



# Getting some peace and quiet as an open source maintainer

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Cornelia Huck <cohuck@redhat.com>

Senior Software Engineer

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# Introduction

What does a maintainer do?

Technical and workflow issues

The human factor

Caring for yourself

Questions?

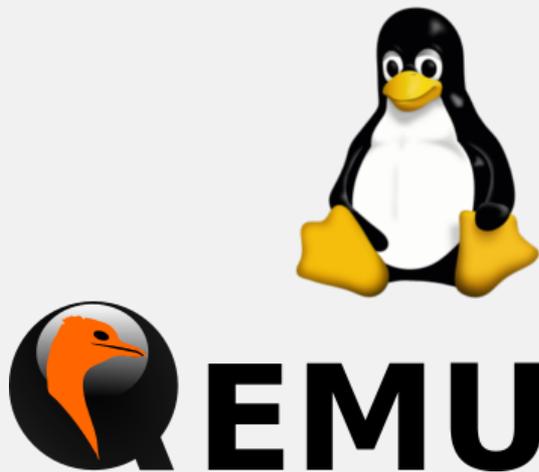
# Introduction

# Introduction

(or, who is going to talk about what?)

Intention: share my personal perspective in the hope that it is useful

- As a maintainer (Linux: since 2012, QEMU: since 2013) and a contributor (Linux: since 2001, QEMU: since 2012)
- For maintainers – and for the people who interact with them
- YMMV...



What does a maintainer do?

# What does a maintainer do?

(a personal perspective)

A maintainer assumes responsibility for a project or a specific part of it:

- Maintenance: keeping it in good shape
- Gatekeeper: keeping not so good things out
- Coordination: within the project, with other projects, with users, ...
- Sharing information



# What does a maintainer do?

(a personal perspective)

... but some things a maintainer should not be responsible for:

- Fixing everybody's bugs, even if they are perfectly capable of doing so themselves
- Extended hand-holding for people who do not make a reasonable effort
- Controlling what other people are doing

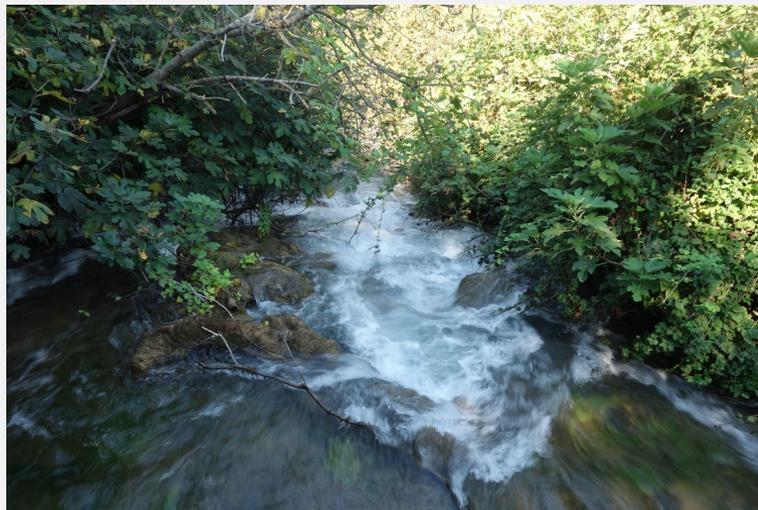
# Technical and workflow issues

# Technical and workflow issues

(or, how *you* work)

There is no silver bullet; a good workflow needs to:

- Work with your personal preferences: what works for someone else might not work for you
- Work with the project and its members: project dynamics can vary a lot
- Try to shop around for good ideas; at least some tweaks are usually required



# Technical and workflow issues

(or, how *you* work)

Be transparent about what you do:

- Communicate your expectations so people do not need to guess
- Be clear when you accept something, but also when you reject it (and why!)
- Let people know that you have seen something, but have not yet time to act on it

# Technical and workflow issues

(or, how *you* work)

Try to spread the load:

- To our robotic overlords: Patch handling tools, automated testing
- To your fellow developers: Solicit their opinions, ask for assistance with tasks
- To the general public: Talking about your project area may bring in interested people

# The human factor

# The human factor

(or, how you work with others)

The people you are interacting with come in many varieties...

- Different cultural backgrounds, including language barriers
- Personal preferences, interaction styles, and quirks
- An experienced developer employed by a company has different interests than a newbie hacking something for fun



# The human factor

(or, how you work with others)

## Behavioural traps: the dictator vs. the doormat

- Trying to control everything is likely to lead to complete overload...
- ...as is not pushing back and accepting everything
- Beware of company politics influencing working with others

# The human factor

(or, how you work with others)

When things do not work out as expected...

- Tempers running high among people passionate about their work
- Trolling and people fanning the flames
- Rejecting ideas that won't work – gracefully



# Caring for yourself

# Caring for yourself

(or, things that should be obvious but often are not)

Even though you can't control what others do, you can improve things for yourself:

- Try to get a clear head once in a while (even if you do not notice being stressed...)
- Somebody to chat with is usually an excellent idea
- You are not in this alone: Find others to help you



# Caring for yourself

(or, things that should be obvious but often are not)

Things change... it might be time for you to change as well:

- Ask others to share responsibility
- Interests evolve; consider shifting to a different area
- Don't let yourself be forced to do something that is doing you harm!
- ...and maybe it is time to just move on



# Questions?



# THANK YOU



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