A young man is noticed by all the villagers; his appearance is strikingly different from the locals. He carries himself with an air of sophistication and he looks like he belongs to another place somewhere beyond the village. However, his sartorial elegance makes him more than an educated urbanite. This young man embodies the kind of social upheaval that communities experience when people migrate to other places for better employment and educational opportunities. The changes in his life-world and the upheaval experienced by the members of his home village are paradigmatic of the complex and sometimes contradictory influences of migration that nation states encounter as large swathes of populations relocate to more prosperous cities outside their home country.

This volume edited by Marlene Laruelle explores the many factors contributing to migration, and seeks to understand the economic and social impacts both on the sending and host countries. Drawing on research conducted among Commonwealth Independent States (CISs) of the former Soviet Union, this is an invaluable resource for scholars and students seeking to understand the causes and impact of migration within the specific locales of the volume’s focus. Furthermore, this collection is written in English and is consequently available to scholars in the English-speaking world, rather than much of the extant research that is written in the languages of the region itself.

Laurelle's general introduction provides a summary of the core issues and particularly how countries that intersect traditional migratory routes benefit from and are damaged by the movements of people across national borders. The book is divided into four parts, each focused on the social impact of migration in the Central Asian region. Part 1 concerns the economics of migration and seeks to place the CISs within their global context. Part 2 focuses
on the social impact of migration; the fluidity of communities as they change and morph as people leave and return, and the strategies that marginalised groups of migrants may use to create supportive networks within host countries. Parts 3 and 4 seek to explore identity issues at both macro and micro levels. Part 3 examines the movements of Russian-speaking peoples, an issue that has become particularly salient since publication, with the annexation in 2014 of Crimea into the Russian Federation. Part 4 concerns gender identities, particularly those of women who earn their living as shuttle traders, moving goods across state boundaries; explorations of rites of passage and the complex issues that result from newly-formed relationships between men and women who have other formalised and committed marriage partnerships back home. Explored in this part are the ways in which traditional masculine roles are appropriated by women and how this impacts on their sense of identity. Not to be forgotten are the changes in masculine identities themselves. Men as responsible adults, heads of families and providers for their wives and children discover a range of identity options made available that otherwise would have been left unexplored. Thus, “new regimes of (im)mobility can lead to the re-articulation of gender roles, and cause gender regimes previously taken for granted to enter discourse in new ways” (p. 310).

The volume, then, is set against the confusing and devastating shock of the global financial crisis with the CISs feeling its full impact in 2008–2009. The economic results of this crisis were unavoidable and yet, paradoxically, it provided a mechanism for people to stay in their host countries, drawing on the resources that local communities from sending countries provided (see Marat’s chapter, pp. 51–64). These economic issues, which are explored in the first part of the book, provide a rich narrative of the movement of money through remittances, changes in skill-sets in different locales and some of the costs of migration, most notably in the movement of criminal elements from place to place, who use mafia-style stand-over tactics among people of their own language groups.

Issues of brain gain and brain drain are canvassed throughout the text. These are set beside the pressing concerns of the health of individuals who migrate but have few resources available in their host country. Alongside this is the gradual unravelling of the social fabric of sending countries and the role of families struggling for support and identity when the main income earner (usually the husband) is only sporadically present. Thus, identity construction and economics intersect within the context of the magnetic pull of larger cities in Russia and the inability of sending countries to hold their populace.

This book offers a nuanced view of migration and its effects on the social practices and individual identities of both the migrants themselves and their