**“****The physical environment has a greater influence than political and technological processes upon global interactions.” Discuss this statement**

Global interactions are series of complex and two-way processes consisting of flows and exchanges. They arise from disparities that exist in between different places around the globe, and these disparities can be either in technology, politics, or the environment. It is these interactions that essentially define what the core (developed and central) and peripheral (underdeveloped and marginal) regions of the Earth are. Although all three of these factors affect global interactions to some extent, this essay will show that it is technological process, rather than the physical environment or political processes, that has the largest influence upon these global interactions. Thus, the essay will disprove the statement that “the physical environment has a greater influence than political and technological processes upon global interactions.”

The physical environment is one of the factors that affects global interactions. The two main ways in which the physical environment influences global interactions is through the availability of natural resources and the geographical isolation of a market. The influence of natural resource availability is evident, for example, in Venezuela. Since the discovery of oil in Lake Maracaibo in 1914, many transnational corporations such as Chevron and Oxy have moved in to extract oil alongside the national oil company, PDVSA. By 1950, Venezuela had become the world’s fourth wealthiest country, at a GDP per capita of $7,424, (surpassed only by the USA, Switzerland, and New Zealand) and enjoyed the highest standard of living in all of Latin America. This led to many immigrants, especially after WWII when much of Europe and Asia was in a rebuilding phase. In 1958, Venezuela, devised the plan for the petroleum cartel that would become OPEC, in which Venezuela has now become the 6th largest exporter. With 95% of Venezuela’s exports, there is no doubt that the oil industry propelled the country to what it became. The geographical isolation of a market is also important. For example, the island of St. Helena, before 2017, was only accessible via a 5 day and 6 night boat trip from Cape Town, South Africa. This has been the case since the construction of the Suez canal, reducing the need for a port in off the west of Africa. Mobile phone coverage was only introduced in 2015, meaning that residents could not interact with the foreign world through the telephone. As a result, the population of the island has dropped from 5,000 to 4,000 over the past 30 years. It is clear that the physical environment has affected global interactions in both of these places. However, political and technological processes can overcome these physical influences, for better or for worse.

The advancement of technology in the modern world has shaped what has become known as the concept of “the shrinking world,” including the concept of time-space convergence (the reduction in travel times caused by the increased ease of transport and communications.) One example of this is the development of the Airbus A380 and its commercial launch in 2007. As a result of increasing power and lowering the density of aircrafts, the Airbus A380 is able to hold over 555 people. The aircraft has over 550 square meters of usable floor space, and even at its size serves 2 out of the top 10 longest non-stop flights (including a route from Dubai to Auckland). Furthermore, it can cruise at 903 kilometers per hour. Due to its capacity, speed, and range, the aircraft is a testament to how modern technology has been able to connect more people to further places at faster speeds, and as such, Airbus has delivered over 230 orders for the aircraft since its inception. This has brought countries with large commercial airlines, such as the UAE, Qatar, and Singapore, to the forefront of air travel, and its respective flagship airports at Dubai, Doha, and Singapore are amongst the most frequented in the entire world. For these countries, this represents a very large source of income and they have since become major world business hubs, especially among the Eastern hemisphere. The development of air travel has also ultimately alleviated some of the problems related to the environmental isolation of St. Helena. Since the opening of its airport in 2016, the island has been able to operate charter flights to Johannesburg, thus vastly reducing travel time and making the island significantly more accessible. However, it is important to note that these technological advancements can be overridden or enable by political processes.

The political processes that occur around the world are the largest influence on interactions around the world. These political processes include international legislation as well as the formation of multinational organizations that encourage or discourage exchanges and flows of goods and people in between locations around the world. For example, one of the most trafficked routes of the Airbus 380 used to be the Doha-Dubai route connecting the two major air traffic hubs in the Middle East. The route was essential as it connected large amounts of passengers connecting between Etihad, Emirates, and Qatar Airways. However, amid political tensions between the UAE and Qatar, all 10 daily flights between the two cities have been suspended. This has caused labor reductions and increase in average price costs for both airlines, making all of these airlines drop below Singapore airlines in the Skytrax world rankings in 2017, and subsequently both of their Middle Eastern hubs to drop below Changi Airport in the airport world rankings. Another example of the influence of political interactions is the ways in which Venezuela has managed its oil assets. Through its prosperous era of development in the mid-20th century, the Venezuelan government used its revenues irresponsibly, leading to extremely high and unsustainable welfare costs. Once the oil industry crashed in the 1980s, Venezuela hit a recession, and since then has not been able to recover to its status as one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The downfall of the Venezuelan economy further accelerated in 2004 after the government blacklisted political opponents in the oil business, leading to less skilled labor and a lowering in oil production, therefore contributing to what has now become a crisis in Venezuela. Global interactions can be further influenced by the development of multinational organizations. One such organization is the Incheon Free Economic Zone. Started in 2002, the zone provides economic incentives and tax breaks to businesses in one of the fastest economically developing regions in the world. The zone is central to the Korean, Japanese, and Chinese markets and ensures the simultaneous development of all three countries and contributes to their status as G20 countries and part of the global core.

Overall, the physical environment, political processes, and environmental processes, all have roles in the shaping global interactions. However, the statement that “The physical environment has a greater influence than political and technological processes upon global interactions” is untrue as political processes are, to a much larger extent, the main influence in global interactions.