

Space as a healing factor in social work? A practical dive into applied spatial and architectural research

Prof.in Dr.in Daniela Steenkamp, DHBW Baden-Württemberg

In this University Project my goal is to explore the relationship between Healing and Space in different social work contexts. The Project focuses especially on the transfer of the Healing Seven Model (Koppen & Vollmer 2022) to the practical use of the principles in community centers and other social work institutions. The project is structured as follows:

- ✦ **Lectures** about architectural psychology, sociology of space and Civil engineering, together with Prof. in Dr. in Carla Pütz (DHBW, Civil engineering) and Harald Maier (Architect)
- ✦ **Supervision of a Master's thesis:** "The Perception of Spatial Design and its Significance for the Subjective Well-Being of Adolescents in Residential Youth Care" (Schappacher 2026)
- ✦ **Educational Development Project:** Redevelopment of a former sports department store into a Community Center
- ✦ **Excursions** with students to Rehab Basel, Robert-Bosch Hospital Stuttgart and Children's Hospital Freiburg (trauma-informed spaces)
- ✦ **Publication (Steenkamp 2028):** "Social Work, Neurourbanism, Healing Architecture and Critical Design Practice in Public Space"

Theoretical Background

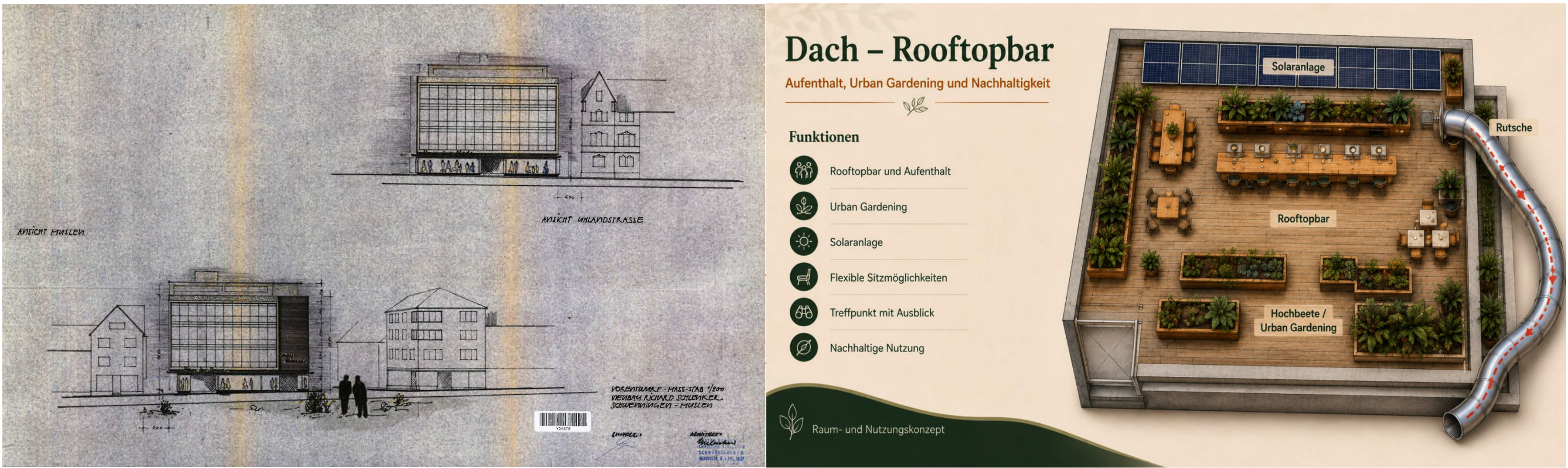
Neurourbanism is an interdisciplinary field that examines the effects of architecture and density of urban environments on human brain function, mental health and emotional well-being. (Humboldt-University 2022; Adli et al. 2017)

Healing Architecture is a science-based research and design discipline that examines the systematic interaction between people and their built environment, specifically focusing on how spatial structures influence human emotions, thinking, actions and physical recovery. (Vollmer 2018 for the Daimler-Benz Foundation)

Critical design practice in public spaces is an approach to urban design architecture that uses physical interventions to question, challenge and provoke debate about the political, social and economic forces shaping our cities. (Münster & Berg 2015)

Results of the Master's Thesis (Schappacher 2026)

- ✦ the spatial design in residential child and youth welfare facilities significantly contributes to the adolescents' subjective well-being by enabling the use, appropriation and co-creation of spaces
- ✦ Well-being cannot be understood independently of the socio-spatial context. Spatial conditions concretize theoretical concepts of well-being such as autonomy, social belonging, consideration of needs and resources
- ✦ Well-being in spaces depends on factors such as relationship quality, care conditions and individual lifeworlds, making single causal effects of spatial design difficult to empirically examine



THE HEALING-SEVEN MODEL

The Healing Seven (Koppen; Vollmer 2022)

Die heilenden Sieben The Healing Seven	Orientierung Orientation	Geräuschkulisse Soundscape	Power Points Power points
Geruchskulisse Odorscape	Rückzug und Privatheit Withdrawal and privacy	Aussicht und Weitsicht View and foresight	Menschliches Maß Human scale

FORMER SPORTS STORE



STUDENTS' IDEAS



Contact:
Prof. in Dr. in Daniela Steenkamp
Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg
Faculty of Social Work (Villingen-Schwenningen)
Study Program Social Work in Local Communities
Friedrich-Ebert Str. 30,
78064 Villingen-Schwenningen
+49 7720 3906-247
daniela.steenkamp@dhbw.de