

Historical Institutionalism and the Comparison of Local Cases

Strategies of Management of Ethnic Conflict and Historical Institutionalism

Ireland (1994) and Bousetta (1997, 2001) constructed institutionalist narratives to account for variations in styles of political organization and participation of minorities between countries and cities, arguing that elements such as citizenship frameworks, legal frameworks for community organization or ideology of party in power form structures of opportunity that shape styles of participation. Ireland called it ‘institutional channelling’ (1994, p. 8), while Bousetta talks of ‘citizenship framework’ (1997, p. 216). Some approaches to ethnic politics in American cities, for instance that of Jones-Correa, also emphasize institutional environments as causal factors for patterns of cooperation and conflict among ethnic groups (Jones-Correa, 2001).

Like these authors, I turn towards institutions as powerful constraints on patterns of minority politics, with however, three innovations. I move away from their ‘bottom-up’ approaches, which construe the styles of mobilization of minorities as their dependent variables, and prefer a ‘top-down’ approach, focusing on the strategies of the local elites in managing both immigrant mobilizations and xenophobic mobilization against immigrants. This enables a more direct focus on the party-political dimension of ethnic minority politics, giving more prominence to the dynamics of the interplay between minority activists and community leaders, on one side, and local politicians and

party organizations, on the other. I draw more heavily on historical-institutionalist theory, following the lead of a growing body of research on immigration and citizenship that is also based on historical-institutionalist hypotheses (such as Guiraudon, 2000; Favell, 1998; Hansen, 2000; Bleich, 2003). This aims in particular at exploring in greater depth the effect of institutions on outcomes, in particular their role in framing issues and actors' goals, and not just as constraining their strategies. Finally, my institutional framework is limited to a number of selected institutional variables at the local level, in an attempt to create a parsimonious explanation of variations.

Strategies of management of ethnic conflict

I derive the focus on the attitudes of city elites from the institutional approaches of ethnic conflict explored by Nordlinger (1972), Esman (1973) and Horowitz (1985) to the study of the politics of ethnic minorities in French and British cities. The main thrust of these authors' arguments is that the elites 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 urban politics of ethnic minorities, viewing the strategies of elites in dealing with minority-related issues as 'strategies of management of ethnic conflict' (using Esman's terminology; 1973, p. 52).

I consider that the governments 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. They 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.

The presence of a large ethnic minority population within the territorial boundaries of local government has become a challenge to these objectives, because it creates a new socio-economic cleavage that translates into political conflict. It is in this perspective that ethnic minorities can be defined as populations which share an interest in agendas of struggle against racial discrimination and recognition of cultural and religious difference in various policy areas, in particular education and the construction of custom-built places of worship. The cleavage between these populations and native, 'white' populations is complex and overlaps with other cleavages. Most notably, they are overwhelmingly lower-income households and they have tended to vote principally for left-wing parties, when they vote (Saggar, 1998b; Anwar 1994, 1998, for Britain; and Kelfaoui, 1996; Richard, 1999, for France). The conflict is thus not just an ethnic one but a combination of ethnic and class con-

flicts. Ethnic minorities of recent immigrant origins also 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 (contrary to native ethnic minorities, as the Basques in Spain or the Corsicans in France), and because for the most part they are concentrated in specific areas of cities.

The presence of these minorities, and the reaction of native populations to this presence, does translate into political conflicts of a specific nature, and this type of conflict entails fundamental and specific 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. Most cities with a high concentration of immigrant populations in both France and Britain have been shaken by riots or low-intensity disorder, with large riots in 1958, 1981 and 1985 in Britain, and in 1981 and 1989 in France. 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 that developed in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain around Enoch Powell, then the National Front. Both these movements scored well in local elections, although the Front National much more spectacularly and lastingly so than its British counterpart. In the 1960s, British cities also came under pressure to take anti-immigrant stances from local xenophobic community associations, often connected with the Conservative Party (Hill and Issacharoff, 1971, p. 50). Third, and most important, ethnic groups often mobilize and formulate specific policy demands: recognition of specific cultural needs (typically the construction of mosques, and catering for Muslim pupils' specific requirements in schools), official policy against racial discrimination and representation in political assemblies are often perceived by mainstream politicians, rightly or wrongly, as potentially divisive for their electorate. All of these problems pose a serious threat to the goals of local authorities (and arguably more strongly than to those of the central state [Le Galès, 1995]).

Significant waves of mobilization in local representative politics happened at approximately the same periods of time in France and Britain. In the late 1970s, both 'black' and 'Asian' community leaders and political activists were starting to appear on local scenes. They were from various backgrounds: church-based groups for African-Caribbeans, Muslim leaders from the Pakistani and increasingly the Bangladeshi community, anti-racist activists, and left-wing unionists and party activists, all concerned with local politics. In France, the mass protest movement of the Beurs (second-generation North African immigrants) that started in 1983 led to the emergence of a flurry of associations that were active in local arenas. In the 1990s, individuals of immi-

grant origins were also very active in local associations and sought to play an active role in municipal politics.

The strategies of management of ethnic conflict are understood as the practices that the local elected governments of cities use to minimize the challenges posed by these mobilizations. They have most of the time been characterized by a dilemma between two conflicting aims: give in to ethnic minorities' demands (recognition of, and accommodation for, cultural difference and implementation of policies against racial discrimination), on the one hand, or, on the other hand, give in to those who express anti-immigrant feelings or refuse to recognize that the issue is a legitimate political issue and seek to keep it off the local political agenda. The strategies of cities have varied considerably within each of our two countries between those two extremes in the 1980s and 1990s. They have ranged between: (1) explicit anti-immigrant attitudes (for instance Leicester City Council during the Ugandan-Asian crisis of 1973, or Birmingham in the late 1950s, for Britain; and the Communist Parisian suburb of Vitry in the late 1970s, for France [Schain, 1993]); (2) 'benign neglect', or the refusal to acknowledge that there is a conflict with a need for ad hoc policies and increased representation, as is the case for most French cities, and in some British cities controlled by the Conservatives; and (3) explicitly 'pro-ethnic minority' stands, chiefly characterized by the establishment of various kinds of political and electoral alliances with ethnic minority groups, as in many British cities since the 1980s.

In the latter cases, where elites give in to minority demands, this often takes the place of facilitation of election through the formation of a governing coalition. This can take several forms and lead to varying degrees and styles of incorporation. Examples from black and Latino incorporation in American cities are classified by Browning, Marshall and Tabb (1984, p. 47) into the following typology: (1) biracial electoral alliance; (2) co-optation; (3) protest and exclusion; (4) weak minority mobilization.

In a biracial electoral alliance, 'a liberal electoral coalition with strong minority participation is formed prior to the period of peak minority demand-protest and results in strong incorporation'; co-optation consists of an 'electoral coalition led by whites with minorities in subordinate roles', and the result is 'partial incorporation'; protest and exclusion defines a situation 'where strong demand-protest is met by a tenacious, resistant dominant coalition' and leads to 'exclusion for some time'; and weak minority mobilization is when there is 'little or no concerted demand-protest activity and fragmented electoral effort is met by a resistant dominant coalition', leading to failure to achieve 'incorporation' (Brown, Marshall and Tabb, 1984, p. 47).

An attempt to apply this typology to British cities would come close to the second type of incorporation, co-optation, because minority activists who

made it into city councils were mostly chosen individually in the context of grassroots politics. Yet it is difficult to rule out the first type, 'biracial electoral alliance', because, as mentioned earlier, the presence of these individuals was also the electoral expression of coordinated movements within parties supporting anti-discrimination and pro-diversity agendas. One can characterize Manchester (Ben-Tovim et al., 1986) Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry (Joly and Candappa, 1994), Bradford, Leicester and many Labour-held boroughs of London (Joppke, 1999, p. 244) as mixing elements of co-optation and biracial electoral alliance.

Meanwhile, there has been no such shift in France in the 1980s and 1990s, but rather a stalemate, in which original hostility has endured or turned into indifference, with most cities avoiding dealing with the issue and ignoring demands for recognition and participation on the part of minorities. Those French city elites who in some instances were enticed to engage in co-optation activities of their own in the 1980s usually did so in very limited ways and abandoned them quite rapidly, because of limited strategic use or because of outright failure (Wihtol de Wenden, 1988, p. 282). For instance, a challenge to the Socialist council of Grenoble by moderate right-winger Alain Carignon led him to take on board one symbolic North African councillor for the 1989 election; and an experiment in consultation with community leaders in the same city has also failed (*Libération*, 2/05/00). Similarly, Socialist leaders in the Lyon suburbs frequently sought to appeal to their North African electorate in the 1980s by taking one North African candidate on their lists, but with short-lived and limited results (Geisser, 1997, pp. 136f.).

When ethnic minorities finally appeared in local councils in 2001, the strategy of party officials drawing up the lists can be described, more firmly than in Britain, as much closer to co-optation than to a biracial electoral alliance. These candidates were in many cases not representing ethnic constituencies, or agendas explicitly related to ethnic disadvantage, but were chosen from within the local community by party list-makers at the time of the election. When they were members of parties, they were in many cases not associated with specific agendas as part of their activities in the party. Their presence on a list was frequently intended in many cases as a broad political statement, simply indicating recognition of the changing make-up of French society. This recognition was noted guardedly in the media, and usually interpreted as an overdue correction of past exclusion.

There were some attempts at articulating issues pertaining to ethnic disadvantage as part of a left-wing coalition, but with little success. The most important one was in the large southwestern city of Toulouse, where the alternative left 'Motivé-e-s' list¹ had a large number of immigrants and others from disadvantaged backgrounds, and campaigned on the theme of a deep social divide in the city: wealthy, white, city-centre dwellers vs. economically unsta-

ble, ethnically mixed suburbanites. The list reached a significant score of around 10 per cent in the first round, and became a central partner in the Socialist-led coalition in the second round. But the coalition was defeated by the centre-right list that was its main opponent² (*Libération*, 19/03/01; Moore in Kraal et al., 2004).

Historical institutionalism

Historical institutionalism (or HI) is one of three strands of institutionalist approaches that sought to rejuvenate political science's longstanding interest in political institutions in the 1990s, with rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism mostly being presented as the two other main strands.³ What all three have in common that distinguishes them from old institutionalism is that they do not just study institutions per se, they also analyse the causal role that these have on political change. In this, they all build on the main teaching of behavioural approaches applied to the social sciences that construes individual behavior as the impetus for change; but they maintain an interest in institutions because the latter help to explain the behaviour of individuals (March and Olsen, 1989, introduction). In rational choice institutionalism, institutions are 'rules of the game', such as laws that constrain the strategies pursued by rational and utility-maximizing actors to pursue their objectives. In sociological institutionalism, they are given a wider definition to encompass norms, conventions and routines, and they impact on individuals' behaviours profoundly, compelling them to conformism. In this light, institutional change can be interpreted as institutional isomorphism, the result of processes of imitation and adaptation of institutions at the macro level (Koelbe, 1995, p. 235)

An influential definition of institutions among historical-institutionalist writers presents them as 'formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals and various units of the polity and economy' (Hall, 1986).⁴ Unlike rational choice institutionalism, it does not just consider institutions as constraints and incentives for actors' strategies, which implies that the formation of actors' preferences is factored out, but on the contrary seeks to show how institutions not only determine these strategies, but also, beyond this, how they also shape the formation of the actors' goals (Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, 1992, p. 7; Hall, 1986, p. 19). Unlike sociological institutionalism, it is unambiguous with regards to political culture, clearly excluding it; and HI also perceives the actor as a rational agent whose strategic decisions, while informed by institutional settings, do have a degree of autonomy. This makes it possible to devote attention to logics of competition and alliance between actors while not losing sight of the defining and framing power of institutions.

Institutions are often construed by historical institutionalists as expressions of previous political and sociological patterns; through them, past political situations, as they are encapsulated and transmitted over time in institutions, act as forces that shape and define the interests and goals of present actors (Hall, 1986, p. 19). Therefore, their utilization as explanatory variables makes possible a contribution to the discussion of national models rooted in history, and their impact on contemporary developments. But HI also leaves some room for an understanding of rapid change, in a more evident way than sociological institutionalism. HI studies have shown how social or economic evolutions increase or decrease the importance of institutions, giving them new 'roles' when strategic actors, whose fortunes and aspirations change, come to react to the influence of old institutional settings in new ways (Koelble, 1995, p. 238).

HI focuses on meso-level institutions, typically established patterns of interest representation, party politics or state organization (for instance Skocpol, 1979; Hall, 1986), as opposed to macro institutions, such as class conflicts or capitalism, which often explain general cross-national similarities. Hence, HI is heuristic for the study of variations between patterns of ethnic politics in western European countries because these are characterized by a broad resemblance, but a closer focus reveals differences. Working-class, post-colonial immigrants form a part of the 'underclass' of western industrialized democracies (Castles and Kozack, 1973). These communities are generally excluded from their institutions of power, but differences occur between the specific modalities of this pattern: more obvious, and permanent, political exclusion, in some cases rather than others, and varying paths toward inclusion, when the latter does take place.

HI is therefore well suited to nuancing and renewing debates on national models of participation and reactions of nation-states to the arrival of immigrants, as well as the processes of participation of immigrants in pre-existing structures. Nuancing deterministic accounts of national models of immigration politics such as Brubaker's and Schnapper's, which posit a rather monolithic link between fixed historical legacies and models of incorporation, the institutionalist literature on immigration and citizenship seeks to highlight the conditions in which various sub-elements of state structures may hinder, trigger and shape permanence and changes in styles of participation and inclusion.

Central and local factors

Rather than being shaped just by local factors, local politics are shaped at the same time by both national and local forces. Both types superimpose them-

selves on localities, and the study of local cases invariably reveals complex relations between them. I nonetheless operate an analytical distinction between the two, resulting in the construction of two types of variables: 'national frameworks' and local frameworks.

'National frameworks': national politics of immigration and central–local relations. National developments have a very strong impact because a large part of what politically defines ethnic minorities in relatively homogeneous nation-states such as Britain and France is their extra-national origin. While I have noted that the local level is pertinent to the discussion of minority-related issues, it would be difficult to ignore national-level developments in the national politics of organization of immigration flows, restriction of migration and discussion of status given to foreigners or newcomers. In both countries, the main institutional determinants of these developments are citizenship laws, ideological trends and policy guidelines, structures of party systems, organization of national bureaucracies and organization of central–local relations in each country. The latter, in particular, is emphasized, because it shapes the ways in which national developments impact on the grassroots. These constitute what I call 'national frameworks'.

The national frameworks have shaped outcomes in ethnic minority incorporation in two ways. They have worked as distinct sets of 'rules of the game' that have constrained actors' access to political resources, thus influencing their strategies. The differences between the citizenship regimes of the two countries must be emphasized here. They have also worked, as this book will seek to show, to frame different perceptions of the legitimate place of ethnic minorities vis-à-vis the political system. In turn, these perceptions have played a strong role in determining the attitude of political elites vis-à-vis ethnic minority mobilizations and would-be councillors. In particular, the book shows how the politics of *immigration* have defined fields of possibilities in the domain of *integration* policies: how debates on migration flows and their legitimacy shape debates on the legitimacy of migrants' and minorities' claim to belong to society and to participate in its institutions.

Many of those national institutions that have an impact on local developments rooted in history and, in many instances, in past developments institutionalized in legal dispositions and administrative statutes, have a path-dependency effect on contemporary developments, as shown by the institutionalist literature on the subject (particularly Hansen, 2000). For this reason, I will analyse national developments as they unfold from the post-war years until the period in which I study the cities, the 1980s and 1990s.

The 'locality' factor: parties and party systems, and styles of local government. There are two types of local variables: those common to all or large numbers of local-

ities, and those that are idiosyncratic to one locality. With respect to the politics of minorities, those common to all or many localities are local electoral systems, the organization of local authorities, patterns of party organization and of internal party politics that are to be found in several or all cities of one country. Variables specific to localities include patterns of internal party politics, patterns of community organization, and patterns of relations between local authorities and local groups. They often find their roots in local history, and, as becomes particularly evident in the French case studies, they play a large role in explaining differences between cities. Most importantly, it is the very localized and specific patterns of combination of all of these factors in each city that shape their specificities.

I operate a distinction between local parties and party systems on the one hand, and local styles of organization of local government on the other. The first variable is a crucial one. All three case studies highlight the high control exercised by parties, cliques and trends within parties, and the relative place of parties to each other in local political competition, on representative politics and, therefore, their importance in shaping patterns of minority participation. First, parties can campaign to increase the electoral participation of minorities. Second, they can co-opt activists and staff of ethnic minority background, who are then able to stand as candidates for the parties and attract ethnic minority votes. Third, they can promote minority-related issues in local political debates because they are often actors with privileged access to media and public exposure. In all these ways, they are often the main springboard for the incorporation of the latter into the political system.

The styles of organization of governments are electoral systems, and the ways in which they combine with residential concentrations and local tradition of management of communities: styles of relations between local authorities and the interests of local communities. Electoral systems consist of electoral districting, which, combined with patterns of segregation of ethnic minorities, give them more or less electoral clout. They also include modes of election, majoritarian or proportional, single candidate or list systems, etc. The first element, the political geography of minority politics, is a structural determinant of minority politics in cities. The latter elements play a secondary role in explaining outcomes, compared to the other variables. In some cases they are important because they can amplify their effects, for instance if they channel the choice of a candidate towards one well-placed decision-maker.

In sum, I focus on three types of variables: (1) national frameworks, consisting of history of immigration politics and central–local relations in each country; (2) local party politics; and (3) styles of local government. These three variables combine in different ways in each British and French city to produce an institutional framework.

Birmingham, Lille and Roubaix, 1980s–2001

Birmingham in Britain, and the Lille–Roubaix–Tourcoing area in France, have been selected for their comparability on the basis of social and economic criteria. Both are among the largest cities of their country. Both are old industrial zones 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 the Lille area) make up a significant fraction of the population. They are overwhelmingly working class, with high unemployment rates, especially among the young, with some variations between groups. In both cases they are concentrated in particular areas of the city: the inner-city areas in Birmingham, the southern periphery of Lille, and specific areas within the cities of Roubaix and Tourcoing outside Lille. My analysis of minority politics in the two areas is based on extensive personal interviews with members of local councils, officers in local administrations, community leaders and political activists, previous academic works and newspaper sources (see appendix).

In the time period chosen for the study, from the early 1980s to 2001, there was widespread racial discrimination against minorities in the two urban areas, as well as widespread awareness of this on the part of the minorities. Both cities have suffered from significant disturbances and riots in neighbourhoods with large ethnic minority populations. Finally, both cities have been controlled by the mainstream left for a long time (the Labour Party in Birmingham since 1983, and the Socialist Party in the Communauté Urbaine de Lille, which has functioned as a grouping of the communes of the area since its creation in the 1960s). In a nutshell, Birmingham and the Lille area were both controlled by the moderate left in the period considered, and they have large ratios of immigrant/native populations (following the criteria used by Browning, Marshall and Tabb, 1990, for the comparison of ethnic minority politics between American cities).

A fundamental difference between the two cities is that Birmingham is one large city, while the Lille–Roubaix–Tourcoing urban zone is fragmented. There are zones which are part of the Birmingham urban area and which are governed by other city councils, such as Wolverhampton or Dudley, but the Birmingham City Council itself covers a very large zone at the centre of the area, and is the largest local authority in Britain since the abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC), with close to 1 million inhabitants. By contrast, the Lille–Roubaix–Tourcoing urban area is sprawling and institutionally fragmented into 87 communes, with only the three largest, Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, topping or coming close to 100,000 people, with populations of, respectively, 178,000, 97,000 and 93,000. While this reflects the fragmentation that is common to French cities, this represents an extreme case. Each

of the 87 communes has an elected *conseil municipal* (municipal council) and each is thus a distinct political arena from its neighbours. The Communauté Urbaine de Lille (Greater Lille Urban Community) plays an important role in local politics and policy-making, but it is elected indirectly, by the members of local elected authorities that are part of its geographical remit. Because it is impossible to study all 87 communes, the book focuses on the largest and most significant.

These two cities form an interesting Franco-French comparative duo in the context of my hypotheses. They are the two most important communes in terms of immigrant population in the area, with nationals of North African countries making up, respectively, 7 per cent and 15 per cent of their total population.⁵ Cities in France display a large variety of political configurations, because of the diversity of their local traditions, the greater number of parties that control cities, the diversity of sizes, geographical situations and socio-economic structures of cities that have large minority populations, and the relative positions of French communes to one another in the context of inter-communal structures. Lille and Roubaix offer a series of contrasts which encompass many of these factors and make it possible to use them to some extent as test cases for each other.

The patterns of interaction between cities in the context of these inter-communal structures are often one important institutional factor in shaping the politics of ethnic minorities through their impact on housing policies and regeneration programmes. Roubaix is also often noted as a particularly interesting case of successful immigrant incorporation, and as such is a particularly welcome test case to Lille, where even after the modest increase in minority representation nationwide in 2001, Lille continued to lag behind. Birmingham has not been matched by a similar test case, because variations between cities tend to be more limited among British cities than among French ones.

What were the strategies for managing ethnic conflict in Birmingham, Lille and Roubaix from the early 1980s to 2001? There was a broadly similar pattern of management in each city, characterized by the type of political dilemma that is common in European cities. All three cities have had to grapple with the pressure to address problems of exclusion, discrimination and urban violence that affect minority communities, as well as their demands for the construction of places of worship, as one factor potentially challenging their political stability; and all three feel that the extent to which they can do this is limited because of the potential negative reactions from the wider electorate. Thus, all three situations are characterized by an unstable and permanently renegotiated *modus vivendi* between the local power and ethnic minority interests.

A fundamental divergence, however, has been emerging over the last 20 years between Birmingham, on the one hand, and Roubaix and especially

Lille, on the other. During that period, the *modus vivendi* of the Birmingham City Council evolved towards a carefully considered yet solid alliance between the dominant Labour group and a group of ethnic minority leaders and activists of African-Caribbean and 'Asian' (predominantly Pakistani) background who were increasingly active in grassroots politics from the late 1970s onward. This alliance can be summarized as the following implicit deal: (1) a relative inclusion of ethnic groups in the political process through co-optation, and (2) significant concessions to their interests, in exchange for electoral support, or absence of electoral challenge, and cooperation in maintaining law and order.

The Labour group won control of the council in 1983, and it has remained in power since then, with a very comfortable majority until the early 2000s. From 1983 it increasingly included ethnic minority councillors, including in posts of major responsibility. In parallel to this, the council continuously defended a proactive policy in defence of specific ethnic minority interests in terms of racial discrimination and recognition of cultural difference. In 1984, the council created a department devoted to the fight against racial discrimination, and programmes and institutions have existed in various guises since then.

In the early 2000s, the Labour/ethnic minority coalition was displaying signs of strain, with former Asian Labour councillors seeking, and winning, election as independent candidates or as members of the rival Liberal Democrat Party. Yet it was too early to announce its demise, as the bulk of ethnic minority councillors remained Labour and some of them continued to occupy significant positions in the leadership of the council.

Overall, Birmingham is representative of many of the large British industrial cities and many London boroughs with large working-class and minority communities, which now all have a strong and lasting presence of minority councillors. There are, however, important nuances: Birmingham came to this situation later than other cities (e.g. London boroughs [Ouseley, 1984] or Liverpool [Ben Tovim et al., 1986]), but has become one where the situation of minorities at the council is particularly strong.

In Lille, on the contrary, there has been no evolution towards any kind of alliance comparable to the one in Birmingham. This was apparent during the two mayoral tenures of 1983–9 and 1989–95. In 1983–9, local offshoots of a national protest movement of second-generation North African immigrants campaigned actively in the city on behalf of various issues related to racial discrimination, social and economic exclusion and cultural recognition. In 1989–95, more bitter and loosely organized groups of disaffected youths were posing a constant preoccupation in terms of law and order, and openly challenging the municipality's insistence on maintaining the political status quo in the city. In response, there has been a continued effort on the part of the municipality to (1) keep the issue out of the spotlight of electoral politics and

(2) divide and weaken, or fund and control, ethnic groups, in order to neutralize potential electoral competition from them when they became impossible to ignore. 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. Until 2001 it also put forward a strong republican-assimilationist discourse, purposefully avoiding the recognition of groups that are explicitly 'ethnic' or Muslim.

Lille's strategy can be understood as representative of a large number of medium-range and large French cities, where there is little or no will to co-opt minorities. But in many respects it is an extreme case of immigrant exclusion, because of local institutional specifics (see below). The results of the 2001 municipal election confirm this, with little sign of the significant shift towards inclusion that occurred in many cities nationwide. In this respect, Lille is more indicative of the strategies of many rather well-off cities that are historical and economic centres of urbanized areas. They are able, more than other cities, to ignore ethnic diversity, in spite of significant minority populations, by externalizing the problem on neighbouring towns through housing policies, and because of entrenched political machines.

Finally, the strategy of the municipality of Roubaix falls somewhere in between that of Birmingham or Lille. The leadership has changed frequently over the last 20 years, from Socialist between 1977 and 1983 to centre-right between 1983 and 1997, when it came under Socialist leadership again.⁶ Because of this, the strategy of the council has frequently wavered, from giving clear xenophobic hints to encouraging the election of North African councillors. Between 1995 and 2001, there were five North African councillors (9 per cent of the total number of councillors), making Roubaix one of the French cities where ethnic minorities are the most represented. Roubaix therefore stands as an exception among French cities, one where minorities are doing particularly well in the local electoral game, and where ethnicity-specific interests are more than elsewhere taken into account. After 2001, it became less exceptional in terms of levels of representation, but the modes of access to elected office in the city remain distinctive and reflect an original political history.

The Main Propositions and the Outline of the Book

*The framing of debates on immigration and integration in national politics:
1945–2001*

In Britain (chapter 2), the liberality of the citizenship regime applied to all migrants from former colonies until restrictions were gradually imposed in the 1960s and 1970s. This entailed the incapacity of the British administra-

tion to control immigration flows from former colonies until 1962, and has enfranchised the populations of extra-European migrants. The other fundamental element is the early depoliticization of migration issues, in the early 1960s, and the passage by Labour of legislation against racial discrimination in the 1960s encouraged the formation of a lasting Labour/minority alliance. Ulterior spells of repoliticization and xenophobic mobilization never fundamentally challenged these 1960s developments.

The tendency towards inclusion in Britain was particularly strong locally because of the configuration of central–local relations in Britain. The country is characterized by a tight separation of ‘low’ and ‘high’ politics, as opposed to a strong inter-penetration of these two levels of government in France (see Webman, 1981). Since the beginning of the migration wave, this has made the local level a stronger focus for ethnic minority mobilization in Britain than in France, because the issues that matter for immigration politics (housing, education, social policies) have all traditionally fallen clearly within the remit of local authorities in Britain, while the distribution of remits is much more complex in France (Webman, 1981; Le Galès, 1993, pp. 34–41; Ashford, 1982). This relative separation of local and national politics in Britain has also facilitated the devolution of the issue to the local level by central elites as part of the 1960s ‘liberal consensus’ on race and immigration, thereby facilitating the construction of the issue at the local level in terms of ‘race relations’, adaptation of local public service delivery to specific ethnic minority requirements and anti-discriminatory policies (Layton-Henry, 1992; Saggat, 1991b). This took the focus of public discussions away from migration flows, that is, the desirability of the migrant’s presence, and shifted it towards the best way to facilitate the incorporation into society of those who were already settled on British soil. That channelled migrant mobilization towards anti-discrimination policies.

The separation between local and national politics was also reflected in the organization of the Labour Party, and made possible the emergence of the left in the party. More than other groups, the left was open to minorities, and when it won control of large cities in the 1980s, it picked up and radicalized the existing issues of equal opportunities and racial equality at the local level and facilitated the access of minorities to election on councils. The final section of the chapter retraces the emergence of such policies and of Labour/ethnic minority alliances in British cities in the context of this national framework.

In France (chapter 3), the recent history of migration politics has also been characterized by a strong influx of post-colonial, extra-European workers, but with two essential differences from Britain. The bulk of these migrants have not been granted citizenship upon arrival, as has been the case in Britain. And, when minority issues did become inflamed, in the early 1980s, they were persistently agitated by the Front National in the political arena. This inhib-

ited major parties of the left and right alike from taking up minority claims, and encouraged them to adopt a ‘universalistic-assimilationist’ attitude to immigration and minority issues which further caused a reluctance to promote minority interests.

This has been compounded by the inter-relatedness of the two levels of government in France. This is true both administratively and politically, with the *cumul des mandats* system (several elected positions for one person). The way the issue has been formulated at the local level has emulated the formulation at the national level, that is, in terms of immigrants as passive objects of policy (capacity of the country to ‘assimilate’ immigrants, discussion of restriction of migration flows) rather than as active participants in politics who pursue their own interests (racial discrimination, participation, cultural and religious recognition). As a result, local authorities have sought either to stay clear of the issue, as is the case in Lille, or in many cases to echo the concerns of the Front National. In all cases, there was little interest in putting forward ethnic minority candidates on party slates.

A turning point was reached in 1997, when the mainstream right approved a moderate reform of nationality law passed by a Socialist government. This, coupled with a temporary weakening of the Front National’s capacity to define the debate because of a split, removed inflammatory, anti-migrant rhetorics from political discourse. Nationality law and immigration law reforms, which were a staple ingredient of political discussions until the late 1990s, have since then almost disappeared from public discourse. This created a new political climate favourable to new discussions on the place of ethnic minorities in French society, which in turn encouraged political parties to co-opt minority individuals.

Contrasting local political systems

Chapter 4 shows how the British national framework, presented in chapter 2, inter-played with local parties and local government to produce an outcome of rapid and, to a significant extent, substantial representation on the Birmingham City Council. The two most important characteristics of the party system and of the organization of local government are: (1) the combination of the ward-based, first-past-the-post electoral system of city council elections, and (2) the specific timing and dynamics of left–right competition in the Birmingham Labour Party in the 1980s. The combination of the two facilitated the coalescence of an electorate preoccupied with both ethnic and working-class issues around a rising generation of minority politicians in the Labour Party. Emerging minority leaders have benefited from a situation in which an ethnic vote was appearing in the inner city, and Labour politicians were interested in tapping into this vote to maintain and increase their domination over internal rivals and the Conservative group at the council. Over

time, this first generation of ethnic minority councillors was replaced by radical campaigners for racial equality allied with the left of the party. In the late 1990s, Asian councillors disappointed with Labour's management of the inner cities weakened the Labour pluri-ethnic coalition by getting elected without the party's support, as independent or Liberal Democrat candidates.

Chapter 5 discusses how the national factors that make incorporation difficult in France were reinforced by the characteristics of the local institutions of Lille to create the outcome of strong exclusion. First, Lille has benefited from its dominance of the greater Lille area to externalize parts of its ethnic minority population on Roubaix. In addition, the Socialist Party, dominant in the city for the last four decades, has important political resources to control, and keep at bay politically, local groups from civil society, and especially ethnic minority groups. In the 1989 municipal tenure, it fended off attempts by the *Beur* movement to raise issues of discrimination and lack of effective citizenship for populations of immigrant background.

This was in part due to the nature of the French municipal electoral system, which allows local elites to remain isolated from social movements, at least for some time. The city-wide single constituency dilutes the electoral clout of ethnic minority populations concentrated in some neighbourhoods. The majoritarian system handicapped smaller, leftist bids that were most prone to take minorities on board. In the 1989–95 tenure, Socialist veteran mayor Mauroy built on the traditional networks of his party in the remnants of local working-class communities to construct a machine that perpetuated the status quo in his favour. With this strategy, it was possible to ignore groups of dissenting North African youths from the most disadvantaged areas of the city, or to divide and weaken them when they managed to present a threat. The Socialists were all the more prone to this type of strategy because the Front National, and its anti-immigrant rhetorics, were repeatedly successful in the poorer areas of the city. The discourse on universalism and republican integration that was pervasive both nationally and locally in the 1980s and 1990s worked for the Lille municipality as a tool legitimizing inaction and ignorance of ethnic diversity.

As in the model of the American party machine of the turn of the century, the Lille machine has relied on patronage to perpetuate the domination of the city by one leading individual in the party; but, unlike American machines, it has kept immigrants out, and instead has relied on native French supporters. While both the majoritarian municipal system and some of the urban regeneration programmes integrated by the Socialists into their networks are common to all other French cities, and are at the heart of the process of exclusion of minorities across France, they have combined in a particularly powerful and lasting way in Lille.

Chapter 6, devoted to Roubaix, emphasizes the existence of strong, autonomous community movements at neighbourhood level, and the relative weakness of party politics. This has made both parties and municipality more

open to influences from community organizations. Since these are heavily neighbourhood based, and since North Africans reach very high concentrations in some Roubaix neighbourhoods (sometimes up to 80 per cent of the population, among the highest concentrations in France, and equivalent to Birmingham), they act as a training ground and stepping stone for young North African leaders. These leaders are able to bargain their political competence and credibility as serious associative actors to obtain positions on the candidate lists of political parties, as well as to exert some leverage on certain departments and councillors of the council.

This is in spite of the strong influence of the Front National in the city, which has reached very high scores (around 17 per cent of the vote) in the last two municipal elections of 1989 and 1995, and has influenced local parties and mayoral candidates to take occasional anti-immigrant stances. This shows that general features of the French local system, such as the municipal electoral system and the inter-penetration of national and local politics, have a greatly different impact from one locality to another, depending on more localized patterns of community and party organization, which are more localized. While these factors have contributed to the construction of the Socialist machine in Lille, in Roubaix they have worked to encourage a neighbourhood-based process of inclusion that is relatively independent from partisan politics.