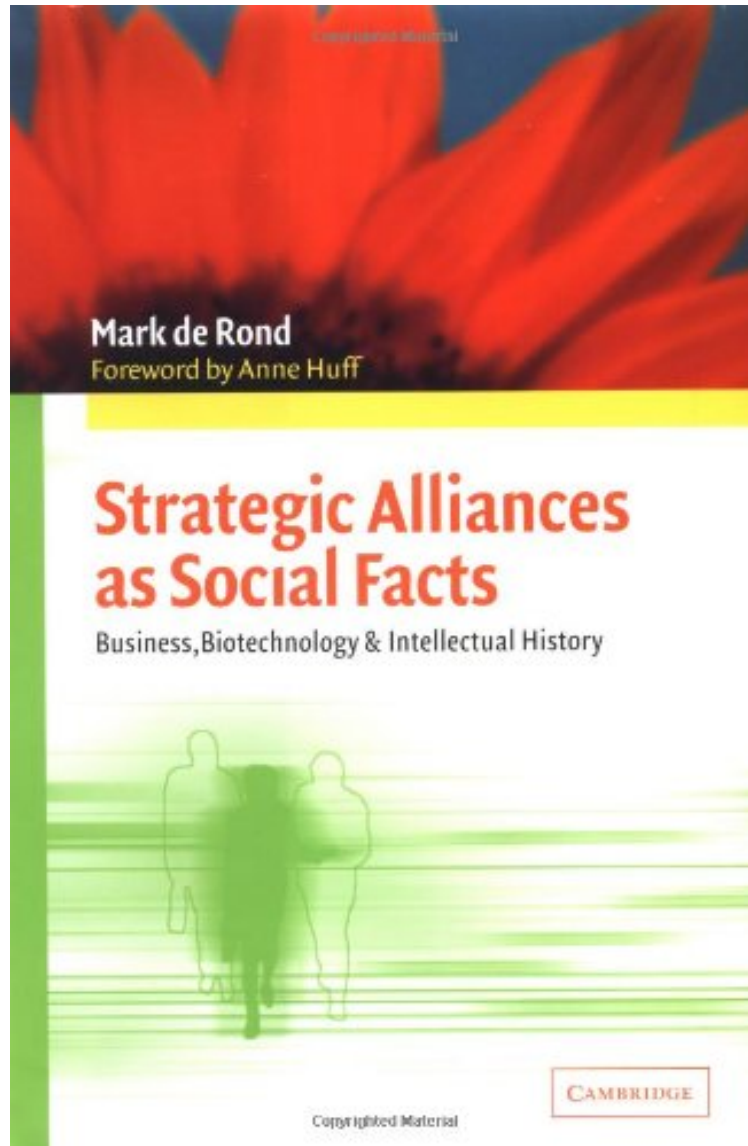


(Download ebook) Strategic Alliances as Social Facts: Business, Biotechnology, and Intellectual History

# Strategic Alliances as Social Facts: Business, Biotechnology, and Intellectual History

Mark De Rond

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**Mark De Rond : Strategic Alliances as Social Facts: Business, Biotechnology, and Intellectual History** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Strategic Alliances as Social Facts: Business, Biotechnology, and Intellectual History:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. More useful than usual academic treatments of alliances By A. J. Sutter If you're a businessperson, most academic literature about strategic alliances (SAs) seems to have been written

about another planet. I've been involved in lots of SA deals, but most management scholars' papers about them either belabor the obvious, or else provide little that I can recognize from real life. The present book is adapted from the author's Oxford U. Ph.D. dissertation, and definitely shows it. It's full of citations to the academic literature, methodological hand-wringing about interviews with businesspeople, and repetitious recaps for nodding dons about what previous chapters have shown, what the present one will show, etc. (A footnote on p.142 even contains a fossil reference to the book as a "thesis".) However, the author recognizes the drawbacks of most other academic work and tries to make this one a bit more practical. He partly succeeds. The best chapters are the detailed case studies of three different biotech alliances. They're much deeper than typical business book case studies, and lack the customary hype. They give you a very vivid overview of the many unexpected ways in which SAs can get screwed up -- as well as the many ways in which they can bounce back from disaster, or be reckoned by all parties to have succeeded even though they didn't meet their original milestones. These studies are worthwhile reading even if you don't work in the biotech field. While some of the author's "evolution diagrams" in these chapters aren't always coherent or intelligible, you lose nothing by ignoring them. Another well-made practical point is that if you think you'll manage an SA by planning and control, forget about it. Continuous adaptation, navigation and consultation are more useful. If your actions tend to be swayed by business books and Harvard Business Review articles, then the critique in chapter 1 of many economic and sociological approaches to SAs might be a useful antidote. I also liked the author's attention to philosophy, e.g. Hume, Heidegger, I. Berlin et al. This is all too rare in business books, but useful to help you examine many assumptions that you might have taken for granted. (A philosophical point of view is especially valuable for recognizing and understanding the impact of metaphors on management, though that topic isn't really addressed directly in this book.) That said, I think the presentation could have been greatly simplified, in order to convince business folks that philosophy has something to say to them. A key point for the author is that we shouldn't expect something as messy as a real-life SAs to fit neatly into one consistent economic, managerial or philosophical paradigm. To explain this, he nicely enlists help from Isaiah Berlin's essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox". But from the build-up he gives the essay you'd think it was as complex as Hegel, existentialism or the "Critique of Pure Reason". At least when I was in college, "Hedgehog" was more or less standard reading for most undergraduates, even if you didn't take a course that assigned it. (One of my classmates even named a software company after it.) The reason is that it's both wonderful and short -- and isn't rocket science, either. So while I was happy to see it mentioned, its treatment in the book is a little pompous, given the modesty of the essay itself. The author's discussion of the structuration theory of A. Giddens is less useful or convincing. If you're a businessperson new to SAs or looking for a how-to, this isn't the book for you. But if you have a few deals under your belt and are looking to enrich your perspective about them, you might find it worth wading through the academic passages of this relatively short book. And if you're an academic in this field, my guess is that you could benefit quite a bit from reading it.

How can we explain a proliferation of alliances when the probability of failure is higher than success? And why have we emphasized their order, manageability and predictability whilst acknowledging that they tend to be experienced as messy, politically charged and unpredictable? Mark de Rond, in this provocative book, sets out to address such paradoxes. Based on in-depth case studies of three major biotechnology alliances, he suggests that we need theories to explain idiosyncrasy as well as social order. He argues that such theories must allow for social conduct to be active and self-directed but simultaneously inert and constrained, thus permitting voluntarism, determinism, and serendipity alike to explain causation in alliance life. The book offers a highly original combination of insights from social theory and intellectual history with more mainstream strategic management and organizations literature. It is a refreshing and thought-provoking analysis that will appeal to practitioner and academic researcher alike.

"An absorbing account of strategic learning in a hi-tech sector. Written in an elegant and witty style, it opens the analysis to a wide audience. The case histories are likely to be quoted in management teaching and research for some time to come." Raymond Loveridge, Leverhulme Research Fellow, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford "Mark de Rond provides an important new explanation of how strategic alliances develop. Unlike past explanations that focus on consensus or regulation, he addresses the contradictions and paradoxes that are inherent in strategic alliances and offers a dialectical model for dealing with them. This is an important contribution." Andrew H. Van de Ven, University of Minnesota "Stated simply, Mark de Rond's book is a tour de force analysis of strategic alliances. Grounded in significant theoretical and empirical work, this book offers readers a masterfully written, intellectually rich assessment of alliances as an increasingly important way of competing in our globalizing world. This book will appeal both to those using alliances to increase their firm's performance and to researchers keen to refine the quality of the questions they pursue." R. Duane Ireland, W. David Robbins, Chair in Strategic Management, Robbins School of Business, University of Richmond "In this significant new book, Mark de Rond argues elegantly and convincingly that we need new theories of alliances which address the heterogeneity and idiosyncrasy of alliances. This is an important message which can apply to our understanding of business in general." John Child, Chair of Commerce, Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham "This book provides a fascinating account of some of the social dynamics

underlying alliances. Using rich case studies, Mark de Rond develops an original theoretical treatment of these complex phenomena. He seamlessly transcends multiple levels of analysis and grounds organizational actions in concrete decisions and behaviours of individuals within those organizations. While the primary focus of this book is on alliances, they are merely the foil for a much larger and more ambitious undertaking by the author to promote a shift away from monistic to pluralistic theoretical accounts. This is a welcome addition to what is becoming a growing social movement among organizational scholars. Given its pluralistic vein, this book is likely to be of interest to a wide range of scholars and observers of the social dynamics of organizational life." Ranjay Gulati, Michael L. Nemmers Distinguished Professor of Strategy and Organization, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University"Mark de Rond's display of the messiness of alliance life through a detailed and witty account of three strategic collaborations in the bio-pharmaceutical sector is highly effective and persuasive. By inviting us to give up the vain pursuit of simple theories, he challenges us, both scholars and practitioners, to grow up to the task of confronting the complexity of the real world and to take full responsibility for our own, necessarily fallible, choices." Hamid Bouchikhi, Professor of Strategy and Management, Director of the New Business Center, ESSEC Business School, Paris

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