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(UN)BOUNDED SOCCER

Globalization and Localization of the Game in Israel

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Abstract Israeli soccer, like the rest of Israeli society, has been undergoing transformation in recent decades, under the influence of globalization. This work examines the specific effects of globalization on soccer in its three major components: mobilization of capital, mobilization of labor, and cultural flows. It appears that, because of the transformation of major aspects of society, Israeli soccer has been globalized on all three components. However, this globalization was uneven, and was determined by the specific local conditions that worked more in favor of labor and cultural flows.

Key words • globalization • Israel • liberalization • nationalism • soccer

Globalization has become a part of our everyday lives, affecting, although in different ways and on different levels, each major aspect of social reality (Archer, 1990). The connection between sport and globalization deserves attention because sport is central enough to not merely reflect aspects of globalization, but to impact our very use of the term “globalization” (Miller et al., 2001: 1). The vast literature that deals with the globalization of sport and, in particular, of soccer, is indicative of the growing interest in the interweaving of sport and globalization (e.g. Harvey and Houle, 1994; Houlihan, 1994; Maguire, 1994; Williams; 1994). Our purpose in this work is to study the development of Israeli soccer and examine its globalization through several key parameters. We adopt the perspective that globalization does not simply ‘pound everything in the same mold’ (Mittelman, 2000), but is rather an uneven process, the outcomes of which are influenced by global and local developments. Accordingly, the globalization of sports in general and soccer in particular is initiated and formulated, but also limited, by the particular societal-local setting and specific societal interaction of the global and the local.

Israeli soccer, we argue, like the rest of society, is affected by the changing global context and the specific interaction between globalization and local structures and dynamics. The state of soccer in Israel was formulated in the past by certain major parameters within a state-centered economic and political context that outlined a ‘political model’ for the organization of soccer. The transformation of these parameters — becoming capitalist, and globalization — entails a change in the organization of soccer towards an ‘economic model’. Israel has been undergoing a process of becoming a capitalist society and, consequently,

opening to globalization. But while, on the one hand, Israeli soccer imports and exports players and is going through a rapid process of privatization, on the other hand, these movements are limited by such factors as economic capacity and security concerns. Conflicting trends can also be observed on the spectators' side, mainly in terms of a dual attachment to both local and global teams.

This study of the impact of globalization focuses on three central flows that are the factors underlying the process of globalization: the flows of capital, labor, and culture. Our general assumptions are that: first, the impact of globalization may be uneven and certain flows may be more dominant than others; and second, interactions between global and local forces determine the pace and extent of globalization and, therefore, the local forces are not erased, but undergo change. These two assumptions lead to three arguments that pertain to our specific case study. First, the globalization of Israeli society, manifested in flows of manpower, capital, and culture, has also involved soccer. Second, the transformation or globalization of Israeli soccer is limited by Israel's local structure and global interactions. And, third, among the global flows, manpower seems the most effective, while capital is almost insignificant, placing Israeli soccer in a semi-peripheral position.

This paper is based on a general study of the globalization of Israel (G. Ben-Porat, 2002), and on a study of the transformation of Israeli soccer from 'a game to a commodity' (A. Ben-Porat, 2003). The information on capital investment in soccer, labor migration, and cultural effects was gathered from the Israel Soccer Association (IFA) archives, the Wingate Institute, the Soccer Budget Control Authority, sport sections in the daily newspapers, and interviews with officials in the IFA. We begin with a brief theoretical overview of globalization, highlighting the uneven effects of the process, specifying the major flows, and dealing in brief with the complex relations between globalization and soccer. Having set the theoretical framework we move to the case study and in the second part, we provide an overview of Israeli soccer and its institutional setting. In the third part, we examine the transformation of Israeli soccer. The three global flows described — capital, labor, and culture — are implicated in the globalization of sport and serve as measures of the globalization of Israeli soccer. Capital is treated in terms of the money invested in clubs and its sources (Israeli and non-Israeli) and changes in management (political vs business). Labor is treated in terms of the import of foreign players and the export of Israeli players. Culture is treated by inspecting the behavior of the fans: their reference to and preference for foreign clubs, the importance they attribute to 'their' club's progress in UEFA and other international tournaments, and the adoption of certain symbols which are borrowed from European soccer. Finally, we tie together the three parts and offer several empirical and theoretical observations.

Global Flows

Globalization has been described as

... a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions — assessed in terms of their extent,

intensity, velocity and impact — generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (Held et al., 1999: 16)

This process, as several authors have argued, is not unprecedented and can be compared to similar trends at the end of the 19th century during which cross-border flows grew significantly and international institutions were formed (Arrighi, 1994; Clark, 1997; Modelski, 1999). This comparison seems especially relevant, considering the formation of international organizations, among them sports organizations, in the earlier period, and the internationalization of sports (Maguire, 1999). What is significant in contemporary globalization is the rise of non-territorial forms of power — multinational firms, ‘offshore’ economic spaces, or macroregional blocs — all largely beyond the control of states, and which challenge the territoriality of the nation state. Consequently, the future of the state, as well as that of national and ethnic identities, is debated between scholars who describe the state as obsolete or in decline (Kobrin, 1998; Omhae, 1995; Rosecrance, 1996) and those who, politically or academically, remain loyal to the concept of the state, and remain skeptical regarding the overall impact of globalization (Hirst, 2000; Weiss, 1998).

The continuing reaffirmation of identities and ongoing ethnic and national territorial conflicts suggests that states are still relevant and that the effects of globalization are differential and limited. Not only are differences between states and societies not leveled by globalization, but they are often accentuated. The flip side of economic growth and efficiency associated with globalization is the deep fault line exposed between groups that have the skills and mobility to flourish in global markets and those that do not. Inequality between and within nations is growing, the power of labor is being undermined, the ability of governments to use compensatory welfare measures is weakening, and discontent is growing (Devetak and Higgot, 1999; Rodrik, 1997; Sassen, 1998; Tilly, 1995). Globalization implies, therefore, on the one hand, a rise of supra-territoriality or de-territorialization, but on the other hand, because of the uneven nature of the process, territory and territorial identity still matter (G. Ben-Porat, 2002; Sassen, 1996; Scholte, 2000). The vast majority of people are, at most, partially ‘global’ and still wedded to place, namely their state or local community, for both material and non-material provisions. Thus, not only do local identities persist in spite of global flows, the resistance to globalization may even reinforce them.

In observing globalization, therefore, we are witnessing, on the one hand, a global restructuring of the world that largely ignores boundaries in favor of economic rationality, but on the other, the redrawing of boundaries and their fortification against the very same global flows. Not only does local ‘resistance’ defy the flattening effects of globalization, globalization itself is a complex process made of different or ‘disjunctured’ flows (Appadurai, 1990). As noted, these flows, interacting with different localities, are uneven, irregular, and often conflicting. Flows of labor, capital, and culture are keys to the operation of globalization and serve as the underlying factors of the process. Their effects are locally specific and the relations between them vary and are likely to be uneven. Understanding globalization requires, first, attention to the interaction of the global and the local, second, estimation of the effects of each factor and, third, the specifically local interactions between the factors.

Globalization and Sport

Sports are both part of and are affected by the disjunctured global flows and local/global dynamics. Wright (1999) argued that globalization occurs on three levels — economic, political, and ideological — and that globalizing tendencies in sport interact at each of these levels. Soccer has drawn special attention, both in regard to the globalization of the game and the impact of the global game on national identities. Croci and Ammirante (1999) showed how the restructuring of soccer clubs across the world corresponds to the logic of the market. Armstrong and Giulianotti's (1997) collection portrays the impact of soccer on the cultural identity of Argentines, Brazilians, Italians, Cameroonians, and other national-ethnic collectives. King (1997) explores the change of identities of Manchester United soccer fans in the context of the emerging European Union and argues that a European identity substitutes, at least partially, for a British one. In other cases a tendency to shift loyalties — sometimes toward a British identity — was observed (Mangan, 1999; Mason, 1995). Overall, soccer became a worldwide game (Guttman, 1994; Murray, 1998), and hence a global commodity.

The globalization of sports relates to the two periods of globalization discussed. Almost immediately after becoming an English coded game, soccer was exported to other countries in Europe, South America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Mangan, 1999). The exportation of the game was not preplanned, but a result of British foreign policy and colonialism. Merchants, bureaucrats, and engineers, who traveled to these regions as government officials or delegates of private enterprises, played the game for recreation and were followed by the local population who were later encouraged to establish their own clubs (Dunning, 1999; Giulianotti, 1999; Mason, 1995; Murray, 1998). In a relatively short time, soccer became a worldwide game (Guttman, 1994).

The spread of soccer in the 19th century was more political and cultural than commercial. The introduction of soccer to the peoples of the colonies was a part of British hegemony, as local games gradually gave way to the imported game of soccer (as well as cricket and rugby). In the period of decolonization, conversely, soccer was instrumental in the national identity of the ex-colonies, especially when they were able to beat the ex-colonizers at 'their own game' (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1997; Maguire and Bale, 1994). In the late 19th century, therefore, soccer was already transcending national boundaries but at the same time, it was becoming an instrument for nation-building (Archetti, 1999; Cronin, 1999; Duke and Crolley, 1996). Soccer, in general, was more international than global, as interactions across borders were between nation states (especially after the International Soccer Federation (FIFA) established the World Cup as an arena for national competition). After the Second World War, the internationalization of soccer resumed at an increased pace.

Since the 1970s a rapid process of globalization matched the internationalization of the game. First, the international soccer organizations (e.g. FIFA and UEFA) became more independent and powerful, often able to impose their authority over the soccer organizations of individual states and to disseminate standardization (Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998). Second, the changing position and nature of soccer as a spectator game was marked by the increasing com-

modification of the game (Harvey, 1996; Murray, 1998). With the commercialization of the game in both capitalist and quasi-capitalist states, its connection with globalization intensified: the game and its components became a commodity in the world market. Soccer was becoming more corporate (Boon, 2000; King, 1997), and big capital was becoming part of the game. Furthermore, international and multinational corporations began purchasing shares in soccer clubs in Europe and elsewhere (Hamil et al., 2000). In brief, as soccer came to be regarded more as an investment (Foster, 2000), capital and labor (in terms of its exchange value) became indispensable and, inevitably, cultural changes followed.

The effects of globalization on soccer can be measured through the three key cross-boundary flows: the mobility of capital (namely, investments), the mobility of labor (players), and the mobility of cultural symbols (global icons and changed identities). Mobile capital finds in (some) soccer clubs a venue for investments, as clubs and teams all over the world turn to privatization. While the soccer associations of individual states (with some legal help from FIFA, in order to maintain local/national interests) may set certain limits on the composition of a club's management and directors, and on cross-ownership of clubs (Sugden and Tomlinson 1998), they are limited in their capacities.

The mobility of labor, with players moving around the globe, is highly correlated with capital investments in soccer clubs. Players are purchased by the 'new directors' in order to enhance the club's chances of participating in continental soccer events which offer significant remuneration (Bale and Maguire, 1994; Boon, 2000; Sugden and Tomlinson, 1998). Practically, mobility of players is a large factor in profit-making in present-day soccer, because the price of players is continually growing; even the Bosman ruling, enabling the mobility of European players across Europe, has not reversed this trend (Szymanski and Smith, 1997). Hence, when a multinational corporation, or any other investor, purchases a soccer club, for example in South Africa, its major assets are the talented players.

Finally, the globalization of soccer is also evident in the cultural sphere in the form of imported symbols, images, and even imported ideologies (such as that of the 'free market' economy). These flows correlate with those of capital and labor, demarcating differences between a (rich) core and the periphery. Soccer (and other sports) entrepreneurs seek to widen their reach (Morrow, 1999; Murray, 1998), and to market players and teams globally, making them part of an emerging global culture. This global sports culture is expressed in the behavior of soccer fans, especially in the periphery, whose loyalty to their local team is complemented, or in some cases contradicted, by loyalty to a foreign club at the 'core' (that is of the major European clubs), a loyalty that is expressed in the phrase, 'overseas sweetheart' (A. Ben-Porat, 2000).

Billing (1997) suggests the term 'banal mundane way' to specify the everyday reproduction of national feelings. The infiltration of global culture can influence such feelings, attitudes, and eventually affect concrete behavior. The cultural impact of globalization on (local) soccer is evident in the daily routine of players and (most critically) of fans. But, at the same time, local soccer remains a venue for the expression of national or regional identity and, possibly, acts as a shelter against global infiltration. The close affiliation of sports with national

cultures and identities has the potential to undermine, rather than support, global integration (Maguire and Tuck, 1998), and different localities and societies may preserve their particular understandings of soccer style, tactics, and aesthetics (Giulianotti, 1999). The impact of a global sports culture, backed by flows of capital and labor, on national identity, fits the description given of unevenness and specificities of global/local interactions.

Global flows and local identities, therefore, operate simultaneously and create unique mixtures reflecting specific localities. Flows of capital, labor, and culture are, in effect, the practical dimensions by which the impact of globalization on sport is studied in a certain society. Their impact, however, varies and depends on local specificities. Global flows, therefore, must be studied in relation to, or in interaction with, local histories, political culture, and institutions that create specific 'path dependencies'.

The Israeli Context

In the earlier years of statehood the Israeli state was positioned strategically with control over foreign gifts, immigration, settlement, and industrial policy. This position allowed the state a great degree of autonomy in terms of its capability to steer business interests and civil society rather than be steered by them (Shalev, 2000). The strategic position held by the state, the dominance of MAPAI party headed by Ben-Gurion, the magnitude of the public sector, and the relatively limited autonomy of the private sector led some scholars to describe Israel as embedded in a 'socialist tradition' (Aharoni, 1989). This argument seems to conflate state intervention and Zionist collectivism with socialism and takes the socialist rhetoric of Israel's founding fathers at face value. Essentially, MAPAI implemented a Keynesian economic policy that was part of the ongoing process of state and nation building. Overall, the centralization of the state overshadowed civic society so that even non-state civic organizations (like soccer clubs) were related to the political sphere, and often dominated by it.

The dominance of politics in Israeli society was evident in the administration of the soccer institutions and leagues. Three competing nationwide federations, each of them affiliated to a political organization, controlled soccer in Israel. The largest, Hapoel (worker) federation was affiliated to the Histadrut (the Federation of Labor in Israel), and through the Histadrut, to the dominant MAPAI party and its affiliates. The Maccabi federation was affiliated to the General Zionist Party (whose base of power was the bourgeoisie). The Beitar federation was affiliated to Heruth, a right-wing political party (the origin of the Likud party). The Israeli Soccer Association (IFA) was an independent non-governmental organization, as required by FIFA, but was, in effect, controlled by the politically affiliated federations. The presidency of IFA, the directorate, the management, and other positions were decided upon and divided between the federations. The federations competed among themselves in order to protect their interests; sometimes interfering in the running of the leagues to prevent the relegation of a favored team. On certain issues, cooperation between the federations was possible. For example, all three federations were united in their opposition to the commercial-

ization of the game. The federations advocated maintaining the amateur status of the game, opposed the involvement of private capital in managing the clubs, and controlled the mobility of players between clubs. This agenda was congruent with the aims of the political parties and the state, which perceived soccer as a venue for political influence and state building, on which IFA depended financially.

The changes to Israeli society in the early 1980s, during which Israel was rapidly transformed into a western-capitalist style society, also affected the development of soccer from a game to a commodity. The globalization and capitalization of Israeli society is reflected in the privatization of the state and public economy (which in the past amounted to 40 percent of the entire economy), the accumulation of private and corporate capital, and the domination of a market economy that replaced the state-controlled system (A. Ben-Porat, 1993). The neo-liberal ideology and policies adopted by the major political parties (including those considered to be of the left) since the 1980s were translated into a policy of privatization, decimation of the welfare state, and global integration. These political economic processes were paralleled (and supported) by rapid infiltration of global or American culture (Azaryahu, 2000; Ram, 2000). Israel's globalization, however, was limited by its particular semi-peripheral position in the global framework of capitalist economies and even more so by continuous conflict with the Palestinians. The globalization of the state economy, therefore, despite rapid liberalization in the 1980s, remained, to the dismay of its business sector, uncompleted.

As elsewhere the changes in political economy in Israel have had significant influences on soccer, and sports in general. In Britain, for example, the organization of soccer, in parallel to wider political economic developments, shifted from a Fordist to a post-Fordist regime of political economic management (King, 2002). Given the semi-professional status of soccer in Israel prior to the 1980s, the terms 'political' and 'economic' models describe more accurately the shift away from political control towards a more business-like type of management. The soccer federations were weakened from the early 1980s by the overall decline of the political parties who withdrew their financial support. The federations lost much of their financial power and, consequently, their support of the soccer clubs almost evaporated, opening the way for private entrepreneurs to make their mark on Israeli soccer.

Israeli soccer in the 1980s was geared for globalization. Soccer clubs already hired a few non-Israeli players (this was allowed by IFA in 1989), were searching for new management and ownership, and were eager to integrate into European soccer events (A. Ben-Porat, 2003). Overall, the 'political model' that had dominated Israeli soccer since the state-building period was transformed into the 'commercial model' associated with Israel's economic liberalization and globalization. But, like the rest of society, the globalization of Israeli soccer was limited by its political-economic surroundings.

The Factor of Capital

Private capital, foreign or local, played a marginal role in Israeli soccer until the 1990s. Foreign capital was not invested in soccer clubs, but came as donations dedicated to training facilities and players' welfare programs (A. Ben-Porat, 2003). Local private capital kept its distance from soccer clubs, which were affiliated with the soccer federations and generally seemed an unattractive investment. The money required to maintain the soccer clubs, including the salaries of players who became quasi-professional, was public. The nationwide federations provided the economic support for the clubs under their auspices and this money came mostly from the state. Supporters of the soccer clubs provided the rest of the money, a rather marginal sum. The declining power of the soccer federations, no longer able to support 'their' clubs, required the latter to seek new sources for support and created opportunities for private capital to become involved in the management of the clubs.

In September 1990, the British businessman Robert Maxwell was negotiating the purchase of Beitar Jerusalem. This team enjoyed a unique reputation. First, it was considered by its achievements to be one of top teams. Second, it was also one of the most popular teams, drawing support from all over the country. Third, and most important, Beitar was affiliated to the right-wing Likud Party which held office during that period. Beitar was reputed to have a big, loyal, and aggressive right-wing crowd that did not refrain from mixing soccer with politics, and was highly nationalistic and conservative. Like other soccer clubs in the 1980s Beitar was in need of financial support and Maxwell was not just a foreigner with capital, but also Jewish (A. Ben-Porat, 2001).

Maxwell, despite being praised by the daily paper *Ma'ariv* as 'philanthropic and a Zionist', was first and foremost a businessman seeking an investment. He had already invested in several ventures in Israel (e.g. Teva, a pharmaceutical company, Scitex, a high-tech company) with total investments reaching some US\$100 million (*Ma'ariv*, 7 Sept. 1990). During that period, Maxwell was negotiating the expansion of his investments in Israel, and was also interested (and pressured by local politicians) in purchasing a soccer club as a business venture, something that had never happened in Israel before. Maxwell himself was no novice to the world of soccer, and held an interest in several English clubs (Fynn and Gust, 1989). After his mysterious death in 1991, his business empire collapsed. Maxwell had insisted on a merger between Beitar Jerusalem and Hapoel Jerusalem, the latter club being then affiliated with Histadrut and the Labor Party — in direct political opposition to Likud, Beitar's patron. Both clubs rejected the idea of the merger, essentially refusing Maxwell's unconditional demand and the purchase of Beitar was cancelled.

Maxwell's interest in Beitar was the only direct attempt by foreign capital to become involved in soccer in Israel, but local capital rapidly became involved after 1993 when Jacob Shachar purchased the management rights of Maccabi Haifa. In the following decade most clubs of the top division ('national' league) were transferred to private management. After the defeat of the Labor party (formerly MAPAI) in the 1977 elections the party's dominant institution, the Histadrut (the labor federation but also the owner of factories, real estate, and the

patron of the Hapoel sports federation), began to lose its power. Its collapse in the late 1980s broke open the gates of the last bastion against the privatization of soccer, forcing even the clubs of the Hapoel federation to be open to private entrepreneurs. Soccer in these years shifted from a 'political' towards a 'commercial model', with the old guard of politicians and party bureaucrats replaced by new directors and management made up of businessmen.

The involvement of local private capital in soccer began in low gear. According to the daily newspaper, *Yediot Acharonot* (24 Sept. 1994), club budgets in 1994 ranged between US\$1.5 and \$6 million. By the 2000/1 season, according to Dunn & Bradstreet (5 Feb. 2001), this had increased to between US\$2.25 and \$15 million. The entire value of the 'premier league's' budget grew from an estimated \$42 million in 1994/5 (when the division included 16 teams) to an estimated \$65 million in 2000/1 (when the division had been reduced to 12 teams). Thus, in five years, money invested in the top league had increased by 50 percent, despite a reduction in the number of teams. The new directors of soccer clubs are Israeli citizens who can be described as medium- to large-size capitalists in Israeli terms. Yaacov Shachar, the owner of Maccabi Haifa, owns a car import company and recently also one of Israel's biggest insurance companies. Loni Herzikovits, of Maccabi Tel-Aviv, is the owner of a company that imports electronic devices. Robi Shapiro, former owner of Hapoel Haifa, made his fortune in fish farms in Nigeria. Meir Shamir of Hapoel Petach Tikva owns a local high-tech company. Gad Zeevi, former owner of Beitar Jerusalem, invested in real estate and several other ventures in Israel and abroad. In addition, three businessmen are principal directors of Hapoel Tel-Aviv.

Most of the businesses described above are also Israeli in terms of their operations and are only partially globalized. Only Zeevi and Shapiro held significant business ventures outside of Israel, but were still considered Israeli businessmen. In other words, all the private capital is 'local' with no real foreign investments involved. The transformation of soccer from a 'political' to a 'commercial model', therefore, involved an increase in private investment. While the development of privatization in Israel was related to overall globalization, empowering business vis-a-vis the state, the capital invested in soccer was largely local. The investment of local capital, however, has further implications for the globalization of Israeli soccer. First, the material revenues associated with participation in European events such as the UEFA cup and the Champions League motivate Israeli teams to participate and owners to expand their investments in the club. Second, owners of certain clubs and the IFA clashed over the weekly training plan of the national team. The IFA, which considered itself the final authority, was challenged by owners who demanded to be consulted since the players were their employees and the national team's policy interfered with their club's plans. The earlier political clashes over representation in the national team gave way to clashes associated with the clubs' particular commercial interests.

The Labor Factor

Mobility into and out of Israeli soccer under the 'political model' was limited and fragmentary. In 1952, Hapoel Haifa imported the first foreign player from Apoel FC of Cyprus. In 1962, two other non-Israeli players were imported from South America to Beitar Tel-Aviv. Further importation of non-Israeli players was then prohibited until 1989 by the IFA. The only exceptions were foreign Jewish players who could, due to the Israeli citizenship law of return, immigrate to Israel, join soccer teams, and be considered Israeli players. Exportation of Israelis began in the early 1960s, when Israeli players went overseas to play in South Africa and Australia. The IFA could not prevent players from moving and playing in other countries. As in other democratic states, individuals were free to emigrate. An attempt by the IFA to ban the return of those players to the Israeli league proved ineffective.

The move of several Israeli players in the 1970s and 1980s was different from the earlier moves described above — the destination was now the more prestigious European soccer market. Accordingly, the players were acquired from their Israeli clubs through local and foreign agents, and their income at their new clubs was much higher than their earnings in Israel. Since the 1980s, with the privatization and commercialization of the game in Israel, an internal market for players has also operated in Israel, with players evaluated and purchased according to their 'exchange value'. Nevertheless, the movement of players was still one-way as non-Israeli players were not allowed to play in the local league.

In February 1986, two foreign players joined the Israeli soccer league. One was a Scotsman, Peter Lorimer, the other a Jew from Argentina, Daniel Brailovski. While both were foreigners, their legal position upon entering Israel was different. Being Jewish, Brailovski received immediate citizenship under the law of return and was allowed to play for Maccabi Haifa. Lorimer, who was supposed to be both a coach and a player, was obliged, after a legal dispute, to settle for the coaching position only. Toward the end of the 1990s, however, a massive influx of foreign players began and an active market started operating.

Israel's accelerated process of economic liberalization was highlighted by incoming flows of capital and labor. A small stream of foreign labor in the early 1990s quickly turned into a wave, as up to a quarter of a million people (many illegally), entered the Israeli labor market. The inflow of foreign labor was considered to be necessary for the growth of the local economy and was tacitly welcomed by the government as a substitute for the Palestinian workforce. For different reasons, Israeli soccer took the opportunity to open its gates to foreign players. The old guard of the Israeli soccer management, the soccer federations, and the IFA, came to realize that they could not prevent the import of foreign players. Israeli players had gone to play in Europe, thereby opening the game, albeit one-sidedly and in a very limited way, to the global market. The big Israeli clubs were keen to add foreign players to their teams, both for their talent and their cost — due to Israel's income tax regulations, a foreign player can be less expensive than a local player of equal worth. In 1987, the chairman of the Knesset Sports Committee announced that it was no longer possible to forbid Israeli clubs from importing players. The Maccabi federation was already sup-

portive of the change and the opposition of the last barrier, the Hapoel federation, was removed when the chairman of the Histadrut, who also had a senior role in the IFA, declared it was time to allow the import of foreign players.

In the winter of 1989, the IFA decided to permit each club in the senior league to recruit two foreign players. In 1993 the quota was raised to three in the first division and two in the second division. In 1999, the number of non-Israelis in first division teams — the premier league — was raised to five (A. Ben-Porat, 2003). In September 1989, ten foreigners played in the Israeli league — all in the top division. The first foreign players had been recruited mainly from South America, the former USSR states, and the former Yugoslavia. The money they earned in Israel was, according to the newspaper *Ma'ariv* (24 Sept. 1991) 'more than double what they could earn in their own country'. The position of the Israeli economy — in the higher echelons of the semi-periphery — was proving attractive to players from the periphery of the world economy. Thus, over 60 percent of the more than 500 foreign players who were imported during this period came from the ex-communist countries; only a few came from Western Europe. This 'match' reflected the financial standing of the Israeli soccer clubs and the relatively low cost of these players. The average cost of the foreign players in the early 1990s was about US\$50,000 per season, while the cost of top Israeli players was then around \$100,000.

The few players from Western Europe, as expected considering the economy and prestige of Israeli soccer, were not from the top rank of players. Towards the late 1990s the bigger soccer clubs, whose resources were far greater than the rest, began to spend more on players. Maccabi Haifa was able to pay close to a million dollars for a player, and paying half a million dollars for a foreign player is no longer unusual at the start of the 21st century.

As with capital, local conditions determine the level and impact of global flows of labor on Israeli soccer. On the one hand, despite the restrictions on the importation of foreign players, globalization in terms of labor inflow and outflow is evident. On the other hand, the limits of available capital, Israeli soccer's marginality, and (it is safe to assume) Israel's general security situation restrict the level of the flow of labor and its quality. Globalization seems to operate at a somewhat higher gear in the export of Israeli players. Playing abroad has become a legitimate aspiration of (and expectation from) the most talented players, and the process involves European and local soccer agents who are in the business of scouting and purchasing Israeli players. The inflow and outflow of players has resulted in a certain change in the cultural atmosphere in Israel.

The Factor of Culture

Soccer played a part in state and nation building in Israel, and was therefore highly political and nationalistic. In October 1948, while battles were still being fought, a national team traveled to the United States to play against local teams in New York and other major cities. This tour was initiated and organized by the state and the army was ordered to oversee preparations for the trip (Porat and Lerer, 1998). In the following years international games involving the national

team, and even friendly games between local Israeli and non-Israeli clubs, became demonstrations of nationalistic spirit (A. Ben-Porat, 2003; Porat and Lerer, 1998). Like other tools of nation-building soccer excluded the Arab minority and the orthodox Jewish community which chose to keep its distance from the nation-building process. Also within the state, as noted, soccer was not all about unity since teams and their supporters were affiliated to political parties through the three federations. This meant that the rivalry between fans often transcended that of pure sport to become a political-ideological confrontation between the main parties.

Soccer, therefore, was both a tool of nation and state building and a manifestation of political rivalries during the first decades of statehood. The political model dictated the behavior of the clubs, the players, and the fans. However, from the 1980s, the stature of soccer as nationalism, and even more so, its relation to politics, began to wane as the commercialization of soccer impacted upon relations between the clubs, the players, and the fans. The constant mobility of players, no longer attached to their clubs, and no longer a 'symbol' of their club, indicated to the fans that 'loyalty' is relative. While in earlier years it would have been almost unthinkable for a player from Beitar to transfer to Hapoel, or vice versa, this attitude withered. The addition of foreign players strengthened these feelings, as fans remained the most stable part of the club and the growing competition required adjustment to the new rules of the game.

Fans could no longer be taken for granted as soccer clubs had to compete with foreign clubs that became available to Israeli spectators through television and later the internet. Israeli fans were now able to watch live matches from the British and other leagues across the world. Many fans reorganized their sympathies between the local club, the national team, and a foreign club they could follow. Indeed, in a recent survey, 50 percent of soccer fans in Israel declared that they had an 'overseas sweetheart' such as Manchester United, Liverpool, Real Madrid, or Milan (*Sports Magazine*, 2002).

The possibility that those loyalties would clash, in a direct engagement between the local and foreign teams, was remote though not impossible. Overall, the Israeli fan distinguishes between 'his' clubs (local and foreign) and the national team. Each provides 'him' with different aspects of culture and identity and different emotional outlets (Veichselfish and Ben-Porat, 2002). The average Israeli soccer fan, therefore, has become cosmopolitan, able to accommodate his attachment to a local club within a wider world affiliation. One significant finding is that fans in Israel, much like King's study of Manchester United fans (2000), tend in case of a conflict of interest, to prefer 'their' local club over the Israeli national team. Thus, if a player is valuable to the local team in its fight for points in the league, many fans oppose his absence from the roster in order to represent Israel in an international arena (Veichselfish and Ben-Porat, 2002).

The cultural impact of globalization on soccer is also revealed in the routine, everyday behavior of the major participants. Players who aspire to 'make it' globally, fans who watch games played far away in real time, and merchandise associated with global player 'icons' and teams is proudly sported across Israel by soccer fans. As suggested, the interaction between local and global cultures may be also a potential site of resistance. But, regarding Israeli soccer, across its

major participants — players, managers, agents, and fans — no sign of resistance to globalization has been recorded. The globalization of soccer is not considered as a threat to local culture but rather a venue — in aspiration more than in reality — for national representation. As such, games of the national team, Israeli teams playing in European tournaments, and individual Israeli players who play in Europe, draw much attention. Thus, the desire of the participants of Israeli soccer to be part of, and look like, the core countries of soccer, motivates the adoption of a global culture of soccer — the apparel of global soccer becomes the apparel of the locals.

Conclusions

The transformation of Israeli soccer in the last decade, as we have attempted to demonstrate, provides an interesting test case for the influence of globalization and its limits. We argue that globalization's influence over sports is molded by local, national, and regional settings and therefore needs to be studied empirically, taking into account the specific economic, political, and cultural context. We further argue that not only is the influence of globalization different from one locale to another, the divergence also applies to the three major factors of the process: the flows of capital, people, and culture. Israeli soccer seems to support this conclusion — its globalization has been both facilitated and limited by wider social developments, and has achieved different measures in the three factors described.

The globalization and liberalization of Israeli society since the 1980s has also affected soccer. Formerly, soccer was embedded in politics and national identity, and was only partially commercialized. The overall liberalization of Israeli society and the waning power of the political parties (the former patrons of soccer) have facilitated the commercialization of the game, introducing a profit motive and economic rationality of both players and owners. The breakdown of the old system was both influenced by globalization and itself aided the process with its openness to flows of capital, labor, and culture. Yet, as noted, the globalization of soccer, in all three of its factors, like that of Israeli society, has only been partial, limited by the local setting.

Investments of private capital in soccer have grown considerably in the past decade, but they are still modest in comparison to the European leagues. Moreover, these investments are almost entirely from local sources rather than foreign capital, as Israeli soccer is not yet a profitable investment. Finally, these investments are not divorced from the political/economic context. Many of the local investors made their profits at the peak of the globalization of the Israeli economy. However, in the current uncertain state of the Israeli economy, some are withdrawing and the others are cutting down their investments. Flows of manpower in the form of foreign players were facilitated by new regulations allowing teams to recruit abroad. From the start these flows were limited by the profitability of the teams, which could not afford first-rate players. Again, the political/economic context is important. With the general economic decline and security threats on the rise, teams are even more limited in their recruitment. The

security situation has caused UEFA, since 2002, to ban the playing international matches in Israel, putting even more limits on Israeli teams.

The effects of globalization on soccer are somewhat more impressive when examining the relations between Israeli fans and Israeli players abroad. While the number of successful players is limited (in the year 2002, some four or five), these players are admired and fans follow their games via satellite TV and the internet. Globalization has allowed Israelis not only to follow their successful countrymen abroad, but also to become attached to foreign leagues, teams, and players. The overall cultural effects, however, are difficult to assess. While Israeli soccer fans are globalized, local identities are far from being erased. This can be seen in the continuing interest in local teams and the national team, as well as in the various manifestations of Israeli or Arab identity during matches, closely related to the developments in the political arena. In conclusion, Israeli soccer has followed the rest of society and become enmeshed in global flows. Yet, and also like the rest of Israeli society, this globalization is limited by local resources, former structures, and by the political context, mainly the pendulum swings of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

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