

Highlighting Some Historical Women in OR

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Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the organizers of this IFORS Conference with special thanks to Professor Gerhard-Wilhelm "Willi" Weber for the invitation to present in this session part of the Moments in the History of OR and IFORS Stream.



The above photo is from the EURO Conference in Leeds, United Kingdom, June 22-25, 2025.

Female OR Pioneers



Ailsa Land (1927-2021) PhD 1956 LSE	Alison Harcourt (1929-) Honorary DSc 2018 Melbourne	Marguerite Frank (1927-2024) PhD 1956 Radcliffe/Harvard	Stella Dafermos (1940-1990) PhD 1968 Johns Hopkins	Judith B. Liebman (1936-2023) PhD 1971 Johns Hopkins
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Ailsa Land and Alison Doig Harcourt are known, first, for a breakthrough paper, “An Automatic Method of Solving Discrete Programming Problems,” published in 1960 in the journal *Econometrica* on branch and bound.



Australian & New Zealand Journal of Statistics

INVITED REVIEW

A seminal contribution of Ailsa Land and Alison Doig Harcourt to the field of mathematical programming

[Gilbert Laporte](#) ✉

First published: 05 March 2025 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/anzs.12439> |

Summary

In 1960, Ailsa Land and Alison Doig published the first linear programming-based branch-and-bound algorithm for the solution of mixed integer linear programs. This algorithm has had a major impact on the field of mathematical programming and remains to this day the only available solution methodology for generic mixed integer linear programs. This article recounts the genesis of this algorithm and describes some of the developments that have taken place since its publication.

Ailsa Land spent her student years and entire career at the London School of Economics (LSE). In 1980 she became the first woman to become a chaired professor in Operational Research in the UK.

She continued her association with LSE as an Emeritus Professor and pursued active research work after her retirement in 1987.

- **Ailsa was the first female to receive the Harold Larnder Prize of the Canadian Operational Research Society (CORS) in 1994 for achieving international distinction in operational research and the Beale Medal of The Operational Research Society in 2019.**
- **The annual Ailsa Land Prize, established in her honor in 2017, for the best MSc student in operational research and analytics in the LSE Department of Mathematics.**
- **Ailsa received the EURO Gold Medal, and was the first female thus recognized, at the EURO Conference in Athens, Greece in 2021 (posthumously).**
- **Ailsa was the first female inducted into the IFORS Hall of Fame in 2023 (posthumously). And, at this IFORS Conference, Judith Liebman will be the second female inducted (posthumously).**

A Panel in 2021 to Honor Ailsa's Receipt of the Beale Medal

In 2021, a virtual panel discussion was held to honor Ailsa's Beale Medal which highlighted the significance of optimization models in addressing important problems of society and the lasting legacy of the work on branch-and-bound.

The panel members are:

Jeffrey Camm, Wake Forest University, USA
Professor and Chair, Business Analytics, Associate Dean of Business Analytics

Karla Hoffman, George Mason University, USA
Professor, Systems Engineering & Operations Research Department

Inana Ujagic, ESSEC Business School, France
Professor, Information Systems, Decision Sciences and Statistics

Anna Nagurny, University of Massachusetts, USA
John F. Smith Memorial Professor, Director, Virtual Center for Supernetworks,
Department of Operations and Information Management, Isenberg School of
Management

Suzana van der Meer, IBM Research, France
Director, IBM Data & AI Expert Labs and Learning

Douglas Stier (moderator), Cornell University, USA
Emeritus Professor, Mathematical and Statistical Sciences

Ailsa and her husband, Frank Land, enjoyed the panel very much!

Ailsa's Biography and Interview

A nice biography of her can be found on the INFORMS website. An outstanding interview by Professor László Végh of LSE, along with the transcript, can be found on the INFORMS oral history page.

Many thanks to the INFORMS History and Traditions Committee (I served on this committee for many years and regularly argued for the importance of having interviews done and posted of female luminaries) for making this possible.



Alison Doig Hartcourt - a “Hidden Figure”

Alison Doig Hartcourt (now 96 years old), after a Master’s from the University of Melbourne, went to LSE and wrote the paper with Land while working as a research assistant there, where she also taught Mick Jagger in one of her classes.

Thanks to colleagues at the University of Melbourne, where she was a long-time tutor and loved teaching, she was (re)discovered!

A wonderful article, “Celebrating the “grandmother” of optimisation on International Women in Maths Day,” by Kate Smith-Miles, Alysson M. Costa and, Robert Maillardet, University of Melbourne, spoke about her journey.

Alison Doig Hartcourt - a “Hidden Figure”

As a statistician, while at Melbourne, Alison worked with social scientist Ronald Henderson and economist R. J. Harper on what became known as the “Melbourne Poverty Survey,” Australia’s first systematic, quantitative measure of poverty. Their work served as the basis of the 1972 Royal Commission into poverty.

She is the co-author of 3 books and other papers.

Alison Doig Hartcourt - a “Hidden Figure”

- **Accolades came to Alison quite late. She never received a PhD but was honored by the University of Melbourne with an honorary DSc in 2018.**
- **Alison Harcourt, STEM pioneer, was the 2019 VIC Senior Australian of the Year.**
- **Alison was also made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2019.**

A Wonderful Webinar with Alison Doig Harcourt

Alysson Costa was a PhD student of Gilbert Laporte's, who was a PhD student of Ailsa Land's.

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**OPTIMAL DECISION MAKING:
A TRIBUTE TO FEMALE INGENUITY**

Kate Smith-Miles and Alison Harcourt
October 12th, 2021

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Marguerite Frank was the co-author with Philip Wolfe of the paper, “An Algorithm for Quadratic Programming,” published in *Naval Research Logistics Quarterly* in 1956. The algorithm is now known as the Frank-Wolfe algorithm and has been widely used in convex optimization and traffic assignment problems.

Marguerite’s contributions to optimization and OR also lie in her papers on the Braess Paradox, one published in *Mathematical Programming* and two in *Transportation Science*.

The title of her 1956 doctoral dissertation at Radcliffe College was, “New Simple Lie Algebras.”

In a reflective essay, published in 2014, Marguerite remarked based on the workshop on “Greedy Algorithms, Frank-Wolfe and Friends – A Modern Perspective” at the annual conference NIPS 2013 at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, at which she was recognized, that:

For me this brief foray in optimization made it easier later to obtain – after various research and part time jobs – a tenured position in the nearby Rider University Business School, and a later one as Fellow in Stanford’s Engineering School O.R. department, where I finally met George Dantzig. I never received any special acknowledgment or a single bitcoin for the article – only the usual professional interest from Anna Nagourney [sic], and Stella Dafermos, who befriended me in my new guise.

Marguerite's work on the Frank-Wolfe algorithm was celebrated at NIPS 2013 with a special panel, "Marguerite Frank – Inventor of the Frank-Wolfe Algorithm – Honorary Discussion Panel," on which she spoke and which can be found on YouTube.



While she was still alive, under the leadership of Professor Immanuel Bomze, the Editor-in-Chief of the *EURO Journal on Computational Optimization (EJCO)*, in 2021, the annual Marguerite Frank Award for the best EJCO paper was established.

In a message to Marguerite, Professor Bomze wrote that: *This prize would honor you and the impact of your oeuvre to the scientific community, which particularly now receives an impressive boost of interest.* **The award is primarily targeted at papers with female authorship (at least one of the authors female).**

Marguerite was deeply touched and honored by this recognition.

The first award, based on papers published in 2021, was given in 2022 and Marguerite served as the Honorary Chair of the jury.

The authors of the first paper thus recognized: Thomas Kleinert, Martine Labbé, Ivana Ljubić and Martin Schmidt.

Stella was born on April 14, 1940 in Athens, Greece, and passed away in Providence, Rhode Island on April 5, 1990.



Her PhD dissertation, "Traffic Assignment and Resource Allocation in Transportation Networks," supervised by F.T. Sparrow, focused on the formulation, analysis, and solution of system-optimized and user-optimized transportation networks.

PUBLISHED PAPERS OF STELLA DAFERMOS

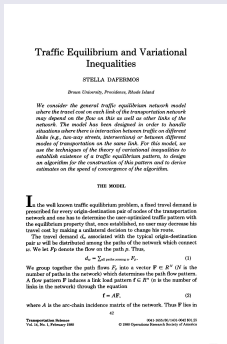
This bibliography contains papers published in scholarly journals and books and a few easily obtainable reports.

1969. The Traffic Assignment Problem for a General Network (with F. T. Sparrow). *Journal of Research of the National Bureau of Standards* **73B**, 91–118.
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1971. Optimal Resource Allocation and Toll Patterns in User Optimized Transportation Networks (with F. T. Sparrow). *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* **5**, 1–17.
1971. An Extended Traffic Assignment Model With Applications to Two-Way Traffic. *Transportation Science* **5**, 366–389.
1972. The Traffic Assignment Problem for Multiclass-User Transportation Networks. *Transportation Science* **6**, 73–87.
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1976. Integrated Equilibrium Flow Models for Transportation Planning. In *Lecture Notes in Economics and Mathematical Systems* **118**, M. Florian (ed.). Springer-Verlag, New York, 106–118.
1980. Continuum Modeling of Transportation Networks. *Transportation Research* **14B**, 295–301.
1980. Traffic Equilibrium and Variational Inequalities. *Transportation Science* **14**, 42–54.
1982. The General Multimodal Network Equilibrium Problem With Elastic Demand. *Networks* **12**, 57–72.
1982. Relaxation Algorithms for the General Asymmetric Traffic Equilibrium Problem. *Transportation Science* **16**, 231–240.
1983. Convergence of a Network Decomposition Algorithm for the Traffic Equilibrium Model. In *Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium on Transportation and Traffic Theory*, M. Hurdle, E. Hauer and G. N. Stewart (eds.). University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada, 143–145.
1983. An Iterative Scheme for Variational Inequalities. *Mathematical Programming* **26**, 40–47.
1983. A Multicriteria Route-Mode Choice Traffic Equilibrium Model. *Bulletin of the Greek Mathematical Society* **24**, 13–32.
1984. Sensitivity Analysis for the Asymmetric Network Equilibrium Problem (with A. Nagurney). *Mathematical Programming* **28**, 174–184.
1984. Sensitivity Analysis for the General Spatial Equilibrium Problem (with A. Nagurney). *Operations Research* **32**, 1069–1086.
1984. On Some Traffic Equilibrium Theory Paradoxes (with A. Nagurney). *Transportation Research* **18B**, 101–110.
1984. Stability and Sensitivity Analysis for a Combined Network Equilibrium Model (with A. Nagurney). In *Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium on Transportation and Traffic Theory*, J. Volmuller and R. Hamerslag (eds.). VNU Science Press, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 217–231.
1984. A Network Formulation of Market Equilibrium Problems and Variational Inequalities (with A. Nagurney). *Operations Research Letters* **3**, 247–250.
1985. Isomorphism Between Spatial Price Equilibrium and Traffic Network Equilibrium Models (with A. Nagurney). LCDS Report # 85-17, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1986. Isomorphic Multiclass Spatial Price and Multimodal Traffic Network Equilibrium Models. *Regional Science and Urban Economics* **16**, 197–209.
1986. Equilibria on Nonlinear Networks. LCDS Report # 86-1, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1986. Equilibrium Analysis of Competitive Economic Systems and Variational Inequalities (with S. C. McKelvey). LCDS Report # 86-26, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1987. Oligopolistic and Competitive Behavior of Spatially Separated Markets (with A. Nagurney). *Regional Science and Urban Economics* **17**, 245–254.
1987. Congested Transportation Networks and Variational Inequalities. In *Flow Control of Congested Networks* (NATO Series, Series F: Computer and System Sciences) **28**, A. Odoni, Bianco, and Szego (eds.). Springer-Verlag, New York.
1988. Sensitivity Analysis in Variational Inequalities. *Mathematics of Operations Research* **13**, 421–434.
1989. Supply and Demand Equilibration Algorithms for a Class of Market Equilibrium Problems (with A. Nagurney). *Transportation Science* **23**, 118–124.
1989. General Equilibrium and Variational Inequalities: Existence, Uniqueness, and Sensitivity (with L. Zhao). LCDS Report # 89-2, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1989. A General Market Equilibrium Problem and Partitionable Variational Inequalities (with S. C. McKelvey). LCDS Report # 89-4, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1990. General Economic Equilibrium and Variational Inequalities (with L. Zhao). LCDS Report # 90-3, Division of Applied Mathematics, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.
1990. Exchange Price Equilibria and Variational Inequalities. *Mathematical Programming* **46**, 391–402.

Two of the working papers, with Lan Zhao and with Steve McKelvey, respectively, were published posthumously, in *Operations Research Letters* in 1991 and in *Journal of Optimization Theory and Applications* in 1992.



Stella's 1980 paper, "Traffic Equilibrium and Variational Inequalities," was one of the 12 Most Impactful Papers in the 50 year history of *Transportation Science*.



Stella as a Trailblazer

Stella's intellect, scholarship, attention to detail, scientific rigor, and creativity were remarkable and her legacy significant and sustained.

Her contributions to network equilibria and variational inequalities have influenced Operations Research, Engineering, Economics, and Regional Science and have helped to unveil numerous applications.

One wonders how much the world has missed because of her untimely passing.

Awards Named After Stella Dafermos (Posthumously)

- **The Stella Dafermos Award established by the Division of Applied Mathematics of Brown University to honor the memory of Professor Stella Dafermos. The prize goes to one or more outstanding graduate students who share her goals.**
- **The Stella Dafermos best paper award by the Standing Committee on Transportation Network Modeling awarded at the TRB Annual Meeting in DC.**
- **The Stella Dafermos Mid-Career Award of the Transportation Science and Logistics (TSL) Society of INFORMS, awarded first in 2022 (to Neils Agatz of the Rotterdam School of Management).**

Judith Liebman

There is an excellent interview with Judith Liebman posted by the University of Illinois on YouTube.



Her granddaughter, Lauren, did a wonderful blogpost about Judith on the Grandma Got STEM blog.

In her OR research, Judith was mainly a modeler. In addition to her work in health systems, she had several publications describing OR applications in transportation, building design, pavement design, and bridge replacement.

I had the great pleasure of knowing also Judith Liebman, who was a contemporary of Stella Dafermos's going back to their Johns Hopkins University days.

When she passed away in 2023, Leon Lasdon wrote a wonderful In Memoriam for Judith, which was published in *ORMS Today*. In it, he highlighted her many accomplishments, including:

- The first tenure-track female engineer in the College of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), 1972,
- The first female councilmember of the Operations Research Society of America (ORSA), which predated INFORMS,
- The first female President of ORSA, 1987.

- Vice Chancellor for Research and Dean of the Graduate College at UIUC,
- Member of the Committee for Engineering Education of the National Academy of Engineering,
- Chair of the Advisory Committee for the National Science Foundation Engineering Directorate,
- Honored by INFORMS, which established the Judith Liebman Award for student leaders in operations research (OR) programs,
- Recipient of the George E. Kimball Medal, for distinguished service to INFORMS and to the profession of OR, 1996,
- Elected an INFORMS Fellow, 2002.

Judith Liebman Award

According to the INFORMS website: *The Judith Liebman Award has been established to recognize outstanding student volunteers who have been “moving spirits” in their universities, their student chapters, and the Institute. The award was established in 2002.*



3 of my former PhD students: Tina Wakolbinger, Patrick Qiang, and Amir H. Masoumi received the Judith Liebman Award for their leadership of the UMass Amherst INFORMS Student Chapter, that I have served as a Faculty Advisor of since 2004.

IFORS Hall of Fame

Ailsa Land was inducted into the IFORS Hall of Fame in 2023 and Judith Liebman in 2026 at this IFORS Conference in Vienna.

This website, a continuing work in process, includes profiles of more than 230 historic individuals as well as the historic institutions, methodologies and application areas with which they are associated. It will continue to grow as new material becomes available.

- **3 of the 47 oral interviews are with females: Land, Shoemaker, and Wright; their bios plus Liebman's bio are included. My bio was included in 2024. About 2% of the bios on the website are of females.**

INFORMS Fellows are examples of outstanding lifetime achievement in operations research and the management sciences. They have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments and made significant contributions to the advancement of OR/MS over a period of time.

- **4 out of the 125 INFORMS Fellows in the inaugural class of 2002 were females (3.2%): Karla Hoffman, Judith Liebman, Elisabeth Pate'-Cornell, and Margaret Wright.**
- **In 2006, about 5% of the INFORMS Fellows were female and, as of 2024, about 10%. Approximately 27% of the INFORMS members identify as female.**

Through 2025, 5 out of 43 of the IFORS Fellows are female - about 11%.

They are: Elise del Rosario, M. Grazia Speranza, Karla Hoffman, Sue Merchant, and Janny Leung.

Subjectto Video Interviews by Anand Subramanian

Anand Subramanian has (as of late 2024) conducted 100 video podcast interviews, with videos posted on the Subjectto Youtube channel. He began this podcast in 2021 and those interviewed represent 24 different nationalities. Residents of 82 countries have accessed his podcast with about 10,000 hours watched. Number of female guests was about 33%.



Female Leadership

Some data on female leadership of our professional societies:
In the 20th century there were two female Presidents:
Judith Liebman (ORSA, 1987) and Karla Hoffman
(INFORMS, 1998).

The below Tables of data are thanks to Graham Rand, and
his Commentary on Carroll & Esposito Amideo, “Gender
Equality: Opportunities and Challenges for the OR
Community,” published in JORS in 2024.

Table 1 Gender distribution of society presidents.

Gender	ORS	USA				IFORS	EURO
		ORSA	TIMS	INFORMS			
Male	32	42	41	20	20	19	
Female	3	1	0	10	3	5	
Female proportion	8.6%	2.3%	0%	33.3%	13%	20.8%	

Table 2 Gender distribution of society presidents in the twenty first century.

Gender	ORS	INFORMS	IFORS	EURO
Male	9	16	5	7
Female	3	9	3	5
Female proportion	25%	36%	37.5%	41.7%

There have been no female Editors-in-Chief of the journal *Management Science* (11 males), the *European Journal of Operational Research* (15 males), and the *Journal of the Operational Research Society* (17 males).

About 2 years ago, after 13 male editors, the Editor-in-Chief of *Operations Research* became Amy Ward.

Several other INFORMS journals now have a female as Editor-in-Chief.

First Discussion Paper in JORS Published in 2024

JOURNAL OF THE OPERATIONAL RESEARCH SOCIETY
2024, VOL. 75, NO. 6, 1011–1029
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01695682.2024.2343343>



DISCUSSION

OPEN ACCESS



Gender equality: opportunities and challenges for the OR community

Paula Carroll and Annunziata Esposito Amideo

School of Business, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT

There is a research gap on understanding gender equality issues in the OR discipline, and on the role of gender in OR participation and career progression. We apply a gender lens to the literature on the history of OR, reflecting on the origins of OR, the OR community, and the theory, methods and practice of OR. A gender lens aims to uncover hidden gender dimensions to bring gender issues into sharper focus. The review shows that women are largely invisible in the recorded history of OR. We use a survey instrument to capture the current OR community and extract insights on their careers by gender. Using a decision tree to understand factors that affect participation in OR, our findings are consistent with other studies: women perceive barriers to their participation and career progression, but the barriers are not as apparent to their male peers. Our paper offers novel contributions including a reflection on the history of OR through a gender lens, insights on the role of gender in OR careers, and a critical discussion of our findings. We aim to stimulate a conversation and encourage a discussion on the next steps toward innovative and cross-disciplinary research and applications at the gender/OR nexus.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

History of OR; gender equality; OR/gender nexus; survey; decision tree

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/01695682.2024.2344969>



COMMENTARY

OPEN ACCESS



Commentary on Carroll & Esposito Amideo “Gender Equality: Opportunities and challenges for the OR community”

Laura A. Albert^a, Annunziata Esposito Amideo^b, Julia Bennell^c, Sally Brailsford^d, Paula Carroll^e, Ruth Kaufman^f, Katherine Kent^g, Kathy Kotiadis^h, Martin Kuncⁱ, Anna Nagurney^j, Frances O’Brien^k, Graham Rand^l and M. Grazia Speranza^m

^aUniversity of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin, USA; ^bUniversity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland; ^cLeeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK; ^dUniversity of Southampton, Southampton, UK; ^eThe Operational Research Society, London, UK; ^fWomen in OR and Analytics Network (WORAN), Office for National Statistics, London, UK; ^gUniversity of Kent, Canterbury, UK; ^hJournal of the Operational Research Society, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK; ⁱUniversity of Massachusetts, Newton, Massachusetts, USA; ^jUniversity of Warwick, Coventry, UK; ^kLancaster University, Lancaster, UK; ^lUniversity of Brescia, Brescia, Italy

ABSTRACT

This article comprises a set of commentaries for the paper written by Carroll and Esposito Amideo from different scholars and OR practitioners. The commentaries agree on the importance of documenting the gender situation across the OR community and the need to address it through multiple actions.

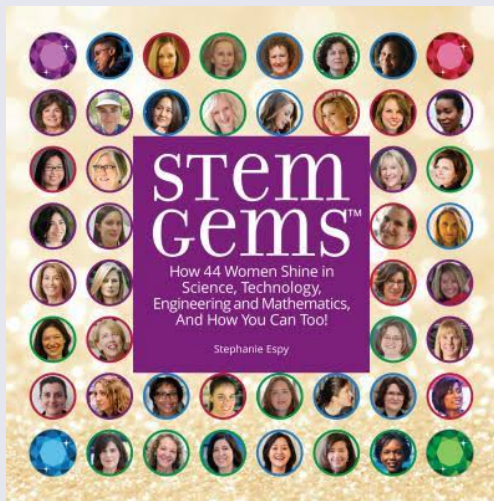
KEYWORDS

Gender Equality; Survey; WOMEN; WORAN



The Future is Bright But Investment is Needed

It is very important that we codify the history / herstory of OR for different age groups.



The Future is Bright But Investment is Needed

- **The skillsets of our students are highly sought after.**
- **Our discipline continues to advance methodologies as well as applications. Many of our tools are used by those in different disciplines.**
- **Our members are regularly contacted by the media to inform and comment on current events and issues.**
- **INFORMS has done a great job in terms of advocacy and outreach.**
- **Quite a few in OR are engaged in writing OpEds, etc.**
- **More are being called to advise the government (harkens to the origins of OR).**

The Future is Bright But Investment is Needed

- We need better **name recognition** by the public, corporations, future students, practitioners, government officials, decision-makers, etc.
- The OR discipline arose from applications in practice, including military applications and logistics. Tighter interfaces between academics and practitioners are needed.
- There are various initiatives in Europe regarding OR outreach that might be useful to expand.
- Grateful that we have begun serious discussions about gender and OR and are celebrating the discipline's greatness!

It is very exciting that the official launch of GLOW (Global Leadership in OR for Women) will happen at IFORS 2026!

GLOW
Global Leadership in OR for Women

IFORS 2026
The 20th Conference of the International Federation of Operational Research Societies
12-17 JULY
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

IFORS
International Federation of Operational Research Societies

Leadership Pathways in Operations Research: Academic, Industrial, and Regional Perspective

Tuesday, July 14th, 2026, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Janny Leung
University of Macau
APORS

Héctor Cancela
Universidad de la República
ALIO

Anita Schöbel
TU Kaiserslautern
Fraunhofer ITWM
EURO

Jules Degila
University of Abomey-Calavi
ORSWA

Rina Schneur
IFORS VP
NORAM

Paula Carroll
University College Dublin
Moderator

GLOW's visionaries include: Grazia Speranza, Janny Leung, Paula Carroll, and Rina Schneur.