

Fist Response Paper:

David Harvey, "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form,"  
in *The City* (2016)

Is my City Responsible for my Personal Isolation?

A city can be a lonely place. Even though so many people inhabit this relatively small geographic area, alienation, loneliness and isolation are not foreign terms for a city dweller. Cities have tried to bring people together and ensure a lively and welcoming community for its inhabitants. Nonetheless, these projects have often times proved themselves to be counterproductive.

In the text of David Harvey "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form", Harvey argues that "many community-building projects are recipes for isolation" (Harvey 231). Cities create gated communities to ensure the unity and communion of one group, but hereby another group of people is excluded because they are not financially able to join this community (231). The unity might be created and protected in these gated neighborhoods but causes many other people to still stay isolated. However, is a city responsible for making his inhabitants feel alienated? Is not the individual responsible for making his own efforts towards communion? A city can try to give its inhabitants different options of creating social connections. For example: by creating public spaces that are open for everyone. A park,

a youth center or an art academy. The city is able to invest in such projects and make sure that these facilities are welcoming and intriguing for their inhabitants. However, the individual is still responsible of engaging with these offers. The city can prepare the table for its citizens but the citizens have to decide for themselves if they want to sit on this table. Many city dwellers suffer from loneliness, depression, anxiety and alienation. The city can try to help these individuals by innovating and establishing new projects, events and spaces. But still the individual has to decide if he wants to be part of this plan. The cultural background, language barrier, social class and financial situation of an individual can also play a major role in deciding if the individual wants to sit at the table or not. Therefore, it is important that the established projects are open for every group of people. The cultural background, language barrier, social class and financial situation of an individual should not be an obstacle for joining these newly created projects and spaces. If they do they will once again generate isolation instead of diminish it. If a city is trying to seriously fight the isolation of its people it should make sure that the only reason for isolation is the personal decision of an individual not the lack of possibilities and options.