



Key Texts for Latin American Sociology

Edited by **Fernanda Beigel**

SSIS SERIES | SAGE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY



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Politics, State and Society in Latin American Sociology: A Partial Introduction

Manuel Antonio Garretón (Chile)¹

As has been widely recognized, let's recall that scientific sociology was born in this region to understand and intervene in the question of the transformation of society – what economics would call development (Trindade, De Sierra, Garretón, Murmis and Reyna, 2007). But a transformation of society does not depend on natural forces but on human action, and for that reason, from a sociological perspective, it must address politics as a central element and, in contemporary times, the fundamental agent for its direction, the State. Accordingly, sociology in these latitudes was born as sociology of development and as political sociology,² occupying with some exceptions the role that political science had occupied in other societies

The paradox is that, nevertheless, in the big paradigms of the time associated with the foundation of sociology, politics and the State were assigned the role of a dependent variable. Thus, from the approach of modernization, the processes of secularization, rationalization and differentiation would make it possible to overcome the intrusions of politics and the State in social and economic life – and democracy as a regime would be the effect of such modernization. From the perspective of Marxist views and dependency, State and politics were the result of economic processes and the capitalist feature of development (Marini, 1969). It would be unfair to consider that there were no perspectives that emphasized the more autonomous character of politics and the State to understand that the same insertion in the world capitalist system allowed a diversity of development paths or that political processes had been developed involving a certain autonomy of politics and the State.³ In fact, studies on Nation-State building, thematically explored by Suzy Castor in this section of the book, point to its central role in the planning processes or in the relationships