Reading Response

Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form by David Harvey

Harvey argues that while the 20th century was *the* century of urbanization and that there has been a tremendous reorganization of the world's population, the factor "urban" is not widely considered in today's discussions and analyses anymore. Therefore, his text focuses on why the process of urbanization and the factor "urban" should take the center stage again, and he gives the following arguments, which run like a common thread throughout the text: Assuming that the trend of urban reorganization will indeed increase in the future, Harvey "warns" the reader that its side effects – such as environmental issues and racism – will, to a great degree, deteriorate. He also suggests we think of cities as the outcome of processes, not something that just "is" (he refers to this as "things"). While Harvey's passion to familiarize the reader with the importance of the city and the urban, it might have been a better idea to be preciser in his arguments, since his argumentation is tremendously abstract and difficult to grasp. He goes on to argue that social processes do not only make time/space but that they are constituted by time/space as well- a reciprocal action (or process), so to say. Eventually, he mentions how we think of urban and environment (/nature) today, as if they were completely separate.

While Harvey mentions that social mobilization and community can indeed be of use for (a) society, he also argues that racism, class devaluation and ethnic chauvinism originate from the deep desire for community, since it highly depends on praising the group you belong to while simultaneously degrading the "other" group. He already introduces these social issues that are intertwined with urbanization in the beginning, then becomes more specific during the text. In summary, he calls upon the reader to reflect one's former definition of the city and how cities and the urban are talked about in general.

Indeed, the distinction between the city and nature is a common one, and they don't necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. That might also be the point that is least talked about in today's discussions, thus using it as his last argument definitely is a smart move to make. Nonetheless, the text focuses on abstract ideas and throwing-around great names such as Einstein, Newton and Kant, thus giving more commonplace examples would have been helpful. Moreover, he mentions social struggles such as racism and ethnic chauvinism, yet only scratches the surface of the actual issue. Especially during a global pandemic, social injustices and the consequences of not being wealthy are such important topics, yet the text lacks in-depth engagement at times. Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic in 2019/20, it has become blatant that the wealthier you are, the less likely you are to be affected by the virus. Socially deprived districts have tremendously high incidence rates, and the German health system is yet to provide them with sufficient vaccination offers. For that reason, I argue that the factor urban is slowly but surely finding its place in the media coverage, although much more attention needs to be paid to it in the future.