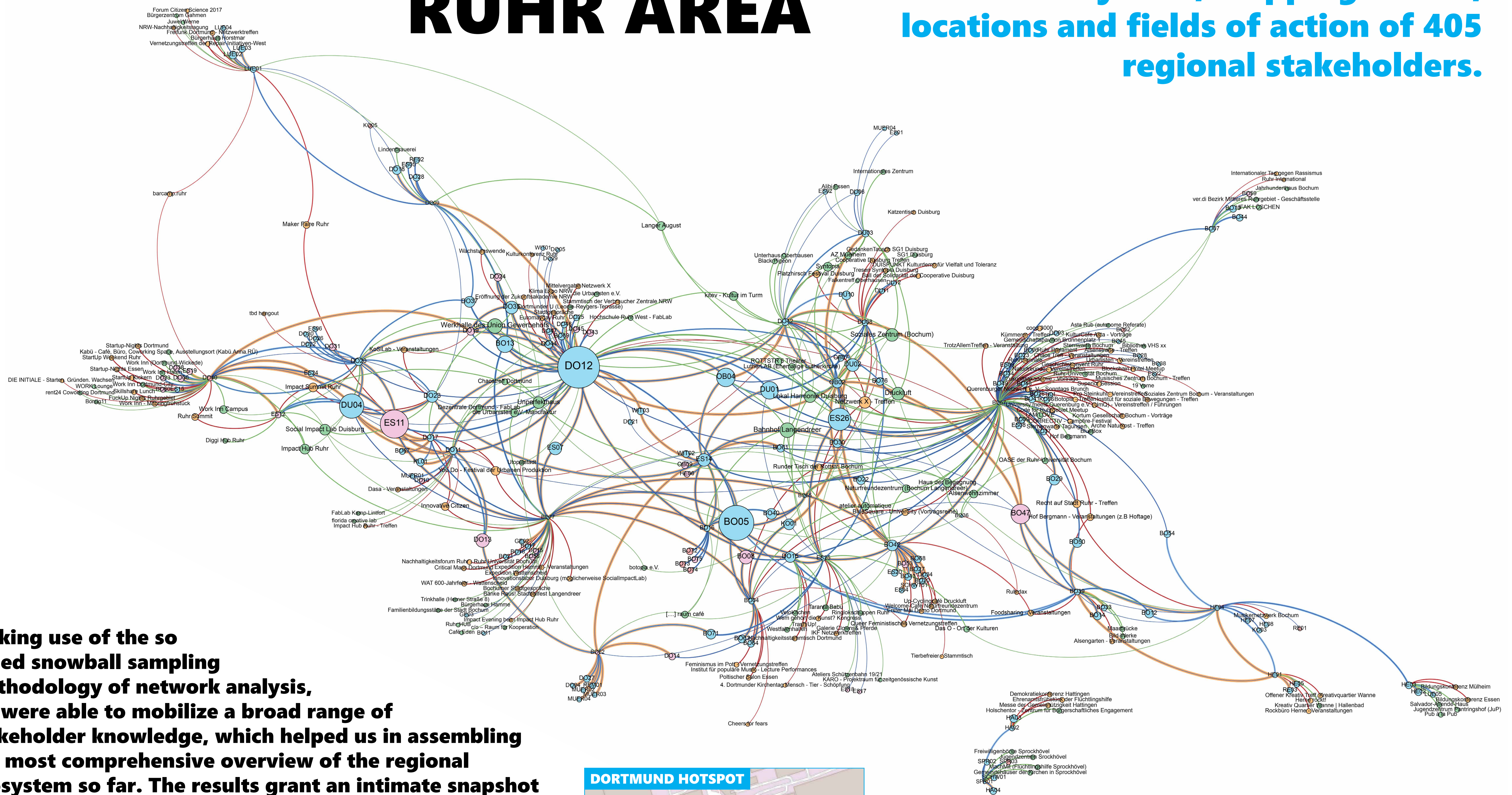


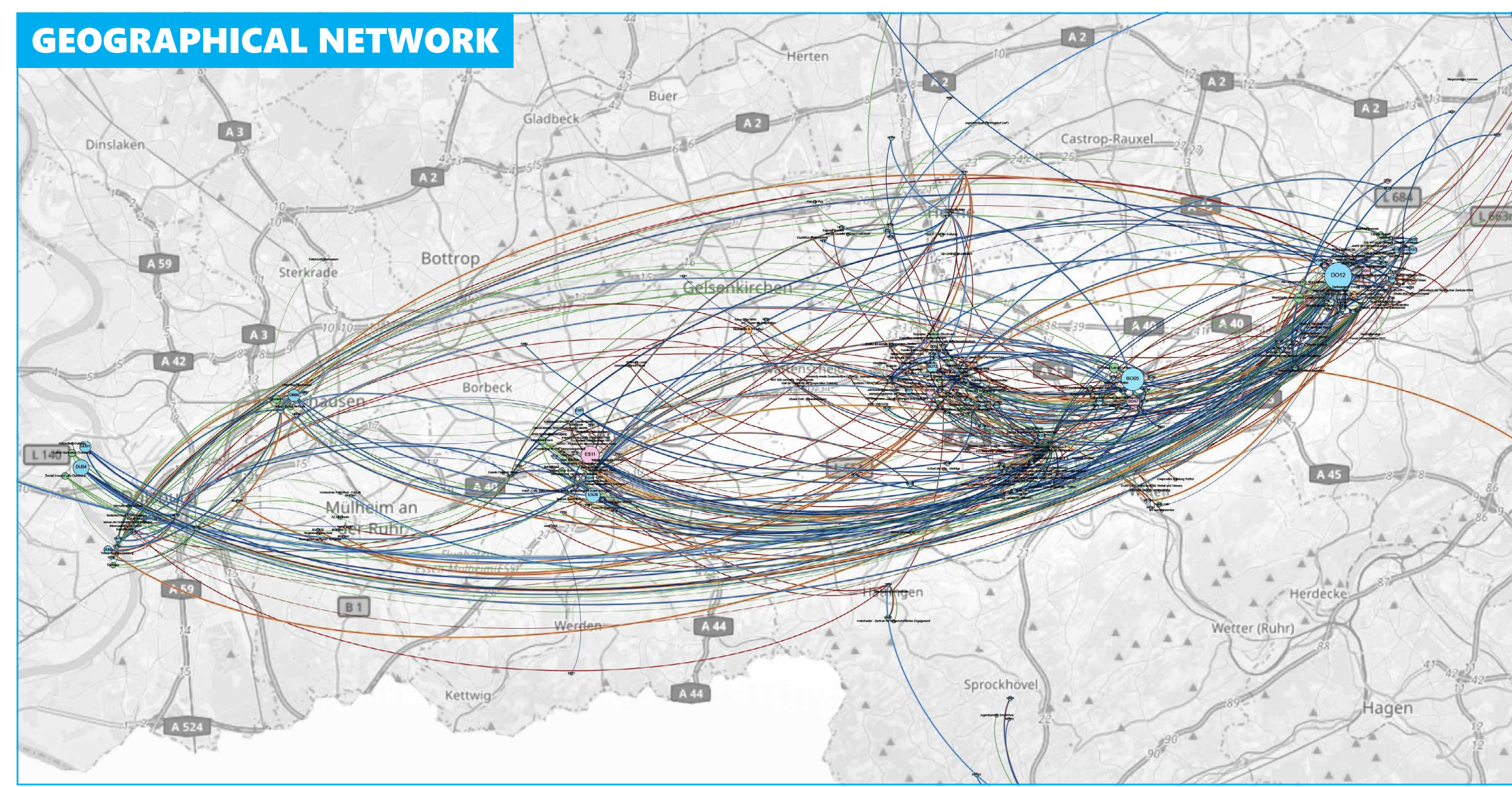
UNCOVERING THE SOCIAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM OF THE RUHR AREA

Visualizing structures and drivers of the diverse regional ecosystem of socially innovative initiatives, spaces and events, the student project "Social Innovation in the Ruhr area" has conducted a ten month survey of the ecosystem, mapping names, locations and fields of action of 405 regional stakeholders.



Making use of the so called snowball sampling methodology of network analysis, we were able to mobilize a broad range of stakeholder knowledge, which helped us in assembling the most comprehensive overview of the regional ecosystem so far. The results grant an intimate snapshot of this dynamic and volatile milieu through thematic network visualisations of structures, fields of action and locations of the identified stakeholders at the time of the survey in 2018. Additionally, we conducted three in-depth case studies of hotspots of social innovation in the region. The results have been published on a website, including an interactive map of all identified social innovation initiatives, events and locations.

GEOGRAPHICAL NETWORK

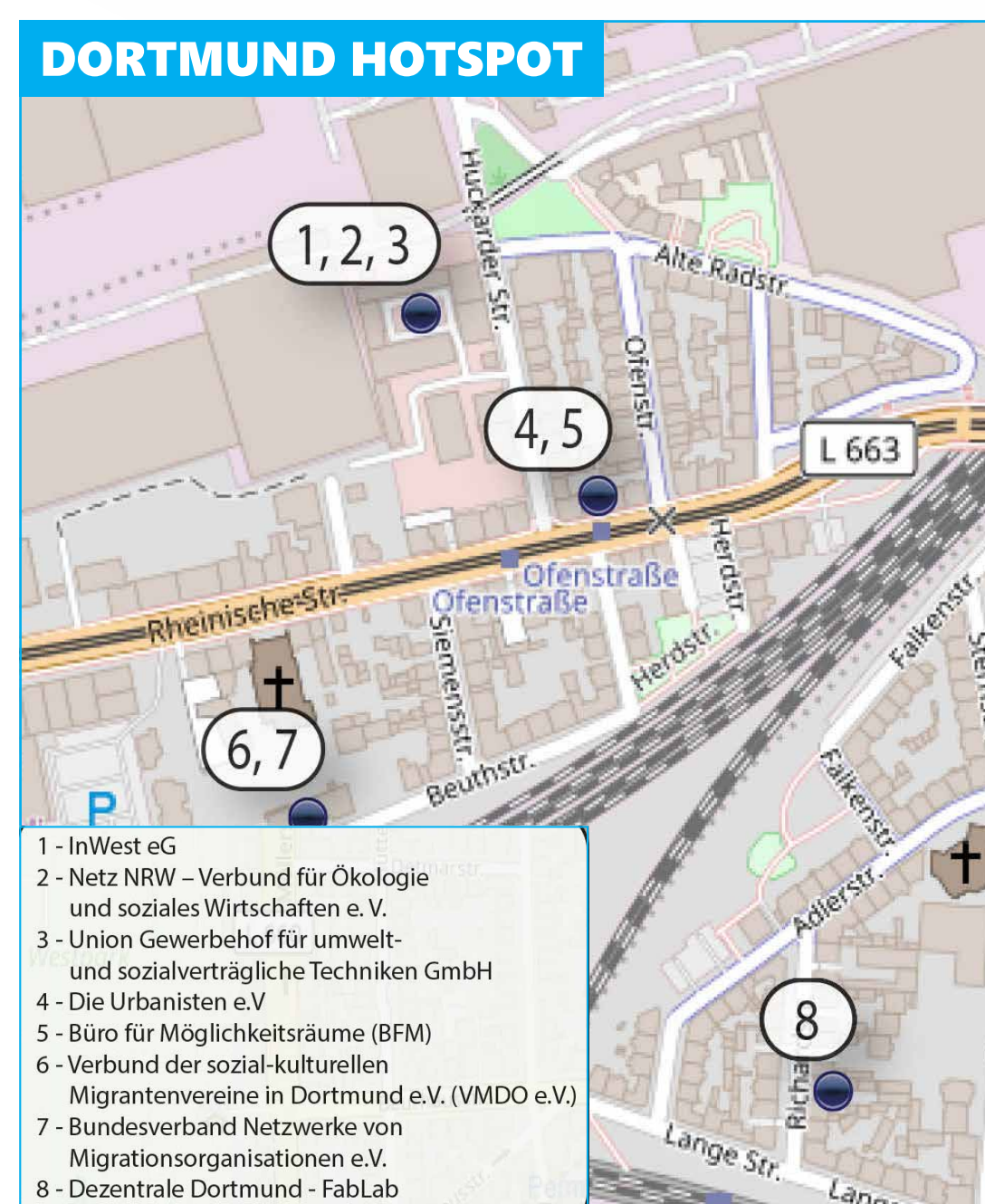
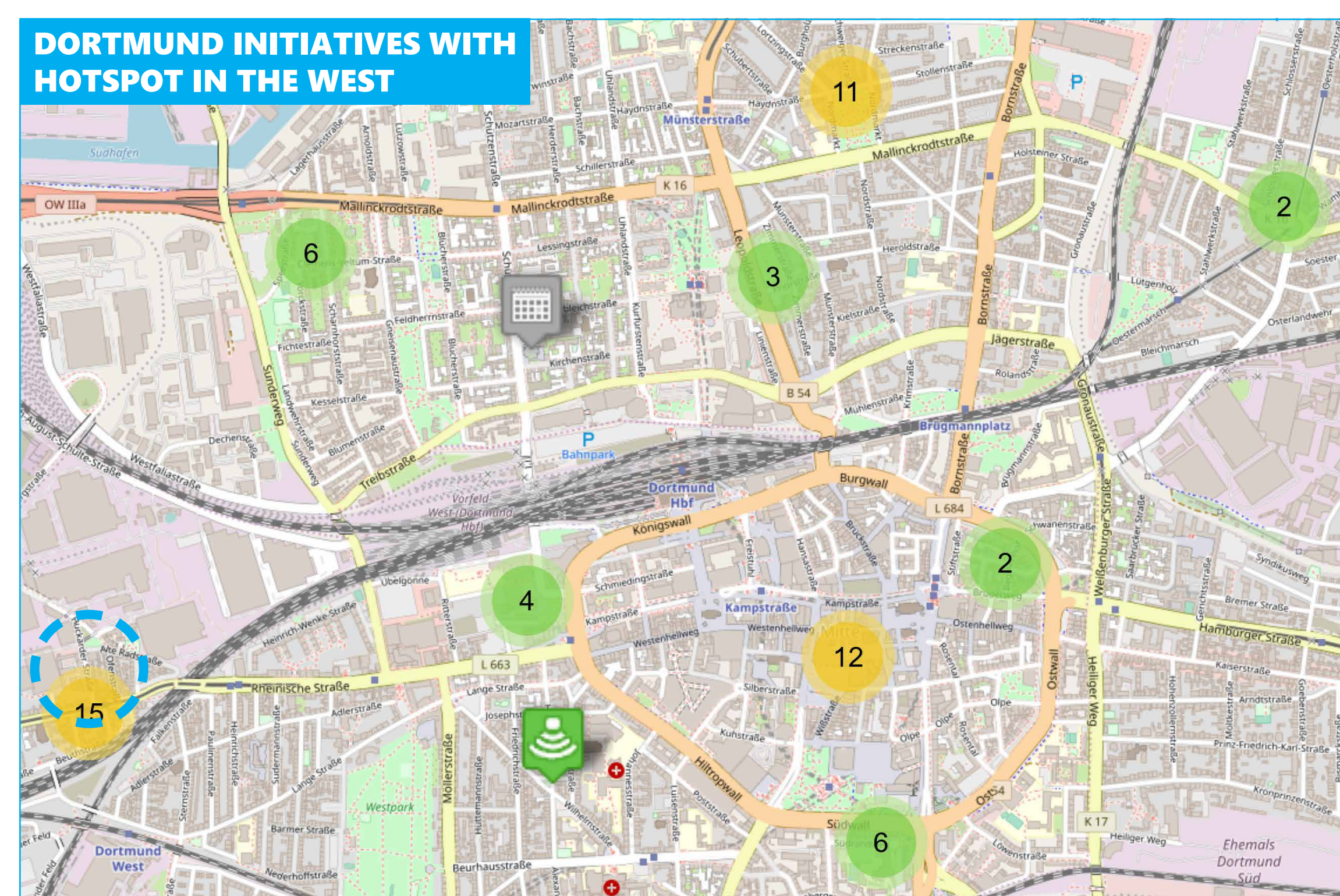


THE RUHR ECOSYSTEM

The network maps of the area show a large and regionally diverse, but nevertheless dense network structure. Even though the metropolitan area of the Ruhr stretches more than 100 km across, the region appears to consist of a continuous, interconnected network of stakeholders. The main drivers of network integration are the four large cities of the area: Dortmund, Bochum, Essen and Duisburg (from east to west).

While Duisburg in the West supports a somewhat smaller stakeholder landscape, which is mostly active in cultural and social areas, Dortmund and Bochum are playing the most central roles, concerning both density and maturity of the local networks, with a broad range of initiatives and causes. What is striking is that geographical distance does not seem to play an overly im-

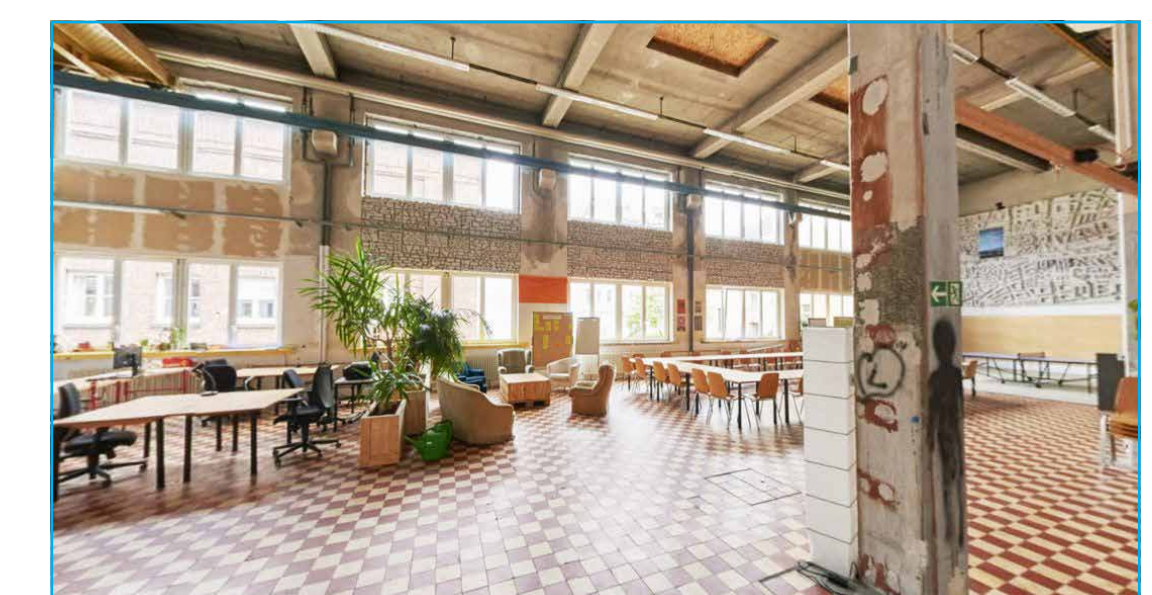
portant role, as shown by the various connections between the very distant cities Dortmund and Duisburg, which underlines the metropolitan character of the area with a strong, integrating regional identity.



HOTSPOT DORTMUND

In the course of the project, we have been able to identify a number of areas of higher density of socially innovative initiatives. In Dortmund, this is the Western area around the "Union Business Yard", an urban refurbishment project, which has grown to become one of the most active incubators for the creative economy of the city. We found evidence that the particular quality of the initial stakeholder network in the hotspot consisted of a delicate mixture of (1) an

active local community with a creative and urban planning background, (2) certain leading personalities, (3) a core set of pioneering initiatives, and (4) the flexible availability of cheap spaces for projects and experiments. In the center of this core network are situated three major stakeholders: the Union Business Yard; the Urbanists, an initiative of citizens with planning background; as well as the InWest association, which refurbishes vacant shops and passes them on for short-term rent for creative businesses using public funding.



PROJECT & TEAM

The project is a result of the practice oriented urban planning curriculum at Dortmund's Technical University, which includes two yearlong research projects in groups of up to 15 students. In this project, the group consisted of 13 first semester students, one experienced Master student tutor and a postgraduate faculty supervisor. The project went through three large phases of exploration, network analysis, and in-depth case studies.



The results of the project have been collected on a publically available website, including an interactive map of all identified stakeholders, spaces and events. Additionally, the results were presented to the interested public in front of more than 30 external guests.

FOLLOW-UP & CONTACT

For more information about project and results, and for questions and feedback, check out our website, or sent us an e-mail.