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Built heritage or lost nostalgia: Israeli fans and the conservation of sports venues

Orr Levental
Physical Education School, Ohalo College, Qazrin, Israel

ABSTRACT
Public campaigns aimed at preventing the demolition of sports venues represent a recent trend to recognise them as legitimate expressions of local sports culture. This article focuses on analysing what fans feel about these sports venues and the need to preserve them. Its main goal is to examine this growing phenomenon, which could affect modern preservation trends and the built heritage of sports. Focusing on the Israeli context, the article includes qualitative analysis of fans’ internet feedback expressing their attitudes towards preservation of sports facilities compared to preserving buildings associated with other cultural pursuits. It also features a series of interviews with fans and analysis of articles published in sports sections of newspapers, journals and sports blogs. The qualitative analysis shows that fans attribute five heritage values to sports venues as well as assign them historical community importance, and they do so consciously but primarily unconsciously. Thus, the primary obstacle to the decision to preserve sports venues is not the degree of emotional significance of these places for fans. Rather it is the absence of broad social recognition of the heritage of sports in Israel or of the possible advantages these buildings offer as a tangible expression of this heritage.

KEYWORDS Israel; Geosport; fans; sports venue; stadiums

The Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel does not classify structures according to their functional use or disciplinary categorisation. Instead, it places emphasis on the social and cultural values of buildings. For instance, in referring to the type of structure worthy of preservation the council refers to ‘buildings with local significance’ and defines them as ‘part of the history of the community . . . part of its way of life and rooted in the historical and experiential memory of those who live there.’ Thus, the cultural value of a building does not depend upon the aesthetic appeal of its architecture. Rather, it emerges and assumes its shape mainly through the reciprocal interactions between the building and the local community. And indeed, around the world, and recently in Israel as well, a social perspective is awakening according to which it is both proper and legitimate to preserve
functional structures that reflect the development of popular modern culture, of which sports in general and competitive sports in particular

Accordingly, the public campaigns to preserve or prevent the demolition of the Ussishkin Arena in Tel Aviv and HaMakhtesh Stadium in Givatayim (2005–7, 2008–11) were led by fans of local sports teams based upon the cultural value of these structures and because they constitute a tangible expression of the municipal sports heritage. This latest trend of Israeli fans activism towards conservation of sports places are reshaping the local cultural heritage of sports. The purpose of this article is to examine this three-way relationship between people, places and culture and to show how the feelings and actions of sports fans towards places that have emotional significance for them finds expression in a broad cultural perspective. The article is based on qualitative research that examines sports fans’ attitudes regarding preserving sports venues as a means of preserving the heritage of sports in Israel.

Theoretical background: sports venues’ functionality, significance and culture

The modern human environment is studded with a variety of sites and structures useful to everyday life. Most of these sites have no particular significance beyond their value to those who use them and most are not etched in the municipal or national collective memory. Objects, structures and sites scattered throughout the public sphere acquire a vague degree of ‘historical’ meaning only when there is some sort of personal, community or national interest in commemorating them and their story. That is to say, the human need to assign historical meaning is achieved by assigning specific spatial significance to particular sites. This need thus constitutes a criterion for distinguishing between different past events and the unique cultural significance of each one of them. According to Graham et al. the past refers to all events that occurred, history is the focus on an assortment of selected significant events, and heritage constitutes the present perspective on the past and on the future as a consequence of the past. The demarcation line between history and heritage is often blurred due to the fact that both of these terms are driven by subjective observation. Moreover, even collective identity, while seemingly singular, is characterised by perceived conceptual differences, for it has the power to represent a different symbolism for every individual who identifies with it. Heritage and heritage sites are loaded with cultural significance only when there is a current need for it. In other words, the ‘past’ – and hence the future – are shaped according to the present.

It can be argued that the natural need of people to identify with inherited values and to dwell on nostalgia has intensified as a result of the rapid changes in modern life. Also, as Hollinshead claims, people who are
depressed or subject to an external threat – whether tangible or not – tend to rewrite history and create myths accordingly. For this reason, the separation between history based on fact and emotionally charged heritage is the result of political activity and exigencies.\(^4\) In light of this, the demand to preserve a particular sports structure signifies the desire for a symbolic representation in a particular place.\(^5\) There are several reasons that people feel a need to confer recognition upon and preserve particular sites. One is the unique nature of works of art and monuments. Another is that the buildings and land at the site have additional uses. Finally, in the current context, these sites serve to reinforce how individuals, the community, the nation or the human race connect to their past and their common heritage. In Israel heritage is an inseparable part of the landscape and finds expression in diverse structures and sites, some of which also serve as tourist sites. Examples include historical/religious sites such as the Western Wall and Masada, museums such as the Reut Museum and the Tel Hai Yard and more. Among other reasons, preserving the national heritage and the myth of establishing the state is considered to be an important national project.\(^6\)

During the early decades of statehood, sport gained major importance as an instrument for reinforcing national identity, and primarily as a propaganda tool in the international arena.\(^7\) Just as at the end of the 19th century sport served to reinforce the collective national identity and also nationalism in Germany (Turnen) and in the Czech region of Austria-Hungary (Sokol),\(^8\) after statehood the leaders of the young Israeli nation used sport to exhibit the markings of sovereignty.\(^9\) By competing in the international arena, Israel’s national football team made a major contribution to strengthening ties with Diaspora Jewry, reinforcing national pride and identification and shaping the image of the new Jew. This was true at the national team’s first football game in 1948, around four months after independence was declared, as part of friendly competitions in the United States,\(^10\) and particularly during its double match against the Soviet team in July 1956.\(^11\)

Until the commercialisation of the 1980s and 1990s,\(^12\) local sport was also highly influenced by politics and marked by a close association between political camps and sports associations. For example, the Hapoel organisation represented the Histadrut, Beitar represented the Revisionist party and Elitsur represented religious Zionism.\(^13\) These ideological/political differences, alongside the decidedly territorial nature of sport in general and of football in particular,\(^14\) led to building separate fields for each association within the same city. In Haifa, for example, the local Hapoel team hosted its games at the Kiryat Haim stadium, while the Maccabi team used the stadium in Kiryat Eliezer. In Jerusalem, the Hapoel team played at the Katamon field, while Beitar played at the YMCA. And in Tel Aviv, the Hapoel team played at Bloomfield Stadium and Maccabi at the Maccabiah stadium.\(^15\)
Sport facilities have an impact on urban economy and development. In addition, these facilities have major symbolic significance for fans of the local teams and for the local community. This is evident, for example, in the prevalent use of the emotionally charged term ‘home’ in numerous contexts in sport: home field, home referees, home games and the like. The word ‘home’ is accompanied by narratives that convey the notion of stability and continuation. Due to the relationship between sport and its venue, modern processes in the world of sport – including the shift of large sports facilities away from urban centres and towards the periphery – have to a large extent changed the social/community nature of sport.

In response, sport and the original facilities that served it have become fertile ground for fan nostalgia. In effect, this nostalgia is a selective collective memory comprising historical elements that create a utopic sports landscape that no longer exists in the present. One example of this can be seen in the architectural trend in the United States towards building new sports facilities designed according to past models of stadiums built in the early 20th century (primarily in baseball, which is identified with US leisure culture) with the goal of producing a sports product that can also serve nostalgic and touristic purposes.

Socialisation processes such as these that take place in cities are essential for creating and rebuilding memories and identity. These processes transpire in public spaces and are directly related to the collective social memory and from there lead to the creation of modern identity. In this context a sports facility is a public place both symbolically and functionally. Moreover, large sports structures have several advantages over other public sites that unify them and make them significant to the local population, including for example, their unique architecture, their spatial permanence and the emotional nature of the activity that takes place in them. In discussing the role of sports facilities, Giulianotti used the term ‘topophilia’ (people’s deep affection towards particular places) to describe the link between football fans and their home field. This link is achieved by controlling and enhancing the fans’ feelings, thus creating both symbolic and tangible connections. In addition, the stadium is the place where the individual becomes part of a large social group with shared goals, experiences and memories that are dependent upon a particular place and cannot take place without it. Accordingly Gaffney contends that every stadium in every city is strongly connected to the local community and contains social meanings and functional roles by virtue of being a symbol of the local culture.

During the past decade, the globalisation of sports has accelerated. One trend includes the growth in the number of television channels dedicated to sports, the growing number of games broadcast live in Israel and abroad, the rising popularity of the internet, the increase in sports information, and the accessibility and immediacy provided by smartphones. All of these have enabled Toto (the Israel Sports Betting Board), which is the primary funder
of sports infrastructures in Israel, to offer a variety of new betting games and to increase its revenues by tens and even hundreds of millions of shekels annually. The most successful of these is Toto Winner, which was first introduced in 2002.

Most of the large stadiums in Israel were built in the 1950s and 1960s. The rapid increase in Toto revenues in the current decade has led to a wave of construction of new stadiums, among them HaMoshava Stadium in Petah Tikva, the Netanya Municipal Stadium, the Sammy Ofer Stadium in Haifa, the Winner Stadium in Beersheba, the Toto Stadium in Acre and others. During this same period, many old stadiums have been sold, abandoned or demolished for a wide variety of reasons. These included the superior functionality of the new facilities, the sharp rise in real estate values in Israel and particularly in the city centres, urban development considerations and more.

In the cases of the Sar-Tov (HaKufsa) Stadium in Netanya (built in 1943 and abandoned in 2012), the Kiryat Eliezer Stadium (1955–2014) and the HaUrva Stadium (1967–2010), the majority of the local fans were pleased with the move to the new facility, as were the residents of the neighbourhoods adjacent to these structures, who were happy to get rid of what they considered to be a noisy and dirty nuisance. In contrast, in other cases (such as the HaMakhtesh Stadium and the Ussishkin Arena) communities of fans undertook wide-ranging public campaigns to prevent these facilities from being abandoned and demolished. This was not only for reasons tied to sports or logistics but rather mainly due to the cultural and community significance of these buildings to the community and its residents.

Sports media personalities and football fans refer to many sports facilities in Israel as ‘legendary’ in order to underscore their historical and symbolic importance. Two large protests by fans – over the HaMakhtesh Stadium and the Ussishkin Arena – also took direct action towards having these buildings acknowledged and declared as worthy of preservation. These attempts at preservation, though they ultimately failed, were part of a pioneering public discourse about the role of sports culture in the cultural history of Israel and the recognition of sports venues as part of the built cultural heritage.

Demolition of the Herzliya Hebrew Gymnasium in Tel Aviv in 1959 to make way for building the Shalom Tower and the resultant public discourse set in motion a process towards recognising the importance of preserving heritage sites in Israel. The height of this process came in 1984 with the establishment of the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel. The desire to preserve historical and architectural cultural values for the sake of generating local and national stability and continuity necessitated setting criteria by which to measure the cultural value of each building and site. The Council defined the following five criteria: a) sites with national importance; b) buildings with local importance; c) sites that
typically exemplify the culture of a particular society during a particular period; d) a building or group of buildings that exemplifies building culture, building technology and building materials; e) the residence of a famous individual who contributed to the development of the community (‘About Conservation, website of the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel’).

In general, it is difficult to tie popular culture and sport to narratives and to historical and national events. Nonetheless, direct examination indicates that a number of sports venues are likely to meet one or more of these conservation criteria. For example, the Ramat Gan Stadium that was built in 1950 meets four criteria:

- It is the site of the third Maccabiah Games and the first to be held after statehood, and thus has national importance.
- It is part of the local history of Ramat Gan and a major factor in its transition from a local council to a city.\(^\text{28}\)
- It marks the beginning of a wave of stadium building in Israel in the 1950s and serves as an example of the culture of a particular society at a particular time.
- The size of this facility, the speed with which it was built and its location on the flooded sediment of the Yarkon flood plain\(^\text{29}\) exemplify building culture and building technology. Moreover, the Ramat Gan Stadium, like other veteran sports stadiums in Israel, may also be consistent with the seven values defined by Robles as generating a moral imperative to preserve heritage: typology (adapting the building to a changing environment); structure (materials and construction); functionality (historical and contemporary use); aesthetics; architecture; history; and symbolism.\(^\text{30}\)

The conservation of cultural heritage has won widespread and diverse recognition through a variety of international laws, treaties and agreements. Yet nonetheless, there are no clear global guidelines regarding the necessity for conservation in specific cases. In practice, the authority to declare that a particular place is worthy of conservation is in the hands of the conservation institutions in each country and their regional branches based on the recommendations and decisions of the local authorities. Preference given to choosing particular structures to be preserved is essentially selective, and it is more common to find places with community, religious or military significance on conservation lists than those related to modern secular culture.\(^\text{31}\)

Yet according to Pfleegor et al.,\(^\text{32}\) though the perception of a sports facility as a heritage site worthy of conservation is not prevalent in modern society, local and national fans consider these buildings as important heritage sites.

Disregarding sports buildings as worthy of conservation is not unique to Israel. In Sweden, for example, the football stadium in Gothenburg was
demolished in 2007 because it did not appear on the list of historical sites in the district. This was despite its being one of Sweden’s largest and oldest sports structures (built in 1913) and loaded with tradition. Indeed, the request to include it on the list received broad support from the municipality and local football teams. In contrast, various conservations organisations around the world, such as the National Registrar of Historic Places in the US, the National Heritage List in Australia and the Register of Historic Places in New Zealand, included stadiums, colosseums, running tracks and golf courses as sites with historical significance for cultural heritage.

According to Cloonan, individuals have an instinctive need to preserve their own personal past. For this reason, modern community life promotes the growing trend towards community-based conservation. Similarly, Amit-Cohen (no date) also claims that societies need cultural assets that transmit stability and continuity. To ensure that environmental resources and their cultural assets are preserved, the public must determine what assets are worthy of preservation, both for contemporary culture and for the coming generations. This perception explains why it is the local community that is leading the campaign to preserve sports facilities in Israel.

According to Timothy and Boyd, heritage is based on a ranking scale to indicate the importance of a particular building. That is, some sites have international importance, while others have national, regional or local importance only. Due to the limited success of Israeli sport in the international arena, the importance of most of the sports sites in Israel is national (e.g. Bloomfield Stadium and Menora Mivtachim Arena in Tel Aviv), regional (e.g. Kiryat Eliezer Stadium in Haifa and Vasermil Stadium in Beersheba) or local (e.g. the sports arena in Kfar Blum and the HaMakhtesh Stadium in Givatayim). While the formation of emotional ties and the instilling of symbolic meaning to stadiums take place on all these levels, it seems that sports venues constitute a major source of community heritage and sports heritage on the regional and local levels more than on the national level. This is likely due to the fact that such structures dominate the space and provide sports content in the lives of the local population.

**Methodology**

The discussion presented below is based on the analysis of feelings, perceptions, terminology and rhetoric while adopting an interpretive qualitative approach. For this purposes, two research instruments were used:

- Qualitative content analysis of 50 reports, publications and surveys published in print and online, as well as of 476 talkback responses to 35 articles published online. The data was drawn from two sources: online sports blogs run by fans, which recently became prominent place for sport
discussion in the public sphere. And, articles published on Israel most popular sport sites: one.co.il and sport5.co.il. The content analysis included logical structuring of the criteria and the meta-themes and interpretive content analysis correspond with news articles.

- Eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with fans of the local teams and with leaders of the public campaigns against the demolition of the Ussishkin Arena in Tel Aviv and HaMakhtesh Stadium in Givatayim. At first, the research mapped out widely published posts and publications, then a direct appeal was made by email to the authors of these contents for an interview request. Because of the closed nature of sports fans communities, especially in the context of public campaigns, snowball sampling was used to locate other interviewees.

**Discussion: individual feelings and active steps towards conservation**

As noted above, the article seeks to examine the feelings and attitudes of the local population and sports fans towards the site in question. It seeks to gauge the affinity between the population’s views of the cultural importance of sports sites and their views regarding the importance of other historical sites. The research rationale was based on the hypothesis that a broad group in the population (mainly sports fans) regards sports venues – whether consciously or unconsciously – as part of the historical, social and cultural heritage of their community and of the nation and sees sports stadiums and arenas as a tangible expression of this heritage. Hence, the article surveyed and analysed the responses of sports fans regarding the demolition or abandonment of large sports facilities, and mainly the HaMakhtesh Stadium in Givatayim and the Ussishkin Arena in Tel Aviv. During the public campaigns over these venues, the possibility of including them on the list of sites to be preserved was raised and considered.

Note that the emotional attitude towards sports venues is not limited exclusively to sports fans. Rather, it is backed by the mythification carried out by the sports media, particularly the online media. Articles published after stadiums were demolished testify to this: ‘HaUrva Stadium 1967–2010, May Its Memory Be Blessed’; ‘The Demolition of Ussishkin: Destruction of the Mythological Arena Has Begun.’ Another example can be found in the widespread use of the term ‘mythological’ in reference to every stadium built before the 1970s (e.g. HaKufsa Stadium in Netanya; Yahud football stadium; the Vasermil Stadium in Beersheba; Kiryat Eliezer stadium in Haifa, and more). Thus it can be assumed that due to the dominance of the media and the media’s reciprocal relations with sports and sports fans, the mythological narrative surrounding sports sites has become prevalent among fans as well.
The article examined 476 responses (talkbacks) to articles published about the demolition of HaMakhtesh, Ussishkin, HaKufsa, HaUrva and Kiryat Eliezer in order to investigate the fans’ attitudes towards sports venues. The responses were divided into four categories according to their content: in favour of demolition based on the rationale of renewal and modernism; in favour of demolition due to reduction in the numbers of fans of the team playing on the field; general responses that do not directly refer to demolition of the structure; and responses against demolition of the structure. This category was further divided into responses that included nostalgia and expressions of sorrow and those that referred to cultural and historical value. The findings show that the largest number of responses (180, constituting 37.8%) did not refer to the topic of the article at all but rather to the situation of the league, the teams and the like. The next category (157, or 33%) expressed objections to demolishing the structures. Of these, half involved nostalgia and memories, and the other half referred to the meaning of demolishing an historical site. Further, 29.2% of the respondents (139) expressed support for the demolition, most in defiance of the team’s fans and some due to the need for new facilities that would provide better sports conditions as well as improve the experience of the spectators.

Note that this relatively equal division of the fans’ responses emerging from the above findings does not necessarily reflect an ambivalent position. Due to the relatively young average age of sports fans (26), most of the respondents have no personal ties to or practical sports experience with these venues. The importance of these places lies mainly in their symbolism for society and sports and in the collective memories they arouse, and not in personal experiences and memories. Furthermore, the very existence and extent of this discussion regarding the issue of conservation and the importance of place relative to the minor number of responses in other parallel contexts (such as articles on conservation of sites that are not related to sport and even on the declaration of world heritage sites in Israel) show that the historical/cultural significance of sports sites is indeed part of the public consciousness.

Analysis of the texts opposing demolition of the sports structures points to three dominant components: expression of personal feelings, emphasis on historical continuity, and comparison to other cultural structures. The frequent use of charged words in the rhetoric reflects the personal feelings of the respondents. Examples include words such as ‘loss,’ ‘destruction’ and ‘mourning’ in the context of the possibility of demolition and words such as ‘heart,’ ‘from time immemorial,’ ‘home’ and ‘family’ with respect to everyday and long-lasting ties with the venue. The second component, the long-term historical connection between the local population and the venue, is evident in the following sentence:

The children – sons, grandsons, great grandsons – all passed through this home, the home of all of us. We spent hours there every week and every
weekend. This was our regular life path. Kindergarten, school, the youth movement and Hapoel at HaMakhtesh. It’s sad, and even more than that. Our childhood and our youth are gone, as are our history and our memory (Response 19).  

The third component – comparison of sports events and sports structures to other cultural events and structures – is more relevant to the issue of justifying the conservation, as seen in sentences such as the following: ‘Look at the Parisians, who understood how wrong they were after building one tall tower (Tour Montparnasse). Would Paris be the same city if tall towers sprang up throughout the entire 5th arrondissement!! Closing off the coast with tall towers is a disaster!!! Demolishing the Gordon swimming pool is a tragedy for posterity … Ussishkin Arena – renovate it and make it operational again!!!’ (Response 59). ‘Synagogues are not destroyed’ (Response 23).  

Online calls to preserve a building are not usually made consciously or in accordance with the criteria of the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel. They are usually motivated by feelings and emotions that arise spontaneously in the face of the destruction of structures perceived as historical. The anonymity of internet talkbacks as well as the character limit and limited exposure of each response yield only a partial picture of the fans’ viewpoints regarding large sports facilities and whether they are worthy of preservation. Nonetheless, the direct and intentional demand for recognition of sports venues as deserving of preservation has been promoted mainly by a limited number of individuals as part of campaigns against the demolition of sports structures during the last decade.  

One individual active in these efforts is journalist Shlomo Mann, a fan of the Hapoel Ramat Gan football team, who appealed directly to the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel and to Knesset member Zevulun Orlev, one of the proposers of the amendment to the conservation law. Mann sought to examine the inclusion of HaMakhtesh in the list of sites to be preserved, based either on cultural heritage or on sports heritage. In an interview on 2 May 2011, Mann claimed that he believed the field should have been included as a site to be preserved due to its local importance. His opinion received support from the district manager of the Conservation Council, Tamar Tuchler, who emphasised that the site represents sports heritage and is deserving of conservation despite the building’s lack of aesthetic elements. Mann also tied the place to the community’s heritage and to the municipal cultural space, among other reasons because he recognised that it is less legitimate to see popular culture as deserving to be preserved.  

Accordingly, Mann noted that from the outset HaMakhtesh Stadium, which was originally built as an amphitheatre in 1927, served as the site of major municipal events such as bikurim (first fruits) ceremonies, sports days and Independence Day celebrations. Even after the stadium was placed at the disposal of the Hapoel Ramat Gan football team, it continued to serve fans,
team players and youth division players, most of whom were local residents (interview with S. Mann, 2 May 2011). By tying the stadium to local cultural events with mass participants over a period of more than 80 years while stressing its visibility and centrality in the urban space, Mann reinforced its status as having ‘local significance,’ one of the criteria defined by the Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites as follows: “These sites are part of the history of the community. They constitute part of the local lifestyle and are ingrained in the historical and experiential memory of the local residents’ (Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites, no date).

The idea of conserving the building of the Ussishkin Arena arose in the context of the campaign against its demolition. As early as 2006, 2,234 fans of Hapoel Tel Aviv petitioned the High Court of Justice to halt the demolition based on the claim that this is not an urban struggle only but rather a struggle with national importance directly connected with the conservation of Israel’s sports heritage. A year later, apparently because of the campaign’s high media profile, a bill was submitted titled ‘Proposal of a Law for Conserving Sports Sites and Facilities’. This proposed law was intended to recognise ‘the importance of sport in the country as an inseparable part of the national culture . . . and to bequeath a historical, sporting-cultural heritage to future generations . . . ’ (17th Knesset, Bill 2590/17/P). This legislative action was halted when the 17th Knesset was dissolved. Nevertheless, it pointed to partial official recognition of sport in Israel as part of the nation’s culture.

Conclusion: sports sites as deserving of conservation

This article sought to examine the feelings of sports fans regarding sports sites through an examination of online discourse and based on efforts to conserve places of this type. Determining whether places are important is dependent upon the attitude of the public towards them. The profound significance that sports fans attribute to sports facilities and the extent and strength of these feelings can point to future trends in the conservation of sports venues as part of the built cultural fabric of society in general. Based on the assumption that ‘space’ becomes ‘place’ in the presence of people that imbue it with meaning, sports structures – more than any other structures – today attract the largest number of people at the highest frequency.

Furthermore, sports venues, and particularly giant structures such as stadiums, serve as an arena for emotionally charged events whose results (athletic achievements) are documented as part of the history of sport and etched into the individual and collective memories of spectators and athletes alike. The unique visibility of sports facilities and their dominance in the urban landscape must also be mentioned. Nevertheless, in addition to being an inseparable part of the history of the community, sports venues are also
loaded with sports heritage and they produce and represent meaning primarily for sports fans. Israel has no sports museums or any other sites dedicated to the history and culture of sports. Hence Israel’s sports heritage finds expression only in the transient memories of the fans. That is, the only permanent and tangible expression of sports heritage is through sports facilities such as halls, fields and stadiums.

As one expression of physical activity, sport must take place in a particular space – an enclosed facility or an open area. The diverse branches of sport and technological developments throughout the course of history have changed the visibility and role of sports venues and their ties to the players and spectators. In the modern urban environment and in its social and functional context, sports venues consolidate five different values that grant them historical community significance, a necessary condition for recognising a site as a cultural heritage structure: a) Sports venues are the most popular meeting place today from the perspective of extent and frequency of use. b) Sports venues symbolise ‘home’ and the sense of individual and collective territorialism. c) Their architecture is unique and stands out in the urban environment by virtue of their size and individuality in the landscape. d) They host important sporting events and competitions. e) These places are continuously and consistently put to functional use for an ongoing period of time, usually for decades.

As this article suggests, direct or indirect reference to some or all of these values can be identified in the online discourse of fans regarding sports facilities, and particularly in response to demands for their demolition. Indeed, sports fans are able to attribute heritage values and common conservation criteria to sports facilities. Yet due to the perceived conceptual distance between sport and conservation, the general tendency is to justify the conservation of sports facilities based on associated historical ties and not necessarily based on sports heritage only. Hence, in view of the compatibility between sports sites and conservation values, the lack of recognition for the heritage of sports in Israel is the main barrier to the future conservation of these sites. A change in perception along with recognition of the role of sport in the history of the land of Israel and the State of Israel will also likely lead to official recognition of sports structures as deserving of conservation.

Notes

3. Orbasli, Tourists in Historic Towns.
5. Levental, “Preservation of sports venues.”
6. Azarayhu, Pulchanei medina.
9. Harif, “Chashuv she’anu nakeh bagoim.”
10. See note 7 above.
11. Ibid. 9.
13. See note 10 above, 8.
15. Levental, “Competitive sports facilities.”
22. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*.
24. See note 10 above, 15.
26. See note 10 above, 15.
27. Ibid.
33. See note 10 above, 31.
34. Ibid. 32.
35. Cloonan, “Moral Imperative to Preserve.”
38. Elo and Kyngäs, “Qualitative Content Analysis.”
40. Suri, “Sampling in Qualitative Research.”
42. Margalit, “Destruction of Ussishkin.”
43. editorial, “HaKufsa Stadium in Netanya.”
44. Rozenberg, “The mythological stadium.”
47. DePiccoto, “Seker haohadim hagadol.”
49. Krupsky, “The Tel-Aviv coalition.”
50. Timor, “The Sale of HaMakhtesh.”
51. Shlomo, “Hamachtshet bagivatayim.”
52. Sidi, “Bill to preserve Ussishkin.”
53. Ibid.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).
Notes on contributor

Orr Levental is Senior lecturer at the Physical Education School, Ohalo College, Qazrin, Israel.

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