
MAPPING THE REALMS OF THE SOLDIERS

Cartographies of Military Landscapes in Skopje and Bitola

Mladen Stilinović¹⁵⁴

Bieke Cattoor

Bruno De Meulder

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Abstract

This paper presents the process and the results of a cartographic exploration on the interactions between the military and the civil society. It features two interrelated study-cases : the cities of Skopje and Bitola, both characterised by consequent periods of war and strong army presence. Frequent and often abrupt changes of occupying military power combined with the local effects of ever-evolving military strategy, altogether having a dramatic impact upon their urban landscapes and the overall territorial settings.

The proposed method of exploration includes the study and processing of archival sources as well as the creation of novel interpretative maps. The former includes a critical analysis of historical and contemporary cartographies, taking into account the specific agency of mapping and its embedded politics. As for the later, two series of eight maps each are created, offering a diachronic as well as a synchronic reading of the history of the local militarised landscapes.

Through the simultaneous deconstruction of archival maps and the construction of interpretative maps, the research approaches the interaction of the military and the city in a twofold way: on the one hand revealing process of appropriation through the act of mapping -in which the specific agency of the military plays a significant role, and on the other hand constructing a palimpsests of urban and territorial army-related narratives that enables the formation and transmission of the city's memory.

¹⁵⁴ Independent researcher, Avenue des Rogations 2/42, 1200 Brussels, Belgium. Email: mladen.stilinovic@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Territories are being continually re-shaped, adapted and super-inscribed by many competing processes and forces. The impact of military planning and military operations on the territory is mostly of a brutal nature: the initial layout of many towns has been greatly influenced by military considerations, and many cities and territories have experienced the destructive impact of war. Yet, as warfare is becoming 'modern', the spatial patterns of military presence are shifting: military apparatuses start moving out of sight, leaving behind vast remains of the 'glorious' past, such as walls and fortifications, as well as abandoned barracks and training grounds. Many military infrastructures are rendered obsolete, landscapes are left scarred. How can one make sense of these both shifting and obscure realms of soldiers and their entanglement with the city and the territory?

The notion of the 'territory as palimpsest', coined by Corboz, allows for a reading of the landscape through its multiple layers and their different representations (Corboz 1983) – maps being very important ones. This research uses the method of cartographic exploration to dig into this military palimpsest, while at the meantime adding another layer to it. The cartographic exploration entails both the studying and processing of archival sources as well as the creation of a series of novel interpretative mappings. The former is a de-construction: it includes a critical analysis of historical and contemporary cartographies, taking into account the specific agency of mapping and its embedded politics. The later is a re-construction involving the imagination of a novel (cartographic) narrative.

Militarised landscapes and the changing relation of the military to the city and the territory are the subject, the Western Balkans are the context of the exploration. This context is rather peripheral to the existing scholarship on militarised spaces: as we follow the events of the last century, the Western Balkans are alternately situated in the margins of both an 'occidental' and 'oriental' focus. The spatial impact of a diverse range of structural military transformations are explored through two interrelated study-cases: the cities of Skopje and Bitola, both situated in the present-day Republic of Macedonia. Both are characterised by frequent and often abrupt changes of resident or occupying military power, the definition of which depends upon the historiographical discourse. A theoretical framework will briefly lay out how 'the military' -as a key concept – has been interpreted through our research, and furthermore, how this interpretation guided the structuring of the cartographic exploration. Further on, some methodological concerns on the method of cartographic exploration will be discussed, followed by a description of the process of producing the maps and arranging them into an appropriate atlas structure. Finally, the reader is taken on a tour of Skopje and Bitola in the examined time periods, thereby we intend to illustrate some possible readings of the explorative atlas.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Manifestations of the 'military'

The research approaches the concept of the 'military' in a twofold way, much like the description of the military being a “cyclothymic animal hibernating during peacetime and awake for war” given by Paul Virilio (Virilio 1998). Virilio's notion on 'speed' as essential to advanced warfare, is crucial to our interpretation of the evolution of military strategies over time, as well as the very act of waging war. When studying the 'hibernating' phase, Rachel Woodward's writings provided valuable insight. Woodward conceptualizes the military as being defined by its presence, rather than by its activity in terms of warfare – a notion she refers to as 'being there' (Woodward 2004). Following her approach (Woodward 2013), the alleged dichotomy between militarisation and securitization was carefully considered throughout the research (Bernazzoli and Flint 2009). In order to define the spectrum of the analysed activities, we concentrated on the military activities performed by declared armed forces. This was important when dealing with cases (i.e. periods) of asymmetric warfare, and moreover for establishing a discourse on the present-day local context as 'post-military'.

2.2 A 'non-linear' history

Finally, these two approaches were brought together using the concepts of 'non-linear' reading of history proposed by Manuel De Landa (Landa 1997), and in particular his notion of 'bifurcations'. We have worked with a historical – time framework in which periods are 'states' that have certain flow, while the passage into the next period is marked by a 'bifurcation'. In such framework, military structures are part of the 'state' by 'being there': engaging in 'peacetime' activities (which includes the preparations for war), while performing as a part of 'bifurcations': unleashing energy mainly through warfare, as well as some other actions. So, following their non-linear nature, each 'bifurcation' resulted in different military structure (or no military structure at all) as well as different urban and territorial setting. Yet, it should be noted that the case studies are always part of a larger system in which these 'reactions' take place.

The above-mentioned time framework consists of the four periods, as well as three transitions:

1. The ultimate decline of the Ottoman Empire (ca.1850-1910)

The very concept of modern military forces has its roots in the establishment of nation states in Western Europe. However, the Ottoman Empire introduced such concept of military in order to display its modernisation, while at the same time to represent its dominance over the different religious and ethnic groups (Akhund 2009).

- 1-2. The two Balkan Wars and the First World War;

2. The Interwar period – Royal Yugoslavia;

The building of a nation and the beginning of the de-Ottomanisation process both had a significant military component. Officers became an important strata of local society, while local youth was increasingly recruited by militarised associations. During this period, disciplinization was the most important military target – closely resembling the Western models discussed by Foucault (Foucault 1977).

2-3. The Second World War and the Skopje Earthquake;

3. The Cold War period – Socialist, non-aligned Yugoslavia;

During the Cold War, defensive doctrines produced militarised spaces beyond cities and into the hinterland, while prompting the development of more territorial urbanities (Farish 2003). Yet, being a non-aligned country, Yugoslavia became a society that was ever-prepared for war and so it continued to rely upon the role of the garrison cities.

3-4. The break-up of Yugoslavia and the armed conflict of 2001;

4. The present-day context – abandonment of military domains.

Nowadays, we are witnessing the emergence of 'ex-militarised' urban spaces and territories, which present themselves as a new field of scientific interest.

3. Methodology

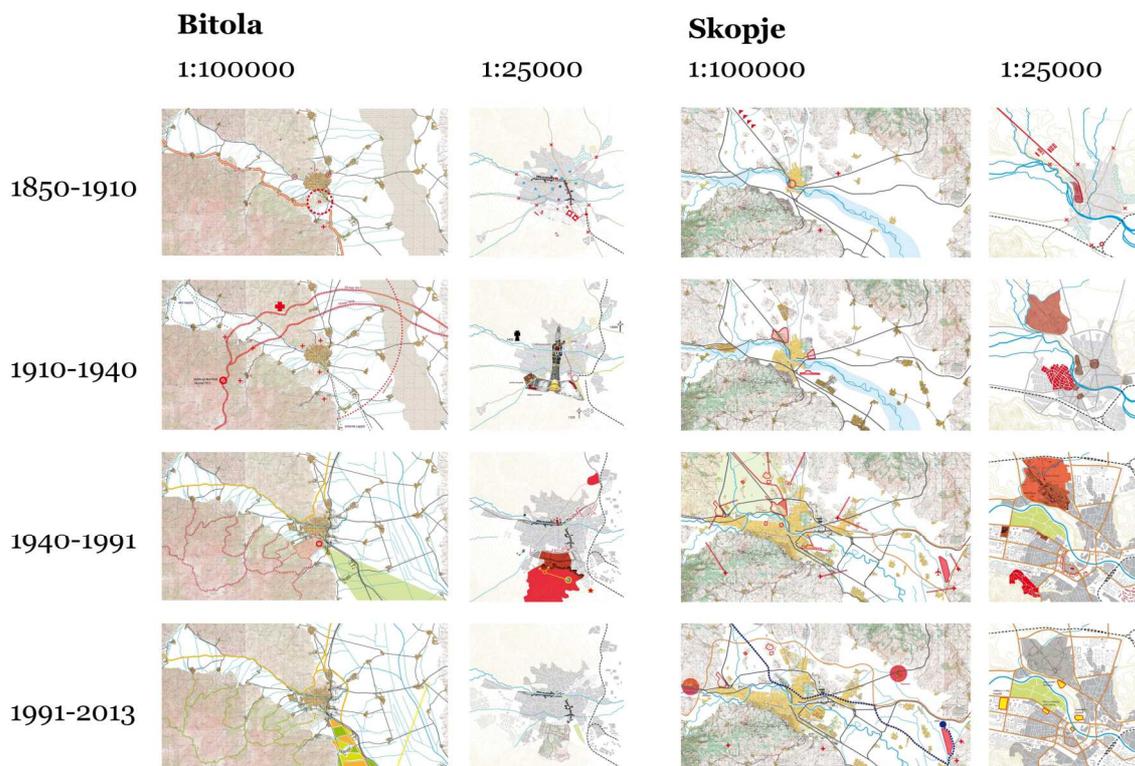
3.1 The military agency of cartography

As we set off to map the military and its presence in the landscape, we must acknowledge that the existing representations were frequently created by the very subject of our research – that is the military. Furthermore, the military has used its spatial knowledge, institutional power and societal status to influence both urban and regional planning – that is to form the landscape itself. It has been argued that modern warfare is actually made possible through maps (Wasinski 2011) and, given that much cartography was produced by military structures, we can argue that they reflect the militarised idea of the landscape. Moreover, the military often exercised control over the dissemination of cartographic knowledge until the very recent past (Postnikov 2002). When taking the existing cartographic sources under the loop, their relation with the military apparatus becomes obvious: during the archival research, we came across a number of deliberate omissions of labels, infrastructures as well as different representations of the urban structures. Yet, the decommissioning of the 'secret' designation of a number of maps allowed us to consult both Ex-Yugoslavian and Ex-Soviet maps, as well as some outdated American documents –providing a somehow multi angled perspective on the Cold War period in particular. Still, due to the presence of different military structures, archives which are in possession of valuable materials are spread out across different locations in Europe.

3.2 Structuring the narrative by structuring the atlas

In order to interpret the relations between the military and the civil society, the existing maps have been de- and re-constructed into a set of novel maps. The careful arrangement of these novel maps into an atlas raises the structuring capacities of the cartographic research well beyond the possibilities of a single map (Cattoor and De Meulder 2011, Cattoor 2013), allowing a more nuanced understanding of the mapped territory, as well as an opportunity to venture into one's own constructs. In this case, the atlas structure consists of two series of eight maps. Each of these two map series offers a diachronic reading of the history of the military landscapes, one focussing on Skopje, the other on Bitola (see Fig.1). Across these two map series, synchronous readings can be constructed that facilitate comparison of the interaction of the military and civil society across the two different sites and across scales. A metamap (term coined by Cattoor 2013) 'clarifies the inter-relatedness of the different parts (maps) composing the atlas. The metamap is not merely a top-down organizational tool, but is intended to form a basis from which the reader can start to construct his or her own interpretations of the territory' (Cattoor 2013 pp. 82).

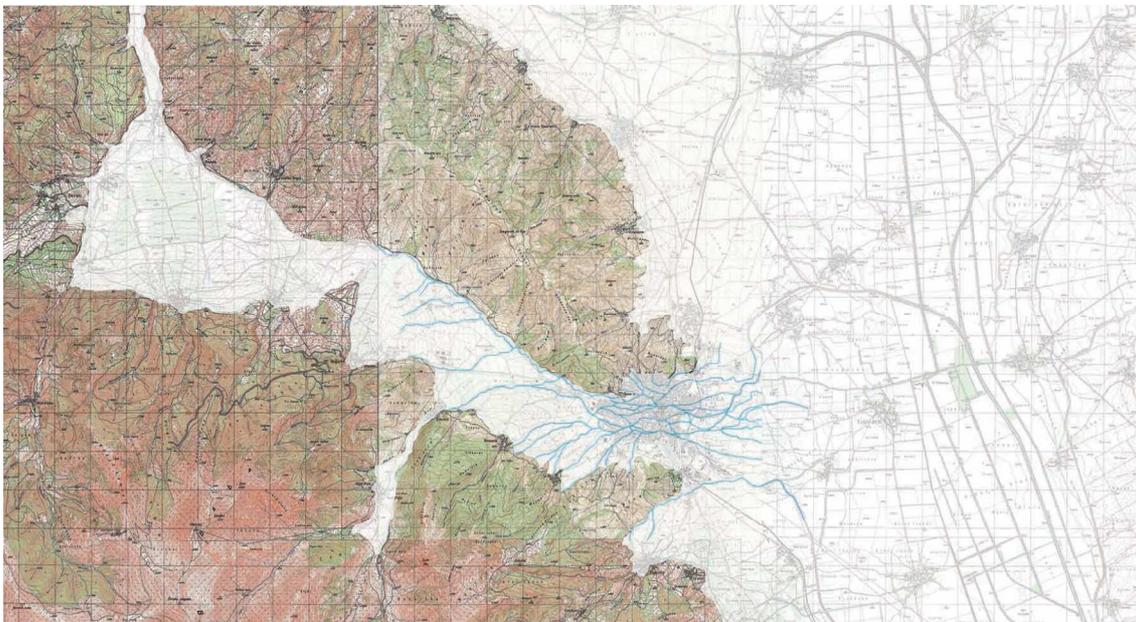
Figure 1 – Metamap



Source: the authors

Such cross-readings require a certain level of inter-operability between the maps, which is achieved by meticulously tuning the design of the single maps. Our atlas contains maps on two different scales: 1:100000 and 1:25000. The smaller scale maps frame an area of 25x15 km, while the larger scale maps frame 5x5 km. On both scales, the mapping is a methodological combination of two approaches: the editing of historic maps and the backdating of contemporary cartographic data (Wiberley 1980). This results in a 'mosaic' or an 'assemblage' of fragments from different maps – speaking both in term of their origin and date. In order to complement the novel maps, frame-cuts from existing maps were made, which could also be considered as an 'edit' of a map.

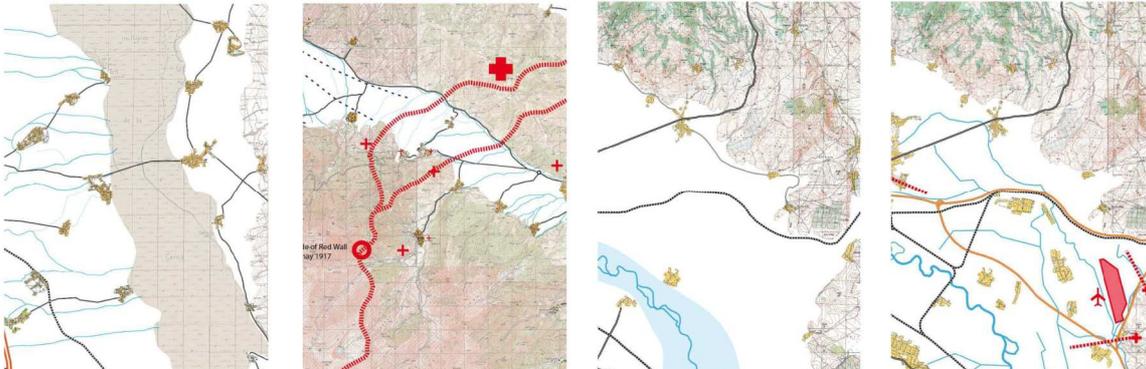
Figure 2 - **small scale maps base map (Bitola)**



Source: the authors

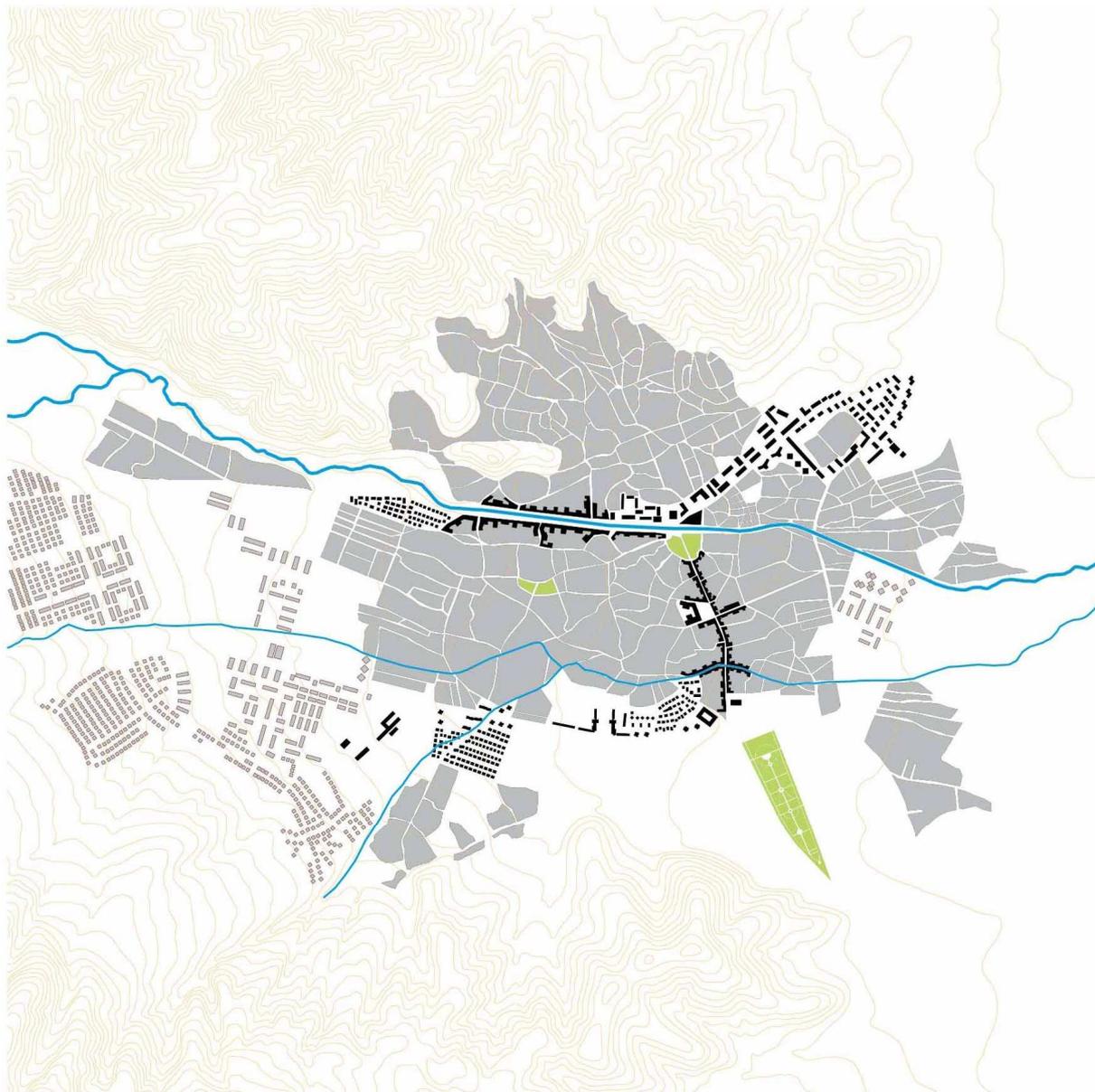
The small scale maps (1:100000) share a common base, made of cut-outs from a recent topographic map, which was edited in order to contrast the easily accessible flatlands against the steep incline of the mountains encompassing the narrow structural basins (see Fig.2). However, transforming bodies of water or wetlands were added on each map separately, either as lines or map fragments. Further on, for the footprints of settlements, fragments from a contemporary map were inserted, adjusted according to the growth through the periods. Finally, different infrastructures are drawn as lines and dots, followed by locations of relevant historic events (see Fig.3).

Figure 3 – small scale maps: details



Source: the authors

Figure 4 – large scale base map (Bitola)



Source: the authors

The large scale maps (1:25000) are produced in a way that the urban morphology becomes more visible. Opposite to the small scale maps, the topography on the large scale maps is reduced to contour lines, without an intent to trace their transformations. Urban formations are drawn uniformly: present-day satellite images and recent cadastral surveys are used as a base upon which the historic data from a variety of maps are plotted, each with its own level of preserved material quality, precision and method of projection (see Fig.4). Finally, symbols are designed to graphically represent the perceived ideological, economical or ecological rationale of the considered period (see Fig.5).

Figure 5 - large scale maps details



Source: the authors

The diachronic reading heads off with mappings of Skopje and Bitola during the last decades of the Ottoman rule. Given that this period of observation has an arbitrary beginning, these maps are conceived as a 'time immemorial' entry into narrative. Across this first period, the synchronous reading juxtaposes two types of Ottoman towns – a modernising one that was Bitola (Monastir), and a more traditional one as Skopje (Uskub). The next period's maps chart the changes in the militarised landscape that occurred during the first half of the 20th century. These range from the destructive effects of warfare and the resulting memorial spaces in and around Bitola, against the modernisation and the de-Ottomanisation of Skopje, resulting in a new image of the military and the nation state. The third set of maps describe the People's Army concept and the emerging infrastructural landscape in the second part of the 20th century. The case of Skopje is mapped within the context of the post-earthquake renewal that led to a shift in the scale of the city – and spatially transformed presence of the military. The final maps represent the present-day context, in which the military is absent and were different actors make use of the vast remains of the militarised landscapes.

4. Some possible readings

Many possible narrative lines can be constructed through the atlas, each of them adding a new layer onto the palimpsest of the city's memory. Yet, in the scope of this paper, we can only briefly illustrate some of them¹⁵⁵. Initially, military narratives are often related to very specific military urban structures and localities that were significant before the appearance of the modern military, such as the fortress of Skopje. But, in the aftermath of a 'bifurcation', the infliction of the warfare narrative onto the urban environment often takes on the form of a more dispersed 'militarised' production of space (such as the partisan guerilla tactics of the WWII). Such production of space includes zones reserved for deployment as well as military memorials, both distributed in repetitive patterns. Military actors appear to be keen on maintaining 'representational' structures in the urban imagery, such as the officer's house, while the actual military domains are often transformed into restricted areas. Still, certain 'lieux de memoires' are erased from the urban narrative, while other become re-contextualised, depending on the entanglement of military and civil society and their respective historiographies. Such example is the monumental project for the renewal of Bitola that never took place, and so the WWI narratives are virtually non-existent nowadays. On the other hand, the Occidental urban model was emulated by the new ring boulevard structure in Skopje, along an imaginary city wall that was never there historically, but that was materialised later on in Kenzo Tange's plan as a housing structure, used amongst others by higher-ranking officers.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we could say that our research provided a base for a different reading of the landscape, one in which the diverse and often conflicting aspects of militarisation became more prominent. In order to provide such reading, we developed a methodology that can include a multitude of layers and narratives. Firstly, by developing a 'non-linear' historical narrative, we were able to confront different, and seemingly contradictory, notions on the nature of the military: 'speed' and 'being there'. Secondly, we analysed an array of archival sources, taking into consideration the embedded military agency of cartography and beyond – of the urban and spatial planning institutions. Thirdly, we established a structure of an atlas along with a set of rules for inter-operability between its constituent maps in order to facilitate a more complex and nuanced, less unidirectional, reading of the territory – far outweighing the narrative potentials of a single map. This allowed us to enter the speculative process of cartographic de- and reconstruction that entails the creation of a set of new interpretative maps through a deconstruction of the existing archival material and other relevant information and observations. Finally, the structure of the atlas allows the reader to construct different readings of the palimpsest of military-related narratives. By doing so we can begin to explore how the military is

¹⁵⁵ The map collection is presented in Stilinović, Mladen; Cattoor, Bieke and De Meulder, Bruno, *Cartographic Explorations into (Ex)Military Landscapes of Skopje and Bitola*, presented at the 10th Urban and Landscape Days: Between Architecture of War and Military Urbanism conference; April 25-28 2013, Tallinn, Estonia, available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/185524521/Cartographic-Explorations-into-Ex-Military-Landscapes-of-Skopje-and-Bitola>

ever present in the landscape, both in war, in peacetime and even beyond its functional presence – continuously transforming the memory of the city.