



Establishment of Muslim Places of Worship and Personalization Strategies in French and Canadian Suburbs

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The renewal of religious pluralism is one of the most sensitive and challenged issues currently facing the public management of Western cities. The transformation of urban spaces, notably by the creation of more visible places of worship, has contributed to an increased interest in the consequences of ethno-cultural and ethno-religious diversity in urban centers. This is particularly the case with Islamic places of worship, often the center of both public and academic attention. This interest is understandable, given the number of conflicts surrounding the creation of mosques: how urban spaces will be shared is a crucial aspect of disputes between ethno-religious minorities, civil society and local governments. Moreover, Muslim places of prayer in Western countries are often feared as breeding grounds for terrorism; given this suspicion, the creation of new mosques is often met with open hostility. However, recent studies of the creation of mosques have emphasized the lower frequency of conflict than in the past (de Galembert 2006; Frégosi 2006; Hoernig 2006). How can we explain this new tendency? I answer this question by analyzing the establishment of places of worship in two communities on the periphery of large cities: the Parisian suburb of Créteil and the Montreal suburb of Laval. Using a hypothesis I previously applied exclusively to Canadian cities, I will assess the degree of personalization of mediation channels between ethno-religious authorities and municipal officials, gauging the extent to which the degree of personalization leads to different processes of institutionalization. As such I propose that the personalization of these channels leads to a political process, whereas non-personalization leads to an administrative one (Fourot 2009). These findings suggest that despite institutional differences in each case, the personalization of channels of mediation and the ensuing political processes have contributed to a reduction in open conflicts, and have and furthered the projects supported by both municipal bodies and ethno-religious groups.

KEY WORDS: Muslim Places of Worship, urban governance, personalization of channels of mediation, French and Canadian Cities.