

Continuing GROWTH

WSP Sweden has been enlisted for some major projects throughout the country while its parent company, WSP Global, is undertaking major expansion through some key acquisitions in new markets.

Images courtesy of WSP Sweden

CEO of WSP Sweden, Magnus Meyer, kicked off his career with an engineering degree from the Royal Institute of Technology, and later earned a Licentiate degree in Construction and Information Technology in 1994. After a few years as Technical Attaché in Los Angeles, he returned to Sweden and started working at LjungbergGruppen as division manager.

“My professional background is mainly in real estate and finance, even though I did a masters in civil engineering, which is more fitting

for my current position. For a long time, I was running GE Capital Real Estate in Scandinavia, doing business development and asset management for GE. Just before joining WSP, I was heading up one of the leading architecture firms in Scandinavia called Tengbomgruppen for close to nine years. So it’s been a mix of different things before joining WSP and my current position in March this year.”

During his tenure as CEO of Tengbomgruppen, Magnus developed the business from 100 to 600 employees, increasing the company’s position as one of the

most renowned and respected architectural firms in Scandinavia. Magnus’s background has given him a strong foothold in the real estate and built environment sectors, making him an obvious choice to head up WSP’s Swedish operations.

On entering the business, Magnus was given the clear mandate of expanding the company, developing WSP’s presence in Sweden and throughout Scandinavia. “We have a long tradition here; the business has been present in Scandinavia for the past 75 years. The Swedish growth strategy is very much in >



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line with the global growth strategy for WSP.”

WSP is an internationally recognised consulting company with strong expertise and experience in technology. The organisation is responsible for numerous projects around the world and a growing portfolio throughout the Scandinavian region. “Locally in Scandinavia, the most recent and also a very big project is the extension of the Stockholm subway. Clearly this is important because it’s a big project for WSP, but it’s also important to develop the city of Stockholm, which is a very fast-growing city, and the extension of public transit is super-critical for the development of Stockholm. A project like that is important for WSP but also for the city of Stockholm.

“Globally, there are many projects around the world that are important. Some are very visible like The Shard in London, which has been very important for the firm given that they’ve done a lot of different services in that project and it’s also a very visible project.”

WSP was appointed for the line from Odenplan in the heart of the Swedish city to Arenastaden, its new commercial and entertainment district. The scheme forms part of a major metro expansion program in Stockholm, which is scheduled for completion by 2022. “This is going to be a challenging project both from a technical and planning perspective. It will necessitate good cooperation with all the parties involved, including the Stockholm County Council, the City of Stockholm, and the municipality of Solna. We have high aspirations to participate in more railway and subway systems expansions.”

Another massive project for WSP Sweden is the new Stockholm Arena, which was project-managed by WSP. The Stockholm Arena is a multipurpose venue for year-round use and is an important part in the plan of extending the existing Ericsson Globe arena. In addition to the new arena, approximately

45,000 square metres of commercial space and hotels and 60,000 square metres of office space were built within the vicinity. As project manager for the Stockholm Arena, WSP provided an extensive suite of services including civil, environmental, fire and risk, and acoustics.

WSP Sweden also took part in the development of two research projects on acoustics in light buildings, AkuLite and AcuWood, which were finalised in late 2013 after four years of research with a focus on acoustics and vibrations in multistorey residential buildings. The projects involved a vast number of dedicated partners, 10 research partners, and more than 40 industries throughout Europe. The main focus for these projects was to deliver new proposals for evaluation measures regarding sound insulation in order to provide the right target values for the construction industry developing new building systems.

As part of a global organisation, WSP Sweden carries the legacy and prestige of the WSP Global group. “Clearly one of the challenges for WSP in the global market is that it’s a very tough and competitive market. Engineering is becoming more and more competitive as it’s becoming more and more global. On the other hand, since WSP is a global firm, there have been a lot of advantages such as using expertise and resources globally.

“However, that also creates a lot of challenges; working with different people in different parts of the world is not easy. The global competitive landscape is clearly one of the big challenges and opportunities for WSP. The business itself is very stable and the Swedish market is very stable with a lot of need for housing, hospitals, and infrastructure, which are areas where WSP is strong. So it’s a mixed picture.”

As Sweden is an important market for WSP Global, Magnus collaborates closely with President and Global CEO Pierre Shoiry.

“We have a lot of interaction. Pierre is direct and I talk to him regularly. Of course, Pierre is very much involved in transactions, particularly given that he has a super-strong record in transactions and he’s also a big help in looking at potential acquisitions for us in the Nordic region.”

In June 2012, Quebec engineering firm Genivar announced that it had made a friendly takeover cash offer for WSP Group. The offer was backed by WSP’s board of directors and investors with the takeover completed in August 2012. Genivar adopted the name WSP at the beginning of this year to create a better risk-management structure by isolating each of its operating entities and public holding companies, integrating the two companies and leveraging the WSP brand name. “When GENIVAR and WSP merged, we also had to merge the values. Part of the reason that the merger of WSP and GENIVAR was so successful was that the values were already very similar; the wording was not exactly the same, but the content was very similar.

“You could say that we’ve merged the values from GENIVAR and WSP into five values that we now use as the combined values of GENIVAR and WSP. The values are: innovative, trustworthy, united, passionate, and caring. Around these, I would say that ‘united’ is the one that strikes me, coming into the business, as one that manifests locally and globally. We have a really strong team with a lot of focus on teamwork, and it really works; it’s part of the DNA of the firm. It’s not something that comes along by itself, but it’s a strong value that was a part of GENIVAR and a part of WSP, and I would say that it is also a core value that we look for in acquisitions. One of the things that we look for globally in acquisitions is that the values are in line with ours.”

WSP is helping clients to protect and restore nature and the environment, to reconsider the



impact of buildings and infrastructure, to reduce their carbon footprint, increase resource efficiency, and improve quality of life. Sustainability is one of WSP’s values and plays an important role in all the company’s activities. As consultants, WSP has the opportunity to influence development by making sure that projects are sustainable throughout their lifecycle—at design stage, during construction, in occupancy, and right up to demolition.

When looking at sustainability, WSP doesn’t mean just in environmental terms. The company is also looking at the economic and social aspects. WSP understands the importance of

long-term planning and has the tools to develop lifecycle calculations within the construction and infrastructure sectors. WSP contributes to long-term development and influences opinion from the early project stages through its investigations and analysis. The company believes that its most important contribution comes through advice to clients and the organisation’s structured approach to sustainability. For example, WSP has introduced the concept of green building design, which takes a holistic approach and focuses on sustainability through all stages of the construction process.

WSP values its staff and puts a very concentrated effort into the development and training of people across the organisation. “As a big firm, we have a lot of local and global programs for training our experts and managers. More so, I would say that the business of WSP is very decentralised; a lot of our activity and our responsibilities are spread across many different regional offices around the globe. That means that we need our local managers and local team members to feel empowered and that they have not only the training and the skills, but also the mandate to work on their own markets.

“We do focus a lot of our efforts on training, but even more so on >





empowering our people to make their own decisions and really be active in their local markets. That is one way of really showing staff that they're valued because it shows them that they have the mandate and that the company trusts them in what they're doing."

Externally, WSP works closely with a number of key suppliers, partners, and clients to maintain the company's stellar reputation for quality projects around the world. "There are a number of programs within this, but the most important one I would say is that we have approximately 48 global clients and partners that we're trying to service and work closely with across the globe. Some of them are really partners and not clients, meaning that we really try to offer services together with these key partners across the globe. It's interesting that



there's a mix of suppliers, partners, and clients in that list of 40-plus global key stakeholders for WSP. I think that also sends a signal that we don't specifically have different programs for clients and for partners; we, in many ways, treat them equally because they're all important to us.

very big global firm and has now become even bigger with the acquisition of Parsons Brinckerhoff, which is due to close in a couple of months. That creates one of the biggest engineering firms in the world with more than 30,000 people globally. Even so, we feel that it's very important for us to build alliances and partnerships with

"Obviously we also have local programs, even though WSP is a

"WSP is a knowledge-based company, reliant on their employees. Our mutual aim is for ISS to provide service, with a human touch—giving time for WSP employees to focus on their clients and their clients' needs."
- Ismo Niemenpää, Segment Director, ISS



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WSP Global's purchase of New York City-based infrastructure specialist Parsons Brinckerhoff is a transformative deal valued at US\$1.35 billion. This acquisition is another major move amid industry consolidation throughout the building and construction sector. WSP entered a stock purchase agreement with UK-based Balfour Beatty for all of the issued and outstanding capital shares of Parsons Brinckerhoff for an

enterprise value of US\$1.24 billion plus an additional consideration of up to US\$110 million in cash.

In buying Parsons, WSP gains a global professional services firm with a network of about 170 offices and nearly 13,500 employees across five continents. Parsons specialises in infrastructure, particularly in transportation, and has a strong presence in the United States and Australia, which are two markets where WSP is looking to grow.

The future is bright for WSP as the company continues building major projects around the world while making major acquisitions to expand the organisation's network and capabilities. "Just a

couple of months ago, we announced the vision for 2020 and that is creating a global engineering firm with 45,000–50,000 people; that is quick growth. Today we have 17,000 people and will be adding on 13,000 people with the acquisition of Parsons Brinckerhoff, so we need to almost double the size of the firm again to reach 45,000–50,000.

"So it's a lot of growth, it's a lot of leveraging off the fact that we're one of the few global engineering firms, which really helps us on the local markets as well, supplying a lot of expertise and resources. A lot of growth is really the ambition going forward." •



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Megan Pearson, Head of Reception, London, UK

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