Editorial

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I should start my first introduction as editor with a note of thanks to the outgoing editor, Jonathan Skinner, and publishers Berghahn for the work they have done to establish *Anthropology In Action* as a highly regarded journal. It started life as the newsletter of the Anthropology In Action network, and when an electronic discussion list took on some of the news and networking functions, evolved into a more conventional journal format, with the support of Berghahn as publishers. The focus throughout has been on anthropology that addresses itself to issues of policy and practice. It has aimed to involve anthropologists working both inside and outside academic departments of anthropology, and those in other fields who are interested in the contributions that anthropological theory and methods can bring. Today, I think it is reasonable to say that the journal combines excellent academic quality with accessibility to a broad readership. I hope that as editor, and with the support of an able editorial board, I can do justice to these aims and achievements. We intend to continue the distinctive role set for the journal as one that is about anthropology *in action*, to stimulate debate and reflection, and to develop anthropological contributions to public discourse.

In their introduction to this themed issue on transferring anthropological skills to applied health research, Gooberman-Hill, de Salis and Einarsdóttir discuss the ways in which applied anthropology has developed in recent years, and perceived barriers or lack of confidence

and congruence between 'pure' and 'applied' work have begun to break down. When I started out as a doctoral student in the late 1980s, these were tangible, and I felt that explicitly applied research was viewed with great caution, even suspicion. Much has changed or been challenged within anthropology since then, as it also has in other fields. Ethnographic research, for example, has become fashionable as a concept in other fields, while it has become more rare as practice, or found in forms such as Rapid Appraisal, which have brought changes in the conditions of research activity. Nonetheless, Gooberman-Hill, de Salis and Einarsdóttir challenge anthropologists to consider relationships between 'pure' and 'applied' anthropology in ways they have hitherto, in many cases, only applied to the social objects of their study. They suggest that concepts such as centre and periphery, and of practice as hegemonic or marginal, which anthropologists employ in analysing the cultures they study, could usefully be turned to analysis of the discipline itself, its thinking and practices.

The papers in this issue provide examples of developing interdisciplinarity and uses of ethnography, including the turn to greater reflexivity and consideration of the anthropologist as subject and participant. They also illustrate the shifts in health-related research from a *medical anthropology* where the anthropologist's contribution was often expected to be cultural translation, for example to assist in understanding why patients do not comply fully with treat-

ments, to an *anthropology of medicine* which can equally address itself to analysis and understanding of how different medical or health care systems operate and view the world. To follow this there will be a further themed issue on policy, which picks up such issues in exploring the perspectives and experiences of anthropologists doing research with policy makers, relatively powerful, elite social groups. The third, final issue of 2008 will then take us to revisit the classic anthropological theme of 'the gift' with a series of articles exploring the complex relationships and interstitial zones between gift and commodity exchanges, ranging from the body physical to the body public.

All three issues for 2008 continue the pattern that has evolved for the journal, of themed issues, working with guest editors, but also including free-standing peer-reviewed articles. We welcome submission of single articles, which can be research-based, commentaries, review articles or contributions to debate. We also welcome proposals from prospective guest editors for themed issues. While all research-based papers are independently peer-reviewed, we wish to see the journal maintain its broad readership and active focus, so all types of contribution are strongly encouraged.