

Staging globalization for national projects: Global sport markets and elite athletic transnational labour in Qatar

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Abstract

The global migration of elite athletes is a key feature of the transnational labour market. Following a background discussion and review of the literature on sport and transnationalism, this article explores this phenomenon in the context of Qatar. Beginning with the emergence, meaning and movement of the elite athlete transnational labour force that constitutes global sport markets, the article explores how states call upon global sport markets in service to national projects. This is followed by a focused examination of the development of the global sport industry in Qatar. By looking at globalization in Qatar, we are able to see culturally relative characteristics of globalization that are not made visible in the predominantly Western-focused sport scholarship. Transnational sport in Qatar exemplifies the operating mechanisms of global networks. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of transnational labour and the role played by elite sport in the contested terrain between localism and nationalism.

Keywords

globalization, nation-building, nationalism, networks, sport, transnational

Professional sports increasingly connect to transnational labour markets. In the European Union, the sport industry's economic importance is estimated to account for 3–4 percent Gross Domestic Produce and 5.4 percent labour force, contributing 407bn Euros value added to the economy in 2004 (Dimitrov et al., 2006; Henry and Gratton, 2001). Such economic value is increasingly substantiated by sport migrational trends. Sport economist Bernd Frick's longitudinal studies of transnationalism in professional football reveal remarkable increases of World Cup football teams' registered players competing in leagues abroad, from 11.4 percent in 1978 to 27.1 percent in 1990 and then to 53.1 percent in 2006 (Frick, 2009). In just one sport from 1998–2007, the International Association of

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Athletics Federations recognized over 250 athletes to have taken nationality transfer.¹ Global markets require transnational labour. Although not all are equally privileged in status or access to the transnational labour force, the notion of national sports increasingly becomes a fantasy. In this article, I examine the highly select group of transnational athletic labour as both product and constitutive feature of globalization.

Theories of globalization and transnationalism must better account for how changing technological capacities encourage and depend upon transnational labour. I first discuss the elite athletic transnational labour force in connection with the nation-state, asking how sport and state relations transform in the context of globalization. Through a case study of global sport in Qatar, I examine how amenable transnational labour can be to projects of nation-building and of nationalism – two separate but co-constitutive collective identities and premises of political authority. Rather than frame nationalism according to ethnic and civic typologies, I build upon conceptualizations of nationalism as culturally relative compositions while emphasizing how nationalism's capacity to operate on multiple levels reveals global dynamics.

While migrant athletes are not new phenomena, within newly and rapidly increasing athlete migrations, it is possible to identify key elements as evidence of changed global-oriented dynamics. Not all athletes – professional or not – universally partake in, benefit from, or constitute the transnational labour force. Primarily elite athletes with specialized skills comprise the transnational sport labour force. These talent labourers enjoy privileged transnational or post-national migratory status. Even without formal political citizenship, economic citizenship privileges entitle elite athletes to enjoy state benefits. The transnational athlete moves through borders as if holding a VIP skeleton key: mobile and fast tracked through work permit, visa and even naturalization protocols, few formal policy barriers delay or deny the specialized transnational labour migrant. While I agree that visible 'labour mobility is not at the wage-earning end of sports labour force, but amongst the salariat', such a reading does not tell the whole story (Miller et al., 2001: 37). Global sport requires transnational labour, often with tragic human externalities that include trafficked, exploited and abandoned human and child labour (Carter, 2007; Darby, 2007). Inequality is not anomalous to globalization so much as partially its consequence. I do not fully examine these market 'externalities' and marginal industry practices that have especially ugly human costs. For all the glory associated with known and valorized transnational athletes, there remain many unnoticed others: 'many of the world's football migrants, employed on the margins of the professional game – in semi-professional or even amateur leagues – and with precarious working contracts, fit categories which can be more easily located within general patterns of mass labor' (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001: 235).

When present, barriers to free flows and exchanges of sport labour appear primarily in two levels: state and sport federation regulation. The allocation of national team slots is based on citizenship, a rule enforced by international sporting associations. These associations police foreign labour via quota policies that protect local talent and ease local identity anxiety, while reinforcing the primacy of nationality. With quotas arise their converse: rule-breaking entrepreneurship fuelled by the competitive potential and character of a team.

To better place and understand the contradictory processes and structures of global sport and, in particular, athletic transnational labour flows, I consider national sport models in

tandem with the professional, commercial game. Migration flows are not simply one-way with a globalized actor being inserted onto the local. The local is not muted in this process. Whether receiving or sending, the local incorporates, designates, resists or embraces additional talent through narratives fitting the local collective memory and identity. While other studies show transnational elites – actors, musicians, academics, multinational businessmen – to inhabit interstitial spaces representing a deterritorializing state, this analysis focuses upon elite athletes as transnational labourers who directly engage state structures, meanings, and dynamics of citizenship qua their very labour activity (Portes, 1997). It is the pairing of transnational labour as a highly visible instrument of nationalism – athletes as national team members – which distinguishes elite sport as a particularly important concentration for transnational studies.

Sport professionalism: Transcending the nation-based sport model

Transition to professional sport is no longer simply a domestic proposition. When countries professionalize sport, state and sport governing bodies' interests in increasing national talent and competitiveness frequently yield to pressure for tapping into the global talent pool. The local market opens the cultural arena not only to transnational competition but also to an alternative market with a global logic. In the case of sport, the cultural domain is reconfigured by the emergence of a transnational labour force. Rather than home-grown talent developing and remaining within the confines of the nation, a mix of informal and formal status enable professional transnational athletes to increasingly move within and between states.

The global is not conterminous with *the international*. In sport, as elsewhere, a global model has not eliminated state-centred, international models. As sport competition premised on the state-centred model persists – competitors continue to represent nation-states – the migrant athlete experience often aligns more closely with assimilation than with notions of flexible identities. While the international experience remains present in part, additional global layers of identity become possible. Mobility, technological instantiation of presence, and flexible network structures and flows transform the transnational migrant's landscape and experience in ways no longer accurately classifiable as international (Castells, 2001; Held and McGrew, 2003). These transformations are fundamental. The transnational migrant emerges in an authority structure that is no longer so tightly state-centred. The transnational athlete's very presence often challenges the state-centric logic and state authority. It would be premature to assume, even for elite labour, full opening of global labour borders or tolerance of entirely flexible nationality. Though globalization is not a macadamizing of every local terrain, localized systems lose many authoritative functions as the local becomes nested globally. Many of the nation-state's claims to sovereignty and citizenship are reconfigured by these changes. International relations scholars identify this shrinkage in state authority by describing a nesting of authority: 'rulemaking and rule interpretation in global governance have become pluralized. Rules are no longer a matter simply for states or intergovernmental organizations' (Keohane, 2002: 214).

Sport increasingly appears with diverging national and commercial constitutive aims that strain sport's dual structure. On the one hand, the new sport model is based on clubs

as corporations. Competitive strength, indeed survival, is based on team success, not the nation. On the other hand, there is a sport base left over from the nation-state, where a reliance on national markets orders and organizes sport. Examples include the International Olympic Committee (IOC) or Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), where bureaucratic interests of national federations perpetuate sport through a lens of state authority. While sports historically have served nation-building, my analysis tries to understand the interaction between sport and nationalism within the global age.

Case study: Global sport and transnational labour in Qatar

Sport in Qatar, a Gulf Cooperation Council state, proves a rich illustration of the interconnectedness, hypermobility, network flows, and economic core characteristic of global sport and transnational labour markets. Rather than narrowly focus upon select professional leagues, I examine a broadened sport profile in Qatar to show a professional commercial arena created through state political design. The state harvests international sports stars and institutions to solidify Qatari nationalism through global sport.

Qatar's high Gross Domestic Product, derived mostly from natural oil and gas, provides its population of approximately 900,000 with the world's second highest per capita income. As a former British protectorate, Qatar obtained state sovereignty in 1971, yet Qatar still remains in processes of nation-building to gain political clout on global levels. As an emirate, Qatar chooses market liberalization while simultaneously attempting to stream global economic flows toward enriching nationalism. The recruitment of transnational labour could threaten nationalist bonds. Yet, this same dynamic has proven initially instrumental to Qatari national endowment and making of national relevancy in global networks. Qatar welcomes transnational athletic labour as an instrument of nation-building, and sport functions there as an international signalling component (Whitson, 2004). While sport and state-building projects shape the emirate's internal identity, here, I focus on the external global signalling mechanisms.

National sport in Qatar is not yet entirely integrated into global sport networks. Qatar attempts to control globalization by setting signposts for global participation in ways more of its choosing. Global sport serves as a medium of nation-building, strengthening Qatar's position in the global market and world. As Eric Hobsbawm argues, globalization proves an agile vehicle for nationalism, while statism provides a fertile territory for global markets (Hobsbawm, 2007). Qatari nationalism is not, however, nationalistic in a liberal nation-state tradition.² With declining or failed projects of pan-Arabism, Qatar receives a 'new opportunity to revive exclusive nationalist histories' (Amara, 2005: 497).³

Global network authority: Broadcasting and hosting transnational labour

Sport emerges as one path among several strategies for making Qatar large in the global system where size matters less than network nodal position.⁴ To be sure, Qatar harnesses global network connections to assert its national position. By welcoming the US military base, US Air Force base Al Udeid, Qatar secures a vital position in global geopolitical networks and avoids being read as a belligerent nationalist state as it pursues nation-building endeavours. Indeed, Qatar's US military base hosting significantly

accounts for Al Jazeera's ability to stave off insurmountable resistance or backlash. Though ostensibly a network independent of the state, Al Jazeera has been employed by Qatar as one of its nation-building projects, as it attempts to provide an international Arab voice. Al Jazeera is fundamental to understanding how global networks serve Qatari nation-building projects. As one of Qatar's most renowned, sometimes notorious, and powerful cultural tools, Al Jazeera increasingly and inseparably links expanding global communication and media presence. Media broadcast industries secure and thread the necessary fibre to further enrich Qatari cultural projects while simultaneously deriving resources from these linked industries, forging a sport-media nexus. Without media infrastructures to access large audiences, a sport industry remains cut off from important revenue and legitimacy bolstering resources. Reports of advertisement, broadcast, and sponsor revenue carry significant figures: 'Qatar Telecom (Qtel), the biggest sponsor of the games, signed a \$10 million (QR36.5m) double partnership agreement with DAGOC [Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee], according to which the company will be the official telecommunication partner for the 15th Asian Games' (Amara, 2005: 513). Due to the state's underwriting of many newly privatized and quasi-privatized businesses, Qatari industry profit figures are uncertain. It is clear, however, that broadcast media and global entertainment industries formidably converge in a nexus that accentuates Qatar's global relevancy.

Qatari sport and Qatari geopolitical and broadcast projects share similar global networks strategies. Qatar carves a global niche through hosting world sporting events (Roche, 2000). State investment in technologically and architecturally first-rate facilities help qualify Qatar as a global participant. The International Association of Athletics Federations championships, Tour of Qatar, and Asian Games are but a few high-profile, profitable international events staged in Qatar.⁵ Efforts to network position via hosting global games are not unique. Regional neighbours United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain enjoy success through landscaping local terrain fit for hosting a variety of global sports, including Formula 1 (F1) motor racing. Qatar displays ambitions to upgrade its motor tracks to become a pit stop in F1 – the world's largest television viewing audience and \$4 billion combined commercial, team, and circuit revenue generating sport. Though endeavours to reach the sporting apex of international honour, the Olympics 2016 Doha, was outbid, Qatar was quick to bid to host FIFA World Cup championships 2018 and 2022. Qatari hosting awards include the 2010 International Association of Athletic Federations World Championships and the 2011 Asia Cup football. Just bidding to host sport mega-events signals important international political status, for bidding campaigns are exclusives, 'only allow[ing] in a limited number of participants – those who are not only able but also willing to undertake the fiscal risks that the hosting of such events generally pose' (Cornelissen, 2008: 485).

Infrastructures, sciences and technologies of sport transnational labour

Asserting itself as more than a host provider, Qatar strives to obtain and develop superior national athletic prowess. Investment in science, technology, and expertise industries gears Qatar not only as a resource for international competitions and sport tourism but also as an elite sport training destination. In this form, global sport also advances a

national project to muscularize more competitive Qatari national teams. In Al Waab, Doha the realization of Sport City – part of a larger Qatari master plan – functions as a specialized corridor of sport infrastructures. Wired with the best facilities, knowledge, and expertise, Sport City offers a seductive platform for obtaining athletic greatness. Aimed at making an ideal disciplined sport body and training ground, Sport City orders sport know-how in a landscape precisely engineered for optimizing performance. Consequently, Qatari recruitment campaigns sell/purchase the dream of many world-class athletes and coaches the world over. From hosting profile enhancement to athletic recruitment and development, Qatar orchestrates a national agenda by making use of global instruments: ‘sport, in its multiple forms, is becoming a tool for leaders in the Gulf to reposition their countries on the world map’ (Amara, 2005: 509).

Qatar’s Aspire Academy for Sport Excellence and larger athletic mission prioritize an essential objective: to rise as a global player through creative focus and development of new talent infused with world class talent within the sport domain. The academy’s motto, ‘aspire today . . . inspire tomorrow’, declares an ethos reflected throughout Qatari global endeavours. Like sportsman governance – a common business indictment of English Premier League football teams that subsume profit maximizing to sporting competitive dominance in what is known as ‘living the dream’ – Qatar’s sport investment strategy is less concerned with immediate economic return than status, prestige, and relevancy. Qatar’s wealth and ideology afford patience toward creating a larger national project.

Consistently embodying the Qatari national ethos of ‘exceptionalism’, new architecture projects build the best, biggest, and tallest sport facilities to surpass the ultimate achievements of the latest or nearest structure of sports training centres, competition arenas, and event venues. While I primarily analyse the global networks employed in Qatar’s national project, the local structural scaffold is not irrelevant. Although characterized by certain unique factors, Qatar illustrates the general processes of transnational labour. Moreover, Qatar’s display of its ‘exceptionalism’ is by no means exceptional so much as common narration of ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983). Architecturally embodying the Qatari national project, the Aspire Tower stands tallest in the region, and the Khalifa Sport Complex ‘a new US\$200 million development project located at the outskirt of Doha city centre’ boasts the world’s largest dome (Amara, 2005: 505). Architecture racing appears a regional strategy for putting a state on the global map. Neighbouring UAE receives global recognition in Dubai for the world’s tallest building, Burj Khalifa. These more one-off or stand-alone physical attractions, albeit spectacular, matter even more when in the presence of other more networked schemes.

Having the infrastructure and landscape to participate vis-à-vis hosting world sport circuits makes for global cultural relevancy while also seeking to attract foreign investment. Qatar does not offer market attraction of massive populations. However, as a medium and infrastructure of telecommunication technologies, Al Jazeera substantiates Qatar’s relevance as a conduit to other large audiences, particularly Arab ones. Having the proper network infrastructures determines who can partake in global culture and who can purchase and attract transnational labour. Media networks, like Al Jazeera, enable Qatar to emerge as formidable sport and entertainment contenders. Geographical location facilitates network association, communication and exchange; however, it no longer stands as prerequisite to global relevancy.

Attracting and developing transnational labour

Qatar not only invests inwardly, integrating and intensifying infrastructures, but also outwardly, harvesting spaces globally to reinforce and amplify its value and relevance. Assuring labour resources and markets for expanding its sporting nation, Qatar understands that transnational labour continues to gravitate to those places that socially and culturally resonate, choice being present. Recruited transnational talent recruits further talent, paving the way for transition and migration. These pathways forge operable transnational social networks, or what Elliot and Maguire call 'talent pipelines' (Maguire and Elliot: 2008: 484; also Castells, 2001). According to Taylor, 'it becomes clear that where these players choose to go and where teams decide to look for players is not indiscriminate but often determined by long established colonial, cultural, linguistic, social and personal connections' (Taylor, 2006: 19). While perhaps not representative of a thick transnational migratory flow, the single addition of Australian Duje Draganja to the Qatari swim squad headed by Australian Otto Sonnenleitner represents the kind of opening for labour circuits. Here, we may be witnessing the formations of a transnational network that could parallel what is by now a well trodden talent circuit of African runners with American universities (Bale and Sang, 1996). Maguire and Elliot capture the significance of transnational experts in facilitating talent flows between host and donor states through details of the seemingly mundane: 'coaches not only develop local connections via face-to-face contacts with other coaches and players, they can also strengthen a series of transnational bonds via regular telephone and e-mail contact with coaching colleagues and players around the world' (Maguire and Elliot, 2008: 492). Qatari training centres appear in Kenya, Spain, and South Africa.⁶ Sport City's campus of the Australian Institute of Sport – a pre-eminent sport science and technology institution – represents a formidable expertise partnership that distinguishes Qatar as a global node of sport expertise.

Qatar capitalizes on a transnational labour force that includes athletes, but also experts and coaches. Attributing the necessity to limited population size, Qatar paid 10,000 Vietnamese fans to support the Qatari national team during the 2007 Asian Cup. The Qatari 2004 football national manager, former Frenchman and coach of the 2002 Japan World Cup team Philippe Troussier has a resume that exemplifies the international mobility common among Qatar sport personnel rosters. Transnational presence in Qatar does not stand contrary to expectation so much as its rule: 'to give an idea of the importance of the phenomenon, in the Qatari Q-League first division, none of the managers is even a Middle Eastern national, let alone Qatari' (Amara, 2005: 501). The emirate's athletic recruitment is not limited to purchasing proven talent but also focuses on developing new athletes. The Aspire Academy casts an expansive scouting net: in 2007, '500,000 boys born in 1994 in seven different countries – Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa' were invited to Qatar as part of a talent search (BBC Sport, 2007). Recruiting transnational labour, Qatar fills its coffers of national athletic talent, professionals, and coaches to flaunt its sporting prowess internationally. Not a strategy unique to Qatar or unidirectional, transnational scouting bolsters national prestige by funnelling talent. Bartered talent gains are often obtained at significant costs to 'selling' states and societies (Bale and Sang, 1991; Klein, 2006). These economic and material conditions are fundamental to understanding transnational labour in Qatar.

Transnational scouting is common for example in the Premier League. Though based in Britain, the league goes on foreign holiday, playing exposition games abroad in Africa, America, Asia and India. Premier League clubs like Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United attract transnational fan loyalties from 'global communities of supporters and merchandise consumers that are similar in size, if not patterns of identification, with the citizenry of nations' (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004: 551). Estimated to have over 41 million fans in Asia, Manchester United now posts a recently debuted, official homepage in Mandarin. Media partnerships for broadcast distribution, sister clubs, and professional exposition tours frequently quest after new markets in Asia.⁷ Transnational recruitment also expands markets. The Premier League 2007 foreign broadcast market entailed 'more than 200 countries, worth a total of £625m for three years' (Sheerwood, 2007). Describing big clubs as transnational corporations, Giulianotti considers football transnational labour 'a form of extrafootball FDI' such that 'buying Asian players can boost a club's sale of merchandise in the Far East rather than improve the quality of its football team' (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004: 553). In one transnational labour acquisition, 'Arsenal purchased the Japanese Junichi Inamoto for £3.5 million in July 2001, and were assumed to have netted more than that sum in Japanese merchandise sales: Inamoto played in three minor matches and was released by Arsenal within one year' (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004: 564). Through transnational talent investment, recruiting, and expo, Qatar deepens and spreads its sporting nation like that witnessed in other transnational sport markets.

Cauterizing the national team: Players, coaches and fans

Too often elite transnational labourers are theorized as if invisible or unproblematic to host nations. Yet, these workers inhabit places beyond what globalization theorists designate as 'nowhere' – airport lounges, posh hotels, business-financial centres: they also tread in local and public territories, sites scripted in national narratives, norms, and boundaries (Portes, 1997). The presence of transnational elites challenges state response, providing a key site to examine how transnational elites are incorporated with or without tension. How has Qatar narrated its recruited transnationals to fit the Qatari bill? Age-old problems and pressures for assimilation remain. A state cannot always hide the 'foreign' profile of transnational migrants, and in the case of athletes, the aim is to openly display these transnational migrants.

When obscuring, marginalizing or segregating migrants is not possible or contrary to interest, states must adapt, incorporate or account for the presence of others. Transnational athletic labour may introduce tensions and contradictions to national identity. Naturalizing is a common path states offer to account for the presence of foreigners. What does globalization look like in Qatar in these points where welcomed transnationals converge in the local? In the case of Qatar, where citizenship might be understood to be by blood, naturalizing transnational athlete migrants contradicts citizen criteria.⁸ Notwithstanding, the Qatari program for transnational athletes involves naturalization. What is remarkable about this naturalization policy is that this path to citizenship is a privilege not widely available at large to the Qatari populations. Of approximately 900,000 Qatari inhabitants, only 200,000 are nationals: 'the only domain where concepts of national identity in the

sense of *jus sanguineum*, cultural purity or blood association to the tribal family, is not problematic in sport, where the naturalization of foreign athletes has taken on an important dimension' (Amara, 2005: 502).⁹ Before considering how the state accounts for this fundamental contradiction, I first describe the athletic transnational labour presence within Qatar.

In pursuit of a project identity, Qatar embraces and actively recruits elite athletic transnational migration. In 2003, Qatar's first division professional football clubs, Q-League clubs, each received £1.5m for talent recruiting and development (Amara, 2005). Chief recipient of these funds was the transnational labour force, comprising elite and spectacular footballers. Though often considered only a swansong football career destination, a cushioned or second retirement for prolonging a career, transnational labour flows to and from Qatar in increasingly alternative ways. To be sure, many famed footballers from other leagues and World Cup national squads do infuse Qatar's Q-League with grandeur and sporting status at the twilight of their careers in swansong type migration. Among such recruits signed are Jay-Jay Okocha, Gabriel Batistuta, Paulo Wanchope, Marcel Desailly, Tony Popovic, Talal el Karkouri, Frank Leboeuf, Stefan Effenberg, Josep Guardiola, and Frank and Ronald de Boer. All of these athletes have represented national teams and have played professionally in top European leagues outside origin countries before migrating to Qatar. For other athletes, though, Qatar functions as a first-stop proving ground. Transnational labour employment and development through Q-League play becomes a route to other more competitive leagues or national team selection. During the 2007 summer transfer window, Lyons acquired Abdel-Kader Keita, a player whose game matured through a staged path from Côte d'Ivoire to Olympique Lyonnais, a French top division and frequent Champions League qualifying team, via Al-Sadd, Q-League (Buckley et al., 2007).

When paired with nationality transfer, transnational labour migration becomes a route to international competition, like the World Cup or Olympics. Athletes take oaths of national allegiance to obtain access to nation-qualified international play, exchanging or amending their national citizenships. When considering joining Qatar by way of a nationality transfer in 2004, Brazilian Ailton Gonçalves da Silva explained his intention to leave his Bundesliga team for a Q-League contract and Qatari national team opportunity by insisting, 'money is not the decisive factor here, as I earn good money at Werder Bremen . . . if Brazil ignores me for 2006, then I have to find another way to get there [the World Cup competition]' (BBC Sport, 2004).¹⁰ Though not anomalous, nationality change is less essential in football than other sports. Even as World Cup play remains a professional footballer's coveted career highlight, a mark of a complete career, in football, the commercial game sustains prestige and salary without singular reference or reliance upon state-centric models of sport achievement or career paths concentrated almost exclusively in international competitions like the Olympics.

For some athletes, transnational migration to Qatar is a proving ground or layover destination for skill acquisition. Sport labour migrant typologies – pioneers, mercenaries, nomadic cosmopolitans, settlers, returnees, ambitionists, exiles, or those expelled – help frame the transnational sport debate by focusing on individual migration causes (Magee and Sudgen, 2002; Maguire, 2009). Yet, to better understand transnational migration requires looking beyond migrant psychological motivations to the varying mechanisms

that enable and shape migration possibilities. Transnational migration when coupled with nationality transfer forges a direct route to exclusive access, sport competition – where entry is qualified by national status. By looking at Qatar, we can see transnational labour implications beyond those captured by sport migrant typologies that primarily emphasize migrant classifications.

Transnational by a new name

Qatari recognition of citizenship on a basis of ‘superiority of blood’ poses a contradiction for incorporating transnationals as citizens.¹¹ When labour migrants do not qualify through lineage, Qatar writes these migrant athletes into its national narrative with the next best thing: a re-naming in a national blood or tribal lineage (Chiba et al., 2001). More than basic certificate or passport issuance, nationality transfer in Qatar frequently demands disavowing a transnational migrant’s name, identity and former national allegiance. Taking on a Muslim or national name, the sport labourer is naturalized, and thereby nationalized. Two-time steeplechase world champion and world record holder Saif Saeed Shaheen is just one example. Born ‘Stephen Cherono’, Shaheen has become one of the most accomplished and famed transnational migrants composing the growing athletic roster of Qatari acquired nationals.¹² By way of nationality transfer from Bulgaria, Angel Popov – renamed Said Saif Asaad – earned one of Qatar’s two Olympic medals. In the 1999 Pan Arab Games, other states became suspicious of many debuting Qatari athletes, appearing in the competition arena seemingly from nowhere or no time prior. After discovering the athletes’ national identities had been disguised, the Qatar weightlifting team was disqualified for violating rules of qualification according to citizenship (Henry et al., 2003). While name changes may deviously work to circumvent competition rules, name changing should also be seen as apparatus for easing dissonance within local communities.¹³ In the English Premier League, star players Patrick Vieira, Thierry Henry and Robert Pires were ‘awarded “Anglo-fied” nicknames such as Paddy and Bobby’ (Levermore and Millward, 2007: 155). Renaming or nicknaming ‘foreign’ representatives readies transnational athletes as fit for local consumption.

Regulating transnational labour and the national competitive advantage

Labour migration frequently ignites fears of invasion or betrayal. Beyond these emotions, the state confronts challenges to authoritative ordering structures and functions. Transnational migrants challenge traditional expectations of national membership: as Raffaele Poli notes, ‘instrumental and commercial naturalizations occurring without sportsmen putting down roots in their new homeland challenge the traditional vision of the nation as a group of people belonging to the same culture and having the same ethnic origin’ (Poli, 2007: 653). Resistance to transnational labour primarily happens at the level of international institutions that remain firmly committed to a nation-state-centred ideology as opposed to other ideologies that are seen as more open, entrepreneurial, or negotiable. Qatar’s recruitment of foreign talent, drawing a transnational labour force that requires nationality transfers, threatens the sanctity and legitimacy of the international federation constituency, the nation-state.

In 2000, the IOC introduced a three-year waiting period before an athlete can compete for a new country. Poli reports that following rumours of 'a possible recruitment of the Brazilian forward Ailton by the Qatari selection', FIFA's Urgency Committee decided in 2004 to forbid 'the employment in national teams of players that, even if they have received passports of their host country, have not lived at least two years consecutively in the territory of the football association concerned' (Poli, 2007: 650). Athletes not having represented a nation in prior international competition maintain their sporting labour rights and are free to join a first national team without penalty. Due to fear of talent flights that could leave national teams as well as international sport institutions in a crisis of legitimacy, the 'citizenship of convenience' possibility must now surmount the IOC and other sport institution rules requiring *reasonable attachment* or connection to the nation of transfer. Even if a nation allows dual nationality, international sport governance requires athletes to choose between nations. Dual or multiple national team athletic mobility is not allowed.

Petitioning FIFA and the IOC, Qatar proposed to welcome foreign athletes of all countries' national teams that denied these athletes World Cup or Olympic team selection (Amara, 2005). Effectively, Qatar could proudly become a team of rejects, a second chance team. FIFA and IOC both rejected this proposal. Might not this proposal symbolize cosmopolitanism par excellence? The concept of a transnational corporate project to develop a sport complex, academy, or 'national' team may appear benign, as if unstained from ideological or political agenda. An imagined proposal for a UN 'national' team might even find a warm, welcoming reception.¹⁴ However, when a state appears and acts like a corporation, much of the current economic sensibility balks. At least in sport, perceived conflicting interests between national-commercial spheres heightens in country/club dilemmas that elicit further regulatory partitioning. Perhaps, this resistance ought to be qualified depending on which state offers such a proposition. A nation, like Qatar, that purchases athletic talent for its national team does not fit easily with current dominant global interests, though it may thrive through global network tools that operate quite nicely within the current version of globalization – within current political and normative priorities. Expectations of a given version of level playing fields skew – or challenge hegemony – in allowing transnational migration for national team making.

Qatar raises suspicion as a deviant national team, threatening the international landscape of elite competition. Through nationality transfer, states are complicit in a particular circumvention of national identity that paradoxically depends upon a sturdy national identity anchor. Transnational sport programmes of nationality transfer circumvent informal rules and expectations of sport premised on a nation-state model. Yet, this circumvention cannot reject national identity too strongly, for this authority maintains the ultimate ordering logic. Qatar does not allow dual citizenship! In a manner akin to 'selling of sovereignty', an economic strategy descriptive of a state's use of sovereign authority to legislate jurisdictions of bank secrecy and tax advantage in making financially profitable 'offshore' geographies, Qatar's sovereign right to legislate individual citizenship criteria crafts competitive advantage.¹⁵ This is where the two sport models, the corporate and state models, collide. The global economic logic is indifferent to national boundaries and ideological premises of state-based sport models.

Globalization in Qatar via transnational labour markets does not diminish Qatar as a bordered, sovereign nation-state. The situation is, as I argue in this article, quite the opposite. If global tools and transnational flows have been theorized as erasing difference and encouraging similitude, Qatar's use of transnational labour initially shows something quite different. Indeed, Qatar seizes global flows in a project aimed at nation-building through the raising of prestige in the world sport arena.

Qatar's global projects are not seamlessly achieved: this cultural, political master plan also produces unexpected consequences domestically. Despite Qatar's aggressive and creative recruitment of transnational labour prompting international institutional response to control labour market opportunities of these athletes when on international competitive fields, current online reports and chatter of Qatar Q-League business schemes resonate in tones common of other sport local-global dissonance. Economic privatization and professionalization of the Q-League have made teams more attractive in the global market, but there are local tensions. One current example includes the Q-League Professional League Development Committee aim to reduce tensions through proposals considering limits on transnational labour scouting to younger players – under 31 unless meriting exception – and provisions for bonus salary supplements to reduce the gap in pay between transnational stars and local talent (*Asian Football Business Review*, 2007).¹⁶

Conclusion

The Qatari sport model builds a national team based on commercial power, selling national identity to athletes where other nations sell sport. However, if a national team can be built upon any player, then the two models collapse. Calling upon global tools to obtain national worth and global clout, Qatar may be cutting the grass under its own feet. Qatar uses global sport – a major component of the global entertainment industry – as a basis for building national relevancy and identity through globalization and global labour markets. Sharpening sport competitiveness through the welcoming of an athletic transnational labour force affords a means toward what Qatar aspires to become. To rise globally, Qatar uses networks in a national project that aims to make an Arab counterbalance to Western global hegemony. Qatar envisions a different globalization. Craig Calhoun provides an alternative understanding to globalization, arguing that cosmopolitanism is not always at odds with nationalism and can support a variety of modernist projects (Calhoun, 2002). Building on multiple globalization theses helps answer the paradox of how national projects are possible in a global age. Qatar illustrates how cultural networks, sport, can rework globalization – both global possibilities and its consequences. Qatar demonstrates when and how it is possible to effectively insert a nation-building project alongside globalization. Qatar attempts to carve out factors and infrastructures of business to make globalization as nice as possible. Elite transnational athletic labour injects and infuses Qatar as part of a prestigious and profitable cultural and commercial network. Qatari nation-building uses global networks and transnational labour to inscribe the state.

Global sport with its global economic core is indifferent to nationalism or national borders. In Qatar, the development of media infrastructures and technologies functions as a primary enabling condition for the professionalization of sport, which invites a global

game and market that demands transnational labour. Rather than state regulatory efforts to protect sport as a preserve arising from within Qatar, regulatory resistance to these global networks primarily comes from outside Qatar. Transnational labour follows the game in less national attachment, embodying a borderless ethos akin to cosmopolitanism in that nationalism subsumes to a more unifying corporatism driving a global system. For Qatar, this may be initially useful. Qatar is significant for the theoretical implications that it shows. Connecting economic and political dimensions of globalization, global sport markets operate for nationalism, nation-building, and transnational labour markets without particular concern for cultural or nationalist differences or consequences.

Notes

1. IAAF report of nationality transfer figures, September 2009. Available at: www.iaaf.org.
2. Mafoud Amara describes nationalism in the Gulf State region, including Qatar, writing 'it is a mixture of religious and tribal solidarities. The first of these is expressed through an attachment to Shari'a law and the Islamic system of jurisprudence while the second is expressed through an allegiance to the chief(s) of state' (Amara, 2005: 496).
3. Qatar mediums of nationalism may also prove useful to reviving pan-Arabism.
4. As examples of the current Qatari diversification and specialization projects, four primary geographically concentrated planning projects and infrastructures appear: a free trade zone contained in a Science and Technology Park in Education City which includes 'anchor tenant' Shell and partnerships with transnational corporations like Microsoft, GE, and ExxonMobil as well as university hub for American study abroad programs; an energy business centre, Energy City; future plans in Lusail for an Arab music and film industry centre within Entertainment City; and Sport City. The US military base also remains a integral feature of Qatar's global relevancy – though it has not been named as Military City.
5. The status of hosted events varies. The Qatar Cycling Pro Tour holds a relatively marginal professional international calendar position, serving as warm up for the 'real' season. Yet, the 2006 Asian Games Doha demonstrates mega-event capacity, drawing over 45 participating nations, 10,000 athletes and 35,000 spectators.
6. The presence of former Kenyan – now Qatari – athletes in Kenya challenges state authority. Neither Qatar nor Kenya currently permits dual citizenship. Powerless to narrate and control this contradictory presence, Kenya opted to expel these former nationals.
7. After Chelsea's tour of China and India, Chelsea reportedly opened training grounds in Surrey to the Chinese national team in preparation for Olympics 2008.
8. I loosely employ 'citizenship' to designate nationals of the Qatar emirate polity.
9. US Department of State, Qatar Background Notes 2007. Other transnational labourers account for much of this difference; however, a sizable population of individuals born in Qatar lack citizenship.
10. At the time of transfer, Ailton found no opportunities for German national team selection.
11. International legal scholarship distinguishes 'citizenship' as the internal relationships of rights, privileges, and responsibilities between a state and its population while 'nationality' designates the external relationships of a state's population beyond the state.
12. Track and field online websites tallied over 38 such nationality transfers in 2005 from just one nation, Kenya to Qatar. A few such transfers include the following athletes paired

with their Qatari given name: Stephen Chrerono: Saif Saaeed Shaheen; David Nyaga: Daham Najim Bashir; Albert Chepkurui: Hassan Abdullah; James Kwalia Moses Chirchir: Al Badri Salem Amer; Thomas Kosgei: Ali Tharer Kamel; Daniel (Nicolas) Kemboi Kipkosgie: Salem Jamal; Richard Yatich: Musbarak Shaami. The commonly reported salary is \$1000 per month for life, living accommodations, nationality transfer bonus, and victory rewards.

13. Issues of defection extend beyond sending or origin states. In 2007, Kenyan runner Leonard Mucheru – who followed a similar nationality change and career map as Qatar offers by taking up Bahraini nationality – obtained international attention after winning a major professional marathon victory in Israel. Bahrain denounced Mucheru – now Mushir Salem Jawher: racing in Israel was contrary to Bahrain's policy that does not recognize the state of Israel. As Bahrain threatened to strip Jawher of passport/nationality, Kenya rearticulated its policy of rejecting dual nationality. Jawher remained in quasi-statelessness.
14. In 2003 the UN convened a conference in Doha, 'Football Without Borders' which featured a youth camp concentrating on themes of unity and rights. Attendance of international footballer, all current Q-League players or staff, made for a star-studded roster of the game's cosmopolitan ambassadors.
15. Like worries about flags of convenience, media representations label athletes taking nationality transfer with similar deviant suspicion, in taking 'citizenships of convenience'.
16. Devising quotas to maintain local representations in the local game is less present in Qatar. Since European Court of Justice ruling in *Jean-Marc Bosman* outlawed restrictions on free EU citizen labour flows, protecting national labour requires more ingenuity in devising new hooks of (dis)qualification. Since 2005, the UEFA quota system regulates Champions League game club squad competition via requirements for 'locally trained'. Of the 25 player allocation slots for given Champions League competition, four reserve spots are for 'club-trained' or 'association-trained'. Further, a maximum number of three non-locally trained, still known as the *three-foreigner rule*, limits the team composition allowed on the pitch during a given time of play. Omitting mention of nationality, nationality becomes inscribed in the category, 'locally trained'. Quota legality is currently under European Commission review.

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