

Sleep, a political issue, an issue for local authorities

The experience is banal. When friends show us around their house or apartment, most of the rooms in the house are presented to us without difficulty and often with pride: from the kitchen and living room, from the verandah to the garden. They are a reflection of the supposed good taste of the home's guests. But when it comes to the bedroom, the visit stops abruptly in front of the door, which must remain closed.

There is an explanation for this restraint. In our imagination, for the individual as much as for the couple, sleep is a sanctuary of intimacy. Our rest is a secret cocoon that must remain preserved from outside intrusions. It is a *no society's land*.

And yet.

Sleep is politics. And in concentrate. Health statistics and everyday experiences tell this truth, not hidden but disinvested, which does not appear as a taboo but rather as an omission. Do we know that our sleep time has gone from 8:05 a.m. in 1986 to 7:47 a.m. in 2010 and to 6:42 a.m. in 2017 [1]? In a few years, the erosion is considerable and the consequences potentially disastrous.

When we don't sleep well, even if there are no precise figures, we cost the community billions of euros. Irritability, problems with attention at work and concentration at school, diabetes, cancer, traffic accidents, excessive use of sleeping pills in particular: the consequences of "bad sleep" appear, dare we say it, nightmares.

The class struggle is not just about workshops: it's also about pillows. In France, in the large nursery school section, the night-time rest of the children of executives is already ten minutes longer than that of the children of workers. Inequalities are also territorial: in rural areas, school transport time can mean waking up very early in the morning. And there are more and more night workers: 3.3 million in 1990, 4.3 million in 2013 [2].

Light pollution in cities, from streetlights, windows and headlights, causes the chronobiological cycles of individuals to go out of control. As for the screens of our televisions, smartphones and other tablets, under the effect of the blue light they emit, their use at night weighs more and more on the progressive and delicate process of falling asleep.

There is one obvious fact: the most logical scale of action is national. Whether it is the regulation of sleeping pills, road safety, the development of public health messages or the regulation of night work in the Labour Code, it is within the ministries and Parliament that things can be played out. But local authorities also have a nice role to play - a role that, today, is often still to be built.

Noise, a skill to invest in

First step, noise. This is a subject that local authorities have already invested in: today, towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants in particular must draw up strategic noise maps (CSB) and environmental noise prevention plans. However, "although regulatory changes and the transfer of powers have placed local authorities at the forefront of the noise issue for the past fifteen years or so [...] the subject has not yet been addressed in planning policies". "Priority is given to air pollution, and it is difficult to identify responsibilities - neighborhood noise remains the responsibility of the municipalities, for example,

The absence of an obligation to do so in the European directive, lack of means and, no doubt, lack of awareness among elected officials and technicians: the observation of a deficiency is pointed out [3]. »

Nevertheless, there are some initiatives which, although technical, remain inspiring: the development by Amiens Métropole of high-service electric bus lines that act on both air quality and noise pollution; the "peaceful metropolis" in Grenoble; the publication of "air-noise" co-exposure maps based on the model of air quality indicators cross-referencing data. The City of Paris, for its part, wants to be in the vanguard on the subject with, in particular, the experimentation of an "anti-noise bitumen" [4] in three Parisian streets and the acquisition of a high-precision sound level meter to verbalize two-wheelers that are too noisy [5]. Thanks to a parliamentary amendment to the Mobility Orientation Law, communities, among other things, can automatically control vehicles that are too noisy, made possible by the cameras and microphones of the Jellyfish.

"Several sensors designed for this purpose have been installed for this purpose in the Île-de-France region. Saint-Forget, in the Yvelines, has already placed a sensor on its 'Route des 17 tournours', which is very popular with motor vehicles. [6] But "beyond these initiatives, the most aware professionals advocate going beyond technical reflexes and thinking in terms of the sound environment, or even 'soundscapes' [...]. It's a question of integrating the sound dimension into the very design and management of territories," summarizes the club Décibel Villes, which brings together local authorities involved in this reflection. To prevent rather than cure, it is better to involve acousticians upstream, from the design phase of urban planning projects, rather than afterwards, when the damage is done. More simply still: since the PLUs can introduce derogatory provisions in terms of siting to protect buildings from noise, why not use them? The CGEDD also recommends introducing a noise component into urban planning and defining urban development guidelines that integrate noise into quality of life criteria.

It is therefore above all a culture of the sound environment that must be developed, both within communities and in all the technical services concerned" [7].

Delaying the start of classes for middle and high school students

"In the morning, the teen is in class but his brain is on the pillow! [8] is a graphic warning from many health professionals. The density of school days - in France, in high school, there are 30 to 40 hours of classes for 178 school days compared to 26 hours for 187 days on average in the OECD - can create weeks of almost 40 hours, sometimes more than for working adults. For rural youth who are forced to ring the alarm clock before 7 a.m., fatigue threatens even more. "The increase in mental workload at this age is particularly noticeable in France, where selection, based on grades, is rather devaluing. The stress that weighs on the teenager is very heavy. Add to this a need to exist socially, to be recognized by their peers: that's where smartphones come in. So, interactions in the evening, when they are alone in bed. At the age of fourteen, it's often a social jet lag that sets in. This burden weighs more heavily than "around eleven or twelve years of age, at the onset of puberty, there is an upheaval of hormonal systems and, with it, a delay of at least one hour in the physiological phase of sleep. In concrete terms, adolescents are naturally out of phase. They go to bed an hour later, get up an hour later and are even hungry an hour later than before" [9].

This is why delaying the start of classes by one hour in the morning is an experiment that should be looked at sympathetically. "A recent American research study was conducted by a team from the University of Washington with groups of biology students at two Seattle high schools whose class start times were delayed from 7:50 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. The research team found that the students were not able to start their classes at the same time in the morning. Sleep time (students were asked to complete a detailed daily diary), average grades, and absenteeism and tardiness were measured before the schedule change (in 2016) and after (in

2017). Their reported sleep time increased by 34 minutes to 7:24 a.m., even though it did not reach the recommended sleep time at this age (between eight and ten hours), their average grades increased significantly and, in one of the two high schools, absences and lateness in the first period of the day decreased. Other comparable experiments had been conducted previously in the United States with similar results [10]. »

Raising public awareness

Sleep seems to constitute a ministerial "non-subject", an "absent column" of political discourse. Barely mentioned, the stakes of our rest seem to disappear in a sanitary Bermuda triangle. In 2017, the most respected French medical authorities on the subject noted, to their regret, that "the national health strategy [of the Ministry of Health] defines a strong prevention policy as a priority axis. The main risk factors identified in this report are tobacco, alcohol, physical inactivity, overweight and obesity. These are of course essential issues, but we regret that the word "sleep" is not mentioned in the

189 pages of the report of the High Council of Public Health. This situation is extremely alarming for us sleep specialists" [11]. 11] Let us meditate, on the other hand, on two activities of the body, both a biological necessity and a pleasure of life, which have been invested by public action for a long time and powerfully: sport and food. Ministries or Secretariats of State are dedicated to them. In our towns and villages, stadiums and canteens are commonplace. Anyone can consult a sports doctor or dietician. The public health messages carried by the institutions resonate in the social body: we all measure the importance of eating five fruits and vegetables a day and getting a minimum of exercise every day.

This deficiency of the national level can be made up for by a commitment from the local level. Town halls and departments in particular could organize times to raise awareness among the population. Let's take the example of the town hall of Yvetot in Seine-Maritime which, in 2017, in partnership with the National Education, has proposed a program of activities on the theme of sleep. "It is in this context that [...] the family support group at the Saint-Exupéry social center organized a café-debate at the Maison des jeunes et de la culture. A dozen mothers, elected officials and a doctor had come for the occasion. They all agreed on the observation that a good quality of sleep is essential for children's balance, concentration and knowledge acquisition. Now it remains to find the solutions. Our modern world is hectic and full of temptations. Social networks reach even the youngest children (...). Is it possible to do away with the Internet and cell phones? Allowing them within a strict, pre-negotiated time frame seems more productive, as does imposing a bedtime limit [12]. »

Another initiative to consider: that the deputy mayor, the vice-president of the department in charge of health issues have the title of their function supplemented by a "sleep" competency. This would strengthen the legitimacy of local elected officials to act on the subject. Better still, because "to name a reality is to bring it to life" [13], this semantic visibility of sleep would contribute to the population's awareness of the political dimension of our rest.

Socialism is a sum of unquestioned questions and proposals, always updated. It is a doctrine connected to reality, in immediate touch with the times. This is why sleep, by the upheavals it has undergone over the last thirty years, by the health and social consequences that these transformations have had on the population, is a fine subject for socialists to invest in.

- [1] Baromètre de Santé publique France (SPF), in Bulletin épidémiologique hebdomadaire (BEH), March 12, 2019.
- [2] Baromètre de Santé publique France (SPF), in Bulletin épidémiologique hebdomadaire (BEH), March 12, 2019.
- 3] Ségolène Poinas, "Le bruit, une compétence très discrète," La Gazette des communes, August 12, 2019.
- 4] Myriam Chauvot, "Paris teste la route antibruit et antichaleur", Les Échos, October 16, 2018. 5] Jean-Gabriel Bontinck, "Circulation : Paris s'attaque au bruit des deux-roues," Le Parisien, September 20, 2019.
- 6] Alexandra Saviana, "Île-de-France: anti-noise radars tested against noisy vehicles", Marianne, 10 September 2019.
- [7] Ségolène Poinas, "Le bruit, une compétence très discrète", La Gazette des communes, August 12, 2019.
- [8] Dr. Jean-Luc Martinot, child psychiatrist and director of research at Inserm, in "Le manque de sommeil altère gravement la santé", Mutations, the magazine of the Mutualité française, July 17, 2019.
- 9] Claire Leconte, child chronobiologist, in Barbara Krief, " Début des cours à 9 heures : 'Les ados sont décalés, c'est à l'école de s'adapter' ", L'Obs, January 8, 2019.
- [10] Agnès Florin, " Dépaler l'heure de début des cours au lycée ne répond qu'une petite partie du problème ", Le Monde, January 29, 2019.
- [11] Sylvie Royant-Parola, President of the Réseau Morphée, Joëlle Adrien, President of the Institut national du sommeil et de la vigilance, Jean-Claude Meurice, President of the Société française de recherche et de médecine du sommeil, Damien Léger, Vice-President of the Société française de recherche et de médecine du sommeil, "Notre société néglige plus en plus en plus le sommeil, rythme fondamental de l'individu", Le Monde, October 8, 2017.
- [12] "Le sommeil, la clé de l'équilibre", Paris-Normandie, March 16, 2017.
- 13] Marie de Gandt, Sous la plume, Petite exploration du pouvoir politique, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2013.