

## Call for Paper

### Phantom Borders in the Political Behaviour and Electoral Geography in East Central Europe

Conference of the Centre Marc Bloch (Berlin) and European University Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder) within the BMBF-funded project "Phantom Borders in East Central Europe"

Venue: European University Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder) and Collegium Polonicum Ślubice // Date: 14. /15.11.2013 //



**+++ Deadline CfP: 30.3.2013 +++**

We understand phantom borders as political borders, which politically/legally do not exist anymore but seem to appear in different forms and modes of social action and practices today, as for example voting as one part of political behaviour. Considering the visibility of historical borders in the territorial distribution of election results in Poland or Ukraine – many more countries in Europe and the world could be mentioned – the question occurs if or if not this visibility indicates a persistence of historical (social or political) spaces or why else these phantom borders seem to be visible. One indicator of phantom borders are maps illustrating the territorial distribution of election results. But we would like to look also at other particularities of political processes and negotiations as for instance the territorial distribution and organisation of unions, parties, political youth organisations, movements of political protest and opposition, the potential territorial aspects of laws or other political decisions. Furthermore we would like to address how parties, politicians and other political actors use, address or/and exploit (re)constructed local and regional particularities to gain political support, as for instance the Ukrainian language law which was passed in 2012 which obviously aimed at gaining support from minorities speaking other languages than Ukrainian.

Within the conference we want to elaborate on different territorial particularities concerning cultural, historical, social, linguistic, religious and economic aspects which may affect political behaviour and electoral geography. Therewith the conference has a strong interdisciplinary approach looking for presentations of geographers, historians, political scientists, social scientists, regional studies scientists, ethnologists.

The conference will be comparative and therewith discuss various case studies analysing and interpreting particularities in different ways and at different levels. The aim shall not only be to observe the potential territorial distinctiveness of political behaviour and electoral geography but also to explain them and discuss interpretations that have already been suggested.

Since the conference is organised in the framework of the BMBF funded joint project „Phantom Borders in East Central Europe“ ([www.phantomgrenzen.eu](http://www.phantomgrenzen.eu)), the focus of studies should be on East Central Europe, but interesting case studies from all over the world addressing the main subjects of the conference are highly welcome. We are very interested in empirical studies. The papers and presentations may focus on one or several of the below mentioned issues addressing the phenomena and explanation of specific election results and political behaviour in East Central Europe and beyond:

***History: In what way is history reflected in political behaviour, as in election results?***

One of the assumptions of the heuristic concept of phantom borders is that historical borders are eventually (re)constructed. A specific political culture, certain norms and values, social and political practices continue to exist, re-emerge or are (re)constructed for various reasons which may lead towards (for instance) territorially specific election results. This historic interpretation contains a methodological, empirical and explanatory challenge concerning the interrelation of current results of elections and their motivations and of current political phenomena with historical narratives and the

underlying socio-cultural structure. Not to forget the different layers of history which may (co)exist in social and political behaviour at the same time – as “post-communist”, “post-Habsburg”, “post-interwar”, etc. Case studies and presentations which address especially the interrelation between historic narratives and present political behaviour in an innovative way providing an in-depth explanation for the eventual (re)construction of historic borders via characteristics of political behaviour are welcome.

*Scale: At which scales and in which way phantom borders appear?*

Particularities of election results and political behaviour, as protest movements or the presence of certain parties, can be found on the local and neighbourhood level between and within cities, within regions, beyond regions and across nation states. We invite papers which look at political behaviour and election results based on different criteria and examining phenomena on different scales. Apart from the different scales and levels of political behaviour, studies about the individual voters / local actors in their localities and places are appreciated.

*National and Regional Governance: How does the national and regional governance context affect political behaviour?*

Some characteristics of territorial systems of political organisation affect election results. The way elections take place, the political system, laws of election, designs of electoral processes and party system may have an impact on election results and their territorial distribution. The most obvious examples are attempts to structure electoral constituencies in order to influence election results. Studies which address the spatial context of the political system in relation to the interpretation of territorially specific political behaviour and election results are welcome. This may include national politics but also regional and local politics regarding elections and other policy fields, as language politics, education, but also specific local and regional interest networks or former institutional political / administrative networks still being active and influential.

*External Governance / Foreign Affairs / Transnational Networks: How does the external governance / foreign affairs context / transnational networks affect political behaviour?*

External politics and foreign affairs are relevant for regional and national politics as for instance the involvement in greater political strategic networks as with the Russian Federation and / or the European Union, NATO or other global networks as well as with neighbouring countries, as for example the Eastern European Partnership. Those networks may have an impact on (re)constructing or deconstructing borders applying structural policies (e.g. EU structural funds), defining economic relations (e.g. energy relations) that affect structures and the individual. Transnational migration may also affect migrants, their families and places of origin on behalf of (geo)political orientations and political behaviour. Studies which deal with the intentions and/or impact of such politics and strategies on political behaviour, election results and the decision making process of the individual at different scales are welcome.

*(Geo)Political Images: What role do (Geo)Political Images play in (re)constructing phantom borders?*

The images given for example by electoral maps and their affiliation with historic borders and the discourse about special images, for instance historical narratives of Galicia apply geopolitical images and by this reproduce and (re)construct them. We thus invite to address the role of past and current geopolitical images in political processes and in the scientific discourse, as the latter seems particularly prone to use historic-geopolitical images and arguments in order to explain territorial political phenomena. The main issue here may be to address how such maps and discourses may influence the researcher, the politician, the voter, etc. in (un)consciously (re)constructing regions by selecting for instance colours and benchmarks to design an electoral map or by easily reasoning and arguing with historical arguments. But (geo)political images are also applied in discourses by politicians or scientists to assign specific norms and values to historical narratives. Which images are applied and what associations are produced, by whom, to what end, in which spatial contexts and with what kind of consequence, for instance in political behaviour, election results or political strategies?

Methods, scales, contexts (dynamics of internal and foreign politics) are important aspects for obtaining necessary data and explaining reasons for territorial and spatial particularities of political behaviour. But obviously West European models and concepts are not necessarily sufficient or valid for the East, South Eastern and East Central European contexts and may not be applied. We are interested in innovative ideas and concepts applying current approaches in social sciences and geography but also political sciences to offer explanations which shall surpass mere applications of West European concepts and consider the specific national or regional characteristics as well as the complex reasons for individual decisions.

In the past a number of studies have been using aggregated data to show and explain electoral results. In the earlier past also qualitative studies have been undertaken in order to explain different characteristics in political behaviour or election results at the individual, neighbourhood, local or regional level. So, one aspect of the conference shall be the methodological approach of researching and analysing political behaviour and election results discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each: Macro vs. Micro-sociological Studies / Quantitative vs. Qualitative Studies. For that reason studies that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches showing and explaining differences in political behaviour and election results are particularly welcome.

*Convenors:* Sabine v. Löwis (CMB, Berlin), Thomas Serrier (Viadrina, FFO), Jarosław Jańczak (Viadrina, FFO)

A publication of selected papers from the conference is intended.

Please send an abstract (up to 500 words) and a short CV no later than **March 30, 2013** to Sabine v. Löwis (vonloewis@cmb.hu-berlin.de) and Thomas Serrier (serrier@europa-uni.de).

Travel expenses (up to a certain amount) and accommodation during the conference will be covered by the organizers.

Conference Language: English

For more information concerning the project please look at [www.phantomgrenzen.de](http://www.phantomgrenzen.de)