

*IREC & IPLMS Conference 2026, Oslo*

**INEQUALITY,  
THE FAR RIGHT AND  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

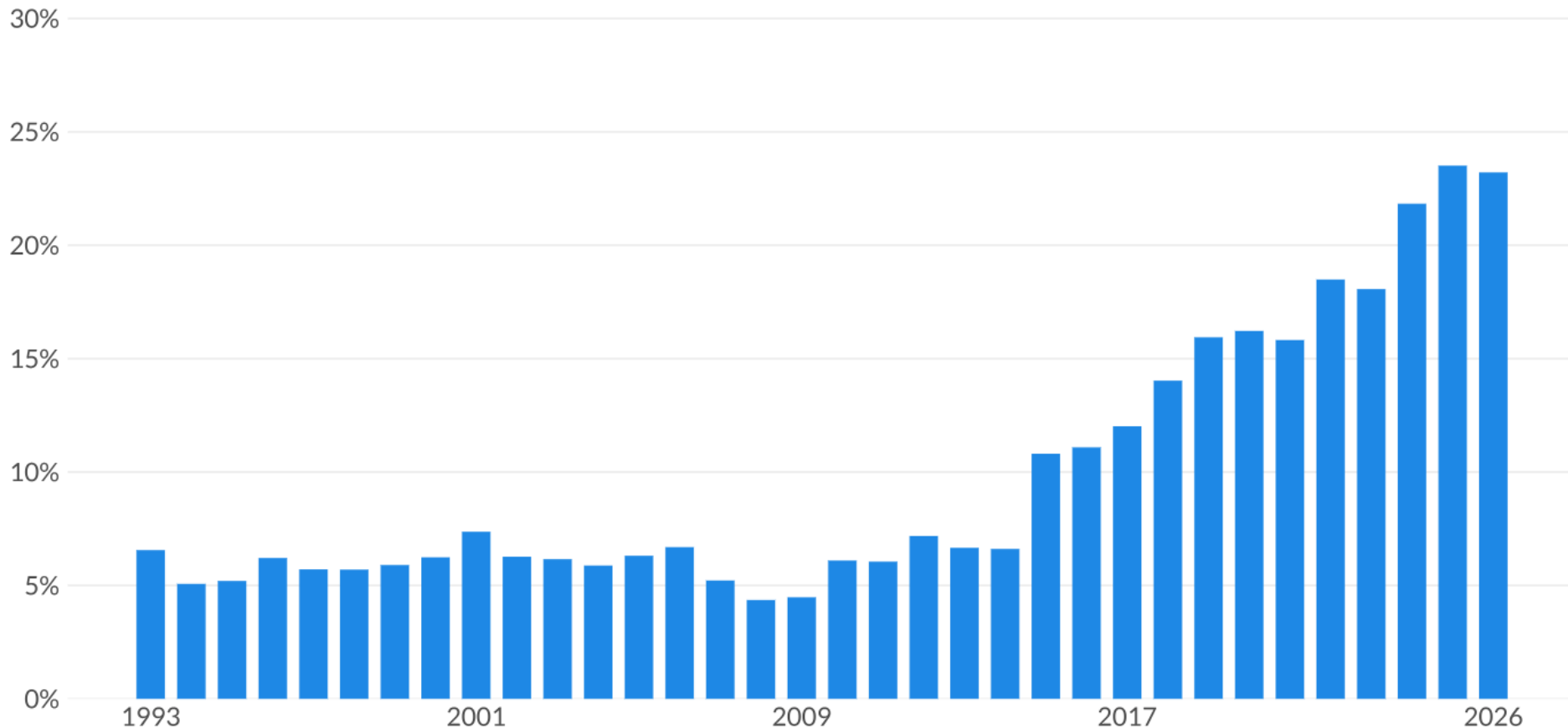
**Richard Hyman**

# OVERVIEW

- the advance of the far right
- strong support in manual working class
- social and employment policies of far right
- the roots of neo-fascism : insecurity, marginalisation and inequality
- what is to be done ?

# THE ADVANCE OF THE FAR RIGHT

Far-Right (Populist)\* Vote-Share

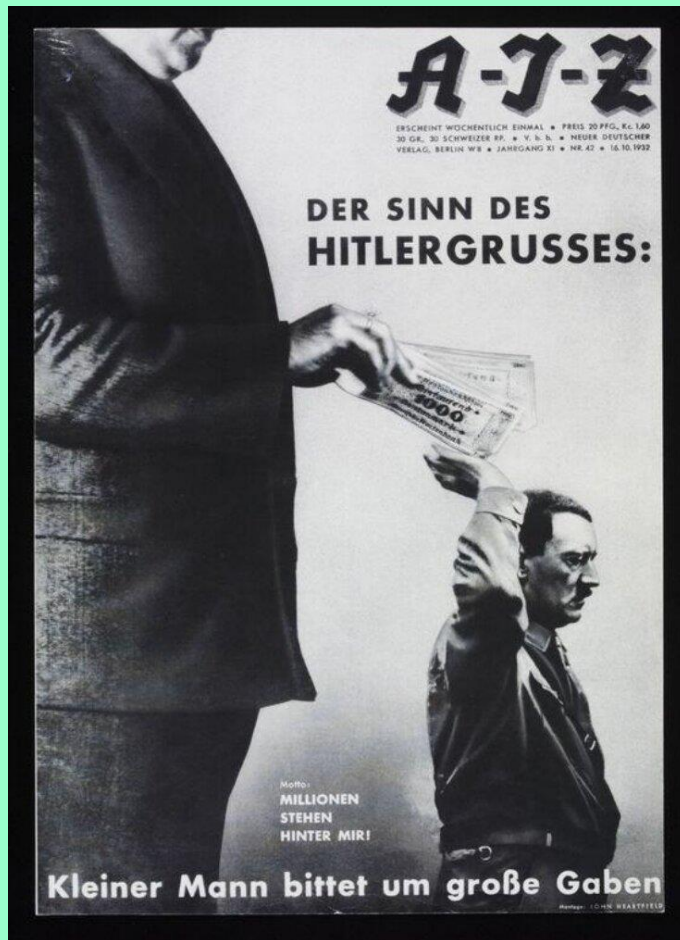


Note. \*Vote shares of far-right populist and far-right parties in 31 European countries, weighted by population size.

Source: **Matthijs Rooduijn** and **popu-list.org**

# THE ADVANCE OF THE FAR RIGHT

- electoral advance of far-right parties across Europe
- increasingly present in national and local government (sometimes in control)
- third largest group in European Parliament
- sophisticated use of social media
- substantial funding from capitalists



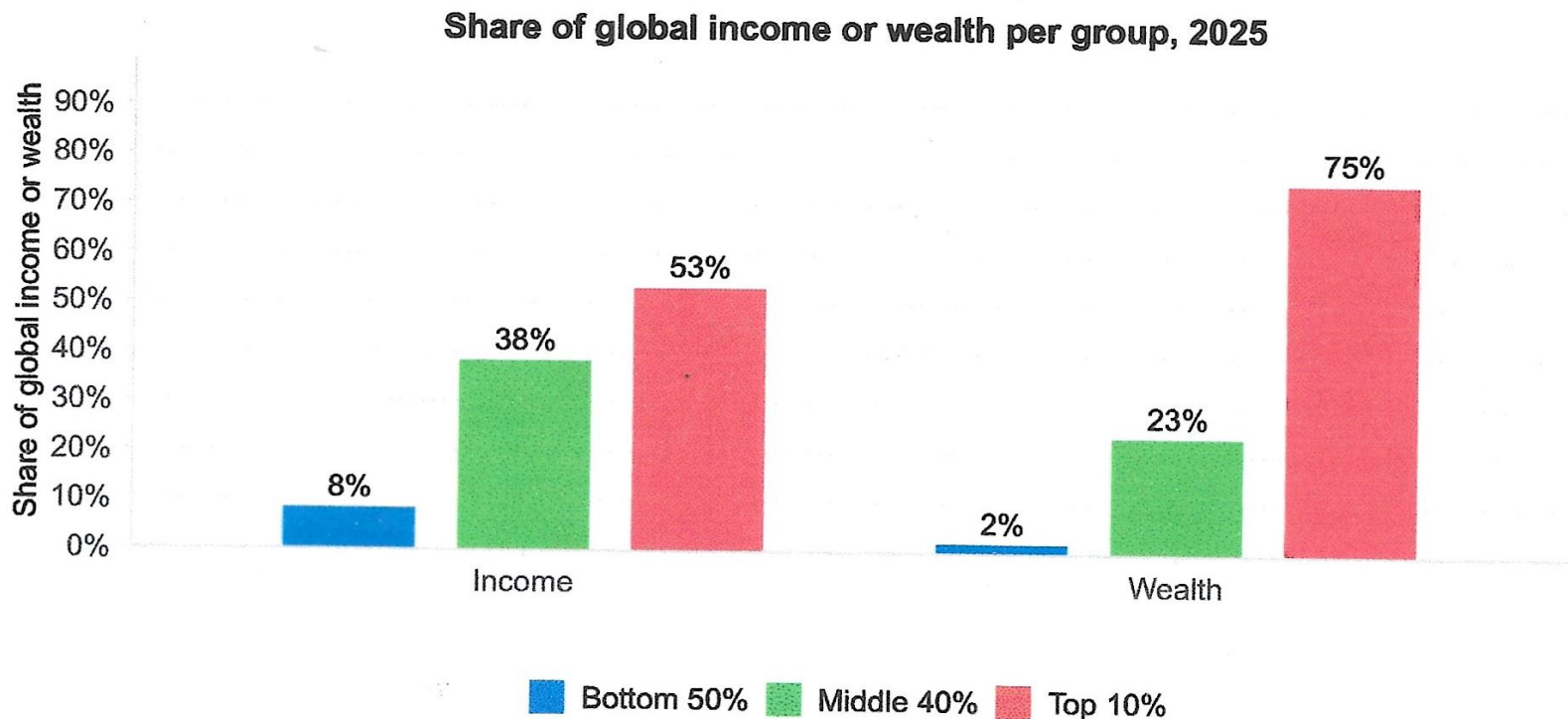
# PARTIES OF THE WORKERS ?

- disproportionate support within manual working class ...
- ... in line with broader erosion of link between income and left/right voting
- competing explanations : economic and cultural
- but interconnected ?

# **SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF THE FAR RIGHT**

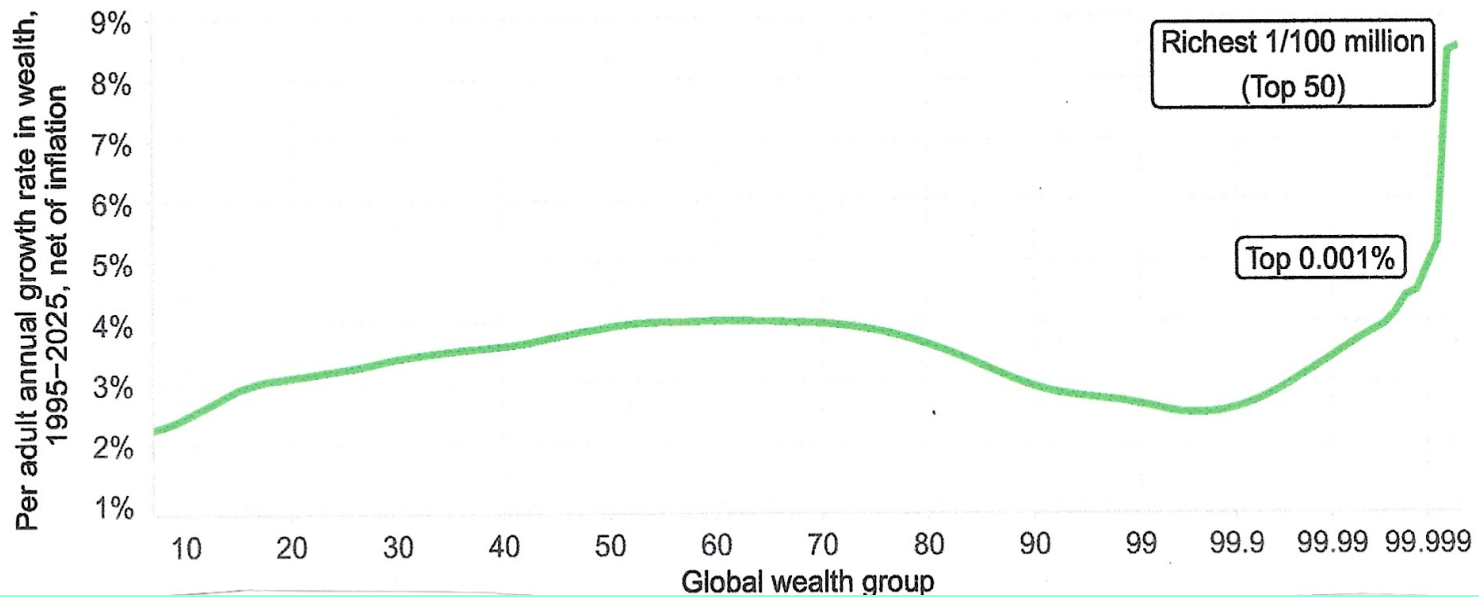
- **some far-right parties have fascist roots ...**
- **... but most derive from neo-liberal (small state, anti-welfare) parties**
- **widespread but problematic shift to ethno-nationalism and welfare chauvinism**
- **ambiguity and obfuscation of social policy : 'position blurring' (Rovny)**
- **ideology of 'disintermediation' entails anti-unionism and hostility to established institutions of industrial relations**
- **many far-right voters want stronger workers' rights, others vehemently oppose**
- **in office, most far-right parties oppose employment rights**

# INSECURITY AND INEQUALITY HELP DRIVE NEO-FASCISM



Source: *World Inequality Report 2026*

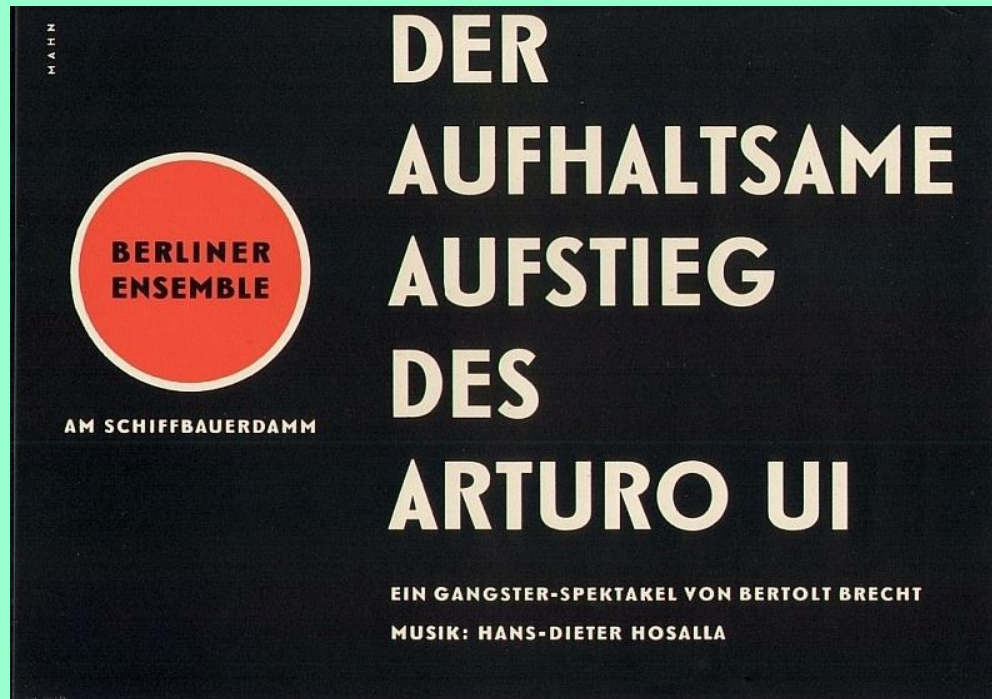
**The wealth growth incidence curve, 1995–2025**



**Source: *World Inequality Report 2026***

# **INSECURITY AND INEQUALITY HELP DRIVE NEO-FASCISM**

- **why do so many workers vote for parties that oppose their interests ?**
- **neoliberalism, economic crisis, austerity and insecurity have devastated traditional working-class collectivism**
- **most social-democratic parties have surrendered to the new economic 'orthodoxy'**
- **credentialism and the 'politics of humiliation' have reinforced anger, resentment and nihilism**
- **escalating inequality erodes trust and social cohesion and reinforces support for far right (Gould & Hijzen, Han, Sudbrack & Downes)**



**Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch,  
aus dem das Kroch**

# A RESISTIBLE THREAT ?

- **what agency to resist the far right ?**
  - many employers actively support, as a means of blocking progressive politics, while others hedge their bets
  - only labour movements have strong incentive and resources
- **there is evidence that far-right voters embrace many opposing positions (Deo)**
  - committed racists
  - hardline conservatives
  - 'left behind' workers
  - 'contrarian' political outsiders
- **effective resistance must engage with this diversity**
- **requiring a political project which offers a credible alternative to neoliberalism**



Thank you for your  
engagement !

**THINK  
OUTSIDE  
THE BOX**

