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PARTNERSHIP

# EMBRACING DIVERSITY ACROSS SOUTH EAST ASIA

Interview with Will Kennedy-Cooke,  
MD WT Partnership

TOP 10  
TALLEST  
BUILDINGS

n

10



A large, glowing full moon is visible in the dark night sky at the top center of the page.

# WT PARTNERSHIP TACKLING DIVERSITY ACROSS SOUTH EAST ASIA

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**ANDREW WOODS**  
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City Garden, Vietnam



**Will Kennedy-Cooke, MD WT Partnership (South East Asia), discusses the challenges as the business rolls out a consistent and reliable service across diverse jurisdictions in an evolving economic landscape. We also speak to his fellow MD's Keith Wong (China) and Mark Van Beers (Hong Kong & Macau) about the challenges and growth in their respective regions...**

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WT Partnership is an independent international provider of quantity surveying and construction cost management services. Founded in 1949 and with a presence in Asia since 1962, its Asian Holdings regional business, comprising Greater China, Hong Kong, Macau, North Asia

and South East Asia (SEA), occupies a key position in one of the most culturally diverse and economically-tempestuous regions on earth. A fast-growing global company with an expertise that extends bespoke offerings of quantity surveying, cost management and facilities management consultancy across Asia and



period. In the short term WTP plans to open fulltime operations in two additional countries with staff numbers potentially growing to 300-plus in three to five years.

“We have been very strategic in each location, harnessing home-grown talent with international expertise where and when required, but without losing sight of being a local business able to support local developers,” Will explains. “Our Singapore office is a hub that supports the region as a whole from which we can add management expertise to any location, together with sharing resources in specific sectors such as infrastructure and facilities management consultancy.

“It is an integral part of our strategy that we play to our strengths, work with the clients and partners that are a best fit with our people and develop a business that is built to last. We do not need or want to be the biggest, taking on any and all opportunities without regard to suitability. However, we do strive to be very good at what we do, to be an employer of equality and choice, to grow while retaining quality of

internationally, WTP is highly regarded in the region, with unprecedented growth in SEA over the past decade.

After an initial spell there in the early 1990s, Will Kennedy-Cooke, MD SEA, relocated back to Singapore in 2006. At that time, after more than 40 years of continuous operations, the SEA business comprised 40 staff in two locations. Today WTP employs more than 200 staff based in six offices across four ASEAN countries working on projects across the region with revenue increased by more than six times in that



Paya Lebar Quarter, Singapore



Elephant & Castle, United Kingdom

# Creating landmarks that define cities



Barangaroo South, Australia



Tun Razak Exchange Lifestyle Quarter, Malaysia

Lendlease is known internationally for creating award winning places. Operating in Singapore since 1973, today we are also located in Malaysia, China and Japan.

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Toll offshore petroleum supply base, Singapore

service, to aspire for continuous improvement and to care for how our clients optimise value from their development investment decisions.

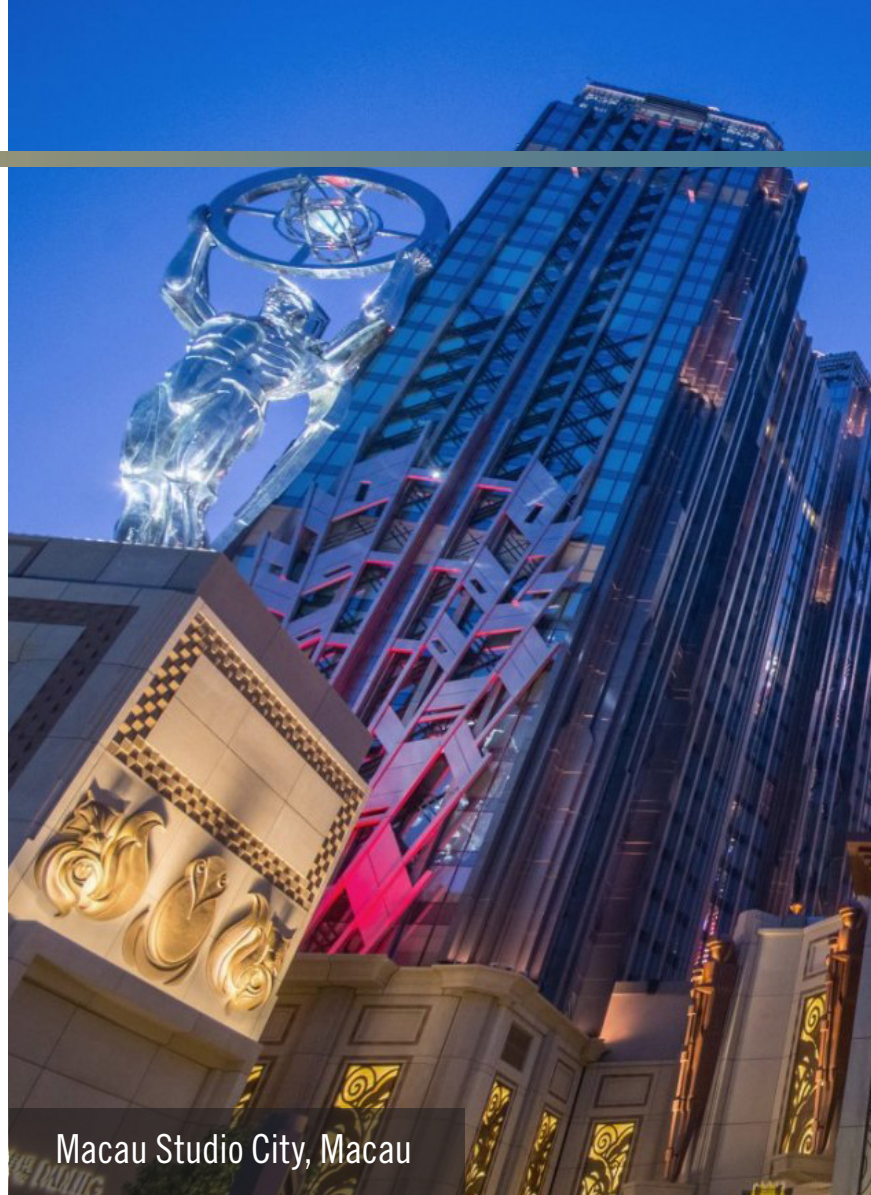
“We get involved with all sizes and types of projects providing proactive and assured construction cost management for our clients’ investments, together with enduring interest, variety and opportunity for our staff,” says Will, who oversees operations across the 10 ASEAN countries. “Our significant presence in the region ensures we are able to deliver both local and international services with a reputation for providing effective delivery of complex and mega projects.”

“WE AIM TO PROVIDE VALUE  
IN MINIMISING WASTE  
THROUGH DESIGN,  
CONSTRUCTION AND  
OPERATION. WE LOOK AT  
HOW THE TOTAL PRODUCT  
CAN STILL BE COST EFFECTIVE,  
BUT BECOME LEANER  
WITHOUT COMPROMISING  
TIME OR SAFETY WHILE  
IMPROVING SUSTAINABILITY”

—  
**Will Kennedy-Cooke,**  
Managing Director (South East Asia),  
WT Partnership

“QUANTITY SURVEYING IN HONG KONG, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE IS AN IMPLICIT DISCIPLINE, BEING THE LEGACY OF BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT, AND TODAY THESE LOCATIONS PROVIDE EDUCATION THROUGH FULL-TIME COURSES IN THE EXPERTISE”

—  
**Will Kennedy-Cooke,**  
 Managing Director (South East Asia),  
 WT Partnership



Macau Studio City, Macau

Due to WTP’s longevity in the region, it enjoys excellent relations with some premium partners from a variety of locations. Will has been involved in some high-profile projects in SEA covering both commercial and public-sector constructions including World Trade Centres 2 and 3 in Jakarta, TRX Living Quarter in Kuala Lumpur, Australian Embassy in Bangkok, the International School Ho Chi Minh City and Marina Bay Sands in Singapore.

“In SEA we’ve undertaken a lot of work with Cognita, a leading global education provider,” says Will. “The relationship with Cognita stretches more than 12 years based on the





formation of trusted relationships with their key people while creating a baseline for common understanding. We have collaborated on more than 10 projects across SEA markets, assisting Cognita to provide world-class teaching environments. It continues to be a very strong, fertile and mutually beneficial relationship.

“We continue to work with Toll, an Australian origin logistics group now owned by Japan Post. We started working directly for them in Asia a decade ago and more recently, having successfully delivered a number of projects in Singapore, we are also working with them in Australia and New Zealand.

“Our Hong Kong office was initiated in 1976 to start working with Hongkong Land, a member of the Jardine Matheson Group. We are very proud of the relationship that has flourished through several generational changes of key personnel in either business over more than 40 years and continues today working across multiple markets in our region. Project locations include Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Singapore with the most recent

## Keith Wong Executive Chairman, Asia, Managing Director (China)

For our business in China, employing two site staff working in a client's site office when we started in 1996 in Shanghai, expanding to 50 in 2006, to more than 500 today with 8 offices across China. We adhere to a traditional quantity surveying practice but when we started, Chinese projects were highly protected, mainly state-owned enterprise (SOE) government projects, although they welcomed foreign investment. And so, we followed Hong Kong developers as they delivered projects in China. At that time more than 95% of our clients were from Hong Kong or overseas with very few local clients.

There was no quantity surveying in China then; they had some cost engineers, but didn't provide a comprehensive service as we do, from inception to completion of the project. It was not an easy task, at that time, because they just didn't understand the purpose of undertaking cost control. They didn't understand

why they needed an independent professional to update the interest of the client side because, at that time, the local client were often very big state-owned enterprises that didn't know or worry about where the money had been spent.

Our local clients grew to 10% after seven years or so, starting from smaller projects, before getting bigger and bigger. The major opportunities were still foreign (mainly Hong Kong) as local investment was more or less owned by a local government or state-owned enterprise.

From 2005 to say, 2010, most of our projects were in real estate: property development, residential, commercial, hotels, and mixed use. The client's just build and sell for a quick cash return. The scale was getting bigger and bigger during that period of time; in the UK, 50,000 sqm may have been considered to be a big project but in China, a big project by then was 500,000 sqm.

The clientele has since continued



to shift from foreign to local and some 70% of our clients are Chinese now with the rest foreign. So, that change is quite substantial and we're now doing 4,000,000 sqm projects.

Currently, we are working for insurance companies like Ping An Insurance and financial institutions such as Shanghai Stock Exchange, that we were never able to get in touch with 10 years ago. E-commerce is expanding so fast and we have done an increasing amount of work in logistics relating to that sector, with clients such as JD.Com and Alibaba. We're doing a 800,000 sqm data centre campus for them and companies like JD.Com, who is the second biggest e-commerce company here. We are also doing a lot of campus work for telecommunication giants Huawei and Tencent.

Now we're helping also lot of local developers going overseas to do projects in the likes of India, Vietnam, Australia and Italy. Something like

90% of the senior management in Chinese companies cannot speak English and so that's why we have a very major role to play.

China is changing so quickly. The second-child policy was introduced in 2015 and now the birth rate is 22mn babies per year with estimates this will increase to 30m very soon. The wealth of the Chinese community is expanding and the middle class is quite affluent now, so they're prepared to pay a lot of money for their children's education. Consequently, international schooling is a booming market and we are currently working for AIS, Yew Chong International School, Wellington and Harrow from UK who all have big expansion plans in the coming few years.



# An inspiring world of education

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# YOUR WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

Jakarta Land is a joint venture between CCM and Hongkong Land, which develops and manages the 8 hectare WTC Complex on Jalan Jenderal Sudirman, Jakarta, Indonesia.

 **Jakarta Land**

**Website: [www.jakland.com](http://www.jakland.com)**

**Email: [leasing@jakland.co.id](mailto:leasing@jakland.co.id)**





Ningbo Shangri-La Hotel, China

completion being World Trade Centre 3 in Jakarta for PT Jakarta Land, a company jointly owned by CCM and Hongkong Land.

“Another client we do a lot of repeat order work for in SEA is Lendlease which has been in Singapore since the early 1970s. We’ve been fortunate to be involved with their more recent SEA development work and we’re currently working on both their Paya Lebar Quarter project in Singapore and their Tun Razak Exchange Lifestyle Quarter project in Kuala Lumpur; the latter being delivered in joint venture with TRX City, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Malaysian Ministry of Finance.

“In an ideal sense, we get involved right from the outset,” he explains. “Setting the construction

budget through collaboration with the client and, where available, with input from the principal design team members. We will then be employed to continuously advise, monitor and update, providing forward forecasting to enable decisions that deliver the completed project to budget. Assuming the budget for capital expenditure is correctly established and informs the feasibility for the project, and assuming revenue projections are met, then delivering to, or within, that capital budget means the project returns for the client will be met or even enhanced. We provide an early warning system for issues that are either likely to compromise the budget or may provide value-added opportunities, meaning the earlier you capture it, the easier it is to plan for how and when that issue is to be managed.”

When commissioned to do so, WTP provides and facilitates formal value engineering, or value management workshops early in the design process to help establish the real aspirations and requirements of a project. Focus is set upon

what's wanted rather than "what's nice to have" and the removal of waste. In the process of determining value, WTP assesses what has to be there and what is discretionary for the design to balance the budget and project brief.

"Much of the discipline of managing the budget obviously depends on the procurement system that transfers the project to the construction phase, together with the profile of the client and its risk appetite. Time is always a big issue because time is cost and therefore overall project programme has a big influence on the procurement strategy. Alternative approaches allow for transfer of construction time and cost risk at various points in the design process depending on the profile tailored to the client's objectives. Once the transfer of that risk has been completed, the business of construction begins," says Will.

"We're also the certifier of payments made to the contractors and we deal with any change through variations, getting further involved if the contractor, for

whatever reason, is unable to deliver to time and cost. Our cost forecasting to the completion of the project helps manage financial decisions and mitigate opportunities for dispute. However, should a client become engaged in difficulties on a project, then we're there to help, interpret and diffuse," he explains.

Quantity surveying is an historically entrenched part of the construction process across





parts of the western world, principally where the British had some involvement with establishing standards and procedures, yet differs in relevancy and application in other locations, especially in today's emerging markets.

“Quantity surveying in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore is an implicit discipline, being the legacy of British involvement in their development, and today these locations provide education through full-time courses in the expertise,” Will explains. “In these

three locations, quantity surveying is just a part of the DNA of the construction and development industry. However, in the other SEA locations, there are a number of developers who may often be unaware of the discipline of cost planning and construction cost management, or how to use the expertise.

“While the core of quantity surveying and construction cost management may be similar the world over, the detailed services we provide across SEA markets varies and can also differ from those required, for example, in each of China, Japan, South Korea or Taiwan. Day to day in SEA we are still mostly commissioned to provide a very traditional, almost old-fashioned

## Mark Van Beers Managing Director (Hong Kong & Macau)

Hong Kong's one of our oldest offices in Asia and we've been here for just over 40 years with our track record in major and mega projects being significant. There's currently a bid for a design, build and operate project, at the old airport, for a sports precinct of three stadiums and other ancillary facilities and we are in one of the three shortlisted bidding consortia. So, we're currently working on that bid, six months in already and, if successful, we will then be providing services to that project for another four or five years.

Corporate fit-out is an important sector of our market in Hong Kong. We're currently working on two substantial office fitout projects for Goldman Sachs including the restack of their headquarters. We're doing another large scale fit out for J.P. Morgan to consolidate a lot of their space into one prime building.

Hong Kong Housing Authority is the public housing body and we currently

have over 20 commissions with them that are a mixture of new builds and term maintenance work; some of them very sizable.

There's a lot of competition in Hong Kong in our market. There'd be anywhere between 15 and 20 firms that could undertake commercial quantity surveying work, maybe more, and there are probably six or eight who are of a similar size and scale as WTP.

Another principal market for us here is Macau where there are 500,000 residents, comprising the entire population from young to grandparents, yet they have 30mn visitors a year.

The whole infrastructure of Macau is still playing catch up with the boom in hospitality and tourism. The construction boom is primarily driven by the gaming operators who are developing mega-scale resorts.

In Macau, in terms of professional consultants and construction workers, there's a minimal resident labour





force to deliver the mega resorts. So, the challenge for us is getting people to be based in Macau to live there for a number of years and to cover that cost. It actually turns into quite an expensive place to build and has become one of the most expensive in the world.

The construction cost, salaries and everything are higher than Hong Kong, actually, and although this market has proved successful for WTP, it comes with truly significant challenges. The boom and bust in Macau goes from one end of the scale to the other. There could be very few projects for a couple of years and then suddenly all the gaming operators will simultaneously launch their next phase of major projects. Consequently, our headcount in Macau from 2004 until today, has varied between two and 50 people and it's gone up and down quite a few times with the cycles of work.

I guess there's two parts to the Macau market, one being a very local market that seldom uses quantity surveyors at all with the other being the five or six international businesses who have the gaming licenses now, for example MGM, Wynn, Melco and a few more.

Actually, these opportunities all start with architects and engineers designing in Hong Kong and then become a Macau project with a lot of people moving to Macau to work on the procurement and construction.

Increasingly, we are also seeing demand to service projects in Taiwan, South Korea and Japan which are markets that we are looking at the potential for future expansion, each being subject to timing and a deliverable business model.



service, that almost mimics what used to be seen in the British market when I started my career there in the mid-1980s.

“Although catching up fast and introducing many of more recent approaches from other more developed international markets, we do lag behind them in many jurisdictions where the infrastructure is not as well developed and the majority of work is still executed in a highly traditional manner; the client’s team completing full design before going to a hard money tender to builders. However, especially in the complex and mega projects, there are more clients now with the appetite to finish

extremely quickly, adopting fast track methods for those who can accept both alternative systems and a different risk profile. But the project still needs to be delivered to budget.”

### NEW TECH

A typical opportunity for potential disagreement between contractors and professional quantity surveyors has been the quantification. Ask several people to measure the same major project, you will inevitably end up with differing opinions on the quantities for individual components. However, if you can get reliable and meaningful quantities



out of an accurate computer-generated model this issue should be resolved.

“BIM (building information modelling) and other technological advances, should be embraced fully by all parts of the construction industry and should certainly not be seen as a threat to the quantity surveying profession,” Will explains. “With readily accessible, reliable and useful quantities, experts can focus on what really drives the cost aspects of the project. We will see in due course, sooner rather than later, a coordinated BIM output that incorporates both time and cost, not only for the construction process but for

future operations as well. The opportunities with other new technologies are immense and the data input requirements to maximise the effectiveness of BIM is coming up to speed. WTP is ready and looking forward to the potential to move towards real time cost planning & estimating and cost management.”

## NEW SERVICES

“Most of our work traditionally has been in the core building sectors, but we now have a flourishing infrastructure division working on roads, rail, airports, renewable energies and utilities (including water, waste, power

“BIM (BUILDING INFORMATION MODELLING) AND OTHER TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE SHOULD BE EMBRACED FULLY BY ALL PARTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE SEEN AS A THREAT TO THE QUANTITY SURVEYING PROFESSION”

—  
**Will Kennedy-Cooke,**  
Managing Director (South East Asia),  
WT Partnership

and district cooling), together with the full range of land reclamation and other large-scale infrastructure.”

Facilities management consultancy services, led from Singapore, is another more recent addition to an increasingly diversified offering from WTP in Asia that is an extension to the same services that have been established earlier within the Australia and UK businesses. “We introduced FM consultancy services into the region just over 12 months ago and have already completed several interesting commissions, both for new and existing clients. The wider market for these services is not very mature and currently nearly all of the work we’re undertaking is in Singapore and Hong Kong,” Will explains. “There are a number of international Asian-based operators that are quite sophisticated in their approach to FM, but generally the facilities management market in this part of the world is playing catch-up with the West.

Sustainability is a key requirement in every sector and is of growing importance to WTP’s services offering. “Several world markets have initiated sustainability targets through a point-scoring exercise,” Will says. “We have Green Mark in Singapore and Australia has Green Star. Leed, a United States Green Building Council initiative, has wide international recognition with a high profile for many corporate clients and there are a number of other sustainable



standards in particular markets. Where there isn't a standard in a country, they may well adopt one so we have projects, for example, in Vietnam that are being done to LEED and others in Indonesia being delivered under Green Mark.

“Originally we became involved with how the cost achieves those sustainable standards in terms of the capital expenditure. We now look at not just the cost through the initial construction project, but also examine the implications for the building's operational life cycle. Over the economic life with an appropriate planned maintenance regime, are

we better with this particular system or an alternative one? Establishing life cycle models and completing whole-of-life studies are an emerging requirement, harnessing both our sustainability and FM consultancy expertise.

“We can also become involved with reviews of how existing buildings can be improved in energy management to the long-term benefit of a building owner and the occupants. We aim to provide value in minimising waste through design, construction and operation. We look at how the total product can still be cost effective,

but become leaner without compromising time or safety while improving sustainability.”

## EXPANDING FOOTPRINT

WTP’s expansion in SEA hasn’t seen the company veer too far from its ethos thus far. “Our growth, short to medium term, has been to stick to our core competences; continuing to do what we do well,” Will explains. “We’re careful about the model we adopt for each location and the

planning we do, to the extent that when we do go into new markets or provide new services, we have the best chance to get it right. That’s about people and network. It’s about understanding the market and not overstretching our management capabilities. It’s about structuring a business that is sufficiently flexible, agile and mobile with capability to both deliver to the local market expectations as well as the requirements of our international clients as opportunities evolve in different locations.”



Internationally, in addition to the long-term operations that originally started in Australia and the UK, WTP has now also been operating in North America and India for a few years with the Middle East being a more recent market entry. As an international group, the geographic footprint is also growing as more opportunities arise and the business is confident of its ability to both plan and manage this expansion programme that is sure to see the company continuing to spread, and deepen its roots. ■



International Commerce Center, Hong-Kong