

The _ network

Introduction

- During the presidential election the subreddit The_donald became the centre of pro-trump/far right internet activity which it remains. However it has become evident that there is a network of similar subreddits backing far right European politicians or political groups.
- This does not seem to be a formal group for the most part though some of them share moderators. A subset do appeared to have a formal group under the r/The_Europe subreddit.

Common features

- Many of the moderators of these groups are far more active on r/the_donald, this may be because the r/the_donald has simply become the hub for far right activity on reddit or that the moderators are less concerned about local politics.
- Further some moderators cross political allegiances for example account u/DanOfWales runs the r/The_Farage (in theory a pro farage/ukip subreddit) and r/moggmentum (a unofficial subreddit to promote Jacob Rees-Mogg)
- These subreddits copy many of the same aesthetics as the r/The_donald or others in the group. While this may be a result of using the same templates, others show that the same users are providing support across a number of subreddits.

Failure to gather support?

These subreddits clearly attempted to act as rallying points for grassroots support of these political movements or at least give the impression with of grassroots support. Many of these subreddits gained subscribers after Trumps election victory but beyond that account growth was often negitable even during election campaigns by far right parties in europe. This can be shown in these images from subreddits supporting Geert Wilders (The_Wilders) and Marine Le Pen (Le_Pen). While The_Wilders was able to increase subscribers a bit during the Dutch elections in March, Len_Pen showed even less change in subscriber growth during the April to May election.

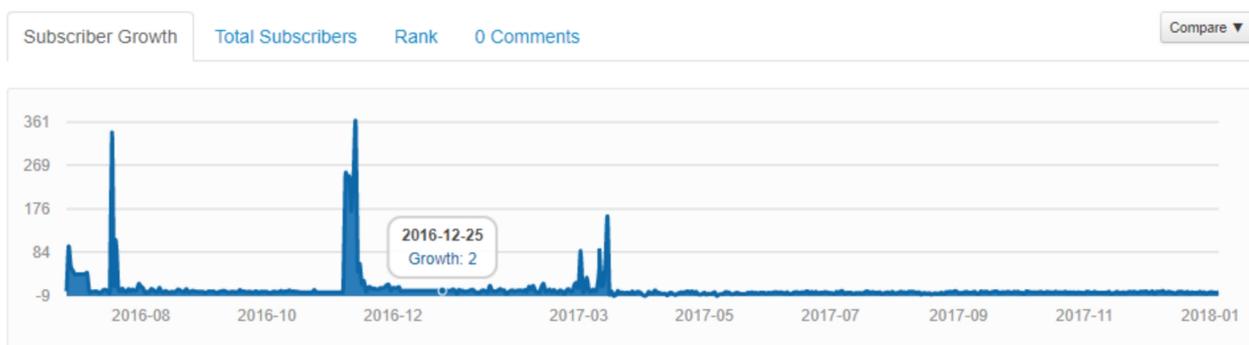


Illustration 1: subreddit metrics of The_Wilders, source:http://redditmetrics.com/r/The_Wilders

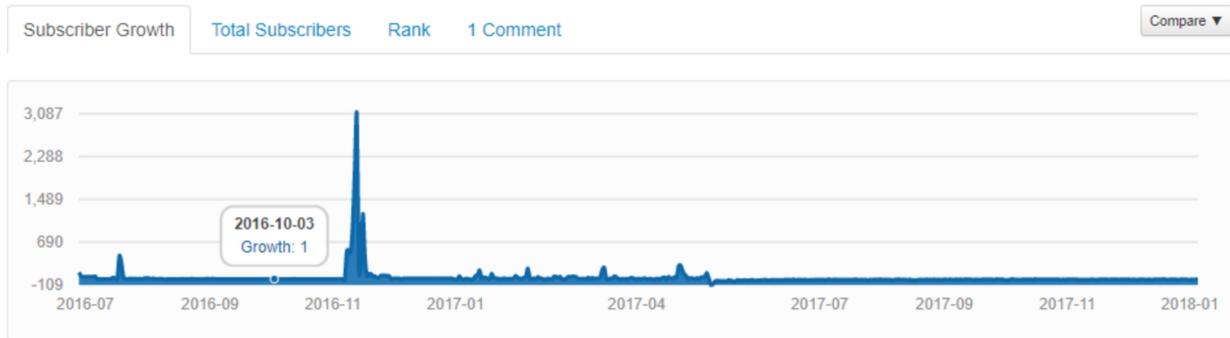


Illustration 2: Subreddit metrics of *Le_Pen*. Source: http://redditmetrics.com/r/Le_Pen
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Other subreddits take a more dramatic direction after their figure looses, the *r/The_Hofer* , set up to support Norbert Hofer closed the subreddit after Hofer’s failed attempt in the Austrian presidential elections in 2016 calling for subscribers to support the general *r/The_Europe* or the italy focused *r/The_Italia* which does suggest that these subreddits are set up simply to push far right parties rather than any actual party affiliation.

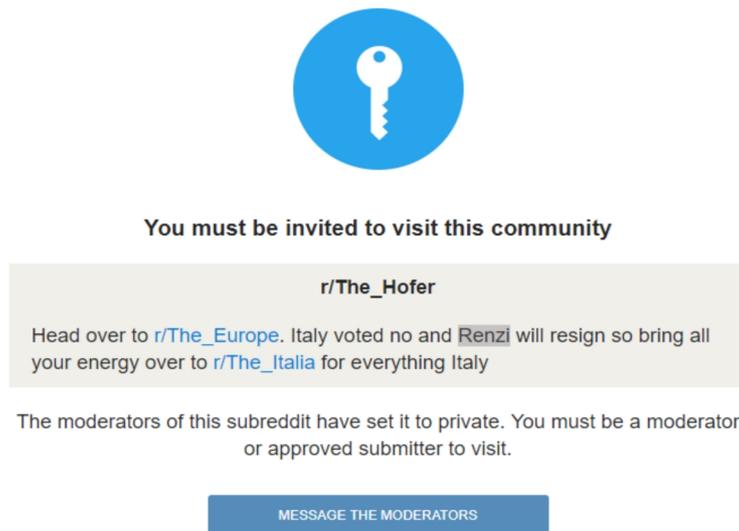


Illustration 3: The splash screen that greets vistors to *the_hofer*. Source:https://www.reddit.com/r/The_Hofer

Conclusions

- Evidence of a collection of far right political subreddits set up in 2016 to support political parties in Europe.
- Strong cross Atlantic and inter party links suggesting these subreddits are not about part loyalty.
- Despite initial growth many of these subreddits attract few new subs, suggesting they have not engaged the same as *r/the_donald* which may be a sign that this method of gathering support for far right politicians is not as effective outside of America. Alternatively the

explanation is that in Europe the far right often appeal to older voters less likely to use Reddit.