The Fight against Tuberculosis: Policies, Exchanges and Representations in Europe and the Colonies, 1850s–1970s

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On May 26, 2026, the Library of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts hosted an international workshop titled *The Fight against Tuberculosis: Policies, Exchanges and Representations in Europe and the Colonies, 1850s–1970s*. This scientific gathering was dedicated to the multifaceted fight against tuberculosis, highlighting its profound medical, social, and political impact from the mid-19th century to the 1970s.

The workshop was organized by Michele Mioni (University of Venice) and Francesca Piana (University of Trento), while the co-organizer was the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The event was held under the auspices of the Academy's Department of Medical Sciences and was financially supported by the COST actions *EuroHealthHist* and *GreatLeap*. Welcome addresses were delivered to the attendees by Dario Vretenar, F.C.A., Secretary General of the Academy, Vjekoslav Jerolimov, F.C.A., Head of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science, and Adjunct Assistant Professor Martin Kuhar, MD, PhD, Director of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science. The presentations were divided into four thematic panels, each followed by an extensive and productive discussion.

The first panel, titled *Contested Visions of Care: Tuberculosis in the Colonies*, analyzed the circulation of public health models between European centers and overseas territories such as Africa





and French Indochina. The lectures problematized the impact of racism on the medical discourse surrounding tuberculosis and offered explanations on how political systems like apartheid fostered the development of antimicrobial resistance. In the second panel, titled *Health Infrastructures: Worlds of Control and Care*, the emphasis was placed on the construction of physical spaces of control in interwar and postwar Europe. Using the examples of Sweden, Romania, and Italy, it was demonstrated how preventive policies encroached upon the private sphere through the architectural planning of sanatoriums, hygienic housing, and school summer colonies. The third panel, titled *Non-State Mobilizations and Plural Expertise*, explored the structure of labor law *vis-à-vis* tuberculosis in Greece, the Masaryk League against Tuberculosis in Czechoslovakia, and radical programs for the institutional isolation of infants in Finland. The final panel, titled *Scales of Care: Micro-history as a Test-Case*, provided a detailed statistical analysis of the impact of anti-tuberculosis measures enacted during the fascist regime in Italy on the decline of tuberculosis mortality.

A special part of the workshop included a guided tour of the photography exhibition *The Reverse Side of the City 100 Years Ago: Photographs from the Collections of Doctors Vladimir Ćepulić and Lujo Thaller*, organized in cooperation with the Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy. The selection of photographs, previously exhibited at the Ethnographic Museum in 2024, offered a window into the housing misery of Zagreb in the mid-1920s. The exhibition themed the impact of housing conditions on the epidemiological characteristics of tuberculosis, particularly within the context of the debate between contagionists and anti-contagionists.

The international workshop *The Fight against Tuberculosis* represented an exceptional opportunity to reconstruct European and global efforts to bring tuberculosis under institutional control. The multifaceted nature of this struggle was presented through national and transnational research, demonstrating the ambitions of modern states to achieve the ideal of a healthy and productive nation by disciplining the human body.