



# *Preface*

... For Dutch / Belgian Landscape Architecture publication:

At every level of society, one cannot help but observe that we are poised for a green revolution. This edition of *Bouwspecial* serves as a prime example of this shift. The growing awareness that green spaces in our living environments are vital for biodiversity, climate adaptation, CO2 sequestration, and our overall well-being is becoming increasingly prevalent. However, the precise methods to achieve this remain a quest across various disciplines.

In our contemporary society, we tend to structure our daily lives with protocols and systems, often exerting control over nearly every aspect. Regrettably, this tendency has spilled over into our relationship with the natural world and our ecosystem. While I am generalizing to some extent, we seem to have lost touch with the capacity to embrace spontaneity in nature, which often leads to wonder and awe. The unforeseen is sometimes viewed as a threat, something beyond our control. Yes, perhaps in a nearby nature reserve, but not in our immediate surroundings. This urge to cultivate runs deep and maybe a legacy of our historical, agriculture-based society. However, we are now being starkly reminded of how our human connection to the natural world carries consequences.

The aforementioned insight is a personal, intuitive awareness that has steadily grown over the past 15 years, gaining even more prominence since

my relocation to Canada. Approximately six years ago, I immigrated to British Columbia, a Canadian province where the effects of colonization are vigorously debated. These consequences are palpable across society, particularly in their impact on the indigenous peoples of Canada. What is remarkable and promising is the growing self-reflection accompanying these discussions. This introspection has led to an openness to learn from the millennia-old culture of the "First Nations" and their harmonious interaction with the landscape, resulting in mutual benefits. The land provided spirituality, sustenance, medicine, and other resources, while human interventions, carried out on a small scale, fostered a biodiverse and resilient landscape resistant to disease, drought, and large-scale forest fires. I understand that this is a somewhat romanticized view and cannot be directly applied to our modern society and urban environments. Nevertheless, we can draw valuable lessons and inspiration from it. For me, this entails embracing the idea of rewilding with the goal of promoting biodiversity and resilience. Most importantly, it underscores that we are not separate from the natural system but rather an integral part of it. It teaches us that our interventions can strengthen the natural system, and in this endeavour, we can leverage the latest techniques and digital tools, as well as the latest developments in architecture and engineering. The translation of these abstract and, at times,

poetic notions into concrete actions is a captivating journey. As a Garden/Landscape Designer, I increasingly contemplate the extent to which we should design plantings. Should we truly design them, or should we create conditions in which nature can thrive autonomously? Should we relinquish control and observe how nature unfolds, intervening only when necessary to achieve a mature and evolving landscape with a profound openness to spontaneity in nature? Let me be clear; even though I have a certain inclination, I do not have a definitive answer. The complexity with which planting is currently designed is admirable and yields beautiful results. What I am certain of is that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions; it is an ongoing exploration, and as professionals, we are in a period of transition and all part of a steep learning curve.

This shift calls for a more holistic approach. Consequently, our profession is no longer solely about hardscaping and greenery; it increasingly revolves around living systems and comprehending these systems to engage with them in a symbiotic manner. We must grant the ecosystem and nature ample room rather than merely filling urban and rural spaces with token greenery. While it might sound like preaching to the choir, I firmly believe that new developments should commence with landscape architecture, particularly at a large scale where nature is the unifying element.

Fortunately, we observe a growing trend toward nature inclusivity. What is particularly intriguing is that Europe, and the Netherlands in particular, are leading the way in this regard. I draw immense inspiration and enthusiasm from working on projects in the Netherlands and staying informed about the latest insights and advancements in landscape architecture, architecture, and urban planning. In many instances, Europe sets an example for the rest of the world.

In this edition of Bouwspecial, made possible in part by De Bloeimeesters and Uitgever Van Lieven, you will find a plethora of captivating topics and projects discussed. We hope these will motivate and inspire you.

Warm regards,  
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