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# Making the single city: the constitutive landscape and the struggle for 'Greater Boston,' 1891–1911

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## ABSTRACT

While historical studies of urbanisation tend to focus on the morphological and social changes of cities in transition, the very ontological status of the city itself can be historically located as an emergence dependent on specific political, cultural and technical conditions. This essay examines the attempt to create a single 'Greater Boston' entity at the end of the nineteenth century in response to forces which were ostensibly linking the separate communities of Massachusetts Bay together into a single whole. Using statistical methods, representational techniques, environmental transformation and appeals to community solidarity in order to make their case for the 'real' status of an enlarged Boston, this movement sheds light on how the limits of the 'single' city are historically contested. This essay argues against radical critiques of spatial boundedness and advances a theory of the 'constitutive landscape' which emphasises the way in which bounded, unitary geographic entities are historically made.

## KEYWORDS

Historical geography; urban change; landscape; spatial theory; Boston

## 1. Introduction

The standard method for undertaking a historical study of urbanisation is to choose a city—sometimes several, but most commonly one—and set it in motion over time. While historians once portrayed urbanisation as a process of morphological expansion, scholars working in contemporary critical traditions now understand urbanisation in terms of a series of contested, non-linear transformations. Political ecologists, for instance, have pointed to the multiple material and immaterial variables which define urbanity (Swyngedouw, 1997; Heynen, Kaika, & Swyngedouw, 2006; Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2015), while environmental historians have blurred the edges between city, hinterland, and wilderness in a haze of mutual interdependencies (Cronon, 1991; Walker, 2007), and urban theorists have experimented with interpreting urbanity at scales which vastly exceed the traditional city (Brenner, 2004). Nevertheless, such studies still tend to take the *existence* of 'the city' as an unexamined ontological given. To write an article or a book that is about Guayaquil or Chicago or any other city, one must assume that such cities do in fact exist as recognisable and meaningful categories of analysis.

In recent years, human geographers have employed the theme of 'relationality' in order to question the status of such bounded, territorially discrete geographic entities as cities and nations (e.g. Amin & Thrift, 2002; Jones, 2009; Painter, 2010; Qviström, 2015). Emphasising the primacy of 'flows' over territories, relational thinking draws attention to the mutability and provisionality of geographic entities, ultimately discarding the concept of the entity altogether in favour of an interrelated, interperforated

world of non-concentric scales which 'no longer allow[s] a conceptualisation of place politics in terms of spatially bound processes and institutions' (Amin, 2004, p. 33).

A relational approach forces geographers to cease naturalising places as entities that simply exist, free of conditionality, in the immanent structure of the world. It offers a strong refutation of the nomothetic search for pure spatial relations in the abstracted geometry of 'absolute space' and the 'isotropic plane' (Jones, 2009, pp. 489–491; Paasi, 2011). However, this relational critique should not be cast in a way that leaves us with a choice between a perfect myth of neat territorial boundedness on the one hand, and on the other, an infinitely heterogenous field of flows wherein the stability of place is dissolved into a churning mesh of relational vectors. It is possible to say that bounded, discrete place-entities *do*, in fact, exist—not as the immanent categories of a world as given, but rather as politically and socially contested provisionalities, emergent within specific historical and geographic conditions, which humans come to understand as 'real' for the purpose of interpreting and ordering their shared inhabitation of the earth's surface. The geographic wholeness of cities and other geographic entities does not inhere in a world 'out there'; it is instead *made* in the world of human action.

By historicising the process through which the territorial wholeness of a city is defined, we come to discover that social negotiations, rather than raw spatial patterns, ultimately determine what area is, and is not, included within the geographical entityhood of any given city. This is fundamentally a *landscape* history when the term 'landscape' is glossed in the 'substantive' sense articulated by Olwig (1996, 2002), Cosgrove (2004), Stilgoe (1982), and Jackson (1964). In these readings, 'landscape' signifies the concrescence of visual representations, embodied practices, physical transformations and—crucially—binding webs of social, cultural and political togetherness. It exceeds pictorial vision to encompass the historical process of humans collectively *doing* transformative actions on the earth's surface, making both places and communities in the process. Its central force is carried in the suffix *scape*: to make, do, or constitute (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], 2014). It is through this constitutive process that the thing called the city—or any other geographic entity—becomes intersubjectively recognisable as a real thing. Treating landscape seriously as a constitutive force takes us through the impasse left between the absolute and relational metaphors of space, for to constitute something is to stitch together its parts in the process of making a bound-up whole.

This essay examines the conditions under which 'the city' comes to exist as a meaningful territorial whole by following the attempts to consolidate Greater Boston into a 'single' metropolis in the two decades from 1891 to 1911. The fight for an enlarged Greater Boston was waged between camps who disputed over quotidian political issues like local alcohol options, control of tax rates and utility regulation. But ultimately the question the two sides were debating was whether or not Greater Boston—a 'single' territory emerging from superimposed layers of political, economic, cultural and ecological unity—did or did not exist. Like most other North American cities around the turn of the century, Boston was transforming both materially and institutionally, in the processes of urbanisation that have been well-documented by urban historians. But in a particularly exaggerated way, Boston underwent a dramatic period of public argument over what territory constituted the *real* Boston. That argument—which was fundamentally an argument about geographic ontology—documents how the city as a 'single' entity does not merely exist as a given historical and geographic category, but instead is made to exist.

## 2. The 'crazy-quilt' landscape: customary units and the crisis of disorder

One of the reasons why Boston's struggle to define its metropolitan unity in the late nineteenth century was so exceptional was the fact that New England was already patterned after another landscape unit which was both institutionally powerful and emotionally near to New Englanders' imagination of their political and cultural heritage: the town. When English settlers colonised the area surrounding Massachusetts Bay in the seventeenth century, they developed a strong form local autonomy carried in the geographic container of the discretely bordered town (or township; the terms are interchangeable in New England). The precise morphology of the early colonial town in New England varied according

to the regional origin of the settlers, the threat of frontier conflicts, the political economy of distributing land titles and local environmental factors (Allen, 1981; Trewartha, 1946). But its basic political structure, executed through the direct democracy of the town meeting, together with the morphological neighbourliness of the nucleated community, dominated the development of the New England landscape over the next two centuries. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the New England states were almost entirely incorporated into towns, and their county governments held little functional power (Updyke, 1913).

This meant that the municipality of Boston was trapped within the borders that had been established when it was still ruled by the British crown. New districts had been created by filling tidal marshes, and a series of annexations from 1804 to 1873 brought seven neighbouring towns into Boston's territorial fold. However, a bitter political dispute over the annexation of neighbouring Brookline, which had become a fashionable post-bellum suburb fiercely protective of its local rights, brought annexation to an end in 1873 (Rawson, 2010). In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, new migrants flooded into the city, new industries built up near its harbour and railyards, and new transit technologies linked workers and jobsites, financiers and speculation sites and friends and families together across ever-larger distances. But Boston's old municipal borders stayed fixed. Increasingly, 'Boston' the territorially bounded jurisdiction inherited from the seventeenth-century colonial centre, no longer matched 'Boston' the nineteenth-century urban entity.

In 1893, a state commission, convened to study the problem of regional park development in the metropolitan area, delivered its initial report to the legislature. The secretary of the commission, the journalist and social reformer Sylvester Baxter, devoted the first 13 pages of his report to the problem of Boston's outdated territorial divisions. 'A glance at the map,' Baxter argued, 'is sufficient to show us how it is cut up by local community boundary lines, not only without the least regard to the physical character of the region, but almost, it would seem, in willful disregard of such character' (Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, 1893, p. 4). This 'crazy-quilt aspect borne by a coloured map of the metropolitan district,' he concluded, was 'one of the strangest absurdities that could be devised' (p. 5).

The New England town system, of course, had not been an 'absurdity' when it was first devised, but a customary division of land which bore the marks of both Old World community structure and a sensitive adaptation to the environmental conditions of settlement on the frontier. Baxter, writing like an early historical geographer, recognised this. As colonial communities grew, he wrote, they 'formed natural centres by themselves, and, having their own peculiar local requirements ... independent local government became desirable' (p. 6). But, he went on to argue, this process of cellular subdivision had reversed in the middle of the nineteenth century, giving way to a 'process of reintegration' (p. 6) which was knitting communities back together and congealing a single urban landscape. What had once been a customary way of life well-adapted to local geography was now, in the face of social and economic change, a maladaptive disorder. Baxter, expressing what Wiebe (1967) calls the symptomatic 'search for order' in Progressive Era politics, laid out the case for an integrated, intentional plan which would recognise the existence of a new, modern geographic entity. Rather than urbanising in a 'most accidental and hap-hazard way,' the time had arrived for Boston 'to grow intelligently and to proceed along carefully considered lines of development' (Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, 1893, p. 13).

That growth, Baxter realised, would have to be metaphorically cast a process of emergence, rather than annexation, absorption or agglomeration. While cities in the American West could expand out into notionally empty space (Bromley & Smith, 1973), and European cities could rely on centralised state power to force administrative renegotiation of their borders (Zitouni, 2012), Boston could not simply annul the existence of its neighbouring towns, given their historical vintage and the degree to which their citizens cherished the political and cultural privileges of local identity. What Baxter needed to show was that processes of physical and economic transformation had stitched these towns together so substantively that they now constituted a single entity—not one in which the centre dominated the periphery, but one in which the 'crazy-quilt' of old town units might be rewoven into a new, harmonious metropolitan unit.

### 3. The struggle to define what 'is really Boston'

Rationalising the territorial structure of the metropolitan entity had already become one of Baxter's central political goals—it was, in fact, the goal which led him to his role on the Metropolitan Parks Commission in the first place. In 1891, at his own expense, Baxter published a pamphlet which advocated for a radical political goal: the consolidation of 27 cities and towns ringing Massachusetts Bay into a single federalised metropolis (see Figure 1). To open that argument, Baxter laid out a matter-of-fact claim in the language of geographic ontology: 'The true Boston—geographical Boston, as distinguished from political Boston—comprises all that territory lying around the city which is covered by a compact mass of population, with social and business interests substantially identical. All this region,' Baxter stressed, 'is really Boston' (1891, p. 3).

For the next two decades, Baxter would continue to campaign tirelessly for a series of reform efforts which all sought to convince the region's citizens and political leaders that this statement—'all this region is really Boston'—was in fact a valid claim. The creation of a jurisdictional Greater Boston was, for Baxter and his allies, part of a political strategy which they felt would make it possible to achieve a long set of desired reforms, from collective ownership of municipal utilities to the cultural assimilation

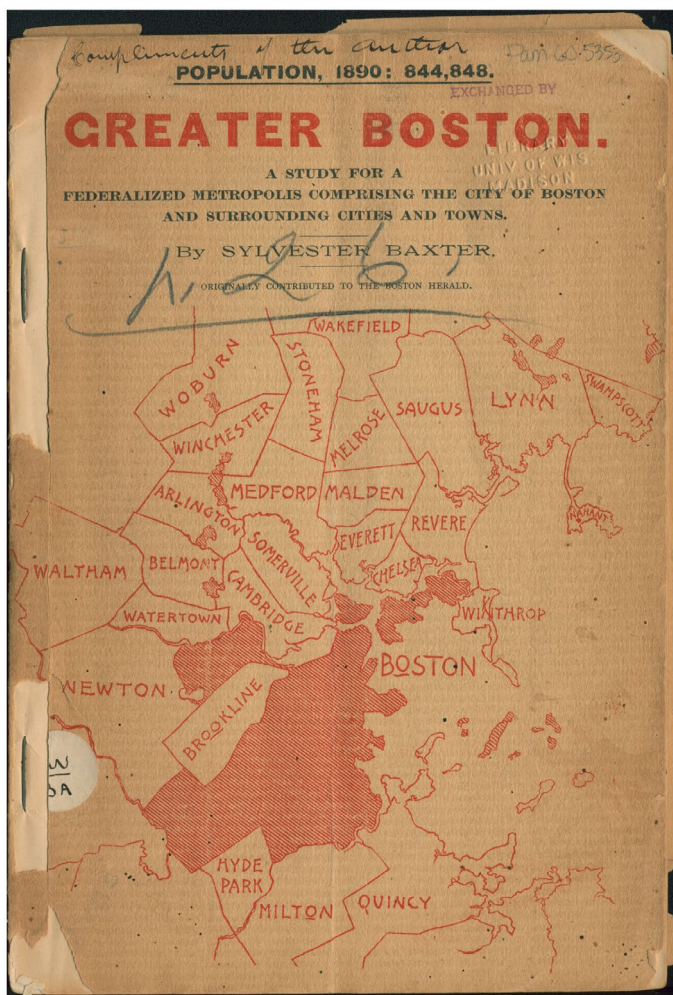


Figure 1. Sylvester Baxter, *Greater Boston* (1891). Holding of the Wisconsin Historical Society; author's image.



of immigrants. Above all, however, the movement was an attempt to enshrine in both legal reality and the court of public opinion a proposition which Baxter believed to be sanctioned by geographic fact: the existence of a single, bound-together territorial unit called Greater Boston. As such, the consolidation movement would repeatedly invoke the adjectives 'real' and 'true' in order to describe the enlarged boundaries of the regional city. The camps lobbying for and against metropolitan federalisation thus found themselves engaged not only in a political struggle between different methods of local governance and their practical consequences, but also a definitional struggle in which the ontological status of the metropolis as a legitimate territorial entity figured as a central point of contention.

To put evidential weight behind the claim that Greater Boston was an already-existent geographic unit that only awaited the consummation of a total jurisdictional identity, the federalisation movement pointed to statistical measures of the region's internal interrelatedness. In his pamphlet, Baxter compiled tables showing the total population, rates of growth and tax rates in the municipalities surrounding Boston. Such statistics, he concluded, demonstrated that 'the political city' could be likened to 'a leaking tub set inside a larger tub, representing the geographical city. The water that is poured into the inner tub leaks out into the larger' (1891, p. 12). Here, Baxter invoked a relational metaphor—the flow of population and capital 'leaking' from the old urban core out to its neighbouring suburbs—in order to prove the existence of a metaphor which was distinctly bounded—the larger tub, or the 'geographical city' of Greater Boston. 'When such conditions have developed,' he argued, 'these municipal entities have de facto become merged into one great city, although continuing a *de jure* separate interest' (p. 14).

If these measures of economic interconnectedness proved Greater Boston's holism as a business unit, a dawning awareness of the city's ecological relationships also served as evidence for the unification hypothesis. As Rawson (2010) writes, Boston, like other industrial cities of the late nineteenth century, began building out extensive infrastructure projects which both transformed natural resources into urban public services and stitched together new political alliances between communities. By 1891, the city's Metropolitan Sewerage District already included nineteen cities and towns linked together by a shared system whose physical constraints—gravity and drainage—dictated a geography which punctured older jurisdictional boundaries (Baxter, 1891, p. 9). Meanwhile, 'no less than 16 different systems with 25 separate water-boards' jostled against each other to supply the region with drinking water, a disorderly mishmash which Baxter contrasted to a promised 'economy and improvement of service proceeding from a uniform administration' (p. 27). In the 1896 report of a state commission established to study consolidated urban governance, the frontispiece map presented overlays of Boston's water, sewer, and park districts to adumbrate the outlines of a possible Metropolitan District.

That emphasis on rational public administration indicated the degree to which metropolitan consolidation was seen as a linchpin for the kind of municipal socialism which Baxter and his political allies promoted as a peaceful corrective to laissez-faire capitalism. Here, Baxter drew on the example of the London County Council, established in 1889 and an institutional centre of power for the Fabian-led Progressive Party (Pennybacker, 1995; Saint, 1989). In the same year that Baxter's *Greater Boston* pamphlet appeared, Sidney Webb published *The London Programme*, laying out a list of socialist reforms from the provisioning of public housing to the regulation of public markets, all of which were politically predicated, he believed, on the 'abolition of vestrydom' and the reassigning of administrative powers to the County Council as a whole (1891, pp. 9–30). Webb insisted that the London County Council was the political body that held the power to "municipalise" our metropolis; and, in doing so, to foster 'the growth among its citizens of a greater sense of common life' (pp. v–vi). H. G. Wells argued in front of Webb's Fabian Society in 1903 that it was only the 'synthetic great communities' of metropolitan regions which could operate socialised public services (1903, p. 227). A unitary metropolis, Wells felt, would also take 'delocalised' commuters and show that they were in fact 'localised' within the totality of the emergent single city (p. 223). Unsurprisingly, when Wells visited Boston in 1905, he sought out Baxter as his tour guide.

As Söderström (1996) has shown, the late nineteenth century witnessed the development of graphical and statistical techniques for 'representing the city as a whole' (p. 259), thus making possible the administrative role of comprehensive planners. Hannah (2000) also emphasises the way in which



**Figure 2.** Geo H. Walker & Co. (ca. 1905). Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Control No. 75694560.

territorial mastery through statistical techniques facilitated the ascent of bureaucratic state power. Baxter's concept of the metropolitan unit rested on similar data-gathering techniques: he noted that it was the 'registrar-general's district' in London which first allowed that city to recognise its functional unity (1891, p. 6). Even more powerful than statistical tables, however, was a mode of illustration long favoured by those whose interests have been served by the ability to see places as totalities: the view from above.

'If we go to the State House cupola, or to the roofs of any of the tall new structures,' Baxter suggested to his readers, 'we shall behold a billowy sea of buildings stretching away in nearly every direction, apparently without interruption, as far as the feet of the chain of hills that encircles the borders of the bay from Lynn around to Milton' (1891, p. 8). From this vantage point, the viewer could comprehend Greater Boston as a single, woven-together landscape, making it obvious—Baxter hoped—that this metropolis was not several cities but one (see Figure 2). The force of this visual composition made possible a kind of knowledge which elevated the totalised legibility of the whole above the chaos of its heterogenous parts, or what Certeau (1984) terms the 'exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive' (p. 92). This very same survey view which has been employed by planners, geographers, and administrators from Patrick Geddes (Matless, 1992) to Dudley Stamp (Rycroft & Cosgrove, 1995) and Gutkind (1952) in order to represent territories as the sites of rational knowledge and improvement (see also Cosgrove, 2001). For Baxter, it was the ultimate object lesson for those who doubted the metropolitan entity's ontological status.

The view of a Greater Boston seen from above as a stitched-together totality disclosed not only a search for an objective knowledge of the world and a Progressive programme of technical rationality, but also a romantic dream of social togetherness and organic solidarity. Much like Webb's hope that

Greater London would promote a 'greater sense of common life' among its people, Baxter believed that the recognition of Greater Boston's unity would awaken mutualist sympathies and public spiritedness in the hearts of the metropolis's citizens. 'Where it is impossible for a stranger to tell whether he has passed from one city or another,' Baxter wrote, 'it seems an absurdity to maintain the fiction of political separateness' (1891, p. 14). Suburban residents, he believed, had already become 'essentially Bostonian in everything but political citizenship' (1891, p. 35). By imaginatively erasing Greater Boston's internal borderlines while emphasising the webs of interconnection which bound the region's citizens together, Baxter was attempting to convince all these people that they lived in the *same* place. The ontological claim for the existence of the single city thus made possible a political claim for the emergence of a public tied together by the common interest of shared settlement.

Baxter was not contemptuous of the spirit of local autonomy. To the contrary, he expressed great admiration for the communitarian tradition which New England guarded in the form of town meetings (Baxter, 1899). But he felt that these democratic sentiments were attached to geographic units which were no longer materially meaningful and hoped that they could be abstracted and reattached to the enlarged community of Greater Boston. Baxter's politics were in league with his fellow New Englander Edward Bellamy, whose socialist philosophy, laid out in the influential utopian novel *Looking Backwards*, was itself an attempt to take the communitarian impulse of the Puritan township and apply it to the interconnected life of modern industrial society (Thomas, 1983). Baxter—who served as Bellamy's chief mouthpiece in the press—explained that it was a philosophy rooted in the assertion that 'the true interest of each lies in a regard for and promotion of the interest of all' (1889, p. 12).

Nowhere was this alloy of rationalistic bureaucracy and romantic communitarianism more evident than in the movement for regional parks which sprung out of the consolidation movement. Throughout the 1890s, the Massachusetts legislature, taking a gradualist approach, began to establish a series of regional administrative boards to handle specific dimension of metropolitan administration. In 1892, it established a Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, naming Baxter as secretary and Charles Eliot as landscape architect. In the board's first report, Baxter emphasised that the park programme was not merely a technical exercise but part of a larger effort to remake the metropolitan imagination. 'While divided into a large number of cities and towns,' he wrote, 'socially this district is, to all intents and purposes, essentially one community. It must therefore be considered such when questions present themselves arising from the needs developed by the growth of such a community' (Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, 1893, p. 3).

In service of the common needs of this 'one community,' the board recommended the creation of a permanent metropolitan parks agency, and over the next decade, the Metropolitan Parks Commission oversaw the construction of the nation's first regional parks system, with large new suburban reserves linked together by webs of parkways (Haglund, 1993; Newton, 1971, pp. 318–336). For Baxter, this system held the potential to instruct the population in the reality of their shared occupancy of a single place called Greater Boston, through both an aesthetic unification of the regional landscape and an embodied practice of encountering regional geography firsthand (see Figure 3). In this 'vast public domain,' he held, the people would find 'great free country-clubs for the people ... where every man, woman, and child has membership' (1902, p. 7). Commons and public forests had been the geographic realisations of the seventeenth-century town's unitary body politic (McCullough, 1995). Now Baxter hoped that the function which the *town* commons had once served—that is, to fix the social cohesion of a 'common' interest within a territorial 'here'—would be held in the *metropolitan* commons of a regional park system.

In spite of the metropolitan park district's widespread popularity, full political federation remained an elusive political goal. It came closest to realisation in 1894, when the state established a Metropolitan District Commission to investigate consolidation (Merino, 1972; Metropolitan District Commission, 1896). As the commission canvassed Boston's neighbouring cities and towns, it found some support for the plan amongst reformist modernisers—but also a widespread and bitter opposition to the supposed existential annulment of the neighbouring towns which was notionally implied by consolidation. The *Advertiser* editorialised that, though these outlying areas would 'ultimately become a part of the "greater Boston" of the next century,' for the meantime 'they prefer to retain their individuality' ('The Greater



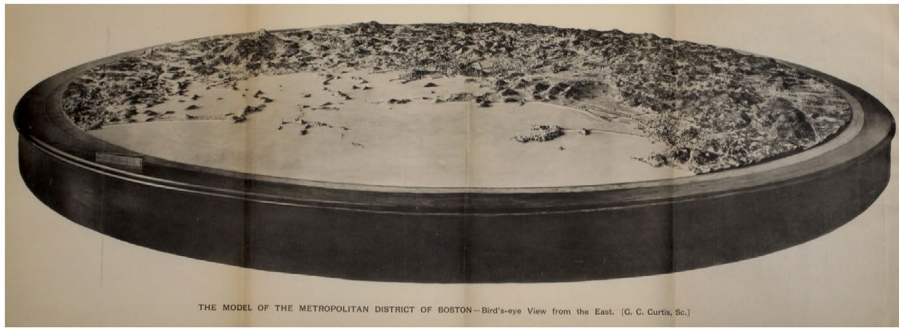


Figure 3. Geo H. Walker & Co. (1893). Leventhal Map Center, Boston Public Library.

Boston,' 1894). One lawyer in Brookline insisted that Greater Boston was 'entirely out of the question,' noting that his town could cooperate with its neighbours on sovereign terms. ('No Annexation,' 1894). Speaking before a group of women at the Mystic Valley Club, Governor Greenhage insisted 'as a *sine qua non* a preservation of those ideas which will keep unchanged the flavour of local character' ('Greater Boston,' 1894).

Scepticism of this kind towards a fully constituted metropolitan unit was rooted in a belief that the *older* units—the towns—were still the 'real' units. While Baxter and his fellow reformers were right to say that functional changes had in fact woven an emergent single landscape out of Greater Boston, they failed to realise how unit landscapes, through processes of community cohesion and institutional inertia, preserve themselves even long after the original geographic logic of their formation has been superseded. As the sociologist Louis Wirth wrote in 1949, critiquing the dreams of regionalists of that era: 'A system of law and administration, with its network of functional interrelations, once developed, comes to have great potency for its own self-continuance' (p. 390).

Undeterred by the political dead-end of the Metropolitan District Commission, Baxter and his allies pressed on, convinced that the inevitable forces of urban change made metropolitan unity a *fait accompli* which merely awaited a dawning public consciousness. Baxter's final campaign for the consolidation scheme took shape under the auspices of the Boston–1915 movement, a Progressive-era coalition of business interests and social reformers which saw urban planning at the centre of a coordinated reform effort that would treat the city 'as a whole ... as an organism having not only business but social problems, not only interests in things but in human beings' ('Boston–1915,' 1910, p. 2; Bennett, 1911; Nelson, 2015). At the public exhibit where Boston–1915 launched its campaign, the entrance hall featured a circular topographic model of the Boston Basin, showing in miniature a



**Figure 4.** G. C. Curtis, *A description of the topographical model of Metropolitan Boston* (1900). HathiTrust digitization.

view almost identical to the one Baxter imagined from the State House cupola—and foregrounding the lacework of parks which stretched over the entire metropolitan system (Curtis, 1900; Kellogg, 1909, p. 331) (see Figure 4).

Unsurprisingly for a movement principally concerned with coordinated, cooperative reform efforts, Boston–1915 quickly came to consider metropolitan-wide governance one of its uppermost political objectives. Provocatively, they called this campaign ‘Real Boston,’ recapitulating the claim that the proposed Greater Boston was sanctioned on the grounds of reality itself. An editorial in *New Boston*, Boston–1915’s house magazine, put the point even more sharply. Though unsigned, the style and argument suggest Baxter as the author. Greater Boston, the editorialist conceded, ‘is made up of separate units, whose individual lines of demarcation are clear and worth keeping.’ But the editorial went on to conclude:

Nevertheless there is a Greater Boston. It is a scientific fact, not a figure of speech. Underlying all diversities there are indissoluble ties radiating through nearly two score towns and cities within a distance of fifteen miles from the State House, which as it were automatically bind all these civic entities into a genuine unity. (‘Unity in Diversity,’ 1910, p. 89)

#### 4. The constitutive power of landscape: bringing single places into being

Advocates for metropolitan unity explicitly acknowledged the social, economic and ecological relationships which were cutting across older municipal boundaries; indeed, such interconnections formed the core justification for governing industrialised cities at an enlarged scale. Just as relational theory in the twenty-first century is attributable to scholars ‘dazzled by globalisation,’ (Paasi, 2009, p. 214) urban reformers at the end of the nineteenth century were similarly astounded by the way that economic and technological transformations were upending traditional spatial configurations.

Baxter, for instance, recognised that a changing urban spatiality was linking Greater Boston together as never before, and he described this change in explicitly relational terms:

The trolley is weaving over the land finer mesh of steel within the coarser network formed by the steam railway, carrying out ... a sort of village-to-village and house-to-house shuttle-work ... making communities and individuals ... alive to the reality of the larger world, and their parts and relations therein. (1898, p. 61)

But Baxter and other advocates of metropolitan unity used these rhetorical registers of relationality in order to advance a vision of a newly *territorialized* space which could capture and encompass the full mesh of these relationships. Relationality thus served an aggregating rather than disaggregating function, binding communities together and awakening them to their shared fate within a common geographic container.

This optimistic attitude, in which Baxter and others insisted that the democratic mutuality of the old town units was geographically abstractable and could thus be brought to bear on the metropolitan unit, was premised on a liberal and teleological faith that good political institutions and cosmopolitan

values would come to prevail over local factionalism. 'The process of organisation witnessed in the growth of a metropolitan population,' he wrote,

is strikingly similar to that of crystallization, where, in the transformation of a liquid into a solid, different centres are established throughout the mass, and these extend rays toward each other, and finally knit themselves together in one homogenous substance. So, in the territory surrounding Boston, the larger areas of the different towns have, from time to time, differentiated into smaller units of population, according to the local interests involved. ... Now that these smaller units have, in their expansion, grown toward and into each other, forming continuous masses of population, the interests that were formerly so diverse have become to a great extent identical, and the disuniting tendency has changed to one of consolidation. (1891, pp. 14, 15)

That crystallisation metaphor sits uncomfortably with contemporary theoretical binaries which, in Painter's words, insist that 'network discourses and territory discourses involve distinct logics that cannot easily accommodate each other' (2006, p. 2). The strong variant of relational theory, wherein relations are given ontological precedence over relata, is hostile to the concept of boundedness, and consequently, such theorisation tends to portray boundaries as nothing more than instruments of coercive state power (see Paasi, 2009 for a list of examples; or the Foucauldian argument in Elden, 2013; also Massey, 2005). While it is certainly accurate to say that territorialisation has often served the ends of militaristic power, this does not mean that, by inversion, the only way forward for a geography that wishes to critique power is a theoretical cancellation of boundedness.

Without putting boundedness in an ontologically prior position to relationality, it is impossible to understand the conflict between Boston's reform metropolitanists and the conservatives who opposed consolidation. Both these camps understood that the cities and towns of Massachusetts Bay were connected by spatial relations. Where they differed was in their assessment of whether these relationships were primarily of an *internal* or *external* character. For Baxter, the constituent parts of Greater Boston had an internal relationship structured by their membership within the totality of the metropolitan unit. For his political opponents, by contrast, the cities and towns were not constituent parts of anything at all; their relationships were of an external character extending among and between smaller geographical entities which were themselves internally unitary and therefore politically sovereign.

If relationships may, in fact, be characterised as internal or external, then we must rely on some form of boundedness and entityhood in order to make this distinction possible. In other words: the constitution of the relata must be completed before the relata may be connected to others in a relationship. As Malpas writes in a stinging critique of the ontological inversion perpetrated by an overemphasis on relationality, 'All relations presuppose boundaries, while the boundary is properly that on which the possibility of relation is dependent. ... Boundedness is thus necessary for the establishing of what we might think of as a certain relational field as well as for the establishing of the elements that are related within that field' (2012, p. 238).

Again, it is important to stress that the creation of a bounded entity is not a mathematically 'absolute' function. By historicising this constitutive process, we can show that the creation of a bounded place is a process which is both non-deterministic and contingent on social forces. Baxter did not try to naturalise Greater Boston as something which immanently existed in the world. Rather, it had been made and was constantly being re-made; it was only through the process of 'shuttle-work' that the entity had any real existence. This parallels Hägerstrand's argument that 'togetherness is not just *resting* together. It is also *movement* and *encounter*' (1976, p. 332). The existence of 'any bounded area,' Hägerstrand continues, may be conceived in a process of continual constitution, 'from the point in space/time when they [the constituent parts] come together unto the point where they become transformed' (p. 332).

This is a conception of flow and of relational emergence which does not posit the radical unsettling of boundedness as its necessary consequence. Quite to the contrary, it is in fact 'togetherness' and the 'bounded area' which Hägerstrand depicts as the consequence of this relational web. By insisting on this processual character of how places come into being—that is, by putting geography and history back together—we can show that 'single' places emerge creatively out of the actions of human settlement, ordering and comprehension of the earth, actions which cannot be stripped of their social, cultural, political dimensions. As Paasi (2004) writes, such formations are 'historically contingent; they are



produced, exist and may be destroyed or transformed in social and political practices and struggles' (p. 542).

This contingency is, as we have seen, driven by transformations of the material landscape and the technologies which make certain transformations possible. They are furthermore reliant on discourses of technical administration, (Söderström, 1996) as well as the desire of citizens to imagine a territory to which they 'belong' (Paasi, 2012). All of these historical forces are on display in the Boston case. However, these constitutive processes also manifest themselves as struggles over the definition of geographic reality itself. For Baxter and his allies, Greater Boston was an object of political and social desire—but it was also, above all, *Real* Boston in their eyes.

It is thus impossible to unbraid the material, socio-technical and ontological strands which feed into the argument that any given area makes up a 'single' place. Malpas refers to Plato's *chora* as 'the womb or matrix out of which things come into being' (2012, p. 233). *Chora*, of course, is also the root of chorography, the study of whole regions in their comprehensive entirety (Cosgrove, 2004). The ontological and geographical concepts united by *chora* are exactly what we find at stake in these metropolitanisation efforts. And just as the Greek *chora* signifies a primally creative spatial quality of 'bounded openness' (Malpas, 2012, p. 235), the Anglo-Saxon *-scape*, or *-ship*, bears a similarly complex meaning: both a bounded constitution of something as well as an ongoing, processual shaping (Olwig, 1996, p. 633; OED 2014).

## 5. Conclusion: how places are or are not made

When we emphasise the *-scape* in 'landscape,' it becomes possible to show that the discourse over Greater Boston is a *landscape* history in the full sense of that word. Landscape's visual accumulation, whether in the view from the top of the State House cupola or in the interconnecting built environment of a parkway system, allowed metropolitan reformers to imaginatively 'see' the metropolis whole. This visual force, however, was only one phenomenological dimension of a landscape which expressed an interconnection between community and place. Olwig (1996) documents the customary practice of 'beating the bounds' in the early modern Northern European *Landschaft*, a ritual for instructing the members of a body politic about the limits of the 'here,' and one which was later carried out in a less embodied fashion through the representational techniques of maps and illustrations. The public campaigns for metropolitan consolidation were, in their way, modern attempts to 'beat the bounds' of a new metropolitan entity and convince urban residents of the expanded edges of this new, and putatively 'single,' community.

This campaign was resisted by those who felt political allegiance to the township, which exerted a constitutive force not yet mirrored in the metropolitan landscape. Ultimately, this smaller constitutive unit proved too politically dominant to overcome. It is worth pausing to note that the *-ship* suffix in 'township' is the etymological twin of *-scape*, again leading us back to the sense of making or defining something as a whole. Landscape is thus the parent of all manner of *-ship* units articulated at different areal sizes. Crary defines landscape as 'the state of being, or reality, of the area or region,' and suggests the terms "*areaship*" or "*regionship*" to signify 'the quality or character of a region as a unity' (1959, p. 22). In the same way, we may describe Baxter's campaign as an attempt to bring about the 'metropolis-ship' of Greater Boston.

The constitutive quality of landscape borne by the *-scape* or *-ship* therefore offers us a compatibilist hypothesis between the metaphors of relationality and boundedness in geography. By historicising the processes of constitution, in which heterogenous swathes of the earth's surface are gathered together and provisionally encircled as a whole unit, we can show how cities (and other geographic entities) are made rather than given. It is in fact the historical moments where new unities *fail* to be fully made, as in the case of Greater Boston, where we can most obviously see that this process of making depends not only on the material conditions of urban transformation, but on the sociopolitical negotiations involved when groups of people living in propinquity with each other determine whether or not they cohabitate a single place. Those processes are relational in their character, as they involve political



conflicts, transformations of the environment, and recognitions of social interconnectedness. But those relationships extend between and amongst bounded entities, and, through the very process of that interconnection, create newly emergent bounded entities by transforming external relationships into internal ones. It is from that process of constitution that the city comes to exist as a distinct thing—the ontological precedent to any study of urbanisation.

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