

## **The skill of travel: Networks into neighbourhoods**

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This paper will explore the social potential of the complementary flows of people and resources between central and peripheral locations. Tourism generates travel from central to peripheral locations, the search for employment creates travel to centres, the latter generating critical reverse flows of remittance, the former communicating the experience of travel through increasingly convergent digital technologies of video camera, picture-phone and the travel-blogs of “gap year” backpackers. The skill and reward of travel is partly in communicating back to your base.

The paper will argue that the management of these movements and flows in both directions creates new skills and networking capabilities across groups of friends and relatives. These in turn deliver new networked relationships which bind distant locations into virtual neighbourhoods.

Such exchanges have also created a new sense of connection between western tourists and the communities they have visited in the tsunami affected regions of Asia. The response to the disaster contradicts assumptions about “compassion fatigue”, and the paper suggests that the forms of adjacency created by such exchanges have transformed “strangers” into “people like us”.

Powerful images and accounts were brought to the rest of the world by the tourist technologies of digital video cameras and cell phones. These technologies permitted a virtual adjacency and also enabled the tracing and tracking of the foreign victims of the tsunami. The same technologies allowed effective warning to reach some communities. Alerted by overseas community members, villagers in the Pondicherry area were able to recall fishing boats and evacuate the danger zone (see <http://www.digital-review.org/aud16a.htm>).

The paper will explore the distributed and collective nature of the skill set generated by the creation and maintenance of remittance and tourist infrastructures and how these can be harnessed for other uses in both recovery and development.