The high-rise Turning Torso in Malmö is a reinvention of Swedish identity, creating an image of a region between Denmark and Sweden. The Turning Torso, a 190m tall building, is located next to the sea in The Västra Hamnen [West Harbor]—a new district of Malmö that markets itself as the City of Tomorrow.\(^1\) Malmö is Sweden’s third largest city and is located on the southern tip of Sweden. By new investments, marketing and designing new neighborhoods, Malmö wants to be a cosmopolitan node—a gateway to the Baltic region.\(^2\)

In 2000, the 18km Öresund-bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen was completed. In an attempt to expand the economic potential of the region the bridge formulated visions of structural change. Incorporating both sides of the sound, the population in the area, and the consumers, The Öresund is the 8\(^{th}\) largest “city” in Europe. The final result as it stands is a region that is “a desperate reaction to the imposed necessities of a global economy.”\(^3\) This is, in particular an increased market economy between Sweden and the other Nordic countries. According to statistics, around 25,000 people living in one of the Nordic countries commute to work in another country everyday. Moreover, “four out of five of those live in Sweden.”\(^4\) A recent study showed that 43% of the commuters live in Malmö and daily travel over The Öresundbron.

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. The first conducted study on this matter ever, commissioned by The Nordic Council, showed that 25,394 people had their largest income from another country.
In 2001 the European Housing Expo Bo01 opened, a newly built permanent city district with mixed buildings, encompassing both commercial and social services together with about 500 housing units.\(^5\) Supported by the Swedish government and the European Commission, this new development is attempting to attract an international audience. The area in the northeast corner of Bo01 is called the European Village, which was “constructed as an international single-family home development, to display how the EU building guidelines are implemented in various European countries.”\(^6\) Countries of the EU and the EFTA organization were invited to demonstrate their national architecture and construction methods appropriated to the Swedish climate and construction conditions. Building the European Village was an effort to test the application of the European Construction Products Directive (ECPD), which are the basic, common guidelines for architecture. Because of the restrained housing development, as a result of high standards, i.e. building costs and an expensive labor market, cities like Malmö and Gothenburg and especially Stockholm have a large housing shortage. It is in the Swedish Government’s interest to increase the competition on the building industry, generating lower constructions and labor costs.

At the northeast tip of the Bo01 area stands The Turning Torso, Europe’s tallest apartment building. The building, which is

\(^6\) Ibid.
based on a sculpture by Santiago Calatrava called Twisting Torso, is designed like a body in movement. The former CEO of The Turning Torso—contractor and board chairman of the Malmö branch of the co-operative housing association HSB, Johnny Öhrbäck—saw the sculpture at an exhibition in 1999 and contacted Calatrava. He wanted to know if it was possible to build a high rise on the same principles. The building is 54 stories high and made up of nine volumes. The first two cubes, 4000m² or twelve floors, are allocated for office space. The rest of the building, 13,500m², contains 157, mostly rental apartments ranging from 45 to 230 square meters. External facilities, such as a sauna, private wine cellar, rooms for parties, exercise rooms and office space for rent, are included in the apartment package. The cheapest apartment, one bedroom of about 50m², costs 7000kr ($1000).

In April last year, a weekly TV production of a political debate program on national television produced a debate on The Turning Torso. The program engaged experts and critics questioning “The Turning Torso as a symbol for the future of Malmö”. Among others, the association Jagvillhabostad.nu [I want a place to live. now], was represented. The organization has formed as a critique towards a socially political problem shaped by a housing shortage for students and the lower class. Malin Norlander, a graphic designer, also took part in the program. She has brought about a lot of attention in the media through the production and selling of T-shirts with the statement: “Fucking Torso.”
The T-shirt, Fucking Torso, is a result of these controversial circumstances and the fact that the cost of building The Turning Torso has more than doubled during the course of its construction. But most of all, the moral reconfiguration of the developer-organization HSB—a company that had always, up until now, built apartments for the people, was what made building The Turning Torso a sour issue. Building The Turning Torso changed the outlook of what a cooperative business in the position of HSB should be. Formed in 1924, this company currently encompasses 500,000 members that through a system of renting the apartment from HSB are in turn owners of HSB. The money that paid for The Turning Torso came from its members, yet the building was not built for its members. The Turning Torso is built for a high-income citizen.

The Öresund-region has through building The Öresundsbron and the high-rise Turning Torso, been claimed as the most potent region in Sweden, situated closest to the rest of Europe. The high-rise has also in many ways reached the goals as a symbol for Malmö through the media. Building The Turning Torso is a facelift—the former welfare state, in a condition of identity crisis, promulgating itself as somebody on the map of the European Union and beyond. But for how long will they last in the European community of competing identities?

7 On the Calatrava-Turning Torso site Cales Pas posted the following comment: “This building will be insignificant when the four new buildings projected by Calatrava will be built in Valencia near the city of arts and sciences. The tallest of the four buildings will be 280 meters high and the smallest will be 220 meters so they will be the tallest skyscrapers of Spain and possibly one of the tallest in Europe.” November 14, 2004
In January, two delegates from the MGM Mirage Design Group in Las Vegas visited Malmö and the Turning Torso. Two new Turning Torso’s are in the planning stage in Las Vegas. The two new high-rise copies are planned to be 60m taller than the original in Malmö. Lars Danielsson, CEO of HSB commented; “there is only one original and that is in Malmö.”