Book Review

HOMES DOT COM Architecture for All, Chris Johnson, Government Architect's Publications (GAP), 2004, Sydney, Australia

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This attractive little book positively bursts with energy. So it is good to see the descriptions and images of Tonkin, Zulaikha and Greer's design for terrace houses at Nelson's Ridge and architect Tony McBurney's 'design-guided' Hunterford Estate in Western Sydney, because they not only suggest 'better' developer 'project homes' but also an underlying appreciation of density and proximity as essentials of sustainability.

While much of the rest has the graphic flavour and fervour of the speculative 'homesteader' publications of the USA in the first decades after the Second World War – and is similarly ethno-centric, despite some international (mostly US) antecedents and the Japanese model – the *e-referencing* and enterprising contemporary Australian examples have the reader reaching for the mouse!

No worries here then, about the manipulation by global capital of the means of production. Holden are apparently holding their own and offer a hopeful example of flexible, niche marketed technology.

I would have liked to see a reference to – and illustration of – Richard Rogers' 1960s *zip-up house* – and particularly the image with the little electric car, plugged-in and charging-up for a mercifully short round of daily journeys. I would also have liked to see a lot more about how *dot com* homes can assist in more sustainable patterns of development. As Jim Kunstler has written recently, 'The tragic truth is that much of suburbia is unreformable. It does not lend itself to being retrofitted in the kind of smaller-scaled, more finely grained, walkable environments that we will need to carry on daily life in the coming age of greatly reduced motoring' (Kunstler, 2005).

HOMES DOT COM snappily renews the challenge to take up new technologies to provide better machines for living for all, wherever.

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Reference

- Kunstler, J.H. (2005) *The long emergency: surviving the converging catastrophes of the 21st century*. Atlantic Books, London (Extract quoted from: *New statesman*, 1 August 2005, p. 25.