

Fertility transition is a demographic process in which fertility of populations fell from high historical levels to low ones observed today. This change is usually associated with modernization and social change. Fertility of traditional, agrarian societies is often described as 'natural' one, meaning that families in such societies does not try or are not able to achieve a specific, desired number of children. Fertility levels in modern, industrial societies relies heavily on family limitation, hence the couples want and do influence the timing of births and the number of children. Although the described change happened in most of European populations at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in relatively short time (few decades), and affected life of each and every person on the continent, it is still much less known and acknowledged than many historic events like French Revolution, Great Depression or World Wars. Despite more than a 50 years of research on that topic, scientist still does not agree about causes, course and consequences of fertility decline. While some scholars see fertility decline as the reaction (adaptation) to changing economy, the other stress the importance of culture, habits or norms and their spread from one social group to the other (diffusion).

This project aims at consideration of historical fertility transition in the population of the Interwar Poland (1918-1939). The Total Fertility Rate (i.e. the average number of children born per women through the reproductive years) on Polish lands was more than six at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and fell to around three in the 1930s. Hence, the general research question are: how did that change happen? What were the main causes of this process on state, regional, environmental and individual level? Was this a culture or economy that dictated the course and tempo of change or maybe a blend of those? Which social groups were first to modify the fertility and which were the most reluctant to do so? By which means was the reduction of fertility achieved (sexual restraint, withdrawal, abortion) and how was the knowledge about these means spread? What does the fertility decline in the Interwar Poland tells us about the modernization of the Polish society and about the processes of social change in Central Eastern Europe?

To find the answers to these questions statistical and narrative sources will be analysed. Numbers published by statistical offices and other institutions that tried to describe the population changes of that time will be used in statistical models that will help author of the project to determine the impact economy, culture and family had on the fertility levels. The narrative sources as diaries, memoirs and material from ethnographic research will complement the statistics by showing what went through the minds of people who decided to influence the size of their family.

The results are important because by describing and explaining the course of fertility decline in specific Polish case, they can add new and significant threads to the scholarly debate on human behaviour connected to modernization, social change and fertility decline.