Innes: Security Bonds

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Abstract: Risk in society is a pertinent concept of late modernity. Most elements of our social and interpersonal lives are in some way linked to concerns about safety, security and fear of harm. As a consequence, we spend a great deal of time engaged in emotional, physical and economic processes that facilitate our safety. Whether this be through purchasing anti-theft devices, or subscribing to self-defense training courses; participating in neighbourhood-watch schemes or altering our behavior to prevent susceptibility to victimization, all demonstrate an inherent pre-occupation with risk and perceived danger. The work presented in this paper offers an in-depth socio-criminological analysis focusing on the issue of citizens insecurity, and proposes an original interpretative paradigm emerging from findings on the INNES (Intimate Neighborhood Strengthening) European Project. A presentation of the idiographic and nomothetic motivations and conditions influencing and predicting social fears and insecurities over the last two decades is discussed, with the presentation of the new interpretative model, 'Social Cobweb Theory'. This model focuses on solidarity and on the strengthening of intimate neighborhood bonds and argues that these aforementioned concepts function as an effective approach in lowering citizens' perceptions of individual insecurities and risk.

Keywords: INNES, citizen security, solidarity, social bonds, risk.

INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Over the last two decades, being, living and feeling 'secure' have increasingly become a matter of collective and individual concern (Visser, Scholte & Scheepers, 2013). A clear and coherent interpretation of the terms 'security' and 'risk' are difficult to place within the various criminological and psychological frameworks, however have frequently been focused on the personal and introspective meaning within a criminal context (Hope & Sparks, 2000). In reference to 'security' with respect to the risk of criminal victimisation, one must consider how to reduce fear of crime and crime-related insecurity, which this paper intends to address.

The manner in which agents within society interact and behave, individually and within group processes has drastically changed with the advances in technology, cyberspace and social networking (Amichai-Hamburger, 2005). Perceived notions of safety and security in the virtual world take on new meanings in the real world, influencing our actions, decisions and behaviours (Prensky, 2001). As a consequence, citizens of any contemporary society may be more vulnerable to crime and victimisation than they believe (Rader, May & Goodrum, 2007). The 'perception of insecurity' is in part a product of the virtual and cyber world; where artefacts of criminality may not feel real, and thus may lead to a collective relinquishing of cognitive and behavioural defences, which in turn can may us that much more vulnerable (Wall, 2008). Therefore, it is of critical importance to re-connect, or re-establish our understanding and recognition of risk, security and the factors that influence them. In doing so this may assist with increasing individual and collective perceptions and embodiments of safety and security.

The philosophy of the INNES[1] project consists of an attempt at activating those collective social actions and mechanisms of solidarity which seemingly have been impaired by modern society and technology. This is of the utmost importance for a range of sectors in modern-day society. What needs to be understood is how to support and facilitate processes within human interactions and cognitions that are influenced by both real and perceived notions of crime and disorder. For example, dispelling the concept of 'fear of crime' which within modern victimology labels the individual in a similar manner to an actual victim of crime, thus alleviating some of the anxieties and fears that individual may have (Morgan, 1983). Safety and security for people and places can be achieved by utilising and equipping individuals and communities into becoming active players of these aforementioned

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(...) aut invisa Minervae laxos in foribus suspendit aranea casses.
Virgil, Georgics, Book Four, 246/247
(...) the spider, hated by Minerva, / hangs wide nets across doorways.

concepts, for themselves and for the wider community, by engaging them in support and solidarity projects directed at real 'victims' of crime.

Project INNES therefore focuses on the lack of social relations within urban environments, and on the criminal victimization processes that these lack of relations and bonds presumably influence. The situation in Mantua and Pegognaga, which are those under investigation in the current study, on paper would be believed to have all the features of well-bonded communities however fear of crime, insecurity and harm to oneself still exists. Therefore, within the larger remit of this project, the identification of a shared understanding of bonds and interpersonal relations to ones fellow community members with a familiar and known narrative is important. The findings within the paper from Project INNES attempt to highlight some of these trends and concepts within a larger, innovative and theoretical framework and focus on the reductions of fear.

Fear

Fear is a human feeling, an emotion with varying degrees of manifestation across situations and between people (Bush, Sotres-Bayon & LeDoux, 2007). Each one of us measures fear based on our own experiences. Fear, however, is also the result of a cultural and social process which may be reinforced by the need to experience events directly (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). From a sociological perspective, fear may be considered as 'insecurity' or 'susceptibility to risk' (Hope & Sparks, 2000). Insecurity can be a condition in which an individual, regardless of the stimuli, demonstrates an adverse reaction through their behaviour, which may be characterized by fear. In the instance where individuals are living in under constant insecurity, this now becomes pathological, and 'insecurity' morphs into disorder, such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress following an assault or burglary (Hanslmaier, 2013; Kushner, Riggs, Foa & Miller, 1993).

Insecurity entrenched within society however would not be considered pathological because any society that has fully developed insecurity as a way to adapt to increasing fears and reporting of crime, for example, or the perceived threat of terrorism, is this a society that has adopted an alternative rationality and a different form of social cohesion. In a sense, this is a self-serving society where fear is a tool for society to perpetuate and preserve itself (Bourke, 2006). Fear then becomes contagious, acting on a level where some of the rules for understanding reality cease to function, and thus may lead to irrational beliefs, thoughts and behaviours (Ogden, 1995).

Fear of crime specifically, and the construction of a range of insecurities is not a recent phenomenon (Hale, 1996). Although the concept and embodiment of 'Fear of crime' through victimisation surveys is relatively new and has integrated itself within the larger annals of victimology and policy (Skogan, 1987), our inner fear of crime has been around since the beginning of modern societies.

Crime-related fear and insecurity attracts public attention to an unjustifiable degree, through over-exposure in both real and fictional media's (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). To say that crimes are not committed, or that they are committed less frequently, does not reassure anyone. In Italy, the overall crime rate has been decreasing during the past fifty years. Nonetheless, we continue to remain fearful of attack or assault. Certain types of crime follow an uneven trend: their rates decrease, increase, stabilize and then begin fluctuating again. Instead of fuelling fears and moral panics about crime and anti-social behaviour, we should attempt and raise knowledge (about facts and reality) and facilitate strong, positive social encounters. This would provide the foundations of building barriers and support for citizens against fears and subjective weakness and propensity to victimisation (Brunton-Smith, Sutherland & Jackson, 2013).

NOT WITHOUT FEAR, BUT WITH LESS FEAR

According to researchers of the Institute of Criminology of Mantua, to strengthen neighbourhood bonds means to focus on those social measures which target both individual and collective needs, while fostering real solidarity. The key agents in this process are citizens (both individually and or as parts of groups) and representative social institutions such as health, education and justice.

Solidarity involves acknowledging the needs of others, which in turn instils or inspires a sense of support and or helpfulness in the minds of others, and a sense of accomplishment to the self (Fetchenhauer & Dunning, 2006). It may trigger active sympathetic behaviours and concrete actions in both the person experiencing it as well as receiving it (Turner, 1967). In doing so, it can create, maintain and strengthen social bonds.

Social bonds, weak or strong, constitute the essential framework of any societal harmony (Sampson & Laub, 1990). The lack of social bonds turns communities and relationships into fragile associations in which individuals and groups are disconnected and only kept together by competing interests and power dynamics (Rebellon, 2002); the polarisation and differentiation of individuals and groups within any society finds its roots in control, not in the equal distribution of responsibility. It seems that fear has become the foundation of modern society. To fight fear, we need to invest and strengthen these aforementioned social bonds. If they have entirely fractured, then these need to be re-built and offer a new underlying structure. The idea is that a foundation of social bonds should be identified and utilised or developed and strengthened until it they are common place.

A sympathetic society is an open society: it is a society in which, one acknowledges the plurality of human behaviour and the fundamental factors of resilience and vulnerability that bring people together. Knowledge and identification of these common needs, whilst recognising individual differences, may serve as the foundation for planning reinforcing programmes and provisions for diverse and encompassing communities.

Project INNES proposed to analyse the role of solidarity in neighbourhood relations, in connection with fear of crime and insecurities linked to criminality. In this sense, 'neighbourhood solidarity' represents a small-scale implementation of the more general principle of solidarity that inspired the work. Project INNES applies a 'Neighbourhood Watch'[2] paradigm critically to the understanding and embodiment of social cohesion, bonds and community insecurities. The element of 'watching', with roots in the panopticon and surveillance (Wilson, 1986) implies important and evocative meanings: some are positive, when related to preventive measures for crime and anti-social behaviour however semantically, the term does suggest a static idea of social bonds; the surveillance element 'freezes' certain situations, removing the dynamism of 'watching', which is present in social actions and relationships. According to INNES researchers, it is important to strengthen this dynamic

concept of 'watching', re-branding it within a framework of community partnership, reciprocal benefit and social cohesion. In turn, this is important for preventing victimisation and decreasing fear of crime in our communities. Crime is an inevitable consequence of modern society. Durkheim stated that crime is both normal and necessary, and consequentially, the probability of being victimised will never be entirely reduced (Cohen & Machalek, 1994). Affirming this and learning to live with this concept is important, as is the knowledge that one is able to count on support and help from the community can reassure us that, if, unfortunately, we were to become victims ourselves, we have assistance. Knowing that a crime against property does not only involve the perpetrator and his victim, but other people as well, who were not personally affected but will do their part in supporting the victim in the aftermath, creates solidarity and bonds, together with relationships (McCold, 1996).

Neighbourhood solidarity, as utilised by INNES, is not a revival of the old concept of a meddling neighbourhood, watching strangers from behind closed curtains. On the contrary, it means knowing that, when you empathize with others and are ready to do something for them, you can count on reciprocity when you need it.

INNES promoted meetings with citizens across its duration, during which these ideas were discussed and people were encouraged to face their fears and anxieties; to identify the true nature of their insecurities by overcoming their subjectiveness; and to think of what to do and how to do it, should the need arise. The aim was developing support initiatives to establish bonds between people, and in doing so, propose a new and innovative theoretical model in understanding social bonds and alleviating risks in our day to day lives (Puccia *et al*., 2015).

BEYOND THE NET: THE MYTH OF ARACHNE AND THE SOCIAL COBWEB MODEL

To observe society's individual and group behaviours requires one to analyse the nature interpersonal relationships: bonds between individuals have loosened but this does not mean that they disappeared or are no longer of importance. They have simply changed. Therefore to strengthen the relational foundation of these bonds, and by basing it on the real, actual meetings of people and groups in contemporary society, could help to develop better impressions and feelings of safety and security.

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[2]Neighbourhood Watch is the final step in the new policies aimed at developing engagement. It started in the 1960s in America and it was conceived as a movement promoting the involvement of citizens in the prevention and control of crime (Titus, 1984). It originated from an UK program (Bennet *et al*., 2008).

The myth of Arachne tells the tale of a woman whom ultimately loses her freedom and individuality to a goddess. In the myth, a woman named Arachne defeats the goddess Athena in a weaving contest. However, as a punishment for disobeying authority and offending Athena with her arrogance, Arachne is turned into a spider destined to weave for all eternity.

Human behaviour is a composite of good and evil; questionable morals; and Id, Ego and Super-ego, with drives, instincts and desires (Sagan, 1988). The space for social relations, as well as the boundaries of our psychological identity, is determined by these varying constructs, travelling along a spectrum that is heavily dependent on situational variables, learning and experience (Ajrouch, Hakim-Larson & Fakih, 2015). When speaking about security, we tend to choose and observe one extremity, for obvious social reasons. Attention to offenders and on the danger and risk they pose us has always been greater and aimed toward the suppression of their traits, conditions, impulses and pathologies that drive their behaviour. Although focusing on the individual is part of the solution in alleviating fears and anxieties of crime and victimisation, it is only part of the narrative and solution. Perpetrators of crime, victims of crime and society are interdependent, all playing key roles in a complex process.

For more than twenty years, some social problems have been analysed with a 'Net' model: to create a net means to set up formal and informal institutional bonds, which can provide weak subjects with support and means to regain individual and social autonomy. In this sense, the public and/or private roles of each player would be instrumental in achieving our goal: this would also mean, for instance, respect for victims of crime. In terms of insecurities linked to criminality, to create a net would involve three main components: support for the victims; crime prevention (inclusive of the intervention and rehabilitation of offenders); and the (re)structuring of social bonds and cohesion. In theory, the image of a net (Figure **1**) is perfect for this process and helpful in pursuing its goal. According to INNES, it demonstrates a potential limitation that must be addressed and is discussed below.

The main feature of the net in Figure **1** is its threads, knotted to each other, which enable the aforementioned processes to take place. Yet, the knots themselves can render the net ineffective. Each knot of the net is a thoroughfare: it can be formal and institutional or informal, a place where people can
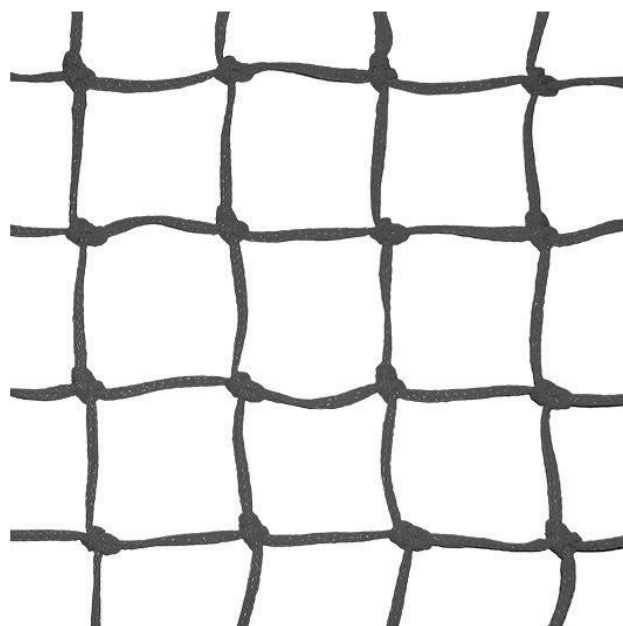

Figure 1:

receive support or be diverted elsewhere; also, other threads and new opportunities branch off from each knot.

Potentially, a social process with knots is an obstacle course: the knot is a bottleneck and one's ability to navigate and 'breakthrough' is limited. Knots are a fundamental element of a net and of its structure, and are essential for its purpose and strength (which aims at developing support and protection processes, prevention, control and social cohesion). They can, however, lead to blockages that would frustrate individuals and complicate the process. In this case resources, energies and time would be depleted and thus weaken the net. Figure **2** illustrates these risks: the individual that must navigate the path from 'A' to 'B' could be diverted, when passing through knots, and may never reach either destination.

It is hence why we propose a new model, which will be discussed within the findings section of this paper.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research used a range of social scientific methods in order to capture as rich and complete data as possible. This involved a method of triangulation, whereby different methods were used for slightly different data capturing exercises, but at the benefit of each other. The limitations of one would be complimented by the strengths of others. The first work stream involved a criminological review of the literature.
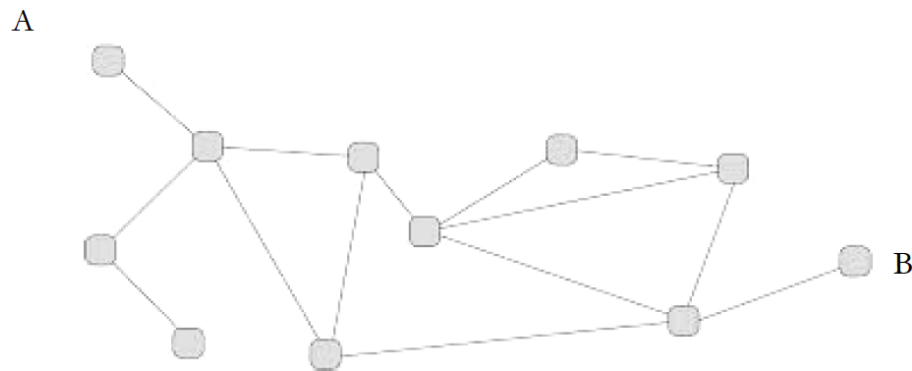
A

B

Figure 2:

The literature review focused on national and European urban society and security. This included utilizing search engines such as GOOGLE SCHOLAR, PsycData and Hein Online as well as archival data. Search terms was also collected on information about urban crime; crime reporting; criminal injuries; offender-victim encounters; citizen-institutional encounters (i.e. victim support, police, health care); 'broken windows' and neighbourhood decay; urban planning and crime; neighborhood watch; social cohesion; and social bonds. A variety of permutations and combinations of these concepts were used at the discretion of the research team and agreed through discussion amongst the consortium. An emphasis on critical evaluation within much of the work, and how it could contribute to some of the issues discussed in this paper was a primary focus. The literature review was published on the IJCIS in Italian and then into four other languages (Bardi, 2013). The data collection was promoted by the Cabinet of the Prefect of Mantua that provided 6 months' worth of crime data for the province of Mantua and of Mantua City, as well as of Pegognaga. Data was collected also through participating local police forces that were able to provide current additional archival information.

In addition to the literature and archival data, key interviews were undertaken within the communities with project stakeholders. These included critical individuals such as the Heads of local Police of Mantua, Pegognaga, and other colleagues within the public institutions with a focus on security and welfare fields. Additionally, interviews at neighbourhood level were undertaken. The INNES program was implemented in 3 districts in Mantua and 1 in Pegognaga, so prior to commencement, the researchers interviewed 4-5 significant people in each neighbourhood. The semi-structured interviews were administered by phone or directly and are available on the project website (www.innesproject.eu).

In order to include citizens at neighbourhood levels (in the 4 districts), the following tools/instruments were applied:

(i)   *Citizen Victimization Survey* (13 items, multiple choice) delivered to a large sample of citizens in Mantua and Pegognaga, in order to detect hotspots for urban and social decay; where start the programme;

(ii)   *Meetings and (informal) interviews with community leaders*, usually linked to a citizen committees or non-profit organisations;

(iii)   *Organization of citizens meetings "Districts Without Fear"*: 'town hall' type meetings, with the research team as facilitators. Citizens were encouraged to attend, converse and discuss with neighbours their fear, anxiety and problems. Together they were empowered to collectively achieve way to pro-socially respond (Sandri *et al.*, 2014);

(iv)   *Citizen Liveability Survey* (5 items, multiple choice) delivered to citizens participating in the above described meetings in Mantua and Pegognaga, in order to assess their feelings and perceptions about security and socio-environmental living context;

(v)   *Community Empowerment Intervention*, in order to put in practice negotiated solutions to fight insecurity and community degradation (Sandri, Morselli & Puccia, 2015).

Some of those activities were implemented in parallel and repeated multiple times. The surveys were sent out into the communities or administered in face to face situations at the meetings/interventions discussed (n=2785 with 2349 being returned or completed). In terms of the citizens meetings and community

empowerment interventions, over 2250 participants in the two communities were reached over the course of the project, with the administration of approximately 100 workshops in schools, city hall's, police stations and NGOs. These included thematically linked sessions and the provision of information linked to the overall finding of this project. Topics such as cohabitation in society; decision making and routine-activities; fear of crime; restorative justice; risk in society; community service and public involvement were all addressed.

The analysis of the citizen victimization survey, meetings and interventions are presented in two articles: '*INNES: Neighbours without Fear*' edited by FDE Institute Press and the current paper. A deeper discussion of findings is included in a new monograph (forthcoming). The FDE's research team is writing the manuscript with the aim for it to be a useful resource for policy makers, researchers and community social welfare and local authority employees.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Bringing the various strands of research together demonstrates the difficulty of social integration among actors who inhabit a complex system such as the city and its inner-segments (districts). Being and feeling safe are thematically associated with the lowest risk of victimisation. Security, according to the discussions with our multiple participants, is directly linked to both real and perceived feelings/experience of victimization; the higher the number of crimes or one's perception of delinquency, the less safe people feels. The victimization survey findings as well as the archival data on crime supported this idea across both regions. The feeling of insecurity can complicate human relations, whilst making it difficult to feel bonded and attachment to a place, such as your neighbourhood or city. Fear of others or fear of certain places may be forcing people to seek isolation thus leading their lives in more protective spaces as opposed to freely operating within their communities. If people suddenly feel distant or removed from their communities, it is likely due to lack of association of feelings of affiliation. Locations within ones community will suddenly be labelled as anti-social, dangerous or risk-prone; not necessarily because they are but due to the manner in which individuals have independently yet *en masse*, ceased interacting and integrating.

The surveys focus on perception of security, confirmed a need to address in detail behaviours assisting and hindering social connections, and the

urban conditions that create anxiety through inducing a perception of insecurity. The perceived security/ insecurity of the respondents emerged from the questionnaires, when sorting the incidence of positive and negative answers about the routes and places favoured or avoided, or the fears experienced at home, or in poorly lit and sparsely frequented areas. Mapping illustrated these critical issues graphically, highlighting the situations requiring attention. Analysis of disused buildings and areas induced us to draw a detailed inventory of disused property in the whole municipal area of Mantova, with the aim of highlighting critical security problems, and providing sample experiences for future reference for local policies of land use for urban regeneration.

The knowledge of the people and the appropriation - even symbolically – of foreign places produces important changes in individual and collective feelings. Being active with the community process transforms conditions and modalities of being and feeling safe for the individual. Everyone must be part of this process and participate (Sandri *et al*., 2014). These concepts and themes are supported by a range of actions and evidence that have since occurred in the researched areas:

➢ Organization of autonomous neighbourhood meetings in Mantua and Pegognaga (2014-2015-ongoing);

➢ Urban regeneration by citizens of several degraded places within their districts (2015-ongoing);

➢ Organization by citizens of street and community parties (2014-2015-ongoing);

➢ Establishment of the Coordination of Lunetta's District Associations www.retelunetta.org (2015-ongoing);

➢ Strengthening of the cooperation with the Coordination of the Pegognaga's Network of Associations https://www.facebook.com/consultadipegognaga (2015-ongoing);

➢ Designing of 3 new proposals on INNES, in cooperation with more than 20 municipalities of the province of Mantua and Cremona and linked networks and 'social cobwebs' (2016).

In terms of community empowerment, we estimate that for the areas in which the research was conducted:

➤ Increase of citizen participation in terms of welfare, safety and security;

➤ Increase of financial resources linked of welfare, safety and security (3 million euros between 2015-2017);

➤ Increase of reports by citizens to Victim Support Centre of Mantua (+20%, 2015). This shows a higher sensitivity towards victims of crime and an increasing solidarity of the community;

➤ Increased reporting by police officers and social workers to the Victim Support Centre of Mantua (+10%, 2015). This demonstrates a higher sensitivity towards those who are victims of crime and an improvement of capacity building after the INNES Trainings.

The project has not had the opportunity to follow-up citizens, associations and public institutions until now due to lack of resources. Regardless, the research team is interested in developing this study to provide follow-up data within participating districts. As a consequence, additional work and research is being prepared.

The INNES research team investigated possible alternatives to the nets (see Figures **1** and **2**), that could maintain their potential while discarding their apparent negative, dangerous and ineffective features. The idea came from debating facts and existing realities with the mutli-disciplinary participants across the duration of the project.

The first step was finding a connection with a distinct discipline, which provided an interesting starting point for the analysis of the problem. Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) developed his fundamental equations on quantum mechanics, whilst attempting to determine the spatial location of an electron to an atomic nucleus at any given point in time during. Returning home one evening through a dark park he noticed that, in the light cones of the few street lamps that shed light in that darkness, the shadow of a passer-by would appear (Rovelli, 2014). The same observation is important for INNES, and serves a clear metaphor in understanding where the weakness of our net lies. The shadows passing under the light represent the social actors; members of the community who are the victims, the offenders, and society; wee only notice them when they happen to be in a light cone, which is our space of institutional and collective attention. Where are the players when they step out of the light?

This is the primary problem: to develop a system in which, at any given time, anyone could count on a net of social relations that could control for exclusion and isolation. The structure should not be based on knots that could create 'bottlenecks' which may impede the passage of social agents and prevent preventative, intervention and rehabilitative processes. In our metaphor, the knots are the light cones of the street lamps in Heisenberg's dark park: the role of people in social processes remains unknown to us, because we only notice them when they are in the spotlight. We do not know what happens to the shadows before or after they pass in the light cones.

The crucial point for INNES is to understand whether a reference model can be developed that could put into practice the idea of a social structure beyond the net concept and, therefore, beyond the risk of knots becoming hurdles, a framework that could always connect people in social processes. The model, upon which INNES's idea is based, is a spider's cobweb. Cobwebs are amazing structures and not only for their ability to bear proportionally grater loads than their nominal capacity. In terms of fears, risks and insecurity, the potential advantage of the cobweb model is clear: it evenly distributes the weight, making fears and insecurities less aggressive, less violent and less insuperable for an individual; who in turn could share the load of these fears and anxieties with the community. Cobwebs are also interlaced structures in which threads are connected without the need of knots, creating perfect geometries. Therefore, creating bonds and relations based on a cobweb model, in which the threads represent the individuals (but also the solidarity that would distinguish them once again, and the knowledge of others, of things and of reality), assists with direct connections and relations.
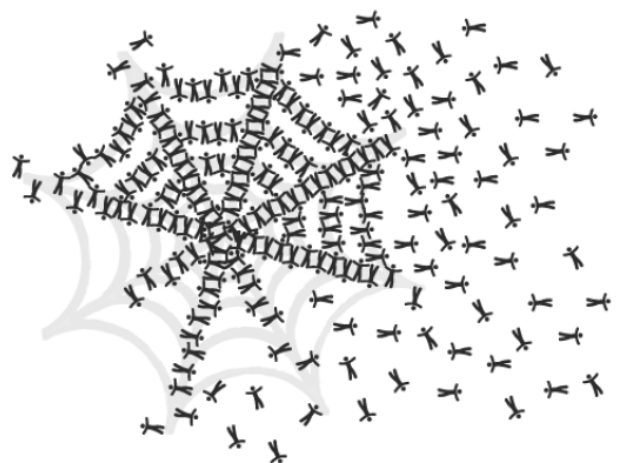

Figure 3:

At the heart of this system lies the spider: in the social cobweb, these are people. In nature, spiders are sensible and can feel change in the cobweb's balance if an insect gets caught, even if they are not in the centre of the web physically. The web's threads, being without knots, allow the signal to pass through unimpeded, with no risk for something to prevent the flow of information. In the same way, the social cobweb receives and forwards any call for help or support. If the net is damaged, a new knot must be created to reconnect the broken parts: a cobweb, on the other hand, can be repaired by the spider, that is, by the individual. The spider mends the bonds by working directly on the damage, without knotting the threads.

CONCLUSION

We all are threads in the web: everyone has a connection to each other; each of us can have, give and receive information, influence and impact each other. Social bonds, relationships and associations are of vast importance to any functional society. The social cobweb is a pro-active model, based on the idea of neighbourhood solidarity. It attempts to interpret social behaviours in urban communities and restores the (individual and group) actors' right/duty of self-determination by means of their own community's engagement. As we mentioned above, in the myth of Arachne, a mortal woman was condemned to weave for all eternity because she challenged and offended a Goddess. If our destiny is to weave, we should try to do so remembering that each piece of the web is another. However, this 'other' must be for us, what we must be for him: Security and solidarity.

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