

IRSTI 18.41.91
UDC 793.3

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2026.1.17.43

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BREAKING AS EMERGENCY ART: CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF STREET DANCE

Annotation

The institutionalization of breaking as an olympic discipline reflects a significant transformation of a street-based cultural practice into a globally recognized artistic and competitive form. Although the historical and sociocultural aspects of hip-hop have been widely studied, the process through which breaking simultaneously develops as an artistic practice, a form of cultural identity, and an institutionalized discipline remains insufficiently explored. This study addresses this gap by examining breaking as a form of 'emergency art', that emerged under conditions of social marginalization and subsequently underwent cultural and institutional transformation.

The methodological basis of the research is an interdisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, a review of scholarly literature, and qualitative methods, including observation, interviews, and analysis of competitive practices. The study also draws on empirical data from the international breaking community with particular attention to Kazakhstan as an emerging center of excellence.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in interpreting breaking through the concept of emergency art and in analyzing its transformation from a non-institutional cultural practice into an Olympic discipline. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the interaction between artistic expression, cultural identity, and institutional structures in contemporary dance practices.

Key words

breaking, hip-hop culture, street dance, cultural transformation, emergency art.

Cite

Murzagulova, A., Veizans, E. 2026. Breaking as emergency art: cultural transformation of street dance. Arts Academy Scientific Journal, no. 1(17): 43–59.

ҒТАХР 18.41.91
ӘОЖ 793.3

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2026.1.17.43

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БРЕЙКИНГТЕГІ «EMERGENCY ART» КОНЦЕПЦИЯСЫ: КӨШЕ БИІНІҢ МӘДЕНИ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯСЫ

Аннотация

Брейкингтің олимпиадалық пән ретінде институционалдануы көше мәдениетіне тән тәжірибенің жаһандық деңгейде танылған көркем және бәсекелік формаға айналғанын айқын көрсетеді. Хип-хоп мәдениетінің тарихи және әлеуметтік-мәдени аспектілері кеңінен зерттелгенімен, брейкингтің бір мезгілде көркем тәжірибе, мәдени сәйкестік формасы және институционалданған пән ретінде қалыптасу үдерісі жеткілікті деңгейде зерделенбеген. Бұл зерттеу аталған олқылықтың орнын толтыруға бағытталып, брейкингті әлеуметтік маргинализация жағдайында пайда болып, кейін мәдени және әлеуметтік трансформациядан өткен «emergency art» түрі ретінде қарастырады. Сонымен қатар, зерттеуде халықаралық брейкинг қауымдастығына қатысты эмпирикалық деректер талданып, осы салада қалыптасып келе жатқан маңызды орталықтардың бірі ретінде Қазақстанға ерекше назар аударылады.

Зерттеудің ғылыми жаңалығы брейкингті «emergency art» тұжырымдамасы аясында түсіндіруде және оның институционалданбаған мәдени тәжірибеден Олимпиадалық пән деңгейіне дейінгі трансформациясын кешенді талдауда көрінс табады. Зерттеу нәтижелері қазіргі заманғы би тәжірибелеріндегі көркемдік экспрессия, мәдени сәйкестік және институционалдық құрылымдардың өзара байланысын тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді.

Түйінді сөздер

брейкинг, хип-хоп мәдениеті, көше биі, мәдени трансформация, emergency art.

Дәйексөз үшін

Мурзагулова, А., Вейзанс, Е. 2026. Брейкингтегі «Emergency art» концепциясы: көше биінің мәдени трансформациясы. Arts Academy ғылыми журналы №1(17): 43–59.

МРНТИ 18.41.91
УДК 793.3

DOI 10.56032/2523-4684.2026.1.17.43

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БРЕЙКИНГ В КОНЦЕПЦИИ «EMERGENCY ART»: КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ УЛИЧНОГО ТАНЦА

Аннотация

Институционализация брейкинга как олимпийской дисциплины отражает значительную трансформацию уличной культурной практики в глобально признанную художественную и соревновательную форму. Несмотря на наличие обширных исследований, посвящённых историческим и социокультурным аспектам хип-хопа, процесс, в рамках которого брейкинг одновременно развивается как художественная практика, форма культурной идентичности и институционализированная дисциплина, остаётся недостаточно изученным. Данное исследование восполняет этот пробел, рассматривая брейкинг как форму «экстренного искусства» (emergency art), возникшую в условиях социальной маргинализации и прошедшую путь культурной и институциональной трансформации.

Методологической основой исследования является междисциплинарный подход, включающий исторический анализ, обзор научной литературы и качественные методы исследования, такие как наблюдение, интервью и анализ соревновательной практики. В работе также используются эмпирические данные международного сообщества брейкинга с особым акцентом на Казахстан как формирующийся центр высокого уровня.

Научная новизна исследования заключается в интерпретации брейкинга через концепцию emergency art и анализе его трансформации из неинституциональной культурной практики в олимпийскую дисциплину. Полученные результаты способствуют более глубокому пониманию взаимодействия художественного выражения, культурной идентичности и институциональных структур в современных танцевальных практиках.

Ключевые слова

брейкинг, хип-хоп культура, уличный танец, культурная трансформация, чрезвычайное искусство.

Для цитирования

Мурзагулова, А., Вейзанс, Э. 2026. Брейкинг в концепции «Emergency art»: культурная трансформация уличного танца. Научный журнал "Arts Academy", № 1(17): 43–59.

Introduction. The hip-hop emerged in the South Bronx in the 1970s, which was a response to poverty, racial segregation, and urban abandonment. Hip-hop consists of five interdependent components: MCing, DJing, graffiti, breaking, and the knowledge principle. Together, all the elements worked together and provided the marginalized African Americans and Latinos with an alternative to violence and creativity, identity, and community structure. The most obvious and immediate expression of hip-hop was breaking, otherwise known as break dance. It is a mix of dance acrobatic elements, improvisation, and it is a phenomenon where dance replaces violence. Crews gained status and respect because of skill and not physical force.

DJs like Kool Herc and Afrikaa Baambataa assisted the transformation and lengthened instrumental breaks to allow the dancers more space. These interruptions led to competitive improvisation, ritualized combat, and social rules that continue to regulate the culture. Breaking was thus a new dance style as well as a restructuring of the life of the urban Bronx.

The transformation of breaking, from a local street action to a global art and Olympic sport, can be seen in the thorny points between culture and institution, art and education, and resistance and globalization. When breaking diffused across national boundaries, it was a means of cultural exchange, a kind of youth training and social promotion. The practice was creative in settings characterized by a lack, but it also evolved into a systematic practice in schools of dance and other cultural centers, and currently, international sporting events.

The development of breaking as a local street culture into international artistic performance and the Olympic Games demonstrates complex crossbreeding of culture and institution, art and education, resistance, and globalization. Breaking became a way of cultural exchange, youth education and a social mobility tool as it went international. Not only was the practice cultivating creativity among settings of deprivation, but it also served as a part of the dance schools, cultural centers, and, most recently, sport events.

This complex change has been examined in this article by analyzing the roots, definitions, and international path of breaking. It highlights the importance of the dance as an emergency art: firstly, it was a survival technique, then it was a way of identity-making, and finally it was the recognized cultural capital. This pays specific attention to the roles of women in transforming the field, the worldwide spreading of breaking through competitions like Red Bull BC One and the spectacular example of Kazakhstan, where breakers have become international stars despite having very little.

Materials and methods of research.

This study is a synthesis of historical, academic and empirical evidence in investigating how breaking has become a global discipline after being practiced in the streets. The background of hip-hop culture and breaking, as outlined by historical and scholarly literature, such as the works of Schloss (2009) and Chang (2005), offers a perspective in which one can understand how it became a valuable element of South Bronx socio-culture. Interviews, observations and competition outcomes among breakers of various contexts, especially Kazakhstan, were used to gather

primary and secondary data, supplemented by battle videos and social media records, thus emphasizing the embodied practices and their spread across the world. The knowledge gained from dance education and pedagogy, such as Veizans (2013), was considered to emphasize how hip-hop culture can be integrated into formal dance training and cultural values.

The analysis used in the study was a historical-cultural analysis to trace the evolution of breaking and place it in the wider context of socio-cultural and institutional processes. The process was conducted through the use of content analysis in media, textual and audiovisual media in a systematic manner to reveal the thematic patterns, cultural meaning and representation of breaking in different situations. The case study is based on Kazakhstan as the example of international excellence, where local practices are adjusted and become international. Comparative analysis also compared New York and Kazakhstan practice with the global pattern, hence examining the issue of processes of institutionalization, pedagogy and cultural legitimacy.

Literature review. The academic sources on the subject of breaking show a dynamic, interdisciplinary area involving the study of dance areas, cultural history, sociology, and sports anthropology. Various researchers treat the phenomenon of breaking through different analytic angles, thus bringing out the artistic, social, and cultural aspects of it. Among the most prominent theoretical approaches to dance studies, the works of Banes, exploring the process of modern practice of contemporary dance in the context of postmodern culture, are to be discussed. Banes proposes the suggestion that many new forms of dances

are created outside of the institutional structure and integrated into the scholarly language and professional dance schools (Banes 1994). This view is especially pertinent to explaining how the art of breaking as a street-based dance has slowly migrated into the realms of authoritative spaces of art and education.

Chang analyses the socio-historical roots of hip-hop culture in the context of urban poverty, racial disparity and structural decline, which led to the rise of hip-hop in the South Bronx in the 1970s (Chang 2007). Chang highlights that the hip-hop culture played the role of a cultural reaction to the social marginalization by offering young people other ways to express themselves, create identities and belonging.

Some researchers pay specific attention to hip-hop dancing, breaking as a cultural and artistic activity. Rajakumar discusses the spread of hip-hop dance all over the world, and he, through this discussion, reveals how hip-hop dance has been modified and redefined in various cultural settings outside the United States (Rajakumar 2012). This is also the case with Fitzgerald, who deals with the dance styles of the city and defines breaking as an extremely dynamic genre of dance: improvisation, physical virtuosity and a performative competition (Fitzgerald 2009).

The hybrid cultural nature of hip-hop dance is brought to the attention of other researchers. Eagle examines city dance using the idea of cultural hybridity that contemporary street dances arise out of the interplay of various movement practices and cultural forces on them (Eagle 1999). In that case, the breaking may be perceived as a blend of African traditions of the diasporic movement, Latin rhythms and the things

that were borrowed from martial arts and acrobats.

Practical and technical breaking is another area that has been covered in applied sources. Green and Brammel provide systematic accounts of vocabulary movement, stylistic elements and terms in breaking, thus contribute to codifying knowledge in the dance form (Green and Brammel 2003). These publications are significant to record the technical organization of the breaking and supporting of the transmission of breakdances in the state of dance communities.

Sociologically, the problem of authenticity and identity in the hip-hop community has been addressed by Harkness, who stated that “underground hip-hop worlds in forming cultural legitimacy through participation, creation, and linking to commonly held cultural practices” (Harkness 2010, 57). In his work, he emphasizes the need to appreciate the community and non-official cultural regulations to sustain authenticity in the hip-hop culture.

The subject of gender in the hip-hop culture has also seen academic interest. The reason is that Hobson and Bartlow consider the characterization of women in hip-hop culture and popular music, to which they find some continuing gender inequalities and the increasing popularity of female performers and artists (Hobson and Bartlow 2008). The contribution of their work to the realization is the changing role of women in breaking culture.

Scholars such as Veizans have determined the stance of pedagogical perceptions of street dance into formal instruction of dance without losing its improvisational roots and cultural basis (Veizans 2013). Such practice represents

the recognition of breaking as a practice, performance, and educational and cultural resource that is increasing in importance.

Although the literature covers lots of material, most scholars concentrate on isolated dimensions of breaking, including its history, cultural fusion, technical composition or social relationships in hip-hop cultures. There is less emphasis on the analysis of breaking as a phenomenon that at once integrates the practice of art, cultural identity, and change of institutions. Specifically, how a street-based cultural practice can transform into a globally established artistic and sporting discipline is a less explored issue.

Recent studies further expand the understanding of hip-hop culture as a complex socio-cultural system that operates across spatial, generational, and institutional dimensions. Villanueva (2023), for instance, proposes the concept of a “hip hop multimodal infrastructure,” emphasizing the interaction between expressive practices (such as breaking, DJing, and MCing) and place-based cultural scenes. This perspective highlights hip-hop as an embodied and spatially situated form of cultural production, where meaning is co-constructed through performance and community interaction. Similarly, Radcliff approaches hip-hop through the lens of youth engagement and cultural remixing, arguing that “processes such as sampling and mixing can serve as frameworks for reinterpreting tradition and creating new forms of collective expression, particularly among young people and marginalized groups” (Radcliff 2025, 29). In parallel, recent studies conceptualize hip-hop as a subcultural formation undergoing continuous transformation under the conditions of globalization, where its

original forms are reinterpreted within new urban and cultural contexts while maintaining elements of autonomy and identity (Benvenga 2022). These studies show that contemporary scholarship increasingly views hip-hop not only as an artistic practice but also as a dynamic cultural infrastructure, a mode of knowledge production, and a site of negotiation between resistance and institutional integration.

This article explores breaking as a kind of emergency art that developed some form of social marginalization and then took a course to cultural institutionalization. The article attempts to add a discourse of tracing the history of breaking by examining how contemporary dance practice is transported between the non-institutional space of cultural heritage and from cultural institutions to international recognition.

Results and Discussion. The history of breaking highlights its origin in the South Bronx in the early 1970s, when the area was in a state of crisis, experiencing deindustrialization, gang life, and the deterioration of the infrastructure. According to Eagle (1999), the form has been described as the emergency art, art that was made under circumstances of scarcity where breaking became not only a survival tool but also a means to express oneself. Fitzgerald (2009) locates breaking, likewise, in the larger constellation of hip-hop, with its improvisational and hybrid quality, a mixture of African diasporic dance traditions and new urban aesthetics.

History reconstructions have been especially relevant to the role of gangs. In the years before the emergence of the organized hip-hop parties, territorial conflict between gangs commonly resulted in violence. According to Chang (2007) and

Harkness (2010), the early hip-hop leaders tried to find other alternatives to violence and turned the gang rivalries into music and dance. Battles were a ritualized form of alternative to a physical fight, which enabled the young people to fight over status and territory by battling performance instead of fighting physically. The birthplace of breaking, the Bronx, experienced the growing peripheralization with increasing marginalization worsened by the exodus of white inhabitants, working-class Black kids tried to find the methods of self-expression in the mainstream culture, which did not recognize their forms of subjectivity (Aprahamian 2023). This is a major theme in the literature, as the authors highlight how breaking as a conflict resolution mechanism works in the streets and is now in some way transformed into a dance battle.

The innovation of music was also very important. There is a universal consensus among scholars that the soul and funk record isolating break technique used by DJ Kool Herc was pivotal in the determination of the conditions in which breaking could occur (Green and Brammel 2003). Herc provided an improvisational atmosphere through the extension of rhythmic passages that focused on percussion. Dancers then reacted by experimenting with more challenging floor work, freezes, and power moves and created a lexicon that separated breaking and other dances. According to Banes (1994), this is one of the points of cultural hybridity whereby the salsa, martial arts, and James Brown stagecraft influences were re-invented in a distinct and very physical manner.

The analysis of breaking should not be considered outside of the context of the whole hip-hop movement. According to

Fitzgerald (2009) and Rajakumar (2012), break, graffiti, DJing, and MCing were not only complementary activities but also a whole cultural identity. Although they had their own techniques, which had been developed by each discipline, they shared one common spirit, which presumed improvisation, competition, and visibility in the marginalized city spaces. Some descriptions indicate direct exchange between graffiti crews and dance crews, where communication and confrontation between groups was often transgressive. Notably, scholars like Harkness (2010) note that the emergence of the hip-hop culture led to the decline in crimes on the street because violent rivalry was replaced by an artistic one. Though graffiti has been condemned as vandalism and breaking was at times referred to as uncivilized behavior, both acts had provided substitutes to drug dealing and violent opposition in the areas characterized by negligence.

It is believed that the breaking had a significant impact, not on the lives of Bronx boys, but also on art, thus, the idea of emergency art is introduced. The idea offers an applicable model in explaining the emergence of breaking. According to Eagle (1999), emergency art refers to a cultural behavior that develops as a direct response to such urgent circumstances of deprivation, violence and exclusion. In terms of this framework, breaking did not actually start as a form of art to be formalized and institutionalized, but as an impulsive reaction to crisis. The earliest b-boys and b-girls used movement as a way of converting desperation to energy and replacing violence with ingenuity and demand visibility in the social spheres that had marginalized them.

Breaking, at the survival level, provides a safe but competitive level of expression to youth who would otherwise have been sucked into the gang subculture. Fights began to be replaced with battles, streets by dance floor, as the main place of confrontation. This initial phase shows breaking to be an element of survival, a fact that Chang (2007) points out in his narrative of how early hip-hop artists were aggressively working to re-channel gang conflicts in culture. Youth groups remained and their rivalries were performed in a symbolic and performative manner instead of violent. The transformation attracts some parallels to some of the Asian cultures, where political or social negotiations are performed in the form of formalized competitions, e.g., culinary competitions, rather than direct conflicts.

The second emergency art stage is identity formation. When the concept of breaking was established as a customary behavior in the hip-hop circles, it allowed those involved to create and express individual and group identity. Having the improvisational aspect of the dance meant that the originality was encouraged, which rewarded those who came up with their styles. Through movement, identity was played out and competed by dance. This, according to Eagle (1999) and Fitzgerald (2009), is the building of cultural hybridity, whereby various forces of the African diasporic traditions, jazz, martial arts, and popular entertainment merge together in the new and fluid identities which challenge the traditional categorization of race, classes, and artistry.

The third phase is the capital and cultural formation. When the breaking became visible in movies, at professional and competitions and later at regular

institutions, it came to find itself in a survival means, and it coincided with a means of cultural prosperity. The process of breaking allowed not just role in the local communities, but also access to the global networks, professional careers, and transnational mobility. As a key instance of how promoting breakers with a marginalized background can be facilitated, Rajakumar (2012) singles out the Red Bull BC One competition, as participants of the competition represented a marginalized group; therefore, raising the profile of emergency art to a highly-regarded cultural production. Therefore, the path of breaking as a survival art is a response to a more general societal change: surviving to identity to institutionalized legitimacy. The adaptability of the form in each of the stages is shown by both its ability to meet the immediate requirements and its development into a platform of international fame.

Traditionally, women have been underrepresented in breaking. However, feminist and cultural studies have also put into more and more emphasis the importance of women in the field. Hobson and Bartlow (2008) note that the women in hip-hop could not be recognized or leaders in a systematic way. During the breaking, it was always possible to ignore the female dancers as exceptions or novelties instead of valuing them as the main players. Women continued to make their place in the scene despite this marginalization and created spaces of visibility and redefined the boundaries of the form. The first B-girl Summit was held in Minneapolis in 2005, was a milestone in this sense. Being the first major event devoted to women in hip-hop and breaking, it marked the difficulties of

the female breakers and their desire to be heard and claimed their own space.

Women have also been observed to make contributions to scholarship through their expressions. According to Hobson and Bartlow (2008, 12), “female breakers incorporated the aspects of contemporary dance, flexibility, and storytelling in the repertoire of breaking”. This way, they broadened its expressive scope to the aggressive, competitive, and athletic commonly stressed by the male practitioners. The input of women demonstrated the possibilities of breaking in telling stories, expressing feelings, and artistic experiments and defied the notion of the dance as being solely about strength and authority.

Another example of this development can be found in contemporary examples. Such female breakers as Ayumi in Japan, Logistx in the United States and Kastet in Russia have succeeded in gaining international recognition and this proves that breaking, in different ways, has no manly interpretation and can be embodied in various ways. Such dancers can be discussed as performers by Butler (1990): the practice of identity due to repetition, which disrupts the normative expectations. Within the breaking, the female performances disrupt the normalization of assuming the form that is produced by men, by reinstating it as a practice in which gender divisions may be repurposed and redefined. Increased visibility of women in breaking also implies pedagogical and cultural transmission. Female instructors in dance schools and youth organizations in every corner of the world can serve as role models to young people, prove stereotypes wrong and make it more accessible. In their teaching and performing, they make

breaking legacy to embrace gender diversity, thus making a difference in the culture of breaking.

Globalization of breaking has been widely written in scholarly literature on hip-hop and popular culture. What started out as a local reaction to inner-city deprivation in South Bronx has become a transnational practice with participants in over a hundred countries. Various elements have helped in this global expansion, starting with media portrayals, commercial sponsorship, international competition and digital networks that led to cross-cultural exchange across borders. Unlike the early development of breaking, when formal training methods did not exist, similar to other action sports (Lee and Tak, 2025).

The first wave of globalization was the international circulation of films and documentaries in 1980s. In 1982, 1983, and 1984, 'Wild Style', 'Style Wars' and 'Beat Street' exposed European, Asian, and Latin American audiences to the aesthetics and ethos of the hip-hop culture. Although the critic Banes (1994) and Chang (2007) note that these representations tended to popularize or commercialize breaking in an easier manner, they also served as mediums of communication. Those audiences who were not familiar with the Bronx setting were drawn into the amazed athleticism, competitiveness and creativity of the dance and local variations began to appear.

This was further intensified by the television shows. During the early 2000s scripts like 'So you think you can dance' in the United States and 'America Best Dance Crew' popularized breaking among large masses. In spite of the fact that these programs often focused on choreography and did not focus on improvisational battle, they opened up the possibilities of

professional dancers and made breaking a form of entertainment and art a norm. In this aspect, globalization was not just a geographic process but a cultural one as well it redefined the way of perceptions of breaking might be.

Corporate sponsorship was also another important parameter. 'BC One' competition Since 2004, Red Bull has had the 'BC One' competition as the premier international breaking stage. According to Rajakumar (2012), 'BC One' is the point at which breaking came to be globalized the most. Through the introduction of organized regulations, international qualifiers and wide publicity, 'BC One' made breaking a professional competition format than it was before. Millions of dancers all around the world competed to be noticed. Corporate sponsorship provided financial sustenance and breakers were able to take the career path of a sportsman and cultural ambassador.

These world forces were strengthened by digital platforms. As the popularity of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok increased, dancers could upload their routines, tutorials, and fight videos regardless of national boundaries. The internet thereby reduced the distance between locations so that a young breaker in Almaty or Seoul could study the styles of innovators in New York or Paris virtually within seconds. This online circulation democratized knowledge, increased innovation and enabled the formation of a global community.

The globalization of breaking has been observed to have a paradox by scholars. What started as a form of cultural resistance has become a part of the mainstream entertainment, and, more recently, global sport. According to Eagle (1999) and Fitzgerald (2009), this process is indicative

of both the flexibility of breaking and tension between authenticity and institutionalization. On the one hand, globalization has availed visibility, resources and opportunities to practitioners all over the world. On the other it may make a highly contextual art into a standardized spectacle that is no longer connected to its Bronx roots.

It is paradoxically how battle culture has evolved. The battles were community rituals in its primitive form that solved conflict and created respect. Battles in the international competitions are evaluated based on the codified criteria, including originality, musicality, execution, and vocabulary⁴. Although it is a fair and transparent system, it also focuses less on improvisation and local narrative and more on technical skill and generalization. The issue is whether or not globalization enriches breaking by guaranteeing its maintenance or takes breaking out of its social context.

The emergence of Kazakhstan as a world center of excellence is one of the most interesting consequences of the globalization of breaking. Although Kazakhstan is not directly related to the Bronx historically, there have been world breakers that have emerged with the country to compete at the top of the Red Bull BC One and other competitions across the globe. Killa Kolaya (Nikolai Chernikov) or Dautlet and Adlet Anarbekov are common names in the international lists, and crews like 'Simple System' have also brought at least some glory to Kazakhstan.

To explain this phenomenon, it is necessary to pay attention to regional,

cultural, and historical processes. According to scholars and practitioners, there are a number of contributing factors. To begin with, the physical strength, acrobatics and endurance culture in Central Asia offered an innate basis of breaking to its hard demanding vocabulary. The area provided gymnastics and martial arts, which were useful in learning power moves and freezes, and thus made Kazakh dancers competitive.

Second, the relatively open artistic atmosphere in Kazakhstan had allowed dancers to experiment with a wide variety of influences. Contrary to situations where dance was highly institutionalized, Kazakh scene evolved in an informal way and dancers were allowed to be creative and integrate local aesthetics with the international hip-hop traditions. This openness promoted innovation, which was very important in the culture of battle.

Third, the regional position of Russia as a breaking hub needs to be taken into consideration. Amir Zakirov and other Kazakh practitioners, in interviews, mentioned that there was a big influx of young dancers going to Russia to meet crews, attend workshops, and share their skills. The Predators Crew which is usually connected with Russian breaking came to be a significant point of contact of Kazakh dancers. Amir himself pointed out that the assimilation with Russian crews was not something of forgetting the Kazakh identity but a mere necessity of strategy as Russia was a center of new findings in the field of breaking. Russian hip-hop, in this case, is a nodal point, a significant aspect of social life, with its internal processes and intricate relations of things and meanings (Ivanov,

⁴ International Olympic Committee, *Breaking at Paris 2024*, 2021,

<https://www.olympics.com/en/olympic-games/paris-2024/results/breaking>

2013). This transnational cooperation shows how globalization does not only work between the Bronx and the world, but also regionally where knowledge flows between neighboring nations.

Lastly, digital media boosted the emergence of Kazakhstan. Videos of Kazakh breakers went viral across the internet and earned them reputations that broke down regional boundaries. This enabled Kazakh dancers to gain international reputation without necessarily having to move around because they were able to train at home and compete on the international scene due to the presence of digital exposure.

The rise of Kazakhstan has both a symbolic and practical implication to the international breaking fraternity. Mathematically, it indicates that breaking is universal. Form that is grounded in the experiences of African American and Latino youth in New York might strike a chord and strengthen the young generation in Central Asia, thousands of miles away, and in a completely different social-political context. There is not much that Bronx and Almaty can say about each other in terms of the historical background, but the spirit of breaking, with its ethics of non-yielding, being creative and competitive, has turned out to be versatile in response to other cultures.

Simultaneously, the history of breaking in Kazakhstan is much different than the one of its development in the United States and Western surroundings. The Kazakh scene did not develop the extensive use of street actions in impoverished neighborhoods as the South Bronx, where breaking was the direct result of the street conditions created by the social contradiction as well as the conflicts of territory. Rather, the culture of breaking in

Kazakhstan emerged in mainly semi-institutional and structured contexts, in the form of studios, clubs, and educational enterprises. This disparity could be defined by the lack of similar types of urban conflict as well as by the different socio-cultural circumstances that did not require similar forms of expressive resistance. Thus, the role of breaking as emergency art becomes less obviously based upon immediate social survival, and mediated by institutionalized cultural involvement.

This, however, does not mean that it does not have the so-called dimension of emergency, but its transformation. In the modern setting, especially with the new generations, the contact with hip-hop dance is becoming more influenced by digital culture and networks. Social media is the platform of the rise of new visibility and identity for breaking dancers. None of these practices are exactly what it once was in the street level fighting Bronx, but they still respond to the present day conditions of society, including the limitations of digital presence, self-visualization, and adapting to global cultural change. At this point, the concept of emergency art in Kazakhstani perspective shifts from urban marginalization to digital and institutionalized form of cultural expression. In practice, Kazakhstan has affected the world performance standards. The sporting focus of Kazakh breakers has increased the demand in the technical skills in global events. Their triumph is a manifestation of the fact that it does not matter the geographical location or cultural background of a person but, there is the commitment, imagination and connection to world networks. This growth does not refute the fundamental significance of the Bronx-centric narrative.

The success of Kazakhstan also leaves the issue of ownership and authenticity of cultures. When breaking is now done and perfected in settings with little or no relation to origins, who is in charge of its history? Should authenticity be determined by adherence to Bronx traditions or ability to become innovative in international structures? Such arguments reflect wider debates on hip-hop studies regarding cultural appropriation, hybridity and preservation of marginalized voices.

The shift in breaking, from street-based culture, into a sport, is one of the most remarkable aspects of cultural presence in the recent time. Breaking was firstly practiced as nonviolent alternative to violence and as a method of expression by the underprivileged youth in the Bronx. An early period of battles saw it improvised, spontaneous and focused on local identity. But in half a century breaking has become a sport whose rules and procedures are controlled, and with codified rules of judging, and international federations. The final stage of this change is an Olympic sport firstly tried at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires and officially declared in the Olympic Games in Paris 2024. The 2024 Paris Olympics marked breaking's recognition as a global sport, a progression from its initial showcase at the 1984 Los Angeles closing ceremony (Braeunig, 2025).

This change is an indication of greater tendencies in cultural globalization and institutionalization. Formalization also entails practices that started as subcultural resistance, and by virtue of being noticed, they tend to be formalized. Similar examples are found in skateboarding, surfing and climbing. Both started as a lifestyle or counterculture activity, and were

appropriated into the Olympic movement. The adoption of breaking is the continuation of this trend which provokes especially acute questions due to a strong bond with the spirit of resistance, improvisation, and authenticity that hip-hop was associated with.

There were a number of strategic factors behind the decision of the IOC to include breaking. First, the Olympic movement has been trying to win over younger viewers who are increasingly consuming culture using digital media as opposed to the traditional sports broadcasting. Second, breaking provides diversity in the world. Although it is based on the Bronx, it enjoys vibrant communities in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa, which presents it well in the representation of the IOC with an aim of demonstrating the global participation. Third, breaking unites athleticism with artistry, offering some form of spectacle that supplements conventional sports as well as other judged sports like gymnastics and figure skating.

The World DanceSport Federation (WDSF) took over the responsibility of ruling breaking to be prepared to include breaking in the Olympics. This move was debatable in the world of breaking, as WDSF did not have much historical connection to the hip-hop culture. The federation however came up with judging standards, international qualifying events and avenues through which national teams can be involved in Paris 2024. The system of judging that comes with WDSF is known as Trivium system that judges three areas that include: physical, artistic and interpretative quality. In every sphere, there are several judges, and the overall result defines the winner. It is supposed to achieve a balance between athletic performance, creativity,

and musicality so that breaking could be considered a sport as well as an art⁵.

Conclusion. The rise of breaking illustrates its evolution from the Bronx to the Olympics represents. A story of resistance, innovation, and reinvention. It reflects the ability of the marginalized groups to develop cultural forms that do not only exist but also transform the world culture. Its history demonstrates the strength of art as the way of survival, identity, and protest. Its integration shows how universal movement is as a language. Its institutionalization can be considered an example that depicts the opportunity and the threats of integrating culture into guidelines.

Breaking will make its future by how it will deal with the tension of authenticity and institutionalization. It is because, in order to remain in its indigenous and improvisational spirit, cultural origins, and welcoming ethos, breaking will not only become an ever-evolving sport, but it will also remain a cultural heritage. In its turn, it may fall victim to too much codification and

commodification, and it is then easy to lose the importance that made it meaningful in the first place.

Finally, the power of breaking in its universality. It is, at the same time, art and sport, tradition and innovation, local and global. Breaking has been performed in train stations, school gyms, international arenas, and Olympic stages – regardless, it has been a glory to the impracticability of the human feel and the strength of cultural groups. The fact that it has been introduced into the Olympics is a milestone. But the most important thing about it is that it has withstood the test of time and has continued to provoke freedom, agency and identification to the entire planet.

All in all, breaking as street art form demonstrates shift of the perception from local social marginalization to global institutionalization and adaptation, redefining its meaning across cultural, institutional and technological contexts.

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Эдмундс Вейзанс – научное руководство, методологическая поддержка и критическое редактирование статьи.

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