

GEOGRAPHY IN THE LIVING WAGE DEBATE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
LIVING WAGE DISCOURSE IN ATHENS, GEORGIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Andrew Herod)

ABSTRACT

The living wage movement has been apart of United States' history since 1906 when the concept was first introduced by a Catholic priest named John A. Ryan. From that time onward, the term has been used by proponents and opponents alike to frame arguments about wages, workers, and employer responsibilities. In its simplest form, a living wage is one which “allows full-time workers to support themselves and their family above the poverty level.” This thesis explores the “living wage” and its implications in two parts. The first section argues that the discourse used in the living wage debate throughout the United States is bound up in the political construction of scale in order to justify, or not, wage increases for low-income workers. The second section of this thesis explores this argument as it is unfolding in Athens, Georgia -a community currently lobbying for the passage of a living wage law.

INDEX WORDS: Living wage, political construction of scale, Athens-Clarke County, Georgia

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of a living wage has experienced a sort of resurrection since the early 1990s when the first modern living wage movements began to sprout up in various metropolitan areas of the United States, the first being in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1994. For these nascent movements, the living wage was heralded as a potential cure for ingrained poverty among people working full-time for what turned out essentially to be poverty-level wages. These first modern movements juxtaposed the concept of a living wage against that of the minimum wage, which, in the United States, has been steadily falling in value since 1968 when it had reached its zenith in terms of real buying power (Economic Policy Institute, 2004). However, what some of these living wage campaigns either do not know, or deliberately ignore, is that the concept of the living wage is a term with a history to it, a history that includes the same moral outrage against poverty-level wages, to be sure, but also a history that is laden with gender-specific and racialized notions of “proper” workers and how they should be remunerated.

Through qualitative analysis of historical and modern discourse in the living wage debate, this thesis will focus upon two issues. First, it will analyze how this discourse was and is bound up in the political construction of scale in order to frame the living wage debate. Second, a similar style of discourse analysis will be conducted with regard to Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, to discern how this particular locality is involved in the construction of scale in order to justify, or not, a living wage law in this community.

## ***Structure of Thesis***

In this thesis I argue that living wage discourse is wielded in order to legitimate increased wages for working people. In doing so, I will attempt to show that this discourse is bound up in a political construction of scale that frames the arguments both for and against the passage of a locally-contingent and locally-enforceable living wage law. In Chapter 2, I develop the conceptual framework for this by analyzing literature exploring the political construction of scale and conclude by introducing a scale schematic, developed from Smith (1992), in order to investigate how such scales are constructed in the historic, modern, and legal living wage discourse. In Chapter 3, I explore these areas of living wage discourse ranging from the movement's earliest era (circa 1906 until the post-WWII era) until the modern era (which began around 1994 and continues up to the present as cities in the United States continue to confront the living wage issue). Each of these sections begins with an overview of relevant literature before proceeding to explore the actual discourse and its geographic implications.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and methodology that will be used in the exploration of living wage discourse in Athens, Georgia. Three specific research questions are posed, followed by an exploration of the epistemological underpinning of this research, before I conclude with an explanation of data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter 5 presents my research findings in three parts, each addressing a research question. I conclude in Chapter 6 with a summary of my results and discuss the potential contributions of this research, as well as provide some reflections on the limitations of my research. Before moving on to the conceptual framework, the remainder of this chapter contextualizes the living wage debate by describing in more detail the current status of living wage laws in the United States.

When thinking conceptually about the living wage movement in the United States, a useful framework is borrowed from Herod (1997a), where he argued that the spatiality of labor may be comprised both of a “geography of labor” and a “labor geography.” While the former portrays labor “in stark terms of how the cost and quality of labor power...affects...investment decision-making process[es]” (Herod, 1997a, p. 6), one which is subsequently used to explain geographic patterns of investment and disinvestment in the landscape, a “labor geography,” by contrast, recognizes the ability of workers as proactive agents to shape their landscape – economically, socially, and ultimately geographically. In the latter, workers are accorded agency to create their own “particular spatial fixes” (Herod, 1997a, p. 17). The difference lies not only in the agency of workers, but also in the discursive representation of those workers.

Likewise, it is possible to look at the living wage movement as being comprised both of a “geography of living wages” as well as a “living wage geography.” While the former may portray living wages in the United States as a geographic distribution of wage variations across the country, there is little sense that the impetus for that variation is initiated and maintained by low-income workers and activists, and even less of a sense that the outcome of a local living wage campaign may, in fact, be creating a new economic and geographic landscape, in effect “making space.” However, by allowing for a “living wage geography,” it is possible to begin to think about the living wage movement as one in which stakeholders are actively engaged in creating precisely these kinds of “spatial fixes.” Before explaining this further, it is still worth assessing the geographic distribution of living wage laws as they currently stand in the United States.

## ***The Geography of Living Wages***

The genesis of modern living wage campaigns in the United States has its origins in 1994, when Baltimore, Maryland, became the first city to enact a living wage law. In December of that year, the Baltimore City Council passed a bill requiring companies that have service contracts with the City of Baltimore to pay their workers at least \$6.10 per hour. The law included steps to increase the living wage over time and, as of August, 2003, Baltimore's living wage was \$8.79 per hour. Since that time, 119 other county-wide, city-wide, or institution-wide living wage laws have been passed in the United States (see Appendix A for a full list of these ordinances, along with a brief summary highlighting the main points of each, compiled in reverse chronological order). In total, 30 states either have now, or have passed but later repealed, living wage laws within their borders. Table 1 ranks the number of ordinances by state and reveals that, with 25 ordinances, minus one repealed, California has by far the highest number. Michigan, New York, and Wisconsin all have six or more ordinances, while Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon have five ordinances each. Figures 1 through 5 depict the spatial distribution of these living wage laws throughout the United States and visually reveal that, as of 2004, there are more living wage laws evident in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and West of the country, while there are fewer living wage laws in the Plains and Southern states. While such a pattern may indicate an increasing amount of unevenness in the geography of living wage ordinances, these numbers should also be a warning that if living wage activism and the subsequent passage of living wage laws have the ability to create a new economic and geographic landscapes, then that landscape likely will be far from uniform. However, as these Figures also indicate, living wage activism is not being introduced into a uniform wage environment to begin with –thus,

thirteen states have now, or will have, state-wide minimum wages higher than the Federal level of \$5.15 per hour (see Appendix B for the parameters of these State's minimum wage laws).

Not only is the spatial diffusion of living wage ordinances in the United States rather uneven, but the individual living wage rates stipulated by each ordinance are uneven as well, highlighting one of the major differences between a “living wage” and the federally-mandated minimum wage. While the current minimum wage sets a nation-wide standard of the lowest wage rate for the country's workers at \$5.15 per hour (with a few exceptions), the “living wage,” by contrast, has no set standard to which all ordinances must conform. Rather, each living wage campaign designates its own wage rate applicable only to the concerned stakeholders in that campaign, a procedure that is often a source of major contention between rivaling factions in the debate, as the remainder of this thesis will attempt to show.

So what is a “living wage”? In its simplest form, the living wage is described as a wage which allows full time workers “to support a family above the [federally-defined] poverty line” (Bellesorte, 2003, p. 1). However, there is a considerable amount of ambiguity inherent in such a definition, stemming largely from the use of words such as “family” and “*above* the poverty line.” As living wage supporters and opponents alike have noted, there is no standard definition of “family,” nor is there agreement as to just *how far* above the poverty line a family should be, while there is increasing dissatisfaction with using the federal poverty line as a baseline from which to measure poverty itself, due to its outdated methodology.<sup>1</sup> That said, Figure 6 depicts

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<sup>1</sup> The poverty threshold was developed in 1963 by Mollie Orshansky, an economist working for the Social Security Administration. Although her methodology contained convoluted methodologies which took into consideration family size, unrelated individuals, and a farm/ non-farm distinction, Orshansky ultimately determined that the proportion of total income that should be spent for food should be no more than about one third of average income after taxes. Thus, the poverty level was calculated by multiplying a baseline amount -the Agriculture Department's budget for an “economy food plan,” which provides an adequate but not exceptional diet- by 3. In 1969, the annual change in the Consumer Price Index was made the basis for the annual adjustment in the poverty thresholds, replacing adjustments based on the annual change in the per capita cost of foods in the economy food plan. (See Fisher, 1992 for an in-depth discussion of the development and history of the Federal poverty thresholds.)

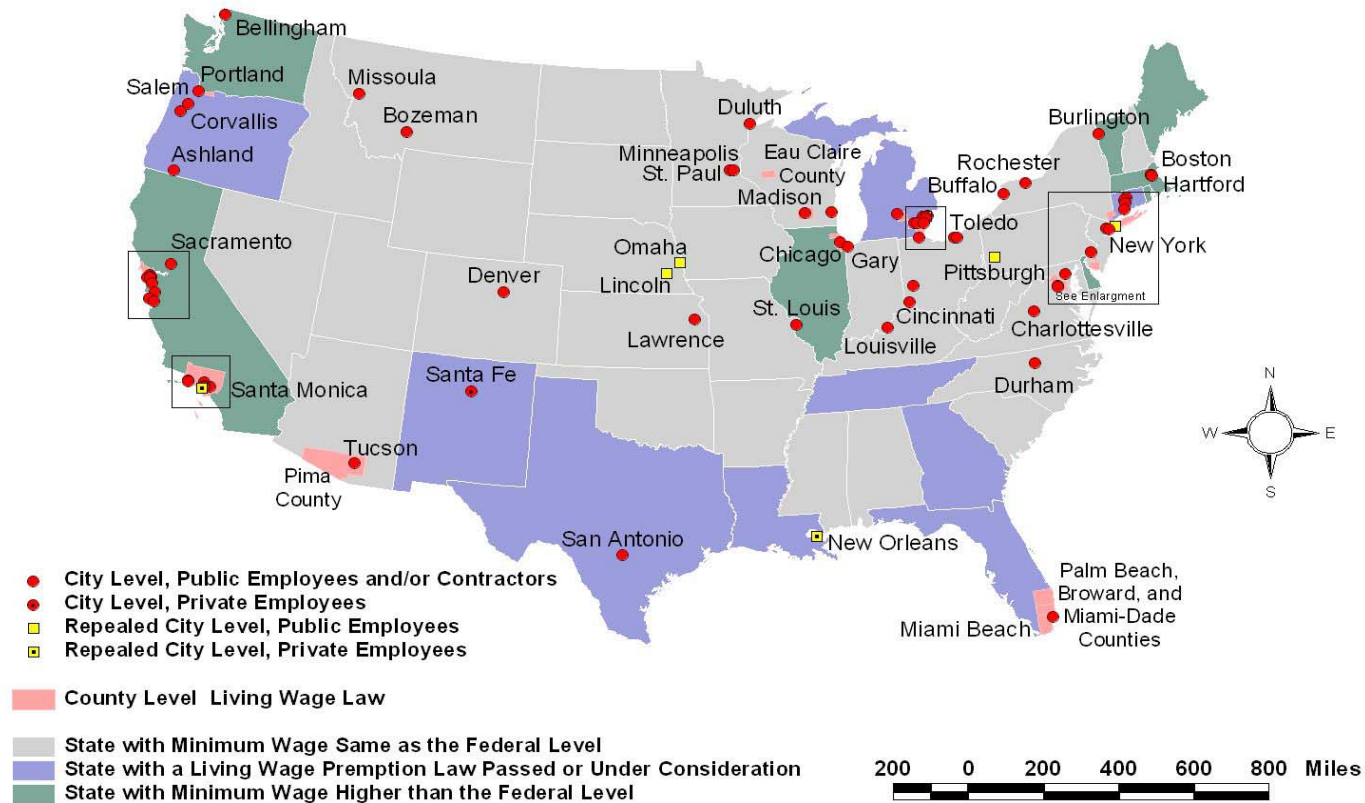
the range of living wage rates currently in effect throughout the United States. Evident, of course, is the fact that the “living wage” is not a single rate, but is a *range* of rates, each one negotiated by the concerned stakeholders in the city or municipality in which it was passed, indicating the extent to which the living wage debate is not just an economic debate but also a geographic one. At \$5.70 per hour, the lowest living wage rate (in Madison, WI) is still higher than the minimum wage, while the highest, at \$13.00 per hour (in Fairfax, California), is approximately 250% higher than the current minimum wage. The majority of living wage rates in the United States now range from \$8.00 per hour up to \$11.00 per hour. There are 36 living wage ordinances that stipulate a living wage rate between \$8.00 and \$8.99 per hour, 37 ordinances with rates between \$9.00 and \$9.99 per hour, and 14 ordinances with rates between \$10.00 and \$10.99 per hour. Incidentally, these rates do not take into consideration the health provision stipend usually included in living wage ordinances, a provision which usually adds between \$1.00 to \$2.00 per hour to the base living wage rate.

**Table 1 - Number of Local Living Wage Laws by State as of 2004, Passed or Repealed.**  
*Data collected from the ACORN Living Wage Resource Center, 2004*

State	No. of Living Wage Laws
California*	25
Michigan**	14
New York*	7
Wisconsin	6
Florida	5
New Jersey	5
Ohio	5
Oregon	5
Connecticut	4
Massachusetts	3
Maryland	3
Minnesota	3
Virginia	3
Arizona	2
Illinois	2

Montana	2
Nebraska**	2
Colorado	1
Iowa	1
Indiana	1
Kansas	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana*	1
Missouri	1
North Carolina	1
New Mexico	1
Pennsylvania*	1
Texas	1
Vermont	1
Washington	1
*1 Law Repealed, **2 Laws Repealed	

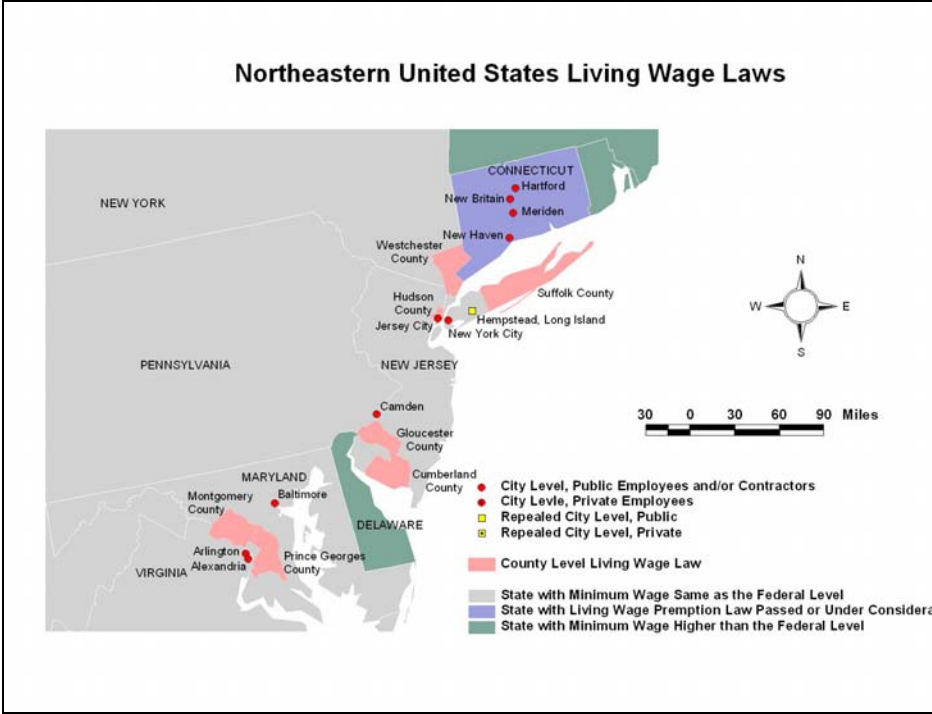
## Living Wage Laws in the United States by 2004



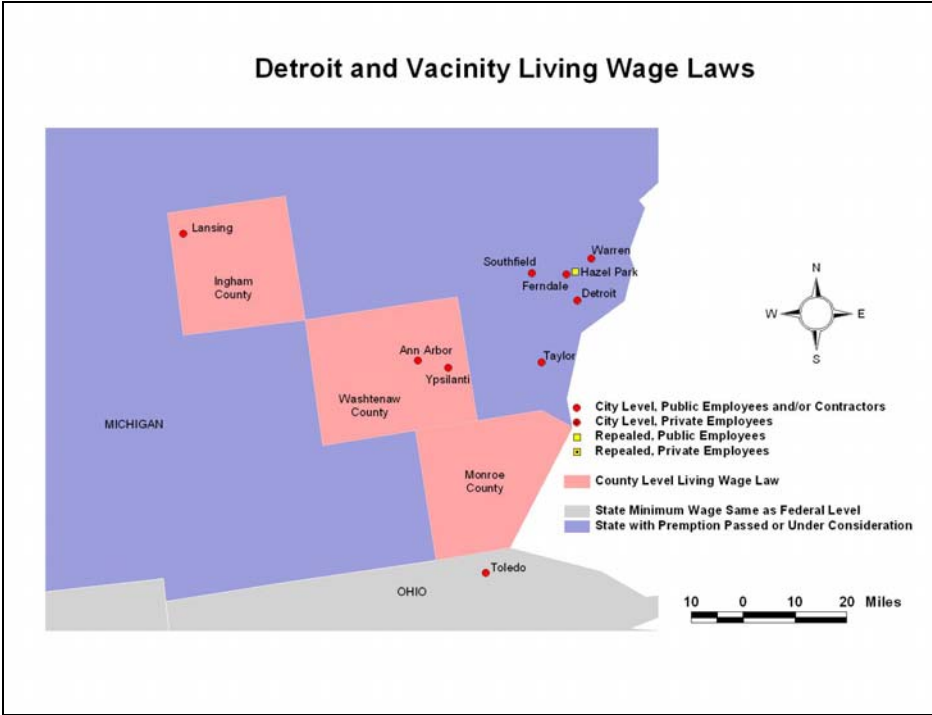
**Figure 1 - Living Wage Laws in the United States as of April, 2004.**

*Data from the ACORN Living Wage Resource Center, 2004*





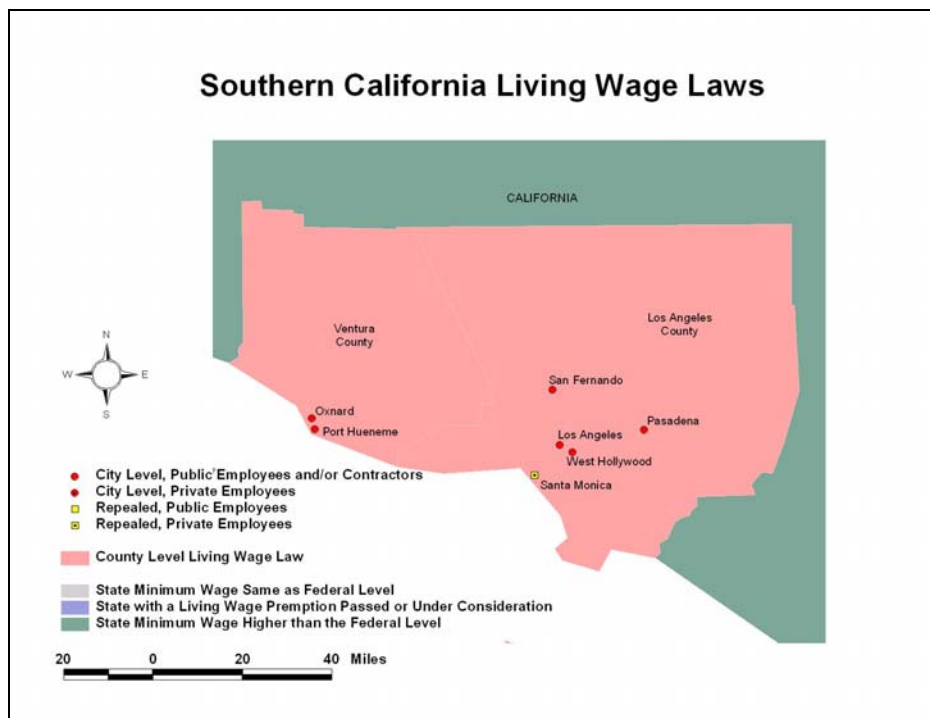
**Figure 2 - Living Wage Laws in Northeastern United States**



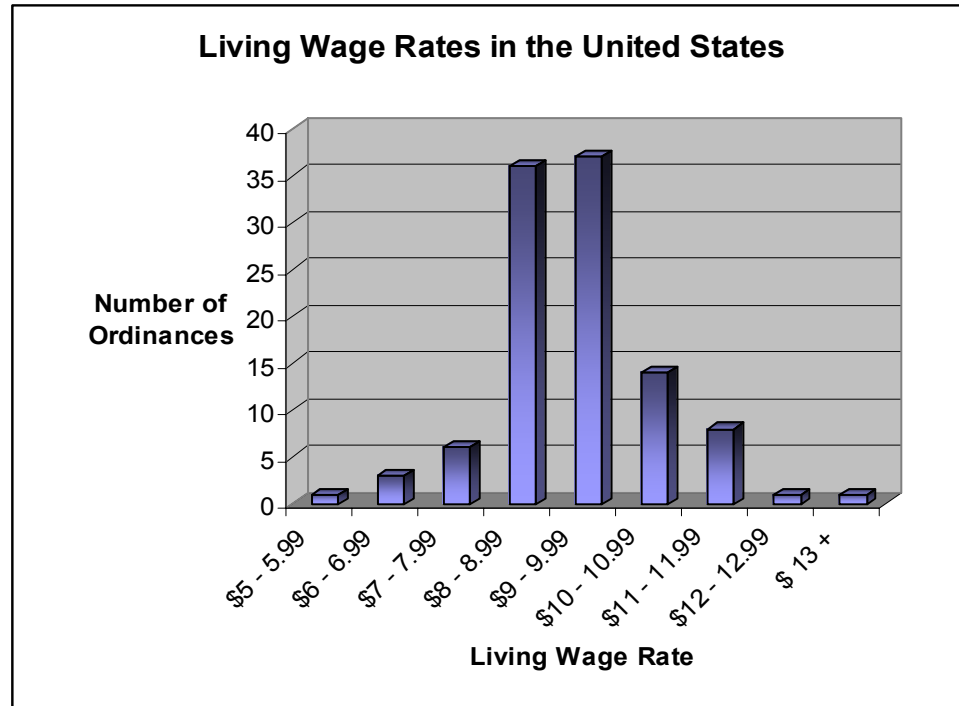
**Figure 3 - Living Wage Laws in the Detroit Area**



**Figure 4 - Living Wage Laws in Northern California**



**Figure 5 - Living Wage Laws in Southern California**



**Figure 6 - Typical Living Wage Rates in the United States as of 2004**  
*Date collected from the ACORN Living Wage Resource Center, 2004*

In his quantitative analysis of the living wage in the United States, Martin (2001) expands on the geography of living wages by analyzing the factors that he believes contributed to the passage of a living wage law in 22 large cities. In his analysis he used logistic regression analysis to test 11 independent variables for their influence on successful passage of a living wage ordinance and his results are surprising in that they challenge some of the more common economic explanations offered to explain living wage activism. For example, the percent of poverty in a city had no significant influence on whether the city passed a living wage ordinance. Likewise, the size of the city's per capita budget for service contracts also did not have a large or statistically significant impact on policy passage. However, alone among the demographic and economic variables tested, the population size of the city had a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship on passage of a living wage law, a relationship opposite to one suggested

by Pollin and Luce (1998, p. 54), who argue that small-sized municipalities could be used to an advantage by living wage activists because their small size encourages “small-town” or “grass-roots” activism:

As a matter of strategic politics, living wage campaigns have a greater chance of success in the municipalities than at the state or national level since at the municipal level the power of big-money politics is still lower.

Of the geo-political variables tested, the size of the Democratic vote in the 1996 presidential election had a large, statistically significant relationship to living wage policy passage; by contrast, cities located in the southern portion of the United States are significantly less likely to pass a living wage law, a finding seemingly confirmed in Figure 1. Neither the number of business organizations nor the number of community organizations had a significant impact on living wage passage, although the presence of an Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) chapter was determined to be statistically significant.

For Martin (2001) to argue that certain conditions explain the emergence and success of a living wage movement in a particular city treats the living wage, and even the activism that emerges from it, as a rather inert phenomenon. While a “geography of living wages” certainly may emerge from such a movement as cities with the necessary variables for passage of a living wage gradually join the list of other living wage cities, while the remainder do not, this method of exploring the concept of the living wage renders the entire movement rather lifeless for two reasons. First, it seems to treat cities as mere “vessels” for these variables, vessels with static borders and economies and little sense of evolution in reaction to shifting social, economic, or political forces. Second, it ignores the potential of living wage activism itself to reshape geo-political boundaries and identities.

## *Living Wage Geography*

Although still useful in understanding the context of the modern living wage movement, I propose in this thesis to investigate the living wage movement not as a “geography of living wages,” but as a “living wage geography.” Primarily, I am interested in exploring how the living wage movement is implicated in reshaping not only the physical geographies of the cities in which they are passed, but as well in how the concept of the living wage becomes implicated in the very construction of space and scale itself.

Herod (1997a, 2001) explained how and why workers may adopt decidedly proactive steps to transform the geographical space within which they live at numerous geographical scales. First, agency itself must be bestowed theoretically upon workers to transform the landscape, still a novel idea to traditional neo-classical economic theories which render theoretically labor as largely passive or invisible. Second, this agency then manifests itself as the social actions of workers as they implement in the physical landscape their own version of a “spatial fix” (Harvey, 1982).<sup>2</sup> Recognizing that competing groups of workers may have very different ideas of an appropriate “spatial fix” at any given time begins to hint at how the negotiation between workers and organizations may result in “scale...itself [being] socially constructed as a material entity” (Herod, 2001, p. 38). Because the concept of scale is central to the living wage debate, I will be drawing upon recent theory in human geography on the construction of scale (Herod, 1991, 2001; Cox & Mair, 1988; Cox, 1996, 2001; Delaney and Leitner, 1997; Kurtz, 2002) to show that, rather than merely rely on some existing scale to

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<sup>2</sup> According to Harvey (1982), a “spatial fix” represents a temporary solution to the inherent crisis of excess accumulation of capital. These fixes are evidenced in two distinct ways: first, the problem of over-accumulation can be prolonged by the geographic expansion of investment, output, and consumption. Of course, once capital has reached its global limit, such an option is no longer feasible. Another form of a spatial fix is to invest this over-accumulation back into the physical, built environment in such a manner that it perpetuates the ability to create new wealth.

justify, or not, a living wage law, proponents and detractors of the living wage are engaged in the construction of particular scales to frame an argument either in favor of or against a living wage in a particular locality.

The construction of scale in the living wage movement is accomplished through the use of discourse to frame the debate; hence, it is this discourse which has emerged as the primary conduit by which the vast majority of people are introduced to the term. Therefore, depending on how discourse is initially presented, substantially different interpretations will likely ensue.

Discourses are, according to Michel Foucault (1979, p. 102):

tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy.

Hence, it is precisely because there are substantially “different and contradicting” discourses in the living wage debate, both in the early renditions as well as the modern, that I have chosen to explore how different groups of stakeholders have used discourse to construct a politics of scale that has, to date, witnessed the successful passage of over 120 living wage ordinances in the United States, with many more on the horizon. With this in mind, the role of discourse in the living wage debate as it is bound up in the political construction of scale is the theme of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF SCALE

This chapter will build a conceptual framework for thinking about the political construction of scale in the living wage debate. The first section will begin by reviewing literature on the political construction of scale. The second section investigates the role of discourse in general, and the use of metaphors in particular, in the political construction of scale. The third section argues that the political construction of scale has consequences and reverberations which take shape in the form of physical realities with which people must deal. The final section then explores Smith's (1992) schematic for thinking conceptually about these different scales, the discourse used to frame them, and the implications they have on the lives of all people. From this scheme, three questions are derived as the conceptual framework that will be utilized in the remainder of this thesis for thinking about the political construction of scale in the living wage debate.

#### *The Political Construction of Scale*

Cox (1996, p. 668, emphasis in original) asks perhaps the most essential question when he inquires “just what *is* ‘scale’?,” before lamenting:

it is as if the urban, the regional, the national or whatever, just exist as part of the scenery rather than as expressions of the geographical extents of particular structures of social relations that are continually being reworked and transformed.

What he is referring to is the fundamental debate in geographic literature over the ontological status of scale itself. This debate revolves around the crucial question of whether scale is simply

a “mental device for categorizing and ordering the world” (Herod, 2003, p. 230) versus whether scale really exists as material, physical constructs brought about by social and economic processes. Although Cox (1996) clearly seems to side with the latter, it is nonetheless worth exploring both sides of this debate in more detail in order to understand the debate and its potential impacts in the living wage forum.

### *The Idealist Approach to Scale*

In the idealist approach to the conception of scale, various scales are posited as purely conceptual devices for understanding the spatial extent of everyday life. These scales generally follow a predictable and hierarchical rubric ranging from something called the “global” down to something called the “local,” or even smaller. In such an approach, each category of scale serves to compartmentalize all processes of life by allowing them to be assigned to the individual scale that is deemed appropriate. Herod (2003, p. 231), for one, describes such a process and explores the implications of this Kantian-based epistemology:

[P]articular process[es] or...social practices can...be considered to be ‘local’ whereas others are considered to be ‘global’ in scope. For idealists, the ‘global’ is usually defined by the geologically given limits of the Earth, whereas the ‘local’ is seen as a spatial resolution useful for comprehending processes and practices which occur at geographical ranges smaller than the ‘regional’ scale, which in turn is seen to be anything which is smaller than the ‘national’ scale.

Not only are these scales portrayed as predetermined categories, but they are also portrayed as mutually-exclusive, wherein an infinite number of activities presumably can be correctly identified as belonging to one or the other. Moreover, these scales are portrayed as unchanging and uncontested; Taylor (1982, p. 22), for example, noted that there seems little attempt to question the underlying rationale for codifying particular scales, nor to question the relationship between them.



### *The Materialist Approach to Scale*

In contrast to the idealist approach of conceptual scales, the materialist approach argues quite the opposite by stressing that different scales do in fact exist and that they materialize largely out of economic, political, and social practices. Herod (2003, p. 231) explains how, in such an approach, the concept of scale takes on very different implications than those described above:

[S]cales are socially produced through processes of struggle and compromise. Hence... the ‘national’ scale is not simply a scale which exists in a logical hierarchy between the global and the regional but, instead, is a scale that had to be actively created through economic and political processes.

While the difference between these two epistemologies should not be over-simplified, in the debate over the ontological status of scale, this difference is very much about whether scale is merely a predetermined mental device through which to make sense of the world, although with no attempt to question the underlying hierarchical nature of scales such as the national and the global, versus whether it must literally be constructed or “brought into being” (Herod, 2003, p. 232).

Within the materialist approach there was an early trend, exemplified by Taylor (1981, 1982) and Smith (1990), which attempted to show how this construction of scale was primarily driven by economic processes, bound up in the global circulation of capital. Taylor (1982), for example, proposed a three-tiered schematic of geographic scale in such a way as to emphasize the explicit economic relationship between scales which was driven in large part by his acceptance that capitalism “presuppose[s] a world market” (Taylor, 1982, p. 20). Thus, he proposed that the “scale of reality” is encompassed by the scale of the accumulation process itself, i.e. the global scale. A “scale of ideology,” by contrast, is aligned with the national scale, one in which equal parts of “idealist populism [and] hard-headed economic protectionism”

(Taylor, 1982, p. 29) serve to shape a national scale not as something “natural” in the landscape, but as a scale derived as a “peripheral or semi-peripheral reaction to core [global] economic dominance. It is [a] defensive mechanism” (Taylor, 1982, p. 29). Lastly, the “scale of experience” is linked to the “scale at which we live our daily lives” (Taylor, 1982, p. 29), i.e. the urban arena. Smith (1990) uses a similar rationale to delineate four distinct scales, including the “global,” “national,” “regional,” and “urban.” For Smith, the uneven development of capitalism globally, created in large part by capital’s simultaneous need to be both mobile and immobile, causes the production of scales as an outcome of these contradictory tendencies. However, Herod (2001), for one, argues that this early approach was somewhat flawed because it prioritized the effects of the circulation of capital in the construction of scale while subordinating political and social relationships.

Later materialist approaches to the concept of scale embrace not only the idea that economic processes are evident in its construction, but that social and political processes are equally as important, as is resistance to these processes. Thus, a better example of a modern materialist conceptual framework for thinking about scale and its production is offered by Delaney and Leitner (1997, p. 97):

Scale is not as easily objectified as two-dimensional territorial space, such as state borders. We cannot touch it or take a picture of it. Likewise scale exists not simply in the eye or political consciousness of the beholder. Where scale emerges is in the fusion of ideologies and practices.

Similarly, Smith (1992, p. 73) says scale “establishes and is established through the geographical structure of social interactions,” emphasizing the social nature of its production. Swyngedouw (1997, p. 169) says “spatial ‘scale’ has to be theorized as something that is ‘produced’; a process that is always deeply heterogeneous, conflictory and contested.” Likewise, Herod (1991, p. 82) asserts “geographic scale is socially produced as the resolution of processes of co-operation and

competition between and among social groups,” both of which stress the role of resistance and conflict in the production of scale. Hence, although these definitions differ slightly, ultimately they all reject the static idealist interpretation of scale by arguing instead that the real object of inquiry seems to be the *production* of scale as a result of political, economic, and social interactions.

As noted above, Smith (1990) argued that it is the uneven development of capitalism that produces scale as an outcome of contradictory tendencies in the global circulation of capital. However, it is in the challenges to this early materialist interpretation that the influence of human agency becomes apparent for subsequent theorists. Hence, Herod (1991, p. 84), for example, points out that:

conceptualizing the production of scale as simply arising out of the internal requirements of capitalist uneven development leaves little room for political struggle, progressive or reactionary, to shape scale.

What was missing in such early conceptualizations was a means for scale to be not only actively produced but also refined. Thus, as Delaney and Leitner (1997, p. 95) attest: “the ‘product’ of the politics of scale may be fluid and revisable and consequences of such politics open-ended.”

Herod (1991, 1997a, 2001) elaborates on the dialectical nature of this relationship:

Whereas political, cultural, gendered and economic struggles distinctively craft the production of scale, scale in turn defines and redefines those struggles. Scale is not merely socially produced but is also socially producing. (Herod, 1991, p. 84)

Swyngedouw (1997a, p. 169) argues that “power” plays a role in this iterative production of scale: “scaled places...become the embodiment of social relations of empowerment and disempowerment and the arena through and in which they operate.” Later, he elaborates further on this:

Scale and ‘scale articulations’ become one of the arenas and moments where socio-spatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated. If the capacity to

appropriate space is predicated upon controlling space, then the scale over which command lines extend will strongly influence the capacity to appropriate space. More importantly, as the power to appropriate place is always contested and struggled over, then the alliances that social groups or classes forge over a certain spatial scale will shape the conditions of appropriation and control over place and have a decisive influence over relative socio-spatial power. (Swyngedouw, 1997a, p. 169)

Jonas (1994, p. 258) expands on this theme when he recognizes both the production and reproduction of scale dialectically, as well as stakeholders' potential reactions when confronted with power inequalities:

On the one hand, domineering organizations attempt to control the dominated by confining the latter and their activities to a manageable scale. On the other hand, subordinated groups attempt to liberate themselves from these imposed scale constraints by harnessing powers and instrumentalities at other scales.

Jonas's (1994) language is very similar to that of Cox's (1998, p.1) explanation of how and why stakeholders may "jump scales" in order to enhance their empowerment. First, Cox (1998, p. 2) makes a distinction between "spaces of dependence" and "spaces of engagement":

Spaces of dependence are defined by those more-or-less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere; they define place-specific conditions for our material well-being and our sense of significance.

By contrast, spaces of engagement are "space[s] in which the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds" (Cox, 1998, p. 2). In Cox's argument, spaces of engagement need not necessarily align with spaces of dependence; in fact, they rarely do. But, when the "immobilization in particular spaces of dependence" causes strife around local interests, any stakeholder may attempt to "construct a network of associations" in order to achieve a favorable resolution (Cox, 1998, p. 6-7). In short, they will envision a more advantageous scale vis-à-vis their space of dependence. Hence, his argument that political struggles can, and often do, expand beyond predetermined scale boundaries is aligned with that proposed by Swyngedouw (1997b, p. 169):

Geographical configurations...become produced as temporary stand-offs in a perpetual transformative, and on occasion transgressive, socio-spatial power struggle. These struggles change the importance and role of certain geographical scales, reassert the importance of others, and sometimes create entirely new significant scales, but – most importantly – these scale redefinitions alter and express changes in the geometry of social power by strengthening power control of some while disempowering others.

When the disempowered cannot resolve a dilemma within their own space of dependence, they may be forced into a process of “jumping scales” (Cox, 1998, p. 7) in order to accomplish that end. As Cox (1998, p. 7) notes, this need not necessarily imply going from a smaller scale to a larger scale: “jumping scales may amount not so much to the construction of more global networks of association but to a strategy of a more localizing kind.”

Herod (1997a), however, in an examination of labor union contract bargaining, cautions against too literal an interpretation of the “jumping scale” metaphor. Instead, he argues that competing scales are actively created “through struggles, compromises and defeats” (Herod, 1997a, p. 163) of opposing forces in the debate:

Local, regional, national, and even international scales of bargaining (or anything else) do not simply exist waiting to be used. Rather, they are actively created through the spatial praxis of social agents.... I would argue that [‘jumping scales’] is an inappropriate metaphor, for it implies the existence of pre-made scales between which actors can jump – a position in seeming contradiction with [the] argument about scale being socially produced.

Hence, there is clearly a need to recognize a more nuanced understanding of the construction of scale –itself a metaphor which seems to suggest that scale is not significant until a physical artifact has been crafted. However, what is not disputed is that once conceptions of “local” or “global” scales have been created, stakeholders may then deliberately invoke one over the other in order to gain advantage; in effect, “actors may attempt to ‘go local’ to outmaneuver more globally organized opponents” (Herod, 2001, p. 43). Likewise, stakeholders may just as easily

attempt to broaden their “spaces of engagement.” Such diverging maneuvers can be seen in two separate case studies by Kurtz (2002) and Herod (1997b).

Kurtz (2002) describes how “scale frames” and “counter-scale frames” were invoked in a dispute between opponents and proponents of a petro-chemical plant in the town of Convent, located in St. James Parish, Louisiana. Kurtz (2002, p. 253) uses the concept of “collective action frames” –which serve to frame reality or sets of beliefs– in order to develop a theory of “scale frames” as a type of collective action frame that does the work of “naming, blaming, and claiming...with central reference to, and differentiation by, particular geographic scales” (p. 254). By contrast, a counter-scale frame “work[s] to counter or undermine one or more elements of the scale-oriented” frame by undermining the spatial extent of the original frame (Kurtz, 2002, p. 256). Faced with the possibility of a seventh petro-chemical plant being sited in their community, the St. James Citizens for Jobs and the Environment originally framed their opposition to the plant at the “parish-scale” by arguing that they were effectively the recipients of environmental injustice; the plant was expected to add to the already more than 7 million pounds of toxic air emissions released by the other plants in 1996 in the immediate area.

In this original “parish-scale” frame, the affected population was 49 percent African-American. However, by down-scaling the frame to include only a four-mile buffer zone around the proposed plant, opponents were able to raise the percentage of African-Americans in the affected population to 81 percent, an outcome which allowed them to more easily pursue their claim that building the plant would violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, under which no entity receiving federal funds may engage in practices which have disparate impacts upon groups identified by race, color or national origin. Plant opponents charged that the state-level permit granting agency was doing precisely that, but by appealing to Title VI they were able to

invoke federal-level oversight into the permitting process. Hence, Kurtz (2002, p. 266) argues that the plant opponents were simultaneously involved with “narrow[ing] the spatial scope of the manifestation of the problem, [while also] broaden[ing] the spatial scope of the implications of the problem.” This case study highlights both Smith’s (1992) and Cox’s (1998) theory that stakeholders will actively and willingly broaden their “spaces of engagement” in order to defend their “spaces of dependence” (Cox, 1998, p. 7) and, in doing so, effectively “jump scales.”

Herod (1997b) describes how the conception of scale was both invoked and contested by competing factions in the longshoring industry along the Eastern seaboard of the United States in the post-WWII era. Primarily, the opposing factions were the dock workers, represented by their union the ILA (and variously the ILA-IND and AFL-ILA after that), versus their employers. Prior to the WWII era, a local-scale port-by-port contract bargaining procedure was used, but the introduction of containerization technology meant that certain ports –primarily New York and the Northeastern U.S.– were disproportionately affected by potential job losses relative to Southern U.S. and Gulf Coast ports, which handled a larger amount of non-containerized material such as agricultural products. Herod’s (1997b, p. 148) central premise is that, fearing job losses, the northern contingent of dock workers instigated a new “geographical scale of bargaining” – one at a “national” scale– because it provided security against job losses unavailable to regional and local bargainers. By “forcing” (Herod, 1997b, p. 148) the shipping industry to bargain at a national scale, Herod is arguing two things. First, he suggests that “scale is made and remade by ordinary, everyday social practices,” i.e. the ordinary, but hardly mundane, act of contract bargaining by a union, and not merely by the “broad and abstract forces...of capitalism.” Hence, there is definitely a face being attached to the construction of scale. Second, through this negotiation, he shows how “real structures” (Herod, 1997b, p. 148) are created which are not

static but which are “subject to constant renegotiation on a daily basis as routinized social practices are transformed by workers to fit new contexts.” Hence, this argument for a greater sensitivity to the ways in which stakeholders first create, then co-opt, ideas of scale allows the possibilities for political action because it acknowledges that geographic scales are materially constituted by social actors and that there is a politics to that construction. Furthermore, it recognizes that because this construction is engineered by ordinary people, it opens up myriad possibilities for literally anybody to participate. Lastly, it recognizes that even though a material reality may result from such construction, it is itself open to being remade by future generations of stakeholders.

### ***Discourse and Metaphors***

The second point that I would like to make regarding the political construction of scale under a materialist approach –one which has profound implications in evaluating the living wage debate– is that the role of discourse cannot be underestimated (Herod and Wright, 2002; Herod, 2003; Hillis, Petit, and Cravey, 2002; Kirby, 2002; Mains, 2002; Jonas, 1994; Gibson-Graham, 2002). The rhetoric of scale is ultimately bound up with how we think about scale, which in turn fundamentally shapes how we understand “social life and its attendant spatiality” (Herod and Wright, 2002, p. 4):

[I]t is no longer sufficient to describe reality as a steadfast phenomenon that presents itself readily for observation, description, and analysis. Instead, we must interrogate how the very terms by which we define and categorize reality are themselves political tools that contribute to the consolidations and/or subversions of the various power regimes that constitute our material and social worlds. (Herod and Wright, 2002, p. 147)



The use of discourse may serve two purposes. First, following from Herod and Wright (2002, p.148), discourse and rhetoric are used to frame “arenas of dynamic political struggle.”

Delaney and Leitner (1997, p. 94) concur as much:

The politics of scale involve the politics of interests and of consciousness, and their connections.... The arguments advanced and the interpretations presented can be seen as practical efforts to persuade or convince; to create in the minds of others a kind of mental map or image of the difference that scale makes. Arguments are among the principle ‘tools’ that political actors use to shape understandings.

An example of this can be seen in Hillis, *et al.* (2002) in which their central argument is that the United States Virtual Trade Mission (VTM) –a public/private media strategy established in 1973 to “provide participating students a multimedia introduction to the big emerging markets and the opportunity they present for America’s businesses...to export sales” (p. 157)– is being used to “indoctrinate” (p. 154) young minds about the benefits of globalization. Hillis *et al.* (2002, p. 155) argue that this “promotion of an identity shift from [local] citizen to [global] entrepreneur also encourages students to shift their focus from the local and national to the global [scale].”

Hence, the inevitability of this “global scale” is being conveyed through discourse in which:

[s]tudents are told that the only scale that really matters is the global one and that interrelationships and money all flow down from the global to the local in a fashion that precludes making connections across or between localities, except as such connections facilitate the flow of capital and the emergence of ‘postnational’ commodity identities. (Hillis *et al.*, 2002, p. 166)

Second, discourse is employed through the use of metaphors which are used to describe and understand scale. Herod and Wright (2002), Herod (2003), Jonas (1994), and Gibson-Graham (2002) all recognize the inherent power in metaphors to shape how we understand scale. However, Herod (2003, p. 238) cautions that:

[w]hen thinking about the use of metaphor...it is important to recognize that the choice of one metaphor over another is usually not made on the basis of which is empirically a ‘more accurate’ representation of something but, rather, on the basis of how someone is attempting to understand a particular phenomenon.

To this I would only add that metaphors are also chosen on the basis of how someone would like *others* to understand a particular phenomenon. Hence, the presentation of scale as metaphor becomes more deliberate and soon conveys “messy and ambiguous images of future, and indeed past and present, conditions” (Jonas, 1994, p. 262) depending on the agenda of the presenters.

One particular way that metaphors are used in scaled discourse is to describe a perceived “local-global” dichotomy as some form of a hierarchical arrangement. Herod (2003) delineates five distinct metaphors often invoked when talking about a perceived “local-global” distinction and argues that some tend to convey a hierarchical relationship, such as images of scale as a ladder, concentric circles, or nested dolls, while others tend to convey a networked relationship, such as capillary-like threads or a tree root system. However, it is Gibson-Graham (2002) who addresses in detail the implications of these hierarchical metaphors. In particular, Gibson-Graham (2002) is concerned that scale is primarily construed in terms of either the ladder or concentric circle metaphor. Hence:

[the] ‘global’ and ‘local’ [are] positioned in a familiar hierarchy wherein each derives meaning from the other. The global is presented as sufficient, whole, powerful, and transformative in relation to which the local is deficient, fragmented, weak, and acted upon. (Gibson-Graham, 2002, p. 30)

Therefore, not only is there a sense of superiority and inferiority imparted by such a hierarchical metaphor, but it means that each scale is seen to be separate and mutually exclusive of the other. Consequently, “[d]eployed metaphorically, [hierarchical] scale gives the impression that social and economic legitimacy increases as one jumps up the scale hierarchy” (Jonas, 1994, p. 261).

In a case study that explores the role of discourse in the construction of scale, Mains (2002) shows how the policing of the border territory between Mexico and the United States is continually enacted and re-enacted by invoking concepts of identity and scale. In particular, she examines how Border Patrol agents along the US-Mexican border defend the United States from

the incursions of undocumented immigrants through the use of discourses in which “dominant cultural values are reinforced and re-inscribed onto specific places and bodies through the deployment of specific scalar imaginaries” (Mains, 2002, p. 193). Caught up in discourses about national security, economic decline, and racial and cultural purity, the Border Patrol –the division of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) charged with policing the border region, including apprehending and deporting illegal immigrants– actively pursues a policy which produces the mutual construction of a superior “national” scale and identity:

To maintain and preserve a distinct US identity with a specific socio-demographic make-up, an authoritative and visible monitoring presence is required at the nation’s borders.... The corporeal practices undertaken at the border [such as the production of videos insinuating an ominous threat from all border crossers, to the apprehension, detention, and deportation of suspected illegal immigrants,]...protect and reinforce the construct of a national community. Through their daily practices, Border Patrol agents reproduce notions of the national and of maintaining the integrity of the nation’s borders. (Mains, 2002, p. 204)

Hence, it is through the discourses emanating from the USCIS which serve most forcefully to reinforce the concept of a national identity that must be protected from outsiders.

### ***Physical Realities and Material Constructs***

Finally, the last point I would like to make about the construction of scale under a materialist rubric is that out of this discourse, material constructs and physical realities begin to have real implications and be “significant determinants of material practices” (Herod and Wright, 2002, p. 148). In order to assert that these physical realities are actively constructed, it is necessary that stakeholders are granted agency to execute this transformation. Herod (2001, p. 14) recognized this in his critique of prior neoclassical economic and Marxist theory when he noted that “both approaches have primarily presented economic geographies devoid of workers as active geographical agents.” However, he goes on to assert that “workers have a vested

interest in making space in certain ways and that their ability to do so is a potent form of social power” (Herod, 2001, p. 16). Workers (and surely “non-workers” for that matter) make space in particular ways for their own ends and to ensure their own well-being and, ultimately, survival. Hence, physical transformations are inscribed onto the landscape which serve to reify a “spatial fix” (Harvey, 1982). Or, in the words of Marston (2000, p. 221), “scale-making is not only a rhetorical practice; its consequences are inscribed in, and are the outcome of, both everyday life and macro-level social structures.”

Having explored how the construction of scale may arise out of both the physical transformation of the landscape, brought about by economic, social, and political forces, as well as the use of discourse to influence how we think about those processes, the remainder of this chapter will look more closely at how these processes may unfold in the lives of stakeholders. Specifically, I will be using a schematic proposed by Smith (1992) to explore how these processes become bound up in the construction of a range of scales which serve particular purposes for particular stakeholders.

### ***Smith’s (1992) Schematic for Thinking about Scale***

Smith (1992) suggests a schematic for thinking about scale which emphasizes the role of the circulation of capital, similar to Harvey (1982) and Taylor (1981, 1982), but also incorporates in its view the idea that broader political and social forces are significant factors too:

Geographical scale is hierarchically produced as part of the social and cultural, economic and political landscapes of contemporary capitalism and patriarchy. The point is precisely not to ‘freeze’ a set of scales as building blocks of a spatialized politics, but to understand the social means and political purposes through and for which such freezing of scales is nonetheless accomplished –albeit fleetingly. (Smith, 1992, p. 66)

Smith's (1992) outline for idealized scale delineations include that of the "body," "home," "community," "urban space," "region," "nation," and "global." Although presented in a manner that would tend to reinforce a hierarchical rubric which equates increases in size with increases in complexity, Smith (1992) nevertheless is concerned with revealing how challenges to, and political contests over, these scales are part of the practices of everyday lives of "ordinary people" (Herod, 2001, p. 45). Specifically, Smith (1992) argues first that each scale is created through discourse, rhetoric, and metaphors about its identity and perceived borders and that, second, those borders are then given "coherence" (Smith, 1992, p. 66) by some physical reality that becomes inscribed into the landscape as people conduct and contest their lives. Lastly, he includes possible sources of resistance to scales which are often imposed by these contesting forces.

For Smith (1992), the scale of the "body" defines the site of personal identity, while the scale of the "home" provides the most immediate context in which this takes place. While each is embodied in a physical form –the body and the house, literally– Smith (1992) also contends that each is highly gendered and that this forms the basis for much of the discourse used to construct these scales, as well as the resistance to them. According to Smith (1992, pp. 67-9):

The dialectic of identity and difference is central to the definition of scale but nowhere more important than with the body.... The...boundary between individual and [for example] state control of the body is contested in the politics of abortion and of sexual preference.... [Following from this,] if the interest of men lies largely in containing women within the home, the interest of women lies more in extending the power and pride experienced in the home to higher geographical scales.

The "community" scale represents the site of social reproduction and incorporates myriad social and cultural institutions created for educational, religious, and recreational purposes. "Community," for Smith (1992, p. 70), "is...the least specifically defined of spatial scales [yet also] one of the most ideologically appropriated metaphors in contemporary public discourse."

Hence, resistance situated at a “community” scale is likely to be a struggle which develops as a “political recognition of social identity –class, race, national origin” (Smith, 1992, p. 71). The “urban” scale represents the daily sphere of the labor market which involves “the most accomplished centralization of capital and social resources devoted to social production, consumption, and administration” (Smith, 1992, p. 72); it is given coherence largely by the daily commute of workers. A significant source of resistance, then, develops from the very processes that give the “urban” scale its meaning: “[t]o the extent that larger conurbations incorporate larger and larger concentrations of oppressed and exploited people...[it] also creates the conditions for political organization of the oppressed” (Smith, 1992, p. 72).

The “regional” scale is the site of economic production and, as such, it is closely bound up with the “larger rhythms of the national and global economy [which] is constructed disproportionately around the kinds of work performed there” (Smith, 1992, p. 73). The region can be conceived as a concentrated network of economic connections between producers, suppliers, and distributors. The social division of labor is “sharply expressed” (Smith, 1992, p. 73) in spatial terms at the regional scale; however, regional borders are also highly porous and changeable. Again, resistance is disproportionately a class struggle and may be highly defensive, combating some perceived external invasion:

Most defensive of all, politically very diverse and often the most volatile are those regional movements based less directly on political economic demands than on historic, possibly romantic, cultural claims that seek to reinstate certain regions as separate. (Smith, 1992, p. 74)

The “national” scale is primarily a political construct which shifted from one formed as the “product of war” to one “resulting largely from the increased scale of economic activity and accumulation attendant on...emergent capitalism” (Smith, 1992, p. 75; also Taylor, 1981, 1982). Resistance is mounted in the face of a “ruling minority class [which] systematically incorporates

in the legal and ideological fabric of the state exploitation and oppression on the basis of class, race, gender, and other social differences” (Smith, 1992, p. 75). The “global” scale, too, is socially produced primarily as a construct of the circulation of capital. Through political as well as economic means, “the rising bourgeoisie actively coalesced different islands of national power into global hegemony” (Smith, 1992, p. 76). In Table 2, I have summarized Smith’s (1992) schematic in order to facilitate easy reference for later chapters which deal exclusively with the living wage debate and which invoke these scales delineations liberally.

**Table 2 – Smith’s (1992) Schematic for Thinking about Scale**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Discourse of the identity, differences, and borders</b>	<b>Material constructs, physical realities giving it coherence</b>	<b>Sources of possible resistance</b>
Body	Boundary between “self” and “other” in a social, as well as physical, sense	Physical body	Symbolic refusal of containment
Home	Heavily gendered site, locus of female activity	Physical home	Usually gender-based
Community	Site of social reproduction	Indistinct; usually follows intertwined social and cultural institutions	Place-based struggles
Urban Space	Daily sphere of the labor market	Administrative boundaries, daily journey to work	Political resistance
Region	Site of economic production	Social division of labor, borders are highly porous and changeable	Class struggles, perhaps as the basis of political organization
Nation	Dominant scale of state power	Political boundaries	Racial, gender, class resistance to institutionalized inequality
Global	Circulation of capital	Earth	Anti-imperial, antiwar, post-colonial, environmental, and feminist movements.

## ***Conclusion***

In the idealist approach to scale, different delineations, largely predetermined and static, were perceived as being merely mental constructs for ordering the world and all of its attendant processes. By contrast, I explored in more detail a materialist approach to scale, which argued that scales arise as a result of these processes. While early materialists such as Taylor (1991,

1992) and Smith (1990) emphasized the role of the global circulation of capital in these processes, later Marxian-influenced geographers such as Cox (1996, 1998), Herod (1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2001), Swyngedouw (1997), and Jonas (1994) all argued for a more dialectical construction of scale as a continually negotiated process which include not only economic influences, but social and political as well. Throughout this process, discourse is employed both to frame the concept of scale as well as to suggest metaphors that, either overtly or covertly, “fundamentally alter” (Herod, 2003, p. 238) the way we think about the phenomenon that it is describing. This literature argues that it is not “broad and abstract forces at work” in the construction of scale, but is very much the result of “ordinary people” engaging in the construction of scale “through the practices of their everyday lives” (Herod, 2001, p. 45). Lastly, this is a discursive process that neither begins nor ends with the permanent fixation of a particular “scale,” but with certain discourses giving more or less coherence to thinking about particular spatial arrangements.

From this literature, then, I would like to conclude by suggesting three questions which allow for the exploration of each of these individual components.

- *How do people perceive their “spaces of dependence” and “spaces of engagement” in terms of scale, or in terms of inscribing a “spatial fix” that is advantageous to their beliefs?*
- *How is discourse used to frame that scale? How are particular metaphors used and are they effective?*
- *What material constructs or physical realities exist now or would need to be created in order to give coherence to various scales? How do these form the basis for subsequent resistance?*

Having developed this conceptual outline to describe the construction of scale and the role of discourse, the next chapter uses this framework to analyze living wage discourse as it has been very much bound up in this discursive process of constructing, and contesting, scale.



# **CHAPTER 3**

## **SCALE, DISCOURSE, AND PHYSICAL REALITIES**

### **IN THE LIVING WAGE DEBATE**

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter will review living wage discourse that spans from the movement's inception, circa 1906, up to its present day use in modern literature. In the earliest forms of living wage rhetoric, discourse was used to frame the living wage debate as one designed largely around socially-constructed identities of individual workers legitimately deserving of a living wage. After analyzing this historical discourse, the second section of the chapter will review the modern living wage literature in which much of the discourse is concerned with defining the proper geographical scale for delimiting wage rates. While opponents rely on fuzzy notions of globalization to argue that "local" living wage laws are deviant and economically disastrous, proponents likewise invoke a range of scalar discourses as a counterpoint. The final section of the chapter will explore the legal considerations that are emerging from the modern discourse, a trend which started in 1997 when the State of Louisiana passed a state-wide living wage preemption law, thereby overruling a city-wide living wage law that had been passed in New Orleans.

#### ***Historical Living Wage Discourse and its Geographic Implications***

Both Smith (1992) and Harvey (2000) recognize that "bodies" are socially constructed. While Smith (1992, p. 67) tends to emphasize the body as a "cultural locus of gender meanings,"

hence according ample weight to the claim that “contests at this scale are...dominated by gender” (1992, p. 67), Harvey, on the other hand, adopts a less gendered view of “body politics” in *Spaces of Hope* (2000, p. 130). Thus, for Harvey:

The body that is to be the ‘measure of all things’ is itself a site of contestation for the forces that create it.... The study of the body has to be grounded in an understanding of real spatio-temporal relations between material practices, representations, imaginations, institutions, social relations, and the prevailing structures of political-economic power.

Harvey (2000) even devotes a chapter specifically to the living wage debate and the contestation of bodies therein. Although drawing from a relatively modern and specific living wage campaign in Baltimore, Maryland, initiated in 1994, he also generalizes its implications:

The...campaign for a living wage...offers a rather special set of openings to change the politics of how bodies are constructed/ destroyed.... [It is] a fundamental form of body politics. (Harvey, 2000, p. 127)

Specifically, he argues that bodies will not only be constructed, but will themselves participate in that construction:

Concepts such as *person*, *individual*, *self*, and *identity*, rich with political thought and possibilities, emerge phoenix-like out of the ashes of body reductionism to take their places within the firmament of concepts to guide political action.... It is the laborer as *person* who is the bearer of the commodity labor power and that person is the bearer of ideals and aspirations concerning, for example, the dignity of labor and the desire to be treated with respect and consideration as a whole living being, and to treat others likewise. (Harvey 2000, p. 118, italics in original)

Hence, while there is certainly room for gender contests in the living wage debate, primarily Harvey sees the living wage debate as one in which bodies are deliberately constructed and contested in the circulation of capital.

While Harvey easily recognizes body politics in contemporary living wage rhetoric, there is as well a considerable amount of historical discourse that is engaged in precisely this same process of constructing “bodies”; indeed, early living wage discourse is virtually saturated with discourse used to construct certain “bodies” as legitimate receivers of a living wage. Beginning

in 1906, and proffered mainly by a reform-minded Catholic priest named John A. Ryan, both religious and economic discourse were used to frame the living wage as ethically required of employers and morally deserving of employees. Specifically, Ryan (1906, 1916) legitimized his argument for a living wage on three principles:

God created the earth for the sustenance of *all* His children; therefore, that all persons are equal in their inherent claims upon the bounty of nature.... [T]he inherent right of access to the earth is conditioned upon, and becomes actually valid through, the expenditure of useful labor.... The men [sic.] who are in present control of the opportunities of the earth are obliged to permit reasonable access to these opportunities by persons who are willing to work. (Ryan, 1916, pp. 113-4, emphasis in original)

Although not opposed to a capitalistic economic system in general, Ryan argued that one element of production, labor, was not to be regarded as a lifeless commodity to which competition could produce a fair market value. Arguing that because the capitalist system was itself a construction of humans, Ryan (1906, pp. 21-2) could infer:

Economic laws are not inexorable, are not independent of the wills of the men [sic] whose actions they describe, do not compel wages to be adjusted by an unlimited use of the economic strength of the bargainers, and do not render existing rates of wages just.

Ryan did, in fact, lend considerable support to the capitalistic system and is not to be accused of harboring communist sympathies. Although he considered living wages to be a right of workers, he also accorded similar rights of profits to employers and capitalists, conceding:

[t]he man [sic] who produces more wealth or other forms of social utility than his fellow producers acquires some kind of right to a greater reward, independently of the extent or intensity of his needs...[because] some of the producers make greater efforts and greater sacrifices than others; and a large part of the world's productive resources is already held by legitimate titles of private ownership. (Ryan, 1906, p. 77; also pp. 199-222)

Along the same lines, private property, he reasoned, “is morally legitimate because it is the method that best enables man to realize his natural right to use the gifts of material nature for the development of his personality” (Ryan, 1906, p. 72).

Clearly, Ryan's discourse hinges on the issue of rights. But regarding rights, he maintained that "as a determinant of rights, economic force has no more validity or sacredness than physical force" (Ryan, 1906, p. 326). Rather, the rights that he repeatedly invokes were of a form divinely conferred upon humans and, as such, were inalienable by human factors. In short, Ryan's position can be summed up in one sentence: "The ethical value of labor is always equivalent to at least a living wage, and the employer is morally bound to give this much remuneration" (Ryan, 1916, p. 119). The concepts of ethics and morality permeate the entirety of Ryan's work and it is around these terms that living wage discourse of this era acquires legitimacy for other writers of the time.

Early, and for that matter contemporary, proponents and opponents of living wages are concerned with the implication of the phrase "living wage." Ryan (1906, p. 95-124, italics in original) could see that living wage arguments posed problems about assigning specific wage levels:

concerning the amount of subsistence goods comprised in the idea of a decent livelihood, the '*sensus communis*' lacks definiteness...[because] the needs of men [sic] and their powers of making an effective use of a given amount of goods or money, are too dissimilar to find a perfectly exact expression in any common denominator.

Figart *et al.* (2002, p. 35) express it perhaps more clearly. Supporters of living wages, they argue:

have to address the question of what, exactly, constitutes a 'living.' Unless it is viewed as a biological minimum below which survival is unlikely, the living wage is a social construct, based on the historically specific, accepted standard of living for the working class.

Although Ryan does devote space to calculating a living wage (1906, chapter VII), his race- and class-consciousness, to his fault, start to become apparent precisely in the fashion described by Figart, *et al.* (2001, 2002):

Through the influence of habit or custom [a worker] comes to regard certain of these acquired needs as essential elements of a decent standard of life. They differ relatively to different races, communities, ranks and classes of men [sic].... Hence a decent livelihood, or a Living Wage, must conform in a reasonable degree to the conventional standard of life that prevails in any community or group. (Ryan, 1906, p. 126)

Again, Figart *et al.* (2001, 2002) put it slightly more succinctly: “the notion of a ‘living’ is gendered and racialized as social understandings of an appropriate wage have varied historically according to the sex and race of the worker” (2002, p. 35), as have notions of skill (Wright, 1999). And imbued throughout the historical texts on living wages are myriad discourses that identify both the receivers and non-receivers of living wages. Hence, not only is there an acknowledgement of differentiation by “races, communities, ranks and classes” of workers (Ryan, 1906), there is as well the theoretical argument that certain of these workers, defined by historically appropriate wage levels (Figart *et al.*, 2001, 2002), will effectively be sorted into different types of workers and non-workers –categories by which entitlement to a living wage is then assessed.

Here it starts to become clear that within Ryan’s claims of moral and ethical rights to a living wage there were also certain caveats attached; namely, a living wage was a moral and ethical right *only for certain workers* –or put another way, it was a living wage only for certain “bodies.” The remainder of this section explores in more detail the early rhetoric as it was implicated in constructing these “bodies” as legitimate recipients of a living wage. The seven distinct socially-constructed identities that I have identified from archival literature include: male/ female, freeperson/ slave, Caucasian/ African American or other ethnic minority, citizen/ alien, and producer/ consumer. Two additional identities constructed in living wage discourse, although less prominent, concern able-bodiedness and heteronormativity.

## *Bodily Dichotomies*

Arguably the most important of all dichotomies constructed through living wage discourse, the male/ female dichotomy, appears as the central distinction around which wages were contested. Fundamentally tied to good wages, “modern manhood” (Ryan, 1906, p. 115) required striking a bargain with the wage system which would permit the patriarchal family to be kept intact. The wage system under purportedly gender-blind neo-classical economic mechanisms, however, loomed as an ever-present threat because the wage system that employed women as less expensive labor threatened to subvert and reverse sex roles. Glickman’s (1997) conclusion that “in...working class masculinist ideology, women not only fulfilled necessary reproductive and domestic functions; they also demarcated a dependence whose absence defined manhood” (Glickman, 1997, p. 44) reverberates with ideological proclamations about women’s place in American consumer society. While Ryan (1906, p. 115) maintains that “in any rightly ordered society the father is the natural provider for all members of the family,” others appealed to more essential and stereotypical arguments: the consensus among living wage supporters was that “uncounted mothers who have a right to be home stayers, are denied that right...[because] husbands’ incomes cannot support homes” (Abbott, 1890, quoted in Glickman, 1997, p. 45). Closely linked to the male/ female dichotomy is a stringent heteronormative marker. Ryan (1906, p. 117) stated bluntly that: “the majority of men cannot reach a proper degree of self-development outside of the conjugal state.” He continued:

for the average man, celibacy is not normal, and consequently cannot be taken as a measure of reasonable and natural rights. The man who is forced by poverty to accept it supports an unnatural and unjustifiable burden, and is deprived of one of the chief means of normal self-development. Hence the minimum of the material conditions of decent and reasonable living comprises, for the adult male, the means of supporting a family. (Ryan, 1906, p. 117-18)

Although only presented as a one-sided identity, a heteronormative marker of legitimacy to a living wage may be seen not only as an affirmation of the male/ female dichotomy but also as a method of including single male workers in the definition of persons justified in receiving a living wage as a way of avoiding the possibility that married men would be forced to compete with single men for jobs. Instead, this was avoided by simply arguing that all men would eventually marry; therefore, their wages should reflect a living *family* wage.

A third example of socially-constructed dichotomous identities derived from early living wage discourse contrasts a state of freedom to that of slavery or, at the very least, indentured servitude. Again, Glickman (1997) describes best how, since the inception of the Industrial Revolution in America until immediately following the Civil War, people had largely resisted the idea of waged labor. Wage workers invoked phrases such as “‘wage slavery’ or ‘prostitution’...the most degraded state the race-conscious, patriarchal white male American workers could imagine” (Glickman, 1997, p. 15) to project their extreme distaste for the idea of wage labor. When, in 1879, Ira Steward stated: “slavery is...the child of poverty;...and freedom is the child of wealth” (quoted in Glickman, 1997, p. 34), he was referring to the perceived unnatural relationship of participants in the capitalist system, specifically between capitalist and worker, in which the “servility produced by wage labor undermined the independence that lay at the root of republican manhood [sic] and republican citizenship” (Glickman, 1997, p. 23).

Glickman (1997) identifies two distinct versions of this freeperson/ slave opposition. In a “producerist” version “wage slavery resulted from the difference in value between what workers produced and what they earned in wages, which was often said to have been stolen from them” (Glickman, 1997, p. 25). By contrast, in a “consumerist opinion[, ] wages that did not meet the needs of workers...[had a] seeming inability to reward the nation’s producers with a comfortable

lifestyle” (Glickman, 1997, p. 25). Denied the ability to consume the very products they produced, workers would be forced into an ideological position of “consumer slavery” –working to produce what they could not own. The difference is important because the consumerist version condemned the wage system not because it robbed workers of equivalence, but because it denied them what they need to live as “family men and citizens” (Glickman, 1997, p. 26), again invoking notions of the male/ female identity, among others. After the abolition of slavery, the freeperson/ slave division was largely marginalized in favor of a low wage/ living wage distinction which still maintained a consumerist essence:

[T]he consumerist idea of just reward implied...that workers under the wage system could be free and fairly remunerated. It required only a short leap from the concept of the ‘just reward’ to ‘just wages’ and from ‘just wages’ to ‘living wages’” (Glickman, 1997, p. 26).

Closely linked to the freeperson/ slave dichotomy, likely due in large part to the era in which living wage discourse was established, is a dialectical relationship between Caucasians and ethnic minorities, especially African Americans. In their use of living wage discourse, white (male) workers “put [other] workers on the margins of the trade union movement –women, blacks, and recent immigrants– in the ranks of the wage slaves” (Glickman, 1997, p. 29) in order to establish the dialectical relationship between themselves and other workers. Invoking the idea that an “American” worker was of a superior group, the discourse sought not only to separate but also to denigrate ethnic minorities. Not uncommon was the attitude of Williams (1887, p. 82, quoted in Glickman):

[T]he American laborer should not be expected to live like the Irish tenant farmer or the Russian serf. His earnings ought to be sufficient to enable him to live as a respectable American citizen.

Apparent here is the close association of Caucasians with American citizenship, but this citizen/ alien dichotomy also overlaps with the freeperson/ slave distinction. My sense is that this is due



in large part to the tendency to package otherwise disparate characteristics together in such a way that they form a string of overlapping identities which are presumed to be at least compatible and desirable, if not outright required. In this sense, Ryan does not blatantly abuse the distinction between identities; however, neither is his declaration very illuminating. Ryan (1906, p. 128) merely adheres to the notion that “a Living Wage...[should be] sufficient...to afford...adequate leisure to discharge the duties of citizenship,” although he rarely elaborates as to what precisely those duties would be. The justification of living wages through citizenship requires an appeal to productive activity: workers staked their claims to political rights on their position as the producers of the nation’s wealth, but concomitantly, and somewhat tautologically, they claimed that, as citizens, they deserved a comfortable existence. In other words, workers made their claim to citizenship based on the fact that they worked, but the fact that they worked was perceived as justification that they deserved all of the amenities accorded to American citizens, which included an expanded level of consumption. Additionally, the citizen/ alien dichotomy invokes the consumerist vision alluded to earlier in which an American society of both producers and consumers is critical to the reproduction of the American capitalist system. However, in this discourse not all consumption can be considered equal. Glickman (1997, p. 90), for example, noticed that:

whereas the Chinese were faulted for underconsumption, blacks were said to consume mindlessly and limitlessly. The two groups represented two poles of primitivism in a modern economy: excessive self-denial and instant gratification. Either extreme would disrupt the seamless web of economic life...defined...as the American norm.<sup>3</sup>

In this consumerist “linguistic subversion” (Glickman, 1997, p. 81), there is a connection between frugality and slavery on the one hand, and consumption and freedom on the other, again echoing earlier identity constructions evident in logic that implied that those who were civilized

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<sup>3</sup> See also Anderson, 1991 for additional discourse on the purported underconsumption of ethnic Chinese in Vancouver, Canada.

became increasingly so through higher wages, but the uncivilized were not equipped for a high standard of living and would either fritter away their wages or hoard them unnecessarily.

The least prominent identity constructed through living wage discourse is that of being able-bodied. Perhaps because the condition was seen to be a self-evident requirement in order to participate in the work force, less explicit mention is made of its condition. Ryan (1906, pp. 82-83), however, and in characteristic form, does make a note of it, insisting that: “the adult male of average physical ability...[should earn enough] to prevent bodily deterioration.” By contrast, the spectacle of lacking able-bodiedness seems to serve as a proxy for other undesirable conditions. There is, for example, vehement castigation of “able-bodied colored men in the South who do not know enough to ask for living wages” (Glickman, 1997, pp. 32), implying that those who are in possession of an abled-condition yet are still unable to secure employment, or the right kind of employment, are exhibiting deviant behavior.

In reiterating the central premise of this section that the creation of these dichotomies was intentional and calculated, wages can be seen as much more than merely establishing a market value of labor. Rather, they are “a means of establishing and reinforcing what men and women should be doing and how they should live” (Figart *et al.*, 2002, p. 63). The idea of accepting wages in exchange for hourly labor became more standard because the very meaning of what it meant to accept wages underwent a transformation. What Glickman (1997, p. 51) refers to as the “living wage solution” was no less than the “reconciliation of manhood [sic] with wage earning.” Workers came to interpret wages as consistent with, and even constitutive of, freedom when wages were at a level high enough to produce and reproduce contemporary racial and gender roles. As a result:

workers played an active role in the construction of American consumer society, not just as participants in popular culture but as originators of a vision of a democratic political

economy to which working-class consumption and consumer organizations were integral. (Glickman, 1997, p. 52)

The process of establishing these dichotomies, however, implicates gender and race directly. Instead of treating differentials in wages as an anomaly, the result of a complication to the workings of a free market, here the purpose is to show that wage differentials “are themselves a social practice, and that the institutional arrangements and public policies that influence wages are also important social practices” (Figart *et al.*, 2002, p. 62). Ultimately, the discourse used to make these arguments for a living wage is bound up in the process of constructing certain “bodies” as its rightful recipients.

Keeping in mind the three questions posed at the conclusion of Chapter 2 as a way of framing the larger process of the political construction of scale in the living wage debate, elements of Smith’s (1992) schematic can now be deciphered. For early living wage proponents, the scales which were perceived to be the most advantageous from which to support a living wage certainly included that of the “body” and “home,” where notions of divinely-granted human (bodily) existence and gendered rhetoric abound, but also included elements of the “national” scale, where references to the *ideology* of “American” outweigh references to actual rights conferred Constitutionally. Hence, this literature represents not so much the process of “jumping scales” (Cox, 1998) but the actual creation, mentally at least, of scales through metaphors such as “slave,” “consumer,” and “American.”

It is perhaps ironic that if a nation-wide living wage had been established during this era, it would have contributed greatly to the physical reality needed in order to strengthen the coherence of these scales. As it stands, a watered-down version of a living wage was created – the minimum wage – by the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1937. By setting the first minimum wage at \$0.25 an hour, well below the rate of what some unions had been able to gain through

collective bargaining (at the time as high as \$0.88 an hour [R. Harvey, 2003]), the Act served to lend coherence to a “national” scale of minimum wage rates. Notwithstanding the fact that the Act did allow for sub-national entities (states and municipal ordinances) to establish minimum wage rates higher than the federal level, this perception of a “national” scale of minimum wage rates virtually silenced the living wage movement until it was reborn in Baltimore, Maryland, circa 1990. The next section will explore in more detail how this modern discourse to great degree shares with the historical discourse the inclination to situate living wage rhetoric at certain scales, particularly the “body,” in order to sway opinion as to the living wage’s potential poverty-reducing qualities, but also invokes the entire range of scales identified in Smith (1992) as it is used to frame the living wage debate.

### ***Modern Living Wage Discourse and its Geographic Implications***

Whereas historical living wage discourse is framed largely by “body politics,” the modern discourse is better understood in the context of globalization and anti-globalization literature. The transformations purportedly being wrought under a rubric of globalization are crucial for understanding the context within which living wage campaigns are conducted; this can be seen in several ways. First, globalization may be contributing to physical changes in the economic, political, and social landscape. In particular, globalization may be contributing to a deterioration in working conditions, not the least of which includes the suppression of wages. It is the latter, of course, which is at the heart of the living wage debate as stakeholders either praise or criticize the purported new wage reality. A second reason to consider globalization’s acute influence on the modern living wage movement is that there is a set of discourse which surrounds the globalization process, a discourse which contributes to how people think about the

process itself, as well as how people think about those whom it affects. While these discourses may go so far as to “naturalize” the process, they may also be bound up with disparaging those who oppose it. Before exploring more of this discourse as it has emerged from various living wage campaigns throughout the United States, I will first describe in more detail some of the purported physical transformations wrought by globalization and what it may mean for living wage supporters and opponents.

Globalization is a rather nebulous term, but for the purpose of considering globalization in the living wage debate, O’Tuathail, Herod, and Roberts (1998, p. 2) offer a good working description:

[Globalization is] an imperfect name for a differential and uneven process of transition from an international economy to an imaginary unified global economy.... [It is] a flexible concept for flexible times, one that is much evoked by commentators and capable of being articulated in a variety of ways.

Hence, globalization can represent a variety of processes, depending on who is describing it.

Some of the processes purported to be a signal of a globalizing economy are described by Herod (1997c, p. 166):

- The shift from Keynesian demand-side economics toward the supply-side approach advocated by neoliberals
- Tremendous growth in the contingent (temporary and part-time) workforce
- Continued declines in union membership
- Greater global competition
- The development of flexible production technologies
- Tendency toward production at smaller plants
- The growth of subcontracting

Just as important as these purported changes to the physical realities in an economic landscape is the idea that discourse plays a large role in the spread of globalization. Thus, O’Tuathail, *et al.* (1998, p. 3) say that “[i]n the discourse of neoliberalism, globalization is the unfolding of the latent potential of *laissez-faire* capitalism to revolutionize the globe,” while

Leyshon (1997, p. 143) argues that it is “largely a private-sector discourse produced by and for a community concerned to develop scripts surrounding corporate strategy.” In short, globalization guided by a highly neoliberal economic rubric is being proffered by the very people that stand to gain the most from it: capitalists.

For Gibson-Graham (1996, p. 121, emphasis added), such discourse is troubling because it has the effect of normalizing the entire process:

[R]eferences are rampant to the *inevitability* of capitalist penetration and the *naturalness* of capitalist domination. The dynamic image of penetration and domination is linked to a vision of the world as already or about to be wholly capitalist –that is a world ‘rightfully owned’ by capitalism.

Dicken, Peck, and Tickell (1997, pp. 158-9, emphasis added) have a very similar concern:

Quite often, globalization is represented not so much as a historical tendency or a complex process, but as an outcome: a ‘new order’.... Such interpretations have the effect of *naturalizing* the global; of treating globalization as some sort of *relentless* and *inevitable* process, driven by the twin imperatives of capitalist competition and technological change.

The result is a capitalist hegemony –the “capacity of a model of social relationships to impose itself as the desired model on the rest of society” (Swyngedouw, 1997b, p. 147)– in which the only conceivable economic system is one driven exclusively by neoliberal economic policy.

Two specific globalization discourses that may serve as exemplary of more complex globalization rhetoric, and which are also relevant in the living wage debate, include the purported shift from a Fordist to Post-Fordist regime (Gertler, 1992) and the similarly purported shift from a Keynesian Welfare State to a Schumpeterian Workfare State, to use Jessop’s (1993) terminology. The purported shift from traditional Fordist production to a post-Fordist regime was premised, according to (Gertler, 1992, p. 273), on the existence of:

a very attractive development model...[with] appealing visions of high-technology, high-value added, skill-intensive economic activity in which, since firms compete more on the basis of quality than cost, they can afford to pay their workers a generous wage.

In a similar manner, the Keynesian welfare state objectives “were to promote full employment in a relatively closed national economy primarily through demand-side management and to generalize norms of mass consumption through welfare rights” (Jessop, 1993). However, critics argue that neither of these scenes has materialized. Rather than a post-Fordist regime with high wages and good working conditions, Peck (1996) argues instead we have entered into a situation in which:

the unemployed are compelled to work or undergo training in return for access to income, which has the effect, within local labor markets, of driving down both the reservation wage of the unemployed and the prevailing market wage for low paid workers.

And rather than a Keynesian utopia of ever-increasing production driven by plentiful consumer spending, the shift has been to a Schumpeterian workfare state in which the effective principle is to “deny workers access to accumulated entitlements, replacing them with a system in which discipline is *locally enforced* by the economic whip of the local labor market” (Peck, 1996, emphasis in original), the cumulative effects of which result in “wage concessions and the growing acceptance of significant changes in work rules and labor relations” (Schoenberger, 1988, p. 256).

The combination of these two forces, then, weakening labor relations and the lauding of supply-side economics –just two of the potential symptoms which may fall under the rubric of globalization– purportedly operating at the “global” level are arguably what is fueling the creation of low-wage geographies in a decidedly localized manner, as Peck (1996, p. 251) describes:

the current acceleration of regional market inequalities, and the related rash of local experiments in the de- and re-regulation of labor, are in many senses products of the prevailing neoliberal environment. In other words, neoliberalism is weakening labor by localizing labor.

Peck goes on to argue that it is the local labor market in particular that deserves more attention in globalization rhetoric. Building on Massey (1995), Peck (1996, p. 15) argues that local geographies of labor result from the way in which capital exploits prior spatial variation in its path of expansion:

The nature of local labor markets is shaped by both ‘general’ processes of labor segmentation and by ‘specific’ local structures of labor reproduction and institutionalization. Geographies of labor are formed at this intersection, where flows of capital accumulation collide with the structures of community.

[L]ocal labor markets are not unique because they are dominated by particular stages or branches of production or by particular classes of workers, but because each represents a *geographically specific institutionalization of labor market structures, conventions, and practices*, providing unique contexts against which the strategies of labor market actors are formulated. (Peck, 1996, p. 266, emphasis in original)

Swyngedouw (1997b, p. 142) argues that the tension between the forces of globalization and these geographically specific local labor conditions results in what he terms “glocalization.” It is a process:

characterized by a parallel and simultaneous movement to the smaller and the larger scale, to the local and the global. This process does not in itself assign greater validity to a global or a local perspective, but alerts us to a series of sociospatial processes that changes the importance and role of certain geographical scales, re-asserts the importance of others, and sometimes creates entirely new significant scales.

While these processes are occurring, Dicken, *et al.* (1997, p. 159) argue that “the nation-state is presented as an eviscerated shell” which breeds “political defeatism” as the power and role of the state is eroded, or at least subjugated, to the supposedly stronger and more important forces of globalization, a point also made by Ohmae (1995). Swyngedouw (1997b, p. 158, emphasis added), however, and in keeping with the parameters of “glocalization,” argues that “interventionism of the state in the economy is [being] *rescaled*, either downward...or upward.” While attempts to scale upward have been “highly contested and still rather limited,” attempts at downward scaling, which involve the devolution of power “to the level of the city or the region



where public-private partnerships shape an entrepreneurial practice and ideology needed to successfully engage in an intensified process of interurban competition” (Swyngedouw, 1997b, p. 158) have been far more prevalent.

A similar claim is made by Cox and Mair (1988), who argue that it is the local governmental authority which is harnessed in order to participate in just this type of nation-state evisceration. Before that, however, Cox and Mair (1988) ground their argument by describing how capital can be “locally dependent” for several reasons: one is the “immobility of built environment investments” (Cox and Mair, 1988, p. 308), such as for public utilities and financial institutions; another is the “non-substitutability of localized exchange” (Cox and Mair, 1988, p. 309), such as for a firm requiring a specialized labor force. What is important about this local dependency is that businesses in these positions are likely to confront this immobility by intervening directly in the local economic development process in order to protect, enhance, or create new opportunities for profits; what is more, these locally dependent businesses are likely to draw upon local, and perhaps state, political authority to do so.

However, not just businesses but people, too, may be considered locally dependent. Importantly, Cox and Mair (1988, p. 312, emphasis in original) define two types of local dependence: a traditional form, in which “social relations, those of family, ethnicity, [and] religion...define sources of self-identification, means through which the individual achieves self-understanding... [and] a strong identification with a *particular locality*.” A modern version, by contrast, of local dependence is derived from “situatedness, in combination with the pursuit of career, material consumption, and status” (Cox and Mair, 1988, p. 313). The distinction in dependence is significant because Cox and Mair (1988, p. 318) argue that traditional forms of dependence are losing out to modern forms:

[I]n place of the lost community of family, ethnicity, and neighborhoods, the business coalition offers the pseudo-community of the locality. To replace old senses of personal significance...it offers the vicarious hope of living in a major league or world class city.

One way this is accomplished is through the use of growth coalitions, in which “the public sector lends something of a visible hand” (Merrifield, 2000, p. 31) in order to make individual localities more attractive to investment capital. What Peck (1996, p. 252) calls an “intractable *georegulatory* problem” is the process by which growth coalitions pit “‘strong’ regions, with extensive social protection and high wages, [against] ‘weak’ regions”; in the ensuing competition between regions, one outcome, at least, is that the effort just to maintain a stable level of investment becomes a “race to the bottom” in terms of wage rates, as per Gertler (1992), Jessop (1996), and Schoenberger (1988). Both Cox and Mair (1988) and Logan and Molotch (1996), too, seem to agree that growth coalitions have the potential to engineer particular labor relations to serve the purposes of growth, but also that those relations often involve depressing wages as much as possible.

To summarize this literature and to begin to think about what implications it may have in the modern living wage arena, I began by looking at the concept of globalization; however, I also stress that the process of globalization is highly nebulous, contested, and idiosyncratic. While certain authors do speak of globalization as a process with real outcomes that have the potential to shape the economic landscape (O’Tuathail, *et al.*, 1998; Herod, 1997c), others are just as concerned that the *discourse* of globalization has become bound up in the process not only of predicting the outcome as inevitable but normalizing the concept as well (Leyshon, 1997; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Dicken, *et al.*, 1996). What these authors caution against is that an idea that is presented as normal and inevitable leaves little room –in discourse, at least– for resistance since anyone who resists the globalization process –resists a purported normal process– is

automatically rendered “not normal.” Hence, a capitalist hegemony evolves in which the only possible outcome is *laissez-faire* capitalism. In two examples of this process –the purported shifts from Fordism to Post-Fordism and from a Keynesian-oriented economy to a supply-side mentality– the shift is not only presented as inevitable, but also “correct” or “better” –i.e. normal.

While Massey (1995) and Peck (1996) also agree that a process of globalization may have achieved economic hegemony, they also argue that it is the local labor market that reflects the physical realities of purported globalizing forces. Swyngedouw (1997b) as well is not willing to discount the role of the local, especially when it results in increased political “interventionism” to engineer “interurban competition” (Swyngedouw, 1997b). Cox and Mair (1988) and Logan and Molotch (1996) describe just such an example of interventionism in the form of growth coalitions and how they attempt to celebrate the “local” as a great place in which to do business; however, growth coalitions may also be involved in local disputes over subsidization for capital investment, which they would support, or unions and the purported level of labor militancy, which they would oppose. And, as the “hometown hoopla of boosterism” (Logan and Molotch, 1996, p. 203) suffuses a locality, there are invariably winners and losers. When the interests of capital investment are pitted directly against the welfare of labor, workers are just as likely to suffer –in the form of suppressed wages brought about through the wrangling of zealous growth pundits– as they are to gain by an influx of jobs. Furthermore, critics to the growth-at-any-cost mentality point to another weakness: “local growth does not make jobs: it only distributes them” (Logan and Molotch, 1996, p. 223). (Incidentally, this means that what Pollin and Luce (1998) call job “poaching” is likely to be a more insidious form of redistribution than any perceived loss of jobs arising from the redistribution of living wages.)

Hence this leads finally to the modern role of the living wage, its discourse, and its purportedly localized attempts to organize resistance to the suppression of wages. The living wage is ostensibly concerned about the reality of the suppression of wages -it causes and its consequences. The battle over this suppression is contested primarily through the invocation of discourses which may, on the one hand, “naturalize” the globalization process as an optimal global economic regime or, on the other hand, vilify the process as one that, among other things, eviscerates the role and power of the nation-state, especially its role and power devoted to the protection of workers, their jobs, and their ability to support themselves and their families. Rather than a strong nation-state organize to protect, in this case, the “American” workforce, innumerable locally-oriented stakeholders –either growth coalitions or living wage campaigns- erupt to lobby for their own interests.

Ironically, however localized a particular living wage campaign may appear to be on the surface, in the discourse that follows what becomes apparent is that in living wage discourse both the supporters and opponents of the concept employ a range of scaled discourses which mirror the delineations described by Smith (1992); that is, while there is a considerable amount of localized discourse, many living wage pundits may as well be trying to “go global.” Here, Smith’s (1992) schematic is an exceptionally useful framework for analyzing living wage opponents’ and proponents’ discourses because it analyzes scale not only through the discourse of its construction, but also through the discourse of resistance, an essential ingredient in any living wage campaign.

### “Global” Scale

For opponents of living wages, perhaps the easiest discourse to invoke –hence its prevalence– is to the perceived power, naturalness, and inevitability of globalization. One hallmark of *laissez-faire* capitalism is the perceived “iron law of wages” governed by supply-and-demand forces. The suppression of wage rates that follows is characterized as efficient and economical, and, under such conditions, the argument that workers are entitled to a living wage is characterized as antithetical to economic rationality. Hence, discourse castigates those who would make the mistake of trying to control or subvert wage rates through local manipulation. As a noted Harvard economist has warned: “the living wage campaign wants to repeal the law of supply and demand and raise wages by fiat” (Mankiw, 2001). Opponents’ discourse also invokes the ideas described by Gibson-Graham (2002), where the vaulting of globalization discourse means that those who oppose it are somehow unintelligent, or at least unsophisticated, as evidence in this editorial warning of the consequences of a living wage: “It takes huge ego to imagine that you are smarter than the marketplace” (*Florida Times-Union*, 2001).

However, Smith (1992) has argued that at all scales there is a potential for resistance. At the “global” scale, resistance can take the form of a universalizing discourse of human rights, a potential described by Kurtz (2002). Proponents of the living wage seem to have recognized this as a possibility and have responded with “global” discourse of their own. When a group of janitorial workers in California tried to organize for a living wage, they seemed to recognize that they would need to think on the same “global” terms as their employers:

What we’re looking for is industrial power.... We have to deal with building services as a whole industry. It’s not just a group of small contractors, different in every city. The contractors are often the same.... And the client companies, who the contractors work for, are some of the largest in the world –like Pacific Bell, Chevron, and Southern California Edison. They change cleaning contractors like socks. So the only way to

really change conditions, and protect our members, is to have the same set of wages and conditions for everyone. (Bacon, 1997)

Hence, while living wage opponents claim that globalization is governed by laws, some of which include the suppression of wages, supporters are also able to invoke a “global” scale of organizing based upon human rights, included in which is the notion that all workers earn enough to sustain their human right to exist.

### “National” Scale

At the “national” scale, opponents tend to portray the living wage movement as one that ultimately will undermine the nation’s place in the global circulation of capital. Hence, a warning from the Employment Policies Institute –a group vehemently opposed to the living wage– attempts to portray the living wage as subversive and a “threat”:

The living wage movement has done a masterful job of convincing the media and the public –and, all too often, business leaders– that each city’s effort is small and discrete, posing no threat to other municipalities. In fact, the movement is a calibrated, long-term plan for national dominance, with each bite a bit bigger than the last. (Employment Policies Institute, 2004)

Hence, this description frames the living wage as something that the entire country should oppose, lest it fall prey to living wage “dominance.” The implication, however, is that the living wage movement and business are naturally opposed to each other.

Proponents, on the other hand, tend to invoke claims to a national-scale “American” ideology:

[I]n America [t]here was a time, not so long ago, when a minimum wage job supported a typical family.... By restoring values to the economic equation, the Living Wage movement is fulfilling the promise of the American Dream that hard work will be rewarded. (Kraut, *et al.*, 2000, p. 2)

By conjuring up historical, and often sentimental, images of “the good old days,” living wage supporters assert that the country could bring back these good times if the entire country would embrace the living wage as part of its national identity and “values.” Two themes are apparent in “national” scaled discourse that compares the United States to the rest of the world. First, it serves as a source of shame for Americans to subject their own citizens to poverty-level wages. While one living wage supporter asks “why does America, the largest and one of the most productive economies in the world, need to subsidize wages so that full-time, adult workers performing essential tasks can achieve a dignified lifestyle?” (Bernstein, 1999, p. 6), another is indignant about the treatment of the workforce: “the richest country in the world should not tolerate such treatment of more than a fourth of its workers” (Shulman, 2003). Second, it also tends to normalize the country’s perceived superiority, a theme evident in this editorial from 2000, when New York City was debating the passage of a living wage in the city:

A living wage for workers in countries like China would not price them out of their jobs. ...American factories could afford to pay their overseas workers a living wage and still maintain profitability. In fighting against trade practices that put American companies in league with the Chinese Communist Party in exploiting the Chinese people, the United States labor movement is trying to slow the unchecked ‘race to the bottom’ that allows American companies to perpetuate virtual slavery conditions in their overseas factories. (Wu, 2000)

Hence, for living wage opponents, the “national” scale is one in which they can claim that, as the “dominant scale of state power” (Smith, 1992), that power is being threatened by purportedly “small and indiscrete” (Employment Policies Institute, 2004) living wage campaigns; in essence, small communities around the country are usurping power that rightfully belongs to the nation-state (i.e., the “national” scale). For proponents, the claim is that living wages will create better citizens of the country; hence, proponents’ discourse invokes somewhat romantic themes of “American” values. In short, they claim that a living wage will offer workers nothing less than

“the ability to support their families, to maintain self-respect, and to have both the means and the leisure to participate in the civic life of the nation” (Pollin, 2002).

### “Regional” Scale

According to Smith (1992, p. 73), the “regional” scale is characterized as the “site of economic production...bound up with the larger rhythms of the...global economy.” Given this close connection with the circulation of capital –as well as Martin’s (2001) assertion that there is a regional pattern to living wage distribution in the United States– it is rather surprising that living wage opponents do not situate the living wage debate at this scale.

Proponents, by contrast, echo Smith’s (1992) assertion that “regional” resistance may take the form of a class struggle in which external invasions threaten to undermine “historic, possibly romantic, cultural claim[s] that seek to reinstate...regions as separate nation-states” (Smith, 1992, p. 74). But also important are the extraordinarily nebulous borders around a “region.” For living wage supporters in the New York City area, the “region” apparently did not include the State’s capital, Albany, although it did seem to include other Northeastern cities that had already passed a living wage:

Albany has turned a deaf ear to the crisis [of New York City’s 1.5 million residents living in poverty.] The Republicans’ Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno has refused to let the living-wage bill come to a vote.... While Albany...[is] asleep at the switch, much of the country is already taking action... Connecticut...and Massachusetts just boosted...[minimum wage] rates” (Robins, 2002)

Living wage supporters and low wage workers are imagined to exist as a singular “class” –one that is on the verge of a crisis– while living wage opponents are described as uncaring “Republicans” living in another part of the state, implied to be far removed, in distance as well as “class,” from the plight of the working poor in New York City.



### “Urban” Scale

The “urban” scale, using Smith’s (1992) schematic, is bound up in the daily operation of the labor market. Hence, for opponents of the living wage, the discourse tends to emphasize how a living wage would disrupt that operation. Buttressed by the dual claims that employers would reduce operational costs by reducing the number of workers employed, as well as “reconsider the firms’ association with the city and contemplate relocating the firm elsewhere” (Tolley *et al.*, 1999), the claim is that, ultimately, living wages hurt more people than they help. Opponents also claim that wage “ripple effects” –increases to maintain some measure of pay hierarchy between the lowest paid workers receiving the mandated increase and those earning somewhat above the new minimum, a trend acknowledged even by ardent living wage supporters (Pollin, *et al.*, 2001)– would cause employers to react defensively. Such predictions, when made publicly, create scenarios of multitudes of unemployed (young) people milling around (your neighborhood), perhaps willing to work but unable to find gainful employment. A statement by the president of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce reveals as much:

[A living wage] will have major impacts.... It could be disastrous, causing unemployment, driving up prices, encouraging high schoolers to drop out and chasing away prospective new businesses.... Its impact deserves to be studied now, before it cripples [the] local economy. (Huddy, 2003)

Proponents, conversely, frame the “urban” scale in the living wage debate by emphasizing the benefits to the local business atmosphere. Their list of benefits include: lower employee turnover, higher worker morale, productivity gains, lower absenteeism, and lower costs of recruitment (Reynolds, *et al.*, 1999; Pollin, *et al.*, 2001; Weisbrot and Sforza-Roderick, 1996; Nissen and Cattani, 1998). Hence, a report on the potential impact of a living wage in Detroit boasts:

With better wages and health care coverage, Detroit firms should attract and retain the best workers, have the most productive work force, and over time, deliver the highest quality of services. (Reynolds, *et al.*, 1999)

Therefore, for opponents, the notion that a living wage could be harmful to businesses is presented as if the entire labor market would collapse and consequently the “urban” scale would itself be threatened. However, for supporters, the discourse asserts that living wages are beneficial to employers and employees alike. Hence, the discourse constructs an “urban” scale in which daily operation of the labor market is said to improve through the passage of a living wage law.

### “Community” Scale

If the “community” scale is the site of “social reproduction” (Smith, 1992, p. 70), then opponents of the living wage conflate “community” scale with the “urban” scale. To put it simply, in opponents’ discourse, the central theme is that without work (as in what defines the “urban” scale), there is no “community.” So, rather than talk about the stress on the “community” as a result of a living wage law, opponents simply reassert that the “urban” scale – as the site of production *and* reproduction– would be decimated by the pressure on business interests.

Proponents, however, seem to embrace completely Smith’s (1992, p. 70) assertion that the “region” is the most “ideologically appropriated metaphor in contemporary public discourse.” For supporters, the list of benefits to accrue from a living wage are said to have direct, beneficial impacts not only on the labor market, as discussed above, but would have a set of additional, *distinct* advantages for the “community.” First, a living wage would decrease the hidden public subsidy (Nissen and Cattan, 1998) given to businesses, first through contracts and

financial assistance, and second through public support (e.g., food stamps) for workers paid low wages. This is presented as a benefit to the “community” as a whole, evidenced in this excerpt from a living wage report presented by the Atlanta Living Wage Coalition:

Every day in Atlanta, thousands of working families struggle to survive on poverty wages. Despite working full-time jobs, they do not earn enough to cover basic needs.... When employers do not pay workers enough to meet basic needs, these workers and their families must often rely on other tax-payer supported social services such as food pantries, homeless shelters and public health centers. (Bellesorte, 2003)

Hence, the discourse connects “tax-payer supported” public subsidies to particularly *local* forms of assistance, such as food banks and homeless shelters –establishments likely to be organized as non-profits and staffed by local volunteers. An almost identical thought is apparent in this editorial regarding New York City’s living wage debate:

The living wage bill that is before the City Council is about providing a realistic living for workers in New York City. In this city, many people with jobs live in homeless shelters and go to soup kitchens because their wages cannot match the basic cost of living.... Surely the generous spirit that was experienced after Sept. 11 can carry over to improve the life of our poorest brothers and sisters. The Council must pass the living wage legislation...so that people who work in this great city can make a living. (Kendall, 2002)

Second, there would be an increase in spending in the “community,” especially among the lowest paid, since poor workers need to spend wage gains on immediate needs rather than savings or other actions which take the income out of the community (Reynolds, *et al.*, 1999). Again, the Atlanta Living Wage Coalition makes a similar connection:

The expenditure of tax dollars on city contracts and development subsidies [to firms that pay living wages] should be viewed as an investment in the community and its working families.... If Atlanta is to become a world-class city, we must insure that working families are not forced to live in poverty. We cannot build a strong community when people who work full time are not able to provide a safe and dignified life for their families. When workers are paid a living wage, they are more able to support local businesses, pay more in taxes, and contribute to their families and communities as active participants. (Bellesorte, 2003, pp. 3-8)

Hence, while opponents adopt a position similar to that espoused by growth coalitions –that without employment possibilities, there is no “community”– living wage supporters have a rich and nuanced discourse that stresses that not only will the recipients of a living wage be better off, but that the *entire* “community” in which living wage workers reside will improve.

### “Home” Scale

Opponents of living wages have employed the “home” scale to a distinct advantage. In the living wage debate, the importance of the “home” is that it (usually) represents more than one worker. Therefore, in a “home” with one worker earning a relatively high wage and one worker earning a low- or poverty-level wage, the *average* wage for the “home” may very likely be above standard poverty level guidelines. Granted, this requires making many assumptions about the “home” scale –for instance, that there will be two workers and an average number of children. Nonetheless, the argument for a living wage *for every individual worker* is muted considerably when the scale boundaries are drawn around the entire “home.” A rather subtle distinction, this type of discourse is apparent in the following passage by a group of economists debating the effects of minimum/ living wage increases:

The policy debate over...wage increases [is not], ‘What level...can redistribute income to *low-paid workers* without serious job loss?’.... The right question for policy-makers to ask is ‘What is the best mechanism to redistribute income to workers in *low-income families*...without serious job loss? (Burkhauser, Couch, and Wittenburg, 1996, emphasis added)

A similar rationale is evident in a passage spearheaded by Richard Tolley, an economist from the University of Chicago and a noted living wage opponent:

Many households have *two or more workers*.... Combining the *role of smaller families* with the presence of additional workers, it appears likely that many of the workers who would receive wage increases already live in *households* with incomes above the poverty level. (Tolley *et al.*, 1999, emphasis added)

Hence, as long as the “home” falls above the poverty level criterion, then low-wage workers are still able to exist *as individuals*.

Proponents, for their part, emphasize the ways in which the “home” as a unit (i.e. the “family”) would be better off with a living wage. Discourse tends to frame, rather dramatically sometimes, the suffering of entire families with low-wage workers: “workers must choose between feeding their families and heating their homes, between medicines for their parents and clothes for their children” (Oppenheimer and Simon, 2003). Along a similar line, proponents claim that the extra time needed to earn enough just to cover expenses takes away from time spent within the “home,” or least with the family:

[T]he average employee worked 140 more hours in 1998 than did the average employee in 1973. Nearly four weeks of added work time, and still millions live paycheck to paycheck, struggling to survive. That’s a month not spent with children, a month not spent enjoying the company of neighbors, a month not spent volunteering in the community. (Kraut, *et al.*, 2000)

Likewise, a living wage supporter in New York City made an explicit connection between family size, poverty, and the need to rely on government subsidies; in a twist to opponents’ arguments that families were less likely to need the living wage, this living wage supporter claims that “one quarter of all the people forced to use New York City’s soup kitchens and food pantries live in families with at least one person holding paid employment” (Berg, 2002). This is a theme repeated in a report by the Atlanta Living Wage Coalition:

Every day in Atlanta, thousands of working families struggle to survive on poverty wages. Despite working full-time jobs, they do not earn enough to cover basic needs. (Bellesorte, 2003)

Others make a direct connection between economics and family well-being: “strong marriages require that workers have a livable income, economic security and sufficient leisure time to build the interpersonal relationships that families require” (Smith, 2004). Hence, scaling the living

wage to the “home” requires many assumptions about the definition of “family,” including the number of workers and the number of children; however, it is also fertile ground for discourse that vaults the “family” as central to “American values.”

### “Bodily” Scale

While the scale of the “body” invoked in the archival literature was primarily used by living wage supporters to portray certain bodies as deserving of a living wage, modern living wage opponents, for their part, have responded by constructing three distinct lines of discourse that scale the debate to the individual level as well. First, in a direct attack on the “body” that deserves a living wage, there is a parallel attempt to portray the worker as a “body” *undeserving* of a living wage: the Employment Policy Foundation, another well-known opponent to the living wage, claims:

low wage workers tend to be unmarried, free of parental responsibilities, and often live in households with high incomes...[or are] young...[or] students who use...low-paying jobs to earn extra cash while finishing their education. (Employment Policy Foundation, n.d.)

It is a theme common as well among opponents who view the living wage as a handout:

the vast majority of minimum-wage workers...in fact, are not the sole support of themselves, much less a family of four. Most are teenagers or adults supplementing their households’ income –and very quickly leaving the minimum behind the old-fashioned way: by working up the earnings scale. (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 1999)

The commonality between these two passages lies in the portrayal of young or unmarried workers as somehow less entitled to earn a living wage. Even though Ryan (1906) responded to precisely the same argument with the rather unconvincing argument grounded in heteronormative discourse, modern retorts have been far more effective in stressing that in neo-classical economic theory, wages are the reflection of the value returned in the production process itself, not of the value of the worker himself/ herself; hence, to contradict such a

fundamental tenet would seem to place proponents of this discourse at odds with their core beliefs.

A second, and more convincing, strategy which invokes the “body” scale in opposition to the living wage pits the “body” against itself. Hence, Tolley *et al.* (1999) argue: “raising wages will result in job losses for the very workers you are trying to help” because they will now be priced out of the local labor market. So, while an individual body may be deserving of a higher wage, to grant it would mean the same body would be rendered unemployed; hence, each individual body is forced to choose between low-wages or no wages.

A third strategy at the “body” scale is to pit individual workers against each other. One way to do this is to create tension between bodies; in short, to portray the living wage as a movement that will make some bodies better off, while others are worse off. Again, Tolley *et al.* (1999, p. 14) warns that “all of those whose wages and income are not increased by the minimum will be worse off, as the higher minimum raises employers’ costs and the ultimate price of products.” Hence, while some workers will have higher wages as a result of a living wage law, those not receiving wage increases will nonetheless have to pay higher prices for the products they consume as individuals. While such inflationary tendencies to date have not been seen in cities with a living wage law, the threat still receives frequent airing in living wage discourse.

For living wage opponents, discourse at the “body” scale is common, but still not as prevalent as the “global” discourse. However, for living wage supporters, the single most common scale projected is that of the “body” –the same as that in the historic context. In contemporary discourse, supporters reiterate claims about the dignity of work, as well as list numerous other benefits that would accrue to individual workers as bodies, including an overall

increase in the amount of earned income and, following from that, less reliance on government subsidies, an increase in spending power, and better access to health care (Nissen and Cattan, 1998; Reynolds, *et al.*, 1999; Pollin, *et al.*, 2001; Bellesorte, 2003). Others stress the disproportionate financial benefits that would accrue to minority and female workers (Reich, Hall and Hsu, 1999; Reich and Hall, 1999; Zabin, Reich, and Hall, 1999). In this discourse, the body of a potential living wage recipient is constructed as both deserving and long-suffering. Rather than discount workers as too young or too irresponsible to deserve a living wage, here the discourse portrays working bodies as intelligent and loyal, as evidence in this editorial:

David Brooks (column, March 2) is right to credit conservatives for understanding that issues of character are central to helping poor people climb out of poverty. Of course virtues like the ones Mr. Brooks lists – ‘industriousness, sobriety, fidelity, punctuality and dependability’ – are all free. Wouldn’t it be great if conservatives also favored making the minimum wage a living wage? Then perhaps poor people who are already industrious, sober, punctual and dependable would have to be so at only one job instead of two. (Shields, 2004)

To conclude this section about the discourse employed in the modern living wage debate, I would like to reiterate two points. First, it is important to note that the purportedly localized nature of the living wage is perhaps an illusion. Regardless of how “localizing” the concept of the living wage campaign may appear to be on the surface, in the discourse used to sway opinion on the matter a range of scaled discourse is invoked, much of which mirrors the delineations described by Smith (1992). Hence, while there is a considerable amount of localized discourse, living wage pundits may just as well be trying to “go global” with their message.

The second point concerns the use of this discourse to privilege purportedly higher or wider scales to positions of authority in the living wage arena. As many living wage opponents have complained:



[c]ity councils across the country are now making decisions on one of the hottest public policy concepts in memory –the ‘living wage’– without access to the facts that would form the basis of sound public policy. (Tolley, *et al.*, 1999)

Implicit in this line of reasoning is that these “local” level authorities are not only making decisions, but making *poor* decisions because they are going against the grain of “global economic realities.” Hence, their actions are presented as selfish, near-sighted, or narcissistic. However, Gibson-Graham (2002) has argued that it is precisely this type of discourse which is responsible for elevating the discursive status of the “global” and leading to the perceived inevitability of the “global’s” power over other scales. According to Gibson-Graham (2002, p. 50), in much neo-liberal discourse:

[t]he global is represented as sufficient, whole, powerful, and transformative in relation to which the local is deficient, fragmented, weak, and acted upon...embarrassingly inadequate and definitely unconvincing.... [L]ocal stories are [seen as] patently ridiculous as ammunition for challenging the dominance and power of the global.

Hence, along with the construction of scale in the living wage debate, there is as well a considerable amount of discourse, albeit primarily from living wage opponents, which attempts to portray local living wage activism as “ridiculous” attempts to influence the (global) circulation of capital. As such, this is not an area of the living wage debate that has been critically examined in depth, nor have living wage supporters, to date, been able to mount a serious rejoinder.

### ***Legal Consideration and its Scale Implications***

A scale not addressed by Smith (1992), but one that is becoming increasingly apparent in the modern living wage discourse, occurs when states pass (or attempt to) living wage preemption laws, as nine states in the United States have already done, including Georgia (Figure 1). When individual states craft living wage preemption laws, they are participating in the creation of a scale that I will refer to as a “state” scale, not to be confused with the “nation-state.”

As the “state” scale is able to solidify and impose its authority and coherence primarily through legal means, the remainder of this chapter will explore in more detail the connection between geography, scale, and the living wage as it is viewed through this legal lens.

The connectivity between law and geography cannot be developed without first addressing law’s supposed *aspatiality*. According to Blomley (1994, 2003) and Harrison and Holder (2003), law is often viewed through an objectivist lens. Commonly, legal theory is written in such a way as to emphasize and idealize “law’s separateness, rationality, and reflexivity...[in which law is] deaf to material, physical, spatial and cultural influences” (Holder and Harrison, 2003, p. 3). By virtue of its distinctive qualities, law is presented as an autonomous instrument –something that can be brought to bear on society. Blomley (2003, p. 20) says simply that “[i]n all cases, something called ‘law’ is detached from something called ‘society’,” before going on to describe the implication this has for thinking about the role of law in geography:

[The field of] law...has not only carefully policed its borders...it has also sought to expel any residual vestiges of spatiality from within its own jurisdiction. The history of legal practice, closely bound up in the formation of large, unified states, can be written as a process of ‘disembedding’ legal conception and interpretation from the multiple places and spaces of social life. (Blomley, 1994, p. 4)

However, the primary concern is that law is, in fact, not separate from geography and the construction of space and place. The interrelation between geography and law can be seen in at least three ways. First, law is said to be bound up in the production of space. Blomely argues that the action of law is assumed to create certain spatial outcomes; that is, “legal interpretations actively *produce* space” (Blomley, 1994, p. 45, emphasis in original). In later work, he elaborates:

The world is not given to us, but actively made through orderings which offer powerful ‘maps’ of the social world, classifying, coding, and categorizing. In doing so, a particular

reality is created. Legal orderings...allow us to distinguish 'citizen' from 'alien', 'public' from 'private', 'employee' from 'employer', 'wife' from 'husband', 'prisoner' from 'citizen'...Spatial orderings are simultaneously legal orderings, and vice versa. (Blomely, 2003, p. 29)

Second, law is said to be locally and geographically contingent. According to Harrison and Holder (2003, p. 4), "law must make room for local conditions and experience, and recognize the changing of laws to work in local contexts." Hence, their argument is one that stresses that legal obligations and rights are understood in radically different ways by groups at different social and spatial locations, as well as different scales. Third, the legal production and contesting of geographic space and place is said to be dialectical in nature:

although legal practice may affect social life within a locality, law itself is not simply imposed upon a local setting, but is instead interpreted in and through that setting. Law is, as it were, produced in such spaces; those spaces, in turn, are partly constituted by legal norms. (Blomley, 1994, p. 46)

Hence, the geography of law is felt by the existence of the physical realities that come from legal orderings that result in real outcomes which define a social map. These legal orderings in turn form the basis for future contests as stakeholders attempt not only to redefine that ordering, but their social map too. The basis for this argument is therefore not unlike that of those concerning the political construction of scale, particularly the claim that real outcomes in the form of "material realities" (Herod, 1997b, p. 48) arise which are themselves open to future contestation. In the legal debate, however, these "concrete localized spatial settings" (Blomley, 1994, p. 42) take the form of legal rights to particular spaces and places.

Ironically, one form this may take is in the absence of geography as a result of a legal imposition, as in the "annihilation of space by law" (Mitchell, 2001, p. 6). In his recounting of anti-homeless laws, Mitchell argues that it is the purported forces of globalization that are

leading to a reduction in legal rights for individual bodies. Globalization proponents, Mitchell (2001, p. 7) claims:

turned to a legal remedy that [sought] to cleanse the streets of those left behind by globalization and other secular changes in the economy by simply erasing the spaces in which they must live –by creating legal fiction in which the rights of the wealthy, of the successful in the global economy, are sufficient for all the rest.

The result was to erase metaphorically the homeless from the (“public”) space they had inhabited by removing the right to exist in that space. Hence, anti-homeless laws “work in a pernicious way: by redefining what is acceptable [legal] behavior in public space...these laws seek simply to annihilate homeless people themselves” (Mitchell, 2001, p. 7).

In the living wage arena, the construction of a state scale is accomplished through the legal affirmation that individual states have a role in regulating wages within their borders. In doing so, states assume a more direct role in the circulation of capital. However, if we accept Smith’s (1992) contention that the circulation of capital is primarily in the “global” domain, then there exists the need to explain how and why individual states have purportedly usurped this role. Here, Ohmae’s (1990, 1995) contention that the (nation-) state is being hollowed-out in favor of more locally-oriented region-states is useful. According to Ohmae (1995, p. 5), globalization is undermining the economic sovereignty of nation-states to the point where they are “unnatural, even impossible, business units in a global economy.” In his view:

the unfettered movement of [investment, industry, information technology, and individual consumers – the 4 ‘I’s] makes the middleman role of nation states obsolete[. T]he qualifications needed to sit at the global table and pull in global solutions begin to correspond not to the artificial political borders of countries, but to the more focused geographical units...where real work gets done and real markets flourish. (Ohmae, 1995, p. 5).

Where the “real” work gets done, for Ohmae, is in the region states which form “natural economic zones” (Ohmae, 1995, p. 80) and which are comprised of the “essential ingredients for

successful participation in the global economy” (Ohmae, 1995, p. 81), as evidenced by their ability to attract and keep the four ‘I’s listed above. If the nation-state is to intervene at all, it should be to “foster and develop...flexible communities of interest through *local* networks” (Ohmae, 1995, p. 96, emphasis added). Such an argument is not unlike that of Swyngedouw (1997b), who argues that interventionism is being “rescaled” either downward or upward, or Martin and Sunley (1997, p. 283, emphasis in original), who argue that “globalization does not justify less state intervention, but a *redirection* of that intervention.” In any event, the results are twofold: first, the prioritizing of innovation and competitiveness under the rubric of globalization furthers the hollowing out of the nation-state as powers and responsibilities are transferred to smaller regional and local governments deemed to be more efficient at managing these phenomena while a second result, one previously touched on, is that social welfare policy becomes subordinated to the needs of economic flexibility (Gertler, 1992; Jessop, 1996; Peck, 1996).

In the contemporary living wage arena, it is evident in the legal discourse that not only are both of these views apparent, but they are also codified in laws which have the effect of moving the debate from discourse to actual “concretized spatial settings” (Blomley, 1994, p. 48) –i.e. laws. The most apparent use of this theory can be seen in the living wage preemption statute passed by the State of Louisiana –typical of statutes passed in other states– where the state is portrayed as both the protector of “its” citizens, as well as a very significant actor in the circulation of capital:

The Legislature of Louisiana finds that *economic stability and growth* are among the *most important factors affecting the general welfare of the people of this state* and are, therefore, *among its own most important responsibilities*. *Economic stability and growth* contribute to the standard of living enjoyed by citizens as employment and income are both dependent on the ability and willingness of businesses to operate in the state.

...

The legislature further finds that wages comprise the most significant expense of operating a business.... Consequently, local variation in legally required [federal] minimum wage rates would threaten many businesses.... [T]his situation would be detrimental to the business environment of the state and to the citizens, businesses, and governments of the various local jurisdictions as well as the local labor market.

...  
The legislature concludes that,...an enterprise must work in a *uniform environment with respect to minimum wage rates*. The net impact of local variation in mandated wages would be economic instability and decline and a decrease in the standard of living for the citizens of the state. Consequently, decisions regarding minimum wage policy must be made by the state so that *consistency in the wage market* is preserved. (Louisiana Statute 23:643, Passed 6/18/97, emphasis added)

The Louisiana legislators easily conflate “economic stability” with “standard of living” and “general welfare,” so much so that it results in “economic growth” henceforth being deemed the “most important factor.” Following that, the preemption postulates an economic theory in which a “uniform wage environment” is both possible and beneficial. Important to note, however, is that this economic theory does not necessarily align with neoclassical economic rationale, nor globalization rhetoric for that matter, which would argue that intervention –in this case by the state– contributes to market *distortion* rather than stability and growth. In any event, these themes were also evident in the Legislature’s floor debate prior to the statute’s passage, where again the state was portrayed as the conduit to a smoothly functioning economic system. According to the bill’s sponsor (Representative Forster) “there would be havoc throughout the state if local government entities started establishing minimum pay for different employers” (Minutes of the Labor and Industrial Relations Committee, 4/25/97), while another person reiterated that he felt “it was vital to the interest of the state to invoke police powers to ensure that all 64 parishes and all municipalities within the state are on a level playing field” (Minutes of the Labor and Industrial Relations Committee, 4/25/97).

This statute, however, did not prevent a coalition of living wage supporters in New Orleans from organizing to have a living wage referendum placed on their ballot. On February

2, 2002, New Orleans voters approved by a wide margin (73,163 voters [63%] in favor and 43,499 [37%] against) a law that stipulated that the minimum wage paid by both public and private employers within Orleans parish would always be at least \$1 above the national minimum wage. Following the ballot victory, the coalition sued to have the New Orleans law recognized. In court, the New Orleans living wage coalition claimed the authority to pass a living wage law under home-rule provisions –the ultimate in scaled down interventionism– which grants the City authority to pass any statute that does not conflict with state laws. Hence, the New Orleans Living Wage Coalition claimed:

[The preemption statute] is invalid...unless the state...proves that: (a) [the preemption statute] is necessary to protect a vital or compelling interest of the state as a whole, and (b) that the state's compelling interests cannot be achieved through alternative means significantly less detrimental to the City's constitutionally based home rule power to initiate its proposed minimum wage legislation. (Petition for declaratory judgment, Civil District Court)

However, in the final decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Louisiana, this argument was rejected and the State of Louisiana was again construed as the ultimate authority in a smoothly functioning economy:

[The state] argues that the statute's regulation of minimum wages is a valid exercise of the state's police power as it was enacted for the purpose of protecting the general economic welfare of the state as a whole.... To sustain an action under the state's police power, a court must be able to determine that its operation tends in some degree to prevent an offense or evil or otherwise to preserve public health, safety, welfare, or morals.... [The preemption statute does just this.] It is the role of the legislature to make such policy decisions for our state.... In this case, we find, as the statute sets forth, that state regulation of minimum wage rates is of vital interest to the citizens of Louisiana, and that statewide regulation of minimum wage rates tends to preserve the public welfare. (*New Orleans Campaign for a Living Wage, et al. v. City of New Orleans, et al.*, 02-CA-0991)

Hence, through these legal channels, the State of Louisiana, and any other state the invokes “state” scaled discourse, is able to construct itself as an autonomous entity –autonomous from

both the federal, “national” scale as well as the “local” scale— responsible for the welfare of “its” citizens and with the power to enforce state-wide living wage preemption.

But this is not meant to imply workers are entirely stripped of agency as a result. Rather, just as workers have agency to reshape the economic landscape to their advantage so, too, does that agency apply in the law sense. Remembering Blomley’s (1994, p. 46) argument that “law is...produced in...spaces; those spaces, in turn, are partly constituted by legal norms” means that the legal discourse in the living wage has the potential to constitute new spaces, or scales, and that the stakeholders have the agency to do so. Whereas Mitchell (2001) noted that “bodies” can be rendered “invisible” by laws that remove their legal rights to occupy certain spaces, living wage laws, by contrast, have the ability to reclaim bodies. The (federal) Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) explicitly exempts certain workers, such as domestic employees and agricultural workers—a pattern copied in New Mexico’s minimum wage law— from minimum wage coverage. However, the living wage proposal presented by the City of Santa Fe did not allow for those exemptions. In essence, the Santa Fe living wage proposal would have reclaimed the “bodies” rendered metaphorically invisible under the FLSA by once again making them eligible for a (minimum) living wage. What is more, this reclamation was not the result of abstract economic forces, but a very real example of how “ordinary everyday people” (Herod, 1997b, p. 148) are reshaping the economic landscape through living wage activism.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter began by exploring the archival living wage records for evidence that living wage discourse is bound up in the political construction of scale. What became apparent is that this historical discourse was primarily engaged in the construction of “bodies” perceived to be



legitimate recipients of a living wage, even though these “bodies” were limited primarily to Caucasian males. While Smith (1992, p. 67) argued that “the scale of the body is socially constructed,” a claim theorized in more detail by feminist writers (notably: Butler, 1986; de Beauvoir, 1952; Marston, 2000; also, Figart *et al.*, 2001, 2002; Bondi and Domosh, 1998), Harvey (2000) builds on this theme by looking explicitly at discourse in the living wage debate, acknowledging that the living wage campaign is a fundamental form of body politics. Although he is referring specifically to the insertion of “body politics” into the circulation of capital, ultimately Harvey (2000, pp. 128-9) affirms that the living wage debate:

proposes a different spatial model of political intervention in the valuation of labor power, highlighting Munn’s argument that ‘bodily spacetime serves as a condensed sign of the wider spacetime of which it is a part’ (1985, p. 17). Creating an alternative spatial frame to that of increasingly fragmented workplaces...becomes part of the means to alter the conditions of circulation of variable capital.

In the modern living wage debate, both proponents and opponents of the concept employ discourse in a manner that constructs a range of scales from the “body” to the “global” –some more effectively than others. While there is a considerable amount of localizing discourse in action, the living wage movement can hardly be considered locally-bound. Rather, living wage supporters especially seem willing to “go global” in order to secure higher wages. A similar scenario can be found in Kurtz’s (2002) assertion that discourse used to frame a debate about environmental (in)justice at the level of the individual was simultaneously able to invoke a universalist discourse of human rights and lay the groundwork for seeking recourse at the international political scale at which human rights abuses are monitored and addressed (Kurtz, 2002; also, Harvey, 2000). In any event, the modern discourse is increasingly defined by a novel scale –that of the “state,” one that is in large measure being facilitated by couching the role of states as (new) actors in the global circulation of capital. By adopting a discourse of their own

they are ultimately able to secure within the entire state a “uniform wage environment” which renders local living wage laws null and void.

Having surveyed these three major themes in the living wage debate, the remainder of this thesis is devoted to exploring the living wage debate in Athens, Georgia, as it was initiated circa January, 2002, when a group of concerned citizens began to organize with the intention of presenting a living wage proposal to the commissioners of the city. Before analyzing the discourse that ensued in Chapter 5, Chapter 4 will outline the methodology employed in that analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Questions*

This thesis is a case study of how the residents of Athens, Georgia, interpret and integrate the concept of scale in their discourse of a living wage. Specifically, I am using the three-pronged approach developed from the earlier theoretical literature which attempt to ascertain the degree to which Athens's residents understand and construct particular scales as a frame for supporting or opposing a living wage ordinance in this county:

- *How do working people, business owners, economic development leaders, social service providers, political leaders, and others understand the living wage debate and, specifically, which geographical scales do they perceive to be important in terms of political praxis?*
- *How is discourse used to frame scale? Are particular metaphors used and are they effective? What implications do they have for thinking about the political construction of scale?*
- *What material constructs or physical realities exist now or would need to be created in order to give coherence to various scales in Athens' living wage debate?*

By posing these questions, I hope that this research will contribute both to the literature theorizing the political construction of scale, as well as contribute to a better understanding of scale in the living wage debate, how it is interpreted, and why it is important. Ultimately, this thesis will provide interested stakeholders with the initial means to evaluate the concept of the living wage, and its socially-constructed implications, as a strategy for reducing poverty among low-income workers.

I have chosen a strategy of using a case study for several reasons. First, according to Yin (1994, p. 1-13), a case study is the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed. As evidenced by the questions I have posed, it is clear that my research is exploratory in nature; however, it is also clear that I am primarily interested in finding out how people in Athens interpret the concept of the living wage. Hence, this is exploratory research of a particular locality and, as such, is best approached as a time-sensitive and geographically specific case study.

Second, Yin (1994, p. 1-13) argues that when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context and the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, a case study is the optimal route. These caveats are relevant to the living wage debate across the United States in general, and to Athens, Georgia, in particular, again for several reasons. First, I have little control over the debate, much less over the political construction of scale in this city. Second, the living wage, even considering the historical background, is primarily a contemporary event with very real implications for everyday workers, businesses, and city residents.

This research was conducted under the rubric of a qualitative research design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, pp. 6-8), it is actually rather difficult to specify a narrowly defined qualitative research agenda. However, there are general tenets to be followed:

[Q]ualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another.... Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own. Qualitative researchers use semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival and phonetic analysis, even statistics...[to] stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.

As I have stressed previously, in the living wage debate the various concepts of scale are socially constructed. However, given the competitive nature of the debate between supporters and

opponents, scale in this sense is also *contested*. Hence, this research is intended to explore how people attach meaning to different scales –that is to say how, in essence, they give it coherence as a reality through the use of discourse and metaphors as a narrative. Additionally, this qualitative research will recognize that I, as the researcher, will be deciding not only the direction of this research and hence will be imparting an idiosyncratic character to it, but that I will also be deciding the final interpretations. These final interpretations, however, are largely guided by the situational constraints that I encountered during the research phase.

### ***Epistemological Approach***

As evidenced by the exploratory nature of the research questions, and the fact that many of the conclusions derived throughout this research are elucidated from the discourse used to express opinions in the debate, this research is premised on a social constructionist view of the creation of knowledge. Just as qualitative research exhibits a rather nebulous form, so too does Stam (2001, p. 294) argue that “social constructionism is not a single target (for its critics) nor a single movement (for its enthusiasts).” Rather, social constructionism is an amalgam of beliefs about the socially constructed nature of reality, or how we as humans come to understand what we believe to be reality. This approach involves several tenets. First, Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 236) state that knowledge, or beliefs about reality, is created: “[w]hat we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspectives. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by the mind.” Second, proponents of this epistemological approach also argue that *reality itself* is being constructed and not only beliefs about it (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), and that this creation takes place in the context of social interactions (Liebrucks, 2001). The ultimate result, they argue, is that there exists a dialectical relationship between knowledge and reality:

“beliefs about reality, which are constructed in social interaction, play an important role in the (re)construction of institutions and persons” (Liebrucks, 2001, p. 365).

Third, however, there is also an acknowledgement of a “self-defeating internal inconsistency of social constructionist epistemology” in that “strings of assertions...are intended to be taken as attempts to say *what is the case* with regard to knowledge and discourse” (Maze, 2001, p. 394-5, emphasis in original). Primarily, Maze (2001, p. 393) is concerned that social constructionism “treats discourse as having objective existence, and assumes that its own statements about discourse are true.” Because so much of this thesis relies on the interpretation of discourse to arrive at a conclusion, this is not an insignificant problem. According to Maze (2001, p. 416), the correct response to such a charge is not to staunchly defend the objectivity of discourse. Rather,

it is only the imposed epistemological superstructure of social constructionism that leads to the impasse of skepticism [about ‘objectivity’ in the results].... Constructionist metatheory presents itself as if it were the logical consequence of...research findings, but it is not. It is an unjustified generalization motivated...by a misunderstanding of the concept of objectivity.... Recognition of the possibility and necessity of objectivity is not, as some constructionists claim, authoritarian. It is essential for the effective criticism of social dogma.

Hence, while I do not treat the information I collect as totally objective in a realist sense, I do assume that the information I collect is an objective reflection of how research participants view the concept of the living wage.

### ***Data Collection***

This research consists of primary documents gathered through the use of interviews with both individuals and focus groups, as well as a range of secondary documents collected from archival, media, living wage supporting agencies, and economic reports of the Athens area.

### *Primary Data*

Primary data from individuals was collected through the use of an “active interview” process described by Holstein and Gubrium (1995), a method differentiated from traditional approaches in both content and objective. In traditional approaches, Holstein and Gubrium (1995, p. 8) caution that the interview participant is treated as a “repository of facts” or a “vessel of answers” and that the objective is towards “open and undistorted communication between the interviewer and respondent.” The main problem with this method, however, is that it posits the information held by the respondent to be “available for truthful and accurate communication” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 8). In other words, if the interviewer would just ask “correct” and neutral questions, the “correct,” or at least valid, response will follow.

However, active interviews are distinguished in content by the fact that they are intended to be interactional. As such, active interviews are:

conversation[s] with a plan, which involve encouraging subjective relevancies, prompting interpretive possibilities, facilitating linkages, suggesting alternative perspectives, and appreciating diverse horizons of meaning” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 3).

As well, the objective of the active interview is premised on an idea that the interview process is not merely a neutral conduit but, rather, the “productive site of reportable knowledge itself” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 3). Knowledge and meaning are derived from the interaction between the interviewer and the participants. Hence,

all interviews are interpretively active, implicating meaning-making practices on the part of both interviewers and respondents.... [I]nterview data are unavoidably collaborative [and] attempts to strip interviews of their interactional ingredients [are] futile. (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p. 4)

Primary data were collected from focus groups using Morgan (1997) and Goss (1996) as guides. According to Goss (1996, p. 115), focus groups are both inherently different from, and occasionally superior to, one-on-one interviews:

[G]roup discussion...provides valuable insight into social relations.... [T]he ‘stories’ produced in the collaborative performance of a focus group better reflect the social nature of knowledge than a summation of individual narratives.

Morgan (1997, pp. 10-11) holds a very similar belief, arguing that:

the comparative advantage of focus groups as an interview technique lies in their ability to observe interaction on a topic.... In particular, group discussions make it easier to conduct ‘less structured interviews’.... This ability to give the group control over the direction of the interview is especially useful in exploratory research.

### *Interview Participants*

Interview participants were chosen with the goal of obtaining a stratified, though not formally representative, sample of community members who would likely be affected by a living wage law, were one to be passed in Athens, Georgia. Really, the only self-imposed criterion was that the interview participant had to either work or live in Athens. Participants were selected based on their perceived relationship to low-wage work in the area, including low-wage workers themselves, as well as business owners and economic development leaders. However, it was clear during the initial phase of interviewing that my ability to identify potential participants was inadequate and, as a result, I adopted a “snowball method” (Thompson, 1997) of identifying additional contacts that I had overlooked. This was an exceptionally useful tactic as I was able, through referrals, to contact several additional senior members of various economic development agencies, as well as several business owners, to whom I would likely have not ordinarily been given access.

I began the process of contacting potential interview participants by sending out a letter notifying participants about my research agenda as a graduate student interested in exploring how people in Athens understand the concept of a living wage, why I had chosen them as a potential interview subject due to their perceived relevance to the living wage issue, a timeline



for conducting the interviews, and a tentative completion date. As of the completion of this research, I had interviewed a total of 19 people from three primary categories. These constituencies are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3 – Interview Participants in Athens, Georgia**

<b>Capacity as Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Number of Participants:</b>	<b>Area of Residence/ Operation:</b>
Low-income workers	10 people*	All live and work in Athens
Economic Development Advising	3 agencies	ACC & surrounding counties (2) Downtown Athens (1)
Non-profit or social welfare agency	5 agencies, (6 people interviewed)	ACC & surrounding counties (4) Athens only (1)

*\* See Appendix C for additional information about sex, age, ethnicity, occupation, and wages.*

Before the interview phase began, a list of potential questions was prepared. The nature of the questions was derived from previous research of the living wage in other cities in the United States, as well as from archival documents. However, questions were also formulated so as to maximize the potential for discussing the concept of scale during the interview itself, a theme that is not apparent in previous living wage research. I also slightly modified each list of questions to better conform to the participant's expected role in the living wage debate. For example, participants identified as low-income workers were encouraged to talk about their individual experiences in this situation, while the social welfare agencies were encouraged to talk about what low-wage work and a living wage might mean for their organization. Similarly, although business owners and economic development advisors were happy to tell me about their personal views on the living wage, I encouraged them also to try to abstract from the living wage concept the processes that they believed to be most salient for their organization or the business climate in general as they saw it impacted by a living wage law.

The interview process involved meeting each participant at their chosen location for the interview. While most of the social welfare agencies and economic development advisors requested that I meet them in their office, the interviews with low-wage workers took place in their homes. In several instances, the participants were currently without a permanent residence and in those cases the interviews were held in a local shelter for homeless persons. While the longest interview lasted approximately 1 hour, the majority of interviews lasted for 45 minutes. 14 of the 19 interviews were recorded on audio tape; however, 5 people indicated that they did not want to be recorded, in which instance I took notes throughout the interview and made a list of what I thought to be key phrases invoking concepts of “scale.” Lastly, 12 of the interviews were conducted with just myself as the interviewer and a solo participant in the active interview style described above. One interview session involved myself and two participants – a husband and wife, both of whom were low-income workers. This interview also resembled an active interview style.

The remaining five participants –all low-income (or temporarily unemployed) workers– were interviewed as a focus group in which the distinction and benefits and drawbacks of a focus group became apparent. Whereas the other constituencies interviewed were able to abstract about low-wage workers and the potential impacts of a living wage, I had anticipated that it would be somewhat harder for low-income workers themselves to describe and reflect upon their situation in great detail, especially for the participants who were working, yet unable to afford a place to live, hence their homeless status. Sensing that this could create reluctance on the part of these participants to submit to an interview, I opted to employ a focus group method so as to ease the participants’ trepidation about having their poverty status “researched.” During the process itself, I believe that the participants were more candid about their economic situation, especially

after everyone in the group had had a chance to hear others talk of being in a similar position. Hence, the “social nature of knowledge” (Goss, 1996) –the knowledge of what it means to be a low-wage worker– was, I believe, more easily communicated in a group setting in the manner described by Morgan (1997).

### *Secondary Data*

The secondary data used in this research involved a range of material, including archival living wage literature, media, living wage supporters’ documentation and brochures, and economic development reports for the area.

### *Data Analysis*

Seidel (1998, p. 1) describes qualitative data analysis as a three-step process of “noticing, collecting, and thinking” about connections. This, however, is not a linear process but, rather, a circular one that requires constant and aggressive interrogation of every piece of information:

The process is iterative and progressive because it is a cycle that keeps repeating... recursive because one part can call you back to a previous part,... holographic in that each step in the process contains the entire process. (Seidel, 1998, p. 2)

The process begins with coding the information, sorting it into “manageable parts,” and reassembling it to reveal a “meaningful or comprehensible fashion” (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 107).

Charmaz’s (1983, p. 112; also, 2000) concept of “constructivist grounded theory” elaborates further on the necessity of coding:

Codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data...coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis.... Researchers use codes to pull together and categorize a series of otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identify in the data. At first the data may appear to be a mass of confusing, unrelated accounts. But by studying and coding...the researcher begins to create order.

Ultimately, the goal is to find “conditional statements” that allow a window into how the participants “construct their realities” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524) and then code these so as to allow for subsequent sorting and analysis. When codes are assigned to these conditional statements, there are two types of codes to consider: “emic” and “etic.” According to Pike (1954), an “emic” code is a description of behavior in terms meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor, or an “insider’s” view. An “etic” account is a description of a behavior in terms familiar to the researcher; it is an “outsider’s” view. Hence, while “emic” codes are those primarily imposed on data by the research participant during the course of the research, “etic” codes are imposed by the researcher for purposes of abstraction and generalization. In the course of my research, none of my research participants actually used the term scale; however, many used metaphors to suggest particular scales in line with Smith’s (1992) schematic. Hence, the distinction between “emic” and “etic” codes is useful; whereas the discourse and metaphors form the basis for “emic” codes, for these are the ways in which the research participants expressed their understanding of scale in this debate, the “etic” codes that I subsequently applied were primarily developed as a result of the literature on the political construction of scale. These codes mirrored that of Smith’s (1992) schematic in Table 2 and hence should be thought of only as a heuristic tool for understanding “scale.” In this heuristic approach, “code words are primarily flags or signposts that point to [ideas] in the data” (Seidel, 1998, p. 14); hence, the heuristic codes for scale are meant only to suggest that there is a process at work whereby living wage stakeholders envision more or less advantageous positions or scales from which to evaluate the debate.

Lastly, a final step in the qualitative analysis process not included in this research would have been to utilize a qualitative data analysis program, such as *N Vivo*, to assist in the coding

and sorting of the data. Although such programs are useful for establishing a pattern of relationships between primary and secondary codes, and for facilitate the ensuing comparisons, I did not use such a program for two reasons. First, my unfamiliarity with this program would likely have been a hindrance. Second, because the number of interview participants was not overwhelming in my research, I believe that the manual coding and comparison of the data was not only more efficient, but allowed for greater flexibility as well.

## CHAPTER 5

### LIVING WAGE DISCOURSE IN ATHENS, GEORIGIA

Guided by the literature on the political construction of scale, along with the previous exploration of discourse in both the historic and contemporary living wage debate throughout the United States, this chapter will look at how residents, business owners, and economic development leaders in Athens, Georgia, understand and interpret the concept of the living wage. Specifically, I will try to show how this interpretation becomes bound up with the political construction of scale by both proponents and opponents of the living wage in this community. The first section of this chapter will explore this discourse as it was recorded in interviews conducted during the summer of 2004. The second section addresses the second question outlined in the previous chapter, namely, to explore how this discourse, through the use of metaphors, is invoked and becomes engaged in the political construction of scale. The third section addresses the question of how various physical realities and physical constructs are able to give coherence to these “scales.”

#### *Question One Discussion*

- *How do working people, business owners, economic development leaders, social service providers, political leaders, and others understand the living wage debate and, specifically, which geographical scales do they perceive to be important in terms of political praxis?*

In Athens, Georgia, the perception of the living wage as evidenced in the discourse used by stakeholders to describe their opinions is not unlike the discourse employed in the modern debate throughout the United States; that is, many of the same themes concerning “body”

politics, family and job security, and “community” improvement surfaced during my conversations with workers, business owners, and economic development advisors in this city. Following from this, two central themes emerged: first, participants that identified themselves as living wage supporters tended to concentrate on the benefits purported to accrue to individuals, families, and the “community” of Athens. The underlying premise appeared to be on based on the notion that most workers are entitled to a living wage, but it is employers who are conspiring to thwart organized efforts to achieve this.

The second theme that emerged was from participants who, although not opposed to improving wage conditions for workers, still opposed the living wage as the best route to achieve this, as evidenced in an editorial comment: “Who can be against the idea of helping people in need? But the method of helping people shouldn’t be to hurt the people you’re trying to help” (Anderson, 1999). Rather, these participants tended to invoke discourse about the forces of globalization, including its apparent inevitability and its ability to penetrate and dictate economic decisions in Athens. Such forces, they argued, have the effect of making a living wage law for this community ineffective, if not wholly counterproductive. Hence, while the distinction in discourse between proponents and opponents was not entirely without some overlap in these two themes, the conversations nevertheless did reveal that the discourse, much as it does in the rest of the country, is being used to frame the living wage along scales similar to Smith’s (1992) schematic. The implication of this, as described by Smith (1992), is that there is not only a set of discourses used to frame each scale, but there are also material constructs that either must exist presently or be constructed in order to give coherence to these “scales.” Finally, also following from Smith (1992), this implies that there is a potential source of resistance at each scale. Hence, what emerged from my conversations with stakeholders was not only the discourse which

framed various “scales,” but also a discourse that seemed to form at least an embryonic resistance.

*Theme One: Benefits of a Living Wage in Athens, Georgia*

In the first theme, when asked about the potential impacts that a living wage could have on individual workers, the most common responses were framed in such a way to emphasize workers’ personal intelligence and integrity in the face of both public perceptions, which often blame the poor for their own situation, as well as the purported callousness of employers who exploit workers but who offer little sense of job security or appreciation in return. Hence, there is clearly a tendency to frame this position at the “body” scale by aligning these descriptions to themes of human rights which transcend economic arguments (Ryan, 1906, 1919; Kurtz, 2002). Primarily, this is accomplished in three steps: first, discourse is used to frame idealized “bodies”; then, these idealized bodies are purported to make idealized workers and, hence, legitimate living wage recipients; lastly, discourse frames these workers as being denied a living wage not by their own lack of effort, but by employers who fail to respond in kind with a fair wage for these idealized workers.

Idealized “bodies” are created through discourse which emphasizes the way in which low-income workers not only persevere in that face of economic hardship, but respond as individual human beings with creativity and dignity which transcends their working life:

I think middle class people don’t really recognize how much harder it is to be poor, how much smarter you have to be, how much more organized, how much more careful...and [middle class people] don’t see that as a skill. It’s a really tough job, though. (Interview with a low-wage worker, Athens, Georgia)

Following from the establishment of these idealized human bodies, the discourse then frames these bodies as idealized workers who bring to work with them the same characteristics that they



embody as individuals. The anticipated result, at least by workers, is that these attributes should and will be rewarded through the remuneration of a living wage:

[a living wage] would [encourage] people...to be competent employees...[and to] perform their duties.... [I]t may apply more pressure to them but it may also make it easier because they know they are getting a living wage...a more fair wage. (Interview with low-wage worker, Athens, Georgia)

Lastly, the intent is then to emphasize that these workers—even low-wage workers— have the ability and desire to form loyal relationships with their employer. However, when employers abuse this propensity by paying poverty-level wages, then that sense of loyalty is effectively short-circuited; hence, the fault for high turnover or poor performance on the job lies with the employer, not with the employees who embody characteristics that can only be sustained—in bodies— through the ability to earn enough to support that body, i.e. a living wage:

it's hard to like a job when you're not making enough to support yourself. The things about any job that annoy you are only underscored by the fact that you're not getting paid very well...and when you're in this sort of low-wage bracket it's easier to justify quitting a job if you get pissed off one day.... I'm not saying that no one would ever quit their job if they make a living wage, but I feel like, 'what are you giving up at \$6 an hour?'...you're giving up a crappy \$6-an-hour job that basically you feel you can go out and find the same crappy job somewhere else.... There's not this sense of security or loyalty. (Interview with a low-wage worker, Athens, Georgia)

Along with the “body” discourse that emphasizes individual benefits from a living wage, respondents also noted the potential for an improved familial situation through the application of a living wage law, again very similar to contemporary discourse throughout the United States. Connections between above-poverty status and family well-being were said to build family self-sufficiency and dignity when, for example, the family as a unit earned enough not to qualify for public assistance:

I think I'd rather see people have better paying jobs. I think that does more for a family's self-esteem...gives them more mobility [and] empowers them or enables them to develop some sense of wealth. [B]eing on public assistance I don't think is the best thing for a family. It's there if they need it, but I don't think it should be a way of life because

it's...just what it does to a family psychologically. (Interview with social service agency, Athens, Georgia)

As well, a recurring discourse involving family life and poverty involved the potential for abuse as a direct result of chronic poverty and pressure on parents: “if people are stressed out because of their income, then there’s a possibility that people could take that stress out on their children” (Interview with social service agency, Athens, Georgia). Although reducing the instances of child abuse is clearly a worthy goal, even without a living wage passage, “family” scaled discourse was actually rather sparse and tended not to be discussed unless specifically prompted by the interviewer.

Just as the “community” scale is both the “most ideologically appropriated” (Smith, 1992, p. 70) and a very common discourse in the rest of the country, in Athens, too, participants were able to envision an impact which would transform the entire community. Not only were themes of “community” involvement and an increase in security stressed, but so was the potential for community transformation, as seen in this comment by a low-wage worker: “it [a living wage] may lead to a little more integration across class and racial lines if people have the economic power to move up or to parts of town where they’ve been restricted from because of income” (Interview with low-wage worker, Athens, Georgia). Hence, the appropriated “community” for this worker is defined by a very specific set of criteria: “communities” that become integrated are not only transformed into something different but are better. A second “community” theme mirrors national discourse which stresses the expected improvement when living wage recipients spend their additional income in the same “community” in which they live. However, as this participant also noted, this need not necessarily be restricted to current establishments, but could as well become bound up in the construction of entirely new spaces:

if people had more disposable income in general, they might come out more [to] downtown Athens a little bit more if they had the money. Or maybe they would create their own space somewhere else. It seems like [the money] has got to go somewhere. (Interview with low-wage worker, Athens, Georgia).

### *Theme Two: Forces of Globalization Shape Athens's Economic Situation*

The second central theme to emerge from my conversations with stakeholders in Athens about the living wage was one in which respondents emphasized that purported globalization forces are responsible for the economic decisions made locally, including those in the labor market. Although globalization was previously discussed as being a rather nebulous term—one that is commonly appropriated by businesses which stand to benefit most from it—this does not mean that such forces do not exist in some form or that local stakeholders are wrong to invoke them. Rather, in a comment by an economic development advisor, the response stressed the very real outcome of purported globalization and the role of wages in that process:

the entrepreneur or the business developer, they can [invest] wherever they want...I used to [advise economic investment] and it didn't matter to us whether that location was in Athens, Georgia, or Jacksonville, Florida,...we didn't care. We wanted a place that would generate sales...[for] corporate headquarters, [for] stockholders. (Interview with economic development advisor, Athens, Georgia)

Likewise, another participant described the competitive global forces in which Athens becomes bound up:

I was talking to a tuxedo manufacturer that had moved to Mexico and I said, 'What can I do to get you to come back to Athens?' and he said, 'Nothing. The labor that I would have to pay \$9 an hour in Athens I can get here for \$3 an hour, and in China for \$1 an hour'. (Interview with economic development advisor, Athens, Georgia)

Also apparent is a discourse that reifies the concept of the city as a "growth machine" (Cox and Mair, 1988; Logan and Molotch, 1996), which would seem to be at odds with the previous discourse. One participant who is employed as an economic development advisor stated that: "it's vital that we attract major capital investment in order to provide enough tax base to support

the services in the area” (Interview with economic development advisor, Athens, Georgia).

However, framing the city as a growth machine that is compelled to seek investment inside its borders destabilizes much of the globalization discourse asserting a borderless economic environment because it simultaneously conjures metaphors of contradicting forces.

### ***Question Two Discussion***

- ***How is discourse used to frame scale? Are particular metaphors used and are they effective? What implications do they have for thinking about the political construction of scale?***

The metaphors used to describe the potential impact of a living wage ordinance in Athens, Georgia, serve the same two purposes that they served in the national debate as they were previously described, namely that metaphors are used to frame the living wage discussion and that the choice of metaphor is important because it can shape how we understand an idea. In Athens, two themes emerged around the use of metaphors. (In this section, the metaphors that I believe to be most revealing are italicized for discussion purposes only.)

In conjunction with the first scale theme above, the first set of metaphors used in that discourse were employed to convey the notion that every low-wage worker was a “body” which served as a container for idealized human qualities of intelligence and loyalty. For example, working bodies could be described as independent and self-sufficient, but only if they received a fair wage on the same level as costs of living:

If we truly want to *reduce dependency on government services* and encourage *self-sufficiency*, then we must acknowledge the need to make the *fruits of labor* support *living conditions*. (Rees, 2001, emphasis added)

Similarly, these metaphors also serve to exalt an individual’s status as a human being, or citizen as least, before that of being a worker, as when consumer activist and erstwhile Presidential

candidate Ralph Nader opined during a speech in Athens that “[w]e’re growing up *corporate*. We’re not growing up as *citizens*” (Hatcher, 2004).

However, there are contradictory uses of metaphors in living wage supporters’ discourse as well. For example, the executive director of a local social service agency serving low-income citizens in Athens, when asked about the possibility of a living wage for both public and private workers in the city, replied: “I don’t think [the living wage] should apply to a *16 year old*...why does he need a living wage? It’s *Moms and Dads* that need the living wage” (Interview with social service agency, Athens, Georgia). In this case, then, only certain privileged bodies – parents– are deemed to be appropriate recipients of a living wage, a conclusion startlingly similar to the historical discourse, *à la* Ryan (1906, 1916), but one typically not embraced by contemporary living wage proponents.

Hence, the metaphors invoked in this discourse are all used to imply that not just any worker might receive a living wage, but that workers with particular moral characteristics such as self-sufficiency or an internal drive towards independence are the rightful recipients. In short, workers currently receiving less-than-living wages are not lazy or unintelligent, but are toiling fruitlessly for employers portrayed as faceless and “corporate.” Many of these metaphors, as a result, resemble those invoked in the early era of living wage activism, circa 1900. However, as noted previously, much of that early discourse was also laden with gender and race implications which ultimately serve to destabilize the discourse in the modern era. What did carry over, however, is the sense of ageism evident in Tolley *et al.* (1999) and others who argued that many low-wage workers were “teenagers” and thus not entitled to a living wage because they did not need one. Here, the comment from the Athens interview is interesting because it aligns precisely with this sense of living wage entitlement, but only for certain “bodies” –in this case parents.

The problem with such caveats, of course, is that it becomes quite easy to manipulate the definition to once again exclude many people on grounds unrelated to work ability; hence, such age- (or gender- or race-) oriented caveats –on principle– typically are not a part of modern living wage doctrine.<sup>4</sup>

The second metaphor theme that emerged tended to emphasize Athens as part of a larger, global economic system. Under such a rubric, Athens tends to be portrayed in a borderless existence within the global circulation of capital. For example, a respondent involved in economic advising in the city claimed that “one of the axioms that I’ve used for many years is that *‘jobs and dollar bills do not recognize political boundary lines’*, and you have to look at [Athens] as a *complete market*” (Interview with economic development advisor, Athens, Georgia, 5/4/04). Hence, the personification and anthropomorphization of capital to be able to think for itself and navigate through the global circulation of capital –the “complete market”– reduces human influence to mere meddling.

However, once again there are metaphors invoked which seem to contradict the borderless designation. For example, one participant claims that “if Athens passed a living wage ordinance, it wouldn’t just affect *us* but would dramatically affect all of our *neighbors* as well” (Interview with an economic development advisor, 5/11/04). While the passage invokes an us-versus-them mentality, the use of the “neighbor” metaphor is even more revealing because it begins to imply once again that there are indeed borders that must be not only recognized, but accounted for in the circulation of capital. Hence, the globalization discourse –and ultimately the

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<sup>4</sup> In Santa Fe, New Mexico, for example, the living wage ordinance explicitly *includes* categories of workers that are now excluded from both the national-scope Fair Labor Standards Act as well as New Mexico’s state-scope minimum wage law. Hence, this inclusion may be argued to be as much about *principle* as it is about securing higher wages.

“global” scale that it helps to construct– seems at times to be weakened by the same participants who invoke it most.

### ***Question Three Discussion***

- ***What material constructs or physical realities exist now or would need to be created in order to give coherence to various scales in Athens’ living wage debate?***

The final question I address in this research refers again to Smith’s (1992) argument that various material constructs or physical realities give coherence to particular “scales.” In so doing, the use of discourse and metaphors about purported and contested physical realities contributes to the political (re-)construction of scale in that it helps to identify the constructs that have been erected as “spatial fixes” (Harvey, 1984). It is the spatial fixes, as much as the discourse, which serve as evidence that actors have successfully broadened or narrowed their “space of engagement” (Cox, 1998) in order to secure a vantage point, whether they be for economic purposes or not, and which form the basis for new battles over scale.

In Athens, some respondents used metaphors of the individual body to suggest they are hard-working, smart, organized, and financially independent, i.e. not on public assistance. In doing so, this discourse also requires that the only physical construct that can validate such idealized “bodies” is the passage of a living wage law at a level sufficient to sustain these bodies. However, for these Athens participants, the physical construct in the form of a living wage law does not yet exist. Similarly, using a community metaphor, stakeholders use the physical reality of, first, more money spent in the Athens area and, second, the possible racial integration or de-segregation of neighborhoods as a way to argue that a living wage would solidify the “community” scale by improving it. Again, however, validation does not exist in a physical form; it can only come through the passage of a living wage law. Until then, “communities” are

portrayed as exclusionary or unsafe to convey a sense of unfairness and insecurity –a condition that can only be rectified through the living wage.

Globalization metaphors included the idea that capital should be unhindered by political boundaries, as well as a strong sense of neoliberal, capitalistic hegemony. Therefore, for some the physical realities needed to achieve this are already evident in the purportedly unrestricted flow of capital across Athens's political boundary and a minimum wage rate uniform with that of its neighbors. To change this purported reality through a living wage law, according to some, would be to disrupt the natural flow of capital. However, to say that it is a reality that Athenians now, or soon will, live in a borderless economy is not entirely accurate, either. The effects of Athens's political boundary on economic patterns –such as in the attraction of capital investment or the location of businesses within the county– cannot be escaped. In a final set of discourse encountered during my research, this constraint is apparent:

Interviewee: I think that business has a tendency to shy away from government control and anytime government steps up and says that we're going to place these kinds of constraints, even though you were planning on putting those constraints on yourself anyway, perhaps some automatically say, 'No, I'll go somewhere else'.

Interviewer: Would [the companies that are here now] leave? ...leave the area entirely to escape higher wages?

Interviewee: Yeah...well, some can't, but some can and I think as leases expire, as real estate...traffic patterns change, [eventually they would] relocate. And although it looks like a huge cost, relocating is a minor cost of running a major service organization.... Would the major retailers leave? Would the automobile dealerships leave? Would many of the service providers that could operate right across the county line [leave]? Absolutely. You would probably see the biggest building boom in the surrounding counties that they've ever seen. But just near the county line...and that's fairly easily proven if you take a look at the Oconee County master plan and you see that Oconee County is a very sophisticated urban county within five miles of the Clarke County line. (Interview with economic development advisor, Athens, Georgia, 5/5/04)

Hence, Athens (and Oconee County, and every other county for that matter) has always taken into consideration the effects of its political borders with respect to economic matters.



## ***Conclusion***

Two central themes emerged in Athens's discourse about the concept of a living wage. First, many participants who claimed to support the idea tended to situate their discourse and metaphors at the scale of the "body," "family," or "community." At the "body" scale, an interesting line of discourse emerged in which individual workers were portrayed as legitimate recipients of a living wage because they were idealized as smart, organized, and loyal to their employers. When living wages fail to materialize, the participants in my interviews tended to downplay personal involvement or agency in the wage setting process and instead transferred responsibility entirely to the employer.

In the second theme of discourse and metaphors, there seemed very little evidence that employers paid sub-living wage standards as punishment for poor job performance. There was, however, a considerable amount of resignation to globalization forces that were perceived to be stronger, more important, and ultimately more efficient in directing the local economy in a manner superior to anything that local stakeholders could conceive. In short, these stakeholders either wholly supported, or at least were comfortably resigned, to the idea of globalization; hence, the discourse that surfaced seemed to lend great strength to the arguments proffered by Gibson-Graham (2002) and others who argue that, to many, globalization increasingly seems inevitable or "right" due in large part to the discourse and metaphors used to describe it.

I concluded by trying to integrate Smith's (1992) theory that different concepts of scales are given coherence through the physical realities that exist in the economic and social landscapes. For living wage supporters, the scale of the "body" can only be validated through the passage of a living wage law that requires a wage level sufficient to sustain individual bodies. Hence, for these supporters, the physical construct does not yet exist. For living wage

opponents, by contrast, the discourse of globalization, *vis-à-vis* neoliberal economic doctrine, requires that the physical landscape be one in which the circulation of capital proceeds unhindered by political interventionism. To an extent, this requires that political boundaries – such as Athens’s county boundary– be rendered as inconspicuous as possible. Hence, the notion that wages rates could be aligned to such boundaries creates in the minds, and discourse, of opponents a sense of a false scale. However, to say that living wage opponents have achieved a “physical reality” of political non-interventionism in the economic realm–while living wage supporters have not– would probably be misleading. For opponents of the living wage there seem to be contradictory discourses which simultaneously portray Athens as an individual player in growth coalition politics –hence, the need to attract capital investment to “our” city and away from our “neighbors” – while also portraying the city as borderless and easily penetrated by the global circulation of capital. Additionally, it is also clear that many economic decisions are still made primarily by county-level political factions. Ultimately, the inability to cast off these local arrangements does as much to destabilize globalization discourse as it does to contribute to the physical realities of a “local” scale.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### *Summary of Results*

This thesis was premised on a framework, borrowed from Herod (1997a), which suggests there are two ways to think about the living wage debate in the United States. First, there is a “geography of living wages” which represents the spatial distribution of living wage laws in the United States. Although Martin (2001) offered compelling evidence that certain variables, when present, make it more (or less) likely that a city or municipality will pass a living wage law, his analysis lacks dynamism for two reasons. First, it seems to treat cities as mere vessels for the variables associated with favorable living wage laws –vessels with static borders and economies and little sense of evolution in reaction to shifting social, economic, or political forces. Second, it ignores the potential of living wage activism itself to reshape geo-political boundaries and identities. Hence, rather than a quantitatively-based living wage research agenda, I proposed to analyze the living wage debate qualitatively, primarily through analysis of the discourse used in the debate. In doing so, I argued that the living wage movement is bound up in the political construction of scale as different groups of stakeholders employ discourse to construct a politics of scale that has, to date, witnessed the successful passage of 120 living wage ordinances in the United States.

In Chapter 2, I outlined the conceptual framework for thinking about the political construction of “scale.” I rejected an idealist approach to the concept of scale because it tends to portray scale as simply a static mental construct for ordering society and its processes. Instead, I

explored in more detail the materialist approach which argues that scale is literally “brought into being” (Herod, 2003, p. 232). While Harvey (1984) and Smith (1992) recognize capital’s influence in this regard, Herod (1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2001) and others inspired by a Marxian-influenced epistemology argue for a more dialectical construction of scale as a continually negotiated process. Throughout this process, discourse is employed to both frame the concept of scale, as well as to suggest metaphors that, either explicitly or implicitly, “fundamentally alter” (Herod, 2003, p. 238) the way we think about “scale.” This literature argues that it is not “broad and abstract forces at work” in the construction of scale, but “ordinary people” who are engaged in the construction of scale through “the practices of their everyday lives” (Herod, 2001, p. 45). Lastly, I argued that this is a discursive process that neither begins nor ends with an ontological status of scale, but with certain discourses giving more or less coherence to thinking about particular scales as more advantageous to particular stakeholders at particular times.

In Chapter 3, I explored the historic and modern living wage discourse, as well as some of the legal considerations, and argued that it is very much reflective of the political construction of scale, particularly *vis-à-vis* Smith (1992). For early living wage proponents, the scales which were perceived to be the most advantageous from which to support a living wage certainly included that of the “body” and “home,” where notions of divinely-granted human (bodily) existence and gendered rhetoric abounds, but also included elements of the “national” scale, where references to the *ideology* of “American” outweigh references to actual rights conferred Constitutionally. However, the early discourse was also bound up in the construction of particular bodies purported to deserve a minimum wage –namely, Caucasian, heterosexual males. Hence, this literature represented not so much the process of “jumping scales” (Cox, 1998) in order for these bodies to achieve a more advantageous “space of engagement,” but the

creation of the “body” scale, dependent as it was upon metaphors such as slave, consumer, and American.

In the modern living wage debate, both proponents and opponents employ discourse in a manner that constructs a range of scales from the “body” to the “global” –some more effectively than others. While there is a considerable amount of localizing discourse in action, the living wage movement can hardly be considered locally-bound. Rather, living wage supporters especially seem willing to “go global” in order to secure higher wages. Their attempts to legitimate a global living wage argument may in fact be a response to countervailing discourse which attempts to discount local efforts to influence wage rates as immature or “ridiculous” (Gibson-Graham, 2002, p. 50). In any event, the modern discourse is increasingly defined by a novel scale –that of the “local state.”

“Local states,” or state legislators to be more precise, are increasingly positioning themselves as the arbiters of wage rates within their state borders. What is more, they have interpreted neoliberal economic doctrine, incorrectly it seems, to mean “uniform wage environments” throughout their states. However misguided the interpretation, the result nonetheless is that local authority in the living wage movement is being legally denied through this intervention. However, as has been the case throughout so much of the debate, resistance is evident; one way this is seen is in the reclamation of individual “bodies” as workers when they are covered by living wage ordinances which repeal federally-imposed exemptions, such as can be seen under Santa Fe’s proposed living wage ordinance.

In Chapter 5, it became evident that two central themes emerged in Athens’s discourse about the concept of a living wage. First, many participants who claimed to support the idea tended to situate their discourse and metaphors at the scale of the “body,” “family,” or

“community.” At the “body” scale, an interesting line of discourse emerged in which individual workers were portrayed as legitimate recipients of a living wage because they were idealized as smart, organized, and loyal to their employers. When living wages fail to materialize, the participants in my interviews tended to downplay personal involvement or agency in the wage setting process and instead transferred responsibility entirely to the employer or to the more nebulous “market.” In the second theme of discourse and metaphors, there was a considerable amount of resignation to globalization forces that were perceived to be stronger, more important, and ultimately more efficient at dictating the local economy. In short, these stakeholders either wholly supported, or at least were comfortably resigned to, the idea of globalization; hence, the discourse that surfaced seemed to lend great strength to the arguments proffered by Gibson-Graham (2002) and others who argue that globalization increasingly seems inevitable or “right” due in large part to the discourse and metaphors used to describe it.

### ***Contributions of this Research***

Taken as a case study of the political construction of scale, this research makes a contribution to the theoretical framework that I described in Chapters 2 and 3 by arguing that in the living wage debate, scale is being politically constructed by both supporters and opponents of a living wage in order to sway opinion on the matter. Building on theory about the political construction of scale in general, and the conflicts over “body politics” by Harvey (2000) and Smith (1992) in particular, I attempted to show that not only is living wage discourse bound up in the political construction of scale at the “body” level but that it is in fact bound up with the creation and contestation of multiples scales –from the “local” to the “global”– which at times even display a certain amount of internal contradictions.

### ***Limitations of this Research***

There were, I believe, at least two distinct limitations in this research. First, to date I have been unable to interview members of the political constituency in Athens to ascertain their thoughts about a living wage in this city. I believe this is a fairly major deficiency because these stakeholders in particular can have significant impacts on the economic, political, and social landscape of Athens. As such, their views about the living wage are critical. However, this research was conducted during an election year and I believe this may have impacted the willingness of these constituents to participate in my research. Although I stressed to all of my interview participants the confidentiality of the data I collected, including the political contingent, in a city with only 10 elected commissioners, plus a mayor, there seemed a sense that this confidentiality would be transparent.

The second limitation to this research that I identified upon its completion is that I feel that much of the discourse obtained in my interviews reflect a somewhat underdeveloped view of the living wage and its potential impacts. This is likely for two reasons: first, it is a direct reflection of the types of interview questions I asked, which I now believe to be inadequate to complete a comprehensive survey of discourse. The second reason that this discourse may be underdeveloped is that the concept of the living wage is still rather new in Athens. There has been little private discussion, and even less public debate, about the potential benefits and costs of such a measure. Hence, with better interview questions –derived perhaps by investing first in a pilot study in accordance with Charmaz (2000)– combined with interviews with stakeholders in the political arena, I believe that an improved assessment of living wage discourse in Athens would reveal to an even greater degree that the construction and contestation of geographic scale defines much of the living wage debate.

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## **APPENDIX A: LIVING WAGE ORDINANCES IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>5</sup>**

### **Santa Fe NM - February 2003**

In February of 2003, Santa Fe became the second city (after New Orleans) to enact a citywide minimum wage increase when the City Council approved an \$8.50 minimum wage for any business in the city with at least 25 employees. The wage will rise \$1.00 every two years until it reaches \$10.50 in 2008, when it will be indexed to inflation.

### **New York City NY - November 2002**

On November 27, Mayor Bloomberg signed into law a living wage ordinance that covers more workers than any other such law in the country. The law will apply to about 50,000 employees of service contractors doing business with the city, principally health care workers, as well as a handful of day care, food service and disability service workers. The initial living wage is set at \$8.10 plus health benefits or \$9.60 if benefits are not provided by the employer. The wage rate will rise in two steps until it reaches \$10.00 an hour in July of 2006 (ACORN, Working Families Party with assistance from the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law).

### **Cincinnati OH - November 2002**

In November, the Cincinnati City Council enacted a living wage law that obligates the city itself as well as any city service contractor with a contract worth at least \$20,000 to pay a living wage of \$8.70 an hour plus health benefits, or else \$10.20 an hour, adjusted annually (Coalition for a Just Cincinnati).

Louisville KY - November 2002 – Information not available

Bellingham WA - November 2002 – Information not available

### **Westchester County NY - November 2002**

In November, the County Legislature approved a law will ensure pay of at least \$10 per hour plus health benefits, or \$11.50 an hour without benefits for most service contractors doing at least \$50,000 of business with the county, mainly those providing home healthcare workers, janitors, and security guards. The bill also covers firms receiving \$100,000 or more in economic development assistance from the county in the form of loans, grants, tax abatements, etc. The living wage will kick in January 2004, rise to \$10.75 base wage plus \$1.50 for benefits as of Jan. 1, 2005, and \$11.50 an hour with \$1.50 for benefits in 2006. For the more than 1000 child care workers in county programs, the law establishes a task force which will examine different models for implementing the living wage and will submit a proposal to the county legislature by August 2003 (Working Families Party, assisted by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law).

### **Taylor MI - November 2002**

In November, Taylor became the 13th Michigan city to enact a living wage law when the City Council approved an ordinance that sets a minimum hourly rate of \$8.64 an hour to be paid to workers who work on city contracts in excess of \$50,000. The ordinance calls for payment of \$10.80 an hour to contract workers if no health benefits are provided.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://livingwagecampaign.org/victories.php>



#### Broward County FL - October 2002

In October, the Broward County Commission approved a living wage law that sets a floor of \$9.57 an hour – or \$10.82 an hour if health benefits are not provided – for all County employees and companies entering into contracts with the County to provide the following services: food preparation, security, maintenance, clerical work, transportation, landscaping, printing or reproduction (Community Coalition for a Living Wage).

#### Watsonville CA - September 2002

In September, the Watsonville City Council enacted a living wage law requiring firms that enter into city service contracts (14 different services are delineated) to pay a living wage to employees performing work under those projects. The living wage is set at \$11.50 an hour if the employer provides health benefits and \$12.55 an hour if no benefits are provided, adjusted annually for cost of living. The law also requires such firms to offer these employees 10 compensated days off for sick leave and/or vacation and includes additional worker protections such as worker retention language (Santa Cruz County Coalition for a Living Wage).

#### Fairfax CA - August 2002

In August 2002, the Town Council of Fairfax adopted a living wage ordinance requiring certain service contractors with city contracts greater than \$10,000 and their sub-contractors, as well as business with more than ten employees receiving city subsidies greater than \$15,000, to pay a minimum hourly wage of \$13.00 with health benefits and \$14.75 without. The wage applies to full- and part-time employees of contractors and sub-contractors, as well as seasonal and temporary workers. The wage also applies to City employees. The level will be adjusted according to annual cost of living increases as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Covered firms must remain neutral with respect to union organizing.

#### Southfield MI - July 2002

In July, the Southfield City Council passed a living wage ordinance that requires employers with City contracts greater than \$50,000 per year, as well as any employer receiving a tax abatement from the City, to pay hourly wages that annually total no less than 125% of the federal poverty line, currently \$11.31 an hour, or 100% of the poverty line, currently \$9.05 per hour, if the employer provides health benefits.

#### Oxnard CA - July 2002

In July, the City Council of Oxnard adopted a living wage policy requiring City service contractors with contracts greater than \$25,000 to pay a living wage of at least \$9.00 an hour, to be adjusted annually (the ordinance includes planned adjustments as follows: at least \$9.25 an hour plus 32 hours of paid leave per year as of July 2003; at least \$10.59 an hour plus 64 hours of paid leave per year as of July 2004; at least \$12.22 an hour plus 96 hours of paid leave per year as of July 2005).

#### Montgomery County MD - June 2002

In June, the Montgomery County Council voted to require all for-profit firms with county contracts over \$50,000 and at least 10 employees to pay a living wage of \$10.25 an hour. The measure also includes a “non-penalty” clause that encourages non-profits that contract with the

county to pay a living wage by insuring that the bidding process does not unfairly undercut them (Progressive Maryland).

#### Port of Oakland CA - March 2002

In March, Oakland voters overwhelmingly (78%) approved an initiative that extends the City of Oakland's Living Wage law to 1,500 low wage workers at Oakland's Airport and Seaport, including baggage handlers, security guards, rental car drivers and food service workers. Oakland's current living wage is \$9.45 an hour if health benefits are provided, \$10.87 if they are not (East Bay Alliance For a Sustainable Economy, HERE 2850).

#### New Orleans LA - February 2002

In February, the voters of New Orleans approved the first-ever citywide minimum wage increase by a margin of 63% to 37%. The city's new minimum wage is pegged to always be one dollar higher than the federal minimum wage, currently \$6.15 an hour. Businesses with less than 500,000 in revenues and employees of city government are exempt (ACORN, SEIU Local 100, Greater New Orleans AFL-CIO, United Teachers of New Orleans). Overturned by Louisiana Supreme Court 9/02.

#### Hazel Park MI - February 2002

February. Repealed 6/02 in reaction to state threat to cut revenue sharing to living wage cities.

#### Santa Fe NM - February 2002

– In February, the Santa Fe city council enacted a law that requires a living wage be paid to all full time city employees, employees of firms who enter into service contracts with the city worth at least \$30,000 and certain recipients of economic development assistance from the city. The living wage will phase in starting in 2003 at \$8.50, then \$9.50 in 2004 and \$10.50 in 2005.

#### Marin County CA - January 2002

In January, the Marin County Board of Supervisors passed a living wage ordinance requiring County service contractors – including non-profits - to pay a living wage of at least \$9.00 an hour, \$10.25 if employer paid health benefits are not included. Direct County employees must also be paid at least this living wage. In-Home Support Services workers whose agencies get County dollars must also be paid at least \$8.50 an hour, \$9.75 if no benefits are provided (Marin County Living Wage Coalition).

#### Pima County AZ - January 2002 – Information not Available

#### Bozeman MT - December 2001

In December, the Bozeman City Commission approved an ordinance that would require that direct city employees and businesses that receive city financial assistance must pay a living wage, pegged at \$8.50 per hour plus health benefits or \$9.50 per hour without benefits. It will be increased annually to match increases in the Consumer Price Index (Montana People's Action).

#### Santa Cruz County CA - December 2001

In December, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors passed a living wage ordinance that was further amended in August of 2002. The wage levels set by the amendment require County

service contractors to pay at least \$11.50 an hour if health benefits are provided by the employer, or otherwise at least \$12.55, indexed annually.

#### New Britain CT - December 2001

In December, the Common Council voted to require companies getting city contracts or economic development assistance worth at least \$25,000 to pay employees at least 118% of the poverty level for a family of four, currently \$10.27 an hour (AFSCME Council 4).

#### Cumberland County NJ - December 2001

In December, the Cumberland County passed a law requiring firms that enter into service contracts with the county to pay a living wage of at least \$8.50 an hour. Firms that do not provide health benefits must pay an additional \$2.37 an hour, and those that do not offer a pension must add an additional \$1.50 an hour to the base living wage (New Jersey AFL-CIO).

#### Camden NJ - December 2001

In December, the Camden City Council passed a living wage law that would require city contractors to pay workers who receive medical benefits at least \$8 an hour. Those not provided with medical benefits would have to be paid at least \$9.50 an hour. (Mayoral veto not yet overridden.)

#### Burlington VT - November 2001

In November, the Burlington City Council passed an ordinance providing a living wage for direct city employees and employees working on city service contracts or for businesses that have received grants from the city of at least \$15,000. The living wage is at least \$10.93 an hour with health benefits, or \$12.68 without. The annual living wage rate adjustment will be guided by a state-issued "basic needs budget" determination for a single earner (a concept and formula introduced by the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign). The ordinance also requires companies to provide at least 12 compensated days off per year for employees who fall under the law. (Vermont Livable Wage Campaign.)

#### Charlottesville VA - November 2001

In November, the Charlottesville City Council approved an ordinance requiring that all city service contractors shall pay a living wage of at least \$8.00 an hour to employees performing services under the city contract.

#### Richmond CA - October 2001

In October, the Richmond City Council passed an ordinance requiring that a living wage be paid by businesses who are awarded city contracts worth over \$25,000, are recipients of at least \$100,000 in public subsidies, or have leases with the city and revenues over \$350,000. The living wage is set at \$11.42 with health benefits, \$12.92 an hour without health benefits, indexed annually. (Richmond Vision 2000, Contra Costa County Labor Council.)

#### Washtenaw County MI - October 2001

In October, the County approved an ordinance that requires companies with county contractors worth at least \$10,000 pay workers on those contracts at least \$8.70 an hour with health benefits, or \$10.20 without.

Hempstead (Long Island), NY - October 2001

[Repealed 12/01] In October, the Board of Trustees of the Village of Hempstead passed a living wage law that requires recipients of city service contracts and economic development assistance to pay employees on city projects at least \$9.00 an hour if health benefits are provided or \$10.25 if not (ACORN, Working Families Party).

Monroe County MI - October 2001

In October, the Monroe County Board of Commissioners adopted a living wage resolution that requires employers with County contracts greater than \$10,000 per year, as well as the County itself, to pay at least \$8.70 an hour, or \$10.20 an hour if health benefits are not provided, indexed annually.

Ashland OR - September 2001

In September, the Ashland City Council voted to enact a living wage law that covers direct city employees as well as employees of city service contractors and companies that receive city grants of tax abatements worth at least \$15,000. The living wage requirement is a wage and benefit package worth at least \$10.75 an hour, indexed annually to inflation. (Oregon Action)

Oyster Bay NY - August 2001

In August, the Town Board passed a living wage law requiring service contractors and subcontractors performing at least \$50,000 worth of janitorial or security services for the town to pay at least \$9.00 an hour, or \$10.25 an hour if health benefits are not provided. (Working Families Party)

Gloucester County NJ - August 2001

In August, the Gloucester County Freeholders adopted an stating that all workers employed on contracts for the county must be paid the greater of \$8.50 an hour or the federal poverty level. In addition, all such employees must be covered by a health insurance plan and an apprentice training program. If no health benefits are provided, the employer must pay an additional \$2.37, to be adjusted yearly with the Consumer Price Index. Job training and youth employment programs are exempt. (New Jersey AFL-CIO)

Suffolk County NY - July 2001

In July, the Suffolk County Legislature adopted a law establishing a living wage for the county. Under the law, recipients of county assistance in the form of loans, grants or tax abatements valued at \$50,000 or more, and service contractors at more than \$10,000 must pay a living wage of \$9.00 an hour. If health benefits worth at least \$1.25 an hour are not offered, the applicable living wage rate is \$10.25. The law extends to tenants and leaseholders of beneficiaries, as well as their subcontractors. Youth employment programs and small businesses with fewer than 10 employees are not covered. Non-profits can be exempted for up to a year after passage of the law, if the ratio of pay from the highest paid employee to the lowest does not exceed 6:1, or the non-profit can demonstrate that its budget will increase more than 10% as a result of the living wage requirement. (Long Island Federation of Labor, Working Families Party, NY Labor and Religion Coalition)

#### Pittsburgh PA - May 2001

In May, the Pittsburgh City Council enacted a living wage ordinance requiring that the city itself, as well as certain service contractors, recipients of city subsidies and certain employers who lease property through the city pay employees a living wage. Setting the living wage at \$9.12 an hour with health benefits or \$10.62 an hour without, the ordinance covers for-profit employers with more than 10 employees and non-profits with more than 25 employees, with the wage rate indexed annually. Non-profit employers will be phased in over a period of three years (Alliance for Progressive Action).

#### Santa Monica CA - May 2001

In May, the Santa Monica City Council passed a living wage law requiring that employers operating within the city's Coastal Zone tourist district with revenues of more than \$5 million a year provide a living wage to employees. The wage rate is set at \$10.50 per hour for those employees who receive health benefits. Employees who do not get health benefits will receive an additional \$1.75 per hour, increasing to \$2.50 an hour in 2002. The ordinance is a first in that it covers employers who have no direct financial relationship with the city (Santa Monicans Allied for Responsible Tourism).

#### Ventura County CA - May 2001

In May the Ventura County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance requiring that all county contractors and subcontractors pay workers employed on county-financed projects a living wage of \$8. If no health benefits are provided, the required wage rate is \$10 an hour. The ordinance exempts in-home support workers, board and care services and printing or copying services.

#### Miami Beach FL - April 2001

In April, the City of Miami Beach voted to enact a living wage ordinance requiring that the City itself and certain of its service contractors with contracts over \$100,000 pay employees a living wage of no less than \$8.56 an hour if employer-paid health benefits are offered, or \$9.81 without health benefits, indexed annually.

#### Pittsfield Township MI - April 2001

In April, the Pittsfield Township Board voted to enact a living wage law that requires service contractors and recipients of financial assistance such as tax breaks, loans and grants worth more than \$10,000 to pay employees on those projects a living wage. The wage is defined as \$8.70 an hour for employers who provide health benefits to their employees and \$10.20 for those who do not. The wage will be upwardly adjusted each year with inflation and will apply to for-profit employers with at least 5 employees and non-profit employers with at least 10 employees.

#### Eastpointe MI - March 2001

The Eastpointe City Council enacted a living wage law that requires companies receiving service contracts or tax incentives of at least \$5,000 from Eastpointe to pay their employees a living wage. The wage is defined as 125% of the poverty level for a family of four if health benefits are not provided, or 100% if they are. Currently the rate is \$8.70 with benefits and \$10.88 without.

#### Missoula MT - March 2001

In March, the Missoula City Council passed a living wage law that requires recipients of city

economic development assistance to at least match the pay of the lowest-paid full time employees of the City of Missoula, currently \$7.95 an hour, and provide health benefits. The ordinance also requires such recipients to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (Montana People's Action, [HERE](#), New Party).

#### Ann Arbor MI - March 2001

In March, the Ann Arbor City Council approved a living wage law that requires recipients of grants, loans, tax abatement and other subsidies or city service contracts that exceed \$10,000 to pay at least \$8.70 an hour to employees with health benefits and \$10.20 an hour to employees without health benefits, indexed annually.

#### Ferndale MI - February 2001

In February, the Ferndale City Council enacted a living wage requirement for firms who receive service contracts worth at least \$25,000 from the city. The ordinance sets the living wage at \$8.50 an hour for firms that provide employee health insurance, \$9.75 an hour for firms that do not, indexed annually.

#### Rochester NY - January 2001

In January, the Rochester City Council passed an ordinance which requires all employers who enter into city service contracts worth at least \$50,000 to pay employees on those contracts a living wage of at least \$8.52 an hour, \$9.52 if health benefits are not provided, indexed annually to inflation. The ordinance further provides that such living wage requirement be extended to all recipients of economic development assistance from the city at such time as the County enacts a similar requirement. Covered employers are required to report annually on job titles and wage rates of covered employees.

#### Salem OR - January 2001

#### Meriden CT - November 2000

In November, the City of Meriden passed an ordinance requiring business that enter into service contracts worth at least \$50,000 with the City to pay their employees at least 110% of the poverty level for a family of four, currently \$9.35 an hour. If health benefits are not provided, these employers must pay an additional hourly sum to be determined and adjusted annually by the City of Meriden based on average costs of comprehensive health insurance in the state. Service contract categories covered are: food preparation, security, custodial, clerical, transportation and parking services.

#### Santa Cruz CA - October 2000

In October, the Santa Cruz City Council passed a law such that city employees and employees of non-profit and for-profit city service contractors must earn at least \$11.50 an hour with health benefits, or \$12.55 an hour if benefits are not provided.

#### Eau Claire County WI - September 2000

County supervisors passed a law that requires companies that contract with the county in an amount over \$100,000 to pay their employees at least \$6.67 an hour with health benefits, or \$7.40 an hour without the benefits.

#### San Francisco CA - August 2000

In August, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a living wage law that requires city service contractors, including nonprofit agencies, and leaseholders at San Francisco International Airport to pay workers at least \$9 an hour. Wages will jump to \$10 an hour next year followed by 2.5 percent raises for three more years. It also gives workers 12 paid days off and 10 unpaid days for family emergencies. A companion piece of the legislation requires covered employers to provide workers health insurance, join a city-run health insurance pool or pay into the City's public health system fund at the rate of \$1.25 an hour per employee.

#### St. Louis MO - August 2000

In July of 2002, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen passed a new living wage law requiring firms that enter into city service contracts worth at least \$50,000 or receive \$20 million in economic development subsidies from the City pay their employees at least a living wage. The law also extends to concessionaires at the city's airport. A living wage is defined as a wage sufficient to lift a family of three above the eligibility level food stamps, currently \$9.39 an hour with health benefits and \$11.41 if benefits are not provided. A similar version of this ordinance was approved by 77% of city voters in the summer of 2000. That ordinance was repealed, mostly on technicalities, by a circuit court judge after business groups brought suit. The law was then re-passed, slightly amended, by the Board (ACORN, SEIU).

#### Berkeley CA and Marina - June 2000, amended October 2000

In June, the Berkeley City Council approved a living wage ordinance which required that a living wage be paid to direct city employees, businesses with city contracts, financial assistance recipients, and businesses that lease land from the city after the ordinance goes into effect. In October, the ordinance was amended to provide an immediate living wage to all employees at the Berkeley Marina, which is City-owned public land, creating the first area-based living wage policy in the nation. The living wage is set at \$9.75 an hour with health benefits and \$11.37 without.

#### Cleveland OH - June 2000

In June, the Cleveland City Council voted to enact a living wage ordinance mandating recipients of city assistance, in the forms of both contracts and subsidies with aggregate value at least \$75,000 to pay their workers (who work at least 30 hrs/wk) a wage of \$8.20/hr starting January, 2001. The wage will be updated to \$9.20 by October 2002 and indexed accordingly thereafter on an annual basis. The ordinance covers for-profit employers with at least 20 employees and non-profit employees with at least 50 employees and a wage ratio greater than 5:1, as well as subcontractors and leaseholders or tenants of recipients of assistance. At least 40% of new hires must be residents of Cleveland, and additional incentives will be provided to employers by the city to encourage provision of health benefits. (Jobs with Justice)

#### Alexandria VA - June 2000

In June, the Alexandria City Council voted 6-0 to implement a living wage ordinance that requires city service contractors to pay their employees at least a living wage, currently \$10.21 an hour, indexed annually to the poverty threshold for a family of four in combination with costs for health insurance. (Tenants and Workers Support Committee, Ironworkers, CWA)

#### Toledo OH - June 2000

In June, the Toledo City Council voted 12-0 to enact a living wage ordinance that covers employees working on city contracts over \$10,000 (and more the 25 employees) and employees working for recipients of subsidies from the city of more that \$100,000 (with more than 50 employees). The living wage shall be at least 110% of the federal poverty level for a family of 4, currently \$9.57/hour, if health coverage is provided or 130% of the poverty level, currently \$11.31, without health coverage. Employees of the tenants in properties that have benefited from financial assistance from the city are covered. (HERE, United Labor Council, Toledo Metropolitan Mission, Toledo Federation of Teachers)

#### Omaha NE - April 2000

[Repealed 9/01, effective 1/02) In April, 2000 the Omaha City Council voted to adopt an ordinance requiring that a living wage be paid to direct city employees, as well as employees of city service contractors, subcontractors and other firms who benefit from at least \$75,000 from the city. The initial living wage is defined as 100% of the federal poverty level for a family of four, or 110% of this level if health benefits are not provided. (Omaha Federation of Labor)

#### San Fernando CA - April 2000

In April, the San Fernando City Council voted to adopt an ordinance requiring that a living wage be paid to employees of firms holding city service contracts or receiving city grants of more than \$25,000, including employees of temporary employment agencies. The initial living wage rate is set at \$7.25 per hour with health benefits or \$8.50 per hour if no health benefits are provided (The health benefits provision does not apply to temporary workers). Wages are adjusted annually to reflect changes in the state employment retirement system. The ordinance also requires at least 6 compensated and 6 uncompensated days off annually for sick leave, vacation or personal leave.

#### Denver CO - February 2000

In February, the Denver City Council voted 12-1 to adopt a living wage requirement for employees of any City contractor or subcontractor with a contract of \$2,000 or more engaged in the work of a parking lot attendant, security guard, clerical support worker, or child care workers on city owned or leased property. The living wage will be set equal to the poverty guidelines for a family of four, currently \$8.50 an hour, updated accordingly (ACORN, 9 to 5, Denver Area Labor Federation, Jobs with Justice).

#### Warren MI - January 2000

In January, the Warren City Council approved an ordinance requiring firms that receive city contracts or tax breaks worth at least \$50,000 to pay workers a wage at least equivalent to the federal poverty line for a family of four, or \$8.83 an hour (the ordinance calculates the work year at 40 hrs./50 weeks a year). Firms that do not provide health benefits are required to pay at least 125% of the federal poverty line, currently \$11.04 an hour.

#### Corvallis OR - November 1999

In November, voters in Corvallis passed an initiative prohibiting the City from entering into a contract worth \$5000 or more with any company that fails to provide its employees a wage and benefit package of at least \$9.00 an hour. The wage and benefit levels will be adjusted annually



in accordance with changes in the Consumer Price Index. The current figure is \$9.42 an hour (9/02) (Jobs with Justice).

#### Hartford CT - September 1999

In September, the Hartford Common Council passed a living wage ordinance covering employees on certain city service contracts as well as employees on development projects receiving over \$100,000 in city assistance. The living wage is defined as 110% of the federal poverty level for a family of four, with a health benefit plan that requires employee to pay no more than 3% of their annual wages. Without such benefits, employers must make payments to employees in lieu of benefits to be calculated annually by the Director of Human Relations, based on the average cost of comprehensive health insurance in the state. The ordinance covers service contracts over \$50,000 in the following categories: food service, security services, custodial/maintenance, clerical/office, transportation, and parking services. The ordinance also includes a provision requiring development projects to allow workers to be represented by a union in exchange for guaranteed "labor peace" (no-strike clause) (SEIU State Council, HERE Local 217, HART).

#### Tucson AZ - September 1999

In September, the Tucson City Council approved a living wage ordinance requiring contractors providing the following services to the city to pay employees on those contracts at least \$8.26 an hour or \$9.30 an hour if health benefits are not provided: facility and building maintenance, refuse collection and recycling, temporary employee services, janitorial and custodial, landscape maintenance and weed control, pest control, security, moving services. Wages will be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. The ordinance also requires that covered contractors maintain a workforce of at least 60% city residents on all such city contracts. (Southern Arizona Central Labor Council and local union affiliates, Pima County Interfaith Council).

#### Buffalo NY - August 1999

In August, the Buffalo City Council approved an ordinance requiring city service contractors and subcontractors working on contracts greater than \$50,000 to pay workers (including workfare workers) to pay a living wage. Required wages are to be phased in over three years starting at \$6.22/hour in 2000, \$7.15 in 2001, increasing to \$8.08 in 2002 for employers providing health benefits. Employers not providing health benefits must pay \$1.00 more per hour each year. In addition, the ordinance requires that applicants for contracts submit information on projected hiring and wage goals prior to award, and submit quarterly reports on hiring and wages after securing a contract (Coalition for Economic Justice, Citizen Action of NY, Buffalo AFL-CIO).

#### Los Angeles County CA - June 1999

In June, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors became the largest governmental entity in the nation to adopt a living wage law. The ordinance requires that a living wage of \$8.32 an hour with health insurance, or \$9.46 without, be provided to full time employees of firms contracting with the County (and their subcontractors) for over \$25,000 worth of services. The ordinance provides for the retention of employees on contracts that the County terminates before they expire. In addition, the ordinance prohibits the use of part time employees on county contracts without justifiable cause and prohibits the use of County funds to inhibit employee organization.

The ordinance provides that its provisions may be expressly superseded by a collective bargaining agreement (Los Angeles County Federation of Labor).

#### Ypsilanti MI - June 1999

In June, the Ypsilanti City Council passed a living wage ordinance that requires companies receiving City service contracts or financial assistance valued at over \$20,000 in a given year to pay employees on that contract or project at least \$8.50 an hour, or \$10.00/hr. if no health care is provided. The law also requires tax abated firms to make good faith efforts to hire local residents for jobs created by the assistance and provides that the City give preference, when possible, to local contractors. (UAW Region 1-A, Huron Valley Central Labor Council, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, Gray Panthers).

#### Ypsilanti Township MI - June 1999

In June, the Ypsilanti Township Board passed a living wage ordinance that requires companies receiving City service contracts or financial assistance valued at over \$10,000 (\$20,000 for non-profits) in a given year to pay employees on that contract or project (and employees of their subcontractors or leaseholders) at least \$8.50 an hour, or \$10.00/hr. if no health care is provided. (UAW Region 1-A, Huron Valley Central Labor Council, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, Gray Panthers).

#### Somerville MA - May 1999

In May, the Somerville Board of Aldermen unanimously passed an ordinance requiring that a living wage be paid to full and part time direct employees of the City of Somerville, as well as employees of firms carrying out service contracts with the city for at least \$50,000 (this threshold will decrease to \$30,000 in 2 years and again to encompass all contracts valued at \$10,000 or more two years after that). The living wage is set at no less than the poverty line for a family of four (based on 40 hours a week for 50 weeks), currently \$8.83 an hour, adjusted annually in accordance with the poverty guidelines (Somerville Living Wage Committee, local labor, Massachusetts AFL-CIO).

#### Miami-Dade County FL - May 1999

In May, the Board of County Commissioners of Miami-Dade County voted unanimously to enact a living wage ordinance requiring that the County itself, certain of its service contractors, and airport licensees (for ground service personnel) pay employees a living wage of no less than \$8.81 an hour if employer-paid health benefits are offered, or \$10.09 without health benefits. The ordinance covers the following categories of county service contracts worth at least \$100,000: food preparation and/or distribution; security services; routine maintenance services such as custodial, cleaning, refuse removal, repair, refinishing, and recycling; clerical or other non-supervisory office work, whether temporary or permanent; transportation and parking services including airport and seaport services; printing and reproduction services; and, landscaping, lawn, and/or agricultural services. The ordinance establishes a Living Wage Commission to enhance compliance and review the effectiveness of the law (South Florida AFL-CIO, Human Services Coalition of Dade County, Florida Legal Services).

#### Cambridge MA - May 1999

In May, the Cambridge City Council adopted an ordinance requiring a living wage, currently

\$10.68 an hour, be paid to employees of the City of Cambridge, as well as to employees of companies or non-profits that enter into service contracts or subcontracts with the city worth at least \$10,000 and to employees of firms that benefit from at least \$10,000 in city subsidies in a year (as well as their tenants and leaseholders). The wage level is to be adjusted yearly in accordance with the area Consumer Price Index. The ordinance directs the city agencies to report annually on subsidies and establishes a Community Advisory Board to review and recommend action on waiver requests. (Eviction Free Zone, Carpenters Local 40, National Lawyers Guild).

#### Hayward CA - April 1999

In April, the Hayward City Council approved the Hayward Living Wage Ordinance which provided that a living wage be paid to direct employees of the City of Hayward, as well as employees of certain firms contracting with the city for at least \$25,000. The living wage is set at no less than \$8.93 an hour if health benefits are paid to the employees, or \$10.32 per hour if no such benefits are paid. The wage will be upwardly adjusted annually in accordance with the area cost of living calculation. The contracted service categories covered under the policy are: automotive repair and maintenance, facility and building maintenance, janitorial and custodial, landscaping, laundry services, temporary personnel, pest control, security services, and social service agencies. The ordinance entitles covered workers to a minimum of 12 paid days off and 5 uncompensated days off per year. The ordinance also allows for the terms of a collective bargaining agreement to provide that said agreement may supersede the requirements of the living wage ordinance upon mutual agreement by both parties (Alameda County Central Labor Council, Hayward Democratic Club).

#### Madison WI - March 1999

In March, the Madison City Council passed an ordinance that requires employers holding city service contracts (and their subcontractors) worth at least \$5,000 and firms receiving \$100,000 or more in financial assistance (and their contractors) from the city to pay employees on city funded projects a living wage of at least \$7.91 an hour. The wage will be upwardly adjusted in two steps to 110% of the federal poverty guidelines for a family of four by January 1, 2001 and continuing thereafter. City of Madison employees are also covered. The ordinance also allows that the terms of a collective bargaining agreement may supersede the requirements of the living wage ordinance (Progressive Dane/New Party, South Central Federation of Labor).

#### Dane County WI - March 1999

In March, the Dane County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance requiring that a living wage be paid to county employees, employees of county service contractors, subcontractors, and beneficiaries of economic development assistance of \$5,000 or more from the county. The living wage is established at the federal poverty level for a family of four, currently \$8.03 an hour. By July 1, 1999 a Living Wage Review Council will make recommendations on possible adjustments for employers that do not provide health insurance (Progressive Dane/New Party, South Central Federation of Labor, Developmental Disabilities Coalition).

#### Hudson County NJ - January 1999

In January, the Hudson County Board of Freeholders unanimously adopted an ordinance requiring County service contractors employing security, food service, and janitorial workers to pay all employees working at least 20 hours per week on County contracts at an hourly rate of

pay of 150% of the federal minimum wage, currently \$7.73 an hour. Contractors must also provide health benefits and one week paid vacation to these employees.

#### San Jose CA - November 1998

In November, the San Jose City Council voted to require companies holding city service contracts worth at least \$20,000 to pay those employed on such contracts a wage of at least \$10.10 an hour with health benefits, or \$11.35 if the company does not provide benefits. In addition, the ordinance requires companies seeking these service contracts to provide assurances of good labor relations and requires successor contractors to offer jobs to employees of predecessor contractors who performed those services. Employees of companies receiving direct financial grants from the city valued at \$100,000 or more in a year are also covered. The contracted service categories covered under the policy are: automotive repair and maintenance, food service, janitorial, landscaping, laundry, office/clerical, parking lot management, pest control, property maintenance, recreation, security shuttle services, street sweeping, and towing (South Bay AFL-CIO/Working Partnerships USA with ACORN and other groups).

#### Detroit MI - November 1998

At the ballot box on November 3, Detroit voters overwhelmingly approved a living wage measure that requires city service contractors or recipients of city financial assistance worth \$50,000 or more to pay employees a wage equivalent to the federal poverty line for a family of four, currently \$9.05 an hour (the ordinance calculates the work year at 40 hrs./50 weeks a year), or 125% of the poverty line, \$11.31 an hour, if no health benefits are provided. The ordinance also requires companies to attempt to hire Detroit residents to fill any new jobs created as a result of the contract or assistance granted by the city (Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO with ACORN and other groups).

#### Multnomah County OR - October 1998

In October, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners passed a living wage policy that requires county janitorial and security services contractors to pay their employees a combined wage and benefit package of \$9.00 per hour (adjusted annually by the Consumer Price Index). The County's action will also apply to food service contracts when those are rebid in 2000. In addition, the resolution includes a retention provision requiring new janitorial contractors to first interview employees of the previous contractor before hiring new workers. Language in the ordinance commits living wage advocates and County officials to a joint lobbying effort aimed at increasing state funding sources that would enable the County to extend the current living wage policy to social service contract workers (Jobs with Justice, Oregon Public Employees Union Local 503, New Party).

#### Pasadena CA - September 1998

On September 14, the Pasadena City Council adopted a living wage ordinance which requires city service contractors (with contracts worth at least \$25,000) to pay employees \$7.25 per hour, \$8.50 if health benefits are not provided. In August, the Coalition succeeded in getting the City to make a permanent budget adjustment to provide the same wage and benefits package to City employees. Coalition set to work on expanding coverage to recipients of economic development and other city subsidies (Pasadena Living Wage Coalition, including Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice).

#### Cook County IL - September 1998

In September, the Cook County Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance that requires County contractors of any size to pay employees working under such contracts at least \$7.60 an hour (Commissioners Stroger, Maldonado, and Daley; Chicago Jobs and Living Wage Coalition led by ACORN, SEIU Local 880).

#### Chicago IL - July 1998

In July, the Chicago City Council voted 49-0 to require for-profit city contractors and subcontractors to pay their workers at least \$7.60 an hour in the following categories: home and health care workers, security guards, parking attendants, day laborers, cashiers, elevator operators, custodial workers and clerical workers. In November of 2002, the coalition pushed council to increase the wage to \$9.05 an hour and add annual indexing (Chicago Jobs and Living Wage Coalition led by ACORN, SEIU Local 880, New Party, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless).

#### Portland OR - June 1996, amended July 1998

June 1996 City Council ordinance required city contractors employing janitors, parking lot attendants, temporary clerical services and security workers to pay their employees \$6.75/hour starting July 1, 1996, \$7.00/hour in 1997. April 1998 amendment requires a new wage floor of \$7.50 an hour beginning July 1, 1998 and \$8.00/hour beginning July 1999 through the year 2000. In addition, the amendment requires that such service contractors offer basic medical benefits to their employees performing work for the City (Jobs with Justice).

#### San Antonio TX - July 1998

In July, the San Antonio City Council passed an ordinance adopting guidelines and criteria pertaining to tax abatements that includes a requirement for beneficiaries to pay at least 70% of employees in new jobs created at least \$9.27 per hour (non-durable goods manufacturing and service companies; and \$10.13/hr for durable goods manufacturing). The guidelines deem retail industry facilities ineligible for tax abatements. In addition, businesses may be eligible for more tax abatement if they fill 25% of new jobs created with economically disadvantaged individuals (COPS/Metro Alliance, San Antonio Central Labor Council).

#### Oakland CA - March 1998

In March, the Oakland City Council unanimously approved an ordinance requiring companies or non-profits that enter into service contracts with the city worth at least \$25,000 or and firms that benefit from at least \$100,000 in city subsidies in a year (as well as their tenants and leaseholders) to pay workers a minimum of \$9.25 an hour or \$8.00 if the firm provides health benefits. The wage level is to be adjusted by April 1 each year in accordance with the Bay Region Consumer Price Index, bringing the current wage requirements to \$9.45 and \$10.87 an hour (11/02). The ordinance entitles covered workers to 12 paid days off per year. The ordinance also allows for the terms of a collective bargaining agreement to provide that said agreement may supersede the requirements of the living wage ordinance (Oakland Jobs and Living Wage Campaign led by ACORN and the Alameda County Central Labor Council, including HERE, SEIU, UFCW, etc.).

#### Durham NC - January 1998

In January, 1998 the Durham City Council passed an ordinance requiring City service contractors to pay their employees working on city projects an hourly wage at least equal to the minimum hourly wage rate paid to Durham City employees, currently \$9.15 an hour (9/02).

#### West Hollywood CA - October 1997

In October, 1997, the West Hollywood City Council enacted a living wage provision requiring recipients of city service contracts worth at least \$25,000 and recipients of grants from the city to pay employees at least \$8.00 an hour with health benefits, of \$9.30 without. The ordinance requires temporary employment agencies to pay at least \$9.00 an hour.

#### Boston MA - September 1997, amended September 1998, expanded October 2001

In September of 1998, the Boston City Council approved an amended version of an earlier, more comprehensive living wage ordinance. The ordinance required companies getting city service contracts worth at least \$100,000 (or subcontracts of at least \$25,000) to pay their employees a wage equal to the poverty level for a family of four (calculating 40 hrs/50 wk. a yr.), indexed annually on July 1 to whichever is higher of the adjusted poverty guidelines or 110% of the state minimum wage. In October of 2001, the law was amended to apply to service contracts of \$25,000 and raised the wage to \$10.25 an hour. As of July 1, 2002, the living wage is \$10.54 an hour. The measure also includes community hiring provisions for both contractors and recipients of subsidies or other financial assistance, requires covered companies to report on jobs created and wages paid, and creates a Living Wage Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation of the ordinance (ACORN, Greater Boston Labor Council and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO).

#### Duluth MN - July 1997

In July, 1997, the City Council passed a living wage ordinance requiring recipients of city economic development assistance of \$25,000 or more to pay at least 90% of employees on the assisted project at least \$6.50 an hour, \$7.25 if health benefits are provided. As of 2002, the living wage figures have been updated to \$7.07 and \$7.88 (as of 9/02) (AFSCME Council 96).

#### Milwaukee County WI - May 1997

County Board of Supervisors voted in May to require county contractors to pay at least \$6.25/hr. in the areas of janitorial, security, and parking lot attendant, indexed to increased wages of county employees. The current living wage is \$7.06 (as of 9/02) (Progressive Milwaukee/New Party, Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee).

#### New Haven CT - April 1997

In April, 1997, the Board of Aldermen passed living wage ordinance requiring city service contractors to pay their employees a wage at least equivalent to the poverty line for a family of four. The wage will be phased up to 120% of poverty over 5 years beginning July '97. (It is currently \$9.14 an hour). The ordinance also requires such contractors to give first consideration to referrals from community based hiring halls to fill vacant service positions. (Labor/community/church coalition led by HERE Locals 34, 35, 217).

#### Los Angeles CA - March 1997

On March 18, 1997, City Council overwhelmingly approved a living wage ordinance requiring

recipients of public service contracts worth \$25,000 or more as well as any business benefiting from a subsidy of at least \$1,000,000 in one year or \$100,000 on a continuing annual basis to pay their employees a living wage. The wage -- indexed yearly to the rise in cost of living-- was initially set at \$8.50 an hour, or \$7.25 an hour if the employer was contributing at least \$1.25 toward health benefits. The wage is to be adjusted annually to correspond with adjustments to retirement benefits paid to members of the City Employees Retirement System, bringing the current wage requirements up to \$9.52 an hour without health benefits, or else \$8.27 an hour (11/02). Affected workers are entitled to 12 paid days off a year. The ordinance also allows that a collective bargaining agreement may supersede the requirements of the living wage ordinance (Los Angeles Living Wage Coalition).

#### Minneapolis MN - March 1997

In March, 1997 city council unanimously passed a living wage policy requiring businesses benefiting from \$100,000 or more in city assistance in one year to pay employees a living wage. The wage will be defined and indexed as 110% of the federal poverty level for a family of four, currently \$9.57. Recipients of such assistance must also set a goal that 60% of new jobs created will be held by City residents. Additional provisions prohibit privatization of services currently performed by city employees that would result in lower wages, and preferences for assistance to union-friendly businesses (defined as neutrality on union organizing, providing complete list of names and addresses of employees, access to facilities during non-work hours, card-check recognition, etc.) (Based on recommendations of the Joint Twin Cities Living Wage Task Force - including ACORN, New Party, and labor unions -- convened to respond to issues raised by a 1995 living wage initiative effort spearheaded by ACORN, New Party and labor).

#### St. Paul MN - January 1997

In January 1997, city council unanimously passed a directive requiring recipients of \$100,000 or more of city economic development assistance in one year to pay employees a living wage, defined as 110% of the federal poverty level for a family of four, currently about \$9.57 an hour (100% of poverty line required for companies who provide health insurance; currently \$8.70). At least 60% of new jobs created as a result of such assistance must go to St. Paul residents (As above, based on recommendations of the Living Wage Task Force, including ACORN, New Party, and labor unions).

#### New York City NY - September 1996

September City Council ordinance requires that employees of city contractors for security, temporary, cleaning and food services be paid the applicable prevailing wage for the industry to be determined by the City Comptroller (Industrial Areas Foundation, Councilmember Albanese).

#### Jersey City NJ - June 1996

In June, City Council ordinance passed to require that city contractors employing clerical, food service, janitorial workers, or security guards pay these workers \$7.50/hour and provide health benefits and vacation (Interfaith Community Organization/IAF).

#### Des Moines IA - January 1988, amended January 1996

In 1988 City Council set a \$7.00/hr. minimum compensation policy for City-funded urban renewal and loan projects. In 1996, this policy was amended to require such city-funded projects

to set a goal of a \$9.00/hr. average wage, including benefits (Councilmember George Flagg).

#### Milwaukee WI - November 1995

November City Council ordinance requires certain city service contractors to pay employees at least \$6.05/hr, adjusted annually to the poverty level for a family of three, currently \$6.87 (Progressive Milwaukee/New Party, Campaign for a Sustainable Milwaukee).

#### Santa Clara County CA - October 1995

County Board of Supervisors law requires manufacturing firms applying for tax abatements to disclose jobs, wage and benefit information, additional subsidies they are seeking. Tax-abated firms must pay at least \$10/hr. and provide health insurance or a suitable alternative to permanent employees. The measure gives the county money-back guarantee protection if goals are not met (South Bay AFL-CIO Labor Council, California Budget Project, Working Partnership USA).

#### Baltimore MD - December 1994

In December 1994 the Baltimore City Council passed a bill requiring companies that have service contracts with the city of Baltimore to pay workers \$6.10/hr. The bill included steps to increase the wage over a four-year period. It has since been further increased to \$ 8.49/hr. (BUILD/Solidarity Support Committee, AFSCME).

#### Gary IN - January 1991

Ordinance requires recipients of any tax abatement to pay prevailing wage and provide complete health care package to employees working over 25 hours a week. Also includes public disclosure provisions (Calumet Project for Industrial Jobs).

#### Colleges and Universities

##### Stanford University - January 2002

University policy requires major university contractors with non-unionized employees to pay workers at least \$10.10 an hour with benefits or \$11.35 without.

##### Harvard University - January 2001

##### Wesleyan University - January 2000

#### School Boards

##### Richmond, VA School Board - March 2001

In March, the Richmond School Board passed a resolution committing that the budget of the School Board provide for a living wage rate for workers employed by the School Board. The living wage is defined as at least \$8.50 an hour if family health care insurance is provided and \$10.13 an hour if no coverage is provided.

##### Milwaukee Public Schools - January 1996

In January, the school board approved a measure requiring all Milwaukee Public School system employees and employees of MPS contractors to be paid \$7.70/hr.

#### Other Jurisdictions



Washtenaw County Road Commission - April 2001

In October, the County approved an ordinance that requires companies with county contractors worth at least \$10,000 pay workers on those contracts at least \$8.70 an hour with health benefits, or \$10.20 without.

Central Arkansas Library System - January 2001

Central Arkansas Library System Board, which governs libraries in 2 counties and 4 cities, adopted a living wage policy providing that all CALS employees be paid at least \$8.75 immediately and \$9.00 starting July 1, 2002, plus full health benefits and retirement benefits, indexed for inflation. The policy also includes an anti-privatization clause that limits the Library's ability to privatize existing services and requires any such contracting out to be covered by the living wage (ACORN, SEIU Local 100 and the New Party). Additionally, campaigns are underway in Atlanta, Little Rock, Syracuse, Sacramento, Iowa City, Wichita, and Knoxville.

## APPENDIX B – STATES WITH MINIMUM WAGES HIGHER THAN THE FEDERAL STANDARD<sup>6</sup>

State	Minimum Wage (Hourly)	Notes
Alaska	\$7.15	Under a voluntary flexible work hour plan approved by the Alaska Department of Labor, a 10 hour day, 40 hour workweek may be instituted with premium pay after 10 hours a day instead of after 8 hours. The premium overtime pay requirement on either a daily or weekly basis is not applicable to employers of fewer than 4 employees.
California	\$6.75	Overtime is due after 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week unless an alternative workweek of no more than 4 days of 10 hours was established prior to 7/1/99. Premium pay on 7th day not required for employee whose total weekly work hours do not exceed 30 and whose total hours in any one work day thereof do not exceed 6, in specific wage and hour orders.
Connecticut	\$7.10	In restaurants and hotel restaurants, for the 7th consecutive day of work, premium pay is required at time and one half the minimum rate. The Connecticut minimum wage rate automatically increases to 1/2 of 1 percent above the rate set in the Fair Labor Standards Act if the Federal minimum wage rate equals or becomes higher than the State minimum.
Delaware	\$6.15	The Delaware minimum wage is automatically replaced with the Federal minimum wage rate if it is higher than the State minimum.
District of Columbia	\$6.15	In the District of Columbia, the rate is automatically set at \$1 above the Federal minimum wage rate.
Hawaii	\$6.25	An employee earning a guaranteed monthly compensation of \$2,000 or more is exempt from the State minimum wage and overtime law. The State law excludes from coverage any employment that is subject to the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act unless the State wage rate is higher than the Federal.
Illinois	\$5.50	Applicable to employers of 4 or more employees, excluding family members. On 1/1/05, minimum wage becomes 6.50/hr.
Maine	\$6.25	The Maine minimum wage is automatically replaced with the Federal minimum wage rate if it is higher than the State minimum with the exception that any such increase is limited to no more than \$1.00 per hour above the current legislated State rate.
Massachusetts	\$6.75	The Massachusetts minimum wage rate automatically increases to 10 cents above the rate set in the Fair Labor Standards Act if the Federal minimum wage equals or becomes higher than the State minimum.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dol.gov>

Oregon	\$7.05	Premium pay required after 10 hours a day in nonfarm canneries, driers, or packing plants and in mills, factories or manufacturing establishments (excluding sawmills, planing mills, shingle mills, and logging camps). Beginning January 1, 2004, and annually thereafter, the rate will be adjusted for inflation by a calculation using the U.S. City Average Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for All Items. The wage amount established will be rounded to the nearest five cents.
Rhode Island	\$6.75	Time and one-half premium pay for work on Sundays and holidays in retail and certain other businesses is required under two laws that are separate from the minimum wage law.
Vermont	\$6.75	The State overtime pay provision has very limited application because it exempts numerous types of establishments, such as retail and service; seasonal amusement/recreation; hotels, motels, restaurants; and transportation employees to whom the Federal (FLSA) overtime provision does not apply. (Applicable to employers of two or more employees). On 1/1/05, minimum wage become 7.00/hr.
Washington	\$7.16	Premium pay not applicable to employees who request compensating time off in lieu of premium pay. Beginning January 1, 2001, and annually thereafter, the rate will be adjusted for inflation by a calculation using the consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers for the prior year.

### APPENDIX C: LOW-INCOME INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

<b>Sex:</b>	<b>Age:</b>	<b>Ethnicity:</b>	<b>Occupation:</b>	<b>Hours Worked:</b>	<b>Current Wage:</b>	<b>Health Benefits?</b>	<b>Family Structure:</b>
Female	29	African American	Janitorial (usually works through a temporary service.)	Typically less than 40/ wk.	Currently unemployed, but has never made over \$8.00/ hr.	No	Single
Female	57	Caucasian	Janitorial	Usually about 20/ wk.	\$6.54/ hr.	No	Widowed, 4 children (living on their own.)
Female	21	Caucasian	Cashier	35-40/ wk.	\$6.00/ hr.	No	Single, mother-to-be (eight months pregnant.)
Female	25	African American	Food Services	35-40/ wk.	\$6.25	No	Single mother, also takes care of her mother.
Female	28	African American	Housekeeper	40+/ wk.	\$6.25	Yes	Married, 5 children
Female	27	African American	Security Officer	40+/ wk.	\$7.00	Offered through her employer, but cannot afford her share of the premium	Single, 1 child. Also takes care of her grand-mother.
Female	26	Caucasian	Waitress	Approx. 20/ wk.	Less than \$10.50*	No, but is covered by husband's policy	Married
Male	26	Caucasian	Elementary school teacher	40/ wk.	Less than \$10.50*	Yes	Married
Male	30	African American	Cook/ Dishwasher	35/ wk.	\$6.75	No	Married, 4 children
Male	54	Caucasian	Custodian	40/ wk.	\$8.94	Yes	Married, 2 children

\* \$10.50/ hr is the rate defined by the Athens Living Wage Coalition as a "living wage."