Re-emerging landscapes: militarised territories from the Cold War period

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This paper is part of my research that investigates the large-scale remains of military activities from the Cold War period. The aim of the research is to provide a meta-perspective on the post-militarised spaces and their different developmental trajectories, that may lead to various outcomes, such as heritage status, requalifiaction or destruction. I am conducting the research on the evolution of the remains, the discourses concerning their transformation and the relevant heritage policies. Different case studies from the Belgian and the European mainland context are taken into account, where artefacts of Cold War military spaces are found within or in the immediate proximity of inhabited areas.

Throughout the history of the modern military, different warfare techniques have created a non-linear succession of distinct military spaces. Such large-scale military heritage from the past has been subject to preservation efforts as well as thorough redevelopment. This led to structures becoming urban heritage in their original form, or by undergoing subsequent transformations. However, the transformation process of the large scale Cold War military structures brings particular challenges, due to the dual nature of the military institutions in this period, that is being both 'invisible' and 'omnispresent'.

Looking at the various case studies in my research, the artefacts of Cold War military spaces are being (re)interpreted in the frameworks of different landscape transformation processes. Relating to the overall topic of this seminar, my research is presented in the light of the relevance of this research for the nowadays state of urbanism as a discipline. The paper is discussing the complex situation that arises from the perceived 'vacant' spaces and the 'disappearance' of a powerful agent such as the military. Namely, the transformation of the post-militarised structures comes in part as a result of the neo-liberal tendencies ('less state'). Furthermore, the very transformation process is a result of negotiations performed within networks that involve a myriad of actors and agencies, with often conflicting views and agendas. The main working hypothesis is that the 'non-human' agency of the material artefacts, renders these networks as flat, rather than hierarchical structures. This in turn allows both for multiple meanings to be ascribed to the artefacts, coming from actors and agencies that are usually perceived as acting from different 'levels' (local, national, global). As a consequence, the transformation policies come as a result of the process, rather than a predefined guideline.

The paper takes closer look at the transformation of the military domain in Koksijde. There, a vast area has been used by the military during few decades, resulting in significant changes to the surrounding system of settlements, while preserving certain landscape elements that were otherwise lost outside of the domain. At the present moment, there is an ongoing procedure for defining a vision as well as legal framework for the transformation of the domain that would include various non-military activities.

Introduction

The current geopolitical situation and the technological advancements are quite different from the moment that the Berlin Wall feel, now almost 30 years ago. In a nutshell, new arenas of conflict are emerging in different geographical settings, while the scenarios of a mass conflict in the European continent are giving way to other types of limited conflicts and the prospect of regions being suspended in continuous state of uncertainty. The disappearance of the clear divide between the two ideological blocks, and the acceptance of the capitalism i.e. the neo-liberalism as a default economical mode had its influence on the role of the nation state – and the military as its fundamental component Consequently, the decreasing of the public spending, along with the technological advancements have led to an increasing number of decommissioned military sites, especially in mainland Europe, where the total area of the military sites becoming 'available for development' is increasing. Such situation can is comparable to other historical periods when vast areas previously assigned to military use have been made available for urban development, creating an opportunity for an application and testing of the urban paradigms of the time. Therefore, by looking at the trajectories of the transformation of the territories that were militarized according to the doctrines of Cold War period warfare, one can obtain a better inside on the state of the urban and landscape planning theory and practice.

In the first section of the paper, I will give a more detailed description on the particularities of the above mentioned territories, as well as the material artefacts found within them. In this description I will first discuss the discourse on the 'continuous development' of the military structures. Then, I will outline few distinct spatial and material aspect of the Cold War warfare doctrines: the changing relation towards the urban areas and the double nature of 'hidden' and 'omnipresent', the multiple advancements that occurred within the period itself and the narrative of a non-occurring conflict.

Then I will provide an account of the dynamics of militarization of the territories, through a discussion of the nature of the military presence. I will argue that the result of this presence is the distinct 'militarized taskscape' that eventually becomes a part of the continuity of the landscape. I will continue by discussing the

act of abandonment, where the main hypothesis on the role of the material remains of the military presence will be further explained.

Finally, I will give a short description of the military domain in Koksijde, which is one of the case studies that my research is focusing upon. I will discuss the latest stage of developments in the transformation trajectory, in light of the previous arguments.

On the militarized territories from the Cold War

Artefacts of a continuous development

Very relevant to the topic of militarized territories and their 'heritage' in terms of material artefacts are the concepts of Manuel De Landa, who elaborates that "changes of state" occur regularly in a given system. These loses of stability are resolved by a "bifurcation", which offers the possible trajectories: upgrade or downgrade to a new stability. This continuous process results in the "mineralisations" (De Landa, 1997) - material artefacts arranged into spatial structures. In this case, the 'changes of state' are the introductions of new warfare techniques and strategies, while 'mineralisations' are the physical structures that were consequently produced. At the same time, other 'changes of state' may lead to 'mineralisations' from the previous cycles to be rendered obsolete – thus becoming subject to the transformations that are the focus of my research.

Large-scale military infrastructures from before the Cold War period have underwent various transformations that differ from each other because they all depend on different parameters, one of the most prominent being the type of warfare that the infrastructures were built for. Therefore, in each case we see the spatial implication i.e. the 'mineralisations' of a certain type of warfare at a different scale. Some of the examples are the urban impact of the castles and fortified walls of the Middle Ages and the urban fortifications of the Baroque until the 18th century. Then, the French *pré carré* has implications upon the urban dimension of the national territory, whereas the *Hollandse Waterlinie* has to do with the regional territory and the landscape dimension. Finally, the front zones of World War I had serious implications upon the landscape, while World War II produced, amongst other, the Atlantic Wall as a combined territorial and naval infrastructure. In each of these cases, we find a certain type of 'military space' that became heritage, either through preservation, further development and/or transformation (e.g. boulevards replacing urban fortifications).

Particularities of the Cold War period military infrastructures

The military infrastructures from the Cold War differ from those of the previous periods in terms of their scale, distribution and versatility. First, the military infrastructures in the Cold War period were planned and built with a very different relation to the urban areas in mind. If for centuries the military was an integral part of the city, be it through the city walls or the military districts with the casernes built as integral urban blocks, the Cold War military planners relinquished these links by organising its built structures in large-scale domains, where the single floor barrack was used as a basic module [fig.1]. The military units became both more specialised and more connected, due to the rise of the communication equipment. This prompted a decisive movement out of the urban areas and into the hinterland, as well as an increase in the areas used by the military. The military now operated within restricted areas, in order to remain 'hidden' - while retaining representational features that were both a relict of the previous periods as well as display of power: parades, Houses of the Officers etc. At the same time, the military was able to gain more knowledge of both its own as well as the territory of the enemy, which in combination with advanced weapons such as long range missiles, effectively rendered the entire planet as battlefield. This meant that the military became 'omnipresent', consequently getting institutionally involved in the decision making on various aspects of spatial and urban planning.

Second, the material artefacts of the warfare from the Cold War period have evolved over time: in the early years tendency towards 'passive' defences existed, but later on the military apparatus was forced to constantly match the abilities of the enemy, leading to the Mutual Assured Destruction (Hirst, 2005). Yet, besides the nuclear-related infrastructure, conventional military structures and technology were developed at an unprecedented pace and scale. Large infrastructures, such as airports and shipyards but also communication networks were instructed for exclusive military use. The conscription was an important element that was maintained throughout the Cold War, which in turn set out a demand for large accommodation facilities within the military domains. Furthermore, during the period of the Cold War several technological leaps have occurred, among which are miniaturisation and computerisation, as well as few generations of communicational systems (De Landa, 1991). As a consequence, the need to engineer and manufacture advanced types of weapons gave rise to the military-industrial complex, which has in turn created an ever-more entangled relation between the military and the civil society. Overall, the technological advancements

meant that infrastructures as well as entire instalments were rendered obsolete in a short period of time after their construction[1].
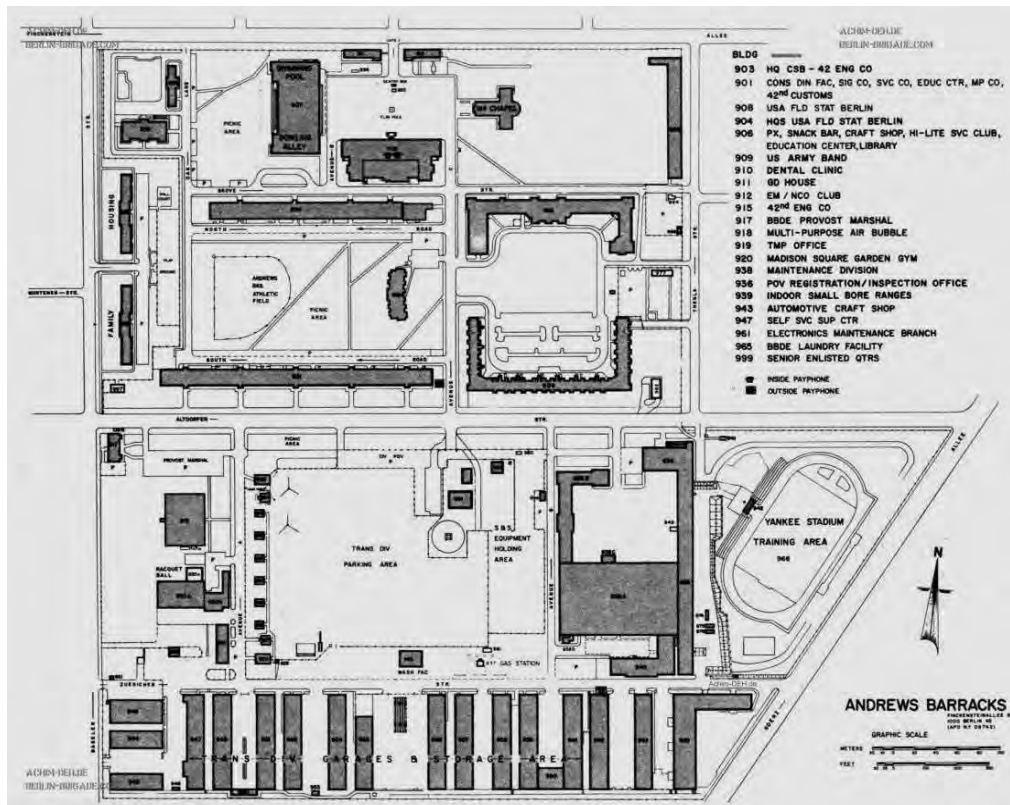
[fig.1] The layout of Andrews Barracks in Berlin. Source: US Army (public domain).

Finally, there is another important particularity of the Cold War period that is relevant for the formation of the general public's discourse and the establishing of the relevant heritage policies: unlike the other warfare techniques and their 'mineralisations', the ones from the Cold War period were never used in an actual war. Namely, the Cold War could be described both as a 'war in reverse' and an 'omnipresent state of preparedness'. Regarding the previous, the nuclear weapons were never used during the entire length of the confrontation between the two blocks. It was only the images of Hiroshima and the fictional narratives of the post-nuclear holocaust future that are evoked when one is confronted with the physical remains of the nuclear weapon facilities, or any 'secret' facilities from this period in general. The perceived 'end of the Cold War' yielded the creation of Cold War heritage status for various nuclear silos and bunkers, creating an archetypical imagery yet obscuring the fact that the threat of nuclear warfare nowadays remains present and active. As for the latter description, the conventional military installations that were spread out all across Europe were never used - as the big invasion never occurred. The often prosaic appearance of the countless barracks seldom offers any architectural values, while there rarely any events that deserve the attention of the historians – albeit there are cases where the abandonment of the structures makes an important event for the national identity, such as in the Baltic states. The fringe narratives and meanings ascribed to the 'mineralisations' from the Cold War period come mainly from the personal histories of former officers and conscripts, the actions of the civic peace movements, but also from the contemporary urban explorers seeking for 'brutalist' or 'ruin-porn' imagery.

The dynamics of the (post)militarised territories

Militarising the landscape, establishing taskscapes
As discussed above, the Cold War warfare required large swats of land to be assigned for exclusive military use and as such they became exempted from the urban planning processes and regulations [fig.2]. The size of

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1   Some of the examples are the early generations of radars spread all over Alaska and Canada, but also the pre-nuclear bunkers such as the *Commandobunker Kemmel,* whch is another case study for my research.

these domains often exceeds the one of the adjacent settlements themselves, thereby further influencing their functional and growth patterns. In terms of their appearance the militarised territories had restricted access, and this often caused for discontinuities in the perception of the territory with profound effects on the spatial and functional continuity. By the means of the land expropriation, the military presence provokes changes in methods of production and the formation of invisible and co-existing boundaries. However discreet, the military structures are "deeply engrained in the cultural fabric of facilities, the infrastructural layers of installations, and the ecological dynamics of the landscape" (Arroyo, Belanger, 2016). Moreover, The militarised territories were part of a network that involved different levels (local vs. national / supranational) and this network insisted on uniformity of both function as well as appearance – guided by the abstract nature of the military doctrines. In terms of the spatial aspects of the military doctrines, the military has been described as a "cyclothimic animal, asleep during peace and awake for war" (Virilio, 1994)– thereby implying that there are different modes of functionality within the same spatial setting. And yet, there are aspects of the "more prosaic military act of just being there" (Woodward, 2011). This means that in there was an array of 'accommodations' made in order to apply the 'uniform' structure and appearance and more importantly the military equipment and infrastructure upon different territories and local settings. Therefore, the 'deterritorialisation' process that isolated the militarised territories from their surroundings , ran in parallel to the 'territorialisation' process of the military doctrine.

[fig.2] A cadastral survey of Bitola, Macedonia from the 1980's showing the void left by the exclusion of the military domain. Source: State Geodetic Agency, Skopje.

In order to make sense of these 'interconnected arrangements' which are nevertheless embedded into the landscape, we look towards the concept of the 'taskscape', being a socially constructed space of human activity, which is perpetually in the process of transformation (Ingold, 1993). Following this concept, it can be argued that the military institutions and their actions have always been an integral part of the landscape transformation process. Likewise, the material artefacts of the military presence i.e. the ex-militarised landscapes are not in any way exempted from the continuity of the landscape transformation process. However, the perception of the former militarised spaces as separate and restricted areas creates a specific discourse among both the general public and the specialists, which is the focus of this paper.

The act of abandonment
Although the actual end of the cold War period remains to be determined, with current debates taking place on whether it is over at all, one can clearly perceive the new types of threats that the military has to tackle nowadays. As the Cold War warfare was designed to combat i.e. maintain a status -quo against a symmetrical threat, it is being rendered obsolete by the current asymmetrical conflicts that are rapidly distributed by the

means of terrorism and propaganda. On a different note, after the abolishment of the military service, that led to professional army forces in a manner of a decade, there is now an increased demand for presence of the troops outside of the country, leading to formation of regular multinational units. These new types of military engagement are then further combined with the developments of the new military technologies and the new economic constellations / austerity measures, a combined products of the rise of the artificial intelligence and the proliferation of the neo-liberal policies. All of the above leads to an increased shortening of the military budgets or at least a severely reduced spending on personnel and non-combat infrastructure, while there is a push towards militarized artificial intelligence and tactical weapons of mass destruction. As an end-result, but also with an added incentive to transform the ownership of the public land, military domains are being abandoned throughout 'the West'.

My research is developed using the argument that once the military institutions have abandoned the spatial structures, the perceived 'military taskscape' ceases to exist, or is at least degraded. Being an integral part of the landscape, such absence / modification creates a rupture that is subsequently reinterpreted through the means of the urban production and/or heritage protection. In doing so, the different agencies have to work with the 'mineralisations' and their 'non-human' agency.

The abandonment of the military domains takes place over a distinct period of time, and three non-consequent events could be well observed in most of the cases: the abandonment, the (re)discovery and the acceptance. In each event, the non-human agency of the material artefacts takes precedence and reveals the network. The abandonment of the structures might have taken place either as a prepared and planned action, or as a consequence of a sudden retreat of the military personnel. Such act may hold a symbolic value, yet it always has an economic and demographic impact on the local community. It results in an array of material artefacts that define the appearance of the territory, and are subject to physical deterioration. The discovery by the next generation usually occurs after a certain period, during which there is a relative loss of political and historical context. Different groups and individuals access the material remains, creating or appropriating new narratives. On the other hand, some of the remains undergo important physical transformations, even destruction. The acceptance is defined by the actions of the urban and landscape planners and /or heritage professionals establish a certain regime of (re)development and/or protection by applying the available legislation upon the material artefacts.

In general, the transformations of the military structures of the Cold War period and/or the territories they occupy are frequently caught up in lengthy procedures. I will try to speculate on this through several aspects, the first one being their sheer size that requires specific approach and must often be handled through lengthy procedures that involve multiple levels of governance. Further on, the transaction of the property that must occur at some point invokes multiple decision making and is subject to different kinds of pressure. Finally, the aforementioned character of the Cold War heritage in terms of its material appearance and narrative leaves multiple entry points for various agencies to join the process, yet might also be perceived as vague and unattractive. Altogether, these aspects are leading to a protracted transformation process, during which the material is experiences decay, while the complex political and socio-economical alignments might shift.

Throughout the abandonment process, the artefacts of the military presence have significant effects on the development dynamic of the landscape. The de-composure of the military 'taskscape' has diverse effects which often run in parallel, yet opposite tendencies. Namely, structures may disappear completely (the movable equipment), become obsolete (large sheds, hangars), subject to decay and/or re-definition of their meaning (the fence, communication masts). However other 'materialisations' may appear where there was a presumed void (the bunkers) or simply become accessible (ports, airfields). In terms of the urban and landscape production though, the large military domains present us with the unique condition in which the land as limited resource is being expanded. The militarised territories occupied strategic location and yet were out of reach for virtually all the actors usually involved: planners, real-estate developers, local administration etc. Their (re)appearance is an act that "reveals the networks" (Latour, 2007)on more than one occasion. And it is the material, the 'mineralisations' that lay abandoned, remnants of the former 'taskscape' that have to be engaged with. The outcome is therefore a negotiation within a network around the 'non-human agency of the material'. This will be further elaborated upon the case study of the military domain in Koksijde.

The transformation of the military domain in Koksijde

A short description

The present-day military domain in Koksijde [fig.3] has developed from the Luftwaffe airport that was built during the Second World war. Despite the poor condition of the runway and of the complex in general at the end of the war, the military presence was maintained. New structures were built to accommodate warplanes and later on helicopter squadrons, as well as a number of conscripts and officers. The limits of the domain seem to have evolved in relation to the requirements of the airfields i.e. 'the military machine', but also in regard to the everyday life of the personnel, the act of 'being there'. Namely, the barracks, the officer's

dwellings and the headquarters were developed on the side of Koksijde, creating ambiguous links with the non-military built environment. It is in this part of the domain that the military structures stand in certain relation to the surroundings, such as in terms of the buildings' size and alignment, dwelling function. Worth mentioning is the part of the military domain in the dunes where there is a holiday centre built and maintained for exclusive use by the members of the Belgian armed forces and their families. At the same time, the domain has determined a sharp borderline for the urban development of the town itself, which has subsequently expanded towards Ostduinkerke.

Parallel to these developments, the surroundings have underwent major changes in terms of landscape transformation. Major infrastructures were presumably planned in relation to the domain, such as the trace of the E40 highway that makes a loop south of Veurne. The main national roads are running along the limits of the domain as well, making large detours in order to connect the neighbouring towns and villages. On an even larger scale, the airfield affects the flight patterns by establishing exclusion zones and special corridors for the take-off and landing of military jets and helicopters.

By contrast, and as a result of the state of exclusion enacted by the military presence, some historical landscape features have been preserved – such as the dune landscape, which has been mainly lost along the Belgian coast due to the rapid expansion of the built environment after the WWII. Also, there is an enclave within the domain: the farm on the east side is officially not part of the domain, but rather an entity of its own. From the above said, one can conclude that the taskscape of the military domain in Koksijde presents a range of 'times', from the endlessly rehearsed and ever-prepared strategical and technical manoeuvres to the leisure patterns of the Belgian riviera.


[fig.4] An aerial photo of themilitary domain in Koksijde. Source: VTM Nieuws.

Although the formal act of the abandonment of the domain has been announced relatively recently, the secretive military taskscape has been going through a protracted process of transformation. The end of the conscription meant that the barracks were obsolete, thereby significantly reducing the actual number soldiers present on the site. Then, long before any intention on transformation of the domain was announced, civilians - more precisely aviation enthusiasts, were allowed access into the military base in Koksijde. This could be referred to as the first 'discovery' of the military domain, one that occurred long before the 'abandonment'. This allowed for a parallel 'taskscape' to emerge, one related to the airport as a functional entity, and which will later become much more important in terms of the transformation of the domain. Another 'discovery' was performed through the television documentaries depicting the work of the Search and Rescue units of the Belgian army[2]. Finally, the barracks have recently been used as accommodation for asylum seekers. Though it may seem like a radical change in the use of the domain, in this case we can observe the way in which the state apparatus deals with 'designated' populations, eg. conscripts, prisoners or refugees and assigns them to 'unincorporated' territories to be used for dwelling.

2   The Search and Rescue services are now the only military component that is present within the domain, with a prospect of abandoning the site as well – which further discussed towards the end of this paper.

The transformation process

This paper is being written parallel to very important documents on this transformation process becoming publicly available towards the end of 2017[3]. The following analysis is based upon these documents, while the aim remains to expand the research upon data that should become available in the immediate future, as well as other relevant sources. As stated in the documents, the transformation of the military domain in Koksijde begun in 2012 as a process led by the province of West Flanders, as the project was deemed to be implemented at a strategical level and through participation of more than one commune. Yet, Koksijde remains the key partner in the process, as most of the domain lays within the limits of the municipality. The agenda for the transformation of the military domain follows the procedures for a *Provinciaal Ruimtelijk Uitvoeringsplan (PRUP)*, which have been dully laid out in the *Processnota*. This process operates on the presumption that all the concerned agencies have been involved at different phases and that the general public has been or will be given the opportunity to contribute to the process at few predetermined occasions. The goal of this paper is to analyse the discourse of this approach, through the produced documents in regard to the previously elaborated distinct nature of the large scale military structures from the Cold War. Nevertheless, the question remains as to the use of the predetermined process trajectories in tackling new landscape dynamics, such as the 'emerging' areas that were previously exempted from the urban regulations and development dynamics, yet nevertheless existed as a part of the continuity of the landscape.
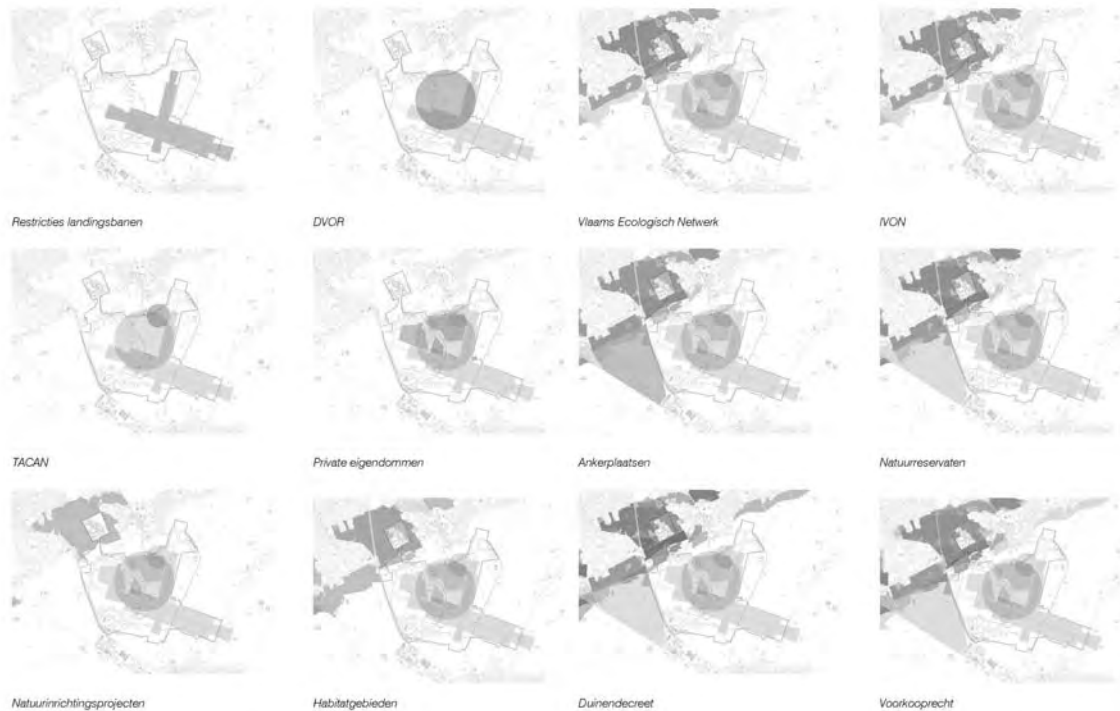
[fig.4] The "conditions" of the domain, appart. Source: BUUR.

The 'flight polder'

The proposed Masterplan for the transformation of the military domain in Koksijde has been prepared by the renowned Belgian urban design and strategic planning office BUUR, along with the participation of a number of experts during the 'design week' organised by the commune of Koksijde[4]. The report begins with a series of 'readings' of the domain's position, with the first benchmark being the system of recreational airfields around the English Channel. The second tier 'attractors' are analysed within the framework of the immediate coastal system. At his scale, aspects of the current and the historical landscape, mobility and connections between the settlements (mostly concerning Koksijde and Veurne) are analysed. Next, the 'conditions' of the site are explored through a graphic analysis that first presents them apart [fig.4] and then overlapped [fig.5], a well known method in spatial planning that aims at graphically revealing areas that offer certain opportunities

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– in this case the ones with less restrictions. As for the conditions themselves, they are related to some juridical aspects (eg. the ownership and the rights for pre-emptive purchase) but mostly to the aspects of the non-human agencies: the airfield elements (runways, radars) and the landscape elements (the dunes). This instance could therefore be identified as the first occurrence of the non-human agency.

Following the analysis, the ambitions for the domain are set out, the maintaining of the 'flight' as a programme being the first one. The next challenge is defined in relation to making the site publicly accessible. Here, a very interesting statement is given in relation to the future of the site that "must become more than just an open, empty landscape with few pathways". Following this. the basic concept for the development is titled as the '(recreational) flight polder'.

Such framing of the transformation process could be interpreted as an entry point for an intervention that would bring more quality in terms of the landscape, as well as more variety in terms of program. The ultimate goal is therefore twofold, yet somewhat contradictory: to both integrate the territory into the existing coastal system, and still to make it recognizable i.e. unique. In relation to this, I will further discuss two aspects that are paramount both to such approach, as well as to the agency of the (post)militarised 'taskskape': the limits of the domain and the material remains (the runways and the radars).

[fig.5] Superposition of the "conditions". Source: BUUR.

The limit as a frame of possibilities

As described before, the limits of the military domain in Koksijde are not homogeneous, but rather influenced by the surroundings. The visibility of the limits and their effects is variable as well. However, there was a prolonged period of time during which the area was subject to different set of rules i.e. was not subject to the urban planning rules and the forces of pressure of urbanisation. The consequence of this imposed status is the treatment of what is essentially a part of the continuous landscape as special case, an area in which new possibilities could be tested. This is not to say that the approach of the planners is one of an 'empty canvas' - which happens once too often in many areas to which the access was restricted during the Cold War. Quite the opposite, there is vast array of analysis performed upon the site and its surroundings and there is a clear tendency towards 'integration'.

Certain agencies are 'penetrating' the site as they are inextricably linked to other material aspects of the site. For example, the nature conservation agency applies the legal framework of the *Dune decreet* – thereby rendering a certain area inaccessible to general public and consequently creating another discontinuity. However, the act of "giving back the dunes to the nature" is made possible by the pre-existing 'taskscape' of the military institutions, and its mineralisations – most notably the simple chicken-wire fence that defined the limits of the domain. A different example are the efforts to bring back aspects of the historical landscape, such as the re-oppening of the Langeleed river bed that is planned within the domain. It is understood that

this is a part of a wider effort to recover this river as a landscape element in its entire length. Yet, the transformation of the domain offers a framework to begin this process. It is very likely that in order to achieve this vision beyond the limits of the domain, other tools and procedures will be needed.

In conclusion to this part, the domain itself and its limits are one example of the non-human agency of the material. The actions of the other agents are framed by the limits of the domain, and yet it is exactly these limits that allow for the actions to happen in the first place.

[fig.6] Visualisations of the proposed concept, featuring existing materials. Source: BUUR.

The runways and the radars

The 'vision' that is proposed by the planners for the 'transformation' of the Koksijde military domain includes the maintenance of a functional airfield as key aspect of the proposed (re)development. Moreover, the 'airfield' is stipulated as a key attractor, one that basically shapes both the imagery of the area - 'the flight', as well as the activity that consumes most of the 'available' area.

Once again, it is the agency of the material that the entire network is revolving around, in two different aspects. First, it is the material aspects of the 'mineralisation' that are more that evident: the size and the length of the runways and the taxi areas, their foundations, the amount of stabilized ground and asphalt coverage, as well as the entire ground modification made in order to allow for high performance take-off and landing. One could hardly plan a sustainable intervention that would result in removal of these structures. The images presented in the plan show the runways being used as promenades and the large concrete surfaces in front of the hangars becoming common areas of the future small manufacture and service zoning [fig.6]. Pending further inquiries into the decision process, we can already conclude that the non-human agency of the material remains had predetermined the transformation process .

Second, as the structures are there to stay, they need to be used in some way: either for their original purpose, which is flight infrastructure, or to be re-purposed – once again as infrastructure for other types of vehicles. In order to maintain the requirements for an operational airfield, while introducing other functions, the planners are obliged to comply to the requirements of the flight procedures. These procedures take into account the planes and the helicopters, as well as the necessary equipment , such as the radars. In conclusion, it is these elements with their non-human agency that are determining the future transformation, both applying restrictions as well as offering distinct features.

The uncertain future

Before the conclusion, one last aspect that I will discuss is the uncertainty that surrounds this process of transformation of post-militarised territories. Namely, the military has been included in the planning process

from its very beginning and its requirements have been embedded into the proposed plans, an example being the length of the runways. Yet, there have been a number of statements by politicians pointing towards a complete removal of the military presence from the domain in Koksijde[5]. It remains uncertain how soon will the decisions take place and how will the procedures be then completed i.e. whether this would require a new spatial planning procedure.

Also, at the present moment, the general population is allowed to express its opinion and give new proposals. This may or may not lead to change of the plans, be it in detail or as a whole concept. Finally, the following phases will need to deliver a more detailed design, and this would mean even more interaction with the material artefacts of the military presence, as they should be fitted for 'civilian' use. The aim of my research is to closely follow the process as it unfolds.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the end of the Cold War period has led to an increased number of military sites and structures being decommissioned. This has in turn generated a significant amount of land that is readily available for development. The contemporary urban and landscape theory and practice are therefore presented with a challenge on how to approach these territories, given the scarcity of land as a resource, but also the tendencies for production of public amenities. However, the large scale military structures from the Cold War have their own particularities which were explained in more detail, followed by a description of the dynamics of appropriation and abandonment of territories by the military institutions. The notion of the militarised 'taskscape' was put forwards and it was argued that the transformation process occurs within a network in which the non-human agency of the material takes central position.

The case of the transformation of the Koksijde military domain was used to illustrate the previously described tendencies, but also to provide more insight on this particular site. This was done by analysing the present state of affairs, as well as the proposed Masterplan for the domain. Two relevant aspects were described in order to point out the aforementioned non-human agency of the material: the persistent limits of the domain and the agency of the material artefacts i.e. the flight related infrastructure.

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5   A number of news articles indicate that the search and rescue service are pondering a move to the Oostende airport, given the possibility of sharing various maintenance services with the civil aviation component.