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The Cinematic Boston:

Space, Production, and Politics

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DECLARATION

I, Jiyoung Kim, declare that this thesis is my own work, and that it has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Signature: Jiyoung Kim

Date: 30 September 2023

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ABSTRACT

"What does a city do in the cinema?" This thesis examines this seemingly simple yet multifaceted question. More precisely, the thesis explores the role of a city in cinema, serving as both a filming location and a narrative backdrop, with a case of Boston. Boston cinema is renowned for its significant characters, particularly Irish Catholic working-class male characters, and its narratives that often revolve around the tensions between these characters and others. Also, it is known for Boston native screenwriters' contribution to Boston cinema, while the city itself solidifies its status as an attractive filming location.

This study analyses Boston and Boston cinema from the perspectives of the city's cultural and historical geography, as well as its political activities, concerning Boston films and the city's film industry. First, it examines how the cultural and historical geography of the city has been portrayed in Boston cinema and how the cinematic history of Boston has been mapped. Second, it analyses how regional political circumstances have influenced both the region's motion picture industry and the films themselves, with a particular focus on the works of the regional film office. Third, it delves into how Boston native screenwriters have constructed significant Boston cinematic themes and narratives. Lastly, the thesis explores the visual design aspect of Boston cinema and how visual design has contributed to Boston cinema's representative themes and narratives. I argue that cinema and the city are undeniably and reciprocally connected–the city serves as a location for filming and an inspiration for characters and narratives, while cinema, at the same time, shapes the image of the cinematic city. Furthermore, the thesis confirms that Boston cinema has been significantly influenced by the city's motion picture industry, culture, history, geography, and its native screenwriters' images of their hometown. Simultaneously, Boston cinema constructs specific images of the city, particularly emphasising the theme of neighbourhoods and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

People often refer to the stages of a PhD degree as a "Journey." My journey began when I was writing my master's degree thesis. It was the middle of a late summer night. I was working late on my thesis and suddenly felt happiness – the happiness of having found the path I wanted to pursue and the pure joy of research. From that night, I stepped into this world.

There are theories about the PhD journey suggesting that it combines solitude and failures. My journey is not vastly different from these theories, but I have also encountered countless moments of the opposites. I reflect on my journey with a mix of relief, accomplishment, excitement, but also fear, it has been challenging, yet joyful. I have walked paths that have brought both happiness and sadness, and in the end, these paths have filled me with gratitude.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep sense of appreciation to my supervisors – Dr. Julian Stringer and Dr. Franziska Meyer. They taught me "HOW" – How to think as a researcher, how to do as a researcher, and how to become a researcher. I could not have completed my doctoral project without their support and wisdom. They have been my navigator in this uncertain, but fascinating world.

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Lastly, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my family: my grandparents, my mum and dad, my sister, my brother-in-law, and my one and only niece. Their endless love and unwavering support kept me going. Now, as I arrive here, I would like to take another step forward.

I hope the new journey will be as marvellous as it has been.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Cinematic City and Boston

In February 2016, at the 88th Academy Awards, Tom McCarthy's biographical drama film, *Spotlight* (2015), won Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay. The film is based on true events involving the nationally renowned investigative journalism team at *The Boston Globe* and their investigation into cases of child sex abuse by Catholic priests in the Boston area. While the story focuses primarily on the investigations, depicting victims, Catholic priests, lawyers, reporters, and other related figures, the film also vividly portrays Boston, highlighting certain aspects that can be understood as "characteristics of Boston." These include clear class divisions among different neighbourhoods, the prominence of the Boston Red Sox baseball team, and a society with deep Catholic roots, featuring numerous churches.

In the film, there are also certain background details that the audience might need to know to fully understand the film, such as the division of neighbourhoods and communities based on specific ethnicities, cultures, classes, different incomes, or religions. For example, one of survivors of sexual abuse, Joe Crowley (Michael Cyril Creighton), who comes from low-income background, grew up in Dorchester, which is primarily known as white, Catholic working-class neighbourhood. When he meets Sacha Pfeiffer (Rachel McAdams), a Spotlight journalist, have this conversation:

> JOE CROWLEY: Are you from here?
> SACHA: I grew up in Ohio but my mom's from Southie.[1]

[1] "Southie" is short for South Boston.

JOE CROWLEY: So you get it. I'd never ever been to Back Bay.[2]

In this conversation, the audience might notice a couple of aspects of Boston that pique their curiosity. First, the distinction between Back Bay and Joe Crowley's neighbourhood suggests that Back Bay might be a more upscale neighbourhood than Dorchester. Second, these background characteristics of each neighbourhood are typically known to Boston residents. Including this example conversation, the film portrays these significant characteristics of Boston from beginning to end. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that having knowledge about Boston is beneficial for fully understanding the story.

While *Spotlight* is acknowledged for accurately capturing Boston, the depiction of Boston in films and its representation–specifically, the uniqueness of neighbourhoods and communities–appears to be a recurring theme in Boston cinema. As exemplified in a brief conversation in *Spotlight*, Boston cinema tends to emphasise the distinctiveness of neighbourhoods, highlighting recurring themes that underscore Boston as a city comprising these diverse communities. From renowned Boston films like *Good Will Hunting* (Gus Van Sant, 1997) to more recent ones like *Spenser Confidential* (Peter Berg, 2020), certain recurring and dominant characters, such as Irish Americans, the working-class, Catholics, or males, can be categorised into specific groups, aligning with distinct divisions of places. In essence, these divisions represent the neighbourhoods and communities of the city, a central theme in Boston cinema.

In 2016, one year after Spotlight received two Academy Awards, another film with strong Boston connections won Best Original Screenplay and Best Actor in

[2] *Spotlight*, directed by Tom McCarthy (2015; Los Angeles, CA: Open Road Films, 2016), DVD.

a Leading Role at the same awards. This film, *Manchester by the Sea* (Kenneth Lonergan, 2016), revolves around an Irish Catholic working-class family in New England. While the majority of the film is set in Manchester by the Sea, Massachusetts, it begins with the main character, Lee Chandler (Casey Affleck), a Boston janitor, briefly introducing Boston. Interestingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, it again portrays an Irish Catholic working-class family in the region.

Based on this observation, I became interested in understanding the reasons for the repeated portrayal of these specific characters, representations, and narratives in Boston cinema. In the respect of repetition, I made a full list of Boston filmography and discovered interesting patterns. As of 2023, there are approximately 180 Boston films, with 30 percent of them being crime genre featuring Irish Catholic working-class characters. This genre constitutes the largest portion of Boston's filmography. Additionally, these characters often inhabit specific neighbourhoods such as South Boston and Dorchester. Another interesting aspect is the contributions of Boston native directors, screenwriters, actors, and actresses to Boston cinema, as many famous Boston films, particularly those featuring repetitive characters and genres, are associated with their work.[3] This led me to develop a keen interest in exploring the relationship between cinema and the city. Specifically, I was intrigued by the city's role as both a filming location and a narrative location in the filmmaking process. Despite Boston films consistently receiving critical acclaim and

[3] For example, among the top 25 grossing films in Boston cinema, half of them are crime genre films featuring Irish Catholic working-class characters from neighbourhoods such as South Boston. This includes *Good Will Hunting*, *The Town*, *The Departed*, and *Spotlight*. Additionally, more than half of the 25 highest-grossing Boston films star at least one Boston native actor or actress as a main character, while 30 percent of the films are written by Boston native screenwriters or based on novels by Boston native writers. See, Box Office Mojo, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.boxofficemojo.com.

attracting the attention of cinephiles, with the repetitive patterns of its cinematic theme and genre, scholarly works on Boston cinema remain limited.

Firstly, Boston has been discussed as a hub of the motion picture industry in the Eastern United States, with an emphasis on regional film offices as intermediaries in creative industries. In these studies, authors argue that the work of regional film offices plays a significant role as they cultivate regional labours and networks, but also, connect and mediate between creative labour, projects, and service providers within the region, as well as between the region and areas outside of the region.[4]

Secondly, while there has been some previous academic attention to Boston films, involving the analysis of individual Boston films with specific approaches, such as *Good Will Hunting* and masculinity, *Mystic River* and violence, and *The Departed* and cross-cultural narrative, there have also been a couple of notable attempts in the last few years to explore Boston cinema within a broader context.[5] For example, Carlo Rotella focuses on more recent Boston area films (specifically from the twenty-first century) and its film boom. In this research, he addresses why Boston became such a popular place in the 2000s, highlighting first, the local

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[4] Candace Jones and Pacey Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," in *Brokerage and Production in the American and French Entertainment Industries: Invisible Hands in Cultural Markets,* eds. Violaine Roussel and Denise Bielby (Lanham, MD, Boulder, CO, New York, NY and London, UK: Lexington Books, 2015), 171-188; Pacey Foster, Stephan Manning, and David Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," *Regional Studies,* 49, 3 (2015): 433-450, https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2013.799765.

[5] Anna Cooper, "America's Representative Men: Moral Perfectionism, Masculinity and Psychoanalysis in *Good Will Hunting*," *Film-Philosophy* 19, 1 (2017): 270-288, https://doi.org/10.3366/film.2015.0015; Allen Redmon, "Mechanisms of Violence in Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* and *Mystic River*," *Journal of American Culture* 27, 3 (October 2004): 315-328, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2004.00139.x; Li Wanlin, "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of *Infernal Affairs* and *The Departed*," *Style* 52, no. 3 (2018): 321-344, https://doi.org/10.5325/style.52.3.0321. These research focus on individual Boston films from specific perspectives rather than examining films within the context of Boston.

government tax incentive program, second, Boston's versatile cityscape, and third, and more importantly, the city's attractiveness as a narrative setting with its authentic locality in the globalised world.[6] Stanley Corkin delves into Boston's cinematic history, specifically focusing on the city's shift from tradition to post-industrial reinvention and a more globalised future. His primary focus is on the period spanning from the 1970s to the early 1980s, and he utilises a selection of films, including *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (Peter Yates, 1973), *The Brink's Job* (William Friedkin, 1978), and *The Verdict* (Sidney Lumet, 1982). Through the analysis of these films, Corkin examines the central theme of white working-class characters and how this aspect has become a hallmark of urban branding images within Boston cinema.[7]

The previous studies on Boston cinema within the context of the city of Boston have primarily focused on the works of regional film offices and its regional film industry, as well as the portrayal of dominant characters such as Irish Americans, the working-class, and Catholics. These studies also highlight the city's transformation from a traditional place to a globalised urban area. However, there are still gaps in the existing research. While previous studies have concentrated on the intermediary role of regional film offices in the context of project-based creative industries, facilitating connections beyond regional boundaries, they have paid less attention to how the city's film industry and the films themselves have been impacted by Boston's role as a filming location. Also, existing research has explored

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[6] Carlo Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," in *The City in American Cinema: Film and Postindustrial Culture,* eds. Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019), 153-174.

[7] Stanley Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," in *The City in American Cinema: Film and Postindustrial Culture,* eds. Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019), 177-204.

the recurring and stereotypical representations found in Boston films, by providing brief analyses of the city's history. However, there is a lack of focus on the late 1990s Boston films as the previously mentioned scholarly works rather focus on the films between 1970s and 1980s. Also, it has paid less attention to the more recent influence of Boston native filmmakers on Boston as a narrative location, especially since its worldwide recognition as a "Boston film" following the success of *Good Will Hunting* (1997) until now. Boston cinema is renowned for the contributions of Boston natives who work as actors, actresses, screenwriters, producers, and directors, often at the heart of Hollywood. Their works are directly linked with Boston films, and it is crucial to examine this aspect to gain a comprehensive understanding of Boston cinema and the intricate relationship between cinema and the city. By delving into the influence of these native filmmakers, we can gain a deeper understanding of the role of the city in cinema, and vice versa.

Therefore, despite the limited scope of existing studies, I assert that the concept of cinematic Boston suggests that the city can serve as a valuable case for understanding its role in both the cinema industry and film representations. As Boston's cinematic patterns suggest, the growth history of its cinema, encompassing both production and representation, establishes the city as a unique cinematic living entity, exhibiting distinct narrative construction compared to other urban centres. Furthermore, I argue that approaching Boston and its films from both perspectives—considering how the city influences films and how films depict the city—is essential. Moreover, Boston's dual role as both a filming location and a narrative location should be discussed comprehensively. Consequently, the thesis provides an in-depth and comprehensive analysis on Boston and Boston cinema. It argues how Boston as a cinematic living entity, functions as a production venue, providing tools for

cinematic narratives and characters. As a result, Boston stands as a foundational element in the construction of Boston cinema and its cinematic history.

1.2 Research Question

Thus, based on this context, my main research question is:

- What role does a city play in cinema, serving as both a filming location and a narrative location (narrative setting)?

More specifically, the thesis aims to answer these questions within the context of Boston:

- How have regional political circumstances influenced both the region's motion picture industry and the films themselves when Boston serves as a filming location?
- How has the city of Boston influenced Boston cinema as a narrative location?

Additionally,

- How has the Boston cinematic narrative been constructed and designed?
- How has Boston been visually designed in Boston cinema in terms of its cinematic theme?

In answering these questions, this thesis explores Boston as both a filming location and a narrative location, providing broader perspectives on how the city plays a crucial role in the process of filmmaking and in the films themselves. Consequently, this thesis examines Boston's distinct role as a cinematic city, arguing the undeniable and reciprocal connection between cinema and the city.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The rest of this thesis first provides a literature review on the discourse of "cinema and the city," and then delves into Boston cinema by exploring the cultural and historical geography of Boston cinema, the region's film industry by focusing on the regional film office, the contributions of Boston native screenwriters, and, additionally, how the theme of Boston cinema is visually designed. A more detailed thesis structure is as follows.

Chapter 2 reviews previous studies on the topic of "Cinema and the City." Since the discourse on this topic has been examined in various disciplines, including geography, architecture, sociology, cultural economy, and film studies, I initially explore how the topic of "cinema and the city" has been discussed and developed in these disciplines. Additionally, it provides a brief analysis of the film spectator as a traveller to the film location. By also exploring the emergence of Hollywood and its decentralised process, the chapter illustrates how location filming has shifted from the West to the East of the United States (the US) and outside of the US. In terms of location filming, I also examine the cinematic city and films as assets of cultural economy. Finally, the chapter outlines the research methods used in this study.

Chapter 3 provides a more detailed analysis of Boston and its representations in Boston cinema, particularly from the perspective of the cultural and historical geography of Boston films. The chapter begins by introducing the cinematic experience of a city, drawing from my own experiences in Boston. It then raises two key questions: first, how Boston cinema has portrayed the city's cultural, historical, and geographical significance, and second, how these elements have been depicted in Boston cinema. To answer these questions, the chapter explores the images of Boston in two ways. First, it examines the mental image of the city, often referred to

as the "public images of Boston," as presented in Boston cinema and other media. Second, it delves into the physical image of the city, focusing on significant architecture and places that symbolise Boston. Additionally, the chapter delves into the cinematic history of Boston, by categorising it into Old and New Neighbourhoods. It argues that Boston's cinematic identity goes beyond these categories. Furthermore, the chapter explores Boston location tours.

Chapter 4 analyses the Boston motion picture industry and how regional political conditions have influenced both the industry and the films themselves, with a specific focus on regional film offices in Massachusetts and the political ecology surrounding them. The chapter begins by providing a detailed analysis of regional film offices in the US and then delves into the history and role of regional film offices in Massachusetts, starting from the emergence of the state's first regional film office in 1977 up to the present day. Through this analysis, the chapter argues that a city's film industry and films can be influenced by regional political circumstances, as Boston cinema (also Massachusetts) has been affected in both positive and negative ways by the political circumstances surrounding the film industry within the state of Massachusetts.

Chapter 5 examines how Boston native screenwriters constructed the representative themes and narratives of Boston cinema. This chapter specifically analyses the theme of Boston cinema–Neighbourhoods and Communities by analysing five selected Boston representative films: *Good Will Hunting*, *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood, 2003), *The Departed* (Martin Scorsese, 2006), *Gone Baby Gone* (Ben Affleck, 2007), and *The Town* (Ben Affleck, 2010). These selected films were written by Boston native screenwriters. Through this analysis, the chapter argues that Boston cinema has developed its own themes and narratives through the selected

images created by Boston native screenwriters. These selected films, listed among the highest-grossing films set in Boston, also received critical acclaim, including recognition at the Academy Awards. Additionally, the genres of these films take up the most significant portion of Boston's filmography. Furthermore, since Boston films gained more public recognition as "Boston film" after the success of *Good Will Hunting* (1997), and as the "Boston Movie Boom" came along with the region's industry transformation–such as the launch of regional film offices–this thesis focuses on this specific period. By doing so, it aims to fill the gap in previous studies on Boston cinema. By examining these example films, the chapter once again highlights how Boston native screenwriters employ local knowledge and regional experiences as tools for creating a more convincing cinematic world.

Chapter 6 provides analyses of the visual design of the selected Boston films, with a particular focus on how the theme of neighbourhoods and communities has been designed to support their narratives and the portrayal of the city itself. In this chapter, I also highlight that the visual design of Boston in the films does not just divide between neighbourhoods and communities but also visually distinguishes people from Boston and those from outside of Boston.

Lastly, the conclusion chapter (Chapter 7) provides an overall conclusion to the thesis, reaffirming that Boston cinema has been constructed based on the city's cultural and historical aspects, as well as the shared images of Boston by the city's native screenwriters, which centres on the theme of neighbourhoods and communities. It also underscores Boston as a filming location, a space that generates narrative, a cultural and economic asset contributing to the region's economy, while highlighting its susceptibility to regional political circumstances. Finally, this thesis

concludes the discussion of cinematic Boston as a filming location and narrative location, and I suggest future research agendas.

2 Literature Review and Research Methods

2.1 Cinema and the City

The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard observes that "the American city seems to have stepped right out of the movies."[8] He suggests that this is the same feeling you get "when you step out of an Italian or a Dutch gallery into a city that seems the very reflection of the painting you have just seen, as if the city had come out of the painting and not the other way around."[9] As Baudrillard noted after his travels across the US, we also experience a similar sensation in our everyday life within cinematic space. When we travel, we sometimes experience a strange feeling that we have been here before even though we have not. Then suddenly, we realise that we saw or experienced this place from somewhere else in films. David Clarke defines this experience as also "a part of the cinema."[10] In other words, just as we can cinematically sojourn the cinematic space, cinema cannot be restricted to the screen or movie theatre; it also exists beyond them.[11]

Since cinema is a "spatial form of culture," the relationship between cinema and the city has long attracted scholars and provided cultural perspectives on the city.[12] As a result, there has been a significant and growing debate in the last couple of decades about their relationship. This debate has left its mark in diverse fields,

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[8] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Tuner (London, UK and New York, NY: Verso, 1988), 56

[9] Baudrillard, *America*, 56.

[10] David B. Clarke, "Introduction Previewing the Cinematic City," in *The Cinematic City*, ed. David B. Clarke (London, UK: Routledge, 1997), 3.

[11] Clarke, "Introduction Previewing the Cinematic City," 1-18.

[12] Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 5; Barbara Caroline Mennel, *Cities and Cinema,* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008).

including geography, cultural studies, sociology, urban studies, architecture, and film studies. Scholars have paid attention to how cinema and the city are inextricably linked, and how cinema has played an important role in the culture, society, urban space, and cultural economy of the city.[13] Among the previous studies on the topic of cinema and the city, David Clarke's edited book *The Cinematic City*, is worthy of notice, as Charlotte Brunsdon argues that this is the first attempt to embrace observations from a range of disciplines.[14] This also suggests the importance of the cinematic city, discoursing on a deeper and broader level.

In the present, it is quite obvious that cinema and the city are deeply connected. However, Clarke points out that until the late 1990s, there were previous studies on the representation of the city in painting and photography, while the understanding of the relationship between cinema and the city had been neglected.[15] Thus, through a reading of studies on the culture and city relationship, such as those by Jean Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin, Zygmunt Bauman, Jacques Derrida, and Georg Simmel, he provides a brief explanation of theoretical concepts such as

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[13] These scholarly works include, for example, Allen J. Scott, "Territorial Reproduction and Transformation in a Local-Labor Market: The Animated Film Workers of Los Angeles," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2, 3 (September 1984): 277-307, https://doi.org/10.1068/d020277; "The Cultural Economy of Cities," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21, 2 (June 1997): 323-339, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00075; "A New Map of Hollywood: The Production and Distribution of American Motion Picture," *Regional Studies* 36, 9 (2002): 957-975, https://doi.org/10.1080/0034340022000022215; Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); David B. Clarke, ed., *The Cinematic City* (London, UK: Routledge, 1997); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice, eds., *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Charlotte Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," *Screen* 53, 3 (Autumn 2012): 209-227, https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjs021; Lawrence Webb, *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2014); Joshua Gleich and Lawrence Webb, eds., *Hollywood on Location: An Industry History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019); and Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb, eds., *The City in American Cinema: Film and Postindustrial Culture* (London, UK and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

[14] Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," 213.

[15] Clarke, "Introduction Previewing the Cinematic City," 2.

"stranger," "flânerie," "city stroller," and "dweller" in (post)modernism. He argues that our modern world was no longer "stable, solid, and foundational" by citing Charles Baudelaire's suggestion that modern life is "the transitory, the fleeting and the contingent."[16] This notion of modernity, marked by its transitory and contingent nature, serves as a crucial backdrop for our exploration of concepts like "flânerie" and their connection to the cinematic city. Finally, he brings these ideas together on the topic of the cinematic city. For example, Clarke emphasises on Anne Friedberg's suggestion that "flânerie can be historically situated as an urban phenomenon linked to, in gradual, but direct ways, the new aesthetic reception found in "moviegoing"."[17]

In 2001, another significant scholarly work was published: *Cinema and the City*, an edited volume by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice provides more in-depth and varied insights into the discourse of cinema and the city. In the substantial introductory chapter, Shiel argues that cinema is the ideal cultural form for the discussion of global culture in the context of the spatial turn, emphasising the closely connected relationship between cinema and the city.[18] Furthermore, considering the heterogeneous nature of the discourse surrounding cinema and the city, Shiel suggests that cinema plays an important role in the cultural economies of cities worldwide, involving the "production, distribution, and exhibition" of films.[19] Simultaneously, cities have played a pivotal role in shaping cinema, influencing its

[16] Clarke, "Introduction Previewing the Cinematic City," 4.

[17] Clarke, "Introduction Previewing the Cinematic City," 5.

[18] Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," 1-6.

[19] Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," 1-2. / See, Brunsdon 2012. She also indicates that the origin of film studies has heterogeneous characteristics that lied in various disciplines.

three key aspects: "production, representation, and reception."[20] While some argue that cinema merely mirrors the prevailing societal norms due to its financial dependence on corporations and profits, it is evident that cinema and the city share a deeper connection, as films capture the essence of urban space and the city experience more effectively than any other medium.[21]

Cinema takes on the city and captures its society. Shiel argues that the intersection of cinema and the city provides the ideal venue for examining society and culture because culture is embedded in cinema, and society, embodied by the city.[22] Moreover, the images and sounds within cinema embrace facets of the city that often elude recognition in our everyday lives. As Gilloch points out, cinema captures elements that typically elude our everyday perception: "things at speed, things in motion, things too small, too large, or too slow."[23] Subsequently, it constructs "people's experiences of the city space."[24] It can be seen from Benjamin's observation, as any art form does, that:

> By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung

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[20] Mennel emphasises the emergence of Hollywood and its vertical studio system along with film productions in the specific region and their economic value. In this respect, cities transform into venues for "production, representation, and reception. See, Mennel, *Cities and Cinema*, 6-7.

[21] Nezar AlSayyad, *Cinematic Urbanism: A History of the Modern from Reel to Reel* (New York, NY and London, UK, 2006), 1-18.

[22] Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory," 1-6.

[23] Graeme Gilloch, "Urban Optics: Film, Phantasmagoria and the City in Benjamin and Kracauer," *New Formations* 61, 2 (Summer 2007): 120-121.

[24] Maite Conde, "Early Film and the Reproduction of Rio," in *Visualizing the City*, eds. Alan Marcus and Dietrich Neumann (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007): 31.

> ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended.[25]

Cinema reflects urban patterns through costume, setting, and space, and in this process, it imitates urban life.[26] Hence, cinema serves as both a representation of society's living fabric within it and a fundamental symbolic component, capturing, documenting, and embodying symbolism.[27] Furthermore, cinema offers a post-human perspective that prompts viewers to consider the city as an assemblage of human characters and a mirror of their actions.[28] Consequently, watching cinema means observing both the city and society. Thus, cinema and the city cannot be considered separately.

2.2 Film Location and Cinematic Travel

There used to be a Hollywood studio system era when major film studios produced movies like manufacturing factories. As we all know, the dominance of the motion picture industry by Hollywood has undergone changes due to the rise of small independent film studios, the development of new technology, and the demand for new geographical views and stories. Film studios began seeking new landscapes, and it became natural to film outside of Los Angeles, even outside of the US. In the present, the motion picture industry relies on cutting-edge technology more than ever. There was once a fear that the film location business would be entirely replaced

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[25] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London, UK: Pimlico, 1999), 229.

[26] John Orr, "The City Reborn: Cinema and the Turn of the Century," in *Screening the* City, eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (London, UK: Verso, 2003) 284-298; and Mennel, *Cities and Cinema*.

[27] Orr, "The City Reborn: Cinema and the Turn of the Century," 285.

[28] Mark Schmitt, "Re-thinking Cinema and the City in Crisis: Film, Narrative Agency and Urban Transformation in Selected Recent Publications," *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 3, no. 3 (September 2016): 373-380, https://doi.org/10.1386/jucs.3.3.373_1.

by digital means, creating entire moving images based on the location photos.[29] That fear has now become our reality. Almost every image we see on screen can be created in a visual-effects studio.[30] However, the concept of film locations still holds significance in the filmmaking process and the experience of watching a film.

Following Amy Corbin's analysis of the trope of the arrival scene in the opening of the 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks), we can briefly understand the experience of cinematic travel:

> A young white man, looking both naive and resolute with his suit and briefcase, has just arrived in the inner city. His entrance is underscored by a long shot of the elevated rail that brought him here, but even without that, we would know that he did not belong in this neighbourhood. We can tell by his gaze: he looks at shirtless and barefoot children playing in the streets, then at a multiracial, working-class group of high school students behind the gates of their schoolyard, laughing, smoking and dancing. His gaze lingers on these sights as curiosities and something he has not encountered before, something slightly threatening. Their stares back at him are just as telling; clearly he does not belong.[31]

Corbin argues that through the camera movements that shed light on his new and exotic workplace, as well as the unfamiliar students, the spectator can fully perceive what he feels and sees. The young white man's gaze becomes the spectator's point of

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[29] Paul Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, eds. Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 95-96.

[30] For example, *The Mandalorian* (Disney+, 2020-) has been filmed in a virtual set using an LED wall as a backdrop that creates fictional worlds. This innovative way of filmmaking allows the location to be brought to the actors and actresses, rather than requiring them to go to the physical location. The LED wall has also replaced the use of green- and blue-screen technology, reduced production environmental footprint, and is suggested as the future of new filmmaking. See, Jay Holben, "*The Mandalorian*: This Is the Way," *American Cinematographer*, February 6, 2020, https://theasc.com/articles/the-mandalorian; Devin Coldewey, "How 'The Mandalorian' and ILM Invisibly Reinvented Film and TV Production," *TechChrunch*, February 20, 2020, https://techcrunch.com/2020/02/20/how-the-mandalorian-and-ilm-invisibly-reinvented-film-and-tv-production/; Janet W. Lee, "How 'The Mandalorian' Creators Reduced Production Footprint Through Technology," *Variety*, September 25, 2020, https://variety.com/2020/tv/news/the-mandalorian-variety-sustainability-series-1234783200/.

[31] Amy Corbin, "Travelling through Cinema Space: The Film Spectator as Tourist," *Continuum* 28, no. 3 (2014): 314, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2014.900880.

view, and the moment he enters the place, his experience becomes the spectator's experience in the diegetic world.[32] In this regard, watching films can be considered cinematic travel, even if the film is not a travel film. The film delivers what film characters' gaze, situations, and experiences to the spectator. Furthermore, it offers the atmosphere of the diegetic landscapes of the film. Considering the diegetic landscapes of the film, it includes all the images or sounds created within the fictional world of the film, which comprehends physical landscapes, norms of social behaviour, and the overall atmosphere of the place.

Examining how the filmic landscape is shared with the spectator as travel, Brunsdon also explores the cinematic journey with the 1968 musical film *Oliver!*.[33] She particularly focusses on Oliver's journey from the countryside to the city of London as a cinematic journey to the urban landscape.



Figure 1 *Oliver!*[34]

In this film, Oliver takes a long journey through the countryside and finally arrives in London (Figure 1). Brunsdon places significant emphasis on Oliver's moment in arrival of London, where he is overwhelmed by the city's allure. She also points out

[32] Corbin, "Travelling Through Cinema Space: The Film Spectator as Tourist," 314.

[33] Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," 209-227.

[34] *Oliver!* directed by Carol Reed (1968; Los Angeles, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2018), DVD.

how much Oliver is amused by the scale and diversity of the city in contrast with where he comes from.[35] This is the moment when the spectator becomes actively engaged in the character's journey. Furthermore, the images depicting Oliver's days in London, such as what he sees and people he encounters, encapsulate a specific period and atmosphere of the city within the context of the society's culture, geography, and economy.[36] Consequently, the spectator's cinema activity is a continuous journey within a diegetic landscape.

If Corbin suggested the spectator's experience involves travelling through cinematic space, and Brunsdon argued the attraction of the cinematic journey to the city with observations on certain films, Giuliana Bruno emphasises the importance of the cinematic city in the cinema by giving a more direct example with Naples and New York.[37] Bruno argues that a film is essentially a travel story in the sense that a city shapes film narratives, these narratives draw audiences into the city, and at times, the city itself would move.[38] The cinematic city provides viewers an opportunity to travel to a city they have never been to before. Furthermore, she also suggests that the cinematic city does not exist merely as a physical space but as a functional entity capable of creating the diegetic world.[39] However, she argues that not all cities can be considered as cinematic cities. According to her, Naples and New York are born to be cinematic as both surrounded by nature and architecture,

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[35] Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," 210-212.

[36] Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," 225-227.

[37] Giuliana Bruno, "City Views: Naples and the Cinema," *MoMa*, no. 15 (Autumn 1993): 14-15; and "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," in *The Cinematic City*, ed. David B. Clarke (London, UK: Routledge, 1997), 46-58.

[38] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 46.

[39] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 46-58.

and the cities constantly attract cinema.[40] As a result, these cities have long been loved by tourists, painters, photographers, and filmmakers. Further, Bruno pays attention to the moment when a series of moving images becomes the filmic voyage:

> In many ways, their filmic image partakes in a form of tourism: cinema's depiction is both an extension and an effect of the touristic gaze. Repeatedly traversed and re-created by the camera, Naples and New York produced a real tourism of images. Shot over and over again these cities have become themselves an image, imaginary, a picture postcard.[41]

Bruno also focusses on how much Naples has been loved as the city has appeared in various artistic forms. There was even a genre featuring shots of the city's real views called "Dal Vero." Watching Dal Vero like an "urban spectacle flânerie," brings the tourist gaze to the spectator and leads them on a journey into the screen landscape.[42] Naples attracted filmmakers to create representations of the city by filming such as Dal Vero; these serial moving images made Naples as a genre in itself.[43] As a result, the visual history of Naples suggests the importance of site and location shooting in the cinema.

To find out more about the filmic voyage to the cinematic city, another noteworthy example is "Immigrant Cinema," by exploring Elvira Notari, who founded a distinguished Neapolitan film production company, Dora Film, and her city films which were shot on location in Naples.[44] In the 1920s, Notari's Neapolitan city films were screened in New York, where many Italian immigrants were settled. For Americans, watching Notari's city films were about travelling to a new foreign

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[40] Bruno, "City Views: Naples and the Cinema," 14-15; "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 46-47.

[41] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 47.

[42] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 48-49.

[43] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 47.

[44] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 47-54.

city, and for Italian Americans in New York, this was a journey to their home. Furthermore, in the mid- 1920s, Dora Film was commissioned to travel and make short documentaries by a group of Italian Americans.[45] The short documentaries portrayed the immigrants' place of origin, and it was screened in New York for Italian American immigrants. For Bruno, Dora Film's immigrant cinema is both "a collective history and a personal story," also this is "a personal archive of memories for a community."[46] In this respect, the cinematic view is a city view that reflects a tourist's perspective as Italian American immigrants travelling to their home by watching Notari's films.

In summary, moving images bring the spectator to the cinematic city through the character's gaze or camera shots, regardless of whether the spectator has already been to the city before or if the cinematic exists in the real world or not. Film location has its own role in cinema.

2.3 Location Filmmaking and Cultural Economy of the Cinematic City

In the early stages of discussion on cinema and the city, there was research on the cultural economy of the city conducted by geographers and urbanists. They particularly focused on Los Angeles, specifically Hollywood, approaching this cinematic city as a hub of cultural economic place. Undoubtedly, Los Angeles, where Hollywood is located, is the most famous cinematic city in the world. The well-known Hollywood sign on Mount Lee in Griffith Park in Los Angeles frequently appears in popular culture and serves as a symbol not only for Hollywood but also for Los Angeles itself. Even though the motion picture industry has been

[45] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 51-54.

[46] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 53.

decentralised and Hollywood now has less impact on the industry since the mid-1900s, it still symbolises the American motion picture industry, and Hollywood films are synonymous with the US films.[47] Examining the history of this iconic cinematic city reveals not only creative activities but also geographical and economic dynamics.[48]

To understand Hollywood as a cultural economic place, it is necessary to explore the history of the US motion picture industry from its origins. The industry began in the New York metropolitan area when the first film studio was established by Thomas Edison in New Jersey in 1893. Since then, many film producers started working in the New York-New Jersey area, and some producers worked in the Chicago area. Several motion picture companies also opened and started making films on the roofs of New York buildings.[49] However, the weather on the East Coast could not satisfy the filmmakers. It was quite challenging to make films on the rooftops during the hot summers and cold winters of the East Coast. Moreover, film producers were seeking something different–they wanted to capture various landscapes. As a result, due to the weather conditions on the East Coast and the need to film diverse and authentic views for popular Western genre movies, film producers began sending camera operators, actors, and actresses to the West. Finally, the first permanent motion picture studio in Los Angeles was established by William

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[47] Stephanie Frank, "Claiming Hollywood: Boosters, the Film Industry, and Metropolitan Los Angeles," *Journal of Urban History* 38, 1 (January 2012): 73, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144211420643.

[48] See, Michael Storper and Susan Christopherson, "Flexible Specialization and Regional Industrial Agglomerations: The Case of the U.S. Motion Picture Industry," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77, no. 1 (March 1987): 104-117, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1987.tb00148.x

[49] Clifford Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254, 1 (November 1947), 12-13, https://doi.org/10.1177/000271624725400103.

Selig in 1909.[50] Two years later, in 1911, Nestor Film Company of New Jersey rented a roadside tavern and lot at the northwest corner of Sunset Boulevard and Gower Street. This place was the first film studio in the Hollywood district.[51]

Shortly after the establishment of the first film studio in Hollywood, the film industry based in the Hollywood district experienced rapid growth. This growth led to an expansion of the population of the Hollywood community and an increase in land values within the district. According to Clifford Zierer, the population of the Los Angeles area expanded from 5,000 people in 1910 to 36,000, in 1920, and further to 235,000 in 1930.[52] Furthermore, a couple of years after the first group of film studios were built in the Hollywood district, film studios that attempted to move or tried to open in the district found themselves having to construct their studios outside of the Hollywood district due to the high cost of land. The Hollywood motion picture industry brought a significant influx of people to Los Angeles and contributed to the city's economy in various ways. Once the motion picture industry was settled in Los Angeles, and the Hollywood district was formed, actors, actresses, and directors began to treat the district as their own empire. They owned luxurious houses in Beverly Hills, spent winters in Palm Springs, and holidays in Malibu, then, Hollywood soon became filled with hotels, shopping centres, restaurants, and beauty salons.[53] As Hollywood films gained popularity, people from other cities in the US and even from outside the US wanted to visit the shops, hotels, and restaurants where movie stars visit. Consequently, Hollywood itself became an important

[50] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 13.

[51] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 12-15.

[52] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 1947: 14.

[53] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 1947: 16.

commercial asset for the city of Los Angeles.[54] As a result, Los Angeles can be distinguished before and after the Hollywood era on the basis of population, number of productions, size of employment and the labour market in the city. Following Zierer's research conducted in 1947 on the economy of Los Angeles, Hollywood made huge changes to the economy of the city as almost 25,000 jobs had regularly been made, in comparison with pre-war period, pay rolls were doubled.[55] At that time, Hollywood studios spent more than a half-million dollars a week, and it was a huge support to the economy of the city.[56] The Hollywood motion picture industry changed the economy of Los Angeles only in three decades.

What made Hollywood special? How was the Hollywood motion picture industry able to support the city's economy? What can the motion picture industry bring to the city's economy, and how is it different from other intra-urban economic activities?

To begin with, as I mentioned previously, filmmakers moved from the East Coast to the West Coast seeking a better environment; Hollywood was an ideal place for the motion picture industry for many reasons, including geographic and economic conditions such as warm weather, diverse landscapes, convenient accessibility from to the city's central business district from Hollywood, enough land for constructing studios, distinctive architecture, and suitable facilities.[57] For example, Hollywood is situated in the heart of the Los Angeles central business district amidst diverse landscapes. Hollywood firms could easily find suitable

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[54] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 1947: 16.

[55] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 16.

[56] Zierer, "Hollywood-World Center of Motion Picture Production," 16.

[57] Joseph Beaton, "Why the Movies Chose Hollywood," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 4, 1 (1983): 99-109, https://doi.org/10.1080/08873638309478586.

facilities, services, and theatres. Moreover, filmmakers could readily discover various, attractive, and high-quality landscape locations for filming, including Griffith Park, Santa Monica State Beach, forests, and mountains.[58] As part of the city of Los Angeles, Hollywood offered a comprehensive package. Alongside the favourable geographic and economic conditions that Hollywood offered, political factors played a key role in its early emergence. For example, Beaton points out that during the first World War, the American film industry and Hollywood coincidently reaped benefits, as primary countries in the motion picture industry, such as England, France, Germany, and Italy lost access to essential resources and filmmaking facilities.[59]

Besides the presence of the Hollywood neighbourhood itself as a commercial asset, Allen Scott scrutinises the case of Hollywood and Los Angeles, approaching the Hollywood motion picture industry as a cultural product industry that contributes to the city's cultural economy.[60] He explains that cultural products are heterogeneous, as there are different types of products, including "traditional manufacture," "personalized transaction or the production," and "transmission of information services," and defines Hollywood film production as a hybrid form of those different types of culture products.[61] Typically, each famous and giant urban city has its own cutting-edge economic activities in this modern capitalist society. However, among them, cultural product industries, such as the Hollywood motion picture industry, possess a significant characteristic in terms of the recursive

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[58] Beaton, "Why the Movies Chose Hollywood," 99-107; Frank, "Claiming Hollywood: Boosters, the Film Industry, and Metropolitan Los Angeles," 73.

[59] Beaton, "Why the Movies Chose Hollywood," 106-107.

[60] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 323-339.

[61] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 323.

relationship between the "cultural attributes of place" and "the logic of the local production system."[62]

This local cultural economic activity takes an intra-urban economic activity, serving as a cultural asset in itself that contributes to a complex and powerful economic model within the city and is an integral part of the industry's output.[63] The Hollywood industry creates cultural products based on local culture and economic activity, and these cultural products, which can be seen, felt, and experienced, become local cultural assets. Furthermore, these local cultural assets are then ready for another cycle of cultural economic activity.[64] Ultimately, through this recursive and repeatable cultural economic activity, local cultural assets evolve into the brands themselves, like London theatre, Broadway musicals, K-pop and K-drama, Bordeaux wine, or Hollywood films.[65]

Now we can see how one local cultural product becomes an important cultural economic asset, as products made in Hollywood guarantee a certain quality of films; and we easily think that films equal Hollywood. The iconic Hollywood sign, originally constructed for advertising a new residential neighbourhood called "Hollywoodland," now represents not only Los Angeles or the US motion picture industry but the US culture itself. There was an attempt to take this Hollywood name, but the Los Angeles government wanted to protect it. And they succeeded in

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[62] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 325.

[63] See, Storper and Susan Christopherson, "Flexible Specialization and Regional Industrial Agglomerations: The Case of the U.S. Motion Picture Industry," 104-117; Harvey Molotch, "L.A. as Design Product How Art Works in a Regional Economy," in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of Twentieth Century*, eds. Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 234-241; Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 323-339.

[64] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 325.

[65] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 324-325.

preserving this iconic name by officially designating Hollywood's boundaries as the only neighbourhood in Los Angeles.[66]

In summary, the first film industry began in the New York-New Jersey area and Chicago, but the industry experienced significant growth in Los Angeles. Filmmakers' decision to move to Los Angeles was quite straightforward–they followed their practical needs, specifically the region's favourable weather and diverse landscapes in Los Angeles. Filmmakers believed that the region's warm and sunny weather in Los Angeles would provide the ideal conditions for filming. It is observed that when one industry aligns with geographical and cultural specificity, it tends to develop idiosyncratic industrial characteristics and a unique sense of place. This idiosyncrasy arises from the "uniqueness of the history of any given place" and "the very functioning of the local cultural economy," and the idiosyncrasy becomes the one and only geographical specialised asset as an effective cultural economic model, much like the Hollywood motion picture industry, which are beneficial to one another. [67]

To conclude this chapter, I have aimed to offer essential perspectives and concepts for discussions concerning "cinema and the city" across various disciplines. The preceding discussions on cinema and the city have highlighted its complexity, particularly its intricate relationship with diverse factors such as culture, the economy, geography, architecture, and history. These discussions underscore the significance of studying the relationship between cinema and the city. To further this perspective, I introduced approaches to "cinema and the city," treating the city as a

[66] Frank, "Claiming Hollywood: Boosters, the Film Industry, and Metropolitan Los Angeles," 72-73.
[67] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 327.

space for film production, distribution (exhibition), and as a wellspring of narrative inspiration. Simultaneously, I proposed considering films as cultural and economic assets, akin to other cultural commodities. Films, as creative works, both reflect and represent the city. Moreover, I raised the necessity of analysing a city from these diverse perspectives.

2.4 Research Methods

A city is selected, used, and portrayed in cinema for various reasons. To truly understand the cinematic city, one must embrace it in its entirety, considering its dynamics and history as an evolving entity. Moreover, cinema serves as a versatile tool for unveiling the various facets of "corporeal, cultural, architectural, historical, and social forms" within the city.[68] In this context, I intend to delve into Cinematic Boston, considering its history, culture, economy, geography, and industry as interconnected elements. To explore these aspects from multiple perspectives, this thesis relies on diverse methodological approaches and sources, drawing from various disciplines, including history, economics, geography, culture, and film studies. As previous scholarly works on cinema and the city suggest, a multi- and interdisciplinary approach is necessary for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the cinematic city.[69] Therefore, data from various sectors are essential for conducting this research.

This thesis employs a combination of methods, including business and industry analysis, textual analysis of selected films, and historical contextual

[68] Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space* (London, UK: Reaktion, 2002), 7.

[69] Clarke, *The Cinematic City*; Shiel and Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*; and Brunsdon, "The Attractions of the Cinematic City," 209-227.

research, to examine the cultural and historical aspects of Boston cinema. Given the comprehensive nature of this study, which explores Boston films within both the industry and the films themselves, a wide range of source materials was used. These sources include newspapers, trade journal articles, reports, and archives from the city of Boston and the state of Massachusetts, as well as the scripts of the selected films.

3 Mapping Boston Cinema: Cultural and Historical Geography of Cinema and the Cinematic History of Boston

3.1 A Journey to the Cinematic City

In the summer of 2010, I travelled to Boston, Massachusetts and visited some famous film locations. It was my first time visiting Boston, as well as the US. When I first set foot in the US for the first time, I imagined that I had developed some so-called stereotypical or landmark images of famous US cities. For example, Washington D.C., often associated with the centre of international politics due to the presence of the White House, while unimaginable wealth and a beautiful richness of art are often linked to New York City. Los Angeles is renowned as the epicentre of the film and television industry. Similar to these cities, before arriving in Boston, I pictured Boston as an educational city with many world-class, prestigious universities and brilliantly smart students. However, at the same time, the city existed in my mind as a mysterious place with crime, darkness, and somewhat low-level local people. Although the trip was not specifically themed like “a cinematic tour” or “a film location tour,” the influence of cinema was consciously or unconsciously taking a part of my journey to Boston even before I arrived. The images of Boston that I imagined had already been shaped by the films I watched, and there was no intention behind them. In terms of the process of constructing an

image of a certain city, it becomes apparent that watching films is one of the easiest ways to perceive and directly create images of the space and place.[70]

The first Boston set film I watched was *Good Will Hunting*. The film portrays the life of a man named Will Hunting (Matt Damon), who was born and raised in the Boston area. Will works as a janitor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Having endured a difficult childhood and still haunted by a traumatic past, Will possesses remarkable intellectual talent. One day, MIT professor Gerald Lambeau (Stellan Skarsgård) discovers his intelligence by chance when Will solves a very difficult maths equation that Lambeau had left for his advanced maths major students. Lambeau notices Will's difficult background and current environment and tries to help him, but Will's aggressiveness and emotional crisis, rooting from the past, are not easy to overcome. Lambeau does not give up on helping Will, he arranges regular meetings with his old friend, Sean Maguire (Robin Williams), who works at a community college as a psychology professor and counsellor from the same neighbourhood as Will. Through these meetings with Sean, Will finally breaks free from his haunted past and discovers his potential and future. The film continuously and deliberately crosses the boundaries between Will's upbringing, his childhood friends and neighbours (South Boston's young generation), and the students at the city's prestigious universities. This is exemplified through characters like Lambeau, an MIT alumnus who is now a professor at MIT, and Skylar, Will's girlfriend who is a Harvard student. While the film portrays both sides of sociological and geographical environments, it also delves into the extremes of the city's geographical, cultural, and historical ethnicities and classes. After

[70] Since film contains both visual and audio, it could be easily imprinted in our minds. By watching films, spectators are able to imagine and perceive fabricated fictional worlds.

watching the film, I, as a film spectator and a consumer, perceive Boston as a living entity, constructing an image of a city where historical and cultural ethnic conflicts and boundaries can be traced geographically.

Good Will Hunting was not the only film that shaped my own image of Boston. Alongside with *Good Will Hunting*, other famous Boston films like *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Paper Chase* (James Bridges 1973), *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001), *Mystic River*, *21* (Robert Luketic, 2008), *The Departed*, and *Gone Baby Gone* also contributed to creating certain images of Boston that existed within cordoned boundaries and neighbourhoods in the city. For instance, *The Paper Chase*, *Legally Blonde*, and *21* portray students at Harvard University and MIT. *Mystic River* follows three men with a white working-class background who were once exposed to child abuse and are still tormented by those memories. On the other hand, *The Departed* and *Gone Baby Gone* depict inseparable individuals involved in crimes in South Boston and Dorchester. Thus, before arriving in Boston, I automatically expected to see those lives, experience places, and immerse myself in atmospheres. Moreover, a part of my mind believed that reflections in cinema represented the real Boston.

After I arrived in Boston, I sought out some famous film locations. From Harvard Law School building and Harvard Yard, where James Hart (Timothy Bottoms) studies law in *The Paper Chase*, to the Boston Public Garden, where Will and Sean sit together and chat in *Good Will Hunting*, and even Charles Street Cleaners in Beacon Hill, which was used as a bistro in *The Departed*. Among those films, some were very familiar and felt friendly to me, while a few were unrecognisable, or I barely knew them. My experience was not merely about visiting the locations and standing in front of them or simply seeing the places. Touring those

locations felt more like a nostalgic activity of reliving my cinematic memories, reminiscing about films and scenes that I had watched, while also learning something new about films I had seen, or even those I had not watched before. Based on this personal experience, I began to ponder three fundamental questions. First, how did I construct the image of Boston from Boston films before I actually visited the city? Second, how did my preconceived images, shaped by the films, differ from the reality of Boston? And third, could I genuinely grasp Boston's cinematic dimensions–its reflections and depictions in Boston cinema–through my journey across the city? In other words, was my cinematic experience sufficient to comprehend the city's cinematic dimensions? Moreover, if specific films can shape the perception of a city's images, then, "how are the city and cinema connected?"

In terms of the connection between the city and cinema, in particular the US city and cinema, the US is likely the most extensively filmed country in the world. Nearly every state and city has featured on screens over the last century. Like Jean Baudrillard observed during his travels from the east to the west, the US possesses such charms that the entire country feels cinematic, even beyond the screen. In fact, one could argue that the country itself functions as "a screen of signs and formulas."[71] Cinema can be understood as a reflection of vibrant cities, capturing the dynamic essence of the city, and encompassing both the mental and physical environments. Additionally, cities themselves can be seen as containing various aspects and elements of cinema. The question then arises: how does this interaction occur?

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[71] Baudrillard, *America,* 56.

In the context of the cinematic experience, this chapter considers whether the city, whether used as a filming location or a narrative setting, provides opportunities for cinematic connections. If film spectators, as tourists, explore cinema spaces, on the contrary or similarly, can they, as Corbin argues, gain cinematic experience through travelling cinema space?[72] As an individual film consumer and a film location tourist, I wonder how Boston cinema consumes the city's cultural, historical, and geographical images. And how Boston cinema captures and portrays the culture and history of the city. Furthermore, can tourists or spectators truly experience the cinematic universe of the city? Regardless of the order-watching the film first and then visiting the city, or visa-versa-can we truly capture a city by travelling to its locations or watching films?

This chapter specifically traces films shot and set in Boston, exploring how Boston cinema is mapped with the city's cultural, historical, and geographical significance. It also investigates how these significances have been consumed in Boston cinema. Moreover, the chapter will delve into how Boston film location tours embrace this significance, as well as the extent to which Boston cinema can be truly experienced and understood through these tours. To explore the city's cinematic history and the cinematic tour of Boston, this chapter starts with exploring the image of the city which is reflected through the city's culture, history, geography, and architecture. Also, the chapter demonstrates what and how the public thinks of Boston, and how those aspects have been reflected in Boston cinema.

[72] Corbin argues that a film spectator travels cinema space by watching film. See, Corbin, "Travelling through Cinema Space: The Film Spectator as Tourist," 314-329.

3.2 Reflection and Representation of Boston: A Mental Image of the City

In the context of perceiving the shape and image of a city, there are two types of cognitive information associated with the city: the tangible or physical image of the city that involves thinking, remembering, or imaging its physical aspects, and the mental image of the city.[73] Some images of the city are directly perceivable by our eyes, while others remain beyond our immediate sight. I categorise these images into two distinct types. Firstly, there are the mental images of the city, encompassing cultural depictions of its people and historical representations of its evolution over time. Secondly, there are the physical images of the city, including its architecture, streets, roads, and the meanings attributed to them. These images are shaped over time through tacit agreements within the public, becoming deeply rooted in local cultures and histories. In accordance with this observation, Kevin Lynch introduces the term "public images," referring to the shared mental pictures held by a significant portion of a city's residents.[74] I argue that public images are not limited solely to the visual representation of physical shapes, but also encompass the characteristics of mental environments, such as the atmosphere that the city embodies.

Boston was founded in 1630 during Colonial America and served as the capital of New England. Since then, the city boasts one of the longest histories among other US cities.[75] Also, its rich history has fostered a flourishing tradition of

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[73] In terms of the constructing an environmental image, Kevin Lynch explains that the process of an observer forming an image of a city entails a two-way interaction between the observer and their environment. As a result, the resulting image can vary among different observers. See, Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1960), 6.

[74] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 7.

[75] The city of Boston was established in 1630 by puritans; prior to that, it was inhabited by Native Americans. See, Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2003), 187-201; Thomas H. O'Connor, *South Boston, My Home*

Boston literature. As a consequence, Boston's cultural and historical images have naturally been created through literature. Moreover, a considerable number of these literary works have been adapted for the screen, resulting in around thirty films that are set in Boston and have been filmed in the city.[76] Particularly, the solid foundation of Boston includes immigrants, democracy, and religion. The characteristic lifestyle of Puritans is also a common sentiment in representations of Boston. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, Louisa May Alcott's novel *Little Women*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlett Letter* are examples that share common underlying sentiments. Considering the region's history, it becomes obvious that New England has exhibited strong and powerful religious faiths, particularly the Puritan spirit. New England was founded and settled as a Bible-based society from the very beginning of immigration to the US during the colonial era.[77] A globally bestselling novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, serves as another example that highlights the deeply ingrained (patriarchal and contested) religious history of New England.[78] It is widely known that Atwood earned inspirations from real events, particularly the 17th century witch trials that occurred in Massachusetts. Interestingly, the setting for the Republic of Gilead, the totalitarian theocratic state with roots in

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Town: The History of an Ethnic Neighbourhood (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2019), 7-8.

[76] "MA Literature Filmed in MA," Made in Mass, Massachusetts Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mafilm.org/ma-literature-filmed-in-ma/.

[77] Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1999), 38-41; Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father*.

[78] *The Handmaid's Tale* has been adapted into a television series by Hulu, spanning five seasons to date. While the majority of filming for the series took place in Canada, it still incorporates several references to Boston. See, Madeline Bilis, "Five Boston References in *The Handmaid's Tale* That Make It a Little Too Real," *Boston Magazine,* June 14, 2017, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/arts-entertainment/2017/06/14/handmaids-tale-boston-references/; Megan O'Brien, "Map: 'The Handmaid's Tale' is filled with Boston references," *Boston Globe,* May 3, 2018, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2018/05/03/map-the-handmaids-tale-is-filled-with-boston-references.

17th century Puritanism, is situated in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This location is renowned for being home to Harvard University, which had its origins as a Puritan theological seminary.[79] Regarding the event that Atwood drew inspiration from-the witch trials can be understood as a reflection of the communities and individuals in Massachusetts who held strong beliefs that the Puritan church was the centre of their lives, showcasing how deeply the Puritan spirit was rooted in the foundation of the city of Boston.

In addition to the Puritan spirit, the terms Irish American, Italian American, Catholic Church, and institutions could also be used to describe Boston. An interesting quote from Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight* captures the essence of Boston. Mitchell Garabedian (Stanley Tucci), an Armenian American lawyer who independently investigates allegations of abuse within the Catholic Church in Boston, says "This city, these people… making the rest of us feel like we don't belong."[80] This quote is followed by a scene in which Walter Robinson (Michael Keaton), a Boston native journalist, attends a Boston Catholic Charity Gala even though he is not directly associated with the charity.[81] Garabedian's words imply how challenging it can be to blend in with Boston natives as someone from outside the city in this unfriendly city.[82] There are invisible boundaries in Boston that divide

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[79] See, Margaret Atwood, "Margaret Atwood on What 'The Handmaid's Tale's Means in the Age of Trump," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/books/review/margaret-atwood-handmaids-tale-age-of-trump.html.

[80] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

[81] At the Gala, Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber), who is new to the *Boston Globe* and the Boston Catholic community, engages in a brief conversation with Robinson. Baron asks Robinson, "Are you involved with the charity?" Robinson responds, "Not directly, no. Several of my friends are. We all went to high school. BC High." Baron suggests that the charity gala would be difficult to miss for him. In response, Robinson remarks, "Hard to get away from, too, apparently." McCarthy, *Spotlight*.

[82] In a dialogue between Garabedian and Mike Rezendes (Mark Ruffalo), Garabedian argues why suddenly everybody in Boston, particularly the Boston Globe, is interested in the church by noting that a new editor of the Boston Globe is Jewish, an outsider. Also, he clearly indicates that they (Old

people based on classes, ethnicities, religions, and even between natives and non-natives. Unfriendliness, taciturnity, and aloofness are commonly used adjectives to describe Bostonians. For example, John Steinbeck comments on the people of New England multiple times in his travelogue of the US. He writes "the natural New England taciturnity reaches its glorious perfection at breakfast," and "an early-morning waitress in New England leads a lonely life," and "I don't think for a second that the people I had seen and talked to in New England were either unfriendly or discourteous, but they spoke tersely and usually waited for the newcomer to open communication."[83] This atmosphere may reflect a form of community solidarity among Bostonians and the city's prevailing culture of conservatism and reticence.[84]

If the depictions of Boston from literature and other mediums reflect traditional and conventional images of the city, some reflections found in popular culture show more recent and modernised cultural images of Boston, capturing how the public perceives the city. A funny sketch from NBC television show *Saturday Night Live* that aired in December 2016, a month after Casey Affleck's Boston and Manchester-set film *Manchester by the Sea* was released.[85] Casey Affleck, a Cambridge native, is well known for his Massachusetts background, along with his older brother Ben Affleck. The sketch roughly, yet precisely, depicts local

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Bostonians) are no better than the outsiders. From this conversation, it is assumed that blending into the Boston native as an outsider is difficult.

[83] John Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (London, UK: Pan in Association with Heinemann, 1965).

[84] The observation that people in Boston are perceived as rude or unfriendly can be readily found. For example, there are articles and columns discussing this topic. See, Stephen Marche, "These Are the 5 Least Friendly Cities in America," *Esquire,* August 21, 2015, https://www.esquire.com/lifestyle/g2346/least-friendly-cities-in-the-us/. In this article, Boston is ranked as the least friendly city. Additionally, Carlo Rotella describes a distinct form of unpleasantness in Boston as "bad traffic skills, bad manners, nastiness to stranger," referencing a scene from the Boston-set film *Gone Baby Gone*. See, Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 153.

[85] *Saturday Night Live*, season 42, episode 10, "Dunkin Donuts," directed by Paul Briganti, written by Chris Kelly, Sarah Schneider, and Bryan H. Tucker, aired December 17, 2016, on NBC, NBC.

stereotypes in Boston using the format of a Dunkin' Donuts commercial spoof concept video. With a full authentic Boston accent, the skit portrays the daily routine of local Boston residents, which begins with a visit to Dunkin' Donuts–a company founded in Boston and one of the most popular coffee and donut chains in the city. The skit portrays them enjoying Dunkin's coffee and donuts on their way to work. The humour in the skit emerges when Casey Affleck remarks, "You want to talk real Dunkin' customers? That's me. I'm like the mayor of Dunkin's. This is the face of Dunkin' Donuts right here," all the while holding a cigarette-half inside and half outside of the restaurant–and asserting that he is not technically smoking indoors (Figure 2).[86] This commercial spoof concludes with Affleck tossing a coffee cup at another customer's car. The guy who claims to be "the face of Dunkin' Donuts" and "the mayor of Dunkin' Donuts" himself, reflects cultural memes of Boston stereotypes, which is sometimes referred to as rude, aggressive, or unfriendly, including Bostonian's obsession with Dunkin' Donuts.[87]



Figure 2 Casey Affleck on *Saturday Night Live*[88]

[86] Briganti, *Saturday Night Live.*

[87] Briganti, *Saturday Night Live.*

[88] Casey Affleck portraying an authentic Massachusetts native customer of Dunkin Donuts for a parody commercial on Briganti, *Saturday Night Live.*

Casey Affleck's Dunkin' Donuts commercial spoof was not the first portrait of Bostonians in *SNL*. Before this sketch, there were famous fictional characters "The Boston Teens" (Figure 3).[89] Two fictional characters, Denise "Zazu" McDenna portrayed by Rachel Dratch and Pat Sullivan portrayed by Jimmy Fallon are a teenage couple who live in Lexington, Massachusetts with a strong Boston accent.[90] Both are usually and typically in Boston Red Sox shirts or jackets, as they presumably represent "typical Bostonian." Interestingly and obviously, this working-class couple has Irish ethnic background and an Irish Catholic as their religion. Through their fourteen appearances in *SNL,* they got married and have a daughter (Kate McKinnon). Their daughter is revealed in the latest episode (aired on 15 April, 2017) when the couple took her on a Harvard University campus tour, hoping she would be accepted. "The Boston Teens" shares a similar manner with Casey Affleck's portrayal of Bostonians. Therefore, for the audience, this kind of depiction–Irish American, Irish Catholic, devoted Boston Red Sox fans, and associated with Harvard University–in popular culture might seem somewhat cliché, yet it distinctly reflects how the public conventionally perceives "Boston" and "Bostonian."

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[89] There has been a total of 14 appearances of "The Boston Teens" so far. The first appearance was on 13 November, 1999. See, Saturday Night Live, "Hickory Farms – Saturday Night Live," YouTube Video, 4:03, November 13, 1999, https://youtu.be/7jpyXf6Io7c. The most recent appearance was on 15 April, 2017. See, Saturday Night Live, "Sully & Denise (Rachel Dratch) – SNL," YouTube Video, 5:09, April 15, 2017, https://youtu.be/mhFGdEwden0. Apart from *Saturday Night Live*, depictions and humour related to Boston stereotypes are also present in other popular television shows such as *Late Night with Seth Meyers* (NBC 2014-). See, Late Night with Seth Meyers, "Boston Accent Trailer – Late Night with Seth Meyers," YouTube Video, 4:51, January 21, 2016, https://youtu.be/rLwbzGyC6t4. Even events like the Golden Globes Awards ceremony have featured Boston-related jokes. See, MovieAwardsAll, "Golden Globes 2013 Opening – Tina Fey and Amy Poehler," YouTube Video, 8:13, January 14, 2013, https://youtu.be/F4rSKCXqEw0. See also, Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 154.

[90] Rachel Dratch is a Massachusetts native. She was born and raised in Lexington as her fictional character "Zazu", also, she created the Teens characters by herself with another *SNL* creator Tina Fey.



Figure 3 Sully and Denise[91]

3.3 Reflection and Representation of Boston: A Physical Image of the City

There are two distinct types of Boston cinema. First, films that are both set and filmed in Boston, and second, films that are set in different locations but filmed in Boston.[92] While these two types exhibit differing approaches to the city and distinct filmmaking processes, they can both be comprehended under the umbrella of "Boston Cinema," considering the city's inherent geographical significance.

In addition to the tax credit programme that Massachusetts has been operating since 2007, the iconic buildings and locations in the Boston area continue to draw filmmakers to the city.[93] In terms of location filming, these landmarks not

[91] Sully and Denise are representative of Boston natives, often seen wearing Boston Red Sox uniforms and Harvard University jumpers. *Saturday Night Live*, season 29, episode 2, "Sully & Denise's Birthday," directed by Beth McCarthy-Miller, written by Tina Fey and Dennis McNicholas, aired October 11, 2003, on NBC, NBC; *Saturday Night Live*, season 42, episode 18, "Sully & Denise," directed by Don Roy King, written by Chris Kelly, Sarah Schneider, and Bryan H. Tucker, aired April 15, 2017, on NBC, NBC.

[92] Some Boston set films were mostly shot in other places rather than Boston. For example, Robert Luketic's 2001 film *Legally Blonde* is set at Harvard Law School, but the campus scenes from the film were shot in California. However, in those films even most of the products were made in other places, at least one scene was shot in Boston. Thus, in this chapter, I only count as there are two types of Boston Cinema and do not count films unless the film is entirely produced in other places.

[93] For further discussion of the tax credit and related industry history, see "Chapter 4. The Political Ecology of the Cinematic City: Massachusetts and the Regional Film Office, 1977-Present."

only contribute to Boston's distinct identity but also set it apart from other cities, much like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the Statue of Liberty in New York City, or Cloud Gate (The Bean) in Chicago. In the case of Boston, certain places such as the Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Memorial Bridge (Zakim Bridge, Figure 4) and the Massachusetts State House have captured the attention of filmmakers over the years. The Zakim Bridge stands out as a more recent addition to Boston's landmark structures. Constructed in 2003, it has been featured in several films including *The Town* and *R.I.P.D.* (Robert Schwentke, 2013). The Massachusetts State House has also made notable appearances, in *The Verdict* and *The Departed*.



Figure 4 The Zakim Bridge in the beginning scene of *The Equalizer*[94]

Additionally, these landmarks are not solely employed to give Boston an authentic appearance, but they often carry deeper implications. In *The Departed,* for instance, the iconic golden dome of the Massachusetts State House is used as a symbol reflecting the ambitious aspirations of the main character, Colin Sullivan

[94] Antoine Fuqua's 2014 film *The Equalizer* begins with a shot of the Zakim Bridge, clearly establishing the film's Boston setting. *The Equalizer*, directed by Antoine Fuqua (2014; Los Angeles, CA: Sony Pictures), DVD.

(Matt Damon). The film portrays a scene in which he gazes up at the dome, conveying his ambitious intentions (Figure 5).

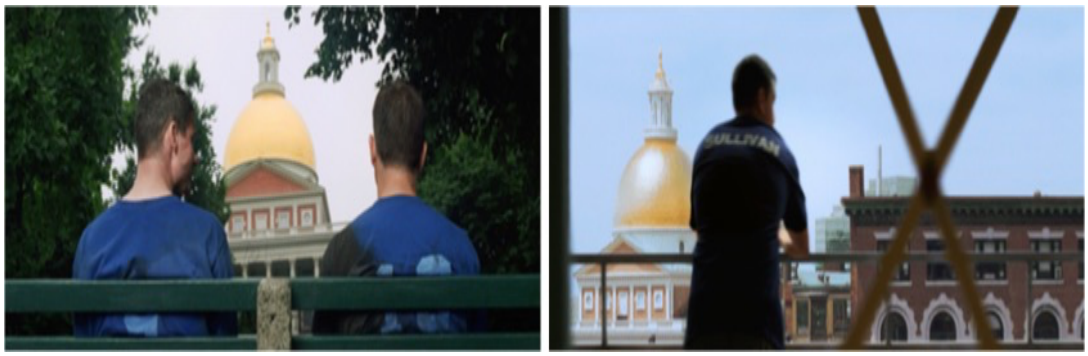


Figure 5 The Golden Dome of the Massachusetts State House [95]

Doyle's Café (used to be Doyle's Pub, Figure 6) in the Jamaica Plain neighbourhood is not a public building or a grand structure, but it holds authentic significance as a cultural and historical landmark that represents Boston. In terms of authenticity, places like Doyle's Café, which possess historical context and aesthetic value, frequently make appearances in motion pictures. These include *The Brink's Job*, *Celtic Pride* (Tom DeCerchio, 1996), *Mystic River*, and *Patriots Day* (Peter Berg, 2016). Once featured in a film, these places often become more meaningful and memorable within the city's context. The Café, which was opened in 1882 by Irish immigrants, was an already famous and historic mainstay in Boston for generations.[96] This establishment, formerly a pub, holds a significance that transcends being merely a café in Boston's history; it carries a deeper cultural importance. The identity and authenticity of the café have been shaped by the city's historical narrative. For example, this location was once a gathering place for the

[95] Scenes depict Colin Sullivan with the Golden Dome of the Massachusetts State House in the background. The dome is used as a symbol of his ambition. *The Departed*, directed by Martin Scorsese (2006; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2007), DVD.

[96] "Doyle's Café," Boston Preservation Alliance, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.bostonpreservation.org/advocacy-project/doyles-cafe.

Irish community, providing a space for individuals from various social classes, including Irish immigrants and the working-class, seeking employment opportunities. Subsequently, it transformed into a hub for politicians, serving as a starting point for their political careers and interactions with local supporters.[97] Given its association with Irish society, the café's appearances in films are often linked to Irish characters or cultural elements.



Figure 6 The historic Doyle's Cafe[98]

To further explore the geographical and architectural images of Boston, "the Triple-Decker" must be included. This architectural style not only embodies the housing history of the region but also sheds light on aspects of Boston's people. The triple-deckers are more than just a common type of architecture; they are a testament to the social history of the city.[99] Triple-Deckers, also known as three-story flat

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[97] O'Connor, *South Boston, My Home Town: The History of an Ethnic Neighborhood*, 45. See also, Jamaica Plain Historical Society, "Doyle's: The Story of American Beer, Politics, and Community," *Locales Jamaica Plain Historical Society*, March 29, 2020, https://www.jphs.org/locales/2020/3/29/doyles-the-story-of-american-beer-politics-and-community; Joey Garrison, "An iconic Boston Irish pub closes after 137 years. Residents fear for the city's soul," *USA Today,* https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/11/17/boston-irish-pub-doyles-cafe-closing-changing-city/2516547001/.

[98] Aviva Luttrell, "Doyle's Café, Iconic Political Bar in Jamaica Plain, Plans to Close After Nearly 140 Years, Citing Rising Costs," *MassLive,* September 13, 2019, https://www.masslive.com/boston/2019/09/doyles-cafe-iconic-political-bar-in-jamaica-plain-plans-to-close-after-nearly-140-years-citing-rising-costs.html.

[99] See, Kingston Heath, *The Patina of Place: The Cultural Weathering of a New England Industrial Landscape* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001); Kingston Heath, "*Housing the*

buildings, are light-framed wooden structures initially constructed to house immigrants, including Irish, Italian, Jewish, and working-class families, in the post-Civil War era.[100] From the 1870s to the 1930, the increasing demand for housing in response to the influx of new dwellers led to the construction of economical housing units that could accommodate multiple families within a single building. These triple-decker buildings allowed three families to reside on each floor. Moreover, their cost-effectiveness made it possible for even working-class families to become homeowners. For instance, one family would occupy one flat while renting out the other two to tenants, thus helping to cover the mortgage.[101] As a result, this architecture not only serves as housing but also encapsulates the essence of Boston's residents. The triple-decker is a significant architectural feature in Boston cinema, frequently appearing in films like *Good Will Hunting*, *Gone Baby Gone* (Figure 7)*, The Fighter* (David O. Russell, 2010)*, R.I.P.D., The Equalizer* (Figure 8)*, The Spotlight* (Figure 9), and *Spencer Confidential*. While triple-deckers were initially associated with working-class housing, this architectural style eventually became common among middle-class families as well, marking a transformation from its early reputation as "second rate and hazardous housing."[102] Ty Burr, a film critic at

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Worker: The Anatomy of the New Bedford, Massachusetts, Three-Decker," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 10, (2005): 47-59.

[100] Catherine Cloutier, "Boston's Triple-Deckers in Demand, Families Getting Pushed Out," *Boston Globe,* October 8, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/10/08/boston-three-deckers-remain-mainstay-but-bigger-buildings-are-rise/s15Oc6pXMXHe8sB2wL0UZK/story.html; New England Historical Society, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Triple Decker," *New England Historical Society*, 2020, https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/rise-fall-rebirth-new-england-triple-decker/.

[101] Madeline Bilis, "The Anatomy of a Three-Decker," *Boston Magazine,* August 10, 2016, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/property/2016/08/10/three-decker-anatomy/; Cloutier, "Boston's Triple-Deckers in Demand, Families Getting Pushed Out." See also, Al Larkin, "Return of the Three-Decker," *Boston Globe Magazine,* August 10, 1980, https://bostonglobe.newspapers.com/image/428526157.

[102] New England Historical Society, "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Triple Decker."

the *Boston Globe* from 2002 to 2021, even goes so far as to dub Boston cinema as a "Triple-Decker Movie."[103] This nickname or definition arises from the prevalence of triple-decker houses in Boston cinema. These houses can serve as characters' homes or simply as backdrop elements, but in both cases, they unmistakably signal that the setting is Boston. Triple-deckers also convey the idea that Boston comprises spaces for both working-class and middle-class residents.[104]



Figure 7 Triple-decker houses and Dorchester[105]

[103] In a discussion held during the summer of 2020, Ty Burr suggested defining Boston movies as "Triple Decker Movie." See, MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea," YouTube Video, 1:06:04, July 9, 2020, https://youtu.be/JcrD2FXFH7Q.

[104] MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea."

[105] Kenzie (Casey Affleck) drives into a triple-decker block in the Dorchester neighbourhood in Boston. *Gone Baby Gone*, directed by Ben Affleck (2007; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures, 2008), DVD.



Figure 8 Robert McCall (Denzel Washington)'s neighbourhood[106]



Figure 9 The *Boston Globe* journalists investigate in Boston neighbourhoods[107]

Prestigious universities located in Cambridge, directly across the Charles River north of Boston, such as Harvard University and MIT, are another iconic representation of Boston. The installation of these universities in films is a well-known symbol of Boston cinema, alongside other symbolic elements like Irish, Catholic, and working-class characters. In certain films like *Good Will Hunting* or *The Town*, these universities serve to distinguish one part of the city's social and cultural history from another–the "Old Boston" and "New Boston," also shaping the characters' personal environments.[108] These universities not only symbolise and

[106] *Fuqua, The Equalizer*

[107] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

[108] For instance, in the film *Good Will Hunting*, the characters Will Hunting, a South Boston native, and Skylar, a British student at Harvard who is soon to attend medical school at Stanford University, represent the juxtaposition of Old Boston and New Boston. When the audience recognises Skylar as a Harvard student, the film immediately establishes itself as a Boston movie, just as when MIT appears

landmark Boston but also convey the message "this is Boston" to the audience. For example, Harvard University, as the oldest university in the US and one of the most prestigious universities in the world, sometimes signifies the city's long history, authority, and credibility as well as those of the characters. Films like *The Paper Chase*, *The Firm* (Sydney Pollack, 1993), *With Honors* (Alek Keshishian, 1994), *Good Will Hunting*, and *The Social Network* (David Fincher, 2010) provide insights into how Harvard University and the city are perceived and appreciated by the public.[109]

Boston indeed offers a rich tapestry of film locations, including iconic places like Harvard Yard, where films such as *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, 1970), *The Paper Chase*, *Good Will Hunting*, *Legally Blonde*, and *The Social Network* were shot. Fenway Park served as a backdrop for films like *Field of Dreams* (Phil Alden Robinson, 1989), *Blown Away* (Stephen Hopkins, 1994), *A Civil Action* (Steven Zaillian, 1998), *Fever Pitch* (Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly, 2005), *The Town*, *Moneyball* (Bennett Miller, 2011), and *Ted* (Seth MacFarlane, 2012). Beacon Hill has been featured in multiple films and television series, including *Blown Away*, *With Honors*, *A Civil Action*, and *The Departed*. This "cinematic chameleon city" boasts its own geographic significance, with unique landscapes and architectural

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in the film at the beginning. Carlo Rotella briefly explains how Old Boston and New Boston are portrayed in *Good Will Hunting*. In the film, there are primarily two groups, each representing different neighbourhoods and character backgrounds. One group represents the Old Boston neighbourhood, primarily inhabited by Irish and other white-ethnic residents in industrial areas like South Boston, Dorchester, and Charlestown. The other group is associated with New Boston neighbourhoods, particularly those connected to Harvard or MIT. See, Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 163.

[109] Characters associated with Harvard University or MIT account for 10 percent of the Boston filmography. This is the second highest portion after so-called Old Bostonian characters.

elements.[110] Therefore, in addition to the cost-effectiveness that Massachusetts offers, filmmakers are drawn to choose Boston as a filming location.

In addition to its versatility as a cinematic backdrop, Boston's ability to transform itself into different places and time periods has made it a prime choice for filmmakers. The city can be easily converted to different places also different times like Alaska in *The Proposal* (Anne Fletcher, 2009), Oregon in *Furry Vengeance* (Roger Kumble, 2010), New York in *Bride Wars* (Gary Winick, 2009), and *Ghostbusters* (Paul Feig, 2016). It can also portray the mid-1970s New Jersey in *American Hustle* (David O. Russell, 2013), and the mid-1970s Sun Belt city of Miami Beach in *Black Mass* (Scott Cooper, 2015), and the late-1960s Rust Belt city, Detroit, in *Detroit* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2017). Moreover, it has been used as a stand-in for locations outside the US, such as Paris and Rome in *The Pink Panther 2* (Harald Zwart, 2009), Germany in *Shutter Island* (Martin Scorsese, 2010), and Japan in *The Sea of Trees* (Gus Van Sant, 2015). As Kevin Lynch described in his famous study, *The Image of the City*, Boston's somewhat European flavour, alongside the city's long history and the age of immigrants from the UK and Ireland, may allow the city itself to transform wherever and whenever filmmakers want to shoot.[111]

Boston plays roles even in films set in futuristic and virtual places that never existed. For example, Jonathan Mostow's 2009 film *Surrogates* depicts a futuristic world, and Robert Schwentke's *R.I.P.D.* is set in a fantasy world, both of which were shot in the Boston area. Regarding Boston's geographical significance, Carlo Rotella

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[110] Kevin Slane, "10 Times Hollywood Used Massachusetts as a Stand-In for Another Location," *Boston Globe,* August 28, 2019, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2019/08/28/10-times-hollywood-used-massachusetts-as-a-stand-in-for-another-location.

[111] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 16. Rotella also highlights that the city's age and multi-layered architecture offer a wide range of setting in terms of different times and places. Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 157.

points out that Boston has both "a visual distinctiveness" and "a layered versatility."[112] Additionally, the compactness of the Boston area, along with the geography of New England, the region offers various landscapes within an hour's drive, including mountains, oceans, forests, and urban places.[113] This accessibility undeniably contributes to Boston's geographic significance. A location manager for *R.I.P.D.* once described Boston as resembling "Universal Studio's backlot," with its unique blend of "obtuse angles and perpendicular dead ends and curves," features not commonly found in cities like Los Angeles, New York, or Chicago.[114]

Boston's diverse landscapes for location shooting are reminiscent of Los Angeles in the 1910s when filmmakers from New York relocated to Los Angeles due to its more favourable weather, varied scenery, and other reasons. The city's geographic uniqueness and its ease in offering a wide range of views make it an ideal choice for film locations. Lynch keenly observes Boston's distinctiveness, noting that "in most parts of the central area one knows where one is simply by the general character of the surrounding area."[115] This distinctiveness often plays a significant role in shaping the narratives of Boston-set films, serving as a point of division and distinction in films like *The Town*, *Good Will Hunting*, *Gone Baby Gone*, and *Mystic River*, which explore the contrast between "Old Boston" and "New Boston" or "Old Neighbourhoods" and "New Neighbourhoods."

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[112] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 157.

[113] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 157.

[114] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 157.

[115] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 22.

3.4 The Cinematic History of Boston: The Old Boston, New Boston, and the Varieties

How can we define the cinematic history of the City of Boston, and where should we begin?[116] Boston's cinematic history is intricately intertwined with the city's social history. The city's historical tapestry has been interwoven into the fabric of Boston cinema. According to the Massachusetts Film Office, the first Hollywood film to be partially shot in Boston was *Vanity Fair*.[117] However, it was the 1950 black-and-white crime film noir, *Mystery Street*, directed by John Sturges, that marked the first feature film predominantly made in Boston.[118] In this film, Boston police embark on a mysterious murder case investigation, aided by a Harvard University professor who is a forensic specialist. As the investigation unfolds, the film displays various Boston neighbourhoods, including Charlestown, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, Roxbury, and even Harvard University. This early cinematic venture laid the foundation for Boston's reputation as a prime location for crime and noir films, often featuring prestigious

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[116] When examining the city's cinematic history from an industry perspective, it's essential to discuss the tax credit programme that has made Massachusetts an increasingly attractive destination for filmmakers since 2007. For more in-depth exploration of the tax credit programme and the city's screen industry history, I delve into further details in "Chapter 4. The Political Ecology of the Regional Film Office: Massachusetts and the Regional Film Office, 1977-Present."

[117] Boston's cinematic history started in 1915. Charles Brabin and Eugene Nowland's 1915 film *Vanity Fair* was partly shot in Boston, and it is the first feature film production made in Boston. While *Vanity Fair* is the first film that was shot in Boston, Massachusetts, *Captain Courageous* (Victor Fleming, 1937), and *Portrait of Jennie* (William Dieterle, 1948) are among the earliest films set in the region. Since then, more than 160 films have been shot in Boston, spanning from the very first film shot in the Boston, *Vanity Fair*, to more recent releases like *Little Women* (Greta Gerwig, 2019), *Spenser Confidential* (2020), and *Boston Strangler* (Matt Ruskin, 2023). There are more recent films shot in Boston and released, including *Don't Look Up* (Adam McKay, 2021) or *The Tender Bar* (George Clooney, 2021). However, even though filming for these films took place in Boston and other cities in Massachusetts, some of them were doubled for other cities like New York or London in the films. "Made in Massachusetts," Made in Mass, Massachusetts Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mafilm.org/made-in-mass/.

[118] Paul Sherman, *Big Screen Boston: From Mystery Street to The Departed and Beyond* (Black Bars Publishing, 2008). See, book excerpt here, "Book Excerpt: 'Mystery Street'," Big Screen Boston: From Mystery Street to The Departed and Beyond by Paul Sherman, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.bigscreenboston.com/2008/03/book-excerpt-my.html.

higher education institutions like Harvard University. As a reflection of Boston's ever-evolving identity, Burr suggests labelling Boston cinema as "the Rise and Fall of Boston."[119] Boston films have consistently delved into the city's industrial, social, and cultural histories, addressing its chronic issues head-on and directly.

In 2009, the esteemed local independent cinema in Cambridge, Massachusetts, known as the Brattle Theatre, organised a repertory series dedicated to Boston Noir.[120] This marked the Brattle's second screening series focusing on films set in Boston. During this 2009 repertory series, the Brattle showcased renowned Boston noir films, including *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Brink's Job*, *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer, 1968), *The Departed*, *Gone Baby Gone*, and *Mystic River*. Among these films, *The Boston Strangler* (1968) is widely regarded as the first film to truly establish Boston as a prominent noir film location on a much larger scale.[121]

In July 2020, the Brattle hosted another repertory series that included a panel discussion about Boston and its representation in Hollywood films. During this discussion, some significant films were suggested as milestones in Boston cinema, responsible for creating and branding certain images of Boston and introducing the city as a cinematic location to the world. Particularly, amongst the early stage of Boston cinema, three films–*The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Brink's Job*, and *The*

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[119] See, MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea."

[120] "Print Calendar Archive, Fall 2009," Programs, The Brattle, accessed April 27, 2024, https://s3.amazonaws.com/nightjarprod/content/uploads/sites/192/2021/07/27135720/sepoct09.pdf.

[121] During the panel discussion in the Brattle's virtual repertory series in 2020, Ty Burr also argued that *the Boston Strangler* (1968) was the first film that truly changed the image of Boston. He analysed that prior to the late 1960s, the primary image of Boston, including Puritans, Brahmanas, eminent academics, the medical community, the Irish, Italians, and African Americans, did not exist as characters on a broader community level. See, MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea."

Verdict–stand out as breakpoints.[122] These three films vividly portray Boston's characteristics, including its geography, ethnicity, and class, while also representing the urban history of the city.

Besides the repertory series provided by the local cinema, Boston cinema has gained increased attention in academia, focusing on the relationship between cinema and the city. Scholars like Stanley Corkin and Carlo Rotella analyse Boston cinema by dividing it into "Old Boston" and "New Boston," with a keen focus on urban decline.[123] Corkin delves into the city's history and its representation in the Boston film, particularly those that capture the transition from Old Boston, characterised as an industrial city, to New Boston, a post-industrial city.[124] Examples include *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Brink's Job*, and *The Verdict*, and *Good Will Hunting*. Rotella, on the other hand, examines the city's cinematic timeline through pivotal Boston-set films that mark new eras in the city's cinematic history. These films include *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *Good Will Hunting*, which ushered in a new era of Boston cinema, and *The Departed*.[125] Each of these films represents a significant turning point in Boston's cinematic history.

Taking *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* as an example, both Rotella and Corkin emphasise that the first's portrayal of Boston places it at the crossroads between "Old Boston" and "New Boston." Corkin, for instance, draws attention to the

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[122] MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea."

[123] In Corkin's article, he clearly analyses the importance of the tax credit programme in Boston's cinematic history. For further discussion of the tax credit programme, see "Chapter 4. The Political Ecology of the Regional Film Office: Massachusetts and the Regional Film Office, 1977-Present."

[124] Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," 177-204.

[125] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 153-174.

significance of the Prudential Tower, which was completed in 1965. He suggests that this iconic structure marks the starting point of Boston's transformation into "New Boston," referencing the research of Elihu Rubin, who extensively examines the Prudential building and Boston's post-war urban landscape.[126] Rubin argues that with the construction of the Prudential Tower, Boston began its transformation into a new era dominated by what are commonly referred to as white-collar professions, including financial sector workers, researchers, scientists, and engineers.[127] Although the film does not provide a direct shot of the Prudential Tower, the fact that it features a view of the building makes *the Friends of Eddie Coyle* one of the films that symbolise the transition from Old Boston to New Boston.[128] Additionally, locations like the new City Hall Plaza, constructed in the 1960s, signal the city's modernisation and rebuilding era in the film.[129] By showcasing this specific place, the film captures a moment of transformation into the new urban space. Furthermore, the use of these highly localised locations gives *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* its geographical significance while authentically representing Boston. Also, similar geographical significance is shown in *The Brink's Job* and *The Verdict* as well.[130] Regarding this local location, Corkin particularly observes the use of "working-class urban texture" which "brand the city by socioeconomic type" rather than iconic

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[126] Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," 190.

[127] Elihu Rubin, *Insuring the City: The Prudential Center and the Postwar Urban Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 205-220.

[128] Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," 190.

[129] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 161.

[130] While *The Brink's Job* primarily focuses on Italian Americans living in Boston and uses specific locations in the North End, and Italian neighbourhood, the film *The Verdict*, with its Irish American protagonist, utilises South Boston locations.

landmarks.[131] This "working-class urban texture" is shown through Eddie Coyle's home which is in Quincy or Boston Bowl in Dorchester.[132] These real Boston locations are distinguished from other Boston films from the past.

Like many other cities in the US, Boston also experienced a population decline. In 1950, Boston's population was 801,444, but it decreased to 697,197 in 1960 and further to 641,071 in 1970, and by 1980, the number had declined to 562,994.[133] Taking *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* as an example once again, this film effectively depicts the significant racial and demographic changes that occurred between the 1950s and 1960s.[134] Eddie Coyle, an ex-convict recently discharged from prison, is a petty criminal and a member of the Boston-based Irish American gang. While he was in prison, many aspects of cultural and socio-economic environments rapidly changed. After his release, he finds himself a social misfit in the transformed post-industrial urban space.

In terms of population decline and post-industrial transformation, there is another explicit moment that captures post-industrial transformation, which is depicted more directly in *The Company Men* (John Wells, 2010). In this film, the main character, Bobby Walker (Ben Affleck), a white-collar worker employed by a shipbuilding company, typically looks down on blue-collar work. However, when he

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[131] Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," 179.

[132] Also, the main character's real Boston accent is another significance that *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* has. These elements–real accents, Boston locations which are not only iconic landmarks but also working-class and ordinary tastes–successfully brand Boston and the Boston Cinema. See, MassHistorical, "Webinar – Boston in Film, Program 1: From Eddie Coyle to Manchester by the Sea."

[133] "QuickFacts," United States Census Bureau, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/bostoncitymassachusetts.

[134] Corkin, "The New Boston and the Grip of Tradition: *The Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973), *The Brink's Job* (1978), and *The Verdict* (1982)," 183.

is fired from the company, he learns the value of physical labour. By portraying changes in Bobby's career and his evolving thoughts on labour, the film sheds light on post-industrial decay, particularly in Boston's shipyard industry, which came to an end in the late 1900s.[135]

Similarly, in terms of portraying deindustrialisation in late 2000, *The Town* marks a significant milestone in Boston's cinematic history. Directed by Ben Affleck, a Cambridge native, the film more directly addresses the transformation through its portrayal of "the cultural image of Boston." Affleck made it clear that he wanted to depict a certain image of Charlestown, one that no longer reflects its present reality but rather "the way it used to be."[136] While the film's portrayal of Charlestown may not be well-received by the neighbourhood's residents, who perceive it as a wild exaggeration, it does vividly depict conflicts, confusions, and gentrification affecting Old Bostonians, New Bostonians, and those in between.[137]

Some films mark important milestones in Boston cinema, while others emphasise their importance to the city itself. While Corkin and Rotella focus on the city's historical narrative and its integration into the cinematic world, the Brattle pays more attention to the variety of Boston films. Since the first Boston-themed

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[135] See, Phillip French, "The Company Men – review" *The Guardian,* March 13, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/mar/13/the-company-men-review. French, *the Observer* film critic, explains that this film gives "a nostalgic beauty to the post-industrial decay of Boston's former shipyards."

[136] In this interview, Affleck emphasises that while the film is set in the 2000s, its portrayal of the town reflects the ambiance of the 1980s and 1990s. See, Alan Siegel, "The Oral History of 'The Town'," *The Ringer*, 16 September 2020, https://www.theringer.com/movies/2020/9/16/21438005/the-town-oral-history-10-year-anniversary.

[137] Charlestown, the main setting of the film, is a neighbourhood in Boston. While the film depicts it as a crime-ridden area, in reality, Charlestown is not known for high crime rates. See, Billy Baker, "Robbed of Its New Image? Charlestown Hopes Not – Affleck's New Film is the Talk of the Townies," *Boston Globe*, September 18, 2010, http://archive.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/09/18/afflecks_new_film_is_the_talk_of_the_townies/.

repertory series in 2007, the Brattle has hosted three screenings, each with its own categorisation. For instance, the 2007 series "Boston Filmed" was divided into four groups: gritty crime dramas, including *Mystic River*, *The Departed*, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968); classic romances, featuring *Love Story* and *Next Stop Wonderland* (Brad Anderson, 1998); period films like *The Bostonians* (Janes Ivory, 1984); and cutting-edge independent films exemplified by *Between the Lines* (Joan Micklin Silver, 1977).[138] The most recent screening event followed a similar categorisation pattern.

The 2020 series "Boston on Film" briefly introduces Boston films in three ways. First, working-class and crime films include *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *The Town*, *Blown Away*, *Lift* (DeMane Davis, 2001), *Gone Baby Gone*, *Mystic River*, *Manchester by the Sea*, and *Knives Out* (Rian Johnson, 2019).[139] Second, upper crust and institutions films encompass *Love Story*, *The Paper Chase*, *Legally Blonde*, *Now, Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), *Altered States* (Ken Russell, 1980), *Coma* (Michael Crichton, 1978), *The Bostonians*, *Little Women* (2019), *Spotlight*, and *Between the Lines*.[140] Third, it highlights Boston-set independents and horror/science fiction films, including *Funny Ha Ha* (Andrew Bujalski, 2002), *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench* (Damien Chazelle, 2009), *Children of Invention* (Tze Chun, 2009), *Session 9* (Brad Anderson, 2001), *Knowing* (Alex Proyas, 2009), and *Godzilla: King*

[138] "Print Calendar Archive, Holidays 2007," Programs, The Brattle, accessed April 27, 2024, https://s3.amazonaws.com/nightjarprod/content/uploads/sites/192/2021/07/27134508/NocDec07_PMS280.pdf.

[139] "Boston on Film, Part 1," The Brattle, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.brattlefilm.org/virtual-programs/boston-on-film/.

[140] "Boston on Film, Part 2," The Brattle, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.brattlefilm.org/virtual-programs/boston-on-film-part-2/.

of the Monsters (Michael Dougherty, 2019).[141] The 2020 repertory series covers more recent films such as *Spotlight*, *Manchester by the Sea*, *Little Women* (2019), and *Knives Out*.

For instance, consider the recent Boston-set film, *Knives Out*, a comedy, crime, and mystery film that does not depict a conventional Irish or working-class neighbourhood. Instead, it delves into the lives of a wealthy suburban family in Boston. However, despite its unique focus, *Knives Out* undeniably belongs to the realm of Boston cinema. The story revolves around a famous New England-based mystery writer found dead in his enormous mansion. A private detective with a southern accent is brought in to investigate each family member. The main setting of the film is the historic Ames Mansion, situated within the Borderland State Park. This mansion, constructed in the early 1900s, is located about seventeen miles from downtown Boston, in the towns of Easton and Sharon, Massachusetts.[142] Its antiquated architecture has made it an attractive choice for various film locations, with appearances in films like *Shutter Island* and *Ghostbusters*. Beyond the allure of this renowned mansion, the film employs distinct accents, including the Boston accent, which firmly establishes its Bostonian identity. The director strategically uses accents by casting Chris Evans, a native of Sudbury, a town in Massachusetts within Boston's MetroWest region. Additionally, the detective, Benoit Blanc (played by Daniel Craig), speaks with a southern accent, in contrast to the rest of the cast who maintain a Boston accent. This accent juxtaposition provides an outsider's

[141] "Boston on Film, Part 3," The Brattle, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.brattlefilm.org/virtual-programs/boston-on-film-part-3/.

[142] "Ames Mansion," National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/places/ames.htm.

perspective while observing and investigating the New England-based WASP family, ultimately cementing *Knives Out* as a Boston cinema.[143]

In respect of the varieties of Boston cinema, there have always been various film genres, narratives, and characters. However, many of these films remained somewhat hidden until the late 2000s. Alongside films that reflect more traditional Boston themes, inspired by true stories like *The Town, The Fighter, Spotlight,* and *Black Mass*, as well as those based on literature such as *Little Women* (2019), Boston cinema expanded its filmography with works that represent more recent true events. These include films that depict a day of the Boston marathon bombings–*Patriots Day*–and the story of a survivor from the bombing–*Stronger* (David Gordon Green, 2017). Furthermore, films that offer a modern interpretation of specific Boston images such as *The Equalizer*, *The Equalizer 2* (Antoine Fuqua, 2018), and *Manchester by the Sea*, as well as comedy films like *Ted*, *Ted 2* (Seth MacFarlane, 2015), *The Heat* (Paul Feig, 2013), and *Daddy's Home 2* (Sean Anders, 2017), and sports films centred around the Boston Red Sox and Fenway Park, such as *Money Ball*, and films serving as various backdrops like *Knives Out* and *R.I.P.D.*, are also included. In this regard, Boston cinema is not solely defined by crime or drama portraying specific ethnicities or classes, but it has embraced a wide range of genres. Boston cinema has opened a new chapter that extends beyond the theme of urban decline, expanding its geographical possibilities in terms of physical backdrops and

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[143] Charles Bramesco, "Rian Johnson, 'Trolling? I've Had Slightly More than Most People'," *The Guardian*, November 30, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/nov/30/rian-johnson-trolling-ive-had-slightly-more-than-most-people. I have mentioned the Boston accent a couple of times in this chapter already. In terms of the identity of Bostonians, the Boston accent is indeed one of the important markers. As some television sketches like "The Boston Teens" and "Dunkin' Donuts" from NBC's *SNL* indicate, the Boston accent is a defining characteristic of Bostonians that sets them apart from others. See, Thomas Stackpole, "Who Gets to Fake the Boston Accent?" *Boston Globe,* January 31, 2020, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2020/01/31/fake-boston-accent/.

narrative settings. In other words, Boston is no longer just a cinematic destination for the Irish, working-class, or Harvard and MIT students; it has become a hub of Hollywood, offering a rich tapestry of historical narratives and contemporary variety.

3.5 Boston Film Location Tours and Boston Cinema

In October 1998, the *Washington Post* introduced South Boston as a travel destination. In this article, there is one interesting observation on South Boston, if someone tells people from Boston about their plan to visit South Boston, then they will often be asked, "why?"[144] This hypothetical situation implies the common belief that there was nothing to visit or see in South Boston. However, this perception changed in the late 1990s. After the release of *Good Will Hunting*, South Boston underwent a transformation in how it viewed its own neighbourhood, in which common sense expired in the late 1990s. In this article, Pegoraro suggests places where visitors can experience the real "Southie," from L street to G street, as well as a couple of historic locations such as Dorchester Heights and Castle Island.[145] Although some visitors still come to South Boston expecting to find a working-class neighbourhood like the one portrayed in *Good Will Hunting*, it is clear that South Boston has become a tourist destination (Figure 10).

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[144] Rob Pegoraro, "No, Seriously: South Boston," *Washington Post,* October 4, 1998, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/travel/1998/10/04/no-seriously-south-boston/7b8fe63f-c243-4d88-b77f-b41b1a154e69/.

[145] Pegoraro, "No, Seriously: South Boston." While this article introduces some notable places in South Boston and recommends an interesting travel route, it also highlights the two extremes of Boston. One of them leads to a wealthier and safer urban environment, while the other still grapples with urban issues, including organised crime, drugs, alcohol, housing problems, and the infamous gang boss, "James J. Whitey Bulger."

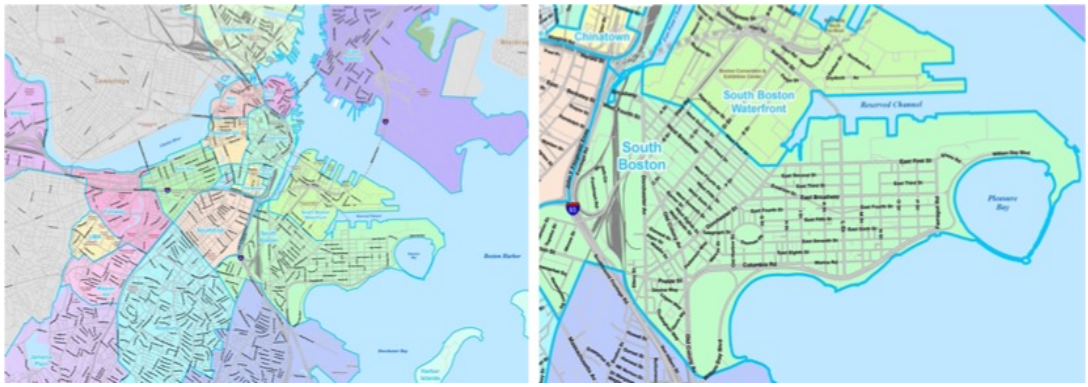


Figure 10 Boston Neighbourhoods Map (Left) and South Boston Map (Right)[146]

As of 2020, the Massachusetts Film Office offers information on three film tours: *Little Women* (2019), *Manchester by the Sea*, and *The Finest Hours* (Craig Gillespie, 2016).[147] In terms of cinematic history, among them, *Little Women* (2019) is a representative example. The film, based on famous literature, marks the fourteenth attempt to bring it to the big screen.[148] Looking at *Little Women'*s (2019) location tour map (Figure 11), the map highlights notable locations. One of the locations is the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel Grand Ballroom, which was used as a backdrop for the New Year's Eve ball scene in Paris. Also, the hotel's luxurious and elegant architecture has also appeared in *Bride Wars* and *American Hustle* as well.[149]

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[146] "Citywide Maps, Boston Neighbourhoods," 3D Data & Maps, Boston Planning & Development Agency, accessed April 27, 2024, http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/64c37bd1-21ac-4ec1-9e3b-5fdbcc135823/.

[147] "Film Tours," Made in Mass, Massachusetts Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mafilm.org/film-tours/.

[148] IMDb, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.imdb.com.

[149] Kevin Slane, "'Little Women' was filmed entirely in Massachusetts. Here are the historic, picturesque locations from the movie," *Boston Globe,* December 24, 2019, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2019/12/24/little-women-filming-locations-massachusetts. Interestingly, in both *Bride Wars* and *Little Women,* the hotel was doubled for a hotel in New York City.



Figure 11 *Little Women* (2019) Film Location Tour Map[150]

While Boston has solidified its reputation as a filming destination, it currently has only one or two private tour companies specialising in film location tours. In comparison to the Massachusetts Film Office, which offers information on relatively recent films, these private tour companies focus on slightly older films but include the most frequently filmed areas and renowned locations in the region. The most well-known and active film location tour company in Boston is On Location Tours, offering primarily two Boston film location tours: the Boston Movie Mile Walking Tour and the Boston TV & Movie Sites Tour. Among these tours, the Boston Movies & TV Locations Bus Tour stands out with extended itineraries covering most of Boston's iconic filming locations, including Boston Common, Beacon Hill, Fenway Park, Copley, South Boston, North End, West End, and Charlestown.[151] On the other hand, the Boston Movie Mile Walking Tour narrows its

[150] "Film Tours, Little Women," Made in Mass, Massachusetts Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mafilm.org/little-women/.

[151] "Boston TV & Movie Sites Tour," Boston Tours, On Location Tours, accessed April 27, 2024, https://onlocationtours.com/boston-movie-tv-tours/boston-tv-movie-tour/.

focus to Boston Common and Beacon Hill, which are among the most famous film locations and the most frequently filmed areas in Boston.[152] Both of these tours share a common tendency of prioritising the most frequently filmed locations rather than exploring the full breadth of Boston's filmography. Additionally, both tours tend to emphasise film from the 1990s to the early 2010s.[153]

Among the films that both tour programmes visit, *Good Will Hunting* provides an excellent opportunity to explore the cultural and historical geography of Boston. During the tours, tourists have the chance to sit on the bench where Robin Williams and Matt Damon sat in the film, allowing them to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of Will and his friends' neighbourhood. When considering the cinematic history of the city, *Good Will Hunting* serves as a compelling case study, as the film showcases various facets of Boston, from corner to corner. These corners include famous and prestigious higher education institutions that symbolise white-collar workers and the so-called "New Bostonian," such as Harvard University and MIT, as well as places that represent the working-class "Old Bostonian"–South Boston. By exploring all these landscapes of Boston, the film effectively maps the city's cultural and historical geography.

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[152] "Boston Movie Mile Walking Tour," Boston Tours, On Location Tours, accessed April 27, 2024, https://onlocationtours.com/boston-movie-tv-tours/boston-movie-mile/.

[153] The films include: *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison 1968), *The Verdict (Sidney Lumet 1982)*, *Field of Dreams* (Phil Alden Robinson 1989), *Glory* (Edward Zwick 1989), *Blown Away* (Stephen Hopkins 1994), *With Honors* (Alek Keshishian 1994), *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg 1997), *Good Will Hunting* (Gus Van Sant 1997), *A Civil Action* (Steven Zaillian 1998), *Next Stop Wonderland* (Brad Anderson 1998), *Southie* (John Shea 1998), *The Boondock Saints* (Troy Duffy 1999), *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic 2001), *What's the Worst that Could Happen?* (Sam Weisman 2001), *Mystic River* (Clint Eastwood 2003), *Fever Pitch* (The Perfect Catch, Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly 2005), *The Departed* (Martin Scorsese 2006), *Gone Baby Gone* (Ben Affleck 2007), *The Game Plan* (Andy Fickman 2007), *21* (Robert Luketic 2008), *The Women* (Daine English 2008), *The Company Men* (John Wells 2010), *Knight and Day* (James Mangold 2010), *The Town* (Ben Affleck 2010), *Money Ball* (Bennett Miller 2011), *Ted* (Seth MacFarlane 2012), *American Hustle* (David O. Russell 2013), *R.I.P.D.* (Robert Schwentke 2013), *The Heat* (Paul Feig 2013). See, On Location Tours, accessed April 27, 2024, https://onlocationtours.com/boston-movie-tv-tours/.

One of the tour sites that appears in *Good Will Hunting* is the Boston Public Garden, which is the first public botanical garden in the US and a historic place in Boston. This location has been featured in several films, including *The Boston Strangler*, *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *A Civil Action*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *21*.[154] Considering film locations, some places are reborn through the cinematic gaze, and as a result, they become more meaningful locations. Among these places, some are already recognised as landmarks, while others are newly identified or become significant due to their cinematic portrayal. The bench (Figure 12) in Boston Public Garden is one such case that has been reborn as both a landmark and a cinematic location after its appearance in the film *Good Will Hunting*. Moreover, the place has evolved into a memorial site after the passing of Robin Williams, who portrayed Sean Maguire in the film, 2014.[155] Film spectators now associate Boston Public Garden and the bench as the location where the two iconic characters, Sean Maguire and Will Hunting, had a memorable conversation.

[154] Just next to Boston Public Garden, there is the Boston Common, which is the first public park in the US. Both of these locations are frequently featured in Hollywood films and television series. See, "Boston Public Garden," Place, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/places/boston-public-garden.htm.

[155] Hillary Richard, "The Boston immortalised in Good Will Hunting," *BBC,* February 24, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20150223-the-boston-immortalized-in-good-will-hunting.



Figure 12 The iconic park bench at the Boston Public Garden[156]

Alongside the bench where Will Hunting and Sean Maguire share a poignant moment discussing Maguire's deceased wife, another nearby bench featured in the Hollywood film *Ted* (Figure 13). While these benches in *Good Will Hunting* and *Ted* are not the same, their frequent appearances in motion pictures add a special layer of significance to the place, even though it already held historical importance as the first public park or botanical garden in the country. Consequently, the city's geographical significance becomes more distinctive. Furthermore, an ordinary place transforms into a cinematic location, simultaneously shaping the city's geographical image. In this process, the place gains newfound importance in the city's cinematic history.

[156] *Good Will Hunting*, directed by Gus Van Sant (1997; Los Angeles, CA: Miramax, 1998), DVD.



Figure 13 The bench and *Ted* (2012)[157]

If an ordinary place is reborn through a cinematic lens, it could be understood as "one person's exotic is another's ordinary."[158] The depiction of South Boston in *Good Will Hunting* is particularly worth exploring. The US is a unique nation composed of multiple cultural groups, and Boston itself is composed of many neighbourhoods, each with its own distinct character and pride.[159] Therefore, examining how *Good Will Hunting* mapped the cultural geography of Boston is a valuable endeavour. While the bench in Boston Public Garden represents the heart of Boston (and Massachusetts), the L Street Tavern, where Will Hunting and his friends gather, embodies the character of a single neighbourhood–South Boston (Figure 14). It might be an ordinary bar for "Southie" residents, but for the spectator, the bar exudes an exotic charm. According to Stellan Skarsgård, who played Gerald Lambeau, South Boston was considered a rather dangerous neighbourhood at that time, to the extent that even his taxi driver was afraid to drive there.[160] However, this

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[157] *Ted*, directed by Seth MacFarlane (2012; Los Angeles, CA: Universal Pictures), DVD.

[158] Amy Lynn Corbin, *Cinematic Geographies and Multicultural Spectatorship in America* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7.

[159] Corbin, *Cinematic Geographies and Multicultural Spectatorship in America*, 11; Richard, "The Boston immortalised in Good Will Hunting."

[160] Janelle Nanos, "Good Will Hunting: An Oral History," *Boston Magazine*, January 2, 2013, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/arts-entertainment/2013/01/02/good-will-hunting-oral-history/4/. At that time, the infamous Irish Mob boss Whitey Bulger's story was still widely known, as Affleck

image of the South Boston neighbourhood underwent a complete transformation after *Good Will Hunting*, as it became one of the featured stops on film location tours.[161]



Figure 14 L Street Tavern in *Good Will Hunting*[162]

Overall, the location tours guide visitors through most of the important milestones in Boston's cinematic history. These places include a wide variety of locations, each representing different neighbourhoods with diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, class, race, or religion. This means that through the location tours, travellers and spectators can extend their cinematic experience beyond the screen as they grasp the flow of the city's cinematic history. However, while the location tours cover most of the notable and popular film locations in the Boston area, they tend to lack information about more recent films like *Manchester by the Sea*, *Little Women*, and *Knives Out*. Additionally, these tours exclude films that used Boston as a virtual setting or doubled for other locations, such as *R.I.P.D.*, *Ghostbusters*, *Detroit*, or the recent titles *Don't Look Up*, and *The Tender Bar*.[163] As a result, while these tours

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recalled. This notorious gang's story has been portrayed on screen multiple times, including in *The Departed* and *Black Mass*.

[161] Pegoraro, "No, Seriously: South Boston."

[162] Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

[163] However, one of the film locations featured in *R.I.P.D.*, Fenway Park, is included in the Boston Movies & TV Locations Bus Tour. See, On Location Tours, "Boston Movie Mile Walking Tour."

provide an understanding of the overall timeline of Boston's cinematic history and its significance as a narrative setting, they may not fully capture Boston as a cinematic backdrop, which is also an important role that Boston has played in the film industry.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with my personal experience, which involved realising the cinematic experience within a city. This experience allowed me, as both a spectator and a traveller, to perceive specific images and characters associated with one city, in this case, Boston, through films set in that city. Based on this experience, this study explores how a city's mental and physical images have been portrayed in various forms of media, the relationship between the city's cinematic universe, the city itself, and film location tours. To investigate these aspects, I conducted a detailed analysis of three main factors: first, how Boston has been represented in various media in terms of its cultural, historical, and geographical images, second, how Boston has been depicted in Boston cinema and how cinematic characters specific to Boston have been developed, and finally, third, how Boston film location tours incorporate Boston's cinematic universe, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in cinematic experience.

The study confirms that Boston has been featured extensively and prominently in various forms of media, including literature and popular culture. These appearances highlight Boston as a city with distinctive characteristics, often depicted with recurring themes related to religion, ethnicity, and hierarchy. Furthermore, Boston cinema demonstrates how films have effectively mapped the city's cultural and historical geography. This mapping process takes into account

various contextual elements, such as the city's racial composition, ethnic diversity, class divisions, religious influences, and historical background. These factors collectively contribute to the construction of a regional identity that is shaped by the intricate interplay of urban elements and layers. Kevin Lynch's assertion that "every citizen has had long associations with some part of his city, and his image is soaked in memories and meanings" underscores the profound relationship between individuals and their perception of the city.[164] Regarding this argument, François Penz and Richard Koeck add that the complexity and difficulty of defining the "image of the city" is not understood by one's single perspective or memories but influenced by "second-hand-source–oral accounts, photographs, paintings, films and actualitiés footage."[165] In this respect, second-hand sources like films construct one's perception of the image of the city along with one's personal memories and perspective. But at the same time, the film is also influenced by the constructed images of the city in the viewer's mind. In other words, the inhabitant, the city, and the films have a reciprocal relationship, and during this process, the film maps and reconstructs the city and its inhabitants in multiple ways, such as culturally, historically, or geographically.

Boston's cinematic universe has a more varied and deeper history than the film tours suggest. Boston's filmography demonstrates that its cinematic history is constructed by various film genres, narratives, and characters over the last several decades, all while retaining a significant "Boston-ish" flavour. This includes Irish American working-class and Catholic characters, individuals associated with

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[164] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1.

[165] François Penz and Richard Koeck, "Introduction," in *Cinematic Urban Geographies,* eds. François Penz and Richard Koeck (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2.

prestigious educational institutions or cutting-edge tech and financial companies, as well as crime genres, as seen in films like *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, *Good Will Hunting*, *The Departed*, and *Black Mass*. However, it appears that Boston film location tours tend to focus more on specific periods, such as films from the 1990s to the early 2010s. Furthermore, these tours place greater emphasis on the most frequently filmed areas, which can be understood as location-based tours rather than film-based tours. As a result, this chapter suggests that Boston's film location tours offer a cinematic experience for understanding the city's cinematic history but also have clear limitations in providing a broader and deeper exploration of the city's cinematic world from its beginnings to the present day. Moreover, the tours are restricted in their ability to present the city as both a narrative set and a backdrop for Cinema.

4 The Political Ecology of the Cinematic City: Massachusetts and the Regional Film Office, 1977-Present

4.1 Introduction to the Regional Film Office

One day in 2005, The Boston Globe journalist Ty Burr defined Massachusetts as "probably the only state with competing film bureaus."[166] As he said, in Massachusetts, there was a time when more than one film office–a private film office and an official state film office–existed, arguing they had more abilities than the others and competing with each other for the same goal. The competition was not the only issue that the Massachusetts film industry had. The political conflict around the regional film offices in Massachusetts has also brought changes to the Massachusetts motion picture industry and the films themselves. In terms of the political ecology in the Massachusetts motion picture industry, unlike other cities and states' film offices, the Massachusetts Film Office shows an inter-regional political conflict, competition, and a time of turbulence. This chapter explores Massachusetts as a film location rather than a narrative set. As a film location, one region and its motion picture industry get affected by regional politics, such as support from governors or mayors. And, at the centre of this regional politics, there are regional film offices. In this respect, the chapter investigates how the political ecology around regional film offices in Massachusetts has evolved and how this political ecology has affected the Massachusetts motion picture industry and films themselves. Furthermore, I argue

[166] Ty Burr, "Reel Boston," *The Boston Globe,* February 17, 2005, http://archive.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2005/02/27/reel_boston/.

that one region's political ecology is directly linked to the region's motion picture industry and films. Before delving into this topic, some initial questions arise: What is the goal of the regional film office? Why do regions need a regional film office, and what kind of abilities do they require? To answer these questions, it is necessary to first explore the history of regional film offices in the US, as it sheds light on the role of these offices.

The history of the regional film office in the US began in the late 1940s when the first regional film office was launched in Moab, Utah.[167] It was a decision responding to the needs of new professions who could help filmmakers and productions seeking new locations out of Los Angeles, California for shooting. Over the 1980s, launching regional film offices became a phenomenon as part of the effort of American cities' rejuvenation plans. For example, Paul Swann's case study of the Greater Philadelphia Film Office shows the city's rejuvenation plan after the late 1990s. Through this case, the role of the regional film office can be understood.

Paul Swann particularly focusses on the regional film office and its economic advantages in attracting film production for the American cities.[168] He observes that American cities must prepare their fate in the post-Fordist era by quoting Peter Wollen's apocalyptical characterisation, stating that post-Fordist cities are characterised by "de-industrialization, casual and freelance employment, large-scale immigration, the privatization of welfare, and social polarization."[169] In the context of these characteristics of the new era, film production, as a cultural product

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[167] "The History of AFCI," Association of Film Commissioners International, accessed April 27, 2024, https://afci.org/about-afci-2/#afci-history. Since the late-1930s, there were voices that wanting a local government liaison for coordinating location shooting.

[168] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 88-98.

[169] Quoted in Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 88.

displaying a hybrid form of goods (traditional physical manufacture) and services (personalised transactions and information), serves as a worthy economic model to explore at the state and city level in these post-Fordist American cities.[170] Many US cities turned their attention to cultural production as part of their preparation for transforming into a post-Fordist city, and this preparation includes launching regional film offices.

In terms of the economic advantage of the regional film office within the city, Philadelphia and its film office show the effect clearly. Philadelphia, which experienced population and manufacturing jobs decline since 1950, has undergone a transformation following Pennsylvania's cultural advocacy efforts, including the work of Philadelphia's Greater Philadelphia Film Office.[171] In short, the Greater Philadelphia Film Office has brought significant economic impact to Philadelphia by attracting film productions. For example, it resulted in 150 million dollars of expenditure between 1992 and 1999, and a regional economic impact of twenty-two million dollars in 1999 alone.[172] The Greater Philadelphia Film Office case highlights the value of film productions on location and the crucial role of the film office within the city. Alongside the mentioned figures above, the attraction of location shooting is valuable enough to capture the interest of American cities, as there is no need to spend significant amounts of money or make any physical

[170] Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," 323-339.

[171] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 88-98.

[172] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 90-91.

investments, such as constructing a new building, to attract filmmakers, as film production itself brings substantial local economic impact.[173]

Then, how does the regional film office attract film productions and what is their role? When a film production comes to a city, it is required to use local services and facilities, hire local workers, and spend money in the location. In this process, the regional film office plays a role as an agency that assists the film production by granting access to public facilities and properties, as well as connecting the production to local unions, which are some of the most helpful roles of the regional film office.[174] Furthermore, as part of their responsibilities, film offices now maintain their own databases, including location information, a photo archive, filmography, casting calls, and a list of useful contacts that aid in location shooting. Through these efforts cities are transformed into film studios. For instance, Jonathan Demme's 1993 film *Philadelphia* was entirely shot in the city of Philadelphia.[175]

Constructing this infrastructure also provides cities with benefits, including the creation of more jobs and increased expenditure within the city. For example, another Jonathan Demme's 1998 film *Beloved* generated between fifty and seventy-five steady employment opportunities for eight months, while M. Night Shyamalan's 1999 film *The Sixth Sense* created about thirty employment for three months.[176] One

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[173] Furthermore, a film shoot does not create any harmless by-products; it only injects vibrant capital into local labour and the economy. See, Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 91.

[174] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 91.

[175] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 88-98; "Filmography," Filming in Philly, Greater Philadelphia Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://film.org/filming-in-philly/filmography/.

[176] However, Swann points out that film offices rely on budget figures provided from the production, also there are several formulae that calculate the economic benefits. Thus, this seems to be difficult to compute the exact economic value of each film production. Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 93-94.

of the significant advantages of location shooting is that it advertises the city, potentially establishing it as a brand and boosting tourism. Swann provides another example, the American TV series *Hawaii Five-O* (CBS, 1968-1980) and its enduring promotional value. Even though this TV series aired more than twenty-five years ago, it still promotes Hawaii.[177] Additionally, films can sometimes change the image of a city, as noted by the Head of the Illinois Film Office, who stated that Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* changed Philadelphia's image from negative to positive.[178]

4.2 Evolving the Political Ecology of the Regional Film Office

One aspect to be considered regarding the works of regional film offices and their political characteristic is the fact that film shoots on location bring a lot of economic value. As a result, the efforts to attract media production have become highly competitive. "Runaway production," the phenomenon of leaving Los Angeles for aesthetic, economic, or other reasons, once involved relocating shoots to cities within the US, instead of Los Angeles or California. However, since the early 1980s, the scope of runaway production has expanded. In the past, cities within the US competed amongst themselves during the 1980s and later with Canada in the 1990s.[179] However, nowadays, location contests have expanded to an international

[177] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 94.

[178] Quoted in Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 94.

[179] If "runaway production" indicated on-location shooting in the US during the early 1980s, the concept evolved to an international level after Canada adopted the model of the US media production industry. Susan Christopherson, "Divide and Conquer: Regional Competition in a Concentrated Media Industry," in *Contracting Out Hollywood: Runaway Productions and Foreign Location Shooting,* eds. Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 21-40; Chris Lukinbeal, "Runaway Hollywood: Cold Mountain, Romania," *Erdkunde* 60, 4 (2006): 337-345, https://doi.org/10.3112/erdkunde.2006.04.04.

level. This essentially means that film offices in the US have joined the global competition, not only regionally competing with other cities within the US.

Anthony Minghella's 2003 film *Cold Mountain* exemplifies a runaway production case and highlights the dedicated work of the film office in attracting film production behind the scenes. When the film's rights to Charles Frazier's the *New York Times* bestselling novel *Cold Mountain* was sold to United Artists (owned by Metro Goldwyn Mayer - MGM) in 1997, North Carolina became the prime choice for the film's setting, as the original setting of the novel is North Carolina. North Carolina's regional film office invested significant effort in this production right from the very early stage of pre-production. For example, even the highest levels of the North Carolina state government reached out to the studio heads.[180] The North Carolina Film Office made efforts over a span of five years to bring *Cold Mountain* to North Carolina. However, during that period, significant changes took place, including a deal between United Artists (MGM) and Miramax. Most notably, a mere three weeks before the scheduled start of filming *Cold Mountain* in July 2002, MGM pulled out the project due to concerns about its profitability.[181] Alongside those production deals, there was another significant change: Miramax chose to relocate their production to Romania. This decision was driven by two main factors. First, the unique regional characteristics of Romania, and second, the cost-effectiveness of Romanian labour.[182] The production argued that the geographic conditions of North Carolina did not align with their requirements, whereas Romania had what they

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[180] David Fellerath, "North Carolina Gets Its Close-Up," *INDY Week*, December 17, 2003, https://indyweek.com/news/north-carolina-gets-close-up/.

[181] Sharon Waxman, "The Civil War Is a Risky Business: Miramax's Bet on 'Cold Mountain'," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2003, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/17/movies/the-civil-war-is-a-risky-business-miramax-s-bet-on-cold-mountain.html.

[182] Fellerath, "North Carolina Gets Its Close-Up."

needed.[183] Furthermore, according to Bill Arnold, the director of the North Carolina Film Office, Miramax informed him that filming in Romania would result in a cost savings of twelve million dollars.[184] To economise on the budget, Romania was selected as the production location due to lower labour costs, similar to one of the reasons Canada was chosen for production locations in the 1990s.[185] The *Cold Mountain* case highlights the rapidly changing nature of location contests and the enthusiastic movements surrounding such competitions.[186] In this competition, regional film offices effectively market their locations to decision-makers in film production, essentially treating their regions as commodities or objects.

Nancy Littlefield, a former president of the Association of Film Commissioners, states, the film commission serves as the intersection where the realms or artistic expression, industry dynamics, and political considerations within filmmaking come together, regardless of its location.[187] Among the pioneering

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[183] However, against the production's argument, Romania also could not provide certain geographic conditions that the production wanted - six months of snow. Fellerath, "North Carolina Gets Its Close-Up."; Lukinbeal, "Runaway Hollywood: Cold Mountain, Romania," 337-345.

[184] Fellerath, "North Carolina Gets Its Close-Up." As an illustration, the average salary in Romania was estimated to be approximately 130 dollars. This substantial difference indicated significant potential for budget savings. See also, Reuters, "Films Romance Romania," *The Age*, November 18, 2003, https://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/movies/films-romance-romania-20031118-gdwra6.html.

[185] See, Christopherson, "Divide and Conquer: Regional Competition in a Concentrated Media Industry," 21-40.

[186] An interesting aspect here is that even though the production took place in Romania, the North Carolina Film Office still held certain expectations. Bill Arnold, the director of the North Carolina Film Office, expressed that since most people do not pay close attention to the credits, it is astonishing to note the remarkable resemblance between the Carpathian Mountains and the Mountains of North Carolina. To be noted, there was a case of visiting Cold Mountain after watching trailers for the film *Cold Mountain*. At the same time, there was another anticipation that the film would generate opportunities and benefits for Romania. The filming process in Romania spanned nine months and involved employing local crews and contributing to the local economy. See, Fellerath, "North Carolina Gets Its Close-Up."; Kara McDonald, "A Warm Reception on Cold Mountain," *Slate Magazine*, February, 2003, https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/17522.pdf; Mark Bixler, "North Carolina Got Cold Shoulder from 'Cold Mountain'," *Chicago Tribune,* December 26, 2003, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2003-12-26-0312260204-story.html.

[187] Quoted in Gary Edgerton, "The Film Bureau Phenomenon in America and Its Relationship to Independent Filmmaking," *Journal of Film and Video* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 41.

regional film offices in the US, the New York City Film Office is particularly noteworthy. The case of New York City's film office, established under the Mayor's Office of Motion Pictures and Television in 1966, serves as a model. It can be said that the city's film office laid the groundwork for how regional film offices should operate. Before the establishment of the city's film office, filmmakers who wanted to shoot in New York City faced numerous obstacles, including difficulties in obtaining permits and communicating with relevant professionals and agencies. Based on the filmmakers' experiences in New York City, a place once renowned for documentaries and art films, the reality of producing feature film turned out to be a nightmare.[188] Negative criticisms regarding filming in New York City aroused enough to attract the mayor's interest, especially during a time when new business solutions were being sought to address the urban crisis.[189] Under the strategies implemented by Mayor John Lindsay's office, New York City's film office started providing a "one-stop shopping system," which reduced filmmakers' tremendous efforts, money, and time for location production in the city.[190] The new system led to New York City becoming a popular filming location. In 1965, only eleven films were shot in New York City, but by 1967, 223 permits for feature films were issued.[191] However, the story of New York City's film office not only underscores the significance of regional film offices but also exemplifies how government

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[188] McLain Clutter, "Imaginary Apparatus: Film Production and Urban Planning in New York City, 1966-1975," *Grey Room,* no 35 (Spring 2009):61-63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20627764; Stanley Corkin, "Performing the New Economy: New York, Neoliberalism, and Mass Communication in Late 1970s Cinema," *Jump Cut a Review of Contemporary Media* 54, (Fall 2012)

[189] Vincent J. Cannato, *The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2001), 561-562; Clutter, "Imaginary Apparatus: Film Production and Urban Planning in New York City, 1966-1975," 60-61.

[190] "MOME Office History," About, NYC Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.nyc.gov/site/mome/about/about.page.

[191] Clutter, "Imaginary Apparatus: Film Production and Urban Planning in New York City, 1966-1975," 63.

administrations can influence both the regional motion picture industry and the functioning of regional film offices.[192]

Similar to the Massachusetts Film Office, which closed due to budget issues, Kansas City's film office also faced closure due to reduced funding for film productions. After the closure of the city's film office, local film industry professionals in Kansas City came together and functioned as independent film officers.[193] This all-volunteer film office group of Greater Kansas City understood the importance and the operational aspects of film offices' works. For example, Heather Laird, a veteran casting director in the city and a former President of this non-profit film commission said, "You need someone who is regularly reading the entertainment industry trade magazines like the *Hollywood Reporter*, so you can see what's going on well in advance," and "that's how you know when producers from Los Angeles or New York are looking to shoot a commercial, movie, or TV show in the area."[194] Additionally, there was a substantial demand for information for shooting in Kansas City. Russ Hadley, a former chairman of the film commission, mentioned receiving numerous calls from people inquiring about locations, regulations, and other related matters.[195] However, at the same time, it demonstrates

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[192] For more story about the New York City Film Office, see Webb, *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City*, 75-81; Webb, "Made in New York: Film Production, the City Government, and Public Protest in the Koch Era," in *The City in American Cinema: Film Postindustrial Culture*, eds. Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019), 83-124.

[193] Lynn Horsley, "With Funds Restored, Kansas City's Film Office Will Roll Again," *The Kansas City Star*, April 7, 2014, https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article344411/With-funds-restored-Kansas-City's-film-office-will-roll-again.html. Interestingly, following the closure of the Massachusetts Film Office, Robin Dawson established a private regional film bureau, similar to the situation with Kansas City's film office.

[194] Quoted in C.J. Janovy, "Now That Kansas City Has a Film Office, Maybe Directors Will Film Here," *KRUR NPR in Kansas City*, October 16, 2014, https://www.kcur.org/show/central-standard/2014-10-16/now-that-kansas-city-has-a-film-office-maybe-directors-will-film-here#stream/0.

[195] Horsley, "With Funds Restored, Kansas City's Film Office Will Roll Again."

that maintaining a private film office representing the region without any full-time officer is very challenging. During that period, the non-profit film office collaborated with the Missouri Film Office, assisting them for almost ten years. However, when the state closed its film office in 2010, Kansas City lost its presence in the Hollywood film industry.[196] In the absence of an official regional film office during this time, Laird argues that Kansas City could have potentially gained millions of dollars in economic benefits by attracting major Hollywood film productions.[197] Taking an example from Philippe Falardeau's 2014 film *The Good Lie*, although its story is set in Kansas City, the majority of the shooting actually took place in Atlanta, Georgia.[198] Despite the organisation of professional volunteers, the potential to attract several film productions disappeared due to government politics and administrative issues.

Here is another example from a different place in the US, the Iowa State Film Office underwent a suspension of its film programme in 2009. Iowa used to attract many major film productions through one of the most aggressive tax incentive programmes in the country. However, after a huge corruption scandal came to light, Governor Chet Culver suspended the film programme. Afterward, Tom Wheeler, the head of the state's film office, along with several top state officials, was dismissed, and subsequently, the film office was shut down.[199] Furthermore, the Iowa state

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[196] Nathan Koob, "You Don't Have to Call Us Home, But Please Stay Here: The City Film Commission," in *The City in American Cinema: Film Postindustrial Culture*, eds. Johan Andersson and Lawrence Webb (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2019), 140-146.

[197] Koob, "You Don't Have to Call Us Home, But Please Stay Here: The City Film Commission," 145.

[198] Janovy, "Now That Kansas City Has a Film Office, Maybe Directors Will Film Here."

[199] Ryan J. Foley, "Iowa Pays London Firm $450,000 to Ditch Movies," *The Washington Times*, July 16, 2011, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jul/16/iowa-pays-london-firm-450000-to-ditch-movies/.

cancelled several film productions that were previously scheduled. As a result of these cancellations, the state paid 450,000 dollars to London-based films production company Midsummer Films, which had originally planned to conduct location shooting for six films in Iowa.[200] Despite the opening of a new state media production office in Iowa, it is evident that the corruption scandal, including Wheeler's misuse of the state film tax credit (such as filmmakers using the funds to purchase luxury vehicles), resulted in a decline in the Iowa motion picture industry.[201] The Iowa State Film Office case illustrates the unforeseen circumstances that can arise around regional film offices, including different perspectives that governors and other legislators hold regarding the local film industries and their value.

The cultural politics surrounding location production competition are complex, involving many stakeholders such as those centralised in Hollywood, and skilled motion picture industry labour, local labour, film production companies, transnational firms, and governments. As I mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter, starting from the late 1960s, cities and states across the US began competing. And from the 1980s and continuing through the 1990s, the US cities (and even the country itself) began competing with Canada. Behind this competition, policy changes by both the Canadian government and the US government fostered the competition for filming locations.[202] For example, since the 1990s, the Canadian government began investing significant effort in training and nurturing a skilled

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[200] Foley, "Iowa Pays London Firm $450,000 to Ditch Movies."

[201] Richard Verrier, "Iowa Film Tax Credit Program Racked by Scandal," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2011, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2011-jan-19-la-fi-ct-onlocation-20110119-story.html; Marty Knepper and John Lawrence, *The Book of Iowa Films* (Berkeley, CA, and Sioux City, IA: The Book of Iowa Film Press, 2014), 23-24.

[202] Christopherson, "Divide and Conquer: Regional Competition in a Concentrated Media Industry," 25-28.

media workforce through organisations like the Canadian Film and Television Production Association and Canadian Television Fund.[203] Additionally, both the Canadian government and provinces competitively offered generous tax credit programmes. Furthermore, Canadian media unions were more negotiable.[204] As a result, these policy initiatives led to reduced labour costs while ensuring fully skilled workers, which are essential for "below-the-line costs" in film production. This development made Canada a more appealing filming location than Los Angeles or even the US. With regards to this rise of Canada as a location, the Film and Television Action Committee, argued that "workers in the American film and television production industry have been substantially harmed by Canadian government film policies" and The Screen Actors Guild supported the FTAC's argument.[205] The competition for filming locations was fostered not only by the private sector but also by the public sector, as national governments and local self-governments established government-sanctioned film offices to attract film productions to their regions and generate profits. In other words, it is apt for the regional motion picture industry and regional film offices to become intertwined with politics.

So now back to the Massachusetts Film Office. In respect of the political ecology, this chapter will scrutinise regional film offices in Massachusetts from 1977

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[203] Christopherson, "Divide and Conquer: Regional Competition in a Concentrated Media Industry," 21-40.

[204] Christopherson, "Divide and Conquer: Regional Competition in a Concentrated Media Industry," 31-34.

[205] Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher, "Introduction: Catching Up to Runaway Production," in *Contracting Out Hollywood: Runaway Productions and Foreign Location Shooting,* eds. Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 1-18. This volunteer coalition was formed in Hollywood in December 1998 "to address the issue of the Outsourcing of the American film workers jobs." See, "About FTAC," Film and Television Action Committee, accessed April 27, 2024, https://ftac.net/html/about.html.

to the present day. To provide a brief timeline of the history of the Massachusetts motion picture industry, 1979 is the year of the inauguration year, as the first official state film office was launched under the state Department of Economic Development. Although the first film office was initially opened two years earlier under the name of the Massachusetts Film Commission, it gained greater significance as an organisation after receiving the state fund in 1979.[206] In 1994, the Massachusetts Film Office met one of the most influential figures in the Massachusetts motion picture industry, Robin Dawson, who served as a film office director for eight years. During her tenure, the offices adopted a more aggressive strategy, leading the state to become a more competitive region for location shooting. However, dark times came to the state in 2002 as the film office was closed due to budget issues. The period between 2002 and 2007 was the most complicated and chaotic, with two film offices competing for the same goal.[207]

Finally, in 2007, the official state film office made a comeback to the scene with a more attractive tax incentive programme. However, after four years, the office faced challenging times once again. Fortunately, in the same year in 2011, the state successfully reorganised the state film office under the leadership of a new film office director, Lisa Strout. Therefore, this chapter will delve into the political ecology of the regional film offices in Massachusetts, following a timeline divided based on the important figures in the state's motion picture industry and significant events. Additionally, the focus of this chapter will primarily be on feature-length film production. To conduct this study, public data such as state film office reports

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[206] Jones and Pacey Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 171-188.

[207] Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 442.

and previous announcement materials will be analysed. Also, newspaper articles from sources like the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Herald,* and the *New York Times*, as well as trade journals like *Variety, Deadline,* and the *Hollywood Reporter,* will be utilised to investigate the details of each timeline within the Massachusetts motion picture industry and its political ecology.

4.3 The Start of the Massachusetts Film Office: 1977-1994

The official film office in Massachusetts State was established in 1979. The first film office had originally been opened two years earlier under the name of the Massachusetts Film Commission. However, the office became a more important organisation after receiving state funds in 1979. It was operated under the Department of Economic Development, with Mary Lou Crane serving as the official film office director. The early period of the Massachusetts Film Office sheds light on the role of regional film offices, why they are necessary, what they do, and how they work.

At that time, even though some famous films filmed in Massachusetts like *Mystery Street* (John Sturges, 1950), *The Boston Strangler*, and *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*, Massachusetts had developed a poor reputation in Hollywood. For instance, a production designer of *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1974), Joe Alves recalled the filming in Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts as they had problems including the Boston Teamsters.[208] The illegal activities of Massachusetts' local unions, particularly during 1977-1978, became a widely known story that contributed to the negative reputation.

[208] Perry Eaton, "How Martha's Vineyard Became the Most Important Character in Jaws," *The Boston Globe*, June 18, 2016, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2015/06/18/how-marthas-vineyard-became-the-most-important-character-in-jaws/. William Bratton is a former head of Teamster at that time was found guilty later in 1982. See also, Nat Segaloff, *Screen Saver Too: Hollywood Strikes Back* (Orlando, FL: BearManor Media, 2017).

Notably, one significant incident occurred during the production of William Friedkin's *The Brink's Job* in Massachusetts. While filming *The Brink's job*, an incident involving a conspicuous payoff was exposed. The filmmakers, seeking to recreate a mid-century atmosphere in the North End, paid residents to remove their cars, window air conditioners, and television antennas. The news spread rapidly, as soon after, every resident in the North End decorated their windows to replicate the appearance of those items as if they had them originally.[209] Clearly, residents demanding money would be the filmmaker's nightmare. However, that was just the beginning. While filming *The Brink's Job,* three masked gunmen infiltrated the editing suite, stole the film footage and demanded money for its return.[210] As a result, in 1981, four men were convicted for crimes committed during the filming of Boston-based productions between 1977 and 1979, which included *The Brink's Job*, *Oliver's Story* (John Korty, 1978)*, International Velvet* (Bryan Forbes, 1978), and television series such as *James at 15* (NBC, 1977-1978)*,* and *See How She Runs* (CBS, 1978). The charges against them encompassed racketeering, mail fraud violations, and extortion. Furthermore, it came to light that these four men were affiliated with Teamsters Local 25, a local labour union belonging to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which provided drivers for motor vehicle equipment utilised in film productions during filming, based in Charlestown, Boston.[211] *The Brink's Job* ultimately generated revenue of eight million dollars in

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[209] Segaloff, *Screen Saver Too: Hollywood Strikes Back.*

[210] The New York Times, "Four Gunmen Steal Reels of Film About $2 Million Brink's Robbery," *The New York Times,* July 29, 1978, https://www.nytimes.com/1978/07/29/archives/four-gunmen-steal-reels-of-film-about-2-million-brinks-robbery.html.

[211] United Press International, "The FBI Said Today Four Teamsters Have Been Indicated...," *United Press International*, June 12, 1981, https://www.upi.com/Archives/1981/06/12/The-FBI-said-today-four-teamsters-have-been-indicted/6270361166400/.

Massachusetts; however, at the same time, it also tarnished Massachusetts' reputation in Hollywood.

Therefore, when the official state film office opened in 1979, one of its primary roles was to recover the relationship between the state and Hollywood productions, essentially acting as a broker.[212] This brokerage role involved mediating between labour unions like the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Screen Actors Guild, the Writers Guild of America, and the Directors Guild of America, as well as Hollywood filmmakers.[213] Once the regional official film office was launched and the office director was appointed, the state officially began addressing the longstanding relationship issues between the state and Hollywood, actively marketing the state to Hollywood film productions. For example, the office director, Cane, embarked on a marketing trip to Los Angeles in 1980, where he met with key decision-makers in Hollywood.[214] The efforts were successful, as the number of film and television productions made in Massachusetts doubled between 1982 and 1984.[215] Furthermore, Richard Rust, a former director of the Massachusetts Department of Tourism stated that film and television productions contributed 100 million dollars in spending to the state, and tourism saw an 18 percent increase in 1984.[216] In 1980, research was conducted to measure the financial impact of motion picture productions in the state. The research indicated that, considering the profits

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[212] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 179.

[213] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 178-179.

[214] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 179.

[215] "Massachusetts Film Office, "Made in Massachusetts."

[216] Fox Butterfield, "About Boston; TV Has 'Discovered' Their City, And Bostonians Aren't Sure Why," *The New York Times*, December 29, 1985, https://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/29/us/about-boston-tv-has-discovered-their-city-and-bostonians-aren-t-sure-why.html.

of previous years, the productions brought a steady growth of revenue, and it is anticipated that they would have a significantly positive impact on the state in the future.[217] As the numbers proved, the prediction came true. The Massachusetts Film Office requested economic impact research every two years since 1980, and according to the research, there has been a massive growth in economic impact, as shown in Figure 15.

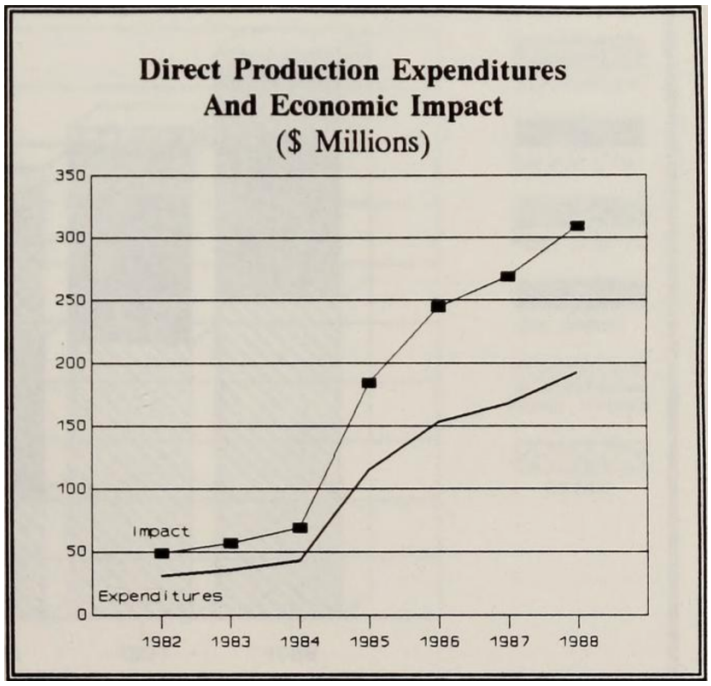


Figure 15 Direct Production Expenditures and Economic Impact[218]

In the context of luring Hollywood film productions to the state, government personnel display their abilities and demonstrate their keen interests in how cooperative and eager the state or city is to host the production. Even higher-ranking

[217] Edgerton, "The Film Bureau Phenomenon in America and Its Relationship to Independent Filmmaking," 43.

[218] The graph from the Economic Survey of the Massachusetts Film and Video Production Industry for 1987 and 1988, conducted by the Butterfield Communications Group, shows the growth of direct production expenditures and economic impact over the past six years from 1982 to 1988. Massachusetts Film Office, *An Economic Survey of the Massachusetts Film and Video Production Industry: 1987-1988* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1989), 1, https://archive.org/details/economicsurveyof00mass/page/n17/mode/2up.

personnel become involved in this endeavour. The office director coordinated another marketing trip in 1984, during which Governor Dukakis flew to Los Angeles and engaged with studio executives from companies like MGM, Twentieth Century-Fox, Tri-Star Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Warner Brothers, and Walt Disney, pitching the idea of location shooting in Massachusetts.[219] To attract film productions, it is sometimes necessary to relax regulations and create policies that reduce time, money, and effort, while also demonstrating the potential for green light, as these factors are crucial for filmmakers. In this process of enticing film productions, the film industry transforms from merely a cultural or creative domain involving film directors, actors/actresses, producers, production designers, and other creative staff to a realm that directly collaborates with legislators. Taking an example, a bill allowing actors/actresses to use firearms without a personal license during filming was approved in 1985, thanks to the effort of film office director Mary Crane and the Massachusetts Film Office.[220] In other words, close and fast cooperative work between film offices and legislatures is essential. Linda Peterson Warren, a former director of the Massachusetts Film Office from 1991 to 1994, explains that luring film productions in the highly competitive landscape of regional film offices requires the ability to deliver promptly, as she states, "it's a fast industry and if you can't deliver, then someone else can."[221]

As Candace Jones and Pacey Foster suggest, the state film office functions as a broker between industry stakeholders such as Hollywood decision-makers and

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[219] Quoted in Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 440; Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 179.

[220] Associated Press, "People in the News," *The Associated Press*, December 4, 1985, https://apnews.com/article/c310c16e97c2ee30848cfff8e535eafe.

[221] Anne Robertson, "State Film Commissioner Steps Down After 8 Years," *The Business Journal* 23, 8 (2002): 4.

filmmakers, as well as local labour unions, which the Massachusetts Film Office actively engaged with during its early years.[222] Amid the fast-paced nature of the industry's politics, the office aimed to resolve strained relationships, promote the state, and support film productions through legislative efforts. However, Massachusetts' negative reputation persisted. In 1990, when Richard Dreyfuss (who also starred in *Jaws*) filmed *Once Around* (Lasse Hallstrom, 1991) in Boston, conflicts with unions led the production to relocate to North Carolina, serving as a reminder of the state's negative reputation.[223] Again, in 1992, two Teamster members were charged with mail fraud in connection to their actions during the television production of *Spenser: For Hire* (ABC 1985-1988).[224] Moreover, during the making of *Blown Away*, the producers were compelled by James Flynn, the film transportation chief of Teamsters, to rent unwanted locations such as a condominium.[225] Due to the persistent fraud issues, the growth of film and video expenditures in Massachusetts only increased by 2 percent between 1991 and 1994.[226] Regrettably, despite the diligent efforts of the film office and some successes in Hollywood, the issues with local unions in the state's motion picture industry did come to an end; instead they continued for a prolonged period.

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[222] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 179.

[223] Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 442.

[224] Dave Wedge, "Boston Teamsters Have Long, Sordid History," *Boston Herald*, December 9, 2008, https://www.bostonherald.com/2008/12/09/boston-teamsters-have-long-sordid-history/.

[225] United Press International, "Teamsters to Probe Movie Shakedowns," *United Press International*, July 31, 2000, https://www.upi.com/Archives/2000/07/31/Teamsters-to-probe-movie-shakedowns/8480965016000/.

[226] Massachusetts Film Office, *An Economy Survey of the Massachusetts Film & Video Industry, 1994 and 1995*, (Boston, Massachusetts, 1997), 1, https://archive.org/details/economicsurveyofm00mass/mode/2up.

4.4 The Rise and Fall of the Massachusetts Film Office under Robin Dawson: 1994-2002

The Massachusetts Film Office became a popular destination for film productions in the 1990s, amidst strong competition from all film offices worldwide, particularly the other five New England states (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island), as well as renowned locations such as New York City, North Carolina, California, Florida, and Canada.[227] Despite the competitive environment, several notable films representing Boston were produced between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, including *Good Will Hunting*, *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997), *Southie* (John Shea, 1998), *Monument Ave.* (Ted Demme, 1998), *A Civil Action*, *and The Boondock Saints* (Tony Duffy, 1999).[228] In 1994, the Massachusetts Film Office encountered a notable figure, Robin Dawson, who took the position of the film office director from November 1994 to June 2002. For the eight years of her term, she emerged as one of the most significant figures in the Massachusetts state motion picture industry.

In this period, led by Robin Dawson, the office introduced fascinating services to boost the state's competitiveness and attractiveness. One of the notable features was the "Fee Free Location Program," established in 1994, which provides qualified filmmakers with access to the state-owned facilities and spaces, including state parks, hospitals, storages, and office spaces, free of charge.[229] This service was

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[227] Massachusetts Film Office, *An Economy Survey of the Massachusetts Film & Video Industry, 1994 and 1995*, 3.

[228] One of the most famous films set in Massachusetts, *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001), was actually filmed in California. Even the scenes depicting the Harvard University campus were shot in California.

[229] Massachusetts Film Office, *The Massachusetts Production Guide 1998-1999*, (Boston, Massachusetts, 1998), i-ii, https://archive.org/details/massachusettsprod00mass/mode/2up.

a point of pride for the state, as both governor and the film office director highlighted this feature in their invitation letters (Figure 16). Since one of the most critical factors, if not the most crucial one, in determining the location for film production is cost-cutting, the Fee Free Location Program is of utmost importance for potential film productions.[230] According to the Massachusetts Production Guide, the office offers various services, such as assisting with the permitting process for location requirements in the state excluding the city of Boston.[231] They also handle communication with local labour and agencies, cooperate with police and fire assistance, provide information on weather, climate, labour laws, and regulations related to the use of weapons. Moreover, their services encompass research assistance for directors, producers, and screenwriters, including script analysis, location scouting, and preparation of location packets.[232] As it suggests, attracting film productions is not an easy and simple job. The work of a regional film office typically involves navigating complex relationships. In the announcement from the Massachusetts Film office in 1998, Dawson credited the state's infrastructure to the support and efforts of the local community. She said that the success of Massachusetts relies on the collaborative contributions of numerous people and organisations, and also noted that airlines, hotels, and restaurants have excelled in offering studios competitive and budget-friendly packages.[233]

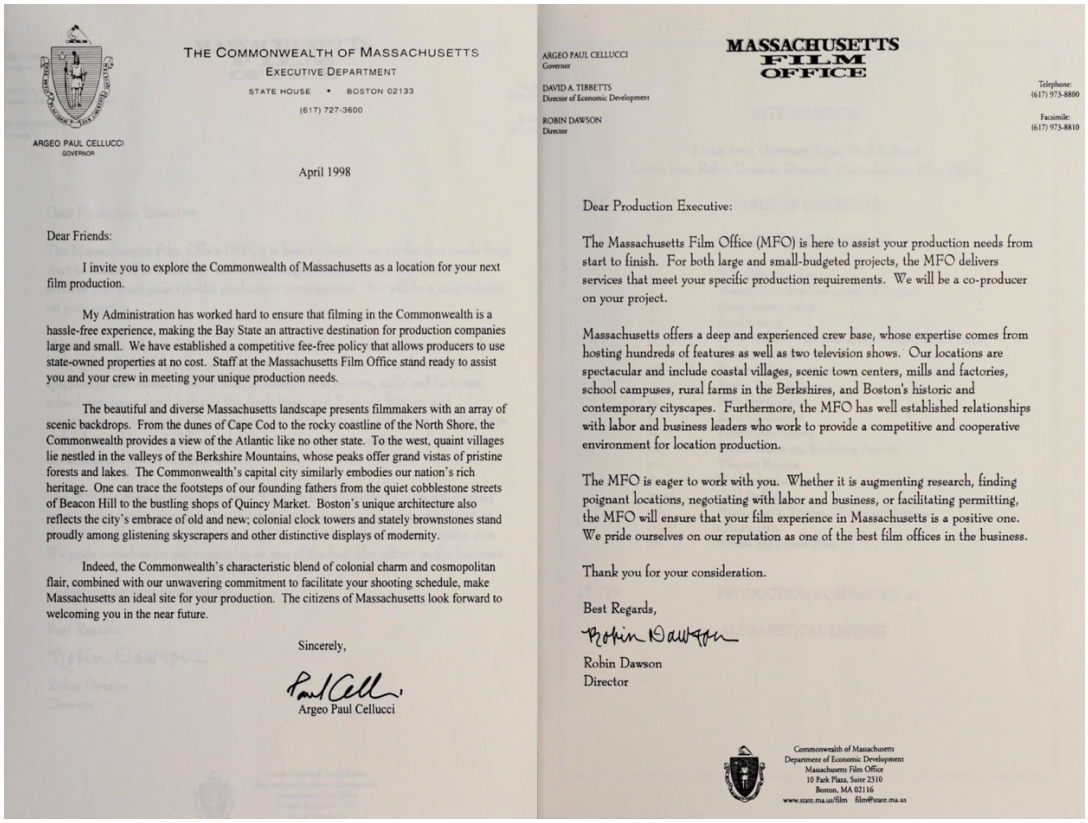
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[230] Carol Gerwin, "Making Movies," *CommonWealth Magazine*, January 1, 1998, https://commonwealthmagazine.org/uncategorized/making-movies/.

[231] Boston has its own film office covering permitting needs or relating requests for the city of Boston which was opened in 1994. See, Massachusetts Film Office, *The Massachusetts Production Guide 1998-1999*, i-ii.

[232] Massachusetts Film Office, *The Massachusetts Production Guide 1998-1999*, i.

[233] Massachusetts Film Office, *Attracting Hollywood Just the Ticket for Massachusetts: 1997 Marks Record-breaking Year in Movie and TV Production for State*, (Boston, Massachusetts, 1998), https://archive.org/details/attractinghollyw00mass.



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE • BOSTON 02133
(617) 727-3600

ARGEO PAUL CELLUCCI
GOVERNOR

April 1998

Dear Friends:

I invite you to explore the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a location for your next film production.

My Administration has worked hard to ensure that filming in the Commonwealth is a hassle-free experience, making the Bay State an attractive destination for production companies large and small. We have established a competitive fee-free policy that allows producers to use state-owned properties at no cost. Staff at the Massachusetts Film Office stand ready to assist you and your crew in meeting your unique production needs.

The beautiful and diverse Massachusetts landscape presents filmmakers with an array of scenic backdrops. From the dunes of Cape Cod to the rocky coastline of the North Shore, the Commonwealth provides a view of the Atlantic like no other state. To the west, quaint villages lie nestled in the valleys of the Berkshire Mountains, whose peaks offer grand vistas of pristine forests and lakes. The Commonwealth's capital city similarly embodies our nation's rich heritage. One can trace the footsteps of our founding fathers from the quiet cobblestone streets of Beacon Hill to the bustling shops of Quincy Market. Boston's unique architecture also reflects the city's embrace of old and new; colonial clock towers and stately brownstones stand proudly among glistening skyscrapers and other distinctive displays of modernity.

Indeed, the Commonwealth's characteristic blend of colonial charm and cosmopolitan flair, combined with our unwavering commitment to facilitate your shooting schedule, make Massachusetts an ideal site for your production. The citizens of Massachusetts look forward to welcoming you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Argeo Paul Cellucci

ARGEO PAUL CELLUCCI
Governor

DAVID A. TIBBETTS
Director of Economic Development

ROBIN DAWSON
Director

MASSACHUSETTS FILM OFFICE

Telephone:
(617) 973-8800

Facsimile:
(617) 973-8810

Dear Production Executive:

The Massachusetts Film Office (MFO) is here to assist your production needs from start to finish. For both large and small-budgeted projects, the MFO delivers services that meet your specific production requirements. We will be a co-producer on your project.

Massachusetts offers a deep and experienced crew base, whose expertise comes from hosting hundreds of features as well as two television shows. Our locations are spectacular and include coastal villages, scenic town centers, mills and factories, school campuses, rural farms in the Berkshires, and Boston's historic and contemporary cityscapes. Furthermore, the MFO has well established relationships with labor and business leaders who work to provide a competitive and cooperative environment for location production.

The MFO is eager to work with you. Whether it is augmenting research, finding poignant locations, negotiating with labor and business, or facilitating permitting, the MFO will ensure that your film experience in Massachusetts is a positive one. We pride ourselves on our reputation as one of the best film offices in the business.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Robin Dawson
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Economic Development
Massachusetts Film Office
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2310
Boston, MA 02116
www.state.ma.us/film film@state.ma.us

Figure 16 The invitation letters from the Governor (left) and the Director (right)[234]

With the local friendly service provided to out-of-state productions, the film and television industry in Massachusetts experienced significant growth in the late 1990s.[235] It is estimated that film productions generated more than one billion dollars in revenue in Massachusetts during Dawson's tenure.[236] Specifically, in Dawson's inaugural year of 1995, thirteen major films were shot in Massachusetts, leading to a 16 percent increase in expenditures on wages, equipment, hotel rooms, catering, and other expenses in the state's film and video productions compared to the previous

[234] The Massachusetts Production Guide for 1998-1999 opens with invitation letters from the Governor (on the left) and the Director (on the right) to potential film productions. Massachusetts Film Office, *The Massachusetts Production Guide 1998-1999*.

[235] Massachusetts Film Office, "Made in Massachusetts." For example, 1997 marked a record-breaking year for film and television production in Massachusetts, generating 77.2 million dollars profit. 1995 was also the state's second-best year.

[236] Nancy Gaines, "Making Scene," *Boston Magazine*, May 15, 2006, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/2006/05/15/making-a-scene/.

year.[237] Beyond the direct expenditures within the state, film productions also yielded a significant economic impact. For instance, *Little Women* (1994) contributed an additional fifty million dollars to tourism spending.[238]

During this period, the state maintained a strong relationship with Hollywood decision-makers. To further enhance these relationships, Dawson travelled to Los Angeles four to six times each year to meet with studio producers and directors.[239] Building specific relationships played a crucial role in attracting major Hollywood film productions. Bruce Hendricks, an executive vice president of Disney, mentioned that while preparing for the major production *A Civil Action*, the company initially considered filming in New York or Toronto, however, they ultimately decided to spend five to seven million dollars in Massachusetts due to the positive rapport they had with the state, particularly Robin Dawson, and the valuable assistance provided by the Massachusetts Film Office.[240] Such harmony among the local infrastructure, support from government and legislature, and the function of the regional film office makes the region an attractive destination for location shooting. This also means that if any of these elements fails in its function or will, the region may lose its appeal to film production decision-makers. Furthermore, it indicates that the regional film office plays a crucial role in maintaining an effective balance within the entangled

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[237] Massachusetts Film Office, *An Economy Survey of the Massachusetts Film & Video Industry, 1994 and 1995*, 1.

[238] Massachusetts Film Office, *An Economy Survey of the Massachusetts Film & Video Industry, 1994 and 1995*, 1. Regarding *Little Women,* the Massachusetts State Office of Travel and Tourism promoted the film in Japan, resulting in a noticeable increase of 19,200 Japanese visitors to Massachusetts. Moreover, over 20,000 additional visitors toured Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House, which served as a filming location for the production. *Little Women* was filmed during Linda Peterson Warren's tenure from April to July 1994, however, it was promoted and released during Dawson's term. See, Gerwin, "Making Movies," *CommonWealth Magazine*.

[239] Eric Aron, "Robin Dawson: Heading Up the Mass Film Office," *New England Film*, January 1, 2000, https://newenglandfilm.com/magazine/2000/01/robin-dawson-heading-up-the-mass-film-office.

[240] Gerwin, "Making Movies," *CommonWealth Magazine*.

politics and fostering their appreciation of the value of attracting film productions in the fast-paced industry.

Since 1994, the year Dawson took charge of the state film office, she demonstrated her ability as a regional film office director. However, despite her hard work and relatively successful outcomes, the relationship between her and the Massachusetts Film Office ended badly. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the issue of Teamsters' illegal activities during filming was a huge problem for Massachusetts during the establishment of the Massachusetts Film Office. In 2000, an investigation into the activities of the Local 25 of the Teamsters, situated in Charlestown, Boston commenced. The ensuing criticism directed towards the local union once again shaped the state's motion picture industry again. Here, it is important to note that the period between 1999 and 2003 coincided with the tenure of Acting Governor Jane Swift in the state.[241] Regional film offices are typically operated under the state departments, and the person in charge of the state plays a crucial role. During the investigation, Acting Governor Swift received reports concerning the unethical and illegal activities of the Teamsters.[242] Also, upon discovering Dawson's excessive and unexplained meal expenses, Swift attempted to fire Dawson several months ago; however Dawson managed to retain her position during that time, and it was later revealed that Dawson had been actively cooperating with the investigation against Teamsters Local 25, which included instances of intimidating film companies and resorting violence.[243] There was a small hope that

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[241] Daniel Kimmel, "Local Teamsters Under Investigation," *New England Film*, August 1, 2000, https://newenglandfilm.com/magazine/2000/08/local-teamsters-under-investigation.

[242] Quoted in Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 180.

[243] Variety Staff, "Mass. Film Office Shut Amid Vendetta Charges," *Variety*, July 28, 2002, https://variety.com/2002/biz/markets-festivals/mass-film-office-shut-amid-vendetta-charges-1117870356/.

the office could survive as the office received 25,000 dollars for operating four more weeks from the state's Office of Travel and Tourism, however, as of 28 July 2002, the Massachusetts Film Office closed its official state film office.[244] Behind this order, there was Governor Jane Swift's initial veto, which meant no more funds would be provided for Dawson, and the subsequent decisions made by the state legislature.[245] There were some arguments from proponents of supporting the Massachusetts Film Office, emphasising that luring film productions could bring huge financial profits, many times larger than the office's budget. Nevertheless, the state found itself without any film office. It was the time when the famous Boston-set film *Mystic River* was about to come to Boston.[246]

In 1994, when Robin Dawson was appointed as the director of the state film office, the city of Boston also opened a city film office under the city's Tourism, Sports and Entertainment Department to assist film productions seeking for filming within the city. While the Massachusetts Film Office oversees all film and video productions filmed in the state, the Boston Film Bureau covers the same responsibilities at the city level. The Boston Film Bureau offers services such as permitting assistance or communication support for local agencies.[247] However, during the financial turmoil, amid controversy, and conflicts faced by the state film office, the Boston Film Bureau unexpectedly became a scapegoat and was closed in June 2002, just a few months before the closure of the Massachusetts Film Office.[248]

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[244] Variety Staff, "Mass. Film Office Shut Amid Vendetta Charges."

[245] Variety Staff, "Mass. Film Office Shut Amid Vendetta Charges."

[246] Variety Staff, "Mass Film Office Shutters," *Variety*, January 25, 2002, https://variety.com/2002/film/news/mass-film-office-shutters-1117869010/; Variety Staff, "Mass. Film Office Shut Amid Vendetta Charges."

[247] Massachusetts Film Office, *The Massachusetts Production Guide 1998-1999*.

[248] Sarah Schweitzer, "No Cheer for Boston Films / City to Close Bureau that Handles Logistics," *The Boston Globe*, May 16, 2002, https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/No-cheer-for-Boston-

Undoubtedly, the absence of a regional film office leaves filmmakers without the crucial support needed to facilitate their productions. The support, such as a one-stop permitting system like many other competitors had, was no longer provided for the filmmakers. Regarding this, Dawson expressed concerns and predictions that filmmakers would become frustrated, feeling like lost navigators, and eventually start considering other cities resembling Boston.[249] After the closure of both the Boston Film Bureau and the Massachusetts Film Office, Dawson's predictions turned into a reality.

4.5 The Nadir of the Massachusetts Film Industry: 2002-2007

During the period between 2002 and 2007, the Massachusetts film office faced its most complicated period in history. During this time, Massachusetts did not have an official film office, which resulted in film producers and directors encountering hardship in finding proper guidance and support for facilitating their productions in the state. However, fortunately, there were some efforts from private film offices that helped the Massachusetts motion picture industry to flourish. Yet, these efforts also contributed to a sense of chaos within the state. In this context, Martin Scorsese's 2006 film *The Departed* is the best example explaining this particular period of the Massachusetts motion picture industry.

Before looking into one specific case, *The Departed*, some background explanation is needed. A former state film office director, Dawson deeply understood how a regional film office takes an important role in the cultural

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films-City-to-close-bureau-2822097.php. Upon the announcement of the closure of the Boston Film Bureau, there was an expectation that the Massachusetts Film Office would continue to promote both the state and the city of Boston. However, the fate of the Massachusetts Film Office turned out to be no different from that of the Boston Film Bureau.

[249] Schweitzer, "No Cheer for Boston Films / City to Close Bureau that Handles Logistics."

economy of the city as well as the motion picture industry. Three months after the state eliminated the Massachusetts Film Office's budget and closed the office in July 2002, she opened the Massachusetts Film Bureau, a private film office designed to support filmmakers interested in filming in Massachusetts.[250] Despite of her connections with Hollywood decision-makers and various businesses like Boston hotels, restaurants, American Airlines, and Enterprise car rental, as well as her efforts to facilitate film productions and her nine years of experience in regional film office sector, Dawson's film bureau was not officially recognised by the state as an official state film office.[251] The Massachusetts Film Bureau just remained as a privately funded non-profit organisation.[252]

While Robin Dawson was engaged in her marketing, scouting, and management activities, a strong advocate for the film business, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, appointed Don Stirling as the President of the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission and named Mark Drago as the Vice President/Executive Director for Film and Entertainment Commissioner in November 2004.[253] Before Stirling started his role, Drago served as the President of the Sports and Entertainment Commission, and he also had experience in the film office sector, which was a part of the commission from 2003. After Romney

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[250] Daniel Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion," *Variety*, March 20, 2005, https://variety.com/2005/scene/markets-festivals/mass-pix-confusion-1117919844/?jwsource=cl.

[251] The local business community demanded the presence of a film office, and Dawson received their support. In fact, the local business community even raised 50,000 dollars to support her new private film office. Mark Micheli, "Dawson Looks for Sequel to Defunct Film Bureau," *Boston Business Journal,* November 4, 2002, https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2002/11/04/story3.html; Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion."

[252] Dawson's film bureau received a 5,000-dollars grant from the state budget and was recognised as a primary film office in the state; however, it did not receive official acknowledgement, and another agency emerged to provide similar services. Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion."

[253] Boston Business Journal, "Drago to Head Film and Entertainment Division for MSEC," *Boston Business Journal*, November 8, 2004, https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2004/11/08/daily6.html.

established a quasi-film office under the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission to promote Massachusetts and declared it as the official one, issues arose with two different offices now working for the same role.

Dawson and Drago both argued that their offices were the best professional office to communicate with. While Drago was the person appointed by the governor, Dawson was known as the primary service provider with the support of the local business community.[254] Both Dawson and Drago had their strong points. On one hand, Dawson emphasised her extensive network of contacts in Hollywood, which included her twin sister and NBC Universal's executive vice president Rebecca Marks.[255] On the other hand, Drago argued that he had deep connections within the state's politics and policy circles, as he worked in the governor's office for several years.[256] While Dawson's and Drago's offices were competing, out-of-state film productions, including Hollywood decision-makers, were left confused about who to contact for information regarding filming in Massachusetts.[257] It is obvious that Dawson has closer ties to Hollywood, while Drago is more closely connected to the state legislature, both of which are important abilities for the functioning of a film office. In contrast, other state and city film offices consolidate these abilities into one official office and participate in the competition, whereas film offices in Massachusetts concentrate on their inter-regional competition.

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[254] Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion."

[255] Gaines, "Making Scene," *Boston Magazine*.

[256] Associated Press, "Two Groups Claims to be Bay State's Leading Office for Wooing Hollywood," *Sun Journal,* December 20, 2004, https://www.sunjournal.com/2004/12/20/two-groups-claim-bay-states-leading-office-wooing-hollywood/.

[257] Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion."; Joanna Weiss, "Lights, Camera, Politics," *The Boston Globe*, May 3, 2005, http://archive.boston.com/news/local/articles/2005/05/03/lights_camera_politics_in_pitch_to_hollywood/.

One of the most well-known Boston-set films, *The Departed* (Scorsese, 2006), shows how this period led the state's motion picture industry into a chaotic situation. *The Departed* is a remake of the Hong Kong noir film *Infernal Affairs* (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2002), which revolves around gangs and undercover police. During the pre-production, the writer of *The Departed* came up with the idea of featuring a famous Irish American crime boss from Boston, "Whitey Bulger," which subsequently influenced the decision to set the storyline of the remake film in Boston.[258] Troubles arose right from the very beginning. When Robin Dawson heard about Scorsese's new film production that might be set in Boston, she was the one who initiated contact with Scorsese's staff to discuss the state's available facilities and properties. After her initial contact, Carla Raij, the location manager of *The Departed,* reached out to Dawson, and Dawson became the first choice for *The Departed*. However, later on, Mark Drago became involved, and Patte Papa, the director of the Boston City Film Office, also entered the scene. Papa's office covers the City of Boston, so it was within their jurisdiction, but Dawson and Drago chased the same goal. Consequently, the situation turned into a messy competition. Dawson accused Drago of threatening Scorsese's film production, and Drago hired a lawyer in response.[259] Fortunately, in the end, Drago was the one who handled location scouting within the state, including the JFK building, while Papa assisted in obtaining a permit for filming in City Hall Plaza, and Dawson also made her contributions to the production.[260] Many film producers expressed their concerns

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[258] Jeremy Kagan, *Directors Close Up 2: Interviews with Directors Nominated for Best Film by the Directors Guild of America: 2006-2012* (Lanham, Toronto and Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 50-51.

[259] Weiss, "Lights, Camera, Politics."

[260] Kimmel, "Mass Pix Confusion."; Gaines, "Making Scene," *Boston Magazine*. *The Departed* obtained fifty-six separate permits and filmed in seven Boston neighbourhoods. See, Carol Beggy and

about the confusion, and they argued that the state should take steps to resolve it. This confusion arose because both of the film offices were funded by the state, with Drago's office receiving 450,000 dollars and Dawson's office receiving 5,000 dollars, making the situation even more complicated and chaotic.[261] For example, a famous Massachusetts native actor who starred in *The Departed,* Matt Damon, complained that it is "unclear which office to contact about filming in Massachusetts," and *The Departed* producer, G. Mac Brown said, "It's great if you have one point person."[262]

The film production spent more than half of its production time in Boston, however, despite the film being set in Boston, many scenes were actually filmed in New York. Many locations in New York doubled for Boston. For example, the police training scene was shot at State University of New York's Maritime College in the Bronx, and the scene where Colin Sullivan (Matt Damon) and mob boss Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson) first meet was filmed at Park Luncheonette in Brooklyn.[263] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, certain indoor scenes also took place in New York, including the interior of the police station, a movie theatre, and some bars.[264] According to Martin Scorsese's words, the location shooting took place in New York as New York had a better deal than Boston at that time.[265]

Mark Shanahan, "'The Departed' by the Numbers," *The Boston Globe*, June 15, 2005, http://archive.boston.com/ae/celebrity/articles/2005/06/15/the_departed_by_the_numbers/.

[261] According to Weiss, the Romney administration remained neutral in this battle. See, Weiss, "Lights, Camera, Politics."

[262] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 180; Gaines, "Making Scene," *Boston Magazine*.

[263] "The Departed," Movie-Locations.com, accessed April 27, 2024, https://www.movie-locations.com/movies/d/Departed.php.

[264] Kagan, *Directors Close Up 2: Interviews with Directors Nominated for Best Film by the Directors Guild of America: 2006-2012*, 79-80; Movie-Locations.com, "The Departed."

[265] Kagan, *Directors Close Up 2: Interviews with Directors Nominated for Best Film by the Directors Guild of America: 2006-2012*, 79.

Scorsese chose New York because they offered a better deal. This means that, in addition to the confusion, Massachusetts faced another drawback–its unattractive tax incentive programme was also a disadvantage for filming in the state. The state's tax incentive programme for qualified film productions had a cap of seven million dollars per production, which was not competitive compared to the incentives offered by other states for major Hollywood films. As a result, Scorsese's team for *The Departed* only spent six million dollars out of their forty-two million dollar budget within the state, and the production predominantly filmed outside of the state, despite receiving fifty-six permits from Boston and Massachusetts.[266] *The Departed* recreated locations in New York, using them as stand-ins for Boston, while also featuring actors and actresses from Boston.[267] In this regard, the financial advantages and ease of facilitating productions that a state or city offers serve as crucial background factors for selecting a filming location. Indeed, it can even influence changes in the content and aesthetics of a film.[268] For example, since New York City operated its own official city film office, assisting film productions by creating policies, minimising regulations, and providing tax incentives, filmmakers were able to save on their budgets and time, while also expanding their options.[269] As a result, Sidney Lumet's 1973 film *Serpico* was able to film in the city with 105

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[266] Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 441; Beggy and Shanahan, "'The Departed' by the Numbers."

[267] Kagan, *Directors Close Up 2: Interviews with Directors Nominated for Best Film by the Directors Guild of America: 2006-2012*, 79.

[268] Webb points out that ease of facilitating productions could impact not only the number of films made in the city but also the city's potential to be captured and broaden its scope. Webb, *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City,* 79.

[269] See, Webb, *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City,* 76-79.

separate locations spread across Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.[270] To reiterate, the regional film office had a significant impact on decisions throughout the production process, including pre-production and filming. In this regard, the Massachusetts Film Office also played a pivotal role in effecting changes within film productions.

Running a regional film office as a standalone entity is a challenging endeavour. In order to effectively fulfil its role as both a regional industry expert and a liaison with local government, it requires consistent financial and practical support from regional governments. Consequently, the stability and achievements of the regional film office have often fluctuated, based on varying perspectives from lawmakers. Film offices have brought about numerous transformations within the city's film industry, exerting influence over not only the quantity of films produced but also the content of these films. This influence extends beyond the strategies and systems implemented by film offices, often stemming from the competition between various city or state film offices. At times, inter-regional competition can even shape the creative and thematic aspects depicted in the films themselves. As explored in this discussion, the case of Scorsese's *The Departed* illustrates how internal political conflicts surrounding regional film offices in Massachusetts can impact both the regional motion picture industry and the film itself. The major conflict occurred when there were multiple film offices each claiming to be the primary service provider. Whether Dawson's office was more eligible or Drago's office, the situation needed to be resolved for the benefit of both Hollywood filmmakers and Massachusetts' local economy, as well as the motion picture industry itself.

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[270] Webb also emphasises that without administrative support, the process would have been expensive and complex. Webb, *The Cinema of Urban Crisis: Seventies Film and the Reinvention of the City,* 79.

4.6 The Reorganisation of the Massachusetts Film Office: 2007-2011

During this period, the Massachusetts Film Office took a big step forward. The concerns, dissatisfaction, and complex communication issues surrounding *The Departed* and filmmaking in Massachusetts prompted the reconstitution of the state's official film office and the amendment of the state's tax incentive programme to remove the cap in 2007. Drago was dismissed in the fall of 2006, and Richard Krezwick, the head of the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission, temporarily assumed the position as an interim chief.[271] Additionally, the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission worked to mend the relationship with Robin Dawson, resulting in the closure of her private film office and providing guidance for the operation of the new Massachusetts Film Office.[272] So finally, the sole and official state film office was reorganised, with Krezwick taking the head of the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission. Also, Nicholas Paleologos, a former Massachusetts state legislator with relevant experience in film and theatre productions, was appointed as the director of the new film office in January 2007.[273] In January 2007, Paleologos announced that the film office had prepared ambitious plans, including the implementation of tax incentives and a more aggressive marketing strategy. Additionally, the office had established positive relationships with the new leader of the Teamsters Local 25 and other local unions such as IATSE and SAG.[274]

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[271] Variety Staff, "Mass. Seeks Film Chief," *Variety*, October 10, 2006, https://variety.com/2006/film/features/mass-seeks-film-chief-1117951631/.

[272] Daniel Kimmel, "Paleologos to Run Mass. Film Office," *Variety*, January 29, 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/features/paleologos-to-run-mass-film-office-1117958274/.

[273] Kimmel, "Paleologos to Run Mass. Film Office."

[274] Kimmel, "Paleologos to Run Mass. Film Office." Unfortunately, several years later, a Boston local union IATSE, IATSE Local 11, also became involved in an extortion case. This topic will be addressed later in this chapter.

It was a clear and successful start. The first tax credit programmes began to be provided in 2006. Initially, the programme was eligible for qualified productions with a 20 percent tax credit and a cap of seven million dollars per production. However, a new governor, Deval Patrick, who ran the state from 2007 to 2015, removed the cap in July 2007 and increased the tax credit to 25 percent.[275] The new marketing and operating strategies, particularly the revised tax incentive programme, drew the attention of a significantly larger number of major Hollywood film studios, enticing them to select Massachusetts as a location for their new film productions for several years. After the introduction of the new tax incentive programme, the number of films produced in Massachusetts increased significantly. Some of the notable films produced during this period include *Bride Wars*, *Surrogates*, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* (Steve Carr, 2009), *Edge of Darkness* (Martin Campbell, 2010), *Shutter Island*, *The Social Network*, *The Town*, *The Fighter*, and *The Company Men*. Only one feature film was filmed in 2005, two in 2006, but in 2007, the number of films jumped to eight.[276] One notable aspect here is that certain films like *Bride Wars*, *Paul Blart: Mall Cop*, and *Shutter Island* were shot in the state, but scenes were doubled for other locations, such as the Dachau Concentration Camp in Germany, New York, and the West Orange Pavilion Mall in New Jersey. Also, for example, *Furry Vengeance* was entirely filmed in Massachusetts, including the City of Boston, even though the film is set in Oregon.[277] Local agencies such as Boston Casting experienced a substantial increase following the enactment of the newly amended tax

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[275] Variety Staff, "Massachusetts Shoots Increasing," *Variety*, May 17, 2007, https://variety.com/2007/film/features/massachusetts-shoots-increasing-1117965197/; Glenn Rifkin, "Lights, Camera, Tax Credit: Massachusetts Lures Filmmakers with Generous Rebate," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/05/business/smallbusiness/05sbiz.html.

[276] Rifkin, "Lights, Camera, Tax Credit: Massachusetts Lures Filmmakers with Generous Rebate."

[277] "Mass Film Doubles," Made in Mass, Massachusetts Film Office, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mafilm.org/mass-film-doubles/.

programme in July 2007.[278] It is clear that Massachusetts' tax incentive programme was both competitive and successful, with its success attributed to the efforts of Governor Patrick, supportive legislators, and the state film office.

However, unfortunately, the period of new growth and stability for the Massachusetts Film Office, along with its successful tax incentives, was short-lived, as the office once again encountered budgetary challenges in 2011. Furthermore, the relationship between Nicholas Paleologos and the Massachusetts Film Office also came to an unfortunate end, echoing the earlier situation with Mark Drago, who was removed from his position in Fall 2006. Paleologos was dismissed as of the 1st of January in 2011, and the film office was reorganised again under a bill that was passed in August 2010.[279] Under the new bill, the Massachusetts Marketing Partnership was established, encompassing the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, along with the Massachusetts Film and Massachusetts Sports Offices, all of which were tasked with marketing and promoting the state's interests. The Massachusetts Film Office used to operate under the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission. However, following the implementation of the new bill, the state film office underwent a transition and came under the management of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. Despite the chairman of the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission asserting that the reorganisation aimed for increased efficiency rather than being driven by politics,

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[278] Rifkin, "Lights, Camera, Tax Credit: Massachusetts Lures Filmmakers with Generous Rebate."

[279] D.C. Denison, "State Film Czar Loses Job Amid Reorganization," *The Boston Globe*, December 4, 2010, http://archive.boston.com/business/articles/2010/12/04/state_film_czar_loses_job_amid_reorganization/.

certain assumptions could be derived from the situation, hinting at the potential presence of underlying conflicts.[280]

Tax incentives have consistently been a point of contention, as I mentioned a couple of times in this chapter. Indeed, these incentives have played a role in boosting the region's motion picture industry by attracting numerous major Hollywood film productions. However, estimating the true value of on-location film production remains a challenging task. In relation to assessing production value, Paul Swann explains that the film offices calculate the income generated for their region by utilising revenue figures and tallying production days.[281] Nonetheless, there is a potential for underreporting actual expenses or concealing costs that exceed the reported figures. Often, this stems from the film offices' aims to meet the informational demands of the film trade and consumer press, as well as to justify their own funding.[282] Consequently, amid debates about the actual value of attracting film production, analyses conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue were released. The analyses suggested that the current tax incentives could potentially cost more money than the revenue generated by film productions.[283] As a result, in early 2010, amid concerns and criticism regarding the true effectiveness of tax incentives, Governor Deval Patrick's administration proposed to reinstate the seven million dollars cap per production again that had been removed in 2007.[284] At that time, Paleologos, the director of the state film office, disagreed with the proposal

[280] Denison, "State Film Czar Loses Job Amid Reorganization."

[281] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 93.

[282] Swann, "From Workshop to Backlot: The Greater Philadelphia Film Office," 93.

[283] Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 441.

[284] Denison, "State Film Czar Loses Job Amid Reorganization."

and actively lobbied against it, ultimately leading to the end of his relationship with the Massachusetts Film Office as he was removed from the director position.[285]

Despite the proposal not passing through the legislature, public conflicts emerged between the state administration and the film office, as well as other related organisations and Hollywood, causing damage to Massachusetts' reputation as a desirable filming location.[286] Once again, the situation gained considerable attention, leading people within the Hollywood industry to publicly express concern about the potential decline of the Massachusetts motion picture industry.[287] Despite the conflicts, the state film office faced another funding cut in 2011, even though it continued to offer the same services such as location scouting, marketing the state, and managing facilities and permits. Fortunately, in the same year, the office was reconstituted as previously mentioned, and since then, it has operated under the Massachusetts Department of Travel and Tourism, with Lisa Strout, the current director of the film office. About four decades have passed since the launch of the first film office in Massachusetts, but even after three decades, the Massachusetts regional film office continued to experience chaos, variability, and conflicts throughout the 2010s.

4.7 The Massachusetts Film Industry After a Long History of Flames: 2011-Present

Lisa Strout, who had previously served as the director of the film division in the Department of Economic Development of New Mexico for seven years, started her

[285] Denison, "State Film Czar Loses Job Amid Reorganization."

[286] Jones and Foster, "Film Offices as Brokers: Cultivating and Connecting Local Talent to Hollywood," 181.

[287] Foster, Manning, and Terkla, "The Rise of Hollywood East: Regional Film Offices as Intermediaries in Film and Television Production Clusters," 441.

role at the Massachusetts Film Office on the 15th June, 2016.[288] Certainly, it can be stated that the Massachusetts Film Office has exhibited remarkable performance over the last decade, considering the significant surge in the number of major Hollywood films being produced in Massachusetts.[289] Moreover, there have been consistently high-profile productions filming, including renowned Boston representative and critically acclaimed films like *Spotlight*, *Black Mass*, *Patriots Day*, *Manchester by the Sea*.[290]

Apart from the tax incentives, what other strengths does Massachusetts possess? The local infrastructure includes local film professionals. According to Strout, as of 2014, Massachusetts had around 4,500 film professionals, with one in three or four being a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees.[291] The significant number of local professionals in Massachusetts offers a huge advantage, setting it apart from other competitors.[292] When a film production shoots on location, bringing their entire crew would incur a huge cost. Therefore, to reduce the costs, it is advisable for the production to hire local crew members. This approach allows the production to economise on expenses such as transportation and accommodation. Additionally, a crucial factor to consider is the proficiency of these

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[288] Mark Shanahan and Meredith Goldstein, "Strout Named New Mass. Film Office Boss," *The Boston Globe*, May 24, 2011, http://archive.boston.com/ae/celebrity/articles/2011/05/24/strout_named_new_mass_film_office_boss/.

[289] In 2011, nine major films were produced in Massachusetts. However, this number increased significantly to twenty-three films shot in 2013, and by August 2014, there were already twenty-two films that had chosen Massachusetts as their filming location. See, Andrea Shea, "Behind the Scenes, Mass. Film Crews Rise in the Ranks," *WBUR*, August 6, 2014, https://www.wbur.org/news/2014/08/06/mass-film-jobs.

[290] *Spotlight* won the Academy Award for Best Motion Picture of the Year and Best Original Screenplay in the 2016 Academy Awards, while *Manchester by the Sea* won two Academy Awards for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role and Best Original Screenplay in 2017.

[291] Shea, "Behind the Scenes, Mass. Film Crews Rise in the Ranks."

[292] New England Cable News, "Future of Film in Mass.," *New England Cable News,* July 28, 2014, https://www.necn.com/news/business/future-of-film-in-mass/1963864/.

local film crews in handling Hollywood-level production standards. Chris O'Donnell, a business manager of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees Local 481, stated that everyone in Local 481 who works on the set of *Black Mass* consists of locally hired crew, indicating that the local crew possesses the skills demanded by Hollywood.[293] However, there was an opinion that the state tax incentives could be reduced or eliminated at any time. If this were to happen, the state motion picture industry could potentially lose many opportunities for Hollywood film productions, which, in turn, might lead local film professionals to seek better opportunities outside the state.[294]

However, Massachusetts' abundance of highly skilled unionised crew members occasionally became challenges for the state. In 2016, a member of Boston Teamsters was sentenced to two years of probation and six months of home confinement after being accused of attempting to extort the reality television show *Top Chef* (Bravo, 2006-) during its filming in 2014.[295] As discussed earlier, this persistent issue was the primary focus of the Massachusetts Film Office, since its very first day of operation. The situation escalated once more when a producer of the show *Top Chef* hired own local non-union labourers, including drivers, to work on the filming of the show.[296] This decision caught the attention of Teamsters Local 25, leading to a series of complications. On the 5th of June 2014, a member of Teamsters Local 25 approached the film set at a Boston hotel and threatened to shut the

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[293] Most Hollywood film productions hire unionised crew. See, Shea, "Behind the Scenes, Mass. Film Crews Rise in the Ranks."

[294] Shea, "Behind the Scenes, Mass. Film Crews Rise in the Ranks."

[295] David Robb, "Boston Teamster Sentenced in 'Top Chef' Extortion Case," *Deadline Hollywood*, December 15, 2016, https://deadline.com/2016/12/top-chef-teamster-sentenced-extortion-case-1201871927/.

[296] Robb, "Boston Teamster Sentenced in 'Top Chef' Extortion Case."

production down. Furthermore, on the morning of 10th June, Local 25 members showed up at another film set and forcibly entered the production area.[297] While a spokesperson of Local 25 stated there were no inappropriate actions, the US Attorney's office reported that Local 25 members engaged in physical violence and used racial and homophobic abusive language toward the production crew and cast.[298] Being threatened and harassed by the local union during filming can be considered an extremely dangerous situation that no production wants to face. Unfortunately, this was not the end of the troubles. The first report was released on 20th of August, 2014, indicating that crew members of Teamsters Local 25 were implicated in threats against the show's crew and cast. Two days later, the city of Boston's film office also got involved in the corruption allegations.[299] It happened when the production of *Top Chef* received permits from the city of Boston's Office of Tourism, Sports and Entertainment, along with additional permits for the rest of the shoot around the city. Kenneth Brissette, the director of the office, received calls from Teamsters Local 25 inquiring about the locations that had acquired filming permits, which could lead to the union setting up picket lines.[300] It was at that moment that the Boston's office realised the production was filming with a non-union crew. As a result, Brissette held onto the permits for a couple of days, causing

[297] Robb, "Boston Teamster Sentenced in 'Top Chef' Extortion Case."

[298] David Robb, "'Top Chef', Host Padma Lakshmi and Cre Harassed by Boston Teamster," *Deadline Hollywood*, August 20, 2014, https://deadline.com/2014/08/padma-lakshmi-boston-teamsters-attack-top-chef-820137/; Robb, "Boston Teamster Sentenced in 'Top Chef' Extortion Case."

[299] David Robb, "Update: Rankled Boston Mayor's Minions Held Up Non-Union Permits for 'Top Chef' Crews," *Deadline Hollywood*, August 22, 2014, https://deadline.com/2014/08/rankled-boston-mayors-minions-held-up-non-union-permits-for-top-chef-crews-823460/; Robb, "'Top Chef', Host Padma Lakshmi and Cre Harassed by Boston Teamster."

[300] Robb, "Update: Rankled Boston Mayor's Minions Held Up Non-Union Permits for 'Top Chef' Crews."

a delay in the shooting schedule.[301] Whether the choice was intentional or unintentional, Brissette's decision could be perceived as discriminatory. He considered the union and non-union status of the film production before making a decision that violated the state law, which prohibits discrimination based on union or non-union status and prevents the mandatory hiring of either union workers or non-union workers.[302] Furthermore, in 2016, Brissette was suspended after being indicted for a similar alleged extortion during the Boston Calling Music Festival in 2014.[303] Similar to the *Top Chef* case, Brissette insisted on hiring local union members, otherwise, the city film office would not issue the permits.[304] Clearly, these situations had an impact on the number of reality television shows filming in Massachusetts, resulting in a sharp decline.[305] This decline is undoubtedly connected to the state's overall reputation in the motion picture industry. In other words, both a regional motion picture industry and individual films often relied on specific factors or figures.

The chronic corruption within the Massachusetts motion picture industry reignited public criticism of the tax incentive programme. The tax incentives offered to specific qualified film productions have stirred controversy. In early 2015, the tax

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[301] Robb, "Update: Rankled Boston Mayor's Minions Held Up Non-Union Permits for 'Top Chef' Crews."

[302] Andrew Ryan, Milton J. Valencia, and Mark Arsenault, "City Official Pleads Innocent to Extortion Charge, Released on Bond," *The Boston Globe,* May 19, 2016, https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/05/19/walsh-administration-official-arrested-union-related-extortion-federal-officials-say/XJehp4hEQXVZ5ancU67KmJ/story.html.

[303] David Robb, "Head of Boston Film Office Suspended After Extortion Indictment," *Deadline Hollywood*, July 27, 2016, https://deadline.com/2016/07/boston-film-office-extortion-indictment-suspension-teamsters-1201793850/.

[304] Robb, "Head of Boston Film Office Suspended After Extortion Indictment."

[305] Dan Atkinson, Jack Encarnacao, and Laurel J. Sweet, "State Sees a Drop in Reality Filming After Teamsters 'Top Chef' Protests," *Boston Herald*, August 14, 2017, https://www.bostonherald.com/2017/08/14/state-sees-a-drop-in-reality-filming-after-teamsters-top-chef-protests/.

programme once more became an issue when Governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker-who is not a supporter of tax credits for film and television productions-suggested defunding the incentive.[306] While local film industry workers argued the state's film tax credit makes a significant number of jobs, nonetheless the state doubted the outcome, expressing concerns that the tax credits benefit out of state companies and high-paid Hollywood stars.[307] The debate over the state's film tax credits continued for two years.[308] In 2017, films like *Ghostbusters* were at the centre of the controversy. The film is a reboot of the renowned franchise of the same name, featuring famous actresses boasting an estimated budget of 144 million dollars. This film also set a record in the Massachusetts tax incentive programme by receiving 26.7 million dollars in tax benefits.[309] Referring to films like *Ghostbusters,* Senate Michael Rodrigues, who proposed shortening the tax incentives, argued that it is nonsensical for the state to overlook people like a single mother in need of childcare vouchers, while the state provides 25 percent of the salary for Hollywood film stars.[310] One obvious fact here is that certain films, including *American Hustle*, *Black Mass*, *Joy* (David O. Russell, 2015), and *Patriots Day*, might have opted for other

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[306] Baker proposed cutting the state's film tax credit to allocate more funds for low-income working-class families. See, Akilah Johnson, "Baker Seeks to End film Credit, Boost Working Families," *The Boston Globe,* March 3, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/03/03/baker-seeks-kill-film-industry-tax-credit-boost-aid-for-low-wage-workers/TdXpbBG7rmuel5NK63dSHP/story.html.

[307] Malcolm Gay, "Proposal to End Massachusetts Film Tax Credit Provokes Strong Reactions," *The Boston Globe,* March 4, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/movies/2015/03/04/proposal-end-massachusetts-film-tax-credit-provokes-strong-reactions/nvvdmMAFjjPzfAAC5R0BQK/story.html.

[308] Jordan Graham, "Gov. Charlie Baker Abandons Effort to Repeal Movie Tax Credit," *Boston Herald*, February 16, 2017, https://www.bostonherald.com/2017/02/16/gov-charlie-baker-abandons-effort-to-repeal-movie-tax-credit/.

[309] Philip Marcelo, "The Debate Over Massachusetts's Film Industry Tax Credits Is Heating Up," *The Boston Globe*, June 18, 2017, https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2017/06/18/the-debate-over-massachusettss-film-industry-tax-credits-is-heating-up/.

[310] Marcelo, "The Debate Over Massachusetts's Film Industry Tax Credits Is Heating Up."

states like Georgia or even Canada if not for the available tax benefits.[311] Also, it is worth noticing that films like *Joy* and *Ghostbusters* were filmed in Massachusetts but were used to double for other locations, such as New York City. This suggests that tax incentives clearly attract film productions to the state, even when the film's story settings are not in Massachusetts. This highlights once again that the growth of the regional film office and the entire local motion picture industry is dependent on specific governmental and legislative actions. However, accurately estimating the precise economic benefits that film or television productions contribute to a region is challenging, which could explain the different views among the public and legislators on this matter. This ambiguity is one of the reasons why the tax incentive programme has consistently sparked controversy. Fortunately for supporters of the film tax credit, Massachusetts lawmakers agreed to extend the state's film tax credit programme on a permanent basis.[312]

Alongside the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, the expiration date of the Massachusetts tax credit programme, initially set to expire at the end of 2022, raised concerns among Hollywood filmmakers considering Massachusetts as a long-term filming location.[313] However, with the state now having a permanent tax credit programme in place, expectations for the state's film industry to thrive have

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[311] Marcelo, "The Debate Over Massachusetts's Film Industry Tax Credits Is Heating Up."; Carrie Healy, "Massachusetts Film Tax Credit Bills Come Under Spotlight," *New England Public Media*, June 11, 2019, https://www.nepm.org/regional-news/2019-06-11/massachusetts-film-tax-credit-bills-come-under-spotlight.

[312] Although there have been some changes in the most recent tax credit deal, the Massachusetts state House and Senate have decided to permanently extend the programme. See, Erin Trahan, "Advocates Strive Once More to Make Mass. Film Tax Credit Permanen," *WBUR*, March 24, 2021, https://www.wbur.org/news/2021/05/24/mass-film-tax-credit-debate; Nik DeCosta-Klipa, "Massachusetts Lawmakers Agree to Deal to Permanently Extend Somewhat Controversial Film Tax Credit," *The Boston Globe*, July 9, 2021, https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2021/07/09/massachusetts-film-tax-credit-forever/.

[313] Kevin Slane, "All the Hollywood Movie and TV Shows Filming in Massachusetts in 2021," *The Boston Globe*, July 22, 2021, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2021/07/22/movies-tv-shows-filming-in-massachusetts-2021-2/.

arisen.[314] The expectations became reality as major Hollywood films chose Massachusetts for their filming locations, including Netflix film *Don't Look Up*, *The Tender Bar*, and even Marvel franchise *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (Ryan Coogler, 2022), and Hulu film *Boston Strangler* (2023).[315] Additionally, film industry workers argue that the state's tax incentive programme not only supports practical film productions but also boosts the state's pipeline of film programmes at colleges and universities, as well as the post-production industry.[316] Furthermore, it could help create another success story like that of Matt Damon or the Affleck brothers, the most Massachusetts representative filmmakers who began their careers in their hometown before achieving stardom in Hollywood.

4.8 Conclusion

When discussing the relationship between cinema and the city, it is important to consider the city's role as both a filming location and the context of its industry. In films, the city serves a vital function not only as a backdrop for the narrative but also as an active filming set. In terms of the city as a filming location, this chapter specifically delved into one particular region, Massachusetts, along with its motion picture industry and the political ecology surrounding them, with a particular emphasis on the regional film office. The regional film office exists to attract film productions by providing assistance and navigation to film productions within the region. The case study demonstrates that the motion picture industry of a particular

[314] Slane, "All the Hollywood Movie and TV Shows Filming in Massachusetts in 2021;"

[315] Kevin Slane, "All the Hollywood Movies and TV Shows Filming in Massachusetts in 2022," *The Boston Globe,* November 3, 2022, https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2022/05/18/movies-tv-shows-filming-locations-massachusetts-2022/.

[316] Malina Saval, "Massachusetts Incentives Boost Hollywood Production in the State," *Variety*, June 1, 2022, https://variety.com/2022/film/spotlight/massachusetts-incentives-production-1235282103/.

region, as well as the films produced within that region, rely on the regional film office, which often operates within a political context. Also, Massachusetts shows a unique historical situation compared to other regions, as two regional film offices competed for the same goal. This situation sheds light on the evolving politics surrounding this creative industry. Consequently, the political ecology surrounding the regional film office significantly impacts the industry and even the films themselves.

This chapter examined regional film offices in the state of Massachusetts, including the Boston Film Office, through a chronological timeline. The timeline can be divided into noticeable events, such as the establishment of the first office, the appointment of office directors, the tenure of specific governors, and the passage of important bills by the state legislature. In the case of Massachusetts, the motion picture industry in the region has witnessed periods of growth and decline depending on these events.

Initially, with the establishment of the first film office in Massachusetts, it began to function as a mediator, aiming to repair the strained relationship between the local labour unions within the state and Hollywood filmmakers. This negative reputation had been cultivated through various film productions, including notable examples like *Jaws* and *The Brink's Job* as these film productions experienced instances of extortions from Boston's local labour unions, particularly Teamsters Local 25. The result was successful, with the number of films produced in Massachusetts and the direct expenditure in the state increasing in the late 1980s. However, the issue with local labour unions recurred in the early 1990s. Fortunately, in 1994, a film professional named Robin Dawson was appointed as the state film office director, with sufficient support from the governor. Robin Dawson's

leadership of the film office proved to be successful for the state's motion picture industry. During her tenure from 1994 to 2002, notable Boston-set films were produced, including *Good Will Hunting*, *Amistad*, and *A Civil Action*, which also had a positive impact on tourism. However, this period of stability was short-lived, as the FBI initiated an investigation against the local union Teamsters Local 25 in the early 2000s. The acting governor between 2001 and 2003 received reports about the investigations, which led to the involvement of the Massachusetts Film Office and the state's motion picture industry in public controversy, resulting in criticism. As a result, the state's official film office terminated in 2002, and the Boston Film Bureau was also closed. Soon after Robin Dawson opened a private film office, the Massachusetts Film Bureau began to play the same role as the Massachusetts Film Office. For a couple of years, Dawson's office stood as the primary service provider in the state. However, after Mitt Romney, a new governor took office, a major conflict arose. Romney opened a quasi-film office and appointed Mark Drago as an executive office director under the Massachusetts Sports and Entertainment Commission. The goal was to promote Massachusetts as a filming location, aligning with the same goal pursued by Dawson's office. The Massachusetts motion picture industry has long been renowned for its inter-regional competition between these regional film offices. The competition affected the regional motion picture industry and even the films themselves. Martin Scorsese's 2006 film *The Departed* production publicly expressed that the competition had to be resolved. The production spent only six million dollars out of the total budget of forty-two million dollars. Although the film's narrative is set in Boston, the production chose to film in New York City, which doubled for Boston. In addition to the competition, another drawback for Massachusetts was the lack of tax incentives. However, in 2007, the

state legislature passed a bill that provided 20-25 percent tax rebates for qualified productions. Additionally, the state government undertook organisational changes: Drago was removed from his position, Dawson closed her private film office, and a reconstituted official state office was established. With the introduction of the official state film office and the new tax programme, the Massachusetts motion picture industry experienced a revival once again. Following the introduction of the new tax programme and the state film office, Massachusetts saw the production of several famous and critically acclaimed films, including *Shutter Island*, *The Social Network*, *The Town*, and *The Fighter*. Also, films such as *Bride Wars* and *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* chose Massachusetts just as their filming location. The tax incentive programme that lured numerous major Hollywood film productions to the state has consistently been a subject of controversy, primarily due to the huge budget it requires. In 2011, the controversy gained public attention, and Governor Deval Patrick proposed amending the tax programme to make it less attractive to film studios. Even though the proposal did not pass, the state film office found itself once again facing a crisis of its existence. Since then, the state film office has continued to play a significant role in the regional motion picture industry. Nevertheless, the issue of the tax revenue programme remains a hot potato.

As we can see from the Massachusetts case, the regional motion picture industry tends to rely on the regional film office. At the same time, the industry is influenced by the regional political ecology, including the governor, senate, legislature, local unions, and other local supporters. Certain political figures can have a direct impact on the industry. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the 38th governor of California from 2003 to 2011 and a famous actor, urged California state legislators to consider more generous tax credits to keep Hollywood in

Hollywood.[317] Thus, the fate of a region's motion picture industry often hinges on the stance of key figures, whether they are supporters of film productions or not. Furthermore, as a filming location, having someone who is thoroughly familiar with all the processes within the region is essential. For example, consider Patte Papa and her role at the Boston Film Office. In Boston, a bustling city teeming with cars and pedestrians, filming can be challenging. Unlike cities like San Antonio or Jackson, Mississippi, where filmmakers might have the luxury of an empty downtown or closed Main Street, filmmakers in Boston face the difficulty of finding such locations.[318] Thus, having someone like Papa who is skilled at managing challenges such as parking bans, street closures, and coordinating with parking garages is a fortunate advantage for filmmakers.[319] Under the guidance of film officers like Papa, filmmakers can find stability and simply follow the guidance provided by the regional film office. When it comes to the role of a regional film office and the economic benefits for a city, film studios select specific cities as filming locations. In this context, even if the narrative is set in New York City or Orlando, film studios might choose Massachusetts due to factors such as cost savings and the ease of facilitating production. This is why film studios sometimes select different cities for their productions, even if the narrative is set in Boston.

Amongst factors that can attract film productions, tax incentives stand out as the most direct benefit. To attract a larger number of film productions, certain states

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[317] Nikki Finke, "Arnold Will Ask for Hollywood Tax Breaks," *Deadline,* November 7, 2008, https://deadline.com/2008/11/calif-legislative-special-session-asked-for-tax-incentives-to-keep-hollywood-at-home-7478/; Richard Verrier, "Tax Relief OKd for Film, TV Shoots," *Los Angeles Times,* February 20, 2009, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-feb-20-fi-filmtaxcredits20-story.html.

[318] Judy Rakowsky, "No Papa Permits? No Filming Here," *The Boston Globe*, June 1, 2008, http://archive.boston.com/ae/movies/articles/2008/05/31/no_papa_permits_no_filming_here/?page=full.

[319] Rakowsky, "No Papa Permits? No Filming Here."

offer more generous and aggressive tax programmes compared to others. For instance, Louisiana provides up to a 40 percent tax credit, requiring a minimum in-state expenditure of 300,000 dollars, while New York City offers a 35 percent tax credit. However, the issue of tax revenue remains controversial, as this chapter discussed earlier, including the case of the Iowa State Film Office.[320] Since a refundable tax credit programme is directly tied to taxpayers' funds, reaching a unanimous agreement becomes challenging. In other words, this situation highlights once again how a region's film industry is intricately connected to its political ecology. Certain aspects, such as tax refunds or the usage of firearms without proper licenses during filming, depend on regional legislature and political figures.

Consequently, the city serves not only as a narrative set in cinema, but also plays a pivotal role as a physical location that can profoundly impact a region's motion picture industry and cinema as a whole.

[320] For example, Michigan used to have one of the most generous tax credit programmes-42 percent. However, in 2015, the state legislature agreed to discontinue the tax incentive. Nevertheless, as luring major film productions remains crucial to boosting the local economy, the debate about the state's tax revenue is still ongoing. While the debate continues in film-related sectors, workers in the Michigan film industry are taking action to advocate for the tax incentive programme. In 2023, lawmakers introduced new bills aimed at bringing back the state's film tax incentive programme, raising expectations that Michigan might once again become an attractive filming location. See, Craig Manning, "Could Michigan Resurrect Its Discontinued Film Incentive Programme?" *Northern Express*, July 23, 2022, https://www.northernexpress.com/news/feature/could-michigan-resurrect-its-discontinued-film-incentive-program/; Lauren Gibbons, "Michigan Film Incentives: The Sequel! Lawmakers Propose New Tax Credit," *Bridge Michigan,* August 23, 2023, https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/michigan-film-incentives-sequel-lawmakers-propose-new-tax-credit; "Take Action," Michigan Film Industry Association, accessed April 27, 2024, https://mifia.org/take-action.

5 The Cinematic Boston and the Unseen Borders: Constructed and Designed by Boston Screenwriters

5.1 The Moment When You Realise You Are Watching Boston Films: The Theme of Neighbourhoods and Communities

For screenwriters, it is crucial to focus on "creating a compelling and convincing world," even though this aspect is often one of the least discussed.[321] Similarly, Robert McKee also emphasises the importance of crafting a believable world with meticulous attention to detail. Through the setting, which includes elements like location and time, the diegetic world becomes more plausible for the audience, enabling them to perceive it as realistic.[322] This spatial perception involves not only understanding a geographical place but also comprehending its social and cultural context. Therefore, when screenwriters choose narrative settings, they must consider the factors that contribute to creating a convincing world. In other words, certain narratives are inherently tied to specific spaces, and different settings can significantly impact the stories they tell. Now, we can consider what happens when certain stories are set in different places. Can they be portrayed as effectively as they were originally? In terms of the relationship between specific narratives and spaces, Franco Moretti argues that geography often shapes and deepens narratives. Moretti specifically points out, "what happens depends on where it happens..." and "specific stories are the product of specific spaces, *...without a certain kind of space, a certain*

[321] Craig Batty, *Screenplays: How to Write and Sell Them* (UK: Kamera Books, 2012), 45.

[322] Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (London, UK: Methuen, 1999)

kind of story is simply impossible."[323] So, how do these particular spaces contribute to the work of screenwriters in crafting cinematic narratives?

When discussing the spaces of certain stories, we can gain insight through the spatial perceptions of screenwriters. In terms of screenwriter's spatial perception, especially when writing about one's own hometown or place of habitation, the use of place and space differs between Boston natives and outsiders or newcomers. This difference is closely tied to our memory and history, and Tim Ingold's explanation sheds light on this. Ingold argues that places are not just locations; they possess histories.[324] What sets the habitant (resident) apart from the outsider is their knowledge of the region, which should be understood within the historical context of their previous journeys. Consequently, Ingold goes on to define wayfinding as a form of storytelling.[325] If wayfinding is considered a form of storytelling, the spatial perception of screenwriters and their individual histories take on increased significance as essential tools for screenwriting. This suggests that narratives can exhibit significant variations based on the screenwriter's choice of settings, shaped by their knowledge and experiences. This concept can be further illuminated through Kevin Lynch's notion of "legibility."[326] Lynch's concept of city legibility provides a deeper understanding of how we perceive a city. City legibility is the ability of

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[323] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London, UK: Verso, 1998), 70, 100. Italics in original. See also, Julian Stringer's observation on ABC's TV show *Lost* (2004-2010) - "The Gathering Place: Lost in Oahu," *Reading Lost: Perspectives on a Hit Television Show,* ed. Roberta E. Pearson (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 73-93. In this article, Julian explores Hawaii (specifically, Oahu, a part of the Hawaiian island) and *Lost* and how *Lost* utilises geographical and cultural characters of Oahu by using Moretti's approach.

[324] Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 219-220.

[325] Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, 219-220.

[326] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1-13.

people to recognise the city's pattern and even sketch it with ease.[327] However, before one can draw a city, they must first create a mental image of the environment.[328] Knowing a city does not merely involve identifying its locations or recalling them; it also encompasses understanding the characteristics of those locations within the city. Spatial characteristics and geographical information fuse in one's perception of the city, ultimately shaping specific representations and narratives about the city. In terms of one's perception of the city as revealed through film, it possesses the capacity to capture "the immaterial subjective-social worlds and their meanings."[329] However, this subjectivity relies on humans (in this case, screenwriters) or specific spatial cultures and memories shared by its inhabitants. Consequently, when subjective observations are applied in the works of screenwriters, their creations–the worlds they craft and the narratives within them–are inherently subjective, akin to fragments of their perspectives.

Now let us consider the city. A single city can be the backdrop for countless tales and images. While there is only one city on the map, it exists in a multitude of perspectives and imaginations. Each imaginary version of the city possesses its own authenticity. Similarly, James Sanders suggests that New York City has two narratives: one as the real, inhabited city, and the other as the city constructed by films.[330] In this respect, during the process of envisioning and shaping a city in each film, the city is constructed in accordance with the perspectives of filmmakers and

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[327] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 2-3.

[328] A mental image of the environment involves visualising what the city contains and how this urban space is constructed according to its residents, effectively mapping the urban space in our minds.

[329] Penz and Koeck, "Introduction," 10-11. Regarding capturing the "subjective-social worlds and their meanings," Penz and Keock film is one of means that is documenting culture's memorials although it needs to be investigated as it is not an objective recording.

[330] James Sanders, *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2002), 3-12.

screenwriters. When it comes to constructing their own version of the city, personal experiences, memories, and knowledge become vital elements. This implies that, once again, one's depiction of a city can be measured by their knowledge. Therefore, in terms of each individual's portrayal of a city, whether through direct experiences or vivid imagination, unique spaces are constructed, each with its own history and memory associated with that space.

This chapter particularly focuses on Boston cinema. Most famous Boston films share a common element: they rely on the city both spatially and thematically. Furthermore, this theme is meticulously portrayed in these films. For example, Tim Grafft, the head of locations for the Massachusetts Film Office, once remarked, "you could really tell Boston locals wrote it," in reference to the renowned and memorable Boston film, *Good Will Hunting*.[331] As two of the film's screenwriters, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, who famously grew up in the Boston area (specifically in Cambridge), Massachusetts, knew the location better than anyone else, enabling them to depict the more subtle details of Boston life in the film. This attention to detail is evident in the film's setting.[332] Like in the case of *Good Will Hunting*, the images recreated or introduced by native screenwriters through a filmic gaze result from their local knowledge and distinctive Boston narrative, even though these images may appear mundane or simple.[333] Furthermore, this detailed depiction of

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[331] Richard, "The Boston immortalised in Good Will Hunting."

[332] Grafft recalls that when *Good Will Hunting* was filming, location filming in Massachusetts must have cost a lot of money as the state did not provide the tax incentive programme for motion picture production at that moment. However, our everyday locations in *Good Will Hunting*, which were introduced by two Massachusetts natives, are the true beauty that cannot be duplicated in different cities, like filming in Toronto. See, Richard, "The Boston immortalised in Good Will Hunting."

[333] For example, a bench in Boston Public Garden, re-created through filmic gaze. Further observances can be found in "Chapter 3. Mapping Boston Cinema: Cultural and Historical Geography of Cinema and the Cinematic History of Boston."

Boston is not limited to the film's locations; characters and narratives are also influenced by the personal analysis and preferences of native screenwriters. When examining filmic spaces and their representations in Boston cinema, spatial legibility becomes noticeable. This on-screen spatial legibility, whether a film is shot on location or in the studio, allows some films to make the city easily identifiable and comprehensible, a concept referred to as "screen legibility."[334] In the case of Boston, the legibility of the city on screen is frequently and prominently featured in the diegetic worlds of the selected films. This, in turn, enhances the narratives and makes them more convincing.

Building upon this observation, this chapter explores how Boston's cinematic narrative is constructed and designed by Boston native screenwriters who draw upon their local knowledge. Why did they make specific cinematic choices, such as selecting the setting, location, storyline, environment, and design? How did they incorporate these specific choices into their narratives, creating Boston-bound narratives, and shaping the cinematic portrayal of the city? In other words, this chapter explores how Boston native filmmakers use their local knowledge as a toolkit for crafting scenarios and visualising scenes.

To examine this, this chapter particularly focusses on screenwriters' city legibility and its presentations in Boston cinema. Furthermore, this chapter argues that screenwriters' subjective images and knowledge of the city create specific representations in film narratives by analysing the selected films' narratives,

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[334] Richard Koeck and François Penz, "Screen City Legibility." *City* 7. no. 3 (2003): 364-375, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360481032000183884. In terms of screen city legibility authors argue that filmmakers utilise the city to enhance their narratives, making it an integral part of the story. Throughout this process, the city's identity and branding are promoted through cinema, while cinema also utilises the city's identity in its cinematography.

characters, plots, geographical locations, and their representations. While there are famous Boston screenwriters who have created significant filmic narrative ideas for cinema, this chapter specifically explores five films: *Good Will Hunting*, *Mystic River*, *The Departed*, *Gone Baby Gone*, and *The Town*. All of these films are written by either Boston-born or Boston-raised screenwriters.[335] In addition, some of them, such as *Mystic River*, *Gone Baby Gone*, and *The Town*, are based on novels also written by Boston native authors. Through these films, I will examine how Bostonian screenwriters perceive their hometown and how they have designed and constructed the city in cinema. While these films share a common theme of specific neighbourhoods and communities, this chapter scrutinises each film with this thematic context. Particularly, the theme of neighbourhood and community is repeatedly represented, often linked to Old Boston neighbourhoods such as South Boston, Charlestown, Jamaica Plain, and Dorchester. These neighbourhoods are often inhabited by Irish Catholic working-class male characters, who play prominent roles in the films and are depicted in distinct ways. Furthermore, there is a noticeable tendency for the neighbourhood and community to define one's identity. In each film, unique but selective representations emerge as central to the narrative. In this regard, this chapter further examines how Boston serves as inspiration and how Boston films create place-bound narratives with distinct and subjective representations.

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[335] *Good Will Hunting*'s screenplay is written by Matt Damon and Ben Affleck. *Mystic River* is written by Brian Helgeland and based on the famous Boston-born writer Dennis Lehane, who was raised in Boston. *Gone Baby Gone* is written by Ben Affleck and Aaron Stockard, both Boston natives, and based on Dennis Lehane's novel. *The Departed* is written by William Monahan, a Boston native, and *The Town* is based on Boston-native novelist Chuck Hogan. The screenplay for *The Town* is by Peter Craig, Ben Affleck, and Aaron Stockard, with the latter two also being Boston natives.

5.2 *Good Will Hunting* written by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon

Our experience, feelings, and memories in one city vary greatly among individuals. While we each possess different images of specific places, some images penetrate these individual perceptions and become deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness. Screenwriters often strive to capture these shared images, both physically and mentally. *Good Will Hunting* elevated the art of persuasively depicting a city, particularly South Boston, even for its local people. Two Boston native screenwriters, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon painstakingly added intricate details to capture the essence of Boston. For instance, despite marketing interests urging them to scout a famous chain restaurant for a marketing tie-in, the writers, who also starred in the film, opted for "Kelly's Roast Beef," a Massachusetts based restaurant chain.[336] This detailed attention to Boston's particulars rendered the film even more convincing. In this regard, geographical knowledge aids in constructing a certain representation that can be perceived as "realistic," whether the film is based on a true story or not.

One of the bright sides of having a native from a particular region involved in a production is the ease with which the production can capture local locations, as the native possesses intimate knowledge of their hometown. The in-depth understanding of neighbourhoods is also an important measure of the contribution made by native filmmakers. While repetitive depictions of certain neighbourhoods or groups of people (such as class or religion) can sometimes make Boston cinema seem clichéd, and the analysis may not always be accurate, these depictions can also establish

[336] Nanos, "Good Will Hunting: An Oral History." This interview with the director, writers, and actors reveals just how well Matt Damon and Ben Affleck capture the essence of "real Boston." They paid meticulous attention to every detail to embody the true Bostonian spirit, right down to their costumes. Both of them understand precise sentiments and intentions that Southie wishes to convey.

Boston cinema as a distinct genre.[337] However, in addition to geographical knowledge, it is interesting to observe the consistent portrayals of Boston by native screenwriters in Boston cinema. Themes of neighbourhood and community, along with the tensions between them, are readily evident, as seen in *Good Will Hunting*.

In *Good Will Hunting,* one of the most accentuated tensions regarding the theme is Will Hunting (Matt Damon)'s personal crisis when he steps into the academia (MIT) and meets Skylar (Minnie Driver), a Harvard University student who moved from outside of Boston (she came from the United Kingdom). This step into a new world that Will has never experienced before, makes him have different feelings about his hometown, South Boston, the Old Boston.[338] In the following analysis, certain depictions of South Boston and stereotypical portrayals of the residents will be examined.

The film precisely depicts the South Boston neighbourhood. From the beginning of the film, a certain depiction of the neighbourhood permeates its narrative. However, the protagonist, Will, is somewhat different from the others. He possesses incredible intelligence. In Golfman's article, he describes Will Hunting as a young man from "the wrong side of the American tracks," naturally a blue-collar worker, doing night shifts and working at construction sites, but with powerful intelligence.[339] Also, Will, Chuckie (Ben Affleck), and his friends represent the people from South Boston, typically Irish, Catholic, and working-class. Every

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[337] For example, *The Town* depicts Charlestown as a neighbourhood with a high crime rate, but at that time, gentrification was already an ongoing issue. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

[338] Like Wall Street in New York City and Hollywood in California, Harvard University and MIT are representative institutions in Boston. Often, the students at these universities are depicted as people from outside of the city, often referred to as the "New Bostonian."

[339] Noreen Golfman, "Getting Ahead of the Class: Reflections on "Good Will Hunting"," *Labour /Le Travail* 42, (Fall, 1998): 325, https://doi.org/10.2307/25148926.

morning, they commute by car, crossing Fort Point and the Charles River to get to work in Cambridge, and then return to their Old Neighbourhood–South Boston–after work.[340] This everyday life suggests a certain reality and a sense of fate, indicating that it is nearly impossible for someone from Southie to move up the social ladder. It implies that Will would have had a different life if he had been born outside of South Boston. For example, Chuckie, Will's best friend, encourages Will to challenge himself with his fortunate talent, saying,

> CHUCKIE: Cause tomorrow I'm gonna wake up and I'll be fifty... and I'll still be doin' this shit. And that's all right. That's fine. I mean, you're sittin' on a winnin' lottery ticket. And you're too much of a pussy to cash it in, and that's bullshit. 'Cause I'd fuckin' anything to have what you got. So would any of these fuckin' guys. It'd would by an insult to us if you're still here in twenty years.[341]

His words imply the enduring reality that most people from Southie would face throughout their lives. Furthermore, they highlight the social stratification present in Boston, a fact likely recognised by every resident of the city.

The social stratification of Boston, characterised by the lower class Bostonians from the Old Boston neighbourhoods, particularly South Boston, who are predominantly Irish Catholic and working-class, and the upper class Bostonians, including those residing in Cambridge and associated with prestigious institutions like Harvard University and MIT, forms the foundation of the film's narrative. These implications for Southie residents are recurrent throughout the film. An example of this is the conversation between MIT professor Lambeau and his old MIT roommate, Sean Maguire, who is now a public college professor in South

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[340] Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera, "Revisioning Migration: On the Stratifications of Irish Boston in "Good Will Hunting"," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics,* no. 32 (2012): 206-227,

[341] Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

Boston. When Lambeau asks Sean to provide therapy for Will, it highlights a shared sense of identity and values that Bostonians are likely to recognise, offering spectators' insight into a fundamental characteristic of this neighbourhood.

> LAMBEAU: I need someone who can get through to him.
> SEAN: Like me?
> LAMBEAU: Yeah, like you.
> SEAN: Why?
> LAMBEAU: Well because you have the same kind of background.
> SEAN: What background?
> LAMBEAU: You're from the same neighbourhood.
> SEAN: He's from Southie?
> LAMBEAU: Yeah.
> SEAN: Boy genius from Southie. How many shrinks you go to before me?
> LAMBEAU: Five.[342]

Describing Will simply as "a boy genius from Southie" appears to encapsulate the essence of his character. This conversation also underscores the idea that each neighbourhood in Boston possesses its own distinctiveness, including its people, stories, and environments. Essentially, it suggests that individuals from the same spatial, social, and cultural background may share an inner connection that can serve as a narrative element. Mentioning a specific neighbourhood in this manner seems like a common and intuitive way to describe the unique identities of these neighbourhoods, communities, and their residents. Furthermore, in the film, Sean is portrayed as a man from South Boston, still living in the same neighbourhood, and unable to connect with his fellow alumni, unlike Lambeau, despite having attended the same university. Sean's South Boston background serves as a crucial element in understanding his character, with certain visual representations such as an Irish flag

[342] Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

in his office reinforcing this (Figure 17). The unseen class conflicts between Lambeau and Sean create a divide between them.



Figure 17 Sean's office (left) and his flat (right)[343]

Will and Skylar's relationship looks similar. While class conflicts exist in urban Boston, there is a chance that Will could have a deeper relationship with Skylar, who does not belong to South Boston. The fact that she hails from the UK, making her a total stranger in the city, might be a reason why Will can form a connection, as there is less preconceived bias against South Boston.

Considering the depiction of the men from South Boston, they are somewhat masculine while this characteristic is contrasted with elites from Harvard and MIT.[344] This is a characteristic that people from Southie are distinguished from such white-collar workers. The toughness of the Southie native is also shown in the first meeting between Will and Sean. When Will mocks Sean's painting and his deceased wife, Sean does not hesitate to grab Will's collar. This is definitely different with Lambeau, and other previous psychotherapists. The toughness displayed by the

[343] In Sean's office, an Ireland flag is decorated on the wall (left), also you can also see him in a Boston Red Sox jacket (right). Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

[344] Richard Rees, ""Good Will Hunting" or Wild Goose Chase?: Masculinities and the Myth of Class Mobility," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 29, no. 2 (Spring, 1999): 228-240, https://doi.org/10.1353/jnt.2011.0019.

Southie native is evident throughout the film. On several occasions, Will and his friends get into fights with other people or show their aggressiveness. The depiction of men from South Boston, their masculinity and toughness are not difficult to find in other films too.[345]

Additionally, there is a common representation for the Bostonian. The moment when Will opens his mind occurs when Sean recalls meeting his deceased wife. Sean says he chose to meet his wife and decided not to go to the memorable Boston Red Sox World series game which was held in 1975. While Will is listening to Sean's story about how the game was stunning, but he missed the game because of the date, Will is more energetic than before. The Boston Red Sox is a topic enjoyed by everyone in Boston. Along with the Boston Red Sox, a scene where Will and Chuckie have Dunkin' coffee portray a kind of typical daily life in Boston as well.[346]

Overall, *Good Will Hunting* demonstrates how the collective memories of residents contribute to shaping the narrative of Boston cinema, whether these representations are authentic or not.[347]

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[345] Further discussion on masculinity and its visual representation will be discussed in more detail later.

[346] These installations contribute to creating a detailed diegetic world.

[347] For example, Ben Affleck and Matt Damon recall that when they filmed a famous scene in a Cambridge bar, it was like the nexus of our social life in many ways because they spent a lot of time near that bar when they grew up there. In this respect, it can be considered as a kind of reflecting their personal memories. Nanos, "Good Will Hunting: An Oral History."

5.3 *Mystic River* written by Brian Helgeland[348]

In *Mystic River*, the theme of neighbourhood and divided community, particularly South Boston and its Irish Catholic working-class population, along with the constraints imposed by their surroundings, continuously appears. Furthermore, South Boston is also depicted as "an unescapable neighbourhood," illustrated through three different yet deeply connected characters. The three main characters–Jimmy (Sean Penn), Dave Boyle (Tim Robbins), and Sean Devine (Kevin Bacon)–are representing distinct lives within South Boston, each shaped by different fates despite their shared experiences in the same city and neighbourhood.[349]

In the present day, Jimmy and Dave are still stuck in the restraints of where they come from, while Sean has "escaped" from the town.[350] Although both Jimmy and Dave are still living in the past, Jimmy has quite a different status in the neighbourhood compared to Dave. This is evident in multiple ways in the film, such as Jimmy and his men, known as the Savage brothers. Jimmy runs a local supermarket in the town, all while commanding an Irish organised gang within the neighbourhood. Their status within the community becomes apparent when the body of Jimmy's daughter, Katie (Emmy Rossum), is found. Jimmy orders the Savage brothers to conduct a private investigation into her murder. It is also evident that people in the community are more cooperative and open when questioned by the

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[348] Also, this film is based on the novel of the same name by Dennis Lehane, a Boston native novelist and screenwriter.

[349] Nicolette Rowe, "Centrifugal Bostons and Competing Imaginaries in *Mystic River*," *Journal for Cultural Research* 12, no. 1 (2008): 82, https://doi.org/10.1080/14797580802090992. In this article, the author references James Sanders' concept of "two New Yorks, one real and one dreamed, each with its own history," and applies this idea to the portrayals of Dave Boyle and Sean Devine in *Mystic River*. Just as we all create our own dreamed spaces, the characters in the film also construct their own spaces.

[350] Sean used to hang around with Jimmy and Dave, but he grew up in a different neighbourhood and now lives in a different area from them.

brothers about the night when Katie died, compared to when detectives Sean Devine and Whitey Powers (Laurence Fishburne) investigate. This implies that the community places more trust in Jimmy and his men than in the police, as they are seen as insiders within the community. Although Jimmy's primary job in the neighbourhood is running a grocery store, his involvement in criminal activities towards the end of the film paints him as someone who still carries the memories of the old days, even as he tries to adapt to a new neighbourhood. However, this contrast in status is not applicable to Dave. He represents someone who is firmly entrenched in the Old Neighbourhood. After enduring abuse during his youth, a part of him remains trapped in that traumatic past, preventing him from moving forward or escaping the nightmares of his past. Furthermore, the film implies that Dave's old friends still remember his dark history, specifically the incident where he was kidnapped and abused. This inescapable past solidifies Dave's position as someone unable to adapt to the new Boston or, at the very least, fully detached from the community.

Similar to the depictions of characters like Will and Sean in *Good Will Hunting*, Jimmy's character in *Mystic River* frequently embodies typical aspects of a South Boston resident: Irish, Catholic, and working-class. He is unmistakably located within the inner circle of South Boston. Interestingly, this group of people, while considered part of the lower class in Boston society, are represented as dominant within South Boston. In the film, Jimmy emerges as the most quintessential Southie character among the three main characters. He embodies Irish heritage, fervent Catholicism, and certainly wields power within the neighbourhood, as evidenced by the narrative. His toughness becomes apparent when he seeks revenge for his daughter's death, in contrast to the less stereotypical Southie

character Dave, who is portrayed as more vulnerable.[351] Furthermore, Jimmy's violent quest for revenge on Katie's behalf, even his wife Annabeth (Laura Linney) refers to him as a King and takes pride in his actions.

Sean serves as a bridge character who is less concerned about the neighbourhood issues compared to Jimmy and Dave.[352] In this film, too, South Boston symbolises a "degenerate and inescapable" neighbourhood, although its residents still appear to take pride in their South Boston origins.[353]



Figure 18 Sean and Whitey are looking at the Old Neighbourhood[354]

The image above (Figure 18) is a still from the Sean's first appearance scene after they grew up. When Sean's colleague, Whitey, asks him what Sean is looking at,

[351] Roger Berkowitz and Drucilla Cornell, "Parables of Revenge and Masculinity in Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River,*" *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 1, no. 3 (2005): 316-332, https://doi.org/10.1191%2F1743872105lw025oa. As an example, the authors state on page 328, "tears are not his medium of grief."

[352] Sean's character is seen as a third party or a bridge between Jimmy and Dave. Even though he left South Boston physically many years ago and holds a respectable job as a state detective, unlike his two old friends, Katie's murder case reveals that the Old Neighbourhood still has a hold on him. See also, Berkowitz and Cornell, "Parables of Revenge and Masculinity in Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River,*" 316-332, and Rowe, "Centrifugal Bostons and Competing Imaginaries in *Mystic River*," 81-97.

[353] Rowe, "Centrifugal Bostons and Competing Imaginaries in *Mystic River*," 85.

[354] The different skylines indicate varying levels of development between the New Boston (right) and Old Boston (left). *Mystic River*, directed by Clint Eastwood (2003; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004), DVD.

Sean replies, "the old neighbourhood."[355] This scene shows that Sean no longer lives in the Old Neighbourhood where he used to reside when he was young, but he still carries memories and a sense of longing for the town. It implies that he might revisit it and have to address unresolved issues from the past. Furthermore, while Sean functions as a bridge between the Old and New Neighbourhoods, the film again highlights the difficulty of moving from the past, the neighbourhood he used to belong to, to the present and the nostalgia associated with the past.[356] Once more, the neighbourhood in Boston is perceived as an inescapable label, shaping one's identity, whether in a positive or negative way.

While depicting South Boston and its residents, the absence of racial diversity is worth noting. For example, Detective Whitey Powers, who comes from outside South Boston, serves as an observer in the film, witnessing the murder case and the tensions surrounding the three men. This dynamic is portrayed several times, such as when Sean initially recognises the victim (Jimmy's daughter, Katie) and explains that he may know her father, but they are not close. However, moments later, Whitey observes that Sean and Jimmy share a closer and deeper connection than Sean had initially described. Moreover, during Sean and Whitey's interview with Jimmy and his wife, they sit together at a table, while Whitey stands behind Sean.[357] The distance between them serves to illustrate two aspects of Whitey's role in the narrative. First, Whitey represents a third party who can objectively observe

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[355] This old neighbourhood refers to South Boston, where he spent his adolescence. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.

[356] Jimmy, Dave, and Sean lead separate lives in the city, yet their adolescent memories continue to influence their present. See, Rowe, "Centrifugal Bostons and Competing Imaginaries in *Mystic River*," 86-87.

[357] This also occurs when Sean and Whitey first question Dave, with Whitey symbolising an outsider in the narrative.

the crisis. Second, he symbolises a somewhat marginalised group of people in South Boston, often referred to as the Old Bostonians. This depiction of racial dynamics may be influenced by the city's history of racial tensions.[358]

The theme of neighbourhoods and communities, as well as the divided society in urban Boston, may seem familiar. On a larger scale, just as the US is composed of fifty states with distinct social and cultural context, Boston exhibits a similar aspect. While each state in the US may have slightly different cultures and laws, Boston operates under the same laws. However, there appear to be unseen borders with different implicit rules depending on the neighbourhood, as depicted in many Boston films such as *Mystic River* (or *Gone Baby Gone*, which will be discussed later in this chapter).

5.4 *The Departed* written by William Monahan[359]

Unlike other selected films for this chapter, *The Departed* started from a different page. While *Good Will Hunting* is created by Boston native screenwriters, and the other three films–*Mystic River, Gone Baby Gone,* and *The Town*–are based on novels created by Boston native writers and then adapted to scripts by Boston native screenwriters, *The Departed* is a remake of the Hong Kong film *Infernal Affairs* but adapted by Boston native screenwriter. In the course of the film, which takes Boston as a narrative setting, William Monahan, the screenwriter of this film, did not hesitate to use a long-time theme that Boston has, which is the code of community and neighbourhood. Furthermore, he borrows an idea from a real Boston case, the

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[358] For example, in South Boston and Charlestown, Boston failed to include African American in public housing projects. See, Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Rach, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 196-197.

[359] This film is based on the 2002 Hong Kong film *Infernal Affairs* (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak).

infamous gangster Whitey Bulger. Since the film uses a real figure, this infamous character influenced many basic settings in the film. Particularly, as Whitey Bulger committed criminal activities mainly in the South Boston area, this historical aspect, including his racial identity and conflicts with other racial and social criminal groups, is fairly similar. In other words, when the narrative is set in Boston, the film actively draws from Boston's history, such as its racial demographic and criminal histories. Like other films in this chapter, *The Departed* continuously emphasises the neighbourhood and community, with South Boston appearing as a central stage of the film's narrative, along with its Irish Catholic heritage.

One of the interesting aspects of *The Departed* is that the two main characters of the film have double identities–Billy Costigan (Leonardo DiCaprio) is an undercover police officer who pretends to work for Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson), while Colin Sullivan (Matt Damon) is a member of Costello's Irish mob but pretends to be a decent detective of the Massachusetts State Police. Both main characters have two identities, but their original identities within the state and the city are rooted in the same place–South Boston. While the film emphasises "identity" through its narrative, the fact that both characters have the same background also influences the narrative. As the narrative develops, commonly appearing representations of South Boston are actively used again. These representations include Boston as a crime city (certainly because of Southie), the distinctiveness of each neighbourhood and community, and the tension between them.

Billy Costigan represents a typical "Southie character" who cannot escape from his hometown.[360] Whether he intends or not, he is still surrounded by the Irish

[360] This is similar to Will Hunting and his friends or other main characters in films like *The Town*.

community. This depiction of the Irish community is a key element in the narrative of *The Departed*. For example, Billy's line "I'm fucking Irish. I'll deal with something being wrong for the rest of my life," implies this.[361] This ethnic based community, Irish, sometimes functions as a restraint that one cannot escape from and defines one's identity. For example, Billy has a criminal family background on his father's side. Although he has lived his life as a legitimate citizen, he cannot be accepted into the police department in a normal way. During his interview with potential bosses Captain Oliver Queenan (Martin Sheen) and Sergeant Sean Dignam (Mark Wahlberg), they treat Billy as "a double kid," judging Billy's adolescence as a time when he pretended to be upper middle class (on his mother's side) while still belonging to the Southie community (on his father's side).[362] This kind of stigma, coming from Southie, remains with a person throughout their life. Once again, the repetitive representation of one's socio-cultural milieu becomes a lifelong identity.

Dr. Madolyn Madden (Vera Farmiga), a police psychiatrist who has a romance with Colin and meets Billy professionally as part of Billy's probation, is similar to Skylar from *Good Will Hunting* or Claire from *The Town.* As a white-collar worker and Harvard alumni, she plays a role that observes the inner circle of Boston from an outsider's perspective. She also represents Colin's desire, which is to distance himself from his real identity and move up in society. The presence of her character accentuates the polarised nature of urban Boston, a city that leads in cutting-edge technology and biotechnology industries and hosts several world-class universities. This bipolarisation, which is evident in urban Boston is also caught

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[361] Scorsese, *The Departed*.

[362] During the interview, Sean Dignam accuses Billy Costigan as follows: "You were kind of a double kid, I bet, right?" "You have different accents? You did, didn't you. you little fucking snake?" Scorsese, *The Departed*.

through Costello's criminal activities. While he engages in typical mafia activities like the drug business, he also steals microprocessors and attempts to sell the chips to a Chinese gang. This shed light on urban Boston's place within contemporary urban society. Interestingly, through the criminal activities, the film emphasises stereotypical "Irishness," but Costello's character is depicted somewhat differently compared to other Irish characters.



Figure 19 Costello mocks Catholic priests and a nun[363]

In terms of Irishness and Costello, the film also portrays typical Irish characteristics that emphasise South Boston characters. While Costello's behaviour towards Catholicism leans more towards desecration, setting him apart from the others, characters like Billy and other mob members exhibit strong Irishness (Figure 19).[364] For example, Costello leads Irish gangsters and occasionally references James Joyce, an Irish novelist, but he is not confined by his identity. However, Costello does not use his identity simply to fit into a particular mould.[365] Instead, he leverages his identity to amass fame, wealth, and power. Costello unmistakably positions himself as someone who challenges the prevailing norms of Irish Boston's social

[363] Scorsese, *The Departed*.

[364] Colin is also an Irish Catholic from South Boston, but in his pursuit of mainstream success within urban Boston society, he has consciously distanced himself from his old community.

[365] Costello even sells information about Irish mobs within the community to the FBI for money.

politics.[366] While it is true that Costello's character defies certain conventional depictions of the Old Bostonian, it is essential to remember that he is deeply entrenched in a life of crime. However, this does not negate the fact that Costello's character remains deeply connected to Irishness and the Old Bostonian society. For instance, the film opens with Costello's narration, accompanied by non-fiction footage of Boston's busing crisis in the 1970s and the racial tensions of that era. Through this visual storytelling, Costello interprets the city of Boston in his own way, and he does not shy away from using racial slurs like the N-word.[367] This not only suggests his lack of fear in employing such language due to his considerable power but also underscores his ties to the Old Neighbourhood, which was once marked by a history of racial discrimination.[368]

Examining the moments when Costello becomes aware of Billy's existence and recruits him, we can observe the Irish identity within the neighbourhood. In a small store located in South Boston, Billy overhears some insulting words from an Italian gang from Providence, Rhode Island: "Business is bad? You opened a store in an Irish neighbourhood. These are dirty people. Don't you know that?"[369] This tension between the Irish community, primarily located in South Boston, and other communities such as Italian gangs from outside of Boston, is a recurring theme in the film. It highlights the ethnic tension between the Irish and other groups, particularly the Irish and Italian populations in South Boston. This tension implies

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[366] Jinhua Li, "From *Infernal Affairs* to *The Departed*: Meta City, Non-city, and Crime City: Remaking Hong Kong Gangster as Boston Mafia," *Cineaction!* 93 (2014): 33.

[367] A blend of non-fiction history, a fictional character loosely inspired by a real figure, and a fictional narrative convincingly creates a realistic filmic world for the audience.

[368] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom,"164.

[369] Scorsese, *The Departed*.

that those who identify as Irish hold a central position within the community. Within South Boston, as well as in some other neighbourhoods including Charlestown, Irish Catholics argue that they represent the Old Bostonians. This perspective stems from the large influx of Irish Catholic immigrants who arrived in Massachusetts after the early 1820s.[370] Additionally, events like the Boston busing crisis and the South Boston Public Housing project further exacerbated the tensions between these communities.[371] Given the historical context, it is a reasonable conclusion that the habit of Southie residents frequently labelling themselves as the owners of South Boston can be seen as a response to conflicts over territorial possession as a means of asserting their identity.[372]

Considering the character settings, it is interesting to contemplate what would have happened if the film had chosen a different city. In this regard, *The Departed* demonstrates that Boston serves not just as a backdrop but as a "tangible cultural component", effectively claiming the "ownership of the story.[373] In other words, when screenwriters aim to create a believable cinematic world, the choice of Boston

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[370] Marilynn S. Johnson, *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area Since the 1960s* (Amherst and Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 14-15, 41. This happened particularly when they started arriving in growing numbers from Ireland to the US in the 1820s. Besides Irish immigrants, new groups of immigrants from Italy, Russia, and other European countries became the largest groups after the 1880s. This happened particularly since they started arriving in growing numbers from Ireland to the states in the 1820s.

[371] See, Michael Rezendes, "Racial Tension Rises in Boston Project As White Prepare for Black Neighbors," *The Washington Post,* January 29, 1988, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/01/29/racial-tension-rises-in-boston-project-as-whites-prepare-for-black-neighbors/5e7bbecb-c7b4-4d2b-a46b-2420caf3e559/; Gerald H, Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholic Stayed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

[372] Silvia Dibeltulo, "Tales of Loss, Betrayal, and Regain: Irishness and Ethnic Identity in Contemporary Irish-Themed American Gangster Films," in *Rethinking Genre in Contemporary Global Cinema,* eds. Silvia Dibeltulo and Ciara Barrett (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 33-47.

[373] Li, "From *Infernal Affairs* to *The Departed*: Meta City, Non-city, and Crime City: Remaking Hong Kong Gangster as Boston Mafia," 33.

with its specific representations in these selected films might indeed be the most obvious and effective choice.[374]

5.5 *Gone Baby Gone* written by Ben Affleck and Aaron Stockard[375]

The selected films in this chapter present their filmic worlds with specific spatial settings. Specifically, the three films I explored earlier in this chapter unfold narratives based in South Boston. These films suggest specific depictions of what Southie and Southie people look like, how they live, and who they are. Furthermore, the films do not forget to depict social conflicts and tensions between Southie and other communities, as well as the transformation into the urban city of Boston. Moreover, these insular neighbourhood cultures are the basis of the narratives.[376] In *Gone Baby Gone*, the main narrative is set in Dorchester, the city's largest and most diverse neighbourhood, located just next to South Boston. Unlike *Good Will Hunting*, *The Departed*, or *The Town*, the film provides fewer direct descriptions of certain residents of the neighbourhoods or the neighbourhoods themselves. However, the film once again emphasises the idea of a structured neighbourhood with certain boundaries in Boston. Ben Affleck, the director and co-screenwriter of this film, reflects on why he decided to adapt Dennis Lahane's novel to the screen, stating that

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[374] Even though this is an interview for a different film, Ben Affleck recalls that when he was filming *Good Will Hunting* in South Boston to capture a "taste of Boston," Even though this is an interview for a different film, Ben Affleck recalls when he was filming *Good Will Hunting* in South Boston to catch a "taste of Boston," he was worried about the fact that Whitey Bulger was still around. This suggests a kind of "public image" and "common memories" shared by the inhabitants. See, Nanos, "Good Will Hunting: An Oral History."

[375] Also, this film is based on the novel of the same name by Dennis Lehane.

[376] Boston is famous for "place-based memory and local interaction," which are central elements in terms of "social and cultural identity." In addition, the city has a distinctive aspect in which strong neighbourhood identities are perceived in local culture, leading to discursive interactions within the city. Anthony Bak Buccitelli, "Virtually a Local: Folk Geography, Discourse, and Local Identity on the Geospatial Web," *Western Folklore* 72, no. 1 (Winter, 2013): 29-58.

he understands "the characters and the world they live in."[377] In other words, this once again highlights how screenwriters' personal observations, linked to "I know," are incorporated into the script.

Before *Gone Baby* Gone, Ben Affleck co-wrote a Boston-based narrative, *Good Will Hunting*, in 1997 with Matt Damon. After that, he wrote this film with Aaron Stockard, who is also a Boston native screenwriter. Similar to his previous film, this one includes a lot of implications about the identities of both neighbourhoods and communities.[378] The film begins by depicting the everyday lives of various people in the Boston neighbourhood of Dorchester. While the film illustrates the ordinary days of the Bostonians, Patrick Kenzie (Casey Affleck), a private investigator in Boston tasked with investigating a child abduction, starts his narrations as follows.[379]

> PATRICK: I always believed. It was the things you don't choose that makes you who you are. Your city. Your neighbourhood. Your family. People here take pride in these things. Like it was something they'd accomplished. The bodies around their souls. The cities wrapped around those.[380]

Patrick's narration conveys the idea that people cannot choose their entire lives on their own; life must be somewhat connected to the environments that include one's

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[377] Charles McGrath, "Redemption Hunting," *The New York Times,* October 14, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/movies/14mcgr.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

[378] Ben Affleck and Aaron Stockard teamed up again for another Boston-based film, *The Town*, in 2010. This film will be discussed later in this chapter.

[379] Patrick Kenzie is a fictional character created by Dennis Lehane. Lehane wrote several novels featuring this character, and all that stories set in Boston. See, Dennis Lehane, "Books," Dennis Lehane, accessed April 27, 2024, https://dennislehane.com/books/.

[380] With Patrick's narration, the urban landscape of Boston after the city's school desegregation is visually delivered. Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

city, neighbourhood, and family. This suggests place-based memory and a life deeply rooted in Boston.

The main story of the film revolves around the investigation of the abduction of a four-year-old girl, Amanda McCready (Madeline O'Brien), and the tragic truth behind it. Local private investigator couple Patrick and Angie Gennaro (Michelle Monaghan) are at the centre of the narrative. While the film primarily focuses on the abduction case, it also provides certain representations of Boston that are linked to the strong identity of the neighbourhood and the rigid interactions between them. First of all, although neither of them has experience in investigating child abductions, they were hired by the missing girl's aunt and uncle because they are believed to have better knowledge of the "local" and "neighbourhood." While local knowledge is indeed a key skill in such cases, this film goes a bit further in emphasising the neighbourhood aspect.[381] During their investigation, Patrick and Angie visit some places within the neighbourhood that only locals might visit. In those places, they also encounter several acquaintances and old friends, either by chance or on purpose, and ask them about the missing girl. As the aunt and uncle had hoped, local knowledge plays a significant role in the investigation. Patrick knows almost everyone who is related to the case. In this respect, Dorchester is depicted similarly to South Boston or Charlestown, which will be discussed later, as a small, tightly knit society with strong connections within the neighbourhood, much like a spider web.

[381] As a Dorchester native, Patrick's knowledge of the neighbourhood and its residents is considered valuable by the aunt and uncle. This is directly conveyed through lines such as when Patrick says, "I think Mrs. McCready was hoping we could help with the neighbourhood aspect of this investigation. The people, you know." Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

In a scene where Patrick and Angie visit Roxbury, an African American neighbourhood, to meet with the case detectives Detective Remy Bressant (Ed Harris) and Nick Poole (John Ashton), the audience can discern some key depictions that help understand Boston. For example, there are images of the Roxbury neighbourhood, which has a completely different environment compared to Dorchester (or other Old Neighbourhoods like South Boston, Charlestown, and Jamaica Plain), as almost everyone on the street is black, unlike Dorchester. The distinctiveness of each neighbourhood is one of the frequent representations that native screenwriters use in films.[382] Another depiction is the deep-seated prejudice in Boston regarding who truly owns the city. During their meeting at a diner in Roxbury, which is predominantly an African American community, except for Patrick, Angie, Bressant, and Poole, Patrick and Bressant have a brief conversation about Bressant's name.

> PATRICK: So, what kind of name is Bressant?
>
> BRESSANT: The kind they give you in Louisiana.
>
> PATRICK: I thought you were from here.
>
> BRESSANT: Well, it all depends on how you look at it. I mean, you might think that you're more "from here" than me, for example– but then again, I been living here longer than you been alive.[383]

This dialogue implies a certain "illusion" that Irish Bostonians think "only they are from here," even though Boston is composed of various ethnic groups, and Bressant came to settle down in the city even before Patrick was born. This fixed idea towards

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[382] For conducting investigation, Patrick also heads to Chelsea, and the appearance of Chelsea is distinguished from Roxbury. White working-class dominant neighbourhoods look more like South Boston. Also, this is quite similar to the missing girl's mother Helene McCready (Amy Ryan), who is a white working-class, drug addict and criminally negligent mother.

[383] Also, Patrick's t-shirt which has "Dublin Ireland" written on it suggests Patrick has Irish ethnic background, and at the same time he represents a kind of inner circle within the neighbourhood. Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

the city, and more specifically, the neighbourhood, defines the Old Bostonian who really belongs to the city, certainly supporting the main narrative. Moving back to Patrick's narration in the opening scene, his description of himself and the city reflects a strong sense of belonging and territoriality, characteristic of the Old Boston.

> PATRICK: I've lived on this block my whole life. Most of these people have. When your job is to find people who are missing, it helps to know where they started. I find the people who started in the cracks. And then fell through. This city can be hard.[384]

In the film, after Patrick finds Amanda and the kidnapper, he decides to send her back to her mother, even though the mother is not capable of raising a child, and the kidnapper might be more capable of taking care of her (Figure 20).[385]



Figure 20 Patrick and Jack Doyle (Morgan Freeman) at Doyle's house[386]

However, at the end of the film, he discovers that Amanda is once again left alone at home without proper parental care. Considering this ending and Patrick's decision, we can interpret it in the context of Patrick's opening narration, which suggests that

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[384] Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

[385] It was Bressant and Amanda's uncle, Lionel McCready (Titus Welliver), who kidnapped Amanda. The police captain was also a part of this conspired kidnapping, as he is taking care of Amanda and living with her at his house. They believed it would be better for Amanda to live separately from her poorly parented mother.

[386] Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

people belong to the city, neighbourhood, and family. The milieu determines one's life through the neighbourhood and community. Patrick's decision also involves one's life as a member of the neighbourhood. He possesses the ability to handle certain cases due to his social and cultural background, having grown up in the neighbourhood. Simultaneously, it underscores that he is an integral part of the local structure.[387]

As a result, the film focuses on a specific case, the abduction. Unlike *Good Will Hunting*, *The Departed*, or *The Town*, this film does not directly address "we are from Southie," or "we are the Old Bostonian." Instead, it indirectly illustrates the lives of the Old Bostonian and depicts what their lives are like within the neighbourhood, emphasising the tight boundaries and identities based on and between the neighbourhood. It also highlights the distinctiveness of each neighbourhood in the city.

5.6 *The Town* written by Peter Craig, Ben Affleck, and Aaron Stockard[388]

Giuliana Bruno suggests that the film is a travel story, with narratives generated by a place.[389] This suggests that the place inspires certain narratives, known as place-based narratives, much like the Boston films introduced in this chapter. Boston native writers Ben Affleck and Aaron Stockard's second film, *The Town*, also exemplifies this idea. While the first four films primarily focus on South Boston as

[387] See, Scott Krzych, ""The Things You Don't Choose": Ethics, Singularity, and Gone Baby Gone (2007)," *Discourse* 39, no. 1 (Winter, 2017): 136, https://doi.org/10.13110/discourse.39.1.0117.

[388] This film is based on the novel *Prince of Thieves* by Chuck Hogan, who is also a Boston native novelist.

[389] Bruno, "City Views: The Voyage of Film Images," 46.

the Old neighbourhood and community, characterised by Irish, Catholic, and working-class elements, *The Town* similarly uses Charlestown as a symbol for these particular representations (Figure 21).[390] The film clearly states in the beginning that it will be discussing the Charlestown neighbourhood, providing three quotes, establishing specific preconceived impressions or premises.

> Quote one: One blue-collar Boston neighbourhood has produced more bank robbers and armored car thieves than anywhere in the world. Charlestown
>
> Quote two: "Bank robbery became like a trade in Charlestown, passed down father to son." – Federal Agent Boston Robbery Task Force
>
> Quote three: "I'm proud to be from Charlestown. It ruined my life, literally, but I'm proud." – Charlestown Man *Boston Globe*[391]



Figure 21 Charlestown neighbourhood[392]

For a filmmaker who grew up in Cambridge, Charlestown was a different world with a notorious reputation for crimes, including armed robbery.[393] In this regard, I argue

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[390] On some level, its narrative appears to feature nearly identical characters in a different neighbourhood. Furthermore, as the film's title suggests, it is truly about the "town."

[391] *The Town*, directed by Ben Affleck (2010; Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures), DVD.

[392] The film begins with a city view from its main setting, the Charlestown neighbourhood (left and right). In the foreground, there is the Bunker Hill Monument (left), and on the right side of the shot, there is the Zakim Bridge, connecting the centre of Boston to the Charlestown neighbourhood. Affleck, *The Town*.

[393] Siegel, "The Oral History of 'The Town'." Based on FBI statistics, the *Boston Globe* article, pointing out that Charlestown had more armoured car robbers than any other in the country, inspired Chuck Hogan, the writer of the original novel for this film.

that the "common sense" or "collective memory" of what inhabitants shared through their time, whether this observation is objectively true or not, even if the story is merely hearsay, it does not matter. But it is more like constructed images of the city with certain selective representations.

The struggles faced by the Old Bostonian as gentrification takes place are vividly depicted in *The Town*. The film frequently shows characters grappling with the changes in a gentrified Boston, the "New" Boston, which is starkly different from the place they used to call home. This theme also resonates in other Boston films such as *Good Will Hunting* and *Mystic River*. The struggle to adapt to a new urban environment where old habits and ways of life and labours are no longer prevalent is a common theme among the Old Bostonians. Characters like Will and Chuckie in *Good Will Hunting*, as well as Doug MacRay (Ben Affleck) and James Coughlin (Jeremy Renner) in *The Town*, exemplify this theme.[394] The kid on a bike from *Gone Baby Gone* who shouted at Patrick in the Old Boston neighbourhood, saying "Go fuck your mother!" and "Beat it, sucker," in a very strong Boston accent, might have grown up to be someone like Chuckie or Doug in the real world.[395] Since the 1980s, Boston has undergone significant changes, and particularly since the 1990s, it has become a more racially and ethnically diverse place, although the extent of this change varies by town and neighbourhood. The social and economic change were evident in many ways and at various levels. For example, among the neighbourhoods in Boston, particularly South Boston, East Boston, Charlestown, and parts of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain, home values, rent, incomes, and

[394] In *Good Will Hunting*, Will's friends support him in finding a new life, and the film ends with Will on the verge of embarking on a fresh start.

[395] Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone*.

education levels saw significant increases.[396] The social changes were closely tied to class conflictions and the division of communities, resulting in a society that was not easily blended. However, those who were identified as low income, Catholic, Irish, and white working-class individuals were seen as the Old Bostonians, and they could exert their influence within their neighbourhoods. Jimmy in *Mystic River* and Doug in *The Town* are prime examples of this phenomenon. These specific social and historical changes that lifelong residents might have experienced throughout their lives within urban Boston are expressed in narratives by Boston native screenwriters. As a result, already seen in *Good Will Hunting*, the conflict between the Old and New Bostonians, or their engagement with each other, has become a recurring theme.

In terms of the Old Bostonian's association with the new Bostonians, *The Town* illustrates a shift in Doug's relationships.[397] At the beginning of the film, he is dating Krista Coughlin (Blake Lively), who is Doug's best friend James' sister. However, his romantic interest shifts from her to Claire Keesey (Rebecca Hall), who represents the New Bostonian archetype, well-educated and a white-collar worker from outside of Charlestown (or Boston). Unfortunately, Doug meets Claire at the bank where Doug and his gang robs, while she is an assistant manager at the bank. After robbing a bank, Doug falls in love with Claire and starts dating her. This relationship changes, Doug's unexpected experience creates uncertain tension and a crisis between Doug's friends (the Old Bostonian community) and Doug's curiosity

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[396] Alexander Hermann, David Luberoff, and Daniel Mccue, "Mapping Over Two Decades of Neighorhood Change in the Boston Metropolitan Area," *Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University,* (2019)

[397] This is quite similar to Will's case in *Good Will Hunting*, as Will starts dating Skylar (a Harvard student who is soon to be a medical student of Stanford), his life takes a step closer to the new Bostonians.

and desire for the New Bostonian world (the white-collar workers' community with stable and decent jobs).[398] An interesting repetition is found in this film as well, which is the habit of the Old Bostonians labelling themselves as "Townie" and separating themselves from others.[399] This "classification" is evident in a conversation during Doug and Claire's first date. Claire tells him that she volunteers at the club in Charlestown, and some of the kids were calling her a "Toonie."[400] Then, Doug explains that "it just means a yuppie. Someone who's not from Charlestown, that's all."[401]

Moving back to the collective memory by native screenwriters, these selective representations penetrate the film's narrative setting. To provide further context for the origin of the term "Toonie" in the conversation between Claire and Doug, as I mentioned above, Doug adds that,

> DOUG: It comes from back in the '90s, like... the Toonies supplied all the tunes to Charlestown... because once they moved in, the Townies stole all their car stereos. So, all of a sudden, everyone in Charlestown... had a Blaupunkt in their car, you know what I mean?[402]

This slang and its origin are anecdotes passed down by word of mouth among the inhabitants. Moreover, it suggests a specific image of Charlestown, irrespective of substantial evidence. By shaping the city with these selective representations, Charlestown, once again like South Boston, is designed as a place filled with lower class individuals and criminals. The amplification of only a part of the

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[398] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 167-168.

[399] "Townie" refers to a Boston native who was born and raised in Boston, typically never left the city, and continues to live in the same town, often with the same group of people.

[400] "Toonie" is Boston slang that signifies the opposite of "Townie."

[401] Affleck, *The Town*.

[402] Affleck, *The Town*.

neighbourhood and its residents has contributed to the construction of Boston's cinematic narrative. For example, the screenwriters of *The Town*, Ben Affleck and Aaron Stockard, openly acknowledge that when they decided to make this film, they aimed to infuse their perspective. While the original novel was penned by a Boston native writer, these two, who spent their childhood in the Boston area, sought to incorporate more of their local knowledge.[403] Consequently, they depict Charlestown in a distinct manner, quite unlike other neighbourhoods like Cambridge or Back Bay. Doug's observation that the city would not put any money into Charlestown, despite the community facing significant economic challenges and imbalanced development, conveys the "Townie" perspective towards the city and their certain, but predetermined, fate.

Once again, the theme of neighbourhood and community centred in Boston narratives, and behind them there are native screenwriters who were willing to put their cognitive images and representations of their hometown into films.

5.7 Conclusion

In the exploration of the five selected films mentioned above, it becomes evident that Boston cinema, as created by Boston native screenwriters, shares common themes. The city, its neighbourhoods, and the sense of community are fundamental elements that underpin Boston's cinematic narrative. As a result, it is revealed that a key element in shaping Boston in films is the depiction of the distinctive characteristics of each neighbourhood and community within the city. In other words, distinctive communities in Boston may be the way how Bostonian screenwriters observe their

[403] Siegel, "The Oral History of 'The Town'."

city. They define Boston not as a monolithic entity but rather as a composition of distinct neighbourhoods, each comprising its unique community. This approach not only distinguishes Boston from other cities but also depicts Boston as a collection of distinct neighbourhoods, each comprising distinctive communities. In doing so, it effectively shrinks Boston, revealing its inner divisions, and defines the city as a composite of these unique neighbourhoods.

From South Boston neighbourhood which almost decides Will's future in *Good Will Hunting*; restraints Jimmy, Dave, and Sean's lives in the past in *Mystic River*; also where Billy and Colin cannot finally escape from and defines their identities in *The Departed*, or Dorchester neighbourhood where surrounds Amanda's fate in *Gone Baby Gone*, to Charlestown where force Doug to grab a gun in *The Town*, using notions of neighbourhoods and communities in Boston have been continuously and constantly shown in Boston cinema. The idea of the city is already a popular theme in Boston cinema narratives. In a broader context, Boston itself is a distinct city that attracts filmmakers as a narrative setting due to its geographical and cultural benefits.[404] However, this is not the only concept that Boston embodies. If we take a close look at the city, we can see that the city is also perceived through the understanding of the different characters that each neighbourhood and community possess. Furthermore, it involves how these smaller entities coexist with others within the city. Certain characteristics that Boston is famous for, such as the Boston Red Sox or Boston Celtics, suggest the idea of a "united Boston" or "one Boston." Characters in Boston cinema often appear wearing Boston Red Sox caps or

[404] See, "Chapter 3. Mapping Boston Cinema: Cultural and Historical Geography of Cinema and the Cinematic History of Boston" and "Chapter 4. The Political Economy of the Cinematic City: Massachusetts and the Regional Film Offices, 1977-Present." In both chapters, I briefly explore why Boston is an attractive place for Hollywood filmmakers.

uniforms, proudly identifying themselves as Bostonians. However, when we closely observe more, Boston is a city that is undoubtedly divided, both in good and bad ways. The city is an amalgamation of diverse and varied groups of people and their neighbourhoods. Moreover, the unique characteristics of each group often lead to tensions and conflicts between them within the narratives of Boston cinema.

In respect of creating a more convincing or familiar world with detailed characters, an accent may be the case that Boston makes Boston feel more like Boston. However, it is difficult to cast actors and actresses who can speak the region's dialect fluently. Thus, sometimes it becomes the reason why certain actors/actresses are casted for the role. Now, this is a famous Hollywood story: when Ben Affleck was filming his directorial debut film *Gone Baby Gone*, he tried to cast Boston local actors and actresses along with the main actor, Casey Affleck.[405] This is how Boston natives design Boston cinema. It is also the moment when screenwriters' imagination for the film is successfully translated onto screen. Moreover, considering specific accents and their visual adaptation on the big screen, the screenwriters' detailed geographical imagination surely becomes their strong asset. This detailed knowledge and imagination serves as tools for the screenwriters, making the cinematic world more convincing.

In terms of the screenwriters' goal to make their work "convincing" for the audience, it might be an obvious or easier choice to stick with this socially and culturally based theme. While some films based on true events, such as *Spotlight* and *Patriots Day*, also actively use certain representations that I have explored in this chapter–the theme of neighbourhoods and divided communities, like South Boston

[405] A younger brother of Ben Affleck.

and the Irish Catholic community–this frequently recurring theme might be considered "real" or "authentic," although it is difficult to define with a specific or conclusive explanation. However, this repetitiveness among native screenwriters might be a result of the collective memory and cognitive map of the city they have gained from their life experiences. Considering this collective memory or cognitive map of the city, which is influenced by the screenwriters' experiences, certain historical contexts, such as the portrayal of Irish characters, might be reflected. Boston is well known for its dominant Irish Catholic community, and the city is often referred to as the "capital of Irish America."[406]

The certain representations that indicate the theme of neighbourhood and community, particularly South Boston, Dorchester, and Charlestown, along with their residents create narratives that are predominantly focused on white males. Indeed, the majority of characters in these films are Irish Catholic and working-class from "remnants of the immigrant-ethnic industrial neighbourhood" like South Boston, Dorchester, and Charlestown.[407] Conversely, in the selected Boston cinematic world, well-educated and white-collar works from outside of "the Old Neighbourhoods" are treated like minorities, even though they often have affiliations with Harvard, MIT, or other cutting-edge business sectors. Furthermore, the narratives frequently depict the struggles of these characters in adapting to the new urban order and the related social strata.

Regarding the place-based narratives of native screenwriters, there is another similar example in Boston cinema. Take a more recent film that was released in

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[406] Johnson, *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area Since the 1960s*, 14-15.

[407] Rotella, "The Boston Movie Boom," 163.

2016: *Manchester by the Sea*. The film was written and directed by Kenneth Lonergan, who has no connection with Boston or Massachusetts. However, it is not a secret that the initial idea for this film came from two Boston natives, John Krasinski and Matt Damon. John Krasinski came up with the story outline, "a young man from Manchester, Massachusetts, who left the area because of personal tragedy, returns when his brother dies."[408] In a small town like Manchester by the Sea, located about forty kilometres northeast of Boston, people cannot live anonymously. Lonergan believes that each place creates a unique environment, so he researched those areas and integrated each place into the film as if it were a character.[409] When the film's setting is ready to generate the story, consider how the place influences the construction of characters who live there.[410] In other words, the place itself is a character that generates place-bound narrative.

To conclude this chapter, the screenwriters' choices of certain representations–characters, neighbourhoods, communities, class, and socio-geographical elements–have shaped Boston cinema and its narratives for more than the past couple of decades. This significance became more vivid after *Good Will Hunting*. While the author of the original novel and another Boston native, Dennis Lehane, consistently explored the theme of South Boston, *–Mystic River* and *Gone*

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[408] James Mottram, "Manchester by the Sea's Kenneth Lonergan interview: 'There's nothing to support the idea that people wouldn't go and see better movies! Nothing!" *Independent,* January 11, 2017, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/manchester-sea-kenneth-lonergan-interview-a7521881.html. Originally, Matt Damon was set to direct and star in the film, but due to scheduling conflicts, Kenneth Lonergan ended up directing and writing it, with Casey Affleck in the lead role.

[409] Kristopher Tapley, "With 'Margaret' Trauma Behind Him, Kenneth Lonergan Returns to Sundance with 'Manchester by the Sea'," *Variety,* January 21, 2016, https://variety.com/2016/film/features/kenneth-lonergan-manchester-by-the-sea-margaret-1201684542/.

[410] Matt Juul, "Manchester by the Sea Director Explains Hollywood's obsession with New England," *Boston Magazine,* November 17, 2016, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/arts-entertainment/2016/11/17/kenneth-lonergan-manchester-by-the-sea-interview/.

Baby Gone–when these works were adapted for the big screen, Boston native screenwriters also maintained South Boston as a central theme in their narratives. What we can find in common of the analysed films is that characters like Will and his friends from South Boston, Jimmy and his old friends from the Old Neighbourhood, and Billy from the same neighbourhood play roles as an "identity," not just a geological space. Aaron Stockard, co-screenwriter of *The Town*, recalls that when he was adapting Chuck Hogan's novel into a film, he felt like there was an entire world for them to discover: "we know this story, we know these people."[411] We assume from this that native screenwriters add symbolic implications based on their city legibility which includes not only physical landscape or landmarks, but also codes, feelings, and patterns that are shared by inhabitants for generations. In order to add a genuine "Boston flavour," which the natives would claim that this is our real history and authenticity, even if it represents only a part of the whole city, they construct Boston's cinematic narratives using these selective representations.

[411] Siegel, "The Oral History of 'The Town'."

6 Designing Boston Cinema: Constructed Visual Design of Boston Cinema

6.1 Visual Design, Structure, and Narrative

The visual design of a film is not solely determined by artistic choices; it also plays a crucial role in conveying the film's story and developing its characters. It helps viewers better understand the film's narrative, allowing them to immerse themselves in the imaginative cinematic world. Production design, for instance, begins with the films' storyline, shaping its overall look and atmosphere.[412] Both basic and sophisticated elements contribute to the visual design. However, the visual design of a film does not solely rely on the real physical world. While some aspects may mimic reality to create a fictional cinematic world, there are always gaps that must be filled with the filmmakers' own imaginations to fully bring the script to life.[413]

Speaking of the visual design of films set in Boston, the city is renowned for its gritty and grim portrayal on screen. While there are various depictions of Boston in the cinematic world, it is often observed that many of the films set in this city, especially those recognised at the box office or in awards, tend to embrace a gritty and grim aesthetic.[414] This recurring depiction shapes the image of Boston consistently, extending beyond narrative, genre, or context, and also influences its

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[412] For more on production design in film, see, Charles Affron and Mirella Jona Affron, *Sets in Motion: Art Direction and Film Narrative* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Charles S. Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998).

[413] See, Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film,* xiv.

[414] Here are some Boston representative films, including *Good Will Hunting*, *Mystic River*, *The Departed*, *Gone Baby Gone*, *Shutter Island*, *The Town*, *The Fighter*, *The Equalizer*, *Black Mass*, and *Spotlight*.

visual image of Boston. If the previous chapters discussed how Boston, Massachusetts native screen writers constructed the Boston cinematic world and the images of Boston from cultural and historical geography perspectives, this chapter delves specifically into the visual representation of Boston in films. It examines how the visual image of Boston has been designed through the lens of Boston cinema. While cinemagoers, journalists, and film critics often describe Boston cinema as gritty and grim, this chapter aims to uncover the specific aspects that contribute to Boston cinema's distinctive visual images.[415] This stereotypical characteristic attributed to Boston cinema is not only based on the narrative but is also created by visual design of these films. In this respect, I will explore how visual design contributes to building a more persuasive and significant Boston cinematic storytelling, enhances character development, and holds broader significance within the realm of Boston cinema's visual design.

One recurring theme that has been explored throughout Boston cinema and in this thesis is the concept of community and neighbourhood. In Boston narratives, this theme is often constructed around the divided people between the Old Boston and New Boston, as well as Boston and the areas outside the city. It is not merely shaped by the people, their history, and culture of Boston but is also mapped by the geography of the city itself. So, how is this theme of Boston cinema visually imagined, illustrated, and designed? It goes beyond showcasing symbolic

[415] See, Joe Queenan, "From the Departed to Black Mass – why is Boston always so grim onscreen?" *Guardian*, December 3, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/dec/03/from-the-departed-to-black-mass-why-is-boston-always-so-grim-onscreen. Even on Quora, there are several questions about Boston films, their gritty depictions, and crime-ridden portrayals. For example, "why is Boston Depicted as So Gritty and Crime Ridden in Films? Aren't Some of the Best Colleges in the World in Boston?" Quora, May 4, 2016, https://www.quora.com/Why-is-Boston-depicted-as-so-gritty-and-crime-ridden-in-films-Arent-some-of-the-best-colleges-in-the-world-in-Boston. Regardless of its reliability, it can be assumed that Boston films are renowned for certain depictions.

architecture; involves creating sophisticated scenes that build the cinematic world of Boston and contribute to delivering its narrative with enthusiasm and persuasion.

This chapter will provide an analysis of several representative Boston set films, including *Good Will Hunting*, *Mystic River*, *The Departed*, *Gone Baby Gone*, and *Spotlight*. These films have already been discussed in previous chapters, focusing on their cultural and historical geography, as well as their narratives from the perspective of Boston native screenwriters. While previous chapters delved into the context of films' characters, narratives, and productions, this chapter scrutinises the visual design aspects of these films and how Boston was visually shaped on screen, with a specific focus on the theme of community, neighbourhood, and the place-generated (place-inspired) narrative. Before examining the visual designs of the selected films, the chapter also briefly explores the visual atmosphere and designs of Boston in other visual arts, such as photographs, paintings, theatrical plays, and television series.

Visual Representations of Boston in Paintings, Stages, and Television Series

The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston 1630-1822, a book by historian Annie Haven Thwing, illustrates the development of the city of Boston between the 1600s and 1800s.[416] Regardless of the author's intended purpose for the images and text, the book provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the

[416] Annie Haven Thwing, *The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston: 1630-1822* (Boston, MA: Marshall Jones Company, 1920). The book not only includes stock images of Boston but also features imaginary illustrations of the city to fill the gaps in portraying the old town that no longer exists in images. Similar to Thwing's book, *Cityscapes of Boston: An American City Through Time* by Robert Campbell and Peter Vanderwarker (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992) provides over two hundred photographs of Boston taken between the 1800s and 1900s. These images allow readers to compare the Old and New Boston.

city's visual aspects.[417] As the book's title suggests, the old city appears to be filled with crooked and narrow streets. Focusing on these streets and capturing them from a vertical point of view (Figure 22) accentuates the city's visual character.[418] These culturally and socially scrutinised efforts to trace the development of the city and urban spaces through geography provide context for understanding how the geography of Boston has evolved. The author, who grew up in Boston and has spent years in other cities and countries, including Washington D.C., New York City, and London, showcases her unique perspective on Boston and how she visually represents the city through her work.



Figure 22 Corn Court, the Governor Hancock Tavern, 1920 (left), Salutation Street, Webster Avenue, Tileston Street, 1920 (middle), and Ridgeway Lane, the West Church, 1920 (right)[419]

The Handmaid's Tale (Hulu, 2017-) based on the 1985 novel of the same name by Margaret Atwood, is primarily set in Boston, encompassing broader areas including Cambridge. It stands as one of the most famous and recent series set in

[417] Similarly, Amy E. Johnson argues that standard stock images, such as Thwing's work, help shape our understanding of a visual language and a specific interpretation of the city, regardless of the photographer's original intention. Amy E. Johnson, "Crooked and Narrow Streets: Photography and Urban Visual Identities in Early Twentieth-Century Boston," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 47, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 35-64.

[418] It will be discussed later in this chapter; the narrow street and its vertical lines and shapes are easy to find in Boston films including *Gone Baby Gone* and *Spotlight*.

[419] Photographed by Annie Haven Thwing, quoted in Johnson, "Crooked and Narrow Streets: Photography and Urban Visual Identities in Early Twentieth-Century Boston," 44-46.

Boston, though it is important to note that the story unfolds in a futuristic dystopian world known as the "Republic of Gilead." While the series was primarily filmed in Toronto, Canada, it does provide viewers with some direct geographical markers from the original Boston, such as Arlington station and Fenway Park.[420] These recognisable landmarks serve to engage the audience and offer a basis for comparison between the "pre-Gilead Boston we know" and the "Gilead–formerly Boston" depicted in the show. Moreover, the appearance of Fenway Park plays a significant role in amplifying the oppressive atmosphere of this dystopian reality. Additionally, the series employs a muted and desaturated colour palette, further enhancing the overall oppressive and dystopian ambiance.

[420] Most importantly, in Atwood's novel, the original work is set in Boston as the author got a lot of inspiration from the Salem Witch Trials and other historical events that happened in Massachusetts. This is briefly explored in "Chapter 3. Mapping Boston Cinema: Cultural and Historical Geography of Cinema and the Cinematic History of Boston."



Figure 23 *The Handmaid's Tale* and Boston[421]

The use of colour in the current reality (Gilead) features vivid red (for handmaids, Figure 23, top-left), green (for wives of commanders), orange and warmer colours. In contrast, some parts of the city that are no longer used in Gilead are illustrated with dark and cool tones. This not only highlights tension but also symbolises the world and the characters themselves.

[421] Hulu's television series The Handmaid's Tale, base on the same name of novel by Margaret Atwood, takes place mainly in Boston. *The Handmaid's Tale*, created by Bruce Miller, aired 2017-, on Hulu. Hulu.



Figure 24 Boston set television series *City on a Hill*[422]

The other recent Boston set crime television series, *City on a Hill* (Showtime, 2019-2022), is another example that illustrates Boston as grime, gritty, and contributes its long standing cinematic image. The series depicts a gang of armoured car robbery based in 1990s Charlestown, Boston.[423] As it delivers these particular narratives and the atmosphere of the city, the television series keeps using its characteristic colours, contrasts, and tone (Figure 24). By controlling these visual elements, the series designs the overall visual atmosphere, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in the narrative. The foggy, grey coloured city with minimal lighting conveys how Boston is a city riddled with chronic crimes yet attempts to solve them.

[422] *City on a Hill, created by Chuck MacLean, aired 2019-2022, on Showtime, Showtime.*

[423] It is not difficult to recognise that there is already a similar narrative about Boston bank robbers based in Charlestown, namely Ben Affleck's 2010 film, *The Town*. However, despite both productions revolving around Boston bank robbers from Charlestown, and Affleck's involvement as a director and producer in each, the television series is not a mere copy of the film but rather an extension of the story. Furthermore, depictions of racial history and boundaries have been somewhat marginalised in Boston cinema until recently, despite a significant history of desegregation between the 1970s and the 1980s. Unlike previous Boston television series or films, *City on a Hill* directly addresses these conflicts and issues.



Figure 25 The National Theatre's production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in 2022-2023[424]

Visual representations of Boston in stage plays are not so different. The UK's National Theatre recently produced a new play, *The Crucible*, partly based on the famous Salem witch trials that took place in Massachusetts and written by Arthur Miller (Figure 25).[425] To convey the scary and paranoid atmosphere of that time, the play highlights troubled characters, darkens the overall atmosphere, and emphasises contrasts. These grim and dark visual designs are repetitive, making them the city's representative image.

[424] Photographed by Johan Persson, quoted in Lean Putnam, "Review: What Do Critics Think of *The Crucible* at London's National Theatre?" *Playbill*, September 29, 2022, https://playbill.com/article/reviews-what-do-critics-think-of-the-crucible-at-londons-national-theatre.

[425] Arthur Miller's play and its story have already been discussed in previous chapters.



Figure 26 Famous Boston paintings by Boston artists. New England Interior (Edmund C. Tarbell 1906) (left), At Dusk: Boston Common at Twilight (Frederick Childe Hassam 1885-1886) (up-right), and Rainy Day, Boston (Frederick Childe Hassam 1885) (down-right)[426]

There are some famous Boston paintings that illustrate the streetscape of Boston (Figure 26, right) and the interior of New England in the late 1800s (Figure 26, left). The slightly darkened and dull colour palette allows viewers to be reminded of the representative images of Boston. This long accumulated and deeply rooted atmosphere of the city can be observed through various media.

[426] From left to clockwise, "*New England Interior*," Edmund C. Tarbell, Museum of Fine Arts, accessed April 27, 2024, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/34680/new-england-interior?ctx=18253c40-efb3-4961-ae72-5cc16763c929&idx=10;, "*At Dusk: Boston Common at Twilight*," Childe Hassam, Museum of Fine Arts, accessed April 27, 2024, https://collections.mfa.org/objects/32415/at-dusk-boston-common-at-twilight?ctx=c2fa9f7f-0aeb-489f-9f79-a56fd233fa31&idx=0; and, "*Rainy Day, Boston*," Childe Hassam, Toledo Museum of Art, accessed April 27, 2024, http://emuseum.toledomuseum.org/objects/54984/rainy-day-boston.



Figure 27 *The Equalizer* (left) and *Boston Strangler* (right)[427]

Alongside other Boston set films that have already been mentioned, *The Equalizer* has a similar filmic atmosphere. The main character, Robert McCall, is a former Marine and CIA operative, now living a quiet retired life while working at Home Mart in Boston. However, he accidently involves himself with the Russian Mafia while helping a teenage prostitute, Alina (Chloe Grace Moretz), in the dark and crime-ridden city of Boston (Figure 27, left).[428] *Boston Strangler* (2023) is the most recent Boston set film, based on the true story of thirteen women who were killed by a serial killer in Boston during the 1960s. The film follows Boston Record American Reporter Loretta McLaughlin (Keira Knightley) and her senior colleague Jean Cole (Carrie Coon) as they investigate the case (Figure 27, right). Since both films are centred around crime, they both possess dark and gritty atmospheres. This repetitive use of visual darkness creates an association in viewers' minds between Boston and this particular visual aesthetic. Along with the visual atmosphere across various mediums, we can observe more varied and elaborate use of elements within

[427] Fuqua, *The Equalizer*; and *Boston Strangler,* directed by Matt Ruskin (2023; New York City, NY: Hulu), Hulu.

[428] In the case of *The Equalizer*, the film was originally set in New York. However, due to budgetary constraints and Boston's strong association with blue-collar storytelling, as well as its geographical features such as the harbour, Boston was chosen as a more grounded and suitable setting for the film. See, Mekado Murphy, "On Film, a City Shows Its Noir Side," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/movies/the-equalizer-portrays-bostons-mean-streets.html.

their specified structures in Boston films. Speaking of the visual elements, that includes contrast, colour, tone, and the overall atmosphere of the films. Furthermore, this also has a significant impact on highlighting the narrative's intensity.

6.2 Good Will Hunting

The conflicts between communities and neighbourhoods, particularly between the Old Bostonians and the New Bostonians, are the most significant and recurring themes in Boston set films, as I have already explored in the previous chapters. While *Good Will Hunting* is considered one of the earliest films that contributed to the establishment of a significant theme in Boston cinema, it more directly portrays the conflicts and differences between neighbourhoods and communities, evident not only through the characters' dialogue or locations but also through the use of visual elements.

Different movements and rhythms characterise the contrasting territories of South Boston (the Old Neighbourhood) and Cambridge (the New Neighbourhood). In locations like the baseball field and public basketball court, slow-motion camera movements capture the dynamics of Will's life with his friends in South Boston. In stark contrasts, moments in Cambridge, including those at MIT and Harvard, exhibit a markedly different pace and atmosphere. This different use of visual elements not only influences and enhances the characters and narrative but also constructs unique places and spaces, establishing distinguishable neighbourhoods and communities, each with its own characteristics. Rees also delves into class differences and social mobility in *Good Will Hunting*, with a particular focus on the masculinities of men

from different classes.[429] For instance, Will and his friends in South Boston share a strong bond reminiscent of family. In contrast, Lambeau and those in his circle, such as his old friend Sean and his MIT teaching assistant Tom, seem to have weaker bonds.[430] In terms of bonding, while Will and his hometown friends' friendship is portrayed masculine, Lambeau's somewhat possessive attitude towards Will, and his sole relationship with his male teaching assistant, Tom, appears to have a less heterosexual dynamic and may even be interpreted as somewhat homoerotic compared to Will's relationships.[431] The use of movement is a key means of portraying these two different communities. In Good Will Hunting, Gus Van Sant employs a straightforward visual strategy.[432] The energy and violence of South Boston stand in stark contrast to the haughty academia.

The most illustrative example of the contrast between two classes, which can also be likened to distinct communities and neighbourhoods, is the scene in which Will and his friends confront the guys who used to bully Will during his kindergarten days on a local basketball court (Figure 28). This scene stands out as one of the film's most intense moments, characterised by a blend of slow and fast movements. The alternation of speeds creates a sense of heightened tension, contributing to the development of character dynamics, particularly that of Will Hunting, and the central conflicts within the film's narrative.

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[429] Rees, ""Good Will Hunting" or Wild Goose Chase?: Masculinities and the Myth of Class Mobility," 228-240.

[430] Interestingly, when Sean tells Will a story about how he met his deceased wife, his strong bond with his hometown (South Boston) friends is revealed that is not shown in the relationship with Sean's MIT roommate Gerald.

[431] Liese Spencer, "Good Will Hunting," *Sight and Sound*, March, 1998, 50-51.

[432] Spencer, "Good Will Hunting," 50-51.



Figure 28 The fight scene[433]

The rhythm, similar to sound, visual also has its own distinct rhythm. As Block points out, visual rhythm is created through stationary objects, moving objects, and the editing process, while sound rhythm comprises three subcomponents: alternation, repetition, and tempo.[434] Rhythm plays a crucial role in creating intensity and facilitating the development of conflicts. In *Good Will Hunting*, the unpredictable alternation between fast and slow editing techniques generates a rhythm that accentuates the intensity of the fight scenes. This approach imparts a sense of chaos and energy to these sequences, distinguishing them significantly from the portrayal of the New Bostonian communities.

As shown in the figure above (Figure 28), the compound movements of the camera and actors create chaotic intensities and heighten the brutality and violence

[433] Will and his friend get into a fight with Will's old kindergarten friend who used to bully him. Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

[434] Bruce Block, *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media* (Milton, UK: Routledge, 2020), 223-243.

of Will's life. As mentioned earlier, the masculinity of South Boston is expressed through the visual structure. During the fight scene, the camera provides close-ups of each character's facial expressions to emphasise the violence in Southie. For example, when Will gets hit or bitten (Figure 28, top), or Morgan (Casey Affleck) throws the first punch (Figure 28, bottom), it maximises the moment, highlighting how brutal the fight is. However, the combination of the close-up shots and slow motion also adds an element of the ridiculous, almost childlike, to the scene.



Figure 29 The fight scene two[435]

In terms of the masculinity of people from Southie and its representation through the film's visual components, it is worth looking at Cooper's analysis.[436] Cooper focuses on hegemonic masculinity in the American cultural context within *Good Will Hunting*. In her article, she suggests that Will and his friends' masculinity and imprisonment affected by the milieu are depicted through the film's mise-en-

[435] Will and his friend get into a fight. It becomes a total mess. *Van Sant, Good Will Hunting.*

[436] Cooper, "Representative Men: Moral Perfectionism, Masculinity and Psychoanalysis in *Good Will Hunting*," 270-288.

scene. For example, in the fight scene, the sky occasionally shines, suggesting the possibility of escaping from the imprisonment enforced by external or institutional problems.[437] Additionally, the camera captures Will and his friends through a chain (Figure 29, top right). The imprisonment imposed by one's milieu, in the case of South Boston in *Good Will* Hunting, is eventually resolved in the ending, as Will decides to leave Boston for California to start a new chapter of his life with Skylar..[438]



Figure 30 The first therapy session[439]

Sean and Will's first therapy session provides another example of the masculinity and imprisonment of males from South Boston. While other psychologists express their displeasure using gentle verbal language, Sean abruptly grabs Will by the throat (Figure 30). This action occurs in an instant. Prior to this, Will and Sean have relatively slow and gentle movements, appearing calm and somewhat drowsy. However, when Sean grabs Will's throat, he moves swiftly. The portrayal of feeling

[437] Cooper, "Representative Men: Moral Perfectionism, Masculinity and Psychoanalysis in *Good Will Hunting*," 282-283.

[438] In regard to Will's finding freedom and the film's ending, Cooper provides a more detailed visual analysis of the final shot of the film in her article. See, Cooper, "Representative Men: Moral Perfectionism, Masculinity and Psychoanalysis in *Good Will Hunting*," 279-280.

[439] Sean Maguire and Will Hunting's first therapy session. Will insults Sean's deceased wife and Sean gets upset. Van Sant, *Good Will Hunting.*

offended and angry in this manner underscores that Sean, like Will and his friends, hails from South Boston.

Overall, the use of fast and slow movements and rhythms created by the camera, actors, and editing controls the narrative, defining the nature of each neighbourhood and community, as well as where each character belongs.

6.3 Mystic River

Clint Eastwood's 2003 film *Mystic River* is set in a fictitious neighbourhood in Boston called East Buckingham but drew inspirations from East and South Boston, also the film itself was shot in these neighbourhoods. The film portrays three childhood friends who grew up together in an Irish American working-class neighbourhood but went on to have different futures after a childhood tragedy. The film begins with the tragic childhood story of three friends: Jimmy Markum (Sean Penn), Dave Boyle (Tim Robbins), and Sean Devine (Kevin Bacon). While they are playing together on the hometown street, two mysterious men in suits approach them and kidnap Dave. Dave eventually manages to escape from his captors after a couple of days but endured sexual abuse, which traumatised him for entire life. Twenty-five years later, they each have their own families and lives in Boston.[440] Although more than two decades have passed, Dave is still haunted by his childhood tragedy. One day, when Jimmy's daughter is found dead, the three friends encounter each other in their hometown community, under different circumstances and confront their old memories.

[440] Dave and Jimmy still live in their old hometown while Sean lives in a different neighbourhood in Boston. Jimmy, an ex-convict, runs a convenience store in the neighbourhood and Sean becomes a Massachusetts State Police detective.

Since the film follows the three characters after the death of Jimmy's daughter and its investigation, it gradually portrays their confrontation with the trauma from the past. The visual structure of the film is designed to create an atmosphere that supports the story and emphasises the contrast between the past and present, Dave's life, and those of the other characters. To underscore this contrast, the film's most distinctive feature is its use of contrast and tone among various visual components. Throughout the film, a dark and gritty atmosphere is intentionally maintained to support the narrative. The film highlights the extreme contrast and the visual intensity that was generated by contrast, illustrating the characters' struggle to move forward in the face of past tragedy.



Figure 31 Dave and his son[441]

The scene above (Figure 31) is from the beginning, taking place twenty-five years after the tragedy. Dave and his son are returning to the neighbourhood after a

[441] Dave and his son are coming back home from baseball play. They are walking into the street where young Dave was kidnapped. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.

baseball game, and Dave shares a funny story with his son related to how he used to play with a ball on that street. This triggers Dave's trauma. The darkness in the scene symbolises Dave's traumatic past, including his abduction, sexual abuse, and detachment from his old friends after the tragedy. At the same time, this dark past is intertwined with the Old Neighbourhood, which is saturated with inescapable trauma. Whether the abduction affected Dave or his friends Jimmy and Sean, who now led seemingly different lives, they all left their friend behind in the past. The film skilfully employs visual elements to depict the characters' situations and conflict through tone control.



Figure 32 Dave[442]

The film consistently emphasises the extreme contrast in tone to generate emotional intensity among the characters. In the scene (Figure 32), Dave tries to confide in his wife, Celeste (Marcia Gay Harden), for the first time, although the conversation does not go well. In that scene, only parts of Dave's and Celeste's faces are revealed during their conversation. The shadowed portrayal of Dave's face, created by the high contrast, accentuates the aspect of his character that is still entangled in the past. Here (Figure 33) is another example of the contrast in tone. It

[442] Dave's wife Celeste doubts his innocence in the murder of Jimmy's daughter due to his suspicious behaviour on the night of the death. Dave tries to tell his history of abduction for the first time. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.

is difficult to see Jimmy and Dave's faces and hard to read their facial expressions. These extreme tonal contrasts heighten the dramatic tension of the film and underscore the lingering influence of the past on Dave and his childhood friends' lives. Moreover, while Jimmy and Sean's appearances are depicted in much brighter tones, such as when Jimmy attends a Catholic service or Sean is working at a crime scene or the police department, the overall tone becomes darker when they move to the Old Neighbourhood (where Dave belongs), emphasising the difference between the old and new neighbourhoods.



Figure 33 Jimmy and Dave[443]

The film also utilises depth as a distinctive element in its visual structure. While screens are technically two-dimensional and lack depth, the film cleverly employs depth cues to create an illusion of depth, allowing viewers to engage more realistically with the images. Notably, the film's use of depth follows a pattern, both at the beginning and end, similar to rhyme schemes.

[443] Jimmy doubts that Dave murdered his daughter. Dave tries to tell the truth about the night. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.



Figure 34 Young Dave[444]

The scene depicted above shows Dave being taken by strangers, and it achieves a sense of depth through the use of convergence and size changes. In the first shot (Figure 34, upper left), the differing sizes of Dave and his two friends, Jimmy and Sean, contribute to the creation of an illusion of depth. This moment symbolises the point at which Dave's life diverges from that of his friends as his car recedes into the distance.

[444] Dave was chosen at random from a group of three friends. Then, he is taken away by strangers. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.

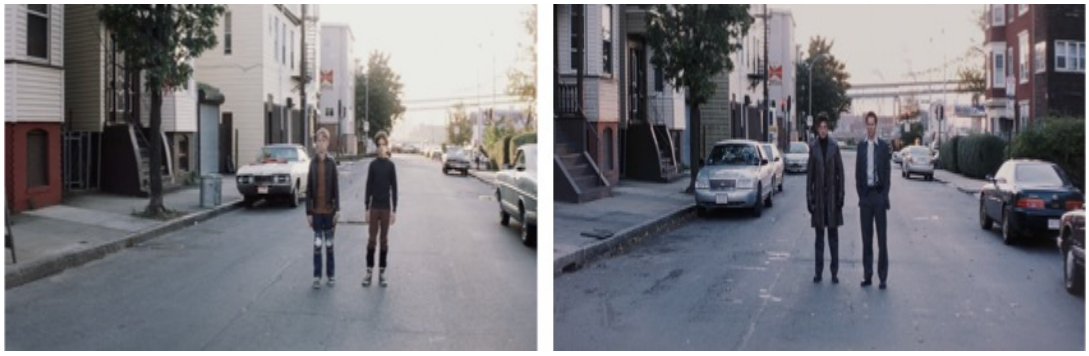


Figure 35 Jimmy and Sean[445]

The scene depicted above (Figure 35, right) takes place just before the film's ending sequence. In this crucial moment, Jimmy falsely accuses Dave of killing his daughter and takes matters into his own hands, despite Dave's denials. At the dawn, after the confrontation, Jimmy sits on the same pedestrian where young Dave was taken, and Sean joins him to reveal the truth about who actually killed Jimmy's daughter and the events of that fateful night, including Dave's suspicious behaviour. Sean asks about the last time Jimmy saw Dave, and Jimmy recalls their last encounter as being twenty-five years ago when Dave was taken by a car. The two men gaze at the empty street where Dave was abducted in their youth. In the following shot, a car is shown, reminiscent of the one that took Dave away. Although there are some differences, such as new buildings and more modern cars, compared to twenty-five years ago, the fact that they are standing on the same street signifies that a part of them remains connected to the past.[446]

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[445] The left shows the beginning of the film, with Jimmy and Sean staring as Dave is taken away. The right depicts the ending, where after Dave's death, Jimmy and Sean realise that Dave was already dead when he was being taken away in the car. Eastwood, *Mystic River*.

[446] Similar to the ending scene, the beginning scene as well, there is a moment where adult Dave is being taken by the local thugs, the Savage brothers who are Jimmy's men. Dave is sitting in the back seats, and the camera shows him through the rear window as the car is driving away, taking Dave into the distance. The use of camera movement and space in this scene is reminiscent of the beginning, when Dave was taken by strangers. This similarity allows the audience to make a connection between

In summary, the high contrast and dark tone suggest a connection to the past, where the three main characters left a part of themselves linked to the Old Boston community and neighbourhood. Furthermore, even though Jimmy lives in the same neighbourhood as Dave, Dave's past continues to victimise him, preventing his transformation into the present. However, it appears that Jimmy and Sean have successfully moved on from the past, but as the film progresses, it is shown that the past (the Old Neighbourhood) still exerts its influence on Jimmy and Sean as well.

6.4 The Departed

The Departed very effectively illustrates the lives of the Old Neighbourhood and the New Neighbourhood, and the in-between. The film depicts the lives of double spies, one actually a cop but disguised as a gang member (Billy Costigan) and the other a gang member but working as a cop and aspiring to be a real police officer (Colin Sullivan). Both of them want to escape their hometown–South Boston by becoming a cop. While the film portrays crimes, investigations, and these lives, its use of colours, tone, and contrasts effectively designs the tensions and crises along with the characters.

According to Michael Ballhaus, the director of photography for *The Departed*, Scorsese aimed for a dark tone throughout the film while ensuring that the characters remained clearly visible to the audience.[447] Therefore, Ballhaus opted for direct lighting over bounce lighting to emphasise the toughness of the characters. He

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the two scenes. See also, Rowe, "Centrifugal Bostons and Competing Imaginaries in *Mystic River*," 86-88.

[447] Stephen Pizzello, "Deep Cover," *American Cinematographer,* 87, 10 (October 2006): 36-40, https://theasc.com/magazine-issues/october-2006.

occasionally desaturated the colours as well. [448] The film's primary strategy involved a desaturated, direct lighting approach, complemented by the use of shadows and cool tones. *The Departed* effectively utilises shadows to establish the mood, visually underscore situations, and accentuate the characters.

Particularly, the film's characteristic tone and colour strategy is exemplified in scenes within the Boston police headquarters, the red-coloured scenes (for example the opera scene), and the Chinatown scene. Ballhaus and Scorsese deliberately created a nearly black-and-white look for the film, especially in the Boston police headquarters, which lends the film a noir aesthetic.[449] Furthermore, even the costume and production design, including set decoration, primarily utilised colours like grey, brown, and blue, adhering to the concept of an almost colourless palette.[450]

With a contrasting colour palette that uses shades of grey, blue, and brown, the film is visually set to appear drier, more efficient, intense, and noir. Take a look at one shot from the Boston police headquarters scenes (Figure 36, left). In this early moment after Colin joins the Special Investigations unit, Ellerby (Alec Baldwin) explains the operation involving Costello's mob to his team. As intended by the filmmakers, the scene appears mostly colourless, with only some dark tones. Additionally, by employing direct lighting on both bright and dark areas, the scene achieves a high level of contrast. Unlike typical police stations with bright

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[448] Pizzello, "Deep Cover," 36-40.

[449] Jack Egan, "Contender-Michael Ballhaus-DP-Departed," *Below the Line,* November 6, 2006, https://www.btlnews.com/awards/contender-michael-ballhaus-dp-departed/.

[450] According to Leslie E. Rollins, Set Decorator of *The Departed*, from the beginning of the film, the colour palette was limited with "grey, brown, and blue accented with hard metallic chrome and bronze anodized aluminium," which is a very chilling effect. Rollins, Leslie E. "The Departed," *Set Décor Magazine*, Winter 2006/2007. https://www.setdecorators.org/?name=The-Departed&art=departed.

fluorescent lighting, The Departed uses different lighting techniques, such as par lights (parabolic reflectors), which create a balance between light and darkness.[451] This choice gives the images of the police station an efficient, cold, and dry look while also emphasising the characters' facial expressions.

The image below (Figure 36, right) is taken from the scene where the Special Investigation Unit conducts surveillance during a business transaction between Costello's gang and the Chinese gang at their temporary operations office. Much like the police headquarters, this location is predominantly dark but illuminated by direct lighting from the ceiling. This setup creates strong contrasts and allows the audience to discern the characters' facial expressions. The consistent use of this colour palette maintains a mood that feels efficient, serious, cold, and immersed in crime.



Figure 36 The Massachusetts Police Department (left) and the Special Operation Command Centre (right)[452]

As mentioned earlier, the use of contrast is notably demonstrated throughout the film. For instance, when Costello first appears in the film, he is shrouded in shadows. The high-contrast tones of the scene, created by incidental lighting, evoke typical film noir moods and emotions (Figure 37, top left). The shadowing on his

[451] Tim Robey, "The Americans' friend," *Sight and Sound* 16. no. 2 (February 2006): 5, 1.

[452] Scorsese, *The Departed*.

face also indicates his mysterious yet dangerous status as a boss. These uses of high contrast create visual intensity along with narrative intensity. In the scene involving an exchange with the Chinese gang, Costello's face is again shadowed, creating suspense before the significant crime.

The high contrast is also vividly displayed in the Chinatown scene (Figure 37, bottom left). This scene is one of the most intense moments in the film as Billy first gets a chance to confront a rat (Colin) after Colin had a secret meeting with Costello at a porno theatre in the Chinatown district.[453] In a very dark and gritty alley, their shadows are reflected on the wall. By controlling the tonal range, the images create a strong contrast between the backdrop (the alley and the wall) and the characters' shadows. This visual structure enhances the foot chase scene and establishes the mood with a film noir visual style.[454] Similar to the Chinatown chase scene, in the film's ending part, there is another moment when Colin's identity is nearly revealed (Figure 37, bottom right). In this scene, the police department, especially Colin's office, is darker than usual, and Colin remains in the shadows. The visual design in these scenes emphasises the concealed lives of these two characters, who are hiding their real identities.

[453] Colin is a crooked cop. At this point, Billy does not know who the "rat" is.

[454] According to Ballhaus, the Chinatown district scene is designed to be "hallucinogenic" and "otherworldly." In this sequence, the characters are mostly in the dark. However, when two main characters venture out onto the crowded streets in the Chinatown, the imagery suddenly bursts with a multitude of colours, a blend of light and dark areas, and even mirrors that reflect Billy's intense expression. See, Pizzello, "Deep Cover," 44-45.



Figure 37 Contrast[455]

However, not the entire film is designed in almost black and white colours or dry, desaturated, and cool tones with high contrast. When Costigan is having a therapy session as part of his probation with psychiatrist Dr. Madolyn Madden (Vera Farmiga) in her office, it features a much warmer environment with browner colours than other scenes. This warmer colour scheme suggests Dr. Madden's position in the film, as being neutral and safe for both Billy and Colin.[456] This contrasting visual representation between Dr. Madden and others (except Costello, whose space is filled with various colours, unlike Billy and Colin) helps structure the characters'

[455] Frank Costello gives a lecture in the beginning of the film (up-left), during the exchange between Costello's gang and the Chinese gang (up-right), Billy chases Colin (down-left), and Colin in the police office (down-right). Scorsese, *The Departed*.

[456] Not only during Billy's therapy session but also when either Billy or Colin has romantic moments with her (both of them have romantic relationships with her), the use of colour is much warmer, more saturated, and brighter. See, Egan, "Contender-Michael Ballhaus-DP-Departed."

identities and situations. Similar to other Boston films, Dr. Madden's distinct colour scheme aligns with her character as a New Bostonian, in contrast to Billy and Colin.

As opposed to most of the characters but similar to Dr. Madden, Costello's wardrobe features a broader range of colours. He even wears a leopard-print bathrobe, while other characters, including everyone else in ordinary streetwear, dress in monochromatic colours like desaturated black, blue, brown, grey, and beige. These wardrobe colour choices are part of the film's visual structure, suggesting visual meanings that indicate the identities of each character. In Costello's case, as the boss with power and nothing to worry about, he has everything he wants. As Scorsese describes Costello, "He has all the drugs in the world, all the money in the world, all the women in the world. He can do anything, mutilate people, He's like God and he's still not fulfilled."[457] Based on this character definition, Costello's clothes are brighter and more colourful, setting him apart from others. Additionally, when the set decorator designed the sets, all decisions were made based on this colour strategy. For example, Colin's high-rise flat near the Massachusetts State House is filled with black, grey, and colourless fabrics. In contrast, Costello's place is full of various colours, warm, and luxurious with sets and props like paintings and furniture.[458]

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[457] Steve Head, "The Departed," *IGN,* September 29, 2006, https://www.ign.com/articles/2006/09/29/the-departed-bloody-jacked.

[458] Rollins, "The Departed."



Figure 38 Frank Costello at the Opera[459]

The use of colour not only suggests the identities of characters but also conveys specific implications, moods, and emotions, allowing the audience to feel and anticipate. While most of the scenes in this film are colourless, designed in monochromatic tones, when the plot or characters head into a crisis, the film intentionally introduces the colour red. This use of the colour red creates a particular mood, implying that a dangerous situation is about to occur. The most significant red colour scene in the film is when Costello attends the opera (Figure 38).[460] In this scene, Costello watches an opera with women and later has a cocaine party with them. This is the moment when he makes a significant resolution to uncover the undercover agent within his mob. By injecting the colour red into half of the frame and contrasting his appearance, the scene becomes a powerful moment that reveals Costello's fearless and dangerous character and foreshadows what will happen next.

[459] Frank Costello is watching an opera. The use of the red colour shows his determination and creates intensity. Scorsese, *The Departed*.

[460] In this film, Martin Scorsese intentionally injects homages to his favourite film, *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932). This scene is one of those homage moments. The sextet from the opera used in *Scarface*, every time when Tony (Paul Muni) is about to kill someone, the same opera, "Chi mi Frena in Tal Momento (Who is stopping me in such a moment?)" from the opera *Lucia Di Lammermoor*, is whistled. The lyrics imply who can stop Costello in this life. Like the story or visuals, sound also has its own structure in the film, and this is evident in this particular case.



Figure 39 The chase scene in Chinatown[461]

The use of the colour red is also prominent in the Chinatown district scene (Figure 39). While the scene is designed to create a "hallucinogenic" mood, one of the signature colour strategies, red, is used as a recurring symbol throughout the narrative. It serves as an alarm, giving notice of one's destiny and creating suspense. As the situation in which Billy chases an unknown man (Colin) gradually unfolds, the use of the red colour also emphasises the dangerousness of their fates. Interestingly, the use of various colours, including red, yellow, green, and blue, in the visual design makes Chinatown a different place where no one truly belongs. It is neither the Old Neighbourhood nor the New Neighbourhood, as mentioned earlier, it is almost "hallucinogenic."

[461] Frank Costello and Colin Sullivan are having a secret meeting in a movie theatre in Chinatown, and William Costigan chases the unknown. Scorsese, *The Departed*.



Figure 40 The death and Colin[462]

The above shot (Figure 40) is from a scene in which Billy finally enters the police headquarters as an undercover agent after Costello's death (at the hands of Colin). In this scene, Billy confronts Colin in the police office, demanding his true identity back and inquiring about the mole within Costello's organisation. But as Colin wants to become a real police officer by erasing people that know he is the mole; Colin tries to erase Billy's police identity from the Boston Police Department portal. As the crisis of uncovering both identities intensifies, the use of the colour red hints at the impending crisis and enhances the visual intensity.[463]

The overall visual design of *The Departed* contributes significantly to the film's atmosphere, character development, setting portrayal, and narrative progression. While the film generally maintains a dark and cold aesthetic, the selective use of warmer and more vibrant colours serves to define each character and their sense of belonging, effectively enhancing the narrative.

[462] Frank Costello is killed by his mob Colin Sullivan (left), after his death, Colin Sullivan tries to find out who the undercover is (right). Scorsese, *The Departed*.

[463] If *The Handmaid's Tale* uses red to signify the handmaids' status in their society and fertility, *The Departed* uses red as an alert for danger, violence, and the death of characters within the narrative. Both the television series and the film employ red as a powerful tool within their visual structure, making it easily recognisable.

6.5 Gone Baby Gone and The Town

Ben Affleck's directorial debut, *Gone Baby Gone*, shares similarities with Clint Eastwood's film, *Mystic River*. Much like Eastwood's work, *Gone Baby Gone* also delves into traumatic violence, specifically child abduction, set within a working-class Boston neighbourhood. Both Dave in *Mystic River* and Amanda in *Gone Baby Gone* find themselves in situations where their health and safety are compromised, as if their fate was predetermined by their environment, such as the Old Boston neighbourhood where they were born. This theme of characters broken by loss, exposed to constant crime, and unfortunate circumstances is a common thread in Boston cinema and is explored in this film, as well as other representative Boston films.[464]



Figure 41 Kenzie and Helene in Dorchester[465]

[464] See, Murphy, "On Film, a City Shows Its Noir Side."

[465] After visiting Ray's in Chelsea, Patrick Kenzie and Helene McCready come back to Dorchester. Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone.*

The complexity of the composition highlights the gravity of the abduction case within a tightly knit working-class neighbourhood in Boston, where residents live closely together.[466] Specifically, the bold, square lines and shapes of the houses, combined with the non-linear movements of people in the background, contribute to the creation of a tense atmosphere in the investigation while also depicting the characteristics of this working-class neighbourhood. As neighbours walk from left to right (Figure 41), they seem to leave virtual trails in the background. This effect intensifies as Patrick and Helene disembark from the car. The trails created by the neighbours and the paths crossed by Kenzie and Helene contribute to a chaotic and disorderly visual atmosphere that aligns with the narrative situation. Moreover, the non-linear motif created by the camera movements accentuates the high-stress situation surrounding Amanda's abduction and the ransom exchange (Figure 42). The use of dark colours, including black, grey, and high-contrast visuals, further directs the viewers' attention to the chaotic circumstances.



Figure 42 The exchange scene[467]

[466] However, this does not always imply that residents are harmonious; it also underscores the close-knit and compact nature of the neighbourhood, especially regarding cultural and social interactions.

[467] Patrick, Angie, and two police detectives, Remy Bressant and Nick Poole, attempt to rescue Amanda at a nearby quarry. Affleck, *Gone Baby Gone.*

In this scene, alongside the use of colours and high-contrast designs, the diagonal lines, resulting from the terrain of the quarry, camera movements, and the presence of Kenzie, Angie, and other individuals, collectively contribute to the chaotic and inexplicable visual composition of the moment. It is a situation where they do not know what is happening. The urgency of the situation aligns with the rapid camera movement and the complexity of the lines.

Affleck's second feature film, *The Town*, also conveys a chaotic and dense community by employing specific visual elements like lines and shapes. As suggested by Thwing's photographs and illustrations earlier in this chapter, the narrow and winding streets of the neighbourhoods are prominently featured in car-chasing scenes. For instance, when Doug (Ben Affleck), James Coughlin (Jeremy Renner), and their gang rob a bank in North End and attempt to flee from North End to Charlestown (Figure 43).



Figure 43 Doug and his gang try to rob a bank in the North End[468]

[468] Affleck, *The Town.*

From the moment Doug's gang approaches the targeted bank in North End until the end of the robbery scene, the camera captures narrow, intricate, and densely populated streets. Even when shown on a car navigation system (Figure 43, bottom right), these intricate lines formed by streets and buildings convey an urgent situation within a tightly knit society. Additionally, the contrast between the skylines of high-rise and low-rise buildings hints at the divided nature of the city, symbolising the division between the Old Neighbourhood and the New Neighbourhood.



Figure 44 After robbery in the North End[469]

Similar to *Spotlight*, the film I will explore later in this chapter, vivid horizontal and vertical lines are prominently featured throughout the film, particularly in scenes with higher intensity. Furthermore, crossing the North Washington Street Bridge (the Charlestown Bridge, Figure 44, top left) marks the moment when Doug's gang returns to their hometown, Charlestown, which is considered part of Old Boston. As Doug's gang crossed the bridge, the cityscape

[469] After robbery in the North End, the gang try to escape, and Boston Police chase them. *Affleck, The Town.*

changed as well. The New Neighbourhood they had just left was filled with high-rise buildings, which differed from Charlestown. This vivid difference was emphasised by the contrast between horizontal and vertical lines. The bridge even seems like a tunnel, contributing to this intense moment as Doug's gang escapes from the New Neighbourhood.

Overall, while the narratives of both *Gone Baby Gone* and *The Town* heavily rely on the divided communities of the Old and New Boston, where people also have different backgrounds and lifestyles, the use of visual elements supports the narratives and makes them more convincing. Particularly, the vivid vertical and horizontal lines, along with the squared shapes, suggest a society where people hardly move up the social ladder and reside in close-knit communities.

6.6 Spotlight

This thesis began with a brief observation of *Spotlight*, highlighting the recurring theme in Boston cinema narratives. These narratives often explore the connections among Boston natives, the communities and neighbourhoods within the city (on a smaller scale), and the city's relationship with the world outside (on a larger scale). In the case of *Good Will Hunting*, the first person to recognise Will Hunting's intelligence and attempt to help him escape his oppressive environment is Professor Lambeau. He is followed by Will's girlfriend, Skylar, and psychologist, Maguire. What these three individuals have in common is their outsider status in Boston or their experience of life beyond South Boston. The outsider's perspective is sometimes essential when trying to break free from one's environment. Similarly, in *Spotlight*, the role of an outsider is strategically illustrated through cinematography, especially when transitioning from the Old to the New. In this case, the outsider is

the new Boston Globe editor, Marty Baron (Liev Schreiber).[470] Throughout the film, Marty's outsider status and his position in the city are depicted not only through dialogue but also visually.



Figure 45 Marty Baron at a local restaurant[471]

There is a moment in the film that depicts the Spotlight team members spending their weekend. Marty is seen gazing outside a local restaurant while he spends his Sunday there (Figure 45). Through the restaurant window, Marty has a view of a church and people coming out from the church, which can be symbolically interpreted as representing the Boston community. By locating the window between them, it conveys Marty's position in the film. In the example shots provided (Figure 45), Marty is situated in the foreground, in contrast to the people in the background. Marty occupies a separate space from both the individuals in the restaurant and those emerging from the church. By controlling the sizes and focus of Marty and the other people, the cinematography creates a depth cue that accentuates Marty's outsider

[470] In terms of the concept of "taking an outsider," a direct quote from *Spotlight* that suggest Boston is a closed community or neighbourhood within a larger context, where insiders stick together, and outsiders may find it challenging to be mixed with. "Because it takes an outsider. Like me." McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

[471] The new Boston Globe editor, Marty Baron, spent a Sunday at a local restaurant. As he sat by the window, he gazed at the church outside. McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

character and his role as an observer. Similar visual design techniques are employed in other scenes as well.



Figure 46 Non-Bostonian Marty Baron's isolation in the city[472]

In Figure 46, each scene captures Marty's status within the city. Starting from the upper left and moving clockwise, these scenes depict Marty waiting for Robby for their first meeting after Marty's arrival at the *Globe*, Marty sitting in a restaurant reading a newspaper on a Sunday, Marty exiting his car in the Globe parking lot, and Marty sitting with other people at a Catholic charity gala. The film consistently employs deep space to convey Marty Baron's isolation as an outsider in the city. This visual technique effectively underscores his lack of integration with others in the city and emphasises his differences within the city compared to others (Bostonian). It also suggests that the city's culture can be described as unfriendly, for example, as they do not include non-Bostonians within their boundaries

[472] There are some scenes that show a non-Bostonian Marty Baron's isolation in the city. McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

(communities). Even when he is seated among other people (Figure 46, bottom left), he still appears isolated.

Similar to Marty Baron's case, the depiction of a character through the use of deep space can also be observed when Mitchell Garabedian appears. This Armenian lawyer, handling multiple cases related to the Catholic sexual abuse cases, is another outsider character, much like Marty.



Figure 47 Garabedien in a crowd[473]

For example, in Figure 47, on the left, lawyer Mitchell Garabedian is depicted crossing the street, while on the right, he is portrayed taking his lunch break on a bench. In these scenes, he is located in the background at small size among other people, making him appear diminutive and isolated, also simply depicting him as one of the crowds. Interestingly, this contrasts with his depiction in locations that can be associated with him, such as his office, the courtroom, or when he goes to an Armenian diner (Figure 48). In these settings, he is positioned in the centre and in the foreground at much larger size. This contrast highlights the distinct status and role of Garabedian within the city of Boston, vividly distinguishing spaces where he belongs from those where he does not.

[473] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*



Figure 48 Garabedian in his office (left) and his regular restaurant (right)[474]

Although the film often uses deep space to portray various characters, it places a different emphasis on characters like Robby or Sacha compared to Marty or Garabedian. For example, the sizes of characters, or position with other people in their scenes differ from those of Marty and Garabedian.

In terms of deep space, Spotlight consistently employs various depth cues to create the illusion of three-dimensional depth. This utilisation of deep space positions certain characters within the narrative, making figures like Marty and Garabedian appear as outsiders in the city. Furthermore, deep space provides viewers with the sensation of being in the same location as the characters, allowing them to observe the unfolding events as though they are witnessing the true events.[475]

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[474] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

[475] Regarding the visual style and design of the film, director Tom McCarthy explains that he tried to create a sense of realism and authenticity that would make the viewer feel like they are witnessing the investigation. See, Mekado Murphy, "Tom McCarthy Narrates a Scene From 'Spotlight'," *The New York Times,* December 17, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/18/movies/tom-mccarthy-narrates-a-scene-from-spotlight.html; and Antonia Blyth, "'Spotlight's Tom McCarthy: "I Passed the First Time," *Deadline*, February 6, 2016, https://deadline.com/2016/02/spotlight-tom-mccarthy-interview-1201697317/.



Figure 49 The Spotlight team is sitting around a speakerphone[476]

For example, in the scene where the Spotlight news team has a phone call with Richard Sipe, who provides valuable information regarding the investigation (Figure 49), they engage in a crucial conversation that could potentially unveil a pattern in the case. As the conversation gradually develops, reaching its climax, the camera also gradually dollies out, causing the team members to recede from the camera. This camera movement effectively complements the process of discovery within the investigation and provides a sense of immersion in the investigation.

[476] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*



Figure 50 The Spotlight team members are interviewing victims[477]

Alongside the use of space, the film frequently incorporates vertical and horizontal lines into its visual structure, especially in the narrow streets of Boston (Figure 50).[478] The lines are juxtaposed with the church's cross, and they are associated with the church itself. Moreover, these lines suggest several aspects. First, they convey the sense of a dense society in Boston. Second, they underscore the seriousness of the sexual abuse case. Lastly, they reflect the somewhat inflexible and problematic hierarchical nature of the societies involved. Additionally, these lines create a mood of the investigation that is gradually and actively being pursued, which is linked to the visual intensity. The sign of the church is pervasive when the Spotlight team journalists investigate the case and interview victims and relevant people. The presence of the church indicates the profound impact of the Catholic institution on the city of Boston.

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[477] McCarthy, *Spotlight.*

[478] This vertical view of the narrow streets is similar to Thwing's photographs and sketches that this chapter mentioned earlier. See, Thwing, *The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston: 1630-1822*.

Overall, Spotlight establishes its visual structure based on the city's historical foundation, the influence of the Catholic-dominated society, and the divisions within communities. The film employs different layers of space to illustrate characters' positions within the city in terms of their cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds. This constructed visual design is straightforward and direct. For instance, it utilises depth cues by controlling character sizes and placement on the screen, thereby creating visual boundaries that accentuate the differences of certain individuals, such as Marty, Garabedian, the other journalists, and the Catholic figures, from the rest.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored how representative Boston films were influenced by their visual design. From old paintings and historical photographs capturing Boston to stage plays, television series, and films, Boston has long been portrayed in a certain way. Within the context of the Boston narrative, an individual's environment becomes their memory and identity. The narrative shaped by one's environment becomes ingrained in their identity, often making it challenging to break free from its constraints, even when it suppresses one's desire for freedom. The Boston films that I analysed in this chapter serve as examples of this. The films show the impact of the environment–neighbourhoods and communities–on whether the characters can escape from their surroundings or not. In terms of neighbourhoods and communities, these films distinctly portray the differences between various neighbourhoods and communities, emphasising conflicts deeply rooted in these areas. In terms of Boston's visual design, it visually supports the theme that Boston is famous and proud of.

For example, consider *Good Will Hunting*. The rhythm and movement, alternating between fast and slow, horizontal, and vertical, serve to indicate where each character belongs. When an individual's traumatic memories and the identity shaped by their oppressive environment are triggered, they may lose their trained calmness and exhibit unpredictable, irregular, and complex movements and rhythms. Masculinity, expressed through language and actions, becomes ingrained in one's body over time.[479] Similarly, *Mystic River* depicts characters' past and present through contrasting images and repetitive deep spaces, signifying different neighbourhoods and communities, as well as the characters' imprisoned past: the Old Neighbourhood. In *The Departed*, the use of specific colours, such as red, along with tone and contrast, creates the film's atmosphere and implicitly represents the progress of the narrative and characters, shaping each character's characteristics. *Gone Baby Gone* and *The Town* illustrate dense and divided communities through non-linear lines and movements. Lastly, in *Spotlight*, the film creates depth cues by changing object sizes and incorporating vertical lines to effectively convey its narrative—the investigation—and explain the characters' status. Consequently, establishing a visual structure for a film allows for the creation of a specific atmosphere and mood throughout the film, as well as the control of intensity and climactic moments within certain scenes. Furthermore, it shapes the characters, narratives, and their interrelationships.

Boston cinema is renowned for its distinct grim and gritty atmosphere. Boston films consistently feature a repetitive and significant visual atmosphere that complements the narratives. Through this repetition, films visually create divisions

[479] For example, when Will insults Sean's deceased wife or when Sean and Lambeau meet in a local pub, Sean's masculinity is expressed.

among neighbourhoods and communities. Within this theme, Boston films highlight the contrast between unity within one neighbourhood and exclusion of others, both between neighbourhoods and between Boston and areas outside the city. Consequently, the visual design of Boston Cinema enhances the audience's immersion in the narrative.

7 Conclusion

This thesis began by observing the recurring characters, representations, and themes of Boston cinema, as well as highlighting the lack of research on Boston cinema in terms of its recognition, recurring themes, and representations. It also underscores the importance of Boston cinema as a case that can offer a deeper understanding of the city's role in both the film industry and the films themselves. From this starting point, the thesis raised and discussed these questions with a case of Boston:

- What role does a city play in cinema, serving as both a filming location and a narrative location (narrative setting)?

And more specifically,

- How have regional political circumstances influenced both the region's motion picture industry and the films themselves when Boston serves as a filming location?
- How has the city of Boston influenced Boston cinema as a narrative location?

Additionally,

- How has the Boston cinematic narrative been constructed and designed?
- How has Boston been visually designed in Boston cinema in terms of its cinematic theme?

To answer these questions, this thesis explored Boston cinema by approaching Boston films from the city's culture, history, geography, and regional film industry and its business. Specifically, this study focused on recurring characters and

narratives, and defined these as Boston cinema's theme, the theme of neighbourhoods and communities.

7.1 Boston as a Filming Location

Regarding location filming, the US filmmakers initially moved west and established Hollywood for various reasons, including a preference for diverse landscapes, favourable weather conditions, easy access to local facilities and service providers, and enticing financial incentives. As technology for on-location shooting advanced and competition among the US states and foreign countries intensified, the role of regional film offices became increasingly significant. They facilitated connections between labour and film studios and provided financial benefits through film tax credit programs. In this context of competition among regional film industries, Boston, Massachusetts was no exception.

However, since the establishment of its first regional film office in Massachusetts, these offices have been influenced by political figures, local unions, the public, and film office commissioners. Consequently, regional film offices have experienced both successes and setbacks. There were times when Boston's appeal as a filming location declined, as seen in the case of *The Departed*, where most of the production occurred in New York despite the film's narrative setting being Boston. However, the city's ability to offer attractive elements like tax incentives and a pool of local talent has made it a sought-after choice for filming locations (for example, *Detroit*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Don't Look Up*). This history of regional film offices in Massachusetts significantly impacted the region's motion picture industry, including the number of films produced in the area and the films themselves. It underscores the influence of a city as a filming location and how it was affected by the local motion

picture industry and surrounding professionals. It also highlights how political circumstances around regional film offices can influence the region's motion picture industry.

Besides the industry-related aspects discussed in earlier chapters, geographical significance, including Boston's versatile cityscape, various landscapes, and architectural diversity, has also played a defining role in establishing Boston as a favoured filming location (as explored in Chapters 3 and 4). For instance, films such as *Surrogates* and *R.I.P.D.* selected Boston as their filming location despite being set in futuristic fictional worlds. This choice highlights the compelling contribution of Boston's diverse and unique geographical features to its appeal as a filming location.

7.2 Boston as a Narrative Location

To explore Boston as a narrative setting, I began by tracing its representation in various cultural and creative works, encompassing literature, television series, and films. This investigation primarily focused on the city's cultural and historical aspects, particularly in the respect of geographical perspective, as discussed in Chapter 3. I specifically approached Boston's representations from two distinct perspectives: the mental images and the physical images. When considering mental images, Boston commonly emerges through its people and distinctive aspects of its identity, encompassing its historical religious roots (Puritan and Catholic), Irish American heritage, working-class culture, and the presence of renowned institutions such as Harvard University and MIT, as well as its influence in finance and cutting-edge technology industries. These representations also illuminate the divisions between neighbourhoods and between Boston and non-Boston regions. In the

context of physical images, I delved into the significance of specific landmark architectures, such as the Zakim Bridge, the Golden Dome of the Massachusetts State House, and the iconic Triple-Deckers. Both these mental and physical images of Boston play a pivotal role in characterising specific neighbourhoods and communities, which are directly woven into the narratives of films.

Regarding its role as a narrative location, the theme of neighbourhoods and communities is particularly prominent. This theme consistently creates divisions among people based on their neighbourhoods and communities, categorised into the "Old Neighbourhood" and the "New Neighbourhood." Furthermore, these themes serve to distinguish between Bostonians and non-Bostonians. This uniqueness of each neighbourhood and community defines both characters and narratives. As I mentioned in the Introduction chapter, these recurring themes provide a detailed context for understanding films. Simultaneously, these themes are the reasons why Boston is chosen for certain narratives, as seen in cases like *The Departed*, *The Company Men*, and *The Town*. These films illustrate a more convincing cinematic world, one that represents the division between tradition and post-industrial city, as well as the transformation into a globalised urban space.

7.3 Constructing Boston Cinema and Its Visual Design

This thesis also examined how Boston native screenwriters constructed the Boston cinematic narrative in respect to the city's images, which can be understood as the theme of the Boston narrative, "neighbourhoods and communities" (Chapter 5). The thesis analysed selected films that were written by Boston native screenwriters and how their local knowledge and images of Boston have shaped the Boston cinematic

narrative. Furthermore, it explored how this recurring theme has been visually designed in these films.

The Boston narrative crafted by native Boston screenwriters often emphasises the distinctiveness of various neighbourhoods and communities, a theme closely connected to the city's images (Chapter 3 and 5). By accentuating the tensions between these neighbourhoods and communities, films create characters and develop narratives, further solidifying the film's narrative setting. There are two key aspects to this phenomenon. Firstly, the public image of the city, as perceived and shared by its residents, influences the creation of specific characters and storylines based on their local knowledge and experiences. At the same time, these cinematic narratives, in a reciprocal manner, contribute to shaping Boston cinema–which can be perceived as an "authentic Boston story," emphasising the interdependent relationship between cinema and the city.

The Boston narrative created by Boston native screenwriters emphasises specific characters, such as the Irish, Catholic, and working-class, as well as the neighbourhoods and communities that are based on these characteristics. This narrative is also reflected in the visual design of the films (Chapter 6). For example, the dynamic camera movements and fast-paced editing in the basketball court fight scene in *Good Will Hunting,* portraying the masculinity of a specific neighbourhood, South Boston. This contrasts sharply with the neighbourhoods dominated by Harvard and MIT students. Also, the use of deep space in *Spotlight* depicts isolated characters (Marty and Garabedian) who come from outside of Boston. In doing so, the film helps to establish outsider perspectives within the narrative and highlights the division and unfriendliness of the city, Boston.

7.4 Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis contributes to the discourse of cinema and the city by examining one city–Boston–and its cinematic world, considering both its industry and the narrative and visual design of its films. In doing so, it underscores that cinema and the city are inextricably and reciprocally connected, with each influencing the other, and vice versa. More importantly, this thesis argues Boston's distinctiveness as an organic body in the city's cinematic history, which cannot be fully understood by focusing solely on aspects such as its role as a backdrop for film, cinematic representations, or industry growth.

Specifically, this thesis confirms that Boston serves as a unique destination for both filming and narrative settings, using it as a case study. As a filming location, Boston offers diverse landscapes, well-equipped studios, financial incentives, and a wealth of local talent. In this process, the city aims to stimulate its local economy by increasing in-state expenditure during filming, also attracting tourists. However, quantifying the exact financial benefits can be challenging. Additionally, Boston's role as a filming location necessitates regional agreements, such as tax incentive programs, which means the city is influenced by the political dynamics surrounding the region's motion picture industry. Consequently, this influence has both positive and negative effects on the film industry and the films themselves. Moreover, as a narrative location, the rich culture and history embedded in the city's geographical position, makes it a cinematic setting that can readily embrace specific narratives, as is evident in Boston's case with its focus on "neighbourhoods and communities." For example, when Hollywood decided to remake the Hong Kong noir film *Infernal Affairs*, Boston was chosen. This decision was influenced by the city's history, such as the presence of gang boss "Whitey Bulger," and the stark division between the

Old Neighbourhoods and the New Neighbourhoods. This division is used to depict Billy and Colin's aspirations to move up the social ladder as the neighbourhoods and communities play a significant role in shaping one's identity in Boston cinema.

Nonetheless, Boston cinema has been significantly influenced by Boston native screenwriters and their collective images of the city in terms of its cinematic representations, leading to the worldwide recognition of "Boston cinema" as a distinct cinematic category. However, as I already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the variations within Boston cinema, such as genre and character other than the neighbourhoods and communities, have received less attention.

Consequently, the case of Boston suggests that the city significantly contributes to the construction of its own cinema and its history, influencing both the cinematic narrative and aesthetic representations, as well as the industry. Importantly, Boston cinema experienced a boom and gained recognition through films featuring repetitive genres, characters, and narrative based on the city's cultural and historical image, as well as aesthetic installations such as the Triple-Decker and the city's grim atmosphere, which can be termed "Boston-ish." Additionally, associations with the works of Boston native screenwriters, and their incorporation of local knowledge about the city and industrial efforts solidify Boston's identity as a cinematic city with these specificities. At the same time, Boston cinema also shapes the image of the city. For example, using the Triple-Decker as a tool for depicting a specific group of people in the city, creates "a representative image of Boston." As a result, while Boston suggests its existence as an organic body in Boston cinema, achieving a thorough understanding of the relationship between cinema and the city, and the city's role in cinema, requires a broader perspective, encompassing both a city as a filming location and a narrative location.

7.5 Future Research Agendas

Regarding the discourse of the "cinema and the city" and "Boston cinema," these topics can be discussed further.

- On the post-production companies within the regional film industry.

Given the heavy contemporary reliance on visual effects in filmmaking, the post-production stage has gained greater importance than ever before. In this regard, it is worthwhile to examine Boston's film industry from the perspective of the local post-production companies in the region. Boston, as an attractive filming location, has established a solid reputation for providing an abundance of local talent, including actors, actresses, designers, camera crews, and other service providers. This talent pool primarily plays a significant role in the stages of pre-production and production. Nevertheless, the potential of Boston, as a destination for post-production remains a topic of discussion. This aspect will offer another dimension to understanding Boston as a cinematic city and a vital hub as the Hollywood East film industry.

- On the virtual production and the cinematic city

In regard to location shooting and visual effects, the concept of "virtual production" and its impact on the definition and role of the cinematic city can be explored. For example, earlier in this thesis, I briefly mentioned *The Mandalorian* and its use of virtual production (Chapter 2). Although *The Mandalorian* is set in a fictional world in space, if a film or television series is set in a physically existing world but shot in front of a "virtual wall," then we can discuss the geographical definition, role, and territory of the cinematic city and how we should perceive it.

- On the Boston cinema and beyond

Academic discussions on Boston cinema have often centred on its portrayal of Irish Catholic working-class male characters. In response to this prevailing discourse, I have pointed out that there is a broader range of genres, characters, and narratives in Boston cinema, even though they have received less attention (Chapter 3). In this respect, there is much more to explore beyond the traditional and stereotypical characters in Boston cinema. For instance, while male characters have dominated Boston cinema, examining female characters and the representation of gender in Boston cinema can be a valuable area of exploration.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

"What does the city do in the cinema?" In more detail, "what is the city's role as both a filming location and a narrative location in the process of filmmaking and within the films themselves?" Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to answer these questions. These inquiries originated from my personal cinematic experiences as I journeyed through Boston and encountered the city's distinct filming locations, as vividly portrayed in Boston cinema. These encounters compelled me to embark on a comprehensive exploration of Boston cinema and its intricate relationship with the city.

Boston, with its robust infrastructure, offers itself as an attractive filming location, although the political dynamics surrounding the motion picture industry have left their mark. Moreover, in terms of location tours, the city serves as a space that provides a cinematic experience extending beyond the screen, despite the limitations of existing Boston Film Tour programmes. The city has proven to be an enticing setting for the creation of specific characters and narratives, as I have focused on throughout this thesis. The recurring theme of neighbourhoods and

communities suggests that the city itself becomes the epicentre of cinematic narrative. Furthermore, in the process of evolving into a narrative backdrop, Boston cinema, in turn, crafts its own images of Boston. It is a symbiotic relationship where both cinema and the city mutually shape each other, underscoring the imperativeness of exploring the interconnected realms of cinema and the city in the dual capacities of filming location and narrative location.

Overall, the thesis examines the undeniable and reciprocal connection between cinema and the city through the lens of Boston. One cannot fully understand Boston cinema without grasping the essence of "Boston" itself. While this may seem like an obvious observation, the thesis provides in-depth analysis of how Boston cinema has been shaped by "Boston-ish," from broader perspectives, and examines how "Boston-ish" categorises "Boston cinema," as a distinctive and special genre in cinema. As a result, this thesis argues that Boston serves as a foundational element in the construction of its own cinema and cinematic history. The foundational elements such as Boston's culture, history, geography, architecture, and people exert a profound influence on each other, emphasising the necessity of exploring both cinema and the city within the contexts of filming location and narrative location.

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