

Diagrams as code 2.0

Diagrams as code is becoming a popular way to diagram software architecture, particularly for long-lived high-level documentation. You write the diagram source in a text-based domain specific language (e.g. PlantUML or Mermaid) or a programming language, and render diagrams using web-based or command line tooling. The benefits are well understood – writing the diagram source as text allows for easy integration into software development practices and toolchains, plus the automatic layout facilities allow authors to focus on content. The problem with this approach is that it's easy for diagrams to get out of sync. Enter "diagrams as code 2.0" — a way to define a model of our software architecture and the views that we'd like to see, ultimately resulting in a consistent set of diagrams that are generated for us.



+ some free and open source tooling for creating software architecture diagrams

Teams need a **ubiquitous language** to communicate effectively



Fewer people are using UML

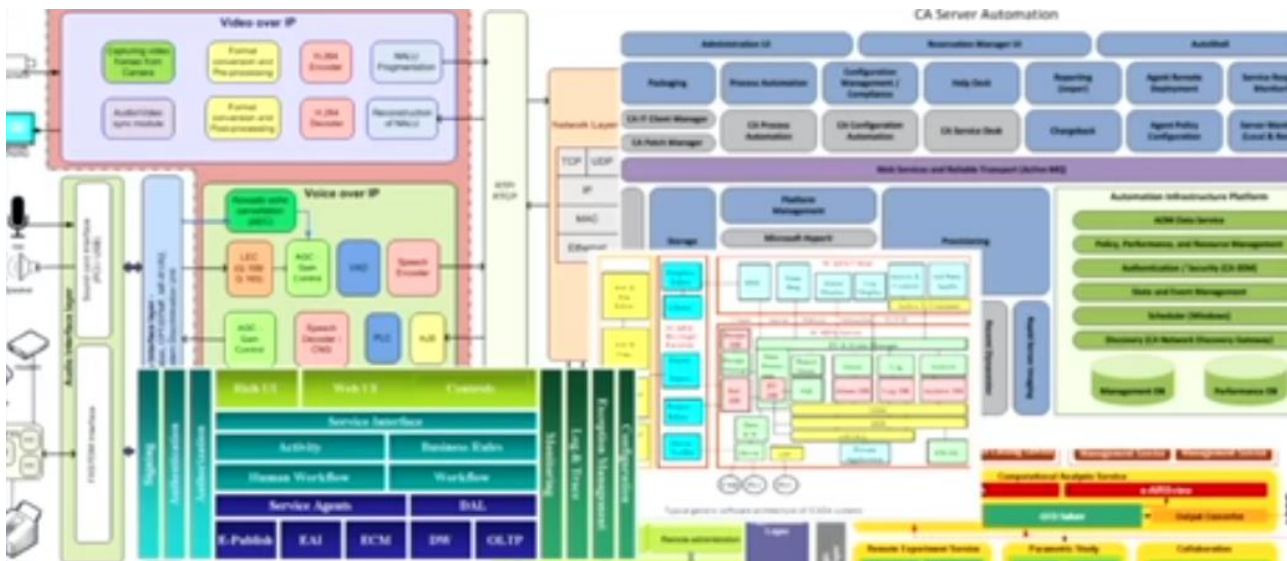


97 Ways to Sidestep UML

O RLY?

Knowfa Mallity

- #2 "Not everybody else on the team knows it."
- #3 "I'm the only person on the team who knows it."
- #36 "You'll be seen as old."
- #37 "You'll be seen as old-fashioned."
- #66 "The tooling sucks."
- #80 "It's too detailed."
- #81 "It's a very elaborate waste of time."
- #92 "It's not expected in agile."
- #97 "The value is in the conversation."



If you're going to use "boxes & lines",
at least do so in a **structured way**,
using a **self-describing notation**

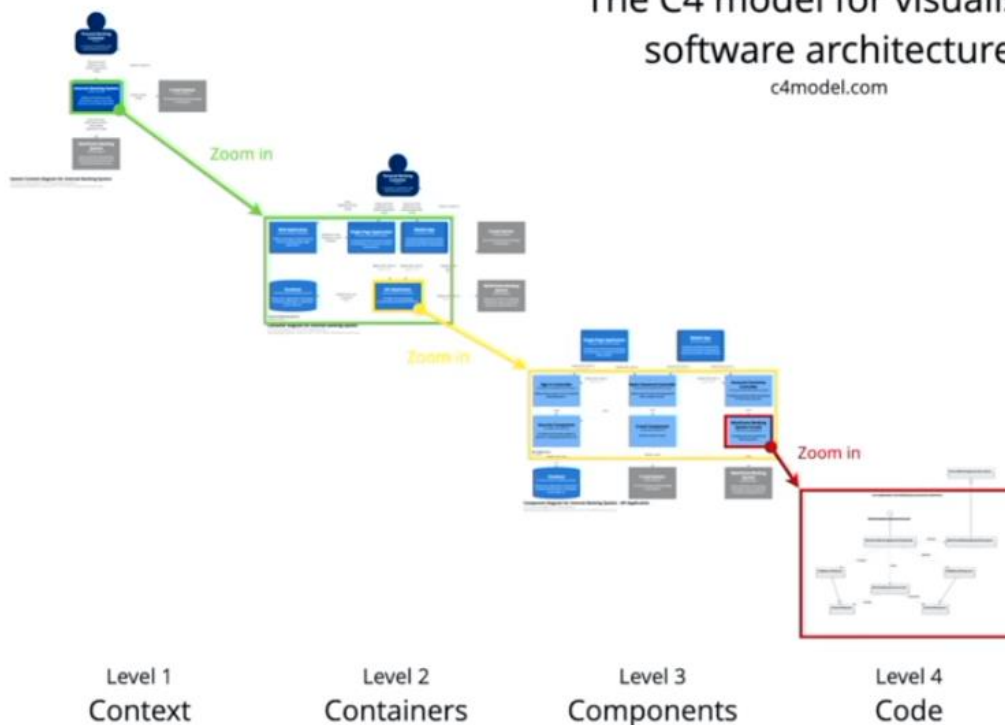
C4

c4model.com

[@sumanbansal](#)

The C4 model for visualising
software architecture

c4model.com



C4 model is a set of hierarchical sequence diagrams that allow you to tell different stories/details to different audiences.



Diagrams are maps

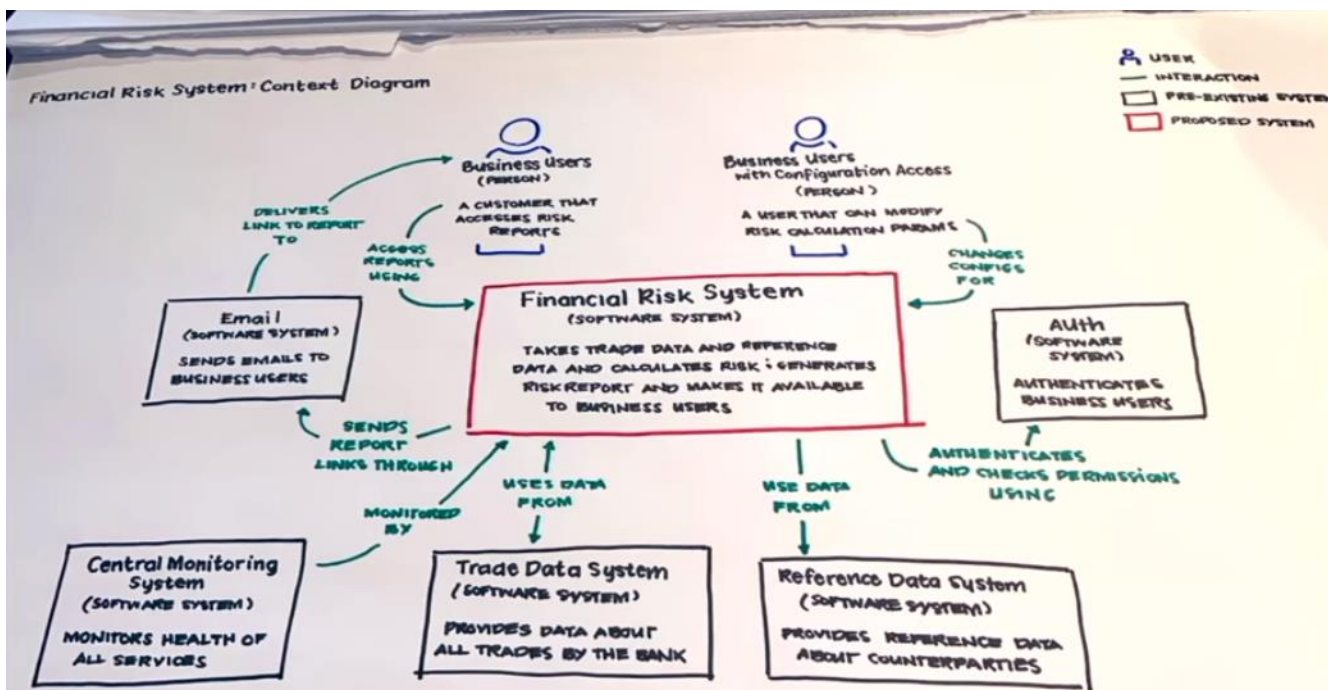
that help software developers navigate a large and/or complex codebase

System Context diagram

What is the scope of the software system we're building?

Who is using it? What are they doing?

What system integrations does it need to support?

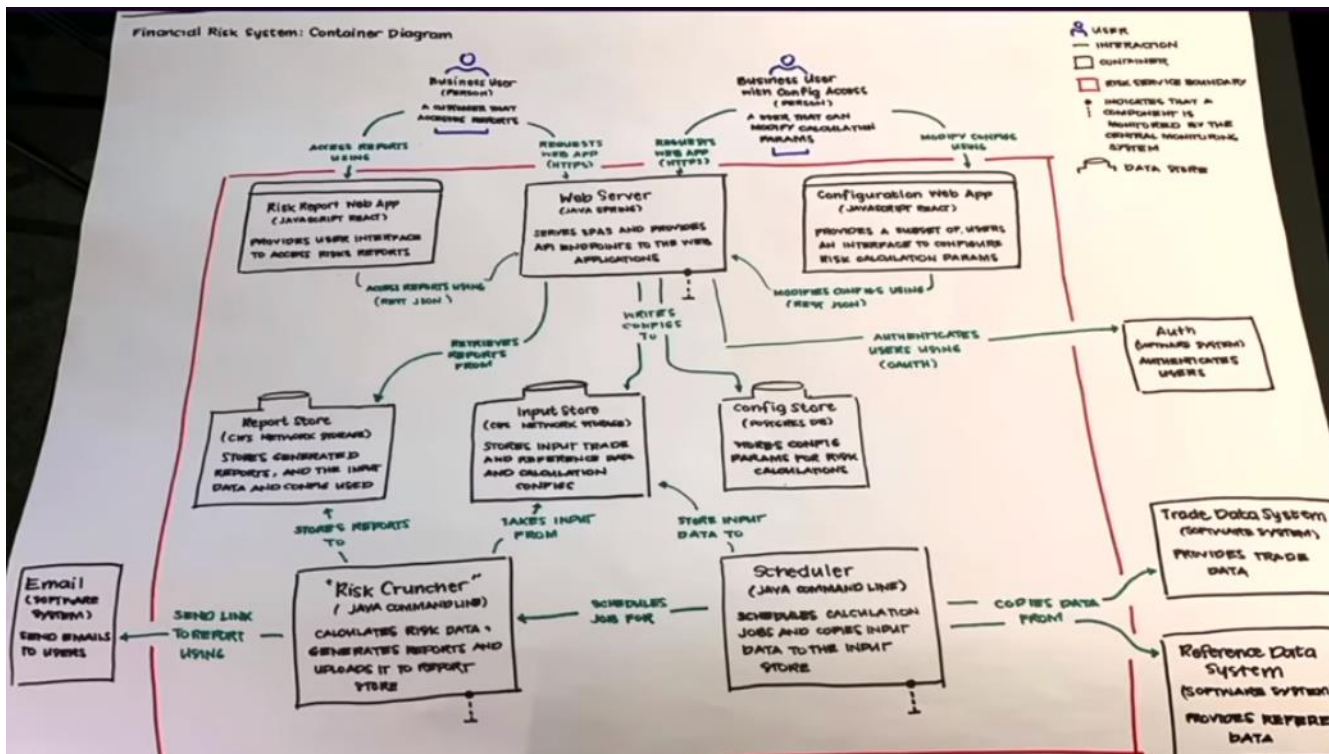


Container diagram

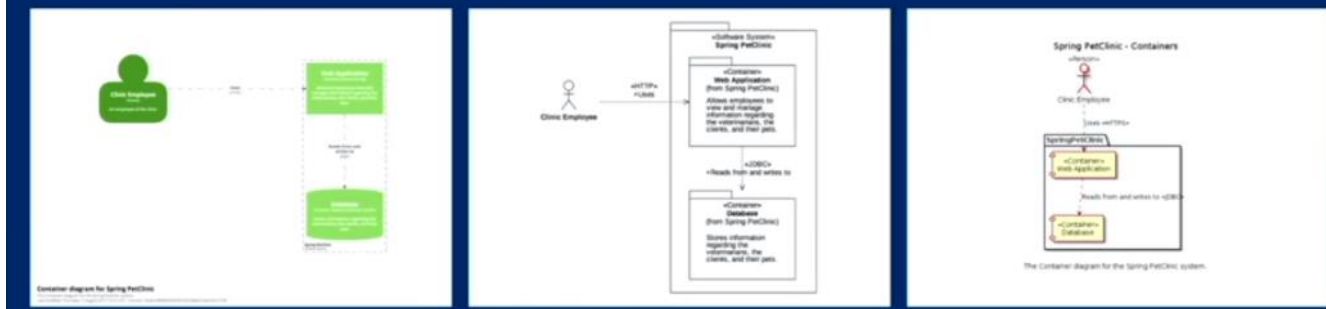
What are the major technology building blocks?

What are their responsibilities?

How do they communicate?



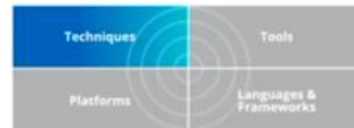
The C4 model is notation independent



A common set of abstractions is more important than a common notation

Tooling?

TECHNOLOGY RADAR

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Techniques

Trial

- 5. Continuous delivery for machine learning (CD4ML)
- 6. Data mesh
- 7. Declarative data pipeline definition

8. Diagrams as code

We're seeing more and more tools that enable you to create software architecture and other **diagrams as code**. There are benefits to using these tools over the heavier alternatives, including easy version control and the ability to generate the DSLs from many sources. Tools in this space that we like include [Diagrams](#), [Structurizr DSL](#), [AsciiDoctor Diagram](#) and stables such as [WebSequenceDiagrams](#), [PlantUML](#) and the venerable [Graphviz](#). It's also fairly simple to generate your own SVG these days, so don't

- New
- Moved in/out
- No change



Unable to find something you expected to see?

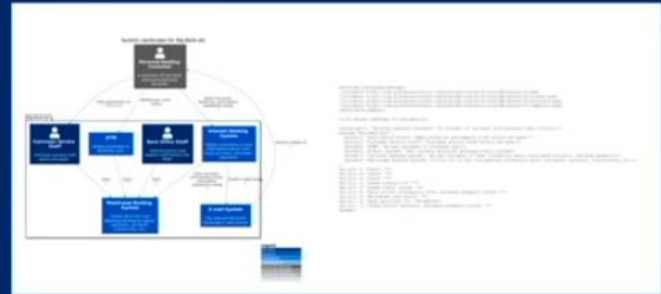
Each edition of the radar features blips reflecting what we came across during the month of six months. We might have missed

“Diagrams as code” is easy to author, diff, version control, collaborate on, integrate into CI/CD, etc

Diagramming
VS
modelling



Create and maintain



Diagrams as code 1.0

You create and maintain multiple diagrams, remembering to keep them all in sync whenever you change a diagram

@simonbrown



Create and maintain



Automatically generates



Diagrams as code 2.0

You create and maintain a single model, and the tool generates multiple diagrams, automatically keeping them all in sync whenever you change the model

goto: Search or jump to... Pull requests Issues Marketplace Explore

structurizr/dsl Public

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<> Code Issues 2 Pull requests 1 Actions Projects Wiki Security Insights Settings

master 1 branch 7 tags Go to file Add file Code

Simon Brown Updated to reflect release. 97b1226 3 days ago 277 commits

.github/workflows	GitHub Actions fixes.	5 months ago
docs	Updated to reflect release.	3 days ago
examples	Fixes an issue where this didn't work when defining relationships i...	5 days ago
gradle	Add gradle JAR.	15 months ago
src	Adds support for formatting the branding logo and font as DSL.	4 days ago
.gitignore	Add gradle JAR.	15 months ago
LICENSE	Initial commit	16 months ago
README.md	Added a link to the changelog.	3 months ago
build.gradle	Updated to reflect release.	3 days ago
gradle.properties	Adds a dummy Gradle properties file for GitHub Actions.	5 months ago
gradlew	Initial commit of source code for the DSL parser.	16 months ago
gradlew.bat	Initial commit of source code for the DSL parser.	16 months ago

README.md

About

Structurizr DSL

dsl software-architecture
structurizr c4model
architecture-diagrams

Readme

Apache-2.0 License

Releases 6

v.1.15.0 Latest
3 days ago

+ 5 releases

Packages

No packages published
Publish your first package

Contributors 8

<https://github.com/structurizr/dsl>

Domain concepts

(not "boxes and lines")

```
@startuml
title Software System - System Context

top to bottom direction

hide stereotype

rectangle "=="User\n<size:10>[Person]</size>" <<User>> as User
rectangle "=="Software System\n<size:10>[Software System]</size>" <<SoftwareSystem>> as SoftwareSystem

User ..> SoftwareSystem : "Uses"
@enduml
```

Domain language of diagramming

(no rules, no guidance)


```
workspace {
  model {
    user = person "User"
    softwareSystem = softwareSystem "Software System"

    user -> softwareSystem "Uses"
  }

  views {
    systemContext softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }
  }
}
```

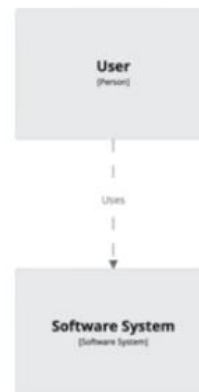
Domain language of software architecture (metamodel and rules)

Model-based (DRY)

```
workspace {
  model {
    user = person "User"
    softwareSystem = softwareSystem "Software System"

    user -> softwareSystem "Uses"
  }

  views {
    systemContext softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }
  }
}
```

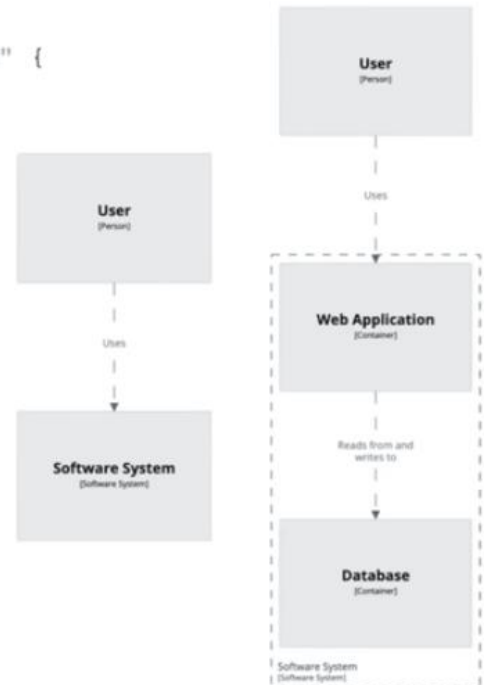


```
workspace {
  model {
    user = person "User"
    softwareSystem = softwareSystem "Software System" {
      webapp = container "Web Application"
      database = container "Database"
    }

    user -> webapp "Uses"
    webapp -> database "Reads from and writes to"
  }

  views {
    systemContext softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }

    container softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }
  }
}
```

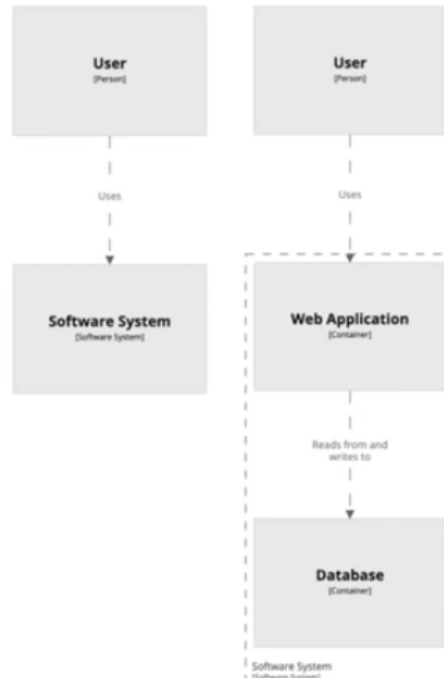


Unspecified relationships can be implied from the model

```
user -> softwareSystem "Uses"
```



```
user -> webapp "Uses"
webapp -> database "Reads from and writes to"
```



Implied relationships
can be disabled using:

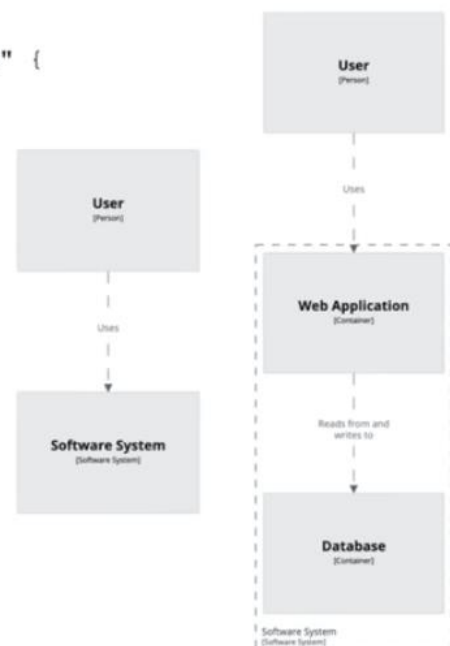
```
!impliedRelationships false
```

Separation of content and presentation

HTML & CSS



```
workspace {  
  model {  
    user = person "User"  
    softwareSystem = softwareSystem "Software System" {  
      webapp = container "Web Application"  
      database = container "Database"  
    }  
  
    user -> webapp "Uses"  
    webapp -> database "Reads from and writes to"  
  }  
  
  views {  
    systemContext softwareSystem {  
      include *  
      autoLayout  
    }  
  
    container softwareSystem {  
      include *  
      autolayout  
    }  
  }  
}
```



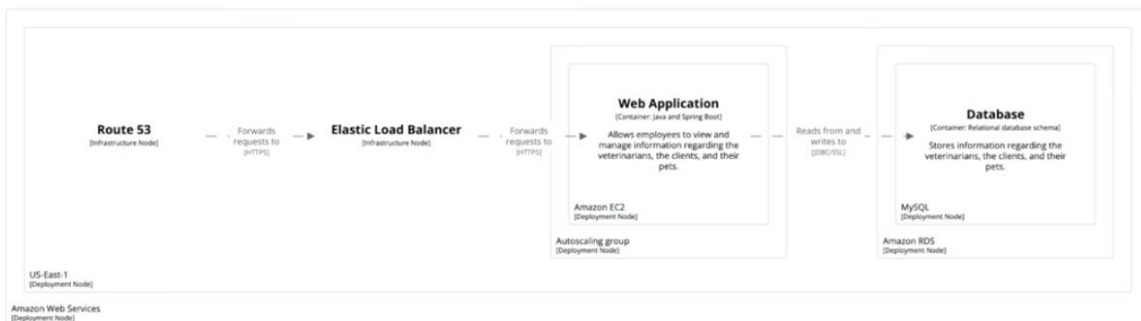
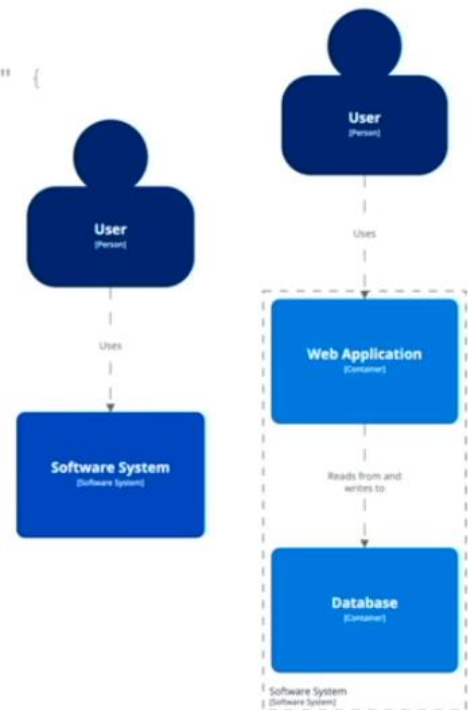
```
workspace {
  model {
    user = person "User"
    softwareSystem = softwareSystem "Software System" {
      webapp = container "Web Application"
      database = container "Database"
    }

    user -> webapp "Uses"
    webapp -> database "Reads from and writes to"
  }

  views {
    systemContext softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }

    container softwareSystem {
      include *
      autoLayout
    }
  }

  theme default
}
```



These use the AWS icon theme

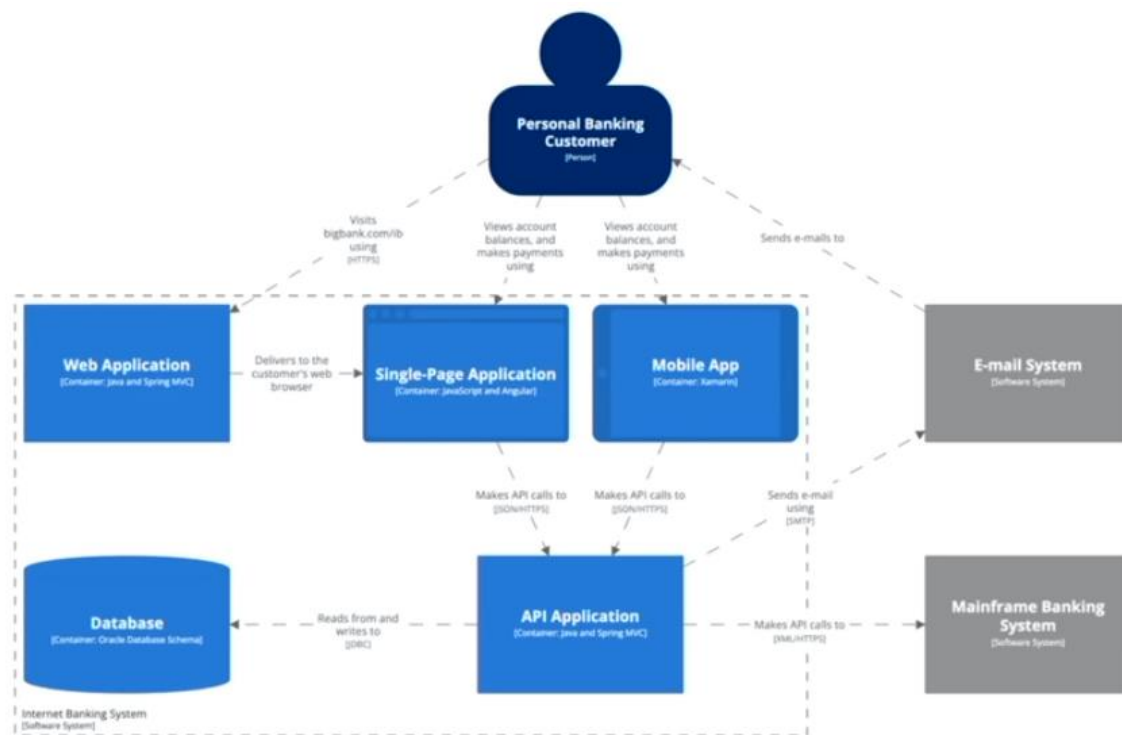
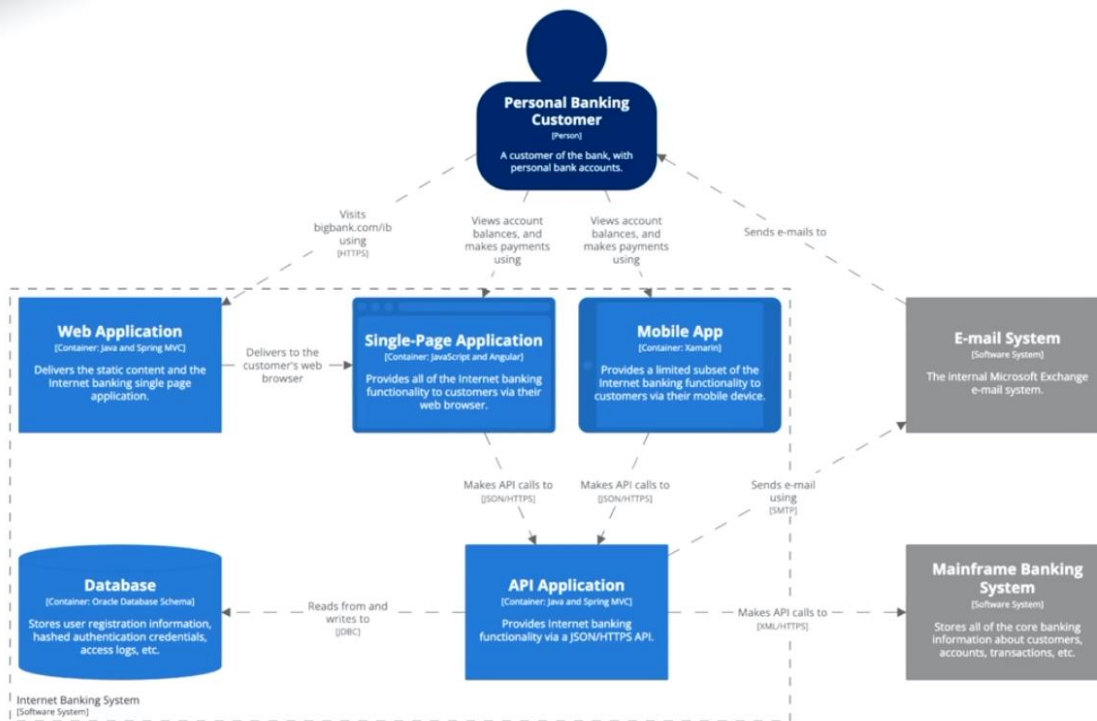
Styling of elements and relationships is achieved via tags

```
workspace {  
  model {  
    softwareSystem "Software System"  
  }  
  
  views {  
    systemLandscape {  
      include *  
      autolayout  
    }  
  
  }  
}
```



```
workspace {  
  model {  
    softwareSystem "Software System"  
  }  
  
  views {  
    systemLandscape {  
      include *  
      autolayout  
    }  
  
    styles {  
      element "Software System" {  
        background #1168bd  
        color #ffffff  
        shape RoundedBox  
      }  
    }  
  }  
}
```





You can also turn off the text in a diagram

Rendering tool independent

The structurizr tool doesn't draw the diagram for you, it lets you define the model and structure using the DSL

"Diagrams as code 1.0"

PlantUML, Mermaid, etc are **input formats**

Automatic layout vs manual layout?



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Structurizr Lite

[Overview](#) | [Getting started](#) | [Auto-sync](#) | [Workflow](#) | [Docker Hub](#)

Overview

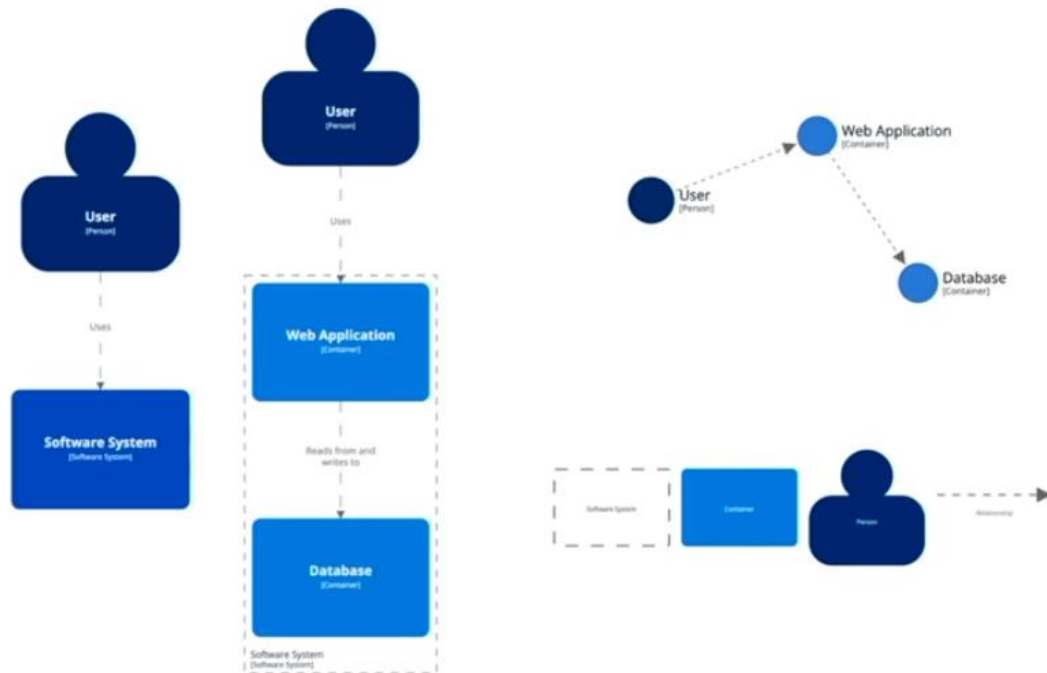
Packaged as a Docker container, and designed for developers, this version of Structurizr provides a way to quickly work with a single workspace. It's free to use, and allows you to view/edit diagrams, view documentation, and view architecture decision records defined in a DSL or JSON workspace.



Structurizr Lite will look for a `workspace.dsl` and `workspace.json` file in a given directory, in that order, and use the file it finds first. If you change this file (e.g. via your text editor or one of the Structurizr client libraries), you can refresh your web browser to immediately see the changes.

<https://structurizr.com/help/lite>

This is a free version of the Structurizr tool that is available as a Docker image from Docker Hub. This is a little web app that you can spin up, point it to your folder that contains the Structurizr DSL definition files, open up localhost:8080 in the browser and it will create a bunch of diagrams for you like below.



The screenshot shows the GitHub repository for **structurizr/cli**. The repository is public and has 10 unwatched, 251 stars, and 30 forks. It is currently on the **master** branch with 1 branch and 31 tags. The repository contains a list of files and folders, including **.github/workflows**, **docs**, **etc**, **examples**, **gradle/wrapper**, **src/main**, **.gitignore**, **Dockerfile**, **LICENSE**, **README.md**, **build.gradle**, **gradlew**, **gradlew.bat**, and **settings.gradle**. The repository is managed by **simonbrowndotje** and has 153 commits. The repository is licensed under the **Apache-2.0 License** and has 30 releases, with the latest release being **v1.15.0** (3 days ago). The repository also has 29 releases and 6 contributors.

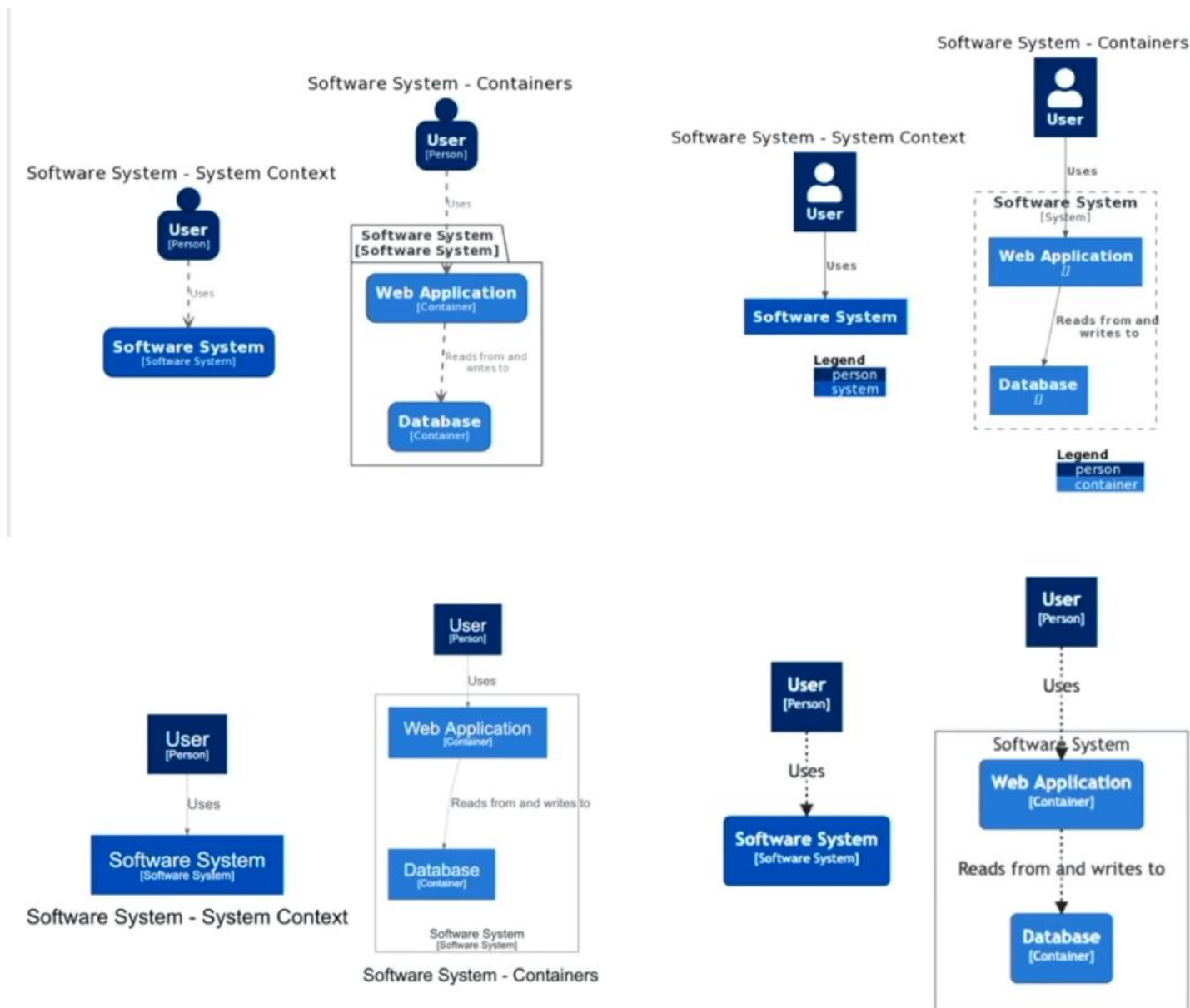
<https://github.com/structurizr/cli>

The CLI tool allows you to export the views you define in your Structurizr DSL definitions to various exort formats like PlantUML, Mermaid, etc.

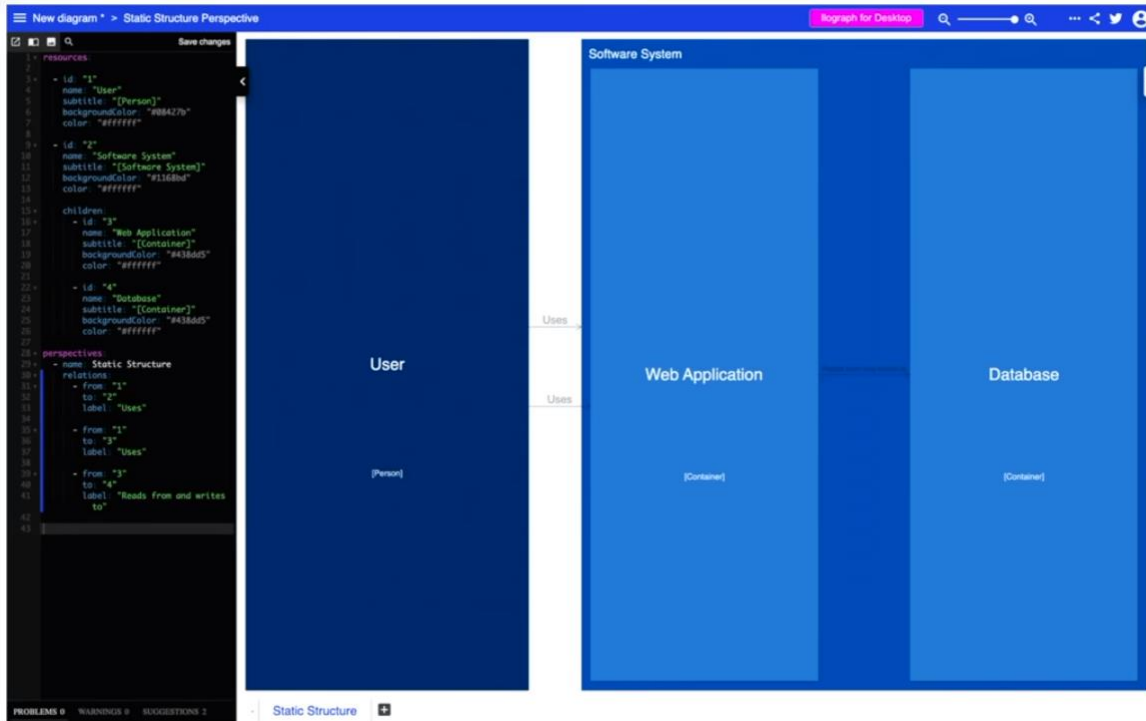

```
./structurizr.sh export -workspace /Users/simon/bigbankplc/workspace.dsl -format plantuml
```

```
Exporting workspace from /Users/simon/bigbankplc/workspace.dsl
- loading workspace from DSL
- using StructurizrPlantUMLExporter
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-SystemLandscape.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-SystemContext.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-Containers.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-Components.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-SignIn.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-LiveDeployment.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-DevelopmentDeployment.puml
- writing /Users/simon/bigbankplc/structurizr-SignIn-sequence.puml
- finished
```

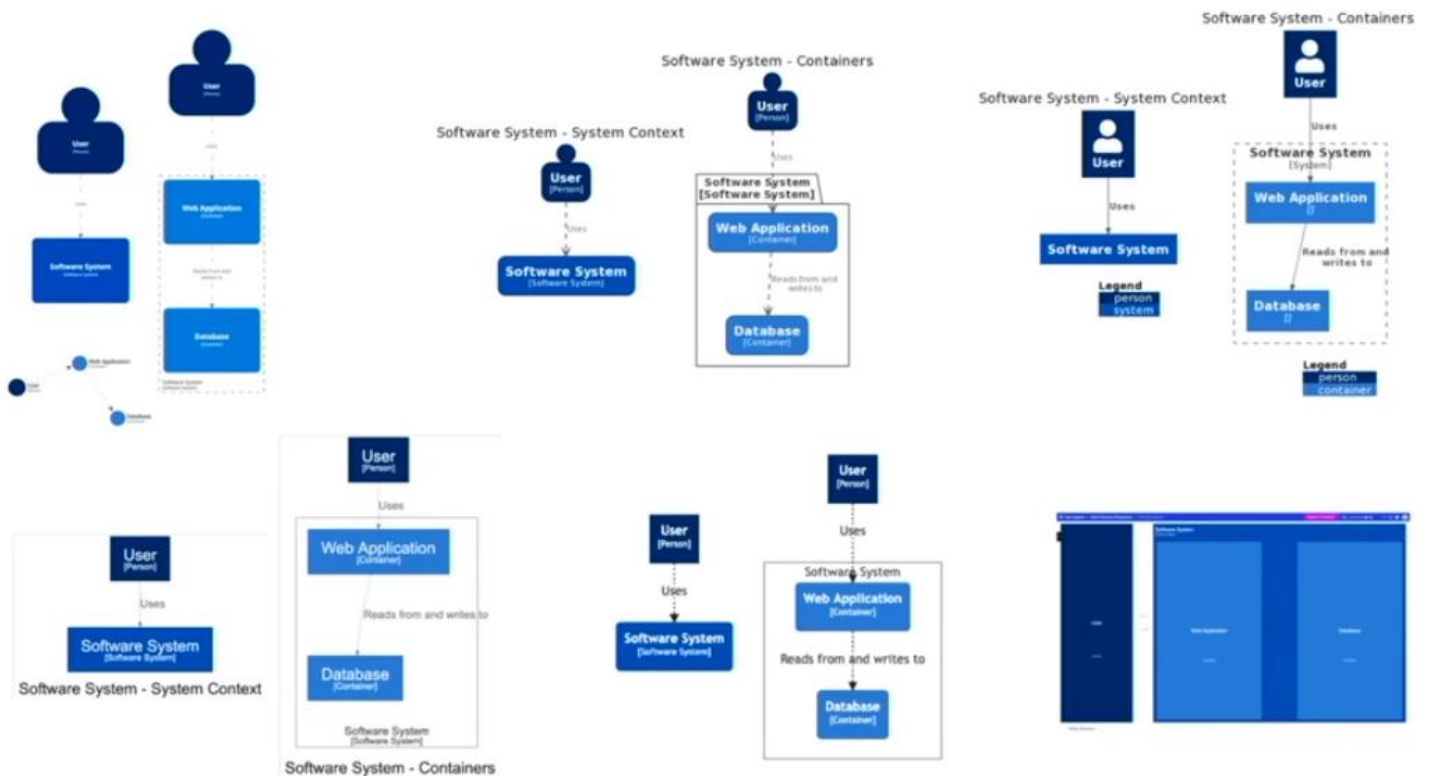
So, you spin up the tool, point it to a workspace definition and export in a format like PlantUML as above to get the files.



golo;



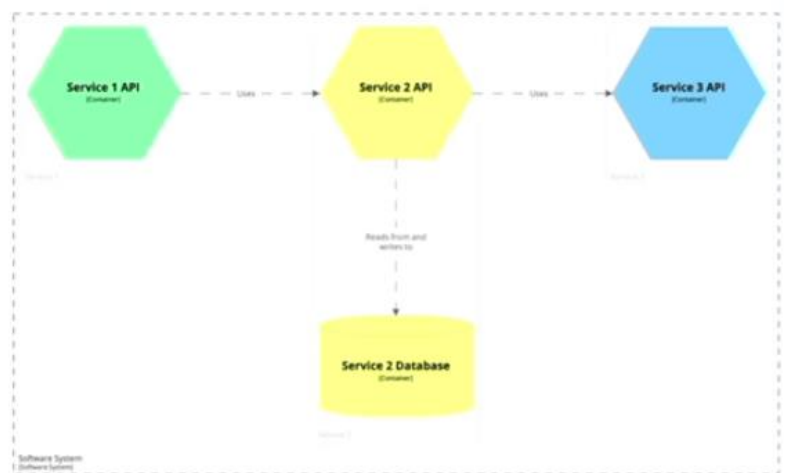
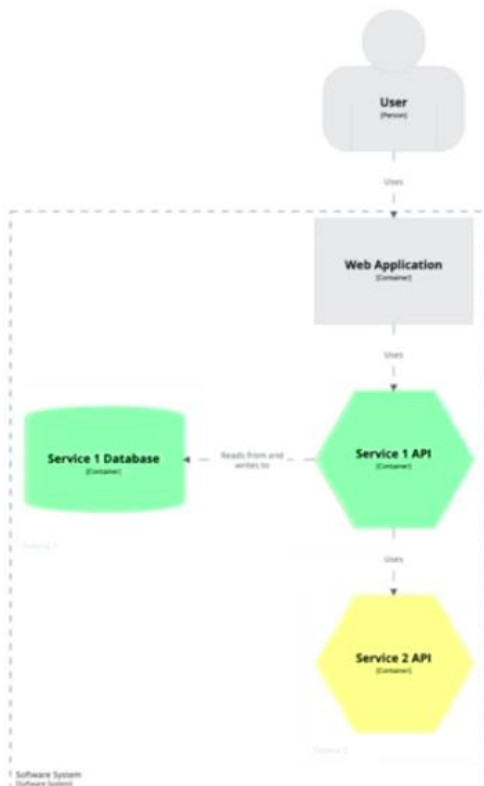
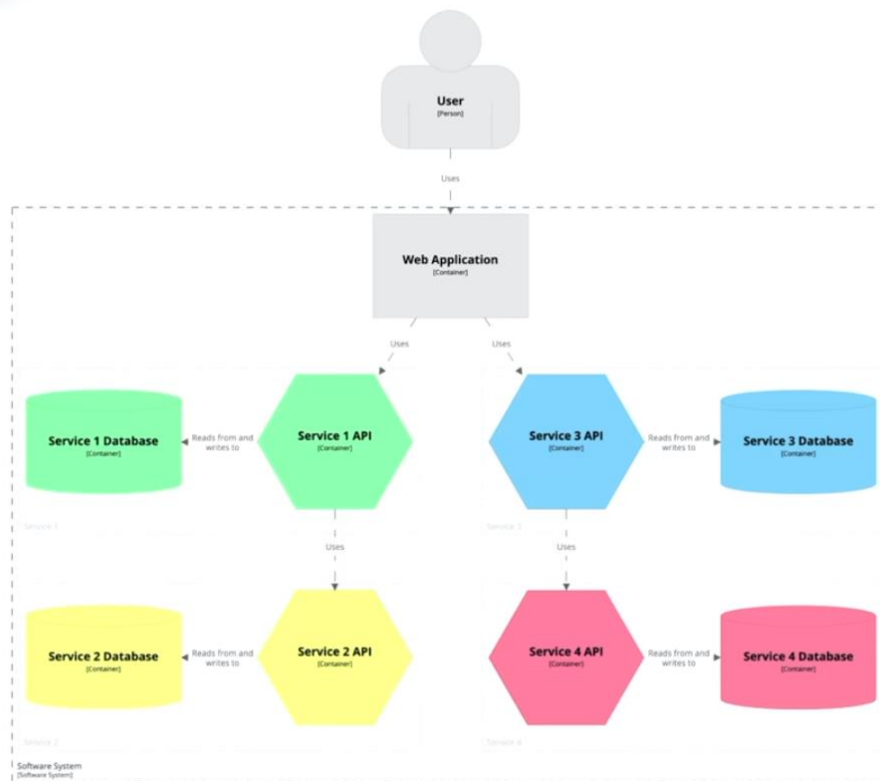
This is a sample Heliograph



More advanced features

How do you diagram large and complex software systems?

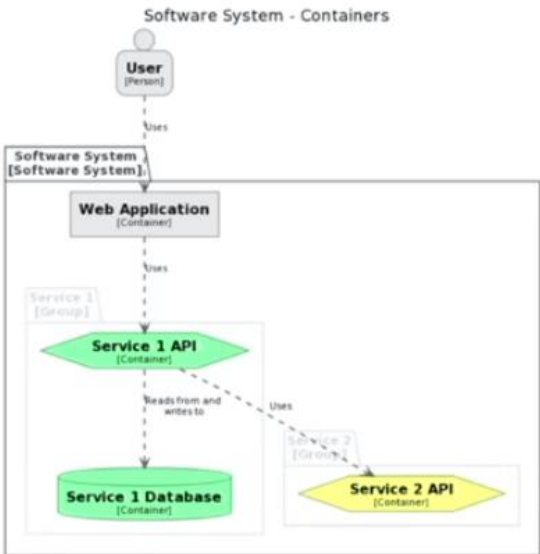
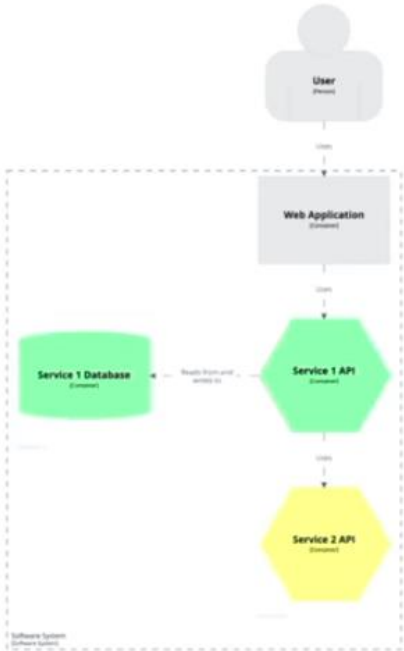
goto;



```

container softwareSystem {
  include user ->service1->
  autolayout
}

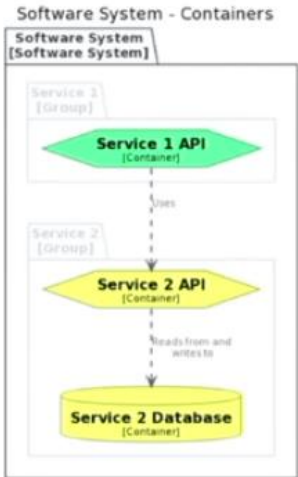
```



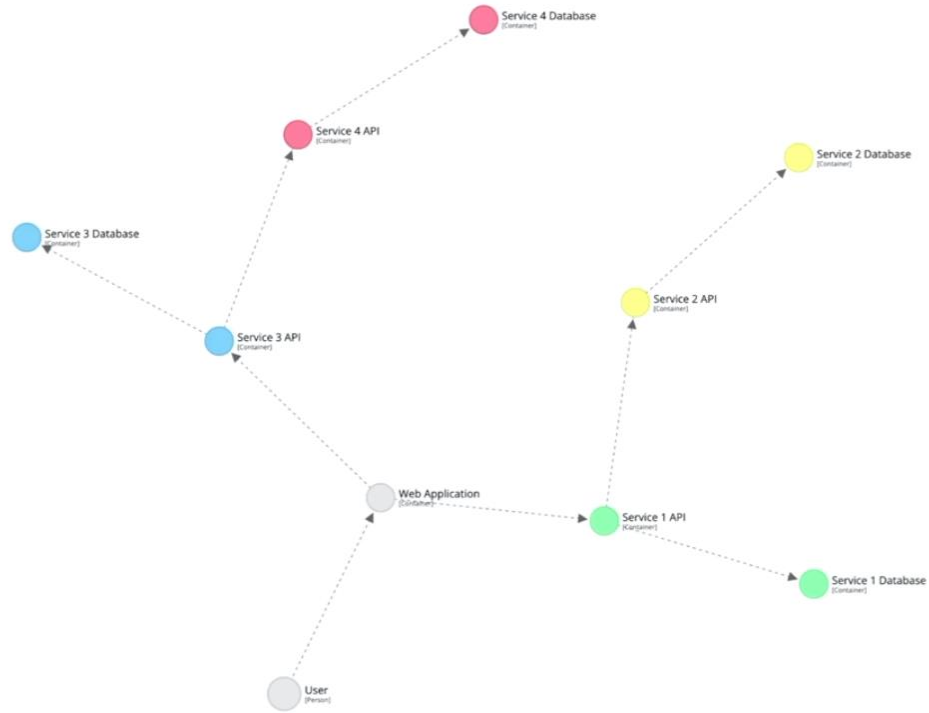
```

container softwareSystem {
  include ->service2->
  autolayout
}

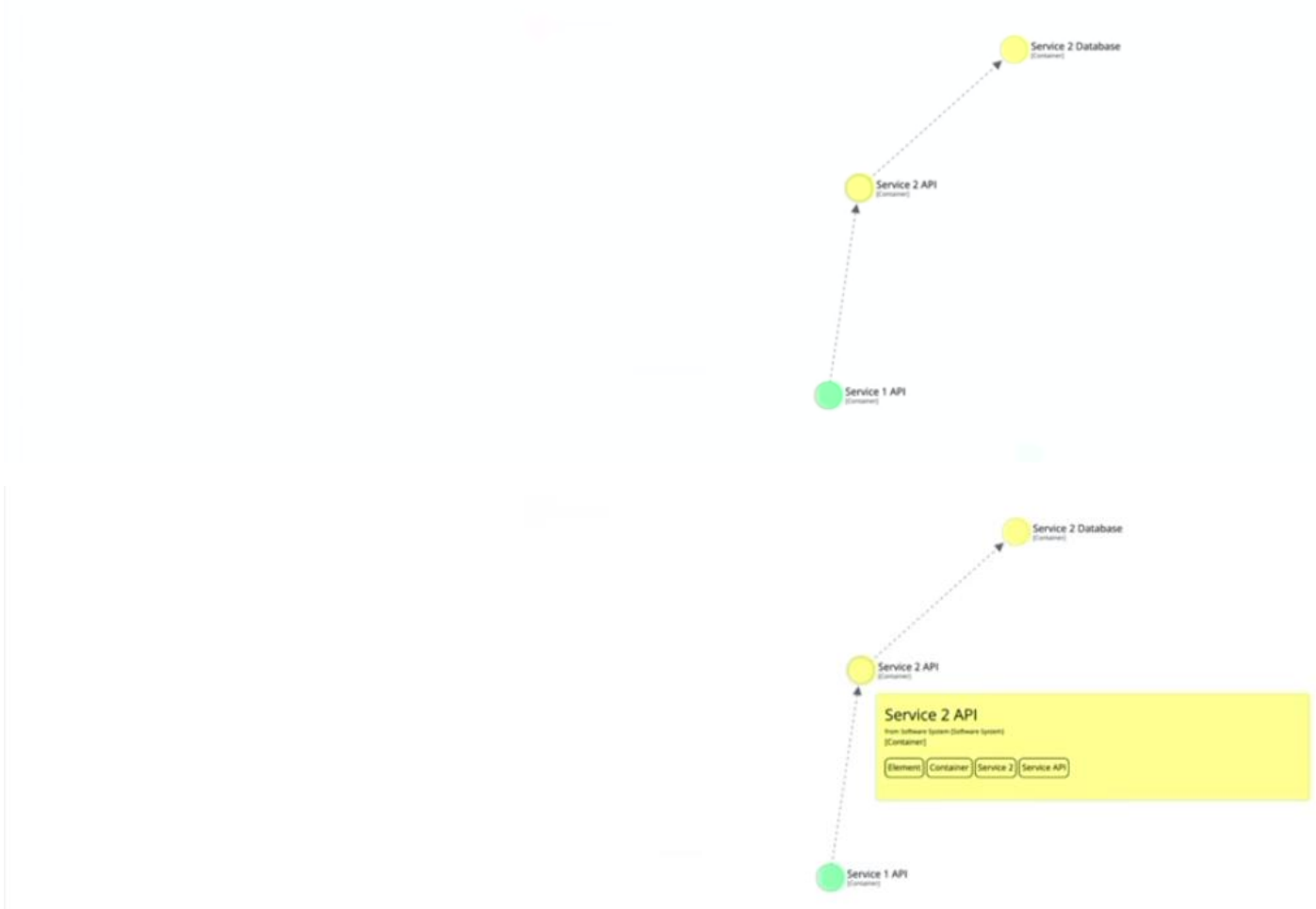
```



This is one way

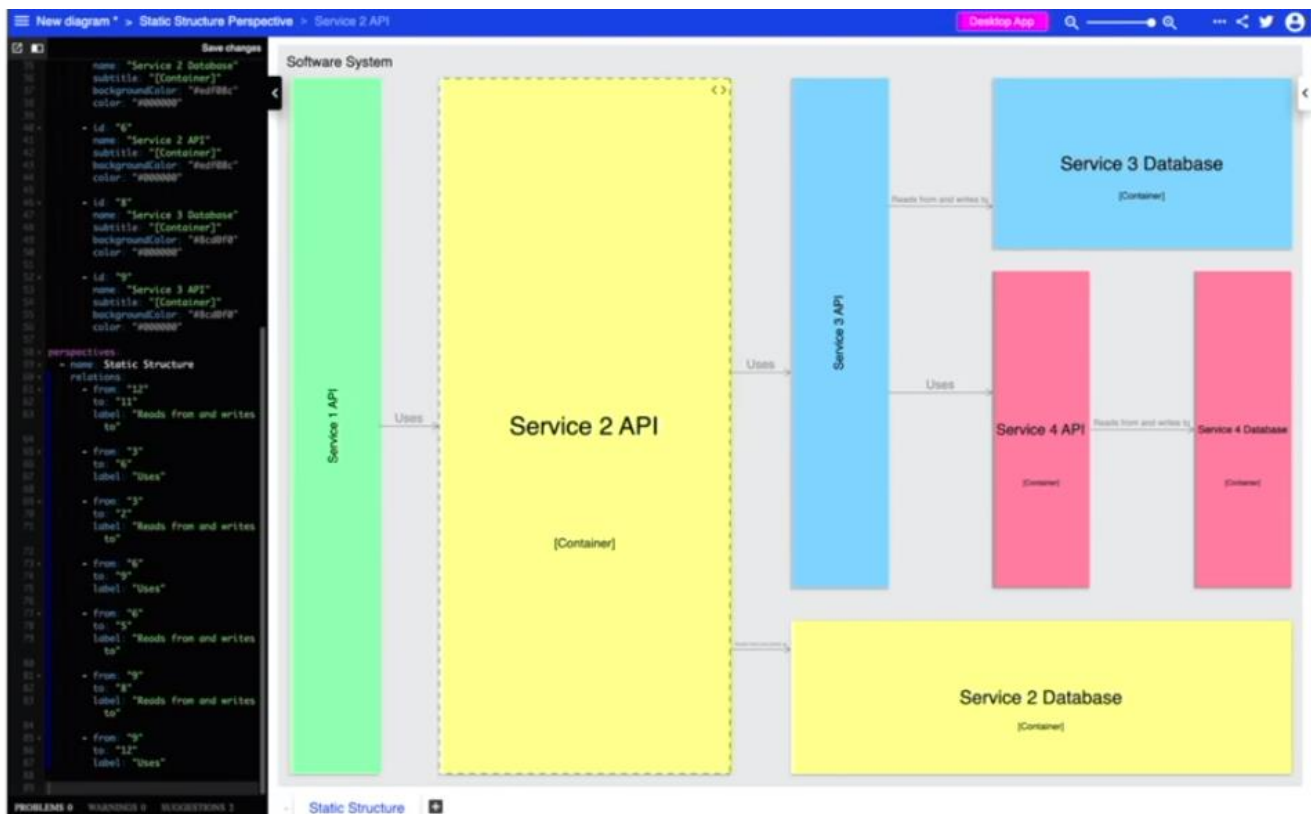


Another approach is to use the D3.js view as a force-directed graph above, you can click on anode to see it as below





You can also load it back into Heliograph to see the above view



Enterprise-wide modelling?

Software systems and people

`system-landscape.dsl`

Software System 1

`software-system-1.dsl`
extends
`system-landscape.dsl`

Software System 2

`software-system-2.dsl`
extends
`system-landscape.dsl`

Software System 3

`software-system-3.dsl`
extends
`system-landscape.dsl`

Scripting support

(via JSR-223: Java Scripting API)

```
workspace {  
    model {  
        ...  
    }  
  
    !script groovy {  
        workspace.views.createDefaultViews()  
        workspace.views.views.each { it.disableAutomaticLayout() }  
    }  
}
```

Plugin support

(via Java)

```

workspace {
    model {
        s = softwareSystem "Software System" {
            webapp = container "Web Application"
            database = container "Database" {
                webapp -> this "Reads from and writes to"
            }
        }
    }

    views {
        systemContext s {
            include *
            autoLayout lr
        }

        container s {
            include *
            autoLayout lr
        }
    }
}

StructurizrDslParser parser = new StructurizrDslParser();
parser.parse(new File("workspace.dsl"));

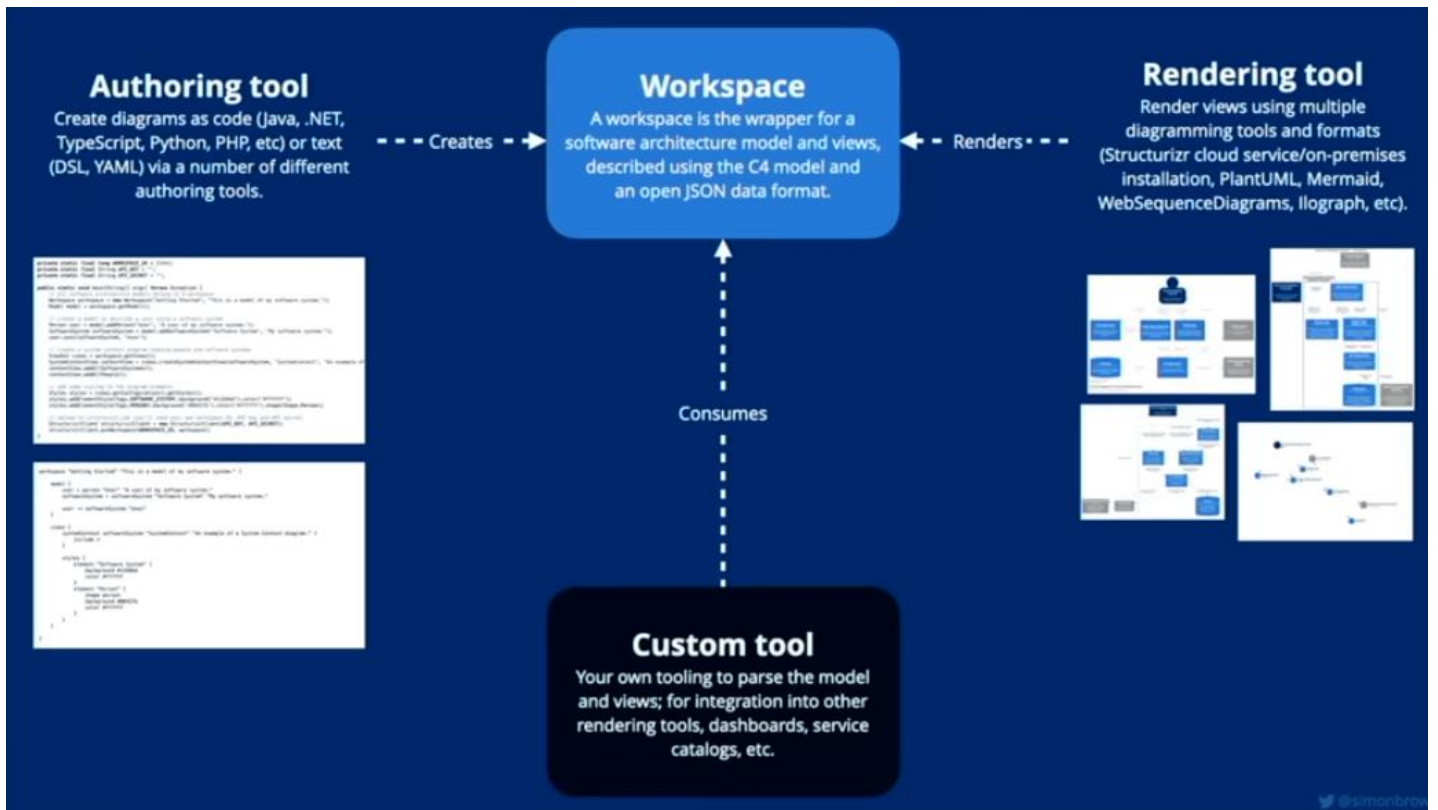
Workspace workspace = parser.getWorkspace();
Container webApplication = workspace.getModel()
    .getSoftwareSystemWithName("Software System")
    .getContainerWithName("Web Application");

// add components manually or via automatic extraction
...

// add a component view
ComponentView componentView = workspace.getViews()
    .createComponentView(webApplication, "Components", "Description");
componentView.addDefaultElements();
componentView.enableAutomaticLayout();

```

Custom tooling



Usage scenarios

Static diagrams

(e.g. PNG/SVG)

Interactive diagrams

(e.g. browser-based)

Structurizr Lite

[Overview](#) | [Getting started](#) | [Auto-sync](#) | [Workflow](#) | [Docker Hub](#)

Overview

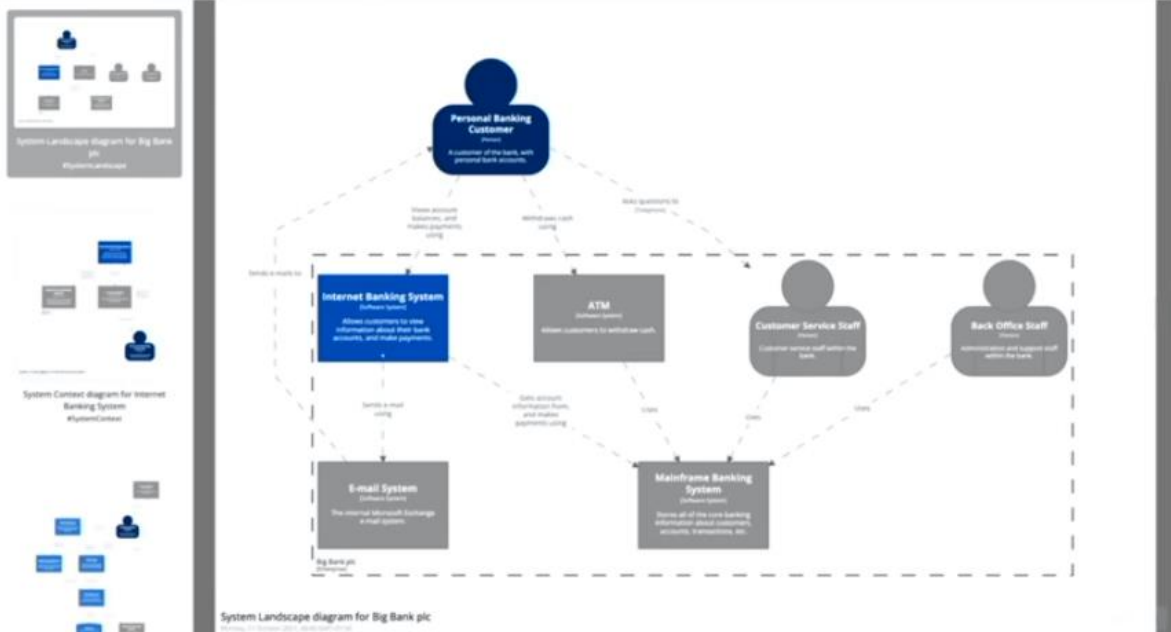
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<https://structurizr.com/help/lite>

```
docker run -it --rm -p 8080:8080 -v /Users/simon/bigbankplc/:/usr/local/structurizr structurizr/lite
```



!docs <directory name>

Financial Risk System

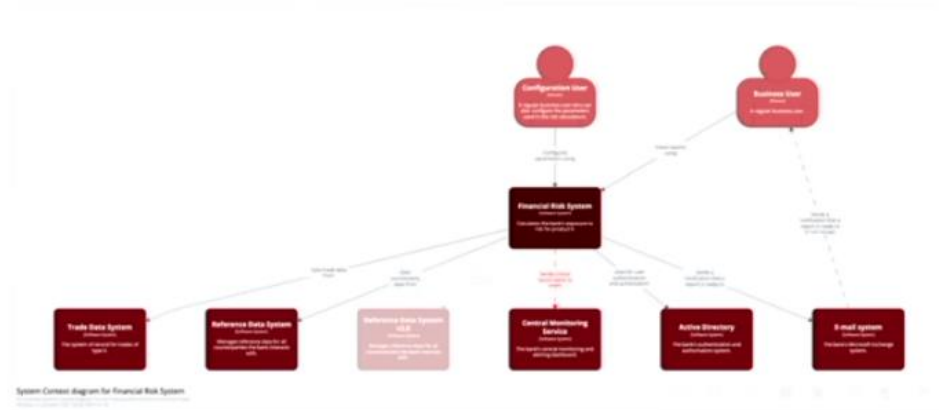
- 1 Context
 - 1.1 Trade Data System
 - 1.2 Reference Data System
- 2 Functional Overview
- 3 Quality Attributes
 - 3.1 Performance
 - 3.2 Scalability
 - 3.3 Availability
 - 3.4 Failover
 - 3.5 Security
 - 3.6 Audit
 - 3.7 Fault Tolerance and Resilience
 - 3.8 Internationalization and Localization
 - 3.9 Monitoring and Management
 - 3.10 Data Retention and Archiving
 - 3.11 Interoperability

Monday, 11 October 2016, 08:45 GMT+01:00

Financial Risk System

1 Context

A global investment bank based in London, New York and Singapore trades (buys and sells) financial products with other banks (counterparties). When share prices on the stock markets move up or down, the bank either makes money or loses it. At the end of the working day, the bank needs to gain a view of how much risk they are exposed to (e.g. of losing money) by running some calculations on the data held about their trades. The bank has an existing Trade Data System (TDS) and Reference Data System (RDS) but need a new Risk System.



1.1 Trade Data System

!adrs <directory name>

adr-tools

- 8. Use ISO 8601 Format for Dates
- 7. Invoke adr-config executable to get configuration
- 6. Packaging and distribution in other version control repositories
- 5. Help comments
- 4. Markdown format
- 3. Single command with subcommands
- 2. Implement as shell scripts
- 1. Record architecture decisions

See also: 101, 2007, 1000, 1000, 1000, 1000, 1000

adr-tools - Summary

[Software System] adr-tools



2017

- 8. Use ISO 8601 Format for Dates

Tuesday, 21 February 2017

Accepted

2016

- 7. Invoke adr-config executable to get configuration
- 6. Packaging and distribution in other version control repositories
- 5. Help comments
- 4. Markdown format
- 3. Single command with subcommands
- 2. Implement as shell scripts
- 1. Record architecture decisions

Friday, 12 February 2016

Accepted

Accepted

Accepted

Accepted

Accepted

Accepted

Accepted

Closing thoughts

“Diagrams as code” is easy to author,
diff, version control, collaborate on,
integrate into CI/CD, etc

Developers
vs
non-developers?

Store your diagrams and docs
in version control,
next to your source code

“Publish” the diagrams and
documentation if necessary

Up front design
vs
long-lived documentation?

Think about diagrams as being
“disposable” artefacts



<https://structurizr.com/dsl>

<https://github.com/structurizr/dsl/tree/master/docs/cookbook>

Thank you!