

ȘERBAN ADELA, *Societal Security and Insecurity*, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2013, 158 pages

The book brings an important theoretical contribution to the understanding of a relatively new field of research: societal security studies. The author develops a new key of apprehending the connection between our psychosocial morphological structure and our status of security in different social contexts, with innovative elements and a completely new approach. I decided to review this book because in my view it is a milestone, a must, for researchers in social theory, community studies and societal security research. And because it has the disadvantage of being written in Romanian, instead of English, unfortunately facing a limited distribution in the circle of the scholars interested in those topics.

In the literature, societal security is approached mainly as a distinct component of internal security, complementary to the strategic security (military and intelligence), whose focus is the security of the structural elements of society. The generally used approach in the field is rather descriptive, without notable theoretical insights. This book makes a theoretical leap, proposing a set of explanatory theses for the conditions of structural insecurity in modern societies, bringing in support theoretical frameworks from various sub-disciplinary fields of social sciences. The main idea of the book is that societal insecurity comes from a social construction of the societal frames not harmonized with human psycho-cognitive design. The image of the *stranger* and the fear of the social unknown (the engines of societal insecurity) are dangerously amplified by the compression of the social distances and the speed of exposure to a random unknown, characteristic feature of the modern living frames. Our cities, our organizations, our social patterns of mobility, our melting socio-cultural boundaries, our relations between states put the people in a social environment that very often stretch human cognitive limitations and accelerate fear and rejection of *the other*, fueling pools of disorganized social emotions that configure an insecure social environment and can erupt into episodes of intense societal insecurity.

The book proposes a model of analysis the social factors and contexts generating insecurity starting from the social fear. The author argues for the idea that the feeling of security is directly related to the structuring of the social environment one people is exposed so that his psycho-cognitive functions can

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internalize it. Starting from Dunbar's model, the author reconstructs the connection between the concentric sphere of human social relations and a territorial correspondent. Similar to each layer of relational social intensity that has a limiting minimum-maximum range, so does the human ability to perceive territory as "safe". Same things happened with social memory. Author explains that people tend to perceive and assimilate unequally the social space, the physical space, the time or the social memory, their experience being concentrated in a cut-out organized in circles of intensity. If these circles are collapsing, they can no longer assimilate the social inputs properly and cannot internalize the exterior contexts as safe.

The book explores these theoretical points following the historical process of establishing this macrocontext of insecurity, pointing out the important aspects for understanding the course of transition to modern social system. The author starts from the model of social morphology specific to archaic societies, which, in the absence of a superior organized capacity for intervention in the social realm, represents a mirror of how the social space is reshaped in direct and maximal connection to our cognitive limitations. The second part of the book is an analytical approach on the transitional process to the modern and post-modern constructed social system, pointing out its paradigm errors in relation to the function of societal security.

The author concludes the book with a bibliographic list organized thematically, offering support to those readers interested in certain aspects approached or developed within the chapters. The bibliography includes twelve sections covering significant thematic areas or research issues.

The major disadvantage of the book is that it is very dense in terms of content. Although written in an accessible language, the book is not one that can be easily read, some topics requiring specialized preparation so that the meanings can be properly understood. Very often, the author is opening topics connected to the central idea of the book that she does not develop later, but only mentions it transiently. Perhaps this is an invitation addressed to the readers to elaborate their own problematization, or simply ideas that will be developed in future works.

*Societal Security and Insecurity* is not an ordinary book, but one challenging readers into a complex comprehension exercise, revealing connections between social elements that are not usually joined in explanatory theoretical frames. The book is innovative in terms of theoretical approach, giving to the readers the openness to look at the topic of societal insecurity and social fear through a combined perspective: morphological, ethnological, socio-historical and political.

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