

“The rise of populism
in Europe can be
traced through
online behaviour...”

**POPULISM IN EUROPE:
CASAPOUND**

Jamie Bartlett
Jonathan Birdwell
Caterina Froio

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This research is based primarily on an online survey of Facebook supporters of CasaPound. The results do not, therefore, necessarily reflect the views of CasaPound. Demos is an independent think-tank committed to undertaking innovative research in areas of public interest. We are non-party political. Our results are set out objectively and accurately without normative judgement.

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All errors and omissions remain our own.

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October 2012

A note on terminology

This paper is the fifth in a series of country briefing papers released in 2012 about the online support of populist political parties and street-based groups in Europe. These papers are based on a dataset of approximately 10,667 Facebook supporters of these ‘nationalist populist’ parties in 11 European countries, which was published in the Demos report *The New Face of Digital Populism*, released in November 2011.¹ Further papers will be released throughout 2012.

Throughout this paper, we refer to two primary datasets by the following terminology:

- *CasaPound Facebook supporters*: The primary data source used in this report is a survey of 423 Facebook supporters of CasaPound Italia, collected by Demos during July and August 2011. All references to CasaPound supporters refer to this group unless otherwise stated. CasaPound officially changed its name to ‘CasaPound Italia’ in 2008, but for the purposes of this report we will refer to the movement as ‘CasaPound’.
- *Populist parties and movements (PPAMs)*: In order to draw comparisons between CasaPound Facebook supporters and the Facebook supporters of nationalist populist parties elsewhere in Europe, throughout this paper we refer to the data set collected for *The New Face of Digital Populism*. This includes 10,667 Facebook supporters of nationalist populist parties and movements in 11 Western European countries. We refer to these as PPAMs throughout.

We also draw on European-wide survey data from Eurobarometer surveys and the *European Values Study* to make comparisons where possible. These studies are cited where relevant below.

Executive summary

The last decade has witnessed a growth in nationalist populist parties and movements in many countries in Western Europe. The majority of these parties and movements are defined by their opposition to immigration and multiculturalism, and concern for protecting national and European culture. On economic policy, they are often vocal critics of globalisation and the effects of international capitalism on workers' rights. This is combined with 'anti-establishment' rhetoric used to appeal to those who are disillusioned with mainstream political parties, the media and government. Often called 'populist extremist parties' or 'the new right', these parties do not fit easily into the traditional political divides.

One of the most difficult to classify of these groups is the neo-fascist political and cultural movement CasaPound, which was originally founded in Italy in 2003 but was formalised in 2008 under the name CasaPound Italia. In this report we refer to the group under its old name, CasaPound.

CasaPound's ideas, policy positions and rhetoric are grounded in the social legislation of Italian Fascism of the 1930s and 1940s. In line with a long tradition developed in the Italian and French far-right ideological debate,² the political message of CasaPound is built on a so-called 'metapolitical' view of fascism, that sees fascist ideas as beyond the traditional left-right political categories.³

Unlike other far-right movements and parties in Europe for which immigration is the key issue, CasaPound's policy positions cover a range of economic and social areas. Its primary concern, which is at the centre of its name, symbol and activities, is the 'housing right' for Italian citizens. CasaPound's discourse also emphasises state sovereignty,

support for public control of the banks and the protection of small enterprises, and opposition to globalisation.⁴ While its supporters reference and oppose immigration and multiculturalism, their arguments against immigration are unconventional compared with other far-right-wing organisations (for example, they argue that immigration is bad for the immigrants themselves, as it is a form of ‘modern slavery’).

CasaPound emphasises modes of direct activism (for example, organising street protests, demonstrative actions, political campaigns and street marches) over more formal methods of political engagement. The group’s political campaigns have aimed to initiate laws, promote referenda and directly influence the national political debate over different topics related to housing, Italian workers, the public austerity programme and the importance of the traditional family unit. The group also promotes and organises cultural and sport activities that are aimed at the militants and core sympathisers of the movement.

As with other far-right groups, the current economic crisis in Europe — and the difficult position of Italy in the crisis — has provided CasaPound with fertile ground for spreading its ideas. The crisis has allowed the movement to strengthen its criticisms of international capitalism as well as eurozone fiscal policy. It has also argued against the weakening of the nation state and the increasing power of unelected technocrats.

Events in 2011 and 2012 have reflected negatively on CasaPound and underline the potentially violent nature of the movement or those affiliated with it. In December 2011, a CasaPound sympathiser (renamed by the newspapers ‘the Italian Breivik’) killed two Senegalese street vendors and wounded three others before killing himself in Florence. Very recently, in July 2012, CasaPound was again at the centre of the political debate for the aggression by one of its militants against the artistic director of a futuristic festival in Viterbo.⁵

This report presents the results of a survey of 423 responses from Facebook fans of CasaPound. It includes data on who they are, what they think, and what motivates them to

shift from virtual to real-world activism.

In July 2011 we targeted adverts at individuals who were supporters of three CasaPound-related groups on Facebook. On clicking the advert, individuals were redirected to a survey, which they were invited to complete. The survey and adverts were presented in Italian, and were then translated back into English for the purposes of this report. The data were then weighted in order to improve the validity and accuracy of any inferences made about the online population. Although online recruitment in social research is widespread, self-select recruitment via social network sites brings novel challenges. Because this is an innovative research method, with both strengths and weaknesses, we have included a methodology section in an annex to this report.

Results

CasaPound’s support base cannot be adequately understood through Facebook alone, and many supporters are not on Facebook. The findings in this report refer specifically to CasaPound Facebook supporters — an important, but specific, sub-group of its overall support base. As we set out in the methodology, this study is more exploratory than comprehensive, but does shed important and useful light on this group; it is the first report, to our knowledge, that explores in depth the political and social views of CasaPound supporters. It is with these caveats that the results are presented.

- *CasaPound Facebook supporters are overwhelmingly male and generally quite young.* Nearly nine in ten (87 per cent) are male, which is the highest proportion out of all PPAMs included in our research; 62 per cent are between the ages of 16 and 30.
- *CasaPound Facebook supporters are willing and active demonstrators, but few describe themselves as formal members.* More than four in ten (44 per cent) reported attending or participating in a street demonstration or protest, which is

significantly higher than the PPAM average and the Italian public in general. However, only one in five reported being a formal member of CasaPound. This might reflect the wider appeal that CasaPound cultural activities hold for people, who might be inclined to ‘like’ CasaPound or attend an event, but not go so far as to join the group formally.

- *CasaPound Facebook supporters tend to be pessimistic about the effectiveness of politics, but are more optimistic than the average PPAM supporter.*
Again, more than four in ten (43 per cent) agreed with the statement that politics was an effective way to respond to their concerns, which was higher than the PPAM average of 35 per cent. CasaPound supporters were also more optimistic than the two other street-based movements we surveyed, the English Defence League and Bloc Identitaire.
- *CasaPound Facebook supporters’ top concerns were the economy and immigration, contrary to other PPAM supporters.*
CasaPound supporters were much more likely than the average PPAM supporter to be concerned about the economic situation, unemployment and corruption. Moreover, only 5 per cent cited Islamic extremism as a top concern, while Islamic extremism was the second most cited concern (at 25 per cent) across all of the PPAMs we surveyed.
- *In their own words, CasaPound supporters cited the group’s values and integrity rather than the protection of cultural identity.*
When asked why they supported CasaPound, supporters were less likely than supporters of other PPAMs to offer responses that were categorised as pertaining to ‘identity’ (6 per cent vs 18 per cent), ‘anti-Islam’ (0 per cent vs 10 per cent) and ‘anti-immigration’ (1 per cent vs 18 per cent); instead, they were more likely to cite the ‘integrity’ of the organisation (17 per cent vs 9 per cent).
- *CasaPound Facebook fans are no more pessimistic than the average Italian about whether Italy is on the right track or not.*

Both Facebook supporters of CasaPound and the Italian general public are very pessimistic about Italy’s future. The great majority (92 per cent) of CasaPound’s supporters disagreed either a little or entirely with the statement ‘Italy is on the right track’, but according to a Eurobarometer survey in 2011, only 8 per cent of the general public said that Italy was going in the right direction, while 65 per cent said the wrong direction and 21 per cent reported neither one nor the other.⁶

- *CasaPound Facebook supporters have very negative attitudes towards the European Union.*
Compared with the Italian general public, CasaPound supporters were significantly more likely to cite the following when asked about their views towards the European Union: loss of cultural and national identity (63 per cent vs only 12 per cent of the Italian general public); waste of money (48 per cent vs 16 per cent); bureaucracy (33 per cent vs 7 per cent); and not enough control at external borders (46 per cent vs 9 per cent).
- *CasaPound Facebook supporters have very low levels of trust in the government, the EU, political parties, trade unions and the press.*
Only 11 per cent of CasaPound Facebook supporters reported trusting the government (compared with 34 per cent of the Italian general public) and 15 per cent reported trusting the EU (compared with 52 per cent of the Italian general public). Of particular note is the remarkably low level of trust in the press—only 5 per cent had confidence in the press, compared with 25 per cent of Italians overall. Political parties also scored very low on the trust measure—just 8 per cent of CasaPound Facebook supporters trust them.

Implications

Our task in this report is to illuminate the phenomenon of online supporters of CasaPound and present the results objectively. We do not offer lengthy recommendations because formulating a response is a task for Italian citizens and politicians. This is perhaps a more difficult task given the fluid

and dynamic way many people now express their political preferences online, and the way social media allow for groups and individuals to network and mobilise faster than ever. We hope this research can inform that task.

What seems clear from our research is that CasaPound is appealing to a significant number of Italians — particularly young Italians — through a combination of right and left-wing ideology, symbols and methods. A number of young people view CasaPound's direct approach to politics — through street protests, occupying abandoned buildings and political stunts — and emphasis on culture and music as an exciting alternative to traditional politics.

Although CasaPound's Facebook supporters differ from supporters of other similar parties surveyed for this research (for example, on their emphasis on economics and housing as opposed to Islam and immigration), in many ways they have a good deal in common. They tend to be young, politically motivated men who have very low levels of trust in mainstream politics and mainstream institutions, such as the government, political parties, the EU and the press.

Maintaining or restoring trust in political institutions is an extremely important challenge for most of Western Europe. In our Europe-wide survey we found that online supporters of PPAMs who are also involved in offline politics appear to be more democratic, have more faith in politics, and are more likely to disavow violence than other supporters of PPAMs. While the causal relationship between these attitudes is not clear, there is still evidence to suggest that encouraging more people to become actively involved in political and civic life, no matter how detestable people find their views (assuming they are within the parameters of incitement of hatred and racism legislation), is an important way forward.

1 Background

CasaPound

The history of CasaPound can be traced back to 1997 when Gianluca Iannone, the future president of the group, helped start the rock band ZetaZeroAlfa (ZZA). ZZA wrote neo-fascist songs with titles like 'Red Roses from the Blackshirts'⁷ and found an audience among like-minded young people who did not feel represented by prominent right-wing parties, such as the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). MSI was formed in the 1940s by former supporters of Mussolini and later, in 1995, split into two separate factions: the more moderate Alleanza Nazionale, and the smaller, but radical, Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (MS-FT). In 2006, Iannone and his group (who were referring to themselves as CasaPound) decided to join MS-FT, but left in 2008 after Iannone was expelled following frictions between the party's rigid structure and his demand for flexibility.⁸

Following his departure from MS-FT, Iannone formally set up 'CasaPound Italia' as an extra-parliamentary 'social association' for disenfranchised, right-wing youths. However, the group had been organising demonstrations for years previously. In 2002, CasaPound occupied a state-owned building in Rome and established the so-called 'Casa Montag'. Initially, Casa Montag did not have a real political and communitarian aim but was rather a centre for people to meet, socialise, play music, and discuss political and social issues. In 2008 the group squatted another building in the centre of Rome, which now serves as its current official headquarters. These 'occupazioni non conformi' ('unconventional squats') functioned as community centres and served as the ideological pillars of the movement. The squatting of Casa Montag and subsequent building occupations had the primary goal of

hosting Italian families that lost their houses, and protesting against the rising rents in Rome and related real estate speculations: the group's slogan was 'rent is usury: stop the increasing costs of living'. This concern for housing is the core of CasaPound's ideology and policy, and is reflected in the group's name as well as its use of the turtle as its main logo: 'The turtle is one of the few living beings which is fortunate enough to have with them the house.'⁹

In addition to the Italian term for 'house', the name of the movement is an explicit reference to the American poet Ezra Pound, who adhered to the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (Italian Social Republic) and supported Mussolini. Ezra Pound's daughter, Mary De Rachewiltz, has repeatedly gone to court to try and stop CasaPound from using her father's name, claiming: '[CasaPound] are a nuisance.'¹⁰ Particularly influential to CasaPound is Pound's analysis and critiques against usury, capitalism and Marxism, in addition to his emphasis on the right to housing.¹¹ While CasaPound borrows a significant amount of its ideology from Italian Fascism, and the likes of Mussolini and Pound, it attempts to disassociate itself from anti-Semitism and racism.¹²

Is CasaPound a populist movement?

CasaPound is one of the more ambiguous of the far-right populist groups that we have surveyed as part of our Populism in Europe series. In the words of the group's founder, Gianluca Iannone, CasaPound seeks to transcend the traditional right-left-wing divide: according to Iannone, describing the group as 'right wing' is 'a bit restrictive'.¹³ Its ideology and approach to political engagement combines both left- and right-wing ideas and symbols. However, it is explicit and open about its support for Mussolini and Italian fascism of the 1940s. CasaPound's emphasis on nationalism, privileging ethnic Italians for welfare services and direct take-to-the-streets approach provide strong grounds for including it in our research into 'new right' European street-based movements.

The Italian press has referred to CasaPound as 'Third Millennium Fascists' — a term its members have come to use themselves — underlining their continuity with the past and their desire to resurrect fascist ideas and apply them to current social problems. According to their vice president, Simone Di Stefano, the group sees Mussolini as a 'point of reference, a vision of the state and the economy and the concept of sacrifice'.¹⁴ Its economic policy is heavily influenced by Mussolini and includes a strong belief in state interventionism, and an appeal to renationalise communications, transport, health and energy. However, CasaPound argues that Mussolini's racial laws were 'a mistake'. According to Di Stefano, '[CasaPound] believe in the national community and the Jews in Italy are part of that.'¹⁵

As mentioned above, CasaPound is also heavily influenced by Ezra Pound's criticism of usury and support for the right to housing. Iannone has called usury 'the worst thing... the head of the octopus... which creates unemployment, debt and threatens the future of our children.'¹⁶ CasaPound argues for a form of 'social mortgage' (*mutuo sociale*) — a housing policy that would guarantee all Italian workers the right to own a property: the right of home ownership is crucial to the movement's message. Alongside this, CasaPound believes in the 'traditional family' as the basic unit of the nation even if, officially, it is not homophobic. One example of this was the campaign entitled, '*Tempo di essere madri*' ('It's time to be mothers'), which advocated lowering the amount of working hours for mothers, without affecting their pay. It has also opposed Italy's austerity programme, most notably in the campaign '*Ferma Equitalia*' ('Stop Equitalia'). Equitalia is the public company in charge of the collection of taxes and the symbol of the austerity movement for Italians. It has been (and still is) at the heart of the Italian political debate after the introduction of the first austerity measures by the government of Mario Monti. Since the beginning of 2012, different bases of Equitalia have been the target of several bomb attacks by unknown political groups.

One distinguishing feature of CasaPound is its explicit emphasis on physical activity and confrontation. The function and importance of sport activities and physical

confrontation — more broadly conceived as a ‘cult of the body’ — is described in detail by Domenico di Tullio (the lawyer of CasaPound) in his novel *Nessun Dolore* (‘Painless’).¹⁷ CasaPound offers a range of sport activities to its core members and sympathisers, including trekking, speleology, rugby, combat (box and martial arts), parachuting, water polo, diving, horse-riding, motor-riding and hockey.¹⁸ One of the most well-known aspects of CasaPound supporters, which CasaPound defines as a ‘sport’, is the ‘*cinghiamattanza*’ or massacre belt that is often seen in the moshpits at ZZA gigs, where male participants whip each other with their belts often until bleeding.¹⁹ An example of this can be seen in the video for ZetaZeroAlfa’s song ‘Cinghiamattanza’ on YouTube.²⁰ The video includes references to *Fight Club*; according to Di Stefano, the practice is ‘a bit like *Fight Club*, a way to risk pain, to confront yourself in a way society does not allow.’²¹

As mentioned above, CasaPound combines traditional right- and left-wing concerns, approaches and symbols. For example, despite an open devotion to Mussolini, it regularly organises events to celebrate famous left-wingers such as Che Guevara or Peppino Impastato (a militant communist who died fighting against the mafia in Sicily). These ambiguities are also reflected in the group’s culture and music: the official radio station of the movement, Radio Bandiera Nera, broadcasts traditional right-wing music (like the singer Massimo Morselli) as well as the anarchist songs of Fabrizio De Andrè. The images used by the group include the so-called *fascio littorio* (the symbol of Mussolini’s ideology and regime), as well as posters of Corto Maltese or the leftist singer Rino Gaetano. These ambiguities also exist at the level of the political tactics: in contrast to other contemporary extreme-right groups — which rarely resorted to ‘squatting’ as a political practice — CasaPound made use of squatting — a traditional left-wing activist tactic — as the pillar of its political engagement.

CasaPound supporters say they are not ‘racist’, but are against immigration because of its impact on wages and houses; not anti-Semitic, but anti-Israel vis-à-vis Palestine; not homophobic, but supporters of the ‘traditional family’. The

ambiguity is symbolised by the location of CasaPound’s headquarters in Rome’s Chinatown. In Iannone’s opinion, this is what elevates CasaPound’s meta-politics above those of the English Defence League: ‘the EDL is going on the ground of the clash of civilization. For me and CasaPound, this provokes a kind of disgust.’²²

These ambiguities account for CasaPound’s appeal, particularly among young people, as they strive to appear as non-conformist as possible. CasaPound recommends to its core members ‘non-conformist authors’, ‘non-conformist music’, ‘non-conformist theatre’, ‘non-conformist events’ and so on. The anti-conformism is a strong pillar in the language of the organisation and it is fairly well known among the Italian audience: an Italian comedian, Caterina Guzzanti, created a caricature of the ideal-typical militant of CasaPound who uses the term ‘non-conformist’ gratuitously to comedic effect.

CasaPound’s approach also appears to help them maintain legitimacy ‘on the street’ and act as an interlocutor between Italian right-wing youth and the world of media and politics, especially on social issues. This strategy of ‘*entrismo*’ is common for the ‘plural right’, as groups can retain an outsider status, while still having the scope to influence institutions and policy.²³

While immigration is not portrayed as a priority for CasaPound, their rhetoric concerning this issue is similar to that of other far-right populist groups like the Danish People’s Party. However, CasaPound’s arguments against immigration are mainly economic in nature, as opposed to cultural, as is the case with the majority of other far-right populist groups. CasaPound argues that it is not against immigrants *per se*, but rather criticise immigration as a forced result of globalisation. They claim that globalisation creates a ‘*multirazzista*’ (multiracist) society, where the rising number of immigrants prevents the state from protecting their own citizens, leading to individual citizens’ rights being diminished.²⁴ Furthermore, they argue against immigration from the perspective of the immigrants themselves, arguing that it is ‘modern slavery’, which must be countered by ‘the people [remaining] masters in their own country’.²⁵

Organisational structure and approach

The most interesting feature of CasaPound is its approach to politics and non-conventional forms of engagement. Through music, sport, presentations and the sense of community created out of social spaces, CasaPound's central tenet is one of cultural production and social solidarity. It has established 15 libraries, 20 pubs and eight sporting associations to help build this solidarity, and offers opportunities for boxing, football, rugby and many other sports.²⁶ According to Iannone: 'politics for us is a community... it is fundamental to create a web of supporters, rather than focusing on elections'. By focusing on culture, social work and sport — rather than explicit politics — CasaPound has been able to widen its support base and strengthen collective social ties between members.²⁷

CasaPound also uses public 'showpiece' protests in order to get its message across. For example, it campaigned against rising house prices by hanging mannequins off bridges to represent the families strangled by mortgages, as well as invading the Big Brother house, claiming it represented 'an insult to those Italians who are victims of the housing crisis'.²⁸ As recently as 31 August 2012, CasaPound occupied the EU headquarters in Rome and dumped bags of coal in front of it, to express solidarity with Italian miners.²⁹

CasaPound also has a distinct youth wing that was founded in 2006 called Blocco Studentesco, which gained 11,000 votes in the last student elections in Rome.³⁰ Blocco Studentesco operates in high schools and lyceums, but mainly in universities. Blocco Studentesco devotes itself primarily to education policy, promoting public against private education, and is against the private funding of research, meritocracy, and any increase in the number (and amount) of scholarships.³¹ Blocco Studentesco was responsible for violent clashes in Piazza Navona, when — armed with batons covered in Italian flags — its supporters incited riots against leftist students in October 2009.³²

CasaPound and social media

As an organisation with a strong youth following and an emphasis on unconventional forms of political engagement, CasaPound is expert in the use of social media. It uses social media to garner support and help appeal to a young demographic. The language they use tends to be based on slogans, incitements and abstract concepts, rather than articulated ideological positions. This is exemplified through their use of music and in particular the music of ZZA. They use self-produced media innovatively, and run an online radio, an online TV station, two magazines, one main website and dozens of satellite websites. They have also held over 150 conferences throughout Italy and use cutting-edge graphic design.³³

At the time of writing (summer 2012), CasaPound Italia has 2,380 followers on Twitter; on Facebook, CasaPound Italia had 25,361 'likes' and ZetaZeroAlfa had 11,462 'likes'. The CasaPound leader, Gianluca Iannone, had 11,692 'likes', and the website claims the movement has 4,000 official members and thousands more supporters across the country.

Conclusion

CasaPound is one of the more interesting and ambiguous populist groups to emerge in Europe in the past five years. It has a 'cool', charismatic leader, an emphasis on social collectivity, youth, fun, sports and community work, and has the veneer of progressivity. Yet, hidden behind this is the shadow of right-wing extremism: the group emphasises physical confrontation and the comments sections and forums of websites are full of extreme views on immigration, anti-Semitism, identity politics and nationalism.

2 Who are CasaPound Facebook supporters?

This chapter presents the socio-economic, age and gender data of CasaPound Facebook supporters. Where possible, we present this information in the context of broader Italian society and make comparisons to similar groups in Western Europe, as presented in the Demos report *The New Face of Digital Populism*.³⁴

Demographics and geography

Using Facebook's publicly available advertising tool it is possible to identify the age and gender of all Italian users of Facebook, as well as the basic demographic information of Facebook members who express a preference for CasaPound.

Across the country as a whole, Italian Facebook users are slightly more likely to be male than female (54 per cent vs 46 per cent, n=20,731,520), but among CasaPound's Facebook supporters, 87 per cent were male (n=16,200). This gender imbalance towards males is shared with other PPAMs across Western Europe, but CasaPound supporters were even more likely to be male than other PPAMs.

CasaPound supporters are generally fairly young: 62 per cent were aged 16–30, compared with an average of 63 per cent this age among PPAMs, and an average of 51 per cent of Facebook users across the general populations of all countries surveyed (see table 1).

Table 1 Age of CasaPound Facebook supporters (n=16,200)

Age group	CasaPound total (%, national statistics in brackets)	Western Europe PPAMs (%, national statistics in brackets)
16–20	25 (18)	32 (19)
21–25	22 (17)	19 (17)
26–30	15 (14)	12 (14)
31–40	20 (25)	17 (21)
41–50	11 (16)	12 (15)
51+	6 (10)	8 (13)

We cannot precisely pinpoint where CasaPound Facebook supporters are located, but we asked survey respondents what was the nearest large city to their location within 50km. Supporters live in a wide geographic area throughout Italy, particularly near Rome and Milan. More than a quarter (26 per cent) are from or around Rome, 19 per cent from Milan, 11 per cent from Bologna, 9 per cent from Naples and Torino, and 8 per cent in Florence.

Education and employment

The proportion of CasaPound Facebook respondents with only a school qualification or diploma is 62 per cent, which is significantly higher than the pan-European PPAM figure of 45 per cent. This may at least in part be due to the youth of CasaPound. However, a significant number of CasaPound's online supporters reported being either current or former university students: just under a quarter (22 per cent) said their highest level of education was university (table 2).

Table 2 Highest educational attainment of CasaPound Facebook supporters (n=423)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Diploma	61	71	66	42	62
Università	23	13	19	38	22
Qualifica professionale	10	14	10	17	11
Did not answer	6	2	5	3	5

CasaPound Facebook supporters were slightly more likely to be unemployed than the average Italian citizen (11 per cent vs 7.9 per cent when the survey was undertaken), but less likely to be unemployed than supporters of other PPAMs (14 per cent). However, given the high number of young people who completed this survey—and the levels of unemployment in Italy among under 30s, which according to ISTAT is 36 per cent for those between 15 and 24 years old—it is unlikely that they are more likely to be unemployed than the average for their age profile. As noted, a significant number of supporters under 30 were classified as students (35 per cent) (table 3).

Table 3 Employment status of CasaPound Facebook supporters (n=423) (national statistics in brackets)³⁵

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Employed	57	62	51	89	58
Unemployed	11	9	12	6	11 (7.9)
Student	29	25	35	0	29
Did not answer	3	4	2	5	2

Membership and involvement

To determine the extent to which CasaPound Facebook supporters are involved in offline activity, we asked respondents whether they were a formal member of CasaPound and whether they had participated in a demonstration or street protest in the past six months (table 4). As CasaPound is not a political party contesting elections, we did not ask online supporters if they voted for CasaPound. We did however ask them who they voted for in the last election (the list of parties we explicitly asked about included the *Il Popolo della Libertà* (PdL), *Partito Democratico* (PD), *Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro* (UDC), *Lega Nord* and *Italia dei Valori* (IdV)): just over a quarter reported voting for the People of Freedom Party of Silvio Berlusconi (PdL); 7 per cent voted for *Lega Nord*; 35 per cent selected the ‘other’ category; and almost 30 per cent reported not voting (which could include many of the younger supporters).

We found that, true to the direct action take-to-the-streets spirit of CasaPound’s methods, online supporters were significantly more likely than average PPAM supporters to have taken part in a street demonstration (43 per cent vs 26 per cent) (table 4). While data from the European Social Survey on this question does not include Italy, it seems reasonable to assume that the percentage of the Italian public who have participated in a street demonstration is significantly lower than 44 per cent. However, we know from the *European Values Study* that 9.4 per cent of the Italian population has ‘occupied factories or buildings’ before.³⁶

Interestingly, this high level of motivation to take to the streets does not extend to formal ‘membership’ of the movement. Only one in five supporters (20 per cent) said they were formal members of the movement (table 4), which is significantly lower than the PPAM average (32 per cent). This highlights the extent to which CasaPound can recruit peripheral supporters to street protests, often through the possibility of confrontation and excitement.

Table 4 Offline involvement of CasaPound Facebook supporters (n=423)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Formal members of CasaPound	20	19	21	18	20
Taken part in a march or demo last 6-12 months	45	34	46	31	43

3 Social and political concerns

We asked CasaPound Facebook supporters a number of questions about their social and political views, trust in people and political institutions, and opinions about the future for themselves and their country. Where possible, we compare results to a Eurobarometer survey and the *European Values Study*³⁷ in order to make meaningful comparisons with national level data. We also draw on comparisons with supporters of PPAMs throughout.

Top two biggest concerns

When asked to rank their top two social and political concerns from a list of 18 current issues, the most common responses from CasaPound Facebook supporters were about the economy and immigration. They were much more likely than the average PPAM supporter to be concerned about the economic situation (32 per cent vs 16 per cent), unemployment (24 per cent vs 13 per cent) and corruption (12 per cent vs 4 per cent) (table 5). They were also far less likely than the average PPAM supporter to be concerned with Islamic extremism (5 per cent vs 24 per cent). The fact that economic issues rank comparatively highly and Islamic extremism so lowly among the concerns of CasaPound supporters distinguishes them from the supporters of similar parties across Western Europe.

Table 5 The top two biggest concerns of CasaPound Facebook supporters (average PPAM score in brackets)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Economic situation	31	37	31	36	32 (16)
Immigration	27	25	28	20	26
Unemployment	24	27	25	22	24 (13)
Corruption	11	17	11	18	12 (4)
Rising prices	11	8	10	12	10

Politics and voting

We asked CasaPound Facebook supporters to tell us their views about the effectiveness of democracy in order to gauge the level of disillusionment they feel with mainstream political channels. In general, Facebook supporters of CasaPound are pessimistic about the effectiveness of politics, but are not too disillusioned to vote.

Only 16 per cent of CasaPound Facebook supporters agreed with the statement ‘it does not matter who you vote for’ (table 6), which is the same percentage as the PPAM average. Thus, CasaPound Facebook supporters are not too disproportionately bitter and disenchanted to vote when compared with supporters of PPAMs in other countries, although CasaPound is not a political party itself.

Table 6 Extent to which CasaPound Facebook supporters agree that it does not matter who you vote for (n=423)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Agree entirely	10	11	9	14	10
Agree a little	7	0	6	5	6
Indifferent*					13
Disagree a little	13	24	16	6	14
Disagree entirely	53	63	53	59	54

*Note: Overall, 13 per cent of respondents selected the response ‘indifferent’, while 3 per cent did not answer the question.

While, CasaPound Facebook supporters overall remain cynical about the extent to which politics is an effective means to respond to their concerns, they are more positive than the supporters on average of other PPAMs we surveyed: 43 per cent of supporters agreed with the statement ‘politics is an effective way to respond to my concerns’ compared with 35 per cent of supporters of other PPAMs (table 7). It is also worth noting that they are more optimistic than the supporters of the other street-based movements we surveyed: the English Defence League (of whom 35 per cent agreed with the statement) and the Bloc Identitaire (of whom only 20 per cent agreed with the statement).

Table 7 Extent to which CasaPound Facebook supporters agree that politics is an effective way to respond to their concerns (n=423)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Agree entirely	17	9	15	21	16
Agree a little	27	26	28	24	27
Indifferent*					12
Disagree a little	14	22	14	19	15
Disagree entirely	23	29	25	19	24

*Note: Overall, 12 per cent of respondents selected the response ‘indifferent’, while 6 per cent did not answer the question.

Personal and national optimism

The majority of CasaPound Facebook supporters were highly pessimistic about their country's future: 83 per cent disagreed either a little or entirely with the statement 'Italy is on the right track', while 8 per cent agreed with the statement (table 8). When compared with results given in the Eurobarometer survey of autumn 2011, which asked a similar question, we see that Facebook supporters of CasaPound are no more or less pessimistic than the general public: both are very pessimistic about Italy's future. Only 8 per cent of respondents to the Eurobarometer (autumn 2011) question 'at the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in Italy?' said it was going in the right direction, while 65 per cent said the wrong direction and 21 per cent reported neither one nor the other.³⁸ These high levels of pessimism mirror those of supporters of other PPAMs (of whom only 10 per cent agree that their country is on the right track).

Table 8 Extent to which CasaPound Facebook supporters agree that Italy is on the right track (n=423)

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Agree entirely	2	5	1	5	2
Agree a little	6	11	6	9	6
Indifferent*					2
Disagree a little	18	6	16	17	16
Disagree entirely	66	74	70	56	67

*Note: Overall, 2 per cent of respondents selected the response 'indifferent', while 7 per cent did not answer the question.

When asked whether they thought their own life would be better or worse in 12 months' time, CasaPound Facebook supporters were slightly more optimistic than the PPAM average (29 per cent of CasaPound supporters thought their lives would be better, compared with 27 per cent of PPAM supporters). Interestingly, compared with the Italian general public, CasaPound Facebook supporters were more likely than

the Italian public to think their personal situation would change (either for the better or the worse). Almost a third of CasaPound supporters thought their life would be better, while another third thought it would be worse and a little over a third (39 per cent) thought it would stay the same. Members of the Italian public, on the other hand, were less certain either way—with 55 per cent reporting it would stay the same compared with about a fifth thinking it would be better and a fifth thinking it would be worse (table 9).

Table 9 CasaPound Facebook supporters' personal outlook for the next 12 months (n=423) (national statistics in brackets)³⁹

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Better	30	26	33	14	29 (19)
Worse	28	28	27	35	28 (18)
Same	39	39	38	45	39 (55)

Note: Overall, 4 per cent of respondents did not answer this question.

Attitudes toward the European Union

Consistent with the majority of respondents from PPAMs in other Western European countries, CasaPound Facebook supporters are more likely to have negative opinions of the EU. As seen in table 10, compared with the Italian general public, when asked about their attitudes towards the EU, CasaPound supporters were significantly more likely to cite loss of cultural and national identity (63 per cent vs only 12 per cent of the Italian general public); waste of money (48 per cent vs 16 per cent); bureaucracy (33 per cent vs 7 per cent); and not enough control at external borders (46 per cent vs 9 per cent).

Compared with supporters of other PPAMs, CasaPound supporters were more likely to cite the loss of cultural and national identity (56 per cent was the PPAM average), but less likely to cite waste of money and not enough control at external borders (59 per cent and 58 per cent were the PPAM average scores, respectively) (table 10).

Table 10 CasaPound supporters' attitudes towards the European Union (n=423) (national statistics in brackets) ⁴⁰

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Under 30 (%)	Over 30 (%)	Total (%)
Loss of cultural and national identity ⁴¹	62	67	64	55	63 (12)
Waste of money	47	50	49	41	48 (16)
Not enough control at external borders	47	46	47	42	46 (9)
Bureaucracy	34	29	33	34	33 (7)
Freedom to work, study and travel ⁴²	32	32	32	28	32 (26)

Trust in institutions and people

Trust in other people, as well as political and social institutions, is generally considered to be an important indicator of social capital in democratic societies. CasaPound Facebook supporters display very low levels of trust towards most political and social institutions compared with their national compatriots (table 11).

Only 11 per cent reported trusting the government and 15 per cent reported trusting the EU compared with 34 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively, of the Italian general public. Of particular note is the remarkably low level of trust in the press – only 5 per cent had confidence in the press, compared with 25 per cent of Italians overall. Political parties also scored very low on the trust measure – just 8 per cent tend to trust them. Nevertheless, a high proportion of supporters think it is important to vote (see above).

Trust in institutions is also low for CasaPound supporters compared with the average of other PPAM supporters. They have lower levels of trust towards the justice and legal system and government than the average for other PPAM supporters, with 11 per cent of CasaPound supporters trusting both institutions, compared with 30 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, of other PPAM supporters.

Similarly to other PPAMs across Europe, the army is the only institution in which CasaPound supporters have comparable levels of trust to the general public, with 73 per cent of CasaPound supporters trusting it compared to 78 per cent of the general Italian public.

Table 11 Extent to which CasaPound supporters and the Italian general public trust institutions (n=423)

Institution	Tend to trust		Tend not to trust	
	CasaPound supporters (%)	Italian public (%) ⁴³	CasaPound supporters (%)	Italian public (%)
Army	73	78	22	28
Police	49	68	46	34
Religious institutions	25	42	69	43
European Union	15	52	80	38
Justice and the legal system	11	X	85	52
Government	11	34	85	70
Political parties	8	24	87	77
Trade unions	7	X	88	56
The press ⁴⁴	5	25	87	51

Asked whether they are inclined to trust other people in general, 26 per cent of CasaPound Facebook supporters said they thought that most people can be trusted (table 12). This is around the average figure for PPAM supporters (33 per cent), and for the Italian general public (31 per cent).

Table 12 **Extent to which CasaPound supporters agree that people can be trusted (n=423) (national statistics in brackets)** ⁴⁵

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Over 30 (%)	Under 30 (%)	Total (%)
In general most people can be trusted	27	24	24	37	26 (31)
In general most people cannot be trusted	57	73	61	46	59 (69)
Indifferent or do not know*	16	3	15	17	11

*Note: Overall, 11 per cent of respondents selected the response 'indifferent', while 4 per cent did not answer the question.

Supporters of CasaPound were most likely to cite ‘group values’ as the main reason for joining the movement; just over half did so. This tends to be a very general affirmation that the individual agrees with CasaPound’s position. Responses in this category suggest that supporters are not just ‘protesting’ against other parties, but rather have a firm sense of identifying with the movement itself.

Beyond that, CasaPound supporters were less likely than supporters of other PPAMs to cite identity (6 per cent vs 18 per cent), anti-Islam (0 per cent vs 10 per cent) and anti-immigration (1 per cent vs 18 per cent). They were equally likely to cite disillusionment, and more likely to cite ‘integrity’ (17 per cent vs 9 per cent).

Group values

Respondents were classified in this category when they had cited, in general terms, the values, principles, norms, beliefs, aspirations or ideas of CasaPound as reasons for supporting the party. This was the most popular set of answers, with 52 per cent of responses qualifying for this classification. Examples include a general support for what the party stands for overall, with many respondents citing both the ideals of CasaPound as well as their practical approach towards achieving them:

*Because of their originality of ideas, their integrity and spontaneity, their true social commitment — because of their concrete helpfulness towards those in need. Therefore: they don't just do ‘media walks’ but act truly. They make facts and not only words. The present Italian political system is obsolete.*⁴⁷

*Because it's the only movement that is really outside the schemes and that works in a concrete and disinterested way for a better world.*⁴⁸

*Many of my political ideals are like those of CasaPound.*⁴⁹

*I think it's the only one that is really close to my ideologies. I'm a Mussolinian.*⁵⁰

Integrity

The second most popular response (not including ‘other’) was ‘integrity’. Responses were placed in this category when respondents had explicitly mentioned that CasaPound could be trusted to speak the truth or believed that the group was consistent in its convictions. Many respondents spoke admiringly of their honest, straightforward approach:

*In the name of ideas and ideals that are not for sale; because CasaPound truly and actively participates in political life, because its politics [are] made by young people for the sake of young people, but most of all for the sake of Italy and not to the detriment of it; (because CasaPound) is born and acts on the streets and not on armchairs. But most of all because my ideals are not for sale and CasaPound does not stoop to compromises, at least for now!!!*⁵¹

*Because I think that it's a political movement for people created by people.*⁵²

Disillusionment

Disillusionment with mainstream political parties and institutions is often posited as a reason for the popularity of PPAMs. Responses were flagged for this category when they expressed disenchantment with current institutions, parties and ideas. Many respondents felt, in particular, that CasaPound was the only movement currently generating new and creative political approaches:

*Because it's the last evidence of a social right-wing.*⁵³

*Because in such a depressing Italian panorama, they are the only ones who, from time to time, manage to face problems with a creative approach.*⁵⁴

*CasaPound is the only revolutionary answer to the political dullness of these days. It's life in a land of dead people!*⁵⁵

Other

The 'other' category was particularly popular for supporters of CasaPound, and suggests that the reasons people get involved is extremely varied. Examples ranged from curiosity to social interaction:

*Love for nature and animals.*⁵⁶

*Out of curiosity.*⁵⁷

*Because it's the best development that fascism has had since the 1920s.*⁵⁸

*Because it's an association that doesn't have prejudices, it's not racist, it has good proposals and I find myself at ease with its militant components.*⁵⁹

Annex: Methodology

The methodology employed for the collection and analysis of this data is set out in detail in *The New Face of Digital Populism*.⁶⁰ We therefore limit this section to CasaPound specific issues.

For *The New Face of Digital Populism* we collected data from Facebook supporters of nationalist populist political parties or street-based movements drawn mainly across Western Europe. We ran a Facebook advert targeted at supporters of all parties and/or party leaders' Facebook pages over the summer of 2011. Each advert invited Facebook supporters of the group in question to click on a link, which redirected them to our online survey.

Our campaign ran over a three-month period, with no single advert being available for more than six weeks. On clicking the advert, participants were redirected to a digital survey page hosted by the website Survey Monkey, which set out the details and purpose of the survey along with an invitation to take part. The size of target population varied from country to country, depending on the size of the Facebook membership of the group in question. Table 14 gives the details of the data collected for the survey on CasaPound.

Table 14 Data collected for survey on CasaPound

Date of survey	No of specific Facebook interest groups targeted	Size of population targeted	No of unique impressions	Total Facebook link clicks	Total survey responses	Final data set
Casa- Pound Jul-Aug 2011	3	16,200	2,203,079	1,803	478	423

The ‘unique impressions’ column lists the number of unique occasions the advert was displayed on the target audience’s Facebook sidebar. The click per impression ratio was relatively stable, at just under 0.1 per cent. The click to survey completion ratio was around 26 per cent. This non-response rate may be the result of some respondents deciding not to take part in the survey on reading the consent form. Our method to correct for non-response rates is discussed in the full methodology given in *The New Face of Digital Populism*. The size of the final data set was lower than the number of surveys completed because we removed incomplete surveys.

Data analysis and limitations

We decided to use Facebook principally because the site is a popular mode of communication for supporters of many of the groups and parties we surveyed.

In order to increase the validity of our results, we applied a post-stratification weight, using the known demographics of the online population to correct the sample’s balance of gender and age in line with the makeup of the group as a whole. To do this, we gathered background data on the composition of CasaPound’s Facebook group membership using Facebook’s advertising tool (which is freely available for any user to access). We gave each participant a weighted value on the basis of the prevalence of their demographic profile (age and gender) in the population at large. Although we achieved demographic representativeness — which can correct for systematic age or gender related bias — it is possible certain attitudinal self-selection biases exist, because this was a self-select survey. It is with this caveat that the results are presented.

While the use of a post-stratification weight is an improvement on the use of unweighted data, it cannot be automatically claimed as a reliable basis for making inferences about the offline group. The use of social network surveys is subject to a well-known technical and methodological critique focusing on the nature of self-entry interest classification on Facebook, the lack of content reliability on social networking sites, and the

lack of internet access and usage in the broader population, all of which are capable of biasing the results of the survey.

Therefore, we take care not to claim at any point in the text that our sample represents or reflects the official views of the group, or indeed of its offline membership.

Throughout the paper, we compare the CasaPound Facebook survey results to the pan-European study results presented in *The New Face of Digital Populism*.

In the background chapter, we undertook a short literature review of Italian and English language material.

In chapter 2, the gender and age of each of the groups in question were collected directly from the publicly available Facebook group level data using the advertising tool mentioned above. This provides the most accurate results on the Facebook membership for each group. Results related to education, employment and involvement in the group are based on our weighted results.

In chapter 3 we give weighted results and provide comparative data where they are available from the 2008 *European Values Study* or a Eurobarometer survey. Where the questions are not worded identically, or there were additional answer options, this is expressly identified.

Chapter 4 is based on the analysis of an open text question about why individuals joined CasaPound. This open question allowed respondents to answer as they wished. An Italian translator coded the responses. We reviewed the content of the responses and created nine main categories for the responses, with a tenth category ‘other’. Responses could fall into multiple categories. We removed data relating to respondents who were not supporters of CasaPound.

Ethical considerations

As this research focused on adolescents over the age of 16, no Criminal Records Bureau check was necessary; consequently, none was sought. Similarly, it was not necessary for us to obtain informed consent from participant parents or guardians as Social Research Association ethics guidelines suggest

such clearance should not be sought and is not required where investigating participants aged over 16. We sought and gained individual informed consent from all participants, who agreed to a consent statement presented at the start of the survey — failure to sign acceptance of this statement prevented them from participating further in the research. Although we targeted the survey only at people aged over 16, a small number of individuals stated they were under 16 when responding to the question about age. We immediately deleted data relating to these people.

We stated on the Facebook advert that we were representing Demos, and were undertaking a survey of Facebook members of the group in question. On clicking the advertisement link, the participant was redirected to the survey landing page. On that page we pointed out that leaders of each group had been informed about the survey. Before running the survey, Demos emailed each of the groups in question to let them know about the survey. On the landing page we also stated that we would be letting the party in question know about the results before they were made public. Before release, we emailed the parties and groups in question with the results where they pertained to their members.

We did not brief participants fully on the study's aims before completing the survey in order to avoid the exhibition of demand characteristics. We provided only a broad overview of the research at the start of the survey, and gave more detailed information on the project's aims only after the last question had been completed. We provided the contact details of the lead researcher to all participants to cover the eventuality that they had questions not covered by the debrief notes, but few participants made use of it.

We told participants that they could withdraw from the research at any time before completion, as part of a preface presented alongside the consent statement. Later we reminded them of this right when they completed the survey via a paragraph in the debrief notes, offering the possibility of immediate withdrawal via a check box. No participants opted to withdraw in this way.

We observed ethical and legal considerations relevant to the storage and handling of data; all data were kept digitally encoded in an anonymous format, and we did not store any data capable of identifying any participants.

We prepared for the eventuality that the research uncovered information with serious security implications, particularly relating to participant support for violence; we took precautions to absolve the researcher of moral responsibility towards the disclosure of information to agents of the criminal justice system by ensuring that the survey did not ask for precise details of acts of violence or illegal political protest. In order to preserve participant confidentiality (the deliberate exclusion by data capture systems of IP addresses) we removed from the researcher the means to identify and incriminate individual participants.

Notes

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- 2 For an overview of this debate, see M Tarchi, *Fascismo, Teorie, Interpretazioni e Modelli*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2003.
- 3 See D Di Nunzio and E Toscano, *Dentro e Fuori CasaPound: Capire il fascismo del Terzo Millennio*, Rome: Armando Editore, 2011, p 95; A Scianca, *Riprendersi Tutto*, Milan: Società Editrice Barbarossa, 2011, p 21.
- 4 CasaPound, 'Il Programma', www.casapounditalia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=67 (accessed 18 Jul 2012).
- 5 The reference here is to the slapping of Umberto Boccioni (among the leaders of the futuristic movement in Italy) by Ardengo Soffici (who wrote a very harsh article against the Futurists' Paris exhibition of 1912).
- 6 European Commission, 'Public opinion in the European Union', *Standard Eurobarometer 76*, autumn 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb76/eb76_tablesresults_en.pdf (accessed 24 Sep 2012) (*Standard Eurobarometer 76*).
- 7 See 'Disperato Amore', www.zetazeroalfa.org (accessed 19 Sep 2012).

- 8 There is an ongoing project on this subject from a group of researchers at the European University Institute and University of Florence. For more information please contact caterina.froio@eui.eu.
- 9 See the CasaPound Italia website, www.casapounditalia.org (accessed 19 Sep 2012).
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- 14 T Kington, 'Italy's fascists stay true to Mussolini's ideology', *Guardian*, 6 Nov 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/06/italy-fascists-true-mussolini-ideology (accessed 3 Sep 2012).
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 C Liddell, 'In the house of Pound', *Alternative Right*.
- 17 D Di Tullio, *Nessun Dolore*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2010.
- 18 CasaPound Italia, 'Sport', www.casapounditalia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=529&Itemid=93 (accessed 22 Jul 2012).
- 19 C Liddell, 'In the house of Pound'.
- 20 See 'Cinghiamattanza — Video Ufficiale Zetazeroalfa', www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYwlpDYGk&feature=related (accessed 19 Sep 2012).
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- 22 Quoted in Liddell, 'In the house of Pound'.
- 23 Moyote Project, 'Casa Pound and the new radical right in Italy', libcom.org, 28 Jun 2011, <http://libcom.org/library/casa-pound-new-radical-right-italy> (accessed 19 Sep 2012).
- 24 'CasaPound Italy FAQ', CasaPoundItalia.org, no date, www.casapounditalia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=40&Itemid=66 (accessed 3 Sep 2012).
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- 26 Speech by leader of CasaPound at national celebration of movement, http://www.casapounditalia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2845:roma-alla-festa-nazionale-casapound-presenta-il-programma-per-la-capitale-sgarbi-cpi-e-lunica-speranza&catid=1:ultime&Itemid=169 (accessed 4 Oct 2012)
- 27 Liddell, 'In the house of Pound'.

- 28 Moyote Project, 'CasaPound and the new radical right in Italy'.
- 29 'Casapound, blitz per il carbone italiano', *Corriere Della Sera*, 31 Aug 2012, http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/12_agosto_31/casapound-blitz-via-ivnovembre-carbone-difesa-2111636181676.shtml (accessed 3 Sep 2012).
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- 34 Bartlett et al, *The New Face of Digital Populism*.
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- 36 Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, *European Values Study*, 2008, <http://zocat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp?object=http://zocat.gesis.org/obj/fCatalog/Catalog5> (accessed 19 Sep 2012).
- 37 Ibid; *Standard Eurobarometer 76*.
- 38 *Standard Eurobarometer 76*.
- 39 Respondents to the Demos survey and *Standard Eurobarometer 76* (autumn 2011) were asked: 'Will the next 12 months be better, worse or the same when it comes to your life generally?'
- 40 Respondents to the Demos survey and *Standard Eurobarometer 76* (autumn 2011) were asked: 'What does the European Union mean to you personally?' Both sets of respondents were allowed to select multiple options.
- 41 The Demos survey figure provided is the percentage of respondents who selected the option 'loss of cultural and national identity'. The *Standard Eurobarometer 76* (autumn 2011) figure provided is the percentage of respondents who selected the option 'loss of cultural identity'.
- 42 The Demos survey figure provided is the percentage of respondents who selected either the option 'Freedom of travel' or the option 'Study and work anywhere in the EU'. The *Standard Eurobarometer 76* (autumn 2011) figure provided is the percentage of respondents who selected the option 'Freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU'.
- 43 Demos survey respondents were asked: 'To what extent do you trust the following: [institution]?' Eurobarometer respondents were asked: 'For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust [institution]'. In each case respondents selected either 'tend to trust' or 'tend not to trust'. The percentages cited for 'Government', 'European Union', 'Political parties', and 'The press' are derived from the Eurobarometer survey in autumn 2011 (*Standard Eurobarometer 76*). The percentages cited for all other institution are derived from the Eurobarometer survey in autumn 2010, as they do not appear in the later survey.

- 44 Demos survey respondents were asked whether they trusted ‘The mainstream media’. Eurobarometer respondents were asked whether they trusted ‘The press’.
- 45 Demos survey respondents were asked: ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “In general, most people cannot be trusted.”’ Respondents were able to select any one of the following options: ‘Agree entirely’, ‘Agree a little’, ‘Disagree entirely’, ‘Disagree a little’ or ‘Neutral’. The Demos survey figures provided are the percentages of respondents who selected ‘disagree entirely’ or ‘disagree a little’, or selected ‘agree entirely’ or ‘agree a little’. The national statistics provided are drawn from the *European Values Study* in 2008. Respondents who took part in the EVS were asked: ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?’ They could select any one of the following options: ‘Most people can be trusted’, ‘Cannot be too careful’ or ‘Don’t know’. The EVS figures provided are the percentages of respondents who selected ‘Most people can be trusted’ and ‘Cannot be too careful’.
- 46 Responses could be categorised under multiple categories: the categories are not mutually exclusive.
- 47 *‘Originalità di idee — sincerità e spontaneità- vero senso sociale- disponibilità concreta in chi ha bisogno. Quindi: no passeggiate mediatiche ma realtà. Fatti non parole. L’attuale sistema politico italiano è obsoleto.’*
- 48 *‘Perchè è l’unico movimento realmente fuori dagli schemi che lavora in modo concreto e disinteressato per un mondo migliore.’*
- 49 *‘Molti miei ideali politici sono uguali a quelli di CasaPound.’*
- 50 *‘Credo che sia l’unica che e’ molto vicina alle mie ideologie. sono mussoliniano.’*
- 51 *‘Per idee ed ideali che non sono in vendita, perchè partecipa attivamente e veramente alla vita politica, perchè è una politica di giovani, per i giovani, ma soprattutto per l’Italia e non a discapito della stessa che nasce ed agisce nelle strade e non sulle poltrone; ma soprattutto, perchè i miei ideali non sono in vendita e casapound non scende a compromessi, o almeno per ora!!!’*
- 52 *‘Perche ritengo che sia un movimento sociopolitico creato dal popolo.’*
- 53 *‘Ultima testimonianza di una Destra sociale.’*
- 54 *‘Perchè nel deprimente panorama italiano sono gli unici che, di tanto in tanto, riescono ad affrontare le questioni con un approccio creativo.’*
- 55 *‘CasaPound Italia è l’unica risposta rivoluzionaria al grigiore politico dei nostri giorni. E’ vita, in un mondo di morti!’*
- 56 *‘Amore per natura e animali.’*
- 57 *‘Per curiosità.’*
- 58 *‘Perche è la migliore evoluzione del fascismo dagli anni 20 ad oggi.’*
- 59 *‘Perchè è un’associazione libera da pregiudizi ,non è razzista, ha buone proposte e mi trovo bene con i ragazzi militanti.’*
- 60 Bartlett et al, *The New Face of Digital Populism*.

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Nationalist populist parties and movements are growing in support throughout Europe. These groups are known for their opposition to immigration, their ‘anti-establishment’ views and their concern for protecting national culture. Their rise in popularity has gone hand-in-hand with the advent of social media, and they are adept at using new technology to amplify their message, recruit and organise.

One of the most difficult to classify of these groups is the neo-fascist political and cultural movement CasaPound. CasaPound emphasises modes of direct activism (for example, organising street protests, demonstrative actions, political campaigns and street marches) over more formal methods of political engagement. Unlike other far-right movements and parties in Europe for which immigration is the key issue, CasaPound’s policy positions cover a range of economic and social areas with its primary concern being the ‘housing right’ for Italian citizens.

This report presents the results of a survey of Facebook fans of CasaPound. It includes data on who they are, what they think, and what motivates them to shift from virtual to real-world activism. It also compares them with other similar parties in Western Europe, shedding light on their growing online support, and the relationship between their online and offline activities. This report is the sixth in a series of country specific briefings about the online support of populist parties in 12 European countries, based on our survey of 13,000 Facebook fans of these groups.

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