



Network of Universities
from the Capitals of Europe

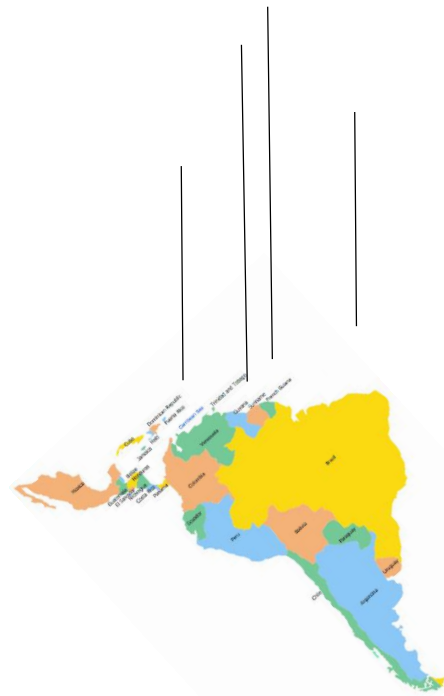
UNIVERSITÉ LIBRE DE BRUXELLES 



Collaborating with Latin America: the situation at ULB

UNICA IRO Meeting – Tallinn, May 2019

How I came to be in charge of Latin America...



May 2017

The IRO team was about to be reshuffled

+

The person in charge of Latin America was leaving

+

A mission to Brazil was planned for early July

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I speak Spanish and have notions of Portuguese

=

**I was a logical
choice**



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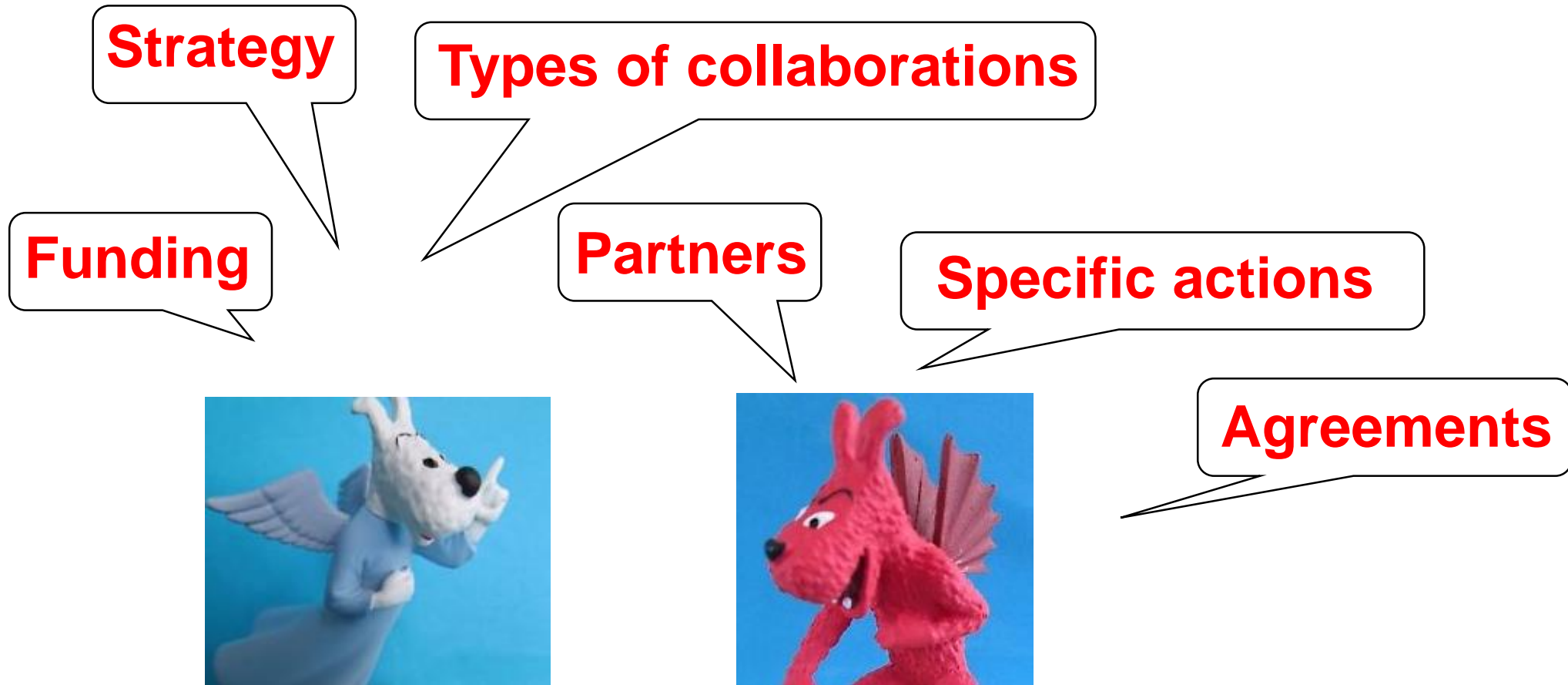


More seriously...

- ➔ The situation was there (reshuffling of the team)
- ➔ A new colleague was about to be hired (project manager)
- ➔ Opportunity to do something new
...even though it was a challenge (everything to learn!)

After 2 years, I'm still not a specialist
... don't take me for what I am not!







Strategy: necessity to combine three different “layers”

- At institutional level → Brazil
 - VRI had a crush on Brazil
 - Science without Borders
 - PP with USP
- At faculty/dept. level → some specific interests in LA
 - Philosophy and Social Sciences (Vice-Dean is a political scientist specialist of LA)
 - Business School (high demand from students to spend a semester in LA)
 - Fac. of Architecture (some LA countries have a reputation)
- At individual level → profs with personal contacts
 - Edwin Zaccai in Environment (sustainability & global warming in Costa Rica and Colombia)
 - Rodrigo Moreno-Reyes in Medicine (thyroid problems in Chile)



Partners must be selected carefully

- Good and not-so-good institutions
- Public and private
- Sometimes very local (faraway province)
- Sometimes former military academies!
(for ex. Universidad Militar de Nueva Granada, Colombia)

➔ Good to have a resource person (prof) who knows Latin American HEIs well



Agreements are not always easy to elaborate

- Sign MoU before student exchange agreement... or not
- Universities sometimes very decentralized and all faculties don't apply the same rules! (for ex. who can sign)
- LA bureaucracy (admin. requirements, imposed templates, absolute fee waiver, etc.)... but thank God for latino “flexibility”!
- Sometimes, the mails you send fall into a black hole (cf. Cuba)
 - ➔ Importance of knowing the people and maintaining contact
 - ➔ Unfortunately, they can change a lot (esp. academics)



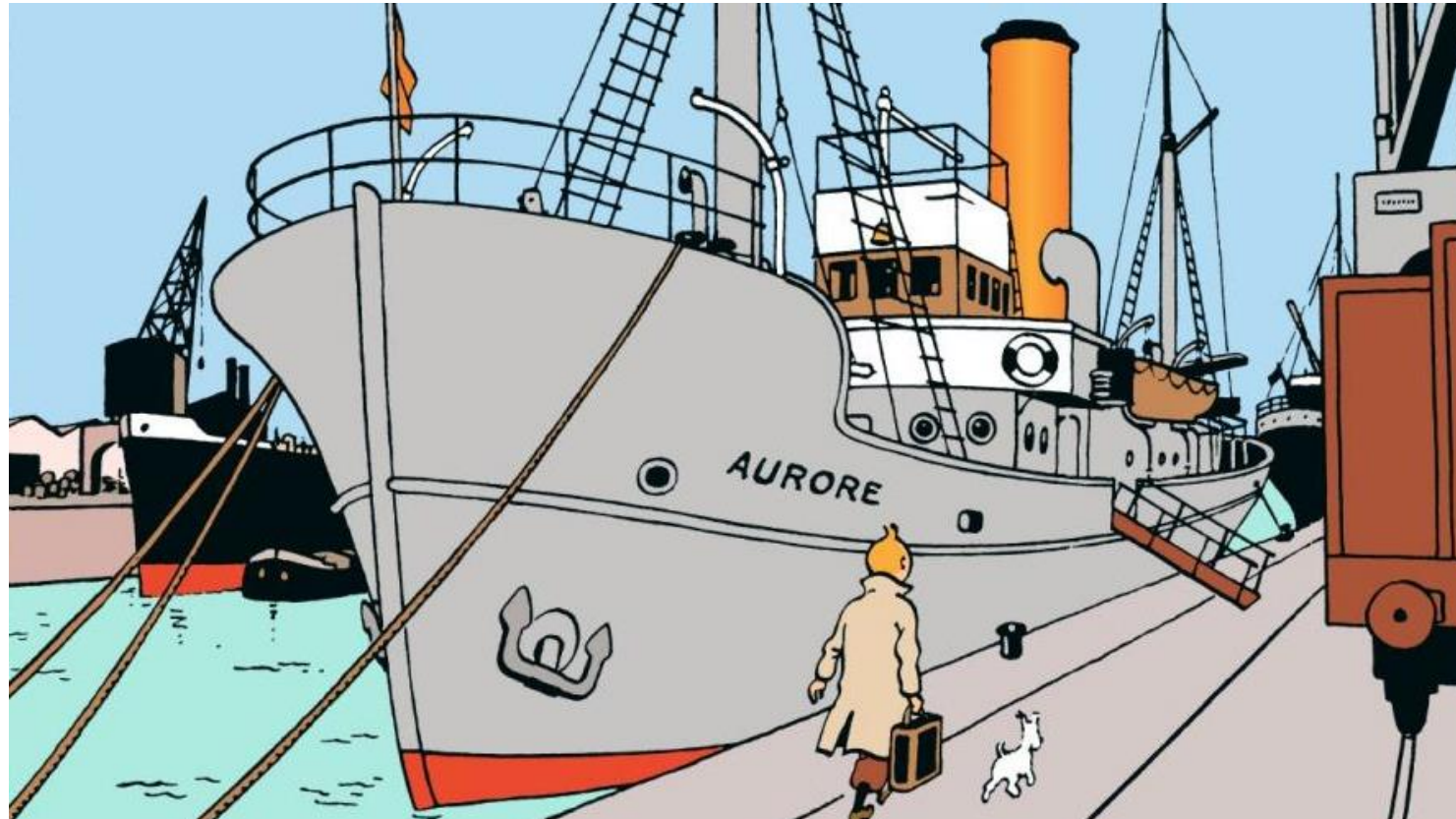
Funding

- For outgoing students, Belgian French-speaking universities have a special “Erasmus like” fund
Travel and health insurance are expensive, even if life in the country is generally cheaper (not everywhere!).
- For incoming students a study-abroad period in Europe is costly
Some Latin American countries have grants, especially focused on certain disciplines, important for them: agroforestry, medicine, public health, engineering, STEM (CONICYT in Chile, CONACYT in Mexico, Colciencias in Colombia).
- Privileged partnership with USP
Call for proposals soon to be launched



Types of collaboration

- Undergrad student mobility → student exchanges at BA or MA level (beware: BA and MA do not mean the same as in Europe!)
- PhD mobility → “sandwich PhD”, cotutelles, common doctoral seminars (ULB-USP)
- Research (seed money to meet partners before applying for research funds from national or international sources)



The end... (or the beginning!)