



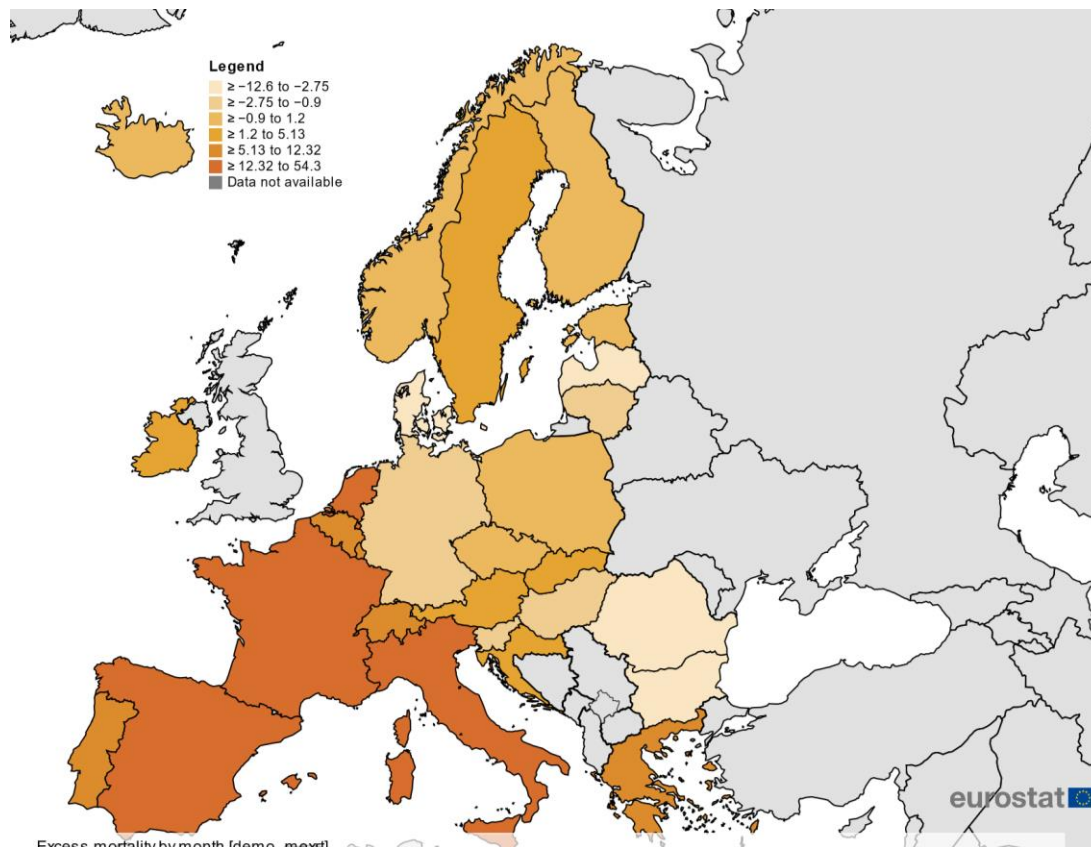
NICOLAUS COPERNICUS
UNIVERSITY
IN TORUŃ

Never give up applying 😊

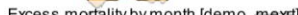
Adam Izdebski

2025-07-17

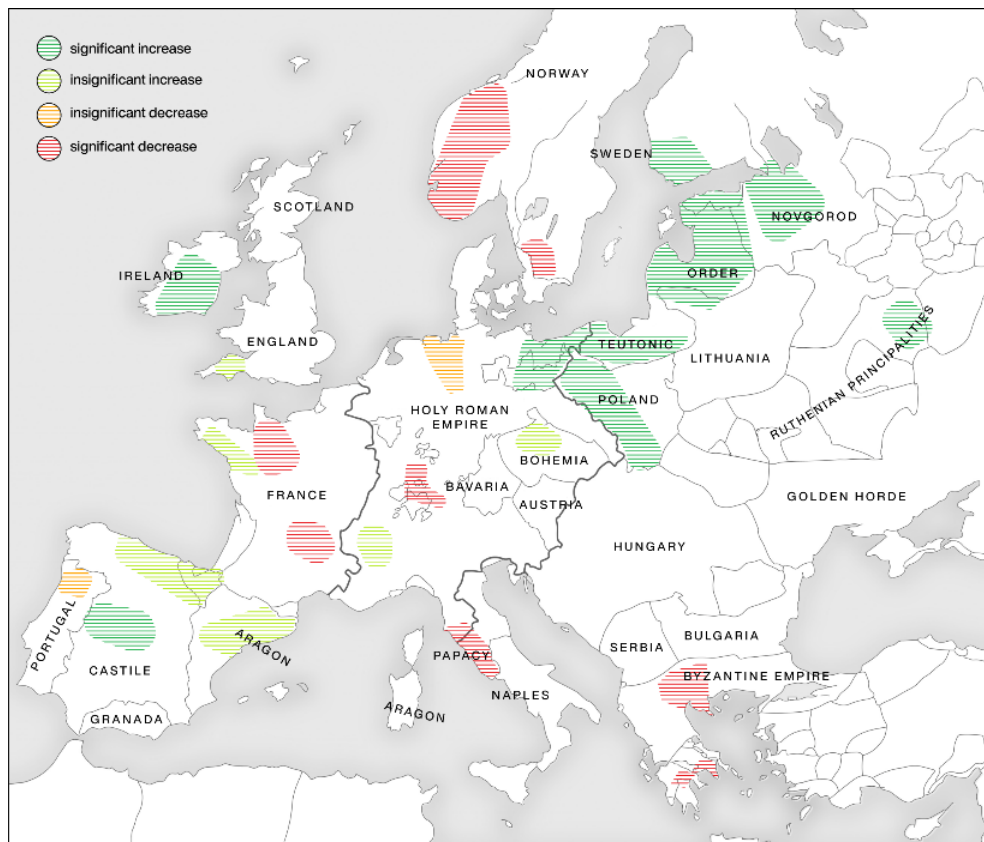
Excess mortality in Europe March 2020 1st COVID wave



2nd COVID wave

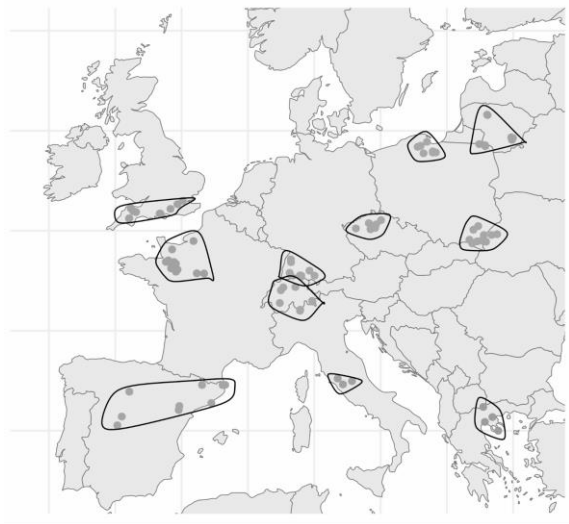


Black Death mortality in Europe 1346-1351 1st PLAGUE wave

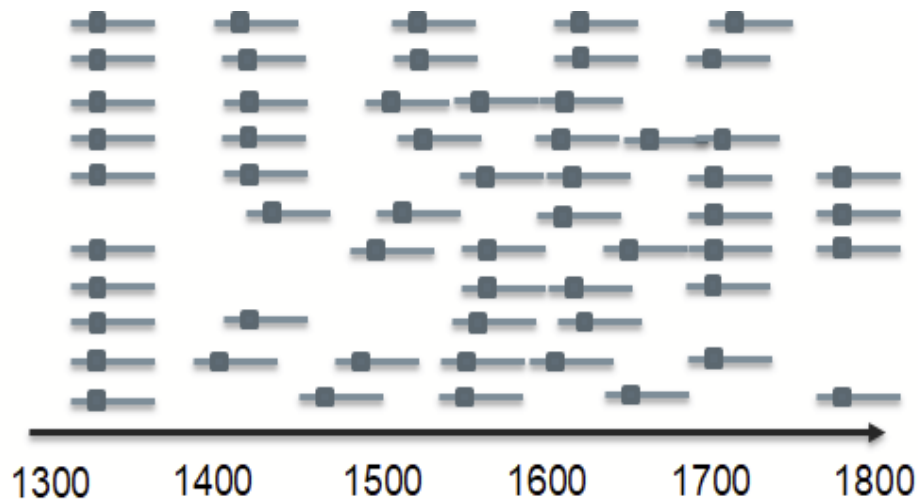


Regional outbreaks – the natural experiments of history

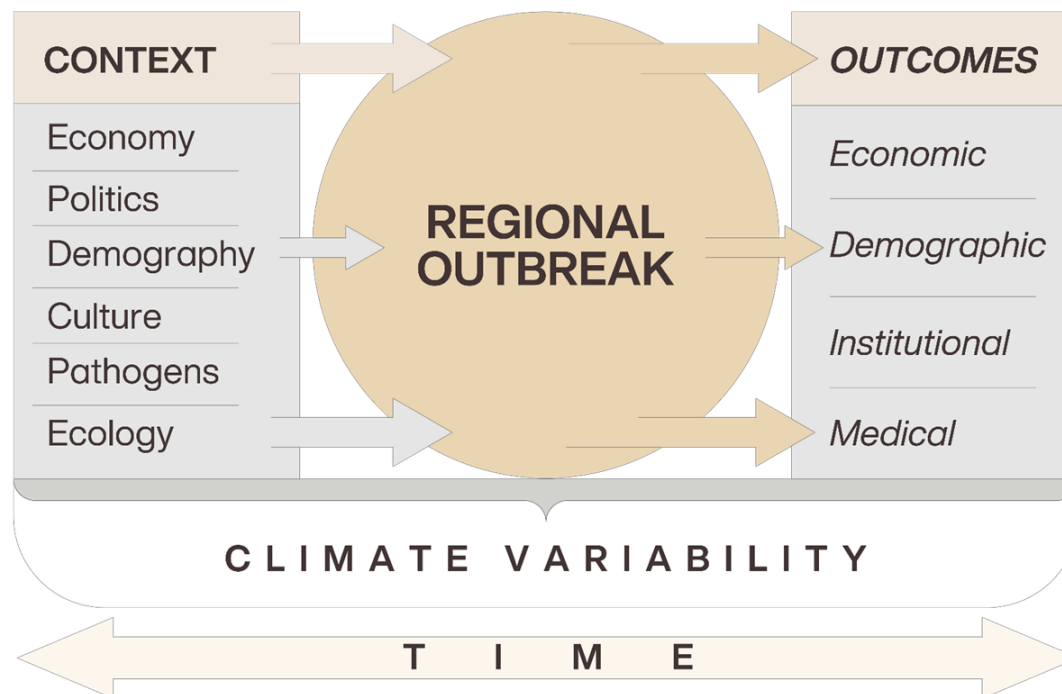
11 European Regions



56 Outbreaks (10 yrs before, 40 yrs after)



EUROpest: the theoretical model





Adam Izdebski
paleoecology
history



Tim Newfield
epidemiology
history



Alexander Herbig
pathogens
genomics



Elena Xoplaki
modelling
paleoclimate





My career path

- ⦿ Historian who became biologist and earth scientist (also started as a psychologist)
- ⦿ Alternating between Poland and abroad (UK, Germany, USA):

Research/study stays: 2007/2008 Oxford – 2011/2012 Berlin – 2015 Princeton University – 2017/2018 Princeton IAS

Work abroad: Max Planck 2018-2025

- ⦿ Leading interdisciplinary research networks and groups from early on (already into it as a student in „koło naukowe”, then Collegium Invisibile etc etc.)
- ⦿ Trying to be done quickly with career milestones (habilitation, professorship, etc.)

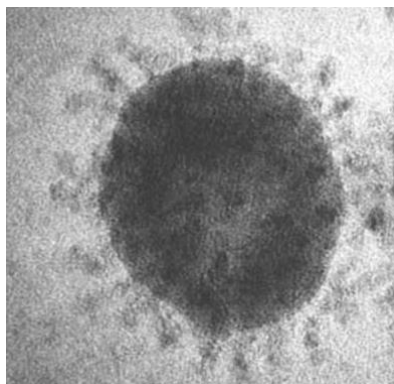


My ERC story

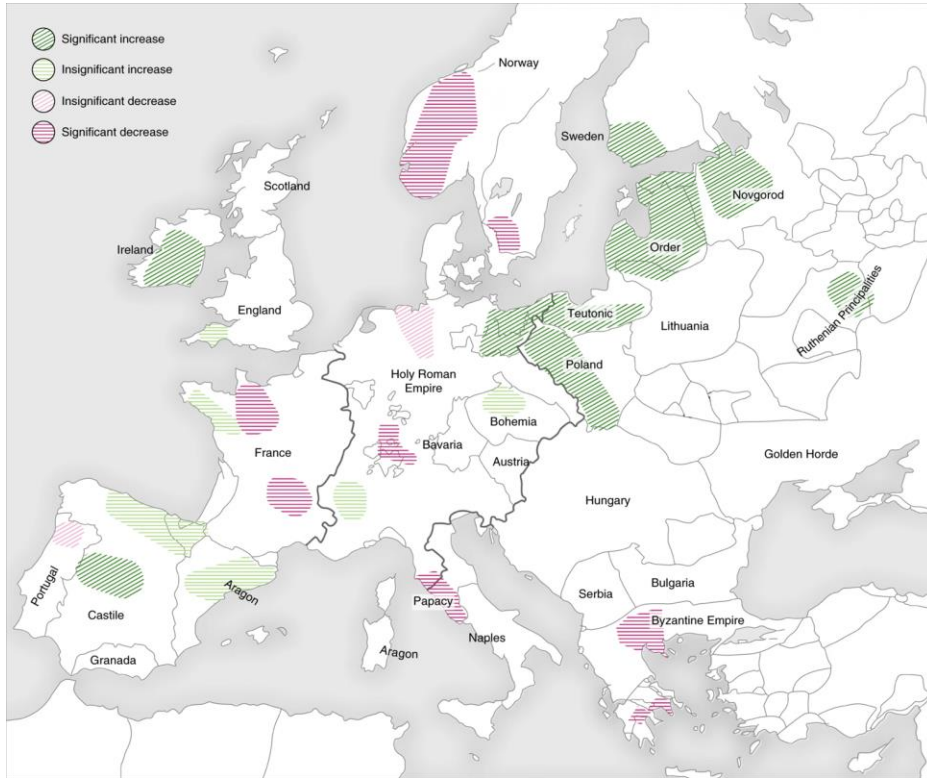
- ⊙ Started in 2009 by supporting (co-writing) joint application of 2 senior scientists from my then PhD institution
- ⊙ 3 Starting Grant applications 2014 (Stage 1), 2016 (Stage 2), 2017 (Stage 1) (same application, improved version each year) (tried also DFG, VW, AvH)
- ⊙ Starting Grant proposal got finally funded as Max Planck Independent Group and carried out 2018-2025 in much enlarged version
- ⊙ 1 Consolidator Grant application (new proposal) in 2020
- ⊙ 3 Synergy Grant applications (new pr.) 2021 (St. 2), 2022 (St. 1), 2023 (funded)



The story of our Synergy Grant



nature ecology & evolution



Led by Izdebski & Newfield in 2022

Long-term demographic impact of the Black Death across Europe

THE EUROpest QUESTION:

***WHY DID ONE PATHOGEN PRODUCE
DIFFERENT OUTCOMES?***

Welcome to HistoGenes!

**INTEGRATING GENETIC, ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON
EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPE**

400-900 AD

[read more...](#)

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 856453.





First application (November 2021)

- ⦿ 4 men, lead authors of the Nature EcoEvo paper
- ⦿ Idea emerged after paper acceptance (spring) proposal writing Sep-Oct (full time)
- ⦿ Strongly historical, with strong paleoecological component and some forays into climate & aDNA, so building very closely on the paper and its methodology
- ⦿ Got as far as Stage 2 (i.e., Part B2 sent to external experts)
- ⦿ Received very encouraging and constructive comments from the reviewers



Second application

- ⊙ Extended leadership – 5 men and 1 woman, now including a climate scientist and a geneticist
- ⊙ Selected 4 out of 6 to be PIs (2 PIs from 2021 became formal project partners)
- ⊙ Proposal sharper, streamlined, theoretically mature – my best application ever!
- ⊙ Research plan more detailed and interdisciplinary
- ⊙ Rejected in Stage 1 (based on Part B1, which actually was 90% same as 2021)...
- ⊙ Most comments highly positive, ca 40% very negative and not useful for revision



Third application

- ⦿ Resubmission of exactly the same proposal as in 2022
- ⦿ Hoping for the panel to be at least 50% the same people as in 2021, so should appreciate our revisions and still remember (and like) us
- ⦿ Change of one PI (from a Polish to a Canadian US-based person...)
- ⦿ Invited to the interview – which was a very positive, fun experience



If it is so hard, why care?

- ⊙ Indeed not the only option for great research and let us not make it into a fetish
- ⊙ Scale of funding and collaboration – huge enabler
- ⊙ Eastern perspective: competitive in terms of recruitment with Western Europe
- ⊙ Recognised international trademark (like Ivy League or Max Planck)
- ⊙ Hence a door-opener for more international opportunities
- ⊙ Negotiation leverage at national and home institution level