national teams, Olympic Committees of each country, and other historically recognized

stakeholders for their participation and influence in the development of skateboarding.



Graphic C

The results from the instruments suggest differences at local, national, and international levels, as they reveal different ways of not only identifying the problem but also what the specific responsibility of the international sports federation, in this case, World Skate, is in these situations. In this sense, four thematic areas were chosen following the trends of the responses in the Women's Training Course that was conducted in more than five Latin American countries, followed by the national skateboarding competition in Argentina. In general, it is agreed that the most critical and urgent intervention points for World Skate are centered on transparency, rule and policy enforcement, judging, and communication. By using these inputs to corroborate these perspectives with those who have more experience in structuring and consolidating organizational structures in skateboarding, such as national teams, delegations, and others,

significant differences were found on topics like communication or judging. However, the three instruments agree that one of the critical points that currently not only compromises the development of skateboarding but also its continuity in the Olympics is the application of rules and policies, a key element for consolidating organizational processes within the skateboarding movement and an opportunity for improvement for national teams and federations.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

The sportification of urban cultures implies frictions between the ideological and aspirational principles of communities; however, since skateboarding is a sport with a strong DIY culture and self-representation, organizational structuring can be an opportunity to take the best qualities of the sport's culture and the experience of international federations.

Although skateboarding already has cultural legitimacy, regulatory legitimacy currently represents a challenge for the skateboarding community. The creation of rules that are contextually adapted to skaters is a priority, as well as policies that guarantee their participation without compromising their cultural legacy.

International federations have a unique opportunity to collaborate in the organizational consolidation of the sport through modernization and adaptation to the languages, practices, and aspirations found in the legitimized and dominant culture in skateboarding, so that it can take advantage of the pro-Olympic movement and not compete against it.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the World Skate and encourage the NFs to

conduct an open, critical, and constructive review of the rules, policies, and regulatory documents of competitive skateboarding practice. This will help identify risk factors, opportunities for improvement, and strengths that allow for better relationships with skateboarding culture.

- Establish clear and continuous communication with the Stakeholders in skateboarding, enabling joint reflection and collaborative work on the history, current state, and future possibilities for skateboarding, not only in preparation for Los Angeles 2028 but also in relation to the potential consolidation of skateboarding as an Olympic sport.
- Promote self-organizing and collaborative processes that enable sustainable efforts for the organizational consolidation of skateboarding. This involves accompanying the consolidation not only within World Skate but also within the NFs that participate in the Olympic cycle processes, sports event organizers, and other significant actors. This will allow for contextually adapted actions that keep alive the values, ideals, and concepts embraced and exalted by the skateboarding community.

Priority	**Recomendation**	**Action**	**Lead**	**Resources**	**Timescales**	**Critical Success Factors**
1	**Conduction of a Comprehensive Review of Rules, Policies and Regulatory Documents**	By establishing a Task Force, conduct a Review of the Documents, Policies and Procedures already existing in order to identify risk factors, which areas must be improved and strengths to be aligned with Skateboarding culture and the newest generations. Ensure that updates are communicated to the NFs and NOCs	Consultant or Project manager	Legal advice. Communication and IT experts and tools. Time	Sep 2025	Commitment from leadership. More engagement from the parts.

2	**Establish Clear, Fluent and Continuous Communication channels**	By organizing mandatory meetings to engage with key stakeholders and implementing a feedback system to have ongoing communication between NFs, WS, Athlete Commission, etc. Making a monthly newsletter to provide updates from all the commission and foster collaboration.	Communication manager Consultant	Communication Budget Time	Dic 2025	Active Participation from all the Stakeholders and World Skate
3	**Promote and Support Self Organizing and Collaborative Processes**	Launch initiatives that encourage self organizing and collaborative efforts among skateboarding communities, focusing on values and ideals central to sports and working in continental areas. Conduct census among the NFs and provide support for the organizational consolidation of skateboarding. monitoring and reporting progress to ensure sustainable development.	Various Consultants Project managers	Training Cost Budget Traveling Cost Time	Dic 2026	Sustainable development efforts. Engagement with skateboarding culture More educated in sports actors coming from the skateboarding scene.

IV. References that allow the reader to access your work (NB this is not a bibliography, but a list of the works actually referenced in the document).

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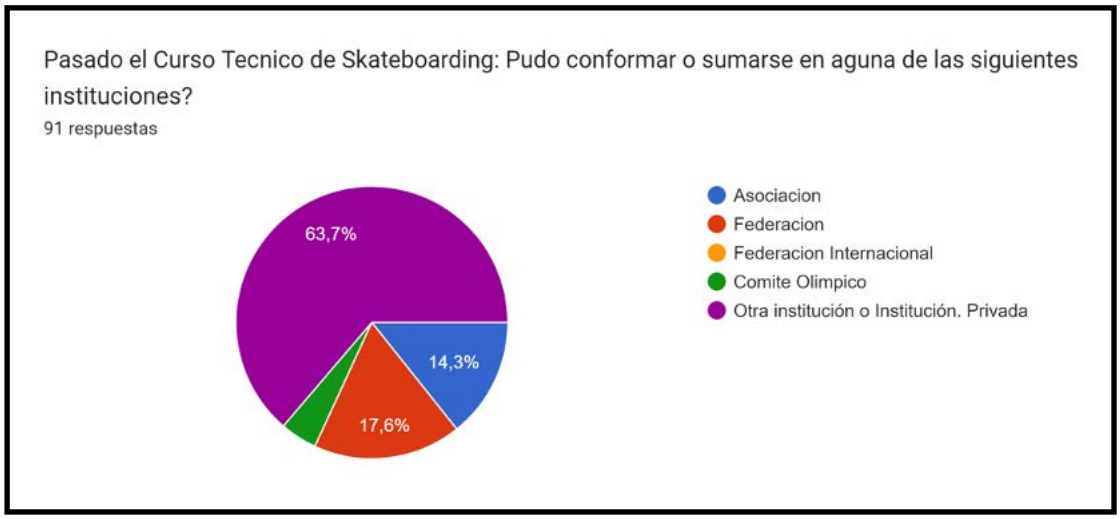
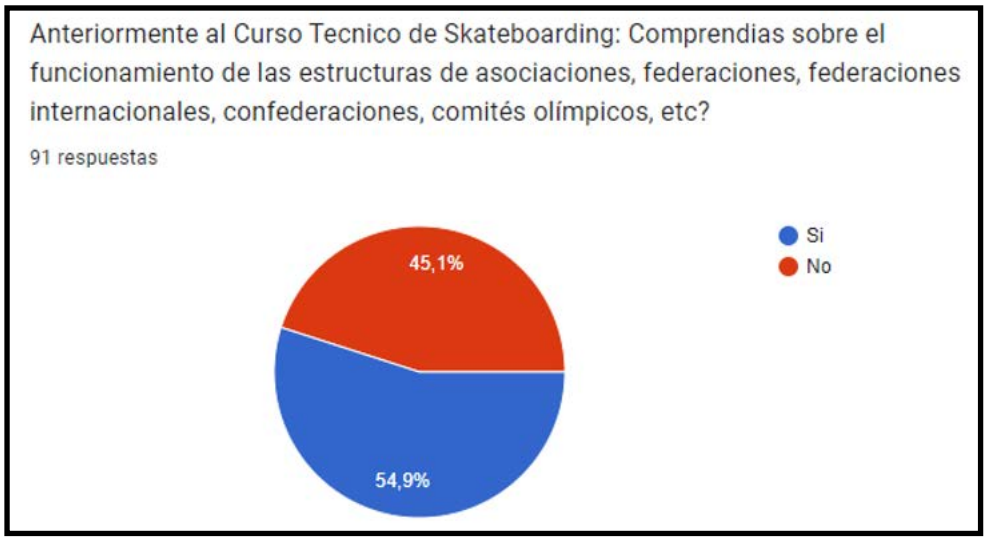
VI. Appendix

Graphic A



Graphic B



Encuesta Piloto de Investigación:
Evaluación de la Unidad de Skateboarding en Organizaciones Deportivas

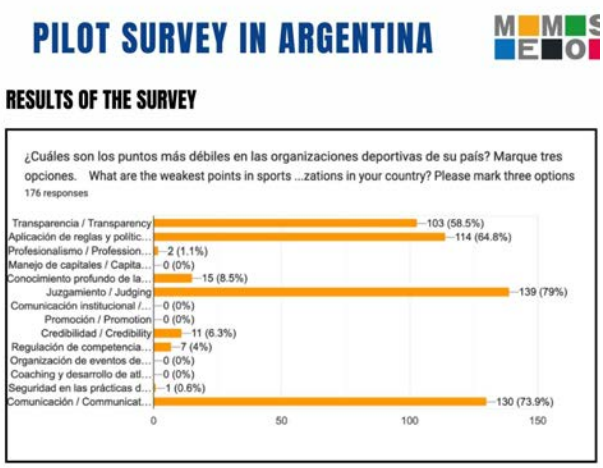
Objetivo: Esta encuesta busca recoger datos para un estudio académico para el análisis de las organizaciones deportivas que gestionan el skateboarding. Los resultados serán usados solo como referencia y no se divulgarán públicamente.

anaicultty@hotmail.com Cambiar de cuenta

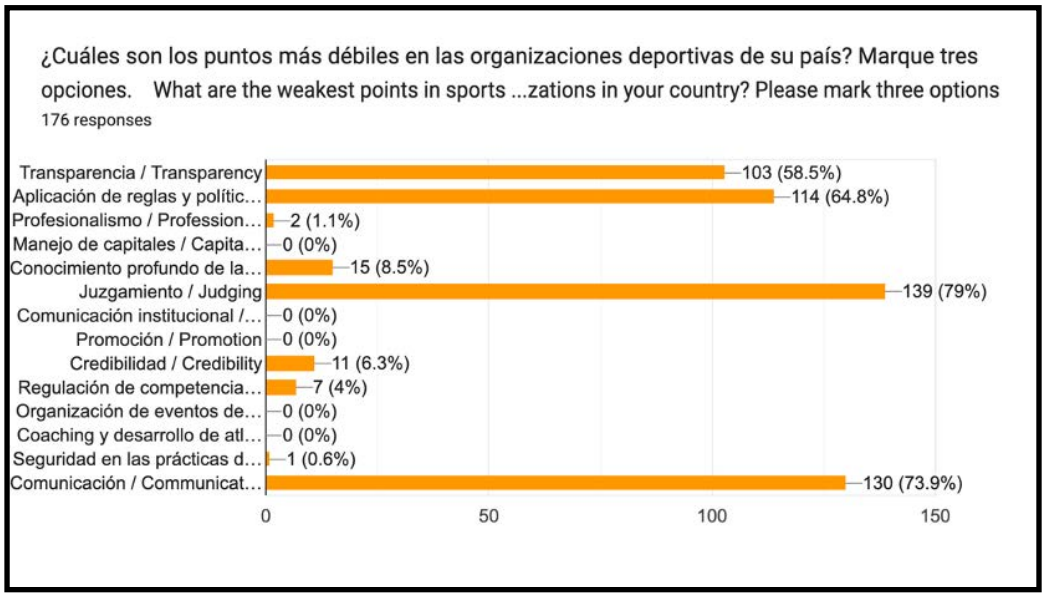
* Indica que la pregunta es obligatoria

Correo electrónico *

Registrar anaicultty@hotmail.com como el correo que se incluirá al enviar mi respuesta



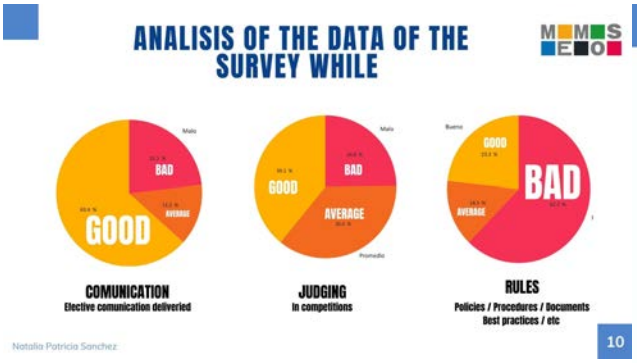
Graphic C

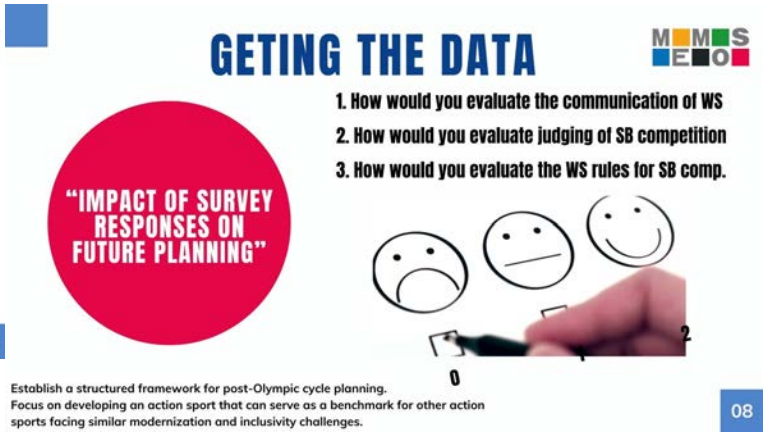


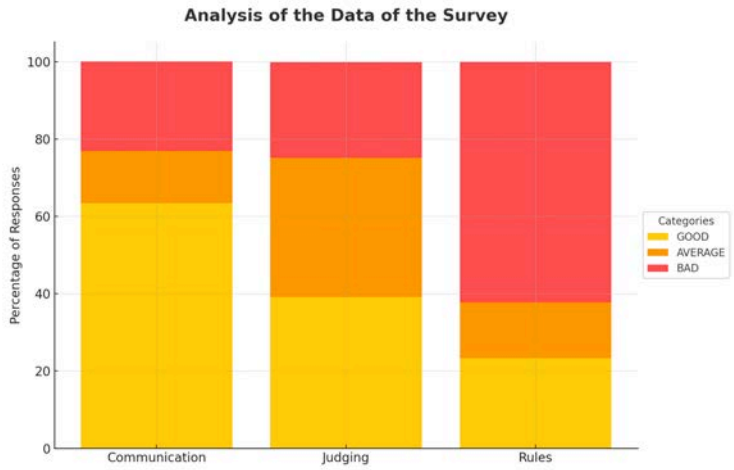
List of Interviewees

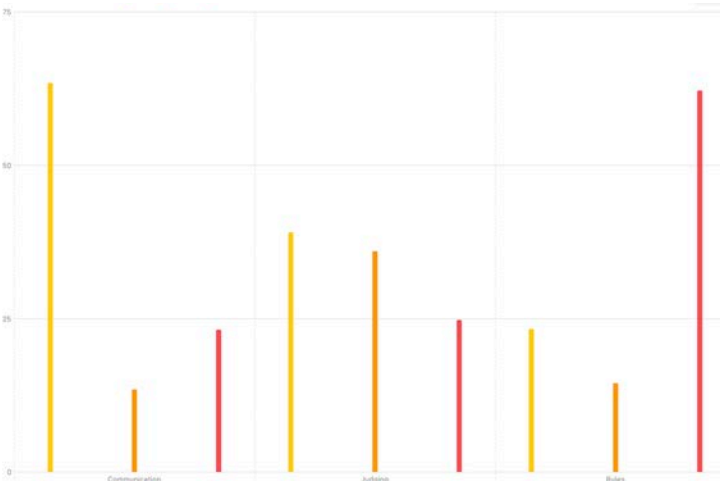
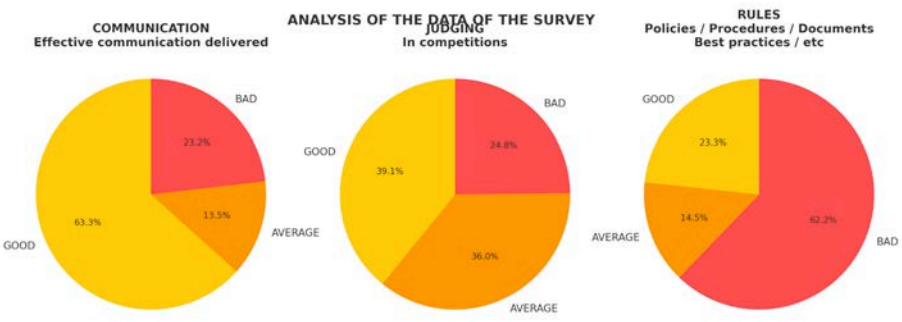
1. **Athlete Representative**
   - Gender: Male
   - Role: Olympic Skateboarder
   - Region: Europe
2. **Olympic Judge**
   - Gender: Male
   - Role: Judge in Tokyo 2020 and current work in China
   - Region: South America (Brazil)
3. **President of National Federation**
   - Region: America (Peru)
   - Specific Role: National Federation President
4. **President of National Federation**
   - Region: Europe (Slovenia)
   - Specific Role: National Federation President
5. **Continental Technical Commission Member**
   - Gender: Female
   - Role: Technical Commission Member
   - Region: South America (Argentina)
6. **International Coaching Commission Director**
   - Gender: Male
   - Role: President of Coaching Commission
   - Region: Global
7. **World Skate Staff Member**
   - Gender: Female
   - Role: Staff Member
   - Region: Europe (Germany)
8. **Gender Equality Commission Member**
   - Gender: Female
   - Role: Equality Commission Member
   - Region: South America (Brazil)
9. **Skateboarding Industry Representative**
   - Gender: Male
   - Role: Involved in Skateboarding
   - Region: Asia (China)
10. **Skateboarder and National Federation Member**
    - Gender: Female
    - Role: Member of National Federation and holds an international position
    - Region: Asia (Japan)
11. **DTN Confederation de Patinaje, Physical Education Professor, and Sports Director**
    - Gender: Male
    - Role: Director
    - Region: South America (Argentina)

Note: The identities of some interviewees are withheld in this public document to ensure their anonymity, in line with the confidentiality agreements made during the research.









Graphics obtained from the survey results