

This response paper deals with the text *Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form* by author David Harvey. He focuses on the development of cities and criticises the absence of specific concepts in contemporary discussions. These concepts involve “modernization, modernity, postmodernity, and capitalist and industrial society” (231).

What I found interesting in Harvey’s text is his philosophical approach to the general perception of cities. He has the opinion that humankind regards cities as something different than it really is, if we would think about it in a logical and rational way. For example, he describes that cities were, and still are regarded as the “high point of the pollution and plundering of planet earth” (236). This implies that a city damages nature and the environment, but why should it generally do this? Although cities are created by humans, they are still part of this planet and of course the environment and are not necessarily damaging it. Harvey adds that urbanization is an ecological process and observes that this ecological process takes place not only around a city but also within it.

The mentioning of the term ‘process’ is another point in his notion I want to answer to.

Harvey elaborates on the relationship between the ‘process’ and the ‘thing’. The common belief is that a ‘thing’ has power over a ‘harmonious state’. This can be regarded as false, as I think that the process is able to solve problems, e.g. process means movement; movement means life somehow, and if something moves, it also evolves. This evolution leads to a progress; a development of ‘things’ (which are often something static). If the evolution of humankind did not take place in the past, it would not have been able to grow and become the fully developed humankind as it is nowadays. In the past, ‘process’ implied to “move on” and leave ‘things’ behind that were established and accepted in society to achieve, create and establish new ‘things’. It is debatable whether all of these new achievements in the past led to positive consequences, but without them, we as humankind would not be at the point of evolution as we are today.

Another original thought the author utters refers to the regard that community-building saves a city and its urbanization, which is false. It leads to the creation of groups which then leads to isolation and not a ‘community-city’. This assumption should be reconsidered and replaced by further developed measures to create a harmonic unity in which many people live in close proximity. The concepts of “modernization, modernity, postmodernity, and capitalist and industrial society” (231) need to be included in contemporary discussions concerning the social process and spatial form of cities.

To conclude, the process should also begin in our way of thinking: humankind should not regard cities as something negative. It is important to include cities in the environment, either in our thinking or in reality, to achieve beneficial development. Furthermore, to replan and design cities to become more “positive”, the general belief that community-building is helpful to achieve unity as a whole is outdated and should be reconsidered.

Works Cited:

Harvey, David. *Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form*. The City Reader 2016, pp. 230-237.