

We're organizing the Lower Manhattan Township, which extends from Allen Street to the Hudson River and from West and East Houston and East Fourth Streets to Chambers and Division Streets. The township is a political organization based on geography, a pretty neutral base, dealing with anything that is a common problem within the area. Obviously there is quite a bit that is accidental about a community, especially in New York City, but geography and common specific interests are the only practical and ultimate bases for live, free politics. Individuals and the communities they form should have political power. It shouldn't occur in a hierarchy resting, living on, an undifferentiated mass.

Most people are powerless; of those most are docile; a few resist occasionally. A financial oligarchy and the political ties have the power. The Democratic and Republican parties aren't legal, have no basis in the Constitution, and exist to circumvent representative government. By indirect elections of candidates that no one ever chose, the parties neutralize the majority of the people, get rid of the bottom. All you get is Nixon or Humphrey off the top. The same process of neutralization shows in anything meant to be democratic, meant to be objective in that it's public and among equals. The selection of juries is an example. The Republican and Democratic parties aren't competitors. They're in collusion. In New York State the Republicans have the State, the main power, and the Democrats have New York City, the minor power. This is an agreement and when it's threatened both sides join against the threat, as when Marchi opposed Lindsay. The agreement is why Rockefeller has been Governor for twelve years and will be for four more. For more than sixty years, three-fourths of the states have been one-party states. You would think that the minority party would

win sometimes. *The Public Life* of 17 October 1969 describes the situation:

At any given moment, one party in a state is stronger than the other and strongly controls the state legislature. The minority party is a winning party, perhaps, in a single large city, or in a small bloc of counties, or among minority blocs of voters – union members, Catholics – more or less dispersed. If such a party is in the hands of organization bosses who can control the nominations of candidates, the party bosses have almost no reason to build up their organizational strength elsewhere in the state in order to contest for control of the legislature.

For example, "how else can we explain why in Democratic Missouri (not to mention Oklahoma, Ohio and Pennsylvania) the Republicans often fail to put up legislative candidates in the Democratic areas and the ruling Democrats fail to put up candidates in Republican areas..."

The only practical, possible, though difficult way to regain control is for everyone to establish townships, local political units. The township would make it impossible for everyone to be ruled from the top; the resistance would be too complex, dense, and permanent. For the government to defeat anything now, say McCarthy's efforts against the war, it only has to be defeated at the top. The Democratic opposition to the war disappeared after the convention; the Republican opposition never appeared; it's heard only in New York. A community that votes to oppose the war is right there, publicly opposed. It doesn't go home after the march; it isn't silent between elections. It doesn't have to compromise with a big institution.

Everyone has to act, has to accept the power that's theirs, otherwise they've given it to someone else. It's not possible to just float along in the situation, whether you're poor or middle and not much connected to the structure or rich and

connected to it. New York City particularly suffers from floaters because of temporary residence and because so many people work here but don't live here. It's a big training center for several activities, including art, and too many people are only interested in being trained and getting what they think to be a good job in the suburbs.

A community, a township, has a right to exist. There are several schemes for the destruction of the Lower Manhattan Township. The Lower Manhattan Expressway, whose death is dubious, was one. (*Plan for New York City*, 1969: "To substitute for the Lower Manhattan Expressway there could be improvement of several cross-Manhattan channels, such as Houston, Broome and Canal Streets.") The Expressway was a device to bust the area. It would have cut the area and smashed the larger Italian neighborhood. The Expressway's City Planner called that neighborhood a slum. The Expressway was to have stores, schools, and business space above it. The surrounding buildings would then have to be razed for apartments to house those who would populate the new facilities. There is talk of a law complex going north around Centre Street. Wall Street in general and the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association want the area for apartments for their workers, who will be in political limbo, since probably they will live in an area owned only by private developers, perhaps their employers, not responsible to the residents or to the city. The Special Greenwich Street Development District, already underway, will be autonomous, private, feudal, a chunk out of New York. Its tenants will have no local rights, which ultimately means no rights. Donald Elliott, Chairman of the Planning Commission, says not to worry, the area won't be destroyed for twenty years. The Plan says:

The smaller lofts are being taken over by artists, and in time housing and white-collar activities are going to supplant industry. The challenge in such areas is to guide

the transition so that firms won't be forced out of business, but relocated.

The Plan harps on the expansion of the "national center" and doesn't mind how that's achieved:

We believe that the national center functions are so basic to the City's welfare that the City should be able to complete assemblage for private and nonprofit developers, even if the existing use conforms to the zoning and is not a nuisance.

We also believe that the City should acquire plots in areas where a change in land use is appropriate and resell them to builders. The use of condemnation powers for this purpose would require State enabling legislation but would not be in conflict with the Constitution.

Everything that can be stopped, started, run by a community should be run by that community. The decision to delegate something to a wider area, say the city or the county, should be very carefully made. Nothing should be delegated because it's easier to do so or it's a little more efficient. Similarly the county should be wary of the state and the state of the federal government. The various levels should be exceedingly jealous, upward only, of their powers and rights. The neighborhoods of Manhattan and especially those of Brooklyn and the other boroughs were ostensibly destroyed for centralized garbage collections, water distribution, efficiency. They were really destroyed so the Democrats could run New York City. In 1855 nineteen villages were consolidated as Brooklyn; in 1898 Brooklyn was consolidated. You can see the result in Brooklyn; The Plan is still centered on Manhattan.

A community should run its own schools and hospitals. It should determine its zoning and housing. No community should have to appeal to the city about zoning. If a community

doesn't use its local powers it won't have any, either in the city or nationally. New York City doesn't ask the neighborhoods if they want to be zoned this or that. Nobody asks a community or a person if they want most of their taxes spent on war. One thing the communities should know is just what taxes they pay and where they go. The communities should seize the power to allocate the taxes. They'd certainly retain more. After a long chapter on taxes and the rich, and with the fact that 90 percent of Americans make less than ten thousand dollars a year, Ferdinand Lundberg concludes: "The over-riding problem in the United States is not economic. It is political."

The center of the Lower Manhattan Township is the Cast Iron District, which is mostly small and medium-sized businesses. Quite a few artists, dancers, writers, and filmmakers live there. On either side there is an Italian neighborhood and south of the eastern Italian neighborhood there is a Chinese neighborhood. Everyone who lives in the community should be a citizen of it, that is, responsible. The township can't be only an artists' group. The participation of the people in the two Italian communities and in the Chinese community are essential to the development of the township. It will fail without them and if it does the final failure will be the demolition of the whole area, something the city longs for. Similarly the businessmen and their employees are vital. The businesses should stay and, hopefully, some of the businessmen and some of the workers should live here. It's believed by the rich and by city planners that businesses, factories, and residences should not be mixed. Short of being mixed with a steel mill or a refinery, business and residences should be mixed. Because of the artists, the Cast Iron District is mixed to some extent. But there shouldn't be only artists living there. One threat is that some of the attributes of Greenwich Village may develop, tourist shops and restaurants, bad art and high rents.

The mixture of business and residence considerably lowers the density of an area. The township should keep or slightly

increase its present low density. In the Cast Iron District buildings could be used to house people who work here but only at the present density of the usual building. Any apartments built on vacant lots should have the same low density. No dense white-collar activity. The introduction to The Plan says:

The planners in a number of the world's capital cities have embraced the same philosophy. The thrust of their plans is to stop the growth of the center, split up its activities and relocate them in outlying subcenters and new towns.

But concentration is the genius of the City, its reason for being, the source of its vitality and its excitement. We believe the center should be strengthened, not weakened, and we are not afraid of the bogey of high density. We hope to see several hundred thousand more office workers in the business districts in the next 10 years, and we think the increase desirable and helpful.

The Plan nods to culture, amenities, Manhattan as a place to live, but those several hundred thousand more office workers mean the end of everything in Manhattan but business. Manhattan's one big local business, incidentally, is real estate.