



## Migrant domestic workers in Europe: law and the construction of vulnerability

by Vera Pavlou, Oxford, UK and New York, Hart Publishing, 2021, 184 pp., £85 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-5099-4237-4

Mirzokhid Askarov

To cite this article: Mirzokhid Askarov (2025) Migrant domestic workers in Europe: law and the construction of vulnerability, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 48:13, 2698-2700, DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2024.2364851](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2364851)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2364851>



Published online: 12 Jun 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 24



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

*Portraits of Persistence* is an invaluable addition to any discussion of Latin America, poverty, political instability, neoliberalism, gender, indigenous populations, and more. It goes beyond what statistical or demographic descriptions provide to give a poignant view of the lives of ordinary humans in often extraordinary circumstances. It is ideal for courses in ethnographic research, sociology, political science, Latin American Studies and more, or as an interesting and informative read on its own.

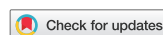
Ronald J. Angel

*Department of Sociology (Emeritus), University of Texas, Austin*

 [rangel@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:rangel@austin.utexas.edu)

© 2024 Ronald J. Angel

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2339919>



**Migrant domestic workers in Europe: law and the construction of vulnerability**, by Vera Pavlou, Oxford, UK and New York, Hart Publishing, 2021, 184 pp., £85 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-5099-4237-4

Studying the issue of migrant domestic workers in Europe is crucial for several reasons. First, it is necessary to protect the rights of these workers, who often face exploitation, discrimination, and poor working conditions. Second, migrants constitute a significant part of the household labor force, and their contribution to the economy is invaluable. Understanding their situation helps to formulate effective and fair policies aimed at integrating and supporting migrants. Third, studying this issue contributes to social stability by preventing conflicts and tensions arising from the underestimation and neglect of migrants' problems. Finally, this research is important for strengthening human rights and ensuring equality, which are fundamental values of European society.

The book *Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe: Law and the Construction of Vulnerability* addresses one of the most pressing issues of our time. The author sets a crucial objective: to identify laws that contribute to the everyday vulnerability of migrant domestic workers and to determine the legal sources and strategies that can best mitigate these vulnerabilities (15–16). This objective is woven throughout the book, culminating in important steps to address these problems.

In the first chapter of the book, the author analyzes the various conditions for the reception of migrants from non-EU countries, focusing on how states, through their migration law regimes, regulate the conditions of entry and stay. The study of the Au Pair program is particularly important, as this program is increasingly used as a source of inexpensive domestic labor (29–30). In this chapter, the author examines the nuances and differences of various migration regimes, such as Regulated Entry/Liberal Treatment (43), Open Entry/Restrictive Treatment (44), and Employer-Led/Mixed Treatment (44).

In the second chapter, the author seeks to answer several important questions, such as, "To what extent does migration status impact migrant domestic workers' entitlement to labor rights and protections, as well as their ability to access them?" A comparison of labor legislation in the UK, Cyprus, Sweden, and Spain helps the reader understand the nuances affecting domestic workers through real examples.

The main part of the third chapter begins with an overview of the various legal sources that constitute the EU labor migration regime and an examination of their relevance. The author starts with an analysis of the rules of free movement of EU workers and then transitions to a comparative analysis of the rights of third-country workers, categorizing them into four types: first, the right of first entry along with a full set of rights similar to citizenship, as in agreements between the EEA and Switzerland (84); second, agreements without the right of first entry but with a relatively good set of rights for resident workers, such as the agreement with Turkey (85); third, Euro-Mediterranean agreements with Maghreb countries, which do not provide rights of first entry but guarantee equal treatment with some implications for residence rights (86); and fourth, agreements with the rest of the world, which offer very limited rights for permanent migrant workers. Particularly valuable is the legal analysis of workers with statuses such as Highly Skilled Labor Migrants (88), Low-Skilled Labor Migrants (89), and those under the Single Permit Directive (91).

The fourth chapter began its formation when the author published an article in the *European Law Review* in 2016, challenging the notion that EU labor legislation sources are not applicable to domestic workers. Focusing on the UK, Cyprus, Sweden, and Spain, the author discusses specific areas of national labor law regimes that diverge from EU law. This aspect of the book renders it particularly relevant among other works, as it not only identifies the problem but also endeavors to propose solutions to these issues (130).

The final chapter of the book delves into the roles and strategies of various actors in representing the interests of migrant domestic workers and advocating for legal and policy changes to enhance their rights. Drawing examples from Sweden, Spain, Cyprus, and the UK, the author analyzes how the rights and protections of domestic workers can be enhanced when they are employed by a company rather than directly by an individual employer. The author concludes that trade unions play—or should play—a crucial role in strengthening workers' rights and protections and ensuring their effective implementation (149). However, numerous obstacles and legal inconsistencies still hinder the realization of truly equal opportunities to secure the rights of domestic workers throughout the EU.

However, EU labor law sources encompass crucial rights and protections against numerous workplace issues, including long and unregulated working hours, constant availability to the employer, pregnancy and maternity discrimination, harassment, and lack of information about working conditions.

The novelty and relevance of the book are unquestionable, as it addresses topics that are often avoided or omitted in scientific discourse. This book represents a bold step in unveiling the many hidden aspects of domestic servitude,

which are evident not only in living memories but also within the EU legal system itself.

Like any scholarly work, “Migrant Domestic Workers in Europe: Law and the Construction of Vulnerability” has its limitations. Firstly, it may be criticized for its narrow focus on legal aspects, neglecting social and cultural contexts. Secondly, the book may lack quantitative data and statistical analysis, hampering the assessment of the problem’s scope and the persuasiveness of its conclusions. Thirdly, there might be limited geographical coverage, with the study concentrating on individual countries instead of providing a comprehensive overview of Europe. Lastly, the work may be faulted for its lack of practicality, as the proposed solutions and recommendations could be too theoretical and complex to implement effectively.

Overall, the book represents an important contribution to research on the challenges encountered by migrant domestic workers. It sheds light on issues concerning the legal and social vulnerability of this group of workers, which have been inadequately addressed in scholarly discourse. The book takes a bold step towards uncovering and understanding the deep structural problems and racial trauma that resonate throughout European societies. This work not only enhances our comprehension of the rights and working conditions of migrant domestic workers but also stimulates further research and action to ameliorate their situation.

Mirzokhid Askarov

*Department of History and Ethnology of the Peoples of Central Asia, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies*

 mirzokhid.askarov90@gmail.com  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0398-563X>

© 2024 Mirzokhid Askarov

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2364851>



**The state you see: how government visibility creates political distrust and racial inequality**, Aaron J. Rosenthal, Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 2023, xv + 261pp., \$34.95 (paperback), ISBN: 978-0-47205-599-9

Rosenthal’s “The State You See: How Government Visibility Creates Political Distrust and Racial Inequality” is a compelling and insightful analysis of the U.S. government’s role in people’s lives and how that role often varies depending on a person’s race. Like many books on racial inequality in the U.S., most of the analysis focuses on differences between Black and White U.S. citizens. Also, like many books on the U.S. government’s disparate treatment of Black and White individuals, Rosenthal emphasizes how these differences create more division and exacerbate injustice. What is unique about Rosenthal’s book is that he draws