

7 Writing with beekeepers on a blog

A collaborative experiment

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7.1 Introduction

I am driving home after an intense day with buzzing bees and their keepers. It's almost dark, and I feel a bit tired from the overwhelming stimulus I've gotten from this experience. I decide to avoid the new 125's road and take the old *Campu Ommu* instead. The route is full of sudden bends, and I must drive slowly and carefully because my old fiesta doesn't really hold the asphalt. The pace allows me to enjoy the different shades of purple and blue slowly taking over the orange veil on the gentle hills. I take time to observe the place getting quiet. People are coming back home after a long day working in the field. I dwell on observing a guy in his tractor rushing up to finish his job before it gets too dark. The car radio is broken, so I take advantage of this moment of peace to reflect on the last days of fieldwork. I spent the last few days driving up and down in the *Sarrabus*¹ to interview beekeepers and engage with their bees.

Many things are buzzing in my mind right now. While driving, I go through the feelings of being surrounded by bees. I dwell on the dance I performed following Giancarlo²'s daughter at her apiary. This was a very extraordinary multispecies experience for me. Yet, I keep stinking about something different. My attention goes to some sturdy words making their own space between my thoughts. Giancarlo, Fabio, Lino, and other beekeepers keep telling me the

1 The Sarrabus is a micro area of Sardinia located on the Southeast coast of the island (see Böhne 1950: 13–14).

2 All the beekeepers' names and the names of beekeeping associations in this book chapter are anonymized.

same thing: “*They* don’t pay attention to us; *they* don’t want to listen to what we have to say.” This complaint is perhaps the most common criticism I always hear from my informants. Behind that, *they* are Sardinian policymakers and their non-beekeepers’ specialists who manage the environment and the funds for beekeeping and agriculture. Beekeepers believe that regional policymakers and their “specialists” lack knowledge of beekeeping’s peculiarities. As a result, beekeepers feel powerless and voiceless before them. The tensions between beekeepers and policymakers strike me. I wonder if beekeepers’ sense of being voiceless depends on the difficulties for non-beekeepers in understanding the world of bees. I wonder how can I tackle the tension raised within different forms of knowledge. Am I able to do this? Do I have the *power* to address this problem? If so, how? And further, does it even make sense to engage with this problem? Why should I?

The conflicting relationship between contrasting forms of knowledge and different powers is a common problem in various fields of anthropological inquiry (Foucault/Gordon 1980; Foucault 1982; Bourdieu 1994; see also Gramsci 1975: 455–465). Anthropologists have explored the relationship between power and knowledge from different perspectives (Haraway 1988; Spivak 1988; Escobar 1998, 2015). Drawing from the four years of ethnographic research on beekeeping on the Italian island of Sardinia, the following chapter analyzes the collaborative processes activated through the blog *Abieris e Abis. Antropologia dell’apicoltura in Sardegna* (www.fareapicoltura.net). I will dwell upon the asymmetrical relationships connected to visual ethnographic methods and the use of a camcorder in the field and reflect on the emergence of writing as a form of collaboration with the informants.

In what follows, after briefly introducing the methodology in the field, I explore the asymmetrical relationships between subjects and researchers in the field.

7.2 Questioning dominance in filming

Before lingering in the analysis of the blog and the collaborative processes it activated, it is helpful to give a general overview of the research project within the blog inserts. During the fieldwork, I interviewed several beekeepers from different parts of Sardinia to have a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of the networks within the community of beekeepers. In addition, I had formal and informal interviews with Italian beekeepers and with the most prominent

spokespersons of the regional and national associations. Along with beekeepers, I encountered employees from the regional departments of agriculture, politicians, specialists in environmental management, the entomologists of the University of Sassari, daily workers, forestry rangers, and whoever deals with the field of beekeeping in Sardinia. Most interviews were carried on as semi-structured interviews using audio-visual equipment. I collected several hundred hours of material with a professional camcorder and with a minimum requirement of external sound equipment.

The blog idea wormed its way into my reflections already in early 2017. The following Summer, I was designing the blog. As I will show later, the blog helped define my position in the field as a researcher. However, this aspect was secondary compared to my first goal of avoiding an asymmetrical relationship with the informants. Using the camcorder as a negotiation tool in the co-production of a film artifact did not seem enough to avoid unequal rapport. Even when beekeepers asked me to use my skills to produce anthropological documentation for their projects, I could still perceive some sort of unbalanced power between my informants and me. The audio-visual equipment proved crucial to exploring the sensorial dimension of beekeeping and *interviewing* bees. However, the camera triggered conflicting reactions in both human and non-human informants. These reactions are worth reflecting on.

The audio-visual equipment had the advantage of facilitating access to the non-verbal corporeal dimension of beekeeping (Meloni 2018a). Beekeepers use their bodies to build their relationship with the bees. Hence, their bodies become an instrument of communication and intra-action with the *body* of the Superorganism³ hive. The beekeeper's gestures, the pace, and the rhythm of the movements' sequence are all aspects of the non-verbal communication between humans and bees. The possibility of zooming in and out with the camera eye allowed me to observe how bees reacted to the beekeepers' corporeal presence and communicated through the bee's dance (Frisch 2012; Seeley 2010). The camcorder, in combination with the sound equipment, boosted my senses, enabling me to explore the aspects that would otherwise remain hidden from a human-centered ethnography on beekeeping.

For their part, the insects reacted to my presence, urging me to negotiate my corporeal position in the field. They lively responded to the furry cover

3 The notion of Superorganism considers the honeybee colony as a single integrated unit composed by a multitude of individuals that, like the cells in the human body, works as a single coherent whole (see Seeley 1989, 2010: 25).

of the microphone and the black-colored audio-visual tools I was wearing on my body. Often, these objects alarmed the tiny hives' guardians, leading the whole apiary to take on a defensive — if not aggressive — behavior towards me (Meloni 2018a). According to Sarah Abbot (2020: 227), before filming with nonhumans participants, it is fundamental to take the time to learn about their means of communication and to engage with their presence in the field. I must remark here that my embedded knowledge in beekeeping acquired through a lifetime apprenticeship growing up in a family of beekeepers allowed me to find *my place* surrounded by bees. Yet, the bees' presence was sometimes overwhelming, and occasionally I felt worried due to my allergy to bees' venom. I took advantage of the length of the camera eye that allowed me to step back in potentially dangerous situations and still maintain a close view of the insects.

As for beekeepers, to some, the camcorder seemed to represent an opportunity, a sort of stage where to perform themselves (Meloni 2018a). However, other informants (beekeepers and non-beekeepers) appeared to feel disturbed by the invasive eye of the camera. In the present-day hegemony of images on social media, the act of filming implies that, most likely, the pictures will become public. Consequently, the subjects too will become visible to the mundane sphere. This is an aspect that needs to be taken seriously. The risk of creating asymmetrical relationships with beekeepers prodded me to reflect on which tools anthropology could provide to address this delicate matter. To avoid asymmetrical relationships, I tried to use the camcorder as an instrument of negotiation, letting beekeepers freely choose what I could film and what they preferred not to show. This approach produced a sort of collaboration between the anthropologist-filmmaker and the subjects that nevertheless differs from the ways of collaborating recently described by David MacDougall (2020).

Yet, despite the effort, *dominance* seems an inevitable question when filming. Hence, the entire film jargon mimics warlike situations. The filmmaker *aims at* the subjects with the camera and s/he *shoots* them. Even in the act of holding a camera steady without using a tripod but simply its body, the filmmaker must control his/her breath in precisely the same way as to aim at something when holding a shotgun. This fact contributes to reproducing an asymmetrical relationship between the filmmaker and the filmed, already embedded in the act of filming (Shankar 2020). To avoid exercising forms of power and dominance, the filmmaker must engage in a negotiation process that may lead to creating new collaborating practices (Gubrium/Harper/Otanez 2015). Yet, as MacDougall pointed out, except in some co-authored films, dominance

is often hard to escape, while significant differences may persist between collaborators (MacDougall 2020: 2).

These aspects led me to consider *writing* a form of collaboration in my anthropological research. More precisely, writing with the informants on a blog was the form of writing I chose to carry on.

7.3 Designing the blog: conflicting knowledge

In 2018, after a few years of collecting data, I decided to take a step further and design a platform where people, including myself, could share their beekeeping knowledge without the fear and aggressiveness connected to social media. At that time, I had acquired the competencies to create a blog by collaborating on two projects of digitalization of cultural heritage in Sardinia⁴. Initially, the blog was structured into four sections, each dedicated to a beekeeping aspect. Additionally, a section embedded videos from my accounts on Vimeo and YouTube.

I called the blog after the name used by the beekeepers of a private Facebook group of Sardinian beekeepers. The word *abieris* is a new coinage made by the admins of the group. The correct Sardinian word for *beekeepers* would be *abiargius*, *apiariosos*, *mojaresu*, *casiddaiu*, *abealzu* (Wagner 1928; Böhne 1950; Spiggia 1997). Many members self-define using the new coinage; hence I used it for my blog. The latter is designed to avoid most male beekeepers' fundamental braggadocio and aggressiveness. It seems that there is a fundamental difference between the modes of communicating and sharing knowledge via Facebook between female and male beekeepers. The formers appear to use social media to seek technical support and pieces of advice. The communication between female group members appears less conflictual than male-based groups. Male beekeepers appear to reproduce online the dynamics of the hierarchy of expertise that usually form part of the relationship between master and apprentice (Meloni 2018a; see also Herzfeld 2004). The blog addresses the divergent perspectives derived from different kinds of knowledge at play and beekeepers' perception of being voiceless and powerless before the

4 The *Progetto Hostel* directed by Beatrice Artizzu with the artistic high school of Cagliari (<https://progettohostel.jimdo.com/>). The other project was called *Progetto S'Intzidu Archeologicu* (www.sintzidu.com now offline) which I designed and directed between 2016 and 2018.

polymakers. These aspects are strictly connected because the contrasting forms of knowledge in beekeeping create tensions (Meloni 2018a). Notably, the relationship between beekeepers and non-beekeepers' specialists is often conflicting. The term *specialists* indicate the professional figures for which apiculture does not necessarily represent the main field of expertise but that have a role in the community of beekeepers. Namely, the delegates of the regional agricultural departments, vets, accountants, agronomists, supervisors from the national agency for work, Carabinieri's inspectors from the department of health and food alteration, forestry rangers, and those figures that operate in beekeeping as workers from policymaker's departments. With these specialists, beekeepers maintain constant and sometimes daily — and mainly asymmetrical — relationships often characterized by a feeling of mistrust. Beekeepers appear to consider many specialists incapable of safeguarding their rights. They claim that the specialists tend to take on a "repressive behavior" against beekeepers rather than providing practical solutions. The latter attribute this restrictive attitude as the consequence of a profound lack of expertise in apiculture's peculiarities and the working of the Superorganism.

However, it seems that beekeepers' and specialists' nature of knowledge differs rather than one of them lacking expertise. The tension lay between the different forms of knowledge addressing similar problems in the field.

The diverse and mutable nature of beekeepers' body of knowledge mirrors in some ways the definition of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), which is "a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with the environment" (Inglis 1993: 3). Beekeepers' knowledge appears structured on a form of local knowledge that combines handed-down *know-how*, fieldwork experience, and a selection of technical-scientific knowledge on bees and beekeeping in the broader sense (Meloni 2018a). Beekeepers' knowledge is structured as a form of local ecological knowledge developed through an ongoing daily relationship with bees and every non-human actor connected to them — namely, plants, mammals, various insects, birds, and pests, as well as climate and international markets of honey and bees. Beekeepers appear to take on the perspective of their bees to analyze the world and give meaning to it. For its land-based knowledge and its awareness of the interactions between human and non-human species within the ecosystem, beekeepers' knowledge can be considered as a sort of indigenous knowledge that takes advantage of technologies, social media, the internet, and academic expertise (Meloni 2018b). In contrast, specialists' knowledge

is based on the form of technoscience produced according to a Western-style system of knowledge linked to dominant institutions (Escobar 1998). In other words, specialists' scholarly ecological knowledge is built on a *globalocentric perspective* (Tsing 2003) that works to standardize agricultural practices (beekeeping included), monitor the productions, and conserve the "biodiversity", with the ultimate goal of monetarizing beekeeping productions at large. Dominant institutions such as the regional administrations, the national policies, the EU system, and various environmental NGOs (e.g. World Wide Fund) empower the agency of specialists on the territory and contribute to establishing a hierarchy of knowledge that puts land-based knowledge of species on a subaltern position. I argue that the IK of beekeepers is precisely what makes their expertise ontologically inconsistent with specialists' technological knowledge (Meloni 2018b).

The form of scholarly ecological knowledge of specialists and policymakers dominates the field and often determines the distribution of wealth and EU funds in the community of beekeepers. Furthermore, it produces the feeling of not being heard, of being voiceless, even when beekeepers sit at the same negotiation tables with other specialists⁵. An excellent example of these sentiments is offered in the post written by the *Padenti's* president Felice Gallus in the private Facebook group of Sardinian beekeepers:

"During a meeting with the [regional] vet service, we discussed the structure of the new plan against the varroa mite. There were also Efisio Mele [Association *Ortus de is Abis*] and Andrea Loddo. I believe that we beekeepers agree

5 I refer here to the regional beekeeping commission created according to the Regional law 24 July 2015, n.19 "Law for beekeeping", Art. 11: the beekeeping commission consists of the following members: a) the councilor of the regional agriculture and agri-pastoral reform, or a delegate, as chairman of the commission; b) a beekeeper spokesperson for each of the three most representative agricultural professional organizations on regional level; c) a beekeeper spokesperson appointed by the most representative cooperative at regional level; d) a spokesperson appointed by the organizations of producers; e) a spokesperson appointed by the legally recognized associations of producers; f) a spokesperson of the regional agency *AGRIS Sardegna* and a spokesperson of the Agency Laore; g) a spokesperson of the Department for plant protection from the faculty of Agriculture of the University of Sassari; h) a spokesperson of the councilor's office of the regional environmental safeguarding; i) a spokesperson of the councilor's office of the regional health care and welfare service; j) a spokesperson of the Sardinian Department for animals (*Istituto zooprofilattico della Sardegna*. See: <https://www.regione.sardegna.it/j/v/80?s=287780&v=2&c=12794&t=1> (accessed 1 July 2016).

that it is pointless to design a monitoring plan without first shedding light on the apiaries that are not registered in the [national] beekeeping registry. Finally, during the discussions, I felt that some spokespersons of the vet service keep understanding their job as “repressive” rather than support [beekeepers]. It is dangerous that a specialist who talks does not understand the difference between a drug that doesn't require a prescription and a drug; more importantly, that s/he cannot distinguish an animal from an insect. I see too much arrogance in the specialists who are supposed to support the [beekeeping] sector. At some moment, the foolishness of the discussion makes us understand the importance of establishing the beekeeping commission as soon as possible. I impel all the delegates of the beekeeping associations to push harder on the [regional] agricultural department. PS: the only bright side is that we are talking about 60.000 beehives. Thus the 1308⁶ should have double the funds availability for the beekeeping sector.⁷”

With some differences, Gallus' feelings towards the regional delegates are shared within the community of Sardinian beekeepers.

Given the importance of these elements, I conceived the blog as an open virtual space in which to discuss and share knowledge on beekeeping from different perspectives without the usual aggressiveness of social networks. In ad-

6 Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a joint organization of the markets in agricultural products. See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1308> (accessed: 28 October 2021).

7 My translation from the original post in Italian: *Ieri durante l'incontro con il servizio veterinario si è discusso del nuovo piano antivarroa, presenti oltre delegazione organizzatrice anche Efisio Mele e Andrea Loddo. Credo che la visione degli apicoltori sia stata abbastanza comune convenendo sulla sostanziale inutilità del metodo visto che non si capisce che è di fatto inutile fare un piano di controllo se prima non si fa un piano di ricerca di tutte le postazioni non censite dell'anagrafe apistica. In ultima analisi tra le varie discussioni ho avuto l'impressione che alcuni esponenti del servizio sanitario continuino a valutare il loro operato come “repressivo” e non di sostegno. È grave che chi parla non capisca la differenza tra una prescrizione senza ricetta e un farmaco ma soprattutto non sia capace di fare una distinzione tra un animale e un insetto. Vedo ancora troppa sufficienza da parte di chi dovrebbe invece essere un supporto al settore e in alcuni momenti la discussione ha raggiunto apici di irragionevolezza che ci fanno capire quanto sia importante che la commissione apistica venga insediata il prima possibile, esorto tutti i rappresentanti delle associazioni apistiche ad aumentare il pressing nei confronti dell'assessorato all'agricoltura PS unica nota positiva è che si parla di 60.000 alveari quindi la prossima 1308 dovrebbe essere raddoppiata nei fondi messi a disposizione per il settore.*

dition, the blog appeared to offer the opportunity to disclose the results of the ethnographic research to a non-academic audience.

7.4 Writing together: the blog *Abieris e Abis*

The blog is structured into six main sections. The section *Home* displays the latest articles that have been posted. The *Il Progetto* (The project) contains a description of the research project with pieces of information on the aim of the blog. A sub-section named *Mappa sensoriale* (Sensorial map) contains an interactive map developed through open-source systems that links to diverse ethnographic material, including fieldwork notes, photographs, and videos hosted on Vimeo. This section is still under development, and it will be implemented with more material. The third section *Fare Apicoltura* (“doing” beekeeping) is linked to two additional sections, *Api e territorio* (Bees and territory) and *Miele* (Honey). The sections functions as tags to group the articles according to their topics. However, the sections are not binding, and an article can be tagged under two or more categories. The section *Video* contains the link on Vimeo to the short movie *S’Acuamebi de Verina Olla* (2018) which an association of Sardinian beekeepers asked me to produce as “anthropological evidence of a traditional way of making the *honeywater*” a traditional by-product of honey (Spiggia 1997; Floris/Satta 2009). This section provides the link on YouTube and Vimeo to the movie *ABIERIS E ABIS. BEYOND A DROP OF HONEY* trailer (2018) (Italy, R: Greca N. Meloni) which is described in detail in a subsection with the name *Il film Abieris e Abis*. The section *About me* offers an overview of my academic achievements. Finally, the section *Privacy* contains the privacy policy.

The wealthiest section of the blog is named *Fare apicoltura* which literally translates ‘doing’ beekeeping. This section includes articles that cover a wide range of topics connected to beekeeping in a broader sense, such as climate change and the environmental struggles connected to the green economy. Most articles in this section form part of the subdivision about bees and the territory. At least five articles included in this section were written together with fieldwork informants and by beekeepers themselves.

The article *Il cambiamento climatico e l’apicoltura*⁸ focuses on the effects of climate change on beekeeping, given the flood that affected beekeepers in various

8 See: <https://www.fareapicoltura.net/post/il-cambio-climatico-e-l-apicoltura>

parts of Sardinia in 2018. This article includes the interview with the meteorologist Matteo Tidili of the regional newscast *TGR Rai Sardegna*. Article *Febbre del Nilo e disinfezioni: quale pericolo per le api?*⁹ dialogues with the entomologist and beekeeper Paolo Fontana about the effects on bees of the pesticides the Italian government used against the mosquitos to control the West Nile Virus. Fontana offers a compelling perspective about the interaction between bees and mosquitos and policymakers' inability to solve problems involving insects. Both these two articles are designed to answer the concerns raised among beekeepers in the case of the frequent floods that directly affect and indirectly affect bees (by killing them during the flood and by spoiling flowers and other food sources) and for the uses of pesticides. In these cases, the format of the interview perfectly responded to the relationship of collaboration between the two scientists and me.

The articles *Sarrabus: c'erano una volta i casiddus*¹⁰ e *Diventare apicoltore*¹¹ are written by the beekeeper Giuseppe Bellosi. Giuseppe is a 70-years old beekeeper who migrated from North Italy to Sardinia in the 1970s. He's a professional beekeeper who keeps caring for the bees, although his daughter has now taken over him in most of the activities in the holding. Giuseppe was a crucial figure in the issue of the eucalyptus (Meloni 2018b) as he engaged in a tireless negotiating activity with policymakers to save the eucalyptus trees from imported pests (see Deidda et al. 2016; Floris et al. 2018). Both articles he wrote on the blog describe the beginning of his beekeeping activity, the difficulties in dealing with the insects, and the discovery of the Sardinian traditional ways of beekeeping (see Böhne 1950: 126–31; Spiggia 1997; Floris/Satta 2009). Part of these texts appeared on the Facebook private group of Sardinian beekeepers, where Giuseppe is one of the most active members. After reading his posts on Facebook, I proposed that he revise them and publish. My role was to adjust both articles to make them consistent with the blog format and to look for some pictures to put along.

The beekeeper Luigi Manias wrote *L'albero degli Arborea amico delle api*,¹² an article about an old service tree in his courtyard. Luigi uses the death of the old tree to introduce the reader to the symbolic value of the service tree in

9 See: <https://www.fareapicoltura.net/post/febbre-del-nilo-e-disinfezioni-quale-pericolo-per-le-api>

10 See: <https://www.fareapicoltura.net/post/sarrabus-c'erano-una-volta-i-casiddus>

11 See: <https://www.fareapicoltura.net/post/diventare-apicoltore>

12 See: <https://www.fareapicoltura.net/post/l-albero-degli-arborea-amico-delle-api>

the history of beekeeping in Sardinia in connection to the claims for independence. Luigi is a 60-years old professional beekeeper highly engaged in cultural events. He has practiced beekeeping roughly since the 1970s. Together with others, he founded one of the oldest beekeepers' associations in Sardinia, which organizes cultural and technical events on beekeeping. In exchange for his article, Luigi asked me to write some contributions to an online blog he directs¹³ and to an edited volume about beekeeping (in publication). In addition, Luigi also involved me in various cultural activities about beekeeping that his association organizes on the island.

Finally, the Italian part-time beekeeper Fausto Delegà wrote two contributions about honey and its link to a specific *terroir*.

The remaining articles on the blog are all written by me. They alternate self-ethnographic accounts about living with the bees and anthropological analyses on critical issues of beekeeping and the environment. The language and style used to address these topics are highly disseminative to reach a larger public as possible, including people that have no beekeeping knowledge. Everything in the blog was carefully designed to make anthropology more understandable to non-anthropologists. Finally, the platform allows me to track the readers' reactions to the articles. This enabled me to adapt the length and writing genre to make multispecies theories more *palatable* to nonacademic audiences (Eriksen 2015: 724).

A former educator of a beekeeping association admitted including my article *Apicoltura, nonostante tutto* (Beekeeping, in spite of everything) in his courses. The article describes the uncertainty of beekeeping from an auto-ethnographic perspective.

"I show that because it's true. People attend beekeeping courses to learn about this job. We explain to them that it is hard. Beautiful and hard. In the regional courses, they only explain that you can make easy money doing beekeeping. But it's not true. They don't know what it means to rely on bees. When I read that thing you wrote, I felt it was true." (Germano Olla, Montevecchio, 22 luglio 2019)

13 See *La mia amica si chiama Erica* on: <https://www.marmillacultura.it/rubriche/abiaresu/la-mia-amica-si-chiama-erica-come-il-miele/>

Readers of the blog do not belong merely to the community of Sardinian beekeepers. Policymakers from other Italian regions, researchers who are approaching the field of beekeeping, and landowners that seek connection with beekeepers often contact me after reading the blog.

7.5 Critical aspects of writing together in beekeeping

The blog and the practice of writing together with beekeepers represent an exciting field of inquiry from a critical perspective. In addition, the blog activates what Sarah Pink calls “blended practice,” which is “ways of working that surpass the disciplinary conventions of practice and theory” (Pink 2018).

By taking on a disseminative approach, the blog allowed me to make visible some of the needs and struggles of Sardinian beekeepers. The blog represents a tool to actively engage in a context in which dynamics of power make beekeepers “voiceless” and prevent them the right to claim anything before the policymakers. Along with policymakers, the large public appears to use the blog to know more about beekeeping and its struggles.

However, some critical aspects are worthy of careful reflection. The main issue is that most beekeepers do not feel comfortable writing texts. They often claim to not possess the competencies in writing in Italian that they otherwise claim in public speeches. The beekeepers who feel comfortable writing are generally those that take on a public role in the community. This aspect is fundamental because it means that the blog risks boosting the voice of the people that have already built their public role in the community. Instead of giving voice to the voiceless, the blog may offer a further stage to beekeepers who already act as community spokespersons or as self-representants. This element is crucial because the activity of the blog interacts with the fieldwork. Empowering beekeepers that already have a role before the policymakers may widen the asymmetries with beekeepers that are less represented in the public domain. This, in turn, fails the premises behind the blog itself.

A further element that hampers beekeepers from writing is the time-consuming characteristic of beekeeping. Through the Autumn and Winter months, beekeepers have less work to do at the apiary. Except for the Strawberry tree's harvesting between November and December, flowering plants rest, and bees winter cluster. Most beekeepers use this break to renew the tools for the upcoming season and to focus on selling honey. From February on, the workload of beekeepers steadily increases. The swarming fever of bees

overlaps with the blooming season, and beekeepers work restlessly every day until the end of August. Hence, the time for other activities is meager. This aspect impacts the willingness of beekeepers to write. Only people that are really motivated engage in this endeavor.

However, the most critical issue concerns the writing competencies in grammar and the use of PCs. Writing is not a neutral form of sharing knowledge. To write, one should possess a specific kind of knowledge that we are used to taking for granted. The aim of writing determines the style and often requires expertise in a specific field. Writing for a blog with a potentially large audience requires more than basic knowledge of Italian grammar and computer use. In the case of Sardinian beekeepers, it foresees the ability to translate into written form aspects of the operational phases that often happen in a different language code. Hence, in most cases, Sardinian is the working language beekeepers use in the field. Instead, Italian is the language of communicating in the blog. The language discrepancy is problematic to resolve even for a *pure* bilingual. Not all Sardinians possess the same competencies in both languages. Sometimes, the level of proficiency is different for language, and it might be connected to specific aspects of everyday life according to gender, class, work, age, etc. While the variety of grammar mistakes on Facebook posts makes writing on the social network less demanding, writing on a blog is necessarily connected to *writing well* in Italian. This aspect impedes some beekeepers from writing their perspectives on the blog. Ethnography may help in this matter. The size of knowledge beekeepers share on Facebook represents a good source of information concerning beekeepers' personal perspectives. Analyzing the posts combined with offline participation and engagement with beekeepers provides more elements to define the position of beekeepers that do not write on the blog. In this case, I used ethnography as a device to write for beekeepers and to translate their claims into written forms. Anthropologists have problematized cultural translation in diverse ways (Maranhão/Streck 2003; Churchill 2005; Samudra 2008; Giordano 2008). This includes questioning whether collaborative writing can effectively avoid power dynamics (Mignolo/Schiwy 2003). Writing in *Abieris e abis* requires the skills of writing a particular form of text that simultaneously addresses a public of specialists and nonspecialists without losing the scientific rigor of the discipline. This represents a manyfold challenge endeavor. Academic training provides courses on research methodology, and although the expertise acquired in the university is fruitful outside the academic (Eriksen 2015), it is designed to prioritize writing in peer-review journals and scientific books.

Nevertheless, ever more commonly, scholars are urged to use their knowledge in non-academic contexts. Yet, there is a lack of training in this regard. In my case, I have learned how to design and use a blog in a collaborative educational project with and high school teacher and her web designer-to-be student. This *impure* academic education enabled me to develop the skills to write *impure* texts on *Abieris e abis*. The results of the fieldwork are sectioned into multiple articles that can be read in less than four minutes, possibly from a smartphone's screen.

Writing skills are not the only aspects to make writing for a blog a real challenge. Academic research outcomes impose numerous deadlines that make overseeing a blog very time-consuming. The pace of academic writing is slower and more demanding compared to the blog. The latter, on the other hand, requires writing on a tight schedule to keep up the interest of the readers. This type of writing is not considered for the quality standards of research outcomes. Hence, it is sometimes frustrating to combine the two modes of writing. Nevertheless, I argue that the blog, with the mechanisms of collaboration that are activated, represents a research outcome worth considering.

7.6 Conclusions

The complexity of the intertwined relationships of human societies and the different approaches used to investigate them show that nowadays, multimodality and experimental collaboration practices are becoming ever more crucial in the contemporary ethnographic mode of inquiry (Collins/Durington/Gill 2017; Estalella/Criado 2018). Mainly young scholars are using unusual practices of collaboration to question power and hierarchies in their fields (Pink 2018). The contexts of the fields may urge researchers to design unusual ways of collaborating with the subjects. Along with filming, drawing, and enmeshing anthropological knowledge and art design (Pink 2007; Ingold 2013), *writing* is a form of collaboration. The contributions in this edited volume have shown a variety of situations that lead researchers to engage in writing together with informants. Aims and the relational dynamics between co-authors contribute to determining the different approaches and styles of writing.

I focused on a specific form of collaborative writing, mostly with beekeepers from Sardinia. I have shown critical reflections on *dominance* in filming beekeepers, and moral questions moved me to design the blog *Abieris e abis*. Primarily, the blog aims at empowering beekeepers that are voiceless before policymakers. Simultaneously, the blog attempts to avoid asymmetrical relationships with subjects by making anthropology's mode of inquiry more *palatable* to a nonacademic public. For the anthropologist Robert Borofsky, the aim of *public anthropology* is to fill the gap between anthropological expertise and the societies studied by anthropologists in which they also take part. He defines the application of anthropological knowledge in the public context as the activity of seeking to "address broad critical concerns in ways that others beyond the discipline can understand what anthropologists can offer to the re-framing and easing—if not necessarily always resolving—of present-day dilemmas" (Eriksen 2015: 719). To this extent, my engagement in the blog may be considered a form of public anthropology. Hence, many articles offer an anthropological perspective on the current environmental crisis linked to world bee decline. Whether as public anthropology or not, the blog activated unexpected forms of collaboration, challenging me to reconfigure anthropological practices. The fieldwork opened up a new dimension, surpassing the borders of corporeal encounters to embrace blended online and offline engagement. While learning beekeeping from my informants, they also learned why beekeeping matters from an anthropological perspective.

Some critical aspects emerged from reflecting on writing together with beekeepers. Writing is not a neutral form of collaboration, and the diverse expertise of co-authors may produce unbalanced power dynamics. In Sardinia, people possess different levels of knowledge of Italian and Sardinians. One language code may be used mainly in a specific context, and often the speaker lacks vocabulary in the same context but the other language. Beekeepers appear to use Sardinian as the primary language to work in the field. The diverse competencies in writing and speaking between Italian and Sardinian may discourage beekeepers from engaging in writing. As a result, only beekeepers already acquainted with writing tend to *speak* on the blog. This may lead to failing the premises of the blog of giving voices to the beekeepers that are less represented before the public and the policymakers. Devising fieldwork and anthropological expertise may help to make the perspectives of these beekeepers visible. This requires the translation of their claims into written forms. While translating culture may reproduce power dynamics, particularly in bilingual contexts (Mignolo/Schiwy 2003), it also raises the question of

authorship. Whose voice is on an article written by the ethnographer but that s/he has negotiated with the informants? When the ethnographer translates someone else perspective, is s/he writing *for* them? If so, do the informants feel those words as their own? Finally, how do non-beekeeper readers perceive authorship in this case? Do they take beekeepers' perspectives seriously, or do they simply acknowledge scholarly anthropological knowledge?

I argue that power dynamics may be unavoidable. After all, I am what I am, and my access to the field is functional for academic research. Yet, reflexivity and a more accurate theory of *impure* practices may help to answer the problems raised in writing with the informants on a blog. There is a need for a theory and methodology for these impure ethnographic practices that the academy seems not yet to offer. Students and researchers may be encouraged to find dynamic ways to address their fields of inquiry.

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