Safety First: Improving perceived safety in the Gillisbuurt in Delft

Introduction
The Gillis-neighbourhood is a problem district in Delft which is part of the 40+ neighbourhood plan of the government. One of the problems named in these plans is a lack of perceived safety. This is also the case for the Gillis-neighbourhood. Not much is known about how urbanists can change the perceived safety in the public space. Research has been done on ways to improve perceived safety and these have been implemented in a design for the Gillis-neighbourhood. A lot of literature comes from the field of environmental psychology. The main theories that have been used are Defensible space (Newman, 1972), privacy zoning (van Dorst, 2005) and the Guidebook on safe design and maintenance (Lopez, Luten, Woldendorp & van Zwam, 2008).

Analysis
An analysis on the physical aspects of perceived safety has been made based on the guidelines given by the guidebook. Overgrown vegetation causes a lack in perceptibility in the inner area of the block. This does not only diminish the perceptibility but it also blocks natural surveillance from the surrounding dwellings on the inner area. The dwellings in the Gillis-neighbourhood are orientated towards the outside of the block, so that there are almost no used front doors in the inner area.

Design
In the design the inner area is divided into defensible spaces which connect to the surrounding dwellings. This reinforces the bond between the dwellings, and the inner area which in term facilitates natural surveillance on the inner area from within the dwellings. These defensible spaces are created by placing dwellings on strategic places. Adding dwellings can also make the plan more financially feasible. By strongly reducing the amount of vegetation natural surveillance is even more encouraged. The division in different areas also produces a central area for the neighbourhood. The community garden which is now located outside of the neighbourhood is placed within the central area. The social cohesion which the gardens produce can be improved by placing these gardens within the inner. This might also attract the residents of the care home to come into the area instead of staying at a distance from it. The connection is made by a new path which connects the care home with the central area and the green areas surrounding the neighbourhood.

Conclusion
Natural surveillance has been given more chance of success by dividing the inner area into smaller areas which can be seen as different territories. This can influence the perceived safety in a positive way. These territories can also improve the place attachment that people will have with their neighbourhood. By connecting the neighbourhood to its surrounding in a better way might attract more people into the inner area. But it will mainly open it up to other residents making it an integrated safer part of the Buitenhof.

Literature