

Introduction to Global Interactions

IB Geography HL | How places connect and why those connections matter

A phone used in Bangkok may depend on minerals mined in Africa, components made in East Asia and software developed elsewhere. A video can cross borders in seconds; a shipping delay can raise prices thousands of kilometres away. Global interactions link everyday choices to distant people, places and environments.

Globalization and global interactions: **Globalization** is the process through which places become more interconnected and interdependent through cross-border flows. Interdependence means that changes in one place can affect livelihoods, decisions and opportunities elsewhere. Connections are economic, social, cultural and political, with environmental consequences.

Global interactions draw attention to the relationships themselves, including how societies **adopt, adapt or resist** outside influences. Global change is not simply the spread of Western culture. Korean entertainment, Indian digital services and international migration illustrate flows in many directions. Connections vary over time and are never equally accessible to everyone.

Flows move through networks: A **flow** is a movement between places. A **network** is the system that enables it, such as shipping routes, financial systems or fibre-optic cables. A **node** is a connecting point within a network: a port, airport, data centre or global city.

Flow	Examples and connections
Goods and services	Food, electronics, tourism and remotely delivered services connect producers with customers.
Capital	Foreign direct investment (FDI) funds overseas business operations; remittances are money migrants send home.
People	Migration, tourism and study connect labour markets, families and cultures.
Information and ideas	Research, streaming media and social platforms spread knowledge, culture and misinformation.

Why connections have intensified: Trade and migration have long histories, including connections shaped by colonialism. Container shipping, air transport, digital communication and policies that reduce trade or investment barriers have accelerated them. TNCs coordinate **global supply chains**, spreading production across countries. This creates **time-space compression**: distance becomes less of a barrier as movement and communication become faster or cheaper. Physical distance still matters for transport, borders and access.

Power and uneven connections

Being connected is different from controlling the connection

Who shapes global interactions: **States** regulate borders, negotiate trade agreements and provide infrastructure. **Transnational corporations (TNCs)** operate in more than one country and influence where investment, production and jobs go. The WTO and UN support rules and cooperation. NGOs and communities influence change through campaigns and collective action.

Power is unequal. A firm that controls a platform, technology or supply chain may set terms for many smaller businesses. Global cities such as Singapore concentrate finance, transport and decision-making. Core and periphery describe differences in influence and dependence, but they are not fixed country labels: prosperous hubs and marginalized communities can exist within the same country.

Opportunities and costs: Connections can create employment, access larger markets, provide access to technology, and enable cultural exchange. However, gains depend on wages, working conditions, ownership and regulation. Workers may receive little of a product's final value, while communities bear pollution. Export growth does not guarantee evenly shared benefits.

Culture also changes in different ways. **Homogenization** makes places more similar through shared brands and media. **Glocalization** adapts global products to local preferences, such as international restaurant menus tailored to local tastes. Cultural mixing can create new identities, while communities may resist changes they consider harmful.

Contemporary connections and vulnerabilities: The digital divide. ITU estimated that 6 billion people used the internet in 2025, while 2.2 billion remained offline [1]. Access also depends on affordability, reliability and skills. Online learning, AI tools, and digital work can broaden opportunities, but people with limited access may benefit less.

Supply-chain disruption. Attacks on Red Sea shipping in 2024 led ships to divert around Africa, lengthening journeys and increasing costs [2]. This shows how disruption at a strategic route can spread through a network. Diversifying suppliers can improve resilience but increase costs. Globalization can be reorganised rather than reversed.

How can globalization be measured: The **KOF Globalisation Index** combines economic, social and political indicators. It distinguishes **de facto** globalization (actual flows and activities) from **de jure** globalization (policies and conditions that enable connections) [3]. It enables comparisons over time. However, national averages hide local inequalities, data are delayed, and indicator choices affect results. A high score does not prove that connections are fair or sustainable.

The geographical question: Which places and people are connected, who controls the flows, and how are the benefits and risks distributed? Use **power, place, networks and scale** to explain the answer.

Sources | Adapted from the three supplied introductory resources. Updated examples and methodology:

[1] ITU, Facts and Figures 2025: [itu.int](https://www.itu.int) [2] UNCTAD, Shipping disruptions, 22 February 2024: unctad.org

[3] ETH Zurich, KOF Globalisation Index: kof.ethz.ch