From the outset, the project had two aspects: a theoretical exploration into the idea of the frame, and a very particular site.

The idea of the frame initially was informed by an exploration of how landscape becomes specific – how is difference constructed without making a landscape fixed and absolute. How to understand landscape specificities from within themselves, without resorting to externally applied metrical ideas of scale? The project thus can be seen as the culmination of some previous projects undertaken as part of my masters which explore similar themes: from to “ANTI-PARK” (2014 TU Delft Q2 Teatro Urbana) – that sought to detach the understanding of a park from scale-signifiers and thus understand Rotterdam as a park, and intervene with an anti-park as differentiation from the urban endless park logic; as well as “DESIRE IN THE ENCLOSED GARDEN” (2014 TU DELFT Q4 Philosophy of the image), an exploration on the ambiguities of the enclosed garden as frame – neither whole part of the landscape nor completely separate from it1. The Explorelab studio’s research component gave me the opportunity to further the theoretical research exploration undertaken for these assignments. However, it is the design component of the graduation studio which provided the ground necessary for speculations on the frame and its relationship to landscape to take shape into a position on landscape architecture, and the role of the landscape architect.

Landscape architecture is tasked not only with designing solutions, strategies, expressions, elaborations but framing situations, posing problems, and putting into question the framework behind a situation, including the very framework of landscape architecture itself. Furthermore, landscape architecture is tasked as much with intervening in a landscape as well as determining and framing what is the territory that it considers landscape. In this regard, the determining of the parameters of a project – that is to say, the framing of a project – limitations, choosing what to include and not include of a design problem – is as much as part of the design as the proposed materializations of the intervention itself. Landscape architecture, unlike other design practices, explicitly involves a territory generated by both human and non-human agencies. While landscape is always framed, the becoming forces within it always escape the frames – the frames are always shifting. The materials of landscape, whether modified by humans, or not must explicitly participate in processes larger than humans. The interventions and elaborations of landscape architecture draw their expression from that very interaction. Landscape is both the raw material and the open ended becoming of the earth. The garden as point of intensity in the landscape is a mediated but ultimately open ended encounter with the landscape.

The main challenge of this project was to move from research to design. From the beginning, the project has a nonlinear structure that followed a pattern of intuitive exploration and synthetic (re-)framing. Although it was the site, and its particular characteristics that guided the problématique of the project, it was the idea of frame and framing that structured this project and permeated all aspects of it, from theory to urbanism to landscape to detail to the very process of design and production itself. In the end, the research provided the ground for the thinking of the frame as an ‘abstract machine’ that has both descriptive – understanding the site as a frame-of-frames – and operative aspects – germ and gesture. In terms of reading the site, the frame was both a framework of how to understand the various aspects of the

1 The seeds of this project were planted much earlier: “THE HOUSE OF THE CITY IS A LANDSCAPE” (UWaterloo Rome program 2011) which sought to understand the logic of landscape of Rome in terms of the materialized ‘support structures’ of the vegetation, and use it in the design of a public building, as well as the first project of my masters, “QUARRY HOUSE’ (2013 TU Delft Q1 Villa Urbana) which explored the enclosed garden as both condensation and intensification of landscape.
site processes in time and as a way to structure the knowledge of the materialized spatial configuration of processes present.

The move between research and design was framed by the tension between the understanding a site as being process of becoming and adopting a critical position for intervening. To consider the site in transformation/becoming—as a series of changes, tendencies, processes continuously unfolding—means that every iteration of the past of the site is a legitimate materialization of forces, conditions, etc. As a designer, however, I am tasked to chose how to frame the site—what to include/exclude in my determining of the project's parameters. Faced with an extreme situation of destruction, displacement, and death, as well as current complexities, I furthermore am accountable to my framing. The challenge is to do so in a way that does not reinforce fixed structures of understanding of space while maintaining the continual openness of the site. To this challenge I applied the mechanisms of framings—the notion framing can happen through delimitation of boundary (frame/gesture) or meshing (framing/germ)—along with the potential for emergence embedded in the germ.

The design is a series of frames that are both frames and framings, germs and gestures which enable and support one another to uncover and respond to existing frames of the site (spatial, topographic, process–related, etc), by providing the potential of unfolding beyond their initial boundaries. By combining germ and gesture, the interventions can operate beyond their frames while being localized as intensities. Each intervention is both a frame and a framing in itself, but combined, overlaid, and meshed with other interventions it produces frames at larger scales, re-framing the site to the city. The activation of the ridge through the four gardens and their associated practices, the linking of the green and open space structures along the ridge to the rest of the city, and the expansion of the practices into the infrastructure field generates a number of parks spanning different scales (linear park, diffuse park, garden-park, activity park, field park, etc). The city as urban landscape can then be articulated as elaborations of a continuous landscape. The site is unframed and re-framed through these interventions, yet the limits of the elaboration of landscape remain open.

The balance of how much to design in order to provide enough material for the germs associated with the gardens can unfold without over-designing or over-determining the future of the site is a continual challenge. Furthermore, the re-framing strategy components of the project have a legibility in their material expressions, which manifest themselves through the attention to the spatial conditions of the design. The design sought to participate and respond to the conditions of adjacent sites and to some of the needs of the populations surrounding the site by providing determined productive practices (tree nursery, orchard), by providing of infrastructure for appropriation. However, without at least a more detailed study of the potential publics-to-be of the site, or perhaps even their direct intervention, these interventions remain at best, speculations and hopes.

The use of the frame as concept provides a conceptual link between a number of frame–like practices that already exist in landscape architecture, such as urban acupuncture, the use of strategies (top down) and tactics (bottom up), process mapping, etc. As with the mechanism of framing, many of these practices are intra-scalar. Through its abstraction, the frame links not only design strategies, but site reading strategies, and reviews all aspects of the territory non-hierarchically, from topography to built fabric to infrastructure to ecosystems. The frame itself provides a frame for the thinking of itself—and for the interventions generated through the mechanisms of framing. Each decision is a framing and one is accountable for one's frames—no aspect of a project can be taken for granted and one's position must be continuously rethought. This project has seen its series of changes, paths not taken, paths abandoned, ideas changed until it has come to this stable point. A fixed framing—such as a conclusion—is a necessary point, but to turn the mechanisms of framing into a formula would defeat the mechanism of framings. Perhaps the most important thing I have learned in this project is that to unframe is as important, if not more, than to frame.

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2 Park here understood as a public or semi-public elaboration of landscape