Class Loading Conflicts in JVM

This guide shows how to analyze and avoid potential problems caused by class loading conflicts. The content is structured in the following sections, the first one gives a little introduction to the Classloader model in Weblogic [1], following the installation of Classloader Analysis Tool (CAT) [1] is shown and then two examples that shows the use of CAT on a real application is presented.

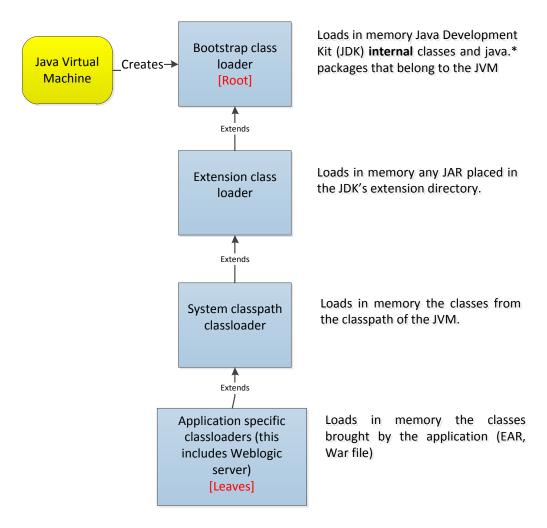
Class loading in Weblogic

Summarizing the class loading process in just some lines is hard so in this guide the focus is talking about hierarchies and the delegation model.

Concept	Definition		
Hierarchies	The classloader in an application server such as Weblogic is based on the model defined by the JVM, which me		
	hierarchical model that on Weblogic is organized as a tree with these levels: bootstrap class loader, extension class loader		
	system classpath classloader, application specific classloaders (this includes Weblogic server) [1].		
	In the previous tree, bootstrap class loader is the root and application specific classloaders are the leaves [1].		
Delegation model	A common question that arises when Java application servers are used is why is my application using the wrong class? This		
	is because the delegation model, which states "The classloader implementation first checks its cache to see if the requested		
	class has already been loaded. This class verification improves performance in that its cached memory copy is used instead of		
	repeated loading of a class from disk. If the class is not found in its cache, the current classloader asks its parent for the class.		
	Only if the parent cannot load the class does the classloader attempt to load the class. If a class exists in both the parent and		
	child classloaders, the parent version is loaded" [1]		

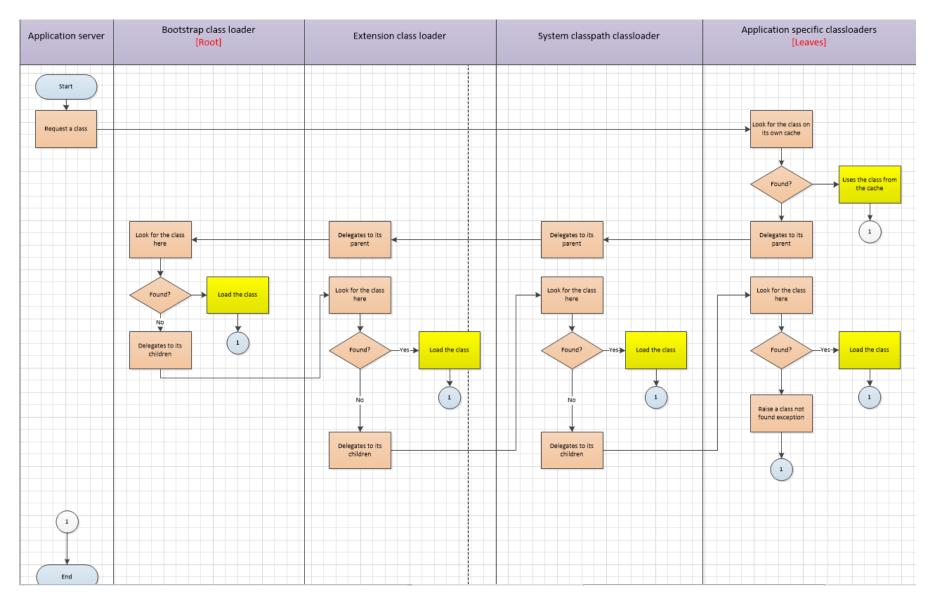
The following picture depicts this hierarchy of classloaders.

Java Classloader Hierarchy



The hierarchy of classloaders in Java

In the previous figure let us say one application specific classloader wants to load a class so the following diagram depicts this process



In the previous diagram is possible to see that because of the delegation process even if the application specific classloader has the requested class, this will be loaded by a superior classloaders in the hierarchy if the class exists on one of the superior levels otherwise the class is loaded by the application specific classloader.

How could we subvert the previous process?

Of course, there are ways to subvert this process to allow us using our own libraries as is described in the following table.

Way to subvert the process	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
prefer-web-inf- classes Element	"If true, classes located in the WEB-INF directory of a web-app will be loaded in preference to classes loaded in the application or system classloader" [1]	This is the easiest way to subvert the delegation model to use your own classes. <pre> </pre> <pre> <pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre></pre>	 With this you can include some undesirable classes that are part of the library because a library can include many packages and classes so you should know the library thoroughly before subverting the delegation model in this way. This is prone to be affected by new bugs introduced on latest version of JVMs as can be seen in these two bugs [3] and [4].
Using a Filtering ClassLoader	This is mechanism to use third party libraries telling the class loader which packages are going to be loaded by the application classloader rather than the system classloader [1].	 The implementation could be a little difficult because each needed package should be mentioned specifically. The risk of including specific undesirable classes is minimized because it specifies packages instead of the whole jar. It looks more stable to face possible bugs since even is recommended as a work around for the bug described in [4] 	 Sometimes can be unpredictable as can be seen in the second example shown below on this document. The implementation can be tricky because we have to provide details about each package we want our application to use.

It has been used here to fix a problem that is described in the second example shown below on this document. <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?> <!DOCTYPE weblogic-web-app PUBLIC "-//BEA Systems, Inc.//DTD Web Application 8.1//EN" "http://www.bea.com/servers/wls810/dtd/weblogic810-web-jar.dtd" E<weblogic-web-app> <container-descriptor> cprefer-web-inf-classes>false</prefer-web-inf-classes> prefer-application-packages> <package-name>org.apache.xerces.*</package-name> <package-name>org.apache.commons.*</package-name> <package-name>org.apache.xmlbeans.*</package-name> <package-name>org.mozilla.classfile.*</package-name> <package-name>org.mozilla.javascript.*</package-name> <package-name>org.osgi.framework.*</package-name> <package-name>org.osgi.resource.*</package-name> <package-name>org.osgi.service.*</package-name> <package-name>org.osgi.util.*</package-name> <package-name>repackage.*</package-name> <package-name>schemaorg apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLCONFI <package-name>schemaorg apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLLANG. <package-name>schemaorg_apache_xmlbeans.system.sXMLSCHEM <package-name>schemaorg_apache_xmlbeans.system.sXMLTOOLS </prefer-application-packages> </container-descriptor> L</weblogic-web-app>

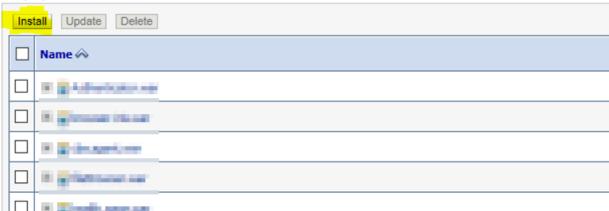
Installing Classloader Analysis Tool (CAT)

This are the steps to install CAT, which is a file called wls-cat.war located on \$WL_HOME/server/lib/wls-cat.war

1. After login into the console with an admin user, lock the console to edit and click on Install

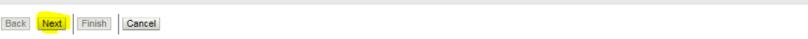
Customize this table

Deployments



2. Look for the application \$WL_HOME/server/lib/wls-cat.war and click on Next.

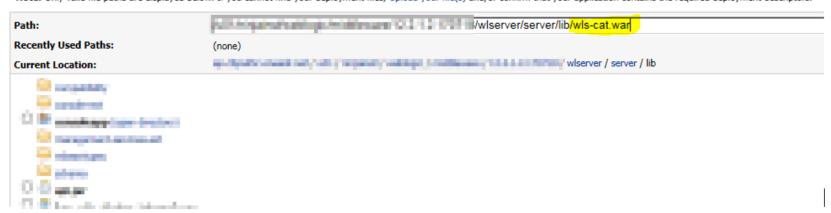
Install Application Assistant



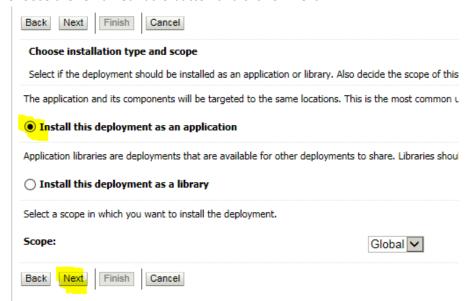
Locate deployment to install and prepare for deployment

Select the file path that represents the application root directory, archive file, exploded archive directory, or application module descriptor that you want to install. You can also enter the path of t

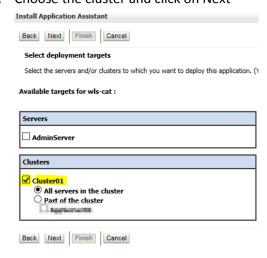
Note: Only valid file paths are displayed below. If you cannot find your deployment files, Upload your file(s) and/or confirm that your application contains the required deployment descriptors.



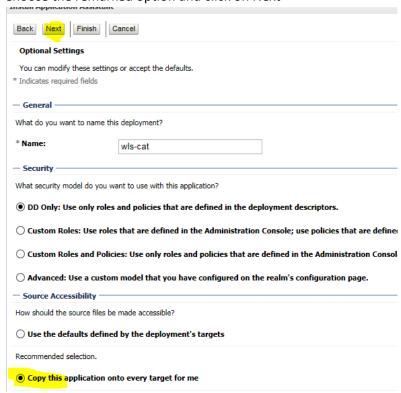
3. Choose the remarked radio button and click on Next



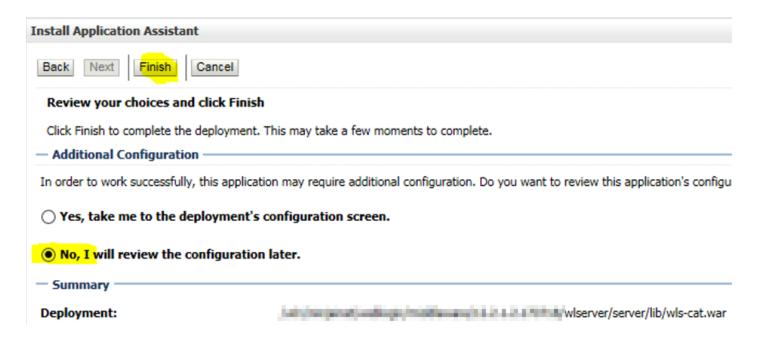
4. Choose the cluster and click on Next



5. Choose the remarked option and click on Next



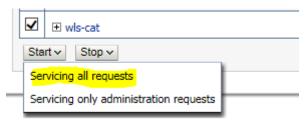
6. Select the remarked option and click on Finish



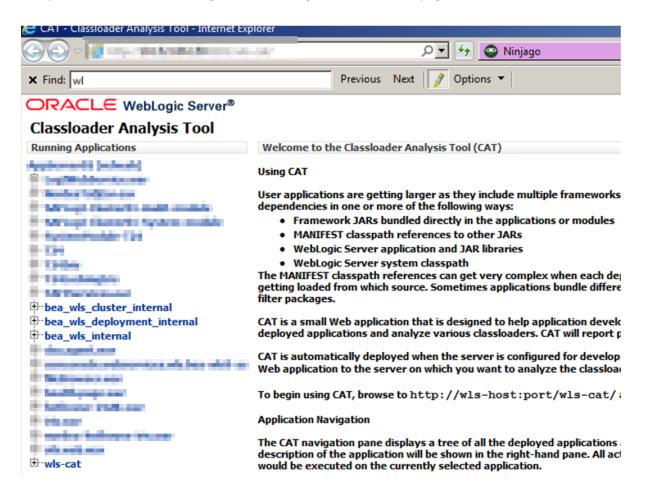
7. Click on Activate Changes



8. Go to Deployments > Control and start the application



9. Test the application using the listen address and the port assigned to each managed server inside the cluster. The application will request a user and you should user the **Weblogic** user, after login this is the main page of CAT.

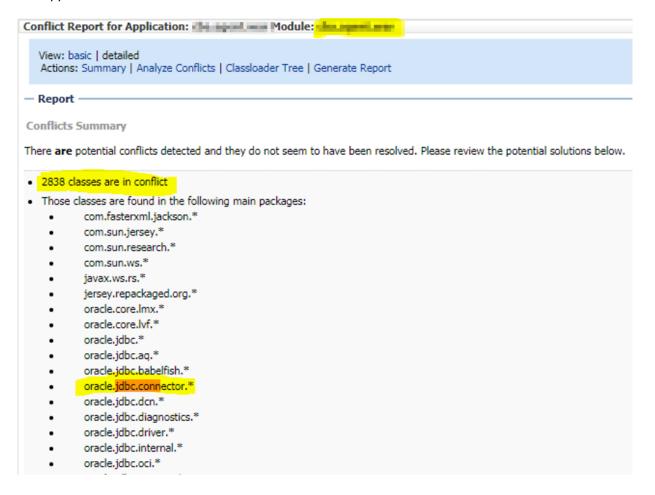


Using CAT to analyze class conflict

In this section two examples related to class conflicts are show.

Example 1

The application CAT identifies class conflicts



As an example we can analyse oracle.jdbc.* to be specific the class called **oracle.jdbc.connector.OracleLocalTransaction** as can be seen in the following report generated by CAT.

Resource: oracle.jdbc.connector.OracleLocalTransaction

Checksum: 1f8d1e637d6813c0d486ff626c60f1d2

Load Location: jar:file: \$WL_HOME/oracle_common/modules/oracle.jdbc/ojdbc7.jar!/oracle/jdbc/connector/OracleLocalTransaction.class

Classloader Type: com.oracle.classloader.weblogic.LaunchClassLoader

Classloader Hash Code: 572145572

Classloader Search Order: 318781939 ->572145572

Alternative Locations:

\$DOMAIN_HOME/servers/ServerExample/tmp/_WL_user/yyy.xxx.war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/ojdbc7-12.1.0.2.0.jar!/oracle/jdbc/connector/OracleLocalTransaction.class

In the previous figure two class loaders are identified: **318781939** ->**572145572**, which means both have the class, but only one of them loads the class. According to the previous report, this class can be loaded from two locations.

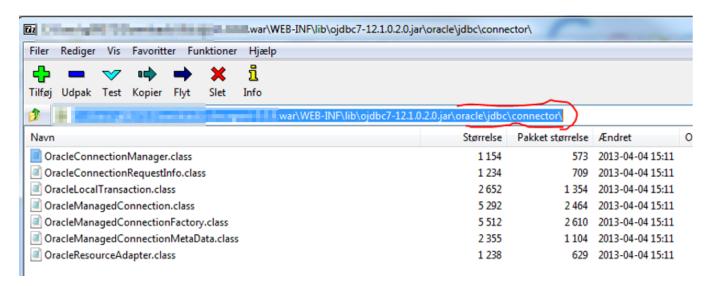
Location:

jar:file: \$WL HOME/oracle common/modules/oracle.jdbc/ojdbc7.jar!/oracle/jdbc/connector/OracleLocalTransaction.class

Alternative Locations:

\$DOMAIN_HOME/servers/ServerExample/tmp/_WL_user/yyy.xxx.war /2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/ojdbc7-12.1.0.2.0.jar!/oracle/jdbc/connector/OracleLocalTransaction.class

The following figure shows the JDBC library inside the application called yyy.xxx.war. Thus, one question is why does the application need a library that is provided by the application server?



It is possible to see the application does not define any filter to use the library from the application instead of the Weblogic library.

```
Type: weblogic.utils.classloaders.ChangeAwareClassLoader
HashCode: 318781939
Filter: empty
Classpath:
                  Server01/tmp/ WL user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/classes
                       Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/_wl_cls_gen.jar
                      Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/ jar
                          Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-annotations-2.8.0.jar
                            Server01/tmp/ WL user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-core-2.8.3.jar
                          Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-databind-2.8.3.jar
                         Server01/tmp/ WL user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-jaxrs-base-2.8.3.jar
                         war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-jaxrs-json-provider-2.8.3.jar
                             Server01/tmp/ WL user war/2egtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jackson-module-jaxb-annotations-2.8.3.jar
                                Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jaxb-api-2.1.jar
                              Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jersey-bundle-1.19.2.jar
                         Server01/tmp/_WL_user_____war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/json-simple-1.1.1.jar
                      Server01/tmp/ WL user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/jsr311-api-1.1.1.jar
                Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/log4j-1.2.17.jar
                   Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/ojdbc7-12.1.0.2.0.jar
                         Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/stax-api-1.0-2.jar
             Server01/tmp/_WL_user war/2eqtxp/war/WEB-INF/lib/
```

This can be confirmed after reading the Weblogic.xml file

```
<!xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>

<p
```

In cases like this, the recommendation is to get rid of JAR files that do not make sense for the application since the application is using the one provided by the application server.

Example 2

The following case shows that even when the tag refer-web-inf-classes>true</prefer-web-inf-classes> is used there could be some problems such as:

1371620039[app:birt.war module:birt.war path:null spec-version:3.0]] Root cause of ServletException. java.lang.LinkageError: loader constraint violation in interface itable initialization: when resolving method "org.apache.xerces.dom.ElementImpl.getSchemaTypeInfo()Lorg/w3c/dom/TypeInfo;" the class loader (instance of weblogic/utils/classloaders/ChangeAwareClassLoader) of the current class, org/apache/xerces/dom/ElementImpl, and the class loader (instance of <bootloader>) for interface org/w3c/dom/Element have different Class objects for the type org/w3c/dom/TypeInfo used in the signature

According to the developer this was impossible because the application was using this

With CAT it was possible to see a big number of conflicts

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lassloader Analysis Tool

tunning Applications Server01 [refresh] 1-}-The same of the sa -}-bea_wls_cluster_internal bea wis deployment internal bea_wls_internal -birt.war L-birt.war }-com.oracle.webservices.wls.bea-wls9-async-res PERSONAL PROPERTY AND 1 the last and the -wis-cat

```
Conflict Report for Application: birt.war Module: birt.war
```

View: basic | detailed Actions: Summary | Analyze Conflicts | Classloader Tree | Generate Report

Report

Conflicts Summary

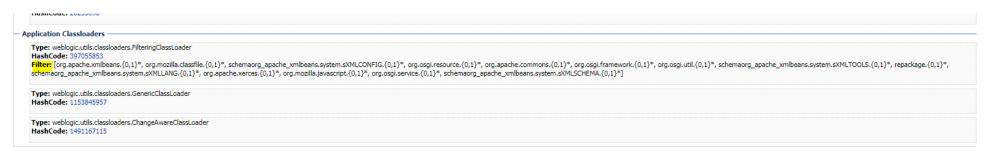
There are potential conflicts detected and they do not seem to have been resolved. Please review the potential solutions below.

- . 2651 classes are in conflict
- . Those classes are found in the following main packages:
 - javax.wsdl.*
 - javax.wsdl.extensions.*
 - javax.wsdl.factory.*
 - javax.wsdl.xml.*
 - javax.xml.*
 - javax.xml.namespace.*
 - javax.xml.rpc.*
 - javax.xml.stream.**
 - oracle.core.lmx.*
 - oracle.core.lvf.**
 - oracle.jdbc.*
 - oracle.jdbc.aq.*
 - oracle.jdbc.connector.*
 - oracle.jdbc.dcn.*
 - oracle.jdbc.diagnostics.*
 - oracle.jdbc.driver.*
 - oracle.jdbc.internal.**
 - oracle.jdbc.oci.*
 - oracle.idbc.oracore.*
 - oracle.jdbc.pool.*
 - oracle.jdbc.rowset.*
 - oracle.jdbc.util.**
 - oracle.jdbc.xa.*
 - oracle.jpub.runtime.**
 - oracle.net.ano.*
 - oracle.net.aso.**
 - oracle.net.jdbc.*
 - oracle.net.jndi.*
 - oracle.net.ns.*
 - oracle.net.nt.*
 - oracle.net.resolver.*
 - oracle.security.o3logon.*
 - oracle.security.o5logon.*
 - oracle.sql.*
 - oracle.sql.converter.*
 - org.apache.commons.*
 - org.apache.xerces.*
 - org.apache.xmlbeans.*
 org.mozilla.classfile.*
 - org.mozilla.javascript.**

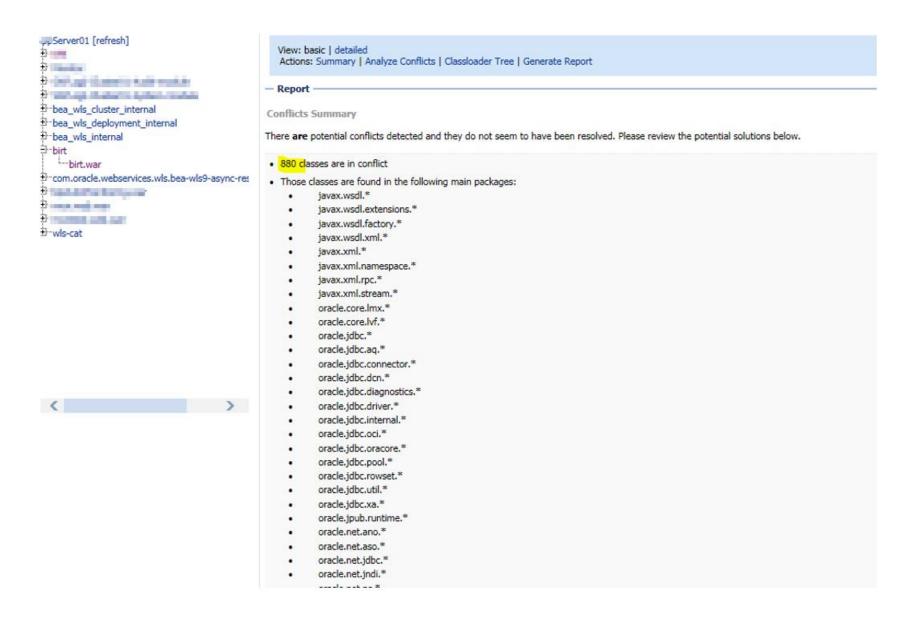
Using CAT to see the conflicts, the Weblogic.xml was modified and now it looks like this:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
   <!DOCTYPE weblogic-web-app
     PUBLIC "-//BEA Systems, Inc.//DTD Web Application 8.1//EN"
     "http://www.bea.com/servers/wls810/dtd/weblogic810-web-jar.dtd" >
-<weblogic-web-app>
     <container-descriptor>
         fer-web-inf-classes>false</prefer-web-inf-classes>
         <prefer-application-packages>
            <package-name>org.apache.xerces.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.apache.commons.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.apache.xmlbeans.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.mozilla.classfile.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.mozilla.javascript.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.osgi.framework.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.osgi.resource.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.osgi.service.*</package-name>
            <package-name>org.osgi.util.*</package-name>
            <package-name>repackage.*</package-name>
            <package-name>schemaorg apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLCONFIG.*</package-name>
            <package-name>schemaorg_apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLLANG.*</package-name>
            <package-name>schemaorg apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLSCHEMA.*
            <package-name>schemaorg apache xmlbeans.system.sXMLTOOLS.*</package-name>
         </prefer-application-packages>
     </container-descriptor>
</weblogic-web-app>
```

The previous filter can be seen using CAT



Moreover, the number of conflicts was reduced



Therefore, in cases like this using a filter within the Weblogic.xml file is better than using the tag prefer-web-inf-classes>true</prefer-web-inf-classes>

Conclusion

At least there are two ways to solve this kind of conflicts deleting JAR files that are not used by the application or filtering classes through the Weblogic.xml file where a filter is recommended as can be seen in the second case described in this document and in the bug described by Oracle in [4]

References list

[1] Oracle (2015) Using the Classloader Analysis Tool (CAT) [Online document] Available from: https://docs.oracle.com/middleware/1213/wls/WLPRG/classloading.htm (Accessed on: 23/01/2018)

[2] Oracle (n.d.) Java Virtual Machine Specification [Online document] Available from: https://docs.oracle.com/javase/specs/jvms/se7/html/jvms-5.html (Accessed on: 25/01/2018)

[3] Oracle (2017) JDK1.8 ClassLoader Doesn't Load META-INF/services/* From Libraries In WEB-INF/lib With prefer-web-inf-classes=true (Doc ID 2229218.1) [Online document] Available from:

https://support.oracle.com/epmos/faces/DocumentDisplay? afrLoop=524837554942480&id=2229218.1& adf.ctrl-state=ab6oaidok_126 (Accessed on: 25/01/2018)

[4] Oracle (2017) Log4j Initialization Error in WebServices Deploy With prefer-web-inf-classes=true (Doc ID 2266334.1) [Online document] Available from:

https://support.oracle.com/epmos/faces/DocumentDisplay? afrLoop=525271175379472&id=2266334.1&displayIndex=1& afrWindowMode=0& adf.ctrl-state=ab6oaidok 228#SYMPTOM (Accessed on: 25/01/2018)