Federating Mobilizon : one more step towards de-facebooked events

There is a new development to our future alternative to Facebook: different Mobilizon installs can now federate with each other.

Why is that important? Why is this a key element? How can this make Mobilizon a fundamentally emancipatory tool? We will try to explain all this below.

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.

If you are not (yet) familiar with our Mobilizon project....

Mobilizon was born from our desire to offer an alternative to Facebook events for marches to protect our climate and other citizen gatherings. Once the first version completed (by summer 2020 if all goes well!), Mobilizon will be a software that groups, structures or collectives can install on their server, to create their own event platform website. Who can do the most can do the least: if Mobilizon is designed to organize a large pacifist march, it will be easy to manage the birthday of the youngest one ʳᵉᵉ!
Conceived with care for humans

Click to download the summary of the interviews and job to be done (pdf in French, only)

We worked with designers to have a strong vision for the software. Interviewing activists at various levels of civil society has allowed us to better design Mobilizon. It should not only serve as an alternative to Facebook events, but also to Facebook groups (to gather, communicate together, organize) and Facebook pages (to publish a presentation, however brief, of its collective, its place, its association… and organized events).
We also understood that Mobilizon had to move away from the Facebook-style social features that exploit our ego and motor the attention economy. In the Mobilizon we designed, there are no likes, incentives to create the narrative of your life on a wall, and no echo chambers to these frustrating dialogues where everyone shouts and no one listens.

In June 2019, we presented this project, asking you to finance it if you wanted us to develop it. With more than €58,000 raised, it’s obvious that you shared our enthusiasm for Mobilizon! In October 2019, we released a first beta version, with basic functionalities. We want to show, in all transparency, the evolution of Mobilizon’s development, with an always-up-to-date demo on test.mobilizon.org.
A new step forward: Mobilizon is now federated!

The federation is one of the most important aspects of the Mobilizon software. It is already good that University X can install Mobilizon on its servers, and create its instance of Mobilizon (let’s call it « MobilizedCollege.net »). But if
Jaimie has created their account on UniMobilize.org, the body of their union, how can they register to the « March for Student Loans Awareness » event that was published on MobilizedCollege.net?

Integrating the ActivityPub protocol into the Mobilizon software allows each installation of each instance of the Mobilizon software to talk and federate with each other. Thus, in our example, MobilizedCollege.net and UniMobilize.org can choose to federate, i.e. share their information and interact together.

Rather than creating a giant platform with a single entrance door (facebook.com, meetup.com, etc.), we create a diversity of entrance doors that can be linked together, while keeping each one its own specificity. Since the second beta update, Mobilizon has made it possible to federate events, comments and participations. Most of the future features we will add in the coming months will also be federated, when appropriate.
For people who administer an instance, there is an interface to manage which instances you are subscribed to and which instances have subscribed to you.

You can already see the effects of this federation on our demo instance test.mobilizon.org. Note that the events there are fake (made for tests purposes), so if you try and install a Mobilizon instance on your server, it is better not to federate with this demo instance!

**Other new features of the last two months**

These last two months of development have mainly been devoted to the Federation aspect of Mobilizon. However, other improvements have also been made to the software.

One of the most visible is the addition of comments below events. Right now, this tool is basic: you can comment on an event, and respond to a comment. It is not intended to be a social tool (with likes, etc.), just a practical one.
Click on the comments to see the event « Mobilizon Launching Party »

Many addresses sources (to geolocate the address you type when entering the event location) have also been added to Mobilizon. We are currently thinking about how to improve this point without overloading our friends in the free-libre community such as OpenStreetMap. Today, we are still relying on OSM’s Nominatim server, pending the delivery of our own server!

Many bugs have been fixed since the October beta release. These corrections, combined with many practical and aesthetic improvements, are partly due to your feedback and contributions on our forum: thank you! If you have any comments about Mobilizon, if you spot anything on test.mobilizon.org, feel free to create a topic on our forum, the only place where we read all your feedback.
The road is long, but the path is set

Let’s be clear: Mobilizon is not (yet) ready to host your groups and events. We are already seeing pioneers who are tinkering with an installation on their servers (congratulations and thanks to you), it’s cool, really… But until we have released version 1, please consider that the software is not ready.

Also, there is no point in suggesting new features, we will not be able to add anything to what was planned during the fundraising last June. We would like to, but we simply do not have the human resources to meet all expectations. Our small non-profit manages many projects, and we must accept our limits to achieve our goals without burning out.
Click to join our forum, and give us your feedback on Mobilizon

For the next few months, the path is set:

- Process your feedback from this beta version and get some rest by the end of the year;
- Work on pages and groups (with messaging, moderation, organizational tools) in the first quarter of 2020;
- Have time for patches, possible delays and finishes that stabilize and document the software, for its release planned before the summer of 2020.
Framasoft remains Mobilized, see you this summer!

Adding federation functionality to Mobilizon is a key step. We will continue to keep you informed of such progress on this blog, and to demonstrate it on the test.mobilizon.org website.

In the meantime, we hope that this new milestone will inspire you as much as we do on the future of Mobilizon, do not hesitate to give us your feedback on our forum and see you in June 2020... to Mobilize together!

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 €.

Support Framasoft

Header illustration: CC-By David Revoy

PeerTube has worked twice as hard to free your videos from YouTube!

Thanks to your donations, we have been developing a software to free us all from YouTube & Co for a year. Why have we gone much further than the first release, (crowdfunded in the spring of 2018), you might ask? Well, that’s because we sincerely believe in the emancipatory power of PeerTube.
Federation and instances to avoid creating a new tech giant

PeerTube’s aim is to create an emancipatory alternative to centralized platforms a la YouTube. In a centralized service, you sign-up with a single address, and each and every of your actions, videos and data are gathered on a single huge computer. For example, Google’s, that hosts YouTube (to be precise, they are server farms rather than huge computers, but on a symbolic level it is the same thing!).

PeerTube is a software. It can be installed on a server by anyone possessing the appropriate skills; say, for the sake of argument, Bernadette, College X and karate club Y. This is called an instance, i.e. a PeerTube host. In concrete terms, hosting an instance creates a website (let’s say, BernadetTube.fr, CollegeTube.org or KarateTube.net) on which you can watch videos and sign-up, so you can interact or
upload your own content.

These instances can chose to follow each other (this is called federating). For example, if the head of IT services of College X would like KarateTube videos to appear on CollegeTube, all she has to do is federate with KarateTube. KarateTube’s videos will remain on its server but students who are used to watching videos from CollegeTube will be able to see them.

In this case, BernadetTube stays isolated, but CollegeTube and KarateTube are federated. Rather than creating a single gigantic platform, PeerTube allows for the creation of a multitude of small, diverse, and interconnected platforms.

**One year of work to let PeerTube mature**

In May of 2018, we started a crowdfunding for PeerTube’s development. Many people decided to give a chance to a software that allows the creation and federation of video platforms. In October of 2018, we « turned in our homework assignment » as they say, when we released the first version of PeerTube.

We could have stopped once our promises were fulfilled, and let the community develop this free/libre software on its own. Instead, we decided to use a part of the donations we receive for everything we do (thank you!) to make PeerTube’s main developer job durable. As a Framasoft employee, he also contributed to other free/libre softwares such as Framacalc-Ethercalc and Mobilizon.

Nevertheless, during the past year, his main mission was to improve on PeerTube. He was able to rely on a growing community of contributors, and no one was idle! In one year, PeerTube was enriched with, amongst other things:
Meet Sepia, PeerTube’s new mascot, by David Revoy (CC-By)

- moderation tools for instance administrators
- a watch history
- videos automatically start at the time code you stopped at (provided you are logged-in)
- notifications (new comments, videos or subscriptions, mentions, etc.)
- playlists (including a « watch later » one, which is now a feature by default on all accounts)
- a system where videos require manual approval by administrators before posting them
- an easier federation management for instance administrators
- a gradual betterment of UI (for example, it is now easier to make the difference between a channel and an account, to see thumbnails or to find a video in your video library)
- audio files management when uploading them: PeerTube will turn them into videos
- the interface is now translated into 25 languages!
Small bonuses make all the difference!

We will now highlight 3 features that we particularly like, as they offer more freedom, comfort and control to PeerTube’s users. Considering more control is not part of the business models of mainstream platforms (greetings, Youtube, Vimeo and Facebook videos!), these three features offer PeerTube’s users a unique experience.

Sharing a video clip

When you share a video link, most platforms offer a « start at » option, which makes the video begin at 53 seconds if what you would like to share starts at 54 seconds.

We simply added a « stop at » option. It might seem silly (and really, it is) but considering YouTube’s job in the attention economy is to capture yours to sell it to Fanta, it is obviously unimaginable for them to let you stop videos!

France, 2015: YouTubers are mainstreaming. Fanta sponsors the 1st Video City Paris convention, so much so that it became some kind of giant ad for this Coca-Cola Company product.

If in a given videos, you only care about 3 sentences between
1:23 and 1:47, you can single them out, share or keep this clip for yourself (e.g. in your liked videos playlist or any other playlist). This feature allows for may uses: zapping, educative content, etc. We at Framasoft find that so much potentials lies in this idea!

**Plug-in system**

Every administrator and user wishes to see the software fulfill their needs. As Framasoft cannot (and does not want to) develop every feature that could be hoped for, we have from the start of the project planned on creating a plug-in and add-on system you can install to customize your PeerTube experience.

Once again, we can see that centralized platforms have locked us up in such a standardized experience that it’s hard imagining that a concept as old as this could be such a breath of fresh, free air. And yet!

Now, this system allows each administrator to create specific plug-ins depending on their needs. They may install on their instance extensions created by other people as well. For example, it is now possible to install community created graphical themes to change the instance visual interface. You could also imagine plug-ins to sort videos in reverse alphabetical order, or to add a Tipee, Paypal or Patreon button below videos!
PeerTube taking off, by David Revoy.

**New video player**

Offering a new type of video player (for nerds: based on HLS technology) is a risky endeavor for a tool as new and interconnected as PeerTube. Considering PeerTube’s young age (it is barely starting to make a name for itself and to be adopted around the world), this could cause incompatibility issues and very problematic differences in versions.

However, we have decided we would introduce it experimentally, starting last summer. Indeed, this new video player is promising: it is faster, has less bugs, makes it easier to change video definition and makes their load fluider (still using peer-to-peer technology). In return, it requires updating some elements (moving to ffmpeg 4.1) and to re-encode some videos.

This new video player has been met with a great deal of enthusiasm, and broadens PeerTube’s future (live streaming, for example, is out of question using the current player). This is why we want to take the time to make it PeerTube’s player by default, which will require work to help current hosts in this transition.
V2 is even more federation-focused

The PeerTube version we are releasing today already includes all these improvements, and many more! This « v2 », as they say, aims to make it easier for instance administrators to federate. They will for example be able to automatically follow instances that follow them, or to follow instances visible on our JoinPeerTube public register.

This new PeerTube version also aims to help the public choose the perfect instance match. To return to the subject of Bernadette, College X and Karate club Y, let’s now add a new audience member: Camille.

Camille doesn’t know a thing about servers or whatever, but he wants to create an account to follow PeerTube channels, or even upload his own videos… And he has a hard time understanding what this is all about! How could he possibly know that BernadetTube is only maintained by Bernadette and that if anything were to happen to her, she could stop administrating it overnight? How can he see that CollegeTube refuses to federate with instances that display sensitive content, even properly flagged and blurred? Where can he learn that KarateTube will favor videos in German, and that support will only be provided in this language?
Once the instance set up, admins will have to configure it, by answering some questions…

When Bernadette, the head of College X IT services, and Karate club Y’s resident nerd will have updated PeerTube with this v2, they will have to fill in a form to better introduce their instance. The goal here is to clearly state:

- the instance main categories
- what languages the admins and the moderation team speak
- the instance code of conduct
- the moderation policy (who moderates, policy regarding sensitive contents, etc.)
- who is behind this instance (an individual? an organization?)
- why did the admin(s) set up this instance
- how long do the admin(s) plan on maintaining this instance for?
- how do the admin(s) plan on funding their PeerTube server?
- information about the hardware of the server

Camille will be able to find all these information on the « about » page of each PeerTube instance (which will now also display new statistics), on the sign-up page… as well as on the joinpeertube.org register!

**JoinPeertube.org is where you get your bearings!**

With over 100,000 videos and 20,000 accounts, it is safe to say that PeerTube has become popularized. It was high time we revamped joinpeertube.org so as to turn it into a front door to these videos, hosts and the federation.

With the help of UI/UX professionals, we have imagined and shaped two user flows to using JoinPeertube.org: one for people who want to watch videos (and maybe sign-up), and another one for video makers who need a trustworthy host for their videos.
Click to discover the new JoinPeertube.org

Both of these paths may lead you to the register of public instances. You can sort them according to your preferences so as to find the one that meets your needs. This selecting is made possible by the answers given to the form mentioned earlier, which allows admins to better introduce their instance and to explain the project behind it to potential users. That being said the best solution is to have a look by your own means (as a side note, we find the site much prettier now!)

Please note that PeerTube now has its own documentation website, meant for both admins (to ease the software installation, maintenance and administration) or for regular users (whether it be for signing-up, managing your playlists or uploading videos).
The future of PeerTube is still YOU!

It would be impossible to name everyone who has contributed to the code, funding, design, translation, documentation, illustration and promotion of PeerTube... but the least we can do is to express our gratitude!

After one year of development and maturation of the project, we are putting a lot of thoughts into its future. People have different wishes, you guys have given us a lot of ideas. All of the feedback we are receiving from you, particularly on the dedicated section to PeerTube on our forum (the best place for your suggestions!) is invaluable to us.

Nowadays, we are imagining new improvements (to the interface, user experience, search engine, plug-in system), important tools, (mobile apps, videos about PeerTube), as well as new, powerful features. Would you like to easily remix online videos from your PeerTube account? to do livestreams? So do we! And we need your support for that!

We are allowed to have all types of dreams and aspirations for PeerTube, but what is sure is that making come true will have a cost. The year we have spent developing PeerTube was funded in part by what was left of the June 2018 crowdfunding, but mostly by regular donations we receive for all of our projects. We will probably launch a new crowdfunding campaign just for PeerTube v3 in 2020.

In the meantime, feel free to help PeerTube grow, to promote instances and videos you like, and to congratulate the whole community for how far we have come with this v2!

Have a look at Contributopia’s travel journals and discover more articles and actions made possible by your donations. If
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 crowdfunding, 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 compartimentalize 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

Mobilizon, illustrated by [David Revoy](https://davidrevoy.com) – License: [CC-](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/)
We are very enthusiastic about the ability to use different identities. Under the same account, you can compartimentalize 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
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 €.

Support Framasoft

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\[2\] 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.
Let’s De-frama-tify the Internet!

Wait up before you yell at us! but yeah, we are here to announce the gradual closing down, spanning several years, of some services from the De-google-ify Internet campaign. We want to achieve this goal in a spirit of cooperation, so that we can focus on more decentralization and efficiency for people who are aiming to make a positive change in the world, no matter how small.

This article is quite long. Our complex thinking can’t be reduced to a tweetable soundbite. We recommend you read this article from start to finish, but you will find its key points at the end. And the original French blogpost is here.

What’s going on?

We’ve said it time and time again: Framasoft is -and wishes to remain- a human scale organization, a team of enthusiasts DIY-ing their way through changing the world, one byte at a time. Our organization is made of 9 employees and about thirty members and every year, 700 to 800 volunteers help us (whether it be for one hour or throughout the year). Over 4000 patrons fund our projects (thank you <3), and every month, hundreds of thousands people benefit from those.

Yet Framasoft is more than all of this: dozens of blog articles, around a hundred of meetings, conferences & workshops every year, a publishing house for free-libre books, lots of responds to the requests of many media outlets and a collaborative directory of free-libre solutions. We currently develop two important softwares (PeerTube and Mobilizon), and we are working on so many cool partnerships and collaborative projects that we’re going to need three months to introduce
you to all of them... (See y’all in October !)

Our pal JCFrog teasing us a bit

One thing is for sure: we, at Framasoft, hold our not-for-profit status close to our hearts. We don’t want to become start-up nor replace Google. We want to preserve our identity without burning ourselves out (we’ll touch on that some more in the following weeks, as we have sometimes overworked ourselves in the past), and keep on experimenting with new things. If we want to achieve all of these goals, we have to reduce our (heavy) workload.

Why are we closing down some services?

From the start, we advertized the De-google-ify Internet project as an experiment, a proof of concept, which was set to stop at the end of 2017. What we had not foreseen was that the discourse about current web centralization (which only nerds like us cared about in 2014) would generate such enthusiasm, and that as a consequence, so many expectations would be placed on us. In plain English: De-google-ify Internet, and all of the services that come with it, was not meant to centralize so many users, nor to lock them up in frama-stuffs
that would last to infinity (and beyond).

Apart from our « just for kicks » projects (Framatroll and Framadsense: still love you, fam), there are 38 services on the De-goole-ify Internet servers. That’s a lot. Like, seriously, a lot. This means 35 different softwares (each with its own update pace, active or dormant communities, etc.), written in 11 programming languages (and 5 types of databases), shared on 83 servers and virtual machines, all in need of monitoring, updating, adjusting, backing-up, debugging, promotion and support integration… It’s a lots of care and pampering, in the same vein as keeping hotel rooms visited by thousands of individuals every month.

Actually, even we can’t keep up with the list of the services we offer -_-‘…

Well, some services barely work anymore (Tonton Roger). Other started as experiments that we couldn’t carry on with (Framastory, Framaslides). Some services have such a large technical debt that even when we spent several days of development in them, we are only delaying their inevitable collapse (Framacalc). Other services could, left to their own
devices, grow forever, limitless, which is unsustainable (Framasite, Framabag, Framabin, etc.). When you are as known as Framasoft in the French-speaking community (Framalink, Framapic), some service are extremely work-intensive in order to prevent and fight misuse. And don’t get us started on federated social medias (Framapiaf, Framasphere): they require a lot of moderation, and would operate much more fluidly had we not welcomed so many users.

And to top it all off… this is no healthy functioning! We all know how handy it is to be able to say « if you want alternative solutions, just look at Framastuffs! ». It is very reassuring to find everything in the same place, under the same name… We are aware of this phenomenon, and that’s why we decided to use « frama », in a way not dissimilar to a brand - though that is frankly not our cup of tea. Except internet centralization is unhealthy.

Internet centralization is risky, too. Not only was it not meant to become so centralized, but also putting all of our data in the same basket is just how you centralize power in the hands of hosts system administrators. Besides, this is precisely the slippery slope from which Google and Facebook emerged.

Therefore, de-frama-tifying is on the agenda.

**Decentralization is one more click away**

Let’s take time to exploit one of the great perks of free softwares over proprietary softwares. When (totally random example) Google burries its umpteenth project, the code is usually proprietary: Google deprives us from the freedom to take this code over and install it on our servers.
click on the picture to discover CHATONS

On the contrary, free softwares allow anyone to take the reins. For example, Framapic doesn’t belong to Framasoft: everyone is legally entitled to install the Lutim software somewhere on their server and let anyone they see fit benefit from it... Actually, this spirit of decentralization is the reason why we have worked with self hosting-easing tools (like Yunohost), as well as with CHATONS (collective of independant, transparent, open, neutral and ethical hosters).

Our goal with this early announcements (concerning, for example, Framapic) is twofold. Firstly, we hope this will incentivize many hosts to open their Lutim instances, aka the same service (looking at you, fellow CHATONS). Secondly, this gives us time to pick hosting offers and to display them on the Framapic landing page, redirecting you in one click to the same service, except with a different host. All of this will be implemented as soon as we announce Framapic’s close down (one year before it actually happens).

So, what happens next?

Smoothly, and over two years! at the very least. (Might take
longer if we stumble on our keyboards and sprain our phalanxes! You never know until you know).

Now that we can all catch our breath, reassured that free and ethical services are SWAG, it is (high) time we start transitionning from the « everything Framasoft » instinct. Less frama services means all of you can explore elsewhere. It’s kinda as if we said:

Our digital CSA is at full capacity, but we are not leaving you with an empty basket: our network of CSAs and other network members will be delighted to welcome you.

We are laying the groundwork for y’all. In a spirit of transparency, you can download this spreadsheet [FR] that shows in detail our estimated closing down schedule. And if you prefer to have a general look, here is our we plan this closing down:
### To be maintained

These services are here to stay!

Migration to "Free Culture"

### To be restricted

**Unsurprisingly announcements + features restricted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>...</td>
<td>Begins 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>We're still pondering over it **</td>
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### To be gradually closed

**Redirect to alternative free software (CONTRIBUTE)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>...</td>
<td>September 2019</td>
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If we take a closer look, there’s a similar pattern for each service involved:

0. First things first, we announce today our plan to close down some of our services, allowing everyone to see clearly what’s happening, and to self-manage so as to fill in for this or that service. During all the following months we will attempt, as much as can be, to make the job of migrating towards other service providers easier.

1. Then, we announce on each concerned service that it will be first restricted, then closed down (1rst column). We will display on the landing page a link to hand-picked alternative hosts (same software or similar one).

2. Afterwards, we limit the service use (2nd column). The goal here is to close the door to newcomers (they won’t be able to create a new account, a new calc, or to upload a new file). We will advise them on alternatives solutions, all the while giving existing users time to migrate their account and personal data if they still up on our services.

3. At last, we close down the service whenever possible (last column on the board) or we make it invisible when maintaining a certain amount of continuity is necessary (e.g. existing frama.link will still redirect to the right web address).

We are not closing down everything, and certainly not now (save for one)

Framastory and Framanews pose a lot of technical issues, forcing us to act quickly. They will be the first services impacted. They will be restricted at the start of 2020, and closed down a semester later. For all of the other services we talked about earlier, restrictions will only start during summer 2020 (even summer 2021 for some), and the first closing
downs will not happen before 2021 – in some cases, not before 2022!

Simply put, the only exceptions to this rule will be the service we won’t close down, (Framadate, Framapads and MyPads, Framavox, Framagenda, Framatalk, the collaborative Framindmap, Framacarte), as well as those we are just moving to our « free-libre culture » project (Framagames and Framinetest). This includes Framadrive, which now has been on limited access for a while because of how popular it became, with 5000 accounts created. This is the limit we had set from the start, and we intend on keeping things that way.

And then, there’s Framabee, aka good old Tonton Roger, our meta search engine that no longer quite works. Some might say we should just finish it off, other would prefer for the landing page to state « killed by Google ». Indeed, no matter how much we hacked, Google & Co received too many queries from us and started refusing them en masse… which proves further that centralizing uses, even here at Framasoft, just won’t cut it! We’ll let Tonton Roger retire early: next month, we’ll wave him goodbye and gift him a pair of slippers.
That night when we came up with the brilliant idea of picking 3 different domain names for the same search engine

**Spring cleaning so we can move forwards together**

We have learnt a lot. The “**de-google-ify**” campaign showed us that users don’t have to follow the « the client is king » model, or to behave like Karen « I wanna speak to the manager » Von Soccer Mom. Yall have gracefully dealt with week-end server crashes (our system administrators don’t have
to work on week-ends), slightly less fancy-looking tools, and limitations on service use so as to give space for other users… In short: there is room in our lives for hand-crafted digital tech, aka small techs, in the most noble sense of the term.

Everything we have learnt since 2014 leads us to think we need a change. Clearly, we don’t want to let people (i.e. y’all!) high and dry, or give you the impression that free culture and softwares is an unkept promise. Quite the opposite: we were happy to introduce you to FLOSS solutions and to help you take them on (thanks for your efforts!). Your trust in and craving for ethical digital tools are precious: we don’t want to make anyone lose their mojo, only to take you all one step further.
And by the way, we are taking the time to do something GAFAMs & Co have never cared to do: announcing way ahead of time our closing down plans and helping our users in the road towards de-google-ifying. We are getting rid of what no longer sparks joy, putting some order in the tools and experiment we have accumulated over the years in our backpacks. This will give space and availability for what’s next.

PeerTube and Mobilizon are proof of our desire to move away from the « just-like-Google-but-with-ethics » software model.
Starting this October and spanning three months, we will be reviewing our « Contributopia » roadmap, and y’all will see that there is a lot to talk about. You’ll discover many more projects we hadn’t seen at the bottom of our digital backpack.

We are very excited for the next steps, as we have many announcements and contribution stories to share… see you in mid-October, we can’t wait!

One year to offer you a new proposition

Drawing on what we learnt from De-google-ify Internet, we sense that it’s possible to build a new, simpler, and handier offer for a range of services, both for users and hosts. Through observing your uses of those services and listening to your expectations, we (along with many other people!) believe that Nextcloud, rich in many applications, is one way to go. We believe this software could fulfill most of the needs of people trying to change the world.
You can do a lot with Nextcloud

We’re giving ourselves a year to contribute (once again) to this software, stir in it, experiment with buddies and offer you a new proposition, which hopefully will make de-google-ifiying even easier... just like de-frama-tifying!

Key points:

- We refuse to become the « default » solution and to monopolize your uses and attention (that’s how we empowered GAFAM & Co)
- 38 services, it’s way too complex for you to adopt and for us to host
- We wish to stay an organization of a human scale, and retain our human warmth... a sort of digital CSA;
- We propose to take the next step towards data decentralization:
  - By gradually closing-down some frama-services so
their landing-pages can become gateways to other hosters

- By taking the time to offer a new simpler range of services for users (through a single sign-on account for example)

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**Mobilizon : let’s finance a software to free our events from Facebook !**

We have less than 60 days to **finance Mobilizon**. Less than 60 days to promote our project of a **free and federated alternative to Facebook events**; and to know how much we need to invest ourselves in it.

**Change the software of the people who change the world?**

From climate walks on Facebook to free software hackathons using Meetup: to change the world, utopians (like us!) too often organize themselves on the centralized platforms of web giants.

We are not going to repeat here how clicking on « *I join* » in a Facebook event « *Vegan Barbecue for Social Justice* » raises many issues: it says **much more about you than you can imagine**, it gives **a significant power to Facebook advertisers** and locks the event community into **a tool that will prevent it from being self-organized** and thus from enduring. And that’s without mentioning the rules of use of these platforms, which
can lead to a closing, without the least justification, from one day to the next, of a group or a community, and of which the centralized structure forms a potentially unique portal for security services and pirates with bad intentions.

https://framablog.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/event.mp4

Mock-up of an Event page in Mobilizon

At Framasoft, we thought it was important to take the time to think about an alternative that could change the situation. We have just spent a few months, with the help of two designers (Marie-Cécile Paccard and Geoffrey Dorne) who have interviewed many activists so as to better understand their digital practices. We looked at what a tool that would really empower individuals and groups could look like.

The tool that surveillance capitalism companies will not make

If you think about it, it’s massively constraining to create a tool that is just good for sucking up and selling data from all over the world…. As long as we do not need (or want) to track people or maintain an unfair economic model, we can imagine a tool that makes a difference.

1. A tool that, even if basic, sets us free

The last thing Meetup, Eventbrite or Facebook want is for us to do without them, take their place and create our own event publishing platform. This is the first of the freedoms Mobilizon will offer: to free people from those money-, data- and attention-grabbing companies.

Of course, you might not be able to install it on a server yourself and create your own Mobilizon instance. But the fact
that a community, a trade union, an NGO, a movement, a federation, that is, any collective can freely emancipate itself from data-hungry platforms, feels essential to us.

Along these lines, making the source code, the « cooking recipe » of the software, public is paramount to us: not everyone can read it, but it is a guarantee of transparency and openness. If the team that develops it makes choices that do not suit me, I can set up my own team to experiment with different design choices and another governance system.

2. A tool that emancipates by federating

But here’s the thing: if my university creates its MobilizedCollege instance on the one hand, and my climate movement creates its EcoMobilized instance on the other, do I need to create an account on each site to keep up with the planned gatherings?

No: it would be a huge strain on end-users. This is why we want Mobilizon to be federated: each instance (event publication site) powered by Mobilizon will then be able to choose to exchange with other instances, to display more
events than « just its own », and to promote interactions. The federation protocol, based on the most widespread standard (called ActivityPub), will also allow, in the long term, to build bridges with Mastodon (the free and federated alternative to Twitter), PeerTube (alternative to YouTube), and many other alternative services.

However, the concept of federation is not a magic wand. On the contrary, it requires even more effort: displaying your moderation policy, communicating with the people registered on your server, choosing with whom you can federate or not, applying your legal obligations (or practicing civil disobedience)... An emancipatory Mobilizon should, in our opinion, facilitate these relationships between the people who open their instance to registrations, and those who entrust them with their data.

3. A tool that is, ideally, user-friendly

Ideally, Mobilizon not only frees us from Facebook events, but also frees us from its groups. And to have user-friendly groups, you have to imagine messaging tools, moderation tools, in short: many features that make us autonomous.
Because a user-friendly tool is a tool that gives us power, that gives us control. Thus, it is a tool that allows each group to organize itself as it wishes. Ideally, Mobilizon offers groups a space to display links to its digital collaboration tools, whatever they are, even google docs (but honestly, Framapad: it’s even better :p).

Another example of empowerment: if I want my family, who invites me to the youngest child’s birthday, to see my militant commitment (say for a pride march), but not my cultural activities (say folk dance), I must be able to control it. Ideally, Mobilizon allows each account to create multiple identities to partition its groups and activities as desired.

4. A tool that is sustainable and resilient in the long run

Software is a constantly evolving tool. Of course, producing a first stable version is a challenge in itself. But it is also the first step in a longer process, where we discover uses and practices that were not anticipated, that we can support.
There are already many possible evolutions for Mobilizon: facilitate geolocation and mapping, develop a mobile application, improve ergonomics and interfaces… What other ideas will our collective intelligence produce when Mobilizon is operational and used?

But here it is, maintaining and growing a commons requires care, time and attention. We must give ourselves the means, and at Framasoft, we hope that the support given to this project will show an enthusiastic supportive public, thanks to which we will be able to plan for the long term.

What resources are being used to produce Mobilizon?

Creating such a tool, with no other goal than to build a digital commons, requires time, involvement and resources. At Framasoft, we are convinced of the importance that Mobilizon can have, in the long term, for many communities. But we are already working on many projects and lack the time and money to do everything…. Thus, we will not get involved without a strong signal that this tool is desired.
One goal, 3 steps, 57 days to make a difference!

We have just opened a collection on joinmobilizon.org. We have given ourselves less than 60 days to know how well our approach will be supported. In concrete terms, the more you give, the more we will be involved in Mobilizon’s development in the long term.

We have defined the following budgets:

- 20 000 € — *Free and basic Mobilizon*, where we will cover our expenses and deliver the code and design work to the community, after the release of version 1;
- 35 000 € — *Emancipatory and federated Mobilizon*, where we will also be able to implement the ActivityPub federation protocol, and all the tools that go with it, including a test instance, for demonstration;
- 50,000 € — *Ideal and user-friendly Mobilizon* which, in addition to the rest, will directly include all the features we dream of for version 1 (groups, messaging, multi-identity, external tool displays);
- Further — *Sustainable and resilient Mobilizon*, which development will be maintained by Framasoft beyond the V1 release, with advanced features.
From now on, and until July 10th, any donation made to Framasoft via the Joinmobilizon.org page will be attributed to the Mobilizon project. On July 10th, depending on the amount that has been reached, we will focus on developing the Mobilizon that you have supported. We plan to release a beta version in the fall of 2019, and a version 1 in the first half of 2020.

https://framablog.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/page_groupe.mp4

Mock-up of a Group page in Mobilizon

You have less than 60 days to determine our involvement

So we need your help. Together, we have less than 60 days to propose and explain this project to the associative, cultural and militant communities in France and abroad. Less than 60 days to convince them of the importance of supporting Mobilizon, without falling into the trap of easy shorthand like « it will replace Facebook » or otherwise « this is a revolution ».

It will therefore be necessary to take the time to speak, to exchange, to listen… to convince without marketing bullshit or claiming to be an authority. Because Mobilizon will not be a miracle instantaneous recipe: it is a first step towards more independence, an adventure that will evolve over time, and one that we wanted to start with you.

How far will we go? It is now in your hands… let’s Mobilize!
PeerTube 1.0 : the free/libre and federated video platform

At the end of 2014, the French non-profit association Framasoft started a crazy challenge: what if we de-google-ified the Internet?

[For French version of this article, see here]

Three years later, more than thirty alternative services to Google, Facebook, and others were available and released to the public. Based on free/libre software only, without advertising, respectful of privacy, maintained by a non-profit association and totally independent.

However, in the « missing » services, one important actor remained: YouTube. Because how one can produce or make available a YouTube alternative without, tomorrow, collapsing in the face of problems? Explosion of online storage space (which costs a fortune), explosion of bandwidth costs (which costs two fortunes!), moderation problems, etc.

A solution had to be found.

The origins of PeerTube

In October 2017, Framasoft has hired the PeerTube developer for a few months on a full-time basis. PeerTube was then only a personal project of a free/libre and federated video distribution platform, in alpha version. The promise was a beta version, usable by the most courageous, for March 2018. The particularity of PeerTube is that the software allows to connect several « instances » of PeerTube between them (thus forming a « federation »), allowing them to exchange information without the user having to change between websites.
By March 2018, the beta version was ready. The association (which lives only on donations) then took the financial risk of extending the developer’s contract, in order to be able to launch a version 1.0 in October 2018. Since Framasoft could not finance this development on its own, a crowdfunding was launched in May 2018 with different levels. 45 days later, the association had collected 53 100€ through 1 381 donations.

In October 2018, the Framasoft non-profit is proud to announce the release of version 1.0 of PeerTube!

Video introducing to PeerTube. For a video with English subtitles, click here. 
Realisation : Association LILA (CC by-sa)

But then, what does this 1.0 version offer?

First of all, and to avoid misunderstandings, let us remind you that PeerTube is not a single centralized platform (as YouTube, Dailymotion or Vimeo can be), but a software that brings together many PeerTube instances (i.e. different
installations of the PeerTube software, thematic or community based) within what is called a federation. You must therefore look for the PeerTube instance that suits you best to view or upload your videos or, failing that, set up your own PeerTube instance, on which you will have full rights.

PeerTube is not a single centralized platform, but a software

Basic functionalities

• Peertube allows you to watch videos with WebTorrent, to prevent the saturation of the broadcast servers. If several people are watching the same video at the same time, they download small pieces of the video from your server, but also from the devices of other people who are watching the same video in the same time!

• Federation between PeerTube instances. If the PeerTube instance A subscribes to the PeerTube instances B and C, from a search on A, you can find and watch videos of B and C, without leaving A.

• The software has fairly detailed settings that allow the governance to be adjusted: each instance can be organized as it wishes. Thus, the instance administrator can define:
  • a disk space quota for each videographer;
  • the number of accepted accounts;
  • the role of users (administration, moderation, use, video upload).

• PeerTube can run on a small server. For example, you can install it on a VPS-like hardware with two cores and 2GB of RAM. The storage space required obviously depends on the number of videos you want to host personally.

• PeerTube has a stable and robust code, tested and proven on many systems, which makes it powerful.
For example, a PeerTube page often loads much faster than a YouTube page.

- Your videos can be automatically converted into different definitions (e.g. 240p, 720p or 1080p or even 4K) to suit the speed and equipment of the visitors. This step is called **transcoding**.
- A « **Theater** » **mode** as well as a « **night** » **mode** are available for better viewing comfort.
- PeerTube does not spy on you or lock you up: indeed, the application does not collect personal information for commercial purposes, and above all PeerTube does not lock you in a « **filter bubble** ». In addition, it does not use a biased recommendation algorithm to keep you online indefinitely. It may be a detail (or a weakness) for you, but for us it is a strength that means a lot!
- There isn’t – yet – any dedicated smartphone application. However, the **web version** of PeerTube works just as fast on smartphones and adapts perfectly to your device.
- Visitors can comment on the videos. This feature can be disabled either by the instance administrators on any video or locally by the person who uploads the videos.
- Since PeerTube uses the W3C standard **ActivityPub** exchange protocol, it is possible to **interact** with other software using the same protocol. For example, the PeerTube video platform can interact with the **Mastodon** social network, an alternative to Twitter. Thus, it is possible to « track » a PeerTube user from Mastodon, or even comment on a video directly from your Mastodon account.
A dedicated button allows you to support the author of a video. In this way, videographers can pick the financing method that suits them.

We may not have insisted on this point, but PeerTube is of course free/libre software⁠[1] This means that its source code (its recipe) is available and open to everyone. This means you can contribute to the code or, if you think the software is not going in the right direction, copy it and make the changes that suit your needs.

Functionalities financed through crowdfunding

- **Subtitling**: possibility to add multiple language files (in.srt format) to provide subtitles for videos.
- **Instance redundancy**: it is possible to « help » a designated instance by activating the redundancy of all or part of its videos (which will then be...
duplicated on your instance). Thus, if the linked instance is overloaded because too many people are watching the videos it hosts, your instance can support it by making its bandwidth available.

- **Import** from other video platforms by simply copying and pasting: YouTube, Vimeo, Dailymotion, etc. On some platforms, the retrieval of the title, description or keywords is even automatic. It is of course also possible to import videos by direct link or from another PeerTube instance. Finally, PeerTube also allows import from .torrent files.

- Several **RSS feeds** are available to you according to your needs: one for videos globally, another for those of a channel and one for comments on a video.
- Peertube has become **international** and now speaks 13 languages including Chinese. Translations into other languages are in progress.
The search feature is more relevant. It takes into account certain typographical errors and provides filters.

**Upcoming features**

We have excellent news: although the third level of our crowdfunding wasn’t reached, Framasoft has decided to hire the PeerTube developer on a permanent contract in order to ensure the sustainability of the software development. Other functionalities are therefore planned for 2019.

- A plugin system to customize Peertube. This is an essential development, as it will allow everyone to develop their own plugins to adapt PeerTube to their needs. For example, it will become possible to propose recommendation plugins with specific algorithms or completely different graphic themes.
- We will probably develop a mobile application (or some motivated contributors will)
- It will quickly be possible to improve the video import tool, so that you can « synchronize » your YouTube channel with your PeerTube channel (PeerTube will be able to check if new videos have been added and will automatically add them to your PeerTube account, including title and descriptions). In fact, this feature is already available for those who host their PeerTube instance and master the command line.
- Statistics by instance or by account may be made available.
- The improvement of moderation tools for big instances

**To go further**

It’s up to you! PeerTube belongs to you, take advantage of its possibilities. Submit quality videos (preferably under a free license, or for which you have the broadcasting rights or an
explicit agreement) to one of the existing instances. Let your contacts and subscribed YouTubers know about PeerTube. And if you can, install your own instance to further expand the federated network!

Supporting Framasoft also means supporting PeerTube

PeerTube

- FramaTube, Framasoft’s PeerTube instance
- Joinpeertube.org
- Instances open for registration
- List of instances and their information
- Frequently Asked Questions
- PeerTube Git Repository
- How to install PeerTube on your own server (only in English for now)
- Submit « issues » (request for technical corrections)
- PeerTube forum of framacolibris to discuss about the software (in English)

Framasoft

- Home page
- Presentation article in English on OpenSource.com Part 1 – Part 2 (thanks to Scott Nesbitt)
- Presentation videos in English at FOSDEM 2017 (De-google-ify Internet) and FOSDEM 2018 (Contributopia)
- De-google-ify Internet
- Contributopia.org