

On TLDs & Building A Great City

Comments to ICANN on Trademark Rights Protection Mechanisms - August 27, 2013

by Thomas Lowenhaupt

Historically, cities were places where people gathered for safety and opportunity. Today cities are increasingly communication centers that facilitate and harness creativity for economic and social development.

Cities harbour the entire range of competing and collaborating cultural actors in tight proximity. To manage these congested spaces, complex administrative and social orders are agreed upon and enforced by residents in cooperation with their governments.

The Internet's arrival in cities was unplanned. It grew organically to connect and advantage some, but disconnected others. Today it's recognized that universal service and education are needed to effectively deliver city services. Here in New York those without access and training are increasingly outcasts, unable to find work or gain access to city services.

The first opportunity that cities will have to thoughtfully utilize the Net to address the plethora of issues they confront arrives with their TLDs. Here in New York City the Bloomberg Administration appointed an 11 member advisory board to sort through the opportunities presented. I'm a member.

At the Advisory Board's most recent meeting we were informed by the city's contractor that our heritage has been endangered by the insistence of some parties that they have first dibs on the name pool ([see meeting report](#)). As a consequence our Corona neighborhood and its 55,000 residents might find a beer website when they check the intuitive corona.nyc site for local issues. Same with our Rugby neighborhood. Today I noted that by one count there are 25,000,000 trademarked names globally. How many will choose to invest \$150 in TMCH for a chance of the New York pie?

I was explaining the situation to a city council member, using as examples the mayor.nyc (see below graphic) and police.nyc domain names and was asked, "Can the exterminator company sell the name to someone else?" I said I expect so, but was unsure. (FYI there are several police trademarks in different categories, one being for a bug spray.)

Its my understanding that the trademark system was created to protect the public from unsavory imitators. That it might now being used to appropriate our historic intellectual resources is highly undesirable. Some say "Better no TLD than one we can't control."

Some new thinking is required. One approach might be to look toward local multi-stakeholder entities to address the complexities. A system that addresses the real needs of cities and

trademark holders is achievable.

Cities need TLDs to help them run better. Not to sell domain names.

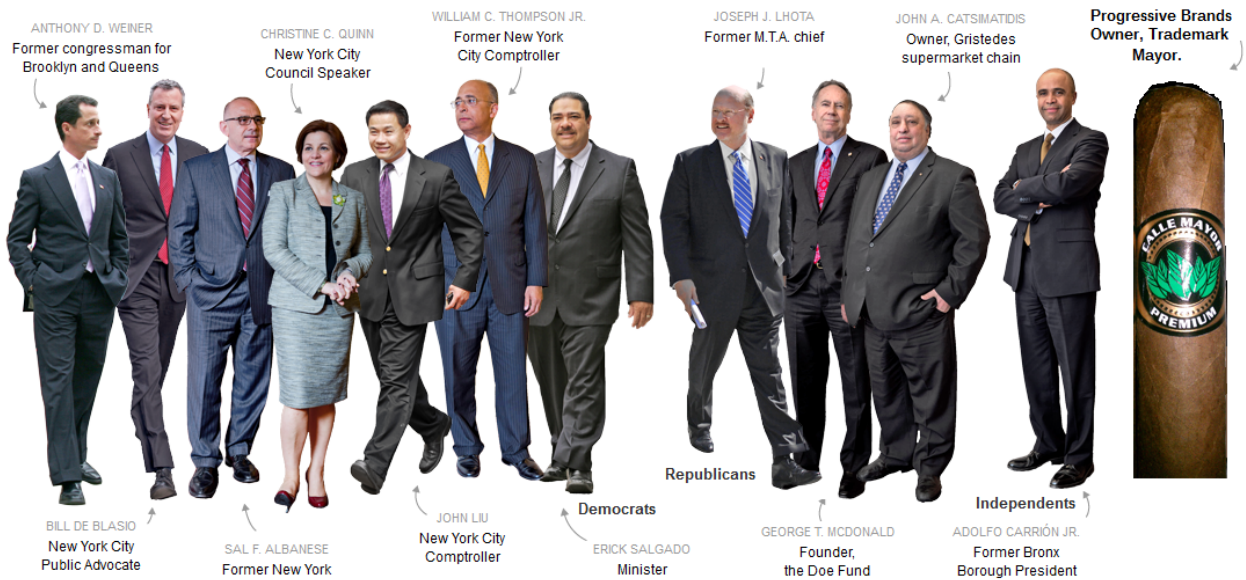
Thank you for your consideration of these comments. The opportunity to present these comments is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Thomas Lowenhaupt

Thomas Lowenhaupt is the Founding Director of Connecting.nyc Inc., a New York State nonprofit corporation educating New Yorkers on public interest issues relating to the .nyc TLD. He is also a member of the city of New York's .NYC Community Advisory Board.

Who'll Be The First Mayor.nyc?



Trademark extremists say mayor.nyc should go to the tobacco party.