

Today's middle class Western societies have their roots in late-medieval and modern burgher culture. The decisive civilizational significance of this group in today's world is the justification of the purposefulness of research on its genesis. The basis for its shaping in the cities of the Middle Ages and early modernity period was the relative personal and economic freedom, implemented in the conditions of municipal self-government, awareness of the community and the separateness of its social layer and the municipal commune, as well as the legally regulated possibility of inheriting property - a burgher plot with a home and work workshop along with the necessary financial conditions. Under these conditions, a burgher ethos of work, acceptance of social diversity and awareness of shared responsibility for the fate of the commune developed. The relative stability of this system resulted in the creation of a Christian bourgeois ideology and what we may call a higher culture - not only sacred art, but education and universities.

The research questions posed in the project concern the general profile and details of this reality in Central and Eastern Europe. Prague and Wrocław - two large cities culturally connected with each other were accepted as the subject of research. The phenomena available for archaeological research and iconography analysis, including written sources, will be traced. We will attempt to define the concept of luxury in the specific, subjective conditions of both cities. We will show phenomena and objects that stand out in burgher culture, sufficiently enough to be described as luxury. We will also try to determine the importance of luxury in social and economic life. We will conduct an attempt to determine what housing, food and access to material culture facilities we can consider as standard, not differing from the average standard of living in the city. The research challenge will be to determine the limits and extent of poverty in the conditions of the city of the late Middle Ages and early modernity period. Archaeological sources will have the greatest value for studying the living conditions of the poorest inhabitants. They are less often depicted in iconographic and written communication.

The starting point for the research will be the concepts presented so far in the world literature on the subject. They will be confronted with the reality reflected by the analysis of material, iconographic and written sources of both cities studied. An important part of these analyses will be based on until now unpublished monuments. Their research will be conducted based on traditional techniques and methods as well as modern archaeometry with specialised scientific equipment.

The research will be conducted by an interdisciplinary international team of archaeologists, historians, art and architecture historians as well as chemists, botanists, zoologists and geographers active in Prague and Wrocław. The obtained research results will be presented in the form of a series of scientific articles reflecting important research threads. Materials will also be prepared for the publication of a book broadly reflecting the implemented programme.