

# Digital Podcast Show Notes

## Episode 58 with guest Simon Wardley

### Hosts: Barclay Rae, Ian Aitchison

(disclaimer: Show notes are approximations of topics discussed, not word for word exact quotations).  
Images from Simon Wardley under Creative Commons.

#### Greetings section

BR: Greetings

IA: Today's trivia is minor. Did you know the word Tapas does not mean small plates as many assume, but actually is derived from the traditional spanish bar food food being served *under lids* (tapa).

BR: <thinks it is the same as glaswegian "put a tap on">. Anyway...

Now let's meet our guest...Simon Wardley, tell us about yourself.

SW: It's all accidentents. I used to work in security and ran companies, and I did public speaking. I advise people to share things and be open. I did this with a new field of Mapping - fully open creative commons - starting 17 years ago. Mapping is not just for IT, it's been used for diverse purposes such as sexual health, for satellites, for governments and by nation states. BR: Let's find out more...

#### Main Bit

BR: So, what is Wardley Mapping?

SW: Origin, once upon a time there was a company with a useless CEO, it was me. I took mission statements and strategy from other companies, but had no idea on where we were going. I read Sun Tsu's Art of War. 5 principles: Purpose, Landscape, Heavens (weather), Doctrine, Leadership. Then John Boyd's OODA loop: Observe, Orientate, Decide, Act. These fit together nicely. I saw the concept of landscape. I asked everyone in the business to send me "your maps" - customer journey, system, process etc - and I looked at them and saw they were not 'maps'. They were all graphs. In a map, space has meaning. This is why they are useful.

So I started on a journey to define maps for competitive environments.

BR: I see many strategic decision tools do not help people make the right decision.

IA: What is the right decision?

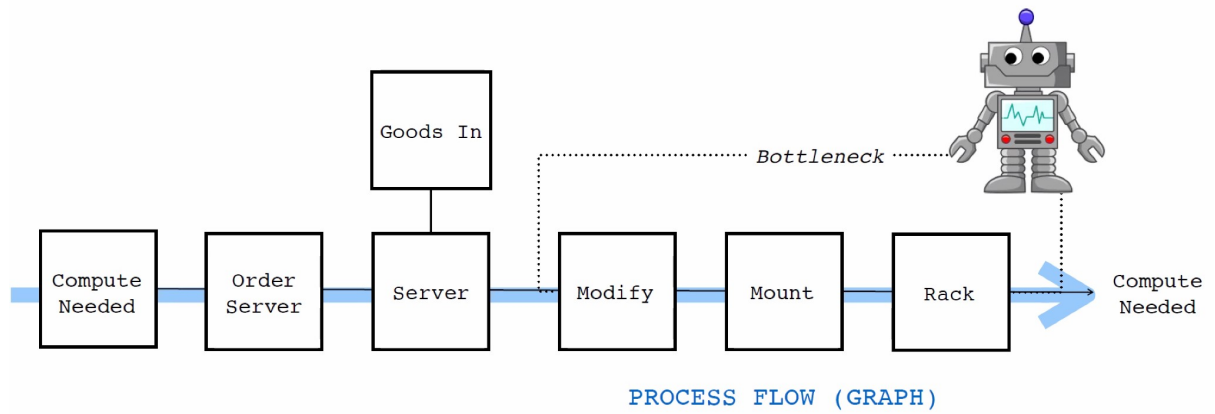
SW: Let's look at a map. You need an anchor, pieces, and consistency of movement. It's easy in geography, things dont move. But in economics and strategy things move quickly.

Let's look at an example of ...a tea shop : anchors are the business, public and government. The cup of tea also has needs - hot water, kettle, power etc. These are the chain of needs. Draw those out and it is a graph. Next, each component is a form of capital and all evolve through common stages : genesis, custom-built, product, commodity. By positioning the things on these stages you can start to ask 'why have I got kettles custom-built?'

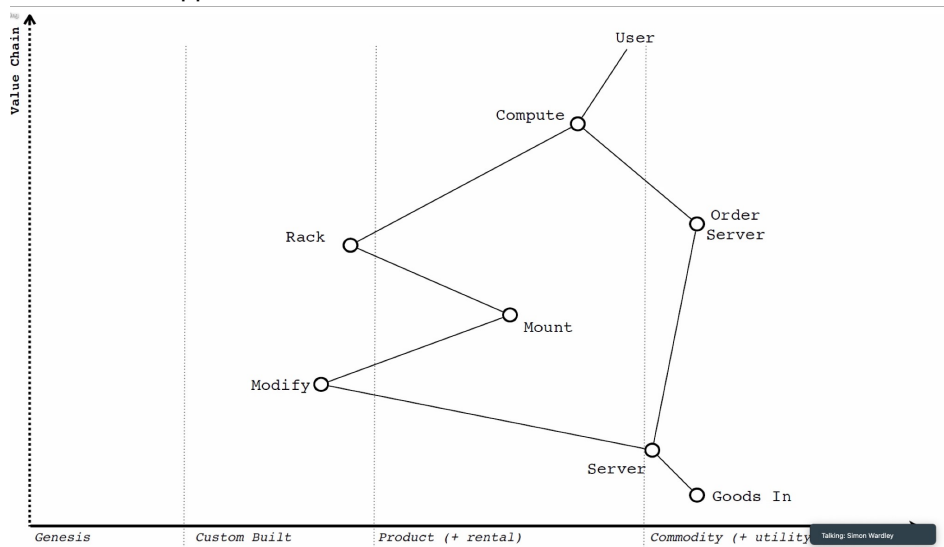
Most organisations run on stories. But if you are a leader, it is difficult to get your stories challenged without challenging the leader themselves. But if you put the stories on a map, then any challenge is challenging the map, not the leader themselves. So it is easier to do.

Here's an example...

Here's a process flow for 'compute' for an insurance company. They would order new computing and onboard them, and came up on investment to automate around the bottleneck, and about to invest millions on fixing this.



So next we mapped this

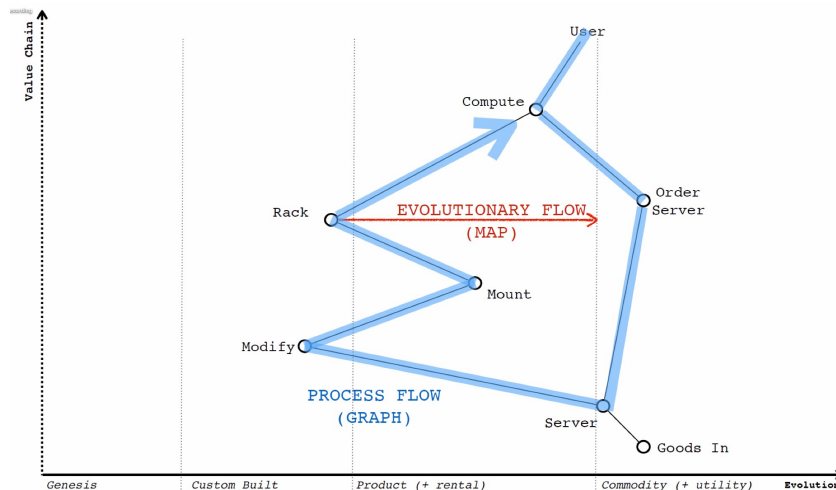


<lots of talk describing the map above>

SW: Then I asked a question - does anything jump out?

IA: Custom-built racks?

SW: yes, they were custom buildings because servers are the wrong shape. So they realised they should be using standard racks. They were optimising current process flow when the entire system actually was flawed.



People get trapped by their stories.

IA: Is the goal always to 'move right'?

SW: Well, we do pre-mortem and post-mortem for learning using the maps. Through that process we learn Patterns, There are about 30 Patterns, 40 Principles and more. Climatic Patterns include Everything Evolves and yes, things move from left to right. But new higher order systems start on the left, the uncharted space. The right is industrialised, ordered and dull.

So there is no one-size-fits-all methodology. You learn about these through mapping.

BR: How often would you revisit maps?

SW: Most organisations have stories and graphs. The best way to introduce maps is some challenge process. You introduce them to help with challenge processes such as architectural or investment boards.

IA: Similar to viability - market, technical, financial - etc. Checkpoints where mapping can help.

SW, and the map will then evolve with the project. And at the end of the project you revisit the map that you started with. Then every few months, revisit the map.

BR: Do people figure in the maps as well?

SW: I've done this on a political and social level, even in the tea shop, all have people. It's used a lot in IT and finance, but in all cases you can use people there.

BR: Types of people?

SW: Ha. Back in 2002 I saw lots of people having conflicts, and we made small teams, and that didn't work so we tried bi-modal and that didn't work either. I realised that maps show a transition in the middle that causes conflict with people. I reorganised the entire company into pioneers, settlers and town planners.

But... you have to allow self-section, you need to understand your landscape, and you need Doctrine. There are about 40 elements of Doctrine. You must have all of those in place until you mess with the structure. Execs like to fiddle with the structure. Don't. Sort out the principles first, not the organisation.

IA: Principles are very important. Shared outcome decision making needs principles.

SW: Absolutely, not rules but guiding principles. Distributed orgs need this especially.

BR: Many orgs seem to re-org constantly. What value proposition can help. We see the chaos in the middle with devops/agile and service. How to stop reorg?

SW: I like to go through my Doctrine table and ask 'are you good at this stuff?'. Rather than doing a re-org, lets accept that the org is not ideal. Focus on basic principles and common language. Are we challenging assumptions? Do we know our users? Do we understand what we are building? Are we removing bias and duplicating? Do we have a bias towards data?

Then are we pragmatic? Are we using standards? Do we bias towards experimentation? Small teams where possible? Distributing power and decision making? Moving quickly? Solve these and then finally get to reorg.

Don't move the deckchairs on the titanic. Fix the hole.

BR: What is the future for mapping? AI? Where is this going?

SW: all maps are imperfect (unless 1:1 scale). All maps are models. All models are wrong. Maps are wrong and imperfect but quite useful. By making Maps all open (Creative Commons) invites others to engage and improve on imperfect mapping. Next, timing: we can expect 30-50 years to change management practices, and maps are 17 years old. There are overlapping waves of change, but - for example, 3d printing was invented in 1986. VR in 1969. So the waves today may hit fast but the overall change takes years. In summary, it's slow but it is getting there. BR: Great, thank you!

### **Simon's Recommended Podcast Bar Drink**

- A cup of tea! Earl grey tea please.

### **Useful Links**

- Simon on twitter: @swardly
- Simon on LinkedIn
- Mapping: <https://medium.com/wardleymaps>, <https://list.wardleymaps.com/>

**Bar Bio**

- Wow, Simon is a firehose of words and thoughts and insight and strategy and landscapes and doctrine and principles! And maps! No matter the complexity, Simon is never lost, he always knows where he is and where to go next. And at the end of every day Simon knows how to get to the most important thing of all, which, for him, is a nice hot cup of Earl Grey tea. Delicious.