A quick search on the internet for the Ruhr Area will very quickly turn up narrowly defined bordered territories. One will either find the Ruhr Area defined by the Regional Association Ruhr (Regionalverband Ruhr, RVR) or the RhineRuhr Metropolitan Region created at the Conference of Ministers of Spatial Planning (Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung (MKRO)) in 1995. The former includes the cities of Bochum, Bottrop, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen, Gelsenkirchen, Hagen, Hamm, Halle, Oberhausen, and Mülheim on the Ruhr, as well as the four further regional districts of Ennepe-Ruhr, Recklinghausen, Unna, and Wetter. The latter constitutes one of Europe’s recognized largest metropolitan regions. It encompasses the RVR designated areas, but also extends southwards to include the Municipalities of Mönchengladbach, Wuppertal, Solingen, Remscheid, Krefeld, Leverkusen, Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn, and the districts of Münster, Münster-Ost, and Münster-Nord. It is sometimes called the Mega City Region RhineRuhr. The built-up areas of this mega city can easily be identified in Google Earth at a scale of 1 cm/100 km as a grey P-shaped formation. These are two very different urban agglomerations, and neither map neatly over and across existing infrastructures nor do they correspond to perceptions of the area. Studies have shown that very few can correctly identify the administrative and territorial boundaries of the Rhine-Ruhr Area. Some perceptions include areas that lie further outside these MKRO or RVR areas.

The Rhine-Ruhr Metropolitan Region covers a total of 3000 square kilometers and is home to an additional 6 million. Overall population densities are thus comparatively low. Still, 10% of the German population lives here. The vast scale of either region also renders infrastructural or political/administrative assessments entirely problematic. The maps presented here, “subcentres” are simply the cities themselves and not neighborhoods, as one might view on other NMM maps. The subcentres along the basin of the River Ruhr from Duisburg to Dortmund have blended together. Hinterlands can be seen surround these areas as one unit – particularly in the north and south east of the aforementioned “P-shape”.

The vast scale of either region also renders representation of the area on a single map – beyond simplified infrastructural or political/administrative assessments – entirely problematic. The maps presented below can be viewed perhaps as yet more ideas or suggestions of the networks can then be viewed. On the other three maps, alternative movements and contested spaces, flagship projects, and spaces of power in the (primarily RVR) Ruhr Area can be seen. This list, however, is not complete. Because of the scale, they also appear as microdots, simple pin-points on the page, a representation that may spark a variety of misinterpretations. These categories were chosen, however, because the Ruhr Area is the European Capital of Cultural for 2010 alongside Istanbul. Many of the flagship projects shown here stand in the foreground as the Ruhr showcases itself to the world. Hopefully, however, the suggestion of an “underbelly” – counter social movements along with their networks and infrastructures (newspapers, publishers, radio) – will come across as a reminder that the images and narratives produced and showcased in ECC 2010 gloss over real struggles and problems lived everyday in the region.
The Ruhr, the Lippe, and the Emscher) expanded during the Trade Route (that traced the Rhine River and its tributaries, 2010 – half a narrative

The scale of this area leaves little to be examined at the Middles Ages. During the industrial revolution, the area's coal gravitated to the region to cash in on the newly exposed natural 100s of mines were opened and entrepreneurs from around Europe for children, theatre pieces, and openings (including the opening of the...