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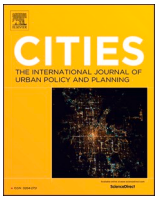

Reversing displacement: Navigating the spontaneity of spatial networks of craft, tradition and memory in post-war Old Mosul

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ABSTRACT

The destruction of Mosul's Old Town has led to sudden and unmanaged displacements of different ethnic, cultural and professional communities who departed northern Iraq's medieval trade and cultural centre. While the reconstruction of historic monuments was prioritised for the post-ISIS recovery process, the disappearance of trade, culture, and communities had a more lasting impact on the erasure of memory, traditional practices and social interactions in the Historic Centre. Moving away from the conventions of planned and structured return in post-conflict cities, this paper investigates the growing and unstructured spontaneous processes of displacement, relocation, and rebuilding as an unmanaged process where the central government and the local authority had limited impact on the daily and active return of displaced communities and craftsmen. We argue that the active and interconnected networks of trade, craft communities and livelihoods in the Old City can be activated by individualistic efforts to trigger a spontaneous, yet effective and decentralised approach to post-conflict return in Iraq. This paper navigates local narratives, spaces of memory and spatial patterns of displacement and return, using the observations, spatial mapping, first-hand local narratives and flows of displacement.

1. Introduction

During a short visit to Erbil on 2nd November 2014, Irena Bokova, the UNESCO Director General (DG) at the time, coined the phrase "cultural cleansing" in the context of radical and terrorist attacks on ethnic minorities in Mosul, at the height of ISIS control in the city. Made from 50 miles away from the heart of the conflict and in the company of representatives of Iraqi ethnic minorities, Assyrian, Chaldean, Yezedi, Turkomen, Shabak, Baha'i, Sabean Mandean and Kaka'i communities, the DG of the UNESCO denounced the attack on communities as a deliberate act of cultural cleansing. Bokova's statement shed critical light on the devastating impact of the war and its ideological target of cultural erasure and urban destruction. Bokova's position led to several actions in the Security Council and United Nations to initiate and lead reconstruction and recovery programmes while the war was at its peak.

In August 2018, UNESCO organised a workshop for the establishment of a "Planning Framework for the Reconstruction of Mosul", aiming not only to rebuild the Old Town, but improve its environment and built fabric through a heritage-centred urban vision for the future (UNHabitat, 2019). This was followed by a public meeting with Mosul residents to share ideas and comments. Those multiple initiatives among others established that local culture is both an asset and a tool to facilitate the city's reconstruction and recovery plan with a look into the future that requires 'open-mindedness', and readiness to embrace the future and its centrality on human beings (Khalaf, 2020). Urban heritage, in this context, was the key visible casualty of the conflict, yet its non-material value, like jobs and livelihoods, is the key driver for any potential plans for return.

Such collective effort, however, was always reactive, made at the point of crisis or post-event as typical of UNECO's interventions. Bokova and UNESCO failed to acknowledge that patterns of displacements were taking place over decades, albeit with the association of conflict, wars or destructive aggression. In fact, the Old Mosul urban and historic fabric survived many wars and conflicts during and before Saddam Hussein's Iraq, yet many Christian, Yazidis and Jewish communities were gradually and softly displaced in Mosul (de Courtois, 2004; Hanish, 2009) leaving behind rich built heritage and craft history, with their cultural influence fading with time. In this sense, spatial displacement in Iraq was a strategy for autocratic rulers to enforce soft and slow change in a controlled and managed displacement. However, the scale of overarching and indiscriminate aggression and destruction during the ISIS conflict, led to one of the most intensive and chaotic displacements in a

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short period of time (3 years, 2014–2017) that caused 10,000 locals to displace every day in early 2017 (Jaber, 2017).

Studies on Iraq's post-ISIS recovery have stressed the importance of preserving public memory and history diversity and inclusion in the context of participation and democracy building (Al-Daffaie, 2021; Isakhan & Meskell, 2019; Larkin & Rudolf, 2023; Saeed & Shahab, 2020). Mobilising local communities with their social and spatial memory is critical to urban recovery and would inform a meaningful and participatory approach to the revival of coherent cultural practices (Isakhan & Meskell, 2019). With UNESCO's Initiative on the "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul" focusing on a human-centric approach, the strategy faced practical challenges of capacity, trust and decision-making obstacles (Khalaf, 2020). The criticality of cultural heritage stems from the collective cognition of community groups and their interconnected spatial practices and flows of everyday life (Abdelmonem, 2012, 2015). It activates intangible processes that traditional professionals and seasoned architects do not possess, creating confusion and garnering limited local support.[1] In this sense, urban memory leads to varied practices and facilitates unique interactions that contribute to the local community's collective memories and emotional attachment to the different spaces through repeated experiences (Abdelmonem & Selim, 2012).

The contrast between managed and spontaneous displacement in postconflict recovery invites comparisons and contrasts between the strategies and policy implications, whether led by international organisations or by the central government. In Mosul, the estranged city in Modern Iraq has developed its approach to recovery that is largely self-managed if spontaneous, that was largely successful to navigate both international organisations and funders' influence (UNESCO, ICCROM, EU) and local practices that contribute to a heterogeneous and organic urban fabric of post-conflict reconstruction. This somehow retrieves the city's old identity as a meeting point of trade and cultural exchange between cultures and ethnic groups. Carrión (2005) stated that historical centres lose their centrality when they become homogenous, emphasizing the importance of heterogeneity, diversity, and coexistence in cities (Paddison, 2000, p.141).

Thus, this paper aims to investigate the impact of war-induced displacement on the everyday life and interactions of the communities in the Old Town of Mosul. Moving away from the conventions of planned and structured return in post-conflict cities, it examines the growing and unstructured spontaneous processes of displacement, relocation, and rebuilding. We argue that active and interconnected networks of trade, craft communities and livelihoods in the Old City, can be activated by collective efforts to trigger a spontaneous, yet effective and decentralised approach to post-conflict return in Iraq. To achieve this, this paper navigates local narratives, spaces of memory and spatial patterns of displacement and return, using observations, spatial mapping, first-hand local narratives and flows of displacement.

To address this aim, we explore the displacement patterns from the Old Town to Al-Aysar, and how that affects the tangible and intangible aspects of the Old Town's historic markets. This includes tracing spaces of exile in the local region and addressing the change in itineraries and patterns of movements as a result of the abandoned spaces, through the lenses of spatial memory, urban conservation, strategic policy and planning. Firstly, we study the affective relationship between memory, places, and people, before developing an understanding of the terms collective remembering and memory and questioning a framework for understanding post-war cities. Within this, we discuss how the theories of affect and Actor-Network can work together to achieve a new means of viewing and studying post-war cities. Through the lenses of memory, places, and people, we explore the pluralistic nature of Mosul's cultural heritage and how the post-war settings pose a threat to that rich culture. We then use qualitative methodologies to explore the network of spaces present in the Old Town from both a historical and a functional perspective, the emerging markets in the more modern eastern side, and the challenges facing returning communities through the three lenses. Finally, this paper highlights the shortcoming of the top-down policies and international interventions, and the idle nature of the central government interventions and management, while shedding light on local practices on the ground that were successful to rebuild local trade, communities and livelihoods.

2. Old Mosul: a mosaic of cultural diversity and historic fabric

Since its early roots as an Islamic City in 650 CE, Mosul had been shaped by a central mosque and surrounding markets (Al-Daywah'jī, 1982), growing gradually to be a market town and regional hub of trade (Fig. 1). By the mid-1900s, Mosul had become a centre for interactions and flows of people, products and cultures on the silk road (Shields, 2000). The bazaars (*Arabic aswaq*, *sing. souq*, '*market(s)*'), such as Bab Al-Saray, Al-Najafi and Al-Sirjkhane, were the cultural heart where travellers, silk, spice and textile traders across the region descend for a weekly visit for trade and exchange. Crafts like printing presses in Al-Najafi, blacksmiths, carpentry and sculpting were key activities in Bab Al-Saray and for the Old Town's rich culture, whereby artisans were from diverse ethnicities or religious backgrounds (Al-Daywah'jī, 1970). Beyond the economic and financial transactions, the Aswaq encompass several aspects of everyday life, where shop owners and locals bond over the frequent and daily exchange of conversations, trade and debates (Alobaidee, 2012).

Typcial of early Islamic cities, Mosul started its Islamic fabric with Al-Msaffi Mosque, (dating back to 637 CE), then led to the initial structure of Bab Al-Saray (Al-Daywah'jī, 1982, p.51) as attached market/souq to the central mosque (Akbar, 1988). Although the exact date of the creation of Al-Sirjkhane is uncertain due to a lack of records and literature, it is known to have functioned as a market for horse equipment merchandise. This market is mentioned twice, once as an extension of Bab Al-Saray (783 CE) (ibid) and once under the name of Sirjkhane (Al-Ubaidi, 2012) which was established during the Mughal era (Al-Janabi, 1982) (probably during the Mughal's expansion to Persia in the 1500s). These two references may refer to the same market that changed its location with the establishment of Al-Nuri Mosque (1172), or they may be two different markets. Despite the conflicting historical accounts, it is believed that Al-Sirjkhane market was established in its current location around 1259 (Al-Janabi, 1982), several decades after the construction of Al-Nuri Mosque. This timeline suggests that a new core was created, with Al-Nuri Mosque at its centre and Al-Sirjkhane serving as the new market. Essentially, Al-Sirjkhane to Al-Nuri Mosque is the same as Bab Al-Saray to Al-Msaffi Mosque.

With the arrival of the Dominican Fathers and the growing Christian influence in Mosul, Al-Sa'a Church (1750) became the center of their political power and its proximity to Al-Nuri Mosque established a visual connection between the Islamic and Christian centers in the Old Town (Girling, 2018). The knowledge and expertise of the Dominican Fathers, particularly in printing and photography (Al-Allaf, 2010), eventually led to the creation of a specialized market for books and printing presses, Al-Najafi Street (1913). Al-Najafi Street's success was facilitated by its location near the commercial hub Bab Al-Saray, which attracted more customers and increased engagement with books, magazines, and newspapers.

The Old Town of Mosul, with its diverse built environment, reflects the area's rich cultural and ethnic history. The town has been home to various communities. In the early 1900s, this included 166,940 Arabs, 494,000 Kurds, 38,000 Turkmens, 61,330 Christians, 11,890 Jews, and 26,000 Yezidis, who have coexisted and contributed to shaping the town's urban fabric and cultural calendar (Chardin, 1926). Moreover,

[1] Examples of such obstacles include the local reaction to the UNESCO-led architectural competition for the redesign and development of al-Nuri Mosque, which was largely managed and won by foreign architects on a modernist proposal.

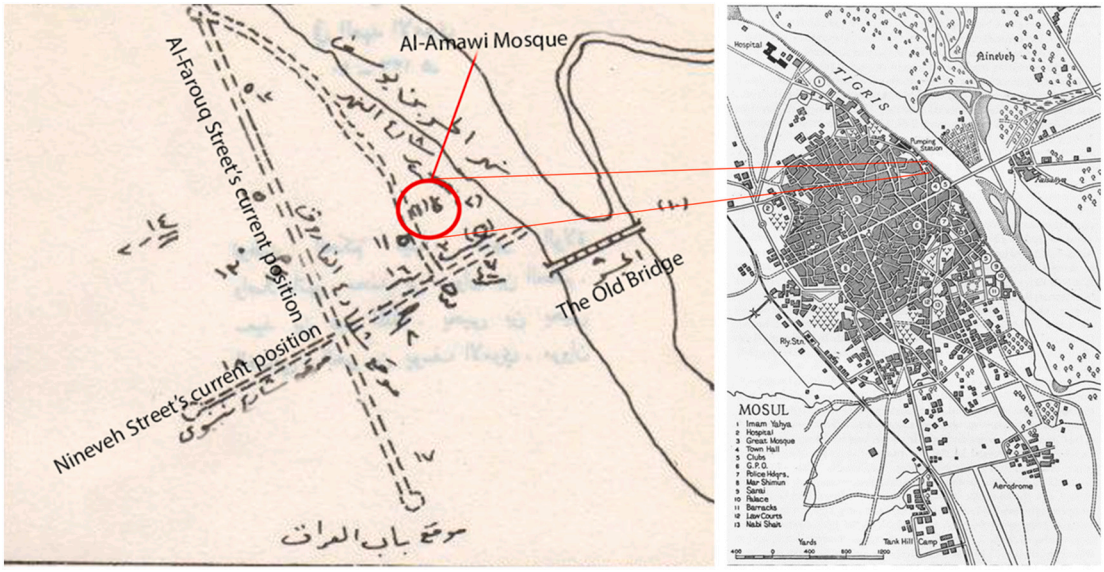

Fig. 1. The growth of Mosul's Urban fabric from 650 CE (Left, Drawn by (Al-Daywah'jī, 1982)) and 1944 (Right (Abdul Samad, 2012)).

Mosul's location at the crossroads of trade routes made it central to previous civilizations, but the town also suffered from wars and destruction, which made it difficult to trace its history before 650 CE (Al-Daywah'jī, 1982). The town stabilized under Islamic rule, leading to waves of trade and immigration that shaped its culture and urban fabric (ibid). This then allowed multiple communities to immigrate and integrate within the Maslawi fabric. For instance, the arrival of the Dominican Mission in 1760 marked the prosperity of the Christian community, leading to the construction of more churches (Mosul Collection Inventory, n.d.; Girling, 2018). Another example is the Yezidis, who, despite facing challenges with the authorities (Guest, 1993; Heard, 1911), have left their mark on the local culture and folklore, including introducing Khedir Elyas celebrations, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Celebration (Arkendi, 2021), and dishes like Bikhon, Halawat Al-Khadir, and Simsimiya (Hadid, 2012). The impact of other communities, such as the Kurds and Jews, can also be seen in the Old Town's built environment and cultural heritage, including synagogues,[2] celebrations like Nowruz and cultural objects like Al-Mahd.

Situated spatial practices like markets and bazaars build emotional and cultural attachments between people and places as social hubs that incubate memory, interactions, and transactions. This relationship between places and practices is demonstrated in the aftermath of the ISIS war on Mosul from 2013 to 2017, where historic shop owners from the Old Town's Aswaq spontaneously and independently reconstructed their businesses without support from central authorities (Hopkins, 2020), preserving their heritage sites, generational traditions, and daily life practices (Saeed & Shahab, 2020). Studies in similar post-war settings (Azzouz, 2019; Bădescu, 2019; Herzberger, 1991; Judt, 2002) shed light on the intangible aspects of heritage, emphasizing its importance in understanding, reconciling with, and preserving the past for future generations. These aspects include memory, interactions, and patterns of movements in historic areas. These studies also view physical objects as valuable sources of memories, meanings, and narratives held by communities over time (Sakamoto, 2015).

In Mosul, the period between 2014 and 2017 was marked by political instability and inter- and intra-ethnic tensions in the Old Town of Mosul (Al-Marashi, 2017). During this time, the actions of ISIS, including urbicide (Coward, 2009),[3] cultural cleansing (Bokova, 2015), and targeted attacks aimed at preventing the area from recovering following their control (Singer, 2015), greatly impacted both the built environment and the local communities (Fig. 2). This exodus affected all communities, including Muslims, Christians, Kurds and Yezidis. As a result, 800,000 people were forced to leave their homes and move, mostly across the river to Al-Aysar, and 35,000 buildings were destroyed (BBC, 2016). Only 4 % of the displaced locals intend to return as of 2019 (ReliefWeb, 2019). Despite the displacement, there were no clear plans from the government to reconstruct homes and shops or provide support to families who returned to their destroyed homes (Davison, 2019). According to Maslawi historian Omar Mohammed, the reconstruction and revitalization of the town is no longer considered a priority by the Iraqi government (Hopkins, 2020).

3. Memory, places, and people: an affective relationship

Collective memory has been defined by Roediger and Abel (2015) as a type of memory that is shared by a group and crucial to the group's social identity. Yadin Dudai (2002) further expands on this definition by breaking it down into three interconnected aspects: “Body of knowledge, an attribute, and a process”. The concept of “collective memory” is a topic of discussion, particularly in the field of oral history, where scholars prefer to use alternative terms like “collective remembrance,” “collected memories,” “cultural memory,” “public memory,” or “mnemonic communities” (Green, 2004). Dudai's and Green's definitions of collective memory seem alike, particularly when exploring the distinction between “collective memory” and “collective remembrance.” While Dudai views collective memory as a shared knowledge of past events, a static knowledge shared among a group, his idea of “collective remembering” focuses on the debated, contested nature of history, politics, and social factors, which evolve with the individual's and

[2] However, this presence has gradually decreased following the Israeli colonisation of Palestine in 1948, the systemic Zionist movement to displace Iraqi Jews (Abd Alsatar, 2019) and the subsequent Farhud [Arabic: “the destruction of order” or “robbery”], a pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad (Tsimhoni, 2001). Maslawi historian Omar Mohammed in an interview with Deutsche Welle (DW, 2020), attempting to revive the memory of Maslawi Jews, documents the exodus in the early 1950s where two-thirds of the Jews were forced to displace, while providing them with “special benefits” in their destinations, mostly being Israel.

[3] A term referring to the systemic targeting of historic spaces in historic city centres, and the deliberate choices in targeting specific buildings (Coward, 2009).

Fig. 2. Souq Al-Sayagh as seen in a video from 2013 (left). Bab Al-Saray in 2012 (Right).

group's relationship (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008).

Assmann (2006), on the other hand, argues that social collective memory is generational and varies across societies due to factors that affect its homogeneity, including ethnic diversity within nations. After displacement, war, and the passing of generations, individual experiences and documentation of events spread globally, forming a collective understanding of the horror. The relationship between individual memory and collective remembering, and explicit and implicit memory, depends on what we choose to remember. In *Voices of Collective Remembering*, Wertsch (2002) introduced "cultural tools" as catalysts for individual memory. These cultural tools, including narratives, symbols, items, and information, link individual memory and collective remembering, explicit and implicit memories. Over time, changing narratives and experiences can impact collective remembering. Cultural tools, when practised in the same location over multiple generations, form a sense of place. The relationships between memory, people, and places are explored further in post-war contexts by Larkin and Parry-Davies (2019). They highlight the presence of the "embodied memory", where non-reproducible knowledge such as dances, performances, movement, and other interactions are emphasised in memorials and culturally significant sites. In similar dynamics, spaces incubate such non-reproducible knowledge and intangible heritage, undertaken by the locals who facilitated these acts for multiple generations. In post-war settings, the triology of memory, people, and places play a pivotal role for societies emerging from violent conflict, as memory and spaces are crucial during the healing process for the affected societies (McDowell and Braniff, 2014).

Academic research on the Old Town has yet to examine these elements of culture, people, and place as main inputs for informing the reconstruction, instead focusing on analysing the demolition by ISIS to understand the group's anti-Shi'i, anti-Sufi, anti-Yezidi, and anti-Christian motives (Nováček et al., 2021, p.331), the cultural cleansing of memory (Singer, 2015), and the importance of reconciliation for the future of Mosul (Mohammad, 2020). These studies have found that ISIS aimed to eliminate all signs of cultural diversity and ethnicities in the Old Town,[4] and that any reconciliation process must involve all sections of society. Studies that focused on the reconstruction process in post-war Mosul highlighted how the reconstruction (especially in the housing sector) is driven by economic drivers and lack an active participation of displaced locals in its planning (Saeed et al., 2022).

It is worth noting that calls for the inclusion of diasporas in Iraq is not only born from the post-war urgency of rebuilding, as pre-conflict studies called for more research on the impact of the displacement of Iraqi community on the wider national identity and culture (Al Dabbagh, 2012). Local-first approaches, which are already being advocated for in Mosul (Isakhan & Meskell, 2019; Matthews et al., 2020), are necessary to restore the heterogeneity of the society in the Old Town as a means to examine the displacement and renewed interactions and practices in the post-war settings. This requires in-depth look at the interplay between the trilogy of (displaced) people, memory, and space.

The exploration of the relationship between memory, people and places can be viewed through the affect framework, which highlights how affective experiences and emotions shape behaviours and social structures (Anderson, 2006). The figure above highlights how multiple generations of locals residing long-term in an area can contribute to creating, facilitating and continuing generational practices within their areas. While doing so, their memories of the events, practices and interactions become ingrained in the space, where their layered experiences in a space are affected by the presence of the facilitating areas, and these areas become devices for remembering (as seen in multiple examples across the literature) (Azzouz, 2019; Bădescu, 2019; Larkin & Parry-Davies, 2019). The Actor-Network Theory (ANT) can support the framework of the theory of affect in this paper. ANT is a theoretical framework that focuses on the relationships between actors, whether human or non-human, and how these relationships shape the social world. ANT emphasizes the importance of the agency of non-human actors, such as objects, in shaping human behaviour (Latour, 2005). In the context of architecture, ANT can help identify the significant actors involved in shaping the built environment and how these actors interact to create the affective dimensions of the built environment.[5] By analysing the relationships between the actors involved in shaping the built environment, including locals, traditions, patterns of movements, and community groups, and how they have affective relationships, the paper can provide insights into how the built environment can facilitate healing and well-being in post-war settings.

Research on cultural heritage in post-war cities has consistently recognized heritage and memory as multi-layered entities, linking physical spaces in post-war to trauma (Schindel, 2012), gender (Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012) and serving as advocators for collective memory (Forty & Kuchler, 1999). These lines of research argue that

[4] For more on ISIS' iconoclasm see (Anon, 2022; Clapperton et al., 2017; Daragahi & Solomon, 2014; Mcginnis, 2015).

[5] ANT has proven useful in identifying the significant actors involved in shaping the built environment and how these actors interact to create the affective dimensions of the built environment. In cultural studies in architecture, ANT has been used to explore how the built environment is shaped by various cultural, political and social actors (Bishop & Williams, 2012). For example, in their study of urban design in Johannesburg, South Africa, Bishop and Williams (2012) used ANT to analyse the complex relationships between various actors involved in shaping the city, including politicians, architects, developers and community groups. By examining the network of relationships between these actors, they were able to identify the significant actors and their roles in shaping the built environment of Johannesburg.

heritage is not a static and consistent term, but is linked to intangible factors such as the changing community, economy, and politics. Demolition and conservation continuously shape heritage, as do choices surrounding elimination and preservation. This study of the architecture of memory in Old Mosul focuses on the examination of semantic and episodic memories in relation to movement, space, and action in both pre-and post-war contexts. The distinction between history as a scientific field and collective remembering as a fluid, experience-based entity is crucial in understanding the concept of memory in war-torn societies. Therefore, we have chosen to use the term "collective remembering" in this paper to emphasize its dynamic nature and the potential for it to be shaped by social and political debates.

4. Memory versus policy in post-war Mosul: what and how to navigate and trace?

Mapping the socio-cultural conditions in cities affected by war requires the examination of both individual and collective memories. In conflict-ridden environments, the web of images that connects memories to places is disrupted, leading to a transformation in the meaning and significance of the two layers of memory that compete in collective recollection (Crowley, 2011). This shift occurs from positive pre-war social interactions to negative former sites of terror memories; a process seen in multiple post-war countries like Argentina (Schindel, 2012), Syria (Azzouz, 2019), and Lebanon (El-Masri & Kellett, 2001). In Mosul's Old Town, the displacement is multifaceted. The destruction has undoubtedly created a mass exodus from the Town, as locals fled to the more modern *Al-Aysar* (The eastern side of Mosul) and outside the city, where 839,490 individuals were displaced because of the liberation operations (IOM, 2017). This displacement not only impacts the spaces within the Old Town but also the meanings behind them, as they facilitated the generational acts and practices for multiple generations (Al-Daffaie, 2021).

The everyday life in the Old Town of Mosul is complex and includes multiple domains that must be considered when researching displacement. In his study on the geographies of Mosul, Al-Janabi (1982) highlights how although the Old Town occupies around 9 % of the overall area of Mosul, it includes more than 70 % of the commercial activities of the city, 26 % of the overall housing areas, and 26 % of locals. Moreover, he outlines how most of the traditional crafts, social interactions, and traditional activities took place within both the markets and the narrow alleyways, locally called *Awjat*. In this sense, the alleys and markets are not only functional spaces for trade and commerce, but also social spaces for community gatherings and events. On this, Abdulqader et al. (2022) highlight how through the locals' eyes, spaces in the Old Town are hubs for cultural events, shopping festivals, and even art festivals. They brought the example of Al-Najafi street, a cultural and commercial venue for shopping, where the locals have memories of traditional and cultural activities such book purchasing and gold shopping (Al-Ubaidi, 2018). Similarly, the Bab Al-Saray market is not only a market that sells everyday essentials, it is also a canvas that offers different products and changes decorations building on yearly celebrations (Anon, 2013; Iraq Now, 2020; Shafaq, 2020).

We found multiple layers to the memories in the markets; some of which link to the generational, inherited nature of crafts and know-how, and others link to the cultural and traditional value of the historic markets, alongside their commercial one. Each cultural and traditional space in the Old Town is a hub that holds different meanings for different community groups. Navigating the change in these markets helps trace the change in memory, traditions, and function. The change to trace is twofold; the first is the change in the architecture of the markets, including their locations, the creation and manufacturing of products, and the origin of the product sold. The second is the change in locals and the associated memory. The latter change is more difficult to trace from the lens of memory, as the memory of the returning locals is different from that of the displaced ones; returning locals have undergone a shared process of reconstruction simultaneously, which may have changed the perception of the place from that of trauma and loss, to that of resilience and rebuilding (a process seen in other post-war countries, see (Bădescu, 2019; Schindel, 2012) for examples).

With these complex layers of memory that link to generational practices, everyday life, and communities, there has been a general lack of engagement with the reconstruction process. Locals approach reconstruction through a bottom-up approach, where reconstruction projects are born from the need to restore livelihood, patterns of movement, and the sense of community (Al-Daffaie, 2021). This is significantly different from the top-down approach practised by the central government and international organisations, whose urban policy revolves around a building-first approach (especially landmarks), and rebuilding the most known landmarks first (UNESCO, 2020; Arraf, 2021; Dumper & Larkin, 2012; Isakhan & Meskell, 2019), before turning their attention to homes and smaller areas of local cultural heritage. With these urban policies in place, prioritising high-budget and low-impact projects, navigating the reconstruction process in the Old Town (and similar historically rich centres) becomes difficult. The multiple, highly contrasting approaches to reconstruction, means we cannot approach the process of making sense of the rebuilding efforts solely through an architectural lens. Therefore, we look at urban spatial memories to begin to understand patterns of urban displacement in Mosul.

5. Methodology: analysing spatial memory and practices in post-conflict reconstruction

Addressing issues relating to the impact of displacement on historical cities' spaces requires us to understand that lived experiences are highly flexible and dynamic, as they resonate differently with different people (Burrell, 2017). These lived experiences and narratives are imperative to form a holistic view on the patterns of displacement. To research and analyse those experiences objectively, we adopt a set of interpretive methods. We undertook interviews and focus groups with key informants and Maslawi locals and shop owners, as well as ethnographic observations in the Old Town's historic markets. In total, we have conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with Maslawis, while circulating a survey and getting responses from 69 locals. The survey provided a starting point for highlighting spaces of memory and areas of cultural significance, while in-situ semi-structured interviews provided an understanding of the experiences, narratives, and interactions happening in these areas.

Interviews were analysed thematically, where emerging themes were connected and the relationships between them are debated in an axial coding approach. We also conducted four focus groups, six walking interviews, ten artisans videos, 14 walking videos, and a community workshop. In the focus groups, discussions about community-led cultural events took place, and questions about the impact of displacement were discussed. Walking interviews helped with micro-scale pinpointing of activities, where stories about interactions within cultural spaces were recorded in the places they occurred. Recorded videos of artisans and town spaces helped go back and record spaces after the data collection period.

In this framework, interviews and focus groups enquire about narratives and lived experiences, in an attempt to make sense of cultural discourses, acts and experiences (Chase, 2012). Narrative enquiry aids in providing a clear framework to interpret stories, shedding light on the side of culture that cannot be explored in other methods (Chase, 2012). Data were analysed thematically, and results were reflected on spatial GIS maps to trace the pattern of displacement and visualise the research findings. The GIS maps are created from scratch, using a 2013 base map (a year before the ISIS insurgency), and contrasted against a 2017 base map (a year after the ISIS insurgency), to trace erasure and pinpoint abandoned cultural heritage spaces.

6. The spatial network of memory

Mosul's Old Town's fabric is one that accommodated a diverse everyday life and a busy cultural calendar over the year. The spatial network in the Old Town consists of markets, religious buildings, and cultural streets that contributed to unique local itineraries throughout the year. This examination of spaces of memory in Mosul's Old Town has led to the identification of several significant sites, including Al-Nuri Mosque and its iconic Hadba'a minaret, Al-Najafi Street and its bookshop Souq, Bab Al-Saray Souq and its associated markets, the Corniche Street, Al-Sirjkhane Souq, and Al-Sa'a Church. These sites are connected by a network of alleyways and interact with other places like Al-Najjarin and Al-Corniche Street, but this paper will concentrate on the historic markets that were selected as spaces of memory by the locals. These spaces have facilitated multiple patterns of movements and enabled different ways to navigate the Town and fulfil everyday needs, or promote diverse cultural events and celebrations (Fig. 3).

The interconnection between culturally significant spaces in the Old Town creates a unique heritage landscape that can be seen in both functional and social terms, as it is related different groups and communities. For example, a butcher from Al-Shahwan stated: "It is a lot more connected than you think. Butchers are located in multiple places within the Old Town, either in Bab Al-Saray, here [in Al-Shahwan], Bab Al-Toub, or Bab Ligish. There is a main Souq…. The smaller ones depend a lot on the personal connections with the people". The historical emergence of these spaces is closely related to their functional connections, as seen in the relationship between Al-Nuri Mosque and Al-Sirjkhane or between Bab Al-Saray and Al-Msaffi mosque (Fig. 4). This connection between historical emergence and function can be traced back to the principles of the Islamic city centre, where there is a centralised mosque and a neighbouring open market (Akbar, 1988).

7. The connection of functions between spaces of memory

The growth in activities and interactions in the Town can be traced back to its historical connection and development. This growth helped establish the crafts in the Town as a cultural heritage and has allowed these practices and crafts to be preserved throughout its history. The impact of Bab Al-Saray's historical emergence and expansion has extended to the surrounding areas, adding to the services already offered by Bab Al-Saray. For example, Al-Sammajah, located on the edge of the car park behind it, takes advantage of the local traffic visiting Bab Al-Saray while offering services not available in the larger Souq. Meanwhile, Corniche Street provides a unique experience for locals, who often bring food from Bab Al-Saray to eat while enjoying the view of the Tigris and feeding the seagulls [ON, IN,01 and UoM, IN, 03]. This tour of Bab Al-Saray and its adjacent markets and areas highlights several practices that are integral to the daily life of the local communities, as the services offered are essential for their daily needs (Fig. 5).

The surrounding areas, including M4 Al-Najafi Street, offer a variety of merchandise such as books, newspapers, and magazines, as well as services that cater to specific communities and are not available in Bab Al-Saray. M5 Al-Sirkhane Souq complements the offerings found in Bab Al-Saray, specializing in female clothing, fabrics, and sewing kits, while Bab Al-Saray has a few shops for women's cloth. Al-Sirjkhane is also a hub for medical professionals and pharmacists, attracting customers from beyond the Old Town's residents. In the realm of artisans, most of them, including blacksmiths, carpenters, and coppersmiths, are located in C1 Bab Al-Saray, with C2 Al-Najjarin and C3 Al-Sayyagh Aswaq located close by for additional exposure. Specifically, the location of Souq Al-Sayyagh between Al-Najafi Street and Bab Al-Saray makes it a bustling hub as locals use the Awjat to navigate the town. Religious buildings also impact the activity levels of the Aswaq. During Friday prayers, the Aswaq close, including street vendors and fishmongers. After the prayers, Bab Al-Saray becomes more lively as worshipers arrive and shop for groceries and lunch. Although the Nuri Mosque and Al-Sa'a church were under construction at the time of the visit in September 2020, it is believed that similar patterns occur during Friday prayers at R1 Al-Nuri Mosque and Sunday services at R2 Al-Sa'a church.

These historic and functional connections demonstrate the interconnectivity of the shops and the impact they have on daily life and the repeated interactions and movement patterns of the locals. This research provides a foundation to examine how these locations changed after the war and the damage to the Old Town's spaces of memory and displacement.

8. From chaotic to managed displacement: emerging Aswaq and residential areas in Al-Aysar

After an early chaos of the emergency situation of the conflict induced displacement, a logical spatial pattern and connections starter to take shape. A preliminary observation of emerging shops in Al-Aysar reveals a pattern where shop owners from the same *Aswaq* attempted to reopen in proximity[6] while those of different crafts are more distant on the Eastern Coast.[7] While this pattern aids shop owners in maintaining their community and connections, such changes impact the itineraries of the locals, as the Old Town was a one-stop-shop for locals and residents of surrounding villages. Because of this, we have investigated the common destinations of displaced shop owners in Al-Aysar, detailed below.

The map shows that Sirjkhane shop owners have relocated to Al-Qadisiya, Al-I'ilam and Al-Andalus, while doctors initially located on the first floor of buildings in Al-Sirjkhane have located to more modern complexes in Al-Muthanna area (Fig. 9). Similarly, workshops in Al-*Najjarin* have moved to Al-Rifaie, and Al-Najafi Street bookshop owners have relocated to Al-Shurta area, the street parallel to the University of Mosul. While there are no accessible records of how many shops were in each *Souq* before the war, it can be estimated that there are around eight displaced carpenters from Al-*Najjarin*.[8] Additionally, all the workshops have been relocated to Al-Aysar, as no machinery were in the street. As for Al-Najafi street, there are a total of two returning bookshops from an estimated total of 42 bookshops in pre-war Mosul.[9]

For residential areas, residents of heavily damaged areas like Al-Qlai'at, Al-Sirjkhane and Al-Sa'a in the Old Town have rented in Al-Zuhoor, Al-Qadisiya, Al-Nabi Younus and Al-Rifaie. This influx of displaced locals and shop owners caused a hike in renting fees in Al-Aysar, as it became a more dynamic area following the displacement; shop owners mentioned that their "whole profit was spent on rent" [BA, IN, 01], and residents suffered from 3 times the rent paid in the Old Town [ON, IN, 02]. However, even though renting in Al-Aysar is significantly more expensive, a substantial number of shop owners remained there. To better understand the permanent nature of this displacement, we enquire about the causes for this relocation and possible motivations for returning (Figs. 6 and 7).

9. Tracing product movements in returning artisan shops

The map presented earlier tentatively indicated that shops in the Old Town are either constructed, reconstructed, or under reconstruction. However, some shops may have physically returned, but the ways the shop operates, i.e., where they import their products and their workshops' locations, may differ. Therefore, to provide a holistic image of the return of cultural practices, we need to investigate how these crafts have

[6] As shown in the upcoming map and figures.

[7] This behaviour can be seen throughout history, where workers of trades stick together following displacement. An example can be seen in 1859 Philadelphia, where Irish immigrants established their crafts after forming a community of traders (Clark, 1992).

[8] Assuming that the Souq was symmetrical and the demolished side housed the same number of shops as the reconstructed one.

[9] As counted by closed bookshops during the site visit.

Fig. 3. Pinpointed spaces of memory and crafts. 1. Al-Nuri Mosque. 2. Al-Najafi Street. 3. Bab Al-Saray. 4. Sirjkhane Souq. 5. Al-Sa'a Church.

Fig. 4. The historical connection of the Spaces of Significance, numbered as per their formation year. Arrowheads resemble the direction of influence.

returned: how they operate, source their materials, and the back-end mechanisms for running their shops.

Two noteworthy examples are the carpenters in Al-Najjarin and a traditional dress shop owner in Bab Al-Saray, each changing the back-end of their businesses to adjust and adapt to the post-war settings, accommodating the changing nature of their crafts and the destruction of industries and factories critical to their supply. The first example is Al-Najjarin (Carpenters' Souq), showcasing a return in the front-end and

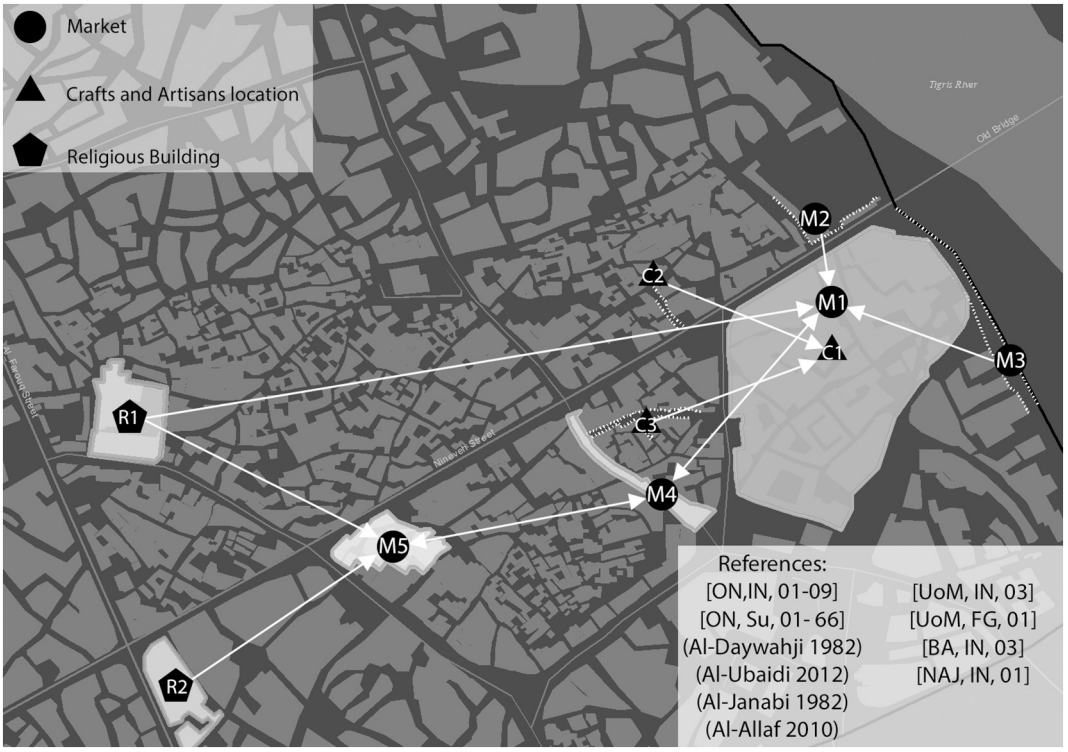

Fig. 5. GIS map of the functionality of spaces of memory and the connections between them.

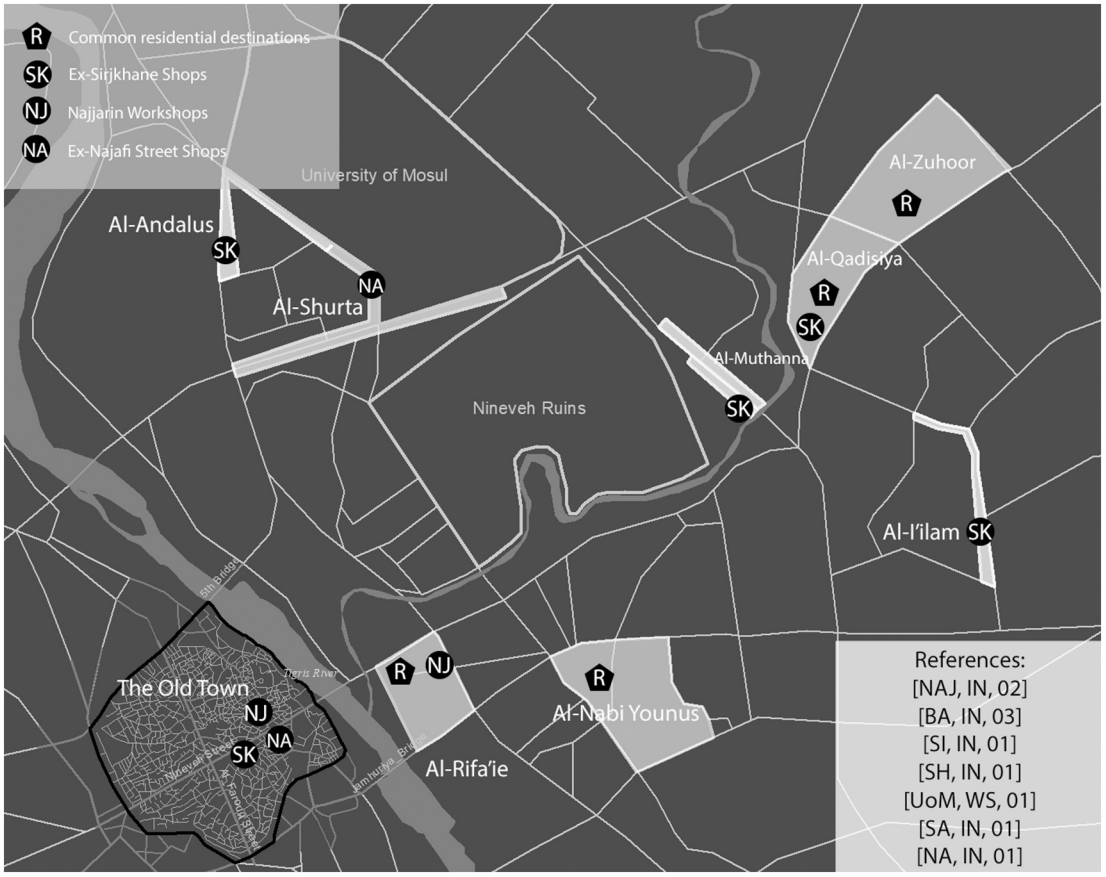

Fig. 6. GIS map of destination of relocated Aswaq in Al-Aysar.

Fig. 7. Abandoned medical complexes in Al-Sirjkhane (left) and newly built ones in Al-Aysar (right).

a change in the 'hidden' operation mechanisms in the back-end.

Prior to 2014, the items traded at Al-Najjarin market were made from raw materials (such as wood) that were processed from start to finish in the souq. The process included cutting, polishing, and displaying the items for sale. However, the flow of the products has changed significantly due to certain factors. As shown in Fig. 10, raw materials are now cut and processed in Al-Rifaie, and transported daily to Al-Najjarin souq via a pickup truck in the afternoon. At the souq, the products are further polished and painted in the shops and then displayed for sale as needed. This change in the product's itinerary not only shows the shift in the location of the craft-making process but also the increased competitiveness as demonstrated by the daily transport of products from Al-Aysar.

In the dress shop, the location, craft, and products remain largely unchanged, but with lower demand for traditional attire, due to the growing popularity of western clothing styles. However, the movement of the products has changed from being solely within the Old Town to being imported from various countries (Fig. 8).

Not all patterns of change can be visible by tracing locations, as more profound activities and practices attached to the spaces' functionality contribute to the production of the product. For example, in Al-Najjarin, the shop owners returned to their original locations, while the nuances of running the business and carpentry scopes are different. These two cases illustrate the transformations that have occurred among returning shop owners and artisans. They are not the only instances of changing business practices in post-war Mosul, but they demonstrate how crafts and businesses may evolve in the future. The examination of these two examples highlights the importance of closely examining the back-end operations of businesses in the study of returning shops in the Old Town. This investigation reveals hidden aspects of the reconstruction process in the Old Town. We can see that while the physical structures in Bab Al-Saray may appear to be fully reconstructed, there is ongoing change in the foundations of the products being offered, which is just as crucial to study (Fig. 11).

10. Reversing displacement: returning communities and challenges of new realities

In her book chapter on place attachment, Giuliani (2003) suggested studying the reasons relationships (and objects in relationships) dissolve or transform and the consequences of the transformation to better understand the bonds and sense of attachment. To Giuliani, the study of the affect should not be separated from the hosting environment that triggers emotions and impacts relationships. The environments in which they dissolve, and form are just as significant as the dynamic of the relationship itself. In this dynamic, each decision to relocate cannot be separated from changes in the environment that hosted the relocating locals, in this case, the Old Town.

Fig. 8. Al-Najjarin Souq with one restored side.

Fig. 9. Arabian dress shop in Bab Al-Saray.

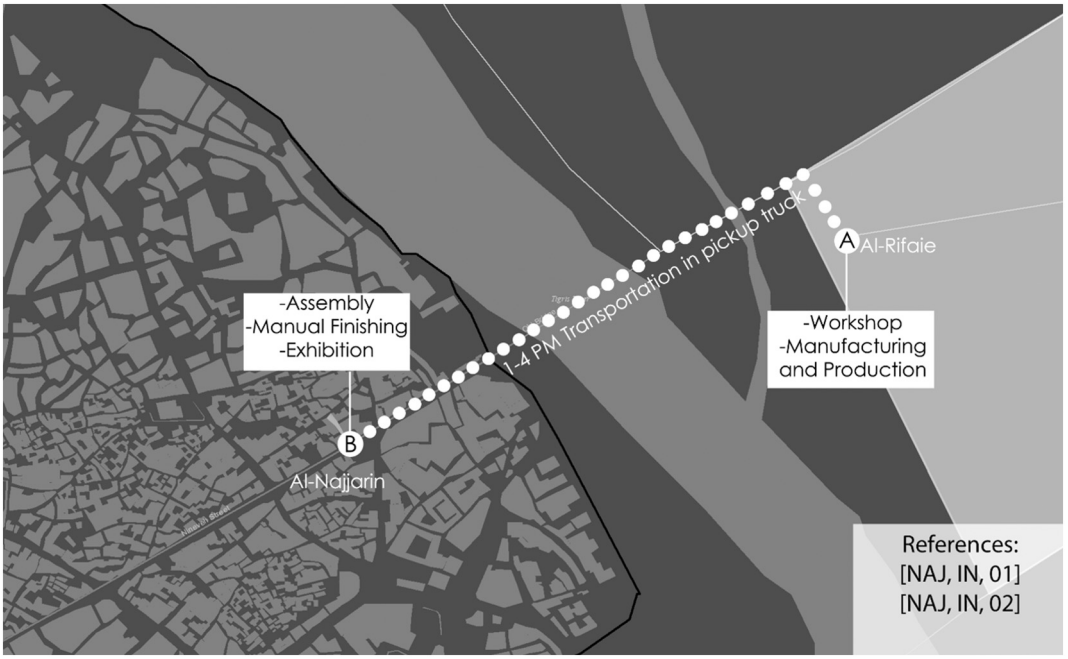

Fig. 10. GIS map of post-war product itinerary for Souq Al-Najjarin.

For instance, shop owners of Bab Al-Saray have reiterated the significance of word-of-mouth in their return, as they were informed that other shop owners have returned, and the *Souq* is becoming lively, as [BA, IN, 02] words it;

> "When we first reopened, the market was very empty, no customers, no one was here. The street was filled with rubble and debris. Gradually, the government began to repave the street, and shop owners reopened, but no customers. We fought through it for months and months; in the winter, when it was cold, we kept open with virtually no customers. Eventually, the people started to return to the market; right now, let us say 50 or 60 % of the customers have returned, and more shop owners know that and they started to reopen too. There is hope for a full return too."

Contrasting this insight with a returning bookshop owner in Al-Najafi, a street where most bookshops moved to Al-Aysar, states that the motivations for returning were financial[10] and that he had to make adjustments to bring back his business in an empty market, including delivery of books and the use of online spaces for that merchandise. In addition, other shop owners have stated that the reason for their return was also emotional, as their familiarity with the place has escalated their return. One local described shop owners as "*fish in the water; they would die if taken out of the Old Town*" [ON, IN, 02]. The two aforementioned reasonings (familiarity and affordability) can be seen in a shop owner's statement, who reopened his shop in Bab Al-Saray with personal funding:

[10] He stated that the increasing competitiveness governed his motivation for returning, coupled with the expensive rent in Al-Aysar and the benefits offered by the Sunni Waqf to encourage his return, including free rent for two years.

Fig. 11. GIS map of Pre-war product itinerary for the Arabian dress shop.

> "I came back because the rent in Al-Aysar was really expensive. I used to give all my profit just for rent. So I closed it and came back here to our original place. Also, this place has all my childhood memories. I worked with my father as I was a child. Immediately after the liberation, they did not let us come back as it was filled with bombs. As soon as they allowed me to, I came back."
>
> [BA, IN, 01]

This theme of financial empowering and emotional connections as the primary motivators for return continues when zooming into similar cases, including the carpenter in Al-Najjarin, who stated when asked whether or not rent prices are a factor in his return: "This shop is 1.5 million [Iraqi Dinars][11] per year. The ones that are located on the main street are 4 million. The ones with a basement are 2 million. Before the war, they were more expensive" [NAJ, IN, 02]. Earlier in the interview, he mentioned his memories with his craft, which grew his attachment to it "*I worked in this exact place. We all learned from the same teacher. Even the ones that had no teacher learned from their parents. My father was not a carpenter, but I helped move things around until I learned*".

With that in mind, it is essential to remember that each *Souq* includes nuances specific to it that enable or keep its shop owners and locals from returning. For instance, a slower return of bookshops in Al-Najafi may result from their unprecedented opening in front of the University of Mosul in Al-Aysar, where there is an opportunity for a new market; the University of Mosul was established in 1967, Al-Najafi street in 1913.

In other cases like Al-Sirjkhane, there are no such motivations for a permanent move, as the functionality of clothes merchandise is not exclusive or impacted by a specific location. However, the slow return is believed to be caused by the potentially permanent relocation of medical clinics, previously situated on the first floor of buildings in Al-Sirjkhane; shop owners assert that it is because of the presence of the clinics, locals wait for their appointment by navigating through the *Souq*. Therefore, the *Souq* lost a large chunk of its audience following their displacement (Anon, 2021). In this sense, there is clear evidence that various factors need to be considered on a case-by-case basis to make sense of the causes of relocation and motivations for returning. These mostly revolve around emotional reasons and financial empowerment, as seen from the previous examples, where due to their attachment to the place, expensive living costs in Al-Aysar, and familiarity with neighbouring shop owners.

11. Overview of post-war reconstruction patterns in spaces of memory and crafts

The exploration of the Old Town's damaged and revitalised areas at the time of writing this paper in July 2022 (Fig. 10) reveals that the restoration of Bab Al-Saray (North East of the map) has been a trigger for the restoration of Al-Sammajah (Northern of Bab Al-Saray). Similarly, the ongoing reconstruction of Al-Sirjkhane *Souq* is catalysing the regeneration of its surrounding vicinities. It remains unclear whether restoring Al-Nuri mosque will similarly vitalise its surrounding neighbourhoods and escalate their regeneration, as the minaret is still in the early stages of being reconstructed. This shows that restoring some significant areas has a ripple effect, propelling surrounding areas to reconstruct. This effect can also be noticed (reversely) in the abandoned Al-Najafi *Souq* (West to Bab Al-Saray), which caused attached *Awjat* to remain destructed (Including Al-Sayagh and *Awjat* leading to Bab Al-Saray). Overlaying this pattern on the pre-war network explored earlier showcases "what is left" from the network of daily life, historical significance, and industrial activities.

The map above shows the reconstructed *Aswaq* in relation to their original plots and the network they form in the daily life of post-war Old Town. Thus far, **M1. Bab Al-Saray** has witnessed the most comprehensive reconstruction efforts, with nearly all of its original shops and areas of crafts returning, including spice merchants, blacksmiths, butchers and fabric merchants (Fig. 12). While the Corniche Street, eastern of Bab Al-Saray, has further complex layers that keep it from a straightforward reconstruction, as most buildings are multi-storey and ex-hotels.[12] The reconstruction project of **M4. Al-Sirjkhane** seems to impact **M3. Al-Najafi** (northern part) directly (however, the southern part and the attached Sayagh street are still demolished). Perhaps, this is due to their proximity to the reconstructed Nineveh Street, where the network seems to be reinitiated around.

This pattern of re-emergence starts with the daily activities and then expands to crafts and historical values and products. For example, the reconstruction of Bab Al-Saray started with the grocery shops and spice merchants, then expanded to the artisans. A similar pattern is emerging

[11] 1 USD is approximately 1460 Iraqi Dinar, as of January 2022.

[12] Which means owners could be investors and not locals.

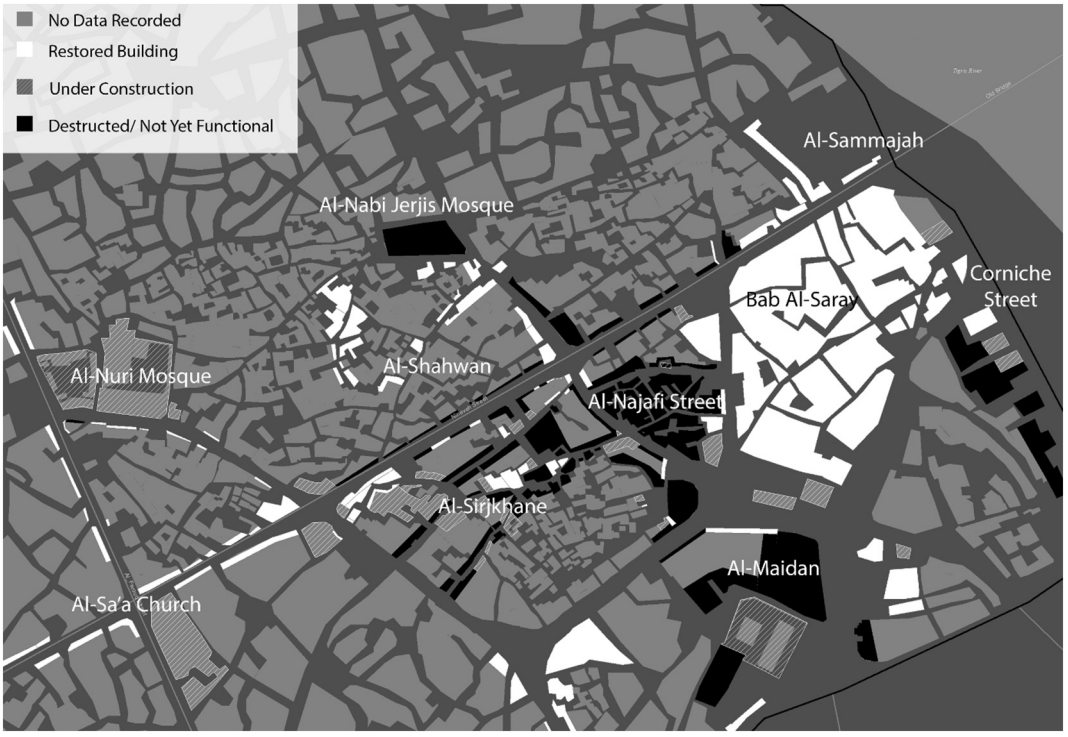

Fig. 12. GIS map of the state of buildings observed and recorded during the site visit.

in Al-Najafi, where the reconstruction starts in the northern parts, where sweets shops and barbers are reopening, and one goldsmith has recently returned (as of July 2020). Thus, the regeneration begins with providing life necessities, which motivates more niche shops to reopen as the *Aswaq* attracts users back, causing a gradual re-expansion of shops within the historic *Aswaq*, with essentials functioning as 'springboards' for other shops, initiating the ripple effect (Figs. 13 to 15).

A few exceptions aside, post-war *Aswaq* in Mosul attempted to keep their functionality. Those who changed their line of work claim that the change in supply and demand caused multiple shops to change their trade line historically, and it still happens today.

> "Shops selling agriculture supplies remained the same, but my neighbour here used to sell Charazat (salted nuts), and now he sells olives. They changed their function because of the economics. Selling

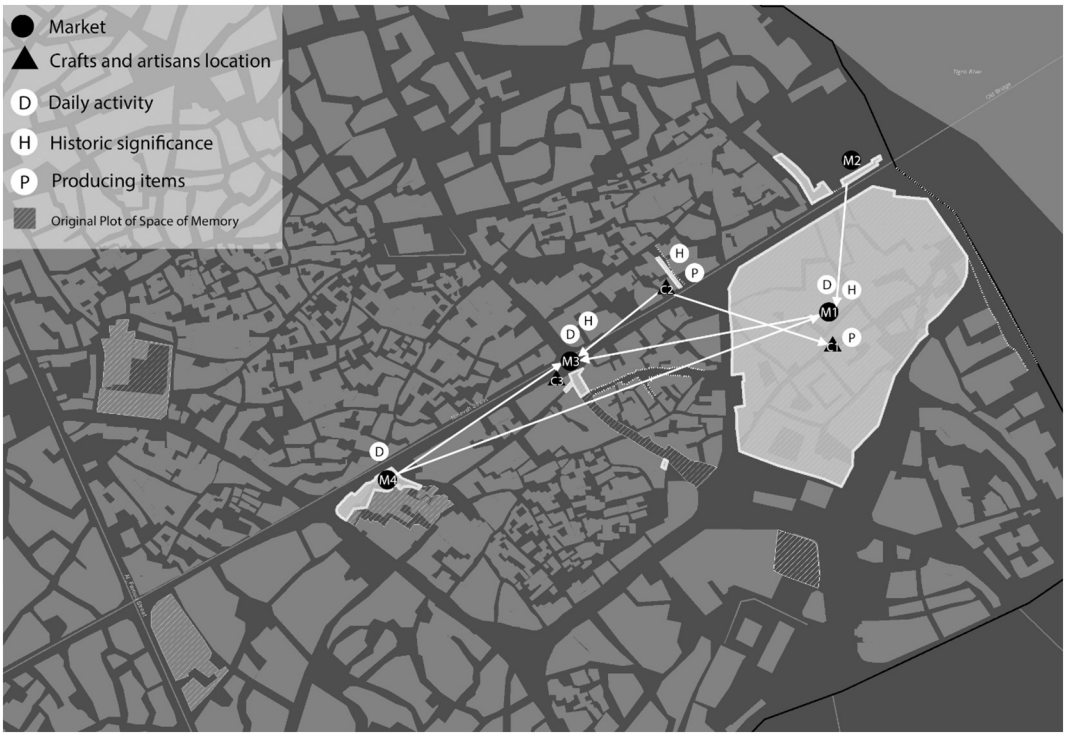

Fig. 13. GIS map of returning Aswaq and associated network of meanings.

Fig. 14. Bab Al-Saray as seen in a video from 2012 (left) and as seen in September 2020 (right).

Fig. 15. Souq Al-Sayagh as seen in a video from 2013 (left) and September 2020 (right).

olive and pickles is more profitable than nuts. It is all about supply and demand." [BA, IN, 01], a grocery shop owner[13]

There is a pattern[14] of constant change in shop functions in historic *Souqs*. However, such changes do not occur as often in artisans' shops that depend on crafts (carpenters, blacksmiths, bookshop keepers). For example, in Al-Najafi street, the more diverse northern part is reopening with multiple functions, while the southern part, exclusive to libraries, is witnessing temporal abandonment due to the slow return of bookshop owners. Similarly, the aforementioned change in the shops in Bab Al-Saray did not include the blacksmiths of the *Souq*, who returned to their original places and lines of work (Fig. 16).

12. Discussion and conclusion: spaces of memory as reconciliation devices

While experiences of past events vary among individuals, locals, especially in historical settings, look at the past for "stability in the face of rapid technological, cultural and social change" (Kern, 1983, p.36). Locals of the Old Town look at the pre-war status of Mosul as a reference point for what post-war Mosul *should* be to battle the image of what it *could* be, given the rapid change caused by war. This paper presented documentation of the impact of the changing cultural layers in the Old Town on the tangible and intangible aspects of its culture. In this process, it became clear that the change caused by war functions on multiple levels, including the way businesses are run, the patterns of movements in spaces, and the network of meanings attached to each space. Such an exploration provided a link between the cultural practices, social interactions, local communities, and architectural elements, illustrated below in Fig. 17.

This paper presents valuable insight into the impact of war on the tangible and intangible aspects of culture in Mosul's Old Town. The displacement of locals and the consequent abandonment of historic areas have significant meaning for the town's image, identity, symbology, and crafts. Communities play a crucial role in safeguarding, reproducing, and identifying spaces and acts of cultural heritage, and their displacement from historic places raises an urgent matter of documenting and recording the change in post-war settings to provide an archive that will help restore these connections. Such documentation is missing from the top-down approaches taken by the central government and international orgnisations, who take a more canned approach to reconstruction and approaching culturally rich historic centres (see (Dumper & Larkin, 2012; Isakhan & Meskell, 2019; Šárka, 2008) for national and international examples on the downsides of international top-down approaches). While Mosul is lacking comprehensive reconstruction documents issued by the central government (except for the Initial Planning Framework (UNHabitat, 2019), which has not been followed), the locals are demonstrating agency and a more successful bottom-up approach to reconstruct the spaces that formed their everyday lives.

The paper highlighted the importance of understanding the locals' needs and the significance of everyday life in post-war settings. With the use of affect and actor-network theories, we discovered that not only are there relationships between spaces, people, and interactions, they are all affective, and each actor in the network holds agency of its own. This makes the (post-war) city a hub for multiple smaller hubs of interactions and architecture, with each of the smaller hubs connecting to each other through an expansive affective network of relationships that cannot be seen through a study on only the tangible front of cities, a network that governs everyday life building on the locals' needs and memories. Emotional and financial factors may govern what the locals perceive as valuable, and it is essential to focus on these factors to understand

[13] It is worth noting that the owner of this grocery shop switched from his initial function of farming supplies in 2007.

[14] Also observed when a person passed by the Arabian dress shop, and the interviewee says "His father used to sell Arabic dresses, and he did too, then he changed to sell kitchen equipment." [BA, IN, 03].

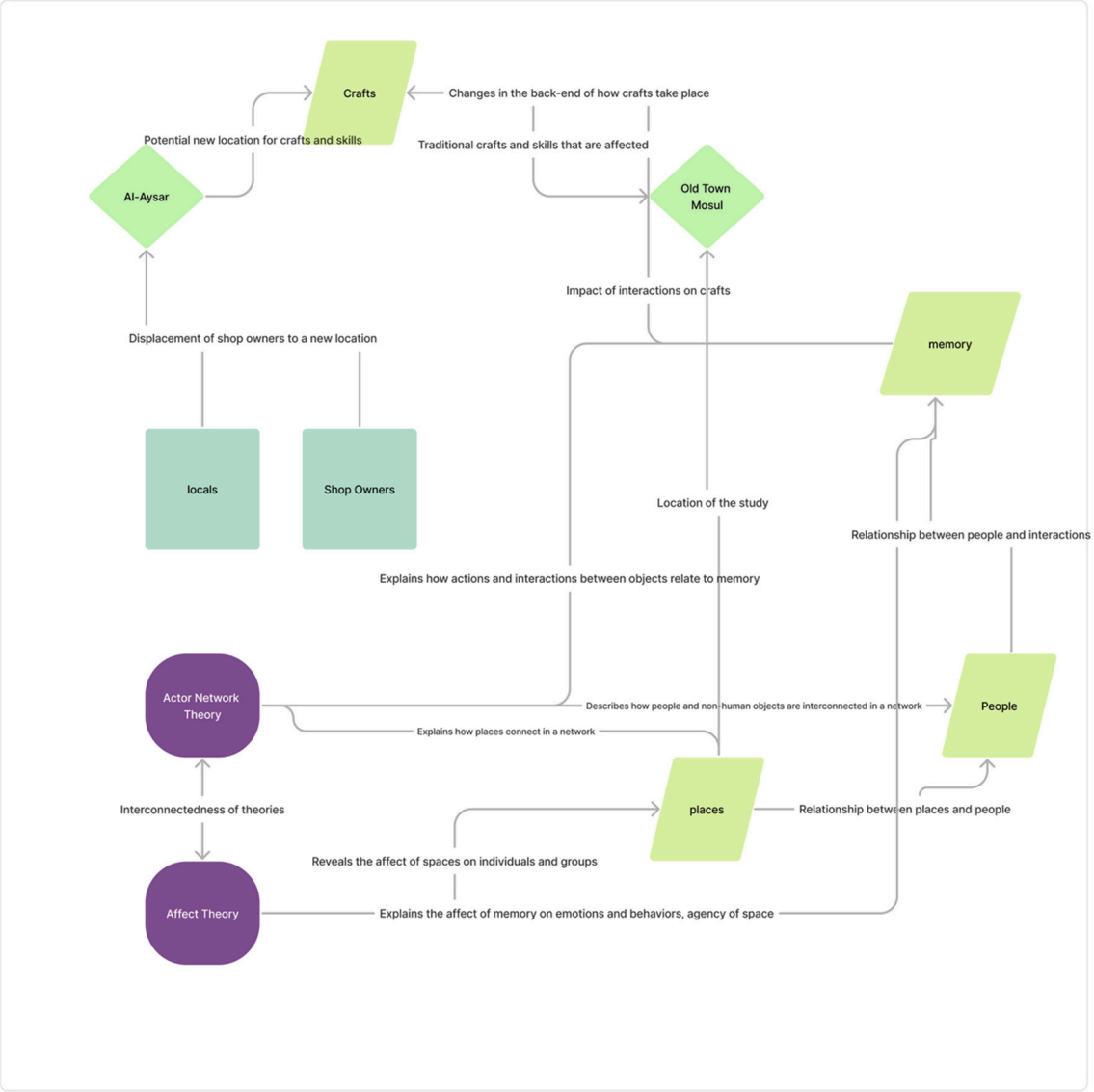

Fig. 16. A diagram explaining the theoretical framework and the connections between spaces, people, and interactions.

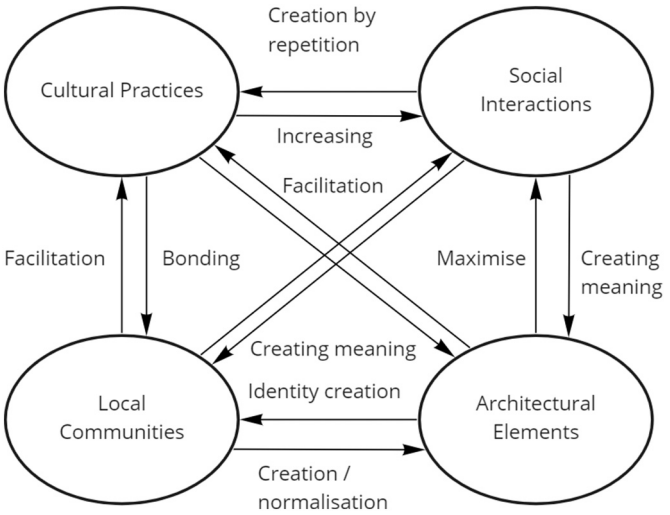

Fig. 17. The dynamic between cultural practices, social interactions, local communities and architectural elements.

patterns of change. The research identifies two main patterns behind the relocation, including natural patterns of development and patterns expedited by the war. It is crucial to differentiate between patterns caused by war and those that were inevitable to address steps in advancements in the Old Town.

The findings have significant implications for professionals and policymakers in understanding the impact of war on cultural heritage. The destruction of the built environment blurs the lines between patterns of displacement, causing confusion among decision-makers and researchers. Understanding the locals' needs and everyday life in post-war settings can help shift the focus from historic monuments to the locals, facilitating the reconciliation process and revitalizing historic monuments.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Yousif Al-Daffaie: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Data Collection. Visualisation, Investigation.

Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Investigation.

Declaration of competing interest

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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