

Historical perspectives on the *International Labour Review* 1921–2021: A century of research on the world of work¹

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Abstract. *This article analyses the history of the International Labour Review (ILR), which was created in 1921, based on the provisions of Article 396 of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, as a major periodical publication of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The article reviews, from various perspectives, the ILR's transformation from an institutional multipurpose periodical to today's modern academic journal, including its institutional journey, the role of the editors in charge and the professional and academic profiles of the ILR's authors. It studies the ILR's contribution to important academic and policy debates and its role for the ILO by examining from a historical perspective the contents, topics and geographical focus of the almost 3,000 signed articles published to date.*

Keywords: ILO history, ILO centenary, *International Labour Review*, ILO publications, multidisciplinary, academic journals

1. Introduction

In 2021, the *International Labour Review* (ILR) turned 100. Its roots go back to 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles created the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the ILR's parent organization. Part XIII of the Treaty, which became the ILO's first Constitution, provided that the Organization should “edit and publish in French and English, and in such

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Responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the ILO.

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other languages as the Governing Body may think desirable, a periodical paper dealing with problems of industry and employment of international interest” (ILO 1920a, 4). The ILR’s history has remained closely connected to the history of the ILO, which in 1946 became the first specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). The ILO’s long-term mandate has been to advance social justice and improve the economic and social living standards of workers worldwide by creating and adopting international labour standards, providing information and research on a broad range of social and economic issues and, through a variety of operational activities, promote employment and improve the quality and decency of work. The ILO is also unique among international organizations thanks to the tripartite structure of its constituent bodies that bring together representatives of business and labour along with those of national governments.

This study provides an overview of the ILR centenary from its origins in 1921, when its major focus was on sharing information and research directly relevant to the ILO’s constituents, to today’s peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary academic journal that focuses on broader issues relevant to the ILO and enjoys a large degree of institutional autonomy and intellectual independence.

The overarching theme of this review is the documentation and analysis of this transformation and the identification of drivers of change in the relationship between the ILR and the ILO during a 100-year period that saw major shifts in the economic, political and intellectual contexts in which the ILO had to operate.

Following this introductory section, section 2 will examine the process of the ILR’s transformation, mostly from a chronological perspective. It will start with a short outline of the ILR’s changing position within the structure of the Office, followed by an analysis of its foundational years (1921–23). The section then turns to three periods that encompass major changes regarding the ILR’s editorial policies and its overall role in the ILO’s research and publication strategy: first, a long period from 1924 to 1970, marked by consolidation, on the one hand, and an increasing focus on research and authored articles on the other hand; second, a phase characterized by greater autonomy and shifting editorial policies (1971–93); and, finally, the journal’s “academic turn” (1994–present). The closing subsection addresses the composition and transformation of the ILR authorship, looking at gender diversity, professional profiles, the background of academic authors by discipline and the authors’ membership in the ILO’s Governing Body.

In section 3, we change the perspective and explore the research presented in ILR articles. How did they change over time in scope and focus? Following a broad typology of the articles and an analysis of their geographical scope (3.1), we assess their contents by looking at disciplinary approaches and key thematic areas (3.2). What were the main trends and how can they be explained by the historical context? How did the ILR translate its objectives of diversity and multidisciplinaryity at a given time? Finally, we highlight under 3.3 the ILR’s intellectual contributions to academic and policy debates on four topics: social insurance and social security up to the Second World War; the economic issues during the interwar years and the New Deal; new approaches to address poverty and lack of employment in developing countries; and women’s work and gender equality.

The conclusion offers several insights that can be drawn from the ILR's history and a brief discussion of its academic and policy impact. Here, we will not only refer to the number of citations of ILR articles and its impact factor, which remain recent and incomplete measurement tools, but also take into consideration the ILR's links to important epistemic communities and its specific commitment to address topics relevant to its broad readership, including the ILO's constituents.

The research for this article had to confront two challenges. First, the history of the ILR is largely uncharted territory.² This challenge was compounded by the closure of the ILO archives through most of 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given these constraints, this article is based mainly on the analysis of online resources, various archival documents and information provided by a new database established for this research project.³ The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the ILR and its “treasures” by providing a sound overview and tentative interpretations of the ILR century. It aims to prepare the ground for further research, including a comparison with similar journals of other international organizations. While comparative historical research on international organizations has advanced greatly in recent years,⁴ their periodical publications have not attracted much scholarly interest. This article intends to help fill this gap, while contributing, at the same time, to the growing body of historical research on the ILO.

2. From institutional periodical to academic journal: The ILR transformation

2.1. The ILR as part of the International Labour Office

Since its beginnings, the ILR has been produced by the International Labour Office (hereafter the Office), the ILO's permanent secretariat in Geneva. Under the guidance of the Director-General, the secretariat implements the decisions of the annual International Labour Conference (ILC) and of the ILO Governing Body. The Governing Body decides on the scope and orientation of the research to be carried out by the Office, which informs all ILO activities, in particular those of standard setting and technical (today: “development”) cooperation. The ILO's publications, including the ILR, contribute at various levels and in different forms to the dissemination of this research among the ILO's constituents, academic audiences and policymakers.

² The ILR has received little or no attention in the recent publications on the general history of the ILO (Rodgers et al. 2009; Van Daele et al. 2010; Boris, Hoehtker and Zimmermann 2018; and Maul 2019). There is only a scholarly article by Patrick Bollé, a former French editor of the ILR (Bollé 2013).

³ The database captures the titles and authors of the almost 3,000 ILR authored articles (in English) published between 1921 and 2020 and provides additional information on the authors' professional profiles, academic backgrounds and gender distribution, as well as on the topics and geographical zones covered by their contributions.

⁴ See, most recently, Sandrine Kott's study of the role of international organizations during the Cold War (Kott 2021).

When the first Director of the newly created ILO, Albert Thomas, received the green light from the Governing Body to set up the Office in 1920, he assigned the task of creating the new periodical to the Scientific (later Research) Division. The structure of the Office underwent important and complex transformations over the following decades. Much of this reorganization was strategic and often politically motivated. At two junctures, these changes directly concerned the position of the ILR.

The first of these occasions arose in 1924, when the ILR became part of an independent Editorial Section (the name changed several times), which was in charge of all ILO publications (ILO 1924, 477). The ILR was thus no longer part of a dedicated research unit. The Research Division was dissolved in 1934, in the context of expenditure cuts necessitated by the Great Depression. From then on, research was decentralized and conducted in individual units and services across the Office.⁵ In the following decades, the position of the ILR within the editorial and translation division or branch changed several times. In the early 1970s, the ILR became its own section, which was an important step towards more institutional autonomy. A second major institutional turning point occurred in 2006, when the ILR Section became affiliated with the International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS, or the Institute). This autonomous research unit of the Office, which reported directly to the Director-General, had been created in 1960 for the purpose of stimulating and conducting innovative research on a broad range of labour issues.⁶ While the ILR had published some IILS research, there was no institutionalized collaboration prior to 2006. When the IILS was dissolved in 2013, the ILR moved to the newly formed ILO Research Department.

2.2. A vision and a model (1921–23)

Albert Thomas was the driving force behind the *International Labour Review*, as it was baptized in 1921, and he had a clear vision. He wanted it to be a “great scientific Review” (ILO 1920b) with two main components: on the one hand, and most importantly, information on a broad range of recurrent topics, from labour legislation to workers’ education, including statistics on wages, prices, unemployment, and so on; on the other hand, articles “on subjects of current interest”, prepared by the Office or solicited from well-known external authors from various backgrounds, who would enjoy “very great liberty” in their submitted contributions (ILO 1921, 245). These articles, with their focus on research and analysis, were a special feature that distinguished the ILR from the traditional “bulletins” of other organizations at the time.

The model for the ILR was the *Monthly Labor Review* (MLR) published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Labor Department, both of which were founded in 1915. Albert Thomas invested considerable efforts to engage

⁵ For example, substantial research on domestic work was performed in the Section on the conditions of employment of women and children, created in 1934, and a Special Problems Section analysed labour conditions in colonies, protectorates and mandated territories (Boris, Hoeltker and Zimmermann 2018, 249).

⁶ See Maryse Gaudier. Unpublished. “The International Institute for Labour Studies: Its Research Function, Activities and Publications 1960–2001”.

the commissioner of the Bureau and first editor of the MLR, Royal Meeker, as the first Director of the ILO's Scientific Division. The MLR had four features that made it appealing to Albert Thomas. First, it covered the same broad range of topics. Second, it combined internally prepared information and research with contributions from external authors. Third, it provided, despite a strong focus on the United States, an international perspective and covered a number of Latin American, European, Asian and African countries (Baker 2016a) – a geographical diversity that was in line with the ILO's constitutional mandate of universality. Finally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics was a data-gathering agency respected for its independence and objectivity (Goldberg and Moye 1985), a quality that resonated with Albert Thomas. With Meeker, who belonged to the progressive reform movement in the United States, and the founders of the ILO, he shared a deep confidence in scientific research, based on objective statistical data and thorough analysis, as a major tool for solving social and economic problems.

The MLR was an attractive model, but it was the journal of a national governmental institution. The ILR, for its part, was the journal of an international and tripartite organization that tried to find international and multinational solutions to labour issues. For example, the ILO advocated international labour standards that were negotiated by its constituents, or it promoted national solutions that could apply also to other countries. The compilation and comparative analysis of information and data from its Member States were extremely important for the smooth functioning of the ILO's tripartite arrangement; they allowed an informed debate and empowered especially the Workers,⁷ who usually did not have as much access to this type of “scientific” input.

The ILR was thus an essential part of the overall research strategy of the Office, which, as Albert Thomas stated in 1922, aimed “to create a body of information which stands above parties, is available to all, and is based purely and simply on the search for truth” (Thomas 1948, 30).

Unlike the MLR, the ILR targeted an international readership in ILO Member States, and particularly constituents and policymakers. It was therefore necessary to publish the ILR not only in English and French, but also “in such other languages as the Governing Body may think desirable”, as set out by the ILO's Constitution (ILO 1920a, 4).⁸

The first issue of the ILR was published, with some delay, in English and French in March 1921. As early as 1922, the Governing Body authorized the monthly publication of *Informazioni sociali* containing extracts of the ILR translated into Italian.⁹ Shortly afterwards, in 1923, a periodical publication in Spanish

⁷ In this article, the capitalized Workers and Employers refer to the groups representing workers and employers in the ILO's Governing Body and at the ILC.

⁸ The journals of other international organizations did not have such a constitutional commitment to multilingualism and have mostly switched to publication in English by now. See, for example, the *Quarterly Bulletin of the Health Organisation of the League of Nations*, founded in 1932, which was succeeded in 1947 by the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*; the *International Review of Education*, founded in 1931 and since 1955 published by UNESCO; and *The World Bank Economic Review*, established in 1986.

⁹ It was published until 1937, when Fascist Italy withdrew from the ILO. From 1939 to 1943, the Mussolini regime published its own version, entitled *Problemi e informazioni sociali*.

with relevant ILR articles was issued (*Informaciones sociales*) as a reaction to the high demand for information in the Spanish-speaking world. The publication became the *Revista Internacional del Trabajo* in 1930. Since 1951, with some interruptions,¹⁰ it has been identical to the English and French versions of the ILR. Similarly, in 1923, a German version of the ILR, the *Internationale Rundschau der Arbeit*, was initiated, reflecting the dominant role of German as the main language of communication of the trade union movement in Central and parts of Northern and Eastern Europe. The *Rundschau* was produced in Berlin, but after Nazi Germany had left the ILO in 1934, its production was relocated to Geneva, where it continued to be published until 1940 (Bollé 2013).¹¹ After the Second World War, extracts of the ILR were published in Japanese (1949–77). A Russian version was created following the end of the Cold War (1994–2009) (Bollé 2013).

After the ambitious start of the ILR, two important changes took place. First, the untimely resignation of Royal Meeker in early 1923.¹² This was a serious blow for the Research Division and the ILR. Both had benefited greatly from Meeker's contacts to obtain first-hand articles on the situation in the United States, which had not yet become a member of the ILO. The second change was the above-mentioned move, in 1924, of the ILR to the newly created independent Editorial Section, which combined the physical production of all publications and periodicals, as well as their distribution and sales. This section also took care of editing, translating and proofreading.

2.3. Consolidation and slow transformation (1924–70)

The following period, which spanned almost half of the ILR century, was marked by two complementary trends. The first was characterized by the consolidation of the ILR as the ILO's flagship periodical in the changing landscape of the ILO's regular publications. The ILR was never discontinued, even during the difficult war years, when the Office, including the Editorial Section and the ILR, were moved to Montreal, returning to Geneva only in 1947. The second development was its gradual transformation from an information-sharing medium to a more research-oriented journal.

During the interwar period, the structure of the ILR was heavily centred on informational pieces, such as labour statistics and short articles/notes providing updates on developments in the ILO Member States with regard to a large variety of labour issues, including new legislation and judicial decisions. The ILR also informed its readers about the Organization itself, events such as the annual ILC and activities such as missions to Member States. Finally, it reported on a

¹⁰ Between 1978 and 1994, the English and French versions of the ILR were published bimonthly, the Spanish edition quarterly.

¹¹ Like the Italian fascists, the Nazis, in 1941, created their own version of the ILR, the *Neue internationale Rundschau der Arbeit*.

¹² Meeker accepted the better-paid position of Secretary of Labor and Industry for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. ILO Archives (henceforth ILOA), P-File 192 Royal Meeker. Letter Butler to Meeker 26.2.1923.

wide range of new publications in various (European) languages and published book reviews.

The research articles complemented these informational parts. They were mostly skilful vulgarizations of the ILO's own research, written by ILO staff. However, we also find signed articles by external authors and, increasingly so, by ILO staff, often higher-ranking officials. Of course, these early research articles were hardly comparable to modern scholarly articles. They were rather short essays, with only occasional footnotes and references. The number of signed articles increased over time, as did their alignment with the emerging standards for academic publishing – a development that we also find in the journals of scholarly societies and associations. In 1921, signed articles constituted 19 per cent of the ILR volume in pages, 26 per cent in 1944, 73.6 per cent in 1970 and 92 per cent in 1990.¹³

Correspondingly, the information part became less important. As early as 1934, the ILR stopped publishing information on new legislation. News on ILO matters disappeared from the ILR in the 1950s, statistical information in the mid-1960s and information on judicial decisions in the 1970s. All this material was offloaded to other ILO publications, consolidating the ILR's structure around three main parts: authored articles, some information pieces on current events and developments, and books reviews. The increasing focus on research reflected the ILR's position among the ILO's other regular periodical publications. For many decades, the ILO's most important periodicals were the ILR; the *Official Bulletin*, containing official documents and information; *Industrial and Labour Information*, focusing on “current events relating to social and economic questions” (ILO 1925b, 216); and, finally, the *Legislative Series*, publishing labour legislation in ILO Member States.¹⁴

From the 1960s onwards, the number of periodicals increased significantly. Independent units of the Office, such as the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the IILS, set up their own journals.¹⁵ There were also various efforts to reach out to the general public.¹⁶ Indirectly, these developments consolidated the ILR's profile as the ILO's “major research periodical” (ILO 1969, 86). Many of the new periodicals had only a limited lifetime. However, because of its constitutional mandate, the ILR's existence was never threatened, despite

¹³ Author's calculation based on ILR database.

¹⁴ *Industrial and Labour Information* (1922–40), which was incorporated in the ILR during the war years in the Canadian exile, became *Industry and Labour* between 1949 and 1961. Its successor was the *Social and Labour Bulletin* (1974–93). The *Legislative Series* was published between 1919 and 1989.

¹⁵ ACTRAV published *Labour Education* between 1964 and 2007. The IILS published a *Bulletin of the International Institute for Labour Studies* (1966–74), replaced by *Labour and Society* (1974–91). It was conceived as a “scientific periodical for the publication of papers on social and labour questions by members of the Institute staff and by its outside collaborators, as an information bulletin, reporting on the activities of the Institute” (Tévoédjèrè 1976, 6).

¹⁶ *ILO Panorama/News* (1962–72), which became *ILO Information* (1971–92) and *World of Work* (1992–2019), all of them targeting the larger public and especially ILO constituents.

the need, on several occasions, to cut down on publication costs and reduce the number of ILR volumes and issues.¹⁷

A considerable continuity has characterized also the editors in charge of the ILR.¹⁸ They had varying titles (chief or assistant chief of the Editorial Section or editor-in-chief, depending on the degree of responsibilities that resulted at any given time from the overall position of the ILR in the Editorial Section and, in turn, from the status of the latter within the Office). Until the mid-1990s, all were male, anglophone (mostly from the United Kingdom), with university degrees in various fields and professional experience as translators, editors or journalists. None of them had a background in scholarly research. They usually started at the ILO as editorial assistants, language editors or translators, before taking over the responsibility for the English version of the ILR and other periodicals. They then moved up to higher positions as assistant chief or chief of the Editorial Section, overseeing several or even all ILO publications, while continuing to manage the ILR. They frequently also edited the journal's English version.

The ILR's editorial strategies and its planning and review processes during the period in question remain difficult to assess without in-depth archival research. However, they seem not to have deviated much from the road map Albert Thomas had formulated for the ILR in 1925: "Its [the ILR's] programme is closely bound up with the general scheme of the research work of the Office." (ILO 1925a, 148). And the Office was bound to the decisions of the Governing Body. The publication of this research in the form of articles in the ILR was a central outcome of almost all of the ILO's programmes, studies and conferences. The ILO's work programme also guided the commissioning of external articles and the acceptance of unsolicited ones, but there was not always a clear strategy. Apparently, a certain flexibility allowed for ad hoc responses to changing circumstances.

Strategic considerations might have shaped editorial decisions as well. During the interwar years, for example, the ILR editors actively commissioned articles to provide information about labour issues in economically and politically important non-Member States, such as the United States, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany after it had left the ILO in 1934.¹⁹

Strategic thinking also explains why the ILR adopted the ILO's pragmatic, albeit ambiguous, approach to dealing with fascist Italy (see Maul 2019, 92–95) and published articles by a number of Italian authors who used the ILR to promote Mussolini's social policies.

¹⁷ This was the case, for example, in the 1970s, when an economic slowdown and the temporary withdrawal of the United States from the Organization caused a difficult financial situation. In 1976, the number of ILR issues per year was reduced from 12 to 6 in English and French, and to 3 in Spanish. See Programme and Budget for 1980/81 (ILO 1979).

¹⁸ The editors in charge of the ILR have been: Pierre Walbroeck (1921), Joseph Edward Herbert (1936), Rexford B. Hersey (1938), James Ernest A. Johnstone (1940), Jean Goudal (1950), Maurice Chapman (1957), David Henry William Hobden (1971), Timothy Lines (1981), Martha F. Loutfi (1994), Iftikhar Ahmed (2000), Mark Lansky (2007) and Tzehainesh Teklè (2019). Interim editors in charge of the ILR were Christine Smith (2003) and Maria Dolores Montero Cué (2018).

¹⁹ In those years, articles about the Soviet Union were often provided by Russian emigrants.

Finally, the need to always have a sufficient supply of articles had an impact on editorial choices. Particularly during the war and the immediate post-war years, it was necessary to actively search for contributions in all the ILO technical departments. High-ranking ILO officials, including the Directors-General, activated personal contacts and used encounters during official meetings to reach out to external authors.²⁰ Given these constraints, it seems likely that the planning of the ILR implied compromises with regard to the quality or the relevance of certain articles.

2.4. More autonomy and shifting editorial policies (1971–93)

An important change took place in the early 1970s. The ILO had more than doubled the number of its Member States between 1948 and 1970 (Maul 2019, 156) and significantly stepped up its standard-setting, operational and research activities. This resulted in a growing number of publications. The Editorial and Translation Branch, as the unit was then called, needed to be reorganized. For the first time, the ILR became a separate section “with a far greater autonomy than hitherto”.²¹ It was led by an editor-in-chief who no longer was responsible for other publications, and it was composed of a team of three language editors and additional editing and translation staff.

From then on, the ILR Section had a clear mandate to plan the contents of the ILR, together with the chiefs of the ILO departments and technical units, advised by the ILO Publication Board.²² The section was in charge of commissioning “substantial, original and stimulating articles by renowned experts who were also good writers”,²³ and the fees for these articles, after having been unchanged for a long time, was increased, “to bring them more into line with fees currently paid” (ILO 1971). Despite these changes, the ILR continued to be “controlled through administrative hierarchy and by an internal advisory board, in conformity with the general publication policy of the ILO”.²⁴ In the mid-1970s, the Publication Board requested the editor-in-chief to include more authors from developing and socialist countries and to maintain a certain balance with regard to contents and geographical areas covered. This request was motivated by the increasing importance of development activities, but it was also a reaction to the growing pressure from Eastern Bloc countries to play a more prominent role in the ILO in Europe (Maul 2019, 220–221).²⁵

²⁰ For instance, Maurice Chapman, responsible for the ILR from 1957 to 1970, who was praised for his capacity to obtain articles about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. ILOA, P-file 3601/A, Maurice Chapman, Annual report 1961.

²¹ The decision was based on the “Confidential report of the Working Party on the organisation of the Editorial and Translation branch”. ILOA, WP/EDIT/1970, p. 30, Files P 12/14/2/1.

²² The Publication Board was set up in the late 1940s, but its composition, role and impact on the ILR’s editorial strategies remain difficult to assess without further archival research.

²³ ILOA, ADM 1001, jacket 1, ILO circular n° 10, 26.1.1971, p. 4.

²⁴ ILOA, Registry 17508, PS2-010, 5661. Response of the ILR editor-in-chief to a survey of the Oxford Centre for Management Studies in 1974.

²⁵ ILOA, ADM 1001, Publications Board, 7.1.1974. This led to an increase in the number of articles on the Soviet Union and other socialist countries (see also section 3.1).

In the 1970s, the editor-in-chief undertook first steps to raise the ILR's academic profile. He reached out with information on the ILR to universities and research institutions to attract a greater number of academic authors.²⁶ Efforts were also made to get the ILR abstracted and indexed by various bibliographic information sources and directories (for example, the *European Business Information Sources* or the *Bulletin signalétique/CNRS*).²⁷

We cannot provide data on the number of unsolicited articles that the ILR received over time and the way in which the acceptance rate changed. An assessment would be difficult in any case, given that acceptance depended on many factors, such as the quality of the articles, the publication deadlines, the availability of reviewing resources, and so on.²⁸ But we can have a look at the reasons for rejection as an interesting source of information about the review process and the underlying criteria.

Since the beginning, the screening and reviewing of articles for the ILR was an entirely internal procedure. The final decision was at first made by the chief of the Editorial Division and, since the 1970s, increasingly by the editor-in-chief, based on comments requested from subject-matter experts in the various ILO units, including ACTRAV or the Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACTEMP).

In 1986, to take an example, these – mostly informal – comments often related to the overall quality of the article or to the language (criticizing, for example, the use of jargon). Lack of political neutrality was another reason for rejection. The submitted articles show that some external authors did not yet perceive the ILR as a serious research journal.

In the early 1990s, the ILO's publication policies changed. Several periodicals were discontinued, mostly for financial reasons, and a decision was taken to strengthen the *World Labour Report*²⁹ and the ILR. The latter was confirmed in its role as a “multilingual forum for the discussion of [social and labour] questions” (ILO 1993, 180–183). The context was favourable to push for a more academic profile of the ILR.

2.5. The “academic turn” (1994 to present)

The ILR's “academic turn” was, in reality, a process that evolved, with some pauses and setbacks, over more than a decade. It started with the appointment of Martha F. Loutfi as editor-in-chief in 1994 and was accomplished on an institutional basis with the ILR's official association with the ILS in 2006.

Loutfi, a development economist who had worked for the ILO's World Employment Programme (WEP), was the first female editor-in-chief. Moreover,

²⁶ ILOA, Registry 17508, PS2-010. Questionnaire filled out in 1979 by Editor-in-chief at the time, David Hobden.

²⁷ ILOA Registry 17508, PS2-010 (1942–1979).

²⁸ See also Margo (2011), especially pp. 21 and 22.

²⁹ The *World Labour Report* represented a new format of publication, which would in the following years become a major vector of disseminating research carried out by the Office. It was published from 1984 to 2000. Other flagship reports include the *World Employment Report* (1995–2005), the *World of Work Report* (2008–14), and, since 2015, the *World Economic and Social Outlook* (WESO).

she was the first editor-in-chief with a technical background and a publication record, including articles in the ILR.³⁰ This allowed her to steer the ILR with more academic rigour.

Loutfi initiated an editorial strategy that encouraged an international, comparative perspective and more interdisciplinarity. As pointed out in the “Editorial” of the first issue in 1994, the ILR was to be a “forum for the expression of reasoned views of experts in different disciplines, from different cultures and perspectives”. It would publish articles that were of high technical quality and used “relatively non-technical language” (ILR 1994, 1).

The most important among the various changes introduced by Loutfi was the establishment of an independent editorial advisory board composed of well-known scholars. The combination of internal review, which was reorganized and systematized, and external peer review was instrumental in aligning the ILR with the basic standards of academic journals and increased its autonomy.³¹ With Loutfi, the number of dedicated special issues increased, which provided a greater thematic coherence. In 1997, the ILR was for the first time indexed in the Web of Science. In the same year, the ILO published its first online version of the ILR, which marked an important step towards reaching a broader readership.

The changes introduced by Loutfi were consolidated and extended, after some stagnation, when the ILR became an affiliate of the ILS in 2006. While the ILR had already published articles originating from ILS research – for example, in a double issue on social exclusion in 1994³² – this official affiliation was a chance to further benefit from cross-fertilization with the activities of the Institute, enhance the ILR’s academic profile and increase its autonomy inside the Office.

A division of work comparable to the one in academic journals was established to guarantee a higher scholarly quality of the articles. The managing editor, as the editor-in-chief was called as of 2007, was supported and guided by the newly established Editorial Board, a small group of renowned scholars from various geographical and disciplinary backgrounds chaired by the Director of the ILS.³³ Based on the expertise of its members, the Editorial Board was in charge of reviewing articles supported by the board of editorial advisers, which was reinforced and restructured. On this new basis, the “Editorial” of the 2007 re-launch edition reconfirmed the ILR’s commitment to multidisciplinary and highest scholarly standards, while being “accessible to a wide readership” and covering “any fields of interest for the ILO” (Goldin et al. 2007, 1).

These institutional changes underpinned an editorial strategy that emphasized the ILR’s international readership and scope, as well as its high academic

³⁰ She was succeeded in 1990 by Iftikar Ahmed, another ILO economist.

³¹ The *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* underwent a similar transformation at the end of the 1990s, when it introduced peer review and established an editorial committee with external experts (Ramsingh 2008c).

³² See ILR, Volume 133, Nos 5–6, and Rodgers (2021).

³³ Currently, the Editorial Board comprises eight members. In 2018, terms of reference were introduced to establish the number of members and define the tasks and procedures of the Board.

quality. Most often, unsolicited articles were now rejected for having a narrow thematic or country focus,³⁴ for being descriptive rather than analytical, or for using overly technical language.³⁵

To professionalize distribution and marketing of the ILR, a partnership was established with Blackwell Publishing, a leading academic publisher of social science journals. This way, it was easier to reach out to a larger community of academics, practitioners and policymakers, while continuing the free distribution of the ILR to the ILO's constituents. Beginning with the first issue of 2008, the ILR was published by Wiley-Blackwell.³⁶

In 2013, the ILS was dissolved, and a new ILO Research Department was created to which the ILR still belongs today. Further steps were taken by the managing and acting managing editors to enhance the ILR's academic profile. Under the leadership of Tzehainesh Teklè, an expert in international labour law and the second woman officially appointed to this position in 2019, the ILR has started its second centenary by confirming its role as the ILO's academic journal and "its unique identity, arising from its multidisciplinary and global scope, and by its international reach, facilitated by its publication in three languages" (Teklè 2021, 1). The editorial strategy encourages highest academic standards, interdisciplinary approaches and submissions across disciplines, a diverse authorship with regard to geographical background, gender and generation, and a writing style "accessible to both academics and policymakers" (ILO n.d.).

In 2019, the peer-review process was revised to systematically apply a double-blind peer-review policy and an initial two-stage screening process. New free access policies have been negotiated with the publisher to "increase the journal's accessibility and readership".³⁷ At the beginning of its second century, the ILR's transformation into a modern academic journal is largely completed. This becomes even more obvious when we look at the ILR authors.

2.6. From professional diversity to academic multidisciplinary: The ILR authors

2.6.1. Three distinctive profiles

At the first sight, the several thousand ILR authors are quite a diverse group, with various professional, social, cultural and geographical backgrounds, although most were and still are from advanced industrialized countries. We find ILO Directors-General and feminist activists, world-class economists and freelance researchers, members of labour ministries and social workers, leaders of cooperatives and even a Soviet spy.³⁸

³⁴ To be included in the ILR, country studies have to come from an economically or otherwise important country, contribute to building knowledge about a broader issue, be representative for a larger region or present policies that could serve as a model.

³⁵ ILOA, P.S. 2-02-2008. ILO Pub: *International Labour Review*, unsolicited articles 2008.

³⁶ Blackwell having merged in the meantime with John Wiley & Sons.

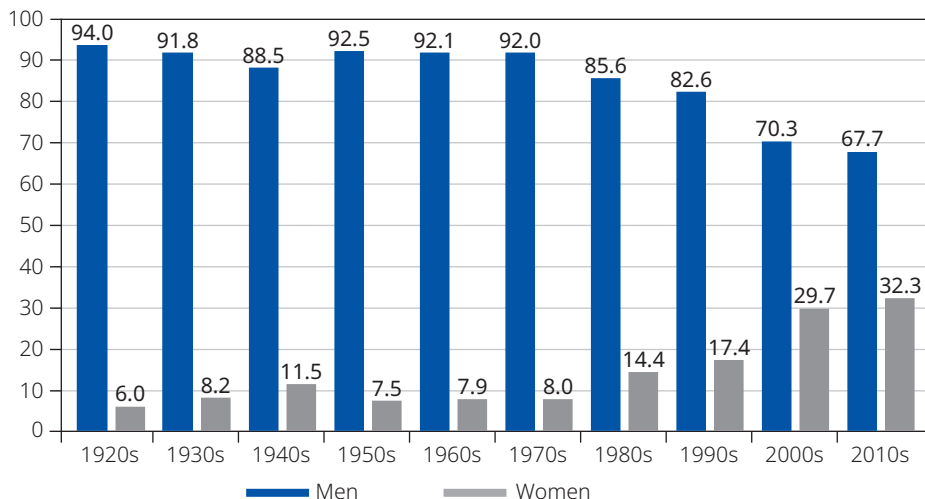
³⁷ *International Labour Review*, Internal strategy document (Geneva: ILO, 2019).

³⁸ Alexander Abramson, a Lithuanian lawyer, who published three articles about the Soviet Union. See Eisenberg (2010).

The founders of the ILR wanted to attract from the beginning a highly diverse authorship, composed of “well-known publicists, economists, employers, and workers”, as Albert Thomas explained in his report to the 1921 ILC (ILO 1921, 245). Indeed, during the interwar period, the ILR featured a broad mix of authors: ILO officials, trade unionists, employers, labour law experts, ministerial counsellors and politicians. The notion of expertise was broad and not based on academic criteria alone. This was reflected especially in the first issues of the ILR, where we find well-known personalities such as Sydney Webb, British social activist and founder of the Fabian Society; German politician and theorist Eduard Bernstein from the Social Democratic Party; Charles Gide, leading figure in the French economic cooperative movement; John Commons, US economist and labour historian; French trade union leader Léon Jouhaux; and progressive businessmen such as John D. Rockefeller Jr from the United States, Gino Olivetti from Italy and Hans-Christian Oersted from Denmark. Olivetti and Oersted were also members of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), founded in 1920 to represent the interests of business in the ILO. These early authors were all leading figures of the international social reform networks, in which the ILO was firmly rooted (Kott 2008).

Albert Thomas did not explicitly mention women when he addressed the 1921 ILC (ILO 1921), but from the beginning, they contributed to the ILR, starting with Beatrice Webb. As early as 1921, she published an article – under the name of “Mrs Sydney Webb” as she was referred to at the time – about the British cooperative movement (B. Webb 1921). Over time, the number of women authors increased steadily, as shown in figure 1, reaching as much as 48.8 per cent in 2020.

Figure 1. ILR authors: Men–women ratio (percentages)



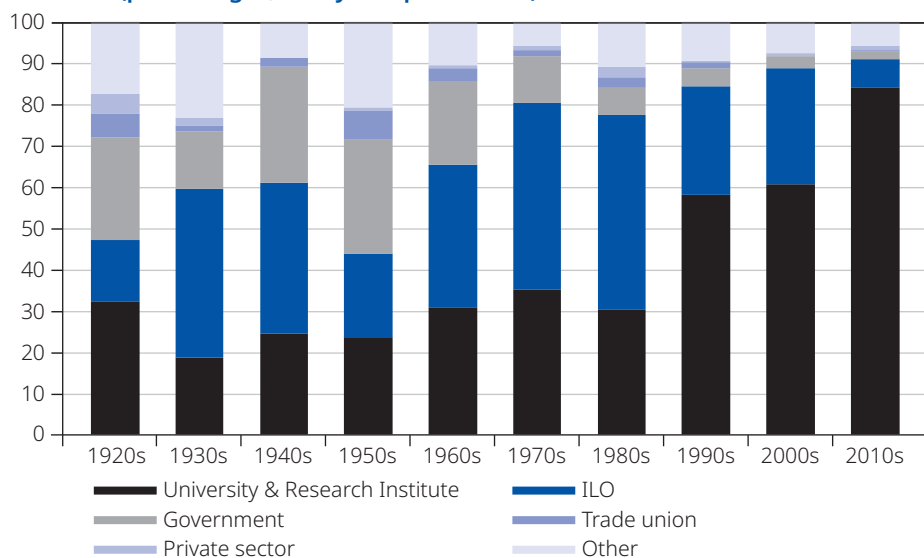
Source: ILR database.

Figure 2 indicates some major trends in the professional profiles for a sample group of ILR authors.³⁹ The information selected suggests that, for most of the ILR's history, the majority of authors belonged to three main groups: members of governments and higher public services, ILO officials and scholars from universities and research institutes.

Trade unionists and employers and managers from the private sector contributed as well, especially in the early years. However, in the following decades, their share decreased and became insignificant by the 1990s.⁴⁰

In the group labelled as “Other”, we find authors from various civil society organizations (outside trade unions and employers' organizations), from other international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as consultants, social workers, teachers, insurance experts, freelance researchers and journalists. Especially in the 1930s, a number of authors in this group had to flee Nazi Germany and contributed as freelance authors based in Geneva or other places of exile.⁴¹

Figure 2. Professional profile of ILR authors (percentages, four years per decade)



Source: ILR database.

³⁹ Information on the authors' professional and academic background (see figure 3) was gathered for four years per decade.

⁴⁰ The private sector authors were mainly high-ranking members of the IOE.

⁴¹ Examples include Leo Grebler, a German-Jewish housing specialist, who lived in Geneva in 1936 and 1937, prior to emigrating to the United States; Kurt Heinig, a journalist and financial expert of the German Social Democratic Party, who emigrated to Denmark in 1933; or Erna Magnus, a German-Jewish expert on social work and welfare, who worked as a consultant for the ILO before emigrating to the United States.

The professional background of women authors followed roughly the same distribution, although the sex-disaggregated data suggest that more women authors fall under the category of “Other”, having a civil society and social work background. In our samples, we did not find any women authors from the private sector during the first 50 years of the ILR; however, more often than their male counterparts, they had a trade union background.

If we take a closer look at the three main groups, we find that the authors from governments or higher public services were a heterogeneous group. They mainly served in national labour departments and ministries of welfare, social affairs or internal affairs. We find heads of national bureaus for labour inspection and chiefs of national health services, chairmen of social security boards and ministerial counsellors. These authors were experts in their respective fields, and many were directly involved in determining and/or implementing policies. While this group represented between 14 and 25 per cent of the authors until the end of the 1960s, their share declined in the 1970s and has become negligible today. The women authors in this group show the same characteristics.

ILO officials, the second group, represented on average about 30 per cent of the contributing authors for most of the ILR’s history. The samples suggest peaks in the 1930s, 1970s and 1980s, which seem to reflect the important role of ILO economists in the economic debate during the Great Depression and in the framework of the WEP (see section 3). Since the ILR’s affiliation with the ILS, the number of ILO authors has declined significantly, underscoring the ILR’s growing autonomy and its engagement with external academic networks.

The group of ILO authors was quite diverse. A special kind of authors were, of course, the Directors-General who used the ILR to address the larger “ILO community” on important occasions, such as during the Second World War or at anniversaries.⁴² Throughout the ILR’s history, we find other high-ranking officials as contributors, such as ILO Assistant Directors-General, regional directors, chiefs of division and directors of programmes and departments. A few women authors held leading positions as heads of the various units in the Office that were devoted to women’s work. Among the more atypical authors were the Jesuit priests who, in their role as official counselors to the Director-General on religious matters, encouraged by the Catholic Church (Zaragori 2018), published several articles in the ILR highlighting the importance of the Catholic social doctrine for the ILO’s work.

The largest group of ILO authors contributed to the ILR in their capacities as researchers and technical experts, and with the increasing transformation of

⁴² Albert Thomas, in the first issue, introduced the ILO and its work (Thomas 1921). Harold Butler promoted the New Deal (Butler 1934), based on research provided by ILO economists. John G. Winant defined the ILO’s role at the beginning of the Second World War (Winant 1939), and Edward Phelan outlined its role in the post-war world order (Phelan 1949). David Morse looked back on the first 30 years of the ILO (Morse 1949) and introduced the project of a World Employment Programme in 1968 (Morse 1968). Francis Blanchard was the last Director-General to contribute to the ILR, with an article on ILO research and technology, a major topic during his tenure (Blanchard 1984).

the ILR into an academic journal, this author profile became dominant.⁴³ Most of the ILO authors were economists, reflecting the change in the Organization's recruitment policies after the Second World War in line with its extended economic mandate stipulated in the 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia⁴⁴ (Maul 2019, 160–161).

2.6.2. The role of academics

The group that has without any doubt shaped the ILR has been that of academic authors affiliated with universities and research institutions. Their number has increased significantly since the 1990s, and they represented over 90 per cent of all authors in 2020. This trend was the same for men and women authors and illustrates the ILR's academic transformation. More broadly, it reflects the growing importance of academic collaboration for the ILO in general.

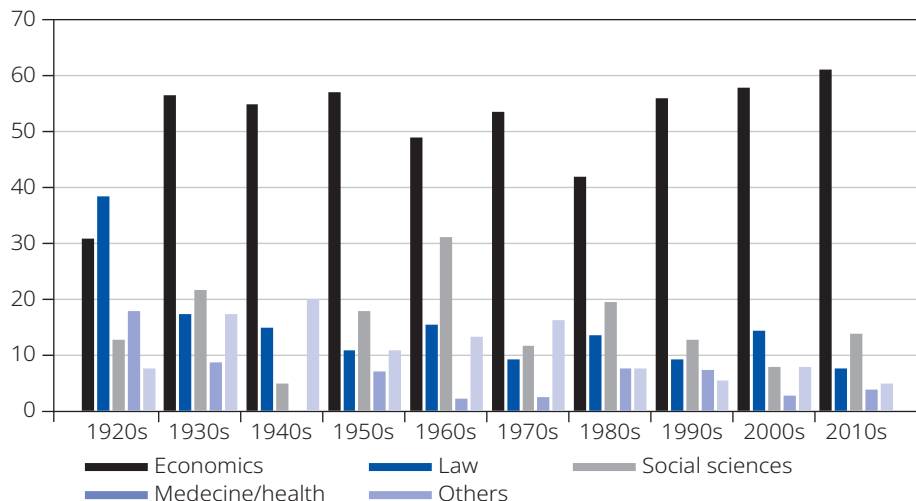
A closer look at the ILR's academic authors shows that, throughout the ILR's history but especially in its first decade, they came from a large array of disciplines, ranging from law, economics, sociology, medicine and psychology to the broad interdisciplinary fields of labour studies and industrial relations. It is a multidisciplinary authorship, with three major groups. First, we have the economists. Here, data suggest that they represented, and still represent, the majority of authors, with a clear rise in numbers since the 1990s. Among them were five Nobel Prize laureates in Economics: Bertil Ohlin, W. Arthur Lewis, Jan Tinbergen, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz.⁴⁵ The high number of economists reflects the expansion of the profession and the overall increase in economic research (Margo 2011), as well as the growing importance of economic research in the ILO since the Great Depression. The second group consists of jurists, usually labour law experts, whose prominent role reflects the normative dimension of the ILO's work. Social scientists (other than economists) form the third group. There has been very recently a slight trend again towards more diversity. In 2020, jurists made up 40 per cent of the authors, and in recent years we also find a growing number of contributions from social scientists and health specialists.

⁴³ In the earlier decades, ILO staff members not only contributed authored articles, but they also provided unsigned information pieces, or were involved in the technical editing and reviewing of submitted articles. An early example of someone carrying out this double role was Marguerite Thibert (Thébaud 2017).

⁴⁴ See especially Part II (d) of the Declaration (ILO 1944).

⁴⁵ What is now known as the Nobel Prize for Economics is the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel. Two ILR authors were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: Léon Jouhaux (1951) and Alva Myrdal (1982).

⁴⁶ The academic disciplines were established for authors from universities and research institutes based on the professional background data for four years per decade (see figure 2). They are grouped according to keywords in five categories: **economics** – economics, industrial relations, business, management, business administration, human resources, development, marketing, commerce; **law**; **social sciences** – sociology, history, anthropology, labour studies, political sciences, urban studies/planning; **medicine/health** – psychology, psychiatry, physiology, medicine, public health; **others** – education, public administration/policy (public health, governance, international affairs, social affairs), science (agronomics, botany) engineering (agricultural and others), mathematics (demography, statistics) and “unknown”.

Figure 3. Disciplines of ILR academic authors (percentages)


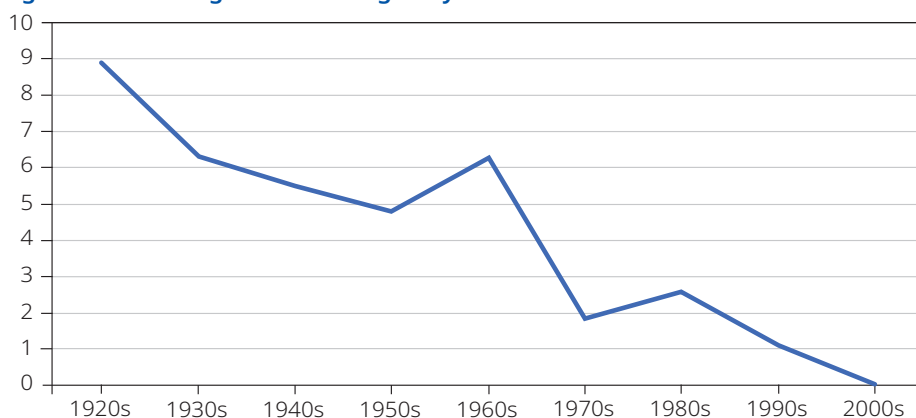
Source: ILR database.

The academic profiles of women resembled those of their male counterparts. Most of them were economists as well. In addition, sample data suggest that before the 1970s, the percentage of women academic authors with a background in social sciences (other than economics), especially sociology, was higher than that of men. Alva Myrdal, the only woman Nobel Prize laureate among the authors, had a sociology background.

Of course, the boundaries drawn between academic scholars and ILO researchers remain artificial. ILO authors usually held university degrees and published also in other academic journals in addition to the ILR. In turn, many external academic authors served at some point as ILO staff members or worked as ILO consultants or experts, participating in ILO committees, missions and technical assistance programmes.

The increasing importance of internal and external academic authors not only illustrates the ILR's academic transformation but also highlights the ILR's growing institutional autonomy and independence from the ILO's decision-making bodies. Figure 4 shows that the share of authors who were members of the ILO Governing Body,⁴⁷ which is one important indicator, decreased unevenly but steadily after 1921, when it was at its highest. It went up slightly in the 1950s (from an average of 4.7 to 6.2 per cent) but dropped all the more sharply to less than 2 per cent in the 1960s and reached zero in the mid-1990s. Most Governing Board authors (82 per cent) were government delegates.

⁴⁷ Given the statistical insignificance of Governing Board members among ILO authors since the mid-1990s and after some random checks, data acquisition was stopped in 2000.

Figure 4. Percentage of Governing Body members as ILR authors

Source: ILR database.

3. Broadening the focus of research

The ILR's increasing institutional autonomy and the academization of its authors, which is in many ways reflected in the type and scope of research published in the journal, will be the focus of this section. This link is particularly visible in the ILR's contributions to important academic and policy debates.

3.1. The geography of ILR articles

Between 1921 and 2020, the period under consideration, the ILR published almost 3,000 signed articles, covering an extraordinary diversity of topics covered. They are divided into two main groups: articles with a clear geographical focus on individual countries or regions (65.4 per cent) and articles with a global focus (34.6 per cent). The latter are either truly international, with a broad geographical scope, or “general” articles with no geographical focus.

The numerous country or regional articles highlight from the very beginning the international scope of the ILR. As early as 1922, the ILR published two articles on India, written by a British industrialist who was a member of the colonial government and a British cooperative leader. Two years later, Albert Thomas proudly announced that “during 1923 the Office endeavoured, with regard to the articles written by outside contributors, to secure that as many nationalities as possible should be represented and to increase the number of articles relating to countries from which information is difficult to obtain owing to language difficulties” (ILO 1924, 332, 333). The ILR had in fact covered 17 different countries, including, for the first time, an article about labour and industry in China, contributed by British missionary John Bernard Tayler, who was an institutional economist at the (Christian) Peking University and its Acting Director (Tayler and Zung 1923). He belonged to the social reform networks described in section 2.6. His co-author was W.T. Zung, a young woman engaged in the Chinese women's and labour movement.

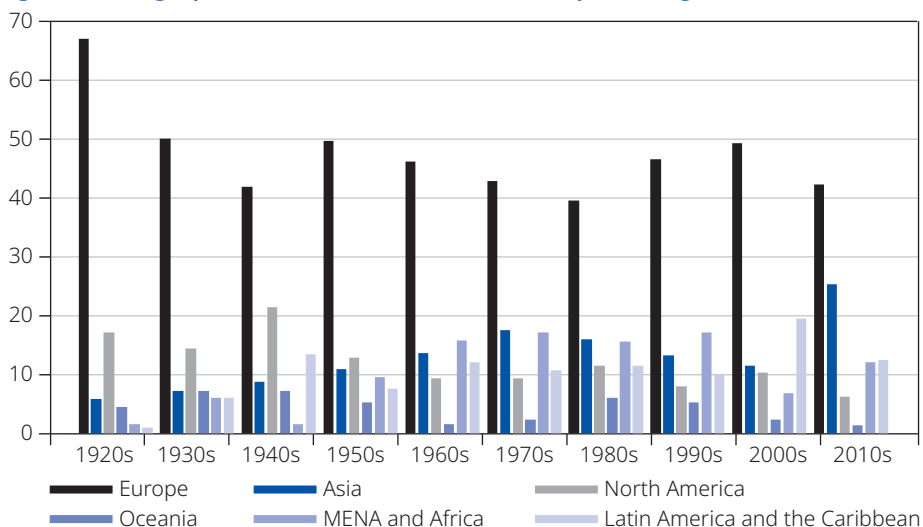
The emphasis Albert Thomas placed on geographical diversity reveals indirectly the challenge the ILO had to confront from the outset, namely its

Western-centric orientation. In the 1920s, almost 90 per cent of all articles with a clear geographical focus were about Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. However, this share decreased to 50 per cent in the 2010s. Over time, the ILR progressively broadened its geographical scope, following in this aspect the general development of the ILO.

As early as the 1920s, we find more and more articles about Asia (mostly about India, Japan and China), and in the 1930s and 1940s about Latin American countries – an expanded scope that reflected the growing importance of these parts of the world for the ILO in the light of the deteriorating political situation in Europe and the ensuing war. Following the return of the Soviet Union to the ILO in 1954 (after it had left the Organization in 1939), the ILR started to publish articles written by authors from Eastern Bloc countries, a development which is not captured by figure 5 below. The ILO’s engagement with development in the 1960s and 1970s led to more contributions from Africa and Asia, often linked to the ILO’s development programmes and technical cooperation activities. Finally, the sharp increase in articles on Asia in the 2010s reflected mainly China’s powerful role in a rapidly globalizing economy.

Throughout its long history, the ILR always had a strong industrial bias, for obvious reasons: industrial workers, traditionally with high unionization rates, embodied the standard employment relationship and the economic development model promoted by the ILO. The industrialized countries had a major influence on ILO policies, given that the ten most important ones among them had permanent seats on the Governing Body. They were also the most advanced in research and data collection. Until today, this has had an impact on the research carried out by the ILO and the wider academic and policy debate. For each region, the ILR covered primarily the economically and/or politically most important countries, which were usually also the oldest ILO Member States.

Figure 5. Geographical distribution of ILR articles (percentages)



Source: ILR database.

Among individual countries that were most often represented in ILR articles, the United States occupied the first position (10.2 per cent⁴⁸). This is not surprising, given the significant role of the United States during most of the ILO's history. It is followed by Germany and the United Kingdom (both around 5.5 per cent), France (4.6 per cent), the Soviet Union/Russian Federation (3.9 per cent), India, which was the predominant Asian country (3.7 per cent), Japan (3.0 per cent), Australia (2.8 per cent), China (2.0 per cent) and Canada (2.0 per cent).

With regard to the regions, after Europe and North America, ILR articles reported on Asia (14.4 per cent), followed by Latin America (10.4 per cent). Among Latin American countries, the ones featured most often were Brazil (1.4 per cent), Chile and Mexico (0.9 per cent) and Argentina (0.8 per cent).

ILR articles about Africa (8.4 per cent) covered especially South Africa (0.8 per cent), one of the founding ILO Member States, then Kenya, Nigeria and the United Republic of Tanzania (0.5 per cent). For Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries (3.4 per cent), the focus was especially on Egypt (0.5 per cent), Tunisia and Iran (around 0.35 per cent each).

What may be considered the key added value of the ILR is all those articles that were drawing attention to smaller, economically less influential countries. They were nevertheless important for the ILO and emphasize its commitment to the principle of universality. Early articles about such South-Eastern European countries as Romania, for example, raised awareness of rural underdevelopment and the various problems it created. Several articles about Yugoslavia in the 1950s pointed to the ILO's specific interest in this country, which, at the time, received considerable technical assistance to strengthen its role as an "alternative to Soviet authoritarian socialism" (Kott 2021, 107). A 2017 article on Viet Nam tackled the impact of social security on productivity – a fundamental question for the ILO.⁴⁹

The country and regional studies have remained the largest group of articles, and especially the country studies have often been very specialized. Today, many of them are dated and only of historical interest. Since the "academic turn" of the ILR, country studies are mostly selected for their relevance with regard to the broader discussion of a topic pertinent to a specific region. More important in retrospect are the "global" articles that have always represented around one third of all signed articles, with an upward trend in 2020 (50 per cent). They are defined for our purposes as those articles with a true "international scope", covering three or more countries in two different regions or two or more regions. In this category, we also include "general" articles that are more theoretical and/or provide an overview of an issue or an ongoing debate. These general articles are more often interdisciplinary and target a readership interested in labour issues from a broader perspective. The most frequently cited ILR article to date, a study on social exclusion by US sociologist Hilary Silver (Silver 1994), belongs to this category.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Calculation based on the articles with a geographical focus, either on a region or a country, in the title or verified through spot checks.

⁴⁹ See Lee and Torm (2017).

⁵⁰ The article has 2,114 citations on Google Scholar (accessed 28 December 2021).

3.2. Shifting thematic diversity: ILR contents at a glance

The contents of ILR articles can be classified in different ways. First, they may be grouped with regard to the general approach adopted. Based on the keyword analysis, and despite significant overlaps, we can say that almost 50 per cent (1,370 out of 2,970 signed articles) have an economic perspective, dealing, for example, with topics such as employment and unemployment, labour markets, prices and wages, business cycles, industry, development, and so on.⁵¹ This matches the observation that many if not most academic authors were and still are economists. Articles that adopt a legal perspective, for instance on labour law and labour rights, including ILO standards and other instruments, are in comparison less frequent (374 out of 2,970 signed articles). While the economic approach has become even more pronounced since the 1990s, following the general trend in academic publishing to become more and more specialized (Margo 2011), the ILR has nevertheless managed to maintain a certain multi-disciplinarity. In the last two decades, the number of articles about labour law has significantly increased, accounting for 50 per cent of all articles published in 2020.

Second, we can group articles according to their thematic focus, keeping in mind that thematic categories necessarily overlap. Since the beginning, the ILR's objective was to cover all aspects of the world of work that are of interest for the ILO and a broader international public. This commitment to thematic diversity, in addition to the geographical diversity, has yielded an extraordinary variety of topics addressed. This range of subjects was particularly wide in the first half of the ILR century when the editorial strategies were less clearly defined.

The broad thematic scope nevertheless makes it possible to identify a number of main topics that the ILR has addressed regularly for extended periods of time.

An analysis by keywords in the title, which necessarily allows for overlaps, shows the following distribution that takes into account only the most important categories. Many of the articles discuss employment and labour markets (493 out of 2,970 articles), followed by collective labour relations (408), labour law (374), social protection (358), development (214), women's work (177), wages (172), migration and refugees (125) and technology (92). Some of these topics and their coverage by the ILR throughout its history are presented in the ILR's Centenary Issues.⁵²

⁵¹ The following most frequent keywords in the title indicate a correlation with an economic aspect: cooperation; cost of living; crisis; depression; development; employment; finance; industry; inflation; investment; labour market(s); market; nationalization; planning; prices; production; state intervention; trade; underemployment; unemployment; wages. Frequent keywords suggesting a legal focus are: act; constitution; contract; convention; court; declaration; law; legislation; recommendation; regulation; right; standard. Articles could be assigned to both categories.

⁵² The different Centenary Issues are introduced by renowned experts and cover the following topics: informality (Kanbur 2021); technology and employment (Howcroft and Rubery 2021); women and gender equality (Folbre 2021); collective labour relations (Bosch 2021), labour law (Dukes, Fudge and Mundlak 2021); development (Ghosh and Rani 2021) and poverty and inequality (Rodgers 2021). They are accessible at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/journals/international-labour-review/WCMS_774343/lang-en/index.htm.

Although these and other more specific topics were discussed regularly in the ILR, the ILO's research agenda priorities explain why in some years we find a high number of articles on a specific topic. In the 1920s, for example, more than one fifth (21.1 per cent) of the signed articles were about trade unions and collective industrial relations. This large share shows the importance of this topic for the ILO in those years, since trade unions did not exist in all Member States or were under pressure in some of them. Freedom of association was not a recognized right, and collective bargaining was in its very early stages. In the 1950s, we find a whole series of articles on productivity, another recurrent topic and important focus of the ILO's work. It also created a common ground for cooperation with socialist and newly independent Member States (Kott 2019). In the 1980s, the number of articles on technology increased. It reflected the ILO's research, also in the framework of the WEP, on the consequences of emerging new technologies (micro-electronics, information technology, Computer Assisted Manufacturing, and so on), both in industrialized and developing countries.

3.3. ILR contributions to academic and policy debates

Throughout the ILR's history, we can identify moments when the ILR contributed to a larger policy and academic debate beyond the immediate ILO context. In this section, we analyse four examples, showing how the ILR created synergies between internal and external research.

3.3.1. From social insurance to social security

Social security has been one of the important areas of ILO activity throughout its history. Especially during the interwar years and the Second World War, it played a leading role in promoting what was at the time a progressive solution to unemployment and poverty. In the 1920s, numerous ILR articles reflected the international expertise that the Office developed in the field of social insurance and that was the basis for 13 Conventions out of a total of 57 that were adopted between 1921 and 1936 (Kott 2008, 30). Many of these articles were country studies,⁵³ but some were commissioned from external authors with the explicit goal of providing a “survey of ideas, a comparison of theories, a study of problems which to-day demand solution in new forms, and an indication of present-day tendencies in the domain of social insurance”. The ILR was seen as “a forum for the expression of further comments and suggestions on the subject” (Ferdinand-Dreyfus 1924, 583). One of the fundamental questions addressed in the ILR was how to finance social insurance.

The “Who's Who” of the European social insurance networks and the ILO chief of the Social Insurance Section, Adrien Tixier, published in the ILR, giving visibility to the ILO's leading role in this field. A number of authors came from Germany, which had produced the model of social insurance promoted

⁵³ Between 1921 and 1950, the ILR published articles on European countries such as Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary and the United Kingdom, but also on the Soviet Union, the United States, as well as on Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay).

by the ILO. Among them were Andreas Grieser, Director of the Social Insurance Department of the German Ministry of Labour, and Alfred Manes, Professor at the University of Berlin until his emigration in 1935. Together with a few other authors, they were members of the ILO's Correspondence Committee on Social Insurance, which was composed of university professors and high-level administrators.

During the 1930s and the war years, the ILR published a wealth of information on the topic, usually unsigned, and programmatic articles by ILO officials such as Karl Pribram, Chief of the Statistical Section, Oswald Stein and Maurice Stack, successors, respectively, of Tixier as Chiefs of the Social Insurance Section. External experts, especially from Latin America, contributed to the ILR as well, reflecting the fact that Latin America had become a strong focus of ILO social insurance activity during the war. Among these authors, we find, for instance, the future Chilean President Salvador Allende, who was Minister of Health and Social Insurance at the time (Allende 1942).

During the war, when the ILO sided with the Allies and benefited from the support of the Roosevelt Administration, it shifted its focus from social insurance to promoting the broader concept of social security, developed most notably in the Beveridge report⁵⁴ to which ILO experts such as Oswald Stein had contributed information on social security policies in various countries (Maul 2019, 124–125). The ILR reflected this shift and published a summary of the Beveridge report (ILR 1943). It was followed by a number of country studies and articles, some of them written by leading political figures such as Arthur J. Altmeyer, the Chairman of the United States Social Security Board (Altmeyer 1945), or Pierre Laroque, the “father” of the French social security system (Laroque 1948).

The ILR thus supported the ILO's efforts to internationalize social insurance and later social security and to link them to the broader epistemic community. It reflected and contributed to the prestige of the ILO in this field through studies by well-known and internationally connected experts who addressed substantive questions regarding the legislation, administration and impact on (un)employment, as well as the financing of the social security systems.

3.3.2. From research to policy: The interwar economic debate and the New Deal

In the 1920s, and especially in the 1930s, the ILR became a forum for economic debate on the causes of unemployment and policy measures to fight it. ILO economists – such as John R. Bellerby, Henri Fuss, Percival W. Martin, John H. Richardson, Edward J. Riches, Wladimir Woytinski and Lewis Lorwin – but also external scholars such as US economist Irving Fisher or Swedish economists Bertil Ohlin and Gustav Cassel, shared their research and ideas in the ILR.

⁵⁴ William Beveridge was the Director of the London School of Economics at the time. His report, officially entitled “Social Insurance and Allied Services” and published in 1942, provided the blueprint for the British post-war welfare system, integrating social insurance, government assistance and voluntary insurance (Jensen 2011, 230).

From the ILO's inception in 1919, its research had analysed labour and social problems as being intrinsically linked to economic problems. During the interwar period, it established a system of labour statistics, produced a major review of the employment situation in the world, released substantial reports on employment issues and published a number of scholarly articles in the ILR. Besides demonstrating a high level of technical knowledge, this body of research proved an early understanding of the fact that labour conditions depended on economic and financial policies that affected production, consumption, investment and business cycles, and that solutions had to be found at the international level.

In the 1920s, the country studies in the ILR provided evidence for the ILO's position that economic instability and unemployment in Europe after the First World War had been caused by misguided monetary policies and that internationally coordinated monetary policies were therefore needed. The works of John R. Bellerby, a British ILO economist, were praised by John Maynard Keynes for their deep understanding of monetary policies and their impact on labour markets (See Endres and Fleming 1996, 211, 212 note 19).

In the context of the unfolding economic crisis and unprecedented mass unemployment, the ILO economists argued that monetary policies were no longer sufficient to overcome the critical situation. Very early on, they took up Keynesian ideas and developed concrete policies to fight mass unemployment through internationally coordinated, large-scale public works programmes. They belonged to a network of economists who had either worked directly with Keynes or subscribed to his main ideas. They emphasized the interdependence between social and economic progress and promoted economic planning and state intervention within an open market economy. Keynes expressly paid tribute to the ILO approach in his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, published in 1936. Abba Lerner, a renowned Russian-born British economist and Keynes disciple, summarized the main ideas in an ILR article that was endorsed by Keynes himself (Lerner 1936).

But the ILR did not simply promote Keynesian ideas, it was also a forum for debate. For example, it published two articles by the Swedish neo-classical economist Gustav Cassel, one of Keynes' harshest critics, in order to "place impartially before the readers of the Review both the 'pros' and the 'cons' of the argument, having regard to the unquestioned standing of the disputants among the economists of the day" (Cassel 1937, 437).⁵⁵

In the following years, the ILR focused increasingly on policies for recovery. For example, it reported extensively on public works schemes in various countries and published articles by well-known scholars such as Bertil Ohlin (Ohlin 1935a, 1935b), and high-ranking government officials such as US Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, who was in charge of the US public works programmes in the Roosevelt Administration (Ickes 1937).

⁵⁵ Cassel had previously criticized an earlier resolution on international public works programmes, which he considered only as a remedy of last resort (Cassel 1932).

Later, in the 1940s, the journal also published a number of articles by women New Dealers. They were less well known than their male counterparts but contributed substantially to establishing and promoting New Deal policies.⁵⁶ The ILR thus provided visibility to the “quasi symbiotic relationship” (Maul 2019, 88) between the ILO and Keynesianism and contributed to the ILO’s goal of internationalizing New Deal policies.

3.3.3. A new approach to development: The ILR and the World Employment Programme

With decolonization gathering pace in the 1950s and 1960s and developing countries joining the ILO, employment became a priority of the Organization’s development policies. The WEP, launched at the 50th anniversary of the ILO in 1969, was the ILO’s contribution to the Second UN Development Decade (1971–80), in a context of mounting criticism of the “growth by industrialization” approach to development, which, despite some growth, did not yield more employment.

The WEP put employment creation at the centre of development strategies and promoted several key concepts such as “appropriate technologies”, “basic needs” and “redistribution from growth”. It also assigned a fundamental role to research in designing employment policies. The WEP contributed significantly to a better understanding of the employment problems in the developing world through its country missions and the vast body of innovative research it generated over two decades. It benefited greatly from its successful collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex and a broad network of high-level academics and policy analysts.

The research was disseminated in various forms – as reports, working papers and, most importantly, as authored journal articles. According to the WEP publication plan,⁵⁷ the ILR was supposed to be the main channel for the dissemination of research results, although researchers were free to publish articles with external commercial and non-commercial publishers.⁵⁸ WEP articles represented a considerable percentage of all ILR articles in the 1970s.⁵⁹ The chiefs and leading personalities of the programme, well-known development economists such as Louis Emmerij, Richard Jolly, Hans Singer, Walter Galenson, Dudley Seers and Dharam Ghai, contributed important articles to the ILR at various stages of the WEP. ILO experts and academic collaborators, many “young and highly motivated” researchers, economists and other social scientists – some

⁵⁶ Examples are the article on unemployment compensation in the United States by Evelyne Mabel Burns, economist at Columbia University, who helped draft the 1935 Social Security Act (Burns 1938); or Catherine Bauer’s article on housing in the United States (Bauer 1945). She had been the principal author of the 1937 Housing Act (Wagner-Steagall Act), which, for the first time, provided affordable, subsidized housing for low-income citizens in the United States.

⁵⁷ ILOA, Registry 180855, ADM 1001, jacket 2, Publication Board, Suggestions for a Consistent World Employment Programme Publication policy, supplementary note from 4.1.1974, annex.

⁵⁸ Between 1978 and 1991, eight editions of a *Bibliography of Published Research of the World Employment Programme* were published. They show the important role of the ILR in disseminating WEP research.

⁵⁹ In 1973, for example, 20 out of 45 ILR articles were based on WEP research.

of them from developing countries – provided a wealth of country-based studies and research articles (ILO 2020, 7).

In 1970, the ILR published what can be considered as a first “special issue”, entitled *Economic Research for the World Employment Programme* (ILR 1970) with articles by two Nobel Prize laureates, Jan Tinbergen and W. Arthur Lewis, who summarized the sometimes controversial debate between ILO economists and academic experts on the WEP’s research priorities (Lewis 1970). The research agenda took form in the following years with a number of topical research programmes. One of them concerned technology and employment and analysed in particular the choice of “appropriate technology” in developing countries. The ILR published a considerable number of country studies, but also broader analyses, such as Amartya Sen’s article on employment, institutions and technology in 1975 (Sen 1975).

In 1974, in a context of rising concerns about overpopulation and economic insecurity in developing countries, a special issue of the ILR presented WEP research on population and employment (ILR 1974), with contributions from leading experts in demographic studies, but also including articles written from the employer and trade union perspectives.⁶⁰

Another group of ILR articles was based on research from the Urbanisation and Employment Programme, which drew attention to informality, one of the WEP’s key concepts. It was further analysed and popularized in a number of ILR articles, starting with an article on the WEP’s seminal employment mission to Kenya in 1972 (Singer and Jolly 1973).⁶¹

The WEP contributed substantially to a better understanding of income inequalities between urban and rural sectors and across geographical zones (ILO 2020). The article by ILO economist Felix Paukert (Paukert 1973), one of the most-cited ILR articles to date,⁶² was based on innovative research and was followed by a number of country studies in the 1970s.

Finally, a central programme of the WEP focused on rural employment research, analysing poverty, landlessness and agrarian structure. Deviating from its overall focus on industrialized countries, the ILR published, until well into the 1980s, a considerable number of articles on rural development, on agrarian reform,⁶³ the impact of the Green Revolution⁶⁴ or the changing approaches to rural development.⁶⁵

In 1976, at the peak of the WEP’s work, the World Employment Conference endorsed a new development strategy based on “basic needs” – a “broad, multidimensional concept” (Rodgers 2021, 4) to address the persisting poverty in developing countries (ILO 1976). In the following years, the ILR published a

⁶⁰ See the articles by Indian employer Tata (Tata 1974) and by the president of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Asian Regional Organisation (Narayanan 1974).

⁶¹ See also Centenary Issue No. 1: Kanbur (2021).

⁶² Google Scholar puts the number of citations at 1,005 (accessed 28 December 2021).

⁶³ See, for example, Dorner and Felstehausen (1970).

⁶⁴ See, for example, Ahmed (1976) and a critical response by Gill (1977).

⁶⁵ See, for instance, Lee (1980).

number of articles on basic needs. They drew on a growing body of innovative WEP research that encouraged the development of national policy strategies and identified basic needs indicators.⁶⁶ The concept eventually faded away in the early 1980s (ILO 2020), when the WEP lost traction in an increasingly unfavourable political and economic context. The ILR however continued to publish WEP research until the end of the programme in the early 1990s.

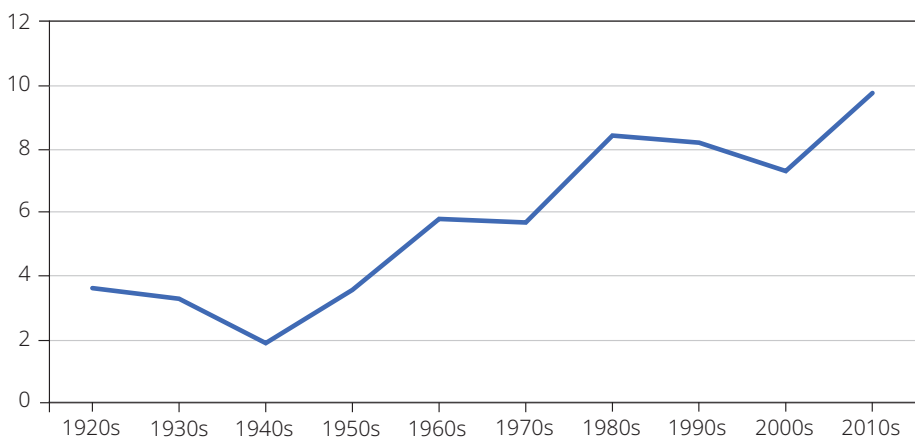
3.3.4. Broadening the diversity debate: Women's work and gender equality in the ILR

The debate on women's work in the ILR is slightly different from the previous discussions. It not only stretches over a longer period and has two key moments (in 1975 and 1999), but it also relies much more on external contributions, which the ILR solicited to enrich and broaden the ILO debate. In addition, the authors came from a larger variety of backgrounds and disciplines, and there was more room for interdisciplinary approaches.

Women's work has been on the ILO's agenda since its inception, and the number of ILR articles devoted primarily to this topic steadily increased – from 3.6 per cent in the 1920s to 9.8 per cent in the last decade⁶⁷ – when we also find many more articles with sex-disaggregated data.

The authors of these articles were most often, but not exclusively, women. In the 1920s, the ILR had already started to put a particular focus on women's employment. During the Great Depression, for example, it published pioneering research from ILO official Marguerite Thibert (Thibert 1933a and 1933b). After the Second World War, the ILR featured several articles on women's employment and domestic work, mostly in the Northern hemisphere. However, they did not reflect the progressive labour standards the ILO adopted during that time, such

Figure 6. Percentage of ILR articles on women and work



Source: ILR database.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Sheehan and Hopkins (1978) and Rodgers (2021).

⁶⁷ Statistics are based on the following keywords in the titles: women, female, gender, maternity, sexual harassment, equal pay, family, (in)equality, combined with spot checks of whole articles.

as the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). In the context of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, articles about women's employment in some African and Asian countries became more frequent, illustrating the emergence of a new and distinct category: the woman worker in the developing world (Boris 2019).

The attention paid to women's rights at work increased significantly in the 1970s. Women's liberation movements took women's rights to the centre of the public debate. The UN organized its first World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, which marked the beginning of the UN Decade of the Woman (1976–85). The ILO adopted a Declaration on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Women Workers in 1975, and in Geneva, an Office for Women Workers' Questions was established. The issue of women and work was seen in an increasingly broader context, which led to greater diversity in the research undertaken. The broad public and academic debate pushed the ILR to give more space to women's work. In 1975, the ILR published a number of articles covering a broader range of topics, from equal remuneration in industrialized countries to discrimination of women workers in social protection and judicial decisions. Most articles had a country focus, but some tackled fundamental problems such as unpaid reproductive work, the unequal access to employment and the exclusion of women from social and political life. Among the authors were leading Western feminists, government officials and academics.⁶⁸ In the following years, the question of women in developing countries, which was not properly addressed in 1975, was taken up again with renewed emphasis. The ILO Programme on Rural Women (1975–85), linked to the WEP, carried out innovative research that helped to identify priorities for technical assistance (Ahmad and Loutfi 1982). A group of ILO economists published a number of articles on rural women's work in the ILR, often based on WEP research, introducing a feminist perspective to the development debate (Palmer 1977).⁶⁹

In the follow-up to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and within the new framework of its Decent Work Agenda of 1999, the ILO started to mainstream gender equality across its activities. In the light of these developments, Martha Loutfi, ILR editor-in-chief at the time, decided to publish in 1999 a double special issue entitled *Women, Gender and Work*, which provided an overview of available data, new issues and policy approaches (ILR 1999).

The core of this special issue was based on new research by ILO researchers and renowned external scholars, who brought innovative insights and approaches to the debate. Among them, we find the well-known US philosopher

⁶⁸ Among them were Elizabeth Reid (Reid 1975), Australian government official and development pioneer; Eliane Vogel-Polsky (Vogel 1975), a feminist and renowned Belgian professor of labour law; and Sylvia Gelber (Gelber 1975), Director of the Women's Bureau of the Canadian Department of Labour.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the articles by Bina Agarwal, who contributed the first article about rural development with sex-disaggregated data (Agarwal 1981); Zubeida Ahmad (Ahmad 1980) and Martha Loutfi, who coordinated the programme (Loutfi 1987).

and social justice theorist Martha Nussbaum who, in terms of gender and equality, disputed Amartya Sen's human capabilities approach (Nussbaum 1999).

This double special issue was followed in 2001 by an anthology of 22 ILR articles published between 1996 and 2000. Entitled *Women, Gender and Work: What is Equality and How Do We Get There?* and edited by Loutfi, it included articles from a broad range of disciplines and extended the debate beyond employment and income (Loutfi 2001). The contribution by ILO economist Richard Anker, an overview of theories of occupational segregation by sex, became one of the most-cited ILR articles (Anker 1997).⁷⁰ In the following years, there was a steady increase in ILR articles on women's work. Thus, in 2017, the ILO published Volume 2 of *Women, Gender and Work*, subtitled *Social Choices and Equalities*. Edited by the ILR's managing editor, an ILO senior development economist and two eminent external scholars, this anthology presented a selection of 32 articles by renowned economists, sociologists and lawyers originally authored for the ILR in the 2000s. It combined the debate of practical strategies with a reflection on fundamental questions, such as the nature of work and its value for individuals and societies. (Lansky et al. 2017). Until today, the ILR has remained committed to drawing attention to labour and economic research with a strong gender dimension – most recently on COVID-19 and women workers in global value chains (Tejani and Fukuda-Parr 2021).

The above provide four prominent examples of ILR contributions to academic and policy debates. But there were other instances when the ILR has created synergies between the ILO and broader policy and academic debates, publishing articles by leading scholars that have provided not only an innovative, but also a critical perspective. We could mention here the 2009 special issue on Latin America's neoliberal experiment (ILR 2009), the special issue on the global crisis one year later (ILR 2010), or a number of noteworthy articles dealing with inequalities (Rodgers 2021).

The ILR's special issues on the future of work also display a multidisciplinary and critical character. Reacting to the emerging debate on the transformation of work resulting from technological change and accelerating globalization, the topic was taken up for the first time in 1996 (ILR 1996). It was again raised in connection with the ILO's centenary in 2019 (ILR 2019 and ILR 2020) – with articles on fundamental questions from economic and legal, but also from sociological (Méda 2019) and historical perspectives (Cherry 2020) – in the larger framework of the ILO's outlook for a new centenary (Supiot 2020).

4. Concluding remarks

4.1. Four insights

Looking back on 100 years of ILR history and diving into the wealth of ILR articles has been an enriching experience and has led to a number of insights.

⁷⁰ The article has to date 976 citations according to Google Scholar (accessed 27 December 2021).

We hope that it will increase interest in this unique journal and provide an incentive for further historical research.

What are these insights? First, the transformation process from a multi-purpose institutional journal to an academic journal, which we have analysed on different levels, was a mix of continuity and change. It accelerated at two junctures, the 1990s and the mid-2000s. While the transformation reflected a general trend, it was driven each time by individual ILO officials who recognized the need for the ILR to adapt and to improve so as to better fulfil its role for the ILO.

Second, the transformation does not only manifest itself in the ILR's changing structure and contents, its institutional position and the professional profile of its authors. It is also visible in the nature of the research presented in the journal. During most of its history, the ILR shared and promoted research carried out or commissioned by the Office. In recent decades, emphasis has been increasingly put on soliciting relevant high-quality external research and on creating synergies with ILO research. The triple special issue on "COVID-19 and the World of Work"⁷¹ is a good example for this dynamic. It presents contributions by ILO specialists and external scholars from various disciplines, who not only analyse the impact of the pandemic and the policy responses for a broad scope of workers and work situations worldwide, but also present reflections and proposals for the post-COVID world of work.

Third, the ILR's academic transformation is a story of increasing autonomy. The ILO's mandate and the broadly defined interests of its constituents have always guided editorial decisions about the choice of articles and methodologies. However, the decision-making authority of the ILR editors and the Editorial Board has progressively increased over time, and the ILR's profile has become less institutional.

Therefore, we can say that, fourth, the ILR is more than the shadow history of the ILO, although much of that history is reflected in the ILR. Since the beginning, the ILR deviated from the general path of the ILO's history, for example, by placing a strong focus on economic questions; by refraining from taking up some internal (and politically complex) debates, such as those on forced labour during the Cold War or on the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; and by drawing attention to emerging issues, such as care work (see ILR 2010).

4.2. The academic and policy impact of the ILR

The impact assessment of academic journals is usually based on a variety of citation measures, most commonly referring to the average number of citations per article published. These measures embody a quantitative approach to assess the quality of academic research, which is subject to controversy and criticism (Supiot 2021, 17). In addition, these measures have many weaknesses. Another problem is the ILR's multidisciplinary design, which can be an advantage in

⁷¹ The first issue was published in March 2022 (ILR 2022).

some disciplines, but is certainly seen as a limiting factor by authors seeking recognition through publication in more specialized journals.

However, for more than two decades now, we have been able to measure the ILR's academic impact. It is a relatively young “scholarly” journal compared to its competitors, and building citations takes time. But the ILR certainly has a promising future, given its high publication standards and an editorial review process that encourages substantive improvement and resubmission of high-quality articles. These strengths are paying off, as evidenced by the growing list of frequently cited articles⁷² and the substantial jump in its SCR journal impact factor since 2007.⁷³

For most of the ILR's history, we obviously cannot quantify either the academic impact or the policy impact, which, in any case, remains difficult to measure. The number of subscriptions would not be a reliable impact indicator either, given the ILO's free distribution policy and the lack of reliable statistics about the ILR's readership.

There are nevertheless two reasons to presume that the ILR had an academic impact before the “academic turn”, as well as a policy impact. First, we find among the authors a considerable number of influential policymakers, important public figures and, increasingly, highly regarded scholars and even Nobel Prize laureates. Many of them belonged to renowned epistemic communities. They contributed to the academic and policy debates we have identified in section 3.3 and provided a number of “classical” articles in key areas that are still relevant today.⁷⁴

Second, we can presume that the ILO's constituents, practitioners and policymakers have used data and research published in the ILR to build their arguments in public dialogues. This was certainly the case in earlier decades, when the ILR's main role was to support the ILO's historical agenda as a clearing house of information on a broad spectrum of labour issues.

In conclusion, there is evidence that the ILR has had an impact across several spheres of discourse and debate that are relevant to the goals of the ILO and the evolving objectives of the journal.

Over the past 100 years, the ILO and the ILR have benefited from each other. Thanks to the ILO's internationally recognized expertise and its innovative research, the ILR has been able to secure contributions from renowned

⁷² See, for example, the number of Google Scholar citations (in square brackets), accessed 27 January 2022, for Zweig (2006) [286]; Locke et al. (2007) [309]; Davoine, Erhel and Guergoat-Larivière (2008) [255]; Kucera and Roncolato (2008) [258]; Stiglitz (2009) [327]; Barrientos, Gereffi and Rossi (2011) [929]; Milberg and Winkler (2011) [269]; Williams and Lansky (2013) [206]; Rani et al. (2013) [165]; and Schmillen and Umkehrer (2017) [165].

⁷³ The ILR's average SCR journal impact factor for the more recent period of 2008–20 has improved substantially when compared to the average for the 2000–07 period. A more detailed analysis, however, would go beyond the scope of this article. See the *International Labour Review* SCR Journal Impact Factor History, available at <https://www.scijournal.org/impact-factor-of-international-labour-review.shtml> (accessed 28 December 2021).

⁷⁴ Many of these articles have been selected for inclusion in the Centenary Collection. See note 52.

authors and opinion leaders. In turn, the ILR has helped the ILO to increase its visibility among wider epistemic communities and gain guidance from experts in formulating policies and programmes for advancing the goals of its Constitution and the principles of social justice, human rights and decent work.

The result of this successful partnership is the ILR's current institutional and intellectual autonomy, which remains a prerequisite for further strengthening its status as an academic journal.

At the beginning of the ILR's second century of existence, we can look forward to the current and future editors continuing to uphold the ILR's commitment to diversity, multidisciplinary, multilingualism and, most importantly, its academic rigor and intellectual independence.

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