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Profit At All Cost

Globalization is not happening by chance. It is something that the power centers of the world actively seek and enforce in order to attain commercial, economic and political advantage. The series **Profit At All Cost** illustrates in simple terms what globalization means – an increase in the volume and frequency of the exchange of people, goods, capital and ideas beyond the borders of nation states. It has been made possible by the lowering of barriers that used to protect countries and regions from economic integration. Today everything is measured by the same yardstick, that of Profit At All Cost. And no mercy is shown to those who cannot keep pace.

01 The White Lake – Milk, Might and Markets

Few people are aware of the effect that the low price of European milk is having on dairy farmers in Africa. Trade liberalization and billions of euros in subsidies for agriculture within the E.U. mean more and more milk is being produced there. This in turn is destroying local milk cooperatives in Africa and denying farmers their livelihood.

02 Matters Hirsute – The Global Exchange of Human Hair

Human hair grows around one centimeter per month. On any single day, 500 tonnes of hair grows on the heads of the world's population. Nonetheless, it is difficult to meet global demand for toupees, wigs and hairpieces. India is the world's largest supplier of hair; hair traders are based in Spain and Italy; hairpieces are designed in Germany and the United States and made in China. Hair is a hugely profitable business.

03 For a Bowlful of Rice – How the Financial Crisis Affects Lives

It was never easy for Indian rice farmer Bodedulla Bhramaiaam to get credit. But now the effects of the financial crisis have pushed him and many other farmers to the brink. Some are committing suicide out of sheer desperation, as traders in the world's financial centers find new ways to speculate with food commodities.

04 Burning Money – Profit at Others' Expense

In the crisis triggered by the bursting of the property bubble in the United States, many people lost all their savings. There is evidence to suggest that key players in this economic disaster were aware of the risks. We chart the progression of the crisis – from real-estate speculation in small-town USA; to the centers of global commerce, New York and London; and on to Germany and France.

05 Rock-Bottom Prices – The Consequences of the Cell Phone Boom

The cell phone has long ceased to be a luxury good, and is now a disposable item. In the Indian city of Delhi, laborers smelt down wires and circuit boards from discarded phones imported illegally from industrialized western countries. They work with their bare hands and without respiratory protection. Their task is to extract valuable metals such as copper and gold from the e-waste. The process creates dangerous fumes that poison the environment.

06 A Matter of Life and Death – The Trade in Human Organs

Thousands of people afflicted by serious illnesses around the world hope their suffering can be alleviated by an organ transplant, but the number of donors is declining. International criminal organ traders earn millions by capitalizing on these patients' dire need. Together with doctors, they operate global networks supplying wealthy patients with organs from the poorest of the poor.



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07 Human Capital – Workers on the Move

In a globalized labor market, people are compelled to be ever more mobile. International competition for work turns people into a commodity, to be shuttled from A to B. It is now a worldwide phenomenon.

08 Empty Stomachs and Fat Profits – Hunger Despite Abundance

Around one billion of the world's people are hungry right now. Stock market speculation and the cultivation of energy crops are driving up food prices and yield high profits for a select few. One possible solution could be the development of new types of genetically modified rice.

09 Fast, Cheap and Fair? – The Dubious Methods of the Textile Industry

Working conditions in the global textile manufacturing industry are often appalling. Public pressure has meant that textile companies have been forced to begin taking steps to improve conditions for their workers. But cost pressures and tight delivery deadlines mean suppliers are still circumventing existing rules.

10 Modern Prophets – The Power and the Impotence of the Forecasting Industry

Whether they concern the price of oil, financial markets or population growth – every day sees a whole new set of forecasts and predictions. The forecasting industry makes billions in profits. The forecasters' statements shape public discourse, but the actual worth of their predictions is questionable. Surprisingly simple methods reveal why this is so, and who is capitalizing on the situation.

11 Poor Despite Wealth – Resources in the Wrong Hands

Gold and cocoa are Ghana's most important exports. But in spite of these valuable resources, the African country still numbers among the poorest in the world. Profits don't stay with the producers, but end up in foreign countries. Now there are plans to drill for oil off the coast of Ghana. But it's still not certain whether local people will benefit at all from this potentially lucrative new source of income.

12 Duped Donors – The Illegal Trade in Egg Cells in Romania

More and more infertile couples are hoping that donor egg cells will fulfill their desire to have children. But such cells are in short supply because of the great health risks to the donors. Unscrupulous doctors in Romania persuade poor young women to donate their egg cells for a small fee. They don't mention the risks involved in the procedure – let alone the huge profits this medical mafia makes when it sells the cells.

13 An Island of Debt – Iceland's Crash

Before the global economic crisis of 2008/2009, Iceland was the world's fifth richest nation. Then its financial system suddenly collapsed. Its citizens now have to bear the burden of billions in debt. The country is in dire straits; an overhaul of existing structures is essential. Is what happened in Iceland symbolic of the weaknesses of the global financial system?