Ethnic minorities in local politics: comparing Amsterdam and Paris

Michon, L.B.

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Chapter III
The Structural Features of Amsterdam and Paris

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the structural features of the cities that are being compared. Amsterdam and Paris (and the latter’s region) are described on the basis of the characteristics highlighted in Chapter II, namely the features of the electoral system, the local organisation of power, the local party systems and the political culture. I will also focus on the ethnic minority presence in the areas’ populations as well as the mechanisms of its political incorporation.

I. Amsterdam

When compared to other capital cities, Amsterdam is a relatively small municipality (750,000 inhabitants in 2008 – see www.os.amsterdam.nl, 2009). It is also a rather unusual capital city, because although it is indeed the financial and cultural heart of the Netherlands, all of the country’s political processes are based in The Hague, which is the seat of Parliament and the location of all ministries and embassies. Nevertheless, the 1983 formulation of the Dutch constitution is explicit in stating that the capital city of the Netherlands is Amsterdam (Bosscher, 2007e, p.495).

a. Electoral system and local political mandates

The Dutch electoral system is characterised by its party list system, with pure proportionality, and very low thresholds. Accordingly, it is possible for a large number of parties to be elected, with coalitions being forged thereafter in order to form executives.
This is also the case at the local level, where elections are held every four years. The number of votes required to win a seat (called a “kiesdeler”) depends on the number of issued votes, divided by the number of seats available. In the case of Amsterdam (with a council of 45 seats), 2.22 percent of the votes were needed to win a seat in the 2006 elections. Eldersveld thus writes of ‘a highly volatile party environment’ (1998, p.325) in which new parties arise easily and coalitions often change.

Greater volatility is added to the mix as a result of the opportunity that voters have to cast preferential votes, meaning that candidates can win a seat relatively easily, despite a lowly position on the party list. Once elected and sworn in, councillors hold their seat personally, meaning that the individual retains it, even if he or she leaves the party to which they are affiliated.

As one of the first Western European countries to do so, the Netherlands granted local voting rights to foreigners in 1985. Since then, non-nationals can participate in local elections after five years of legal residence in the country (since the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties, EU-citizens only have to wait for six months). There is no need to register in order to be entitled to vote; the municipal administration automatically sends voting forms to all inhabitants entitled to participate a few weeks before Election Day. In 2006, nearly 580,000 residents were entitled to vote in Amsterdam (77 percent of the population; Hylkema & van Zee, 2006, p.3).

The city council is a legislative body and has important powers: it sets the agenda, passes regulations and controls the actions of the executive. The executive, formed by the mayor and his or her deputies, has to abide by the decisions of the council (Gemeentewet, III, H.IX). It also needs the council’s support, since coalitions can crumble if there is a lack of confidence in the executive. In such a scenario, coalitions must be rebuilt during the council’s term in office, but if this is not possible, new elections must be called.

The Dutch local electoral system allows seats in the municipal (or district) council to be shared by two people, one of whom is formally a councillor, while the other becomes a “duo.” This provides an opportunity for politicians who are interested to learn the rules of the game while keeping a low profile and having less responsibility.

The Ministry of the Interior sets the maximum amount of the indemnity that city councillors receive for their work, which depends on the size of the population in the city. In Amsterdam, councillors receive 2000 Euros per month (Rechtspositiebesluit raads-en commissieleden, 2004), while district councillors receive a monthly indemnity of 980 Euros.

The mayors of Dutch municipalities are not elected by either the population or the municipal council. Instead, they are appointed (for a period of six years) on the basis of the choices made by a commission of the council, which is validated by the Ministry of the Interior (mayors are then formally appointed by the Queen). Dutch mayors, particularly in big cities, can thus be characterised as professional managers. Their main duty is to secure public order (Gemeentewet, III, H.XI, art.172). The memoirs of Ed van Thijn, which deal with his period as mayor (between 1983 and 1994), reveal some of the elements of the role, as well as details of his relationship with his deputies and the council. The mayor should not be involved in political decisions, van Thijn writes (2003, p.25); he is supposed

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1. “Duo” councillors are not elected, but they have an official status and can vote in the commissions. They cannot, however, vote in the council.
to stand above the parties and represent the city, while being controlled politically by the deputy mayors (idem, p.114). However, the extent to which the mayor plays a part in political decisions depends on the character and political positions of his deputies and the dynamics within the executive. Confronted with “strong” deputy mayors, the mayor is indeed kept outside the political game. However, when faced with a group of weaker deputies (either because their parties do not have a strong base, or because the deputy has been criticised in the council), the mayor can play much more of a leading role (idem, p.25, p.111, p.152).

The number of deputy mayors can vary; there must be at least two, but their number cannot exceed 20 percent of the overall number of councillors (Gemeentewet, II, H.III, art.36). The type of coalition that is formed can influence the number of deputy mayors, since each coalition partner will provide at least one. Until 2002, deputy mayors were members of the council and were chosen from the municipal councillors. In 2002, however, the system of dualism was introduced, creating a strict distinction between the council (the representative and controlling body) and the mayor and deputy mayors (the executive). As a result, it is now possible to appoint deputy mayors who either were or were not on the party lists.²

b. Administrative organisation of Amsterdam

The city council in Amsterdam has 45 seats, and 14 of the city’s 15 districts have district councils (one, Westpoort, has no council as its population is very small). While the mayor of Amsterdam is appointed (see above), the district mayors are elected by the people – it is usually the first candidate of the party that wins the most votes. The size of the district councils depends on the size of the population in the district. So, the most populated districts (Zuidoost, Oud Zuid, Noord) elect 29 councillors, while the least populated (de Baarsjes, Bos en Lommer, Oud West, Westerpark) elect 17 (in total, 322 district councillors are elected). City and district council elections are held on the same day, but are separate, and it is not possible to hold a seat in both.³

The districts councils were initiated in 1981, when the districts of Noord and Osdorp elected councils as an experiment, and as a compromise between the social-democratic party, the PvdA, which was very much in favour of district councils, and its Christian-democratic coalition partner, the CDA, which was less so (Bosscher, 2007d, p.493). Four additional councils were elected in 1987 (de Pijp, Watergraafsmeer, Buitenveldert and Zuidoost), and by 1990, all districts, except the city centre and the industrial area of Westpoort, had councils.⁴ A few districts merged in 1998 (reducing the number thereof

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³. Since the elections of March 2010, a number of districts have merged. There are now seven districts with councils in Amsterdam (Centrum, Noord, Oost, Zuid, West, Nieuw-West and Zuidoost) and the number of district councillors has been reduced to 203.

⁴. The idea behind the creation of districts was on the basis that, at some point, Amsterdam would become part of a city-province, along with a number of municipalities in the region, meaning that it would no longer have a municipal council and would instead be governed both at district and metropolitan level. This plan was, however, rejected by a referendum in 1995 (Bosscher, 2007d, p.493; Barlow, 2000).
from 16 to 13), and the city centre elected a council for the first time in 2002. In formal terms, the districts are commissions of the city council, and their role depends upon what it decides to delegate to them. District policies mainly concern the management of public space, spatial and economic planning and welfare, culture, sport and recreation (Barlow, 2000, p.277; Schaatsbergen, 2006).

**Figure 3.1: Map of Amsterdam and its districts**

![Map of Amsterdam and its districts](http://www.amsterdamsights.com/amsterdam/neighborhoods.html)


**c. The political system in Amsterdam**

According to Eldersveld (1998), the success and failure of political parties in Amsterdam has largely followed national political developments, albeit with the city having its own distinct dynamics. Eldersveld distinguishes four stages through which the relevant parties have passed since World War II. The first of these lasted until 1963, and was a period of stability and consensus during which five parties (the PvdA, the VVD and three religious parties) won between 75 and 80 percent of the votes cast. Subsequently, a “viability crisis” occurred between 1963 and the early 1970s, when many small parties entered the political arena. This led to the erosion of the electoral base of the mainstream parties (idem, p.321; Bosscher, 2007c, pp.424-30). The third stage identified by Eldersveld was

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5. The executive had always argued that policies for the city centre concerned the whole city, and did not, therefore, need the approval of a separate council. However, the municipal council decided that the city centre needed a council just like the other districts. A referendum was called by opponents to a city centre council, and voters rejected the idea of a council. However, as fewer than 30 percent of the enfranchised inhabitants cast their vote, the referendum was invalid (Bosscher, 2007d, p.493).

6. With the elections of March 2010, the prerogatives of the municipal and district councils have been clarified; see Gemeente Amsterdam (2009).
one of “restabilization”, which began in the late 1970s and ended in 1990. This period was characterised by the dominance of a few big parties (PvdA, VVD, CDA – a union of the religious parties that had existed previously, and D66), but also by increased levels of abstention and volatile voting patterns (Eldersveld, 1998, p.321-24). During this third stage, the upheaval caused by squatters and other radical movements in the city had a significant impact on politics. The question of how to deal with public disorder was a significant matter. Moreover, the concerns raised by these movements dominated the public and political debate, and related to issues of housing, the state of the subway, and monumental projects – i.e. an overall concern for city planning. These debates were also triggered by the election of new, radical parties to the council of representatives(Bosscher, 2007d). Finally, a fourth stage began in 1990, with the dramatic losses of the social-democrats and the Christian-democrats, and the emergence of both the Green Left party and the extreme-right (Bosscher, 2007d). The electoral success of the extreme-right parties, CD (“Centrumdemocraten”) and CP’86 (“Centrumpartij 86”) in the early nineties (three seats in 1990, four seats in 1994) was a shock (van Thijn, 2003, pp.89-93), but their achievements did not last. Traditionally, extreme-right (political) movements have remained marginal and isolated in Amsterdam (Berveling, 1994, p.25; Buijs & Fennema, 1998, p.33).

**Figure 3.2: Percentage of votes obtained by the main parties in Amsterdam between 1986 and 2006**

Source: Hylkema & Zee, 2006, p.4


Since 1953, left-wing parties have always held more seats in the city council than their right-wing counterparts. One party clearly dominates the political arena in the city: the social-democratic party, the PvdA (Berveling, 1994, p.25). As Figure 3.2 demonstrates, the PvdA, has always come first in the elections over the last 20 years, followed by the
liberal party, the D66 (social-liberal), the VVD (right-wing) and GroenLinks (green party). The electoral success of the PvdA has, however, varied, experiencing both peaks of very strong support (1978, 1986, 2006) and periods where the party was less popular (1966-1970; 1990-2002; see Bosscher, 2007c; Bosscher, 2007d; Eldersveld, 1998). These ups and downs are somewhat linked to the position of the party leaders; Schaefer, who led the party in the 1978 elections, was very popular, while Etty, who headed the party list in 1990, was seen as being an authoritarian (Bosscher, 2007d, p.457, p.471). At that time, the PvdA was known for its stringent party discipline, which made the party group in the council an obedient follower of the decisions of the deputy mayors. After the dramatic elections of 1990, however, all parties agreed on a number of rules to enhance the autonomy of the council vis-à-vis the mayor and his deputies (Berveling, 1994, p.24).

The coalitions formed for the executive have changed regularly, although the PvdA has always been a constant, and has played a pivotal role in terms of its decisions about which parties it was prepared to govern with (Berveling, 1994, p.25). However, between 1990 and 2006, and because the party had fewer seats in the city council, multiple-party coalitions have had to be formed. In 2006, the PvdA regained its unquestionable leading position in the city council by winning 20 of the 45 seats. It went on to form a coalition with the Green Left. The social democrats are also in power in a majority of the districts. Indeed, after the 2006 elections, all 14 district mayors were members of the social democratic PvdA.

d. The role of migration in Amsterdam

According to Bosscher (2007f, p.541), the main challenge for Amsterdam in the 21st century is not its capacity to attract new inhabitants (after losing 200,000 between 1960 and 1986), but the issue of how to deal with the growing ethnic diversity of the population. This increase in diversity is well documented, since Dutch municipalities register an individual’s country of birth as well as that of both of his or her parents. In other words, through this administrative form of registration, it is possible to gain insight into the size of the population of first and second generation immigrants in a particular area.

Recent figures for Amsterdam reveal that half of the population is foreign-born, or has at least one parent who was born abroad. This includes so-called Western immigrants (who come from other European countries, the US and Canada, and Japan; 14 percent of the population). The largest minority groups are from Surinam, Morocco (nine percent of the population) and Turkey (five percent). Those born in the Netherlands of native-born parents represent 51 percent of the city’s population (see Table 3.1).

Despite the significant size of the population of those of foreign descent, a large majority (88 percent in 2008) of the inhabitants in Amsterdam has Dutch nationality, while five percent have the nationality of another European country, two percent are Moroccan and one percent is Turkish (source: Onderzoek en Statistiek Amsterdam, 2008). The local enfranchisement of foreigners does not, therefore, involve large numbers of those living in the city.

7. Including the two liberal parties (the VVD and D66), as well as GroenLinks (in 1990), the VVD and D66 (in 1994) and the VVD, D66 and GroenLinks (in 1998). In 2002, the PvdA formed a coalition with the VVD and the CDA.
Table 3.1: First and second generation immigrants in Amsterdam, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total non-western immigrants</td>
<td>258,494</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among whom from:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>68,813</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antilles</td>
<td>11,440</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>38,913</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>67,153</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western immigrants</td>
<td>107,422</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch natives</td>
<td>381,374</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>747,290</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.os.amsterdam.nl, 2009

The presence of immigrants – first and second generation – varies greatly from one district to another (see Onderzoek en Statistiek Amsterdam, 2008). Dutch natives form more than 60 percent of the population in the city-centre and the districts of Oud-West, Oud-Zuid and ZuiderAmstel (the southern districts, see Figure 3.1). Western immigrants (first and second generation) are also present in these same districts. On the other hand, immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin are concentrated in the Western districts; in Bos en Lommer and Geuzenveld/Slotermeer, 23 percent of the population is of Moroccan descent and 16 percent are of Turkish origin. Immigrants with a Surinamese background are concentrated in the district of Zuidoost, which is a very distinctive area that is both separated geographically from Amsterdam and has its own particular history. The city, thus, has districts with specific concentrations of different groups of people, although the extent of the concentration and segregation thereof should not be overestimated. As Musterd and Ostendorf state, there is “no extreme segregation or polarisation” in Amsterdam (1998, p.198) because of the effects of the Dutch welfare state; the system of social benefits, social housing and income redistribution attenuates the impact of the combined spatial concentration of poverty and ethnicity.

e. Political recruitment and the inclusion of minorities

Political recruitment and candidate selection is typically a matter of intra-party politics (Rahat, 2007); parties are relatively free to decide how to select and nominate candidates. In practice, however, the procedure for candidate selection in the Netherlands varies only slightly from one party to another. There is usually a selection committee (which may be separate from the executive committee of the party), which auditions candidates, receives statements of support about potential candidates from individual party members or party groups, and sets up a draft list of candidates. Party members also play an important role in the decisions made about the list of candidates. For example, within the PvdA,

GroenLinks, the VVD⁹ and D66, the party members of either a particular district, or the whole town, vote on each position on the electoral list, thus enabling them to change the order of the candidates, or even put a candidate on the list who is not backed by the selection committee (PvdA, 2005; GroenLinks, 2008; VVD, 2005; D66, 2008).

Leijenaar and her colleagues have looked in detail at the process of the recruitment of municipal candidates for the 1998 elections in the Netherlands, particularly with regard to the selection by political parties of women and those belonging to ethnic minorities. Their findings highlight the importance of specific features of the recruitment process, in particular the role that self-selection and the party committees play in deciding on candidates. The small share of women and ethnic minority candidates in the selection commissions explains, in the opinion of Leijenaar and her colleagues, why few female and immigrant candidates were selected in the late 1990s (Leijenaar et al., 1999, p.105). Moreover, these authors also point out that there is bias in the traditional recruitment channels, which favour individual initiative. Women and those from ethnic minorities are, apparently, less likely to put themselves forward as a candidate than men and native Dutch party members (idem, p.41). It further appears from their analysis that ethnic diversity on party lists is seen as an important issue by left-wing parties in the more urban areas. The two liberal parties (VVD, right-wing and D66, centre-left) see potential candidates more as individuals than the left-wing parties, which tend to see people as part of a group (idem, p.100).

A study conducted a few years later on the political participation of immigrants in four Dutch cities not only also revealed that selection committees were predominantly comprised of white middle-aged men, but likewise highlighted the limited ways in which candidates were sought: usually, people who were already party members were approached and/or personal networks were used (Berger et al., 2001, p.53). However, for almost half of the selection committees examined, including ethnic minority candidates in the candidate lists was an explicit act, with the Christian democratic, social-democratic and green parties actively seeking out those from minority groups (idem, pp.58-59). This study also revealed that in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, as opposed to the smaller cities like Zaanstad and Eindhoven, parties were more “used to” ethnic minority representatives, and their inclusion on party lists was more often a priority (idem, p.60).

As for the more general profile of the parties, a survey conducted by Eldersveld of the holders of positions in the parties in Amsterdam in 1961, 1976 and 1993 (Eldersveld, 1998), revealed that the parties’ elite (ward administrators, leaders of party groups – e.g. women and youths – and party administrators) has remained relatively stable or, to use Eldersveld’s term, exclusive in terms of their social-economic profile (being predominantly staffed with “middle-class male professionals”, idem, p.342). It was mainly by changing the intra-party organisation and increasing the opportunities for members to have a say that the smaller parties (D66, PPR, and later GroenLinks) adapted to the changes in context that started to be seen in the 1960s (idem). Eldersveld thus characterises the political system of Amsterdam, in terms of its adaptation to societal phenomena, as a: “dynamic vote-relevant structure, aware of the imperatives of adapting to environmental changes and political crisis” (idem, p.344).

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⁹. The party regulations for the 2006 selection procedure clearly indicate that party members vote on each position on the list (VVD, 2005). However, one of the interviewees, a member of the VVD, explained that the general meeting only voted for the list as a whole.
Overall, the features of Amsterdam as a political structure for the inclusion of ethnic minorities in the local political elite appear to create a favourable context. The system of proportionality favours representation in terms of gender and social background (Farrell, 2001, pp.165-166), while it is also possible to suppose that proportionality is a priori beneficial when it comes to the representation of ethnic minorities. Moreover, since 1985, foreigners have been entitled to vote and stand in a local election after five years of residence. This not only has a direct effect, through the participation of foreigners in elections (although, as we have seen, this effect is limited nowadays), but also an indirect impact, since parties include immigrants on their lists in order to appeal to the foreign electorate (which is generally not the only reason to include ethnic minority candidates on party lists). Finally, I would argue that the status and prerogatives of the city and district councillors ensure that elected representatives in Amsterdam play an interesting role: they truly hold power, since they control the executive. Moreover, they can also do this as an individual, because the seat is, in a way, his or hers personally for four years.

In terms of the implications for representation as a result of the features of the system, it is important to note that according to law, city and district councillors represent the entire city and not just their particular area (Gemeentewet, III, H.II, art.7). Preferential voting has important implications. Some councillors may be directly elected by a group of voters and feel accountable to them. However, there is no way to clearly identify this group, other than by their geographic location in the city or district. Overall, the conception of representation conveyed by these structural characteristics is one that is detached from group interest representation.

The dominance of the PvdA in Amsterdam has an important implication for the access of migrants to the local political system: this access largely depends on the choices made by the social-democratic party. The number of migrants elected can depend on preferential votes, but the political parties make the crucial decisions about whether to include ethnic minority candidates on their lists, and, if so, who they are. In practice, however, the PvdA in Amsterdam, like the other major political parties in the city, has proved to be open to ethnic minorities.

II. Paris and its region

a. Electoral system and local mandates

In France, nationality and citizenship are strongly intertwined, although an exception was (reluctantly) introduced in 2001 for EU-citizens (Strudel, 2003, p.4): French citizens and EU-nationals have voting rights at the local level. Those entitled to vote have to register on the electoral rolls (“listes électorales”) to be able to participate in the elections. Municipal elections are held every six years in France, and local representatives are elected via a two-round majority vote with closed party lists. Since the law on parity of 2000, half of the candidates on the lists must be women.

If a particular list wins a majority of the votes in the first ballot, it automatically wins half of the seats on the council. The other half are allocated by a system of proportionality (using the method of the highest averages) among all of the lists which
won at least five percent of the votes, including the one that has already won half of the seats on the council. If no list has a majority of the votes after the first round, a second round is necessary. All of the lists which won at least 10 percent of the votes on the first ballot go through to the second round. The list with the most votes wins this ballot, and automatically gets half of the seats on the district council. The other half of the seats is divided as set out above (Bécet, 2001a, p.60).

There are several different positions in a municipal council. Local executives (the mayor and his/her deputies) are elected by, and from within, the municipal council. The mayor is the executive authority of the municipality, and is the only person responsible for administrative and legal duties (Bécet, 2001a, p. 64; Bécet, 2001b, p.101). One of the great powers of the mayor is the responsibility for public order, which gives him/her important latitude with regard to the means (management and the use of the municipal police and the signing of decrees) and objectives of public policy.

The mayor can also delegate tasks to the deputy mayors, who are then in charge of the implementation of a specific area of policy-making and its budget. He or she is also assisted by municipal councillors, who are referred to as having a “délégation.” While the prerogative of the municipal council is to “delineate the concept of local public interest by voting on decisions in all areas of communal responsibility” (Bécet, 2001b, p.106) (i.e. it is a legislative body), the political power in French municipalities is clearly concentrated in the hands of the mayor. In practice, the executive clearly initiates the policies of the municipality. The structure created by the electoral system, and the division of tasks in the council, is one of top-down hierarchy.

It is possible to hold concomitant mandates at the local and/or regional and/or national level (the so-called “cumul des mandates”), and this opportunity is widely utilised. The opportunity for newcomers to gain access to politics is, therefore, reduced (the number of political positions that are available is restricted), but this disadvantage is believed to be less important than the advantages of the “cumul” system. The cornerstone of the “cumul” is the embeddedness of politicians and the contact that there is with the population. In this context, the local mandate, and especially the mandate of the mayor, has a very important role in the French political context. Indeed, Offerlé writes that a local mandate constitutes a pool of legitimacy and resources (Offerlé, 2004, p.82; see also Haegel, 1993, p.78; Houk, 2007, p.133; Thiébault, 1988, p.83).

An important issue, which is partially linked to the “cumul”, relates to the material remuneration for locally elected positions. The amount of these indemnities is outlined by law, but the precise sum that elected representatives receive is voted on by the municipal council. In Paris, district councillors do not receive any financial compensation for their mandate, nor do those who have a “délégation.” All other councillors (district deputy mayors, district mayors and members of the Conseil de Paris) do receive payment. This arrangement clearly reflects a strong hierarchy of positions and, thus, power. A recent decision of the Conseil de Paris, which applied from 1st of July, 2008, set the amount of the indemnity for district deputy mayors and all members of the Conseil de Paris at 1500 Euros a month. The city’s deputy mayors and the district mayors receive 2800 Euros a month, while the mayor of Paris receives a monthly sum of 5000 (Délibération du Conseil

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10 Twenty-seven of the 163 members of the Conseil de Paris hold a regional, national or European mandate – knowing that the Conseil de Paris is both a municipal council and a council for the “département.”

11 However, two district deputy mayors I interviewed told me that they receive 1100 Euros a month.
de Paris, 16 juin 2008). In addition, all of these representatives can claim for certain expenses (like transport and mission costs).

b. Administrative organisation of Paris

Paris has a city council, the “Conseil de Paris”, and 20 district councils. The former has 163 seats and is both a municipal council and a council for the “département”\(^\text{12}\) (a “conseil général”). It has separate budgets, following the policy division between these two formal layers of power. The members of the Conseil de Paris are elected indirectly, through an election in each district.

Electoral lists run for candidacy in each district. Consequently, the first third of the councillors elected in each district (following the order of the candidates on the lists, and according to the two rounds system of both majority and proportionality votes described above) automatically hold a seat on both the district council and the Conseil de Paris (see Code électoral, partie legislative, IV, ch.VI; Berthon, 2001, p.113). Accordingly, one could say that each member of the Conseil de Paris is elected on behalf of a particular district. In total, 516 councillors are elected to Parisian district councils. The size of these councils depends on the size of the population: the most populated district, the 15th, has a council with 51 seats, while the least populated, the 4th, elects 12 councillors (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Map of the districts of Paris

![Map of the districts of Paris](http://www.friparis.blogspot.com/2010/06/liens-vers-les-arrondissements.html)


The district councils were elected for the first time in 1983. Their role is to participate in the organisation and administration of the district, but they have no decision-making powers. The district council must be consulted by the Conseil de Paris on issues of urban planning that concern the particular area (Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales, L.2511-15). Furthermore, the district council has the right to deliberate and release so-

\(^{12}\) The “département” is an administrative sub-division of the French region.
called preferences about the decisions made by the Conseil de Paris that are relevant for the district (idem, L.2511-13). Ultimately, though, decisions are made by the Conseil de Paris and the Parisian executive.

c. The political system in Paris

For over a century, the supremacy of moderate right-wing movements and parties in the capital city has been enduring (Nivet & Combeau, 2000, p.55), and the political battles in Paris have been fought within the political right. The opposition between Gaullist and conservative (centre-right) parties has, indeed, structured the more recent political developments in the city (Nivet, 1994, p.161; Dupoirier, 1977). Ever since the 1950s, the Gaullist parties have gained power, and the Gaullist representative, Jacques Chirac, became Paris’ first mayor in 1977\(^\text{13}\), remaining in power until 1995. His first deputy, Jean Tibéri, succeeded him as mayor until 2001, when a left-wing candidate, Bertrand Delanoë, was elected.

The divisions of the right characterise Parisian politics. The traditional right-wing parties and their leaders have had significant problems with the Gaullist parties, which were thought to be too focused on national power and not Parisian enough.\(^\text{14}\) The proximity of the national arenas of political power enhanced the localism of the traditional right in Paris, while for the Gaullists, and particularly the RPR, national and local politics were intertwined (Houk, 2007, p.132). The success of Jacques Chirac in 1977 can be explained by his ability to lean on existing networks and rely on right-wing “notables” (Haegel, 1984, p.20). Subsequently, Chirac managed to turn Paris into a RPR bastion (Nivet & Combeau, 2000, p.249; Houk, 2007, p.146), using political and administrative positions for the purposes of partisan retribution (Haegel, 1984, p.33). One effect of this was that the success and supremacy of Chirac masked the divisions of the right for a number of years, although these re-appeared as soon as he left the Town Hall for the Elysee palace in 1995; there has been no consensus on who the leader of the right should be for the municipal elections since he left (Boy & Chiche, 2002, p.31-32; Houk, 2007, p.146).

Another important and constant feature of the political structure in Paris is the east-west divide. Eastern districts have always favoured left-wing parties, while the western parts of the city have constantly elected right-wing executives. This divide has now been present for over a century and the political frontier has been remarkably stable over time (Ranger, 1977, p.811; Boy & Chiche, 2002, p.47; Dupoirier, 2004). After the creation of the district councils in 1983, the right won in all districts in 1983 and 1989, thus, exerting absolute control in the city. In 1995, however, six districts in the north-east quarter (the 3rd, 10th, 11th, 18th, 19th and 20th) elected left-wing mayors. The traditional east-west divide returned from 2001 onwards, as the western (7th, 8th, 15th, 16th, 17th) and two central districts (the 5th and 6th) in the city elected right-wing district mayors, while in the 12 other districts (a majority of districts), the left-wing lists won the majority of votes, thus, making the election of Delanoë possible.

\(^{13}\) Paris had no mayor between 1871 and 1977 (Nivet & Combeau, 2000, p.11). During that period, the executive of the city was led by the ‘préfet de Paris’ and the ‘préfet de police’, both appointed by the national government (Dupoirier, 2004, p.32).

\(^{14}\) Interview with Elisabeth Dupoirier, 22/07/2008.
The election in 2001 of a left-wing mayor in Paris can be seen as a radical change in the traditional political equilibrium of the capital city, as it ended the supremacy of the right (Dupoirier, 2004, p.48). The left-wing coalition of socialists, communists and the greens did not, however, gain a majority of the votes in 2001. The political change is best explained by the effect of the mode of election (Dolez, 2002, p.78), in combination with the division of the right (idem, p.90) and the success of the green party, which is seen as being a consequence of the process of gentrification in certain districts (Dupoirier, 2004, p.44; Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 2004, p.83).

The east-west opposition in electoral terms is, thus, linked to the sociology of the population. The western parts of the city are, and have previously been, the “beaux quartiers”, where wealth is concentrated. In contrast, the eastern districts were where the working-class traditionally resided (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 2004, pp.16-17; 50-51). The sociological features of the population also explain why other parties, noticeably the extreme-right Front National, never managed to gain ground in Paris. The population is well educated and materially well off, and, according to Dupoirier, is “not particularly concerned with immigration and security” (Dupoirier, 2007, p.82). Moreover, Chirac fiercely opposed the Front National, and in Paris this extreme-right party never achieved the success it had had in the “banlieues” (idem, p.83).

d. The role of migration in Paris

Paris is a city of strangers, in the sense that “real Parisians” i.e. those born in Paris (without including those whose parents were born in the city) are in a minority within the population of the city. This has been the case for decades: in 1889, 36 percent of the people living in Paris had been born there, while 56 percent had been born in France, but outside the city. Nowadays, approximately a third of the population of the capital city was born there, while half were born in other areas of France and 20 percent were born abroad (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 2004, p.28).

French law does not allow for the statistical distinction between ethnic groups. The only insight into the origins of the population is data about country of birth and nationality figures. The figures from the latest census (Table 3.2) reveal that the share of foreigners among the population of Paris in 1999 (14 percent) is slightly higher than in the region of Paris (13.3 percent), and is more than twice as high as the national average (5.6 percent; see Belbah et al., 2003, p.19). Looking at the foreign-born population (irrespective of nationality), it appears that 18 percent of those living in Paris were born abroad, principally in other European and African countries. Almost 40 percent of these individuals were born in Africa, of which the group born in the North African countries was the largest, representing five percent of the total population.

Another indication of the effect that migration has on the population of Paris can be seen in the naturalisation figures. In 1999, 7.3 percent of the population was naturalised (idem, p.20), which is slightly higher than the average in France. In other words, 21 percent of the Parisian population either is or was born a foreigner.
In their study on the integration of foreigners into Paris, Belbah and his colleagues revealed that the population of non-natives in the city distinguishes itself from the rest of the Parisian population in terms of both its social and demographic features and its activities: they are less well educated and are more likely to be unemployed (idem, p.20).

The presence of immigrants differs significantly from one district to another: the percentage of foreigners is above average in the wealthy districts (the 16th and the 8th), the city centre (2nd, 3rd, 10th and 11th) and the north-eastern districts (18th, 19th and 20th). In the bourgeois 16th and 8th, where many Europeans live, a significant proportion of the foreign population is wealthy and has high-ranking jobs, while the remainder are active in the low qualification services sector (housekeepers and cleaners). Conversely, in the working-class districts (the 18th, 19th and 20th districts), non-western immigrants form the majority of the foreign population (Pinçon & Pinçon-Charlot, 2004, pp.33-34).

e. Structural features of the region of Paris

While the territory of Paris is limited, that of the region of Paris (Ile-de-France) is composed of eight “départements” and 1,280 municipalities, including close to 11 million inhabitants and extending to rural areas. The suburban municipalities close to the city are comprised of three “départements” (Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val-de-Marne), and more than half of the region’s population lives either in Paris or in the suburban area nearby (see Table 3.3).

The geographic, demographic, social-economic, and political features of the region are extremely varied, and it makes no sense to talk of the “banlieues” as a coherent entity. As Kastoryano & Crowley (2001, p.174) write: “In no sense, therefore, are les banlieues a uniform social space” (italics in original).
Table 3.3: Population of Paris, the suburbs and the region of Paris in 1999 per thousand of inhabitants, and an estimation of the population in these areas for the year 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Paris</th>
<th>Close suburbs (&quot;petite couronne&quot;)</th>
<th>Distant suburbs (&quot;grande couronne&quot;)</th>
<th>Region (Ile-de-France)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,125.2</td>
<td>4,039.0</td>
<td>4,787.8</td>
<td>10,952.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimation as of 01/01/2005*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,153.6</td>
<td>4,254.6</td>
<td>4,991.1</td>
<td>11,399.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Provisional data

One of the characteristics of many of the cities surrounding Paris (although there are important exceptions) is an “urban void” (Cornuau et al., 1965, p.18), since traditional French centralisation is palpable in the Paris region. Many of the municipalities in the suburbs, especially in those near to the centre, are in fact an extension of the capital city and have turned into so-called dormitory towns. As Cornuau and his colleagues explained, by the 1960s, the urban functions of the conglomeration of the region were concentrated within Paris (idem, p.19).

From a social-economic point of view, some suburbs are wealthier than others (the western “banlieues” vs. the northern and eastern “banlieues”). This division more or less coincides with the presence of immigrants (mainly in the northern and eastern “banlieues”) and political preferences: the western suburbs usually vote for right-wing parties, while the eastern suburbs (and those close to Paris in particular) are known as the “red belt”, and are governed by left-wing parties.

The political context of the Paris suburbs has, for the past century, been strongly linked to the relationship between these areas and the capital city. Firstly, the political identity of the “banlieues” was constructed partly in opposition to Paris: the cities in the suburbs depended financially and administratively on the capital city, but, since the end of the 19th century, have opposed the supremacy of Paris in terms of making decisions about the region (Girault, 1995, p.251). Secondly, and due to the movement of a large number of workers from Paris to the suburbs (idem, p.252), as the left-wing parties started to lose ground in the city at the beginning of the 20th century, so they began to gain votes in the suburbs. By the end of the 1930s, the political profile of the different geographical areas of the suburbs had been stabilised for many years to come, in the form of opposition between the rural and residential areas of the “banlieues” in the west, which were largely conservative, and the “red belt” in the north and the east, with its population of workers and being the place where the communist and socialist parties were, and still are, successful (idem, p.256-257; Thema b, 2005).

The administrative reforms of 1964, which led to the fragmentation of the original “département” of the Seine into four distinct “départements”, has in some way strengthened the political and social-economic cleavages within the suburbs close to Paris. The municipalities of the north-east, with their large populations of workers, were grouped into the “département” of Seine-Saint-Denis and were “abandoned” to the
communist party (Girault, 1995, p.260). The cities in this area are described by Kastoryano & Crowley as “comparatively poor in a comparatively rich region” (2001, p.175), with high unemployment, a lot of social housing, and a comparatively large foreign population (19 percent; INSEE 1999). More recently, the socialist party has gained power at the cost of the communist party, while the extreme-right Front National has gradually also won votes (fewer in the suburbs close to Paris, more at the peripheries of the region; Thema b, 2005).

Processes of migration to Paris and its suburbs are linked to the attraction of the region in economic terms. Paris, and by extension the suburbs, first attracted people from the French countryside (at the end of the 19th century), neighbouring countries (Italy and Spain), other European countries and, finally, other parts of the world. These different groups arrived at different points in time and settled in different areas of the “banlieues.” So, during the 20th century, the Italians settled in the eastern “banlieues” (Blanc-Chaléard, 1995, p.100), the Spanish in the north and north east “banlieues” (Dreyfus-Armand, 1995, p.133), and the Portuguese across the entire region (Volovitch-Tavarès, 1995, p.196). Similarly, Algerian immigrants have settled in the north (Stora, 1995, p.167, 169), while the Sub-Saharan Africans moved into both the north-eastern part of the region and the north-eastern districts of the capital itself, namely the 18th, 19th and 20th districts (Poiret, 1995, p.205-206). Many of these historical patterns of settlement continue to be notable, but mobility within the region has reduced the effects of the concentration of certain groups of people in certain areas (Kastoryano & Crowley 2001, p.174).

If one looks at more recent figures concerning the country of birth of the inhabitants of the Paris region, it appears that in 1999, 15 percent of them were born outside France (14 percent in 1990, see Table 3.4). Among them is a large group of people who were born in other European nations, as well as individuals who were born in African countries.

Table 3.4: Those born abroad but living in the Paris region (Ile-de-France) in 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Absolute figures</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>568,049</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>705,592</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>466,608</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other African countries</td>
<td>238,984</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>269,644</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas/South Sea Islands</td>
<td>67,723</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total born abroad</td>
<td>1,611,008</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>10,952,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f. Political culture and the inclusion of minorities

Some aspects of the political culture, such as political careers in general, the openness of the parties, the level of democratisation, and the codes and norms of militancy, are important issues to consider if we want to understand the careers of ethnic minority politicians in Paris. The French academic literature contains several studies of the country's political culture (Duyvendak, 1994; Offerlé, 2004; Haegel, 2007) but these are either concerned with the national organisation of specific parties, or particular local settings (but not Paris).

The study by Haegel (1984) of the RPR elites offers some insight into the Parisian careers of those at the top of Chirac's Gaullist party during the 1980s. More than the other parties at that time, the RPR welcomed women and young politicians (Haegel, 1984, p.8, p.12). Nevertheless, in terms of education and profession, the RPR councillors were a relatively homogeneous group (idem, p.13). Haegel distinguished two groups among the RPR elite: the first was the “barons”, who had held many electoral roles and had had long political careers. This group held power, although this was (partially) restricted by the growing control of Chirac of the Parisian right (idem, pp.20-21). The pretenders, on the other hand, were younger, had no Parisian roots, and did not have local mandates; they built their careers mainly within the party, holding leading positions in it (idem, p.30-32).

The French right-wing movements and parties are traditionally very hierarchical, and the designation of candidates and party lists for elections does not involve consulting the party members. At the end of the 1990s, however, a change occurred, since internal positions became the subject of party member designation (Haegel et al., 2003, p.177-78). Yet, in both the RPR and the UDF, the continuation of certain practices, like the far-reaching decision-making power of the leader and the deference of party members to the party “notables”, do restrain democratic influxes (idem, p.181). Indeed, the designation of candidates and party officials in the current, main right-wing party, the UMP (founded after the 2002 presidential elections), reflects the practices of its predecessors. The decisions about candidates and lists for municipal elections in cities with more than 30,000 inhabitants are made by the party's highest national body on the basis of a proposal of the national nomination committee, which first consults party members belonging to the local branch (UMP, 2008).

In contrast, the process of designation of candidates by the Parti Socialiste (PS), the major left-wing party, does involve a vote by the party members on the issue of candidate lists (as a whole, not on each candidate). However, when it comes to important roles (like that of the mayor of big cities), any decision needs to be validated by the party's national council (party statutes of the Parti Socialiste, 2006, article 9.1). Interviewees have explained how the choice of candidates for the municipal elections was made by the executive commission of the section (the local branch of the party, usually at the level of the municipality or city district) on the basis of a difficult balance between the representation of the different party factions, the “parité” obligations and the inclusion of both incumbents and new people. Despite the formal role of the sections, the mayor – or candidate mayor – appears to have a great deal of influence on the choice of candidates on the lists of the different districts. For the 2008 elections, the mayor of Paris decided

that half of the 20 district list leaders should be women and insisted that so-called “civil society candidates” should also be included.\textsuperscript{16}

Little is known about the workings of the Parisian PS party. One detail did, however, emerge from the interviews: although a third of party members occupy an elected position, this share is much less in Paris. The city was regarded as a battlefield for the socialists in the past, and the Parisian socialist party has delivered only a few national party leaders (including former Prime Minister, Jospin). Delanoë was not a well-known politician on the national stage when he was elected mayor of Paris in 2001, but he established himself as the main left-wing candidate for the position because he had been the leader of the socialist group in the Conseil de Paris (Boy & Chiche, 2002, p.31).

The PS appears to have played a crucial role in the inclusion of ethnic minorities in French politics more generally, although it is also much criticised for its lack of “real” inclusion. When looking at the political mobilisation of immigrants of North-African origin, Leveau explains why the PS has been an obvious interlocutor: firstly, because the communist party did not welcome this group; secondly, because François Mitterrand (the socialist president elected in 1981) made a number of promises to immigrants (regarding the enfranchisement of foreigners in particular); and finally, because the socialist government opened up the right of association to foreigners and increased the available subsidies, both of which enhanced the mobilisation of North-African immigrants (Leveau, 1989, pp.255-56).

Two other parties are important political actors when it comes to the inclusion of ethnic minorities in Paris and the region, but for different reasons. Since having gained many votes in the city at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, the Green party (les Verts) has proved to be particularly open to ethnic minority politicians (as will be seen in the next chapter). This party is known for its democratic culture: every decision involves lengthy discussions and a vote by party members (Faucher-King, 2007). How the Parisian branch of the party works is not documented, although the number of party members in the Parisian region greatly exceeds that of the party’s other branches (idem, p.119). What further characterises the Green party is the profile of its members: almost 60 percent of them have a higher education qualification (idem, p.123).

The other important, partisan actor here is the communist party (PCF), since it holds power in many municipalities of the “département” of Seine-Saint-Denis, where there are high concentrations of immigrants. The attitude of the PCF towards this group has been ambivalent; although these immigrants were predominantly (unskilled) workers, thus belonging to the working-class preserve of the party, the PCF has not welcomed this population, either in terms of its (specific) interests, or within the party organisation (Masclet, 2006, p.29 ff; Leveau, 1989, p.251).

In his study of how the communist party dealt with immigrants in a municipality of Seine-Saint-Denis, Masclet argues that the PCF’s municipal leaders have always had great difficulty with the increasing migrant population in the city, because the presence of immigrants, and the resulting socio-economic problems, hindered the party’s political ambitions: the creation of a ‘real’ urban entity out of a proletarian tenement (Masclet, 2006, p.30). Masclet also highlights that the communist party’s leaders only very reluctantly – and very late in the day– included ethnic minorities on their party lists, while

\textsuperscript{16.} Interview with Claude Dargent, 13/06/2008.
the socialist party and the greens, in a minority position, have been much more open (idem, p.253 ff, p.290).

Little is known about the political participation of ethnic minorities in the municipalities of the Paris region, but the studies that have focused on the issue (usually concerning one specific group of immigrants in a particular area) tend to conclude that immigrants conform to the political dominance of the municipality. In her work on the inclusion of Italian immigrants in two very different municipalities of the “banlieues”, Blanc-Chaléard explains that in the communist area, Montreuil-sous-Bois, the group joined the communist party, while in the right-wing Nogent-sur-Marne, this community strongly opposed communism and refrained from overt political engagement (Blanc-Chaléard, 1995, p.128). Likewise, Kelfaoui, who studied the political participation of North-Africans in Saint-Denis, concluded that voting patterns were very similar to those of the rest of the population in that city, with similar variations in turnout levels and choices of parties (Kelfaoui, 1995, p.377).

A recent study by Geisser and Soum (2008) focuses on the practice behind the new trend of diversity (‘diversité’), which all French political parties seem to be so supportive of. The inclusion of ethnic minorities (for internal or elected positions) is not new for the Parti Socialiste and the Green party, which dealt with the issue during the 1980s and 1990s (Geisser & Soum, 2008, p.31, p.33). However, both parties had to face the disillusionment of their (former) party members (idem, p.38). In contrast, the right-wing parties were not particularly open to ethnic minorities during the 1980s and 1990s, whether in their discourse or the practice of including this group in their ranks (idem, p.45). However, they do now appear to provide better opportunities for immigrants. Nevertheless, the figures presented by the authors for the number of ethnic minority party members in the highest national body of each party reveal that the Parti Socialiste and the greens have many more ethnic minority party representatives (respectively 10 and seven percent) than the right-wing party, UMP (one percent; idem, p.110). When it comes to candidates for elected positions, all of the parties have a tendency, when election campaigns approach, to promote those who are newcomers in every sense, thereby discarding ethnic minority politicians who have been party members for a longer period of time (idem, p.54).

The political context of Paris and the Paris region thus appears to be characterised by hierarchical structures and the concentration of power, deriving from both the mode of elections and some elements of the political culture. The former element guarantees that there is very strong power in the hands of the mayor and a top-down power structure, with the mayor at the top and the opposition at the bottom. The “cumul des mandats” reinforces the concentration of power in the hands of certain representatives. From the point of view of the conception of representation, it is important to note that the electoral system entails a geographic representation in Paris. On the other hand, the French constitution of 1958 is clear about the fact that sovereignty cannot be divided or attributed to a group of people, or even to parties (la Constitution du 4 Octobre 1958, art.3, art.4). Group interest representation is thus incompatible with the dominant conception of representation and, a fortiori, ethnic group representation. Despite the importance of the presence of immigrants in the capital city and its region, the relatively closed party systems (through the dominance of certain parties in certain territories) and the political culture, highlight the lack of interest that parties, especially those on the
right, have in the political integration of minorities. The exclusion of foreigners from the political process is one of several factors that restrain, rather than facilitate, the access of newcomers to the political arena.

III. Comparing Amsterdam and Paris

The features of the contexts presented in the previous two sections highlight the numerous differences that are summarised in Table 3.5. The two countries’ contexts do, however, share some elements. First of all, Amsterdam and Paris are both the capital cities of liberal Western countries. They share basic democratic features (scoring towards the top for political rights by the standards of the Freedom House indices, with high scores also being assigned for civil liberties, see LeDuc et al., 2002, p.7), as well as a colonial past and comparable experiences of the mass immigration of guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by their families later on. Moreover, despite important differences in their electoral systems, to which I will turn below, it is important to note some similarities: in both countries there are party list elections, indirect elections of the executive, and (in principle) a separation of the executive and legislative power. Finally, but importantly, ethnicity and migration do not play a role in the political process: these factors do not act as an impediment or a prerequisite for participation in the political system. In this, both France and the Netherlands differ from, for example, New Zealand, where seats are reserved in the parliament for Maoris to compensate for the fact that this minority is under-represented in the political and electoral system (Farrell, 2001, p.168). No such approach is taken for ethnic minorities in France or the Netherlands. Nevertheless, in France foreigners are excluded from the political process because nationality and citizenship are intimately intertwined. So, in order to vote and/or be elected, one must have French nationality (an exception is however made for EU-citizens in local and European elections). In the Netherlands, on the other hand, non-nationals have been granted local political rights since 1985. France and the Netherlands thus differ in terms of the political rights granted to foreigners, which is an issue that is not strictly correlated with ethnicity, but is related to it.

From a bird’s-eye view, the two contexts that I have compared share some characteristics, but Amsterdam and Paris – or the Netherlands and France – can only be seen as relatively similar political contexts, in terms of the issue of the political participation of ethnic minorities, when compared to a totally different country or city. Within the framework of my study, the contexts of Amsterdam and (the region of) Paris are, first and foremost, very different from one another. Firstly, their size makes them utterly dissimilar. Amsterdam has almost 750,000 inhabitants, while Paris has over two million and is at the heart of a conglomeration of eleven million people. Secondly, although Paris and Amsterdam are both capital cities, Amsterdam is not the seat of the government, and the local political elite is largely disconnected from its national counterpart. Indeed, France is often promoted as an example of a strongly centralised country: the status of Paris is that of the centre of all political power, and the status of the “banlieues” is highly linked thereto. The proximity of the national political arena obviously has an impact on the local political processes in Paris, which in turn influence political developments in the region.
### Table 3.5: Structural features of Amsterdam and Paris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Paris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>747,290 inhabitants</td>
<td>2,125,246 inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electoral system</strong></td>
<td>Pure proportionality</td>
<td>Two-round majority vote with limited proportionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>List system</td>
<td>Closed list system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preferential voting</td>
<td>Parity (half of all candidates must be women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enfranchisement</strong></td>
<td>Automatic</td>
<td>Inscription on electoral rolls is necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enfranchisement of foreigners since 1985</td>
<td>Only nationals have political rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position of executive</strong></td>
<td>Appointed mayor</td>
<td>Elected executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appointed deputy mayors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position of the council</strong></td>
<td>Legislative body (dualism)</td>
<td>Legislative body (in practice: council follows the executive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of local mandate</strong></td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of seats</strong></td>
<td>Municipal council: 45</td>
<td>Conseil de Paris: 163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All district councils: 322 (until 2009)</td>
<td>All district councils: 516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indemnity</strong></td>
<td>• Municipal councillors: €2000/month</td>
<td>• Parisian mayor: €5000/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• District councillors: €980/month</td>
<td>• Deputy mayors and district mayors: €2800/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• District deputy mayors and Conseil de Paris: €1500/month (No indemnity for district councillors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political system</strong></td>
<td>Stability: one, city-wide dominant party (social-democrats)</td>
<td>Stability: social-democrats in charge since 2001 (after 100 years of right-wing domination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change: changing equilibrium between the most important parties; changing coalitions</td>
<td>Change: division of the right; division of the city (left and right-wing districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of migration</strong></td>
<td>Figures for first and second generation:</td>
<td>Figures for foreign-born:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 35% of population is of non-Western origin</td>
<td>• 18% is foreign-born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 88% of population has Dutch nationality</td>
<td>• 5% is born in a North-African country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>86% of population has French nationality</td>
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<td><strong>Recruitment and openness of political system</strong></td>
<td>Selection of candidate is made by committees within parties Final decision is made by party members</td>
<td>Opaque procedures of selection. Members have a large say on paper, but in practice party leaders have most of the decision-making power</td>
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<td>Explicit will of most parties to include ethnic minorities (and women)</td>
<td>Obligation to include women. Varying willingness to include ethnic minorities</td>
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<td><strong>Dominant conception of representation</strong></td>
<td>Councillors represent the entire city</td>
<td>Indivisible sovereignty. However, members of the Conseil de Paris are district representatives</td>
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Thirdly, the defining features of the electoral systems are such that very different political systems emerge in each context. While the municipal electoral system is based on proportionality in the Netherlands, the French municipal councils are elected via a majority-runoff system (with a small element of proportionality) with closed lists. There is still an ongoing debate among scholars about the exact effect of electoral systems on party systems and representation, but it appears that those utilising proportionality ensure better representation in terms of gender and social background (Farrell, 2001, pp.165-166). Furthermore, the multi-party system, along with the need to build coalitions in Dutch municipalities, creates party systems and political cultures that differ from those in French municipalities, where the electoral system ensures strong majorities and a powerful position for mayors. Accordingly, while Paris and Amsterdam have known dominant parties (the Gaullist RPR between 1977 and 2001 in Paris, the social-democratic PvdA since 1953 in Amsterdam), the kind of dominance that is exercised is very different. Furthermore, the number of parties affects the opportunities for immigrants and ethnic minorities to engage in a party (as it does for all those who want to take part in politics), and may engender a competition between ethnic minority politicians for eligible positions.

Another important difference that is produced by the electoral system is the opportunity to cast a preferential vote in the Netherlands, whereby councillors can have a strong individual link to (part of) the electorate. Finally, in the Netherlands, non-nationals can vote in local elections, while this is impossible in France (with the exception of EU-citizens). I have demonstrated above that the effect of the enfranchisement of foreigners in Amsterdam should not be overestimated, but this political right to participate has practical and symbolic consequences, whereas non-nationals are excluded from the political process in France, which is also important in symbolic terms.

Accordingly, despite some differences, there is common ground when we look at the dominant conceptions of representation in both contexts: the prevailing understanding of representation is one in which the entire population is represented and group interest representation is not approved. Ethnic group representation seems to be out of place in both cases. So, now that each structure has been described in terms of its relevant features, I will now turn to the practices of ethnic minority representatives (their careers and their discourses), which can be observed within each context.