The rural built environment is a dynamic complex that assembles multi-dimension variables of time, space, and people. Nothing is constant, but only constant changes all the time. The transformations are not caused by single force whatever political or economic. Indeed, it is the result of a composition of various forces including official and folk powers. The forces always change by themselves, and impact on different levels of built environment, to different extents respectively.

This research tries to understand the dynamic process of transformation happening in the rural built environment of China, by a detailed case study of the Xiaqiao village (下桥, under bridge). It attempts to figure out the series of transformations in the specific rural context during the recent 400 years. It contains four socio-economic periods representing the different development stages that are the Qing dynasty (1616-1911), the Republican China (1912-1948), the Planned Economy PRC (1949-1979), and the Market Economy PRC (1980-2015).