

**hour Town**  
**Paul Glover and the Genesis and Evolution of Ithaca HOURS**

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**Abstract**

Ithaca HOURS are, arguably, the most successful of the local currency experiments of the last two decades. At the height of their popularity in the mid-1990s, perhaps as many as 2,000 of Ithaca and region's 100,000 residents were buying and selling with HOURS. The high profile of HOURS in the Ithaca community has prompted a series of articles, television news segments and documentaries, primarily for the popular media. Though constituting valuable documentation of an intrinsically interesting phenomenon, these reports has tended to be fragmentary and ahistorical, thus lacking in context in terms of the longitudinal evolution of the Ithaca region's political economy. The present study attempts to remedy these lacunae in our understanding of the genesis and evolution of Ithaca HOURS by presenting a systematic account of Ithaca's experiment with local currencies over the past decade and a half through the person of Paul Glover, the individual most closely associated with the founding and developing of HOURS. The article follows the activist career of Glover through the end of 2003, thus placing HOURS in the context of Ithaca's activist community's efforts to push the local polity and economy in the direction of ecological sustainability.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

“I’ve used HOURS for groceries, gifts, video rentals, movies, meals, books, pottery, chiropractic care, shoe repair, Xerox copies, computer printer [cartridges], a wrist rest, faxes, haircuts, pizza, theatre tickets, dance lessons and yoga lessons. I repaid a loan I owed with HOURS, too (<http://ithacahours.com/success.html>).”

This capsule testimonial of the utility of Ithaca HOURS is representative of the case histories that collectively constitute the informal, working history, perhaps even folklore, of this upstate New York local currency. For researchers and activists working in the area of grassroots development, Ithaca HOURS have taken on a certain iconic character. They have been the subjects of dozens of articles and hundreds of references in print and web-based media, as well as a number of television news reports (<http://ithacahours.com/media.html>). In 2001 American Public Television produced a 30 minutes documentary entitled “How to Spend an HOUR” (<http://www.ithacahours.com/>). In addition, the Ithaca HOURS experience has been the inspiration and catalyst for the startup of another 37 local currency projects across North American (<http://ithacahours.com/otherhours.html>).

Yet, for all their notoriety, both in the research and activist communities, the understanding of Ithaca HOURS tends to be fragmentary. Journalists parachute into Ithaca to provide snapshot reports, and there is as well an extensive web-based documentation of first-person experiences with Ithaca HOURS. But there has been little systematic third-party and longitudinal accounting for the genesis and evolution of North American’s best known and most successful local currency experiment. In this report the authors intend to rectify this deficit in the scholarly and popular literature by providing an historical account of the development of Ithaca HOURS within the context of the ongoing political economy of Ithaca itself. This report of the evolution of Ithaca HOURS is part of a larger study that includes a systematic survey of Ithaca HOURS users.

#### **THE SETTING: ITHACA AND REGION**

Ithaca is located in south-central upstate New York. The local tourist industry promotes the city as “Ithaca Terrifica,” and bumper stickers and t-shirts carry the slogan “Ithaca Is Gorges” ([www.zuzu.com/ithaca](http://www.zuzu.com/ithaca)). The promotionals only marginally overstate Ithaca’s attractions. It is situated at the southern end of the picturesque Finger Lakes region, with scenic vistas across a landscape interspersed with woodlands, small farms, gorges and waterfalls.

The city itself counts on 30,000 residents, with another 20,000 in the suburban Town(ship) of Ithaca. Tompkins County, for which Ithaca serves as county seat and commercial center, has a total of 100,000 residents. Adding to the population totals are the student bodies of Cornell University (20,000) and Ithaca College (6,500), a substantial proportion of whom do not count as permanent year-round residents.

For the purposes of this report, the principal question about Ithaca is: What makes this upstate New York college and university town the kind of place that would host what has become, arguably, the planet's most successful community currency experiment? In response to the question as to why Ithaca happens to possess the fertile soil to sustain its HOURS local currency, there are at least two obvious answers: (1) need, tied to a local economy that chronically under-employs a substantial proportion of its labor force, and (2) a contrarian intellectual culture with a predisposition towards counter-stream social movements. These two explanations, by extension, coalesce into one: the search for alternative sources of income to sustain modest lifestyles devoted to the neighborly pleasures of small-city living.

Ithaca and region are nominally part of the Northeastern United States "rust belt," with union-scale employment long evaporated with the migration of jobs to the U.S. South and Southwest, and to Mexico and China. Exacerbating the long-standing employment-income crunch in localities like Ithaca is current federal government policy. With a Middle-Eastern war and tax concessions to the wealthy to pay for, Washington has downloaded the tax-service burden to local governments. The governments of Tompkins County are thus facing double digit tax increases at the same time they are cutting services, to an economy and populace struggling to stay solvent in a globalized economy (Journal Staff Reports 2003, Hillis 2003). HOURS, then, were created and evolved in a climate of relative economic privation.

To stay competitive in the global market place, the Ithaca region has attracted a cutting-edge research establishment in and around Cornell University. It is, however, overseen by coterie of Ph.D.'s and apprenticing graduate students. Consequently, its benefits have not had a major impact on the employment prospects of the typical Ithaca resident. The kind of intellectual culture, though, that nurtures Ithaca HOURS has little affinity for the bio-tech and related enterprises that take place at Cornell and its research parks. Intriguingly, neither does this culture share much of a common cause with Cornell and Ithaca College's academic programs in the social and planning sciences and the humanities, where one might reasonably expect mutual admiration if not collaboration.

The intellectual culture that sustains HOURS is not an academic one, with status hierarchies revolving around refereed publications and preoccupations with peer-reviewed research. In contrast, the HOURS worldview, while relying on a well-read and thoughtful understanding of contemporary events, is essentially an applied vision, directing its energies towards the redesign of Ithaca as a self-sufficient, sustainable community.

At the heart of this ecological design project for Ithaca is employment — meaningful work at a livable wage, in the service of community. The jobs in question are not academic positions, nor are they employment chasing investment dollars, whether for big-box stores in suburban malls or research labs attached to Cornell's academic capitalism. Rather, the kind of work consistent with the HOURS philosophy is essentially village based: shop keepers, café owners, craftspersons and alternative health therapists, for example. In the HOURS economy the ideal is neighbors serving each other, foregoing the flow of outside dollars in order to keep local ones at home.

There is at operation here a kind of Right Livelihood, seeing one's work as the expression of one's unique talents in the service of community, rather than as the simple equation of job and maximized earnings. Still, the connection between vocation and wage, a living wage, remains, as does the question as to whether Ithaca as a village econ-

omy could provide one — in its global variation it clearly cannot since margins for corporate profitability depend on minimum wage workers without benefits.

The Ithaca Coalition for a Livable Wage (Feuer 2003) has lobbied the local business community to provide its employees with a livable wage. Ithaca's Alternatives Federal Credit Union has calculated \$8.68 an hour for the Ithaca livable wage, on the provision that employers add health insurance (AFCU 2003). The \$8.68 an hour for a forty hour week translates to a yearly income of \$18,061, giving a family or a partnership of two wage earners an income of \$36,122 a year, still significantly below the Tompkins median family income of \$53,041 (DuPuis II 2003, Pendall et. al. 2004). And this relatively high median income of over \$50,000 a year compared to the estimated livable wage places into relief the labor market stratification in the Ithaca region: minimum wage service workers versus affluent professional and technical workers connected to Cornell's research and development establishment.

Two high profile Ithaca employers, the Alternatives Federal Credit Union ([www.alternatives.org](http://www.alternatives.org)) and the GreenStar Cooperative Market ([www.greenstarcoop.com](http://www.greenstarcoop.com)), have in fact committed to, and are, paying their employees the living wage standard.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this breakthrough, though, most Ithaca service workers labor for the New York State minimum wage of \$5.15 with no health insurance (Feuer 2003). Furthermore, Ithaca's livable wage is still on the frugal side of a modest income. Consequently, there is, and has been, a chronic need for more purchasing power from somewhere to somehow get into the pockets of a good share of Ithaca residents. And since problems can be opportunities in disguise, HOURS in the person of local activist Paul Glover seized the day by giving Ithaca its own legal tender.

### **PAUL GLOVER AND THE GENESIS OF ITHACA HOURS**

In a mid-1990's interview for an ABC (American Broadcasting Company) television report on Ithaca HOURS, Ithaca's mayor, Alan Cohen, characterized the genesis of Ithaca HOURS in the following way: "The roots of the program here came from our Bohemian community, so to speak, or what one might call the 'granola' community. But it has been surely but slowly accepted by the mainstream business community, and the success it had within that community to me is indicative of the potential success that it could have within any community."<sup>2</sup>

Paul Glover, the initial driving force behind Ithaca HOURS, is ostensibly a member of Ithaca's "Bohemian" community. His income is consistently below taxable levels and he lists his occasional sources of income as masseur, dishwasher, teacher, farm worker, freelance writer, chess player, factory worker, graphic artist, library worker, yard worker, and lumberyarder ([www.ithacanews.org/glover.resume.html](http://www.ithacanews.org/glover.resume.html)). To many Ithaca HOURS supporters, though, Mayor Cohen's choice of terms (Bohemian and granola) to describe Ithaca's successful local currency project will carry the odor of condescension: quirky folk on the town's margins have made one contribution to the life of the mainstream business community.

This underlying tension between mainstream-counter-stream went above ground into a direct confrontation in the fall of 2003 when Glover became the Green Party candidate to replace two-term mayor, but non-candidate Cohen. "My campaign will contrast the Cohen-driven chain store massacre of Ithaca's budget with grassroots economic development," was the way Glover characterized his campaign to a local newspaper (Van-

campen 2003, cf. Wetmore 2002). The 2003 mayoral race, then, at least for Glover and the “Bohemian” community constituted a referendum on the car-centered, non-local development policies of the departing city hall administration.

Fifty-six year-old Paul Glover is not a traditional politician, though his coming out as mayoral candidate may in many respects be a natural, if not necessarily predictable, evolution of the course of his life events. As he says, “I am a perennial Ithaca tourist” (Bishop 2003a), having spent most of his life in the city of his birth. He graduated from Ithaca High School (where he was voted “most artistic [www.ithacanews.org/glover.resume.html]) and then earned a degree in marketing at nearby Utica’s Mohawk Valley Community College, while editor of the school newspaper. Degree in hand, he took leave of upstate New York for stints of community organizing in Louisiana, Florida and Massachusetts, ending up with a several year stay in California.

Glover arrived in California, as one might anticipate, by thoroughly unconventional means: he took half a year in 1978 to walk from Boston to San Diego, as he says, in order to see “the effects of land use and population shift on natural resources” ([www.ithacanews.org/glover.resume.html](http://www.ithacanews.org/glover.resume.html)). His accomplishment had a profound impact (Wallechinsky 1986, 356):

The last night of the walk, I camped probably eighteen miles from the coast, and I could see the lights of San Diego. On the whole trip, 199 days, I had spent only \$503. Probably a month of that time was staying with people or working various jobs, rather than walking, so I averaged about 20 miles a day for 3500 miles. In the morning I walked down the hills towards the city. . . A few blocks from Imperial Beach, I heard the waves and I started to laugh and cry. I did it! It’s real. You can actually walk from one ocean to the other. It became a reality to me. Before that, it was theoretical.

Finding his way to Los Angeles, he organized Citizen Planners of Los Angeles, a group, in Glover’s words, “dedicated to democratic ecological urban design. Not utopias that float in the air out of reach but real practical, step-by-step, totally refashioned urban America” (Shepperd 2003). His Los Angeles sojourn also included a degree in city management from Santa Monica College, as well a booklet and slideshow, *Los Angeles: A History of the Future* (Glover 1983), outlining his ecological design strategy for saving Los Angeles from itself.

But after eight years, with his vision for renewal unheeded, Glover ended up concluding that Los Angeles was “an entirely featureless nightmare”(Shepperd 2003). On the other hand, for Glover, “Ithaca [with its 30,000 residents] is the scale of community that is emotionally coherent to me” (Shepperd 2003). By the mid-1980’s he was back in Ithaca.

Glover sees himself as a “social entrepreneur,” promoting “mutual enterprise systems.” Glover’s style of entrepreneurship, however, does not include \$200 an hour telephone consultations, nor an office with a receptionist and a team of research assistants. “The streets are my main office,” he says, “I’ve been a vegetarian for 32 years. I don’t ride in cars. I don’t own anything. I rent an apartment paid entirely by Ithaca HOURS. I consider myself wealthy if I can appreciate the beauty of the day” (Shepperd 2003).

Of course, before Glover could pay his rent in local currency, Ithaca HOURS had to be invented. And the motivation in the first instance was straightforward need: “I was short of money and it occurred to me to print some,” was Glover’s unreconstructed explanation for starting HOURS (Boyle 1999, 103). But Glover was also driven by ideological impulses. He saw Ithaca’s local currency as a reaction to the first Gulf War in 1991. “Our country was just being dragged along by huge armaments manufacturers and the need for oil to fuel the automobile. I felt that something had to be done to build a local economy which would enable people to supplant these forces” (Douthwaite 1996, 80).

Still, Ithaca HOURS was not an immaculate conception, popping full-blown from Glover’s fertile imagination. Before HOURS there was a LETS (Local Exchange Trading Scheme) experiment. Michael Linton, the Scottish-born Canadian developer of LETS, came to Ithaca in the late 1980s to encourage and assist Glover and friends in setting up a LETS scheme (interview with Glover, March 2003). But no more than sixty members ever participated in Ithaca LETS, and it folded in 1988 after ten months of operation when the community agency whose computer stored the LETS credits and debits closed down (Douthwaite 1996, 80). The LETS experiment left Glover still dedicated to the idea of local currency but searching for a more fluid and inclusive medium of exchange than a membership restricted LETS with its relatively cumbersome accounting procedures.

The specific catalyst for HOURS came in 1991 when Glover heard a National Public Radio report on a currency experiment in New Barrington, Massachusetts, about 250 miles to the north and east of Ithaca. A popular New Barrington delicatessen owner had been turned down for a bank loan to expand his business. Undaunted, the owner of The Deli issued “‘Deli Dollars’ as a self-financing technique. Customers could purchase these notes during a month of sale and redeem them over a one-year period once The Deli had moved to its new location . . . The notes which were dated and read ‘redeemable for meals up to a value of ten dollars.’ [The Deli owner] sold ten-dollar notes for eight dollars and in 30 days had raised \$5,000. Over the next year, [he] repaid the loan, in sandwiches and soup, rather than hard-to-come-by federal dollars” (Witt 1998).

Susan Witt of the E. F. Schumacher Institute in Great Barrington was one of the originators of the “Deli Dollar” scheme. She explains how the New Barrington experiment moved Glover towards the institutionalization of Ithaca HOURS. “[Glover] liked the idea of a hand-to-hand currency that let consumers support local businesses through the pre-purchase of products, but he wanted to broaden the concept. Instead of each business issuing its own notes, why couldn’t the community as a whole issue a local scrip? To learn how this might be done, he spent a week researching the history and theory of regional scrip at the E. F. Schumacher Library” (Witt 1998).

Adding to this cross-fertilization of ideas that produced Ithaca HOURS was the serendipitous arrival back home to Ithaca of Goddard College (Vermont) student Patrice Jennings, who had just completed a thesis on local currency (Douthwaite 1996, 80; Boyle 1999, 108). After an initial collaboration, with the expectation that Patrice would handle the public relations end of the HOURS initiative, she and Glover went their separate ways, leaving him the prime mover behind the startup of HOURS (interview with Glover, March 2003).

With the vision of a local currency crystallized, Glover says, “I began waving Xerox prototypes [of Ithaca HOURS notes] at my friends, telling them, ‘This is going to be money. We’ll trade it with each other. Sign up here.’ When I got a list of 90 pioneers, I

published their offers and requests, initially a hybrid barter and monetary system”(Shepperd 2003). The photocopies soon turned into the “In Ithaca We Trust” notes that have been circulating through Ithaca for the past 12 years. To promote HOURS, Glover started a bi-monthly newspaper he called Ithaca Money, which metamorphosed into HOUR Town. HOUR Town served as an outlet for not only Glover’s artistic and political impulses, but also as a source of income. In 1993, for example, he earned 447 HOURS, at \$10 an hour, selling display advertising. And since his landlady accepted HOURS, Glover could claim, “I can pay for about 95 per cent of what I need with them” (Douthwaite 1996, 82).

There is, however, the “other five per cent.” Over the years a series of federal dollar jobs and contracts have kept Glover and HOURS solvent. A VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America — a kind of domestic Peace Corp) federal government grant, for example, was instrumental in permitting Glover to do the groundwork necessary for the institutionalization of HOURS. As he acknowledges, “They carried me for three and a quarter years. The paycheck was very helpful in allowing me to apply myself entirely to the development of Ithaca HOURS. VISTA was a great job for me because I was at complete liberty to do exactly what I wanted to do, which is probably not typical of any job” (Winterton 2003). This kind of support was critical for the viability of HOURS since Glover circulated through the community on a daily basis to monitor the HOURS economy by recruiting and retaining new businesses and suggesting available tradesmen and laborers for retailers with a surplus of local currency.

#### **FOUNDER’S ORGANIZATION TO COMMUNITY INSTITUTION**

Though HOURS was Glover’s preoccupation, as well as his occupation, in its early years, it was only part of his design for a green and sustainable Ithaca. By the mid-1990’s he was actively exploring additional avenues for grassroots community development. In 1997 the second of Glover’s major community development initiatives started up: The Ithaca Health Fund (IHF). Drawing from the same premise that catalyzed HOURS, Glover simply pointed out that Ithaca federal dollars in the form of health care premiums were leaving the city while a substantial percentage of its residents were either under- or uninsured. His remedy was a basic two-pronged solution to keep health-care dollars circulating in Ithaca: (1) recruit subscribers to pay \$100 a year for coverage, and (2) solicit health care providers to offer preferred discounts to Fund members.

Intriguingly, among the first subscribers to the IHF was Mayor Alan Cohen, whose administration served as the foil for Glover’s 2003 mayoral campaign. But back in 1997 before the ideological battle lines were completely drawn in cement, Cohen expressed measured, if not enthusiastic, support for the Fund. “I believe the idea has merit. There are a lot of people in the community who don’t have health coverage, or don’t have enough coverage, and this is a way to get it to them,” Cohen said and then added, “I also feel that Paul Glover has a good track record. People were skeptical of the HOURS system, which as proven itself” (Katz 1997).

Since 1997 over a thousand subscribers have paid into the Fund and at the start of 2004 it had close to 650 active subscribers and total assets of over \$195,000 ([www.ithacahealth.org/](http://www.ithacahealth.org/)). Glover estimates, however, that the Fund will need a membership of 40,000 of the 100,000 residents of Tompkins country, for which Ithaca serves as the county seat, in order to self-fund full coverage for both medical and dental care

(Glover and Houghton 1999). In the interim, between partial and full coverage, the IHF has nevertheless delivered significant benefits to its membership. As Glover summarizes, “So far, each and every month for the last six years, we’ve brought in more money than we’ve paid out. We started out where the maximum payment for a broken bone was like \$550. Now we’re up to \$2,500” (Hourihan 2003).

As the IHF grew, Glover’s involvement in HOURS changed. An advisory board was incorporated in 1998 as Ithaca HOURS, Inc. (Glover 2000a). The advisory board held elections for a board of directors, with the subsequent election of a president, Steve Burke, an Ithaca small business person, representing the transition from a founders’ organization to an independent, incorporated institution. In addition, HOUR Town, the bi-monthly newspaper/ directory for HOURS, which served as an outlet for Glover’s commentary on local and national affairs, has become a yearly directory of goods and services, effectively an “alternative Yellow Pages.” In the meantime, Glover uses his web-based [ithacanews.org](http://ithacanews.org), serving an e-mail list of 7,400, to share his perspectives on community-based sustainability with both a local and a global audience.

Though no longer the energizing force behind Ithaca HOURS, Glover nevertheless remains an unofficial ambassador for the local currency he was instrumental in founding. He still circulates through Ithaca to promote HOURS as he pursues the interests of the IHF, with the Fund itself accepting 25 per cent of its \$100 subscription fee in HOURS. And as a grassroots activist he continues to advocate a number of community and sustainability issues such as mosaic sidewalks, a return of trolley service to Ithaca and the Whole Ithaca Stock Exchange (WISE), a scheme for investment in local enterprise ([www.glover-mayor.org/](http://www.glover-mayor.org/)).

In addition, Glover has taken on the gadfly task of redirecting the focus of Ithaca’s popular GreenStar Cooperative Market.<sup>3</sup> Over the past few years he has campaigned for and promoted candidates for GreenStar’s board of directors who favor a return to local producers and production rather than relying on distant agribusiness, even if they are nominally organic. Glover’s slates of candidates have won most of the directorships, but GreenStar’s 15 member board remains divided on key issues and at a stalemate with the co-op’s professional managers who see themselves as pragmatists, delivering the kind of commercial products their clients shop for. Interestingly, the market’s current general manager, and Glover’s principal nemesis in the battle for GreenStar’s identity, is Patrice Jennings, his one-time collaborator in the startup of Ithaca HOURS.

The GreenStar wars bring into relief Glover’s strengths as a community organizer, while at the same time revealing the limitations in his approach. He excels as a visionary who can capture the imagination of those seeking alternatives to what they see as the cognitive monoculture undermines community and ecosystem quality of life. Glover, however, is not a politician in the traditional sense of a coalition builder — an organizer who compromises in order to move projects forward, even if they become distorted in the process. In contrast, the unconventional originality of Glover’s blueprints for a sustainable Ithaca tends to have a polarizing effect. He can dismiss potential allies among Ithaca’s affluent, for example, as members of the “holistic middle-class” (Jacob interview, March 2003).

Glover’s uncompromising idealism was reflected in first adventure with electoral politics when he ran for Ithaca’s Common Council in the early 1970’s as an anarchist. As he recounts (Wallechinsky 1986, 346):

I was going to be a city councilperson who would, as I emphasized throughout my campaign, rely on people to initiate political reforms and to make sure the government was kept off their backs. I issued campaign literature, knocked on 1800 doors, talked with hundreds of people and was endorsed by the [Libertarian] Party. I also had good conversations with working-class conservatives who supported me because I was opposed to big government. Dr. [Benjamin] Spock came to town to speak for me. I received 22 percent of the vote and finished in second place. I beat the democrat.

Some three decades later in his second encounter with Ithaca city politics, Glover would not fare quite as well. In Ithaca's three-way mayoral race in the fall of 2003 he received just 12 per cent of the vote, with progressive Democrat Carolyn Peterson, a veteran city alderwoman, winning with 60 per cent (Bishop 2003b). This time he was in third place behind the Republican candidate.

It remains for Peterson, the politician, to implement, as she sees feasible, Glover's vision for a sustainable Ithaca. Compromises and strategic defeats are inevitable. Glover's after-election statement reflected the intensity of his frustration with the reality of seeing a progressive city taking the middle road between outside corporate development and locally inspired sustainable initiatives. He said, "Carolyn will be faced with hard choices immediately — to restrain taxes, maintain services, to serve environmentalists as well as capitalists, to serve labor as well as big box stores. I'll be active [in assisting] her with grassroots economic development, [but] if she seeks to install more chain stores in the city's southwest 80 acres, I'll be her worst pain in the ass" (Sickelco 2003).

## CONCLUSION

Despite Paul Glover's acerbic tone in the quotation that concluded the last section, his continuing role in Ithaca's community development will not likely be limited to agitator or gadfly functions. His proposal for a revival of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century trolley service that linked Ithaca's downtown to the Cornell campus, up the city's East Hill with a 11 per cent grade, has influential advocates — as well as dismissive opponents (Sisler 2004, Lerner 2003). Glover was also one of 40 potential candidates surveyed by the Green Party as potential U.S. presidential candidates for the 2004 election, and one of four to express an interest (Faler 2003). He is, however, limiting his low-key campaign to the internet, and allows, if he were nominated, he would reprise his Boston to San Diego walkathon, supplemented by Amtrack train, trolley and bike, as his principal barnstorming mode (Glover 2004). As of this writing, however, Glover is polling near the bottom of the Green Party primaries (e.g., IPR 2004), far from unexpected for a near invisible campaign profile from a candidate who refuses to travel by car.

In the meantime, Ithaca, once identified as "America's most enlightened town" (Spayde 1997),<sup>4</sup> and recently ranked number one of the U.S. cities "emerging as great places to live" (Minzesheimer 2004), still struggles to realize its sustainability aspirations and maintain its progressive reputation. And part of its progressive reputation, of course, is grounded in its local currency. This acknowledgement in the context of the political battle over the direction of the future growth and development of the Ithaca region (driven by outside corporate imperatives versus responding to local initiatives) raises a number of critical questions about the nature of Ithaca's regional economy and the place

of HOURS within that economy. Among these questions are the following: What role do Ithaca HOURS play in a regional economy dominated by chain stores? In conjunction with the local business community, do they provide an effective counterpoint to the agents of the transnational economy doing business in Ithaca? How viable, then, is Ithaca's community currency 13 years after its startup? Does it connect residents in social capital networks of mutual reciprocity? Does it appear to provide additional purchasing power to lower income residents?

Extended answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this historical account, although they are addressed as part of the larger study that informs this report. But we can say by way of conclusion that Ithaca itself is much more than the quaint university town with one of a kind establishments all eager to accept Ithaca HOURS for at least partial payment for the goods and services they offer, an impression that has been perhaps inadvertently left by popular accounts of the HOURS phenomenon. While the image of Ithaca as a series of small-business networks involved in the trading of HOURS does reflect a significant part of the city's reality, it is also important to realize that most of Ithaca's business activity takes place on its periphery and its interface with its suburbs at extended strip and enclosed malls. Ithaca HOURS are not traded in these chain-store zones. Though excluded from the zones of corporate commerce, Ithaca HOURS nevertheless carry a powerful symbolic value in the cultural life of Ithaca. They are inevitably highlighted by city promoters as one of Ithaca's attractions — "We have our own currency!" Consequently, while their material impact, though far from inconsiderable, may still be at a substantial distance from the aspirations of their creators, HOURS constitute a potent, and symbolic, weapon for the progressive side of Ithaca's pacific insurgency against what they see as the culturally homogenizing and economically stratifying power of the transnational economy.

### Endnotes

1. GreenStar's wage did not quite reach the level the Ithaca Coalition for a Livable Wage calculates as "livable." This, though, was the way they described GreenStar's move forward: "Effective January 1, 2004 the starting wage will go from \$7/HOUR to \$8.21/HOUR (plus health insurance), a 17 percent increase. Other wage rates will rise as well. In addition to the wage, GreenStar employees receive 100% paid medical and dental insurance (full-time employees), a 17 1/2% food discount, and other benefits" (Feuer 2003).
2. The video tape of the program is in the possession of the authors. The video tape is a compilation of news reports on Ithaca HOURS that is part of an HOURS "starter kit" for those interested in replicating the Ithaca experiment in their own communities.
3. For a representative position paper on Glover's view of GreenStar, see: "What We Need to Know About the Corporate Takeover of the "Organic" Food Market" (<http://www.ithacanews.org/greenstarstock.html>). For the GreenStar Council response, see: [http://www.greenstarcoop.com/council/response\\_glover.shtml](http://www.greenstarcoop.com/council/response_glover.shtml)
4. It would be misleading to leave the impression that Ithaca HOURS is necessarily the primary civic institution that makes Ithaca an "enlightened" town. It is one of many grassroots initiatives. For a discussion of Ithaca activism, see "(Spayde

1997), and for a point-by-point listing of Ithaca's activist oriented groups and institutions, see Glover (2000b).

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