Wilderness and remote areas are a diverse element in the patchwork of spaces that form the land surface of our planet. Only very small amounts of people are living in sparsely populated areas, which is an expression of the strong organisation of human societies to maximise those living in close relative proximity. More than half of the world’s population now lives in areas categorised as cities, and although more than 95% of the world’s population live in approximately only 19% of the land area, the remaining 90% of space on land are far from being uniform remote or even wild areas. There are very different ways of how the un-built area that still makes the largest share of land can be understood in terms of being under influence and in reach of human civilization.

Only 15% of people in rich countries live more than an hour of travel time from a city (of at least 50,000 people), while the same applies to 65% of people living in the poor countries of the world. This poster series presents a different approach to visualising and understanding these loneliest places on the planet that are probably the last of the wild areas on Earth.

The maps are using a technique called a gridded cartogram transformation. The technique is used to visualise the relative distance of areas to the majority of people. The maps derived from the distorted grid show the physical space transformed according to the absolute travel time that is needed to reach the nearest major city by land transport averaged over the area of a grid cell. This results in a map that gives the remotest places most space and provides a unique new perspective on the spatial dimension of remoteness.