

Development as inclusive social participation: beyond the conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution

Desenvolvimento como participação social inclusiva: para além da compreensão sistêmica conservadora da evolução social

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Abstract: In this article, I argue that the profound growth of the current social-economic inequalities must be faced by a reaffirmation and a recovery of a political *praxis* that confronts conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution and institutional structuration, which leads to strong institutionalism, that is, to the centralization and monopolization of both social evolution and institutional dynamics within the social systems or institutions themselves and from a self-referential, self-subsisting and autonomous logic of functioning which is absolutely internal, technical, non-political and non-normative. This is the basic conservative argument, which depoliticizes the social-economic evolution and the

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projects of development, removing an inclusive democratic social participation of the economy and the political institutions. The central argument is that the politicization of institutional systemic logic leads to an inclusive political *praxis* which embraces all social systems and their constitution from a direct refusal of the *laissez-faire*, of minimal politics and of the technocracy concerning institutional dynamics.

Key-Words: Democracy; Conservatism; Systemic Logic; Strong Institutionalism; Development.

Resumo: argumento neste artigo que devemos enfrentar o profundo crescimento das desigualdades socioeconômicas atuais por meio da reafirmação e da retomada de uma *práxis* política que confronta a compreensão conservadora sistêmica da evolução social e da estruturação institucional, as quais levam ao institucionalismo forte, isto é, à centralização e à monopolização tanto da evolução social quanto da dinâmica institucional dentro dos próprios sistemas sociais ou instituições e a partir de uma lógica de funcionamento autorreferencial, auto-subsistente e autônoma que é eminentemente interna, técnica, não-política e não normativa. Este é o argumento conservador básico e ele despolutiza a evolução e os projetos de desenvolvimento socioeconômicos, deslegitimando uma participação social democrática inclusiva em relação à economia e às instituições políticas. Dessa forma, meu argumento central consiste em que a politização da lógica institucional sistêmica leva a uma *práxis* política que enquadra todos os sistemas sociais e sua constituição a partir de uma recusa direta do *laissez-faire*, de uma política mínima e da tecnocracia no que se refere à dinâmica institucional.

Palavras-Chave: Democracia; Conservadorismo; Lógica Sistêmica; Institucionalismo Forte; Desenvolvimento.

1. Introduction

Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty First Century* carefully explains the growth of the social-economic inequalities as the extremely problematic core both in the current particular societies and in the global order represented by the cultural-economic modernization (or globalization) (see Piketty, 2014).² Concerning the political economy of the contemporary (national and international) social-economic dynamics, it is impressive how Piketty said that there are only two conclusions to be drawn: (a) there is no free market (or *laissez-faire*); and (b) all is politics and political (see Piketty, 2014, p. 09-37). However, Piketty's political economy appears to have no position in relation to political forces and practices which may battle against such process of wealth concentration. If social-economic inequalities are a political process – not a technical, logical or spontaneous one –, then which social-political forces can face the economic oligarchies (the Piketty's main enemy of contemporary social justice, political democracy and political institutions)? Or better: *how can we face such a situation politically?* How can we face the political-economic power of oligarchies? Piketty said – and I agree with him on this point – that political institutions should assume an active role concerning the growth of social-economic inequalities, meaning that they should control capital flows in many

2 That approach has similarities with those of other contemporary intellectuals. See, for example, Habermas, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b; and Giddens, 1996, 2000, 2001.

particular senses and ways, imposing, for example, the progressive taxation of the private wealth and inheritance; at the same time, they should perform a very effective social policy directed to the working class and even more generically to socially disadvantaged people. Clearly that is the solution, but how can it be implemented?

The only way to deconstruct such situation of social-economic inequalities is political practice. This article offers an answer to the question of political *praxis* and the political forces that may face the growth of the political power of economic oligarchies, something that was not addressed by Thomas Piketty in his absolutely great book. I discuss a general point concerning the present state of social-economic inequalities in contemporary societies: it is necessary to face conservative systemic comprehensions of social evolution and their consequence, that is, strong institutionalism in relation to the coordination and legitimation of social systems, which leads to their depoliticization and the subordination of democratic politics to economic unpolitical and impersonal mechanisms, monopolized by oligarchies, political parties and technocracy. Then, it is necessary to once again politicize economic *self*-structuration and evolution, weakening the conservative political tendencies that affirm systemic logic, depoliticized technicality and strong institutionalism as the basis of social evolution and institutional structuration beyond an inclusive democracy, beyond the politicization of the social systems. The politicization of social systems and of institutionalism means that an inclusive comprehension of democracy is the only contemporary political paradigm that allows rethinking economic structuration-dynamic, political institutionalism and social development. Here, only an inclusive democratic political *praxis*, which embraces the economic field and political institutions, may offer an

alternative to social-economic crisis in general and the growth of political-economic conservatism in particular as based on systemic logic, strong institutionalism and the depoliticization of institutional systemic structuration and social evolution.

1 The Systemic Comprehension of Social Evolution: The Conservative Argument

The basic conservative normative-political argument concerning the legitimation of social evolution is the fact that Western modernization is characterized by a systemic autonomization and self-referentiality of economic and social-political institutions. What does this mean? It means that modern institutions – contrarily to traditional ones – have an internal logic of functioning that is fundamentally private, technical, unpolitical and basically dependent on the very proper dynamics of each institutional system. In this sense, institutions are complete systems, that is, they have a full structuration and self-organization concerning their field of action. Each institution or social system is a complete set of norms, procedures and practices of self-functioning and self-legitimation which makes it autonomous, self-referential and self-subsisting in relation to other social systems and, at last, in relation to all which lies outside the specific institutional system. As a consequence, social systems have an internal logic of functioning and programming that can only be understood, legitimized or modified from within and by a self-authorized institutional staff – the social systems cannot be intervened in from outside and according to alien logics, procedures and norms, as by alien epistemological-political-normative subjects (see Hayek, 1985a, 1985b; Friedman, 1995; Nozick, 1991; Butler, 1987).

Three important normative-political arguments of conservatism can be perceived here: (a) the logic of social evolution is determined by the fact that social systems or institutions have a dynamic of functioning and programming which is internal, self-referential and self-subsisting, which means that each social system, as a complete world of norms, practices and actors, have the capability to evolve and legitimize the evolution of its field basically from itself and according to its internal dynamics, codes and institutional legal staffs; (b) internal systemic movement or institutional dynamics is fundamentally technical, non-political and non-normative, that is, as an internal procedure, the systemic dynamics is a set of formal rules and practices directed to the self-subsistence of the institution, assuming a non-political and non-normative core and role, basically technical, instrumental; (c) only self-authorized people and institutional technical staff have the capability to ground and perform the legitimation of the specific systemic institutional field, because systemic dynamics is *internal and technical*. In this sense, the institution or social system is essentially a technical field with technical norms and procedures, streamlined by a technical institutional staff. There is nothing political and normative in systemic institutions, just as political intervention and the normative framework in these systemic institutions are delegitimized because of the assumption of systemic logic concerning the structuration of social systems and their basic self-referentiality regarding to their own operation over time – modern social systems or institutions, according to conservative, are depoliticized structures with non-political and non-normative, technical-logical procedures, practices, values and subjects (see Hayek, 2006, p. 90-95).

As can be seen, the conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution, in the moment that it conceives of institutional structuration as a technical procedure, depoliticizes systemic institutional dynamics, centralizing and monopolizing it in the hands of institutional elites and their technicians. In the same way, the conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution, in the moment that it conceives of Western modernization as a process of consolidation of different and autonomous social systems, removes both political *praxis* and social normativity of the internal dynamics of the systemic institutional evolution, which becomes basically technical. That is the reason why social movements and citizen initiatives cannot assume a direct democratic political *praxis* based on social normativity inside the technical-logical, depoliticized sphere, procedures and subjects which constitute every single social system – therefore, there is not political-normative democracy inside technical-logical social systems. This is how conservatism depoliticizes social evolution and systemic institutional structuration: individualizing and internalizing the legitimation and evolution of every social system or institution, conceiving it as a technical-logical sphere, proceduralism and values managed by an institutional self-authorized legal staff which is fundamentally technical (the so-called technocracy) – here, systemic institutional evolution is basically a matter of internal institutional logic, norms and procedures, with a technical dynamic, as well as a matter for institutional self-authorized people.

As a consequence, social dynamics is determined by three important points generated by conservative theoretical-political positions: (a) it is individualized and technicized, that is, there is no longer a social evolution as a whole, dependent on political *praxis* and social normativity, but only

particular institutional evolutions in every specific systemic institutional fields, with internal and technical logics of functioning; (b) it is depoliticized, because what matters to the functioning of social systems is their internal logics and dynamics, not the political *praxis* and social normativity, which means that politics and social normativity are weakened and at last delegitimized as the basis of the legitimation of institutional structuration and political *praxis*; finally, (c) by its technical-logical structuration and functioning, social system's managing and legitimation are assumed by a technical-logical self-authorized legal staff, so that they become overlapped to social movements and citizen initiatives, acquiring an unpolitical sense and dynamic which blocks political democracy as the normative basis of the social systems' constitution, legitimation and evolution over time. It is no longer possible to politically organize social evolution as a whole – that is the consequence of the conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution and institutional structuration.

Social evolution is, then, a matter of systemic institutions that monopolize and centralize the legitimation of their specific social fields from an internal logic of development of the very institutions – the institution is its very own field of action; its rules, procedures and dynamics are the same rules, procedures and dynamics of the field. Indeed, the systemic comprehension of social evolution leads to strong institutionalism concerning legitimation and performing of institutional dynamics and social evolution. Now, it is important to focus on the consequences of a conservative systemic comprehension of social evolution, which are the individualization and technicization of social evolution and of institutional structuration, the depoliticization of institutional dynamics and the weakening of political

praxis regarding the regulation of social systems and the delegitimation of social normativity as the general basis to criticize and orientate institutional structuration and dynamics. The systemic comprehension of social evolution and structuration is based on the argument that each social-institutional system has a very particular dynamics of functioning, which is exclusively dependent on the internal logic, norms and procedures of the institutional field itself. In this sense, firstly, institutional evolution is a very particularized and individualized question, which has no direct link with strong politics or with a general conception of social normativity. Institutional evolution, as an internal procedural logic, is merely technical, as the functioning of a machine – institutional evolution cannot be right or wrong in a moral-political sense (as the concept of social justice presupposes), but only in a technical sense. Here appears the *objective (because technical) meaning* of institutional structuration and functioning, according to conservative systemic theories (see Hayek, 1987, 1995; Nozick, 1991; Habermas, 2012a, 2012b, 1997, 1999; Dubiel, 1993). In other words, an objective systemic institutional structuration and functioning is only possible through technical constitution and grounding, and that is the sense and organization of the market: from technical and logical mechanisms, not by a comprehensive notion of social normativity. As consequence, the market is fundamentally depoliticized as sphere, procedure and subject.

Secondly, here also appears the conservative argument that institutional evolution is not a political and normative question, but a technical one which must seriously consider its technical structuration and functioning as the condition to the correct understanding and programming of institutional systemic evolution. Indeed, as a technical mechanism,

there are no moral-political obligations within the social-institutional systems, such as – speaking in terms of political and economic institutions – social justice or inclusive democracy. Systemic institutions function according to a logical and technical dynamics and, within the institutions, only technical arguments and experts have the ability to understand, legitimize and orientate institutional systemic dynamics. Politics and social normativity are an unjustified attempt to control the systemic logic of the institutions, reducing all different systemic institutional logics to politics and social normativity. What is important here is that conservative theoretical-political positions refuse critical interventions and normative-political paradigms to frame systemic institutions. According to the conservative view, we can only understand, justify and criticize institutions from their own internal systemic logic (and each institution has its specific logic), not from a general conception of social normativity or a structural political *praxis* which intervenes from an alien dynamics assumed by civil society's political subjects into institutional systemic logic.

Therefore, conservative theoretical-political positions do not accept the social link of systemic institutions and a direct political *praxis* that – based on social normativity – regulate and orientate these systemic institutions from other dynamics than the technical logic typical of each systemic institution. This is the meaning of Friedrich Hayek's notion of social justice as a mirage: social justice, as a theoretical ideal *and a* political principle based on a conception of social normativity, is a general and binding paradigm which criticizes and orientates systemic institutions beyond systemic logic, from normative-political principles. But, according to Hayek's political theory, the only systemic institutional basis to the understanding, orientation and

legitimation of the institutions is their very own institutional logic of functioning, which is technical. There is no morality, politicized and carnality within systemic institutions, there is no normativity as a constitutive institutional basis, but only a technical dynamic of functioning. That is not exactly a problem or a bad thing, as if we were bad people, or as if systemic institutions were evil institutions. Institutional technical dynamics is the only institutional logic to guide the functioning and legitimation of institutional evolution, and this cannot be forgotten by political theories (see Hayek, 1985a, 1985b, 1987).

Therefore, thirdly, conservative systemic theoretical-political positions depoliticize both institutional systemic structuration and evolution and the theoretical-political legitimation of institutional dynamics, delegitimizing all theoretical-political positions based on a notion of social normativity and a conception of inclusive and general democratic political *praxis* which frame and orientate systemic institutional evolution. Conservatism always comprehends systemic institutional structuration from a technical and logical point of view, depoliticizing it. This theoretical-political way enables the supposedly (conservative) scientific objectivity of institutional systemic logic, that is, conservatism continually affirms scientism and technicism as the basis to understand, legitimize and orientate systemic institutional evolution. Technical and scientific explanation and justification of systemic institutional logics are the very basic argument of the conservative defense of an objective analysis and labor regarding institutional structuration and evolution, and it means that institutional structuration and evolution are depoliticized, just as social normativity is delegitimized as a general social-political basis to the framing and the orientation of systemic institutions.

For example, from a systemic comprehension of institutional evolution, based on a neutral, impartial and impersonal logic and scientific point of view, economy is fundamentally an objective science-technic, which means that economic prescriptions, political economy and even economic subjects are not political or normative principles and subjects, but merely technical – this makes economy a strictly objective (non-political and non-normative) science. Therefore, according to conservatism, there is not a political and normative economy characterized by a general and binding conception of social normativity and a political *praxis* which frame, intervene in and orientate systemic economic structuration and evolution, because there is not a moral-political-normative economy, as there is not a social link of the systemic institutional evolution of the economic field – a social system is a self-referential, self-subsisting and individualized technical-logical sphere of social evolution. Meritocracy appears here as the only normative principle to economy, in the sense that it exactly denies both social normativity and political *praxis* as the basis of grounding, framing and orientating the economic field. Indeed, meritocracy as the basis of economy's social link means that only within economic logic and dynamics it is possible to ground the *status quo*. This implies that the only pathway that remains to politics is the acceptance of the market's systemic logic as the basis of economic constitution, political structuration and social evolution (see Hayek, 1995; Nozick, 1991; Harvey, 2008).

There is a correlation between systemic institutional logic and meritocracy concerning conservative political economy: the systemic institutional logic of economy, in the moment that it affirms itself as an internal, autonomous and self-subsisting movement of legitimation and evolution,

allows only individual capacity as the normative basis to legitimate and perform *status quo* (which implies the strict respect to internal and technical logic of economy, as well as the depoliticization of systemic institutional evolution). The conservative political economy is essentially a technical and logic understanding of economic dynamics, that is, it is basically a systemic institutional logic of functioning. That is the reason why conservative political economy affirms both systemic institutional logic and dynamics as the basis of institutional evolution and social structuration, and a central role of systemic institutions regarding the centralization and monopolization of the legitimacy and orientation of their specific fields of action by internal and technical institutional logic and subjects. In other terms, the systemic comprehension of institutional structuration and evolution directly leads to strong institutionalism, depoliticizing institutional legitimation and evolution and refusing social normativity as the basis of institutional structuration and orientation. Now, strong institutionalism leads to and implies in the institutional centralization and monopolization both of institution's legitimation and development and of societal-political dynamics as well.

2. Strong Institutionalism as the Consequence of Systemic Institutional Logic

The depoliticization of systemic institutional structuration directly leads to strong institutionalism regarding the comprehension and grounding of systemic institutional dynamics in private and political institutions in general. What does strong institutionalism mean? It means that all possible practical decisions and processes of institutional legitimation are centralized and monopolized by

institutions from a technical-logical, unpolitical standpoint and managing assumed by institutional self-authorized elites and technicians. Therefore, social evolution, institutional dynamics and political legitimation are tasks performed only by institutions from their internal proceduralism, norms and legal actors. As said above, systemic logic presupposes that each social system or institution has very particular dynamics, which is internal to the institution, autonomous, self-referential and self-subsisting in relation to other social systems (such as political institutions) and mainly to common people (i.e., non-institutionalized people). As a consequence, the dynamics of social systems are basically internal, centralized and monopolized by the very institutions and their legal staff. And the dynamics of social systems are not political or normative, but essentially technical, logical, programmable and calculable – a question of pure science and technique, directed to technicians, assumed exclusively by technicians; they are not a political matter or a normative problem, not for common citizens or common people. Here, their purpose is the maintenance of the social systems' integrity and stability. Thus, all political decisions and institutional plans are made with the aim of ensuring this autonomy and self-referentiality of social systems. Systemic social link is denied, which means that political *praxis* and normative considerations are not a part of systemic institutional foundations and dynamics (see Rosanvallon, 1981).

Here, strong institutionalism can be perceived as a consequence of conservative systemic institutional logic concerning social evolution, institutional structuration and political legitimation. Systemic institutional logic denies an inclusive political *praxis* and social normativity by the affirmation of the self-referentiality and technical character

of social systems, as much as strong institutionalism emphasizes the centralization and monopolization of institutional dynamics, social evolution and political-technical legitimation by the social systems themselves, according to their internal dynamics, procedures, rules and legal actors. That correlation between systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism is the basic consequence of conservative theoretical-political positions, which are becoming very influential and powerful in current times, mainly in the context of the contemporary social-economic crisis of Western modernization. This conservative correlation means that all institutional decisions and movements are fundamentally centralized and monopolized by institutions and conceived of according to the ideal of a systemic institutional logic as the basis of the evolution of social systems, which means, again, that the current social-economic crisis is a technical, and not a political or a normative problem; it is a technical problem which should provide the ultimate guidance to political institutions and citizens about the political reformism regarding this social-economic crisis. It allows the conservative refusal of an inclusive democratic political discussion and legitimation of political *praxis* regarding that crisis – it will continue as a technical question, resolved by economical elites and their technicians (see Habermas, 1997; Hicks, 1999).

The depoliticization of systemic institutional structuration and legitimation is the direct consequence of systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism. Indeed, systemic institutional logic knows and allows only technical and (scientifically) objective institutional analysis, design and legitimation, in a way that each social system or institution must be understood, justified and changed according to their internal rules and specific

internal procedures and legal actors. Such conservative understanding of institutional structuration and evolution, which is basically technical, non-political and non-normative, enables both a pure technical and logical comprehension of social systems, and a depoliticized social *praxis* concerning the criticism and the transformation of the very institutions. In other words, institutions cannot be substituted with the spontaneous political *praxis* or shaped by a general conception of social normativity and cannot be violated in their internal logic, procedures and legal actors as well, because such alien violation stiffens or even destroys the very specific dynamics of each social system. As a consequence, political democracy and social normativity are denied by the conservative correlation between systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism, which depoliticizes institutional legitimation, structuration and evolution. As a technical structure and movement, institutions can at the same time centralize and monopolize their own fields of action and affirm such fields as technical ones, refusing their political and normative social roots and linking. Nowadays, the conservative theoretical-political position regarding social evolution and institutional structuration and legitimation becomes the very basis to the understanding and formulation of political, normative and technical proposals to the resolution of this social-economic crisis (see Duggan, 2003).

Indeed, according to conservative theoretical-political positions, the current social-economic crisis is the consequence of a general political *praxis* and a conception of social normativity that violates logical and technical structuration and transformation of systemic institutional dynamics – an argument that the fathers of neoliberalism, such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, have defended in the 1970s. Such argument starts with the idea that a direct

political *praxis* within the economic field, based on a notion of social normativity undermines the pure technical and logical, impersonal and impartial economic structuration and evolution. In this case, the conservative comprehension of economy conceives of the relationship between capital and labor basically as a formal contract of employment, as well as it understands the capitalist market as a practical field based on economic competition and meritocracy. Such a comprehension admits only formal rules as market's constitutive principles, that is, the economic structure is regulated by norms and practices that fundamentally emphasize the competition founded on meritocracy, from an affirmation of the market as a practical field that is determined only by competition and meritocracy. Now, an interventionist political *praxis* based on social normativity both denies pure competition and meritocracy as the basis of economic evolution and stabilization and connects the market's structuration and evolution to civil society's social normativity and political claims. The consequence is that social normativity and democratic political *praxis* weaken strong institutionalism, which is the basis of systemic institutional logic.

As the solution to the contemporary social-economic crisis, current conservative theoretical-political positions are defending a return to a conception of the market as an impartial, impersonal, depoliticized and technical structure based on pure competition and meritocracy. The first thing that should be perceived here is that such comprehension of the market as a structure based on pure competition and individual meritocracy leads to the depoliticization of economic dynamics, which is defined – according to the conservative comprehensions – by the very competition and meritocracy. Secondly, it leads to the technicization of the

market's rules, practices and dynamic, in the sense that the market's dynamics is streamlined by tactical movements and choices concerning investments and interactions between competitors, all of them instrumental. We can perceive here that such market dynamics performs a threefold movement that legitimizes the market as a non-political and non-normative institutional structure: first, it determines all the economic dynamics based on competition and meritocracy, defining the *status quo* as a result of the correlation between competition and meritocracy; second, and as a consequence of the first step, political-normative claims are delegitimized as instruments of the market's organization, because they presuppose both a political and normative link of the *status quo* and the political accountability of economic dynamics, which means that the *status quo* is not based on pure competition and meritocracy; third, the market as determined basically by pure competition and meritocracy cannot suffer external political-normative intervention nor can it be shaped by political-normative principles, so markets dynamics depends essentially on the maintenance of its internal autonomy and integrity (see Krugman, 2009; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2009).

That is the conservative depoliticization of systemic institutional dynamics and strong institutionalism which grows dizzily today as an effective possibility of resolution of contemporary social-economic crisis. It reduces democracy to the protection of systemic institutional logic, denying a more effective role to social normativity concerning systemic framing and orientation. So the political-normative task of contemporary politics and social movements is the contraposition to this conservative theoretical-political position: it is necessary to waken systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism as a paradigmatic basis to

understanding, legitimizing and orientating social evolution and institutional structuration. They must be changed by an inclusive democratic political *praxis* and a conception of social normativity that once more places democracy, politics and social justice as the paradigmatic basis to the legitimation and orientation of social systems or institutions. Indeed, the most dangerous consequence of systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism is the depersonalization of economic and political institutions and their elites, by the depoliticization of institutional systemic dynamics and its closure and autonomy in relation to political *praxis* and social normativity, as the depoliticization and impersonality of the institution's self-authorized legal staffs.

Such institutional systemic depersonalization means that the very basic theoretic-political goal is always to protect and foment internal and technical logic and dynamics of social systems or institutions, as if they were super-subjects that lie beyond any particular social-political subject and class. In this case, according to conservative arguments, institutions cannot be directly associated with particular social-political subjects and classes: they are a set of technical, impartial, impersonal, unpolitical and neutral rules and practices which regulate and legitimize any specific social field. As super-subjects, their rules and practices are not linked to a specific social class, but they are the very basic and formalist condition to the legitimation and evolution of their proper fields of action. Now, as depersonalized and depoliticized super-subjects, not linked to social-political particular subjects and classes, systemic institutional dynamics cannot be challenged or destroyed from outside. It cannot be substituted with political *praxis* and social normativity as well. Indeed, institutional systemic logic is the condition to the evolution of its own field, the basic general

structure of rules and practices that enables objective and justified actions concerning this specific institutional field of the social world. Institutions are the technical-logical, non-political and non-normative world which they represent, and that is the reason why they cannot be personalized and politicized: as a general and impersonal structure of grounding and action of a specific field of the social world, they are effectively the social world they represent and legitimize.

We can perceive here that systemic institution as a set of formalist, neutral, impersonal and impartial rules and practices represent a general structure of guidance, legitimation and action of its specific social field, in the sense that they are not political subjects or classes: they are a set of defined and objective technical rules and practices. As a consequence, they cannot be held responsible for the *deficits* that exceed their own field of action and for problems that are caused by the disrespect of internal institutional logic and dynamics. Thus, there are no political and normative claims that could be made to the systemic institutions or utilized as a contraposition to these institutions, because problems concerning *status quo* are determined by the non-compliance with the systemic institutional rules and practices. Systemic institutions, from the conservative theoretical-political positions, are autonomized in terms of political *praxis* and social normativity by this justification: systemic institutions are basically a set of technical rules and practices, a general, impartial, impersonal, unpolitical and neutral structure of legitimation and action concerning a specific social field; only according to their internal rules and practices, evolution and its results take place to those who are inside systemic institutional logic and strictly follow systemic institutional mechanisms and rules.

Now, strong institutionalism is a consequence of that depersonalization and depoliticization of the systemic institutions by the affirmation of a self-referential and self-subsisting systemic institutional logic and dynamics. Within systemic and formal institutions, politics and social normativity have no legitimacy, only technical and logical arguments and foundations. It leads both to the centralization and monopolization of institutional legitimation and evolution within systemic institution and according to its internal dynamics and to the reduction of institutional legitimation to a technical legitimation, performed by institutional political-economic elites – depersonalized and depoliticized systemic institutions allow only technical-instrumental foundations and changes, exclusively from internal dynamics and logic. This is the main problem concerning the growth of social inequalities analyzed by Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty First Century*: the conservative theoretical-political position based on systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism, which leads to the depersonalization and depoliticization and technicization of systemic institutions, as to their depersonalization and depoliticized functioning and programming and managing. The path to understanding and to solving the contemporary social-economic crisis consists in facing and delegitimizing strong institutionalism, refusing a systemic comprehension of institutional legitimation and evolution. This means linking systemic institutional structuration with an inclusive political *praxis* and a general conception of social normativity that refuses systemic self-subsistence, self-referentiality and autonomy concerning democratic politics and social normativity. Then, systemic structuration and legitimation become basically a normative-political question, not a technical and logical question.

3. Development as Inclusive Social-Political Praxis

Thomas Piketty explained in a very impressive way the intensity of the growth of social-economic inequalities in our contemporary times; he has also shown that social-economic inequalities were a constant and unresolved problem to the development of many societies throughout the 19th and 20th centuries; finally, Piketty has argued that these social-economic inequalities will be a great problem to the 21st century (which they actually already are). Now, my humble contribution to Piketty's masterful ideas consists in affirming, like he indirectly does, that the social-economic crisis and the growth of social-economic inequalities are justified by conservative theoretical-political positions which assume a systemic comprehension of social evolution and institutional legitimation and structuration, leading to strong institutionalism in politics and economy. As a consequence, systemic logic and strong institutionalism lead to the depersonalization and depoliticization of systemic institutional logic, dynamics and legitimation, which means that institutions cannot be replaced or destroyed, as much as they cannot be intervened in from outside by political-normative principles and social movements and citizen initiatives. Systemic institutions have internal, self-subsisting and self-referential logic, dynamics, legitimation and elites – these basic features of systemic institutions do not admit violation or intervention from outside; only institutional elites and their technicians have the legitimacy to understand, ground and change systemic institutions. My contribution to Piketty's work is to render explicit such connection between *the empirical fact of the growth of social-economic inequalities* analyzed by him and the *conservative*

justification of the depersonalization and depoliticization of systemic institutions, based on systemic logic and strong institutionalism, something that Piketty did not address in his superb work. Now, my conclusion is that the conservative theoretical-political positions assume systemic logic and strong institutionalism as the basis to an autonomization of social systems or institutions in relation to a direct political *praxis* and a binding conception of social normativity that refuse systemic institutional closure and self-referentiality, linking institutional evolution to political *praxis* and social normativity in a very strong way. That is the basic conservative strategy to depersonalize and depoliticize systemic institutional structuration and legitimation; that is the main conservative theoretical-political strategy to a technicization of institutional structuration and evolution.

My second conclusion in this article is that social-economic inequalities are a political matter, which means that institutional constitution, dynamics and legitimation should be politicized and personalized. In other words, there is not a pure technical justification of systemic institutional structuration, dynamics and legitimation – if we read different conceptions of political economy, both in the right and in the left, the only conclusion we achieve is that there are many truths (according to each conception of political economy!) concerning economic institutional constitution and legitimation. Now, what does this condition teach us? It teaches that the explanation of institutional structuration and legitimation is not technical, neutral, impersonal, or purely objective and scientific; *it is directly political and personalized*. Such situation is proper to a *Realpolitik* marked by social classes and their struggles for hegemony as the basic motto to the socially hegemonic ways and justifications regarding institutional dynamics and social evolution. The conservative

depersonalization and depoliticization of institutional constitution and social evolution, based on systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism, denies that very basic characteristic of institutional construction and evolution. As a consequence, conservatism technicizes institutional structuration, legitimation and evolution, making then unpolitical, depoliticized.

Therefore, the very basic theoretical-political task of the Left is to face the depersonalization and depoliticization of systemic institutional dynamics and legitimation, which implies the confrontation of conservative systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism. Systemic institutional structuration is not a closed, autonomous and self-referential procedure concerning democracy and social normativity. Systemic institutional dynamics is not a purely objective and neutral analysis, but a very direct political one. It is also not a technical form of structuration and legitimation of institutional action, but a political *praxis*. And our fundamental task is to reaffirm systemic institutional dynamics as a political *praxis* based on an inclusive social participation and on a notion of social normativity. Our fundamental task is exactly the politicization of institutional constitution, dynamics and legitimation, and this implies three basic consequences: (a) the refusal of systemic institutional logic as epistemological-political basis to the understanding, legitimation and evolution of social systems or institutions; (b) the consequent rejection of the autonomization, self-subsistence and self-referentiality of institutional structuration and legitimation, based on technical dynamics; and (c) the refusal of the centralization and monopolization of both institutional legitimation and social evolution by institutional elites and technicians, beyond an inclusive democratic participation. Such

politicization of institutional evolution and legitimation can serve as epistemological-political basis to the confrontation of conservatism and, as a consequence, to the resolution of the current social-economic crisis from an inclusive democratic participation based on a direct political *praxis* and on a general conception of social normativity (see Esping-Andersen, 1999, 2003).

As is being argued, systemic institutional logic directly conducts to strong institutionalism, that is, the theoretical-political conception based on the self-referentiality, autonomy and self-subsistence of each institution or social system regarding political *praxis* and social normativity, regarding the civil society's epistemological-political-normative subjects leads to the centralization and monopolization of social evolution and political legitimation as a basic matter, role and goal of the very institutions which close themselves to popular political *praxis* and social normativity, becoming the very own field that they represent, becoming also the exclusive unpolitical and technical subject of its own constitution, legitimation and evolution. In this sense, all the power of legitimation of social evolution is centralized and monopolized by the institutions and their internal elites and technicians. Politics is eliminated from systemic institutional explanation and justification, which becomes purely technical, instrumental. That is the reason why systemic institutional logic becomes depersonalized and depoliticized: depersonalization and depoliticization of systemic institutional logic mean that institutions are not a result of social struggles by conflicting social classes, but a neutral, impartial, impersonal and technical set of rules, procedures and practices which regulate a specific field of human life and action—a set of formal, impersonal and unpolitical rules, procedures and practices which are beyond

the struggles between social classes, therefore beyond politics. As depersonalized and depoliticized subjects, institutions cannot be criticized or linked to social classes, so they have all the legitimacy and capability to centralize and monopolize their specific fields, becoming these fields themselves. In other words, the depersonalization and depoliticization of institutions naturalize such institutions, and they become an evolutionary process that does not result from a social struggle by confronting social classes or generated by them. They actually emerge through a spontaneous and impersonal collective process. According to Friedrich Hayek, systemic institutions have evolved from an impartial, impersonal and spontaneous process of individualized human actions which is not political or normative, but neutral and spontaneous and impersonal, as said (see Hayek, 1995). That is the reason why institutional autonomy, self-subsistence and self-referentiality must be protected from politics and social normativity; and it is also the reason why systemic institutional logic is basically technical, centralized and monopolized by the institutions themselves.

Now, an inclusive popular political *praxis* based on a general conception of social normativity is the only way to confront conservative systemic logic and strong institutionalism. An inclusive popular political *praxis* enables the politicization and personalization of the dynamics and legitimation of social systems, refusing institutional depersonalization, depoliticization and technicization of systemic institutional logic. As a consequence, institutional constitution, legitimation and evolution appear as generated by social struggles and linked to specific social classes and their hegemony. Therefore, institutions are not neutral, impartial, impersonal and objective in political terms, but

very political and deeply linked to the social world, very dependent on the social-political subjects or classes. Therefore, they can be criticized and transformed from political *praxis* and social normativity. An inclusive popular political *praxis* rejects the centralization and monopolization of institutional constitution and legitimation by the very institutions and their elites, as well as it rejects social evolution as a technical, impartial, impersonal and unpolitical procedure that is exclusively internal to the institutions. Institutions, in the moment that they are affirmed as a political question and as a result of social struggles, as a product of class hegemony, can be democratized. Likewise, social normativity refuses technical and logical explanations, emphasizing an inclusive democratic participation as the only way and procedure to institutional constitution, legitimation and evolution, rejecting its centralization and monopolization by institutional elites, rejecting as well the institutional autonomy, self-referentiality and self-subsistence regarding popular political *praxis* and social normativity. Democracy becomes, then, the epistemological, normative and political basis to the comprehension and legitimation of institutional structuration and social evolution.

Conclusion: A Political Alternative to Conservatism

A democratic linking of systemic institutions leads to their politicization and framing by a notion of social normativity. As a consequence, they can no longer be justified by technical, non-political and non-normative principles, procedures and practices, based on systemic institutional autonomy, self-referentiality and self-subsistence concerning the lifeworld. They cannot be understood through their

closure and self-referentiality in relation to democracy; only an inclusive democratic participation and justification can enable institutional legitimacy and constitution, based on political *praxis* and social normativity. That is the solution to conservative systemic logic and strong institutionalism, which are the epistemological-political basis to the foundation of systemic institutions, closed and opposed to an inclusive and participative democracy – systemic institutions which centralize and monopolize their self-constitution and even social evolution from within, by institutional elites. An inclusive and participative democratic political *praxis* based on a general conception of social normativity (for example, the connection between individual, political and social rights; the social, cultural, political and economic inclusion of all peoples etc.) allows both the politicization of institutions or social systems and the effacement of systemic logic, autonomy, self-referentiality and self-subsistence. Henceforth, it is an inclusive and participative democracy that is the epistemological, normative and political basis to institutional constitution, legitimation and evolution.

Accordingly, in the moment that an inclusive and participative democratic political *praxis* replaces systemic and technical institutional characters, strong institutionalism is delegitimized as the way and institutional structure to the legitimation of the systemic institutions themselves. Institutional internal rules, procedures and practices of systemic institutions are changed by political and normative democratic principles and practices, as well as institutional elites are substituted with political popular participation. In the same way, technical logic and arguments are substituted with these political and normative arguments. This means that institutions or social systems are not fields separated from the social world, political *praxis* and social normativity.

Systemic institutions are not closed, autonomous and self-referential fields of human action, disconnected and located outside of the social link and political framing. Therefore, they must be connected and linked to an inclusive and participative democratic political *praxis*, as they must be framed by a notion of social normativity based on political and normative expectations, needs and values. Systemic institutional autonomy, self-referentiality and self-subsistence deny this political and normative link among economy and State and democracy, since the political affirmation of systemic institutions is the foundation of conservative theoretical-political positions concerning politics and capitalist economy, as regarding their mutual relations and support.

Conservative systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism as the basis of the constitution and legitimation of social evolution have to be weakened and finally substituted with an inclusive democratic political *praxis* and a general conception of social normativity that places democracy as the epistemological, normative and political basis to institutional structuration and legitimation, and to the performing of social evolution. That is the fundamental task and path to face conservatism and avoid systemic institutional closure, autonomy, self-referentiality and self-subsistence in relation to an inclusive and participative democracy. The very fundamental basis of the growth of social inequalities and oligarchic concentration of wealth is this systemic institutional logic and strong institutionalism concerning the constitution, understanding and legitimation of social systems, especially the capitalist market and political institutions. Therefore, a serious consideration of Piketty's masterful analysis implies the opposition to conservative systemic institutional logic and

strong institutionalism, which entails the substitution of institutional closure, autonomy and self-referentiality with democratic political *praxis* and social normativity, refusing a technical, impersonal and unpolitical comprehension and legitimation of systemic institutions in favor of an inclusive and participative democracy based on the priority and centrality of use values in relation to exchange values, that is, based on the centrality of the social link and political constitution of systemic institutions, and not on their disconnection to the social world, democratic politics and normativity.

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