

Title of the project:	HESS – The Dynamics of Healthcare Systems Segmentation: The institutional stratification of social groups in South America
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Web page:	-
Area:	Health care, social policy segmentation, social inclusion, Global South

What?

HESS, titled "The Dynamics of Healthcare Systems Segmentation: The institutional stratification of social groups in South America," is a research project that investigates the emergence and development of healthcare system segmentation in twelve South American countries from a comparative and historical perspective. Healthcare system segmentation refers to the co-existence of different healthcare systems within a country, each targeting distinct social groups (e.g., public systems for the poor, social insurance for formal workers, private schemes for upper classes). The project employs a mixed-method approach that integrates Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), document analysis and statistical techniques. The primary objectives of HESS are:

Investigate Healthcare System Segmentation Origins: Analyze the historical emergence and development of segmented healthcare systems across South American countries from 1910 to present.

Create the Healthcare System Segmentation Dataset (HESSet): Develop a novel dataset documenting the institutional fragmentation of healthcare systems and social group coverage patterns.

Map Social Group Inclusion/Exclusion Dynamics: Identify which social groups have been included or excluded from different healthcare systems and analyze cross-country variation.

Explain Segmentation Patterns: Determine whether the extent of segmentation can be explained by economic, political, social, and healthcare system-specific factors.

Who?

The project is entirely developed and based at IGOP, and led by Gabriela de Carvalho under supervision of Marga León.

Why?

HESS is important for several reasons. The project aims to address theoretical and empirical gaps in welfare state literature, which has been blind to segmentation beyond labor market policies and lacks historical accounts of segmentation origins in the Global South. By providing empirical evidence and developing novel analytical tools, HESS will support policymakers in designing effective Universal Health Coverage policies. The project will also have significant societal impact by identifying best practices for reducing healthcare inequalities and supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

How?

HESS will be executed through a series of work packages (WPs) that include:

1. **Conceptual Framework Development (WP1):** Conduct literature review on welfare stratification and healthcare to develop a novel framework on how to conceptualise and measure healthcare system segmentation.
2. **Dataset Creation (WP2):** Collect and code healthcare legislation from twelve South American countries (1910-present) to build the HESSet database, which is a novel dataset documenting the institutional fragmentation of healthcare systems and social group coverage patterns.
3. **Data Analysis (WP3):** Apply descriptive statistics to map segmentation patterns and use Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to identify causal configurations explaining segmentation extent.
4. **Communication and Dissemination (WP4):** Develop a communication strategy to disseminate the project's findings to stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public.

When?

The project is scheduled to run for 24 months, starting from June 2025.