In a range of countries, the public value of and support for a range of academic disciplines has been questioned and debated. While in the U.S., the role of humanities and social sciences and their place in higher education have been challenged, in the U.K. funding support for less obviously ‘applied’ subjects has also been cut, along with the introduction of higher student fees in all subjects. The current focus on demonstrating the utilitarian value of higher education, particularly for the less clearly professional or technical subjects, as opposed to those referred to as STEM (science, technology, engineering and medical) subjects requires more discussion. Following the recent Research Excellence Framework Exercise in the U.K., which introduced formal assessment of ‘research impact’, it is timely to reflect on the engagement of anthropology with public policy and practice, and how it makes an impact on these spheres. For example, we might ask how can impact be measured, and how will we know the impact of the impact agenda itself? Comparable questions have been raised within anthropology about the audit culture and a focus on measurability. We all surely wish for anthropology to make a meaningful impact on the public sphere, and to contribute to social wellbeing, but how can or should these be assessed, and does the process of assessment bring value, or detract from this work? Anthropology of course has a long history of various forms of engagement, particularly through sponsorship by colonial governments, keen to utilise anthropological knowledge in the service of governance, and debate about the role of anthropologists in military interventions continues. Similarly, anthropological involvement with development and with health-related research is nothing new, while other fields of engagement have opened up – design anthropology being one example. How does the new impact agenda in higher education relate to this history and how are academic anthropology departments tackling it?

The focus of *Anthropology in Action* is specifically on the ways in which anthropology is engaged with public matters, and it aims to encourage such work and provide a forum (along with the APPLY network e-list and also now our new Anthropology in Action facebook page) for discussing this and for contact and idea exchanges between people working outside academic anthropology, as well as those situated within it. We encourage readers to submit contributions such as letters, comments and discussions and accounts of their own experiences and careers, as much as research-based articles that demonstrate the myriad engagements of anthropology with policy and practice issues and with public discourse and concerns.

With this agenda in mind, we are also inviting submissions of articles and comment or debate pieces or other contributions for a planned special issue reflecting on the issue of ‘impact’, including questions such as: how do we define and measure impact? How do anthropologists engage with public policy and discourse in order to make an impact? Contributions are welcome from all countries with a view to inclusion in a 2015 issue. Please contact me by e-mail if you are interested in contributing.