

*Thesis title*

Is the original landmark building of London's Canary Wharf in New York City? The transnational circulation of skyscrapers designed by Cesar Pelli

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The last several decades have marked a radical change in the role of architecture and its players. Today, architects are driven purposefully by economic concerns that originated from the design of exceptional buildings on a global level. Skyscrapers and iconic buildings designed by architects such as Cesar Pelli are now built in an overwhelmingly large scale in not only size but also price and visual significance. Spectacularization, iconicity and branding are some of the aspects particularly noteworthy to developers, public administrations and project stakeholders, as it is now apparent that architecture can affect a brand success and the media can trigger attention to the architecture industry. This trend is leading to the production of increasingly striking urban transformations, which are affecting the city's urban context and skyline both positively and negatively. Since 1977, architect Cesar Pelli's firm has realised around 140 projects combining reliability and design with a strong concept. This mixture has brought to the design of some of the tallest buildings in America, Europe and Asia. This thesis aims to firstly acknowledge and examine the apparent international circulation of three similar buildings designed by the famous architect Cesar Pelli from 1985 to 1992. The three selected projects are: Three World Financial Centre in New York City, One Canada Square in London and Bank of America Corporate Centre in Charlotte, all characterised by a similar external outfit and complex scheme but located in different urban contexts. In addition, this thesis questions the reason behind the supposable reproduction and worldwide circulation of Pelli's architectural design, when Pelli is a talented and significant figure in the world of Architecture yet he has apparently chosen to repeat a stylised design three times. Then, what aspects of these designs has been repeated, and why has this been done when considering the areas in which these buildings stand? Secondly, this thesis aims to understand the advantages and disadvantages of using open data as a main source of urban context analysis, and for using the QGIS programme for the development of relevant maps. The analysis is conducted through a systematic methodology on which every building is examined based on architectural parameters and urban context features. The urban context data are collected through the OpenStreetMap (OSM), an open source-mapping project, and in turn elaborated on Open Source Geographic Information System (QGIS). This innovative method of survey has significant potentialities but in some cases, the information are not fully available or provoke an overlapping of attributes. Nevertheless, reaching over 2 million of registered users, OSM has large development margins and offers the opportunity to create maps useful for any purpose. After comparing the three case studies, the thesis concludes that there is a strong relation between the design of Three World Financial Center and One Canada Square but just in part for Bank of America Center. The New York building has been transferred in London with just few changes mainly due to the presence of the same developer Olympia & Park boost whereas the Charlotte one encompasses elements deriving from the other two where Cesar Pelli also the designer of the whole complex. In regards to urban context, the three buildings manifest different role within their cities and locate in areas with opposing characteristics. Three World Financial Center is part of a four buildings complex in Lower Manhattan next to Ground Zero and symbolises a gate for the city skyline. One Canada Square was built in Canary Wharf, a new financial district in the East of London, and is noted especially for its height as it was tallest building in UK for 20 years. Finally, Bank of America Center is a landmark for Charlotte's city center and still the tallest building in Charlotte and the State of North Carolina State. The similar design of the Pelli's three buildings is just an early case of circulation and transfer of architecture, as this concept of replicating buildings is still visible in recent years.

