

Multispecies Engagement Evaluation Program ANAT SPECTRA 2022 Report

Requested by the Dept. Interbeing (DI) & AANAT 2082*

Prepared by MEEP in collaboration with Wurundjeri Country



MEEP is a zero waste project, in compliance with protocols stipulated by the 2079 UPC (United Planetary Council) Transtemporal Waste Agreement (TWA).

This report is subject to temporal paradoxes and inter-temporal disclosure clauses. References to future political outcomes and events are omitted from this document. For onsite 2022 evaluation MEEP received cultural visitation visas, Fermi Paradox exemptions, and has conformed to all Cosmic Censorship Hypotheses. While conducting polytemporal travel MEEP evaluators agree to maintain sense-able and physically reasonable forms.

*After-Australian Network of Art and Technology (AANAT)



Summary

MEEP (Multispecies Engagement Evaluation Program, c. 2082) are delighted to conduct an independent evaluation of multispecies engagement at the 2022 ANAT SPECTRA Live Symposium. This report presents the culmination of three days of on-site observation, sense-making and engagement across species lines and scales, conducted between 21-23 April, 2022 at the Science Gallery and Storey Hall in Naarm, on Wurundjeri Country.

The on-site evaluation was conducted by senior evaluators, Aeolid and Osmia. Both evaluators are first generation multiplicity-natives, born multiple after the United Planetary Council's introduction of the 'No one is here' legislation of 2045*. As ANAT SPECTRA 2022 was centred around the theme of 'multiplicity' our evaluation tends to the questions: 'What are the values, ideals, and practices of a multiplicitous world, and how can persons and practices in attendance be recognised as collaborators in the symposium? As a temporally extraneous evaluation agency representing a future which foregrounds multiplicity (c. 2082) † MEEP were appointed to conduct this research and evaluation.

What are the values, ideals, and practices of a multiplicitous world?

While we applaud ANAT SPECTRA 2022's sincere gestures towards multiple futures and a multiplicity of ways of being, knowing, and doing, our report finds that significant opportunities to 'do' multiplicity and deepen multispecies engagement within the symposium remain. MEEP recognises 'multiplicity' in the context of 2022 to be an intention – that which is aspirational, nascent, emergent. As future delegates we have sought to not simply evaluate the SPECTRA symposium – but through application of a 2082 evaluation frameworks, paradigms, and techniques – to practice a future of radical difference in your present.

At the 'tail-end' of our report, we share offerings that we hope will provide ANAT SPECTRA 2022 with pathways to deepen multi-species literacy, amplify inclusion, engagement and excite futures of radical multiplicity.

* 'No one is here' recognises a multiplicity of beings, ways of knowing and being, and interdependent nature of all life and phenomena. This legislation centres the equity, inclusion, and care of all earthly (and non-earthly) life across scales as necessary for the continuity of life upon Earth.

† Please note that futures are multiple. MEEP represent a single future, contingent upon the actions of multiple entities within the present and other time horizons.

Molten core, filaments (aims, hopes, intentions)

Our aims and objectives in conducting an evaluation of ANAT SPECTRA Live 2022 were twofold. Firstly, our intention was to ask ‘how well is the engagement between species at the symposium?’; secondly, to model practices of evaluation otherwise – with the intention of generating new possibilities for SPECTRA participants in 2022.

Common to many practices of the 2020s, art evaluation typically assumes an anthropocentric model. Evaluation models are dominated by audience engagement frameworks and the desire to produce quantitative ‘metrics’ that measure an ever-elusive ‘engagement’ with persons whom identify, or read, as human. Our report provides a counter to anthropocentric modes of evaluation, applying a future paradigm of arts evaluation from 2082 to the ‘present-day’. Applying the multispecies evaluation lens widely used by MEEP 2082 to ANAT SPECTRA 2022, this report explores to what degree of multispecies inclusion and participation has been facilitated by the symposium, and what the shape of this engagement has been. It is our hope to make visible some of the diverse, poetic and significant invitations being made by the myriad attendants who occupy the program, bodies and site of ANAT SPECTRA 2022.



Image 1.1
The fruiting body of a fungus attends the ANAT SPECTRA 2022 symposium from the Oculus garden at the Science Gallery.

Exterior, Science Gallery Melbourne,
22 April 2022.

Tentacles, fronds, queries

To conduct this evaluation, we explored several tentacular avenues of enquiry. Through observation, surveying human-identifying participants, engaging in presencing activities, and on-site sensemaking we asked: Who is present, how are they present, and how is their presence received? How are participants relating, or in relation? What systems support the symposium? What cultures and cultural practices are at play? What might this tell us about multispecies engagement?

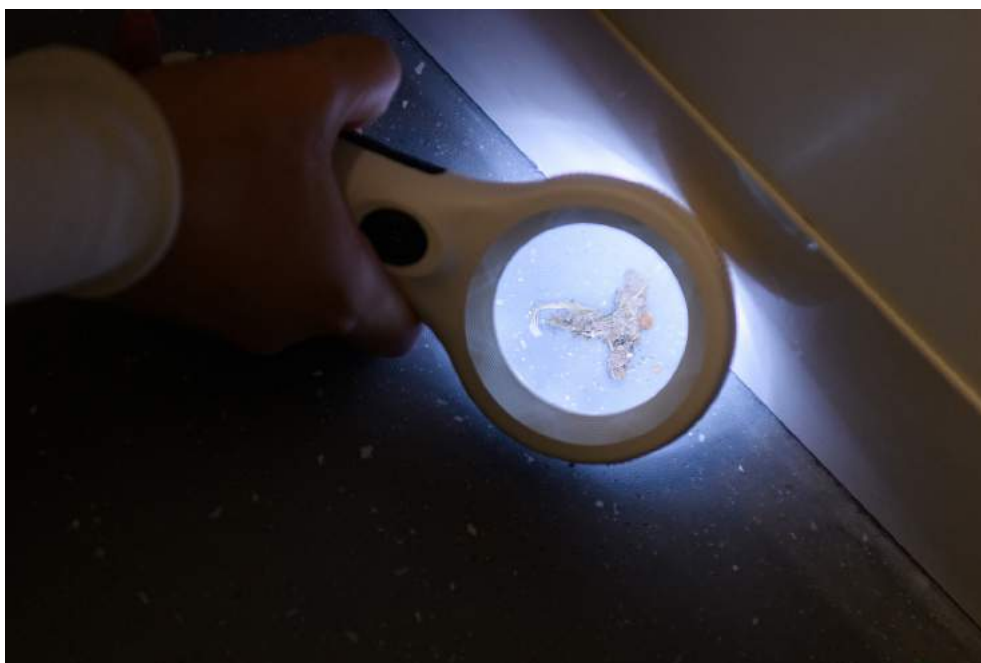


Image 1.2
Acknowledging the presence of organic matter in the AV room of the Science Gallery. While home to algorithmic, digital, and electrical entities, agencies, and forces, the AV room also hosts several analogue creatures.

Interior, Science Gallery Melbourne,
22 April 2022. Photo by Sarah Walker

Rockpool, Wedge-tail Eagle (discoveries, findings)

Although the symposium addressed themes of multispecies care and awareness, all-bipedal panels featured throughout, and all presentations were authored by humans (albeit occasionally in kinship with other persons). The direct voices, desires, and needs of more-than-human communities were absent. Country was frequently acknowledged but not directly included, with programming remaining typically indoors and removed from the input of the more-than-human stakeholders in attendance. It was noted that no ethical framework for multispecies recognition was evident at the symposium. For talks and panels, human attendees were seated indoors in a dark, basement level auditorium for several hours in atmospheric conditions that frequently denied material needs (ie. water, rest, comfortable temperatures, natural light.) Human symposium participants, however indicated a high level of multispecies literacy and willingness to engage with other-than-human beings. Of those surveyed, 44.4% described themselves as ‘frequently in exchange’ with forces, entities, and agencies that are not human, 33.3% described themselves as ‘always in exchange’, and 22.2% described themselves as ‘often in exchange’. While English and French were the most commonly spoken languages amongst those surveyed (77% and 33% of participants, respectively,) Canine and Vegetal languages were also reported to be spoken by 33% of human-identifying participants.



Image 1.3
Pigeon ‘spikes’ atop an emergency phone indicate that help offered to human persons is not extended to avian persons. A key example of hostile design.

Exterior, Science Gallery Melbourne,
21 April 2022

Basalt, Violet (site survey)

Across the Science Gallery site we observed a notable and consistent hostility towards other-than-human persons. This was evident in antimicrobial sprays and fluids, anti-avian exterior design (image 1.3) and rodent and insect execution devices (image 1.4). Vegetal persons were most commonly engaged only in deconstructed forms, across cotton, paper books, consumables.



Image 1.4
Rodent persons are clearly unwelcome in the basement of the building hosting the Science Gallery and ANAT SPECTRA. Such a deadly ‘welcome’ presents not only barriers to rodent access at the symposium, but signals outright intent to harm rodents in attendance.

Interior, Melbourne Connect Building,
22 April 2022

Howl, Hoot (Attendance and Participation)

996 human bodies were registered entering and exiting the Science Gallery Melbourne building over the two days the Gallery hosted ANAT SPECTRA. However, MEEP's survey of human-identifying SPECTRA participants revealed the attendance and presence of trillions of entities, agencies, and forces over the course of these two days. Surveys of human-identifying participants highlighted a high degree of multispecies literacy amongst the group, with participants situating themselves within complex webs of relationships, reciprocity, and care with and for more-than-human others.



Who is present at the ANAT SPECTRA 2022 Symposium?

Fig 1.1

Who is present? how are they present? Drawing upon survey data, this data visualisation illustrates how participants represent an extended constellation of relations across scale, species, and time. Confounding

categorisation and taxa, this visualisation charts a map of relations between SPECTRA participants and the entities, agencies, and forces that constitute participants, cohabit with them, and whom participants care for.

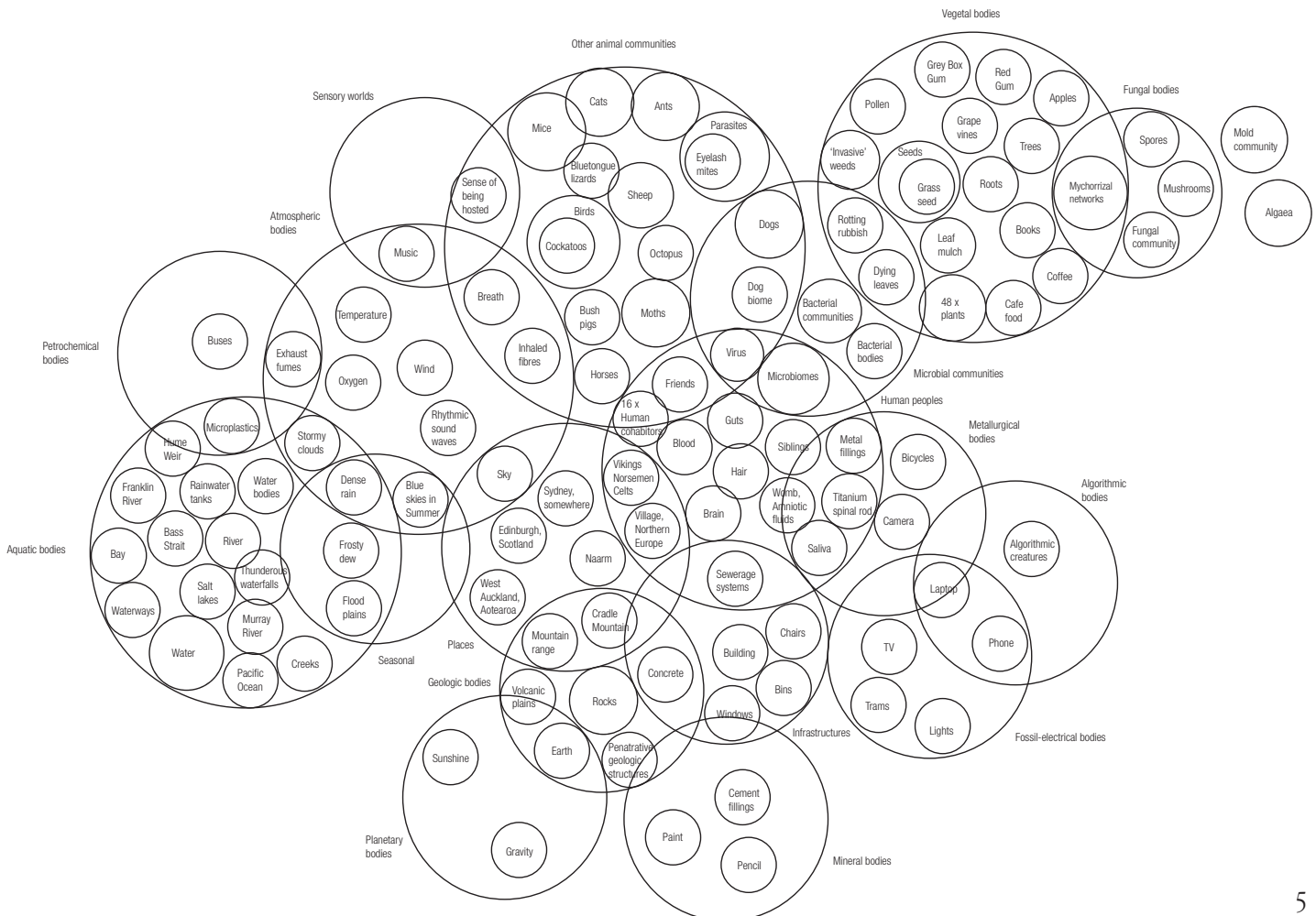


Image 1.5

Coliform bacteria in attendance. MEEP registered the attendance of multiple species during ANAT SPECTRA22. This community of coliform bacteria were present at the opening night event on 21 April, residing on a used champagne flute.

Other-than-human inclusion

How has ANAT SPECTRA 2022's human cohort related to other-than-human participants at the symposium? How have they been recognised, where and how are they present, what have been their barriers to access? Has the inclusion of other species been facilitated through the design and programming of the symposium? MEEP conducted a visual survey on-site, presenting our findings below.



Image 1.6
 Humans (and possibly machines) welcomed at the Science Gallery front desk.

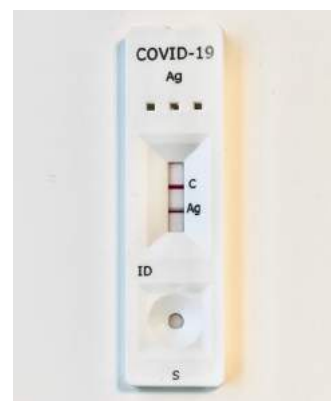
Left: from top to bottom
 Image 1.7
 An insect body found crushed against the fuzz of a peach. Sighted at the symposium grazing table.

Image 1.8
 Vegetal bodies and macroplastic wrap comingled in a rubbish bin.

Image 1.9
 An 'insect-o-cutor' sighted within the basement of the Melbourne Connect building, host to the Science Gallery.

Image 1.10
 Digital sensors within the gallery.

Image 1.11
 COVID-19 encounters. Human symposium participants playing host to viral bodies.



Wit(h)nessed*, whispered (observations) Including unsolicited & overheard comments

Glass bottles on a trestle table, containing water from Italy.
The fire alarm sounding; eucalypt smoke from the ceremony winds through the gallery, hangs lightly in the air. The tail of a cat flickers onto Cass' screen, waving to the human audience before flickering into invisibility again, subsumed by the digital background.
Outside, Common Myna's stride around the edge of the Oculus, peck at a discarded apple core.
1:34 PM, 22 April, 2022 on Wurundjeri Country: Dried fruit, seeds, nuts, in small, crinkly plastic bags.
"I am so hungry"
"I need a huge carbonara right now" (gestures to gut)
The grazing time is limited, squeezed into ten minute breaks.
"She's a part of my biome"
Collaborate at the frequency of trust.
In the dark soil of the oculus, an arachnid and three fruiting bodies of mushroom declare themselves in orange.

An arachnid and three fruiting bodies of mushroom declare themselves in orange.

Vent 1 – 1.1m/second,
Vent 2 – 1.2m/second,
Vent 3 – 1.2m/second (like wool on skin)
Vent 4 – 0.8m/second (the colour of dawn on a grass hillside)
Drones, swarms, nests.
(No one mentioned the wifi password.)
Atmospheric presence is felt on the skin, a light breeze with a wind speed of 0.4 m/second to 1.2m/second.
"I felt I wanted some space away from my microbiome for a while"
"Plants are part of my learning community"
"I need more water"
"Sorry, I some need fresh air"
"Some human animals don't have teeth that can eat apples"
"I wanted to move like an ant, but I felt like a human trying to move like an ant"
"A raven died at the volcano"
"There was a tiger-snake on Elizabeth"

* Neologism to year 2022, initiated by Ettinger and later brought to common usage in the Stefanou School (c.2045). Wit(h)nessing collapses the perceived distance between a witness and the observed, speaking to the participatory and co-creative nature of observation.

Bloom, Harvest (Offerings & Recommendations)

These recommendations arise from suggestions made by symposium stakeholders across species. Each offering emerges from the multiplicity of experiences, desires and perspectives expressed during the evaluation period.

Unplan (sphagnum moss)

Make space for the fugitive, fragile, the soft and slow creeping knowledge that spawns and mutates in spaces only left in shadow.

We want to spend more time discovering together. We want to experiment.

Unsettle (silt)

Let the edges weed and listen to their lessons in thriving – growing through concrete with collective pressure. Muddle the clarity of activities to let more complex systems emerge from the mess.

We want to learn in different ways – tactical, sensory, playful ways, we want to make a mess, literally and conceptually.

Refuga (growling grass frog)

Spaces of rest and replenishment nourish both form and spirit. Only from rest can futures regenerate. Only with rest can we spawn new worlds.

We want to take breaks to rest, stretch, nap, digest. There is so much to reflect on.

Seed (kangaroo grass)

The relations, presences, and senses at the symposium carry future actions of interest to the symposium's conveners. How will the new things we seeded be tended to?

How does all this learning become legacy? How do we continue together?

Alliances (fishbone fern)

The 'T' is already relational – make visible the relationships, fortify through alterity, convene clusters, pods, partnerships, nodes that might speak, walk, pause, learn, make-sense together through programming.

We want more time to meet people, to make deep connections with each other, with the ideas, with our bodies, with our grief, with the site.

Seep (swamp)

There is no edge where the swamp stops and becomes the soil, no point where the flesh becomes the air, where science becomes poetics. Everything is soft and leaking, all bodies porous, seeping thresholds. Abandon anything that told you(s) it is fixed.

We want to abandon the binaries. We want a program that rejects divisions and reinscribes old, bad habits.



Image 1.12
A fishbone fern grows in the half-light of the Oculus, at the Science Gallery.

Exterior, Science Gallery Melbourne,
22 April 2022

Bloom, Harvest (Offerings & Recommendations)

cont...

These recommendations arise from suggestions made by symposium stakeholders across species. Each offering emerges from the multiplicity of experiences, desires and perspectives expressed during the evaluation period.

Flock (white plumed honeyeater)

Let the collective make the decisions, practise the democracy of deep listening and co-leadership/co-navigation led by no one, decided by all.

We are facing a screen, we are facing experts, we are separated and unable to see each other's faces, to know who each other are. On day two we didn't know where to go.

Revere (golden sun moth)

Practice reverence for the stewards already amongst you(s). Elevate the significance of their presence. Acknowledge the generosity of their offerings.

We want First Nations voices at the front, we want radical cultural safety. We want First Nations people supported.

Rot (tubaria fungi)

The old has to yield and sluice into the soil, to surrender sublime. A sacrificial transposition to feed ground fertile enough to feed new roots thickening with new power.

We want to hear emergent voices. We want to see new faces leading to new places.

Nourish (cumulonimbus cloud)

Depleted soils cannot absorb the rain, cannot let the groundwater seep back into the aquifers. Tend to the systems that let knowledge generate. To care, first needs must be identified.

We want more water. We want more light. We want to be outside and to tend to our sensory needs.



Image 1.13
Basalt, igneous rock in attendance
at ANAT SPECTRA 2022 from the
Oculus, Science Gallery.

Exterior, Science Gallery Melbourne,
22 April 2022

Conclusion

We began our evaluation by asking how well multispecies engagement was at the ANAT SPECTRA 2022 symposium. Throughout the three days MEEP were present, human participants demonstrated a high degree of multispecies literacy, and easily identified themselves as amalgams of many forms, forces, stories and events. While we applaud ANAT SPECTRA 2022's embrace of 'multiplicity' and its themes of multispecies care, we believe there is room for the symposium to shift multiplicity from discussion to active demonstration.

How might SPECTRA foreground its own multiplicitous assemblage and make space(s), and time(s) to deeply listen to the stories and invitations present in its many flowing, fruiting, flocking participants? How might space for the soft and sensory knowledges of story, of visions, of memory and intuition be invited into a programmed schedule? MEEP are keen to see ANAT SPECTRA consider the duty and practices of care necessary for inclusive and diverse futures, and to consider how these might shape the design and delivery of a symposium. How might a symposium offer practices of multispecies reciprocity? How might a symposium foreground the wellbeing of all persons, both human-animal and other, and how might it directly contribute to multispecies wellbeing on-site? How might a symposium program best attune to, serve, and benefit from worlds beyond the human?

We wish you(s) at ANAT 2022 a multiplicitous future and thank you(s) for the opportunity to conduct polytemporal multispecies engagement evaluation at SPECTRA.

NOTE: Should there be a desire for further engagement, MEEP are available for consultation regarding temporally-accessible staff training programs in multispecies literacy, care, and competency, and site-specific design for kinning rooms.

Disclaimers

All efforts have been made to adhere to vocabularies and formats most appropriate to interhuman discourse most common in the year 2022. However, in instances where meaning would be diminished by translation, or it is deemed beneficial to the receiver of the report to 'sense into' the offering of a particular word or assemblage, the 2082 usage has been maintained.

A change from individual to plural will perhaps appear as most strange to a reader native to the early 21st century. An effort has been made to include sensorial knowledge deemed largely accessible to early 21st century readers. An effort has been made to tailor this evaluation to human only readers, and survey data was gathered only from participants who identified as human during the ANAT SPECTRA 2022 symposium.

This evaluation was compiled through data collection methods with bodily sensors and augmentation devices. An effort has been made to compile the multisensory and polytemporal narratives in a manner that best makes-sense in the year 2022.

MEEP is a project initiated by artists Ana Tiquia and Luna Mrozik Gawler
Visual identity, design and layout by Test Objects / Manuel Sepulveda

Commissioned and supported by ANAT (Australian Network for Art and Technology) 2022

