

Because We're Wild Animals?

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They say our tree may never grow back, but one day something will. Yes, [...] these apples look fake, but at least they've got stars on them. I guess my point is we'll eat tonight, and we'll eat together. So let's raise our [juice] boxes. To our survival.
(*The Fantastic Mr. Fox*, 2009)

Introduction

Welcome to the thirty-third edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*. This special issue on Sustainability Culture is our first issue of 2026, and my first issue as editor-in-chief, but I look forward to many more. Inspired by the *Blade Runner*—quoting sign-off from *Exchanges'* former EIC—the recently departed, much-missed, and still oft-consulted Gareth 'Gaz' Johnson—I have begun this issue with another epigraph from a film, this time a mock-heroic speech from Mr. Fox (voiced by George Clooney), in the form of a toast, from Wes Anderson's adaptation of Roald Dahl's beloved children's book *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Why? Well, perhaps I should begin my explanation by way of introducing myself, apropos of this Introduction.

I joined *Exchanges* as chief editor late last year, transferring from Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick, where *Exchanges'* publisher, the Institute of Advanced Study, is based. Before taking the helm of the journal, I had been serving on the editorial board since 2022. But long before that, before even earning my doctorate in film studies and embarking on scholarly research, I worked as an editor and freelance film journalist. You could say that movies are 'in my blood', but words are too.

For those of you previously unfamiliar with *Exchanges*, this isn't a film journal (although articles about film are among our most popular). Rather, the journal covers the full breath of subjects and disciplines, with an emphasis on scholarship that considers how various disciplines intersect. Like films themselves, *Exchanges* is interdisciplinary, encompassing the full spectrum of human thought and inquiry, and I have always considered my own research to embrace this interdisciplinary spirit. It's a spirit that

fosters connections between seemingly disparate subjects; these connections might not necessarily be intuitive, but often by virtue of their counter-intuitiveness, their unexpected combination expands human knowledge and moves scholarship in exciting new directions.

It's one of the things that first drew me to *Exchanges*, and it encompasses the approach of this new issue on Sustainability Culture, an issue that addresses some of the most profoundly important challenges of our era or any other—climate change, habitat loss, food insecurity, overconsumption—through the lens of social attitudes, customs, and relations—in other words, through culture. It asks, how do we actually promote a *culture* of sustainability, one that actively embraces the steps necessary to reverse the destructive (and self-destructive) path humankind is headed down? How can attitudes be shifted, if they can at all? And whose attitudes (and actions) are really the problem? When we use seemingly universal terms like 'Sustainability Culture', whose culture do we speak of?

In my 2019 monograph (shameless self-promotion alert!), I write about *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* in the context of 'American pastoralism', a form of 'New World' Romanticism that suggested wild, bountiful nature should be both venerated for its sublime power and beauty but ultimately moulded by human hands and minds into something made by us and *for* us, demonstrating our own imaginative power to shape the world (Devereaux, 2019). The goal, establishing a 'middle-ground' between nature and culture, was seen as a necessary 'pastoral compromise' that tamed the brutishness of our natural human 'instincts' with the civilising effects of culture (2019: 128). But as Anderson's film shows, this 'compromise' between 'the opposing forces of civilization and nature' (Marx, 1964: 3) is eventually overridden by human hubris. As a result, 'civilization' wins out, leading to human-made perversities like supermarkets full of painted apples and other fake food. All the while we justify our own self-destruction by lamenting that it's in our 'nature' to be selfish, to desire to live unsustainably, even though unsustainable living flies in the face of the natural world. Mr. Fox, the self-professed 'wild animal', adapts to living within his means. Why, seemingly, can't we?

If *The Fantastic Mr. Fox* strikes a somewhat ironic, ambivalent tone about the compromising influence of culture on nature, this issue on Sustainability Culture is rather *uncompromising* about its negative effects. What might look like survival comes at the expense of our very souls, leading to, as Courtney Work details in her Critical Reflection, 'alienation, addiction, and generational trauma' (see Work, 'The Royal We and the Good Life', p. 111). It could also spell not our survival but our doom; unsurprisingly, it is the most vulnerable among us that first suffer the

consequences. At any rate, it is catching up with all of us—the past two hundred years of human behaviour, shaped largely by cultural attitudes from the West, is seemingly leading us to global catastrophe never before witnessed by human eyes (or fox eyes, for that matter).

In the following pages, scholars living and working around the world grapple with how culture has altered nature and might be impacting our own survival—and, crucially, what we might be able to do about it. How can we alter human attitudes enough to establish a true culture of sustainability, one that encourages long-term thinking and the wellbeing of other humans and non-humans alike? In the future, will we be resilient enough to survive, and if so, will we be able to do more than simply eke out an existence as a species and as a planet?

Guest editor Theodoor A.M. Richard outlines what is at stake, wondering, if our very survival depends on the embrace of Sustainability Culture, why does Sustainability Culture seem to be failing and how can we make it succeed? In his issue Introduction (**Richard, p. 1**) Richard outlines the terms of Sustainability Culture: what it means, how it works, and how we might begin to truly achieve it in this age of the Anthropocene, our current (unofficial) epoch when the planet is largely shaped not by natural events, but by human actions. In interdisciplinary fashion, he explores the concept of ‘glocal’ culture, which reflects both local and global considerations of sustainability and how both intersect.

Emerging from multiple editions of the International Conference on Sustainability Culture (ICSC), a series of events organised by Richard and hosted by National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, the issue addresses Sustainability Culture from a variety of global perspectives: it spotlights multiple Indigenous cultures (**van Velzen, p. 14; Bayrak, p. 78**), social science and anthropological studies (**Cassa, p. 56; Work, p. 111; Nwe et al. p. 135**), ‘hard’ science-based inquiries (**Farquhar et al., p. 93**), art-based responses (**Sabin, p. 38**), and even philosophical approaches (**Wood, p. 124; Richard, p. 158**).

Industry-based approaches are considered, which may prove somewhat controversial; many argue that a ‘neoliberal’ problem can’t be solved by neoliberal, market-based solutions. This brings up another provocative question: What ‘compromises’ are we willing to make, if any, in order to make living sustainably—ethically, responsibly, with care for others and ourselves—the only acceptable way to live? Given the current state of our world as I write in March 2026, making Sustainability Culture the norm seems more unattainable than ever, but as a matter of literal life and death, it is certainly up to those who recognise its importance to try.

Calls for Papers

On that happy note, I'd like to remind everyone that, in addition to special issues, *Exchanges* currently has an open call for papers. You can register for our email newsletter and/or follow our social media channels to keep up with the latest announcements and opportunities—links to these are found towards the end of this editorial.

Open calls for papers

Exchanges continues to invite manuscript submissions throughout the year on any subject which can either (a) demonstrate a degree of interdisciplinary thinking or research or (b) are written for a wide-reaching academic audience from within a singular discipline. Hence, while pieces which draw directly or indirectly on interdisciplinary methods, methodologies, praxis and thinking are especially welcome, this is not a prerequisite for consideration in our pages.

Additionally, *Exchanges* accepts submissions from researchers, practitioners, and independent scholars globally. We consider manuscripts from authors at any scholastic level and especially encourage submissions from early-career researchers, but all submissions must meet the same minimum academic standards to be published.

See our [Selection Policy](#) for more information.

Deadlines: There are **no manuscript submission deadlines** on our open call, and submissions will be considered throughout the year. Manuscripts therefore may be submitted for consideration via our online submission portal at any point.

Formats: Manuscripts can be submitted for consideration as traditional **peer-reviewed** research or review article formats, which will undergo a rigorous, double-anonymised external review process. Alternatively, they may be submitted under our **editorially reviewed formats** for briefer works (up to 4,000 words), which often are able to transit to publication faster.ⁱ Editorially reviewed formats can be especially suitable for first-time authors or those looking to embrace reflexivity, posit an opinion, or share professional insights. It is notable that all article formats receive extensive reader attention and downloads.ⁱⁱ

Requirements: Word counts and requirements for all content formats vary, so prospective authors are strongly encouraged to review our Author Guidance.ⁱⁱⁱ Where an exception to

these standards is required, authors should discuss this with the chief editor ahead of submission. Manuscripts passing our review processes and accepted for publication will subsequently appear in the next available regular issue, which are normally published in spring and autumn.

Review: All submitted manuscripts undergo initial scoping (suitability and initial quality) and originality checks by the chief editor before being accepted for further editorial review. Manuscripts seeking publication as research articles additionally will undergo one or more rounds of formal peer-review by two or more suitable anonymised assessors. Editorial decisions on manuscript acceptance are final, although unsuccessful authors are normally encouraged to consider revising their work for later reconsideration by the journal.

Authors: Notably, *Exchanges* has a mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early-career and post-graduate researchers (IAS, 2025). Consequently, we are especially pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars or first-time authors, although contributions from established and senior scholars are also welcomed.

Further details of our open call requirements can be found online (Exchanges, 2024a). To make a submission, visit:

- exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/submission

Informal approaches

Exchanges has always welcomed approaches from potential authors to discuss prospective article ideas or concepts with the editor-in-chief. However, abstract submission or formal editorial discussions ahead of a submission are *not* normally a prerequisite, and authors may submit complete manuscripts for consideration without any prior communication.^{iv} During the submission process authors are encouraged to include a note to the editor outlining the article format or call under which their manuscript is to be considered or any other considerations they wish to bring to our attention.^v *Exchanges* regrets we cannot offer extensive feedback, advice or critique on outline manuscripts or text ahead of formal submission and review.

Author fees

Exchanges is a 'diamond' (a.k.a. 'platinum') open-access, scholar-led journal, meaning there are **no fees or charges** for readers or authors. All published content is made freely available online globally (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013; Bosman et al, 2021**). Furthermore, authors retain all rights over their work, granting *Exchanges* first publication rights during submission as a pre-requisite for publication consideration. *Exchanges* is also happy to support translations of our published articles subsequently appearing in other suitable journals, and requests only that a link back to the original piece is incorporated. Authors may wish to consult *Exchanges'* journal policies for further information on how we handle author contributions (**Exchanges, 2024b**).

Further advice for prospective authors can be found on the *Exchanges* and IAS websites (**Exchanges, 2024c, IAS, 2025**), as well as in editorials, podcast episodes, and blog entries.

Forthcoming Issues and Continuing the Conversation

We will be announcing the Call for Papers for a new special issue very soon. I am particularly excited about this one. Please keep an eye on our social media channels and subscribe to our newsletter for updates. You can find us via the following links:

- Bluesky: [@ExchangesJournal](#)
- Editorial Blog: exchangesdiscourse.wordpress.com
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/groups/12162247/
- LinkTree: linktr.ee/exchangesjournal
- Newsletter: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa-jisc.exe?A0=EXCHANGES-ANNOUNCE

The Exchanges Discourse Podcast

The *Exchanges* podcast has been dormant since Gaz's departure in late 2025, but the hope is it will be resurrected soon. It will likely continue the tradition of inviting journal authors to talk about their papers and work and offer publishing advice for early-career scholars. The journal archive includes episodes looking at academic podcasting, early career monographs and the emerging practice of 'open' monographs, as well as Gaz's valedictory episode, in which he discusses his lengthy tenure as *Exchanges'* editor-in-chief.

All episodes are free to listen on [Spotify for Podcasting](#), and many other podcasting platforms. You can also find a full listing of past episodes from this year, and all previous ones, on the *Exchanges* website.

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/podcast

Contacting

For general inquiries (for instance, to discuss a potential submission), contact us at: exchanges-journal@warwick.ac.uk.

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I would also like to thank Dr Fiona Fisher for her support, empathy, and guidance, and the staff at the Institute of Advanced Study, IAS Director Prof Alison Cooley, Dr Hannah Shaw, Rachel Hitchcox and former staff Dr Katie Reynolds and Abbie Pritchard. Thank you all for making me feel so welcome. Finally, I want to thank Dr Chris Rose for bringing me complicated drinks and walking me home at night even when it rains, which in West Yorkshire is a lot.

Dr Michelle Devereaux is the managing editor-in-chief of *Exchanges* and a former Leverhulme Trust Early Career postdoctoral fellow in film and television studies at the University of Warwick. Her 2019 monograph, *The Stillness of Solitude: Romanticism and Contemporary American Independent Film*, was published by Edinburgh University Press, and her other work appears in *Screen*, *Film Quarterly*, *The Bloomsbury Guide to Sofia Coppola* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023) and *Television with Stanley Cavell in Mind* (University of Exeter Press, 2023). Her research interests include romantic and post-romantic philosophy, contemporary screen culture, gender and feminist theory, film aesthetics, critical neurodiversity studies, and genre studies. She has worked as an editor for various print and web publications in North America and the UK.



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Endnotes

ⁱ **Editorially Reviewed Formats:** i.e., Critical Reflections, Conversations (interviews) or Book Reviews, which do not undergo external peer review and are thus usually able to be more swiftly published. While the acceptance rate is higher for these types of material, those which fail to meet our required editorial standards in any respect will be declined and returned to their authors.

ⁱⁱ **Top Articles:** This diversity of format interest is frequently reflected in our annual Top Articles list, which appears in the IAS annual report, and on our blog.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Word counts:** We do not typically include abstracts, references, endnotes or appendices when considering word count. Submissions slightly over/under our required word count limits will be considered for review at the chief editor's discretion. However, significant excess will normally be automatically declined.

^{iv} **Expressions of Interest:** We do on occasion solicit expressions of interest ahead of submissions for special issues, as promoted on our Announcements page, blog, and other social media channels. For regular (open or themed) issue submissions, authors may submit their manuscripts without any prior contact.

^v **Formats:** For more on formats, word counts and other requirements for any prospective submissions, see: <https://exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/guidance#formats>.