

Local Creatogenesis: The Construction Logic and Realization Path of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" Driven by New Farmers

-- A Case Study of Foshan

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Abstract: The key to activating the endogenous dynamics of rural revitalization lies in the synergy between "nurturing people" and "cultivating the environment." As "Rural Makers" who possess both "locality" and "innovation," New Farmers are the core active agents promoting rural industrial upgrading and value reconstruction. However, individualized "Makers" face an "ecological niche" dilemma characterized by high risks, high costs, and high isolation. Based on "Local Creatogenesis" theory and innovation ecosystem theory, this paper proposes an analytical framework for the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" to solve the current problem of "seeing the people but not the environment" in rural talent cultivation. Using a methodology that combines theoretical analysis and qualitative case studies, this research takes the highly urban-rural integrated city of Foshan as a practical sample to deeply analyze the value core and construction logic of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem." The study argues that the construction logic of this ecosystem is embodied in the multi-dimensional co-construction and coupling of three dimensions driven by New Farmers: space, industry, and culture. In terms of spatial logic, it achieves the activation from "idle resources" to an "innovative field." In terms of industrial logic, it achieves the reconstruction from "singular production" to "cross-boundary integration." In terms of cultural logic, it achieves the sublimation from "traditional replication" to "value recreation." On this basis, the study further refines three major realization paths for creating this ecosystem in Foshan's practice: a policy path centered on "systemic empowerment," a digital path characterized by "platform-based co-construction," and a social path based on "community-building." This study aims to demonstrate that constructing a "Maker Ecosystem" that supports "local creatogenesis" is a long-term mechanism for achieving synchronized resonance between the individual growth of New Farmers and the systemic revitalization of the countryside.

Keywords: Local Creatogenesis, New Farmers, Rural Maker Ecosystem, Construction Logic, Rural Revitalization, Foshan.

1. Introduction

The deepening advancement of the rural revitalization strategy is pushing the core issue of "talent" to the new height of "endogenous development." General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to "actively cultivate local talent and encourage capable individuals who have left to return to their hometowns to start businesses" [1]. Under the combined effect of this macro-policy guidance and the two-way flow of urban-rural elements, a "New Farmer" group—distinct from traditional farmers and possessing both modern vision and local sentiment—is becoming a key variable in activating dormant rural resources, reshaping rural industrial forms, and rejuvenating the rural cultural landscape.

However, a pressing practical problem that needs to be solved is: how to transform the individual "agency" of New Farmers into a "systemic" kinetic energy for rural development? Existing research has either focused on the individual entrepreneurial performance, financing dilemmas, and social integration of New Farmers [2], or on macro-level policy supply and training systems [3]. Although these studies offer various insights, they mostly remain within a linear thinking of "attracting people - supporting them - generating output." They lack a meso-level theoretical framework to

explain: how exactly do New Farmers interact dynamically with diverse actors, various resources, and multiple systems within a specific rural field, and jointly "give rise" to a sustainable innovation environment?

This paper argues that the essence of New Farmers is that of "Rural Makers." They are innovators, creators, and entrepreneurs rooted in the local land. Just as the growth of "urban makers" depends on the support of "maker spaces" and "innovation ecosystems," the "Local Creatogenesis" of New Farmers also urgently requires a dedicated "Rural Maker Ecosystem." "Local Creatogenesis" emphasizes an innovation process that is embedded in the specific local cultural context and emanates from within. It does not rely on the simple transplantation of external resources but achieves a leap in value by "rediscovering" and "creatively transforming" local resources [4].

Therefore, this study attempts to move beyond the limitations of "individual support" and introduces the theoretical perspective of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem." Using Foshan—a core node city in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area with a high degree of urban-rural integration—as a practical sample, this paper aims to answer the following core questions through qualitative analysis and case studies: First, what is the value core and

theoretical connotation of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" driven by New Farmers? Second, what is the "construction logic" that enables this ecosystem to form? Third, in a practical field like Foshan, what characteristics do its "realization paths" present? The theoretical contribution of this study lies in constructing a meso-level analytical framework that explains the synergistic evolution of New Farmers and the rural environment. Its practical value lies in providing a decision-making reference for local governments to shift from "fragmented talent attraction" to "systemic environment cultivation."

2. Theoretical Basis: New Farmers, "Local Creatogenesis," and the "Rural Maker Ecosystem"

To construct an analytical framework for the "Rural Maker Ecosystem," it is first necessary to clarify its core theoretical elements.

2.1. The "Maker" Essence of New Farmers: From Producers to Value Creators

"New Farmers" are by no means a simple iteration of traditional farmers, nor are they synonymous with the "new generation of farmers." This study defines them as "Rural Makers," whose essential characteristics are "cross-boundary" and "creative" in nature.

First, New Farmers are "cross-boundary" actors. They move between urban and rural areas, between the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries, and between online and offline spaces. They bring "heterogeneous resources" acquired from the city—such as capital, technology, information, market channels, and aesthetic preferences—into the countryside, and creatively recombine them with the "local resources" of the countryside, such as land, ecology, culture, and labor.

Second, New Farmers are, even more so, "creators." What distinguishes them from traditional "producers" is that their primary goal is not "input-output enhancement" but "value discovery and model innovation." They are "incubators" of new rural industries, "introducers" of new business formats, "shapers" of new brands, and "advocates" of new aesthetics (such as rural aesthetics). It is this "maker" attribute that makes New Farmers the "key active agents" driving rural "local creatogenesis" [5].

2.2. "Local Creatogenesis": The Value Core and Goal of the Ecosystem

"Local Creatogenesis" is the value core and ultimate goal of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem." This concept originates from a reflection on the "external source-driven" model of rural development, emphasizing the "endogeneity" and "locality" of development. The core meaning of "local creatogenesis" lies in:

Localized Mining of Resources: The source of innovation is not the airdropping of external capital or technology, but the "rediscovery" of dormant local resources. This includes idle physical spaces (like old factories, ancient residences), unique ecological environments (like mountains, rivers, forests, fields, and lakes), and deep historical contexts (like intangible cultural heritage, folk customs, and local sage culture).

Localized Activation of Actors: The actors of innovation are not just the New Farmers, but also the local villagers,

village collective organizations, and local craftsmen who are activated by them. It is a process of synergistic co-existence between "new" and "old" actors.

Localized Realization of Value: The value created is not just economic value, but a unity of social and cultural value. It aims to reshape local cultural identity, repair rural social capital, enhance the local quality of life, and achieve the harmonious co-prosperity of "people, land, industry, and culture" [4].

Only when the "maker" behavior of New Farmers is deeply embedded in the logic of "local creatogenesis" can their innovation and entrepreneurship gain sustainable vitality.

2.3. "Rural Maker Ecosystem": Theoretical Framework and Systemic Composition

Based on innovation ecosystem theory [3], this study defines the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" as: A dynamic system that, with "local creatogenesis" as its goal and "New Farmers" as its core actors, within a specific rural territory (field), is composed of diverse actors (government, enterprises, villagers, social organizations, etc.), key resources (capital, technology, data, land, etc.), and supporting institutions (policies, culture, networks). Through synergistic evolution and value co-creation, it provides New Farmers with support for innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and life.

This ecosystem has three prominent features:

Systemic: It is not a simple sum of its elements, but an organic whole in which the elements are interdependent, interact with each other, and evolve dynamically.

Embeddedness: It must be deeply rooted in the specific local context and industrial foundation, bearing a distinct "local" imprint that cannot be simply replicated.

Emergence: The vitality of the ecosystem (such as its innovative atmosphere and community identity) is not entirely "planned" by the government but "emerges" from the interaction of its diverse actors.

Therefore, the key to cultivating New Farmers has shifted from "supporting individuals" to "cultivating an ecosystem."

3. Construction Logic: The Multi-dimensional Co-construction of the Rural Maker Ecosystem

The "Rural Maker Ecosystem" is not built in a vacuum. It is "constructed" by New Farmers acting as "Makers" in the rural field, through their active practice and interaction with local resources and actors. In Foshan's practice, this construction logic is clearly manifested as a multi-dimensional co-construction and coupling of three dimensions: space, industry, and culture.

3.1. Spatial Logic: Activation from "Idle Resources" to "Innovative Field"

The construction of the ecosystem begins with the "local activation" of physical and social spaces. The large number of idle, abandoned, and inefficiently used physical spaces in the countryside are the perfect "carriers" for "local creatogenesis." The "maker" practice of New Farmers is first expressed through the "awakening" and "reshaping" of these "dormant spaces."

The core of this logic is "field creation." By leasing, transforming, and operating idle spaces, New Farmers turn them from "passive factors of production" into an "active Innovative Field." This field is not only a place for production

and business, but also a "generator" for creative exchange, community interaction, cultural performance, and identity formation.

This logic is particularly prominent in Foshan. As a major manufacturing city, Foshan's rural areas (especially the urban-rural fringe) were once dotted with old workshops and warehouses from "village-level industrial parks." With industrial upgrading and the "Industrial-to-Industrial" (Gonggai Gong) reform, a large amount of space has been released. At the same time, Foshan has preserved a wealth of ancient Lingnan villages, which also contain numerous idle ancient residences.

Case 1: "Creative Activation" of Industrial Heritage. In Foshan's M-CITY (Chancheng District), New Farmers and artist groups have moved into old factories and ceramic warehouses, transforming them into pottery studios, cultural-creative incubators, designer hotels, and art exhibition spaces. These spaces are no longer isolated "dots" but are interconnected, forming a "pan-home furnishing" and "ceramic culture" maker ecosystem that integrates "R&D, design, production, exhibition, and trade."

Case 2: "Lifestyle Activation" of Ancient Villages. In ancient villages like Songtang and Xiangang in Foshan's Nanhai District, New Farmers with backgrounds in design and cultural tourism have rented idle "Wok Ear Houses" (a characteristic Lingnan residence). They have restored and transformed them into boutique homestays, private kitchens, independent bookstores, or research-study bases. They "use points to lead areas," injecting "lifestyle aesthetics" into the ancient villages, attracting more makers and tourists, and forming an "ancient village lifestyle" maker field [4].

In this spatial logic, New Farmers play the role of "space weavers," "weaving" scattered idle resources into a physical and social network that possesses "local aesthetics" and "innovative vitality."

3.2. Industrial Logic: Reconstruction from "Singular Production" to "Cross-Boundary Integration"

The survival and development of the ecosystem depend on a sustainable industrial logic. As "cross-boundary" actors, the core contribution of New Farmers lies in breaking the "primary industry" constraints of traditional agriculture and promoting the "cross-boundary integration" and "value chain reconstruction" of rural industries.

The core of this logic is the creation of an "industrial ecological niche." Leveraging their keen insight into urban market demands and their familiarity with modern industrial chains, New Farmers find new "ecological niches" "between urban and rural" and "between industries." They do not "scramble for food" with traditional farmers in the existing market; rather, they create an incremental market by "connecting the second and third industries" to the first.

Foshan's practice provides an excellent footnote for this logic. Foshan's strong manufacturing base (especially in home appliances, furniture, and food processing) and its proximity to the core Greater Bay Area market (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Macao) provide fertile ground for the "cross-boundary integration" of New Farmers.

Case 1: "Agriculture + Industry": The Shunde Prepared Foods Ecosystem. Foshan's Shunde District is a "UNESCO City of Gastronomy," and its prepared foods industry is growing explosively. The "New Farmers" here are long past being traditional farmers; they might be food engineers,

supply chain managers, or catering brand founders. The "maker ecosystem" they are building links to standardized planting and breeding bases upstream, relies on Foshan's powerful industrial cluster of food processing, cold chain logistics, and smart home appliances (like professional prepared-food kitchenware) midstream, and precisely connects to B-end restaurant chains and C-end e-commerce platforms downstream. This is an integrated "agriculture-industry-technology-trade" industrial ecosystem [5].

Case 2: "Agriculture + Digital": The Nanhai Digital Flower Ecosystem. Lishui, in Foshan's Nanhai District, is a national flower distribution center. Facing the bottlenecks of the traditional flower industry, a group of "second-generation farmer" New Farmers has blazed a new digital path "from the field to the C-end" using live-streaming e-commerce and short videos. They have built an ecosystem around "digital flowers," which includes not only growers but has also attracted MCN agencies, professional live-streamers, packaging designers, smart greenhouse technology service providers, and logistics giants to cluster here, achieving a leap from "selling products" to "selling standards, services, and brands" [8].

In this industrial logic, New Farmers play the role of "industrial linkers," embedding the "local resources" of the countryside into the broader "modern industrial system."

3.3. Cultural Logic: Sublimation from "Traditional Replication" to "Value Recreation"

If space is the "container" and industry is the "skeleton," then culture is the "soul." A sustainable "Rural Maker Ecosystem" must have deep cultural connotations and a unique value proposition. The highest value of New Farmers in the construction of the ecosystem is manifested in the "value recreation" of "local culture."

The core of this logic is "cultural empowerment" and "identity formation." As "translators" and "narrators" of "local culture," New Farmers excavate traditional culture that is on the verge of being forgotten (intangible cultural heritage, folk customs, farming wisdom) and use modern aesthetics, design language, and market logic to carry out its "creative transformation" and "innovative development" [6].

Case 1: "Intangible Cultural Heritage + Cultural Creativity." Foshan is the "City of Kung Fu," the "Hometown of Lion Dance," and the "Capital of Ceramics." New Farmer maker groups delve deep into these "super IPs," transforming them into tangible, sensible, and consumable cultural-creative products, research-study courses, and immersive experience projects. They are not making "specimen-like" replicas of the heritage, but are making it "lifestyle-oriented" and "fashionable," allowing it to re-enter contemporary life, thus achieving the "living inheritance" and "value realization" of culture.

Case 2: "Community + Identity." The highest realm of local creatogenesis is "local identity." By organizing rural art festivals, dragon boat races, harvest festivals, and maker salons, New Farmers provide a platform for communication, interaction, and integration between "new villagers" (New Farmers) and "old villagers" (original residents). In this process, a "new local community" that blends "local sentiment" with "innovative spirit" gradually forms. This "community identity" and "sense of cultural belonging" is the most "sticky" soft environment of the ecosystem and the core element for attracting and retaining makers [9].

In this cultural logic, New Farmers play the role of "cultural pastors," injecting soul and sustainable endogenous dynamics into the ecosystem through "value recreation" and "community building."

4. Realization Paths: Ecosystem Cultivation Strategies in Foshan's Practice

The "construction logic" of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" reveals its endogenous evolutionary laws, while the "realization paths" explore how external forces, represented by the government, can "follow the trend" to "catalyze" and "empower" the emergence and development of this ecosystem. Foshan's exploration presents a systemic cultivation strategy that advances on three fronts: policy, digital, and social.

4.1. The Policy Empowerment Path: From "Fragmented Support" to "Systemic Empowerment"

The emergence of the ecosystem first requires breaking through "institutional obstacles." The traditional "fragmented" policy support system (such as the aforementioned "nine dragons managing the waters," "supply-demand mismatch," and "cyclical disconnection") is the biggest constraint on the ecosystem's growth [7]. Foshan's path reflects the transformation from a "fragmented" policy supply to a "systemic" institutional empowerment.

Conceptual Shift: From "Manager" to "Ecosystem Cultivator." The Foshan government (especially at the district and town levels) is achieving a conceptual shift from "direct intervention" to "environment cultivation." The government is no longer the "omnipotent approver" but the "chief service officer," whose core duty is to "build platforms, lower thresholds, set rules, and link resources."

Structural Reconstruction: From "Departmental Segmentation" to "One-Stop Hub." To face the complex "cross-boundary" needs of New Farmers, Foshan is exploring the establishment of "one-stop" service platforms. For example, setting up a "New Farmer Service Center" or "Rural Revitalization Talent Station" to act as a "single window" to coordinate cross-departmental affairs such as land transfer, financial matchmaking, project approval, and talent certification, thereby greatly reducing the "institutional transaction costs" for New Farmer makers.

Content Innovation: From "Inclusive Subsidies" to "Precision Irrigation." Policy content is shifting from "giving money and goods" to "giving opportunities and identity." Foshan is particularly outstanding in financial innovation, such as developing "data asset pledge" and "industrial chain finance" products for industries like flowers and prepared foods. More importantly, Foshan is exploring the establishment of a "New Farmer Professional Competency Certification System," incorporating them into "citizenized" talent management, and granting them equal treatment in social security, children's education, and political honors, thus resolving the makers' "worries back home."

4.2. The Digital Empowerment Path: From "Tool Application" to "Platform Co-Construction"

In the digital age, the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" is naturally a "digital twin" ecosystem. Digital technology is the most

powerful "enabler" for New Farmers to achieve "cross-boundary integration" and "local creatogenesis" [8].

"New Infrastructure" for Infrastructure. As a "trillion-GDP" city, Foshan's rural digital infrastructure, such as 5G and the Internet of Things, has achieved basic full coverage. This is the "foundation" for the ecosystem's operation.

"Linker" for Industrial Platforms. Foshan's digital empowerment goes beyond the tool-level application of "live-streaming e-commerce." The government and leading enterprises are jointly promoting the construction of "industrial internet platforms." For example, in the prepared foods sector, they are building a "B2B" supply chain procurement platform; in the flower sector, they are building an integrated data platform for "production, sales, and logistics." These platforms link scattered "New Farmer Makers" into an efficient and collaborative "industrial network."

"Cockpit" for Governance Platforms. Foshan is exploring the use of a "Digital Village" governance platform to manage data on "people, land, money, and affairs" through "one network." This not only improves the efficiency of rural governance but also provides "data navigation" for New Farmers to precisely match with policy resources and market opportunities.

4.3. The Social Empowerment Path: From "Individual Integration" to "Community Building"

An ecosystem lacking "social capital" is fragile. "Local creatogenesis" is not just an economic activity; it is also "social reconstruction" [9]. Foshan's "small government, large society" governance tradition provides deep soil for its "social empowerment" path.

Cultivating "Hub-type" Social Organizations. The government "delegates power" and "empowers," actively cultivating "hub-type" social organizations such as "New Farmer Associations," "Industrial Alliances," and "Returning Youth Alliances." These organizations are the "capillaries" and "adhesives" of the ecosystem. They undertake some government functions, such as organizing training, holding salons, matchmaking resources, and setting standards, forming a community governance mechanism of "self-management, self-service, and self-development."

Building an Integration Mechanism for "New and Old Villagers." The stability of the ecosystem depends on the integration of "new makers" and "old villagers." Foshan is exploring the establishment of "benefit-linking" mechanisms, such as encouraging New Farmers to prioritize hiring local villagers, giving back a portion of business profits to the village collective, and forming "common prosperity companies" in cooperation with the village collective. At the same time, by jointly organizing cultural activities like "village galas," dragon boat races, and art festivals, they promote emotional identity between "new and old villagers" and build a "local community."

Fostering an Innovation Culture that "Tolerates Failure." The government and society jointly foster a social atmosphere that "encourages innovation and tolerates failure." By promoting the "maker spirit" of "New Farmers" through the media, recognizing outstanding cases of "local creatogenesis," and enhancing the social prestige and professional honor of New Farmers. This "soft environment" is the most core element for attracting and retaining "makers" [10].

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1. Research Conclusions

Based on "Local Creatogenesis" and "Innovation Ecosystem" theories, and using Foshan as a case study, this research has conducted a theoretical construction and path analysis of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" driven by New Farmers. The study draws the following conclusions:

First, the essence of New Farmers is that of "Rural Makers." The key to activating rural endogenous dynamics has shifted from "individual support" to systemic "ecosystem cultivation." This ecosystem is the necessary environment to support the "local creatogenesis" of New Farmers.

Second, the construction logic of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" is a multi-dimensional co-construction driven by New Farmers. It begins with the "spatial activation" of "idle resources," relies on the "industrial reconstruction" of "cross-boundary integration," and ultimately sublimates into the "cultural sublimation" of "value recreation." These three dimensions are coupled and indispensable.

Third, the realization path of the "Rural Maker Ecosystem" is a systemic project of multi-faceted empowerment. Foshan's practice shows that it is necessary to advance on "three paths" simultaneously: "policy empowerment" (from fragmentation to systematization), "digital empowerment" (from tool application to platform co-construction), and "social empowerment" (from individual integration to community building). Only then can a powerful "catalyst" and "guarantee" be provided for the emergence and development of the ecosystem.

5.2. Policy Implications

Based on the above conclusions, this study provides the following policy implications for Foshan and similar regions across the country in cultivating New Farmers and advancing rural revitalization:

Establish an "Ecosystem" Mindset, Achieve a Shift to "Environment Cultivation." Local governments must achieve a "conceptual upgrade." The focus of New Farmer cultivation work must shift from "project-based support" of "giving money and goods" to "ecosystem cultivation" that "nurtures platforms, communities, and culture." Policy assessment should shift from "how many people were attracted" to "how good an environment was created."

Build "Localized" Platforms to Undertake "Cross-Boundary" Needs. To address the "cross-boundary" and "local" needs of New Farmers, "departmental segmentation" must be broken. It is recommended to operationalize "Rural Maker(New Farmer) Service Centers" at the district and town levels, acting as "super-connectors" and "one-stop hubs" to coordinate "full-element" resources such as land, finance, approvals, technology, and markets.

Empower "Social Organizations" to Achieve "Community Co-Governance." The government should "take a step back," devolving resources and power to social organizations like "New Farmer Associations," supporting them in playing the role of "operators" and "service providers" within the ecosystem. A more resilient and dynamic governance structure should be built through "government guidance, community self-governance, and market-based operation."

Strengthen "Cultural Soul-Casting" to Enhance "Local Identity." In the construction of the ecosystem, the excavation and recreation of "local culture" must be placed at the core. "Rural aesthetics" and "cultural creativity" must be integrated

into the entire process of spatial transformation, industrial development, and community activities. "Cultural empowerment" must be used to enhance the "local identity" and "professional sense of belonging" of New Farmers, as this is fundamental to the ecosystem's "stickiness."

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(8) Jiangmen City Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning 2025 Research Project Outcomes (JM2025C61)

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