As autumn turned to winter in 2007, Beijing was transfixed by its newest landmark: the leaning twin towers of China Central Television's half-finished headquarters. Masterminded by Rem Koolhaas for the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), the building was a startling departure from the straight-up-and-down skyscrapers that dominated the rest of the capital's Central Business District. Koolhaas's massive structure was to be an angular loop: a pair of asymmetrical legs (234 and 194 metres tall) linked by a crowning L-shaped tube. That November, the city was buzzing with rumours that any day now the towers — two black, diamond-patterned chopsticks tilting unsteadily towards. each other through the smog — would be joined. Enhancing the mysticism of the event, the project's engineers (the high-priests of this architectural cult) had decreed that the connection had to be made at dawn, to ensure the equal temperature of both sides. Obsessed bloggers and amateur photographers stalked the building in both the virtual and real worlds; journalists eked out their nights at the Foreign Correspondents' Club bar, listening for tip-offs that the dawn to come would be *the* dawn.

When spectators weren't generating pseudo-facts about the building — about how it was supposedly the largest building in the world (besting the Pentagon), dependent on untested engineering wizardry, resting on a site the size of thirty-seven football fields — they were debating its controversial politics. By designing the headquarters of China's most censored media outlet, was Rem Koolhaas — architecture's philosopher-king — giving a glaze of avant-garde sophistication to an organisation that was Maoist in its commitment to controlling information? Was it appropriate to let a building that some have described as a monumental "twisted pretzel", a "deformed doughnut", or even as a sci-fi monster overshadow an historically low-rise imperial capital that was already being smashed

to pieces by the Olympic modernisation drive?[1] What did it say about the Chinese Communist Party that it had cleared a Maoist motorcycle factory (and hundreds of ordinary civilian dwellings) to make room for a totem to Western modernity? Or that it was spending on a single building perhaps twice its annual budget on rural healthcare? More pressingly: would the thing actually stand up?

In 2007, OMA's iconic design became China's most spectacular piece of architectural theatre to date, outshining even Paul Andreu's futuristic, domed National Theatre (inaugurated that September) and the most radical works of Olympic architecture (the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium; the Teflon-coated Swimming Centre, or "Watercube"). Its celebrity (or notoriety) has lessened little since, thanks in no small part to CCTV staff burning down much of a wedge-shaped sister building, a cultural centre and hotel also designed by OMA, during an illegal fireworks display in 2009. (The fact that Koolhaas's co-designer was a highly photogenic young architect called Ole Scheeren — who is currently dating one of China's most famous actresses and is given to posing moodily in designer clothes in front of his great work — has probably helped the media stay focused on the project.)

The CCTV building also seized imaginations because it expressed so perfectly the strange politics of contemporary Chinese architecture: the Communist government's twin obsession with image-boosting monumentality and cutting-edge design; its addiction (whatever the cost) to both national power projection and to kow-towing to foreign know-how; and the curious collaboration between globe-trotting starchitects and the world's last great Communist dictatorship. The recent history of China's architecture has reproduced, in microcosm, the paradoxes of the country's political system: in which state domination is veneered with free-market

capitalism; in which cosmopolitan glamour coexists with, and often supports, one-party authoritarianism; and in which a Communist government is legitimising itself by erasing its proletarian past and building shrines to capitalist modernity.

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Architecture has always projected power. “It is a means for inflating the individual ego to the scale of a landscape, a city, or even a nation,” writes Deyan Sudjic. “What architecture does, as no other cultural form can, is to glorify and magnify the individual autocrat and suppress the individual into the mass. It can be seen as the first, and still one of the most powerful forms of mass communication.”[2] Ambitious architects and dictatorial regimes have long formed a mutual-support act. For architecture, more than any other creative industry, depends on concentrations of wealth and power; on the state’s special ability to marshal resources and manpower. “Architects are pretty much high-class whores,” Philip Johnson (who himself had a thing for fascism in the 1930s) famously declared. “We can turn down projects the way they can turn down some clients, but we’ve both got to say yes to someone if we want to stay in business.” Hitler’s relationship with Albert Speer is the *locus classicus* of the affinity between architecture and power: the link between the two was so confused in the Führer’s mind that it is unclear whether he (a frustrated architect himself) saw his buildings as a way of creating his state, or created his state in order to erect the buildings of his dreams. “A strong Germany must have a great architecture since architecture is a vital index of national power and strength,” he pronounced in the 1920s. Ten years later, he remade his point from a position of command: “Our enemies will guess it, but our own followers must

know it. New buildings are put up to strengthen our new authority.”[3] As Speer’s half-built Germania lay in ruins after 1945, the Allies’ judges deemed his architectural schemes an ideological weapon of mass destruction. The last-but-one Nazi prisoner of Spandau, Speer languished in jail longer than other high-ranking Nazis with arguably more blood on their hands.[4]

The Chinese have invested more meaning in the built environment than any other civilisation. For more than two millennia, imperial architecture was ruled by an elaborate body of rules called *fengshui* that — in the interests of maximising political auspiciousness — shaped every detail of building location and design. The Chinese emperor claimed to be the Son of Heaven; his power derived from his ability to commune between the natural and the human worlds. His palaces and temples were an important part of fulfilling that brief: they had to demonstrate the ruler’s skill in balancing the forces of nature and man. A succinct six-syllable formula, *tianling dili renhe*, summed up the cosmic demands on the empire’s architects: “Heavenly influences must be auspicious, geographical features beneficial, and the actions of man in harmony with the social, cultural and political situation”. In their position, layout and decorative schemas, palaces needed to be not only functional, but also symbolic of emperors’ potent combination of worldly and supernatural authority.[5]

Imperial Beijing embodied this complex of ideas about power projection. The decision to build a Chinese capital there was made at the start of the fifteenth century by one of China’s most ruthless rulers: by the Yongle emperor of the Ming dynasty, a usurper who murdered his nephew, the designated heir, and massacred not only his critics, but their friends and relatives up to ten degrees of association.

Yongle's Beijing was, one recent historian has judged, "the product of the most authoritarian imperial court in Chinese history."[6]

The site of the city was selected with utmost care for its geopolitical symbolism. It lay on the hinge between two worlds that Chinese emperors had long aspired to control: agrarian China to the south; and the nomadic steppe to the north. Within the capital's thick walls (the first part of the city to go up), Beijing's design figuratively recreated the centralised order of the empire itself. Yongle's capital was sliced in two by a central north-south axis, some seven and a half kilometres long. At the mid-point of this line was the imperial palace, the Forbidden City (itself named after an auspicious constellation, traditionally the home of the supreme deity around which other stars revolved). The palace lay at the heart of a triple set of square walls, all orientated to the points of the compass, forcing visitors towards one conclusion: that the Chinese emperor, the Son of Heaven enthroned within his capital — the universe in harmonious microcosm — both physically and spiritually represented the cosmic centre of the world.[7]

Almost every regime that has ruled China from Beijing since the Ming has, in its own way, subscribed to Yongle's spatial vision of power. When the non-Chinese Qing dynasty deposed the Ming in 1644, its new ruler's first act on reaching Beijing was to slip inside the Forbidden City; to assume the emperor's rightful place at the centre of the universe. Through the eighteenth century, Qing emperors also built to the northwest of their capital an imitation Versailles as a summer pleasure palace, expressing their omnivorous appetite for any cultural or technical display (whether Confucian, Buddhist or European) that would enhance their own prestige.

Even Mao Zedong — modern China's great destroyer — instantly identified with the physical symbolism of the Forbidden City. His predecessor, Chiang Kai-shek, had taken the south-eastern city of Nanjing as his capital; after driving Chiang's Nationalist government off the mainland in late 1949, Mao soon chose to shift the capital back to Beijing. On 1 October 1949, Mao announced the founding of his new People's Republic from Tiananmen: the Gate of Heavenly Peace just south of the Forbidden City, which for the Ming and Qing dynasties had been the portal between the emperor's inner sanctum and the outside world — the venue at which imperial decrees were proclaimed to the populace, and from which military campaigns set out.

But Mao was also bent on remaking Beijing in his own revolutionary image: on retaining the parts of the architectural past that were useful to him, and on demolishing those that were not. The Forbidden City's principle of political seclusion had an immediate appeal, and Mao quickly moved himself and his Politburo behind the vermillion walls of Zhongnanhai, an imperial park that for thirty years since the start of the republican period had been open to the public. "The emperors lived there," he is supposed to have observed. "Why can't I?"[8] But others things had to go. The old city wall was quickly pulled down, because it held up traffic. Mao — under the influence of Soviet planners — was determined to turn the centre of Beijing into an industrial powerhouse. "From now on," he vowed, looking out from the Forbidden City in 1949, "there will be a forest of chimneys to the horizon."[9]

The centrepiece of Mao's radical makeover was his transformation of Tiananmen into a grand theatre for the Communist state. The area that Mao surveyed from a viewing

platform on 1 October 1949 was not the vast opening that is now Tiananmen Square. It was a densely wooded, T-shaped parkland — dotted with gates, steles, temples, bridges and government departments — that lacked even a formal name. Mao wanted a square "big enough to hold an assembly of one billion"; a public space in which the proletariat could exercise their "democratic dictatorship". [10] Within a decade, Tiananmen had become, at 440,000 square metres, the largest public square in the world. The underwhelming wooden porches around the old park's perimeter had been replaced with a rim of stolid Stalinist government buildings (the Great Hall of the People; a new Museum of Chinese History). Out of the square's centre loomed the thirty-seven-metre-high Monument to the Heroes of the Revolution, a giant obelisk purposefully disrupting the old imperial north-south axis with "the lofty spirit and unsurpassable achievements of the people's heroes".[11] The square's road system was blasted open to suit the needs of the state: the road before Tiananmen Gate was quintupled in width between 1949 and 1959, to accommodate the tanks that were *de rigueur* for mass military parades, as well as the armies (tens of thousands-strong) of other National Day performers. Completed while China lurched into perhaps the worst state-manufactured famine in history, the remodelling of Tiananmen — just one of Beijing's hugely costly "Ten Great Building Projects" of the 1950s — spoke volubly of the government's prioritising of authoritarian exhibitionism over public welfare, and foreshadowed contemporary China's mania for megaprojects.

By the late 1950s, the new square was almost fully Mao's: his thirty-foot portrait, suspended from the viewing platform on which he surveyed admiring crowds, gazed down at his own words (inscribed

in his own calligraphy) on the Monument to the Heroes of the Revolution.[12] Mao conquered the rest — the southern half — of the square a year after his death, when his orange, embalmed body — a sleeping beauty awaiting the kiss of history to bring him and his ideas back to life — was set inside a large mausoleum in order, Party planners explained, "to underline further the political meaning of Tiananmen Square".[13]

For three decades, Mao placed politics in command of Chinese architecture. Experts begged him to leave Beijing's centre alone: to preserve it as a relic of imperial history and to build a new government district to the south of the old city walls. "The value of antiquities is a matter of perception," he replied. "If one has to cry about the demolition of a city gate and the creation of new openings, then it is a problem of political awareness."[14] Throughout the transformation of Beijing, every significant decision was taken by politicians, while architects were instead enjoined "to complete the socialist revolution by raising high the red banner of Mao Zedong thought, diligently studying the works of Comrade Mao Zedong [and] engaging deeply in class struggle."[15] Between 1966 and 1976, the Cultural Revolution did its best to abolish the very concept of a professional architect. "Rely on the Working Class" ran the slogan *du jour* in the industry's periodical, *Architecture Journal*, which lauded coal-processing plants supposedly designed solely by their workers.[16] Liang Sicheng, the founding father of modern Chinese architecture and an energetic campaigner for the preservation of old Beijing, died in 1972 a demoralised, traumatised man, his final energies expended in writing humiliating self-criticisms of his "counterrevolutionary scholarship".

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The Chinese, Mao famously believed, were “poor and blank. An empty sheet of paper has no blotches and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it.” Since the death of Mao in 1976, China’s rulers have turned their backs on revolutionary dogmatism; and China’s built environment has served as a clean piece of paper upon which the state’s new policies (this time of economic liberalisation) could be inscribed. The earliest building boom of the post-Mao period spoke of the state’s decision to stop interfering quite so much in the lives of its citizens. A fanatical economic meddler, Mao had condemned any kind of saleable sideline — keeping pigs, handicrafts, catching fish — as counterrevolutionary. But even before Mao’s demise, exasperated farmers had started dismantling Mao’s huge, lazy collectives into small, profit-hungry family plots, which generated agricultural surpluses to finance industrialisation, imports and a spike in rural building. In the early 1980s, the architectural markers of China’s political reforms were first seen not in fancy urban skyscrapers, but in modest improvements in village dwellings: in two-storey residences that sprang up on the prospering south and east coasts, paid for by hardworking peasant entrepreneurs making decent money raising livestock, growing fruit and vegetables, and manufacturing basic commodities like fertiliser, bricks and cement. In those days, an extra storey in a concrete box was the height of status-conscious architectural chic.

From its beginnings, then, post-Mao China’s development was driven by ordinary individuals seizing opportunities where they could. And the country’s helter-skelter urbanisation has — up to a point — reflected these socioeconomic principles of decentralisation. In December 1978, only weeks after asserting his supreme authority

over the Communist Party to end the power vacuum that had followed Mao's death, Deng Xiaoping outlined one of the signature policies of his "New Era": control over economic activity would be devolved to local governments, villages and even individuals, encouraging the populace to innovate outside the planned economy. The former fishing village of Shenzhen — marked out in 1980 as a "laboratory for the contained unleashing of capitalism" — has been the demographic and architectural bellwether for the economic explosion that resulted: between 1978 and 1985 alone, the population increased thirty-seven-fold, to reach a million; by 2000, it had swollen to seven million. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Shenzhen exhibited all the architectural restraint of the Blade Runner set, sprouting factories, apartment blocks and skyscrapers (the first of which was topped with the prestige architectural flourish of 1980s China: a revolving rooftop restaurant).[17]

Architects have often struggled to keep up with this pace of development: Shenzhen, one commentator remarks, has "humiliated vision".[18] China's urbanisation since 1978 has been characterised by febrile dreams for expansion that defy careful architectural planning: in 2001, the minister of civil affairs proposed that 400 new cities — of one million residents each — should be completed by 2020; in the twenty years preceding, the same number had already been achieved. The term for describing Beijing's growth — which in thirty years has demanded the construction of four new ringroads — has been "spreading the pancake": allowing the city to overrun its earlier perimeters, as naturally as batter rushes out from the centre of a frying pan. Buildings go up quickly, and come down again only a little less quickly. Most residential buildings will be demolished within twenty years, one Chinese newspaper has warned. In Beijing,

apartments seem to age in dog years: a state-of-the-art block will look distinctly shabby in well under a decade.[19] “I have come to the conclusion that in China aesthetics are irrelevant,” one urban critic has remarked. “[A]rchitecture — that collection of styles which aims to give identity to undifferentiated building mass — has been liberated of aesthetic relevance. The blanket of grayish pink that makes up the Chinese city will smother almost any attempt at refinement or elegance. At best a necessary burden, architecture in China is applied last-minute. It seems to be squirted against the facades like sauce from a squeeze pack.”[20] Through the 1980s, often the most architectural vision you could hope for was a “big-cap” (*dawuding*) — one of those red, heavy-eaved Chinese roofs — slapped on a skyscraper.

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But by the time I started visiting China, its rulers — newly flush from double-digit GDP growth — had rediscovered a sense of focused architectural ambition. My first trip took me to Shanghai in 1996: “you must go,” my hosts told me, “to see Pudong” — the muddy backwater on the eastern bank of the city’s river that the government had decided, just three years before, to transform into a financial centre. When I got there — travelling across on a dingy ferry — I remember seeing only one completed high-rise; but it told you, with disarming frankness, much of what you needed to know about China’s building aspirations. It was the Oriental Pearl Tower: three distended pink and silver bath pearls linked by an ascending concrete ladder, all on a knobbly-kneed tripod, and topped by a triumphantly phallic television mast. Every window on the 263-metre-high viewpoint was inscribed with a boast about the tower: that it was the world’s third, or maybe fourth, tallest television tower; where its revolving restaurant

stood in the global pecking order of revolving restaurants; how many metres higher than the Eiffel Tower it was. (To hammer home the last point, there were souvenir models with the two buildings glued next to each other on the same mini-plinths; the Eiffel inevitably looked pitifully shrunken by comparison.) Yes, it was vulgar; but it had chutzpah.

By the end of the decade, Pudong had become the PRC's first global architectural mega-project: a forest of skyscrapers interwoven with eight-lane roads and Scalectrix overpasses, and a favourite backdrop for Hollywood sci-fi blockbusters. It was also the first splashy urban redevelopment for which the PRC engaged an all-star cast of foreign architect consultants (Richard Rogers, Toyo Ito, Dominique Perrault), and thus a milestone in the PRC's attempt to reinvent itself as a freewheeling economic and cultural powerhouse after the disastrous anti-democracy crackdown of 1989 (following which most Western investors had left). Look at us now, China's government was saying: the post-socialist sponsors of capitalist modernity. Pudong dwarfed the old colonial buildings of the Bund, on the facing bank of the Huangpu River. Until the 1980s, these buildings — a line of neo-classical and art-deco facades erected by the foreign powers who dominated Shanghai's economy until the 1930s — remained Shanghai's most imposing structures. The Pudong (dotted with buildings that have in succession claimed the crown of world's tallest building) seemed expressly designed to humiliate the Bund — itself a symbol of China's pre-1949 humiliation.[21]

Pudong was only the beginning of China's hunger for trophy architecture. Since the late 1990s, Beijing too has bristled with iconic new structures, usually of foreign design. The city's break-out piece was Paul Andreu's National Theatre, commissioned by the then president, Jiang Zemin, in 1999: a glass and titanium dome looming

out immediately to the west of the Forbidden City that many Beijingers know (not so affectionately) as the "alien's egg" or (even less affectionately) as the "giant turd". It "broke the shackles," commented one of the chief Chinese planners on the project, "and made more avant-garde architectural designs possible later".[22] The success in 2001 of Beijing's bid for the Olympics accelerated the architectural overhaul of the city. The Olympic park just beyond the fourth ringroad has been the stage-set for an extraordinary sequence of architectural statements: the National Stadium in the shape of a bird's nest; an aluminium-covered basketball centre that mimics a bamboo box; a swimming pool whose translucent Teflon exterior recalls a bubble-wrapped water cube. This architectural extravaganza has played a crucial role in rebranding China as a forward-looking, cosmopolitan, above all modern country; it has become a major source of soft power for China's Communist government. In an era when most of China's official cultural campaigns are still greeted with suspicion by the West (consider the ongoing anxiety in Europe and America about the founding of PRC-funded Confucius Institutes within universities, or about China's investment in Africa), China's new architecture has generally found a more worshipful international reception. China, the message goes, is the home no longer of crusty, politics-hobbled socialism, but of architectural vision. The National Stadium, its designers Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron hoped, "might do for Beijing what the Eiffel Tower … has achieved for Paris."[23]

China's desire to establish itself as an architectural powerhouse has turned it into a land of utopian opportunity for starchitects, enabling them to realise the kind of fantasies that Europe and America have rejected. China loves starchitects for technical and

psychological reasons. At least until now, state commissioners have genuinely worried that Chinese practices lack the expertise to achieve the kind of spectacular effects that they clearly crave. “In China, as an architect, you’re seen as a cultural figure, and also as a technician,” purrs Ben van Berkel, who is currently building a football stadium (in the shape of a “traditional Chinese bamboo football”) in north China and a new city in the southeast. “You are the consultant for cultural effects; they give full allowance for your creativity. That artistic freedom is wonderful … It’s very difficult for an architect to work in Amsterdam or Paris right now. There are so many regulations. There’s no building in Amsterdam done by a high-profile architect that’s splendidly fantastic.”[24] “People who actually live in China … are usually open to our ideas,” remarks Rem Koolhaas — who, before winning the CCTV competition, was struggling to secure top-level commissions in Europe and the US.[25] “In Europe, you tend to meet the client’s representative, not the actual client,” OMA’s Asia director, David Gianotten, adds. “But in China we were often in direct conversation with the leaders of CCTV … As clients they knew what they wanted but didn’t know how to get there. This made us the experts.”[26] “Everyone is encouraged to do their most stupid and extravagant designs [in China],” Jacques Herzog has admitted. “They don’t have as much of a barrier between good taste and bad taste, between the minimal and expressive. The Beijing stadium tells me that nothing will shock them.”[27] Ole Scheeren has concurred, speculating that the CCTV towers could only have been built in China; anywhere else in the world, building codes would have vetoed the design. Not everyone takes such a positive view: one Chinese academic has complained that his country has “turned into a laboratory for foreign architects.”[28]

Hiring a big foreign name is also a status symbol, a luxury: government commissioners "love the fact that they have a starchitect working for them," remarked Ou Ning, a design and architecture critic. "It proves that they have money and power."[29] Foreign architects, Ma Yansong (one of the up-and-coming stars of Chinese architecture) notes tartly, "are treated as superior beings here."[30] Ma himself only shot to celebrity in China after he won a big international competition to build a Canadian skyscraper in 2007. Chinese architects, it seems, only become credible back home through the imprimatur of Western recognition. Even diehard contrarians have been attracted by the government's beneficence. Until the early 2000s, Ai Weiwei was famous principally amongst artworld cognoscenti for his small-scale architectural designs and conceptual art, such as the defiant sequence of "finger" photographs: images of him giving the finger to a succession of government buildings — now Tiananmen Square, now the White House. But it was his widely publicised involvement in designing the National Stadium in Beijing that helped bring him global celebrity, turning him into the darling of the international art scene and — ironically — China's most prominent dissident.

Since that commission, the Chinese government has tried, but failed, to harness his architectural prestige to burnish their own soft power. Early in 2008, Ai was invited by a local government functionary to build a studio on the outskirts of Shanghai — to help the city compete culturally with Beijing. In the two years that it took to design and build the complex, Ai had established himself as one of the most provocative and internationally celebrated members of the country's awkward squad. He had denounced the Bird's Nest Stadium as a "disgusting fake smile", and advertised in international broadsheets

his boycotting of the Olympic opening ceremony; he had repeatedly and vociferously championed the victims of political corruption. Through 2008, he campaigned to expose one of the greatest architectural scandals of post-Mao China: the shoddy construction of schools in Sichuan which collapsed, killing thousands of children, during the earthquake that year. (One devastating photograph taken after the disaster pictured a former school next to a government building: the school was rubble; the government headquarters was unaffected.) His public support of the earthquake's victims led to him being beaten by police to the point of brain trauma. Unsurprisingly perhaps, by the time that Ai's Shanghai studio was completed in summer 2010, the government had decided — in an almost comically spiteful volte-face — to order its demolition.

Ask foreign starchitects what has drawn them to China and you tend to get vague exhalations about how China is opening up politically, economically, culturally; about how it is travelling in the right direction. "Architects want to be in the forefront, to be contemporary," Ben van Berkel remarks. "And if you want to be that, you have to be aware of China. China, at the same time, wants to collaborate, to get better in every aspect of its culture … We should learn from China. It's not just an economic quickness there, there's also a drive, an ambition. There's energy and intelligence."[31] China, Koolhaas has observed, is a "parallel universe" compared with the "backward-looking US".[32] "As a professor at Harvard, I have spent more than ten years carefully studying the direction in which China is developing. I'm convinced that it'll be positive in the end."[33] (This is a prediction that no Harvard Sinologist — with a lifetime of studying China — would venture to make.) "In China, there's a debate about progress that isn't happening elsewhere," David

Gianotten remarks. "I don't want to compare China with the West. Judgements are irrelevant here … We should embrace the Chinese context, what's going on; the openness is very exciting."[34]

A very few of these architects will openly admit that the appeal of China as a working environment springs from its authoritarianism; Rem Koolhaas is a member of that candid minority. "Today's architecture is subservient to the market and its terms," he has complained about working in the West. "Architecture has turned into a spectacle."[35] In China, by contrast, the architect thrives under a benevolent despotism. "What attracts me about China is that there is still a state. There is something that can take initiative on a scale and of a nature that almost no other body that we know of today could ever afford or contemplate … On our own, we can at most have good intentions. But we cannot represent the public good, without the larger entity, such as the state. To make matters worse, the more radical, innovative and brotherly our sentiments, the more we architects need a strong sponsor."[36] No architect, as far as I am aware, has admitted that China's ability to finance their fantasies substantially depends also on its access to low-paid labour; on the maintenance of a delta-epsilon class of rural migrant workers who, despite the hardships and dangers of working on big urban construction projects, can still earn considerably more than they would in the under-developed countryside. And so they keep coming to cities like Beijing, despite exploitative contracts, poor safety regulations and living conditions, and their exclusion from the systems of medical and educational benefits that regular urbanites receive.

Such rationalisations have not gone unchallenged. Observers, rather than beneficiaries, of China's recent architectural frenzy, take

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