Editorial

Maryon McDonald

This is the first issue of this journal following the Brexit referendum vote in the U.K. It is perhaps fitting therefore that we have a Special Issue on diplomacy. The articles in this Special Issue (guest edited by Magnus Marsden, Diana Ibañez-Tirado and David Henig) deliberately try to move away from a perspective that would assume diplomacy to be the sole province of nation-state representatives or something that takes place only behind the closed doors of presidential or governmental offices and embassies. Instead, the focus here is on ‘unofficial’ and ‘everyday diplomacy’. The articles show how ethnography can highlight the often unrecognised grass-roots work that goes on to maintain trade and civility, to construct cosmopolitanisms, and to negotiate tension and conflict.

In addition to this Special Issue collection, we have an article by Adam Kuper who reflects engagingly on the work and teaching of Kuper’s own former teacher, Meyer Fortes. Kuper throws some new light on the content and context of Fortes’ work, a set of publications and teachings that might appear to have fallen on the Cambridge of that time from a great height. It is perhaps always salutary to remember, as Kuper indicates, that so many of the theoretical debates that have truly gripped anthropologists and their students in the past no longer seem to have analytical purchase.