Building and scaling Hare's community governance

Happy hackers building together

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https://harelang.org

Slides & more info

Slides and additional information about this talk:

What is Hare?

> **Hare is a systems programming language designed to be simple, stable, and robust.** Hare uses a static type system, manual memory management, and a minimal runtime. It is well-suited to writing operating systems, system tools, compilers, networking software, and other low-level, high performance tasks.

– harelang.org

What is Hare?

We all have a stake in Hare.

Hare *literally* belongs to all of us.

- The copyright is collectively held by 140 people.
- Both the software and its community is the product of our **collective investment**.
- That comes with both **empowerment** and **responsibility**.

Contributing to Hare

We contribute to Hare by:

- **Working on the software**, the Hare compiler and standard library
- **Building projects** in Hare and enriching the ecosystem
- **Blogging or chatting** about Hare online
- Consciously **choosing to make people feel welcome**, respected, and empowered, to **re-enforce** all of the other dimensions in which people contribute, and help new members of the community become **invested**.

How Hare is actually governed

- Big technical decisions are made by consensus via an **informal RFC process**.
- We agreed on and adopted a **code of conduct** that describes standards of behavior (both inside *and* outside of community spaces).
- We have a **fiscal policy** which governs how money is spent via consensus, which is then carried out by a small committee of trusted members who actually control the bank accounts and so on.
- We have a **BDFL** for when all else fails.
- Ultimately: Hare is governed **as little as possible**!

December 2019: Hare development begins in secret

Governance model: none to speak of

February 2020: Teasing Hare on my blog

> I have a new secret project which I've been working on. I intend to keep this project under wraps for a while still, because I don't want people to start using it before I know if it's going to pan out or not. This project is going to take a lot of time to complete, so I hope you'll bear with me for a while and trust that the results will speak for themselves.

Governance model: ARG

April 2020: We have a winner

Ember Sawady discovers the project via the (public, if you look for them) CI logs and sends her first patch.

Governance model: ARG/BDFL

April 2022: Hare is announced to the general public

harelang.org: “Announcing the Hare programming language”

- 18 established contributors
- Website pre-populated with content
- Cultural norms pre-established

Governance model: BDFL

Circa April 2023

Problems

- Drew does not scale
- Strict expectations of professionalism is partitioning the community
- Hate and bigotry is festering in communities *like ours* around the Internet

harelang.org: Scaling the Hare community

Problem 1: Drew doesn’t scale

Solutions:

- **Define maintainer role** and nominate them from the community
- **Establish RFC process** for independent consensus-building
- **Define BDFL role**

Define maintainer role


```
AARCH64 SUPPORT
M:  Willow Barraco <contact@willowbarraco.fr>
F:  *aarch64*

CRYPTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY
M:  Armin Preiml <apreiml@strohwolke.at>
F:  crypto/

THE REST
M:  Drew DeVault <drew@ddevault.org>
M:  Ember Sawady <ecs@d2evs.net>
M:  Sebastian <sebastian@sebsite.pw>
M:  Joe Finney <me@spxtr.net>
L:  ~sircmpwn/hare-dev@lists.sr.ht
// ...
```

harelang.org: Maintainer documentation

Establish an RFC process

RFC: Request for comments

- **Optional** tool for building consensus on big changes
- Anyone can submit an RFC regardless of status
- No formal process of approval: “read the room”

harelang.org: RFC process

Define BDFL role

- Setting (and clarifying) **the broader vision** and direction for the project
- **Organizing participants** and **empowering them** to roles for which they are suited
- **Planning** long-term priorities and design goals
- **Mediating conflicts** in the community
- Providing **the last word** when consensus cannot be reached

harelang.org: A note from Hare's BDFL

Problem 2: Fragmentation in the community

Solutions:

- Acknowledge that our community is a social place
- Make space for that socialization
- Keep professional, on-topic spaces separate

Problem 3: *gestures vaguely at everything*

Solutions:

- Publicly assert our values
- Code of conduct & enforcement team

harelang.org: All rabbits welcome

harelang.org: Code of conduct

All rabbits welcome

> We are the maintainers of the Hare programming language, and we support the right of all people to self-expression, and are building a community in which all forms of self-expression and identity are welcome, **with the exception of expressions of hate and intolerance**.

...

> In particular we affirm the rights, legitimacy, and humanity of disparaged classes within the free software ecosystem, including but not limited to women, people of color, transgender individuals, people of all sexual identities and orientations, and all others besides. You are welcome in our community, as equals, to learn, to participate, **and to lead**.

Hare Code of Conduct

Adapted from contributor covenant, *plus*:

Scope

Egregious violations of our cultural norms, such as displays of intolerance, harassment, or other egregiously inappropriate behavior **outside of our community** spaces may result in enforcement action within the Hare community, in the interest of providing a safe space for participants who may be threatened by individuals who engage in inappropriate conduct beyond our borders.

Outcomes

Case study: Joe Famous

Problem

Joe Famous politely introduces himself to the project and says he's excited to work with us. He is a well-known programmer whose blog is full of misogyny, queerphobia, racism, etc.

Enforcement action

Moderators collectively agree to proactively ban him from the project.

Outcome

He sends us an angry email. We ignore it :)

Case study: John Doe

Problem

```
<john doe>   is there a way to create macro, i.e def fn? something like
             #define func(arg) in C world, you know
<maintainer> no
<john doe>   why
<john doe>   this sucks so much
```

Enforcement action

Private warning from a moderator.

Outcome

Not received well, John leaves the community.

Case study: Jane Doe

Problem

Jane has a new project she's working on to control sex toys with Hare and she's discussing it in community spaces. Cool project, but sexualized language is forbidden by the code of conduct.

Enforcement action

Privately ask her not to mention this project in Hare community spaces.

Outcome

No hurt feelings, life goes on.

Case study: Jimmy Placeholdername

Problem

```
<jimmy> it's just ***** folks being the f*ckt*rds they are
<jane>  wow chill
```

Enforcement action

None. Jane is not officially a moderator.

Outcome

Jimmy cools off.

Using these tools sparingly

All of these tools are used **as little as possible**.

The community **runs itself** for the most part.

Back to the people

Hare is built by about 140 people (last time I checked).

We are all peers, leaders, and friends.

Thank you!

harelang.org: more about Hare

drewdevault.com: more about me