

## **Shaabi in the City: On Modernizing Sounds and Exclusion in Egyptian Cities**

**Authors :** Mariam Aref Mahmoud

**Abstract :** After centuries of historical development, Egypt is no stranger to national identity frustrations. What may or may not be counted as this “national identity” becomes a source of contention. Today, after decades of neoliberal reform, Cairo has become the center of Egypt’s cultural debacle. At its heart, the Egyptian capital serves as Egypt’s extension into global capitalism, its flailing hope to become part of the modernized, cosmopolitan world. Yet, to converge into this image of cosmopolitanism, Cairo must silence the perceived un-modernized sounds, cultures, and spaces that arise from within its alleyways. Currently, the agitation surrounding shaabi music, particularly, that of mahraganat, places these contentions to the center of the modernization debates. This paper will discuss the process through which the conversations between modernization, space, and culture have taken place through a historical analysis of national identity formation under Egypt’s neoliberal regimes. Through this, the paper concludes that music becomes a spatial force through which public space, identity, and globalization must be contested. From these findings researchers can then analyze Cairo through not only its physical landscapes, but also its metaphysical features – such as the soundscape.

**Keywords :** music, space, globalization, Cairo

**Conference Title :** ICEUUPD 2024 : International Conference on Everyday Urbanism, Urban Planning and Design

**Conference Location :** Havana, Cuba

**Conference Dates :** February 01-02, 2024