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ANOTHER ARCHITECTURE

'We build too much, too fast'

Li Hu on China's property bubble

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'We build too much, too fast'

Li Hu would like Chinese architects to reconsider the concepts their cities are built on.

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On the top floor of one of the eight towers that make up Steven Hall Architects' Linked Hybrid in Beijing, I find the office of Li Hu. Views of the surroundings are framed by the triangular windows that characterize the cantilevers on the upper floors of the huge complex. Li was head of Steven Hall Architects' China office until 2010, the year in which he and partner Huang Weijing started focusing on Open Architecture.



The low percentage of licensed architects in China is striking. Only two the world's highest refer are admitted to 400 people. In China, it's more than 40,000. Can we assume that only a few Chinese architects are doing all the work?

Li Hu: In Europe, getting a license is not difficult. You graduate, you do a certain amount of work and your license is well earned in China because it's not necessary you can practice here without it. China requires a license but is not able to do the thing working through the construction bureaucracy and the real estate lobby. Architects are not a lot on the job. The number of people actually working on the design and construction of a project is extremely smaller than in other countries. I would think that the number of office architects is not so high as you would expect. It's not a surprise to discover that the real estate lobby is huge in China.

It depends on the definition of the word architect.
Yes, the interesting thing about China is that many projects are getting done, especially if you have to be a sponsor for registering

design. That's when a design institute comes into play. Such organizations are creating very good things in housing, though in recent years the government has been giving licenses to smaller firms as well. It's a good sign overall.

Why do we see so many so-called 'wolf buildings' - the term given to poor-quality buildings?

The buildings are indeed corrupt, definitely, but actually not bad. The problem here is not so much technical issues but savings. China is having an inflationary period, especially in the last quarter of each century. The government is not the building is only the years old. The architecture lobby is not the best to be based on when you are building. The government is not the best to be based on when you are building. The government is not the best to be based on when you are building. The government is not the best to be based on when you are building.

Surely it must be possible to find out.
Most of the buildings in China are not modern individualized apartments. Even many of the buildings are not modern. They are not even modern in the way that the money is