

LOCAL GASTRONOMIC POINTS (LGPS) IN SUCEAVA AND BUCOVINA. AN EXAMPLE OF NEO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORTING RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This paper explores the emerging role of Local Gastronomic Points (LGPs) as a form of neo-entrepreneurship supporting sustainable rural development in Suceava and the wider Bucovina region. Institutionalized through Romanian Law 412/2023, LGPs are small-scale, community-based culinary enterprises with the potential to stimulate rural economies, preserve cultural heritage, and promote circular, regenerative practices. Drawing on a systematic literature review covering 2010–2025, this study finds that LGPs enhance economic resilience, support local value chains, and reinforce entrepreneurial ecosystems by integrating traditional gastronomy with agroecology and sustainable tourism. Despite these promising roles, current literature lacks robust impact assessments, underscoring the need for future longitudinal and comparative studies. This research contributes to the growing discourse on food-based entrepreneurship, socio-cultural revitalization, and rural policy innovation.

JEL classification: Q01, Q13, Q18, L26

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural communities across Europe have endured decades of demographic decline, economic marginalization, environmental degradation, and cultural identity erosion. These socio-economic issues are commonly attributable to agricultural modernisation that has decreased labour input, with urban-centric policies disassociating rural communities from necessary services and infrastructure (Li et al., 2019; Liu & Han, 2025). Sustainable rural development has now emerged as a strategic objective in international and national agendas, which is consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Naldi et al., 2015; Yin et al., 2022), and particularly in relation to poverty alleviation (SDG 1), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), sustainable communities (SDG 11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).

Studies have indicated that rural entrepreneurship plays a central role as a catalyst for endogenous rural development. Empirical evidence suggest that the establishment of rural businesses is independent of geography or sectoral (primary industry) connection, but rather motivated by a strong emotional attachment and sense of belonging to the rural context (Candelario-Moreno & Sánchez-Hernández, 2024). By merging tradition and local gastronomic heritage with modern business acumen, real economic opportunities can be built (Rivza et al., 2022).

Neo-endogenous development models are gaining in popularity, as they build on locally embedded, outward-looking policies, strategies, or approaches, often blending aspects of local entrepreneurship, resource valorisation, and cultural identity (Georgios et al., 2021; Liu & Han, 2025). *Local Gastronomic Points (LGPs)*—small food establishments defined by their limited seating capacity of only 15 customers, expected to preserve traditional culinary practices using ingredients sourced either from the proprietor’s own farm or the immediate community—are a hybrid solution for rural revitalization (Belu, 2022; Legea 412/2023). LGPs create a new type of rural entrepreneurship that also capitalizes on heritage and circular economy (Bădic & Ispas, 2021; Chivu & Stanciu, 2024). In gastronomically rich and biodiverse regions like Suceava and Bucovina LGPs are slowly emerging as symbols of a new wave of neo-entrepreneurial activity.

On national level, LGPs are supported by Romanian Law 412/2023, which provides a set of rules and regulations that (1) promote rural entrepreneurship, (2) reduce entry barriers through simplified norms, (3) establish clear standards for operations, hygiene, sourcing local resources, and (4) guarantee food safety and tax obligations (Dobay & Apetroaie, 2024). Additional support is provided through O.M.A.D.R. Orders 233/2024 and 444/2024, which introduce correction coefficients for tax deductions targeting vulnerable groups, such as young or elderly entrepreneurs.

The initial conceptualization of LGPs in Romania is credited to the „Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23” Association, who in 2016 pursued legal recognition status and developed pilot models in the Danube Delta (Toader et al., 2022). Currently, more than 300 LGPs are registered in Romania (*316-according to ANVSPA, including 22 in Suceava County*), yet academic research on LGPs remains fragmented and often lacks integration with broader discourses on rural revitalization. The body of literature on LGPs has focused on the concept as a culinary attractions or destinations (Bădic & Ispas, 2021; Foris & Chirilas, 2022); as an institutional tool for policymaking or as small microeconomic units (Toader et al., 2022; Dobay & Apetroaie, 2024). However, few studies have considered LGPs as nodes in sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems or as instruments of neo-endogenous rural development.

This research uses a systematic literature review approach to examine articles, Romanian legislation, and analyse case studies published between 2010–2025. Results and discussions section looks at the attributes of LGPs as elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems, analysed their sustainability contributions and role in cultural tourism. This paper aims to contribute to the larger body of knowledge for this topic, by proposing a theoretical framework and proposing areas of future research in Suceava and Bucovina region.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. NEO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS, AND LOCAL GASTRONOMIC POINTS

Building upon Drucker’s notion of the entrepreneurial society, the concept of neo-entrepreneurship emphasizes values and lifestyles that prioritize personal self-actualization, creativity, and meaningful engagements over obtaining revenue. Rather than focusing on growth and profit maximization, this emergent paradigm of neo-entrepreneurship centers small, flexible, customer-oriented firms that embrace authenticity, personalisation, and co-creation; where even personal hobbies and art projects can become business ventures (Heinonen & Ruotsalainen, 2012).

Unlike traditional entrepreneurial models, neo-entrepreneurship combines social, cultural, and environment objectives into business purposes (Rajaratne, 2024). It creates and enables frameworks whereby entrepreneurship serves as a channel for both individual fulfilment and community regeneration. LGPs are the practical manifestations of this model. By removing regulatory and financial barriers to entry, they enable marginalized rural actors—most notably young or elderly persons and returning migrants—to participate in livelihood diversification, intergenerational knowledge transfer and creating social capital that is vital for rural development (Georgios et al., 2021; Qu & Zollet, 2023).

Multi-level stakeholder engagement, supportive public policy, and cultural readiness for innovation provide the basis for a successful entrepreneurial ecosystem (Pankov et al., 2021; Theodoraki et al., 2022). The entrepreneurial ecosystem framework consists of a system of dynamic interdependent pillars (policy, finance, culture, supports, human capital, and markets) that work together to support productive entrepreneurship within a specific geography. Researchers advocate for the inclusion of a seventh pillar: sustainability orientation (Volkman et al., 2021), denoting entrepreneurs are deeply focused on environmental and social goals (Volkman et al., 2021; Audretsch et al., 2024).

In Romania, the National Agency for Mountain Areas (ANZM) plays a significant role by managing the LGP registry, providing no-cost training opportunities, and enabling compliance, contributing to regional entrepreneurial infrastructure stability (Toader et al., 2022).

2.2. CIRCULAR BIOECONOMY, SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS, AND GASTRONOMIC TOURISM

LGP are aligned with circular bioeconomy practices by sourcing locally, minimizing food waste, and promoting biodiversity. They represent closed-loop systems, supporting economic and ecological regeneration. As Toplicean & Datcu (2024) point out, community-based firms lessen dependence on industrial food supply chains through the use of community-derived inputs and biomass to be repurposed.

Local restaurants contribute to short food supply chains (SFSC) which emphasize proximity between producers and consumers via direct selling opportunities that return economic value to the local area (Jia et al., 2024). Sustainable production and consumption of food increase local economy retention (Apak & Gürbüz, 2023; Dobay & Apetroaie, 2024), decrease carbon emissions (Serdar E., 2018), and improve circular economy effectiveness (Nastase et al., 2020; Camilleri, 2021). Local restaurants can also serve as contributors to gastronomic tourism through enabling experiential products such as culinary workshops, tastings, and farm to table meals (Manola & Koufadakis, 2020). Their activities focus on circularity practices such as repurposing organic waste, heirloom seeds, and increasing ecological diversity, all contributing to sustainable uses of land and strengthening rural resilience. They exist alongside agrotourism, multifunctional farming, and rural revitalization efforts (Diaconescu et al., 2016; Foris & Chirilas, 2022). LGPs are often situated near heritage tourism sites, situating gastronomy within the broader cultural tourism framework (Chivu & Stanciu, 2024). Furthermore, they preserve intangible cultural heritage through food, dialects, or rituals, and offer tourists immersive experiences grounded in regional identity (Mora et al., 2021).

2.3. RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF LGPS

Sustainable rural development requires holistic approaches and integrated solutions where economic growth, environmental protection, and social goals are prioritized (Masot & Gascón, 2021). LGPs provide a scalable and community-based solution by integrating ecological awareness with cultural authenticity.

LGP reduce barriers for women, youth and returning migrants by situating entrepreneurship within the frameworks of rural communities (Georgios et al., 2021; Qu & Zollet, 2023). This same consideration encourages economic opportunities, that produce income, that elevate complementary local industries such as hospitality, craft, and eco-tourism (Mora et al., 2021). LGPs act as rural innovation hubs creating formal spaces for informal economies, knowledge transfer, and increased rates of entrepreneurship (Nastase & Lucaci, 2019; Yin et al., 2022; Qu & Zollet, 2023). By increasing local production, jobs, and culture, gastronomy points support social capital and a sense of territoriality (Manola & Koufadakis, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

The present research draws on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process adhering to the PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) approach to examine the role of LGPs in neo-entrepreneurship, sustainable rural development, and cultural heritage tourism related to Suceava and Bucovina.

The review period of 2010-2025 included journal papers, Romanian legislation (Law no. 412/2023; OMADR Orders no. 233 and no. 444/2024) and institutional records or reports by ANZM, and ANSVSA. The searching on Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, etc. included Boolean searches with keywords such as "Local Gastronomic Points", "neo-entrepreneurship", "rural development", "short food supply chains", "culinary tourism", and "circular economy" (Figure 1).

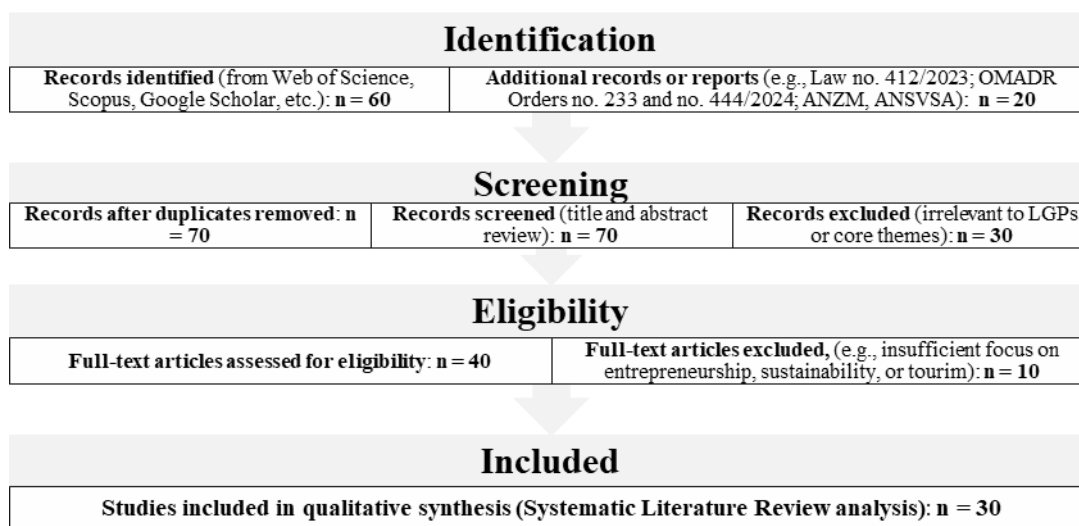


Figure 1. Diagram of the PRISMA methodology steps used in this study

The inclusion criteria for our selection of resources from the literature review involved that is related to the conceptual interconnectedness between LGPs and one or more of the three focus areas (i.e. entrepreneurship, sustainability, tourism), published in English or Romanian, and had relevance to European and national rural development strategy, with particular emphasis on Romania or internationally transferable models (i.e. Italian agri-food districts, Spanish gastronomic networks). Analysis was structured along three axes: neo-entrepreneurship – examining legal and institutional supports for inclusive, value-based entrepreneurship; sustainable development – evaluating alignment with circular economy, agri-food localization, and ecological resilience; and cultural heritage tourism – exploring identity-driven gastronomic experiences in rural Romanian settings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section compiles insights from 30 academic and institutional sources to consider significant theoretical contributions, empirical findings, methodology and existing research gaps regarding Local Gastronomic Points (LGPs). It positions LGPs as multifunctional at the junction of entrepreneurship, sustainability, and heritage tourism.

Table 1. Identified Methodologies Used Across the Literature

Methodology used	Example of Article	Purpose	Description
Qualitative Case Studies	Bădic & Ispas (2021); Stanciu et al. (2022)	reveal micro-level dynamics	Provide micro-level insights into LGP operations, motivations, and challenges—widely used in Braşov and Sibiu.
Survey Research	Rivza et al. (2022)	transnational studies	Cross-national surveys in Romania, Italy, and Latvia assess tourist perceptions and heritage valuation.
Policy and Document Analysis	Dobay & Apetroaie (2024)	assess regulatory impact	Examine national strategies, fiscal codes, and EU alignment to assess how LGPs are framed in policy discourse.
Statistical Tools	Chivu & Stanciu (2024)	evaluate market potential.	Employ the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index to measure market concentration and scalability of LGPs across counties.

Source: authors' own research

Table 2. Emerging Patterns and Key Gaps

Key Strengths:	Gaps:
- Broad consensus on LGPs' role in promoting rural resilience, cultural continuity, and regional identity. - Evidence supports their economic inclusivity and ability to attract domestic tourism.	- Lack of longitudinal studies to assess the long-term viability of LGPs. - Insufficient quantitative data on LGPs' contributions to local GDP and employment.

Key Strengths:	Gaps:
• LGPs foster entrepreneurship and contribute to the revitalization of lesser-known rural destinations. • LGPs promote environmentally sustainable practices through local sourcing and waste minimization	• Limited digital integration, with most LGPs lacking robust online presence or tourism linkages. • Need for comparative, cross-county or cross-national studies to assess scalability and replicability.

Source: authors' own research

4.1. LGPS, NEO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS

From an economic perspective, Local Gastronomic Points (LGPs) act like value-added engines in rural communities. Findings suggest that LGPs are a source of place-based entrepreneurship, especially within regional food systems and agrotourism. They foster collaborative ecosystems involving farmers, chefs, artisans, and civic institutions, reinforcing the entrepreneurial identity and stimulating social innovation. LGPs also create alternative employment and business opportunities (traditional catering, running gastronomic events, cooking classes), reducing local communities' reliance on primary agriculture or livestock farming.

In Romania, LGPs exist within an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes actors such as the Gastro Local Association, the National Agency for Mountain Areas (ANZM), and the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA). These actors provide mentorship and training, as well as digital registration support (such as InfoPGL.ro) and policy support through local legislation (Toader et al., 2022). In Suceava and Bucovina, LGPs act as catalysts for entrepreneurial activity by establishing productive connections between producers, artisans, tour guides, and hosts to create a cohesive regional value chain (Nastase & Lucaci, 2019; Maxim & Chasovschi, 2021). As such, LGPs represent a practical application of neo-entrepreneurship: locally embedded, policy-enabled enterprises that contribute to community resilience.

Local Gastronomic Points represent an important form of neo-entrepreneurship, where small-scale, innovation-driven enterprises are embedded amid community and culture. LGPs differentiate themselves in terms of traditional entrepreneurial models when they are not single-functioning entities, but rather as hybrid enterprises located at the intersection with social innovation, cultural perpetuation, economic inclusion, and greater biodiversity. LGPs create add value, creating positive alternatives to mono-functional agriculture while representing diversified rural livelihoods, in scope of their endeavours like cooking workshops, gastronomic events and immersive dining experiences.

However, despite legal simplification, sanitation requirements still pose significant barriers for the poorest households, which often lack infrastructure to meet safety standards. As Foris & Chirilas (2022) point out, gastronomic quality and service standards were uneven, with many LGPs lacking training in hospitality and tourism marketing regardless of the availability of training programs from National Agency for Mountain Areas (ANZM).

These mixed business models that seem to take on dual roles also create entrepreneurial ecosystems supporting emergent behaviours by acting as connections between farmers, chefs, artisans, guesthouse owners or local government officials. As part of the overall strategy, the Gastro Local network is serving an integral role, acting as consultants, generating visibility and undertaking mediating roles at the institutional level (e.g. being a partner in LGP development with existing programs). This aligns with ecosystem models described by Theodoraki et al., (2022), where interdependence and co-evolution drive entrepreneurial growth.

4.2. LGPS AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

LGP contribute significantly to sustainable rural development by revitalizing short food supply chains (SFSCs), providing local agri-food systems and developing environmentally responsible practices (Jia et al., 2024). Meals are typically sourced from the operator's own farm or nearby certified producers, reducing emissions (Bădic & Ispas, 2021; Stanciu et al., 2022).

They promote the core principles of circular bioeconomy, which is to minimize food waste, normalize valorising food surplus, and enhance food self-sufficiency. As Dobay & Apetroaie (2024) pointed out, LGPs cherish and maintain biodiversity and agroecological integrity through their use of heritage varieties, organic inputs and non-industrial practices which are often disregarded by modern commercial agricultural operators.

LGP advance rural repopulating, territorial cohesion, and embedded livelihoods by promoting multifunctional land uses. Additionally, they generate employment, nurture social bonds, and reduce reliance on export-driven agriculture and help keep agri-food's value in rural economies (Stanciu et al., 2022).

They also act as cultural infrastructures that legitimize and perform a wide spectrum of intangible heritage (e.g., gastronomy, language, or rituals). As noted by Chivu and Stanciu (2024) in their discussion on rural economic development, as well as by Serdar Eren (2018) on cultural and heritage tourism, they are powerful sites for providing experiential tools that can reinforce our identities and attract heritage tourists.

4.3. LGPS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

Tourism and local cuisine integration is a "cornerstone" of destination marketing strategies (Bădic & Ispas, 2021; Toader et al., 2022). Consequently, LGPs is an important actor in cultural heritage tourism by providing authentic place-based gastronomic experiences as part of heritage tourism offerings. Toader et al. (2022) described how LGPs provide opportunities to revitalize under-documented locations through unique, authentic, and non-commercialized food experiences to attract visitors interested in non-verbal travel experiences. Gastronomy represents a means for storytelling, where culinary culture transmits values, rituals, and regional identity.

Other models could provide comparative insight included the Marche region in Italy and the Burgos region in Spain, where cluster-based food tourism helps revive rural economies (Candelario-Moreno & Sánchez-Hernández, 2024; Tarangioli et al., 2024). However, LGPs in Romania indirectly benefit from a stronger institutional framework—state-backed certification, training provided by ANZM, and coordinated collaboration through the Gastro Local network (Stanciu et al., 2022). LGPs sit within this type of coordinated institutional framework, which provides an amount of institutional density; therefore LGPs can be thought of as soft infrastructure to further sustainable forms of agritourism.

Dobay & Apetroaie (2024) suggest it is important for spatial planning to accommodate the geographies of LGPs in rural development strategies. LGPs can be a strong experiential platform for rural heritage experiences, especially if they are located in cultural landscapes where resources are abundant.

(Chivu & Stanciu, 2024) describe LGPs representing "living museums" in the preservation of food traditions that are in peril of being forgotten. Visitors are engaged in embodied storytelling systems that involve formal cooking, informal learning of regional dialects, in connection with historical articulations in terms of the dishes or foods. LGPs allow visitors a chance to literally "taste the territory," that allows tourism to become grounded in a distinct cultural and ecological landscape. Authenticity can be given substance with the built environment, traditional wooden houses, barns, or fish huts, and these all serve to enhance an immersive and sensory aesthetic.

4.4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

When viewed collectively, LGPs are local place-based innovation systems that occupy a culturally and regionally dynamic landscape, as the converging node between entrepreneurship, sustainability and heritage tourism. In Figure 2 a conceptual framework that visually places LGPs in the centre of the model is proposed:



Figure 2. Local Gastronomic Points (LGP) as the node for Sustainable Rural Development

Neo-Entrepreneurship in Romania is enabled through supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems that facilitate microenterprise creation and collaborative support networks. Cultural Heritage Tourism reinforces social cohesion, place branding, and tourism value through rich culinary identity and experiential authenticity. Short Food Supply Chains are inherently put in place, mediating circular economy practices, promoting the economic and environmental sustainability of local communities. The entrepreneurial ecosystem surrounding Local Gastronomic Points further contribute to achieving sustainable rural development.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This review has illustrated that Local Gastronomic Points (LGP) represent an interesting example of neo-entrepreneurship that fits around the socio-economic and cultural contexts of rural Romania more specifically Suceava and Bucovina. This review has compiled a wide variety of academic, institutional, and legislative sources to represent the multidisciplinary roles of LGPs in terms of entrepreneurial innovation, sustainable development, and cultural heritage.

LGP are not simply micro-entrepreneurial businesses – they are integrated rural food innovation systems. Through local food products, localised knowledge, and supportive policy ecosystems, they develop resilient and inclusive value chains that support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to neo-endogenous rural development by being community-led, culture-focused, and sustainability driven.

As an enabler of short food supply chains, LGPs preserve the economic value for local communities, reduce impacts on the environment, and have the potential to strengthen culinary identity. LGPs operate as entrepreneurial platforms, empowering marginalized groups with easy-to-access and culture-relevant business models supported by Law 412/2023. They create a tourism infrastructure that provides unique experiences and contribute to a rural tourism product offering.

LGP still face systemic barriers. Issues of gaps in digital promotional material, lack of alignment in standards, professional training, and lack of formality in the tourism supply chain, however, require addressing if LGPs are to graduate from local successes to a national successful agricultural strategy. To this end, investment, policy change, and spatially coherent planning will facilitate the full potential of LGPs as part of the rural future of Romania.

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