

**Le manège de la frontière:
A study of Roxham Road, Quebec**
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Abstract

In 2017-2018, an increase in asylum seekers crossing the Canada-US border between regular border crossings caused a stir in Quebec and Canada. The vast majority of these crossings were made in Quebec, at Roxham Road. Even today, the passage via Roxham Road has aroused many reactions in Quebec, including the provincial government, which is asking the federal government to close this access. This presentation will highlight the notion of the "[manège de la frontière](#)" or "border staging" (ObsMigAM, 2020) -- a border situation in Quebec that showed human dynamics like that demonstrated along several borders in Europe and the USA.

The research focuses on understanding the mobilization of a group of citizens, called Bridges not Borders (B&B), who live near the border and mobilized to offer support to people crossing the border. A central question is: 'How do we qualify this type of mobilization which differs from the institutional practices of reception?' The case of B&B contributes to the literature on borders by bringing a perspective that focuses on the dynamics and mobilizations of citizens helping vulnerable people along border crossings. The study draws on recent literature examining what is taking place along the borders and who are the different actors/protagonists. The analysis highlights the human and benevolent strategies to circumvent the border. At Roxham Road, the border has been militarized by the more visible presence of police forces, which also roused right-wing populist, anti-immigration groups, who appeared along the border to provoke left-wing groups, hoping to influence public opinion. On this border scene, a citizen mobilization "from below" has also appeared, which has organized itself to better support migrants and denounce the restrictive and closure policies of governments. To understand this action, we mobilize the concept of hospitality which makes it possible to explore another narrative of welcoming. The methodology uses a qualitative approach and includes analysis of the documents produced by the collective, more than a hundred posts published in a blog, semi-directed interviews with members B&B and observations made at Roxham Road.

Biography

Chedly Belkhodja is a professor in the School of Community Public Affairs at Concordia University. His research focuses on issues of immigration in medium-sized cities and in regions of low immigration and the discourses and representations of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. He also develops a reflection on the phenomenon of populism and right-wing ideologies in contemporary democratic societies. He is presently leading a SSHRC-funded research program on the migration of French nationals to Québec and Ontario. His articles have been published in *Géoregards*, *Études canadiennes*, *Ethnic Studies of Canada*, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *Politics and Societies*, *Argument*, *Francophonie d'Amérique*, and *Lexicometrica*. In parallel, he published an essay on Francophone immigration to Canada (From Here and Elsewhere, *Édition Perce Neige* 2011) and directed two films produced by the National Film Board of Canada, *Tableaux d'un voyage imaginaire* 2001 with filmmaker Jean Chabot and *Au bout du fil* in 2006.