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RHETORICAL INVENTION AND BECOMING LOCAL

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RHETORICAL INVENTION AND BECOMING LOCAL

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Dedication

To Tina

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RHETORICAL INVENTION AND BECOMING LOCAL

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This dissertation is an effort to understand the role of rhetorical invention in becoming local. The project aims to bring rhetorical studies closer to the building of a sustainable polis. The study revisits classical notions of rhetorical invention to locate concepts and tools for adaptation in contemporary rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice. The concepts of *energeia*, *imitatio*, *topoi*, and the rhetorical appeals are used to analyze rural rejuvenation efforts in the community of Aurora, The Partnership for Rural Nebraska, and The Project of Becoming Native. These texts serve as rich sites of rhetorical invention and becoming local.

The dissertation establishes a manner of rhetorical invention as production that aligns rhetorical studies with the design arts; this includes theorizing and teaching rhetorical invention with an emphasis on visual symbolic forms. A close reading of Aristotle's term, *energeia*, reveals that rhetorical invention is a process of bringing before the eyes the internally active nature of discourse and objects. Furthermore, the analyses of rural rejuvenation projects demonstrate how rhetorical and design tools of invention function in community development projects. Finally, this project articulates a pedagogy

of becoming local and a model of rural rejuvenation. The former calls for rhetorical teaching to focus on a place's longevity while the latter offers conditions and tools for the invention of sustainable new beginnings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During a long highway ride, on a route that once served the cattle drives of a bygone era, a sickening gut feeling began to stir. Making my way from a central Texas campus to the Nebraska prairie revealed a tired and dilapidated rural landscape. Main streets were cluttered with “for lease” signs, town populations were declining (or disappearing), and a growing sense of pessimism clouded the coffee shop chatter. Something had gone wrong in the rural places I once called home. And as I now have come to understand, this situation is not isolated to rural Nebraska or even rural communities. Many places have been confronted by the haunting realization that their way of life is unsustainable.

Empathetic feelings for those people being uprooted by a shifting global marketplace are nothing new. I remember my grandparents’ farmhouse being auctioned off despite their ten children who were in line to become third generation farmers; none of whom could see a sustainable path to make that farm work. I also recall McDonald’s arriving in my small town and forcing the locally owned drive-up hamburger joint out of business. A few years later McDonald’s locked their doors and left the town a placeless building and a signless pole – structures symbolic of the dysfunctional relationship between rural communities and a post-industrial economy. However, the feeling I incurred on that particular drive north was more than empathy. It was a feeling of personal failure, an intuition that my studies and way of life were contributing to this destitute plight of rural America.

I had spent the past decade studying rhetoric and making professional connections that would provide me the portability to move upward. However, I had failed

to make the most important (and obvious) connection – the link between rhetorical studies and living together in a local sustainable manner. Rural communities were struggling, in part, because professionals, myself included, had neglected the local in our theories, pedagogies, and daily practices. In the 2004 Iowa presidential primary campaign Senator John Edwards echoed these sentiments. He stated, "For too many politicians, rural America is that vast landscape they look down on as they fly between Washington and Los Angeles" (White House). The same could be said about rhetorical scholars, as we move amongst conferences conversing in uniform luxury hotels about general theories and practices devoid of particular places.

This dissertation is dedicated to the invention and sustainability of places. It is a study committed to connecting the scholarship and pedagogy of rhetorical studies to the work necessary for rural rejuvenation. On the broadest level, *this project works to illustrate how rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice can be used to cultivate paths of becoming local*. On disciplinary grounds, this investigation inspires to relocate the rhetorician closer to the productive work of the polis. The practical yields from such a project are the rhetorical resources necessary to create, nourish, and sustain community rejuvenation. In other words, this is a dissertation about the role of rhetorical studies in motivating and equipping people to dig in and work for the longevity (and, ultimately, survival) of a place.

For this reason, this particular project involves communities and places that have a material, embodied presence. While virtual communities may play an important role in becoming local,¹ ultimately they are supported by material structures that demand healthy soil, energy, and able workers. Rhetorical scholarship of late tends to focus primarily on the virtual and mass-mediated realms and less on the material structures that establish the ecological conditions for a healthy place. For this reason, it is important to direct a

rhetorical project on physical places, in an effort to become literate in sustainability measures and to achieve a more balanced array of rhetorical scholarship.

This chapter works to further pin down the issue, question, methods, and implications that guide this dissertation. What follows next is an assessment of the current state of rhetorical scholarship. From this assessment emerges the focus and research question propelling this study. Ultimately, this dissertation is a study of rhetorical invention as it functions to sustain places, specifically rural communities. Thus, this chapter addresses the concerns facing rural places in an effort to demonstrate the need for rhetoricians to assist in rural rejuvenation projects. Following the state of rural affairs is a sketch of how rhetorical scholarship might embrace the project of becoming local. Finally, the chapter includes sections regarding the theoretical framework and methodologies employed throughout this project.

CURRENT STATE OF RHETORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

A rhetorical studies dissertation having to make explicit the connection between rhetoric and a given place is ironic. Rhetoric, by its situated nature, has an inherent connection with the local. However, the contemporary rhetorical studies program behaves much like other disciplines in the modern University – jockeying for position in the unsustainable race of reductionism. In this race, the subject-worried players (particularly the humanists and social scientists) work to demonstrate that they have a transportable subject matter. And the most egregious amongst this brand of scholars not only asserts that he understands a specialized part of the world, but that this part is the world. The rhetorical scholar, for example, asserts that what they teach is *everywhere* and can fit *anywhere*. Yet, the pedagogy and theory generated from the current turn toward

interpretation/criticism fails to equip students with the knowledge to build a home *somewhere*. The problem with reductionism is that it ignores the dialectical relationship between part and whole. As Wes Jackson contends, the “placement of priority on the parts over the whole denies the importance of emergent properties” (Becoming 35). And these emergent qualities provide the keys to sustainable homes and communities.

The past few decades of rhetorical scholarship have been dominated with theories and practices classified as *critical* and/or *interpretive* (McKerrow, 1989; Hyde and Smith, 1979). The critical/interpretive turn in rhetorical scholarship – a necessary and important move to unveil the workings of power and better understand linguistic possibilities – cultivates students of rhetoric keen on disassembling and understanding. The shortcoming of the critical/interpretive turn is that it leaves a distance between the rhetorical scholar and those doing the rhetorical work of the polis. Consider the issue of declining rural populations in the US. How have these significant dwelling spaces – places where people produce nourishment and serve as stewards of the land – become more sustainable from the critical/interpretive turn in rhetorical scholarship? Granted, industrial farming methods are ripe sites for rhetorical criticism and rural residents could benefit from a better understanding of the linguistic possibilities that shape their community’s development, but there is a chasm between the critical/interpretive turn and the rhetorical production necessary to rejuvenate particular rural communities. And this chasm applies to communities of all shapes and sizes.

The chasm exists, in part, because authors of this rhetorical scholarship are constrained by the method of reductionism that dominates academic scholarship. Reductionism dictates that an issue/problem be reduced to its parts and studied seriously by specialized experts. This method is convenient for scholars because the parts are portable, meaning they can be applied and taught anywhere with little adaptation. The

laws of reductionism dictate that Professor Fargo can easily transform into Professor Austin with minimal changes to her lecture notes. Furthermore, the entire course can be taught without engaging the very local communities that house the University and/or the communities most students will someday be responsible for sustaining. Reductionism, in part, is to blame for a portable and disengaged pedagogy. Once the parts have been detached from the whole, they no longer carry the cumbersome responsibility of fitting the contours of specific places. In other words, reductionism operates without a concern for the local. It sets the conditions for rhetorical studies to remain distanced from the work being done to sustain the local.

The chasm between rhetorical scholarship and local community development also is reflected by the neglect of rhetorical theories and practices that frame rhetorical invention as a *productive art*. Invention for the critical turn is subsumed by a process of deconstruction that offers the possibility (and promise) of inventing new beginnings. But how to assemble these new possibilities in specific communities remains largely unarticulated in the scholarship. Maurice Charland warns that the shortcoming of the critical turn is that it does not protect from “an infinite regress in negative critique” (71). Charland goes on to add that “while the critical rhetorician struggles within a local context, he or she has no place to call home.” It is significant to point out that Charland’s central metaphor is one of *being at home*. This dissertation too is interested in exploring a homecoming for rhetoricians, a process where disassembly is treated as an integral step in the rhetorician’s larger construction project. To build sustainable places, rhetorical invention needs to be framed as a productive art.

In an age when rhetorical scholarship stands outside the work being done to develop communities, it is timely to focus resources and practices on the process of assembling the disassembled community. While rhetorical scholars need a constant

critical/interpretive eye, the praxis element of the rhetorical equation compels rhetorical scholars to be assemblers – designers of a sort. The design arts represent an integrated and engaged field that is geared toward production. The classical tradition of rhetorical invention is a ripe place to establish a connection between rhetoric and the design arts, for the ancient focus too was on the production of discourse.

The design arts not only offer rhetorical scholarship a productive focus, they incorporate the fundamental aspects of the critical/interpretive turn. Rhetorical critics, suggests William Keith, are “engineers by trade” (Engineering 242). Like the mechanical engineer who breaks down a machine in an effort to improve its design, the rhetorical critic breaks down discourse and “re-describes” how that rhetoric was produced; this is the process of “reverse engineering” (Engineering 239). Both the engineer and critic are interpreting from a particular place in the world. Thus, the goal is not to find Truth; it is to discover methods to assist in an improved and/or new design. New beginnings are the ends of reverse engineering and the critical turn.

New beginnings also are fundamental to the project focused on becoming local with rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice. Note that “becoming” implies that this project is an ever-moving production process. Allowing “reverse engineering” to inform our productive practices and vice versa embraces the dialectical relationship between production and deconstruction that offers the possibility of creating anew. Therefore, rhetorical scholars, equipped with a critical perspective, should address how to engineer becoming local to a given place. With these aims in sight, this dissertation poses the following question:

How can rhetorical invention be used to assist the project of becoming local to a given place?

The potential yield from this dissertation is threefold in that it speaks to *theory*, *practice*, and *pedagogy*. Regarding theory, the aim is to delineate theories of rhetorical invention that are applicable to the task of becoming local. In terms of practice, I will demonstrate how rhetorical invention is being practiced in rural rejuvenation efforts. Finally, I will begin articulating a rhetorical pedagogy for the project of becoming local. This includes generating a working model for rural rejuvenation efforts.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to further discussion of the rationale, theoretical framework, and methodology used for this dissertation. The second chapter delineates the contemporary scholarship on rhetorical invention and articulates a turn toward rhetorical invention as production. This turn includes visual symbolic forms as they function in the invention process, and it hinges on collaborative efforts with the design arts. In chapters three through five rural rejuvenation efforts are analyzed in relation to rhetorical invention. These include: chapter 3: the progress of a rural community, Aurora, Nebraska; chapter 4: the Partnership for Rural Nebraska, a collaboration of university, state, and national rural development organizations; chapter 5: the project of becoming native articulated by Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry. The final chapter will read across the previous four chapters to draw implications, articulate a rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local, and offer a model of rural rejuvenation.

CURRENT STATE OF RURAL AFFAIRS

While communities of all sizes face serious sustainability issues that demand attention to the local, for purposes of this project, rural communities are used to illustrate the urgency and utility of becoming local. Rural areas are ripe sites for analysis because these places are integral to the sustainability of the United States; they house the bulk of

natural amenities that feed and energize the people within these borders and beyond. David Porter contends that the poor performance of rural communities “retards national productivity and national prosperity, and fails to effectively utilize the nation’s resources” (3). The significance of rural areas is further evident when taking into consideration geography and population. Rural areas make up some 75% of US geography and account for the dwelling place of 49 million people (Economic Research Service, [Rural](#)). The following map displays this distribution:²

Nonmetropolitan and metropolitan counties, 2003

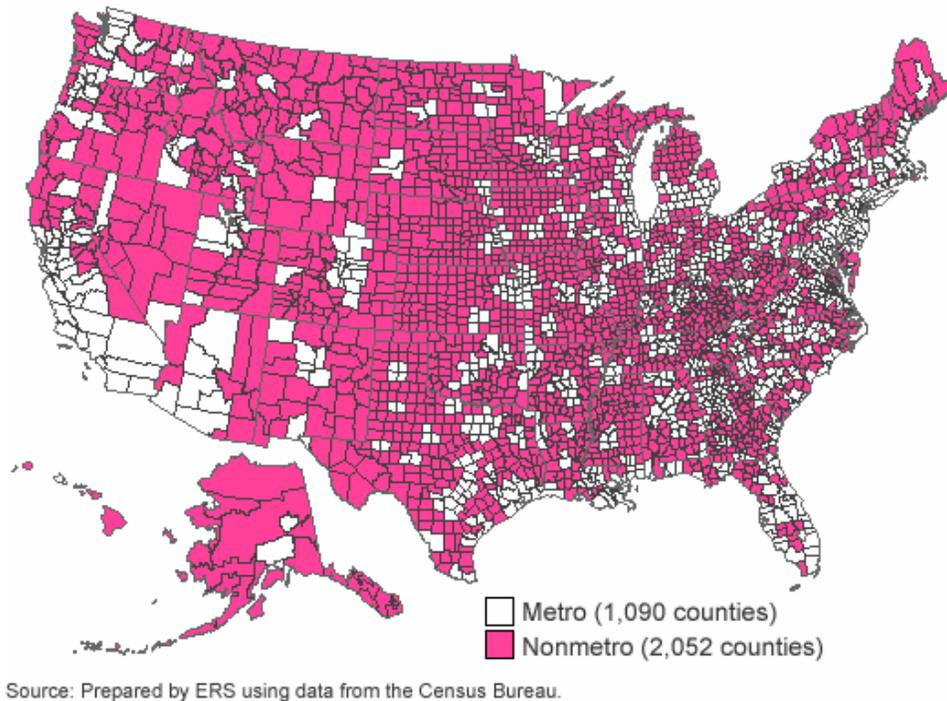


Figure 1.A

The image above illustrates the rural/urban dichotomy using the more common classification by researchers of metropolitan/nonmetropolitan. When the term “rural” community is used throughout this project, it refers to the classification defined by the US government.³

Despite the fact that the natural resources of these nonmetropolitan areas are invaluable and the rural population is a critical mass (20% of the US total), rural areas garner modest constructive attention by researchers and policy makers. Yet, scholarly attention is warranted to these rural spaces. Rural communities have an intrinsic connection to the nation's sustainability in a global economy; they have the potential to be micro-scale examples of the project of becoming local. The success stories that exist in the more progressive rural communities are the exemplars of this brand of invention. These rural communities, constrained with expired industrial know-how, are challenged to transform farming and manufacturing methods to be competitive in a new global economy. Because these communities lack the resources to keep full-time development committees and professional consultants on the pay roll, they have turned to their most powerful resource: the local people. Here, with people who have chosen to dig in, the successful rural communities have found their competitive advantage. The transformation of industrial farming and manufacturing sectors has forced communities to diversify their economies. Such an arduous task with limited financial resources has caused citizens to think local and organize around a common purpose, namely longevity. The exemplar communities, as this dissertation will attempt to delineate, are inventing and discovering more local and sustainable solutions to the pressing pains that Senator Edwards was alluding to in his stump speech.

The audience Senator Edwards addressed needed little briefing about the economic, demographic, and educational situation of rural America that has been shaken over the past few decades. Driving through the rural communities of Nebraska, for instance, paints a tired picture. Main streets are cluttered with "for lease" signs as job growth has not kept pace with metropolitan areas. The nonmetro worker's wages are 69% of the metro worker's wages; two decades ago the disparity was much smaller at 82%

(Atkinson 4). In addition, many town populations are declining; during the 1990's – a plentiful decade of growth for metropolitan areas – nearly 25% of rural counties experienced a population decline and half of those counties lost 5% or more of their population (McGranahan 11). The biggest losers were those communities furthest from metropolitan areas and largely dependent on agriculture. The trend seems to be continuing at an increased pace; from 2000 to 2003 the number of counties with population decline was 1000 (USDA, Rural 6). Another primary problem is education. While high school drop-out rates tend to be better than metropolitan areas, those youth who leave to pursue post-secondary education are not coming back to live and work in rural areas. For instance, “only 17 percent of rural adults age 25 and older had completed college in 2000” (Whitener 16).

Wes Jackson, an agricultural scientist and founder of the Land Institute attributes the problems of economy, population decline, and education to a disregard for what is native to a given place. The industrial system of farming and manufacturing is unsustainable, in part, because it fails to attune itself with the local ecology. For example, the corn field in Nebraska is planted with the same seed and in the same industrial manner as the one in Arkansas, despite the known fact that the soil's vitality demands more diversified methods and seeds that are germane to that ecosystem. The same can be said about manufacturing (which is how many rural towns since the 1950's have supplemented their declining farm populations), where a plant in Mississippi is built nearly identical to one located in South Dakota, blind to the contours of place. In both examples, there is little concern for what is local as it relates to sustaining the longevity of place.

And these problems are not exclusive to rural communities. Communities, regardless of size, are confronted by a late-industrial model of production that fails to

account for the long-term care of a given place. Without the know-how of a given place, gathered from those who have made the commitment to dig in, a town/city is a mere springboard for individuals and companies to use in the quest to move to higher ground.

Placeless productions not only have economic and environmental consequences, they unravel the civic fabric that constitutes healthy democracies. It is well documented that US political apathy is rampant (Patterson 2002; Hart 1999). Moreover, civic involvement is low especially amongst younger populations (Bennett and Rademacher 1997). To remedy such problems elites have suggested reforming the media's political coverage and enhancing civics education in the schools. However, the indifference many people feel toward being politically involved correlates with consequences. Nicholas Lemann explains:

People become active citizens because they perceive it as likely to produce results for them. If you construct society so that the only reason to become an active citizen is that it's the right thing to do, then most people won't be active citizens. The way to encourage citizenship is to endow it with practical and psychological consequences. The more decisions seem to be in the hands of faraway experts, the more voters are treated as sheep who must meekly respond to the manipulations of public opinion experts, the deeper the slumber of the citizenry will become (33).

Lemann does not provide specific details on what constitutes practical and psychological consequences. Yet, to develop and organize such personalized initiatives would demand a local understanding of a given place. Might we conclude that a research and pedagogical system of reductionism is at the core of this disinterested and uninvolved citizenry?

Training our best and brightest in a specialized part has resulted in a people ill-equipped and unmotivated to commit to a place.

The lack of commitment directly affects the civic work necessary to sustain democratic living. For instance, a study by Williamson et al. revealed a strong correlation between civic participation (on both local and national levels) and the expectation of long-term residency in a given community (3). This expectation of long-term commitment resonates with the project of becoming local. One thinks and acts differently when he approaches a dwelling space with the mentality: “I may never move from here.” Philosopher Henry Johnstone addresses this disposition when he writes about the distinction between a traveler and a tourist. “Home is where one feels that one could abide for an indefinitely long period....I do not mean to suggest, however, either that everyone has a home or that no one could be at home living out of a suitcase. A person ensconced in a home could be homeless if his relationship to the building or its other occupants did not permit him to envisage an indefinitely long stay there” (Johnstone 146). Reductionism undercuts the relationship to local places, ultimately creating pseudo-communities with houses inhabited by the homeless.

Aligned with reductionism is a narrative of success in higher education that is premised on moving to the next place, the better place to be. This narrative has been a whopping success as evidenced by the exodus of educated youth and job opportunities from rural areas. The becoming local project, however, is premised on nurturing healthy communities by keeping a constant eye on longevity. The nurturing process hinges on a community’s ecological health. This is the message of becoming local, and it needs to be spread beyond the margins of activists and idealists.

The education system is one primary area where the narrative of becoming local needs to be woven throughout the pedagogy. Wes Jackson calls professors to train the

best and brightest students to “dig in” and take notice of what emerges in a given environment. The reach of such an initiative goes beyond molding productive individuals and vibrant communities; it directly strengthens the project of democracy. It has long been written by thinkers like Rousseau, Tocqueville, and Bellah that “stable democracies must be grounded in strong communities” (Barber ix of forward). Therefore, there is much at stake in motivating an attitude and know-how focused on digging in to a given place. And rhetorical studies programs have an opportunity to embrace the important work of becoming local.

RHETORICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND THE PROJECT OF BECOMING LOCAL

Rhetoric, as a field of study, has a rich tradition of theories, pedagogies, and practices that pertain to the project of becoming local. Innovation and discovery have long been associated as key tenants of rhetorical work. The classical traditions, both the Sophistic and Aristotelian, are premised on innovation and discovery respectively. Sophistic rhetoric is innovative in that it functions through the possible; it embraces “things that are not but can be” (Poulakos 68). The Sophist’s innovative spirit, according to John Poulakos, offers a third alternative between a world of actuality and ideality. He writes, “[T]he ends of this (possible) rhetoric can be reached because people are endowed with the capacity to see themselves and the world not only as they are but also as they can become” (68). The sophistic third position sees the world as forever becoming – a position integral to this project.

The Sophists were creating new beginnings from possibilities; Aristotle, on the other hand, theorized rhetoric as an art of discovery. Seeing the means of persuasion in each particular case is the rhetorician’s task. While Aristotle critiqued the Sophists for

teaching style over logic, he carried forth their placement of rhetoric in the realm of the possible. Aristotle explains in Book 1 of the Rhetoric:

Its [rhetoric's] function is concerned with the sort of things we debate and for which we do not have [other] arts and among listeners as are not able to see many things all together or to reason from a distant starting point. And we debate about things that seem to be capable of admitting two possibilities; for no one debates things incapable of being different either in past or future or present (41).

The Sophistic and Aristotelian tradition hold that rhetoric functions in situations that are becoming. Rhetoric is foremost an art of invention.

In addition to an emphasis on the possible, Aristotle's rhetorical theory can be read as advocating an innovative art of *making*. In other words, rhetoric has a productive function that Aristotle commonly assigns to poetics. Janet Atwill, reading across Aristotle's philosophical writings, contends that Aristotle distinguishes between three types of knowledge: theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge, and productive knowledge. The actions assigned to each knowledge type are *seeing*, *acting*, and *making* (Rhetoric 164-176). While rhetoric has long been discussed in terms of its relationship to theory and praxis, less attention has been paid to its productive capacity.

Atwill characterizes productive knowledge by the following three characteristics: "Its concern with the contingent, its implication in the social and economic exchange, and its resistance to determinate ends" (Rhetoric 172). Rhetoric is a productive art, in part, because of its concern with "what can be otherwise" (Atwill, Rhetoric 173). This contention will be expanded in chapter two where rhetorical invention is detailed, but for now it is important to emphasize that the classical rhetorical tradition supports the notion

that rhetoric is a productive art of innovation and discovery. This opens up the rhetorical tradition to be read in a manner that assists the project of becoming local. Or in the case of rural rejuvenation, it frames rhetoric as a productive art equipped to work toward the sustainability of places.

While contemporary rhetorical scholars give righteous lip service to rhetoric as an art grounded in praxis (practical knowledge), the scholarship stands distanced from the productions of the polis. If rhetoric is a productive art, contemporary rhetorical scholarship should reflect that position. Moreover, this same scholarship should embrace the project of becoming local. Rhetorical critics have done a thorough job of describing the substance of text – those assumptions, ideologies, and methods that stand beneath the rhetorical work of influence and identification. This is evidenced in the academic journals of rhetoric/speech that teem with theorists describing ways of seeing rhetoric and critics espousing ways to judge and interpret texts. However, these foci omit an integral aspect of the rhetorical tradition: how to make “stuff.” They omit the productive aspect of the rhetorical tradition that originated in the classical tradition in the canon of “invention.”

Making discourse, like making objects, involves theories, pedagogies, and practices of rhetorical invention. Yet, contemporary rhetoricians have neglected their longstanding and integral connection to invention as production. For example, some twenty-five years ago, Kneupper and Anderson put out the following call: “What is clearly needed is significant theoretical, critical, and experimental research that explores the uses of rhetorical invention in the composing process to compliment speech communication’s concern with eloquence and enrich the perspective of the discipline” (320). This call went largely unanswered. The interpretive/critical turn emerged and gave

little attention to the embodied process of making “stuff” – the productive component of the rhetorical equation.

To be fair to the critical and interpretive turn, invention as production has been absent in rhetorical scholarship because of major theoretical and technological shifts. These shifts are evident by the emerging fields of study that rhetorical scholars have embraced in the past thirty years. Janice Lauer contends that scholarship on invention did not disappear with the turn to interpretation and criticism; it was subsumed by fields of study in hermeneutics, cultural studies, race and gender studies, and communication technology (Introduction 10). These fields recast rhetorical invention to align with the emergent theories and methods.

Take the case of hermeneutics. This field of study asserts that all interpretive moves are rhetorical. Thus, classical notions of invention may no longer apply to a discipline where the “range of rhetoric is potentially universal” (Gaonkar qtd. by Lauer, Introduction 10). If the production of text is always already a matter of interpretation, rhetorical invention logically gravitates toward hermeneutics – a study that works to facilitate understanding. Gaonkar contends that classical rhetoric employed a “vocabulary primarily fashioned for directing performance rather than facilitating understanding” (32). The interpretive/critical turn places *understanding* in front of *production*.

Disciplinary and theoretical justifications partially explain the move away from invention as production, but communication technologies also have played a key role in shaping rhetorical theory. The rhetorician’s attention became fixated on how best to consume texts with the onslaught of mass-mediated messages. Barry Brummet, authoring a rhetorical history textbook, contends that 20th century rhetoric has “changed dramatically to offer relatively less advice to people as to how to *produce* messages. Rhetorical theory is correspondingly more concerned to describe the ways in which

people receive messages and to advise people as to how to receive messages more critically” (Rhetorical 672). Brummett does not lament that this shift that was determined, in part, by mass communication technologies – the machines that relegate most people to the role of reader/listener. Instead, he and other contemporary rhetorical scholars focus primarily on ways to read/listen to a text.

The critical/interpretive turn is succeeding in its effort to understand the formations of power and knowledge that constitute cultures. The work to deconstruct these structures is generating a pedagogy that challenges students to be more critical readers. Yet, this turn in rhetorical studies has failed to instill in students the creative mentality, methods, and productive know-how necessary to invent and sustain a given place. In many respects this move has constipated students. Developing a population keen on irony without providing a productive outlet disregards the necessity to act. Furthermore, it neglects the responsibility to act in accordance with the ecological health of a given place.

The interpretive/critical turn has neglected to understand how one might start becoming local to a given place. While it is accurate to say that people today mostly consume texts, and that there is great need to understand how to best critically read those texts; a burden of act still remains: people must design, produce, and sustain communities. And at least some of that understanding so coveted by the critical/interpretive turn is absorbed and learned through the process of making, especially when an individual has the opportunity to “dig in” and commit to the longevity of a given place. Rhetoric’s obsession with receiving messages, necessary as it is to have a critical lens, fails to completely answer the needs of would-be rhetoricians working to produce sustainable solutions to complex problems.

The consequence of focusing so heavily on *understanding* is that the rhetorician, at least as certified by academia, largely is absent in the local discussions where rhetorical invention is thriving. Communities are being molded by development, business, and policy leaders; but where are the well trained rhetoricians? Have we critics so keen on understanding, taken the time to dig in with our writing and practice? While the well-versed are busy writing and teaching about a general world that should use healthier, more inclusive rhetorics, the upwardly mobile developer and investment banker are busy applying their post-industrial knowledge of the world to local communities. The consequences, especially in most rural places, have been devastating. Rhetoricians and their texts could assist community residents in the difficult task of digging in. Faced with scarce resources and complex populations, communities are in dire need of the language and process of becoming local.

A professional echelon of community problem solvers that includes researchers, government agencies, and community developers is addressing the issues facing rural communities. These efforts are primarily driven by the scope and methods of a post-industrial economic system. The scholarship on rural rejuvenation follows a like path with investigations on rural tourism, technological advancements, and agribusiness. However, there also exists more progressive and radical scholarship that is working to produce ecologically healthy and sustainable ventures. What both literatures have in common is a lack of attention to language use.

From a rhetorician's viewpoint, the very glue that invents, develops, and sustains these community projects largely has been left out of the conversation about rural rejuvenation. This is not to say that communities are oblivious to strategic communication or the power of language; however, the notion that language serves as a tool of invention is not commonplace in community development projects or the research

being conducted on these efforts. Because the rhetorical perspective is potentially informative, an initial investigation seems justified – one that might support future studies that would produce large scale comparative analyses. A rhetorical tradition focused on invention, I argue, has the ability to inform the project of becoming local, especially if invention is developed in tune with the arts of design.

Rhetoric as an academic study and practice needs to reposition itself as a design art. Harkening back to classical forms, rhetoric should reclaim the space between the journal and the construction site. This move demands that rhetoric be positioned as a productive *techne* and reconnect with its poetic function – the art of making. David Kaufer moves us toward this position when he frames rhetoric as a design art similar to engineering and architecture. To escape the dismissal of rhetoric as a practical art or the subsumption of rhetoric by the critical/interpretive move, Kaufer suggests that production theories of rhetoric should be enriched by theories of reception (*Tekhne* 276). While the second chapter of this study will discuss more systematically the notion of rhetoric as a design art, it is important to note here that rhetoric as design advances a way of seeing, making, and acting that is integral to the creation of new beginnings. While I work from the assumption that rhetoric is but one element involved in the project of becoming local, the productive capacity of rhetoric makes it ripe for meeting the felt needs of the day. And the local people with ideas and materials, especially those working around issues of sustainability, are ready to listen to a tradition centered on inventing alternatives to address complex problems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rhetoricians have the potential to make a valuable contribution to rural rejuvenation projects, especially when these projects are influenced by methods and

practices of becoming local. Part of the rhetorician's contribution stems from the rich tradition surrounding rhetorical invention. In this dissertation, I wish to articulate a theory of invention as production – a path for making stuff – by piecing together rhetorical theories and practices that are most conducive to the project of becoming local.

Throughout this project, much attention will be given to reading classical theories and practices of invention as they relate to becoming local. Classical rhetorics were rooted in building and sustaining a polis. The public speeches of rhetors like Demosthenes, Lysias, and Isocrates were fundamental to the “promotion and maintenance of social harmony” in the polis (Ober 35). While Josiah Ober is reading classical rhetorical texts for evidence of a functional political system in ancient Greece, his analysis of Greek's participatory democracy implies that a healthy model of rhetoric was in place to create, foster, and nourish both the rhetoricians who delivered these influential speeches and the audiences that understood them.

This healthy model of rhetoric was cultivated by the classical connection between rhetoric and poetic. The poetic link to rhetoric is significant to becoming local because it opens the space to argue that rhetoric is a productive art. By placing the focus on production, rhetorical scholarship concentrates on invention; thus, it moves closer to the work of the polis, in this case rural rejuvenation.

In an effort to frame rhetoric as a productive art, I will make explicit the connection between rhetoric and poetic, the arts of doing and making. While these claims are advanced in chapter two, the basic premise of this argument is as follows: before Plato coined the term *rhetorike*, *poiesis* and *logos* were influencing the practice of sophistic rhetoric. For instance, Gorgias delivers speeches in metered verse and Isocrates teaches the art of logos. Thus, by the time Aristotle made the rigid distinction between rhetoric and poetic, the soon-to-be “rhetorical tradition” had etched its way into human

experience. Rhetors were using poiesis and logos to do the work of the polis. As Jeffrey Walker contends, “The suasive eloquence of poetry is at once a subset of the general art of rhetoric and at the same time is its ancient ancestor. Further, insofar as epideictic is the primary or central form of rhetoric, and poetry is the original and ultimate form of epideictic, poetry is also the original and ultimate form of rhetoric” (41). This statement suggests that rhetoric’s relationship with the poetic is contingent upon when and from whom the rhetorical tradition started. If we start strictly with Aristotle, rhetoric is a practical art of discovery that operates, in most respects, distinct from the poetic art of making. However, reading Aristotle through the Sophistic vein frames the poetic as the ideal form of logos from which rhetorical scholarship evolved.

By concentrating on its poetic function rhetoric becomes a productive art. Rhetoric as production fits the art into a middle place between the theoretical/practical binary. This move captures rhetorical invention as an integral art in the construction of healthy discourse and communities. In line with the work of Kaufer and Butler, rhetoric can be thought of as belonging to the “family of design arts” (Rhetoric 7). Viewing rhetoric as a design art emphasizes the inventive and productive nature of rhetoric while not forgetting its critical/interpretive aims of reception and understanding.

To re-read the rhetorical tradition through the designer’s eyes is to move rhetoric beyond the 20th century liberal arts. The designer’s work, as Richard Buchanan contends, is the “new liberal art of technological culture” (Wicked 3). The design arts invent and produce by integrating the specialized knowledge produced by a century of specialized disciplines operating as *Arts and Sciences*. Buchanan contends, “Design is emerging as a new discipline of practical reasoning and argumentation, directed by individual designers toward one or another of its major thematic variations in the twentieth century: design as communication, construction, strategic planning, or systemic integration” (Wicked 18).

The intersection between planning, communicating, and integration is the space where rhetoricians might work alongside other designers. Buchanan suggests that “all men and women require a liberal art of design to live well in the complexity of the framework based in signs, things, actions, and thoughts” (Wicked 12). Rhetoric too, equipped with a classical tradition of invention, is a productive art integral to living well.

Connecting rhetoric’s productive nature with a critical project is another important theoretical move of this study. Rhetoric as a design art means that production is forever being informed by reception. David Kaufer explicitly makes this point in the following excerpt:

In prototypical design arts, an artifact is planned; externalized at intermediate phases in the form of sketches, blueprints, models, mock-ups, thumbnails, or storyboards; and eventually, cast into finished form. The coevolution of intention and artifact is considered so vastly difficult and detailed that slippage is not only necessary but expected. The effects being judged are vastly more intricate and complex than the designer’s most general goals, *making the conditions of reception part of the environment needed to refine the theory of production.*

Unlike a practical art, which need not “mature” because production theory need not answer to the dynamic input of reaction, design art is thought to increase in sophistication and differentiate aspects of production theory and vice versa.

(Tekhne 251)

Kaufer is of great assistance to this dissertation because his work demonstrates how rhetoric as a design art incorporates the critical turn in its approach to production.

When William Keith suggests that rhetorical criticism is an engineering trade, he too is talking about an interpretive move integral to the design process. A successful engineer must be able to look at an object and understand the strategic moves that went into creating such a product. In the same way, the rhetorical critic should be able to “redescribe discourse in strategic terms” with the ends being the “successful engagement of specific problems” (Keith, Engineering 239). The ability to interpret from a given place in the world is an invaluable skill for both the would-be engineer and producer. My dissertation asks rhetorical critics to complete the reengineering process by taking the understanding gained from interpreting discourse and start building anew, especially with regard to local development projects

With rhetoric expanded into the realm of design, the issues surrounding rural rejuvenation are ripe sites for rhetorical investigation. An imposing rhetorical challenge faces rural communities plagued with eroding economic and social institutions. Constrained by sentiment steeped in “tradition,” new ideas and designs must be brought before people’s eyes in an effort to rejuvenate communities. Traditionally, the rhetorician’s aim was to bring before the eyes that which cannot directly be seen. Development projects require a similar process – that discourse be used to invent new ideas that have yet to materialize. Eddie Ranson, President of the Aurora, NE Chamber of Commerce speaks of this process as a leader’s “vision” (Ranson). I take vision to mean the ability to see new beginnings. And this is the work of rhetorical invention when it is theorized and practiced as a design art.

Rhetorical invention is a vast category of theory and practice that comprises the bulk of classical writing. For instance, two-thirds of Aristotle’s On Rhetoric concerns the invention of speeches; thus, it is important to clearly define what aspects of invention are most applicable to this study. Foremost, those theories and practices that align with the

practices of the design arts will be addressed. Furthermore, in an effort to argue that rhetorical invention can be extended beyond traditional speeches and into the entire range of symbolic expression used in community rejuvenation projects, much will be made of the visual nature of the invention process. This dissertation will discuss the manner in which a rhetor brings that which we cannot see (a new vision) before an audience's (community's) eyes. Thus, there will be an emphasis on the visual elements of rhetorical production. Within these visual descriptions, special attention will be given to *energeia*, a significant term coined by Aristotle to explain the internally active nature of discourse.

To summarize, this dissertation advances the claim that rhetoric is a productive art, a middle ground between a practical study and the critical/interpretive turn. The productive nature of rhetorical work aligns this art with the practices of designers. The connection between rhetoric and the design arts is most evident in the scholarship surrounding rhetorical invention. This will be illustrated by re-reading the works on invention as they relate to the productive work of designers. Thus, creating objects involves similar moves as creating discourse. This connection will be made explicit by focusing on the rhetorics of rural rejuvenation projects, with special attention being given to the more visual aspects of this process.

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation asks: How can rhetorical invention be used in the project of becoming local to a given place? From this question follows a method of analysis that explores rhetorical invention as it relates to local rhetorics of rural rejuvenation. The path from question to conclusion begins by tracing fundamental theories and practices of rhetorical invention that originated in the classical rhetorical tradition. By "tracing"

rhetorical invention, I am not proposing to pull out classical terms and apply them to contemporary concepts. I am proposing a re-reading of fundamental classical ideas as they relate to rhetorical invention as production. In many ways, this is a turn back to a logos that creates rhetoricians while simultaneously moving beyond the liberal arts training that has produced specialized critics operating under the rules of reductionism. When asked: “To what ends do you invent?” the project of becoming local responds: “longevity.”

Longevity goes beyond the liberal notion of enlightening individuals and focuses on the greater health of the cosmic whole; which, in turn, is a perspective of always becoming that works to produce local healthy communities. Thus, this is not a conservative move back to some golden era; it is a move toward places that is driven by sustainability. Traces of this perspective, I contend, exist in classical notions of the healthy polis. These traces, read with a designer’s mentality, cast rhetorical invention as an integral part of community development. Before the key rhetorical concepts (tools) employed in this investigation are detailed, let me further explain the merits and utility of re-reading classical methods.

The ancient scrolls that have been mythologized, depoliticized, and converted into guidebooks, ironically speak to the complex problems facing rural communities. Classical rhetoric developed as a practical art of inventing and producing discourse in an effort to foster and maintain a healthy polis; thus, it speaks to the complex process involved in the design of rural communities. Kathleen Welch contends, “Classical rhetoric can readily address any situation partly because it focuses not only on critical stances toward discourses that already exist, but because it presents elaborate theories for production of discourses as well” (5). Rhetorical theories, therefore, are at the crux of producing good communities. The classical discourses are adaptable and relevant for

contemporary scholars in that they focus on the making of text while providing insight into critical methods.

In addition to adaptability, ancient rhetoric is an apt resource because of its classical assumptions about the dialectical relationship between speech/action. The ancient voices address the connection between speech and action dissociated in the scientific era. In classical rhetoric, speech is action for it fosters a healthy polis in pursuit of the good life. The speech/action dialectic, then, is directly connected to the creation and maintenance of healthy communities. Furthermore, this relationship affirms the dialectical method as an integral part of the rhetorician's toolbox.

Finally, classical rhetoric offers us (consumers of text keen on the games language plays) a model of holistic and democratic living. The ancient rhetorician was dedicated to actualizing the good life using texts that bring to life the lifeless. Quintilian refers to this holistic rhetorical ethic as the good person speaking well. Classical rhetoric spawned from a larger task focused on discovering, explaining, and cultivating the good life. This holistic approach holds that rhetoric's understanding of discourse translates into the building of healthy democratic communities.

Classical rhetoric evolved alongside our most vibrant example of participatory democracy as practiced in ancient Athens. While democracy has become a buzzword in the contemporary global village, the inactivity and apathy of the US polis suggests that power (*kratia*) of the many (*demos*) be redefined; we should take steps to evolve the political system. By definition, any move toward a healthy democracy requires the actual participation of "the many" in an active manner that goes beyond casting a ballot. In the speeches and theories of classical rhetoric we find working models for both participatory democracy and rhetorical productivity.

The Athenian political system that functioned during a 200 year period offers a model for participatory democracy.⁴ I say this while acknowledging that women, slaves, and non-citizens were excluded from the polis. Historian Josiah Ober expounds on the utility of the Greek political system despite the fact that citizenship was severely limited. He writes:

We may deplore the Athenians' exclusivist attitude, but moral censure should not obscure our appreciation of the fundamental importance of the new democratic political order. For the first time in recorded history of a complex society, all native freeborn males, irrespective of their ability, family connections, or wealth, were political equals, with equal rights to debate and to determine state policy (7).

Beyond the primacy of Greek democracy, Ober is impressed by the negotiation of tension between the elites and the masses in the Greek political structure. For instance, not only did the political system lack elected representatives, the elites were unable to dominate government positions because the appointments were chosen by lot. This rule, among others, divided power to achieve political equality; at the same time, it accepted that certain citizens would always be elite due to wealth, talent, birth, or other differentiating factors.

The tensions between elites and masses were moderated, in part, by an egalitarian rule for speaking in the public assembly. The assembly system allowed all persons present the opportunity to voice their praise or dissent on a given debated topic. Ober contends that consensus, the goal of early Greek democracy, had its dialectical opposite in the term for "free speech" (296). While consensus was the ideal goal of public deliberation, it is telling that the Greeks protected the individual to think and speak freely

in the assembly. The Greeks realized that long-term consensus could potentially inhibit the discovery of effective solutions. Dissent not only enhanced idea-generation, it served as a scapegoat function. Ober writes, “Consensus decision making furthermore left the Athenians with no scapegoat and no easy way of revising policy when the consensus decision turned out to have unpleasant consequences. In this situation the demos had no one to blame except themselves, and they might be forced to confront the fact that mass decision making did not always produce wise policy” (298). An atmosphere of free speech allows a space wherein the rhetorical scapegoat can work its therapeutic function. The Athenians managed the dialectical tension between free speech and consensus without confining it by constitutional measures.

Ober’s argument is especially relevant to rhetoricians; he borrows heavily from ancient rhetorical speeches to construct his sociological conclusions on the relationship between elites and masses in ancient Greece. In addition, Ober draws a direct connection between the quality of rhetorical speeches and the health of the democracy. For this study, I am interested in the characteristics of the classical rhetorical model that enable a healthy democratic community. How invention was taught and practiced is one area to conduct such a study.

Classical rhetoric supplies a healthy model for participatory democracy, as evidenced in the pedagogical system in ancient Athens. The link between rhetorical training and an active citizenry persists today as an implicit justification for Speech-Communication Departments. The formations of Speech Departments during the first half of the 20th Century were based on the need to equip the citizenry with rhetorical skills (Keith Pedagogy).⁵ While the department name *Speech-Communication* has given way to variations of *Communication*, there remains a need to make explicit the connection between rhetorical pedagogy and a participatory polis. In academe, the

rhetorician has the tradition/methods to own the space where language, politics, and practice intersect.

This study works from the assumptions that classical rhetoric is adaptable, connected, and offers a model of holistic and democratic living. These attributes are exactly why the rhetorical scholar's methods belong at the table of planning communities for good living. Two criteria were used to determine which classical concepts would be employed in this analysis. First, the concept must relate directly to rhetorical invention. Second, the rhetorical concept needs a corollary with a method in the design arts. Hence, the classical concepts of *topoi*, *imitatio*, rhetorical proofs, and *energeia* were chosen as the primary tools of analysis. Following is a justification of how each concept fits the above two criteria. In addition, an example is provided of how each classical concept is used to analyze rural rejuvenation.

The *topoi* common to becoming local are traced throughout three bodies of discourse concerned with community development. *Topoi* are used to find patterns and differentiate among the rhetorics of rural rejuvenation. For instance, the *topos* "entrepreneurship" is fundamental to the Nebraska state economic development projects. At the same time "entrepreneurship" for the Center for Applied Rural Innovation reflects a community network of resources. Tracing how "entrepreneurship" emerges and generates different possibilities for each entity is one function of this tool. The advantage of using *topoi* as an analytic tool is that it is an inventive tool that matches with the designer's method of "heuristics."

Cynthia Haller contends that rhetorical *topoi* and design heuristics have many similarities. She writes: "Functionally, both types of heuristic serve to locate relevant material in the particular situation and generate ideas for invention. Both are relevant across a number of situations, making them heuristically efficient. Finally, both are

learned through social participation in particular communities” (356). Haller addresses the *situated* and *social* nature of topoi and heuristics— two attributes that make this tool suitable to address the challenges of community development. Heuristics and topoi that emerge from situated social exchanges are primary tools for local inventions.

In addition to topoi, attention is given to the rhetorical practice of *imitatio*. Michael Leff contends that the “doctrine of *imitatio* provided the most obvious intersection between the reading of texts and the production of persuasive arguments” (201). It makes perfect sense that a study articulating the productive nature of rhetoric would focus on the inventive nature of *imitatio*. Furthermore, *imitatio* compliments the scientific method of biomimicry – a design process that works to mimic nature (Benyus, 1997). Thus, rhetorics of rural community rejuvenation will be analyzed for the manner in which imitation and mimicry are used as invention tools. For example, Wes Jackson operates the Land Institute on the premise that biomimicry is the answer to the challenge of achieving sustainable agriculture. Documenting how *imitatio* cultivates judgment for future rhetorical inventions assists the project of becoming local.

Alongside topoi and *imitatio*, the well documented Aristotelian appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos will be analyzed in the texts, but from the designer’s vantage point. Contemporary designers are concerned with the user’s experience in a similar manner to the rhetorician’s age-old concern with audience. To read the rhetorical appeals as part of the designer’s inventive process requires a practice of “interpretation by design” (Kaufer, Tekhne 256). Kaufer describes this method as “interpreting what is uttered against the contrastive set of alternative choices that could have been uttered and weren’t.” He goes on to state that “interpretation by design is the way we conventionally account for this space of a speaker’s productive choice” (Tekhne 256-257). Kaufer’s position is that constraints delimit the range of rhetorical appeals in the same way they delimit the

experience of a designed object. Thinking as a designer means that each rhetorical appeal functions as an interaction: an appeal to logos involves the interaction between *language* and *context*, ethos is based on a *theory of language* and public *entitlement* interactions, and pathos develops from the interaction between *language* and *emotion* (Kaufer, Tekhne 257-259). In the analysis of rural rejuvenation, the appeals are used primarily to illustrate how ideas of rejuvenation are presented to the community at large.

While *topoi*, *imitatio*, and rhetorical appeals are standard concepts associated with classical rhetoric, *energeia* is relatively unknown. Yet, the term illuminates an integral aspect of the rhetorical process – the visual and internally active nature of rhetorical inventions. For designers, a visual vocabulary and working space have always been the preferred medium of expression. Rhetorical invention, being a visual process as much as a verbal one, should take the designer’s lead. Promoting theories of invention that account for both images and words is mandatory for successful integration into the project of becoming local. *Energeia* is a rhetorical concept that illustrates traces of the visual in classical invention theories.

Despite the fact that Aristotle’s “*energeia*” commonly has been translated as “actuality,” the term can be re-read to account for the visual nature of rhetorical invention. In On Rhetoric Book III 1411b Aristotle uses *energeia* repeatedly to describe how the “inanimate becomes animate.” The connection between *energeia* and visual mental processes is supported by Stephen Nichols’ contention that Aristotle’s *energeia* accounts for the missing link in Plato’s “double dialectic of the visual and verbal working together” (623). Nichols traces Plato’s classical image theory wherein the soul is described as a book “in which events are inscribed in two media: words and pictures.” Both words and images are responsible for bringing together the body and the mind to produce a self-view (622). Nichols argues that Plato fails to address the creative force

that makes the dialectic possible. Thus, Aristotle coined *energeia* to account for this internal activity. The activity (or agent) needed to account for the interaction between visual and verbal mental processes is *energeia*. This further explains why Aristotle considered *energeia*, alongside metaphor and antithesis, a crucial aspect of inventing urbanite enthymemes.

Aristotle references *energeia* in relation to a process of “bringing before the eyes” that which cannot be seen. This ability is central for the consummate rhetorician and designer. Furthermore, the invention of rural community development hinges on this ability as exemplified above in the vision of Aurora’s leaders. *Energeia*, in part, accounts for how rhetoric invents, words, images, and, out them results, communities. This analysis examines *energeia* played out in three phases of the development process: bringing ideas before the mind’s eye (intrapersonal idea generation), bringing ideas before the minds’ eyes (sharing the idea to a broader audience), and bringing ideas into being (moving from idea to construction and implementation).

The classical concepts detailed above will be used to analyze discourses of rural rejuvenation. In addition, I engage in the process of “reverse engineering” throughout these analyses. Redescribing how a community found successful ways of becoming local is an important step toward generating a rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local and a model of rural rejuvenation. These rhetorical tools of production are used to analyze rhetorics of becoming local to a given place. For each rural development project, attention is given to the role rhetorical invention plays in the project of becoming local.

These methods outlined above will be used to investigate efforts of becoming local to a given place. Specifically, efforts dedicated to rural rejuvenation are the sites of analysis. Three distinct groups working to solve the major problems facing rural communities are analyzed in chapters three through five. The groups were chosen

because they are representative of the distinct discourse communities that are addressing the problems facing rural communities. The three groups include publicly funded rural development agencies, a land institute exploring the project of natural agriculture, and one rural community's development efforts.

The first part of the analysis focuses on the small town, Aurora, NE. This community has been developing unique solutions to the problems facing rural communities since the invention of deep-well irrigation in the 1930's. The community's development efforts have garnered state and national recognition. Aurora, located in the fertile soil of southeastern Nebraska, is a community with a population of 4,210. The town is about 90 miles from the state capitol, Lincoln. Beyond material gains and a diversified economy, Aurora is noted for its rich community feel, a feeling that has been cultivated through a host of public initiatives.

Aurora's successful efforts are analyzed, in large part, using the critical lens of reverse engineering. I illustrate and redescribe the accomplishments of this community. The analysis of Aurora begins with interviews – I talked with key community figures involved in recent development projects, including the Director of the Development Corporation, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Manager of Hamilton Tele-Communications, and the Editor of the local newspaper. In addition, newspaper archives of the Aurora Register are used to trace the development of this “progressive” culture that Aurora leaders promote. Also, publicity materials distributed by the Chamber of Commerce, local newspaper editorials, and community strategic plans are examined.

The second group consists of rural development agencies and institutes; these publicly funded agencies conduct research, provide resources to rural development projects, and steer federal and state public policy on rural initiatives. These agencies are primarily concerned with economic development, and they represent the status quo in

industrial farming and rural community development. The Partnership for Rural Nebraska is a conglomeration of these very groups that represent State, University, and National organizations working toward Nebraska's rural development. On the state level, I focus on the Nebraska Rural Development Commission, a branch of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. At the University level, the Center for Rural Innovation, housed at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, will be analyzed. And on a national level, Rural Development Nebraska, an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture serves as the site for investigation. The analysis of these rural development agencies consists of texts that describe and promote their policies of rural development to the public. These include state and national policy initiatives, public relations materials (websites, brochures, pamphlets), and research reports.

The final group analyzed, working to solve the major problems facing rural communities, is a smaller contingency of researchers and theorists who seek radical change to the current industrial farming system. This group includes Wendell Berry, a philosopher who equates healthy democratic communities with a local agrarian economy. In addition, The Land Institute under the direction of Wes Jackson is germane to this group. The Land Institute (located near Salina, Kansas) researches sustainable ways to implement natural systems agriculture. Natural systems agriculture mimics the natural environment of a given place in an effort to grow crops that compliment the eco-system. The mission of the Land Institute is that of becoming native to a place. It reads:

When people, land, and community are as one, all three members prosper; when they relate not as members but as competing interests, all three are exploited. By consulting Nature as the source and measure of that membership, The Land Institute seeks to develop an agriculture that will save soil from being lost or

poisoned while promoting a community life at once prosperous and enduring
(About).

Analyzing the “becoming native” project involves both philosophical writings by Wendell Berry and the mission and daily activities of Jackson’s Land Institute. Berry’s landmark text, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture serves as the primary text. The research studies, promotional materials, and writings of Wes Jackson are used to assess the workings of the Land Institute.

From these three groups, dedicated to rural rejuvenation projects, texts are analyzed if they directly address an aspect of the invention process – moving from the idea phase to the construction and maintenance of a finished project. The texts include research studies, promotional materials, press coverage, philosophical justifications, and interviews with key community leaders. Special attention is given to efforts that involve visual symbolic forms during the invention process.

The analysis proceeds from the theoretical conclusions in the following chapter. While the specific analytic tools were outlined above, chapter two includes a thorough examination of rhetorical invention as production to develop the equipment necessary to analyze rural rejuvenation. Also, the connections between rhetoric and the design process will function to expand the “texts” analyzed. With design tools, a community development project from the idea-stage to implementation can be read as a site of rhetorical invention. In addition, chapter two refines the tools necessary to analyze visual aspects of the invention process. The re-reading of *energeia* and incorporation of design processes connects rhetorical invention to visual symbolic productions.

The method outlined above cultivates a path toward answers to this study’s primary question: How can rhetorical invention be used to assist the project of becoming

local to a given place? Re-reading these classical concepts with a design perspective offers the interested reader a way of thinking and creating that is productive. In addition, the visual aspects of the method reflect more closely the communicative milieu of rural rejuvenation projects compared to a traditional analysis based exclusively on discursive symbolic forms. Most importantly, these analyses (beyond their contribution to critical and productive methods) could be employed as a motivational tool in the classroom. The examples of people and communities that choose to “dig in” would offer an alternative narrative of success. This narrative, coupled with tools of invention, might assist in cultivating a homecoming major. In this sense, this study motivates students to think progressively about the longevity of a given place.

In summary, this dissertation frames rhetorical invention as an art of production. Placing the emphasis on production opens the space to address rhetoric’s integral role in the project of becoming local. Informed by theories and practices of the design arts, this study attempts to re-read rhetorical concepts related to invention as production. Included in this study is an emphasis on visual symbolic forms. Expanding rhetorical texts to include presentational symbolic forms is an effort to better equip rhetoricians with tools and methods of production. This dissertation uses the rhetorics of rural rejuvenation for complementary purposes: to develop a rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local and to help construct a rhetorical model of rural rejuvenation for future projects that aim to create anew.

Chapter 2: Rhetorical Invention as Production

Seldom is an idea new; the time always is. In the investigation of rhetoric a new idea may not emerge, for the subject is an old one, and in the past innumerable ideas about it have been known and practiced. But ideas have to be tailored to fit their time. Each generation of rhetoricians must examine anew the concept of rhetorical invention (Harrington, Modern 373).

Elbert Harrington previous statement is humble; it is also a pragmatic aim for rhetoricians. Invention should be examined according to the pressing issues of each generation. One way to rationalize these re-readings of invention is to abide by the truism that “rhetorical systems are cultural products arising in response to the needs of an age” (Berlin 292). Today, the felt need in education, government, industry, and community revolves around sustainability. A language and way of being – a rhetorical system – is beginning to form around the realization that natural resources are exhaustible. It is the realization, contends Wendell Berry, that sustainable places require long work and long time (Art 92). In these times, a critical mass of people is starting to think and create new beginnings according to the terms of longevity. These terms necessitate a shift toward becoming local to a place.

Such thinking and focus has radical consequences for the practice and theory of rhetorical invention. For starters, there is much work to be had for rhetoricians who are willing to rethink the notion of the engaged scholar.⁶ By engagement, I am referring to collaboration that is equally genuine and integrated between academic experts and the stakeholders who are neck deep in a problem. This brand of engagement aims to connect the local community with the specialized knowledge systems entrenching university research institutions.

Need for the engaged scholar (or “inventor”) is at a premium. For rhetorical studies, this need poses a grand opportunity to engage the inventive space – a productive place between the journal and the construction site. Currently, it is the dwelling place for many in the design arts. Yet, this engagement requires a shift in direction and scope: in part, rhetorical critics need to take the logical next step beyond interpreting/understanding and immerse themselves in the building of local places. Under this framework, rhetoricians embrace longevity and confront the arduous task of inventing sustainable places. In the broadest sense, this project asks the scholar to start becoming local in her research and pedagogy. The first step in the process is placing more emphasis on production.

This chapter, following Harrington’s advice, proceeds by reevaluating the tradition of rhetorical invention with one eye focused on becoming local to a place. In an effort to build the case that rhetorical invention needs a productive focus, it is necessary first to assess the current state of invention in rhetorical studies. To this end, I will delineate the path of invention in twentieth century rhetoric programs.⁷ Much to the delight of this scholar, the path culminates with the theoretical scope of rhetorical invention expanded. However, framing invention as “understanding”, which is the case with the bulk of contemporary scholarship, fails to equip the rhetorician with the required skills for becoming local. In many senses, it produces the opposite result – disengaged scholarship concerning abstract spaces.

Thus, it is necessary to expand the trail of rhetorical invention by reading it as a productive art. To this end, I begin by fusing the rift between rhetoric and poetic that has its origins in classical rhetoric. These classical texts offer a language and mentality that can be re-read to serve the project of building anew, so in the second section of this chapter I detail how classical notions of rhetorical invention offer the rhetorician methods

for producing discourse and objects. In order for these rhetorical concepts to adequately address the current communicative environment, it is necessary to explore the visual nature of the invention process. Therefore, the next segment expands rhetorical invention from the realm of discursive symbolic forms into a broader environment that includes presentational symbols. Here, a close reading of Aristotle's "energeia" grounds the argument that words and images play a fundamental role in rhetorical invention.

Connecting the visual to rhetoric brings the rhetorician closer to those in the design arts – scholars and practitioners doing the necessary work of production. These connections between design and rhetoric are explored in the final section of this chapter. Specifically, Kenneth Frampton's "critical regionalism" is outlined – a method that addresses the paradox facing this dissertation: building and engaging the local while operating within a global world. This chapter closes by connecting contemporary design theory and practice to rhetorical invention and the project of becoming local. These theoretical moves together are then employed in the analysis of rural rejuvenation efforts in chapters three through five.

To summarize: rhetorical invention is framed as a productive art, and visual symbolic forms are read into this process to further open the conversation between rhetoric and the design arts. Ultimately, the connection with designers better equips the rhetorician to *engage* in the project of becoming local and assist in the effort to rejuvenate communities.

RHETORICAL INVENTION IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The malnourished and displaced state of invention in rhetorical studies leaves the discipline ill-equipped to confront the pressing needs of the day. The current emphasis is

too far from production to speak adequately with those people working on how to sustain a given place; thus, the research and practice of rhetorical invention needs to be modernized. To give due credit to former writers, the last comment is neither original nor germane to the twenty-first century. A common refrain throughout the twentieth century is that rhetorical invention needs to be “modernized” (Hudson 1921; Harrington 1962; Kneupper 1983; Atwill and Lauer 2002). This call resurfaces in speech-communication about every 25 years, beginning with the Hoyt Hudson’s article in 1921 entitled: “Can We Modernize the Theory of Rhetorical Invention?” Such a generational resurgence of interest in invention supports the contention that rhetorical systems adapt to the needs of the day.

Yet, it is also plausible that the cyclical questioning of invention arises because the concept is too ambiguous and slippery to theorize in definitive terms. Under this line of reasoning, these attempts to theorize invention fulfill a common definition of insanity – doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. While the merits of this dissertation stand on the veracity of the former statement, the seemingly ubiquitous nature of invention lends to the critique that invention cannot really be pinned down.

Janet Atwill assuages these criticisms by explaining that invention’s indeterminacy largely derives from the quest for rigid disciplinary boundaries. Rhetorical invention straddles fundamental conceptual binaries that distinguish arts and sciences. This middle-ground status can be traced to Aristotle as he framed invention “between theory and practice, subjectivism and empiricism” (Atwill, Introduction xi). In other words the productive art of invention lies in the space between the traditional liberal arts and sciences, despite attempts by disciplines on both sides of the binary to frame invention as being either one or the other. In this sense, the difficulty in studying

invention may not reside in the concept itself; rather, the problem arises when a productive art is taken hostage by a discipline in the traditional arts and sciences. Similar to the ceaseless parent conversation around “What is rhetoric?” there is merit in modernizing invention by moving beyond the disciplinary binaries that shaped the past century’s specialized knowledge production. Scholarship on rhetorical invention during this time suggests that rhetorical studies could do better in the study and teaching of this productive art.

Early 20th century calls to modernize invention can be understood as direct responses to nineteenth century rhetorical theory. Subsumed by the rhetorical systems of Whatley, Blair, and Campbell, invention as discovery disappeared in the nineteenth century (Berlin 292-293). Douglas Ehninger was right to conclude that these rhetorical systems were an “invention of management” because in these systems the rhetorician merely gathered information that was produced and located outside the realm of rhetoric (qtd. by Berlin, 294). While *invention as management* diminished the scope and power of rhetoric, Berlin explains that this placement of invention answered the needs of the day. Invention as management reflected the political and philosophical shifts that married British rhetoric with American culture.

Using this logic, it follows that during the first half of the twentieth century new needs arose and calls to reframe invention would follow. William Keith, tracing the history of US Speech-Communication Departments, makes available the historical path to explain such needs. Keith contends that the pedagogy of speech teachers in the early twentieth century was motivated by a civic mission (Pedagogy). The aim was to prepare students for public life – to mold the character and instill the deliberative skills necessary to nourish a democratic society. It is fitting that these speech departments emerged largely from land-grant universities whose mission centered on serving local

communities. Thus, it is no coincidence that the rise of land-grant universities would mark a revival of classical rhetoric, for the classical system too had a civic mission directly tied to democratic practices.

Rebirth of Classical Invention as Production

Thomas Benson's history of the Cornell School of Rhetoric details the emergence of classical rhetoric in the Speech graduate program.⁸ The seminar, Benson writes,

[H]ad a double purpose – the recovery of ancient, foundational texts that could take the discipline back to its roots in public discourse, and the appropriation of ancient theory to modern uses. The classical texts were considered as theory and were used less to govern than to inspire theorizing. The seminar quickly produced an outpouring of scholarship and attracted new graduate students who became leaders in the discipline, rapidly diffusing the Cornell approach to rhetoric into departments of speech and drama (Benson, Cornell 6-7).

These early seminars were designed and attended by disciplinary founders like the Chair, Alexander Drummond and students of the program, Hoyt Hopewell Hudson, Everett Hunt, and Herbert Wichelns. The revival of classical rhetoric was premised on the assumption that speech (and drama) should be studied as part of a larger rhetorical system by using a liberal, humanistic approach. This turn to classical rhetoric can be explained as a reaction to developments in Speech research.

The methods and scope appropriate for Speech research were negotiated in the discipline's fledgling academic journals in the first quarter of the twentieth century. For example, the research board of the Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking called for

extensive research in the “scientific study of speech” (Benson, Cornell 5). In addition to promoting the scientific method, there was a push, especially from Midwestern Speech Departments, to specialize research around the distinct techniques of oral communication. Under this categorization, *speech*, *drama*, and *speech correction* warranted specialized research and study (Benson, Cornell 7). These moves toward science and specialization were juxtaposed by those authors wanting to treat Speech as a rhetorical art. Thus, the readings of the classical system worked to “modernize” rhetorical invention in an effort to address the needs of the day, in this case, to counterbalance the rising popularity of the scientific method and the push to specialize areas of study within Speech Departments.

With the rising importance of the social scientific method to speech research, pressure increased to justify the rigor and legitimacy of studying speech through a rhetorical lens. The rhetorical canon of invention provided this legitimacy, as it supplied a systematic way to explain the inventive process in all fields associated with symbolic construction (i.e. painting, drama, and poetry). Out of this search for legitimacy came a reevaluation of rhetorical invention through re-readings of classical rhetoric.

In a 1921 edition of The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, Hoyt Hopewell Hudson asked: “Can we modernize the Theory of Invention?” Hudson felt that the current pedagogical texts mentioned invention as a necessary part of speech making, but they failed to provide students explicit guidance on how the process works. Furthermore, invention was confined to a specific part of the composition process: constructing a paragraph. Hudson argued that invention should be expanded to explain the entire speech process. Therefore, he called on scholars to make the study of speech models more “topical and less critical, so that such study will give more aid than it has to the student constructing speeches of his own....Perhaps in argumentation the various forms of reasoning and argument can be presented not merely as canons of criticism, to test the

work of others, but as topics, to aid the invention of the student's own arguments" (Can 333). Hudson asks teachers to go beyond teaching critical reading comprehension and equip students with the ability to *produce* speeches.

He also calls for more research incorporating the assumptions and methods of the classical rhetorical system. This ancient theoretical and pedagogical system of production revolved around *rhetorical invention*. For Hudson, a common thread connected classical notions of invention to the felt needs of early twentieth century scholars and students of all symbolic fields of study. He explains:

[I]n rhetorical invention as taught and practiced in ancient times there was the recognition of a method that is fundamental to all inventive thinking, a method which embraces such divergent practices as that of Bret Harte running down the letters of the alphabet, repeating, "add, bad, cad, dad," and so on, to find a rhyming word suitable for his poem; that of some other author who goes to his "commonplace book" for a germinal idea, and that for the debate coach who asks of every proposal to be debated, is it necessary, is it expedient, and is it morally right. And if, in some of the illustrations, we have come a long way from Aristotle's rhetorical topics or the five "means of thought development" of Canby, yet I trust we are still on the same track (Can 332).

One should study classical invention because, according to Hudson it is "an aid to better thinking" (Can 333). Topoi, for instance, could be used as places to discover means of persuasion (Can 327).

Hudson's call to teach students more about producing texts by re-reading classical rhetoric spilled over into basic public speaking textbooks. Richard Huseman for instance,

details how “modern approaches” to Aristotle’s topics were common in public speaking textbooks used from the 1930’s through the early 1960’s (21). Despite Hudson’s urging to place more theoretical attention on invention, his call to modernize invention was largely unanswered by scholars.

In 1948, Elbert Harrington published a book on invention entitled: Rhetoric and the Scientific Method of Inquiry. A reviewer of the book makes a point to note the neglect of invention to this point. The reviewer comments, “Of the five ‘traditional’ parts of rhetoric, invention in recent decades received comparatively little attention from scholars.” He goes on to call Harrington a “pioneer in a relatively new field” (D.E. 378). The fact that Harrington was considered a “pioneer” in this relatively new field adds further support to the contention that the projects of “modernizing” invention arise continually in response to the shifting generational needs.

Harrington contends that calls to revitalize invention (like the one made by Hudson) failed because the topics have proven to be a “barren approach” (Rhetoric 60). He explains that the topics are “often a substitute for good thought. Even high-school debaters can find the topics or reasons for or against anything from radio control to socialized medicine, and they can speak of these topics glibly; but all too often the topics substitute for facts” (Rhetoric 60). Harrington’s disregard for the classical topoi is telling of his larger project to align rhetorical studies with scientific inquiry. He explains, “Rhetoric then becomes not a counterpart to logic [Whatley], not a liberal education [Isocrates], not a scheme of topics [Aristotle, Cicero, Hudson], but a counterpart of our scientific spirit and method of inquiry” (Rhetoric 64).

Following Harrington’s line of argument, rhetorical invention should be focused on understanding, in part, because a democratic society demands that “the people” are educated in reason and with facts. Harrington’s project works to situate humanistic

rhetoric within the process of scientific inquiry. This alignment (or juxtaposition) remains today in Speech and Communication Departments that are known to house social scientists alongside rhetorical critics.

The shifting patterns of invention continue with the cultural and political transformations of the 1960's and 1970's. These years represent a vibrant period for the theory and pedagogy of invention (Lauer 2004).⁹ In rhetoric and composition studies, theories of invention complementary to cognitive psychology and studies in epistemology were developed. For example, labeling their method heuristics, Richard Young et al. developed practices of invention based on tagmemic linguistics and Rogerian psychology (Rhetoric).

Scholars like Young worked from the contention that rhetoric is epistemic; thus, theories and practices of invention should offer “strategies for initiating inquiry and communicating discoveries” (Pender, 169). In terms of pedagogy, heuristic practices found their way into composition textbooks as exercises in freewriting and journaling. Invention as heuristics represents a move to develop grand theories of rhetoric (e.g., the tagmemic heuristic and Burke's pentad). The vibrancy of inventional studies in this period results in the expansion of invention's domain.

Recall that Hudson too urged Speech scholars in the 1920's to expand invention by considering it in relation to the entire process of speech-making. However, he framed invention in the narrow sense by concentrating its study around topics and commonplaces. This attention to *topoi* and *loci* left rhetorical theorists and practitioners a mere crawl space to explore. In the early 1960's Elbert Harrington follows up his book project with an article entitled: “A Modern Approach to Invention” in the Quarterly Journal of Speech. In this text Harrington too calls for an expansion of invention by making it “broad and complicated in nature” (374). Harrington revises his stance on the

topics in this later article and contends that they should serve as one aspect of inventional theory and practice.

Alongside the topics, Harrington envisioned theories of invention involving a liberal education, character, and a “thorough understanding of the whole process of inquiry” (Modern 375). Wow! Harrington certainly offers a wide-scope vision of rhetorical invention. While a liberal arts education and good character went hand-in-hand with the classical system of rhetoric, the idea that rhetorical invention should account for the entire process of scientific inquiry was a new challenge for rhetoricians. Harrington explains this expanded scope as follows:

Rhetoric can no longer be described, in terms of Aristotle, as an “off-shoot” of ethics and politics. In our discussions today we can create no dichotomy, such as barren subtleties and practical affairs, or true knowledge and opinion, or science and opinion, or science and natural law. The questions of science become less certain, and the realm of practical affairs and everyday living more certain.

Rhetoric has to deal with all the questions which face mankind and the obligation of the rhetoric is to apply to each one the full resources and methods of the whole process of inquiry. In doing this his first task is to know the sources of the materials – one’s own resources, the information gained from firsthand observation and interviews, and the organized store that lies in modern libraries (Modern 375).

Harrington blurs the line between the modern binaries of *subjective* and *objective* knowing. Furthermore, he radically opens up rhetorical studies to address most every symbolic construction.¹⁰

These diagnostic moves seem to reflect the post-structural and post-modern turns that inform contemporary rhetorical theory. However, Harrington is no post-modernist. He remains committed to an individual knower who stands apart from her subject matter, yet she can come to know that subject through methods of inquiry. While all language is rhetorical, the self remains distinct according to Harrington. This dichotomy between the rhetor and their subject matter is illustrated further in Harrington's rigid line between *invention* and *persuasion* in rhetoric. He considers persuasion the "adaptation of ideas to the audience" (377); whereas, invention is "the establishment by the speaker or writer of a proper relationship to his subject" (Harrington 375). Harrington believed that the rhetor first must understand their subject matter. He explains, "Before the speaker or writer thus enslaves himself to his audience, he stands alone, an individual and, we hope, a scholar. Here he works out that type of relationship to his subject that later will give the brightest luster to his style, his delivery, and all the other aspects of his rhetorical art" (378). Invention expands generously, by Harrington's account, from the discovery of *topoi* to the relationship of the rhetor to their subject matter. Beyond a liberal education and good character, successful invention demands the rhetorician understand both the modes of inquiry and linguistic theory.

History shows us invention's range of application within rhetorical theory. From nineteenth century rhetoric to Hoyt Hudson's call for classics revisited to a turn onto Harrington's road of inquiry, the path of rhetorical has been: invention as *management* to...invention as *production* to...invention as *understanding*.

Invention as Understanding

Harrington's characterization of *invention as understanding* became a mantra for rhetorical scholars and remains intact today. In addition, invention became the hook to legitimize the academic merit of rhetorical studies. In 1979 Kneupper and Anderson call for a unification of wisdom and eloquence in both the research and pedagogy of rhetoric. Invention serves as the linchpin between wisdom and eloquence endowing rhetorical studies with historical and philosophical legitimacy. With invention, rhetoric is a proper field of study, a legitimate member of the brotherhood of humanities: without invention, it is mere rhetoric – a series of stylistic devices. Thus, invention makes possible the serious *understanding* necessary to perch on a high branch of the academic pecking tree.

With understanding positioned as a proper rhetorical function, theories of invention expand infinitely. The expansion derives from the following first assumption: rhetoric is primary in how one comes to know and interpret the world through language. While Harrington did not use these terms, his call for rhetors to understand human inquiry and the properties of language was a call to embrace rhetoric's epistemological and hermeneutic functions. Rhetorical theorists, in their studies on epistemology (Scott 1967 and 1976; Brummett 1990; Cherwitz and Hikins 1982 and 1986) and hermeneutics (Hyde and Smith 1979) expand the scope and function of rhetorical invention.

Viewing rhetoric as epistemic posits that knowledge and truth belong to the domain of rhetorical inquiry. In 1967 Robert Scott aimed to elevate rhetoric from Plato's shadow (Brookey and Schiappa 1). Like philosophy, Scott argues that rhetoric too has an epistemological basis, albeit a constitutive one. Unlike philosophical projects that aim to discover truth, rhetoric creates it. Scott's theory claims that human beings, uncertain as they are, must act in order to know (Greene 20). Ten years later Scott refines his thinking and advances the following statements: 1) Rhetoric is one of many ways of knowing, 2)

rhetorical knowing is that of creating actuality, and 3) rhetorical relativism does not suggest a standard-free society; it indicates that societal standards have to be established cooperatively and renewed repeatedly (Scott, Viewing).

Scott's position gets massaged and rewritten in two opposing manners. One position can be categorized as "perspectivism" as articulated by Cherwitz and Hikins, while the other is "intersubjectivism" as advocated by Brummett. Both projects work to ground Scott's project and further explain the relationship between rhetoric and knowledge. Brummett argues for a brand of relativism where "knowledge cannot in principle be changeless and unified (Cartesian dualism) because of the nature of knowledge, of the knower, and of the relationship between knowers and the objects of knowledge" (Relativism 83). The relative nature of knowledge, for Brummett, opens the door for rhetoric to study how knowledge emerges from symbolic human exchanges. Intersubjectivism implies that people get their meanings, not from objective reality, but from people through communication.

For Cherwitz and Hikins, rhetoric is not just a way of knowing, as advocated by Scott, but rather "all ways of knowing are inherently rhetorical" (Communication 92). Rhetorical perspectivism accepts that "each person in the universe stands in some particular relation to every other thing" (Communication 106). Thus, the various positions of a subject, in relation to the reality they are trying to describe, work to explain why people often disagree about the nature of an event. Key to this explanation is the premise that knowledge exists independent of any given person. Although these two perspectives differ about the nature of rhetorical knowing, they share a primary assumption concerning rhetoric's epistemological status (and communication in general). Both positions, Cherwitz explains, hold that knowledge is either discovered by or created

through the machinery of human symbol use (Philosophical 3). Rhetoric is an epistemological endeavor.

The epistemic position immensely increases the reach and status of rhetorical invention compared to the non-epistemic discovery of arguments. When Robert Scott asserts that rhetorical knowing is that of creating actuality, he places invention at the center of rhetorical work. The same can be said of Cherwitz and Hikins when they frame rhetoric as a process of describing reality. While the inventive nature of rhetoric is obvious, the manner in which a rhetor might build a better place or more healthy discourse is left unarticulated. For example, Cherwitz and Hikins contend that the job of the rhetorician is to “investigate both the pragmatic aspects and the philosophical implications of discourse purporting to describe reality” (Communication 64). Upon investigating these implications and aspects, the question remains: After gaining an understanding of discourse, how does the rhetor produce something improved or anew? Rhetoric as epistemic is an asset to the reach of invention, but leaves the specific art of production largely unexplored.

Rhetorical invention undergoes a similar transformation when the question of interpretation is raised in rhetorical studies. Hyde and Smith describe the rhetorical nature of hermeneutics in the following manner: “The speaker invents rhetoric in accordance with the speaker’s hermeneutical function and in adaptation to that of an audience.” They continue,

If rhetoric is the telos of interpretation, than rhetoric is essential to understanding.

It functions quite early in the process of understanding by bringing to bear the linguistic possibilities appropriated by the individual. Each act of interpretation, each ‘making sense of,’ is a product of the forestructure of that individual. The

forestructure precludes a presuppositionless interpretation of phenomena. Thus, all interpretation in a sense is rhetorical; all hermeneutics is rhetorical. Since interpretation makes understanding possible, and since interpretation is rhetorical, rhetoric underlies knowledge even at an intrapersonal level (363).

Hyde and Smith do not explicitly call their work a theory of invention; however, the rhetorical nature of every interpretative move is a claim about the rhetorical nature of all understanding. Thus, rhetorical invention first and foremost is a process of understanding, as it starts with *interpretation* and continues with the *adaptation to an audience*.

Hyde and Smith's approach is analogous to the epistemic move in that they concentrate almost exclusively on the understanding part of the invention equation. In this case, the work of adapting to an audience is left largely unexplored. Recall that Harrington circumvented the problem of audience by relegating questions of application to the realm of persuasion, reserving rhetorical invention for the realm of inquiry. Hyde and Smith are not dismissing the productive move involved in rhetorical invention, yet they leave this work largely unfinished.

Invention as Generative and Aleatory

To argue that invention is involved in each interpretive act greatly expands its centrality in rhetorical theory; yet, invention broadens even further when positioned as a derivative of language itself. Margaret Zulick, directly working from Kenneth Burke and Michael Bahktin, contends that language has a generative function. The slippery dimension to language inherently lends it to generate new beginnings. Kenneth Burke described the generative function of language in this way: a Symbol is used to describe a pattern of experience, and within this Symbol new Symbols emerge that do not

necessarily have any relationship to the experience (Zulick 110). Under the generative language lens, the location of rhetorical invention radically shifts from the rhetor's domain to a property of language itself. Zulick uses this lens to articulate a rhetorical theory of social invention – an intersubjective invention that forever is generating a “third language through replication, variation, and slippage (117).

Because language comes to each user with variation and slippage, it is forever in a state of movement. Zulick further explains, “[I]nvention is happening all the time, and is as active in the act of interpretation or hearing as it is in the act of speaking. Invention is something that goes on between moments in public discourse, and generates chaotically an always-changing larger-order pattern. This engine of discourse is neither democratic nor authoritarian – it is a non-aligned space that only insures generative contact between discourses, so that whatever thoughts we think today will be slightly different tomorrow” (118). Rhetorical invention, in this respect, is an aleatory process in that the productions are chance happenings. Furthermore, invention becomes that unstoppable function of language use; it forever offers the promise that new beginnings will arise. Zulick's social invention serves as an example of another major turn in the theory of rhetorical invention. Rhetorical studies moves from invention as *understanding* to invention as *generation*.

Like clockwork, the inventional turn gathers a critical mass of supporters some two decades after the hermeneutic and epistemological turns in rhetorical scholarship. Most interesting to my (admittedly selective) narrative of twentieth century rhetorical theory is that invention as generation shares many similarities with invention as production; yet, they start from divergent first assumptions. Zulick makes her case, in part, by re-reading classical rhetoric including the Aristotelian tradition. Recall that Hoyt Hudson, too, went to the ancient voices to find his way through contemporary discourse. Both Zulick and Hudson represent trends in rhetorical studies to re-read and expand the

classical rhetorical tradition in relation to the post-structuralist and post-humanist turn in rhetorical studies.¹¹ The two moves also share a common end – the language of generation, like the language of production, directs the rhetor’s conversation toward the process of making. While the rhetor’s agency in the invention process has been relocated, the generative move brings us closer to a productive sense of invention, a way of seeing that further attunes rhetorical studies with the design arts.

The generative nature of invention develops alongside the “post-structuralist” turn in rhetorical studies. Contra the classical tradition of locating *topoi* to create probable arguments, the generative turn focuses on the “aleatory” nature of tropes – the chance happenings that abound in language. In this sense, invention is “a throw of the dice” in which tropes crash into one another (Vitanza 186). Vitanza illustrates the aleatory nature of invention with hypertext, and he points to Gregory Ulmer’s work on “electracy” as a working pedagogy of aleatory invention.

Ulmer describes the invention of anything (poetics, methods, etc.) as *heuretics* (Interview). *Heuretics* is an aleatory brand of invention that works as a method of chorography, an inventional process germane to an electronic literacy or “electracy.” (Ulmer, [Internet](#)). Ulmer’s project marks a radical shift in the treatment of invention as he replaces the dominant invention metaphor of *topics* with *chora*; *chora* being another Greek term for place.¹² Whereas *topics* are viewed as abstract containers, *chora* stands in for “the sacred nature of specific places” (Ulmer, [Internet](#) 100). Ulmer explains that *chora* is something like “an area where genesis takes place” (Peters, qtd. by Ulmer, [Heuretics](#) 48). Ulmer concedes that he cannot define chorography, he can only show what its like by doing it. In this way, a reader/producer of text develops a chorography as they navigate through a text.

Where the definition of chorography is loose, the purpose is clear – chorography is a method for thinking and writing electronically (Ulmer, Heuretics 45). When working through an electronic text one is confronted with the question: How do I proceed through this information? The clearest description I gather from Ulmer is that chorography concerns itself with how one navigates through a storehouse of information (Heuretics 47). Through this navigation one is inventing/composing in a manner unique to electronic technologies. Ulmer writes, “Here is a principle of chorography: do not choose between the different meanings of key terms, but compose by using all the meanings (write the paradigm) (Heuretics 48).” This statement reads similar to Zulick addressing the slippage inherent in language.

Embracing the slippery nature of language, the rhetor invents by jumping from one symbolic point to another. Ulmer’s project is a work that is always becoming, and for this reason a summary of the process remains ambiguous and incomplete. One thing is certain: Ulmer is working to invent a theory of invention through the act of production. Recall that heuristics is about inventing more than just arguments or poetry; it also concerns itself with inventing methods and ways of seeing.

Reclaiming Rhetorical Invention as Production

While Ulmer is writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century, another call for research goes out for scholars to improve upon the “neglect of the rhetorical canon of invention” (Atwill, Introduction xi). Alongside Atwill, Janice Lauer describes rhetorical invention studies as being vibrant in the 1970’s but largely disappearing in the 1990’s (Rhetorical 1). It is important to note that Lauer and Atwill’s historical narrative of invention is informed largely from rhetoric and composition studies. Yet, their

explanation for invention's disappearance matches well with the story outlined above concerning invention as understanding. Invention did not disappear; rather, it was subsumed largely by other theoretical areas, for instance, cultural studies and technology (Lauer, Rhetorical 2). Atwill explains the shortcomings of rhetorical invention studies in the following manner:

[T]he history of research in invention in the last half of the twentieth century – at least in American higher education – suggests that institutions are ill designed to accommodate this indeterminacy. When confronted with these oppositions, the institution has shown a propensity to choose theory over practice and to accommodate the subjective and aesthetic over the empirical and utilitarian. To be sure, the complex character of rhetorical invention is responsible in part for its ambiguous status. Invention is concerned with practice, but it aims at creating arts that can inform practice across situations. Moreover, while the art aims at enabling practice throughout its history it has been defended as being more than an instrumental means to an end (Introduction xii).

Atwill's conclusion reflects the inability of rhetorical studies to sustain invention when framed as understanding. Invention as understanding allows the study to slip easily into a theory of interpreting, knowing, or feeling. If invention is to remain at the core of rhetorical studies, it needs to focus primarily on the production of new beginnings.

This dissertation is not concerned with settling, once and for all, the theoretical differences outlined above. Rather, it is a study interested in emphasizing the productive aspects of rhetorical invention. When posed with the question: Who got it right, the Cornell School or Ulmer? my answer is: Yes! Both topoi and aleatory acts of invention

are of assistance to the project of becoming local if they advance the creative and productive nature of invention. The theoretical path delineated above demonstrates how rhetorical invention as a productive art was largely neglected by twentieth century rhetorical scholarship. While *invention as understanding* equips the study of invention with greater reach and significance, work remains to be done in articulating the manner of making sustainable places. One insight all theories of rhetorical invention might share, if they aim to be productive, is the inherent link between rhetoric and poetic. Establishing this connection opens up a middle-ground, a productive place for rhetorical invention that lies between theory and practice.

RHETORIC AND POETICS

The demarcation between rhetoric and poetics throughout the history of rhetorical studies has directly influenced theories and practices of invention. This division, advanced by scholars since Aristotle, generally has been to the detriment of rhetorical invention's scope and status. Two categorizations have impeded rhetorical invention's study and practice: 1) poetics, not rhetoric, has been assigned ruler of the *aesthetic* kingdom; and 2) poetics, not rhetoric, dominates the market of creative and productive language use.

The former assumption makes rhetorical invention a discursive process employed to discover rational arguments for speeches/compositions. This categorization is problematic for scholars attempting to explain the entire range of symbol use (discursive and presentational)¹³ in an age of secondary orality.¹⁴ If rhetorical invention is to address the current communicative milieu, the aesthetic dimension of symbol use must be addressed. Furthermore, Nietzsche's voice has found its way into rhetorical scholarship

in the calls for rhetorical studies to take an *aesthetic turn* (Greene 1998; Whitson and Poulakos 1993). This aesthetic turn, like the endeavors into epistemology and ontology, has far-reaching implications for scholars interested in rhetorical invention. To involve the aesthetic in theories and practices of invention is integral if rhetorical scholarship is to be useful in a visual communicative environment. Embracing the aesthetic is also important to interdisciplinary intelligibility: speaking effectively to those in the design arts that are fluent in aesthetic concerns.

The latter assumption – that poetic is productive – diminishes rhetorical invention’s role in the important work of creating new beginnings. Without the potential to create anew, rhetorical invention is merely a practical act of doing that fails to address critical projects. The ability to create anew has a direct connection to the project of democracy. New beginnings created through language use open the spaces for democracy in the most radical sense. Hannah Arendt asserts that public speech interactions allow for human particularity (Curtis 33). These interactions in their particularity demonstrate individual freedom; thus, they serve as ammunition against tyranny.¹⁵ Individual freedom is contingent upon a public sphere that sustains human plurality. Craig Calhoun explains that Arendt’s public is a “realm of self-creation through free, voluntary action undertaken to consort with and in relation to the people” (p. 9). Action in this public is more about discussion in and of itself than it is about achieving consensus. Arendt arrives at this conclusion by looking back to the Greek agora where the public was an agonistic performative space. When reading the Greeks, Arendt discovers a public where citizens converse with one another. She writes:

In this incessant talk the Greeks discovered that the world we have in common is usually regarded from an infinite number of different standpoints, to which

correspond the most diverse points of view....In a sheer inexhaustible flow of arguments, Greeks learned to understand – not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from another’s standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects (Arendt qtd. in Calhoun 9).

From this statement, we hear Arendt’s preference for plurality in the public sphere. The speech and action in public spaces reveals human freedom to create new beginnings. I equate Arendt’s new beginnings with the work specific to rhetorical invention. Interesting enough, Arendt is working to protect radical democracy by offering an aesthetic account of communication and rhetoric (Arendt 1958).

The aesthetic and creative aspects largely omitted from theories of rhetorical invention can be traced back to a division between rhetoric and poetics articulated most thoroughly by Aristotle. Aristotle’s writings, systematizing and massaging Plato’s castigation of the Sophists and the poets, work to define and make distinct the realms of rhetoric and poetry. The significance of Aristotle’s On Rhetoric is common knowledge for rhetoricians, but this audience is less familiar with the profound influence of The Poetics on the development of artistic design and aesthetic theory. As Thomas Farrell contends, Aristotle’s Poetics was for centuries the single most coherent statement about aesthetic discourse available to Western thought (10). Understanding the rhetoric and poetics texts in relation to one another is important, especially as I aim to align rhetorical invention with the design arts.

Aristotle defines rhetoric as an ability (faculty), in each case, to see the available means of persuasion (On Rhetoric 1355a). Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic in that it belongs to the common person and not to a particular science. It functions through

enthymematic reasoning used by rhetors in the contingent dealings of practical affairs. Thus, rhetoric is an instrumental art to be used, like a tool, in the day-to-day events involving politics and ethics. Rhetoric is a process, a practical art of *doing* or *acting* (Corbett vii), which makes it distinct from the poetic art of *making*.

The poetic is an art of production. The productive quality of poetics is evident on etymological grounds, as the Greek term for poetics (*poiesis*) derives from the verb “to make” (*poieo*). Aristotle contends that the poetic is “more philosophical and of graver import” than history (or rhetoric) because it deals with universals (Poetics 1451b). He goes on to explain that a universal statement is “one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily do – which is the aim of poetry.” Poetics work to transcend the singular in order to reveal that which might happen; in other words, it reveals those human actions that are probable and necessary (Aristotle, Poetics 1451b).

The poetic, like rhetoric, is rooted in human nature, but the poetic arises from human evolution and desire. Aristotle explains the evolution of poetry arising, in part, from a common childhood practice of imitative play. Furthermore, poetry emerges because individuals find pleasure in works of mimesis (Poetics, 1448b). People, more than other animals, desire mimesis according to Aristotle; it is part of human instinct to enjoy works of imitation (Farrell 11).¹⁶ Tragedy, in its ability to reproduce actions and life, is the most effective poetic form because it yields catharsis. The poetic is pleasurable because people enjoy seeing accurate imitations, even if those representations are painful to view.

Aristotle’s distinction between rhetoric and poetics is a common theme running throughout the development of rhetorical and literary practices. Remaking and refining the border lines between rhetors and poets is a significant theoretical conversation in the twentieth century, in part because disciplinary boundaries between Speech and Literary

Departments were at stake. The Aristotelian distinction between rhetoric and poetics is drawn by twentieth century rhetorical scholars on the basis of *ends*, *methods*, and *motives*. The *ends* of these two academic pursuits differ: persuasion belongs to rhetoric and imitation belongs to poetry (Herrick 14; Howell 325).

Methodologically speaking, rhetoric is focused on impression first while the poetic is focused on expression first (Hudson Rhetoric 371). Hoyt Hudson, the Cornell School theorist interested in a revitalized notion of rhetorical invention, argued for a clear distinction between rhetoric and poetics on the grounds of the author's method. The rhetorician forever has the audience in mind at every turn, while the poet is motivated by and concerned with a subject (Rhetoric 371). In line with the methodological differences, Hunsaker and Smith contend that rhetoric and poetics are motivated by differing habits of conceiving and ordering composition. Rhetoric is an intellectual endeavor that moves logically from idea to idea, while the poetic is an imaginative process that moves from image to image (241).

Despite, rigid distinctions between rhetoric and poetics, Hudson acknowledges that poetics often have a rhetorical dimension and rhetoric has a poetic dimension. At times poets consider their audience and rhetoricians work to transcend the moment (Rhetoric 373). Under close examination, Aristotle's categories too bleed into one another. For example, in a discussion about tragedy Aristotle describes that "tragic fear may be aroused by the spectacle; but they may also be aroused by the very structure and incidents of the play" (Poetics 1453b). Here the poet is concerned with the pathetic appeal that awakens an audience's emotions. Yet, the distinction between rhetoric and poetic still holds, Hudson argues, because the poet does not share the rhetor's narrow conception of a particular audience. The poet's relation to his audience is "more general and more vaguely defined" than the rhetorician (Hudson, Rhetoric 373).

These Aristotelian categories remain an influence on rhetorical scholarship. The most prevalent and basic distinction between the two arts is that poetic is *mimetic* while rhetoric is *nonmimetic* (Howell 326). The term mimesis, in the broadest sense, means “representation” or “imitation” or “fictive utterance” (Walker 284). Considering that rhetoric involves each of these mimetic qualities, the distinction seems to be useless. Yet, for Aristotle mimesis had a narrow application to the poet’s work; thus, it worked to separate the poetic from rhetoric. The poet’s mimesis, according to Jeffrey Walker, was a “representation of stories that embody the general truths of human experience” (284). The poet involves herself with the making of a specific imitative form. It is important to note that Aristotle has a limited sense of imitation that is distinct from Cicero’s *imitatio*. I will address these differences explicitly in the section on classical rhetorical invention.

While these Aristotelian distinctions still inform contemporary rhetorical theory and practice, the conversation in rhetorical studies did evolve from a debate about “rhetoric and poetics” into a debate about “rhetoric and aesthetics.” The shift stems, in part, from the characterization of rhetoric as the “the pragmatics of discourse” while poetics is the “aesthetics of discourse” (Hunsaker and Smith 241). The move from “poetic” to “aesthetic” was a welcome transition, according to Hariman, from the “moribund debate” between poetic and rhetoric that largely concerned itself with mapping intellectual history (Terrible 11). The shift from poetic to aesthetic is significant for this project because it serves as the impetus to rethink rhetorical invention along more visual lines.

The degree to which aesthetics is involved in rhetorical invention stems from its role in rhetorical theory. For instance, the aesthetic turn advocated by Whitson and Poulakos frames rhetoric as aesthetic; whereas, the less radical position in rhetorical studies understands the aesthetic as a dimension of rhetoric. Such is the case with

Ewbank and Ewbank who argue that rhetorical artifacts have “philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions,” each of which should be considered by rhetorical critics (285). I will address the latter position first then return back to rhetoric as aesthetic.

Advocates view the inclusion of aesthetic in rhetorical invention as a healthy expansion of rhetorical studies. Hariman belongs to this group when he writes, “As rhetoric is a mode of knowing it must include some kind of aesthetic knowledge” (Terrible 16). Hariman contends that rhetoric needs a broader approach that “attempts to understand how all human activity involves a complex dynamics of social performance” (11). Discourse has an aesthetic status that works to explain and guide the ongoing human conduct of real life.

Arguing that aesthetics play a fundamental role in rhetorical discourse has been met with reservation by speech scholars. The charge has been that an overemphasis on the aesthetic may cause society to lose its sense of self in a world of deceptive fiction (Scott 32). In other words, the aesthetic threatens the rational deliberative discourse necessary to sustain a democracy. In Hariman’s book on political style he admits that an aestheticized politics could be problematic,¹⁷ but the greater danger is how inept modern thinkers are at creating a culture that can defend itself against disingenuous political acts (10). For Hariman, the aesthetic aspect of rhetorical discourse is a fundamental part of how we come to know the world. Positioning the aesthetic as part of the rhetorical equation does not break with Aristotle’s notion of poetics and rhetoric; rather, it expands the connections Aristotle implies between poetic and rhetorical discourse.

Positioning the aesthetic as a part of rhetoric is radically different from positioning rhetoric as aesthetic. The aesthetic turn in rhetorical studies, as labeled by Ronald Greene, refers to a Nietzschean-based reading of rhetorical history as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This turn mirrors the classical distinction of *poetic at work in*

rhetoric versus *rhetoric as poetic*. As they were in classical times, the implications for seeing rhetoric as aesthetic/poetic are significant. The “aesthetic turn” aims to do away with epistemological questions altogether.

The “aesthetic of appearance” is a radically different model upon which to base rhetorical theory. Epistemology becomes a sub-category of art as the “aesthetic consideration becomes decisive” (Whitson and Poulakos 136). Rhetoric, from the aesthetic stance, can be thought of as an artistic act that masks (with beauty) the chaos of life itself. The aesthetic appearance, a “linguistic image,” satisfies a person’s needs and cravings to cover up a world of disarray. The task for aesthetic rhetoric is to “speak words appealing to all the bodily senses,” not just the mind (Whitson and Poulakos). This position stems from the assumption that all relationships between reader and object (or audience) are obtained aesthetically. The aim for aesthetic rhetoric is not one of influence (Aristotle) or identification (Kenneth Burke); rather, its success is seeing an audience affected by its message. The orator says to the audience, “Let me take you with me to a world more enchanting and more sufferable than the one you now inhabit” (Whitson and Poulakos 142).

Aesthetic rhetoric moves from turn to turn contra the Aristotelian move from place to place (topoi). Like Gregory Ulmer’s attempt to replace topos with chora, here too topos is asked to step aside. This brings the discussion of rhetoric and poetics back to the initial claim that invention had been impeded by traditional Aristotelian categorizations of these two interconnected arts. The recent theoretical and critical conversation on the role of aesthetics in rhetoric is an asset for vibrant theories and pedagogies of rhetorical invention. However, the contemporary scholarship is still focused almost exclusively on training better critics in the aesthetic workings of rhetorical texts. In other words, rhetorical invention is still subsumed by the complex task of understanding. Alongside

these projects, there is further need to rethink rhetorical invention as a productive art. Gregory Ulmer's project on "electracy" is one example of how invention can be reframed as an art of making. Another place to begin such a project is a re-reading of the ancient connection between rhetoric and poetic.

While Aristotle's poetics have had great influence on literary scholars, his depiction of poetics primarily as a mimetic art delimits the more common understanding of poetics in ancient antiquity. To advance this point, I borrow generously from Jeffrey Walker's meticulous book, Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity. When Aristotle uses the term "mimesis" as the distinguishing feature of poetry, he does so in a very narrow fashion. Walker teaches us that mimesis in the general sense means "representation" or "imitation" or "fictive utterance." Yet, Aristotle's notion of mimesis "boils down to the *representation* of stories that embody the general truths of human experience (284). Furthermore, Aristotle parses rhetoric and poetic in such a way that the treatment of their relationship by later scholars is dismissed or left isolated in taxonomies.

It is of interest to this study of rhetorical invention as production to explore poetics prior to Aristotle's taxonomy. Without tracing the poetic and rhetoric debate prior to Aristotle, you bracket (or fail to notice) the vibrant period of rhetorical history where Sophistic practices and participatory democracy flourished. In this way, by starting with Aristotle, you bypass the period of rhetorical theory and practice that was ripe with new beginnings.

The poetic, in its most general sense, refers to the doing and making of verse (Walker 19). Jeffery Walker points out that Gorgias referred to the poetic as being "speech with meter." In this sense, poiesis is the antecedent to rhetorical teachings and practices of the Sophistic tradition. Before Plato coined *rhetorike*, *poiesis* and *logos* influenced notions of sophistic rhetorical practice. For instance, Gorgias delivers

speeches in metered verse and Isocrates teaches the art of logos. Thus, by the time Aristotle attempts to make the rigid distinction between rhetoric and poetics, the soon-to-be “rhetorical tradition” had etched its way into human experience. Rhetors were using poetics and logos to do the work of the polis.

The disconnect between the rhetorical work in the polis and Aristotle’s notions of rhetoric and poetic is a reflection of the instability and tension in contemporary accounts of rhetoric and poetic. As Jeffrey Walker contends, “The suasive eloquence of poetry is at once a subset of the general art of rhetoric and at the same time is its ancient ancestor. Further, insofar as epideictic is the primary or central form of rhetoric, and poetry is the original and ultimate form of epideictic, poetry is also the original and ultimate form of rhetoric” (41).

From these statements, it becomes clear that rhetoric’s relationship with poetics is contingent upon when and from whom the rhetorical tradition started. If we start with a traditional reading of Aristotle, rhetoric is a distinct category of general discourse that operates (in most respects) unique to poetics. However, the Sophistic vein teaches that the poetic is the ideal form of logos from which rhetoric was born. Where contemporary scholars begin their archeological projects, in large part, determines how the meanings of rhetoric and poetics shake out in disciplinary and theoretical terms. Throughout this project, I abide by Jeffrey Walker’s reading of the relationship between poetics and rhetoric in antiquity. Starting from the assumption that rhetoric is as much an art about *making* as it is one of *doing* allows for more complete theories and practices of rhetorical invention. It frames rhetoric as being aligned with the integrated and engaged design arts. In an effort to attune rhetorical studies with twenty-first century productive arts, there is much need to better understand the visual nature of invention.

THE VISUAL NATURE OF RHETORICAL INVENTION

The role visual symbols play in rhetorical invention is a significant and novel area of analysis in rhetorical studies. Yet, there are theoretical inroads available for navigation; the conversation between rhetoric and typically visual disciplines has already begun, and an interdisciplinary field of study is emerging between rhetoric and visual culture studies (Helmets ix). Maugerite Helmets recalls the development of this conversation:

From its formal academic beginnings in technical communication and new media design,...to its theoretical relationship with semiotics and cultural studies, visual rhetoric as a school of inquiry was soon associated with projects that investigated the relationship between design and reception, quite literally, a world of visual objects: advertising, medieval tapestry, needlepoint, documentary photography, and commemorative memorials among them (Helmets ix).

The conversation between discursive disciplines like rhetoric and visually oriented fields corresponds with the scientific, technological, and cultural shifts of the late twentieth century. However, there is much theoretical work left undone; a deep incision between image/word and sensation/thinking still remains.

Traditionally, words have reined superior to images in the academic pecking order. Recall that it was Plato who castigated images to the bottom rung of the divided line of truth. Furthermore, psychology addresses “perception” and “thinking” in separate chapters with the visual being relegated to the former mental process. Rudolf Arnheim explains that the “senses are said to gather information about the outside world; thinking

is said to process that information” (171). The Cartesian method also assumes that images are gathered first and then corrected by a higher, abstract form of thinking (with words). From this line of reasoning, images are a mere by-product of good thinking. A modern exemplar of this position is Jurgen Habermas, whose disdain of the aesthetic is such that he frames the image as irrational and inferior to discursive communication. According to his line of argument, the image (broadly addressed as the aesthetic) is the emotive baggage tainting rational discursive claims. In terms of rhetorical appeals, the word is to logos what the image is to pathos.

If one takes the position that today’s discourse is dominated by images, these distinctions between word and image are damning for the prospect of a healthy deliberative democracy. Domination requires a subservient other; in contemporary society that marginalized other is reality and reason (Molwana xi). More specifically, the word (logos) has lost its appeal because the image triumphs. These logocentric laments are neither accurate concerning current cognitive theories nor useful considering the deterministic quality of the digital communicative milieu.

On a psychological level, the visual has been demonstrated as primal to the verbal. John Berger contends, “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (1). The public experience of adults also is rooted in what they see, because what one sees is brought within their reach. And that which is within one’s reach becomes functional reality. Therefore, images that are within our reach are important artifacts of study because they shape the rhetor’s design of rhetorical productions. In a sense, images reveal and mold the means of production in public spaces. Rudolf Arnheim, borrowing from the psychologist Roger Shepard, demonstrates how visual perception “transcends constantly and routinely the mere mechanical recording of sensory raw material” (172). In basic terms, Arnheim illustrates how the mind uses

visuals in a “thinking” manner. He asserts that intelligence, inventiveness, and creative discovery are all associated with the visual imagination apart from a discursive language (173). From the view of Arnheim and Berger, the image’s epistemological status improves greatly compared to longstanding disregard by philosophers and cognitive psychologists.

In addition to psychological considerations, the image is important to rhetorical invention because of its ubiquity in the current communicative environment. Walter Ong’s thesis that major technological shifts cause a shift in consciousness suggests that there is no turning back these new ways of seeing (and making). Rationality and reason are not under attack by images; rather, they too turn with the symbol using system in place. Visual rhetorics do not crush the human ability to reason; they expand logocentric notions of rationality.

The rigid distinction between word and image is neither useful given the evolution of communication mediums, nor accurate if we are to read the history of rhetoric through a visual lens. Such a logocentric position places the contemporary reader and scholar in a feeble situation. A heavy load of reproduced images paint the contemporary page/screen; yet, the average person lacks the analytical tools and know-how necessary to engage them critically and construct them creatively. A rhetorical pedagogy that leaves students largely illiterate when it comes to using images as devices of invention is antiquated and of little use to the project of becoming local. I concur with art historian Michael Holly; it is time to call into question “the possibility of ever keeping separate the discursive and the visual” (8). The visual is an integral aspect of rhetorical invention as I demonstrate by borrowing from recent scholarship that focuses on visual symbolic forms.

The pervasiveness and inventive power of images summon the rhetorician to address the visual turn in symbolic production and consumption. In terms of method, the

major challenge for rhetorical scholars focusing on visual aspects of rhetoric is the lack of language and procedure necessary to understand images in relation to discursive text. The dearth of language and procedure stems from a rigid reading of the word/image dialectic paralleling the logos/pathos (reason/emotion) dialectic in rhetorical studies. Rhetorical scholars are beginning to answer this call by embracing (although with hesitation) the arduous challenge of reading images into rhetorical scholarship.¹⁸

The Parlor Press, in its latest series entitled “Prospects in Visual Rhetoric” is a fine example of the need and justification for visual research in rhetorical studies. Their rationale for such a focus follows:

‘Prospects in Visual Rhetoric’ emerges in the scholarly publishing world to offer an opportunity for a new tradition to be forged, not so much to build a canon, but to rewrite rhetorical tradition from a visual perspective. It is our hope that looking backwards at significant writers and noteworthy essays will allow scholars in the emerging field of visual rhetoric to trace their history to the visual theories, critical commentaries, and scholarly studies of the past. Rhetoricians interested in the visual turn of present-day scholarship will be able to extend their inquiry into the styles, genres, and forms of aesthetic discourse of previous decades and centuries. We hope that art historians, designers, and critics of the visual will also benefit from reconceptualizing these key statements (Helmets).

The new tradition promoted by the Parlor Press is attuned with my motives for addressing the visual nature of rhetorical invention. The rhetorical tradition is ripe to be read through a more visual lens. Such readings have the potential to not only reach out to other fields

of study but to form theoretical unions that push beyond the traditional liberal arts. It has the ability to frame rhetoric primarily as an art of production – a design art.

Beyond the Parlor Press, evidence of a visual presence in rhetorical studies abounds at the National Communication Association Conference and other specialized academic conferences where entire seminars and panels are dedicated to *visual rhetoric*. This is not to claim that interest in the visual is a phenomenon unique to rhetorical studies; the visual/aesthetic/image is an emerging area of concern for multiple scholars in traditionally discursive disciplines like philosophy (Roland Barthes), psychology (Daniel Osherson), and political communication (Kathleen Jamieson) to name a few. Images offer scholars a fresh way into addressing issues such as emotion, dissent, and pedagogy, all of which are important elements of rhetorical invention.

Before taking up the call of the Parlor Press and re-reading concepts fundamental to the rhetorical tradition through a visual lens, it is important and helpful to my readings of classical rhetoric to detail selectively the contemporary scholarship in rhetoric and communication that directly addresses the visual. While these works are more concerned with the consumption of images, their conclusions can be expanded to assist a project of rhetorical invention as production.

Contemporary Studies in Visual Communication

Despite hesitancy toward visual symbolic forms in rhetorical scholarship, the research focused on visually dominated mediums like photography and television offer insight into the visual dimension of rhetorical invention. Susan Sontag writes, “The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: There is a surface. Now think – or rather feel, intuit – what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way”

(23). The visual demands that the audience deduce, ponder, and supply missing warrants in order to make meaning out of everyday experiences. The image, for Sontag, functions as a catalyst that sparks mental processing. Unlike Plato, who felt that the image merely imitated reality, Sontag encourages viewers to accept that images allow us to possess reality (356). While Sontag does not explicitly discuss rhetorical invention, her description of the image's power speaks to the process of invention. The image serves as a heuristic of sorts that sparks the intuitive connections integral to creating new beginnings.

Assuming Sontag has it right and images inspire readers to grasp the reality located beyond the surface, mass-mediated visual messages play a fundamental role in shaping public experiences. Walter Ong's work on orality and literacy teaches us that a people's logos shift with major communication technological shifts. It follows that the reasoning of contemporary audiences has been cultivated by something of a "televisual logic." This shift in consciousness has yielded people who think visually about public affairs (Brummett, Rhetorical 34). Barry Brummett explains:

The media tend to metonymize complex issues for the public. Incorporation of metonymized images into mosaics is the way that people position themselves within public life and public issues. The orders that people impose on experience give them a perspective on or a role in those public issues, and thus link *private* concerns to political problems. The way in which public problems are metonymized for public consumption is an important part of the way in which mosaics are equipment of living (Rhetorical 98).

The idea that televisual logic leans heavily on the mosaic speaks to the centrality of images in the invention process. To make meaning out of the world, a person taps into the circulation of images to create a personal metonym.

Gregory Ulmer uses a variation of the mosaic – the emblem – as a primary part of his experimental pedagogy on rhetorical invention (Electracy). Ulmer has students create personal emblems as an exercise in rhetorical invention. The students' visual inventions not only make rhetoric; they also function to inductively create theory about producing in a digital environment. While Brummett is asking the critic to read images metonymically, the mosaic composition can be extended to the art of making. To construct a mosaic, the rhetorician must consider the circulation of images in relation to a given place. The visual topoi and the response they elicit serve as tools of invention.

Photographs, television pictures, and digital images alter one's experience in the world. This is a primary contention of scholars attempting to elevate the status of emotions and affect in rhetorical studies. Under these terms, scholarship on visibility and images offer the prospect to rethink the dialectical relationship between image/word, pathos/logos, and affect/reason.

Theories of rhetorical invention stand to gain much from the inclusion of emotion and affect – two concepts that are commonly bracketed by rhetorical scholars. Despite the rich rhetorical tradition concerning emotional appeals and their role in creating ethical messages, logocentrism has dominated rational decision-making models. Furthermore, these logocentric models are elevated as the linchpins of democratic societies. Under this thinking, emotional appeals, as Plato suggested, belong to the private subjective domain. Hariman and Lucaites attempt to shift the suppression of emotional appeals by demonstrating how iconic photographs communicate public emotions. They assert that images serve as necessary symbolic forms in democratic deliberative discourse (2001).

Trying to alter the misconception that “visual practices necessarily disrupt society’s ability to make sound judgments,” Hariman and Lucaites use the well-known Kent State photo as their visual artifact (7). While methods for reading visuals are in their infancy stage, Hariman and Lucaites read this image as serving an “iconic” function. They contend that iconic photographs play a fundamental role in the “formation and development of democratic societies and of the public sphere itself” (7). Their reading reveals that the Kent State iconic image is effective because of its ability to identify with audiences. The iconic photo “equips an audience to think, feel, and act” because these images have the ability to activate strong emotional identifications with the audience (Hariman and Lucaites 7-8). They liken this to Aristotle’s discussion of the enthymeme in that audiences are required to fill in a range of emotions necessary to attain shared meaning.

The Kent State icon also illustrates how visual media can be used as a tool for dissent. The image, displayed on national news, evolved into a metonym for the struggles of the anti-war movement. This is not an uncommon occurrence as many social movements “have been influenced significantly by photographs and TV images that were originally created and exhibited as news” (Messaris 139). Dissent, an essential component of democracy and community development, is commonly associated with emotional responses. Instead of dismissing affective performances of dissent as mere spectacle, they can be read as rich sites of democratic struggle. And if dissent by image is a fundamental part of the democratic public spheres, it is important that “public discourse is capable of emotional depth and power” (Hariman and Lucaites 19).

These mass-mediated iconic photographs not only allow audiences to identify emotionally, they offer models for how to be in public. The emotional and aesthetic training that images provide compliments Hannah Arendt’s insistence that new

beginnings occur in the performances of public excellence (arête). Iconic photographs and other visual artifacts prepare people for spontaneous interaction with one's peers in public. Images provide people insight into the public performance of bodies, and these performances are potential sites of political dissent. Dissent, in this case, involves the message that things can be otherwise, or in Arendt's language, new beginnings are possible. Likewise, this critical space is an invention site from which ideas and constructions can emerge.

While Hariman and Lucaites, in their Burkean focus on identification, avoid describing the grammar of images, they call for future studies to examine the aesthetic designs of iconic photographs (20). In a digital age, where students are increasingly producers of image based messages, the grammar of visual design is a necessary component of rhetorical invention. Grammatical readings of images tend to be rooted in semiotics. For example Kress and Leeuwen assess the grammar of an image by looking at these categories: *narrative representations*, *compositional characteristics*, the *placement of viewers*, *models of reality*, and the *materiality* of the image. Each of these categories serves as a grammatical method to ascertain how images mean. While rhetorical projects are not primarily focused on reading images in this manner, these readings are of assistance for scholars and teachers working to better develop visual literacy in their research methods and pedagogy. Without an understanding of how certain visual designs function, there is little reason to expect that researchers and students will use images meaningfully, especially as productive critical tools in the public sphere.

In addition to understanding the grammar of images, Hariman and Lucaites encourage analyses that explore the rhetorical functions of visual artifacts. In this sense, the interest is in understanding the role images play in discourse. This would be an

invaluable tool for designers of discourse. Recent scholarship in argumentation has begun to embrace this very task.

In the key-note address at the ALTA argumentation conference in 2001, Catherine Palczewski asserted that images deserve serious scholarly attention. The grounds, warrants, enthymemes, and sometimes even the entire claim of an argument, come in the form of images (Palczewski 5). Surveying the current scholarship on this topic, she constructed four major claims argumentation scholars have made concerning visual arguments:¹⁹ 1) Images can be arguments¹, 2) Images can be parts of an argument¹, 3) Images can serve as a response to an argument², and 4) Images can participate as argument² (5). Palczewski's first two statements assert that images can argue, while the last two assertions support the claim that images can play an instrumental role in public dissent.

Images can be arguments¹. While argumentation theorists have focused on the discursive aspect of arguments, nondiscursive symbolic forms have always been part of rational discursive arguments. Charles Willard notes that metaphors employed in arguments function through the use of imagery. Thus, arguments consist of both discursive and presentational symbols. Unlike Hariman and Lucaites, who focus on the emotional aspect of images, Willard elevates images to the status of words by arguing that the two coexist during rational arguments.

Images also function as part of an argument; for example, they provide grounds for argument in the case of abortion rhetoric (Celeste Condit), function like logical fallacies in political advertising (Kathleen Jamieson), and serve as the entire argument, such as *the body* in environmental rhetoric (Kevin DeLuca). Framing the image as a standard argument part is not a radical assertion because the assumption is that these

images are functioning like traditional discursive argument parts. In this case, images are used to advance rational deliberative debate.

In addition to being a fundamental part of processing and forming arguments, images can offer a “response to a discursive argument” (Palczewski 7). In this sense the image works differently or beyond the realm of discursive symbolic forms. The image, in part because it presents itself in totality, can redirect or thwart a discursive argument. Thus, they have the potential to be powerful vehicles for dissent. The Kent State photograph is an example of an image serving as a response. The iconic photograph demonstrates how an image can “reconstitute the American public in opposition to excessive state power” (Hariman and Lucaites 21).

Images are used a fourth way, according to Palczewski, when they are employed as examples of argument². In these cases, visual arguments supplant entire verbal arguments and the refutation occurs on an image vs. image basis. Take the case of counter-publics that are constrained by powerful images serving as metonyms for the status quo. Refuting these images requires counter-images. For example, “Americanos,” a photographic narrative that provides a “nuanced view of Latina/o personhood,” functions as a counter-image to the misleading generalized Latino aesthetic presented by the mainstream US media (Calafell and Delgado 2). Calafell and Delgado contend that “in a mediated world, dueling images become the battleground for the articulation of identity” (3).

The following techniques outlined by Lake and Pickering describe three rhetorical methods of image refutation: 1) Dissection – an arguer discursively breaks down the image to its component parts and its relations. For instance, the photograph of President George W. Bush on an aircraft carrier declaring an end to major combat is a powerful synecdoche. Counter-arguers attempted to deconstruct the image by dissecting its

components to show its publicity-stunt characteristics (the banner “Mission Accomplished” was designed by White House staff, paid for with tax dollars, and used in the 2004 Presidential election campaign). 2) Substitution – an arguer replaces an image with one of an opposing polarity. 3) Transformation – an arguer recontextualizes the image in a new frame. This is the technique *Adbusters* relies upon with their culture jamming anti-advertisements. In one ad, for instance, a bottle-shaped noose is placed in a frame identical to where an Absolute Vodka bottle would appear.

The techniques of dissection, substitution, and transformation all inform the process of making. The newness of any design takes on the critical function of replacing or improving upon that which already existed. The process of rhetorical invention can be looked upon as a process of dissecting, substituting, and transforming. These three steps run parallel to the design method of “reverse engineering” that is explained in the latter part of this chapter.

Images in the argumentation literature work in/as rational public arguments. While argumentation scholars are incorporating images into a discursive argumentation theory, they stop short of fully expanding their language to better address visual thinking. This is where Hariman and Lucaites are helpful. The emotive and aesthetic nature of images plays a fundamental role in constructing and maintaining the public spaces where people speak and act. Hariman and Lucaites demonstrate how images are important mediums of public emotion for the maintenance of democracy. Yet, their project too lacks a focus on production. In their current form, Hariman and Lucaites work to equip the consumer of public discourse with better critical reading skills. While their conclusions can be expanded to inform practices of rhetorical invention, there is still a need to read the connection between rhetoric and the visual through the eyes of the inventor.

Recall that it was Michael Holly who called for a blurring of the distinctions between words and images. His research is rooted in ancient images that work to show the influence of images on classical theories and practices. Rhetoricians too have much to gain from re-reading these ancient texts with an eye toward visual methods and practices. In the following section, I point to some possible paths into classical rhetoric that speak directly to the visual nature of rhetorical invention. In addition, I re-read Aristotle's notion of *energeia* to contend that words and images are not so far apart under a rhetorical system focused on production.

Classical Rhetoric and the Visual

A strong relationship between speech and imagery exists in the practices and theories of classical rhetoric. While classical rhetoric is focused primarily on the production of formally spoken speeches, images and imagery play a fundamental role in the process of rhetorical invention. The power of these visual symbolic forms is captured by Simonides, a Greek poet of the 5th century BCE, who tells us that “Painting is silent poetry, and poetry speaking painting (Francis 24).”²⁰ Images and words are similar according to this dictum; each has the power to poetically remake the world. Yet, the relationship between silence and speaking remains complex

From Simonides, the rigid boundary between work done by images and work done by words is made permeable. Images, like words, are responsible for producing rhetorical eloquence – the form that aptly addresses the psychology of the audience. Aristotle goes a step further than Simonides and frames imagery as central to the act of interpretation. He writes, “Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same

writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images” (Interpretation C-1). From this passage, visualization is the mental experience involved in both speaking and writing; thus it is the basis for rhetorical invention. In other words, the classical sense of reasoning necessitates a visual component.

That images, by virtue of their relationship with words, are central to ancient rhetoric is a stance further supported by the epistemological status granted to the process of seeing. In an effort to demonstrate the centrality of the visual in classical rhetoric, a close reading of the Attic Greek (the primary language of the early rhetorical texts) is quite revealing. The assumption here is that syntax and etymology reflect a people’s conception of reality. Thus, unpacking the grammar and denotations of a language is a way into a given cultural concept.

A common Greek verb, ὀράω, denotes “to see.” ὀράω is an irregular verb in that it takes on different constructions and meanings when it changes forms.²¹ In the aorist case²² the word becomes εἶδον. In Homeric writings, this verb form means to see, perceive, and behold. Furthermore, εἶδον is the stem of the English word “video,” and the root is used to form the noun, εἶδωλον, which means “image” or “a phantom.” What is most significant about εἶδον is its connection to the verb οἶδα. In the fourth principal part (perfect case) εἶδον is closely related to οἶδα which denotes “to know.” In this sense, seeing implies a degree of knowing (Liddell and Scott 227); literally, to have seen is to have known in Greek. The “knowing” denoted by οἶδα refers to the ability to do something or it indicates that someone is able or powerful enough to know. What is significant to this dissertation is the status given to visuals, including both imagery and images. The epistemological weight of the visual coupled with Aristotle’s notion that all

symbolic productions are linked by mental images reveals fundamental assumptions concerning the classical role of imagery and images in rhetorical productions.

Considering the breadth of classical rhetoric (from the Sophistic teachings of Gorgias to the Roman religious rhetoric of St. Augustine) there are numerous paths by which to further illustrate the centrality of the visual in ancient rhetorical theory. For instance, the rhetorical handbooks teach that visualization serves as a key part of the progymnasmata – the exercises of classical rhetorical pedagogy. During the “advanced composition” stage of the progymnasmata, ekphrasis (description) is taught and practiced. Michael Holly contends that Hermogenes, who offers the most detailed account of the progymnasmata, makes a fundamental connection between word and image in the exercise of *ekphrasis*. For Hermogenes, ekphrasis is most concerned with clarity and visibility; it is a way of seeing through hearing (Holly 9). Holly strengthens this argument by borrowing from J.T. Mitchell, who coins the terms “ekphrastic hope” and “ekphrastic fear” to describe the rhetor’s hope that words actually can make us see objects and ideas, and the fear that the figures used in ekphrasis will not be exposed (Holly 11). It is impossible to turn word into image; yet, Mitchell contends this aim has kept many a rhetorician and poet writing. Both artists yearn for word accounts to be picture like. Thus, ekphrasis calls attention to the “the primal connection between word and image” (Holly 10).

While the mnemonic system and progymnasmata demonstrate the significance of the visual in ancient texts, one could also build a case by joining those voices who are re-reading the rhetorical tradition through sophistic lenses.²³ However, this dissertation found its path through a reading of Aristotle’s Rhetoric – an unlikely coupling considering this text has been the culprit for the rigid distinction between rhetoric and poetic.

Re-reading Aristotle reveals a rhetorical process relying heavily on imagery. In On Rhetoric Aristotle coins an original word that commonly has been translated (by classicists, philosophers, and rhetoricians) as ‘actuality’, referring to a metaphysical state; however, the term also can be taken to denote the internally active nature of text and objects. A close reading of Aristotle’s account of rhetorical *energeia* (ἐνέργεια) delivers a heightened awareness of how classical rhetoric can inform the making of discourses and communities in this era of secondary orality. The thesis here is that images and words in their internally active state offer the opportunity to create new beginnings. Aristotle’s rhetoric establishes the nature of symbolic forms that provides the necessary condition for invention to occur.

Aristotle’s Energeia

Energeia as used by Aristotle commonly has been translated as the actuality of a given object or utterance. Energeia is a fundamental component of Aristotle’s thinking and has influenced contemporary concepts aiming to describe the key ingredient of action. In English, *energeia* is etymologically responsible for the word “energy.” With a degree of likeness to the Greeks, the English word “energy” is used to describe the power and capacity to act or to be lively. Yet, from a rhetorical point of view, *energeia* has been given sparse attention, despite the fact that Aristotle in his discussion of *lexis* (style) places *energeia* on the same playing field as metaphor and antithesis (Rhetoric Book III. 1410b).

Understanding the significance of the various usages of *energeia* and existing literature on the topic is greatly enhanced by understanding the term itself. A word search using the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae turns up 718 references using versions of

energeia in classical texts.²⁴ Of these usages, nearly 500 of the references belong to Aristotle.²⁵ According to George Blair's thorough account of energeia, there is no tangible evidence to indicate the term was in use before Aristotle (4-7). Aristotle uses the term most frequently in the De Anime, Metaphysics, and Nicomachean Ethics as a metaphysical descriptor of reality. The term traditionally has been translated as *actuality* with *potentiality* (dunamis, δυνάμει) serving as its dialectical partner. However, Blair makes a strong case that Aristotle coined the word specifically to mean "internal activity."

Throughout Blair's reading of Aristotle's texts, he illustrates how energeia is an active term concerned with "doing." Blair writes, "[A]ristotle had discovered that 'to be' (for a living being, at least) is 'to live' and 'to live' is be 'internally active.'" (38). Aristotle describes energeia in multiple places by using the Greek words available that denote "doing" and/or "making." In addition, the word's etymological formation supports this active sense of the term. Aristotle formed energeia from an active middle verb (ergon) meaning "to work" "to act" "to do" or "to be busy" (Blair 17). Blair cites a passage from the Nicomachean Ethics in which Aristotle equates a student's work to energeia. Aristotle writes, "The reason is that nature is just like teachers, who think they have achieved their end by showing the students as being internally active²⁶... because the work is the end, and the internal activity (energeia) is the work. This is why the word energeia is derived from work" (Blair 57-58).

The significance of moving energeia from a static term signifying *actuality* to an active term related to *doing* is profound, especially when considering the process of rhetorical production. As for direct references to rhetoric, energeia is cited thirteen times in On Rhetoric. While the concept only makes sense by understanding Aristotle's metaphysical citations, the rhetorical references reveal how Aristotle expanded energeia

beyond the realm of living objects and into the space of discourse. This expansion is of great consequence to rhetorical scholars as the divide between objects and speech blurs when one starts from the assumption that discourse is *energeia* (internally active). Thus, it adds further credence to the claim that the design arts and rhetoric are inherently connected.

The attention *energeia* has received from rhetorical scholars is minimal. One finds it mentioned in discussions of style or defined in exhaustive lists of rhetorical terms; in these cases *energeia* means “to energize” or “actualize” (Crowley 370). Richard Lanham does elaborate on this definition by suggesting that *energeia* relates to the rhetorical style of displaying “vigor or verve, of whatever sort, in expression” (Handlist 65). And George Kennedy in his translation of Aristotle’s On Rhetoric adds personification to *energeia*’s denotations. These descriptions – energy, actuality, verve, and personification – reflect Aristotle’s usage of the term, but they fall short of unpacking a significant concept that works alongside fundamental rhetorical figures like metaphor and antithesis.

In On Rhetoric (Book III. 1410b) Aristotle gives the most telling statement of *energeia*’s significance. In explaining how urbanity (*ἀστεῖα*) is achieved in style, Aristotle writes:

In terms of the thought of what is said, such kinds of enthymemes are well liked; in terms of the lexis, on the one hand because of shaped language, if it is spoken with some contrast (for example, regarding the peace shared by others as a war against their won interests, where peace is opposed to war) or on the other because of the words, if they have metaphor – and metaphor that is not strange (for that would be difficult to perceive) nor superficial (for that causes nothing to be experienced). Furthermore, urbanity is achieved by means of bringing before

the eyes; for things should be seen as being done rather than as in the future. [To achieve urbanity in style] one should thus aim at three things: metaphor, antithesis, and actualization [energeia].²⁷

In an effort to produce a memorable enthymeme – one that might become popularized (urbane) – the student must understand not only style (i.e. antithesis) and word choice (i.e. metaphor); they must have a sense for bringing before the eyes (i.e. energeia).

Contemporary rhetorical texts spend a good deal of time addressing tropes (using metaphors) and figures (using antithesis), but energeia largely has been omitted from the scholarship despite the fact that it describes a critical aspect of bringing that which we cannot see before the eyes. Recall that Aristotle first coined energeia to describe the internal activity of objects. In the above statement, he extends the reach of energeia to describe a function of language. The rhetor’s aim is to produce an internally active enthymeme, and this active process involves the making of imagery in order to bring before one’s eyes. “Bringing before the eyes” is the Greek *pro ommaton poiein*. Our interest in this phrase is the use of the verb *ποιέω*. In this example the verb is translated as “bringing,” but the verb literally means “to make,” “produce” or “do” as associated with the construction of a building. Energeia accounts for the rhetor’s “making” involved in crafting smart enthymemes. Thus, energeia blurs the line between speech and objects as it places the work of discourse in line with the building of objects (and places). To successfully bring before the eyes with discourse is the action necessary to build good communities. Smart enthymemes and rejuvenated communities share the characteristic of being internally active. This message is reinforced and explained further a few passages later in On Rhetoric Book III.

In Book III 1411b Aristotle uses *energeia* repeatedly to describe how the “inanimate becomes animate.” An expression is considered a “smart saying” when the metaphor is proportionate and is “set before the eyes.” Aristotle explains, “I mean that things are set before the eyes by words that signify actuality (*energeia*). For instance, that a good man is ‘four square’ is a metaphor, for both of these are complete, but the phrase does not express actuality (*energeia*), whereas ‘of one having the prime of his life in full bloom’ does; similarly, ‘thee, sacred animal ranging at will’ expresses actuality (*energeia*), and in ‘thereupon the Greeks shooting forward with their feet’ the word ‘shooting’ contains both actuality (*energeia*) and metaphor.” This description concludes with an additional reference to Homer’s ability to bring inanimate objects to life. Ultimately, the poet and rhetor use symbols to actualize objects by injecting them with movement. This process is evident in passage 1412a where Aristotle lauds Homer because he can “give movement and life to all.” For Aristotle, *energeia* is movement, and this is the essence of bringing something before one’s eyes.

This description reveals the emphasis on movement in verbal expressions. Characters literally dance when *energeia* is achieved. For Aristotle, *energeia* is not a fixed point, but rather a vivid energized concept that explains the workings of discourse, objects, and communities. Framing *energeia* as a process centered on “bringing before the eyes” illustrates the primal connection between words and images as they, both, are involved in breathing life into stationary objects and abstract thoughts. The connection between *energeia* and visual mental processes is also supported by Stephen Nichols contention that Aristotle’s *energeia* accounts for the missing link in Plato’s “double dialectic of the visual and verbal working together” (623).²⁸ The activity or agent needed to account for the interaction between visual and verbal mental processes is *energeia*.

This further explains why Aristotle considered *energeia*, alongside metaphor and antithesis, a crucial aspect of molding urbanite enthymemes.

While I have concentrated on *energeia* as coined by Aristotle, it is significant to point out that later writers often have confused *energeia* with a similar Greek word, *enargeia*. While these are not synonymous terms, each concept relates rhetorical discourse to visual processes. The most detailed explanation of *enargeia* is Dionysius of Halicarnassus telling of Lysias's powers of *description*. Through speech Lysias had the ability to make his listeners "see the actions which are being described going on and that they are meeting face-to-face the characters in the orator's story" (Lanham, 64). Much like *energeia*, this term revolves around making present, in the here and now, that which cannot be seen. *Enargeia* involves that special talent to compose a figure that creates a visual picture. As with *energeia*, the concept involves bringing the lifeless to life (in other words, creating new beginnings).

Lanham posits that *energeia* can be conceptualized as a more general term for vivid description, while *enargeia* is an umbrella term for all the words that refer to "vigorous ocular demonstration" (65). Lanham's choice words further establish the connection between word and image. In addition to this connection, Sharon Crowley borrows from Quintilian's use of *enargeia* to expand our understanding of *pathos*. Rhetors use vivid depictions of events to "stir the emotions of the audience exactly as if they had been present when it occurred" (Crowley 155).

These pre-modern descriptions of *enargeia* have implications for the traditional characterizations of rhetorical appeals, especially *pathos*. These linguistic tracings are examples of a rhetorical theory precluding the Cartesian divide between mind and body. The separation of mind and body cleared the path for the rigid dichotomy in which *logos* belongs to reason (mind) as *pathos* does desire (body). This hierarchy prevails today

when images are dismissed as emotive while the discursive remains the sole tool sufficient for deliberative rational debate. However, this dichotomy is problematic when taking into consideration what we know about *energeia* and *enargeia*.

Rhetorical invention from a pre-modern frame works to mend the damage done by the Cartesian blade. Classical rhetoric is wider than Descartes' intrapersonal invention system that one could invent by himself while lying in bed thinking.²⁹ While it is efficient to bracket the role bodies and emotions play in private writing, rhetoric's inherent public dimension necessitates that bodies and emotions be taken into account. In other words, the building of sustainable places demands we take into account the mind, the body, and emotions.

Jeffrey Walker's work on Aristotle adds further support that *energeia* and the rhetorical appeals have been misread. Walker contends that Aristotle's account of *pathos* actually describes a model of practical reasoning (84). The rhetor is always in a process of guiding the audience on an emotional path and *energeia*, according to Walker, is a fundamental part of successful guidance. He writes, "It will always be the cognitive frames endowed with greatest "presence" or *energeia* in the audience's psyche that determine which enthymemes most effectively, persuasively guide its practical reasoning toward a specific *pathos/praxis*, or indeed which enthymemes are even perceived as enthymemes" (85). Enthymemes mean because they are internally active (*energeia*) in the audience's mind.

I now have made the move from the visual to *energeia* to *pathos* to the acceptance of rhetorical arguments. *Energeia*, in part, "accounts" for how rhetoric invents not only words/images but with them places. The contemporary examples of rhetorical *energeia* rejuvenating rural communities will be examined in chapters three through five. The analysis of *energeia* will involve three phases: Bringing an idea before the mind's eye

(intrapersonal), bringing the idea before the minds' eyes (public display), and bringing the idea into being (construction). With the visual and *energeia* detailed, I will retreat back to the primary aim of this dissertation – demonstrating how rhetorical invention plays a role in the rejuvenation of places. In this spirit, the following section explores and re-reads classical tools of invention to be employed for the analyses that makes up the remainder of this project.

CLASSICAL CONCEPTS OF INVENTION

Commonplaces (*topoi and loci communes*), imitation (*imitatio*), and rhetorical proofs (*ethos, pathos, logos*) were previewed in chapter one as classical concepts integral to rhetorical invention and applicable to the design arts. In the following section, those assessments are expanded upon as I re-read these classical terms to offer the contemporary rhetorician both a language of building and a mentality of production. To this end, each rhetorical tool is connected to corollary methods in the design arts.

Commonplaces

Rhetors in the ancient world, faced with the task of inventing a speech, were trained to go searching for ideas and arguments in common places. These general and specific discovery sites are referred to as *topoi* in Greek and *loci communes* in Latin; they make their way to English as *common places*. It is significant to this project that these commonplaces originated in rhetoric from mnemonics. Mnemonics, the ancient Greek memory system attributed to Simonides of Corax,³⁰ served as a visual cognitive mapping system (Yates 18). The Rhetorica ad Herrenium, a pedagogy text in the ancient handbook tradition, teaches that rhetors stored their ideas in specific places (*topoi*) in the mind to

memorize ideas and stock arguments. These storehouses of the mind mimicked material building forms. For example, a speaker would visualize a house filled with rooms, wherein each room served as a background to store an idea.

The fact that these visually oriented mental storehouses evolved into Aristotelian topoi – places of invention – further demonstrates the centrality of imagery in the process of invention. In addition, a mnemonic origin for rhetorical topoi highlights both the spatial and building metaphors inherently connected to making rhetoric. Topoi, as they structurally store symbolic forms, serve as mental pathways toward production. While these hallways of the mind delimit the possibilities of production, they simultaneously provide the boundaries necessary for the construction of any local argument or building.

The houses of ideas/arguments in the ancient rhetorician’s mind were unique dwelling places that gave form to one’s oral experience of everyday life. The local and idiosyncratic nature of this early sense of place (mnemonic topoi) is an important distinction for this project. In the same way a vernacular architecture can mark a given place (i.e. community) from all other spaces, the rhetor’s mental topoi can mark a local site of invention. From the practical utility of the mnemonic system, Aristotle theorizes topoi into general commonplaces germane to invention.

Aristotle is the first thinker (on record) to theorize topoi as general places under which many enthymemes could be discovered. In the Rhetoric, he describes twenty-eight topoi³¹ that function largely as argument strategies. In addition to serving as formal argument schemas, the topoi also offer places to begin. As Thomas Benson remarks, topoi are not precise or rigorous probes; rather, they are “a way of getting started” (Senses 240). Aristotle demonstrates this position in the Rhetoric when he explains that “one way of selecting [enthymemes, and] this is the first [in importance], is the topical

(2.12).³² Rhetors are encouraged to use a topical system as a launching pad, a beginning place to develop ideas and arguments.

To connect the topoi of memory with Aristotle's topoi of invention we turn to the Roman notion of *loci communes*. For Cicero, rhetorical places are integral to both the canon of memory and invention according to Cicero. In the *De Oratore*, Cicero describes the mnemonic system as creating a storehouse of ideas in the mind. He writes,

[The] best aid to clearness of memory consists in orderly management. He [Simonides] inferred that persons desiring to train this faculty must select localities and form mental images of the facts they wish to remember and store those images in the localities, with the result that the arrangement of the localities will preserve the order of the facts, and the images of the facts will designate the facts themselves, and we shall employ the localities and images respectively as a wax writing tablet and letters written on it (354).

The efficient cognitive management of ideas hinges upon the construction of orderly mental places. What Cicero offers with this visual account of memory compliments his thinking about rhetorical invention. While Cicero defers to Aristotle's discussion of the topics, he expands the classification of topoi by distinguishing between technical and atechanical places; in that, the former refer to arguments derived by an art and the latter are non-artistic testimonies (McKeon 27). The four primary technical places are definition, enumeration, etymology, and circumstances. Cicero glosses over "testimony," but these atechanical topoi are integral to the project of becoming local.

Creating a distinctive place demands the specific voices of those with experience. To give Aristotle credit, he does offer a concept similar to atechanical or specific topics in the term *idia*. *Idia* refers to the particular material (facts, opinions, and arguments) relevant to a given subject. Aristotle remarks that *idia*, successfully employed, are to be relevant and closely related for they allow the speaker to be “more at home” with a particular speech (Rhetoric 2.11). *Idia* and testimony, both atechanical places, are important elements of becoming local. They represent the themes associated with being at home. Combining these atechanical *topoi* with technical *topoi* allows this project to trace how a sense of place is molded by using both regional and global concepts.

The two processes, memorizing and inventing, both contribute pathways toward building anew in local places. Memory and new places appear to be contradictory terms. Rigidly organized memory systems would seem to yield the cliché and general argument schemas that work to universalize thought and action, whereby these systems would flatten the particularity necessary for the invention of local places. And indeed static universal categories have resulted from many attempts to theorize commonplaces. For this reason, *topoi* as they relate to the rhetorical invention of the local cannot be pinned down without diluting their creative potential.

An alternative way to theorize *topoi* and employ them in the invention process is to embrace their fluidity and pluralism. Richard McKeon offers insight into this way of seeing – a path that embraces the creativity of commonplaces:

If there is a philosophy of discovery and creativity, it cannot be a philosophy established by consensus concerning the nature of things, the powers or faculties of thought, the devices of arts, or the meanings of warrants of statements. It must be a pluralistic philosophy which establishes a creative interplay of philosophies inventing their facts, their data, their methods, their universes. It must be a rediscovery of the commonplaces of invention and memory for innovation rather than the establishment of doctrine or proselytizing and conversion among marked-off heresies and dogmas” (McKeon, Creativity 34).

The rediscovery McKeon alludes to not only supports revisiting these seemingly hallow Greek rhetorical methods, it points to an integral aspect of inventing the local. The local common places (both general and specific) are the points where rediscovery begins. These ordinary and oftentimes vernacular places serve as the starting points for building local places.

In the *ordinary* lies the potential to discover the *extraordinary* contends architect Robert Mugerauer (Community). Calling for a revival of local places, Mugerauer understands that local places are forever being reshaped by the multiplicity of voices and natural events that create (and destroy) dwelling places. For this reason, the ancient commonplaces understood through the tradition of rhetorical invention and memory serve my project dedicated to local places quite well. These technical and atechanical places function as storehouses of ideas and starting points of invention; together they present a path to rediscover yesterday’s multiplicity of places in an effort to restore, append, and build anew for generations to come.

In terms of the design arts, rhetorical common places have a direct corollary with design heuristics. The heuristic is a general domain used by designers to evaluate across a variety of contexts, in the same way the technical commonplaces could be employed for any given speech. The information system cliché is one example of a heuristic used in software design (Haller 358). This heuristic works to locate commonly occurring structures to help guide the designer. In addition to these general categories, heuristics also derive from the social experience of using language; thus, heuristics can be local and idiosyncratic to a given discourse community as were the specific *topoi* that Aristotle discussed (Haller 357). The general and local nature of design heuristics is aligned with the scope and function of rhetorical *topoi*.

Imitatio

Imitatio and *mimesis* as they relate to invention and poetics respectively are distinct rhetorical concepts. However, through translation both terms are often reduced to mere imitation – the copying of style. This reduction works to conflate and diminish two vibrant rhetorical concepts that serve integral roles in this dissertation. I understand these distinct concepts to be more complex and sophisticated than the act of copying.

Earlier in this chapter, Aristotle’s poetics was described as being mimetic in nature. While *mimesis* commonly is associated with imitating or reproducing reality, Paul Woodruff contends that Aristotle’s *mimesis* is more expansive as it refers to media, objects, and modes. Woodruff explains, “The media of *mimesis* include dance, music, painting, and poetry; the objects include things as they are, things better than they are, and things worse than they are. The modes include narrative and drama –and, perhaps impersonation as well” (78). *Mimesis* is more general than imitation, in part, because it

applies to both narrative and dramatic modes. For example, mimesis delves into the make believe (i.e., things better or worse than they are); whereas, rhetorical imitation is delimited to the real (Woodruff 81).

Imitation, in the narrow sense, involves three key steps for rhetors: copying a model, examining the copy, imitating the model's structures (Crowley and Hawhee 295). This Sophistic pedagogical training was more concerned with teaching *style* than *invention*. For this reason, later rhetoricians often dismiss rhetorical imitation as being integral to rhetorical invention. Woodruff, as did Aristotle, works from this limited sense of imitation. To locate a more expansive notion of imitation, one that would assist a project of invention, we turn to Cicero's "imitatio."

Imitatio as employed in Roman rhetorical pedagogy worked to "show what the rules [of rhetoric] could not tell" (Leff 202). Through the exercise of imitatio rhetoricians were trained to identify the strategies and forms employed in historical texts, and then judge the utility of these rhetorical moves. These judgments, Michael Leff explains, would then be "reembodied in a new composition addressed to a different situation" (202). Imitatio is not a "copy" or "reproduction" of tradition, rather, it is a method that interprets and judges traditional forms to create anew.

In the Ad Herrenium (a Roman handbook published anonymously and attributed to Cicero) imitatio is classified as one of three ways to acquire rhetorical faculties with *theory* and *practice* being the other two. The author explains that "imitation stimulates us to attain, in accordance with a studied method, the effectiveness of certain models of speaking (I.ii.3). Imitatio is an integral process in the method of making judgments that is distinct from theory and practice.

Recall that Aristotelian imitation was a practical skill to copy style, whereas Ciceronian imitatio is about honing the ability to judge. By employing imitatio, a rhetor

becomes familiar with traditional speeches to make judgments that inform the invention of new texts. Imitatio's inventive quality motivated Erasmus in the sixteenth century to publish anthologies of classical speeches without detailing a logical order of the texts' arrangement (Arthos 334). Erasmus employed these copied speeches so that rhetors would form their own judgments about the utility and merit of the classical rhetorical moves. These judgments were then be employed and adapted in future rhetorical productions. Under Erasmus' sense of imitatio, Arthos writes, "a true Ciceronian would not sound very much like Cicero" (334). Again, imitatio is more sophisticated and productive than mere imitation.

With imitatio emphasizing judgment, the concept serves as the conduit between interpreting and production (Leff 201). With respect to this study, imitatio is an apt segue from invention as understanding toward a rejuvenated notion of invention as production. While Michael Leff re-reads Cicero's imitatio as the connection between rhetorical hermeneutics and producing rhetorical discourse, the latter part of this equation remains largely absent in rhetorical pedagogy and practice. The design arts, however, offer some guidance to the practice of imitatio throughout the production process.

Imitatio is closely related to the designer's methods of bio-mimicry and reverse engineering. The scientific method of biomimicry – a design process that works to mimic nature – starts from the assumption that "there is more to discover than to invent" (Benyus 4). In other words, nature has alternative solutions for many of the problems confronting humans – energy production and efficient transportation systems being two exemplars. Biomimicry seems to delimit rhetorical invention to an Aristotelian notion of discovery. However, these "discoveries" of nature provide the material for new cultural systems to emerge. When the designer asks: How can we run a business like a redwood forest? (Benyus 238-251), imitatio is working to create anew. New productions derived

from discoveries in nature are dependant upon the rhetor's faculties of interpretation and judgment. The success of biomimicry hinges on the ability of designers to make judgments about natural forms. In this way, rhetorical imitatio serves as a useful pedagogical method for the designer, while biomimicry offers the rhetorician a method to move from judging texts to producing them. One primary element of bio-mimicry that is especially germane to rhetoric is the practice of reverse engineering.

Reverse engineering refers to a deconstructive process whereby an engineer breaks down an existing object to better understand how it was designed and produced. Reverse engineering is "the attempt to recapture the top level specification by analyzing the product – 'attempt' because it is not possible in practice, or even in theory, to recover everything in the original specification purely by studying the product" (Musker). In industry, reverse engineering often is motivated by competition and legality, to understand the competition's building process and to build without engaging in copyright and patent infringement. However, reverse engineering also offers a critical method to adapt and improve upon that which already exists. In the same way that Erasmus published classical speeches to teach judgment, reverse engineering demands from the designer a judgment in terms of both the method and materials used to produce.

Reverse engineering is valuable to rhetorical criticism because it is embedded into a model of making. For example, the stages of reverse engineering are as follows: 1) analysis of the product, 2) generation of an intermediate level product description, 3) human analysis of the product description to produce a specification, 4) generation of a new product using the specification (Musker). These four steps include an analytic, judgmental, and generative move – all of which are necessary to create new beginnings from tradition.

While the critical rhetoric project also aims to remake anew in place of what has been deconstructed, this aim has went unfulfilled as the critic and constructor of the public domain remain largely disconnected. Recall from chapter one, William Keith's telling metaphor that critics operate much like engineers for they both need to be competent in reverse engineering. Indeed, critics and engineers both are redescribing how a text/product was constructed; however, only the latter is held accountable to use that conclusion to produce anew. *Imitatio*, as articulated by Michael Leff reminds rhetoricians that their judgments garnered from tradition are to be put to use. Reverse engineering and biomimicry are design methods open to such rhetorical projects.

Rhetorical Proofs

Beyond commonplaces and *imitatio*, the rhetorical proofs (*ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*) are integral to rhetorical invention. These complex Greek rhetorical concepts have inspired libraries of theorizing and criticism; thus, it would be naïve to suggest that in these few paragraphs I might add anything novel to the interpretation of these terms in and of themselves. However, there is room to explore a more productive frame for the rhetorical proofs so they might better address the invention of the local. For this move, I borrow from David Kaufer's discussion of the rhetorical appeals in his scholarship on rhetoric as a design art.

A contemporary way to teach the Aristotelian appeals is to associate them with the elements of the rhetorical triangle (speaker, text, and audience). *Ethos* – appeals to character and credibility – belong to the speaker, *logos* – reasoning and evidence – exist in the text, and *pathos* – emotional appeals – reside within the audience. While these divisions are easily grasped (and reproduced on multiple choice exams by even the most

elementary student), these distinctions become slippery when the appeals are taught as tools of invention. For example, a rhetor wants to deliver a speech at a city council meeting on the need for local energy production. In terms of invention, the rhetorical appeals would suggest to the rhetor that she should be considerate of the audience's emotions, think about her credibility and supply reason to her message. Yet, each of these appeals, to be effective in influencing the city council members, must pass through all three parts of the rhetorical triangle to achieve the outcome desired. Slippage is inevitable. As Kaufer and Butler contend, "It is dubious to proclaim some types of rhetorical proofs as more or less 'inside' or 'outside' the speech when no rhetorical appeal can pass from speaker to hearer without simultaneously occupying, in rich ways, both sides of the spatial metaphor of "in" and 'outside' the speech" (Rhetoric 84). Under the rhetorical triangle, the proofs are difficult to distinguish, in this way they become insignificant to the process of rhetorical invention.

An alternative approach is to frame the rhetor's appeals as working to balance the goals of the design. Kaufer and Butler contend that *predictiveness*, *responsiveness*, and *humanness* represent the goals of the design of rhetoric (Kaufer and Butler, Rhetoric 84). Each rhetorical appeal is motivated and shaped by these goals. In a successful invention, the rhetorical appeals balance these design goals.

The rhetorical proofs as currently taught also fail to acknowledge that the choices available to a rhetor in any given situation are delimited. Each proof, according to David Kaufer, is designed by the rhetor in a complex design space. In other words, there is an interactive relationship between the mode of proof and the environment from which it derives. Kaufer describes this method as *interpretation by design*, by this he means "interpreting what is uttered against the contrastive set of alternative choices that could have been uttered and weren't." He goes on to state that "interpretation by design is the

way we conventionally account for this space of a speaker's productive choice" (Tekhne 256-257). Kaufer's position is that thinking as a designer involves the realization that logos, ethos, and pathos function as an interaction.

In the case of logos, the interaction is between *language* and its reach across *contexts*. The question of logos: "What makes some words and phrases more portable than others?" involves a *language/context* interaction (Kaufer, Tekhne 258). The environment for ethos is formed through a *theory of language* and *public entitlement* interactions. Here, the question is "What can I say to entitle myself to say or do things to enhance persuasion?" (Kaufer, Tekhne 259). Understanding how entitlements work is a culturally based determination necessary for the design of ethical appeals. The third appeal, pathos, derives from the interaction between *language* and a system of *emotions*.

Commonplaces, imitatio, and the rhetorical proofs are used to analyze discourses of rural community development in the following three chapters. "Redescribing" how a community invents ways of becoming local is an important step toward generating a model of rhetorical invention. In addition, the design methods detailed above – heuristics, biomimicry, reverse engineering, and interpretation by design will also guide how these rejuvenation discourses are involved in the project of becoming local. While these design methods compliment classical rhetorical tools, I have yet to establish a theoretical connection between design and the rhetorical project of becoming local. Up to this point, I have treated design more like a metaphor for rhetoricians, but the conversation and collaborative possibilities I envision between rhetoricians and designers includes integrated theories, methods, and productions. To this end, it is important to make clear what is meant by design and the motives for connecting the two disciplines. Furthermore, an important question remains: How can a theory of design critically employ tradition to assist the project of building anew and becoming local?

RHETORICAL INVENTION, THE DESIGN ARTS, AND BECOMING LOCAL

A primary motivation to align rhetorical studies with the design arts is to bond the production of discourse with that of materials and spaces. The assumption here is that language not only includes oral, written, and nonverbal symbols but also includes “rites, ceremonies, monuments and the products of industrial and fine arts” (Buchanan, Design 192).³³ Some thirty years ago, Richard McKeon framed language in a similar fashion when he classified rhetoric as an architectonic productive art. McKeon was advocating an “art of producing things and arts, and not merely one of producing words and arguments (Uses 53). Carl Holmberg explains that architectonic for McKeon “does not simply mean an art of construction; it means an art of invention which is a rhetorical system of organizing data, experience, existence, places, or commonplaces” (229). This dissertation too is interested in the art of invention common to both the production of discourse and materials. McKeon derived his methods from mediaeval rhetoric, yet he points the rhetorician down the path of production.

I join with Richard Buchanan and ask: “What would a study of rhetoric in our own period look like if rhetoric were explored by McKeon’s strategy” (Design 183)? Buchanan contends that rhetoric would look more like a design art, for design is the productive architectonic art of the twenty-first century. He explains, [D]esign offers a pathway for bringing theory – ideas about the nature of the world and how we should live our lives – into closer relationship with practical action and the creation of diverse kinds of products and experiences” (Design 186). It is necessary to unpack this statement by understanding what is meant by “design” and the manner in which it relates to “practical action” and “diverse experiences.”

In the section that follows, I establish a working definition of design and explore the similarities between rhetoric and design studies. These comparisons are followed by

delineating the emergence of design studies in the twentieth century. From this point, “critical regionalism” – a method of building that compliments the project of becoming local – is discussed in relation to the classical methods of rhetorical invention. The move to critical regionalism completes the framework from which rural rejuvenation will be analyzed.

Sameness in design and rhetoric

Unlike rhetoric, the definition of design is generally uncontested (Buchanan, Design 188).³⁴ Richard Buchanan describes the art:

Design is the term commonly used today to describe the invention, planning, and realization of both tangible and intangible products, including all of the digital products that now exist alongside traditional analog methods. The term extends in its application to the planning of software, information and knowledge systems, and to the physical hardware systems that we usually describe as primary examples of ‘technology,’ following the restricted meaning of ‘technology’ that one usually finds in the twentieth century (Design 188).

This definition, adopted throughout this dissertation, understands design in a broad sense. It also reveals why rhetoric and design traditionally have had minimal interaction. Design was about making *products* at the start of the 20th century, while rhetoric was about making *texts*. In addition, design emerges as a professional trade and academic discipline to answer the calls of Industrialism;³⁵ whereas, rhetoric via Speech Departments emerges as a civic skill deemed necessary for democratic living.³⁶ Design and rhetoric rise in this

past century from disparate ends and originating myths; yet, Buchanan's definition also suggests the commonplaces from which designers and rhetoricians stand.

While designers and rhetoricians might publish and practice in different spaces, there are inherent connections between rhetorical studies and the design arts. The first connection is the lack of a distinct subject matter. That which properly belongs to design and rhetoric has been long debated without a consensus emerging. This ambiguity derives from an unstable identity that has spawned contentious debate within both fields on the question: What is distinct about our methods and practices? Is rhetoric an art like Hudson envisioned or a counterpart to the scientific method as suggested by Harrington? Designers too would ask such questions: Are we a fine art in the sense of sculpture and painting or a scientific trade like engineering? As with rhetoric, the conversation in design moves beyond these taxonomies to embrace a broader more integrative and critical role in the arts and sciences.

A second similarity exists in how each field of study originated. Buchanan reminds us that both arts were "practiced as a craft and profession long before it become a subject matter for theoretical speculation" (Design 188). The makers of unique crafts were designers by trade in the same way that itinerant teachers – the first Sophists – were practitioners of rhetoric. Furthermore, these two arts were/are at work in practices and fields of study arranged under different nomenclatures (i.e. advertising, urban planning, law, public policy etc.). As the rhetoric of inquiry teaches, all fields of study (including the hard sciences) are inherently rhetorical in the same way that all fields of study invent, plan, and realize a given product. The final product, whether it is a null hypothesis or a critical text, involves both rhetoric and design.

These wide-scope disciplinary frames are tantalizing because one can argue that it is design or rhetoric all the way down. But at the same time, a borderless scope is a recipe

for defeat in an era where specialists with clearly defined subject matters and quantifiable results are awarded the bulk of resources. These difficulties produce, in both rhetoric and design studies, the insecure position of admitting to colleagues across the university that we lack a subject matter (the first connection between rhetoric and design described above). Yet, to embrace this lack as a differentiating strength – a competitive advantage compared to the specialized fields –opens up a much needed and invigorated role for rhetoric and design. It embraces the architectonic nature of these fields that McKeon articulated in the 1960's. However, it is prudent to reframe McKeon's projection and suggest that these arts are poised, not to dominate the arts and sciences, but to serve as integrators of the specialized knowledge houses erected in the twentieth century.

The final and most obvious connection is that both fields of study are arts of invention at their best and mere stylistic manicures at their worst. It was Peter Ramus who parsed invention from rhetoric and handed it to the lovers of wisdom, leaving the dressing and presentation of discourse to the rhetorician. In design, the parsing is done by those in industry and science who view design as the “styling of the appearance of products” (Buchanan, Design 194). Under this system, the designer enters the product development process post engineering phase and departs prior to the sales pitch. The designer dresses up the project but is detached from the full process of product development.

The way out of these diminutive roles for design and rhetoric lies in the ability to contribute to the invention process. Ciceronian thinking assigns to rhetoric, both wisdom and eloquence (invention and elocution). Buchanan conceives of design in the same fashion. He explains, “[D]esign is an art of invention and disposition, whose scope is universal, in the sense that it may be applied to the creation of any human-made product. This makes design an art of forethought, as traditional rhetoricians perhaps regard their

discipline as an art of forethought in verbal communication” (Design 191). The key term in Buchanan’s description is forethought. Designers refer to this stage of development as the “fuzzy front end” while classical rhetoric termed it “invention.” Those primary looks, thoughts, and feelings are not exclusive to the reigns of science and philosophy; they also properly belong to rhetoric and design.

These three connections between rhetoric and design offer a stasis of sorts, places where designers and rhetoricians stand together. Yet, to understand how design fits with the rhetorical project of becoming local, it is important to trace the emergence and rise of design studies and practice in the twentieth century.

The Emergence of Design

In the twentieth century, design experiences a vibrant period of development and transformation in terms of theories, practices, and pedagogy. Design evolves from “a trade activity to a segmented profession to a field of technical research and to what now should be recognized as a new liberal art of technological culture” (Buchanan, Wicked 3). To understand the move from a technical research field to an architectonic liberal art requires a brief account of the factors that motivated and constrained the emergence of design studies. One way to trace the development of design in the twentieth century is to track the needs of late-capitalism.³⁷

Industrialism emerged with the initial problem of transforming the modes of production to maximize profit. The designer’s task, in this stage, was to generate buildings and products in a manner conducive to mass production. Once the modes of *production* were mastered, the problem confronting the capitalist was *distribution*. The designer assisted in refining distribution channels and maximizing the efficient use of

space. It is important to note here that “space” is associated with Modern industrial building designs. The industrial age set out to ease the burden of labor, generate capital, and ultimately yield higher levels of affluence. Modernity’s success hinges, in part, on the ability to obliterate *places*; for designers, this mandate equates to inventing buildings and products that are transportable to any *space*.

The perfect Modern building “is cubic, geometrically organized, constructed in steel, glass, and reinforced concrete, regular in form, flat on top and (with a few specified exceptions) pure white. It is to be conceived as a thing in itself, as if it were the only building in the world, and designed from the inside out, in terms of an abstract, idealized conception of its functions, with no concessions to the landscape or cityscape around it” (Berman 43). This utopian industrial building exists in infinite space – a one-size-fit all approach that flattens the inconvenient and inefficient particularity of places. The “big box” buildings that house Lowe’s Home Centers and Home Depot are exemplars of the Modern conception of space. When confronted with a given place, these 150,000+ square feet buildings flatten the preexisting conditions until the structure exists in a conformed environment. The design of efficient distribution and production channels accomplished just that.

Once production and distribution were conquered, the capitalist moved on to the perplexing issue of consumption. To control the rate of consumption would allow a company the ability to maximize output and increase efficiency. One way to control consumption is to manipulate the life-cycle of a given product. Thus, advances in material technology throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s allowed producers to construct products with short and predictable life cycles, as is the case with clothing and automotive tires that are made to wear out every few years. With the consumption cycle perfected and easily mimicked, companies were faced with the problem of differentiating

themselves from the competition. Assuming capital is available competitors had access to the same production, distribution, and consumption models. Thus, the only competitive edge for a given company was its design, specifically the ability to design experiences.

While the concept of infinite space is an attribute of industrialism, the commoditization of *space* marks a transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society. Designer, Miodrag Mitrasinovic working from the scholarship of Lefebvre and Baudrillard explains the post-industrial move in the following manner: “By the early 1970’s capitalism was facing the most serious crisis of its internal contradictions that could have no longer been resolved by improving neither production nor distribution processes. Lefebvre claimed that capitalism has managed to surpass the contradiction and to achieve growth by producing and occupying space: more precisely, by the production, colonization, fragmentation, specialization and commodification of space” (27). In a post-industrial society, contemporary design is called upon to move beyond objects and commoditize spaces and experiences.³⁸

The “experience economy” as it has been tagged, emerges in response to the improbability of achieving a competitive advantage at the level of commodities, goods, and services. The progression of economic value follows this path: *extraction of commodities* → *making goods* → *delivering services* → *staging experiences* (Pine and Gilmore 22). Pine and Gilmore demonstrate this shift using the birthday party as example. The birthday party started as an occasion where ingredients (commodity) were purchased to bake a cake. Then, companies began selling ready-made cake mixes (goods) to be prepared instantly for the birthday party. The next evolution occurred when grocery stores started offering affordable, fully baked and decorated cakes with the added benefit of home-delivery (service). The final shift to an economy of experience happens when the entire party experience is purchased, as with a birthday celebration at *Chucky Cheese*

(21-22). The birthday party illustrates how the capitalist's growth equation has shifted to the design of experiences.

One contemporary multi-disciplinary design firm, IDEO embraces quite well the needs of a post-industrial experience economy. In this way IDEO serves as an example of how rhetoricians and designers might work together in places beyond the academy. IDEO starts each project by establishing a point of view – “a place where we all agree we've been and can serve as springboard to where we're going.” This point of view “guides the creation of products, services, environments, and digital experiences that support and extend the brand experience” (IDEO). Notice that the aim of every design is to enhance an *experience*. IDEO's involvement in the experience economy strengthens Buchanan's contention that design is the new liberal art of technological culture. IDEO compiles teams of engineers, anthropologists, and designers to engage in the fuzzy front end of a project's design. These teams set out to examine how people experience objects and places in an effort to design products that create experiences. The scientist, humanist, and artist together are asking the question: How does design shape the experience of the user? And unlike the industrial age, when designers played a limited role in the production process, IDEO's diverse experts are involved with a project from the fuzzy front end through the launch of the end product.

Until this point, I have characterized design as fulfilling the needs of late-capitalism. To close my selective account of design here would misrepresent the critical element of design studies, diminish the case that conversation should be happening between designers and rhetoricians, and neglect the role design plays in the project of becoming local. The design arts have produced a body of critical scholarship that calls into question contemporary modes of production. The idea of “critical regionalism” as articulated by architect Kenneth Frampton is one such resistance effort that speaks

directly to my project at hand. Critical Regionalism offers a theory and practice of design that aims to reform the late-capitalistic economic and social system in a manner that promotes becoming local. From Frampton, the rhetorician gains a critical method of invention that compliments the classical tools of commonplaces, imitatio, and the rhetorical appeals outlined above.

Critical Regionalism and Inventing the Local

Resistance through architecture or “critical regionalism” as detailed by Kenneth Frampton is a manner of building that counter-balances the universalizing aim of modernity (Place 57). He explains his resistance theory in the following manner. By critical regionalism,

I did not mean any kind of style, nor did I have in mind some form of vernacular revival. Instead, I wished to employ the term to allude to a hypothetical and real condition in which a local culture of architecture is consciously evolved in express opposition to the domination of hegemonic power. In my view, this is a theory of building which, while accepting the potentially liberative role of modernization, resists being totally absorbed by forms of optimized production and consumption (Place 56).

Frampton’s conception of resistance through architecture stems from Paul Ricouer’s philosophizing on the tension between universalizing civilization (the aim of modernity) and local culture. Frampton expands the civilization/culture dichotomy by outlining fundamental and irreconcilable tensions that function in an architecture of resistance. Frampton offers the following five tensions as “sites of confrontation”: 1) space/place, 2)

typology/topography, 3) architecture/scenographic, 4) artificial/natural, 5) visual/tactile. These dichotomies represent spectrums of tension at work in the contemporary production process; thus, these tensions offer this dissertation a continuum by which to judge the efforts of becoming local. They offer the rhetorician criteria to address the question: To what ends do we invent?

The first tension detailed by Frampton addresses the relationship between *space* and *place*. A few pages back, I detailed how formally subdivided infinite space was a fundamental aspect of modern industrial thinking/acting. However, these modern yearnings for *spaces* are countered by *places* that are not always able or willing to be compromised by a modern design, as Lowe's Home Centers Inc. discovered when they attempted to build over the Edward's Aquifer in Austin, TX (Busky and Liao). Austin residents opposing the construction argued that the small shops and natural environment that currently occupy this place were more apt and environmentally sound than Lowe's big box building. This example of resistance illuminates the irreconcilable tension between space and place.

On one hand, "modern urban development has favored the proliferation of a universal, privatized, placeless domain" (Frampton, Place 58). Yet, the boundaries that mark places are important to people because they serve as the points that present face. These dwelling places mark a person's existence. The existential connection of people to place is forever in tension with spaces that lack faces and cornerstones. This explains, in part, the crisis experienced by those whose places (homes) are decimated by natural disasters or placeless construction.

The tension between space and place is evident in rhetorical invention with the general and specific commonplaces established by Aristotle and Cicero. The general topoi align with modern spaces; whereas, *idia* (or testimony) is connected with specific

places. The scholarly attention dedicated to general *topoi* further mirrors the Modern building project. However, *idia* and place cannot be ignored, for they are integral elements of critical building.

The distinction between *typology* and *topography* can be parsed on the grounds of scope. Typologies are “wide range” and “universally applicable to almost any site” (Frampton, Place 58); whereas, topographies are site specific. To compare this distinction to linguistics, typologies reflect the standard grammar and syntax of a given language, while topographies represent the vernacular forms of language use. Topographies, like vernacular language, are passed on by those with the know-how of a given place. A topographic building will “harmonize with the rise and fall of the cultivated landscape” (Frampton, Place 59). Typologies develop criteria from the outside and superimpose them on the topography; their end goal is to transform reality. The rhetorical appeals understood as interactions are inherently topographic when successfully employed. The appeals must “harmonize” with the landscape to be accepted by a particular audience.

The third dichotomy is *architectonic* and *scenographic*. The former term has to do with the technical means that support a given building, while the latter term refers to the reduction of a building to its image or representation without concern to what lies beneath the surface. The tectonic makes a statement about material reality – the relationship between a built form and the natural surroundings are revealed. When tectonic forms are reduced to images, as is the case with visual communication mediums, scenography is at work (Frampton, Place 60). Imitation, in the mere sense, is scenography. It is to copy style without an understanding of the formal relationships that allow discourse (and buildings) to function in an environment. Imitatio, on the other hand, demands the rhetorician have a tectonic understanding of discourse to be used to create anew.

The *artificial* and *natural* division reflects the relationship a building has to nature. Frampton contends that “more than any other art form building and architecture have an interactive relationship with nature” (Place 60). However, Modernity’s alliance to universal technology and civilization work to supplant the natural with the artificial. Frampton offers the all-to-common experience of the modern air-conditioned building, where windows are sealed and fluorescent lights are bright even on the most temperate and shiny days. Unpredictable temperatures and sunrays are modern inefficiencies that demand the artificial. Yet, the unintended consequence of optimal efficiency by artificial means is the destruction of the natural – the very materials that provide the conditions for artificial inventions. Kaufer’s understanding of the rhetorical appeals as interactions is a recognition that language does not stand alone. A material interaction –a relationship with the natural – is at work when rhetorical appeals are successfully employed.

Visual / Tactile, the final binary in Frampton’s critical regionalism, accounts for the experience of an environment. Perceiving architecture through a visual stimulus is just one way to experience a building. Varieties of other factors affect one’s experience of architecture, for example air movement, temperatures, smells, and ambience. Frampton details how Renaissance architecture set out to promote “rationalized seeing” that came to be known as “formalized representation” (Place 61). Seeing buildings in this way supplants the tactical experience of a building. Frampton explains that it is important for the visual and tactile to serve as critical checks on one another. The implication here is “that the being as a whole has a greater capacity to resist than the well-known symbiotic link connecting the visual stimuli to information rather than experience” (Place 62). This dichotomy is especially important for rhetoricians. As I argued earlier, there is much work left to done to understand the role of images in rhetorical invention. However, the move beyond the image is to understand how discourse creates an entire sensual

experience. While performance studies acknowledges the embodied nature of rhetorical production, the designer's methods further remind the rhetorician that invention is more than discourse all the way down.

Frampton outlines these five dichotomies to argue that critical regionalism is a building method that emphasizes *place, topography, architectonic, natural* and the *tactile*. Frampton's "regionalism" resists the universalizing move that is germane to modernization; yet, he interjects "critical" to signify that this resistance is not a return to populist or historical regionalism as the case with Third Reich architecture (Place 55). His is not a project stuffy with nostalgia – one that seeks to resurrect mythical vernacular building forms. Frampton's regionalism is appealing because it acknowledges the paradox of local cultures operating within a global technological and scientific system.

Inventing the local in the age of globalization is the apparent paradox of this dissertation. Frampton embraces this paradox to articulate the possibility of a "regionally based world culture" (Frampton, Modern 327). Critical regionalism is a "hybrid situation in which rationalized production (even partially industrialized production) may be combined with time-honored craft practices, provided that the scale of the investment remains sufficiently modest to permit idiosyncratic forms of disjunction and that the local culture retains a capacity to evaluate the results in terms which are not exclusively economic" (Frampton, Place 57). In other words, he promotes the importing (or imitatio) of cultural forms when they are remade (or redescribed) within a local place. In this way, there is wiggle room for new beginnings to emerge within a post-industrial environment. For rhetoricians, critical regionalism offers a method of deconstruction that fits within a larger process of invention.

CONCLUSION

I began this lengthy journey with the contention that contemporary rhetorical scholarship lacks a level of engagement necessary to address issues of sustainability. Absorbed with understanding and deconstructing, rhetorical studies left behind its productive tradition. This chapter worked to revive this tradition by re-reading rhetorical invention as a productive art. Going back to the classical tradition to re-read productive methods like *topoi*, *imitatio*, and the rhetorical proofs offers a method of building for the project of becoming local. Alongside these productive methods arises the necessity to better understand visual symbolic forms. Aristotle's *energeia* provides a classical way into reading rhetorical invention as a visual and verbal practice. Opening up rhetorical invention to visual symbolic forms better aligns rhetoric with the inventive work being done in contemporary society. Currently, this productive space is being occupied by the design arts. Thus, I outlined the connection between design and rhetoric emphasizing the benefits of integrated efforts. While design could benefit from the classical rhetorical methods, rhetoric gains from the current methods of heuristics, bio-mimicry, reverse engineering and interpretation by design. Furthermore, the design arts also provide a critical manner of invention and building. Frampton's critical regionalism illustrates the tensions involved in creating local places in a global world. These dichotomies equip the rhetorician with a way to judge the ends of invention. Ultimately the connection with designers better equips the rhetorician to *engage* in the project of becoming local.

Chapter 3: The “Progress” of Aurora, Nebraska

RECAPITULATING THE METHODS

The concepts generated in chapter two can be categorized into three types of analytic tools: *classical rhetoric and design*, *visual rhetoric*, and *critical building*. In the next three chapters I analyze the process of becoming local, and each of these analytic tools functions to guide the case studies chosen. The first case study is Aurora, Nebraska; it occurs later in this chapter. However, before I begin the analyses, I recapitulate each of the above categories in an effort to make clear the analytic path taken throughout this dissertation.

The classical rhetoric and design tools include complimentary concepts employed in the production of rhetoric and design. The rhetorical *commonplaces* are paired with design *heuristics*, while *imitatio* in rhetoric are connected to *biomimicry* and *reverse engineering* in design. In addition, the *rhetorical proofs* (ethos, pathos, logos) are discussed in relation to *interpretation by design*. These seven tools offer the rhetorician both a language of building and a mentality of production.

The visual rhetoric analytic tools include the *grammar of images*, the *emblem*, the *image as argument*, and *energeia*. The grammar of image refers to how images mean while the emblem works as a site of idea generation within the circulation of images. Framing images as arguments opens up the analysis of images to more discursive functions (i.e., dissent), and the final term, *energeia*, is an overarching concept explaining the manner in which rhetors bring that which cannot be seen before the eyes. My analysis of *energeia* moves through three phases of ideation: bringing an idea before the mind's

eye (intrapersonal), bringing the idea before the public's eyes (public display), and bringing the idea into being (construction).

The third category, critical building, specifically refers to critical regionalism as detailed by Kenneth Frampton. Frampton provides the following five dichotomies as tensions in the building process: *space/place*, *typology/topography*, *scenographic/architectonic*, *artificial/natural* and *visual/tactile*. Recall that these dichotomies are best thought of as spectrums of tension at work in the production process. I am using Frampton's dichotomies to judge efforts of becoming local. In other words, when a community invents using one of the methods in the first two categories, critical regionalism offers a way to judge the invention's ends. In terms of becoming local, I am looking for efforts in invention that emphasize *place*, *topography*, *architectonic*, *natural* and the *tactile*.

AURORA, NEBRASKA

Aurora, the Hamilton County seat situated amidst the fertile soil of southeastern Nebraska, is a rural community by every definition. Born from agrarian roots, it is a small town (population 4,210) grappling with the forces of a global post-industrial economy. Aurora was chosen as a case study because it has history of innovation, a history that has enabled it to buck the trend of decline experienced by most US rural communities. For instance, the population is projected to grow by 7-9% in the next two decades (Aurora Chamber), despite the fact that Aurora is located some 75 miles from the metropolitan area of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Aurora's innovative spirit has not gone unrecognized by state and regional sources. In 2001 the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City profiled Aurora's technology

and e-business developments as exemplars of progressive development. Yet, telecommunications are just the latest turn in this culture of innovation that has been nurtured by the local residents.

Beginning with the invention of deep-well irrigation in the 1930's, Aurora community members have managed to shift with the changing macroeconomic forces. While agriculture still plays a central role in the community, Aurora has turned from *agriculture* to *manufacturing* to *technology* earlier and with more ease than peer communities. Today, Aurora is home to three fortune 500 companies, a host of regional and local businesses, and an impressive agriculture cooperative. These ventures reflect Aurora's aim to diversify their agriculturally based economy into an economy that support energy, telecommunications, and transportation. These emerging industries account for 55 million dollars of capital investment over the past decade and a county property valuation that increased 80% from 1990 to 2000 to over 900 million dollars (Aurora Chamber).

Innovation has not only resulted in material gains and a diversified economy for Aurora: Aurora is noted for its rich community feel, a sense of community cultivated through a host of public initiatives. For instance, in 1994 and in 2000 Aurora engaged in a process of strategic planning. In each case, hundreds of community members were called upon to assess the most pressing needs of the community. These planning sessions served as rich sites of invention where priorities and initiatives were outlined for the next five years. The byproduct of these community discussions was the formation of small groups formed around specific felt needs. These volunteer groups are a reflection of the participatory culture fostered by Aurora.

The strategic planning process is just one reason why Aurora is described as "progressive" by those inside and outside the community. Mark Kremer, a native of

Aurora who left for Minneapolis and moved back to Aurora a decade ago, describes the progressive climate: “I came back because I saw opportunity.... I subscribed to the hometown paper—as most former residents of small towns do—and saw that there was a progressive mindset, people looking for new opportunities, and a community that was structured around growth. There was a high level of involvement, and they welcomed people to participate” (Community Affairs 6).

Aurora’s “progressive” culture has been attributed, in part, to the development of private foundations. Currently, some fifteen local foundations have assets totaling over 40 million dollars. The foundations have not only cultivated a culture of philanthropy, they have funded numerous community projects and local ventures. Recent foundation-funded developments include a new library building, Plains Museum, Children’s Explorit Educational Center, and a Leadership Center.

Community leader and President of Hamilton Telecommunications, Gary Warren, articulated the value of these private foundations as offering the ability to act fast and spend in ways that a publicly financed project may look at as needless waste (Interview). The shale shingles on the library, an aesthetic nicety, are an example of a foundation decision that likely would have been voted down in a tax funded project. The foundation determined this “extra” as important toward cultivating a progressive community.

The foundations are a significant dimension to understanding what it means to invent and develop in Aurora because they add a level of cooperation between public and private interests. Unlike the “community development” sales tax initiatives passed in most communities since the mid 1980’s, Aurora has refrained from incorporating this funding mechanism for economic development. Their success relies upon a mixture of public agencies, private foundations, and interested individuals.

This chapter analyzes successful development projects of the Aurora community. Particular attention is given to the initial inventions, specifically deep-well irrigation and fast-speed photography; these inventions are cornerstones of Aurora's innovation culture. Additionally, the strategic plans of 1994, 1999, and 2000, along with the I-80 corridor project, serve as primary examples of invention. The texts for this analysis were obtained from interviews with community leaders, local newspaper accounts, strategic planning documents, and community infrastructure and building designs. These texts are examined using the tools summarized above in an effort to trace how Aurora engages the project of becoming local.

The Memory of Innovation

In 1931 Frank Edgerton dug deep into the earth of Hamilton County some 225 feet in search of crop water. Edgerton's probe was fruitful to say the least; he tapped into the Ogallala aquifer – the most abundant underground water supply in the United States. By 1937 Edgerton created an eighteen foot diameter windmill wheel, the largest in the county at the time, as part of the invention of deep-well irrigation (Hamilton, 1997). Within a year of the windmill, a study by the University of Nebraska concluded that the aquifer contained a supply of groundwater that would forever guard against shortages (Hamilton, 1998). For Aurora, experiencing the most devastating drought on record and quickly becoming a “dust-bowl”, Edgerton's invention worked radically to change agriculture in Hamilton County and the surrounding areas. The Aurora soil was suitable for grain crops, especially corn, and irrigation improved crop yields immensely. For this discovery, Hamilton County became the self-proclaimed “Deep-Well Irrigation Center of the World” (Hamilton, Welcome).

The discovery of deep-well irrigation illustrates Aurora's rich tradition of agriculture, but it also signifies the cornerstone of a "progressive" culture of innovation articulated by Aurora community members today. In Streeter Park, the town's oldest and largest park, a monument stands as a reminder that the innovation of deep-well irrigation played a profound role in the development of Aurora. It reads:

During the 1930's Nebraska suffered one of the most serious droughts in its recorded history....Between 1930 and 1940, the state declined in population because of the unfavorable agricultural conditions," the historical marker goes on to tell that "a 225 foot deep well, sunk in the county by F.E. Edgerton in 1931 remains one of the deepest in the area. It is not uncommon for irrigated land to produce more than twice the crop raised on non-irrigated land. Irrigation is an important factor in the occupation of Nebraska by an agricultural population.

This marker describes a time when Aurora's declining livelihood drove Edgerton to invent. Despite the fact that deep-well irrigation as traditionally practiced is no longer sustainable, Edgerton's discovery and invention serve as a cornerstone from which Aurora's culture of innovation was nourished. Frank Edgerton literally dug deep to start a new beginning for this place, and this inventive act would continue to establish an Aurora *place* in the midst of the expansive Great Plains *space*.

Frank Edgerton's invention allowed agriculture to flourish in the area, but his son, Harold, would bring international attention to Aurora. Harold Edgerton became an MIT scientist and inventor; he is known as the "father of electronic flash photography" and developer of the stroboscope (Aurora News, [Explorit](#)).³⁹ Edgerton's research had world-wide reach; he was funded by the National Geographic Society for over twenty projects

and named one of the 15 most influential inventors of the 20th century (Edgerton, Strobe). Today, Harold Edgerton's legacy continues in Aurora's Edgerton Explorit Center. After Dr. Edgerton's death in 1990, a hands-on science center with interactive exhibits and displays was constructed and opened in 1995. The first-rate learning center has received over 600,000 visitors and aims to "instill and nurture in all people the joy of scientific discovery and exploration through hands-on learning experiences" (Edgerton). As the mission statement relates, this is a place of invention, an incubator of sorts working to foster a culture of innovation.

The Edgerton father and son discoveries are important precursors to understanding contemporary inventions in Aurora. The historical marker and multi-million dollar educational center illustrate that public memory of these innovative pioneers exists today. If I am overstating the influence of the past on present actions, even the most conservative assessment would conclude that a critical mass of people sees significance in promoting Aurora as a progressive innovative place. Kathy Brown, plant manager of a local company speaking of their \$100,000 gift to the Edgerton Explorit Center reflects this sentiment: "The Aurora Community has a longstanding tradition as a progressive community and the science center is kind of a jewel and it needs to be supported and nurtured." (Kugler, Edgerton A10). The Edgerton Explorit Center is a jewel in that it works to promote and sustain a culture of innovation in Aurora. It is a material reminder that Aurora's narrative of innovation and progress begins with the Edgerton family. These early inventions reflect a great deal about what it means to become local in this rural community.

Progress (and progressive) is a commonplace articulating what it means to become local in Aurora. The term is part of the community logo – "Aurora: Promise, Progress, Productivity" – that greets drivers upon entering the town and serves as the

header for Aurora's promotional material. This topos surfaces in more than just promotional materials. Testimonies about the community by residents and those outside the community commonly use descriptors like "progress" and "progressive" when referring to Aurora. United Nations worker Natalie Hahn, a recent guest at a local awards banquet, demonstrates this trend when she says: "Aurora is an interesting and progressive community." She goes on to remark: "It is an amazing statistic" that nearly 79 students who graduated between 1992 and 2004 have returned to live in the community (Fowler). Hahn points to a critical indicator Aurora leaders use to gauge their progress – the talented and motivated youth who return and commit to the community's development.

"Progressive" and "progress" are also choice terms for local newspaper editor/owner, Kurt Johnson. When pressed during an interview to expand upon this terminology Johnson told me that "progressive" refers to a "perspective" in Aurora of "seeing the bigger picture." The progressive recruitment of jobs and talented workers is only possible with the realization that "it all has to work together" (Johnson). Johnson is describing the multiple community elements, like housing, utilities, and education that, when successful have a synergistic effect on community development projects.

The commonplace of progress, entrenched in the community vernacular since the Edgertons, also works to differentiate Aurora from its peer communities. Phil Nelson with Hamilton Telecommunications of Aurora, describes it this way: "A lot of Doc's [Dr. Edgerton] magic was his ability to inspire. By doing what we're doing to expand [the Explorit Center] sets an example to other communities as to what small communities can do" (Kugler, Edgerton A10). Becoming local in Aurora, in part, involves embracing a pioneering spirit. While Aurora remains a traditional community with many "conservative" values, they juxtapose this sentiment with the commonplace of progress applied to how they invent. This approach to invention is a manner that many rural

communities refuse to embrace. Thus, Nelson is accurate in suggesting that Aurora is providing a model of invention for other places. In this case, the method of invention is imitatio, both as taught to visitors in the Edgerton Center and promoted to other communities as the invention of sustainable development.

The Edgerton Explorit Center, by its mission and the motive for its creation, is an example of imitatio at work. The center teaches about Edgerton's discoveries and also offers "hands-on exhibits" that allow visitors to interact with science. These exhibits are meant to teach certain principles, but they also work to inspire invention through imitatio. Imitatio works to cultivate a mentality for invention. It is this mentality that community leaders believe is important to nourish. Gary Warren, President of Hamilton Telecommunications, remarks, "If we don't build, maintain and grow facilities like this [Edgerton Explorit Center], and resources like this for our communities, we won't attract and keep young people. We don't have to have everything here, but we do need to have some of these things" (Kugler, Edgerton A1). Warren is addressing a prominent problem facing rural communities – the youth leave for post-secondary education and training and do not return to rural areas.

Imitatio at the Explorit Center works to combat this problem in the broadest sense. To interact with the discoveries of Edgerton, the thinking goes, is to equip people with a mentality to invent anew. Imitatio as a method teaches us that an Edgertonian does not look like Dr. Edgerton, yet they share a common curiosity. Aurora hopes this method of imitatio works to inspire the creative youth to invent anew in the confines of Hamilton County.

Imitatio is also at work with the Edgerton Explorit Center as an exemplar to other communities. Inventing a sustainable place requires cultivating a culture that motivates and equips people to dig in and contribute. The story that must be told, experienced, and

sustained is that becoming local has value. As Warren remarks above, Aurora uses the science center to demonstrate to other rural communities that smaller places can offer more. The goal is not for other communities to mimic the Explorit Center; rather, it is one of imitatio. Aurora's methods and motives are to be applied as they best enhance other places. Where Aurora sees value in cultivating a culture of innovation directed toward technological advancements, other rural communities, because of geography or disposition, might choose a different point of emphasis; in this community imitatio is at work when the Explorit Center functions as a catalyst and model for the invention process.

The memory of innovation in Aurora also speaks to the visual dimension of rhetorical invention, specifically *energeia*. The invention of deep-well irrigation and stop-action fast speed photography both literally brought before the eyes that which could not be seen. The preservation and display of these discoveries functions as a visual invention tool.

Dr. Edgerton's invention of fast-speed photography is a prime illustration of how visuals can serve the process of invention. Edgerton created a strobe flash that made it possible to capture images previously undetectable. To see images of a milk drop ring or the moment a balloon pops, is to see phenomena the naked eye cannot without technical assistance. These images of action, frozen in time, make available a unique vantage point into a given activity. This is *energeia* at work, the use of symbols to demonstrate the internally active nature of words and objects. And these demonstrations, in the way they bring before the eyes that which cannot be seen, offer a perspective that can spawn new beginnings. In the case of Edgerton's photographs, these new beginnings could stem from invention by biomimicry. To bring the natural before the eyes in the form of high-speed

photography has the potential to display an act worth mimicking in new designs of objects and places.

In addition to the Explorit Center, the historical marker of deep-well irrigation situated in Streeter Park can be read as *energeia*. This sign brings the history of innovation before the community's eyes. While the marker is not especially attractive or extraordinary enough to warrant special attention, it is a significant marker of place. As cornerstones reflect the foundation from which a building emerges, the visual display of this discovery serves as an anchoring point, a point from which dwelling places show forth. The connection here between *energeia* and place is key to a rhetorical theory of invention. While the visual sign marks this place, it also serves as a reminder that this place is internally active and in possession of an innovative spirit; thus, the visual sign inspires and warrants new discoveries and inventions.

Aurora's notion of progress not only functions as *imitatio* and a fundamental commonplace, it works as a heuristic for Aurora residents to justify further community development projects. The narrative, beginning with the Edgertons, teaches that the tradition of this rural community is progressive. When new beginnings like the technology incubator or leadership mentoring program are proposed, progress is the mental shortcut warranting the investment. Aurora's design logic is that progress must be embraced to sustain this community. In terms of argument structure, the heuristic of progress serves as the warrant to build anew. Successfully using progress as a justification for new development is evident in the Aurora community strategic plans of 1994 and 2000.

Strategic Planning

Invention inherently belongs to the strategic planning process to such a degree that the process of thinking strategically about satisfying needs is a study of invention in itself. To this end, the strategic plan can be seen as a tool of invention similar to biomimicry or imitatio. In addition to investigating the strategic plan, it is important for this project examining the rhetoric of becoming local to analyze what emerges from the plan.

Aurora, in conjunction with Hamilton County, has conducted several strategic plans to assess community needs and invent a better place for people to live. Their latest endeavors include a “technology task force” that made recommendations in 1994 and 1999, and a more general “community task force” that reported in 2000. These three reports serve as the texts for this analysis. The categories and recommendations derived from Aurora’s planning efforts are rich sites of analysis because they illustrate the process of inventing a place. While the emergent qualities are specific to Aurora, they can function inductively (and instructively) as starting points for others to build a local way of being.

In 1993 a group of interested community members in Hamilton County gathered to form the Information Technology Task Force. This volunteer group consisting of industry, agriculture, government, education, and health care officials, set out to plan the future of information technology in Aurora. The exigency and assumptions for the task force are expressed in the opening paragraph of their strategic plan report:

We live in a changing world, and technology is causing that change to occur more rapidly now than it did fifty, twenty-five or even ten years ago. Information technology is the superhighway which links rural America to urban America. It

enhances our ability to communicate with individuals and organizations around us in a direct and efficient manner. Information technology enables us to more easily and more rapidly be informed of the continuous advancements which occur around us, therefore, enhancing the quality of our lives both economically and socially (Information 1).

The heuristic at work in this statement is “progressive.” Because we are progressive, the thinking goes, it is not only logical but necessary to embrace the latest technological advancements. In other words, if Hamilton County is to sustain itself as a place of progress, information technology (IT) must play an integral role. While the superhighway serves as the means to a progressive Aurora, the commonplace of progress demands that community members work together on complicated issues. It is this “culture of cooperation,” states Eddie Ransom, Executive Director of the Aurora Area Chamber and Development Corporation, which has enabled Aurora to sustain and develop (Interview). Ransom offers as an example three Aurora banks who, despite competing interests, have come together on multiple occasions to address overarching community issues like IT. In 1993 community members with diverse interests assembled under the commonplace of progress to invent the IT future of Hamilton County.

To ascertain how conclusions generated by the strategic plan serve the project of inventing the local, it is revealing first to understand the methods by which information was gathered and processed, especially regarding who was (and who was not) given a voice in this project. According to the 1999 report, the strategic plan involved six key stages: 1) assess the community, 2) develop a mission statement, 3) determine wants, 4) put the goals in writing, 5) develop the action plan, and 6) evaluate the outcomes. Within these planning stages there is potential for alignment with Frampton’s critical

regionalism. For example the first stage, “assess the community,” is also referred to as an “environmental scan.” This step is aimed at becoming “oriented to the community’s current state” (Information 3). Here, the task force attempts to measure up the opportunities and threats to their “area;” in Frampton’s terms, they are taking stock of what nourishes and depletes *place*, *topography*, and the *natural*. While the strategic plan does not explicitly state what emerged from stage one, the recommendations reveal that the IT plan was attuned partially to the concerns of critical regionalism. I address these recommendations after detailing the sources used to compose an image of Aurora’s IT state of affairs.

To determine the IT “wants” of the community, the task force surveyed and educated all in the community who were interested and willing to engage the project. To analyze this phase of the strategic plan, I look to Kaufer and Butler’s notion of interpretation by design. Recall from chapter two that the rhetor’s design is motivated by the goals of *predictiveness*, *responsiveness*, and *humanness*. These goals also define and delimit the range of design possibilities in Aurora’s strategic plan. To interpret how the task force generated the strategic plan is to evaluate the task force actions in relation to the contrastive alternate choices that were not employed. This act also reveals the rhetorical appeals at work to invent the task force’s recommendations.

In regard to educating the community, the IT task force worked to invent a participatory environment by employing an ethos of deferment. The IT task force prepared public relations materials about information technology in conjunction with presentations to the village boards and primary service providers. In addition, two IT information conferences, attended by 175 and 150 people respectively, were held in 1994 and 1996 at the public school. These conferences not only educated citizens, but the

public forums gave community members a voice in planning the mission statement and directing the strategic plan.

The location and function of the conferences reflect the task force's appeal to ethos. Inventing Aurora's IT future hinges on public involvement, as does the implementation and sustainability of the development projects. The task force explicitly makes this clear when discussing how to develop these plans. They write, "The task force...seeks to distribute the information and encourage individuals and groups with an interest to take responsibility for carrying out the various actions required. Although the task force may choose to facilitate the implementation of certain action steps, the task force considers it extremely important that most of the goals be achieved by individual entities or consortiums within the community other than the task force" (Information 4-5). Ideally, "most" of the "responsibility" is deferred to the community members at large. Here we have an appeal to ethos that functions by deferring status and agency from the speaker and placing it on the audience. In Kaufer's terms, the goal in this message design is responsiveness; the IT task force is working to avoid a perception of being exclusive or heavy handed.

And there is good reason to read their appeal as ingenuous, if for no other reason than the material reality facing small communities. Aurora cannot afford to employ a core of consultants and professionals to solve their most pressing problems. Operating much like a non-profit business the sustainability of rural places requires a village of interested volunteers, and this constraint shapes any successful appeal to ethos. It is "extremely important," contends the task force, that the advancements in IT are addressed as a cooperative undertaking. Gary Warren, President of Hamilton Telecommunications and a founder of the IT task force, emphasized the tenuous nature of the task force during those early years. For about three years, Warren recalls, a small group of interested individuals

kept meeting, uncertain whether the task force would generate a critical mass of interested individuals (Interview). For this reason, the task force appeals to ethos to invent new beginnings, in this case, a critical mass of participants.

While the task force urged the community to actively contribute to the community's IT future, they are clear that this invention oscillates between collective and individual goals. This duality is evident in the strategic plan's reference to moving forward with the recommendations:

The entire planning process to this point has been voluntary in nature. The task force was formed voluntarily with people from diverse and broad areas of interest. The community's input was sought and received on a voluntary basis as well. Implementing the plan, working to achieve the action steps and reaching the goals will also be voluntary in nature. Our desire is for individuals and entities within the community to use the plan as a resource for determining their own actions and plans. Hopefully, some of the ideas derived from the community and published in this plan will spark new activity and positive progress toward one or more of the goals or the overall mission of Hamilton County's Information Technology Strategic Plan (Information 17).

On one hand "individuals" are "voluntarily" working to better their "own actions." Yet, we are also told that successful strategic planning requires that "citizens" take "responsibility" and work for the "overall mission" of Hamilton County. It is the responsibility of citizens organizing voluntarily to nourish ideas in a cooperative venture.

Furthermore, the task force is hopeful that the strategic plan will "spark new activity" and yield new beginnings not yet articulated. Here, emerging from the strategic

planning process, the local is invented and affirmed. Recognizing that to be local is to oscillate between individual interests and collective missions is fundamental to understanding public entitlement in Aurora. And the interaction between public entitlement and language is the design space that shapes the rhetor's appeal to ethos. By deferring agency and responsibility to the community at large, the task force demonstrates how ethos can be used to invent and nourish a local sense of responsibility.

In addition to the strategic plan's methods, the goals from the '94 and '99 reports reveal the culture of invention in Aurora (see Appendix for a complete list). The focus on communication technologies suggests that Aurora is committed to fostering connections that spur new beginnings. Location and access to these technologies affects the degree to which the culture of innovation is enhanced. In 1994 the task force's primary goal was building the IT infrastructure in Hamilton County. The "public" dimension of each recommendation is telling, especially considering that many of these technologies were just emerging into the public realm. For example, public access to satellite downlinks and online connections are priorities of the task force. In addition, connecting the public schools to external sources via video is promoted along with providing a video-conference room available for public use. These public access points are to be complimented with a community mail network and a bulletin board for local information.

While infrastructure is the primary focus of the 1994 goals, sustaining the infrastructure is addressed with a focus on IT education and a call to establish an IT foundation. The above mentioned ideas began as goals, and each of them to some degree was implemented before the second task force report in 1999. What we can take from these initial goals is a commitment to ubiquitous infrastructure that consists of multiple public access points. The manner in which these tools might be used is left largely

unarticulated. The 1999 report ventures into issues of residential use and promoting the IT infrastructure to business prospects.

The shift to enhance IT use in Aurora, along with using the infrastructure to recruit business development, demonstrates how the initial plan spawned inventions. By 1999 Aurora had set its goals on improving IT education and access for the community. This involved making people aware of the “impact of information technology on the social-economic structure of our society and specifically our local area (Information 16).” Here we have the challenge of bringing before the eyes that which the community cannot see. *Energeia* is at work. The task force recommended that a second technology conference be hosted in Aurora and that the high school host an IT demonstration night for the public. Furthermore, a call went out to improve the community’s online face. Each of these efforts works to create an image of what IT is doing and can do for this community.

In order to further promote and develop Aurora’s use of information technology, they employ the topos of “progress.” Aurora’s progressive tradition of innovation paves the way for information superhighway to develop new business and community opportunities. In this vein, the 1999 task force sought to recruit technology businesses and IT experts to Aurora. Despite the geographic constraints (75 miles from a metropolitan area) and stigmas associated with small towns (i.e., old-fashioned and narrow-minded), the technology infrastructure implemented from the 1994 plan made it possible to recruit IT businesses to Aurora.

To nourish the IT sector, plans for an information technology business incubator emerged. Again, the progressive topos is fulfilled, this time by the incubator project. The technology incubator demonstrates the utility of *imitatio* in the invention process. The incubator is a place to grow fledgling ideas into self-supporting entities. In Aurora’s case,

the technology incubator offers a place to cultivate and launch ideas, but it also offers a network of expertise. Gary Warren, an initiator of the technology incubator, describes in an interview that the incubator works to put the start-up companies in contact with resourceful individuals. Here, is another example of imitatio, as the know-how of residents is used to create anew. Through conversations, the past experiences are used to make judgments about a new venture. And these conversations, Warren remarks, have seemed to “be the most helpful” to those starting up IT companies (Warren). The recruitment success of IT companies and skilled workers, impossible without the technological infrastructure, has been made possible by a vision articulated in the 2000 strategic planning report.

The Aurora Development Corporation in 2000 invited a cross-section of Hamilton County individuals to engage in a community strategic planning process focused on goals for the next three to five years. From the initial conversations the following mission emerged: “Our vision is to be recognized as a great community to live and work” (Aurora, Hamilton 1). This statement reflects the kind of “place” Aurora wants to show forth. I read the community strategic plan as it reflects the invention and design of critical regionalism. The question is: How does Aurora try to invent a regional place – a place where one could become local while balancing the demands of a global technological agenda?

The overarching topos for the 2000 strategic plan is growth. To frame the issue as one of growth signifies a common concern for rural communities – the aging and declining population. The “growth” goal is also consistent with the mission of being “recognized” as a great community. Publicity will attract newcomers and entice the youth to return home, just as this publicity attracted me to pen this chapter. Invention for the sake of growth also fulfills the promise of progress advertised on the city-limit marker

and discussed in the early pages of this chapter. Community members were surveyed about the pressing needs facing Aurora. With over ten percent of the community providing written or verbal feedback, the task force felt they received an accurate pulse of the residents' concerns. The following topoi emerge as areas that need to grow: *business, education, employment, families, and recreation*. Together these topoi compose Aurora's community emblem, a recognizable lure to would-be residents. The strategic plan is the initial step of invention and the first attempt to bring this vision (emblem) before the eyes of the community. The manner in which this vision articulates aspects of critical regionalism follows.

Frampton holds that places work contra to the uniformity of spaces. To discuss place is to discuss what is local about a given environment. Aurora's community strategic plan reveals the inherent tension between place and space when trying to inspire and invent growth. In order to grow *Business*, the committee encourages a revitalization of the town square. The town square, arguably the most distinctive aspect of Aurora, reveals a strong sense of place. In the center of the town square stands the county courthouse building, shaded by large trees and war memorials. Facing the courthouse on each of the four city blocks are local business storefronts. The task force recommends that the development should use "the décor of the courthouse as a central focus" and "utilize existing storefronts around the square to maintain the 'Downtown square' atmosphere" (Hamilton, Strategic 3). These recommendations clearly reveal a concern for place. The historic courthouse functions as a cornerstone from which all other designs emerge; it serves as the epicenter from which an orientation to place is fostered. Aurora's recommendation reflects a trend in small towns to rejuvenate the main-street business districts.⁴⁰ These projects are motivated by the desire to present a local face to would-be

shoppers. Furthermore, the main-street projects serve a social function, as the well-groomed public places house parades, festivals and public gatherings.

In addition to building designs, Aurora's *Education* recommendations reflect a concern for place. The task force recommends to "jointly fund a position with responsibilities to coordinate and publicize educational opportunities to meet community needs" (Hamilton, Strategic 4). This position reflects the committee's commitment to developing "educational partnerships." With these arrangements, the local schools, higher education, and industry would engage in dialogue about curriculum to better train workers and equip the youth to be productive residents in Aurora. This brand of curriculum is designed in accordance with the local. To best achieve this integration and better manage public resources, more sharing between school and other community resources is encouraged. The task force's view of education works to establish a pedagogy tied to place. This pedagogy is one of becoming local; it is designed to fit the contours of Aurora.

Frampton also made the distinction between typology and topography: typology refers to a general type of building that could be built anywhere, while topography indicates attunement with a place. In terms of *Business* goals, Aurora addresses both parts of the dichotomy. They are in favor of recruiting "franchise" restaurants to the area, which is an obvious typology; these eateries are uniform, from the building design to the menu items served. Yet, they also call for "attractive dining facilities" that suggest something unique to the aesthetic of Aurora. Other typologies can be found in the task force's hope that a mini-mall could be established for retail purposes, and the *Education* recommendation to import satellite classes delivering post-high school education and computer training. Both typologies, although working to serve local residents, fail to consider local terrain in the invention and production process.

The same disregard for the local can be witnessed in the *Family* recommendation to “establish a community-based committee to promote November as National Family Month.” However, there are also topographic dimensions to the family recommendations. One idea is to establish a “family friendly seal of approval” that could be assigned to local events that promote “keeping family first” (Hamilton, Strategic 7). Keeping family first is the general goal that the task force asks all employers and organizations to consider. This goal exemplifies the tension between typology and topography. On one hand Aurora embraces the conservative typology that “the well-being of the family is the strength of the community” (Hamilton, Strategic 6). Yet, the task force acknowledges that the “traditional family” is changing shape. Thus, local solutions are required. For example, the committee calls for the development of after-school programs, programs dictated by homes in which there is no parent waiting for children returning from school. In addition, they acknowledge that single-parent families are common and suggest a support group be formed to “assist parents dealing with issues unique to their situations” (Hamilton Strategic 6). In both cases, a topographical approach is used to deal with Aurora’s families.

The third dichotomy, scenographic/architectonic, is the degree to which structural elements of a final product are made transparent. In terms of invention, this pairing addresses the motives of a particular building project. Is the goal to create an image (scenographic) or to demonstrate how a given structure functions in harmony with the larger environment (architectonic)? In Aurora’s case, the task force aims to generate a more robust business climate by enhancing the décor of the downtown district. The scenographic is working here to create an image of the town square that compliments the wide-scope image of Aurora as a place of progress.

While this Aurora literally fits Frampton's concern with building design, the tension between scenographic and architectonic concerns works to explain the actions of a community's public services. For instance, Aurora's task force recommends that the public schools "create an environment where all educational formats are open to evaluation" (Hamilton Strategic 4). This statement reflects the general tone of transparency throughout the education goals. The motive here, to expose the structures that support Aurora's educational system, further involves community members in the decision making process. With a push toward openness in the motives and design of the public school pedagogy, the architectonic is being emphasized.

Frampton understands the artificial/natural tension as one between human made objects and nature's creations. When applied to community development, this dichotomy can be taken to distinguish between artificial development that primarily involves materials and methods from outside a region compared to "natural" development that uses native materials and emphasizes local methods. The Aurora task force emphasizes nature under *Employment* goals when they their recommend the development of value added agriculture industries that would "utilize the resources of this productive agricultural community" (Hamilton, Strategic 5). Developing agriculture that uses resources in a sustainable manner clearly reflects the "natural" dimension of this invention.

Another less obvious example of the emphasis on natural is the family friendly work policy. The task force asks all employers to examine their policies and place "family first" (Hamilton, Strategic 6). The assumption here is that "family" is the cornerstone of healthy communities. While the definition of family is contestable, the task force clearly views the family as a natural resource that needs to be nourished. As

water, sun and soil are the natural materials necessary for agriculture; the family first mentality works to sustain the community of Aurora.

These two recommendations concerning *Employment* and *Family* emphasize the natural, but the task force also encourages local students to research companies that might move to Aurora. This move encourages the “artificial” to develop in Aurora (by artificial I mean a business with methods and products that are invented without the place of Aurora influencing the design). The artificial is also at work in the *Recreation* goal to build a multiplex recreational facility. The facility would offer indoor walking, gyms, a swimming pool, and other recreational activities for “inter-generation” use (Hamilton, Strategic 8). While this recommendation promotes the health of Aurora’s residents – an embrace of the *natural* body – the multiplex facility largely is artificial. The environment will mirror any modern gym where people come to exercise or engage in sporting activities. The air temperature is controlled, the surfaces are smoothed, and ample automobile parking makes the experience artificially accessible and predictable. These popular areas of “recreation” decorated with fitness machines and polished floor boards are prime sites where the artificial displaces nature’s wildness.

The final dichotomy of Frampton’s critical regionalism, the visual/tactile, involves the manner in which a given object or place is experienced. To serve as critical regionalism a place must be experienced and understood by more than just the sense of sight. To be local is to be a place with smells, sounds, and other sensory idiosyncrasies that fit under the “tactile” label. The Aurora task force makes a gesture toward the tactile within their *Education* goals. In an effort to involve more people in the planning of the education system, the task force recommends that community members be invited into the school facility to “help the public recognize strengths and needs of the school” (Hamilton, Strategic 6). Recognition hinges upon one’s ability to be present in the school.

And while the task force is not explicit in their motives, their recommendation supports the idea that the tactile is a powerful dimension of creating a sense of place. It is this sense of place that the Aurora task force desires in their schools because the tactile makes places recognizable, and thus plausible, sites for community members to invest their resources. This is not to suggest that the visual does not function in the making of places, as Harriman and Lucaites make clear in their scholarship on visual icons; rather, it asserts the materiality of places that make up Frampton's critical regionalism. The task force too envisions a material Aurora where bodies are educated within the confines of bricks and mortar. Getting people involved in this process demands that they step through the front door and tactilely experience the environment.

To summarize Aurora's strategic plan as a model of critical regionalism would be a generous assessment at best. Aurora, like most communities, is competing in a post-industrial economy where places that cannot be commoditized are often turned into uniform spaces. Yet, there are sparks of invention in the strategic plan marking this community as a place with an eye toward topography and the natural. Voices in this community are aligned with the project of becoming local.

I-80 Corridor Development

Aurora's history of innovation and their systematic strategic planning are wide-scope views into how this community invents. Aurora's Interstate 80 (I-80) corridor project conversely serves as a case-study, wherein, we can trace the invention process from the ideation phase through construction. Moreover, the corridor project emerged from a recommendation of the 2000 community strategic plan; it demonstrates how a group of community volunteers created a new beginning. The corridor project is read as a

rich site of invention highlighting the process of *energeia* and the function of images in invention.

The I-80 corridor project emerged from a *Business* goal to develop infrastructure connecting Aurora to the interstate.⁴¹ The east-west interstate runs 455 miles through the length of Nebraska and is located about three miles south of Aurora. The travel route is a significant source of traffic, as over 24,000 vehicles pass the Aurora exit daily (Aurora News-Register, I-80). With the potential to attract interstate travelers, the task force recommended that a committee be established to research prospective business possibilities. The committee, formed in 2000, consisted of a small group of interested residents who embraced the invention process that produced Love's Travel Stops and Country Stores in 2003.⁴²

The invention of the I-80 corridor project can be read chronologically and interpreted as *energeia*. The development committee was faced with the challenge of inventing and bringing before the eyes that which could not be seen. This process involves three stages: bringing a vision before the task force's eyes (ideation stage), bringing the idea before the eyes of all interested parties (recruiting stage), and bringing the constructed project before the community's eyes (building and promoting stage). In what follows, I reverse engineer the invention of the I-80 corridor.

The seed for the I-80 corridor project was planted in 1995 when an entrepreneur interested in building a hotel near the interstate exchange approached Aurora city officials for assistance. According to City Administrator Mike Blair, upon this solicitation, Aurora did an initial analysis on the feasibility of annexing the corridor (Swazo 17).⁴³ While the engineering plans and property assessments were shelved for this project, the vision of extending Aurora down a corridor that bulges at the interstate

was brought before the planner's eyes. In 2000 the task force revisits this vision and the ideation phase was in full swing.

The task force specifically sets out to attract a major transportation business near Aurora's I-80 exit 332, but this effort is also part of a larger vision evolving through the cooperative efforts of public and private support. This grand narrative, dubbed the "Road to Progress," guides the initial recruitment efforts.⁴⁴ The long-term vision that would connect Aurora to I-80 is invented, in part, through imitatio. Other Nebraska communities, like York and Kearney, are located a few miles north of I-80, and they developed their corridors successfully over the past few decades. Kathy Kugler reports that these communities experienced growth due in large part to the development of the corridor (AACD 8). The task force studies these experiences, uses them as positive proof, and through imitatio moves forward with their own long-term vision for Aurora.

Bringing the long-term vision before the eyes of the task force is determined, in part, by the challenges stemming from infrastructure (or lack thereof). In other words, the constraints are primary sources of invention. Recall that in 1995 the city of Aurora did an initial assessment of corridor annexation feasibility. In order to equip the three-mile stretch of land, both water and sewage pipes needed to be laid. For this to become reality, private property would have to be acquired by the city. I mention these seemingly banal details because they illustrate how a material constraint, like running water, influences the invention of a project. These material constraints, during the ideation phase, determined the specific people necessary to invent this project. In the case of annexation, balancing material constraints requires town officials, county officials, and interested residents, all of whom must work together cooperatively.

This delicate mixture of interested parties emerging from a material constraint was the key to Aurora's success, according to City Administrator, Mike Bair. He

describes the process in this manner: “This whole project represents, I think, the best of private-public partnerships and public-public partnerships” (Swazo 17). Bair’s assessment is a common refrain heard from community leaders: Aurora’s progress hinges on the cooperative use of private and public resources. The “Road to Progress” is envisioned as a gateway for I-80 travelers into Aurora. The ideation phase of this project is shaped by material constraints necessitating a variety of organizations and individuals willing to embrace the vision of annexation. Once this vision is solidified in the planners’ minds, the recruitment and promotional phases begin.

Bringing a vision before the eyes of a potential business (recruitment) and the community at large (promotion) requires that the progress topos adapt to the corridor project. The recruitment of Love’s Travel Stops and Country Stores to Aurora requires a clear vision embraced cooperatively by the interested parties detailed above. Involving the residents of Aurora is a critical part of the recruitment success. In an effort to demonstrate the critical nature of this cooperation, I detail how the vision is promoted to the community. I then address the actual recruitment of the travel store.

To promote the corridor project, to bring it before eyes of the community, it is important for the task force to emphasize the project’s necessity. Ultimately, the corridor development would create infrastructure and jobs, fulfilling the dominant topos of progress, but the particular justification for the I-80 corridor is also meant to enhance Aurora’s “image” to outsiders. Gary Warren, a primary member of the task force, explains it this way: “If you look at the York [Nebraska] interchange as it is today, you would actually think York is a much bigger community than it is....Whereas, if you drive by Aurora and look at that interchange, up until recently at least, we would seem like a smaller community than we are. That image stays with people. There’s no question that it raises the image of Aurora and Hamilton County in the eyes of the traveler that is going

by” (Kugler, AACD 8). What is at stake here is the invention of Aurora’s face to potential customers, investors, and residents.

The I-80 corridor would connect the face of this rural community to a national thoroughfare. Here we have a prime example of *energeia*; to see the highway and cornfields that have long owned this three mile path as internally active is to see a new beginning. This beginning reframes the image of Aurora from just another declining rural community to a progressive small town (that is growing). Transposing the welcome mat from a greeting sign to a corridor of services physically brings the community before the eyes of all those passing by. While the invention of the corridor undoubtedly extends the reach of Aurora, the manner in which this development works to create the local (a place) is yet to be seen and contingent upon the ripple effect that follows the recruitment of Love’s Travel Center.

According to Mayor Marlin Seeman, the Love’s Travel Center is just the start of this new beginning. He remarks, “It is the potential to develop the entire interstate interchange and use that as an opportunity to invite shoppers and visitors to our center square that is so exciting” (Aurora, I-80). The track record of Love’s would suggest that Seeman’s goal of further developing the corridor is realistic, as complimentary ventures tend to locate around these travel centers (i.e. fast food eateries). Yet, Seeman’s comment alludes to the tensions articulated in Frampton’s critical regionalism. Attracting these national travel centers, hotels, and fast-food restaurants to the I-80 corridor, he contends, will entice people toward Aurora’s local town square. The logic here is that building familiar spaces will invigorate local places. Whether or not this cause/effect relationship will come to fruition is the ultimate question of contemporary community planning. At what point does the local vanish, getting painted over by post-industrial spaces and/or commoditized by totalizing places? While it is unclear how (and if) Aurora will balance

these tensions, if sustained, this invention has the potential to serve as an example of critical regionalism.

Promoting the grand vision of the corridor to various agencies and members throughout Hamilton County positively affected the recruitment of Love's Travel Stops and Country Stores. Jenny Love-Meyer, a company owner, remarks that the community's cooperation was the competitive advantage over other potential Nebraska sites (Kugler, Love's 4). Love-Meyer refers to the cooperation between county, town, and private parties, a cooperation allowing Aurora to address the community's needs.

To recruit Love's Travel Store, Aurora needed to annex the property, purchase the necessary land and equip it with utilities. Yet, the development cost could not be justified without a guarantee that a major business, like Love's, would build on the corridor. Here is where the art of bringing before the eyes comes into play. The Aurora task force, lacking the physical proof (utilities) to show Love's they could meet their needs, relied upon the image of a cooperative and progressive community/county that was poised to act on Love's requests. Brad Maul, director of the Aurora Area Development Corporation in 2003, sums the recruitment project up in this way: "If you look at it, it's truly a remarkable feat. If you look at all the pieces that came together in basically a five-month window, from the time we signed a purchase agreement to the time we were laying water and sewer lines out there, it's amazing. That could not have happened without everyone working together and being on the same page. A lot of things had to fall into place to make this thing happen and without the cooperative effort of the city, county, chamber and land owners, this would not have been possible (Kugler, Love's 22). There is nothing profound or radically new in Maul's assessment; however, the message here is an important one for invention. Creating anew is a cooperative and interdisciplinary effort.

The task force brings a vision before the management's eyes of Love's Travel Store to produce the desired outcome.

While I have already detailed part of the third phase of *energeia* – the actual promotion and construction of the travel center – it is necessary to further describe how the finished product was presented to the public to get a sense of the entire invention process. As Gary Warren remarks earlier in this chapter, establishing the image of Aurora as a growing, progressive community motivated the I-80 corridor development. Therefore, the manner in which the development was brought before the eyes of the public is an integral stage of the invention process.

In small towns like Aurora, the weekly newspaper still functions as the village voice. The Aurora News-Register strives to keep the communities of Hamilton County connected by reporting on local government, education, industry, recreation, and social events. The development of the I-80 corridor was certainly “newsworthy” criteria and its progress received ample attention in the local paper. The paper went a step beyond adequate coverage. One week before the opening of the Love's Travel Store they published a 24 page feature detailing a complete timeline and events of the project. The insert, titled “The Road to Progress: Love's Project helps Aurora tap into I-80 Corridor Development Plan,” includes seven feature articles, a photographic narrative of events, and numerous advertisements welcoming Love's to the community. As a whole, the piece strategically frames the project in a manner consistent with the task force goals of 2000.⁴⁵ For example, an advertisement run in the feature reads: “Growth, Progress, Prosperity: Hamilton County took another giant step forward with the Love's project and pending I-80 corridor development project. The News-Register remains committed to keeping local residents in tune with change and progress, one story at a time. We've got you covered”

(Aurora News-Register, Road 21). I am especially interested in how the News-Register's visually covered the project.

The cover of the insert greets the reader with a page-sized aerial photograph of Aurora. The grammar of the image is especially telling: the photograph is shot directly above and behind Love's Travel Store. Although the aerial photograph is an "objective" image, working to capture the real, the angle of the shot has ideological implications. To a viewer, the aerial photograph is the most powerful angle. The top-down angle "contemplates the world from a god-like point of view, puts it at your feet, rather than within reach of your hands" (Kress and Leeuwen149). In this way, the photograph presents the News-Register reader with an overarching view of "progress." It brings before the eye an image of growth that matches the task force's aim to make Aurora appear larger.

In addition to the position of the reader, the composition of the aerial photograph reinforces what the I-80 corridor should mean to the community. The photograph positions the Love's Travel Center at the bottom of the page, making it disproportionately large and intelligible in comparison to the highway that leads the viewer to the top of the page, which is decorated by a distant view of Aurora. The image reads from bottom to top, whereby the lower information represents the *real* and the upper information points to the *ideal*. Kress and Leeuwen detail how this real/ideal hierarchy is a common attribute of the composition of Western images (193). The more specific and real information, in this case the layout of the Love's site, is offered underneath the generalized image of Aurora as the ideal place of "progress."

When we read the image in this manner, the superimposed title "The Road to Progress" is reinforced by the photograph's composition. The reality of the I-80 corridor project is that a national travel store chain now exists in Aurora; yet, this project is

brought before the eyes of the community as an invention reinforcing the ideal Aurora – a small town that is a place of progress. Both the composition and viewpoint of this aerial photograph demonstrate the image function in the invention of the local.

The insert also employs multiple photographs to tell the narrative of the construction process. These black and white images, while not particularly eventful or aesthetically remarkable, signify the “becoming” dimension of Aurora’s community development. The photograph of “seven golden shovel-wielding dignitaries” literally and symbolically breaking ground leads to shots of trenches being dug and pavement being poured (Aurora News-Register, [Road 4](#) and 17). From the ideas generated by task force 2000 to the powers that granted/invested resources, the project is (be)coming to Aurora. There are also a series of photographs that detail the construction process of the Love’s building. Streets are created, cement is leveled, the bricks are laid, and the towering Love’s sign is raised high above I-80 (Aurora News-Register, [Road 12](#) and 13). Here, the images show the infrastructure becoming positioned in such a manner that it could sustain such a venture.

With the ideas and ground molded, the viewer receives a look inside the travel store, where empty shelves, a newly installed soda dispenser, and an Arby’s cashier counter await customers (Aurora News-Register, [Road 20](#)). We also get a frontal shot of the nearly complete Love’s Travel Store façade (Aurora News-Register, [Road 2](#)). These images, while informing the reader that the project is “nearing completion,” reflect the important work left for the Love’s company (for the building is expected to produce profits). They also symbolize the inventive work that is forever becoming for those interested in Aurora’s community development. The visual narrative offered by the News-Register reinforces the phases of *energeia* by using images to bring before the eyes that which we cannot see – progress. For the community task force, the I-80 corridor is

becoming the road to progress and the image of the Love's construction process works to validate this claim. Yet, the ideal of "progress" is slippery (much like the notion of rhetorical invention) as it is always "becoming" with the desires and constraints of a new generation. Thus, we can expect similar 24 page features on projects-to-be that attempt to bring the "progress" of the Aurora before the community's eyes.

CONCLUSION

Aurora has an intrinsic relationship to invention as the Edgerton family creations in deep-well irrigation and photography inspire and nourish a culture of innovation within the community. This memory of innovation plays a significant role in the current invention of Aurora's new beginnings; a sense of place is established when these memories are brought before the community's eyes. In the case of the Edgerton Explorit Center, *imitatio* motivates future generations to embrace discovery and simultaneously see opportunities in their hometown. In terms of rhetorical invention, Aurora offers us an example of invention by tradition.

The significant quality of Aurora's way of making is that they use the past to justify the internally active nature of the Aurora community. In other words, successful *imitatio* involves tapping into malleable *topoi*, narratives, and methods. In Aurora's case, the *topos* is *progress* with the current application being scientific and technological developments. While progress is an ambiguous and ubiquitous concept void of context, it becomes an identifying symbol and a justification for further community development enabling Aurora to create anew. This is shown to be the case in the strategic plans and development of the I-80 corridor.

The Aurora and Hamilton County strategic plans are motivated by the task forces' desires to create area growth. Within these plans a sense of the local emerges concerning what needs to be sustained and created anew. The IT task force demonstrates that to be local in Aurora involves oscillating between individual interests and collective missions. This duality is fundamental to community notions of public entitlement. Thus, the design space of a rhetor's appeal to ethos is shaped by this brand of public entitlement and language. By deferring agency to the community at large, the task force demonstrates how ethos can be used to invent and nourish a local sense of responsibility.

This task force aims to cultivate responsibility (especially in youth) for communal solutions invented in harmony with personal ambitions. Expanding the culture of innovation the Edgerton's pioneered, they paved the way for the invention of public access to information technology and a business technology incubator with the "progressive" topos. These inventions compliment the larger community vision articulated in the 2000 strategic plan. While Aurora is not the poster community for critical regionalism, they remain committed to inventing and nurturing a sense of place. The tensions outlined by Frampton demonstrate the difficulties in trying to grow a rural community within a competitive global market. For the rhetorician and designer, these tensions are excellent sites of invention.

Exactly how the I-80 corridor project will affect Aurora's invention of the local is yet to be seen. However, from ideation to construction the corridor project illustrates the important rhetorical work of bringing a new beginning before the eyes. The internally active corridor and its visual description expand how rhetorical invention has been theorized and taught previously. It is important to expand discursive scholarly analyses to more visual and tactile forms that influence the invention of creating anew.

The “progress” of Aurora as analyzed in this chapter is not an answer to the problems of inventing the local, nor is this analysis by itself meant to serve as a model of invention to be evangelized to other rural communities; rather, the analysis offers a case-study of one community working with limited resources to invent new beginnings. Reading it from the vantage point of rhetorical invention and the design arts emphasizes the symbolic dimension involved in community development. For rhetorical theorists, Aurora, Nebraska represents a place where the rhetorician may engage in reading and inventing new beginnings as they relate to becoming local.

Chapter 4: Invention and Rural Development

The development and sustainability of rural communities are primary objectives for a host of publicly funded agencies and institutions. Where the previous chapter focused solely on the invention of one community, Aurora, Nebraska, this chapter concerns itself with the rhetoric of the overarching agencies/institutions that are intrinsically connected to the invention of rural communities. The Partnership for Rural Nebraska (PRN) is a collaborative organization that represents the professional echelon of community development, consisting of “three major institutions – the State of Nebraska, the University of Nebraska, and the U. S. Department of Agriculture” (Partnership, Perspective). Each of these institutions is represented this chapter’s investigation of *The Nebraska Rural Development Commission*, a state agency; the *Center for Applied Rural Innovation*, a University of Nebraska housed institute; and *Rural Development Nebraska*, an arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Partnership for Rural Nebraska is a rich site of investigation for this dissertation; it represents the macro forces (i.e., state, national, and global players) directly affecting issues of community development. In many ways, the PRN functions as a consultant for rural communities addressing development and sustainability issues. Their mission “is to improve the effectiveness of resources that support local-based rural development efforts statewide, and to better utilize human and financial resources for rural development” (Partnership). Analyzing the organizations that make up this cooperative is also important because we get the opportunity to explore the role state and national agencies play in the invention of the local. For example, the PRN’s annual Nebraska rural development conference is signified by a mural with the words “People,

Place, and Policy” superimposed on the image of an agriculturally based community (Nebraska Rural Institute).⁴⁶ As the mural illustrates, the conference is dedicated to policies that affect the dwelling places of rural people, which is a reflection of PRN’s emphasis on the local. Yet, the agencies that make up the PRN offer rural communities professional expertise and access to resources that are global in perspective and reach, and are, therefore, potentially opposed to locally invented solutions. Tensions between global and local, as well as the previous chapter’s tools of invention, will be explored in the following analysis.

CENTER FOR APPLIED RURAL INNOVATION (CARI)

The invention of the Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI) points to a methodological shift in addressing community development. CARI was created in 2000 by the Nebraska Board of Regents to combine the University’s efforts in *community revitalization, sustainable agriculture* and *leadership development*. This integration demonstrates an overarching commitment to invention as production, for CARI operates like an interdisciplinary think-tank that has been blended with community extension programs. The lines and arrows between theory and practice are blurred and multi-directional. The outcome is a center that works to “help create a rural community and agricultural structure that is economically viable, environmentally sound, socially acceptable and sustainable into the future” (CARI, Mission). In an effort to fulfill this mission, CARI conducts research, manages outreach programs, and leads conferences/classes in addition to serving as a conduit for an assortment of local, state and national rural initiatives. CARI’s composition and mission statement indicate a holistic interdisciplinary approach to community development. This approach moves

beyond the traditional problem centered approach for community development and toward “asset based community development.” Dr. Allen, a former director of CARI, contends that the former method identifies “a community’s needs, deficiencies & problems,” while the latter approach attempts to discover “a community’s capacities & assets” (Vitalizing 2). The following table reproduces the basic distinctions between the two approaches as detailed by Allen:

Traditional Approach		Asset Based Approach	
Basis:	Needs	Basis:	Assets
Goal:	Institutional Change	Goal:	Building Communities
Conversation:	Problem & Concerns	Conversation:	Gifts & Dreams
Change Agent:	Power	Change Agent:	Relationships
View of Individual:	Consumer & Client	View of Individual:	Producer & Owner

Table 4.A

Asset based community development (ABCD) reflects CARI’s holistic approach to building sustainable rural communities. The emphasis on the local aligns ABCD with the project at hand. Local producers building local relationships are the communal assets to be treasured. Dr. Allen explains that “the ABCD approach sees the community as a ‘treasure chest’ to be built upon. Resources from outside the community (e.g., external grants) should be used only as a last resort in order to fill gaps” (4). If we were to substitute “external building materials” for “external grants” the statement would read like a line from Frampton’s critical regionalism. CARI’s method for addressing

community development assumes that topography and the natural are available for “discovery.” It is an approach that makes a habit out of producing places.

Thus, in addition to the local, the asset-based method compliments the move toward invention and production. CARI, through their research and extension programs, works to imbue community leaders with the notion that residents are “producers,” assets capable of inventing and building anew. Instead of confronting problems in a deductive fashion, one invents communities by building relationships inductively. Community development is not framed as problem solving; it is approached as asset building, whereby residents can become inventors and producers. In this way, agency is a function of the relationships that form around the art of invention. Here is one of the redeeming qualities of framing invention as production for the rhetorician. The turn toward producers is a turn toward agency within the field of rhetoric and for the art as practiced in community development.

CARI works to realize their mission of creating producers who build local communities through research programs and extension efforts. Three of these projects/programs, *Nebraska Rural Poll*, *Nebraska Cooperative Development Center*, and *Nebraska Edge* are especially germane to this dissertation. These initiatives involve empirical research, value-added agriculture, and entrepreneurship, each of which demonstrates CARI’s approach to local development.

Nebraska Rural Poll

The *Nebraska Rural Poll* is, ultimately, the invention of a voice. The annual poll, created a decade ago, is sent to some 7000 Nebraska families living in rural areas and generally garners a response rate of over 40%. The results from the poll are compiled by

CARI and distributed to local and state government officials. CARI's hope is that an "aggregated voice of rural Nebraskans" will be heard by policy makers, as opinions from rural stakeholders have become increasingly marginalized with the growth of Nebraska's metropolitan areas (CARI, [Nebraska](#)). The poll is a vibrant site of invention; it creates the topoi by which trends about the quality of rural living are generated. These trends then are interpreted and used to influence public policy. In this way, the development of the poll and its interpretation become objects of interest to a project on rhetorical invention.

The Nebraska Rural Poll generates topoi using two types of questions: core questions that are repeated annually and "key issue" questions that address a timely/significant topic. This process mirrors Cicero's distinction between technical and atechanical topoi: the core questions concern demographics and common issues while the "key issue" questions address concerns particular to a time/place. The poll's commonplace questions address demographic information like age, education, income, religion, residency etc. In addition, certain core issues like "individual well-being" and "community" are repeated each year to ascertain trends. In terms of invention, these common questions, by their inclusion or omission in the poll, establish whose voice gets projected and what trends are important to bring before the eyes of policy makers. Each year the survey asks this community question, "When you think of the past year, would you say...My community has changed for the... (better, same, worse)?" While the responses to this question can be simply tabulated and revealed, an aggregate voice is invented upon interpreting the data. Analyzing the question with regard to the commonplace variable of *gender* or *age* invents an "issue" to be addressed by future community development plans. For example, women are significantly more dissatisfied with job opportunities in rural communities than men. Highlighting the "gender" variable

is an interpretive move that works to frame a policy agenda. While the Nebraska Rural Poll packages these results by emphasizing certain relationships in graphs and summaries, it abstains from explicitly leveraging this information to make arguments about specific public policy issues. In this way, the Rural Poll stands as a source of invention to be interpreted at will by those making policy decisions.

In addition to commonplaces, aspects of the Rural Poll are invented through local testimony. Recall that an atechical place for Cicero is an inartistic testimony that is used to create an argument. Aristotle referred to these specific examples as *idia*. In order to design the “key issue” questions for the Rural Poll, CARI gathers testimony from a select group of rural residents and policy makers. For example, the 2001 Rural Poll included questions about a revised national farm bill expected to come up for debate in the next legislative session. This testimony worked to invent the farm bill as a significant issue for an aggregate rural voice. In this example, testimony (or inartistic proofs) demonstrates the inventive nature of public dialogue, reflecting Hannah Arendt’s contention that new beginnings are a product of people coming together in public to converse (and perform).

Through these public testimonies and pulling from general commonplaces, the Rural Poll seeks to establish a longitudinal survey ready to be employed for the invention of public policy arguments. Certainly, individuals in rural communities have used their voices historically to shape public policy; however, the Nebraska Rural Poll pools these individual voices to generate an aggregate voice that is on message and amplified. The rhetorical invention of voice developed through the commonplace questions and the topoi tracked in the survey questionnaire are important processes for rhetoricians to analyze.

Nebraska Cooperative Development Center

As the name reveals, the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC) works to create, nourish, and sustain cooperative business efforts in rural communities. The center conducts feasibility studies, offers business planning advice, and assists with marketing solutions. From this description the NCDC appears as just another consulting firm, but the center also plays an advocacy role as they work to establish unique partnerships between rural providers and pursue public policies that are in the best interests of rural communities. One of their goals is “to facilitate and support favorable public policy by increasing the awareness of rural people’s needs and the role of cooperative development” (NCDC, Turning).

The center’s motto, “Turning Your Idea into a Profitable Reality,” gives them the ability to wear a variety of different hats and directly addresses the rhetorical work associated with *energeia* – the internally active nature of discourse and objects. An idea is brought before the eyes with the NCDC stipulation that the invention must be profitable. They proclaim, “Sparks of imagination! Creative ways to make profit and quality products are quickly becoming a reality across the landscape of Nebraska. They start with an idea and the determination to see it develop. The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center helps these ideas become reality” (NCDC, Mission). The cooperative and local manner in which these internally active inventions become reality informs this project.

While agriculture coops exist in many rural communities, the notion of cooperative farming runs counter to the model of industrial farming that is practiced extensively throughout Nebraska. Furthermore, cooperatives are traditionally associated with collective cultures; thus, they cut against the individualism that undergirds the pioneering spirit of Midwestern farmers. Therefore, the invention of cooperative business ventures rests upon an appeal to *logos* that distances it from collectivism yet calls into

question the dominant methods of industrial production that have resulted in the decline of the rural agricultural community. NCDC makes this appeal by framing cooperatives as “value-added ventures” (NCDC, Turning).

A cooperative designed by NCDC works to create a value-added venture. This term “value-added” has a degree of stickiness today – it is portable across a variety of contexts. Portability is an important factor of an effective appeal to logos. Kaufer and Butler, as referenced in chapter two, discuss appeals to logos as an interaction between language and its reach across contexts. From this perspective, the term “value-added” is portable enough to signify that cooperative ventures are not only reasonable, they are worth the risk of forfeiting long work and expensive resources. This rhetorical appeal also distinguishes such profit-driven ventures from collectivist communes, while emphasizing the substantial rewards for the community at large. According to the NCDC, value-added ventures “will assist in increasing economic and social opportunities, and will stimulate innovation within the rural economy and contribute toward rural community revitalization throughout Nebraska” (Turning). The appeal to value-added ventures is made on the grounds that these businesses are catalysts for new beginnings, beginnings that are desperately needed in many rural communities.

Part of the appeal to create a value-added venture is through the exemplars put on display by the NCDC. In their brochure, we learn about the Sandhills Perch Cooperative through an image of a fisherman holding his catch. It is explained that 33 ranchers and farmers have formed an alliance “to help satisfy the nation’s unmet demand for yellow perch” (NCDC, Turning). This image also appears on the center’s “group ventures” webpage. An exemplar like the Sandhills Perch Cooperative becomes a tool of invention through its appeal to ethos. The success stories grant NCDC a degree of public entitlement to address audiences that might be skeptical of cooperatives or nontraditional

farming methods. Public entitlement in these rural communities is a result of being perceived as a “producer.” To this end, the Sandhills image works well to establish credibility. The image brings before the eyes the people, scenery, and products that make a cooperative function. When the venture at hand is a new beginning, the visual serves as an invaluable symbolic resource for rhetors working to prove that possibilities can become reality.

In addition to exemplars, the NCDC has established a network of certified “first responders” to serve as physical contact points for interested parties. These individuals are located throughout the state and are available to support a new cooperative venture. The program is described as follows: “First Responders are very knowledgeable about the full range of technical assistance resources available and how these resources can be accessed on behalf of groups. This network has become an essential link between local groups, and the vital resources available for local, state, and federal partners” (NCDC, Turning). The first responder program signifies NCDC’s commitment to local inventions. A map of first responders displays that these individuals are located throughout the state of Nebraska. Thus, anyone seeking advice about a cooperative venture should be able to locate a first responder with some degree of know-how about their given place. The program also demonstrates the tension Frampton discussed with relation to place and space. The first responder program ultimately oscillates between the local groups concerned with their “place” and a system of resources that are owned and distributed according to the modern rules of a post-industrial society. Balancing the yearning for place with national resources and technological advancements is the role of first responders.

The cooperative ventures nourished by the NCDC are prime examples of Frampton’s critical regionalism, for they originate with the available “natural” resources

and add value to those resources by forming creative partnerships. These partnerships are a product of embracing the constraints and treasures of a place. This marks a significant shift from industrial agriculture, whereby resources and methods are imported and superimposed on the land. Due to market and ecological forces, the cooperative venture is a refreshing method of invention and a sustainable manner of becoming local.

Nebraska EDGE

Nebraska EDGE (Enhancing, Developing, & Growing Entrepreneurs) is an entrepreneurial training program for residents of rural communities. Similar to the NCDC, the program focuses on transforming ideas into reality, in this case a small business (Nebraska EDGE, [About](#)). They also share the common goal of growing small communities through local ownership of resources and services. Where the programs differ is on the issue of what constitutes community “growth” and a “visionary” business opportunity. While the two programs are not antithetical, the EDGE program encourages a brand of invention that emphasizes feasibility over NCDC’s sustainability criterion. Furthermore, EDGE trains individual small business owners while NCDC is concerned with cooperative ventures. These distinctions have implications for the invention of places especially considering that the EDGE program has served over 2000 would-be entrepreneurs (Nebraska EDGE) in the past decade. Thus, we can infer that this critical mass of small town business owners plays a fundamental role in rural development, especially considering that the Rural Poll consistently finds that rural community members are most dissatisfied with their community’s retail shopping options and service needs, each of which could be met by small businesses (Allen et al. 13). The following

analysis focuses on how the EDGE training program works to motivate and nourish invention.

The EDGE acronym (enhancing, developing, and growing entrepreneurs) explicitly frames entrepreneurship as the dominant topos of the program. An entrepreneur is someone who is able to “transform their visionary ideas into viable business opportunities” (EDGE, [About](#)). In this context, innovation is a prerequisite for entrepreneurship. Exactly how these visionary ideas emerge is not the focus of EDGE; they are focused on growing and developing ideas into functional small businesses. The criterion by which these inventions are grown is feasibility. In the first step of the entrepreneurial training class participants learn how to “determine if it is feasible to start or grow your business” (EDGE, [About](#)). The transformation from idea to reality hinges on the answer to the feasibility question. The topos of entrepreneurship signifies a manner of invention that is intrinsically connected to capital. The entrepreneur’s relationship with the local is not necessarily one that is motivated by place because to be an entrepreneur is to channel your self interests and aspirations into an idea that the market will support. In this way, a feasible business does not necessarily connote a sustainable venture. The former term is about maintaining cash-flow and/or profit while the latter term is a broader concept that carries both financial and ecological implications. A successful small business for a given individual is feasible if it produces profit for a given period of time, but that does not necessarily mean it will be sustainable in the long term with regard to the greater community and ecological climate.

For this reason entrepreneurship, judged by the criterion of feasibility, functions as a topos that is ambivalent to the local. This is not to suggest that small business owners are not concerned or influential players with the quest to improve rural communities; rather, it is to demonstrate that entrepreneurship is driven by feasibility not sustainability.

These two criteria are distinctive markers of invention methods that operate differently. Feasibility operates first under the rules of a post-industrial business model; sustainability, on the other hand, operates first by the rules of longevity and place building.

Nebraska EDGE works, foremost, to foster small business inventions that are feasible; however, the program both in terms of philosophy and method views itself as strengthening the local dimension of a community. The connection between EDGE's entrepreneurial training program and local community development is explained in the following excerpt taken from published research that profiles EDGE.

First, the [EDGE's] structure was designed so that local groups of interested citizens representing a cross section of the community are the advocates at the local level. Second, the programme does not simply focus on transfer of knowledge and technology. Given theory and literature showing the importance of community in entrepreneurial success (Lamb, 1952; Gartner, 1985; Bryant, 1989; Van de Ven, 1993) it was deemed advisable to have a community programme rather than one simply focused on individual entrepreneurs. Although some of the outcomes are similar in that new business enterprises are developed and jobs are created, additional outcomes include a mobilization of local resources around entrepreneurial efforts that enhance the community economic and social base. The programme helps communities develop small business support networks and provide comprehensive education and skill development for individuals wanting to start or expand a business. Coalition building and tapping

community assets are key to the success of this strategy (Korshing and Allen 388).

When it works, EDGE not only provides would-be business owners with the tools to operate successfully, it “mobilizes” a network of community resources that are available for use by the entire community of entrepreneurs. Thus, the entrepreneurship fostered by EDGE nourishes the local.

Unfortunately, such a “community” of entrepreneurs has yet to be realized in most small towns where EDGE courses have been conducted. The program has an excellent record of training individual entrepreneurs and creating job growth, but the creation of local infrastructure and resources to support community development has yet to occur in more than a few very successful programs. To address this shortcoming Korshing and Allen suggest that future EDGE programs place greater emphasis on the community dimension (397). However, from a rhetorical perspective the problem may run deeper. For instance, the topos of entrepreneurship traditionally signifies an individual venture, and reframing this concept to connote a communal affair demands an affirming language and practice. In addition, the EDGE program faces methodological and ideological constraints. The traditional top down community development model, in which major industrial companies are lured to towns with steep tax incentives and relocation monies, still dominates most resources allocated for community development. The EDGE program aims to be a grass-roots approach, a sustainable, community-centered web of local entrepreneurs and resources. While the “ownership” dimension has taken hold (as evidenced by the numerous successful businesses that have benefited from the EDGE program), the larger “community” dimension needs to be reexamined in terms of rhetorical topoi and appeals that reflect becoming local to a community.

One way that EDGE is working to change thinking about community development is through their youth oriented course. To develop and grow a local entrepreneurial way of being, the EDGE program is planting the seed at an early age. The “Buzz on Biz” class is an EDGE designed curriculum aimed at motivating high school students to consider small business entrepreneurship as a viable career. The class is designed to “provide the knowledge and skills necessary to test the feasibility of a student's business concept” (Nebraska EDGE, Get). In regard to its rhetorical dimension, the class ultimately is about invention and learning how to assess those creations. We learned in chapter two that imitatio was a common pedagogical method used to develop a rhetor’s ability to invent by fostering one’s capacity to judge. The EDGE program employs a similar method in the “Buzz on Biz” class.

To foster an entrepreneurial spirit, the program employs imitatio in its opening module, a module designed to answer the following question: Who are entrepreneurs? Through exemplars and case-studies students are offered images of how entrepreneurs look and act. The actions of successful and unsuccessful small business owners form a benchmark by which new ventures are to be created. Here, the ability to form sound judgments is emphasized. Students are asked to assess their own character, desire, and skills in relation to successful entrepreneurs to determine if they are suited for this career. This is a process of imitatio in that students learn how to judge themselves, in this case, by studying the models of entrepreneurship. These judgments then are to be applied to creating a feasible new venture.

For the rhetorician, the EDGE program reveals how the invention of the local faces significant rhetorical challenges. Even Vice Chancellor Owens, who oversees CARI, described EDGE as a program that is grounded in reality (Owens). I take this to mean that EDGE is a pragmatic program that views entrepreneurship as a “real” door into

the larger mission of transforming the methods of community development. For the entrepreneurship topos to connote a communal dimension, a language of becoming local that demonstrates the utility and sustainability of connecting individual entrepreneurs to larger community goals must be employed. In the next chapter, we will analyze some of these rhetorical moves through the writings of Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson, but for now it is significant to note that EDGE was designed to strengthen the local by tapping into individuals' entrepreneurial spirit. Whether this path of invention will ever yield such results is yet to be seen.

NEBRASKA RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission (NRDC), a branch of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, is an advocate for rural Nebraska communities. The NRDC is influential in creating public policy and initiatives that directly affect rural communities. To this point we have yet to explore the manner in which public policy affects the invention and development of rural communities. Omitting the policies that fund and regulate rural development would paint an incomplete picture of rural community development. How state agencies interact and influence local actions is of particular interest to this project. The convergence between state and local communities, where it exists, is significant for rhetoricians because it demonstrates the degree to which rhetorical invention of the local is both constrained and nourished by outside forces. In this case the outside force is the Nebraska state legislature.

The NRDC mission is laden with concepts familiar to a project focused on rhetorical invention and becoming local. The NRDC aims to “stimulate rural development innovation,” “strengthen community sustainability and growth,” and “foster

community-based partnerships” (NRDC, [History](#)). The manner in which innovation, sustainability, and partnerships are invented through public policy is of particular interest to this project. In other words, how these development concepts are given legs and brought before the eyes of the public are the rhetorical moves under analysis.

“Building entrepreneurial communities” is one of three 2005 legislative priorities of the NRDC. Recently, the legislation was signed into Nebraska law under an umbrella incentive package aimed at creating 21st century jobs (Perry). As the title suggests, this provision of the bill addresses the efforts of the EDGE program. Here too the topos of entrepreneurship is employed to alleviate the pains of rural communities. The bill would provide grants to rural communities in an effort to “energize small business development and entrepreneurship” (Dominisse). Notice how the terms *small business* and *entrepreneurship* are not conflated in this statement. The former term pertains to individuals while the latter term, similar to EDGE’s rhetoric, is an effort to describe a broader approach that includes building the greater community. Rural community development is brought before the eyes of rural residents through the model of entrepreneurship. Yet, this topos is potentially problematic. Fundamental to successful rural development are rural residents, and a concept commonly used to describe metropolitan economic assistance efforts, like this one, may not seem germane to rural ventures. John Bailey, writing for a Nebraska rural advocacy group, explains:

Entrepreneurial development has been the recent ‘hot’ economic development policy idea in state government. Nebraska is following suit this year with a major small business and entrepreneurial policy and budget initiative in the Governor’s budget. Most states unfortunately tout small business as part of their entrepreneurial initiatives, and then enact policies that do not address rural

economic development needs. The term “entrepreneurial” is often lifted to promote economic development policies that do not benefit small business development in rural communities. While the Nebraska entrepreneurial initiative has some of this, the proposals in the Governor’s budget specially target programs that have proven to work in rural communities.

Bailey is complimenting a budget provision advocated by NDRC providing grants, at a maximum of \$75,000, that could be used to “build community capacity” programs in rural communities that meet the “criteria of ‘chronic distress’ and/or ‘severe historical population loss’ (Dominisse). However, he is skeptical of the entrepreneur topos because it commonly is employed toward policies that benefit the largest and most dominant players in the global business community.

The term entrepreneurship signifies an overarching rift that exists between many rural communities and state agencies. While the tension commonly is articulated as one of resources going to the haves (the metro areas) rather than the have nots (the chronically distressed rural communities), it can also be read as illustrative of the tension between space and place. As was discussed in chapter two, late-capitalism is premised on a business model and design that operates under modern conceptions of space. In this way entrepreneurship has a well documented history of flattening places. Now, states like Nebraska are trying to revitalize rural areas by “building entrepreneurial community” – a rhetorical move that works to localize a typically global concept. NRDC works rhetorically to invent rural revitalization by lifting entrepreneurial from its modern connotations and repositioning it within the sphere of energizing and building places.

A second legislative priority for NRDC, passed during the latest Nebraska legislative session, is the Agricultural Opportunities and Value Added Partnerships Act.

This provision provides grants upwards of \$75,000 to agricultural endeavors like those promoted by the Nebraska Cooperative Development Committee (and mentioned earlier in this chapter). With this public policy, the NRDC is working to promote cooperative inventions that add value to an agricultural commodity. Rhetorically, the bill emphasizes two methods of invention, cooperative and value-added.

When the Nebraska Department of Economic Development offers grant money to develop and sustain cooperative ventures, they are embracing a method of invention that differs from the entrepreneurial approach. Invention by cooperatives mirrors the philosophy and methods of the design firm IDEO that was discussed in chapter two. IDEO “helps people innovate” by employing multidisciplinary teams that are involved in every step of the design process, from ideation to product completion. These collaborative teams are the linchpins for innovative inventions that build sustainable places.

In the same way, cooperative agriculture ventures require seemingly divergent individuals to invent, design, and work together as they create new beginnings. If the scholarship in contemporary rhetorical studies on invention and community development is any indication, this method of cooperative invention is quite foreign to the field. At best, one can find co-published research, but these papers tend to be authored by specialists within the same area. Invention by specialized isolation, as practiced by rhetoricians, is supremely ironic considering rhetorical scholars typically contend that language arrives to the rhetor from/with a multiplicity of voices. Where language inherently is cooperative, the methods for rhetorical scholarship are inherently individual. Invention through cooperatives promotes a way of designing and making that might just be the key to the creation of sustainable places. The NRDC encourages this method in an effort to energize rural agriculture and thereby revitalize these depressed communities.

Rhetorical studies too might do well to improve its own inferior position in the academy by embracing such cooperative invention. I shall pick this argument up again in the concluding chapter.

Value-added innovations are highlighted by the NRDC as another legislative priority. Value added agriculture is an umbrella term for products that increase the worth and appeal of a given agricultural commodity. The extension program at Iowa State University explains the concept in these statements: “1) value-added agriculture converts agricultural outputs into products of greater value, 2) value-added agriculture is increasing the economic value of an agricultural commodity through changes in genetics, processing or diversification, 3) value-added agriculture is the process of increasing the consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity” (Iowa). These statements detail three different innovations, the invention of products, processes, and audiences.

Rhetorically these inventions mirror the rhetorical triangle whereby the speaker is the product, the text is the process, and the audience holds constant. Thus, value-added inventions can be interpreted as rhetorical appeals aimed at inventing a commodity’s enhanced value. For example, many Nebraska communities and farmers have embraced ethanol, a value-added product that is a substitute for petroleum. In less than a decade, Nebraska’s ethanol production has grown from experimental research to more than 500 million gallons produced annually (Nebraska Energy), which accounts for one-third of the corn produced by Nebraska farmers. Concerning rhetorical invention, the move from the ideation of alternative fuel sources to the substantial volume of ethanol being produced is contingent upon the “value added” to this invention.

Ethanol becomes a value-added invention of product when Nebraska corn (or biomass) is converted into an alternative fuel source. Influencing local communities and farmers to embrace ethanol production is the role of the NRDC. The massive increase in

Nebraska's production can be attributed to a state wide effort to increase value added agriculture, with ethanol production being a primary value-added product. Rhetorically, the credibility (ethos) of ethanol is at stake as is the case with all inventions of products (or speakers). The public entitlement that lends to the credibility of ethanol is directly tied to the NRDC.

With the Nebraska Department of Economic Development on board, the initiative has systematic resources available, and as the legislation supported by NRDC indicates these include external funds. In this way, state agencies play an integral role in establishing the ethos for a new beginning. Public entitlement is granted to an invention of product from the top down. In addition to this top-down state support, ethanol gained credibility from its intrinsic quality as a fuel source environmentally superior to petroleum. Here the public entitlement comes from the "natural" that Frampton indicated was a fundamental part of critical regionalism. The natural not only lends credibility to the invention, it promotes biomimicry as the design method for alternative fuels. In the case of ethanol production, biomimicry works to invent sources (in addition to corn) that can be used for its production.

Biomass – the term used to describe potential ethanol sources that include livestock waste and corn shucks – is the future of ethanol production, as it burns clean and has the potential to reduce current US oil consumption by 50%. The NRDC promotes the invention of these alternative sources by creating and promoting value added agriculture legislation. Ethanol derived from biomass offers the potential for local communities to prosper as it is the derivative of many natural products germane to a given place. In this way, the NRDC promotes inventions that oscillate between the top-down mission to produce ethanol yet require unique local response to generate the materials necessary for production.

The NRDC plays a significant role in the invention of rural community development. Rhetorically, they establish the topoi through which laws and funding decisions are made, demonstrated by the terms entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and value-added agriculture. These topoi spur inventions when they are brought before the community's eye in a local manner that is credible and accessible. Legislation specifically targeting Nebraska rural communities, like the two bills detailed above, reflects an appreciation of the local by the NRDC. For rhetorical scholars studying community development, the example of value-added agriculture teaches that the invention of products, processes, and audiences aligns with the rhetorical triangle. This connection should be explored further; it opens spaces for the engaged scholar to address and become involved in the work of community development.

USDA: RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEBRASKA

The final layer of the Partnership for Rural Nebraska is the national dimension. When addressing the invention of rural communities, this project would be incomplete if there were no mention of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), specifically Rural Development Nebraska, the branch of the USDA that plays an integral role in the revitalization of Nebraska's rural communities. The mission of the USDA Rural Development Nebraska is to "deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents" (USDA Appoints). This arm of the government is a venture capital entity that invests in programs and initiatives that receive final approval from the President. Currently, the Bush administration advertises that "over 800,000 jobs have been created or saved through these investments" (USDA Appoints).

The USDA Rural Development Nebraska supports various efforts detailed in this chapter. For instance, they offer assistance with cooperatives, value-added inventions, and energy conservation/development programs. Each of these mandates filters down into state and local rhetoric about community development. The rhetorical imprint of the national agenda is transparent from the analysis of state and local development throughout this chapter. In an effort to avoid repetition, I focus on a pair of programs –the Rural Housing Program and Community Development Program – whose missions have yet to be addressed. These programs inform my project because they seek to enhance the invention of revitalized rural communities.

Rural Housing Programs

To this point in the chapter, little attention has been dedicated to the invention of community development that falls outside the realm of business. Only in the analysis pertaining to Aurora, Nebraska did a more general notion of community play itself out in the strategic planning process. While the USDA Rural Development Nebraska primarily focuses on economic assistance for business ventures, as is evident in the “jobs created” that populate their press releases; the agency is also committed to assisting rural residents with housing needs. This support signifies a federal commitment to dwelling places, a critical element of what it means to be local.

The Rural Development Nebraska housing program works to develop “affordable housing” for qualified rural residents. One initiative, the direct single family housing initiative, provides guaranteed loans for lower income rural residents to become homeowners. These dwelling places provide the means to become local. In 2004 over 700 rural Nebraska households received over 46 million in loans from this initiative

(USDA, 2004). I read these loans as the ideation phase of invention; these loans bring before the owner's eyes that which cannot be seen (or attained), in this case fiscal resources. For rural residents these loans offer the chance to create a dwelling place that is safe and modern. Rhetorically, safety and modernization define and legitimate publicly funded expenditures, but alongside these essential needs there is the mythos that ownership leads to freedom. Freedom is obtained through the invention of place created by individual owners, as was the case for Tammy Allison whose "true home" made it possible to get a dog her three children had long wanted but could not have in their rental unit (USDA, USDA).

Rural Development Nebraska promotes this program by bringing the "success stories" of loan recipients like Tammy Allison before the eyes of the public in the form of verbal and visual narratives. These testimonies (or *idia*) are used to demonstrate the program's utility and promote the new beginnings available for low income families. In order to demonstrate the rhetorical invention involved in the housing program, I will focus on the case of Winnebago, Nebraska, where "A Place to Call Home" was made possible with USDA assistance (USDA, Place).

The testimony supplied by Rural Development Nebraska tells us that "Karla Daniels, a Native American single mother, lived in an apartment with her four daughters....The amount of living and yard space was limited prompting Karla to seek alternate living quarters" (USDA, Place). For Karla, the problem as stated was a lack of sufficient space, but the issue is understood better as a lack of a grounded place. She explains her plight as one of "moving from place to place" wherein she promised her kids that someday she would give them "their very own place to run and play" (USDA, Place). Karla was in need of the grounds (literally and rhetorically) for a stable place, when she sought help from Rural Development Nebraska.

As was the case with the Edgerton marker in Aurora, Nebraska, the rhetorical invention of place involves a cornerstone from which harmonious inventions emanate that which is brought before the eyes. Here is where a federal agency plays a significant role in the invention of the local. The USDA not only offers the means from which to build anew; they frame the rhetorical parameters of the invention. With these success stories we learn that to be rural is to own property, to have the freedom to invent a physical place of one's own. Karla's needs could have centered around wanting better public parks for her children to share a common place to run and play or enhanced community cultural activities for their educational experience, both of which potentially could be a priority of USDA Rural Development Nebraska.

The federal agenda – currently, an “ownership society” as articulated by President Bush – sets the *topoi* and criteria by which inventions of place are brought before the eyes of the public. This agenda is invented not only by the policies themselves, but by the visual exemplars used to promote the program. Alongside the visual narrative of the success story, Karla and her daughters are photographed inside and outside the home. The image functions as data to the argument that Rural Development Nebraska is in the business of creating private places for rural residents.

The example of Karla Daniels illustrates how private property is the defining place for rural residents. This rhetorical illustration, begs the question: how is cooperative community development sustainable if the primary mode and means of invention are individual and private? This project is not equipped to answer such a question, but it reflects Frampton's concern about the tension between spaces and places. For now it is helpful to plot how USDA Rural Development Nebraska does place focus on community development.

Office of Community Development Program

USDA Rural Development Nebraska goes beyond their role as a funding agency by providing technical expertise to local communities through regionally positioned staff. The USDA representatives coordinate and tailor development programs to a specific community's needs. The mission of the Office of Community Development (OCD) is "to help communities build capacity from within thereby empowering them to develop and sustain their own communities" (USDA, Office). From this statement, it appears that this arm of the USDA is wholly committed to the invention and nourishment of places.

One method of invention employed by the Community Development Program officials is imitatio. The federal officials are equipped with techniques pertaining to strategic planning, leadership training, business models and other community related functions. Imitatio comes into play when these general techniques are tailored to fit a given place. For example, the OCD has a program that is focused on "empowerment zones" and "enterprise communities." These areas and communities were competitively earmarked to receive both fiscal and technical assistance from the OCD. While the programs organize the community at a "grass-roots level," the regions and communities are kept on task using "strategic planning and benchmarking procedures", each of which are generated from best practices and research (USDA, Creating). In this way, the exemplars and general techniques from past projects are the benchmarks from which to create anew in a given community. Through imitatio the local inventions are not carbon copies; rather they are inventions that have been informed and guided by the methods of past acts.

The OCD's commitment to assist in the invention of the local is further explained in their description of services offered:

Technical assistance might include strategic planning or leadership development. Technical assistance often includes developing and strengthening partnerships and finding the right match of appropriate resources to meet the needs of a community. Technical assistance can be bringing Rural Development financial resources to the table, but most importantly requires combining an array of resources to meet the community's needs as opposed to expecting the community to "fit" into a "government program". Technical assistance involves helping a community bring all of their community development components (i.e. business, housing, medical, education, infrastructure, recreation, etc.) together as a team to build the community successfully (USDA, Office).

OCD's assistance is technical, meaning a uniform method is taught from the top-down; however, imitatio is at work with their recognition that "fit" is important. While the techne is available for use by all communities, a specific community's mold must be shaped from the inside out, from the local. This was Erasmus's lesson on invention by imitatio, publishing the book of great speeches so rhetors could make judgments by which to create anew. The USDA's Community Development Program employs Erasmus's method in the technical assistance they provide.

The techne offered by the Office of Community Development is meant to empower local communities as reflected by distinguishing certain rural towns as "empowering communities." They frame their mission in a like manner: "The Office of Community Development's goal is to create empowered communities – no longer beset by hopelessness, pervasive poverty, unemployment, and general distress. These communities should be able to implement self-generated strategic plans that solve some

of their most difficult economic and social challenges” (USDA, Creating). Empowerment functions as a topos connoting degrees of agency, freedom, and success in addressing a community’s needs.

The empowerment model contends that invention *should* be in hands of local residents; yet the approach works on the assumption that federal agencies have the tools necessary for successful community development. If invention does require assistance from the top-down, the model for invention should be able to produce sustainable ventures. However, Dr. Allen’s “asset based” approach to community development, detailed in chapter three, maintains that a problem centered approach does not generate the conversations and cooperatives that are necessary for residents to become producers. In other words, the problem-based approach fails to create in residents a sense of agency. Thus, the problem-centered approach fails to empower people to invent and produce the sustainable new beginnings necessary for successful community development. Following this line of thought, the topos of “empowerment” might be better employed when places are defined first by their assets and not by their problems. To align with this method of invention the OCD would need to remake the techne that drives their community development approach.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focuses on external institutes and agencies that influence community development projects. The Partnership for Rural Nebraska, consisting of University (CARI), State (NRDC), and National (USDA) voices, serves this analysis well.

One of the more remarkable approaches to local community development stems from CARI’s “asset based” model. This method aligns with rhetorical invention as

production (outlined in chapter two). Guided by this method, the programs of CARI are geared toward rural residents becoming producers. An initial step in this invention is generating a voice that articulates the agenda for community development. This voice, articulated by CARI's Rural Poll, is a function of rhetorical commonplaces and testimony. An agenda directly resulting from this rural voice is a cooperative method of community development wherein invention occurs inductively through relationships, as practiced with CARI's cooperative development center. In this program, CARI reflects a dedication to the *natural* and *topographic* dimensions that are germane to critical regionalism. For rhetoricians this program teaches that the invention of the local starts by bringing seemingly dissociated people together and sending them in search of local treasures.

Another compelling takeaway from CARI is how they employ the “entrepreneur” topos throughout their programs. Entrepreneur sets the parameters for invention in a manner that is not necessarily compatible with local community sustainability. The topos, as used by CARI, signifies a private business pursuit that results in a strengthened community network. Data from the EDGE program reveals that entrepreneurship training does improve small business ventures, but the larger network of community resources seldom is achieved. In regard to rhetorical invention, this is not surprising. The topos of entrepreneurship, without a shift in its everyday connotation, constrains new beginnings to the realm of individual business ventures and begs the question: How many people in a given small community have the resources and/or desire to be “entrepreneurs”?

Age alone disqualifies many rural residents from such a venture, yet both the young and old are potential assets for community development. This is where the asset-based approach is a useful alternative; it frames the issue of community development as contingent upon creating producers, including children, the elderly, and people without

the resources to start a small business. This approach is better represented in CARI's emphasis on cooperative developments. Here, the more radical topoi of cooperatives more fully encompasses a method of invention that has the potential to sustain rural development.

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission also plays an integral role in community development by shaping public policy that currently emphasizes "building entrepreneurial communities." Again, this term is not a perfect fit for generating rural revitalization because past policies of this name have been perceived by rural residents as disproportionately benefiting metropolitan areas. Two NRDC programs that have not been conflated with urban measures are the emphasis on cooperatives and value-added partnerships. These programs function through topoi that encourage a manner of invention that sustains the local. The cooperatives employ a multidisciplinary approach similar to the design firm IDEO, while the value-added program mirrors the interrelatedness of the rhetorical triangle. In both cases, rhetorical invention of cooperatives and adding value are rooted in taking stock of local resources and methods, significant aspects of critical regionalism.

Lastly, the USDA Rural Development Nebraska demonstrates how state and education agendas often originate through federal mandates. For example, the venture capital available from the USDA reflects the Bush administration's yearning for an ownership society. Rhetorically, the Rural Housing Program uses testimonies to bring before our eyes a model of invention that is private and signified by owning property. While these private homes are certainly places, the degree to which they build a sustainable local community is questionable. Because of this contradiction, a fissure exists between the private places spawned by the housing investments and the sustainable communities desired by the Office of Community Development. Employing imitatio the

OCD's method of invention offers a techne to communities so they might be empowered to sustain these techniques without federal assistance.

From this chapter we learn that the conditions for rhetorical invention are shaped greatly by a professional echelon of developers who are not local. Thus, any analysis of the local would be incomplete without addressing the role state and federal agencies play in the invention process. These agencies and institutes cannot be painted with one broad stroke as the methods employed in community development efforts are theoretically and technically diverse. This is not to say that the "Nebraska Partnership" fails to live up to its billing because common ground exists between these partners; instead, I emphasize that the rhetorical invention shaped and practiced by these community development groups is a mixed bag of assumptions and tools.

Chapter 5: Becoming Native and Rural Rejuvenation

The universities now offer only one serious major: upward mobility. Little attention is paid to educating the young to return home, or to go some other place, and dig in. There is no such thing as a “homecoming” major. But what if Universities were to ask seriously what it would mean to have as our national goal becoming native in this place, this continent? We are unlikely to achieve anything close to sustainability in any area unless we work for the broader goal of becoming native in the modern world, and that means becoming native to our places in a coherent community that is in turn embedded in the ecological realities of its surrounding landscape (Jackson 3).

Wes Jackson speaks to the reality professors understand all too well. The contemporary college degree comes with the promise of higher wages, polished professional skills, and a rung on the ladder to success. Students arrive on campus with a shared assumption: College degrees lead to upward mobility.

Universities reinforce this assumption as evident in the narratives they share about their “most distinguished alumni.” For instance, the University of Texas features “Longhorn Spotlights,” – a news column that highlights outstanding alums (Rush). Meet Gay Warren Gaddis, a class of 77’ graduate featured in a recent spotlight. The story informs us that Gaddis was born in rural Liberty, Texas (population 10). She earned a BFA in studio art at UT and went on to be a copywriter in Dallas, TX; then, she moved to work at a consulting firm in Atlanta, GA, where she was employed by four Harvard MBA graduates. The story goes on to note that Gaddis relocated back to Austin, TX, and started an ad firm with three employees; it grew to 127 people. In 2002 she expanded her ad agency to New York City with global clients such as Dell, Marriott, and Sprint.

Gaddis's narrative, as told by the UT alumni association, is a model of upward mobility. This small town girl made it all the way to the Big Apple. Although rural Texan is her native language, she now speaks Harvard and Fortune 500. In form, Gay Warren Gaddis is the exemplar who works to prove that Universities are doing their job. And for each discipline at UT, similar narratives are told about successful students who have used their talent and education to rise upward. While the individual merits of Gay's achievements might be laudable, her story need not be the dominant narrative told and sold to students and the citizenry at large.

According to Jackson, framing the success narrative as "upward mobility" is problematic, for it devalues becoming native to a given place. The rhetoric of upward mobility fosters a way of thinking – a method of contribution – that inhibits healthy community development because the people's focus is on moving to the (perceived) next best place.

The contention here, and throughout this chapter, is that without a sense of what is native to a place, healthy communities cannot be invented. Consequently, without a native understanding of a place the local is unsustainable for two primary reasons: youth depart in the quest for upward mobility because they fail to see value in digging in, for "settling" signifies failure, and local sustainability demands an ecological approach fundamental to the project of becoming native. Philosopher Wendell Berry and scientist Wes Jackson represent the movement toward becoming native, a project that seeks radical change in the social and economic fabric of the United States. Their writings, methods, and actions will be analyzed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

The previous two chapters represent progressive and pragmatic attempts to rejuvenate rural communities operating within the constraints of late-capitalism. In many cases, they signify the best practices currently ongoing in the effort to rejuvenate

depressed rural areas. These programs and initiatives can be thought of as the first step toward an awareness and nourishment of the local.

This chapter is an appropriate extension to contemporary practices of becoming local because it details a wide-scope and radical turn on the road to rural rejuvenation. It is radical in that it measures successful inventions not by economic but by ecological indicators. The becoming native approach is a fledgling program that demands much work and a long time to become realized – it is tomorrow’s community. However, the assumptions and methods of becoming native are available for rhetorical analysis in Wes Jackson’s “Land Institute,” a natural systems agriculture research center, and Wendell Berry’s seminal work, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture. These two texts are the primary sites of investigation because they articulate a manner of becoming native. In doing so, they also provide this dissertation with a radical worldview, a worldview full of significant implications for rhetorical invention and rural rejuvenation. While the assumptions and method of becoming native tend to differ from the previous chapter’s analyses, all three chapters share a commitment to local inventions in an effort to rejuvenate rural communities.

This chapter, with an eye toward rural rejuvenation, investigates the project of becoming native as it relates to invention as production. The following sections begin with an introduction to the assumptions and ends of becoming native. From these assumptions, the primary methods employed by Jackson and Berry are explained not only in relation to their project but against the larger context of rhetorical invention as production. With the assumptions and methods exposed, Wes Jackson’s agricultural research center, The Land Institute, is analyzed for its approach to invention. And as with chapters three and four, the findings from this chapter will be used in the concluding

chapter to articulate a model and pedagogy of becoming local as it relates to rhetorical studies and rural community rejuvenation.

BECOMING NATIVE TO A PLACE

“The great aim of modern life has been to improve the future...And this is no elitist obsession; it is commonplace” (Berry, *Unsettling* 57). Wendell Berry reads the “future” topos, more specifically the “future-as-paradise” topos, as the dominant vision driving the industrial project; therefore, we can deduce it is also the dominant vision fueling most rural rejuvenation efforts. In this way, the commonplace of a perfect tomorrow orients the rhetorical invention of modern new beginnings. This futuristic vision sees science and technology correcting modern ills and minimizing labor.

Despite the progress of modernity, as evident for example in the steady decline of infant mortality rates, the industrial project has had an unsettling effect on people, as it encourages an upwardly mobile mentality that disregards “places.” Berry points to specialization, the preferred industrial method, as the culprit for such displacement. Thus, the project of becoming native is a response to the modern agenda of upward mobility and its propensity for displacement. For rhetoricians, the assumptions and methods of becoming native are attuned to a theory and practice of *invention as production*. In what follows, I read the rhetoric of becoming native for its manner of rhetorically creating and producing.

Regarding first assumptions, Jackson’s project of becoming native is not a naïve yearning for a harmonious nostalgic past or an effort to discover a natural existence in some pristine setting; rather, it is a way of living in communities that are always becoming – places where people can earn a living, think creatively, and be of use. Being

native to a place is always a process of becoming, as Jackson reminds us, “from the Big Bang to the present, change is the rule” (Becoming 112). In this way, becoming native is an acknowledgement of *energeia*. The hermeneutic move here is to view *nature* alongside *discourse* as being internally active, in the same way that Aristotle first coined *energeia* to describe the metaphysics of objects and later assigned this same quality to rhetorical discourse. To see the whole as internally active opens the door for rhetorical invention. The constant motion of these native new beginnings demands the continuous rhetorical work of bringing before the eyes.

A native place is one that operates under an ecological model. Jackson explains, “[W]e of Western civilization have moved from the church, to the nature-state, to economics as the primary organizing structure for our lives.... It is time to move more aggressively on to the fourth phase, already under way, ecology (Becoming 116). Becoming native demands an ecological accounting system that takes into consideration as many production costs as possible. Under this system, the inventions of new beginnings are measured by their attunement to a place; they are judged by their ability to sustain the local. The design of native inventions, thus, is aligned with Frampton’s critical regionalism. Inventions must compliment their surrounding environment. Yet, becoming native (and critical regionalism) does not envision the ends to be an ecological utopia.

These “native” new beginnings, Jackson warns, should be created with great caution to avoid the impulse to gentrify places and turn them into “Eco-Disneylands” (Becoming 113). Here, Jackson’s warning runs parallel to what Mitrasinovic’s research reveals in the design of theme parks. The invention of totalizing landscapes is not conducive to nourishing human particularity, which for Hannah Arendt is the foremost attribute of a democratic public sphere. As such, totalizing landscapes are not the places invented by the project of becoming native. A native invention operates under an

ecological accounting system that is further explained in the next section. Of fundamental importance to this project is that “becoming” is conjoined to “native.” To be native for the researcher, farmer, and rhetor is to approach the world as internally active.

Wendell Berry describes this internally active approach as that taken up by a conversationalist. The conversation between person and place is never static or complete; each participant forever changes the other. Berry explains, “The conversation itself would thus assume a kind of creaturely life, binding the place and its inhabitants together, changing and growing to no end, no final accomplishment, that can be conceived or foreseen” (qtd. by Jackson, 40). The conversationalist approach opens a wide-space for rhetorical invention as production to be an integral element in the becoming local project. It is an approach that binds the rhetor’s appeals not only to an audience but also to a place.

Rhetoric has long appreciated the relationship between speaker, text, and audience but ecological accounting stretches the rhetorical triangle. Further implications of such a conversation for rhetorical studies will be addressed in the final chapter. For Berry these conversations pertaining to local inventions start with the creation of a home as echoed in Wes Jackson’s opening call for a homecoming major.

The invention of a healthy and sustainable community starts with the private lives of responsible individuals according to Wendell Berry. In this way, all people are responsible for creating places, and this starts with home building. For Berry there is much work to be done in the name of home improvement. He contends,

The modern home is so destructive, I think, because it is a generalization, a product of factory and fashion, an everyplace or a noplacement. Modern houses, like airports, are extensions of each other; they do not vary much from one place to

another. A person standing in a modern room anywhere might imagine himself standing anywhere else –much as he could if he shut his eyes. The modern house is not a response to its place, but rather to the affluence and social status of its owner. It is the first means by which the modern materiality imposes itself upon the world. The industrial conquistador, seated in his living room in the evening in front of his TV set, many miles from his work, can easily forget where he is and what he has done. He is everywhere or nowhere. Everything around him, everything on TV, tells him of his success: his comfort is the redemption of the world. His home is the emblem of his status, but it is not the center of his interest or of his consciousness. The history of our time has been to a considerable extent the movement of the center of consciousness away from the home (Unsettling, 53).

Berry attacks a method of rhetorical invention that teaches solely by way of general topoi. Homebuilding demands a rhetoric that is rooted in a local consciousness which infers the need for local topoi.

Berry describes modern homes as “emblems” of status that can be invented and experienced without even opening one’s eyes (and ears etc.). Recall from chapter two that the emblem, according to Gregory Ulmer, is an integral element of a “mystory.”⁴⁷ And the mystory was established to “simulate the experience of invention, the crossing of discourses” (Ulmer, Heuretics xii). By combining/crossing images of local testimony (idia) an emblem emerges; and from this emblem’s wide-image, inventions abound. The contemporary home incites no such wide-image inventions as its design is motivated by industrial status markers – general topoi handed down through materialism – instead of

local testimonies generated by the needs of a place. To adequately respond to a place is to invent a local emblem that is brought before the eyes of the community in the form of a specific home.

Berry's caustic remarks also speak directly to the current state of rhetorical studies and offer a path for a healthy theory/practice of invention as production. While these issues are fully addressed in the final chapter, it is useful to articulate here what is at stake for rhetoricians under Berry's approach. According to Berry, contemporary homes are generalizations that lack a sense of place, whether they are occupied by families or academic departments. By substituting *rhetorical studies* for *home* Berry's polemic reads, "The modern rhetorical studies program is not a response to its place, but rather to the affluence and social status of the University." The treatment of rhetorical invention is a glaring reflection of the chasm between rhetorical scholarship and rejuvenation of places.

Invention as understanding teaches that rhetoric is everywhere, in our inquiries, interpretations, and languages. While these generalizations are important theoretical moves, they too move the consciousness of the student and professor away from a home, a place. Places are the cornerstone of becoming native and an integral element to rural rejuvenation. Places might also play a similar role in rhetorical inventions. Berry contends that a concern for place is how healthy homes and healthy work is invented; these are the first steps to inventing sustainable rural communities. In this way, invention as production is an art of homebuilding. A producer/rhetorician assumes that one's dwelling place is intrinsically connected to where one works. And from this starting point, the rural community is on its way to becoming native.

Philosophically, Berry connects the place of home and work by adopting an ecological approach. This approach teaches that there is "need to prepare humans to live short lives in the face of long work and long time" (Art 192). Thus, becoming native

demands that each person takes into account the environment (place) as it was before they arrived and will be long after they depart, for the time and work necessary for ecological health spans far beyond the life of any given self. Becoming native to a place requires people to think and act in a manner that puts the least amount of stress on the places they dwell.

Longevity is the goal of healthy communities. What if this ecological approach guided rhetorical invention? The rhetor, assuming the role of producer, would take long time and long work into consideration with the creation of linguistic turns. Longevity would be the impetus behind these inventions, not upward mobility as played out in disciplinary status. For example, David Kaufer alludes to this concern with his call for further examination into the “portability” of rhetorical appeals within a given cultural context. The most portable appeals in becoming native would be the ecologically sensitive turns. Again, we shall revisit these arguments in the concluding chapter. For now, I return to explaining the project of becoming native by outlining the primary methods of invention employed by Berry and Jackson. These methods are then compared and contrasted to the tools of invention discussed in chapter two.

METHODS OF BECOMING NATIVE

The dialectic is of foremost concern to becoming native, and is a primary method of invention for rural rejuvenation projects. The dialectical relationship between the whole and part informs the research and farming done by Jackson and Berry. Their contention is that the age-old dialectical method has been neglected and substituted with a scientific method of reductionism that promotes specialization. Reductionism, according to Jackson, dominates contemporary inventions by offering “one truth” about

the world (Jackson, Native 35). Furthermore, reductionism teaches that science is neutral in relation to how it is employed. It follows, then, that industrial farming, a product of scientific reductionism, would emphasize specialized parts over the whole and largely ignore the emergent qualities that arise from its methods. The contention here is that reductionism and specialization displace the soil in the same way they displace communities. Following this line of argument, rural rejuvenation efforts by specialists who focus primarily on the broken parts of a community are inherently unsustainable.

Wendell Berry traces the displacement caused by specialization all the way down to an individual's character. He writes,

The disease of the modern character is specialization. Looked at from the standpoint of the social system, the aim of specialization may seem desirable enough. The aim is to see that the responsibilities of government, law, medicine, engineering, agriculture, education etc., are given into the hands of the most skilled, best prepared people. The difficulties do not appear until we look at specialization from the opposite standpoint – that of individual persons. We then begin to see the grotesquery – indeed, the impossibility – of an idea of community wholeness that divorces itself from any idea of personal wholeness (Berry, Unsettling 19).

Berry attacks specialization as the preferred method of invention because it never gets around to addressing wholeness – the connection between mind, soil, and energy for instance. With regard to rhetorical invention, it would appear that invention as understanding fulfills the wholeness criterion – it works to see rhetoric through a grand vision of epistemology, hermeneutics, or aesthetics. These theories are attempts to

address disciplinary wholeness, but they presumptively assume rhetoric all the way down; furthermore, they bracket the notion of an individual's wholeness. Both moves reject the dialectical relationship between part and whole if we consider rhetoric and the scholar as being but parts of a larger academic life-world whole. Before we lose sight of the methods of becoming native, I shall stop here and return to these disciplinary issues in the final chapter.

The dialectic is the preferred method of becoming native because it offers the ability to better reveal emergent qualities. The shortcoming of specialization, according to Wes Jackson is that it neglects these emergent qualities: "Our placement of priority on the parts over the whole denies the importance of emergent properties, or qualities, the things that pile up as we go up the level of organization from small to large. Even systems theory is a form of reductionism, for the intersecting variable on the computer does not predict emergent qualities (take the two gasses hydrogen and oxygen which combined at a given temperature and pressure give us wetness)" (Becoming 35). The contention here is that the dialectical method of doing science and rhetoric opens up the potential for emergent qualities to be brought before their eyes.

We came across emergent qualities in chapter two concerning Gregory Ulmer's method of "electracy" as internet invention. While Ulmer's method is not "dialectic" – he is foremost concerned with a method of invention that takes into account emergent qualities – the emblem works to invent emergent possibilities that would not come to surface without mingling the specialized parts into a wide-scope visual. Berry and Jackson certainly are more comfortable with "discovering" emergent qualities; whereas, Ulmer is in the post-modern frame of inventing these qualities. Yet, the connection is significant; both methods of invention rely upon emergent qualities.

For Jackson and Berry, these emergent qualities are contingencies of place. Thus, alongside the dialectical method, becoming native involves a method of “digging in” to a place. And this digging in is a material commitment as much as it is a mental and spiritual one. One can only learn to recognize emergent qualities when a person “digs in” and commits to all dimensions (i.e., physical and symbolic) of a community. Because places are situated, qualities emerge that demand a local understanding of how the parts interact with the whole and vice versa. While it is impossible to see or know the whole of anything, a person who “digs in” to a specific place gains invaluable resources. She has history, experience, and a commitment to longevity to help create and produce community in accordance with the balance between part and whole. She is the ideal inventor for rural rejuvenation projects.

Digging in implies a commitment to longevity; it is the mentality that I may never leave this place, and the marks I make will forever be a part of this place. Digging into a place constrains a rhetor’s design space. This is the message of Kaufer and Butler as they encourage rhetor’s to see the rhetorical appeals as interactions. Upon digging in, the interaction is a pathetic interaction between language, emotion and place. While rhetorical invention has long revolved around audience appeal, digging into a place adds a heightened degree of responsibility to these appeals. The rhetor is the audience as much as everyone who will come to call this place home for generations to come. In this way, the potential risk of any invention is becoming homeless and displacing others in the process. Rhetorical inventions blind to place dismiss the responsibility of sustaining the local. These inventions add further credence to the pejorative use of the term rhetoric, as a craft or trickery.

To dig in is an ecological approach that takes into consideration all that has gone into inventing a given place. When a person commits to digging in they work to take into

account the historical path of the people(s) and place. Jackson writes, “We must keep before us the need to gain and maintain a realistic image of what it was like for creatures of the upper Paleolithic as they gathered and hunted as a cultural species in numerous tribal arrangements for two million years, 150,000 years or so with the big brain” (Becoming 113). For Jackson, evolutionary theories are a way into discovering what is native about a place. These historical tracings serve as a method of invention that parallels Cicero’s *imitatio*. Becoming native is not a yearning to return back to an age of hunting and gathering in the same way that *imitatio* is not the mimicry of great orators; rather, they are both an acknowledgement that evolutionary history and canonized speeches can teach us something about how to invent a sustainable home or crop on the Nebraska prairie.

In addition to *imitatio*, Jackson’s invention is rooted in biomimicry. Biomimicry holds that “it is time to turn to nature’s economy for more and better ideas” (Jackson, Becoming 72). Using *nature as the measure* (and this includes *human nature*) to inform inventions is an integral method of becoming native to a place. This ecological approach tempers the Cartesian measure of “man’s cleverness” by emphasizing “nature’s wisdom.” Human cleverness, contend Jackson and Piper, transformed the earth in an effort to yield an abundance of food (1091). This cleverness succeeded but with unintended and devastating consequences, as witnessed in the erosion of top-soil and the drastic decline of small farmers, both of which have led to the decimation of rural communities. The lesson here is that community development cannot be done alone in the mental confines of a specialized man-made house. The solution for Jackson and Piper is biomimicry – a method that shifts the pendulum away from man’s cleverness and nearer the side of nature’s wisdom.

Wendell Berry teaches that *nature as the measure* is an age-old method of invention employed throughout Western history. As an example, he recites Virgil: “Before we plow an unfamiliar patch / It is well to be informed about the winds, / About the variations in the sky, / The native traits and habits of the place, / What each locale permits, and what denies” (qtd. by Jackson, Becoming 73). Virgil embraced nature as a defining constraint and a way to make judgments about the invention of places and actions. This is exactly how biomimicry functions as method of invention. “The biomimics are discovering what works in the natural world, and more important, what lasts,” writes scientist Janine Benyus, “The more our world looks and functions like this natural world, the more likely we are to be accepted on this home that is ours, but not ours alone” (Benyus 3).

While biomimicry denotes the copying of nature, the application to contemporary business and dwelling places is an invention by *imitatio*. Biomimicry is *imitatio* with *nature* as the criteria by which to judge the production. If rhetorical invention as production is to assist in the project of producing sustainable communities, the design space of rhetors could benefit from biomimicry and other ecological approaches. Rhetorical invention would be taking cues from how nature invents, and if Berry’s contention that *nature as the measure* has a long storied history is true, it is likely rhetors have been taking cues from the natural for a long time. But that project is for another day and another rhetorician.

The methods of becoming native to a place as described by Jackson and Berry involve *nature as measure*, *digging in*, *emergent qualities*, and the *dialectic*. Each of these methods is an attempt to create sustainable rural communities by taking a cue from ecology. The methods of becoming native are attuned to *biomimicry*, *imitatio*, *topoi*, and *interpretation by design* – tools detailed in accordance with invention and production.

While these methods share many similarities, the becoming native methods are cultivated and used as part of an overarching agrarian worldview. In this way, they supply answers to the question: To what ends should rhetor's invent? The becoming native model replies: producers are local, committed to the long haul, and dedicated to nature as the measuring stick. The following section investigates The Land Institute, Jackson's research center that employs the becoming native model in an effort to grow sustainable crops and rejuvenate rural communities.

THE LAND INSTITUTE

When people, land, and community are as one, all three members prosper; when they relate not as members but as competing interests, all three are exploited. By consulting Nature as the source and measure of that membership, The Land Institute seeks to develop an agriculture that will save soil from being lost or poisoned while promoting a community life at once prosperous and enduring (Land Institute, Mission).

The Land Institute's mission statement eloquently summarizes the assumptions and methods of becoming native detailed in this chapter. The dialectic conversation between individuals, land, and communities revolves around the internally active emergent qualities of nature that always are in the process of becoming. This institute, founded by Wes Jackson over 25 years ago, adheres to the methods of becoming native throughout its research and programs. The Land Institute is an exemplar that brings before the eyes a project of becoming native. It is especially germane to rhetorical invention in its successful efforts to invent a radically new beginning, a unique agricultural paradigm that serves as a foundation for community. Furthermore, it is a

case-study of remarkable perseverance, as it has sustained itself to this point with minimal support from the dominant players in the agriculture industry.

Most unique to The Land Institute is a research agenda focused on “natural systems agriculture” (NSA) carried out on over 500 acres of land located in Salina, Kansas. The problems addressed by the Land Institute are not in agriculture, the problem is of agriculture (Land, About). While the institute does not condemn patchwork research concerning the problems in agriculture, these solutions revolving around better resource management are short-term fixes that fail to remedy the root causes of agricultural problems. Therefore, when confronted with the harsh reality that nearly one-third of US top-soil has eroded in the past 200 years, Wes Jackson concluded that the problem was of agriculture itself. He broadly describes this contention:

Before agriculture we were gatherers and hunters. We took but we did not plant. Once we started planting, soil disturbance was required *every year* because the plants that sustained this more settled way of human life were annuals, mostly from the grass family. Annual grasses like wheat, rice, corn, rye, and barley account for 70 percent of all human calories. For convenience sake, we planted these annuals in monocultures. As we did, we created two edges on this agricultural sword: soil erosion as the consequence of the necessary *annual plowing*, and the pests that the *monoculture invites*. The first, over the long term, is more serious than the latter, but combined, they largely but not exclusively define The Problem OF Agriculture (Land, Programs).

To address the problem of agriculture, Jackson and associates began to invent and employ a method of natural systems agriculture.

NSA works from the assumption that nature should not be subservient to agriculture as is the case with contemporary industrial farming methods; rather, nature should be the measure as was explained in the previous methods section. Jackson explains the logos of using nature as measure: “Ecosystems self-regulate, accumulate ‘ecological capital’ and are largely resilient to most perturbations (for example, epidemics and drought are buffered). Our mission has been to honor these systems and mimic them to some degree. In our Rural Community Studies program, we extend this thinking to human communities, rural ones first” (Land, [About](#)). Jackson is clear that biomimicry is the preferred method of natural systems agriculture; moreover, his last statement makes an integral leap – one between nature and people. Growing sustainable food and fiber is the bedrock of growing sustainable communities. Thus, we need only stretch a bit further to connect natural systems agriculture with a brand of rhetorical invention. The rhetorical invention of becoming native too operates with nature as a guide. The remainder of this section addresses these connections by first detailing NSA, and then exploring the link between this method of farming, rural community rejuvenation and rhetorical invention.

Natural Systems Agriculture

Natural Systems Agriculture operates under the assumption that nature should be mimicked in an effort to produce sustainable food and fiber sources. Employing this method of biomimicry, The Land Institute focuses on studying the eco-system germane to a specific place. In the case of Salina, Kansas, positioned amongst the expansive Flint Hills, the natural ecosystem is tallgrass prairie. While most of the native Kansas prairie has been cultivated to yield monoculture crops like wheat and corn, some native prairie

still exists and serves as a rich site for the Land Institute's research. Biomimicry serves as the design method; however, using nature as measure also involves an interpretive process of reverse engineering.

To assess the interaction of the part and whole one must engage in deconstruction to gauge the make-up and construction process of a prairie ecosystem. An interpretive and, thus, rhetorical element comes into play when the researcher/rhetorician works to describe irreducible principles of the whole that provide the form and function for the symbiotic relationship of parts. By framing reverse engineering with an interpretive eye to the "whole," I have inserted the dialectic into what typically is a reductionist method. It is the emphasis on the whole that Wes Jackson felt had been abandoned by agriculture (and community development projects), but is still brilliantly illustrated in tallgrass prairie.

The tallgrass prairie teaches the fundamental lesson that sustainable life is contingent upon perennial polycultures (Land, [Research](#)). A perennial polyculture is a recurrent multiplicity of seeds grown in mixtures. This structure is contrary to the design of contemporary agriculture where the annual monoculture is a homogenous seed planted yearly, as is the case with the common grains of wheat and corn. To be native, according to the prairie, requires a multiplicity of voices engaged in a working relationship that is symbiotic.

With regard to rhetorical invention, the prairie is a working model for interdisciplinary research teams. These teams of multiple voices would silence their specialist yearnings and collaborate as a mixture, like the prairie seeds of the Flint Hills. The criteria guiding these inventions would mimic those that sustain communities, each of which the prairie's polyculture fulfills. The Land Institute lists the criteria as follows: "The only communities that persist through evolutionary time are those that: 1) maintain

or build their ecological capital, 2) fix and hold their nutrients, 3) are adapted to periodic stress, such as drought and fire, 4) manage their weed, pest and pathogen populations” (Research). While rhetoric has a longstanding concern with the ground on which arguments and consensus are built and maintained, the prairie model literally implies that the conditions (or models) for sustainable living can be found in the soil. What if the invention of rhetorical discourse took this same cue seriously? Instead of standing outside and critiquing the rhetoric of becoming native, rhetoricians would engage the ecologist with a faith that conversations on rhetoric and natural systems agriculture might produce emergent qualities, further improving the conditions for sustainable communities. In this approach, rhetoricians would be absorbed in the serious work of becoming native.

Texts yielded from the work of becoming native might look more like the programs designed by the women’s “New Century Club” in Matfield Green, Kansas that met from 1923 to 1964 (Jackson, Becoming 92). In an effort to compliment the specialized nonplace scholarship in academic journals, rhetoricians might use their art to foster local invention, deliberation, and learning. The women’s monthly programs addressed a broad range of topics as Jackson recounts: “Their monthly agendas were filled with decency, with efforts to learn about everything from the birds to the government, and with coping with their problems, the weather, diseases” (Becoming 94). These women engaged the whole in relation to their small part and place in the world.

What is significant about these seemingly amateur texts is that these women were on the internally active road of becoming native, for they were attuned to a specific place. Jackson explains, “An entire club program devoted to coping with the heat of August is being native to a place. That club was more than a support group; it was a cultural information in the making, keyed to place.” (Becoming 98). The rhetorician’s texts could assist the project of inventing and cultivating cultural information, not only to rejuvenate

rural communities but to make these places resistant to the desires of a late-industrial society. And there is great need for these texts created in a native rhetoric: it was industrial desires that ultimately flattened the original Matfield Green and eliminated the “New Century Club.”

A native rhetoric – one that works toward sustainability – would be a multiplicity of discourses that builds ecological capital, increases vital nutrients, adapts to crisis, and manages outside threats to sustainable living. While the rhetorical inventions are pluralistic and adaptable, this is not an “anything goes” and “everything is possible” approach. As Kaufer and Butler contend with interpretation by design, a rhetor’s appeals are delimited by the design space. So too with the prairie where boundary lines are drawn by an ecological force that is greater than any one of the parts; these lines establish the load for balance and harmony. Certainly, the analogy between rich soil and rhetorical invention is not a one-to-one match. I am not ready to deconstruct or collapse rhetorical artistic eloquence into natural biological/chemical relationships (and it is important to note that this is not the goal of the Land Institute either). The model of the prairie offers an ecological paradigm by which we might create and judge rhetorical discourse. Rhetors looking for a model of local invention may see in the native prairie an analogous, sustainable manner of production.

Measuring Success with Ecological Capital

A sustainable living community, in accordance with the first criteria listed above, maintains or builds ecological capital. Abiding by this rule, The Land Institute measures success by levels of ecological capital. For example, the “Sunshine Farm” managed by the Land Institute is a longitudinal research site designed to determine how farms might

eliminate or drastically reduce fossil fuels and operate on sunlight. The accounting system for such a project is an ecological method established to calculate energy use. In short, the weight of all of the farm inputs and outputs are converted into an energy equation that assesses energy deficits and surpluses where they exist (Bender). The motives for such a method are the invention of sustainable communities. Marty Bender, a researcher with the Land Institute explains:

The purpose of the renewable energy technologies in our project is to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels but not our dependence on local energy systems.

Virtually all farms are part of the local community in many ways, energy being no exception....Just as important as the monetary income from the sale is the fact that the excess electricity is now on the grid for use by the local community. In other words, in an all-solar future, given certain limits of energy production by solar technologies compared to current conventional technologies, it will likely be considered uncivic to own a personal electrical technology located near a grid but not connected to it.

Bender articulates a method of measuring up, a criteria by which to judge communities that revolves around local energy production.

Recall from chapter two, that *energeia* –Aristotle’s concept meaning “internally active” – is where the English word “energy” is derived from. To bring before the eyes that which cannot be seen is ultimately about a rhetor energizing an idea/concept. I reject the notion that it is mere coincidence or a groundless metaphor that links the Sunshine Farm with the work of rhetorical invention as production. This connection, seemingly unarticulated to this point in our intellectual trajectory, is now central to farmers and

rhetoricians interested in local productions. It is a connection held together by an ecological approach, an accounting method that evaluates farming and discourse production by their ability to generate renewable energy. And both farmer and rhetor would benefit from the cooperative work of bringing this ecological accounting method before the eyes of the community. As Wes Jackson contends, an understanding of the prairie's natural eco-system should be used to develop healthy rural communities.

The leap from perennial polyculture to human culture is an important and vibrant place for rhetorical invention. The manner in which this connection is invented and brought before the eyes of the people will determine the connection between natural systems agriculture and community development. However, this connection will not come before the eyes of any given community through a piece of rhetorical criticism done from afar and published even farther down the road. The conversation must be a mutual digging in by both scientists and artists, or in this case between natural system researchers and rhetoricians.

The conversation between farmers and rhetors is attuned to Wes Jackson's contention that nature as measure includes human nature. NSA is as committed to growing sustainable food and fiber as it is about growing sustainable human communities. Yet, their expertise resides primarily in the natural realm, and this is where rhetoricians come into play. Inventing and articulating the leap from prairie to town square is a task well suited to the rhetorical tradition, especially when framed as an art equipped with the tools and theories to support invention as production. Connecting prairie systems with human nature is a shared ecology that can be expressed with the language of an ecological accounting method.

Wanting to establish this connection between the prairie's ecosystem and rural communities, Wes Jackson set out to dig in to a relatively abandoned Flint Hills quarry

town, Matfield Green. Jackson purchased the abandoned school house and some vacant homes to start building anew. The excavated rural town had dwindled to 50 people, but in the past 20 years it has slowly become both a revitalized dwelling place and a community research site for associates of The Land Institute. The new inhabitants come to Matfield Green with the objective that “we have to live in a way that doesn’t spend the ecological capital of the Flint Hills area” (Benyhus 55). Their inventions are guided by the natural setting of Matfield Green and the materials left behind by past residents. For instance, the school building now serves as an education center for becoming native, used by both local school districts and community groups. Students and citizens alike are learning how to be native with the place of Matfield Green, and in turn, they are learning how to sustain their rural communities.

While the residents of Matfield Green are busy tracking energy consumption and the human carrying capacity of this place, the rhetorician’s work is left unexamined or unarticulated as such. As Wes Jackson observes, if people are to dig into places like Matfield Green, they need to be able to see that they can make a living. In other words, the possibilities of becoming native must be brought before the eyes. Although he refrains from using these words, Jackson is looking for an audience and making an appeal to influence. Who better to assist in such a challenging project than a rhetorician, trained in a local art with productive tools of invention? And the project is intriguing and serious for rhetoricians because ecology is constraining the design space. This native rhetoric will be measured by its relationship with energy production and the outcome will be judged by its ability to generate sustainable community living. Rhetoricians will be at the fuzzy front-end of rural rejuvenation like they once were with the creation of the ancient Greek city-states.

CONCLUSION

The project of becoming native teaches that an ecological paradigm should guide our inventions. An ecological approach, understood through Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry, necessitates a radical return to the local. The scientist and artist are encouraged to dig in, embrace the dialectical method, and take great concern with the emergent qualities of a place. It is an approach that calls into question the specialized expert and her accompanying mission of upward mobility. The Land Institute is an initial step in the becoming native project as it works to localize energy production by employing an ecological accounting method. Ultimately, these research efforts are an attempt to create sustainable communities. The becoming native project opens the door for conversations and collaborations with the rhetorician.

The rhetorician, equipped with a rich tradition of invention and a trained eye toward local audiences, could be a significant player in the leap from natural systems agriculture to community living. If the prairie and other sustainable eco-systems are to serve as *imitatio* for the invention of revitalized communities, engaged rhetoricians, willing to dig in and able to see emergent qualities, are needed to bring before the eyes of would-be residents this alternative model of human dwelling.

As it currently stands, rhetorical pedagogy fails to motivate and train students in the process of becoming local. A rhetorical pedagogy that takes its cue from the project of becoming native begins by framing the student as a producer with the agency to create new beginnings. These inventions, however, come with ecological constraints and responsibilities to the larger community. In this way, rhetorical productions and the rhetors who invent them are judged by their ability to sustain places. To best address sustainability issues, rhetorical pedagogy would have to reach out to those disciplines literate in energy, soil, and material production. And here is where the design arts can

serve as the conduit between the seemingly distant realms of materials and languages. Those who design places and objects in an experience economy operate in this space between the physical and symbolic. Rhetoricians could do well by pairing with designers to engage the project of becoming native and further develop a pedagogy of becoming local for rhetoricians and designers alike. This pedagogy is a main concern of the final chapter wherein the theories, methods, and practices revealed throughout this dissertation are commingled to address the primary question of how rhetorical invention can assist in the project of becoming local.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation embarked along the path of rhetorical invention. The search through tomes of rhetorical scholarship, the practice of designers, and cases of rural rejuvenation reveal how rhetoricians (as producers) can embrace and enhance projects of becoming local. While there are still many paths to explore and invent, there is a good deal to report at this boundary marker concerning the theory, pedagogy and practice of rhetorical invention, as they relate to the vitality of rhetorical studies and the rejuvenation of rural communities.

Now that we have explored the theoretical and practical areas involving rhetorical invention, I offer a set of answers to the question: How can rhetorical invention be used to assist in the project of becoming local to a place? The primary arguments emerging from this analysis are:

- 1) Rhetorical invention as production makes the rhetorician a capable and valuable participant in the conversation of rural rejuvenation.
- 2) Tapping into a productive tradition aligns rhetorical studies with the integrated work of the design arts.
- 3) These theoretical and disciplinary connections make way to begin articulating a pedagogy of becoming local.
- 4) A model of rural rejuvenation emerges from teaching rhetorical invention as a means to becoming local; this model is meant to function like the great speeches compiled by Erasmus – not as steps to copy but as fodder to fuel inventions in the Ciceronian spirit of *imitatio*.

The proceeding sections elaborate on these four arguments by revisiting the notion of rhetorician as producer, articulating a rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local, and

outlining a model of rural rejuvenation. Within each section, the implications for rhetorical studies and extensions of this project are offered.

RHETORICIAN AS PRODUCER

This project rests on the argument that rhetoric is a productive art operating in the space between the journal (theory) and the construction site (practice). Re-reading the ancient rhetorical tradition, where “poiesis” and “logos” gave birth to “rhetorike,” provides contemporary rhetoricians with an invaluable genealogy. From this starting point, it follows that rhetorical invention ultimately is concerned with creating new beginnings, an assertion that has broad implications regarding the position and reach of rhetorical studies. Positioning rhetorical studies as a productive art aligns it with the integrated work emerging from the design arts. As for reach, rhetoric expands into the engaged work being done to create and sustain communities

The Reach of Rhetorical Invention

In the early part of the twentieth century, the purview of rhetorical invention began to expand (as the delineation in chapter two illustrates). From invention as *management to production to understanding to generation*, rhetorical invention moved to include more substantial and integral dimensions of language use. These expansions fulfill Elbert Harrington’s advice that each generation should “examine anew the concept of rhetorical invention” (*Modern*, 373). I took Harrington’s advice to heart throughout this dissertation and worked to articulate an engaged notion of invention as production. This turn to “production” answered a secondary concern of this project: bringing the rhetorician closer to the work of the polis.

To engage the local, rhetoricians reach back to a tradition of rhetorical invention that centers on creating and maintaining the polis. They must re-learn the ancient know-how and prepare tools to work for the sustainability of places. Casting invention as production provides rhetoricians with an ethos, a grounded assertion, that they deserve a seat at the table of rural rejuvenation. The Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI) reveals that this table currently is occupied by persons with economic, agriculture, business, and sociological backgrounds; absent in this mix is the attention to language and audience interactions rhetoricians can offer.

Rhetoricians are a logical fit with the rural rejuvenation experts if they work from the position of invention as production. But this demands that rhetoricians step closer and roll their critical tools into a renewable process of creating anew. William Keith moves the rhetorical critic in this direction by equating the critic's methods with that of reverse engineering. Under this method, deconstruction comes with the motive to create anew. And here in the details of production is where contemporary rhetorical studies falls short. To make these new beginnings happen, we have to change our way of seeing; we must view *rhetorical invention as production*.

Rhetorical invention as production is informed by a re-reading of Aristotle's "energeia." To see discourse as internally active is to accept that rhetorical invention is a process of bringing before the eyes. Thus, rhetoric is as much a visual art as it is a verbal one, which is an observation made obvious in digital texts like Ulmer's "electracy" project and reaffirmed by classical rhetoric pedagogy. The visual nature of rhetorical invention is also illustrated in rural rejuvenation projects. In the case of Aurora, Nebraska, bringing the I-80 corridor project before the eyes of the Love's management and the local residents was a matter of seeing the corridor as internally active and visually framing the new beginning within the topos of progress. In addition to demonstrating the

visual nature of rhetorical invention, rural rejuvenation projects emphasize the internally active nature of both words and objects – an important Aristotelian connection expanding the rhetorician’s reach from the symbolic into the material realm.

Viewing the world as internally active directly addresses the tertiary concern articulated in chapter one: cultivating a participatory democracy. Embracing *energeia* sets an important condition for participatory democracy. To see the world as *becoming* protects the possibility of human particularity critical, according to Hannah Arendt, to democracies. Furthermore, concepts like *energeia* turn the scholar back to texts that emerged, in part, from a participatory democracy. As Ober’s reading and my analysis of *energeia* demonstrate, these texts have much to offer contemporary scholars concerned with the conditions for democracy.

Positioning the Rhetorician

If the invention of speeches is to be attuned with the invention of rural corridors, it is logical that conversations begin between rhetoricians and those in the design arts – persons accustomed to working in the space between the material and symbolic. Where rhetoricians have something to say about audiences, designers have something to say about places. And here rests the connection necessary to engage the project of becoming local to a place – the know-how to invent objects and discourse relating to both people and places. In this space, rhetoricians are positioned as producers alongside their colleagues in the design arts.

Regarding the design arts, this project found biomimicry to be prevalent in rural rejuvenation projects, illustrated in the value-added agriculture ventures promoted by the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center and The Land Institute’s research on natural

systems agriculture. Borrowing from eco-systems to shape inventions is more than mere mimicking; it is better understood as *imitatio*. Rhetoricians have a rich tradition of teaching judgment from a canon of great speeches. Might the rhetor's *imitatio* not also be informed by the inner-workings of a Kansas tall-grass prairie or a Nebraska cooperative? Taking a cue from these eco-systems' methods of invention would alter radically the Cartesian method of isolated scholarship and reframe the methods/ends of rhetorical education. I address the latter implication in the following section concerning the rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local; here, I use the examples of cooperative agriculture and the design firm, IDEO, to describe a more integrated manner of producing rhetorical scholarship.

In chapter four the methods of cooperatives and value-added agricultural ventures are connected to the design firm, IDEO. Each entity operates by employing multi-disciplinary teams working collaboratively to invent and build places. These groups reveal a model of scholarship attuned to the very manner in which most rhetoricians view language. Language comes to us with many voices, yet the model of rhetorical scholarship is largely one of isolation – a Cartesian model of the lonely thinker inventing great thoughts. These great thoughts are then judged by and against scholarship produced by the same isolated methods of production. If language comes to us with many voices, it follows that rhetorical scholarship should use multiple voices in its analysis and invention.

Take the case of this dissertation, which ironically was written largely in the Cartesian model of isolated scholarship. Imagine if this writing were done in conjunction with one of the Land Institute's doctoral interns and an owner of a value-added agriculture venture. With each party dedicated to rural rejuvenation, the voices concerning language, the prairie, and a cooperative venture could work jointly to produce

sustainable places. In this arrangement, the work would include a brand of rhetorical scholarship emerging from the worldviews and measuring sticks of those parties integral to a given issue, here, an ecologist and landowner. The payoffs of cooperative scholarship compared to lone writing are inventions and plans that take into account emergent qualities.

Aurora's community strategic plan has been in action for the past five years and is a rich site of rhetorical invention; however, a cooperative project between rhetorician, ecologist, and landowner might have analyzed the interaction between the topos of progress and the community's water quality for instance. What emerges from a rhetorical mandate for community growth alongside water restrictions is fodder for further research and new beginnings. Cooperative scholarship would be equipped to address emergent qualities arising from the dialectic between component part and whole, in large part, because the specialist's thinking is kept in check by the other collaborators. This brand of scholarship offers the range to probe deep and still see panoramas. Such a larger perspective-taking is how IDEO sustains a competitive advantage compared to other monoculture design firms; likewise it is how the prairie sustains an ecological advantage over monoculture industrial agriculture.

In addition to methods and integrated work, the design arts bring to rhetorical invention a familiarity and concern for places. Kenneth Frampton demonstrates this attention to place with a theory of critical building. Critical regionalism provides a typology and method for rhetorical scholarship geared toward the invention of sustainable places, whether they are rural communities or academic departments. Considering that commonplaces (topoi) have a rich rhetorical tradition, an emphasis on "place" connects critical regionalism and rhetorical invention. Revisiting the specific topics (idia/testimony) is one way to foster integration between rhetoric and design. The

specific topics are substantial markers of the local, just as the “natural” and “topography” are significant aspects of critical regionalism.

The concern with place by designers and rhetoricians is attuned with more progressive models of community development. We witness this in John Allen’s asset-based community development approach, an approach premised on nurturing the treasures of a place. The asset-based approach reframes the conversation about rural rejuvenation from that of *problems* into that of *gifts*. The assumption here is that sustainable communities emerge from the gifts of a local place. “Treasures” and “gifts” serve as commonplaces of the asset-based approach, yet the method’s success hinges on local testimonies (specific topics).

This connection between critical regionalism, topoi (both common and specific), and asset-based rural rejuvenation illustrates the seemingly natural fit between rhetorician, designer, and community practitioner. It also represents but a single contact point between rhetorical studies and design arts, where there are numerous untapped conversations and relationships that flow logically from these two arts. Kaufer and Butler’s work concerning the rhetor’s design space is one such connection as is William Keith’s assertion that critical rhetoric functions like reverse engineering. Many more possibilities ensue from these fledgling attempts to position rhetoric alongside the productive and integrated design arts – one of which is the continued expansion of rhetorical studies into the realm of presentational symbolic forms. This expansion answers the call for rhetorical studies to become literate in the visual and aesthetic.

The visual (or presentational symbolic form) is a primary element of concern for the design arts, as demonstrated in *drawing* being a designer’s preferred medium. Visuals also function in rural rejuvenation efforts. The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center reveals that images function as the preferred medium to bring before the eyes of

community members exemplary development efforts. Thus, for rhetorical studies to become better aligned with these productive efforts, it must become more literate in presentational symbolic forms, especially concerning the role of the visual in the invention process. Gregory Ulmer's "electracy" project is the most promising example of teaching rhetorical invention through the visual; however, he is concerned foremost with heuristics – a theory of aleatory invention. To achieve multiple voices on rhetorical invention, scholarship needs to focus on the visual nature of more traditional theories of rhetorical invention including dialectic, topoi, and heuristics.

Positioning the rhetorician as producer opens a space for rhetoric to be embraced by those interested parties working toward rural rejuvenation. This integration would take some of the pejorative meaning from rhetoric, bolster rhetoric's ethos, and create a broader audience for rhetorical scholarship. This might include audiences like the interdisciplinary scholars and practitioners that contribute to the "Community Development Society."⁴⁸ The producer label also positions the rhetorician closer to the design arts. The benefits here are numerous, and include access to a tradition fluent in aesthetics and visual symbolic forms, as well as the opportunity to begin cultivating a more sustainable disciplinary home within the 21st century University. Such an altered position and expanded reach are the result of framing rhetoric within the project of becoming local. Rhetoric is a field of study that sustains itself by digging in and producing the situated texts of a place. The degree to which rhetoric as production is embraced rests largely on a supporting pedagogy. Following is an attempt to articulate a pedagogy of becoming local for rhetorical studies.

RHETORICAL PEDAGOGY OF BECOMING LOCAL

Wes Jackson opened the previous chapter by calling on higher education to develop a homecoming major. Contemporary pedagogy, contends Jackson, teaches a model of working and living that is premised on upward mobility – a manner of thinking and acting that neglects the local. By making health the paramount standard of educational development, Jackson remakes the pedagogical measuring stick into a sustainability-of-place meter. This ecological meter would judge theories, pedagogies and practices by their commitment and effect on the longevity and health of a given place. The assumption here is that both an individual's and a community's "health" require a sustainable home premised on local harmony.

Thus, the question of how to dwell with and among others demands an ecological answer that we can begin to formulate with examples like the tall-grass prairie of the Flint Hills. It is fitting that the word ecology comes to English from the Greek word for house (oikos). An ecological turn in education can be thought of as a move toward understanding the logos of being at home. This move should not be confused with some essentialist quest to discover the Good Life; rather, for rhetoricians it is a process of bringing the internally active process of sustainable community before the residents' eyes. Using the work of rural rejuvenation detailed throughout this dissertation, I begin to articulate what a pedagogy of becoming local might look like for rhetorical studies and specifically, the study of invention. First, it is important to detail the shortcomings of the current educational system that necessitate this pedagogical turn.

Shortcomings of the Specialist's Pedagogy

The current rhetorical education system primarily trains students and faculty to focus on specialized parts as they operate in complex environments. The same can be

said about higher education in general. In the quest to specialize and professionalize students, universities and colleges promote knowing the world from an expert's point of view. In turn, this system creates a culture that defers solving its felt needs to specialized experts. The specialist works in the following manner of reductionism: she defines a general problem, reduces the problem to its parts, studies how a few parts work, and uses this information of parts to make the whole healthier.

Because experts only can speak about a part in the context of the whole, contemporary University scholars know much about a small slice of the "healthy polis" equation but very little about a *particular* healthy polis. For instance, the mechanical engineer can build a more efficient engine while the historian can record richer accounts of history, but neither is challenged to think about how that engine or history adds to the health of a specific local community or how a given community might add to their notions of engineering or history. Students are not getting to lay their hands and minds on the emergent qualities of a given local environment, precisely because these qualities exist in situated places – they are found in homelands. But these homelands are too particular and too time-consuming for specialized professors and would-be specialized students whose professional livelihoods are premised on upward mobility.

Teaching from the specialist's model fails to equip students with the resources to recognize emergent qualities and use them to benefit local situations. For example, we teach undergraduate speech-communication majors much about symbol using in relationships, politics, mediums, and organizations; yet, these students leave the University largely illiterate in local ecosystems, local material use, and local deliberative models. Philosopher and farmer Wendell Berry explains the consequences of a specialized mentality:

What happens under the rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more intricate, it has less and less structure. It becomes more and more organized, but less and less orderly. The community disintegrates because it loses the necessary understanding, forms, and enactments of the relations among materials and process, principles and actions, ideals and realities, past and present, present and future, men and women, body and spirit, city and country, civilization and wilderness, growth and decay, life and death – just as the individual character loses the sense of responsible involvement in these relations (Unsettling 21).

Specialization for Berry lacks a commitment, a responsibility to place. Nurturing this value hinges on a pedagogy that cultivates students' ability to see emergent qualities and motivates them to work for longevity – the seven generations that might want to call this place home. To recognize emergent qualities in a local environment, one must be able to see beyond their specialized training (the parts) and analyze processes in relation to a given place (the whole).

Rhetorical pedagogy, in its current form, does a poor job of seeing beyond its own specialized borders to gain a greater understanding of the whole. For example, the “it’s all rhetoric” position is the epitome of a specialist’s sight line. This reductionism is what Cherwitz and Hikins associate with “provincial scholarship.” The “all-to-human tendency” of provincialism occurs when scholars “raise rhetoric as a discipline to the top of the academic pecking order” by trumping rival methods and ways of seeing (Cherwitz and Hikins, Climbing 376). By muffling the voices of other worldviews, the study of rhetoric remains isolated for the enlightened few.

Celeste Condit, delivering the Carroll Arnold lecture at the 2004 NCA Annual Conference in Chicago, argued that communication scholars (rhetoricians included) need to reassess the position that it is language all the way down. This winner-take-all assertion shuts down the possibility of integrated research projects with scholars and practitioners across the campus and community. It thereby diminishes the possibility of becoming local to a place, for it takes many eyes to see emergent qualities. Furthermore, totality arguments have dangerous implications; for example, consider the consequences deduced from the evolutionary biologist who asserts that “it’s all genetics.”

Condit argued that communication scholars would do well to abandon the fancy that their subject matter reign supreme and team up with scientists who are sympathetic to the role of language. Condit’s advice, read across the project of becoming local, produces interdisciplinary mergers founded on an appreciation for the part and the whole – the dialectical method. Thus, these mergers reject the temptation to embrace the specialist’s eureka moment: “My slice of the world is the world!” The dialectical method opposes any specialist position that asserts its dominion over the disciplinary arms of the academy.

In addition to bracketing other disciplinary forces, rhetorical studies largely ignores an intrapersonal dialectic, the relationship between being a scholar and a healthy person. The part, a scholar, is seldom analyzed in relation to the whole, a healthy person. Here again, this is an indictment of reductionism. Its effects are not limited to scholarship; they permeate the scholar too. For example, consider the mandate to publish non-stop in select journals with acceptance rates under 20%. From this demand emerges a specialized scholar working and speaking with a few like scholars. This environment, lacking multiplicity and balance, does not compute with the dictates of sustainability. To produce in this environment at this level something must give way, whether it is teaching

quality, physical or mental well-being, personal relationships etc. – each a compositional part of the whole, healthy scholar. And as the Land Institute’s research on soil erosion reveals, once integral parts give way, the unsustainable search for imported fixes begins, whether they be intensified fertilizers or pharmaceuticals.

The problem is not that rhetorical scholars have gladly embraced the unsustainable research demands of the modern university; it is that the rhetorical scholarship has yet to seriously engage the issue of the healthy scholar. Where in rhetorical theories is the healthy rhetor (and critic) or at minimum a pedagogical commitment to produce healthy persons? Granted, the turn to “invention as understanding” has raised implications concerning an *ethical* or *sensitive* rhetor, but scholarly discussions about what constitutes the modern good person speaking (producing) well are considered arcane in an age of secular humanism and post-modern deconstruction. The mistake here is that this system of reductionism never gets around to addressing the cornerstone of a sustainable community, the healthy person dwelling in a healthy home. A pedagogy of becoming local, rooted in a place, works to address the specialist’s shortcomings. This pedagogy also directly answers this dissertation’s question concerning the rhetorician’s role in becoming local.

Becoming Local in Rhetorical Studies

The narrative of upward mobility requires a shift toward a narrative of creating sustainable places. This shift necessitates a pedagogy of becoming local. Rhetorical studies programs have an ancient tradition that demonstrates the adaptability and productive nature of their art. Furthermore, rhetoric is a situated art that responds to the needs and desires of an audience. These characteristics suggest that rhetoricians are

primed to become lead advocates for this pedagogical turn; a turn that needs to transpire throughout the modern University. The new pedagogy would revolve around and be measured by the health of the local polis – a mission that rhetorical studies claims to be nourishing but has failed to produce under the current rubric of upwardly mobile specialization.

With this pedagogy, I see rhetorical invention being taught in conjunction with ecological considerations, like learning how to gauge the “load” a given place can bear. Product designers and architects have long been cognizant of the weight their work could bear and recently more concerned with its sustainability. Rhetorical discourse too should be judged by its ability to function in harmony with the larger whole. In other words, to bring before the eyes should be done in accordance with the sustainability of a place. Emerging from these “should” statements is a post-liberal ethic for the pedagogy of production; it is an ethic with ecological undertones that reframes the classical notion of the good person speaking well. These ethical considerations are significant and garner consideration by future projects, but I shall retreat back to my primary aim of articulating a pedagogy of becoming local.

The becoming local mission is a project of discoveries and innovations that are rooted to a place. This project’s success is contingent upon rhetoricians getting busy with the work of invention, for the project of becoming local needs to be invented. It also must be brought before the eyes of the professionals creating pedagogy and the residents already neck deep in the project of community rejuvenation.

Fortunately, the groundwork for becoming local is already underway as demonstrated by the rural rejuvenation efforts analyzed in this dissertation. The project of becoming local is emerging outside the university walls in a fragmented manner and on a grass-roots level. We see a commitment to the local, for example, in Aurora’s technology

incubator and also with the first-responder program of the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center. Both efforts are aimed at producing sustainable homes (and jobs) for people committed to a place. These programs, along with the other rural rejuvenation efforts analyzed in this dissertation, offer methods and know-how to cultivate a rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local.

The project of becoming local revives the need for a focus on rhetorical production that has been subsumed by a quest for understanding. Becoming local diminishes the expert mentality and demands each person get to work producing locally. As Wendell Berry contends, “the responsible consumer must also be in the same way a producer” (Unsettling 24). An unbalanced rhetorical pedagogy pumping out savvy readers fluent in irony is irresponsible. Under this system, the burden and opportunity to produce is left largely to the more “applied disciplines” like engineering and business that have yet to embrace a local way of seeing and acting. Rhetorical pedagogy should aim to cultivate and nourish producers who can engage the important work of sustainability. This pedagogy centers on invention as production.

A rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local could start teaching invention as production by offering the student methods and tools for building anew. These include, but are not limited to, the rhetorical and design methods analyzed in this dissertation (i.e. topoi, biomimicry, interpretation by design, etc.) In addition to invention tools, the pedagogy marks *sustainability* as a foremost criterion by which to judge rhetorical productions. Sustainability implies that rhetorical productions are to be measured by an ecological accounting method, like that practiced by the residents of Matfield Green. The ecological accounting system cultivates a manner of rhetorical eloquence that not only meets the audience’s desires, it answers the demands of a place. In this way, the sustainability criterion constrains rhetoricians to think and act locally in their efforts to

influence, because at stake in each rhetorical appeal is the community's energy balance. And I mean this literally; rhetorical productions would be gauged, in part, by energy consumption vs. energy production. Under this method, talk is no longer cheap. Exactly how we might "measure" the energy required of rhetorical productions is not clear. However, the dialectical method in its ability to yield emergent qualities offers a starting place for such a project. Emergent qualities would serve as benchmarks toward evaluating the sustainability of a rhetorical invention.

A rhetorical pedagogy of becoming local, measured by an ecological accounting system, embraces the dialectical method between part and whole in its pursuit of sustainable ventures. The dialectical method requires both a *techne* and a mentality that operate similar to the prairie's sustainable polycultures and the farmer's cooperative value-added ventures. Sustainability is unachievable without a multiplicity of eyes on the lookout for the dialectic's emergent qualities. Seeking multiplicity in rhetorical pedagogy is to engage the integrated methods of productive disciplines – the design arts being the focus of this dissertation. The teaching of rhetorical invention gains from designers a visual literacy and a refined ability to notice what emerges when symbols and materials interact. Teaching multiplicity does not mean that becoming local is an "anything goes" brand of relativism. Rather, multiple parts are delimited by their interconnected relationship with the other voices that make up a given place. We must also remember that these relationships are always becoming, as the dialectical relationships between parts and whole are internally active. *Energeia* provides the opportunity for new beginnings, forever keeping rhetoricians busy bringing before the eyes that which we cannot see.

Using the dialectic well is contingent upon multiple and diverse eyes equipped with long-term knowledge and the experience of place. Thus, a rhetorical pedagogy of

becoming local motivates people to “dig-in” and work for the longevity of a given place. Rhetorical studies, along with the greater University system, needs to offer alternatives to the path of upward mobility. To “go home” in this educational culture, especially to a rural area, is a compromise at best and a sign of self defeat at worst. To “settle down” in a community is a euphemism for being stuck; there is never talk of “settling up.” Motivating students to “dig in” starts by bringing before the eyes opportunities for young people to earn a living. Recall that Aurora’s community strategic plan worked to cultivate a culture of innovation, through projects like the Edgerton Explorit Center and technology fairs. The programs were part of a larger aim to foster a critical mass of people qualified to work with emerging communication technologies. Aurora’s effort was geared toward motivating the youth to dig in and invest their livelihoods with this community. They have been relatively successful, in part, because they brought this culture of innovation before the student’s eyes in a variety of contexts and mediums.

Rhetorical studies could join these rejuvenation efforts by engaging local community efforts, not only to study these discourses from afar but to be directly involved with community invention. Currently, these types of pedagogical activities come to the student under the label of “service learning” and are promoted to students as “real-world” experience. While the “real-world” metaphor accurately pokes at the pedantic nature of much rhetorical studies pedagogy, it misses an opportunity to teach the value of becoming local. Community projects can offer students the chance to lay their hands on qualities that emerge from specific places. They provide students of rhetoric a constrained design space in which they may invent local productions. These experiences, taught as examples of what it means to become local, could serve as viable alternatives for students unimpressed with the track of upward mobility – they would open the space to articulate the value and responsibility of sustainable dwelling.

These community based teaching environments also could be used to promote a manner of imitatio. The student would be required to discover places committed to the local, like Jackson's Land Institute or the Nebraska EDGE Program. The rhetoric of these programs would work to refine the student's judgment faculties so she would be equipped to invent anew in projects concerning rural rejuvenation. The local rhetorics could also motivate a brand of would-be rhetorical scholars that view the academy as dissociated from heartfelt and homebound concerns. The teaching of imitatio would invite a multiplicity of students to bring their places to the academic table, thereby legitimizing local scholarship in local publications.

In summary, the rhetorical pedagogical model of becoming local operates under the assumption that a local dwelling involves understanding one's relationship to a place and vice versa. Becoming local requires that the contemporary student of rhetoric thoroughly examine the dialectical relationship between part and whole, all the while tracking emergent properties and discourses that sustain healthy communities. Motivating students to dig in and commit to the longevity of a place should be a primary aim of rhetorical pedagogies. One way to achieve such results is to engage students in community efforts with an emphasis on the experience of becoming local. Aligned with Richard Cherwitz's notion of "academic engagement," this pedagogy belongs in an interdisciplinary atmosphere where the question/issue being addressed structures the course material being taught (New). I will close this section with an extended example to demonstrate the tangible yield from such a rhetorical pedagogy.

Aurora, Nebraska, is confronted with a labor shortage that threatens to impede their vision of progress and community growth. Leaders of Aurora realize that the shortage can be alleviated by recruiting migrant workers to the area, but with this remedy comes a host of complicated community issues. For instance, infrastructure demands

including sufficient housing and medical care need to be addressed. Even more significant are the cultural issues bound to be brought to the surface in this largely homogenous community. This situation presents a vibrant opportunity for the student of rhetoric to dig in and experience rhetorical invention in a local manner.

To create a sustainable solution, Aurora must invent a language and plan of action that addresses the needs and dispositions of two seemingly dissociated audiences. The student of rhetoric is faced with the challenge of stasis – where do these groups stand together. This situation offers the student each of the above mentioned qualities of becoming local. First, the problem will provide the student experience with the dialectical method. One eye needs to be focused on the whole – the overarching health of the community – in relation to the parts: a solution to a labor shortage (a part) will directly affect multiple community services. Thus, the student needs to employ the dialectical method to track, analyze, and use what emerges with each rhetorical invention. Furthermore, by connecting the student with an Aurora task force member, she gets to engage someone who has chosen to dig in and work for the longevity of a place.

In addition to these local experiences, the student would be engaged in an interdisciplinary class that emerges, not from the obligation to teach a disciplinary canon, but from the very issue being addressed, in this example Aurora's sustainable growth. While the teacher would use literatures of becoming local to motivate the class, any tool of production helpful in addressing the issue would be fair game for course material. The class development itself would be an exercise of invention as production. Together, the classroom and community would deliver to the student a pedagogy that demonstrates the engaged and important work of becoming local.

MODEL OF RURAL REJUVENATION

With a dissertation advocating a focus on rhetorical production and becoming local, it follows that an earnest attempt should be made at plotting a course for rural rejuvenation. To be clear, this is not an effort to mold a professional model of rural rejuvenation that can be implanted on places. There are a host of community development models available for such work – one of which, the “asset-based approach,” is detailed in this project. Rather, this model of rural rejuvenation outlines a discourse path to be used in the Ciceronian spirit of *imitatio*. In other words, the model is not meant to be copied; it is better used as a source of rhetorical invention.

This model of rural rejuvenation developed dialectically. I read community development efforts across a theory of rhetorical invention as production and the project of becoming local. What emerged is a first attempt at articulating the invention of rural rejuvenation. Throughout this section, the worldview, methods, and best practices of rural rejuvenation are addressed. It is my hope that this model will benefit from future projects that read a more expansive array of communities and include authors outside rhetorical studies.

A model of rural rejuvenation functions within a certain worldview, an overarching sense of what it means to be a resident in a small community. Emerging from Aurora, Nebraska, and The Land Institute are two such worldviews that serve to orient the other components of the model. Regarding Aurora, we encountered a “culture of innovation” that originated in the Great Depression as a response to dire agricultural conditions. Edgerton’s invention of deep-well irrigation would serve to mark the place of Aurora as one of innovation. This innovative culture received national attention when the next generation of Edgerton invented the strobe light to make high-speed photography possible. Today, a culture of innovation drives the community strategic planning; we see

the culture of innovation manifested again in the I-80 corridor project. I revisit these inventions because they demonstrate the long work and time it takes to cultivate an innovative spirit. What started with a family of inventors has diffused into a critical mass of residents working for the betterment of Aurora, Nebraska. These inventions also suggest that residents of Aurora view their community as internally active. The rhetorical condition of *energeia* opens a space for new beginnings to emerge. Thus, to nurture a culture of innovation is to nourish a worldview that orients rural rejuvenation projects.

Another significant worldview emerging from this project is Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry's notion of becoming native. Becoming native embraces the culture of innovation but constrains productions with the measuring stick of sustainability. And sustainability implies that innovations are in harmony with the local ecology. A model of rural rejuvenation operating under the aim of becoming native, then, requires a rhetoric of place. For example, becoming native necessitates a language to reference the given load a place can handle; it also demands an understanding of a place's history, including the people who inhabited an area prior to the era of industrial farming. A worldview of becoming native coupled with a culture of innovation promises to invent anew in a manner that can sustain rural rejuvenations for generations to follow.

The worldview of innovation and becoming native is reflected in the dominant commonplaces that shape a model of rural rejuvenation. One such topos, that of *progress*, has served Aurora, Nebraska, well throughout their community development inventions. While *progress* and *becoming native* appear to be contradictory terms, they are attuned under the assumption that a native place is forever internally active. Change is the rule of becoming native and the fuel for the *progress* topos. In this way, the model of rural rejuvenation is a progressive one that embraces change, but under the condition that each turn is directed toward becoming local.

In addition to progress, the topos of *entrepreneurship* emerges in Aurora's strategic plans, the University housed Nebraska EDGE Program, and the State run NRDC. As argued in chapter four, a limited notion of entrepreneurship signifying individual business ventures is not necessarily aligned with sustainable rural rejuvenation. However, the EDGE program and the NRDC employ the entrepreneurship topos by attaching a community obligation to an individual's business pursuits. While the community networks promoted by these programs have proven to be difficult to sustain compared to the business ventures, an expanded notion of entrepreneurship could be a useful addition to this model.

Yet, there is need to further invent a topos that signifies the brand of producer necessary for successful rejuvenation. This producer, similar to the entrepreneur, is looking for a way to earn a living but with an added concern for place. This producer realizes that sustainable communities are the product of individuals acting and producing in relation to the local. Gaining the know-how and seeing the emergent qualities of a place results from a multiple-eye analysis, demonstrated in the cooperative ventures supported by the NRDC. Thus, a coupling of diverse and integrated entrepreneurs committed to a place gets closer to the mission of this model. While the entrepreneurship topos resonates with business minded residents, there is further need to refine this concept to tap into the productive power of a larger percentage of residents. The sustainability of places dictates that communities, rural ones in particular, cannot afford to ignore the productive possibilities of a single member, including both young and old residents.

The final dimension of this rural rejuvenation model is the use of in-house incubators. These are controlled places specifically designed to grow local inventions. The incubator is a home for fledgling ideas to be nurtured. In the Aurora technology

incubator we see a commitment to cultivate inventions, despite the diminutive size of the community. While technology incubators in larger metropolitan areas typically are the product of venture capitalists, Aurora's incubator signifies a direct effort in community development. The Aurora incubator, primarily a resource center providing working space, was designed to promote entrepreneurship and create a critical mass of technology jobs. It was also established to entice Aurora's young people to return home to work after completing post-secondary education and training. Community supported places for invention are significant dimensions to a model of rural rejuvenation; they set the conditions for ideas to germinate and offer the potential for people to earn a living.

Aurora's incubator is significant because of its rarity in smaller communities, but a more expansive and radical incubator exists in the ecological accounting experiment of Matfield Green, Kansas. In the case of Matfield Green, the entire place can be classified as a community incubator. Those involved with Matfield Green not only work, they live in this incubator attempting to measure the ecological impact of their livelihoods. In addition to measuring energy production/consumption, the residents cultivate and nourish a way of living that, proven successful, could radically alter rural rejuvenation efforts. For now Matfield Green serves as an exemplar of a community place that nourishes inventions beyond those in a traditional business environment. In Matfield Green and the Aurora technology incubators, the culture of innovation is enhanced along with the project of becoming local.

This model of rural rejuvenation operates within a culture of innovation that is directed toward becoming native to a place. New beginnings come from such internal activity. The topoi of progress and entrepreneurship function as sites of invention that shape the efforts of rural rejuvenation. Yet, these inventions are constrained by ecology, so their success increasingly demands integrated cooperative efforts that include a

multiplicity of voices. Finally, in an effort to nourish further inventions, idea incubators play an integral role in developing talent and opportunities for those willing to dig in and work to sustain a place.

This dissertation was conducted to better understand the role of rhetoric in the project of becoming local. The project made progress to those ends in two primary ways: by reaching back to classical rhetoric for rhetorical invention's productive lineage and by embracing the methods and tools from the design arts. Furthermore, the analysis of rural rejuvenation efforts reveals models, programs, and exemplars of becoming local. These projects, read as sites of rhetorical invention, support my initial contention that there is much work for the rhetorical scholar in rural rejuvenation efforts. It was also my aim in this dissertation to articulate a path for rhetorical scholars to start becoming local in their theories, pedagogies, and practices. The rhetorician as producer, a pedagogy of becoming local, and the model of rural rejuvenation each provide a way of seeing and acting that is meant to guide the rhetorical scholar in the direction of becoming local.

CLOSING REMARKS

It has been nearly two years since that drive home on rural Nebraska highways sparked a sickening feeling about the state and fate of rural communities. At the time, I failed to see the connection between this intuition and rhetorical studies – the discipline that has consumed the past decade of my life. Nor did I have a sense of the rural rejuvenation efforts underway, operating at various points in society. I attribute both oversights to my disregard for the local in a quest to join the upwardly mobile scholar. In many ways, I was tentative to articulate the urge to go home and dig in, for this reflects a brand of provincialism at odds with the aims of a research University. In fact, my own

homecoming was to be put on hold until after the erudite book, tenure, and national ethos had been achieved.

Much has turned in the past few years. Today, I see that contemporary efforts at rural rejuvenation are as germane to rhetorical studies as ancient theories of rhetorical production and a president's inaugural address. Furthermore, Jackson and Berry's call for the modern University to take up teaching a homecoming major now motivates my writing, pedagogy, and dwelling. The rhetorical tradition has become a way home – a path toward becoming local.

This dissertation demonstrates the above mentioned connections by focusing primarily on the role of rhetorical invention in becoming local. By today's standards, the result brings before the eyes a peculiar looking rhetorician. She is equipped with tools of invention and engulfed in the work of production alongside her colleagues in the design arts. Her home address has moved from the liberal arts (or social sciences) to the integrated place being carved out by those fields of study working between journal and construction site. This means her lunches are spent conversing with the folks in the fisheries and wildlife department or at other times with those scholars studying community planning. Her rhetorical inventions – some of which are collaboratively developed with her eating partners – are measured by and directed toward the sustainability of places. At the end of the day, this rhetorician is a homemaker.

The political and ethical implications deriving from this brand of rhetorician are significant, both in terms of the disciplinary position of rhetorical studies and the responsibility of rhetorical scholars. And while this dissertation articulates many statements concerning the “distribution of power” and what “should” be done regarding rhetorical invention and rural rejuvenation, it largely avoids conflating the project of becoming local with an established ideology. Admittedly, I do not have an “ism” to

explain the project of becoming local, nor, at this point do I have the energy to label it. Parts of the becoming local position read quite conservative, for example the agrarian position of Berry and Jackson check both humanism and the post-modern turn toward language. Yet, I also hold rhetorical inventions up to Hannah Arendt's radical notion of a participatory democracy premised on the creation of new beginnings. If another scholar were so inspired, a future project might explicitly trace the political and ethical ramifications of this project.

At this point, I am content to assert that rhetorical invention has a vibrant and important role to play in the 21st century quest to cultivate and nourish healthy communities. The integrated work of becoming local is beginning to emerge. Whether the rhetorician along with a critical mass of producers will engage the work of digging into places like Aurora, Nebraska depends upon further attempts to bring this project before the eyes of colleagues, neighbors, and family members.

End Notes

¹ There is a compelling argument that digital communicative environments (virtual communities and pop-culture entertainment included) are working to shift the attention from national to global concerns. The contention is that once people start thinking globally, they realize that agency and freedom are derived locally. Paul Cantor, analyzing popular television shows, offers up this assessment: “In *The Simpsons* and *The X-Files* the American nation-state has somehow been displaced from the center of its citizens’ lives, and they end up concerned with issues that are at once more local and more global” (x). While I concur that television programming and virtual communities play a role in shifting the consciousness of the citizenry away from the nation-state, these virtual spaces ultimately lead back to embodied material places. And these places need the attention of even the most symbolic and mediated fields of study.

² This map was generated by the Economic Service Research of the United States Department of Agriculture.

³ The US Census Bureau defines urban areas as a population mass that is over 50,000 and a density core of at least 1000 people per square mile. This urban status, in part, determines if a county is metropolitan and nonmetropolitan. Being a metro or nonmetro community is not only determined by population; the second primary variable is the degree to which the local economy is supported by an “urban” workforce. The US Office of Budget and Management defines a metropolitan area as “(1) central counties with one or more urbanized areas, and (2) outlying counties that are economically tied to the core counties as measured by work commuting. Outlying counties are included if 25% of workers living in the county commute to the central counties, or if 25% of the employment in the county consists of workers coming out from the central counties—the so-called ‘reverse’ commuting pattern” (Economic Research Service, Measuring).

⁴ Athenian democracy emerges around 508 B.C.E and while an oligarchy usurps control between 429-403 BCE, democratic practices are in place until 322 B.C.E.

⁵ In a lecture at UT delivered in 2002, William Keith traced this longstanding democratic narrative as the underlying motivator of US Speech-Communication Departments.

⁶ There is terrific irony in that I am advancing a claim about engagement in a dissertation that, by definition, is an individualistic and isolated research project. Despite the contradiction (which further illuminates the thesis that radical change is necessary for rhetorical studies to engage the local), I am hopeful that a brand of academic engagement is emerging from these antiquated research and graduate pedagogy models. My notion of academic engagement is influenced by the writings and practices of Dr. Richard Cherwitz and Dr. Thomas Darwin. Academic engagement, for both of these trained rhetoricians, is more than opening the University doors for community members to visit or be research subjects. The engagement involves integrated participation with community members on interdisciplinary projects (Cherwitz, New; Cherwitz Citizen).

⁷ Rhetoric finds its home in both Speech and Composition Departments in the twentieth century. While my assessment touches on both traditions, I am focusing on the speech/communication tradition.

⁸ Thomas Benson has done a thorough review of the history of the Cornell School of Rhetoric. The school operated from 1865 until the mid 1960’s under a variety of names (English, Oratory, Speech and Drama) but never officially was labeled “rhetoric.” Benson describes the school as such: “The Cornell idiom is often described as a set of ideas clustering around a commitment to

the recovery of a humanist approach to classical rhetoric as the basis for study of speech and human communication. Carroll C. Arnold, on the other hand, once remarked that there was no such thing as a Cornell School of Rhetoric if by that was meant a unified set of ideas; rather, he said, the Cornell tradition at its best referred to a group of highly intelligent and original people who often had very different ideas about rhetorical theory and method” (Cornell 2). Later scholars often refer to thinkers from this school as “neo-Aristotelian.” This label generally is not a compliment; rather, it is a critical term to describe the shortcomings of the classical system to address contemporary issues.

⁹ Lauer’s book, Invention in Rhetoric and Composition, is a comprehensive account of invention as it plays out in the scholarship of Rhetoric and Composition. While there are references to the tradition developed by Speech scholars, the emphasis of the book is on the development of invention as it relates to composition.

¹⁰ Harrington does qualify the scope of rhetoric to those methodologies that are based in language. He cites mathematics and music as two examples that exist beyond the logic of language assigned to rhetorical studies (Modern 375).

¹¹ For contemporary readings of classical rhetoric that refigure the rhetorical tradition see John Poulakos, Sophistic Rhetoric in classical Greece. Also, Susan Jarratt in Reading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured reads women voices into the classical tradition. And, Susan Crowley and Deborah Hawhee in Ancient Rhetoric for Contemporary Students revisit the application of classical rhetoric in modern pedagogy.

¹² The third type of place is “kenon” meaning “nothing.” This sense of place inspired the ontological question of nothingness. Ulmer writes that the Greeks took into account all three senses of place, “but with the development of literacy they became separated (Internet 101).

¹³ Ernst Cassirer makes the distinction between discursive (i.e. words that connect in a linear fashion) and non-discursive or presentational symbolic forms (i.e. images and music which are perceived in their totality). Suzanne Langer, working to expand Cassirer’s notion of discursive symbolic forms, writes, “Its (presentational symbolic forms) primary function, that of conceptualizing the flux of sensations and giving us concrete things in place of kaleidoscopic colors or noise, is itself an office that no language-born thought can replace (Langer 93). Langer’s description illuminates the validity and acknowledges the difficulty of critically analyzing symbolic forms that function beyond the linear expression of written language.

¹⁴ A term used by Walter Ong to characterize the contemporary technological environment. The communication mediums of secondary orality borrow from oral traditions by attempting to digitally integrate the entire range of symbolic production.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt’s The Human Condition develops from a selective reading of Greek history. From these ancient texts, she pieces together a narrative that allows for a radical democratic politics. The Greek narrative of participatory democracy demonstrates how an aesthetic public space is premised on openness. This openness created a politics that speaks to issues of freedom in a pluralistic world. Arendt’s public is motivated by a notion of human particularity (Curtis 33). And, for good reason, the reality of totalitarian regimes makes it ethically paramount that particularity, above all else, be protected. Our ethical dilemma is “how to create a world in which it [particularity] can appear and flourish, and how to cultivate our passion for it” (Curtis 34). For Arendt particularity can be experienced in public spaces where spontaneous acts of excellence are promoted. Thus, her aesthetic bent is not about performance for honor or the desire for beauty, but rather the public aesthetic experience confirming that new beginnings abound. These new beginnings are the basis of radical democratic politics.

¹⁶ Aristotle's mimesis is commonly translated as "imitation." However, after a close reading of the Greek, Paul Woodruff concludes that "mimesis and its Greek cognates defy translation" (73). Woodruff explains that mimesis refers closest to the production of images, but he details how Aristotle used the term in a varied and broad manner. I will return back to this important distinction with the discussion of Cicero's imitatio toward the latter part of this chapter. The important point here is that mimesis with Aristotle's poetic is distinct from Cicero's notion of imitatio.

¹⁷ Hariman is referencing the charge of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School that an aestheticized politics leads to Fascism (See: The Aesthetics of the Critical Theorists: Studies on Benjamin, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas, Ed. Ronald Robin. Lampeter, United Kingdom: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990). In addition, Phillip Wander worries that a political aesthetic is an ideology in the waiting that will resurface without calling itself by its rightful name (70). Wander's analysis reveals the "art" of War portrayed by mass media handles "the implications of human slaughter in an attractive, necessary, and somehow glorious manner" (72). In this case, the aesthetic works to alienate people from humanity in a way that can be pleasurable.

¹⁸ Evidence of this abounds at NCA and other more specialized academic conferences where entire seminars and panels are dedicated to visual rhetoric. This is not to claim that interest in visual communication is a new phenomenon; the visual/aesthetic/image has been a significant topic for multiple scholars in philosophy (Barthes, Roland. "Rhetoric of the Image." Image, Music, Text Ed. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 32-55.), psychology (Daniel Osherson, et.al. Visual Cognition and Action), political communication (Jamieson, Kathleen. Eloquence in an Electronic Age New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.) and various other disciplines.

¹⁹ Palczewski is using Daniel O'Keefe's distinction between argument1 and argument2. Argument1 refers to a kind of utterance (i.e., "I made an argument"), whereas argument2 refers to a kind of interaction (i.e., "I had an argument").

²⁰ E.D Francis in Image and Idea in Fifth Century Greece discusses this claim in detail. Francis, an art historian, argues that Greek statues and painting functioned as public art in that, like words, they made legends tangible and credible in a manner that directed the people's behavior and belief (24).

²¹ The irregular nature of this verb suggests its primary nature and extensive use in oral Greek culture before Attic Greek was formalized.

²² The aorist is the third principal part in Greek. It functions most like the past tense in English. However, unlike English, the aorist has the ability to indicate aspect (moods).

²³ I am referencing recent projects that aim to awaken rhetorical traditions that work against or alongside Aristotelian notions of rhetoric. The following works, while not specifically addressing the visual, illustrate alternative readings of the classical rhetorical worldview. Poulakos, John. Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece; Vitanza, Victor. Negation, Subjectivity, and The History of Rhetoric; Ballif, Michelle. Seduction, Sophistry, and the Woman with Rhetorical Figure.

²⁴ The word search was done in Greek using the Online Thesaurus Linguae Graecae <<http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>>.

²⁵ George Blair details *energeia*'s usage throughout Aristotle's works and reports that the term is used 671 times.

²⁶ Here the verb *ἐνεργεω* which means to be in action, comes in the form of a present active participle (*ἐνεργουντα*); thus, the reason the verb is taking on adjectival status.

²⁷ This translation by George Kennedy uses the traditional translation of *energeia* as actuality. However, the statement makes better sense by substituting “internally active” for actuality. “Enthymemes that stick demand we know something about metaphor, antithesis, and being internally active. This latter translation speaks to the significance of using active, lively arguments.”

²⁸ Nichols traces Plato’s Classical Image Theory wherein the soul is described as a book “in which events are inscribed in two media: words and pictures.” Both words and images are responsible for bringing together the body and the mind to produce a view of one’s self (622). However, Nichols argues that Plato fails to address the creative force that makes this dialectic possible. Thus, Aristotle coined *energeia* to account for the internal activity. Nichols is translating *energeia* in a similar manner to George Blair as detailed earlier in this paper.

²⁹ I take this from conversations with Dr. Thomas Darwin who worked hard to assure me that the dissertation process should feel awkward, for it’s a long winded intrapersonal conversation.

³⁰ Simonides was delivering a panegyric to a nobleman of Thessaly, named Scopas. In his speech he praised the nobleman, but added homage to Castor and Pollux, two Greek gods. Upon conclusion, Scopas announced that he would only pay Simonides half his wages; the gods, to whom half the speech was dedicated, should have to pay the rest. Later that evening, during the dinner, Simonides received a message that two people demanded his presence outside the palace gates. As he went outside looking for the anonymous messengers, the palace roof collapsed, and all the dinner guests, including Scopas, were crushed to death. The bodies were extremely mangled, and when the relatives came to identify the corpses they could not recognize them. Simonides identified the bodies by remembering, through visualization, the places and names of each guest at the table. The mnemonic system, thus, was based upon a visual memory system where words were placed on backgrounds (Yates 17).

³¹ Aristotle’s 28 topics described in the *Rhetoric* are as follows: opposites; different grammatical forms; correlative terms; more or less; time; turning the tables; definition; meaning of words; division; induction; previous judgment; parts of the whole; consequences; contrast; contradiction of private vs. public; consequence by analogy; same results and antecedents; reverse outcomes; motives equal existence; incentives and deterrents; implausible occurrences; refutation by contradiction; addressing false accusations; cause to effect; alternative plans; previous mistakes; meaning of names (2.23).

³² Brackets inserted by the translator George Kennedy.

³³ Buchanan is working from John Dewey’s characterization of language.

³⁴ This is not to say that design theorists and practitioners are in agreement about the disciplinary identity of design (Buchanan, *Design* 189). I will expound on this point later in the following paragraph

³⁵ Design as a formal study committed to satisfying the needs of industrialism has its origins in the German “*Staatliches Bauhaus*” art and architecture school. The school, founded by Walter Gropius and operated from 1919-1933, has come to represent modernist architecture. In terms of industrialism, the Bauhaus school worked to design simple, affordable, and functional products available for mass production. The school worked to integrate the arts to achieve utility in everyday life; to these ends, they combined the expertise of engineers, craftspeople, and artists to make industrialized products. For example, the cantilever chair is a common furniture design that emerged from the Bauhaus school. (for further information see: [Bauhaus Museum of Design](http://www.bauhaus.de/english/) <<http://www.bauhaus.de/english/>>)

³⁶ Admittedly, the democratic theories of Republicanism and Classical Liberalism that guided political thought in the early twentieth century created the conditions necessary for industrialism to thrive in the United States. In this sense, the rhetorical pedagogy aimed at preserving a capitalist democracy was as connected to industrialism as the product designers. However, the democratic myth that motivated speech departments remains distinct from the explicit connection between designers and industrial product development. Whether or not this myth accurately describes the influence that speech training had on land-grant university students is an entirely different question. What is important here is that rhetoricians and designers envisioned themselves doing dissimilar work.

³⁷ The following characterization of Industrialism and Design developed from conversations with Dr. Miodrag Mitrasinovic and his recent book: Total Landscape, Theme Parks, and Public Spaces.

³⁸ While my project focuses on the design of material places, it is important to note that a post-industrial society is made increasingly possible by a focus on immateriality made possible by digital technologies. Designers have embraced the potential of immateriality in their work with software and hardware design. I have limited this project to materiality for it serves as the launch pad for immateriality to develop and flourish. Abraham Moles makes this point clear in the following passage; “Any immaterial civilization will be heavily materialized because its immaterial products are necessarily linked to the mechanical infrastructure that generates, stabilizes, and governs them” (273).

³⁹ Harold Edgerton’s high speed photographs of a bullet shot through an apple and the milk drop forming a perfect coronet are the most well known.

⁴⁰ These main-street projects have become common in many small communities. With regard to establishing place, the results are a mixed-bag. In the most extreme cases a theme is chosen from an antiquated past, for instance the “wild west”, and this décor is pasted on storefronts and promotional materials. This is an example of a totalizing place as Miodrag Mitrasinovic details in his work on theme parks.

⁴¹ Interstate 80 runs from east to west starting in New York and terminating in California. The interstate stretches the entire length of Nebraska and passes some three miles south of Aurora.

⁴² The development of the corridor is an ongoing process that the task force predicts will take over twenty years to complete. However, the Love’s project marks the first major development in an effort to connect the interstate directly to Aurora.

⁴³ By annexing this corridor, the City of Aurora is responsible for supplying services including water, sewage, and electricity. The infrastructure for these services did not exist before the development of the travel center in 2003.

⁴⁴ “The Road to Progress” is the title of the 24 page news insert that tells the story of the I-80 corridor project. The narrative ran in the local paper, the Aurora News-Register, on November 12, 2003.

⁴⁵ It is important to note that the editor and co-owner of the Aurora News-Register, Kurt Johnson, was also the chair of the I-80 corridor project. This is not to suggest that Johnson crafted the insert as task-force propaganda, rather it is important to make explicit the editorial stance of the local newspaper. In a personal interview, Johnson made it clear that he works hard to separate his obligations as a reporter from his community involvement as President of the Aurora Development Corporation. Throughout the “Road to Progress” insert Johnson is quoted in the latter role while his voice is absent from the reporting.

⁴⁶ The annual conference is titled: “The Nebraska Rural Institute.” PRN has been sponsoring the conference for ten years. The conference typically is attended by community development leaders, extension educators, and local government officials.

⁴⁷ The “mystory” is a writing exercise developed by Gregory Ulmer to be an experience in invention. It asks students to design an electronic emblem, and then reflect on the feelings, metaphysics and morality the image signifies. The mystory is part of Ulmer’s larger project on a pedagogy based in heuristics which is contra to learning by hermeneutics. Ulmer’s textbook, Internet Invention: From Literacy to Electracy (2003) details the mystory assignment and provides numerous examples.

⁴⁸ The Community Development Society, self-described, is “an international association that works with members of various sectors including neighborhood organizing, community planning, education and University Extension, economic development, environment, health, housing, social services, and more” (About CDS). The group provides leadership, facilitates networking, and publishes scholarship on topics relating to community development activities throughout the world. The academic publication is titled: The Journal of the Community Development Society. Further information is available at <http://comm-dev.org/>

Appendix

1994 Information Technology Task Force Goals

- Two-way video connections among our school districts and other educational institutions
- Multiple public access points to satellite downlink
- Public access to on-line services at reasonable cost
- Video conference room available for business and public use
- Computer mail network and community bulletin board
- Ongoing awareness programs about information technology
- Foundation to fund information technology projects

1999 Information Technology Task Force Goals

- Enlist the support and participation of other organizations and entities, both public and private, in the process of developing, setting and accomplishing the various goals of the information technology strategic plan
- Additional training and educational opportunities in information technology
- Recruit information technology based businesses; businesses which use a high level of information technology; and individuals with professional expertise in the area of information technology
- Enhance the level of public access to the internet
- Enhance the opportunities and services available to existing businesses via information technology
- Year 2000 awareness
- Increase the awareness of the impact of information technology on the social-economic structure of our society and specifically our local area
- Continue the Hamilton County information technology fund

(These goals were published as part of the 1999 Hamilton County IT Strategic Plan)

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