

# Sweden is paving the way in progression through skateboarding, city planning and *Malmö's Bryggeriets Gymnasium*.

*Malmö is proudly replacing the 'N' with a 'G' on that 'No Skateboarding' sign.*

*Written by Joseph Andrews | @joeandrews2009@aol.co.uk | 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019*

The informalities and alternative value systems of skateboarding's culture has always caused issues for the sport.

Cities are cluttered with 'No Skateboarding' signs and skaters are diverted from using the city as a playground. They are oppressed by hostile architecture and discouraged by a large portion of any city's inhabitants.



*Pontus Alv, owner of Polar Skateboards, at the famous TBS spot, Malmö. Skaterockz.cz*

This is quickly changing, with the Swedish city of Malmö actively encouraging skateboarders through careful city planning, architecture and even education.

This structural nuance is an extension of the freedom of expression.

## Setting up successful policy

For over 20 years, the city and its skateboarding community have been in on healthy terms, with competitions such as Quicksilver's Bowl Riders Comp having additional funding from the city, alongside financial aid which helped to build concrete skateparks.

The skateboarding community has had Gustav Eden, one of its members, on the city council for quite a few years, indefinitely encouraging the city's open dialogue with the skaters.

Fast forward to the present day, and Malmo's first skateboarding school, the Bryggeriets Gymnasium has been a hugely successful testament to formalising the sport and integrating its education into the curriculum.

***“The idea was to have a school where your passion for skateboarding can help drive your pursuit of knowledge.”***

Gustav Eden told interviewer ([www.freeskatemag.com/2016/11/09/inside-man-gustav-eden/](http://www.freeskatemag.com/2016/11/09/inside-man-gustav-eden/))

The school's success reflects the achievements which can be accomplished with open discussion, between both a mobilised skateboarding community and forward-thinking city council.

## Architecture with Utility

The advent of the world's first skateboarding school is not the only dimension of Malmo's progression.

City planners have peppered the urban environment with architectural designs intended to be used by skateboarders. Their needs are incorporated at the heart of the plans, alongside attempts to integrate other members of the public.





*‘Malmö Högskola’ spot was built to encourage skaters.*

*Skatemalmö.se*

These spaces actively encourage skateboarders worldwide, with media coverage of the city branding Malmö as the ‘Mecca’ of skateboarding.

## **Performative Critiques of Architecture**

Historically, architectural sculptures have been implemented as features to be observed and marvelled at.

Malmö’s architectural designs and spaces quite literally asks to be used.

Urban theorists such as *Henri Lefebvre* and *Ian Borden* have suggested Skateboarding endorses a performative critique of the environment; they challenge dominant power structures, toy with the ambiguity of public space, and push the boundaries of accepted forms of ‘play’.

The persistence of skateboarding contesting the rights to space has no doubt contributed to the innovations in city planning in Sweden.

The scene's organisation and mobility are testaments to what can be achieved by essentially counter-cultural, marginalised groups if they are willing to debate and formalise their craft.