



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Populist polarization in Italian politics, 1994-2016 : an assessment from a Latin American analytical perspective

Zanotti, L.

Citation

Zanotti, L. (2019, September 26). *Populist polarization in Italian politics, 1994-2016 : an assessment from a Latin American analytical perspective*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/78561>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/78561>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/78561> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Zanotti, L.

Title: Populist polarization in Italian politics, 1994-2016 : an assessment from a Latin American analytical perspective

Issue Date: 2019-09-26

Chapter 1

Populist Polarization: Cleavages and The Transformation of the Party System

What do the 2015 legislative election in Greece, the 2016 presidential election in the United States and the 2018 general election in Italy have in common? In Greece, one of the countries hardest hit by the Great Recession, the outcome of the 2015 election was the formation of a government coalition comprising SYRIZA, a radical leftist populist party (Stravakakis, 2014), and ANEL, a rightist populist party (Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). In the United States, Donald Trump, a political outsider at odds with the Republican Party, secured the presidential nomination and won the presidency by using a populist discourse. In the same election cycle, his opponent and “official” Democratic Party candidate, Hillary Clinton, struggled to secure the nomination when a radical, populist senator, Bernie Sanders, became a surprise primary challenger (Oliver and Rahn, 2016). In Italy after the 1994 party system collapse, two electorally strong populist parties emerged: the Lega Nord and Berlusconi’s Forza Italia. Later, as a consequence of the economic crisis of 2009, comedian Beppe Grillo formed a third populist force in the Italian party system, the Five Star Movement (Bobba and McDonnell, 2015). The common denominator between Italy, the U.S. and Greece, is the growing presence of populist polarization, defined as the tendency of relevant political forces to move towards the extremes of the political spectrum. In this sense, the opposite of polarization is the convergence of the most relevant parties toward the same ideological position. Polarization is a key concept for understanding these three empirical observations as well as many political developments around the world. More in detail, these are examples of a particular type of polarization, which takes place along what I define the populist/anti-populist axis (see also Stavrakakis, 2014; Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018).

In fact, in these party systems the conflicts that structure the party competition goes beyond the classic left-right classic divide. As Lipset and Rokkan (1967) pointed out in their classic work, the cleavages that can structure a party system are multiple. It would therefore be mistaken to conceptualize and measure polarization only on the left-right continuum. If in a certain party system parties compete alongside multiple axes, polarization, as a feature of the system, needs to be addressed with respect to every line of conflict within the system.

In this chapter I develop the main concepts of the theoretical framework of my dissertation. In effect, I analyze how three concepts, polarization, populism and cleavage, are used to construct the dependent variable of this study: populist polarization.

The chapter is divided in four sections. In the first section I analyze the concept of polarization in the political science literature. Following Sartori's typology of pluralist polarized party systems, I examine the challenges in the study of polarization in political science. Moreover, I develop a conceptualization of polarization which has the main advantage of avoiding dealing with normative assessments.

In the second section I discuss the concept of populism. Given that populism is a contested concept, I first present the four most common definitions: the structuralist, the economic, the political-institutional and the ideational. Second, I explain and analyze the reasons why I find the ideational approach more convincing. Furthermore, after presenting the other relevant definitions of populism, I deal with some of their main weaknesses.

The third section is dedicated to the concept of cleavages. First, I differentiate between the "traditional" or sociological definition and the political definition of cleavage. After this, I explain the theoretical and empirical relevance of populism/anti-populism cleavage.

In sum, the object of this chapter is to define the concept of populist polarization. I define populist polarization as the situation in which a party system is polarized not only on the classical left-right axis, but also on the populist/anti-populist one. Even though polarization has been studied almost exclusively as a left-right phenomenon, a system may be polarized along other axes (e.g. center vs. periphery, rural vs. urban). My interest in this study is analyzing polarization on the populism/anti-populist axis. This phenomenon is relevant both theoretically and empirically. From a theoretical point of view, it is relevant to exposing the link between polarization and populism and thereby going beyond the limitations of analyzing polarization only as a left-right feature. Empirically, populist polarization it is gradually gaining relevance in many geographical areas, especially in Southern Europe (Stavrakakis, 2014) and in some countries in Latin America (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014), and in different socio-economic contexts where it helps to explain the current political situation, but it may have further applications still.

Conceiving of populism-populism as a political cleavage assumes that it lasts in time (Rae and Taylor, 1970; Kitschelt, 2007). While it is safe to assume that this political cleavage endures as long as the ideological and discursive antagonism lasts, I believe that the organizational characteristics of the parties may also affect its duration and its characteristics. In the last part of the chapter, I will develop a framework that attempts to establish a link

between the ideational approach to populism and the organizational features of populist forces. I thereby contribute to filling a gap within the ideational approach, which needs to incorporate the organizational variable to the study of populism. The organizational variable matters because from the type of organization we can make inferences on the chances of survival of populist parties.

1.1 Polarization in comparative politics

Polarization is an essential concept for understanding the contemporary political world. From the emergence of SYRIZA in Greece to the election of Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election to the election of Órban in Hungary from 2010, it looks like the distance between the extreme poles of the political space is becoming increasingly relevant around the world. Venezuela provides a clear illustration: from the first election in 1999 and even after its death in 2013 and the election of Maduro, the political field is divided between those in favor of the *chavismo* and those who are against it. Nevertheless, polarization is also a contested concept. A basic definition of polarization in political science is provided in the Dictionary of Politics, which refers to the phenomenon “any general move of political actors from centrist to extreme political positions” (McLean, 2003, p. 407).

Later in this chapter I analyze the relevant definitions in political science and comparative politics but, for now, in general terms we can maintain that polarization in political science refers to a situation in which the parties, the electorate or both are deeply divided and engage in a highly confrontational competition (Sartori, 2005). As I show later, what is missing from this description is agreement on a more specific definition and, consequently, means of measurement. Thus, if we really want to grasp this phenomenon, we need to go back to its conceptual origins. The first to develop an analytical framework to understand polarization was Giovanni Sartori in his seminal 1976 book on different types of party systems. In the following section I first describe in detail the characteristics of Sartori’s pluralist polarized party system.

The following section is dedicated to a critical analysis of Sartori’s conceptualization. Last, in the third section, I describe two challenges that I encountered in the study of polarization in political science: conceptual confusion and measurement problems.

1.1.1 Sartori’s conceptualization of partisan polarization

As I mentioned above Sartori formulated the first conceptualization of polarization in political science. The typology that Sartori created classifies party systems on the basis of three

characteristics: the number of relevant parties in the system (fragmentation), the ideological distance between the parties (polarization), and the dynamic of the inter-party competition. Sartori describes the polarized pluralist party system as a system formed of five or more relevant parties with great ideological distance and a centrifugal type of competition between them. Sartori claims that in this type of party system, the relevant parties occupy both extremes of the left-right axis as well as the political space at the center (Sartori, 2005 p. 119). The system is multipolar in the sense that its competition mechanics depend on a political center, which needs to deal with an opposition on the left and right. While in a *moderate* pluralist party system the distribution of power is represented by a normal curve slightly skewed toward one of the two sides of the left-right axis, when a party system is *polarized* the distribution appears to be bimodal with two peaks at the far left and right ends and a dip in the middle.

Consequently, the two types of party systems result in different types of competition. While the moderate pluralist party systems favor centripetal competition, polarized pluralist party systems favor centrifugal competition because their multipolar mechanics that cannot be accounted for by dualist competition (Sartori 1976; 2005). As Dalton (2008) points out, in the former type of system, parties converge on the center to compete for the median voter, while in the latter parties are more dispersed along the political continuum.

Sartori clarified his approach by identifying eight features of a pluralist polarized party system (1976; 2005). The first is the presence of anti-system parties. This kind of party does not accept the existing political regime and aims at changing it. Sartori maintains that such parties undermine the legitimacy of the regime which they oppose. He identifies anti-system parties mostly with communists and fascists. Even though Sartori uses a broad definition for anti-system parties, “they share the property of questioning a regime and of underlining its base of support” (2005, p. 117). Sartori wrote his book in the mid-1970s, when the international and historical conditions were quite different from today. It is worth noting that Sartori maintains that the tactics of anti-system parties are irrelevant to his concept. This is a relevant point considering that when Sartori wrote, many of the communist parties in Western Europe were playing by the rules of democracy. Nevertheless, following Sartori this “do not alter the test: they pursue and obtain a delegitimizing impact” (2005, p. 118).

The second feature of polarized systems, as stated above, is the presence of bilateral oppositions and of a political center. The interaction of these two components result in a multipolar system characterized by a bimodal distribution of the power in the system. This a crucial point. When the opposition is unilateral, no matter how many parties oppose “they can join forces and propose themselves as an alternative government” (2005, p. 118). On the

contrary, in a polarized party system the oppositions are mutually exclusive and cannot join forces.

The third characteristic consists in the presence of a center party. This, according to Sartori, means that the electoral and ideological confrontations are not bilateral but triangular. The system is then multipolar in the sense that the party in the center of the system needs to compete with both the party situated at the right and at the left pole (2005, p. 119).

Fourth, Sartori notes that the pull by the parties situated at one pole may be more pronounced than the pull exerted by the parties situated at the other pole, causing competition to appear bilateral. Nevertheless, the most important feature when we talk about polarization is that in all cases the lateral poles of the system are literally “two poles apart, and the distance between them covers a maximum spread of opinions” (2005, p. 120).

The fifth feature refers to, as we noted above, the prevalence of centrifugal impulses over the centripetal ones. The system tends to a progressive weakening of the ideological center that loses its electoral weight due to the strengthening of the extremes.

The sixth feature Sartori finds in polarized pluralism is its congenital ideological structuration. In this context, ideology is intended as a *forma mentis*, i.e., a means of perceiving and conceiving politics and, consequently, a matter of principle. In other words, the key dimension of the confrontation is ideology. Sartori maintains that the common characteristic of the parties in the system “that all parties fight all another with ideological arguments and view one another in terms of ideological mentality” (2005, p. 121).

The seventh characteristic of pluralist polarized party systems is the presence of irresponsible oppositions. Sartori claims that is probable that an opposition behaves responsibly if the other actors expect it to have a chance of keeping its promises, while, on the other hand, an opposition is more willing to be irresponsible if it is unlikely to govern. In this kind of system, the alternation of the possible allies of the center party is mostly constrained by ideological limitations (Sartori 1976; 2005)

The last feature refers to what Sartori calls the policy of outbidding (2005, p. 123), i.e., the excessive promises of the parties situated at the poles of the system. If extremes parties can promise whatever benefit or policy without having to be responsible for it, then these parties do not compete fairly. In fact, Sartori points out that political competition needs to be based, not only on the presence of more than one party, but also on a minimum degree of fair competition and mutual confidence among political actors.

In sum, according to Sartori, a pluralist polarized party system is a system characterized by the presence of anti-system irresponsible oppositions on both the left and right that are situated

at the ideological extremes of the left-right axis and that, with the presence of a political center, create centrifugal, multipolar competition. Moreover, this competition is strongly exercised on ideological bases. To illustrate these characteristics Sartori uses the examples of Italy in the mid-1970s, the Fourth French Republic in the 1950s, Chile before 1973 and the Weimar Republic.

1.1.2 Analyzing Sartori's definition

Even though Sartori's definition is surely one of the most authoritative in the comparative politics field, two aspects of it deserve a closer look. First, Sartori's conceptualization is affected by a negative bias. It is important to state that Sartori maintains that the pluralist polarized party system is less stable than the pluralist moderate party system. Given that in both types of party systems, the fragmentation is the same (five or six relevant parties), for Sartori the polarization produces instability and danger for the regime (see also Sani and Sartori, p. 1980).

The examples of pluralist polarized party systems in Sartori's book are the Weimar Republic, Chile before 1973, the Second Republic in Italy and the Fourth French Republic in the 1950s. It is worth noting that in two of these cases the political regime broke down (Germany and Chile), while the other two were characterized by a chronic political instability (Italy and France). In the Weimar Republic, the system basically presented two options at the poles of the political spectrum, the Communists and the National Socialists, with an almost absent political center. The Chilean case was different; only there did Sartori see the centrifugal competitive dynamic as leading directly to the downfall of the system. In the Chilean case, the country was characterized by a long period of democracy political stability—at least in comparison with the other countries in the region. However, Sartori (1976) maintained that in 1973, the level of political polarization and fragmentation increased, causing Pinochet's military coup and the consequent breakdown of the democratic regime (Sani and Sartori, 1983).

For Sartori, then, the pluralist polarized party system is highly instable with high chances of collapse of the party system and the breakdown of democracy, or at least low-quality democracy. This negative view about polarization is shared by most of Sartori's successors. It is not surprising, then, that also most of the subsequent literature on polarization focuses on its harmful consequences for the democratic regime (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008; Hetherington, 2009; Layman, Carsey and Horowitz 2006; Torcal and Martini, 2013). Partisan polarization has been associated with phenomena such as democratic backsliding, corruption and economic

decline (Frye, 2002; Valenzuela, 1978). As I will explain later in more detail, polarization is not always and necessarily a damaging phenomenon; excessive convergence can be as problematic as excessive polarization.

The second feature that I would like to discuss in Sartori's definition is related to the presence of anti-system parties at the poles. According to Sartori (1976; 2005), pluralist polarized party systems feature anti-system parties at the extreme poles. Following Mudde, anti-system parties differ from radical parties. Anti-system parties are those parties that reject democracy as the best political regime and aim to change it (2007a, p. 22-24). On the contrary, radical parties are situated at the extremes of the left-right axis but their aim is not overthrowing democracy. In sum, it is true that radical parties can be a challenge for democracy because of their extremist traits, but they are different from anti-system parties because they—at least in theory—do not intend to undermine democracy (Mudde, 2007; 2011). In fact, anti-system parties can be referred to, in terms of Linz's terminology, as semi-loyal opposition actors, i.e. those parties that sit on the fence of democracy, sometimes ignoring, sometimes observing the consensus (1978, pp. 27-31). On the other hand, radical parties are loyal to the democratic system, but radical in their ideology, in the sense that they tend to place themselves near to the poles of the axis of competition without questioning the political regime as such.

When one thinks about the anti-system category, it is worth noting that this can develop because of the presence of parties in the system that are conveying an anti-system message, i.e. parties that are semi-loyal to the democratic regime. However, at the same time, the anti-system can also be a consequence of the anti-systemic attitude of a part of the electorate.

A good example of the difference between extreme and radical parties are populist radical right parties. Unlike the extreme right of the 1930s, the populist radical right is democratic, in that it accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule. It also tends to accept the rules of parliamentary democracy; in most cases "it prefers a stronger executive, though few parties support a toothless legislature" (Mudde, 2015, p. 295).

However, as stated above, we can observe the emergence of the populist radical right ideas both at the party system level—the offer side—and in the electorate—the demand side.

With respect to this, the study of the populist radical right has been dominated by the normal pathology thesis. This thesis translates into the belief that the populist radical right represents a sort of pathology of contemporary Western democracies, which has only limited support under "normal" circumstances. Within this paradigm, mass demand for populist radical right parties is the main puzzle and can only be explained by some form of modernization theory related crisis (Mudde, 2008, p. 11). However, this thesis does not pass the empirical test. As

Mudde has pointed out, “the key features of the populist radical right ideology – nativism, authoritarianism, and populism – are not unrelated to mainstream ideologies and mass attitudes” (2008, p. 11). Populist radical right ideas are not alien to the majority of the Western European population (Mudde 2010, p. 1178). For this reason, Mudde (2010) refers to the populist radical right as a pathological normalcy since is connected to mainstream ideas, shared mass attitudes and policy positions. This makes demand for populist radical right politics an assumption rather than a puzzle (Mudde, 2008, p. 1). While this argument holds true for the European context, it is an open question whether similar occurs in Latin America and the United States. In fact, the rise of Trump in the U.S. and Bolsonaro in Brazil could indicate a difference.

It is worth noting that Sartori wrote this book in the mid-1970s, when the international and historical conditions were totally different from today. The world was still divided into two blocs and the bipolar ideological confrontation ruled. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the so-called end of the ideological bipolarism and the hegemony of the neoliberal model, the anti-system options in the party system seem to have declined. In fact, the presence of anti-system parties has notably shrunk in the last fifty years. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this kind of party, at least in Europe, has almost disappeared.⁴ Has polarization too? A glance at the current political situation in many countries suffices to show that it has not. In fact, even if the parties situated at the extreme poles of the left-right axis do not necessarily want to change the political regime, they can be considered radical with respect to their policy positions. What is important is keeping the presence of anti-system parties and polarization on two different analytical planes. Radical parties, i.e., those parties situated at the poles of the system, do not necessarily aim to destroy the democratic regime, while, on the other hand, it is possible that a party that is not ideologically radical may be interested in changing the regime. It is important to remember that a system may be polarized even without the presence of anti-system parties.

1.1.3 Assessing Sartori’s definition: a critical review

Even though I maintain that there are some issues with Sartori’s definition, I still rely on his definition and propose my own conceptualization, clarifying some aspects. An important aspect of Sartori’s work, with which I agree, concerns the view of polarization as a phenomenon driven by parties and political competition, rather than by voters and conflict at the mass level. At this point a specification is in order. Polarization in political science has been

⁴ Golden Dawn (XA) in Greece is one of the few exceptions (Georgiadou, 2013).

studied from various points of view. Different types of studies have focused on partisan polarization (Dalton, 2008), polarization in the electorate (Layman and Carsey, 2002; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Stanig, 2013; Lelkes 2016) or both (Bermeo, 2003). Partisan polarization and electoral polarization reflect the degree of ideological differentiation between political parties in a system (Sartori, 1976; Dalton, 2008) and the mass electorate respectively.

It should be noted that these are two separate phenomena that may, in certain environments, influence each other but are not necessarily connected. Because the two phenomena are not always linked, we can assume that their causes and the mechanisms that lead to them may be different. Since I adopt a Sartorian conceptualization in this work, I focus only on partisan polarization. In fact, given that the aim of this research is looking for the determinant of populist polarization we can assume that it is the agency, i.e., the political actors, who have the main role in polarizing the party system.

As stated above, in this work I developed a conceptualization of polarization that for the most part follows Sartori's but differs in some respects. In this work I consider a party system as polarized when a) both poles are occupied by relevant parties and b) the dynamic of competition is centrifugal. There are essentially two differences to Sartori's, one theoretical and one normative.

Normatively, I do not share Sartori's dim view of partisan polarization. Instead, I treat the issue of whether polarization is good or bad for the party system and the political regime as an empirical question. Neither polarization nor convergence can be considered bad per se. True, an *excessive* level of polarization can be harmful for regime stability. Yet, in the absence of polarization, excessive convergence can also imperil democracy. Convergence should be thought as the shift toward the ideological center of the most relevant parties. The consequence of the convergence of the relevant parties in a system is the low electoral and ideological relevance of the poles of the system. One illustration is Venezuela in the 1980s. As Morgan's (2011) study about party system collapse shows, at the beginning of the 1980s the two main parties—Acción Democrática (AD) and Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente (COPEI)—started a process of progressive convergence until their ideological positions were undifferentiated to the voters, who started to feel orphaned and unrepresented by the two main parties. It cannot be said then that the absence of polarization is good for the party system because polarization counteracts convergence and excessive convergence is also unsafe for the stability of the system. It is very clear that in Venezuela, the convergence between these two parties was also reinforced by the formal interparty agreements such as the “Punto Fijo,” which was formalized in 1958 and led to the national unity government led by

AD's Betancourt (Coppedge, 2005, p. 290). Even if the integrity of elections was never questioned, critics began to call the system a *partidocracia* (partyarchy) rather than a democracy (Coppedge, 1994).

What we can we state then? On the one hand, if a party system is polarized it does not necessarily mean that it is unstable or that democracy is at risk, but on the other hand, problems *may* arise if either polarization or convergence reaches extremes levels. In fact, when mainstream parties cannot offer different programmatic positions to their voters, the linkage between voters and representatives weakens and can eventually break, leaving the former unrepresented (Lupu, 2014; Roberts, 2017). Therefore, we should be careful when analyzing polarization and developing arguments about its impact on democracy.

How, then, can we determine whether polarization is dangerous or not? There are three possible, non-exclusive answers to this question.

First, it can be answered that this is an empirical question. In fact, judging whether polarization is dangerous or not is just a matter of the context in which it takes place. This means that the implications of polarization on democracy and the stability of the party system need to be assessed empirically.

Second, we need to consider polarization as a matter of degree. The right question when we analyze a party system is not whether it is polarized or not but the degree to which it is polarized. I agree with Sartori and with most scholars that *excessive* polarization may lead to problems for the stability of the system or the political regime. Nevertheless, a moderate amount may make the system more functional. As a consequence, it may be helpful to consider polarization as a continuum. In fact, studying polarization as a dichotomist concept, at least on the left-right axis, would allow us to classify political systems only as convergent or polarized. Studying polarization as a gradual phenomenon allow us to distinguish different degrees.

The third aspect that we need to consider is related to the analytical and empirical difference between extreme parties and anti-system parties. One the one hand, if the system features anti-system parties, the probability of perilous consequences for democracy are higher.

To use the language of Linz (1978), if the parties at the extremes of the axis are ideologically distant but willing to play by the rules of the democratic game, then chances are lower that polarization—even high levels of polarization—will damage the system or the regime. On the other hand, if the parties at the extreme poles are disloyal or semi-loyal, then there is the possibility of grave consequences for the system and, in some cases, for democracy itself (Linz, 1978). In sum, to answer the question about the consequence of party polarization we need also to consider the type of parties situated at the poles. Together with Linz, Arturo

Valenzuela (1978) argues that the breakdown of democracy in Chile in 1973 was due mainly to the polarization that resulted from the transformation of a pragmatic political center into an ideological one, thus preventing accommodation, compromise, and, finally, respect for the rules of the democratic game.

A final clarification needs to be made with respect to the relationship between polarization and fragmentation. The latter is normally defined as the number of parties in the system (Sartori, 2005; Dalton, 2008). Even though some scholars argue that there is a high correlation between party polarization and party fragmentation based on the assumption that the number of parties reflects the degree of polarization within a party system (Wang, 2014, p. 688), Sartori and others have reiterated that polarization is not a positive, linear function of fragmentation.

Low levels of polarization can be found in highly fragmented party systems; meanwhile high levels of polarization can be found in non-fragmented party systems (see Dalton, 2008; Pelizzo and Babones, 2007). A two-party system such as the United States, which patently grew more polarized during the 2015 election season, provides a clear example of the empirical distinction between polarization and fragmentation. Therefore, in line with Sartori, I maintain that polarization, intended as the ideological distance between the parties at the poles, may occur also in two-party systems.

In sum, I adopt a Sartorian definition of partisan polarization with two main differences. I do not take Sartori's and others' negative stance on polarization. Excessive polarization and excessive convergence both may be harmful for the system. In fact, a certain degree of polarization is useful for voters to distinguish parties' policy stances and differentiate them (Lupu, 2011). Also, I claim that a party system may be polarized even without the presence of anti-system parties, defined as parties that are not loyal to democracy. When there are parties that are radical in their policy proposals without wanting to take down the democratic regime, a party system can be conceived as polarized. Therefore, I identify a party system as polarized when there are political options situated close to both poles, independent of their stances towards the democratic regime and of the numbers of parties in the system.

That said, in the next section I describe two challenges that I found in studying the phenomenon of polarization in political science.

1.1.4 The two challenges in the study of polarization

The first challenge found in studying polarization is the conceptual confusion that surrounds this phenomenon. Since Sartori's seminal work, many definitions have proliferated, leading to conceptual confusion.

The conceptual confusion is twofold. First there is conceptual confusion arising from problematic conceptualizations. Even when the definition of the phenomenon is explicit, partisan polarization, like many other widely used concepts in political science, is poorly defined and over-stretched (Sartori, 1970). In fact, although Sartori's book is widely cited and constitutes a seminal book on party systems, alternative conceptualizations have proliferated in studies of the topic.

Given that the definition in many cases is missing, it looks like it is taken for granted as if the conceptualization was widely shared, which is not the case. Even when the definition of the phenomenon is explicit, partisan polarization, like many other widely used concepts in political science is poorly defined and over-stretched (Sartori, 1970). In fact, Persily is right stating that "polarization (...) is quickly becoming a catchall for whatever ails (...) politics" (2015, p. 4). The same author defines polarization saying that is simultaneously represented by three phenomena; hyper-partisanship, gridlock or the inability of the system to perform basic policy-making functions due to the obstructionist tactics (2015, p. 4) and incivility, i.e., "the erosion of norms that historically constrained the discourse and actions of political actors or the mass public" (2015, p. 4). While this definition identifies attributes or empirical referents, it lacks the first level, which is central to saying what a concept really is (see Sartori 1970).

This happens mostly in the American politics literature, which is probably the most developed literature on polarization (Hetherington, 2001; Abramowitz, 2010; Persily, 2015). According to Sartorian definitions, partisan polarization has to do with the variation in the ideological distance *between* parties and more in detail, one necessary condition for a party system to be polarized is the existence of extreme parties on both sides of the left-right spectrum. Given that the American literature is mostly empirical, it partially lacks conceptual clarity and sometimes there is the risk of conceptual overlapping. Almost all the studies on polarization in the U.S. are based on the measurement of "all unanimous roll call votes taken during each Congress to locate each member on a liberal-conservative scale that ranges from -1.0 to 1.0; the higher the score, the more conservative the member" (Jacobson, 2013, p. 690).

Also, Abramowitz states that “ideological polarization in Congress is defined by consistency in voting across issues” (2010, p. 35). Seen from this light, polarization rises when there is a larger proportion of legislators who take consistently liberal or conservative positions on issues. Measuring polarization like that is confusing because the spread between the parties increase even if one party move toward one pole and the other maintains the same position or, for instance, if both parties grow more conservative at a different pace. This is quite evident during the 1990s and 2000s where the Republicans grew more conservative and the Democrats tended to maintain a moderate position (Jacobson, 2013, p. 691). As pointed out above, while polarization is defined as the shifting of the relevant parties toward both ends of the political spectrum. Conversely, the shift of the relevant parties toward one pole should be defined as outflanking. Another example of outflanking is the emergence of the so called Third Way (Giddens, 2001; 2013) in the U.K. during the Blair administration.

Giddens uses “Third Way” to refer to a “framework of thinking and policy making that seeks to adapt social democracy to a world which has changed fundamentally over the past decades” (1998, p. 26). In persisting with the economic policies of Margaret Thatcher, under the government of Tony Blair, the Labor party shifted its position towards the center of the political spectrum, moving closer to the Conservatives.

For Sartori (1976; 2005), one of the defining attributes of polarization is that the *two poles* are occupied. Indeed, Sartori argues that polarization truly occurs when both ends of the left-right spectrum are involved. In fact, if there is only one extreme party, it can be brought into an opposition coalition that can offer a government alternative to the ruling coalition. When polarization occurs, the parties at the poles differ in their ideology and cannot form a government alternative to the ruling coalition. As Sartori pointed out, political systems with those characteristics could hardly be viable “because the unmoderated and ideological politics results in a paralysis or in a collapse”. The only way to avoid jeopardizing democratic stability would be to incorporate the anti-system parties in the political order (1976, p. 176).

Another example of the problems of the American politics literature on polarization consists in the assessment of the negative conceptual pole of polarization. Most of this literature, defines the opposite of polarization as the ideological coherence within parties (Perisly, 2016). Nevertheless, if we consider partisan polarization as the ideological distance between the parties in a system, the opposite conceptual pole is convergence, i.e. the ideological proximity between parties, not coherence in terms of voting behavior in Congress.

This, as stated before, is a consequence of the measurement choices that, without a proper and clear conceptualization, may lead to conceptual overlapping and confusion. The second

challenge I found in studying polarization is strongly connected to the first one. Given that the concept is at times stretched or erroneously interpreted, there is no agreement on the measurement. These measurement problems go even beyond the U.S.-focused writings and the fact that most of those scholars measure polarization as intraparty coherence. Partisan polarization has been measured mainly using mass surveys (Morgan, 2011; Lupu, 2013; Dalton and Anderson, 2011), expert surveys (Hubert and Inglehart, 1995; Benoit and Laver, 2006) or through the analysis of party manifestos (Budge, Robertson and Hearl, 1987; Caul and Gray, 2000). Each measurement has its advantages and disadvantages.

Mass surveys are perhaps the most used to measure polarization in the party system. Through mass surveys voters estimate the position of the relevant parties in the system answering to this question:

“In politics people often talk of ‘left’ and ‘right’. Where would you place the following parties on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘left’ and 10 means ‘right’?” (CSES module 4).⁵

The standard deviation of the mean of each party represents the average distance between the relevant parties which, in turn, is partisan polarization. Based on this data, Dalton (2008) has combined the relative position of each party on the left-right scale from a question in the CSES survey and weighted by the electoral size of parties in terms of vote share. The inclusion of both these elements constitutes the main advantage because the presence of a large party located to the extreme would mean a more polarized system (Dalton, 2008, p. 906). Regarding the disadvantages, this measurement is based on voters’ opinion and therefore it represents the voters’ perception of the partisan polarization rather than an objective measurement.

It could be the case that, for instance, voters perceive a certain party as situated as the extreme of the left-right spectrum because of features other than its ideology, such as the political style of its leader.

Expert surveys classify the position of the parties of the system according to the opinions of scholars and political pundits. One of the most used is the database of Chapel Hill University (CHES). This measurement is quite popular partly thanks to its sheer accessibility—the mean judgements of specialists about left–right locations or particular policy positions can be used as reported without tedious data-processing. Also, expert judgements are also perceived as authoritative (Budge, 2000, p. 103).

⁵ Dalton’s Index is constructed using CSES survey; however, the question used to measure the position of the parties in the left-right axis also appears in other surveys.

Nevertheless, it has some disadvantages. First, these measurements share the same problem as Dalton's index, i.e., it is more a perception of the experts than a direct measurement of what parties say during campaigns and do once in government. Budge (2000) highlights further limitations; he claims that we actually do not know a) what constitutes the "party" whose position is being judged—is it the leaders, activists or voters or all three combined?—b) the criteria experts base their judgements on, particularly when making a general left–right classification (Huber and Inglehart, 1995, p. 78), c) whether judgements refer to intentions and preferences or overt behavior, an important distinction when most theories use declared or implicit party preferences to explain overt behavior, and d) what time period judgements of policy position are based on—the instant at which the survey is administered? The election or inter-election period in which the survey is conducted?

Furthermore, experts' surveys are a relatively new measurement tool for measuring party positions, implemented only since the 1990s. For this reason, it is impossible to employ them to measure party positions for periods prior to that.

The third option is the use of party manifestos to estimate parties' left and right positions (Budge Robertson and Hearl, 1987; Caul and Gray, 2000; Klingemann, 2005). The more common measurement of party positions using the manifestos of parties is the RILE index developed from the Manifesto Project. This index is the result of the sum of 13 coding categories seen as being on the "left", 13 seen as being on the "right", and the subtraction of the percentage of aggregated left categories from those of the right. The index range is [-100 to +100] which respectively represent extreme left and extreme right. The RILE scale is thought to be more reliable than any single coding category, since it is likely that most of the stochastic variation in text coding will result from different coders allocating the same text unit to different categories on the "left" or the "right" (Mikhaylov, Laver and Benoit, 2008, p. 9).

The main advantage of using manifestos is that, contrary to mass or expert surveys, it constitutes a more "direct" measurement because it is based on a direct source and not on a perception of citizens or experts. However, as Dalton points out "the comparative manifesto project focused on the salience of issues rather than party positions, and thus there is debate about the validity of this methodology" (Gabel and Huber, 2000; Harmel, Tan, and Janda, 1995; Laver and Garry, 2000) In other words, these studies highlight that given that polarization represent the ideological spread between the parties at the poles, measuring it on the basis of issues rather than on the actual position of the parties on the left-right axis may be problematic (Dalton, 2008, 904).

Even if there are differences between them, these three measures have at least one relevant aspect in common. They understand polarization only as a matter of left and right. Therefore, one might think that the only reliable conceptualization and measurement of partisan polarization in a system is related to the left-right cleavage. However, this is not always the case. Even if there are many party systems that are structured only around the left-right cleavage, there are systems in which other cleavages are preponderant and, in some cases, more relevant (Downs, 1957; Dalton, 2008; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). In other words, these measurements are not that useful in capturing the current situation in some political systems, where other cleavages are as relevant as the left-right divide. The object of this work is what I and other scholars have called the populism-anti-populism cleavage (Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). This is strongly linked to the classic literature on cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). This literature stresses that there are other political divides that structure the party system. In other words, other cleavages may be polarized. This means that conceptualizing and measuring partisan polarization only in the left-right axis may not be enough in certain circumstances. To obtain an accurate understanding of polarization first we need to map the party system to see which the relevant cleavages are.

1.2 Populism and Populist Polarization

In 2017 the Cambridge Dictionary declared populism its word of the year. In the news many national elections are been depicted as a battle between populists and political options that defended the status quo. However, in the public debate the concept is often poorly defined and employed out of context. Even in the academic literature, most definitions of populism lack conceptual clarity and are often conflated with other concepts such as nativism. Even when employed properly, it remains a contested concept (Weyland, 2001; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017; Mudde, 2017a).

In the first part, I analyze other relevant definitions in the literature and their main weaknesses. I analyze the structuralist, the economic and the political-institutional definition. In the second explain the definition of populism I use in this work and the main reasons for this decision. This matters because populism is a contested concept and in the political science literature there is no agreement on a common definition. Before continuing, it is worth mentioning that in this work I follow the definition of Cas Mudde who defines populism as a “thin-centered ideology that considers society ultimately divided into two homogeneous

groups the ‘pure’ people versus the ‘corrupt’ elite, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde 2004, 2007; Stanley, 2008; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Even though, for reasons that I specify below, I find the ideational definition more convincing, in the political science literature the concept of populism is extremely contested. In fact, despite widespread diffusion of this definition, “we are even further from a definitional consensus within the scholarly community” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 4).

1.2.1 The structuralist, the economic and the political-institutional definitions of populism

The origins of the structuralist definition of populism can be found in the seminal work of Gino Germani (1956). Germani was an Italian sociologist who travelled to Argentina after the establishment of fascism in Italy and started to analyze Peronism. According to him, Peronism should be thought as a “left fascism” in light of the popular bases which this movement mobilizes and politicizes and the anti-pluralist modalities of the regime (1956).

Scholars who have used the structuralist definition (Germani, 2003) conceive of populism as a multi-class coalition that stresses redistributive policies. The structuralist conceptualization “assumes that the emergence of populism is the product of certain transformations at the socio-structural level” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015, p. 495). Populism is then a consequence of a model of economic development that favors the emergence of heterogeneous social classes that includes some marginalized sectors. In the words of Germani, “populism itself tends to deny any classification in a right / left dichotomy. It is a multiclass movement, although not all multiclass movements can be considered populist” (Germani, 2003). In turn, these social classes pave the way for the emergence of a populist leader who creates a multi-class movement or party with a strong anti-elitist stance. For example, the urban demographic explosion that occurred in Latin America during the 1930s as a consequence of the massive migration from the countryside to the cities generated masses that were for the first times available to participate in the political life of those countries. As Germani (2003, p. 99) pointed out “these masses were socially mobilizable may be politically activated by some kind of populism, supported by the attraction of a charismatic leadership”. The populist phenomenon is conceptualized here following a family resemblance strategy. While the application of the classic Sartorian ladder of generality assumes that a certain concept has clear boundaries and defining attributes (Sartori, 1970), family resemblance at times, relaxes these assumptions (Collier and Mahon, 1993). The idea of family resemblance entails a principle of category

membership different from that of classical categories, in that there may be no single attribute that category members all share (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 847).

In defining populism, Germani underlined that populism usually includes contrasts such as a claim for equal political rights and for universal participation for ordinary people, but fused with some kind of authoritarianism, under a charismatic leadership. It also includes socialist demands (or at least, a claim for social justice) the vigorous defense of the small property, strong nationalist components and rejection of the importance of the class. It is accompanied by the affirmation of the rights of the common people as contrary to the interests of the powerful privileged interest groups, usually considered hostile to the people and the nation.

Any of these elements can be emphasized according to hostile and social conditions, but they are all present in most populist movements” (2003, p. 114). In conclusion, following the author, populist experiences share some quite evident commonalities even though there may be no trait that all family members, as family members, have in common (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 847). This type of definition has been quite influential for scholars who study Latin America and has been employed to understand the case of Vargas in Brazil and Haya de la Torre in Peru (Conniff, 1999).

In my opinion, this type of definition is unconvincing for several reasons. To begin with, it does not allow us to distinguish populism from the other political forces that form broad constituencies in order to be competitive at the national level. It is supposed that every force that intends to win elections is formed by multi-class coalitions since this is a characteristic of all modern catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966), such as the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Social Democrats. In addition, even though this conceptualization of populism can account for the emergence of populist leaders in some Latin American countries, such as Perón in Argentina (Ostiguy, 2009) or Vargas in Brazil (Conniff, 1999), or in Western Europe, e.g. Berlusconi in Italy, it does not explain why populism did not emerge in some other countries of the region that experienced the same socio-structural transformations. Moreover, this definition focuses only on certain kind of policies, i.e. those policies that were implemented during the substitution of importations (ISI) period. Last, defining populism as a specific type of political regime implies that populists are always supposed to be in the government and that populism cannot exist in the opposition.

The second definition conceives of populism as an economic approach which supports growth and redistribution but overlooks inflation and balance sheet deficit risks (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1995). This approach was particularly dominant in studies on Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s. Dornbusch and Edwards (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990a, 1995),

analyzing the history of Latin American economy, maintained that this was characterized by the cycles that they define as “dramatic”. The origin of those cycles is in the existence of “populist macroeconomic policies for distributive purposes” (Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990a, p. 247). It is worth underlining that the redistributive focus of populism is a central point of the “economic” definition of populism.

Fleshing out the term “populist macroeconomic policies”, the authors refer to “expansive fiscal and credit policies that over evaluate currency to accelerate growth and redistribute income” and that are implemented “with no concern for the existence of fiscal and foreign exchange constraints”(Dornbusch and Edwards, 1990b). At this point, the cycle follows up with a short period of economic recovery that gives space to unsustainable macroeconomic pressures that, in turn, lead to the plummeting of real wages and severe balance of payments difficulties (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 4). The unsuitability of the so-called populist macroeconomic measures is due to the increase of real wages without a correspondent increase in prices. Even though inflation rises, populist policymakers reject devaluation “because of a conviction that it reduces living standards and because it will have further inflationary effects without positively affecting the external sector” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 4).

When a country finds itself in deep macroeconomic distress, there is no option left but to implement a drastically restrictive and costly stabilization program often with the help of international financial institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank.

In sum, populist leaders promote non-efficient economic policies using state resources to finance redistribution. These policies are successful in the short term but in the long run result in debt and inflation. Such policies, Dornbusch and Edwards maintained, ultimately fail, and when they do the major cost is on the groups that were supposed to be favored (1990a). In fact, major economic crises happen, and the state is obliged to implement painful stabilization programs.

In general terms, Dornbusch and Edwards (1990) pointed out that with the exception of Colombia populist macroeconomic policies have been implemented in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Mexico and Nicaragua. Two examples of populist macroeconomic measures are those implemented by Allende in Chile and Alan García in Peru. These are depicted as similar cases in which policymakers viewed the objective situation of their economies the same way, proposed that strongly expansionary policies should and could be carried out, and rationalized that constraints could be dealt with (Dornbusch and Edwards 1990b, p. 248). Also,

in both cases foreign constraints and high inflation forced painful neoliberal adjustment programs that, in turn led to political instability and, in the case of Chile, to a coup.

This definition of populism maintains that the phenomenon is inherently linked to certain macroeconomic policies has at least one main weakness. It does not account for different types of populism. In fact, interpreting populism as a specific economic approach focuses only on leftist populism and does not help to explain neoliberal populism like the governments of Menem in Argentina, Fujimori in Peru or Berlusconi in Italy. In these cases, populist policy-makers did not implement macroeconomic policies with the objective of redistribution. Instead, in contexts like Argentina and Peru during the late 1980s and early 1990s, characterized by balance of payments shortfalls and high inflation, Fujimori and Menem campaigned in favor of policies that would allow a gradual stabilization against right wing opponents, respectively Mario Vargas Llosa and Eduardo Angeloz, who proposed orthodox solutions. However, once in power they implemented neoliberal policies, performing what has been called “bait and switch” (Stokes, 1997, p. 1999).

The third definition is the political-institutional. It conceives populism as a “political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland, 2001, p. 14; see also Roberts, 2006). This close, personalized relationship ignores established intermediary organizations or takes them as secondary to the personal will of the leader. Seen thus, populism would be a transitory phenomenon that disappears as soon as the leader disappears. This definition is particularly common when conceptualizing populism in Latin America and in non-Western Europe contexts. Weyland (2001), using classical Sartorian concept building as a foundation, sketched the tradeoff with respect to the radical and the cumulative concepts. The main advantage in building concepts using the classical strategy is that classical concepts minimize border conflicts by relying on minimal definitions that focus on one domain and stipulate as few definitional characteristics as possible (Weyland 2001, p. 2). One of the main critiques that Weyland makes of previous definitions of populism is that “most of the traditional definitions of Latin American populism were cumulative concepts that encompassed several attributes of different domains. In particular, they assumed a close connection between populist politics and its social roots, socio-economic background conditions and/or substantive policies, especially expansive economic programs and generous distributive measures” (Weyland 2001, p. 5). This critique is directed towards those conceptualizations of populism such as the sociological and the economic which see populism as intrinsically linked to some necessary background conditions. On the contrary,

Weyland locates populism in the sphere of the domination of power relations rather than as necessarily related to the distribution of material resources. Populist leaders embrace anti-elitist rhetoric and are defiant toward the status quo, relying on the friend-enemy dichotomy which is typically political (Weyland 2001, p. 11). One of the contributions of Weyland's work is that he systematized the conceptualization of populism. Moreover, maintaining that populism does not need a specific socioeconomic context to emerge and flourish furnishes important insights into the relationship between populism and neoliberalism which has been previously neglected.

Considering populism as a strategy means conceiving of it as an instrument the leader wields to win and exercise political power. Even though this definition makes clear that populism could lead to different types of policies, there are at least three the problems with it.

First, this definition focuses only on the populist leader, while populism can also express itself through other types of political entities, such as parties or social movements (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014). Holding that only personalistic leaders can embrace populism means that the number of possible cases shrinks considerably. The second weakness is related to the top-down directionality of populism. I do not intend to dismiss the fact that in most cases populism is a consequence of the actions of the leader but, in some cases, populism is enacted by the will of the base generating a bottom-up dynamic. One clear example of this dynamic is Podemos in Spain. is the party formed as due to the push of a social movement — los Indignados or 15M — striving to create a more participative democracy than the essentially two-party system formed by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the Partido Popular (PP) (Ramiro and Gomez, 2017; Kioupkiolis, 2016). The third weakness is related to the survivor of populism without the leader. In fact, this approach does not explain why populism, in some cases, survives the retirement or the death of the leader. A clear example is *Chavismo* in Venezuela after the death of Chávez in 2013.

It is worth noting that the precedent differences are analytical, i.e. differences relative to the definition and to the attributes that are present in a manifestation of populism, but populism is a contested concept on another level too. From a normative point of view, some scholars conceive populism as a pathology or disease (Pasquino, 2013) while others define it as a truly democratic force (see Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). For the purposes of this work, I maintain that whether populism is a danger to democracy is mainly an empirical question. To answer this question, we should analyze the threat each manifestation of populism may pose democracy individually. The negative often negative of populism arises from the fact that at least in Western Europe populism has mostly appeared joined with nativism and authoritarianism in the form of populist radical right parties (Mudde 2011, 2013; Stavrakakis,

2018). Parties like the Front National in France, the Lega Nord (FN) in Italy and Fidesz in Hungary are currently at the center of the political and journalistic discussion for being in some respects at odds with *liberal* democracy. However, even though populism can generate some frictions with liberal democracy, mostly for conceiving of the people as a monolithic, unified subject and not recognizing the rights of minorities (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018), nativism has been the real game-changer in some Western European countries during the last two decades. It is true that populism exploits the tension in liberal democracy between majority rule and minority rights. Populists “criticize violations of the principle of majority rule as a breach of the very notion of democracy, arguing that ultimate political authority is vested in ‘the people’ and not in unelected bodies” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 82).

However, populism and nativism are often conflated in the public and sometimes even in the academic debate. For example, the Cambridge Dictionary argues that “what sets populism apart (...) is that it represents a phenomenon both truly local and truly global, as populations and their leaders across the world wrestle with issues of immigration and trade, resurgent nationalism and economic discontent”. However, the anti-immigration stance is not a defining attribute of populism, neither if populism is defined as an ideology nor if it is defined as a political strategy. This conceptual confusion was patent in the coverage of national elections in several countries such as Netherlands, Austria, Italy and France—in which the populist parties were radical right parties—which have been depicted as a contest between populist forces and the status quo. Radical right parties’ core ideology is not populism but nativism, which is defined as “an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’), and that non-native people and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation state (Mudde, 2011, 2015). As a consequence, even though populism is surely a component of the radical right experience in Western Europe, it is secondary to nativism.

1.2.2 The ideational approach

The ideational approach has been gaining ground in the academic debate on populism (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018; Hawkins et al., 2018). Scholars employing this approach focus on one particular characteristic of populism: its ideas. More specifically, the ideas, which are common to the discourse of populist actors, manifest themselves in a “shared way of seeing the political world as a Manichean struggle between the will of the people and an evil, conspiring elite” (Hawkins et al., 2018, p. 2). In other words, the ideational approach sees

populism as “first and foremost a moral worldview that is used to both criticize the establishment and construct a romanticized view of the people” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 496).

In sum, the ideational definition represents a minimal definition that sees populism as a political discourse that posits a struggle between the people and their will versus a conspiring elite.

Within the ideational strand of literature, scholars have developed different approaches, focusing on discourse (Laclau, 2005; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018), ideology (Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), frame (Aslanidis, 2016a; Caiani and Della Porta, 2010) and mode of identification (Panizza, 2005) of the populist ideas.

Even if all these conceptualizations fall under the ideational approach, there are some minor differences especially between those who define populism as an ideology and those who define it as a discourse. Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser observed that the “argument that that populism should be defined in ideational terms [is] very similar to the discursive definition used among some Latin Americanists” (2017, p. 514). More in detail, the ideational approach to populism is close to the conceptualization of Ernesto Laclau and other scholars (Mouffe, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2017). Both approaches in fact normally address cases like *chavismo* in Venezuela and SYRIZA in Greece.

As mentioned above, the so-called discursive conceptualization of populism belongs in the ideational category (Hawkins *et al.*, 2018, p. 4). Indeed, both approaches—the Laclauian and the view that populism is a thin ideology—place populism in the realm of ideas and highlight the popular identity and the antagonistic relationship with a morally corrupt elite. However, there are some differences. Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) highlight three of them. First, the Laclauian approach to populism carries a strong normative stance with its talk of populism’s goal of “transforming politics and break[ing] with the liberal status quo” (2017, p. 516). On the contrary, the approach that conceives of populism as an ideology is more prone to enable the generation of empirical knowledge and avoids making normative judgments (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

Moreover, Laclau tends to see populism as the only democratic discourse that is capable of “unifying and inspiring large majorities around a transformative project” (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 516). However, the reason for limiting this redemptive feature only to the populist discourse is unclear. Mudde’s approach considers other types of redemptive discourse, such as a pluralist one. Lastly, seeing populism as an ideology separates from an analytical point of view the existence of populism and its rhetoric from its effects on politics (Hawkins

and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Laclau, on the contrary, “tends to limit populism to movements that attract a numerical majority” (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017, p. 516). Indeed, his notion of discourse blurs the difference between populist ideas and how they play out in the political domain. This becomes a problem since it excludes from under the populist umbrella minoritarian movements such as, in some countries, a populist radical right without charismatic leadership (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Keeping in mind that the ideational approach unifies all those conceptualizations that see populism as a set of ideas, following the conceptualization elaborated by Cas Mudde (2004, 2007b), I define populism as a “thin-centered ideology that considers society ultimately divided into two homogeneous groups the ‘pure’ people versus the ‘corrupt’ elite, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people”(Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012, 2017).

Ideology is the *genus* of the concept. Populism is defined as a “thin” ideology which can be associated with “thick” or “full” ideologies such as communism, socialism or fascism (Mudde 2017, p. 30). Accordingly, the internal barriers that the populist discourse creates are different depending on the type of populism, i.e. the host ideology to which populism cleaves. In other words, populism has a restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to—and sometimes even assimilated into—existing ideological families (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Conceiving of populism as an ideology is similar to understanding it as a frame through which individuals, both politicians and individuals, comprehend political reality.

This definition, then, conceives of populism as an ideology that is employed by political entrepreneurs but also shared by social groups that have reasons for adhering to this worldview. Conceiving of populism as an ideology means that it is not always imposed in a top-down dynamic. On the contrary, the populist set of ideas is also shared by some social groups that have an interest in doing so. By conceptualizing populism as an ideology, we can understand that its rise and fall are “related to both the supply-side and demand-side factors” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 497). Following Sartori (1970), defining a concept means also saying *what* the concept *is not*. In other words, this definition of populism only makes sense if there is a non-populism. Populism as an ideology has from a theoretical point of view two direct opposites: elitism and pluralism. Elitism shares populism’s monistic view of society being divided into two homogeneous, antagonistic groups but holds an opposite view on the virtues of the groups (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2013, p. 499). Elitists believe that they are superior in moral, cultural and intellectual terms (Bachrach, 1967). Pluralism, on the other side, rejects the monism of populism and elitism, maintaining that society is divided into a broad

variety of partly overlapping social groups with different ideas and interests. To pluralists, diversity is a strength, and power is supposed to be distributed throughout the society to prevent specific groups from imposing their will.

Following Ochoa Espejo, the key in distinguishing the between populists and pluralists (or liberal democrats) is to determine *who* the people are who legitimize the state. Pluralism, on the one hand, frames its appeal in a way that guarantees and requires that the people be unbounded and open to change both in fact and in principle. On the other hand, populists reject any limits on their claims to embody the will of the people (2015, p. 61). This difference between populism and pluralism has to do at the same time with openness and self-limitation because if “the people can (and probably will) change, then any appeal to its will is also fallible, temporary and incomplete” (Ochoa Espejo, 2015, p. 61). One of the examples she treats is Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), presidential candidate for the Leftist PRD party in Mexico and leader of the Coalición por el Bien de Todos (CPBT) in 2006. When he lost the national election by a thin margin, he refused to accept the tribunal’s ruling. First, he and his supporters engaged in act of civil disobedience. Later, after rejecting the tribunal’s final ruling, he took an alternative oath of office and assumed the title of “Legitimate President”, organizing a “shadow” government (Ochoa Espejo, 2015, p. 79).

More features of the ideational conceptualization of populism merit discussion. To start with, it is important to examine how the people are defined. For populists, people are not only pure but also the only legitimate guardians of democracy. Populism has a monolithic conception of the “pure people”. The people are conceived of as a corporate body and they are assumed to have the same interests and a common will (Canovan, 2002). Populists, then, have given different interpretations of “the people”. As Kriesi (2014) points out, populism’s meaning varies with the understanding given to “the people” i.e. to the idealized conception of the community (the heartland) to which it applies (see also Hawkins, 2010). Mudde defines them as a “mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population” or “an imagined community” (2004, p. 546).

Moreover, populism is conceived of as a contraposition of two homogenous groups: the people, who are pure, and the elite, who are corrupt. The pure people and the corrupt elite are constructed categories that can vary over time and space. Depending on which enemies populists blame for the condition of the country, we can identify different types of populism.

In other words, populism is defined as a thin ideology because it is only the confrontation between “us” and “them” that is given. The exact identity of these two categories, on the other hand, changes and this changing allows us to identify different sub types of populism. These

categories are what Laclau (2005) calls “floating signifiers”, i.e. empty containers with no clear meanings. Looking at the three waves of Latin American populism, we can see examples in the conceptualizations of “the people” and “the elite” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014).

The so-called first wave of populism in Latin America, between the 1940s and the 1960s, saw the rise of populist leaders such as Perón in Argentina and Vargas in Brazil. In their discourse, the people consisted mainly of the natural base of the left, the urban and the rural poor. At the same time, the elite were depicted as those “that opposed the expansion of the state, the nationalization of the economy and the implementation of protectionist trade policies”. (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 498). The second wave of Latin American populism, which was characterized by the use of neoliberal discourse, the people were seen as a passive mass of individuals. On the other hand, the “corrupt elite” was represented by “those actors who profited from the state-led development model and were opposed to the implementation of the policies of the so-called Washington Consensus (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 498).

Finally, in the third wave, beginning at the end of the 1990s, populist leaders strongly opposed free-market policies, instead appealing to the ideology of Americanismo. The people then became all those discriminated against and excluded while the elite became “the defenders of neoliberalism and the political actors who support a Western model of democracy that is not suitable for Latin America” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014, p. 499). These are clear example of how “floating signifiers” have been used in the different Latin American populist experiences.

Last, another important element in this definition of populism is its assumption that politics should be expression of the general will of the people. This, in turn, reveals a particular perspective on democracy. Stating that populists believe that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people means that populists take “government of the people” literally and are prone to refuse all checks and balances on the popular will (Kriesi, 2014, p. 363).

Populists also have a tendency to reject all kinds of intermediary institutional bodies between the people and the decision-makers and have a strong anti-institutional impulse (Canovan, 1999). This ideological definition is useful because it allows us to account for the variation in time and space in the definition of “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite.” A corollary of this advantage is that we can distinguish different subtypes of populism such as exclusionary or inclusionary populism (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013a) or populist radical right parties in Western Europe which flourished in the last two decades (Mudde, 2010; De Lange, 2007). Being able to distinguish between different sub-types of populism allow us to map the configuration of the populist/anti-populist cleavage, which is one of the aims of this research.

1.3 The populism/anti-populist cleavage

Academic contributions on populism are abundant. In Western Europe, there is a developed scholarly tradition on the fortunes of the so-called populist radical right (Mudde, 2015; Mudde, 2011; Bale et al., 2010; Betz, 1993). Events such like Brexit and Donald Trump's election have been largely analyzed through the lens of populism. However, with some exceptions (Ostiugy, 2009; Pappas, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2014; Stavrakakis, 2018; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018), few studies focused on populism from the perspective to its capacity to structure political competition in a certain party system. In other words, few of these studies are interested in answering the question about the determinants of the configuration of populism and its counterpart (anti-populism) as a political cleavage. As Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2018) pointed out "while aspects of this antagonistic dialectic between populism and anti-populism have been occasionally discussed in the relevant literature (...) its real nature and implications have not been properly investigated". Looking at Latin America, in those countries in which populist leaders held power for a long period of time, such as Argentina and Venezuela, a new cleavage emerged between those for and against. In fact, it is impossible to understand Argentinian politics without considering the Peronism/anti-Peronism divide, or Venezuelan without the opposition between chavistas and anti-chavistas.

The aim of this section is to explain that populism/anti-populism, in certain circumstances, should be understood as a specific type of cleavage. However, first it is necessary define what cleavages are. In political science, two different types of cleavages structure the party system: the sociological and the political. After explaining the characteristics of these two types of cleavage, I present my own conceptualization of populist polarization, which is a situation in which the populism/anti-populism political divide gains traction and become crucial in structuring the political space.

1.3.1 Cleavages in Political Science

How can polarization and populism explain the current political landscape in some countries? As we have seen, these two concepts have not been analyzed together, at least in the Western European literature and they require a concept that helps bridge them. I believe the concept of cleavages can join the two together. Roughly speaking, cleavages are divides that organize political competition in a Western European party system. When cleavages polarize, they

structure the system. As a consequence, seeing populism anti/populism cleavage and analyzing its polarization can give us insights on the structure of certain party systems.

In what follows, I discuss the literature on cleavages in political science and I characterize the populism/anti-populism divide as a political cleavage.

Without a doubt, cleavage is one of the classic concepts in modern political science. It was introduced by the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) on the origins and the stabilization of the Western European party systems.

Even though the term was coined by Lipset and Rokkan, the literature on cleavages can be roughly divided into two strands: on one side some scholars, following Lipset and Rokkan (1967), advocate for a sociological (or classical) conceptualization of cleavages. On the other hand, a more recent and less European strand maintains that cleavages can just be conceived of as political fractures without clear social correlates (Roberts, 2016; Sitter, 2002).

Let us see in detail the features and the differences between these two conceptualizations.

1.3.1.1 Sociological cleavages

The concept of cleavage was first developed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Cleavages are, according to the authors, dichotomous divisions of society in two opposing camps that are determined by the position of individuals in the social structure. Most contemporary European parties, they argue, have their origins in the radical socio-economic and political changes that occurred between the mid-19th century and the first two decades of the 20th (Caramani, 2008, p. 319). More specifically, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) maintained that two historical events were crucial: the Industrial Revolution and the National Revolution. While the former refers to changes related with the processes of industrialization and urbanization, the latter is linked to formation of nation-states and liberal democracies (Caramani, 2008, p. 319–20). These two historical processes produced divisions that, in turn, generated political parties.

These two revolutions created socio-economic and cultural fractures that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) named cleavages. Modern party families are then the result of the political translation of social divisions in systems in which conflict is increasingly settled through vote (Caramani, 2008; Kitschelt, 2007).

The National Revolution of the early 19th century, produced the center-periphery and the state-church cleavage. The first fracture resulted from the conflict generated by those who resisted the centralization and the cultural standardization of the nation-state. The state-church fracture represented the conflict between those who supported a secularized state and those

who advocated for the aristocratic privilege and for church control of education. From here emerged respectively the liberal and the conservative parties.

The Industrial Revolution, in turn, generated the rural-urban and the workers-employers cleavage. The rural-urban fracture is the product of the conflict between the industrial and the agricultural sectors of the economy with respect to trade policies. The workers-employers represents the fight between the capital owners against the emerging working class with regards to issues related to job security. The parties that emerge from this division are the mass parties—mainly socialist and communist parties confronting elite parties.

Party systems, therefore, emerged and stabilized around those cleavages which are basic social fractures which are deep structural divides that persist through time (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967).

As these divisions are very deep, they end up configuring alignments between the two sides of society and political parties. Parties, then, for Lipset and Rokkan (1967) integrate local communities into the great project of the nation. Also, parties act as the main agent of political mobilization, bringing to light the latent conflicts in the society in which they are inserted and forcing citizens to ally with each other.

The study of political parties has, for this sociological approach, immense importance, since it is they that will gather and stimulate not only the appearance of social fractures or cleavages, but the mobilization around these cleavages and the subsequent electoral behavior. But, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967) strive to make clear, not all a society's conflicts and controversies come to polarize the political scene, since some will remain latent.

Among the scholars that have tried to give Lipset and Rokkans' conceptualization of cleavage a bit more of specificity, Bartolini and Mair pointed out that a cleavage needs to feature at least three necessary attributes. First, it requires an empirical element, which identifies the referent of the concept and which can be defined in social-structural terms. Second, cleavages feature a normative element, the set of values and beliefs which provides a sense of identity and role to the empirical element. This set of values and beliefs also reflects the self-consciousness of the social group(s) involved. Lastly, there is the necessity of an organizational/behavioral element. This element refers to the set of individual interactions, institutions, and organizations, such as political parties, which develop as part of the cleavage (1990, p. 215). In sum, maintaining that a proper cleavage needs to possess all three characteristics, for Bartolini and Mair a cleavage "has therefore to be considered primarily as a form of closure of social relationships" (1990, p. 216).

Following this strand of literature, cleavages have three characteristics. First a cleavage is a division that has its roots in sociological differences such as status, ethnicity or religion. Second, there must be a sense of collective identity involved, in the sense that the members of the group are aware that they share the characteristic on which the cleavage is grounded. Third, a cleavage must find organizational expression, for instance through a party or a trade union (Mair, 1997).

With respect to the stabilization of the party systems, Lipset and Rokkan observed that, despite the foment Western society has experienced during the 20th century, “it is noteworthy how little the formal party systems have changed, though their programmatic content is different. Essentially the cleavages have been institutionalized (...) since the contemporary party systems still resemble those of pre-World War I Europe” (Karvonen and Kuhnle, 2001, p. 6). The freezing hypothesis, an admittedly minor part of Lipset and Rokkan’s contribution, has been at the center of a debate at least for the 1960s onwards. The discussion started in the mid-1970s when in the Western world saw the emergence of the so-called post-materialistic issues like environmentalism, the use of nuclear power, gender equality and minority status (Inglehart, 1997; 2000) As Lipset pointed out these issues “have been perceived by some social analysts as the social consequences of an emerging third ‘revolution’, the Post-Industrial which introduced new bases of social and political cleavage” (Karvonen and Kuhnle, 2001, p. 7). Following the work of Inglehart (1997), scholars began to point out the emergence of new social divides. These new divides separated those employed in the production of material goods from those employed in the post-industrial economy, whose higher education levels often correspond with greater concern with quality of life issues. This new divide at the sociological level, in certain party systems, has been represented by different groups such as the Green parties or the New Left. This partial rearrangement within some Western European countries surely fostered new parties and realigned bases of support, even though the old cleavages continued to be relevant. In more general terms, following Mair, the freezing hypothesis advanced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) can be interpreted in two different ways. In one view, the Lipset-Rokkan argument remains valid considering “the presence in contemporary competitive politics of many of the traditional party alternatives as well as (...) long-term party organizational continuity over time” (2001, p. 27). The other approach proposes that to validate the freezing hypothesis, it is necessary to “establish that cleavages persist, and that contemporary mass politics continues to be grounded among traditional social oppositions” (Mair, 2001, p. 27). For the first group of scholars, the freezing hypothesis remains more or less valid, while for the other, it is no longer effective., Looking at electoral and partisan

stability at the aggregate level through the 1980s, there is a tendency towards continuity in those patterns, at least in the majority of the studies (Pedersen, 1979; Maguire, 1983; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). However, other studies evaluated the freezing hypothesis rely on the social structural determinants of voting preferences (Inglehart, 1984; Kriesi, 1998). These studies show the gradual decay of cleavage politics, at least in the social-structural sense of the term.

This process responds to the party adopting a less choosy and a more catch-all approach. At the same time, the social structure experiences a dramatic change, with the erosion of both class and religious identities during the recent decades (Mair, 1997). This erosion, in turn, resulted in more fragmented collective identities. In sum, it can be said that the evidence in favor of and against the validity of Lipset and Rokkan's hypothesis of cleavage freezing is mixed.

To conclude, a cleavage needs to satisfy three conditions, namely the existence of stable and aligned demographics, shared attitudes and party choices. Although this conceptualization of cleavage is the most employed, at least to explain party systems in Western Europe, another, more recent conceptualization has emerged. In the next section I examine the so-called political cleavages.

Although is true that all sociological cleavages arguments came from the literature on Europe, there have been cases where the same type of argument has been used to understand politics beyond Europe, such as Chile. Unlike the rest of Latin America, Chile has often been considered a paradigmatic case of partisan competition around social and religious cleavages, at least until the *coup d'état* of 1973 (Dix, 1989; Scully, 1992; 1995; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2003).

1.3.1.2 Political Cleavages

As mentioned above, the second strand of literature refers to cleavages as political fractures that structure party systems even without clear sociological correlates. This type of fracture has been named a political (Levitsky et al., 2016) or non-structural cleavage (Sitter, 2002).

It is true that the European scholarly tradition presumes that cleavages are grounded in sociological distinctions of class, ethnicity, religion, or region (Roberts, 2016, p. 56; see also Deegan-Krause, 2007). However, it is worth remembering that Lipset and Rokkan also acknowledged that "the possibility that the parties themselves might establish themselves as significant poles of attraction and produce their alignments independently of the geographical, the social and the cultural underpinnings of the movements" (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967, p. 3).

In general terms and in line with the reasoning on party system change, it is worth noting that the classical conception of cleavages à la Lipset and Rokkan is facing challenges on at least three fronts. First, while Lipset and Rokkan focused their work on the origins of party systems in Western European countries, there are new cases of party system formation in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. In the second place, new data and methods have emerged to measure the presence of cleavages. Third, a new conception and understanding of the term “cleavage” has arisen (Deegan-Krause, 2007). With respect to the last point, the conceptual tie between political cleavage and social divisions is not necessarily maintained in all uses of the concept (Zuckerman, 1975, p. 235). Daalder for example, analyzing the five types of cleavages in Europe, maintained that two — nationality and regime — have no necessary ties to divisions within the society. Also, Dogan differentiates political cleavages from the broader category of political divisions, pointing out that the former persists over time and have extensive membership, as shown in electoral behavior (see also Zuckerman, 1975, p. 235). In his definition, political cleavages do not need to have sociological roots. Geoffrey Roberts in his *Dictionary of Political Analysis* defines a cleavage as “the condition of division between members of a political group or political system, and thus the opposite of consensus” (1971, p. 33).

Zuckerman maintains that “though in the embryonic form, the literature exhibits a modicum overlapping usage which permits the development of a typology of a political cleavage as well as the distinction of political cleavage within the general category of political division” (1975, p. 236). In a similar vein Kitschelt (2008) constructed a typology with the aim of differentiating between divides and cleavages. He used two criteria: the durability of the issue division and the centrality of the division for the organization of the party system (Kitschelt, 2007, p. 532). For the interest of this study it is worth noting that Kitschelt assumes the possibility of cleavages that do not necessarily reflect social divisions. For Kitschelt, political partisan cleavages feature high durability and an intermediate level of centrality of division for the organization of the party system (2008, p. 532).

A certain strand of scholarly thought then admits that merely political divisions, which may or may not have sociological roots and still structure the party system. Moreover, since any competitive party system must “cleave” the electorate as rival parties mobilize support, cleavages constructed in the political arena between rival party organizations – without reference to social group distinctions – are not necessarily unstable alignments (Roberts, 2016). An example that Roberts uses to underline this last point is the structuration of the American party system. The fact that Republicans and Democrats have no subjacent social divides has

not prevented competition along a stable axis or political cleavage in the US party system. This political cleavage surely has weak sociological roots, but it stands on parties' programmatic brands or "reputations," and it sorts voters into rival partisan camps according to their policy preferences (Roberts, 2016; Sniderman and Stiglitz, 2012).

Another example of political cleavage lies in Latin America. In Chile, some scholars think the so-called democracy-authoritarianism cleavage shaped political competition in the system. From an organizational point of view, the two opposed coalitions, "Concertación" and "Alianza," are descendants of the coalitions after the return to democracy (Tironi and Agüero, 1999). Starting with the plebiscite of 1988, a political divide emerged at the party system level. The reproduction of this political-cultural divide was helped by the instauration of the binominal electoral system (Tironi, Agüero and Valenzuela, 2001). Analyzing the post-Pinochet political system, Tironi and Agüero maintained that the origins of that configuration needed to be found not in the social cleavages, mainly class, that had structured the system before the military took the power. Instead, the bipolar competition pattern within the Chilean party system was a consequence of a new political-cultural divide, namely authoritarianism-democracy (see also Tironi, Agüero, and Valenzuela, 2001). In other words, from the restoration of democracy in 1989 until perhaps the constitutional reform in 2017, "social cleavages seem to explain less about new patterns of political competition than a purely *political* cleavage shaped by party elites with opposing positions on the 1973 coup, Pinochet's legacy and democracy" (Bonilla *et al.*, 2011, p. 10; see also Torcal and Mainwaring, 2003). Some former Communist countries also provide a good case in point. Evans and Whitefield (1993), for instance, examine the emerging structure of party competition in new democracies in Eastern Europe. Their analysis shows that in some countries "the constraints under which market transition is taking place are likely to result in a lack of structured competition based on socio-economic cleavages of the sort to be found in Western Europe" (Evans and Whitefield 1993, p. 522).

In more general terms, the so-called missing middle approach "proposes that the communist legacy has led to individuals lacking institutional or social structural identities from which to derive political interest other than those of the nation or mass society" (Evans and Whitefield, 1993, p. 534).

Historical legacies of Communism, then, made hard for former Communist parties to develop party systems based on solid social divisions. At the same time, Kitschelt maintained that "the clash of interests between relative winners and losers of transition would lead to the alignment of the main axis of competition between parties which offered pro-market,

cosmopolitan, and internationalist policies, and parties which offered particularist, interventionist and anti-integrationist policies” (1992, p. 16). In other words, if Communist legacies may have, for some scholars, inhibited the formation of stable cleavages at both the social and party system level, at the same time, they allow political actors to establish a more immediate type of linkage with voters. This division can be conceived of as a liberal-communist divide at the party system level.

In sum, cleavage in political science has been conceptualized in two ways. The classic or sociological definition of cleavages describes them as competitive alignments based on major social divisions (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 1990). More recently, other conceptualizations have developed. Among these alternative definitions, some scholars started to point out that some party systems are structured by fractures with low or absent sociological ties.

One last point needs to be made. Political cleavages are not necessarily less stable than classic ones. The stability in the pattern of competition within some party systems, such as Chile after 1989, Greece and Italy during the Second Republic and in recent years, demonstrates that even when strong cleavages are not present, their absence does not prevent the system from forming a remarkably stable competitive axis. Also, with regards to the former Communist party systems, Sitter pointed that “non-structural cleavages that focus on regime change or approaches to nationalism may be as significant as the socio-economic cleavages generated by the process of economic transition” (2002, p. 430). With respect to the stabilization of the vote in the former communist region there is also evidence that “[v]alues are definitely more effective in sustaining party loyalty than are the effects of socio-demographic traits unmediated by those value orientations” (Toka, 1998, p. 607). In other words, there are studies that show that the combination of values and structure does not stabilize preferences more than values do (Enyedi and Deegan-Krause, 2007, p. 5). Enyedi and Deegan-Krause (2007) observed that, even in Western Europe, countries such as Ireland have reached a considerable degree of electoral and party stability, developed despite weak structural bases and personality-centered electoral systems (see also Mair, 1997). In any case there is no a priori reason why such ‘non-structural’ cleavages (that lack the objective element) should not be as divisive or decisive as structural cleavages (Sitter, 2002, p. 430).

1.3.2 What is the populism/anti-populism cleavage?

In the last 20 years, several countries have witnessed political changes at the party system level that have undoubtedly increased partisan polarization, especially along the populism/anti-populism divide. For instance, populist radical right parties that have gained electoral power in European party systems since the 1980s cannot be explained only by the polarization of the left-right axis because that cleavage rests on disputes about the role of the state regarding socio-economic issues (Kriesi, 2014). Nevertheless, populist radical right parties do not necessarily focus on economic issues; rather, they try to politicize the topic of immigration. It is important, then, to consider another axis that has already been taken into account by some other scholars (Pappas, 2014; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). The axis that helps us understand the present situation in some countries in Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Latin America is what I call populism/anti-populism.

Following the preceding argument, I maintain that to understand the political situation not only in Western Europe but also in Latin America, and probably elsewhere, it would be useful to consider partisan polarization along a different cleavage, overcoming the traditional left-right socio-economic and other classic cleavages (e.g. state-church conflict or center-periphery). This cleavage is not completely new in the literature, but even if populism has been a recurrent topic on the academic agenda during recent years, the importance of this divide in structuring party systems has been largely underestimated (see Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2018) with some notable exceptions (Ostiguy, 2009; Stavrakakis et al. 2018; Stavrakakis, 2018).

In analyzing the social divisions in Western Europe, Hanspeter Kriesi (2004; 2008; 2014) observed that even though Lipset and Rokkan's freezing hypothesis does not seem to hold, this has not necessarily led to an end of the structuration of politics by cleavages. The author observes a new division operating mainly at the middle-class level, which is shown by the contraposition between those defending individual autonomy and an egalitarian distribution of resources (Kitschelt, 1994) and those who, by contrast, are characterized as warmer to the idea of free market and who "have an idea of community which is more authoritarian, paternalistic and organization-centered" (Kriesi, 1998, p. 169). This division is similar to the "new values" cleavage (Inglehart, 1984) that produced the new left in the mid-1960s, but, as the author pointed out, "it is not able to fully account for the enormous political implications which contrasting value-orientations have today" (Kriesi, 1998, p. 165). Against the mobilization of New Social Movements during the 1960s, a conservative counter-revolution gained

momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, when the issue of immigration offered a possibility for right-wing parties to mobilize the anti-universalistic counter-potential against the libertarian left (Bornschieer, 2012, p. 123). Those who support this counter-revolution (Ignazi, 1992) against universalist values are called globalization's losers and we expect them to seek to protect themselves through protectionist measures and through an emphasis on national independence (Ignazi, 1992). Winners, by contrast, who benefit from the increased competition, should support the opening up of the national boundaries and the process of international integration (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 922).

While I agree with Kriesi about the existence of a two-dimensional space of competition in most Western European countries, the conceptualization of populist/anti-populist cleavage I propose is different from Kriesi's (2014) integration/demarcation for at least two reasons.

First, unlike the integration/demarcation cleavage the populism/anti-populism one is a *political* cleavage. As explained above, political cleavages are not necessarily rooted in sociological fractures like Lipset and Rokkan's classic cleavages. On the other hand, integration/demarcation for Kriesi is a cultural divide that represents changes at the societal level that started during the 1960s. In fact, building on the classical theory on cleavages, Kriesi includes the social structure as a major and necessary constituting element.

The globalization or integration/demarcation cleavage for Kriesi "partially overlaps with some of the topics of the traditional divides related to anticlericalism, nationalism, and traditionalism, but embraces many new topics as well, like environmentalism, euthanasia, international equality, European integration, etc." (Enyedi and Deegan-Krause, 2007). As a consequence, the globalization cleavage that Kriesi proposed is not fully orthogonal to the classical divides. However, given the different natures of populism/anti-populism and integration/demarcation, it can be the case that the two cleavages may co-exist in a given party system.

The second difference is related to the fact that even if Kriesi's conceptualization is very useful for understanding certain aspects of current political dynamics, Kriesi's "adaptation hypothesis" assumes that "the new conflict can be expected to reinforce the classic opposition between a pro-state and a pro-market position while giving it a new meaning" (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 13). In fact, he states that the most probable impact of globalization on the party system would be an "intensification of political conflicts within mainstream political parties as a consequence of their attempt to redefine their ideological profiles" (Kriesi et al., 2008).

Basically, in most the cases, the party system responds to globalization challenges by just adding new issues to the left-right cleavage, not by changing its structure. I am not quite

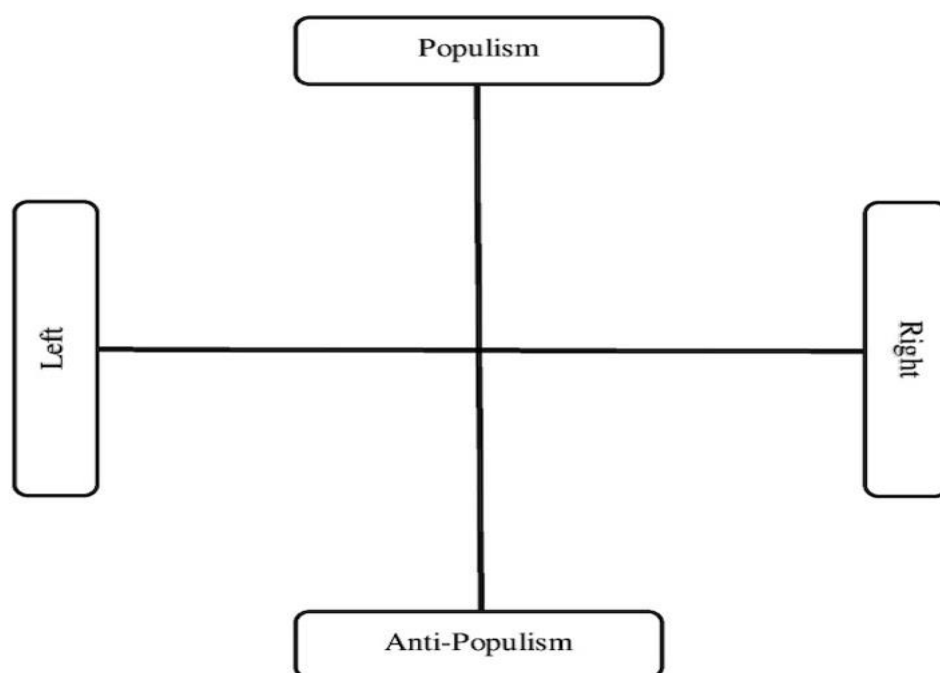
convinced. An important feature of my conceptualization refers to the full neutrality of the populism/anti-populism dimension with respect to the classic left-right axis.

By contrary, the conceptualization of the populism/anti-populism cleavage that I propose more resembles the high-low divide characterized by Pierre Ostiguy (2009). In various contributions (2009, 2017), Ostiguy maintained that certain party systems around the world are partially structured by a divide that he called high vs. low. It could be also the case that the high-low divide completely structures an entire party system, as in Argentina and Venezuela. Ostiguy's high and low axis is formed by two components: the socio-cultural and the political-cultural. High and low are defined as "ways of relating to people" and they "include issues of accents, level of language, body language, gestures, ways of dressing, etc." (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 55). As a way of relating to people, they also encompass the way of making decisions."

There are, however, some differences. First, Ostiguy named this dimension low-high. This difference is not substantial because the author pointed out that the low-high category represents the populism/anti-populism debate. The reason why he decided not to name the categories populism/anti-populism is related to the fact that the term "low highlights the neutrality of populism, often forgotten in the heat of debates, with regard to left and right [...] while 'populism' is generally mentioned in isolation from the countervailing political (and normative) reaction it generates; the low is actually one of the two poles of what is a dimension scale" (Ostiguy, 2009, p. 4). However, if populism is defined as a set of ideas, it is surely possible to place the political actors on a continuum and say that one is one or less populist than another. The main difference between the populism/anti-populism cleavage and high/low is that while the former refers purely to the ideology and discourse, the latter includes heterogeneous aspects such as politicians' way of speaking, their dress, etc. Another relevant piece of work which employs the populism/anti-populism divide to analyze the system of competition among political actors. In a recent contribution, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2018) in analyzing post-authoritarian Greece maintained that alongside the classic socioeconomic cleavage (left-right) the populist/anti-populist discursive divide structured the party system from 1974 until the 1980s, when the socialist alternative Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) shifted from populist to anti-populist positions similar to New Democracy's (ND). In this way, with the disappearance of the populist pole and the convergence of the two main alternative on the same positions, the cleavage faded. However, this condition did not last long. In fact, despite the privileging of consensus by traditional political parties, the sociopolitical field started to become more contentious after 2008. The economic crisis had a profound effect on the political system and was a critical juncture that

reactivated the populism/anti-populism divide with the rise of the populist right-left SYRIZA as an electorally relevant force capable of channeling popular discontent towards the austerity measures imposed to the country by both Greek and European elites. The January and September 2015 national elections saw the collaboration of SYRIZA and the populist right-wing Independent Greeks of ANEL (ANEL), who also opposed the austerity measures. Among other insights, mainly into Greek politics, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis' contribution (2018) is particularly relevant for at least two reasons. First, it refers only to the discourse of the political leaders, leaving aside other characteristics that could be strongly influenced by the context, such as ways of speech and dress. Secondly as the authors pointed out, they started to fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the role of anti-populism, which has never been studied as such since “bringing it to the fore [allows studying] populism and anti-populism together and focusing on their mutual constitution from a discursive perspective” (Stavrakakis et al., 2017).

Figure 1.1: Political space of competition in party systems with populism/anti-populism and left-right



Having acknowledged the differences and the similarities between other “new” cleavages in the literature, I maintain that there are some party systems where the parties compete only on the socioeconomic left-right axis; in other words, in some places, this cleavage is the only one that structures the system. In other cases, as shown in figure one, the left-right axis and the

populism/anti-populism axes are both relevant while in others, the only relevant axis of competition is populism/anti-populism. This is relevant to polarization at least in two different ways.

The first is conceptual. As observed earlier, the concept is widely used, but not well defined. Acknowledging that a certain degree of polarization is needed for a cleavage to emerge and structure the system means avoiding those interpretations that consider polarization as a dichotomic concept, a feature that a certain party system may have or not. In other words, to effectively structure a party system, there may exist some degree of polarization on one or more axis of competition. If no polarization is present, then the divide is not relevant for the partisan competition. This observation stresses even more the neutrality of the concept.

The second argument is normative in the sense that some degree of polarization is necessary because it fulfills a basic function for the party system, strengthening party brand and bolstering party attachments (Lupu, 2015). For instance, in new democracies, mass partisanship may “institutionalize party systems, stabilize elections and consolidate the democratic regime” (Lupu 2015, p. 332; see also Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). This rejects the negative connotation often attributed to the concept. As recalled earlier, it is not polarization per se which is dangerous for the party system or the political regime. On the contrary, extreme convergence can be as dangerous as excessive polarization for the stability of the party system.

Furthermore, introducing the concept of polarization is relevant because if we are interested in studying partisan polarization, it is important to know where to search. In other words, if we do not first understand the competition dynamics of a certain party system, we will not be able to say whether it is polarized or not because it could be either polarized on the left-right axis, on the populism/anti-populism axis or on the both of them.

As the populism/anti-populism cleavage is a political cleavage, i.e. a divide that does not necessarily have sociological roots, to be differentiated from an issue-based divide, it needs to have strength and duration in time. As a consequence, I determine whether a case satisfies the following two facets of the emergence of the cleavage. To determine whether the cleavage is really structuring the system, identifying the presence of populist parties is insufficient. In many party systems, there are populist parties, but ones too weak to frame the discourse in a polarizing manner and to stir up the reaction of non-populist parties to develop an anti/populist discourse. Things change when populist parties are electorally relevant. In these cases, populist options are able to gain broader consensus and non-populist alternatives will need to develop a counter-ideology to frame the political situation of “crisis” (see Meguid, 2005).

To measure the pervasiveness of the divide, I track the percentage of the national vote that populist parties win. I establish this threshold at forty percent or more of the total. Moreover, this vote share must be maintained for two consecutive national (presidential or parliamentary) elections. In other words, for the populism/anti-populism to emerge and structure a certain party system, the sum of the vote share of the populist parties in the lower chamber needs to equal or exceed the forty percent of the total vote share in two consecutive elections.

In the case of a government coalition, the coalition is considered populist if the populist party (or parties) is preponderant within the coalition. Even though thresholds are arbitrary, I maintain that the forty percent threshold is high enough to consider only those party systems in which populist parties play an important role in the electoral arena. Furthermore, by insisting that the vote share threshold must be reached and maintained for two consecutive national elections, I weed out those ephemeral parties that may appear and disappear between an election and the following. With regards to the anti-populism pole, it may take time to effectively constitute a coherent discourse.

Having described the characteristics of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, this last section is dedicated to establishing a link between the organizational strength of parties and the possible implications for the future of the cleavage. As pointed out above, conceiving of populism as an ideology allows acknowledging that it can be manifested by different political actors such as leaders, parties and social movements (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). What are the implications of this statement? Although its answer is not exhaustive, this last section attempts to construct a bridge between the ideational approach of populism and party organization that, with some exceptions (see Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016; McDonnell, 2013; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018), has not been analyzed. More specifically, the aim of this section is giving some insight into the longevity of populist parties on the basis on their organizational characteristics. Literature on party organization is broad and parties could be classified on the basis on multiple characteristics that have do to with their organization e.g. the characteristic of their members, their leadership or their internal structure. I will focus only on one of these aspects, namely the organizational density (or strength) of parties. This is relevant because if populism is conceived of as a cleavage, the persistence of the divide is linked, among other factors, to the duration of populist parties in time.

1.4 Party organization in comparative politics

As mentioned above, populism/anti-populism is a political divide embodied by two antagonistic factions at the party system level. Since one of the aims of this work is to make inferences about the duration of the cleavage, analyzing the parties' ideology alone is not enough. The antagonistic discursive interplay between populism and anti-populism is a key factor in maintaining the cleavage, but since populism and anti-populism are embodied by parties, some of the characteristics of these parties may have an impact on the persistence of the cleavage.

To understand this, I need to focus on the precedent studies of evolution of the partisan organizations. Second, I show how this variable is useful to comprehend the configuration of the cleavage and its duration.

Parties are the principal vehicle for representation in modern democracies. "In democracies, they (political parties) represent the principal instrument through which segments of the population compete to secure control of elective institutions, and through them to exercise predominant influence over public policies" (LaPalombara and Anderson, 1992, p. 393).

However, parties vary in many aspects (Sartori, 2005a). For instance, the literature on political parties in Western Europe have classified parties by characteristics such as their structure and their procedures. Following Giovanni Sartori (2005a), there are three main criteria to classify parties: historical, functional and structural-organizational (see also Ignazi, 1996, p. 550).

First, parties can be classified following their historical evolution.

Second, it is possible to classify parties by the functions they perform. Given that parties fulfill different functions, a vast body of literature distinguishes among parties or some specific goal that they pursue (Neumann, 1956; Kirchheimer, 1966; Panebianco, 1988; Katz and Mair, 1995). Lastly, different types of parties developed different internal organization and rely in different manners on organizational resources such as members, supports or leaders (Duverger, 1954; Art, 2011).

While the three types of categorizations can be employed, I analyze the four party models that Katz and Mair (1995) elaborated: cadres parties, mass parties, catch-all parties and cartel parties. In doing so, I am able to categorize parties by their historical evolution, the main function they perform and their internal structure.

1.4.1. Types of party models

Cadres (or elite) parties historically were the first type of party. The model developed in Europe when suffrage was highly restricted. This kind of party does not particularly stress the function of representation since elected members of the parliament could count on their own mobilization resources and their personal constituencies, and there was little need of a proper organization on the ground. However, as Katz (2008) noticed “within parliament the advantages of working in concert [...] led to the evolution of parliamentary party organizations, frequently cemented by the exchange of patronage” (225). As a consequence, the organization on the territory was embryonal and “at the level of the electorate the concept of party membership remained ill defined” (Katz, 2008, p. 225). Since as stated before, the MPs could count on their personal organizational resources, there was no need for a party central office as those resources often relied on clientelist linkages. Cadre parties are described as parties with minimal organization outside of the legislature (Duverger, 1954, see also Wolinez, 2002, p. 140). In a context of low political participation, a loosely structured, elite-centered organization was crucial for the longevity of this kind of party and for the stability of the party system. When, after the process of industrialization that started in the second half of the 19th century, especially with the entrance into the political arena of the masses, this type of organization could not survive.

In the second half of the 19th century, mass parties emerged. Mass parties were the result of leaders developing parties set on being competitive and winning elections. While cadre parties maintained that they spoke on behalf of the nation, mass parties explicitly speak in favor of one determined group and frequently build their organizational structure on the pre-existing organizational structure of the group they represented (Katz, 2008, p. 225). On the internal structure point of view, the strength of mass parties was in numbers. In practice, even if mass parties represented the interests and the ideology of a limited group, membership in mass parties reached significant numbers. Consequently, unlike cadre parties, mass parties needed highly-developed organizations which aspire to enlist a large percentage of their voters as party members.

Although mass parties attained electoral success in many countries, it was evident that not all the groups desirous of parliamentary representation could count on constituencies sufficiently large enough to support a mass party (Katz, 2008). Furthermore, the party congress began to play too large a role in the party’s public engagement. Mass parties lasted while they

were able to profit from a structural change, namely the extension of the suffrage. To benefit, they adapted their internal organization to absorb the demands of the new electorate.

However, this type of party then was no longer viable and nowadays there are almost no parties that maintain this organizational structure.⁶

At this point, another type of party emerged, the catch-all parties (Kirchheimer, 1966). Building on the work of Neumann and Duverger, Kirchheimer focused on the transformation of parties of mass integration into ideologically bland catch-all parties. With the objective of gaining ground in the political arena, some of those parties gave up to the efforts of encadrement of the masses and downplayed ideology while focusing on attracting the support of broader portions of the electorate. The success of these parties pushed other parties to do the same and this, in turn, led to a change in Western European party systems (see also Wolinetz, 2002). This new type of party has the characteristics of mass party with regards to members, branches and congress but cultivates direct connection with the electorate rather than one mediated by external party organizations (Katz, 2008, p. 303). With respect to their function, catch-all parties focus on the task of contesting elections to the detriment of the others. Lastly, catch-all parties started to rely on political professionals such as media, consultants and pollsters (Katz, 2008, p. 304). Catch-all parties are, in most cases, similar to what Panebianco (1988) named electoral-professional parties. Even if those parties usually rely on a formal organization, the emphasis shifted so sharply to the party in office that the membership became superfluous. While catch-all parties were able to maintain themselves for half a century, other structural developments required an adaptation of organizational strategies.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the catch-all party type entered a phase of crisis as a consequence of a series of developments. First, increasing public debts forced ruling parties to make a choice: cutting welfare or increasing taxation. Second, globalization eroded party loyalties and membership since it reduced the ability of governments to control their economies (Katz, 2008, p. 304). Last, technological changes increased the costs of electoral competitiveness. Analyzing these changes, Katz and Mair (1995) suggested that a considerable number of parties shifted toward what they called cartel-parties. This has implications both for the functions performed and for their internal organization. With respect to the former, “the parties reduce their relevance in their role of bringing pressure to bear on the state on behalf of civil society (representative function) in favor of a part of their role of governors, defending policies of the state, becoming agents of the state rather than of society” (Katz, 2008, p. 304;

⁶ PT in Brazil (Samuels and Zucco 2018) and Frente Amplio in Uruguay (Yaffé 2004).

see also Katz and Mair, 1995). With respect to their internal organization, cartel parties tend to increase the formal powers of party members and in some cases allow the participation of supporters. This decreases internal democracy since it disempowers activists who are believed to be more doctrinaire and policy-oriented and less willing to accept limitation. Moreover, “cartel parties also tend to replace the staff of the party central office with hired consultants, both further privileging professional expertise over political experience and activism and removing another possible source of challenge to the leaders of the party in public office (Katz, 2008, p. 305).

Katz and Mair (1995) also underline the importance of the relationship of parties with the state. Cartel parties are a result of the trend towards symbiosis between the parties and the state. In sum, on the basis of their historical evolution, functions and structural organization, four main party models can be identified: cadre parties, mass parties, catch-all parties and cartel parties. Each one has a specific form of organization and functions that gave parties longevity. It is worth noting that the types of parties listed above are not exhaustive of all the typologies.

Therefore, while I agree with Gunther and Diamond (2003) that the problem with these typologies is that they “do not adequately capture the full range of variation in party types found in the world.” In fact, “[they] are based on a whole variety of definitional criteria [and] have not been conducive to cumulative theory building” (2003, p. 168).

However, for the aim of this study, these party models are useful for thinking about the influence of partisan organization on the duration of political parties. In fact, they are examples of types of partisan organizations disrupted by the occurrence of a structural change. At that point, a party’s survival depended on adjusting its internal organization and primary functions.

1.4.2 Party organization and populism

Even though the organizational characteristics of parties are well studied, the literature on the link between partisan organization and populism is not well-explored. Populism is quite a contested concept and most of the widely used conceptualizations insufficiently stress the importance of the organizational component.

Both the most employed conceptualizations of populism, the political-institutional and the ideational, for different reasons, do not deal enough with parties’ organizational features in their analysis of the phenomenon, with few exceptions (Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016; Stanley, 2011; Mudde, 2007; McDonnell, 2013; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018).

On the one hand, it looks like many scholars, mostly those close to the so-called political-institutional conceptualization, tend to overemphasized the role of the leader as they define populism as “political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercise government power based on direct, unmediated, un-institutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (Weyland, 2001, p. 14; see also Roberts, 2006). On this view, the two main features of populism are the type of political actor who exercise power and the political actor’s ability to mobilize a base (Weyland, 2017). With regards to the first aspect, populism is conceived of as a political strategy that revolves around an individual politician (Weyland, 2017, p. 56). With respect to his or her ability to mobilize, because populists tend to view widespread mass support as the legitimate basis of rule, they act mainly through TV and increasingly through social media (Weyland, 2017, p. 57-58).

On the other hand, the ideational approach, as I explained earlier in the chapter, defines populism as a “thin-centered ideology that conceives politics as ultimately divided into two homogenous groups: the ‘pure’ people and the ‘corrupt’ elite and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Stanley, 2008). Populism, like other ideologies, relies on core attributes or ideas. Scholars agree that the defining ideas of populism are four (Mudde, 2004; Hawkins, 2009; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). First, populism is people-centered, or, to use Canovan’s words, prizes “government of the people, by the people, for the people” (1999, p. 10). Second, the people are always in contraposition to an elite, defined as morally corrupt (Mudde, 2004; 2007). Third, populism entails a (moral) distinction between the “good” people and the “corrupt” (or “bad”) elite (Mudde, 2004). Fourth, the populist movement or party, claims to represent the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004). The ideational definition gives us insights on the organizational features of populist actors.

Scholars agree on the fact that, even though populist forces are often led by charismatic leaders and organized in highly centralized and personalized parties and hence it can be maintained that populism has an elective affinity with a certain kind of organization, these are not defining properties (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Van Hauwarert and Van Kessel, 2018). In fact, populism can express itself not only through a charismatic leader but also through a party such as the Lega in Italy and the FN in France. Moreover, populism can manifest through a social movement such Podemos or the Indignados/M-15 movement (Aslanidis, 2016a; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 42). Obviously, these organizational forms are ideal types. There can be are hybrids. One of the most cited examples is the MAS in Bolivia. The MAS embodies simultaneously the charismatic leadership of Evo Morales, social movements that

oppose neoliberal policies and a search for representation of previously excluded ethnic groups. Also, the MAS is a political party which Morales created to run for election in 2006 (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016, p. 57).

That said, the ideational approach assumes that populism can manifest itself through different organizational channels. Starting from this point, the degree of organizational density of populist parties can give us some insight into the future of the cleavage.

The relevance of considering the literature about party organization in studying the populism/anti-populism cleavage is linked to the fact that the aim of this research is to explain the determinants of the emergence of populism conceived of as a political cleavage. What are the implications of considering the antagonism between populist and anti-populist parties as a political cleavage?

First, considering the characteristics of the organization combined with the populist (or non-populist ideology) can give us insights into the organizational diversity among populist forces.

Furthermore, as seen above, one of the characteristics of the cleavages is durability (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Kitschelt, 2007). This is straightforward if we consider traditional sociological cleavages. This kind of cleavage is durable by definition, since changes at the sociological level are slow. However, if populism/anti-populism is a political cleavage, we need to make inferences about its durability. Which characteristics of the parties in the system can give us insight into their durability?

Part of the answer relies on the fact that it is the ideological contraposition between populist and anti-populist parties that keeps the dynamic of the political cleavage working. However, focusing also on the organizational characteristics of populist actors, we can make inferences about the duration of some of these populist options and, consequently, about populism as a cleavage.

Political parties, from the point of view of their organization are classified on the basis of different characteristics. Literature on party politics includes a significant number of party typologies based on their ideology, organizational features and their changes.

However, parties may be able to fulfill their main representation task through different organization strategies. In other words, the parties within the system have greater chances to last if they are organizationally dense, regardless of the specific organization strategies.

Following Sartori, I define organizational density as “the power of penetration of a given party, both in terms of intensity and reach” (2005a, p. 8). A party’s organizational density refers to its organizational network which “goes far beyond the party itself for it includes all the ‘space’

that a party is able to occupy de facto, and no matter under which form, in whatever setting” (Sartori, 2005a). Obviously, there are many different types of organizational networks.

However, for present purposes I maintain that a party is characterized by organizational density if the party has roots in the territory and if its mobilization capacity goes beyond the electoral periods. In other words, a party has high organizational density if the power of the leader is limited by a sort of internal checks on his or her will.

This variation is depicted in Figure 1.2, which differentiates between high and low levels of organizational density and the presence (or absence) of populist ideology.

Table 1.2: Party typology (organizational density and presence of populist ideology)

Organizational Density Populist Ideology	High	Low
	Yes	No
Yes	Populist Organic Parties	Personal Populist Parties
No	Organic Parties	Electoral Parties

The upper left quadrant is labeled personal populist parties, which denotes the tendency of those parties that, while adopting a populist ideology, do not develop a dense organization, i.e. power is concentrated in the hands of the leader and there is nobody to counterbalance her power. One example is Geert Wilders’s PVV in the Netherlands. The Party of Freedom (PVV) is classified as an example of populist radical right populism (Mudde, 2013). On the organizational side, it can be classified as personal parties since “Wilders dominates the PVV in terms of selection and training of candidates, planning political strategy and articulating the party’s program and ideology” (Vossen, 2011, p. 197-180), making the PVV is a sort of electoral vehicle (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 44).

A second type, populist organic parties, is found in the upper right quadrant of Table 1.2.

The defining feature of populist organic parties is that those parties, while adopting the populist ideology, develop organizational characteristics that make them not fully dependent on the leader. Indeed, they grow other organs that share power with the leadership and build an institutionalized mechanism for candidate selection. The SVP in Switzerland and the

National Front in France are paradigmatic cases of populist organic parties. Both of these parties, in fact, have built a solid party organization with several associate organizations and branches (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 52–53).

An alternative organizational pattern is found in the lower left quadrant. Electoral parties are the obverse of populist organic parties, as they lack both the populist ideology and high organizational density. Uribe's Partido de la U in Colombia was not an organizationally dense party, but an electoral vehicle for the leader. Moreover, Uribe's discourse cannot be categorized as populist since it lacks the anti-elitism component.

A final category, organic parties, is found in the lower right quadrant of Table 1.2. Organic parties do not share populist ideas, and the power of the leader is limited by other organs that function as counter-weights. Classic European social democracies such as the German SPD or the French PS constitute fine examples.

In Italy, as I develop in more detail in chapters three and four, despite the importance its leadership has always had in the Lega, the party has also had the organizational density to offer an effective check, at least when compared to other populist parties. On the other hand, both FI and the M5S, for instance, are dependent on their leaders but, unlike the Lega, this dependency is unfettered by a dense organization. However, this typology travels outside of the Italian context. For example, in other countries, we can classify populist parties on the basis of their organizational density. While the FN in France is an example of organic populist party since organizational characteristics of the party balance Marine LePen's, and previously Jean-Marie LePen's, discretion. On the other hand, Geert Wilder's PVV in the Netherlands or the Palmer United Party (PUP) in Australia are personalist populist parties since they are totally dependent on their leaders.

To sum up the argument, those parties that have high organizational density are less dependent on their leaders and, as a consequence, have greater durability than a party that has no organization to curb the discretion of the leader. While one-man leadership surely makes a party or movement more manageable, since there is no room for collective decision-making that could make coalitions formation more complex, it hurts the long-term viability of the party.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I theoretically constructed and analyzed the object of my research, namely the populism/anti-populism cleavage. To do this, I relied on three strands of literature in political science. First, following the literature on cleavages, I maintain that the populism/anti-populism

cleavage needs to be conceived of as a political cleavage, i.e. a fracture in the system that structures competition between parties but does not necessarily have sociological roots. Second, following a Sartorian conceptualization of partisan polarization, I maintain that for a cleavage to emerge and structure the system requires a certain degree of polarization. Since polarization is necessary for cleavage to emerge and the system to function properly, I do not believe that the polarization of the party system is per se a dangerous for the stability of the system or for the democratic regime. Extreme polarization may be dangerous, as is extreme convergence. In other words, I do not adhere to a normative conceptualization of partisan polarization. Third, since populism is a highly contested concept, I explained the reason why I find the ideational approach proposed by Cas Mudde (see also Stanley, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwaaser, 2013; Stavrakakis, 2014) most convincing. This conceptualization treats populism as an ideology or discourse that sees society as divided into two homogeneous and morally distinct groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Moreover, populism holds that politics needs to be the expression of the general will of the people. Conceiving of populism as a set of ideas almost always attached to full ideologies allows distinguishing between different types of sub-populism. This approach also goes beyond the description of populism as linked to the emergence of a charismatic leader (see Weyland, 2001; Roberts, 2006). In the last part of the chapter, I proposed a closer look on the relationship between populism as an ideology and the organizational characteristics of political parties.

With this objective in mind, I elaborated a typology that accounts, on the one hand for the type of thin ideology of parties — whether they are populist or not — and, on the other hand, parties' organizational density. First, this is a useful reminder that populism is not a phenomenon that is always related to the emergence of charismatic leadership. Even though there is an affinity between charismatic leaders and populism, this is not always the case. Populism, in fact, can manifest itself through other mobilization options, such as political parties or social movements.

The thrust of this observation is to facilitate inferences about the duration of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, since we can assume that both populist and anti-populist parties are more durable when they develop an organization that somehow limits the discretion of the leader. On the contrary, when parties rely only on their leaders, the odds of the cleavage enduring fall.

In the next chapter, I will introduce my theoretical proposal for the emergence of the populism/anti-populism cleavage, the programmatic convergence of mainstream parties, the occurrence of massive corruption scandals and party system collapse.