

A SYNOPTIC VIEW OF THE MAGELLANIC CLOUDS:
VMC, GAIA AND BEYOND

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A Milky Way perspective on the Magellanic Clouds

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The Magellanic Clouds play a pivotal role in Local Group archaeology. The most recent simulations tell us that the Galaxy came together from Magellanic-mass subsystems at about $z \approx 5$ although a few like Sgr, the LMC and SMC survived and are infalling today. The Magellanic Clouds are the closest star-forming galaxies as distinct from the Galaxy, while all other dwarfs within the halo have been stripped of their gas. Their lower metallicities and resolved stellar populations provide us with a unique window on star formation and gas processes in low-mass galaxies. Many uncertainties remain: Are the Magellanic Clouds on first infall? Are they part of a larger accretion flow? Are they responsible for non-axisymmetries within the Galaxy? What impact will they have in the distant future? How important are they when we consider Local Group analogues in the nearby universe and within cosmological simulations? These are some of the issues that will be considered in this short review.