# THE LINUX SCHEDULER: A DECADE OF WASTED CORES

Jean-Pierre Lozi jplozi@unice.fr

**N**ice Sophia Antipolis Baptiste Lepers baptiste.lepers@epfl.ch



Fabien Gaud me@fabiengaud.net COHO DATA

Alexandra Fedorova sasha@ece.ubc.ca

Justin Funston jfunston@ece.ubc.ca



Vivien Quéma vivien.quema@imag.fr Grenoble Ensimag

#### THE LINUX SCHEDULER: A DECADE OF WASTED CORES 1/16

Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)











Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)

Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts):
R < script.R --nosave &</li>
R < script.R --nosave &</li>





D



UBC



Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)

Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts): R < script.R --nosave & R < script.R --nosave &</p>

 Compile your kernel in a third terminal: make –j 62 kernel









Grenoble INP

Ensimad

Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)

Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts):
R < script.R --nosave &</li>
R < script.R --nosave &</li>

- Compile your kernel in a third terminal: make –j 62 kernel
- Here is what might happen:









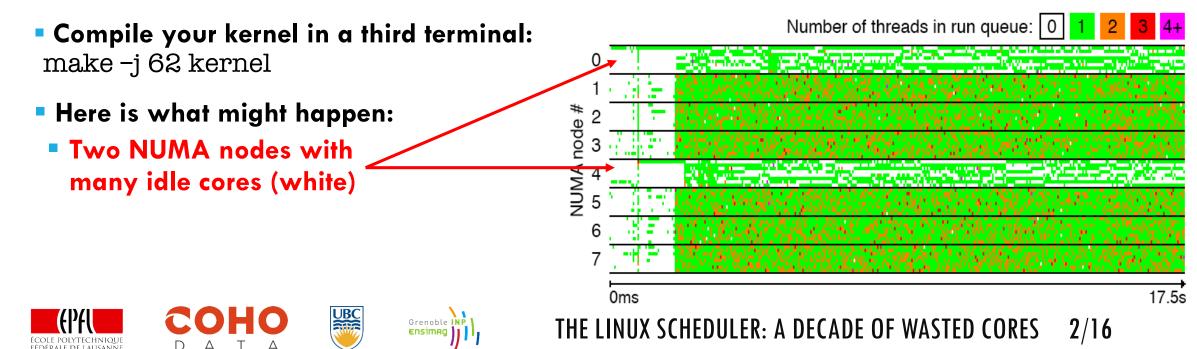


**U**niversité

**S**oph<mark>ia</mark> Antipolis

Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)

Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts): R < script.R --nosave & R < script.R --nosave &</p>

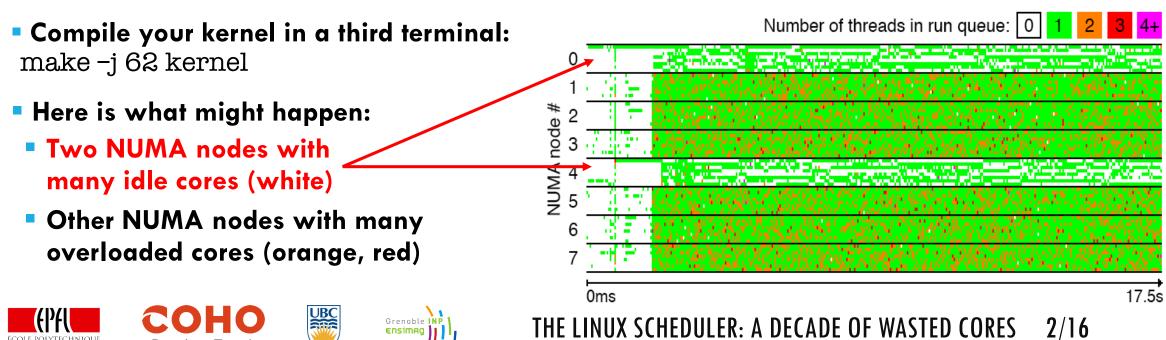


**U**niversité

**S**oph<mark>ia</mark> Antipolis

Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)

Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts): R < script.R --nosave & R < script.R --nosave &</p>



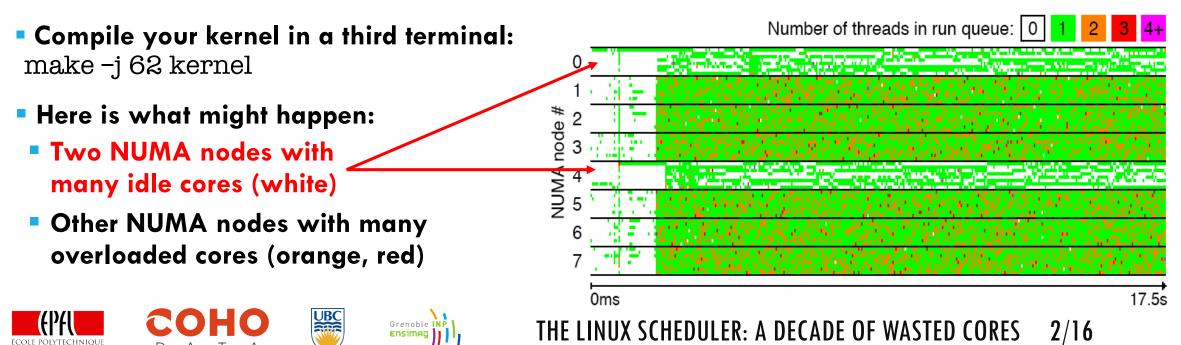
Performance degradation: 14% for the make process!

- Take a machine with a lot of cores (64 in our case)
- Run two CPU-intensive processes in two terminals (e.g. R scripts): R < script.R --nosave &</p>

R < script.R --nosave &

**U**niversité

**S**oph<mark>ia</mark> Antipolis



General-purpose schedulers aim to be work-conserving on multicore architectures

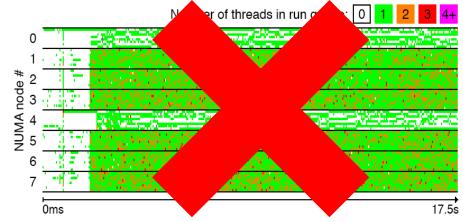












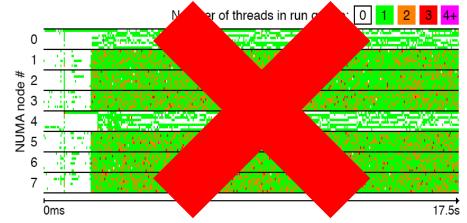
- General-purpose schedulers aim to be work-conserving on multicore architectures
- **Basic invariant:** no idle cores if some cores have several threads in their runqueues
  - Can actually happen, but only in transient situations!











- General-purpose schedulers aim to be work-conserving on multicore architectures
- **Basic invariant:** no idle cores if some cores have several threads in their runqueues
  - Can actually happen, but only in transient situations!

# We found four major bugs that break this invariant in the Linux scheduler (CFS)!

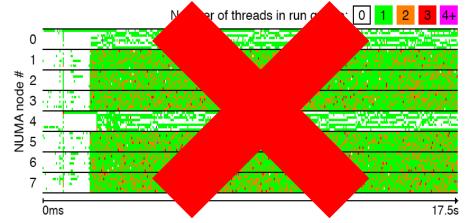












3/16

- General-purpose schedulers aim to be work-conserving on multicore architectures
- Basic invariant: no idle cores if some cores have several threads in their runqueues
  - Can actually happen, but only in transient situations!

Grenoble IN

# We found four major bugs that break this invariant in the Linux scheduler (CFS)!

THE LINUX SCHEDULER: A DECADE OF WASTED CORES

• This talk: presentation of the CFS scheduler + issues we found + discussion





- General-purpose schedulers aim to be work-conserving on multicore architectures
- Basic invariant: no idle cores if some cores have several threads in their runqueues
  - Can actually happen, but only in transient situations!

# We found four major bugs that break this invariant in the Linux scheduler (CFS)!

• This talk: presentation of the CFS scheduler + issues we found + discussion



Disclaimer: this is a motivation paper!

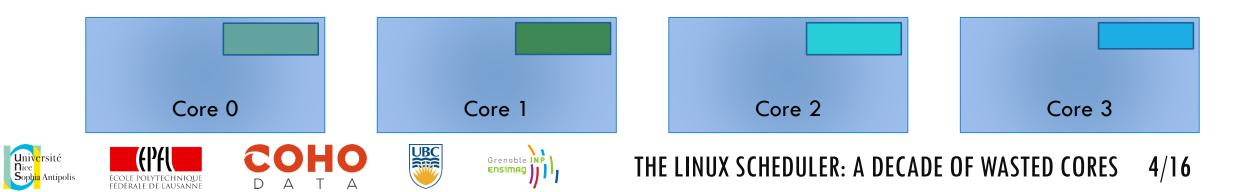
Don't expect a solved problem 🙂



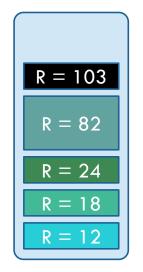


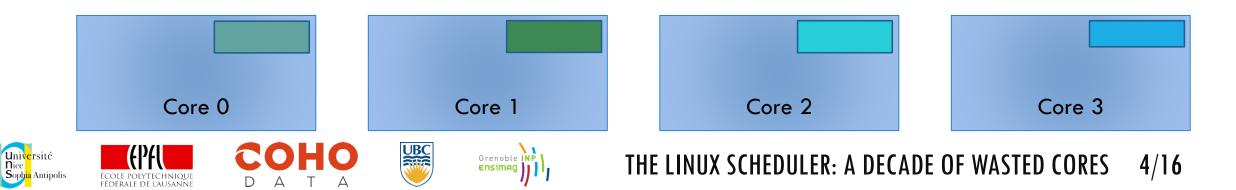






One runqueue, threads sorted by **runtime** 





One runqueue, threads sorted by *runtime* 

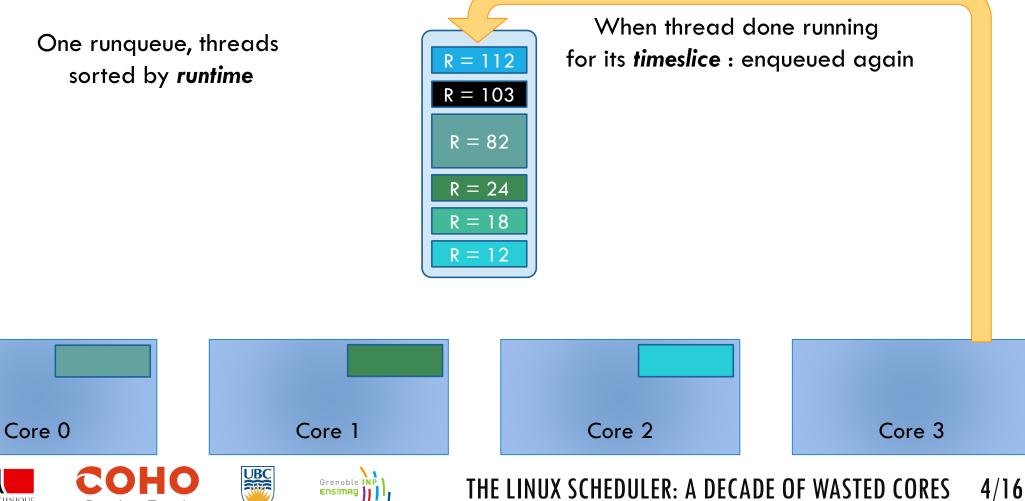
Université Nice Sophia Antipolis

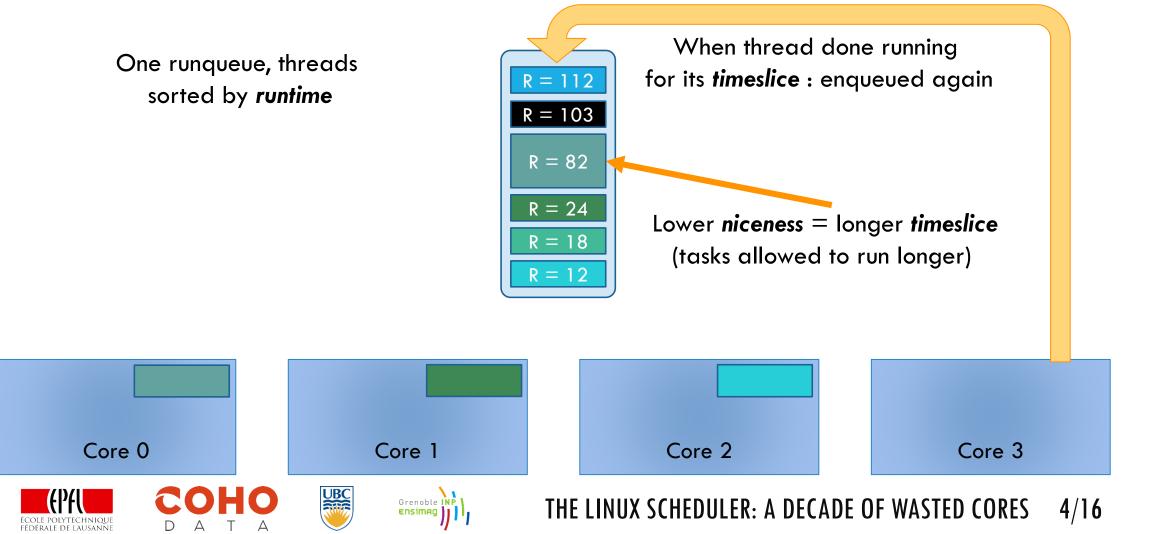
ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUI

FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANN

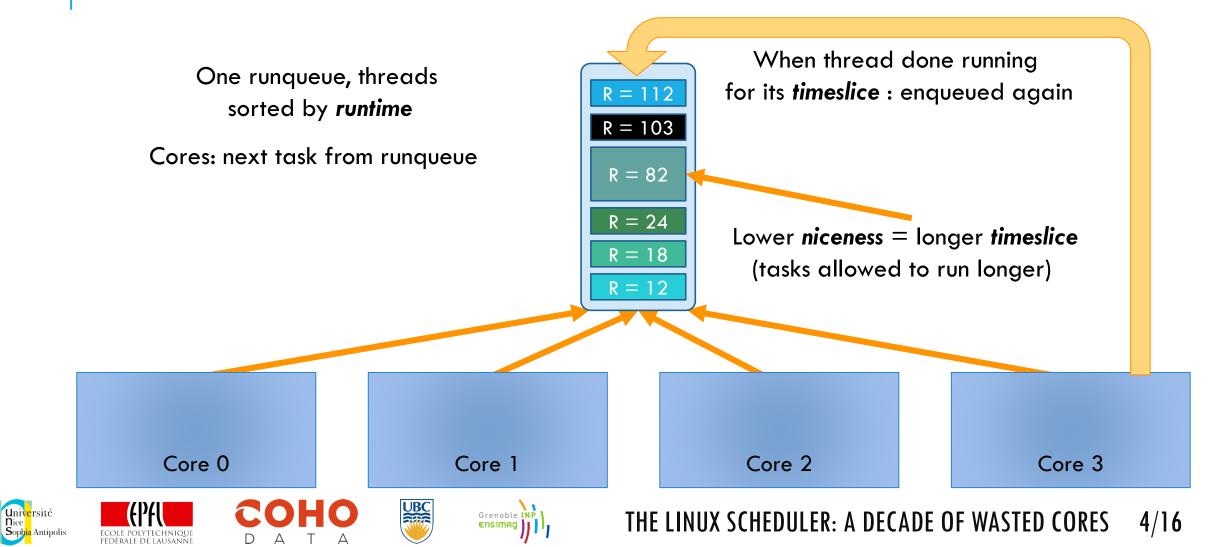
D

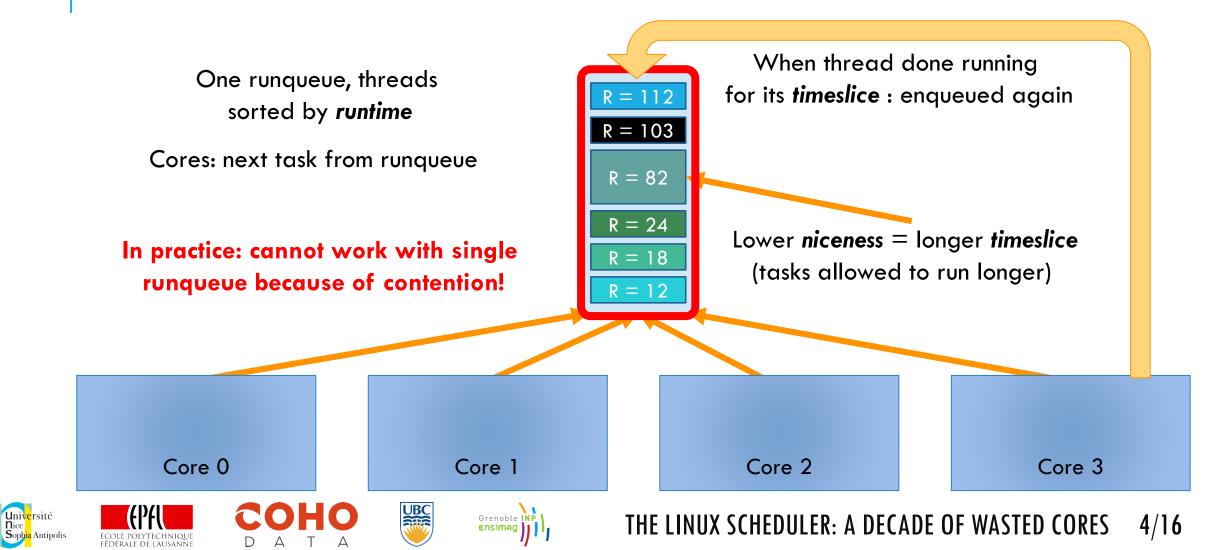
А



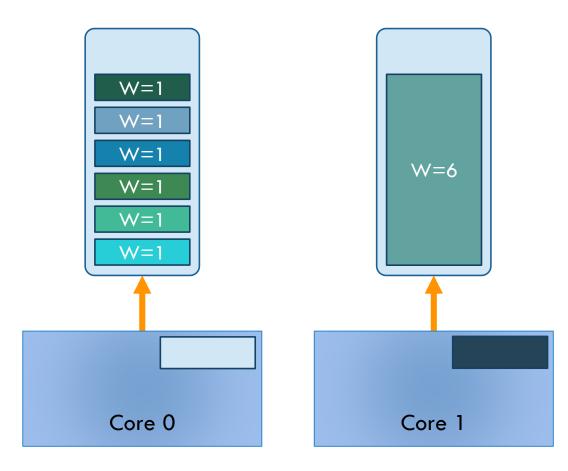


Université Nice Sophia Antipolis





• One runqueue per core to avoid contention





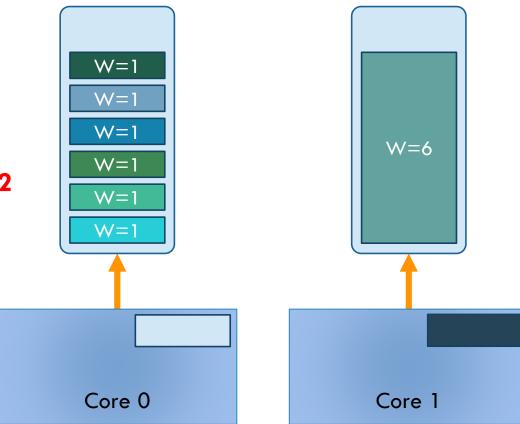








- One runqueue per core to avoid contention
- CFS periodically balances "loads":
- $load(task) = weight^1 \times \% cpu use^2$





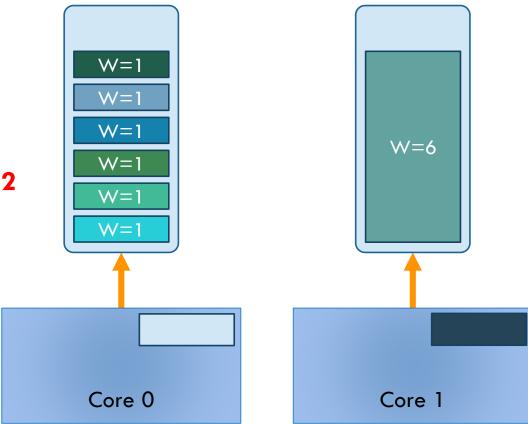






- One runqueue per core to avoid contention
- CFS periodically balances "loads":
- load(task) = weight<sup>1</sup> x % cpu use<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lower niceness = higher weight







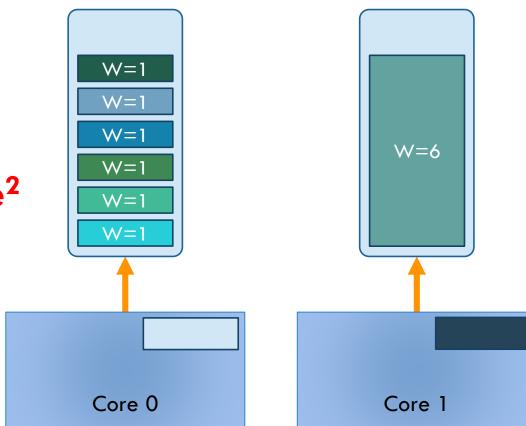




Grenoble INP Ensimag



- One runqueue per core to avoid contention
- CFS periodically balances "loads":
- load(task) = weight<sup>1</sup> x % cpu use<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>1</sup> Lower niceness = higher weight
- <sup>2</sup> Prevent high-priority thread from taking whole CPU just to sleep





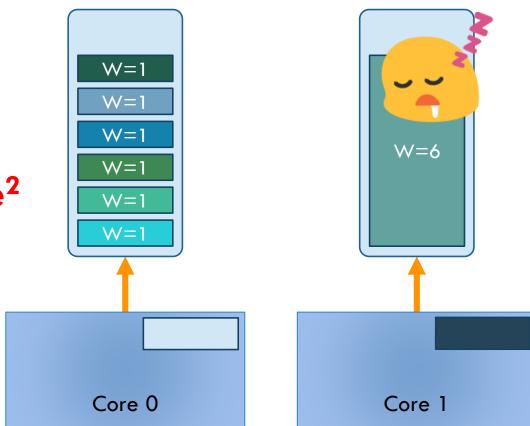








- One runqueue per core to avoid contention
- CFS periodically balances "loads":
- load(task) = weight<sup>1</sup> x % cpu use<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>1</sup> Lower niceness = higher weight
- <sup>2</sup> Prevent high-priority thread from taking whole CPU just to sleep



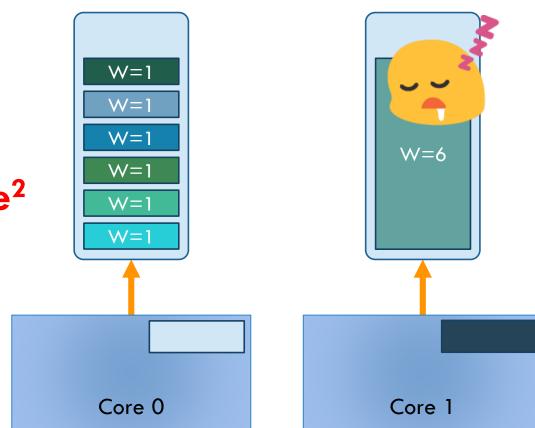








- One runqueue per core to avoid contention
- CFS periodically balances "loads":
- load(task) = weight<sup>1</sup> x % cpu use<sup>2</sup>
- <sup>1</sup> Lower niceness = higher weight
- <sup>2</sup> Prevent high-priority thread from taking whole CPU just to sleep



Since there can be many cores: hierarchical approach!

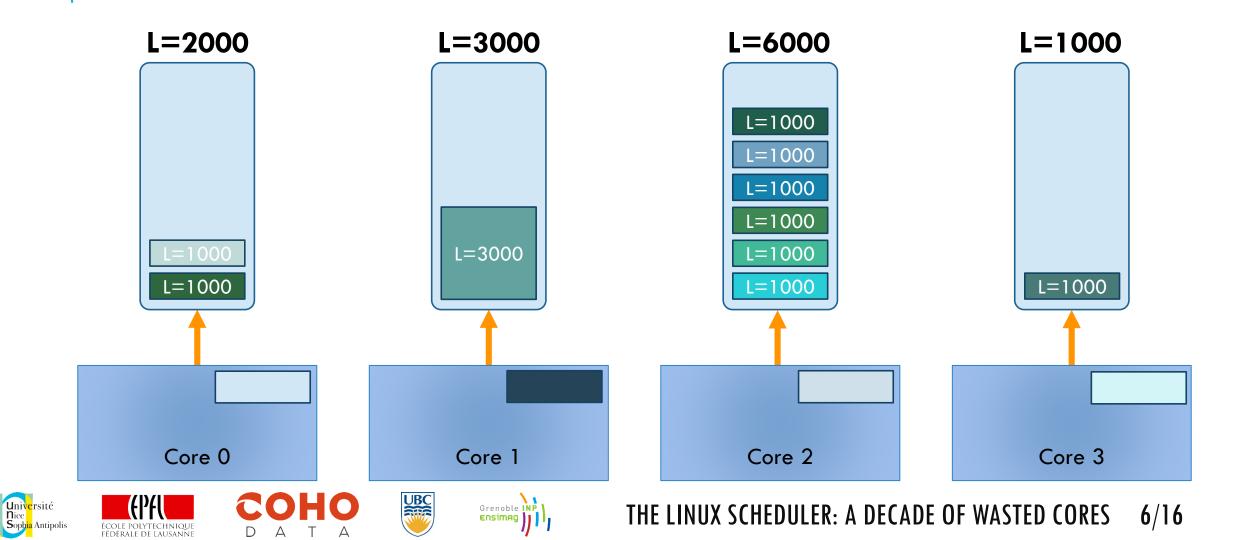
Grenoble INP Ensimag

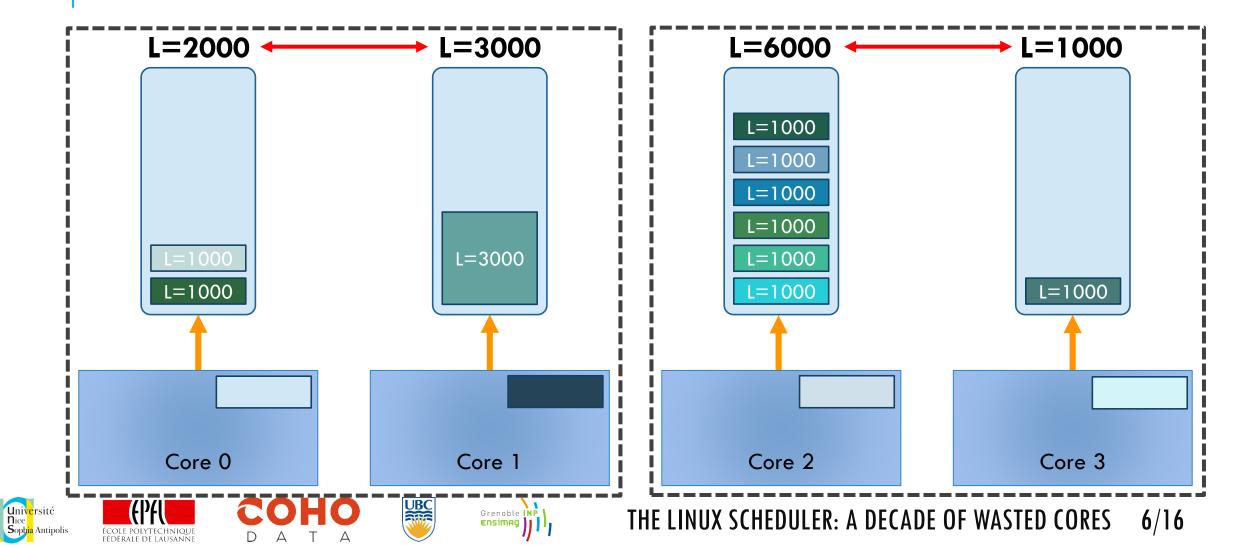


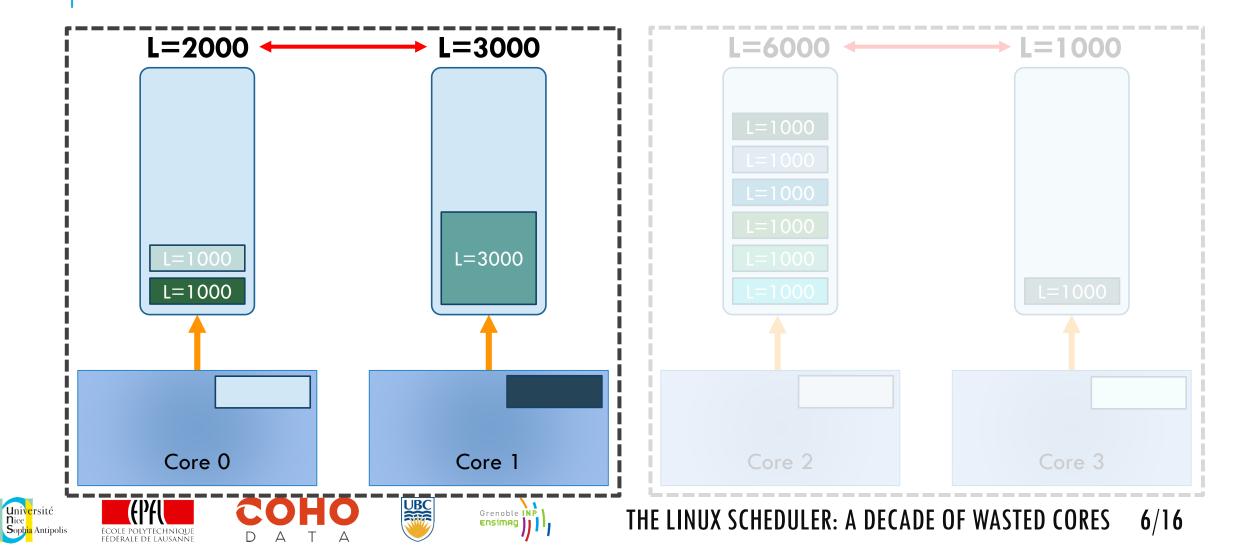


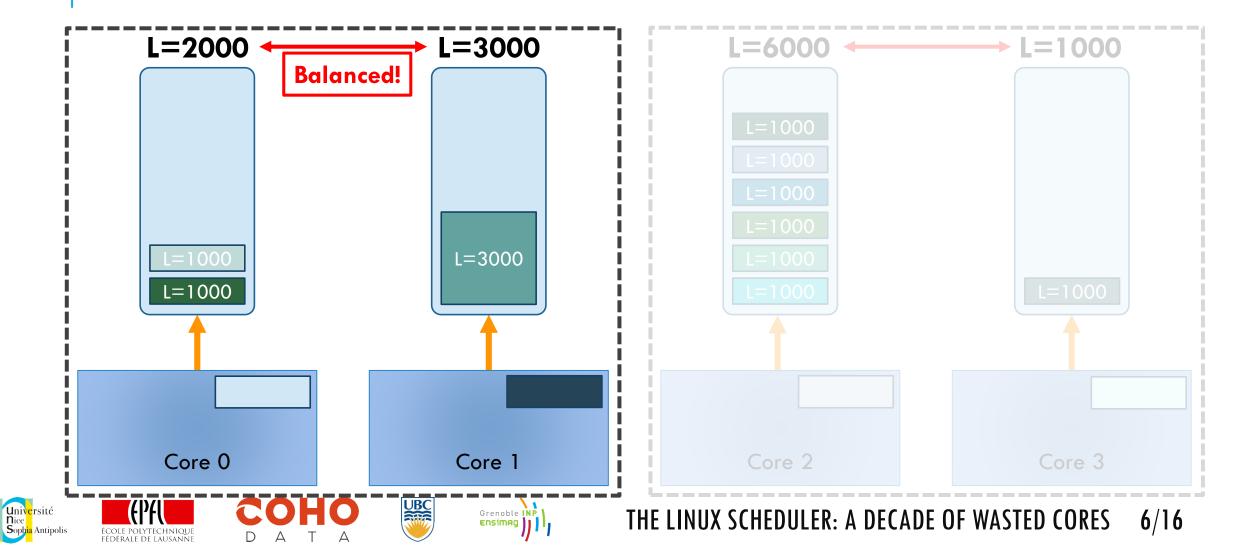


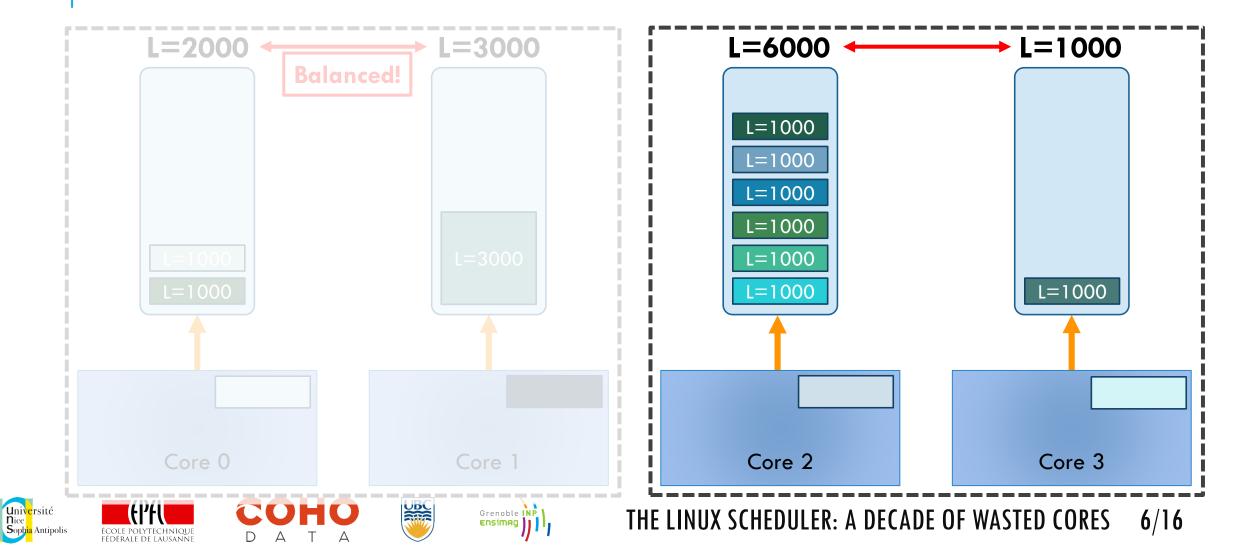
THE LINUX SCHEDULER: A DECADE OF WASTED CORES 5/16

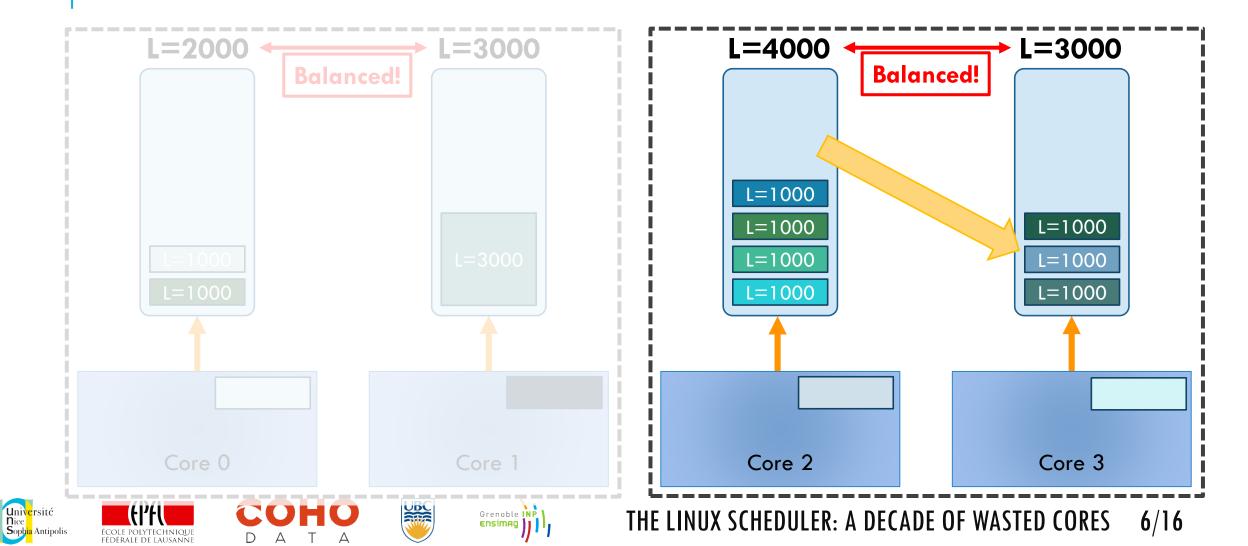


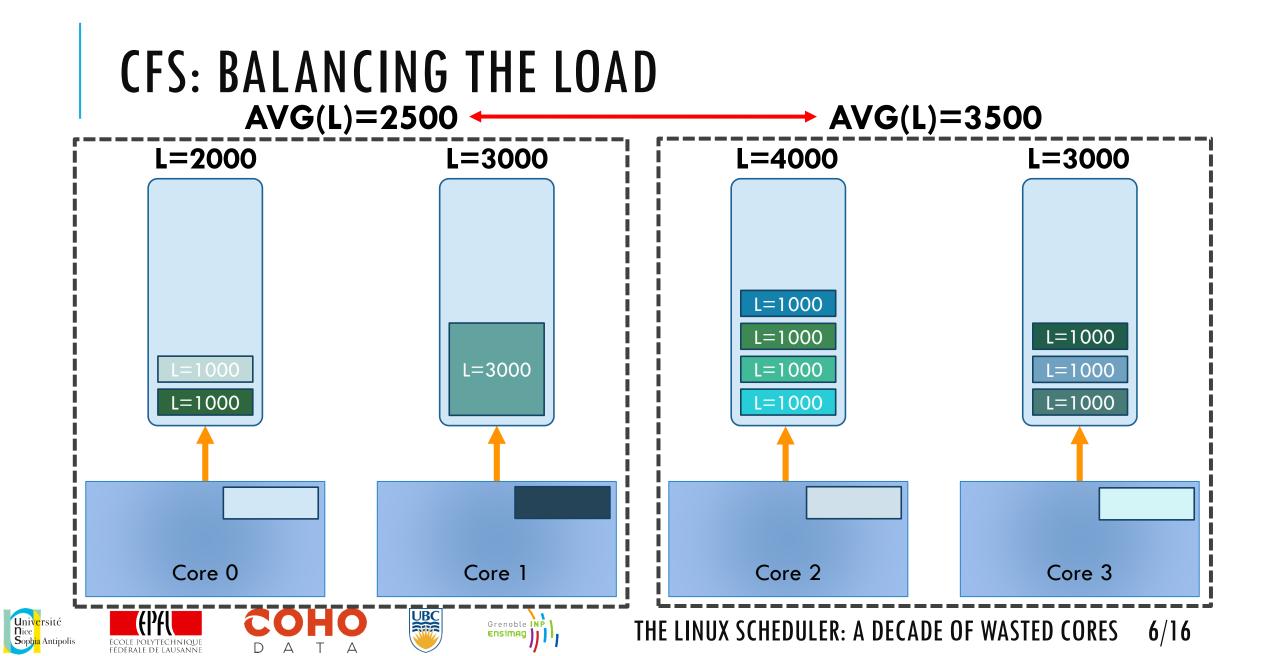


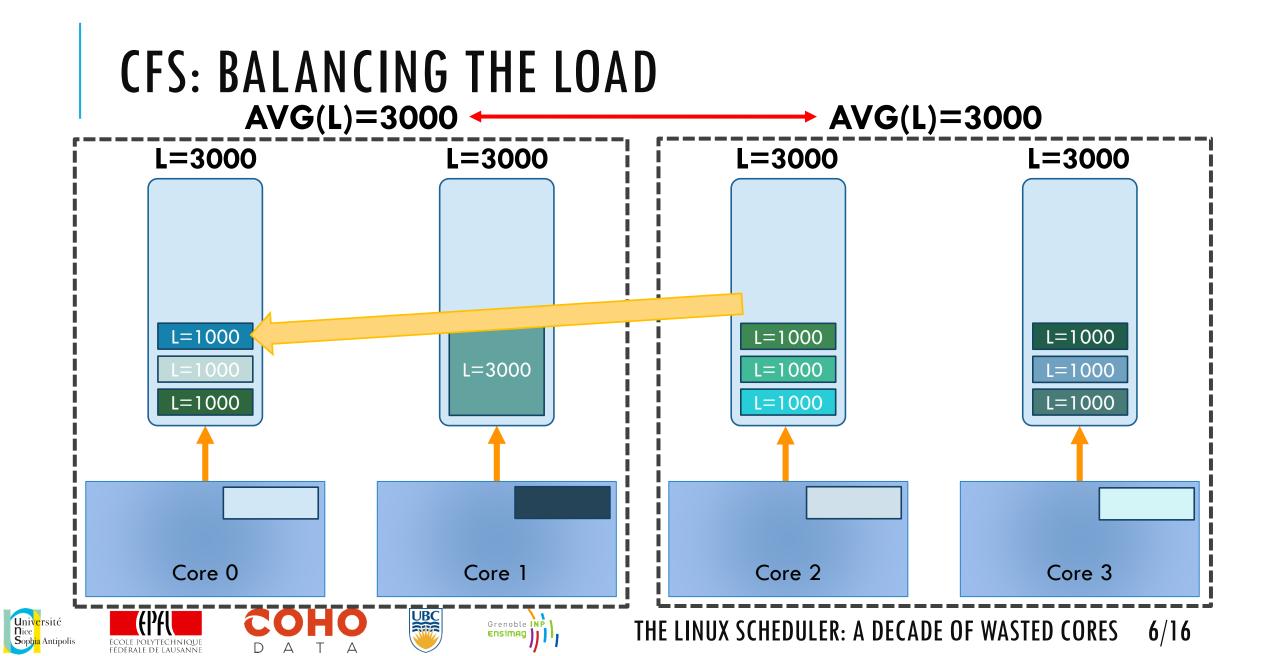


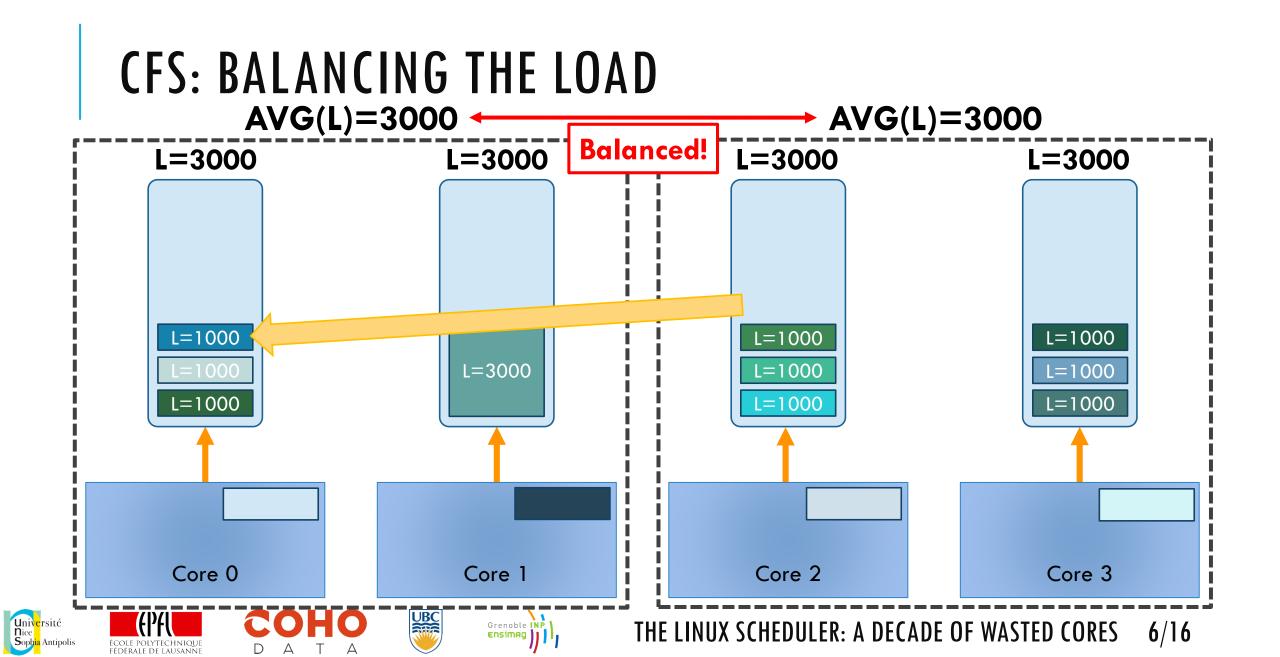












Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics









Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics

One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"









- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Idea: ensure a tty cannot eat up all resources by spawning many threads



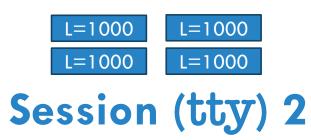






- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Idea: ensure a tty cannot eat up all resources by spawning many threads

Session (tty) 1





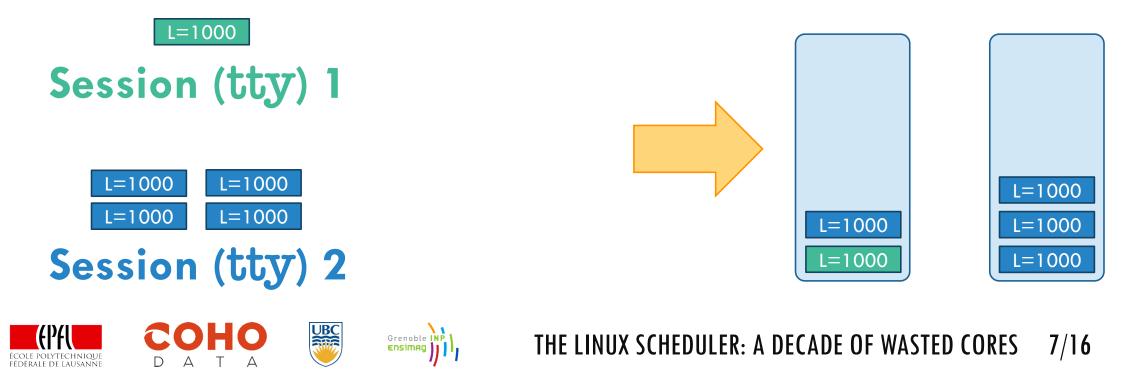






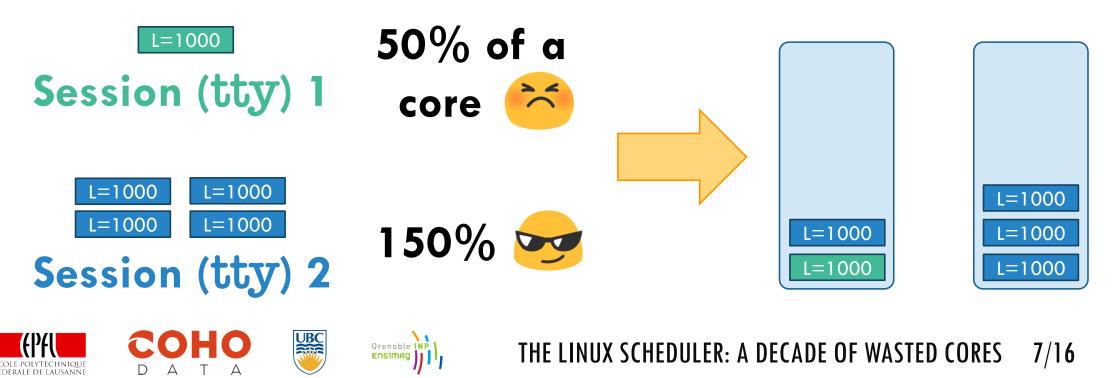
<u>Unive</u>rsité

- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Idea: ensure a tty cannot eat up all resources by spawning many threads



Université

- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Idea: ensure a tty cannot eat up all resources by spawning many threads



Université

- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Idea: ensure a tty cannot eat up all resources by spawning many threads



- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Solution: divide the load of a task by the number of threads in its tty!







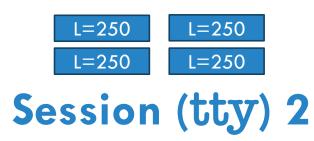
Grenoble INI

Ensimad



- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Solution: divide the load of a task by the number of threads in its tty!

Session (tty) 1





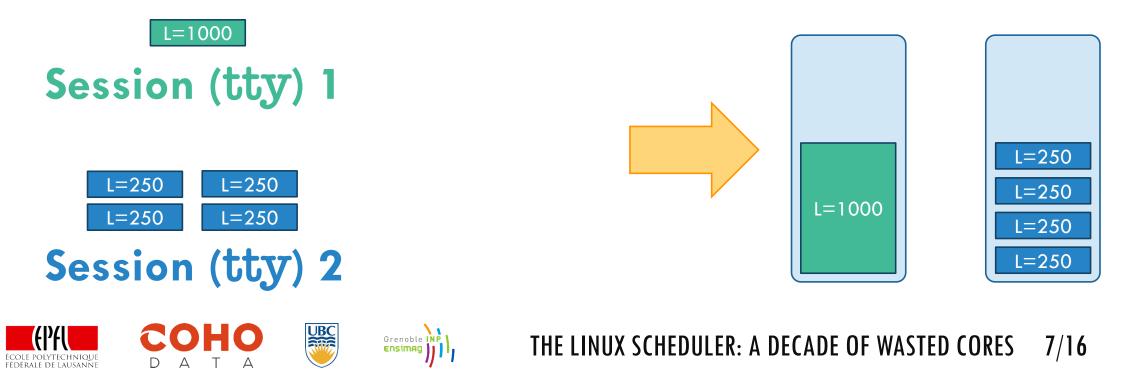






Université

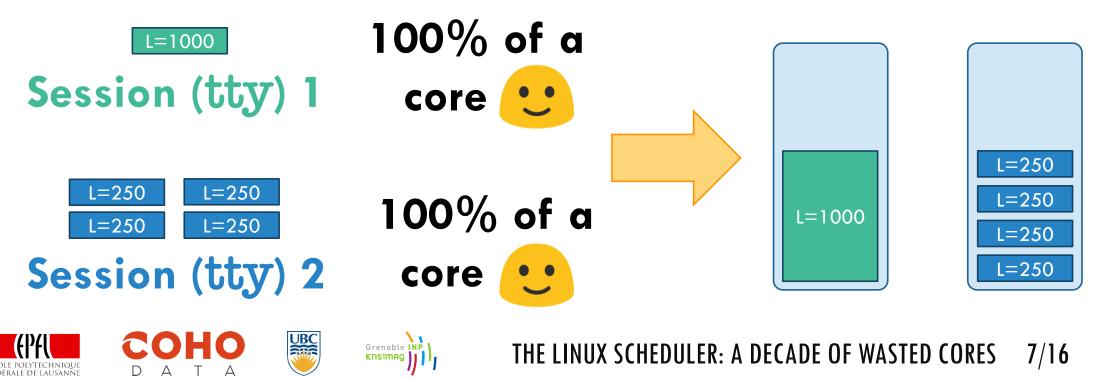
- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Solution: divide the load of a task by the number of threads in its tty!



Université

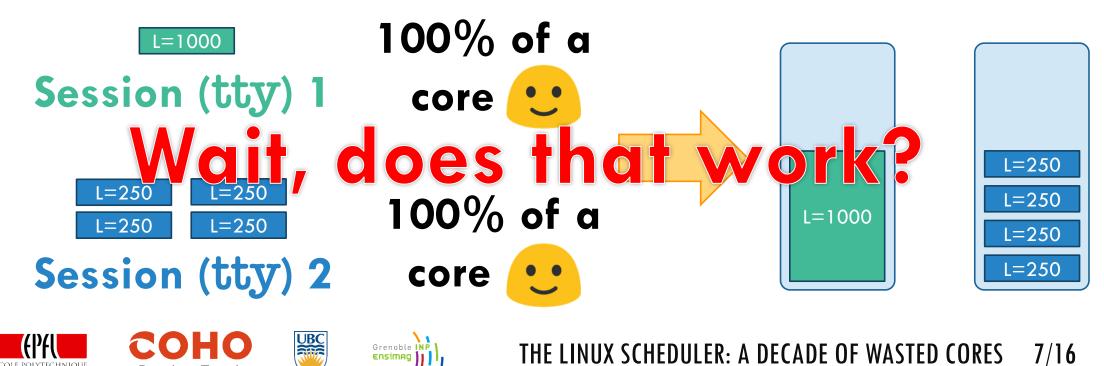
Sophia Antipolis

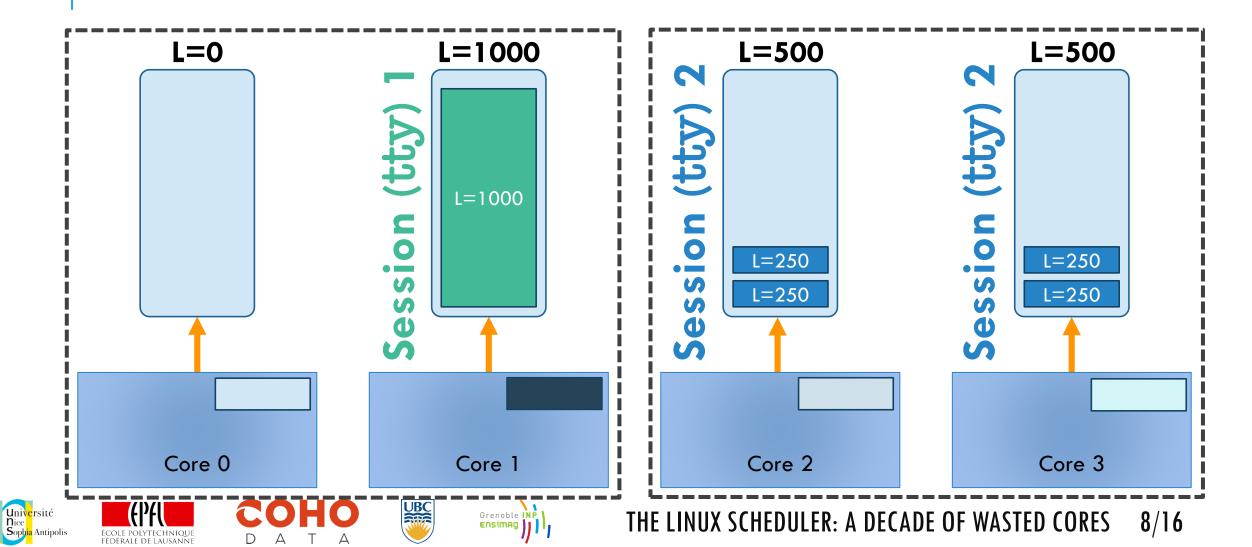
- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Solution: divide the load of a task by the number of threads in its tty!

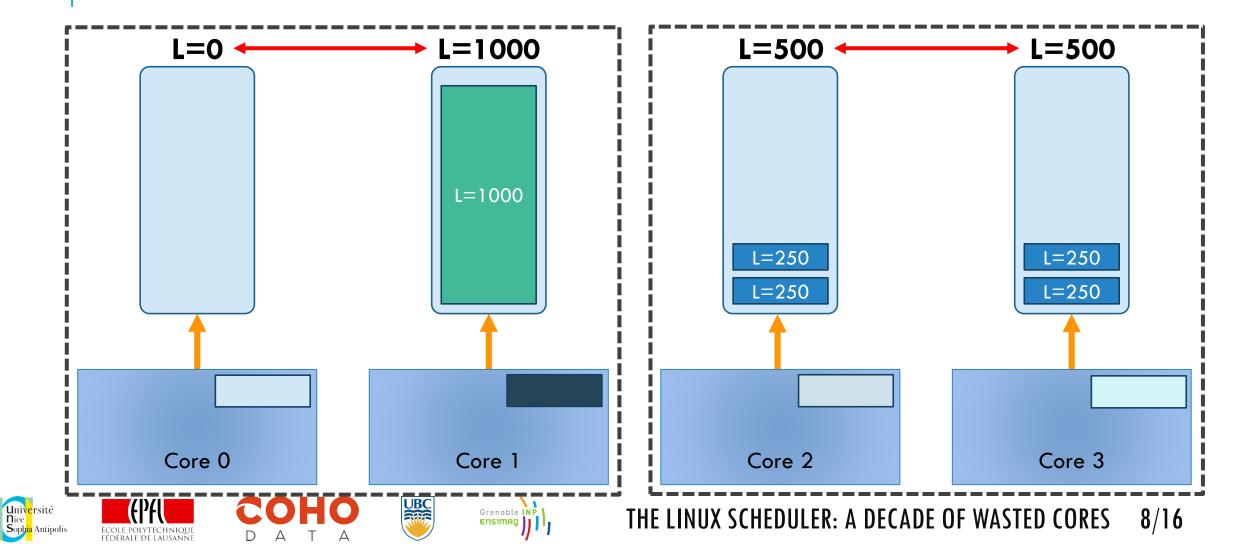


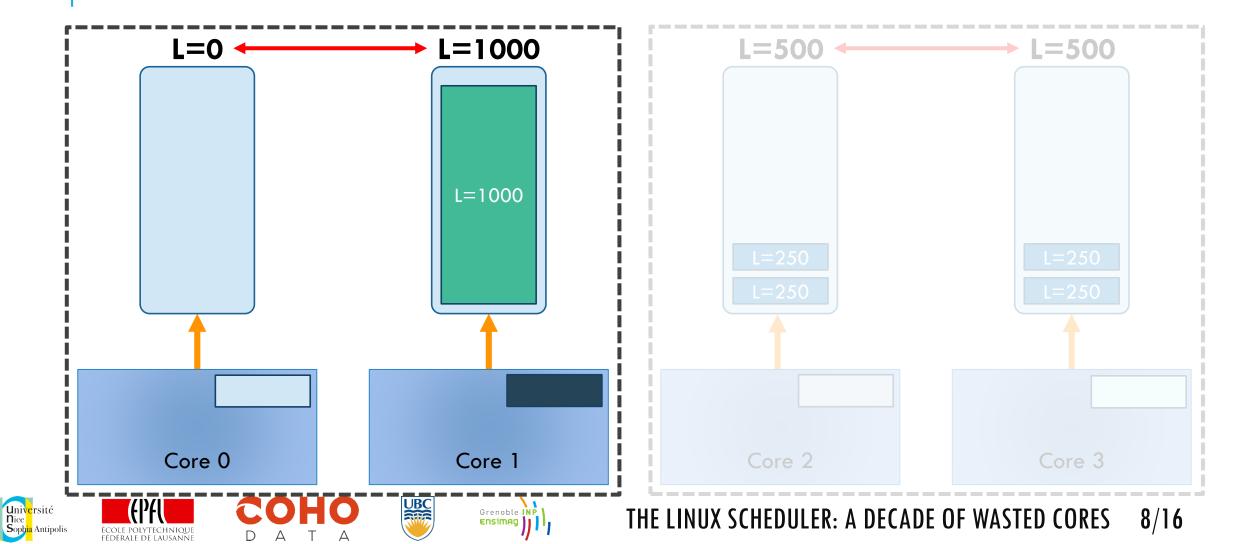
**U**niversité

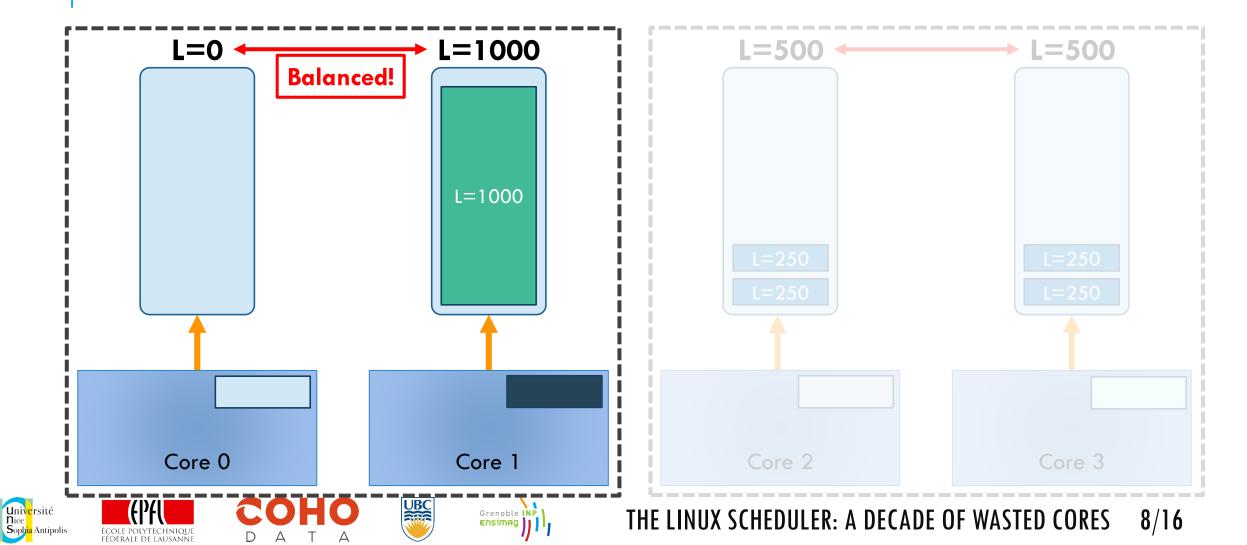
- Load calculations are actually more complicated, use more heuristics
- One of them aims to increase fairness between "sessions"
- Solution: divide the load of a task by the number of threads in its tty!

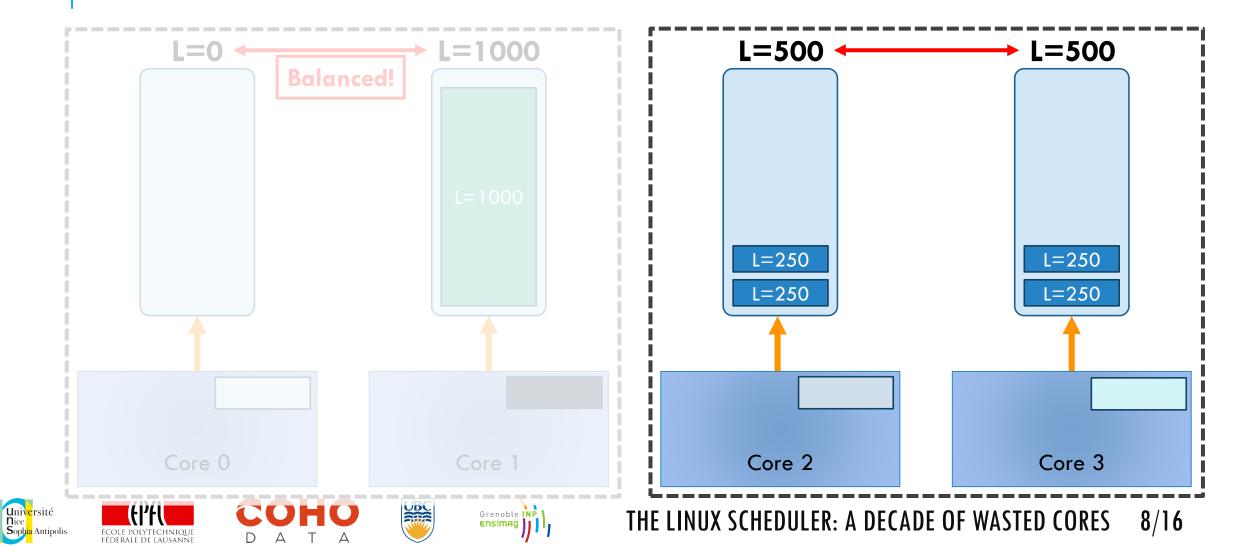


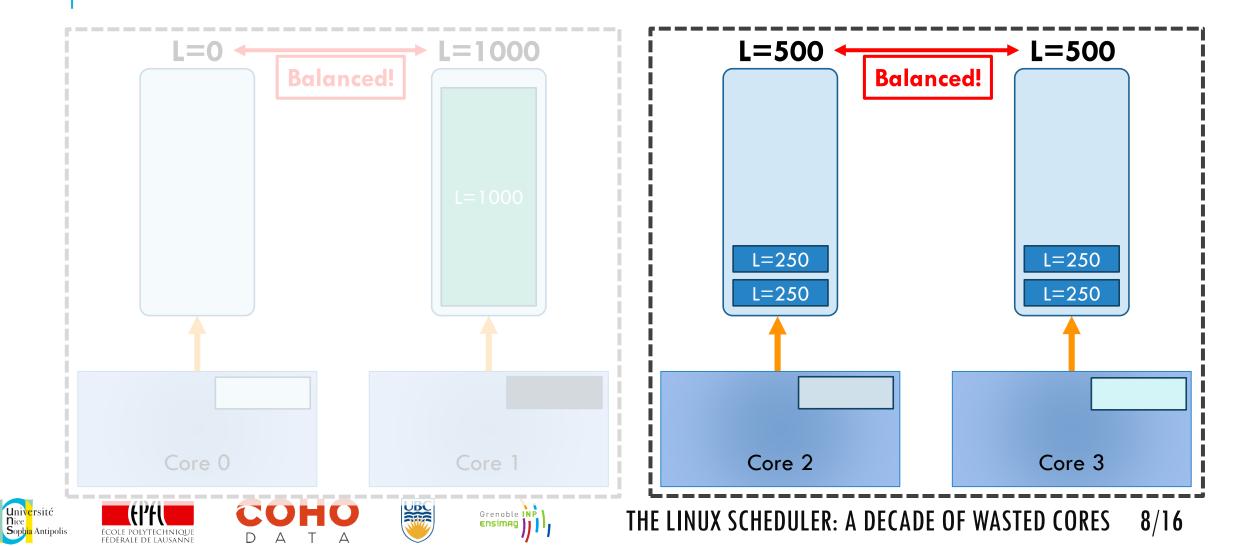


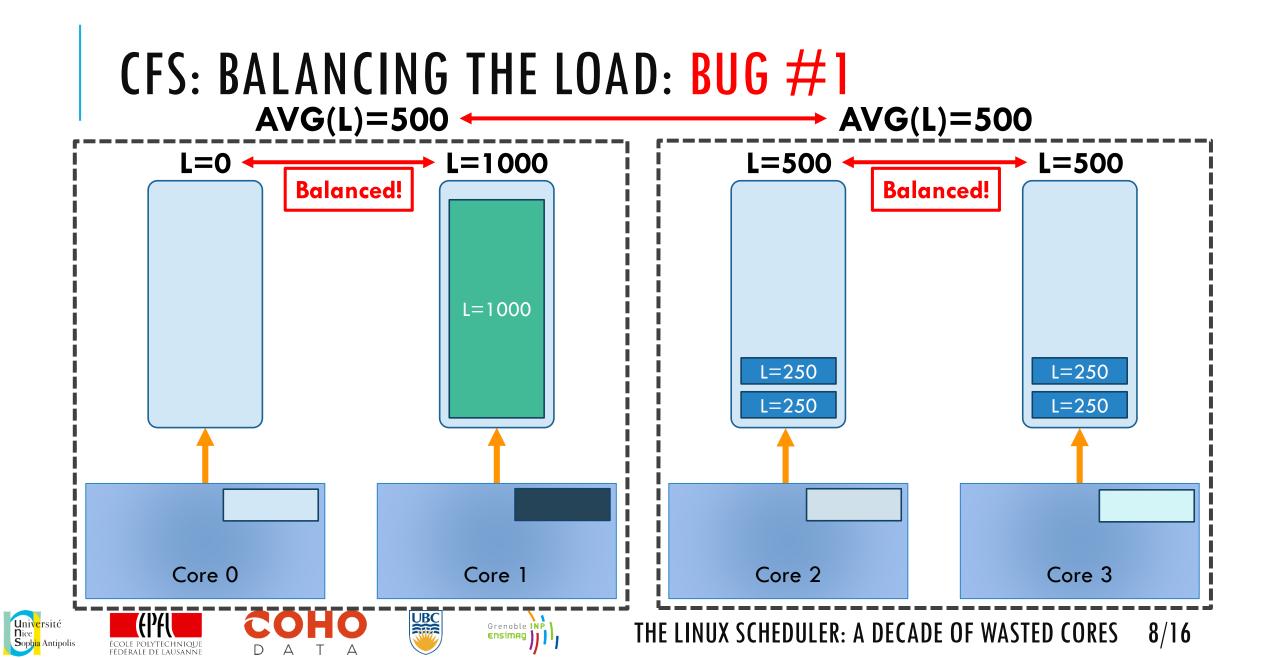


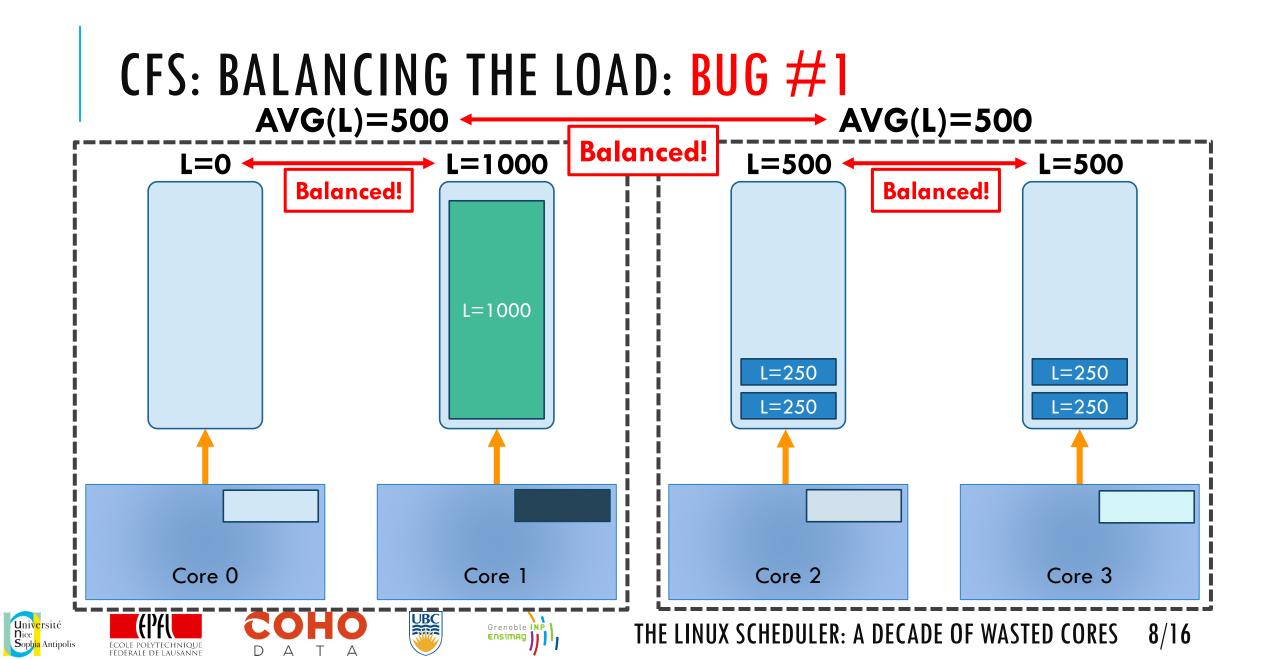


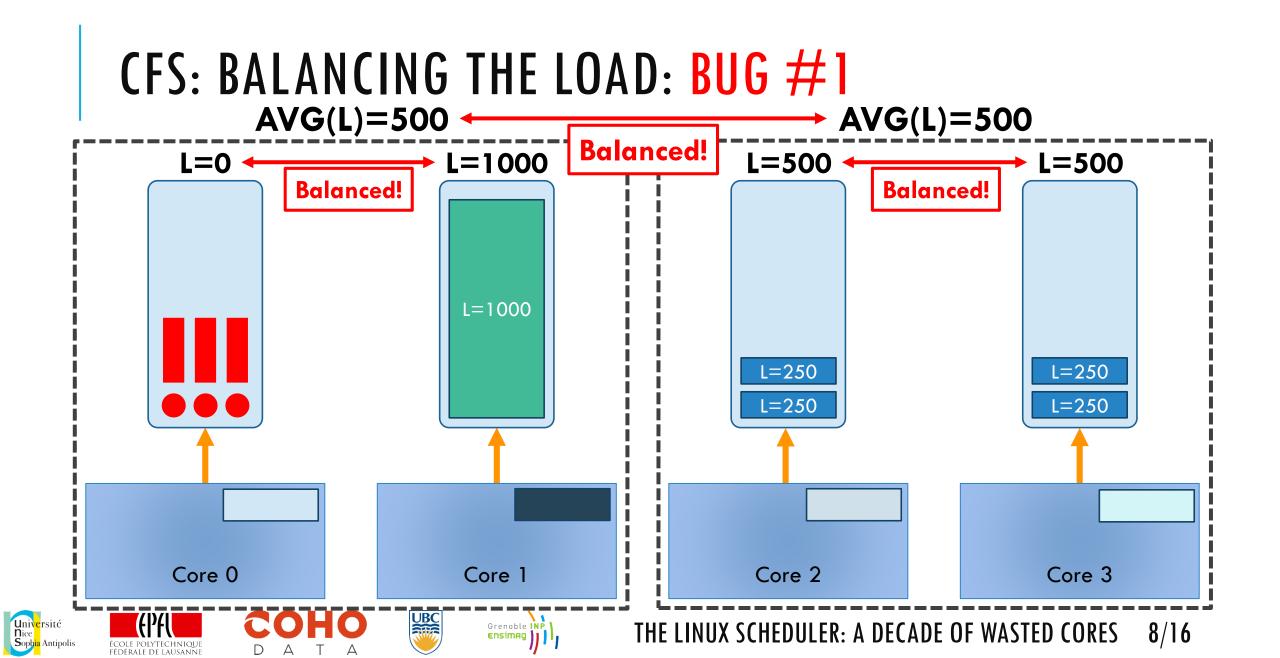


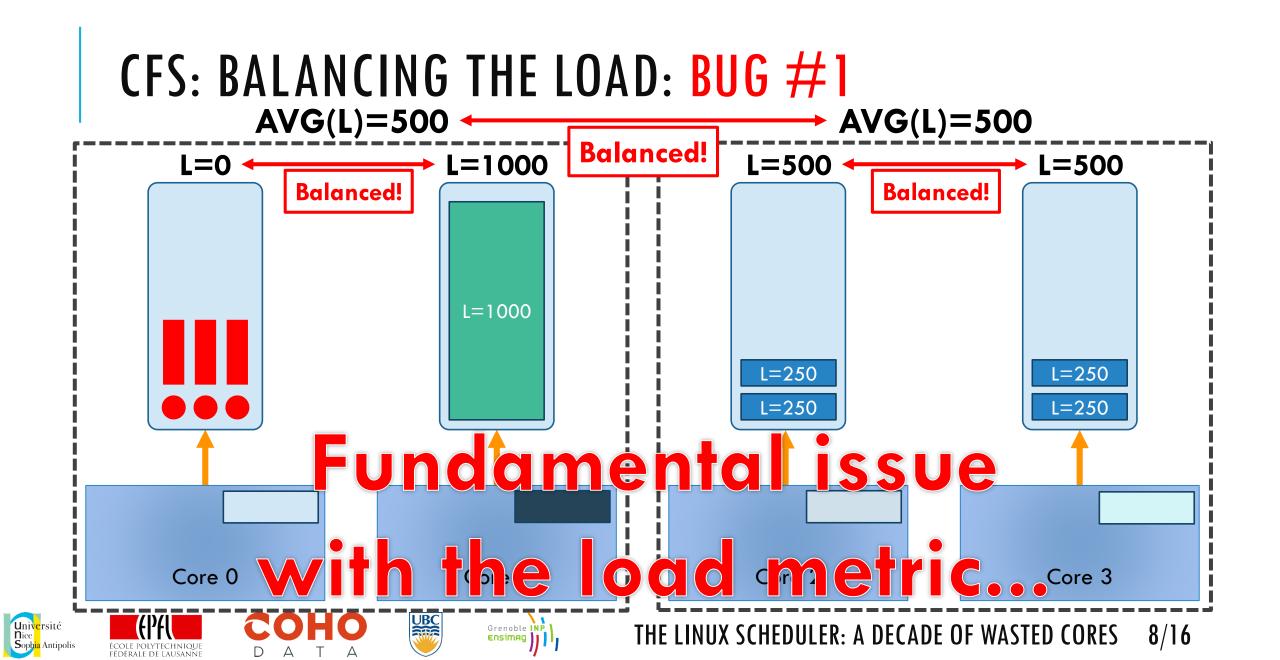




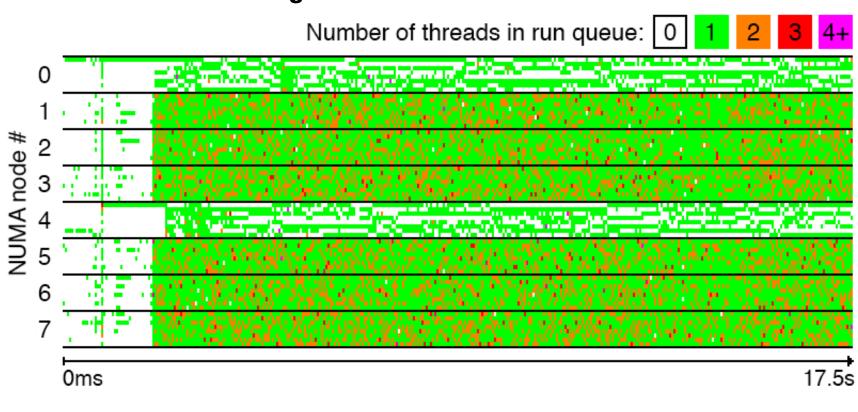








#### This was our bug!











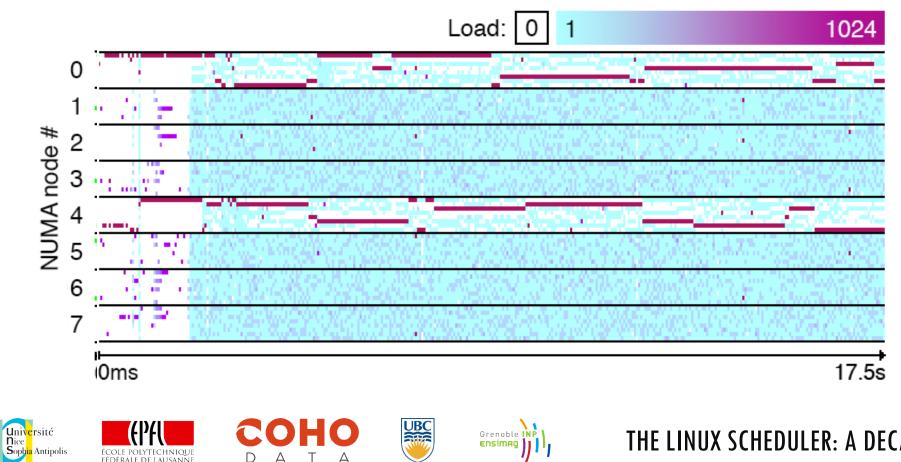


#### This was our bug!

ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQU

FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANN

D



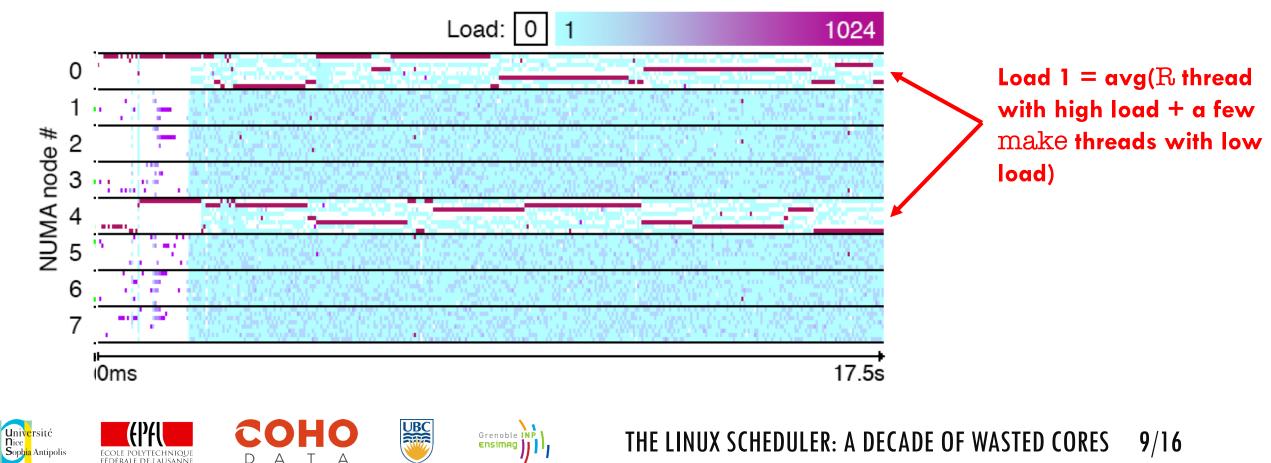
Grenoble INP Ensimag



#### This was our bug!

D

FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANN

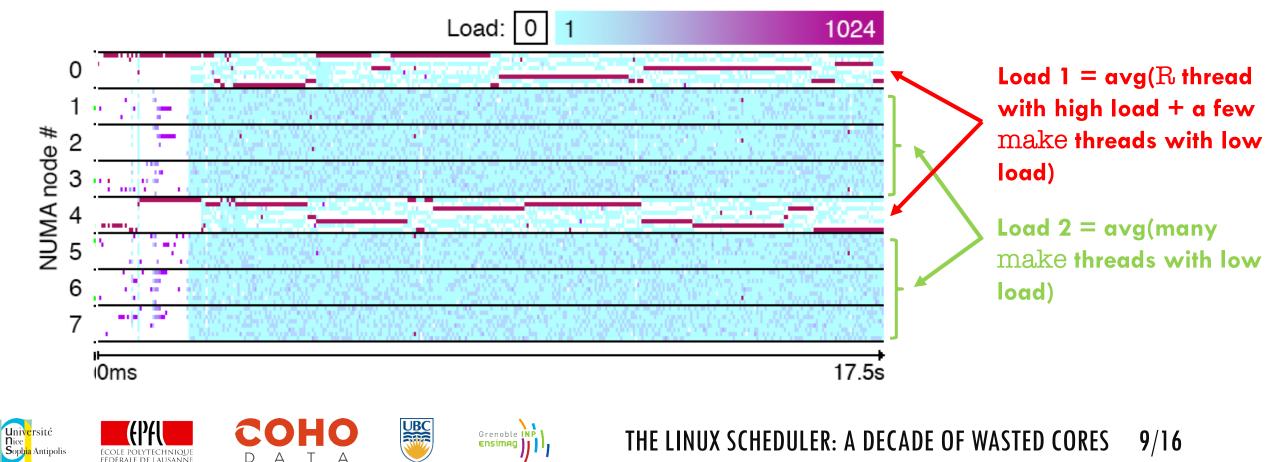


#### This was our bug!

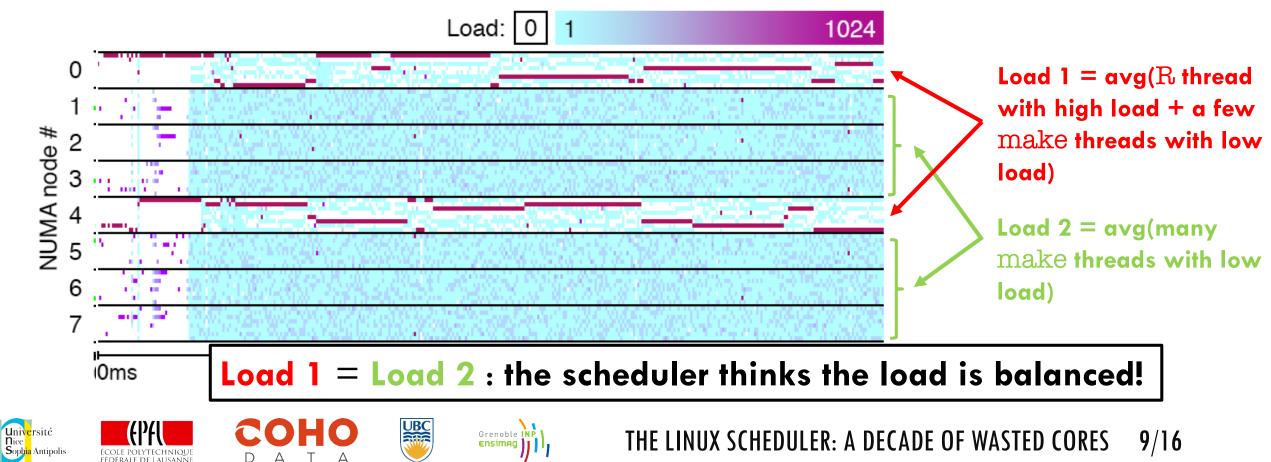
ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQU

FÉDÉRALE DE LAUSANN

D



#### This was our bug!



• We saw load balancing hierarchical: cores, pairs of cores, dies, CPUs, NUMA nodes...











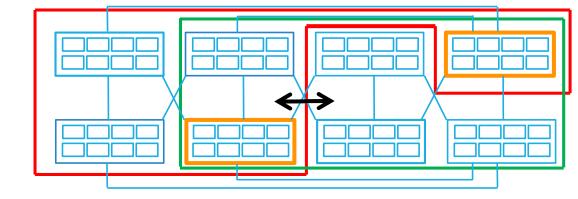
- We saw load balancing hierarchical: cores, pairs of cores, dies, CPUs, NUMA nodes...
- Bug #2: on complex machines, hierarchy built incorrectly!











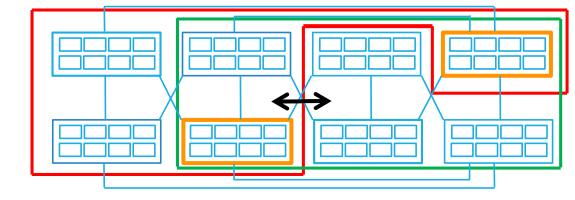
- We saw load balancing hierarchical: cores, pairs of cores, dies, CPUs, NUMA nodes...
- Bug #2: on complex machines, hierarchy built incorrectly!
- Intuition: at the last level, groups in the hierarchy "not disjoint"



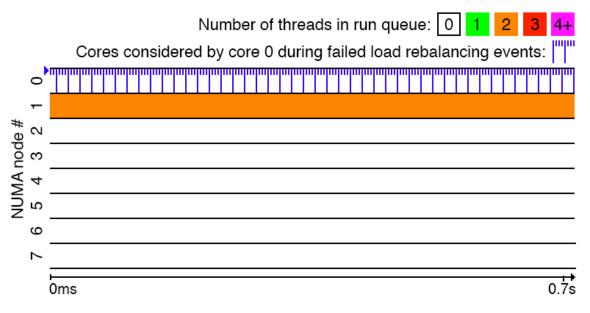








- We saw load balancing hierarchical: cores, pairs of cores, dies, CPUs, NUMA nodes...
- Bug #2: on complex machines, hierarchy built incorrectly!
- Intuition: at the last level, groups in the hierarchy "not disjoint"
- Can break load balancing: whole application running on a single node!

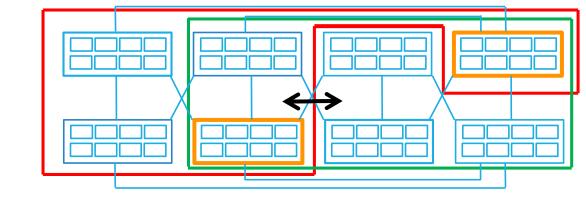




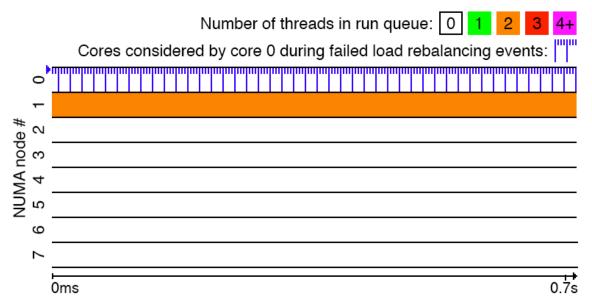








- We saw load balancing hierarchical: cores, pairs of cores, dies, CPUs, NUMA nodes...
- Bug #2: on complex machines, hierarchy built incorrectly!
- Intuition: at the last level, groups in the hierarchy "not disjoint"
- Can break load balancing: whole application running on a single node!



Bug #3: disabling/reenabling a core breaks the hierarchy completely

Grenoble INP







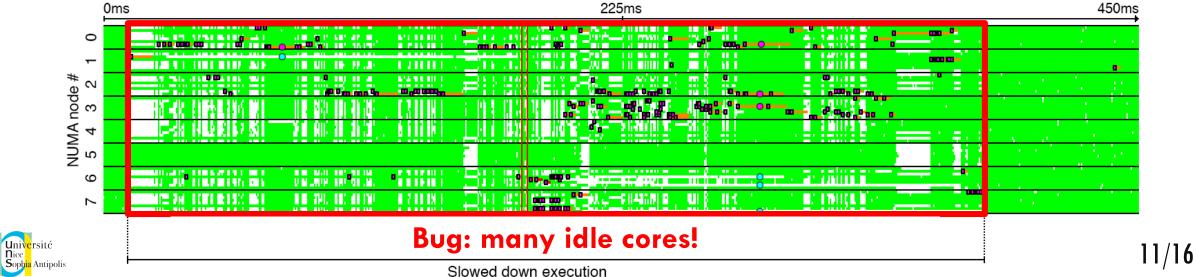
THE LINUX SCHEDULER: A DECADE OF WASTED CORES 10/16

Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H

Thread wake-up on a non-idle core

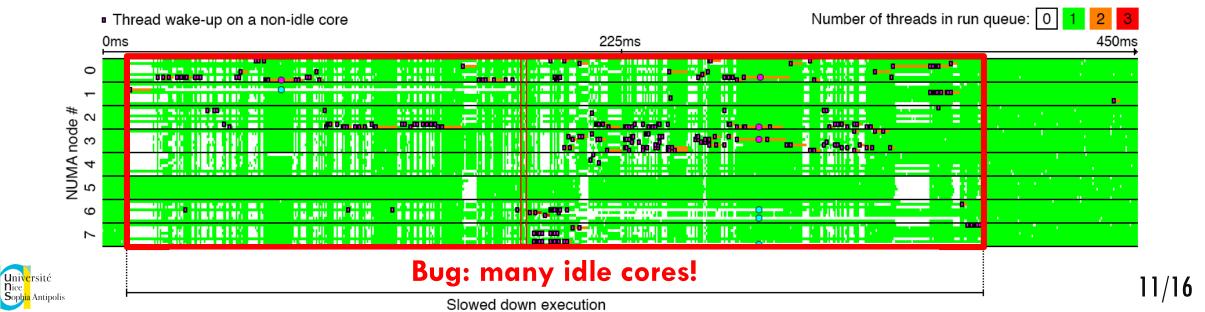
```
Number of threads in run queue: 0
```



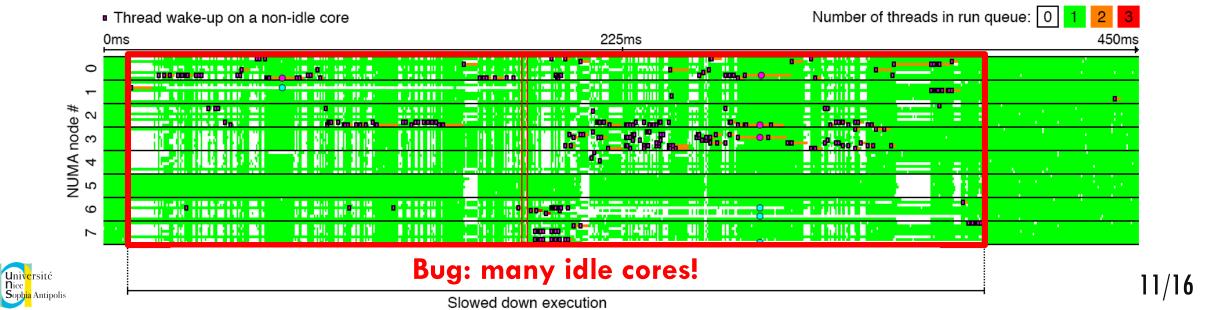


Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H

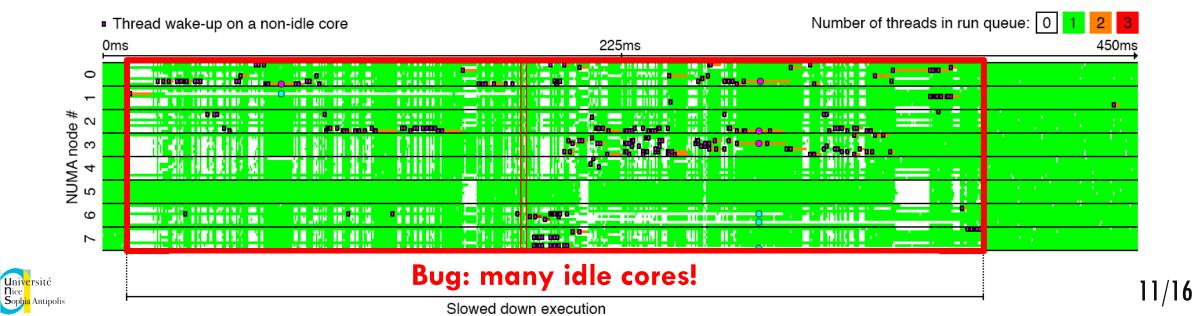
In addition to periodic load balancing, threads pick where they wake up



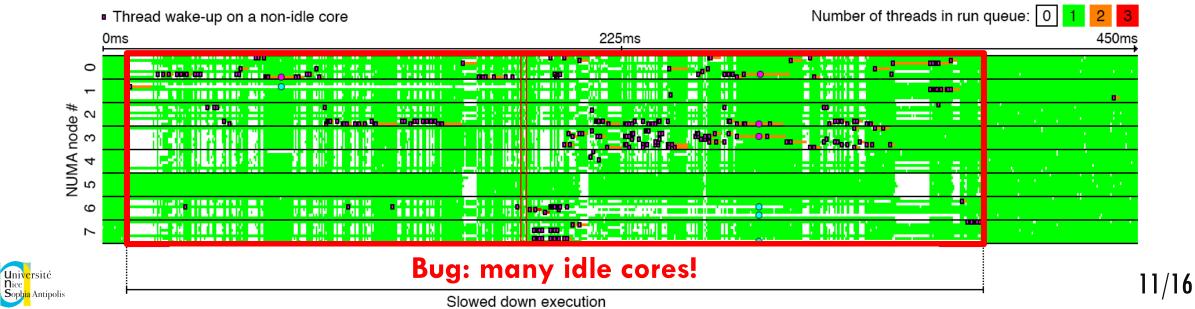
- Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H
  - In addition to periodic load balancing, threads pick where they wake up
  - Only local CPU cores considered for wakeup due to locality "optimization"



- Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H
  - In addition to periodic load balancing, threads pick where they wake up
  - Only local CPU cores considered for wakeup due to locality "optimization"
  - Intuition: periodic load balancing global, wakeup balancing local



- Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H
  - In addition to periodic load balancing, threads pick where they wake up
  - Only local CPU cores considered for wakeup due to locality "optimization"
  - Intuition: periodic load balancing global, wakeup balancing local
    - One makes mistakes the other cannot fix!



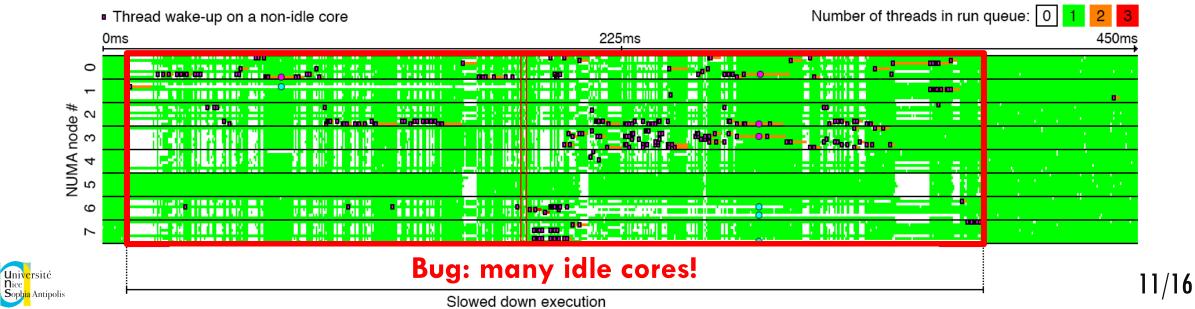
### Performance degradation: 13-24%!

# **MORE BUGS: WAKEUPS**

**U**niversité

#### Bug #4: slow phases with idle cores with popular commercial database + TPC-H

- In addition to periodic load balancing, threads pick where they wake up
- Only local CPU cores considered for wakeup due to locality "optimization"
- Intuition: periodic load balancing global, wakeup balancing local
  - One makes mistakes the other cannot fix!



Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem









UBC

- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- To recap, on Linux, CFS works like this:
  - It periodically balances, using a metric named load,









Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.







Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.
- In addition to this, threads balance the load by selecting core where to wake up.







Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- **† Fundamental issue here...** appeared with *tty*-balancing heuristic for multithreaded apps
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.
- In addition to this, threads balance the load by selecting core where to wake up.







Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- $\uparrow$  Fundamental issue here... appeared with tty-balancing heuristic for multithreaded apps
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.
- **† Fundamental issue here...** added with support of complex NUMA hierarchies
- In addition to this, threads balance the load by selecting core where to wake up.







Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- $\uparrow$  Fundamental issue here... appeared with tty-balancing heuristic for multithreaded apps
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.
- **† Fundamental issue here...** added with support of complex NUMA hierarchies
- In addition to this, threads balance the load by selecting core where to wake up.
- **† Fundamental issue here...** added with locality optimization for multicore architectures









Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem

#### To recap, on Linux, CFS works like this:

- It periodically balances, using a metric named load,
- $\uparrow$  Fundamental issue here... appeared with tty-balancing heuristic for multithreaded apps
- threads among groups of cores in a hierarchy.
- **† Fundamental issue here...** added with support of complex NUMA hierarchies
- In addition to this, threads balance the load by selecting core where to wake up.
- **† Fundamental issue here...** added with locality optimization for multicore architectures

CFS was simple...

then became complex/broken when needed to support new hardware/uses!









Linux scheduler keeps evolving, different algorithms, new heuristics...

Hardware evolves fast, won't get any better!









Linux scheduler keeps evolving, different algorithms, new heuristics...

Hardware evolves fast, won't get any better!

We \*need\* a \*safe\* way to keep up with future hardware/uses!









Linux scheduler keeps evolving, different algorithms, new heuristics...

Hardware evolves fast, won't get any better!

We \*need\* a \*safe\* way to keep up with future hardware/uses!

### Code testing

No clear fault (no crash, no deadlock, etc.), existing tools don't target these bugs









Linux scheduler keeps evolving, different algorithms, new heuristics...

Hardware evolves fast, won't get any better!

#### We \*need\* a \*safe\* way to keep up with future hardware/uses!

### Code testing

No clear fault (no crash, no deadlock, etc.), existing tools don't target these bugs

#### Performance regression

Usually done with 1 app on a machine to avoid interactions: insufficient coverage







Linux scheduler keeps evolving, different algorithms, new heuristics...

Hardware evolves fast, won't get any better!

#### We \*need\* a \*safe\* way to keep up with future hardware/uses!

### Code testing

No clear fault (no crash, no deadlock, etc.), existing tools don't target these bugs

### Performance regression

Usually done with 1 app on a machine to avoid interactions: insufficient coverage

### Model checking, formal proofs

Complex, parallel code: so far, nobody knows how to do it...

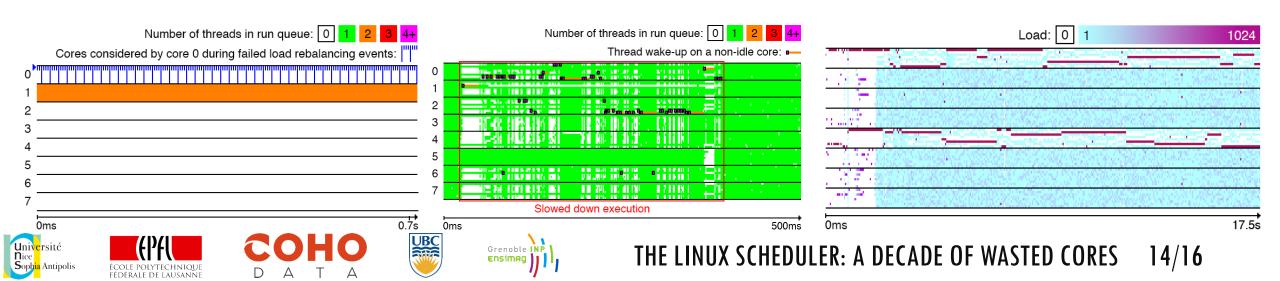
Grenoble IN



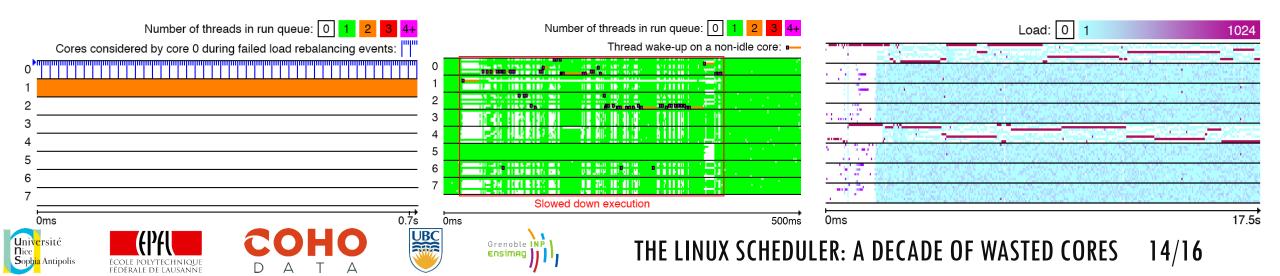




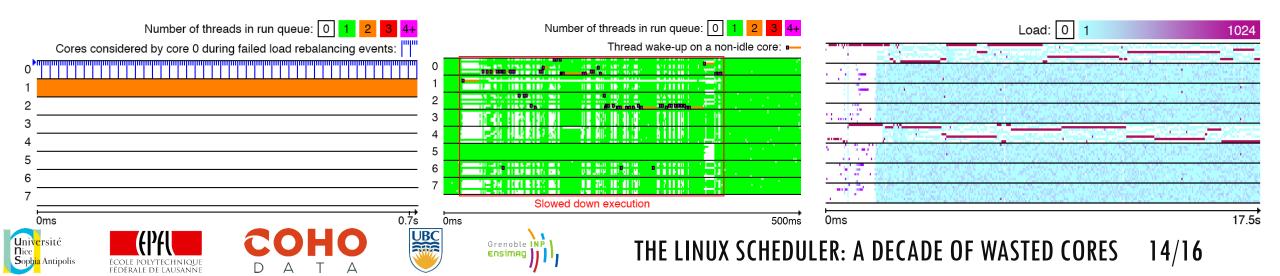
• What worked for us: sanity checker detects invariant violations to find bugs



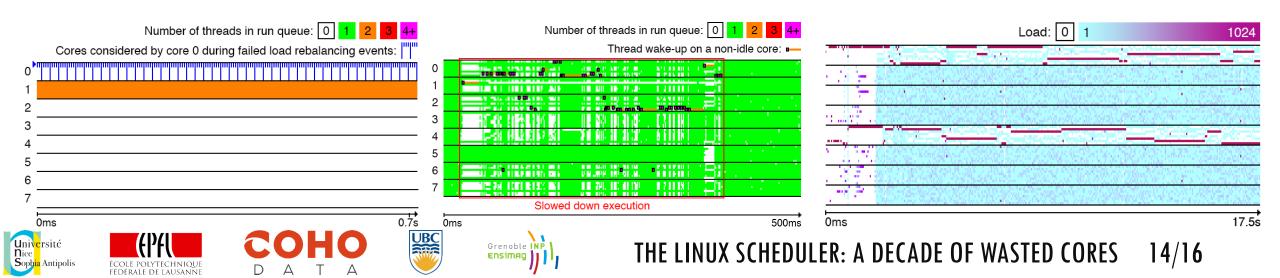
- What worked for us: sanity checker detects invariant violations to find bugs
- Idea: detect suspicious situations, monitor them and produce report if they last



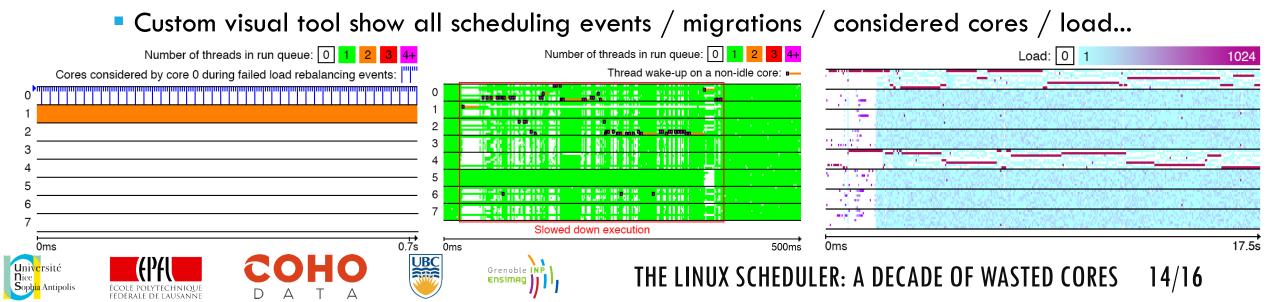
- What worked for us: sanity checker detects invariant violations to find bugs
- Idea: detect suspicious situations, monitor them and produce report if they last
- All bugs presented here detected with sanity checker!



- What worked for us: sanity checker detects invariant violations to find bugs
- Idea: detect suspicious situations, monitor them and produce report if they last
- All bugs presented here detected with sanity checker!
- Our experience: exact traces are \*necessary\* to understand complex scheduling problems



- What worked for us: sanity checker detects invariant violations to find bugs
- Idea: detect suspicious situations, monitor them and produce report if they last
- All bugs presented here detected with sanity checker!
- Our experience: exact traces are \*necessary\* to understand complex scheduling problems



### Basic fixes for the bugs we analyzed:

- Bug #1: minimum load instead of average (may be less stable!)
- Bugs #2-#3 : building the hierarchy differently (seems to always work!)
- Bug #4: wake up on cores idle for longest time (may be bad for energy!)







### Basic fixes for the bugs we analyzed:

- Bug #1: minimum load instead of average (may be less stable!)
- Bugs #2-#3 : building the hierarchy differently (seems to always work!)
- Bug #4: wake up on cores idle for longest time (may be bad for energy!)
- Fixes not perfect, hard to ensure they never worsen performance
- Linux scheduler too complex, many competing heuristics added empirically!
- Hard to guess the effect of one change...







### Basic fixes for the bugs we analyzed:

- Bug #1: minimum load instead of average (may be less stable!)
- Bugs #2-#3 : building the hierarchy differently (seems to always work!)
- Bug #4: wake up on cores idle for longest time (may be bad for energy!)
- Fixes not perfect, hard to ensure they never worsen performance
  - Linux scheduler too complex, many competing heuristics added empirically!
  - Hard to guess the effect of one change...

### Efficient redesign of the scheduler possible?

• We envision scheduler with \*isolated\* modules each trying to optimize one variable...







### Basic fixes for the bugs we analyzed:

- Bug #1: minimum load instead of average (may be less stable!)
- Bugs #2-#3 : building the hierarchy differently (seems to always work!)
- Bug #4: wake up on cores idle for longest time (may be bad for energy!)
- Fixes not perfect, hard to ensure they never worsen performance
  - Linux scheduler too complex, many competing heuristics added empirically!
  - Hard to guess the effect of one change...
- Efficient redesign of the scheduler possible?
  - We envision scheduler with \*isolated\* modules each trying to optimize one variable...
  - How do you make them all work together? Complex, open problem!







Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem











- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- Analysis: fundamental issues (added incrementally), even basic invariant violated!







D



- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- Analysis: fundamental issues (added incrementally), even basic invariant violated!
- Proposed pragmatic detection approach (sanity checker + traces): helpful







- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- Analysis: fundamental issues (added incrementally), even basic invariant violated!
- Proposed pragmatic detection approach (sanity checker + traces): helpful
- Proposed fixes: not always satisfactory







- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- Analysis: fundamental issues (added incrementally), even basic invariant violated!
- Proposed pragmatic detection approach (sanity checker + traces): helpful
- Proposed fixes: not always satisfactory

Open problem: how do we ensure the scheduler works/evolves correctly ?

New design? New techniques involving testing/performance regression/proofs/...?









- Scheduling (as in dividing CPU cycles among theads) often thought to be a solved problem
- Analysis: fundamental issues (added incrementally), even basic invariant violated!
- Proposed pragmatic detection approach (sanity checker + traces): helpful
- Proposed fixes: not always satisfactory

Open problem: how do we ensure the scheduler works/evolves correctly ?

New design? New techniques involving testing/performance regression/proofs/...?

### Your next paper 😊







