

The cholera epidemic, which lasted from 18 June to 22 October 1866, was the most severe outbreak of this infectious disease in 19th-century Poznań. It caused massive and rapid changes in population numbers within a short period of time. In the case of an infectious disease such as cholera, the incubation period and its course is very short, symptoms of the disease are easy to recognize, with no specific symptoms, the disease gives no complications, and immunity after the illness is short-lived. Hence, cholera epidemic gives "clean" demographic and health effects and can be used as a "model epidemic" to analyse these effects at a population level.

The aim of the project is to examine the short and long-term social, health and economic effects of the epidemic, as well as its influence on demographics, as regards the reproductive attitudes in a Poznań family. This goal will be achieved by using the cholera epidemic in Poznań in 1866 as a natural spontaneous experiment, but modified to some extent by the city authorities and its residents. The project assumes that the cholera epidemic in 1866 was not only a demographic and economic phenomenon with measurable effects, but also a multifaceted medical and cultural phenomenon. In the project, the cholera epidemic will be studied using the methods from historical demography and epidemiology, and the methods from history of medicine. The project will identify various conditions of the cholera epidemic in 1866 (political, social, and biological). The post-epidemic fate of widowed persons, single mothers and "epidemic" orphans will be studied. Noteworthy are the changes in the social and professional composition of Poznań population due to the potential surplus of deaths of people from the so-called "risk groups" (garrison soldiers, doctors, merchants, salesmen, priests, house maids, etc.). An important aspect will be to study functioning of the population in the post-epidemic phase concerning age groups, religion, occupation and sex, etc. The research will also focus on the local economy in 1866 and in the subsequent years: unemployment rate, changes in the standards of living, the labour deficit and decline in industrial and agricultural production. An important issue will be the analysis of the short and long-term demographic effects of the cholera epidemic, manifested in changes in marriage patterns, fertility, mortality and population growth rates over time, and their interactions. For example, high mortality level of people at reproductive age in the epidemic phase could affect reproduction level of Poznań residents in the post-epidemic phase, and parent's death during the epidemic phase could influence the decision on starting a family by the offspring. The socio-economic status of inhabitants (religious denomination, profession) and the impact of promoters the idea of organic work on the effects of the epidemic will be taken into account.

Various historical sources will be used in the project: parish registers, Prussian statistics, narrative sources (letters, diaries), consistories, collections of legal acts, etc.

The main expected result of the project is to present a multi-faceted (social, economic, demographic, biological) response of populations to epidemics in a broad cultural and social context. The results provide an important insight into 19th-century epidemiology and allow better understanding the great transformations taking place in societies at that time. The project will contribute to better understanding the microevolutionary processes in human history, because epidemics of infectious diseases, through mass and rapid changes in population size, can change the genetic structure of the human species. The next project result will be a database for Poznań created according to international standards. This first database for urban population in Poland in the 19th century will be placed in the European Historical Population Samples Network and its high standards will be successfully applied to comparative studies of epidemiological transition in populations from the Prussian sector to populations from other regions of Europe, conducted by a wide circle of interdisciplinary scholars and researchers. The project will fill the knowledge gap in epidemiological changes in historical populations.