Exploring University Alliances and Comparable Academic Cooperation Structures

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This project has analyzed Swedish universities, set in terms of internationalization and new demands.

The project addresses questions about the on-going structural changes to the Swedish research and education system. There are three themes. The first theme raises the question about financing, the second about the universities as strategic actors and thirdly how universities interact with society, in particular the knowledge link between universities and businesses.

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon and development of alliances between universities. We present ten university alliances that have been established during the past decade, primarily in Europe and North America. A brief background on each of the selected alliance structure is provided, drawing attention to the objectives or purpose of their establishment, and highlights some significant outcomes since their initiation. In reviewing the different cases in this study, it is possible to detect that in some cases the formations of alliances are devised along with strategic decisions to create possibilities for larger academic environments, and to widen research possibilities. It is possible to detect that there are diverse formulations for new methods in the management of higher education programs, which include new structures in teaching, research, as well as different modes of cooperation within what once might have been considered as competing institutions. The study will answer what the universities want to achieve with alliances, and what potential risks there are with involving in them.
**Introduction**

Institutions of higher education have historically been characterised by a trend towards expansion (Trow 2005). Although new sources of research funding are constantly appearing, there are also more players who want a share of available funds, thus creating a competitive environment for the available resources. This is an international phenomenon that is particularly evident in some national academic systems where universities lack their own sources of capital and fixed assets, and where alternative sources of funding besides the state budget funds are limited (Neave, Blückert, Nybom 2006). The forces behind this development are familiar within the academic sector in the United States, where the phenomenon has been studied by a number of researchers who conclude that it is evident that competition is on the increase – for students, for academic staff members, as well as in terms of financing resources (Clark 1998, Florida 2002, Trow 1996). Moreover, this tendency is also on the increase within the international academic arena (Castells 1996, 1997, 1998). In Europe, the Processes of Bologna and Lisbon combined with the creation of the European Research Council, and the European Technology Platforms can be considered as signs of the ongoing changes of the structure of the academic sector. The formation of these processes will most likely strengthen the incentives for collaboration and differentiation that exists today within the European Union.

According to Harman & Meek (2002) and Georghiou & Duncan (2002), university alliances and partnerships, even mergers, are among the responses to these changes. Some of the findings conducted by these authors indicate that it is possible to imply that if mobility among students increases, and if competition for resources grows, alliances may be one way for university administrations to lower their risk of missing out on resources. Forming alliances may also provide an opportunity for universities to increase their resources by becoming more competitive, and to maintain their brands for which they are recognized. They will be able to work in traditional areas while generating new ideas and concepts, while at the same time combining strengths and resources such as the knowledge base of former competitors, as well as access to take on new challenges and exploit new niche areas that are constantly emerging.

The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon and development of alliances between universities. A particular goal is to discuss the structure of selected alliances including their current status and accomplishments since their inception. In some instances alliances have developed as a reaction that aims to follow a trend in the academic environment, marked by positive synergies and success observed in alliances composed by top universities. In other cases
alliances have formed as a response to variables such as a fierce international competitive climate in the academic sector.

In this study, we present ten academic alliances that have been established during the past decade throughout Europe, North America, and Asia. A brief background on each of the selected alliance structures is provided, drawing attention to the objectives or purpose of their establishment, and highlights some significant outcomes since their initiation. Reflections are presented based on the current outcomes of the cases analyzed, with the goal to provide a discussion platform in terms of potential policy implications, as well as recommendations for further research in this subject. It is asserted through this study and the review of the literature that a number of different variables, including changes in market structures, internationalization, globalization, technology, as well as, powerful international competitors are among the drivers that have forced some universities to consider new strategic choices to address current demands, and ways of positioning themselves in the future. Thus, in reviewing the different cases in this study, it has been possible to detect that in some cases the formations of alliances have been devised along with strategic decisions to create possibilities for larger academic environments, and to widen research possibilities. It has been possible to detect that there are diverse formulations for new methods in the management of higher education programs, which include new structures in teaching, research, as well as different modes of cooperation within what once might have been considered as competing institutions.

It is possible to make a connection and suggest that alliances can be seen as a result of external pressure for change, increased competition and reduced predictability. Nevertheless, it is also feasible to consider a different view and argue that alliances can be the result of something other than mere strategic business oriented decisions, and to question whether they are in fact in search of ‘real’ cooperation, or whether the fact that they are structured is merely a way to demonstrate what league of players a university can be associated to, as a means to promote their interest. It is also possible to question if creating an alliance is part of a marketing plan, possibly with the aim to recruit students or attract corporate funding. Plausibly, there is a range of different types of university alliances where the results of their structure are producing results that do not account for more than signed papers, while others may contain massive institutional collaboration. Nonetheless, it is clear that a response to external pressures, as well as to the potential opportunities for capitalizing from the changing context within the academic environment, is the formation of alliances, partnerships, consortiums, and other types of close
forms of cooperation between universities. Thus, one of the objectives of this study is to describe the selected alliances, providing a brief account of their recent accomplishments and results within the academic environment in which they operate, and to consider on whether or not the selected alliances are performing according to their stated purposes to join forces. In addition, through the review of the literature regarding academic cooperation structures, one goal with this study is also to provide an account of the type of arrangements that might comprise the formation of an alliance, which might include a range from extremes such as voluntary cooperation agreements to merger structure types.

**Background to Research on University Alliances and Methods Applied**

During the time of this study, it has been found that the available literature and research material in this subject matter is limited, with most of the data and literature concentrated on university mergers. Often in the literature the definitions on university and academic joint ventures and mergers have unclear explanations, and can be labelled in different types of classifications. Kay Harman and Lynn Meek edited a special issue in *Higher Education* on academic mergers (2002), and many of the contributions in that issue touch upon circumstances of relevance to both mergers and alliances. Lang (2002) refers to a figure previously suggested by Harman (1989), which may serve as an illustration of the problem of the lack of concrete terms or definitions, or as what we can interpret as slightly “sliding” definitions. Figure: 1. Harman (1989) places different types of cooperation and academic joint ventures in a range in two extremes, sliding or moving between the ranges of “Voluntary Cooperation” to “Amalgamation through Merger.” Hence, what in one case one might call cooperation; in a different case or situation it might be called consortia.

“While the terms “cooperation” is often loosely used to subsume consortia, federation, affiliation and even mergers, they are in practical fact different. An affiliation is not a federation. A federation is not a consortium, and so on. The fact, however, that the various forms of inter-institutional cooperation are different and far from inter-changeable does not mean that they do not occupy a common theoretical continuum” (Lang, 2002:157).
Voluntary cooperation  Consortia  Federation  Amalgamation through merger

Figure 1. Harman’s continuum of inter-institutional arrangements. Source: (Lang 2002)

Using the terminology presented by Harman (1989) and referred to by Lang (2002), (for the purpose of our analysis of academic structures in this study, and not with the purpose of presenting terminology for a lexicon of inter-institutional cooperation), we rely on and interpret these terms in the following manner:

- **Voluntary Cooperation:** intentional collaboration or mutual assisting without requiring any specific commitment from the parts.

- **Consortia:** a joint association that takes place in agreement with various parts, establishing terms for collaboration and joint efforts towards a common goal. Consortia are formal organizations that exist apart from the institutions that constitute their memberships. These institutions are separately incorporated, and they have internal regulations and statues as independent organizations. They have a relative permanent and have a formal structure and typically are “one-dimensional” in the sense that they provide only one service or program (Lang, 2002).

- **Federation:** the formation of a coalition or a partnership between parts, with each institution retaining authority to grant degrees. In federations the participating institutions remain autonomous. It retains its assets and it is responsible for their management, and its liabilities. Its governing board remains in place, and it holds authority to make academic appointments, admissions, and offer employments. Its faculty competes for and receives grants for research directly (Lang, 2002).

- **Amalgamation through Merger:** The combination or fusion of two or more organizations, becoming a single entity.
**Methods of Analysis**

In this study we consider ten academic alliances (Table 1) that have been established during the past decade throughout Europe, North America, and Asia. Background material on each of the selected alliances is provided, drawing attention to the original objectives, current conditions, and highlights of significant outcomes. It should be noted that each alliance is treated as a case study, and that the selection process of the case studies were based on variables such as the described types of structures in the alliances or partnerships and geographic locations. There are a number of other alliances that have been explored; however, the lack of accessibility to data has limited their inclusion in the selection of the following ten case studies:

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It is worth mentioning that for this study it has been useful to rely on findings from a parallel investigation and in-depth analysis of the preconditions and prerequisites for a merger or alliance between two Swedish universities: Örebro University and Mälardalen University (Broström et al, 2005). The in-depth research conducted on these universities has provided valuable information applicable to this project, by allowing the use of reference material in order to reflect upon different conditions and similarities from these experiences. In addition, we also draw on the experiences from an earlier study of the preconditions for an alliance between two Swedish technical universities: The Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg (Broström et al, 2004). This Swedish alliance is included and presented among the ten cases in this study.
With these selected objects of investigation we explore and discuss the phenomenon of university alliances with respect to the following questions:

- What are some of the objectives and results that are sought after through an alliance?
- What are some potential risks that can arise from the formation of an alliance?
- Are there tangible results that have resulted from the collaborating structures formed?

With the purpose of addressing these questions, a number of methods including semi-structured interviews have been conducted with representatives from the investigated universities. In addition, a simple questionnaire was sent to representatives of the alliances, in which they were asked to provide a ranking behind potential motives for the formation of their respective alliances. The ranking included variables for potential motives like: economies of scale, synergies, revenues, efficiency, recruitment, renewal, commercialisation benefits, joint marketing of research and teaching, and stronger leadership.

The respondents were asked to rank these variables from less important (1) to most important (5). Responses to this questionnaire were not provided by all of the fundamental parts in the alliances, and some of the respondents requested to keep the information as confidential. Thus, the synthesis of potential motivations for structuring of an alliance, and the summary table which we present in this study, are based on our analysis of the material obtained through public information documents, and in some cases, this is also supported by information provided through the questionnaire responses and interviews conducted. It is also appropriate to mention that most interviews were conducted over the telephone, with the exception of personal interviews held with representatives from Øresund University, and from the Cambridge-MIT Institute.

Hence, relying on these information sources, as well as on the collected empirical material, a synopsis of each of the selected alliances is provided drawing attention to the original objectives, current conditions, and highlighting significant outcomes. The information gathered has permitted us to make some reflections related to the positioning of the structure of alliances, as well as to analyze and establish a discussion of potential risks and benefits associated with the formation of alliances.
**Alliances Considered in the Study**

**Wharton-INSEAD Alliance (USA-France)**

An important incentive for the alliance between the already top-ranking business schools Wharton (United States), and INSEAD (France), has been to take advantage of the opportunities that internationalisation offers. This alliance, which was established in 2002, renewed their commitment to continue to work together for 3 more years in 2004 (Wharton/INSEAD Alliance, 2007).

This alliance has been operating successfully indicated by the growth in the number of MBA students registered, the number of courses, joint programs, and research projects conducted in parallel. Currently the alliance offers courses in four of their university campuses in Fontainebleau, Singapore, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. By providing access to four campuses this alliance can access multinational clients demanding global executive education, as well as open enrolment programs that allow students to choose several locations for their studies (Wharton/INSEAD Alliance, 2007). Among some of the stated essential tools that ought to be offered by a global education system, which the alliance aims to provide, is the fact that it allows a diverse student body working together both inside and outside of the classroom. Accordingly in 2006, the entering MBA class was more than 30% non-United States students, which brought a different perspective into the education, which enriches the overall learning experience. In addition, an essential element for a successful international alliance and international program is the global content in teaching materials, and faculty, which needs to be actively engaged in research that impacts global businesses.

In aiming to reach their objectives, this alliance has been focusing heavily on research as a means of developing new business knowledge. Thus this alliance has also allowed students and faculty to capitalize and to take advantage of each of these schools’ “breadth and depth of connections”. This has resulted also in their reporting of successful student exchange programs, successful joint executive education programs, and new collaborations in terms of research (Wharton/INSEAD Alliance 2007a). In addition, as both INSEAD and Wharton focus on research “as a means of developing new business knowledge,” and with the aim to support faculty members from both schools to work together on research projects, and pedagogical materials this alliance recently established the Center for Global Research and Development (The INSEAD/Wharton Alliance, 2007a).
Overall, both Wharton and Insead statements are that they are pleased with the relationship, which was launched at a difficult time given the downturn in the economy, the bursting of the dot-com bubble, and the September 11 effects, which pointed to a high risk at the time. However, according to the Wharton reports, the results have been a positive experience, which can be demonstrated by the fact that together the alliance has been able to participate in a number of significant research projects, joint education courses, as well as the growing numbers of MBA students registered in the diverse campuses, specially under those circumstances in which the alliance was structured (The INSEAD/Wharton Alliance, 2007).

**Cambridge-MIT Institute (CMI) (USA-UK)**

From the time of its inception, the alliance between Cambridge University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT (Cambridge-MIT Institute, CMI) has aimed at bringing together the cutting-edge expertise of both of the universities to enhance entrepreneurship, productivity and competitiveness. One important point of departure for the alliance is that innovative ideas arise when researchers at leading institutions work together and exchange and develop ideas. CMI’s mission is thus to “think the unthinkable” by funding experimental research projects with direct applications in industry (Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2004). Over the past six years, these two universities have been working together to explore new ways in which universities in partnership with others might help enhance the productivity, competitiveness and entrepreneurship. Their statements included that they have developed new approaches to education, exchange and research, by "convening" a broad range of representatives from industry, government and universities. Thus, the result from working together has led to the development of transferable capabilities in terms of educating, convening, and exchanging and sharing of ideas. “Over 100 other academic institutions, more than 1000 companies, and a wide range of other stakeholders have participated” (The Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2006).

Accordingly, over the last 6 years, the Cambridge-MIT Institute has funded over 100 projects involving multiple partners at Cambridge, MIT, and beyond which have included significant activities and results within disciplines ranging from health care, transport, engineering, IT, and others. In addition, the types of projects range from the development of courses in a joint manner, such as development of new courses to support a curriculum in Biological Engineering, to joint Urban Planning and Design Studios. The joint Urban Planning and Design Studios aim
at educating planning and architecture students at the University of Cambridge and MIT about ways in which to use space, design, transportation, and public policies to accommodate technology and development while focusing on sustaining liveable environments (The Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2006). In November 2006, a project that received significant attention in the media was a joint project in which a silent aircraft, aiming at quieter and more environmentally sustainable flying, took one step further as researchers from Cambridge University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) presented this revolutionary concept. The Silent Aircraft Initiative has been funded by the Cambridge-MIT Institute since 2003, as a collaboration led by professors at Cambridge University Engineering Department, and professors at the Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT. The project, which has a grant from CMI of £2.3 million, brings together teams involved in different aspects of aircraft design for a multidisciplinary approach. The initiative has involved 40 researchers from the University of Cambridge and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) all driven by a common cause with a very clear mission (The Cambridge-MIT Institute. (2006b)

Further results from the alliance include the establishment of the Cambridge-MIT Institute "Partnership Program", which has a goal to provide opportunities to facilitate work towards building of “meaningful and sustainable research and education partnerships related to science, technology and innovation” (The Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2006a). In summary, the timeline of projects developed in partnership since their start, as presented in the document Working in Partnership (2006), indicates that the collaboration from these universities has been significant from the time of its inception, clearly visible from the increase in the number of exchange students, joint publications, graduates from the program, as well as the number of joint events that have increased and which continue to grow significantly (The Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2006).

**The SETsquared Partnership – Universities: Bath, Bristol, Southampton, Surrey (UK)**
The SETsquared partnership is an alliance and collaboration of the universities of Bath, Bristol, Southampton and Surrey. The partnership, which was formed in 2002, supports and encourages the development of business “spin-outs” from collaboration in university research. The partnership collaborates with industry, by providing access to university knowledge and their facilities, as well as business operations and technology transfer through services specifically
aimed at high-growth potential technology start-ups from both within and outside the university setting (SetSquared Partnership 2007).

One of the objectives of the Partnership is to invest in “Top Research” which is considered an essential component that catches the interest of venture capitalist and research foundations, which are interested in university companies. For this purpose, and with the intention of gaining access to seed capital, all four SETsquared Partnership universities have agreements for accessing support for commercialisation activities, seed capital finance, and ongoing strategic and financial support for spin-out companies to maximise their chances of success. Additionally, global collaboration is essential in their objectives, and for this they work with a Department of Trade and Industry’s £1.5 million “Science Bridge” grant. With this type of funding the Partnership has been able to develop a link with the University of California San Diego, and the University of California Irvine in the United States. The aim of this has also been to identify areas of collaboration for research in the areas of bioengineering, wireless technology, and sustainable and environmental habitats (SetSquared Partnership 2007).

Furthermore, the Partnership maintains that some 170 companies have been supported by the different SETsquared Centres, and that private investors have been contributing with over 15 million pounds. Among major achievements one may consider that their support in the development of four spinout companies since the start of 2002 has created a combined market capitalisation of over £160 million. In addition, the partnership asserts to have raised over £45 million of follow-on funding for various ventures, and in a number of trade sales (SetSquared Partnership 2007a).

**The White Rose University Consortium (UK)**
The White Rose University Consortium is a strategic partnership between Yorkshire’s three leading research universities in Leeds, Sheffield and York. The consortium was established in 1997. The aim of the partnership is to develop the region by combining the strengths of the universities, particularly in science and technology. The means to achieve this are increased collaborative research, intensification of industrial partnerships and joint postgraduate programmes. The Consortium aims to enable the combined research strengths of the three universities to more easily attract major research projects and increase the share of private funding. The partnership also aims at a combined research power that is comparable to that of the universities of Cambridge and Oxford (The White Rose University Consortium (2007)).
The Consortium does not provide funding, however it works to facilitate and support the partner universities’ creativity and innovation, and to ensure that together they can secure the funding and resources they need for their research, teaching and entrepreneurial initiatives. The model has been a success. The Consortium managed to exceed its original goal of £3 million with a good margin. In 2003/2004 it managed to secure funding and research projects for a value of £40 million for the White Rose universities. In June 2006, partners from the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield were awarded £4 million to undertake world-class research and provide advanced research training in Japanese and Chinese Studies as part of a government drive to strengthen Britain’s specialised research capacity in the area. They established a White Rose East Asia Centre (WREAC) with the objective to create what will be one of five new collaborative centres that may create a world-class research to diffuse the UK’s understanding of the Arabic-speaking world, China, Japan and Eastern Europe (The White Rose University Consortium, 2007a).

In addition in May 2006, the public was expected to benefit from closer links between researchers, healthcare companies and doctors as a grant of £4.7 million was secured by a consortium of Yorkshire's universities, health trusts and global companies. The grant was provided by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF), with the goal to have a White Rose Health Innovation Partnership (WHIP), coordinated by the White Rose University Consortium, with the aim to have “innovative partnerships” that could provide a dynamic framework for the delivery of new technologies, methodologies and practices into the medical and healthcare sector at a much faster rate than has previously been possible. When the announcement was made about partnership, three global healthcare companies – Smith & Nephew, Johnson & Johnson and B Braun confirmed their participation in the initiative. This demonstrates the amount of interest that this types of partnerships receive, as well as the potential for increasing the amount of expertise and expertise from which the partnership can benefit from toward their overall objectives (The White Rose University Consortium, 2007a).

**THE ÖRESUND UNIVERSITY (SWEDEN-DENMARK)**

The Öresund University was established in 1997 as collaboration between universities in the Öresund region (Denmark and Sweden), including the major ones such as Lund University, Copenhagen University and the Technical University of Denmark. The collaboration includes other schools as well and together there are twelve universities and university colleges that
The idea was to create a loose association of universities, which, over time, would collaborate in research and education. The Øresund Bridge, which was being constructed around that time over the sound between Sweden and Denmark, was an important driving force. The bridge was expected to provide more opportunities for taking full advantage of what the region of the sound had to offer. In particular, student mobility would be easier and the universities could therefore make courses available across the border (Øresund University, 2007).

There were three important reasons for creating the Øresund University: One was “selective excellence” based on the realisation that no university can excel in every area, especially not the smaller ones. An alliance with a large, combined resource base was considered as a structure that would make it possible for each of the members, with a good conscience to select the fields in which to concentrate their resources, and thereby achieve excellence (Øresund University, 2007). The member universities are:

1. Copenhagen Business School
2. Danish University of Education
3. IT University of Copenhagen
4. Lund University
5. Malmö University
6. Roskilde University
7. Technical University of Denmark
8. The Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture
9. The Royal School of Library and Information Science
10. The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences/Alnarp
11. University of Copenhagen
12. University of Kristianstad

According to the Øresund University (2007) the collaboration between the 12 universities includes the following achievements and facts and figures:

- 140,000 students
- 10,000 researchers
- 6,500 PhD students
• 4,000 International students
• 800 International partner universities
• 8 Nobel Prizes
• 5th In Europe in scientific output

Source: (Öresund University, 2007a)

The facts and figures presented are impressive, nevertheless, it is difficult to assess the level of collaboration that these universities have had since their inception. One tangible project that the collaboration has begun is the Öresund Study Gateway. The Öresund Study Gateway is an online webportal that gathers information about all the study possibilities at the 12 universities in the Öresund University consortium. This should provide the possibility to access more than 4000 educational programs and courses for the students of the collaborating schools (Öresund University, 2007).

**Royal Institute of Technology – Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden)**
The strategic alliance between the Royal Institute of Technology and Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden was formed in 2005 after a thorough investigation of the pro and cons of enhanced co-operation (Broström et al, 2004). The decision to form an alliance between the most prominent Swedish technical universities, and the historical rivals, was giving a large echo in the Swedish university system. Both universities conducted independently a strategic review, which disclosed an increased competitive landscape of students, researchers and cooperation with companies. The consideration of forming an alliance grew out of these strategic findings. The major opportunity envisaged with the alliance was to market the two universities to students and researchers, particularly in Asia.

The alliance has so far established several new initiatives in the development of various master programmes. However the main single event is the formation of an Asian office (together with the Karolinska Institute) in Beijing with the objective to market the three universities to Chinese students and to search for collaboration with Asian universities in various research fields. The alliance has led to intense collaboration and information exchange between the two technical universities, even including joint board meetings. Nevertheless, there are currently no joint
programs offered to date, but there appears to be continuous interest in further extending the collaboration efforts between these universities.

**University of Miami (USA) and McGill University (Canada)**
The University of Miami (UM) in the United States and McGill University in Canada signed a strategic alliance in 2004, with the purpose to collaborate in the fields of engineering and information technology. The objectives as presented in the announcement documents were to boost joint ventures, grant making opportunities and faculty and student exchanges between the two universities (McGill University, 2004). As part of the faculty exchange that is expected to result from the alliance, UM and McGill University were expected to write joint proposals to international funding agencies to improve research initiatives and increase the economic impact in their respective communities. Since the announcement of this alliance, it has been difficult to find further information with regard to the level of joint efforts after 2004, and whether or not the formation has resulted in further research or further commitment, or whether this alliance has continued. Through the contact taken with the responsible parties of this alliance, the responses indicated that there appears to be some collaboration taking place; however, it has not been possible to determine whether there are current ongoing projects that can provide tangible results of their collaboration.

**IDEA League (UK-The Netherlands-Switzerland-Germany)**
IDEA League is a strategic alliance initiated in October 1999 between: Imperial College in London, Technische Universiteit in Delft, (TU Delft), Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich (ETH Zürich), and Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule in Aachen (RWTH Aachen). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 27 March 2006, in which the Grandes Écoles de Paris (ParisTech) joined the IDEA League. The addition of this school to the alliance includes a number of collaboration initiatives including the ability to create joint Master courses, the first IDEA summer school focusing on Biotechnology and Bioengineering Applications in Medicine. There are joint grant schemes for research and grant applications. The initiatives are in line with the objectives of the IDEA League, which from the time of its initiation has been committed to working with the highest international standards in both research and education. Collectively, the purpose of the alliance is to develop competitive master programmes in line with the universities’ internationalisation policy and in accordance with the Bologna Process.
The benefits that IDEA anticipated from the alliance included the ability to recruit international students, as well as to use their collective resources to attract more public and private funding. Thus from the time of its inception, the following are some of the major achievements accomplished in the past seven years:

- ParisTech (Grandes Écoles de Paris) joined the IDEA League, signing of Memorandum of Understanding on 27 March 2006.
- First IDEA summer school: Biotechnology and Bioengineering Applications in Medicine in September 2006.
- Implementation of grant scheme for research collaborations.
- Preparation of a statement on level of degrees for Bologna follow-up meeting (May 2007 in London).
- Summer School in Biotechnology and Bio-engineering Applications in Medicine, 2006.
- Setting up of a Joint Master Course in Applied Geophysics (between Aachen, Delft and ETH).
- Agreement introducing a grant scheme for research projects for students.
- Joint master courses are set up.
- Scholarship programme launched.
- The IDEA League initiated an E-learning collaboration. The first workshop led to various joint projects, including:
  - developing a joint distant-learning programme;
  - focusing on libraries to form collaborating virtual knowledge centres;
  - sharing software tools in evaluation schemes.

In order to achieve these results and standards, the IDEA League states that it has been essential to use common quality management principles for their educational programmes (IDEA League, 2006). Furthermore, the official representatives of the IDEA League partner universities are committed in terms of making the structure work and develop, for this they hold annual meetings for evaluation and validation of the achievements of the various projects, as well as to set directives for further co-operation (Buttner, 2002).
Glasgow-Strathclyde Universities Strategic Alliance (Synergy) (UK)
The alliance between University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde (Synergy) was established in 1998. The objectives were to establish higher levels of joint research activity, offer an improved range of teaching and learning opportunities and to enhance administrative and service functions. A number of new research and teaching activities have been initiated in areas of for example understanding schizophrenia, smart splints to mend tendons and several new teaching initiatives such as the Glasgow School of Law and the Glasgow School of Social Work (launched in August 2004). The expected outcomes regarding research were higher quality research and higher research income mainly through critical mass and economies of scale, enhanced interdisciplinary research and the joint marketing of research. In teaching, the main expected outcomes were in offering more attractive programmes and enhanced curricula as well on economising on the development of new teaching initiatives (Glasgow – Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, 2004).

The universities have a combined research portfolio of over £100 million, thus the universities claim that they are major international forces in research (Glasgow – Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, 2004). Part of the claimed success by Synergy is given to the fact that since 1998, the partnership has shifted the focus of research efforts in the two universities from competition to collaboration. Accordingly, the shift provided the opportunity to enhance both institutions and to provide academic and financial benefits. Currently, it includes collaborations in teaching, some of which share resources and reduce costs, as well as others, which aim to develop new courses that neither institution could offer alone (Glasgow – Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, 2004). As Synergy has developed over the years, the benefits (as demonstrated by the large research portfolio), clearly demonstrate that the collaboration is working and can confirm that what once began as a strategic alliance in research has developed into research, teaching and into the support of essential infrastructure in areas such as library provision at the two universities (Glasgow – Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, 2004).

Although as any other universities, this alliance continues to face constraints from reductions in government funding, nevertheless those who can access opportunities can market their research, expertise and teaching programmes in a global marketplace. “Optimum success world-wide requires collaboration at local, national and international levels. It is within this context that the partnership between the two Universities is taking place” (Glasgow – Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, 2004).
The International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU) (Eight countries)

The International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU) was officially created in early 2006. The members of IARU include ten of the world's leading research universities: Australian National University ANU, ETH Zürich, National University of Singapore, Peking University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Cambridge, University of Copenhagen, University of Oxford, the University of Tokyo and Yale University. The alliance's aim is to sponsor a range of student and faculty exchange programs but also plan to go beyond traditional exchange programs to introduce joint and dual degree programs, joint research projects, and scholarly conferences. One goal established for the future, as the alliance develops, is to seek support for its research projects and to enhance collaboration in commercialisation of research. Joint research projects have been discussed including topics such as global movement of people, ageing and health, food and water, energy, and security (International Alliance of Research Universities IARU, 2007a). This is a relatively new alliance thus there are no specific tangible results presented or available for evaluation. Nevertheless, the following activities are planned, encouraged and are to be supported by the Alliance: Summer (northern hemisphere) internships; Key conferences with encouraged participation/contribution from alliance academics; Student exchange at both undergraduate and postgraduate level; Development of joint/dual degree arrangements; Arrangements at each university to support faculty exchange.

One current program is through the Australian National University (ANU), which is actively involved in several IARU projects including a research theme entitled “Global Change”. This has been stated to be the integrating research theme for IARU collaboration over 2005-2007, which was to be explored via topics and “led” by IARU members. For each topic discussion papers were proposed to be prepared, and the first of the academic workshops for each topic were held in Europe over September to November 2006 (International Alliance of Research Universities IARU, 2007). Furthermore, the workshop hosts have been asked to produce papers by mid-February 2007 in which outlines for specific research (and education) proposals were to be presented. These topics are stated to have been explored in a similar way to the "Global Change and Sustainability" research topics. Finally, as this is recently established cooperation, there are a number of plans that comprise their goal in continuing the development of this international alliance, including stated interests to work jointly on benchmarking and develop
shared positions on key public policy issues that are relevant globally (International Alliance of Research Universities IARU, 2007).

Table 2: Summary of alliances’ significant accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alliance / Partnership/Consortium</th>
<th>Significant Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cambridge-MIT</strong>&lt;br&gt;Year Established: 2000</td>
<td>• Establishment of the Cambridge-MIT Institute, “Partnership Program”.&lt;br&gt;• The program aims to provide opportunities to facilitate work towards building of “meaningful and sustainable research and education partnerships related to science, technology and innovation”&lt;br&gt;• The partnership has collaborated in over 100 joint projects and publications. (The Cambridge-MIT Institute, 2006a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wharton-INSEAD</strong>&lt;br&gt;Year established: 2002</td>
<td>• First co-branded Alliance program.&lt;br&gt;• Newly established Alliance Center for Global Research and Development.&lt;br&gt;• Book published by the alliance: Gatignon, H. &amp; Kimberly, J.R. Eds. (2004).&lt;br&gt;• The alliance has collaborated in over 70 joint projects &amp; publication Source: Wharton/INSEAD Alliance (2007a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>McGill University – University of Miami</strong>&lt;br&gt;Year established: 2004</td>
<td>• No further information material was available on this alliance, aside from the announcement of the formation of the alliance made public in 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SETsquared</strong>&lt;br&gt;Year established: 2002</td>
<td>• The flotation of four spin-out companies since the start of 2002 created a combined market capitalisation of over £160 million.&lt;br&gt;• The Partnership has obtained over £45 million of follow-on funding for various ventures in difficult markets and has succeeded with a number of trade sales. Source: (SetSquared Partnership (2007a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The White Rose University Consortium (White Rose)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Year established: 1997</td>
<td>• Through collaborative partnerships they exceeded their goal of £3m&lt;br&gt;• In 2003/4 financial year achieved funding and research projects worth £40m for the White Rose Universities. Source: The White Rose University Consortium (2007a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Øresund University</strong>&lt;br&gt;is a consortium of twelve universities Sweden &amp; Denmark&lt;br&gt;Year established: 1997</td>
<td>Through collaborative efforts the following results are presented:&lt;br&gt;• 140,000 students, 10,000 researchers, 6,500 PhD students&lt;br&gt;• 4,000 International students, 800 International partner universities&lt;br&gt;• 8 Nobel Prizes, 5th In Europe in scientific output Source: Øresund University (2007a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDEA League</strong></td>
<td>• On 27 March 2006 the Grandes Écoles de Paris (ParisTech) joined the IDEA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In several of the case studies we found underlying motives behind forming an alliance, and establishing of an alliance philosophy as essential, some which could be summarised as follows: Cooperation facilitates profiling, specialisation and international excellence, which enables the universities to achieve international critical mass, something that is often considered as crucial in the competition for external funding from both national research councils and global corporations. In some cases such as The White Rose University Consortium, the Wharton-INSEAD alliance and the Cambridge-MIT Institute, the cooperation exceeds the expectations with respect to securing more funding from the business community. However, in some cases the need for increased corporate funding is still an important element to work towards, as in some cases having access to more funding from the private sector is an important prerequisite in order to increase levels of government financial support.

A number of illustrative key words and phrases appear in strategy documents and in articles that describe the new competitive landscape: “scale”, “world class”, “restructure”, “full range of services” and “create new centres of excellence”. The internal discussion is thus focusing on more efficient universities and perhaps, most importantly, universities that are more forceful and competitive in what they deliver, even if they may be more selective when doing so. The case studies show that key terminology like ‘profiling’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘strategy’ are no longer
merely education policy rhetoric; they are a reality. We are already beginning to see the results internationally through new field formations. Often the experiences are positive ones such as in the cases presented above where tangible results in terms of high quality research conducted, courses developed, as well as amounts of capital raised for international efforts. Nevertheless, it is also difficult to separate how much of the results presented or the goals and objectives presented by the different alliances are actually tangible or achievable. Thus what is the difference between the rhetoric and reality presented? In some cases it is clear that there are tangible results and it is possible to state that the alliances are actually working and producing positive results. In other cases it is necessary to critically analyse their results presented.

It is also possible to state that in the analysis of these alliances, a theme recognized is that of the playing fields on which the universities and the business community operate. Despite the completely different backgrounds and traditions, that is, between the traditional academic vs. business environments, these appear to overlap and resemble one another. Universities and the business community will essentially remain different and continue to operate in distinct normative systems; it is a question of degree rather than type. However, since it is a process that follows a gradual change, it is possible for different universities to take different strategic positions and to lean more towards the modes of the business communities (Clark 1998). In the cases analysed it is clear that many of the alliances and partnerships aim to capitalize from the opportunities offered by the possibilities to capture larger markets and participate in the globalisation economy. However, it is still clear that in many of these cases, their goals, at least as stated are still set in terms of academic and research endeavours and with sights into furthering scientific environments. The benefits for universities are instead the opportunities for branding, profiling, differentiation and synergies in teaching, research and cooperation. In this respect, the potential is both significant and likely to be fulfilled with a well-executed alliance.

The alliances in this study were formed over the past ten years, and interesting variables have been found that ought to be considered for further evaluation in future studies of a different nature. The positive experiences included accounts such as the emergence of unexpected and new ideas as a result of the alliance. The negative experiences included opinions about problems that they had encountered in terms of underestimation of the management capacity, and the extent of resources needed to make the alliance happen. In this respect, it is possible to state that the experiences from university alliances can be similar to those in the business world. Thus, the probability of an alliance’s success can be increased when organisations match each
other with respect to physical, intangible and organisational resources, and where there are significant common value-systems – historically, culturally and strategically.

It is possible to state that there are different premises in terms of the structural changes in the academic sector, and with further analysis it should be feasible to find different variables in the ten alliances, however, the scope of this study limits an in-depth examination of the particular factors that have encouraged the formation of each individual alliance. Nevertheless, without examining the specific factors that may lead an alliance to form, a synthesis of potential motives behind the formation of alliances is presented in Table 3. The motives analyzed included variables like: economies of scale, synergies, revenues, efficiency, recruitment, renewal, commercialisation benefits, joint marketing of research and teaching, stronger leadership and increased international image. Table 3 illustrates some of the assessed important motives for the ten alliances in our study.

Table 3: Summary of potential motives behind the formation of ten international alliances and partnerships.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>Wharton-INSEAD</th>
<th>UM-McGill</th>
<th>SETsquared</th>
<th>CMI</th>
<th>White Rose</th>
<th>Øresund</th>
<th>IARU</th>
<th>Chalmers-KTH</th>
<th>Synergy</th>
<th>LARU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economies of scale</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergies</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercialisation benefits</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint marketing of research and teaching</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stronger leadership</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased International Image</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*The table was created using responses to rankings provided by some of the alliances, for which we have included only the variables that were given the highest ranking in the responses. In the cases where we did not receive responses from all the appropriate members in the alliances, we have used our analysis of the public document reviewed in which statements of purpose or goals were presented. Thus the table presents some of our assessment and views of what might be potential motives behind their formation.
The motives behind the alliances appear to vary, but a common theme recognized is the expression for the need for preparation for a new international approach that emphasises the need to reach larger markets. In addition, the need to address issues concerning renewal, profiling, and branding of research, and educational offerings, and competition for internationally mobile students and companies, are among other demands leading to consideration of alliance type structures of cooperation.

**Discussion**

Alliances are formed and will keep being formed in the higher education sector, just as they have been formed in the business world. The benefits are likely to be opportunities for profiling and branding, combination of strengths and generation of synergies in education, research and cooperation. Therefore one important priority is the creation of a common vision for a possible alliance defining content, the level of ambition and the connection to the overall strategic development.

Returning to the interpretation of academic cooperation structures, it is possible to state that after our analysis of the ten alliances, we consider that the arrangements comprehend variables that are found in ‘federation and consortiums’ type of structures. It is relevant to state that we can place the alliances analyzed within the sliding graph that goes from voluntary cooperation to a merger structure. Hence, following the terminology that we referred to in the beginning of this paper, and as presented by Harman (1989), and Lang (2002), we can interpret the term “alliance” to comprehend variables from both “Consortia” and “Federation”, Figure 2. In our interpretation of alliances the term refers to arrangements which after being examined, we consider indicate that they comprehend variables that are particularly found in these two types of structures. The structure that follows an alliance seems more intensive than what one would find in a “Voluntary cooperation” arrangement. And, in our analysis of the ten cases, none of the alliance structures examined go all the way to comprehend the variables particularly found in a merger.
It is however apparent that there is a great variety among the structures and accomplishments in the alliances, where some configurations and organizations are flexible and “intentional” in their character, while other structures can be intensive and far-reaching, and may involve a different number of partners. Some as we have indicated have not developed as expected, and perhaps can be questioned if they have been structured for marketing reasons, or whether there were specific events in the implementation processes that caused them to stagnate.

In addition, it is possible to state that there can be a number of risks and negative experiences, which might result from an alliance. There are threats and risks that arise during the inception periods and in the implementation processes. However, these risks play side by side of large opportunities such as the potential to create and establish powerful forms of cooperation to compete for international grants, research programmes, as well as for attracting corporate endowments, such as in the Cambridge-MIT, and the Wharton/Insead alliances. In relation to these factors, the analysis of the various case studies indicates that building alliances cannot be treated as yet another separate endeavour among a university’s already diverse range of activities. Alliances can be considered actually as a way to deal with the lack of cohesion. The process of structuring, developing, maintaining, and expanding an alliance requires aside from financial and human resources, constant care, new incentives, new structures and the capacity of the alliance participants to be open to the new opportunities that alliances can and often do provide. There is also much more to learn in this regard from how the business community exploits the benefits of alliances, in a manner as to minimize these risks on academic alliances.

Perhaps the most significant risk relates to “soft” values linked to traditions, the brands and the role that each of the universities play at the national and regional levels and internally with respect to its own staff and students. These are assets that are difficult to account for and difficult to value, nevertheless it is essential to consider these variables, specifically during initial
formation stages, in order to minimize the potential threat to these values. An alliance must build legitimacy based on its own merits, and in that manner gradually convince the players that it is appropriate to proceed to the next stage. This is another argument for ensuring that a number of clear strategies are defined regarding how to tackle the initial phases of an alliance. These strategies should not have problematic or irreversible consequences if the alliance, despite of efforts made, would run into difficulties. Therefore, it can be preferable to begin with educational initiatives with short take-off times than attempting to restructure research.

One question that could be asked is whether 1+1 really equals 2 as is often assumed in the business alliance literature (Gomes-Casseres, 2002). In terms of this question, it is possible to relate it to the fact that research funding, whether it derives from a government source, a research council or a foundation, does not fall under any formal distribution policy mandate. At the same time, it is difficult to get away from the fact that such considerations are fairly common in reality. From this point of view, it may be risky for the parties in an alliance to be seen as one player. This could actually lead to them being punished for their cooperation. Therefore, in order to minimize this potential risk, an alliance ought to be formed in a strategic manner, in a way such as that it becomes a “third player”, at least initially. A third player ought to, through cooperation, be able to act as a recipient of resources without this hindering or inhibiting resource-seeking activities by the participants in the alliance.

The difficulties related to geographical distances should not be underestimated. With today’s technology, contact networks can easily be extended to other places, as is exemplified by CMI and the Wharton-INSEAD alliance. However, experience from other sectors show that everyday personal contact and interactions are important, and perhaps even crucial – for the long-term success of an alliance. Thus, there needs to be a great deal of ingenuity and new forms of concrete collaboration to avoid a situation where an alliance is merely a set of general strategic decisions, or at worst a “distribution policy”.

Perhaps one major risk is that an alliance is announced, attracts attention, is motivated by expectations for change and great improvement, but then in practice does not lead to much change at all. This, to some extent, appears to be what has happened with the Øresund University.
One uncertain factor in this respect is always the staff and the students, i.e. the very groups that are supposed to gain from an alliance. To begin with, the students and the staff need to believe that the essential benefits of an alliance outweigh the disadvantages. It is crucial that a thorough and sensitive process is carried out to ensure maximum commitment to the changes. This is not to say that every individual will experience a change. In a situation like this, one cannot ignore the fact that there will be the usual opposition and a well thought-out strategy should be put in place for such a scenario.

Some of the potential arguments for and against an alliance are summarised in Table 4. The table also contains perspectives on the opportunities and threats that a strategic alliance may include. Although these perspectives have not been deeply analyzed, these are presented here with the intention of introducing a topic considered to deserve further discussion, and which is suggested for further development in later studies.

Table 4: Arguments for and against an alliance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments in favour:</th>
<th>Arguments against:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Profiling and concentration</td>
<td>- Traditions, reduced autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Easier to compete for increased funding</td>
<td>- Regional linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Greater opportunities for renewal</td>
<td>- Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cooperation, critical mass, competence</td>
<td>- Relative weakening of the influence of heads of faculties (or equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recruitment (international)</td>
<td>- More bureaucracy, slower reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- International cooperation</td>
<td>- Legal and financial administration obstacles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities:</th>
<th>Threats:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Classic merger arguments (synergies etc.)</td>
<td>- Weakened identity and brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Easier to obtain new resources for reappraisal and restructuring</td>
<td>- Less chance of establishing strong alumni support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Educational opportunities (international recruitment, masters and Ph.D.s)</td>
<td>- Impact on undergraduate education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship with industry and the community</td>
<td>- Many subjects will feel threatened (more than the number that will benefit?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- More resources to handle intellectual property issues</td>
<td>- Trade union aspects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The possible positive and negative effects of many of the alliances will become more apparent with time. But throughout this analysis only a few cases have been found where the main motive for an alliance has been to rationalise operations according to the classic business model through extensive closures and restructuring measures. Rather, the reason behind alliances is to collaborate in order to deliver more efficient education and research programmes, especially in terms of what is offered to international students, top researchers and global corporations.

The content and level of ambition of an alliance must be related to the overall systemic effects. Experience from the business world indicates that strategic alliances must be in line with the overall visions and strategies of the players. An alliance must be seen as a means of achieving the organisation’s objectives rather than an end in itself. A number of unsuccessful alliances might be marked by this type of confusion. The analysis of the ten university alliances considered in this study indicate that their structures have different purposes, and are organised in different ways depending on the overall focus and the route the parties are taking.

Furthermore, among the goals presented by many of the alliances are that they are eager to become more attractive to external financing organisations and to secure more corporate funding. Several alliances have enjoyed success in this respect. It appears as if companies have welcomed their aspirations for bigger and more specialised research initiatives. The new competitive climate and the fact that industry and enterprise are becoming increasingly global, means that the challenge is to ensure that the actors have enough cutting-edge expertise and critical mass to attract both regionally-based as well as globally-active companies to support research at the universities, or conduct research in cooperation with them. High profile research in an international perspective and a willingness to fully commit to research initiated by external players are crucial factors, and strong, interacting institutions are the lubricant.

Hence, in the same manner as in the business world, university alliances must be built from below (Gomes-Casseres 2002). We suggest the following to be some management related points to consider for the success of university alliances:

- In alliances there need to be a strong commitment from the participating institutions and their staff, as well as strong support from the presidents.
- It is crucial to have a common vision of the alliance’s future and potential benefits.
The staff must be involved in both the planning and implementation processes. The decision processes must be open and transparent.

The staff must be informed promptly about possible changes in positions/job descriptions. The students must also be informed about any changes in the courses and academic programmes.

There should be a well thought-through plan for negotiations concerning the alliance and for implementing agreements that relate to the alliance.

Decisions regarding the name of the new alliance must be taken as quickly as possible.

It is possible to conclude that alliances are dynamic rather than static, thus it is essential for alliances to evolve over time so that the universities can get maximum benefit from their structures. They must be managed, organised and coordinated, and require participation from the highest levels of management. Experience shows that the management issues and costs must not be underestimated thus a strategic alliance will require significant leadership capacity. This may even have to limit collaboration activities with other universities than the alliance partner over a long period of time.

This picture suggests that the traditional rationalisation benefits are probably limited. International experience with respect to alliances supports this conclusion. Neither is there any simple or immediate way of influencing the research structure that exists in terms of cooperation in an alliance. Rather, the opportunities offered by an alliance involve increased interfaces between the universities at all levels. This is of course a process that requires delicate planning and a strong mutual understanding of each side’s strengths and weaknesses. It also requires an efficient measure of mutual trust, which means that a joint declaration regarding a lasting alliance is essential, and perhaps even a prerequisite.

Research collaboration within strong areas takes time and must be preceded by careful analysis as well as strong relationships between research groups. Alliances, if organised in the right manner, can lead to a significant formal and informal growth of knowledge and knowledge transfer where 1 plus 1 equals 3, to use a common cliché for describing alliance benefits. The benefits will most likely often appear in unexpected, new and exciting collaboration processes.
Acknowledgement: The authors wish to thank Sverker Sörlin for contributions in the early phase of the study, and Anders Broström for contributions, comments and advise throughout the study. Our special thanks go to Karla Anaya-Carlsson for her unwearied document research and assistance.

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