Situation of the dissertation

Nocturnal traffic noise has always been an environmental issue. Across centuries, transportation modes may have evolved considerably, but still today, traffic noise continues to disturb sleep and quality of life. According to the World Health Organisation, transportation noise has become the most important environmental pollutant in Europe, exposing one in five European citizens regularly to noise levels which are found to be harmful for their health. Inhabitants of large cities are considered particularly vulnerable to the effects of noise pollution, as cities usually serve different functions. The Brussels-Capital Region, with a surface of 162 km² for more than one million inhabitants can be described as a dense city.

Noise management in an urban setting is an always ongoing and complex matter. The main goal hereby is to create sustainable guidelines, which combine the characteristic functions of the city, without degrading its inhabitants of their right for rest and tranquility. Notwithstanding the fact that extensive and clear data on road traffic noise exposure in the Brussels-Capital Region are available, scientific information on how noise exposure impacts its inhabitants is currently missing. Present study aims at contributing to this aspect.

Besides its housing function, the Brussels-Capital Region - as any other major city - has also a national and international economical center. In order to fulfill their professional activities, about 400 000 people migrate daily towards the Capital. Commuting - another source of daily stress - has been the study interest of many occupational and health researchers. Despite the fact that commuting has been the subject of many investigations, only a few studies concentrated on the effects of commuting on sleep. Thereby, they mainly focused on quantitative measures of commuting and sleep. Emphasizing on aspects of perceived commuting stress and sleep outcomes is the key component in the second part of this project.

Curriculum Vitae

During the last year of her psychology study at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (2004), she had the opportunity to work with prof. Cleytys and prof. De Vaeye, in the experimental sleep laboratory at the VUB. This led to a master thesis "Effect of cognitive arousal on sleep latency, somatic and cortical arousal following partial sleep deprivation". During her internship, she worked in the Sleep Laboratory of the CHU Brugmann in Brussels. In 2005, she started her doctoral research at the Biological Psychology Research Unit, under the supervision of prof. Cleytys and prof. De Vaeye. Currently, she develops her own activities, offering counseling for persons with sleep problems, lectures, and coaching in professional contexts.