MOBILE HOLLYWOOD

LABOR AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF PRODUCTION

Kevin Sanson

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Labor and the Geography of Production

Kevin Sanson

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CHAPTER ONE

Leaving Los Angeles

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the relocation of production activity from Southern California to one of a number of emerging production hubs around the world was raising significant anxiety among labor leaders, industry observers, and local politicians in Los Angeles. Job losses in the city's "signature" industry topped their list of concerns. The departure of film and television production was indeed having a measurable impact on the entertainment business, but this migration was not new. For different reasons at different times, significant portions of production activity had previously "run away" from the region, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s but as early as the late 1940s. Each time the phenomenon manifested, it raised concerns about the consequences for Hollywood. But this most recent phase seemed to mark a more fundamental—and many feared, permanent—shift in the spatial dynamics of film and television production. An evolving confluence of economic and regulatory factors around the globe was refashioning production into a more mobile, geographically dispersed means of making films and television series. By 2014, the adjustments to Hollywood's production geography appeared more like a complete transformation, in both existential and structural terms. As the *Los Angeles*

Times lamented, "As Boeing is to Seattle, the entertainment industry is to Los Angeles. It was once unthinkable that most movies and TV shows would be made anywhere else. It's not so unthinkable anymore."[1]

Attempts to explain the causes and effects of this historical juncture of runaway production—the term most commonly used to describe the relocation of production activity from Southern California—typically frame them as the inevitable results of cost-saving measures and local policy initiatives. According to this logic, it's simply cheaper for studios to move the production process to places with highly skilled workers, a well-established physical infrastructure, and most important, a financial incentive that offsets the costs of doing business there. For these locations, from Vancouver to the Gold Coast in Australia, the motivation is primarily economic, in the form of additional jobs, higher wages, and more revenue. While there is much less consensus among scholars about the efficacy of these policies and their local economic and cultural impacts, the contours of debate have similarly never strayed far from treating runaway production as a matter of global political economy and local economic development. The former articulates a powerful vision of international coordination and control through which the major Hollywood studios organize distant production locations and labor into a factory-like assembly line, while the latter emphasizes public policy to enable integration into Hollywood's operations and engender a self-sustaining satellite production industry.

Collectively, however, these explanations do little to illuminate the sheer scale and complexity of achieving what the *Los Angeles Times* found so unthinkable: transforming the mode of production into a more nimble and mobile apparatus. How does

a high-cost, creative endeavor that employs hundreds, sometimes thousands, of skilled professionals, and requires countless other resources, move so easily between Los Angeles, London, Vancouver, and Prague? Given the logistical complexity, what keeps the whole thing from imploding? Perhaps most striking given the focus on jobs lost and jobs gained in the debates about runaway production is that the experiences of media workers who are caught up in these shifting spatial dynamics remain conspicuously absent from the discussion. What can their tribulations reveal about the contemporary conditions of craft and technical labor within a more mobile regime of accumulation? How do their voices and experiences reconfigure mobile production not as a rational function of budget sheets and policy mechanisms, but as the cumulative effect of their labor power under the structures of capital expansion?

Mobile Hollywood aims to answer these questions by drawing attention to the spatial dynamics of contemporary film and television production and their impact on the visibility, nature, and perceived value of certain forms of labor that shape, sometimes quite literally, where Hollywood can or cannot travel. In so doing, it provides a detailed empirical investigation into the ways that screen media workers in different parts of the world engage with and are disrupted by the expanded geographic scale of Hollywood production. By focusing on the logistical ingenuity of service producers, location managers, and teamsters, it offers a frontline account of how the mobility of film and television production not only intensifies (often invisible) modes of labor we rarely associate with the entertainment industries, but also reconfigures the mode of production into a more exacting regime of accumulation. In this sense, *Mobile Hollywood* weaves an account of work functions *and* working

conditions—that is, what these workers do in the division of labor and the environments in which they do them—into its examination of the studio's ability to extract "value" from a global workforce.

More than simply documenting the norms and nature of creative labor, however, *Mobile Hollywood* links the material dimensions of craft and technical work into a broader reassessment of capital operations in Hollywood. Accordingly, it troubles the abstraction of capital's power by examining how its expansion actually "works," seeking to give meaning to the workaday dynamics that coordinate geography in the financial and creative interests of Hollywood. Here, labor becomes a prism through which to understand the entertainment industry's respatialization not as an inevitable outcome of its consolidation and concentration of power, though that certainly plays a part, but as a more fraught and contingent mode of production that subsumes disjuncture within and across its division of labor. At its most distilled, *Mobile Hollywood* argues that the global scale of blockbuster film and television production is an inherently heterogenous spatial enterprise. It is constituted by a much more dynamic and diverse set of social relations that its workforce must manage and patch together—often but not always in ways that are invisible and unwaged—as a condition of their employment within a mobile mode of production.

LOCATIONS AND THE LIMITS OF COMPETITIVE LOGICS

Each quarter, the nonprofit organization FilmLA releases reports that track production activity within Los Angeles County, along with more detailed and comparative yearly analyses

on how California stacks up against other production hubs, both domestic and international. With each new report, industry commentators scrutinize data points in ways that suggest the competitive dynamics of the contemporary production landscape are a zero-sum game. A contest based on the number of productions hosted in a given location separates winners from losers. Georgia's rising prominence as a production hub over the past few years, for instance, comes at the expense of California's historic position at the top. A few years before Georgia's success, Louisiana had been championed as the "Movie-Making Capital of the World," but it was just following the successful tactics devised more than a decade earlier in Canada.[2] New York and the United Kingdom never trail far behind in these calculations, consistently ending up over the past several years in the world's top five filming destinations. Still more, Australia, France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and China, as well as US states like Illinois, North Carolina, and New Mexico, have hosted their fair share of Hollywood film and television production. This says nothing about the offshoring of postproduction activities like music scoring and visual effects to cost-effective jurisdictions overseas.[3]

According to the logic of competition, however, the race is decidedly between California and rival destinations, with the entertainment industry's established home base in the paradoxical position of underdog. The state has been playing an anxious game of catch up ever since reports started documenting the staggering job losses upending the industry. In 2010, according to reports, California had "lost 10,600 entertainment industry jobs, more than 25,000 related jobs, and $2.4 billion in wages, and $4.2 billion in total economic output since 1997 as film and TV production has moved to other states and countries."[4] By

2013, the state's production activity hit a crisis point, when its share of the top-grossing live-action features reached a meager 8 percent—a 60 percent drop in market share over the previous fifteen years.[5] Today, California has made notable progress toward reclaiming its position, but stiff competition remains. FilmLA's more recent research reveals that only one in four of *all* US-produced, live-action, English-language narrative features released in 2018 were filmed in California; the other 75 percent were shot somewhere else.[6] The number dwindles even more when the focus shifts to the top-grossing live-action features—those productions that make the biggest economic impact and create the most jobs for below-the-line workers. Only 14 percent of the biggest box-office earners filmed primarily in California, which put the Golden State behind both Georgia (first) and the United Kingdom (second), but tied with Canada for third place.[7] Reports on television production make for rosier headlines, but it is similarly distributed across competing jurisdictions. While California attracted more television production than any other *single* location in 2018, it hosted fewer than half of the 465 American series filmed that year, with New York, Georgia, Illinois, and locations in Canada handling the majority.[8]

The competitive dynamics of contemporary film and television production are derived from the emergence of production incentives that policymakers have used to lure Hollywood producers away from the soundstages and backlots in Los Angeles. Production incentives are a type of economic enticement—a package of tax breaks and other concessions—that governments use to target specific firms or, in the case of film and television, entire sectors of industry, hoping they will relocate to their jurisdictions, create jobs, and diversify economic activity. Canada is widely credited with introducing the model for

contemporary production incentives in 1997. In less than a decade, the template took hold domestically, making the period between 2004 and 2012 one of lost jobs and decreased economic activity in California's entertainment sector. Today, more than thirty states and territories in the US, not to mention countless international jurisdictions around the world, offer a production incentive program. These incentives can take various forms, from government-issued grants and cash rebates to subsidized services, like local film commissions, waived rental fees for studios and equipment, discounted labor costs, or some combination thereof.

The most competitive form of production incentive, however, is the tax credit, a token of sorts that recipients can use to minimize their tax obligations in the locations where they film.[9] Notably, tax is a relatively minor burden for productions. As limited liability corporations, they rarely have much, if any, state or federal taxes to pay. So tax credits—the most desirable ones—are commonly issued as transferable or refundable commodities. Productions can sell a "transferable" credit to a separate individual or business entity—such as a hedge-fund investor or insurance company—that can use it to offset their own financial obligations, or productions can exchange the unused value of a "refundable" tax credit for cash from the local government that issued it. Both options enable producers to use the returns to significantly offset production costs and leverage competitive pressures among locations to generate better deals.

Ever since they expanded in number and substance throughout the early 2000s, production incentives have been firmly established as the game pieces that nations, states, and some cities play against each other in competing for Hollywood's attention. At the time of writing, for example, the US state of Georgia

offers a 20 percent transferable tax credit (plus an additional 10 percent if the production includes the promotional logo for the state film commission in its ending credit sequence), while the United Kingdom offers a 25 percent refundable tax credit on qualified expenses. Some jurisdictions, like Massachusetts, allow productions to choose either option. Such cost reductions can reach upward of 70 percent when the various programs on offer in a particular location are combined (e.g., British Columbia and Fiji), but most hover somewhere between 25 and 35 percent in savings. For its part, California launched its own (rather modest) incentive program in 2009, offering between 20 and 25 percent in tax credits for qualified productions but capping total spending each year at $100 million. The program has since been renewed and expanded twice to increase its competitiveness with some success, especially with respect to television, but not enough to best more lucrative programs elsewhere.

As a matter of political economy, the differences between competing schemes are less important than their steady normalization and overall impact since the late 2000s. In the US, only five states offered a production incentive in 2002, but that number had increased to forty-four before the end of the decade.[10] (It now sits at thirty-three.) By 2012, a study by the *New York Times* estimated that Hollywood was receiving $1.5 billion in state-based tax credits each year.[11] In 2017, an academic study valued the film industry's nationwide savings at $1.7 billion, with nearly 80 percent coming from just five states: New York, Louisiana, Georgia, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.[12] Both studies excluded international territories. Nevertheless, such figures represent significant stakes for state or federal budgets, and accordingly attract intense scrutiny and little consensus with respect to their economic and cultural impact. For some

scholars, the results are highly dependent upon perfecting the right mix of public-private partnerships in the context of a proactive and responsive orientation to global development more broadly.[13] Yet for every success story, failures to realize tangible benefits in places like Michigan and Louisiana, especially after the incentives are removed or decreased, provide plenty of evidence for critics to question whether such programs ever generate enough economic activity to cover their costs or if they simply constitute financial handouts to Hollywood. As Vicki Mayer and Tanya Goldman argue, "the system of tax credits is like every other bloated financial system in the U.S., moving capital between elites while workers live with exaggerated job insecurity, declining market value, and uncertain futures that make up the rest of the workforce."[14]

Fortunes of individual locations clearly ebb and flow and have done so now for more than two decades. The details of existing schemes are subject to change each time lawmakers review budgets or reassess economic priorities. Sometimes proponents lose reelection or acquiesce to competing lobby interests. Sometimes incentives are increased to better compete with neighboring jurisdictions or abandoned altogether when the anticipated benefits fail to materialize. Some places, like Australia and Canada, offer combinable or "stackable" programs at the city, state or provincial, and federal levels. Further, bespoke deals between public authorities, private entities, and productions are common but rarely made available for public scrutiny. Indeed, accusations of corruption can plague schemes.[15] Such challenges have given rise to third-party service providers that leverage the confusion to underscore their value proposition. Accounting firms sell studios on the premise that "production incentive legislation changes rapidly, and no two incentives programs

are alike. How can you possibly keep up? The fact is you don't have to because we do."[16] Such firms consult with productions to ensure they are aware of the latest changes, understand all the fine print, and file the appropriate paperwork to "maximize savings," lest a missed deadline or obscure detail jeopardize eligibility. Meanwhile, facilities manager Pinewood Group has expanded its studio holdings beyond London to include spaces in Wales, Toronto, the Dominican Republic, and most recently Atlanta, the largest studio in the South. Such service providers—along with the very workers at the heart of this book—ensure that the fates of individual locations do little to upset the fully institutionalized mobility of film and television production.

Accordingly, *Mobile Hollywood* doesn't question the efficacy of particular production incentives and does not focus on the complicated economic-cultural dynamics that emerge in a single location. It accepts that the competitive dynamics of the contemporary production landscape are firmly established but rejects the impulse to assess who will win or lose in the race for Hollywood's affection—such a perspective risks confusing individual trees for the forest. As its name implies, *Mobile Hollywood* is interested in how mobility actually functions as a historically specific means of organizing production across an expanded geographic terrain, a distinct evolution of capital-labor relations that is more complex and contradictory than what the winner-take-all mentality of market competition suggests. In other words, *Mobile Hollywood* wants to tell a different narrative of capital operations that does not equate value with successfully besting one's rivals for Hollywood's symbolic and material capital.

Rather than conceive of Mobile Hollywood as a process that solely survives on competition and domination, this book renders visible the persistent friction that characterizes a more

mobile mode of production. This is not a story about capital's ability to annihilate global difference but about an always provisional arrangement of capital, territories, and resources into a nimbler and more tentative encounter. From angry residents and uncooperative politicians to translation issues and inadequate equipment, problems should be expected in an enterprise of this scale. Such risks make contingency planning and collaboration among disparate stakeholders essential to value creation, because the impression of seamlessness—how many of the media workers in this book evaluate and assess a job well done—is necessary to ensure repeat business. By acknowledging the inherent perils that either threaten or impede capital's presumably seamless mobility, this book troubles monolithic conceptions of Hollywood's power. Instead, it privileges the incongruent agendas, divergent interests, and temporary relationships that come together in making Hollywood mobile. It focuses on tracing the ways labor helps operationalize capital within and across an expanded production geography that is characterized by heterogeneity, unpredictability, and complication. In so doing, it emphasizes the actions of different and less visible figures of labor whose personal and professional livelihoods occupy a critical nexus within the spatial operations of a large-scale, commercial creative enterprise.

LIVING LABOR, OR THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE NUMBERS

In August 2013, *Variety* ran a cover story on the "chronic, unresolved problem" of runaway production, focusing especially on the prominence given to the issue in the agenda of the newly elected mayor of Los Angeles, Eric Garcetti.[17] According to the

trade publication, Garcetti was the first mayor to speak about the state's loss of film and television production in an inaugural address, following a bold campaign pledge to "[end] runaway film and television production for good."[18] With the production landscape in a "state of emergency," he vowed to appoint the city's first film czar, a public official to advocate on behalf of the industry in, among other contexts, the highly politicized debates in Sacramento about increasing tax incentives for screen media production. For the most part, the story underscored the competitive logic that frames much of the runaway-production debate: other cities, states, and countries are luring Hollywood producers away from California with economic enticements, so the Golden State's legislature needs to ramp up the competitiveness of its own incentive program. Such maneuvers are framed in the article and elsewhere as necessary concessions to offset the rising costs of production and reverse job losses in one of the state's chief industries. Advocates, including Garcetti, also championed the economic impact screen media production facilitates across other sectors, especially service industries like catering and dry cleaning.

In a productive shift away from the more abstract discussions of multiplier effects and political discourse, however, the article included a sidebar featuring profiles of entertainment professionals, from a musician and set painter to a television director and line producer, each discussing how runaway production had altered the nature of his or her personal and professional life. These laborers shared that they were working less and traveling more. For some, this meant drawing unemployment or transitioning into new careers. Instead of buying a house in middle age, they were living with roommates. Others were spending long stretches away from family and friends while on location

in Nashville or New York. They were struggling in emerging production hubs like Atlanta to find the resources, both human and material, they needed to do their jobs in ways that they were accustomed to doing them. "Working in Atlanta is a logistical nightmare," Millicent Shelton, who directs television, reported. "You have to wait for the wardrobe to come from Los Angeles; they don't have cranes you need. It's a real pain in the ass. The [under-trained] crews can be really infuriating."[19]

Collectively, the half dozen profiles highlight the increasingly bleak reality screen media workers share as locations continue to battle for preferred status among Hollywood producers. They face emotional strain, personal sacrifices, creative compromise, and stunted professional mobility. Most important, the sidebar provides a compelling reminder of the quite tangible human toll, which is often obscured in the studios' financial calculations, of outsourcing production work. At its best, the cover story offers an important corrective to the macro-level analyses that drive much of the runaway-production discourse, even while the Garcetti profile itself never strays far from those very talking points. Yet its attendant sidebar notwithstanding, the feature does little to shift the accepted terms of debate from economic logics of labor markets, production spend, and public subsidy and remains emblematic of some of the more troubling tropes therein: namely, an assumed autonomy in runaway production's global spread, powered solely by financial imperatives and tax rebates, and an accepted parochialism in its Southern California bias. Runaway production, as the contemporary debate frames it, is about leaving, a unidirectional process that pits the point of origin against points of destination in a simplistic spatial framework. It further pits individual laborers against each other, as if the true culprits behind lost employment

opportunities in Hollywood are fellow screen media workers in Atlanta or Belfast rather than the cost-containment strategies of transnational media conglomerates.[20]

Like the logics of competition, the runaway-production discourse operates at a level of abstraction when it comes to the experience of media workers. They simply serve as objects for value *capture* when their wages and working conditions are appropriated by Hollywood or offered up by governments looking to boost local economies. The only value *creation* they provide is symbolic in nature. They are either the happy faces of booming production hubs or the downtrodden victims of lost employment. In terms of scholarship, such obfuscation is compounded by the sparse (but growing) amount of research devoted to the experiences of below-the-line workers, especially when compared to the scholarly and popular interest in their above-the-line colleagues: writers, directors, producers, and of course, actors (who even have their own academic subfield in "celebrity studies"). Much of our investigations into creative labor, academic or otherwise, tend to privilege the distinctive, expressive, and symbolic dimensions of cultural production—however circumscribed by industry constraints and pressures—rather than the craft-like or technical work also required to transform creative ideas into cultural commodities. Indeed, the "creative" and the "symbol making" activities of film and television workers are commonly singled out as *the* element that distinguishes these industrial processes from other sectors. While this distinction is certainly true with respect to the production of screen commodities, the division of labor is such that not all workers contribute the same inputs into that creative process, and the work they perform does not receive the same recognition or perceived value within those hierarchies. Such attention is both

cause and effect, contributing to the normalization of the material and symbolic distinctions among different classes of workers as much as it draws from some of the same assumptions about "artistic" labor's greater creative agency and authorial status.[21]

Still, the allure of Hollywood glamour and the lure of Hollywood capital continues to enrapture many of us, from aspiring students who long for their shot in the director's chair to local governments that conjure red-carpet dreams of flashy jobs and thriving economies. And yet for those of us who have ever encountered a film or television production in a public space, the experience rarely conforms to the excitement and dynamism we most associate with creativity. Instead, it's rather boring. You'll find large trucks, wardrobe trailers, massive cables, signs and barriers, idle equipment, and just a few visible but unremarkable people standing around, most likely security or production assistants tasked with protecting the "true" ritual site from curious onlookers. Craft and creativity presumably flourish just beyond any public vantage point (figs. 1 and 2). It's a bit of a paradox: mobile production has made chance encounters with Hollywood more possible in a greater number of places, but in so doing it potentially ruptures some of the fundamental assumptions about the nature of that work. But what happens if we stop to ask questions about the trucks, trailers, cables, and signs? How did they get there? Who is responsible for them? What sort of labor makes them possible, and how does that generate value for Mobile Hollywood? I start from the premise that these objects are trace elements of the more unsung, wearying, and less visible work screen media laborers perform—work, I argue, that the respatialization of production has intensified and extended, begetting newer, revised, or expanded work routines and rituals that deserve scrutiny in our attempts to wrangle with the operations of Mobile Hollywood.

Figure 1. Surprise encounters. Location for *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017). Brisbane. Photo by author.

Accordingly, this book, in part, joins an emergent effort to rebalance attention and reconfigure our understanding of craft or technical work's distinctive conditions in our broader accounts of film and television labor.[22] At the same time, it also aims to push our inquiries beyond the accepted parameters of

Figure 2. Surprise encounters. Location for *The Rookies* (2019). Budapest. Photo by author.

just creativity or craftwork as the markers of work in Hollywood not by simply acknowledging that other labor inputs exist within the division of labor but by taking those labor processes as serious objects of study. Indeed, part of my aim with this book is to turn attention to some of the more invisible conditions of mobile production to illustrate how the accumulation of capital depends upon such practices to calibrate the spaces through which Mobile Hollywood moves. Most of these elements are neither within the purview of management oversight nor do they align with a rational (or even sustainable) division of labor. Instead, they constitute a series of work-related pleasures and obligations that screen media laborers accept as part of the job, a form of self-discipline and control that not only straddles the messy boundaries of capital relations but also converts imperfections in the mode of production into something more amenable to capital accumulation.

In short, the work that makes Hollywood mobile exceeds the explanatory purchase of craftwork and creativity. It is bureaucratic, logistical, relational, and service-oriented in nature, and absolutely critical, more so than ever before, in shaping a more mobile and responsive mode of production. Specifically, these work functions coalesce around what I argue are acts of "just-in-time" or "immediately responsive" (spatial) coordination. As the following chapters illustrate, these acts manifest in assorted ways. In the most literal sense, someone has to organize the movement of people, equipment, and things through space and into/out of the spatial and temporal confines of a production. Like most project-based endeavors, this coordination aims for efficiency, rationality, and cost-effectiveness. Such activities, in the context of mobile production, entail working with and alongside an ever-expanding number of individuals and organizations that are not normally considered sources of productive value: politicians, local residents and private businesses, transportation authorities, environmental agencies, police and security firms, and waste removers, among others. This list is iterative and always changing according to the needs of a given production. As the accounts in this book attest, hospitals, power plants, mines, historic sites, inner-city street corners, and environmentally sensitive locations, to name but a few, all require workers to accommodate competing and contradictory processes and protocols into the rhythm of film and television production.

Still, no amount of advanced planning or strategic cooperation can fully discipline the risks of internal or external disruption. While the reliance on project-management tools help rationalize the geography of production, these technologies are imperfect instruments when confronted by the unwieldiness of the people and places that constitute the variable socio-spatial

relations of mobile production. Thus, coordination also involves individual acts of suppression, working to contain the disruption, disjuncture, and sheer messiness of Mobile Hollywood by constantly putting out fires or squashing, often temporarily and tentatively, potential impediments to capital expansion. Notably, these acts of suppression occur across workers' professional *and* personal lives, a means of coordination that assembles (and reassembles) new configurations of work routines and practices, both pleasurable and precarious, into the spatial fabric of film and television production. Many of the workers employed on mobile productions are considered local hires, men and women who live and work in the distant hubs where production takes place. But the shifting spatial dynamics of production also have respatialized labor itself, creating a growing class of itinerant workers who move from location to location as a professional necessity.

For many workers who share their stories in this book, the allure of a jet-set career is strong and adds to the pleasures they continue to find in their craft. Mobile production has further resignified some forms of production work around notions of entrepreneurialism and project management that a certain class of workers has found professionally productive and rewarding. It also has generated opportunities in places where they previously did not exist. At the same time, hopscotching from one location to the next is not without its challenges. Production managers, line producers, location experts, and more generally, heads of technical departments must constantly negotiate different cultural understandings of film and television workflows, working hours, and divisions of labor; contend with shifting or nonexistent union regulations; and manage variations in job titles, roles, wages, and assumed training. Power dynamics between local hires and "more mobile" London- or Los Angeles–based crew

members, who occupy senior managing roles, shape everything from on-set social relations to professional mobility.

As such, mobility is not an equitable dynamic. For many workers (and as feminist scholars remind us about workers under capitalism more generally), the reproduction of their labor power requires them to satisfy certain preconditions for employment, a capacity for work that appears "natural" but is nevertheless necessary to accommodate the job. It tends to favor young, single, white men (often without children) who face less cultural pressure to perform domestic, place-bound duties associated with home and family than their female counterparts. While it was never explicitly acknowledged in my conversations with industry workers (who were predominately white), it's also not hard to fathom how one's racial or ethnic identity may exacerbate existing injustices in the context of international travel and border crossing. For a white man, relocating from Los Angeles to Prague or from London to Vancouver likely entails a different set of experiences than it does for his black or brown colleagues.[23]

Mobile production is, at best, a mixed bag. The expanded geography of production has intensified demands for some workers and engendered entirely new job categories and professional opportunities for others, often in places that would not have access to them otherwise. Yet it exacerbates the existing system's latent and not-so-latent inequalities as enduring sources of value for capital expansion. This book, then, provides a grounded investigation into the experiences, complexities, and evolving work functions that characterize a particular spatial expertise, acts of coordination that help stitch together a global assemblage of places, people, and resources into Mobile Hollywood. In so doing, it challenges received wisdom about

the nature of work in the entertainment industries and opens up for analysis some of the more unsung, wearying, and invisible conditions of creative labor that are essential to a mobile mode of production.

TYING IT TOGETHER: LOCATIONS, LABOR, CAPITAL

Locations have always factored into Hollywood narrative productions. From early actualities and scenic travelogues to postwar productions in Italy, France, and the United Kingdom, some form of location-based shooting has been common practice in Hollywood. While reasons to shoot on location might change over time, the practice has proffered a rich and illuminating history of debate. Largely focused on representational concerns, this literature considers the centrality of space and place to certain genre aesthetics, urban imaginaries, and issues of sociocultural authenticity.[24] Yet as a distinct object of study, the concept of mobility as part of the mode of production has received relatively scant attention from media industry scholars. As a consequence, a mobile mode of production risks being misunderstood as a fairly obvious and unremarkable practice of "shooting on location," an isolated decision to simply shift the creative process from the bounded confines of a studio's soundstage to a location's natural exteriors.

Recent work by media industry historians have started to grapple with the centrality of locations at different points in time to Hollywood's filmmaking activities.[25] These interventions effectively articulate location shooting as a historically contingent decision with implications for both creative practice and the actual locations where these productions took place. Most critically, this research productively complicates location

shooting as the negotiated outcome among economic, aesthetic, technological, and logistical variables. Still, as a historical practice, location shooting is understood in these assessments as a temporary deviation from normal practice rather than a product of capital relations. Studio shooting was the constant (and commonly preferred) alternative against which decision makers evaluated the risks of traveling beyond the soundstage: "Shooting on location always connotes a fundamental choice to accept the *unpredictability of actual places* over the hermetic environment of studio production facilities."[26] Given the physical studio provided a central site to manage labor and related production processes, it was an incredibly effective tool to contain costs and improve the efficiency of large-scale film and television production before advances in technology, communications, and travel made it easier to do so from a distance.

This book is not about location shooting or the one-off decision to film outside a studio's production facilities. Rather, its primary objective is to interrogate the normalization of mobility as a constitutive component to the mode of production and examine the implications for a particular community of screen media workers who operate at the intersection of capital interests and geography. In this context, shooting on location, going on location, and location shooting are somewhat anachronistic descriptors that rely on binaries between studio/location and interior/exterior, and are at odds with the fundamentally mobile and dispersed nature of contemporary large-scale film and television production. More critically, such binaries elide the global synchronization along an expansive international supply chain of people, places, and resources that help sustain mobility as a much more integrated, naturalized, and commonsense practice within the industry's day-to-day operations. So much so, mobility is a powerful structuring force that forms the organizational

backbone to other creative, economic, and industrial dynamics across a range of scales, both large and small, that helps suture disparate links and relations around the world.

In this vein, a mobile mode of production and the socio-spatial relations that constitute it exemplify some of the core logics of "supply chain capitalism," a concept first developed by the anthropologist Anna Tsing to describe the ways global processes link up across diverse economic, geographic, and cultural formations. She writes that supply chains not only bring commodities to market but also reconfigure workforces into patchy, awkward, and unstable relationships within and across geography.[27] Other social and political theorists, including Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, have extrapolated from Tsing's ideas to more explicitly link questions of capital operations to a concern with logistical labor and the variable social and spatial formations of mobile processes. In one of their earlier writings, Mezzadra and Neilson argue, "Logistical coordination is central to the instances of bordering, connecting, and stretching of heterogeneous spaces . . . . [Logistical] operations calibrate and coordinate movements across different populations and borders, taking into account the varying conditions that shape their formation. The aim is not to eliminate differences but to work across them, to build passages and connections in an ever more fragmented world."[28] The ability to work across "varying conditions" shapes mobile production's elastic geography, enabling a more agile spatial enterprise that exceeds the specific dynamics of any individual location that encounters it.

For Tsing, supply chain capitalism extends key ideas developed elsewhere in her writing about the diversity, disjuncture, and inherent "friction" that make capital encounters possible, often in ways that are more productive than capital's homogenizing tendencies; indeed, she concludes, "diversity forms a part

of the *structure* of capitalism rather than an inessential appendage. . . . [It] conditions the responses of both capital and labor to the problems of cutting labor costs and disciplining the workforce."[29] On the one hand, these conditions speak to the persistence of subcontracting and outsourcing not just in the entertainment industries but world capitalism more broadly. On the other hand, these conditions point to a more complex process in which lead firms make strategic decisions about what to standardize and discipline within the chain (e.g., inventory tracking, audit procedures) and what responsibilities to abdicate entirely by delegating them further down the chain (e.g., labor practices, environmental protocols).[30] Mobile production adheres to these base logics of supply chain capitalism. As I argue in the following chapters, studios, producers, and others with capital interests are more concerned with the end result than the means of achieving it, a whatever-it-takes mentality that standardizes budget sheets and accounting procedures but delegates and disperses operational oversight of potential complications out of their purview (further and further down the chain). Acts of "just-in-time" and "immediately responsive" coordination are the products of the contingency and friction within capital relations and help tie together the production geography of Mobile Hollywood.

AN INDUSTRY STUDY OF FILM AND TELEVISION LABOR

The arguments in this book are oriented around a set of intellectual priorities that are closely associated with critical media industry studies, an interdisciplinary subfield that coheres around an effort to provide more grounded and contextualized accounts of how the political economy of the media industries operates within and across individual practices and

organizational dynamics. A central concern for media industry scholars is the ways in which rote industrial conventions at a variety of scales—from the actions of individual workers to international or national market regulations—are the negotiated outcomes of messy cultural dynamics and broader systems of power.[31] Media industry scholars recognize the structuring force of macro-level political and economic factors but reject deterministic claims in favor of perspectives that identify complexity, contradiction, and ambivalence as key to industrial operations. These priorities underscore my intention to reassess the operations of economic power from the grounded experiences of a particular group of workers. In so doing, I emphasize the division of labor, the specificities of particular job functions, the changes to those functions over time, and the impact these dynamics have had on the capital imperatives of the entertainment industry—concerns that repeatedly avoid tidy explanations and rationales.

I also draw upon insights from the sociology of work and production studies to enrich the ideas in the chapters that follow, especially their interest in theorizing media work through the prism of the everyday experiences of labor. Both traditions have provided harrowing accounts of the tensions and transformations taking place in creative and cultural workplaces, offering rich and grounded accounts of work experiences and meaning making among professional communities. These studies are an important addendum to the more abstracted accounts of labor in critical political economy and economic development research. Sociologists have been especially adept at theorizing the politics of cultural work, drawing on empirical studies across a range of creative industries to intervene in debates about race and gender, immaterial labor, pedagogy, and neoliberal policymaking, among others, to reveal the celebrated characteristics of creative

labor often betray a darker or more contradictory reality.[32] Few, if any, of these accounts tend to the specificities of film and television labor, however, often approaching cultural work through a shared framework to align with the creative industry policy contexts within which the research takes place. Space and place are considered primarily as matters of urban development and workplace cultures: creative clusters and the techno-bohemian ethos that define the Silicon Valley office complex.[33]

Production studies, meanwhile, especially the work of John T. Caldwell, has provided more granular accounts of technological change, time pressures, and sociocultural norms that shape the way film and television workers understand the nature of their work.[34] More broadly, this strand of scholarship has helped substantiate the value in media workers' own interpretative activities as they negotiate issues of power and culture that permeate their workplaces. Yet such analyses remain most attuned to the constitution and contestation of the values and identities that shape a shared work world or community of practice among particular groups of film and television laborers. Production studies largely, though not entirely, avoids broader engagements with global political economy in favor of workers' identity-making and everyday theorizing. Vicki Mayer's monograph *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy*, however, is a productive exception that not only focuses on the identities, values, and practices of a diverse range of media workers around the world but also links those insights to shifts in the global television economy. While her analysis remains more attuned to issues of identity work and notions of creativity and professionalism, I share her investment in disrupting received industrial and academic hierarchies about

what jobs and work functions are valuable, both to the industry's global economy and as objects of study.

My point here is not to erect false distinctions or unproductive hierarchies between intellectual traditions. Indeed, such distinctions are murky to uphold and often rely on different critical inflections rather than fundamental oppositions. Instead, I rehearse these scholarly contributions in a more inclusive spirit to acknowledge the broader conversations that shape the arguments in this book.

Mobile Hollywood relies heavily on interviews with below-the-line workers to tease out details otherwise obscured in more macro-scale research. I draw most explicitly from interviews with nearly two dozen service producers, location experts, and teamsters, alongside a wider array of production executives, film commissioners, and other below-the-line workers for additional background. These interviews included both local hires and more mobile workers who have worked "for Hollywood" in a range of film and television production hubs: Atlanta (US), Belfast (Northern Ireland), Budapest (Hungary), Dublin (Ireland), Glasgow (Scotland), the Gold Coast (Australia), London (England), Los Angeles (US), New Orleans (US), and Prague (Czech Republic). A secondary list of locales expands the geography of production to include Iceland, Romania, South Africa, Korea, Slovakia, and Thailand, among others. By focusing on the socio-spatial relations of production across a number of hubs rather than a single location, *Mobile Hollywood* maps the ongoing integration and convergence of what we might otherwise assume are distinct territories and work experiences, illustrating how a global supply chain of logistical labor enables a more agile and responsive mobile production apparatus.

I also rely to some extent on textual materials, such as industry reports, trade press coverage, union newsletters, and promotional texts, as well as my own observations at industry trade shows and location visits, as a way to triangulate information learned through my conversations with industry professionals. Still, my intention—in this project and others—is to listen most closely to the voices of labor, allowing workers the space to reflect critically on how their roles and responsibilities have changed over the past two decades and discuss openly the perceived challenges they face as basic matters of their workaday lives.[35] Given my interest in the granular detail of what these workers do and why it matters to Hollywood's mobile operations, a core contribution to media industry studies underscores just how much we can still learn from taking seriously the humdrum tasks and routine drudgery of media labor in all its forms. Accordingly, *Mobile Hollywood* engenders a more multivalent and translocal perspective that weaves the macro-level complexities of flexible capitalism into the quotidian, even mundane, realities of how a vast global network of screen media labor actually works to mobilize production.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This chapter has been concerned with making explicit the core assumptions that shape the arguments in the rest of the book. The following chapters elaborate upon and extend these themes through grounded case studies of the work service producers, location experts, and teamsters do in the context of Mobile Hollywood. The book concludes with a consideration of mobile production's adaptiveness to the travel restrictions and heightened safety protocols following the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in early 2020.

Chapter 2, "Making Hollywood Mobile: Elastic Production Geographies and Irrational Labor," establishes some of the core features of supply chain capitalism as they apply to the spatial operations of contemporary film and television production. In particular, it elaborates upon what this framework renders visible with respect to both geography and labor, focusing on the operational logics that help transform the mode of production into something more iterative and responsive. Accordingly, its primary objective is to reframe how media industry scholars theorize capital operations in Mobile Hollywood. Moving beyond the conceptual, the chapter then concludes with an assessment of how these capital abstractions actually play out in the context of labor, industry, and workaday realities.

Each of the next three chapters continues in this vein with a detailed examination of three different groups of workers whose experiences have been profoundly affected by a mobile mode of production. Chapter 3, "Here to Help: Service Producers and the Labor of Film Friendliness," examines the labor that helps materialize a location's economic and policy orientation to Mobile Hollywood. Film friendliness (also sometimes called a film services framework) is commonly associated with the mechanisms that make production hubs amendable to the demands of large-scale film and television production, not only by offering a wealth of economic enticements but also by uniting a range of public and private services under an agenda explicitly driven by the needs of Hollywood. Against this backdrop, this chapter charts the rise of service producers in places like Prague and Budapest, where mobile production has created an opportunity for (predominately) British and American expatriates to translate their creative aspirations and national identities into successful small business ventures that cater to Hollywood clientele. More broadly, it argues service producers perform

critical but largely invisible functions in film-friendly contexts around the world to ensure local complexities never interfere with foreign capital interests, a form of middle management that helps rationalize the production process and mediate the uneven socio-spatial connections that keep Hollywood mobile.

Chapter 4, "Crew Adjacent: Location Experts, Spatial Creativity, and Logistical Quagmires," shifts the focus from the managerial work of service producers to the craft of location managers and scouts. It argues mobile production has diminished some of the professional authority and creative autonomy of location experts but increased the value of their logistical expertise, a form of work that takes place adjacent to the temporal demands and spatial boundaries that shape the daily regimes of their below-the-line colleagues. It further troubles the rhetoric around "local" labor by documenting the inherently mobile nature of location work that makes constant travel from one production hub to the next a defining feature (and central challenge) of the job.

Chapter 5, "Driving Hollywood Outside Hollywood: Transportation Teamsters, Industrial Relations, and Distant Locations," provides the first sustained interrogation of how a class of workers "always already" marginalized from the discourses of craft and creativity are adjusting to realities of mobile work. It is perhaps no surprise this group has been the most politically vocal for a California incentive scheme, putting them in unlikely alliances with other labor unions and the studios. In so doing, this chapter highlights one union's response to the spatial dynamics of mobile production, arguing the strategies and tactics of organized labor have had a key part to play in both the creation of an expanded production geography and the regulatory logics that govern the activities of individual

laborers across the spatial terrain of Mobile Hollywood. It further demonstrates that such scale-making endeavors often result from the collaboration and cooperation of misaligned stakeholders (in this case, management, government, and labor, among others) that help establish a common outcome, even while achieving quite divergent and contradictory claims in realizing those projects.

In the final chapter, "Risk Management for Mobile Hollywood," I end with some reflections on one possible future for Mobile Hollywood. Drawing on a series of crises in the industry—the complete shutdown and return to work following the novel coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, the narrowly averted strike by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) in 2021, and the on-set shooting death of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins that same year—I acknowledge the industry's nascent engagement with discourses around risk and risk mitigation but query whether the investments are engendering a culture of compliance over safety. For the industry, its advocates, and scholars invested in the global conditions of screen media labor, I argue a critical turn to workplace health and safety regulation and the mental and physical well-being of individual workers is a fertile ground of inquiry as we continue to grapple with the impacts (both visible and less so) of a more mobile mode of production.

CHAPTER TWO

Making Hollywood Mobile

Elastic Production Geographies and Irrational Labor

In March 2019, Showtime's gothic period drama *Penny Dreadful* (2014–16) made headlines after the network announced its intention to relocate the series from Dublin to Los Angeles for the production of its fourth season, attributing the decision to the $25 million boost (the largest award to date) in tax credits it would receive from the California Film Commission. "Choosing where to set up production for the next chapter of the *Penny Dreadful* fable was one of the most important decisions we had to make, and there were many options we looked into," Jana Winograde, the network's then-president of entertainment, said in a media release at the time. She continued, "Shooting in California obviously has many attractions, but without the state's film and TV tax credit it could become cost prohibitive."[1] Reimagined as *Penny Dreadful: City of Angels* (2020), the series replaced Victoria-era London and gothic horror with 1930s Hollywood and Mexican American folklore. It premiered in mid-2020 to modest reviews but no commitment from Showtime for further seasons.

There is something telling, I think, about the contemporary production landscape when a decision to shoot in the most prominent media capital of the world warrants such fanfare in newspapers and trade magazines and is further characterized as a carefully considered option—one among many—by entertainment executives. It's an even a richer anecdote when understood within the context of the state's tax-credit scheme, which dedicates 20 percent of its $330 million annual budget for the sole purpose of luring *existing* television series away from the foreign and domestic cities where they had initially set up production. It's been an extremely successful provision.[2] In fact, *Penny Dreadful* was the sixteenth television series to relocate to California in less than four years, following similar moves (and headlines) by other high-profile productions like *The Affair* (New York) (2014–19), *American Horror Story* (New Orleans) (2011–), *Good Girls* (Atlanta) (2018–21), *Lucifer* (Vancouver) (2016–21), and *Veep* (Baltimore) (2012–19).

Accordingly, the transformation of film and television production into a more nimble, responsive, and mobile apparatus has reached a particular apex by firmly repositioning locations as a collection of largely interchangeable (but not identical) variables. So much so that today, efforts to lure large-scale productions with tax rebates and incentives are no longer considerations made only at the earliest stages of financial planning and creative development; even well-established productions are subject to competitive forces, easily packed up and relocated whenever an opposing region can offer a sweeter deal to producers.

As Myles McNutt observes about the "ongoing mobility" of television production, "focusing on the mobility of the productions reminds us that they were never in single, stable

environments even after choosing initial production locations. These productions were always mobile, with producers continually tracking shifts in incentive structures and local infrastructure to determine the most efficient way to produce the series in question."[3] As a result, this dynamic, often championed as evidence of local job growth but quickly abandoned as soon as mobile production moves on to the next location, leaves local workers in precarious positions as, increasingly, they are simply given low-waged opportunities or never hired at all as key positions are allocated to crew brought in from elsewhere.[4]

But how did we get here? This question is not so much a historical one, though there is some history to tell, but a more direct concern with how we conceptualize a dynamic regime of accumulation that crisscrosses multiple locations, communities, and scales in its pursuit of capital. This query involves not only recasting in new light some of what we already know about the spatial dynamics of contemporary film and television production, but also unearthing the consequences that new conceptual frameworks render visible as part of our engagements with the scale and diversity of Mobile Hollywood. Ultimately, it calls for us to rethink the spatiality of media's political economy with particular attention paid to the excessive demands upon creative labor to shape—often times, quite literally—the elastic geography of contemporary Hollywood operations.

Accordingly, my intention in this chapter is to develop a more complicated understanding of capital, geography, and labor. I push back against assessments that assume mobility is a relatively rational outcome of economic logics and policy interests, a modest calculation of incentives and infrastructure that results in perpetual choice for producers but abstracts the role of labor from the production of value. Instead, I reframe Mobile

Hollywood as a much more tentative and contradictory socio-spatial enterprise that relies heavily on logistical coordination, service-oriented work, and relational labor to create the conditions necessary for a nimbler mode of production.

In the first section of the chapter, I distinguish Mobile Hollywood from prevailing accounts of film and television's spatial dynamics. Drawing on developments in anthropology and social and political theory, I argue for an analytical frame that privileges the contingent encounters that constitute mobile production as a means to understand more precisely what its global expansion requires from screen media workers. I take up the concern with labor more directly in the subsequent section. Here, I frame the industry's embrace of more flexible production processes as the historical preconditions for the mode of production's spatial expansion. While academic debate recognizes precarious working conditions as a feature of the global film economy's impact on creative labor, I draw attention to the heightened logics of collaboration, coordination, and synchronization that have emerged alongside changes within the mode of production. In the final section, I turn to accounts from workers, offering a grounded exploration of the ideas discussed in the previous sections as a frame for the chapters that follow.

GLOBAL, LOCAL, AND MOBILE HOLLYWOOD

As suggested, a few media scholars already have engaged with Hollywood as a particular spatial constellation of capital-labor relations that exceeds a discrete place-based industry in Los Angeles. Most prominent, arguably, is the critical view of American media hegemony outlined by Toby Miller et al. in *Global Hollywood* and its sequel.[5] These projects link the global

coordination and control Hollywood studios exert over foreign filming locations and an international workforce to its powerful and troubling domination of international trade agreements, intellectual property regimes, and marketing prowess. By continually relocating activities to destinations that promise the most attractive benefits, the studios erode wages and working conditions around the world as complicit governments and labor organizations offer more and more concessions to retain the attention of producers.[6] Further, the authors articulate this power to a critical engagement with US economic and cultural capital more broadly. They write, "The source of Hollywood's power extends far beyond the history of cinema, to the cultural-communications complex that has been an integral component of capitalist exchange since the end of the nineteenth century."[7] As such, its intervention is attuned not only to the stringent study of Hollywood's global power but also to part of a broader political economic assessment of US-style capital expansion.

Whereas the arguments in *Global Hollywood* take up a concern with the financial interests, business strategies, and political maneuvering that contribute to the perpetual mobility of film and television production, economic development arguments offer an alternative take on the worldwide matrix of Hollywood operations. They emphasize the local circumstances that enable global integration and, as a consequence, understand local stakeholders as more active—though not necessarily equal—collaborators in the making of international co-ventures. The work done in Australia by Ben Goldsmith and Tom O'Regan, and Goldsmith, Susan Ward, and O'Regan, is a paradigmatic example of this perspective. In two book-length publications and a series of chapters and articles, the authors develop a line of

argumentation that distinguishes between the control and coordinating power of the major studios and the sometimes complementary and convergent actions of the local places caught up in the web of globally dispersed production.[8] According to this logic, the interests of global capital—already a mix of foreign and domestic finance from a range of investment sources—are subject to an iterative and contingent set of political, economic, and cultural concerns that converge around a particular policy agenda to facilitate a location's global participation.

Economic development perspectives offer a necessary corrective to critical political economy's overly deterministic and monolithic account of Hollywood's global hegemony. Indeed, as Goldsmith et al. themselves suggest, "This top-down perspective needs to be balanced by an examination of the critical role played by the many location interests . . . that not only support Global Hollywood but have acted as junior partners, collaborators and investors, innovators and supports in the very transformation and creation of this system of globally dispersed production."[9]

Yet despite their different political orientation, both perspectives accept capital expansion as a coherent project rather than something more tentative and incomplete. A focus on local, complementary dynamics may privilege the agency of junior partners but still depends on binary logics—global/local, push/pull, top down/bottom up—that obscure the complexity and contradictions that exist somewhere in the messy middle. Both lines of inquiry assume a relatively rational union between global capital and local interests. Disjuncture is either obliterated in the name of US-style capitalism or enthusiastically remade in the name of local advancement. Most critical to the purposes of this book, neither account fully appreciates how a more firmly

established mobile mode of production reconfigures the organization of work and work routines necessary to sustain it.

The point here is not to besmirch the validity or reliability of these accounts but to signify a different and more contemporary framework through which we can engage with aspects of mobile production left unaddressed or not yet assessable ten or twenty years ago. This is to ask, as Anna Tsing suggests, what else has been happening in the context of capital expansion: "Like a giant bulldozer, capitalism appears to flatten the earth to its specifications. But all this only raises the stakes for asking what else is going on—not in some protected enclave, but rather everywhere, both inside and out."[10] For Tsing, the problem with how we understand projects of expansion is one of how we understand scale and scalability. In manufacturing terms, the prevailing view of expansion privileges the rationality and efficiency of the factor floor. All the component parts—whether we are speaking about drill bits and machinery or studio infrastructure and skilled labor—seamlessly fit together to enable global scale without disrupting (at significant costs) the rhythms of the assembly line, creative or otherwise.

Sometimes the route to industrial progress achieves its objectives through state-sponsored violence or sheer corporate power (similar to what we find in the Global Hollywood story), or project elements can coalesce more neatly or uniformly in what Tsing calls "precision nesting scales" (similar to what we find in the Local Hollywood story).[11] Critically, however, Tsing calls for more attention to the non-scalable aspects of expansion, by which she means the small elements that don't easily nest into larger ones, the components that are more indeterminate and never fully cooperative with capital's centrifugal tendencies, the parts of a project that are prone to contingency and failure, and

the dynamics that are often pushed aside or hidden from view as impediments to unfettered progress. Drawing attention to these dynamics, she argues, allows us to understand scalable projects not as natural or inevitable but the product of much more local, peculiar, and divergent processes—not mere "hiccups" to capital expansion but constitutive features of it.

Tsing is an anthropologist who develops and employs her concepts, like scale-making and friction, in the context of global capital's encounter with the environment, from logging in the Indonesian rainforests to mushroom picking in the Pacific Northwest, and through her ethnographies, she interrogates how those entanglements affect and bring together a range of economic, cultural, and community-based actors. In her work she upends monolithic narratives of capital progress (or failure) to demonstrate how expansion actually manifests from quite localized forms of "messiness" as disparate agendas and social actors engage with one another in the making of capital relations, stories that are often obscured when we take the logic of progress narratives for granted. Michael Curtin has employed a similar strategy to illustrate how the globalization of Chinese film and television has unfolded not as a coherent global project but from a series of complex interactions that involved state actors, corporate executives, creative professionals, audiences, and a host of other players across local, regional, national, and global levels; in a separate article, he draws on Tsing more explicitly to deconstruct the financial fantasies that underpinned the spate of media mergers and acquisitions in the 1990s.[12] Aswin Punathambekar also has found Tsing's insights into scale-making helpful in analyzing "how the 'global' [was] variously imagined, acted upon, contested, and rearticulated" during the Bombay film industry's transition into Bollywood.[13]

For my purposes, I am less interested in the "spectacular discourses" that conjure Mobile Hollywood as a steaming engine of capital progress than I am in the material conditions such fantasies leave in their wake. As I argue in the next section (and throughout this book), such "messes" are inextricably linked to the surplus value workers provide when tasked with "cleaning" them up, subsuming the impediments to capital expansion across their personal and professional lives and within an ever-expanding regime of social relations necessary to pull the whole thing together. In short, Mobile Hollywood is an incredibly messy affair, but its messiness is the characteristic that has been most evacuated from our engagements with it—a simple glitch or discrepancy in the way of capital progress rather than a signature feature of the mode of production's transformation.

This assessment of the frictions and tensions inherent to capital expansion follows recent interventions in social and political theory. As Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson argue (drawing in parts from Tsing), "the deep heterogeneity of contemporary global space is the result of a continuous and systematic process of production that is adaptive, temporally variable and constantly redefines its own boundaries."[14] The system can contract, disperse, or dissipate altogether, because "its operations are flexible or pliable, capable of confronting the unexpected and thriving off contradictions and incompleteness."[15] Likewise, Curtin and I have posited a similar assertion about the contemporary mode of film and television production, concluding that it marks "what we consider a distinctive phase of flexible capitalism in the screen media industries, since it's characterized by a mobile regime of socio-spatial relations that entails a more protean mode of production, one that involves a constant refashioning

of relations and resources across locations."[16] The current mode of production can easily accommodate variations in territory, regulation, and culture; respond to unexpected disruptions; or simply shift its spatial configurations on a whim. By intensifying its demands on labor, mobile production can bring together the necessary people, places, and resources into a series of provisional and iterative relationships that maintain a fiction of rationalism and coherency within an otherwise grinding system.

Accordingly, I understand Mobile Hollywood as a distinct spatial assemblage that is generated by the protocols and processes necessary for it to maneuver back and forth across an elastic production geography. It is constituted by a translocal network of social relations and operational logics that certainly emerge from and intersect with particular national economies and local cultures, but nevertheless reconfigures these territories into a geographic formation that is greater than the sum of its parts. There are generalizing tendencies and scalable elements, for sure, but it equally engenders dynamics that are more tentative and incomplete. Differences in policy, costs, culture, skills, geography, and history are as necessary as elements of standardization and conformity.

Mobile Hollywood, then, is more mutable and responsive. As a concept, it signifies how mobility has become a firmly entrenched feature of the mode of production and underscores the scale to which those adjustments have reorganized the socio-spatial relations of production. These changes have been gradual over the past two decades but no less impactful for the workers who must live and labor under what has now become—more so than ever before—business as usual. In the next section, I take up the concern with labor and geography more directly,

framing the socio-spatial relations of production as an increasingly critical conduit for value creation in Mobile Hollywood.

LABOR, GEOGRAPHY, AND VALUE

While it's broadly recognized that the division of labor during the studio era did not fully replicate the mass-production processes of the manufacturing industry, the centralization of employment (labor power and time), resources (financial), and physical assets (the technological means of production) within a single entity (the major studios) helped anchor profit maximization to a particular place: the studio's offices, soundstages, and backlots in Los Angeles. The separation of planning or conception and the execution of creative duties allowed studios to increasingly subdivide tasks into ever more specific work functions and further rationalize labor time and labor power as means to increase wealth. While the capitalist orientation of the mode of production has never changed, both the management systems and the division of labor have evolved over time into ever-more specific configurations to keep pace with broader changes in the economy and creative practices. It was a dynamic process of adaptation that constantly retooled technologies of both management and creative production, as well as reconfigured its workforce to reinforce the mode of production.[17]

A more mobile mode of production is the most contemporary means of organizing the creative process with significant implications for its workforce. Namely, the expanded geography of production that has emerged over the past decade has made the coordination of people, places, and things an absolutely critical input for value creation. As I suggested in the previous section, this "coordination" is the consequence of capital's unpredictability as it expands across territories and, critically, it is no longer under

the purview of a central producer ("management"), but increasingly and necessarily subsumed by laborers as a facet of both their personal and professional lives. It's the messiness of Mobile Hollywood that investors prefer to keep hidden from view but which labor must tackle as part of its ever-expanding work functions.

In what follows, I trace the socio-spatial adjustments in the division of labor that followed the industry's turn to flexible specialization, and then I argue that our accounts of labor need to do more than simply accept "precariousness" as the final word on labor-capital relations. Certainly, this work is precarious: productivity pressures, labor concessions, uncertain opportunities, increased responsibilities, diminishing budgets, and so forth characterize film and television employment. The arguments in this book add to those concerns. Yet it also aims to look inside the nature of that work in more detail to link the sustenance of a more mobile mode of production to the reconfiguration of its workforce—the diminishment of certain tasks, responsibilities, and forms of work, and the simultaneous rise in value of newer or revised labor inputs that help suture the ever-shifting socio-spatial relations of production into Mobile Hollywood.

"Flexible specialization" is a term used to capture the industrial shift from mass-production methods to vertically disintegrated production networks. In Hollywood, flexible specialization emerged in response to increasingly uncertain market conditions, including changes in consumption patterns in postwar America and the decision to divorce exhibition from production and distribution. This moment of reorganization saw the major studios look to reduce massive overheads by divesting their physical infrastructure, production services, and ongoing labor costs. While they retained control of market access in their roles as financiers and distributors, the studios externalized the production process and transformed it into a series of temporary

and transactional relationships among independent contractors who provide "inputs" into a single project.[18]

Flexible specialization marked the embrace of an externalized, project-based logic in the industry's approach to creative endeavor. Independent producers or creative entrepreneurs brought together the necessary resources into a single unit for the duration of a project only to dissolve that unit once production finished. Accordingly, producers were able to distill the complexity of film and television production into smaller and more discrete processes and phases, which helped them further extract surplus value, control costs, and coordinate workflows across a large number of interconnected tasks and activities.[19] Yet for workers and other service providers, the organizational change transformed their standard employment relationships into something more ephemeral. Traditionally defined by long-term or permanent employment in a single studio, work now consisted of a series of short-term contractual arrangements that laborers needed to stitch together across a number of successive projects to sustain their professional livelihoods.

By making labor and capital inputs more variable, the shift in production operations helped the entertainment industries anticipate more profound spatial adjustments in global production processes in the second half of the twentieth century.[20] Many countries with histories of public service broadcasting experienced a seismic shift in their regulatory principles and communications policies, refashioning creativity and innovation as powerful engines of economic growth rather than subsidized cultural sectors. In the process (and amid much debate), policymakers relegated the sustainability of national economies and cultures to the logics of the global marketplace and embraced the growth value derived from producing more immaterial

goods and services.[21] Further afield, transitional economies and private businesses emerged in contexts once characterized by socialist regimes and state-owned enterprises. As a consequence, a number of domestic industries, including film and television production, entered a period of crisis that heightened the appeal of foreign (but not exclusively American) investment and private ownership as a source of economic stability, employment, and operational capacity.[22]

Given the structural shifts happening around the world, it was only a matter of time before the contracting of creative services extended to regions beyond Los Angeles.[23] Goldsmith, Ward, and O'Regan make this point, calling project-based thinking the "precondition for the larger canvas of places, spaces and individuals becoming involved in film and television production."[24] As I indicated in the previous chapter, Canada, especially Vancouver, was an early innovator in this respect. Regional producers, broadcasters, and film commissioners eagerly collaborated with their American counterparts, marketing skilled workers, exterior locations, and infrastructure as compelling "parts" made to integrate into a broader project-based production process conceived elsewhere. In return, the influx of foreign capital helped the regional industry combat its symbolic and financial marginalization within the government's national broadcasting policies and buoy its own globally oriented economic development strategy.[25]

Soon, other locations, both domestic and international, followed Canada's lead and competition increased, transforming the major entertainment conglomerates into a global command center for satellite locations in North America, Europe, and Australia.[26] In terms of value, the logic of the project—that is, the ability to stitch together variable "inputs" from a highly

competitive and segmented (and increasingly global) group of "suppliers"—enabled producers to better manage costs and offset risk in an uncertain entertainment marketplace.[27]

Despite the wealth of scholarship on media and cultural globalization that followed these transformations (and the increased interest in creative labor, more generally), few attempts to explicitly link the spatial operations of the film and television industries to the plight of media workers remain. Again, the most prominent exception is the interventions of Miller et al. Despite my earlier reservations about their overly deterministic account of global power, the authors effectively link the emergence of a global network of subcontracted firms and individuals to the increasingly precarious working conditions for creative and cultural workers, creating what they call a New International Division of *Cultural* Labor (NICL).[28] As producers seek to gain cost advantages around the world, mobile production not only engenders a highly competitive global labor market, but it also exacts concessions from domestic labor organizations back home. As competition increases, wages go down and labor protections disappear, increasing surplus value for Hollywood as it is able to extract more and more from workers around the world by paying them less and less.

But, in Tsing's words, what else is going on? The integration of mobility into the mode of production over the past two decades requires taking seriously what, exactly, a more dispersed and nimble production apparatus requires from the workers who sustain it, and more precisely, what, exactly, workers do to shape, smooth over, and refine the contradictions inherent to a mobile regime of accumulation. No matter how seamless, rational, or inevitable mobile production appears, it depends on a series of operations and actions that are unpredictable and tentative,

what Mezzadra and Neilson refer to as "a drama of frictions and tensions in which the efficacy of the operations appears far more fragile and elusive than might otherwise be assumed."[29] This is both experiential and procedural, traversing borders between workers' personal and professional lives as much as it resignifies and reconfigures the nature of work.

For many workers, the boundary-crossing nature of mobile production translates into an unequal process of relocation, respatialization, and resocialization. As I demonstrate throughout this book, they find themselves sacrificing family time, personal relations, and other nonwork concerns in exchange for employment, often for long stretches of time and at greater distances from home. Alternatively, cultural norms, class status, national identity, or reputational capital cut them off from the elite tribe of traveling workers, leaving them more vulnerable to the whims of mobile production. Many of these aspects of work exist outside of capital relations; that is, they exist as a "natural" prerequisite for wage labor produced outside the boundaries of a formal employment relationship. As discussed in the previous chapter, workers who accept mobility as part of their job must secure their potential labor value at no cost to the system, whether they are white, male, single, childless, and Anglo-American (as is often the case in this research) or benefiting from other familial structures that can accommodate home care, childcare, and any other domestic duties in their extended absence (not to mention other geopolitical matters, like eligibility for international work visas and the privilege that makes traversing international borders easier for some than others). A similar logic applies to the service producers I examine in the next chapter: many working in Prague and Budapest are American and British expatriates with previous experience as

line producers, which establishes assumptions about trust, skill, and aptitude when dealing with Hollywood producers that does not extend to their local—non-American or British—counterparts in the region.

Less obvious examples underscore that the reproduction of value is not exclusive to the individual laborer but an increasingly variegated dynamic that draws upon relations that constantly shift between capitalist and noncapitalist forms. Location experts, for instance, often forge and nurture relationships with property owners and private businesses—who have power to shape the terms of access to space—outside of capital relations, but they nevertheless rely on those same relationships to prove their qualifications (and value) for each new job. Similarly, existing relationships are often leveraged for access to locations, which translates into value creation for the production but doesn't necessarily transform the nature of that friendship outside of the exchange; they both are alienated in the Marxist sense from the final commodity but not from the friendship that endures. In an example from my fieldwork, a neighborhood boy is hired by a production assistant (PA) to stand along the perimeter of a filming location, because the PA believed residents would react less aggressively to a "local" explaining why the beach is closed to the public. His value as a "local" was a noncapitalist attribute made valuable within the context of production. Further, environmentally sensitive and potentially hazardous shooting locations are bound by a series of regulations and protocols that are (often) at odds with the extraction of value: public, protected, and monitored by external agencies, such sites necessarily shape the contours of production as much as, if not more than, the dictates of internal

management structures. Such distinctions are not highlighted to imply these examples exist in opposition to capital—somehow unsullied and pure—but as an indication of how the generation of value depends upon labor to constantly refashion patchy and fragmented interests into a workable frontier for Mobile Hollywood.

Accordingly, the "dramas" of mobile production make explicit the intensification of work functions that loosely coalesce around acts of "just-in-time" or "immediately responsive" coordination—logistical management, service-oriented work, and relational labor that help synchronize an iterative matrix of socio-spatial relations into the rhythm of film and television production. So many of these work functions are necessary preconditions for mobility and ensure the mode of production remains adaptable, flexible, and responsive to any disturbances, constantly suturing and resuturing the creative, human, environmental, legal, and administrative resources, among others, according to the logics of mobile production.

For workers on the front line, these practices constitute a regime of excessive and irrational labor. Curtin and I have previously defined "excessive labor" as "the persistent pressure for 'more' in the workplace, which is a consequence of equally excessive structural change that stems from the concentration of corporate power, the financialization of creativity, the proliferation of far-flung productions hubs, and the escalating impact of production subsidies."[30] I offer the additional notion of irrationality to signify that the demands for "more" have pushed the orderly processes of production and the rational protocols of management systems to their limits. This point is not to say that chaos reigns, only that producers are more con-

cerned with the end result than the means of achieving it, a whatever-it-takes mentality that delegates and disperses operational oversight of potential complications and impediments out of their purview to ensure their conceptions of mobile production remain untroubled.

The global expansion of production processes only exacerbates this phenomenon and underscores the abdication of any real commitment to building human capital or standardizing labor. Tsing cites this as a signature feature of supply chain capitalism, in which "goods gathered from many arrangements can lead to profits for the lead firm; commitments to jobs, education, and well-being are no longer even rhetorically necessary."[31] The more spatially dynamic the process, the more diversity and disjuncture it encounters, making coordination of the "many arrangements" (subcontracted and outsourced, of course, and not confined wholly to one's professional life) necessary for value creation. These arrangements are indeterminant, patchy, and fragmented—in her term, "assemblages"—and exist both within and outside capital relations. She continues, "Amassing wealth is possible without rationalizing labor and raw materials. Instead, it requires acts of translation across varied social and political spaces."[32] For studio executives, producers, and other figures of capital interests, the rationality and standardization that frames mobile production might abdicate on-the-ground complexity or risks, but only when the labor of film and television workers keeps those perils out of sight. This process of translation is what I chart in the final section and other chapters in this book, focusing explicitly on multifaceted and increasingly valuable forms of coordination that contribute to a global supply chain for screen media production, and what these global configurations mean for our broader understanding

of the contradictory and inequitable experience of work within a mobile production apparatus.

THE MESS BEHIND THE METRICS

The story of runaway production is most commonly understood in terms of its generalizing tendencies. Hollywood production expands across geography by approaching its locations as largely interchangeable assets, a package of tax incentives, subsidized infrastructure, and discounted wages that local policymakers have designed to attract interest from producers. Establishing cities like Wellington, Vancouver, and Prague as global production or postproduction hubs, proponents hoped, would boost local economies, create well-paying jobs, and facilitate elite training opportunities for local screen media workers with potential spill over impact on domestic industries. In return, producers would reap the economic advantages of supportive policy, state-of-the-art services, and an eager pool of creative workers. From this perspective, Hollywood is just another physical production location, whereby its creative, financial, and logistical incentives are evaluated (often unfavorably) against the suite of amenities presented by competing locations in other parts of the world. No longer is mobile production a comparison between purpose-built soundstages and exterior locations, but a deliberation among Los Angeles, Atlanta, London, Vancouver, and Budapest, all of which have well-developed physical infrastructures, diverse geographies, and deep labor pools to service large-scale productions.

For production executives, mobility helps mediate the trade-offs between the creative vision of writers and directors, the logistical requirements of large-scale productions, and the financial resources necessary to sustain it all. As one

executive explained to me, "I'm immediately thinking about locations. . . . What locations offer what we need for what cost? Oftentimes we can do more creatively—get more bang for our buck—if we look at locations outside Los Angeles."[33] Such assumptions, however, demand a frame of reference that helps make the world legible in those terms. As Tsing argues, such homogenous or homogenizing frameworks are not natural but are created to help align with only one particular view of the world: They "must be brought into being—proposed, practiced, evaded, as well as taken for granted."[34] Production executives and producers depend upon the creation of such frames to ensure they do not have to think differently about what they do or how it happens—at risk of overusing an earlier metaphor, they prefer to keep the assembly-line production of the factory floor unchanged as operations disperse around the world. Difference and diversity remain, of course, but are pushed out of sight by more cogent and convergent narratives of capital relations—that's scalability.

Consider, for example, the prominence of the Los Angeles–based payroll and accounting firm Entertainment Partners (EP). Its entire business depends on its ability to conjure a world that aligns with the economic imperatives of the major studios. First launched as an accounting firm in the mid-1970s, the company—now one of the largest such firms in the world, with offices in the US, Canada, and London—specializes in automating business operations. Its proprietary software Smart Studio Suite systematizes everything from the earliest stages of script development and production budgeting through to scheduling and residual payments for cast and crew. According to one of its executives, "For almost 100 years, most of the industry focused on solving production as *an individual event.* [But] most of our clients produce more than one piece of content and [do] it over and over

again, so we moved away from event solutions to a *continuum opportunity.*"[35] What they consider a "continuum opportunity" is—in different terms—the scalable framework that prevents the idiosyncrasies of individual creative "events" from bringing the whole endeavor crashing down. It's a frame of reference that makes production (seem) possible without having to adjust the ways producers manage project-based workflows or calculate financial operations. Creative idiosyncrasies can remain non-scalable in the context of software that helps keep business operations coherent.

As the complexities of production have grown alongside its geographic expansion, it is no surprise that EP has extended its operations to include a global consulting service for production incentives and tax rebates. The division's website offers a very literal interpretation of scalability: it has transformed the entire globe into a map of competing jurisdictions that are represented by different colors and percentages, which correspond, respectively, to the particular type of rebate the region offers and the size of return available for producers. Visitors to the website can use the firm's estimation tools to calculate potential savings or use its comparison functionality to assess the value, criteria, eligibility, and general guidelines across three jurisdictions at once (fig. 3). At industry events, EP makes these maps available in glossy guidebooks, a handy tool for producers to make sense of the world without having to worry too much about the complexities those numbers elide. These services are matched by the firm's internal expertise that can advise on the changing laws and regulations, and leverage relationships with auditors and state departments of revenue to ensure the rhythms of capital accumulation are harmonized. All these services tie back into their accounting software, further cementing the firm's status as a conduit for scalable protocols.

ENTERTAINMENT PARTNERS | Production Incentives | Services | Our Team

Jurisdiction Comparison

Select up to 3 jurisdictions

Czech Republic | Utah | Fiji | Compare

Czech Republic	Utah	Fiji
	Incentive	
20% Rebate Local Production Company Required: Yes	**20-25% Refundable Tax Credit**	**75% Rebate** Local Production Company Required: Yes
	Eligible Production Types	
✔ Feature Films ✔ Scripted Television Reality Television ✔ Documentaries ✔ Animation Video Games Webisodes Talk Shows Game Shows Live Events Commercials	✔ Feature Films ✔ Scripted Television Reality Television ✔ Documentaries ✔ Animation Video Games Webisodes Talk Shows Game Shows Live Events Commercials	✔ Feature Films ✔ Scripted Television ✔ Reality Television Documentaries Animation Video Games Webisodes Talk Shows Game Shows Live Events ✔ Commercials
	Project Criteria	
Minimum Spend: CZK 15M (film); CZK 8M (TV); CZK 2M (documentaries)	**Resident ATL:** 20% **Resident BTL:** 20% **Minimum Spend:** $500K **Project Cap:** None	**Minimum Spend:** $250K FJD (total Fiji expenditure) **Project Cap:** $15M FJD
	Qualified Spend	
20% of qualified expenditures. Qualified expenditures incude goods and services provided and paid to companies or individuals registered to pay income tax in the Czech Republic. Costs incurred before the date of the submission of registration papers are not eligible. International costs paid to foreign cast and crew who pay withholding tax in the Czech Republic are eligible for a rebate of 66% on the withholding tax actually paid. Eligible expenditures are capped at 80% of the total budget.	20% of qualified expenditures. Qualified expenditures include direct production expenditures made in Utah that are subject to state taxes. **Bonus:** 5% if a production: • Will spend at least $1M in Utah • Hires 75% Utah residents for cast & crew (excluding extras and five principal cast members) or 75% of dollars left in the state (by the production) are spent in rural Utah.	Total Fiji Expenditure means the production expenditure on goods and services purchased from and paid to a Fiji resident.
	Program Guidelines	
Annual Cap: CZK 800M **Sunset Date:** None **Screen Credit:** No **CPA Audit:** Yes **Cultural Test:** Yes	**Annual Cap:** $8.29M **Sunset Date:** None **Screen Credit:** Yes **CPA Audit:** Yes	**Screen Credit:** Yes **CPA Audit:** Yes **Cultural Test:** No
	Additional Considerations	
Applicants must submit the project's budget, estimate of eligible spend, shooting schedule for Czech locations, co-production agreements and proof of 75% of the budget in place.	**Loan-out Registration:** Yes **Income Tax Withholding:** • Individual: Not Required • Loan-out: Requirements vary, please contact incentives@ep.com for more information	

Figure 3. Entertainment Partners' Jurisdiction Comparison Tool. Entertainment Partners. 2020. Jurisdiction Comparison. Accessed from https://www.ep.com/production-incentives/jurisdiction-comparison.

The normalization of mobility's scalable dynamics is not unique to the major studios and their business operations. The rationalized financial logics that drive expansion are equally embraced by the regions vying for international attention. The annual Locations Show—as the name might suggest—is one of the most visible manifestations of just how naturalized a mobile mode of production has become, largely because the event is so spatially concentrated: in exhibition halls, stalls representing different cities, states, regions, countries, and related services vie for a sense of distinction from their most serious competition as producers and executives wander through the hotel. The event is hosted each year in Los Angeles by the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), the professional body for film commissioners (typically a public employee who acts as a liaison between a location and incoming productions). As with most professional communities, the Locations Show has embraced its own cultural rituals and practices, even embracing an implicit but hierarchical code through which stallholders aim to capture the attention of distracted but potential clients.[36] For regions with an incentive, the percentage often becomes the most prominent design element of their stalls, sometimes the ONLY element they advertise (fig. 4). Other stallholders exploit publicity stills from previous productions successfully serviced in the region, hoping the association with films like the *Hobbit* or *Avatar* franchises might speak to the quality of its production or postproduction facilities (fig. 5). Less-established locations (often third-tier destinations that lack the physical infrastructure and labor pool necessary for hosting large-scale productions) rely on landscape photographs in hopes of attracting productions that simply need suitable exteriors for a second unit shoot or one-off visual effects work (fig. 6).

Figure 4. Utah Film Commission stall. Photo by author.

Figure 5. Film New Zealand stall. Photo by author.

Figure 6. Maine Film Office stall. Photo by author.

For many creative stakeholders, such financial logics speak to the evolution of the major studios into increasingly complex corporate enterprises that prioritize the concerns of shareholders, private equity, and short-term financial imperatives over an interest in creativity and craft innovation or the health and

well-being of its workforce. As Curtin argues about the impact of financialization on the media industries, "One of the key functions of shareholder value is to rationalize corporate structures and behaviors that are essentially unfathomable. It does so by celebrating quantitative metrics and short-term profitability over foundational investments in research, human resources, and the communities where corporations operate."[37] Such foundational investments are much harder to scale up—open-ended research, interpersonal relationships, and local cultural dynamics threaten the coherency of corporate strategy by pointing to particularities and contingencies. They make it more difficult for capital elites in Hollywood to imagine a world according to the logics of mobile production.

Yet disjuncture does not disappear from view entirely. Of interest here are what the quantifiable metrics and financial logics of mobile production work to obscure from our accounts of how Hollywood generates value, with what implications, and for whom. In March 2015, for example, I interviewed production manager and location expert Stephen Burt about his experiences working on a number of large-scale productions across different European hubs, like Berlin, Budapest, and Dublin. At the time of the interview, the Scotsman was based in Dublin and working as the production manager for *Penny Dreadful*. Following up with him upon learning about the production's relocation to California, I found Burt not in Los Angeles prepping for the next installment of the series but in Budapest already working on a different program, *Halo*, based on the first-person shooter video-game franchise. While producers of *Penny Dreadful* had asked Burt to conduct budget comparisons in advance of the show's move that compared Dublin, Los Angeles, and other locations, the only crew, according to Burt, invited to join the

series in its new destination were recurring series director Paco Cabezas and director of photography John Conroy.

Burt wasn't displeased or aggrieved, as far as I could tell, about his circumstances. Indeed, despite being relocated some 1,500 miles from Dublin (and more than 10,000 from his home in Glasgow), he was gainfully employed on another major television series in a production hub already familiar to him based on previous employment—and he admits he loves Budapest, so doesn't mind relocating there when required. For workers like Burt and his peers, professional obligations are inherently mobile and transient, a respatialized employment relationship that extends the well-documented, project-based career of screen media laborers across an expanded but discrete production geography, reorganizing one's personal and professional networks over an extensive terrain in the service of Hollywood operations. As Burt suggests, "It's about becoming part of a mobile production network. We're constantly in contact with one another. We know who is available when and where."[38]

During our initial interview, Burt acknowledged a defining tension in his work: a pleasurable and rewarding excitement associated with shooting in different and often "exotic" locations across the continent that was tempered by the personal challenges inherent to such a mobile career. He explained, "You can't have a family. I don't know anyone who does my job who manages to hold down a relationship. Your lifelong friends also become Facebook friends. I see my mates very rarely. I'm always on the move, in a different place. It doesn't bode well for any sort of commitment. I do keep a flat in Glasgow. . . . But it just sits there empty."[39]

In this sense, the dynamics of familial, romantic, and interpersonal relationships—even a sense of home and home

ownership—are non-scalable. They don't easily align with an image of the world united under capital progress but are necessarily reconfigured as part of his capacity to work. Further, they point to the contingencies that riddle capital expansion and how the lives of workers are often caught between conflicting obligations and pleasures. For Burt, Mobile Hollywood has resignified aspects of his working life as a jet-set career, taking him to places he loves and rationalizing that mobility as the outcome of financial projections and budget sheets (which, ironically, Burt himself often calculates as part of his job). Other calculations—certain understandings and negotiations over home and personal relationships, in this example—are equally vital to value creation but outside the overt concern of management and necessarily invisible and unwaged: a standard prerequisite for the job.

My conversations with professionals at the Locations Show reveal similar dynamics. Discussions with commissioners and location managers make clear how the event is marked by a sense of "one big" global community as much as uneasy reconnaissance. Such tension generates anxiety: representatives from Shreveport, Louisiana, uncomfortably shrug off my questions about potential competition with New Orleans, unable or unwilling to answer if the priorities of the state outweigh those of individual cities. A few stalls away, another state commissioner confides in me that she is tired of being treated as "Hollywood's bitch" by studio executives who expect her to assume a much more flexible approach to the "fine print" within the state's already generous incentive.[40] The gendered dynamics at play were not lost on her either. She openly questioned how the same strong-arm tactics would unfold if she were a man, recognizing the attempt to generate additional "value" from her

gender difference. And finally, at Booth 703, a location manager who represented one of the countries in the United Kingdom tells me that her job would be much easier (i.e., locally competitive) if she wasn't shuffled into the same stall as the British Film Commission, Film London, Northern Ireland Screen, Wales Screen Commission, Creative England, and Creative Scotland. It's a one-stop shop but with unclear benefits for the competing jurisdictions.[41] On the surface, the Locations Show presents a rational image of capital relations in which, according to one attendee, the "best offer seals the deal," but the relational dynamics—frustration, fear, suspicion, envy, competition—are as necessary to value extraction as they are potentially disruptive to the smooth operations of capital.

These interpersonal dramas may play out in the background of Mobile Hollywood but are no less central to its design. Likewise, the acts of translating, coordinating, and assembling the socio-spatial relations of production are equally rife with idiosyncrasies and contingent articulations when the operations of capital "hit the ground." Locations, especially environmentally sensitive, historically significant, or even privately owned ones, are not inherently conducive to capital and can actually slow down accumulation because the cultural, environmental, or logistical sensitivities they elicit act as impediments to those cornerstones of capital relations, efficiency and rationality. They are, in Tsing's terms, non-scalable elements because they are distinctive, diverse, and subject to unknown contingencies: local bureaucracies, state and municipal laws, and cultural norms related to work and work routines are only a few points of friction that stand in the way of Mobile Hollywood's seamless movement through space. Yet the desire to film in such locations tests the property regimes designed to protect them, requiring

workers to sort through a series of overlapping bureaucracies, legal arrangements, safety protocols, technical practicalities, and creative quirks that allow for value creation.

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, location experts are adept at forging makeshift relations and transformative assemblages with the pesky details that refuse to "nest" neatly within capital expansion. For example, when Sam Mendes petitioned the local council for permission to shoot scenes for his World War I drama *1917* (2019) on Salisbury Plain near Stonehenge, both the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) protested.[42] They feared his plans to build a French farmstead with full combat trenches threatened the historic site as well as its rare wildlife. Filming proceeded but not without a large amount of behind-the-scenes suturing from its location manager Emma Pill, a process that took about eight months of work not accounted for on any production schedule or call sheet:

> Normally with location movies, you're in and out in a couple of weeks. [But for this location,] I learned so much about soil. You have to put it back in a certain way. If you just throw it in, there'll be a certain amount of sinkage over the winter. I had to get a license to exhume bodies [following a geo-scan of the area because of its historical significance to Bronze Age culture]. Obviously if they were modern bodies, you're calling the police. But ancient bodies, you have to have a license to have permission to exhume them from the ground.[43]

Dead bodies notwithstanding, there also was the matter of local fauna, including one of the country's rarest birds, the stone curlew. The RSPB was on site each day to ensure neither cast nor crew disturbed the natural habitat. Pill added, "We couldn't strike [dismantle] the barn because some swallows and wagtails

had decided it was a perfect environment to nest [and it's against the law to disturb them]."[44] Such imbroglios riddle Mobile Hollywood but are left to some of its most invisible workers, who employ "immediately responsive" or "just-in-time" work practices, to solve.

Critically, these processes are not necessarily replicable across space; while any site is potentially susceptible to capital appropriation, the operations that make it so often lack transferability to another location. Making a site like the Great Barrier Reef in Australia productive won't engender a set of protocols one can replicate when they attempt the same with the Charles Bridge in Prague. Sometimes these negotiations can generate productive collaborations that prepare a particular site for repeat use in the future, but it's just as likely that the encounter is less generative, if not destructive. Evaluating and assessing the variable consequences of capital encounters is what's possible when such frictions are made visible as an inherent part of capital expansion. Sometimes these actions might seem too small or particular to matter much in our considerations of how Hollywood works. Calming a resident who is upset that a production has blocked access to his favorite coffee shop, convincing preservationists that a large-scale pyrotechnic sequence won't damage local landmarks, or negotiating with local gangs to ensure filming can proceed without the threat of violence or vandalism are not forms of labor that moviemaking naturally evokes. Of course, one only has to recall the tragic death of second assistant camera operator Sarah Jones to illustrate just how excessive and irrational the dream factory's demands have become. Jones was struck and killed by a passing train while shooting a scene in Georgia after the film's director failed to obtain appropriate permissions to film on a live railroad track—a horrifically

visible manifestation of what happens when the "just-in-time" impetus is pushed to its extreme.[45] Yet such work-related obligations are more normal and necessary than our glamorized misconceptions might otherwise lead us to believe. Further, they are absolutely critical in mediating between contradictory and diverse interests to produce value for studios, producers, and other investors.

CHAPTER THREE

Here to Help

Service Producers and the Labor of Film Friendliness

At the 2016 Karlovy Vary Film Festival in the Czech Republic, entertainment industry executives, government officials, directors, and other creative professionals from around the world attended a glitzy reception at the city's Imperial Spa, an ornate nineteenth-century building that had doubled as the Montenegrin casino in the Bond film *Casino Royale* (2006) when it filmed in the region ten years earlier. Guests included Barrandov Studio CEO Petr Tichy, Czech Film Commissioner Ludmila Claussova, Comcast Senior VP for Government Affairs Rick Smotkin, and the Oscar-winning production designer and set decorator Allan Starski (*Schindler's List*, 1993), among others. They had gathered to celebrate the region's status as a "Billion Dollar Location." The accolade takes its name from a series of *Variety* special reports, and the event marked the first time an international location had been recognized after similar "Billion Dollar" profiles of Louisiana (2015) and New Mexico (2014). The magazine's twelve-page insert featured short and pithy coverage of the region's available infrastructure and where to source

facilities and equipment; updates on its then-recently revised production incentive scheme; reflections from visiting professionals on their positive experiences filming in the region; and a spotlight on some of the strengths of its local crew base, from animation and visual effects to more traditional crafts like set construction and costume design.[1] It was only fitting, then, that the soirée included crew from Barrandov's costume department, who had "transformed themselves into 17th-century partygoers, with women in boudoir-inspired corsets, bodices and low-cut frocks, while men pranced about in perukes, doublets and Cavalier boots, providing the atmospheric flare of racy period drama."[2]

Yet despite the pretense of celebration and the aura of legitimate award recognition, the event was just an elaborate advertisement for the country's recently expanded production incentive, and the "report" was an extended advertorial masquerading as trade news, sponsored in full by Comcast NBCUniversal in partnership with Barrandov Studio. Indeed, littered between the glowing write-ups about filming in Prague were full-page advertisements for the historic studio and its amenities. Certainly, the region's success and recognition are worth celebrating—conjuring Mobile Hollywood in all its spectacle—but not to be lost among the red-carpet revelry are the equally constitutive, if less spectacular and equitable, social relations that are driving it. It's still Hollywood, after all, even if it's relocating to the Czech Republic. Comcast executives will sip Champagne, while local crew members dress up as live-action party favors.

Reviewing other editions in the *Variety* series finds a similar format. Perhaps not to be outdone by its regional arrival, Hungary's profile the following year was nearly twice the size of the Czech edition, with full-page advertisements not from a single

facility but from an assortment of service providers in Budapest: multiple studios, service production firms, equipment providers, and even tax specialists.[3] Capitalizing on a string of high-profile productions based in the city in recent years, the Hungarian National Film Fund—which managed the country's incentive program at the time and was the primary sponsor of the "Billion Dollar" report—elected as the cover image the iconic Széchenyi Chain Bridge, which links the eastern and western sides of the city across the Danube River. While its towering stone lion sculptures at each abutment have long been the backdrop to tourist photos, the bridge itself has become a recurring background player in a number of international film and television productions, most recently in the opening scenes of the trailer for Marvel's feature *Black Widow* (2021). In a nod to the bridge's growing cinematic profile, the cover of the magazine featured empty director's chairs spaced evenly across the width of the bridge and continuing far into the horizon, disappearing from sight. The back of each chair was emblazoned with the name of a creative who filmed in the city, including Ron Howard, Angelina Jolie, Ridley Scott, Denis Villeneuve, Marc Forster, John Moore, Paul Feig, Brett Ratner, and Neil Jordan. "Thank you for helping us to become better," the headline reads under the *Variety* masthead. Inside, a second full-page advertisement replaces the chairs with stacks of film canisters, labeled with titles of films, such as *Tinker Tailer Solider Spy* (2011) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), and the television series *The Borgias* (2011–13) and *The Alienist* (2018–20). "The Hungarian film industry is proud to have served you," it enthuses.

The somewhat carnivalesque assemblage of public servants, facility managers, corporate executives, highly decorated creatives, and costumed revelers at Karlovy Vary, alongside the

deference of a gracious Hungarian film industry in the more recent advertorial, captures the disparate ties that bind the performative logics and material conditions into the perception of a location's "film friendliness." Asked to explain her interpretation of the concept, one city film commissioner explained,

> It means we're always open for business. We're film friendly, and we've got a [city] council that is completely on board with what we want to do, which is why when a big production comes like [redacted] or [redacted], I can safely say, "Yeah, we'll close this street." The details will need [to be]worked out, but it can be done. When and how or for how long is open for discussion, but I just don't want to give the impression that it's something we can't do or something we have to "wait and see" about. We can do it. It's an attitude that, if we don't, someone else will. So why didn't we?[4]

Indeed, as mobility has evolved into the presumptive mode of production over the past two decades, the "impression" or "attitude" in the context of increased competition needs to convince producers not only that the location has the requisite resources to fully service a large-scale film or television production with ease, but also that it has the ability to accommodate even the most logistically or creatively complicated demands, which have become no small feat in the era of high-octane franchise films and big-budget television drama. Even the whiff of risk will send producers elsewhere. But gaining trust requires more than projecting an aura of confidence and compliance. Film friendliness means adopting the posture as a deliberate policy maneuver, coordinating an extensive roster of services, agencies, and individuals—many of them not involved in film or television as their primary business—under an incentive-driven agenda to attract and facilitate international productions. It requires substantive transformations in policy, infrastructure provision, training,

community relations, and place-based marketing, all while projecting an outwardly accommodating posture. In the case of the Czech Republic, it was dressing up local crew in period frocks for the pleasure of investors. In Hungary, it was service with a smile and a big dose of gratitude.

This chapter accepts both the performative logics and material conditions of film friendliness as a constitutive component of mobile production's political economy, but argues that its prominence has had an equally impactful effect on the contours of certain forms of film and television labor. In many regions, film friendliness has helped formalize a successful and externalized para-industry of "service producers." Doing much more than the name implies, service producers are often the first point of contact in distant production hubs for globe-trotting producers and thus occupy a critical position in the division of film and television labor. They have oversight of the administrative, legal, and cultural complexities entailed by an expanded production geography. Looking more closely at operations "on the ground" not only makes visible the demanding nature of that work, but it also underscores the practical complexities of space and scale-making projects that film friendliness works to obscure. Indeed, by featuring empty director's chairs and no local crew, the Hungarian cover image unintentionally captures that very erasure: the city awaits lead firms, top-tier creatives, and foreign capital, but the mess that accompanies them remains out of sight.

The first section of this chapter outlines the general roles and responsibilities of service producers. I extend this discussion in subsequent sections to chronicle some of the daily complexities they confront, underscoring both the unpredictable conditions of mobile production as well as the rising demands

placed on service producers to manage its spatial efficacy. My aim here is twofold: first, to highlight the ways mobile production not only thrives on differences (cultural, economic, ethical, and otherwise) but also engenders levels of standardization across geography; and second, to draw attention to the necessarily invisible yet integral work service producers perform to smooth over potential cracks and suture what is an essentially fragile enterprise.

SERVICE PRODUCERS

A production service firm's most obvious function is to unite foreign producers with the requisite locations, facilities, equipment, and crew in the production hubs where they are based. Service firms exist in both established and emergent locations, including London, Brisbane, Moscow, and Shanghai, where they are key mediators between visiting producers and local infrastructure and resources.[5] Service producers perform an open-ended list of duties: they estimate budgets, find locations, book soundstages, navigate local permits, obtain permissions, certify compliance with local laws and regulations, manage local crew and production personnel, ensure the comforts of A-list talent, mediate on-set conflicts, translate workflows (and language), lobby state and regional governments for more favorable business conditions, and, by the very nature of securing production contracts, generate continuity of employment and ongoing skills training for local film and television workers who labor for Hollywood in these locations.

Given the heavy organizational and administrative duties under their charge, service firms tend to staff the local production office in the city where the film or television project is

based. They hire native production managers, location managers, assistant directors, production assistants, and other administrative support to ensure local processes never impede a production's costs or schedule. They also deploy across a number of production departments local craft workers and technicians, who then serve under the tutelage of foreign department heads and their key assistants, likely flown in from Los Angeles or London. As an interface between foreign and domestic work cultures and bureaucracies, service producers are middle management, answerable in the final instance to the international producers who hire them but responsible for the domestic production personnel and crew members who work under their service contracts.

It's not that all these work functions are distinctively new. Someone somewhere always has had to store the props, source the wardrobe, rent the equipment, balance the budget, hire workers, and book accommodation. Rather, the point is that the spatial dynamics of contemporary production has fashioned a loosely linked infrastructure of providers that allows producers to generate competition and cost savings among private firms whose bids—successful or not—are now intimately bound up with the fates of different localities and local workers. In other words, what was once considered unproductive labor (necessary but costly administrative and logistical work), often integrated within a suite of services provided by a physical studio, is now an increasingly externalized spatial process in which international producers can capture added value. Of course, some of these services are still part of the overall support packages provided by physical production spaces, like Twentieth Century Fox Studios in Los Angeles or Pinewood Studios in Atlanta or (figs. 7 and 8), but at the same time, these firms are no longer

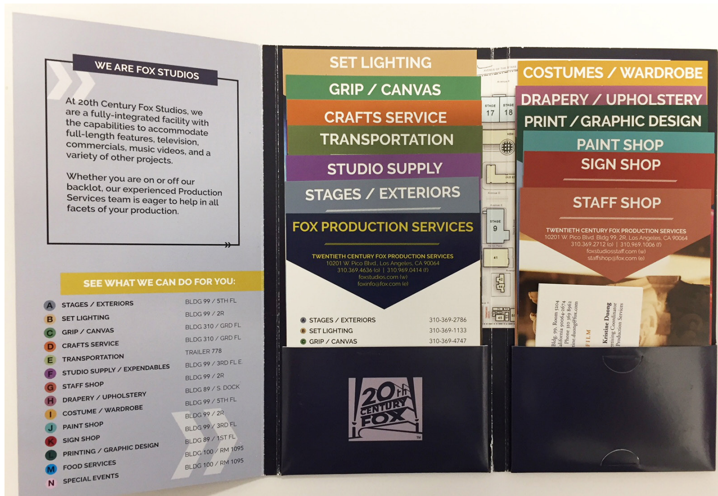

Figure 7. Services brochure from Twentieth Century Fox Studios. Photo by author.

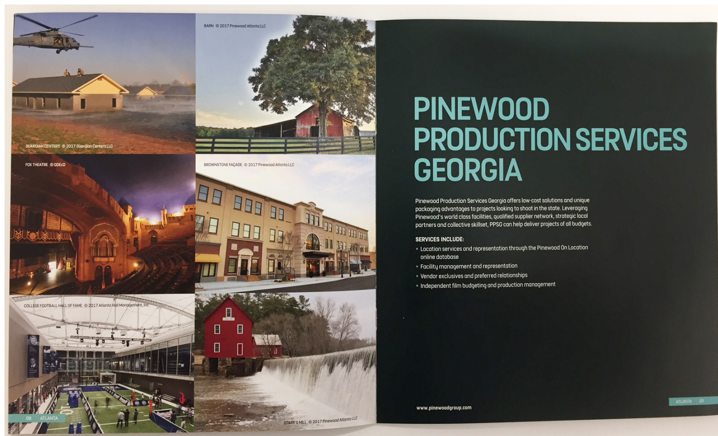

Figure 8. Services brochure from Pinewood Studios Atlanta. Photo by author.

the sole provider in town. These services now constitute the backbone of a number of small to medium enterprises that have emerged over the past few decades, whose entire business model rests on mediating the interests of global capital with the often incompatible elements of local complexity.

This is mobile production's version of supply chain capitalism: the studios outsource responsibility for the messy details and awkward encounters to third-party providers who, in turn, stitch together additional suppliers—from high-end accommodation and equipment rentals to drivers, makeup artists, and location experts—all to ensure producers only ever register the warm embrace of distant production hubs. This dynamic isn't inherently malicious. As I will demonstrate below, these transformations generated a professional space for film and television workers to reimagine themselves as entrepreneurs and risk-takers rather than below-the-line laborers, even though their "independence" remains structurally dependent upon returning interest from Hollywood. This contradiction is a key tension within supply chain capitalism more broadly: "Compliance is both voluntary and required. Such practices remind us that supply chains weave complex corporate dependencies into the fabric of their commitments to the independence of firms."[6] As a result, service producers are both inside and outside the prevailing work cultures of Hollywood. They are mediators, problem solvers, relationship builders, and "translators," both literally and symbolically, in their attempts to discipline, tame, and convert disjuncture into something that resembles, though never fully achieves, full conformity.

Leading firms in Prague (Stillking Films, Sirena Film) and Budapest (Mid Atlantic Films, Pioneer Pictures) are managed by American and British expatriates or Hungarians with

transnational connections in the entertainment industry from their time spent working or studying abroad. Primarily former line producers or production managers, they saw an opportunity to formalize production services as the cities became popular filming destinations in the 1990s for London- and Los Angeles–based productions. It was primarily an entrepreneurial response—in the absence of a state-driven one—to the increased interest in Eastern European locales as cheap filming destinations. Later, that interest was sustained, as it has been in so many other cities, by the launch of competitive production incentives. Today, these firms manage the vast majority of Hollywood (as well as European) productions in the region. Furthermore, for the blockbuster films and television series based in their cities, these service firms can coordinate filming (and thus maneuver around another set of local bureaucracies) across a large swath of the region, which means both visiting and local crew must be ready to work in Romania, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria. Indeed, both Prague and Budapest can serve as central commands for international productions that want to take advantage of the region's geographic diversity, spending a few short weeks in, for example, Croatia for the necessary seaside exteriors before returning to the studios in the Czech Republic or Hungary, or coordinating a series of second unit shoots in the hills of Slovenia while principal photography remains in Prague or Budapest. In these examples, places like Prague and Budapest are both hub and spoke in a hub-and-spoke production metaphor—at a distance from the creative and financial authorities in Hollywood but nevertheless serving as a command center over a series of day-to-day operations that take place within and beyond the cities' sound stages.

Each of the producers that shared their pathway into service production recounted a version of the same story. Prague and Budapest in the late 1990s were in the midst of a market transition and slowly integrating themselves into the world economy, which made them affordable places to live and work and alluring places to launch small businesses. They were especially attractive to expatriates. Following a series of failed attempts to break into the production industry in his native England, for example, Matthew Stillman, then in his early twenties, decided, while visiting a friend in the city, that Prague offered a better chance at success, especially as initial interest spiked among foreign music videos and commercial productions that were intrigued by favorable exchange rates and low costs. Using money he made from a successful night club venture (that he launched in the city shortly after arriving), he says, "We had a look around and decided to give it a go because we did not have much to lose. So that is really how we started with a typewriter, and an answering machine and a phone at Barrandov."[7]

His company, Stillking, is now the largest service firm in Prague, with offices in London, Cape Town, Bucharest, and Budapest. Drawing on Stillking's success, Stillman founded in 2014 the 2020 Content Group, one of the world's largest private companies that produces advertising and entertainment content across seven brands. His business partner in Stillking, the American David Minkowski, joined the company after a series of visits to Prague in the 1990s. He was returning to the city as a freelancing line producer on low-budget international productions so frequently that he opted to stay. He decided the service firm offered him more stability and greater opportunity than the job-to-job existence he had as a sole trader in California—a chance to settle down and have a family while working in the

industry he loved. Like Stillman's experience in London, Minkowski found Prague "easier" to advance his career in and to do it more quickly than Los Angeles.[8]

The American Jennifer Webster, who co-founded Pioneer Pictures in Budapest, tells a similar story. After graduating, she soon tired of the monotony of her corporate career in advertising in New York City. "I was looking for something different in my life. I was tired of waking up in the morning and facing the drudgery of my commute but I didn't know what to do," she told me.[9] At a holiday party in 1993, she met an American Hungarian who convinced her and a friend that the transformations in Budapest made it ripe for opportunity. Still in her twenties, she decided to leave her corporate job and open a coffee bar in Budapest—the intent was to launch the first American-style café before Starbucks entered the newly opened market. Soon after relocating but before the café ever materialized, she heard from a former business acquaintance who was coming to the city to film a commercial. He reached out to see if she was interested in serving as his production assistant, knowing at one time she had entertained transitioning from the corporate side of advertising into production. She readily accepted (largely because she would earn New York rates during the month-long production, and that would cover her living expenses in Budapest for the year).

Webster met the Hungarians Ilona Antal and Eleonóra Peták on the set, who were already "servicing" Italian commercial productions in Budapest but before the term or the role itself had become widespread in the region. Together, they saw an opportunity to take their experience working on the commercial and transform it into an idea for a small business that would assist top international commercial producers when they filmed

in the region. It was the first company of its kind in the city, and they eventually expanded into feature film and television and opened additional offices in Argentina and China. In addition to the production company, Webster built upon her interest in architecture and interior design to invest in real estate, managing a portfolio of high-end apartments that she rents to the likes of Keira Knightley and Rosamund Pike when they are filming in Budapest. In 2015, the film and television division of Pioneer entered into a full partnership with Stillking in an effort to pool resources and accommodate a larger number of productions in the region.

While there are productive scholarly discussions about a location's "film friendliness," which overlap with some of the aspects outlined above, the concept is framed more as a conscious policy maneuver and place-based marketing strategy on behalf of film commissions than a condition made possible through the grit, business savvy, and entrepreneurial spirit of individual producers. Film commissioners perform many of the same duties as service producers to attract projects to a city or region, but service producers, unlike commissioners, remain central figures throughout production and handle a much larger roster of duties, making them as much place-based advocates as they are expert practitioners who have leveraged mobile production into a career and private enterprise that otherwise remained unavailable to them. It wasn't always easy. Service producers are quick to recall the early days of mobile production, when they had to pitch British and American executives quite aggressively in order to convince them that the experience in Prague or Budapest would be a good one. "Most Americans we pitched couldn't find Budapest on the map or thought it was part of Germany. Remember, this was only a

few short years after the [political economic] changes, and we had to convince them Budapest wasn't some abandoned city of a fallen empire."[10] Accordingly, a closer look at the work service firms perform betrays some of the increasingly complex demands "film friendliness" obscures, and how central their labor has become in managing the shifting spatial dynamics of mobile production.

ARMS SMUGGLING IN MOBILE HOLLYWOOD

As an entrée into this discussion about service producers, I want to share an anecdote from a conversation with service producer Adam Goodman, a British expatriate who now operates one of Budapest's premier production service firms, Mid Atlantic.[11] Given the various roles these individuals and their firms perform, I was explaining to Goodman my misgivings about the term, that the work he does stretches the limits of what most individuals might consider a "service." He nodded in agreement and shared the following experience as further proof.

Goodman is on set in the city's 10th district as his crew readies to film Brad Pitt's zombie thriller *World War Z* (2013). He receives a call on his mobile that the weapons the crew needs for a shoot three or four days away have been impounded by Hungary's Counter Terrorism Centre (TEK) after a tactical team raided a customs free zone in the airport where the weapons had been delivered. The entire cache included more than one hundred weapons: pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles, and grenade launchers. Goodman was ordered the following day to report to the National Bureau of Investigation for questioning. He heard his colleague Bela Gadjos, in charge of the weapons on set, had already been arrested earlier that

morning, pulled from his home in the middle of the night in nothing but his boxer shorts while the authorities raided the residence.

According to Goodman, British Airways originally had agreed to transport the props from London to Budapest but at the last minute refused to make the trip for unknown reasons. In order to ensure the weapons arrived in Budapest with no adverse impact on the shooting schedule, the producers chartered a private jet.

> Unfortunately, I think the problem for us began when the chartered jet arrived at 3 a.m. at a smaller airport in the region. Someone called a tip into the national security service and here we are with what looks like a chartered plane with a weapons cache arriving in the middle of the night under the cover of darkness. It also happened less than two weeks before October 23, which is a very politically charged public holiday in Hungary [it marks the start in 1956 of what was a failed rebellion against Soviet-imposed policies]. The plane lands. The tactical team swarms. They're wearing balaclavas with machine guns ready to go. I get the call the next day, informing me that I'm under suspicion of arms smuggling because my name was on the permit.[12]

Eventually, the producers were cleared of all charges, but the episode underscored for Goodman the enormous pressures service producers face and the lengths to which they must go to smooth over any wrinkles (big or small) that interfere with a production. It's far too easy for foreign producers to conflate any logistical challenge they experience in Budapest with the process of filming in the city itself. In other words, what might be just another run-of-the-mill headache in Hollywood risks becoming perceived as a symptom of deficient skills and infrastructure, whether real or imagined, in Budapest, and that

narrative is bad for Goodman's business. It's his job to ensure that the experience is a positive one. After all, his company is viable only as long as there is ongoing interest in filming in the city.

As for the weapons debacle, the problem was the result of different national regulations. At the time, Hungarian law required permanent deactivation of all munitions used on a film set. Yet in the US and UK, regulations only stipulate temporary deactivation, commonly a screw through the barrel to prevent live ammunition from exiting the weapon. Remove the screw, for example, and the weapon is fully functional and not sufficiently modified under Hungarian law: "It looked like I was smuggling a fully functional arsenal. Obviously we weren't the first production to bring in weapons. Productions have been bringing them into the country illegally, probably unknowingly, for years. We just got caught. And we got caught—I think but I can't prove it—because a local munitions company that wanted the film's business but didn't get it turned us in to the authorities."[13]

As a result of this experience, Goodman successfully lobbied the Hungarian Parliament to change what he characterized as some of its less film-friendly laws, including the use of weapons on set, citing the millions of dollars in lost revenue should incoming productions start to find the area less accommodating than a competing territory. Yet in a final bitter twist, while the scene with the weapons was filmed in Budapest without further troubles, it was ultimately edited out during postproduction. It never made it into the final cut of *World War Z*.

I find this story instructive because it provides a glimpse into the local labor practices and logistical intricacies of mobile production, while also capturing some telling details about the

cultures and social relations that start to crisscross this production geography. It not only complements existing explanations of screen media's globalization but also extends those discussions to better account for the daily entanglements and practical encounters that propel the operations of capital on the ground.

The location—Budapest—signals perhaps the most obvious contours of what we already know. With a government subsidy in place for more than a decade, Budapest quickly became a popular location for tentpole feature films and hour-long television drama, often edging out its neighbor and former location favorite Prague in a battle for the Hollywood dollar. Budapest, in fact, has had one of the most robust incentive programs in Europe since 2003, allowing studio producers to claim a 30 percent tax rebate on combined local and foreign expenses. Thus, even costs incurred outside of Hungary—like a second unit shoot in Croatia—are eligible for the rebate if the production is based in the country. Likewise, the economic development arguments used to convince the Hungarian Parliament to loosen its gun control laws draw attention to the investments (and less explicitly in this particular example, the jobs) made available to locations that play willing hosts to foreign producers, as much as the lobbying effort also underscores what some critics might perceive as the dangerous collusion between international production and public authorities in those very locations. Meanwhile, most, if not all, risks, including charges of international terrorism, are shifted to the international producer's junior partners.

On the one hand, this episode is an anecdote about the ability of Hollywood's transnational reach to reconfigure labor markets for its own advantages.[14] Tactics that are both commercial and political undermine the autonomy of distant production locations and labor, keeping them dependent upon and

thus subservient to the global flow of production work from Southern California. In short, Hollywood capital obliterates obstacles that impede its expansion. On the other hand, Goodman's story (and the rise of service firms more broadly) points to the prominence of what other scholars have called a "film services framework" or, more colloquially, "film friendliness."[15] Both concepts are understood as matters of policy and performativity as a region looks to not only engender the coming together of the requisite organizations, infrastructure, and expertise necessary to sustain large-scale production, but also fundamentally refashion the identity of a particular place as a site defined by an outward-looking and welcoming embrace of footloose producers:

> This process involves bringing together local, regional and sometimes national government agencies, business associations, film-related businesses and organisations, infrastructure owners and operators, representatives of the local community, "environmental managers" (those responsible [for] or with an interest in the use of places that filmmakers might to shoot in), police and emergency services, transportation services and agencies, health and safety officers—indeed any person or body that may be affected by filmmaking in a place—to ensure the needs of filmmakers are prioritised in order to make the experience of filmmaking in a place as straightforward as possible.[16]

Less visible in these accounts, however, are many of the hiccups mobile productions encounter and the governing role service producers embrace as both opportunity and obligation within Mobile Hollywood. While the financial wherewithal of Brad Pitt's production company makes it possible to charter a private jet for a transnational flight in the middle of the night, for example,

this whatever-it-costs mentality can't immediately escape certain devices, like national security measures, designed to control cross-border flows, never mind potential sabotage from a disgruntled local business. Furthermore, we can see the impact of local histories and cultures that, in this instance, make certain calendar dates matter more than international producers might think, and how national laws offer competing definitions of what constitutes a "functional" weapon. There's even evidence of the personal and professional risks associated with servicing screen media productions.

Certainly, arms smuggling is an extreme example. It nevertheless underscores the central yet precarious position these individuals occupy in the international division of cultural labor and just how expansive the "service" role has become in tandem with Mobile Hollywood's feverish pursuit of low-cost production venues. Such risks aren't even guaranteed to pay off with onscreen rewards when the decision to cut scenes from the final film are made in editing rooms at a safe temporal and geographic distance from the original clamor on location. Someone—in this case, the service producer—has to negotiate these challenges, otherwise the entire endeavor betrays its complexities and undoes its own dynamism. While the performative logics of film friendliness suggest locations can reconfigure their identities into plug-and-play components of mobile production, the labor of service producers underscores the differences, both cultural and professional; disparate intentions; contradictory assumptions; and sheer unpredictability that remains part of Mobile Hollywood. Such discrepancies further enable the mode of production to shift orientations on a whim (when other "differences" become more attractive), but they also are simultaneously

threatening, always in the background getting in the way and being pushed out of site.

STITCHING IT ALL TOGETHER

Despite the tone of inevitability that characterizes much of the current discourse on the mobile and dispersed nature of screen media production, especially among those in the mainstream news and trade press, such accounts pay less attention to the everyday misunderstandings and general messiness that constitute this scale-making process. In fact, sometimes (maybe even most of the time) mobile production happens when interests and agendas *don't* converge as seamlessly as the prevailing debates suggest. In this way, the dispersed nature of mobile production is less about the unimpeded flow of Hollywood capital in which difference is subsumed into a singular economic or cultural dynamic; rather, Mobile Hollywood is a more contingent process informed by multiple and overlapping agendas that are unpredictable and difficult to fully wrangle under the guise of rationality and efficiency. As Anna Tsing writes, "Friction makes global connection powerful and effective. Meanwhile, without even trying, friction gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power."[17] This duality characterizes mobile production, a spatial nexus of enormous power that coalesces in particular places not in spite of numerous roadblocks but because of the enormous and persistent work to outmaneuver them. Indeed, differences in policy, economics, and labor capacity enable both the spread of mobile production and the work opportunities to keep them under control and out of sight.

Certainly, service firms play a key role in managing that friction in order to rationalize the production process and maintain an efficient division of labor, even if their reasons for doing so don't necessarily converge with those of the foreign producers

or local authorities, all of whom have their own vested interests in the success of mobile production. As a group, they represent one of the first waves of mobile workers—motivated out of personal interest and opportunity more so than necessity—who turned entrepreneurial, launching small businesses that became responsible for an array of administrative, legal, technical, bureaucratic, service-oriented, and creative functions that continue to feed the system responsible for their own precariousness. They are centrally responsible for managing access to the spaces and resources that sustain an expanded production geography. Yet so much of their labor remains invisible, not only to the casual observer but also to the international producer, and that's intentional. Service production facilitates a sense of seamless mobility despite the numerous fault lines service producers confront on the job. Any sense that the fault lines are opening up to a full-fledged earthquake draws attention to the very friction at odds with service production's primary role. Such a perspective often puts them in insecure situations, as Goodman's story indicates, but their actions—whether proactive and preemptive or reactive and immediate—nevertheless inflect the smooth operations of large-scale film and television production.

In what follows, I draw attention to the ways the work of service producers shapes and is shaped by the evolving contours of Mobile Hollywood. At first, they found themselves working across starkly different cultural and creative contexts. Repeat visits from Hollywood helped erase or obscure some of these differences, but the process of assimilation is never complete and remains an ongoing juggling act for service producers to master. As I highlight throughout this book, mobile production thrives on a "similar but different" dynamic across its geography. Given the feverish competition between jurisdictions, especially neighboring regions in Eastern Europe, service producers

also are acutely aware of the fleeting nature of Hollywood capital. For some, the pressure pushes them to sell false promises to producers and puts their professional reputations at risk. In the final section, I address the unequal power dynamics that characterize these sets and the role service producers play in managing the social relations of production.

Unpredictable Encounters and Divergent Aspirations

The nature of the "service" these producers provide (and the disparate agendas they stitch together) is directly shaped by the local context. Service work doesn't obliterate those differences but accommodates their nuance when forging the particular links necessary to facilitate operations on the ground. In other words, difference isn't entirely evacuated under the weight of capital expansion but in many ways is conducive to its interests.[18] Indeed, if it wasn't for the distinctiveness of the region's immediate post-socialist histories and the economic advantages that those transformations brought about, they may not have emerged as persuasive contenders for mobile production. In both Prague and Budapest, the cities' sociocultural and historical specificity further shaped the motivations and expectations of different actors, from local crew and government officials to visiting producers. There was a brief period in the late 1990s in places like Prague, for instance, when international producers were drawn to a location simply because it offered a compelling exchange rate, low costs, and a local crew base that had cut their teeth on quality national or regional motion pictures. Far from the prying eyes of studio executives, these visitors enjoyed a sense (however false) of creative autonomy and adventure, while local service producers, production managers, and location

experts had unparalleled access to elite producers and celebrity talent, like Jerry Bruckheimer, Matt Damon, and Barbara Broccoli. "You could take them out to dinner. You could hang out with them. You could learn from them," Minkowski said.[19] In conversation, this moment is remembered with a sense of nostalgia. The glamorous aura that comes with making motion pictures turned awestruck local authorities into productive allies who simply wanted to see a little Hollywood magic transform their districts into other times and places. For the international visitors, however, over time, the Czech government has proved a less reliable ally (justified in part by its deference to the sentiments of residents who are "fed up" with the disruption large-scale productions can cause to city life) than its Hungarian counterpart, whose interest in the economic benefits of service production drives its robust policy support.[20]

Since the role of producer did not exist within the mode of production in Eastern Europe, it created an opportunity for expatriate workers, like Minkowski, to assume that role and act as "conduits of tacit, embedded organizational knowledge, which local players attempted to internalize through direct observation and imitation" as a means to improve their value to production.[21] In addition to dealing with the numerous inefficiencies that plagued the administrative and logistical aspects of production, much of the earlier work service producers performed focused on cultural mediation and organizational issues, dealing with disparate language competencies, different work routines, and upskilling to meet the demands of blockbuster film and television production. It was a continuous education for local production personnel from some of the most seasoned industry veterans, both above and below the line. At the same time, the knowledge exchange was mutual, with visiting workers

picking up insights from observing differences in work routines, value assumptions, and resourcefulness.[22] For a younger generation of workers in these cities, for example, the opportunity to work for Hollywood offers better pay, prestige, and higher levels of access than their respective domestic industries, even if opportunities for upward mobility are limited and the ephemeral nature of mobile production threatens professional stability.[23] These accounts are important reminders that abstract conceptions of globalization and their attendant frameworks like the NICL don't fully capture the contradictory motivations and complex aspirations of the individuals otherwise at risk of being perceived as the victims of such dynamics.

As interest in locations accelerated with the launch of production subsidies, and service producers trained up a new generation of crew, the operations of mobile production subsumed some of the idiosyncrasies into much more familiar structures. English became the lingua franca of film production. Hollywood's strict division of labor established the "proper" work routines and job categories. And yet Mobile Hollywood's ability to subsume and incorporate differences is never complete, with contingencies always proliferating at its edges. Some things may change, while some things remain the same. Indeed, my interviews suggest competitive tax incentives and increased business simply exacerbated or expanded the complexities service producers face as part of their jobs, with rebate-related issues occupying a substantial amount of time alongside actual production work. According to Minkowski, "I have become more of a lawyer and accountant and lobbyist. I spend so much time trying to understand how this whole process works from a legal perspective, from a financial perspective, from a policy perspective, and from a bureaucratic perspective. I spend time trying to figure

out how to game it and goose it just to secure work from foreign producers. I need to convince the government to support the film business. I need to figure out how to keep from losing business to other countries."[24] Service work, in this sense, is never complete but a constant jostling of incongruent elements into a universal form that producers recognize as film friendliness.

Fragile Promises and Risky Speculation

Service firms commonly prepare ten to fifteen different budgets at one time up to a year in advance for projects, with only cursory interests in a location. Line producers commonly budget more than one city for the same project. Working on behalf of studios, they collect budgets from competing locations, typically London, Berlin, Prague, and Budapest, for comparison. Service firms receive the script, coordinate location scouts, and develop virtual presentations (sometimes just a PowerPoint emailed to the line producer with one hundred to two hundred images) with a tentative budget. Only about five or six of these initial requests will translate into a more detailed site visit with key creative personnel, during which they are "wined and dined" in addition to inspecting key locations and studio facilities. Only one or two productions will make the commitment to shoot in the location. The hubs and the workers who live there learn to treat each potential project as a priority, at least in terms of the economy of appearances, without becoming too emotionally invested in any one project—the market is simply too volatile to wager everything on a coveted production until there's more certainty that the location is a serious contender.

It's a tricky process rife with speculation and manipulation. Less honest service producers or film commissions can persuade

a gullible line producer with a budget that artificially reduces costs. Certain locations, like Romania, tend to look cheaper on paper, because budgets rarely include contingency costs for unexpected logistical disruptions, such as transporting wardrobe from a more cosmopolitan location when the wardrobe supervisor cannot find enough of what he or she needs in Bucharest. Line producers can adjust numbers to make certain locations more attractive to studio executives in Los Angeles simply because they prefer Vancouver or Berlin to Budapest. Furthermore, they tend to lowball below-the-line wages unless a service producer intervenes. Labor rates in Prague and Budapest are lower than in London and Los Angeles, but the wages for local crew are fixed. "Yet because they're filming here [line producers] think they can tell me what costs *they* think are fair [for Budapest]," says Goodman.[25] Parochialism notwithstanding, he continues, good studio executives know if line producers are comparing apples to apples: "I can put $1 million in the construction budget, and get a lot with that in Prague and Budapest. Can I keep the budget the same if I'm the line producer who is comparing Vancouver? Sure, but it won't go nearly as far. You can goose each of those items to hit the overall budget number you want."[26]

Location-based competition, then, has far more localized effects than policy-level adjustments to production incentives. Competitive pressures put livelihoods and reputations at risk. Here service producers face a moral dilemma with professional consequences: how to balance an honest depiction of the costs with an attractive pitch that maximizes the foreign producer's savings, never knowing for sure if the opposing budgets are valid representations of a competing location. Of course, the most scrupulous service producer errs on the side of honesty in

a business where "reputation is everything." But selling snake oil is a common practice within the spatial operations of mobile production, making some locations more appealing than others, for better or worse, depending on disparate individual agendas.

A similarly fragile dynamic is at work when securing locations for incoming producers. Making available a location's geography is one of the fundamental services these firms provide to outsiders, and a key process in making visible what the region can offer, both creatively and logistically, to filmmakers. Domestic location experts—who I discuss in more detail in the next chapter—have already scouted a range of soundstages and exterior options for consideration as part of the initial pitch to producers, but deliberation among the director, production designer, and international location manager ultimately determines the final filming destinations. Often this process starts with thousands of digital images that are fashioned into a short list based on a production's creative needs (e.g., Does this match the director's aesthetic? Does it fit the script's need for Victorian architecture?) and a location's logistical feasibility (e.g., Does the location have a power supply? Will it accommodate crew parking, craft services, and portable toilets?). Location experts must then further weigh a location's viability against a host of other variables, including production schedules, budgets, seasonal weather, and health and safety concerns.

Producers have grown increasingly wary about overuse, often pressing location experts to reveal what other productions have used a particular location, and property owners have become savvier, raising rental fees or limiting availability to odd hours so as to not interfere with their primary businesses or personal lives. As a location expert in Budapest admits, "It adds a level of complexity to finding the 'best' location when the production

designer sees gaffer tape from the last crew that filmed there. They hate it. . . . I now hear more often: show me somewhere no one has filmed."[27] Securing permits and permissions for access becomes paramount once selections are made. These negotiations require a location manager not only to engage third parties external to a production but also maintain ongoing and meaningful relationships among private citizens, business owners, historical agencies, security firms, public authorities, and local politicians. Location experts acknowledge that negotiating with such disparate actors demands a nimble set of tactics to assuage concerns and engender acquiescence. Negotiating with local politicians and public authorities has become especially fraught, given the growing magnitude of the requests from foreign producers and the increasing pressure on representatives to protect historic sites, neighborhoods, and residents.

Service producers and, by extension, the location experts who work for them, thus face multifarious contingencies that threaten to undermine what otherwise appears as a rather routine aspect of the production process. Competition from other production hubs only intensifies the pressure, as it simply underscores the fleeting nature of global capital. Visiting producers remain invested in a particular location only as long as they remain convinced it serves a functional purpose. It falls to the service producer and his or her teams to maintain that impression of functionality, no matter the speculation or instability involved, because ongoing business depends on it. This places a particular burden on service producers to present an outwardly visible, anything-is-possible confidence that necessarily belies an at-all-costs work ethic behind the scenes. Minkowski captures this duality when recalling an experience during the filming of *Child 44* (2015) in Prague:

> We needed a Metro station, and of course, the only one that worked for our needs also happened to be the busiest Metro station in Prague. No one has ever shot there before. . . . Our schedule called for two 12-hour days of shooting. . . . The locations manager was like, no, it's impossible. We can't do it. Why? Because we've never done it before! They'll never let us! I get involved. I call the Mayor of Prague [to get permission]. This is why it's important for me to keep my crews together and work with the same people. It helps them realize what's possible, that anything is possible, really. Let's say "yes" and then figure out how to get it done.[28]

There are a number of potential pitfalls service producers might encounter when securing locations: from disagreeable landlords and uninterested politicians to cumbersome bureaucracies and bad weather. Anything can go wrong, and many things do, but the implicit promise service producers make is to ensure the fragility of the entire enterprise never threatens a location's perceived amenability to foreign producers—they must say "yes" and then figure out how to get it done.

Awkward and Uneven Relations

As former line producers, service producers still struggle with an anxiety that comes from a lifelong freelance mentality. Like all contingent laborers, service producers work on a project-by-project basis. However, unlike their counterparts, service producers must also contend with the additional overhead of running a small business enterprise with a permanent and casual staff of its own. In other words, the ability of service producers to secure work from foreign producers is entwined with the personal and professional fates of the local crew and administrative support they employ. Most firms have a small permanent group of office administrators but engage crews on a

freelance basis as jobs arise. Service firms tend to work with the same crew members as a means to ensure efficiency and quality. As is common among craft workers and technicians, local crews also tend to coalesce into tight professional packs, meaning a production manager prefers to work with a particular production coordinator and so on.[29]

Service firms typically have about five core crew groups with which they staff projects of various sizes. While the crew members are technically free to take the first job available (i.e., they are not locked into exclusive contracts with any particular service firm), they remain reluctant to distance themselves too far from a single service producer because the earning potential on Hollywood productions is incredibly high compared to other sectors.[30] Additionally, the sense of trust and professionalism that accrues over time among crews that work together repeatedly helps offset the highly casual and contingent nature of film and television work.[31] "It's not arrogance or selfishness, but they worry about new blood. They worry about someone shining on set and then replacing them. It's the fundamental insecurity that the nature of this work breeds in the crew. You never want your current job to be your last,"[32] Goodman tells me. Consequently, service producers worry that the local crew base has become too exclusionary as a result of their precariousness, admitting that crew regeneration is a potentially serious threat to future sustainability and requires an ongoing and exhaustive quest for new trainees and apprentices to maintain efficient operations.

The social relations of production are further complicated by the transnational makeup of the production teams. Local crew, of course, potentially gain immense value in the knowledge and skills exchanged on a professional film or television set, though the social relations on set adhere to a strict hierarchy. There is

the international elite group of above-the-line talent, largely though not exclusively culled from Anglo-America; below-the-line department heads from Los Angeles or London; and local crew hired to support their foreign managers. The biggest staffing challenge service producers face is a process they refer to as "casting the crew," in which they try to negotiate with their foreign partners the appropriate mix between local and foreign below-the-line crafts people and technicians. Service producers prefer international crew who "travel well," industry slang for those heads of departments and key assistants who leave behind an entourage of trusted collaborators and thus make space available for more local hires, striking a productive balance in which the number of local crew isn't diluted by the number of visiting collaborators.

According to my conversations, the right mix was always an abstract estimation but understood to make it easier for service producers to mediate misunderstandings on set. Foreign department heads are the unquestioned creative authorities, with local hires there to support them. Everyone who spoke with me clearly understood the hierarchies that structure their workplaces, though many of them questioned the logic. Service producers defended the arrangement, claiming the division of labor simply reflects the temporal and geographic logistics of production, not the depth of local talent. It's much easier for executive producers and directors to coordinate with a production designer, for example, if they are in the same place at the same time and speak the same language. Of course, this national cultural makeup shifts among some of the lower-budgeted European fare shooting in the region, wherein you find a greater mix between foreign crew and local hires. Such productions have less money to support travel expenses compared to

studio films or television series, so more positions are open to local technicians.

Yet Hollywood producers are notoriously risk averse, with little willingness to relinquish control, likely because there is much more money at stake. According to this logic, it reduces creative and financial risk to employ known entities in key leadership roles rather than wager on a local hire without a similar pedigree, a cycle that makes it very difficult for local crew to advance professionally. Likewise, it also partially explains the strategic benefit Minkowski's and Goodman's leadership provides, respectively, to Stillking and Mid Atlantic. By working with expatriates with strong Hollywood connections, studio producers are a step removed from the prospect of negotiating directly with foreign partners while on location in Prague or Budapest. This point is an explicit part of their value proposition: "People say, what is it that Mid Atlantic films do, what are you here for? Well, we know what 10,000 forints should buy you. Not what some people tell you it should."[33]

For their part, local crews have expressed reservations about on-set hierarchies, alleging they benefit the service firms more than individual crew members. As individual crew members amass more and more credits on major productions, for example, they develop their own relationships with foreign producers and department heads. Some feel confident that they now have the professional network necessary to secure work on their own but can't because of the nature of service work that pitches complete packages of financial, material, and human resources to foreign producers. While the service firm can act as a helpful gatekeeper, providing a form of quality assurance for both incoming producers and local hires, they also maximize cost savings when local hires are priced as supporting players rather

than department leaders. Indeed, crew members are growing more and more aware of their own value as locations remain popular filming destinations, though, as one service producer admitted to me off the record, demands for higher wages reduce any cost savings from production incentives or cheap labor rates, and that's ultimately not good for the firm's business or the crew's livelihood. A less competitive environment will prompt foreign producers to look elsewhere. For the skeptical crew member, however, it raises questions about the service firm's allegiance, questions that cannot be addressed in any meaningful manner as speaking up would threaten the very relationships responsible for securing work for local hires.

Local crews also have come to understand Hollywood's highly regimented division of labor if not fully embrace some of what they perceive as its excesses. As Kristina Hejduková, a Prague-based service producer, tells me, "It's hard to justify to a [local] production designer why he can't pick up a hammer if someone from construction needs help. It seems inefficient to Czech crews not to help someone when they need it. It wastes time, which wastes money."[34] Service producers, too, claim the bloated production processes of the major studios cause some dissonance with the purported cost savings of location shooting. Reporting procedures, for instance, are complicated, with decisions that require approval from corporate overlords far removed from the culture and creative environment on set. She continues, "Rather than just let us use common sense to resolve some small problem, it requires memos to multiple assistants who have assistants who probably have assistants. We don't even see some of these people. Everything is documented and reported, especially insurance concerns, because no one wants to be liable for accidents. If it rains, we issue memos to wear a raincoat. At a

certain point, it starts to feel like a waste of time and money. You certainly don't see those expenses on the screen."[35]

But someone has to do it. So much of the labor of mobile production falls to service firms in key locations around the globe. While they delegate many of the more production-focused tasks to their teams of production managers, production accountants, location managers, and expert technicians and craftsman, service producers still stitch it all together, keeping the incongruent mechanisms that power production's mobility running as smoothly as possible.

THANK YOU, PLEASE COME AGAIN

The labor of service producers is a necessary component to sustain the spatial dynamics of mobile production and is furthermore characterized by its complexity, encompassing multiple aspects of production, from the administrative, legal, and political to the organizational, technical, and cultural. The nature of this work draws attention to the service producer's ingenuity and resilience in stitching together disparate agendas and untold details, a process that only ever serves as a conditional safeguard against the always-present hazards threatening the smooth expansion of a highly mobile production apparatus. In other words, global projects, like the dispersal of film and television production, must be made, work must go into forging connections and maintaining links, a messy and incongruent process that nevertheless gives shape to the possibilities and limitations of these encounters. In their roles as middlemen and -women, service producers provide a level of governance in which their loyalties are bifurcated between the foreign clients that help sustain the producers' independent businesses and

the local crew and other providers who depend on their service firms for continuity of employment.

Service producers are very aware of the role they play in nurturing these makeshift junctions, and that they do so under fraught circumstances. The structural differences that make locations attractive to Mobile Hollywood also give rise to the need to manage the consequences of disjuncture. In other words, if Budapest ever became "just like" Hollywood, in terms of, say, cost or skills, it would undermine its own value. Mobile Hollywood needs those differences, and those differences require service producers to provide a sense of familiarity and confidence in the face of disjuncture. The contingent dynamics of service production refuse the lie that conditions on the ground are somehow flush with comforts once characteristic of other places, like Hollywood, and that these production hubs have been somehow remade to fully align with the interests and rewards of global capital. Friction is helpful here because it recasts geographic expansion as an incomplete and tentative process. Global coalescence does not happen *to* particular places but is made possible *from* the practical and provisional encounters that emerge within and across its cracks. By calling attention to the immediate pressures and daily entanglements service producers face, these details trouble the friendly face and welcoming embrace of policy-driven publicity. Rather, focusing on the work functions of service producers not only extends our understanding of the gritty machinations of mobile production, but it also establishes some of the recurring characteristics of work in Mobile Hollywood, no matter where it takes place.

CHAPTER FOUR

Crew Adjacent

Location Experts, Spatial Creativity, and Logistical Quagmires

Locations are a fundamental requirement of all motion pictures, a statement so obvious that the contribution location experts make to the production process risks being overlooked and underappreciated.[1] Mobile Hollywood, after all, requires a destination. Sometimes it needs more than one, often simultaneously. Even stage-bound productions venture into nearby exteriors for second unit shoots. Still, with hundreds of crew members and background extras, a dozen or so trucks and trailers, tents for craft services and weather protection, and numerous rigs and other resources, a production cannot just show up at a private residence or public street corner. Locations must be *made* accessible to a mobile mode of production, and that process has increased in complexity and magnitude as the geographic scale of production has expanded around the world.

Prevailing accounts of contemporary creative labor have not devoted much attention to the work of location experts.[2] This absence may reflect how the dynamics of so much location work exceeds our presumptions about below-the-line labor. These

laborers lack the tactile artifacts we associate with other craft positions. They don't stitch a costume, paint a face, build a prop, or decorate a set. They also lack an explicit technical skill set we associate with trade workers. They don't construct interior set pieces, lay electricity cables, or drive camera rigs. Yet location experts are very much integral to the creative team whose well-honed contributions directly shape the look and feel of the motion picture or television series. They share an intimate creative partnership with producers, directors, and especially production designers, and while they may not immediately identify as craftspersons or trade workers, they possess a deep, comprehensive knowledge of each department's aesthetic and technical requirements, working particularly closely with the lighting, camera, and electrical departments.

As I will sketch below, location experts need to anticipate how the visual and functional needs of stakeholders shape a location's potential effectiveness and what, if any, adjustments are necessary to make it a safe and workable option that aligns with the material and symbolic dimensions of the script. They also must satisfy an extensive checklist of essentials (e.g., Does the location have access to electricity? Where can it accommodate parking or craft services?) and potential problems (e.g., Is the location near a busy motorway or under a flight path? Is the site weatherproof? Are there power lines that will interfere with overhead camera rigs?). Adjustments are often necessary, but they are made without exceeding the budget, of course. Listening to location experts recite the variable and overlapping scenarios they rehearse when scouting filming sites, one hears an impressive account of proactive troubleshooting, a constant and iterative exchange of "if, then" contingency plans. This is an imaginative process that nevertheless requires a

tremendous amount of logistical ingenuity to ensure the endeavor can move quickly and seamlessly through space to achieve its artistic objectives.

This chapter examines the spatial expertise of location workers. Similar to the fate of their below-the-line colleagues, technological change and workplace pressures have eroded some of the creative authority and autonomy of the location expert. They still very much love what they do but are in the throes of reconciling their passion with a growing burden to do more with less and more quickly across a larger geography. Yet paradoxically, the shifting spatial dynamics of Mobile Hollywood have elevated and intensified other aspects of location work. Here we see how the logistical labor of location experts is critical to making space accessible to a mobile mode of production. They must organize and manage the movement of people, equipment, traffic, and other resources within and between filming sites, and this labor is intended to remove obstacles—both anticipated and unexpected—that stand in the way of the temporal, spatial, and financial efficiency of capital accumulation, often with disregard for the immaterial borders that once separated a location expert's personal life from their professional livelihood.

THE TYRANNY OF TECHNOLOGY AND TRAVEL

In July 2017, Ed French was murdered in San Francisco. Three months later, Carol Munoz Portal was murdered in Mexico. Both men were location experts. Both men were killed while scouting for locations. French was working on a commercial project. Portal was employed by Netflix's *Narcos* (2015–17). The deaths prompted the Location Managers Guild International (LMGI) to include this passage in their media release

memorializing the men: "Location scouts and managers are often vulnerable, working alone while scouting dangerous environments. While such occurrences are rare, location pros can also be targets because of the equipment they carry."[3] Reports indicated French was murdered during a robbery that targeted his camera. Portal was scouting in a notoriously crime-ridden area. Explicitly invoking the Sarah Jones tragedy, the organization's statement further linked the killings with the heightened awareness about crew safety more generally.

These concerns—being alone, being in a remote area, being a target—recurred throughout my conversations. Scouting, in particular, is one of the most precarious components of location work. As the LMGI message makes clear, scouts are alone, often in unfamiliar environs far from home, as they search for the perfect filming site. As this is part of the preproduction process, no one (besides the location experts themselves) really knows what they are doing or where they are doing it. Like any investigative journalist, they are "on assignment." The murders of the location scouts in San Francisco and Mexico became reference points in my conversations soon after the incidents occurred, but across my interviews more generally many individuals recounted their own anxious stories: being in a bogged down vehicle in crocodile-infested waters, for example, or trekking fourteen miles through a desert when they anticipated being away for only a few hours. No mobile service. No producer. No familiar face waiting back at the hotel to summon emergency services when they failed to return on time.

There is a dark side to location work that aligns with a broader and more ambivalent narrative about the erosion of work and working conditions in the screen industries. This does not diminish the pride and pleasure these individuals express

about their work (even if the sentiments aren't always returned by producers), but it underscores a growing sense of disillusionment with the industry's motivations and priorities. One longtime location expert characterized the predicament for labor as a practical matter with more than a hint of nostalgia for a bygone era:

> The industry has been corporatized, or whatever you want to call it. There is no creativity anymore. I would love to work on more independent projects, but I can't afford it. They can't afford my rate. [Names a recent installment of a high-profile franchise film.] I won't even see that movie. It's just so fucking stupid. But I took the job. It pays my mortgage! It's what we have to do. I'm lucky that I started in this industry years ago. I had the pleasure of working on other types of film, interesting films, mid-range budget films. No one makes them anymore. I wouldn't want to start out in the industry as it is today. It's all about money. Producers or studios or whatever don't care about creativity or craft. What can you do? You have to work.[4]

Despite the sense of resignation, the quote is symptomatic of a larger sentiment among screen media workers, both above- and below-the-line, who reiterate passionate commitments to their craft while acknowledging frustration with a system that seems at odds with the artistic impulses it appropriates for value.[5]

The contradiction here captures the power of capital to engender a form of social cooperation in which the performance of one's creative resilience or efficiency helps sustain the very operations that threaten to undermine those same pleasures. In other words, workers learn to conflate their economic value with the conditions that perpetuate their own precariousness. As the cases of Sarah Jones, Ed French, and Carol Munoz Portal demonstrate, the consequences of such professional commitments can

be tragic, but the principle is fundamental to independent contracting in general and the creative industries in particular.[6] The system functions not only by outsourcing work to a saturated labor market but also by exploiting certain myths around work and identity that mobilize workers into a supply chain of immediately responsive but ultimately disposable human labor. This dynamic isn't inherently evil, as the rhetoric may very well "offer sites for self-expression that are unavailable in more conventional forms of livelihood."[7] Indeed, the experience of location experts underscores their work as a site of both pleasure and peril, a series of inherent tensions and contradictions that is captured neither in radical critique of capital exploitation nor more liberal assessments of the creative economy.

The sections that follow look more closely at the ways technology and travel are transforming the nature of location work within mobile production. The first section draws attention to the concerns with creative autonomy and craftwork, especially as the import of technology to location work has increased alongside the need to operate across an expanded geography of production. The second section outlines how this geography requires workers to become mobile and highlights the toll constant travel takes on location experts.

Technology

Location experts—either scouts or managers—are some of the first individuals hired by a production, sometimes even before the director and production designer, so they can start breaking down the script into discrete locations. At this point, they visualize the spatial needs of a story, consider where they might find those locations or whether to build them on a soundstage, travel

near and far to capture an array of images, and then curate them into what they hope is a meaningful and productive complement to the collective vision for the project. Location experts often work most closely with the production designer to narrow thousands of images into a more manageable short list that is then presented to the director and cinematographer for further culling. As I will discuss in more detail below, tenacity, patience, commitment, and creative ambition are prized qualities that "good" location experts cultivate over time and reaffirm in their reflections on the profession. There's also a sense of excitement and adventure associated with the scouting process. Such assignments can potentially send location experts "anywhere" as they are "often the first person on the ground to see if it's even possible to shoot where they might want to shoot."[8] Depending on the size and scale of the project, this process can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months, all done before a single line of dialogue is recorded and often before the script is even finished.

Location experts take great pride in the creative and curatorial aspect of the scouting process. They are, after all, the experts here. In the not-too-distant past, location experts—many photographers by training—invested time in preparing for what are called "show-and-tell meetings" with producers, directors, and production designers. After weeks, sometimes months, of research, scouting, photographing, and culling from an expansive archive of images, the show-and-tell process is the first occasion for location experts to fully perform their professional authority and aptitude. Many recounted the "rush" they felt when retrieving 35mm prints from the developer (or in-home lab) and rapidly creating storyboards of potential shooting sites "just in time" for the late afternoon appointments. They create

folders for each location. Each folder opens with a key shot—the best of the lot—and then guides the viewer through the space: inside the door to the left, then to the right, and so on, giving the location expert complete control over their colleagues' experience of the potential site. They tediously trim edges and create panoramic landscapes by taping together overlapping pictures. Sometimes those photo displays decorate an entire meeting room, not unlike in an art gallery.

These meetings provide the location expert with an opportunity to curate images to their creative counterparts and work collectively to identify the filming sites best suited to the project. Options, alternatives, and backups are necessary to accommodate the often idiosyncratic creative egos of the decision-makers. If Option A doesn't emerge as a contender, the location expert needs to be ready to pitch Options B, C, or D. "I not only need to find a location that I think best fits the script, but also anticipate potential objections from the director or production designer in case our visions don't quite match, or they have particularly strong opinions about what they want."[9] They also need to weigh potential sites against a range of other logistical and technical issues that can complicate the viability of one location over another, no matter which one "looks" best on film. Sometimes this process entails the decision about what *not* to show their creative colleagues—knowing that it's often harder to talk a director or production designer out of using the "perfect location" based on technical or logistical obstacles alone. A location expert recounted an episode from early in her career when she had to persuade a director not to use what he considered the "perfect" location for a particular scene. She objected because the tide made the remote island site only accessible by rowboat, which not only raised significant health and safety

concerns but also presented practical transportation obstacles. There also was no electricity. "It was visually stunning, but I should have never presented it to him. I'll never make that mistake again," she reflected.[10]

The metaphors of detective work, globe trekking, and hunting are commonly invoked to describe the nature of the scouting process, driven by a sort of wanderlust that fuels these experts' creative pursuits and professional obligations. For example, "It's a very visual process at first. I immediately start visualizing ideas when I read the script. I grew up here. I know the city [Budapest] very well. So, some ideas come from memory. But *I am always hunting* for a new place and shooting and shooting and shooting [images] either because the script calls for [something different] or it's just something we [location experts] do [naturally]."[11]

The "hunt" allows location experts to balance familiarity with surprise and novelty. Discovering a new locale (even or especially in one's own city), transforming an existing space for new purposes, or finally gaining access to a destination previously off limits for one reason or another are all described with a sense of personal satisfaction and professional victory. Such metaphors are not unlike the "trade stories" that John Caldwell describes as "narratives of self-affirmation,"[12] which are critical in the context of a highly competitive and saturated labor market. They not only distinguish spatial expertise as a particularly valuable and distinguishable creative input, but they also mark that expertise as not something "just anyone" can do but rather a professionally cultivated skill set learned over time and as the consequence of training.

Yet the stories also function on a much more fundamental level by conflating modest workaday pleasures with a compulsion

that filters across many aspects of a location expert's personal life. Everyone told me some variation of the same warning about the common hazards of their creative commitments: they're horrible drivers because they're paying more attention to the passing scenery than the road; they make for difficult travel partners, opting to snap photos of landscapes and buildings rather than take pictures of the family around the pool; they spend a lot of time just walking around different cities they visit looking up at the architecture rather than in front of them, and so on. Veteran experts often amass impressive personal archives from their scouting expeditions, a collection of images they have recorded over time that fits the particular creative needs of a project or simply "just because" the locale might work for some unknown project in the future. One of the most memorable experiences during my fieldwork occurred when a veteran location professional invited me into her home office. In addition to the posters and production memorabilia one might expect, the walls were lined with filing cabinets full of hundreds upon hundreds of photos with place-specific folder labels: "LA River Under 110 @ San Fernando"; "USC Hospital—Old County Morgue"; "Cemetery (Angeles Abbey)"; or simply "Grass Roof." The archive was a personal resource and point of pride for her—a first stop for any initial research that she largely navigated based on her own memory of where she filed what. Some of the locations already had appeared in films or television shows on her resume, but many were documented simply because she saw creative and functional potential in them.

The locations that make up the personal archive are not exactly proprietary material. Many are a mix of public and private spaces that for most of us just exist as a random street here or an office building there. Yet the archives transform those

static destinations into something more malleable, a location ready for its remake in the name of "just-in-time" creative production. For the location expert, the archive functions as professional currency and quality assurance in addition to his or her screen credits. It speaks to the vastness of their knowledge and the immediacy of their responsiveness. Having an archive of potential resources at their disposal limits the turnaround time and initial travel that a project requires. Like a sound recordist with her own gear or a makeup artist with his own bag of supplies, the archive (and camera) is a necessary tool of the trade that individuals commonly curate on their own dime and outside the confines of officially contracted work while driving around town, during family holidays, and on a leisurely stroll through the city.

There's more than a semblance of handiwork here: the technical proficiency and creativity of photography, the enthusiasm for innovation and novelty, the scrapbook-like approach to the lookbooks, the meaning-making from expert curation, and the art of persuasive presentation to executives and colleagues. It is a craft, practiced over time, honed for excellence, and prized as a distinct skill. It also is highly socialized in its commitment to collaboration, necessarily balancing one's individual labor inputs within the broader workshop-like environment of film production.

Yet today conditions are changing. Location experts are at much greater distances from producers, digital cameras have taken the place of 35mm film, the internet is home to millions of images from amateur photographers, and the cloud has become the default archive for professional scouting images. Sensing the changes, location experts acknowledge a pronounced ambivalence with respect to the impact technological change has had

upon their sense of value and creative identities. Location experts readily admit the internet makes their job a bit easier. In addition to the obvious efficiencies it creates with respect to speedy communication and travel logistics, extensive desk research before a physical scout helps narrow down options, thus saving the scout time, money, and potential travel hardship. Yet it simultaneously increases the burden of that task. The world is now at their fingertips, and producers or production designers can too easily disregard the expertise of their colleagues and encourage them to "keep searching," because their own Google searches suggest there are additional and better options to consider. Anyone on the production team is a potential location scout by simply entering a few key search terms into Google Images.

Further, the cloud now offers an endless archive of images for producers to review at their leisure in place of the more personalized (and face-to-face) curation of what the location expert considers to be the best options. Rare are the 4 p.m. meetings when location experts would decorate production offices with their display boards and, in collaboration with the director and production designer, engage in tactile creativity: moving boards around, discarding unwanted options, and reorganizing preferred locations as they collectively narrow down their filming sites. The panoramic image also is at risk. Location experts can shoot more quickly, compile more images, and deliver on tighter deadlines without the time-consuming process of stitching together individual images, even digitally, into comprehensive landscapes.

Accordingly, the show-and-tell process increasingly occurs in isolation with little showing or telling involved: The producer, director, or production designer quickly scrolls through a

secure website on their own with minimal input from or collaboration with their colleagues in the location department. This is especially true for a scout searching in Budapest or the Gold Coast in Australia for a producer in Los Angeles. An Australia-based location expert tells me, "I can be on a helicopter taking images of the Great Barrier Reef around the Whitsunday Islands, and the producers will want me to send them those images before I'm out of the helicopter. Gone are the days of developing film and making lookbooks. Now, I just hand over a USB stick, or more likely, load images onto a [secure] website, then send an email."[13]

As a consequence, many location experts are faced with information overload. No longer contending with the material limitations of a roll of 35mm film or the finite shelf space of personal archives, most location experts now have terabytes upon terabytes of images they store on numerous external hard drives with no meaningful way to organize and preserve that amount of information—they simply collect too much too quickly before moving onto the next job, where they do it all over again.

These trends align with a larger narrative about the erosion of creativity and craftwork in an entertainment industry seeking to stabilize its financial well-being at the expense of its workforce. Like the experiences of their below-the-line colleagues more generally, the creative and craft-like nature of a location expert's work routines is increasingly subject to the edicts of managerial rationality that diminish creative authority, abandon commitments to quality, and ramp up productivity pressures in lieu of established workflows.[14] In this case, producers and other studio executives increasingly prefer to review location images via email. They are less invested in the location expert's commitment to their craft than in the inventory

they can produce, often at a moment's notice. As such, location experts often find themselves spending portions of nonwork time curating a personal archive as a repository of "immediately responsive research" for whatever queries might arrive in the future. This point is not meant to discount a location expert's creative passion or sense of agency, but to illustrate how the logics of Mobile Hollywood enable a form of self-discipline that comes at no expense to producers. As I argued in Chapter 1, producers simply prefer mobile production without the "mess" of creative investment.

Mobility

Existing work tends to frame the mobility of film and television workers in terms of the transient, project-to-project nature of their careers. For instance, Caldwell describes this as a "nomadic labor system" or "an amorphous enterprise," writing, "even after a technical worker has obtained employment and established credentials and competency, they still must hustle for every new production they hope to work on. . . . What usually results is that a small coalition of workers on one shoot will migrate in a loosely cohesive fashion to another shoot."[15] As other commentators also have acknowledged, the tendency for department heads and other managerial agents to hire from a pool of workers with whom they share previous experience is a common feature in the entertainment industries, resulting in semipermanent work groups that migrate from one production to the next as a way to offset risk and increase trust.[16] While below-the-line workers readily admit this dynamic reproduces exclusionary power dynamics, especially with respect to race and gender, they struggle to accommodate more inclusive practices within a

system that does not reward the time and investment it takes to generate such opportunities for disadvantaged workers.

For example, Calvin Starnes, an experienced grip, explains that labor budgets are fixed and time pressures are intense. Producers are not inclined to increase the resources necessary to create opportunities to hire and train new crew members, meaning efforts to diversify crew are delegated (or abdicated) to department heads. With fixed resources to support the team, bringing on a new hire means replacing an existing member rather than expanding the size of the crew. It's also perceived as a potential threat to the safety and efficiency of a team that has built up over time a particular work rhythm and shared sense of trust. Starnes elaborates,

> You spend more time with these people than you do with your family, so you have to get along. It's tough to break into crews that travel together, no matter what color or gender you are, because there is a preexisting core. You can come in as a day player and then come in more regularly, but once you have your team, that's it until somebody leaves. . . . If you're forcing me to hire someone, you're creating a situation where I don't know if I can trust them, and I don't know their skill level. You're also telling me to hire an unknown over someone I already know and trust. . . . If it's an extra person who won't take a spot away from a core team member, give me whoever you've got. It diversifies the crew. It creates more work for more people. And it trains a larger, better workforce because it's putting the new person among a solid, experienced group of grips.[17]

Mobile production is not detached from these racialized and gendered dynamics. By introducing a more pronounced spatial dimension to project-based work, it further aggravates the injustices that already exist within the social relations of production and bestows additional privilege upon workers who can more

easily accommodate the demands of geographic transience by virtue of their class status, racial identity, gender, or nationality.

This is true of all below-the-line workers, though the impact on location experts stands out as particularly acute given the spatial dynamics of their labor. As Greg Elmer and Mike Gasher write, "The duties of location scouts, as digital and televisual librarians of sorts, articulate and adjudicate many complex global factors to local actors, mediating remote spaces to Hollywood and other production centers."[18] In a much more extensive case study of location experts, Myles McNutt links their local expertise to increasingly precarious livelihoods, arguing, "Their greatest asset is knowledge of a city, state, or region, a process that requires considerable time and experience. Their livelihoods are thus more vulnerable than many other workers [to the instability of mobile production]."[19] In other words, the place-specific nature of their labor is integral to the mobility of production but comes at the cost of their own professional stasis. Location experts would need to "sacrifice long-standing relationships with the local community and [their] knowledge of local geography, only to replicate, at great effort, that knowledge in other locations if [they] wished to remain" employable within a mobile production apparatus that can change locations on a whim.[20]

McNutt singles out television as particularly precarious for local workers, but such assessments are only partially accurate. In particular, the tendency to conflate local expertise with sedentary labor effectively downplays or elides the complex socio-spatial adjustments within the location department itself, a reconfiguration that makes mobility constitutive of the workplace and requires collaboration with a growing roster of colleagues that spans a production geography greater

than any one place. As mentioned earlier, resources—more so than medium—often determine how much of the initial location-related tasks are delegated to local counterparts in different regions around the world, but it rarely means the supervising location manager—the department head—or other key members of the department are free from any travel.

For example, Emma Pill, supervising location manager for the Bond film *Spectre* (2015), recalls having more than 125 individuals in her department scattered across Austria, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Switzerland, and the UK. Still, after spending nine months researching possibilities from her London office, she scouted a short list of locations herself (in all places but Mexico) before presenting options to the director, Sam Mendes. Over the course of her career, her work has entailed travel and extended stays in Greece, Hungary, Iceland, and Norway, among other countries. "Fortunately, I love to travel," she says before adding, "but it does take a toll on your relationships with friends and family."[21] Likewise, Naomi Liston, who hails from Scotland, supervised more than six primary locations (and even more secondary destinations) for the television show *Game of Thrones* (2011–19) from its headquarters in Belfast, while Los Angeles resident Wesley Hagan spends most of his time in Atlanta working on both films and television programs. For the Netflix series *Ozark* (2017–22), he was in Missouri to manage locations for the pilot but returned to Georgia for the duration of the program. Like many of his colleagues, he's away from his home in Los Angeles more often than not. "I'm not getting calls for LA. Hollywood is in Atlanta right now," he says.[22]

Highly sought-after location experts thus spend a significant amount of time in transit. At the height of their careers, leading location experts report being away for the bulk of a calendar

year—either scouting or filming on location—with momentary returns home between jobs. It's in those brief moments that they try to tend to neglected gardens; exercise and devote some time to their own mental welfare; and mend personal relationships with partners, children, and friends. In recounting her decision to retire from location work, Belle Doyle points to the toll frequent international travel and twelve-hour-plus days took on her health and well-being:

> I was always on some transatlantic flight or European flight. I was going to Los Angeles, Cannes, Toronto, or Hong Kong. . . . It was never ending. I started having some health issues. My blood pressure was high. I had gained loads of weight. It got to a point—you know, I'm fifty—where my body was telling me I was working too much. It's all glamorous and lovely for a while, but then there's a moment of realization when you say to yourself, I'd rather be home watching telly with a cup of tea then attending another party at Cannes.[23]

Concerns over basic health and well-being needs taken for granted in normal circumstances but put under undue stress in the context of what more than one location expert called "our gypsy lifestyle" was a pervasive concern. Living on planes and in hotels limits access to gyms, impinges on healthy diets, increases exposure to colds and flu, and hinders any sense of a "regular routine" in a consistent time zone. When you finally arrive at your destination, exhausted from travel, sleep in your hotel room usually prevails over physical exercise. Yet even sleep is not always restful. Stories circulate about encounters with bedbugs and cases of scabies contracted while on the road.

Professionals with enough industry clout can negotiate concessions to lessen the burden of mobility. Some of these deals are relatively modest, like business-class airfare. Location experts

simply travel too frequently and too far in compressed amounts of time with expectations to be "work ready" immediately upon disembarking the plane. Business class offers a chance to do prep work or take a nap. It also offers additional expediency: you board early, you can disembark more easily, and your bags normally arrive first on the carousel. Such privileges lessen the impact constant travel takes on productivity. Indeed, location experts easily conflate the value of comfort and convenience as a simultaneous boost to both personal welfare and professional obligations. These benefits may seem small, they recognize, but every minute gained lessens productivity pressures on the ground and affords location experts a sense of calm amid relentless deadlines.

Still, especially for less experienced workers, who lack the clout of celebrity talent who can commandeer first-class airfare or private flights, such small asks can quickly turn into major points of contention when negotiating with producers. Location experts struggle to fathom why such modest requests face so much scrutiny given the multi-million-dollar budgets to which producers are accustomed. "They will spend six figures on something to make the director happy or go over budget to [accommodate] changes we had to make because they decided to start filming before the script was finished. Why do we argue about small things?"[24] That such minor demands are considered "big wins" when producers agree to them is evidence of the degree to which workers are inclined to cooperate with the contradictory logics of mobile production—resilience is a sign of professionalism *and* a source of value for producers and studios.

Other location experts have taken more pronounced measures to offset the personal burdens of their professional obligations. Like Doyle, Lori Bolton made the decision to step back

from location work after the birth of her daughter in the late 1990s. "I decided I wanted to see her grow up," she told me. Rather than step back completely, Bolton, who has worked in the industry for more than three decades, decided to focus her professional energies on location scouting rather than location management. Scouting, which typically ends before production begins, afforded her more control over her schedule and a healthier balance between home and work life:

> Location managers have one of the most demanding jobs on set. You are accountable and available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for the duration of the shoot. If you are filming somewhere else, you don't even get to come home at the end of the day. I didn't want to do that with a kid. [But the decision] was hard. I had just reached a certain level in my career and now I was backing away. . . . At first, it felt weird to put parameters around what I would and wouldn't do. I [stipulated] that I wouldn't be away from home for more than two weeks at a time. I was incredibly lucky people let me do it.[25]

Despite her unease, it worked out well for her. In the last twenty years, Bolton has more or less maintained that schedule while scouting for some of Hollywood's biggest and highest profile films, including *Pearl Harbor* (2001), *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* (2005), *Inception* (2010), *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013), *Insurgent* (2015), *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018), *The Lion King* (2019), and *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022). She became the first location professional invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and a founding member of the LMGI.

Yet limiting time away to a two-week scout rather than a six-to-eight-month sojourn on a distant production still provoked trepidation for Bolton. By framing the decision as one she was "lucky" enough to be "allowed" to make, she effectively undercuts

any sense of empowerment over her own work-life balance. Such language underscores how even highly decorated craft workers enjoy only a tenuous sense of autonomy in the context of contract work and surplus labor. Whether you are fighting for business-class airfare or hoping for more time with your family, there's always an eager new recruit ready to take your place if you are perceived as less amenable to the demands of the system.

In addition to documenting the personal tolls mobility extracts from location experts, I make the broader point here that it is simply too reductive to equate local knowledge with local labor. Location experts are now, themselves, highly mobile and must learn both the creative potential and bureaucratic processes of multiple locations, as both a consequence of and contributing factor to mobile production. Even in faraway destinations, local hires in Vancouver, Prague, or Budapest tend to serve as sources of expertise and coordination over a broader swath of the region. As I acknowledged in the previous chapter, if a production chooses Budapest as its production base, it is more likely to source second unit location needs from a regional network within Eastern Europe; it's simply more cost-effective. Croatia is a common destination for Budapest-based productions in need of seaside locations, for example, or Austria for productions that require castles, as years of conquest have destroyed such structures in Hungary. In these scenarios, the Budapest-based location team often assumes direct responsibility for the secondary destinations and spends time away from the city for the duration of those shoots. Still, it's not uncommon for the Budapest location experts—who likely report to a foreign supervisor from London or LA—to employ an assistant or coordinator in Austria or Croatia to assist with immediate needs. Ultimately, the department's makeup starts to reflect a

spatial heterogeneity that is dynamic and fluid, making the term "local hire" appear highly contingent in the context of ever-expanding production geographies.

As mobile production intensifies, the working relationships necessary to get the job done sometimes exacerbate many of the latent tensions and hierarchies that structure the division of labor. Staffing the location department and professional advancement in emergent production hubs stand out as particularly vexed issues. On the one hand, these concerns extend from what we already know about project-based careers: reputational capital and trust are the primary currency, existing professional relationships are key, the best jobs are reserved for an elite group of workers, and breaking this cycle of exclusion remains a challenge for newcomers. On the other hand, mobility has altered the socio-spatial character of most film and television crews, which exacerbates cultural tensions and biases in ways that tend to reaffirm existing power dynamics and hierarchies in the industry despite rhetoric around local job opportunities that policymakers like to champion.

As mobile production has accelerated rapidly in places like Atlanta, for instance, there is concern that job demand is exceeding labor supply. According to some of the more benign explanations, the city simply lacks the labor pool to adequately staff various below-the-line departments, including location work, and that can result in some nefarious activities among colleagues and collaborators. "Atlanta has enough quality crew for three major productions. But the city is so busy that you can't keep your crew once you find them. If a higher profile production comes along, it will poach your best workers. We all talk to each other, so I don't know why they think that's a good idea, but they do it!"[26] A darker narrative—often spoken

about in hushed tones and off the record—links these structural concerns to an impending crisis. According to this logic, local "yokels" are advancing too rapidly without adequate training to meet the high-pressure demands of large-scale film and television production. Inflated egos rather than experience drive contract negotiations, and misplaced confidence dilutes the sense of professionalism and proficiency one normally develops over time. Safety incidents are invoked as evidence of what's at stake, alongside a sense of exasperation that mobile production proceeds largely unfettered.

Adding to this frustration, regions outside of Los Angeles fall under the jurisdiction of different labor organizations (or lack of labor organizations altogether) with dissimilar career trajectories than what is customary in Southern California. Normally, a location manager can assume a certain level of competency and pay rates when he or she hires a key assistant, because union rules regulate the titles workers can use and the rate they earn based on their previous experience. Unions also maintain specific protocols for professional advancement: how many credits one must acquire as a coordinator before becoming an assistant manager, for instance, or before an assistant manager can take on more supervisory duties and departmental leadership. In places with different union locals or nonexistent union oversight, those basic assumptions about skills, proficiency, and salary simply don't apply.

As a safeguard, veteran professionals tend to rely on trusted pools of available colleagues when work takes them away from home, regardless of where those individuals are based. Location expert Kent Matsuoka, for example, explains, "I spend about half of the year away from [my home in] Los Angeles. I immediately look at where I am going: who has filmed there, who is

filming there, who is planning to film there, who just left, and who we can bring with us."[27] The semipermanent work groups mentioned earlier now travel together, especially within North America, where repeat visits to prominent production hubs build confidence. Hagan adds, "I may not know the region's geography. But it doesn't take long for a good location manager to figure it out. Once you've done two or three projects in an area, you get comfortable."[28] They welcome local hires, particularly scouts and coordinators whose more intimate knowledge can help location experts get around a given location, but in places with a well-developed infrastructure, location experts are just as likely to turn to film commissions, tourism agencies, or service producers for support. Senior roles are thus reserved for a more elite group of workers who depend on their existing professional networks as springboards for mobile careers.

When mobile production ventures further afield to international destinations, local hires take on more prominent roles within the division of labor, often out of necessity. As described in the previous chapter, travel costs make it impractical to transport and house entire departments for extended periods of time overseas, while language and foreign bureaucracies increase the appeal of local expertise. Emma Pill, who, in addition to *Spectre*, was the supervising location expert for the Budapest-based production of *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), captures the tensions well:

> I'll admit it. I was frustrated at first when I learned I was the only one from the UK producers planned to take to Budapest. You always want an ally, at least one person you trust by your side, but I found my colleagues in Budapest exceptional. I depended on them a great deal. I don't speak the language, so I had to trust that the information I shared with them was then translated and shared with property owners and businesses. I don't have time to chase

> them. I don't have time to follow up. I need to know [the task] will get done right the first time so that when the unexpected does happen, we're ready to respond to that problem without trying to retroactively fix our mistakes. If I have to ask at that point, "did [this information] get shared with everyone because it's now really important to implementing our [contingency] plan?," it's already too late.[29]

Prague- and Budapest-based location experts similarly acknowledge that their good experiences far outnumber the bad, and that over time, they have developed long-standing relationships with producers and foreign location experts that translate into rewarding collaborations in which their expertise and autonomy are recognized, and they enjoy equitable footing with their international counterparts (despite differences in job titles and pay rates). Trust has been built up as interest in the cities has increased, and foreign crew return for subsequent productions over the years. This is especially true in Budapest, which has become the second busiest filming destination in Europe after London.[30] In these cities, the responsibilities of location experts largely mirror those of their foreign counterparts, but access to supervisory positions are rare except for the occasional project with more modest budgets that simply cannot afford to travel with a foreign crew intact.

This puts location experts in faraway destinations in a paradoxical position. While their labor inputs are critical for generating the sort of access and bureaucratic maneuvering mobile production requires, they almost always must negotiate their autonomy and expertise through a foreign head of department. The situation certainly produces mutual benefits in which both visiting supervisor and local hire learn from each other, but it's just as likely to raise on-set tensions. Budapest-based location

expert János Cserven explains, "I have worked on productions before where the producer is just more comfortable dealing with an American. I speak fluent English. I can explain the details of a location. I can negotiate with a crazy production designer. But the producer will just look around me for my [American] head of department."[31] Rudulf András, who spoke with enthusiasm about how much he learned from working with Pill on *Blade Runner 2049*, adds that not all of his collaborations have been as rewarding. Like Cserven, he describes worse-case scenarios that result from a foreign head of department who is there for what András calls "diplomatic" reasons: "It just creates more work for us. We have to entertain him. We have to show him around again and again. We have to explain everything to him so he can just re-explain it to producers, [which feels like] the only reason he is there."[32] From their perspectives, diplomacy just adds an unnecessary layer of middle management, a waste of time and money better spent on other things when they are fully able to accomplish the jobs themselves.

Like those of their below-the-line colleagues, the social relations of production that constitute the location expert's professional collaborations are adjusting to a more mobile mode of production. Personal lives, professional routines, and working relationships are being reconfigured under the pressures of technology and travel to engender "commonsense" logics that help sustain Mobile Hollywood. Distances from home are greater, crew demographics are more transnational, and long-standing rituals are being reconsidered. Yet this is a contradictory process. For the location experts who help operationalize a mobile regime of accumulation, a sense of wanderlust continues to drive their enjoyment of a job despite the challenges they confront as a consequence of a life spent on

the road. As a grounded example of capital operations, it underscores how much mobile production "is composed through a continuous process of formation and deformation. More often than not, capital these days is disproportioned and struggles to assert its unity amid multiple internal conflicts and heterogenous relations with its different outsides."[33] In this case, aptitude, training, technology, and safety, among other workaday realties, simply point to a number of unstable principles that facilitate Mobile Hollywood's expansion. At the same time, it also underscores the centrality of logistics, or acts of coordination, in producing the sort of environment that mobile production requires. Indeed, as they recalibrate their sense of value in Mobile Hollywood, location experts repeatedly cite the logistical complexities of location work as a site where the fragility of the entire enterprise is most explicit and thus the critical import of their work is most impactful, however invisible it remains to colleagues and casual observers. I turn my attention to those dynamics in the next section.

LOGISTICAL PRESSURES AND SERVICE DEMANDS

As location experts read a script, they start to match the narrative and desired aesthetic to a number of material locations—providing numerous creative options is key but so is the location manager's logistical and technical expertise. They must know what is or isn't achievable, creatively and functionally, in certain locations, and just as important, map that onto the production's schedule and budget. As I have started to sketch, this is an imaginative process rife with quite practical complications. Sometimes these potential hiccups are directly related to the creative process itself. As location expert Doyle observes, "If a producer

needs a street for a 19th century drama, we know where to look. We also know there isn't just one street for 19th-century drama. Do you want urban or rural? What social class are the characters?"[34] Sometimes it's not about knowing where to look or what details matter but rather figuring out believable "cheats." How easily can the production "bend" one location to look like another, shooting Budapest, for instance, to look like Paris, as they did for the spy thriller *Atomic Blonde* (2017)? How can a location expert leverage practical locations, camera tricks, and visual effects to turn a rock quarry in Atlanta, Georgia, into the moon for *First Man* (2018)? Cheating a location can produce a more cost-effective alternative than traveling to multiple destinations (or a more plausible option when your location is the moon) but requires the location expert to do far more than find a simple 1:1 equivalency and call it a day. They must master a running list of the site's technical affordances, logistical pitfalls, practical deficiencies, and safety protocols, and then unite disparate stakeholders—from producers, directors, and gaffers to private businesses, municipal authorities, and residents—with conflicting interests and different levels of investment under a single workable plan for filming at the destination.

How does the light change throughout the day, or how might the tide impact access to the perfect beach location? What natural obstacles, like unpaved roads, might hinder access for trucks and related equipment? Who owns the site? How many storefronts need to be redecorated? How many residents need to be informed about the production? What traffic needs to be rerouted? What security detail is necessary? When is the location available, and at what cost? Where is there room for base camp, craft services, and curious onlookers? Is the site accessible, safe, and secure? How do we make it so? Does it have the

necessary amenities (like electricity)? If not, what equipment do we need to bring with us? Where do we park? Where do we eat? Where do we go to the bathroom?

Sometimes these duties place location experts in the role of "den mother" or "babysitter." In a behind-the-scenes documentary about *Game of Thrones*, the location expert Liston, for example, is overheard discussing—with equal parts humor and serious intent—how she planned to prevent crew from urinating on an electrified fence that marked the perimeter of the production's farmland location or from smoking near large propane canisters: "These big gas canisters, that's all propane. You cannot sit there having a fag, otherwise the whole thing's going to go up."[35] In fact, Liston's presence in the documentary (and penchant for profanity) was picked up in news reports and blogs about the show and circulated on social media as jovial evidence of the less-than-glamorous but demanding nature of the job. But it's not all toilet jokes. At the other extreme, it's worth quoting at length from the location expert Kyle Hinshaw to capture his mediation of conflicting demands and tremendous responsibility while working on the science fiction feature *First Man*:

> Sometimes [the locations] process was frustrating because the producers wanted to shoot in Georgia as much as possible to take advantage of the tax incentive. So I was asked to come up with seemingly impossible practical options for the launch pad and Swing Arm in Cape Canaveral (ultimately shot at a Georgia power plant in the middle of the state), a location that could double as Ellington Air Force Base in Texas (the Perry Fairgrounds), and the moon surface (the Vulcan Quarry in Stockbridge). . . . Georgia Power took a lot of hand-holding. They had never opened up an active plant to a project of this size. . . . On top of security concerns, their facility houses massive amounts of coal and hazardous materials. Serious security and safety protocols have to be

> maintained . . . so we had to be very detailed in our filming requests, and get all set plans pre-approved before we got the contract completed. It took multiple meetings, on-site visits and set plan proposals before everything was finalized. We had to distribute personal protective gear to the crew—hard hats, ear plugs, and safety vests. Our location team of about 20 people had to learn the different sirens for the plant—usually these initiated an evacuation protocol depending on what emergency situations was under way (fire, hazmat spill, dangerous weather, etc.). In the event of an emergency, we were responsible for evacuating the crew and performing a roll call at the muster station.[36]

This is a far cry from any red carpet, but someone has to do it. Such "details" are very much in the location expert's domain and stretch from mundane minutiae to quite serious procedures that, if disrupted, would not only impact the comfort and safety of cast and crew, but also upend the smooth and seamless operations of the entire production. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the operations of capital are rife with friction, and the messiness of those encounters affect how an expanded production geography is imagined, managed, and enacted by those workers who constitute it. If service producers occupy a critical but overlooked position within the internal governance of mobile production, location experts are on the front lines, literally mapping the efficient movement of people and things through space. The military metaphor is appropriate given the genesis of logistics in military history at a time when armies needed to coordinate the movement of people, supplies, and other resources across ever greater geographies and growing numbers of men.[37] (It was common to hear location experts themselves refer to their project management ephemera—from Gantt charts to Google maps—as their "battle plans.") Coordinating mobility for maximum efficiency (and thus value),

however, is not a task done in isolation; it involves a much broader assemblage of people, property, and things that the location expert must reconfigure into a set of relations that are conducive to capital.

Location experts thus occupy a critical juncture between the rationality of project management technologies and the unpredictable encounters with real people and real locations. This work is inherently contradictory and fundamentally relational. On the one hand, the logistical nature of their work feeds into the mobile operations of production by anticipating and planning for disturbances, enabling a more flexible and immediately responsive regime of accumulation. Yet no amount of strategic planning or elaborately detailed Gantt chart can fully discipline the risk of internal or external disruption. As the geographer Kate Hepworth writes, "These imagined geographies of optimization and rationalization are only ever imperfectly deployed. They guide interventions into already existing environments, encountering the messiness and intractability of the spaces they aim to transform."[38] On the other hand, then, the dynamic and contingent nature of logistical work produces new spatial configurations that create a distinct temporal rhythm and expand the social relations of production. For location experts, the structured sociality of film and television work extends across a number of fleeting alliances that are necessary preconditions for mobile production to (ideally) advance unfettered. These alliances are both formal and informal, the most crucial ones arguably are external to the production itself, and they operate according to a timeline that overlaps with but exists separately from the production's official schedule.

As discussed, location experts often work alone and according to their own day-to-day deadlines during the scouting phase.

As the start date for production nears and location options are increasingly culled, they engage more and more of their colleagues in assessing filming sites to ensure the location meets the creative and functional needs of the various departments. Once the locations are finalized, they start rationalizing and optimizing the geography for filming. This work begins weeks, sometimes months, before the crew ever shows up. For example, reviewing a location department's schedule for a four-day shoot at an inner-city street corner of a major urban center for a large-scale blockbuster, members of the department were on site three weeks in advance to assist with preliminary electrical work, enable visual effects to scan the location (as it was standing in for somewhere else), and oversee the removal of commercial freezers from the alleys behind private businesses. The following week they installed closure warnings on the relevant pedestrian ways and roads, and dropped letters within a two-mile radius of the filming site. The formal "bump in" started the week before filming. Road closures commenced. Cars were relocated. Garbage bins were removed. Camera rigs arrived and were fenced off from the public. By the end of the week, the art department showed up to start redecorating storefronts, flipping street signs, and remaking anything that was incongruent with the site's scripted location. More letter drops and emails were sent to residents and businesses. A few days before filming, location experts oversaw the construction of base camp and cordoned off parking areas for two hundred crew members and more than fifty trucks.

While the crew shows up to commence filming according to the call sheet, members of the location department are there at least two hours prior to their colleagues—in this case, 4 a.m. Remember, location experts are responsible for the legal

agreements to film in a given area, so they are the first to arrive and the last to leave each day. Elements on the checklist for this particular location included ensuring private business were closed, traffic lights were turned off, public notices were placed correctly, extras knew where to wait, and security was stationed appropriately throughout the vicinity of the shoot. Once filming ended, the schedule for the location department extended another full week as members were responsible for returning everything back to its original condition, including a final letter drop and email to thank private businesses and residents for their cooperation.

All of these details are meticulously documented across a range of formats, including Gantt charts, Word documents, annotated maps, and formal contracts. For this particular four-day shoot (which required a month's worth of *scheduled* production work from the location department but resulted in less than five minutes of actual screen time), the location's folder—where the location expert managed the plans for the site—contained no less than two dozen such documents. Every location is rationalized in a similar way with their own folders full of individualized schedules, checklists, maps, signs, and contracts. Location schedules are staggered, running alongside the production schedule but maintaining their own temporal logic. While part of the location department is at a site where filming is taking place, colleagues are already at work at the next destination, prepping it for the crew to show up in a few weeks' time. As filming starts anew somewhere else, others remain at the previous site to erase any sign of the production ever having been there.[39]

Thus, location experts are more autonomous and exist outside the daily production schedules and call sheets that constitute

Figure 9. Production signs in Brisbane for *Thor: Ragnarok*. Photo by author.

their colleague's work worlds. They are more mobile, constantly moving from one location to the next and back again as they work to make and remake space—to open up geography—for mobile production. It's labor largely abstracted from its most physical manifestation: the public signage that reroutes traffic or advises pedestrians they are entering a filming site (fig. 9). Vicki Mayer offers a compelling analysis of such images as evidence of a coded language that impinges on public space, redirecting (or disinviting) residents from the site "where the hidden labor of the film industry becomes manifest and visible."[40] And yet the same signs are themselves both product of and distraction from

a regime of labor that remains largely alienated from the value creation that happens once cameras roll, but it is nevertheless central to its accumulation.

Filming in public or private spaces requires an immense amount of bureaucratic maneuvering on the part of location experts, who must negotiate permits and permissions with a legion of external parties: business owners, local residents, municipal authorities, state authorities, public transport officials, rubbish-bin collectors, portaloo providers, private security firms, and police and fire departments, among many others. They need permission to redecorate storefronts, fire semiautomatic weapons in residential neighborhoods, reroute public foot traffic through the inner city, and facilitate road closures on major interstate thoroughfares. This means knocking on doors, attending community meetings, coordinating with public agencies, posting public notices, and responding to press inquiries. The location department is the most public-facing and engaged department of a production. In each scenario, location experts must clarify in terms most appropriate to the particular audience what the production process entails, knowing so much of it is a foreign concept to those for whom Hollywood remains more a glamorous imaginary than a technical activity. In many cases, these locations are not Southern California, where Hollywood has historically constituted part of the economic and cultural fabric of the city.[41]

Negotiating with local politicians and public authorities has become especially tense given the growing magnitude of the requests from incoming producers and the increasing pressure on representatives to protect historic sites, neighborhoods, and residents. Sometimes it requires even more creative solutions, like the location expert who recalled with some pride the time

he had to hire a member of the 18th Street Gang in East Los Angeles to ensure the production could film in the area without interruption.[42] The "informant" was paid for his service but also advised the production on what other residents would require payment to prevent theft and vehicle tagging while the crew was working. As the earlier reference to Hinshaw's work on *First Man* illustrates, location experts often amass a wealth of knowledge, some having seemingly little to do with creative production. Another location expert tells me:

> Filming in an open field is easy. Filming in a working hospital is incredibly difficult. I know so much about how different places operate: not just hospitals but power plants, mines, military complexes, palaces, and historical sites. Each has its own set of health and safety protocols and their own set of rules about what you can or cannot do and when you can do it and for how much [money]. There's no training book that can prepare you for what you need to know or much you learn when your job requires you to find [solutions] for questions you never anticipate.[43]

Of course, location experts must coordinate with internal stakeholders as well, like executive producers, directors, and production designers who hold key positions within the overall power structure of a production. The singularity of their creative visions—and often, their whatever-it-takes mentality—can strain the financial and human resources of the location department. It also often jeopardizes the logistical capacity of any given location, which can threaten the safety of the crew, harmonious relations with local communities, and the overall sustainability of the location itself by simply destroying it or creating political, social, or environmental circumstances that prohibit its use by future productions. A location expert in Budapest, for example, recounted to me one of his most

challenging scouts: a high-profile British film director who wanted to transform the city's Museum of Ethnography into a train station. Simple enough, but at the time, the museum was located in one of the country's most opulent buildings, originally the Royal Palace for Justice, which comes replete with royal waiting rooms and statues throughout its marbled interior that honor some of the greatest icons of the former empire. The director—not one known for his modest visions—first wanted the "unfamiliar" statues removed to make room for a full-sized locomotive that he hoped to bring into the building by removing an exterior wall, and further wanted to know what interior room was best for filling up with a mixture of (stage) blood and water. Location experts also must appease fellow crew members, who are quick to express dissatisfaction if the location poses exceptional difficulty or challenges to their work routines. "The director may love you for finding the perfect location. But if the grip department turns up with their trucks and they have to hike up a mountain for the location you found, they don't like you because you're the location manager. In fact, they hate you."[44] Once filming begins at a site, a location expert is normally the first point of contact for any troubleshooting, from angry neighbors, misplaced extras, and lost caterers to unexpected weather, power outages, and property damage.

Given the contradictory pressures location managers face, they often speak about their position within a production in liminal terms. They walk a fine line between, on the one hand, the creative needs of the director and production designer and, on the other, the concerns of external stakeholders, such as property owners or transportation authorities. They are the only crew members who must deal with both the fantasy and reality of a production, meaning they contribute not only to

the production's fictional world but also contend with its material impact in the real world. It also means they understand, intimately, what happens when—in the words of one location expert—"the circus invades someone's backyard." He continues, "It's really hard for a homeowner to understand the scale of what we're trying to do. At first, they don't even really believe me [that I work for a film production]. I have to translate the enormity of the process and make them aware of what might go wrong. It also makes me the person who they see as singularly accountable for this whole thing."[45] This labor entails complex forms of preparation and coordination through which location experts work to unite disparate agendas around a common goal: a professional standard that is repeatedly described as "seamlessness of experience." The emphasis here is to ensure the production remains a minimally disruptive occurrence for everyone potentially impacted by its presence, including the crew, the public, and the natural environment.

A JOB WELL DONE

The majority of location work is invisible, intangible, interactive, and performative, focused on producing an experience in which success—a job well done—is determined by the seamless coordination of disparate needs and agendas. There is a strong correlation here to the emotional labor performed by service workers. Location workers put an excessive amount of work into explaining, comforting, assuring, assuaging, convincing, supporting, and even apologizing. It's not uncommon to hear location experts discuss sincerely pleasurable "friendships" they've developed with certain property owners over time as a consequence of repeat use of their locations. Such relationships and

their maintenance persist outside the context of value creation but are transformed when location experts bring outside parties—from politicians and police officers to local neighbors and business owners—into the production itself. Access to a location is bought by the production, but the treatment of those who give permission—before, during, and after filming—is a key part of that exchange, much like the treatment of spa clients or hotel guests is a component of what is bought and sold in luxury service work.[46] Location workers themselves often disappear into the background of the very processes they help facilitate in the first instance: intentionally invisible, unnoticed, and unremarkable unless something goes awry. Service work, after all, rarely draws attention to itself unless the service is unsatisfactory.

Class relations between producers and technical laborers are easily read in antagonistic terms with respect to subordination, resistance, and control. The ways in which we have historically discussed below-the-line labor in industry studies have supported this analytical framework, and indeed, evidence in my own research suggests that there remains much value in approaching the conflicts between management and labor through such a lens. Yet by introducing questions about logistical pressures and service demands into the intricate and complicated matrix of socio-spatial relations that enable mobile production, we are confronted with a more amorphous form of work that, on the one hand, opens up the experience of work to relationships not solely defined by managerial dictates, and on the other hand, draws attention to acts of coordination—of people, things, emotions—that create the space necessary for Mobile Hollywood.

CHAPTER FIVE

Driving Hollywood Outside Hollywood

Transportation Teamsters, Industrial Relations, and Distant Locations

The work of transportation teamsters strongly aligns with the preceding discussions of "just-in-time" or "immediately responsive" logistical labor—perhaps more conventionally so than any other role involved with production. Teamsters organize the storage and shipment of people and things. They drive, deliver, carry, and chauffeur. They ensure the goods they handle—whether human or otherwise—arrive on time and in pristine condition. They are also responsible for coordinating resources, both physical and administrative, including vehicles, fuel, and insurance, as well as safety compliance, which help unlock and sustain a production's mobility. Many of them remain on call and ready to work with only a moment's notice, even for a shift that lasts just a few hours on any given day. Yet contrary to the entrepreneurial rise of service producers or the emergent professional dexterity of location managers, the logistical nature of teamsters' work is a historical formation, a steadfast fixture of the group's overall occupational identity and unwavering

component of their work routines and rituals. As such, the work teamsters are asked to do in the context of Mobile Hollywood has not transformed so much, but the locations—and the distances between them—have grown far greater and more varied over the past twenty years.

While teamsters remain proudly and at times defiantly unified in their blue-collar roots, it also exposes them to a greater degree of risk in Mobile Hollywood. Like other un- or low-skilled labor in the global economy, transportation teamsters are more easily replaced than other production workers when the movie "factory" relocates to distant locations around the country and the world. Indeed, one of the most recurring battles the union has had with producers is policing the employment of nonunion drivers, especially as those productions have creeped further and further away from Hollywood. There's some irony here, then, in that the individuals who have kept Hollywood mobile since the early 1900s have faced the biggest threat to their livelihoods because of production's disarticulation from a particularly local geography. Further, as they lack recourse to the more individualized and entrepreneurial discourses that have cohered over time around the "specialized" skill sets of craft workers, teamsters struggle to cultivate the same sense of individual exceptionalism that their colleagues can use to secure employment in project-based work. In the absence of individual, skills-based appeals to producers and other hiring authorities, the teamsters' struggle is inherently more collective and traditional in scope. The union's role in the midst of mobile production has been to retain control over the supply of labor and protect jobs for its members. And, by most accounts, they have succeeded: the union has been at or near full employment since 2015, and membership has grown threefold over the past twenty years.

This chapter untangles the protections and entitlements available to teamsters that allow them to participate in Mobile Hollywood. It focuses on the efforts of Local 399, which represents transportation teamsters in Los Angeles, to better understand the tools and tactics it has mobilized in a bid to protect jobs for union members. Specifically, the chapter demonstrates how Local 399 leveraged existing entitlements and bartered for regulatory exemptions to rework the geography of production in ways that allowed teamsters to move more freely across the country and the world. They similarly have maintained pressure on lawmakers in Sacramento to create, then improve, the state's incentive program to reintegrate California into a more mobile mode of production. In so doing, I argue, the union effectively leveraged the spatial logics of mobile production—flexibility, efficiency, rationality, seamlessness—but reconfigured them to accommodate an agenda distinct from producers, a form of collaboration despite difference that found common cause in Mobile Hollywood.

In documenting these strategies, this chapter refuses to frame the dynamic between the union and producers as a simple dialectic of conflict and concession between angry labor activists and greedy studio capitalists. Certainly, there has been conflict and to a lesser extent (at least compared to other entertainment unions) concession, but the more interesting story here is one that makes visible the points of overlap and alignment between management and labor despite different interests and agendas. These alliances are no less awkward or messy (perhaps even more so), but drawing attention to these convergences helps make visible teamsters' own role in reshaping the geography of production to suit their interests.

In the first section, I provide a general overview of the history and work routines of transportation teamsters in Hollywood.

In the subsequence section, I trace the union's evolving strategies in service of their members, a battle that is rife with ambivalence and contradiction but nevertheless proving successful in its attempts to grow the union and secure work for members. Friction remains a key element throughout the discussion, illustrating how a simple binary between management and labor fails to appreciate the muddled and difficult alliances that emerge in the context of Mobile Hollywood.

HOLLYWOOD TEAMSTERS

Teamsters are drivers. The term originally referred to men who corralled a "team" of horse-drawn wagons and hauled goods across the country. By the late 1800s, wagon routes formed a vast transcontinental transportation network, providing a service to the industrial and commercial enterprises unfolding in the country's emerging urban centers and contributing to the broader economic expansion.[1] In this vein, teamsters have always formed a necessary logistical component in the supply chain: carriage, storage, and delivery. The efficient and effective movement of stuff through space has been the defining feature of the work teamsters have done for more than a century, whether at the helm of horse-drawn wagons or motorized transport.

Also central to the experience of their work and (mobile) workplaces has been collective action and advocacy. Issues of fair wages and unsafe working conditions galvanized early organizing efforts, with wagon drivers coordinating their fellow carriers to improve conditions of life on the road: eighteen-hour days, seven-day weeks, low pay, and full liability for the goods they hauled fomented the rank and file into establishing collective representation.[2] First organized in 1903, the International

Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) has evolved over time to become the country's largest labor organization, with more than 1.4 million members and 1,900 affiliates in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Following the organization's roots in transport and delivery, the Package Division is the union's largest, and the United Parcel Service (UPS) is its single largest employer, though it now encompasses blue collar and public service workers in a number of different industries, from breweries and bakeries to food processing.

While jobs, wages, and working conditions have remained key concerns for the union over time, its contemporary public profile arguably has been overshadowed by affiliations with corruption and organized crime, including the tenure of past president James (Jimmy) R. Hoffa. Hoffa, who held office from 1957 to 1971, was subject to numerous government investigations before being convicted of jury tampering, attempted bribery, conspiracy, and fraud in 1964. He continued as the union's leader from prison until he relinquished the role as part of a deal to secure an early release. Hoffa disappeared in 1975, presumably the victim of a mob hit. His son, James P. Hoffa, followed his father and served as the union's president from 1998 to 2021, making him the organization's second-longest serving leader.

Like their brothers and sisters in the international organization, Hollywood Teamsters also drive. They have been behind the wheel of studio vehicles for almost as long as the U.S. film industry has existed, though their experiences remain largely marginalized in both scholarly accounts and popular imagination of work in Hollywood. Far more attention has been given to the more traditional craft unions, like the IATSE and the respective talent guilds, than their blue-collar brethren. Teamsters have received some representation in films like *Hoffa* (1992)

and *The Irishman* (2019), but the work they do is overshadowed by the myth-making violence of the international's affiliation with wise guys and mobsters. Despite being the bedrock of a functioning economy, carriage, storage, and delivery are much less cinematic.

Still, like the broader organization to which they belong, Hollywood teamsters were among the earliest groups in the entertainment industry to organize. During the turbulent 1930s, studio prosperity—and the relative harmony between management and employees—came to a chaotic end as executives looked to stave off significant debt from the previous decade and circumvent the financial pressures of the Great Depression.[3] The period witnessed actors, writers, and craft workers mount several actions against producers, angling for improved wages, working conditions, and other benefits.[4] According to the teamsters' own history, studio drivers were similarly beleaguered, forced to wait outside studio gates as day laborers in the hopes that studio management would select them from the crowd of anonymous faces. Income was capped at a flat wage of five dollars per day, regardless of overtime, and employment was insecure: they were readily dismissed for raising concerns or complaints about working conditions and had no recourse against producers.[5]

In response, Joe Tooley, Nate Saber, and Ralph Clare rallied drivers to sign organizing cards. Known as the "founding fathers" of the Hollywood teamsters, the men chartered Local 399 in April 1930 with about 180 studio drivers, following the formation of Local 817 in New York City just a few years earlier. Both Local 399 and 817 remain the only locals within the IBT to represent workers in a singular division—the Motion Pictures and Theatrical Trade Division. Other teamster locals

mirror the structure of the parent organization, wherein workers in the entertainment industries constitute a division alongside other categories, like parcel carriers, warehouse workers, airline attendants, and municipal employees, all under the umbrella of a single local. This disparity reflects how locals outside of traditional entertainment hubs in New York and Los Angeles have worked to accommodate mobile production, drawing on drivers from other divisions and sectors to support the increased but itinerate opportunities for production work.

Despite its focus on a singular industry, Local 399 has extended its jurisdiction to other job categories in film and television. It first organized horse and cattle wranglers in 1939, as production on Westerns accelerated and workers found themselves in shoddy accommodations and dangerous conditions on distant, desert locations. Other divisions include animal trainers and handlers, studio mechanics, location managers, and most recently, casting directors. While extending membership to new and diverse job categories has helped strengthen its negotiating power with producers, transportation drivers—the focus of this chapter—remain the largest division and drivers are core to the local's trade identity; the local's slogan, after all, is "Driving Hollywood." Members of the transportation division—which include camera-car drivers, talent chauffeurs, chef drivers, crane operators, and stunt drivers, among others—make up nearly two-thirds of the local's membership.

Local 399 also negotiates on behalf of all entertainment division teamsters in locals across a confederation of Western states. In addition to California, Local 399 represents entertainment industry drivers in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. In all, Local 399 negotiates on behalf of

more than 6,500 teamsters when bargaining with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). While Local 399 negotiates separate agreements for location managers and casting directors, its largest agreement with producers, the so-called Black Book, covers drivers, wranglers, animal trainers, dispatchers, mechanics, and other auto-service workers. When Hollywood producers employ teamsters anywhere within the confederation, they must ensure wages and conditions are no less favorable than those specified in the Black Book agreement.[6]

Contemporary transportation departments in the film and television industry have a hierarchical structure like any other area of production. The transportation coordinator serves as the department head and is the primary liaison with producers and other creative and technical leaders. They determine a production's transportation needs, budget, schedule, and staffing, occupying a somewhat awkward nexus between management and labor. Transportation captains support coordinators by overseeing the day-to-day operations of a production. They serve as the department's eyes and ears on set, working to coordinate any maintenance and fuel needs; provide on-the-ground parking support for location filming; and ensure talent, trailers, and equipment are picked up and delivered on time and where needed. Large productions often include a transportation co-captain or dispatcher to provide additional support, often managing routine transportation needs each day.

Departments also include a Department of Transportation (DOT) administrator, a relatively new position created in the last five to ten years in response to the increased mobility and complexity of film and television productions. DOT administrators are compliance officers who ensure producers do not run afoul of state or federal transportation regulations. As drivers

are one of the few crew positions subject to external oversight, DOT administrators confirm driver qualifications, maintain vehicle safety checks and records, and monitor hours of service, especially critical when drivers are required to cross state lines.

Drivers, of course, drive. Depending on the scale of production, the department can have as few as five or six drivers or as many as fifty individuals ready to move people, equipment, and trailers or helm more specialized vehicles for filming and stunt work. It is not uncommon for the number of drivers to ebb and flow over the course of a production depending on its need on any given shooting day. For instance, when a television production needs to leave the soundstage to shoot on location, the transportation department will recruit additional drivers on a short-term basis (sometimes as little as a few hours) to assist with the greater transport needs.

LOGISTICAL GEOGRAPHIES

As recounted in Chapter 2, the disintegration of the studio system transformed production into a project-based endeavor. As the studios externalized their workforces and centralized corporate power, the employment market expanded and competition for jobs increased. Technological advances and new production practices weakened the industry's traditionally rigid division of labor, collapsing distinctions between management and worker and between different job categories.[7] Conventional trade unionism struggled for relevancy in a context in which individual craft workers could negotiate personal-service contracts above and beyond the standard package of union protections, and the increase in independent and offshore production facilitated access to employment and skills acquisition beyond

the unions' purview. No longer able to secure for their members a job for life within a precarious and project-based profession, each union and guild adapted differently to preserve their strength and relevance, which ultimately splintered interests and agendas not only between different unions but also among different membership segments within the same union.[8]

In some instances, these transformations prompted a radical shift in occupational identities and organizing strategies. Under the leadership of President Thomas Short, for example, IATSE worked to consolidate its power by merging a number of smaller locals with similar or overlapping jurisdictions and centralizing its approach to producers, reducing the historical autonomy a number of locals enjoyed over their collective bargaining agreements with producers: "It's really about organizing the work force; control the work force, control the industry."[9] Its most controversial tactic, however, was to ensure the workforce it controlled mirrored the industry's need for a more flexible and agile labor market as a means to accommodate the new logics of production. This strategy entailed loosening membership protocols in established and emerging production hubs; embracing an entrepreneurial, skills-based approach to hiring; and eventually abandoning the more conventional closed-shop values of seniority and employment rosters altogether, mechanisms that historically provided the union's tight control over the supply of labor to studios.

Shifting away from seniority rosters to embrace a more skills-based approach to hiring helped IATSE locals open their doors to more individuals in a greater number of production hubs. It also acknowledged that, in the context of new production routines and technologies, highly specialized skill sets do not always conflate with longevity in the industry. It's a

controversial approach, especially among long-standing and senior union members who may view new entrants as competition for the already limited opportunities for studio work. According to one case study, the shift risks the perception among members that "experience is valued less, and that individualistic and entrepreneurial values (which are required for the self-promotion associated with skill-based hiring) are more important than the amount of skill a worker has gained through years of experience."[10] In short, individual exceptionalism trumps collective interests, seniority, and equitable pay.

The un- or low-skilled nature of the transportation teamsters' labor, however, makes this tactic much less available to drivers. It's much more difficult for individual teamsters to compete with each other for work based on the logic that they are the "best" (i.e., most skilled, talented) person for the job when, in the mind of producers, anyone with a license can drive—a perspective that has always taken the bite out of potential strike threats as well. As such, the seniority roster remains a powerful tool for the teamsters. According to business agent and organizer Ed Duffy, "Protecting jobs is central to everything we do, and the roster not only helps ensure our members are hired fairly, but also helps us track the amount of work taking place in Los Angeles, which we can (and do) leverage in our ongoing push to keep our members working in California."[11] Local 399 remains one of only a few locals in the entertainment industry that retain seniority-based hiring practices.

Here's how it works: individual teamsters are allocated to one of three tiered groups based on their length of employment in the industry. As they gain work experience and longevity, they advance across the tiers. They must work two years, for instance, to advance from the bottom tier to the second tier, and

then work another eight years before they advance to the most senior ranking. At least 98 percent of the more senior grouping must be employed before producers can engage teamsters from the subsequent tier. Union leaders say the system helps protect employment opportunities for veteran drivers and ensures more experienced workers are less likely to be the first dismissed from a production in response to shifting transport needs. Union leaders also claim it helps protect diversity and limit nepotistic practices, though such logic elides the structural limitations that hinder equitable access to work in the first instance and the claims from women and minority drivers that the reality is worse than the rhetoric.[12]

Nevertheless, only once the full roster is exhausted can the local initiate a practice called "permits," which allows producers to hire nonunion workers to fill open positions. Permits can last for a few hours or a few days—as soon as a represented employee registers availability on the roster, permits must cease—and thus offer ready-made evidence of production activity. When employment demands exceed (represented) labor supply, the union can champion full employment and open work opportunities to individuals outside of their representation. Once those individuals accrue thirty days of employment on a union production, they are eligible for union membership, something the permit process helps facilitate.[13]

While the seniority roster enables the union to maintain control over a (local) labor supply, it remains a rather blunt instrument to wrangle the agility and adaptiveness of mobile production. While it sutures Local 399 drivers into project-based work when it's based in Southern California, it struggles to accommodate the logic of project-based work when a creative endeavor expands across a broader swath of geography.

For that, the union needed a more explicit spatial intervention, what union leaders frequently refer to as the teamsters' "sacred right": they follow their equipment. A contractual entitlement enshrined in Paragraph 59 of the Black Book agreement states that any studio equipment sourced from Los Angeles but taken to a distant filming location must be driven by Hollywood-based teamsters no matter how far it travels. Whether they ship studio equipment to Detroit (for *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* [2011]), New Mexico (for *The Avengers* [2012]), Hawaii (for *Jurassic World* [2015]), or Iceland (for *The Fate of the Furious* [2017]), producers are contractually obligated to employ Local 399 drivers to operate said equipment. Further, motion picture teamsters from any of the locals in the confederation of Western states also must operate all non-studio equipment (i.e., sourced from independent providers) if the providers are based in any of those jurisdictions.

By establishing and maintaining a space through which Local 399 teamsters can travel into other union jurisdictions, across state lines, and into international territories, Paragraph 59 enables a form of movement that conventional jurisdictional rights otherwise prohibit. It effectively trumps competing claims from other locals about the rights of their own members to perform certain types of work and to access certain types of equipment. Instead, it helps create a "frictionless" gateway for mobile production to proceed without interruption. In this sense, the entitlement functions as a logistical tool that recalibrates space for the efficient circulation of people and equipment and reconstitutes the traditional rules by which that space is governed. Just as international trade agreements are forms of spatial governance that permit and amplify the logistical coordination of global supply chains, Paragraph 59 works to dismantle or weaken the rules and regulations that otherwise might

hinder the seamless movement of bodies and things across an expanded geography of production.

But it doesn't do this spatial work on its own. Movement is further enabled through a series of exemptions at the state, federal, and international level, all the result of advocacy and lobbying efforts in which the union recognizes common cause with studio representatives. The Motion Picture Association (MPA), with support from Local 399 and the IBT, have secured two key exemptions in recent years from the DOT. Both exemptions focus on hours of service to better accommodate the "unique nature" of film and television work. First is an exemption to how many hours a transportation teamster can work and the second is how transportation teamsters are obligated to keep track of their hours of service. Collectively, these mechanisms help govern both labor and the spaces through which they move in the interests of more seamless and continuous access to employment.

For transportation teamsters in the film and television industry, daily work often mixes short trips in the mornings and evenings with substantial periods of rest during the day. Drivers may remain on duty but not responsible for operating a vehicle. They often spend significant portions of their days at the filming site, for instance, loading and unloading equipment until they need to make a transport haul later in the day. It's also common for them to remain off duty in between trips, simply waiting until it is time for them to transport people or equipment back to the production base. According to the DOT's Hours of Service Regulations, property-carrying drivers can only drive for eleven consecutive hours within a fourteen-hour period and are required to take ten consecutive hours off before driving again.[14] Obviously, the eighteen- and twenty-hour days that commonly characterize production violate these rules, while

the erratic nature of the work drivers do during a single day complicates any easy calculation of consecutive activity. Further, as freelance employees, teamsters commonly work for different employers and productions on any given workday or work week. As they move from studio to studio, they operate different vehicles for different employers, which complicates their ability to track hours of service through federally mandated electronic logging devices that lack interchangeability across vehicles, employers, and worksites.

Accordingly, teamsters most recently received an exemption from using the federally mandated electronic logging devices. Instead, they retain paper logs that they carry with them across job sites (and thus different studios with different vehicles) and are required to submit those paper logs to each new employer. Tracking hours of service is handled as a manual and collaborative process among teamster locals, production companies, on-site DOT administrators, and drivers. Earlier, transportation teamsters secured an exemption to the limitations on hours of service through a 2005 act of Congress. The exemption adjusted the federal caps on workdays and driving time when a driver's movement is contained within a one hundred-mile radius of the production's designated base.

Notably, as a federal exemption to hours of service, it applies to productions regardless of their location, whether they are shooting on the backlots in Hollywood or on the soundstages in Atlanta. The expansion to service hours acknowledges a teamster is likely to drive, for example, six miles from the production base to a filming site, remain on location for sixteen or eighteen hours, which may include some work but also allows for a lot of down time, before making the six-mile trip back to headquarters. The MPA successfully argued that studio drivers do not generate

the same risk of accidents as long-haul truck drivers and thus warranted an exemption to existing rules. Yet as soon as they operate a vehicle beyond the one hundred-mile zone or cross state lines, federal regulations apply to their hours of service. It's not uncommon for teamsters to work under exemptions in one jurisdiction, like Los Angeles, travel across state lines to New Mexico under federal oversight, then set up in Albuquerque where the exemption reapplies.

While contractual entitlements and regulatory exemptions are more permanent deviations from normative governing arrangements, provisions that reconstitute the geography of production also can manifest in response to the peculiar needs of a single film or television show. Transportation coordinator Mark Dometrovich, for example, recounts his experience of filming *The Fate of the Furious* in Cuba: "The most challenging thing is really the lack of resources. We brought all of our supplies but if you run out of toilet paper (for instance) that's all you're going to get. If you run out of bottled water, you're out of luck. There's no place to buy it. If something breaks down, there are no parts to fix it. Even the fuel, for us in Transportation, was a big problem. Their diesel fuel had such high sulfur that it would trip the filters in the vehicles." In response to these limitations, the production shipped, via boat, more than one hundred pieces of equipment, including sixty-five vehicles intended for on-screen needs and behind-the-scenes use. Negotiations with local government authorities secured the port for delivery and created a "sovereign corridor" for the production to import goods otherwise prohibited under existing trade law. Dometrovich explains, "We shipped everything by boat, roll on and roll off type of ship, where you drive everything onto it. We took stake beds, camera trucks, 5 tons, 10 tons, trailers,

porta-potties and generators." Even local hires needed to be picked up from their homes and driven to base camp every day given Cuba's ongoing restrictions on automobile sales. In all, the production had to transport more than one thousand people to and from filming locations each day.[15]

There are likely infinite examples of regulatory reform and legal maneuvering that help establish a sovereign-like geography for a more mobile regime of accumulation. Indeed, examples from previous chapters—like the national security incident that *World War Z* provoked in Budapest or the lobbying efforts of location managers to preserve production incentives—are calculated efforts, both proactive and reactive, to adjust territorial forms of governance that otherwise might hinder mobile operations. Special work authorizations, like the O–1B Visa in the US for "individuals with an extraordinary ability in the arts or achievement in motion picture or television industry," also serve as tools to rework the space of border security and migration for a more seamless movement of talent across territory, a privilege that does not extend to everyone equitably, of course. The distinction I am making with respect to teamsters is to acknowledge the role organized labor has played in constituting such a space. The space of mobile production is as much a product of industrial relations and political advocacy as it is constituted by the flight paths of individual workers who cross the globe in the name of work.

Like special economic zones, port terminals, or, in this case, the geography of production, such spaces are engineered to thwart disruption, reduce costs, and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of movement and circulation, often by reforming existing regulations and legal structures of control.[16] They result from unlikely alliances among various groups, both

public and private, and across local, regional, national, and even international scales, but not always because there are shared logics or motivations that each stakeholder brings to the collaboration. For producers, the need to source specialized equipment and contend with pesky rules and regulations requires too much time and attention, a burden that increases the potential for risk and simply falls outside the totalizing frames through which they approach mobile production. As discussed in previous chapters, such a perspective enables them to imagine the expansion of production as rational and scalable. For transportation teamsters, the complex coordination of geography may overlap with management's desire for (the appearance of) seamlessness but simultaneously appeals to the union's more conventional and collective interests for continuity of work. Mobile Hollywood, in this sense, appears as a common cause despite different motivations and agendas.

As I have argued elsewhere in this book, these developments are neither innocuous nor immune from criticism. Indeed, the challenge these spaces pose to normative forms of governance does not render them completely void of rules, routines, or structures. Rather, they are rife with indeterminacy and contradiction, what Anna Tsing would identify as the "non-scalable elements" that can never be fully expunged from the spaces of capital expansion. Engaging with Tsing's work, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson highlight how logistical geographies "are saturated by competing norms and calculations that overlap and sometimes conflict in unpredictable but also negotiable ways."[17] Competing labor regimes, governing structures, work routines, and cultural dynamics manifest as part and parcel of these differences, constantly threatening the otherwise coherent and efficient movement of people and things across the geography

of mobile production. For teamsters, different access rights, variable wages, disparate training, and non-studio equipment of uncertain standards make for a somewhat dubious workplace in which heterogenous teams, even within the same department, must collaborate and coordinate within the geography of Mobile Hollywood. Indeed, that the "sacred right" is one the union must always police and protect underscores how mobile production is far from a seamless or definitive operation but a process always teetering on the edge of conflict and disruption, despite appearances otherwise.

Before she was the local's recording secretary, business agent, and organizer, for example, Lindsay Dougherty was a transportation dispatcher. She first joined the teamster local in her hometown of Detroit, Michigan, to work on films that relocated to the city following the implementation of its production incentive. In 2006 she moved to Los Angeles, where she joined Local 399. "I did not do much work in Los Angeles in my first five or so years in the city. Ironically, I ended up back in Michigan for three movies as a 399 dispatcher. I was working in Georgia, Florida, Illinois, wherever there was an incentive."[18] According to union leaders, they see the nomadic existence of transportation teamsters as a sign of success, especially veteran workers in the highest seniority group, though one that comes with the same costs to personal health and well-being discussed elsewhere in this book. Even union organizers are not exempt from travel. In addition to lobbying trips to Sacramento and Washington, DC, Local 399 organizers frequently fly to North American jurisdictions that lack a motion picture division or any collective representation whatsoever. Business agent and Local 399 organizer Josh Steheli adds, "if producers are able to undercut our rates by $20 in another jurisdiction, it's not great for our members nor is

it good for local hires. I'm always on a plane trying to organize motion picture workers in other places—what's good for them is ultimately good for us."[19] There's an unquestioned acceptance within the union that an expanded geography of production is a fait accompli, so directing some attention at shaping the contours of that geography—or, more specifically, the practices and protocols that govern both labor and mobility within that geography—is not acquiescence as much as it is a political response to shifting conditions.

Dispersed across an expanded terrain of production, then, teamsters end up working alongside—and in the case of organizers, advocating for—local hires in different jurisdictions, many of whom often lack the familiarity with the challenges of large-scale moviemaking. In the past fifteen years, for example, transportation coordinator Craig Fehrman has worked in Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Georgia, among others: "When I'm out of town I never know what the crew is going to be like and there's always some good, some bad. When you are in LA there's not a million questions and there's not the whole learning experience of telling someone what they need to do."[20] While skills and experience are likely to increase relative to a location's ability to remain attractive to visiting productions, even in well-developed hubs like Atlanta, Local 399 drivers commonly work alongside teamsters from other locals who do not enjoy the same wages, fringe benefits, or conditions as they do. Considered a "supplementary workforce" outside the confederation of Western states, local hires are subject to different and variable contractual agreements with producers and are only able to drive equipment sourced from their respective jurisdictions. Union leaders acknowledge animosity is common, especially in larger and more developed filmmaking hubs. "We

are showing up with thirty drivers from Los Angeles. We're in their own backyard and telling them their local workers are 'supplemental' labor. It causes some awkwardness. It causes strife."[21] But, union officials are quick to point out, Local 399 teamsters are just "following their equipment," often to places that lack similar infrastructure.

Like the pastiche of mobile workers and local hires that make up other below-the-line departments, Mobile Hollywood has stretched and expanded the mode of production across space to integrate and leverage different and variable labor regimes that are now always already "inside" the dream factory's extended floor room. Rather than disrupt the operations of capital, this friction remains necessary to sustain the flexibility and nimbleness within a more mobile mode of production. Even organized labor is complicit in helping paper over the cracks that present potential disruptions. Here, the teamster's "sacred right" to follow their equipment is a form of cooperation that enables spatial expansion without sacrificing a principled commitment to employment for Local 399 members—enshrined as a contractual entitlement, the "sacred right" not only enables capital and labor to cross borders that otherwise separate states and national territories, but it also reifies privileges and distinctions as those operations encounter differently situated communities and protocols.

BLUE-COLLAR SPECTACLES

The union's effort to suture future job opportunities to an expanded geography of production was not totally disconnected from more local efforts to keep film and television work in California. Indeed, the teamsters have been one of the earliest

and most persistent groups in the entertainment industry to pressure Sacramento for competitive production incentives. It's easy to see these tactics as localized efforts to counteract mobile production, but the more critical point here is to understand these strategies as part of a multiscalar intervention into the spaces of mobile production in terms most appropriate for their members and their interests. Viewed in isolation, the union's strategy looks bifurcated or contradictory. Focusing on regulatory exemptions and particular entitlements that enable greater mobility among teamsters risks the appearance of acquiescence, while an inward focus on California seems futile in the face of what has become a fully entrenched mobile mode of production. At times it benefits the union, strategically and rhetorically, to draw attention to their fight against runaway production, but the ultimate objective has not been to counteract mobility as much as it has been to integrate California into a broader spatial agenda.

The teamsters' drive for state intervention into mobile production aligns with the phenomenon's contemporary history, with 1999 as a formative year. First, in April, fifteen hundred workers came together for a rally in Burbank's Johnny Carson Park, where they called upon state legislators to support the industry with tax breaks. A few months later, in July, more than two thousand teamsters, driving some one hundred movie vehicles in a caravan from Burbank to Sacramento, made their way to the California State Capitol. Cherry pickers, camera trucks, water trucks, and wardrobe trailers blocked streets and encircled government offices while the teamsters chanted "Bring Hollywood Home." At the time, lawmakers were considering two bills that would have introduced the state's first incentives to keep productions in California. Despite passing in the State Assembly,

they failed in the State Senate. Four years later, the local gathered another one hundred vehicles and four hundred demonstrators, including several state lawmakers, at the St. Regis Hotel in Century City. There the payroll services company Axium International had intended to hold an event on the benefits of Canadian production incentives, but it was canceled in response to the planned protest.

Such efforts, especially the one in Sacramento, are recounted by union officials and through union publications each time the push for state incentives is addressed; they also attracted press attention as part of the broader activities spearheaded by a new coalition of below-the-line workers called the Film and Television Action Committee.[22] The protests aligned with the teamsters' general disposition (across all divisions) toward disruptive tactics, but in the context of the entertainment industries the action was designed to conjure in quite explicit terms an image of the industry that delivered middle-class jobs for blue-collar workers. "At that time, we were losing a significant number of employment opportunities, first to Canada, then New Mexico and Louisiana. We needed to shift the narrative for lawmakers who always ask, 'If Warner Bros. is making hundreds of billions of dollars, why do they need incentives?' We needed them to understand this was about supporting good jobs for hard working teamsters," recalled business agent Ed Duffy, who helped organize the demonstrations.[23] Trucks, trailers, and cherry pickers—large, impressive pieces of equipment—helped visualize the less glamorous side of the business, and they made material (both figuratively and in more literal terms) the scale of local job losses, which were reaching record numbers throughout the 2000s.

While the disruptive spectacles were political flashpoints designed to redirect capital back to the region, they emerged

out of a much longer, more tedious, and largely invisible lobbying campaign that commenced in the late nineties and continues today. Duffy adds: "I was in Sacramento, like, every other week. But it's a constant, ongoing battle. Every two years, legislators move on. They're not there anymore, and we have to start re-educating all over again."[24] Duffy, along with his colleague Steve Dayan, have been central figures in the union's multipronged lobbying effort over the past twenty years, alongside former union lawyer turned lobbyist Barry Broad, who retired in 2018. In addition to "countless" meetings with state senators and representatives in Sacramento, the trio also focused attention on more local matters of concern in Los Angles. Despite the city's historical relationship to moviemaking, its administrative processes—as in other cities around the world—were perceived as costly and overly bureaucratic, prompting a successful campaign in the late 2000s that made obtaining permits cheaper and more efficient, increased the provision of parking on locations throughout the city, and launched a "Film Works" marketing campaign aimed at educating city residents about the economic value of moviemaking in hopes it would make them more welcoming when a production moves into their neighborhoods. More recent activities have focused on strengthening the state's incentive program by increasing the funds that are available, expanding the types of productions that are eligible, and ensuring determinations are made according to the potential impact on below-the-line wages.[25]

Furthermore, both Duffy and Dayan have held influential roles within key governing organizations and advocacy groups. Duffy has served on the board of the city's permit-granting organization, Film LA, for more than a decade, and is its current chairman. He also been a member of the LA City and

County Film Task Force; the State Film Incentive Alliance of Unions, Studios, and Vendors; the Entertainment Union Coalition; and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. Meanwhile, Dayan has served since 2009 on the board, including a stint as chairman, of the California Film Commission, which runs the state's incentive program. While it's not uncommon for union leaders to seek out influential positions in organizations that are aligned with their politics, these networks nevertheless betray the patchy and often awkward entanglements at the local, regional, and state level that the operations of capital are prone to produce.[26] According to Duffy, "I'm always meeting with legislators, council representatives, or labor leaders. I'm there with representatives from the major studios. We need them to give us clout. But there's always political pushback against incentives. Labor organizations want to know why the entertainment industry deserves the support instead of teachers. Politicians worry the programs are too expensive and only benefit studios and celebrities. Often, I'm the only one in the room with any experience on a film set, so my voice becomes important. I'm there to translate and explain."[27] The union's lobbying efforts, which include Duffy's emotional labor and acts of translation, may very well produce value for the studios, but to focus solely on that value loses sight of the union's ability to shape those operations to benefit its members.

While it took a decade for the political pressure to pay off, California launched its first incentive program in 2009, which set aside $100 million annually for qualified projects over the next seven years. The program has been renewed and expanded twice in the past decade, with its third incarnation (worth $330 million annually) set to expire in 2025. The program has been a success for the teamsters, both rhetorically and materially.

Recalling the qualifications raised in the first chapter about the "success" of any one individual incentive program over another, it's hard to deny the program's ability to reintegrate California into the geography of production, retaining local employment opportunities and generating economic activity from the growth in productions over the past ten years.[28] The union's official publications are peppered with enthusiastic profiles of individual film and television productions that have been lured back to California or remained in the state after receiving incentives. That the publications also feature with equal enthusiasm the work of Local 399 members on productions based around the world remains an unspoken contradiction that simply underscores the complexities of work and union politics in the era of mobile production.[29]

CONCLUSION

It's somewhat facile to attribute in any direct or causal fashion a shift in the tone of union politics to two men, but as Local 399's only leaders over the past four decades, Leo T. Reed (who served as secretary-treasurer from 1988 to 2014) and Dayan (who served in the same role from 2014 to 2022) have certainly exercised significant and distinctive influence on the organization's strategies that are emblematic of its broader transformations in the mobile era. Reed, a former professional football player, police officer, and bodyguard to Sylvester Stallone, was a towering figure, complete with dark shades and a thick, handlebar mustache. He had a highly combative and competitive reputation that followed him from the football stadium through his turn to law enforcement and then union politics. He once reportedly took out full-page advertisements in *Variety* and the

Hollywood Reporter that read, in part, "To all non-union producers, our office hours are from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. Come see us or we'll come see you."[30] After fifteen years as a business agent and organizer within Reed's leadership team, Dayan unseated his boss for the top job in the bitterly contested election in 2013. Dayan, with a leaner frame and bookish visage, has employed a much less confrontational approach, complementing squabbles with individual producers about contract violations with a more politically attuned (and cooperative) approach directed at the politicians in Sacramento.

The differences between the two leaders easily gave way to barbs and accusations throughout their respective election campaigns. Opponents framed Reed as a belligerent, corrupt, and old-school Hoffa crony, while Dayan's critics worried that he was a corporate sellout, too eager to play nice with producers at the expense of union members.[31] Of course, the truth is more complicated and contradictory. At stake in the perceived differences between the two union leaders was the organization's evolving attempts to contend with shifting industrial dynamics, a process that always needed to balance the traditional orientation of the union's politics and the members' collective identity with the increasingly flexible logics of mobile production.

Still, it's hard not to read deeper meaning into even more recent leadership shifts within the organization. Dayan's recently announced successor, Lindsay Dougherty, is the first woman to be elected to the leadership spot. She's also the first individual from Local 399 to ever hold a national leadership role. In fact, Dougherty holds two. In 2022, she was elected as the Teamsters Western Regional International Vice President and appointed as the International's Director of the Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division. Despite assumptions about organized labor's

waning allure among a younger generation of workers, Dougherty speaks about the future in revolutionary terms: "It's not just in Hollywood but all over the country. We need to reinvigorate the labor movement. We need a revolution. There is a lot of frustration, a lot of unhappiness. We need to get people re-engaged and unified because it's the only way we can make changes."[32] In my conversation with her, there was a clear sense of urgency for the local to embrace more pressing and contemporary matters: getting new media (e.g., streaming video) productions covered by the collective bargaining agreement; improving workplace health and safety, especially working hours, for members; and reducing conflict and competition among locals in different parts of the country to improve conditions for all teamsters, regardless of location.

The last point, perhaps more so than the others, explicitly acknowledges one of the most enduring impacts of mobile production for the union: shifting the geographic scope of organizing efforts and the contours of collective experience beyond any one jurisdiction. Past attempts at a national contract—a single collective bargaining agreement that would cover all teamsters in the Motion Picture and Theatrical Trade Division—have failed to gather much momentum. Local 399 spearheaded those efforts, but union leaders attribute the stalemate to a persistent suspicion among competing jurisdictions that the local would put their own members' interests ahead of those outside Hollywood. Further, the symbolism of Doughtery's appointment in the context of the #MeToo movement is not lost on observers. Despite some modest attempts to improve the visibility of female teamsters, driving remains a close-knit, male-dominated profession with a lot of work to do to reverse a history of sexual harassment, misogyny, and cronyism.[33] While the logics of

Mobile Hollywood require the union to continue to keep its eye on the geography of production, the ability to diversify its agenda is a necessary response to further modernize the organization, incorporating into its arsenal the same multiplicity and syncopated operations as a mobile regime of accumulation.

CHAPTER SIX

Risk Management for Mobile Hollywood

In the opening pages of this book, I posited that the global dispersal of production activity from Southern California had reconfigured the mode of production over the past two decades into a more mobile regime of accumulation. As a firmly established spatial dynamic, mobile production is *the* mode of production for contemporary Hollywood movie- and television-making. Debates about runaway production that frame it as a zero-sum game in which the fortunes of some locations come at the misfortunes of others, fundamentally obscure the ways mobility is operationalized through the heterogenous work routines and rituals of screen media workers. Rarely have scholars offered sustained investigations of the sheer complexity involved in the emergence and eventual establishment of a mobile mode of production: How does a capital-intensive enterprise that requires inputs from thousands of skilled professionals move so effortlessly around the globe? How does an endeavor of this scale and scope not collapse under the weight of its own logistical magnitude? By turning to the lived experiences of media workers who are unevenly caught up in Hollywood's geographic grip, I

wanted to draw more detailed attention to their everyday toils and tribulations. What can we learn about the contemporary conditions of craft and technical work within a mobile mode of production? How does listening with interest to the voices of labor reshape our understandings of the everyday demands and pleasures they face on the job, and reconfigure what we recognize as extractable value—both professionally and personally—in a mobile regime of accumulation? In what follows, I want to return to some of the collective insights and themes that emerged in response to those initial queries across the individual case studies and particular accounts that appeared in this book. Additionally, as I struggle to bring this project to a close amid the endless personal and professional distractions and complications associated with the global coronavirus pandemic, it affords me an opportunity to reflect on the future of mobility at a time when many individuals and industries are confronting restrictions on their movement for the very first time.

I defined Mobile Hollywood in Chapter 2 as a distinct spatial assemblage that is constituted by a translocal network of social relations and operational logics that reconfigures these components into a geographic formation that is greater than the sum of its parts. It derives its flexibility and adaptability through an iterative series of protocols and processes that depend on new and intensified labor processes, a turn to immediately responsive spatial coordination that allows production to maneuver back and forth across an elastic production geography. As a result, the logistical ingenuity and spatial coordination of service producers, location scouts, and labor organizations—among many others, both within and beyond the confines of a single production—are sources of added value to the production

apparatus and critical professional currency for screen media workers in the context of Mobile Hollywood.

While these efforts give the impression of a wholly rational and efficient enterprise, the reality is far more fragile and tentative. Contingencies are simply subcontracted further down the chain and across greater distances to ensure any threat of friction never disrupts the coherent financial logics of the major studios and their shareholders, even while those logics depend on the very global differences labor works to subvert. As I have demonstrated, it's often a matter of perspective: some frames make visible the elements best governed centrally or understood in universal terms (like production incentives), while other elements are best kept out of sight because they are either too messy or too particular (like potentially excavating dead bodies at a filming site or any one of the other examples that pepper the chapters in this book). The argument throughout the previous pages is that both the general, universalizing frameworks and the more peculiar, disjunctive variations in the rhythms of production are characteristic of mobile operations. In drawing attention to those elements that resist totalizing accounts of global scale, I uncover the extent to which this friction reworks the norms and expectations of screen media labor.

This dualism is a core feature of supply chain capitalism, a critical metaphor that "offer[s] some of the most vivid images of our times: telephone operators assisting customers from across the globe; 'traditional' indigenous farmers growing specialty crops for wealthy metropolitan consumers; Chinese millionaires reaping the profits of Wal-Mart contracts; sweatshop workers toiling in locked rooms while brand-name buyers disavow responsibility."[1] Drawing from the discussion in the previous chapters, we might add to this tapestry the following scenes: an

American expatriate in Hungary excavating cheap local labor to source locations for a high-end television drama from Los Angeles; a Scottish location scout living out of a suitcase in a hotel room in Dublin; a teamster sourcing gasoline from America for a high-octane franchise film shot in Cuba; or a Hollywood producer financially and morally unencumbered by the escalating demands placed on both mobile and local crew who are lucky enough to get work on large-scale productions. Whatever semblance of factory production that existed once upon a time in Hollywood now extends across the globe to incorporate into its international operations the diverse and fragmented inputs from people whose personal and professional lives are uprooted—in good ways and bad—across a growing number of locations.

Of course, the dispersion of the factory floor in the entertainment industries has been a historical process that commenced once the studio system came to an end and a more flexible mode of production emerged to replace the more centralized systems of control and oversight that characterized Classical Hollywood Cinema. The historical difference between project-based thinking and a more mobile mode of production is not only one of scale but also one of scope. The roster of people, places, and things that are called upon to help realize large-scale production now constitutes a seemingly boundless and capricious socio-spatial assemblage. These relations, in turn, call upon the efforts of individual laborers to coordinate them, whether that means appeasing suburban residents, persuading municipal authorities, bribing less scrupulous officials, or lobbying for regulatory reform. Such efforts engender more (but not fully) fluid and seamless mobility for both capital and labor, and as a consequence, screen production thrives as a much nimbler structure that can sustain disruption and delay without fundamentally

adjusting its operations.[2] It simply shifts to another location on an established map of possibilities, in which resources, protocols, and processes already are designed to sustain a pliable production geography.

Yet as I have argued throughout *Mobile Hollywood*, the operations of capital do not fully remake these assemblages into an unfettered pathway for accumulation. They remain rife with friction, complexity, and contingencies. This intervention matters because it draws attention to the idiosyncrasies that emerge in the context of screen media workers' personal and professional lives: the mundane and unglamorous but very much central detail of what value they provide in the name of labor (or, more simply, in the name of a job well done) as they confront and subsume challenges that threaten to upend mobile production. By focusing on the actions, functions, and sacrifices they perform, we gain a deeper understanding of heterogenous routines that help facilitate production's spatial expansion and a clearer story about Mobile Hollywood as "a drama of frictions and tensions in which the efficacy of the operations appears far more fragile and elusive than might otherwise be assumed."[3] By taking seriously the unpredictability of mobile production as well as the operations that work to respond to the more tentative and contingent dynamics of creative endeavor, we garner a more developed sense of what, exactly, a more dispersed and nimble mode of production requires from the men and women who sustain it and what, exactly, those workers do to smooth over the cracks that emerge as part of the increasingly routine demands of their jobs.

In each of the preceding chapters, I framed these efforts as acts of just-in-time or immediately responsive coordination, protocols of logistical management, service work, and relational

labor that help synchronize an iterative matrix of socio-spatial relations into the rhythm of film and television production. Service producers, location experts, and union officials in their own distinctive ways have helped coordinate space and the movement of people and equipment *through* space to service the needs of both labor and mobile production. In many instances, this coordination manifests as a series of routine tasks within the division of labor that require workers to suture varied and disparate agendas. For service producers trying to keep their small businesses afloat, they juggle iterative incentive schemes, shady government officials, demanding producers, competing locations, and the needs of a local crew base. Location experts find their creative autonomy diminished but the value of their project management skills has risen alongside the logistical demands of mobile production. Meanwhile, union officials have collaborated, cooperated, and partnered with both management and government to remake the geography of production on terms more suitable to their rank-and-file members. In each case, laborers work with (or sometimes in opposition to) politicians and regulators, local businesses and residents, environmental agencies and arts organizations, and a range of other municipal services, like transportation, waste management, and police departments. They stitch together resources—creative, human, environmental, legal, regulatory, and administrative, among others—to establish the terms of movement, making it easier for productions and groups of workers to traverse the globe as part of their employment. Sometimes their objectives align, more often they don't, but each relationship or negotiation serves as a prerequisite and source of ongoing support for mobility.

There also are impacts that extend beyond the professional. The expanded geography of production translates into an

unequal process of relocation, respatialization, and resocialization for workers. As I demonstrated throughout this book, many workers sacrifice relationships with family, friends, and loved ones in order to make themselves more mobile. They move to distant locations in pursuit of work, or simply live out of a suitcase for long stretches of time, traveling from Los Angles to London or Belfast to Budapest with side trips to Reykjavik, Dubrovnik, or Krabi. They suffer from poor diets, lack of exercise, and the stress of constant travel. Still others, whose cultural norms, class status, national identity, or reputational capital make them less available to the mobile demands of contemporary production, miss out on the material and symbolic privileges that come with it: employment, wages, autonomy, and professional advancement, to name but a few. They may turn to side jobs for supplemental income, accept their junior roles as the limits of what's possible, or leave the industry for an entirely new career altogether. As many interlocutors acknowledged to me, seniors, women, minorities, and non-English-speaking craft workers are the most vulnerable to the whims of mobile production.

Ultimately, what I hope the accounts in this book provide is a frame through which we can start to better understand the global scale of Mobile Hollywood without losing sight of some of the details that make it all possible. As Tsing reminds us in her work, we tend to think about scale as universal and generalizable—it's easier to describe "bigness" in terms that cover up or brush over points that depart from grand narratives of progress. But there's a lot more to learn when we start to chip away at the abstractions and assumptions that frame systems like mobile production. Even a term like *production* gains greater clarity by bringing to the fore other players and processes often obscured

from view. We discover more grounded and granular accounts of what the structure demands from different individuals and what risks they face in their efforts to meet escalating professional standards. Each case study, anecdote, or example allows for diversity, heterogeneity, and messiness to exist as part of global integration, providing us with a means to see how scale is sustained and reproduced through a variety of activities, both pleasurable and perilous. Hopefully, the voices of labor that evidence these claims offer some inspiration to others to continue expanding the roster of individuals (and their work) that warrant study in our ongoing attempts to wrangle with the complexity of Hollywood, both in Southern California and around the world.

FROM FRICTION TO FULL RUPTURES: A FUTURE FOR MOBILE HOLLYWOOD?

A series of tangentially related events over the past few years have collectively proffered insight into one possible future for Mobile Hollywood. First, by April 2020, the global coronavirus pandemic had forced most of the world's activities into a complete shutdown, including the Hollywood production industry. Debates about a safe return to work became quite public as the pressure of capital and labor demanded production resume, but the threat of contagion made mobility—from dealing with the prospects of international travel to managing the intimate space between actors—an overt object of concern for health and safety experts. In October the following year, the IATSE reached a new three-year contract agreement with the AMPTP following a tense and protracted negotiation period that nearly resulted in the union's first-ever industry-wide strike. A

primary concern for the union, prompted in part by the ongoing experience of members during the pandemic, focused on what it described as "excessively unsafe and harmful working hours."[4] Less than one week after the IATSE and AMPTP reached a tentative bargaining agreement, the actor Alec Baldwin fatally shot cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and wounded director Joel Souza in an ammunitions incident on the set of the independent feature *Rust*, which was filming in New Mexico. Recalling the aftermath of the death of camera assistant Sarah Jones in 2015, debates about who to blame, how it happened, and whether producers privileged budgetary concerns over the safety of cast and crew populated headlines in the months that followed. In a matter of a few years, safety was suddenly a very overt object of scrutiny for the industry, its workers, and observers.

Each of these examples captures a moment when the fragility of the system teetered on the edge of catastrophe and underscores how the risky consequences of collapse play out—quite literally—across the bodies of individual screen media workers. They represent moments when the structure demanded even more from just-in-time coordination or, as in the case of Hutchins, Souza, and Jones, simply fell apart when that coordination wasn't thorough enough. Collectively, they demonstrate just how fraught accountability has become in the context of mobile production, illustrating that capital can simultaneously engender new lines of authority and summon additional resources in the name of safety, while shifting that responsibility further and further down the chain of command or diffusing it across multiple, overlapping job descriptions. Still, each episode galvanized a broader conversation about health and safety, forcing the operations of capital to adjust and react to what history

may eventually consider an unprecedented (if limited) moment of concern for the welfare of screen media workers.

The shutdown of worldwide film and television production due to the novel coronavirus outbreak in early 2020 was only a momentary disruption to the operations of Hollywood. As Kate Fortmueller explains in one of the earliest engagements with questions of production in the time of coronavirus, "Producers have grown accustomed to stoppages and have learned how to prepare for them, yet the pandemic still unsettled the rhythms of productions in unprecedented ways as well as disrupting many of the service and leisure industries that provide necessary income to freelance creatives. It would require creativity, careful planning, and financial resources to get film and television production back on track."[5]

It also would require significant risk mitigation. Indeed, as the plans for resuming production made clear, management, labor organizations, workers, and health experts initiated a process of adjustment and revision to ensure operations could resume amid health and safety concerns. They cooperated and collaborated but for different reasons. As an immediate result of the work stoppage, cinematographers, makeup artists, location experts, and teamsters, among other below-the-line crew and technical workers, found themselves unemployed in locations around the world. For the major studios and broadcasters, the shutdown of scripted film and television production disrupted well-established release schedules and production timelines, which ultimately threatened revenue streams. Both camps were eager to return to work. But labor organizations needed to mediate to ensure the rush to resume production did not come at the cost of the well-being of their members. Lacking any coherent federal plan to deal with the virus, they had no choice but to

work together on the development of protocols that accommodated the uncertainty of the disease and minimized disruption to the mode of production.

At first, mobile production made use of the elastic geography established over the previous two decades as Hollywood resumed filming in countries that managed a more effective federal response to containing the virus (or simply had far less restrictions on economic activity). Australia, for instance, became a popular destination, welcoming some two dozen large-scale productions from overseas within the first year of the pandemic. Notably, not everyone embraced the government's flexible attitude toward celebrities and foreign production crews. As further evidence that the supply chain logics of mobile production can reshape geopolitics to suit its own objectives, Australia's notoriously stringent border rules arguably kept its residents much safer during the pandemic than their friends and families in other parts of the world, but left many citizens stranded overseas, wreaked havoc on global supply chains for basic necessities, and even prevented locals from crossing state borders within the country. Exemptions for George Clooney, Matt Damon, Tom Hanks, Kate McKinnon, Natalie Portman, and Julia Roberts may have been made on economic grounds but did nothing to offset the anguished stories of families separated by border rules, unable to return home, attend funerals, or meet newborn grandchildren.

By June in the US, the Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Task Force, the membership of which extends to the unions, guilds, management, and health experts, started crafting return-to-work protocols in a white paper and follow-up publication called "The Safe Way Forward."[6] Key outcomes that remained in the final agreement reached in September 2020

included mandatory testing for cast and crew, an introduction of a "zone system" that divvies up who can be where on a production set into three distinct (and largely impassable) perimeters, and the creation of new roles and division to ensure compliance, namely the Health and Safety Unit overseen by the COVID compliance officer (CCO). A closer read of both documents further underscores the additional demands on project management and logistical work. Location experts, for example, are singled out with more than two dozen additional provisions to consider when scouting filming locations, from an even greater emphasis on using photo libraries (to reduce the risk of exposure among production staff and the public) to finding locales with more size and space (to better facilitate social distancing). New advice for the transportation department and base camp setup, the production office, craft services, and the overall temporal workflow of a production day were outlined as well.

On larger features and television series, the Health and Safety Unit can include up to fifteen staff members, including the CCO. While the creation of a new role and unit for health and safety suggested a genuine investment in the well-being of screen media workers, concerns immediately surfaced about the absence of any formal regulation or oversight and the overall incoherent implementation of health and safety provisions. Some productions required individuals to complete a two-hour safety course provided by Contract Services before being appointed into the role. Other productions hired individuals with no medical experience. Some individuals simply transitioned into the role and assumed responsibility for compliance after a career in an entirely different craft department. Even the name of the role varied from production to production. Further still, as *Vulture* notes, "There's a growing industry of companies offering COVID-19 services and

CCO certificate programs—not to be confused with a certification program. Those don't exist. There is no formal regulation on COVID-19 safety, nor any consensus on what makes a set safe, or if that's even possible. But everyone wants to keep the show on the road."[7] Ultimately, the responsibility to "keep the show on the road" become an additional burden for individuals who lacked access to appropriate resources and training and largely relied on instinct and commonsense appeals to their colleagues in their attempts to enforce a form of compliance at odds with long-established work routines and hierarchies. Again, much like the episodes detailed elsewhere in this book, the approach embraced a "whatever it takes" mentality, though the system still demanded quite different things from the production entities that controlled resources and the individuals who had to coordinate more complicated realities on the ground.

Meanwhile, while the unions, guilds, and management struggled to come to terms on return-to-work protocols over the spring and summer, they faced yet another negotiation that arguably proved more contentious than the first: the renewal of the Basic Agreement and the Area Standards Agreement between the IATSE and AMPTP. The Basic Agreement covers more than forty thousand craft workers and technicians in thirteen West Coast IATSE locals, while the Area Standards Agreement applies to an additional twenty thousand production workers in twenty-three jurisdictions around the country, including Georgia and Louisiana, among other production hotspots. Renegotiating collective bargaining agreements is a ritual in Hollywood that unfolds every three years. Negotiations started in May 2021 with the existing Basic Agreement set to expire on July 31. As part of their bargaining, the union prioritized working conditions and compensation, focusing especially

on unregulated wages on streaming productions, reduced working hours, and longer rest periods between projects. Both sides agreed to postpone discussions until September to allow them more time to renegotiate their return-to-work protocols following changing health advice and increased vaccination rates in the months since the safety provisions had first been established.

By the fall, production activity had returned to prepandemic levels, in part due to those safety guidelines, but studios were reluctant to concede any ground in contract negotiations given the financial burden they incurred from production delays and the costs of additional safety resourcing. According to a report in *Variety*, the return-to-work protocols added approximately 5 percent to budgets, though some reports put it as high as 15 percent. Nearly 40 percent of those additional costs are associated with labor, like CCOs, while the rest covered materials like face masks and sanitizers.[8] Yet the downtime during the pandemic, alongside the additional resources diverted to keeping crew safe over the past year, only bolstered IATSE's hardline approach to negotiations when talks resumed, making the adverse impacts of long hours and inadequate rest periods a cornerstone of their campaign. According to *Deadline*, IATSE had distributed pamphlets to members to galvanize support for industrial action, noting, "Long and irregular hours without adequate breaks and rest are unsafe. The IATSE locals are unified in their recognition that no other industry demands its employees work without bathroom, meal, or relaxation breaks day after day. The IATSE locals are unified in their understanding that no other industry deprives its employees enough time to drive to and from work and get eight hours sleep every workday, week after week, after week."[9] By the end of September, neither side was willing to concede any ground; talks stalled. The union subsequently

issued a strike authorization vote to its members across the country, which passed with overwhelming support. More than 90 percent of its eligible members participated in the vote, and 99 percent supported the strike.

Fueling the stalemate between union and management were the quite public displays of frustration among the union's rank-and-file membership. During the work stoppage and subsequent slowdown, crew members suddenly rediscovered what the job had been demanding they sacrifice in the name of work: time to rest and recuperate, capacity to mend broken relationships with family and friends, a chance to engage with pastimes and hobbies, and a much-needed opportunity for more regular sleep. Concerns for improved work-life balance extended to social media with the hashtags #IASolidarity and #IALivingWage gaining significant traction across platforms. A dedicated Instagram account, ia_stories, allowed anonymous craft workers and technicians to share harrowing accounts of work-related horrors from Hollywood sets around the world. Garnering more than 150,000 followers within a matter of months, the site attracted mainstream media attention focused on the shocking anecdotes of near misses, tragic accidents, and crippling addictions to drugs and alcohol to cope with it all. Workers posted about chronic back pain and recurring urinary tract infections from standing on set for extended periods of time without access to bathrooms. They recounted the almost accidents they experienced from having to perform elaborate stunts without any rehearsal time. People reported falling asleep while driving home after an eighteen-hour day or being denied time off to cope with serious illnesses. Even more troubling were the posts about witnessing colleagues collapse from overwork, exhaustion, or exposure to extreme weather or being forced to return to work within hours of an on-set accident or death (fig. 10).

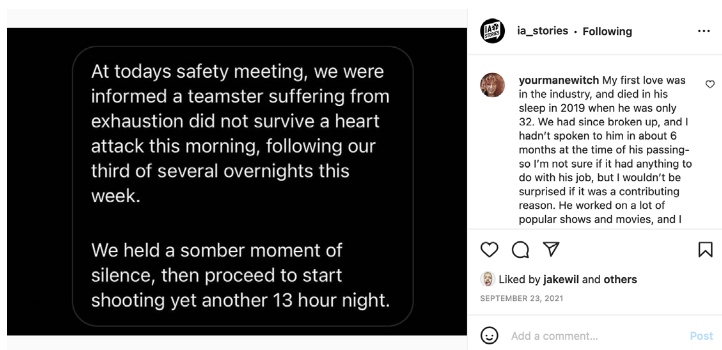

Figure 10. Public Instagram post from IA_Stories [ia_stories] and comment, about on-the-job fatalities. September 22, 2021. https://www.instagram.com/p/CUJXICFrTq2.

Following one of the most intensely visible periods of solidarity among rank-and-file members in the union's history, IATSE reached a tentative agreement with the AMPTP on October 16, 2021, which narrowly averted a planned strike. As the union distributed details about the deal to its West Coast locals, members reacted with muted enthusiasm or outright disappointment that terms didn't offer a large-scale reconfiguration of their employment relationship with producers. Muted enthusiasm transformed into more anxious concern, when less than a week after the tentative agreement was distributed to union members the cinematographer Halyna Hutchins was killed by a prop gun that discharged a live bullet while rehearsing a scene on location in New Mexico. Reports immediately surfaced about a problem-plagued production. According to a report in the *New York Times*, the tragedy followed two other accidental gun discharges and resignations from crew who were concerned about inadequate housing, late payments, and a generally chaotic production characterized by inadequate safety provisions, including an overworked armorer charged with looking after weapons on set.[10]

Of course, the outcry to the incident followed a very common discursive pattern that emerges every time there is a highly publicized fatality or accident on a film set. It starts with a public outpouring of grief and agitation for change. There are debates about accountability and frustration at the complex legal protections that make liability incredibly different to discern. The industry responds with the provision of additional training programs and education for crew, but arguably offers no structural adjustment that might facilitate sustainable change. Accidents continue to happen and then the cycle repeats. This accident, however, resonated more deeply because it occurred within the context of broader labor strife and a vexed collective bargaining process. For craft workers and technicians who worried that the tentative agreement did not realize the scale of change necessary, the death of Halyna Hutchins offered devastating evidence that far greater protections were needed to improve working conditions and keep them safe on the job. At her memorial, Michael Miller, IATSE vice president, remarked to the crowd, "We're here to mourn. But I'm afraid we are also gathered with some frustration and a little bit of anger. Anger that too often the rush to complete productions and the cutting of corners puts safety on the back burner and puts crew members at risk."[11] The anger certainly factored into the formal ratification of the union's agreement with producers, drawing only 56 percent endorsement from delegate votes and an even narrower slice of the popular vote at 50.3 percent in favor of the agreement.[12]

Spatial coordination, immediately responsive labor, and service work emerged as increasingly valuable (and necessary) skills to better operationalize the syncopated and capricious rhythms of production into a manageable enterprise. Providing an impression of seamlessness and efficiency makes for a job well done but also demands forms of work that simply exceed

what we normally associated with creative labor. As the chapters in this book attest, the work Mobile Hollywood creates is often fleeting and unglamorous. Certainly, screen media workers can find fulfillment and pleasure—even excitement—in their work, but the job remains inherently precarious. Perhaps less explicit but no less worthy of acknowledgment, however, is a more insidious undercurrent of risk and peril that also haunts many of the stories shared throughout the previous pages. Indeed, it took a global health crisis to render visible the much more mundane but no less dangerous risks screen media workers confront as part of mobile production. They are overworked and fatigued. They are cut off from friends, families, and loved ones. They postpone treatments for serious illness for far too long. They juggle an increasingly complex and expanding set of tasks as routine parts of the job. As these demands increasingly put their minds and bodies at risk, they cope with the pressure by turning to drugs and alcohol.

Mistakes happen, sometimes with tragic consequences, but such glitches in the system are often treated as the non-scalable elements of global projects that remain out of sight, that is, until they simply become too big—like a pandemic, followed in quick succession by a tense contract negotiation, viral social media posts, and an on-set death involving a high-profile celebrity—to ignore. In response, the mode of production reconfigures resources and redeploys them in ways that can accommodate anger and advocacy for change, charting a current course of action in which "risk management" is both an explicit discourse and a logical extension of the already excessive demands placed on the individuals who show up to work each day. Whether these investments on the part of studios and producers are designed to better nurture a more robust culture of health and safety or simply satisfy a culture of compliance remains to be seen as

Hollywood resumes its activities in a (not quite yet) postpandemic environment.

For the industry, its advocates, and scholars, however, the shift from precariousness to perilousness may prove a productive maneuver to broaden the conversation about labor, working conditions, and the global film economy. It introduces an engagement with risk, risk management, and workplace health and safety culture that turns attention to a series of laws, regulations, and policies that may make for more meaningful interventions into the realities of labor than a persistent concern with production incentives and the financial logics of the studios. There is some reason for optimism. In the UK, the Film and TV Charity has turned its attention to developing resources and assistance for screen media workers that focus on mental health and well-being, anti-bullying, and improved working conditions. Similarly, the Screen Well initiative in Australia provides a range of programs and workshops to support mental health and overall well-being for screen media workers. In the US, the Sarah Jones Film Foundation was formed by Jones's parents after her death. Its primary aim is to achieve greater accountability for on-set safety in the film and television industry, including support for the Set Safety App that provides workers with access to resources and anonymous helplines to report concerns. Unions and affiliated organizations in these countries also offer safety- training programs to ensure workers are compliant with appropriate regulations. Like the shifting nature of work itself, media industry scholars know little about these initiatives and the broader regulatory environment that shapes workplace health and safety. While these efforts remain disjointed, and policy is highly bespoke by nation, the turmoil of the last few years suggest that the time to invigorate a global conversation about safety culture in film and television production is long overdue.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE. LEAVING LOS ANGELES

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18. Key research on the contours of flexible specialization in the entertainment industries has been conducted by Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper. See Christopherson and Storper, "City as Studio"; Storper, "Transition to Flexible Specialisation"; Christopherson and Storper, "The Effects of Flexible Specialization on Industrial Politics and the Labour Market: The Motion Picture Industry," *Industrial & Labour Relations Review* 42, no. 3 (1989): 331–47; and Storper and 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 (1987): 104–17. For an important critique, see Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, "Hollywood for the 21st Century: Global Competition for Critical Mass in Image Markets," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 16 (1992): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.cje.a035188.

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23. At first, the shift to a more flexible mode of production and the project-based thinking that underpinned it further entrenched Los Angeles as the central node of industrial activity. For workers, spatial concentration helped offset the instability of project-based work by keeping them close to the heart of industrial activity, and it afforded them greater access to both formal and informal learning opportunities within a co-located creative community. The highly collaborative and transaction-intensive nature of making films and television series thus made Los Angeles the hub for conceiving, planning, and executing creative production. See Storper and Christopherson, "Flexible Specialization and Regional Industrial Agglomerations"; and Scott, *On Hollywood.* For a more contemporary discussion that draws on this work, see Michael Curtin, "Global Media Capital and Local Media Policy," in *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communication*, ed. Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, and Helena Sousa (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 541–57.

24. Goldsmith, Ward, and O'Regan, *Local Hollywood*, 22. See also Goldsmith and O'Regan, *Film Studio.*

25. Tinic, *On Location.*

26. Scott, *On Hollywood*; Goldsmith and O'Regan, *Film Studio*; Goldsmith, Ward, and O'Regan, *Local Hollywood*; Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2*; and Christopherson, "Behind the Scenes."

27. Goldsmith and O'Regan, *Film Studio*, 13–18. See also, Christopherson and Storper, "City as Studio"; and Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-expressive Creative Worker."

28. Miller et al., *Global Hollywood*. See also Christopherson, "Behind the Scenes."

29. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 67.

30. Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 6.

31. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 110. See also Tsing, "Supply Chains."

32. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 62.

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41. Anonymous locations manager (UK), personal communication, 2015.

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CHAPTER THREE. HERE TO HELP

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3. "Billion Dollar Location: Hungary," *Variety*, October 31, 2017.

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9. Jennifer Webster, personal interview, 2018.

10. Webster interview, 2018.

11. Adam Goodman, personal interview, 2013.

12. Goodman interview, 2013.

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14. Miller et al., *Global Hollywood 2*; Christopherson, "Behind the Scenes"; Janet Wasko and Mary Erickson, eds., *Cross-Border Cultural Production: Economic Runaway or Globalization?* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008); and Elmer and Gasher, *Contracting Out Hollywood*.

15. Again, the work in Australia has been key in developing these ideas in depth. See Goldsmith and O'Regan, *Film Studio*, 55–59; Goldsmith, Ward, and O'Regan, *Local Hollywood*, 152–60; and Tom O'Regan, "Revisiting Film Cities and Film Services: Methodology, Theory, and Applications," *Journal of African Cinemas* 10, nos. 1–2 (2018): 9–29, https://doi.org/10.1386/jac.10.1-2.9_1. For other contexts, see Keyan G. Tomaselli and Ndu Ngcobo, "Hard to Get, Film Friendliness and Local Production," *Journal of African Cinemas* 10, nos. 1–2 (2018): 31–50, https://doi.org/10.1386/jac.10.1-2.31_1; Oswelled Ureke and Keyan Tomaselli, "From 'African Cinema' to Film Services Industries: A Cinematic Fact, *Journal of African Cinema* 9, no. 1 (2017): 75–92, https://doi.org/10.1386/jac.9.1.75_1; and Krzysztof Stachowiak and Tadeusz Stryjakiewicz, "The Rise of Film Production Locations and Specialised Film Services in European Semi-Peripheries," *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 67, no. 3 (2018): 223–37, https://doi.org/10.15201/hungeobull.67.3.2.

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17. Tsing, *Friction*, 6.

18. For an account of how this transpires in the context of Hollywood productions in China, see Aynne Kokas, *Hollywood Made in China* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), especially chapter 6.

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23. Szczepanik. "Transnational Crew"; and Sayfo, "Set for Success."

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25. Adam Goodman, personal communication, 2013.

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Blair, "You're Only as Good as Your Last Job: The Labour Process and Labour Market in the British Film Industry," *Work, Employment & Society* 15, no. 1 (2001): 149–69, https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170122118814; Blair, "Winning and Losing in Flexible Labour Markets: The Formation and Operation of Networks of Interdependence in the UK Film Industry," *Sociology* 37, no. 4 (2003): 677–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385030374003.

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34. Kristena Hejduková, personal communication, 2015.

35. Hejduková communication, 2015.

CHAPTER FOUR. CREW ADJACENT

1. I am using the term "location expert" rather than the professional titles "location manager" or "location scout" or "location assistant" because most of my interlocutors have performed in all these roles over the course of their careers.

2. Film historians are an important exception here. Focused on earlier periods of mobile production, they offer productive insights into location work before it became a formalized production role and at a time when location shooting was more of an exception to studio-based filming. For example, see Gleich, *Hollywood in San Francisco*; Gleich and Webb, *Hollywood on Location*; and Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*.

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5. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson, eds., *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); and Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*.

6. See Tsing, "Supply Chains." Notably, the creative industries are a paradigmatic example. See Ross, *No Collar*; Rosalind Gill and Andy C. Pratt, "In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work," *Theory, Culture and Society* 25, nos. 7–8 (2008): 1–30, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408097794; McRobbie, *Be Creative*; Curtin and Sanson, *Precarious Creativity*; and Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor.*

7. Tsing, "Supply Chains," 171.

8. Wesley Hagan quoted in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 190.

9. János Cserven, personal communication, 2017.

10. Anonymous, personal communication, 2016.

11. Cserven communication, 2017.

12. Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 68.

13. Duncan Jones, personal communication, 2018.

14. Caldwell, *Production Culture*; Banks, "Craft Labour and Creative Industries"; Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-expressive Creative Worker"; Curtin, "Post Americana"; Curtin and Sanson, *Precarious Creativity*; and Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor.*

15. Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 113.

16. Blair, "You're Only as Good"; Jones, "Careers in Project Networks"; and Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-expressive Creative Worker."

17. Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 106, 108. See also Kristen J. Warner, "Strategies for Success? Navigating Hollywood's 'Post-racial' Labor Practices," in *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, ed. Michael Curtin and Kevin Sanson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 172–85; and Rosalind Gill, "Life Is a Pitch: Managing the Self in New Media Work," in *Managing Media Work*, ed. Mark Deuze (London: Sage, 2010), 249–62.

18. Elmer and Gasher, *Contracting Out Hollywood*, 13.

19. McNutt, "Mobile Production," 69.

20. McNutt, "Mobile Production," 69.

21. Emma Pill, personal communication, 2017.

22. Hagan in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 196.

23. Belle Doyle quoted in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 179.

24. Anonymous location expert, personal communication, 2018.

25. Lori Bolton, personal communication, 2017.

26. Anonymous location expert, personal communication, 2017.

27. Kent Matsuoka, personal communication, 2016.

28. Hagan in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 194.

29. Pill communication, 2017.

30. London remains the top destination. "Hungary Confirmed as One of the World's Top Film Production Destinations," *About Hungary*, November 3, 2017. http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/hungary-confirmed-as-one-of-the-worlds-top-film-production-destinations.

31. János Cserven, personal communication, 2018.

32. Rudulf András, personal communication, 2018.

33. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Politics of Operations*, 165.

34. Belle Doyle quoted in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 186.

35. *Game of Thrones: The Last Watch*, directed by Jeanie Finlay, on HBO, 2019.

36. Lisa R. Reisman, "First Man Lifts Off," Location Managers Guild International (LMGI) website, https://locationmanagers.org/first-man-hinshaw.

37. For an overview of the relationship between military and logistics, see Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

38. Kate Hepworth, "Enacting Logistical Geographies," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32 (2014): 132, https://doi.org/10.1068/d13044p.

39. An anonymous location expert was gracious enough to share files with me from a recent production. The files contained contracts, maps, schedules, and other ephemera that the location expert created with basic home-office software. Yet the terms of their employment mean that anything they create—even a simple Excel worksheet—is the property of the production, not the location expert. Thus, I can only speak in generalities.

40. Mayer, *Almost Hollywood*, 63.

41. Given the lack of diversity among the location experts I interviewed, how one's racial or ethnic identity might affect the ease at which

they could enter private spaces, like homes, or effectively negotiate with neighborhood residents or municipal authorities, never developed into a substantial point of conversation. Nevertheless, it's not difficult to imagine instances in which certain identify formations may shape one's experience of work and impinge upon their ability to succeed.

42. Hagan in Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 193.

43. Cserven communication, 2018.

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45. Jones communication, 2018.

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CHAPTER FIVE. DRIVING HOLLYWOOD OUTSIDE HOLLYWOOD

1. David Witwer, "Unionized Teamsters and the Struggle over the Streets of the Early-Twentieth-Century City," *Social Science History* 24, no. 1 (2000): 183–222.

2. International Brotherhood of Teamsters, "The Early Years," no date, https://teamster.org/about/teamster-history/the-early-years.

3. Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise: 1930–1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

4. David F. Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour: Ideology and Democracy in the Screen Actors Guild* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and Murray Ross, *Stars and Strikes: Unionization of Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

5. Teamsters Local 399, "Hollywood Teamsters: The Local 399 Story," August 8, 2017, video, 48:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyrOjCQfoXQ.

6. According to the agreement, producers must ensure "the aggregate rate for wages and fringes in the thirteen (13) western states shall equate to the aggregate rate for wages and fringes as stated herein,

even though the wage or fringe component may be less than the comparable rate in this Agreement" (Paragraph 59[g]). In other words, they can pay people less if they employ more people so the aggregate wages are comparable to what's listed in the agreement.

7. John Caldwell, "Breaking Ranks: Backdoor Workforces, Messy Workflows, and Craft," *Popular Communication* 8, no. 3 (2010): 221–26. For earlier takes on these developments from an industrial relations perspective, see Lois Gray and Ronald Seeber, eds., *Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Arts and Entertainment* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press 1996), especially chapters by Susan Christopherson and John Amman.

8. Christopherson, "Beyond the Self-expressive Creative Worker"; Lois Gray, "Entertainment Unions Tune Up for Turbulent Times," *New Labor Forum* 9 (2001): 122–31; Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco, "Divided They Stand: Hollywood Unions in the Information Age," *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation* 1, no. 1 (2006): 130–43.

9. Quoted in Gray, "Entertainment Unions," 122.

10. Jennifer Hambleton, "Collective Values in an Entrepreneurial World: Imagining Craft Labour in Cultural Work," *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation* 12, no. 1 (2018): 43–61.

11. Ed Duffy, personal communication, 2021.

12. These points were made during interviews with union leadership. They also are reiterated in press coverage. See Zoe Hewitt, "Teamsters' Seniority System May Not Work Well for Other Crafts, Guilds," *Variety*, April 18, 2018, https://variety.com/2018/artisans/production/teamsters-seniority-system-1202756284. For claims about sexual harassment, misogyny, and nepotism, see Gary Baum and Rebecca Sun, "Does #MeToo Matter in the Teamsters? Trucker Sisters Take on 'Boys Club,'" *Hollywood Reporter*, February 22, 2018, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/does-metoo-matter-teamsters-trucker-sisters-take-boys-club-1086432.

13. They also must satisfy a range of other requirements, like having the appropriate driver's license, obtaining certain safety qualifications, and passing preemployment drug tests. Alternatively, workers are made eligible for membership when they are employed by a nonunion

production that the crew, with the help of Local 399 organizers, successfully "flips"—that is, votes for union representation—after filming begins.

14. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, "Summary of Hours of Service Regulations," https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/hours-service/summary-hours-service-regulations.

15. Details, including quote, are taken from Matthew Klekner, "Rapido Y Furioso," *Newsreel*, June 2016, 5.

16. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 67.

17. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 206.

18. Lindsay Dougherty, personal communication, 2021.

19. Josh Steheli, personal communication, 2021.

20. Craig Fehrman quoted in Matthew Klekner, "Snowfall in Los Angeles," *Newsreel*, April 2018, 5.

21. Josh Steheli, personal communication, 2021.

22. For example, see Michael Coit, "Film Workers Rally to Keep Production Here in California," *Daily News*, April 19, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/film-workers-rally-keep-production-here/docview/281888016/se-2; Patrick McGreevy, "Film Workers Urge Legislation to Keep Production Here," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/film-workers-urge-legislation-keep-production/docview/421434142/se-2; David Bloom, "Canada Criticized for Luring Film Jobs," *Daily News*, June 26, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/canada-criticized-luring-film-jobs-panel/docview/281886666/se-2; "150 Teamsters and Their Production Trucks to Participate with Hundreds of Others from the Film Industry on FTAC's March on Sacramento, July 6," *Business Wire*, July 1, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/wire-feeds/150-teamsters-their-production-trucks-participate/docview/446610251/se-2; Stephen Gregory, "Show-Biz Workers to Rally in Sacramento," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/monday-business-preview-some-major-economic/docview/421406580/se-2;NickMadigan, "Runaways Inspire Taxing Questions," *Variety*, August 23–29, 1999, 7–9, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/film-runaways-inspire-taxing-questions/docview/1401420757/se-2; James Bates, "'Bring Hollywood Home' Echoes All Way to Canada," *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 1999, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/bring-hollywood-home

-echoes-all-way-canada-labor/docview/421603651/se-2; and Jessie Hiesand, "Protesters Rip Runaway Production," *Hollywood Reporter*, November 17, 2003, https://global.factiva.com/ha/default.aspx#./!?&_suid=167391011303603331357744192597. An online archive of the union's publication, *Newsreel*, is available at https://www.ht399.org/newsreel. See issues from March 2009, April 2010, Fall 2012, and May 2013.

23. Duffy communication, 2021.

24. Duffy communication, 2021.

25. Initially, incentives were awarded through a lottery system, but they were subsequently granted to projects according to the jobs and economic activity they would generate.

26. Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*.

27. Duffy communication, 2021

28. According to the California Film Commission, the incentive programs have supported more than 160,000 positions through 604 projects. See California Film Commission, "Program Statistics," February 28, 2022, https://film.ca.gov/tax-credit.

29. See *Newsreel*, https://www.ht399.org/newsreel, especially issues from April 2010, January 2011, April 2014, May and July 2016, and April and July 2018.

30. Matthew Klekner, "Member Spotlight: Leo T. Reed," *Newsreel*, February 2019, 11.

31. Richard Verrier, "The Plot Thickens in Hollywood Union Election," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 2013, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/la-xpm-2013-oct-08-la-fi-ct-teamsters-election-20131008-story.html.

32. Dougherty communication, 2021.

33. Baum and Sun, "Does #MeToo Matter in the Teamsters?"

CHAPTER SIX. RISK MANAGEMENT FOR MOBILE HOLLYWOOD

1. Tsing, "Supply Chains," 149.

2. Curtin and Sanson, *Voices of Labor*, 7.

3. Mezzadra and Neilson, *Border as Method*, 67.

4. IATSE, "AMPTP Film and Television Negotiations Stalled, Union to Hold Nationwide Strike Authorization Vote," press release, Septem-

ber 21, 2021, https://iatse.net/amptp-film-and-television-negotiations-stalled-union-to-hold-nationwide-strike-authorization-vote.

5. Kate Fortmueller, *Hollywood Shutdown: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition in the Time of COVID* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021), 19.

6. DGA, SAG-AFTRA, IATSE, and Teamsters' Committees for COVID-19 Safety Guidelines, "The Safe Way Forward," June 12, 2020. See also Fortmueller, *Hollywood Shutdown*, 33–35.

7. Kelsey Miller, "I'm an On-Set 'COVID Person,' Whatever That Means," *Vulture*, September 24, 2020, https://www.vulture.com/article/covid-compliance-officer-producer-anonymous-in-hollywood.html.

8. Gene Maddaus, "COVID Protocols Add About 5% to Film and TV Production Costs, Study Finds," *Variety*, November 16, 2021, https://variety.com/2021/film/news/covid-costs-film-tv-production-1235113051.

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10. Simon Romero, Graham Bowley, and Julia Jacobs, "A Call of 'Cold Gun'! A Live Round. And Death on a Film Set," *New York Times*, October 30, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/30/movies/alec-baldwin-rust-shooting-timeline.html.

11. Anousha Sakoui and Josh Rottenberg, "How Hutchins's Death has become Another Rallying Cry for Film Set Safety," *Los Angeles Times*, October 24, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2021-10-24/hutchins-rust-alec-baldwin-film-set-accident-new-mexico.

12. IATSE employs an electoral college–style approach to voting. Individuals cast votes within their locals. Locals are awarded a certain number of delegates based on membership size. Every delegate must vote according to the majority result within their respective local.

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