

CENTRAL EUROPE.
ABOUT THE CONCEPTUAL CAREER
OF A CULTURAL-POLITICAL TERM

Steffen Höhne

Topic of this contribution is the present usage of the catchword "Central Europe" in East Central European transformation societies. The author attempts, from a linguistic-historic and pragmatic perspective, to deduce the different meanings ascribed to "Central Europe" from the historical usage of this term, and from the extent of its exploitation in the name of ideology. Today's notion of Central Europe refers to Germanic (not necessarily Pan-Germanic) historico-political conceptions of the 19th and early 20th century, conceptions related to the decline and eventual destruction of the Habsburg monarchy, and lastly to the dissident debates of the 80s. The aim is to prove that present (post-1989) usage of "Central Europe" is determined by semantic content of all those three conceptions, thus illustrating the principal semantic vagueness of the term.