

The visit to the States allowed me to experience a culture and a form of architecture I have never seen before. My interest was started throughout one of the lecture courses where Chicago's position as the original skyscraper city was put forward to me.

Going to Chicago allowed me to see these original skyscrapers and appreciate the scale of undertaking constructing them in the late 19th Century was when the steel frame was an innovative form of construction. This changed my ideas on a dissertation title from one based around suburbia and horizontal development to one more focussed around vertical development and the skyscraper. Buildings such as the Monadnock, the Marquette, Willis Tower and the Mies Van Der Rohe typology interested me and the tours on Chicago's architectural heritage were particularly fascinating.

New York struck me as the modern high-rise metropolis. Developed later slightly later than Chicago I found that the development of buildings worked differently to those in Chicago, this was clear to see around Wall Street and also with the Empire state building. Going to New York allowed me to experience the social design of the city, from the individual block to the district to the whole of Manhattan Island and beyond. Seeing New York's newer high rise buildings such as the UN building, Trump Towers and the under construction Freedom Tower on ground zero gave me an appreciation of the great strides forward high rise design has taken from the early days in Chicago. I also came to see, through architectural exhibitions in both cities, how these urban systems are constantly evolving and how the structures which have developed in New York and Chicago may no longer be suitable or sustainable in the modern city.

The experiences gained from the trip to America gave me a greater understanding of how architecture, and particularly high rise architecture, has developed since the late 19th Century when America started to become world leaders in aspects of architectural design. In terms of my dissertation it has led me to look into high-rise design over time, starting with two conceptual ways of designing skyscrapers stemming from New York and Chicago.

I have since been exploring ideas of skyscraper development and am questioning the sustainability and need for architectural and urban development to rise vertically rather than spread out horizontally as has been done extensively in some parts of the world in suburbia systems and so the visit to America was critical in helping me establish ideas for my dissertation through experiencing that which I had been shown throughout a number of lecture courses.