

## **Mixology as a Regional Field: Stakeholder Configuration and Field-Level Stabilization in Israel's Urban Cocktail Scene**

Despite growing scholarly attention to gastronomy as a driver of urban differentiation and regional competitiveness, sub-fields within the culinary economy remain analytically under-theorized. Mixology, in particular, has emerged as a visible component of urban cultural life, yet little is known about how its internal actor configuration shapes its regional role and capacity to operate under conditions of disruption.

This study conceptualizes mixology as a relational regional field and develops the notion of field-level stabilization as an outcome of distributed stakeholder configuration under stress. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork conducted within Israel's urban cocktail scene - including semi-structured interviews with bartenders, venue owners, importers, producers, and other key actors, alongside participant observation - the analysis applies Bryson's (2004) stakeholder identification and analysis framework to systematically map influence, interests, and interdependencies within the field.

Rather than offering a purely descriptive account, the study analyzes how specific stakeholder constellations shaped responses to major external shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war. Interview evidence highlights cases in which customers initiated efforts to sustain local mixology bars, including cooperative structures and community-backed support mechanisms. Importers described investments in mentoring programs and professional competitions as ways of maintaining the broader professional ecosystem. In parallel, within wider civic and sectoral initiatives to support regional agriculture during the war, linkages between local farmers and selected cocktail bars intensified. New producer initiatives that emerged during the pandemic and wartime period further enriched the regional beverage landscape and encouraged experimentation with domestically sourced ingredients-particularly citrus varieties. These developments did not replace global supply chains, but they expanded local circulation channels and strengthened connections between urban establishments and regional producers.

These patterns indicate that stabilization was not centralized but emerged from horizontal coordination across consumption, distribution, and production layers. The study challenges resilience accounts that privilege formal institutions, demonstrating instead how informal relational architectures within cultural economies generate adaptive capacity. While grounded in Israel's urban cocktail scene, the analysis offers a broader lens on how niche cultural economies contribute to regional stabilization under prolonged disruption. By identifying how inter-actor configurations shape economic

continuity and local embeddedness, the paper contributes to debates on sustainable regional economies and the micro-foundations of resilience in urban systems.