

Computer model answers questions surrounding Neanderthal extinction

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For a long time, archaeologists have suggested that modern humans wiped out Neanderthals because we had greater technological and cultural development, which allowed us to find and exploit resources more readily than Neanderthals did. It's a plausible explanation, but it leaves us with pressing questions about the details of how this might have happened.

For a start, we know that Neanderthals had *some* culture, so exactly how much more would modern humans have needed to have in order to be more competitive? And modern humans entered Neanderthal territory in smaller numbers than the established Neanderthal population—could technology make up for what they lacked in numbers?

These questions highlight a major challenge with this model: there are other plausible explanations for the disappearance of Neanderthals. For example, they could have been wiped out by climate change or an epidemic.

Competition between species is “ultimately a matter of numbers,” the authors write. Where one species thrives, the other is reduced to zero. Modelling this interaction is a matter of boiling it all down to numbers: creating two mock “populations” in a computer model, giving them certain characteristics, and seeing what circumstances lead to one population wiping the other out.

Read full, original post: [Computer simulation fills in the blanks of Neanderthal extinction](#)