Ethnic Minorities, Cities, and Institutions: a Comparison of the Modes of Management of Ethnic Diversity of a French and a British City

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Abstract

This paper examines the strategies of management of post-colonial ethnic diversity of the city council of Birmingham (England) and the municipality of Lille (France), and argues that the differences between the two strategies arise for a large part from differences between the institutional frameworks in which the two cities operate.

In both cities, the presence of post-colonial minorities on their territory since the 1960s constitutes the same kind of threat to the continued exercise of power by the dominant political interest of the local elected authority: direct electoral challenge from anti-immigrant political forces or from immigrant groups themselves, and public disorder, which ultimately constitutes a threat to the electoral performance of the group in power. However, each city has reacted very differently to these threats. In Birmingham, since the early 1980s, there has been a de facto alliance between the ruling Labour group of the council and some ethnic minorities groups since the early 1980s. In addition, the council has implemented pro-active policies against racial discrimination and in favour of the participation of ethnic groups in the decision-making process of the council. In Lille (dominated by the socialist mayor Pierre Mauroy since 1974), by contrast, there is no alliance with ethnic groups, which are kept out of the realm of conventional local politics, and there are only limited efforts to implement policies addressing the issue of minorities.

This paper seeks to show the role played in explaining these differences by three main characteristics of the institutional environment of the two cities, which have acted since the early 1980s as a set of resources and constraints on the local authorities. These characteristics are: (i) the relation between the cities and the central polity (a tight separation of "low" and "high" politics in Britain, and a strong inter-penetration of the two levels of government in France), (ii) the structure of the party-system and the internal organisation of parties (the pervasive influence of the Front National on French politics, which discourages the Socialist Party to strike an alliance with minorities, and a strategic openness towards minority groups on the part of the Labour party) and (iii), the organisation of local government in the two countries (a more open "parliamentary" style of government in British councils than in the French "presidential" mode of government by the mayors).
Introduction

In this paper, I will seek to provide the basis for a more extensive research project aiming at understanding how Western European cities manage ethnic diversity arising from post-colonial immigration within the limits and resources of the institutional framework in which they operate. It is an attempt to bring the institutional approaches of ethnic conflict explored by Nordlinger (1972), Horowitz (1985), Esman (1973), and more recently by John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (1995), for instance, to the study of the politics of post-colonial minorities. The main thrust of these authors’ argument has been that the élites of states that are faced with cross-cutting ethnic conflicts are able to maintain the stability of the system by using institutional arrangements as instruments. I seek to transpose this type of model to the challenges posed by post-colonial ethnic minorities to cities.

I accept that the government of cities in Western Europe are broadly autonomous, in that they have interests which are distinct from the interests of other actors, and particularly from those of local groups and local economic interests, on one side, and from those of the central state, on the other side. Furthermore, I accept that they are able to pursue these interests in relative independence from these actors: without being substantially constrained by local economic and social conditions, and without substantial interference by the national state (King and Gurr, 1987). This does not entail, however, that the central state plays no role in local affairs; on the contrary, much of the discussion below will focus on the patterns of interaction between centre and periphery. But urban elected governments are considered as independent political actors, their general interest is to stay in power, and, to this end, to maintain law and order and to sustain continued electoral support for themselves.

In this perspective, the presence of post-colonial minorities within the territorial boundaries of local government has become a challenge to these objectives. Post-colonial ethnic minorities have several distinctive characteristics. First, they have a very specific relation to space, because they have no claim to sovereignty on a part of the territory of the nation-state in which they live (contrarily to native minorities), and because they are overwhelmingly concentrated in specific areas of cities. Second, they belong most of the time to the working class and vote in majority for left-wing parties, when they vote (Le Lohé in Saggar, 1998, and Kelfaoui, 1996). The conflict is thus perhaps as much a class conflict as an ethnic conflict. But the presence of these minorities, and the reaction of native populations to this presence, does entail fundamental challenges for cities. First, it breeds public disorder, both from second generation immigrants who express frustration at racial discrimination coupled with economic disadvantage, and from violent anti-immigrant movements. Second, it is often correlated with the development of anti-immigrant political movements which directly undermine electoral support for the mainstream political establishment, such as the Front National in France or the strong anti-immigrant movement which developed in the 1960s in Britain. Third, ethnic groups often formulate specific policy demands: recognition of specific cultural needs, official policy against racial discrimination. These demands are often perceived by mainstream politicians, rightly or not, as potentially divisive for their electorate. All of these problems pose a serious

1 Further reflexion on this question should provide a more detailed framework for the study of urban ethnic minorities in the light of theories of ethnic conflict.
threat to the goals of local authorities (and arguably not to those of the central state, (Le Gales, 1995)).

I argue that, in order to confront these challenges, local authorities devise "strategies of management of ethnic conflict" (Esman, 1973, p. 52) understood as the regulatory processes and practices that the local elected governments of cities use to minimise this challenge. I seek to understand how the strategy of management chosen by cities is influenced and shaped by their institutional framework. The institutional framework is understood here as a set of "formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals and various units of the polity and economy" (Hall, 1986) \(^1\) (Following recent works that apply similar institutional approaches to the study of the politics of ethnic minorities, such as Kastoryano 1996, Brubaker 1992, Favell 1998, Guiraudon in Joppke 1998, and, specifically on cities, Ireland, 1992). The most relevant elements of this framework for Western European cities are the relations between the centre and the periphery of the national polity, the organisation of political parties, the party systems, and the organisation of local government. This institutional framework plays an important role in shaping issues and the circumstances in which they appear on local political agendas. It also provides local authorities with a repertoire of instruments to operate different modes negotiation and conflict resolution. Finally, it also operates as a set of constraints that orients and limits their possibilities for action.

In this paper, I sketch the outline of an application of this framework to a comparison of the cities of Birmingham in England and Lille in France. France and Britain are both old and centralised nation-states, which are very comparable in terms of post-colonial migration and in terms of social characteristics of ethnic minorities (Lapeyronnie, 1993). Both cities are also similar in many respects. They are both old industrial cities that lie at the heart of large industrial urban areas, the West Midlands and the Nord-Pas de Calais. In both cases, post-colonial ethnic minorities (predominantly Pakistanis, Indians, and West-Indians in Birmingham, and Moroccans and Algerians in Lille) make up between 15 and 20% of the total population of the city. These populations are overwhelmingly working-class populations with very high unemployment rates, especially among the young, with however some variations between groups. In both cities, there is also ample evidence of "ethnic conflict" as defined above. In both cases, ethnic minorities are concentrated in particular areas of the city: the inner city areas in Birmingham, and the southern and peripheral parts of Lille. Within these areas, they often make up more than half of the population. In both cities, there is clear evidence of widespread racial discrimination against minorities, and widespread awareness of this by the minorities (in spite of the fact that this is not commonly acknowledged by the native population in Lille). Both cities have suffered from important disturbances and riots in ethnic neighbourhoods, although the disturbances in Birmingham (the Handsworth riots in 1985) were more spectacular and have prompted more important policy measures by the council than those in Lille. Both cities, immigrants are a significant electoral force, and are considered as such by the council and the municipality, though much more so in the former than in the latter. Finally, both cities have been controlled by the mainstream left for a long time (the Labour Party in Birmingham since 1983, and the Parti Socialiste in Lille, where the Mayor since 1973 has been Pierre Mauroy, who was also François Mitterrand's Prime Minister between 1981 and 1984). In a nutshell, the two cities are interesting for this comparison because they are both controlled by the
moderate left and because they have comparable ratios of immigrant/native populations (following the criteria used by Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, 1990).

There are, however, two major differences which have to be taken into account. First, some social and cultural characteristics of the groups considered vary between the two cities: the Pakistanis in Birmingham have a much more traditional and institutionalised blend of Islam than the North Africans in Lille, which leads them to formulate more policy demands and to keep a tighter control on their second generation than the North Africans. The socio-economic stratification of the groups in both cities is also different, because there are influential groups of Indian and Pakistani entrepreneurs in Birmingham, which provide material resources for their community, while there are only a few successful Maghrebian entrepreneurs in the Lille area.

Second, the elected government of Birmingham, the Birmingham City Council, covers a much larger area and population than that of the Municipality of Lille. There are nearly 1 million inhabitants in Birmingham, against only 170 000 in Lille, although the latter lies at the centre of a metropolitan area of 1.2 million people. This is due to the extreme politico-institutional fragmentation of local authorities in France: the Lille metropolitan area is divided into more than 60 communes, with only the three largest ones, Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, topping 100 000 people. There is a complex entanglement of levels of elected government to cover the area: the Conseil Régional, the Conseil Général (on the level of the département), and the Communauté Urbaine de Lille, which is a grouping of all the communes of the urban area. Here, I will focus on the Municipality of Lille. And, within those two institutions, I will focus more specifically on the holders of political power, namely the ruling Labour group of the council in Birmingham, and the mayor, his adjoints, and his personal advisors in Lille.

**Progressive Birmingham, Immobile Lille**

What are the strategies for managing ethnic conflict of these two local authorities? There is a broadly similar pattern of management in each city, characterised by a tension between conflicting aims. Both cities are confronted with claims by ethnic groups, consisting in policy demands (funding of specific welfare and cultural needs), and demands for increased representation understood as an increase of the number of ethnic minority individuals serving as local councillors. Both wish to accede to these demands in order to maintain public order and satisfy the ethnic electorate; and both feel that the extent to which they can do this is limited because of the potential negative reactions from the wider electorate. Thus, they are both characterised by an unstable and permanently renegotiated modus vivendi between the local power and ethnic interests. It must also be added that both local authorities are involved in the management of broadly comparable urban regeneration programmes.

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2 These differences have no doubt important roles to play in explaining many variations between the two cities and will be dealt with in later developments of the research. Here, I will limit myself to exploring institutionalist hypotheses.

3 Another choice would have been the neighbouring city of Roubaix, where an even higher percentage of the population is from an ethnic minority background, and where the issue of ethnic minorities plays a more important role on the agenda of the city council. However, Lille was preferred because of the fact that it was controlled by the Socialists, its role as a regional capital, its percentage people of ethnic minority background all made it more comparable to Birmingham.
funded by the central government designed to fund groups that promote economic development or perform various welfare tasks and services for urban communities (which are in practice very often minority groups, or, as is more commonly the case in France, groups whose members are predominantly from an ethnic minority).

Within this common mode of government, however, a fundamental divergence has been emerging over the last 20 years. During that period, the *modus vivendi* of the Birmingham city council has been evolving towards a carefully considered alliance with representatives of ethnic minorities. This alliance can be summarised as the following implicit deal: (i) a relative inclusion of ethnic groups in the political process, and (ii) significant concessions to their interests, in exchange for (i) electoral support, or absence of electoral challenge, and (ii) co-operation in maintaining law and order. The Labour group won control of the council in 1983, and it has remained in power since then, presently with a very comfortable majority. Since then, the number of councillors who are from an ethnic minority background has jumped from just one to twenty-one, making the Asian population well represented (13.7% of the councillors for 13.5% of the population and the Black population still under-represented (3.4 councillors for 5.9% of the population) (Le Lohé 1998). They are all members of the ruling Labour group. In 1984, the council created a department devoted to the fight against racial discrimination. After various changes of name and status over the years; it is at present an "Equalities Unit", and also deals with women's rights and handicapped persons. One of the main roles of this structure is to encourage other services of the council (notably education, housing, and personnel) to work towards the elimination of racial discrimination in their sector. This type of anti-discrimination policy is not specific to Birmingham: it is carried out by most Labour authorities throughout Britain. And, compared to many other Labour local authorities, Birmingham is seen as moderate on the issue. Moreover, this policy is advocated to local authorities, though not imposed upon them as an obligation, by the third Race Relations Act passed by a Labour government in 1976. As a direct response since the 1985 Handsworth riots, there has also been a strong tendency to institutionalise ethnic groups and to incorporate them, to some extent, in the policy-making process of the city council, through the creation of the Standing Consultative Forum, an umbrella organisation that acts as a link between over 300 hundred organisations grouped in nine ethnic sub-umbrella groups and the departments of the council. According to most of the representatives of the ethnic groups involved, this structure has enabled them to obtain some demands, such as sponsoring by the council of the independence days of Pakistan and India or the construction of a community centre for the Bangladeshi community. The city has known only minor disturbances since 1985.

Because of these proactive policies, the Labour majority which controls the council has had to defend its commitment to ethnic minorities during electoral contests against a clearly opposed Conservative local press and against the local Liberal-Democrat and Conservative opposition. Both of these parties propose to abolish the Equalities Unit if they obtain power.

In Lille, on the contrary, there has been no evolution towards any kind of alliance comparable to the one in Birmingham, but, rather, a continued effort on the part of the municipality to (i) keep the issue out of the spotlights of electoral politics and (ii) divide and weaken, or fund and control, ethnic groups, in order to neutralise potential electoral competition from them. Neither the ruling Socialist party headed by Mauroy, nor the local mainstream right-wing opposition is keen to push the issue to the forefront of electoral competition. The only ones to do so are the *Front National*,
who reach high scores (around 15%, as everywhere) in the city, especially in the southern part. In the 1989 and 1995 municipal elections, a few councillors of North African origin were elected, but they have remained powerless and have been on the whole become unpopular with the North African community of the city. At the time of the 1995 election, the municipality manipulated leaders of young, second generation immigrant groups to disrupt their plan to challenge the Mayor electorally, who was re-elected. Since 1990, however, the municipality has renamed its urban programme “Schéma Local d’Intégration” in order to focus it more explicitly on the issue of "intégration" of ethnic minorities. It has done this under the influence of the regional branch of the FAS (Fonds Social d'Intégration), which is a decentralised fund of the Ministry for Social Affairs and which funds ethnic groups around the country since the 1960s. The main effects of this new project are to merge the processes of attribution of grants of the FAS and of the Municipality, and to target more directly groups which are openly promoting cultural ethnic activities.

Whether Birmingham’s strategy is in fact more progressive or more or less effective in defending the electoral interests of the council than Lille’s is outside the scope of this research; what can be ascertained, however, is that it asserts itself as a visible and pro-immigrant policy, while the issue is little discussed in Lille, or, when it is (as with the new Schéma Local d’Intégration (SLI)), it does not feature efforts to include immigrants in the decision-making processes of the city, to fight against racial discrimination or to push for any kind of policy demand. In many ways, Lille can be seen to be where Birmingham was twenty years ago.

Why these differences? There is first of all a fundamental and obvious factor, which is the difference in citizenship regimes. It is that ethnic minorities have enjoyed automatic voting rights upon entry into Britain and have used it to significant effect since the mid-1970s, especially at the local level. They have been for two decades now an important electoral support for the Labour party, and have managed to elect several hundred councillors of ethnic minority background on local councils throughout the country. In France, first generation immigrants do not as a rule have the vote but have traditionally played little role in French electoral politics.

However, the explanatory power of this variable must not be over-estimated because, since the early 1980s, the second generation in France has played an electoral role. According to what data is available, it seems that they have quite high registration and turn-out rates, and on the whole vote for the socialists, although this is not an absolute rule and is subject to local exceptions. This second generation electorate, combined with those first generation immigrants who do have a vote (through naturalisation or dual nationality), is considered as an important marginal electoral group for closely contested elections by the socialists in Lille.

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4 In Britain, all persons from a post-colonial immigrant background have the vote, and they play an increasingly significant role in elections, especially at the local level, in spite of under-registration and of a lower turn-out rate than Britons of a native, European descent (for recent details; for a history of the British citizenship regime since 1948, see Layton-Henry, 1992).

5 Though some sections of the “Asian” electorate (i.e. Indians and Pakistanis, mainly), vote Conservative. There are also local exceptions to the rule.

6 For details, see Kelfaoui, 1996.

7 According to reports by members of the local North African community in Lille-Sud who are courted by members of Socialist lists during electoral campaigns; it is very difficult to obtain data on this from the town hall.
Explanations for the variation therefore need to be found with other institutional variables as well. In the rest of this paper, I will focus on the relations between centre and periphery of the national polity, the organisation of political parties, the party systems, and the organisation of local government in the two cities. The argument runs along the following lines: the issue of ethnic minorities has been politicised in each city, but in very different ways. In Birmingham, it is a conventional political issue, which runs along the Labour/Conservative cleavage. In Lille, it de facto opposes both the conventional left and the conventional right to the Front National. Thus, it has been relatively easy for the Birmingham City Council to have an openly pro-minorities attitude. It has needed to have this attitude for two reasons: because the local institutional context has facilitated the emergence of a strong minorities lobby in Birmingham, and because of encouragements coming form the central polity. The interest of Lille, on the contrary, has been to play down the issue to avoid confrontation with the Front National, which holds a quasi-monopoly over the issue. In order to effectively play down the issue, the municipality has kept immigrants out of politics. It has been able to do so because the institutional context plays against the mobilisation of ethnic minorities.

I will seek to show in the first section how the difference between the relations between centre and periphery is a powerful explanatory factor for the difference between the way the issue is shaped in the two cities. In the second section, I examine how political parties also contribute to shaping the issue, importantly by acting as a gateway into the system for minorities in Britain, and thus forcing the local authorities to be responsive to their demands. Finally, the third section proposes directions for exploring the role of the institutional structure of local government in acting both as a set of resources and constraints for local authorities and as a window of opportunity for immigrants.

I. The centre-periphery relation

Both countries are similar in that they have highly centralised systems of government. However, the modes of centralisation are very different. Here, I will focus mainly on two aspects of the central-local relation: the territorial organisation of the welfare state, and the articulation of local and electoral competition. I will argue that these differences are the first step to understanding why the issue of minorities is high on local agendas on Britain, while it is not so prominent in French local arenas. In Birmingham, the ultimate outcome of this agenda-setting process has been the development of the issue of "racial discrimination" and of the issue of the representation of ethnic minorities at the City Council. In Lille, it has been a persistent reluctance on the part of local élites to put any issue related to ethnic minorities on the political agenda.

1. The territorial organisation of the welfare-state

In Britain, local authorities are traditionally seen as service deliverers (as well as institutions of local democracy). In addition, the policy remits of the national and local levels of elected government are tightly separated, very much in a "two layer cake" organisation (Webman, 1981), in spite of the trend of the last 15 years which have seen an increasing number of attributions transferred to un-elected bodies, both at national and local levels (the so-called "quangos", Stoker, 1988, p. 52) Local authorities are in charge of the police, public housing (council housing), and of the
education system (in spite of the 1988 Education Act which nationalised the curriculums: much of the decisions are still taken by Local Education Authorities (LEAs), which in the case of Birmingham is the City Council). These policy sectors are precisely the ones in which the issue of ethnic minorities is salient. First, because they are of concern to immigrant themselves, because many live in Council Housing (although this is very contrasted: the West-Indians in Birmingham live in Council Housing, but the Asians in Birmingham are mainly home-owners), are often strongly disadvantaged in the system of attribution of housing (Rex et al, 1967, 1979) and often have demands regarding the school curriculums. In Birmingham, there was a long and successful negotiation round in 1983 between the Education service of the Council and a Muslim Liaison Committee, representing the main Muslim organisations of the city, on the issue of religious education. Second, because ethnic minorities are often perceived by local populations as the cause of the deterioration of these services. Finally, all of these issues appear particularly easily on the agendas of local authorities because post-colonial minorities are very concentrated in specific urban areas (Johnson, 1990).

Because of this, the local arena in Britain has often been the arena where the issue arose first, well before it became a national issue. In fact, groups and institutions in Birmingham were sending signals to the central government as early as the late 1950s (Messina 1989, Hill and Issacharoff, 1971), pointing to the strain put by immigration on the local housing availabilities. The fact that the areas concerned were services also created a climate favourable to the formulation of the issue in terms of improvement of service delivery for minorities.

In France, on the contrary, the municipality is less a service deliverer to the local community than a means of representation of the local community in front of the central government. In addition, the distribution of competences between central and local government is more along the lines of a “marble cake” (Webman, 1981). Of the aforementioned policy areas which are of direct interest to migrant workers, only the social services lie within the remit of an elected local authority, the Conseil Général, whose chief executive was the prefect until the decentralisation laws of the early 1980s. The French equivalent of Council Housing is run by semi-public bodies, the Offices des HLM, over which local authorities usually have little control, and, the central state was directly in charge of the housing of guest workers during the large immigration wave of the 1960s through its own organisations, notably the foyers SONCOTRA. Finally, the education system is extremely centralised: local authorities deal almost exclusively with the construction and maintenance of buildings. Thus, in Lille, there is one very large HLM, the SLE, which houses a third of the population of the city, and most of its ethnic minorities, and takes all decisions single-handedly. When problems arise between groups of tenants and the HLM, it is dealt with between those two actors, with little intervention from elected officials, except in a conciliatory role. When an “Affaire du Foulard” (Headscarf Affair) arose in 1995 in a high school in Lille-Sud (a few Muslim female students refused to remove their headscarves, against the rules of the school, Le Monde, 15-4-95), the conflict took place between the Rectorat (the local branch of the Ministry of Education) and Muslim groups.

At the same time, municipalities do play an important role for certain issues. First, local elected officials can play an important role as intermediaries between their constituents and administrations in the resolution of individual pleas and conflicts. This often the case for problems related to housing conditions, employment, and regularisation of residence permits for those who are legally foreigners. Second, they
play a central role in the attribution of urban regeneration grants. In theory, it is jointly managed by the Region, the State via the “sous-préfet à la ville” (sub prefect in charge of urban policy), and the City. But in practice it is the municipality, which has a real knowledge of the local community, which is able to push its favoured candidates. In addition mayors deliver construction permits, and they have long resisted the construction of outwardly oriental mosques, and, in all cases, they have to be courted by Muslim groups who wish to build religious centres.

Hence, the dominant picture in France is that of a blurred division of policy remits, with the issue of ethnic minorities cutting across different arenas. The main service providers, the education system and the social housing services, are out of the realm of representational politics. At the same time, elected officials may play a role on an individual basis as brokers between individual and administration. As a result, the French municipalities are not regarded as major arenas for political mobilisation from minorities. In Britain, on the contrary, it is clear that the main local political actor, the local council, plays a major role as a provider of services that are of central interests to ethnic minorities, and thus is the focus of much attention and collective mobilisation from ethnic minorities.

2. The articulation of local and national electoral competition

The different organisation of local and national electoral competition is also a basic factor, along with the differences in the distribution of policy remits which I have just dealt with. In Britain, the political élites of each level of government are tightly separated from each other. Local politicians seldom attempt national careers. Conversely, local politics are less important preoccupations for national politicians than in the case of France. This is due to the fact that the most important prerequisite to get elected as member of parliament is to be selected by a local branch of one’s party. In Birmingham, several constituencies have had prominent MPs, such as Roy Hattersley. Although both were concerned with the issues of interest to their constituents (which included the race and immigration issue), they have never had to manage it.

On the contrary, in France, affiliation to a party is indeed an important factor for the success of a national career, but at least as important is the local notoriety and popularity of a candidate, which can typically be attained through the exercise of local mandates, such as a seat at the conseil général or, most importantly, as mayor of a large commune (Mabileau, 1994). In fact, a candidate will often receive the support of both the local and national party, if they perceive him as popular in the constituency. Thus, French politics are mainly about building a local power base by controlling or being prominent in a municipality or a conseil général, (second lowest tier of elected government after the municipality, corresponding to the territory of the département) in order to be able to compete for national parliamentary elections. Much of a politician’s support is often derived from his ability to lobby for his constituents at the national level. This is made possible by the cumul des mandats, whereby the same person can cumulate local and national mandates. As a result, local politicians are often national politicians, and it is certainly the case of Lille’s mayor Pierre Mauroy, who is a historic figure of the Mitterrand era.

3. The issue of ethnic minorities as it is shaped by the relation between the two levels of government
The two sets of differences outlined above have two consequences. First, the issue of ethnic minorities has been more salient in British local political arenas than in French ones from the start (the late 1950s in Britain, the 1960s in France), and it was always more likely to be understood as a problem of local and material allocation of resources in Britain. Second, when it became a national issue in Britain, national élites were able to depoliticise it nationally by making it exclusively a local issue.

The elements mentioned above make it very easy for national élites to get rid of an issue by "sending it down to the local level", that is, by making it a policy issue for local authorities, who then have to deal with it, while Westminster can ignore it. This is precisely what British national élites have done with the issue of immigration and ethnic minorities since the mid-1960s, at times more than others, but always with great success. This has had two consequences. First, the issue has become even more salient at the local level, while it became much less so at the national level, with however some variations in time. Second, this shift of level has precipitated a shift from a formulation in terms of immigration to a formulation in terms of racial discrimination and of relations between communities.

Racial riots in 1958 and anti-immigrant tendencies in the electorate in the early 1960s prompted the two main party élites in London to agree tacitly on a common policy line in order to remove the issue out of electoral competition, and thus limit the potential damage to their domination of the political system. This consensual policy consisted in combining a gradual restriction of immigration from former colonies with policies designed to facilitate "harmonious relations between communities" and a legislative framework to fight against racial discrimination (researched in detail by Katznelson, 1973, Messina, 1989, Saggi, 1991, Layton-Henry, 1992). It also triggered the first of the various urban regeneration programmes funded by the central government that have taken place since then (summarised by Le Gales, 1993).

A major aspect of these policies have been to devolve the responsibility for the development of the "harmonious relations between communities" to local unelected bodies, the Community Relations Councils. The second Wilson government passed a provision ("section 11", as it has been known since then) in the 1966 Local Government Act to make extra funds available for Local Authorities with a certain percentage of ethnic minorities within their boundaries. Then, in 1976, the third Race Relations Act (the two first ones dating back to 1965 and 1968), passed again by a Labour government with no real opposition from the Conservative opposition, explicitly gave to local councils the responsibility for "equality of opportunities" and "good relations between people of different races". Because of this, it has been argued convincingly that a major aspect of this continued consensual policy has been to send the issue down to "low politics" in order to protect the national level from its destabilising effects (see Saggi, 1991, Messina, 1989, but especially Bulpitt, 1986). According to Bulpitt, this has continued unchanged during the 1980s, as an exception to the Thatcher governments' policies of reduction of the remit of local government, because it had proved an efficient strategy on that particular issue of immigration and race. This is one of the reasons why the Thatcher governments did little to prevent radical Labour local authorities from sponsoring ethnic groups and starting aggressive anti-racist and anti-discrimination campaigns. The Birmingham city council was directly inspired by the example of those radical cities when it set up its first Committee on Racial discrimination in 1983.

This policy of liberal consensus coupled with the devolution of the issue to the local level has had another far reaching consequence: it has proved to be very
efficient in wiping out extreme anti-immigrant votes, both nationally and electorally. On the whole, the Conservatives steered away from Enoch Powell (He was expelled from the shadow cabinet after his rivers of blood speech in 1968).

In France, there have also been attempts by the state to localise the implementation of national policies in the early 1980s (Weil’s *Le Local Tous Azimutés*, 1991), and to engage in contractual policies with regions and cities to revitalise margined neighbourhoods which in effect contain a high proportion of immigrants. In the 1970s, several communist municipalities outside Paris had overtly expressed concern about problems entailed by immigrant populations on their territory, and sometimes surfed on anti-immigrant feeling among their electorate (Schain, 1993). However, since the 1983-1984 period, and despite these elements, the two levels of debate, local and national, have clearly been interlocked, and the formulation of the issue at the local level has followed the formulation of the issue in national contests. The French national élite, confronted with a similar problem in the 1980s as the British élite in the 1960s (rising anti-immigrant vote), also depoliticised the issue in the sense that they reached a tacit agreement over what policy should be implemented (attribution of a unique *Carte de Séjour* of 10 years for all immigrants in 1984 coupled with the closing of the borders). However, this issue was not depoliticised in the sense that it was removed from the electoral debate, as has been the case in Britain (Weil, 1991, chap 7, pp. 287-314). On the contrary, both the Parti Socialiste and the Right whipped up artificially their differences on the issue: varying types of liberal postures for the left, and a tougher language for the right. This is due to the pattern of national party competition in the 1980s within the bi-polarised multi-party system of French politics, in which there was a need for both the Left and the Right to assert their differences, particularly in the context of the rise of the Front National (Schain, 1993). However, this strategy has largely failed, and the agenda on the issue has mostly been set by the Front National since its first electoral successes in 1983. Significantly, the Parti Socialiste has since then completely dropped its earlier plans to grant voting rights for all foreigners in local elections. This influenced the way the issue was constructed at the local level in three ways. First, the central élite never really tried to avoid the issue, and thus did not try to send it down to another level of government. Second, because of the inter-relatedness of the two levels of government, the continued politicisation of the issue at the national level entailed a continued politicisation at the local level. Third, the issue at the local level has been formulated in the same way that it has been formulated at the national level, namely in terms of immigration flows, and capacity of the country to absorb and incorporate extra-European immigrants. As at the national level, the agenda has been heavily influenced by the Front National, which reaches very high scores in all local elections, as it does in national elections. Thus, in contrast to what happened in Britain, the debate at both levels of French politics has considered immigrants as objects of policy (are there too many? Is it possible to assimilate them?), instead of citizens/consumers of policy (anti-discrimination policy, relations between communities) (Crowley, 1993, pp. 627-628). As a result, there has been a tendency in France to keep the immigrants out of politics.

II. Political parties and the local politics of minorities

The attitude of the parties towards the issue of post-colonial minorities, and the extent to which the parties can impose their attitude on the local authorities that they
control, plays an important role in setting the agenda of the latter. In this respect they play an important part in the construction of the issue at the local level which I have dealt with above. They are an especially relevant factor in the case of the issue of ethnic minorities because they can be a crucial springboard for the demand of increased representation on the part of the minorities.

1. penetration of ruling parties by minorities

Both parties have been deeply ambivalent regarding the issue of minorities, and particularly regarding their willingness to incorporate them. But, on the whole, they are also the ones which have been the most open in each country to the demands of ethnic movements.

However, the Labour party has been much more persistently so than the Parti Socialiste. Black and Asian activist movements have worked with the Labour party since the mid-1970s. From the early 1980s onwards, they have joined the Labour party in large numbers, especially in cities like Birmingham. Within the party, they have been confronted with important racial discrimination on the part of established circles of white local élites. The latter have often sponsored emerging local black figures in order to obtain the support of their community, arguably reproducing patterns of colonial rule; manoeuvering to give them as little responsibilities as possible in exchange for their support. In particular, they have done this through the manipulation of the complex procedures of designation of the party candidates for local and national elections (for instance, the episode in the Birmingham constituency of Sparkbrook observed by Back and Solomos, 1995). However, what I wish to argue here is that it is precisely the existence of these formal procedures that has ultimately enabled minorities to get a foot in the door, to get elected in increasing numbers, and to play a significant role in local party politics. Most visibly, the Pakistani communities have been able to take control of several inner city party organisations during the 1990s because the procedures for the designation of candidates for local elections boil down to giving the choice to the members of the ward party. More generally, there have been possibilities for discussion of the issue in the Labour party.

This is due to the fact that many Black and Asian activists had a strong left-wing culture, very often inspired by the political culture of their home countries (Marxist Unionism with the influential Indian Workers’ Association, the American politics of Black emancipation among African-Caribbean activists, Shukra, 1998) which made them familiar with the culture of the Labour party. In addition, they started mobilising intensively at a time, the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the Labour party witnessed a sharp decrease in grassroot mobilisation, and in many instances they provided welcome support to failing organisations. This, together with the liberality of the citizenship regime, whereby all immigrants all had full voting rights upon entry in Britain, enabled minority populations at the local level to become an important constituency. This was typical on the level of local elections, but also in many cases for national parliamentary elections. In Birmingham, local MPs (members of Parliament) such as Roy Jenkins and Roy Hattersley built strong support among local Black community leaders. Finally, these MPs and more generally the Labour moderate were often prone to seek the support of Black and Asian labour activists at that time because they were facing increasing competition from the left of the party. (Back and Solomos, 1995).

This close association between the Labour party and ethnic minorities’ activists and politicians is predominantly a local phenomenon. In addition, it contrasts
with the situation in the Conservative party, where there are few representatives of minorities. This is correlated with the left/right polarisation of the issue at the city level.

In the organisation of the Parti Socialiste of Lille, by contrast, the procedure for the choice of candidates at local elections gives less power to the neighbourhood level, and the choice is usually consensually made in favour of the local notable or incumbent (Sawicki, 1992, pp. 6-11). This is typically the case in Mauroy’s Lille. I argue here that this absence of institutionalised procedures for the designation of candidates acts as a resource for established, white native members who are often hostile to the presence of ethnic minorities or to their election to any responsibility within the party (based on Ware, 1996). Occasionally, there will be an outcry and a secrétaire de section has to expel one or two members of the section who have made racist comments to a new North African member. But, most of the time, North African potential members are discouraged at the outset.

This defiance also stems from sorry memories of earlier co-operation with the party that ended badly. There was a very strong wave of second generation North African mobilisation in the early 1980s, which culminated in a demonstration of about 100,000 people in Paris in the autumn of 1983, protesting against racist violence by the police and demanding alternative modes of citizenship for immigrants. At that stage, the movement came under the influence of the Parti Socialiste, and in particular by supporters of the then president Mitterrand, who hoped to tap in on the electoral support of the young second generation immigrants. This led to the creation of SOS Racisme in 1985, followed a little later by France Plus, a rival organisation sponsored by other groups within the party. By the end of the decade, however, the decision was made by those same supporters of Mitterrand to withdraw support, and the whole movement collapsed (Bouamama, 1994). This was an illustration of the difficulty for new social movements to make themselves heard in the French political system without the support of one of the major parties (Duyvendak, 1995).

Both of these movements had been mainly a national, media-driven movement, and dramatically failed to build permanent local support among urban North African communities (Poinsot, 1993). In Lille, local North African and left-wing activists who were part of this movement are now hostile to the Municipality and are toying with the idea of forming an ethnic list for the next elections.

2. relation between party and local authority

In Britain, local politics have been increasingly politicised since the 1950s, with the political parties within the Councils becoming the main arenas for decision making. In the case of labour-held authorities such as Birmingham, this is reinforced by the traditional mode of relation between the party and councils, inherited from the Fabian conception of social reform. In this model, local councils are seen as instruments in the hands of the party to implement policy goals, notably to develop public services and welfare (Gyford and James, 1983). This is still made possible by the fact that party groups are the effective holders of power within councils. Thus, in Birmingham, the local party has been markedly more influential on the attitude of the Council than in Lille. And, because the party was influenced by the presence of ethnic

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8 The major difference between the two was that SOS Racisme advocated the Droit à la Différence, a French version of cultural pluralism, while France Plus focused on campaigning for the participation of second generation immigrants in electoral politics.
minorities members within its ranks, it pushed for the council to start anti-discrimination policies. In 1983, under the combined influence of mounting black mobilisation, and of the example of the radical experiments of the Greater London Authority, which was then controlled by the left of the party, the District party organisation produced a policy document entitled “Birmingham Labour Party and Ethnic Minorities in Birmingham: Labour Party Politics and Multi-Ethnic Society in Modern Birmingham” (Back/Solomos, 1995, p 177). The then moderate Labour leadership of the Council had little choice but to follow these recommendations, although it was initially very reluctant to, because of a perceived hostility of the traditional white and blue collar working class vote. The local party has thus been an important factor in ensuring the development of anti-discrimination policy in Birmingham. Through the local party, the influence of the radical wing of the party in other authorities was also a fundamental explanatory factor, through the influence of the District Party.

In the North of France, there has also been a long history of interaction between municipalities and the Parti Socialiste (the Socialisme Municipal), of which Lille is an example. However, the party has not been able to influence the municipalities; on the contrary, it is the power structure of councils that have in the end shaped the local organisation of the parties (Lefebvre, 1999). In Lille, there is a structure, called the Comité de Ville, which is made of representatives of local sections, and is in charge of defining the party’s policy recommendations for the city, and of selecting the leader of the list for the municipal election. In short, it has one fundamental role, which is of choosing the next mayor of the city. But, the mayor Pierre Mauroy has been so dominant since his first election to the job in 1973 that this choice is mainly formal. Moreover, because of the way in which the issue of minorities is constructed, the party's main preoccupation regarding ethnic conflict is mainly to try and avoid losing working class votes to the Front National. Significantly, the Comité de Ville has a policy workshop on "how to fight against the Front National", and none about immigration or ethnic minorities.

To sum up the difference, one could say that the Labour party regards the Birmingham city council more as a means to implement policy change than does the parti Socialiste in Lille. Conversely, the latter sees the municipality more as a powerbase than does the Labour party. This difference, combined with that of the modes of relations between the party and the local council, and the electoral power of the Front National, helps explain why the Birmingham city council is more prone to undertake policies in favour of minorities.

III. National styles of local government and the inclusion or exclusion of minorities in city politics

The basic characteristics of the organisation of local government in each country have a very different impact on the strategies of the councils on two ways. Directly, because it gives them more or fewer instruments to reach their goals. Indirectly, because it gives immigrant groups more or fewer resources to push their demands and to get some of their representatives elected or accepted as legitimate interlocutors, who can then efficiently raise issues on the council’s agenda. In Birmingham, the overall result is that the organisation of local government adds to the pressure on the Council to have a favourable attitude towards minorities. In Lille, it
gives the Council instruments to pursue its policy of playing down the issue, by enabling it to keep minorities out of the arena of electoral politics.

The basic unit of French elected government concentrates all the most intense ingredients of majoritarian democracy, marginalising minorities; this is less the case in Britain. Second, the modes of local organisation of the *Politique de la Ville* (*Urban Policy*) in effect acts as an instrument for the municipality in its enterprise of control of the local community; again, the situation is more nuanced in Britain (Mabileau, 1994, pp. 119-134).

1. The impact of citizenship regimes on cross-generational solidarity

Before looking at the local institutions themselves, it is necessary to lay stress on the large gap between the numerous and institutionalised forms of mobilisation of religious ethnic groups in Birmingham (both Muslim in the Pakistani community and Christian in the African-Caribbean community) and the failure since the early 1990s of those groups which attempted to speak for the North African population in Lille.

I argue here that one major explanation for this difference is that the French citizenship regime accentuates the gap between first generation immigrants, who most often do not have the vote, and second generation immigrants, who do. Because the first generation have no means to participate in local politics, and are not prone to it because of other factors, the second-generations are very much left to themselves. This is to the extent that the issue of ethnic minorities is often associated with the issue of youth problems, in the same way that there is an issue with African-Caribbean and Asian youths in Britain. But the difference is that this is often the only way in which the issue of ethnic minorities is formulated in France. One of the most active groups in Lille in the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Texture*, viewed the problem as a major hindrance to mobilisation and proposed that second-generation immigrants support the introduction of voting rights in local elections for their parents (Poinsot, 1993).

This contributes to explaining why minorities have a lower profile in the politics if Lille than in the politics of Birmingham. This in turn bears on the strategy of the councils in that it puts more or less pressure on them to deliver on policy demands, and in that it provides them with more or less channels of communication with the ethnic minority population. Bearing this difference in mind, we can turn to the organisation of local institutions *per se*.

2. Local representative government and the exclusion or inclusion of ethnic groups

In France, the municipality is by far the most important level of local government, and the idea of representation of the local community lies at its very heart. It is closely linked with the notion that the municipalities, or cities, constitute the fundamental unit of the French representational system. Indeed, it is the only institution that has survived virtually unchanged since the revolution. It is seen as making local democracy possible, and as a very efficient way to stabilise the whole French political system, in the face of persistent disorder at the centre (Ashford, 1982, Mabileau, 1994). It has been able to play this role because of the ease with which local elites can access the central, governmental decision making processes, particularly because of the *cumul des mandats* system, mentioned above. Because of this, the electoral politics of the municipalities are considered by voters and politicians alike as the place of representation, and power, par excellence (Cordeiro, 1996). For the insider, it is a gateway to considerable influence; equally important, it leaves
outsiders with few resources. A closer look at its organisation reveals that it concentrates power in the hands of a few leaders, essentially the mayor and his aides, and leaves out many actors, especially minority groups. It is also a symbolic stake for outsider groups, as getting elected as a conseiller municipal means entering the world of representational politics, as opposed to community and associational politics, in which ethnic minorities are usually confined (Cordeiro, 1996).

The concentration of power in the hands of the mayor is so intense that the system has sometimes been dubbed a "presidential system" (Dion, 1986, p3-43). Elections take place every 6 years, with traditionally a high turnout, on a single-constituency, proportional list basis. The Conseil Municipal, roughly the equivalent of the legislative branch of the municipality, is always made up of at least 50% of members from the majority list (the rest of the seat being attributed proportionally). The mayor, usually the leader of the leading list, is elected on the first meeting of the newly elected council. Once elected, he becomes both the representative of the state in the city and the executive branch of the municipality for the next 6 years. Important decisions and the budget are voted by the council, but in practice the latter has only a role of approbation of the mayor’s decisions, thanks to the solid and stable majorities provided by the electoral system. He usually runs the city with the help of a cabinet of advisors, in the case of large cities. Mayors also delegate responsibilities to Adjoints, (i.e. prominent members of the Conseil Municipal who were elected on his list; but, precisely, these powers are only délégations and can be withdrawn at will by the Mayor in case of political disagreement, who thus keeps a very tight political control on the city. The administration is run by a secrétaire general (the equivalent of a chief executive in Britain), who usually works closely with the mayor and is associated with political decisions.

These basic characteristics have several far reaching consequences. First, the long intervals between elections mean that, for the first three years, the Mayor has little interest in courting any interests other than those of his main constituency (in Lille, the white left-wing middle class and working class). Second, because there is virtually only one person with palpable power in the whole system, it is completely impossible, and unnecessary, to give some power to a representative of a group or minority of any kind. This is particularly problematic for minorities, because, as I have mentioned, one of their main goals is precisely political and institutional representation. Whereas, for instance, demands of environmental groups can be taken into account by the mayor in his decisions, it is extremely difficult to give a key role to a conseiller from a minority background (or to any outsider, for that matter), supposing one wants to. The few délégations go to senior politicians which are very close to the mayor, and among which are usually the candidates for his succession. Thus, the three conseillers municipaux of Maghrebi origin in Lille (out of 56) are held by everyone, including themselves, to be "tokens" given by the Mayor to the maghrébi electorate when he assembled his list. Consequently, they are of little use at the Mairie (as indeed are most other conseillers), and are seen as “traitors” by many young members of their community. As a result they lose all political influence. This also tended to be often the case in Birmingham when the first minority councillors started getting elected, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but it has largely changed since then, and their full incorporation in the decision making processes of the city council is now widely acknowledged. Finally, the principle of the single constituency is a great disadvantage to electoral groups that are concentrated in particular
neighbourhoods within cities, such as immigrant groups, because their votes are diluted in the votes of the native majority.

By contrast, the organisation of local political institutions in Britain offer many more opportunities for minorities attempting to participate and to formulate policy demands. First, the local elections system is very fragmented in space and time, which provides quantity of opportunities for outsiders to get elected. The territory that lies within the remit of the council has two striking characteristics: it is divided in a high number of small territorial units ("wards"), and one councillor is elected by one ward every year in a first-past-the-post system. The combination of these two elements creates a very favourable context for candidates preferred by ethnic minorities. First, because the latter are a strong majority of electors on very limited territories, which most of the time correspond roughly to the wards. Second, because the majoritarian rule accentuates this domination and ensures that ethnic minority candidates are successful. Thus, in Birmingham, around a third of the wards are "inner city wards" with often more than 50% of their population of ethnic origin, and many of these are represented at the council by ethnic minority councillors. One pitfall to this is that ethnic minorities in Britain and in Birmingham are very divided along ethnic lines and sometimes favour a non Labour candidate by voting against each other.

In addition, the organisation of the council itself makes it comparatively accessible for small outsider groups of councillors to participate fully in the decision-making process once they are elected. It can be broadly likened to a small "parliamentary system" : decisions are taken by various committees organised around policy sectors (housing, personnel, education, etc) and made up of a mix of councillors reflecting the overall proportion of the different parties in the council. In Birmingham, the Labour group has a clear majority, and thus controls all the committees. Within the party, however, there are cleavages along policy issues. In contrast to the French system, the leading councillors do not dominate the council single-handedly; it is more often than not the ruling party as a whole that takes important decisions (Stoker, 1988, p. 89). The policy of the council is thus determined by a game of fluid alliances between the leadership (elected by the group) and sub-groups. As a result, all councillors within a group have to be taken into account, and, even if a certain number of backbenchers will never mount significant opposition to the leadership, there are certain individual or groups which manage to impact on the leadership. In Birmingham, one of the longest serving Labour African-Caribbean councillors has co-operated with the leadership for the past 15 years while always pushing for more radical and more extensive anti-discriminatory policies. In this way, he has been instrumental in shaping the council’s policy. A young Asian councillor has recently been elected president of the Committee of the NEC (National Exhibition Centre), a highly important showcase for the economic development of the city. The twenty-one councillors of ethnic background (out of a total of 117) are always unanimous in supporting the anti-discriminatory policies, although they often have diverging positions on other issues.

3. The control of the local community

A pointed out by Mabileau (1994, pp. 135-148), political actors in France who are not part of the representational system are particularly deprived of access to political power, while being increasingly dependent on elected bodies, and especially the municipality, for funding. The local community in France, or “société civile”, is organised overwhelmingly along the lines of a specific legal framework, the
association as defined by the 1901 law on associations. This is broadly comparable to
a charity in Britain: a non-profit organisation dedicated to activities of general
interest. For the last twenty years, there has been a trend towards the strengthening of
the control of associations by the municipalities, by controlling their source of
funding. Most ethnic groups in Lille are associations, be it cultural or neighbourhood
associations, tenant groups, or sports clubs, for the younger, second generation. Many
of these are funded jointly by the FAS (Fonds d’Action Sociale) and by the
municipality. Moreover, the groups of young, second generation immigrants are very
often extremely dependent on the town hall, because, as mentioned earlier, it is the
latter which in effect control the attribution of urban programmes, and second
generation groups often within the remit of urban regeneration. In addition, the
municipality has considerable leverage against young community leaders because it
deals with local sporting equipments, which are a hot issue in Lille-Sud, and because
it can occasionally provide jobs at the council or other institutions to a mostly
unemployed second generation immigrant population. Finally, the municipality of
Lille controls its territory especially well, because of the very strong implantation of
the socialist party in the city. Most leaders of associations are close to the party. This
is still true in spite of the decline of traditional socialist groups, such as local bands
and clubs.

The Politique de la Ville thus acts as a convenient instrument reinforcing other
instruments of control. Most importantly, it helps to ensure that local North African
leaders, who are very influential among their peers in their respective neighbourhoods,
contribute to maintaining law and order in the city. However, the Achilles heel of this
crude form of patronage is that funding sports and providing occasional jobs is all the
municipality can give. As a result, it has been perceived in Lille as being caught in a
perverse cycle whereby it has been giving more and more since the early 1990s, for
less and less result, and always escalating claims on the part of the leaders of the
associations. In fact, the most successful action against the main problem of Lille Sud
in the early 1990s, an organised manhunt against the drug dealers of the area in 1993,
was undertaken by local groups and Muslim associations, without the council even
being notified. The mayor was obliged to express his approval and visit the scenes of
the violence with the press a few days later.

When a group of young leaders, disgruntled because they had obtained less
funding for their associations than before, decided to join forces with controversial,
older north african leaders to from a 100% North-African list for the 1995 municipal
elections, the municipality perceived this as a threat to the re-election of the mayor,
who was being challenged by a serious candidate from the Right (Alex Turk). It
perceived this “ethnic list” as a threat because ethnic minorities are perceived as an
important marginal electorate in the context of a closely contested election. One of the
leaders of the list, was then offered a place, in eligible position, on the socialist list,
together with a job at Euralille, the new business centre which was being built on the
site of the new Eurostar station.

It is obvious that, in Birmingham, traditional patterns of patronage have been
functioning in similar ways (Back and Solomos, 1995). In addition, the various urban
programmes that have been set up by the government since the 1960s have had some
similarities with the French ones in that they have provided local community
organisations with financial resources to perform services (although since the 1980s,
they have focused increasingly on economic regeneration of deprived areas, in
partnership with the private sector).
However, they have been less an instrument of control of the community by the council than in French cities. This is due to the increasing fragmentation of the local British system, especially because of the tendency to transfer competences from elected authorities to quasi-administrative bodies ("quangos") (Stoker, 1988, chap. 3, pp. 52-78). In the field of urban regeneration, the attacks by central government on local authorities since the early 1980s have considerably limited the ability of the latter to control these programmes. Since 1981, "it has been a pre-requisite of inner-city programme approval that local authorities should have consulted the private sector." (Stoker, 1988, p. 114). In addition, many programmes are managed by non-elected institutions, such as the Solihull and Birmingham Technology and Enterprise Board (TEC), or the Health Authority, in Birmingham. Typically, local councillors sit on these boards, but power is dispersed among many different players. There is therefore a complex game for the control of financial resources by different interests: competing ethnic minorities groups, often along ethnic cleavages, and local institutions trying to push their own interest. The city council is only one actor among others, even if it does remain the most prominent one.

Finally, ethnic groups are not as dependent as their French counterparts on these programmes, because they have more financial and organisational resources from within their community. This is especially clear with the Muslim (predominantly of Pakistani origin) community, which has dense religious networks and receives funding from religious organisations and religious governments. Birmingham, especially, has a very active Muslim community (Joly, 1987). Because of all this, local councils are less able to control and/or exclude ethnic minorities from local politics.

Conclusion
In this paper, I have sought to provide the bases of an explanation of the strategies of management of post-colonial ethnic conflict of the city council of Birmingham (England) and the municipality of Lille (France). Each city has reacted very differently to the problems posed by electoral challenge by anti-immigrant forces and civil unrest. In Birmingham, since the early 1980s, there has been a de facto alliance between the ruling Labour group of the council and some ethnic minorities groups since the early 1980. In addition, the council has implemented pro-active policies against racial discrimination and in favour of the participation of ethnic groups in the decision-making process of the council. In Lille (dominated by the socialist mayor Pierre Maurois since 1974), by contrast, there is no alliance with ethnic groups, which are kept out of the realm of conventional local politics, and there are only limited efforts to implement policies addressing the issue of minorities.

I have argued that the differences between the two strategies stem for a large part from differences between the institutional frameworks in which the two cities operate. I have focused first on the relation between the cities and the central polity, which is characterised by a tight separation of "low" and high" politics in Britain, and a strong inter-penetration of the two levels of government in France. This has made immigrant political mobilisation at grassroot level easier in Britain than in France. It has also facilitated a strategy of devolution of the issue of race and immigration to the local level by British central élites in the 1960s, while it has encouraged the salience
of the national issue of immigration control and nationality law at all levels of electoral competition in France, which has encouraged the success of the *Front National* and kept immigrant groups out of the realm of conventional political participation.

Second, I have dealt with the structure of the party-system and the internal organisation of the parties. In Birmingham, there is a strategic openness towards minority groups on the part of the Labour party, because its local organisation has made it more penetrable by ethnic minorities members at the local level. This in turn compels the council to take the demands of minorities (racial discrimination, under-representation) into account. In Lille, the pervasive influence of the *Front National* on French politics, which discourages the *Parti Socialiste* to strike an alliance with minorities, coupled with the failure of attempts made to co-operate with ethnic minorities’ political movements during the 1980s by the party, encourage the *Parti Socialiste* to avoid the issue.

Finally, I have argued that the organisation of local government in the two countries (a more open "parliamentary" style of government in British councils than in the French "presidential" mode of government by the mayors) facilitates the incorporation of ethnic minorities in the decision-making processes of the council in Birmingham, while it is unfavourable to outsider groups in France. This in turn makes it more difficult for the dominant group in Birmingham (the leader of the council and the committee chairmen) to ignore the demands of minorities, while it makes it relatively easier for the mayors of large French cities such as Lille.
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