

Ethnic Minorities, Citizenship and Nationality:
A case study for a comparative approach
between France and Britain

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Fieldwork

This research is based on several months of fieldwork in Spitalfields in 1987 and 1988. This fieldwork was completed by a two months stay in Bangladesh in January and February 1989, especially in the area of Sylhet.

Abstract

This paper explores the hypothesis that a comparative approach between France and Britain can allow for a better understanding of identification processes at work in inter-ethnic relations, with particular emphasis placed on the issue of nationality and citizenship.

Social and political involvements of and a propos ethnic minorities in France have moved in the last few years from anti-racist struggles to compaigns dealing with nationality and citizenship. This evolution is part of a wider questioning of the whole framework of the nation-state and of its essential references and gives birth to new processes of identification induced, among other things, by the settlement of ethnic minorities.

A close look at a British case can provide relevant insights to help understand these processes, especially as legislation and practices on citizenship and nationality are very different in these two countries.

Inter ethnic relations and the various representation and identification modes to which they give birth are studied in a neighbourhood of London, Spitalfields, where an important Bangladeshi population lives.

Different references and boundary markers are used by the inhabitants to define themselves and the others. Some of them are based on ethnicity, but class identification also plays an essential part. As for the Bangladeshis, they can use their country of origin as a supplementary framework of social and political references.

Through this study it is the issue of self and/or others' definitions of 'belonging', related to the notions of citizenship and nationality, which is raised, and a comparative approach questioning a British situation from a French perspective highlights relevant similitudes and/or differences as to the organisation of inter-ethnic relations in very different settings.

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INTRODUCTION

In March 1989 local elections were held in France. Amongst the topics journalists were eager to seize upon, one was of particular significance: the arrival for the first time on the voting scene of large numbers of young people of non-French background. This emergence on the political scene is not an unexpected one. For the last few years, youth movements all over the country had raised the issue of equality of rights between French nationals and 'immigrants'. What made the 1989 local elections so significant was that almost all the political parties competed to attract these young people who had opted for French nationality and had, therefore, become potential voters.¹ This provided a stark contrast with the last local elections held in 1983 during which the presence of 'immigrants' and their children was brandished as a threat by the National Front. Within six years, this population had changed from a threat to French 'national identity' to a new reservoir of votes which had to be taken into account, even if without enthusiasm.²

This change is only one of many taking place in France in the social and political fields and is linked to the long-term presence of ethnic minorities.

Elections are times during which the issue of full citizenship, including the right to vote for non-French settlers, is particularly discussed; but, more importantly, what is questioned is the very meaning of the word 'citizen'. It is acknowledged that voting is an essential part of citizenship, but at the same time citizenship cannot be reduced to only this meaning. It is in this context that the idea of a 'new' citizenship arises. First of all, it implies that active participation in society should be recognised and supported without consideration of nationality. Secondly, it carries the notion that to be a citizen is not only to vote every 4 or 7 years, but also to have an everyday involvement in political parties and, perhaps especially, in civil society (i.e. community life, social relationships and so on).³

In this sense, the calls for a new citizenship are not only demands for a say for 'non indigenous' people, but also a challenge to French people to take part in a new definition of society at large. They, too, would have to decide upon their role as citizens, apart from their registration on the electoral roll. The debates about this new citizenship, therefore, call for a collective redefinition of social and political relationships in a situation where society is composed of people from different origins, whether this is defined as multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, or some other term is used.

The first point I want to argue in this paper is that France is today confronted with a deep crisis concerning notions of nation and state, and that redefinitions of these are needed. This crisis can be examined through the way in which nationality and citizenship are perceived and practised.

One way of approaching these perceptions and practices is through the route of inter-ethnic relationships; indeed if the long-term presence of ethnic minorities did not provoke this crisis by itself, by adding new terms of debates to the existing ones, it helped to deepen it and to force onto public consciousness the necessity of finding new frameworks.

The second point is that in order to understand better the issues at stake, it is relevant to look at a country which, even though confronted with similar questions, has a very different way of trying to tackle them.

Britain provides such an example because, unlike France Britain has always given voting rights to migrants from her ex-colonies. The British situation is thus different, in the sense that the issue of the access of ethnic minorities to a large legal citizenship is not discussed as it is in France now. But are not

these two countries confronted with similar tensions and questionings: what defines belonging to a nation? Is a technical citizenship enough for ethnic minorities to be recognised as fully belonging to the nation? The British situation seems to be proof of the contrary since ethnic minorities still suffer from racism and are somehow seen, as I will suggest later on, as being non-British.

Through the case study of inter-ethnic relations in an inner-city area of London, I will question such issues as identification processes, the building of social boundaries, practices of citizenship and perceptions of who belongs to different categories, such as class, nation and ethnic minority.

In conclusion I will point out the ways in which the study of a British case can prove to be an interesting approach to looking at the French situation.

CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY

In the last few years, social and political involvement of and ...-propos ethnic minorities in France has progressively moved from purely anti-racist struggles to campaigns dealing with nationality and citizenship. This process cannot be understood on its own and has to be placed in the wider framework of a general crisis of the idea of nation-state and of the social and political organisation produced by it.

Indeed, today's debates around such issues as citizenship and nationality have a specific dimension. Not only does the very presence of ethnic minorities, who intend to stay, force French society to examine itself, but also this presence is combined with an ideological crisis, in which all the dependable references appear to fail and where the old terms of identification are undergoing a deep crisis of confidence.

This redefinition process might be particularly pervasive in France, where the definition of the nation-state has been essential in the formation of political thought. By their will to transform notions of citizenship and nationality, different social and political actors are highlighting the crisis of different structures in French society and pointing towards the need for transformations.

Some of these structures have played a central part in the ideology of the nation cherished by the French state; an ideology for which assimilation into the Republic, one and indivisible, was essential.

The education system, for example, is one such structure. The French conception of a free, compulsory, levelling and secular education has been instrumental in the framing of policies of unification of and assimilation into the Republic. Schools were the main instrument through which children originating from different parts of the country, and now from different countries, became French through the radical negation of regional cultures and languages, and through the ideology of equal opportunity for social promotion through education, whatever the class origin.

This ideology, which was fundamental, is today falling apart, confronted as it is by alarming scholastic under-achievement, which raises questions about the effectiveness of the educational system in the present situation of high unemployment.

Schools are not the only institution in crisis. Trade unions underwent a similar process. In the fifties, they too used to play a part, even if a controversial one, in the integration of immigrant workers into the French social and political system.⁴ Here again, assimilation into the nation through class organisations is not working any more.

One of the latest developments in this weakening of long-held principles of the French nation is the question of religion. France is a secular state, and separation between Church and State was apparently something which could not be called into question. But contrary to this principle, some people argue that Islam is incompatible with French society; thus for them, earlier immigrants such as the Spanish, the Portuguese or the Polish were quickly 'assimilated' because they were Catholic, whereas Muslim populations would have more difficulty assimilating because Islam plays an integral part in their lives. At the same time, some Muslims are now organising themselves to cater for their educational and religious needs, asking support from the State, and thus throwing a new light on the relationships between secular and religious structures and pointing out the actual discrepancies between discourse and practice.

Thus the questioning of old frameworks built since the 19th century seems to be one of the defining characteristics at the end of the century. It seems

necessary to analyse this period ending, of expanding colonial empires, liberation wars and independence, and to re-evaluate it by taking into account all of its consequences. Concerning the notion of Nation, the settlement in Western European societies of people from what used to be colonies cannot be underestimated.

It raises the question on the one hand as to the kind of relationships which are built between groups of different origins, with possibly different national references in a single national framework, and on the other hand as to the effects of the existence of these groups on the wider political scene.

It is from this point of view that a comparative approach to these issues can prove relevant. Indeed the above-mentioned crisis is not taking place only in France. With differences in degree and formulation, it seems the whole of Western Europe is today confronted with the same kind of debates. One obvious reason is that many West European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, have immigrant workers settled in their midst, and each of them has to draw up policies concerning these populations and the place and role ascribed to them.

Until now most of the comparisons among these different countries have been made either with reference to immigrant associations throughout Europe⁵ or immigration rules, civil rights or equal opportunity policies.

Debates on nationality have mainly been concerned with the comparison of the respective nationality laws, i.e. rules for access to nationality. Only very recently have the different European policies concerning access to civil rights been examined. Thus the conference organised in December 1988 by SOS Racisme in Paris⁶ gathered youth from different countries concerned with these issues. But one absence was striking: that of young people from Britain.

This absence is all the more disappointing considering that the granting of voting rights to immigrants, i.e. non-French nationals, at least at local elections, is very often felt to be one of the best possible remedies against racism and discriminations in France:

Look at my sister, says Louiza. She was born in France before 1962. She's never been to Algeria. She is not French, so she cannot vote. This is unjust. My parents too settled in France. If they could vote, they would have more consideration shown to them.⁷

Considering this widely-held conception, it should have seemed relevant to look carefully at a situation where such rights not only exist, but have now been exercised for years: the British one.

Even more surprisingly, this Conference was not the only instance in which the specific situation of Britain was largely unconsidered:

The granting of the right to vote to foreigners at 'all elections' is an absurdity: taking into account today's legislation and mentalities, this proposal has no chance of being considered. However, one can discuss a local citizenship, not linked to nationality, which several European countries have already granted: Sweden (since 1975), Norway (since 1978), Denmark (since 1981) and the Netherlands (since 1985).⁸

If Sweden and the Netherlands are very often mentioned as being in the European vanguard for their policies of equal rights for immigrants, Britain is seldom mentioned except when riots shake inner-cities; and even then Britain is more often compared to the U.S.A. than seen as a country where 'immigrants' can enjoy full citizenship rights under certain conditions.

This is not to say that no research at all has been carried out in France about aspects of nationality in Britain. For example, Kristin Couper has looked at the British legislation on nationality and its effects on social organisation in Britain.⁹ But most of the time, Britain is not considered specifically on these issues, but as one more example of policies towards ethnic minorities, without really taking into account the fact that Commonwealth Citizens/British Subjects enjoy civil rights.

Yet I think many reasons exist which could make Britain a relevant case for a comparative study with France on the issue of ethnic minorities, citizenship and nationality.

First of all, considering the emphasis put on civil rights today in France, can Britain not provide an illuminating example of the shortcomings of such an objective, given the clear inequalities between groups and/or individuals who are supposed to have equal rights? Likewise, can one find any correlations between citizenship rights and the actual modes of organisation of the relationships between dominant group(s) and ethnic minorities? What is the part played by these rights? How are they used by ethnic minorities as well as by the dominant group(s)? What is their relative position when compared with other identification processes such as ethnicity or class?

The choice of Britain for a comparison with France seems all the more able to provide interesting insights since an essential similarity exists between these two countries. Both France and Britain have a colonial past. They are the only two European countries to have built such considerable empires overseas¹⁰ and for which those empires played a very important role for their societies at large, reaching all parts of the population and giving birth to specific ideologies and policies. Relationships in the mother-countries between indigenous populations and minorities originating from what used to be colonies are still very much shaped by the colonial past.

The colonial history of both France and Britain was essential to their emergence as powerful nations. The ending of this period could only have deep repercussions on definitions of the nation and of people's sense of belonging. The relevance of it in today's political debates has been shown recently in Britain, when Mrs Thatcher's electoral slogan was 'Put the Great back into Britain'. The Falklands War was also pointed out as a largely propagandist exercise, an attempt to re-unite Britain behind the banner of its renewed grandeur.

If this past is broadly-speaking similar, the French and British conceptions of colonial rule, and therefore the way their empires ended, have been very dissimilar. This shaped, on the one hand, immigration rules and the legal rights available to ethnic minorities, and on the other hand, the way relationships were to be built with them.

The fact that ethnic minorities from the Commonwealth enjoy civil rights in Britain is due directly to the existence of the category of 'British subject'. It is, therefore, not the status of 'British national' which gives those rights, and the role of British political history as well as the conceptualisation of the relationships between the mother-country and the Empire are crucial.

The French situation is the opposite. In spite of some feeble attempts to integrate colonies into the mainstream political system, colonies and their inhabitants always had a second-class status as far as citizenship was concerned. The way the independence processes took place only emphasized this tendency. The Algerian Liberation war was a crucial landmark in France in this respect. In the view of the French State, since Algerians wanted to be independent, they would have to take upon themselves the consequences of it, even in France. They would be immigrants there and treated as such, as aliens

without any rights.¹¹ Either people were entering the 'one and indivisible Republic', or they kept themselves outside of it and were not even second-class citizens, but not citizens at all. They were outsiders. Behind its 'technical' meaning, the term 'immigrant' gained its contemporary political meaning in this context and implies exclusion.

These dissimilarities also gave birth to different systems of representation, and therefore to the use of different words to designate people.

Before the 1962 Immigration Law, immigrants from the Commonwealth had a right of entry to Britain. Under different pressures, which I will not recall here, successive immigration laws were passed from 1962 onwards, to allow for the control of black immigration without putting into question the status of the Commonwealth Citizen/British Subject. This policy, quite rightly labelled racist, has been one of the means of the racialisation of the debate about immigration and ethnic minorities in Britain, even if other factors played a part in this process.

The combination of this racialisation with a situation where everyone, be they British or Commonwealth citizens, had equal rights, at least legally, played an important part in the development of the use of such terms as 'black' and 'white' to designate people. The British situation was not one in which the boundary between 'us' (the indigenous) and 'them' (immigrants and/or ethnic minorities) could be drawn along nationality, and 'black' and 'white' were ready terms to be used.¹²

Again this was not the case in France. The line was clearly drawn between those who were French nationals and had rights, and those who were not and had no rights. This might be one of the reasons why the terminology used is not a racially connotated one, but one in terms of 'French' and 'immigrants'.¹³ This terminology is so deeply rooted in discourse that it is still used now, even though it is no longer suitable to describe the situation.

But this persistence is also significant of something other than sheer language habits. Terminology is not an independent a-historical variable, but also a way of making sense of a situation.

Thus, to keep the French/immigrant terminology is also a way of denying another place to ethnic minorities in France than the one historically ascribed to them; likewise, the use of black/white in Britain, beyond being a racially connotated terminology, is also for many a way of defining who belongs to the nation and who does not. And this was partly the meaning of the new British Nationality Law passed in 1981. Its aims were to define criteria more clearly for access to British citizenship, i.e. to limit it to people with 'close connections with Britain'. During the discussion of these changes in the law, some politicians even mentioned the possibility of restricting civil rights to those newly defined British citizens. Here again, one is confronted with attempts at redefining what it means to belong to a nation, and reintroducing a certain 'meaning' in a worn-out idea.

I have detailed the French and British situations because it seems necessary to show how similar processes can be at work in dissimilar situations. Whereas race and ethnic relations and citizenship rights have followed very different paths or processes in these two countries, the points at stake today seem to be the same: to redefine what it means to belong to the nation, and how this nation itself has to be adapted to the coming century.

I have been arguing that the long-term presence of ethnic minorities highlights a deep-rooted crisis of the nation-state in European countries, at least in France and Britain, and that this can be analysed through a comparative approach between France and Britain, using what I call the looking-glass effect.

My knowledge of the French situation, based on on-going research,¹⁴ is used to point out what seems to be either similar or different in a British situation, to delineate what is unique to Britain and what could be more universal, to point out what the effects are of a given social and political setting on inter-ethnic relationships, and to assess whether apparently similar processes are really so and whether they do have the same causes.

I am, therefore, not in a position to compare two types of fieldwork as such, but am working with two sets of social and political relationships, the British one being the basis for collecting data, and the French one acting more as a background, a mirror held to reflect those two contrasting images.

Choice of Fieldwork: Spitalfields

My interest in the East End of London stems from its reputation as a working-class stronghold, with its ambiguities of resistance to fascism and of more or less chronic anti-semitism and racism. Considering the proposed research topics, when I had to choose a place for fieldwork, my first reaction was to see whether Tower Hamlets could offer interesting features. A pre-Ph.D work had allowed me to stay for a few weeks in Spitalfields (E1) and to realise its potentialities.¹⁵

The presence of ethnic minorities and/or immigrants in the East End of London is a historical feature. Because of the opportunities provided by the closeness of the London Docks, Spitalfields was first inhabited by Huguenots fleeing persecution in France, then by strong Jewish and Irish communities, and now by Bangladeshis.

Tower Hamlets was heavily bombed during the Second World War, thus housing is mostly composed of decaying Georgian houses and Council estates built after the war or in the seventies. Despite important job losses due to the progressive closing down of industries such as tea factories or breweries, the area still contains quite a lot of workshop activity, mainly composed of small units involved in the tailoring and clothing industry. Thus Spitalfields in no way presents the features of a dormitory area.

A poor area, with its run down housing, its lack of amenities and services such as schools, playgrounds, street-cleaning, etc, Spitalfields has nonetheless fallen prey to developers.

Its privileged situation, a stones-throw from the City and next to the Docklands area, could make it, once this 'pocket of poverty' is destroyed, an ideal site for financial and service companies.

Considering my hypothesis, all these features combine to make Spitalfields a particularly suitable area for fieldwork. It is a popular area, where different ethnic groups have been or are still living, thus providing different examples of the use of ethnicity as a relevant marker, and where class identification is still strong, as is identification to the neighbourhood. Being 'local' is an essential feature of social relationships and definitions.¹⁶

The large Bangladeshi population and the involvement of many of its members in social and political activities, be it in 'ethnic' associations or political parties and so on, is also shaping a variety of attitudes from the different actors involved locally.

Last but not least, the very strong and living links many Bangladeshis have maintained with Bangladesh also provide interesting insights as to the way a reference to a double national sphere can be used.

I will first look at the views of white residents of both Bangladeshis and their relationships to them. I will examine how they perceive their situation in Spitalfields, how they make sense of it, and ways in which the whites' representations of Bangladeshis can be understood as the construction of a category ascribing to Bangladeshis the negative aspects of the white residents' own lives.

Then I will look at another characteristic of Spitalfields which plays an essential part in the forms taken by inter-ethnic relationships: the relationship to the Jewish population. The introduction of this third term of reference can allow for a better understanding of the relationships between the two main groups living in Spitalfields, particularly so as the history of Jewish settlement seems to be undergoing a process of mythification, changing a conflictual past to a lost golden age.

The third important point to be looked at is the redevelopment problem. Through examination of the discourses and practices on this issue, I will try to show how belonging to the neighbourhood is defined when its inhabitants are confronted with a threat from 'outsiders'. This approach should allow for another important clarification: in the complex set of relationships in Spitalfields, which ones can be defined as ethnic relations, and which ones as ethnicised relations, i.e. where the point at stake is not whether the two sides of the relationships are two ethnic groups, but how and when ethnicity is used as a relevant marker.

I will then take a closer look at the Bangladeshi population itself, the views its members have of the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, the way they organise; in doing so, the essential part played by the existence of another sphere of references, Bangladesh, will be carefully looked at.

These four sections will allow for the highlighting of the different identification processes at work in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood. This attempt to define them will then enable me to point out the specific relevance of the British situation, i.e. the influence of a legal equality of rights on the building of inter-ethnic relationships, the part played by ideas of belonging in relation to different national frameworks, etc.

1. The attitudes of whites to the Bangladeshis and the neighbourhood

Space occupation in Spitalfields is characterised by a very visible presence of the Bangladeshis. The main street, Brick Lane, is almost entirely composed of 'ethnic shops':¹⁷ groceries, fruit and vegetables, saris and Indian video shops, catering for the needs of the Bangladeshi population. Most of the other shops are wholesale shops for the leather and clothing industry, now mostly owned by Asians.¹⁸ The general atmosphere can thus be said to be mostly Bangladeshi, with a large amount of traffic caused by the Mosque and the display of Bangla-written posters advertising political or cultural events.

Seen from outside, Spitalfields is often described if not as a ghetto, at least as a Bengali-only area. Yet this is not the case. Half the population of the neighbourhood is not Bangladeshi, and if some estates (generally the worst ones) are inhabited almost exclusively by Bangladeshi families, the reverse can be said of other estates, where Bangladeshis are seldom seen.

One is, therefore, confronted with a situation where the partial invisibility of whites is not due to an overwhelmingly Bangladeshi population, but to a differentiated use of space. Different needs and/or ways of life make for this differentiation. Thus white residents do not shop on Brick Lane, but further away in supermarkets in Bethnal Green or Shoreditch; most white children do not attend schools in Spitalfields itself. They either attend private schools, or public ones outside Spitalfields.

This quite separated use of space can be explained both by 'objective' reasons, imposed upon the inhabitants, and 'subjective' choices or strategies.

As far as housing is concerned, the policy of Tower Hamlets Council is to offer the more desirable estates¹⁹ mostly to whites and more generally to reproduce separate housing allocations. The argument that this is in response to tenants demands is an ambiguous one. Whether it is a free and voluntary choice for a Bangladeshi family to refuse rehousing outside the E1 postal area, or the direct effect of racist attacks and attitudes is difficult to decide. Both elements certainly play a part, Spitalfields (E1) acting as a place where one is relatively protected, as well as a convenient area where shops and services catering for one's needs are easily available.

The way white residents describe the area and their place in it provides an interesting example of an ideological construct.

The much less visible presence of white residents is accounted for in their own words by a feeling of 'having become a minority':

A neighbour of mine came up to see a Councillor and she's never been in this centre (the local community centre), she came up and said: 'oh, I didn't know you had an Indian restaurant here'. I said: 'No, that's the canteen'. But because of the Bengali cook, and the majority of people within the canteen was Bengali people, that's their first impression.

White people have finally accepted they were outnumbered, they have become a minority and will stay one.

The main issues around which this feeling is expressed are, on the one hand housing and education, and on the other hand, access to and employment in social services.

As I said the only thing I got against them (Asians), to me personally they seem to get all the houses and all the flats, and I'd like my son and my daughter to have one.

it's not only the houses, I mean you're not getting jobs nowhere, they specifically ask for Bangladeshi people ... so I think it is quite a threat to not only the community but professional people as well, they obviously think 'Well, if I'm not Asian, if I don't speak the language, there is no way I'm gonna get the job.

Both these representations are not unique to Spitalfields; it has been repeatedly noticed that in situations of competition over scarce resources, ethnic minorities are often perceived as being privileged and equal opportunity policies are very often criticised.

What is interesting is some of the white respondents' use of the very term of 'minority' to define themselves.

White residents very often mention their own responsibility for that state of affairs. In their view, it is also because they have lost old reflexes of solidarity and support that they cannot effectively cope any more with the difficulties they are confronted with in housing, employment and so on.

On several occasions, the ability of Bangladeshis to get together, either for personal aims or collective action to better their conditions, was balanced against the inability of whites and even their unwillingness to do so:

They (Bangladeshis) put their money together, they can do a lot. But we're all jealous of one another, because the majority of white people don't like their neighbours getting something they don't have.

The only thing the Bengalis do is standing up for their rights, whereas white people don't. They stick together, Indians, white people don't. We're too busy saying 'What've you got? You've got a better house, but I've got posher curtains'.

Thus, more than any concrete situation, what the white respondents are accounting for by using the term 'minority' is a feeling of powerlessness. This feeling is fed by what is felt to be the loss of old frameworks of reference or ways of life. It is seldom used as a description of the situation as one of 'reversed racism', where ethnic minorities would have more power.²⁰

Access to housing is not only viewed as an 'ethnic' issue, i.e. where the debate will directly be about the ethnic backgrounds of each tenant. It is also a social issue concerning the preservation of a certain life-style, one in which two or three generations live next door to each other, thus building a close-knit social network where mutual help and support are always available.²¹

Thus the criterion for access to scarce housing resources is very often given as this:

That's the only reason that I'm a bit prejudiced there, because I think my son and daughter should have had a chance to get a flat here and be near us. because when we got married, we were allowed to live near my mum. And I think if you have been growing up around here, you should be allowed to stay around here, not go to Mile End. Mile End ain't far, but it still is not here, is it?

Coupled with this idea, according to which their children should be given preferential access to nearby housing, is another important one: that of merit.

For those white tenants proper housing is a valuable good which has to be merited. When they were young and still living with their parents, they lived in overcrowded bad housing conditions and only progressively gained access to better housing conditions. For them, time and the ability to take 'proper' care of one's house seem to be the main criteria to be legitimately allowed to climb the housing ladder:²²

The Irish people, the Scottish people who lived here, they didn't get what the Bengalis are getting now. We never got, even English people never get, what they're getting now. My mum lived in two rooms ... for 13 years, we shared one toilet, we had no running hot water, only two sinks on the landings and a gas cooker on the landing. Now it seems all different people get flats for different reasons. There don't seem to be no fairness now, you know what I mean?

Some white residents feel they have become a powerless minority, that they do not get what they think they deserve. Yet when one looks carefully at the policy of allocation of Council housing in Tower Hamlets, discrimination against Bangladeshis and their rehousing in the worst estates are the actual facts. This only reinforces the idea that these white residents are expressing the way they feel more than reacting to any concrete reality.

But what is even more interesting is the way the Bangladeshi population is used by some white residents to build an 'ideological actor placed at the negative pole'.²³ They are thus trying to make sense of the transformations which have occurred in the last 20 or 30 years. Confronted with the collapsing of old ways of life, be they real or mythical, part of the white population is reacting by concentrating all the negative or changed aspects of the life of the neighbourhood on the Bangladeshi population.

For many white residents, Bangladeshis are a living image of what they or their parents used to be, which they are not any more and do not want to go back to being. These white people see the Bangladeshis as being poor, illiterate, not fit to live in 'nice housing' because of lack of adaptation to Western urban life, and working long hours in badly paid and hard jobs. All these are things their parents or grandparents might have been or might have been accused of being. This is particularly noticeable when talking to women: they all mention how terrible Bangladeshi women's lives must be, 'locked up at home with so many kids':²⁴

They're (Bangladeshi women) kept down, ain't they, they're not allowed to go anywhere, I think the men got a lot to do with it. All they seem to do is have loads of kids and stay indoors, innit? They seem to have gone back to an older time in England, when women had to stay home and had 10 kids.

To conclude I will say that relationships to Bangladeshis are ambiguous: for some white residents, they recall at the same time lost relations of solidarity and mutual help, and a past they do not want to go back to.

In what whites describe as their 'lost working class paradise', Bangladeshis represent both a proof that some aspects of it could still be used, and thus are still valid references, and a reminder of aspects of the working class life they do not want to go back to.

2. The 'Jewish myth'

As mentioned earlier, Spitalfields used to house an important Jewish population. There are still some small synagogues in the area, but one of the main ones on Brick Lane is now a mosque.²⁵ Most of the Jewish population has now left, moving out of the area to more desirable parts of London as their condition improved. Some old Jewish people have stayed in Spitalfields and memories of the time when many Jews were living here are still very present and a constant reference.

Jews are referred to in two opposite ways by the respondents: on the one hand the situation of the Bangladeshis today is presented as the replica of the Jews' thirty or forty years ago; on the other hand these two groups are presented as opposite types of the possible relationships between ethnic minorities and the dominant group.

The first point to be noticed is that those two views are held by both white and Jewish respondents. Jewish pensioners and white residents quite readily compare the two groups as going through the same processes. Bad housing and working conditions, racial harassment, language difficulties - the similarities of the two situations are easily listed by most as being the lot of all minorities when they settle down. I will come back later to those who put the emphasis on these similarities only; for them assimilation is a normal process and it is part of the rich history of the East End as a place of welcome for all kinds of minorities.

Some of the respondents very quickly pointed out what they saw as being different in the two groups. Work and religion are the two central points to be mentioned: Jewish employers were said to have hired anyone, and Jewish people generally to have kept their religion to themselves, in the private sphere, not trying to 'push it down other people's throats':

When the mosque used to start,²⁶ all the dogs used to start barking with the noise of the mosque and this causes a lot of racist tension. A few of us spoke to the mosque leader and we appreciate that everybody has their own religion but as people were saying, years ago, when this was a majority of Jewish people, with their synagogues, they could pray ten times a day without interfering with everybody else's religion.

The only thing I notice with the Bangladesh people, is that the Jewish people had the shops and the factories, anybody could go and work for them, but with the Bangladesh community, it seems to be a very quiet, closed shop. That affects a lot of everyday people who are trying to get a job, because the Bangladesh people all stick together and this does cause a lot of friction, because years ago, you could go anywhere and get a job.

I do not wish to deny that relationships between the Jewish and white residents in Spitalfields could have been good ones, based on mutual respect and help. Some anecdotes told by the respondents testify this has been the case:

There used to be a synagogue here, when we used to go to school on the Sabbath, they're (the Jews) not allowed to do nothing and they used to ask us to go and light the lights and gave us half a crown. Won't touch the money, they weren't allowed to touch the money. They used to leave the half crown on the side with packets of chocolate and cigarettes. You know, things like that.

What I want to highlight is the process of construction of an 'ideal Jewish community' which is given credit for everything Bangladeshis are said to lack.

As mentioned earlier, it is said that it was easy to find a job in the Jewish workshops and factories, that Jewish parents quite readily complied with the

rules of the British schools, catering for their religious needs outside school time.

Even the general attitude of Jewish people to life in Britain is said to have been different. Basically it is said they wanted to integrate, trying hard to learn English and to adopt English ways of life. In contrast, the respondents accuse the Bangladeshis of 'keeping themselves to themselves', of not being willing to learn the English culture. Moreover, it is said that they want to maintain their own culture, for instance by the teaching of their mother-tongue.

What is even worse in some of the white respondents' view, is that the Bangladeshis want to 'force' their culture and religion on to the British institutions, particularly the schools, thus not only keeping apart, but threatening the 'British culture'.

With these kinds of references, the time when 'Jewish people was a majority' is presented as a Golden age, one of smooth and easy-going inter-ethnic relations.

In order better to measure the coherence of these assertions, one will have to look more precisely at the Jewish population's attitudes to assimilation and/or integration in British society.

Meanwhile one has to note that this construction is somehow at odds with the history of tensions between the Jewish and the white indigenous populations, as well as with some Jewish respondents' descriptions of open fights between different synagogues.

3. Locals versus strangers

I will now look at a third issue, offering interesting insights as to a more positive view on inter-ethnic relations in Spitalfields, as well as to other types of identification than the one along 'ethnic' lines.

As mentioned earlier, Spitalfields is a very central area. Five minutes walk from the City and the Tower of London in the west and close to the newly redeveloped Docklands area in the east, it has become a very desirable part of London in the last few years. Liverpool Street Station, on the west edge of the neighbourhood, is already undergoing a process of large-scale redevelopment. A few yards from there is found the Spitalfields Fruit and Flower Market. It will be relocated and the site redeveloped as an office complex, a second Covent Garden. This part of Spitalfields, between Bishopsgate and Brick Lane, has kept a lot of the old Georgian houses, which, if enough money is spent on them, can be turned from slums into high class lodgings. Some of them have already been refurbished.

Even if most of the respondents regretted the changes in the area, they all felt very strongly about staying there. None of them would like to move out. These attitudes are confirmed in the Spitalfields Survey.²⁷ In it 280 persons out of 397 expressed a desire to stay in Spitalfields. Asians who wished to stay gave as their main reasons, work, the presence of a Bengali community and their liking of the area. Non-Asians cited friends, relatives, local roots, and work in a descending order of importance.

For the respondents, Spitalfields has always been, and in a way still is, a place where social relationships are warmer than anywhere else. It is a place where everybody knows everybody and support is always ready at hand, not one where a cold anonymity would be the rule.

These characteristics of life in the East End of London have been often described,²⁸ together with its more or less virulent racism. And that is where Spitalfields' residents draw a clear line between themselves and the rest of the East End.

If anti-semitism and racism are recognised as realities, the responsibility for their existence is always attributed to Bethnal Green, on the northern side of Bethnal Green Road.

Bethnal Green to me it's a racist area, it's National front. I couldn't live there if they gave me my rent free. I laugh at people like that moving out to get away from the Bengalis and their children have turned up to be junkies.

Bethnal Green don't like Blacks, and Asians. I think that's why they (Asians) like to come around here, because it's always been a place for people of different minorities, and different cultures.

The 1978 National Front demonstration down Brick Lane is explained as having been organised by people from Bethnal Green, whereas Spitalfields residents made a point of joining the Bangladeshis to make it clear that they were not to be mistaken for the Bethnal Greeners.

Indeed Spitalfields' long history of minority settlement, from the Huguenots to the Bangladeshis, is also very often presented as a rich inheritance, a historical tradition to be proud of. The living side by side of people of different backgrounds is then a 'fact of life', something which is also part of the character of the area that its inhabitants appreciate.

Describing Spitalfields in such a way, the whole question of defining who belongs to it and who does not is an important one. Here the notion of 'being local' is central.

Two main criteria appear from my available data: being local has nothing to do with ethnic backgrounds, but depends on length of residence and class:

Being local does not mean you've got to be white, far from it.

The local white people, when it comes to a crisis, they will get up and come and support the Asian people, because the Asians are locals.

How then are the 'outsiders' defined? They are those who 'use' Spitalfields for their own individual interests and/or middle-class newcomers:

(After 1978) a lot of jobs were going, you know for community workers, and this and that and the type of people that applied for them jobs were qualified middle-class ... strangers. And they come, they stay for a time, they earn their money and they go ... That's what people resented, people coming in on a good wage, staying for two years and then blowing off again, after they've made a bit and got the recognition of actually working in deprived Spitalfields. It's quite a famous area, it's got character and everything. So local people felt they were being used, which they were.

The redevelopment schemes for the area provide a very good opportunity to further explore this central notion of localism.

Confronted as they are to a whole series of threats from 'outside', the residents' definitions of who is local, i.e. who should have a right to decide and priority for the potential new resources, is essential to an understanding of how and when class, instead of ethnicity, is used as a relevant boundary marker. If the middle-class strangers are so despised, it is because they directly threaten the old 'working class' way of life; the negative effects of their presence are already noticed by the 'locals' even though the ones actually living locally (a completely different notion from being local) are a handful.

Middle-class is coming in, upper middle class I suppose, with this property development. So you've got hundreds of them just coming in, buying up the properties, putting everything else up for you ... When they could well afford not to live here, we didn't ask for them to come, we don't need them. They are not very sociable anyhow, so we don't want them.

I mean they are not only changing the houses. I mean you walk into a local pub. The pubs are even catering for them, you find it's all wine bars. I think you've got only one local pub. You might think what a hole, but at least the local tenants and working men feel comfortable in that pub.

The effects this logic could have are visible. A few months ago, the Council launched a scheme on housing in which several estates in and around Spitalfields were to be given away to H.A.Ts.²⁹ Mass meetings were organised at which the crowd was half white and half Bangladeshi, and for the first time local activists were quite confident that all local people would join against this action on housing.

The notion of localism is interesting in that it provides a good example of an alteration of the boundary definitions. Whereas in the relationships between residents ethnicity is very often referred to, to make sense of the situation, class becomes the main boundary marker in the relationships to 'external' threats.

4. Bangladeshis

I have just shown how important such a notion as that of localism seems to be in Spitalfields. If this is true when listening to non-Asian respondents, can one find the same kind of feeling expressed by the Bangladeshi population?

The Spitalfields Survey has shown that out of 186 Asian respondents, only 19 expressed a desire to leave the area (10.2%).³⁰ This attachment to the neighbourhood was for Asians mainly linked to the availability of work (66.27%) and the character of the area itself (17.75%). Of non-Asians, only 26% mentioned work and 36.65% local roots (i.e. friends and relatives).

My own data confirms that if a majority of residents wish to stay in Spitalfields, reasons for this are different according to ethnic origin. The main reasons given by Bangladeshis for their settlement in Spitalfields were, on the one hand, the effect of chain migration, i.e. that they came to the East End because they already had a relative there, and, on the other hand, a feeling of protection:

Mr Rahman no longer wants to live in Cable Street, but 'somewhere safe, like Spitalfields'. ... What follows ... is a desire to seek security by living within a large number of their own community. And with Spitalfields having the largest proportion of Bangladeshis in Britain, it is fast becoming one of the few safe areas left in Tower Hamlets.³¹

This protective dimension of Spitalfields is not to be underestimated. A look at a map of racial attacks in Tower Hamlets³² shows that most racist attacks from 1978 to 1983 have taken place either in the Stepney-Mile End and Shadwell areas, or at the edge of Spitalfields adjoining Bethnal Green.

Apart from this safer environment, perceived to be due mainly to the high proportion of Bangladeshi families, Spitalfields also offers all the necessary facilities to the Bangladeshi population:

In other areas, I may have problems, but in this area I know that if somebody attacks me, ten people will come to defend me. So there is safety first, and people's concern /.../ I think that sense of security is important.

Here we have all the support, the shops, the mosque, Brick Lane does not look like England.

Spitalfields is considered a better place than others to live in, if not a good one, because it is a safer place, and one where Bangladeshis can find both shops and services catering for their needs and work.

Indeed all these arguments can be reversed, and this image of Spitalfields can become an image of ghettoization instead of one of positive choice for Bangladeshis.

If they wish to live in the area it is also because, on the one hand, the police do not take the proper steps to efficiently tackle racist attacks outside Spitalfields where fewer Bangladeshis are settled, and on the other hand, the local authorities have a clear policy of allocating the worst estates, i.e. in the E1 postal area, to Bangladeshis and outside E1 to white families.³³ The 'choice' many Bangladeshis made to live in Spitalfields is therefore very strongly influenced by external factors such as racial discrimination.

I will nevertheless suggest that notwithstanding the huge difficulties Bangladeshis are confronted with in Spitalfields, this area represents a kind of 'community centre', a meeting place for all Bangladeshis living in London (or even in Britain) where religious, cultural, social and political needs can be catered for and organised. If this is the case, attachment to Spitalfields would arise more from an attachment to a way of life and cultural and political backgrounds than from an attachment to a specific local area. It should be noted that most of the Bangladeshi respondents express themselves in terms of 'the Bengali community' and its problems rather than in terms of localism as such.

Another issue is the relationships organised between political parties and the Bangladeshi population. Spitalfields provides an interesting example of the strategies set up by the local political parties' apparatus as well as influential and/or prominent members of the Bangladeshi population.

Bangladeshis represent 15.1% of the total population in Tower Hamlets but their distribution is very uneven and they are mostly concentrated in the western parts of the Borough. In some areas they can make up more than 35% of the population.

The study of the political involvement of Bangladeshis in Spitalfields ward's Labour party is particularly interesting as more than 50% of the ward electorate is Bangladeshi.³⁴ Both young Bangladeshi 'leaders' and the local Labour party apparatus have to elaborate specific strategies to take this specificity of the electorate into account.

One of the issues at stake is that of 'representation' for an ethnic minority. How can its interests be best promoted? What is the respective importance of political ideas and ethnic backgrounds when deciding who should stand as a party candidate and so on.³⁵

After the Labour electoral defeat in 1986, the recruiting of large numbers of Bangladeshi members was seen as one of the only ways out:

The Labour Party has resented it for a long, long time (the bargaining power of Bengali voters) but they had to give way because they are no longer able to build up on whites in Spitalfields /.../ Now they feel that to keep control of the Borough, of the power, they have to select Bengalis in the Labour Party.

In fact the ensuing rise in Bangladeshi membership was the result of the conjunction of two sets of interests. Young Bangladeshi 'leaders' already involved in the party felt that the Labour party membership should reflect more equitably the local population and its demands. They also needed more support in their fight to get more Bangladeshi candidates selected or even to gain access to some positions of power and decision within the party itself. Confronted as they were to some reticences in the party's structures, they needed to build themselves some support in the form of a wider Bangladeshi membership.

But another group in the party also had an interest in that change and therefore supported the young Bangladeshi 'leaders' claims.

The party was an offshoot of Docklands unionism for a very long time, and the party was very difficult to join for anybody. People applied to join and they didn't hear for years, they held things very cosy and safe, and you have no doubt more informations than I have about racism in Trade Unionism .../.../ I would rather connect the new (Bangladeshi) councillors to the changes that took place in the party, when there was clearly what could be called a left-wing move to remove the traditional conservative thinking in the Labour party.

This left-wing move, which had been gathering momentum for some years, was also confronted to a strong resistance and thus also needed to look for potential supporters. The recruitment of new Bangladeshi members was then seen as both a political stand against the traditional racism of the older members and an ideal way to take power off them.

This alliance between the party's more radical white members and Bangladeshis was definitely not only a strategic alliance, and common ideas and conceptions certainly helped the making of this alliance.

But it very interestingly exemplifies how an ethnic minority 'bargaining power' can be used to further an aim which has only very indirectly to do with ethnic related issues.

Individual and/or collective strategies among the Bangladeshis are not only aimed at political parties as such, but also to other dimensions of citizenship such as social services, the stake being to gain a wider recognition of the Bangladeshi population and its needs and to achieve some kind of balance in rights and opportunities.

Even while considering these activities in the social and political fields in Britain, the importance of Bangladesh as a vivid reference point cannot be underestimated. Even though the scope of the ongoing research is inter-ethnic relationships in an area of East London, relationships to Bangladesh have to be taken into account if one wishes better to understand them. First of all, Britain's Bangladeshis' social choices and strategies are still influenced by their Bangladesh social network:

/.../ most of the Londonis36 in the beginning they sort of give in to these demands, they keep on sending money and then, they enjoy a different status like that, like a saviour you know ... in most cases, they just hide their conditions there (in London) and try to live up to that image. because there they are not considered rich, or any asset to the society, but when they come here, they are given that status here. So that's how they enjoy that, it really gratifies their own ego in many ways.

This kind of remark varies according mainly to age and length of stay in Britain. But my own observation of 'Londoni' families in Sylhet confirms this essential significance of social recognition in Bangladesh.

Secondly, there seems to be a very high level of interaction between Bangladesh and Britain at the political level. Information travels to and fro, formal and informal meetings take place in London, gathering people from the same area. It seems these practices have undergone a certain development in the last few years since decentralisation took place in Bangladesh:

Over the last few years, some meaningful sort of liaisons and contacts have developed, with the decentralisation of local government in Bangladesh /.../ what has happened over the last few years is that some Upozila³⁷ chairmen started coming here for short holidays and whilst here they have met with people from their respective areas ... this has enabled people from here to develop links with the politically powerful people in their area. I mean from these contacts in the future there will be much more direct intervention by people from here in political events in Bangladesh.

The study of the interactions between political involvements in Bangladesh and Britain will allow for a better comprehension of Bangladeshi people's choices in Britain itself and of how their place at the junction of two different nations can introduce new sets of references and political practices in these two countries.

CONCLUSION

Through the elements of my case study of Spitalfields presented here, I have tried to highlight some of the processes at work in this multi-ethnic area of London. All the actors in these social networks are building up symbolic and/or organisational instruments which allow them to make sense of their own situation and to work out adapted strategies.

Thus I have pointed to different ideological constructs and/or political and social practices through which social boundaries are built up by Spitalfields residents.

Many white residents have an ambiguous double-sided perception of the Bangladeshi population. For them this population represents aspects of their lost 'working class paradise', where practices of solidarity were essential, but also a 'working class hell' they want to forget, that of bad housing and working conditions.

Identification along ethnic lines is also used by white residents to differentiate ethnic minorities, organising a kind of hierarchy in which cohabitation with a Jewish population becomes a mythical golden age of easy-going ethnic relations and the settlement of Bangladeshis is often perceived as a 'threat' to their 'identity'.

I have also tried to show how identification according to class can in some cases supersede that drawn along ethnic lines, for example when the local population as a whole is threatened by the arrival of middle-class outsiders.

These two types of identification are thus very often used by the same people depending on the issues and/or problems they feel they are confronted to: 'internal' issues, i.e. the allocation of scarce local resources to the different ethnic groups living locally, or 'external' issues, i.e. the defence of the area against new-comers. As far as the Bangladeshi population is concerned, the uses different individuals and/or groups make of a virtual 'Bangladeshi community' show to which extent such a notion is a variable one, differently defined according to strategies and objectives.

Thus by trying to highlight the variable criteria for identification chosen in different instances, it might be possible to evaluate in which ones and why ethnicity, class or nationality are used.

This is all the more important that exclusions and inclusions are many and on different levels. Thus it should not be supposed that inclusions on one level or under one set of circumstances means 'full' inclusion. For instance inclusions of Bangladeshis as locals in white respondents' discourses should not conceal the fact they are somehow excluded of this quality. Indeed if Bangladeshis' length of residence in Spitalfields is used to include them in the group supposed to oppose middle-class 'intruders', it should not be forgotten this same criteria is used to try and deny Bangladeshis access to better housing conditions.

The same kind of questions can be raised concerning access to and uses of citizenship rights such as voting. Some white respondents mentioned their reservations about voting for a Bangladeshi candidate. Yet when asked, none of them denied or questioned the fact that ethnic minorities, and in that case Bangladeshis, enjoy full citizenship rights. Would their reservations be based on what they perceive as irreconcilable cultural and/or religious differences, more than any feeling of a higher legitimacy in Britain of white people's voices? Or are they rather a way of silencing views which they feel will not be socially acceptable, i.e. that ethnic minorities members should not have such a right because they 'do not really belong'; or again are white respondents trying to say there that although ethnic minorities can use their citizenship rights, they should do so without interfering or disturbing the 'usual' arrangements?

The interactions at work in Spitalfields provide an interesting example of the building up of identification processes, indeed at a local level but nonetheless in relation with wider frameworks of references such as the working class (or the middle class) or the nation, and can allow for better understanding and definitions of the relationships between different types and/or levels of 'belonging'.

This kind of issue can be studied in similar neighbourhoods in Paris, Lyons or elsewhere. A comparative approach between France and Britain can then allow for a clearer understanding of the processes at work and a case study of a British locality can provide essential elements for the analysis of the French situation.

It also leads to a questioning of positions such as Ren, GALISSOT's according to whom in France 'the identification process resolves itself for those excluded from this superior benefit (nationality) in an ethnicisation process'.³⁸ If this was so how could one explain that in Britain, where this particular exclusion³⁹ is not taking place, ethnicity has become the quasi-exclusive mode of organisation of inter-ethnic relationships? Could one not think that this apparent contradiction in fact conceals similar processes: those of exclusion/inclusion in the nation?

Notes

1. One has to remember that immigrants do not have any civil rights in France. They can enjoy such rights as Welfare and unemployment benefits obtained through work or family status, but employment in the public services (post offices, public hospitals, public transport and so on) and voting rights are reserved for French nationals.
2. Indeed alarmist and racist comments were also aired about this new kind of 'threat' through voting.
3. Thus the renewed interest for Greek philosophers' definition of citizenship, for the history of this notion and for the celebration of the French Revolution by many youth groups is meaningful.
4. See Gerard Noiriel, *Longwy, Immigrés et prolétaires*, Paris, PUF, 1984.
5. See for example J. Rex, D. Joly and C. Wilpert (eds.), *Immigrant Associations in Europe*, London, Gower, 1987.
6. *Premiers Etats Généraux de la Jeunesse Européenne*, 3-4 December 1988, La Sorbonne, Paris.
7. Robert Sole, 'Les Franco-Maghrébins et l'élection présidentielle', *Le Monde*, 25 February 1988, p.8.
8. Robert Sole, 'Etrangers sans isoloir', *Le Monde*, 16 April 1988, p.6.
9. See Kristin Couper, 'Nationalité, et droit du séjour' in *Annales de l'Université de Savoie, Anglais* No.4, 1983, pp.91-104, and 'Black British: catégorie sociale ou double identité', in *L'Homme et la Société*, No.83, 1^{er} Trimestre 1987, pp.52-58.
10. Portugal might be a third one, but internal conditions made for a different type of empire and of relationships between colonies and the (metropole). As for Germany, Belgium, Italy, etc. their possessions overseas were far less important.
11. Thus the repression of the Algerian demonstration organised by the F.L.N. in Paris in October 1961 was significant: several hundred Algerians living in France were killed by the police even though independence was by then an irreversible process. The state was showing its strength to signify to Algerians what their place was to be from now on. The very black-out of this event in French collective memory is also significant.
12. For a more detailed discussion of the history and effects of these terms, see Catherine Neveu, *Londres en noir et blanc. Racisme et relations inter-communautaires en Grande-Bretagne*, Mémoire EHESS-Paris, May 1986, 176p.
13. Even if racist terms also exist.
14. Research team 'Political attitudes of Muslims in France' under the direction of R. Leveau and C. De Wenden, Centre for Study in International Relations.
15. See Catherine Neveu, *Bengalis ... Spitalfields. Eléments pour une étude des relations inter-communautaires dans l'East End de Londres*. EHESS, Paris, 1987, 54p.

16. See the very interesting paper by Sandra Wallman 'Ethnicity and Boundary process in context' in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds.) Theories of race and ethnic relations.
17. On the differentiation between different types of shops in multi-ethnic areas, see V. De Rudder *Autochtones et immigrants en quartier populaire*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1987.
18. See A. Shukur and S. Carey 'A profile of the Bangladeshi community in East London' in *New community*, Vol.12, No.3, Winter 1985-86.
19. By this I mean the more recent ones, newly built houses in contrast with the ageing and run-down tower blocks.
20. Thus the situation could not be assimilated to those described by Nancy Murray in 'Anti-racists and other demons. The press and ideology in Thatcher's Britain' in *Race and Class*, Vol.XXVII, No.3, Winter 1986.
21. For a somehow idealised description of this kind of network, see M. Young and P. Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London, Peregrine books, 1986 (First published 1957), 204p.
22. On this, see J. Eade, *The politics of community. The Bangladeshi community in East London*. PhD Thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, 1986, p.325. Avebury, 1989.
23. This concept has been proposed by Gerard Althabe in *Urbanisation et enjeux quotidiens. Terrains ethnologiques dans la France actuelle*, Paris, Ed. Anthropos, 1985.
24. This image is certainly reinforced by common representation of Bangladesh as the poorest country in the world.
25. and was a Huguenot temple before becoming a synagogue.
26. East London Mosque on Whitechapel.
27. Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Service with Catholic Housing Aid Society, *The Spitalfields Survey, Housing and Social Conditions in 1980*, London, 64p. See Tables 7.3 and 7.4, pp.40-41.
28. See S. Wallman, *op. cit.* and M. Young and P. Willmott, *op. cit.*
29. Housing Action Trusts. Local residents are afraid this giving away of estates to these new structures will only be another way of pushing them out to house middle class newcomers.
30. Whereas 81 non-Asians out of 194 did (41.7%). the Spitalfields Survey, Table 7.2, p.39.
31. Spitalfields News, January 1986.
32. *Racial Harassment in London*, G.L.C., 1983.
33. Report to the GLC on Racism in Allocations, Dr Philips, 1986.
34. and 34.3% in St Mary's, 20.1% in St Katherine's, and 15% each in Weavers and Shadwell, the adjoining wards. London Borough of Tower Hamlets, 1986, Register of Electors.

35. This issue of electoral representation has been examined more thoroughly in C. Neveu, 'The waves of Surma have created storms in the depth of the Thames', Electoral representation of an ethnic minority: a case study of Bangladeshis in the East End of London. American Political Science Association 85th Annual Meeting, Atlanta (Georgia), September 1989.

36. A term widely used in Bangladesh to designate Bangladeshis living in London.

37. Subdistrict. One of the political units in Bangladesh whose chairman is directly elected.

38. Ren, Galissot, 1987.

39. The 'superior benefit' here also being civil rights.