

"Sozialraumorientierung"

Social space orientation –
the German way of community work?

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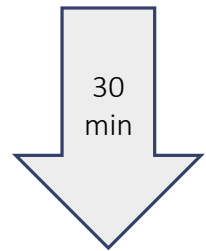
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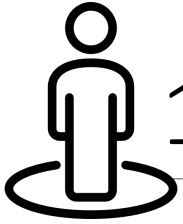
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„Sozialraumorientierung“

Social space orientation – the German way of community work?

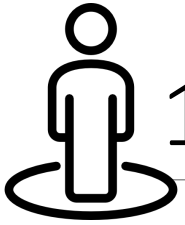
1. What is social space orientation? – Definitions and key characteristics
2. What historical and theoretical tradition is behind the specialist concept of social space orientation?
3. What does the specialist concept of social space orientation have to do with community work?
 4. What methodological principles are applied?
 5. What criticism is there of social space orientation?





1. What is social space orientation?

- An international discourse on social space orientation is still very much in its infancy. So far, social space orientation is limited to the German-speaking area (Germany, Austria, Switzerland).
- In the few English-language publications on "social space orientation" the following translations can be found (*cf. Frampton 2013; Baumann/ Mehrle 2018; Nuss 2021*):
 - Social space orientation
 - Spatially-oriented social management
 - Social space driven social work
 - Community orientation



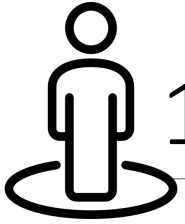
1. What is social space orientation?



Wolfgang Hinte (*1952)

Social space orientation (SSO) – german: Fachkonzept Sozialraumorientierung (SRO) - is the designation for a conceptual field of social work that does not focus on changing individuals through pedagogical measures (as would traditionally be the case) but on designing living environments and creating conditions that allow people to cope better and more autonomously with difficult life situations.

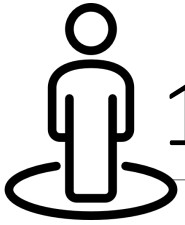
(cf. Hinte 2012)



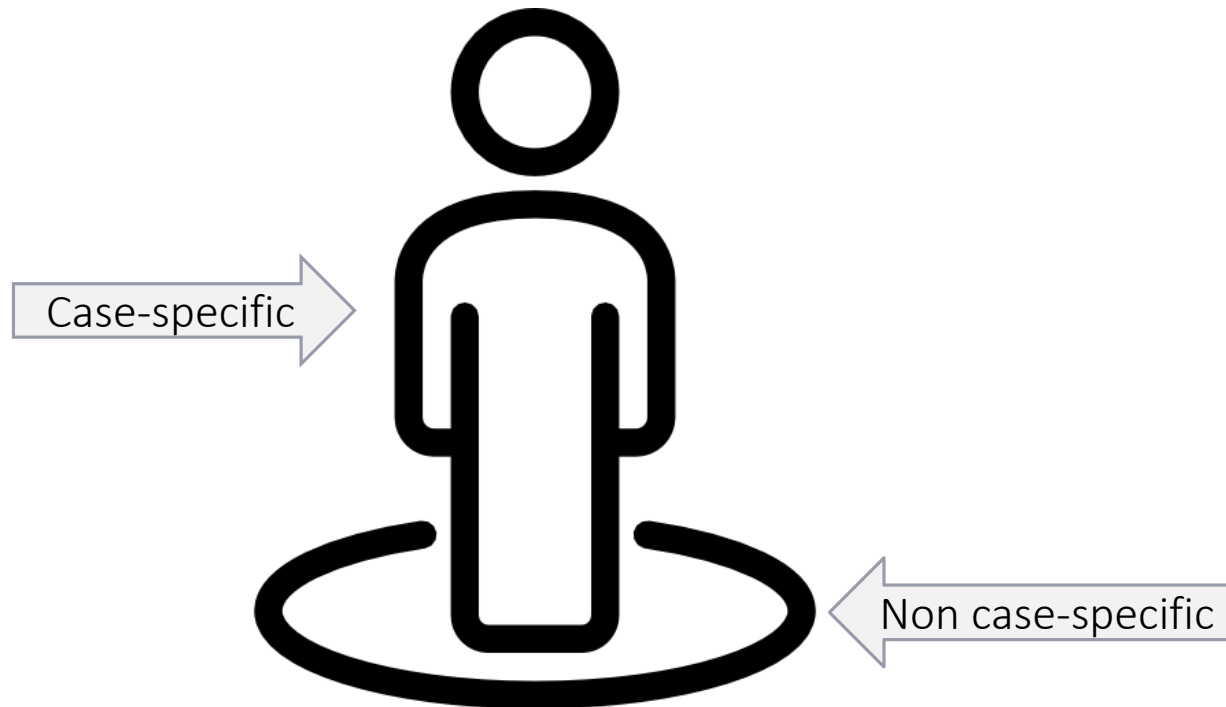
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The specialist concept of SSO is a “highly personal” (*Fehren/Hinte 2013*) concept and, at the same time, a concept with socio-ecological objectives that aim to change conditions in the social space.

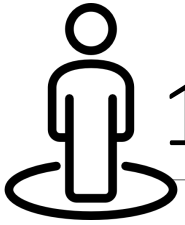
SSO stems from community work and ties this conceptual and methodological line of tradition with approaches based on progressive and critical education, and empowerment (*cf. Nuss 2021*).



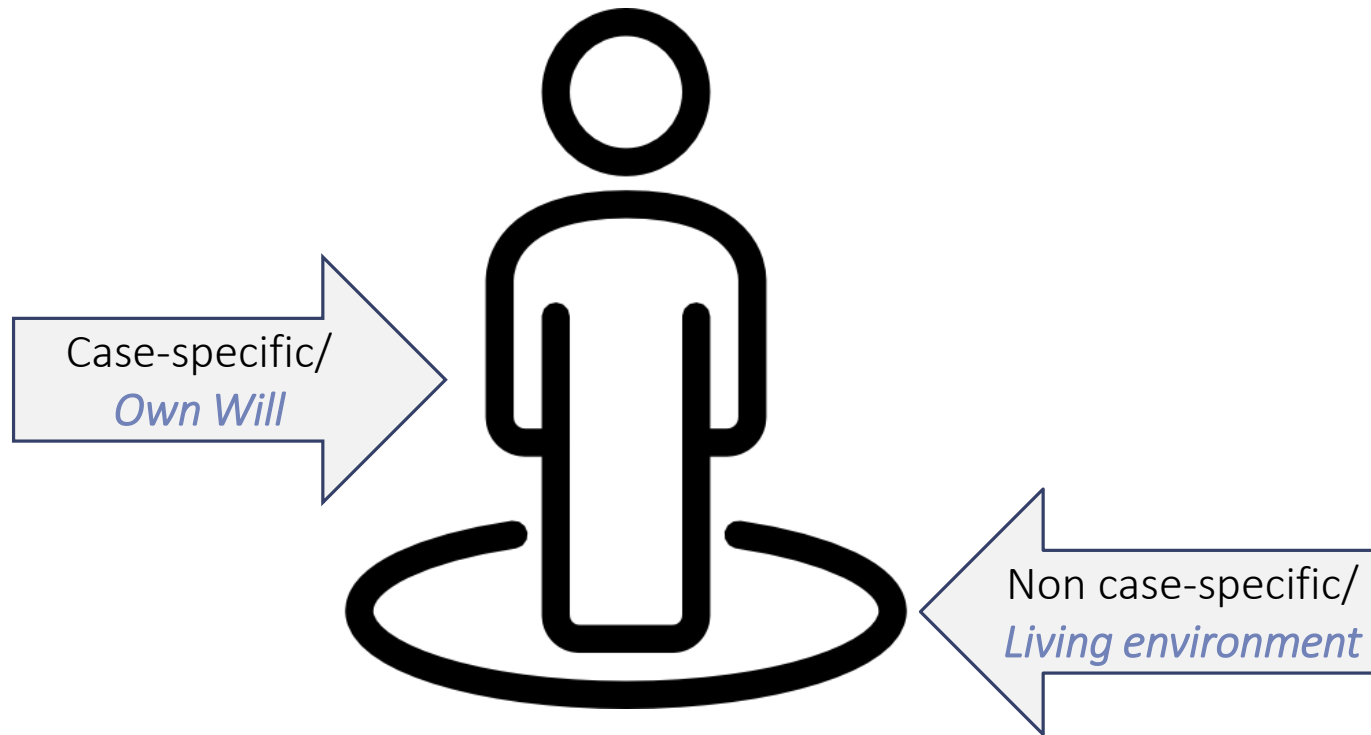
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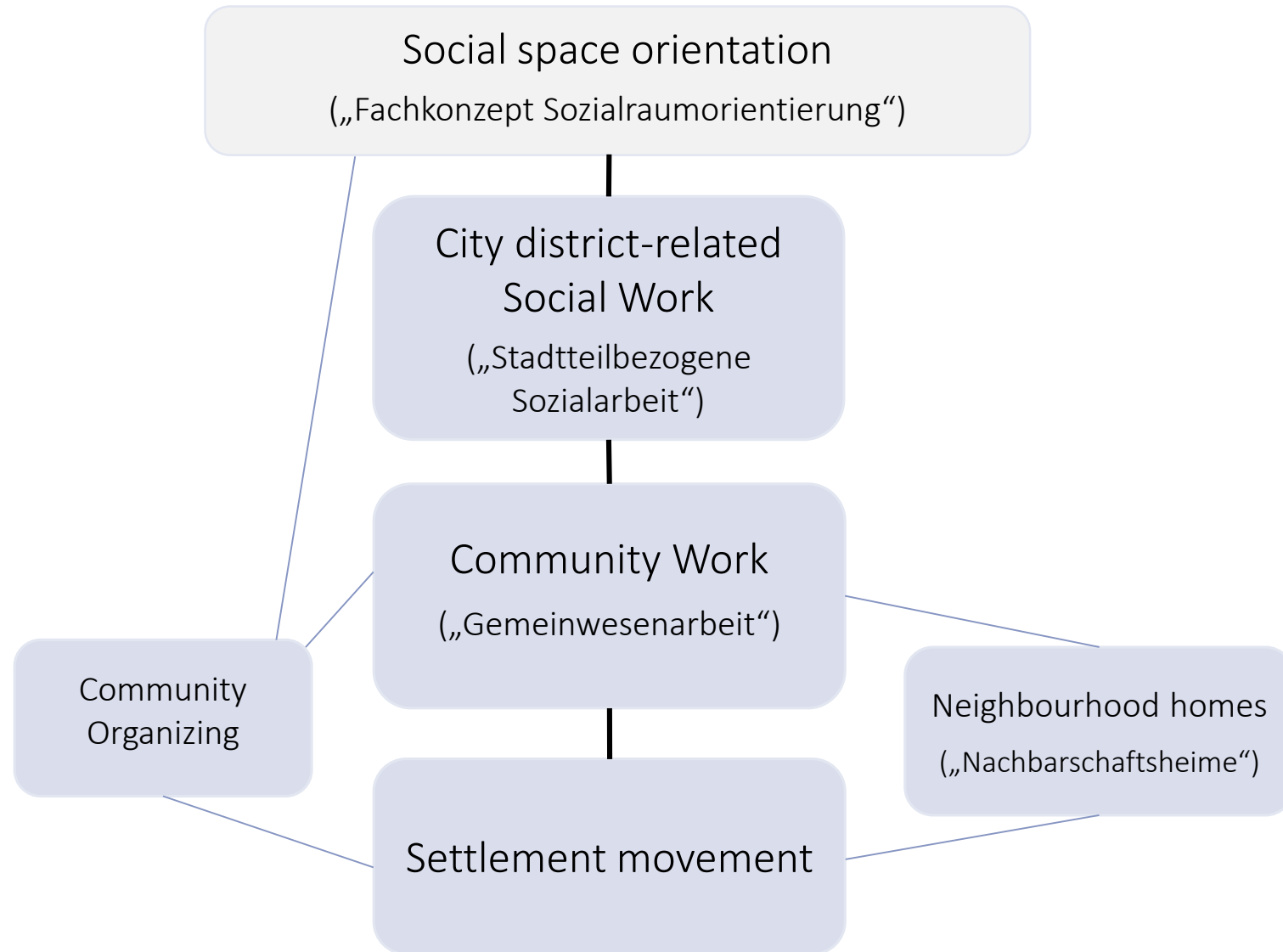
(cf. Bestmann 2014)



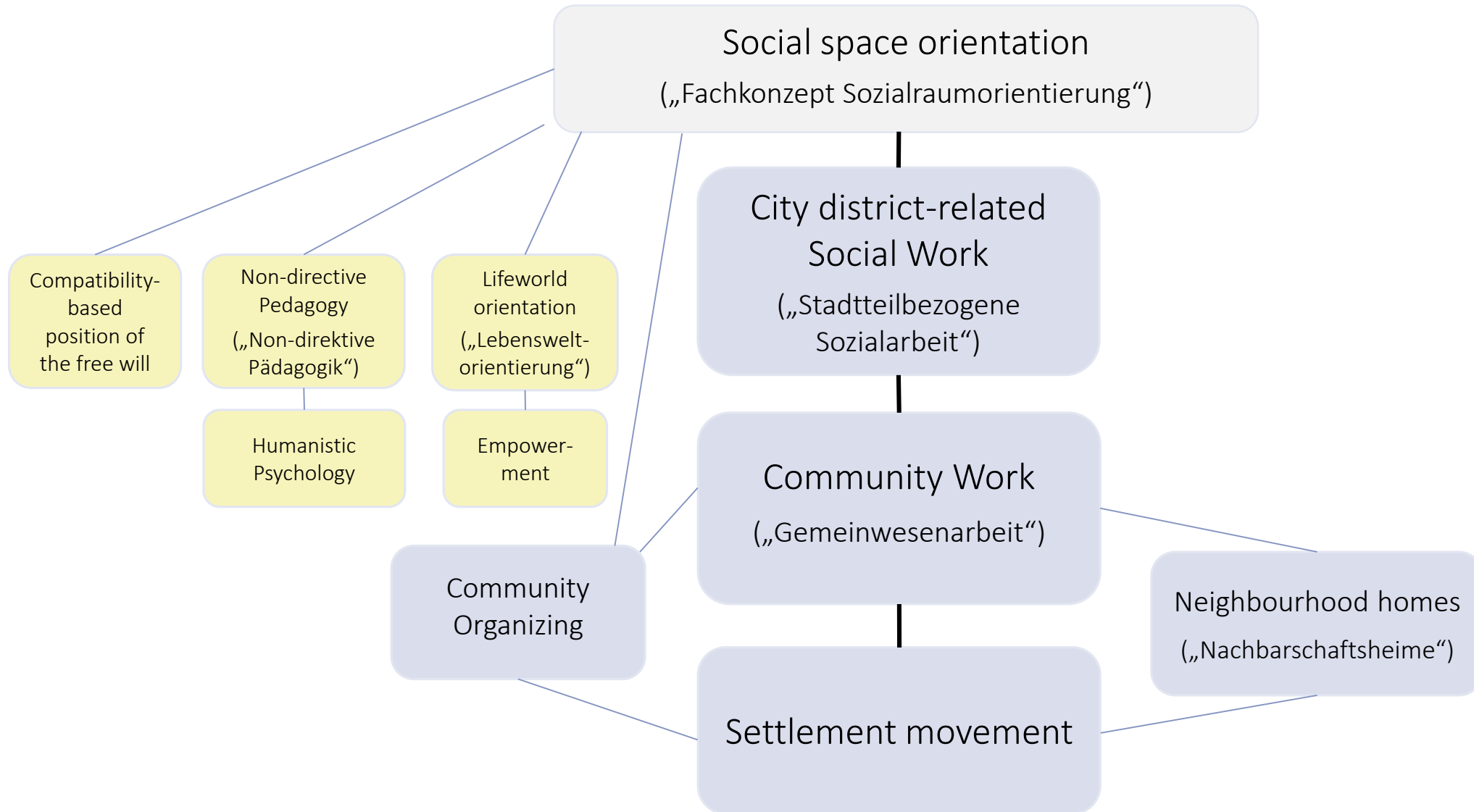
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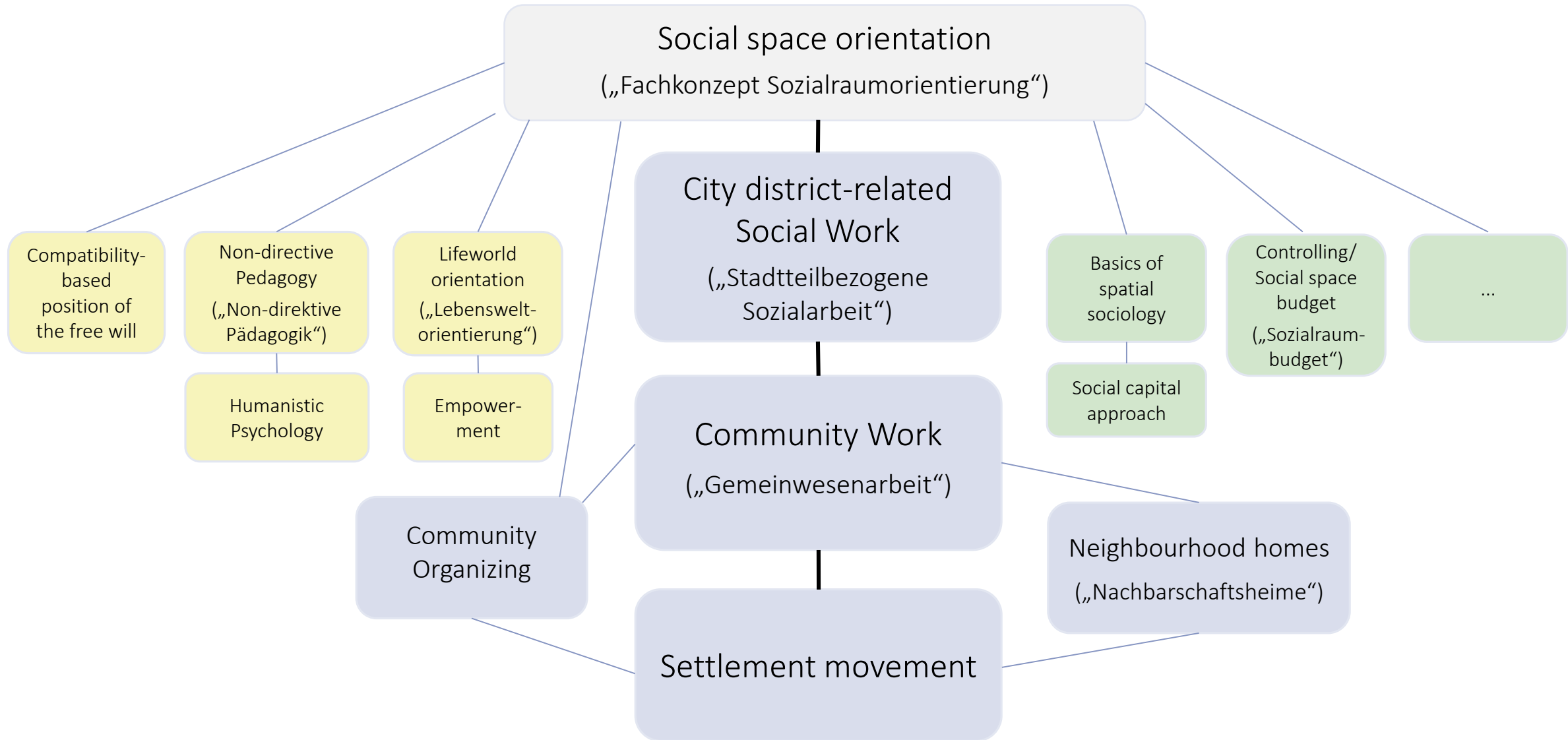
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- Social space orientation is to be defined neither as a theory nor as a method or work approach.
- It is a “specialist concept” that links major and fundamental theories with a methodological action practice > action science orientation.

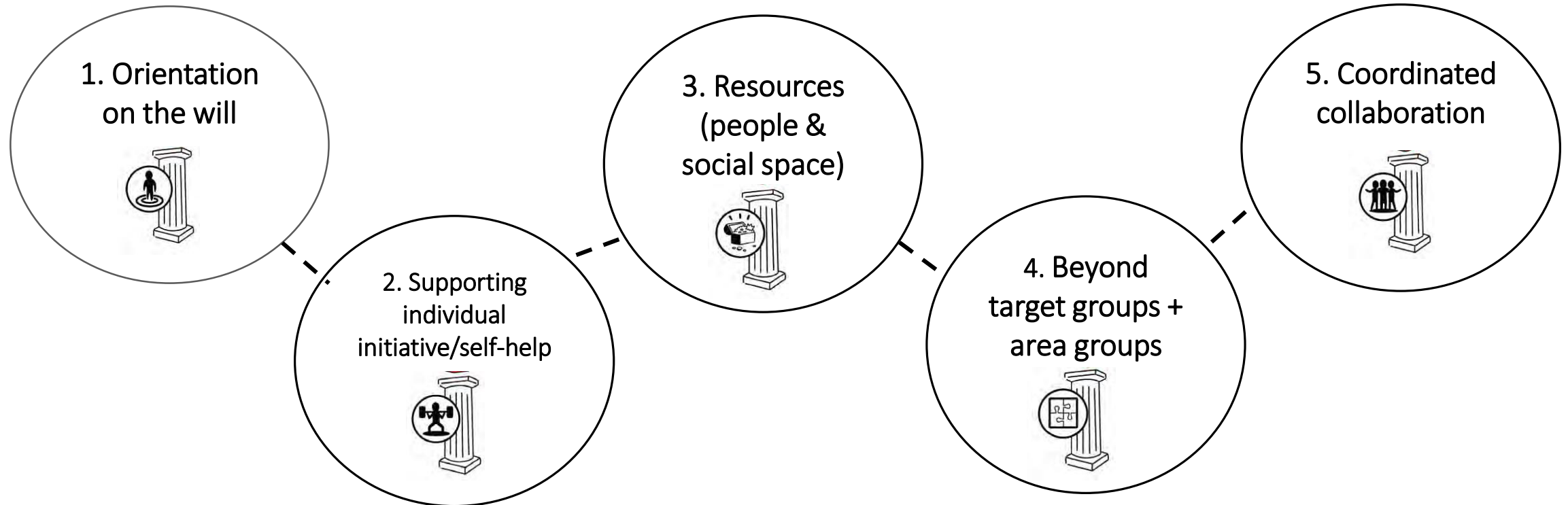
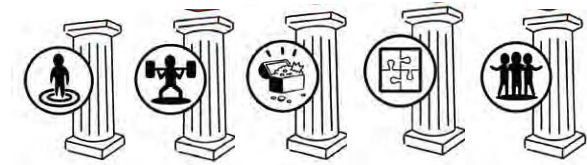
3. What does social space orientation have to do with community work?

- Social space orientation can be defined as an extension of, an addition to, and a further specification of community work (“Gemeinwesenarbeit - GWA”).
- This doesn't mean that community work no longer exists in Germany today: Fundamental approaches of community work have flowed into other concepts; however, it continues to exist as an independent “phenomenon” in social work (*cf. Nuss 2021, p. 158*).
- Community work emerges whenever we are talking about working beyond the individual case and the group, when a networking perspective is key, the city district, the quarter/ neighbourhood with its multifarious resources (*cf. ibid.*).

3. What does social space orientation have to do with community work?

- Hinte suggests defining community work (“Gemeinwesenarbeit”) as a field of social work in Germany (*cf. Hinte 2018a and 2018b*):
 - As a social work method that has long been considered it is no longer sustainable (*cf. as comprehensively covered in Galuske 2013 and others*).
 - As a work principle and conceptual guideline “Gemeinwesenarbeit” has been continued with the social space orientation.
 - As a field of social work, the community work tradition receives a systematic place within the wide subject of social work by being assigned a “field of work” (*cf. ibid.*).

4. What methodological principles are applied?

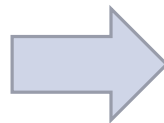


(cf. Fehren/ Hinte 2013; Fürst/ Hinte 2020; Hinte/ Treeß 2014; Noack 2015; Nuss 2017)



4. What methodological principles are applied?

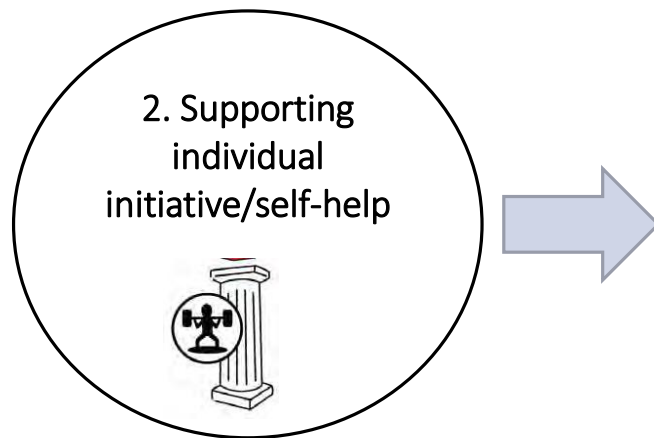
1. Orientation on the will



- The consistent focus on the *will of the people* is a central element of the work and forms the basis for all actions and further principles of the social space orientation.
- The will of the people is the “primary driving force” for activities for structuring one’s own life and the living space.
- The person is not the object of social work actions.
- Avoidance of a “pre-defined” desirable will where the professional expert already knows what’s right for the people (anti-expertocratic approach).



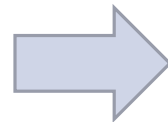
4. What methodological principles are applied?



- Activating the people's own strengths.
- Goal: "I did it myself" + inclusion in own life decisions and democratic participation in the community.
- Based on an attentive assessment of the people's will, a plan is jointly developed with them in which each participant can contribute to the success of the respective situation to the best individual extent possible.
- "What can I do for myself and my environment?"



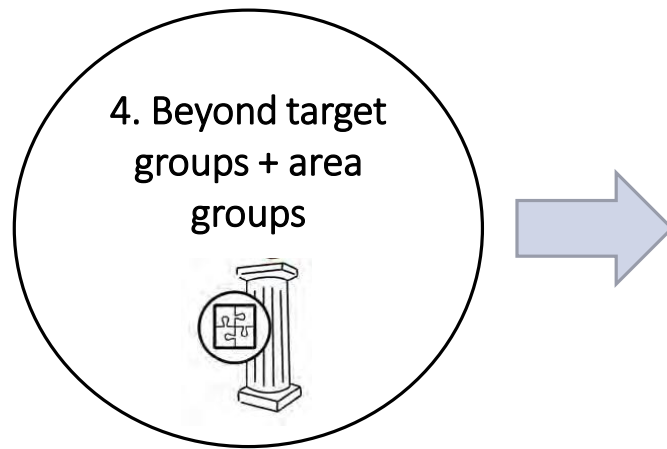
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- The available *resources a) of the people* and *b) the social space* are utilized.
- The people decide themselves what can be a resource and what not.
- Care must be taken that this “taking things into one’s own hands” is not interpreted as a socio-political opportunity to not create a balance. Recognizing resources does not remove the need to actively work on improving the external conditions!



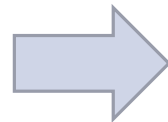
4. What methodological principles are applied?



- A “stereotyped view” (*Hinte 2008, p. 9*) of predefined target groups should be avoided.
- All of the people who live in a district – regardless of whether they are young or old, female or male, with or without a refugee background – are placed in the focus and actively involved.
- This kind of approach does not completely exclude target-group-specific actions but it avoids predefined stigmatization.
- Transdisciplinary work means networking beyond the individual social area: e.g., school policy, city planning, business promotion.



4. What methodological principles are applied?



- *Cooperation, coordination and networking* promotes a “holistic view” of the people’s living situation and the correlations of the social space.
- It’s about being willing to cooperate with all actors in the social space.
- Where possible, a rigid narrowing to the areas of responsibility of institutions should be surmounted.

5. What criticism is there of social space orientation?

➤ Noack did a summary and structured the criticism of the specialist concept SRO into five points (*cf. Noack 2015, pp. 162-192*):

1. Socio-political criticism
2. Administrative criticism
3. Social law criticism
4. Financing criticism
5. Methodological criticism
 - a) Criticism of the de-routinized planning and implementation of assistance
 - b) Criticism of the five guiding principles

Conclusion:

Working in an social space oriented manner,

⇒ does not mean changing people with a pedagogical intention

⇒ but, with the active participation of the people, creating lifeworlds and arrangements that will help them to move closer to their desired goals and thereby to a self-determined life.

Contact options:

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further questions!



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„Vielen Dank“ for your attention!

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