

Geography is all around us, Geography effects [sic] us all. Me, I'm geography. This building is part of geography; everything is geography. Geography isn't just about Jamaica's there, Africa's there, Britain's there, it's about us as a community.

(Anton (age 15), participant in the GA's Young People's Geographies Project)

The Young People's Geography (YPG) project

The GA Project *Young People's Geographies* was about young people working with their teachers and drawing from their own experiences and curiosity to help shape their geography curriculum. Usually, teachers decide what young people get in their lessons. But what do children and young people make of the geography they get? This project explored practical ways for young people's interests, experiences, aspirations and curiosity to influence the geography curriculum. It was about making school geography more exciting and relevant to students by involving them in curriculum making and by focusing on their own lived geographies.

The geography curricula developed by this project were characterised by:

- conversations between teachers, young people and academic geographers.
- pedagogies that encouraged communication and exchange, such as argumentation, debate and decision making
- involving young people's everyday experiences, as reported by themselves and from their geographical research.

The project was set up with the idea of conversation at its heart. It encouraged teachers and students to talk to each other about their perceptions of geography. The project recognised that young people participate in their own 'lived' or 'everyday' geographies. They live somewhere, shop here, 'hang out there', have friends who live over there, have relatives that come from elsewhere. Many take holidays in distant places, and have interesting perceptions of 'other' people and places. The project sought to draw from these experiences and help young people understand them, connecting them to the wider world of people, places and the human and physical processes that operate through space.

Mary Biddulph comments that Anton's quote above captures for her the essence of what a geography curriculum is all about.

'For Anton school geography clearly isn't just about locational knowledge (but he concedes that it is partly about this.) What he expresses is a more sophisticated take on the discipline, capturing his own position within it and a sense that geography connects him to others and elsewhere. The skilful teacher recognises and values this, but also finds ways to induct Anton to ways of understanding the world using ideas that may be new, challenging and sometimes requiring painstaking effort'.¹

¹ Biddulph, M. (2012) *Where is the curriculum created?* in Lambert, D. And Jones, M. *Debates in Geography*. London: Routledge.

- To find out more look at *Geography* Autumn 2012 – the whole issue is concerned with *Children's and young people's geographies*, but particularly Mary Biddulph's article on 'Young People's Geographies and the school curriculum.'
- Explore the *Teaching Geography* Summer 2010 issue which contains several articles about Young People's Geographies.