Since the Chinese cultural revolution, the rural areas of China are dealing with an ever-growing problem of depopulation. Living in vertical blocks, commuting to various ‘desk jobs’ via metro, enjoying the perks of booming cities, seems to be the new ideal for the young Chinese who want to detach from the hard work of farming and tea producing and indulge in a combination of Western and Eastern culture that the new cities promote. This is not an isolated case but a spreading global phenomenon. Today, China is facing enormous challenges to keep rural areas alive, while combating growing issues in overpopulated urban areas. Even strict policies inhibiting movement of individuals are not producing much in terms of the desired results. In Europe a reverse trend is already emerging among the young, where the countryside is again becoming an exciting place to live, where prices for accommodation are lower, connections with people are more personal and life seems to be calmer, healthier and more ‘connected to the earth’ in terms of sustainable food production.

International student workshop brought together architectural faculties from three different universities, namely Tsinghua from Beijing, Austrian TU Wien and University of Ljubljana from Slovenia with the aim of exchanging ideas ‘in situ’. The workshop took place in March 2018, in Fujian Province. A picturesque mountain village Renshou located at the edge of a green bamboo forest, with beautiful views to the nearby valley, was selected as a case study. There, with an exception of a few old villagers in dire social circumstances, living in a partially preserved rural settlement of high quality, everything seemed completely deserted.

What sort of strategies and programs are available to revitalise rural Chinese settlement? Students from all three faculties exchanged ideas and proposed projects of various scales. The final presentation was held at TU Wien in June 2018. Now their ideas and proposals will be on view in Ljubljana.
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