

50 Follen Street : Cambridge, Mass :

U-D	REC-2156	ETD	3/8/56
Univ. of Pennsylvania			
Community planning			
28			

Dear Mr D'Arms :

Let me answer your questions about Dr Gurkind in the order you put them.

As to the need of such a survey as Dr Gurkind proposes to make, there is in my mind no doubt whatever. Much of the work we now do in other countries — or that their own technicians, trained in the West, do — is superficial, if not often harmful, because of our ignorance of native patterns, based on long experience. This is true alike in urban planning, in housing, and in agriculture. Moreover our own tradition in planning might well be enriched, as it already has been in architecture, by a comparative survey ~~of~~ of other traditions. Even a poor book in this field, like Violic's survey of Latin American housing and planning, is valuable and usable.

Is the task feasible? In any exhaustive way, No: to do a thorough survey would require the collective efforts of at least two generations of scholars. The work proposed would be in the nature of a swift reconnaissance, a taking of significant samples and specimens, a first aerial mapping of unknown land. But it would not be the worse for these limitations: it

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would rather provide the incentives and temptations to more detailed research. For such a task a single observer has special qualifications, just because he is free moving. That a committee or a corps of specialists would lack.

As to Dr Gutkind's qualifications. As far as preliminary acquaintance with the material goes, I know no one who is even half as well prepared. His books, *The Revolution of Environment*, *The World From the Air*, etc. are not impeccable in either judgment or method: but for all that they stand in a class by themselves: and it is an important class. I do not value him as a thinker as highly as did Karl Mannheim: but I respect Mannheim's judgment sufficiently to admit the possibility that his verdict may be more just than mine.

If Dr. Gutkind were starting this project from scratch, I would feel that his age was a decisive handicap. But what he wants to do is to reap, by a more concentrated effort, a lifetime's cultivation of this field: so the risk, with respect to his age, seems to me a tolerable one. Given the time, he has the industry, the perseverance, and the inner drive needed to carry the project through.

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The result I would anticipate will not be a monument of objective scholarship: it will be rather the kind of book that will open the eyes, rouse the imagination, widen the horizons of people working in a field that has been provincially restricted: not the least happy result of such a work is that it will tempt other people to look more deeply into this or that aspect of the environment and will prompt them to amplify or correct Dr Gutkind's work. But even those who react most strenuously against him will still be in his debt.

Let me sum up. Dr Gutkind is not perhaps the ideal man to do this job: yet the very fact that he has had the insight to propose it is no small qualification — all the greater because no competitors are in sight. As for the job itself, it seems to me so important that I would urge you to go ahead even if the only candidate were but half as well prepared as Dr Gutkind.

Faithfully yours
Lewis Mumford

P.S. I should perhaps add that my estimate is based: 1. on Dr Gutkind's English publications, 2. on correspondence since 1946: 3. on personal observations & conversations at the Wenner-gren Conference on Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth last June.