

## Preface

The Collaborative Enterprise project started with a discussion between Antonio Tencati (Università Bocconi, Milan) and Laszlo Zsolnai (Corvinus University of Budapest) during the Annual Meeting of the Business Ethics Faculty Group of the CEMS – The Global Alliance in Management Education, held in Lisbon in April 2004. The discussion, also influenced by the work carried out by the Group of Lisbon, focused on the urgent need to overcome the dominant competitive model because of its increasing and unsustainable impacts on human, natural and social capital.

On the basis of these reflections, we organized the CEMS Blocked Seminar on ‘Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability: New Perspectives on Business Management,’ which was held at Università Bocconi in Milan in September 2005. In addition to *Antonio Tencati* and *Laszlo Zsolnai*, faculty included *Knut J. Ims* (Norwegian School of Economics & Business Administration, Bergen), *Eleanor O’Higgins* (University College Dublin) and *Steen Vallentin* (Copenhagen Business School). *Ulisse Pedretti* from Coop Italia presented the experience of the retail chain in addressing the sustainability issues.

The seminar was a great success and we decided to develop the core ideas further. We wrote a joint paper on ‘The Collaborative Enterprise,’ which was presented in the Fourth TransAtlantic Business Ethics Conference at *The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania*, in October 2006. The paper explored collaborative ways of doing business where enterprises seek to build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders and aim to produce sustainable values for the entirety of their business ecosystems. We argued that competitiveness involves self-interest and aggressivity and produces monetary results at the expense of nature, society and

future generations. Our paper generated a lot of debate. Some reactions were encouraging while others were critical, suggesting that the collaborative model was relevant only for the European context, especially Continental Europe. However, the evolution of the international economic conditions and the surrounding academic debate (consider, for example, the contributions by the late Sumantra Ghoshal) supported us in strengthening our research efforts. After some revision our Collaborative Enterprise paper was published in *Journal of Business Ethics* in 2009 (Vol. 85, No. 3, pp.367–376).

In June 2008 we organized an international workshop entitled ‘The Collaborative Enterprise: Creating Values for a Sustainable World’ at Università Bocconi in Milan. The workshop aimed at collecting and documenting alternative working models of business that challenge the currently prevailing competitive model. Contributors to the workshop included Johan Wempe (Saxion Universities of Applied Sciences), Maurits Sanders (Saxion Universities of Applied Sciences), Hendrik Opdebeeck (University of Antwerp), Ove D. Jakobsen (Bodø Graduate School of Business), Knut J. Ims (NHH, Bergen), Zsolt Boda (Corvinus University of Budapest), Alan Strudler (Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania), Eleonora Curlo (Zicklin School, Baruch College, The City University of New York), Margit Osterloh (University of Zurich), Hossam Zeitoun (University of Zurich), Tibor Hejj (Proactive Management Consulting Ltd., Budapest), Rita Hejj (Proactive Management Consulting Ltd., Budapest), Giacomo Mojoli (Slow Food), Francesco Perrini (Università Bocconi), and Clodia Vurro (Università Bocconi). Based on the presentations of the Milan workshop and other invited papers, we developed the present book on Collaborative Enterprise.

Our book promotes a *collaborative attitude* of doing business based on a positive view of the self and others. The authors of the book believe that we need to go beyond the current management mainstream, which is incapable of facing the challenges of sustainable development. Enterprises seeking to build long-lasting,

mutually beneficial relationships with all their constituencies, while producing values for their stakeholder networks, represent new hopes for a better future.

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