Broadcasting Space:
China Central Television's New Headquarters

SHANNON MATTERN

The New School

China Central Television's spectacular new headquarters, set to open in 2009, has attracted attention from the design press since its designers were selected in an international competition in 2002. In this paper, I examine the Office for Metropolitan Architecture's design for the CCTV building, the rhetoric surrounding the design, and the media and spatial contexts in which the building will exist. I argue that, contrary to the designers' claims — and perhaps in spite of their best intentions — that the building will promote a more open, accessible state media, this steel and glass structure embodies tensions currently gripping the institution — tensions between official ideologies and the market, between the Party and the people, between propaganda and commerce. As the medium of television grows increasingly decentralized through digitization and mobilization, and as China's state media faces increasing competition from other media in other forms and from other places, the symbolic significance of a huge, monolithic structure will become ever more important in signaling the continuing power of this state institution.

Since 2001, stadia, hotels and bridges have been rising hurriedly to accommodate the impending rush of Olympic visitors. From within this chaos of cranes and I-beams has emerged an odd "Brobdingnagian sculpture" of a building that has been likened to a particle accelerator, a calligraphic symbol, a picture frame, a deconstructed doughnut, a pair of "big shorts," a triumphal arch, and most tellingly, a blank TV screen (Zalewski, 2005, np.; Goldberger, June 30, 2008, np.). This is China Central Television's (CCTV) new five-million-square-foot headquarters, the second largest office building in the world, designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). "This iconic new addition to the Beijing skyline," the architects write, "combines the entire process of TV making — administration, production, broadcasting — into a single loop of interconnected activity" (OMA, n.d.). Out of a shared nine-story base, housing a partly subterranean production studio, arise two legs: one that includes space for broadcasting, and another that is dedicated to "services, research, and education" (ibid.). The two torqued glass towers of the CCTV building, both wrapped in an irregularly patterned metal "diagrid" mesh, join at the top in a 13-story "overhang," which, according to the designers' Web site,

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serves as a "cantilevered penthouse for the management" (ibid.). Other reports have made clear, however, that this prime location will not be the exclusive domain of CCTV officials; it will also include public spaces, like a canteen and a public viewing deck, where three glass windows in the floor will permit views to the ground roughly 500 feet below. "Embracing the public as never before," *Architectural Record* reports, the CCTV building, although secured for staff and equipment, will offer Universal Studios-style tours that grant visitors access to a public "loop" circulating throughout the building, affording interior views of CCTV's "inner workings", as well as grand exterior views of Beijing's Central Business District and the Forbidden City to the west (Amelar, 2004, p. 108).

Figure 1. *Television Cultural Center (left) and China Central Television headquarters (right) are both surrounded by the towers of Beijing's new Central Business District. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*

While the public may be confined to a defined "loop" in the CCTV building, they have free rein of the 1.25-million-square-foot Television Cultural Center (TVCC) next door. This L-shaped building, a "mirror image" of the CCTV, includes a 1,500-seat theater, cinemas, recording studios, an exhibition hall, a press room, a five-star hotel, a ballroom, and other public amenities. It was to have served as the international broadcasting center for the 2008 Olympics. According to Arup (n.d.), the project engineers, if you ever find yourself sitting at the main intersection of the Central Business District, you can glimpse the TVCC through the CCTV building's picture frame, suggesting, perhaps, that the media represents its public, or, taking a more cynical view, that the public facilities on this 49.5-acre site are all for show (see

Figure 10). On the southeast block — the project is spread over four blocks — we find more public space: a Media Park is intended to offer a "soft landscape" for outdoor broadcasting and public events (see Figure 1). The architects suggest that the space will give this state media organization more "ambition to extend their broadcasting more [toward] . . . the public (OMA, n.d.). Also on the site is a two-story, ring-shaped service building containing central energy for CCTV and TVCC, parking for CCTV vehicles, and guards' dormitories.

Figure 2. *Media Park and service building in foreground, with CCTV and TVCC behind. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*

Here we behold the shape of urban space after Koolhaas's predicted "death of the skyscraper." Here, too, we behold the physical embodiment of state-controlled media in a nation rushing to create the semblance of a society more open, more tidy, better prepared for the global spotlight. A government design project, Koolhaas argues, has the potential to inspire transformation from within the system: The building's centripetal loop and public spaces envelop civic activity, while its glass facades and studio walls make the production process and, by extension, its management, transparent. "[T]he building introduces accessibility and maybe even something like accountability . . . that is entirely new to CCTV — or perhaps to any TV station," says OMA partner and project architect Ole Scheeren (quoted in Dickie, 2007,

November, np.). With this new building allegedly comes greater openness and wider broadcast. When the building opens in 2009, CCTV's 16 channels will expand to 250, all transmitted digitally.

Yet the messages broadcast by Koolhaas's glass-and-steel medium may not match the architect's nor his clients' rhetoric. The CCTV building, despite the building's transparency and supposed "legibility," embodies neither openness nor accountability. What is "accountable" about a building that is designed to "dissolve in the sky" on days of intense air pollution? (Ole Scheeren, quoted in Fong, 2007, np.; see Figure 6).[1] Yet the messages that the building *does* convey are consistent with those of the institution it houses and the architectural context it is joining. It is an accidental harmony, however — a consequence of shared contradiction and confusion. Both CCTV-the-institution and CCTV-the-building embody a tension between official ideologies and the market, between the Party and the people, between propaganda and commerce, or in the words of anthropologist Zhao Bin (1999), between the roles of "mouthpiece and money-spinner." Furthermore, as design editor Ole Bouman notes, the building materializes tensions within the larger Chinese architectural context "between chauvinism and internationalism, between Western interests and the interests of globalization in general" (quoted in Drenttel, 2007, np.). These tensions lead to strategies of overreaction and overcompensation.

We will examine the overlapping contexts — spatial, historical, political-economic, social, and cultural, all of which are characterized by similar tensions — from which the CCTV building arises. As Beijing undergoes rapid, dramatic development, its planners and designers struggle to reconcile its "imperial and communist past" — the Forbidden City, the wide avenues, the "monumental Soviet-nationalist architectures — with emblems of the new liberal capitalism," including high-rise condominiums, office towers, and luxury hotels (Hanru, 2004, pp. 456-457). The CCTV building, juggling responsibilities to the state, the market, the Chinese people, and global publics, also carries the burden of serving as an architectural icon within that urban context. Furthermore, it must come to terms with its own institutional history, and with the history and future of television and mass media. As the medium of television grows increasingly decentralized through digitization and mobilization, and as China's state media faces increasing competition from other media in other forms and from other places, the symbolic significance of a huge, monolithic structure will become ever more important in signaling, to both local and global audiences, the continuing power of this state institution. Does the external symbolism then extend inside, to the building's program? Do the new liberal, commercial values supposedly defining the institution also inform the way media is made and disseminated?

Finally, we will examine the building's potential as a social catalyst. Will it significantly alter the face of Beijing, revolutionize the way people inhabit public space, transform the way CCTV employees do their jobs, promote liberalization, and help to bring about a new age of transparency and accountability for Chinese state media and the People's Republic of China? The building, undoubtedly an engineering marvel,

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[1] Daniel Zalewski (2005) reports: "The pollution, Koolhaas said, is one reason the CCTV design . . . is so boldly graphic in shape and façade: subtlety can't be seen through smog."

will likely offer little in the way of social or political revolution. Liberalism, accountability, and openness are manifested here not in inhabitable, material form, but as icons, as architectural gestures, as images projected on screens, as rhetorical flourishes.

Contextualism At Different Scales: Beijing As Urban Medium

BBC radio host Philip Dodd asked Scheeren in a March 2008 radio interview if he thought the CCTV building might become Beijing's first iconic structure, in the way that the Eiffel Tower is to Paris or the Space Needle is to Seattle. Scheeren responded:

> It might come to exist in an interesting polarity between a contemporary icon and a historic structure. It's true that Beijing has never had this iconic object. On the contrary, it probably has one of the most complex and fascinating structures, or *textures*, in its center: the Forbidden City, which completely withdraws itself from an object-like description . . . [It is] one of the most interesting monuments ever built . . . except it doesn't present itself like one. (Dodd, 2008)

Scheeren situates the CCTV within a field of spatial forces: the "texture" of the Forbidden City paired with the "void" of Tiananmen Square together constitute two strong "forces of gravity that define Beijing's character" (ibid.).[2] He acknowledges that Tiananmen Square, the physical site, created momentum for a shift in Beijing's spatial logic, but does he also acknowledge, as Carolyn Marvin (2008) does in her recent study of Beijing's "megaspaces," the Tiananmen massacre's effect on televisual space and the symbolic power of state media?

> By effectively seizing Tiananmen Square, the June Fourth Protesters challenged state power at its physical and symbolic core. Refusing to play the acquiescent and submissive role demanded of Chinese citizens, they dared the state to reclaim its own space. It did so with a horrific display of force in the surrounding streets that deeply damaged its standing at home and abroad. Defined for centuries by their unquestioned control of space, China's rulers found that *monumental space was no longer sacrosanct in a television age*, but politically ambiguous and highly vulnerable. (Marvin, 2008, pp. 248-249, italics mine)

By 1989, television had trumped the representative power of symbolic space. We will examine the Chinese media landscape in the third section, and then address whether or not the architects understand how their building works, and how the CCTV building actually does function within the late- or post-television age.

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[2] Cultural philosopher Rick Dolphijn (2006) describes Tiananmen as "the true oriental void, for it had been a broad, short market street before only recently being turned into a square and had been in no way connected to the façade-less Forbidden City that now heads it" (p. 50).

Figure 3. *CCTV within the "texture" of a rapidly changing Beijing. Copyright Doug Kanter/The New York Times/Redux*

For now, as we establish the spatial context for the CCTV building, it is important to note that the city itself — Beijing's physical space — has historically functioned as a medium. "Centralized authority loves recursion, seeing its favored forms deployed at every site and scale," writes architect and critic Michael Sorkin (2008); "official Beijing is an exemplar of this merger of symbol and control . . . . The Forbidden City was itself conceived recursively, as the terrestrial expression of celestial geometry" (np.). Piper Gaubatz (1994), X. Winston Yan (1996), Mihai Craciun (2001), and several writers in a special "Ubiquitous China" issue of *VOLUME* (2006), a periodical that Koolhaas co-founded, discuss the evolution of urban planning and historic preservation, as well as their underlying "messages" and ideologies, throughout Beijing's history, and particularly in the past half-century. I won't repeat these discussions here.

The issue of contextualism — which, in simple terms, refers to how a design "speaks to" its surroundings — has been debated hotly since Beijing underwent rapid growth in the mid-20th century. Developers questioned which approach was best: to preserve the city's architectural heritage through a "faithful and literal" adoption of historical architectural characteristics such as the curvilinear roof, clay tiles, brick walls with half-exposed wooden columns, etc.; or to follow Soviet advice and reject that "feudal" historical style in favor of more modern, socialist designs; or to find a compromise, one "capturing [the] essence" of the local context and national style, while also reflecting "the spirit of

contemporary society" (Yan, 1996). When Deng Xiaoping came to power in the late 1970s and reversed Mao's anti-urban development strategies, a lack of trained Chinese architects led builders to borrow contemporary design ideas, without an appreciation of their fashionable "ironist mannerism," from the West. "The result," Carolyn Marvin (2008) reports, "was a hybrid kitsch of decorative Western-style detail appliquéd on Soviet-style grandiosity" (p. 248).

Recent urban developments return to the recursive tradition: "The insistent grandiosity, the incredible extent, the mobilization of labor, the fixation on symbolism, and the centralization of planning all announce a representational project, as well as an urban and architectural one" (Sorkin, 2008). And the Olympics, which, like the old World Expositions, are "primarily . . . architectural and urban planning event[s]," provide a unique opportunity to use the "physical environment [to serve] as the medium for the host's message" (Keller, 2008, p. 137). The physical city of Beijing, reimaged and recast for global capital, global visitors, and the global spotlight, has had to negotiate between "seemingly opposed ideological and economic imperatives" (Broudehoux, 2004, p. 244). Design scholar Anne-Marie Broudehoux says that Beijing faces

> [the] impossibility of producing a coherent image for the Chinese capital, which could reconcile international demands for a market-friendly environment, tourist demands for an ancient capital city, government desires for a modern socialist capital, elite aspirations for a cosmopolitan metropolis, and popular pressure for a socially responsive urban environment. (ibid.)

The result of this market-driven, "spatial logic" has been "the establishment of new class relations and new patterns of urban segregation to a degree unknown in pre-reform Beijing, thereby negating the efforts of forty years of socialism." Rapid development has resulted in the elimination of many of the old *hutongs* composed of tight, enclosed grids of one- and two-story courtyard houses (*siheyuan)*, whose one-time residents have since been relocated to new residential towers at the city's periphery — "deluxe *hutongs* in the sky" — if they are not "simply made homeless without contingency" (Nobel, 2008, p. 76). The Chinese government has reported that approximately 15,000 residents have been relocated throughout Beijing, although human rights groups suggest that the number may be as high as 1.5 million (cited in Keller, 2008, p. 138). At the same time, hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have flocked to Beijing to work, often for just a few dollars a day, and the pace of construction has cost some their lives. The new China, and especially the new Beijing, embodies "what is possible when modern technology, capitalist zeal, Communist control, national ambition, and a bottomless, unprotected labor pool combine in the service of building," writes design critic Philip Nobel (2008, p. 76). "You get things done."[3]

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[3] Even the old is being made new in Beijing: parts of the Forbidden City — Meridian Gate, the Hall of Supreme Harmony, and Qianlong Garden — have been renovated. Beijing's $40 billion Olympic "modernization" campaign also included a renovated airport by British architects Foster & Partners, now the world's largest, and perhaps the world's only airport resembling a dragon, along with new subway lines and new roads. The population underwent refurbishment, too: Pre-Olympic public education campaigns taught locals to refrain from spitting and queue-cutting in the presence of foreign visitors,

Of course, none of these phenomena nor the criticism they have generated are new. Urban historian Mike Davis (2006) describes huge purges or relocations of the homeless and slum-dwellers in Berlin in advance of the 1936 Games, and in Seoul before the Olympics in 1988 (p. 106). Most cities that have won the "dubious honor" of hosting the Olympics since the 1970s, Helen Jefferson Lenskyj (2000) claims, have "experienced more negative than positive social, political, economic, and environmental impacts" (p. 2; see also Liao & Pitts, 2006; Burbank, et al., 2001). Broudehoux (2004) argues that Chinese authorities' "elaborate mechanisms to control and reshape the perception of the city" draw on redevelopment strategies generated in many cities, over many decades, to help them prepare for major events (pp. 160-161).[4] What makes Beijing's *different* from other cities' Olympic developments, however, is the scale and speed at which they are happening. "This is an extreme, extreme version of what has happened at other Olympics," says Olympic historian David Wallechinsky (quoted in Demick, 2008).

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and workers were sent on conveniently timed vacations. Traffic was banned in visible locations at key times, cars with even and odd license plate numbers traded alternate-day downtown driving privileges, and manufacturing at nearby factories was temporarily curtailed or suspended.

Critics wondered about the sincerity and long-term effectiveness of these social reform stopgap measures, and some were equally concerned that the physical infrastructural developments might be just as short-lived or short-sighted. Architecture critic Paul Goldberger (2008, June 2) describes stone walls along elevated roadways that are props in the urban "stage set — Potemkin hutongs designed to distract visitors from the fact that so many real hutongs are being demolished . . . ." Nobel (2008) is even more critical: "The wooded margins of every highway? The elaborately greened interchanges? All fresh, and all false, every tree imported and planned to mask Beijing's essential filthiness in advance of the coming-out party . . . ." (p. 76). Many critics wonder about Chinese authorities' plans for long-term use of many Olympic sites.

[4] Most of these redevelopments involve work in three areas: physical beautification, social reform, and ideological manipulation, Broudehoux (2004) claims. Physical beautification projects include public works, "highly symbolic architectural monuments," major infrastructure projects, "large scale cosmetic intervention," pollution alleviation, and greening efforts. Social reforms include language and literacy programs, "'civilizing' campaigns," and "mechanisms of social control and discipline" (p. 160-161). And ideological manipulation is intended "to manipulate popular consciousness, foster nationalist sentiment, and boost civic pride through political spectacles, mass demonstrations, and ritualized practices" (ibid.). We see all of these strategies employed in Beijing.
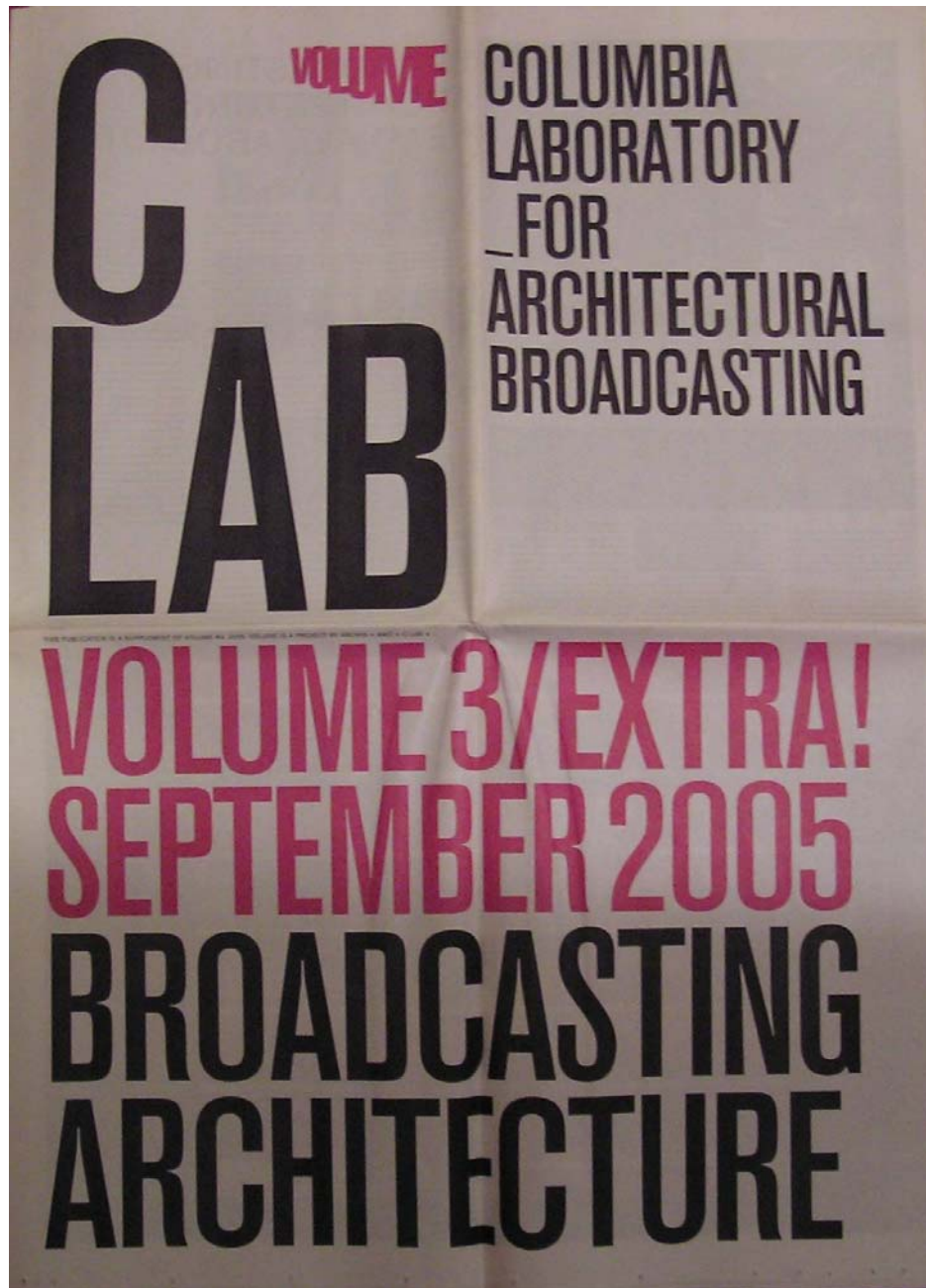
Figure 4. *"Broadcasting Architecture" supplement to VOLUME. Photo by the author. Permission courtesy Columbia Laboratory for Architectural Broadcasting*

"Architectural broadcasting" was the focus of an issue of *VOLUME* (2005), a publication co-founded by Koolhaas in 2005. The designer has frequently lamented that architecture is "too slow", that there is far too much lag time between conception and concretization. So, Koolhaas launched a magazine "to promote OMA's ideas while they were still molten, not cold steel" (Zelewski, 2005). But in China, even architecture moves fast, perhaps almost at the speed of print. Between 2002 and 2006, construction spending in China increased 165%, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics, and until 2010, construction is estimated to reach two billion square meters annually (cited in United State Department of Commerce, n.d.). China's "'all-at-once' pattern of development" has rendered the Chinese architect, according to Koolhaas, "the most important in the world; s/he will build the most. Burdened by speed and obligation, without the intellectual infrastructure to rethink the project of modernity, s/he is in an impossible situation — changing the world without a blueprint" (Rowe, 2005, p. 8; Koolhaas, 2004, pp. 452-453). Japanese architect Toyo Ito writes, "In today's China, the demand [in architecture] is for size, expressions of immensity . . . What I envy in China is, while neither the client nor society has any clear idea of what to symbolize, still there's a strong expectation of architects as creators of symbols" (Ota, 2004, p. 448). In such an environment, Koolhaas is free to use architecture as a fast medium, not only to disseminate his own firm's ideas, but also to embody the ideologies of CCTV and the state that controls it. It is important to remember, though, as Broudehoux does, that these represent three potentially separate ideologies, each requiring a distinct rhetoric to reach a particular target audience. As we read descriptions of the Beijing development and the CCTV building, we must keep in mind who is speaking to whom, and for what purpose.

Scheeren suggested to Dodd (2008) that the CCTV building's effect has been "to focus a certain discourse, to focus a debate, and to really spur opinions," to push people "to deal with what their city is ultimately becoming and also what kind of symbols start to inhabit their new existence." Perhaps this building, like the media it houses, has the potential to shape public discourse about design, about representation, about identity. Of course, the CCTV building does not serve this discursive function in isolation. What symbols are being used by other architects working in China? How are they using the "physical environment [to serve] as [a] medium for the host's" — or their own — messages (Keller, 2008)? How are they responding to their Chinese, and urban, contexts?

Architects and planners are creating that context even at the scale of urban form, through their choices of sites. Since 1911, architectural historian Sean Keller (2008) explains, the Republican and Communist governments have deemphasized the imperial axis of the city in favor of the east-west axis of Chang'an Avenue, which became the "axis of the people" (pp. 137-138; see also Bracken & Sohn, 2008, for more discussion of Beijing's evolving morphology). But the Olympic plan (redesigned, significantly, by Albert Speer, Jr.) "reasserts and extends" the axis of the Forbidden City, thus suggesting a reorientation of centralized power, a new urban texture and a new politics: "'soft power' on a grand scale" (ibid.). The CCTV headquarters' move from western Beijing to a prominent site in the new Central Business District (CBD), at the intersection of Chang'an Avenue and 3rd Ring Road, suggests a reorientation of this institution, as well; on its site, the "axis of the people" meets commerce.

Figure 5. *Skyscrapers of the Central Business District surrounding the luminous new CCTV headquarters. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*

Some critics have been disappointed by the overrepresentation, among new construction, of a well-worn architectural form: the skyscraper. Within the CBD, 300 new towers will rise in the next decade. "Asia has adopted the skyscraper as the symbol of its modernity," critic Hou Hanru (2004) writes (p. 473). Architect and urban design scholar Peter Rowe (2004) explains the logic behind this development:

> The discrete volumes of buildings often appear to be defined almost exclusively by external parameters on a site, such as set-back ratios, sun-angle regulations, fire-code provisions, and so on, rather than by internally driven programmatic and architecturally motivated compositional principles. Under real estate pressure, buildings are quite literally built to the available limit, frequently without regard for much else. (p. 34)[5]

In short, the shape of much built space is based on pure economic and functional maximization. Even this utilitarian form is symbolic.

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[5] See Koolhaas's (1978) discussion of the motivations underlying the skyscraper form in his *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*.

Yet alternative forms have appeared on the horizon, particularly in the 2,800 acre Olympic Green, across the 4th and 5th ring roads. Here are Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron's National Stadium, known as the "Bird's Nest"; PTW/Ove Arup's National Swimming Center, the "Water Cube" covered with inflatable bubbles; and Studio Pei Zhu's Digital Beijing, the Olympics data control center, a building bearing a striking resemblance to a vertical stack of computer motherboards. In western Beijing, we find the locally designed Beijing Shooting Range Hall, designed to look like (surprise!)a pistol; the LED-covered Wukesong Basketball Arena, called the "Bird's Cage"; and Schuermann Architects' LaoShan Velodrome, whose roof is modeled after a bicycle wheel, and where, as one might expect, cycling events will take place. Close to Tiananmen Square is French architect Paul Andreu's new National Grand Theater, "The Egg."

Xing Ruan (2006), author of *New China Architecture*, notes the ubiquity of figurative design concepts, from birds' nests, to eggs, to dragons, to the "twisted donut" of the CCTV building. Ito suggests that the "underlying connection between communism and mass symbols" might explain this figurative fixation (quoted in Ota, 2004, p. 449). But why *these* symbols? Keller (2008) proposes that these references to ancient or natural symbols serve to "soften" the designs, to make them appear innocuous, even inevitable, in their connection to China's historical and natural contexts (p. 138). Taken altogether, however, these buildings constitute not a coherent system of symbols, but a "collection of trinkets" (architect Yung Ho Chang, quoted in McGuigan, 2007). Ruan calls the result "hybrid kitsch," echoing Marvin's description of '80s Beijing style. Architecture critic Edwin Heathcote (2007) agrees:

> In Beijing, the world's greatest architects have virtually given up on the idea of the city. This is modernism minus utopia, and with no context — physical, topographical, political, theoretical, or urban. The simple, single image is everything. Any of these buildings could have been built anywhere else. Beijing is becoming a realization of the most superficial aspects of a contemporary design culture obsessed with the gesture and the icon, with the cleverness and complexity of its own structure. This is architecture as stage set for the Olympics, for a regime determined to demonstrate its modernity and its emerging economic and cultural power. Radical architecture has let itself be used for spectacle and propaganda. (p. 17)

Many of these trinkets — Andreu's National Theater, in particular — have been protested, halted, or aborted. "Andreu's National Theater is generally seen as a grotesquely inappropriate building in a supremely sensitive site. It has fueled a simmering hostility on the part of the architectural establishment against outlandish foreigners capturing coveted state contracts" (Lubow, 2006, p. 68). Architecture critic Wang Mingxian confesses that "we really wish that our Chinese architects were able to win the bidding for these landmark buildings" (quoted in *TIME*, 2004). "I have to admit," says Dou Yide, deputy chairman of the China Architecture Society, "that Chinese architects cannot compete with their foreign counterparts when it comes to imagination and design . . . . Most of them know very little about new materials and new technology, which has badly limited their creativity and imagination" (ibid.). Sociologist Xuefei Ren (2006) notes a generational difference in receptivity to foreign architects: While the older generations regard the influx of Western designers as a form of cultural colonialism, younger designers often welcome the influx of new design ideas and technologies (pp. 190-191). Today's architects — both Chinese designers and Western designers commissioned to work in China — are questioning how to define "contextual" design in

an ever-expanding context. The boosterist *Beijing Business* magazine reports that many young Chinese architects (underrepresented in recent projects), "instead of attempting to fuse oriental aesthetics with Western-style design . . . are exploring more sophisticated and subtler ways of connecting today's construction to their nation's culture" ("The Great Architecture Leap Forward," 2007).

Contextualism at Different Scales: CCTV as Civic Icon

OMA rejected the curvilinear roof, clay tiles, and red accents and claimed to draw inspiration from the hutong. Koolhaas's (2006) team proposed two design options: one was a sprawling, "low-rise business/living hutong"-style design; and for the other, the design that won, they created "a field condition with elevators: a contemporary hutong in terms of its social performance. It produces density, proximity, uncertainty, and intimacy" (p. 122). Rather than "giving up on the idea of the city," as Heathcote (2007) suggests, OMA proposes to recreate the city — a televisual city — in its enclosed, "continuous loop." It is striking how much Koolhaas's description calls to mind the "culture of congestion" that defines Manhattanism, as he describes it in his 1978 manifesto, *Delirious New York* (1978). In China, apparently, that congested culture is manifested in a new form: a deconstructed-Manhattan-skyscraper-cum-hutong. Perhaps in updating the traditional hutong, OMA is "capturing [the] essence" of the local context, while also reflecting "the spirit of contemporary society" (Yan, 1996).

Or maybe the hutong simply offers a convenient justification. Sorkin (2008) argues that the hutongs of Beijing, as well as the lilongs of Shanghai, "offer an alternative vision to the Modernist constructs that shape the city today and provide an irreplaceable element in the urban repertoire that demands not simply to be conserved but extended" (np.). The hutongs are "low, tight, intimate, . . . tractable on foot, diverse"; they are "sanctuaries of both intimacy and variety in the midst of a city too rapidly doing away with the best of its public character." Is Koolhaas's interpretation of the hutong such a means of extending its character of intimacy and variety, or is it a misappropriated metaphor? Koolhaas (2006) tells the story of American architect Henry Cobb, who went to China to "talk about the 'skyscraper as citizen.' The suggestion that a skyscraper is a citizen is obviously code for 'Don't worry about skyscrapers: they don't destroy public space'" (p. 120). Koolhaas is here offering similar reassurance for a potentially worrisome design. Yet there is little intimacy, tractability, or diversity in this space (I will further discuss the building's character, as a public space and a work space, below).

At least it's not another skyscraper. Of all the designs submitted for the CCTV competition, only OMA's was not a high-rise. Koolhaas is convinced that the skyscraper has outlived its utility. *New York Times'* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff suggests that Koolhaas's "kill the skyscraper" campaign is in part generational and personal:

> Mr. Koolhaas is part of a generation of architects . . . whose early careers were shaped
> in opposition to the oppressive formal purity of mainstream Modernism. They fashioned
> asymmetrical forms to break down the movement's monolithic scale and make room for
> outcasts and misfits. (July 13, 2008)

While skyscrapers may have once catalyzed urban density and activity, as Koolhaas argues in *Delirious New York*, they have since devolved into "commercial tools for maximizing profits" (Tuchman, 2008, p. 126). Plus, "the race for height is pointless," Scheeren said in an interview: "there will always be someone taller" (quoted in Lian, n.d.). So, the architects experimented with alternative forms. "We wanted to break the traditional hierarchy implied in the vertical line," Scheeren says: the loop "acts as a non-hierarchical principle, with no beginning and end, no top and bottom" (Scheeren, quoted in Lian.) "It has a delicacy despite its size," Koolhaas says (quoted in Anderson). "It's something that's not really a tower, but three-dimensional, so it defines urban space" (ibid.). Its vectors operate on x, y, and z axes, complicating the way the building is conceived and constructed; how it relates to its context; and how it shapes views of, and is viewed within, that context. The exterior offers passersby no sense of scale. The façade gives no indication of where floors begin and end, where CCTV employees might be peeking out their office windows. Kurt Anderson (2008) writes in *Vanity Fair*, "This is a wonderful trick — to make such a stupendously large structure visually manageable, almost gemütlich, at close range." The building thus defines itself in *opposition* to the towers surrounding it, and delights in its difference.

Dodd (2008) describes it as "an engineering and architectural near-impossibility, built on top of an earthquake zone." Upholding this mythology, a CCTV engineering tale has made its rounds in the design world: the two legs of the tower could be brought together — in a widely documented "kiss" on December 8, 2007 — only at dawn, when the steel in both segments would have cooled overnight and would face minimal differential heat stresses. The architects are pleased with the building's orneriness; Koolhaas (2004, August) was "elated and horrified by the sheer outrageousness of the problem we had set before [the engineers]." Because Beijing's existing building codes did not apply to a building of this shape and complexity, a special panel of 13 structural engineers was formed especially for the CCTV structure (Fong, 2007).

The building, according to Rocco Yim, a juror in the competition that chose OMA, represents "just what the new China is all about": "irreverent, a can-do spirit, fearless and extremely confident" (quoted in Fong, 2007). Yet, rather than affirming that spirit, the architects, like many of their Western colleagues practicing locally, seem to be exploiting it by adopting a self-serving interpretation of "contextualism." They are using China as a laboratory to execute designs that would not be realized elsewhere. Scheeren admitted that it is "unlikely that this structure could be built anywhere else in the world because the design would not be permitted by building codes elsewhere. In China, there was an openness to making things happen [that] created an extraordinary context for architecture" (ibid.). Scheeren and Koolhaas seem to have their own convenient definition of the Chinese architectural context: Do here what they won't let you do elsewhere, and perhaps change the culture in the process.[6]

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[6] Goldberger (June 2, 2008) writes, "The scale and ambition of the project is an unmistakable statement of national pride, yet China, strangely, has been content to make this statement using the vocabulary of the kind of international luxury-modernism that you might just as easily see in Dubai or SoHo or Stuttgart — dizzyingly complex computer-generated designs, gorgeously realized in fashionable materials. The message seems clear: Anything you can do, we can do better."

Despite these engineering acrobatics and the loop's clever evasion of scalability, the building's structural integrity is meant to be ". . . readable. I want someone looking at CCTV to understand why it stands up," Koolhaas said to the *New Yorker* (Zalewski, 2005). The external steel mesh — much like that used for Koolhaas's Seattle Public Library, except here in an irregular diamond pattern — is a structural exoskeleton that allows pressures to "travel around the system and find the best load path into the ground" (Scheeren, quoted in Fong, 2007). Yet the design is not merely functional; it is connotative, too. While, as *Architectural Record's* Robert Ivy (2006) admits, the exoskeleton "provides a rational diagram of physical realities," it also serves as "a dynamic web that invigorates the exterior." That dynamism is intended, Ivy's colleague Sarah Amelar (2004) notes, to "[hold] up against the visual imprecision of the 'Beijing blur'" caused by pollution and frequent sandstorms blown in from the Gobi Desert.

Figure 6. The CCTV building shrouded in the "Beijing blur." CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture

One has to wonder how many passersby, aside from architects and their critics, will look to the building and see a "rational diagram of physical realities"; how many will expect to read the building's structural integrity on its façade. The crossed bars are more likely to connote restriction, defense, opacity.

The architects suggest, likely for the Western audience's benefit, that the building's glass façade provides the prevailing architectural metaphor: transparency and accessibility. But the steel exoskeleton, intended as a display of the rationality of the building's form, communicates clear, if unintended, messages: This building is strong and impervious . . . and expensive. Chinese architects commonly express concerns over the amount and cost of steel needed for the building. Ma Liangwei, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Institute of City Planning and Design, thinks that Koolhaas's engineering marvel is all about "shamelessly showing off" (quoted in Kennicott, 2008).

The Times' Ouroussoff notes the seeming contradiction between the building's transparency and opacity:

> Mr. Koolhaas has set out to express the elasticity of the new global culture, and in the process explore ways architecture can bridge the gap between the intimate scale of the individual life and the whirling tide of mass society. The image of authority he conveys is pointedly ambiguous. Imposing at one moment, shy and retiring the next, the building's unstable forms say as much about collective anxieties as they do about centralized power. (July 13, 2008)

The ambiguity is attributable in part to glass's slipperiness as a metaphor; the assumption that transparency necessarily connotes "truth and honesty [are] simplistic and flawed," says design scholar Nigel Whiteley (2003, p. 16). In the past century, transparency has taken on new meanings: In addition to "honesty, democracy, accountability, [and] legitimacy," it is also associated with "surveillance, spectacle, marketing, and virtuality" (ibid.).[7] Despite Koolhaas's claims that the building is *not* about spectacle, the glass façade of the CCTV building, in 21st century China, does carry some of these darker connotations and anxieties.

It is unlikely that passersby will take comfort in the building's scalelessness, or use words like "delicate," "intimate," or "gemütlich" to describe it. Several critics lament the building's seeming disregard for Beijing's history and culture. Chinese architectural historian Xiao Mo calls the CCTV complex "a fundamental mistake. It's too strange, does not suit Chinese perceptions of beauty, and makes people

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[7] Architectural historian Anthony Vidler (1992) addresses the distinctive ambiguity of transparent surfaces in Koolhaas's design: "The architect allows us neither to stop at the surface nor to penetrate it, arresting us in a state of anxiety" (p. 223). The ambiguity of "transparency" and other aspects of Koolhaas's design might lend themselves well to the Paranoid-Critical Method, which Koolhaas (1978) describes in his *Delirious New York* (pp. 237-243). PCM activity "is the fabrication of evidence for unprovable speculations and the subsequent grafting of this evidence on the world, so that a 'false' fact takes its unlawful place among the 'real' facts" (ibid., p. 241). If we want the building to connote strength, we'll manipulate its symbols to match this image. If we want the building to suggest openness and accountability, we'll draw attention to its aspects that reinforce this image. In characteristic PCM fashion, "modern architecture is invariably presented as a last-minute opportunity for redemption . . . 'While everybody else foolishly pretends that nothing is wrong, we construct our Arks . . . .'" (ibid., p. 246). Is Koolhaas's design CCTV's ark?

uncomfortable because it is not straight" (quoted in MacLeod, 2008). "Nine out of 10 Chinese hate the CCTV building," an Air China employee told the *Financial Times*' Murie Dickie (December 2007). "It looks like it's going to fall down." They obviously cannot "read" the rational structural diagrid.

Figure 7. *Guards in front of the CCTV headquarters on July 30, 2008. Photo by Bao Fan/ ChinaFotoPress/ Getty Images*

Mo, citing Andreau's egg and Herzog and de Meuron's bird's nest, and likening the CCTV building to a "bird's tree," suggests that "they," the Western architects, "have turned our beautiful Beijing into the world's bird capital" (quoted in Chow, 2008). Nicknames like the "bird's tree" (We have to wonder who generates these names: the designers, the government, or the public?) might seem to infantilize and inoculate the design. But architecture critic Inga Saffron argues that, rather than charming you with its eccentricity, the building will "always remind you of how small you are, and how big the state" (quoted in Fong, 2007). It may not be as tall or monolithic as the surrounding towers, but the CCTV complex is still monumental, both vertically and volumetrically. "[S]tartlingly different from any other object in sight," the CCTV is a modern-day Orwellian Ministry of Truth (Orwell, 1949). "The CCTV tower is deliberately, brutally, almost absurdly iconic, imitating the blunt, slick, and professional voice of the state media it will contain," argues *Washington Post* architecture critic Philip Kennicott (2008). "Its shape sends a basic

message: We can defy gravity. Which is another way of saying: Our power is unlimited." Its only resemblance to Beijing's old alleyways, which the architects, likely for their clients' and Chinese preservationists' sake, claim as inspiration, seems to be its horizontal spread — the way the complex straddles its four-block site. Rather than reincarnating the hutongs, however, this building revives the fortress of the Forbidden City. With its steel exoskeleton and guards at the gate, no angry mobs will storm this Bastille.

The State of Media and Media Space

Koolhaas (2004a) seems to understand that his architectural symbol must communicate with extreme clarity if it is to compete not only within a messy physical context, but also within a hazy media landscape, another manifestation of the Beijing blur:

> While television is a medium that reaches everybody, television buildings all over the world are mute. They fail to achieve their iconic and urban potential, remaining lifeless both day and night. CCTV will be one of the most influential TV stations worldwide. An active façade will launch a contemporary iconography for the city and the world. (p. 500)[8]

A media company needs a home that is a physical embodiment of its influence, that reflects the central role that media play, or hope to convince others that they play, in the civic realm.

Television arrived in China in the late 1950s. China Central Television was founded in the mid-1970s to unify the country through the presentation of "official news and information, culturally-appropriate entertainment, and use of the official dialect" (Lull, 1991, p. 22). Yet the social position and political role of television have evolved: After Mao Zedong's death, CCTV, where programming had been driven by anti-foreignism, began to open up to foreign media and ultimately became the quintessential "symbol of (and contributor to) the success of the national modernization" in both economic and ideological dimensions, James Lull argues (pp. 1, 5). By the mid-80s, most urban families had a television set, a "real testimony to the improved living standard" (ibid., p. 17).

The progress halted at Tiananmen Square, when soldiers occupied the CCTV's facilities to ensure that programming served the Party's interests. Television became once again a "blatant propaganda device," answering to both the Chinese Communist Party's Propaganda Department, since renamed the Publicity Department, which controls the ideological content of programs, and the Ministry of Film, Radio, and Television, which handles regulatory and administrative affairs. CCTV is the legal property of the

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[8] Koolhaas (1978) speaks similarly of the design of the 1930s NBC headquarters at Rockefeller Center: "NBC conceives of the entire block (insofar as it is not punctured by RCA's columns) as a single electronic arena that can transmit itself via airwaves into the home of every citizen of the world — the nerve center of an electronic community that would congregate at Rockefeller Center without actually being there. *Rockefeller Center is the first architecture that can be broadcast*" (pp. 199-200).

Ministry, and its current headquarters is, fittingly, a gated, bland Socialist-style building secured with barbed wire and patrolled by armed soldiers (ibid., p. 1).

Today, all Chinese local stations are required to carry CCTV-1, which broadcasts propagandistic news and other educational and entertainment programs. "Forcing the lower-level stations to carry CCTV-1 is perceived as important," writes Daniel Lynch (1999), "not only to helping the central party-state inculcate appropriate worldviews, values, and action strategies, but also to ensuring that CCTV itself retains a large, stable audience whose attention can be sold to advertisers" (p. 143). CCTV is the "first-line administrator of television in China." Like the *People's Daily* and the Xinhua News Agency, CCTV is part of the national media system, which ranks above municipal media like the *Beijing Daily*, the Beijing Television Station, and the *Beijing Youth Daily*, and is expected to set an example for all Chinese television, to "unify the people, preserve the authority of the party, and fulfill the promises of the reformation" (Lull, 1991, pp. 1, 24; Huang, 2007). Yet, aside from the CCTV-1 broadcasting mandate, CCTV has only "guidance relations" with the lower-level stations, and most of these stations exercise some autonomy (Lynch, 1999, p. 143). The underlings include a suite of Beijing TV channels, which subscribers to Beijing's local cable service can access, along with a "satellite" channel from each of the Chinese provinces.

China has also been importing programs from and exporting programs to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and, increasingly, the West, through barter, program exchanges, satellite, signal spillover, and piracy. All foreign shows have to be approved by the Ministry, which limits the amount of foreign programming that stations can air.[9] China upholds a policy of "latent suppression" toward international satellite television — the government has "policies against the ownership of satellite dish antennae or cable access which are not enforced . . ." — but subscribers to various satellite plans can access NKH (Japanese public television), HBO Asia, the National Geographic Channel, the Cartoon Network, MTV, Star Movies, Star Sports, ESPN, and even, on some systems, BBC World and CNN (Thomas, 1999, p. 246).[10]

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[9] We might consider why foreign design is not similarly regulated; aside from the requirement that foreign private firms pair up with a local design institute, there is little restriction on the number or location of foreign-designed projects.

[10] Beijing-based satellite provider HBOCN also offers channels from Phoenix, a broadcaster in Hong Kong that is partly owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Murdoch is heavily invested in China and even helped CCTV design and operate its news Web site (Kahn, 2007). In 2002, Phoenix's InfoNews channel, known for its lively "CNN" style, was granted "landing rights" in the mainland and until 2006, when state-run China Mobile purchased a 20% stake in the company, was the only non-government station broadcasting 24 hours a day in China. Phoenix is known to cover "some news (e.g., about Taiwan, SARS, mining accidents, homosexuality) in greater detail and more promptly than state television," report Joseph Boyd-Barrett and Shuang Xie (2008, p. 217). "Nonetheless, it generally conforms to the policy directives of the Chinese government . . . ." Also notable is a recent exclusive deal between CCTV and American sports marketing company IMG that allows IMG to develop and market new sports events throughout China (Blumenstein et al., July 31, 2008, p. B1).

"Commercialization," Joseph Man Chan (1996) writes, "has given some autonomy to the stations at the operational level, introduced some competition to the television system, and rendered the stations more responsive" (p. 135). Plus, an increase in formal journalism education and a rise in professionalism engendered greater critical freedom and higher production standards. Zhao Bin (1999) identifies several changes that exemplify a freer, more critical professional culture: live news broadcasts have replaced some recorded programming; the number of daily news bulletins has increased; and there has been a rise in critical investigative journalism — even programs that expose controversial issues (pp. 295-297). CCTV-9, a 24-hour English language service launched in 2000, offers "something closer to real journalism than the wooden litany of achievements and upcoming cultural events which once typified broadcasts," writes Nicholas Cull (2008), scholar of public diplomacy; the channel has presented stories of about domestic pollution and China's energy crisis (p. 132). "The decision to allow, and even encourage, critical journalism on television demonstrates a new sense of confidence and a better understanding of propaganda on the part of the Party state," Bin says (1999, p. 297). "Behind this confidence is a realization that critical journalism, carefully managed and directed, does not always do damage to the state's authority and legitimacy" (ibid.). Similarly, officials must have concluded that allowing the public a restricted view into the scene of CCTV television production, through glass walls along a clearly demarcated circulation path, presents little danger.

While China has earned praise for allowing virtually unrestricted press coverage of the May 12, 2008, Sichuan earthquake, the government did limit domestic coverage of grieving parents protesting the shoddy construction of collapsed school buildings in the affected areas. Beijing expelled foreign journalists from Lhasa, Tibet, during the March 2008 protests, blocked all independent news coverage of the event inside China, and filtered text messages going to or coming from Tibet. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have released several reports challenging China's commitment to press freedom, particularly for its own journalists. In late July, just weeks before the Olympics began, Hong Kong journalists who sought to capture frenzied Olympic ticket sales were assaulted by Chinese authorities. Dissidents, including professional journalists and bloggers, continue to be jailed. Many critics cite China's failure to uphold its promise, made during the 2001 Olympic bid, to guarantee news media "complete freedom to report on anything when they come to China" ("In the Words . . . ," n.d.). International media were later told that they would have to obtain special permission to broadcast from Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City during the Olympics, and, just a week before the games, that they would be denied access to politically sensitive Web sites. That same week, President Hu Jintao held an "international press conference" to which only 25 news organizations were invited, and for which questions had to be submitted in advance.

These measures, as well as recent general bans on anti-Communist content, "false news," and "spreading rumors," are rooted in Beijing's reluctance to "appear to be losing control of the domestic media, which have been emboldened by changing audience expectations as the economy opens up," according to Clarissa Oon (2008) of Singapore's *Straits Times*. The Olympics merely concentrate those threats. "Protests have arisen around virtually every Olympic Games in recent history," write *Foreign Affairs*' Elizabeth Economy and Adam Segal (2008), "but Beijing, with its authoritarian political system, is uniquely threatened by dissenting news, and it has responded with a traditional mix of intimidation, imprisonment, and violent repression." China may continue to intimidate and incarcerate those who offend

its sensibilities, including visitors who bring with them to the Olympics "anything detrimental to China's politics, economy, culture, or moral standards, including printed material, film negatives, photos, records, movies, tape recordings, videotapes, optical discs, and other items" (Bradsher, 2008). But, *The New York Times'* Nicholas Kristof (2008) says, Chinese "repression isn't what it used to be, and dissidents now are often less afraid of the government than it is of them." We might be witnessing the emergence of a new form of hegemony, one befitting a society that, despite its claims to be "Marxist-Leninist," is really, Kristof quips, "market-Leninist. The rise of wealth, a middle class, education, and international contacts are slowly undermining one-party rule and nurturing a new kind of politics . . . ." Behind Beijing's new "sense of confidence" in its ability to balance media control and freedom and its "better understanding of propaganda" is the perpetual fear of dissent or, worse, public protest (Bin, 1999, p. 297).   What if a French or American protester attempted to disrupt the Olympic torch relay? What if a Falun Gong activist were to immolate himself on Tiananmen Square, and NBC was there to see it?

Ultimately, Bin reports that television's "political role as the Party's mouthpiece has been increasingly eroded" by internationalization, commercialization, the professionalization of broadcasters, and what Lull calls the "'leaky' nature of programming policy" (Bin, 1999, p. 292; Lull, 1991, p. 108). "The Party has learned to deal with the situation with a double-edged policy: It keeps at arm's length from what it sees as harmless popular entertainment on the one hand, while continuing to maintain a tight grip over what it has identified as key areas, such as television journalism, on the other" (Bin, pp. 292-293). What defines China's television industry today, Bin says, is "being caught between two masters, the state and the market, which are by no means clear-cut binaries, but intricately interrelated with each other" (p. 303). Again, we see this attempt to balance allegiances and responsibilities manifested in the physical embodiment of state media: a building that is simultaneously transparent and opaque, accessible and defensive.

Digitization will bring new challenges, and perhaps create more "leaks" in the policy. OMA (January 27, 2003), whose architecture licenses seem to have entitled them to consult on all manner of social and cultural issues tangentially related to design, proposed in a memo to CCTV officials that the broadcaster "could use its dominant position, the force of its numbers, its economic power, and its central government to lead the world into a digital future" (np.).[11] The designers, contradicting the accessibility and liberalization rhetoric in their public presentations and publications, are here clearly pandering to their government client; this shift in register reminds us again of the variety of rhetorical levels on which this project operates, and the variety of stakeholders invested. In that digital future, the designers concede, "China might choose to exert some control over content for its internal political stability," but it could be "the first nation to create truly open standards for its technological infrastructure, spreading connectivity

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[11] Vidler (1992) notes that the Office Metropolitan Architecture is a "firm named as if to confront the modern crisis head on and fearlessly" (p. 191). Fellow historian and critic Sarah Williams Goldhagen agrees that "Koolhaas may be our greatest contemporary architect, but the nature and volume of his production indicate that he wants to be more than that. He plays the game of cultural critic and theorist, visionary, urbanist, and shaper of cities for the globalized, digitized, commercialized world of the twenty-first century" (np). He is also a media consultant: Koolhaas has consulted for Conde Nast magazines and proposed a rebranding of the European Union.

and opportunity." China could afford to make its *conduits* open and accessible, but it should not risk losing control of *content*.

When that content is the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, as with any major media event, control is critical. The International Olympic Committee at one time proclaimed on its Web site that "Television is the engine that has driven the growth of the Olympic Movement." That this statement no longer appears online may suggest that the media event has entered a new era of representation (cited in Miah, Garcia & Zuihui, 2008, p. 323; see also Dayan & Katz, 1992). "While modern media events were originally viewed on the television at home," Lee Humphreys and Christopher Finlay (2008) argue, "digital technology increasingly displaces the home as the site of spectatorship for the Olympics . . . . Advanced mobile technology like 3G and mobile TV encourages the watching of events from wherever the viewer may be" (p. 299). China has the world's highest numbers of cell phone and, as of Spring 2008, Internet users. These new media present new potential threats not only to television's position as the Olympic medium *par excellence*, but also to the Party. Mobile technologies, according to Humphreys and Finlay, enable sousveillance: they allow individuals to watch, from below, those in authority; "the sousveillance enabled by mobile technologies is changing the flow of information among citizens in China and indicating the fragility of the Chinese authorities' official narratives and their control over them" (p. 302).

But new technology need not compromise official narratives, particularly not when the government has thousands working on its Golden Shield (Internet censorship) Project, and when those new technologies are controlled by state media subsidiaries.[12] CCTV launched its mobile TV services in 2006 in cooperation with China Mobile, a 7.5 million-subscriber network, and China Unicom, both state-owned and, like all mobile networks in China, controlled by the Ministry of Information Industry. Plus, the government's recent reshuffling of its telecommunications industry, collapsing its five major state-owned telecom companies into three, each providing landline and mobile service, will likely correspond to the eventual distribution of three licenses for third-generation mobile phone technology.

Furthermore, new technology can itself become a fresh narrative that helps a host nation to update the Olympics' timeless values of progress and peace with new digital metaphors for global connectivity. Humphreys and Finlay (2008) suggest that

> The Beijing Olympics has the potential to send crucial messages to domestic and international audiences about China's ability to be both a technological pioneer and a producer of reliable technology, and to transform the perception of China from a low-cost industrial support system for the global information economy to a major player. (p. 286)

The Broadband World Forum Asia proclaimed 2008's games the first "Broadband Olympics," while Lenovo, the China-born but now "globally"-based computer manufacturer, in which the Chinese government is the

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[12] See Fallows (March 2008) for a discussion of China's Internet censorship strategies, their weaknesses, and ultimate effectiveness.

largest shareholder, became the first Chinese company to join the Olympic Partner Program and is a top supporter of the 2008 Games (International Engineering Consortium, 2007).[13]

Even yesterday's digital media (homemade videos, chatrooms, blogs, etc.) have proven useful in reinforcing national narratives. In a July 2008 *New Yorker* article on the revival of youth nationalism in China, Evan Osnos reports that "[n]ineteen years after the crackdown on student-led protests in Tiananmen Square, China's young elite" are rising through Internet activism, not in pursuit of liberal democracy, but in defense of sovereignty and prosperity," in support of a new Chinese nationalism (p. 29). Osnos traces this phenomenon back to Spring 2005, when Japan approved a textbook that underplayed wartime atrocities against the Chinese, and "patriots in Beijing drafted protest plans and broadcast them via chat rooms, bulletin boards, and text messages" (Osnos, 2008, p. 33). Nearly 10,000 demonstrators assembled, and several among their ranks vandalized the Japanese consulate. In response to Nicholas Negroponte's prediction that the global Web will render nationalism obsolete, Osnos explains that, "In China, things have gone differently" (p. 29).

Yet this new digital nationalism has the potential to manifest itself in ways that compromise state control, particularly over physical and virtual representative spaces. Returning briefly to our discussion in the previous section, we might consider what implications new media technologies will have for spatial planning and control. As Marvin (2008) notes, the Tiananmen Square massacre and media event reminded Chinese rulers that "monumental space was no longer sacrosanct in a television age, but politically ambiguous and highly vulnerable" (pp. 248-249). What happens if television itself is supplanted by mobile technologies of sousveillance? What role might the symbolic spaces of contemporary Beijing — the commercial developments; the public spaces of the Olympic Village; and particularly the CCTV, the architectural embodiment of state media — play in this struggle for control over human behavior in public spaces and control over mediated representations of those publics and those spaces? Might different models of control prevail in different kinds of spaces — including state, commercial, and public spaces; the stadia and playing fields where Olympics visitors practice; the spaces of live, embodied spectatorship; and the media-spaces in which those experiences are represented to audiences around the globe? Marvin suggests that marketization and popularization, the same forces that have altered the ideology of state television, are now being absorbed into dominant state narratives and planning strategies. The regime's expectation is that "stripping national space of overt political content" by creating consumer-friendly commercial and exhibition spaces separate from "ordinary communities of work and politics"; by creating an Olympic Green that dwarfs Tiananmen; by offering innocuous architectural symbols, like birds' nests

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[13]   Television ads show that Lenovo is managing information technology for the Olympics, while also promoting the ThinkPad, which the company acquired from IBM, and its new IdeaPad. Glen Gilbert, a company vice president, told *The New York Times* that "In China, the advertising will be very much leveraging the heritage of a Chinese company," but "in the U.S., we won't be making direct mention of that" (Clifford, 2008, np.). While company spokespeople deny intentionally hiding Lenovo's Chinese roots, public relations executive Lou Hoffman told *The Times* that "[t]he typical American still associates Chinese products with cheap — precisely what Lenovo doesn't want . . . . They want to be viewed as a global company, not a Chinese company, in the West, or they'll never be able to beat the cheap rap" (ibid.).

and bubbles and Bermuda shorts – "will diffuse [the space's] potential for 'lived' protest" (Marvin, 2008, pp. 249, 254). But what if these efforts are directed at the wrong kind of space? "Up to now, the Chinese government has been able to keep a grip on" protest activities, said Xu Wu, a former Chinese journalist and current Arizona State professor (quoted in Osnos, p. 33). Today, the prevailing space of political action is what Wu calls the "'virtual Tiananmen Square.' [Activists] don't need to go there. They can do the same thing online and sometimes be even more damaging."

Government officials and apologists might have us believe that new communication technologies, the very technologies that could have threatened the power of corporate media and centralized state media, are simply absorbed into the market and the state. But commercialization, internationalization, and digitization have certainly affected significant shifts in Chinese media. These shifts have made media more responsive to their audiences. They have encouraged more critical reportage; increased the number of media outlets, particularly local ones, that customers can access; brought media *to* the people "wherever [they] might be"; and forced media producers to consider how they can balance their obligations to the market and the state. However, the state's constant fear of losing control and losing face, means that free consumer choice and the "freedom to report on anything" in China both come with strings attached. It also suggests that state media have something to prove: namely, their continued relevance and authority in a changing media landscape. That "proof" comes in the form of a gravity-defying, diagridded fortress.

A Loop of Interconnected Activity: CCTV Building as Workspace

It is telling that, for their 2004 book, *Content*, Koolhaas and his associates invited Rene Daalder (2004), a Dutch screenwriter and film director, to explain just how the CCTV building will play its symbolic role:

> Due to historical and geographic circumstance, CCTV's headquarters in Beijing will inevitably become an important hub in this evolution of the global media landscape. Incredible efficiencies in the workflow will be realized, along with an increasingly bidirectional relationship between the station and the public, which will no longer be bound by the traditional limitations of time and place. As CCTV's digital brain becomes ever more transparent and ubiquitous, it will be precisely the immaterial elusiveness of tomorrow's networked world that will give the new building's presence its greatest importance. (p. 504)

As the television medium becomes ever more decentralized through digitization and mobilization, the symbolic significance of a huge, monolithic structure will become ever more important in signaling the (presumed) continued power of this state institution. Its power is intended to be of the "soft" variety. Unlike the old gated and barbed-wired CCTV headquarters, the new headquarters "evinces a quiet, monumental grandeur" (Goldberger, June 30, 2008). It "leaves open the space it encapsulates. It activates the ground. It draws activities into the building" through the Media Park and the TVCC (Scheeren, quoted in Pogrebin, 2006; Amelar, 2004).
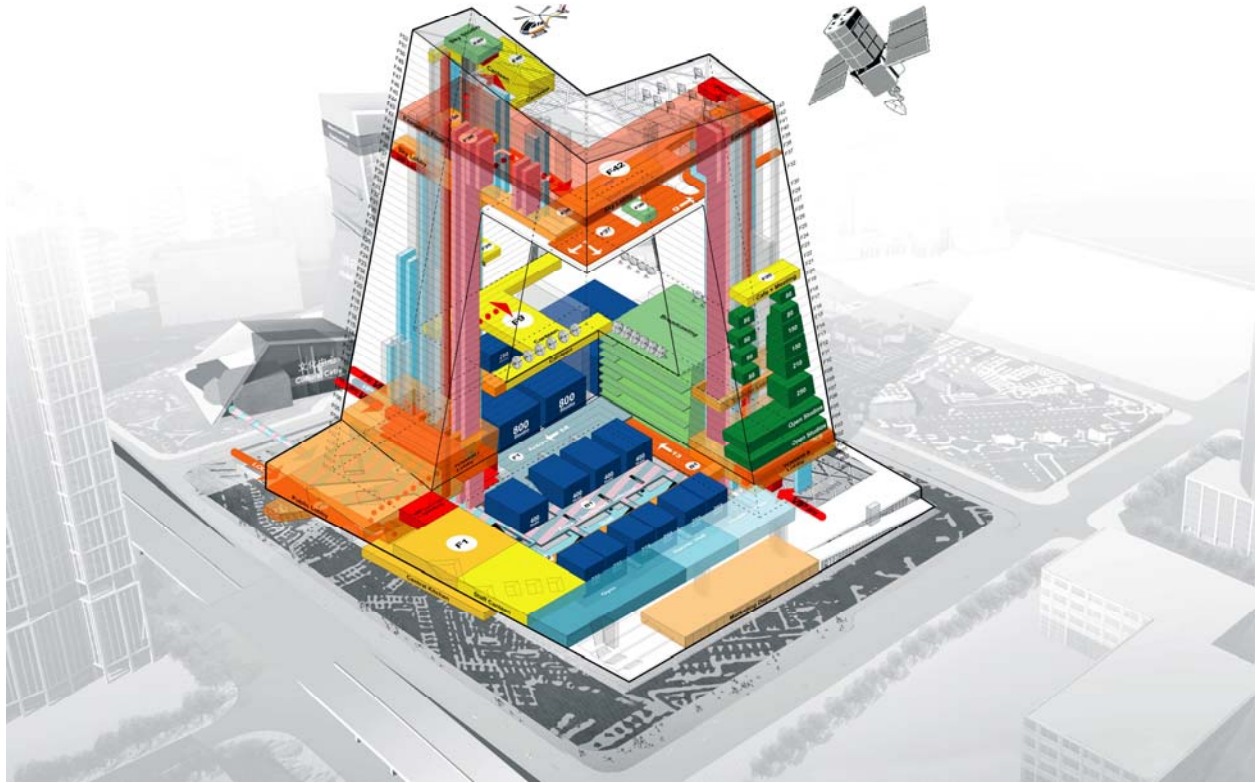
Figure 8. *CCTV building program. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*

The architects wish to make clear that this building functions effectively not only as a representation of state media power, but also as a media workspace.

> What I think is a unique feature — and I think it is one of these things that is only possible in China right now because of the nature of the Chinese state and economy — is that all these [separate departments and functions of a television company], which in a market economy would be atomized and pulled apart, can be integrated into a single whole. (Koolhaas, quoted in Zalewski, 2005)

While it is true that, for the sake of economy and efficiency, many urban media companies do distribute their different divisions throughout the city and its surrounding areas, one must wonder what uniquely

Chinese and contemporary conditions have made this integration possible in Beijing. Could this be yet another convenient interpretation of context, another attempt to justify, in political-economic terms, a design choice that is in actuality made for the sake of aesthetics or symbolic value?[14] Koolhaas attempted to quell such concerns at a symposium at Tsinghua University in August 2003. He assured his audience that the integrated design, the "loop," was not an intellectual or aesthetic experiment, ". . . but, rather, a building whose form embodied the Chinese tradition of collectivism" (ibid.) Ten thousand CCTV employees, to include creative and business workers and management, are to be brought together in a "shared conceptual space" (Koolhaas, August 2004). Gathering typically disparate entities will foster communication and better understanding of the nature of the work of one's colleagues. The building, the architects say, creates a "chain of interdependence that promotes solidarity rather than isolation, collaboration instead of opposition" (OMA, n.d.). Or, as Scheeren puts it, "The brains will know what the hands are doing" (Walters, 2006).

But just how "collective" will this 750-foot building, with its sharp angles and hole in the center, really be? Anderson (2008) suggests that "the fact that the building bends over and twists like a yogi means that the 10,000 TV workers who inhabit it, unlike the occupants of any normal high-rise, will be able to see much of the hive they're inhabiting" (np.). What efficiencies of workflow does this hive offer the loyal worker bees? How easily will members of the production team, who work in one side of the tower, be able to interact with members of the research team, who work on the other side? Working between departments requires taking the elevator all the way to the top or bottom and walking across, then taking another elevator up or down the other side. Is a "*loop* of interconnected activity" really the best model for promoting easy collaboration? We must also wonder why a truly "integrated" workspace does not include room for its board of directors: the CCP's Publicity Department and the Ministry of Film, Radio, and Television. Why banish these integral departments to off-site locations?

Is a self-contained TV "city" the best place to make television in the 21st century? Given the efficiencies, conveniences, and mobility that new media technologies have offered to news-gathering, reporting, and production, why should we assume that physically contiguous production departments are desirable? What advantage is there to a reporter in never having to leave the building? Rather than focusing on how the "content" is shuffled around and packaged "back at headquarters," we might examine instead how information travels from the field to the production facility. But the designers' descriptions of the building focus almost entirely on circulation *inside* and, secondarily, around the site; they all but

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[14] This building might be yet another example of, or a variation on, one of Koolhaas's signature approaches to design, something he has been developing since the late 1980s, and according to Goldhagen (2002), "perhaps his most important contribution in architectural terms": namely, "making whole buildings into problems of sectional space." He has "worked on breaking apart and recomposing the horizontal layers of space between typical floor slabs in order to emphasize, in architect-speak, designing in section (Imagine slicing a building in half and then designing vertically as well as horizontally.)." Imagine standing on one leg of the loop and looking across, seeing colleagues working on the same floor, but across a huge chasm. Or imagine working in the platform across the top of the building and looking at your colleagues downstairs, vertically aligned with your position, but 500 feet below.

ignore the links between the media product, its producers, and the outside world. The intricate, elevator-dependent circulation system within the building; the inevitable front-gate security, ensured by the presence of live-on-site guards; and the location of news vehicles on a separate block of the site threaten to hamper employees' access to the world outside the complex. We will need to look next year, after the CCTV has occupied its new headquarters, to see how it functions as a media workspace — but for now, there is little indication that OMA, or its clients, have considered how the media workspace can foster these external connections.

Still, the architects seem to believe that their design can help to push the institution in a more responsible direction; they intend to use architecture to effect managerial and political change.[15] Scheeren told the *Wall Street Journal* that OMA "received many indications, including explicit statements, that CCTV was interested in becoming more liberal and independent and was seeking a building that would facilitate these changes" (quoted in Fong; see Pogrebin, 2008). Koolhaas reportedly suggested, upon accepting the commission, that by the time the new building opened, China's censorship might very well have been relaxed. Responding to criticism of the project's ethics, and claims that Koolhaas is little more than an "apologist for the corruption and extreme capitalism of Beijing," the architect says, "We are deeply aware that this is not an innocent project . . . . We have chosen to participate in China now because we believe that the process of modernization needs pressure from within" (Drenttel, 2007; Koolhaaas quoted in Zalewski, 2005).[16]

Architecture As A Social Catalyst

Koolhaas has long been known as a polemical social commentator, and as design critic William Drenttel (2007) notes, there are numerous examples of the designer using "flawed social commentary to rationalize his architectural conclusions." The integrated workspace, the transparency and public spaces, and the communal "loop" could all be little more than architectural apologia. We must wonder how "accountable" a building can be when it requires one-and-a-half times as much steel per square foot as the World Trade Center, thus making it the "architectural equivalent of a gas-guzzling SUV" (Drenttel, 2007). We must also question who, or what, ultimately determines the degree of accessibility of this institution. Ouroussoff (July 13, 2008) suggests that Koolhaas is aware that China's, and its state media's, accessibility and accountability are constantly under negotiation:

> The architect sees the dividing line between public and private spheres as an active battleground, one that is constantly shifting and readjusting as society's norms change and evolve. For now, however, it is not the architect who will determine the degree of openness at CCTV, but the company's government-appointed board of directors (np.).

[15] Scheeren described the building to Dodd (2008) as a "three-dimensional physical construct that would inscribe a particular organizational structure that would ultimately affect the way that people inhabit the structure, [so] that people work in the structure differently."

[16] There has been much recent debate within the design community over the ethics of Westerners designing in China. See Buruma, 2006; McNeil, 2006; Pogrebin, 2008; & Davis, 2008.

Koolhaas's clients have the prerogative to undermine his best intentions. The CCTV's directors, Ouroussoff reported shortly before the Olympics, "have threatened to close off two public roads that cut through the site. An enormous plaza will also be restricted to the company's employees" (ibid.). If these restrictions were enforced, the public would be limited to the packaged entertainment spaces of the TVCC and the Universal Studios-style tours through the CCTV loop. These consumer-friendly commercial and exhibition spaces, "stripp[ed] . . . of overt political content," Marvin (2008) argues, will likely "diffuse [the] potential for 'lived' protest" (p. 254).
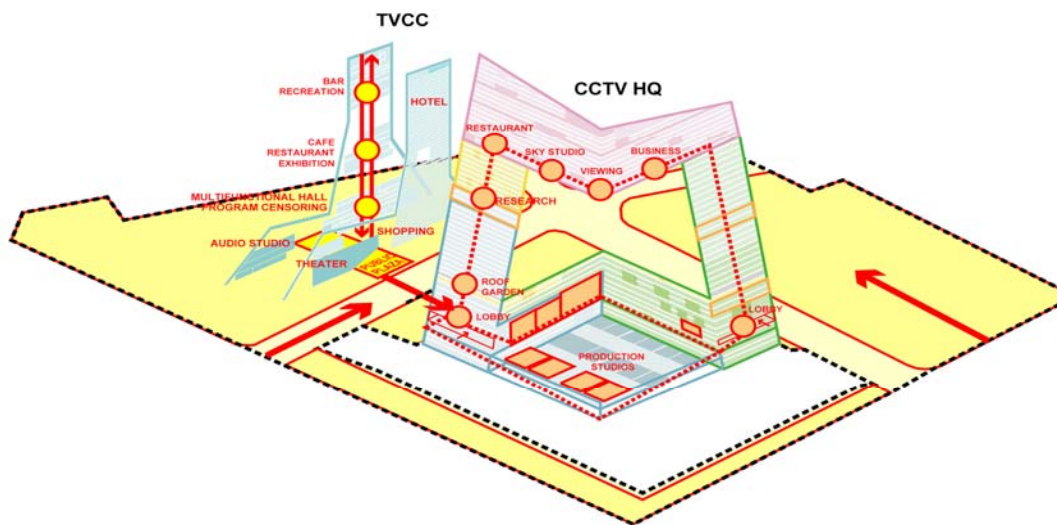
Figure 9. The public loop throughout the CCTV complex. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture

Koolhaas has offered Beijing "a spectacular icon that reflects both the communicatory ambition of China's totalitarian capitalism and its determination to adapt to the symbolic codes of Western economies," architect Luis Fernandez-Galiano (2003) argues, "and it is in the acceptance of this mediatic commerciality where his clairvoyance and cynicism are to be found." *The New Yorker*'s Daniel Zalewski (2005) agrees that "Koolhaas's belief in the power of architectural metaphor [is] unsettling." It is "as if he thought an open building could single-handedly reform a closed society . . . . It [is] hard not to think that some of OMA's liberatory talk [is] itself a form of propaganda, a way of justifying a revolutionary design that had the misfortune of being commissioned by an unsavory client."

The CCTV building constitutes an engineering feat and a radical rethinking of the skyscraper; it is indeed structurally and stylistically revolutionary. But is it institutionally or socially revolutionary, as the designers had promised, as well? Will CCTV-the-building revolutionize CCTV-the-institution? Will the design offer an object lesson in architectural determinism, in management-by-design? Such theories have been largely discredited, and given the speciousness of the claims and slipperiness of the metaphors surrounding the design, it seems more likely that the revolution will play out through visual and verbal rhetoric. What we have here is the *appearance* of openness, transparency, accountability; the outward presentation of the "symbolic codes of Western economies," or their idealized versions, superimposed on inward structures of "totalitarian capitalism." The result is not hybrid kitsch, but a stylistic and political contradiction.

For all the talk of structural, ideological revolution, it is ultimately an "active façade" that will broadcast a "contemporary iconography for the city and the world." Appropriately, the façade predates the interior program: Workers rushed to complete the façade of the CCTV building before the start of the Olympics, but CCTV will not move in until 2009. It should be no surprise that Koolhaas, himself a former screenwriter, turned to Daalder, a fellow screenwriter, to discuss the "forward compatibility" of the CCTV design, since the building is a screen on which new state narratives are projected. Around London, now preparing for the 2012 Olympics, construction barriers serve a similar function: Iain Sinclair (2008) describes them as "temporary fences . . . use[d] as masking screens, notice boards for sponsors' boasts, assertions of a bright, computer-generated future." The problem, he says, is translating these development narratives into reality: "If they had stopped there, with the smiling crowds, the immaculate projections, it would be fine; the whole regeneration package could have been a computer game. The mistake was to take a perfected storyboard backwards into reality." When the fiction meets contradictory fact, "[w]hen reality inconveniently has fallen short of image," legal scholar Jacques deLisle (2008) says, "Chinese authorities have turned to Potemkin village tactics to hide, or distract attention from, the incompleteness or the deleterious side effects of China's breakneck modernization" (p. 20).

deLisle has examined the conditions under which the Olympics, and China's larger project of modernization and liberalization, could affect positive change in a repressive culture. Narratives of development, stability, normality, and globalization — the dominant narratives the Party wishes to project to the outside world — must coexist with potent narratives of nationalism, as well as numerous counternarratives on Tibet, Taiwan, the Xianjiang separatists, human rights, Falun Gong, Darfur, media freedom, and environmentalism. It remains to be seen how China can manage these counternarratives, deLisle says, and more important, how it *acts on* them. When do the "Green Olympics" translate into better air quality and more sustainable infrastructural projects and manufacturing?[17] When do the narratives of press freedom become realities?

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[17] See Fallows (June 2008) for a discussion of the graveness of China's environmental problems, its tremendous opportunities for improvement, and the need to acknowledge China's recent successes in addressing these problems.

When do the metaphors of transparency, accessibility, and accountability represent the reality of CCTV? Chinese rulers discovered at Tiananmen that television changed the politics of public space. In response, it seems that they have simply co-opted the counternarratives — public access to the means of self-representation and the instantaneity of global communication — that compromised the monumental space of Tiananmen, and blended them with new narratives — commercialism; the "immaterial elusiveness of [the] networked world," to borrow Daalder's language; perhaps even the potential for sousveillance — that have the potential to compromise control today, and *built those counternarratives into* their new monumental spaces.[18] By offering a public park for outdoor filming and performances (whether it will be used for these purposes remains to be seen), glass walls for public sousveillance of the production studios, and a public observation desk permitting panoptic views, OMA collapsed the controlled space of media production into a public space for entertainment and seemingly democratic self-representation. But maybe all these are a mere "stage set . . . designed to distract visitors from the fact" that what lives inside is still the mouthpiece of the Party, an institution that could be wondering about its centrality and autocracy during the "Broadcast Olympics" and in the new commercialized, digitized, globalized media culture that will likely persist long after the Games' crowds have departed (Nobel, 2008).

"Today, no one can deny the vast improvements in China's overall conditions brought about by the last twenty-five years of reforms and modernization," Broudehoux (2004) admits.

> However, it is also true that globalization and marketization have benefited a few while making many people more vulnerable. Chinese society has thus become increasingly fragmented, plagued by growing social inequity and spatial segregation. Recent image construction endeavours have tried to camouflage such shortcomings, but in the process, they have only provoked the anger and resentment of the population. As the 2008 Olympics grow near and image construction efforts accelerate, those contradictions will only intensify. There are growing signs that the walls of this Potemkin façade may come tumbling down, revealing deep cracks in the foundations of modern Chinese society (pp. 245-246).

Despite its best efforts at integration, the CCTV building embodies this fragmentation and segregation. The public may be free to peer into television studios and editing suites, but glass walls will maintain the

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[18] Even though Koolhaas (1978) regards the 20th century skyscraper as the exemplar of the "Automonument," and the CCTV headquarters is ostensibly the *anti*-skyscraper, we can still discern some qualities of the Automonument in the CCTV building. An Automonument "does not represent an abstract ideal, an institution of exceptional importance, a three-dimensional, readable articulation of a social hierarchy, a memorial; it merely *is* and through sheer volume cannot avoid being a symbol — an empty one, available for meaning as a billboard is for advertisement" (p. 100). Koolhaas's design *does* represent "a three-dimensional, readable articulation of a social hierarchy", but the explicit and implicit hierarchies differ. The building suggests that "an institution of exceptional importance" resides within, but we must wonder if the massive structure is simply a cover-up for an institution suffering a crisis of confidence. Furthermore, the flexibility of the building's symbolism renders it, like the Automonument, a "billboard" for the projection of institutional, national, and commercial messages.

separation between spaces of media consumption and production. The public may be free to look out over a remade Beijing from an observation deck high in the sky, but it is still the CCTV administration who will permanently occupy this position of prominence. And as they scan the skyline from that high perch, public visitors will likely catch a glimpse of the round central service building, where reinforcement security is always on-call. Perhaps, like Virilio's vision machine, this building offers views that deny the potential for *looking*. The CCTV building will frame, contain, and cast shadows upon the public spaces in the TVCC and the Media Park next door.   That park may offer, according to Koolhaas, "a radical potential for encouraging and even sponsoring large gatherings in an urban condition, in the heart of Beijing." However, this language also suggests that the park is conceived as a safe alternative to Tiananmen Square; it is a terrain that, because of its location in a Central Business District, near the CCTV's security building, "diffuse[s the] potential for 'lived' protest" (Koolhaas, 2006, p. 122; Marvin, 2008, p. 254).[19]

Figure 10. *The CCTV "framing" the TVCC. CCTV by OMA/Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren. Image courtesy of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*

[19] Wong and Bradsher (2008) describe China's Olympic security system, "the most comprehensive and sophisticated surveillance system ever," which involves measures ranging from neighborhood brigades to surveillance cameras to surface-to-air missiles. "Whereas the legacy of previous Olympics was sports stadiums," argues James C. Mulvenon of the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis, "the legacy of the Beijing Olympics will be a high-tech police state."

Then again, perhaps Scheeren is right. Perhaps the mere existence of this Brobdingnagian sculpture, regardless of its success in embodying its designers' rhetoric, has helped "to focus a debate" about identity, representation, and citizenship, and to push people "to deal with what their city is ultimately becoming and . . . what kind of symbols start to inhabit their new existence" (quoted in Dodd, 2008). Economy and Segal (2008) note that "[a]lready, some Chinese bloggers, intellectuals, and journalists . . . have seized the moment to call for less nationalist rhetoric and more thoughtful engagement of outside criticism" and ask themselves "how Chinese citizens can legitimately attack Western media organizations if their own government does not allow them to watch media outlets such as CNN and the BBC." Debates over "urban image construction," like the iconography of the CCTV building, could also "act as a catalyst in promoting potential social change by provoking the creation of an urban public sphere," Broudehoux (2004) hopefully suggests, "eventually leading the way for the development of civil society" (p. 245). There are several Chinese design magazines and Web sites — supplemented by Chinese editions of, and Chinese features in, international architecture journals — through which this public sphere could form. Architect Zhi Wenjun (2006) suggests that China's "culture" magazines, which reach a larger audience, have the greatest potential impact on public discourse: These magazines offer more frequent columns on architecture and urbanism, and, "[a]s a result, ordinary people [can] . . . discuss the significance behind residential buildings, pay attention to the development of urban planning, dispute the new CCTV building, and evaluate the SOHO Modern City and the creation of public art . . . ." (p. 131).

"People talk about the new buildings," writes Goldberger (June 2008), and, "whether they approve or not, recognize that such daring constructions would not get built anywhere else." Is this enough? If this is the debate over "urban image construction," it seems to center not on *what* those images are, or *why*, but on the very fact that they are being constructed. The *what* and *why* are more difficult to grapple with. Ultimately, the CCTV building, this structure which "couldn't be done anywhere else, is "pregnant with infinite metaphor": It's a particle accelerator, a big pair of shorts, a calligraphic symbol, a deconstructed doughnut, a triumphal arch, a blank TV screen, a display window (Heathcote, 2007).[20] The CCTV building is more polysemic than Beijing's other figurative designs: the bird's nest, the

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[20] Koolhaas has evinced an interest in polysemic skyscrapers. In *Delirious New York*, he argues that "the needle" and "the globe" represent the "extremes of Manhattan's formal vocabulary": The needle "combines maximum physical impact with a negligible consumption of ground," while the globe is "the form that encloses the maximum interior volume with the least external skin." The globe "has a promiscuous capacity to absorb objects, people, iconographies, symbolisms" (Koolhaas, 1978, p. 27); it "absorbs" symbolisms, like Beijing's bent skyscraper. The CCTV building thus mixes the attention-grabbing nature of the needle with the symbolic promiscuity of the globe.

pistol, the bicycle wheel. "The novelty of the form . . . takes time to comprehend," Goldberger (June 2008) says. "[T]he building seems to change as you pass it." It can mean whatever you want it to mean, but whatever it means, it does so emphatically, brazenly. Even in a big doughnut costume, or in its boxer shorts, it wears them *loudly*, conveying assurance to compensate for its occupants' insecurity. How will CCTV handle the threats posed by mobile technologies and pirated international satellite? By opening itself up to global scrutiny and the potential for unflattering presentations, could China be caught with its shorts down?

Perhaps, rather than "broadcasting space," a more apt symbol of China's new media age and its contemporary spatial condition is the "virtual Tiananmen Square." And perhaps this virtual sphere's more fitting, more honest, material embodiment is another of Beijing's new buildings: Digital Beijing, the "control center for the Olympics; home base for the technical and security teams; and hub for the routers, computers, and servers needed to run the Games in a digital age" (Liu, 2008, p. 104). Situated on the western edge of the Olympic Green, the building is a response to the neighboring sports facilities, "such clean, elegant packages," according to architect Zhu Pei (ibid.). Zhu sought to "design something that was uncultivated, masculine, and authentic", something that got "to the truth" of China's contemporary identity (quoted in Liu, 2008, p. 104). The building is constructed of four upright slabs of gray granite that, together, resemble a computer motherboard. The three western slabs house electronic equipment, and the eastern section houses offices; China Mobile and other telecommunications companies will move in after the Games. The western façade is mostly granite, with ribbons of glass that light up at night, while the eastern façade – the side most approaching visitors will see first – is made primarily of glass, with LED streams flowing through its glass ribbons. After the Olympics, the building will host "high-tech" exhibitions in a below-grade gallery space. Maybe this place is a better representative of contemporary Chinese media and media space. It offers a reminder of the persistent interrelationships of virtual and physical space; even the digital has an inherent materiality, in the form of servers and routers that have mass and generate heat. And that equipment, which the building humbly protects, supports the media-making activity that takes place in the world *outside* its walls. The building makes no spectacle of communication; it so honest an expression of its program that it essentially effaces itself to embody its function. Pei refers to it as "*fei jianzhu*," "nonarchitecture" (ibid., 106). Digital Beijing deserves further study.

Koolhaas, we know, doesn't do "nonarchitecture." Besides, honest or self-effacing design seems to be ill-fitting dress for a propaganda arm of the state, especially one that is desperate to broadcast its continued strength and relevance in a potentially threatening new media age. The CCTV complex, like the institution it houses and the urban and national contexts within which it resides, embodies a tense negotiation between capitalist and socialist values: It is both mouthpiece and money-spinner, both propaganda and commerce, both transparency and opacity, both chauvinism and internationalism. It may not be the embracing, accountable, accessible structure that the architects have advertised, but in its contradiction, it is the perfect home for China's state-controlled television.

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