

# Place

Eastern Arc and the levelling up agenda

The termly newsletter of Eastern Arc  
Spring 2022

do different



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**EASTERN**  
**ARC** Academic Research  
Consortium

## A note from the Director

Stretching across the East and South-East of England, from the Wash to the Channel, ours is a region of contrasts, of urban centres and agricultural richness, of natural beauty and historic significance, of trade, transport, migration and movement.

It is a region of significant prosperity but also one of stark deprivation. With the forthcoming white paper on 'levelling up', it is vital that the Government recognises the urgent need of communities at a local level.

Our coastal communities are a clear example of this. They include some of the most deprived wards in the country, including Great Yarmouth, Tendring (which includes the [most deprived area](#) in the country, Jaywick), Southend, and Thanet.

As civic, anchor institutions, working with our communities is at the heart of what we do. On page 5 you can find out about our recent booklet, *The Importance of Place*, and what we are planning to do as a consortium to address the challenges - and use the opportunities - of our region.

Elsewhere in this newsletter we meet our new Thematic Champions, set out our response to the recent Science and Technology Committee review on the crisis of reproducibility, hear about our new communities of common interest, and learn about our webinars and podcasts.

I hope you enjoy this edition, and don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you want to find out more about any of our work at [info@easternarc.ac.uk](mailto:info@easternarc.ac.uk).



## Two new champions join EARC

Last term we were joined by two new thematic champions. Giuseppe Maglione will be representing Kent in the [Human Rights, Equality and Conflict theme](#); Paola Giuseppantonio di Franco will be joining colleagues Faiyaz Doctor and Michael Tymkiw in representing Essex in the [Culture, Connection and Creativity theme](#).

- [Giuseppe is a Lecturer in Criminology](#). His main research interests are around penal politics, restorative justice, conflict mediation, penal abolitionism and anarchism. Before becoming a full-time academic, he worked as a legal advisor in prisons, victim-offender mediator, community mediator and trainer in conflict management/mediation for private and public organisations (police, social workers, healthcare professionals etc.) in Italy, Norway and Scotland.
- [Paola is a lecturer in Heritage and Digital Humanities](#). Her research combines material culture, heritage, and cognitive science to explore how new technologies impact heritage making processes and the interpretation processes of the past. She was a Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellow at Cambridge before coming to Essex as one of the original EARC Fellows.



They come at an exciting time for the consortium as we develop new projects and realise the potential of our collaboration. To find out more about all of our champions, go to <https://easternarc.ac.uk/champions/>

# reproducibility crisis

## The reproducibility crisis: EARC responds to call for evidence

*There is a clear crisis in reproducibility, but how deep it is is open to debate. Last month we submitted a response to the Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee's call for evidence. In it we explored the issues underlying the reproducibility crisis, and suggested a number of actions that will help to address it.*

In 2016 a *Nature* survey found that 70% of respondents had 'tried and failed to reproduce another scientist's experiments,' although '73% said that they think that at least half of the papers in their field can be trusted'.

In responding to the S&T Committee's call for evidence we talked to academics and professional services staff across EARC to understand the issues and offer some thoughts on how the crisis could be address. Among our recommendations were the following:

- Funders provide **discrete funding for reproduction studies**;
- Funders develop **a database of underused software and hardware**, which may be necessary for the analysis of specific data as part of a reproduction study;
- Funders and publishers make the **reviewing and enforcement of data management plans** more robust;
- Publishers mandate **pre-registration and accepting articles for publication based on an outline of research**;
- Publishers employ staff and/or students to routinely **run the code on data submitted**;
- Institutions be required to integrate open and reproducible research practices into their **incentive structures** at all career levels.
- Individuals change the way that postgraduate students and early career researchers are **trained in research methodologies and publication strategies**..
- Government works to **improve the scientific literacy of politicians, policymakers and civil servants**. Without it there is a tendency to accept the results at face value and act accordingly. There is a need to 'embrace uncertainty' and accept that results are not necessarily clear cut;
- Representative bodies for research disciplines **mandate the use of systematic reviews**, such as the Cochrane or Campbell Collaborations, or the [Open Synthesis](#) group, to review, rate, synthesise and publish best available evidence.

**The full response can be read in our position paper [here](#).**



# Mental health and the life course

The EARC Health Systems, Social Care and Wellbeing theme launched a seminar series in the autumn term looking at **'Mental Health and the Life Course.'** Each event consists of two brief papers, followed by comments from a designated respondent, and by audience discussion.

The series aims for a conversational feel, focused on exploring the distinctive contributions of different disciplines to specific issues, and on searching for points of convergence and divergence between these perspectives. Each session features contributions from each EARC institution, and the intention is to encourage the development of a community of like-minded scholars who may wish to collaborate on research, teaching, or public engagement projects – or just to learn from each other.

Three seminars have already been held, and three more will take place this term:

- **2 February, 1pm:** Vulnerable Adults
- **14 February, 12noon:** Midlife
- **8 March, 12noon:** Ageing

The events are free and open to all. They are virtual (via Zoom), so you can access them from anywhere. You don't have to be at the EARC universities to take part. For all of our upcoming events, do have a look at [our events page here](#).

A new 'community of common interest' (CCI) has been developed around human-digital interaction. CCIs are a way for us to map and understand our strengths in a particular area, and to allow colleagues to link with others working in common or complementary areas across EARC.

Technology is increasingly ubiquitous and we are ever more reliant on it to inform us, to amuse us, to work for us, to care for us, to protect us. This reliance comes at a cost, and we need to be vigilant as to what we lose and what we gain in accepting the digital.

Researchers across Eastern Arc are working on both the technology itself, but also on the societal, economic and personal issues that come with it. Our community of common interest in this area is broad and wide ranging, taking in machine learning and artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual and augmented reality, the Internet of Things, and brain-computer interface. We also have sociologists and legal experts looking at the wider implications of our new relationships with technology.

To access our new CCI, [click here](#). If you want to discover our other CCIs, [click here](#).



## human-digital interaction.



# The importance of place

'Place' is central to all of our work.

At consortium level we are defined by our region. As we make clear in [the background to our collaboration](#), all of our members 'are on the North Sea rim, a region rooted in the land but shaped by travel, trade and migration.' As such, involvement with, integration within, and relevance to our region and the wider beneficiaries of our work are embedded in our [Strategy 2020-25](#).

As part of this, we are engaged with the national conversation around 'place' and 'levelling up', producing [position papers](#), responding to calls for evidence, and ensuring that our academic expertise is brought to bear in this area. We make the case that it is essential that the needs of our communities are recognised; there is a real danger that our region is overlooked in the continuing work to identify national need.

Each of our universities has civic engagement as a key part of their strategies. UEA and Essex are part of the Civic Universities Network, and Kent defines itself as a 'dual-intensity university grounded in place,' serving its communities by 'contributing actively and substantially to the health, wellbeing, prosperity and success.'

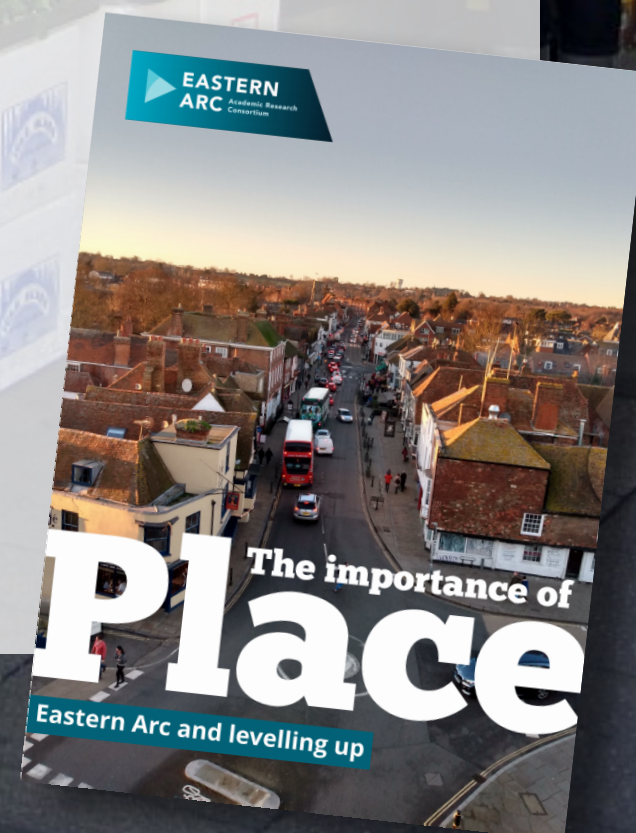
Each of the universities has developed strong relationships with individuals and organisations within the region who work within and on behalf of their communities. These include county and borough councils, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), businesses, charities and individuals.

These relationships result in many different projects, collaborations and initiatives. For instance, UEA is involved in the Norwich Good Economy Commission, which works with the council and others to identify key issues and collaboratively explore how they can improve people's lives. Essex leads the Catalyst Project, which works to improve local community services for the vulnerable in Essex and Suffolk, and Kent is part of Growing Kent & Medway, a collaborative project that aims to support practical and policy development in making the region a centre in climate-smart technology in food production, processing, packaging and supply chains.

As our Director said in his introduction (p1), our region can be seen as prosperous, but it is home to significant deprivation and need. With the Government's focus on 'levelling up', it has never been more important to understand need on a granular level, and to recognise the value that local 'anchor' institutions such as ours make to their communities.

This is why we published a booklet setting out 'the importance of place'. In it we explain the difference we are making within our region, but also what needs to be done as the Government decides on its spending in the years ahead.

To download and read the booklet, go to our [news pages here](#).





# Pyramids of life

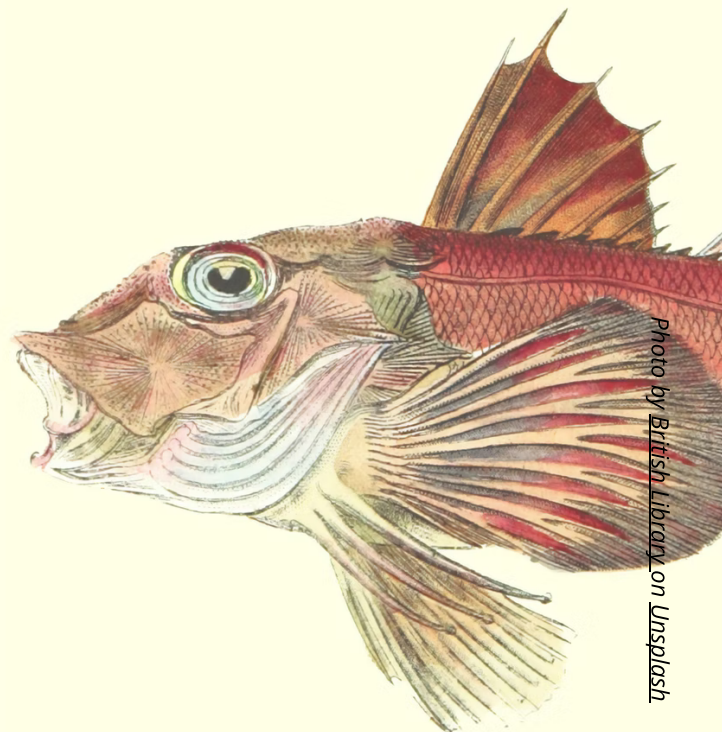
Episode 21 of our podcast series is now available.

In this edition we hear about a groundbreaking £1.5m project that seeks to better understand how we can work sustainably to manage our oceans. The project, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), aims to develop a methodology that will enable us to more robustly quantify the effect that fishing has on the marine ecosystem.

Led by Professor Jon Pitchford at the University of York, the project involves colleagues at the universities of East Anglia, Essex and Roehampton, as well as researchers at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), based at Lowestoft, and other stakeholders across the UK.

Joining Phil Ward to explain the project, the issues underlying it and what they hope to achieve through it are experts from UEA, Essex and Cefas.

**Listen to the podcast [here](#), or via Spotify or iTunes.**



## Transdisciplinary workshops

Over the course of the past term Kent has hosted a series of transdisciplinary workshops for Eastern Arc colleagues exploring how to work across disciplines. Funded by the Wellcome Trust, the workshops looked at four different aspects of transdisciplinary research:

- Knowledge and Power : addressing unequal relationships
- Challenging Comfort Zones : environments and collaboration
- Managing expectations in transdisciplinary research
- Diversity and Inclusion : from theory to practice?

To find out more about each of the events, have a look at the full programme [here](#) (pdf), or talk to Prof Julie Anderson at Kent

## ‘Empower the East’

### The Eastern Arc Archives and Special Collections Strategy

The EARC Archives and Special Collections Group have developed a strategy to give a focus to their work. The vision for the Strategy is to empower the archives of our universities to take an active role in leading our research and informing our education. to do so, it has three objectives:

- **Integrate:** To identify the common and complementary themes between our collections, and collaborate to build on them. .
- **Influence:** To create and develop resources that will enable better understanding and wider engagement with our collections, within and beyond our universities.
- **Advocate:** To advocate on behalf of our collections, and develop internal and external networks to address needs and maximise opportunities.

To support them in this work, the Group will shortly be advertising for a CHASE internship. Keep an eye on our news feed for details of this opportunity when it opens.



## With radical hearts and open minds

Eastern Arc is the regional research consortium that brings together the universities of East Anglia, Essex and Kent.

All three universities were established in the 1960s to be a different type of institution, aiming to work across disciplinary boundaries, and to offer alternative ways of thinking.

Eastern Arc continues this tradition. If you want to find out more about our work, go to our website where you can discover what we've achieved so far and how you can get involved.

<https://easternarc.ac.uk/getting-involved/>

