

Squatting Practices within Protest Cycles:

Socio-Spatial Structures or Activist Agency?

Miguel A. Martínez López
m.a.martinez@cityu.edu.hk

City University of Hong Kong
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Aims

- Understand the **evolution** of the squatters' movement in the city of Madrid since its origins until the present times
- To determine the dimensions that contributed to shape the **protest cycles** in which squatters were active
- Knowing the crucial urban and political **contexts in interaction** with the squatters' movement
- Distinction of the **socio-spatial structures of opportunities** and constraints for squatting

Methods

- Data Base 1977-2012
- 149 cases of SSCs (although some especial ones)
- Participant observation (2007-2013)
- Secondary sources and independent-activist media

Theory (I)

- 'Protest cycles' refers to intense waves of different movements and conflicts that, eventually, may lead to revolutionary changes (Kriesi et al. 1995, Tarrow 1998)
- It is quite controversial how to set the boundaries of each protest wave, its duration, key actors and conflicts involved, and, above all, the issues of 'decline' and 'diffusion'
- Every movement experiences a life cycle dynamics but this is not isolated from wider protest cycles and other contextual dimensions. Do they overlap?

Theory (II)

- 'Socio-spatial structures' refers to the set of social relations involved in the production of the space (Soja 1980, Harvey 1996)
- The major implication for the study of squatting is that every squat is embedded in wider processes of movement building and urban transformations
- My suggestion is to extend its meaning in connection to POS (Political Opportunity Structures) in order to understand the significant urban and political contexts of interaction

Theory (III)

- Owens (2009):
 - > rise and decline are subject to conflicting narratives
 - > vacancy depends on housing market and urban renewal
 - > shifts to the alter-global movement
 - > regulations and criminalisations made squatting more difficult (Pruijt 2013, Dadusc and Dee 2014)
- Mudu (2004):
 - > life dynamics of squatting longer than 3 decades
 - > diversity of types and networks of squatting

Theory (IV)

- Pruijt (2003, 2014):
 - > urban renewal regimes and governance of squatting
 - > political squatting tends to decline (either by radicalisation or by institutionalisation) while housing and entrepreneurial are more long lasting
- Holm and Kuhn (2010):
 - > squatters addressed urban questions by joining other urban movements
 - > repression and legalisations were turning points

Results

3 main cycles, with two 'internal phases' in each cycle:

- **1975-1995 Triggering conditions**

1977-1980 Early "squatters" as immediate precedents of SSCs (but not a squatting movement)

1985-1995 Initial autonomist squatters and growth

- Evictions without penal punishment, no negotiations, decline of citizen movement, rising of NSM, decaying areas of the city centre but increasingly in working class peripheries

Results

- **1996-2010 Criminalisation and global speculation**

1996-2003 Reaction to criminalisation and the rise of the Global Justice Movement

2004-2010 Steady development from the economic boom to the crisis in a globalised Madrid

- Penal persecution implied more risks but not the end of squatting, a few negotiations and legalisations at the end of the cycle, more diversity in types of squats, some projects continued squatting after various evictions, new movements (solidarity with migrants, housing, free internet, etc.)

Results

- **2011- The 15M movement**

The higher growth of SSCs and also visible squatted houses due to the new housing movement against foreclosures

- One legalisation and one attempt of negotiation, higher legitimacy and more positive media coverage of squatting, poverty-unemployment and neo-liberal policies, convergence of new movements

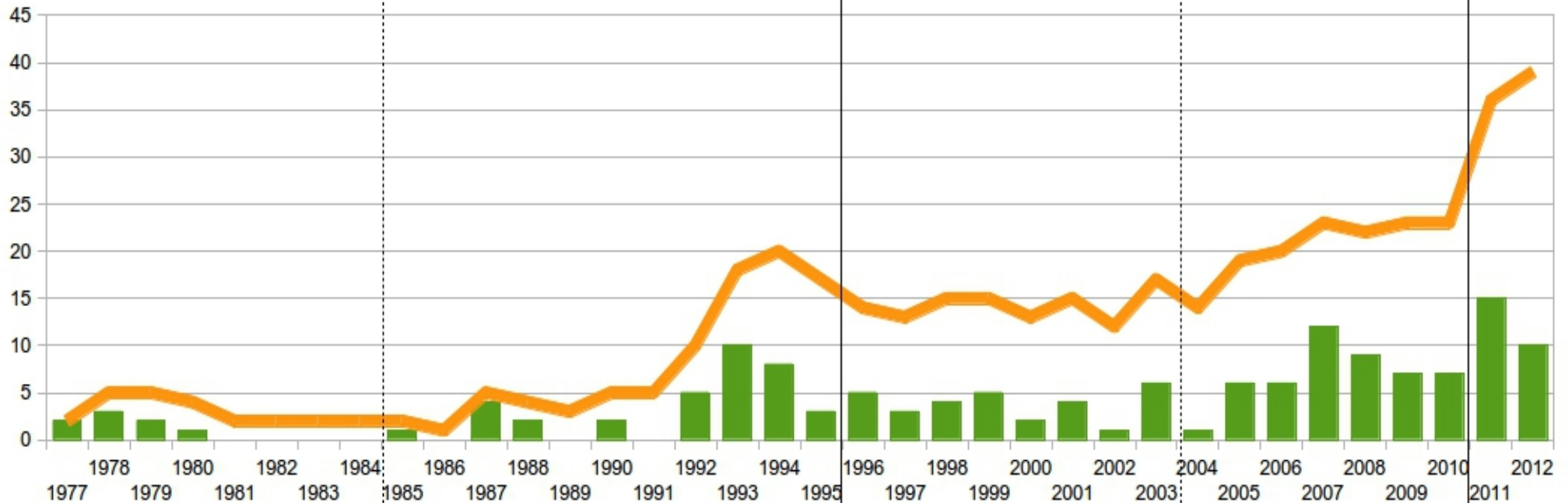
**Early "squatters"
1977-1984 (8y)**

**Triggering
of squatting
1985-1995 (11y)**

**After-
criminalisation
1996-2003 (8y)**

**Steady
development
2004-2010 (7y)**

**15M
2011-
2014**



Initiated SSCs

8

35

30

48

25

Active SSCs/y

3

8.2

14.3

20.6

37.5

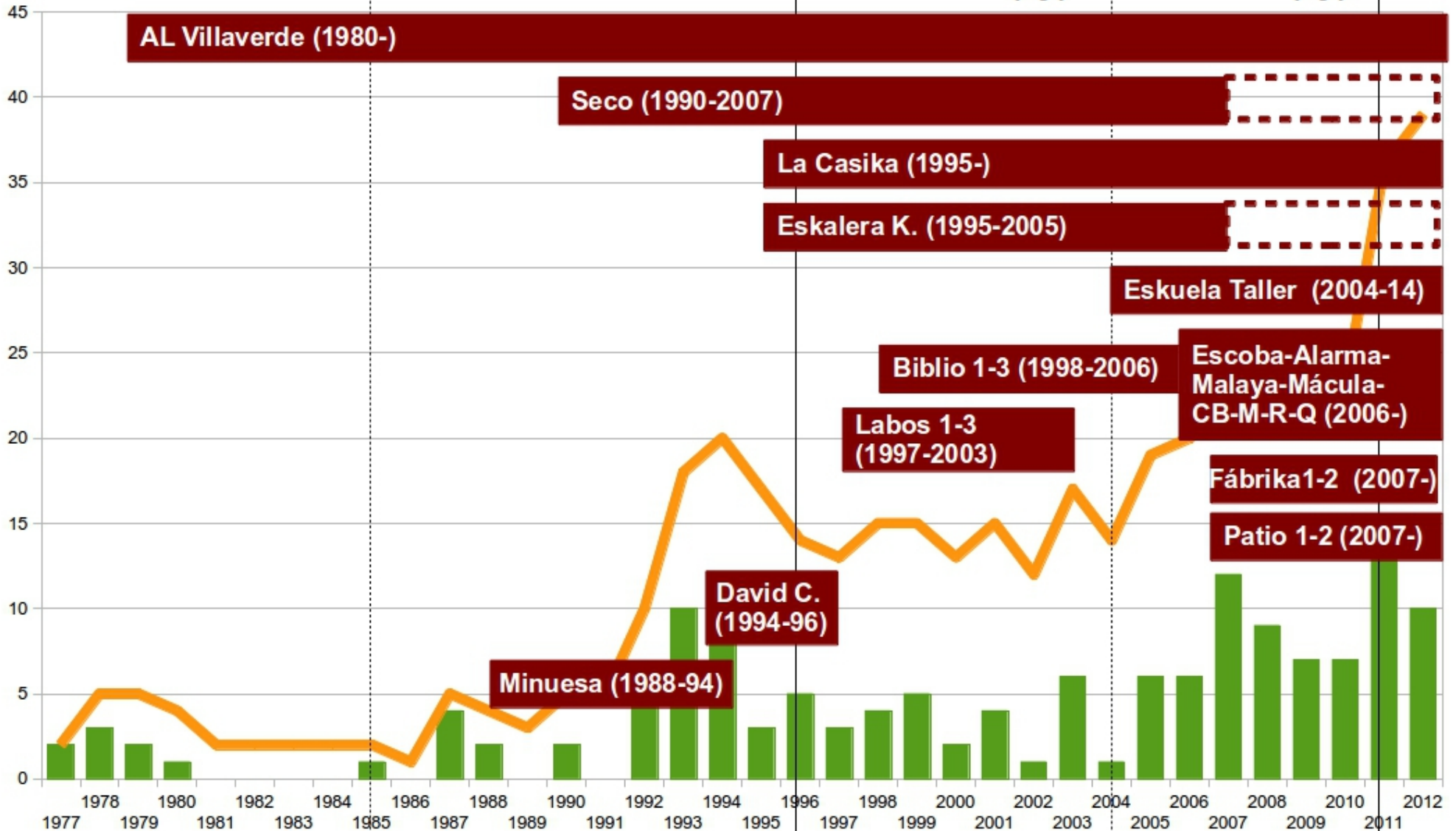
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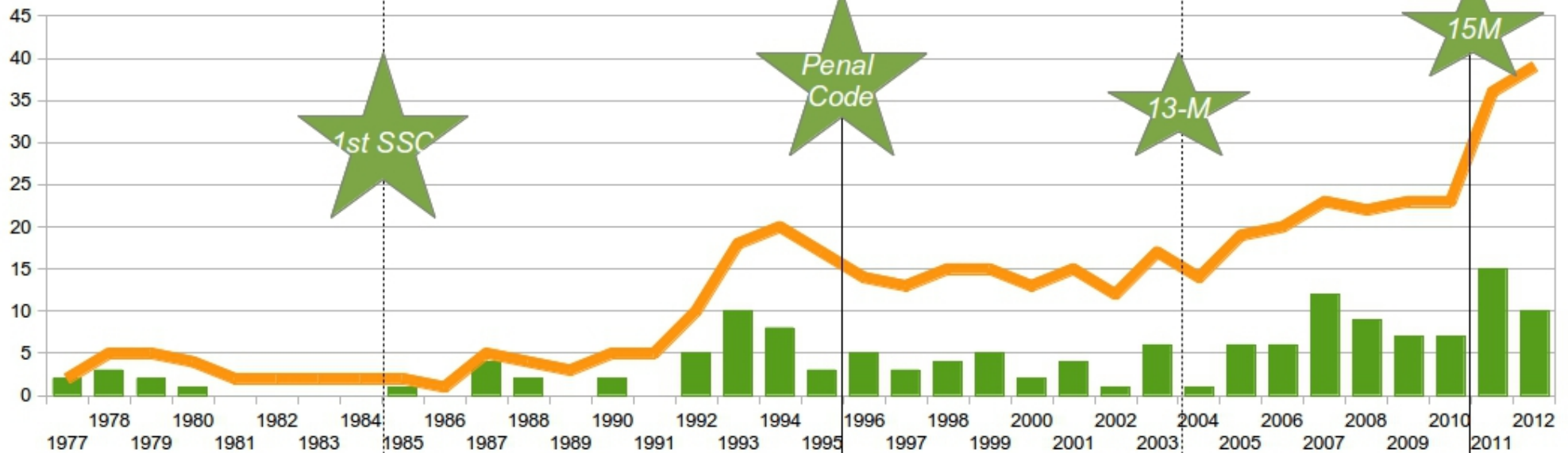
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2014



**Transition to
Democracy**
1975-79

Social-democrats at Central State
1982-96

**Conservatives at
Central State 1982-96**

**Social-democrats at
Central State 2004-
2011**

**Workers' strikes
and citizen mov.**
1977-79

NSM & Insumisión 1989-2002

Global Justice Mov.
1994-2004

**Housing and
environm.
mov. 2004-11**

Economic crisis 1979-92

Economic boom and immigration
1996-2008

**Economic
crisis**
2008-14

**Early "squatters"
1977-1984 (8y)**

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2014**

**Social-Democrats at
Local Government
1979-91**

**Conservatives at
Local Government
1991-2014**

Massive Social Housing
construction and public utilities
in periphery-working class areas.
Industrial restructuring

European Cultural Capital,
mega-infrastructures,
urban renewal
and Global Madrid

Gentrification, Privatisation,
Global corporations, immigration,
new urban developments (PAUs),
mega-infrastructures (Olympics)

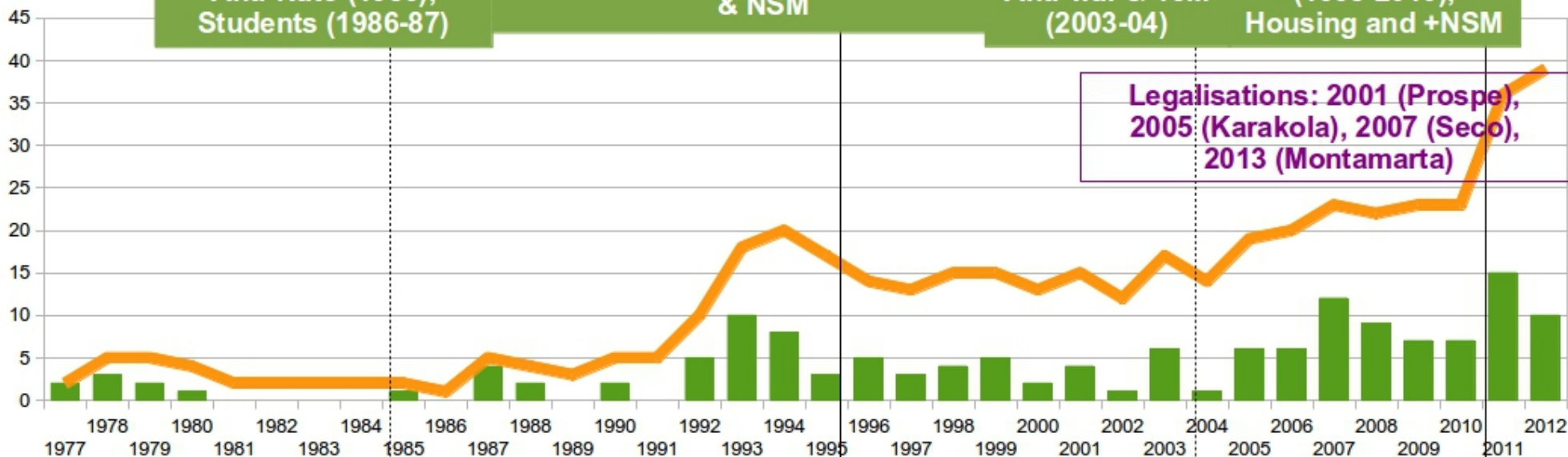
Decline Citizen Mov.
(1979 onwards),
Anti-Nato (1986),
Students (1986-87)

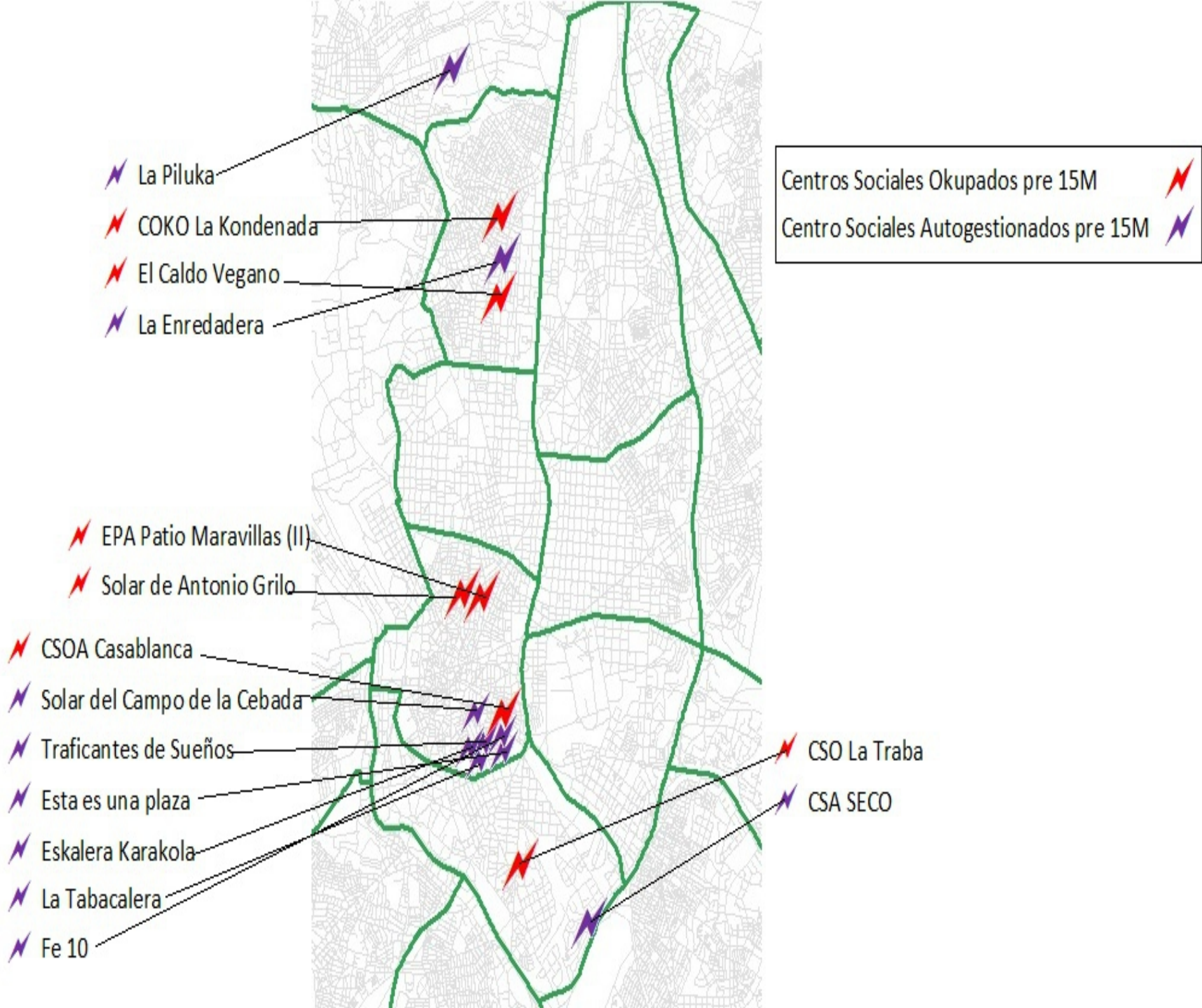
Anti-militarism (1989-2002),
Autonomism-LA (1988-99)
& NSM

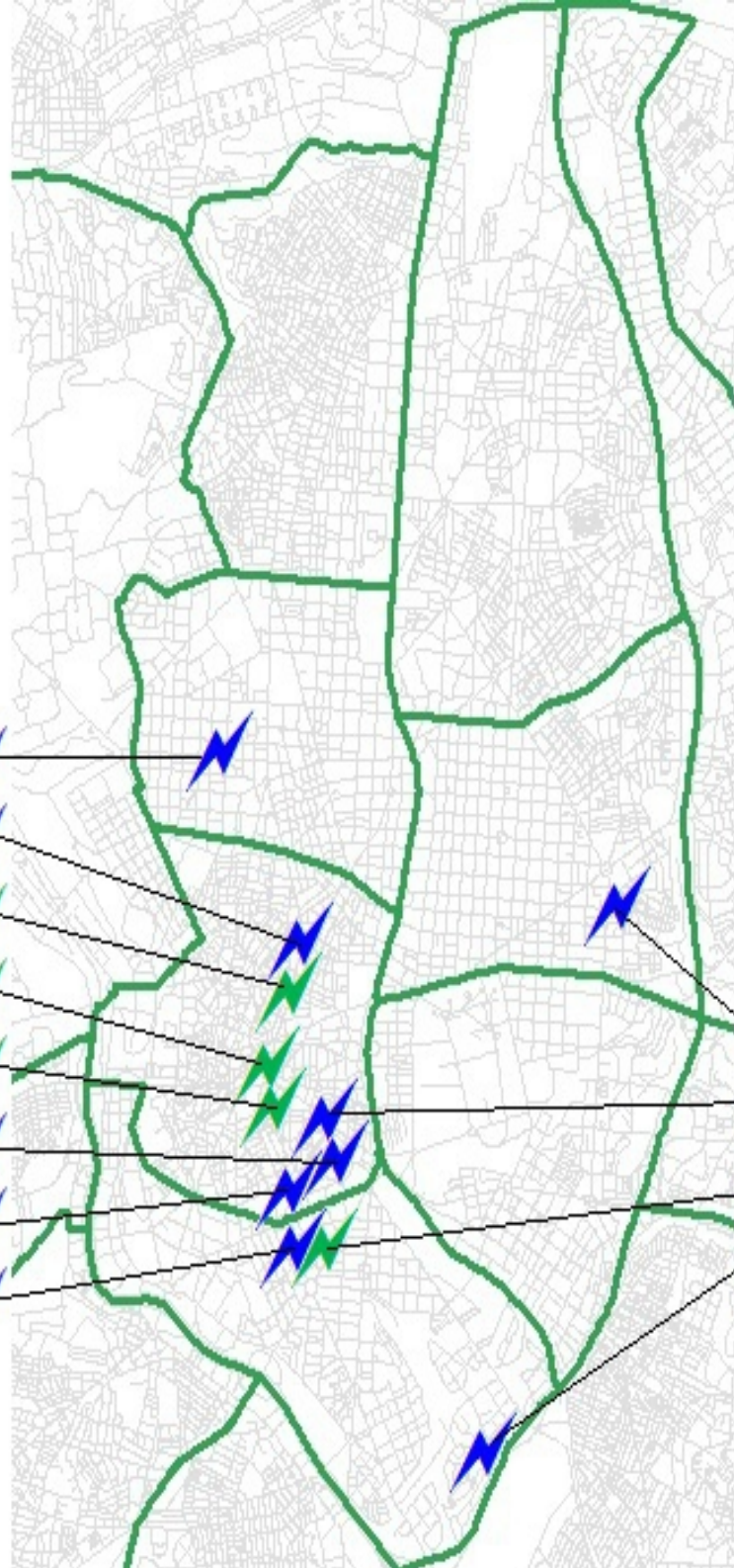
Global Justice
(1999-2004),
Anti-war & 13M
(2003-04)

Anti-fascism,
Autonomism-RES
(1998-2010),
Housing and +NSM

Legalisations: 2001 (Prospe),
2005 (Karakola), 2007 (Seco),
2013 (Montamarta)







Centros Sociales Okupados 15M ⚡

Viviendas Okupadas 15M ⚡

CSOA La Morada

CSOA 16.0

Corredera Baja

Hotel Madrid

Concepción Jerónima

CSOA Magerit

EL Asamblea Popular Lavapiés

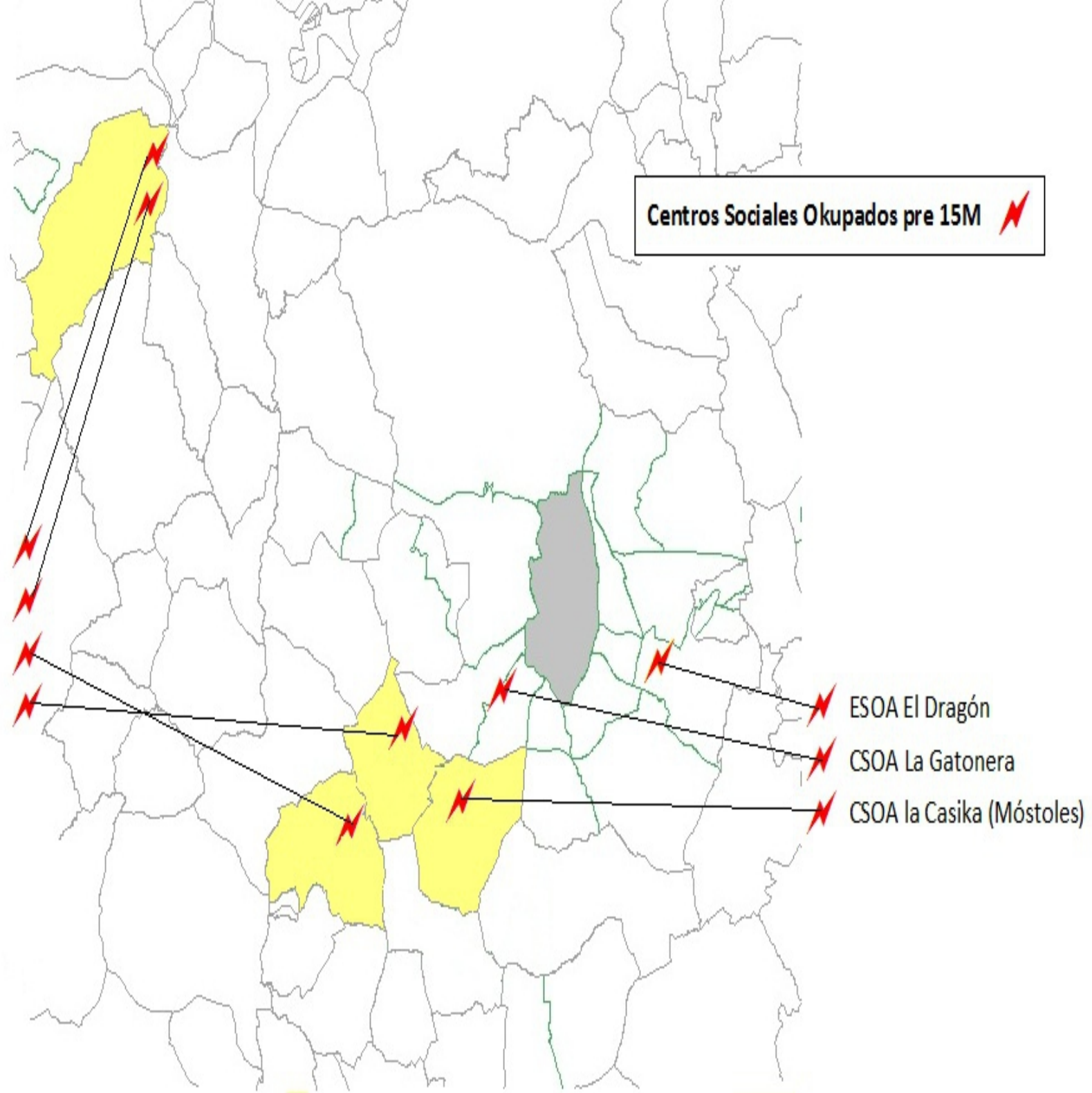
Templo del Sol

CSA Salamanca

Espacio de Convergencia

Sebastián Elcano

Koala



- ⚡ Centros Sociales Okupados 15M
- ⚡ Centros Sociales Autogestionados 15M

⚡ CSOA La Piña (El Escorial)

⚡ Centro Social Casa Abierta (El Escorial)

⚡ CSL Galapagar (Galapagar)

⚡ L.A. Hormigonera

⚡ EKO

⚡ CSCA la Burla del Inem

⚡ ECL la Alcalina (Alcalá de Henares)

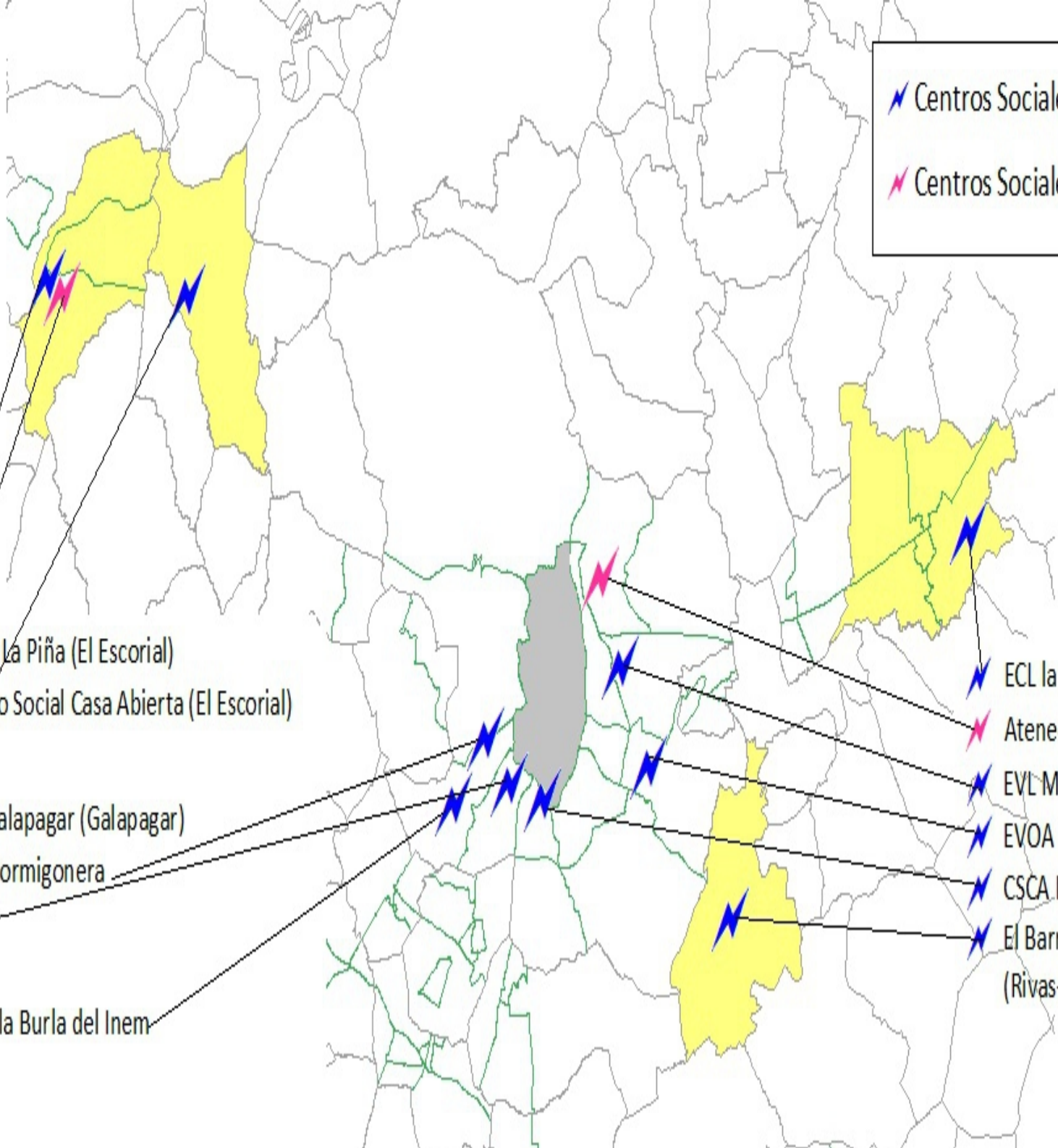
⚡ Ateneo Libertario de Hortaleza

⚡ EVL Montamarta

⚡ EVOA La Cantera

⚡ CSCA La Osera

⚡ El Barracón del Consenso
(Rivas-Vaciamadrid)



Conclusions

- Duration of cycle: first cycle lasts 8+11 years, while the second lasts 8+7, and the third lasts -for now- 4 years
- Shifting points: First popular SSC, State-level criminalisation, End of Alter-Global movement and convergence with Local-National 15M movement
- Evolution: growth, light reaction and higher growth
- Patterns? No general pattern in terms of duration (although a few exemplary long lasting SSCs in each period) nor in terms of location (except accumulation in two central areas)

Conclusions

- Urban and political contexts: strong interactions with other movements, weak interactions with governments (only a few legalisations in the last years), opposition to urban speculation and urban policies, opportunities in slow restructuring-renewal central areas/spaces
- Belonging / Leading / Pioneering protest cycles?
 - > Initially, filling the gap left by citizen movement
 - > Secondly, before 1995, leading radical movements in parallel to anti-militarism
 - > 1996-2004 early alter-global initiatives and then, after criminalisation, overcome by the alter-global movement
 - > 2004-2010 early preparation of the convergence with the 15M movement and key component of it later on