Mobilizon: lifting the veil on the beta release

Mobilizon is an alternative to Facebook groups and events. After a successful crowdfunding, it is time we gave you a taste of this software and updated you on its progress.

This article is a part of « Contributopia’s travel journals ». From October to December of 2019, we will assess our many (donations-founded) actions, which are tax-deductible for French taxpayers. Donate here if you can.

La version originale (en Français) de cet article est à lire ici.

An eagerly awaited alternative to Facebook events

During the Spring of 2019, we launched our Mobilizon crowfunding, to fund a free/libre software allowing communities to liberate themselves from Facebook events, groups and pages.

This crowdfunding’s aim was to produce Mobilizon and to know how far you all wanted us to go with this project. Over one thousand people funded this project, and we are very pleased to see how enthusiastic you all were: evidently, many of us are tired of Facebook’s walled garden around our events!
Thank you all for the success of this crowdfunding!

Today, we are keeping a promise we made during the campaign: sharing Mobilizon’s progress with you. We decided to showcase it to you as soon as possible, even though most features are not developed yet. This is precisely what a beta is: some things are still rough around the edges, the paint is fresh, not everything is in place (yet)... but you can still get a clear picture of what we have achieved and how much work still remains to be done.

A beta release to lay the foundations

Mobilizon’s aim is to create a free/libre software allowing communities to create their own spaces to publish event.

Here is everything you can do with Mobilizon:

- **Sign up** with your email and a password, then log in;
- Receive email notifications;
- Create and manage several identities from the same account;
  - to compartmentalize your events;
  - Every identity consists of an ID, a public name (name, nickname, username, etc.) an avatar and a bio
- Create, edit or delete **events**;
  - From the identity you used to create said event;
  - You can create, keep, edit (and delete) draft events;
  - You can manually approve (or refuse) attendance requests.
  - You can easily share by mail or on your social medias;
  - You can add events to your calendar.
- Register for an event by choosing one of your identities;
- Report problematic content to the instance\(^2\) **moderation**;
- Manage reports of problematic content

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We are very enthusiastic about the ability to use different identities. Under the same account, you can compartmentalize several aspects of your social life: one identity for sports, one for family gatherings, another one for activism, etc.

This is the sort of tool Facebook & Co will never offer, as they have a vested interest in gathering every aspects of our social lives under a single, and therefore advertiser-friendly, profile... Thus, it always brings us great joy to realize that when we distance ourselves from these platforms model, we can imagine user-friendly, emancipatory tools.

Better yet, you can have a look by yourself...
test.mobilizon.org: discover the software and its features

Wait up before you organize a Last Party Before Armageddon on test.mobilizon.org: it is only a demo site! Feel free to use it however you want, to click at will: there will be no consequences as every account, event etc. will be automatically deleted every 48 hours.

Click on the screenshot to go and visit the demo of Mobilizon!

One of our promises while we were mapping out Mobilizon’s development was to
create a tool by and for people, so we worked with UI/UX designers... we hope you like the result!

We have made room on our forum for your feedback. However, we will probably not be able to answer to requests pertaining to new features, as we already have much to do!

The way is already mapped out: we are Mobilized!

In the next few months, we will publish regular updates of this beta release, and show you its progress. This way, we will have time to observe and hear your feedback, up until the first fully functional release of Mobilizon, which is planned for the first semester of 2020.

Depending on your level of expertise, you may look under the hood and read Mobilizon’s source code. Nevertheless, we do not recommend installing Mobilizon on your server before we take care of its federated features.

As Mobilizon is not (yet) federated, it is not (yet) possible, for example, to register to a Framaparty posted on Framasoft’s Mobilizon instance from an account created on a UnitedUni instance, hosted by your college. Both the federated aspect and the ability to register to an event anonymously are being developed right now. We will introduce you to them when we keep you updated on the software again, around December.
With the federation features coming next december, compass roses will multiply!
Illustration: David Revoy - License: CC-By 4.0

During 1st semester of 2020, we will publish the first stable release of Mobilizon. We will implement moderation tools as well as collaborative ones (groups, organizational spaces, private messages). We will be in touch with pioneer installers and users (the latest have probably used their pals’ servers). We will be working on technical documentation too.

**We keep our promises, starting now**

We at Framasoft cannot wait to see as many people as possible free themselves for Facebook events, and use Mobilizon to organize, say, an advocacy group or a Climate March.

However, we might have to wait a bit before closing down all these Facebook groups that structure part of our lives. Meanwhile, we hope this demo will show the potential of a software meant to gather, organize and mobilize... people who are trying to make the world a better place.

Have a look at Contributopia’s travel journals and discover more articles and actions made possible by your donations. If you like what you just read, please think of supporting us, as your donations are the only thing that allow us to go on. As Framasoft is a public interest organization, the real cost of a 100 € donation from a French taxpayer is only of 34 €.
Notes

[1] **Federation**: If my college hosts my email, and yet I can communicate with a gmail (hosted by Google), it is because they speak the same language: they are federated. The federation, here, refers to the use of a common language (a « protocol ») to be able to connect. Capacities do not rely on a single player (e.g.: Facebook for WhatsApp, Google for YouTube, etc), but rather on a multitude of companies, organizations, collectives, institutions, or even private individuals, required they posess the appropriate skills. This provides more resilience and independance to these networks, and makes them harder to control as well. Thus, in the case of Mobilizon, different instances of the software (on the servers of a college, collective or organization such as Framasoft, for example) will be able to synchronize the data made public (events, messages, groups, etc.).

[2] **Instance**: an instance is one hosted installation of a federated software. This software is therefore located on a server, under the responsibility of the people who administer this server (the hosts). Each host can choose whether to connect or not its instance with others, and therefore whether or not to grant access to the information shared on said instance to its members. For example, framapiaf.org, mamot.fr and miaou.drycat.fr are three Mastodon instances (respectively from the hosts Framasoft, La Quadrature du Net and Drycat). As these 3 instances are federated, their members can communicate with each other. In the same vein, two -or even two thousand- Mobilizon instances can be connected and share events.