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lation of training courses related to career, the fight against abuses particularly in respect of young practitioners, and improper use of self-employment.

Today Italian trade unions find themselves under twofold constraints: all these issues represent a challenge and at the same time an opportunity that extends outside the traditional scope of union representation but can attract outsiders towards a new unionism in pursuit of social guarantees. All depends on the extent to which unions will adjust their interests to match those of knowledge professionals with a broader campaign for inclusion.

Peter Tom Jones and Vicky De Meyere,

John Huige and Lou Keune,


The authors of _Terra Reversa_ formulated an ambitious and strong plea for an integral policy of sustainable production and consumption. In the first section, with the title ‘Business as usual is no longer an option’ the actual crisis is described mainly from an ecological perspective. Economic growth is no remedy for this crisis. The alternative is formulated in the next section where a transition strategy is outlined that should lead to a socio-ecological responsible economy and a sustainable consumptive model. Section three provides four practical transition cases: in the transport sector, in the food-industry, in tourism, and in the construction sector.
The chapter that deals with construction is optimistic; as construction has such a bad record, the sector has a lot of ‘low hanging fruits’ within reach from which it is relatively easy to earn substantial sustainability results. Based on experiences in Belgium and the Netherlands, the effect of passive houses, smart grids, cradle to cradle and other closed life cycles is treated. The authors also see important barriers: the general attitude of the actors in the sector, the lack of qualification in this field starting with architects, and the structure of the sector and its suppliers. Nevertheless, the concrete proposals based on the 4 E-model (Enable, Encourage, Exemplify, Engage) provide the reader with a lot of food for thought about the use of sustainable materials, efficient use of energy, possible pilot projects, environmental friendly financing and the necessary education and training.

The book is worth reading and I do not see important lacunas. However, one challenge that is perhaps only slightly touched upon is the necessary change on the supply side of the industry. Are companies and their workforces ready for the tremendous change that is needed and that will lead to a completely different product to be delivered? In fact this problematic aspect is only signalled in the necessary qualification changes for architects. But is sustainable building not a process that relates to all actors? What does it mean for the (unstructured) production process; how to prepare the workforce; how to change the classical division of labour into a more holistic approach? Or do these actors just have to wait till consumer demand and trends change and then adapt to this changing demand?

The challenge of a broader social and sustainable reform is promoted in the book Plan voor een duurzame en solidaire economie (Plan for a sustainable and solidary economy) that has been published recently. The authors (John Huige and Lou Keune) are part of a growing network of academics and practitioners that have joined forces (www.platformdse.org). The network organises meetings and discusses the path to a
Fair and Green Deal (FGD). In the title and its lay-out the publication refers to a reform-plan (Het Plan van de Arbeid – The Employment Plan) that was formulated in the 1930s by the Dutch social democratic party as an answer to the global crisis of that time. In the book the ecological and social dimension of the actual crisis are seen as a consequence of the neo-liberal ideology that has reigned over three decades. The book stresses the urgency of a fundamental reform of our economy. In the chapter dealing with the necessary transition, the authors refer to Terra Reversa. An important difference with the Terra book is the improved analysis of the socio-economic dimension of the actual crisis.

For Dutch readers the works reviewed can be recommended as a useful introduction to the debates among progressive researchers and activists in the Netherlands and Belgium.


In almost twenty years of existence CLR-News has only rarely reviewed books that tell the history of the building workers’ trade unions. Humphrey McQueen’s book *We Built this Country* is an exception. The reason why we have picked it up is rather simple. McQueen, who calls himself a Canberra-based activist and freelance historian, has written a remarkable book that covers more than 200 years of building workers’ experiences and thus opens ‘a window into the making of the Australian working class’. Although the research and writing was commissioned by the Construction Division of the Australian CFMEU (the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the successor organisation of the Australian Building Labourers’ Federation), the financing of its publication owes nothing to the union.