

**Farwell ʔL-'ANBARIYIN****Aliaa El-Dardiry<sup>1</sup>, Ahmed El Antably<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup> Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport**Abstract**

Would the disappearance of one's building influence his own daydreams, experience, and sense of belonging? Would this person remember it? Would these memories preserve the demolished building? This paper explores people's memories and perceptions upon the demolition of a historical building, and their effect on the produced space and sense of belonging. It documents people's narratives as a way of conserving the building through their memories. The paper focuses on *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin*, a market that dates to the Fatimid period and represents a significant Mamluk architectural style. Its location is at *ʔl-Mu'iz* Street, near *ʔl-Azhar* Street, *ʔl-jmmāliyyha* district, Cairo. However, nowadays, it is just a ruin with a fence and street vendors next to it, after its demolition in February 2019. The study utilizes qualitative methodology through site visits, observations, and random semi-structured interviews with people in *ʔl-Mu'iz* Street. The collected data is thematically analyzed. The results reveal the diversity of memories and their dependence upon the level of interaction with *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin*. The ability of people's memories to conserve, not only the tangible heritage, building's architectural design and materials, but also the spatial experience, events, and social activities. Furthermore, memories show people's sense of belonging and place attachment, especially to those who used to work there, even after the building's demolition. During site visits, it is remarkable to observe the ability of previous shop owners and workers to conserve their memories about *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin* by using simple elements. Finally, the paper shows the importance of using memories as a way to conserve *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin* even after its demolition.

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**Keywords***Memories; Documentaion; Post demolition; Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin***1. Introduction**

The scope of the paper is the lost tangible heritage and the daydreamers who are bound to them. It explores memories of lost buildings, as well as their ability to document and relive that building one more time. The paper focuses on *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin* for several reasons: its location, historical background, architectural significance, and most importantly, for its recent demolition that had an echo on social media and public debates. Through using narrative writing, the paper is exploring the memories of *Wikālīī ʔl-'Anbariyin's* vendors and shop owners, who have experienced it. It explores the influence of the demolition on the everyday life of its dwellers and the relationship between memories and spaces produced post the demolition. This research follows a qualitative methodology, in which it depends on on-site observations and semi-structured interviews. Then through thematic analysis, the data is analyzed.

The paper consists of five sections. The first section illustrates the concepts of memories, placelessness, and the role of memories in reliving lost tangible heritage. The second section is an overview of *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin*, its historical background, and architectural significance. The third section, entitled "Research methods," focuses on the qualitative methodology. The fourth section, "Daydreamers of ʿal-'Anbariyin," is about the analyzed data from the memories of the interviewees and site observation. It includes three subsections: toponymia, time, and event, as well as the right to be haunted by memories. "Conclusion" is the fifth and last section. It discusses the outcomes.

## 2. Reliving Lost Tangible Heritage

According to UNESCO, tangible heritage is the material significant elements, such as monuments, of the built environment (Hassan, 2014). However, heritage is not just a physical artifact; it is a cultural process, which people associate with everyday life (Harvey, 2001). They are important, not only because of their architecture and past events but also because of their connectivity with ordinary people's lives (Lowenthal, 1979). This connectivity and association help in the formation of a bond between buildings and their people, which is called place attachment (Lewicka, 2008). This attachment encourages people to begin making memories and feel the intimacy about that building. Memories are connected to our senses. With the help of these senses, the mind starts creating stories that could easily illustrate its experiences, and enable them to persist in life (Archibald, 1999). The demolition of the building announces the end of the building's life (Thomsen, et al., 2011). Under this circumstance, in which the building is lost, placelessness, as Relph has described it, occurs (Relph, 1976). It is when people lose their sense of place (Sumaiyah, 2013). Despite the lost buildings, memories have their role in reviving them and the ability of these memories and their documentation to sustain those lost buildings (Kenneth, 1990).

## 3. Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin: overview

The location of *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin* is in a *ʿal-Mu'iz* Street, near *ʿal-Azhar* Street, *ʿal-jmmāliyyha* district, Cairo (Figures 1 and 2). It has its historical background and architectural style (Figure 3).

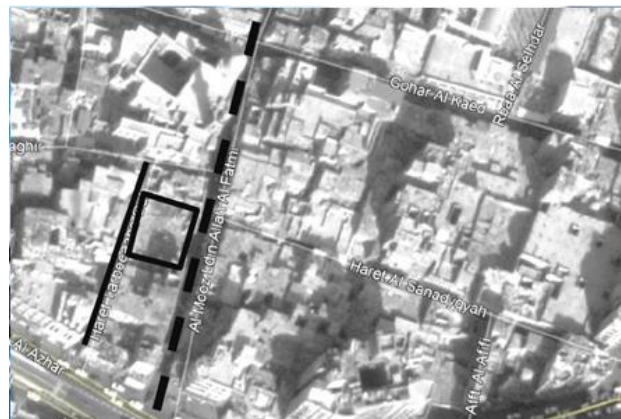


Figure 1. Location of *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin*. The black rectangle indicates *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin*. The black dashed line indicates *ʿal-Mu'iz* Street. The black continuous line indicates *Harit Tarbi'at Ūwf*. (Source: Google Earth Pro. (October 12, 2018)).



Figure 2. Location of *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin*. The white dashed rectangle indicates *Wikālīī ʿal-'Anbariyin* façade and its shops which overlook *ʿal-Mu'iz* Street. The white dashed line indicates the attached building. (Source: <https://www.elanbarienagency.com/>)

The building used to be *al-M'aūnah* prison in the Fatimid period (Al-Malty, 2002). Sultan *Qalāwun*, during the Mamluk period, demolished the prison and constructed "*qaysariyat al'anbr*": a market for amber (*al-Maqrīzī*, 1441). Subsequently, according to the National Archives (National Archives, 1864), *Wikālīṭ al-'Anbariyin* had passed by two phases. In the first phase, before 1810, Farahat al-Hinawy owned and reconstructed it to include a *Wikālah* (market), a small *Khan* (motel), and *Hawanit* (shops). Then in 1855, a new owner *Y'aqūb Byk Ṣabry*, one of the assistants of *Muḥammad 'Aly Baṣṣā* (*Mubarak*, 1889), combined the previous functions to make a big *Wikālah* (market), in which it includes several shops, for selling textiles and perfumes, and rooms for accommodation above them. It was a four-story building, with a courtyard in its middle and attached to two buildings. To access the building, people used the main entrances that overlooked *al-Mu'iz* Street, as well as, from the stairs of the attached buildings. A shop owner said that *Wikālīṭ al-'Anbariyin* used to be the keystone, in which it connected two existing buildings, through being in the middle. Therefore, despite moving from one building to another through *al-Mu'iz* Street, workers, and visitors, through the connected passway that surrounded the courtyard, could move easily away from noise and crowdedness of the street. Although in 2005, fire affected the building, its interior (Figure 4), and its façade (Figure 5), shops continued to function, as well as storage areas (Figure 6).



Figure 3. The façade of *Wikālīṭ al-'Anbariyin*. (Source: Al-Ahram online article, 2016 <http://www.ahram.org/NewsQ/565296.aspx>)



Figure 4. Deterioration of *Wikālīṭ al-'Anbariyin's* interior. (Source: Dardasha Tareq, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZtLLsrwJU8>) 2015



Figure 5. Deterioration in the elevation of *Wikālīṭ al-'Anbariyin*. (Source: Dardasha Tareq, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZtLLsrwJU8>)



Figure 6. Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin in 2015.

The building was demolished in February 2019 (Al-Aref, 2019) (Figure 7). Currently, a three meters high corrugated sheet fence surrounds the ruins of the building, cutting the threads of attachment to the space, in which the building used to exist (Figure 8).



Figure 7. The façade of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*. (Source: *Al-Ahram* online article, 2016 <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/565296.aspx>)



Figure 8. The black continuous line indicates the fence. The black dashed line indicates one of the attached buildings. The black dotted line indicates the ruins. (Source: *Al-Mesryoon*, 2019. <https://almesryoon.com/story/1235663/>)

#### 4. Research Methods

This paper uses site-based observations and semi-structured interviews with users of the site, to gather memories about *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*. Site visits and interviews took place on several random days in April and May 2019. The randomly conducted interviews ranged between ten minutes to thirty minutes, focusing on the memories and daydreams of people who once experienced, worked or visited *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*. The number of interviewees was nine from the workers and shop owners in the building and its surroundings (Figure 9). Despite the inability of four interviewees to share their memories, because they were new vendors and had not experienced the building well, the other interviewees were able to share theirs. At first, the interviewees seemed anxious and did not want to say anything about *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*. Despite earlier anxiety, they started sharing their stories. Some of the interviewees felt the need to show their photos of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, although they did not have them. Another one took a paper and a pen to draw a plan of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, to illustrate how it used to look like, as well as,

the names of their owners. Another one recommended me to watch a video about the building on YouTube. The last one, to explain the courtyard of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, used the furniture in his shop to form the shape of the courtyard. Later, the interviews were thematically analysed.



Figure 9. The location of the interviewees, in the surrounding of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*.  
 (Source: Google Earth Pro. (October 12, 2018). *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, Cairo. 30° 02'49.02" N, 31° 15'36.42" E, Eye alt 100m. DigitalGlobe 2019. <http://www.earth.google.com> [May 7, 2012])

## 5. Daydreamers of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*

Inspired by Gaston Bachelard and Michel De Certeau, this section is about the interviewees' memories of the building. It includes three sub-sections. "Topophilia" is the first sub-section, which is concerned with the narratives and memories of the interviewees regarding the tangible and intangible essence of the building. "Time and event" is the second sub-section. It is about events that interviewees still remember. The last sub-section, "the right to be haunted by memories", is about memories and their relationship to the produced space after the building's demolition.

### 5.1. Topophilia

Through the lens of Bachelard's "the house of the cosmic root" and "the house of l' Antiquaire" (Bachelard, 1969), I could reflect on interviewees' narratives about *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, their own home, as well as, their daydreams. Some of these interviewees could not remember the full details of *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*, due to their short-time experience. One of the interviewees mentioned: "I was new. I just used the building for storing." It may also be due to their lack of experience. Another interviewee admitted: "Unfortunately, I did not enter it. I could just remember its façade, as I used to pass by it." I could yet find interviewees who experienced the building. They were able to tell *Wikālīṯ al-'Anbariyin*'s story. They, as Edmund Husserl argues, experienced it in their "transcendental conscious life" (Husserl, 2003). This consciousness appeared in one of the interviewees' talk: "I could remember the building itself and the people who used to work there as one family. It used to have a spirit that would never be repeated one more time". A shop owner added: "I had worked there for twenty-five years. We used to have our workshop place for crafts. All the workers are still my friends." A worker, who used to work there for twenty years, could illustrate the architectural details, such as the courtyard, the crypt, the wooden door, the wooden handrail, the vaulted shops. In addition to that, he mentioned the names of the workers and shop owners. He illustrated the influence of the crypt on his dreams; for him, it is an ambiguous place (Figure 10). He described his feeling of comfort when he used to sit in the courtyard and look at the sky. Another interviewee expressed his feeling of being at home, as he used to have his own exhibition room, in which he could do anything freely.

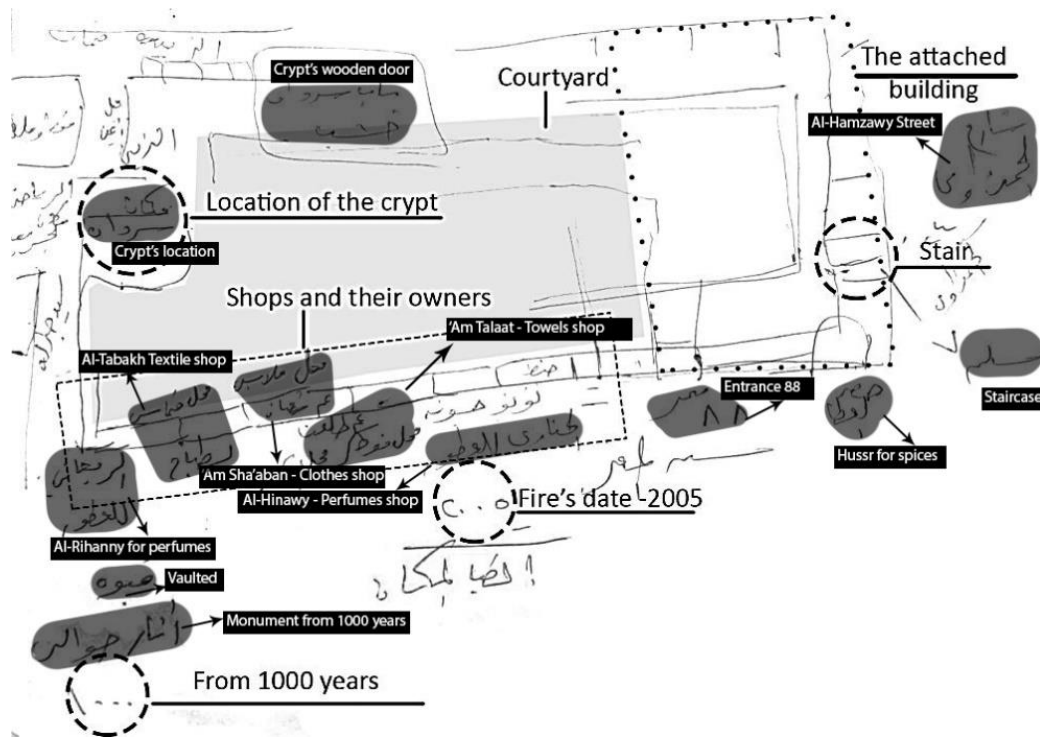


Figure 10. Interviewee's drawing of *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin*'s plan. It shows the names of shop owners, the crypt's location, the fire's date (2005), the building's history (1000 years), the courtyard, and other architectural elements.

For another interviewee, the essence of *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin* is the courtyard. He used his shop furniture to explain its rectangular shape. He mentioned the enclosure of the courtyard, which provided him with a sense of intimacy and privacy. He added that this inner courtyard influenced communication and connectivity between the workers, where a worker could call the other. The courtyard was their focal point and gathering space for eating and other activities. It was their own lived space. The courtyard also connected *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin* to the other attached buildings. Therefore, workers and visitors could easily access *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin* and move freely between the three buildings (Figures 11 and 12).



Figure 11. The black continuous line indicates the location of *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin*.

The white rectangles indicate the attached existing buildings.

(Source: Google Earth Pro. (October 12, 2018). *Wikālī al-'Anbariyin*, Cairo. 30° 02'49.02" N, 31° 15'36.42" E, Eye alt 100m. DigitalGlobe 2019. <http://www.earth.google.com> [May 7,2012])

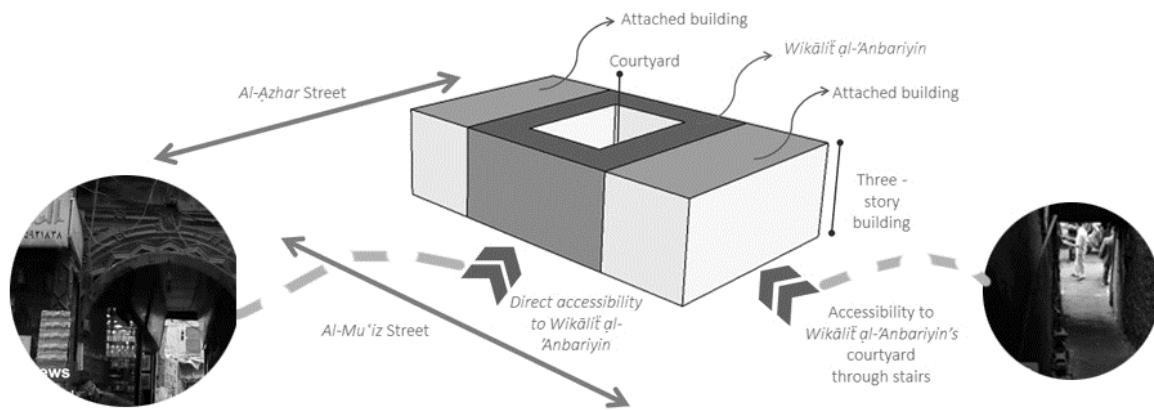


Figure 12. A sketch that shows the attached buildings to *Wikāliṯ al-'Anbariyin* and its courtyard

One of the interviewees talked about the functions inside *Wikāliṯ al-'Anbariyin* and recommended a video to watch on YouTube, to understand more. He said that the building used to have several functions, besides the shops, such as an exhibition, storage spaces, and residential rooms. It was a multi-functional space that embraced the workers. They could sell, exhibit, and store their goods in one building. Despite its authenticity, shop owners and workers were able to customize and invent in their shops. To satisfy their needs for organizing their goods, they used wooden or glassed shelves, chairs, and desks, which suited their shops (Figure 13).

Some of the interviewees reached the field of the immemorial. They took much time to imagine and express the odor of *Wikāliṯ al-'Anbariyin*, and the texture of its wood and stone, "The texture of the stone had added to the authenticity of the building," "there were special wooden ceiling, as well as, old textured wooden handrail." Another one mentioned the pleasant fragrance that used to spread in the building.



Figure 13. Interior of a shop, on the ground floor of *Wikāliṯ al-'Anbariyin*, overlooks *al-Mu'iz* Street. (Source: DMC video, 2018. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URjQ\\_wbE6TU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URjQ_wbE6TU))

## 5.2. Time and Events

Through phenomenological temporality, Husserl could be able to study the essence of things and individuals (Young Kim, 2016). I focus on the retentional aspect of *Präsenzzeit* (Gallagher, 2013). The essence of the retentional aspect is the intentional sense's preservation of the experienced object, even after it has vanished in the past (Gallagher, 2013). This appears in the interviewee's narratives about *Wikāliṯ al-'Anbariyin's* past events, which they have witnessed and experienced. These past events are still embedded in their conscience, and they can recall them. Some of these past events are pleasant to remember. One of the interviewees remembered the first day of working in the building, as well as, the communal days. Other past painful events could not be forgotten. A shop owner recalled: "I had an exhibition inside the building. It got burnt that day in 2005. Its image is still in my mind. I tried to forget, but I could not". Another one said: "I have witnessed all the events, the fire, and the demolition. These images are still embedded in my mind".

### 5.3. The Right to Be Haunted by Memories

The demolition of the building was followed by the emergence of the three-meter corrugated sheet fence (Figure 14), that gazes from hence to thence (Morgenstern, 1905), leading to the formation of an abstract space. This abstract space is not just a space, but also can disrupt some social relations (Lefebvre, 1991). However, against the existence of the fence, vendors are adapting and producing their spaces. This takes place through negotiating the fence. Instead of it being a border, they use it as a partition, and with the help of light structures, they could show their goods. Memories have haunted the space, making it habitable (De Certeau, 2011). This affects the social codes, in which people practice in that space. From the field observation and the interviews, some of the vendors, who used to work in *Wikālīī al-'Anbariyin*, still have the desire, the sense of belonging, and the right to continue working in the same place. One of these vendors said, "I have been working here, pointing at the space of the building, since I was young. Even after the demolition, I put my goods on these shelves, because I feel that it is my own space" (Figure 15 and 16). One of the vendors used the same sign of his demolished shop (Figures 17 and 18). Another one is still putting *Wikālīī al-'Anbariyin's* address on his business card that he gave during the interview.

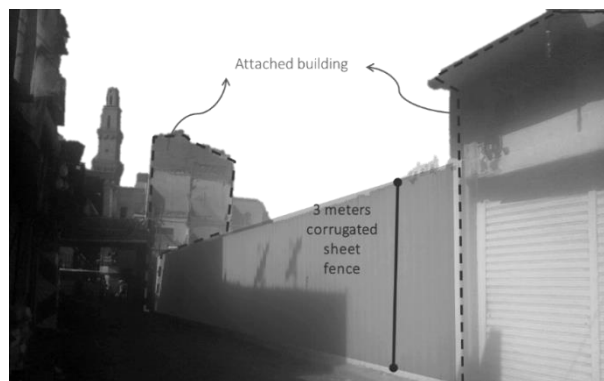


Figure 14. The fence and the adjacent buildings



Figure 15. Produced spaces. The white dashed line indicates the produced space. The continuous white line indicates the fence.



Figure 16. Vendor's space





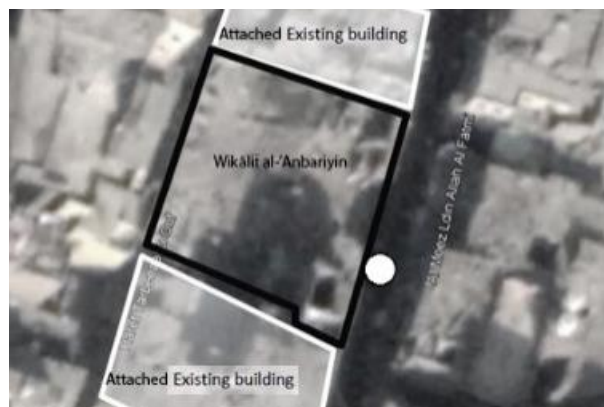
Location of the image: towards Harit Tarbi'at Üwf from al-Mu'iz Street.



Figure 17. The white dashed rectangle indicates a shop that has its sign, before Wikāliī al-'Anbariyin demolition. Source: Al-Ahram online article, 2016



Figure 18. The white dashed rectangle indicates the same shop with the same sign, after Wikāliī al-'Anbariyin demolition.



Location of the image: al-Mu'iz Street.

The absence of *Wikāliī al-'Anbariyin* influenced vendors' memories and everyday life by several means. Firstly, it broke the connectivity between the adjacent buildings on both sides. They were connected visually so that the

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passerby would see their exterior facades as one façade. According to an interviewee, the buildings were internally connected, and workers and visitors could freely move from one building to another through the stairs of the two existing buildings and passageways surrounding the courtyard of *Wikāliī ʿal-ʿAnbariyin*. For him, *Wikāliī ʿal-ʿAnbariyin* was like the keystone. With its demolition, the connectivity breaks down. This leads to the use of a movable ladder to reach the first floor of one of the attached buildings. (Figure 19 shows one of the attached buildings. The black dashed line is one of the existing buildings. The white circle marks the path that used to connect the two buildings. The white dashed line shows the ladder. The white continuous line indicates the fence.) Furthermore, instead of the connection provided by *Wikāliī ʿal-ʿAnbariyin* between the two attached buildings, vendors have to use *al-Muʿiz* Street.



Figure 19 One of the attached buildings.



Location of the image: towards *Harit Tarbiʿat Uwf* from *al-Muʿiz* Street.

Secondly, the absence of the courtyard impacts the vendors' private world. Instead of the centralized gathering focal point, in which different activities take place, linearity becomes the norm. Vendors align their goods with the fence. (Figure 20 shows The alignment of shops with the fence. The continuous black line indicates the fence. The white dashed line indicates the space which is occupied by the vendors sitting in *al-Muʿiz* Street and using the fence and light structures in showing their goods.) *al-Muʿiz* Street becomes their gathering point, where vendors gather and commune. There is no privacy, as mentioned by one of the vendors. The presence of vendors in the street influences the spatial experience and perception of walkers. One of the vendors declared: "Something changed, the building used to provide a sense of intimacy."



Figure 20. The alignment of shops with the fence.



Location of the image: al-Mu'iz Street.

Finally, *Wikālii al-'Anbariyin's* embracement of a multiplicity of functions no longer exists. Nowadays, some of the vendors leave their goods or their light structure unattended in the street. Others have to carry and reorganize their goods every day, as they could not leave their goods and they have to store them in another place (Figure 21 shows Vendors storing the goods. The black continuous line indicates the fence, in which vendors use it as a partition. The black dashed line indicates the storage of the vendors, overlooking *al-Mu'iz* Street.). Despite the absence of *Wikālii al-'Anbariyin*, as well as, the existence of the fence as a new border, the vendors have their spatial language. Every vendor knows his territory. (Figure 22 shows the Territoriality. The black continuous line indicates the fence. The white dashed line indicates the vendors' boundaries). They could define their boundaries, by using their light structures. Even if the vendors remove their goods and shelves, their own space is still identified. One of the vendors mentions: "Most vendors here used to work in the building. Even the new one, we treat each other as one family".



Figure 21. Vendors storing the goods.



Figure 22. Territoriality.



Location of the image: al-Mu'iz Street.

## 6. Conclusion

The objective of the paper is to explore people's memories of a demolished building and their ability to document and conserve it. Moreover, it explores the role of these memories in the produced space after the building's demolition. I have chosen *Wikāliī al-'Anbariyin*, for its architectural authenticity, historical significance, as well as its role in ordinary people's everyday life. From the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews, I deduce several points. Firstly, people, who self-experience the building, memorize it, and become attached to it. This appears in the interviewees' detailed narratives, as well as their drawings. Secondly, the building's architectural design influences people's memories, experiences, and dreams. This point is expressed in the influence of the crypt, as well as the courtyard, on the interviewees. Finally, even after the building was lost, people can recall the events that they witnessed in that building. This takes place in the interviewees' memories of the building's significant events. Furthermore, it shows the ability of memories to express and document a demolished building.

After the *Wikāliī al-'Anbariyin's* demolition, however, the existence of the fence, that represents the power, social spaces have been produced by vendors, in which some of them used to work. This is because, from the interviews, they have the desire, sense of belonging, as well as the feeling of having the right to shape their own city. The absence of the building impacts the workers' lives. It changed from an enclosure, centralised and private gathering space, to a public street space aligned with the existing fence. Despite this, vendors can organize their produced space and define their boundaries. Correspondingly, from the interviews and site observation, memories have their influence on the produced space. This could be seen, through the signs that the vendors use, in addition to vendors' spatial experience and way of communication.

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