

“WHAT DOES EUROPEAN MEAN, IN THIS CASE?” THE
CZECH REPUBLIC, ROMANIA, AND THE EASTWARD
EXPANSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE
GERMAN PRESS

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Starting with the mid-1990s, the present contribution deals with the discussion in the German press about the eastward expansion of the European Union. Coverage of two new members, the Czech Republic and Romania, has been selected in order to demonstrate that the recurring leitmotifs and narratives of the debate can be traced back to the semantics of specific possibilities of how to describe social space and its dynamics. Three paradigmatic notions of social space are evaluated and their consequences for describing and assessing “old” and “new” regions of the EU analysed. In the media debate, however, these notions have always remained implicit, never have they been named, never has any reflection been voiced about them. Also striking is the fact that they have been used in the same sense by papers of differing political orientation and that there has been very little change over time.