

The *Cinematic* United Kingdom

This map depicts the **settings** of 1078 British films released cinematically in the period 2010-2020. By plotting this information we can see which parts of the UK the film industry tends to favour and which parts have been overlooked.

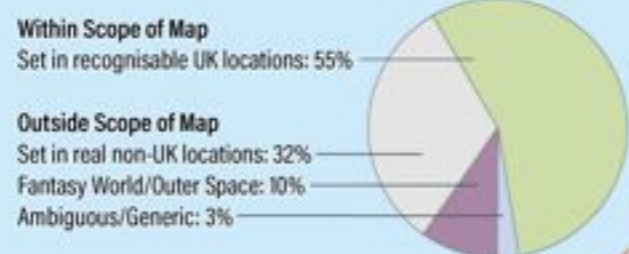
Other projects, such as moviemaps.org, have mapped filming locations, but this project maps settings in order to depict biases in regional representation. I work with data from The British Film Institute, which maintains a database of films that it certifies are 'British.'

The BFI applies a points-based 'cultural test' which covers not just on-screen factors such as filming locations, language of dialogue, and citizenship/residency of lead characters, but also off-screen ones like source material, citizenship/residency of actors and heads of department.¹

'British' films do not have to be set in the UK or feature characters who are residents/citizens of the UK (see chart below). The on-screen content of films such as *Widows* (2018, Steve McQueen) or *Lean on Pete* (2018, Andrew Haigh) is diegetically American, but the films qualify because they were directed by UK citizens/residents and produced by the same UK-based companies that produced those directors' earlier films.

By cross-referencing the BFI data with plot summaries from *Sight & Sound* I infer the settings of British films. When a synopsis does not provide enough information I examine other sources, working from memory if I have seen the film, watching trailers, or reading interviews with filmmakers.

Locations represented fall into four broad categories:



Key
○ regionally significant town or city
● film setting

Northern Soul (2014, Elaine Constantine) is set in the fictional town of Burnsworth because the director did not want to "stitch any towns up [by] calling them shitholes."² The film was shot in Burnley, Bury and Bolton, so I marked these places because the film represents them without calling them out directly.

Even though the interiors of the famous Wigan Casino were filmed in King George's Hall, Blackburn, the **setting** is still Wigan.

Social-realist films are often explicit and documentary-like in their depictions of place.

Red Road (2006, Andrea Arnold), a thriller with realist elements, is named after the housing estate in Glasgow where it is set.

I, Daniel Blake (2016, Ken Loach) is unambiguously set entirely where it is shot, in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Towns do not always 'play' themselves. Literary adaptations often need to cheat locations because the actual places no longer look right for the period.

The Personal History of David Copperfield (2020, Armando Iannucci) used King's Lynn to stand in for Great Yarmouth and historic parts of Hull to stand in for Victorian London. On this map, it is Yarmouth and London, not King's Lynn and Hull, which are marked. The film also features scenes set near Canterbury and Dover.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children (2016, Tim Burton) posed challenges typical of fantasy films. It is set on a fictional inhabited island off the south coast of Wales. The film also features a Pembrokeshire landmark known as the Green Bridge. A place called Caldey Island is the nearest likely location/inspiration.

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Geo-coding, web app development:
Beth Manghi

Thanks:
Lucy Wales, BFI Collections and Information
Dr. Lavinia Brydon, School of Arts, University of Kent
Dr. Richard Misk, School of Arts, University of Kent

Footnotes:
1: BFI cultural test: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/british-certification-tax-relief>
2: Interview with Elaine Constantine: <https://thequietus.com/articles/16500-northern-soul-article>



cine-map.com