

## INSIGHTS & INSPIRATION

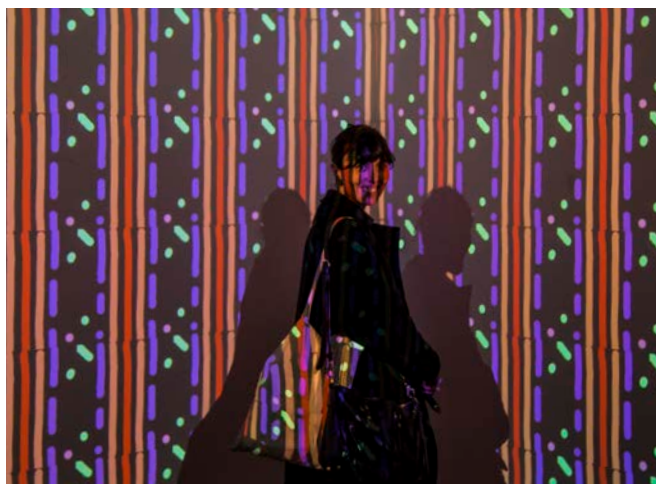
### MORE THAN 560 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS CRYSTALIZED INTO 5 INSIGHTS

#### Cadging Inspiration in New York City

Three weeks of heavy qualitative research. One week of synthesizing all the data. Culminating in five Insights that the IDEO team presented to the ILR community. Each Insight led to a design principle, which, taken as a set, will push the way ILR tells its story to the world. (See supplement for details!)



As the IDEO team moved into the design phase, they took two exploratory trips to topflight NYC institutions: the Cooper Hewitt and Cooper Union—specifically, the Herb Lubalin Center for Design & Typography. At the former, they learned how to incorporate emotion, all five senses, and inclusivity into design systems. At the latter, they delved into a treasure trove of type and poster art.



### WEEKEND SUPPLEMENT:



The 5 Insights, plus the stories that shaped them



The design principles that will spark ILR's new brand



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# RIGHT NOW, ILR IS MORE *VERSUS*, THAN *AND*.

We heard a lot about theory vs. practice. Labor vs. management. Undergrad vs. grad. Faculty vs. staff. Ithaca vs. NYC. Institute vs. institute.

Some of the divisions we learned about not only felt like false dichotomies, they played down what makes ILR such a special place—namely, that you offer multiple perspectives.

When those perspectives clash, everyone feels divided. We saw how students model their behavior after faculty and staff, and identify themselves with one faction or another.

We visited the ILR campus on 34th Street, and we heard about an extreme case that exemplifies what's uniquely possible at ILR. In an executive education class, two students who worked at JFK sat next to each other.

One had worked for many years as a baggage handler, and he was an active union rep at his IAM local. The other had a business degree and was an HR manager at jetBlue, the only non-union airline.

The two not only became fast friends, they functioned as sounding boards for each other's ideas and careers long after the class ended. As we heard, "It was ILR that provided this opening for a middle manager and a local labor leader—not just CEOs or academics on a panel—to find common ground and improve their workplaces."

This kind of exchange is extraordinary, and simply wouldn't be possible anywhere else. It's a differentiator for ILR. You're stronger when you're *and*.

"People always ask, which ILR are you: HR/finance or labor/radical?"  
—Undergrad

"I think there could be more joining between corporate and labor."  
—MILR candidate

"We need to be in this together, workers and employers. That's the way to innovate."  
—Faculty

"Why can't we celebrate our many voices rather than choose just one?"  
—Faculty

How might we show up strong on both sides of a debate without being divided?



# SILOS DILUTE YOUR VALUE.

Some of the versus mindset has actually become structural. We heard that ILR's six departments feel weak and disempowered, and that the proliferation of institutes pulls people, time, and resources away from ILR's core offer.

Silos make it difficult to come together and speak with one voice. They also impair your ability to collaborate.

We learned about classes from different departments and institutes that had similar if not redundant curricula. Instances like these are missed chances to work together and make something stronger.

Students come here for an interdisciplinary look at the workplace. They want diversity, not institutional tensions. They want to learn from a hybrid approach.

“Why are there six departments? We only need three.”  
—Faculty

“The institutes weaken the departments. We don't see what each other is doing, we don't talk.”  
—Faculty

“I have no idea how many institutes we have or what they stand for. I really don't.”  
—Undergrad

“Grad students are off doing their own thing. I wish we would collaborate more.”  
—Undergrad

How might we better connect departments, institutes, and programs?



# YOU DON'T HAVE AN ADMISSIONS PROBLEM.

When we began this project, we had heard that ILR was no longer attracting top students. Through our research, we learned that ILRies are a rare breed who want to understand both sides of the coin—and you're really good at recruiting them.

We learned that ILRies are born leaders. They run nearly all the clubs at Cornell. And they want to be *here*—few students transfer out. The kids we spoke with who transferred in were ILR loyalists who'd been eager to get here as soon as they could make it happen.

What's true of ILR students is also true of faculty and staff. Everyone here could be at another social sciences school, but ILRies want to be in a place dedicated to thinking in systems.

So let's tell stories about new research. Those clubs led by ILRies—let's tell stories about what they're working on. The faculty, staff, and students who come here are your greatest asset. Let's celebrate them.

“No matter what you concentrate in at ILR, the school creates leaders.”

—Undergrad

“There is something special about the people who come here.”

—Undergrad

“I don't think like a historian, I think like an ILRie.”

—Faculty

“The students we admit are brilliant. Our brand should be about their stories.”

—Staff

How might we unlock and celebrate the stories of ILR faculty, staff, and students?



# YOU CARE ABOUT A PEOPLE-CENTRIC WORKPLACE.

Some people come here to fight for workers' rights, and others hope to get a high-paying job. But everyone at ILR has a shared purpose. You all want to understand the workplace from the perspective of people.

And in general, ILRies favor impact over methodology. This is a chance to find common ground.

You're the foremost experts on Organizational Behavior. You understand what worker-centered incentives look like. You are masters

of Dispute Resolution. You can use these skills in your own backyard.

That all disciplines at ILR converge on a people-centric workplace is no small thing.

Like a shared garden, common ground needs tending by everyone. It can and should feel like work. It takes real work to find and renew a collective sense of purpose.

"ILR is the one place in America where you consider everything from the worker's perspective."  
—Undergrad

"We aren't simply profit-driven. I'm more interested in driving the bottom line in terms of societal wellness."  
—MILR candidate

"I want to see kids aligned with the movement—whether they're in HR, union leaders, or policy makers."  
—Faculty

"I want to help organizations be better to their people."  
—MILR candidate

How might we express the deeper purpose that every ILRie shares?



# YOUR HISTORY IS HIDING YOUR RELEVANCY.

ILR was founded at a crucial cultural moment: the war was over, unions were strong, regulations were strong. You're really good at telling this story.

But the current moment has extraordinary implications for the workplace, too. The rise of the #MeToo movement, teacher walkouts, the gig economy, workers' centers for undocumented laborers, minimum wage increases for fast-food employees.

Everyone we spoke to wanted to talk about these issues but there was a reticence, as if they didn't feel totally

prepared. We heard about students not being able to take as many D&I classes as they'd hoped for, or not learning about how technology will affect the workplace of tomorrow.

Given how dominant workplace issues are in the mainstream news, ILR should be the most sought-after collection of minds in the country.

The heart of ILR is intact. Your roots are relevant. But you're not taking the necessary risks to drive a movement the world desperately needs.

“We should be creative around tech and AI, and think about what's possible and what are the threats in the workplace.”  
—MILR candidate

“Words like *management*, *HR*, and *labor* are rooted in the past and don't describe what it feels like to go to work today.”  
—Professional student

“You need to know where it's been before you can change the world.”  
—Union leader

“We should be doing more than remembering movements. We should be making movements.”  
—Staff

How might we lead a movement around a people-centric workplace?



# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

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These insights highlight problems to be addressed, but they also begin to point to real opportunities: your shared purpose, and the idea of going back to your roots to build new movements for the future.

The design principles will inform and push the expression of the ILR brand. They'll also serve as a set of guardrails—a way to check ourselves against what we've learned.

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## INSIGHT

## PRINCIPLE

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Right now ILR is *versus*, not *and*.

1

Embrace multiple perspectives.

Silos dilute your value.

2

Practice radical hybridity.

You don't have an admissions problem.

3

Celebrate the people who come here.

You care about a *people-centric* workplace.

4

Cultivate common ground.

Your history is hiding your relevancy.

5

Engage the present moment.

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