# Book Reviews

## Isolde Brade / Arne Sünnemann / Michael Anz: Russland. Aktuelle Probleme und Tendenzen, Leipzig: Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde 2004.

Russia's economy is booming. Six years of economic growth with an enormous increase of the gross domestic product, the enlargement of foreign portfolio investments as well as a permanent lowering inflation rate since 1998[1] reveal the ideal basis for potential foreign investors and their business activities in Russia. The forthcoming joining of the Word Trade Organization improves these possibilities decisively. Beside chances for companies relating to the raw material and the energy sector, manifold possibilities are given to companies dealing with mechanical engineering, metal processing, the IT-business and all different spheres of consume.

In order to have a successful business activity in Russia, it is essential to understand local peculiarities as well as their origins. The numbers of publications related to these topics have been increasing since the rise of Russia's popularity in the latest years. Some books deal with a broad overview, whereas other publications give an insight in a very specific topic. The book written by Isolde Brade, Arne Sünnemann and Michael Anz investigates Russia's socio-geographical and economic development since 1991. These issues enable a broad overview of current developments in Russia and its people.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter gives a survey of geographical information about Russia. A map therefore shows the subdivision of the Russian Federation into its federal districts, followed by a tabulated overview of different characteristics, such as population density, main branches of industry and enumeration of important cities complete this chapter. The Chapters 2-8 then draw a picture of Russia's development since the 1990s. Each chapter contains information to a specific issue: form of government and political subdivision, population, settlement structure, infrastructure, economy, social situation and ecology.

The authors provide all necessary information on a few pages (each chapter contains 10-20 pages) and enable an overall view without being too detailed. Brade, Sünnemann and Anz use lots of statistics, maps, charts and tables. This multitude of data allows the practised reader a fast understanding and appraisal of essential information. Short texts show current trends and features.

[1] Zwischen Reform und Restauration (Dr. Uwe Kumm, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants), in: 10 Jahre Verband der deutschen Wirtschaft in der russischen Föderation, OWC-Verlag, 2005.



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Commentaries and newspaper clippings emphasise (partly in a very critical way) these current trends. The last chapter contains an extensive list of further readings to the different issues. This is a very useful aid to intensify the content of the different topics given in the preceding chapters. A collection of helpful (internet-) links form the book's conclusion.

As already described, the publication in issue contains a very extensive use of varying data. This implies an enormous risk due to the fact that previous censuses partly turned out to be untrustworthy. Even though this data was mostly published by the national committee for statistics, it is doubtful whether or not one can trust this data in every way. The authors are aware of this risk and refer to this problem in the book's preface. By using this controversial data, the authors do not aim at revealing the entire reality rather than demonstrating trends and tendencies. This analysis was very successful.

The reader actually benefits from the book's large size. This allows the full-paged maps and tables to be arranged very clearly. The renunciation of colours on the other hand is rather unprofitable for these hinds of graphs as they are unclear and difficult to read. Colourful design would have enabled an easier reading and understanding.

This criticism shall not in the least devalue this book. It is very useful for a broad overview about Russia's economical and socio-geographical situation. As a result of its manifold topics, the book does not replace further reading, such as investment guides for economists. On this account, the book is not constricted to a particular user, so it can be recommended to a larger spectrum of readers, no matter if they come from an economical, scientifically or political background.

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