

**Panel:** *Understanding the impact of digitalization on gender, culture and empowerment."*

**Presenter : Ruth Wanjiku**

*President, International Federation of Landscape Architecture (IFLA), Africa Region*

**BIO**

Wanjiku is a Landscape Architect with 15+ years of experience shaping landscapes. Her professional journey has taken her across the vibrant landscapes of Africa, where she has worked on projects within the built and natural environments.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya, Wanjiku leads the team at Muzuri Spaces a firm providing landscape planning, landscape assessment and landscape construction services, focusing on the East African region. Her team endeavors in crafting designs that seamlessly blend structures and landscapes.

Wanjiku's impact extends beyond office practice, serving in leadership and lecturing roles. She is the President, International Federation of Landscape Architecture (IFLA) Africa Region, and the former IFLA Africa Professional Practice and Policy Committee Chair. Further, Wanjiku has served in various capacities in the Architectural Association of Kenya (AAK), including as past Chairperson of the Landscape Architects Chapter and currently as the Honorary Secretary of AAK's Executive Committee. She has in the past served as a tutor at the Department of Landscape Architecture, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology (JKUAT) and at the Department of Architecture & Interior Design, Kenyatta University.

Wanjiku holds a bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, and a Master's in Planning (Urban & Regional Planning) from the University of Nairobi.

In her professional and personal endeavors, Wanjiku advocates for treating the landscape as canvas on which all other human activities thrive, and failure to make the landscape king, often leads to undesirable results.

## **Title: Protecting Living libraries**

### **Abstract**

This paper advances the concept of "landscapes as libraries" a framework that portrays landscapes as living repositories of knowledge, memory, and cultural practice. As digital platforms increasingly dominate the preservation and transmission of knowledge, there is danger of loss of information that is not stored in books, but rather in the topography of the earth itself. Drawing from African contexts, the paper argues that digitalization is often reshapes how these "libraries" are accessed, interpreted, and governed.

While digital tools offer opportunities for documentation, and empowerment, they also risk erasing tacit knowledge, reinforcing inequities, and commodifying culture. Landscapes function as living libraries, archives of ecological memory, cultural praxis, and gendered knowledge systems. Digitalization, risks accelerating the destruction of these spatial archives unless approached through a multi-lens.

Through reflections of the various components of the Landscape Library, the paper showcases how knowledge is embedded in the landscapes that we transverse and how this knowledge impacts lives. Any form of digitization, must acknowledge and apply indigenous, gender, cultural and informal lenses as appropriate. The paper concludes that true empowerment requires a hybrid model, digital technologies used not to replace, but to annotate and advocate for the preservation of the physical library itself.