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'Disney synergy' in Anaheim, California: The political economy of "The Mighty Ducks"

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Abstract

Synergy occurs when a company recirculates, recycles, repackages, and redeploys an intellectual property that it already owns. While this is a strategy that all media corporations try to utilize, Disney has come to represent the quintessential example of how synergy can be utilized in the media industry. This article analyzes how Disney used synergy to make The Mighty Ducks franchise a success and how their efforts impacted upon the City of Anaheim, California. Using document analysis and personal interviews, the research cited in this article shows why Disney invested in the Angels baseball team and created the Mighty Ducks hockey team. This was a strategy to increase Disneyland's profitability by building up the City of Anaheim, where Disneyland is located. They utilized the films *Angels in the Outfield* (1994) and *The Mighty Ducks* (1992), as well as their acquisition of ABC and ESPN, to cross promote their products across a variety of media. In the end, Anaheim is the city it is today because of Disney. This raises an important question for critical communication researchers. How are the business strategies of the major media networks influencing the urban planning strategies of our communities? The first *Mighty Ducks* film paved the way for the brand to become popular with kids. The creation of an actual Mighty Ducks hockey team helped the City of Anaheim develop, and it also served the company for synergistic purposes. While the second and third films combined didn't make as much as the first film alone, having the team and the movies allowed for much cross-promotion. With the addition of a Saturday morning cartoon show, animated movies, and an extensive line of merchandise, *The Mighty Ducks* (1992), as a film and as a brand, became a prime example of 'Disney synergy' in action.

Synergy occurs when a company recirculates, recycles, repackages, and redeploys an intellectual property that it already owns. This strategy involves "transforming intellectual properties into 'brand names' with product lines that can be consumed across media venues". While synergy is often a goal of other major media corporations, the Walt Disney Company has developed the strategy so well that the phrase 'Disney synergy' has come to represent "the ultimate in cross- promotional activities".

It thus serves as "the quintessential example of synergy in the media/ entertainment industry" (Wasko, 2001: 71).

Within the past century, corporate power has expanded into all aspects of social life, and no organization is more responsible for this phenomenon than the Walt Disney Company. Understanding the Walt Disney Company is an important endeavor because its distinctive brand name has come to be associated around the world with childhood, family, fantasy, and fun. It is important to understand that "corporations like Disney are fully implicated in the realm of power, politics, and ideology as they engage in processes of commodification and exploitation that recognize profit as the sole determining factor in all their corporate decision making" (Giroux and Pollock, 2010: 6). One example of this is the City of Anaheim, California, where Disneyland is located. In the mid-1990s, the Disney Corporation decided that it was time to redevelop Disneyland and make it feel more similar to a resort like Disney World, which is located in Orlando, Florida. In order to do this, however, the Disney Corporation felt that it was also vitally important to help redevelop the City of Anaheim's popularity. Disney's strategies for doing this involved investing in a number of ventures within the City of Anaheim.

The purpose of this article is to explore the synergy phenomenon and discover the ways in which the Disney Corporation has helped to transform Anaheim, California. By analyzing the ways in which Disney utilizes synergy and profits from its products through the use of a diverse array of markets, this article uncovers the ways in which communication corporations can influence the lived experience of a community's residents. In particular, this article will focus on the relationship between *The Mighty Ducks* franchise and the City of Anaheim, California.

What's good for Anaheim is good for Disneyland

In 1992, Walt Disney Pictures released *The Mighty Ducks*, a film about a rambunctious Minneapolis peewee hockey team. Starring Emilio Estevez and a barrage of successful child acting stars, the movie brought in over $50 million at the box office. The success of the film itself, though, does not tell the whole story behind this particular product. In fact, *The Mighty Ducks* is an excellent example of how the Walt Disney Company strategically utilizes synergy in order to place their products in a variety of markets. The original film starts by following the troubled life of Gordon Bombay (played by Emilio Estevez), a slick attorney whose entire world is centered on his work. After receiving a DUI, Bombay is sentenced to community service. His assignment is to coach the 'District 5' peewee hockey team until his obligated hours have been fulfilled. While the season starts horribly, the team inevitably gains trust in one another and begins to compete for the league championship. In fact, even after his community service hours were done, Bombay, who has been transformed from a heartless, vain, materialist into a sensitive, compassionate teacher, stays on to coach his team through the entire season and playoffs. The team changes their name from simply the 'District 5' team into 'The Ducks' when Bombay gets them new equipment. The president of Bombay's law firm, Mr. Ducksworth, agrees to fund the team with new hockey equipment under the condition that the law firm is advertised on their jersey. Cleverly, Bombay comes up with 'The Ducks' as their new name.

In response to the enormous success of the movie, the very next year Disney decided to invest $50 million in a National Hockey League (NHL) expansion team, properly named The Mighty Ducks. In their first year of operation, the 1994–95 season, The Mighty Ducks of Anaheim had the top selling logo across all sports (Jensen, 1997). That same year, Disney released a sequel titled *D2: The Mighty Ducks*, in which Gordon Bombay was asked to coach the United States of America's national junior hockey team. With a few special additions to the team, Bombay drafts his Ducks to play for the world championship. After overcoming adversity early in the tournament, they make it to the championship game against Iceland, where they are only able to win after they decide to replace their USA jerseys with Mighty Ducks jerseys.

Figure 1. Mighty Ducks of Anaheim logo during the 1994–95 season

This obvious advertisement for the NHL team can also be found in the third episode of this series, *D3: The Mighty Ducks*. In this 1996 film, most of the players have received scholarships to play junior varsity hockey at a prestigious prep school, Eaton Hal. Two main problems face the players at their new school. First of all, the school's mascot is 'The Warriors,' not 'The Ducks'. Also, they spend the beginning of the school year being bullied round by the varsity team. Both of these issues are handled, though, when the varsity and junior varsity teams play an exhibition game to decide which mascot will represent the school. This film also includes a cameo appearance by NHL star Paul Kariya, who was actually playing for the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim at that time.

The new hockey team and the film series coincided with a couple other major projects Disney was undertaking at the time. In July of 1995, "the company stunned Wall Street and the media with the dramatic $19 billion takeover of Capital Cities/ ABC" (Wasko, 2001: 36). Alongside their other television stations, sports programming, publishing, and multimedia assets, Disney acquired the ESPN cable service. Now, Disney could promote their team and other products through the worlds most popular and influential sports network. Disney also saw the new hockey team as a way of boosting and shaping the Anaheim economy in California, where Disneyland is located. They wanted to turn Anaheim into a tourist destination like Orlando, Florida, and Disneyland into a resort like Disney World. The opening of Disneyland in 1955 is often identified as inaugurating the concept of theme parks; when, in fact, there were actually around 2,000 amusement parks in the United States by 1919. What made Disneyland so unique and popular, though, was its affinity with world fairs, which combine celebrations of the past with visions of the future. Besides giving the company the "opportunity to expand upon Classic Disney themes and to emphasize and promote American values, or at least those that Disney believed in", it also gave the company the opportunity to utilize synergy (Wasko, 2001: 56).

While Disneyland is located in Anaheim, California, Disney also has theme parks in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Paris, and Orlando, Florida. Orlando's Disney World consists of over 30,000 acres of land, four theme parks, three water parks, five golf courses, campsites, and a 200-acre sports complex. It also includes Celebration, a neo-traditional/futuristic planned community that "may be the closest thing to a live-in Disney world and could well serve as the quintessential example of Disneyization" (Wasko, 2001: 178). This Disneyization process can also be seen when analyzing the theme parks in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Paris. Disneyland Paris, originally named Euro Disney when it was built in 1992, was Europe's most popular tourist attraction in 1998, bringing in about 12.5 million visitors (Wasko, 2001: 67). In Japan, one enthusiastic commentator opined "nearly a carbon copy of the 'original' Disneyland in Anaheim, Tokyo Disneyland gives the visitors the 'authentic' American flavor" (Yoshimoto, 1994: 190). Likewise, the Hong Kong park is "based on rides and shows that debuted at the company's other Disneyland-style parks" (1999: 23). In this way, Disney not only cross-promotes their products, they promote a particular way of experiencing the world.

Wasko notes that the "predictability of a Disney park visit is possible because of the rigorous control exercised in managing the parks" (Wasko, 2001: 166). In this regard, Bryman (2008) identified six specific levels of control. First, Disney creates the layout of the parks, the rides, and the exhibits so as to control the activities and overall experience of the visitors. Second, Disney owns the land itself and can therefore control the immediate environment. Third, Disney controls the behavior of the employees. Fourth, control is aligned with the beneficial motifs of science and technology. Fifth, Disney exerts control over the visitor's ability to imagine and what they imagine. Sixth, Disney controls their own destiny by maintaining a close relationship with the American government, and by cross-promoting Disney products across a variety of different consumer markets. Theme parks represent the ultimate in synergy because they are able to bring media products and merchandising together at one site (Wasko, 2001: 158). In the 1950s, "the combination of Disneyland – the theme park and *Disneyland* – the television program was a model of cross-media promotion" (Wasko, 2001: 157). The one-hour weekly television show, produced by ABC, prominently featured the Anaheim theme park. Disney was then also able to promote their films and other projects at the theme park, as well. Disney's theme park activities "contribute significantly to overall corporate goals, providing ongoing revenues and promotion for other parts of the corporate empire" (Wasko, 2001: 158). In his 1998 autobiography, *Work in Progress*, then-CEO Michael Eisner identified another advantage. Disney believed that having "a professional hockey team and programs related to it was good for Anaheim, and therefore also good for Disneyland" (cited in Gentile, 2002: 1).

It is fair to conclude that Disney invested in the creation of the Mighty Ducks hockey team as part of a wider strategy to build and promote the City of Anaheim. Disney realized that the more people fetishizes Anaheim as a Disney location, the more Disney would be able to profit from people's fetishization of Disneyland. Another example of this strategy being utilized began in 1996 when Disney bought a minority interest (about 25 percent) in the California Angels because of worries about the team moving away from Anaheim. Then in 1998, following former owner Gene Autry's death, Disney acquired the rest of the team and changed their name to the Anaheim Angels. Between the two transactions, Disney spent over $140 million to acquire the ball club. But in 2003, just a year after winning the World Series, the team was sold to billboard mogul Arturo Moreno for $182.5 million (Chass, 2003). According to *The New York Times*, Disney lost about $100 million during its ownership of the Angels (Chass, 2003). But in the end, making money off the team itself was not the point of investing in the Angels. Disney's investment was designed to promote Anaheim as a vacation destination. This is why they invested over $140 million to purchase the team, and then another $100 million to renovate and refurbish Edison Field. They also signed a 33- year lease with the City of Anaheim that keeps the team in Orange County until at least 2017 (Gentile, 2002). All of these business deals, along with the 1994 film *Angels in the Outfield*, were simply meant to promote Anaheim and build it up as a top vacation destination.

This connection between the Angels and Disney actually existed long before Disney ever invested in the team. Promotions like the one below reveal how Disney has tried to promote the City of Anaheim alongside their products for a considerable period.

Figure 2. Angels-Disneyland advertisement from 1967

This connection still exists today. After Moreno purchased the team from Disney, he tried to change their name to the Los Angeles Angels. However, Disney's $140 million investment came with the agreement that not only would the team remain in Anaheim, but also 'Anaheim' would remain in the team's name. Therefore, the team is currently called the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.

The history of The Mighty Ducks of Anaheim is very similar. After the success of the first *Mighty Ducks* film and the creation of the NHL team, the second and third films were promoted heavily. This was done through the team, while the team itself was promoted heavily through the movies. There was even a Saturday morning cartoon series based on the movies and the team, which eventually became an animated movie series (Jensen, 1997). There was also an extensive line of merchandise including action figures, hockey equipment, books, and athletic apparel. Despite the synergy between the film industry, the consumer market, and ESPN, the team itself was costing Disney money. In fact, Disney is reported to have lost over $60 million dollars during the team's final four seasons alone, despite reaching the Stanley Cup Finals in 2002–03 (Foster, 2005). So, in 2005, Disney sold the team to Orange County technology entrepreneur Henry Samueli for $75 million. Samueli eventually changed the team's name to simply The Anaheim Ducks. Even though Disney lost money on the team itself, it still accomplished its goal of bringing a hockey consuming culture to Anaheim.

The first *Mighty Ducks* film paved the way for the brand to become popular with children. The creation of an actual Mighty Ducks NHL team helped the City of Anaheim develop more of a sports consuming culture; and it also served the company's synergistic objectives. While the second and third films combined didn't make us much as the first film alone, having the team and the movies allowed opportunities for cross-promotion. With the addition of a Saturday morning cartoon show, animated movies, and an extensive line of merchandise, *The Mighty Ducks* (1992), as a film and as a brand, is a prime example of 'Disney synergy' in action.

The Creation and Sale of Disney's Mighty Ducks Hockey Team: a timeline

- 1992
  - The original *Mighty Ducks* film is released
- 1993
  - Disney creates an NHL team—The Mighty Ducks
- 1994
  - Mighty Ducks have Top Selling Jersey in all of Sports
  - *Angels in the Outfield* is released
- 1995
  - Disney buys ABC, including the ESPN sports channels
  - *D2:The Mighty Ducks* is released
- 1996
  - Disney buys 25% of the California Angels basketball team.
  - *D3:The Mighty Ducks* is released
- 1998
  - Disney buys the rest of the Anaheim Angels (renamed from the California Angels)
- 2002
  - Angels win the World Series; Mighty Ducks go to the Stanley Cup Finals
- 2003
  - Angels are sold
- 2005
  - Mighty Ducks are sold

The Fetishism of Anaheim, California

Political economists understand that power operates at different levels. It can be held within specific private ownership structures and hierarchies as well as through political alliances with media corporations. Broadly, power and control is central to any understanding of modern society and "any adequate analysis of the distribution of power and of the process of legitimation must necessarily include an analysis of the mass media" (Murdock and Golding, 1974: 224).

In the case of Anaheim, California, mass media have influenced the development and identity of the community to an extent that it is hard to disassociate the community from mass media related initiatives. The City of Anaheim is known for little else other than being the home of Disneyland, the

Angels, and the Ducks. Therefore, in order to understand how the City of Anaheim came to be what it is today, it is essential to understand how Disney utilizes synergy to promote and sell their products.

Karl Marx (1999) noted that the value of a commodity reflects the value of the labor that has gone into producing it, as well as the commodity's potential to be fetishized by consumers. However, Smythe (1977) felt that when it came to communications, Marxist theory had a blind spot. His question to Marx was: "What is the commodity form of mass-produced, advertiser-supported communications under monopoly capitalism?" And his answer: "audiences" (Smythe, 1977:1). In other words, Smythe realized that the mass media had turned the audience into a commodity. In fact, what many people would consider leisure time is really just the time when the audience is being sold to advertisers. This means the audience is really doing unpaid work. Therefore, the selling of audiences to advertisers not only serves as an essential marketing function, it also helps to reproduce labor power within society. It is not just "a question of the increasing control of the large media companies over a particular media sector or even several sectors, but also their increasing influence over the whole field of non-work time" (Murdock and Golding, 1974: 225). The City of Anaheim is a physical manifestation of this concept. Anaheim's entire identity is built around the idea of leisure time. Whether that leisure time consists of going to Disneyland, an Angels game, or a Ducks game, Anaheim's popularity rests on its capacity to dominate its residents' and visitors' whole field of non-work time with activities that only serve to benefit the Disney Corporation.

After experiencing the success of the first *Mighty Ducks* film, Disney decided that professional sports was a market that they had left. Understanding how to utilize synergy better than most other corporations, Disney saw the potential to profit from their products across an even more diverse array of markets than they had previously been taking advantage of. In that sense, Disney seems to always be looking for other leisure/non-work time products and activities to associate their brand with. Disney's former ownership of the Angels and Ducks exemplifies this, as does their recent purchase of Marvel Comics and Lucas Films. Disney is constantly looking to associate themselves with leisure time, which is becoming an increasingly important arena of modern capitalism.

Marx's *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1999) begins with an analysis of the basic component of the capitalist economy: the commodity. From this Marx explains how many of the contradictions within capitalist society arise. In the case of commodity-form capitalism, the intrinsic quality of something no longer determines its value, only its basis of exchange. The commodity, then, becomes "crucial for the subjugation of men's consciousness to the forms in which this society finds expression and for their attempts to comprehend the process or to rebel against its disastrous effects and liberate them from servitude" (Lukacs, 1967: 85). This means that even the way in which one thinks about addressing the problems caused by the commodity structure is influenced by the commodity structure. Georg Lukacs (1967) would call this phenomenon 'reification'. This concept refers to an abstract idea becoming material, and forming the basis for society's perception of reality. For instance, in contemporary capitalist society, exchange value has become the dominant way of knowing, organizing, and expressing the world. This means that the "problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all aspects" (Lukacs, 1967: 83). In order to achieve this domination, it would be necessary for the commodity structure to penetrate society in all aspects and to remold it in its own image (Lukacs, 1967). This means that society's way of understanding and interacting with the world, in general, is influenced by commodity-form capitalism. This is even true when one is analyzing the commodity structure. Society's collective perception of reality is influenced by dominant hegemonic ideals; "this development of the commodity to the point where it becomes the dominant form in society did not take place until the advent of modern capitalism" (Lukacs, 1967: 85).

The City of Anaheim certainly represents the notion that exchange value has become the dominant way in which our society organizes reality. Its physical development and perceived identity both derived from decisions that benefit the Disney Corporation (rather than from decisions that are meant to positively advance the lived experience of residents). Instead, decisions about the development of Anaheim require that residents and visitors are positioned as consumers and commodities. The nature of commodities, though, does not arise from the fact that people produce them. People in all societies produce useful goods, but not all these goods are commodities. A good becomes a commodity when the good becomes fetishized. Traditionally, the term 'fetish' refers to the religious practice of attributing human characteristics to material objects. In the general sense, though, the concept of 'fetishism' refers to people finding more value in a good other than just simply its physical production value. McKercher and Mosco (2008) believe that this concept is especially important when analyzing creative labor, such as that which is involved in producing mass media content. In other words, Disney's success is very much based upon their ability to convince consumers to fetishize the commodities they produce. Consumers of Disney products don't think about the utilitarian use of the products they are buying; instead, they fetishize Disney's commodities and create personal meaning from these products. That is why Disney's venture into professional sports seemed so natural. Professional athletics (and increasingly college athletics) is the most obvious example of fetishism coming to life. Professional athletics exists purely because of consumers' fetishism of the games and the players.

What is of major importance in this discussion is that the capitalist system is being reified not only by organizing our reality around the notion of exchange value, but also because exchange value is in part constructed from consumers' fetishism of commodities. Therefore, Disney's attempt to redevelop Disneyland's identity depended upon the extent to which consumers fetishized Anaheim, California. That is why Eisner said that having "a professional hockey team and programs related to it was good for Anaheim, and therefore also good for Disneyland" (cited in Gentile, 2002: 1). Disney utilizes synergy better than most other corporations because they are able to convince consumers to fetishize leisure time. That is why the City of Anaheim's entire identity is built on the idea of leisure. Disney realized that Disneyland would profit tremendously if Anaheim was fetishized as a vacation destination. Therefore, they invested in other leisure time activities throughout the region in order to promote corporate identity and Anaheim's reputation, simultaneously. In this context, it is worth recalling that Adorno (1975) was one of the first people to identify the entertainment industry as a major site for elite domination within contemporary capitalist societies. He recognized that this domination had connections with broader structures of political-economic power and control. He called this enveloping process "the culture industry". According to Biltereyst and Meers (2011), "if there is one truism in media and communication research then it is the one about how people rely on the culture industry for the images, words, and voices with which they interpret and interact with their social environment" (2011: 415).

The Political Economy of Urban Planning

The political economy of communication reveals that major modern communication systems are now so evidently key institutions in advanced capitalist societies that they require the same kind of attention that is given to the institutions of industrial production and distribution. By focusing on the structure of the economy, and incorporating the notion of praxis into their research, political economists of communication analyze how power is produced and reproduced within the media, and they reveal where and how active resistance is possible. According to Logan and Molotch (1987), sustainable urban development must necessarily include "efforts to preserve use values at the expense, if need be, of rents and profits" (1987: 215). If environmental or sustainability movements are organized in ways that require exchange-values to be the leading factor in our decision-making, then these movements are simply perpetuating the commodity-form capitalist system that produces environmental and sustainability problems in the first place. With these thoughts in mind, it is clear that Anaheim's entire identity and decision-making process is dominated by the notion of exchange value. What will happen to the City of Anaheim if one day the Disney Corporation does not see it as a place that can be used to synergistically benefit their other products and the corporation as a whole?

In her famous novel *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1992) points out, "there are only two ultimate public powers in shaping and running American cities: votes and control of money. To sound nicer, we may call these 'public opinion' and 'disbursement of funds', but they are still votes and money" (1992: 131). In other words, Jacobs suggests that we should be wary of allowing powerful corporations with lots of money to have a major role in the development of our communities. It negatively influences the democratic process.

In this sense, we need to be wary of allowing other communities to be affected by major communication corporations in a similar way to Anaheim. By 2050, about three quarters of the world's population will live in cities. While the concept of companies planning and sometimes even owning cities is not a new development, there seems to be a sudden rise in this trend, with communication corporations such as Disney, IBM, Google, Intel, and Cisco now taking advantage of this growing market. Google has started to supply cities with their own fiber internet infrastructure; they have already started development in three metro areas and have plans for nine more very soon. Also, IBM's Smarter Cities Challenge asks cities to apply to IBM with community planning projects that tackle a diverse array of issues, including protecting drinking water supplies, tackling food deserts, and reducing traffic congestion. To date, they have served over 100 cities with this program. On top of that, companies such as Cisco and Disney have helped to design and build cities from the ground up. Cisco designed South Korea's Songdo International Business District, while Disney designed, built, and owned Celebration, Florida.

We need to be critical of allowing these types of communities to develop. In many ways, they mirror traditional company towns in which communities were owned and developed by one specific private interest. For example, in 2004, just as Disney was selling the Ducks and Angels, Walt Disney Resort employed 21,750 people, which represented 24 percent of total city employment. Apart from Walt Disney Resort as the number one employer, Angels Baseball LP was Anaheim's fourth largest principal employer in 2004. Currently, Walt Disney Resort employs 23,512 people, 14 percent of Anaheim's total employment (City of Anaheim Annual Report, 2014: 135).

Therefore, on top of dominating the non-work time of residents and visitors of Anaheim, Disney actually dominates residents' work time also. In that sense, Anaheim is the ultimate physical manifestation of the audience commodity. In 2004, almost a quarter of Anaheim's residents worked for a company that was investing in other city ventures that were meant to ultimately generate more profits for the place they worked—Disneyland. Disney invested in the Angels baseball team and created the Mighty Ducks hockey team as a strategy to increase Disneyland's profitability. They utilized the films *Angels in the Outfield* (1994) and *The Mighty Ducks* (1992), as well as their new purchase of ESPN, in order to cross promote their products across a variety of media. In the end, Anaheim is the city it is today because of Disney.

For critical communication scholars, understanding the use of synergy is of vital importance. How can we begin any analysis of a media product without first recognizing what that product represented to those who created it? We have to first ask ourselves— how does this industry generate revenue, and what role does this particular media entertainment product serve within that system? The case study provided here reveals how Disney uses synergy to dominate a variety of media outlets. It also provides an excellent example of how Disney promotes a fetishism for sports culture. By purchasing ESPN, Disney gained control of the most popular sports network; thus, the more popular sports are, in general, the more potential profit Disney can generate. Disney creates an abundance of products and merchandise that transcend different cultures, groups and genres. In the end, 'Disney synergy' represents "the ultimate in cross-promotional activities" and also serves as "the quintessential example of synergy in the media/ entertainment industry" (Wasko, 2001: 71). More broadly, the Disney-Anaheim connection reveals how powerful media corporations influence everyday lived experience. Not only are they responsible for the content we consume through various forms of mass entertainment and the merchandise we consume as a result of our fetishization of that content; they also influence the decisions that determine how the communities we inhabit are physically designed and developed.

The City of Anaheim is an example of a community in which the labor and non-work time of residents are dominated by one corporation. Michael Eisner's proclamation that having "a professional hockey team and programs related to it was good for Anaheim, and therefore also good for Disneyland" illustrates how Anaheim is viewed by the Disney Corporation (cited in Gentile, 2002: 1). They see the city as just another resource in their synergistic quest to profit from the commodities they produce. They see it as a place where decisions should be made that benefit Disney financially, independently of the lived experiences of the community's residents. Political economists of communication should consider this case study part of a wider trend whereby communication corporations become more involved in the planning and design of urban spaces.

Author Bio

Geoff Ostrove is a doctoral candidate in Media Studies at the University of Oregon. His primary focus is on integrating communication theory into the world of community planning. In this context he analyzes the political-economic factors that influence our perception of land use and development. Geoff was honored with IAMCR's 2013 Urban Communication Research Grant and the University of Oregon's 2013 Public Impact Award. His research interests also include: intercultural communication, religious studies, critical theory, political economy, rhetoric/public address, and natural resource management.

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