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#### **Professional Social Work in Divided Cities?**

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#### **Abstract**

The basic observation underlying the present chapter is the manifestation of a spatial segregation in Western cities since the last third of the 20th century. At the same time, it is not said that poverty is concentrated exclusively in specific disadvantaged residential areas, the so-called “hot spots”. Such an implication is in danger to reify residential groups as members of what is called a “new underclass” in specific city districts, as “cast offs” and the “losers of modernization”. In spatial terms: The social divide is misleadingly manifested only in territorial ways.

But this assumption is often found in current community-oriented social work. These assume that social problems need to be understood increasingly as spatial problems, making it necessary for social work to locate its services *within* the disadvantaged residential areas. In the following chapter, we propose that such a perspective is subject to fundamental constraints. Therefore we argue for an alternative perspective to prevent such a “containerizing”: It is necessary to critically examine the issues and position the actors involved in the organizations responsible for social work according to the outcome of such examinations.