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The Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in France: Municipal Councillors of Maghrebian Origin

by

Timothy G. Stenhouse

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctorate of the Loughborough University of Technology

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ABSTRACT

With the sedentarisation of North African migrants from the 1960s onwards, French society witnessed the emergence during the 1970s of a second generation of Maghrebian residents. Formerly, Maghrebins had engaged in relatively limited forms of political activity, notably in French trade union movements and associations linked to the country of origin. The election of over a hundred municipal councillors of Maghrebian descent in March 1989 brought a new dimension to political activism among ethnic minorities in France.

In seeking to chart the progress of these municipal councillors, fieldwork was conducted in the form of questionnaires and interviews, mainly in the Paris and Lyons conurbations. Drawing on this data and other sources, the activities of Maghrebian councillors are examined in the thesis at two levels: within the confines of municipal politics, and within the wider framework of national politics in France.

In analysing the process by which Maghrebian councillors gained office, the following factors are considered: the main objectives to which those concerned subscribed at the time of their election; the manner in which their positions were negotiated on party lists; their prior associational and political experience.

In assessing the councillors' period in office the following aspects are investigated: the objectives which councillors sought to pursue on taking up office; the responsibilities with which they have been entrusted; the obstacles they have faced while in office; their rôle as intermediaries between civil society and the local machinery of the state.

At a national level, consideration is given to the rôle played both by pressure groups external to political parties and those internal to them. These include France-Plus, SOS-Racisme, the Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane and the Confédération Nationale des Elus Originaires du Maghreb. The attitudes of Maghrebian councillors towards issues of national importance such as the place of Islam in French society and the Gulf War are also analysed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis owes a great deal to the many individuals and institutions with whom I have been concerned throughout my research. However, first and foremost I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Alec G. Hargreaves, my supervisor, for his immeasurable contribution to the research. Without his considered judgements, endless patience and boundless enthusiasm, this thesis would never have been completed. I am also greatly indebted to all the staff in the Department of European Studies at Loughborough University for their unfailing support and advice.

A great source of inspiration for the thesis came from staff at the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick. The contribution and kindness of Dr. Harry Goulbourne is particularly noteworthy. I would also like to thank Kalbir Shukra whose expert knowledge and contacts in the area proved invaluable and Dr. Neil MacMaster at the University of East Anglia who introduced me to the area of ethnic relations in France.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives
The election of more than a hundred municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin in March 1989 marked a new phase in the political participation of ethnic minorities in France. Maghrebians are the largest single group of immigrant origin in contemporary French society. As most first generation immigrants have remained foreign nationals, they have been unable to participate in electoral politics. Most of their children, however, enjoy French citizenship. With growing numbers of younger Maghrebians reaching adulthood during the 1980s, they have become increasingly involved in the electoral process. A few gained seats on municipal and regional councils in 1983 and 1986, but it was not until 1989 that a significant number ran for office.

In October 1989, I decided to undertake doctoral research on those who had been elected in March of that year. A number of researchers in France were embarking on similar work at about the same time, but none was in a position to undertake a comprehensive study of the field. Varying methodologies have been employed and diverse parts of the country have been studied. Abdelomoula (1991), Dazi-Heni and Polac (1990), Diop and Kastoryano (1991) and Poinsot (1991) have, for example, examined the associational dimension of Maghrebian political participation. Other researchers such as Geisser (1992) have attempted national studies on Maghrebian councillors based on quantitative data. However, knowledge of Maghrebian political activism remains fragmentary and no one has yet produced a comprehensive survey of the field.

For reasons explained below, I decided to base my own research mainly on qualitative data. I set out to study not only the participation of Maghrebian councillors at a local level, but also their involvement in ethnic minority pressure groups at national level. In so doing I hoped to gain a more general understanding of Maghrebian political activism.

In examining the political participation of municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin between March 1989 and December 1992, I set myself four primary objectives: to chart the socio-economic backgrounds of the councillors; to explore their motivations for becoming candidates; to analyse their achievements once in office; and to throw light on their attitudes towards national issues and
organisations affecting the Maghrebian population.

With respect to the first objective, I sought to determine the nature of their involvement in political and organisational life prior to being elected. This involved analysis of their membership of and contact with political parties at local section level and with associations of both a local and national nature. Inherent in this was an attempt to establish how councillors had forged links with political parties and had come to be candidates on party lists. Had they put themselves forward as candidates? Or were they invited to do so either by local party heads, or by an intermediary? Were they members of a political party prior to becoming elected? If they had never been members of a political party and were thus affiliated councillors, why was this the case? Had they envisaged being a candidate on a different party list, or even a separate party list specifically aimed at Maghrebians?

Secondly I wanted to explore the factors which had led the councillors to seek office. Had they been attracted to electoral office by tangible or more abstract goals? To what extent were such motivations primarily individual, or collective concerns?

Concerning the achievements of councillors once in office, I was interested to know whether one could, for example, explain differences in the experiences of individuals according to their sex, socio-professional status, or age. In order to achieve this aim, I first of all had to acquire an understanding of the powers that councillors have at their disposal and the limits of these. This entailed an examination of municipal politics and of the decision making process. Equally, however, I required an insight into the responsibilities that councillors have been entrusted with. These differ in at least two respects: according to the committee to which they belong and; whether they are simply a municipal councillor, or occupy in addition the rôle of maire-adjoint.

The nature of the relationship between councillors and the Maghrebian population at large was to be an integral feature of my research. In particular I was anxious to discover whether and also in what ways councillors acted as intermediaries between, on the one hand, the ethnic minority group from which they originate and, on the other hand, the institutions of French society of which they are members. Do Maghrebian councillors perceive themselves to be representing solely their ethnic group, or do they consider themselves to be in
office to serve the interests of all members of the municipality? Linked to this would be an examination of the period of office of councillors belonging to different Maghrebian sub-groups (differentiating for example between Maghrebians of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian origin, as well as between Arabs and Berbers and between harki families on the one hand and economic migrants on the other). What might this reveal about the relationships that exist between the various Maghrebian populations resident in France?

Fourthly, determining the nature of the relationship between political parties and ethnic minorities was to be a further objective. Are Maghrebian councillors concentrated within particular parties and if so why? Have political parties enabled councillors of Maghrebian origin to carry out their functions like any other councillor, irrespective of race, religion, or nationality? Or have the former channelled Maghrebians into specific types of responsibility which are linked to the Maghrebian population in the municipality? Do Maghrebians have access to the same positions of responsibility as non-Maghrebians? Has there been a conscious attempt by political parties in France to place Maghrebians in limited positions of power and by so doing to 'neutralise' potential violence on the part of Maghrebian youths after the events of the early 1980s?

1.2 Phasing of the research programme
I began by undertaking a literature research of the field, looking not only at France, but also at longer established models of ethnic minority political participation in the United Kingdom, the United States and other countries. At the same time I sought to establish contact with institutions specialising in the area of race and politics in France (the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris) and the United Kingdom (the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick). In addition, national political party structures incorporating the concerns of Maghrebians in France were identified and initial contacts were made via attendance of a conference of the Fédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes et Républicains (FNESR) in Paris in January 1990. Links with ethnic minority pressure groups in Britain and British postgraduate researchers interested in the field were established in June 1990 when presenting a paper at the annual conference of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

During the first year of research I was able to define the objectives and methodology of my study. This included the drafting of a questionnaire and the
question format for semi-directive interviews with councillors. The questionnaire and interview data were to form the core of my primary sources.

From October 1990 to June 1991, I engaged in fieldwork in France. Having secured the post of English Language Assistant at the University of Nancy II, I used Nancy as my base for field trips to the greater Paris and Rhône-Alpes regions. In the course of these field trips, I interviewed 18 councillors of Maghrebian origin as well as the president of a Maghrebian national pressure group. In June 1992 I conducted interviews with five additional councillors and with three PS officials interested in Maghrebian affairs. This brought the total number of interviewees to 27, of whom 23 were Maghrebian councillors.

Between autumn 1991 and autumn 1993, I processed my data and wrote up the results.

1.3 Methodology
In order to carry out research of this nature, a number of fundamental questions had to be asked beforehand. The first of these concerned the number of Maghrebian councillors elected in March 1989. Determining the precise figure was inherently problematic given that the Ministry of the Interior does not keep official figures on the ethnic origins of candidates. Furthermore even if a breakdown on ethnic grounds was available, there would still be the major task of ploughing through the lists of candidates in over 36,000 communes. Similarly, if one attempted to make up for the absence of official ethnically-based data by taking Maghrebian names as a possible starting point, this would at best provide only an approximate estimation. In certain cases it might, for example, be difficult to distinguish between the names of Maghrébins and French nationals of pied-noir origin. Other sources would therefore have to be consulted such as political party officials interested in the fate of Maghrebian candidates. Initial surveys carried out immediately after the municipal elections suggested that the PS had the largest percentage of councillors, followed by the PC, and that parties of the Right also contained a significant share. The figures were nevertheless at best patchy concerning the actual number of councillors. Georges Morin, then conseiller-délégué to Louis Mermaz at the Ministry of Agriculture and himself a pied-noir, had compiled a coded list of all councillors on PS lists originating from the Maghreb which included pied-noirs as well as Muslims both from harki and economic migrant backgrounds, but was not prepared to reveal either an exact figure, or the names of individuals listed. A
second potential source was the Maghrebian association which claimed to have 'sponsored' many of the councillors, *France-Plus*. It initially quoted a figure of 506 elected councillors (this figure has in fact changed several times over the following years), but was willing to identify only a handful of these. In these circumstances, the only practical way to proceed was by using a chain approach. Drawing on published sources, I identified known councillors of Maghrebian origin whom I subsequently interviewed, then asked them for details of other Maghrebian councillors in their municipality or *département*. An additional source of information was provided by ethnic minority pressure groups, particularly *France-Plus* and the *Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane* (CSCM). To this day the overall national figure has yet to be determined with exactitude by any of the researchers active in this field, but it seems probable that there are no more than a hundred or so Maghrebian councillors, of whom over eighty were elected on *PS* lists.

Granted the difficulties inherent in undertaking an all-encompassing national survey of Maghrebian councillors and given the time restrictions within which I was working, I decided to select a number of *départements* within which I would attempt to obtain comprehensive data. In this way the study would be thorough at local level even if this was not possible nationally. A decision was therefore taken to focus initially upon a limited number of councillors using the cluster sample technique. This is a device by which sub-units are grouped together as a total unit. This was seen as a preferable method to quota sampling, where councillors would have been analysed according to criteria such as sex, age group, or socio-professional status. This is a somewhat artificial way of examining candidates and could result in one having to distort research methods in order to fulfil quota requirements. It would in any case have been impractical since I did not know the socio-professional characteristics of potential interviewees.

A second question with which I had to deal concerned the total number of councillors whom I might realistically hope to interview, and the localities on which it might be appropriate to concentrate my efforts. As there appeared to be very few municipalities with more than one councillor of Maghrebian origin, their scattered distribution suggested that it would be unrealistic to conduct more than around 30 interviews within the time available for my fieldwork, particularly as I also wished to seek additional information by interviewing other party officials who had a personal interest in Maghrebian affairs. My hope was that
the latter would able to offer a more general overview both of the period in office of the councillors and of the development of Maghrebian political activism nationally. In targeting particular areas, I took into account factors such as regional concentrations of Maghrebian councillors, geographical promiximity to my base, political orientation and the responsiveness of potential interviewees to my initial approaches.

The concentration of Maghrebian councillors within the greater Paris region, and especially in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis, made this a natural target area. The large concentration of councillors in Marseilles made this a potential area of study also. However, given the large distance between Nancy and Marseilles, such an undertaking would have been very difficult to carry out. For this reason study of Maghrebian councillors in the south of France was not undertaken. Travel to the Paris region was easy from the east of France. Similarly there were direct train services to Rhône-Alpes, where Lyons and Grenoble were the furthest I could reasonably expect to travel with any real frequency. The political orientation of municipalities was a far from negligible factor and given the tendency of Maghrebian youths to vote for parties of the Left, the choice of municipalities would have to take account of this. In this respect it became apparent that the study of councillors in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis would be particularly relevant. Finally, the degree to which councillors in a given municipality were willing to co-operate was important. Initial contacts in my target départements suggested that councillors there would be willing to discuss their experiences in detail. However, in Hauts-de-Seine a number of councillors were unreceptive to my initial approaches and it proved impossible to achieve comprehensive coverage within this département.

A third set of questions concerned the precise kinds of data which I would seek to collect and the manner in which I would do this. My sample would clearly be too small for it to be possible to focus primarily on quantitative data. In order to undertake a survey based on qualitative data, a three-pronged approach was adopted: closed questionnaires, semi-directive interviews, and such published sources as were available.

Questionnaires would be distributed to councillors prior to the interview taking place. If properly planned and administered, the questionnaires presented the advantage of asking impersonal questions where there was little possibility of interviewer bias. The uniformity of the questions would facilitate comparisons
between councillors. It was my intention to have them fill in the questionnaire as a preliminary to the interview. In a few cases for operational reasons, this had to be varied slightly and the interviewees brought the questionnaires with them, already filled in. This was justified on the grounds that some councillors could not be contacted by telephone and therefore sending a questionnaire accompanied by an introductory letter would gain their confidence and encourage them to participate in interviews. While this worked satisfactorily in most cases, in a few cases there were difficulties. In PC-controlled municipalities, where correspondence is pre-selected before reaching the councillor, several letters did not reach the person concerned. A second drawback was that councillors invariably combine their period in office with a full-time occupation and are thus unable to visit the town hall on a regular basis. This meant that some letters had been unopened before further contact was attempted by telephone.

Given these factors, I thought it would be preferable to establish initial contact by telephone. A detailed explanation of the reasons for undertaking the research was provided and the benefits of acquiring a wider knowledge of the field were impressed upon the councillors from the outset. Questionnaires were presented to the councillors in tabular form so that responses could be filled in without difficulty. This would also enable my analysis of the responses to be speeded up considerably. Care was taken to ensure that terminology was clearly defined, likely response categories incorporated into the questionnaire and questions succinctly posed so that this reduced the likelihood of questions being interpreted in an ambiguous manner. In addition to questions on the background, motivations and achievements of councillors, a separate section was devoted to personal details on the councillor concerned. Since this involved sensitive information such as the date when French nationality had been obtained, I felt that it was important to point out, both in the questionnaire and to the councillor in person, that all information would be treated confidentially and would only be published with the prior consent of the interviewee. This ensured that councillors would be willing to provide personal data on themselves.

Prior to engaging in discussion with councillors, a number of specialists with an interest in the field of race and politics were consulted in France, the United Kingdom and the United States. These included individuals from the following institutions: the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the
University of Warwick, the Department of Political Science at the University of Ohio and Canisius College, New York. These contacts were undertaken partly to seek guidance when research was still in the early stages of hypothesis formulation and partly to establish goodwill with a view to future exchanges of information.

During the year spent in France, I initially hoped to hold informal discussions with each councillor before conducting the formal interview. In the event, informal interviews were dispensed with, on the grounds that to undertake interviews of this nature would have required questioning all councillors on at least two occasions. This was not possible given time and geographical constraints, though for a minority of councillors contact had already been established via attendance at the January 1990 FNESR conference. Where the views expressed by councillors during my formal interviews with them needed follow up on and clarification, this was done either by telephone, or by letter. I also refrained from conducting focus group interviews where several councillors would be questioned at the same time. This method was unsuitable for my purposes in that first of all it could have resulted in a 'majority' view prevailing when in reality councillors might well hold divergent views. Secondly certain individuals would be likely to dominate discussions and this might have meant that some individuals were left out of matters altogether.

Formal one-to-one interviews were preferred and the responses were recorded on tape with the prior consent of councillors. Interviews took place in one of three places: a café; a town hall office of the councillor concerned; at the councillor's home. Councillors were asked to choose their own preferred meeting place and this helped to create a relaxed atmosphere between interviewer and interviewee, greatly reducing any pre-existing apprehensions that the latter might have of being interviewed. No written notes were taken during the interview. Interviews were semi-directive and this method offered a number of advantages. First of all it enabled any ambiguities in the completion of the questionnaire to be resolved immediately. Secondly, where councillors found it necessary, formal interviews provided them with the opportunity to expand upon answers in the questionnaire where, due to closed questions, their own opinions might contain nuances that could not otherwise be detected. Thirdly the flexibility of the interview format enabled me to incorporate new, or emerging issues related to Maghrebian, but which went beyond the confines of the councillor's municipality. In particular, the beginning of hostilities and the
ending of the Gulf War were subjects that I was able to add to pre-existing stimuli.

Once the majority of interviews had been completed towards the end of the year spent in France, a new strategy was adopted with respect to one of the Maghrebian pressure groups, the CSCM. During one weekend I attended in the rôle of an observer the annual national conference of the association. Witnessing the activities of the association, notably during discussions on the general plight of Maghrebians in France after the affaire du foulard and the Gulf War, enabled me to gain first-hand experience of the pressure group, and to obtain documents unavailable to non-members of the association. In effect I adopted a double rôle, that of a group member of the association, providing my own contributions to the subject, while at the same time posing questions in the capacity of researcher.

Published material was used from a variety of sources, notably covering the following three countries: France; United Kingdom; United States of America. Material on Belgium and the Netherlands was also consulted. Given the plethora of data on and the longer history of ethnic minority political activism in the country, literature from the the United States especially concerning African-Americans and Hispanics proved invaluable in terms of providing possible theoretical models. These enabled me to identify more clearly the peculiarities of the French model and the unique characteristics of the Maghrebian population in France. The ongoing nature of Maghrebian political participation necessitated consulting French daily newspapers and weekly magazines. These provided up-to-date information on specific events and issues. However, they often contained inaccurate details and as such were treated with circumspection. Published autobiographical sources were occasionally used where available. The inside information which they contained made them essential reading, but it was of course necessary to be aware of possible author bias. Finally conference reports, research reports and theses were consulted.

1.4 Choice of sample
Attendance at the FNESR conference in January 1990 revealed that a coded list of councillors on PS lists had been drawn up. However, it was not possible to acquire the list at the time due to PS reluctance to disclose information. Thus prior to beginning fieldwork in October 1991, in the absence of readily available official details, the acquisition of candidates names' was obtained via an informal network of contacts at grass roots level. It had become apparent at the
conference, through discussions with participants and available literature on their whereabouts, that a large number of the councillors had been elected in the Ile-de-France region, centred on Paris. Once initial contact had been established with councillors, early strategic surveys indicated that there was a particularly strong concentration of Maghrebian councillors in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis. This reflected the demographic profile of Seine-Saint-Denis, which contains the heaviest concentrations of Algerians - the largest Maghrebian group in France - to be found in the petite or grande couronne. Census data showed that apart from the Ile-de-France, two other regions contained particularly heavy concentrations of Maghrebs: Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur. Granted the time and financial constraints under which I was operating, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur was too far away from my base to be included in my sample. Instead, Rhône-Alpes was targeted as a more realistic alternative and within this region the two major conurbations were singled out: Lyons and its suburbs and Grenoble. Grenoble presented an additional advantage in that as opposed to the greater Paris region and Lyons, its concentrations of Maghrebs were far more modest. A similar point applies to Dijon, the only location in my sample situated outside Ile-de-France and Rhône-Alpes. In this respect a more accurate reflection of variations in the distribution of the Maghrebian population in France could be made, though it should be emphasised that any such comparisons are necessarily tentative in the absence of a comprehensive study of councillors elected in localities with large, medium and small concentrations of Maghrebian in the whole of France.

After an initial number of interviews had been conducted in the Paris region by the end of January 1991, an additional list of councillors was procured from the study undertaken by Vincent Geisser at the Institut de Recherche et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et du Maghreb (IREMAM). His study involved analysis of Maghrebian councillors in Lyons, Grenoble and Marseilles. Geisser had secured a complete list of councillors in all of these areas and information on the former two helped to supplement my own more fragmentary list.

During June 1991, I was allowed sight of the unpublished coded PS list of councillors. The list contained few surprises, but I discovered that there was an additional number of councillors in the Paris region of whom I had previously been unaware. These councillors would therefore have to be interviewed when funding could be secured to engage in additional field work. This was achieved during June 1992 and in the same month the PS finally provided me with a
complete list of Maghrebian councillors elected on its lists throughout France.

The 23 councillors finally included in my sample included all Maghrebians holding municipal council seats in six out of the seven départements in which my interviews were conducted. The largest concentration was in Seine-Saint-Denis, where I interviewed all 11 of the Maghrebian councillors elected in 1989. Even here, their seats were very scattered. Only one municipality, Ile-Saint-Denis, had two Maghrebian councillors. When all my interviews had been completed, Ile-Saint-Denis remained the only municipality in my sample having more than one Maghrebian councillor. Also within Ile-de-France, I interviewed two councillors in Essonne, one in Val-de-Marne and two in Hauts-de-Seine. This brought the total number of interviewees in Ile-de-France to 16. For reasons explained in section 1.5, Hauts-de-Seine was the only target département in which I failed to secure interviews with certain Maghrebian councillors. There are in in this département five Maghrebian councillors, three of whom refused to be interviewed.

Outside the greater Paris region, my sample included all four Maghrebian councillors in the Rhône département, centred on Lyons, both of the Maghrebian councillors in Isère, where the principal city is Grenoble, and the sole Maghrebian councillor in Côte-d'Or, who holds her seat in Dijon. It was possible to interview her without making a separate trip to Dijon because she spends a large amount of time in Paris. This brought to seven the total number of councillors holding seats outside Ile-de-France.

1.5 Problems encountered

The nature of the subject studied and its almost constant evolution presented numerous obstacles to be overcome. It was often necessary to distance oneself from current events relating to Maghrebians in France in order to gain a wider perspective. This was particularly important when interviewing councillors after some incident had taken place and had made the headlines in the media. Equally, however, new events could not be ignored if they questioned the existence of Maghrebians in France in general. This was the case for the Gulf War and an additional chapter was incorporated into the thesis reflecting this development.

Account had to be taken of external factors which might adversely affect the interviewees. This was most noticeable during and immediately after the Gulf War, particularly after the affaire de Rheims when a French youth of
Maghrebian origin was shot by a white French shopkeeper. During the fighting in the Gulf, councillors displayed a marked reluctance to talk, attributable no doubt in part to the widespread public anxiety about potential tensions which might surface between ethnic minorities and possible retributions from the white French population, but also perhaps reflecting internal divisions on the matter within the Maghrebian population. It was extremely difficult to contact councillors during the period of hostilities and for this reason relatively few interviews were conducted from January to the end of March 1991. In the immediate post-war period councillors were more willing to discuss issues, yet this was also a tense and emotional period for Maghrebians with a series of individual incidents between youths of Maghrebian origin and the police featuring heavily in the media. The sometimes virulent reactions of councillors cannot be divorced from this context.

Throughout the interview stage divisions between Maghrebian sub-groups became apparent. If one was seen to favour a particular sub-group, then another might perceive one to be a potential adversary. In the case of Maghrebian pressure groups, dealing with members of France-Plus and the two groups internal to the PS, the Confédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb (CNESOM) and the CSCM, was a difficult balancing act since individuals would often criticise Maghrebians in the other group(s). It was important for me to adopt a neutral stance and not to express opinions on other councillors in my sample.

An initial wariness on the part of councillors concerning my research had to be overcome, and this was sometimes difficult. This was particularly the case in the département of Hauts-de-Seine, where, prior to my own interviews, researchers and media representatives had already questioned Maghrebian councillors at length. Despite my best endeavours, it proved impossible to secure the cooperation of three of the five councillors in this département. Elsewhere, councillors were on the whole receptive to my requests. The fact that I was non-French was an advantage in that, apart from arousing their curiosity, this enabled interviewees to feel that they could criticise French society and institutions in front of me without embarrassment. Care had to be taken to ensure that contact with women councillors, particularly those who remained in the parental home, was made with sufficient reassurances about personal safety. This invariably meant acting via a male intermediary, usually another Maghrebian councillor, with whom they were familiar. Whenever possible interviewing at the home in
the presence of other family members was avoided. For one male councillor it was not possible to interview anywhere else and the nature of the questions posed proved to be acutely embarrassing for the councillor concerned.

A far greater hindrance was the initial hostility of PS leaders concerned with the Maghrebian community. When research began in earnest at the beginning of 1990 it was made quite clear to me that the names on a coded list of Maghrebian councillors elected on PS lists would not be provided and that the official association concerned with Maghrebian PS councillors, the CNESOM, would not be willing to assist me with my research despite repeated requests for help. This considerably slowed down the process of establishing contacts and it was only in the summer of 1992 that the complete list was finally released to me.

1.6 Previous studies
The political participation of Maghrebians in France is a relatively new phenomenon and it is only during the 1980s that youths of Maghrebian origin have successfully entered politics at municipal level in significant numbers. Consequently published material in this area has been sparse. Previously political participation among the parents of these youths, the so-called 'first generation' who migrated from the Maghreb, was of a limited nature, restricted to activism within fields such as the trade union movement during the 1970s. There were several reasons for this. As first-generation immigrants remained foreigners, they had no formal political rights. Secondly the first generation did not perceive its installation in French society as permanent and when it settled in various waves during the 1950s and 1960s, it was reluctant to become involved in French politics. Thirdly the first generation was still closely linked to the country of origin and if it was politically active, then it was primarily in organisations of the country of emigration. Finally there was the fear among the first generation that political activism in France would be frowned upon by the authorities in the country of origin, who might indeed call into question their right of residence.

To the above factors must be added the tendency among French researchers to view the condition of Maghrebians in France as falling primarily within the discipline of sociology. This is justified by researchers in that Maghrebians are the main targets of discrimination within French society and have been faced by two divergent and often opposing cultures: the Western French one, external to the home, and the Muslim one within the place of residence. Maghrebians have
de facto been perceived as a 'problem' and this has resulted in numerous studies and counter-studies highlighting the difficulties that they face in such spheres as education, employment and housing. While these studies may have some merit, an over-emphasis on questions of this nature has neglected more salient issues concerned with youths attempting to overcome difficulties by playing an active part in French institutions.

Given, then, the recent nature of Maghrebian political participation and the stress on sociological perspectives, there has been a dearth of published studies on the political field. New theoretical approaches are required as long-standing researchers such as Leveau and Wihtol de Wenden (1988c, 109) have pointed out:

Les commentaires sur les limtes des instruments d'analyse dont nous disposons aujourd'hui, pour étudier les comportements politiques d'un groupe culturel minoritaire dans l'espace national, conduisent à une interrogation sur la mise au point d'instruments nouveaux de réflexion.

A decision was thus made early on in my research to consider other longer standing models of ethnic minority political participation outside France. In so doing, it was not my objective to make a systematic comparison of other models with the French experience since such an undertaking would have required a separate study in its own right. Rather, other models would serve the purpose of providing theoretical frameworks upon which the French experience could be tested and a clearer view of the latter gauged. I decided to examine a variety of models, each of which enabled me to gain a clearer understanding of Maghrebian political participation in France. The following minorities were considered: Hispanics and African-Americans in the United States; Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in Great Britain.

For the former two minorities there is an abundant literature on the political domain and this indicated a number of useful lines of inquiry with respect to Maghrebian political participation in France. Like Hispanics, Maghrebians are also composed of extremely heterogeneous and often opposing populations. Both groups were involved in successive post-war migrations to the 'host' nations, although Maghrebian immigration in its earliest forms pre-dates this. Among both groups there is the lack of a common agenda, or a single leader and this has negatively influenced political participation. However, a number of
significant differences exist also. Hispanics have met with a far greater degree of electoral success at both local and national level in terms of numbers and positions of seniority and responsibility, and have become involved in American politics at an earlier date (from the mid-1970s onwards) than has been the case for Maghrebians in France. There has been a greater degree of support between candidates and electorate among Hispanics in terms of increasing the number of politicians from the ethnic group and unlike Maghrebians in France, a national caucus has been in existence since 1977, creating the conditions for a national Hispanic leadership framework. Where appropriate in the thesis, I make reference to these issues, though solely with the aim of shedding more light on Maghrebian political participation.

With regard to African-Americans, Maghrebians share the dubious privilege of being the principal targets of racism in their respective countries of residence. However, they differ in the reasons which led to their large-scale migration and subsequent discrimination. There is a legacy of enforced slavery for African-Americans contrasting with the legacy of the Algerian war and a combination of economic and political factors for Maghrebians. Some Maghrebian associations such as France-Plus have made a point of studying the African-American model in order to learn from its successes and failures, and have adopted some of its tactics. At a national level Maghrebians have also followed the example of African-Americans by creating ethnic minority pressure groups, both inside and outside political parties. The Civic Rights campaigns of France-Plus have quite unashamedly taken a leaf out of the ones undertaken by African-Americans in the 1960s. However, one needs to be acutely aware that the manner in which ethnic minorities have integrated into American and French societies varies considerably. Whereas minorities in the United States have, in general, integrated on a collective basis and have asserted pre-migratory identities (hence the terms African-American, Irish-American, or Italian-American), the tradition of immigration into France has primarily been one of insertion on an individual basis (hence the tendency to Frenchify surnames and even first names in order to gain acceptance and the playing down of former national identities). In the case of Maghrebians, though, citizens resident in France have retained clearly identifiable names of non-European origin and, perhaps, following the example of African-Americans, some youths declare themselves to be Franco-Algerian, Franco-Maghrebian or Beur (though the latter term refers particularly to youths of Maghrebian origin in the Paris Region and is largely rejected by similar youths elsewhere).
Ethnic minority political participation in Britain, while a fairly recent phenomenon, has preceded that in France, and research in this area offers tools which may assist in understanding the French experience. Similar to African-Americans, Afro-Caribbean are also victims of discrimination in a myriad of forms and, like Maghrebians, are generally perceived in negative terms by the dominant society. Political participation for Afro-Caribbean pre-dates that of Maghrebians in France and may, perhaps, indicate likely future political developments for the latter in France. Local councillors and a number of mayors of Afro-Caribbean origin have been elected since the 1970s, and since 1987 there have been three MPs of Afro-Caribbean origin. Afro-Caribbean, like Maghrebians, vote overwhelmingly for parties of the Left and thus the overwhelming majority of local councillors and all parliamentary representatives have been members of the Labour Party. Both minorities have also migrated for essentially economic reasons, though in the case of Maghrebians a significant minority left their home country to escape political repression.

Asians, while also migrating to Britain as a result of 'pull' factors and including persons of diverse nationalities and religions which are often at odds with one another, present an additional point of comparison with Maghrebians. Many Asians of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin share the Muslim faith with Maghrebians. On both sides of the Channel the place of Islam in Western society has been called into question with the Salman Rushdie affair in Britain and the affaire du foulard in France. A small number of youths from both ethnic minorities have sought comfort from low socio-economic status and esteem in the dominant society by turning to Islam. Equally abortive attempts have been made to set up independent Islamic parties. At present three MPs in Parliament are of Asian origin. As with Maghrebians, Asians vote overwhelmingly for, or represent as candidates, one political party, the Labour Party. However, Asians are not concentrated to the same degree within the Labour Party as is the case for Afro-Caribbean. This is, perhaps, indicative of a greater degree of success by Asians in adapting to the social conditions, although this differs considerably according to nationality (Bangladeshis faring worse than any other ethnic minority in Britain in terms of educational achievement for example). Furthermore the presence of a thriving Asian economic base is clearly visible whereas this is not the case for Afro-Caribbean or Maghrebians to anywhere near the same extent.
The following literature review is divided up on a thematic rather than chronological basis and includes the works of American and British political scientists in addition to those in France, for reasons outlined above. Rather than attempting an exhaustive review of the literature, I shall concentrate on some of the most important works to have been published which are directly relevant to my own research.

1.6.1 Theoretical Approaches
I have examined a variety of hypotheses put forward by political scientists in the United States in relation to non-white (African-American plus Hispanic) political participation. The opposing 'isolation' and 'ethnic community/compensation' theories of Orum (1966) and Olsen (1970) have proven inconclusive in that they do not fully explain variations in the success of political participation. According to the first approach, the social isolation of African-Americans hinders the development of competence required for political participation, while the second argues that African-Americans are on average more politically active than whites of equivalent social status since activism is a major norm within the African-American population. The efforts of Danigelis (1977) have led to major developments in the field. By constructing a new hypothesis, which he labels the 'political climate' theory, Danigelis has managed to incorporate elements of both the 'isolation' and 'ethnic community' models. Danigelis focuses on the ways in which non-white political activity may be affected positively or negatively by the following three factors: formal and informal white rules; white attitudes towards these rules; black attitudes towards these same rules. For my own research purposes this is particularly helpful. If the political climate theory is adapted to Maghrebian political participation in France, then it would imply that the success or failure of action would be dependent to a large extent upon the support of white allies. While my own findings confirm that white support is required if Maghrebian political activity is to develop successfully, we shall see that success may be limited.

A major advance in the area of ethnic minority elite study has been provided by the work of Martiniello (1992). There are two distinctive features about his research. First of all Martiniello has sought to analyse elite theory from an ethnic minority leadership perspective. Taking on board the contributions made by Myrdal (1944) and Higham (1978), he has provided new insights into the emergence of ethnic minority elites and the leadership styles in terms of the strategies deployed and rôles assumed. I found this approach invaluable in my
own analysis of Maghrebian pressure groups. The second concerns Martiniello's comprehensive review and analyses of previous research in the area, pinpointing the major shortcomings at present. What is particularly impressive here is the breadth of Martiniello's reflection. He argues that the American model is best suited to providing researchers with a more complete understanding of ethnic minority leadership in Europe. Besides traversing national boundaries, Martiniello also cuts across academic disciplines. He criticises the compartmentalisation of research on ethnic minorities into narrow and constricting disciplines, which has resulted in a lack of awareness of each other's studies. Instead he advocates a pluri-disciplinary approach where common ground concerning terminology and hypotheses can be found. I share a great many of these beliefs and have sought to explore further the American model in order to clarify Maghrebian political participation with respect to differences that may be apparent.

1.6.2 Electoral Studies
The electoral behaviour and attitudes of Maghrebins in France have been the focus of a number of studies during the late 1980s. Muxel (1988) has compared and contrasted the political attitudes of the Beurs (i.e. Maghrebian youths) with white French youths. Her findings reveal that the former identify closely with parties of the Left and in particular with the PS. No less than 83% of the Maghrebian youths interviewed situated themselves to the Left of the political spectrum, of which 51% identified with the PS and 20% with the PC. This compared with only 42% of French white youths who considered themselves to be allied to the Left. Clearly my own study would have to take into consideration such conclusions when examining the extent to which councillors in my sample belonged to, or stood on the lists of parties of the Left. Was there, for example, a particularly large number of Maghrebian councillors on PS lists? Muxel also clearly points to the pro-integrationist stance of many Maghrebian youths which is reflected in the desire among these youths to become involved in associational activity and the anti-racist struggle. The associational experience prior to gaining political office that candidates in my sample received was one of the features that I aimed to illuminate in my own study.

Dahi and Leveau (1988), while reiterating the experience gained by Maghrebian youths in associational activity, added a new dimension to the field in France by examining the factor of ethnic minority concentration in certain areas and the effect that this can have upon electoral results, particularly at local level. They
identified three locations with particularly large concentrations of Maghrebians: Marseilles, Nord and Seine-Saint-Denis. The last of 3 was included in my field of study.

In the United Kingdom, Anwar (1980, 1986, 1990) and Fitzgerald (1984, 1987, 1989) have made important contributions in their respective studies on the political attitudes of Afro-Caribbeans and Asians as well as on the attitudes of political parties towards these minorities. The analyses of Fitzgerald in particular concerning the treatment of ethnic groups by political parties, especially the Labour Party, were extremely useful in helping me to construct a framework for examining the attitude of the PS towards Maghrebians.

1.6.3 Political mobilisation and participation

Wihtol de Wenden (1988), in her study of the relationship between immigrants and politics in France, places the issue of political activism within a far wider historical perspective. The author enters into the thorny questions of political rights, nationality and citizenship. Discussion includes the following areas: a questioning of whether citizenship and nationality are in fact synonymous in France; distinctions made between political rights at local and national levels; a need to revise the traditional assimilationist concept of the Nation-State. Her reflections on these issues were particularly helpful in my study of the background to the electoral participation of Maghrebians and successive governments' policies towards immigration. Wihtol de Wenden concludes by arguing that the collective integration of youths of Maghrebian origin into French society (by, for example, the civic rights campaigns) implies a change to existing political power relations.

The factors precipitating the entry of Franco-Maghrebians onto the political scene provide one aspect of a study by Jazouli (1986). The book was the first of its kind to examine in detail the transformation from defensive to counter-offensive action by youths of Maghrebian origin. As such it constitutes an important development in the literature on the political participation of Maghrebians in France even if it is from a sociological perspective.

Geisser (1992), taking the election of Maghrebian municipal councillors in 1989 as the starting point for his research, has focused attention upon those elected in Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur. He has concluded that in terms of socio-professional status Maghrebian councillors are an elite and clearly
distinguishable from French youths of Maghrebian origin as a whole. This was an issue which I had already decided to examine, and Geisser's results provided interesting comparisons. Geisser argues also that councillors are unable to play the rôle of intermediaries between the local Maghrebian population and the municipal powers since they are not considered as 'legitimate' representatives by Maghrebins locally and in some cases are perceived to be tokenist symbols. I sought to gauge the views of municipal councillors in my own sample on whether they perceived themselves to be token candidates and whether they felt they had a rôle to play as intermediaries. Councillors were questioned also on the rôle of Maghrebian pressure groups as intermediaries.

Vigil (1987) has made a valuable contribution to the study of Hispanic political participation in the United States. The developments that he assesses from the 1970s onwards pre-date and mirror those in Maghrebian political activity beginning in the 1980s. Vigil starts by describing the change from protest to accommodation electoral politics among Hispanics. He stresses the positive development of the large-scale increase in voter registration which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of elected Hispanic officials at local and national levels and the importance of population concentration in influencing political activity. This was extremely helpful in interpreting the civic rights campaigns of France-Plus. Vigil points to a willingness among Hispanic candidates to support one another even when the other candidate in question may belong to a different national sub-group. For my own study of Maghrebian councillors, Vigil was useful both in highlighting national sub-group differences that emerged and in suggesting the extent to which such differences might impair the effectiveness of Maghrebian political activism. Furthermore he argues that the Hispanic politician is no longer dependent solely on the Hispanic population since s/he appeals to a wide cross-section of the American population. Nevertheless Vigil urges caution, for Hispanics have been unable to find a common agenda and this has adversely affected the influence they might exert nationally. He concludes by pointing out the limits of political action achieved and argues that what is required is a combination of electoral and non-electoral strategies.

Fitzgerald (1984, 1990) has charted the emergence of Afro-Caribbean and Asian councillors and MPs in the United Kingdom. She highlights the obstacles faced by black candidates and the limits to what they can achieve once in office. This greatly aided me in preparing the chapter on the period in office of Maghrebian
1.6.4 Pressure group and protest politics

Walton (1972) in a pioneering study of the multi-faceted nature of Black politics has made a significant theoretical contribution to the understanding of ethnic minority pressure groups. With reference to the African-American model, Walton argues that the success of ethnic pressure groups is dependent on the positive or negative attitudes of the dominant society. This is the case no matter how charismatic ethnic leaders may be, witness the ineffectiveness of even Dr. Martin Luther King once white support had been withdrawn from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In this respect Walton's hypothesis is a precursor of Danigelis' political climate theory. The author examines the various tactics of ethnic pressure groups which include the following: lobbying; mass propaganda; electioneering and working inside political parties. The use of such techniques was not lost upon my analysis of the four nationally-based pressure groups considered in my study. In addition Walton identifies a number of inadequacies in ethnic pressure group activity, notably that of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of which the following two predominate: the abstract nature of their goals contrasting with the economic interests of the ethnic minority masses; the failure of pressure groups to agree on collective objectives and strategies, which may be attributable to factionalism, or leadership personality differences. Walton's criticisms of pressure group divisions were particularly useful in helping to understand differences that exist between Maghrebian pressure groups internal to the PS.

Shukra (1990) has examined ethnic minority pressure group activity in Britain. Her study of Black Sections in the Labour Party illustrates why it has taken so long for ethnic pressure groups to emerge and how they are extremely limited in what they can hope to achieve in terms of electoral and policy goals. The article served to identify a number of areas of investigation for Maghrebian pressure groups inside the PS for my own study.

1.6.5 Political leadership

Thus far there has been little academic analysis of Maghrebian political leaders. Negrouche (1992) has looked at the shortcomings of France-Plus but in so doing did not undertake any detailed examination of the association's councillors.
organisational framework, or internal divisions. While a somewhat larger body of literature exists on *SOS-Racisme*, this has consisted almost entirely of personal accounts by former members (Désir 1985, Dray 1987, Malik 1990) and as such should be treated with caution. A recent exception to this is the work of Slama (1993) who places the anti-racist campaign of the association at the heart of PS ideology in the 1980s.

1.6.6 Coalition politics
In the United States Marable (1985 and 1993) has explored African-American political activism from an essentially Marxist perspective. Of particular note is the section devoted to the 1984 presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson and the 'Rainbow' coalition which cut across ethnic divisions. This work was helpful in illuminating potential future strategies for Maghrebian political participation and, given the change of government as a result of the 1993 legislative elections, assumes even greater significance with the divisions in Socialist ranks, notably among members of the *Socialisme et République* tendency.

A most novel study of electoral coalitions, not from a black-white pressure group perspective but dealing with a coalition of Hispanics and African-Americans, is to be found in the book by Browning, Marshall and Tabb (1984). The study examines the development and transformation of political activism from the protest mode to one of electoral participation in ten Californian cities. The recent nature of the Hispanic entry into the political arena makes this especially relevant to Maghrebs in France. However, the analysis is flawed in its failure to put African-American-Hispanic coalitions into any sort of perspective and it completely ignores black-white coalitions, based on similar socio-economic status, thus leaving its theory of incorporation open to criticism. Nevertheless comparative studies of this kind are to be encouraged provided that a more convincing theoretical framework can be constructed.
CHAPTER 2
FACTORS PRECIPITATING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

2.1 Introduction
The election of over one hundred representatives of the 'second' generation among the North African immigrant community during the 1989 municipal elections was indicative of a new direction in Franco-Maghrebian political participation in France. It represented a major landmark for at least two reasons. Firstly it broke with the relatively passive role of the parents of these youths, the 'first' generation who emigrated to France from their native North Africa, principally from Algeria and to a lesser extent Morocco and Tunisia. Traditionally the parents were discouraged by their respective national governments (and particularly by the Algerian government after the Franco-Algerian war) from becoming involved in politics abroad and in any case as foreigners they were not entitled to enjoy the same political rights as French nationals. Secondly the collective action of Maghrebian youths in some respects went against the former tradition of ethnic minorities integrating into French society on an individual basis. This therefore undermined the Republican and Jacobinist concept of priority being accorded to the individual.

In attempting to chart the progress of the Maghrebian councillors from the 1989 municipal elections onwards, I have first of all sought to trace the birth and development of political action among Franco-Maghrebians. In so doing, the future direction that such activities were to take should become clearer. It was in fact from the early to mid-1970s onwards that French social scientists in particular and French society in general began to become aware of the visible existence of this 'new' generation. These youths were born overwhelmingly in France during the 1960s and their parents had decided for the most part to stay in France, however long they might continue to entertain the myth of return.

2.2 The myth of return
Essential to the development of collective political action was the simple realisation by youths of Maghrebian origin that they would remain permanently in France rather than settle in their parents' native country. This was reinforced by holidays spent in their parents' country of origin. The overriding image retained was a negative one. In comparison with life in
France, life in the North African countries was often perceived by the youths as inferior to that in France. It should be remembered that the majority of candidates who emigrated to France from the Maghreb originated from the least advanced rural areas. More significantly, though, the youths themselves were considered as semi-foreigners by the native population. This was especially the case for girls who were clearly distinguishable by virtue of their western clothes and behaviour.

Given, then, that youths of immigrant origin were rejected by the indigenous populations of the Maghreb and that in addition governments there were reluctant to facilitate their insertion (for example through the setting up of special language classes in Arabic since the majority of youths spoke little, or no Arabic apart from their parents' dialect), they have increasingly come to the conclusion that their mother country is France and that the idea of return is a myth.

2.3 Counter-offensive action
This realisation created the framework upon which collective action was to develop. Its earliest expression was to be found in the networks created by Franco-Maghrebian youths following the decision during the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to attempt to expel certain categories of North African immigrants at the end of the 1970s. Action of a more visible and long-lasting form was to be continued by the Rock against Police movement. Inspired by a succession of racist crimes perpetrated against French youths of North African origin, it grouped together members of the 'second' generation and various left-wing movements in France. Through the medium of live rock concerts, Rock against Police sought to question racist murders and police repression of youths.

Thus far collective action by youths was mainly of a defensive nature. A major change in policy adopted by Maghrebian youths became apparent prior to the 1981 Presidential elections. It was in April of that year that a group of Franco-Maghrebiens decided to go on hunger strike to protest against continuing expulsions. Simultaneously a letter of appeal was sent out to the various presidential candidates. The tactic proved to be successful since one of these, the PS candidate and eventual winner, François Mitterrand, replied that upon coming to power he would put an end to the expulsions. This promise was indeed honoured. The importance of this decisive institutional victory
should not be underestimated for, apart from achieving their avowed aim, the youths were asserting that the 'second' generation did not only want to remain in France, but was in fact ready to participate in French society when given the chance and this was the final blow to the myth of return.

2.4 The accession to power of the Socialists
If this initial victory was an obvious spur to further collective action of a counter-offensive nature, then the Socialist government was to provide an additional impetus that would have an even greater impact. Upon being elected to office, the new government set about repealing the 1939 law concerning foreign associations. Henceforth associations could be created by Maghrebians and other foreign nationals in France without prior government authorisation. Aside from enabling a massive increase in the number of associations, it would also significantly permit those who participated within them to gain useful experience. That Maghrebian youths would be likely to participate was, perhaps, indicated by the violence that took place in conurbations with large Maghrebian concentrations in 1983, particularly in Lyons. Events such as these convinced youth leaders of the need to go beyond immediate defensive measures.

2.5 The extreme Right
A further factor was to be, ironically, the major political breakthrough made by the extreme Right in the 1983 municipal elections with the Front National. Immigration became the main issue during the 1983 elections and the discourse and practices of even the PS (considered by the Maghrebian population as their natural allies) became more hesitant and indeed ambiguous. With the above negative factor coming into play, the attention of the 'second' generation was now focused upon a clearly defined enemy. Lapeyronnie (1987) in his comparative study of African-Americans in the United States and French youths of North African origin in France alludes to the importance of the increase in intolerance displayed by segments of the white French population in stimulating collective action.

If Lapeyronnie's analysis is accurate, then it would appear that the social integration of the 'second' generation was already well underway and that rather than the youths themselves, it was hostility towards them by part of the indigenous white working class which was at the root of the problem. Whites of relatively low socio-economic status live in closest proximity to the
Maghrebian population and also show the greatest tendency among the white French population to vote for the Front National. It should be stressed, however, that this is not the sole factor behind the dramatic increase in support for the extreme Right.

2.6 The anti-racist marches of 1983-4

It is partly as a response to the increasing wave of xenophobia (and in particular anti-Arab sentiment, aimed principally at Maghrebians, but de facto affecting the whole Maghrebian population) that the 1983 'March for Equality and against Racism' should be viewed. The march was initially conceived of by a Catholic priest, Christian Delorme, head of the CIMADE in Lyons, and inspired by European non-violence and African-American civil rights movements. The march from Marseilles to Paris was a form of action, new, not only to the 'second' generation, but also to social movements in France as a whole. The importance of the march can be gauged from the fact that it aimed at highlighting institutional and political blocking points marginalising the Maghrebian population, which was thus maintained in a position of inequality and injustice (immediately prior to the march there had been a spate of racist attacks against 'second' generation youths in Lyons). Those involved, then, were presenting a general demand for equality in such fields as education, employment, justice and various political and administrative powers.

The immediate success of the march was obvious enough: the mobilisation of 100,000 people in Paris in addition to those on the route there; the positive portrayal of Maghrebian youths in the media; the granting of some of their requests, such as a meeting with President Mitterrand. However, perhaps more important than these achievements was the recognition in the long-term of the need for collective action and the very desire to act. After the march had taken place, Franco-Maghrebian youth associations held meetings throughout the country. Although some meetings found difficulty in going beyond the initial phase of simple denunciations, there was at least now the implicit recognition that integration, whilst underway, would be problematic. Secondly if Maghrebian youths wished to overcome such obstacles, then they could not afford to abstain from political life as their parents had, on the whole, tended to do.

Equally, though, Maghrebian youths now became aware to a much greater
degree that there remained hurdles for putting into practice their demands at local level. This was all the more frustrating for these youths given that the success of the march had considerably increased their hopes and expectations. That frustration arose was partly a consequence of bureaucratic constraints. Furthermore formulating concrete demands proved to be an additional stumbling block since the march had appealed to 'values' as opposed to a clearly designated plan of action. Thus there was a gap between what the march had facilitated at national level in terms of general ideas espoused by the government and the reality of restrictions encountered at local level. Paradoxically it was possible to persuade the most important person representing the state, the President himself, of the legitimacy of their demands, while failing at a local level to convince the most humble officials.

2.7 Dispensing with traditional intermediaries
By November 1984, following the far less successful 'Convergence 84 for Equality' march, the Maghrebian youths did not appear to have made much progress. What options were open to them at this juncture? It was impossible to integrate fully into French society via the traditional channel of workers' movements and trade unions since these no longer served the same function as previously, nor did they enjoy the same degree of influence. Formerly Italian, Spanish, Polish and Belgian workers had assimilated into French society by means of such bodies. As Thibaud (Jazouli 1986, 194-5) has stated:

Des étrangers s'intégraient d'abord non pas à la France en général, mais à une France contre l'autre.

By this Jazouli meant that immigrants were previously able to assimilate by finding a central social conflict to which they could adhere via membership in a French social movement. This was illustrated by Spanish Republicans and Italian and German communists who took part in the Resistance during the Second World War. However, when the 'second' generation entered into the political arena, they were faced with a complete vacuum; there were no political, or social movements to which they could adhere. The traditional political ally of immigrants was the PC. During the 1960s Communist-controlled municipalities had welcomed successive waves of Maghrebian labour and family migration. However, an open-door policy had been pursued by the PC on the understanding that any such migratory flows were a temporary phenomenon and that workers would eventually return to their
country of origin. When tensions surfaced in municipalities between the established white working class and the newly arrived Maghrebians, as a result of the presence of the latter, the attitude of the PC leadership changed. Instead of its former conciliatory tone, the approach of the party leadership hardened. What was at stake for the PC was the defence of its traditional working-class support which, by virtue of the prolonged settlement of Maghrebians, was in competition with the latter for limited municipal resources. As far as Maghrebians themselves were concerned, there was an awareness of the exclusion strategy deployed by the PC and a resulting reluctance to participate in, or offer support for the party structure. This posed a potentially serious threat to the local position of the PC and it in this light that one should view the opposition of the party to the right to vote for foreigners at municipal level. By the late 1970s a new generation of youths of Maghrebian origin had emerged. Unlike the 'first' generation, the 'second' generation identified far less closely with the PC and youths tended to operate outside the party's orbit. Associational networks set up were of far greater significance in structuring Maghrebian youths and this was particularly the case after 1981 when an unprecedented development in associational activity was witnessed. Secondly, as Leveau (1989) has argued, the youths in question had, via an extensive stay in the French education system, developed social aspirations far removed from those of the PC and identified more with Palestinian youths than with the traditional forms of working class solidarity. In this respect, then, as Leveau has again pointed out, associations have replaced political parties and in particular the PC as social intermediaries between the immigrant and white French populations.

What, then, of the potential alternative of allying with the various associations on the Left who were sympathetic to their cause? Judging by the relative failure of the 1984 march, youth leaders realised that they could not rely indefinitely upon the support of these organisations. Moreover, many youths considered that the organisations were not so much interested in the plight of Franco-Maghrebians as in promoting their own interests. Even the avowedly anti-racist association, SOS-Racisme (whose principal success was spreading the message of racial harmony and tolerance via the 'Touche pas à mon pote' slogan worn on badges), was not beyond criticism. Many youths refused to be identified with the cause of SOS-Racisme in that it was perceived to be largely an instrument of the PS. The fact that many of its hierarchy were not Franco-Maghrebians and that even its leader, Harlem Désir, was not of North African
origin, but rather of West Indian descent, furthered the alienation of the youths. It should not be forgotten either that SOS-Racisme encouraged links with Jewish organisations in France, whereas many youths from the 'second' generation identified themselves with the plight of Palestinians in Israel. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, SOS-Racisme's rôle in Franco-Maghrebian political participation has been somewhat marginal to date.

2.8 Creating new intermediaries

Arezki Dahmani, an Algerian-born university lecturer at Paris XII, had taken part in both the 1983 and 1984 marches, felt that no existing political party or association could respond to his desire for integration. He therefore participated in the setting up of another organisation, France-Plus (eventually becoming its leader) in the autumn of 1985 which would be targeted specifically at Maghrebians and at their participation in the political process. Dahmani was largely inspired by two factors: his disappointment and disillusionment with communism when visiting the eastern-bloc nations and his consequent endorsement of the advantages of western-style democracy; a close examination of the U.S. model for the integration of African-Americans where the overwhelming adherence of this ethnic group to the Democratic Party resulted in the latter largely ignoring the needs and demands of the African-American population since the Democrats were virtually guaranteed their vote. France-Plus would, according to Dahmani's experiences and research, be an organisation which aimed at creating a new channel of integration into French society. In explaining the reasoning behind the creation of France-Plus, which, contrary to SOS-Racisme, did not have the support of celebrities, or famous intellectuals, Dahmani quite categorically stated that:

Nous [France-Plus] refusons de choisir une France contre une autre...La mise en place d'une vraie politique d'intégration nécessite un consensus. Elle doit être à l'abri des changements de majorité, à l'échelon national. Et à l'abri des conflits inter-nationaux.

(La Lettre de France-Plus: March 1989, 1).

According to this logic, Franco-Maghrebians could adhere to political parties on either side of the spectrum (the Front National excepted) and the Left could no longer count on their support.
By placing emphasis upon integration via political means, Dahmani was already at the forefront of a major departure from the stance of organisations such as SOS-Racisme (see section 4.6. for further details).

While the objectives of France-Plus might at first sight find favour among the youths concerned, there were at least three obstacles to the willing participation of the 'second' generation that would have to be broken down. Perhaps most difficult of all would be persuading youths that participation within the French political apparatus was not a denial, or more to the point a betrayal of the parents' cultural heritage (again the fact that most Maghrebian youths are the children of Algerian parents is crucial here). In order to participate in elections in France, it is necessary to be a French national and to enrol on the electoral list. Until its amendment by the Balladur government in the summer of 1993, Article 44 of the Code de la Nationalité Française (CNF) provided that, with certain exceptions, any child born on French soil automatically acquired French nationality on reaching the age of majority. These provisions applied, for example, to the children of Moroccan and Tunisians immigrants. The picture is more complicated where Algerians are concerned. Most of the children born to Algerian immigrants before 1963 lost French nationality when Algeria became independent in 1962, but under Article 23 of the CNF, they retained the right to reassume French nationality if they so wished. In addition, any child born to Algerian immigrants in France since 1963 was deemed to be French from birth. Algeria has always refused to recognise these claims, insisting that the children of Algerian immigrants are Algerian rather than French nationals. In practice, most youths of Algerian origin have been able to choose between French and Algerian identity papers. But as their parents generally sided with the cause of Algerian nationalism during the war of independence, there have often been strong emotional pressures against their taking up French citizenship. As electoral participation required precisely such a commitment, France-Plus faced an important emotional barrier in this respect. Secondly a marked degree of apathy among these youths, due in part to a lack of knowledge about the political process and the benefits that might accrue, had to be reversed. Finally as France-Plus proposed to cooperate with parties of all complexions apart from the extreme Right, it would have to convince youths that parties of the mainstream Right would be willing to take their needs and concerns into consideration. The previous actions during Giscard's presidency were not a very encouraging factor.
At the outset France-Plus claims that approximately 792,000 Franco-Maghrebians were on the electoral list in 1985. By 1989 this figure, according to the association, had almost doubled to 1.5 million. These figures should be treated with extreme caution since the Ministry of the Interior does not keep figures according to ethnic origin and France-Plus has not to our knowledge identified the precise source of them. However, even taking on board these figures, while the major campaign orchestrated by France-Plus of travelling throughout France to educate youths on the advantages of enrolling was instrumental in the substantial increase in numbers, it does not alone explain the large-scale turnaround from previous apathy. Further impetus was to be found in the actions of the Chirac government during the 1986-88 period. Uppermost in the minds of Maghrebian youths and in fact the entire Maghrebian and non-French populations was the government's proposed reform of the French Nationality Code. Whereas previously any person born on French territory, but of foreign parents, automatically acquired French nationality at the age of eighteen, the Chirac government was now proposing to modify this provision so that the children of immigrants would have in effect to 'earn' the right to acquire citizenship. This potential change was especially alarming to youths of North African origin since if it were to be adopted, then they might be refused French nationality, and thereby rendered liable to expulsion. From the viewpoint of political rights, however, the proposed actions of the Chirac government crystallised in the minds of the 'second' generation the belief that if they did not participate fully in the political process, then there would be others quite willing and able to take decisions which could change their very status in terms of nationality and this could be to their detriment.

The first opportunity that Maghrebian youths would have to express their political opinions on a large scale was to be during the 1988 Presidential election campaign. Research has indicated that youths of Maghrebian origin voted overwhelmingly for the PS candidate, François Mitterrand, and has even suggested they were a non-negligeable factor in his triumph (Dazi, Leveau 1988).

As far as being able to vote for candidates of Maghrebian origin was concerned, however, it was the municipal elections of 1989 which were more relevant. Although it was not the first time that Franco-Maghrebian youths
had put themselves forward as candidates (there were in fact several candidates in 1983, though a precise figure has yet to be arrived at), never before had such a large number expressed the desire to operate within the electoral process. Of an estimated 600 Franco-Maghrebian candidates put forward on various party lists, over one hundred were elected (see section 4.5.2. for precise details on numbers). Given the actions of the Chirac government with regard to ethnic minorities and more specifically the proposed modification of the Nationality Code, the overwhelming majority of candidates elected belonged to parties of the Left, particularly the PS.

Aside from the numerical importance of the 'second' generation's presence, the election of candidates was significant in that it saw the coming together of children whose parents had fought on opposing sides during the Algerian war of independence. The presence as candidates for electoral office of the sons and daughters of harkis indicated that they too had been the victims of discrimination and felt that they had to make their views felt. Figures vary wildly as to the exact number of elected councillors, but it would seem likely that the figure advanced by Catherine Wihtol de Wenden (1989, 21) of 20, if a somewhat conservative estimate, is, perhaps, closer to the truth than the 60% of all elected Maghrebian councillors put forward by the weekly Le Point magazine (7 August 1989).
CHAPTER 3
THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A CANDIDATE

3.1 Introduction
There has been much discussion of the nature of political elites and the extent to which such elites are self-perpetuating in the sense they are drawn mainly or exclusively from one or more particular segments of society. Municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin in France seem to represent a new segment of society that has gained access to the channels of power, however limited the power associated with these channels may in reality be. Do these councillors nevertheless constitute an elite and if so what kind of an elite are they? To answer this question, one must first of all say what we understand by the term 'elite'. Dahl (Parry 1969, 31) defines the term in the following manner:

The category of 'top persons' in any interest group or activity which affects politics.

However, for an elite to have the ability to exert political influence, it is almost certainly necessary for it to constitute a coherent, united and self-conscious group. Meisel (Parry 1969, 32) gives a more comprehensive definition when he refers to the three 'C's', namely cohesion, conspiration and consciousness. By cohesion we refer to those factors which unite municipal councillors. When using the term 'conspiration' we allude to agreement among councillors to carry out certain acts in unison (though unlike the dictionary definition, this does not necessarily refer to acts of an illegal nature). By consciousness we mean an awareness among councillors of the convictions and indeed actions of their counterparts elsewhere. For our present purposes, we shall take these to be our definitions. We shall first of all examine whether there is cohesion among our sample of municipal councillors and will seek to determine whether these councillors are distinguishable from all Maghrebians resident in France and from the French population as a whole in terms of gender, age and educational success.

3.2 Motivations
3.2.1 Objective factors
In order for an elite to exercise its domination, the organisational and political skills of a homogeneous group are required. We need, then, to examine factors
which may lead to unity of purpose. We shall differentiate between, on the one hand factors of an objective nature and, on the other, those of a subjective nature. Let us take a closer look at the former. If the municipal councillors concerned do form a homogeneous group, then this is likely to be seen in their social characteristics. A recent study of municipal councillors in the communes of Cenon and Blanquefort in the Bordeaux region by Richard Balme (Mabileau 1989) provides an interesting comparison. Here it should be noted that all municipal councillors were questioned, irrespective of their ethnic origins. The study revealed that in terms of gender, councillors are predominantly men (43 men to 12 women). A similar feature characterised my sample of municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin, although the ratio was much smaller (15 men to 8 women). The Bordeaux study also indicates that in terms of age, the majority of municipal councillors are of 'mature years' (the average age being 49). For the sample of councillors of Maghrebian origin, however, the figure was considerably lower (the average age being 35). Some 40% of the councillors of Maghrebian origin studied were found to be in the 31-40 year age bracket, while another 35% were situated in the even younger 21-30 classification. Thus three quarters of all councillors were aged forty or less.

Analysis of the socio-professional origins of the municipal councillors in question and their levels of educational achievement should give us a greater insight into whether they actually constitute a homogeneous group. Taking the I.N.S.E.E. definition of socio-professional categories (Mabileau 1989, 137), table 1.1 indicates the categories to which councillors in our sample belong.
Table 1.1 Socio-professional analysis of Maghrebian councillors and the population as a whole (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-professional category *</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>National Working Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Managers and higher intellectual professions</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intermediate professions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Others</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The distinct characteristics of the councillors become apparent from analysis of table 1.1. The data reveal that 39% (9) of Maghrebian councillors interviewed belong in the managerial and higher intellectual professions. By these we refer to such professions as engineers, teachers, journalists and business managers. This compared with only 9.7% of the total working population in this category. Another 43% (10) belong in the category of intermediate professions. These cover occupations as diverse as junior school teachers, nurses and technicians. This was the case for 19% of the total working population. The remaining 18% (4) are to be found in a category that I have termed 'others'. This encompasses a disparate group of councillors who are either retired, unemployed or are currently students in higher education.

Further evidence of the particular characteristics of the councillors of Maghrebian origin can be gauged from my examination of the educational qualifications of councillors in my sample. Some 74% (17) of those councillors interviewed obtained the baccalauréat. This compares with 40% of all youths in France in 1989 irrespective of their origins. For French youths specifically of Maghrebian origin there are no detailed statistics on educational attainment. This is mainly attributable to the fact that statistics according to ethnic origin are not drawn up, but partly also to the logistical problems of counting youths who may in fact enjoy dual nationality (this is the case for many youths of Maghrebian origin, particularly those of Algerian descent) and who in theory could therefore be counted twice. However, using
the results of a study conducted into the educational success of these youths (Aissou 1987), it is possible to examine figures on the percentage of French youths of Maghrebian origin who complete the whole of the 'second cycle' of high school studies which terminates at baccalauréat level. The data from Aissou's study reveal that youths of Maghrebian origin tend to perform less well than French youths as a whole and markedly less than the councillors of Maghrebian origin in my sample. Whereas 60% of French youths as a whole completed studies up to and including the baccalauréat, this was the case for only 29.5% of youths of Maghrebian origin. Bearing in mind that only 40% of French youths actually passed the baccalauréat, it is not, then, unrealistic to assume that a similar proportion of youths of Maghrebian origin who took the baccalauréat in fact obtained the qualification. This would leave us with a figure of approximately 20% of French youths of Maghrebian origin passing the baccalauréat. Even taking into account margins of error, there is a striking contrast with the fact that among my sample of councillors, 92% had obtained the baccalauréat. Moreover, 44% (10) of Maghrebian councillors interviewed possess qualifications above those of baccalauréat standard (this being the equivalent of an 'A' level), which in terms of the British higher education system would approximate obtaining a degree level certificate and 13% (3) of Maghrebian councillors studied hold higher degrees (maîtrise or doctorat). The councillors in question, then, clearly differ in terms of educational achievement from both the population as a whole and from other inhabitants of Maghrebian origin resident in France.

Where unity of purpose among councillors is concerned, one indicator worth examining is whether they occupy posts in either the public or private sector. Balme found in his study of the Bordeaux region that there was a close correlation between the political allegiances of the councillors and their occupations. For example those councillors who were members of parties of the mainstream Right (UDF, RPR) tended to be employed in the private sector, whereas those on lists of parties of the Left worked predominantly in the public sector.

Councillors share similar characteristics also in their national origins. Graph 1.1 highlights the national origin of the councillors' parents.
Graph 1.1. National origins of Maghrebian councillors (nationality of parents)

![Graph showing national origins of Maghrebian councillors]

**KEY**
1 = Algerian
2 = Algerian + French
3 = RONA (Rapatriés d'Origine Nord-Africaine)
4 = Moroccan
5 = Tunisian

The graph reveals that by far the most important nationality is Algerian, which accounts for no less than 60% (14) of the councillors' parents. Eight of these are concentrated within the single *département* of Seine-Saint-Denis. A further 9% (2) of the councillors have parents of Algerian and French origin while 13% (3) are the descendents of harki parents. Thus 80% (18) of the councillors in our sample have at least one parent, and in most cases both, who are of Algerian origin. Identical proportions, 9% respectively (2 + 2) account for the remaining councillors, who are of Moroccan and Tunisian origin.

These factors, while important, nonetheless do not indicate whether we can expect the political convictions of the councillors to be similar. In this connection, it is necessary to examine the process of political socialisation which all politicians have undergone. By this we mean the prior political and/or associational experience that councillors have gained before taking up office. Membership of an organisation is a vital factor in forming the political character of a municipal councillor. As a result of previous group membership
a councillor may both acquire and develop a willingness to become involved in council matters. For the Maghrebian councillors interviewed, membership of an organisation was an important staging post on the road to political investiture. Table 1.2 enables us to develop this analysis.

Table 1.2. Circumstances of councillors' prior involvement in the council by type of organisational membership (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior activities</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associational</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade unions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures show that 52% (12) of the councillors acknowledged they had been members of associations prior to being elected. Often they had belonged to more than one association. Another 45% (10) belonged to political parties and 9% (2) had been members of trade unions, while 4.5% (1) had adhered to anti-racist organisations. Of the remainder, 9% (2) did not have any prior political experience.

The first observation that one can make from the figures is that several municipal councillors are members of more than one organisation. This explains why the total percentages exceed 100. Secondly it should be noted that not only can training for political office be obtained via the traditional channel of political parties, but political parties themselves look favourably upon potential candidates who have gained an apprenticeship via associations, irrespective of whether they were previously involved in the party machinery. Membership of an organisation is important for at least four reasons. Firstly it is indicative of a keenness on the part of the individual to become involved in organisational life. Secondly it is evidence of the attachment of that individual to the local community (though in certain individual cases, experience has been acquired via national associations such as France-Plus or SOS-Racisme). Thirdly, as has been mentioned, time spent in an organisation serves as an apprenticeship within the community power structure. Finally and in individual cases crucially, it is the stage upon which prospective municipal councillors make contact for the first time with the already elected representatives of the local council.
From the examples highlighted thus far it should be clear that there is indeed cohesion, as defined earlier, among the municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin. Cohesion alone, though, is not in itself proof of unity of purpose. As Parry (Mabileau, Moyser, Parry, Quantin 1989, 109) has concluded:

...the link between social background and political behaviour is often feeble and many other factors can intervene to strengthen or weaken cohesion. Social homogeneity is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for elite integration.

It is necessary therefore to examine the degree of consciousness and conspiration among the councillors. Consciousness and conspiration are important factors in that there is a close relationship between frequent contact among elites and shared values. Rosenau (Parry 1992, 112) explains it thus:

It seems reasonable to presume that the greater the interaction among diverse types of leaders, the more they will comprehend each other's attitudes and thus the readier they will be to join together in support of a particular policy.

For those councillors of Maghrebian origin within the PS (the overwhelming majority of those interviewed, it should be remembered), the first experience of meeting other councillors from the same ethnic background was likely to be as members of the CNESOM. While the organisation itself is examined in detail in chapter 6, for the purposes of this chapter it is essential to understand that the councillors were divided up into committees. These were devoted to specific areas of interest pertaining to Maghrebians in France. These included the following: Islam, the armed forces, relationships with the police, culture and political participation. Meeting three times a year, councillors, by attending the meetings, became more aware not only of other Maghrebian councillors elsewhere and forged links with them, but also with the political convictions of the latter. In a minority of cases this actually became a source of conflict. Links between councillors were furthered during the Gulf War when participants at a CNESOM meeting voted to send a special delegation of councillors to the Maghreb immediately after the war had ended (see section 6.5.1.). Such actions have served not merely to cement existing links between councillors within the same département, but have created a greater awareness
of the problems facing Maghrebian councillors throughout the country. CNESOM meetings have provided the forum in which councillors have been able to compare and contrast these problems. One maire-adjoint from the département of Essonne, who regularly attends the CNESOM meetings, explained the gradual development of structured relationships between the councillors in the following terms:

On a commencé à se connaître. On a passé la première année à cela, à savoir qui fait quoi. La deuxième année, je crois qu'on a commencé à pénétrer les dossiers [des différentes commissions] On a discuté à froid. Parce que la première année, c'était vraiment une année où il fallait se positionner par rapport à l'histoire de la France et du Maghreb. La deuxième année on a dit [qu']on veut une nouvelle politique, on veut de nouveaux rapports. Et le voyage [de la délégation] au Maghreb est en quelque sorte le couronnement. (Hanana: Chilly-Mazarin)

3.2.2 Subjective factors
Let us now turn our attention briefly to subjective factors. We shall first of all consider what factors motivate councillors into seeking office. Leaving aside ideological motivations, and focusing instead on personal objectives, it is possible to distinguish broadly between two types of politicians (Parry 1969, 78). There are firstly those who, in seeking office, hope to satisfy a desire for prestige, power or adulation. These tend to come from relatively prosperous upper-class backgrounds and are commonly referred to as 'game' politicians. Secondly, however, there are those politicians who have been raised in a working-class background (typical in this respect of many immigrant families) and who in early life were deprived of many of the material comforts of life. In entering the political arena such politicians seek both wealth and venal rewards. These are commonly referred to as 'gain' politicians. The majority of municipal councillors with whom this study is concerned would tend to fit the latter model. Many of the parents originate from the poor rural areas of the Maghreb and are generally unskilled with low levels of education.

This, though, is a somewhat general overview and we need to focus on the specific motives that Maghrebian councillors may have for seeking office. The picture here becomes far more complex with a variety of motives emerging from the interviews conducted. Some individuals are driven to enter politics
by what they perceive to be a mission. It is the identification with a clearly defined cause which often persuades these individuals to gain experience in politics early in life. This is the case for several municipal councillors in this study and appears to be the single most important factor at play. The 'mission' factor was expressed in a variety of ways by councillors. Some argued that their initial decision to enter politics was motivated by the need to provide a positive image of Maghrebians to French society as a whole:

[Mon objectif] c'était de montrer aux Français et en particulier aux Dijonnais que nous en tant que Beurs pouvions être comme les autres et s'intégrer comme les autres. Et que l'intégration n'était pas forcément un problème.
(Hammadi-Denis: Dijon)

Others placed particular emphasis upon becoming involved in politics in order to encourage French youths of Maghrebian origin to vote:

Mes objectifs, c'étaient d'inciter les Beurs à voter, surtout ça parce que c'est vrai qu'ils ne votent pas.
(Rahmouni: Vénissieux)

One maire-adjoint had been inspired by the actions of civil rights activists in other parts of the world. This influenced his decision to seek office because, as a child, had identified with like-minded causes:

J'ai été élevé dans l'ère de Martin Luther King. Il m'a beaucoup marqué. Notamment pour faire que les noirs américains soient des citoyens américains...[...] Peut-être avec d'autres, surtout avec d'autres, j'ai essayé de traiter ce problème.
(Sahiri: Grenoble)

For some councillors it was rather a specific event which crystallised in their minds the need for action on their part. The dramatic increase in support for the extreme Right during the 1980s is one case in point:

La décision, je l'ai prise le lendemain de l'élection présidentielle [de 1988]. Le Front national a fait 15 pourcent. Je me suis dit : Il faut que je rentre dans un parti politique et puisse avoir des responsabilités
politiques pour essayer de changer les choses. C'était le Front national qui a été pour moi le détonateur.
(Kedadouche: Aubervilliers)

Others again cite the actions of the Chirac government between 1986-8, most notably the proposed reform of the Nationality Code, as the main contributing factor:

C'est la période de cohabitation qui m'a obligé à sortir de l'anonymat. J'ai commencé à militer en fac.
(Hanana: Chilly-Mazarin)

For a minority of the councillors interviewed, other incentives were suggested as motivating factors. One councillor from Isère was specifically interested in improving her awareness of how local politics operates:

Moi, [...] ça peut paraître égoïste, ce qui me paraissait intéressant dans l'expérience, c'était de voir comment au niveau communal ça fonctionnait.
(Chaïb: Grenoble)

3.3 Functions
In this section we shall move away from factors motivating councillors into seeking office and instead will focus on the nature of our sample of councillors as an elite. Assuming that in any kind of society (or at the very least in most societies) there will be some form of hierarchy, an elite will tend to emerge which is distinct from the population as a whole. A distinction needs to be made, however, between the various types of elite. For the purposes of this chapter, it is necessary to distinguish between political elites, who are the focus of attention here, and socio-economic or military elites. Within the political elite there are differences between those who operate at national and local levels. Parry, when referring to national political elites, talks of two clearly distinct levels, one being the lower stratum (also referred to as the 'outer core' by other political scientists), the other being the upper stratum. By this he explains that there exists a bridge between an inner core of decision makers and the rest of society. The upper stratum are those elites who actively participate in major decisions. The lower stratum, on the other hand, act in effect as mediators between the inner core and the masses by
transmitting information in either direction and by explaining and/or justifying the reasoning behind the policies formulated by the inner core. While fundamental differences undoubtedly exist between the two levels, it is nevertheless possible for members of the lower stratum to gain access to the higher level by virtue of the experience they have acquired from below.

How does this national model apply to municipal councillors in France? As the mayor makes most major policy decisions, s/he is clearly part of the upper stratum. However, as Mabileau (1989, 29) indicates, the mayor is not the only player involved:

In France [at municipal level], most such decisions are taken by individuals and not only just by the mayor (who generally keeps control of local finances), but also his deputies (adjoints). The latter are given delegated authority in specialised areas of local management such as town planning, welfare and culture.

The status of the mayor is, in this respect, peculiar to France, particularly when one compares and contrasts it with the British model. Whereas in Britain the mayor is perceived more in terms of an honorary representative of the council, in France the mayor is a figure who wields considerable power, attributable to his/her prominent position within the local community. Furthermore s/he is expected to bring together a variety of divergent groups and interests which exist among the local population and are officially represented by the local councillors. The power in real terms of the mayor has been noted in the following manner by Dupuy (Mény, Wright 1992, 82-3):

Legally the Municipal Council makes decisions, but, in reality, it is the mayor who, in the name of the general interest, imposes his decisions. The mayor is perceived as independent of all the parties concerned; he is presented as the 'father' of the commune and is accorded great prestige and attributed exceptional qualities of wisdom and experience. The Municipal Council apathetically lends itself to ratifying the mayor's decisions, often by a generally unanimous show of hands.

It should be apparent, then, that municipal councillors have relatively little influence over the decision making process and it is questionable whether they can be termed a political elite. At best they may belong to that category of
political elites known as the lower stratum or outer core. However, my own research has clearly demonstrated that the municipal councillors in the sample do belong to a socio-economic elite in terms of educational achievement and socio-professional levels, which clearly differentiates them from both the total French population and from the Maghrebian population in France. Despite obvious limitations in the political sphere, councillors are able to act as intermediaries between the mayor and the electorate in putting forward the views and grievances of the electorate which the mayor and his deputies may be unaware of. In so doing they are able to exert some degree of influence, albeit indirect, over future decisions that the mayor might take.

3.4 Maghrebian councillors and elite theory

Having noted that municipal councillors generally belong to the lower stratum of elites, we need to examine the extent to which their status fits in with elite theory. What for example is the relevance of the lower stratum to elites in general? Can elite theory adequately account for the evolution of the municipal councillors in question? If not, what alternative explanations exist? What possible conceptual deficiencies are inherent in elite theory?

First of all what is the importance of the lower stratum? After all, have we not already demonstrated that it is the upper stratum that makes all the major decisions? Mosca (Parry 1969, 33) argues that the lower stratum is essential in maintaining elite status:

Below the highest stratum in the ruling class there is always another that is more numerous and comprises all the capacities for leadership in the country. Without such a class any sort of social organization would be impossible.

Let us look more closely at the implications of Mosca's argument. Mosca puts forward the view that alone the upper stratum is numerically and politically incapable of performing the complete range of functions that are required of any leadership in a society. In order that such functions may be successfully carried out, the help of the lower stratum must be enlisted. The lower stratum will act as an intermediary in explaining and justifying the decisions of the upper stratum to the mass of the population. Secondly the lower stratum includes the prime candidates for recruitment to future positions of prominence within the upper stratum. Underpinning the whole argument is
Mosca's belief that the key to the stability of any political system lies more in the quality and continuing existence of the lower stratum than in that of the upper stratum. This is because the latter can always be replaced by suitable replacements from the lower stratum. If the lower stratum disappears, however, then not only is the potential for future leadership material lost, but society as a whole will lose its cohesion since there will no longer be any linkage between the elites and the masses.

The implications for the municipal councillors with whom this study is concerned are profound. If the councillors are systematically prevented from reaching the upper stratum, then it is likely that they will become disenchanted with their status and, seeing no possibility of promotion, may decide to retire from the political arena altogether.

A related aspect of elite theory is Michels' 'iron law of oligarchy', which is akin to the hypotheses put forward by Mosca and Parry. Michels' interest in the pre-war Socialist parties in Europe provides the basis for pertinent comparisons with the majority of councillors under study, given their concentration on PS lists.

Essential to an understanding of Michels' research is his theory of the 'iron law of oligarchy'. Michels argues that in any organisation of any size, leadership is necessary to ensure its success and survival. However, one of the consequences is that, given the nature of the organisation, it becomes impossible to hold the leaders accountable to the party followers. This is true in spite of the fact that the leaders are supposed to be the agents of those who have elected them to office. Michels attributes the absence of checks to at least two sets of factors: those of an organisational and those of a psychological nature. The former are of greater importance since it is via organisation that more power can be acquired and this can be used to wield yet further power in terms of controlling the way the party operates. This may include the way in which the party is financed, the information that the party disseminates and crucially the selection of party candidates for electoral office. The last point is particularly relevant to the case of municipal councillors. For a party to acquire and maintain power, electoral success is clearly required. However, Michels recognises that party members alone are not sufficient to ensure this. Therefore the support of non-party members must be won. In order to achieve their support party policy will have to become
more moderate. A logical consequence of this is that in order to attract widespread support,

the party must moderate its dogma, must provide continuity of leadership to give an assurance of stability, must devote itself to organizing its vote rather than maintaining the purity of its doctrine. (Parry 1969, 43)

If the party devotes its energies to ensuring that its support is sustained and indeed increased, then it should follow logically that retaining office will become the primary consideration. This specific goal is likely to be achieved by a 'watering down' of party doctrine according to Michels. If Michels's hypothesis is correct, then it may be difficult to maintain a proletarian leadership. Parry (1969, 44) describes what happens as a result:

Instead a 'proletarian elite' emerges which ceases to be proletarian in anything but origin as it exchanges manual for desk work and wages for salary. The leaders are 'bourgeoisified', strangers to their class, and the party hierarchy becomes an established career offering a rise in social status as well as income.

Before we analyse the implications of Michels theory upon the plight of the Maghrebian municipal councillors, it is important to highlight one potential flaw in the model which may have direct implications for Maghrebian political participation. Mosca argues that it is by no means certain that minority interests are more likely to be attended to by an elite. The reverse may in fact be true with two potential outcomes. In the first, failure to take on board minority interests results in a combination of apathy and alienation from the political process. In the second scenario, the minority population may perceive the lack of attention it receives to be profoundly unjust and react by intervention inside or outside established channels. This could entail potential outbursts of violence as were witnessed in France during the mid-1980s. Against this criticism Michels argues that the ruling class maintains itself by adjusting its policies to meet the demands of the new social forces and incorporates the leadership of those forces into at least the lower stratum of the elite. For the purposes of our study this would mean the PS taking into consideration the needs and wishes of the Maghrebian population along with those of other ethnic groups present in France. This brings us to a question to
a question of great importance. Has the PS taken on board the municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin for purely electoral reasons, seeking to increase its support, or has it acted out of a genuine desire to improve the lot of Maghrebians in France? If it is the latter, then it should be possible for councillors to make the transition from the lower to upper strata and therefore be potential future candidates for mayoral and parliamentary office. The next section of this chapter will seek to answer this very fundamental question.

3.5 Recruitment of Maghrebian councillors
We need to examine why the PS has sought to attract candidates of Maghrebian origin for municipal office and the manner in which it has gone about the process. The previous municipal elections of 1983 had been something of a disappointment for the party in electoral terms and party leaders were keen to increase their support, both in terms of attracting new members to party ranks and improving the party's standing with the public at large. One potential area of attracting support was among the Maghrebian population. In the early years of Socialist rule, the party had witnessed outbreaks of unrest, notably in 1981 and 1983, when youths of Maghrebian origin were prominent along with other youths in expressing their anger and frustration with conditions in the suburbs of major French cities, notably Lyons. The PS had also been present to witness the more positive channelling of energy into events such as the 'Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme' and had in fact been instrumental in setting up the anti-racist movement SOS-Racisme. The PS was, then, acutely aware of the desire among youths of Maghrebian origin for action and of the obstacles that remained when it came to taking effective action at municipal level. If carefully harnessed, then this energy could be used to the party's electoral advantage. The desire for action was reinforced by the creation in 1986 of France-Plus and the subsequent campaigns to enrol 'Beurs' on the electoral lists (see sections 4.2 and 4.5 for the creation and electoral participation of France-Plus).

It was as a response to all these factors that the PS sent out a national directive at the beginning of 1989 calling upon local party sections, particularly where the Maghrebian population was significant numerically, to encourage suitable candidates of North African origin to put themselves forward as potential candidates. When interviewed, various councillors made specific reference to this directive. In response to the question of how the PS had reacted to his being proposed as a candidate, one municipal councillor from the département
of Seine-St-Denis made the following comments:

Cela répondait à la demande de Mauroy. Au début des élections municipales, Mauroy avait dit que sur chaque liste, il fallait qu'il y ait un Beur.
(Kedadouche: Aubervilliers)

This view was confirmed by another municipal councillor and reflected the opinions of all councillors interviewed:

....Un des objectifs pendant le mandat de François Mitterrand, c'était de retrouver des Beurs sur des listes. Et notre section s'est dit: ce serait bien de respecter ça. Et c'est à ce moment-là qu'on m'a dit: ce serait bien que tu participes..
(Hammadi-Denis: Dijon)

Certainly the large number of municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin on PS lists suggests that their candidacies were not a mere coincidence. This view is confirmed by Georges Morin, President of the CNESOM, which brings together various municipal councillors originating from the Maghreb, and who was instrumental in the setting up of France-Plus:

(Morin: Paris)

Morin adds:

Il a fallu quand même pousser le mouvement. Et de la même façon les jeunes Maghrébins, même ceux d'entre eux qui étaient membres ou proches du PS, n'osaient pas encore. Parce qu'ils étaient encore un peu frais, un peu fragiles dans les structures du PS.
(Morin: Paris)

Morin explains further that with the agreement of Pierre Mauroy, the decision
was taken to encourage Maghrebians to stand as candidates:

J'ai dit: "Ecoutez. Il est très important que le P.S. donne enfin un signe qu'il prend en considération les Maghrébins de France. Plus il y en a sur les listes, plus j'en serai satisfait. Mais il ne faut pas que ce soit artificiel."

(Morin: Paris)

Further evidence of a directive from the national leadership was provided by a long-standing PS activist, Sultana Cheurfa. While not a municipal councillor, is of Algerian descent and as President of the Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane she has been closely involved with municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin:

Oui le PS a passé un circulaire à l'époque en 89 disant qu'il devrait y avoir un élu [candidat] d'origine maghrébine sur les listes.

(Cheurfa: Paris)

In answer to the question of who actually sent out the circular, Cheurfa replied:

C'était un circulaire national. Donc c'est Mauroy au bureau exécutif.

(Cheurfa: Paris)

3.5.1 Selection process
This being the case, the question needs to be asked of how candidates were selected. What kind of selection process was in operation and upon what criteria were candidates chosen? As we have already seen from observing the social characteristics of the councillors, they are on the whole relatively young and their organisational experience is somewhat limited, often restricted to that of membership of cultural or sporting associations rather than political parties.

Georges Morin, President of the CNESOM, upon gaining the support of Pierre Mauroy, was personally entrusted with the responsibility of contacting prospective candidates. He explains the type of criteria employed when he telephoned and wrote to the various town halls prior to March 1989 in order to identify future candidates as follows:
...Si vous avez sur votre commune des Maghrébins qui sont enseignants, médecins, animateurs sociaux, sportifs, qui ont vraiment de l'allure et qui ont du caractère, vous les prenez. (Morin: Paris)

Furthermore after the 1989 municipal elections had taken place, Morin sought councillors of various denominations, but who all were of Maghrebian origin. Of the total of almost 300, over a hundred were of Muslim origin:

J'ai écrit, j'ai téléphoné à toutes les mairies du P.S. en leur disant : Signalez-nous tous les gens qui sont du Maghreb, qu'ils soient chrétiens, juifs ou musulmans. Nous avons réussi à trouver près de 300 élus socialistes originaires du Maghreb et à peu près 200 d'origine europééno-juive, une centaine d'origine maghrébine-musulmane. (Morin: Paris)

It was on the basis of this data that Morin compiled a list of municipal councillors throughout the whole of France originating from the Maghreb, divided up into the various départements. Analysis of the selection process enables the comments of Morin to be tested, as is shown in table 1.3.

Table 1.3. Selection process of councillors to municipal office (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner in which approached</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Put themselves forward</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted via intermediary</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by local party</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made up party list</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As inquired how they had become candidates on party lists, 35% (8) of my sample said they had put themselves forward, 13% (3) had been proposed by intermediaries (either local associations, or national organisations such as France-Plus) and 4% (1) claimed to have made up the party list themselves. The latter category refers to one maire-adjoint in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis who, as First Secretary of the PS, was personally responsible for drawing up the joint PC-PS list. However, the largest proportion, 48% (11), said they had been invited by the local party section. Of these six were below the age of 30 and another three below the age of 50. The figures appear to
support the above comments of councillors and PS officials that a national directive was indeed sent out to recruit 'Beurs' onto their lists and that young candidates were sought in particular. Among those councillors who were invited to stand as candidates, one was directly approached by the mayor:

[Le maire] est venu me voir à la sortie d'un match de basket (...) Il m'a dit : Malika, il faut qu'on se voie. Donc il m'a expliqué qu'il voulait me faire figurer sur la liste pour quelque chose puisque j'étais femme, parce que j'étais gisroise, parce que j'étais impliquée dans la vie associative - et parce que je suis Beur.

(Chaib: Grenoble)

The above testimony is mirrored by that of other councillors, though not necessarily all were approached by the mayor in person. Significantly it tends to be the youngest and therefore least experienced of councillors who were selected in this manner. The question nonetheless remains as to how the local party section obtained the names of potential candidates for not all the councillors in my sample were necessarily party members. Over a third (8) of the councillors who filled in my questionnaire indicated that they did not belong to a political party. Of the remainder who did (15), all but two were members of the PS (one was a member each of the PC and one belonged to the RPR). One of the PS party members was also a member of Génération Écologie and unsuccessfully sought election on one of the latter's party lists during the 1993 regional elections. One councillor in a suburb of Lyons explains her particular situation:


(Rahmouni: Vénissieux)

Of the sample of councillors who put themselves forward as candidates not one was to be found in the 21-30 age bracket. Instead these councillors tend to be almost exclusively party members who have enjoyed several years of experience within the local party section and who saw their candidacy as a
natural and logical progression. In answer to the question of how she was elected, one maire-adjointe made the following remarks:

(Cocozza: Drancy)

3.5.2 Typology of Maghrebian councillors
In brief, then, it may be possible to distinguish between two types of councillor in respect of the selection process. On the one hand are younger candidates, below the age of 30, who are not necessarily party members and who have relatively recent experience, either in a political party, or more likely in an association. This type of candidate has been persuaded to enter local politics. On the other hand, there are candidates above the age of 30, the majority being in the 31-40 age bracket, who have gained considerable experience within the party as fully committed activists and who perceive their candidacy as being the logical next step. Only a tiny minority have been encouraged by intermediary sources to seek office.

3.6 The promotion of councillors from the outer core to the inner core
Now that we have ascertained how the selection process takes place, we have to determine what possibilities exist of promotion from the lower to upper strata. One circumstance in which Maghrebians may be promoted to the upper stratum may arise if they put themselves forward as candidates for mayoral office. If successful, Maghrebians would be able directly to influence the decision-making process. In addition the post could be used as a possible springboard for election to parliamentary office. However, since the next municipal elections after those in 1989 are not scheduled until 1995, this avenue has not so far been open to them. Other indicators nonetheless exist and prominent among these is the extent to which Maghrebians have been put forward by the main political parties as parliamentary candidates. The most recent opportunity of this kind was during the 1993 legislative elections, when in fact none of the mainstream parties fielded any Maghrebian candidates. Only the two principal ecologist parties, Génération Ecologie and Les Verts, put forward candidates of Maghrebian origin (including one councillor in my
sample who is presently a municipal councillor on a PS list). None of these was elected.

The fate of Larbi Georges Sali, who attempted to run as a PS parliamentary candidate in 1988, is perhaps significant. Sali is now maire-adjoint in St. Denis in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis, which has the largest number of Maghrebians and particularly Algerians in Ile-de-France. Sali, who had undergone a theoretical grounding in politics at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris, was a long time activist in the PS local section, and appeared to be well positioned and qualified for seeking higher office, particularly in Saint-Denis, where he had born and brought up. He certainly believed he was well placed to stand for the office of député and put himself forward. In order to conceal his origins from the electorate, he decided to invert his forenames. He was duly selected at the Assemblée Générale of the local PS section, but was opposed by Henri Weber, who was invited to stand by Laurent Fabius. Weber successfully demanded a second vote and the previous result was reversed. Sali alleges that the normal selection procedure was not respected and that it was as a direct result of this that Weber finally became the official PS candidate for parliamentary office. Weber was overwhelmingly defeated by the PC candidate. While it is by no means certain that Sali himself would have fared much better against the Communist adversary, the crucial point here is that if the above testimony is accurate, then he was forcibly denied the opportunity to do so.

3.7 Conclusion

While it cannot be assumed that the circumstances of the Sali case referred to above reflect the plight of Maghrebian councillors in general, some underlying principles which are general to the political participation of Maghrebians in France do nevertheless apply and merit further analysis. In the final section of this chapter we shall highlight potential obstacles and the implications of these for future political activism on the part of Maghrebians.

The problems experienced by Sali in the selection process illustrate the difficulties that ethnic minority councillors may face in organising support for their nominations to positions of responsibility. As Fitzgerald (1984) has observed with respect to Afro-Caribbean and Asian councillors in the United Kingdom, the nomination of an ethnic minority councillor is dependent to a large extent upon white support since whites are in the majority in local party
sections. With respect to the French situation, there are few instances where, for example, Maghrebian members of a political party will constitute the majority. However, as Fitzgerald is at pains to stress, even if such a majority existed, there is no guarantee that members from the same ethnic minority group would vote for an ethnic minority councillor.

It should not be assumed that the unsuccessful nomination of ethnic minority councillors can be explained solely in terms of racial factors. There may in fact be a number of non-racial factors equally at play. In the case of Maghrebian councillors, this might include the political convictions of an individual which are at variance with those of the local party section. This is particularly the case for any individual on a PS list who either does not belong to the same 'tendency' as the one which prevails in the local party section, or who is sufficiently independently-minded that s/he refuses to adhere strictly to official party policy. Indeed if an ethnic minority councillor was selected purely as a tokenist measure, then this may pose additional problems where that councillor holds divergent ideological opinions from other local party members.

Nevertheless racial factors cannot be totally excluded from the analysis. In the case of the PS, which was the party in office nationally for over a decade, the choice of individual candidates have been influenced by external factors. The behaviour of any party in office is governed to a certain extent by public opinion and its reaction to events. From the mid-1980s onwards the PS, for reasons already explained, was forced into defensive mode. Therefore in a political climate which was clearly unreceptive to ethnic minority groups and especially to Maghrebians, account would certainly have to be taken of racial factors by the PS national leadership. This in turn would have a bearing upon the weight accorded to the placing of ethnic minority party members in high-profile positions of responsibility. Fitzgerald argues that this is one of the major obstacles to ethnic minority political participation. In what she terms 'vicarious racism', the ethnic minority candidate is not selected by the political party on the grounds that the electorate at large would not tolerate his or her candidacy. This serves as an excuse for inaction on the part of the party concerning matters of racial equality. However, as Fitzgerald (1984, 113) rightly points out:

Those who take this attitude claim and may very well believe that they
do not share this general prejudice. They fail to recognise that it would make no practical difference if they did.

Why, then, should it be important for people of ethnic minority origin to hold positions of responsibility in the upper stratum? Fitzgerald identifies at least four factors. First of all it would, according to her analysis, make the white policy makers of the upper stratum more sensitive to the needs of the ethnic minority population. Secondly it would enable ethnic minority councillors to play an active rôle in formulating policy. This is seen as preferable to the traditional situation which prevails where ethnic minorities remain passive agents who have decisions taken for them by white policy makers. Thirdly the tenure of positions of responsibility by, in my sample, Maghrebian councillors would provide a positive rôle-model for youths of Maghrebian origin. This may be particularly important in urban areas with high rates of unemployment where youths see no hope of future employment and may be attracted to the rapid acquisition of material wealth as flaunted by drug dealers for example. The latter, along with sportsmen, perhaps, often provide the only rôle-models to which many Maghrebian youths can hope to aspire. Finally by creating the conditions in which members of an ethnic minority can gain access to positions of responsibility, it would demonstrate the extent to which political parties are genuine in their commitment to equality of opportunity.

The above guidelines require further discussion. The first dilemma faced by political parties who are willing to take on board the above considerations is whether they should implement a quota system. In the case of the PS the principle of quotas is already accepted for the political participation of women, though one must remember that women constitute the majority rather than the minority in French society. To accept such a system for Maghrebians, even if the percentages were much reduced, would leave any party open to the criticism of that it was disproportionately favouring one minority on the sole basis of race and this to the detriment of the population as a whole. This might create resentment and hostility on the part of the white French population since there would undoubtedly be the perception by some that Maghrebians, who were not necessarily deserving of electoral office, would be given political opportunities at the expense of suitably qualified white candidates. There would need, then, to be careful consideration of the candidates chosen under any such system. The other side of the coin, however, is that under the present situation perfectly apt candidates from ethnic minorities may
themselves be prevented from being elected to office through no fault of their own.

Secondly, and leaving aside for one moment the reasons for which ethnic minority councillors may be elected, even if they do rise to positions of prominence due to their own merits, there still remains the thorny issue of the extent to which they can be expected to represent their own ethnic group. While a more detailed discussion of this issue is to be found in section 5.5, for the purposes of this chapter it is important to stress that the selection of a candidate from an ethnic minority may have serious repercussions on the policies formulated by political parties with regard to that minority. If, for example, a Maghrebian councillor is perceived by the political party to be a representative of the Maghrebian population as a whole, be that at municipal or national level, then such a perception might adversely affect the treatment of Maghrebeans. Fitzgerald (1984, 110) explains why with reference to Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in the United Kingdom:

...It is all too likely that the parties will take the easy option of treating the opinion of 'leading' black people in their own ranks as representative of the views of black people at large. Aside from the objections of 'tokenism', the real danger is that the idiosyncratic opinions of a small group of necessarily atypical black people may shape party policies on racial equality in ways which will fail to meet the real needs or wishes of the majority.

In practical terms what can be done by political parties to ensure that Maghrebian councillors have the same opportunity as any other local politician to enter the upper stratum? An obvious measure to implement is systematically charting the number of Maghrebians within political parties and crucially those in positions of responsibility. Thus far only Georges Morin in the PS has sought to list municipal councillors originating from the Maghreb (which includes non-Muslims) and even he has yet to provide a list of Maghrebians in positions of responsibility within the party. It is only by a close internal examination of the methods employed for recruitment that political parties will be able to make an informed decision on whether a policy of positive discrimination should be advocated. There should therefore be an internal review which takes account of the recruitment and selection procedures for candidates. The progress that ethnic minority councillors make
will similarly need to be monitored. Any comprehensive review will equally require the party structure to be re-examined (Fitzgerald 1984). These remain the idealistic goals that political parties must pursue if their sincerity regarding the provision of equality of opportunity for ethnic minorities in the political sphere is to be fully credible. However, these considerations along with others will have to be measured against electoral considerations and in particular adverse public reaction, bearing in mind that the views of party members and those of party supporters are not necessarily one and the same.
CHAPTER 4
NATIONALLY-BASED ORGANISATIONS

4.1 Introduction
In their dealings with the formal institutions of French political life, most councillors of Maghrebian origin have been involved more or less directly with a variety of pressure groups, some of which have sought to act as intermediaries on their behalf. While there are numerous local associations, whose influence is inevitably limited to particular localities, at the national level there are two well known organisations which claim to speak for young people of immigrant origin. These are France-Plus and SOS-Racisme. The present chapter will focus primarily on France-Plus. There are two main reasons for this. Unlike SOS-Racisme, which is concerned with all ethnic minorities, France-Plus devotes its efforts almost exclusively to Maghrebians. In addition, France-Plus has prioritised the electoral process, whereas SOS-Racisme has seldom been concerned with the promotion of local or national candidates. As my own research is centred on Maghrebians involved in electoral politics, I will not attempt an exhaustive analysis of the two organisations, but will instead use comparisons where appropriate to identify more clearly the strategies deployed by France-Plus.

We shall begin by briefly outlining the origins of the two organisations and will seek to identify what links exist between them and mainstream political parties. During its early days France-Plus was closely identified with the PS, but we shall see that it has increasingly distanced itself from traditional political cleavages. This accomplished, I shall go on to highlight both the organisational structures of the associations and their objectives. The actions of France-Plus will be studied in the following two domains: civic rights campaigning and the 'sponsoring' of Maghrebian youths for the 1989 municipal elections.

The ideological differences that exist between France-Plus and SOS-Racisme will be considered with respect to the following issues: political strategies; the right to vote of immigrants; links with Jewish youth organisations and the Palestinian question. We shall then consider the views of the councillors in our sample towards the two associations and their rôle in the relationship between elites and the grass roots. Internal divisions within the associations, which have resulted in a rapid turnover of personnel, will be considered in a final section.
Before entering into an in-depth examination of associational activity at national level, it is important to recognise that associations claiming to promote the interests of Maghrebian youths exist also at local level. These include the Association Nouvelle Génération Immigrée (ANGI), the Mouvement des Beurs Civiques (MBC) and Génération Beur, which operates in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis. This latter organisation is presided over by Nordine Chérif, a graduate of the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Paris and a former PS activist whose bid for a place as councillor in the St. Denis municipality proved unsuccessful. In 1989, the association put forward no less than thirty proposals to the government of Michel Rocard, of which twenty-five were concerned with national issues and five with matters of international importance. By far the most controversial of these was the first, demanding that a French national of Maghrebian origin be appointed to a special ministry concerned with the integration of citizens of immigrant origin.

4.2 Origins and development

4.2.1 France-Plus

Although the best known figure in France-Plus is now its President, Arezki Dahmani, the organisation owes its origins primarily to Georges Morin. Of pied-noir origin, Morin is a member of the comité directeur of the PS and a long-time activist in affairs concerning the Maghrebian population in France. When I interviewed Morin in June 1992, he emphasised the support which he had received from the upper échelons of the PS during the preparatory stages. Morin recalled sending a letter to Jean-Louis Bianco in 1985, not yet a minister but in regular contact with ministers in positions of power under the premiership of Laurent Fabius, in which he stated his desire for the PS to become more engaged with youths of Maghrebian origin. Subsequently, he met with party leaders, including Lionel Jospin, to discuss the matter and as a result of the latter’s interest, a working party was set up to examine the issue in greater depth.

Expanding on the objectives which he had in mind, Morin stated:

L’une des choses qui fait le drame des Maghrébins à l’heure actuelle dans les années 80-90, c’est qu’ils sont la seule communauté française d’origine étrangère qui n’a pas investi le champ politique. Toutes les autres minorités, qu’elles soient protestantes, juives, arméniennes, pied-noir, ont investi le champ politique [...] Moi, j’ai dit à mes amis beurs : "Si vous voulez que les hommes politiques cessent de vous insulter et de
jouer la corde du racisme pour avoir des votes à droite ou à l'extrême droite, le seul moyen, c'est que vous pesiez sur le plan électoral. C'est-à-dire qu'il vous faut vous inscrire sur les listes électorales et vous devrez aller voter."
(Morin, Paris)

Asked how it was that Arezki Dahmani, then an assistant lecturer at Villetaneuse, had become president, Morin said:

[Dahmani] était là parce que la première réunion que nous avons tenue pour constituer cette association s'est tenue chez une amie algérienne [Dalila Chevalier] qui est l'épouse d'un professeur de Villetaneuse. Il s'appelle Jean-Marie Chevalier et il m'a dit : "Tiens, j'ai un assistant qui s'appelle Arezki Dahmani". Donc il est venu et quelques mois après il était président.
(Morin, Paris)

This account is largely confirmed by that of Mohamed Meb Toul, another member of the comité directeur of the PS (the only member of Maghrebian origin, in fact) as well as a former producer of the "Mosaïque" television programme. According to Meb Toul, the initiative for France-Plus had indeed originally come from Morin, with the backing of senior PS officials. It was at a meeting with other members of the working party, notably Dalila Chevalier, the Algerian wife of an economics lecturer at the University of Villetaneuse and Nacer Kettane, a Maghrebian writer and journalist, that Dahmani entered the picture:

Ils [le couple Chevalier] l'ont proposé comme président. Dalila parce que c'était l'étudiant de son mari. Il [Dahmani] est un peu jeune, médiatique [...] et derrière lui c'est Dalila et Morin. Mais, disons, on le tient. C'est lui le président, mais nous, nous tenons les rênes.
(Meb Toul, Paris)

The influence of the PS was plain to see at the official launch of France-Plus in the autumn of 1985, as Le Monde reported:

D'autres personnalités proches du pouvoir dont M. Georges Morin, chef de cabinet de M. Louis Mermaz, président de l'Assemblée nationale,
encouragent, avec des moyens plus modestes [que ceux de SOS-Racisme], la constitution de "France-Plus", une association regroupant enfants d'immigrés et de harkis, sous la bannière des droits civiques. (Le Monde, 1 November 1985)

The magazine *IM'média*, which specialised in matters relating to young Maghrebians in France, took a jaundiced view of these links with PS officials, particularly those with pied-noir origins:


Despite France-Plus having been in large part the creation of Georges Morin, Dahmani, from the movement's early beginnings, had his own ideas as to how it should develop and took full advantage of the opportunity with which he was presented, directing the association in a way that was not anticipated by its initiators. Dahmani, born in Kabylia in 1952, became involved in Algerian politics while a student, setting up an autonomous student movement. After being imprisoned for this, however, he believed that he had reached an impasse in Algeria and would be better served by leaving the country. He settled in Paris in 1974 to undertake a Ph.D. in economics. A short stay in Eastern Europe convinced him of the benefits of western-style democracy and that his future lay in France. He participated in the 1983 and 1984 Beur marches, but believed that no effective association existed to take up the demands of youths of Maghrebian origin. Meb Toul claims that during the first France-Plus press conference, Dahmani, when questioned by a journalist as to his political orientations, clearly distanced himself from bi-partisan politics: "Un journaliste lui a dit : 'Est-ce que vous ne roulez pas pour le PS?'" To this, Dahmani was reported to have replied: "Je ne roule pour personne". (Meb Toul, Paris)

The reluctance of Dahmani to deal solely with one political party can be attributed in part to his analysis of the American model which has been the inspiration for many of his deeply-held convictions concerning France-Plus. Dahmani explains his logic as follows:
Aux États-Unis, nous avons constaté que les Noirs ont fait une grosse erreur. Ils ont choisi un camp et assimilé la défense de leurs droits à la victoire des démocrates. Du coup, ils ont permis à toute cette partie de l'Amérique qui s'est toujours sentie républicaine de les rejeter en toute bonne conscience.  
*(Jeune Afrique 15 March 1989)*

Meb Toul believes that Dahmani has displayed a considerable degree of shrewdness in his dealings with the originators of the movement by avoiding their manipulation. Once there was a change of government in 1986, the most prominent founder members withdrew their support from the association:

Mais il s'avère qu'Arezki Dahmani est beaucoup plus malin que Georges Morin. Il s'est sauvé avec cette association [...] Arezki s'est sauvé avec France-Plus, ce qui fait que tous les fondateurs de cette association sont partis. Dalila, Georges Morin, Nacer Kettane. C'est eux les fondateurs de l'association.  
*(Meb Toul, Paris)*

Having taken over the presidency, though, Dahmani had to face the reality of financing the association. This was complicated by virtue of the opposition to the movement from certain members of and sympathisers with the PS. However, the main opposition originated from the parallel movement which had been set up, SOS-Racisme. Georges Morin explains why:

La première raison, c'est qu'il y avait un autre mouvement qui était lancé parallèlement qui était SOS-Racisme. Manifestement ils avaient été plus soutenus que nous, pour des raisons de fond d'ailleurs. SOS-Racisme disait qu'il ne fallait surtout pas créer des groupes sur une base ethnique ou culturelle.  
*(Morin, Paris)*

Morin claims to have been told directly by Julien Dray and Harlem Désir, the co-founders of SOS-Racisme, that the existence of a new movement would detract from their own support. With hindsight this appears to have been an exaggerated fear (and one which Morin denied at the time) given that so few youths of Maghrebian origin were involved in SOS-Racisme. Indeed Morin cites this as one of the main reasons for creating France-Plus.
Dahmani seems to demonstrate an awareness of difficulties encountered when making the following comments:

Nous sommes confrontés à des gens de gauche, de droite et du centre qui continuent à nous ignorer, nous manipuler, à ne pas tenir leurs promesses.
(France-Plus n.d.a, 27)

Perhaps it was in part a realisation of the hard realities of political life that persuaded Dahmani of the need to pursue a pragmatic approach to fund-raising, remaining receptive to parties across the political spectrum who showed an interest in his movement. The following comments are revealing in this respect:

Aux partis politiques de séduire, de convaincre et d'agir. A nous de choisir celui qui comprend le mieux nos préoccupations et défend l'intérêt général de la société dans laquelle nous vivons.
(France-Plus n.d.a, 27)

With the change in government in 1986, Dahmani had the opportunity to put the receptiveness of the mainstream Right to the test. Even Georges Morin is now willing to acknowledge that the new government in office at the time was more disposed to provide financial aid to the movement than the previous Socialist one:

Done en 86 la majorité change en France et Arezki Dahmani qui est un garçon intelligent et habile a pris contact avec le nouveau gouvernement français. Et là par contre il a rencontré des oreilles attentives. Notamment de Philippe Séguin et de Claude Maluret. Ils ont eu une aide du gouvernement de droite qu'ils n'avaient pas eu d'un gouvernement de gauche.
(Morin, Paris)

This is something which Morin, although defending Dahmani's position, found particularly difficult to accept as a Socialist:
Cela me donnait mal au ventre de voir que c'est un gouvernement conservateur qui donnait de l'argent à un mouvement que nous avons créé avec des jeunes issus du Parti socialiste.
(Morin, Paris)

In 1988 the government again changed hands and a Socialist Prime Minister returned to Matignon. Morin claims that subsequently the new Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, and members of his 'current' attempted to wield influence over France-Plus and this was to be the start of various tendencies within the PS developing similar tactics (see section 6.4 for details of the activities of various PS 'currents' with regard to Maghrebian pressure groups). According to Morin's testimony, he warned members of the Rocard tendency against such action in the following terms:

Moi, j'avais dit à l'époque aux amis rocardiens, méfiez-vous parce que si vous mettez la main dessus, cela va paraître comme un mouvement beur rocardien et déjà les problèmes de l'intégration sont compliqués [...] Surtout chaque clan du Parti socialiste va être tenté de créer son propre mouvement et cela n'a pas raté.
(Morin, Paris)

Morin goes on to explain what he meant by the last sentence. In his opinion the result of not heeding the above advice was that he then witnessed the break-up of the 'Beur' movement into the following separate sub-groups:

Alors il y a eu les amis de Jospin qui ont créé Club Emergence, les amis de Jean-Pierre Chevènement qui ont créé le Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane. Et tout cela après que Laurent Fabius a bien mis les mains sur SOS-Racisme.
(Morin, Paris)

Morin believed that such factionalism merely complicated matters further and deflected attention away from what he perceived to be the more important concerns of Maghrebians (see section 6.2.2 for further details).
4.2.2 SOS-Racisme

During and after the 1983 Marche des Beurs and the 1984 Convergence march, it had become apparent that the 'Beur' movement was fragmented and unable to provide a single mouthpiece to air its views. Moreover this was the case not only for Beur youth associations, but equally for groups claiming to represent the plight of ethnic minorities in general. It was against this background that SOS-Racisme had its origins.

The association was initially the brainchild of Julien Dray. Of pied-noir origin, Dray was born in Oran in 1955, but was brought up in the Seine-Saint-Denis municipality of Noisy-Le-Sec. He studied economics at the University of Villetaneuse, and subsequently secured a post as junior lecturer there. Villetaneuse was an important arena in which student activism was allowed to flourish during the 1980s. The student demonstrations in 1986 against the Devacquet bill began there and several of the original members of both SOS-Racisme and France-Plus were recruited from this university. Successive presidents of the university had been members of the PC and the party wanted to use the institution to demonstrate its ability to lead. Dray had become interested in politics via membership of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) while simultaneously setting up a new organisation, the Mouvement d'Action Syndicale (MAS). Among the founder members of the latter was Harlem Désir, a French national born of mixed parents, a West Indian father and an Alsatian mother. Désir would be instrumental in the creation and organisation of SOS. In 1981 Dray joined the PS and became increasingly sympathetic to the plight of ethnic minorities resident in France.

SOS-Racisme was set up in November 1984 and emerged into the public arena in the autumn of that year when it participated in the Convergence march, which was only a limited success. The reduced support for this demonstration compared with the 1983 march convinced Dray of the need to bring together the disparate groups which had participated in these events and to transform them into one united organisation.

In order to achieve a structured and coherent movement which appealed to French youths, Dray would be required to enlist the support of ethnic minority groups including Maghrebian youth groups. He therefore devoted his efforts in the first three months of 1985 towards negotiating with Beur association leaders, as well as Maghrebian intellectuals and religious leaders. A conference
was organised by Dray and Désir at the Sorbonne in March 1985. During this meeting, reservations were expressed by Beur leaders concerning the links between SOS-Racisme and the PS. Some argued that SOS was the official mouthpiece of the party. Equally there were doubts about the leadership of SOS since several figureheads including Eric Ghébali, Marc Britton and Dray himself were of the Jewish faith and this could lead to potential conflict with the Beur movement given that the latter identified closely with the plight of the Palestinians. Dray was perfectly aware of such reservations, but nevertheless argued that French nationals of the Jewish faith were an essential feature of any movement which purported to be anti-racist:

Au moment de la fondation de SOS, la communauté juive, ses intellectuels, ses jeunes sont d'emblée partants. Et nous nous sommes bien décidés à ce qu'ils jouent un rôle. D'abord parce que dans la bande certains sont juifs, ensuite parce que le mode de fonctionnement des juifs vis-à-vis du racisme, de l'antisémitisme, concernés, militants, nous paraît un exemple intéressant. Même si on nous l'a parfois reproché.
(Dray 1987, 204-5)

Dray was able to convince some, if not necessarily all, Beur leaders of the need to highlight their condition in the media and that SOS had the financial clout to do this. Dray was to realise the potential of PS support in helping the movement attract media attention early on according to Malik:

Les fondateurs, et surtout le plus politique d'entre eux [Julien Dray], ont compris qu'ils pouvaient pallier la carence médiatique et institutionnelle des mouvements beurs. Ils vont capter à la source le fonds de commerce et, avec le soutien de l'appareil du PS, récupérer la lutte des jeunes des cités.
(Malik 1990, 40)

For the movement to function effectively, a representative figurehead was required. Dray was reluctant to put himself forward as leader since, because of his origins, he might risk marginalising the movement. However, Harlem Désir, a history student from Villetaneuse, presented the ideal profile as Dray explains:
Côté symbole, on est servi: il y a Harlem Désir, black et surtout un nom à faire rêver; ensuite une extraordinaire facilité d'élocution, une étonnante maîtrise de soi.
(Dray 1987, 204)

In other words ethnic minorities could identify immediately with Désir because of his origins, but at the same time he possessed the necessary leadership qualities for the post. Despite this, Serge Malik maintains that Dray remained the driving force behind the association:

Pour Harlem, qui vacille parfois face à l’enjeu, la confiance et la force viennent de Juju [Julien Dray], du Patron.
(Malik 1990, 41)

Initially the supporters of the movement were drawn from the same background as Dray; students at the University of Villetaneuse, often from the classes he taught, who had joined the LCR and MAS, before adhering to the PS and finally SOS itself. Later, however, youth leaders from other parts of the country became involved. Prominent among these were Kaïssa Titous, the first president of Radio Beur and later a vice-president of SOS, and Nora Zaïdi, head of SOS in Franche-Comté, and who would eventually become one of two Euro-MPs of Maghrebian origin. This enabled an organised network to be set up on a small scale. If, however, the association was to attract more widespread support, it would require the recruitment of individuals on a far larger scale. According to Malik, potential members were to be recruited according to the following criteria:

Dray demande à Rocky [Didier François, recruteur pour la LCR] et à Harlem [Désir] de recruter en faisant attention au look. Il faut rameuter des Beurs qui fassent "banlieue", ne soient pas politisés, ou, si ce n'est pas possible, il convient de les sélectionner au sein des fédérations d'Ile-de-France du PS.
(Malik 1990, 45)

To pursue its aims SOS-Racisme required financial support. In due course, it was to receive funding from the Fonds d'Action Sociale (see section 4.3 on organisational resources). From the outset, however, the association had attracted the attention of the nation with its attempts to spread the anti-racist message via the Touche pas à mon pote campaign in the early part of 1985. As a result of
nationwide publicity, a number of sponsors came forward to help finance SOS. These included the Free Masonry (Grand Orient de France), Yves Saint-Laurent, and various industrialists and other institutional associations such as the Ligue Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme. It seems likely, however, that even more generous financial aid was provided by organisations sympathetic to the PS. These included the Mutuelle Nationale des Etudiants de France (MNEF), the Fédération de l'Education nationale (FEN) and the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT).

While the support of these organisations was appreciated, it posed a dilemma for SOS since they were all closely affiliated to the PS and therefore a direct link could be made between the association and this political party. Furthermore the link could potentially provide the basis for future conflict if SOS and the PS differed on policies regarding ethnic minorities in France.

With the departure of Julien Dray from the daily running of the association in 1988 to pursue his political career as a député in Essonne, Désir was henceforth the uncontested leader behind the scenes in addition to remaining in control in public.

4.3 Organisational resources of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme

The two associations differ in terms of the composition of their members. Whereas France-Plus is composed almost exclusively of French nationals of Maghrebian origin, of whom Kabyles predominate among the leadership, SOS-Racisme encompasses a far wider range of nationalities and ethnic and religious groups. These include French nationals of Central and West African origin, South East Asians and to a lesser extent Maghrebians. SOS-Racisme estimates its national membership at 17,000. (Le Journal de SOS-Racisme Paris Ile-de-France 1992, 3). France-Plus has not released any precise figures to date, although a figure of 10,000 has been quoted by one press source. (Le Monde 9 July 1992) It seems likely, however, that the membership of France-Plus is considerably less than that of its counterpart. Both associations have a national network, although they are heavily concentrated in the Paris region.

The organisation of France-Plus is divided up into three basic levels: an executive; a collective of national delegates; an honorary committee. The first of these is made up of a president, a vice-president, two general-secretaries (one is concerned with co-ordinating the network of its members, while the other deals
with external affairs), a treasurer and a deputy-treasurer. At a second level national delegates are chosen to sit on committees which examine specific issues. The number of these varies dependent on their particular relevance at the time. They have included the following: Europe; religion; elections; society; the economy; youth and sport; information and communication; education; finance; family; employment and training; social action; justice; old people; health; the environment; urban issues; housing; culture; women's and minority issues; business advice. The delegates on these committees tend to be either municipal councillors who were sponsored by the association, or members of the executive. Among our sample, five councillors have at some stage or other presided over one or more of these committees. It should be stressed, though, that not all claim to have been sponsored by France-Plus for the 1989 municipal election campaign (see section 4.7.1 for further details). Finally there is an honorary committee on which prominent Maghrebian personalities are invited to sit. These have included the writer and doctor, Nacer Kettane, instrumental in setting up Radio Beur, the cardiologist and maire-adjoint in Lille, Salem Kacet, the journalist Farid Aïchoune and prominent businessmen such as Slimane Azzoug and Yazid Sabbeg.

SOS-Racisme has an executive with a president, a vice-president and an administrative council. It has 15 specialised committees, each related to specific issues, which deal with everyday cases of discrimination that people from ethnic minorities face. In addition there is a body of some three hundred personalities which provides financial sponsorship to the association. France-Plus is financed to a large extent by the FAS (Fonds d'Action Sociale) which in the period 1987-90 substantially increased its annual contribution from 370,000 francs to 1.8 million francs. This coincided with the presence in power between 1986 and 1988 of a centre-right government under the premiership of Jacques Chirac and subsequently of the Socialist government under Michel Rocard which was also sympathetic to the association's goals. During the Chirac premiership, the then Minister for Social Affairs, Philippe Séguin, was particularly receptive to the association's aim of presenting candidates on lists of both the Left and the Right for the 1989 municipal elections. Previously in the 1988 Presidential elections, surveys carried out after the second round of voting had taken place indicated that French youths of Maghrebian origin had voted overwhelmingly for the PS candidate, François Mitterrand. The benefits that accrued to France-Plus as a result of trying to place itself above the Left-Right divide were as follows:

(Passages 1989, 24)

Séguin, in addition to augmenting the funding for France-Plus, also invited a young Beur, Farida Berhaili, to become a councillor on his list in Epinal, which she duly accepted. In 1990, when the Socialist government was in office, the annual budget for France-Plus totalled more than 3.5 million francs and was divided up in the following manner: 1.8 million francs (51.1% of the total) were provided by the FAS; 500,000 francs came from the Ministry for Social Affairs (14.2%); 350,000 from Matignon (9.9%); 250,000 from the Ministry of Defence (7.1%); 200,000 francs (5.7%) from the Secretary of State dealing with Women's Rights; 170,000 francs (4.8%) from the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport; 100,000 francs (2.8%) from the Commission concerned with the Harkis; 100,000 francs (2.8%) from the Aquitaine Regional Council; 50,000 francs (1.4%) from the Gironde Regional Council. (Fonds d'Action Sociale 1991, 2)

SOS-Racisme also receives its funding from a variety of sources, some of which are extremely difficult to quantify. What is clear, though, is that although the association is dependent to a large degree on state aid, the proportion of funding from the FAS is much smaller than that for France-Plus (51.1%) for 1990. In the period 1985-88 SOS saw its funding from the FAS rise from 50,000 to 500,000 francs annually. There was a small increase of 10,000 francs in 1989. State finance from other sources is more difficult to estimate. It is derived from a variety of ministries similar to those drawn on by France-Plus, to which may be added the ministries responsible for education; culture; environment; justice; training; humanitarian action. Figures have yet to be released publicly providing a precise break-down. Funding is secured from its committee of financial sponsors, the members of whom pay an annual contribution to the association. In the case of events such as the SOS-Racisme concerts finance was obtained from the state, TF1 and Yves Saint-Laurent. The association has also a far more modest income from the sale of its Touche pas à mon pote badges. Given the degree of state intervention in funding and that from its origins questions have been raised as to the nature of the association's relationship with the PS, the
question of the extent to which the party has been able to exert influence has to be raised. One former member of the SOS leadership, Kaïssa Titous, questions whether the relationship was at all prudent. She argues that it has in fact been detrimental since financial influence on the part of the PS has resulted in political clout being wielded over SOS, which in turn has alienated Beurs from remaining in or adhering to the association:

Je mesure à quel point notre [celle de SOS-Racisme] élimination des choix politiques et notre exclusion de la gestion financière allaient de pair. Le contrôle de l'argent par un groupe politique organisé [Le PS] a fourvoyé le pluralisme en autorisant la mise à l'écart des Beurs et de toute voix autonome. Le fric commande la politique à SOS comme ailleurs.

(Passages 1989, 29)

Journalistic observers equally noted the alienation of many Beurs from the association which they attribute to the close financial links with the PS and its sympathisers:

Soutenue par le pouvoir et patronnée par des personnalités du show-business, l'association SOS-Racisme allait peu à peu s'aliéner les Beurs qu'elle avait d'abord su séduire.

(Le Monde, 1 November 1985)

4.4 Objectives

4.4.1 France-Plus

The aims of France-Plus are twofold:

(a) A primary aim of the organisation was, according to Dahmani, to bring together youths from the various nationalities and origins which make up the Maghrebian population in France. In particular he sought to unite the children of parents who had fought on opposing sides during the Algerian War. Dahmani explains it thus:

L'objectif de France-Plus, c'est qu'une page de l'histoire douloureuse soit tournée par les "beurs" et les enfants de harkis. Tous ensemble. Pour écrire une autre histoire, plus juste et plus digne, tout en gardant la
mémorie. Le principe "diviser pour mieux régner" a fait son temps, nous l'avons compris.
(France-Plus n.d.a, 27)

(b) Secondly, and as mentioned previously, France-Plus had as a major objective facilitating the economic, social and political integration of youths of Maghrebian origin. Dahmani explains the logic of this approach:

À France-Plus, on ne parle ni d'assimilation, ni d'insertion. On parle d'intégration. Les seuls handicaps auxquels se heurtent les jeunes sont liés aux conditions sociales de leurs parents. Le devoir - et l'intérêt - de la France, c'est de les aider à sortir de la marginalisation et de l'exclusion, c'est de les intégrer.
(La Lettre de France-Plus 1989a, 2)

Dahmani goes on to define what he means by the term 'integration':

Intégration signifie égalité des droits sociaux et politiques. C'est le droit à la ressemblance qui conduit le jeune à vivre naturellement sa différence. Pour avancer cette idée, nous avons créé France-Plus, il y a quatre ans en précisant que l'intégration était à la fois économique, sociale et politique.
(La Lettre de France-Plus 1989a, 2)

Concerning political integration, a Civic Rights campaign, taking a leaf out of the African-American movement of the 1960s campaigns, was undertaken. This included encouraging the enrolment on the electoral lists of youths of Maghrebian origin in addition to presenting candidates on various party lists for local and other elections.

4.4.2 SOS-Racisme

SOS-Racisme has two principal aims. The primary aim of the association and the one for which it was created at the outset is to combat racism. Secondly, however, the association realised that the battle against racism was not simply one of words, but was more importantly, perhaps, a long-term struggle of actions. A second objective thus became a 'pro-integration' stance.
The means by which SOS sought to achieve these objectives varied considerably. Initially, in order to combat racist opinion, the weapons of the media were utilised to the full, as Harlem Désir explains:

Oui, nous avons dans une première phase, lancé SOS-Racisme comme une campagne d'opinion en utilisant toutes les ressources médiatiques possibles.

*(Le Monde, 29-30 July 1990)*

This involved both large-scale marches in which sympathisers from throughout the country converged on Paris and a nation-wide campaign to spread the anti-racist message by means of a badge with the slogan, *Touche pas à mon pote*. Dray was aware that the use of a badge enabled people to demonstrate their support for SOS-Racisme even when the association did not have any operational framework. He assesses the importance of the badge in the following manner:

Si l'on fait une campagne pour tous, il faut trouver un moyen qui permette de militer sans se rendre à des réunions. Dans nos têtes l'image du badge Solidarnosc fait tilt. Si quelqu'un, chanteur, acteur, intellectuel, agrafte le badge devant les caméras, l'effet est immédiat.

*(Dray 1987, 206)*

However, while the above actions met with some degree of success of SOS-Racisme to expand its operations, a nationwide organisational structure would have to be created. As Dray explains, the movement was transformed into a campaigning organisation:

Il est vrai qu'après le grand rassemblement de la Concorde en juin 1985 nous avons opéré un tournant pour devenir un mouvement militant. C'est la deuxième phase de notre action, avec les batailles qui ont suivi contre la loi Pasqua, la réforme du code de la nationalité, et la participation au mouvement de la jeunesse de novembre-décembre 1986.

*(Dray 1987, 206)*

The organisation's 1986 newsletter explains the importance of its network:
SOS avec ses comités qui se sont développés dans toute la France, dans les établissements scolaires, mais aussi dans les quartiers, dans les entreprises, est ainsi un lieu de solidarité active contre les discriminations, qui rompt l'isolement de ses victimes. (*SOS-Racisme 1986, 30*).

With an organisational framework in place, SOS-Racisme was then able to devote its attentions to a third phase of action where emphasis was placed upon concrete actions to support its "pro-integration" stance. Désir explains as follows:

"C'est l'objectif de la troisième phase de notre action: faire entrer l'intégration dans les faits. (*Le Monde, 29-30 July 1990*)."

This would be achieved in practice with the help of the following two measures:

- l'aide juridique aux victimes de discrimination et de racisme.
- la proposition de mesures concrètes pour faire avancer l'intégration et la mobilisation de l'opinion qu'elles entraînent.

(*Le Journal de SOS-Racisme Paris Ile-de-France 1992, 3*)

In terms of the second set of proposals, this would entail the following actions:

En développant la citoyenneté, donc. Sous toutes formes : par l'accès plus large à la nationalité, bien sûr. Nous avons proposé la création d'une agence nationale pour les naturalisations. Par le droit de vote aux élections locales [...] Aujourd'hui, il faut intervenir tous azimuts, bien sûr. Administration, école, formation professionnelles, etc.[...]

(*Le Monde, 29-30 July 1990*)

4.5 Electoral participation of France-Plus

4.5.1 Civic rights campaigns

To achieve the majority of its objectives, particularly those pertaining to the political domain, it would be necessary for France-Plus to attract the support of youths of Maghrebian origin. However, even if politically-motivated goals did initially find favour among the youths concerned, there were at least three major obstacles which France-Plus would have to overcome:
i) The first of these was, perhaps, the most difficult and involved the association persuading youths that participation within the French political apparatus would not be a denial, or even a betrayal of their parents' cultural heritage. Significant here was the numerical importance of youths of Algerian origin. In order to participate in both local and national elections, youths of Maghrebian origin would have to enrol on the electoral lists and this would be possible only if they were registered as French nationals. The complexities of the Nationality Code meant that the children of Algerians born prior to 1963 would have to make a conscious decision to opt for French nationality. This was made especially difficult for male youths of Algerian origin who, since they were regarded by the authorities in Algeria as natives of that country, could be called upon to do military service there.

ii) Secondly it was necessary to reverse the marked degree of apathy among these youths, related in part at least to the above considerations, but due also to their comparatively low levels of educational achievement and socio-economic status, which meant that there was a lack of knowledge about the political process and the benefits that might accrue from it.

iii) Thirdly France-Plus still had to convince youths that parties on the Right as well as those on the Left would be willing to take on board their needs and concerns. Previous government actions under the presidency of Giscard did not augur well.

The campaign of civic rights advocated by France-Plus involved travelling throughout France, but particularly to those areas in which the proportion of citizens of Maghrebian origin was significant, to make the youths concerned aware of the need to enrol on the electoral lists. Of note among the various campaigns was the sixty-day trip around France from 6 October to 5 December 1988, the first phase of the so-called 'Eurocharter', during which time a coachload of France-Plus activists met youths in Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseilles, Nice, Lyons, Metz, Lille, Nantes and Paris as well as neighbouring towns.

Figures concerning the number of Franco-Maghrebians enrolled on the electoral lists before and after France-Plus's registration campaigns vary quite considerably and must be treated with caution. As the French state keeps no
official figures on the ethnic origins of electors, it is impossible to establish an
exact figure for those of Maghrebian origin. Dahmani, for his part, estimates the
figures before and after France-Plus's registration campaign as follows:

En 1985, nous étions seulement 792 000 inscrits sur les listes
electorales. Les jeunes, surtout, n'avaient guère conscience de la force
qu'ils représentaient. Aujourd'hui, [1989] nous sommes 1,5 million soit
environ 4% de l'électorat.
(Jeune Afrique, 15 March 1989)

Dahmani gives no indication as to how he has arrived at such figures, nor does
he explain the composition of the numbers involved.

The figure of 792,000 may be a somewhat misleading representation of data
calculated by Georges Morin, whose close involvement with the Socialist
governments of the 1980s permitted access to unpublished sources of various
kinds. In 1986, Morin stated:

Il y a en gros une masse de 800 000 électeurs français d'origine
maghrébine. Que l'on peut diviser en trois groupes, encore une fois de
manière approximative parce que, Dieu merci, il n'y a pas en France de
fichiers par religion. Mais on arrive d'une manière ou d'une autre à
retrouver ces chiffres. Il y a en gros 350 000 électeurs qui sont
originaires de la communauté des Français musulmans rapatriés [i.e. les
harkis et leurs enfants].

Il y a aussi à peu près 350 000 électeurs potentiels qui sont fils
d'immigrés. [...] Et puis on évalue en gros à 100, 120 à 150 000 le
troisième groupe qu'on baptise brutalement 'immigrés de luxe' - c'est
un terme que je n'aime pas trop - constitué de médecins, d'enseignants,
d'universitaires, de commerçants, et qui n'ont pas connu les drames des
immigrés et des rapatriés. [...] Donc en tout, si vous voulez, il n'y a pas
loin de 800 000 électeurs potentiels.
(IM'média Magazine 1986, 17)

Although Morin begins by speaking of 800,000 electors (a figure very close to
that cited by Dahmani), it is clear from the remainder of his remarks that this
denotes the total number of potential Franco-Maghrebian electors, i.e. all adult
French nationals of Maghrebian origin, as against those who have actually
enrolled on the electoral register. Morin later updated these figures, estimating that in 1990 there were 500,000 people of harki origin and another 500,000 Franco-Maghrebians, i.e. first-generation economic migrants who had settled in France and taken French nationality combined with immigrant-born children enjoying French nationality. With an additional 1.4 million Maghrebians retaining their nationality of origin, Morin concluded that in 1990 there were 2.4 million Muslims of Maghrebian origin resident in France (Lacoste C., Lacoste Y. 1991, 534). As only about a million of these were adult French nationals, and hence eligible to vote, it is difficult to see how 1.5 million Franco-Maghrebians could have enrolled on the electoral register, as claimed by France-Plus.

It does nevertheless seem likely that the major campaign undertaken by France-Plus on a nation-wide scale made a significant contribution to improving registration figures among young Maghrebians. The impact of these enrolments on the electoral lists was felt during the 1989 municipal elections. In the municipality of Berre (Bouches-du-Rhône), the incumbent Communist mayor refused any kind of dialogue with youths of Maghrebian origin. This in a municipality of 12,000 inhabitants of which at least a third are of non-French and in particular of North African descent. Local youths reacted to the intransigence of the mayor by enrolling and voting en masse for the PS candidate, Serge Andréoni. This enabled the latter to top the poll by a narrow margin in the first round, and created the conditions for his second round victory. The mayor publically thanked the youths in question (Le Point 24 April 1989) for their support. Selim Sahli, France-Plus activist in Berre, evaluated the contribution of local youths in the following terms:

(Le Point 24 April 1989, 78)

The second phase of the 'Eurocharter' was devoted to meeting political figureheads in other European countries. The aims of these meetings differed from those within France as the official France-Plus newsletter explains:

Ils [les représentants de France-Plus] ont pour mission d'aborder avec les responsables des états l'idée de citoyenneté en Europe, le statut des non-européens, l'harmonisation des droits politiques et sociaux. Objectif:
la mise en place d'une carte de résidence européenne avec la liberté de circuler et de s'installer dans tout pays des "Etats-Unis d'Europe".

*(La Lettre de France-Plus 1989c, 4)*

Meetings were held in Spain, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium. The twelve representatives of France-Plus also met with members of ethnic minorities in these nations. This was exemplified by their visit to Great Britain where, among others, they held discussions with Dianne Abbott, one of the Black British MPs. The global objective of these visits was to create the framework for a European movement of civic rights which would be called Europe-Plus. A satellite organisation, Belgique-Plus, has already been established in that country.

4.5.2 'Sponsoring' youths on municipal electoral lists

A potential outcome of youths of Maghrebian origin enrolling in large numbers on the electoral lists was that at least some of these would eventually become candidates for election to local political office. The opportunity to realise this was provided by the 1989 municipal elections. It was not the first time that Franco-Maghrebians had put themselves forward as candidates. Several had in fact been candidates for the previous municipal elections of 1983, including one councillor in our own sample. The major development lay rather, then, in the large number of candidates of Maghrebian origin who expressed their desire to operate within the political machinery of French society. For Dahmani the municipal elections were the ideal platform on which he could put into practice his ideas on political integration. An integral feature of his ideology was that candidates should be placed on the lists of parties of the Right as well as those of the Left, traditionally considered as the allies of Maghrebians in France. Dahmani explained his reasoning prior to the elections as follows:

> Je ne crois pas que la démocratie soit le monopole de la gauche. Pour sa consolidation et l'inscription de nouveaux droits dans les textes législatifs de la France, nous avons besoin de tous ceux qui partagent ces valeurs. Il nous faut convaincre ceux qui ne sont pas convaincus.

*(Politis 16-19 January 1989)*

The three political personalities mentioned at the end of these remarks are the mayors of Lyons, Bordeaux and Grenoble respectively and as such wield a great deal of influence over their cities.
Dahmani laid down two pre-conditions for the placing of young Maghrebians as candidates on the lists of political parties. The first was that that the parties themselves should not regard the youths merely as 'token' candidates who were only on the lists to boost support for that party:

Ce candidat doit figurer en bonne place. On ne veut pas être l'Arabe de service ou le Portugais de service.
*(Politis 16-19 January 1989)*

The second pre-condition concerned the responsibilities that the successfully elected candidates would have. Dahmani believed that any such youths would be doing a disservice to the plight of Maghrebians in general if they dealt exclusively with matters relating to ethnic minorities since it would pigeon-hole them into a distinct category of elected officials who would be there to serve the interests of one particular segment of the local community based on ethnic origin. Consequently it would undermine the wider mission of those Maghrebians elected. Dahmani commented in the following manner:

La seule chose que nous [France-Plus] leur [aux candidats] demandions, c'est de refuser dans les attributions de s'occuper de l'immigration. Nous voulons qu'ils soient reconnus pour leur compétence.
*(Politis 16-19 January 1989)*

The line taken by France-Plus did not meet with universal approval, however. Georges Morin in particular was extremely critical of the tactics adopted by Dahmani and this has been the cause of subsequent differences between the two individuals and the organisations that they preside over. Morin disagreed with the actions of France-Plus for two reasons. First of all the inclusion of ethnic minority candidates might mislead parties into thinking this assured them of the ethnic minority vote:

Moi, j'ai eu une explication très orageuse avec Arezki Dahmani en disant : Ecoute, d'abord tu escroques les gens qui t'écoutent parce tu leur fais croire que parce qu'ils auront un beur sur la liste, ils vont avoir toutes les voix des Maghrébins de la commune. C'est faux et tu le sais très bien.
*(Morin: Paris)*
Secondly Morin argued that Dahmani used candidates as bargaining chips. They were put forward indiscriminately across the political spectrum, suggesting to political parties and the public at large that the youths in question had no deep-rooted ideological convictions and could be taken advantage of by either side of the political spectrum:

Et deuxième chose, beaucoup plus grave, que je n'ai pas pardonnée, que je n'aime pas du tout, c'est qu'il donnait le sentiment en allant "vendre" des candidats aussi bien à droite qu'à la gauche que les Arabes étaient à "vendre". Et que pour une place ils n'avaient aucune idée politique aussi bien à gauche qu'à droite indifféremment.

(Morin, Paris)

Differences between Morin and Dahmani became more visibly apparent during the municipal election campaign. It was in part in response to Dahmani's 'sponsorship' of candidates that Morin decided to alert Socialist town halls to the possibility of taking on board suitable candidates of Maghrebian origin. In the city of Bordeaux this led to candidates of Maghrebian origin figuring on rival party lists. Dahmani, after negotiations with the Mayor of Bordeaux, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, had put forward Hassan El Houlali on a joint RPR-UDF list. The PS candidate for mayor, Xavier Bordeaux, was angered by the France-Plus member appearing on the opposing list and another youth of Maghrebian origin was invited to stand on the PS list. El Houlali, who was successfully elected, explains how events unfolded:

Son [Chaban-Delmas] adversaire socialiste, Xavier Bordeaux, nous a reproché nos contacts avec le maire. Nous [France-Plus] lui avons répondu que nous fréquentions tous les démocrates, de droite ou de gauche. Il [Xavier Bordeaux] n'a pas aimé et a pris un Beur que nous ne connaissions pas, en queue de liste, condamné d'avance.

(Le Point 24 April 1989)

Dahmani himself explains the logic of the campaign in Bordeaux:

Le schéma idéal, c'est que Chaban-Delmas prenne un jeune de "France-Plus" et les socialistes aussi. Le fait est que le Parti socialiste en a pris un, en 40è position, et Chaban un, en position éligible, le geste de
Chaban a un impact sur l'opinion publique, sur son électorat. On fait la même chose avec Baudis, Carignon, Séguin, Diligent et j'en passe. Ça fait réfléchir. Que veut dire ce geste ? L'intérêt pour moi, c'est l'intérêt de ce que cela représente pour la France.
(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 274)

From the above case there would appear to be a discrepancy in the practices of France-Plus. Dahmani seems to be claiming that the Beur on the PS list and the Beur on the Chaban-Delmas list were both France-Plus imports. This may well be one example of France-Plus claiming to have sponsored candidates who had nothing to do with it (refer to section 4.7.1 for further details). Nevertheless France-Plus claims to have enjoyed considerable success in its campaign to sponsor candidates of Maghrebian origin on various party lists. In the aftermath of the municipal elections, Dahmani made the following assessment:

Cet engagement de n'être ni de gauche ni de droite est illustré par les 506 élus aux dernières élections municipales à l'occasion desquelles 60% des candidats figuraient sur des listes de gauche et 40% sur des listes de droite modérée et républicaine.
(France-Plus n.d.a, 28)

At face value the figures would appear impressive, particularly since France-Plus claimed to have put forward 1000 candidates in total and that of the 506 elected, 54 became maire-adjoints. However, in subsequent interviews the exact numbers of candidates and elected councillors have been called into question. In an interview given to Libération on 28 March 1989, Dahmani claims that his organisation "sponsored" 386 of the successful candidates. In another article, this time with Le Monde on 7 April 1990, Dahmani reduced the figures further when making the following estimation:

La réussite a été spectaculaire puisque, sur 2000 candidats d'origine maghrébine, plus de 500 ont été élus, dont 350 avec le parrainage de France-Plus.

In my own sample, fewer than 20% of the municipal councillors interviewed (5) claim to have been sponsored by France-Plus and only 8 have been members of the organisation. Furthermore from my own investigations of the picture on a national scale, thus far it seems likely that no more than forty councillors can be
identified as members of France-Plus and even this may prove to be an inflated figure. When comparing this with France-Plus's claims of 'sponsoring' 506, or even 350 councillors, is still some way short of the original total.

The question of the accuracy of Dahmani's calculations was put to Georges Morin, who as president of the CNESOM, has at his disposal a complete list of municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin elected on PS lists or joint PS-PC lists. Morin expressed his reaction to the figures in unambiguous terms:

Quand France-Plus déclare qu'il a lui 500 élus, je me demande où il [Arezki Dahmani] les cherche, où on les trouve. Même s'il compte comme membres de France-Plus, qui ne sont pas pour beaucoup d'entre eux, les nôtres, ceux du PS, je ne connais pas beaucoup d'autres partis qui ont fait cet effort. Même mettons qu'il y a autant de non-Socialistes que de Socialistes, ça fait 200 personnes. Où a-t-il trouvé les 500? Je crois qu'il y a une large part de fantasme là-dedans. Peut-être a-t-il recensé tous les candidats? Je n'en sais rien. En tout cas ça me paraît très largement exagéré.
(Morin: Paris)

The speculative figure of around 200 cited here by Morin is an extrapolation from the 100 or so councillors of Maghrebian origin elected on PS lists. It is important to note that these PS councillors include not only Franco-Maghrebs from Muslim families who emigrated to France for economic reasons as well as members of the harki community, but also people of pied-noir origin, who might more properly be classified as of European rather than Maghrebian extraction. It is very doubtful that Dahmani has undertaken a comprehensive study of the municipal councillors elected nationwide in all the 36,000 communes of France. Even if he had studied all the lists, there would still be a need to verify the precise origins of each person and there is no systematic data available on this. It is perfectly feasible for example that despite a person's surname, he or she may not necessarily be of Maghrerbian origin. As France-Plus has consistently refused to release a full list naming all the councillors whose election it claims to have assisted, the figures advanced by the organisation must at best be treated with caution and may well prove to be incorrect.
Whatever the exact figure, the election of an appreciable number of Maghrebian municipal councillors was significant for a variety of reasons. France-Plus had brought together for the first time children whose parents had fought on opposing sides during the Algerian war. The presence of the sons and daughters of harkis alongside the children of economic migrants indicated that they too had been the victims of discrimination and wished to make their presence felt. It was also striking that the candidates put forward by France-Plus reflected the full range of the political spectrum, excluding the Front National. Equally important in Dahmani's mind was an awareness that French citizens of Maghrebian or non-European origin in general had not been the main focus of attention during the 1989 elections:

Réconciliation enfin avec l'opinion publique française. Pour la première fois depuis 1983, l'immigration n'a pas été un enjeu dans la campagne.  
*(La Lettre de France-Plus 1989c, 4)*

Linked to this was the realisation that far from being a hindrance, youths of Maghrebian origin who had been put forward as candidates had, in a number of cases, contributed to the victory of the local party list:

Aucun maire n'a été rejeté par la population pour avoir inscrit un jeune beur sur sa liste. Au contraire, certains maires ont même gagné ou amplifié leur victoire du fait de ce choix.  
*(La Lettre de France-Plus 1989c, 4)*

This was the case in the municipality of Berre-l'Etang (Bouches-du-Rhône), as we have already seen, where the Communist mayor refused any kind of dialogue with Maghrebian youths. An estimated 300 of these youths enrolled on the electoral lists and voted instead for the PS candidate, Serge Andréoni. This enabled the latter to lead the PC mayor by 108 votes in the first round and created the conditions for the second round victory *(Le Point, 24 April 1989)*.

### 4.6 Policy issues of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme.

#### 4.6.1 Political strategies

The different strategies adopted by France-Plus and SOS-Racisme have led to fierce verbal conflicts between the two organisations. SOS-Racisme takes issue with the nature of France-Plus and claims that the latter constitutes a Franco-
Maghrebian lobby. This, in Désir's view, goes against the former tradition of foreigners being integrated into French society:

Cette logique de vote ethnique est contraire à l'intégration républicaine qui suppose responsabilité individuelle et vote de conviction.

(Le Point, 24 April 1989)

It has also, according to Désir, been badly received by French public opinion and may lead to further hostility towards French citizens of Maghrebian origin:

C'est une démarche qui risque d'être très mal perçue par l'opinion publique qui supporte mal qu'un groupe, une minorité culturelle qui fait 2, 3 ou 5% de l'électorat veuille servir de bascule pour faire ou défaire des majorités. C'est malheureusement quelque chose qui pourrait entraîner des réactions de rejet très violentes de la part de l'opinion française.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 263)

This contrasts sharply with Dahmani's endorsement of lobbies if, like those of other interest groups, they can be used to further the advancement of Maghrebians:

On parle d'un lobby. Quel lobby? Si c'est un lobby d'intérêt général qui fait avancer le peuple, qui fait avancer la démocratie, pourquoi pas? Est-ce qu'il y a quelqu'un qui trouve scandaleux qu'il y ait un lobby arménien? Un lobby protestant? Non, c'est normal, c'est un droit acquis... La politique est un rapport de forces permanent, un jeu de contradictions d'intérêts.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 271)

SOS-Racisme has been critical of another aspect of Dahmani's approach, namely the claims by France-Plus to have 'sponsored' from parties of the traditional Right. Dahmani counters any such criticisms by arguing that SOS-Racisme and its avowed support for the PS has been counter-productive in the organisation's anti-racist approach. Instead Dahmani advocates conciliation and dialogue with parties on both sides of the political spectrum:
Une vraie politique anti-raciste nécessite non pas la guerre, mais le
dialogue avec l'ensemble des forces politiques respectueuses de l'État de
droit.
*(Le Point, 24 April 1989)*

Dahmani expresses in unambiguous terms his refusal to remain tied to one
particular party in the way that he claims SOS-Racisme is to the PS:

Quant à l'aspect pédagogique, veut-on vendre des Beurs à gauche ou
faire avancer la France? On ne s'adresse pas à une seule partie des
Français, mais à tous les Français.
*(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 274)*

Dahmani argues that to conceive of an anti-racist approach solely within the
framework of one political party is too simplistic and condemns the interests of
ethnic minorities to a subordinate rôle:

Si effectivement on décide d'y aller vers un seul parti on est dans une
logique ethnique. C'est le vote juif, le vote arménien à vendre à tel ou tel
parti. Or, le militant de France-Plus est avant tout un citoyen républicain,
à l'image de la France. Certains sont fascinés par le socialisme, d'autres
par le libéralisme. On ne propose pas un modèle d'enfermement. Nous
considérons que la liberté d'opinion est une liberté fondamentale qui est
to l'origine de tous les autres droits.
*(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 274)*

Indeed some France-Plus members believe the anti-racist strategy of SOS-
Racisme has played into the hands of the extreme Right by providing a stimulus
for racist discourse and actions. The following account by a prominent member
of France-Plus bears testimony to this:

Ce n'est pas en criant "Halte au racisme!" à longueur de journée que tu
vas l'effacer. Au contraire, tu l'entretiens. A force de dire aux Français
qu'ils sont racistes, ceux qui ne le sont pas risquent de se braquer et de
se rapprocher du Front national.
*(Le Point, 24 April 1989)*
In response to the criticism voiced by some that France-Plus is composed of the elites among the Maghrebian populations in France and consequently is out of touch with the grass-roots level reality, Dahmani makes the following observations:

L'idée de l'élite a deux intérêts : elle sert de référentiel. Un tel est avocat. Donc c'est possible : il suffit de se battre...Deuxième chose : par rapport à l'opinion publique, il faut que cette élite serve de locomotive pour tirer le maximum de jeunes vers le haut. Ma logique n'est pas de dire il y a d'un côté la crème et de l'autre ceux qu'on laisse sur le carreau. France-Plus rassemble des personnes de toutes conditions, du cardiologue au RMiste.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 277)

4.6.2 Voting rights for foreigners

A great deal of debate in the past few years has focused on the question of voting rights of non-French nationals in local elections. Opinion within PS ranks has been divided on the issue despite the support of President Mitterrand himself and another prominent advocate, Pierre Mauroy. However, public opinion polls have consistently revealed that French people at large would react negatively to the prospect of non-EC nationals being eligible to vote. Division within the government is reflected to some extent in the stances adopted by France-Plus and SOS-Racisme.

The former, while supporting in theory the right of non-French citizens who have been resident for some time in France to vote in local elections, urges caution as to the practicality of this in at least three respects. Firstly Dahmani argues that it would be prudent not to consider questions of this nature during electoral periods since there are more important issues to be addressed:

A la lumière des nouvelles données socio-démographiques et des enjeux politiques de demain, France-Plus choisit de geler la question du droit de vote des immigrants pendant cette période électorale, afin que l'on prenne en compte les vrais problèmes des étrangers.

(France-Plus n.d.b, 1)

Secondly Dahmani believes that the granting of the right to vote would be unpopular with the French public in addition to posing constitutional problems.
He would advocate the right to vote as the ultimate proof of what he terms the successful 'integration' of non-French citizens, but at present does not think this is feasible:

Le droit de vote n'est pas une priorité, inutile de se raconter des histoires ; aujourd'hui, compte tenu des obstacles constitutionnels et de l'état de l'opinion, le droit de vote est impensable. Il sera la phase ultime d'une politique d'intégration réussie.

(Le Monde 7 April 1990).

Thirdly Dahmani argues that publicly advocating the right to vote for foreigners could prove counter-productive and result in the opposite of what is actually being sought:

Si on veut n'obtenir aucun résultat, il n'y a qu'à brandir ce droit de vote à chaque consultation électorale. Plus on aggressera les gens, plus on les braquera avec cette idée, moins elle passera.

(Le Point 24 April 1989)

The reticent position of France-Plus contrasts starkly with that of SOS-Racisme. Harlem Désir makes no secret of his support for non-French nationals being eligible to vote. He argues that it would be a clear victory for democracy:

Une partie de l'opinion perçoit ce droit de vote comme étant une conquête naturelle de la démocratie qui devra venir en son temps parce qu'elle est logique: ces immigrés vivent parmi nous; ils ont les mêmes devoirs que nous; la seule perspective raisonnable c'est leur intégration: à partir de là il faut s'en donner les moyens et la citoyenneté est un de ces moyens.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 258).

SOS-Racisme has demonstrated its support for the right to vote by organising a petition in favour of it.

Even greater schisms between the two organisations are apparent when considering the question of 'associated' municipal councillors, i.e. non-French citizens who are elected at municipal level and can express their views on the
municipality, but who do not enjoy any of the voting rights or powers of a fully fledged municipal councillor.

Dahmani believes that electing associated councillors is a masquerade which deflects attention away from what he perceives to be the more important question of councillors of French nationality:

Je ne suis pas dans cette logique de représentativité. Je suis dans une logique de réflexion sur des problèmes concrets. Car j’estime que la commission extramunicipale fonctionne aujourd’hui comme une mascarade. C’est le vrai conseil municipal qu’il faut viser. Tant que ces conseillers municipaux associés n’ont pas le bulletin de vote pour sanctionner ou adopter, tous les discours restent des discours.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 272-3)

An official France-Plus pamphlet goes even further in its condemnation of associated councillors. It likens the whole endeavour to one with colonialist overtones and condemns it in the clearest possible terms:


(France-Plus n.d.b, 3)

A very different opinion was voiced by Harlem Désir. When asked how he viewed the results of the first experience of associated councillors in Mons-en-Baroeul and Amiens, his response was far more positive:

C’est très pédagogique. La démonstration y est faite que ça peut marcher, qu’on ne met pas le monde sens dessus-dessous en donnant aux immigrés le droit de participer au conseil municipal, de s’exprimer sur tous les points du budget...Il faut multiplier ces expériences en sachant qu’elles ne peuvent pas être une finalité, parce qu’elles sont basées sur des collèges électoraux séparés.

(Bekhouche, Butzbach, Kharmoudi 1989, 262)
Not only, then, is SOS-Racisme in favour of associated councillors, but its president argues in favour of increasing their number.

4.6.3 Links with Jewish youth organisations and the Palestinian question

If there is one issue that unites Maghrebians in France above all others, then it is the continuing conflict in the Middle East and their support for the Palestinian cause. This is particularly the case among French youths of Maghrebian origin who identify their own plight with that of Palestinian youths. Both SOS-Racisme and France-Plus have been confronted with the issue and in the case of the former the problem has been posed from the outset of how to bring together French youths of the Jewish and Muslim faiths. Arie Bensemhoun, president of the Union des étudiants juifs de France (UEJF), and a member of SOS-Racisme explains the inherent problems of accommodating the two groups:

Au moment où, en 1985, nous avons décidé de créer SOS-Racisme, l'une des questions majeures a été de savoir comment faire s'asseoir côte à côte de jeunes juifs sionistes et de jeunes Arabes probablement les défenseurs de la cause palestinienne.
(L'Express 8 July 1988)

Despite an awareness of the problem faced, or perhaps because of it, SOS-Racisme has attempted to avoid adopting a clearcut position on the Palestinian question. When Bensemhoun and Dahmani met to discuss this among other topics, the former advanced the argument that expressing views on the Middle East had nothing to do with combating racism in France:

Il n'a jamais été question pour SOS-Racisme de régler le conflit au Moyen-Orient! Ça n'a rien à voir avec le racisme en France, avec les droits de l'homme en URSS ou en Afrique du Sud. Il ne faut pas tout confondre.
(L'Express 8 July 1988).

Dahmani's response was to point out double standards in the behaviour of SOS-Racisme:
D'accord, mais SOS-Racisme a quand même manifesté dans la rue pour les juifs d'URSS, de Syrie. Il ne l'a pas fait pour les territoires occupés. 
(L'Express 8 July 1988)

Not only were there divisions between France-Plus and SOS-Racisme over the issue, but within the SOS-Racisme leadership, there were calls, notably from French youths of Maghrebian origin, for the organisation to support the cause of the Palestinians. The views of Kaïssa Titous were illustrative of this. In her view, it was vital that SOS-Racisme,

condamne la répression, réclame son arrêt, exige le retrait de l'armée israélienne] et reconnaîsse le droit du peuple palestinien à une terre.
(L'Express 8 July 1988)

Arezki Dahmani believes that it was a mistake on the part of SOS-Racisme to bring together two groups as manifestly disparate as French youths of the Jewish and Muslim faiths and expect them to work in harmony when the organisation had no clear directive as to what its policy towards the Middle East should be, or indeed whether it should adopt any kind of position on the matter:

C'est sans doute qu'il y a eu des erreurs au préalable. La volonté de départ, c'était bien de regrouper un front uni antiraciste. Seulement il n'y a jamais eu de clarification sur le Moyen-Orient. Si la question des droits de l'homme était claire à SOS-Racisme, si on avait dit dès le départ qu'ils sont invisibles partout dans le monde, on n'en serait jamais arrivés là.
(L'Express 8 July 1988)

Dahmani continues to argue against the logic of grouping together Jews and Muslims when expressing the view that French citizens of the two religions do not face the same problems of discrimination within French society. Nor do they enjoy a similar social status:

Pour les Franco-Maghrébins, le racisme se vit au quotidien. Lié à leur statut social défavorisé [...]. Les juifs vivent le racisme à un autre niveau. Par leur histoire, par leur mémoire, ils ont su se structurer. D'une manière générale, ils ont un statut social en France qui n'est pas celui des
4.7 The views of councillors on France-Plus and SOS-Racisme

In the questionnaire which was administered, councillors were asked to express their opinions on France-Plus and SOS-Racisme. In addition they were asked to answer questions on membership of these associations and to say whether they had been supported by either during the municipal election campaign of 1989.

4.7.1 France-Plus

Of the 23 councillors in our sample, 8 are, or have been, members of this association. One of these has subsequently resigned. Councillors were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 4 their feelings towards the association. These ranged from extreme antipathy (=1) to wholehearted endorsement (=4). Not surprisingly, perhaps, of the 5 councillors who accorded 4 points to France-Plus, all but one were also members. The two councillors who gave France-Plus 3 points each equally belonged to the association. No fewer than 10 councillors (including one member of France-Plus) expressed only lukewarm support for France-Plus, giving it 2 points, while the remaining 6 councillors were unsympathetic and gave only one point.

Thus less than a third of our total sample of councillors (7) reacted favourably to the association. Of the remainder, the majority were either indifferent (10), or hostile (6). In order to explain these figures, councillors were asked during the interview to expand upon the views expressed in the questionnaire. Among the 6 who did not endorse France-Plus, a number of criticisms were voiced concerning the association. Prominent among these was dissatisfaction with the following: the operational mode of the association; false claims which it was felt had been made by the movement; the origins of France-Plus; its links with particular sections of the Maghrebian population in France and the extent to which the association reflects the reality of life in France for Maghrebians; the close identification of the association with the PS; the political-style organisation of the movement.

Several councillors argued that France-Plus had too similar a rôle to other associations such as SOS-Racisme and the CNESOM, as the following two testimonies indicate:
Je crois que cela [France-Plus] s'inscrit dans la même idée que SOS-Racisme.

(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

Le problème, c'est qu'Arezki Dahmani avait voulu avoir tout de suite la même mission [la CNESOM]. La même chose a été abominable pour nous [La CNESOM].

(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

The latter councillor believes that France-Plus went out of its way to enlist the support of councillors of Maghrebian origin when often such backing was not in fact forthcoming. Moreover she argues that the association has been dishonest in painting a false picture of its links with councillors:

Arezki Dahmani récupère un peu trop les gens. Il annonce des chiffres qui sont complètement faux. Ils [France-Plus] annoncent des gens chez eux qui ne le sont pas.

(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

Another councillor questioned the origins of the association and feels that it may have been created artificially:

Je ne vois pas d'où ils [France-Plus] tiennent leurs sources. D'où est né ce mouvement. J'ai l'impression que c'est un truc monté par quelqu'un.

(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

Several councillors reproached the association for being too closely identified with a specific segment of the Maghrebian population in France, that of Kabyle origin. This, according to the following account, has resulted in a 'ghettoisation' of the movement vis-à-vis Maghrebs resident in France as a whole:

C'est comme une association kabyle. C'est à dire la communauté de la communauté. Moi, cela me gêne personnellement. Je préfère quelque chose qui s'ouvre comme la CNESOM ou SOS-Racisme et qui ne se ferme pas.

(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)
One councillor, herself of Kabyle descent, echoes the close identification of France-Plus with the Kabyle population:

"Il [Arezki Dahmani] est le fief des Kabyles et cela ne me plaît pas non plus. Le bureau est composé presque exclusivement de Kabyles. Je suis Kabyle moi-même. Mais on refait un ghetto dans le ghetto.

(Nadia Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

A number of councillors have taken issue with the dichotomy between, on the one hand, the discourse of France-Plus, and on the other its actions in practice. In particular the links that France-Plus has had with the PS have been severely criticised in that the movement claims to be apolitical. A maire-adjointe, who resigned as a member of the association, aired the following views on the subject:

"Je n'ai pas apprécié les propos qui ont été tenus de la part du président de France-Plus. Il est à la fois reçu et a des relations auprès de certains ministères dans le PS et se permet de dénigrer le PS. Je veux dire qu'il faut choisir quelque part.

(Cocozza, Drancy)

Linked to the aforementioned criticism, another councillor condemned the association for constantly changing and seeking to attract the attention of the media:


(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

The charge of operating in the same manner as a political party is levelled at France-Plus by one of its founder members, a former student at the University of Villetaneuse and now a councillor. He argues that not only does it have relations with political parties, but that it has now begun to function like one and this is something he regrets:

"J'y adhère [à France-Plus] dans le coeur, mais moins dans la pratique parce que j'ai beaucoup aimé les débuts et si je n'ai pas adhéré à un parti politique, c'est parce que je refusais la logique et le raisonnement d'un
Some councillors expressed the opinion that the whole concept of France-Plus is out of touch with the reality of life in France for the majority of Maghrebian since the members of this association are almost exclusively composed of elites. According to the following account, the latter are out of touch with grass-roots level:

...Et puis c'est quand même pas une image de la réalité. C'est des élites. Cela touche énormément les élites.

(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

4.7.2 SOS-Racisme

Given that only two of the councillors in our sample are members of SOS-Racisme, it is, perhaps, of little surprise that our interviewees should be reluctant to express their opinions on the association. When asked to fill in the questionnaire section on the association, only one councillor (who was not one of the two SOS-Racisme members) wholeheartedly endorsed SOS-Racisme, awarding 4 points. Another two councillors gave the association 3 points, indicating at least some degree of support. Of the rest, 7 councillors expressed only lukewarm support (=2 points), while a very clear majority (13), according one point each, indicating a fundamental lack of sympathy.

The general absence of discourse on SOS-Racisme during the follow-up interviews revealed an indifference rather than an outright hostility to the association. This indifference may be attributable in part to SOS-Racisme having relatively little contact with Maghrebian councillors. Nevertheless among the minority of councillors who did support it, a variety of reasons were cited. These included endorsement of its anti-racist stance:

Je suis un sympathisant de tous les mouvements qui cherchent à avancer certaines idées.

(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)
Others acknowledged the transformation in outlook of the association in attempting to tackle more tangible problems and felt this compared favourably with France-Plus:

> Je n'ai jamais fait partie [de SOS-Racisme], mais j'ai plus de sympathie [pour lui que par rapport à France-Plus] parce qu'ils font des choses concrètes qui nous touchent.

(Bellouch, Gennevilliers).

On the other hand some councillors did criticise SOS-Racisme. One councillor argued, contrary to the previous endorsement of SOS-Racisme, that the association did not in fact do enough in practical terms and complained that its anti-racist goals had proven counter-productive:

> Pour moi SOS-Racisme développait des idées de lutte contre le racisme, mais ne trouvait aucun champ d'applications. Je pense que les idées ne suffisent pas si elles ne peuvent se manifester dans le concret. Pour moi c'est [SOS-Racisme] plutôt un slogan de bonne conscience qui sonne creux et qui, en plus, est à double tranchant, car, crier "Halte au racisme" tout le temps et sans cesse peut éveiller des consciences endormies [racistes ou non] et aboutir à l'effet inverse de ce que l'on attendait.

(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

It needs to be pointed out that the above councillor is a long-time member and supporter of France-Plus. Another councillor, who was not a member of either association, took issue with SOS-Racisme because of its links with Jewish youth organisations and criticised France-Plus which has flirted with Jewish organisations for the same reason:

> Parce que bon il y a l'expérience de France-Plus et de SOS-Racisme et on a vu ce que cela a donné avec les Juifs. Les Arabes sont toujours obligés de faire des concessions et de ne plus tenir à leurs positions.

(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

It should be stressed that the above testimony is not necessarily shared by all councillors in our sample and reflects rather an extreme viewpoint. Nevertheless it is true to say that some Maghrebian councillors have been alienated from SOS-Racisme by virtue of these links and its ambiguous position vis-à-vis the
plight of the Palestinians. In this respect, then, the above views may be the most open expression of latent criticisms that councillors were unwilling to air in public. One should not forget that the interviews were conducted for the most part in the aftermath of the Gulf War and there may have been a marked reluctance to criticise SOS-Racisme's links with Jewish organisations since several councillors in our sample are resident in municipalities with significant numbers of people of the Jewish faith.

One councillor argued that the well-publicised national associations such as SOS-Racisme and France-Plus have occupied too much of the media limelight and that as a result disproportionate importance has been attached to their opinions in relation to other associations who may have equally valid views they wish to voice:

Qu'on ne donne pas uniquement la parole à France-Plus et SOS-Racisme.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

4.8 Recent Developments
4.8.1 France-Plus
While divisions within France-Plus only began to surface in the national press during and after the Gulf War, internal dissensions were apparent as early as June 1989, when a delegation was organised by the association to visit the Maghreb. The delegation, which was made up of 15 Maghrebians including 8 municipal councillors, was invited by the Algerian government to explain the problems of 'integration' into French society that Maghrebians faced. Among the delegation, four councillors on PS lists, including a maire-adjointe in my sample, disagreed with the views expressed by the leader, Arezki Dahmani, and argued that they were not able to voice their own opinions freely. The maire-adjointe, who subsequently resigned from France-Plus as a direct result of these differences, expressed her disapproval in the following terms:

J'ai démissionné. C'était lors d'une délégation organisée en Algérie [...]. Je n'ai pas apprécié les propos qui ont été tenus de la part du président de France-Plus.
(Cocozza, Drancy)
The maire-adjointe objected to the way in which Dahmani criticised the PS, while at the same time maintaining close links with government ministries.

Upon returning to France a press conference was held during which the four councillors articulated the following reservations concerning the trip:

On a fait six jours avec cette délégation et on a fait une conférence de presse en disant que nous ne nous reconnaissions pas dans la démarche de France-Plus telle qu'elle est établie.

(Cocozza, Drancy)

Divisions within France-Plus became more manifest during the Gulf crisis in the period preceding the opening of hostilities. Dahmani endorsed French government policy during the hostilities (see section 7.2 for further details) and argued that there was overwhelming support among the Maghrebian population in France:

Personne [parmi les populations issues de l'immigration maghrébine], par exemple, ne dit qu'il se refuserait de se battre pour la France contre un état arabe...

(Le Quotidien de Paris 16 January 1991)

The above comments contrasted sharply with those of other members of France-Plus, of whom the then leader of the regional association in Paris, Farid Smahi, was the most vociferous in condemning French military action against fellow Arabs:

Est-ce que la sécurité de la France est menacée? Non. Pourquoi aller combattre d'autres Arabes, alors qu'il existe des violations beaucoup plus importantes, et que les médias n'en ont pas alerté l'opinion publique?

(Le Quotidien de Paris 9 January 1991.)

Councillors in our sample who are also members of France-Plus acknowledged that opinions on the Gulf crisis were divided among activists. This applied for example to one councillor who reflected a more widespread view that support for French military intervention would be conditional on the Palestinian question being addressed at the same time:
Si on s'occupe des Palestiniens, je veux bien partir, sinon je ne pars pas.
(Le Quotidien de Paris 9 January 1991)

Another councillor who belonged to the association confirmed that there were divisions inside France-Plus's executive committee:

Il y en avait qui étaient pour l'intervention de la France et il y en avait qui étaient contre.
(Aïsséou, St. Ouen)

In April 1992 Smahi formerly dissolved the Paris committee of France-Plus and left to create his own organisation, Arabisme et Francité. Contrary to Dahmani's philosophy of learning from the mistakes of the American model and steering away from any 'community' mentality, Smahi instead advocates the African-American model of promoting cultural differences. In addition Smahi directly criticised Dahmani's leadership which he believed devoted too little time to attending to concerns at grass-roots level:

Arezki a fait une politique de cabinet au lieu d'aller sur le terrain.
(Libération 23 April 1992)

Criticism over the financial handling of the association was expressed, not only by Smahi, but also by members of the France-Plus leadership that remained, of whom the most prominent was its then vice-president Nadia Amiri. In July 1992 Amiri was excluded from the association on the grounds that she had refused to adhere to a charter drawn up by Dahmani according to which members must not break a strict code of secrecy concerning the movement's affairs. Dahmani has thus far refrained from commenting publicly on this. Amiri refused to adhere to the charter for the following reasons:

On ne peut plus continuer dans ce climat proche de la malversation du point de vue financier et complètement opaque du point de vue du fonctionnement interne.
(Libération 24-25 October 1992)

She refused to,
signer une charte déontologique qui était un véritable acte d'allégeance à Arezki Dahmani. Cette charte nous soumettait à un devoir de réserve et de discrétion par rapport aux activités de France-Plus.

(Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace 24 October 1992)

In reaction to her exclusion by central headquarters, the Strasbourg section of France-Plus, to which Amiri belongs, rejected her dismissal and sent a letter to Arezki Dahmani calling for his dismissal. Disapproval among local committee heads of the manner in which Amiri was treated and of the secret charter spread throughout the country and resulted in the secession of several committees into autonomous organisations. Thus the former head of France-Plus in Nice, Abdellatif Ben Omar, set up France Euro-Citoyenneté, Amo Ferrati in Lille, founded Espace Intégration and Rachid Kassi in Hauts-de-Seine created Démocratia. Other local heads resigned including David Sery Deles in Vandoeuvre-Lès-Nancy and Charles Baudoin Djoudi in Lyons, who expressed the following criticism of Dahmani's handling of finances:


(L'Evénement du Jeudi, 22-28 October 1992)

The financial dealings of individual France-Plus members had already been called into question in May 1991 when Aziz Sahiri, then president of the association in Isère and a maire-adjoint in my sample, had been found guilty of embezzling funds (Le Monde 3 April 1992). In July 1992 the Ministry for Social Affairs ordered a far more extensive examination of France-Plus's finances with a special auditing committee of the FAS being commissioned to make a comprehensive report. In the findings of the report a number of major criticisms were made of the leadership in its handling of finance of which the following three were prominent:

(i) Financial irregularities had been observed during 1989 and 1990. Expenditure claims had been made without sufficient explanation of the nature of such claims.

(ii) Unjustifiable expenditure for the above period totalled 30,000 francs and in particular exorbitant travel expenses had been incurred by the President of the organisation. These accounted for 67.3% of total travel expenses.
(iii) Staff payments had not been made in the normal manner.

In its conclusions the auditing report remarked:

Nos contrôles ont relevé plusieurs points qui ne nous semblent pas entrer dans l'objet de l'association et des niveaux de remboursements de frais que l'on trouve rarement dans les associations financées par le FAS.  
(Fonds d'Action Sociale 1992, 8-9)

Inherent in the committee's conclusions was criticism of the highly centralised nature of France-Plus's organisational 'set-up'. This, according to the report's findings, greatly hindered relations between headquarters in Paris and the regional committees and made the separation of functions within the movement problematic:

Les conventions entre France-Plus et ses comités régionaux sont parfois inexistantes et leurs modèles ne précisent pas à quel exercice elles se rattachent.  
(Fonds d'Action Sociale 1992, 9)

La séparation des fonctions de France-Plus n'est pas satisfaisante car extrêmement centralisée autour de quelques personnes. 
(Fonds d'Action Sociale 1992, 11)

The report observed that the regular advice of financial experts had not been heeded by the France-Plus leadership and recommended that its expenditure should therefore be reduced by a substantial amount.

In the period since its creation France-Plus has experienced great difficulty in broadening its support among Maghrebians and this has been recognised by public powers controlling the purse-strings of the association. This is, perhaps, illustrated also by the association's noticeable reluctance to disclose figures on its membership, when in other respects it has been only too eager to produce figures on the number of candidates 'sponsored' and youths enrolled on electoral lists. However, while the publicised internal divisions highlighted above have certainly not helped, the association's failure to attract widespread support among the Maghrebian population in France cannot be attributed to this factor
alone. Rather the inability of France-Plus to create a network of activists at
grass-roots level has been a more important factor. As Geisser (1993, 12) has
rightly pointed out, the association has attempted to conceal its lack of appeal
among Maghrebians by adopting the following approach:

Pour pallier à ce déficit [de militants sur le terrain], la direction de
l'association a tenté de bâtir une "vitrine ethnique" composée d'individus
issus de l'immigration, censée la représenter dans les meetings, les
émissions de télévision ou les diverses manifestations.

The France-Plus leadership has therefore had to face up to the following
dilemma: continue as at present with a membership that is at best stagnant and
which in practice may well be in decline, especially with the fragmentation of the
association into splinter-groups; or attempt to widen the appeal of the
association by including non-Maghrebians. Faced with this stark choice, France-
Plus would appear to have opted for the latter, as Geisser reveals after having
interviewed the association's leadership:

Confrontée à cette crise de représentation, elle [France-Plus] a été
obligée de s'ouvrir à de nouvelles catégories d'adhérents, justifiant son
ouverture par une argumentation de type : "Nous sommes une
association qui luttons pour l'intégration, il est donc normal que nous
acceptions des Français de toute origine".
(Geisser 1993, 12)

Given the emphasis that France-Plus has placed upon electoral goals, this has
led to a profound change in its policy. If the following testimony of the
Secretary General of France-Plus is to be believed, then henceforth the
association will be prepared to 'sponsor' non-Maghrebians to electoral office for
the 1995 municipal elections:

Moi, j'ai demandé une plus large ouverture. Ça consisterait à présenter
des candidats neufs, montrer que les valeurs de France-Plus sont aussi
défendues par des non-beurs [...]. Il faut que ça devienne un concept, et
non pas un rassemblement ethnique.
(Geisser 1993, 13)
It remains to be seen whether a new electorate can be attracted to the movement, particularly at a time when the activities and achievements of France-Plus have been called into question.

4.8.2 SOS-Racisme

While internal divisions in SOS have been less pronounced and publicised than those in France-Plus, there have nevertheless been significant changes made to the composition of the leadership. This culminated in the resignation of Harlem Désir from the post of president on 5 September 1992. Prior to this a number of the earliest members of the association had gradually departed from the movement, most notably Julien Dray and Isabelle Thomas, to further their personal political ambitions in the PS. Désir had become increasingly disillusioned with the traditional parties of the Left and in particular with the PS. The first signs of this were manifest in May 1990 when at a press conference of the Radio station Europe 1, Désir openly criticised comments made by the then prime minister, Michel Rocard, concerning ethnic minorities. Désir complained about the endless debates on 'integration' and instead advocated practical action on the matter:

Les annonces du pouvoir ne se traduisent pas sur le terrain car dans les cités, l'échec scolaire se poursuit, il n'y a pas d'équipements sportifs, et les transports sont absents après 20 heures.

(Le Monde 8 May 1990)

Désir was also clearly offended by Rocard's comment that France could no longer, "accepter toute la misère du monde".

(Le Monde 8 January 1990)

Ideological differences over the issue of immigration were translated into practice during SOS-Racisme's third annual congress between 28 and 30 April 1990. A series of practical measures designed to "casser les ghettos" was approved and, in the closing speech, Désir sent out the following message to the PS leadership:

Nous [SOS-Racisme] constatons que les choses n'ont pas changé sur le terrain et nous proposons des solutions. S'ils [le gouvernement]
prennent des mesures pour casser les ghettos dans les villes et dans les écoles, ils retrouveront notre confiance.

(Le Monde 3 May 1990)

A point of no return was reached during the Gulf War when SOS-Racisme distanced itself from the government and opposed military intervention (see section 7.2 for further details).

The change in presidency resulted in an almost immediate apolitical stance being adopted by the new leadership. In so doing, it has clearly sought to distance itself from the PS. Its new president, Fodé Sylla, thirty year old activist of Senegalese descent, who played a prominent rôle in the 1986 student demonstrations while at the University of Créteil, is himself a former member of the PS, who became disillusioned with the party and has subsequently relinquished all links. Sylla has strived to promote an apolitical image of the association. This was reflected in the following comments made concerning the 1993 legislative elections:

Nous [la société française] entrerons dans une année politiquement chargée, mais SOS ne donnera aucune consigne de vote.

(Le Monde 8 September 1992)

This contrasted, though, with Désir’s calls prior to the 1988 presidential elections for French nationals to vote for the PS candidate, François Mitterrand. Désir, upon leaving SOS-Racisme, was involved in an abortive attempt to set up a new movement, Action-Egalité. When this failed, he joined Génération Ecologie for whom he stood as a candidate in Trappes (Yvelines) during the March 1993 legislative elections. A former vice-president of SOS-Racisme, Hayette Boudjema, was also a Génération Ecologie candidate at these elections in Saint-Denis (Seine-Saint-Denis). Both candidates failed to amass a sufficient number of votes to enter the second round.

4.9 Conclusion

Discussion in this chapter has centred around the nature of national ethnic minority pressure groups and their links with political parties. My analysis of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme has revealed that their relationships with political parties are both complex and paradoxical; while the associations often criticise the visions of society that political parties may have, the need to survive means
that collusion is often sought with different political powers. This is particularly the case for France-Plus. Geisser (1993, 10) in his most recent study of Maghrebian elites severely criticises France-Plus for its attempt, a failed one in his opinion, to "cultiver un apolitisme de façade". According to Geisser this results in the following three outcomes: a lack of change in leadership; low rates of activism among members; a tendency among the leadership to personalise power which in turn leads to a form of clientelism. My own research would tend to back up these findings.

However, the question of the relationship between ethnic political elites and the minority group interests that the former claim to represent still remains largely unanswered. To what extent is it possible for the leaders of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme to represent minority groups? Are they, as Geisser (1992, 136) suggests, increasingly perceived by researchers and ethnic minority communities alike as, "élites communautaires sans communauté"? What rôle do ethnic elites play with regard to political participation? To attempt to answer these questions, one first of all needs to distinguish between different types of ethnic political leaders. A number of typologies have been formulated to determine the nature of ethnic political elites in the United States and we shall briefly consider the two most salient of these for our own research.

The first of these was put forward by Myrdal (1944) to explain the African-American political leadership. It divides ethnic leaders into broadly two groups. In the first group, which Myrdal refers to as based on 'accommodation' leadership, the socio-economic order in place is not called into question, nor is there any attempt to break down barriers of hierarchy. Instead ethnic leaders belonging to this category have as their prime objective the best possible adaptation of the minority group into mainstream society. As Martiniello (1992) has commented, leaders in this group strive via negotiation and compromise to secure the best possible improvement for the minority group. The second group, which Myrdal calls 'protest' leadership, aims rather at destroying the status quo and in addition questions both the behaviour and actions of the dominant society. My own research on national pressure groups in France suggests that the leaders of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme are more likely to belong to the former category. Myrdal argues further that it is in the interest of the dominant white society to rely on 'accommodation' leaders since such elites can be used to help control and pacify the ethnic minority group.
While Myrdal's model has contributed significantly to the field in that it has enabled political scientists to differentiate between contrasting types of ethnic leaders, with respect to the French situation it is, perhaps, an oversimplistic model and a somewhat dated one, bearing in mind the development of elite models in the United States in the 1960s and in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. Higham (1981) provides a more contemporary model which enables a greater diversity of elite leadership models to be compared and contrasted. This is particularly appropriate for our purposes in that Higham highlights three types of ethnic leaders and their relationship vis-à-vis both the ethnic minority group and the dominant society. According to the first type, known as 'received' leadership, the pre-existing network of elites in the country of origin is transposed to the country of immigration. In the second, referred to as 'internal' leadership, ethnic leaders come to the fore within their own ethnic group and act as spokespersons for the ethnic minority group in its dealings with the dominant society. Thirdly there is what Higham calls a 'projective' leadership. By this he makes reference to individuals from the minority group who have attracted attention beyond the ethnic group that they are identified with. While leaders belonging to this category have gained recognition outside their ethnic group, their links with the latter are weak. Nevertheless, despite the tenuous links that leaders may have with members of their own ethnic group, they remain a symbolic source of pride. Individuals in the 'projective' leadership may be artistic, intellectual, sporting, or even business personalities who have gained widespread recognition in the dominant society. Both the present leader of France-Plus and the former leader of SOS-Racisme may belong to this category rather than the preceding two. In the case of Arezki Dahmani, his accession to power as the leader of France-Plus was provided, not by any popular Maghrebian base of support, but by a disparate group of individuals sympathetic to the PS, among whom figure non-Maghrebian occupying positions of power within this political party. With regard to Harlem Désir, while he does not claim to represent any one ethnic minority group, the links that Julien Dray was able to forge with PS leaders greatly facilitated the development of the association and the symbolic aspect of Désir's leadership enabled the anti-racist message to be disseminated more effectively.

The question of representativeness and legitimacy is an important factor that needs to be considered. If our sample of councillors is indicative of Maghrebins in France in general, then it may be the case that for reasons expanded upon in section 4.7.1, Dahmani is perceived in somewhat negative
terms. However, the extent to which ethnic leaders can ever hope to be truly representative of the minority group they claim to serve is clearly problematic and the same question could equally be posed of political leaders in general irrespective of race, religion, or nationality.

Rather, as Martiniello (1992) has argued, there needs to be greater emphasis placed on the conditions in which ethnic leaders have emerged. Two fundamental questions need to be asked here: who gains access to positions of power within the ethnic minority group and how? One hypothesis, referred to as the 'situationist' approach, posits that the emergence of ethnic leaders is dependent to a large extent upon the characteristics of the situation and period. Thus it is feasible that an ethnic leadership may be imposed externally by authorities in the dominant society. Huggins (1978) argues that in the American case dominant white society has found it easier in terms of social control to extract a few personalities from the ethnic minority group and has made leaders out of them. Does this model, then, fit the French situation and explain why Dahmani, for example, has emerged as a leader?

The 'situationist' approach contains at least two fundamental weaknesses. Firstly, even where an artificial leadership has been created, one still needs to examine the reasons which have led to one individual being preferred to another. Dahmani for example may have been preferred to other potential candidates because of his professional status as a university lecturer. Secondly and crucially, however, once in power an ethnic leader may indeed modify his or her mode of behaviour and actions. In the specific case of Arezki Dahmani the 'situationist' approach certainly fails to take account of individual variables. While it may be true that Dahmani was initially given the mantle of France-Plus leader by Chevalier and Morin to exert some degree of influence over the Maghrebian population (and perhaps also because Dahmani, rightly or wrongly, may have been perceived as manipulable by the aforementioned individuals), once Dahmani took over the leadership rôle he made it his own and has directed the association into areas with which the founder members disagreed.

Is it possible, then, to define the rôle(s) that ethnic leaders assume? Do they, as some researchers have argued, act as intermediaries between the ethnic minority group and the society at large, and if so what is the nature of the intermediary relationship? Geisser (1992) urges caution for, in his view, the whole idea of an intermediary rôle makes two major presuppositions. Firstly Geisser questions
whether it is normal that ethnic elites should assume such a rôle, which, in his opinion, recalls the colonial context in which an 'indigenous' elite worked for the colonising administration. Secondly he points to the ambiguous attitude of ethnic minority associations such as France-Plus which, while promoting minority group candidates to electoral office, have not formulated any clear criteria upon which such candidates may be selected.

Taking on board the above considerations, it nevertheless seems accurate to suggest that ethnic leaders do act as intermediaries between the ethnic minority group and French society. In the case of Arezki Dahmani, press coverage on the opinions of Maghrebians has focused predominantly, if not exclusively, on his opinions. In the absence of a clearly designated Maghrebian political leadership, any pretentions that Dahmani may have to speak on behalf of the Maghrebian population resident in France have only infrequently been called into question by the media. Indeed Negrouche (1992) has argued that Dahmani has deliberately set out to become a yardstick of opinion on a multiplicity of issues related to the Maghrebian population in France. Negrouche believes that the attitude adopted by Dahmani vis-à-vis the media is indicative of

l'existence d'une forte stratégie médiatique chez cet enseignant en économie qui ne lésine pas sur les interviews, les déclarations à la presse ou les communiqués. A tel point que le président de France-Plus est aujourd'hui devenu une sorte de baromètre beur sur lesquels les journalistes se précipitent pour la prétendue météo communautaire, dès qu'il est question d'immigration. (Negrouche 1992, 51)

Ethnic leaders have, then, enabled some sort of mediation to take place between ethnic minority pressure groups and the political party in power. However, even if one accepts that ethnic leaders are able to articulate at least some of the demands, hopes and fears of the minority group, there remains the question of dual loyalty. On the one hand ethnic leaders are perceived by society at large to be representatives of the ethnic minority population. On the other hand they are at the same time a new segment, a new elite, within society at large. The question therefore is raised of whether it is possible to defend the interests of the ethnic minority group without in some sense adversely affecting those of the dominant society. During the Gulf War, for example, ethnic leaders were faced with a dilemma when the views of society at large were not necessarily in unison with
those of the minority group. By endorsing French government action, Dahmani at the same time ran the risk of alienating Maghrebian youths within his own movement who argued that French military intervention was contrary to the interests of Maghrebians (in the extended sense to include the populations still resident in the Maghreb). The youths in question justified their opposition to French government policy in that it was being used against fellow Arabs.

Ethnic leaders have to some extent been able to define the political strategies of the ethnic minority group. In the case of France-Plus this has proven successful since the campaigns for electoral registration have mobilised Maghrebian youths in large numbers and have encouraged a minority of these youths to put themselves forward as candidates for municipal office. The association has therefore been able to create, albeit in embryonic form, a Maghrebian electoral machine. In seeking to achieve the above political objectives, ethnic leaders like Dahmani have been accused of adopting an autocratic style. However, it should be remembered, as Martiniello (1991) has noted, that ethnic minority communities are rarely strongly structured groups which readily accept the leadership of one individual. Rather they display a relative degree of apathy and mobilising the group is only possible via a strong and determined leader.

Finally and no less importantly, it should not be forgotten that the efforts of ethnic leaders and their pressure groups have contributed to Maghrebians being able to attain political office at municipal level. The efforts of political parties themselves should not be underestimated here (for further details on the recruitment of municipal councillors by political parties, see section 3.5.1). It may be argued that in creating a Maghrebian electoral machine, the potential anger and frustration of Maghrebian youths at their socio-economic position within French society has been channelled away from the streets. Equally, however, as we shall seek to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, this has also served as a means for the PS leadership to neutralise political mobilisation.
CHAPTER 5
COUNCILLORS' EXPERIENCES IN OFFICE

5.1 Introduction
We shall now turn our attention to the day-to-day political life of municipal councillors once they have achieved office. Four essential features of their activities will be analysed. First of all we need to examine the manner in which the municipal council functions and the extent to which this may limit the powers that councillors have at their disposal. Secondly we shall highlight the various responsibilities that councillors are entrusted with. We shall then go on to look at the principal problems that councillors have encountered before finally presenting a brief overall assessment of their period in office.

5.2 Nature of the municipal council
As chapter 4 has illustrated, it is necessary to distinguish between various types of political elites at municipal level. To refresh our memory, the upper stratum, or inner core, are those elites who actively participate in major decisions. The lower stratum act in effect as mediators between the upper stratum and the rest of society by transmitting information in either direction and by explaining and/or justifying the reasoning behind the policies formulated by the inner core. While fundamental differences undoubtedly exist between the two levels, it may nevertheless be possible for members of the lower stratum to gain access to the higher level by virtue of the experience they have acquired below.

How does this model apply to my sample of councillors? It is the mayor at municipal level who is responsible for the major policy decisions and s/he is clearly part of the upper stratum. However, as Mabileau (1989, 150) indicates, the mayor is not the only player involved:

In France [at municipal level], most such decisions are taken by individuals and not only just by the mayor (who generally keeps control of local finances), but also his deputies [adjoints]. The latter are given delegated authority in specialised areas of local management such as town planning, welfare and culture.
The status of the mayor in this respect is peculiar to France, particularly when one compares and contrasts it with the British model. Whereas in Britain the mayor is perceived more in terms of an honorary representative of the council, in France the mayor is a figure who has great influence. Power may also be exerted as a result of prominence at national level (many mayors also serve as députés). It is the mayor in France who is expected to bring together a variety of divergent groups and interests which exist among the local population and are officially represented by local councillors. The power of the mayor has been described in the following terms by Dupuy:

Legally the Municipal Council makes decisions, but, in reality, it is the mayor who, in the name of the general interest, imposes his decisions. The mayor is perceived as independent of all the parties concerned; he is presented as the 'father' of the commune and is accorded great prestige and attributed exceptional qualities of wisdom and experience. The Municipal Council apathetically lends itself to ratifying the mayor's decisions, often by a generally unanimous show of hands.

(Mabileau 1989, 149)

It should be apparent, then, that municipal councillors, who are neither maires nor maires-adjoints, have relatively little influence over the decision-making process and belong rather to the lower stratum or outer core. However, they are able to act as intermediaries between the mayor and the electorate in putting forward the views and grievances of the electorate which the mayor and his adjoints may be unaware of. In so doing they are able to exert some degree of influence, albeit indirect, over future decisions.

5.3 Responsibilities

To begin with let us examine the kinds of responsibilities that municipal councillors are entrusted with. We shall distinguish between those responsibilities which are: (a) of a functional nature; (b) those which involve personal involvement with an individual; and (c) those where there is interaction between the municipal councillor and a group.

(a) By functional tasks we refer to those tasks which deal with factors shaping
the local political agenda. In practice this involves responsibilities being delegated to the municipal councillors within the framework of committees of which they are members. Invariably set up under the auspices of the council and spokespersons from the community at large, the committees should be viewed more as consultative forums rather than as decision-making bodies since any recommendations made have, in general, to be ratified by the council. Only in cases of minor importance will the committee take a final decision after liaising with one of the maire-adjoints and the head of the committee (who may also be a maire-adjoint). When decisions of major importance have to be taken, however, they can only be approved by the council itself and this therefore entails a debate plus vote. Previous to this the mayor and his adjoints will engage in preparatory work.

The committees to which the municipal councillors may belong broadly fall into six categories, though there is obviously some overlap between them:

i) Social - This covers matters such as social security, health, environment, infancy, youth and the elderly.

ii) Urban - This may include transport, traffic and housing.

iii) Economic - Areas as diverse as professional integration, unemployment and commercial markets.

iv) Education.

v) Leisure - Sport, culture.

vi) Law and order, delinquency and crime.

Among the municipal councillors interviewed within the confines of my sample, the overwhelming majority, 83% (19), belong to more than one of these committees. Certain patterns emerge concerning the kinds of committees of which they are members. Those within the urban and social fields predominate with 65% (15) and 52% (12) respectively of my sample belonging to at least one of these. Where the former is concerned, crucial to an understanding of the high percentage is an awareness of the fact that the municipalities under study are almost exclusively situated within the major conurbations, most notably Ile-de-France and Rhône-Alpes. Where other committees are concerned, 40% (9) of the councillors interviewed belonged to committees relating to leisure, 22% (5) were members of committees devoted
to education, while another 22% (5) participated in committees dealing with economic matters.

Given the heavy concentration of councillors in the urban and social fields, we need to ask how far they were free to choose committees on which they would sit. Some councillors said that certain committees had been imposed upon them at first:

Mais c'est vrai qu'à l'urbanisme, on m'a un peu imposé parce qu'on a dû se partager les fonctions lors d'une réunion.
(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

Others argued that the mayor in particular had sought to entrust them with membership of specific committees which were not necessarily of prime interest to them and consequently they had to express their disapprobation forcibly in order that they finally be nominated to a committee of their choice:

Au départ [...] il [le maire] envisageait tout de suite de me mettre au sein du club de prévention de la délinquance [...] Mais j'ai tout de suite refusé. Je ne voulais pas faire un peu l'immigrée de service. Je ne veux ni faire plaisir au maire ni me donner des responsabilités qui ne m'intéressent pas. Je préfère travailler seulement dans la commission culturelle.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

Only one councillor indicated that he was actively encouraged to participate in a committee devoted to Maghrebians. This was the case for one councillor in the Communist-controlled municipality of Gennevilliers who found this wholly unacceptable and refused to be a part of it:

On a voulu me mettre dans l'immigration et j'ai refusé pour des principes simples. Je ne suis pas responsable des problèmes d'immigration. Je ne peux pas supporter cette responsabilité qui ne m'incombe pas. Les communistes aussi voulaient me faire jouer ce rôle. Le PS a compris plus vite.
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)
b) A second task of the municipal councillor is that of surgery work involving individuals. This tends to be outside the confines of committee responsibilities and the councillor concerned assumes the rôle of broker, relaying the specific demands of the individual to the relevant bodies. One maire-adjoint in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis explains the kind of requests he has to deal with and how he approaches them:

Vous rencontrez des individus qui viennent vous voir pour des problèmes qu'ils rencontrent personnellement, y compris des problèmes qui échappent à votre délégation. Et c'est à vous ensuite de les mettre sur la bonne voie: que ce soit au niveau administratif, au niveau de la préfecture ou d'un ministère, pour essayer de résoudre leur problème particulier.
(Sali, St. Denis)

The nature of the advice given by the councillors often centres around facilitating an understanding of official documents which are required by individuals, particularly if the latter are of non-French origin and have not taken up French nationality. The same maire-adjoint details the type of work which he undertakes with individuals on a daily basis:

Et c'est vrai qu'à St. Denis la tendance est à la régularisation de papiers. Ce genre de choses. Et pas seulement des Maghrébins. Il y a des Africains noirs qui rencontrent beaucoup de difficultés parce qu'ils sont en situation non-régulière ici. Il y a le problème de logement avec tous les formulaires à remplir pour y avoir accès, les problèmes d'accès à l'école pour les enfants, les problèmes de couverture sociale. Ça, c'est du réel. Et ça prend beaucoup de temps.
(Sali, St. Denis)

In short, then, the relationship between municipal councillors and individuals can be resumed in the following manner:

The activities of councillors in relation to these individual goods consist mainly in mobilising secondary resources to deal with the
demands through established administrative procedures, whether by giving backing to a request or by getting something done about it when there is no statutory provision for dealing with the matter.
(Mabileau 1989, 150)

c) Thirdly among the tasks that councillors undertake, there may be involvement with groups which approach a councillor with the objective of obtaining a particular demand. Here the municipal councillor's prior associational experience may prove to be invaluable.

Of particular importance, in this respect, are their associational or professional memberships. Such groups enable them in many cases to anticipate a demand, and even to formulate it in cases where it otherwise might not be openly expressed [...]. Their involvement in the social life of the locality is thus fundamental to their capacity to articulate demands and often provides them with a better understanding of such demands than would result simply from the approaches of which they are the targets.
(Mabileau 1989, 150)

This is illustrated by the account of one young councillor in the Grenoble suburb of Gières who readily acknowledges that her associational experience along with her ethnic origins have facilitated contact with the younger members of the municipality:

C'est vrai que quand j'ai fait l'animation des jeunes, j'ai eu au sein de la mairie beaucoup moins de problèmes que les autres animateurs. Parce que du fait que je parlais l'arabe - il y a une forte minorité maghrébine à Gières - le courant passait sans problème.
(Chaib, Gières)

Associations may, for example, ask for funding for the construction of a local community centre, or a place of prayer if no permanent building is currently available. This was the case for one councillor in Epinay-sur-Seine:

Il y a une association de jeunes d'origine maghrébine qui s'occupe au
sein de cette maison de quartier de la population maghrébine en général. Et là j’ai appris récemment que leur but, c’était de demander un local, un lieu de culte. Alors c’est en négociation actuellement avec le maire.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

In the majority of cases, though, the work that councillors undertake stems from their own initiative. This is not altogether surprising when one considers that councillors are much more likely than individuals or associations to be familiar with government programmes which they can take advantage of. Furthermore they may become aware of potential projects via the suggestions of either the mayor or his adjoints.

It is possible, then, to divide for the purposes of analysis, as Mahileau (1989) has done, the responsibilities of municipal councillors in this domain into three distinct types:

i) In the first type, which we shall call articulation, the councillor plays a double rôle, that of receiving and then articulating demands. It is the objective of the councillor to convert policy into practice and this is achieved by becoming involved in the decision-making process internal to the council and by mobilising the support of the principal political forces in the locality.

ii) The second task, that of involving groups in the local decision-making process, is part and parcel of the process of local integration. It is incumbent upon the councillor to take into consideration the diversity of local interests that may exist. This is achieved by the council itself releasing funds and resources in order that group objectives are met, while others are denied.

iii) Finally, as a result of close links between the councillor and local groups, the former can gain access to the political arena at a local level.

5.4 Period in office of councillors
5.4.1 Initiatives

I shall now examine some of the initiatives that the councillors in my sample have taken. Councillors were asked to rank in order of importance the
following objectives that they had in mind at the very beginning of their period in office:

i) Procuring tangible objectives for the Maghrebian population at municipal level.
ii) Promoting equal opportunities for Maghrebians at municipal level.
iii) Changing the attitudes of the 'white' French population towards Maghrebians.
iv) Serving the interests of the local community irrespective of the race, religion or nationality of its inhabitants.

Councillors were asked to rate on a scale of one to four the importance of these objectives, one point equating no importance whatsoever, while four points indicated that the objective was an extremely important one.

Significant differences between men and women councillors became apparent in the answers to this question. Whereas women tended to be interested in more tangible aims, men placed more emphasis on abstract goals such as changing the attitude of the 'white' French population towards Maghrebians. Out of the eight women in our study, virtually all (7) attached importance to a tangible aim, with 4 of these rating it the joint most important objective. For men, however, there was an almost unanimous apparent disregard for tangible aims with only 2 out of the 15 men in my sample according more than one point to this particular objective. Indeed some gave no points at all, indicating a complete lack of interest.

The results were confirmed by the follow up interviews. Several women councillors stressed an interest in tangible projects they had in mind and this included some who had only rated them of minimal importance in the questionnaire. Typical of the projects started were the following three examples:

Au sein de la délégation culturelle, je m'intéresse en particulier au conservatoire de musique et de danse. Et je travaille énormément pour ça. D'ailleurs je suis présidente de l'association parents-élèves pour ce conservatoire. J'ai des contacts très fréquents avec le maire-adjoint
chargé de la culture pour développer ce conservatoire.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

Moi, j'ai fait une proposition pour agrandir un gymnase. Il y avait des travaux qui étaient nécessaires. On a entamé une discussion. C'est vrai qu'on a été écoutés et qu'il y a maintenant une salle de réunion.
(Chaïb, Gières)

D'abord il y avait le problème d'un centre social. Il m'a fallu quand même deux ans pour résoudre ce problème.
(Boulaouinat, Bron)

Men, on the other hand, preferred to speak in far vaguer terms about their projects:

Je n'avais pas d'objectifs au départ si ce n'était de montrer que l'intégration, ça passe par la politique.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

L'idée de fond que j'ai, c'est de permettre aux jeunes issus de l'immigration d'avoir envie de se mobiliser, de prendre en charge leurs idées et leur avenir.
(Sahiri, Grenoble)

The above comments from men councillors suggest, perhaps, that they in particular feel a heavy burden of negative images which they want to overturn. This is undoubtedly linked to the unfavourable climate and various negative stereotypes that exist within French society concerning Maghrebian men, who are often seen as threatening or aggressive. Maghrebian women, on the other hand, are perceived in a more favourable light.

It would seem equally that women adopt a far more pragmatic (and, perhaps, realistic) approach to the duties of municipal councillor than is the case for men. The underlying reasons behind the contrasting attitudes are complex and may be related to the cultural background of Maghrebiens. One sociologist, Juliette Minces, suggests a possible explanation when examining the progress
that women of Maghrebian origin have made relative to their male counterparts in French society:

Elles [les femmes d'origine maghrébine] ont beaucoup plus à gagner que les garçons. A force de travail et de réussite scolaire, socialement elles montrent une image d'une immigration maghrébine valorisante et équilibrée par rapport à leurs frères, qui pour le moment n'offrent souvent qu'une image de violence négative.

(Minces 1986, 84)

There was, however, one area in which both men and women were agreed and that was that the rôle of a councillor was to serve the interests of the local community as a whole irrespective of ethnic origin, race, or nationality. All but one of the councillors in my sample attached major importance towards serving the needs of the community in their municipality as a whole. Councillors were fully aware of the symbolic nature of their initial election for the Maghrebian population, but argued that once this first threshold had been crossed, they were concerned to serve the interests of the local community in its entirety, as the following account illustrates:


(Chaïb, Gières)

Moreover, according to the same councillor, the demands that Maghrebians may have are often identical to those of other French nationals in the municipality:

Les demandes des Beurs et des Maghrébins sont les mêmes que celles de n'importe qui. On veut un boulot, un appartement. Et puis on veut vivre dans une jolie ville, quoi.

(Chaïb, Gières)
The following testimony reflects the general mood of all councillors towards the issue of representing the municipality as a whole rather than particular sections of it:

J'ai une vocation générale. Je suis un homme politique issu de cette ville qui ai vocation à défendre des valeurs, à défendre des choix politiques pour tous, pour tous ceux qui en tout cas font confiance à notre équipe.

(Sali, St. Denis)

It should be added that the same maire-adjoint was prepared to qualify his remarks by stating that while Maghrebians would not receive preferential treatment, their needs would be given particular consideration:

Et bien sûr j'ai cette préoccupation toute particulière de défendre cette population issue de l'immigration en général, bien évidemment d'origine maghrébine en particulier [...] Je suis de ceux qui considèrent qu'il est profondément inégal de traiter de façon égale une situation inégale.

(Sali, St. Denis)

These remarks imply that the balancing of general interests with sectional needs may not always be as easy as some interviewees suggested.

5.4.2 Problems encountered
We shall now focus upon the major obstacles that councillors have faced during their period in office. In the questionnaire councillors in my sample were asked to rank in order of importance on a scale of one to four the principal obstacles encountered. Interviewees were asked to evaluate all six alternatives in order to determine the importance of each individual obstacle. The following potential problems were listed:

i) Discrimination faced within one's own party.
ii) Lack of prior political experience.
iii) Administrative constraints.
iv) Budgetary/financial restrictions.
v) Opposition on the part of the Maghrebian population.
vi) Opposition on the part of the non-Maghrebian population.

Space was set aside in the questionnaire for other salient factors and in addition all problems encountered were discussed in detail during the follow-up interviews.

As mentioned previously, it should be remembered that by virtue of his or her status, the rôle that a councillor is able to play is limited by the degree of power s/he has at his/her disposal. This is something that the councillors are acutely aware of as the following accounts reveal:

Mais ce n'est pas dans les commissions que se décident les choses. On s'en aperçoit rapidement au bout d'un an. Nous sommes uniquement des faire-valoir. Tout se décide entre le maire et ses adjoints.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

Je pense qu'au cas de tous ceux qui sont là pour la première fois, c'est le même problème. C'est-à-dire qu'on saisit peu ce qui se passe réellement au niveau des prises de décision.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

This was a great source of frustration for several councillors as the above councillor acknowledges in her own case:

En fait je me suis rendue compte qu'on doit discuter des projets. Mais en réalité les décisions sont déjà prises ou sont prêtées à l'être. Moi, je me sens un peu frustrée.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

5.4.3 Administration and finance
The two major obstacles which are cited in almost equal proportions by councillors are administrative constraints and financial restrictions. Indeed several councillors apportioned equal weight to both factors in the questionnaire. This is doubtless explained by the extent to which the two factors are interlinked. One example of this is the difficulty which councillors
face in obtaining funds for a specific purpose since there are strictly defined rules which dictate how the administration shall operate. The account of one maire-adjoint in the département of Essonne is illustrative of this point:

C'est une administration qui a ses règles. Il y a par exemple un circuit de l'argent qui ne peut pas tout se permettre. Il n'y a pas un chéquier entre les mains du service qui va acheter n'importe quoi pour réparer la chose. Tout est contrôlé.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

The same maire-adjoint acknowledges that municipal councillors have to face up to the economic realities of a limited budget and that consequently only a small percentage of potential projects can be undertaken:

On est en face de la réalité. On voit le côté budget, le côté répartition. Ce n'est pas élastique. On ne peut pas tout faire.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

Other councillors argued that it was rather administrative red-tape which constituted the major handicap in their ability to carry out projects effectively.

5.4.4 Lack of prior political experience
It was noticeable that a pertinent comment on how to overcome administrative hurdles came from a maire-adjoint who himself works in administration at the Ministry of Youth and Sport. He argues that it is above all a question of gaining experience and perhaps more to the point knowing how, where and when to ask for a given favour:

Je connais le circuit, à savoir si on frappe à la mauvaise porte ou pas, et si on sait taper là où il faut au bon moment.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

This conveniently leads us on to a third factor cited by councillors, especially those within the 21-30 age bracket, namely the lack of prior political experience. One councillor in the département of Hauts-de-Seine explains the difficulties which he came up against at the beginning of his period of office:
Au début ça n'a pas été facile. Il y a chaque clan dans chaque groupe. Il y a des anciens chefs qui étaient les détenteurs de tous les pouvoirs. Ça m'a pris un certain temps pour comprendre le fonctionnement de l'appareil politique.  
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

Only a tiny minority of councillors received specific training concerning the post and consequently many were forced along with other newly appointed councillors on their party list, to train themselves:

On a laissé passer un trimestre. on a vu un peu ce qu'on nous demandait de faire et ensuite on s'est donné la formation nécessaire.  
(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

As a result of a lack of expertise in the mechanisms involved and of the issues at stake, councillors among my sample often had to vote on subjects they knew little or nothing about. One councillor in the département of Seine St. Denis explains it thus:

On est là pour donner une voix au moment du vote en séance du Conseil municipal. Et souvent j'avoue qu'on discute comme ça avec d'autres conseillers municipaux dont c'est la première expérience. Eh bien ils votent pour des choses qu'ils ignorent, et dont ils n'ont jamais entendu parler. Quand on vote par exemple des subventions aux associations. Il y a beaucoup d'associations avec des sigles. On ne sait même pas ce que sont ces sigles.  
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

It is often the case that for reasons of party loyalty, councillors are required to vote on matters about which they are very unclear:

Il faut respecter la discipline de groupe. Mais on vote pour des choses qu'on ignore. Personnellement je vis ça très mal. C'est très désagréable.  
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)
Councillors were often expected to follow the party line on certain policy matters and this is something that the younger councillors had particular difficulty in coming to terms with as the following account illustrates:

Au début de mon mandat, il y avait une association qui voulait faire un contre-vote [au sein du Conseil municipal]. Moi, je voulais sauver cette association (...) J'ai voulu lever la main et on [les autres conseillers municipaux du PC] me l'a retenue en disant : "Ce n'est pas la peine de voter. Vous serez perdant". Cela m'a beaucoup choqué. Il m'a déçu. Je venais de me rendre compte que je n'avais pas le droit de vote en réalité.
(Dendoune, Ile-St-Denis)

The other PC councillor in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis argued that the major obstacle he faced was having committees in which he was not necessarily interested imposed on him:

J'ai été écarté des commissions intéressantes. Les commissions m'ont été attribuées sans que je puisse donner mon avis. C'est pour cela que je ne peux m'intéresser à 100%.
(Hiaoui, Bondy)

5.4.5 Discrimination within one's own party

For four of the municipal councillors in my study, the major obstacle encountered was that of discrimination within their own local party. For three out of the four councillors concerned, this was the PS. The remaining councillor was elected on a PC list, although he is not a member of that party. Two of the councillors on PS lists believe that they have been treated merely as tokenist symbols and their views and experiences have not been taken into consideration. One of these councillors from the département of Seine-Saint-Denis expressed his frustration in the following manner:

L'obstacle numéro un à mon avis, c'est déjà que le gouvernement socialiste, le Parti socialiste nous donne, me donne en tout cas, l'impression qu'il se sert plutôt de nous.
(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)
The same councillor goes on to substantiate his argument:

C'est-à-dire pour attirer l'électorat maghrébin qui est important. Nous sommes deux millions et demi dans la société française dont au moins 1,2 millions en âge de voter, qui peuvent voter et qui votent pour la plupart. Donc on sert un petit peu d'alibi.

(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

The same councillor argues that councillors of Maghrebian origin in general have been under-used and his own situation is but one example:

Je pense que le PS n'a jamais fait un effort important pour nous donner les postes, les responsabilités que nous méritons. A la fois pour notre militantisme et notre formation professionnelle.

(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

For one of the other three councillors on a PS list, this also meant being deprived of the means to effectively carry out her duties:

Ce que je leur [aux responsables du PS] reproche, c'est qu'ils n'ont pas fait le travail indispensable [...] et dans mon mandat depuis deux ans, on ne me donne pas du tout les moyens, ni d'aider les gens de ma communauté dans quelque domaine que ce soit, ni d'essayer de créer des structures pour eux. Et moi, chaque fois que je demande quelque chose, c'est vraiment mis de côté.

(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

Indeed relations between the councillor in question at Vénissieux and the local party sank to such depths that her membership of the stallholders' (marché forain) committee was withdrawn. The councillor, who was interested in the committee because of the number of youths of Maghrebian origin involved in the profession, explains what happened subsequently:

Et donc ça m'intéressait en ce sens que je pouvais les [les jeunes] aider. Mais malheureusement on m'avait mis des bâtons dans les roues et de
facto on m'a retiré ma délégation, ce qui fait que depuis un an je n'ai plus cette délégation.
(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

It is important here to provide a brief description of the background of various incidents that occurred in the early part of this councillor's period in office and which have as a result soured relations with the local party. After having received little help when she requested it at the beginning of her period of office, unlike some councillors elsewhere, the councillor in question gradually came to the conclusion that she was not being treated with the same degree of respect that other councillors were afforded:

Bon je me suis aperçue à un certain moment qu'on me considérait pas du tout comme une élue à part entière.
(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

Differences between the councillor and the local party section became visible on at least two occasions. The first of these was during the visit of the then Prime Minister, Michel Rocard, to the neighbouring municipality of Bron in December, 1990. Via a friend who was another councillor of Maghrebian origin in Bron, the councillor from Vénissieux was able to secure an invitation. However, because the maires-adjoints in Vénissieux were unable to secure similar invitations, this became the source of a grudge that they held against her according to the following account by the councillor:

On m'a traitée de magouilleuse parce que j'avais magouillé pour avoir cette invitation. Alors que moi, je n'avais vraiment rien fait. La preuve, c'est que je ne me suis pas déplacée.
(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

This was by no means an isolated incident for she was similarly reproached for having gone on holiday to Libya along with a local cultural association. Consequently the councillor in question believes that within the local party section she has been marginalised:

J'ai vraiment une position à part. Je suis vraiment dans mon coin. A
chaque fois qu'il y a un problème avec moi, on ne me le pose jamais à moi. C'est eux qui parlent entre eux et quelquefois [...] ils me font une réflexion.

(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

An impasse was reached during the Gulf War when the councillor in question adopted a position contrary to that of the French government which was fully endorsed by the local party (see section 7.2 for further details). As a result of her opinions being aired in the Municipal Council the councillor was told that she would be punished by the maires-adjoints. Henceforth she was not informed about events which under normal circumstances she would have been eligible to attend. In addition the councillor in question claims to have received racist abuse from the wife of one of the maires-adjoints who worked as a local party secretary. The latter is alleged to have called the councillor "une sale arabe" (Rahmouni, Vénissieux).

In response to this, the councillor from Vénissieux, in addition to refusing to attend council sittings, asked one of the two Maghrebian pressure groups within the PS, the Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane (CSCM), to intervene on her behalf. The councillor also started court proceedings against the secretary which were quickly dropped since there was no witness. The CSCM sent a delegation to the Lyons suburb to discuss the matter with local party heads. The president of the CSCM, Sultana Cheurfa, said it was unacceptable for a councillor on a PS list to be treated in this manner by another member of the party. The local party heads came to an agreement on this, and it was decided that the councillor from Vénissieux would be re-integrated into the local party section. The councillor was subsequently allowed to speak in the council chamber with the support of other councillors.

For the councillor elected on a PC list, alleged discrimination against Maghrebiens took an altogether different form. The councillor in question argues that he became aware of prejudice when a football team made up exclusively of youths of Maghrebian origin from the municipality was due to undertake a tour of Germany, sponsored by the town hall. The trip was cancelled and instead another team of white youths including the children of PC councillors took its place. When the councillor in question inquired as to
why the Maghrebian team was not allowed to tour, he was given the following explanation:

On a annulé ce voyage parce qu'on a estimé que 70% de l'équipe ne pouvait pas partir. Alors j'ai cherché à comprendre. On m'a dit ; "Ne cherche pas à comprendre". J'ai expliqué cela à la commission [de sport] et une semaine plus tard les dirigeants m'ont attaqué en disant: "Tu m'as traité de raciste à la mairie". Eux [les conseillers municipaux au sein du PC], ils pouvaient se permettre de partir avec une équipe différente. Et l'autre équipe avec leur famille et leurs enfants.
(Dendoune, Ile-St-Denis)

The councillor in question sought to find out whether any misdemeanours had been committed by members of the Maghrebian team, but none could be found to explain their exclusion from the tour. The failure of the local PC party section to provide a justifiable explanation of events leads the councillor to make the following conclusion about the behaviour of local PC councillors:

C'est sûr qu'au sein du groupe [du PC] il y a des racistes. Il y a vraiment des gens qui ne peuvent pas nous sentir. C'est-à-dire le groupe de l'équipe de football déjà.
(Dendoune, Ile-St-Denis)

The councillor cites a second example of alleged institutionalised racism by the local PC council when he attempted to find a dwelling for an immigrant family of Maghrebian origin. Upon contacting the relevant authorities in the municipality, he was told that it would not be possible to house the family in question. However, the same official indicated that if the councillor himself wished to obtain accommodation, then this could be provided without any difficulty.

The councillor believes that such double standards are symptomatic of PC discourse regarding ethnic minorities. This is illustrated in the councillor's view by PC leaflets concerning immigration. One leaflet entitled "Immigration: l'opinion des communistes", which was distributed in June 1991, contains the following comments:
Alors que toute immigration nouvelle aurait dû être arrêtée depuis longtemps (les communistes le disent depuis 1974), une immigration clandestine est organisée au mépris de la loi. [...] Avec 3,5 millions de chômeurs, il faut arrêter toute immigration nouvelle [...] Un immigrant peut également décider de retourner dans son pays. Des accords nouveaux basés sur l'intérêt mutuel avec les pays d'origine doivent lui permettre de réussir sa réinsertion.

(Parti communiste 1991, 1)

The leaflet was condemned immediately in the strongest possible terms by the anti-racist organisation Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples (MRAP):

Depuis une semaine, les adhérents et sympathisants du MRAP font part au Mouvement de leurs sentiments concernant le tract sur l'immigration publié par le Parti Communiste Français. Ces sentiments vont de la stupéfaction incrédule à l'indignation et à la condamnation sans appel. [...] Le MRAP espère que ce tract donnera lieu de la part de ces auteurs à une analyse critique et sera sans délai retiré de la circulation.

(MRAP 1991)

When shown the same PC leaflet, the councillor in question made the following observation:

Le discours officiel vis-à-vis de l'immigration est favorable. C'est [le tract] désolant. C'est sûr qu'à un moment donné j'avais déjà des doutes après un [autre] article qu'on m'avait donné.

(Dendoune, Île-St-Denis)

The other councillor in my sample elected on a PC list and a member of the party has not encountered discrimination from his own ranks.

5.4.6 Opposition from the Maghrebian population

French citizens of Maghrebian origin are perceived as a homogeneous group
by the generality of the French population and as such are the victims of the same types of discrimination as among the Maghrebian population. There is in fact a wide diversity of nationalities, ethnic groups and political beliefs.

This is borne out by the experiences of at least four councillors in my sample. We shall take one specific example of a councillor in Dijon to illustrate this point. The councillor, born and raised in France, is of Algerian origin. In the municipality of Dijon in which the councillor works, she has encountered opposition from the Maghrebian population which is predominantly Moroccan. The councillor has few dealings with the Moroccans in the locality since in her opinion they are totally opposed to what she terms 'integration', a concept which she endorses for all Maghrebians. Rather than asking the councillor for advice and help, Moroccans tend to rely instead on the consulate in the town. In addition the Moroccan population tends in large part to be sympathetic towards the conservative RPR, whereas the councillor in question is a member of the PS. Not surprisingly, then, there is little contact between the two as the councillor readily acknowledges:

Il ya une forte communauté marocaine, mais comme ils sont contre l'intégration, honnêtement je ne m'en occupe pas. Et en outre on ne m'invite pas non plus. Parce que pour eux, je ne suis pas un exemple [...] Par contre il y a quelques Algériens et là j'ai été reçue tout de suite. (Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

While the councillor has been immediately accepted by the smaller Algerian population, this in turn has created its own problems. The councillor in question was asked by members of the Algerian population to become the local president of Recherches-Perspectives-Expression-Société (REPERES), an extension in France of the Amicale des Algériens en Europe, an organisation for Algerian expatriates controlled by the Algerian government. She refused this invitation for the following reasons:

Parce que je ne veux pas être encore utilisée par l'Algérie. Déjà je me bats en tant que française en France en disant que je ne suis pas la petite bougnoule, je ne suis pas la beurette. Je suis française à part entière, mais avec un plus. Et ce plus, je veux le garder. Et je pense
que je risque de le perdre si je rentre dans ce genre d'association.
(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

5.4.7 Opposition from the non-Maghrebian population
Few councillors cited this as a major problem. Only in three municipalities did councillors indicate difficulties and this tended to be verbal abuse from the Front National (FN) party councillors. However, in general councillors acknowledged that in the Municipal Council opposition parties treated them with courtesy. The one noticeable exception to this is the PC and it is the relationship between this party and the PS which we shall examine in the final section on problems encountered.

5.4.8 Municipal politics: PC-PS relations
The importance of the relationship between the PC and the PS in my sample can be gauged from the fact that of the 23 councillors questioned, no less than 16 perform their duties in a Communist-controlled municipality. Indeed 11 of the councillors alone are to be found in the PC-controlled département of Seine-Saint-Denis and two of these are on PC lists.

Under an agreement concluded by the PC and PS prior to the March 1989 municipal elections, it was decided that a Union of the Left should operate, but that individual municipalities should decide the exact framework of how this operated. Once in office, several councillors discovered that the relationship between the two parties was somewhat less than fraternal and they themselves became the potential targets of abuse. One councillor from the Seine-Saint-Denis municipality of Aubervilliers explains his own predicament as follows:

L'accueil du PC a été beaucoup plus froid [que celui du PS]. En fait il faut dire beaucoup plus agressif.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

When pressed to explain this statement, he made the following observations:

Ils [les communistes] l'ont prise [ma candidature sur une liste du PS] comme une trahison. Dans la mesure où j'ai toujours vécu dans cette
ville [...] Que le fils se retrouve dans un autre parti que celui de la majorité. Ce n'était pas compréhensible pour eux.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

In practical terms the PC has provided a formidable obstacle in the Municipal Council proceedings:

C'est bizarre, mais ils [les communistes] sont contre tout, quoi. Ils ont les moyens pour tout contrôler et nos propositions n'ont pas beaucoup de résultats.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

The councillor in question has subsequently gone on to become a regional councillor for Génération Ecologie while remaining a municipal councillor elected on a PC-PS list.

For one of the councillors elected on a PC list, attempts to work with a PS Maghrebian maire-adjoint on a joint project to find a dwelling for one family were thwarted by the PC local party section. When asked about the manner in which the PC reacted to the project, the councillor's reply was as follows:

(Dendoune, Île-St-Denis)

The aforementioned interpretation of PC reluctance to co-operate with PS councillors would appear to be supported not only by other councillors in the département, but equally by Maghrebian councillors elsewhere in PC-controlled municipalities. One councillor in the Hauts-de-Seine département explains the difficulty that he has encountered in even finding out what projects the PC local party list has in mind:

C'est une difficulté de travailler avec les communistes parce qu'ils ne
nous aident pas. Tout est caché, tout est camouflé. Donc c'est le flou. On est nul. On est fantoche, quoi. On ne sait pas ce qui se passe. On ne sait pas ce qui se trame.
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

The councillor concludes that the relationship between the PC and PS at municipal level can be resumed in the following terms:

Ils [les communistes] ont un monopole, ils gardent leur système. C'est donc pour ça que nous [dans le PS] sommes la minorité dans la majorité.
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

It is as a direct result of the impasse created by the PC's actions that the councillor in question has decided to take the initiative and carry out the projects that he has in mind by other means:

C'est pour cela que j'ai créé une association dans ce quartier pour essayer d'être plus libre.
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

5.5 Overall assessment of councillors' period in office
In the final part of this chapter we shall provide an overall assessment of the councillors' period in office. This will include not simply the views of the councillors themselves, but also those of non-councillors who in various capacities are interested in, or have frequent dealings with, the councillors in question.

It should be evident from what has so far been said that the PS in particular took a decisive step in putting forward candidates of Maghrebian origin on its party lists at municipal level in the 1989 elections. Was this done for purely electoral reasons, though, and once the initial symbolic stage has been passed, has the party followed through its support for Maghrebian candidates to its logical conclusion? With reference to the first of these questions, the views were sought of three principal actors within the PS: Sultana Cheurfa, president
of the Maghrebian pressure group within the party, Le Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane; Mohamed Meb Toul, a member of the comité directeur of the PS, and former TV presenter of the "Mosaïque" programme aimed at Muslims in France; Georges Morin, President of the Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb (CNESOM). Cheurfa is under no illusions about why the councillors of Maghrebian origin were selected:

Ils [les conseillers municipaux] ont été beaucoup plus choisis en fonction de l'idée que ce sont des agents électoraux plutôt que sur le fond...
(Cheurfa, Paris)

She goes on to explain how the candidates were recruited:

On a cherché dans les associations des gens qui avaient l'air sympathique et qui étaient plutôt jeunes pour comprendre comment cela marche dans les conseils municipaux.
(Cheurfa, Paris)

This view is supported by Mohamed Meb Toul and equally by Georges Morin, who was instrumental in telephoning mayors in order that candidates of Maghrebian origin should be put forward on their lists. Morin argues that he specified that candidates should be chosen according to their competence. When asked what he said to the mayors, he made the following remark:

J'ai dit: "Ecoutez. Je pense qu'il est très important que le PS donne enfin un signe qu'il prend en considération les Maghrébins de France. Donc plus il y aura de Maghrébins sur les listes, plus j'en serai satisfait. Mais il ne faut pas que ce soit artificiel."
(Morin, Paris)

Meb Toul is under no illusions about the tokenist nature of the candidates in question being elected:

On s'est rendu compte qu'on a canalisé les "leaders" de mouvements
In other words according to Meb Toul's testimony, councillors of Maghrebian origin have been used as pawns to channel the potential anger of Maghrebian youths in France into non-violent avenues.

This leads us on to the second question of whether the views of Maghrebians in France have been given sufficient expression in the political arena. By virtue of the limited powers accorded to municipal councillors, the voices of Maghrebians are virtually absent from political discourse at national level. Cheurfa believes that the decision to take on councillors of Maghrebian origin was not sufficiently thought through:

Cela n'a pas été suffisamment réfléchi ou il n'y a pas assez d'engagement de la part des socialistes qui sont dirigeants au sein de la municipalité pour que ce soit plus efficace.

(Cheurfa, Paris)

This view is endorsed by some of the more experienced and politically aware councillors as the following opinion indicates:

A mon avis ils [les conseillers municipaux] se rendent compte qu'il y a du travail à faire. Qu'ils doivent se former eux-mêmes. Ils doivent s'impliquer dans un cadre qu'ils ne connaissent absolument pas.

(Sali, St. Denis)

Consequently Cheurfa argues that the councillors themselves have suffered in terms of low self-esteem and have interiorised negative perceptions that the French population as a whole has of them:

De la même manière qu'on ne reconnaît pas dans la société française l'identité musulmane de certains Français, les élus eux-mêmes ont
intégré cette image défavorable et dévalorisante de ce qu'ils sont, de leur famille. Et cela, ils le vivent très mal.
(Cheurfa, Paris)

Mohamed Meb Toul argues that the crucial question of giving Maghrebians positions of real responsibility has been avoided:

Ce n'est pas par ces intermédiaires-là [les conseillers municipaux] qu'on va accéder à ce qu'on appelle 'l'intégration' des Français d'origine maghrébine. On y accédera en faisant accéder des gens émérites, selon leurs compétences, à des postes de responsabilité institutionnels.
(Meb Toul, Paris)

Meb Toul outlines the five key institutions which are concerned with the plight of Maghrebians: the Fonds d'Action Sociale; the Direction de la Population et des Migrations; SONACOTRA; the Office des Migrations Internationales; the Ministry of Integration. There is a not a single person of Maghrebian origin occupying an official post of responsibility in any of these institutions, according to Meb Toul.

Meb Toul believes that the PS made a serious mistake in allowing the whole process of putting forward the candidates in question to be covered by the mass media. This, he argues, has proven to be counterproductive for it has raised false hopes among both the councillors concerned and the Maghrebian population in general. He advocates rather a lower profile approach and cites the RPR as pursuing a more effective policy. When asked whether he thought the visibility of Maghrebians elected on PS lists created problems, Meb Toul made the following reply:

Quelque part oui. Parce qu'il y en a autant au RPR, mais ils sont moins visibles. C'est une erreur tactique de notre part. Peut-être qu'on a voulu être trop m'as-tu-vu et qu'il vaudrait mieux avoir des postes de responsabilité anonymes dans la société française. On aurait dû exister sans parler trop de nous.
(Meb Toul, Paris)
What of the councillors' views on their period of office? A wide diversity of opinions on the matter is expressed, from those who feel they have accomplished at least some of the objectives they set out to achieve by limiting their aims to specific purposes, to those who are disenchanted and threaten either to leave their party list and join another party, or who at the end of their six-year term will not seek to renew their mandate. Despite these differences, there seems to be a general consensus that once the symbolic threshold had been crossed, there then begins a period of apprenticeship, and it is only after two years in office that they have been able to put into practice some of their projects. Some, for reasons already mentioned, have been thwarted in such attempts.

There is, then, a general awareness of the problems that are inherent in the post of a municipal councillor and of the fact that there remains a great deal of work to be done. It may in fact only be at the end of their period of office that we will be able to determine with exactitude the achievements of the councillors in question and the extent to which they have been able to overcome the obstacles that have been placed in their way.
CHAPTER 6
MAGHREBIAN PRESSURE GROUPS WITHIN THE PS

6.1 Introduction
Pressure groups are by no means a phenomenon peculiar to ethnic minorities. Organisations claiming to represent the interests of agriculture, business, labour, women or other groups largely pre-date ethnic minority pressure groups. We may define pressure groups as being

a categoric group whose members are to some extent conscious of their common characteristics, regard themselves as having a common value or 'interest' arising from these characteristics and to some extent direct their behaviour to advance their common interest.

(Walton 1969, 140)

Shukra (1990) in her study of black sections in Great Britain defines the aims of ethnic minority pressure groups as follows:

i) Electoral objectives. This may mean both attracting members of an ethnic minority to a political party and increasing the number of elected representatives from that ethnic minority.

ii) Policy/campaigning objectives which aim at mobilising the support of the ethnic minority outside the electoral process.

iii) Self-development objectives of the organisation. This can be used as a platform for personal promotion.

The logic of ethnic minority pressure groups is to provide an alternative for minorities to being submerged by the dominant host society in which they find themselves. By organising pressure groups within a political party of this host nation, the aim is to transform that party by operating from within.

This chapter will concentrate upon the two principal Maghrebian pressure groups within the PS, the Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane (CSCM) and the Conférence Nationale des Elus Originaires du Maghreb (CNESOM). We will focus upon the first and third aims as defined by Shukra (the second aim is examined in chapter 4 on national organisations, dealing
specifically with France-Plus and SOS-Racisme). We shall begin by chronicling the origins of the two organisations and explaining the manner in which they operate and their objectives. The chapter will then go on to highlight ideological differences that exist between the two and which are attributable in part to their links with the various courants or tendencies in the PS. This will involve analysis of the manner in which the CSCM and CNESOM function. In the final part of the chapter the views of the two organisations will be compared and contrasted with respect to the right to vote of immigrants in municipal elections. (Differences between the two concerning the Gulf War and the 'headscarf' affair are referred to in chapter 7.)

Before we examine these themes, however, it is necessary to briefly examine one other pressure group within the PS which relates to Maghrebian, Club Emergence, which was set up in 1989 by Mohamed Meb Toul, former producer of the magazine programme Mosaïque on the third television channel, FR 3, and a member of the comité directeur of the party. Club Emergence was an attempt to provide a forum for debate on incorporating Maghrebians into mainstream political parties. Meb Toul in a speech delivered at the first meeting of Club Emergence, on 25 November 1989 at the National Assembly, described the aims of the organisation thus:

Nous pensons que jusqu'à présent ils [les Français d'origine maghrébine] ont été en dehors des partis politiques et que les politiques les concernant s'élaboraient en dehors d'eux.

(Club Emergence 1989, 7)

Despite some initial success in attracting party leaders (Lionel Jospin and Louis Mermaz), municipal councillors (of which two, Georges Sali and Henri Touabi, belong to my sample) and other party members sympathetic to the cause including the president of the CNESOM, Georges Morin, Club Emergence never attracted widespread support. This is perhaps attributable in part to its failure to publicise itself throughout France, but also to the existence of other politically-oriented associations such as France-Plus. Club Emergence ceased in reality to function as an effective force once the CSCM and CNESOM came into existence. It is for this reason that we shall focus attention upon these two organisations exclusively.
6.2 Origins and development

6.2.1 Le Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane

The origins of the Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane, created on 23 June 1990, date back to the period between elections in 1986-87 and in particular to a face-to-face television debate between François Léotard, a senior member of the UDF, and Jack Lang, Minister of Culture. During the debate, Léotard, according to the now president of the Cercle, Sultana Cheurfa, commented that the Rights of Islam are incompatible with the Rights of Man and those of Women. Cheurfa, a PS activist and member of the branch committee in the 19th arrondissement of Paris, was angered by these comments since she believed that they denied her very existence. In response to this Cheurfa, along with a friend in the PS, wrote an open letter to Léotard in Le Monde. The newspaper refused to publish the letter. This proved to be a revealing experience for Cheurfa:

Cela a montré les limites de la réflexion à tous niveaux dans notre société. Et notamment de ceux qui s'exprimaient.

(Cheurfa, Paris)

This perception was reinforced during the so-called affaire du foulard in the autumn of 1989, for in her opinion it revealed that there was division and crisis within French society as a whole and within the PS in particular. She explained her reasoning thus:

Il y a deux parties de la société française : on est d'une France contre l'autre France. Un Parti socialiste même contre un autre Parti socialiste, de droite à gauche. Donc on se définit par des pôles.

(Cheurfa, Paris).

Cheurfa attempted to express her opinions publicly by means of an article in Le Monde. However, the article, though published this time, was modified and the title was changed from 'Voile sur la France, Troubles au PS' to 'Contre l'assimilation' (Le Monde 24 November 1989). In addition Cheurfa circulated a document within the PS which attempted to bring together members of the party who were of the Muslim faith. The document was duly printed in a party journal, Vendredi, but again modifications were made, most notably the omission of any signatures and the addition of an insignia showing a nude woman wearing a veil. Neither change had been made with Cheurfa's
approval. Before a PS congress meeting on the secular nature of the state took place in 1989, Cheurfa met with friends in the party to discuss the whole affair.

The *affaire du foulard* would provide the stimulus for the creation of the CSCM. Its President is convinced that what was at stake in the affair was the future status of Maghrebian in France. In its first newsletter the CSCM argued that the affair was in fact an affront to Muslims:

Les Musulmans de France ont subi un véritable déferlement d'hostilités dans lequel la présentation faite de l'Islam tenait de la caricature, et où même l'insulte ne fut pas évitée.

*(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 5)*

A subsequent meeting with municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin took place in January 1990 during the first national conference held by the Fédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes et Républicains (FNESR). Cheurfa attended the conference presided over by Georges Morin, but claims to have been prevented from speaking. This was one example of the clash of personalities between the two future leaders of Maghrebian pressure groups within the PS, although Cheurfa claims there was an antecedent to this when at a previous FNESR meeting over which Morin presided, she was prevented from entering. It was directly after Cheurfa was not allowed to express her opinions at the second meeting in January 1990 that she left the chamber along with a small group of councillors to discuss the creation of the CSCM. Cheurfa made the following observation:


*(Cheurfa, Paris)*

The CSCM is headed by a *bureau* which is called the *Comité d'Orientation*. The tasks which the *Comité d'Orientation* performs are as follows:

C'est le Comité d'Orientation qui détermine et conduit, entre deux
Assemblées Générales, et dans le cadre des décisions qui y sont prises, la politique du CSCM.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane n.d., 2)

The members of the Comité d'Orientatio are elected by the Assemblée Générale for a three year-period in office.

The Comité d'Orientatio chooses a bureau which is made up of the following members:

- A President who prepares the work that the Comité d'Orientatio will undertake and supervises the carrying out of decisions. It is the President who represents the CSCM in its dealings with external elements.

- One or more vice-presidents to assist or take over from the president in case of emergency.

- A Secretary-General who deals with the internal administration of the organisation and may be aided by a deputy.

- A Treasurer concerned with the organisation's finances and who may also be supported by a deputy.

Below this is the conseil d'administration comprising twelve members. The meetings of the CSCM may take place at three levels: an Assemblée Générale at national level which normally takes place once a year; various Assemblée Régionales; Assemblées Locales for members within a specific municipality or town/city.

The CSCM is made up of fully-fledged members enjoying full voting rights and associated members sympathetic to the organisation's goals. The latter may participate in discussions, but do not have the right to vote. Among the full members are a disparate group of individuals of the Muslim faith (principally, though not exclusively, of Maghrebian origin) which include associational leaders such as Nordine Chérif (Génération Beur), intellectuals such as the philosopher Sadek Sellam and the sociologist Rachid Alaoui, as well as PS activists at departmental level and various municipal councillors including maires-adjoints throughout the country.
The CSCM aims at encouraging the cultural, ideological and social expression of Socialists who are of the Muslim faith. In order to achieve this, a three-pronged approach is pursued as article 3 of the preamble sets out:

- Rassembler les musulmans vivant en France et qui se reconnaissent dans le Parti socialiste, pour en être membre ou proche.

- Oeuvrer pour une meilleure connaissance de l'Islam et du patrimoine culturel, social et familial lié à sa civilisation.

- Combattre les préjugés auxquels se heurte la communauté musulmane de France, apporter aide et soutien à ses membres, et combattre pour que l'égalité de droits et de devoirs leur soit reconnue.

(Cercle des Socialistes ce Culture Musulmane n.d., 1)

The logic of the Cercle is explained in the first newsletter. There was first of all a feeling that decisions were being taken for the Maghrebian population by people of non-Maghrebian origin and that this situation needed to be reversed:

Une telle structure paraît nécessaire face au constat d'exclusion de la communauté musulmane de la sphère politique, qui persiste malgré la présence d'élus et de militants dans les divers partis, et notamment au P.S.

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 1).

Secondly, Maghrebians were perceived to be under-represented in organisations concerned with the plight of ethnic minority groups:

Aucun membre de la communauté n'est présent dans cette institution [le Haut Conseil à l'Intégration].

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 1)

Thirdly, Maghrebians were not allowed to express themselves freely in the media and instead unrepresentative figures were given the opportunity to express their opinions, often inflaming the debate and furthering the misperceptions and stereotypical images that the French population as a whole may have of Maghrebians in France (for examples see section 7.2). Therefore:
Pour exister, il faut se faire entendre : ce n'est pas d'une protection dont nous avons besoin, c'est d'une expression [...] Il nous faut, publiquement, être nous-mêmes

*(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 4).*

Fourthly, the Cercle felt the need to make the PS aware of the existence of Maghrebian in France:

Le PS en a sans doute besoin pour prendre la mesure de cette réalité, nouvelle et définitive : la présence d'une communauté culturelle et religieuse minoritaire, en France et au sein de la classe ouvrière.

*(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 5).*

With the setting-up of the Cercle, municipal councillors, association representatives, regional heads and intellectuals who belonged to, or were sympathetic toward, the PS could henceforth meet to discuss matters of importance concerning the Maghrebian and other Muslim populations in France. It would be independent of the party *courants* and secular individuals of Maghrebian origin would be allowed to join.

### 6.2.2 Conférence Nationales des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb

The CNESOM, set up in March 1990, is the brainchild of Georges Morin, a pied-noir, and conseiller délégué under Louis Mermaz at the Ministry for Agriculture. Its origins date back to 1983 when a network of PS activists including the sons and daughters of North African immigrants, made up of Beurs and harkis as well as pieds-noirs, was started at the request of Lionel Jospin and Pierre Mauroy. The aim of the network was as follows:

Nous tentions, ensemble, de définir ce que devrait être la politique du parti et du gouvernement pour une meilleure intégration à la communauté nationale des populations originaires du Maghreb.

*(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1992, 1)*

A more formal structure for the activists was created with the setting-up by Morin of the little known *Groupe des trente* in 1987. Made up of thirty original members, the body sought to reflect on issues concerning the
Maghrebian population. Geisser (1993, 14) argues that the short-lived existence of the *Groupe des trente* should not be underestimated in the wider context of Maghrebian political activism and evaluates its importance in the following terms:

C'est la première fois qu'une forme d'ethnicité maghrébine apparait en tant que telle, en dehors des luttes inter-courants et des querelles de leaders.

With the extension of Morin's responsibilities under Pierre Mauroy in 1988 (henceforth Morin would be responsible to the PS General Secretary for elected representatives originating from the Maghreb), a joint venture was undertaken between the party and the FNESR. This sought to bring together Socialist elected representatives at national and local level (though as yet there were and still are no députés of Maghrebian origin in the PS) as well as affiliated representatives originating from the Maghreb or apparentés. This action was achieved with the agreement of Pierre Mauroy, president of the FNESR, and Guy Vadepied, its General Secretary. Between June and September of 1989 a survey was undertaken by Georges Morin, by telephone and letter, to determine the number of municipal councillors originating from the Maghreb (including pieds-noirs as well as those of Muslim origin) and the following figures were arrived at:

Par le triple canal des fédérations du PS, de celles de la FNESR et des maires socialistes, nous arrivions à collecter, en trois mois, les coordonnées d'environ 300 élus, nationaux et locaux, dont une centaine d'origine maghrébine.

*(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1992, 1)*

While all 300 became members of the CNESOM, only 100 were of Maghrebian origin. Of the other 200 elected officials all were sympathetic towards people of Maghrebian origin and had links with the Maghreb (e.g. pieds-noirs who had formerly resided in the Maghreb).

On 4 November 1989 the first national meeting of the 300 municipal councillors took place under the aegis of the FNESR in the National Assembly and nine working parties, each devoted to a specific theme, were established.
As Morin explains, they were divided up into the following three categories:

3 de nature économique et sociale [logement, école, emploi], 3 de nature culturelle [programmes d'enseignement, rôle des médias, Islam de France], et 3 touchant la vie publique [rapports avec la justice et la police, rapports avec l'armée, intégration politique].

(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1992, 1)

This first meeting served as a preparatory session for the second meeting, which was again held at the National Assembly and organised by the FNESR, from 5 to 7 January 1990. It was at this meeting that ministers of the government were to enter into discussions, based on the nine themes, with the elected representatives. In March of the same year the Fédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes et Républicains originating from the Maghreb was officially created.

The president of the CNESOM, Georges Morin, has been unwilling to provide me with a copy of the organisation's charter. However, despite the absence of this document, it is possible broadly outline the two major objectives of the CNESOM:

i) The first of these is to provide a mouthpiece for the 'Maghrebian' voice within the PS, taking into account all constituent parts of the populations that have previously resided in, or originate from the Maghreb. Morin, while quick to deny any claims of purporting to represent Maghrebian opinion as a whole, acknowledges this when making the following the comments:

Sans prétendre aucunement "représenter" l'ensemble des populations dont nous sommes issus, nous sommes à même de traduire pour nos interlocuteurs les attentes et les espoirs de nos compatriotes, et de réagir aux actions et aux projets que les ministres ont engagées ou nous font connaître.

(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1992, 1)

In other words the CNESOM can act as a forum to relay Maghrebian opinion from grass-roots level to the highest échelons of the PS leadership.
ii) Secondly, the organisation aims at promoting a positive image of *maghrébinité* in French society. This is required since the diverse groups which make up the Maghrebian population in France are united in terms of identity only on the basis of their rejection by large parts of French society. Geisser (1993, 15) argues that one of the reasons for the CNESOM being set up is to combat the negative perception in French society of anything associated with the Maghreb:

> Pour répondre à cette forme de stigmatisation, la CNESOM entend promouvoir "une maghrébinité positive" qui intègrerait pèle-mêle enfants de l'immigration, juifs sépharades, et rapatriés d'Afrique du Nord.

However, Morin's concept of bringing together disparate and some would even say opposing populations is a problematic one. Critics of the CNESOM have argued that the idea of bringing together the different constituent parts which make up the CNESOM is at best an idealistic one, harking back to a colonial past which has little to do with the present reality. Geisser (1993, 15) clearly subscribes to this view when he makes the following comments:

> La nouvelle association [la CNESOM] repose sur une vision idéale voire idyllique du "Maghreb d'avant les indépendances", vision transposée à la France d'aujourd'hui. Elle est propre à une génération de militants et de dirigeants socialistes pour lesquels la situation actuelle doit être décodée avec les clefs idéologiques d'une société passée.

### 6.3 Organisational Resources

In terms of the composition of their members, the CNESOM and CSCM differ quite radically. Numerically the CNESOM is the larger of the two with almost three hundred members and includes among its ranks various nationalities, origins and denominations.

These include pieds-noirs, the sons and daughters of harkis and members of Muslim families of economic migrants, both Arab and Berber. Additionally there are members of mixed French and North African origin.
The CSCM, on the other hand, has a more strictly defined membership based rather on Islam. While Maghrebians predominate within the Cercle, it also has members of other nationalities and origins, such as Black African Muslims:

La référence musulmane apparaît comme l'élément commun et durable autour duquel se trouve notre communauté.

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 4)

This does not mean, however, that only practising Muslims can adhere to the organisation. As one newsletter explains, membership of the CSCM is not confined to those having a strong attachment to Islam (Cheurfa herself is not a practising Muslim, although she says that she is a believer). The CSCM has a membership of 50, of which 25 are municipal councillors (four of whom feature in my sample). The majority of the councillors in the CSCM exercise their functions outside the city of Paris and this explains the relatively small number among my sample of councillors. In addition the Cercle distributes its newsletter to 350 'contacts', 100 'personalities' (either interested in, or who have close allegiances with, the Arab world), 50 associations and institutions, 50 occasional correspondents, leaders within the party, députés and a selected number of PS mayors.

Both the CNESOM and the CSCM are primarily Paris-based and neither has any regional sub-divisions, though the latter does state in its constitution that regional meetings can in theory take place. While members come from throughout France, those from Ile-de-France are by far the most numerous. Both organisations consist of a bureau with a president, vice-presidents (of which there are three municipal councillors of Maghrebian origin in the CNESOM and one in the CSCM), and a Conseil d'administration (with twelve Maghrebian councillors in the CNESOM and two in the CSCM). In the CNESOM the members of the Conseil d'administration are divided up into the three committees already mentioned.

In the CNESOM one national meeting is held per annum. This has attracted on average between one hundred and fifty and one hundred and eighty members. In addition there are bi-monthly meetings attended by the thirty members of the Conseil d'administration. Discussion draws on the detailed work of the individual committees. The CSCM meets once a month on
average and it discusses themes relevant to Muslims resident in France. There has also been discussion of the mandates of municipal councillors who are members of the CSCM. These discussions have concerned the ideological bases of the party and senior members of the CSCM have explained the nature and logic of the various tendencies. On two occasions the CSCM has directly intervened in local party section dealings on behalf of municipal councillors belonging to the CSCM when there has been a dispute (see section 5.4.5.). Such action is justified by the CSCM according to article three of its constitution which states that the organisation is committed to combating prejudice and ensuring equal rights for all. The CNESOM, apart from debating issues, organised a trip to the Maghreb immediately following the end of the Gulf War (see section 7.2.2 for further details) and has been involved in the campaign to oppose the Front National during the 1992 regional elections in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

The finances of the CNESOM and CSCM reflect the different attitudes that the party leaders have towards these organisations. The CNESOM is financed largely by a quango, the Fonds d'Action Sociale, and has continued to benefit from the support of Pierre Mauroy and Louis Mermaz. While the Fonds d'Action Sociale is not an instrument of the PS, it does nevertheless reflect the political complexions of the day. The CSCM, on the other hand, has not enjoyed any such support and consequently has had to rely upon a variety of sources including membership subscription fees, receipts from organised activities, donations and any subsidies that might be granted.

6.4 Ideological affinities

Both organisations claim not to belong to any particular courant or tendency within the PS and the two presidents, when interviewed, were at pains to stress their opposition to any influence from these courants. Morin made the following comments:

Si vous donnez une couleur à cette association, vous allez la saborder.
Chaque clan du PS va être tenté de créer son propre mouvement.
(Morin, Paris)

Cheurfa argued that to take sides within the party would be a futile exercise, particularly when seeking to open up a dialogue with the party as a whole:
Notre expression commune ne doit pas être soumise aux stratégies d'une tendance particulière. Tel est le seul moyen d'engager un dialogue utile avec tout le parti.

(Cheurfa, Paris)

Nevertheless despite the claims of both organisations to be above party factionalism, they are, to some extent, influenced by the heads of particular courants, or at the very least are sympathetic towards the ideology of these tendencies. The CNESOM was initiated with the support of Lionel Jospin and Pierre Mauroy, who belong to the tendency within the PS known as the Jospin - Mauroy - Mermaz courant. The other party leader in this tendency, Louis Mermaz, is in fact the head of the Ministry of Agriculture under whom Georges Morin worked as a conseiller-délégué until the change of government in March 1993. Prior to this Morin was and still remains a maire-adjoint in the municipality of Gières (Isère). Mermaz was influential in the region as president of the Conseil Régional between 1976 and 1985. Morin is also a member of the comité directeur of the PS and access to this level invariably necessitates being put forward by a prominent individual in a particular tendency.

The CSCM, while avowedly non-factionalist, shows a marked ideological leaning towards the Socialisme et République courant, headed by Jean-Pierre Chevènement, which is to the far left of the party. Cheurfa, president of the CSCM and herself a member of the Chevènement tendency, said in unambiguous terms where she thought the Cercle stood within the political spectrum. In answer to the question of whether hers was an organisation above party factionalism, Cheurfa replied,

Oui, mais qui est bien socialiste et qui est bien à gauche.

(Cheurfa, Paris)

Sympathies towards the Chevènement courant were displayed in private during the Gulf War by several municipal councillors who were members of the Cercle, and who telephoned Chevènement to express their personal support for the stance that he had adopted during hostilities. In particular they applauded, according to Cheurfa's account, his decision to resign as Minister of Defence. While Sultana Cheurfa was personally informed by the councillors of this support, she has been unwilling to disclose their names for
my research purposes.

Indeed, though no member of the CSCM resigned as a result of French involvement, the discourse and actions of the Cercle during the Gulf War closely mirrored those of the former Defence Minister with respect to opposition to French and American military participation. One of the main ideological tenets behind the Socialisme et République tendency is a reluctance to endorse liberalism or US hegemony, and this is implicitly stated in a PS document charting the origins of the various courants (Parti Socialiste Section Jean Jaurès 1990). Before, during and after the conflict, the CSCM criticised the United States for its behaviour and the French government and PS for its support of American participation (for further details see section 7.2.1). In November 1990 the Cercle issued the following warning to the party in its conference-debate pamphlet on the Gulf crisis:

Let France savoir résister aux pressions du "lobby atlantiste". A cet égard nous souhaitons que le Parti socialiste contribue à éclairer l'opinion.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990f, 3)

The suggestion was made that the United States was leading world opinion into a logique de guerre and that their allies in France were advocating a close Atlantic alliance. The Cercle voiced its disapproval in the clearest possible terms:

Les Socialistes de Culture Musulmane s'efforceront, pour leur part, de combattre dans l'opinion la "logique de guerre" dans laquelle la France a beaucoup à perdre et fort peu à gagner.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990f, 3).

This view was reiterated immediately after the end of hostilities when the Cercle, in a special newsletter devoted to the Gulf War, criticised the French government for having a change in policy (i.e. military intervention) imposed upon it as a result of American pressure:

Globalement, la France s'est vu imposer, par la cohérence de la politique américaine, un chamboulement complet de ses positions stratégiques : la plupart de ses amis et alliés se sont retrouvés dans le
At the conference-debate held by the CSCM at the National Assembly on 14 June 1991, a prominent member of the Chevènement courant, Max Gallo, was invited to speak. He was defined in the accompanying pamphlet as being firmly opposed to a Franco-American coalition in the Gulf War, a position identical to the views expressed by the Cercle:

Cette cohérence l'a conduit à prendre position contre l'alignement de la France dans la coalition américaine dans la Guerre du Golfe.

Further evidence of links between Chevènementiste ideology and that of the Cercle is to be found in criticism of other tendencies within the party, especially the courant headed by Michel Rocard. Philippe and Hubscher (1991, 71), in their study of the internal workings of the PS, highlight the principal criticism made by the Socialisme et République tendency of Michel Rocard's ideology:

Une politique d'alliance avec la droite et une renonciation à toute perspective de transformation de la société. Un nouvel ennemi apparaît : le rocardisme.

Cheurfa, in a letter to Michel Rocard, criticised his speech made on 9 January 1990 at the CNESOM national conference at the National Assembly in which Prime Minister stated that France could not continue to accept immigrants into the country. This reflects the similar nature of the criticisms levelled at the Rocard courant as the following comments attest:

Notre demande est sociale et culturelle : nous ne voulons pas que l'identité française de demain se fasse sans nous, ni contre nous. Devons-nous comprendre votre amalgame comme un argument pour la refuser?

The above comments are consistent with the Socialisme et République
tendency strategy; denounce the enemy and name it in terms which already constitute a condemnation.

6.5 The right to vote for immigrants
With the ratification of the Maastricht treaty requiring a modification in the French Constitution (henceforth other EC member state nationals will be eligible to vote and stand as candidates in local and European elections), the whole debate has re-opened as to whether foreigners resident in France, particularly those of Algerian, Moroccan or Tunisian nationality, should have the right to vote. President Mitterrand, while affirming his support for this right to be granted to non-EC nationals resident in France for a number of years, has not attempted to translate this commitment into law, due to the unfavourable reaction of the French public as revealed by opinion polls on the subject in the press. Both the CNESOM and CSCM have debated the question at length, and while sharing the same desire for Maghrebian nationals to be able to vote, they differ both on the means to achieve this and on the timescale. The position of the President of the CNESOM, Georges Morin, has shifted from one of hostility to a gradual acceptance of this right. He explains his initial position as follows:

Moi, au départ, j'étais très "Républicain". C'est-à-dire, je disais que le droit de vote n'était que pour les citoyens français.
(Morin, Paris)

However, his position changed when he began to listen to the arguments of municipal councillors within the CNESOM such as Zaïr Kedadouche (Aubervilliers), who convinced him that non-EC nationals who had worked in France for a considerable length of time and who had contributed to the well-being of the nation deserved to have the right to vote. Morin paraphrases Kedadouche's views as follows:

Je pense à Zaïr [Kedadouche] ou à d'autres : 'Moi, je suis Français parce que mon seul mérite, c'était d'être né dans ce pays. Mon père qui a trimé pendant trente ans pour que ce pays avance n'a pas le droit de vote. Il a cent fois plus le droit de voter que moi.'
(Morin, Paris)

Given the current debate on allowing other EC member nationals the right to
vote, Morin believes that it would be illogical not to allow non-EC nationals, resident in France for a far longer period of time than the former, the possibility of voting. Therefore he now argues that:

Majoritairement nous sommes pour le droit de vote aux élections municipales.
(Morin, Paris)

Nevertheless he recognises that there would at least two drawbacks if this right did become law. First of all Morin argues that if the right to vote at municipal level is granted, then the next logical progression would be to allow foreigners to vote in regional or national elections. This is an objection that some, if not necessarily all, on the Right have put forward. Indeed there are adversaries on the Left as well. Secondly Morin recognises that the French population is not at present ready to accept the idea of foreigners voting in French elections and is particularly hostile to Maghrebian nationals acquiring this right. Morin argues that the PS should set an example and has already done so, implementing the intermediate stage of associate municipal councillors experimented with at Mons-en-Baroeul and then at Amiens. Morin explains his position thus:

Il faudrait aussi que les communes socialistes donnent l'exemple en créant partout des conseillers consultatifs qui permettent justement à ces étrangers qui ne peuvent pas voter de désigner des représentants qui siègent aux conseils municipaux pour y parler. C'est déjà un progrès.
(Morin, Paris)

The position of the CSCM, by contrast, has remained the same throughout. Part of its policy has been to oppose the creation of associate municipal councillors for the following reasons:

Elles [les élections de conseillers municipaux associés] ont permis une prise en compte officielle des populations étrangères, mais ne peuvent être une fin à long terme, parce qu'elles maintiennent une division légale entre Français et étrangers. C'est donc bien à tort que le PS a cru pouvoir utiliser ces expériences - et promettre leur extension- pour justifier le recul sur le droit de vote égal.
In the same newsletter the CSCM argues that accepting the concept of conseillers municipaux associés would be an extremely unpopular decision among Maghrebians. The CSCM believes this is illustrated by the opposition of the association Mémoire Fertile which called for them to be boycotted. The CSCM concludes that the implementation of conseillers municipaux associés is merely a front to attempt to conceal what it perceives to be the real problem facing the PS, namely informing the general public in the clearest possible terms about the right of non-French nationals to vote and furthermore having the necessary courage to do so.

The CSCM believes that the postponing of any decision on the right of non-EC nationals to vote is a retrograde step. It issued the following warning on how this would be interpreted at grass roots level:

> A la base, les critiques n'ont tout de même pas manqué, comprenant qu'il s'agit d'un nouvel écart par rapport aux valeurs de la Gauche.

*(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 9)*

In fact the CSCM argues that by excluding foreigners from the political decision-making process, the effect of government inaction is to legitimise racist discourse and practice. In so doing the Cercle clearly disagrees with the view that, because of negative public feedback, the government should advance cautiously, as advocated by members of the party including Georges Morin. It explains its reasoning in the following manner:

> Le racisme est présenté comme un obstacle à la reconnaissance du droit de vote : "l'opinion n'est pas prête". C'est, à l'inverse, l'exclusion des étrangers qui renforce l'impact politique des réactions racistes [...].

*(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 9)*

Ne tournons pas autour du pot : ou bien la Gauche croit qu'il est possible de dire la vérité aux Français ; les immigrés resteront, la France doit leur faire leur place et la reconnaissance du droit de vote aux élections locales est un point de passage normal. Ou bien, le PS préfère reculer tactiquement, mais l'idéologie raciste est un peu plus légitimisée. Parce que ses théories d'exclusion ont la force de s'appuyer
sur la réalité sociale de discriminations admises.
(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b,. 10)

6.6 Conclusion
How far have ethnic minority pressure groups within the PS succeeded in influencing decision-making processes within the party? The CSCM and the CNESOM have adopted contrasting strategies, neither of which appears to have met with very much success. The CSCM has attempted to influence the party hierarchy from below, while the CNESOM has hoped to benefit from its close links with senior members of the party. The question of voting rights for foreigners is one of several important issues on which the CSCM has failed to persuade party leaders to follow its line. Another was the Gulf War (see section 7.2), when the CSCM's pleas against French military intervention went unheeded. While the establishment of the CNESOM owed much to senior party figures such as Georges Morin, it does not appear to have impacted significantly on policy decisions. On both the Gulf War and voting rights for foreigners, the CNESOM has largely followed the official party line. The control which the party hierarchy was to exercise over the CNESOM was only too apparent during the conference held by the FNESR in January 1990, which was to a large extent stage-managed by the PS leadership. Prior to the conference councillors had met with PS leaders in private to fix the agenda and indeed to provide the exact wording of questions that Maghrebian councillors would pose to the party leaders. Ever since then, as Geisser (1993) points out, the CNESOM has appeared reluctant to express its opinions freely, preferring to sit on the political fence on various issues:

En effet, sur un certain nombre de questions politiques, économiques et sociales, l'association de Georges Morin [la CNESOM] a refusé de se positionner clairement, se réfugiant dans un attentisme "réconfortant", mais auto-destructeur.

In a situation where the CNESOM has been perceived by Maghrebian councillors to follow PS leadership policy rather than formulating its own, this has resulted in a significant decrease in attendance at CNESOM meetings. One councillor from Orléans, outside my own sample, acknowledged this when questioned by Geisser (1993):

Sur ces différents points [le droit de vote des immigrés, la politique
sociale du gouvernement et la "politique arabe" de la France], la CNESOM a adopté une politique de suivisme à l'égard des dirigeants socialistes, suivisme qui a parfois déçu les élus franco-maghribins de base.

One potential avenue by which Maghrebian councillors might try to achieve greater success could be by forming coalitions with:

i) Other ethnic minority pressure groups

ii) Non-ethnic minority pressure groups.

The former path would entail forming coalitions between Maghrebian pressure groups and/or other minority pressure groups such as Black Africans or Turks. However, the likelihood of the two Maghrebian pressure groups within the PS coming together, or even alliances between them and either France-Plus or SOS-Racisme is somewhat unlikely given personality differences between the leaders. Furthermore the heterogeneous nature of the Maghrebian population makes this an even more remote possibility.

First of all divisions between the two principal Maghrebian pressure groups within the PS are symptomatic of ideological differences that permeate the party at all levels. These have important repercussions for the ability of Maghrebiens to express grievances and to attract a non-Maghrebian audience which is both sympathetic and receptive to their particular needs. Different and often opposing strategies deployed by the CSCM and CNESOM make any attempt to define and shape a specific Maghrebian agenda within the party problematic.

This is illustrated further by the divergent positions adopted vis-à-vis the principle of incorporating French nationals of the Jewish faith who originate from the Maghreb into the two pressure groups. Whereas the CNESOM considers them an integral feature of the organisation, the CSCM displays a marked reluctance to incorporate people of the Jewish faith into its midst. The comments of one councillor in my sample who is a member of the Conseil d'administration in the CSCM illustrate the depth of feeling on this issue:

Dans notre groupe [le CSCM] on n'accepte pas les Juifs. On ne veut
pas de sionistes. Même s’il y a des Juifs qui sont pour la Palestine. On n’en doute pas. Mais on se refuse à cela. On a des Français de souche qui sont avec nous, mais les Juifs non. Parce que bon il y a l’expérience de France-Plus et de SOS-Racisme et on a vu ce que cela a donné avec les Juifs. Les Arabes sont toujours obligés de faire des concessions et de ne plus tenir à leurs positions.

(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

The President of the CSCM echoed these sentiments after having been interviewed for my study. She criticised in no uncertain terms one Maghrebian councillor in the CNESOM who had continued to work within that organisation alongside a councillor of the Jewish faith during the Gulf War. In general the CSCM argues that, unlike French Muslims, French nationals of the Jewish faith enjoy a privileged position within both the PS and French society at large.

No one voice is able to speak on behalf of all Maghrebians in the PS and this seriously weakens the potential force that they might wield. Mohamed Meb Toul was the president of the now defunct Club Emergence, and is the only member of the comité directeur of the PS of Maghrebian origin, a position he achieved thanks to the support of one of the party leaders, Henri Emmanuelli. Meb Toul recognises this lack of unity:

Je voulais parler de cette incapacité à s’organiser. D’une part le Cercle. D’autre part la CNESOM. Il n’y a pas de véritable porte-paroles de Français d’origine maghrébine au PS.

(Meb Toul, Paris)

It is possible to make a comparison here with Hispanics in the United States who, like Maghrebians in France, are made up of different nationalities and whose entry into the political arena has been a relatively recent phenomenon. As Garcia (1989) has observed, the development of a national Hispanic community (Chicano, Cuban and Puerto Rican populations) has contributed significantly to the directions and content of their leadership and organisations. This has enabled a clearly defined national agenda to be laid down. However, in the case of the PS, even when the CSCM and CNESOM are in broad agreement on an agenda, as is the case concerning the right to vote of immigrants, leadership personality clashes prevent the pursuance of a
united approach. There is, then, acknowledgement by both organisations of
the need to initiate change from within the party with regard to the perception
and treatment of Maghrebians in French society, yet at the same time an
inability to exert any major degree of influence.

Secondly, and despite statements to the contrary, the CSCM and CNESOM
have inevitably, perhaps, become caught up in the wider struggle between
tendencies in the party. The CNESOM in particular, by virtue of its leaders'
and backers' affiliations, may be identified with the Jospin-Mauroy-Mermaz
courant, and this can engender problems when general support is sought
within the party for new initiatives. At the very least the clear support of party
leaders belonging to one tendency creates resentment among others. The
CSCM, while less visibly reliant on the support of one individual courant,
reveals a marked ideological affinity with the Chevènement courant and like
this tendency is made to feel marginalised from the rest of the party. Both the
CSCM and CNESOM are further adversely affected in that the ideological
battles between tendencies have taken precedence over other issues, and
among the latter the plight of Maghrebians has been reduced to one of
secondary importance.

Thirdly, the lack of unity between the two organisations has sent out
confusing signals to non-Maghrebians both within and outside the PS. The
absence of a single, united agenda has meant that the views of Maghrebians
from outside the two PS pressure groups have been sought by the media and
other spokespersons, most notably Arezki Dahmani of France-Plus, have been
consulted. Consequently this has distracted attention away from the demands
put forward by the CSCM and CNESOM and instead has focused attention
upon an organisation, France-Plus, which is criticised by not only the two
pressure group leaders, but also by the majority of municipal councillors in
our sample, as being unrepresentative of Maghrebians in France. Meb Toul
believes that internal divisions between Maghrebians within the PS profit
external organisations claiming to represent Maghrebians.

It is clear, then, that if Maghrebians within the PS hope to become a force to
be reckoned with and to operate with the same weight that other so-called
lobbies do, personality and even ideological differences will have to be
relegated to a rank of lesser importance. Some semblance of unity is all the
more important given that on the governing bodies which deal with ethnic
minorities, of which Maghrebians constitute the largest percentage, such as the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, the Office des Migrations Internationales (OMI), Fonds d'Action Sociale (FAS), the Direction de la Population et des Migrations (DPM), or SONACOTRA, no Maghrebians hold positions of responsibility.

It is equally clear, however, that as long as the PS is perceived, whether correctly or incorrectly, to be side-stepping and/or neglecting major issues that concern Maghrebians in France, the two pressure groups, particularly the Cercle, will strive to continue. The political contradiction in which the existence of both is rooted is not lost upon the president of the Cercle, Sultana Cheurfa. Mohamed Meb Toul explains a conversation that he had with her on the subject:

La contradiction du Cercle, Sultana d'ailleurs la reconnaît. Elle m'a dit: "Moi, j'ai appelé ça Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane. Là je ne suis pas plus musulmane que tu es catholique dans le sens où mes parents étaient d'origine maghrébine, on est traversés culturellement par l'Islam" [...] Donc cette appellation musulmane, elle l'a fait un peu pour provoquer. C'est de la provocation, mais consciente. Parce qu'à partir du moment où ils [les Maghrébins de France] sont exclus, ils provoquent.
(Meb Toul, Paris)

The CSCM, despite seeming on the surface to be organised on religious grounds (some do in fact participate in the organisation's activities), is rather a medium which enables its members to voice their opinions on what is perceived to be the exclusion of Maghrebians from mainstream French society. The religious factor is more a means of mobilising support than a deeply-held conviction among members. This seems to be implied by the following comments contained within an official CSCM document:

Notre objectif n'est pas religieux. Chacun d'entre nous reste maître de ses choix. Mais nous croyons à la nécessité de notre expression commune.
(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991a)

The lesson for the PS and indeed other political parties is self-evident; failure
to recognise and acknowledge the specific needs of Maghrebians in French society will inevitably lead to conflictual relations between, on the one hand, the political formations in question and, on the other, those of Maghrebian origin who operate within these parties and endeavour to change the status quo. Meb Toul concludes with the following analysis:

Le Parti socialiste, comme tous les autres partis d'ailleurs, a intérêt à ne pas exclure. Parce que si tu exclus, ça crée après des mouvements de revendication négatifs et conflictuels.
(Meb Toul, Paris)

The repercussions of a refusal to take on board such political considerations could be dramatic for the future development of political participation and inter-ethnic relations in France with particular reference to Maghrebians. The CSCM has already hinted at how French citizens of Maghrebian origin might react if they perceive their specific concerns to be ignored:

De son côté, la communauté musulmane, qui est aujourd'hui majoritairement acquise à la Gauche, peut s'en éloigner, en mesurant soudain combien elle en est incomprise.
(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 1)

Can Maghrebian pressure groups hope to achieve greater success by breaking links with the PS? Is it detrimental to the overall prospects for the socio-economic advancement of Maghrebians to remain so heavily concentrated within one political party? At least three potential alternatives to the present situation may be envisaged.

In the first instance a reformist trend within the PS, which might involve Maghrebians, may be able to push the conservative wing of the party into a centre-right alignment. Consequently the PS would become qualitatively a labour party.

A second and perhaps more likely scenario is the emergence of a coherent bloc within the PS which at some future point will become organisationally capable of splitting from the Socialists.

Another change in the status quo may take place if, as is now the case, the
traditional Right is returned to power. Maghrebians may feel that their interests are better served in other parties. The attempt by several Maghrebian candidates at regional level to be elected on the lists of the two main ecology parties, Génération Ecologie and Les Verts, should be seen within this context.
CHAPTER 7
CASE STUDIES

7.1 Introduction
The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an unprecedented number of events in French society and on the world stage where the interests of Muslims were partly or primarily at issue. By far the two most notable of these for French Muslims were the 'headscarf' affair in 1989 and the Gulf War in 1991. In the former the very status of Muslims in French society was being called into question. The latter debate focused on potentially divided loyalties between, on the one hand the nation in which they live and one of the Allied partners, France, and on the other hand an Arab state, Iraq, with which Maghrebians share the same faith and similar origins. In this chapter we shall examine these two events from the viewpoint of Maghrebian councillors in my sample, and discover what this might tell us about the perception that white French society has of Maghrebians residing in France. Given the importance of both events, they will be analysed separately. The Gulf War will be examined first, with a variety of viewpoints being highlighted: Maghrebian pressure groups inside and outside the PS; Maghrebian councillors' reactions to the manner in which events unfolded. With respect to the 'headscarf' affair, analysis will be made at two levels: the underlying issues at stake in the affair and reaction to them from Maghrebian pressure groups in the PS of which councillors in my sample are members; evaluation at a more general level of the place of Islam in French society. While the Gulf War and the 'headscarf' affair are sufficiently complex in nature to merit separate analysis, common features nonetheless exist between the two and these will be studied in the final section. Given that a number of councillors in my sample belong to the above pressure groups, there will obviously be some degree of overlap in sections. This is particularly the case for the CNESOM delegation's trip to the Maghreb.

7.2 The Gulf War
7.2.1 Maghrebian pressure groups
Among political elites within the Maghrebian population, three main groups may be distinguished: national organisations claiming to represent the interests of Maghrebians in France across the political spectrum; national pressure groups operating within mainstream parties, principally the PS; and locally elected representatives. We shall begin by considering the first two types. The most important national organisation of Maghrebians without any specific party
affiliation is France-Plus. It gave whole-hearted support to the policy of the French government during the war. France Plus's president, Arezki Dahmani, was quick to defend the record of present and past French citizens of Maghrebian origin from charges of actual or potential disloyalty towards the French state:

...Je ne vois pas pourquoi on nous renverrait nos origines à la figure chaque fois qu'il y a une crise [...] De la Premiere à la Seconde Guerre mondiale en passant par l'Indochine et l'Algérie, nos parents et nos grands-parents ont suffisamment versé leur sang pour la France pour que, deux ou trois générations plus tard, on ne remette pas en cause notre patriotisme.

(Le Quotidien de Paris 16 January 1991)

According to Dahmani, who was given ample opportunity to express his views on television and radio, as well as the national press, French youths of Maghrebian origin in general supported the government line:

Si je considère les sondages que nous avons pu faire à l'intérieur de notre association, la moitié des jeunes ne conteste pas en soi la logique de guerre.

(Le Quotidien de Paris 16 January 1991)

As Geisser (1991) has pointed out, it should not be assumed that the opinions of young Maghrebians as a whole are in line with those of France-Plus. While claiming to speak for the wider Maghrebian community, the leaders of France-Plus may in fact be quite remote from grass-roots opinion.

Political activists of Maghrebian origin are concentrated in the PS more than in any other party, and within its ranks one finds the best organised ethnic pressure groups of a party nature. The two most important of these are the CSCM and the CNESOM (see chapter 6 for details on their organisational structure and ideologies). While the former concerns only Muslim members of the PS, the latter embraces a wider range of French citizens linked to the Maghreb.

Differences between the CSCM and the CNESOM were visible both during and directly after the Gulf War. Views were at variance even before French forces became involved and these divergences reflected the fundamental ideological
differences referred to in chapter 6. The CSCM from the very outset of the conflict drew a connection between events in Kuwait and the Palestinian issue. In its second newsletter, the CSCM gave its undivided support to the Palestinian struggle and in particular to the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO):

Le CSCM affirme sa solidarité sans faille avec l'Intifada, avec ceux qui luttent pour la reconnaissance d'un état indépendant, et avec leur représentant légitime : l'OLP.

(Le Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 13)

Indeed representatives of the PLO were invited to a debate on the Gulf War organised by the CSCM in the aftermath of hostilities at its Assemblée Générale on 14 June 1991. The CSCM's position was reaffirmed and clarified further in the circular of the CSCM distributed at its committee meeting on 15 June 1991:

La question palestinienne est le centre, à la fois symbolique et réel, des crises qui traversent le Proche-Orient. Le Cercle a adopté, dès l'origine, le principe d'une solidarité complète avec le peuple palestinien, et de soutien aux décisions de ses représentants, l'OLP.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991i, 4)

The CNESOM, on the other hand, was far more nuanced in any support of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). While it is certainly true that individual councillors within the CNESOM expressed their solidarity and identified their own plight with that of Palestinians in general, Morin, when interviewed, appeared to distance himself from the PLO. When asked why Maghrebians in France were depicted in such a negative manner by the media and public, among his explanations was the following comment:

Il y a des phénomènes détestables que sont l'Imam Khomeni, Kaddafi ou ce qu'a été le terrorisme palestinien.

(Morin, Paris)

Clearly these were not the comments of a man who gave his unconditional support to the PLO. Indeed they take on added significance with the comments of Pierre Mauroy (instrumental in the setting up of the CNESOM), who called into question the legitimacy of Yasser Arafat as leader of the Palestinians on a television programme while visiting Israel during the war. The CSCM reacted
sharply to Mauroy's comments by issuing a statement which was published by several newspapers in South East France and which protested against the declarations of the party leader:


(Cheurfa, Paris)

Initially the CSCM was supportive of the stance adopted by François Mitterrand, congratulating him after one speech when he made it clear that France was not engaged in a war with Islam:

La mise-au-point est heureuse car nous relevons avec inquiétude les discours, commentaires ou analyses qui amalgament sans vergogne la Guerre du Golfe, les risques de terrorisme en Occident et les sentiments réels ou supposés des musulmans en France

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 25 January 1991)

However, the CSCM subsequently adopted a far more critical tone than the CNESOM with respect to the French government position. On 7 November 1990 the Cercle organised its first conference on the Gulf crisis and what the implications would be for the PS. Six days later on 13 November it issued its first press release entitled, "Que la crise du Golfe ne devienne pas la guerre du pétrole", arguing against French involvement in military intervention (Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990g).

Another communiqué, dated 6 December 1990, and entitled "Que les bouches s'ouvrent", expressed its support for former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson and Max Gallo, a PS député, who criticised the change in French government policy from advocating an embargo to calling for an ultimatum. The CSCM became increasingly dissatisfied at the distinct absence of Muslim viewpoints being aired by the French media:

En effet, la plupart des musulmans de France ont l'impression que leur expression politique n'était pas tenue pour légitime, que leurs droits de
Moreover the CSCM argued that sections of the press were calling into question the loyalty of French Muslims:

Il faut, immédiatement et sans réserves, prouver son allégeance à la communauté nationale. Certains médias ont publié des papiers qui déclinaient l'idée que les musulmans de France étaient la "cinquième colonne de Saddam Hussein".

At the same time, the CSCM denied that there was strong support for Saddam Hussein among Maghrebians in France:

Dans leur grande masse, les musulmans français n'éprouvaient pourtant pas de sympathie particulière pour le régime irakien, déjà coupable à leurs yeux de cette première guerre, stupide et terrible, qu'il a menée huit ans durant contre l'Iran.


On 25 January a new press release entitled, "Pourquoi faire passer les musulmans de France pour la 5e colonne de Saddam Hussein?" was issued and there was criticism of party leaders who feared conflict within France between minorities from the Muslim and Jewish denominations. The following comments were made:

Plusieurs instances associatives ou politiques se mobilisent pour le 'dialogue Beurs/Feujs'. Le Cercle ne croit pas aux risques de 'guerre des communautés'.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991b)
A further press release, dated 31 January 1991, protested against the comments of Pierre Mauroy in Israel when questioning the representativeness of the PLO.

On 21 February the CSCM distributed a petition among PS members to voice disapproval of the party leadership's position and asked people to sign the petition in order that a debate be held on the matter. The petition objected strongly to the French government's pursuance of the war, believing that it would create deep divisions within the party. Moreover it was explicitly stated that decisions made by the party leadership were not in tune with party activists at grass roots level:

Le quasi-unanimité des décisions de sommet ne s'appuie pas sur une conviction comparable dans la base du parti.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991e, 4)

To issue a statement of this nature was as far as the CSCM could reasonably expect to go without incurring the wrath of party leaders. It is in this context that one should view the toned-down criticisms of French government policy. Contrary to the CNESOM, which was willing to acquiesce in French involvement, albeit with certain conditions attached, the CSCM could not bring itself to support French military involvement:

Nous ne pensons pas que la seule voie de réponse à l'annexion du Koweit par Saddam Hussein soit l'entrée en guerre de la France sous commandement américain [...] Nous ne croyons pas à la libération d'un pays ou d'un peuple quand ils sont pris en otages et réduits à un tas de cendres [...] Nous ne percevons aucune perspective en dehors de la recherche d'un Cessez-le-feu [...] Nous voyons là le message qui devrait être celui du Parti, nous voyons là la politique qui devrait être celle de la France.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991e, 2)

The CSCM organised a debate on the Gulf War in the National Assembly building on 16 April. The PS leadership, conspicuous by its absence, was represented by two députés who were members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.
Once hostilities had ended in the Gulf, the Cercle, in a special newsletter printed on 9 March 1991, made a post-war analysis of events, and this included the manner in which the party had conducted itself. The Cercle indicated that it was not alone among the PS faithful in opposing the leadership policy before and during the war. Furthermore it argued that with the conflict ending, others, hitherto unable to express their opinions publicly, would also begin to criticise the behaviour of the party. This, the CSCM’s newsletter continued, would inevitably lead to divisions within party ranks:

La guerre a ouvert des failles plus importantes qu'il n'y paraît. Les opinions que le Cercle veut défendre n'y sont pas isolées, surtout, parce que le "tabou" qui pesait sur tout débat lié au Proche Orient est tombé. (Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991f, 6)

Morin, in the CNESOM newsletter of 16 February 1991, indicated that the CNESOM on the whole supported the position of the French government with particular respect to the following actions:

Approbation chaleureuse du discours prononcé le 24 septembre à New York par le président de la République et qui devrait rester la charte de notre action [...] Nécessité d'imposer l'évacuation du Koweit mais sans humilier pour autant le peuple irakien. (Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1991)

However, he did acknowledge differences between members of the CNESOM over the effectiveness of the embargo, the need to go to war, the extent of the combat zone required for the liberation of Koweit and the rôle that France would be able to play in the region in the post-war period.

The CNESOM view, then, was a delicate balance between on the one hand support for the government position globally, and on the other hand sensitivity towards the feelings of Arab nations involved in the conflict. This therefore contrasted with the far less conciliatory tone adopted by the CSCM with respect to the French government position.

7.2.2 Maghrebian Councillors
Following the end of hostilities in the Gulf, interviews were held with a sub-set
of my sample of councillors. This group consisted of 13 PS councillors, nine of whom held seats in Seine-Saint-Denis; the four others were from provincial départements. None said they had given unconditional support to Saddam Hussein. The reaction of one councillor from a suburb of Grenoble expressed a widely held attitude towards the Iraqi leader:

[Saddam Hussein n’est] certainement pas un héros [...] Il n’est pas intégre. Il prêche un état laïc pendant toute la guerre Iran-Irak et puis juste avant le conflit il fait la prière devant toutes les télévisions du monde.

(Chaïb, Gières)

The interviews elicited little evidence in support of the idea that there was a pro-Saddam ‘fifth column’ in France. When asked how people within their locality had reacted to events in the Gulf, only two of the 13 interviewees in my subsample acknowledged that there had been disturbances within their municipality, and one of these, when pressed for additional information, asserted that the problem had been caused by a minority of white French youths who were supporters of the extreme Right and who had deliberately engaged in acts of provocation. In general the interviewees stressed the peaceful and law-abiding behaviour of individuals and emphasized that any divisions which may have existed between Maghrebians and other French citizens were rarely expressed publicly, but rather behind closed doors in the presence of family and friends. This was suggested by the following comments of one maire-adjoint who sought out the opinions of youths of Maghrebian origin in his municipality:

Ils [les jeunes] m’avaient dit: “Mais pour nous la position est claire. On a les mêmes sentiments, mais ils restent entre nous. On n’a pas à parler à l’extérieur.”

(Sali, St. Denis)

Another councillor argued that it was in response to white French fears about the potential for inter-ethnic conflict and the possible consequences for French Muslims that the latter kept their opinions to themselves:

Il y avait un moment de panique. Ce sont des gens qui se sont regroupés sur eux-mêmes. Le silence.

(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)
Most of the councillors interviewed gave their unequivocal support to the policy adopted by Mitterrand. Others, such as a schoolteacher from Aubervilliers, expressed their support, but with nuances:

Si vous voulez connaître ma position personnelle, j'étais sur la ligne du Président de la République avec des nuances [...] Sur la position que pouvait avoir un Président de la République avec des Américains j'ai été à la fois Chevènementiste et Mitterrandiste. J'ai été entre les deux et il y avait un équilibre à trouver.

(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

Those who were opposed to French policy stressed the theme of France being too closely aligned with the United States:

J'ai dit que je n'étais pas d'accord avec la politique de Mitterrand qui consiste à faire allégeance totale avec les Américains, aller suivre et aller faire une guerre contre un pays du tiers monde qui n'était pas si fort que l'on prétend.

(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

Despite these criticisms and the threats to resign made by some councillors during the crisis, none in fact did resign; nor to my knowledge has any done so to date. This does not mean, however, that there were no reservations concerning the way in which the PS conducted itself. Many Maghrebian activists within the party felt frustrated and angry at the fact that they were not allowed to express themselves freely during the war. One councillor recalled what happened when, along with other colleagues in his local party section, he attempted to make a public announcement on events, criticising certain aspects of government policy:

On a fait un texte. On a essayé de faire des choses. mais manifestement tout est bouclé. Il y avait un plan vigipirate qui marchait à l'intérieur du PS, partout. Et puis on discutait avec nos voisins, mais pas d'opinions qui sortent dans la rue alors qu'il n'y avait aucun danger.

(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

Another councillor, a maire-adjoint, in Seine-Saint-Denis, who opposed French government policy, but did not want to speak out publicly, chose a more
Several interviewees told me that they believed that a confidential directive had been sent out by the upper échelons of the PS national leadership instructing local party officials that discussion and in particular criticism of government policy on the Gulf should be confined within party structures, i.e. such criticisms should not be voiced publicly. Pressures of this kind appear to be reflected in the very limited extent to which interviewees in my sample had spoken publicly about the conflict in the Gulf. One even refused to speak about the matter during my interview. Among the others, six said they had not expressed their opinions in public at all. Of the six who had done so, three had voiced their opinions only after hostilities had ended; among the three others who had spoken out during the war, one of these did so in order to express unconditional support for the government. Thus only two interviewees were openly critical of the government position during the events in the Gulf and for one of these, a municipal councillor in the Lyons suburb of Vénissieux, the result was a considerable strain in her relations with the local PS section:

Rahmouni had shown her written intervention to the local party representatives prior to the Council session in which she proposed to deliver the speech and had been expressly told not to proceed with it. Instead, she was urged to condemn Saddam Hussein and to demand his withdrawal from Kuwait. When she refused to do this and read out her prepared remarks, party officials told her she would

symbolic avenue to express his disapproval:

Dans la mairie communiste, il n'y avait pas de portrait du Président de la République et moi, je me suis dit qu'il doit y en avoir. Au début je l'avais mis comme un défi. Mais je l'ai enlevé parce que je considère que dans cette affaire du Golfe, la France a pris une position avec laquelle je ne suis absolument pas d'accord [...]. J'étais fou de rage, furieux. C'était très profondément ressenti.  
(Sali, St. Denis)

Tous les groupes se sont exprimés sur la guerre et moi, je me suis exprimée aussi. Moi, je ne me suis pas exprimée dans le sens du PS. Pas du tout. Je suis allée à l'encontre. J'ai même attaqué le Président de la République [...] et ça a été très mal pris.  
(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)
be punished:

On m'a dit qu'il y a une discipline de groupe "et tu ne l'as pas respectée. Tu seras sanctionnée".
(Rahmouni, Vénissieux)

Rahmouni was subsequently marginalised from the local party meetings (see section 5.4.5 for further details) and it is only recently that she has been re-integrated into the local party after the CSCM intervened on her behalf.

The other councillor who openly spoke out against the PS line did so first of all within the confines of the local party section, before airing his dissatisfaction in public. He was under no illusions as to the possible repercussions:

Au mois de mars je l'ai fait publiquement au conseil municipal. Alors il y a eu des collègues qui ont dit qu'ils m'ont reproché de l'avoir fait et puis qui voulaient même m'exclure du PS.
(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

Several interviewees expressed anger at the fact that within the PS their views were as far as possible suppressed and/or discounted. This was extremely frustrating in the eyes of those who saw a profound injustice in other, numerically smaller, minorities in France being consulted and having the freedom to express themselves in the media:

C'est quand même inadmissible dans une démocratie quand il y a une minorité de 2 millions et demi de personnes et on n'en tient pas compte. On ne cherche même pas à savoir ce qu'ils pensent. Il y a 150 000 Arméniens en France. Ils constituent un véritable lobby [...] On se fiche complètement de ce qu'on pense. Et ça a été vraiment un grand coup pour moi. J'aurai du mal à pardonner ça au PS.
(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

One of the most sensitive issues thrown up by the Gulf conflict concerned relations between citizens of the Jewish and Muslim faiths in France. The Palestinian issue, on which they are deeply divided, was repeatedly played upon by Saddam Hussein. To counter media speculation about possible inter-communal fighting, pressure group leaders such as France-Plus's Arezki
Dahmani met openly with the representatives of Jewish organisations and made joint appeals for calm. The CSCM was more guarded about 'fraternisation' of this kind:

Nous n'avons surtout pas cru qu'il était juste de déplacer sur le terrain de l'opposition entre les communautés juives et arables le seul vrai problème posé: la divergence réelle apparue entre la communauté nationale prise dans son ensemble, et les citoyens français d'origine arabe.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 25 January 1991)

It is clear, however, that there were strong pressures from within the PS towards inter-communal co-operation. One interviewee, a maire-adjoint in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis, which contains the largest concentration of people of Algerian origin in the Paris region, disclosed that behind closed doors meetings between representatives of the two religions did take place locally and that the discussions were based to a large extent upon preventing potential conflict from arising. Misgivings over meetings of this kind were voiced by one councillor in Hauts-de-Seine who, when asked who had invited him to one such meeting, replied:

Le groupe socialiste chez nous pendant la réunion de section [...] Aller rencontrer la communauté juive par exemple, ce prétexte qu'est le conflit au Koweit, et qu'il faut y aller voir cette communauté pour dire que nous nous aimons. Moi je vois pas l'intérêt. Nous savons pertinemment que nous ne nous haïssons pas. Mais nous avons un litige en commun qui est le problème palestinien. En tant que communautés vivant en France il n'y a aucun problème. Ceci dit, on sait où sont nos limites. Donc je vois pas pourquoi je devrais aller voir l'autre pour l'embrasser et lui dire "faisons la paix". [...] C'est pour ça que j'ai refusé intégralement de cautionner cette opération qui me paraissait débile.

(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

All my interviewees were incensed by the remarks of the PS General Secretary, Pierre Mauroy, when he visited Israel during the Gulf War. Mauroy argued during a television interview that Yasser Arafat could not be considered to be the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. A typical reaction was the following:
Councillors of Maghrebian origin clearly identified their own plight with that of Palestinians on the West Bank. Although they recognised that Saddam Hussein was attempting to manipulate the Palestinian question in order to gain support for his position in Kuwait, this did not in any way dilute the strength of their commitment to the Palestinian cause:

Oui, on peut faire le lien puisque Saddam Hussein s'en est bien servi. On était bien obligé d'en tenir compte [...] Moi, je suis pour qu'il y ait un état palestinien. C'est évident.

(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

If condemnation of what were perceived as double standards on the part of the United Nations was widespread, it was equally unanimous concerning the manner in which the media covered events during the Gulf War and in particular the image that was portrayed of Maghrebians both inside and outside France. Most significantly there was considerable annoyance among councillors at not being able to express themselves freely in the French press. As one interviewee put it:

Je ne me suis pas exprimé aussi parce que c'était difficile de s'exprimer. Les médias n'ont pas donné la parole aux heurs. Les médias ont fait voir des trucs complètement caricaturaux, des réactions hystériques.

(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

However, opinions on another aspect of the war - the sending of a PS delegation to the Maghreb in the aftermath of hostilities - were divided and were the subject of heated debate among councillors. The delegation was organised by the CNESOM. Its 15 members were selected on a quota basis to represent the various groups of PS activists who have links with the Maghreb. The objectives of the mission were twofold:
i) To correct the erroneous image that North Africans and French citizens had of one another through media coverage of the war and reactions on either side of the Mediterranean.

ii) To participate in what the delegates perceived to be a more global process of decreasing tension in order that the Palestinian problem be addressed.

Morin, in a newsletter sent to councillors in the CNESOM dated 16 February 1991, explained why he believed the trip to be necessary:

Cette mission d'élus socialistes originaires du Maghreb auprès de nos collègues élus des partis démocrates d'Outre-Méditerranée visera à mieux nous informer mutuellement de nos analyses, à maintenir le dialogue et à étudier ensemble la meilleure manière, pour nos peuples respectifs, de surmonter l'épreuve et de retrouver très vite les voies de l'amitié et de la coopération.

(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1991)

The CSCM, however, took a radically different view of the trip and severely criticised those who organised it and allowed it to go ahead. This was spelt out in part of a newsletter devoted to the consequences of the Gulf War for the PS in March 1991:

Il est scandaleux que les hommes politiques, peu soucieux de se confronter aux sentiments des peuples maghrébins, aient imaginé d'envoyer des élus "rapatriés, juifs, beurs ou musulmans" leur expliquer l'"injustice" de leur jugement.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991f, 6)

Cheurfa, when interviewed on the subject, qualified the trip as "une erreur monumentale...".

(Cheurfa, Paris)

Four of the councillors who made up the delegation were among my sample of interviewees. All of these believed there was a need to rectify the erroneous version of events in the Gulf as portrayed by the western media:
Moi, je pense qu'on leur a donné une autre image. Les médias ont causé énormément de dégâts et donc il fallait régler ce problème.
(Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

They also feared that people in the Maghreb were receiving a misleading view of the French position:

On s'est rendu compte qu'il y avait un dérapage. Que les populations avaient pu avoir une image les unes des autres qui était complètement erronée et pour le moins caricaturale.
(Chaïb, Gières)

The aim of the trip was, therefore, "d'aller voir si le dialogue était encore possible". (Chaïb, Gières)

A prime reason cited by at least two councillors for making the trip was to make their own personal contribution to resolving the Palestinian question:

Moi, je pense qu'il y a quelque chose de fondamental qu'il faut vite régler et je m'en suis rendu compte à l'issue du voyage. C'est qu'il faut, si la France veut avoir encore une image positive au Maghreb, qu'on propose quelque chose pour la question palestinienne.
(Nadia Hammadi-Denis, Dijon)

Another councillor, who was instrumental in organising the trip, went even further:

Il ne fallait pas rester sur le Maghreb. Il fallait aussi aller en Israël. Puisque le point central pour nous, c'est le problème palestinien [...] Et on s'est dit qu'il fallait absolument qu'on aille dans les territoires occupés.
(Kedadouche, Aubervilliers)

Councillors who made up the delegation acknowledged that there were indeed plans to visit Israel, but these were subsequently shelved. In addition, members of the delegation also felt that its composition was symbolic in that it showed how ethnic groups that were often at loggerheads could actually be united.
This apparent unity was, however, disputed by Maghrebian activists who did not participate in the trip. Some objected strongly to the very existence of a delegation on the grounds that it might be perceived by the authorities in the Maghreb as the legitimate representative of the French government. Commenting on this, one interviewee said:

Ce n'était pas au Maghrébins d'expliquer la politique française. C'était au gouvernement français d'expliquer la politique française.  
(Bellouch, Gennevilliers)

7.3 The 'headscarf' affair and the place of Islam in French society

Divisions within PS ranks were never more visible or pronounced than during the 'headscarf' affair. At stake in the affair were two opposing conceptions of society. On the one hand, there were those within the PS who championed the Jacobinist notion of the one and indivisible Republic and the concept of secularity. The latter became part of the Left's tradition during the Third Republic when, by virtue of the laws of 1881 and 1882, national unity was cemented by a system of secular schools. The separation of 'church and state' was made into law in 1905. The partisans of this approach were opposed to the idea of Muslim girls wearing veils at school on the grounds that it (and by extension Islam) was a negation of Republican values. The defenders of this approach believed that at best Islam should be practised in private and that preferably Muslims should be persuaded to espouse secular values. On the other hand, there were those in the PS who were active in the associational network and in regular contact with ethnic groups. Among these were activists of the Muslim faith. The partisans of the latter approach argued that Islam was not incompatible with the rules, institutions and values of French society.

For both the CSCM and the CNESOM, the affair revealed the stereotypical and often distorted manner in which Maghrebians are perceived within French society. It also raised more fundamental issues. These included the need to redefine former values and explain how Islam could be incorporated into a nation which was by tradition predominantly Catholic. The CSCM took issue with the lack of opportunity for ordinary Muslims to air their views on the subject in the media:

Les premiers intéressés - il y a 4 millions de musulmans dans notre pays
Instead others, who in the eyes of the CSCM gave a distorted and unrepresentative account of the issues, were allowed to express their opinions:

Dès l'origine, la polémique a valorisé considérablement les groupes politiques islamistes. Les médias leur ont été ouverts ; ils ont pu, sans contestation, usurper la qualité de défenseurs des musulmans de France.

With the extremist opinions of Islamic fundamentalists being aired, consequently the views of Muslims as a whole were stifled according to the CSCM.

The second major criticism made by the Cercle was the extent to which the debate on secularity intruded upon the question of the presence of ethnic groups in French society. The confusing of the two issues, in Cheurfa's opinion, sent out the following message to the French public:

Musulmans - pas - Français,

Cheurfa believed that the debate on the nationality of Maghrebians was sending out a misleading message since Muslims in France are, in their overwhelming majority, no longer migrants and have settled down in the country permanently. This leads her to the following conclusion concerning the 'headscarf affair:

La 'question islamique' est désormais un problème franco-français

Thirdly, the CSCM questions the views of those within the PS who argue that the values they stand for are diametrically opposed to those of persons adhering to the Islamic faith:

Ce sont des valeurs de gauche qu'on a opposées au respect de la personnalité musulmane : laïcité, féminisme, République.
In other words the political choices made by Muslims, who identified with or were members of the PS, were being called into question. Cheurfa, as a woman, wished to respond to the specific criticism that to adhere to Islam implicitly meant opposing greater freedom for women:

Si le 'voile' est un symbole de l'aliénation de la femme musulmane, les trois jeunes filles de Creil en ont fait un symbole, inverse, de résistance.

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990a, 6)

Fourthly Cheurfa argues that double standards are being employed when applying the principle of secularity in practice. She cites the example of French children of the Jewish faith who wear the kippa when at school without this being reported in the press or provoking calls for such pupils to be expelled.

The CSCM argued that the basis upon which the notion of secularity was based, the separation of state and religion, was outdated. The reasoning for this was that:

les concepts laïcs se sont définis dans un contexte culturel imprégné de culture catholique ; leur validité vis-à-vis d'autres sphères culturelles n'a pas été historiquement prouvée.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991i, 7)

The Cercle thus advocates a redefinition of secularity which will take into account the status of men and women of Muslim origin and culture. It argues that the following matters will have to be re-examined:

- les références et les connaissances enseignées (dès l'école),
- la vision du monde (telle que véhiculée, par exemple, dans les médias),
- des critères qui définissent la légitimité des expressions dans le débat politique.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991i, 9)

At the heart of the matter, for the CSCM, is the pluralistic acceptance of a diversity of cultures within French society. The organisation believes the 'headscarf' affair demonstrated that French public opinion was not yet ready to accept the reality of a permanent Muslim presence:
L’"affaire du Voile" a montré que cette réalité n’est pas admise par la société française. Le pluralisme culturel est refusé par de larges secteurs de l’opinion.

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 1)

Furthermore the CSCM recognises that there are deep divisions within PS ranks over the issue:

Le respect de l’identité musulmane en France est d’autant plus nécessaire que son refus a pu prendre prête de certaines valeurs de Gauche.

(La Lettre des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1990b, 1)

The CSCM argues that the Left in France must come to terms with the contradictions in policy that it was unable to resolve during the colonial period. The organisation therefore poses the following question from which French society cannot escape and which will determine the future for Maghrebiens and indeed Muslims in general in France:

Confrontée à l’apparition d’une forte minorité musulmane, la France doit se redéfinir [...] L’enjeu de la période actuelle est de savoir si l’identité française de demain se fera avec ou contre les musulmans; mais il est clair qu’elle ne pourra plus se faire sans eux.

(Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane 1991h, 5)

The CNESOM, on the issue of the 'headscarf' affair, adopted a position which is not altogether dissimilar to that of the CSCM, although once one enters into the finer detail differences do nevertheless emerge. Morin, more than Cheurfa, affirms his personal adherence to secular values, which reflects in no small part his former occupation:

Moi, je suis instituteur d’origine. Je suis profondément laïque.

(Morin, Paris)

Given his support for secularity, his opposition to the creation of separate schools for children of different denominations is quite logical:

Et la pire des choses pour mon pays serait que les gosses de France
fréquentent des écoles confessionnelles. C'est la catastrophe. On va s'adonner au Liban.
(Morin, Paris)

Furthermore Morin believes that what he terms 'secular extremists', those who advocated separate schools for children whose parents did not adhere to secular values, were the best allies of religious extremists:

Je dis qu'au moment de l'affaire du voile, les intégristes laïcs étaient les meilleurs alliés des intégristes religieux. Parce que chacun d'entre eux poussait la création des écoles confessionnelles.
(Morin, Paris)

Like Cheurfa, Morin argues in favour of the same treatment for all denominations:

Il ne fallait pas deux poids deux mesures.
(Morin, Paris)

Equally he believes that it does not serve the interests of Maghrebians or indeed French society in general to have internal (both within France and the PS) arguments of such passion since they tend to polarise debate. Morin likens the arguments that were fought out to almost war-like proportions:

C'était fou de voir la société française prête à une quasi-guerre civile pour six jeunes filles dans trois collèges de France.
(Morin, Paris)

This is a view echoed by the CSCM with respect to the PS:

Il y a deux parties de la société française. On est d'une France contre l'autre France. Un Parti socialiste même contre un autre Parti socialiste, de droite à gauche. Donc on se définit par des pôles.
(Cheurfa, Paris)

In a brief statement published at the time of the preparatory meeting organised by the FNESR on 4 November 1989, providing the framework upon which the CNESOM could be created, it was explicitly stated that French society should
come to terms with the reality of Islam in its midst:

La majorité de la population française, de tradition culturelle chrétienne doit faire l'effort, en s'appuyant sur les valeurs de tolérance et de démocratie qui sont fondatrices de la notion de laïcité, d'assumer le fait que l'Islam est la seconde religion de France et s'habituer à un environnement nouveau pour eux, en particulier les mosquées.

(Fédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes et Républicains 1989)

Nonetheless despite the above call, the position of the CNESOM is more nuanced and cautious than that of the CSCM. Whilst at the same time appearing to encourage French society to adapt to the presence of Islam, the CNESOM, suggests that Islam as practised by Muslims in France should also be adapted to the secular values of French society:

Les musulmans d'autre part, doivent faire l'effort de vivre leur religion autrement que dans leur pays d'origine [ou de ceux de leurs parents] en intériorisant les valeurs de la laïcité et en faisant leur la distinction entre la sphère publique et la sphère privée.

(Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb 1989)

In this respect not only does the CNESOM reaffirm its support for secular values as they stand; contrary to the CSCM, it also calls for an up-dated re-definition of Islam and warns Muslims about practising their religion in too visible a manner. These statements suggest the CNESOM adopted a more guarded position than the CSCM.

7.4 Maghrebian councillors and general issues concerning the place of Islam in France

The 'headscarf' affair brought into the open a number of more general issues relating to the place of Islam in French society. Rather than attempting an exhaustive analysis of all areas, we shall instead focus on a more limited number of the most salient of these, seeking the views of councillors on specific topics. These include the following: finding a legitimate mouthpiece for Islam; reducing the influence of external forces on French Muslims; attempts to modernise the organisational framework of the faith in France; establishing the legitimacy of Islam in French society; examining claims of a potential Islamic backlash in
France.

A major issue is which body should be considered as the legitimate voice of Muslims in France. Unlike the Christian faiths, Islam has no one leader as Khellil (1991, 156) points out:

Ce qui distingue l'Islam modéré des autres religions monothéistes, c'est l'absence de l'Eglise précisément, avec un clergé.

Indeed even the manner in which Islam is practised differs from one country to another as Khellil (1991, 153) again explains:

Même sur le plan religieux la division [intérieur de l'Islam] se fait sentir à plusieurs niveaux. Par exemple, les musulmans de France ne fêtent pas la rupture du jeûne du Ramadan [une des Aïd] en même temps : la distinction entre les chiites et les sunnites [majoritaires] est très nette; mais surtout, chaque nationalité fête l'Aïd en même temps que son pays d'origine.

One maire-adjoint in my sample describes the consequences of a vacuum in religious leadership:

Il n'existe pas de consistoire musulman, contrairement aux autres religions monothéistes, et donc il y a un vide. Tout dépend du bon vouloir de ministre de l'Intérieur qui est aussi le ministre des Cultes. A aucun moment l'Islam n'a été la "tasse de thé" d'un quelconque ministre de l'Intérieur. L'absence d'une hiérarchie dans l'Islam arrange finalement tout le monde [la gauche comme la droite].

(Loudhini, Île-St-Denis)

Councillors were in general quick to agree that a vacuum does indeed exist, leaving the religion open to external influences, and this was a matter of some concern to them. The following views of one councillor were representative of the majority of councillors interviewed:

Moi, ce qui m'inquiète, c'est le contrôle [...] Je ne voudrais pas qu'on mette à la tête quelqu'un qui ne soit pas français, qui ne soit pas un
musulman français. Ça, j'en fais vraiment une question de principe. On ne peut pas mettre à la tête des mosquées des gens originaires des pays musulmans.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

In this councillor's view it is critical for the future of Maghrebians in France that a French Muslim should be chosen as the head of the Muslim community rather than non-French and/or extremist elements:

Par exemple la mosquée de Paris est toujours confiée à un Algérien. Je suis contre. Je crois que c'est important pour l'intégration des musulmans en France que ce soit un Français [à la tête]. Sinon on peut aller à toutes les dérives.
(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

For one councillor in the municipality of Evry, the financial participation of Muslim countries in the building of an Islamic cultural centre in his constituency led to conflict which, in the councillor's view, not only presented the wrong image for Islam, but ultimately resulted in the centre failing to open:

Il y a eu un conflit interne, un conflit de gestion. À la limite ce n'est pas une bonne image pour ceux qui prétendent défendre l'Islam. Il y a un conflit parce qu'il y a une mainmise des pays d'origine [le Maroc et l'Arabie Saoudite]. Les problèmes de gestion se retournent contre eux parce que depuis un an ou deux, cela [le centre] reste fermé.
(Tounsi, Evry)

My sample of councillors includes three of the original four members of the CNESOM committee on Islam. An additional councillor among my interviewees has since become a member of the committee. The latter not only endorsed the above comments, but went on to explain that discussions between the CNESOM and the then Socialist government took place in the summer of 1991 to attempt to resolve the question of outside countries influencing Islam in France:

Ce qu'on a constaté nous [les musulmans français], c'est qu'on n'a pas les moyens pour la construction de mosquées. Et on laisse l'Arabie Saoudite, la Libye et le Maroc à payer ces mosquées-là. Comme on voit aujourd'hui la mosquée de Paris est sous le contrôle de l'état algérien, il
nous a semblé bon de proposer au ministre [de l'Intérieur à l'époque, Philippe Marchand] comment trouver des solutions, comment ne pas laisser un pays tiers gérer l'Islam de France.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

One possible solution would be to create an official institution with a recognised hierarchy which could then act on behalf of Muslims in France. Since no such structure presently exists, any project of this nature would entail modifying the way in which Islam is organised and this may divide opinion and encounter opposition as the following reflection suggests:

Nombreux, en effet, sont ceux qui, parmi les musulmans, estiment que la création d'une Eglise musulmane serait contraire à la tradition islamique. (Khellil 1991, 156)

It is extremely difficult to quantify the degree of opposition that may, in practice, exist. It seems likely, however, that traditionalists among the Muslim population would oppose the above reforms. Nevertheless, among my sample of councillors, the majority reacted favourably to the up-dating of the organisation of Islam to more accurately reflect the reality of life in France. This is illustrated by the following comments of one councillor:

Le problème, c'est le retard de la religion musulmane qui n'a pas fait sa réforme [...] Il faut que les gens démocrates aident cette troisième religion de France [quatrième pour ce qui est de l'ancienneté si l'on comprend le protestantisme] à s'en sortir et à faire ses réformes [...] 

L'histoire fait que cette religion s'est toujours adaptée.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

Among the suggestions made by the councillors on the CNESOM committee was that there should be a national campaign to open a debate on the issue. The CNESOM would contribute by publicising its own ideas on modernising Islam:

Pour normaliser nos rapports avec l'Islam, on [la CNESOM] a proposé qu'on fasse de la publicité. Fabriquer une affiche pendant une semaine sur comment la France peut normaliser ses rapports avec l'Islam. Je parle de normalisation parce qu'actuellement ce n'est pas le cas.
To my knowledge this proposal along with others put forward to the then Home Office Minister, Philippe Marchand, in June 1991 has yet to be put into practice. The councillor in question believed that while Marchand was disposed to resolve the major issues for discussion, the problem lay in the provisions of the French constitution, which make a clear distinction between the state and church:

Là où il y a un problème, je crois que c'est au niveau de la constitution. C'est à dire l'État français ne peut pas aider à la construction de mosquées puisqu'il y a la loi de 1905 qui dit qu'ils font de la séparation.

With the change in government in March 1993 it remains to be seen how the new administration will lend itself to the above ideas. The failure of French government to contribute in practical terms to the modernisation of the Islamic faith raises, perhaps, a more fundamental issue, that of the legitimacy of Islam in French society.

The issue was raised by a number of councillors in their day-to-day dealings. One illustration of this was the question of the provision of a place of worship in the municipality of Evry (Essonne). The local Maghrebian population (in Evry), made up predominantly of Moroccans, demanded that there should be a building (in a similar style to that of a traditional mosque, if not enjoying the same status) in which they could pray and practice their faith. At the same time a cathedral for the Catholic population was being built. The French Ministry of Culture decided to contribute to the financing of the cathedral on the grounds that it constituted a work of art, but was unwilling to play any part in financing the Muslim centre of worship. Maghrebian councillors inside and outside the municipality took issue with what they perceived to be double standards in the treatment of the two religious buildings, resulting in the marginalisation of Islam in French society:

C'est le ministère de la culture qui a investi pour la cathédrale. Et c'est l'Arabie Saoudite avec le Maroc qui a investi sur la mosquée. Et on trouve là, il y a un problème. Pourquoi le ministère de la culture aide une cathédrale à se monter. Bien sûr c'est une œuvre artistique etc, je comprends. Et la mosquée à côté on laisse l'Arabie Saoudite, des gens
qui ne sont pas démocratiques du tout construire une mosquée à nous.
Je trouve que cela crée une exclusion.
(Hanana, Chilly-Mazarin)

The councillor whose seat is in the municipality of Evry made the following comments:

La construction d'une cathédrale fait moins peur [que celle d'un centre culturel pour l'Islam]. Que le ministère de la culture a participé au financement, je trouve cela un peu scandaleux.
(Tounsi, Evry)

When asked whether they would favour the building of a mosque in their municipality, councillors responded in the affirmative, but expressed reservations about any place of worship being too visible in case it might attract adverse reaction:

Moi, je serais personnellement [en faveur de la construction d'une mosquée]. C'est très délicat [...] Moi, ce que je souhaitais, c'est que ce ne soit pas trop visible. C'est-à-dire qu'on essaye quand même d'être discret et de permettre aux musulmans qui le souhaitent de prier collectivement.
(Plantade, Épinay-sur-Seine)

One maire-adjoint draws the following conclusion about the manner in which the provision of Islamic places of worship, and by extension Islam itself, are considered by French authorities:

L'Islam est la deuxième religion en France [en terme du nombre de pratiquants], mais sa représentativité est très limitée par rapport à son poids réel dans la société que ce soit au niveau du nombre de lieux de culte ou au niveau des médias. Un maire peut accepter ou refuser d'octroyer une salle de prière pour les administrés de confessio
musulmane. L'Islam en tant que religion est toléré, mais non admis.
(Loudhini, Ile-St-Denis)

Councillors object, then, to the inferior status assigned to Islam in French society which fails to take into account the sheer number of Muslims. This inferior status is exemplified in the councillors' opinion, by the degree of control
that authorities can exert over facilities for the faith.

Among my sample, several councillors are wary about Islam having too large a profile in their municipality for fear of attracting adverse reaction. The majority of these have been members of the CNESOM, which, for reasons described earlier, has advocated a low profile for the religion. However, most councillors were agreed that provision should be made for a place of prayer. This was the case for one councillor who, while not claiming to be a practising Muslim, nonetheless refuted the idea of being the council spokesperson for Islam:

Je m'intéresse sur le fait que c'est [le centre culturel] une construction sur la ville et que c'est une bonne idée. Un centre culturel peut en donner une autre image. Mais comme je ne suis pas du tout religieux et musulman, sur la dimension qu'on voudrait me donner dans l'affiliation par rapport à mes origines ethniques, cela ne me concerne absolument pas. J'ai prévenu le maire et ses adjoints que j'étais l'élu de tous les citoyens de la municipalité. Je ne suis pas l'élu des Maghrébins, des Musulmans chargé de l'Islam.

(Tounsi, Evry)

In the final part of this chapter we shall briefly discuss councillors' views of the fears that some sections of French society have about Islam. The councillors, when interviewed, were acutely aware of the negative image that Islam has in France (hence the desire to promote a more positive image by means of publicity campaigns for example) and of the calculation that Muslim equals fundamentalist. This was reflected in the comments of one maire-adjoint:

L'Islam en France bénéficie d'une image manichéenne dans l'opinion.
- un arabe est égal à un musulman,
- un musulman est égal à un intégriste,
- un intégriste est égal à un danger pour la société.
Malheureusement pour les musulmans, cette opinion largement véhiculée se trouve confortée par ce qui s'est passé hier en Iran et aujourd'hui en Algérie et en Egypte.

(Loudhini, Ile-St-Denis)

While it was not the expressed aim of my study to engage in a detailed survey of the beliefs of French Muslims, as part of the questionnaire which Maghrebian
councillors were asked to fill in there was a question asking how they would view the creation of an Islamic party. The overwhelming majority, 21 councillors, stated that they would certainly not want to belong to any such party. None of the councillors stated that they would definitely want to become members. Only 2 councillors said they might join an Islamic party.

It would, however, be incorrect to assume that opposition to Islamic fundamentalism is synonymous with a rejection of Islam per se. Virtually all the councillors in my sample consider themselves to be Muslims, although several stressed that they were not practicing Muslims. Neither the CSCM nor the CNESOM have sought to actively increase the number of practising Muslims. Rather they have limited themselves to promoting a more positive image of the religion and this is a goal that councillors, both inside and outside these organisations, are agreed upon.

7.5 Conclusion

Two years have passed since the formal ending of hostilities in the Gulf, and it is over four years since the 'headscarf' affair came to prominence. With hindsight what lessons can be learnt from the two events regarding the future prospects for Maghrebians in France? A number of points emerge.

Perhaps the most significant among these is first of all that both events forced French Muslims to question their own place within French society as Geisser (1991, 454) suggests with reference to the Gulf War:

Situation paroxystique, la crise du Golfe a joué un rôle de révélateur, obligeant les acteurs [musulmans] à s'interroger sur leur relation à l'Etat-nation.

The fact that Maghrebians on the whole did not support the activities of Saddam during the Gulf War and did not engage, as some feared, in inter-ethnic conflict suggests, perhaps, that they acknowledge their permanent place within French society. What is at issue is rather the nature of their place within that society.

In the case of the 'headscarf' affair, perhaps the most fundamental question of all was being posed. Can one be both Muslim and French? Césari (1991, 126) argues that the fact that Muslims in France were publicly debating the issue was in itself a revealing factor in that it indicated a desire to be a permanent feature of
French society:

C'est ainsi que la demande de l'Islam brise en quelque sorte le repli traditionnel de ce groupe par rapport à l'espace public français. [...] Tout se passe comme si la revendication de salles de prières, de carrés musulmans [...] étaient les signes [...] d'une reconnaissance implicite de l'installation définitive.

What seems to have been at stake, then, in both events is a renegotiation of the place of Muslims in French society in a way that will be more acceptable to them.

Secondly, the two events indicated the extent to which both governmental authorities and the media are able to influence discourse on ethnic groups. The problematic concept of distinct 'communities' was partially legitimised in official circles during the Gulf War by President Mitterrand himself, who, when speaking to the French nation on 3 March 1991, thanked French citizens of the Jewish and Muslim faiths for their restraint. The term 'community' was indeed repeatedly used by the media before, during and after hostilities. It was somewhat paradoxical that even some Maghrebian councillors, who emphasised their desire to serve all sections of their respective municipalities, irrespective of race, nationality, or religion, should interiorise the notion of 'community' when referring to the diverse populations residing in their place of office. The following comment by a maire-adjoint from Villeurbanne is illustrative of this:

Deux communautés [juive et musulmane] dans notre cité comme dans d'autres villes ailleurs, ont jusqu'à ce jour dominé leur angoisse, leur peur et ont fait preuve de sang froid exemplaire, facilitant le travail du maire et les forces de sécurité.
(Geisser 1991, 460)

The partial legitimisation of this concept in political circles during hostilities in the Gulf reveals a clear development from arguments put forward during the 'headscarf' affair and leads on to a third factor which featured in the two events. There has, perhaps, been a redefinition during both events, but particularly during the Gulf War, of the Jacobin conception of the 'one and indivisible Republic' with the idea of a pluralistic French nation-state seemingly gaining favour. In this respect, rather than insisting upon the shared characteristics and
values of French citizens, as was the case during the 'headscarf' affair, differences between the various constituent parts of French society are acknowledged, as Geisser (1991, 454) has observed with reference to the aforementioned speech by Mitterrand:

Derrière ces propos apparemment anodins, se trame, selon nous, une représentation plus générale, tendant à imposer une vision de la réalité sociale en terme de coexistence entre communautés particulières.

However, as the Gulf War and the 'headscarf' affair demonstrated, the Arab and Islamic world is still largely perceived in negative terms by western society, with Islam seen as backward and dangerous. Even when western authorities have acknowledged the existence of Muslims in western society, it has seemed to be a begrudging acceptance. What French Muslims want, however, is a more positive official recognition of their existence.

Thirdly and with specific reference to the hostilities in the Gulf, the war highlighted the preoccupation of French Muslims with the Palestinian question. Indeed the former made a clear parallel between the war and the plight of Palestinians, which they supported.

Finally, the Gulf War demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of the Maghrebian population in France. Feelings among the Maghrebians were clearly far more complex and diverse than the media generally suggested at the time.

Some activists, such as Arezki Dahmani, believe that the restraint displayed by Maghrebians when their loyalty was called into question may prove to be a turning-point:

Je dirais paradoxalement que cette situation du Golfe est salutaire [...] J'ai l'impression que nous sommes en train de vivre le dernier test.
(France-Inter 5 February 1991)

A minority of interviewees in my sample, invariably those who were also members of France-Plus, agreed with this analysis, according to which the Gulf War had served to demonstrate that young Maghrebians were now wholly committed to their future in France. One councillor expressed the following view:
Je crois que c'était important de dire qu'on est français [...] Je suis engagée. Je suis française.

(Plantade, Epinay-sur-Seine)

In contrast, some interviewees believed that Maghrebians had been betrayed by the PS, and that this augured badly for their future representation within the party. This view was aired by one councillor as follows:

Je pense que 90% de ces jeunes Beurs, ces Franco-Maghrébins [...] vous diront la même chose. Un écoeurement total par rapport [au PS]. C'est pour ça que l'intégration se fera désormais pas seulement avec le PS - ce sera avec d'autres partis aussi.

(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

Describing his own position, the same councillor remarked:

Moi-même en particulier. Je suis prêt à aller dans d'autres partis et je le ferai si d'ici un an ou deux le PS ne change pas, ne s'améliore pas, ne fait pas son autocritique [...] Je le quitterai et j'irai ailleurs. C'est sûr et sans regrets.

(Touabi, Aulnay-sous-Bois)

Yet even comments of this kind fall well short of an outright break with France. While both the 'headscarf' affair and the Gulf War may have led some Maghrebians to re-examine the precise nature of their relationship with French society, few, if any, among them appear to have been forced into a situation of rupture or open revolt. This was, perhaps, best illustrated by the comments of the maire-adjoint in St. Denis who, while symbolically taking down a portrait of François Mitterrand in his town hall office to express his opposition to French government policy during hostilities in the Gulf, still pledged allegiance to the then party of government on whose list he was elected and of which he is an active member:

Il faut mettre les choses dans leur juste place. A titre symbolique je ne supportais plus le portrait de Mitterrand. Mais j'aurais fait une campagne d'enfer pour lui. Ça, c'est révélateur.

(Sali, St. Denis)
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

8.1 Principal issues considered
Chapter one began by outlining the objectives and logic of my research. The limits of studies undertaken thus far on political participation in France were highlighted and the usefulness of considering models from other countries was stressed.

Chapter two focused on factors facilitating political mobilisation prior to the March 1989 municipal elections. Prominent among these were the anti-racist marches of the mid-1980s. However, they also revealed the limits of such action and the need for mobilisation in the political arena. The coming to power of the Socialists in 1981 and the repealing of the law on foreign associations created the framework within which youths of Maghrebian origin gained associational experience.

Chapter three highlighted the processes by which Maghrebians became candidates for electoral office. The PS actively sought to promote Maghrebian candidates for municipal office and recruited among either associational or party activists. The majority of candidates were invited by the local party section to seek office. The promotion of Maghrebian to positions of responsibility at local and national level has thus far proven problematic. Maghrebian councillors, while clearly constituting a socio-economic elite, do not actively participate in the decision-making process and as such cannot be considered as belonging to the upper stratum of political elites.

Nationally-based organisations were examined in chapter four and their different objectives analysed. For France-Plus the political mobilisation of Maghrebians has been the primary aim. While its campaigns to increase electoral enrolment have met with some success, its claims to have sponsored candidates for municipal office have been exaggerated. SOS-Racisme has sought to combat racism, but has alienated itself from Maghrebian youths by virtue of its links with Jewish organisations. Both organisations are inextricably linked to the PS despite their claims to be independent of particular parties.

In chapter five we highlighted the councillors' period in office. The responsibilities that they have been entrusted with fall primarily in the urban and
social fields. Differences exist between men and women councillors concerning objectives, with the latter favouring more tangible aims. Most councillors have been hindered in their duties by a lack of political experience and/or administrative obstacles. In a minority of cases councillors have experienced discrimination within their own party. In Seine-Saint-Denis opposition from PC-controlled municipalities has presented a formidable obstacle to councillors elected on PS lists. Councillors claim to represent all citizens in their municipality but contact with them is limited. Nevertheless councillors act as intermediaries in relaying demands from the grass-roots level to the decision-makers.

Maghrebian pressure groups operating within the PS were studied in chapter six. Their existence reflects the overwhelming concentration of Maghrebian within this party. Both the CSCM and the CNESOM claim to provide a forum in which the Maghrebian voice can be heard on the national political stage. Despite claims to be above internal party divisions, both organisations are closely linked to particular tendencies within the PS.

Chapter seven considered two testing points of the ways in which Maghrebians are perceived in French society. Maghrebian councillors agreed that both the Gulf War and the 'headscarf' affair indicated they were generally perceived in a negative light. The two events served to question the place of Maghrebians in France. In the case of the Gulf War the concept of the French nation-state was questioned. For the 'headscarf' affair, the legitimacy of Islam in a secular state was being raised.

8.2 Main Findings

The main points which emerge from my study are:

i) At a local level municipal councillors of whatever origin have extremely limited powers at their disposal. The decision-making process at municipal level is such that only mayors and their adjoints have been able to exert any degree of influence over the local political agenda. None of the Maghrebian councillors in my sample, or indeed in France as a whole has yet risen to the position of mayor and only a minority presently occupy the post of adjoint. In the case of councillors in my sample, their relative lack of experience and years has compounded matters. Councillors have felt frustrated at the limits of their powers and the slowness of the administrative machinery.
ii) The PS has played a major rôle in the development of Maghrebian political activism at municipal level in at least two ways. Firstly, the party has facilitated the political and associational experience of French youths of Maghrebian origin via the 1981 law on foreign associational activity. Secondly, by means of a directive from the PS leadership, it has enabled over eighty French nationals of Maghrebian origin to become elected on municipal lists. The party has therefore significantly influenced the mode and level of Maghrebian political participation in France and this is reflected in my own sample, where the majority of councillors were elected on PS or joint PC-PS lists. The election of Maghrebian councillors on non-PS lists may, in fact, have been largely a reaction to PS efforts.

iii) The interest that the PS has taken in promoting Maghrebian political participation raised expectations among those elected to municipal office. However, these hopes have remained largely unfulfilled. Councillors of Maghrebian origin have had the illusion of entering into positions of responsibility, whereas these positions in fact have extremely limited powers. The PS leadership did not sufficiently think through the implications of promoting Maghrebian political activism and a major consequence of this has been the disappointment and frustration of Maghrebian elected officials. The PS has not officially promoted any French national of Maghrebian origin to a position of national prominence within its party structure as an elected representative. At best it has provided semi-official posts internal to the party structure. However, these have been created without any of the powers of formal authority. Furthermore the party has failed to honour its pledge to grant the right to vote to immigrants resident in France.

iv) At a national level, Maghrebian political mobilisation is restricted to pressure group activity since there are as yet no nationally elected representatives of Maghrebian origin, although two Maghrebins have been elected as Euro MPs. Maghrebian pressure groups, which operate inside and outside national political parties, have failed to produce a national political agenda for Maghrebins. This is attributable to the following factors, some of which are interrelated:

a) The fragmentation of pressure group activity among a number of organisations has prevented a common approach from being adopted.
b) The close identification of pressure groups with certain political parties (notably CSCM and the CNESOM within the PS) has alienated some Maghrebian activists. Party divisions have been reproduced within pressure groups operating inside and, in the case of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme, outside political parties. In the case of the CNESOM, as a result of its links with party leaders, pressure group activity has been perceived to follow PS leadership policy rather than to set out its own agenda. In the case of the CSCM it has been identified with tendencies in the PS that are marginalised from the party leadership and many Maghrebian councillors have felt alienated from this pressure group.

c) Personality and ideological differences between Maghrebian pressure group leaders have prevailed and this has meant there has been little attempt to seek common ground.

d) There is little contact between pressure groups and Maghrebian at grassroots level. In the case of France-Plus and SOS-Racisme there has been no popular mandate for the election of leaders. The former has been seen as removed from the realities of life for the majority of Maghrebian in France, while the latter's links with Jewish organisations have discouraged many youths of Maghrebian origin from becoming members.

e) There is at present no charismatic leadership figure of Maghrebian origin capable of bringing together the diverse and often opposing groups that operate in the political arena.

v) As a result of the above factors, Maghrebian political activism has been seriously weakened since there is no one voice able to claim that it is putting forward the views of Maghrebian as a whole. Rather a number of voices, claiming to act as the legitimate spokespersons for Maghrebian interests but without any popular base, have been allowed to express their opinions. No national political agenda for Maghrebian exists at present with respect to their advancement in the political arena, the economic betterment of Maghrebian, the economic development of Maghrebian enterprise, educational equity, social service and welfare provision. Debate has centred instead around the promotion of cultural pluralism in France.
8.3 Limitations of the Study

The study of Maghrebian political participation is a relatively recent area of research within the social sciences in France and, in comparison with other countries such as Great Britain and the United States, is still very much in its infancy. Consequently any researcher new to the field is faced with the problem of having to select from a diverse number of categories, which inevitably results in certain areas being chosen at the expense of others. My own study was no exception. In selecting certain options, I was aware that this meant excluding others which might also merit examination. While a comprehensive coverage of councillors within given départements was sought, the relatively small number of candidates studied means that it cannot be considered as wholly representative of councillors throughout France. Previous studies have encountered similar difficulties and a national study, which would necessarily involve the work of several researchers, is urgently required. Analysis of attempts at political mobilisation at different levels to include regional and European dimensions should also be an integral part of any comprehensive national study. Equally, research on Maghrebian councillors nationally could examine in greater depth variables such as gender and socio-professional status. One area which my study touched upon, but was not able to examine in sufficient depth was that of differences between councillors according to their national origins. The treatment of Maghrebian elected officials in parties other than the PS is a neglected area which could also be profitably investigated.

My decision to analyse both the period in office of councillors and Maghrebian national pressure group activity meant that other areas of political mobilisation were correspondingly examined in less detail than I would have hoped. One example of this is the shaping of the local political agenda. By this I refer to the range of questions which are defined as problems requiring attention in the municipality. A crucial factor here is the relationship between the Municipal Council and economic forces which may influence the agenda. The extent to which economic elites exert influence over the local political agenda has been a neglected area of research. This aspect has yet to be examined with respect to municipalities on which Maghrebian councillors sit and is an avenue which requires further exploration. The extent to which national and even international factors impinge upon the local dimension is also worthy of analysis.

My study sought to examine the relationship between councillors and a variety of bodies. However, a more in-depth coverage of the councillors' dealings with
local associations and their constituents is needed. In particular the extent to which associations make demands upon councillors and the frequency and degree to which councillors mix with associations should be looked at. This is important in that by becoming involved in the social life of the locality, councillors will be better able to articulate the demands that the local population may have. A related area is the extent to which councillors' previous associational experience affects their relationship with associations.

8.4 Future prospects for Maghrebian political participation
If the enhancement of Maghrebian political representation is the primary aim, then coalitional politics is the most likely means of achieving this goal. There may, perhaps, be the need for a national caucus similar to that created by Hispanics and African-Americans in the United States and which cuts across party lines. There are already signs that this may be beginning to take shape in France with the attempt by France-Plus to set up what it terms the Mouvement National des Elus Locaux (MNEL). However, first indications suggest that its close identification with the RPR may severely hinder its chances, given that the majority of Maghrebian elected officials are in the PS and that France-Plus's exaggerated electoral claims may have discredited this association in the eyes of councillors. Nevertheless it is one small step in the direction of promoting a national political agenda.

The future direction that Maghrebian political participation may take will depend also on the reconsideration of current political allegiances. It remains to be seen how Maghrebiens will react to the new government of the Right. Will this act as an incentive, perhaps, to further mobilisation? Will the party allegiances of potential Maghrebian candidates shift? While the PS may have a more sympathetic rhetoric, has it in practical terms been as responsive as it could have been? Do other parties offer a more viable alternative? Is the overwhelming concentration of Maghrebian elected officials in one party detrimental to the overall prospects of the ethnic group? All these questions remain to be answered.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that any efforts to attain political office will not by themselves address the multitudinous problems that currently face the Maghrebian population in France. Even if there was the possibility of creating a Maghrebian national political leadership, this would still have its limitations. In the long-term struggle for the advancement of Maghrebiens in French society,
alongside political factors, the socio-economic dimension cannot be ignored and should be an integral feature of a multi-dimensional strategy.
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Table 1.1 Socio-professional analysis of Maghrebian councillors and the working population as a whole

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Table 1.3 Selection process of councillors to municipal office
ABBREVIATIONS

ANGI Association Nouvelle Génération Immigrée
CFDT Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail
CNESOM Conférence Nationale des Elus Socialistes Originaires du Maghreb
CSCM Cercle des Socialistes de Culture Musulmane
DPM Direction de la Population et des Migrations
FAS Fonds d'Action Sociale
FEN Fédération de l'Education Nationale
FNESR Fédération Nationale des Elus Socialistes et Républicains
LCR Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
MAS Mouvement d'Action Syndicale
MBC Mouvement des Beurs Civiques
MNEF Mutuelle Nationale des Etudiants de France
MNEL Mouvement National des Elus Locaux
OLP Organisation pour la Libération de la Palestine
OMI Office des Migrations Internationales
ONR Office National des Rapatriés
PC Parti Communiste
PLO Palestine Liberation Organisation
PS Parti Socialiste
RECOUS Rassemblement et Coordination Unitaire des Rapatriés et Spoliés d'Outre-mer
REPERES Recherches-Perspectives-Expression-Société
RONA Rapatriés d'Origine Nord-Africaine
RPR Rassemblement pour la République
UDF Union pour la Démocratie Française
UEJF Union des Etudiants Juifs de France
ENQUETE SUR LES ELUS MUNICIPAUX D'ORIGINE MAGHREBINE

Merci de bien vouloir prendre le temps de remplir ce questionnaire. Ma recherche concerne la participation des Français d'origine maghrébine au niveau municipal et j'aimerais recueillir votre opinion sur un certain nombre de points.

SECTION A  L'accésion au pouvoir politique

1) Vous avez été élu(e) conseiller(ère) municipal(e) en mars 1989 sur une liste de quelle(s) formation(s) politique(s)?

PS+ PC PS PC RPR UDF CDS RPR+UDF LISTE AUTONOME AUTRE

2) Comment en êtes-vous venu(e) à figurer sur cette liste?

   a) Je me suis proposé(e) aux responsables de la liste.
   b) J'ai été invité(e) à le faire par les responsables de la liste.
   c) Un intermédiaire a proposé ma candidature. Lequel/laquelle?

3) Aviez-vous envisagé la responsabilité de vous placer sur une autre liste aux élections de mars 1989?

   Oui
   Non
   Si oui, laquelle?

4) Etes-vous membre d'un parti politique?

   Oui
   Non
   Si oui, lequel?
5) Quand avez-vous adhéré à ce parti?
   a) Avant de poser ma candidature.
   b) Au moment de poser ma candidature.
   c) Après avoir posé ma candidature.

6) Comment vous situeriez-vous par rapport à un parti islamique?
   a) J'y adhérerai certainement.
   b) Je n'y adhérerai certainement pas.
   c) J'y adhérerai peut-être.

7) Adhérez-vous à l'une ou l'autre des organisations suivantes:
   FRANCE PLUS
   SOS RACISME
   REPERES

8) Eprouvez-vous un préjugé favorable/ défavorable/ plutôt défavorable ou êtes-vous indifférent(e) à l'égard des organisations susmentionnées? (Utilisez l'échelle 1-4, 1= très défavorable, 4= très favorable)
   FRANCE PLUS
   SOS RACISME
   REPERES

9) Les organisations suivantes ont-elles soutenu votre candidature? Oui Non
   FRANCE PLUS
   SOS RACISME
   REPERES

10) Avez-vous été soutenu(e) par d'autres organisations?
    Si oui, laquelle/ lesquelles?
SECTION B  Le bilan au pouvoir

1) Au moment d'être élu(e) conseiller(ère) municipal(e) en mars 1989 quelle importance attachiez-vous aux objectifs suivants: (Répondez à l'aide de l'échelle 1-4, 1= aucune importance, 4= extrêmement important)
   a) Obtenir des avantages tangibles pour les franco-maghrébins au niveau municipal (ex: faire construire un local communautaire).
   b) Promouvoir l'égalité des chances pour la communauté franco-maghrébine au niveau local.
   c) Changer l'attitude des Français dits "de souche" dans leur perception des Français d'origine maghrébine.
   d) Servir les intérêts de la communauté quelle que soit la race, la religion ou la nationalité de ses habitants.

2) Une fois élu(e) quelles tâches vous ont été confiées?
   a) Maire-adjoint
   b) Président de commission
   c) Membre de commission
   d) Autre (à préciser)

3) Dans quelle mesure vos responsabilités concernent-elles principalement la communauté maghrébine/ immigrée? (1= pas du tout, 4= essentiellement)

4) Dans quelle mesure vos responsabilités concernent-elles la population locale dans son ensemble? (1= pas du tout, 4= essentiellement)

5) Dans quelle mesure estimez-vous avoir réussi à réaliser les objectifs suivants? (échelle 1-4 comme précédemment):
   a) Procurez des avantages tangibles à la communauté franco-maghrébine au niveau local.
   b) Promouvoir l'égalité des chances pour la communauté franco-maghrébine au niveau local.
   c) Faire évoluer la mentalité des Français "de souche" dans leur perception des Français d'origine maghrébine.
   d) Servir les intérêts de la communauté locale dans son ensemble quelle que soit la race, la religion ou la nationalité.
6) Quels obstacles majeurs vous ont empêchée de réaliser ces objectifs? (échelle 1-4 comme précédemment):
   a) Vous avez fait l'objet de discriminations au sein de votre parti.
   b) Manque d'expérience politique antérieure.
   c) Contraintes administratives.
   d) Financement insuffisant.
   e) Opposition de la part de la communauté franco-maghrébine.
   f) Opposition de la part de la communauté non franco-maghrébine.

7) Commentaire libre sur les principaux obstacles auxquels vous vous êtes heurté(e).
RESEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS  
(FACULTATIF)

Je vous saurais gré de préciser quelques détails à votre sujet qui me permettront d'avoir une documentation plus approfondie. Je tiens à préciser que ces détails resteront strictement confidentiels.

Nom
Prénom
Sexe
Date de Naissance
Lieu de Naissance
Ville où vous résidez
Profession
Baccalauréat OUI NON
Diplômes d'enseignement supérieur
Nationalité1
Date d'obtention de la nationalité française

1 Je présume que vous êtes de nationalité française, mais pour les besoins de ma recherche il serait intéressant de savoir à quelle date vous avez opté pour la nationalité française. Ces renseignements, je le rappelle, sont strictement confidentiels.
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