



## ARTICLE

# Tracing young people's engagements with the diplomacy and geopolitics of a British Overseas Territory

Matthew C. Benwell<sup>1</sup>  | Catriona Pennell<sup>2</sup> | Alasdair Pinkerton<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, Newcastle, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Exeter, Cornwall, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, UK

## Correspondence

Matthew C. Benwell, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University, Newcastle NE1 7RU, UK.

Email: [matthew.benwell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:matthew.benwell@ncl.ac.uk)

## Abstract

Research from political geographers has increasingly identified the diverse actors, practices, and performances of diplomacy, challenging narrow conceptions that had tended to associate them with the state alone. The following paper engages this plurality directly through, on the one hand, its focus on young people as diplomatic actors and, on the other, the diplomacy of a British Overseas Territory (OT)—the Falkland Islands—a polity characterised by its liminal subjectivity between colonial dependency and independent statehood. In 2022, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War, we partnered with the Falkland Islands Government Office (FIGO) in London, to design, deliver and evaluate a national schools' competition. The Falklands Forty Schools Competition (FFSC) culminated in an eight-day trip to the Islands for seven prize winners. The paper reflects on our role in co-organising the competition and the opportunities it afforded to observe young people probe and critically question the official narratives presented to them by government representatives. This offered us the opportunity to explore how geopolitical and diplomatic narratives can be projected, negotiated and challenged by young people in the context of a highly curated trip with narrative projection at its heart. We show how young people through their participation in the competition and, more specifically, a trip to the Falkland Islands, were able to identify slippages and inconsistencies in these 'stable' narratives related to governance of the Islands. The young people, far from being passive diplomatic 'delegates' unquestioningly imbibing the information presented to them were, instead, highly aware of narrative tipping-points, tensions and slippages in their engagements with government representatives and diplomats.

## KEYWORDS

diplomacy, geopolitics, narratives, young people

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The information, practices and views in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

© 2024 The Authors. *Area* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).

# 1 | INTRODUCTION

Research from political geographers has increasingly identified the diverse actors, practices and performances of diplomacy, challenging narrow conceptions that had tended to associate them with the state alone (Dittmer & McConnell, 2016; Dodds et al., 2022; McConnell, 2018; McConnell & Dittmer, 2018; Pinkerton & Benwell, 2014). This work has introduced ‘a broader and more inclusive diplomatic culture, which reflects and is shaped by the agency of a plurality of diplomatic actors’ (McConnell, 2018, p. 378). The following paper engages this plurality directly through, on the one hand, its focus on young people as diplomatic actors (see Benwell, 2016), and on the other, the diplomacy of a British Overseas Territory (OT)—the Falkland Islands—a polity characterised by its liminal subjectivity between colonial dependency and independent statehood (McConnell & Dittmer, 2018, p. 145). It examines the ways that official narratives and imaginaries were constructed and presented by representatives of the Falkland Islands, and how they were variously received, questioned and subverted by young people taking part in a nationwide schools’ competition.

In 2022, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War, we partnered with the Falkland Islands Government Office (FIGO) in London, to design, deliver and evaluate a national schools’ competition. The Falklands Forty Schools Competition (FFSC) was funded by the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) and culminated in an eight-day trip to the Islands for seven prize winners.<sup>1</sup> The FIG’s interest in the initiative stemmed from a desire to enhance knowledge about the Islands among younger generations living in the UK and aligned with their broader strategic narrative to ‘Look Forward at Forty’, as opposed to continually framing the Falklands through the limiting lens of the 1982 war alone (Mercopress, 2021). It was inspired, in part, by the UK government’s funding of school visits to battlefields of the Western Front during the centenary commemorations of the First World War between 2014 and 2019 (Pennell, 2018, 2020). Our interests as academic researchers were focused on charting how young people’s perspectives and understandings of the past, present and future of this British OT emerged, developed and shifted over the course of the competition. Whilst the kernel of the project derived from the academic team, it is clearly important to acknowledge the funding source from the FIG, their overarching objectives, as well as the close collaboration it required with their representatives in London. During the course of the competition we—the academic researchers—began to observe how the young people posed critical questions concerning the official narratives presented to them by government representatives. This offered us a unique opportunity to explore how geopolitical and diplomatic narratives can be projected, negotiated and challenged by young people in the context of a highly curated trip with narrative projection at its heart. In what follows, we show how young people through their participation in the competition and, more specifically, a trip to the Falkland Islands, were able to identify slippages and inconsistencies in these ‘stable’ narratives related to governance of the Islands.

The competition, which ran over the course of one year, was centred around the initial provocation: What do the Falkland Islands mean to you? It invited young people, resident in the UK and aged between 16 and 18 years, to share their creative stories, research and insights into, for instance, the history, geography, culture, people and environment of the Falkland Islands. Entries to the competition could come in the form of essays, posters, podcasts or short films. After an exhaustive judging and interview process, which took into account the relative educational privilege of entrants, seven young people were selected as competition winners and given the opportunity to visit the Falkland Islands.<sup>2</sup> Before the trip, the young prize winners (and their parents/guardians) were supported through a series of online workshops facilitated by academics, media experts and/or government representatives, designed to provide them with background information about the Falklands Islands and the necessary skills to undertake a storytelling activity related to their visit. The academics undertook participant observation and compiled ‘field notes’ throughout the course of the competition and most intensively during the 8 days of the trip. In addition, the seven young people completed a pre-trip questionnaire, interviews (in groups of two/three) at the start, middle and end of the trip, as well as a focus group a few weeks after returning from the Islands. These were all analysed alongside the young people’s initial creative entries to the competition and their final story-telling submissions.

The competition enabled us to be experimental and offered an original opportunity to observe young people’s engagements with diplomatic performances and geopolitics. Our research design facilitated observation of young people’s changing perspectives as the project unfolded and these were revealing of their sensitivity to ‘the little moments’ when geopolitical tensions bubbled under the surface in ways that disrupted the stability of strategic narratives. The young people, far from being passive diplomatic ‘delegates’ unquestioningly imbibing the information presented to them were, instead, highly aware of narrative tipping-points, tensions and slippages in their engagements with government representatives from the Falkland Islands (see McConnell & Dittmer, 2018).

## 2 | YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENGAGEMENTS WITH DIPLOMACY

A considerable body of work has recognised young people as serious political actors, as well as identifying the multiple ways they engage with, and are agents of, geopolitics (e.g., Beier & Berents, 2023; Benwell & Hopkins, 2016; Hörschelmann, 2008; Katz, 2004; Laketa, 2015; Skelton, 2010; Woon, 2011). In the UK, young people are encouraged to critically explore questions related to global governance, geopolitics and borders as part of the A Level Geography curriculum (Dodds, 2016; Kyndt, 2015). More broadly, Nguyen (2020, p. 5) points out that while 'schools serve as critical sites to achieve the state's geopolitical goals, students, teachers, and communities regularly negotiate, contest, and contribute to these social processes'. It is clear, then, that young people do not passively receive geopolitical narratives presented to them and can reinterpret and 'reshape them in sometimes unpredictable ways' across a range of contexts (Lizotte & Nguyen, 2020, p. 934). In a practical sense, young people are increasingly participating in formal diplomatic arenas where they debate pressing (geo)political issues of importance to them, such as the inaugural British Overseas Territories Youth Summit held at the Houses of Parliament in 2023. Notwithstanding these developments, far less academic work has considered young people's engagements with these kinds of diplomatic spaces and performances. Opportunities to bring young people into contact with diplomats, government representatives and their presentations of policy objectives and strategic narratives are clearly more limited.

Work from scholars of political geography has increasingly been drawn to the concept of performance and its links to geopolitics and diplomacy (see Dodds et al., 2022; Jones & Clark, 2019). For instance, McConnell (2018, p. 364, emphasis in original) points out that diplomacy 'is not only a rhetorical situation but an inherently *performative* practice'. While Dodds et al. (2022, p. 87) contend that, 'it is through performances within certain spaces and at particular moments in time that ideas and knowledges are (re)produced and "brought into being"'. It is, of course, where these ideas can also be disrupted, challenged and subverted, as Dittmer's (2013) study with young people participating in a college-level Model United Nations aptly illustrates. Although not involving 'real-world' diplomats, Dittmer employs participant observation over an extended period to examine how young people perform and negotiate geopolitical imaginaries from the perspective of their assumed national diplomatic personas within the context of a simulated UN assembly meeting. While this work shows how young people can play with performance in simulated diplomatic settings, there has been rather less work focused on their engagement with the performance of diplomatic narratives by governments and their representatives. Educational field trips organised by schools and Geography departments at universities throughout the UK often offer young people the chance to visit government departments and/or foreign ministries to engage directly with officials (e.g., Newcastle University and Royal Holloway, University of London, both run field classes to Cyprus that encompass briefings with diplomats and government representatives). However, these interactions are usually one-off, brief (as opposed to offering opportunities for more sustained contact) and have not attracted significant commentary.

Some work outside of political geography has reflected on undertaking trips or fieldwork with/alongside young people (e.g., Herrick, 2010; Krakowka, 2012; Staddon et al., 2021). Pennell and Sheehan (2020) investigate how young people negotiate processes and practices of war remembrance during curated trips in the UK and New Zealand. Their work shows that far from being passive receptors, young people engaged critically with the production of cultural memory in relation to war remembrance across different national contexts. Nevertheless, they contend that 'conceptualising how young people make sense of their participation in remembrance activities is methodologically challenging, given their closely circumscribed role and the expectation that they demonstrate an empathic, reverential demeanour' (Pennell & Sheehan, 2020, p. 23). There are striking parallels with the dynamics of the competition that we co-organised with the FIGO which was a similarly 'formal government-funded trip that participants knew they were lucky to be on' (ibid., p. 29). The extent to which the young people felt able to ask awkward and probing questions in relation to, for example, British colonial histories and the British OTs and/or the sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the UK over the Falkland Islands/*Islas Malvinas*, was most likely shaped by the fact the FIG were funding their trip to the Islands. Despite this, the young people were attuned to inconsistencies or slippages in the strategic narratives they were presented with and showed willingness to explore issues that were 'off-script' or occasionally uncomfortable for our government hosts.

## 3 | DESTABILISING ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVES

The initial creative submissions prepared by young people entering the competition touched on a diverse array of topics including, among others, linguistic histories of the Falklands, palaeogeography of the South Atlantic, an entrant's familial connections to the Islands, military histories and cultural memory connected to the 1982 war. Perhaps inspired by the FFSC website, which was curated by the FIGO and featured collections of nature and landscape photography from the

Falklands, another dominant theme in entrants' submissions was the rich flora and fauna of the Falkland Islands. One of the eventual prize winners produced, as their competition entry, an evocatively imagined account of a shepherd's ramble across the Islands' terrain, and their personal encounter with nature:

Blocking his way to the beach were albatross nests; like earth chimneys they rose out of the ground, each sporting their own cloud of white. The man tentatively picked his way through the earthen flues, the smooth heads turned to track his progress with deep-set eyes, shadowed as if with eyeliner, as the man reached the shore. From a distance he watched as the penguins made their way up the beach towards gorse-scattered cliffs; lurching and tripping over the seaweed, tossed by the waves into knots of green and yellow, creating a twisted carpet across the white shoreline. The man loved the sounds and the smells of his island; the wind and the birds combined to create a beautiful consonance, resonating with the faint roar of elephant seals in the distance.

(Extract from 'A shepherd's rambling', an entry to the FFSC)

The extract draws on geographical imaginations of a pristine and idyllic island landscape that were reinforced through the images and accounts the young prize winners were presented with in workshops leading up to their trip to the Falklands. The spectacular wildlife and environment of the Islands have been longstanding elements in the official projection of the Falkland Islands to international tourists, while the careful (and scientifically considered) stewardship of the natural environment by the FIG and its agencies has been a crucial strand in the Islands' diplomatic projection (Blair, 2022). In the context of this competition these themes were positioned by the FIGO as one way to generate 'forward-looking' narratives about the Islands, as well as interest from younger generations of Britons perceived to be animated by issues related to sustainability and the climate crisis. Indeed, several responses to the pre-trip questionnaire reiterated these assumptions about young people's concerns for and interest in environmental matters:

Q: What do you think we can learn from the Falkland Islands about present-day global issues?

- How to live comfortably yet sustainably with minimal impact on the environment.
- How to protect a wide range of flora and fauna which the Falklands does constantly.
- Sustainability, self-sufficiency, good governance and the down to earth way of life with the focus on the environment rather than material assets.
- How climate change might be having an effect on the unique wildlife and farming of the Falklands Islands.

The young people reproduced ideas they had heard in the pre-trip workshops about the FIG and islanders as responsible environmental stewards, living in ways that were sustainable and self-sufficient. There was a sense the young people saw the Falklands as a place where the environment and natural resources were protected and placed above material gain. In the final quote, climate change is framed as something done to the Islands as a consequence of activities 'elsewhere', as opposed to something the Falklands might contribute to as well.

Our discussions with the young people, alongside our observation of workshops and analysis of their questionnaire responses, suggested they largely subscribed to the stable environmental narratives they were presented with prior to the trip. Nevertheless, some asked probing and critical questions about the inconsistencies of, on the one hand, foregrounding narratives of sustainability and environmental stewardship, whilst on the other, pursuing hydrocarbon exploration for the future exploitation of offshore oil and gas (Blair, 2022). Rather ironically the carbon footprint associated with maintaining an air link to the Falkland Islands and its use for travel as part of the competition, did not receive critical comment from the young people. The slippages and tensions in seemingly 'stable' environmental narratives were most clearly exposed, however, through little moments and interactions during the trip. During their time in the Islands, the young people had the chance to visit and experience different sites and talk to a range of government representatives responsible for conservation, agriculture and fisheries, heritage and environmental research (i.e., South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute: SAERI). On the very first morning of the trip, the young people visited Yorke Bay, a site off-limits until late-2020 due to landmines laid by Argentine forces in 1982, where they viewed Peale's dolphins and had the chance to count different species of penguin dotted across the beach. Although a stunning site, the group were informed of issues with the beach being opened to tourists and locals, resulting in the disturbance and reduction in numbers of penguins nesting there. Immediately, then, the young people through their active and embodied interactions with the beach and birds learnt about the tensions inherent to environmental stewardship. The activity exposed the complexities and trade-offs inherent to managing tourism and conservation in ways that had not been discussed in the pre-trip workshops.



A presentation from the Director of Natural Resources at the Falkland Islands Fisheries Department revealed other tensions picked up on by the young people:

The Director made reference to how the FIG had been lobbied by NGOs and the UK Government to join the Blue Belt [the UK Government's flagship international marine conservation programme], before posing the question: 'Will the UK cough up £100 million to replace the shortfall in fisheries revenue? No!'. She pointed out that the FIG were looking at how to establish a Marine Protected Area but they wanted to do it their way.  
(Field diary extract, 14 February 2023)

Like the UK Government say they want to implement a Blue Belt but they don't realise that is almost £100 million gone [from FIG revenues] ... Britain can afford maybe like areas of Blue Belt because it's a lot bigger and has other industry, they have got a tertiary sector. But you can't really afford to do that in the Falklands, so they need to stop imposing rules that work in Britain, assuming it will work and benefit the Falklands.  
(FFSC prize winner, 16 February 2023)

The political tensions wrapped up in environmental policy were performed in lively ways during this presentation, illustrating once again the slippages in seemingly stable narratives. The itinerary of the trip brought young people into contact with a host of different representatives and inevitably there were moments when diverse opinions or conflicts were expressed. The young people were acutely sensitive to these shifting atmospheres in the room, commenting on little asides or comments made by the speakers. This aligns with work that has repeatedly shown young people's sophisticated responses to geopolitics, the climate emergency and policies associated with the environment and conservation across different international contexts (e.g., Bowman, 2019; Stratford & Low, 2015; Walker, 2016). The trip to the Falklands offered young people the chance to experience the islands for themselves and therefore 'test' the public narratives in relations to their own, developing, 'ontological narratives' (i.e., the narrative that composes us at the level of the individual). It was through their direct interactions with different government representatives across a range of spaces—a government department office, the legislative assembly, the governor's residence, beaches, farms, scientific labs and so on—that knowledge of (geo)politics was performed and assembled, enabling participants to ask increasingly incisive questions of their hosts and to reflect critically on inconsistencies or tensions.

#### 4 | THE UK AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS: A MODERN AND HARMONIOUS PARTNERSHIP?

Notwithstanding the call to 'look forward at forty', the sovereignty dispute between the UK, Argentina and the Falkland Islands remained a tangible presence in the minds and collective consciousness of the FFSC participants (as evidenced by the multiple references to the 1982 conflict in competition entries) and in our own interests. One pre-trip workshop was dedicated to the issue of South Atlantic geopolitics, during which the FIGO representatives presented the situation from the perspective of the Falkland Islands. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the theme of the competition, the young prize winners (a couple of whom had family connections in the Falklands) expressed support for the islanders' position in questionnaire responses. Similarly, the young people learned about the 'modern relationship' between the Falkland Islands and the UK, in ways that suggested a partnership based on reciprocity and harmony. Typical anonymised questionnaire responses from the young people before their trip to the Falklands, reproduced these notions of a strong and stable connection between the countries:

As a British citizen I think that the Falklands and its inhabitants are safer and more prosperous under the more stable hand of British politics.

Without the help of the British forces, the people of the Falklands wouldn't have been able to make it into what it is today.

While intended to be 'supportive', the responses above also hint at the uneven dynamics and dependency characteristic of the relationship between the UK and British OTs like the Falkland Islands (McConnell & Dittmer, 2018). Although the stresses and strains in that relationship were not explicitly discussed by the young people before departing for the Islands—due to our focus

on past and present geopolitical relations with Argentina, as well as their rather ‘unproblematised’ presentation by government representatives in the pre-trip workshops—they encountered them during the trip in ways we had not anticipated. Once again, the opportunity to observe and shadow the young people during their exchanges with UK Government diplomats and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) was illuminating and provided the basis for subsequent interview discussions.

On the first day of activities in the Islands, the young people had a meeting with seven out of the eight elected MLAs at Gilbert House, the small building on Stanley Harbour that hosts the Legislative Assembly. With expectations of a formal briefing given the meeting’s location and the number of political representatives present, the young people expressed their surprise and relief at its eventual informality, as well as the openness of their hosts. Instead of a staid presentation delivered by the MLAs, the meeting was driven by the young people’s critical questions about governance and the day-to-day functioning of politics in the Falklands, with many of the MLAs’ answers emphasising themes of political self-determination, economic self-sufficiency and resilience. This contrasted starkly with an appointment with the Deputy Governor of the Falkland Islands the following day, as recorded in this field diary extract:

There’s some nervous tension around this meeting. The rather exclusive surroundings of Government House, appear alien, exciting and somewhat formidable for some of the young people—and this is heightened as we walk down the long driveway and we’re welcomed by the Governor’s staff who show us through to the reception room. The Deputy Governor introduces himself and the three-legged structure of the Falklands’ constitution, which perhaps gives greater emphasis to the Governor/Government House than the MLAs meeting the day before (during which the MLAs made Government House sound more like a constitutional formality rather than an integral/equal part of the system of governance). Brexit was raised as an issue by the young people, not least because we heard about its impact on the fisheries industry yesterday [at the briefing from the Agriculture and Fisheries Department]. The Deputy Governor looked unsettled at the question, but ultimately had to acknowledge that ‘the UK failed to deliver for the Falklands on Brexit’, and that a lot more work was needed to compensate the Falklands for the UK’s decision.

(Field diary extract, 15 February 2023)

The meetings with the Falklands’ MLAs and the Deputy Governor were marked by very different performances and atmospheres influenced, in part, by the political spaces in which they took place. The young people picked up on these divergences in how speakers talked about politics, the Falklands’ constitution, and its implications for relations between the UK and the Islands. This translated into highly nuanced reflection in our final interviews:

**Interviewer:** ‘We’re interested in how you’d describe the relationship between the UK and the Falkland Islands from what you’ve heard this week?’

**Respondent 1:** ‘Conflicting objectives, I think on some points. Obviously with Brexit, they weren’t really, British OTs weren’t really taken into consideration much. We’ve heard that from a lot of different people. I think it has sort of negatively affected the Islands.’

**Respondent 2:** ‘Yeah and I feel like they’re also, they feel a little bit less like a partnership, as much as they want to be part of Britain, I feel like sometimes they don’t feel they are being heard by Britain in a sense.’

**Respondent 3:** ‘I think from the MLAs [Members of the Legislative Assembly] I definitely picked up on the fact that they didn’t really like being considered part of Britain ... I feel like they are very frustrated that even after the conflict they still don’t necessarily feel as independent as they want to be.’

**Respondent 2:** ‘I feel like they want to have their own country and they want to be running it. But it isn’t sustainable to have a country of this size on their own, and they do need Britain as their preferred back up, to stand with them in different conflicts. But they want to be able to have control of their own country in a sense as well.’

(Group interview with three of the FFSC prize winners, 16 February 2023)

The young people were highly attuned to these micro-moments during which they heard slightly conflicting messages or when challenges emerged to the stable narrative track presented to them before arriving in the Islands. As the trip progressed, they became particularly sensitive to the geopolitical tensions inherent to the governance of many British OTs that comprise a constitutional monarchy *and* a parliamentary representative democracy (Clegg, 2022). The young people, then, sensed the frustrations of the different government representatives they heard from during the week and drew these insightful conclusions about complex questions related to the (geo)politics of British OTs like the Falkland Islands.

## 5 | CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the rather unique nature of the FFSC, we contend that there is fertile ground for political geographers to explore similar situations where young people are brought into contact with the performative practice of diplomats, government representatives, or when they participate in various government-organised initiatives (Pennell, 2020). These opportunities might be more commonplace than initially assumed given the regularity with which young people take part in trips/events arranged by schools, universities and/or different recreational clubs. Working with/alongside young people in similarly dynamic ways to those outlined in this paper can offer privileged insights into their sophisticated perspectives on the worlds of international relations, diplomacy and (geo)politics.

Existing research has consistently highlighted young people's agency and ability to critique, challenge and subvert predominant geopolitical relations and practices. This paper extends this examination of young people's geopolitical agency to their engagements with the performances of diplomats and government representatives, revealing their ability to ask critical and sometimes 'uncomfortable' questions that relate to tensions or inconsistencies in narratives presented to them. The ability to shadow, observe and interact with the young people—both formally and informally—throughout the course of the FFSC enabled us to track their changing views about geopolitics. The two examples we highlight in this paper, related to the environment and (geo)political relations between the UK and the Falkland Islands, illustrate young people's sensitivity to little revelations or slippages that were revealing of tensions or contradictions in seemingly stable narratives. There is, we argue, scope for political geographers to think more creatively about potential opportunities and methodological approaches, which can enable them to work with/alongside young people as they engage directly with the spaces and actors of geopolitics and diplomacy.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to extend their thanks to all of the young people (and their parents/guardians) for agreeing to participate in this research project. We acknowledge the generous funding of the Falkland Islands Government and are extremely grateful to representatives at the Falkland Islands Government Office in London for their dedication and hard work in co-organising the Falklands Forty Schools Competition.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### ORCID

Matthew C. Benwell  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1336-751X>

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The FFSC received 23 entries from young people attending 21 schools (13 state and eight private/fee-paying) in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>2</sup>POLAR classifies local areas across the UK into five groups—or quintiles—based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 and is used as a measure of educational advantage. In order to adjust for this advantage, during the judging process we allocated additional points for entrants with lower POLAR quintile scores. After making this correction, six of the seven prize winners lived in areas classified as quintile 4 and 5—areas with the highest proportions of young people participating in higher education. The other prize winner was in quintile 3. Despite our efforts to publicise the competition as widely as possible, the low entry numbers and the relatively privileged backgrounds of the prize winners were points of critical reflection for the Organising Committee and are perhaps illustrative of how 'off the radar' and seemingly inaccessible British OTs like the Falkland Islands continue to be for the vast majority of young people in the UK.

### REFERENCES

- Beier, J.M. & Berents, H. (Eds.). (2023) *Children, childhoods, and global politics*. Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press.
- Benwell, M.C. (2016) Young Falkland islanders and diplomacy in the South Atlantic. In: Benwell, M.C. & Hopkins, P. (Eds.) *Children, young people and critical geopolitics*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, pp. 107–122.
- Benwell, M.C. & Hopkins, P. (Eds.). (2016) *Children, young people and critical geopolitics*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Blair, J.J.A. (2022) Tracking penguins, sensing petroleum: 'Data gaps' and the politics of marine ecology in the South Atlantic. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 5(1), 60–80. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848619882938>
- Bowman, B. (2019) Imagining future worlds alongside young climate activists: A new framework for research. *Fennia*, 197(2), 295–305. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.85151>

- Clegg, P. (2022) Political and constitutional issues for the contemporary Falkland Islands. *Round Table*, 111(1), 69–78. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2022.2036028>
- Dittmer, J. (2013) Humour at the model United Nations: The role of laughter in constituting geopolitical assemblages. *Geopolitics*, 18, 493–513. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2012.742066>
- Dittmer, J. & McConnell, F. (Eds.). (2016) *Diplomatic cultures and international politics: Translations, spaces and alternatives*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Dodds, K. (2016) Global governance. *Teaching Geography*, 41(3), 98–102 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26383220>
- Dodds, K., Woon, C.Y. & Xu, L. (2022) Critical geopolitics. In: Lindroth, M., Sinevaara-Niskanen, H. & Tennberg, M. (Eds.) *Critical studies of the Arctic: Unravelling the north*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 77–98.
- Herrick, C. (2010) Lost in the field: Ensuring student learning in the ‘threatened’ geography fieldtrip. *Area*, 42(1), 108–116. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00892.x>
- Hörschelmann, K. (2008) Populating the landscapes of critical geopolitics: Young people’s responses to the war in Iraq (2003). *Political Geography*, 27(5), 587–609. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2008.06.004>
- Jones, A. & Clark, J. (2019) Performance, emotions, and diplomacy in the United Nations assemblage in New York. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(4), 1262–1278. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1509689>
- Katz, C. (2004) *Growing up global: Economic restructuring and children’s everyday lives*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Krakowka, A.R. (2012) Field trips as valuable learning experiences in geography courses. *Journal of Geography*, 111(6), 236–244. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221341.2012.707674>
- Kyndt, C. (2015) A world of borders. *Teaching Geography*, 40(1), 17–19 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26455155>
- Laketa, S. (2015) Youth as geopolitical subjects: The case of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. In: Kallio, K., Mills, S. & Skelton, T. (Eds.) *Politics, citizenship and rights. Geographies of children and young people*. Singapore City, Singapore: Springer. Available from: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-94-1\\_6-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4585-94-1_6-1)
- Lizotte, C. & Nguyen, N. (2020) Schooling from the classroom to the state: Understanding schools as geopolitical sites. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Spaces*, 38(5), 920–937. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420909396>
- McConnell, F. (2018) Performing diplomatic decorum: Repertoires of ‘appropriate’ behaviour in the margins of international diplomacy. *International Political Sociology*, 12(4), 362–381. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/oly021>
- McConnell, F. & Dittmer, J. (2018) Liminality and the diplomacy of the British overseas territories: An assemblage approach. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 36(1), 139–158. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775817733479>
- Mercopress. (2021) *Falkland Islands in 2022: ‘Looking forward at 40’*. Available from: <https://en.mercopress.com/2021/12/31/falkland-islands-in-2022-looking-forward-at-40> [Accessed 4th March 2024].
- Nguyen, N. (2020) On geopolitics and education: Interventions, possibilities, and future directions. *Geography Compass*, 14(9), 1–11. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12500>
- Pennell, C. (2018) Taught to remember? British youth and first world war centenary battlefield Tours. *Cultural Trends*, 27(2), 83–98. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453449>
- Pennell, C. (2020) ‘Remembrance isn’t working’: First world war battlefield tours and the militarisation of British youth during the centenary. *Childhood*, 27(3), 383–398. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568220908307>
- Pennell, C. & Sheehan, M. (2020) ‘But what do they really think?’ Methodological challenges of investigating young people’s perspectives of war remembrance. *History Education Research Journal*, 17(1), 21–35. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.18546/HERJ.17.1.03>
- Pinkerton, A. & Benwell, M. (2014) Rethinking popular geopolitics in the Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty dispute: Creative diplomacy and citizen statecraft. *Political Geography*, 38, 12–22. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2013.10.003>
- Skelton, T. (2010) Taking young people as political actors seriously: Opening the borders of political geography. *Area*, 42(2), 145–151. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00891.x>
- Staddon, S., Barnes, C., Lai, J.Y., Scazza, M. & Wilkie, R. (2021) A “token of love”: The role of emotions in student field trips teaching critical development geographies. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 47, 839–856. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2021.1977918>
- Stratford, E. & Low, N. (2015) Young islanders, the meteorological imagination, and the art of geopolitical engagement. *Children’s Geographies*, 13(2), 164–180. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2013.828454>
- Walker, C. (2016) Tomorrow’s leaders and today’s agents of change? Children, sustainability education and environmental governance. *Children & Society*, 31(1), 72–83. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12192>
- Woon, C.Y. (2011) ‘Protest is just a click away!’ Responses to the 2003 Iraq war on a bulletin board system in China. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29(1), 131–149. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1068/d3609>

**How to cite this article:** Benwell, M.C., Pennell, C. & Pinkerton, A. (2024) Tracing young people’s engagements with the diplomacy and geopolitics of a British Overseas Territory. *Area*, 00, e12942. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12942>