The idiom "a picture is worth a thousand words"... which first appeared in a 1911 newspaper article, in the USA, and in various commercial advertisements in successive years... refers to the notion that a complex idea can be conveyed with just a single still image, or that an image of a subject conveys its meaning/essence more effectively than any description does. It also aptly characterizes one of the main goals of visualization, namely making it possible to absorb large amounts of data very quickly.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (consulted on 6 Mar 2015)
“Geography is a representation in picture of the whole known world together with the phenomena which are contained therein”

Claudius Ptolemaeus, Geographia (Cosmographia)
Every mapmaker has to select what to put on the map and what to leave off, so that the resulting map reflects what the mapmaker thought was important.

The Ptolemaic revival of the Renaissance humanists, in the 13th, 14th, 15th centuries AD, led to the first maps of coastal and marine regions – “Portolan Charts” – because they were drawn by mapmakers who had navigation and trade in mind.
“ecosystem” approach
both environmental and socio-economic issues
translate complex scientific datasets into aggregated information
communication aimed at the general public
BUT easy to use also for professional and practitioners
an all-around tool for whoever does not have the skills to get raw data
based on data from the EC and its Agencies
interfaced to a number of other marine databases
providing new indicators, map services and analysis tools
- long time in the makings

- 2007 first idea by the EC "Blue Paper" on IMP
- 2008 conceptual work by the EC (DG MARE)
- 2010 prototype, public consultation, user survey
- 2011 Version 1 (~70 maps) and user survey
- 2012 Version 2, Version 2.1 (at EEA) in 2013
- 2014 Version 3 implemented by EC JRC

- supporting the EU policy-making process

- Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP)
  - Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)
  - Integrated Coastal Management (ICM)
- Common Fishery Policy (CFP)
- Blue Growth Strategy

- up-to-date data retrieval and publication

- dynamical database: not a collection of static maps
- new datasets uploaded and updated continuously
- multiple use: normal & advanced (restricted) modes
- environmental & socio-economic data layers
  - geography
  - environment
  - security and safety
  - fisheries and aquaculture
  - tourism and protected areas
  - transport, energy and maritime resources
  - people and employment
  - governance and European policies

- technical features
  - multi-theme, map overlay
  - selection with drop-down menu
  - time slider
  - bar chart with time series
  - map queries (pop-up frames)
  - data layer description (with the "info" button)
  - metadata & sources

- user feedback

species: Atlantic Cod (Gadus morhua)
gear:     Bottom Otter Trawl (OTB)
year:     2013

fisheries zones
fishing vessels routes
species: Atlantic Cod (Gadus morhua)
gear: Bottom Otter Trawl (OTB)
year: 2013

bathymetry [m]
-2000  0

UK oil wells
Natura 2000 sites

normalized catch intensity
0  1
AIMS OF THE ATLAS

• mapping activities: data collection, regular updates, map validation
• offering access to complex information in pictorial form
• conflicts (problems) and synergies (opportunities)

TARGET USERS

• General Public: simple to understand parameters and indicators
• Students and Researchers: access & retrieval of datasets
• Stakeholders & Policy Makers: easy to query and use
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VIEWING STATISTICS

In 2014, the European Atlas of the Seas received from 6000 to 8000 visits per month (228 per day), up 13% from 2013. Sharp increase (about 20%) of the traffic in the last quarter of 2014, after the publication of Version 3.