

The Slawson Award

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Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Peter Mackie

Education

- BA Geography, University of Wales Swansea
- PhD Geography, University of Wales Swansea

Current position

In 2011 Peter was a Lecturer in the School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff.

Slawson Award

Peter received the Slawson Award in 2004 for his project entitled ***Children in Informal Trading: Cusco, Peru***. The thesis identified a clear gap in informal trading and child labour literature. Whilst both bodies of literature explored children's work in informal trading to some extent, neither fully investigated the role that children play in this particular activity.



Informal trading is an important part of the retailing landscape in many majority world countries, particularly in Latin America. Furthermore, it is an exceptionally visible part of the retailing environment. The selected case study city of Cusco is a city where informal trading plays a key socio-economic role. Notably, children can be seen to play a role in informal trading activities in Cusco, which would appear to be a contravention of current international policies that seek to eradicate child labour. The research sought to 'investigate the geography of children in informal trading in Cusco by closely examining the nature of their work, and their experiences as child traders, within the policy and legal context'.

The research adopted a multi-method approach, incorporating informal discussions, examination of documentary material, 30 depth key informant interviews, observational surveys describing 8,600 trading units, 400 questionnaire surveys and 30 detailed interviews incorporating visual methods. This diverse research methodology ensured that all informal trading in Cusco was described, identifying the role of children. Furthermore, it allowed a detailed insight into the lives and experiences of the children who work in informal trading. In addition to the more traditional research methods, time was spent working as an English teacher in Cusco, based in a number of different charities associated with street children. This enabled trust to be developed and proved to be extremely useful in creating an environment where the children could learn about the research and about the researcher, whilst also providing the opportunity for informal discussions to take place. Without the Slawson Award, Peter would not have been able to spend such a length of time in Cusco, hence less time would have been spent becoming familiar with the children and consequently the results would have been a less accurate reflection of their experiences.

Since the Slawson Award

Following the research project, supported by the Slawson Award, Peter, alongside several other academics based at Swansea University, helped to establish the *Geographies of Age Research Group* which will encourage further research in the field of children's geographies and age-related topics at the University. Peter also founded *Kids in Cusco*, a children's charitable organisation which involves talking to school children in South Wales about the situation of children in the developing world, particularly in Cusco. This is a method of disseminating his research findings to children in Wales but more importantly raising global awareness of the key issues. The organisation has since been incorporated as a project into the charity Discovery and is growing exponentially. Peter maintains a role in training volunteers and developing the scheme.

Following the completion of his PhD, Peter took a role as the Senior Research Officer at Shelter Cymru, a charity that seeks to address homelessness in Wales. In this role Peter was responsible for developing and delivering research that would improve homelessness policies and services. Subsequently in 2009 Peter moved back into academia and became a Lecturer in the School of City and Regional Planning, where he continues to pursue his interests in housing and homelessness policy and the informal sector, particularly in Latin America. In 2011 Peter carried out a project exploring the rights of street traders in Cusco and Quito.