



## THE SOCIAL AS A NORMATIVE CONDITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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### ABSTRACT:

This research, entitled “The Social as a Normative Condition for Social Justice” delves into the concept of the ‘Social’ (Das Soziale) and its potential semantic-normative development for constructing social justice. Social justice is understood as ensuring the minimum conditions for social existence. This research addresses critical theory and social philosophy to examine the ‘Social’ as social practices, relationships, and institutions, positioning it as paradigmatic. The central questions are: 1) How do social practices, relationships, and institutions contribute to social justice? 2) How can these elements, particularly institutions, be reoriented from mere analysis to active correction and stabilization of social reality? Jaeggi’s work on social practices and institutions provides a foundation for this inquiry. She argues that social practices are not only performed but must also be understood intersubjectively, establishing meaning and enabling actions. The relevance of this research extends beyond philosophical discourse to address pressing global challenges in politics and society. The erosion of social trust and increasing inequality underscore the need for robust social institutions that can correct and stabilize social realities. By redefining institutions not only as analytical constructs but as active agents of social justice, this research aligns with global efforts to promote equitable and just societies.

### KEYWORDS:

Critical Theory. Social Philosophy. Social Justice. Public Policy.

## O SOCIAL COMO UMA CONDIÇÃO NORMATIVA À JUSTIÇA SOCIAL

### RESUMO:

Esta pesquisa intitulada “O Social como uma condição normativa à justiça social” visa aprofundar a ideia do “Social” e seu potencial semântico-normativo para a efetividade da justiça social na qual passa a ser entendida pelas condições mínimas de existência social. A pesquisa se orienta pelos pressupostos da teoria crítica e da filosofia social tendo duas questões centrais a serem discutidas: 1) Como as práticas, relações e instituições sociais contribuem à justiça social e, sobretudo, 2) Como uma instituição social, pensada sob o esteio de uma teoria crítica social e da filosofia social, pode orientar normativamente a realidade social? A contribuição de Rahel Jaeggi é importante para tratar sobre o Social e, particularmente, naquilo que diz respeito à tarefa socionormativa da instituição social. A relevância desta investigação vai para além do discurso filosófico e aborda desafios globais prementes na política e na sociedade. A erosão da confiança social e a crescente desigualdade sublinham a necessidade de instituições sociais robustas que possam corrigir e estabilizar as realidades sociais. Ao redefinir as instituições não apenas como construções analíticas, mas como agentes ativos da justiça social, esta pesquisa alinha-se com os esforços globais para promover sociedades equitativas e justas.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Teoria Crítica. Filosofia Social. Justiça Social. Política Pública.

### 1 Introduction

From the point of view of philosophical knowledge, critical theory (CT) has established itself as a specific field of study and research. In this sense, critical theory comes to be understood as the diagnosis, analysis and corrective attitude of a given social reality (Jaeggi, 2009). In the realm of critical research, therefore, this corrective action is what namely called the normative sphere (Forst et.al., 2009; Jaeggi, 2016; Stemmer, 2008). Thus, considering these three procedural moments of critical theory, the identification of social problems, also known as social pathology, becomes a fundamental element for the makeup of critical research.

In fact, there is not just one form of critical theory, but many ways of the critical research approaches. That is why, in this kaleidoscopic universe of CT, the social philosophy takes on a place of (socio) normative orientation; in other words, within the breadth of philosophical knowledge, social philosophy also has a field of study and research.

Jaeggi's work (Jaeggi, 2017) is outstanding about the Social as unfolding of social philosophy. She claims: "*Das Soziale – soziale Praktiken, Institutionen und Beziehungen – ist als konstitutive Bedingung von Individualität und Freiheit zu verstehen*". In other words, “The social - social practices,

institutions and relationships - is to be understood as a constitutive condition of individuality and freedom”.

Although Jaeggi expatiates on the Social in “Sozialphilosophie”, she works out the conception of social institution and social practice elsewhere (Jaeggi, 2014; Jaeggi, 2009). Then, on the following assumptions, in the next two sittings, I will explain these two concepts and their relevance for this research; and secondly, I going to try link them with a (socio)normative unfolding of Social: social institution as a normative condition for social justice.

For this research, I intend to explain, in the second session, that the sphere of the 'Social' can be linked to social and institutional issues in practical life; in the third session, that a possible unfolding of the Social is addressed to specific social practices that take on a political contour, as is the case with the Maranhão 2050 action plan.

As this is critical research, it is anchored in critical theory, and thus it is essential to demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed solutions to the problems in question through practical application. In this case, the diagnostic and analytical functions are linked to the corrective functions when the Maranhão 2050 social plan is presented as capable of promoting effective social transformation.

## 2 The Social as core of critical research

As previously stated, the social philosophy encompasses three distinct areas of inquiry: relationships, practices, and social institutions. Social philosophy is understood to be a discipline within the broader field of practical philosophy. What, then, does this mean? (Friesen, 2022; Klaus, 2022). This implies that philosophical knowledge is not merely a theoretical epistemic domain; rather, it encompasses a practical dimension that is subject to study and research. In this instance, theory and practice are inextricably linked, with neither taking precedence over the other. The practicality to which I have referred, for the purposes of this research, concerns the field of critical theory. In this field, it postulates diagnosis, analysis, and correction as fundamental attitudes for carrying out critical research.

For Jaeggi, the term "Social" is defined by social philosophy and critical theory, which address various aspects of social practices and institutions, as well as forms of social life. In this context, critical reflection on the structures of social reality must be combined with social theory and social ontology.

On *Kritik von Lebensformen*, Rahel Jaeggi presents one of the constitutive elements of the "Social," which is precisely "social practice," in the second chapter of the first part of the book. She reserves *Sozialphilosophie und Kritik* to discuss the "social institution." On *Sozialphilosophie*, Jaeggi presents the concept of "social relations," which she links to the theme of social life (*gesellschaftlichen Lebens*). This

latter concept is situated within an ontology of the "Social," which in turn provides the philosophical foundation for the entire enterprise (*Ontologie des Sozialen*).

## 2.1 Social Ontology as an assumption for Social Philosophy

In Rahel Jaeggi's view, an ontology of the social sphere necessitates the consideration of four fundamental questions: The questions that must be addressed are as follows: "How do we achieve social effectiveness?"; "How is society structured?"; "What is a collective?"; and finally, "What are institutions?" Accordingly, Jaeggi posits that the concept of social relations is predicated on the intersubjective assumption. This assumption asserts that any relationship between individuals is contingent upon their actions and lived experiences within a social world (*Mitgliedereinersozialen Welt*).

For Jaeggi, social practices are established as "connective practices". This designation implies that these actions are not only carried out but must also be understood between people "about what is done." Consequently, they concern both individual and collective actions. In this regard, Jaeggi presents the concept of social practice as a structuring element of the idea of "form of life" (*Teil einer Lebensform*). Furthermore, a form of life is contingent upon a specific context. For instance, the Brazilian social context is replete with poverty and misery. Consequently, from the standpoint of critical theory and social philosophy, it is imperative to address the normativity of forms of life, not only in terms of formal considerations but also in a practical sense.

One might reasonably inquire whether the hypothesis that every life form possesses an inherent disposition for continuous learning is a tenable philosophical proposition. Furthermore, the process of social learning (*sozialen Lernprozessen*) may provide a context for the normative claims of social communities, thereby offering potential solutions to concrete problems. This approach would permit the procedural and socio-normative dialectical movement between the idea of a solution (to problems) (*Lösung-sidee - Überprüfung der Idee*) and the effective resolution of these same social problems (*Problemlösung*). It is in this "space" that the social dynamics of emancipatory public policies become relevant. In this instance, there would be a process of "*de-transzendentalisierte Vernunft*" of the concept of Social (Habermas, 2001).

In my estimation, the theme of "insertion" (*Einbettung*) in this context is not dissimilar to a participatory-emancipatory realm. The link occurs insofar as the multiple social contexts are considered for the purposes of diagnosis, analysis, and, above all, the corrective attitude to problems. I do not question the reflective level (*reflexiver Ebene*) of critical tradition and social philosophy. However, when this reflection does not guide us towards correction, then I believe that philosophical research, from this

perspective, runs into a self-contradiction. It postulates diagnosis, analysis, and correction, but only fulfills the first two procedures.

Jaeggi acknowledges that certain forms of life lack an orientation to duty (*Sollensvorstellung*), which would grant them an embodied status (*verkörpert*) of thought and action. In other words, a form of life is constituted in a normative space open to foundations (*Lebensformen [...] sofern der normative Raum ein Raum der Gründe ist [...]*) (Habermas, 2012). However, given this assumption, the question remains: what is the place of emancipation after all? One might posit that the emancipatory type of claim is linked to the three types of normative foundation: conventional, functional, and ethical. Or is it linked to the modes of normativity, namely rules, prescriptions/norms, and guidelines? This framework remains constrained by the formalist legacy of the Frankfurt School. It is necessary to adjust a theoretical framework that is designed to correct errors.

In the book chapter entitled "*Was ist eine (gute) Institution?*" Jaeggi posits that institutions serve as the foundation of the social order, providing it with stability. In Jaeggi's view, institutions are "establishments constituted by social practices with habits that present a permanent system of reciprocal attitudinal expectations and that also establish stable positions and are characterized by efficiency and public recognition." In accordance with Jaeggi's conceptualization of a social institution, each institution progresses through two distinct phases: the initial formation (institutionalization) and the subsequent codification. During the institutionalization phase, an institution may either create or abolish social customs (*Soziale Bräuche*). The codification phase, in contrast, entails the formalization of these customs into a set of rules and regulations. In this instance, Jaeggi employs Maurice Hauriou's contributions to exemplify the legal field as a form of institutional codification. This is why an institution makes itself present in the social world through the meanings and stabilization of a given social reality.

In this section of the book, it is acknowledged that Jaeggi presents the theoretical foundations of an institution in a formal and analytical manner. However, it is also observed that he does not sufficiently address the corrective sphere. It might be beneficial to further develop the perspective of the stability of the social world as conceived by Jaeggi. In the corrective-emancipatory sense, a social institution must answer two fundamental questions: "What are we dealing with?" (*Womit ich es zu tun habe*) and "What do I have to do?" (*Was ich zu tun habe*). In this context, the question is not merely one of formal description. Rather, it is essential to consider the implications of critical research (critical theory and social philosophy) to identify the most effective means of rectifying potential or ongoing social distortions.

For Jaeggi, and from the perspective of her social philosophy, institutions are the backbone of the Social (Jaeggi, 2009). In this sense, Jaeggi asserts that a (good) social institution has the objective of promoting the good life (*Beförderung des guten Lebens*), but how can this concept be understood? Jaeggi starts from the premise that a social institution should be conceived as an instance of distributing social goods and social rights (*Zuteilungsinstanzen von sozialen Gütern und Rechten*). Hence, from a social-ontological point of view, an institution must consider both its functioning and its effectiveness. The following is Jaeggi's conceptualization about a social institution: "institutions are customary bodies composed of social practices that represent complex systems of permanent reciprocal behavioral expectations, establish stable status positions, and are characterized by public efficacy and recognition" (Jaeggi, 2009).

The concept of social institution as proposed by Rahel Jaeggi represents a socio-ontological approach within the context of social philosophy. This approach is characterized by the integration of both social characteristics and the relationships between people and an Institution (Detel, 2013). In this context, I have previously discussed the concept of the "ontology of the Social" (*Ontologie des Sozialen*) which is based on the questions of "what are institutions?" and "what is a collective?"

From the perspective of social philosophy, a social institution is defined as a collective entity that manifests itself in a structured and operational manner (as a social practice). Jaeggi herself says that our social world is woven (*gewebt*) of institutions, and the more numerous they are, the denser they become. Institutions not only create the social material (*Geflecht des Sozialen*), but they also create it as a normatively regulated and ethically dense network. Institutions contain criteria about what it means to belong to them and to abide by them. Consequently, they establish meanings and, most importantly, stabilize the social world. The preceding discussion has established that a social institution, understood from the perspective of social philosophy, can and should address the promotion of social justice as a stabilizing task for a given reality. This assertion will now be elaborated upon.

### **3 A social critique of institutions: normative mediation for social justice**

In the article "*Was ist eine (gute) Institution?*" Jaeggi notes that, from the perspective of social philosophy and critical theory, a social institution should be concerned with social goods and rights (*sozialen Gütern und Rechten*). In this sense, this question is linked to the primordial approach of social ontology, which addresses the effectiveness and functioning of a social institution. On the other hand, in "*Sozialphilosophie*," Jaeggi points out that social philosophy encompasses both descriptive and normative elements, with the objective of achieving social effectiveness (*sozialen Wirklichkeit*). Consequently, a

social institution is deemed effective in the context of social philosophy when it can be shown to achieve social justice. In this context, social justice is understood as the fulfillment of the most basic social requirements (Pinzani, 2012; Parijs, 2017). This is the way the relationship between social institutions and social philosophy is established. The question thus arises as to how this process is enacted in practice. In a manner of speaking, this synthesis serves to reinforce the two issues previously outlined in the summary: a) How do social practices, relationships, and institutions contribute to social justice? and b) How can these elements, particularly institutions, be reoriented from mere analysis to active correction and stabilization of social reality?

### **3.1 Social justice as the product of a critical theory of social institutions**

Based on the assumption that “If human beings are essentially social creatures and constitutively embedded in social relationships, practices, and institutions, how can the relationship between the individual and society be understood more precisely?” (Jaeggi e Celikates, 2017). It can be surmised that the relationship between society and the individual is made explicit in terms of a social ontology in the effectiveness of an institution. Consequently, within a normative perspective, the objective of social emancipation becomes central.

Tilo Wesche pointed out (Jaeggi, 2009) that acritical theory is predicated on three fundamental presuppositions: diagnosis, analysis and correction. This triadic articulation occurs through the empirical “filter,” which is precisely the epochal context in which we move and situate ourselves. It is in this sense that the Brazilian scenario occupies a prominent place in this research and in this last section.

Brazilian society is confronted with a reality that lacks rights and social goods. Despite the country's material conditions, which would suggest the potential for a different outcome, income is concentrated in a profoundly deleterious path (Oxfam, 2024). The issue is no longer the mere existence of radical inequality; rather, it is the absence of social equity that is of concern as John Rawls once cautioned (Rawls, 1999). In this sense, the Rawlsian assumption of fairness performs an important practical task: it links social philosophy with traces of a social ontology with the theme of social justice, but how-ever, how does this occur?

Rawls's concern with the institutions of justice is linked to his concept of social justice. Social justice is defined as the fair distribution of social goods and opportunities among members of a society. Rawls's focus on social justice is based on the idea that social institutions, which are made up of social practices, relationships, and institutions, play a crucial role in achieving social justice. From the



standpoint of social philosophy and critical research (CT), it can be demonstrated that the minimum conditions of social existence must be met for social goods and rights to be acquired.

Brazil, like any other country, is place to a multitude of social institutions. Regarding this research, it is evident that there are numerous NGOs and social programs that are dedicated to achieving social justice. In more recent times, I have been engaged in research into social programs in the state of Maranhão, my home region and the place where I teach in higher education. These programs are aligned with my research: one of these programs is the "Mais IDH" (More HDI) initiative (Assai, 2023; Assai, 2020).

The "Mais IDH" social action plan, developed by the Maranhão state government, aims to prioritize the development of the state's most economically disadvantaged regions and populations. The initiative was conceived as a movement that would expand and intensify, bringing together an increasing number of sectors, including government and civil society, in order to implement planned territorial actions. The actions developed by "Mais IDH" include a socio-normative analytical metric: the Human Development Index per municipality (MHDI), which is associated with the motto "What should we do to solve the social problems present in the cities with the worst human development indices per municipality?" The objective is not to accept the logic of developmentalism, but rather to establish better conditions for those cities that, in a way, can be understood as social forms of life and which need the most fundamental goods for their sociability. Public policies, therefore, warrant careful attention, as they facilitate the overcoming of historical disparities.

It is important to note that my selection of these two social programs, "Maranhão 2050" and "Mais IDH (HDI)," is based on the principles of a critical theory of poverty. This approach is effective in diagnosing, analyzing, and proposing solutions to social problems. It is also influenced by my position as a researcher in this field. It is therefore evident that these three procedures must be supported by this social immanence, which in no way impedes the consideration of other realities (Stahl, 2013).

Poverty is not merely a monetary issue. Consequently, income alone does not guarantee the effectiveness of a social justice plan. Consequently, the "Mais IDH" public policy places great emphasis on the diagnosis as the initial step in understanding the specific needs of a given municipality. In this context, the procedural is the first postulate of a critical theory. Furthermore, this triadic composition is not limited to this stage; it extends to subsequent stages of analysis and correction. The final two elements of critical theory are mediated by the identification of social problems. One example is the transition from mud to brick schools, which is one of the consequences of the "Mais IDH" (More HDI) program in municipalities with the lowest MHDI indices. The action may appear straightforward, but it is, in fact,



quite complex. In contrast, the exchange of construction materials is not the sole objective of this initiative. Rather, it is a means of achieving social justice for those who are most in need and who are vulnerable to social exclusion and persistent poverty. It is therefore of great importance that social institutions can constitute themselves as a normative mediation, thus transforming scenarios of extreme poverty into conditions of human health.

### **3.1 The experience of the Mais IDH Plan and Maranhão 2050: socio-institutional practices for the realization of social justice**

All critical research, understood here as research that is both theoretical and practical in nature, has in its research composition the diagnosis, analysis, and correction of problems within a given society. Considering the aforementioned assumptions, I will now present, as the final component of this research, two experiences that are present-ed in their respective institutional platforms as struggles for the realization of social justice: Mais IDH (More HDI) Plan and Maranhão 2050 (Maranhão, 2016; Maranhão, 2024). Both are linked to practical social status and therefore warrant consideration of the three elements of critical research.

The state of Maranhão lies between the north and northeast of Brazil. It has a vast territory and is marked by poverty, even though it has commodities such as soybeans and iron ore, both of which are exported. This discrepancy mainly affects the poorest, who in many cases live in poverty or extreme poverty. This scenario can be attributed to a longstanding lack of consideration for the needs of these individuals, who are in urgent need of comprehensive social goods and rights. The current government of Maranhão has been implementing measures to address the aforementioned negative situations. The result of these investments is the implementation of two social plans that address economic, environmental, educational, and labor issues. I have already pointed out the More HDI Plan, but now I will explain some aspects of this social plan and add the Maranhão 2050 plan. I won't focus on political personalism and will therefore stick to the socio-normative propositions of the two plans mentioned here.

The Mais HDI Action Plan, one of the first measures demonstrates his choice to prioritize the development of Maranhão's most deprived regions and populations, while also establishing itself as an innovative social technology. The starting point for the work was the systematization of the component indicators of the three dimensions of the Municipal Development Index - MHDI (education, health and basic income), calculated based on information from the 2010 Census, both those relating to the 30 target municipalities and those relating to the state and national plans. The guidelines of the More HDI Action Plan include [Maranhão, 2016]:

I - integration of public policies based on territorial planning;

II - expanding mechanisms for popular participation in the management of public policies the development of municipalities;

III - expanding the supply of basic citizenship programs;

IV - inclusion and productive integration of poor populations and the most vulnerable socially vulnerable social segments, such as rural workers, quilombolas (quilombolas are communities of African descent), indigenous people and traditional populations, based on a development model that meets the specific needs of each one-off them;

V - valuing the social, cultural, economic, political, institutional and environmental diversity of the environmental diversity of regions and populations.

The Plan's actions should be carried out in a decentralized and integrated manner, through joint efforts between the state and the municipalities, observing intersectorality, transdisciplinarity, comprehensiveness, civil society participation and social control. The first part of this plan is called preliminary diagnosis, and this question is associated with the first element of critical research; on the other hand, there is also the advanced diagnosis in More HDI.

Composed of the four axes listed - Education, Health, Income, Municipal Management and Environment - the Preliminary Diagnosis presents a comparative picture of the general conditions of performance, public health, production, work, municipal legislation and protected areas of the 30 municipalities protected areas of the 30 municipalities, also relating them to indicators for Maranhão and Brazil.

The Preliminary Diagnosis offers the opportunity to measure, based on the conditions in which a given municipality finds itself, as well as to evaluate the socio-economic dimension of the situation identified and qualify the scale of the effort required for its implementation.

On the other hand, the social action plan called Maranhão 2050 (Maranhão, 2024), which comes from the federal government's Growth Acceleration Programme (PAC into Portuguese), provides for more investment in all areas. but both More HDI and Maranhão 2050 won't work without the participation of civil society and the mediation of social institutions. In this sense, the socio-institutional perspective is revived, i.e. social institutions, as Rahel Jaeggi understands them, have a fundamental task in the realization of social justice. They are not just formal arrangements, but, from the point of view of critical research, they operate and must realize social goods and rights.

The Maranhão 2050 Plan is the state's first long-term strategic plan. state. It was built from the assimilation of different perspectives, seeking to identify the urgent socio-economic issues to be overcome within the state and presenting a detailed roadmap for present and future challenges. The idea is to help leverage development.

The Plan is organized into result areas that symbolize its objectives, such as the search for "Transformative and structuring education, identity and culture", "Proactive and structuring", "Prosperous and inclusive economy", "Valued and resilient environment", "Healthy resilient", "Healthy, safe and fair society" and "Effective, connected and innovative governance", connected and innovative". It should be noted that these metrics are aligned with the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As previously stated, the environmental issue has been identified as a key performance indicator within the Maranhão 2050 plan. In this sense, we may designate it as "ecopolitics," as the concept of environmental justice is, to a greater or lesser extent, intertwined with the notion of social justice. Environmental justice may thus be conceived as a comprehensive possibility of a certain practice emanating from social justice.

The Maranhão 2050 plan outlines four scenarios that present strategic challenges linked to the effectiveness of environmental justice. The plan's objectives include:

1. Reducing deforestation and fire rates, and increasing the protection and recovery of biomes;
2. Structuring the management of natural resources and mitigating the impacts of climate change;
3. Improving territorial management and stimulating the exchange of popular and traditional knowledge;
4. Boosting the development of the green economy and mainstreaming environmental education.

These points illustrate the interconnection between the educational and environmental spheres, particularly in the context of advocating for an ecopolitical status as proposed in the Maranhão 2050 plan. The lack of efficient ecopolitical management is evident when we consider the following diagnostic element: "Only 8% of schools have a sewage connection (public network) and 45% have treated water (public network)". Considering these considerations, it becomes evident that the ecopolitical response to this scenario should entail the implementation of public policies that facilitate the realization of basic conditions of access, accessibility, and permanence for all students, particularly in regions characterized by heightened inequality and constrained mobility. These conditions pertain to essential aspects such as transportation, materials, food, sanitation, hygiene, and technology.

In addition to the strategies, the Maranhão 2050 programmatic action plan encompasses the following ecopolitical strategies:

It is imperative to reinforce the mechanisms for monitoring, inspecting, controlling, and preventing deforestation and illegal burning in a coordinated manner throughout the state. Furthermore, it

is essential to promote reforestation and the recovery of degraded areas in the biomes and riparian forests, while simultaneously strengthening the remaining corridors of native vegetation. The native population must be trained and empowered to monitor and prevent deforestation and fires, and to promote the use of technology and partnerships with federal, state, and municipal entities.

Environmental governance must be structured through councils representing native and traditional peoples, in conjunction with the Public Prosecutor's Office and the judiciary, with a view to combating deforestation and fires.

It is recommended that sustainable low-carbon agricultural practices, such as agroecology and organic, conservation, and family farming, be encouraged. This can be achieved by adopting new technologies and sustainable innovations, certifying and offering incentives to producers.

From the perspective of philosophical social ontology, these measures constitute an ecopolitics that affects all entities within the state of Maranhão. In this case, a genuinely ecopolitical approach that is genuinely committed to environmental protection requires the establishment of a policy of environmental justice that considers social goods and rights—social justice—as an essential component of an ecopolitical framework. This is why, for example, the consolidation of a strategy to improve the management of water and forest resources and the universalization of sanitation by expanding the collection and treatment of urban and rural sewage and guaranteeing access to and the quality of water (Maranhão, 2024, p. 62) represents a persistent challenge for the construction and implementation of an ecopolitics.

## **Conclusion(s)**

As we have seen, critical research, that is, research aimed at diagnosing, analyzing, and correcting a particular social pathology, must always be linked to lived reality. Therefore, in this research, I have proposed listing the basic postulates of critical theory and social philosophy for a socio-institutional composition aimed at achieving social justice (understood as the idea of providing the minimum conditions of social existence, i.e. social goods and rights). And since critical research requires an empirical basis, I brought as an example the ongoing social plans from the state of Maranhão here in Brazil. The struggle for social justice continues and the epistemic spheres of/in life contribute to this end.

It is also worth emphasizing the social and ontological nature of this research about the following questions: "How do social practices, relationships, and institutions contribute to social justice? How can these elements, especially institutions, be reoriented from mere analysis to actively correcting and stabilizing social reality?"

Just as Jaeggi pointed out the socio-normative nature of institutions in effecting stability in the social tissue. In this sense, institutions must serve to mediate the processes of acquiring social goods and rights, which is what is commonly referred to as social justice. Within the framework of a critical theory, social justice is not a purely formal construction; on the contrary, social justice occurs at every moment when people benefit from social rights and goods. This is why the Gini Index and the Urban Well-being Index (UWI) are fundamental metrics in this composition. It should be under-lined that The Urban Well-Being Index (UWI) measures the quality of life in Brazilian metropolitan areas from a socio-spatial perspective. The Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI), on the other hand, measures people's life quality from a socioeconomic perspective. Similarly, and within the scope of critical theory, social practices and relations help social institutions when they cooperate in making social goods and rights a reality.

Returning to the empirical dimension of this research, the State of Maranhão has one of the lowest urban well-being indices in Brazil. That's why, in this case, the struggle for social justice must be continuous, and the role of social institutions is fundamental, so to speak, in building an effective social life. Indeed, "struggle" has become a socioanalytical category in critical theory (Honneth, 1994). For a critical social theory, struggle is consolidated as a possible condition for the realization of a given reality. In this case, social institutions are co-participants in this emancipatory construction. Struggle is not just "fighting for something", but above all knowing the "why" and the "what for". Let the critical theory and social philosophy be these mediations for the conquest of the social goods and the social rights.

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