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Prologue

Environmental noise quality is basically founded on a subjective interpretation, based upon the presence of disturbances, previous experience and expectations. Early studies on the effects of aircraft noise used a standardised questionnaire to evaluate the effect — annoyance — and related this to the noise exposure [1].

Over the years, the complexity of the human reaction to environmental noise has been revealed by a variety of disciplines such as sociology, medicine, psychology, acoustics and statistics. The Japanese–Swedish symposia on the medical effects of noise have been a major instrument in this expansion of knowledge [2–5].

The progress is well illustrated by the content of this symposium. The variety of noises studied is large and effect parameters range from electroencephalographic recordings to psychological parameters. New concepts for noise sensitivity and judgement are presented.

The setting of the Symposium is important. Meeting away from the city environment (and its noises) in an isolated rural setting allows participants to discuss at length and whenever, not restricted by presentation and discussion time limits. Apart from the efficient exchange of data, this also allows for the establishment of personal contacts and friendships — an additional asset for development of the science and future collaborative research projects.

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