Response Paper 1 – „Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form" by David Harvey

Out of the concepts about time and space David Harvey gives I think the assumption that cities aren't just things but are based on a lot of different things and are also shaped by time and place is the one that works the best for cities in general but specifically modern cities. For example, warehouse buildings in New York located in Brooklyn next to the East River were once used as factory buildings due to their location next to the river. Today there are just as well sought after as in the past but for other reasons. Those spaces are being transformed into living spaces because of the views they offer of Manhattan. It will be interesting to see what those spaces will be in the future, what will shape them and how they will fit into the lives of humans in the future. Due to the ever changing nature of cities, I think they can be seen rather as processes than as things as they are not something that can be finished. I think it is interesting to say that "space and time do not exist outside of process: process defines
space/time" (234) because in most cases things, for example the construction of a train station, are only seen in a time frame after the process is defined, rarely are things done the other way around. These time frames are mostly only considering the process from a start to a finish but to not consider the ever changing nature of urban spaces. If that would be considered a process would probably never be finished and it would be harder to allocate a specific time to something.

Harvey poses the question what community actually means. In a lot of cases community is seen as the solution for all the problems that cities have or people create in cities. Communities have the reputation of being the institution that fixes everything. There are communities that do city cleans once a month, communities that plant flowers in dull spaces, communities that paint murals on blank spaces, communities that organize street festivities to bring people together and so many more. The question I ask myself is if communities are the only way these things would happen or could they be part of the design of new cities? And if those "problems" communities solve are already part of city planning, what would people then do? Would they build communities for other issues that were not noticed before because people want to be a part of something and make a change?

The essence of a community can be a contradiction as communities are advertised as a way of being a part of something and bringing likeminded people together and this does happen in a community. But what communities can also do is isolate its members from other communities and other people by giving its member a specific thing to focus on, to live their lives within specific guidelines and turn a blind eye to other issues. A very extreme example for this can be some religious communities in which its members feel secure and do not even wish to experience other things. Communities can be both positive and negative and I agree with Harvey when he says that communities are essential to many forms of social struggle and have always been a way to mobilize the power of many people in one place. Communities have always been a part in humans lives and in the transformation of spaces. What are communities, a thing or a process?