

# THE RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIOLOGY AND POLICY

SOME REMARKS ON THEIR PRESENT AND FUTURE STATE

by

E. W. HOFSTEE

*Agricultural University, Wageningen, Netherlands*

According to the programme, it is my duty to present to you the conclusions which could be drawn from the activities of our Congress. For several reasons, I hope that you will permit me to take a very liberal view as to the way in which I discharge this duty. The organisation of the Congress was excellent, but the way in which it has worked makes it almost impossible to present conclusions at this moment. I received the papers at the same time as you did, and I had no opportunity to study them beforehand. As to the discussions, the fact that the Congress was split up into a number of Working Groups made it impossible to get more than a superficial impression of the contributions of the participants. But even if it had been possible to digest everything which was written for this Congress and was said during the discussions, I suppose that real conclusions could hardly be more than a bare catalogue, and would be rather dull.

Therefore, I shall take the liberty to use this opportunity to formulate my own view on what I believe to be a central problem inherent to the general theme of our Congress. I hope in this way to make some contribution to our activities.

This problem, which in fact has been of concern to me for many years, is what really is the function of sociological research and of the advice of sociologists with regard to government policy, what really are the relations of sociologists to government and what should they be. During the last few years this problem became, at least for me, more urgent than ever before.

During almost the whole of my active life I have been strongly engaged in many ways, and on all levels, in the endeavours of sociology to lay the scientific foundations for government activities. Much of my own research work was focussed on problems of this kind. I was, and I am still, a member of numerous government councils, committees, etc. which cover a rather broad field. I have also had my share of participa

tion on international committees, boards, etc. which had to do with advising policy makers. Because of all these activities I could hardly avoid going into the general aspects of the relations between sociologists and government and trying to formulate some conclusions based on my own experiences and those of many others who were engaged in this aspect of the work of sociologists. Perhaps it may be useful to communicate some of my experiences and conclusions to you, on the one hand looking back to the past, and on the other hand trying to formulate some opinions about the future.

I can imagine, when I formulated my problem, that many of you were thinking of the many shortcomings which shows the collaboration between sociologists and government officials, and the frustrations originating from that situation. It is certainly a serious matter. Looking back at more than 30 years of research and advisory activities which were meant to influence government activities directly and indirectly, there are many reasons why one could feel disappointed. If I were in a pessimistic mood I would be inclined to conclude that the effect of many reports I wrote myself, of those which were submitted by bodies of which I was a member, and of hundreds which were written by others and which I have read, did not in any way justify the years of hard labour which were devoted to the research and the studies embodied in these reports. Seemingly, many of them, perhaps even the majority, hardly affected the government agencies who requested them and paid for them. Policy makers and government officials went on to do as they did before the report was written, and often they did not even give a comment on the report at all. Often the only function of reports seems to be to get a stamp and to go to the files. The distribution of copies is often restricted to a number of government offices, and after some time there is only silence. If, because of the position of the authors of a report, or the members of the committee who prepared it, or for other reasons, an official interest in the report is shown, this does not guarantee that its ultimate destiny is much better. If one had a grudge against the civil service—which I certainly have not—one might even suspect them in that case of doing some deep thinking to find more sophisticated methods in order to prevent any effect from the report.

A procedure which can deprive the composers of a report of any satisfaction from the work they have done, is to send the report they have submitted to one or more councils, standing committees, etc. and to ask them to give their judgement and their comments on it. When the final comments arrive at the government bureau in question

everyone has forgotten about the report, and they will be buried in the files too. I remember one case in which I, as a member of different councils, etc., had to give my comments four times on a report of which I had been one of the composers.

Sometimes, one cannot help wondering why ministries and other government agencies ask for reports and other information from sociologists if they seemingly have no intention of using the results of the work of these people. One gets the impression that in many cases a genuine interest from government officials exists for the problems for which they call upon the sociologists, but that this interest is non-committal in the sense that they do not proceed to consider concrete plans to take certain measures or to change a certain policy. The report is merely a piece of information which is not used. Even if they personally would like to change a certain policy, it is often clear from the beginning that such a change is, at least at that moment, impossible for political, financial or other reasons. The result is the same. Sometimes, when a real change in policy is envisaged, a report is requested not only to obtain more information about the problem, but more especially to find the necessary arguments to convince the higher officials or politicians of the acceptability of the plans. But if, in that case, the results of research do not agree with the preconceived plans of the administrators, the reception of the report is often not enthusiastic. Even worse is the situation when the work of sociologists and their possible report is in fact only meant as a kind of shield for the administration against the attacks of politicians and public opinion.

It can sometimes save the government much trouble when it can be said that the problem about which a member of parliament is asking awkward questions is being studied thoroughly by a special committee, and that the government will give its opinion after the committee has submitted its report and the report has been studied. It may be useful also, when the government is making certain proposals, to be able to say that the conclusions of a committee which studied the subject have been taken in account, even if there is in fact no relation at all between the proposals and the conclusions of the committee. I remember – it is many years ago – when a committee of which I was a member, after years of study, submitted a report to a V.I.P. on an important subject, this person said quite openly that he was sorry that we had finished our work. For some years he had been able to satisfy impatient members of parliament by referring to the special committee and the extensive studies which were being made. But now he had to formulate his own point of view and he did not like that. Afterwards,

it appeared that he still found a way to postpone that critical situation by using the procedure I mentioned, namely, sending the report to a certain council and asking for its comments. Cases like this are certainly exceptional.

Less important cases, however, in which the composers of a report, consciously or unconsciously, are brought into the rather humiliating position where it is not the real scientific value of their work but its function as a shield against possible political attacks which is decisive, are not infrequent.

In many cases, one will have happier experiences than I have pictured in the forgoing, but it cannot be denied that the position of sociologists trying to make their science useful for practical purposes is often frustrating. After some years of experience they often try to free themselves from their full-time or part-time relations with policy making or executive agencies. Sometimes – and this is a worse situation for both sides – they take up an attitude of resignation and produce the reports they are requested to make, in a way similar to someone producing plastics, without any scientific creativeness.

When there are complaints – and in the present situation there are certainly reasons for the sociologists to complain – it is always necessary and useful to hear the other side, in this case the people who represent the administration. Often, they are not content either. They blame sociologists and other social scientists for being impractical, for having no feeling for policy making, and for having no understanding for the actual political situation. They think that sociologists often go too deep into all kinds of theoretical problems and methodological considerations, while they do not give an answer to the real problems, and that their reports are often of little help to the administration. They are often convinced that publication of a report would do more harm than good to public affairs. They have a kind of ambivalent attitude towards sociology and sociologists. On the one hand, they feel insecure as to the theoretical backgrounds of the problems they are facing and as to the possible consequences of certain measures they want to take. Therefore, they seek the help of those who should know about society, the sociologists. But they feel disappointed when the sociologists show they have little, if any, precise knowledge about the question which is bothering the administration at a certain moment, and when sociologists claim that extensive research should be done before they can give any answer. And when, sometimes after years, the report comes, it often gives only a partial or even inadequate answer to the question. In many cases the problem has already lost its acute

importance when the report is completed and it is of no use any more.

Should the conclusion be that administration and policy making on the one hand, and sociology on the other hand, are incompatible, and that sociologists should stop trying to find an application for their science in the sphere of public affairs? I suppose that none of you will expect an affirmative answer to this question from my side. Sociology cannot withdraw from this field, not only and not even primarily because so many sociologists earn a living from activities on behalf of government on different levels. Sociologists cannot withdraw because it would mean that they would give up an important part of their responsibility. More than ever in this rapidly changing, and in many respects unhappy world, sociological insight into the problems of our own countries and of the world as a whole is a bare necessity for the improvement of the situation. A sociologist who is interested in the welfare of people – and anyone who is not should not be a sociologist – simply cannot be indifferent to the activities of governments which, to such a high degree, are decisive for the well-being of everyone.

But if we are convinced that sociology really has an essential task in this respect, the question of the right relations between government and their agencies on the one hand, and sociologists on the other hand, become so much the more urgent. We simply have to find a way for satisfactory collaboration. The problem of the unsatisfactory relations between the administration and the sociologists is, like most problems, a complicated one. Partly it is a question of maladjustment and insufficient understanding of each others functions and duties due to a lack of experience, which is natural after a short time of collaboration. Often government officials do not understand, that their practical questions as such do not constitute a research problem, and that these questions have first to be transposed into scientific terms before a sociologist can do something about is. But often by this transposition the problem, and therefore the answer, loses an important part of its value for the administration. On the other hand, our university education in sociology, from the point of view of application, is too theoretical and too abstract. Sociologists often forget that concrete problems as they present themselves in society do not only have their sociological aspects but also their technical, economic, financial and political aspects, and that a possible solution of a problem almost always means a conflict of interests. The possible remark from the side of an administrator to the sociologist that his conclusions may be right but that a policy based on these conclusions is politically not

feasible, may infuriate a young sociologist, but it is usually more than an easy excuse for doing nothing. For the administrator considers what can be realised and not what is ideal. The sociologist has to understand that the question of the feasibility of a certain solution belongs explicitly or implicitly to his problem. Sociologists often forget that if results of their reports suggest that a certain policy should be changed, this in fact implies a criticism of those who set up and carried out this policy, which often means the people who asked them to do the research. If, in that case, the administrators in question are not over-enthusiastic about the report, and need some time to digest it mentally, this is quite understandable. The foregoing is one of the reasons why the work of sociologists in the long run often has more consequences than appear at the beginning. My own experience is – and that is one of the pleasant aspects of growing older – that often, years after giving certain advice to government agencies, measures are taken and policies are adopted which in fact are based on that work of years ago.

This leads me to a more general remark which may lessen the feelings of disappointment among sociologists. Gradually, I have come to the conclusion that the greatest effect of the work of sociologists is not its direct influence on concrete measures taken by the government, but its influence on the gradual change in the way of thinking of government officials. It needs some patience, of course, to wait for this result.

This does not alter the fact, however, that the question of the unsatisfactory relations between sociologists and government officials needs more and more serious attention than it has had in the past. The problem cannot be solved by a motion or a decision, only by study, contact and discussion. The authorities have to be aware of the fact that when a research worker is doing his work well, his research and his reports have a great emotional value for him and that he needs a certain recognition for this work. The report should be discussed between principal and research worker, and if possible should be published. If the results of the report cannot be or can only be partially used in the work of the administration, it should be explained why this is the case.

On the other hand, the sociologist has to accept that he cannot take over the responsibility of the administrators and the policy makers. He has to find his satisfaction primarily in his research work, and he should consider the possible influence of his work on practical policy and any possible collaboration with the administration in the development of the practical planning as an additional gratification.

Establishing more satisfactory relations between sociologists and government officials in general is the more important because it is more or less a precondition for the solution of another, perhaps even more serious problem which is related to the activities of sociologists on behalf of policy making, and which has gradually become clear during the last 10 to 15 years and now has become acute. I should like to devote the rest of my address to that question.

It obliges me to go a little deeper into the function of applied sociological research and to make some differentiation between the various aspects of this function. On another occasion I distinguished – more or less arbitrarily, of course – the activities of social scientists on behalf of government policy into three different levels<sup>1</sup>.

(1) Research related to the general character of social change which takes place in our society or which may be expected in the near future, in which attention has to be given to possible social and psychological resistance to this change, to possible disfunctional aspects of spontaneous change, etc. Research of this kind is not concerned with certain specific parts of government policy but has to make clear the general character of the problems which the government will have to face in the future. It is, in fact, more or less fundamental research, but the sociologists who engage in this type of research should have a certain feeling for policy making.

(2) Research concerned with specific policy problems, but on a high level and of national or even of international importance. As an example, I would mention research with regard to a national policy for education which can serve as a basis for the modernisation of the legislation on education, or research which could contribute to national policy on physical planning. It is clear that research on this level should be carried out in closer relation with policy makers than research on the first level. This does not mean that it should be carried out under the direct control of government agencies. As well as research on the first level, it should be free and – to use a modern term – creative research, because one of its functions is to confront the government with new problems, new insight and new possible solutions.

(3) Research related to the practical execution of an established policy. Research of this kind can be of a regional character, for example, related to the execution in a province, region or municipality of a general policy in the field of social work. It may be also of a

national character, for example, when it is aiming at an evaluation of the effect of a certain policy. The scope of the problems to be investigated on this third level is set – or at least should be set – by the established policy in the field in question and the specific conditions, for example, conditions of a regional character, which influence its execution. Research on this level should be conducted in direct relation with the administrative body responsible for the execution of the policy in question. The research worker, in this case, has to give exact answers to exact questions asked by the administration, and in principle it is not his task to question the rightness of the policy. It is important that on this level there is a direct follow-up to the research, in the sense that the person who did the research be consulted permanently by those who formulate the concrete plans and execute the measures so that his findings will be reflected in the correct way in their activities.

It is clear that, in principle, there is a logical sequence in the three categories of research mentioned in the foregoing. A specific part of the totality of government policy should, if it is right, fit into a general conception of the future development of society and of the role of government in that development. Research concerned with this specific field of policy should be inspired by the results of the research which provided the basis for this general vision of the future. On the other hand, research related to concrete plans on the executive level should find its starting point in the results of the research on the second level and in the policy in the field in question which should have been based on that research.

In practice, one will hardly find this ideal situation. So far, research on behalf of government activities has, for the greater part, taken place on the third level, the level of the execution. Coherent research with a broad scope, which is meant to lay the principal foundation for an important part of a national policy, is rare, with the exception perhaps – to a certain degree – of research on behalf of economic policy. Social research, intended explicitly to provide a coherent picture of our society in the future, under the conditions which during the last few years have become gradually clearer, is practically non-existent.

This situation is not so strange as it looks at first sight. As long as a certain society has a more or less static character, so that its main institutions and its general structure are changing only slowly, and – what perhaps is most important – the population, including the policy makers, consider these institutions and this structure as self-evident, there will be no real need for an insight into the general



development of this society. In that case, fundamental change of important parts of the government policy will not, for the most part, be considered. Problems will only occur in relation to the execution of an established policy. Besides the acts of administration in the technical sense, these executive activities will consist mainly of endeavours to adjust living conditions, education, the attitudes and the economic activities of groups and individuals to the existing and accepted norms as they are reflected in the established policy. These efforts towards adjustment can be concerned with many different fields, and they can be of great importance. However, in a more or less stable society they do not lead to serious questions concerning the general policy on which they are based. On the contrary, they support this policy and consolidate the existing order.

Also, under such conditions of relative stability and gradual change, social research can be very useful and even essential for a correct execution of the existing policy. It sometimes threatens to become a routine affair. Often, however, the execution of a certain policy will cause a great number of related investigations, for which the development of new theoretical and methodological concepts is needed, and therefore it can lead to progress in our science as a whole. An interesting example in rural sociology is the totality of research in the field of the adoption of new farm practices in America and elsewhere. However interesting and however important this kind of research may be it remains within the limits of an accepted policy and an accepted image of the social order.

Looking back, we can conclude by now that sociologists when they began to develop relations with the administration and government policy made the mistake of accepting, implicitly or explicitly, that we were living in a world which fundamentally was still more or less stable and that only petty change and gradual development could take place. One may now in particular wonder why, after World War II, when relations between sociology and governments became more intensive, this belief still persisted. We can understand this only when we realize that this first decade after the war in historical perspective has to be characterized as a period of restoration like the well-known period of restoration after the Napoleonic wars. People had a nostalgic desire for the good old times. They wished to see the troubles of the thirties and the war as ugly accidents which should not have happened. They wanted to continue life as it had been before, or they yearned for a new start on the same basis. They forgot that what had happened was more than just an

accident. In political life there was hardly any resistance to this general tendency towards restoration. Some political parties officially included the building of a new society in their programmes but, in fact, they collaborated with other parties in this sphere of continuity and gradual improvement within the limits of the existing social order. It will be clear that under these conditions, the contributions which the administration expected from social scientists were in fact almost exclusively on the third, the executive, level. Though perhaps a few amongst the sociologists felt some doubts with regard to the stability of our society and the rightness of the accepted policy in a certain field, the majority made no objections and implicitly accepted a wide range of presuppositions as a normal stage which was set for their work. The fact that, on the whole, sociologists accepted positions as research workers on the third level did not, mean that their contacts with the authorities were smooth. Many of the little conflicts, misunderstandings, etc., which I have mentioned in the first part of my address, were there from the beginning. But they were quite different from the problems we are facing now.

Since about 1955, the situation has changed and changed relatively quickly. More and more it has become clear that we are not living in a more or less stable society but that, on the contrary, we are witnessing an enormous evolution which is disturbing every aspect of social life and which makes almost every element of government policy obsolete, or certainly will make it obsolete in the near future. Almost everything which seemed to be well ordered in our welfare states is now not only discussed and criticised, but in large measure it is breaking down because the conditions on which it was based are disappearing. We now know that the change was not as sudden as it seemed to be but that, because we were living for many years in the sphere of restoration, we did not realise what was going on, partly under the surface.

Just because, for the greater part, they were insufficiently aware of the situation, this process of rapid change not only caught the administration but also the greater part of the sociologists unprepared, when it became obvious. Unprepared in many ways, mentally, scientifically and organisationally. The sociologists were not able, and in fact are still unable to give the policy makers a scientifically sound insight into the real social background of the change which is taking place and to formulate realistic expectations with regard to the future. There is no systematic body of theory on large-scale, fundamental social change. What has been added since the 19th century to sociological theory in this field is hardly worthwhile. In general, macro-

sociology – I mentioned this already during our last Congress – has been neglected for decades, theoretically as well as methodologically. The help which sociologists can offer to the development of adequate new policies in different fields is mostly negligible. Some sociologists, usually those not hampered by any knowledge of administration and policy making, seem to believe that speculation on the basis of defective and one-sided material could take the place of sound and reliable insight in this respect, but those who have to deal in practice with the problems of sociology in relation to government activities know that sweeping generalisations are of little use for practical policy making.

In fact, the situation for the greater part is unchanged, in the sense that the majority of the activities of sociologists are still taking place on the third level, the level of execution. But often it does not really work any more.

As I mentioned, in many fields the established policy has become obsolete or coherent policy is lacking. Also, there is almost no sociological research of a higher level which the sociologists working at the executive level could use for guidance. As a result, these sociologists at the third level often feel more or less at a loss. To go on as if nothing has changed during the past 10 or 15 years, or to take only changes in detail into account, is unsatisfactory for everyone concerned, for the sociologist as well as for the administrator and the population. But, on the other hand, the research worker on this level can hardly start to inaugurate a new policy in the field in question on his own. If a sociologist is requested to do the necessary research for the planning of a new hospital in a certain region, and he writes a large report on the fundamental aspects of the social position of patients in the post-industrial era, he is asking for trouble. But, on the other hand, one can hardly blame him if he is convinced that continuing to build hospitals as we have done during the last few decades may lead to disaster, since the social presuppositions on which the existing system of hospitalisation is based are gradually giving way. In most cases, people try to muddle through, of course, for after all life is going on and plans have to be made. But often the situation is extremely frustrating for the social scientist.

Let me take a practical example which perhaps will clarify how great the difficulties can be.

For more than 25 years I have been working as an adviser for the government agencies which are responsible for the reclamation and the colonisation of new land, the so-called polders, in the Zuiderzee-

project. When the second polder was under construction, sociologists were called in for the first time to give their contribution to the planning of this polder. Though we had many problems of a scientific character, our position as sociologists in the whole of the planning was quite clear.

Though it was hardly formulated explicitly, the underlying policy which guided the planning was evident. It required the creation of an agricultural region of 50,000 ha which would fit into the whole of the countryside in the Netherlands. Undesirable consequences of a long historical development on the old land should be avoided, of course, but in essence rural society as it had existed in the Netherlands was the yardstick for the planning. Research consisted, to an important extent, of a thorough study of the social and economic structure of agricultural regions on the old land which were more or less comparable with the polders as to soil, expected type of farming, etc. I have to add that we interviewed people in rural areas on the old land extensively with regard to possible improvements which could be made, as compared with the present situation in which they lived. That did not alter the fact, however, that the situation on the old land was the starting-point for the planning. In the end we planned a larger minimum size for the farms, fewer but better service centres than on the old land, and a number of other improvements, but essentially the North-east Polder does not differ from other regions dominated by arable farming and certainly not (only in scale) from other polders which were reclaimed in the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century.

When, shortly after the war, we started the hydraulic works for the third polder it seemed, at the beginning, that with some minor changes the starting-points for the planning which we used for the North-east polder were still valid. But as the planning advanced we became more and more insecure. Things did not develop in the North-east polder in all respects as had been expected. Mechanisation in agriculture developed more quickly than had been anticipated, as well as the motorisation of traffic. Farmers employed far fewer farmhands than had been calculated, the service centres did not grow according to the plans, and in many other respects the planning of that polder already seemed to be out of date. As a result, we had already changed the plans for the third polder, the Eastern Flevoland polder, several times before it was pumped dry. The number of planned villages was reduced, as well as the planned number of farms and the size of these planned farms increased correspondingly.

After the polder was pumped dry and the reclamation started, changes in the plans went on and thus, for example, the number of villages on 40,000 ha was reduced to three. But in principle, the underlying policy of the planning did not change and could not change.

About ten years ago, when the planning of the third polder for practical reasons reached its final stage, the government, the politicians, the farmers' unions and all other bodies and pressure groups which were interested in the planning of this polder still thought of agriculture as a developing, but not yet as a fundamentally changing part of social and economic life. The polder is now practically finished and we have to acknowledge that what we did was to make a replica of the past on a large scale rather than a real new part of Dutch society which can function adequately in the future.

And now, a year ago the fourth polder, Southern Flevoland, was pumped dry. To a large extent it will be used for urban development and recreation. But, nevertheless, some ten thousand hectares will have to be used for agriculture. To be honest, we do not know what to do about the agricultural part of this polder. That does not mean that we, as sociologists, have no idea about what possibly could be done. But there is no clear policy any more which can guide the people who are responsible for the development of the polder at the executive level. It is clear to everyone that the policy of the past has become obsolete. It makes no sense, for example, to divide the polder into farms which are perhaps on average a few hectares larger than those in the third one, and to build service centres like in the past, only fewer, etc. But dropping the old policy does not mean that a new one automatically presents itself. The Dutch government, no more than any other government in Western Europe, has no clear conception of a possible consistent policy with regard to agriculture and rural life in the post-industrial future. A special problem is that in political life agriculture is still haunted by many taboos, and this frustrates possible efforts by governments to find a solution. Moreover, a possible new policy with regard to agriculture and rural life could only work when it fits into a clear notion on the part of the government as to the future development of a society as a whole and of its own responsibilities with regard to that development. That is clearly lacking.

The example I have mentioned is not an exception. On the contrary, many similar cases could easily be demonstrated in other fields. That means, however, that at the executive level, where the work simply has to continue, research and planning have often reached an absolute deadlock. In many cases things are done in a way which is certainly

wrong, but no one is willing or able to take the responsibility for trying another solution, because there is no policy backing him. Ultimately, of course, policy makers and politicians are responsible for the solution of these agonising problems. But I firmly believe that social scientists have to acknowledge that they are partly responsible too. As I have tried to point out, they have failed to do the necessary research on what I called the first and the second levels, and therefore the scientific backbone for a reformulation of government policy in general and of policies for specific fields of action are lacking. Moreover, because real scientific insight is lacking, policy making is open to the influence of all kinds of social fantasies which so easily crop up in times of social confusion like ours.

Though research on the executive level cannot be neglected, sociologists who are interested in public affairs have to concentrate their activities in the coming years on the first and the second level. This will not be an easy job. It means that they not only have to tackle many problems to which they have hardly given any attention in the last few decades, but it means also, as was mentioned already, that in many respects they have to review and to extend their methods and their theoretical basis. That one of the main aspects of this change in sociology has to be a much greater emphasis on macro-sociology is clear. But it is also important that new conceptions of the organisation of sociological research on behalf of policy making have to be developed. The present organisation for the greater part still bears the characteristics which belong to research at the third level which has to give direct answers to questions raised by government agencies.

As I have already emphasised, research on the first and second level, because it has to provide the government with new insight and has to break through established opinions and traditional policy, can never be dependent in its activities on specific and restricted questions which are brought forward from the side of the government. It has to find its own way within very broad terms of reference. But, on the other hand, it will have to produce a more or less consistent and permanent flow of insight and information which has to have a relevance to future policy making. This means that research of this type could hardly be done within a government bureau, but, it should be more strictly organised than the normal free research at our universities. If this work were to be done at universities it should be coordinated by a group of people who have a picture of the way in which such research should be done, and how its results could be used. I shall not go into further details here, but I know, also from experience, that it is difficult

to find the right understanding for this kind of research and its organisational requirements both from the side of the government and from the side of the social scientists.

I am convinced, however, that the development of this type of policy-oriented sociological research is a bare necessity. Modern policy making is impossible without a basis of social research of this character. If we do not succeed in developing adequate research on these higher levels, not only is the growth of a consistent body of government activities which can meet the needs of future society endangered, but also existing social research on the executive level and the consequent planning will, for the greater part, lose their importance. To revert to the general theme of our Congress, the contribution of sociology to development and policy is at stake.

As most of you will know, I am retiring from the chairmanship of our Society, and thus, in a certain sense, this address was a swan song. Perhaps you will have obtained the impression that it was a rather pessimistic one. That is not really the case. I believe, however, that post-war sociology stands at the cross-roads and that it has to reconsider thoroughly its position as a science and as a means of helping society to overcome the disordered state in which it has arrived as a consequence of the unprecedented change we are witnessing. I hope, and I trust, that our Society will participate in the search for a new and promising future for sociology.

NOTE

<sup>1</sup> I made this differentiation for the first time in a report of the Social Science Council of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Science and Letters (Commentaar van de Sociaal-Wetenschappelijke Raad van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen op het rapport van de Werkgroep uit de Contactcommissie Overheid-Sociaal-Wetenschappelijke Raad).

Afterwards, it was also used by an advisory group which prepared a report on the social sciences for the Second Ministerial Conference on Science, organised by O.E.C.D., and in which I participated (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, The Social Sciences and the Policies of Governments, Paris, 1966). Part of the line of thought used in the following may be found in: Hofstee, E. W. (1965), *Het uitgiftebeleid voor de Zuidelijke IJsselmeerpolders*, Meppel.