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Orientation to the Urbanarium, a Slide-Tape Production

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ORIENTATION TO THE URBANARIUM

a slide-tape production

by Darryl Degelman

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in Communication Design
at the College of Fine and Applied Arts
of the Rochester Institute of Technology

September 7, 1973

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thesis Committee

R. Roger Remington, Advisor

Gene DePrez, Director of Communications, RIT

Richard Farley, Associate Urban Designer,
Bureau of Planning (Rochester)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis was to create a slide-tape production that would define an educational organization called the Urbanarium. A copy of the script that I developed for the production is included under Appendix 1. This will serve as an orientation to the Urbanarium project for the reader of this Thesis Report.

Background and Development

The script for the slide-tape production is based on information obtained from the Urbanarium proposal which was primarily developed by Mr. Gene DePrez, Director of Communications, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Director of the Urbanarium Steering Committee for the six month planning period (July 1-December 31, 1973). The Steering Committee for the planning period is composed of several individuals from community and academic sectors. They are listed under Appendix 2.

During the six month planning period, members of the Steering Committee have been acting as advisors to the Planning Committee, which is composed of R.I.T. faculty and students. They are listed under Appendix 3.

Much of my thesis involvement is based on my experiences as a member of the Planning Committee. I was involved in the creation of the organizational plan that would fit the function of the Urbanarium. One of the initial responsibilities of the Planning Committee was to develop a concrete definition of the Urbanarium. Each member wrote several definitions which were listed with those of the other committee members (Appendix 4).

After an analysis of the definitions, we collaborated and developed a detailed description of the Urbanarium and its functions (Appendix 5).

I also worked with the Planning Committee in activities such as reviewing prototype programs, considering possible room space for the Urbanarium, reviewing potential consultants, and preparing materials for newsletters.

The primary responsibility of the Planning Committee has been to develop Work Plan I, an organizational plan for the first twelve months operation of the Urbanarium. Work Plan I has been segmented into the following areas:

1. Community Need Analysis
2. Definition of Year One Programs
3. Methodologies
4. Organizational Plan
5. Final Review and Analysis

A comprehensive chart was developed by the Planning Committee to plot the planned sequence. The chart illustrates the relationship between proposed activities and groups (Appendix 6).

As illustrated in Work Plan I, a sequence of interface points have been planned between the Steering Committee and the Planning Committee to discuss key policy matters. August 3, 1973, was the first meeting between these groups. The slide-tape program was initially shown during this meeting. Except for Mr. DePrez, members of the Steering Committee had only a generalized concept of the Urbanarium, and they were the primary audience. The program was also designed so that it could be used after this meeting to inform the general public of the Urbanarium intent. Future Urbanarium consultants were also a likely audience for the program.

A challenge existed in the fact that the slide-tape program was primarily developed during the first month of the planning period. Although I felt that I understood the objectives of the Urbanarium, many of the specific policies of the organization were to be decided later in the planning period.

Objectives

My main objective in the design of the production was to communicate the basic intent of the Urbanarium which is to develop a better society through the co-operation of the academic and community sectors. I also wanted the Steering Committee to see a flexible structure that they could influence through their participation. The program was to act as a catalyst in generating interest, discussion and involvement in the Urbanarium.

The slide-tape program functioned as a tool in the development of the definition of the Urbanarium, although it was not designed for that purpose. It aided the Planning Committee and the Steering Committee in perceiving the Urbanarium concept from an audio-visual perspective. It also serves as a model for future Urbanarium methodologies.

Audience Reaction

After the initial showing of the production a critical question was raised by several members of the Steering Committee:

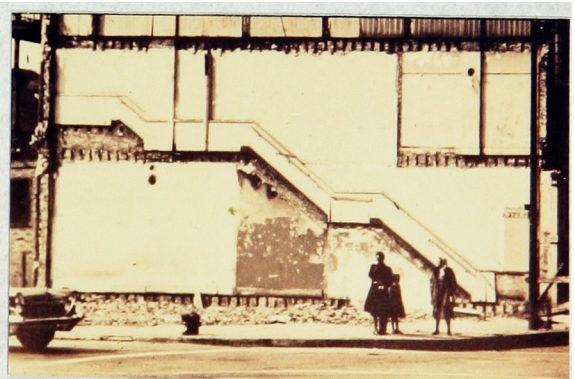
"Do the images suggest too much emphasis on the inner city and not enough on suburban and rural community concerns"?

Revisions

I concluded that several images from the production were influential in that perception (Illustration 1). A predominance of images emphasizing minority social problems, and the frequent use of urban images were instrumental in the audience's interpretation. Mr. Roger Remington, Director of Urbanarium Planning, brought to my attention the possibility that the metal fences in several of the images may also be interpreted as an over-emphasis on the urban environment.

It should be noted that several committee members have expressed some doubt for the name, "Urbanarium", because of its apparent urban emphasis. Therefore, it

ILLUSTRATION 1.



is very important for the imagery representing the Urbanarium to express a broader regional involvement. In an effort to communicate this broader scope, different images were chosen because they represent problems facing the suburban and rural communities as well as the urban environment (Illustration 2).

The question that was raised by the Steering Committee also lead me to develop a series of symbols that were used to represent some of the Urbanarium involvements (Illustration 3). The uplifting, or education, of Man is juxtaposed with symbols of housing, transportation, the environment, and the business-industrial sector. Two formations of the symbols were used in the production. Their simplicity of style enables them to be used in variable structures. The circle motif within each symbol is intended to create a continuity of design. The symbols are to be read as separate but related images.

It should be noted that these symbols were not necessarily designed as permanent marks that would be used for Urbanarium identification in the future. It had been decided earlier that the organization

ILLUSTRATION 2.

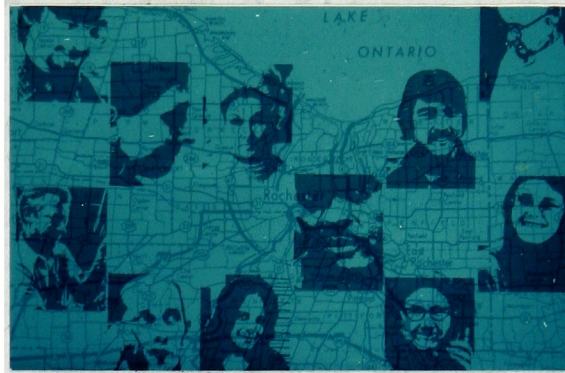


ILLUSTRATION 3.



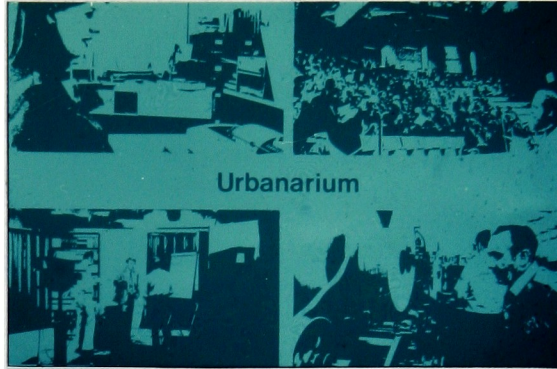
would wait to establish a permanent mark and logo. This decision is based on a philosophy of flexibility, particularly during the planning period. A low profile was to be maintained throughout the planning phase. This lack of specific identity is one of the things that made the production a difficult task. Little, if any, visual material was available to draw upon. Transparencies were available of some of the prototype programs, but they would have been out of context with the media used in the remainder of the production.

Methodologies

A. Concept and Imagery

The concepts had to be presented from hypothetical positions. It was for this reason that I decided to use images from magazines, newspapers and catalogs that represented possible Urbanarium activities. My use of high contrast images helped to abstract the specific identification of individuals or places (Illustration 4).

ILLUSTRATION 4.



Most of the imagery was copied with ortho film, then Color Key overlays were made from the negatives. Colored gels were also placed in combination with the negatives because of their intense color.

This "generalized approach" was an attempt to evoke a participatory affect on the audience. This is important because the Urbanarium was not a refined package when it was presented to the Steering Committee. The Planning Committee did not want the Steering Committee to think that any policies had been rigidly set. Many decisions concerning the Urbanarium were to be made in the future, and hopefully, the expertise of the Steering Committee members would be stimulated by the slide-tape program. Even the wording of the program script includes phrases such as, "It has been proposed that...", and "The Program Council is expected to...". These phrases imply a somewhat open policy that may encourage suggestions.

Although the slide-tape production is primarily a solution to a conceptual problem, I did experiment with effects which were intended to create additional visual interest. These effects were based on the use

of a dissolve unit connected with two slide projectors that were focused on the same area of the screen. Although this is a commonly used structure in slide-tape production, I intended to dramatize the dissolve effect by occasionally placing positives and negatives of the same image so that one dissolves into the other. This technique adds variety and an interesting kinetic effect (Illustration 5).

Another technique involved dissolving a blue Color Key overlay into a copy of the same image in red. An afterimage visual effect results when the red image is subdued with a red gel that is attached to the slide mount (Illustration 6).

B. Media Rationale

Slide-tape was chosen as the media for this production for several reasons but flexibility was the primary consideration. The evolving nature of the Urbanarium required that the media have the capability of change. Revisions of both sight and sound were expected and slide-tape has the versatility that is

ILLUSTRATION 5.

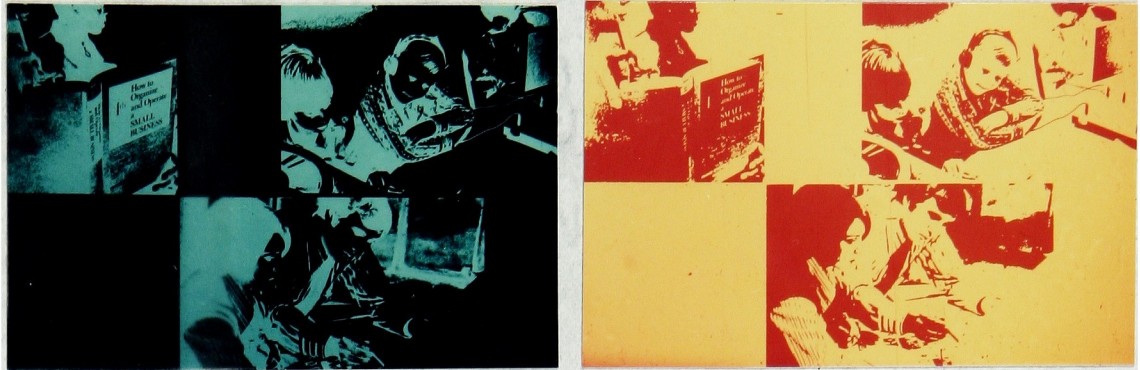
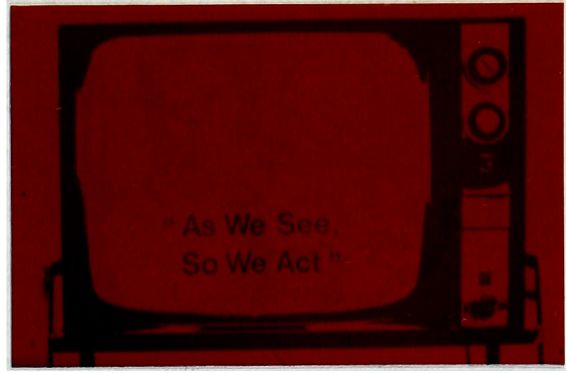


ILLUSTRATION 6.



not inherent in media such as television and motion picture.

Availability of materials and equipment also enabled the production to develop over a relatively short period of time.

a. Production Costs

Slide-tape offers an economical means of producing an audio-visual product. The eight minute Urbanarium program cost less than \$100 to produce:

narration.....	\$ 35.00
recording tape.....	8.00
ortho film.....	7.00
slide mounts.....	8.00
Color Key.....	5.00
colored gels.....	13.00
slide trays (2).....	7.00
graphic materials including transfer type.....	<u>5.00</u>
	\$ 88.00

C. Music

Music is important in setting the mood of the production. The visual montage introduction which presents the various concerns of the Urbanarium is accompanied by a dramatic buildup of drums and horns from a selection called, "Entrance Into Sogo", which is from the sound track of the motion picture, Barbarella. A brief narrative introduction to the Urbanarium follows and the remainder of the production is accompanied with two selections from an album titled, Roger Eckers. "Turn On" and "Use Me" contain soft flute sounds that create an easy listening low key contrast to the introduction.

D. Narration

Dave Jones, the narrator of the production, also assisted in maintaining the low profile identification of the Urbanarium. His direct style of voice was preferred to a more theatrical type.

After the initial showing of the production,

a member of the Steering Committee suggested that two different narrators (perhaps a man and a woman) would have given the program a better pacing and more variety. I believe that it may have become confusing with two different voices. Perhaps a break in the narration would have helped the pacing.

Conclusions

In developing this thesis I have been practicing what the Urbanarium advocates- problem solving through a team effort. My thesis evolved from the cooperation of several individuals. The experience of working with people from the academic and community sectors has enabled me to see the importance of collaboration in solving the complex problems of contemporary society.

I have also seen how designers can become involved in meeting a variety of communication needs. My work went beyond the manipulation of media. As a member of the Urbanarium Planning Committee, I was able to participate in a decision making process that was a meaningful exercise in communication design.

APPENDIX

PAGE NO.

1. Script of Slide-Tape Production.....
2. Urbanarium Steering Committee Members.....
3. Urbanarium Planning Committee Members.....
4. Planning Committee's Definitions of
the Urbanarium.....
5. Planning Committee's Comprehensive
Definition of the Urbanarium.....
6. Work Plan I Chart.....

APPENDIX

1. Script for Urbanarium Slide-Tape Production

Our communities face many complex issues in a rapidly changing society. Human needs must be met through the use of knowledge and experience in devising and choosing alternative courses of action. The people of these communities must have the opportunity for meaningful educational experiences.

An opportunity for this type of interaction is being made available through an educational concept called the Urbanarium. Funded by the Kellogg Foundation and operated as a part of the Rochester Institute of Technology, the Urbanarium provides the people of the greater Rochester community an opportunity to study community issues and explore future options. The Urbanarium intends to strengthen the communication between educational institutions and the community. As sponsor of the Urbanarium, the Rochester Institute of Technology will expand its rapport with other educational institutions and citizen groups that are involved in community issues such as housing, transportation, ecology,

APPENDIX

1. Script (CONTINUED)

city and regional planning, and health care. Issues will be explored from many points of view so that the alternatives are properly understood.

Students will have the opportunity to participate in field-work projects, community and agency internships, and work-study programs. They will become involved with planners, service groups, the business sector, and citizens to study the nature of social problems and the action that must be taken effect change. Through complementary and continuing education, Rochester area schools can expand curricula to meet the needs of the students and faculty who are interested in participation in the Urbanarium.

The results of this cooperative effort will be made available to the general public through various media. Television programs, instructional films, exhibits, conferences, simulation gaming, publications, and reports will be used to create a broad-based civic awareness.

APPENDIX

1. Script (CONTINUED)

The Urbanarium will serve as a focal point where individuals within a number of sectors of metropolitan Rochester and the academic community can interrelate with one another, and where cross-fertilization among sectors can occur. At the same time, its operation will yield national implications in that the Urbanarium will provide other metropolitan communities, after adequate evaluation, with models which can be utilized to meet their unique community problems.

It has been proposed that the Urbanarium function through the colleges and services of the Rochester Institute of Technology, with coordination from the project staff and with cooperation from area colleges. Appropriate needs and priorities are expected to be identified by a Community Council that would include several RIT people, but primarily consist of individuals from various sectors to be served. For example, individuals may be selected from areas such as professional,

APPENDIX

1. Script (CONTINUED)

technical and citizen organizations. Another group, the Program Council, is expected to determine the appropriate project activities relative to the needs and priorities. The Program Council matches the community education needs identified by the Community Council to opportunities for student and faculty involvement in developing programs to meet those needs. The Program Council will include RIT faculty, staff and students.

The activities that are proposed will be carried out by Program Development Teams, consisting of RIT faculty, students, Urbanarium staff and resource people from the community.

To visualize the concept of the Urbanarium a series of prototype programming has been attempted. The success of these programs has proven the potential of the Urbanarium. One of these programs titled, Dreams, explored the potential which planning offers to an urban situation. Several local organizations collaborated in this project which included a series of events and supporting exhibitions.

APPENDIX

1. Script (CONTINUED)

Another program titled, Rap and Produce, is an annual meeting of citizens from the inner-city and people from government, education, employment, housing and social services. They discuss local problems and develop a plan to remedy them.

The medium of television was used in another program that ~~delt~~ with people from different socio-economic backgrounds. A faculty member of a local college wrote and narrated this program titled, As We See, So We Act.

Several times urban simulation gaming has been offered as a prototype. Students from two area colleges jointly played the game, "Metropolis", as part of their regular courses. A major simulation gaming workshop was also conducted for area educators, trainers, and community organizers. It was jointly designed and offered by the Environmental Laboratory of the University of Michigan, and RIT.

APPENDIX

1. Script (CONTINUED)

Design students from RIT created an exhibit that explored the rationale for mass transit in Rochester. The project examined solutions in other cities and explained the proposed plan for this area. Its impact was felt as it was displayed locally and in the lobby of the Department of Transportation building in Washington, D.C.

These examples represent some of the potential of the Urbanarium, as a unique educational concept. Several of these activities have been completed and evaluated; others are under way or are being planned at this time. All of these programs focus on the future growth of the metropolitan Rochester area, with an emphasis on learning and evaluating alternatives. The Urbanarium is an imaginative concept that can bring a significant new force for communication and meaningful action in the community.

APPENDIX

2. Urbanarium Steering Committee Members

Mr. Donald Bruening	Professor, RIT School of Photographic Arts & Sciences
Dr. Alex Cameron	Executive Director Rochester Area Colleges, Inc.
Dr. Stuart Denslow	Executive Director Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Board
Mr. Gene DePrez	Director of Communications RIT
Mr. Richard Eisenhart	President R.H. Eisenhart, Inc. Trustee, RIT
Mr. Frederick Gardner	Director Division of General Education College of Continuing Ed., RIT
Dr. Edward Johnson	Dean College of Business, RIT
Mrs. Geneva Johnson	Associate Executive Director United Community Chest, Inc.
Dr. Robert Koch	Dean University College University of Rochester
Mr. Franz Seischab	Professor, RIT College of Science
Mr. Stanley Skinner	Executive Director North East Area Development Corp.
Mr. Robert Fassanella	Student, RIT

APPENDIX

3. Urbanarium Planning Committee Members

Mr. Roger Remington	Professor and Chairman, RIT Dept. of Communication Design College of Fine and Applied Arts
Mr. Ronald Hilton	Professor and Academic Administrator, RIT Metropolitan Center
Mr. John Bozza	Professor, RIT Department of Criminal Justice College of General Studies
Mr. Lon Foster	Graduate Student, RIT Dept. of Communication Design College of Fine and Applied Arts
Mr. Darryl Degelman	Graduate Student, RIT Dept. of Communication Design College of Fine and Applied Arts

APPENDIX

4. Planning Committee's Definitions of
the Urbanarium

An Urbanarium is:

an educational research and development center...
a community resource center...
a bridge between school and community...
a union of civic ideas, facts and feelings...
a community center for continuing education...
a Tri-borough bridge linking resources of
community, citizenry and area colleges...
a laboratory for students, faculty, and citizens..
a handbook of human resources of the community's
institutions...
a convener of an increasingly informed populace...
a conveyor...
a coming-together of the academic, business and
citizen communities...
the mutual sharing of ideas, questions, problems
and solutions relating the urban environment in
an educational context...
an educational process encompassing the divergent
and common interests of the urban citizenry...
a new concept in community interaction...
a center...
the key to a city...
the dynamic regional resource center...
a cooperative organization with unique process
and program-generating capabilities...
an action communications center...
a dynamic communications center with unique
process and program-generating capabilities...

(CONTINUED)

APPENDIX

4. Planning Committee's Definitions of
the Urbanarium

(CONTINUED)

... that will:

- study the community structure and recommend future courses of action.
- coordinate information on civic issues and make it visible.
- develop opportunities for the people of the area to interact in meaningful learning experiences.
- generate interest and involvement in the social responsibilities of the public.
- determine and explore alternative approaches to problems identified by the community.
- facilitate the development of that citizenry into one sufficiently informed, sensitized competent to address the problems of the community.
- provide a mode for rational communications with respect to the problems of living in a metropolitan environment.
- provide an opportunity to explore means of mitigating these problems.
- increase the community's ability to confront issues germane to the improvement of the quality of the life of its citizens.
- motivate rational community involvement in focusing on areas of human concern.
- locate avenues leading to the solution of present and future problems of human interaction in an urban context.
- help to bridge the gap between professionals and pre-professionals.
- expand the consciousness of the community to the implications of not dealing with a problem.

(CONTINUED)

APPENDIX

4. Planning Committee's Definitions of
the Urbanarium

(CONTINUED)

...that will:

- broaden understanding, expand the information available and facilitate more cooperative significant action for all those in the Rochester urban society who share the responsibility for improving the quality of life there.
- focus cooperative educational and community means on important human issues.
- utilize educational and community expertise in a synthesis process to improve the quality of life in the greater Rochester area.
- focus educational and community resources on identifiable regional needs and generate functional packages to meet these needs.

APPENDIX

5. Planning Committee's Comprehensive Definition of the Urbanarium

The Urbanarium is a new concept in community interaction for the Greater Rochester Area. As a learning and resource center, the Urbanarium brings together the energies and competencies of the academic and citizen communities to facilitate and motivate constructive community involvement. With the overall goal of improving the quality of life, it is the objective of the Urbanarium to enhance the development of an informed, sensitized and competent citizenry with the ability to focus on and confront the problem areas of human concern it may identify.

APPENDIX

6. Work Plan I Chart

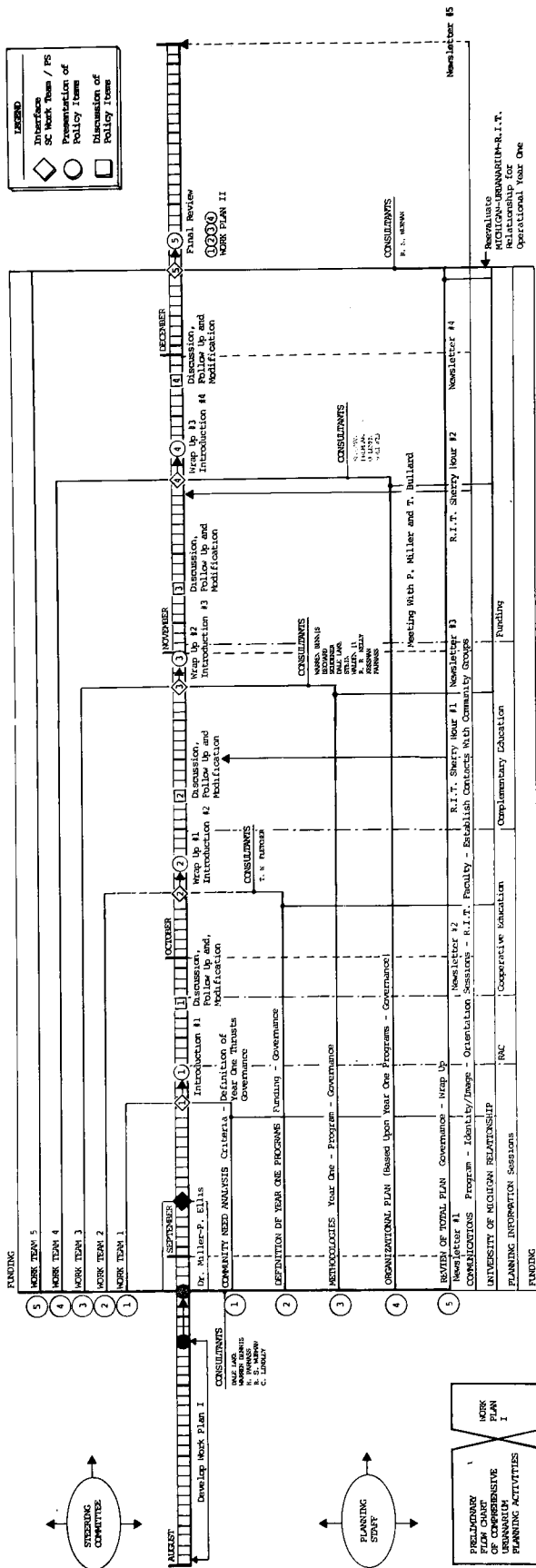


IMAGE SOURCES

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