

sb

International magazine for sports,
leisure and recreational facilities

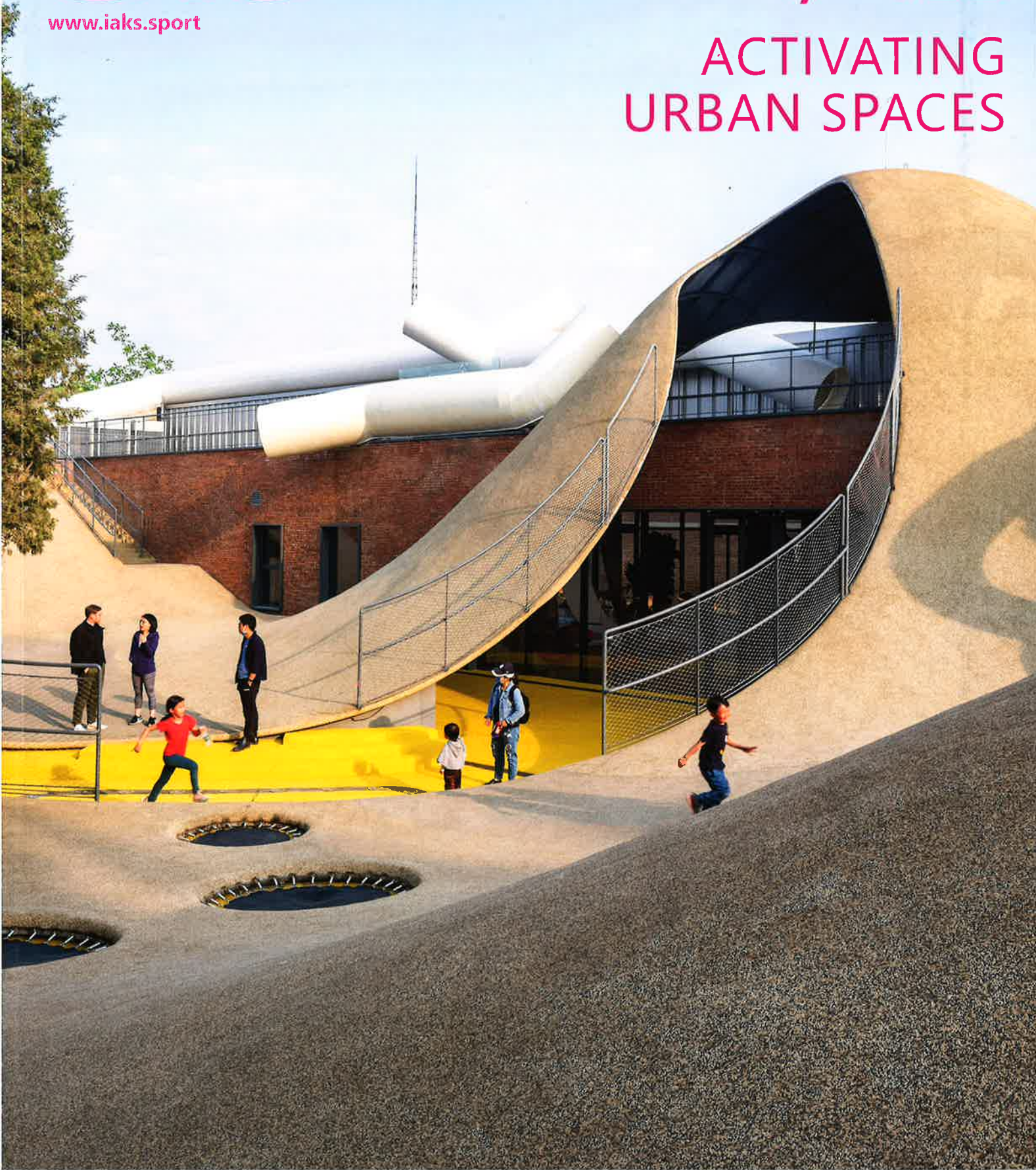
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ACTIVATING URBAN SPACES



Editorial



DEAR IAKS MEMBERS AND "SB" READERS,

This edition of "sb", dedicated to "Activating Urban Spaces", highlights one of the most interesting developments in the IAKS's support for active living. In previous editions we have often seen redevelopment initiatives that transform industrial areas, often along the waterfront, into a highly engaging urban public domain. Those of you who attended the recent study trip to Vancouver would have seen this with Westminster Pier Park, one of the eight visited venues.

This "sb" broadens the definition and development of urban public space. Two projects integrate existing transportation infrastructure into the active public realm. Jong-Am Square in South Korea inserts an indoor community facility under a transportation overpass. While this does not "tame" the overpass, it is an opportunistic and insightful development that brings relief, social opportunities, and community programs to a highly congested and chaotic urban environment. More importantly, it develops a meaningful precedent for what is undoubtedly an international problem.

The Terminal and Urban Park in Brazil integrates a large outdoor activity area with an aging transportation hub, and in the process enhances the surrounding historic area as well as increasing the overall public sense of safety and well-being.

Urban spaces often have a focus on youth, and in this edition we see several international examples. The Julia Reserve Youth Park in Australia is a 2-hectare open space that includes a skate precinct, parkour facilities, ping pong tables, kick-about areas, and multi-purpose courts.

The Children's Community Centre – The Playscape, in China, is a radically different approach. This project integrates a traditional learning facility with an extreme play area for very young children. This approach is incredibly creative and noteworthy in providing young children with an exciting and self-driven opportunity for innovative play.

The all-weather space in Liechtenstein is the third project within a school precinct and is a sharp

contrast to the Chinese one. In this similarly scaled project we see a more controlled design with the feel of a traditional outdoor sports courtyard. However, the very organized and formal design is set within an angular context, unlike the Chinese project where a very free-formed play area was set in a very rigid and architectural context. While the contrast in approach is striking, both projects work extremely well.

Another project bringing active living into the neighbourhood is the Varketili Park in Georgia. This development in a formerly empty and mis-used space in the middle of apartment blocks creates an opportunity for people of all ages to practice an active lifestyle and socialize outdoors.

The Skatepark in Nepal creates an opportunity for personal development, social interaction, and self confidence in a challenging geographic area, and illustrates the restorative value of sport for young people.

The development of temporary urban parks is one means of creating an enhanced relevance, either as a short-term installation, or as a placeholder for further development. The Brettspiel in Germany is an example of the former, re-envisioning, for a short term at least, a formal civic public square. This provides the community with a deeper appreciation of an existing public gathering place.

Reinventing and infusing the urban domain with increased opportunities for active interaction is shared by all the projects included in this edition of "sb". We trust readers will find their diversity in intent, delivery, and engagement to be innovative and community-building.

Conrad Boychuk

IAKS Honorary Member



ACTIVATING URBAN SPACES

NEWS

IAKS Study Trip to Greater Vancouver	4
IAKS ANZ at 2022 SPLASH!EXPO	6
Networking event in Melbourne	6
Innovative outdoor activity areas	7
Conrad Boychuk appointed IAKS Honorary Member	8
IAKS Honorary Member Prof. Dr Carlos Vera Guardia has died	8
IAKS Nordic Executive Board 2022-2023	9
IAKS LAC webinar on stadium design	9
New to the IAKS Network	10

GUEST AUTHOR ARTICLE

Slacklining infrastructure for the urban environment	12
Bernd Lohmüller	

PROJECTS

Julia Reserve Youth Park in Oran Park Town	16
JMD design	
Playscape at Children's Community Centre in Beijing	20
waa (we architech anonymous)	
Terminal and Urban Park in São Luís	24
Natureza Urbana	
Jong-am Square exercise and social room in Seoul	28
Simplex Architecture	
Skate park in Butwal	30
maier landschaftsarchitektur	
School yard and exercise space in Balzers	32
Planungsbüro Wegmüller	

Title: Playscape at Children's Community Centre in Beijing
Photo: Tian Fangfang

PROJECTS

Varketili Urban Park in Tbilisi	34
Artstudio Project	
"Brettspiel" temporary installation in Bochum	36
SOWATORINI Landschaft	

ADVERTORIALS

Polytan soccer courts in a class of their own	38
Polytan	
Urban sports products made in Germany	40
Bänfer Sportmanufaktur	
From the intern to the CCO	42
CONICA	
Second pumptrack by BT Project in Gniezno, Poland	44
BT Project	
New norm defines future shock pad and e-layer performance	46
Schmitz Foam Products	

sb 4/2022

ADVERTORIALS

Three new components for the base layer of flooring systems	48
Melos	
Close-to-home fitness opportunities	50
Playparc	

PROFESSIONALS & PROFILES

Optimisation through real-time data	51
Functionality, aesthetics and design	51
Hexagonal festival arena	52
All you need in sports	52
First-class athletics facility	53
MOBILPARC® - fitness trailer for all	53
World's first multi-storey skatepark	54
Myrtha teams up with Endless Surf	54
Company Index from A to Z	55
Imprint	64



Location
Balzers, Liechtenstein

Client / operator
Balzers municipality

Landscape architects
Planungsbüro Wegmüller AG
CH – 7250 Klosters
www.d-wegmueller.ch

Sports flooring
Realsport AG
CH – 8552 Felben-Wellhausen
www.realsport.ch

Author
Planungsbüro Wegmüller

Photos
Jonathan Burgy

Official opening
2022

Construction costs
EUR 780,000

BLUE NOTES

SCHOOL YARD AND EXERCISE SPACE IN BALZERS

In the municipality of Balzers in the Principality of Liechtenstein, a multifunctional all-weather space has been built in the immediate vicinity of the school building, meeting many different needs and providing exercise opportunities for everyone. The Wegmüller design office in Switzerland set itself the task of designing a public space that encourages pupils to get moving and become active – an approach that could set a precedent.

The existing red synthetic surface was in need of refurbishment. The planning office modelled its design on innovative projects from Denmark and concluded that an all-weather pitch certainly does not have to be rectangular or necessarily red in colour. The central approach of the design was to cater for a wide range of needs and to give the space a design as diversified as possible so that it can be enjoyed by pupils both in physical education lessons and during school breaks and leisure time.

Breaking the mould

The new all-weather playground in Balzers is directly linked to the school building. Its shape does not conform to any standard, but is freely designed. The primary goal of the redesign was to encourage physical activity as holistically as possible, based on the latest sports science findings. The PU-bonded synthetic surface is in different shades of blue and has different markings for different activities, some of which overlap. The

new, low-emission LED sports field lighting enables use in the evening as well. Users can switch on the light themselves by pressing a button until 10 pm at the latest.

The open space is not rectangular as usual, but adopts a free, polygonal shape that is framed by concrete elements and interlocks with green spaces dotted with trees. The design is committed to the principle of inclusion as the site is also accessible for people with a disability.

Short track crosses the space

In addition to three multi-sports courts for various ball games, the space integrates a running track, a bouldering

wall, a combination playground and other equipment, such as a ground-level trampoline and a slackline. Between the playing areas, there is space for activities such as running training, and balancing, jumping and coordination games.

The activities are deliberately designed in such a way that anyone can get started. A short running track runs diagonally across the space and is combined with a sand pit for long jumping. An amazing number of different activities can take place in a limited space. Today, the overall surface area for sport is even slightly smaller than before, but there are now far more opportunities for games, sports and fun.