

## **New Perspectives on Taishun's Covered Bridges: Local memories, heritagization and the role of social media**

**Marina Svensson  
Lund University**

### **Abstract**

When studying at university Zhong Xiaobo, a young man from Taishun in Zhejiang province, China, happened to come across an article with a picture of the covered bridges (*langqiao*) of his home county. He had previously not given much thought to the bridges, or been aware of their historical value and uniqueness, but now felt a strong sense of pride. In 2000, Zhong Xiaobo created a website devoted to raising public awareness about the bridges at the same time as the local heritage authorities also began to pay more attention and list the bridges as protected sites. The website attracted many visitors and supporters. Many people who had left Taishun for work elsewhere also started to see the bridges in a new light, and they became a symbol for their childhood and hometown. Today Zhong and his friends are also actively using social media to connect, discuss the bridges and discover other sites, as well as share memories and experiences of the local heritage. Over the years links have been forged between local residents, experts, and tourists. When a storm hit the county in September 2016 and destroyed three of the old bridges, social media became an important platform to get news, voice concern, and share personal memories of the bridges. People also began to donate money and discuss how to rebuild the bridges. This paper reflects on the importance of the bridges as sites for personal and communal memories, changes over time, and how the recent disaster accentuated their importance for the local community. It pays particular emphasis on the role of images and social media for articulating, sharing and storing memories.