The capitalist city

The capitalist city is a strangely unfamiliar place, segregated and segmented by post-WWII zoning practices into sprawled, disparate, mutually exclusive ‘zones’ for shopping (mall), housing (cul-de-sac), education (conjoined primary and secondary schools), and working (office-park) simultaneously divided by—and connected to—one another by impassible (for pedestrians) swatches of concrete that support fast-moving, multi-laned traffic. This disconnected, 3-dimensional non sequitur is ‘designed’ by engineers, financed by unscrupulous banks charging usurious interest rates for consumer credit, and directed by legally-trained elected officials—drum-majors, marching to the familiar sound of political expediency in service of seemingly incessant re-election campaigning.

The capitalist city is a deregulated place, in which corporations have been apportioned more rights than human-beings and are allowed to devour small, local, businesses—and even cannibalize one another (via ‘hostile takeovers and aggressive ‘mergers and acquisitions’)—in a voracious, parasitic, frenzy—spawning conglomerate, ‘mega-entities’ that preside over urban ‘fiefdoms’ from boardrooms overlooking secluded, secured, suburban ‘campuses’ and urban penthouses. These mega-entities are encouraged (via tax policy) and empowered (via armies of political lobbyists and campaign contributions) to grow into mammoth, top-heavy, change-resistant, dinosaurs (now obsolete)—that, as the sole surviving employers/vendors/distributors to entire segments of local (and increasingly global) economies—are ‘too big to fail’ and must be ‘bailed out’ by the very taxpaying serfs who toil the land which they control. These mega-entities now include multiple-thousand-megawatt power plants and similarly scaled industrial farms—national security risks/soft-targets—that if ‘brought down’ individually, would cause tens (and hundreds) of thousands of people to go without necessities like food and power.

The post-capitalist city

The post-capitalist city is distinct from the capitalist city in two primary ways:

1) It will be based upon the reduction, redistribution, and dispersal of the ‘mega-entity’.

2) Its development will be catalyzed and orchestrated by the emerging ‘creative class’.

The post-capitalist city is one in which visionary artists, architects, and designers take the lead in defining how urban society can (physically)—and should (ethically) function in the 21st century and beyond. This ascendant and unfettered creative class will employ/deploy the current Geppetto-esque puppet-masters of urban life—public policy (politicians), zoning/land use
(city planners), engineering (masters of form-follows-function-pragmatism—civil, traffic, and structural engineers), finance systems (bankers/investors)—to create long-term sustainable places that are exemplary and expressive of the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of contemporary society.

The post-capitalist city de-monopolizes and disperses the omnipotent, omnipresent mega-entities (e.g. corporations, political ‘machinery’, infrastructure [public utilities], etc.) that currently dominate and subjugate the daily lives of individuals. In the post-capitalist city, the current paradigm of urban areas being completely dependent upon massive tracts of rural farmland and colossal, exurban power plants to supply us with our daily sustenance will be challenged, retracted, and transfigured—reassembled at a manageable scale upon the rooftops of tall buildings—plugged into the existing power grid and dispersed throughout the city.

This new network will be linked together—socially and technologically—to create a new renewable energy power grid (circuit) and an agricultural model that grows our food organically at a human-scale—in close proximity to the folks that consume it (along dense transit corridors, commercial cores, and urban nodes)—rather than produce it exclusively along the exurban periphery and expend the time, energy, and effort required to import it (food and power) back into urban neighborhoods (daily). The new paradigm will permanently reduce the strain on our transportation and power transmission infrastructure and it will sufficiently diversify our supply chain (food and power)—allowing any individual segment of it to go temporarily off-line (for whatever reason) without fear of collapsing the entire network and paralyzing entire sectors of the city.

The post-capitalist city supplants our banal, gray, crumbling, antiquated urban infrastructure by re-imagining the pragmatism-as-expression mind state that permeates our built environment—transfiguring it into healthy (physically and spiritually), diverse, dense, colorful, active, multi-lingual, multi-layered spaces—logically arranged and exuberantly expressed by the emerging ‘creative class’.

These writers, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, and designers have/are capable of projecting a broad-reaching vision that, when implemented, will begin to repair the damage done to our population, environment, and capital markets by the uninhibited, unethical, short-sighted greed of our capitalist predecessors.

We imagine the post-capitalist city as a collection of unique, spiritually uplifting places that transcend the de facto gospel of ‘functionality’—endeavoring to enrich our individual day-to-day realities, nourish our collective soul—piquing the interest and creative energy of future generations!