

# The Squatting Movement(s) in Paris Region. Internal Conflicts and its Survival

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## Argument

Squatting sets conflicts against representative political institutions, property and speculation. It promotes alternatives institutions and autonomy of social daily life. But squatting has very different faces.

The history of squatting in Paris could be partly seen as the history of the competition between autonomous and institutionalized wings of the squatting movement, mainly between artists, autonomists and Housing Movement activists. This intestinal conflict opposes diverse groups of squatters who get unequal resources, who differ on their conception (practical and intellectual) of squatting, on their internal organization, on their goals and attitudes towards public authorities.

Each cycle of mobilization is dominated by a type of squat. Despite fluctuations of cycles overtime, the divisions have contributed to maintain the squatting movement alive while we could have expected its death because of a strong co-optation process at the municipal level since 2001 combined with repression of the most radical wings and the most precarious squatters.

The open conflict between the autonomous and institutionalized wings contributes to maintain both the crucial critical dimension and the vital resources in the movement. This duality paradoxically allows squatters to produce substantive impacts on housing and cultural policies. More broadly, we argue that the more a social movement is heterogeneous, the more it is powerful in challenging authorities and keeping urban societies in movement.

## 5 configurations of squats

In Paris, five types of groups use squatting as a mode of action

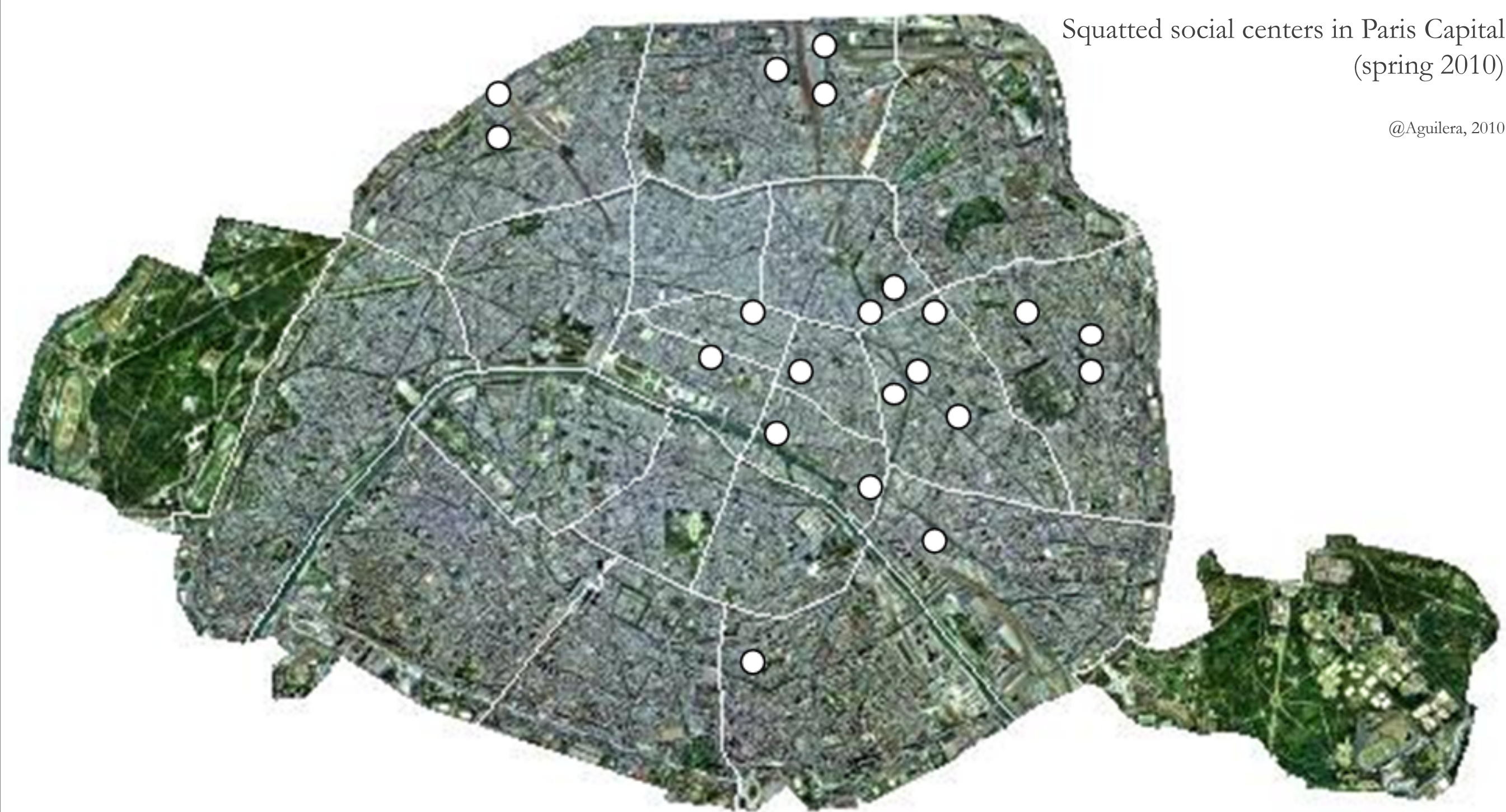
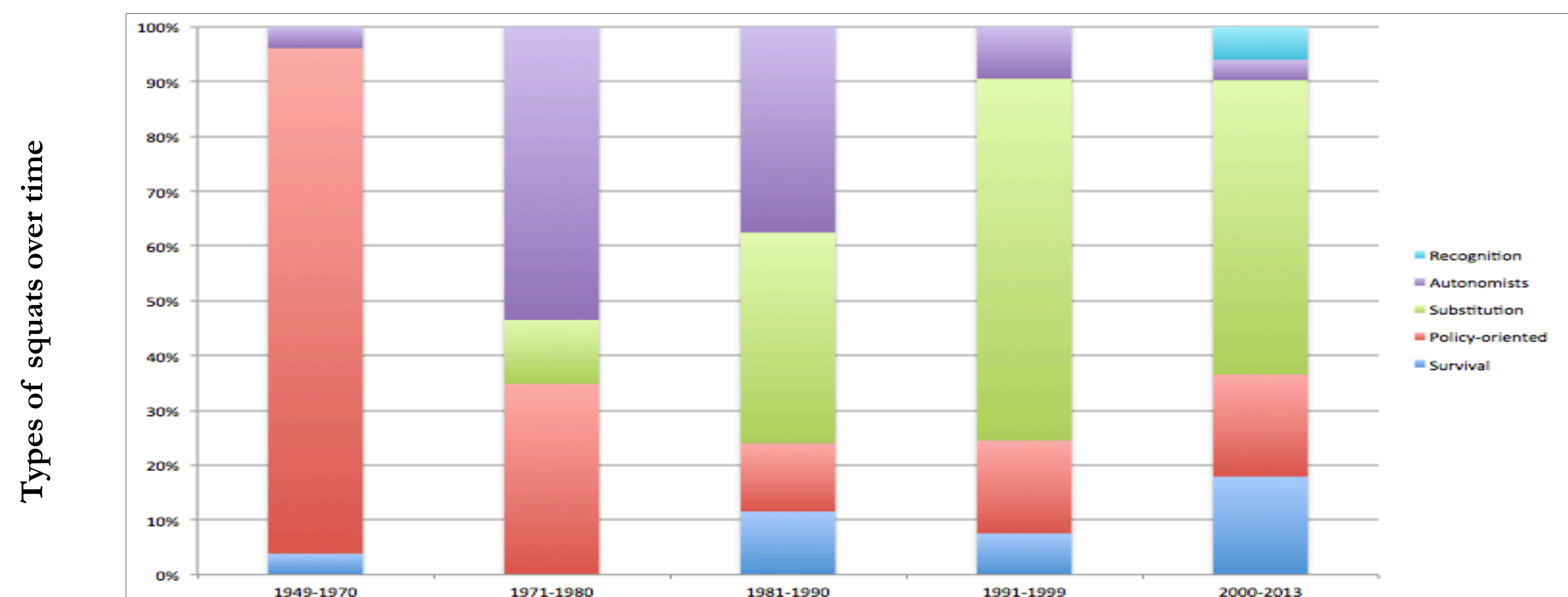
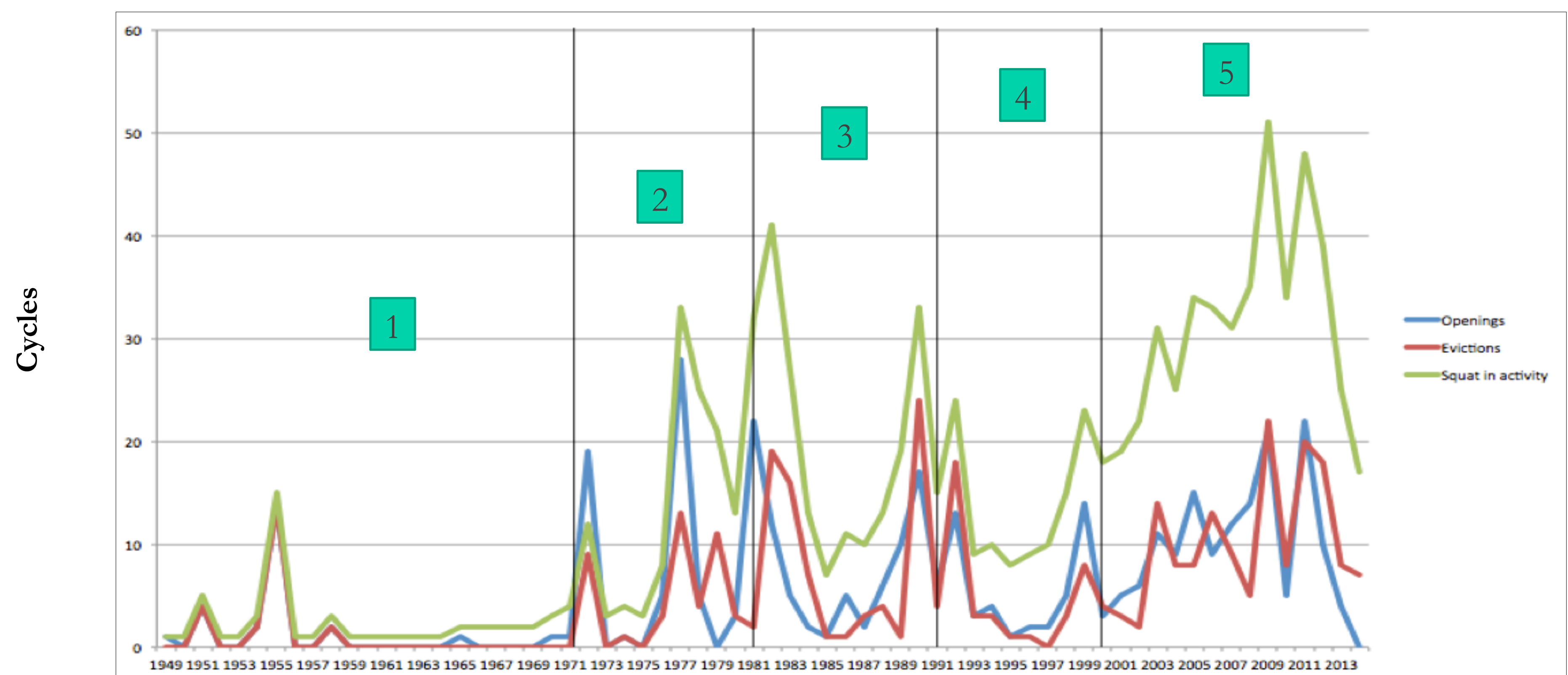
1-The Housing Movement's collectives use it as a mode of action among others. Activists open squats for families while claiming their rehousing in social housing. They are reformist and policy-oriented, and have many resources (ex. DAL, Jeudi Noir) (*policy-oriented*).

2-The Artists open squats in order to get a place to work and produce alternative culture. They provide social and cultural services on behalf of the municipality and animate the popular neighborhoods. Many of them are legalized by the Municipality of Paris since 2001 (*substitution*).

3-The Autonomous squatting movement has been progressively evicted from the core city center, particularly with the legalization policies in the 2000s. But despite strong repression, they are still active. They refuse negotiations and violently oppose to the artists' and Housing movement squatters (*autonomists*).

4-Squatting can be used to ask for recognition to institutions (ex. Union trades for irregular migrants) (*recognition*).

5-Squatting is of course a shelter for the urban poor (*survival*).



Talking about *one* squatting movement would be an overestimation of the coherence of diverse practices using different resources, claiming diverse attitudes and serving contradictory goals. At a first sight, we could think that a division in a social movement is a factor of weakness, above all when local policies legalize only artists and evict the other groups.

In Paris, the movement has survived precisely because each groups took advantage from the strengths, the resources and from the effects of their respective actions while maintaining an active and useful critical vigilance over each other. In this game, the artists have changed the image of squatting, the Housing movement have rehoused families, while the autonomists have played a crucial role in keeping activists aware about the risks of cooptation. The combination of flexible institutionalization, cooptation and radical extraction contributes to change urban societies and keep them in movement.

