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Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the discipline of Conservation

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LISTED BUILDINGS – PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE IN SWEDEN
National Heritage Listing Implementation
An Overview and Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Listed buildings are historic buildings or groups of buildings, of special architectural and/or historic interest. Protection of such heritage according to the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act (Kulturminneslagen, KML) forms a main activity within the publicly financed field of cultural heritage in Sweden. The main purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate this performance and to analyse conditions of this activity.

The direction of this activity is formulated in national overall politico-cultural objectives, as well as specific objectives concerning national cultural heritage and historic built environments, and is interpreted in strategic documents at regional level, established by county administration boards. Public regulations, economic incentives and information, form the official instruments to protect, preserve and promote Swedish cultural heritage.

Adequate legislation supporting protection according to KML, implies knowledge about why objects are to be protected, as well as how they should be managed in order to maintain their significance. In the dissertation this is considered as basic conditions that have to be satisfied, for a legislative protection to gain effect.

The heritage listing operations of seven counties form the basis for this study. These counties (Blekinge, Kronoberg, Södermanland, Västmanland, Gävleborg, Jämtland and Norrbotten) have been selected with the objective to obtain maximum variation with the purpose to provide as wide basic information as possible. In the dissertation the heritage activities with listed buildings are evaluated under the headings *selection, documentation and information*. Principles and objectives are analyzed, as well as selection criteria for listed buildings, and how information is communicated by the heritage sector about listed buildings, with the purpose to increase public engagement in heritage protection. The status of the legislative protection is studied in a case study that exemplifies various situations where the legislative protection system is examined.

With limited resources within a widened field of operations, the heritage sector is faced with demands for efficiency and prioritizations. The basic purpose of the heritage sector, to protect and preserve historic environment, is supported by social planning and economic perspectives. This dissertation argues in favour of the necessity of developing basic knowledge about deficiencies as well as merits of the heritage protection system, but also knowledge about how such factors affect possibilities to fulfil objectives of heritage operations.

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