Frames in Unit 9

We are told that the world is becoming increasingly globalized. We are increasingly tied together in a global network that allows us to share information rapidly with each other, and perhaps form one global culture. We have a giant world-wide system of production and distribution. Even our communities are being globalized. But this transformation raises as many issues as it resolves.

00:01

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00:30

Planet earth from above; animated lines represent the networks that connect us
Aspects of our global culture: McDonald's, a worldwide chain, and a soccer stadium

01:05

Photos of massive shipping containers – first up close, then further away, then on a ship that will transport them across the globe

01:48

Photo of an iPhone – one of the technology advancements that has contributed to our globalized community

02:27

Image of the crowded conditions in a clothing production facility; a factory emits billows of polluting smoke

We are told that over the course of the last century, the world has become increasingly "globalized." Now, this term is confusing and is often used in different ways. But it tells a story that connects all the frames in this course. In fact, one way to get a working definition of globalization is to look at recent events through each of our three frames.

We can begin to define globalization by noticing how we are all increasingly tied together in one "global" network. For the first time, it's become possible to speak and interact in real time with people on the other side of the world. We can rapidly send information to each other. We share ideas and concepts with great efficiency. Some people have even argued that we are increasingly sharing one global culture. They believe our differences are being flattened and we have more of the same experiences as people far away.

Globalization also means that our production and distribution has increasingly become connected in one giant, worldwide economic system. Products we use are made from many raw materials dug up, cut down, or grown in different parts of the world. Those resources are then shipped to other places to be processed into parts. Those parts are moved yet again to another place, where they are assembled. Finally, the assembled product is transported to a market somewhere in the world for sale. The profits from the sale may then be shared by investors and business owners living in yet more parts of the world. Production and distribution of goods and services has become truly global.

Our communities are also becoming globalized. Once, the nation-state seemed to be the ultimate, largest possible community. But today, we can become members of digital communities that connect people living in different nations or parts of the world. These communities of people share common work, hobbies, interests, or beliefs.

But within the context of the frames, globalization raises as many questions as it resolves: Who benefits from this global network? Who can contribute? Who runs the network and whose ideas can move freely? And what happens to privacy when we are all connected all the time?

Similarly, who profits from this global production and distribution? Who makes things, who gets paid, and who gets to use the things we make? And what's the impact of this rapidly expanding economy on our world and on our environment?

Finally, if we are moving towards a global community, why is there still violence, and even genocide, between groups? Why, recently, do we see a resurgence in nationalism in ethnic identity, and, in some cases, in religion? Is it because people are lost in this vast global system? Are they seeking some smaller, closer community to anchor themselves to something solid?

These are among the many questions that make studying the past meaningful to us as we look to understand the present.

You are already participants in making the communities, networks, and products of the future. How will you use what you know of the global past to do it better? These are the questions that make world history meaningful, useful, and usable.