

# 1948 // NATIONAL PROFILE THE NETHERLANDS

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## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN 1948

In 1948, garden and landscape architecture were established fields in the Netherlands. The Dutch Federation of Garden Architects BNT was founded in 1922, but education in garden architecture already existed since the late 1900s and was offered at different levels in several schools, such as Boskoop and Frederiksoord. In 1946, Jan T.P. Bijhouwer (1898-1974) was appointed as the first professor in garden and landscape architecture at the National Agricultural College in Wageningen, and in 1948 also at the Polytechnic in Delft.

To protect the profession, the BNT introduced an exam for the recognition of professional garden architects and landscape architects in 1947. A full regulation came into force in 1952. In the course of the 20th century, the profession developed along two interconnected tracks. On the one hand, garden and landscape architects designed public and private urban spaces and recreation areas, often in collaboration with (modernist) architects and urban planners. On the other hand, landscape architects, mostly in public service, worked at a regional scale. They were involved in the modernisation of cultural landscapes into functional landscapes for agriculture, housing and infrastructure, and in the creation of new landscapes in reclaimed polders in the former Zuiderzee.

## NOTABLE INDIVIDUALS



Four Dutch participants attended the International Landscape Architects Conference in London in 1948: garden and landscape architect Catharina (Toos) Polak Daniels (1904-1989) of the Dutch Federation of Garden Architects BNT, garden architect Pieter N. Neven (1913-1999) of the Royal Dutch Association for Horticulture and Botany KNMTP, urban planner Paul Kessler (1917-2012) of Delft Polytechnic and the city of Rotterdam, and student in garden architecture H. Hageraats.<sup>1</sup>

Due to a lack of funding, no Dutch delegate was present at the meeting in Cambridge in August 1948, when IFLA was founded. It also prevented a Dutch membership from the beginning.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Polak Daniels was registered as founding Counsellor.<sup>3</sup>

**Catharina (Toos) Polak Daniels (1904-1989)** started her career as a dietician in Switzerland but switched to garden architecture in the early 1930s and started her own firm in 1935. Her work varied from designs for private and institutional gardens to public parks and rural

landscape designs. She was supervisor for the planting designs and schemes in the post-war housing district Buitenveldert in Amsterdam. Inspired by Swiss examples, she propagated Robinson playgrounds and was one of the first to design roof gardens in the Netherlands.

Apart from the daily work in her all-female office<sup>4</sup>, Polak Daniels was active in several networks, and she was a keen supporter of internationalization. She committed herself to advance landscape architecture in the Netherlands and its relations abroad as a member of several committees of the Dutch Association of Garden Architects BNT, and as its president in the early 1950s. From 1948 until 1961, Polak Daniels was the IFLA representative for the Netherlands and a liaison between IFLA and BNT.

**Petrus (Pieter) Nicolaas Neven (1913-1999)** was trained as a garden architect and graduated 1933. Among his teachers were well-known garden architects like the Copijn family<sup>5</sup> and Gerard Bleeker, whom he compared with the French

botanist André Guillaumin - "the type of men we should respect and from whom we could learn so much if we wanted".<sup>6</sup> He started his own landscaping company Neven & Bolt in 1936. In 1952 he was among the first generation of garden architects recognised by the BNT<sup>7</sup>. Neven worked mostly in the northern part of the Netherlands on public and private gardens. He was a great lover of natural stone such as Swedish Öland limestone, which he imported himself.<sup>8</sup> As an active member of the northern department of the Royal Dutch Association for Horticulture and Botany KNMTP he fulfilled positions as secretary, chair and examiner for the gardener's exam. Neven participated in the International Landscape Architects Conference in 1948 as representative of the KNMTP. In KNMTP's weekly journal he wrote about diverse topics, from roof gardens to foreign trips to the UK and France, where he studied the urban development and garden architecture of Paris.



1. List of delegates present at the International Landscape Architects Conference at County Hall, London August 1948, Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects, November 1948. On the person of Hageraats nothing is known so far.  
2. D.P. 'Tuinarchitecten fotograferen eigen werk', De Boomkwekerij, 5 (1950), 12 (17 mrt), 95.  
3. Golden Book IFLA 1, 1948-1968, part 1. 'Notes of informal meeting held at Jesus College, Cambridge, 14th August, 1948', p1-3.  
4. Anne Mieke Backer, Er stond een vrouw in de tuin, de HEF Publishers, Rotterdam 2016, p. 486-487.  
5. <https://www.tuinbouwschooltuin.nl/voldgavst/andhttps://natuurtijdschriften.nl/pub/404486/GenH195701004005.pdf>  
6. Neven, P.N. (1949). 'Een Herfstbezoek aan ... de Jardin des Plantes', Weekblad van de Kon. Ned. Mij. Voor Tuinbouw- en Plantkunde, 2-37 (10 nov), 299.  
7. Erkende tuin- en landschapsarchitecten. Bouw, 24 May 1952, 390.  
8. <https://www.vakbladnatuursteen.nl/nieuws/natuursteenhandel-in-het-bloed>  
9. Paul Kessler, 'Landschaps-architectuur',

Bouw 3 (1948), 50, 390.  
10. Polak-Daniels, C. (1948) Enkele indrukken van het Internationale Congres van Landschapsarchitecten, De Boomkwekerij 4-4 (19 nov), 30.  
11. Paul Kessler, 'Landschaps-architectuur', Bouw 3 (1948), 50, 388-392.  
12. Paul Kessler, 'Landschaps-architectuur', Bouw 3 (1948), 50, 388-392.  
13. Neven, P.N. Een Internationale Tentoonstelling van Werk van Tuin- en Landschap-architecten, Weekblad van de Kon. Ned. Mij. Voor Tuinbouw- en Plantkunde, 1-32 (1948), (7 oct), p6-7.  
14. Image from: Collectie het Nieuwe Instituut - SGW014. Photo archive of the editorial team of Stichting Goed Wonen [Good Living Foundation].  
15. C. Polak Daniels, roof garden at the Ministry of Finance, 1967-1969 Special Collections Special Collections, Wageningen University & Research - Library  
16. Image from: Yearbook of the Alumni association of the G.A. van Swieten Horticultural School (Frederiksoord), 2000  
17. Catharina (Toos) Polak Daniels

**Paul Kessler (1917–2012)** was educated as an urbanist and planner at the College (now University) of Delft, and worked at the Town Planning Department in Rotterdam when he attended the IFLA conference in 1948. He later moved to the Provincial Planning Department of Gelderland (1951) and lectured at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam. As author and editor of the journal *Bouw [Building] and Stedebouw en Volkshuisvesting [Urbanism and Housing]*, he wrote mostly about architecture, urbanism and planning, but now and then elaborated on the relation of these disciplines with landscape and nature. In his report of the 1948 IFLA conference, he pointed out that the landscape architects present disapproved of the interpretation of landscaping by architects and urbanists as “simply filling spaces with plant material”.<sup>9</sup> Instead, a full-fledged green plan should be drafted, together with the urban plan for built volumes, suggesting cooperation from “the first minute”. Kessler saw this as a very useful warning for the Netherlands as well.

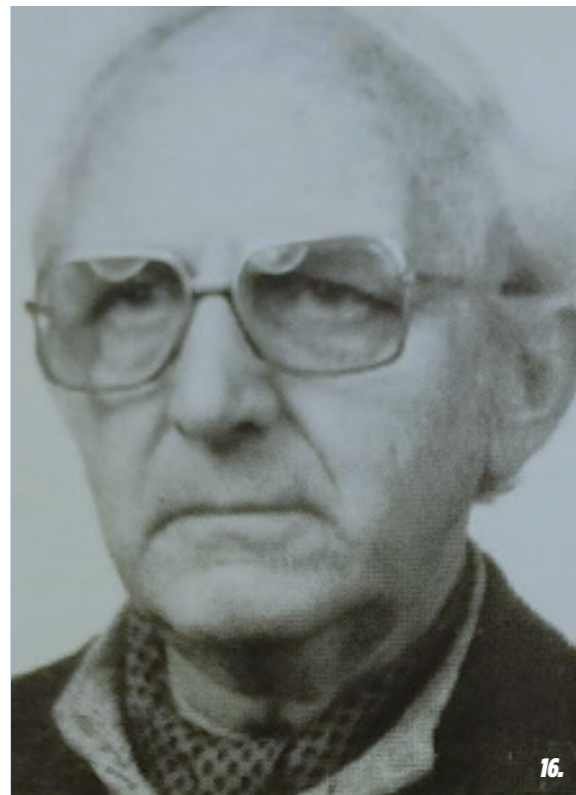
### **IFLA CONFERENCE REPORTS**

In their reports of the conference, the Dutch representatives praised the lively discussions with various disciplines, the team spirit and the broad approach of the tasks for landscape architects. Polak Daniels stressed the importance of meeting people from so many countries: The many who talked officially and unofficially at this congress, emphasized repeatedly that, those who want to make a good plan, should do so in “team spirit” and that the landscape architect should be involved from the very beginning.[...]

Garden and landscape architects, civil engineers and architects, manufacturers



healthier society must notice what is happening in this respect throughout the world. Often, he will be able to do this by taking note of the written word; it is a shabby form of thought transmission, but it is nevertheless one and still the most common. Much, much better, however, is the image, especially if at the same time we are given the opportunity to see this image before us during a lecture by the designer or a colleague who breathes the same air.”<sup>13</sup>



and town planners and those in charge of education tried to solve problems, which are similar in many countries, in the greatest harmony. And there was no one who disputed the other’s primacy.<sup>10</sup> Kessler too admired the “lively team spirit” and the input from many disciplines. He pointed out that the profession as a whole profited from the meeting: While talking, many participants got a better idea of what a landscape actually is; not “filling urbanist and architectural holes”,

but “deliberate design”.<sup>11</sup> He observed that all countries lacked skilled labour and that a tendency toward larger scale interventions existed in every country and noted that “biological balance” and adjusting to nature and soil conditions also were important principles in landscape architecture.<sup>12</sup> Neven emphasised the importance of images over text in international communication: “... anyone who believes in our work to contribute to a better and