

Apian Gazette

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Abstract

Apian Gazette, designed in collaboration with artist Nicolas Polli, is Apian – Ministry of Bees' official bulletin to inform the public of its activity. Published on an irregular basis, *Apian Gazette* serves to bridge the gap between the rigours of academic journals and the immediacy of blogging. It is designed to be easily produced and distributed, creating a material platform for cross-disciplinary collaborations and experimentations. Inspired by beekeeping journals, the Gazette pays tribute to the independent spirit of amateur publications while reappropriating the academic means of knowledge distribution.

Printed in autumn 2025, the second volume focuses on the Ministry of Bees itself. It offers a brief overview of over a decade of research – from the fields of anthropology, art, and beekeeping – about the age-old relationships humans have developed with bees.

For *Academizines!*, a special issue of *Unbound: A Journal of Digital Scholarship*, Volume 02 of *Apian Gazette* was updated. A digital layer was superimposed onto the first edition, leaving the original English text untouched while partially covering the French translation. This update morphed the printed ethnographic zine into a digital hybrid, opening up a discussion with academic peers. This extended abstract unfolds some of the main anthropological themes tackled by Apian – Ministry of Bees, such as the roles of technology and collaboration in bridging multispecies and multimodal anthropology.

More than a decade ago, I created Apian, a self-proclaimed Ministry of Bees. Based on my background as an artist, beekeeper, and multispecies and multimodal anthropologist, the Ministry is responsible for the relationship between humans and all bee species. It is tasked by bees with safeguarding the history of this age-old relationship and does so by producing what I term polymorphous ethnographies. These ethnographies combine various media, including video, sound, photography, and writing, bringing a *kaleidoscopic perspective* (Westmoreland 2022) to multispecies anthropology. Ultimately, the Ministry aims to establish a framework for the future of this relationship in the context of climate breakdown – a future free from extractive practices and rooted in ancestral knowledge.

Apian Gazette is thus one example of the polymorphous ethnographies produced by the Ministry. Multimodality gives volume to ethnographic experience, away from logocentrism, diversifying the outcomes and reach of anthropological research. By employing the term polymorphous rather than multimodal, however, I foreground the morphing potential of ethnographic data. In this framework, an ethnography is not a static result but a continuously morphing entity. It may first be expressed as a text before morphing into a film, a sound piece and a zine, and, of course, it works the other way around as well, starting as a film and morphing into a text.

Shedding new light on ethnographic findings, this approach also helps think about the role and potential of each media. When is sound more appropriate than text or text than images? In what context do images surpass text? Multimodal anthropology is thus approached from the angle of technology and technics. Rather than seeing technology as mere tools for exploring and expressing different layers of the research's subjects, this approach proposes seeing technology as foundational to multimodal anthropology. As for this digital Gazette, it was first printed and distributed to comrades to build a like-minded community, before morphing into a digital version, engaging in dialogues with academic peers, and reflecting on zines – as print media – as a technology suited for doing ethnographic research on a burning planet dominated by late-capitalist agendas.

Here, the Ministry of Bees embraces the zine format to create a space to share nascent hypotheses, building a bridge between academic research and participants. Rather than replacing conventional peer-reviewed publications (Jones 2024), zines introduce another temporality to scholarly research, privileging immediacy, accessibility, dissemination, and collaborative potential. Defining what a zine is tricky because, ultimately, zines do not want to be defined. It is a DIY publication – often in small print, not-for-profit, home-made – used by various communities to spread the word about urgent political matters, celebrations, and calls for action. It is all of that and none of that. A zine is an anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist print media; it is *print capitalism* (Anderson 1983) appropriated by artists, activists, and socialists, amongst others, to build other forms of governance. As a sub-technology of the printed press, zines function much like archives; when appropriated by marginalised or feminist movements, they become epistemological technologies that define how the past and the future are encountered (McKinney 2020).

The use of the alias aims to reveal Apian – Ministry of Bees' inherent collaborative nature. Invoking a *collaborative ethnography* (Rappaport 2008) approach, the Ministry seeks to decentre the researcher as the sole authority. Instead, it advocates collaborative approaches that transform fieldwork into a space of co-imagination, enabling the co-production of knowledge (2008). This co-constitution of knowledge is grounded in long-term engagement with communities, bridging the gap between academic inquiry and lived experience. Fundamentally, this collaborative approach is not restricted to humans. Beekeeping is an inherently interspecies practice; therefore, the Ministry views bees not as subjects of study, but as comrades. Ultimately, this issue of Apian Gazette, in both its print and digital versions, is a call to continue this collaboration across species and disciplines.

References

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