

ACTIVITY

The Worldmapper.org website could be an extremely useful resource for exploring the idea that maps are metaphors for knowledge. The Worldmapper maps adjust the size of the landmasses to illustrate some measurable fact about the world.

Use the QR code below to view Map 1, which shows the relative percentages of the municipal waste recycled in that country (in 2002).



The QR code below links to Map 2 which shows the proportion of people aged 15–49 living with HIV in 2013.



In addition to providing information and facts, these maps also carry quite an emotional punch. In Map 1 for example, we might notice that the developed nations are dominant, leading us to ask about what is happening in developing countries? What ethical, political and ability knowledge do they have that allows them to be dominant in the amount of waste they can recycle?



Map 2, representing HIV prevalence, is utterly dominated by sub-Saharan Africa. Again, it forces the viewer to wonder what is going on there that makes HIV a larger problem there than anywhere else in the world. What political, ethical, religious and scientific knowledge is present (or absent or manipulated) that leads to such a health crisis?

Now consider two more maps. Use the first QR code below to view Map 3, which shows the proportion of children (aged under 5) dying in 2015. The second QR code will take you to Map 4, which shows the proportion of people aged 100 and over in 2015.



Have a look at Africa or Japan on each map. The representations create quite a strong emotional impact about living conditions in parts of Africa and Japan and again lead us to wonder about the customs, traditions, political, ethical and religious knowledge that might contribute to these facts.

These maps (perhaps like any map) do more than simply represent the world in their own distorted ways; they guide our thinking and force new questions upon us.